

Crime against Humanity: The Atrocious Conditions and Treatment of Refugees on the Greek Islands

Enough! Please No More Reports Telling Us the Bleeding Obvious!

By [Chris Jones](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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This week another damning report from UNHCR on the atrocious conditions and treatment of refugees on the Greek islands. A few days earlier another about Lesbos. My computer is full of reports about refugees in Greece and on Samos. There seems no end to the flow.

We have some simple questions to ask of all those organisations and individuals who write and research these reports.

Firstly, why do you bother?

From where we are on Samos I can tell you that not one report has made any difference to the lives and well being of refugees here. Of course over the past decade there have been changes but these have been influenced mainly by the refugee flows to the island. Every month is bad it is just that some are worse than others.

We now wait for the reports that will tell us again, as they do year in and year out that winter preparations are virtually non existent and refugees are once more going to face even more intolerable conditions due to the winter weather. Be assured nothing much will happen. Just like last year and all preceding years.

Are those involved in these reports ignorant? Do they seriously believe that their work is going to make a difference when all before them have failed utterly to change things for the refugees? Surely they ought to know that their reports make no difference.

And just how much money is spent in these efforts? Money which we would argue could be much better used to improve the lives of those who are the subjects of their reports.

Secondly Why do so many reports fail to ask why nothing changes?

The failure to ask this question suggests a combination of factors all of which point to deeply rooted flaws in many of the sponsoring bodies. Is it the case that some of the organisations involved have as part of their funding agreements an obligation to churn out reports? Is this churning connected to their sense that this is what they do. Turn out reports? They may feel that this looks good and justifies their existence. That so few of the reports seem to have any follow up to assess their impact would suggest that they are not interested in whether

they make any difference.

Not often, but occasionally I look into some of these organisations behind the Reports. Delusional is the word that most commonly comes to my mind. They tell us without shame that they seek to influence key policy makers and their organisations to bring about positive change. Do they seriously expect us to accept that such people don't know what is going on in places such as Samos? As one organisation told me " we aim to bring the lived experiences of refugees and displaced people in Europe directly to policy makers themselves." Who no doubt are all ears and all too ready to act on the evidence! They also tell me of the seminars and conferences they attend to speak about their findings. And few fail to mention their intent to shape public opinion and media coverage. There is invariably a void when it comes to reporting on how their work has made life better for refugees. It is a void which speaks volumes about their ineffectiveness.

In many ways the vast majority of this activity seem to be no more than another dimension to the 'refugee business' – "there's gold in them hills". Gold which pays for their wages, flies them into Samos or Lesvos pays for their rental car and hotel and gets them back home again at the end. To stay in this business it does not pay to ask the most important questions nor even to consider that the way in which they have conceived their inquiries might be incorrect.

A Crime Against Humanity

This is what is occurring on Greece's frontier islands and beyond. It is a crime. If the refugees were horses or dogs there would be prosecutions. Key perpetrators would be at least named and identified and some punished. But when it comes to refugees, nobody ever seems to be held to account whether it is the social worker who demands sexual favours in return for a positive asylum report; the police officers who are violent and attack refugees; the doctors who give nothing more than a paracetamol tablet for every condition they confront; the hotspot manager who does nothing about the swarms of rats in the camps; the police chief responsible for the outrageously cruel detention facilities in police stations; the people responsible for arming police with tear gas and authorising its use against refugees. The list is endless. Yes, it is a system but it is not faceless. To treat it as such creates the perfect environment for the cruel and vicious to flourish with impunity. And this is what the refugees face and have faced for years now on places like Samos and elsewhere.

I was told by one organisation that they could understand my frustration that nothing has changed despite the many reports over the past decade. But it is anger not frustration that I and many on Samos feel. It is common knowledge that the situation is shit upon shit. The case has been made. We don't need or want more reports telling us.

Instead we need and demand reports that ask the right questions about why nothing changes. Where does the money go? Who makes key decisions? What are their names? We need to see people held to account for their unlawful behaviours.

Enough of this madness.

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