



## JOINT STATEMENT

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### **Greece: Civil society denounces killing of unaccompanied child in Moria**

Athens, Geneva and London, 27 August 2019,

The World organization against torture (OMCT), Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) and the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) are shocked by the stabbing to death of a 15-year-old Afghan boy and the serious injuries of two other teenage boys after a fight on 24 August 2019 at the Moria reception and identification centre (RIC) on the Greek island of Lesbos.

[Expressing its shock, UNHCR](#) also described the inhuman and degrading conditions in "the safe area at the Moria Reception and Identification Centre, RIC, hosting nearly 70 unaccompanied children, but with more than 500 other boys and girls staying in various parts of the overcrowded facility without a guardian and exposed to exploitation and abuse"; some of them are accommodated with unknown adults.

In June 2019, the OMCT, RRE and the GHM, together with 9 other NGOs, submitted a [joint report to the UN Committee against Torture \(CAT\)](#), expressing grave concern about the situation of unaccompanied children in the hotspot of Moria, where they spend on average five months before they can move to the mainland. There is an acute lack of available care, particularly mental healthcare, coupled with pervasive substance abuse amongst children, who are often experiencing severe trauma. An anonymous organization describes the conditions for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) in Moria: "The overall situation for unaccompanied minors is alarming. The living conditions in the shelters are substandards and supervision is minimal and not 24/7". A serious lack of health care specialists has been reported, as well as a huge shortage of social workers and capable caregivers for children., Only one psychologist, two coordinators and two nurses are present for more than 300 children, and only until mid-afternoon. In addition, the police is the only point of contact for the children, but they are not trained to deal with children, especially traumatized children, and do not speak their language.

The Greek authorities are urged to conduct a swift and impartial investigation into the case, including any inaction by the facility management or those responsible, identify those responsible, bring them to trial and apply the penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions provided by law. They are further urged to offer compensation to the victims and/or their families as the fight occurred in an official "safe zone," that is [a designated as a supervised space](#) within a temporary open accommodation site which is supposed to be used as short-term measure to care for unaccompanied in light of the insufficient number of available shelter places, for a maximum of 3 months.

In this regard, the OMCT, RRE and the GHM call on the Greek authorities to respect the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment n°6 on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin in taking the appropriate steps "to allow for the immediate release of unaccompanied or

separated children from detention”<sup>1</sup>, and to implement the CAT’s recommendations following Greece’s review in July 2019, to “ensure that children are not detained solely because of their immigration status. Detention should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period possible”<sup>2</sup>.

The OMCT, RRE and the GHM echo [the statement of the UNHCR Representative in Greece, Philippe Leclerc](#): “Moria is not the place for children who are alone and have faced profound trauma from events at home and the hardship of their flight. They need special care in designated shelters. The Greek government must take urgent measures to ensure that these children are transferred to a safe place and to end the overcrowding we see on Lesbos and other islands,” he said, adding that “UNHCR stands ready to support by all means necessary”.

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<sup>1</sup> General comment no. 6 (2005) treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, 1 September 2005 (CRC/GC/2005/6), §61.

<sup>2</sup> Committee against Torture, Concluding observations on Greece, July 2019 (CAT/C/GRC/CO/7) §23.