

The hot spot facilities



Since September, following the EU summits agreements, the decision which converts detention centre of Moria Lesvos into one of the five so called peripheral “Hot Spots” that are going to be established in Greece, took place¹. Due to the existing establishments and since the operation of the mentioned detention centre, the Moria Hot Spot was selected as the first that was going to open

in Greece. Cause of the large numbers of arrivals over the summer period that made Lesvos the main entering spot in Europe, some of the specific facilities that need to exist in the hot spot centres already were placed there.

The inauguration of the centre took place on the 16 of October with a number of european union and greek state executives to be present. In reality what really happened was that at that day most of the migrants who had stayed in the areas where the executives were going to visit were violently removed and the place was subsequently quickly cleaned. The play scene for the media to record was in this way completely set up, and it returned to its previous state of wretchedness as it used to be, by the time the executives left the island. For the significance but also the symbolism of these centres for the realisation of the anti-migration politics of the European Union and its member states, the statement of Andrea Rigoni, (Italy) rapporteur of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) at his visit is quite indicative: «...our impression is that here we are at the new border of Europe, within this centre. Outside from it you are outside Europe. Inside it, you enter Europe...»

Within the centre, but also in the olive tree fields around it, during the period since September until the mid November which was the period with the peak arrivals, there were about 5-10.000 people everyday. Depending on their nationality and the numbers of registration that were taking place, most of them had to stay there for 3 to 15 days. The wards with the kiosks



from the previous detention centre remain for most of the time at the moment unused for the accommodation of the people that arrive, driving most of them to buy camping tents or knock up roughly made shelters at the fields surrounding the centre. Inside the centre, the UNHCR has placed 62 small kiosks and a huge tent, mainly for the accommodation of families and vulnerable groups. The sanitary facilities are almost non-existing, especially if it is taken in consideration the huge number of people are supposed to serve². As a result many people use the old abandoned facilities of the previous military camp that was placed there.

Over the last period landscaping works take place, some from military machinery, for the planned extensions at the establishments in the near future.

¹ According to information, the creation of 5 peripheral Hot Spot Centres is planned in the islands of Lesvos, Hios, Samos, Kos and Leros and a central much bigger one in an unknown are of Attiki.

² Their awful situation can be seen in the pictures that follow the note.

Registrations – Identifications



The registration and identification system, after a lot of experimenting has been divided in two areas. The one is used for people coming from Syria which are still the majority of people coming, and also for Palestinians and Africans³. At the second area where most of the difficulties and tensions appear, are led people from all other countries. However the successive changes in registration identification system are the main reasons for creating confusion and as a result tension in the area. The role of the resolution of the tension has been assigned to the forces of riot police who have settled on the island with beatings and use of chemicals to form an integral part of the operation of the Centre.

At the detention camp there is also a ward for unaccompanied minors for 160 persons. The area consists of a group of kiosks at the southern entrance, surrounded by double fence covered with barbed wire. The access to the site is very strict in specific groups and organizations creating a wall of invisibility to its internal functioning. Depending on the arrivals and the positions that open to hosting facilities in the rest of Greece in place there are “hosted” around 50 minors. Major problems are created by the joint detention of minors that has led to several fights between them. In the last visit of the Musaferrat collective in the area of the camp, we received specific complaints that during one of the last days, as a result of such a fight, there was brutal police invasion on full gear. The minors of the ward were horrified after this.

NGOs

The numerous voluntary and professional NGOs that are in the detention centre play a key role for its operation. Apart from many organisations that are active in the surroundings of the camp with the main task to provide assistance to newly arrived migrants, many have undertaken various pieces of work in the operation of the centre. This work may include from providing assistance in the construction of accommodation kiosks and cleaning, up to medico-psychosocial support for vulnerable groups. The important role of these organizations in providing assistance particularly to the migrants that usually arrive exhausted and in need of urgent assistance is something that cannot be overlooked, as well as the intentions of many people working in them. However it is clear that the substantial contribution of these organisations is located in prettifying a situation of devaluation, misery and imprisonment that turns against all those that are supposed that are here to help. At the



³ The Syrian families are led for registration and identification at the refuges camp of Kara Tepe, playing an important role at the decongestion of this identification spot.

same time, the absolute silence that the majority, if not all of them, has kept in events of violence and exploitation within and in the surroundings of the camp, makes it clear that their role in the field, constitutes them as institutional co-administrators and active participants in the anti-migration politics developed in the detention centres. This is something that cannot be examined separated from the broader plans of “NGOing” and privatisation of the security and enclosure industry worldwide⁴.

Another important point in relation to the presence of the professional ngos on the island, is the jobs they provide for many residents of the island and not only. Their engagement in this way, but also through the high expenses they have, with the local economy is a key point of raising acceptance by the local community. However rumours for suspected scandals are heard lately, with parts of the municipal opposition and the press to address repeated questions towards the mayor’s office for its financial transactions with the some of these organisations but also for the central role they play in managing the migratory issue on the island fully replacing local authorities.

Businesses

The exploitation industry remains flourishing at the detention centre of Moria. Apart from the contractors that continue to gain huge profits from the operation of the camp, and can expect a lot more with its planned expansion, smaller merchants keep gathering in the surrounding streets chasing some profits for themselves as well. For a long time the administration of the camp allowed them to operate within the area of the camp, something that has only changed over the last 2 weeks. During our last visit to the camp we found in place 8 food canteens, a small truck with fruits, a van with camping tents and sleeping bags and 2 stands of Vodafone that seems to be the winner of the competition among the telecommunication companies. It should be noted their quick adaptation to the needs of the market, “offering” sim cards with contracts with free airtime to countries in the Middle East. The taxi owners also seem to capitalise on the situation, by moving the taxi-ranks outside the migrants’ detention camps with multiple charges than the usual.

Planned changes

The limitation of arrivals during the recent days has led to the decongestion of the camp of Moria allowing most of the migrants to finish with the registration procedures in shorter periods. The completion of the expansions that take place will increase the capacity of the camp, something that in conjunction with the pressure that exists from residents of the nearby village against the presence of the camp on the surrounding private plots is expected to lead to the enclosure of migrants within the camp⁵. After the completion of this transfer we should expect the complete sealing of the camp with access to be allowed only to registered mediums and organisations. A

⁴ The significance of examining the role of different organizations in the management of the migration issue is very important. Their role in the complexity it presents can not be described in this information note. As such, we will return to examine it more specifically.

⁵ Up to now the need of migrants to come and go on the registration center for the completion of procedures has led to an “artificial openness”. Parts of the fence are damaged and form additional gateways in the center. In the last week a system of controlled entrance is applied allowing the entrance only to migrants and registered ngos.

question still remains on the area that the pre-removal centre for the migrants that are not going to be handed with asylum, is going to be located.

**Musaferat
November 2015**

For a photographic tour of the Hot Spot Centre visit the Musaferat blog

<https://musaferat.espivblogs.net/>