

# Chilling Times on The Greek Island of Samos. The Plight of Refugees

By [Chris Jones](#)

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*Bad things are happening on Samos. At the end of October the earthquake hit with all its devastating consequences as hundreds lost their homes. The damage is still being assessed. And now some 12 days later the aftershocks continue. One this morning registered as 4.1 R.*

2 days after the quake a fire in the jungle left over 250 refugees homeless. And now this morning another major fire in the camp. A Somalian friend who has been burnt out this morning told us of her terror at waking up in the smoke, of grabbing a few things and then running for her life. This is the second time she has been burnt out this year. Then on November 9<sup>th</sup>, between the 2 fires, a refugee boat carrying 27 people arrived from Turkey. This is the first such arrival on Samos for many months. But it ended in tragedy as the boat was thrown onto the rocks on a remote and dangerous part of the coast south east of Vathi. One six year old boy died. 6 people are still missing, 2 of whom are thought to be pregnant.

As is the norm here, the police arrested the young Afghani man steering the boat as being a smuggler. It is a ridiculous charge as nearly all those who steer the boats are those who cannot afford to pay the full fare. He can expect to be found guilty and a significant jail sentence.

Bad enough, but the sadness of these events takes on a new dimension of horror. Not only did the police arrest and charge the boat driver as expected, they also arrested the father of the dead boy and charged him with exposing a minor to danger (law 4619/2019). This is a new law and it is the first time we have seen it used on Samos.

We heard yesterday evening that the father had been to the court and sentenced to 7 years in prison but this has yet to be confirmed. To date the case has not attracted any media attention except the ever reliable AreYou Syrious group which immediately recognised both the cruelty of the arrest and the dangers it poses:

“While the survivors were taken to the camp on Samos to quarantine, the father of the boy was arrested along with the driver of the boat. The father was taken in for “suspicion of endangering a life” and if convicted, he could face up to 10 years in prison. CEO of Help Refugees/Choose Love, Josie Naughton said:

“These charges are a direct attack on the right to seek asylum. It is outrageous that a grieving father is being punished for seeking safety for him and his child. Criminalising people who are seeking safety and protection shows the failure of the European Union to find a solution to unsafe migration routes that forced thousands to risk their lives to seek protection.”

Arresting traumatized parents who have just lost their children is not the answer and cannot be accepted. This is a very cruel decision for the Greek authorities to make. This cannot be a new norm."

This shocking development may not be in the media but I would put money on the fact that every refugee on the island knows and they are outraged and appalled. As Ayoub told me over the phone as I was writing this:

"Everything happening here at the moment on Samos from the earthquake to the fires and now this cruelty to the father whose son died says one thing to me. We are not seen as human. I am so tired from this."

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