



## Left behind

How the world is failing women and girls on refugee family reunion



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Front cover photo: Berivan, from Aleppo, Syria, with her daughter in front of her tent in Vasilika refugee camp, 26km east of Thessaloniki, Greece. When this photo was taken (August 2016) Berivan, who is with her husband and three children, had already been in Greece for several months. Berivan was hoping to be reunited with her brother and sister who are in Germany. (Photo © Konstantinos Tsakalidis / CARE 2016)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Forced displacement due to persecution, violence, natural disasters or other causes brings trauma that the rest of us living in relative safety struggle to imagine. Loved ones are lost and families are torn apart, often ending up far from home and in foreign lands where sometimes kindness is shown, sometimes cruelty. All this impacts differently on men and women, boys and girls in ways that are often poorly understood or addressed.<sup>1</sup> Refugee women and girls face specific threats – including sexual violence and exploitation – and aid efforts often struggle to put in place basic steps for their safety or assistance, such as gender-segregated washing facilities or reproductive health-care.

Yet aid is only part of the picture. If we want to show humanity to the world's most vulnerable, then refugees also require legal protection. In the aftermath of the Second World War, governments negotiated the UN Refugee Convention to provide a framework to define the protection offered to forcibly displaced people. The legal protections provided, or not provided, to refugees also have gendered implications which are poorly understood and inconsistently addressed. To better understand a women's rights perspective on these issues, CARE International commissioned a study consisting of field research in Greece and interviews with experts and government officials in other contexts.

Our findings from Greece should constitute a wake-up call for anyone concerned about women's rights and the protection of refugees. Since 2015, when more than a million people risked their lives to try and reach Europe

seeking protection, governments have progressively introduced policies making it harder, more dangerous and more expensive to reach the European Union (EU). With the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016, thousands of refugees have been trapped on the Greek islands, where the reception conditions are unhealthy and unsafe. Nevertheless, there have been increased numbers of women arriving in Europe since 2014 and more are travelling alone, or alone with children.<sup>2</sup> These women have often been subject to various forms of violence. Overcrowding in the 'hotspots' (reception centres) means that pregnant women, single women and women with children are forced to share tents with strangers. There are no safe bathroom and toilet facilities for women, and the lack of lighting at night means that women are scared to go out after dark. NGOs have been asked to provide nappies for adult women so that they do not have to use the toilet at night. There are very few doctors, and women have little or no access to sexual and reproductive health services or psychological support.

For refugee women and girls who have reached European shores, or are trying to do so, one of the most secure pathways is refugee family reunification or reunion. Families have frequently been split up during flight for many reasons including decisions to send one family member ahead to another country, but also because of separation at borders by border guards, or as a deliberate tactic by smugglers. Over 86% of the cases facilitated by the Ecumenical Refugee Programme in

Greece of single-parent households seeking family reunification are female-headed households. Yet changes in rules regarding family reunification or a failure to implement them, and inadequate action on relocation or resettlement, have pushed more and more refugees into conditions of insecurity.

Families should in theory be able to be reunified under the Dublin III Regulation of the Common European Asylum System. But there are major obstacles for women in accessing family reunification including lack of access to legal advice and information, long waits for any response to their applications, refusal of applications on various grounds including limited definitions of a 'family', and refusal to recognise identity and marriage documents from some countries. We found evidence that European governments are consistently failing to use the discretionary clause in the Dublin III Regulation under which they can consider applications for the transfer of asylum applications on humanitarian grounds. This discretionary clause could be used to offer asylum and relocation to female survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), but in practice we found that the Greek Asylum Service is not even trying to send these applications to other EU Member States as they know they will be rejected.

Even women who had received a positive decision on their application had in many cases been waiting over six months since that decision to be allowed to buy their tickets to travel to join their family members. The long waits, with little or no information, cause extreme anxiety and stress for these women. Often, they are alone with several children to look after, and have no adequate social or psychological support. Delays in responding to family reunification applications, or negative responses, push women to seek alternative means to reach their family members and several women we spoke to had paid smugglers to help them (unsuccessfully) to move on to another Member State. These routes are expensive and risky and expose women to further dangers, which could be avoided if they were allowed to move legally.

The situation in Greece, and in Europe more generally, illustrates several key points relating to the gendered risks and lack of protection for women refugees at a global level. The vast majority of the world's refugees are in countries in the global South. In order to share the responsibility for refugee-hosting more fairly between states and to ensure a dignified life for refugees, governments must increase the safe and regular routes available so that women are not pushed into dangerous irregular journeys. This can be done by honouring commitments on resettlement and increasing the number of places offered, adopting a less narrow definition of 'the family' in facilitating family reunion, expanding

private and community sponsorship programmes, and exploring the expansion of other legal pathways such as student and work visas. National asylum systems' inconsistent approaches to gender-related persecution have also not kept pace with the nature of conflict and how sexual and gender-based violence is recognised as a strategy of warfare and a political tool. The inconsistency between attention by European governments and UN Security Council members to this under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1820 and their refugee and asylum policies is evident.

Women are not essentially or naturally 'vulnerable' but the condition of forced migration and current government policies combine to put many of them at risk. Our research in Greece, and elsewhere, was supported in significant ways by refugee and migrant women activists who have formed their own networks and community centres – such as the Melissa network in Greece – to assist, protect and empower newly-arrived refugee women. The policy question is rather what might governments in Europe, and further afield, do differently to better assist and protect women fleeing violence and persecution?

## Recommendations

1. Reaffirm the principle of family unity as a core foundation for refugee protection both in the UN Global Compact on Refugees and under other national and regional frameworks, such as the EU's Dublin III Regulation and whatever future European framework replaces it.
2. Adopt and implement more generous interpretations of 'the family' when assessing cases for refugee family reunion. This should ensure that those with links of care and dependency can qualify for family reunification even when they do not fit a more narrow definition of 'family'. In the European context, states should offer to facilitate family reunion under the Dublin III discretionary clause, including to SGBV survivors, pregnant women and single women, and the Greek authorities should submit applications on to other EU Member States on this basis.
3. Ensure systems and capacity are in place to treat all applications for refugee family reunion in a speedy and transparent manner. While the process is underway, adequate reception and accommodation conditions should be provided for all refugees, including safe spaces and accommodation for women where they can be protected from SGBV. Access to proper legal, health and social services with female interpreters should be guaranteed.
4. Recruit and train adequate numbers of gender-balanced personnel to carry out vulnerability assessments, and ensure that they seek out and appropriately address 'hidden' as well as visible forms

of vulnerability. Improving the collection of gender and sex-disaggregated data on asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons is also important to better prioritise and target assistance and protection.

5. Ensure all those working with refugees are trained on SGBV, and that comprehensive systems are established to support SGBV survivors. European states should offer to facilitate family reunion and host refugees under the Dublin III discretionary clause, including for SGBV survivors, and the Greek authorities should submit applications on to other EU Member States on this basis.
6. Open up other legal routes for refugees to reach a place of safety, such as student and work visas, and scale up global refugee resettlement efforts with criteria based on need for protection, rather than nationality, faith or other arbitrary factors.
7. Clarify and strengthen asylum decision-making as it relates to gender-based persecution, which includes rape, sexual slavery, honour crimes and trafficking. In the European context, this should include following the recommendations made by the European Parliament in 2016 for a comprehensive set of EU-wide gender guidelines in asylum-related legislation and procedures.
8. Ensure that women victims of violence are not returned to any country where their life would be at risk or where they might be subject to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment (ie, non-refoulement).
9. Support refugee women's participation in decision-making and the evaluation of policies that impact on them. Steps should include creating an enabling policy environment for women to register civil society organisations, establishing systematic and meaningful consultation and feedback on assistance and protection policies, as well as longer-term, flexible funding to finance their civil society organisations, women's 'safe space' centres and other community-based protection initiatives.



# REFUGEE FAMILY REUNION AND REUNIFICATION FROM A WOMEN'S RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

While the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol (the 'Refugee Convention') do not refer explicitly to family reunion, the principle of family unity has emerged as an important norm in global refugee policy and practice. The UNHCR Handbook sets out that as a minimum requirement a spouse and minor children of a refugee should benefit from family unity provisions where family life has been temporarily disrupted due to conflict or persecution.<sup>3</sup> As attention to gender equality and women's rights has moved on since 1951, subsequent UNHCR guidelines have also called on states to factor gender more deliberately into decision-making on asylum and refugee status.<sup>4</sup> Under the EU's policy framework, there are two ways that families can be reunited:

1. Family reunification under the Dublin III Regulation, whereby asylum seekers can be transferred to have their application considered with family members who are seeking asylum in another EU Member State, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland or Liechtenstein. Family members are defined in this case as a spouse (or unmarried partner where domestic legislation affords them equal treatment) and unmarried minor children (regardless of whether born in or out of wedlock or adopted under national law).<sup>5</sup>

There is scope under the Dublin III Regulation for EU Member States to agree to the transfer of asylum claims in cases where the family ties are not those close relationships described above. Article 16 considers cases

where a person may be dependent on extended family because of ill health, pregnancy, disability or old age. In addition, Article 17 concerns the transfer of an asylum application on humanitarian grounds. There have been strong calls for greater use of this 'discretionary' clause in order to help to reunify vulnerable asylum seekers, such as victims of sexual and gender-based violence, with their extended family members. However, as our research shows, in an overwhelming majority of cases EU Member States are enforcing the very narrow definition of family and are refusing to consider applications under these other articles.

2. Family reunion where a person recognised as a refugee in an EU Member State can apply for their family members to come and join them. Each Member State sets down its own criteria for family reunion, including the length of time for which a person has been recognised as a refugee, their income and ability to support their family.

Many Member States have refused family reunion to refugees protected under subsidiary forms of protection.

The re-cast Directives of the Common European Asylum System, which make specific reference to protection of victims of gender-related forms of persecution, insist on a gender-sensitive approach to the reception of asylum seekers and procedures for determining their claims. They also lay down criteria for assessing vulnerability of refugees, including attention to various gender-related factors, and specify that vulnerable people should be

eligible for special protection measures.<sup>6</sup> Again, as our research in Greece shows, unfortunately reality is far from the commitments made in policy.

Also when it comes to protecting and promoting women's rights in situations of forced displacement, there exists a considerable body of policy, operational guidance and standards which governments could be enforcing and implementing. In 2016's New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, 193 states agreed that protecting those who are forced to flee is a shared international responsibility which should be borne more equitably by all countries. That Declaration includes commitments to "ensure that our responses to large movements of refugees and migrants mainstream a gender perspective, promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and fully respect and protect the human rights of women and girls."<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, UNHCR guidance, the Committee for the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the 'Istanbul Convention') all call on states to be gender sensitive in assessing claims for refugee status. For example, CEDAW's executive committee issued General Recommendation No.32 (5 November 2014) which supplements the 1951 Refugee Convention by recommending that:

States parties apply a gender perspective when interpreting all five grounds [determining the reasons for persecution according to the Refugee Convention], use gender as a factor in recognising membership of a particular social group for purposes of granting refugee status under the 1951 Convention and further introduce other grounds of persecution, namely sex and/or gender, into national legislation and policies relating to refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>8</sup>





# REUNITING REFUGEE FAMILIES: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Our research in Greece uncovered evidence of how the failure amongst governments to share responsibility in refugee-hosting is having direct and very concerning impacts on refugee women and girls. The situation on the Greek islands is especially acute, where those who arrived after March 2016 are restricted under the EU-Turkey agreement. The living conditions in the so-called ‘hotspots’ (reception centres) are insecure, unhygienic and inadequate,<sup>9</sup> and have worsened in the second half of 2017 as the increased number of arrivals has led to severe overcrowding. Our research uncovered multiple accounts of single women, women with children, or pregnant women being forced to share tents with strangers. Hygiene conditions are terrible. Lighting is poor at night and there are no safe and protected toilet and bathroom facilities for women, so that for some women it is preferable to wear a nappy at night rather than to risk going out to the toilets.<sup>10</sup> These conditions clearly put women in danger of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as exposing them to risk of illness and psychological harm. Women are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, with networks of prostitution and survival sex existing in and around the hotspots.<sup>11</sup>

## Increased numbers of refugee women arriving in Europe

Women are still a minority, but do make up a significant proportion of those arriving, particularly in Greece. This brings with it new questions about the need to consider

the specific needs of women and men in the reception and integration of refugees.

### Arrivals by sea in 2017

	Men (%)	Women (%)	Children (%)
Overall	69	13	18
Greece	42	22	36
Italy	74	11	15
Spain	83	9	8

Source: UNHCR

Statistics from a pre-registration exercise carried out by the Greek government in the wake of the EU-Turkey agreement, on the composition of the population of vulnerable refugees, indicate that the majority of adults classified under this category were women.<sup>12</sup> Women also constituted the majority of single-parent households, where female-headed households outnumbered male-headed ones by 627 to 104.

It is also striking that only 17 women victims of rape or serious sexual exploitation (and 10 men) were identified, highlighting the difficulties of identifying survivors of sexual violence. Based on both global averages and the countries of origin and transit involved, it is fair to assume that the number of SGBV survivors is certainly much higher than this. However, despite global policy commitments by states and UN agencies highlighting that serious steps to address GBV in emergencies should not be held up by the wait for prevalence studies, this is yet to translate into adequate action in Greece.

## Vulnerabilities by type and gender, July 2016

Vulnerability	No. men	No. women	Total No.
Unaccompanied minors	1009	209	1218
Single parents with minor children	104	627	731
Pregnant women		522	522
Incurable or serious disease	174	174	348
Disability	209	104	313
Elderly	104	139	243
Post-traumatic disorder	39	39	78
Victim of torture	39	10	49
Rape or serious exploitation	10	17	27
Total	1688	1841	3529

Source: Hellenic Ministry of Migration Policy

It should also be noted that there is a serious problem with the non-identification of victims of trafficking. According to one of our interviewees, only five victims of trafficking were identified on the Greek islands in the whole of 2015, which must represent only a tiny proportion of those (primarily women and girls) who were affected.<sup>13</sup>

## Challenges in identifying gender-related vulnerabilities

Despite the EU being formally committed to seriously addressing gender in all policy areas,<sup>14</sup> our research uncovered that this is yet to translate adequately into the assessments of or response to refugee women's needs in Greece. Likewise, notwithstanding the regulations in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) on assessing the vulnerability of refugees and establishing special protection measures in response,<sup>15</sup> our research found that gender-sensitive procedures are not consistently in place and many asylum seekers and refugees who are 'vulnerable' are not being identified or sufficiently protected.

Our informants stressed that there were not nearly enough people to carry out the vulnerability assessments in the hotspots. This responsibility has recently been taken over by the Greek government, who have had difficulties in finding enough medical staff willing to work on the islands. Previously when the medical services were provided by Médecins du Monde there

were 15 doctors working in the Moria camp on Lesbos, for example, but now there are only five.<sup>16</sup> With medical staff responsible both for primary medical care for all the refugees and for conducting vulnerability assessments, this means that vulnerable people are waiting a long time for their assessments, and then even if found to be vulnerable may not be relocated to safer accommodation on the Greek mainland.

Our research also suggests that the CEAS definition of vulnerability is inadequate to the situation on the ground in Greece. In particular, while the list does not include single women travelling alone (without any minor children), evidence we gathered suggests that these women are in fact at particular risk of SGBV on the route and in reception facilities.<sup>17</sup>

What's more, the assessment of female refugees' vulnerability is further undermined by arbitrary political decisions on which nationalities qualify for protection. Under the EU relocation programme – a scheme agreed in September 2015 to relocate 160,000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other EU Member States – the only eligible individuals were citizens of countries for which the rate of EU granting of international refugee protection is over 75%. Initially Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis were all eligible for relocation, but in 2016 Iraqis dropped out of the eligibility criteria. This criterion excluded certain refugees, including women and girls, on the basis of their nationality and is blind to their individual vulnerabilities and needs.

## Implications for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence

In theory survivors of SGBV are amongst those classified as 'vulnerable' and so should be eligible to be moved to the mainland, and preferably to urban locations, yet often this does not happen.<sup>18</sup> The problems of reporting SGBV for all women are well-known, and these are even more marked for women in the Greek 'hotspots', who often do not speak Greek or English, and have no idea who to turn to in order to report violence.

The European Council on Refugees and Exile points out that currently in the hotspots "vulnerabilities are not sufficiently identified either because time does not allow, or the appropriate tools are either not in place or not used". They also highlight that vulnerability to trafficking is not taken into account in these assessments.<sup>19</sup> According to figures from MSF, only a third of the SGBV survivors that they worked with in Lesbos had been officially identified as 'vulnerable'.<sup>20</sup>

Melissa, a migrant women's organisation based in Athens, told us that they see many survivors of SGBV but these women are finding it hard to get information and

access the services that they need. Women, they said, do not necessarily trust the Greek authorities or NGOs and therefore will not go and report incidences of SGBV.<sup>21</sup> This lack of support for women survivors, who are often coping also with looking after young children, means that in many cases they will go back to their abusive partner because of a lack of alternatives.

The Greek General Secretary for Gender Equality has developed a protocol with other Ministries for the management of SGBV cases, but it has no mechanism in place for monitoring, and so implementation remains inconsistent. When women experience SGBV within a camp, an NGO can make efforts to move them to a safe location, but this requires a referral form signed by the camp manager. Some camp managers prefer to turn a blind eye to cases of SGBV, whilst others get involved and position themselves as case managers, a role for which they are not trained. And as camp managers are often men, this is highly problematic for the women involved. A constant theme of our interviews was a real lack of confidentiality for women who report SGBV.

According to the protocol, women who experience SGBV should be placed in one of the 40 existing women's shelters across Greece run by local municipalities. The availability of places in the shelters depends on the municipality where they are located, and some are more or less welcoming to refugee women. In some cases there are no interpreters. Refugee women also find it hard to be sent to shelters far away from Athens and thus far from any support networks that they may have established.

## Family separation and family reunification – a gendered challenge

Greece hosts a large number of refugees wishing to reunite with family in other Member States, and the majority of these are women. Statistics from one NGO, based on around 2,000 claims which they are supporting, show that 86.5% of the cases of single-parent households seeking family reunification are female-headed households.<sup>22</sup>

Our research found that there are many reasons why families are separated. In some cases, one family member will go ahead of the others because there is not enough money to pay a smuggler for the whole family's passage, or because they decide that only one person should take the risk of an irregular journey. On other occasions families are split up during the journey, whilst crossing borders.

Generally, it is the male members of the family who have made the journey onwards to a new destination country, which can present its own challenges, whilst the women

and younger children are left behind in Greece. Women are left behind to negotiate the official and legal processes necessary to gain family reunification, often whilst also caring for children or elderly parents.<sup>23</sup> In some cases, because the wait for reunification is so long and the process so complicated, these women will also undertake risky and irregular journeys themselves in order to try and re-join their male family members. Over half the women we talked to had been waiting more than one year. Waiting alone without their male family members, these women feel scared and insecure. As one young woman explained: "We are used to having a man to protect us. When you have a man in your family you feel safer."<sup>24</sup>

## Barriers to family reunion and reunification

Barriers to family reunification include lack of information and legal support. One Syrian woman told us about how she had been living in a camp in central Greece and had to travel to Thessaloniki to make an application to join her husband in Germany. She spoke neither Greek nor English, and was unsure about the process and what papers she needed to submit. This woman later moved to Athens and was at the time of the interview being helped by an NGO which was providing her with legal assistance. But many other women who are not fortunate enough to be supported by an NGO may have no legal support in making their claim.

A representative of PRAKSIS told us that when their lawyer first meets some of the women and examines their files, there are frequently mistakes in the applications which they have submitted on their own to the asylum office and which could jeopardise the success of their application.<sup>25</sup> A lack of information also means that women who could apply for family reunion through a consulate or embassy do not do so and are pushed into the family reunification process instead.

## Delays in processing family reunification requests

Lawyers working with PRAKSIS, a partner of CARE International, estimate the average waiting time to be around 15 months. The causes of the delays in responses to family reunification requests lie both with the over-loading of the Greek Asylum Service and with the slow responses of other Member States. The Greek Asylum Service has between January and November 2017 submitted 7,692 outgoing requests for family reunification under the Dublin III Regulation, a massive increase on the 299 requests submitted in 2013.

Interviewees from various agencies noted that EU Member States do not apply transparent or open criteria

to assessing family reunification applications and reported that they do not believe that these states are living up to their commitments to family reunification. A representative of the Greek Asylum Service spoke quite frankly to us about their frustration with this situation and called on other EU Member States to fulfil their obligations to family reunification under the Dublin Regulation as part of a fairer sharing of responsibility within the EU.

All of the interviewees talked about the negative effects of the wait, and of having no information about the progress of the application for many months or even years. Some of the women we met did not like to go out of their apartments, and stayed trapped inside with their children. This isolation at home only exacerbates their fragile mental health.

A Bedouin woman from Kuwait, who had been waiting over a year to try and join her husband in the UK, told us that she stayed at home in her apartment all day with five of her six children. Only one child, her oldest boy, was currently attending school.

A Somali woman told us she had been waiting 10 months to hear about the result of her application to join her husband in the UK. She was clearly under a lot of strain waiting for the result of her application whilst trying to care for her three-year-old daughter: "I have to be a mother and a father to my child. I am often afraid, but there is no one to help me." Whilst waiting the women have no way of gaining information about the status of their application, and are thus left in limbo, not sure about how to plan for their future.

G, a Syrian woman, is living in Athens with her four children aged 15, 13, 9 and 6. Since arriving in Greece she has been moved from one camp to another before finally being housed in an apartment in Athens. She has been waiting over a year to hear about her application for family reunification with her husband in Germany. She expresses the despair and anxiety felt by so many women: "Please somebody help me to go soon. Please do something. We've been separated for three years now. My son is ill with epilepsy. My children miss their father and every woman wants to be with her husband."

## Delays and obstacles drive women to attempt irregular journeys

The length of the wait for decisions can mean that women decide not to wait and to proceed on their own to try and reach family members located elsewhere in Europe, thus pushing them into irregular and dangerous journeys.

B, a 17-year-old Afghan woman, explained how she had turned to smugglers to help her reach her brothers in Germany when she and her mother had been waiting for over a year with no response to their application. B decided to pay a smuggler to get her to Germany, but both her attempts, once to cross the Macedonian border on foot and once to smuggle herself onto a ship, have failed. "I just want to be with my brothers. I would do anything to be with them," she says. B's desperation has pushed her into dangerous situations, but she feels unsafe staying in Greece alone with her mother, and doesn't believe that she has any future there.

## Narrow interpretations of 'the family' keeping families apart

Women we met had been refused family reunification because the family member that they were trying to join did not meet the strict definition of 'family' imposed by EU Member States, such as a mother and daughters trying to reunite with their son/brother who was over the age of 18, or an elderly woman trying to reunite with her adult brother.

Others were refused because the papers they provided to support their claim were not judged adequate – such as the case of a Somali woman whose marriage certificate was not judged authentic and so her application to reunite with her husband in Norway was refused. This refusal to believe in the validity of 'traditional' or 'customary' marriage documents is frequent and reflects a wider problem for women who may have fewer official identification and registration documents than men. As one of our interviewees pointed out, women from some countries often do not even have official birth certificates which are recognised during the asylum process. Women's lack of official documentation and identification may prove a real barrier to their ability to access refugee protection.<sup>29</sup>

## Failure to implement the 'discretionary clause' under Dublin

We also found that the discretionary clause in the Dublin Regulation is not being used, and that women who could qualify on humanitarian grounds were still being refused family reunification.

For example, one Syrian woman had been forced to watch her husband and children being beheaded by an armed group inside Syria. Her daughter's head was given to her in a bag. Alone and suffering from severe trauma, she had managed to reach Greece and was now trying

to join her adult brother in Germany. An NGO providing support to her informed us that her application for family reunification was refused despite her clearly vulnerable status because she and her brother were both adults and thus did not meet the definition of 'family' (in addition, German policy also does not currently offer reunion opportunities to siblings).<sup>30</sup>

When we asked NGOs and the Greek Asylum Service about the use of this discretionary clause in the Dublin Regulation, there was a general agreement that it was not being used at all by any Member States. The Greek Asylum Service told us that they do not send any requests for family reunification under this clause because they would not be accepted.

F is from Somalia. She left the country when her father tried to force her into marriage with a much older man, and fled to Syria where she lived with her aunt for several years. Whilst in Syria she met and married a Somali man who is now a refugee in Norway. With the onset of the war in Syria, F's aunt returned to Somalia, but as she was scared about the consequences of going back to her family there, she left Syria with two other Somali women friends, and travelled to Turkey. She considered applying for family reunification with her husband whilst in Turkey, but was told that the procedure would be very long, and therefore decided it was better to take the risk and travel on to Greece with a smuggler. Her husband sent money to Greece for F to pay for a smuggler and false papers to try and get her to Norway, but each time she went to the airport to try and board a flight she was turned away because the airline did not trust her passport. In the meantime, she became pregnant and decided to go to the Greek Asylum Service and to apply officially for family reunification. F now has a seven-month-old baby, but her application for family reunification to Norway has been refused because the Norwegian authorities will not accept that her marriage certificate is genuine. After the refusal of family reunification, she applied for asylum in Greece, but this was also refused, even though she told the asylum official about her fears regarding her situation having run away from a forced marriage and the danger she would be in if returned to Somalia. She is living alone in Greece with her baby, and now pregnant again, scared and unsure about her future: "I don't know what to do. The lawyer says I can't do anything. I have no idea about my future."

## Delays in reunification processes

Even once a positive response is received, there are very long waits for women to get their tickets to travel to join their family. For several months of 2017, reports suggest that Germany restricted the number of people allowed to travel to 70 per month.<sup>31</sup> Although this limit has now been lifted, there is a long backlog of families who have received positive responses to their reunification applications, but who are still waiting to get permission to buy their tickets to travel. One young Afghan woman waiting with her mother to be reunited with her two brothers in Germany told us that she had received a positive response to her reunification request over seven months ago, but had been waiting for the Greek Asylum Service to give her the permission document needed in order to be able to buy her ticket: "We have been back again and again to ask, and each time they say that we will get the permission next month, but now we have been waiting seven months. They should not make us wait so long."<sup>32</sup>

X, an 18-year-old Afghan woman, is living in Athens with her mother, her 16-year-old sister and her 4-year-old daughter. She was forced to leave her home in Iran following a violent dispute with her husband, and crossed the Turkish border by foot carrying her daughter across the mountains, through the snow with no food or drink for 12 hours. The family tried to cross the border from Iran to Turkey twice, the first time the police hit them, took their money and sent them back. After one month in Turkey and on their third try, the family managed to reach Greece and spent nine months in a refugee centre in Kos where they were living with many single men and were scared of the regular fights that broke out. Supported by the UNHCR because of their vulnerable situation, they were finally transferred to the Greek mainland and were given a flat in Athens. X has a 17-year-old brother who has been in Sweden for three years, and the family are desperate to join him there. However, their case has been held up because the Swedish authorities are subjecting the brother to a bone scan to verify that he is really 17. If the results of the scan show that he is over 18 then the family's claim for reunification will be rejected. The family have been waiting for 18 months to try and join their brother in Sweden. They have nothing to occupy them while they wait, and X has not managed to find a place at school for her daughter. As she says: "I don't know anything about my future. I am angry and stressed. I feel alone and abandoned with my daughter."

*Continued overleaf*

X's case shows multiple criteria of vulnerability – a single mother, victim of SGBV, and caring for her dependent mother and younger sister. And yet the strict rules concerning the need to prove her brother's age have held up her application for family reunification.

Families are split up during forced migration for many reasons, including border guards letting only some family members through, or smugglers deliberately separating families. There is a suspicion, however, amongst EU Member States that families are deliberately sending their minor children ahead of them with smugglers in order to try and facilitate or speed up the family's quest to reach a certain destination. These suspicions mean that states are reluctant to reunify parents with minor children as quickly as possible, as this might be seen as an incentive for other parents to send their children ahead of them.

We heard of several cases where parents had been separated from a child (sometimes as young as five) and were waiting for long periods to be reunited with that child. As one lawyer explained, the asylum service in the receiving state will argue that the parents have neglected their duty in allowing their child to travel alone, and thus they are not 'fit' parents and it is in the child's best interests to remain in the care of the state.<sup>33</sup> This stance obviously does not take into consideration the multiple reasons for family separation, including the traumatic experiences that both parents and children might have been subjected to, nor the despair caused to parents who cannot be reunited with their children. One Syrian woman we met had a 10-year-old son who had travelled alone to Germany with smugglers. She told us that her son had left on his own without consulting her. "When I thought I had lost him I wanted to die," she said. The woman was delighted and relieved when she finally got news from her son safely in Germany, but remained anxious and frustrated that it was taking so long for her to be able to join him there.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the women we met for this study could in fact have applied for family reunion as they had a close family member who had been recognised as a refugee by another Member State. However, there seemed to be a severe lack of knowledge of this possibility, and also barriers in that to apply for family reunion a woman needs to be able to go to the embassy of the country she wishes to apply to. A Bedouin woman from Kuwait had a husband who had been recognised as a refugee in the UK and so should have been able to apply for family reunion to join him. However, she did not have enough information about this process, and had not been able to get to a British embassy anywhere along her route. She had thus gone through the process of applying for family

reunification but had been waiting over a year for an answer to her application.

There are currently concerns that under the Joint Action Plan for the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, Greek national law is being modified to enable the return of refugees to Turkey even when they have applied for family reunification.<sup>35</sup> Several interviewees raised concerns that this would mean that refugees would be expected to apply for family reunification either from Turkey, or even in Turkey. This would pose very grave problems for the women we spoke to, who had travelled through Turkey to reach Greece and had found that the conditions in the country were dangerous, especially for women travelling alone.

## Criminalisation and detention of female refugees

In the absence of safe and legal routes, such as family reunion, refugee women and girls have been forced to undertake irregular journeys to rejoin their family. Our research in Greece, and wider experience, highlights the worrying trend towards the criminalisation of refugees that find their own way, often by engaging with smugglers. For women, this leaves them even more at risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation, and means that if they become victims of sexual exploitation or of SGBV then they will be even more reluctant to report this because of their lack of legal status and fears of detention or deportation.

Those who have not been admitted as eligible to apply for asylum in Greece, or for family reunification or other legal pathways to move onto other EU member states, remain in Greece with no regular status and are thus at risk of detention. The conditions in detention have been described as dirty and overcrowded. According to a research paper published in 2016, "Detainees find it difficult to access decent healthcare or legal advice. Women and men are often mixed, when they should be kept separate, and children are held alongside adults."<sup>36</sup> Women we met, such as S (see next page), described the harsh detention conditions that they had experienced.

## Other safe and legal routes for women

Many of the young women who we met in Greece had been studying or were hoping to take up their studies. More flexibility and openness in granting student visas to young women such as these would help them safely and legally travel to another country, and also be an important first step in integration in that country. Allowing refugees to study and gain qualifications will better equip them for finding a job and making a contribution to host societies as well as promoting their own integration and independence.

S, a Somali woman, was detained after her one-month permit to stay in Greece and submit an asylum claim expired. "I was in detention for two months but it felt like two years," she said. She explained that the authorities deliberately put her in a cell with women who did not speak Arabic so that she had no one to talk to. There were only two toilets for all the detainees, and women were allowed out of their cells for only two hours a day to use the bathroom and toilet facilities. This meant that often the queues were so long that she was returned to her cell without having had the chance to use the toilet. Food was pushed through the door without any human contact. S finally managed to find a lawyer and an interpreter who got her released from detention after she had paid them over 500 euros.

A similar argument can be made for granting more work visas to women refugees and taking greater steps to recognise their qualifications and skills. A study from Australia, for example, shows that women refugees have far more difficulty in finding work than men,<sup>37</sup> and part of this is non-recognition of skills and qualifications. Helping women to enter with work visas and to integrate into the labour market would be a benefit both for host societies and for the women who would gain economic independence.

As the earlier section on assessment of gender-related vulnerabilities highlighted, there is simply not enough capacity in place in Greece to effectively identify SGBV survivors or respond to their needs for protection and assistance. This is compounded by how the EU lacks a coherent approach to gender-based persecution and whether and how this qualifies individuals for asylum or not. Our research very much backs the findings of analysis commissioned by UN Women, which revealed how European, and wider global, legal frameworks on refugee protection have not kept pace with the nature of conflict and the tactics used by fighting parties to persecute and terrorise populations.<sup>38</sup> A significant proportion of women refugees in Greece have fled wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan where sexual slavery, early and forced marriage, honour crimes and trafficking have emerged as tactics in the conflict linked to the political and social agendas of fighting parties. The Refugee Convention requires that successful asylum applicants not only demonstrate that they have a well-founded fear of persecution, but also that this is on account of their belonging to a protected group. These groups and the grounds for asylum are defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention as race, religion, nationality, social grouping or political beliefs:

Women and girls are not always recognised as such a group. Judges have too often claimed, when reviewing gender-based asylum applications, that women who survived sexual violence had problems in 'the personal sphere' and therefore do not require international protection. Women may also face inherent biases of decision makers who make subjective credibility assessments.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, on 8 March 2016, the European Parliament issued a resolution highlighting the "great degree of gender inequality for asylum seekers across the European Union" and that "women and LGBTI people are subject to specific forms of gender-based persecution, which is still too often not recognised in asylum procedures."<sup>40</sup>

The irony of this situation is that it is European governments, including the UK and other UN Security Council members, that have been amongst the most active supporters of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1820 and its successor resolutions aimed at recognising and addressing the political and security nature of sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. According to UNSCR 1820:

Women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group.

Efforts under UNSCR 1820 have centred largely on tackling impunity for conflict-related sexual violence, and there has been important momentum, through the Call To Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, on better integrating GBV into humanitarian aid responses. Integrating GBV into the asylum system and legal protection afforded to women is the blind-spot.

## Implications for sexual and reproductive health

The specific health needs of women refugees, and in particular their sexual and reproductive health needs, are not being met. Many women arrive in Greece pregnant, or become pregnant whilst they are in camps or temporary accommodation. Pregnancy may be wanted, but may also occur as a result of SGBV, or because women feel pressured to travel with male refugees in order to gain protection. Women have little access to contraception. As mentioned above, transfer of pregnant women from the hotspots does not always happen in a timely fashion. We were told that there is a real problem with access to emergency contraception for all women, including those who have experienced rape. Pregnant women do have access to the Greek medical services and deliver their babies in Greek hospitals, but there is the

constant problem of lack of interpreters as is the case with access to all public services. NGOs are working to address this problem. CARE and PRAKSIS, for example, provide interpreters to accompany women to their appointment, while AMURTEL provides ante-natal and post-natal care services. But this is still a significantly under-resourced area.

## Refugee women activism and community-based protection

In the absence of adequate preparedness or response by government institutions across Europe, civil society and voluntary activists have stepped up. Women activists and women's rights associations interviewed for this study consistently raised the issue of the way in which there are not sufficient safe spaces for women to access assistance or protection, or for them to express their needs or feed into the design or monitoring of the crisis response. Within the camps both on the islands and on the mainland, there has been no consistent, structured approach to facilitate consultations with refugee women and girls. Decisions are often taken for family groups, and the head of the family is assumed to be the man. Similarly, there is not sufficient provision for women to be able to learn Greek (or another language if they are hoping to move on to another destination country), or support for them to form community support groups and networks.

One 'woman friendly' centre in Athens, organised by the Melissa Network of Migrant Women in Greece, provides an example of good practice – a centre run by women for women, and which gives refugee women the opportunity to get support on a number of issues, including health, parenting, legal advice, as well as learning Greek and engaging in cultural and arts projects. The women who benefit from this space clearly appreciate the support and feeling of community and safety that it provides them in their otherwise very insecure circumstances. Yet its scale remains small in the national context and short-term humanitarian funding to the crisis response has failed to translate into sustained investment in similar spaces elsewhere. As one young Afghan woman explained:

Melissa is the first place I have found that is only for women. I feel comfortable here. We need more spaces that are for women only. Sometimes when you are mixed with the men and boys they are aggressive, and we can't say anything.

Importantly, refugee women-led networks and activism go beyond protection to also address dignity, empowerment and agency. For example, the Melissa Network supports women that experience both intimate

partner violence and other forms of vulnerability not only with access to services, but also wider follow-up and ongoing support. Informants suggested that, in the absence of this kind of sustained and comprehensive support, GBV survivors often return to the perpetrators of violence. In the words of Dr Nadina Christopoulou, an anthropologist and cofounder of the Melissa Network:

Places like ours are not just providing a safe space for women, but a more fully-fledged approach addressing both women's vulnerabilities as well as their potential in becoming fully-engaged social actors. This goes beyond mere services and is dependent on trust-building and community-building.

## A failure of responsibility-sharing and a strategy of refugee containment

It is true, I am not Syrian, but do I not have a right to live? Is the blood of others different from the blood of an Afghan? No, people of the world, an Afghan also bleeds red. But unfortunately, today the European Union discriminates against us. They have recognised difference between peoples, have determined that others are worthy of their humanity, and have lowered the value of an Afghan life. Politics determines who is offered a safe place to go, not their needs. In this big, wide world, is there no place for us? Can we not find a place to live together so that we have peace of mind, are far from war, bloodshed, discrimination, and disrespect?  
– Marzia, age 16<sup>41</sup>

The suffering and rights violations experienced by refugee women and girls in Greece is a direct consequence of the failure by European governments to share responsibility in hosting them, and the trend towards wider 'Fortress Europe' policies. It is within this broader picture that the obstacles and delays faced in accessing refugee family reunion need to be understood.

Since the EU-Turkey agreement, inadequate progress has been made by other EU Member States in sharing the responsibility with Greece to host refugees that reached European shores. In September 2015, the EU agreed a scheme to relocate 160,000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other Member States to try and share responsibility for refugee-hosting.<sup>42</sup> Yet in practice, the numbers of refugees relocated under the scheme remains well below targets. As of November 2017, only 31,779 refugees had been relocated.<sup>43</sup>

Wider European policies on development cooperation and foreign policy have also become dominated by migration management and border control, as formalised by the EU Migration Partnership Communication launched in



June 2016. As a result, vast amounts of EU development funding have been redirected to migration control objectives in countries of origin and transit countries of migrants, instead of using it for its original purpose: sustainable development, poverty eradication, reducing inequality and human rights. In Niger, for example, civil society activists have raised concerns over how allocations of funding under the Africa Trust Fund appear very much driven by border control and management objectives, which risks pushing refugees and migrants into ever more dangerous routes. Closing off shorter routes from Agadez results in people taking longer, more dangerous journeys, such as from Tahoua, which has led to deaths from dehydration in the desert. Furthermore, these strategies may hamper freedom of movement and labour force mobility within the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) region, as Niger has a significant rural workforce that travels to Côte d'Ivoire, Algeria and Libya on a seasonal basis. Another example is Afghanistan, to which the EU is a significant donor, but which has also agreed on the 'Joint Way Forward' which entails forced repatriation of over 80,000 Afghans from Europe to Afghanistan, regardless of the fact that the conflict has reached new heights and that there are serious and legitimate concerns over the safety of those returned.

A range of informants also raised concerns over the implications of Brexit for how the UK will, or will not, contribute to responsibility-sharing on refugee hosting. When Prime Minister Theresa May announced her Brexit plans, she stated: "I want us to be a truly Global Britain – the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe too."<sup>44</sup> Yet in this speech, refugees were noticeably absent, while the question of migrants from within Europe was specifically discussed. The UK opted not to join the EU relocation scheme and the nature of future cooperation with its 'European partners' on refugee protection remains unclear.

However, there have also been some beacons of light in an otherwise dark picture. The German government's policy was highlighted by numerous informants as an important and principled one, notwithstanding subsequent wavering and questions over its ways forward. Germany has received over one million refugees over the past three years and increasing numbers of these have integrated into the labour market.<sup>45</sup> As one refugee activist put it to us:

What difference might it make if other European governments showed the same generosity as Germany and also solidarity with them? Perhaps then Angela Merkel and those supportive of integrating refugees in Germany might have an easier time with those opposed to this.

On 12 October 2017, the European Parliament voted for a plan to increase the number of refugees resettled in Europe on a humanitarian basis. MEPs called on governments to take a much larger share of those refugees in need of resettlement. The Civil Liberties Committee argued that the EU should take 20% of the global total of those eligible for resettlement according to the UNHCR's Global Resettlement Needs assessment, which in 2017 would amount to around 250,000 people. They also highlighted that resettlement should be used as a humanitarian tool for refugee protection, and not as a bargaining tool with third countries.<sup>46</sup>



# A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON SAFE AND LEGAL ROUTES FOR REFUGEES AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Right now, I'm here alone. My younger brother was here in Sudan, but now he got smuggled to the UK. The other one moved to Juba [South Sudan]. The rest of my family members live in Eritrea. I have nine people in my family, five brothers and four sisters. But I am alone.

– A young Eritrean refugee in Sudan<sup>47</sup>

This European trend towards eroding safe and legal routes for refugees, including refugee family reunion, and thereby criminalising refugees who attempt irregular journeys, reflects an ugly global trend.

In the United States context, the Trump administration has significantly reduced the cap on the number of refugees to be resettled in the United States, from 110,000 to 45,000 in 2017, and framed the shift in terms of reducing risk to the safety and security of US citizens. The Travel Ban Executive Order further acts as a barrier to deny entry for nationals from eight countries, including the family members of refugees who are already in the United States.

The extreme negative effects of criminalisation of irregular arrival can also be seen in the Australian case, where refugees arriving by boat were confined in offshore detention centres in Nauru and Manus. Reports from Nauru exposed the appalling levels of SGBV and sexual exploitation against women and children that occurred there.<sup>48</sup> Informants in our research repeatedly raised the question of what this shift represented in terms of these states' shift away from values of

humanity, charity and generosity towards those of xenophobia, cruelty and isolationism.

Several interviewees pointed to the example of Canada as one which could be used as a model for other countries in the global North. The combination of a government resettlement quota and a private sponsorship scheme has allowed Canada to take in a larger number of refugees than many other countries. At the same time, the programme implies a comprehensive package of integration so that those who are resettled have access to the necessary services, language learning and livelihood opportunities. This is vital for women, who need tailored services to respond to their specific needs, for example, childcare whilst they attend language classes or other training, and recognition of their skills and qualifications. The use of private or community sponsorship schemes, if these are properly organised and monitored, should be encouraged to complement (but not to replace) the number of government resettlement places.

At a global level, resettlement could be a means to prioritise the protection of those women refugees who are in situations of vulnerability or risk. Candidates for resettlement are identified by UNHCR and its partners according to vulnerability and protection criteria including legal and physical protection needs, survivors of torture and violence, women and girls at risk, children and youth at risk, elderly refugees, medical needs, family reunification, and lack of foreseeable durable solutions. UNHCR commits to submit at least 10% of refugees

under the 'women and girls at risk' criteria on a yearly basis, and this figure is supplemented by women who are resettled under the category of survivors of SGBV.<sup>49</sup> Currently only a very small percentage of refugees are resettled. In 2016, UNHCR sent just 125,600 refugees for resettlement. There is thus a huge potential for ensuring greater protection and security through massively increasing the number of resettlement places available. UNHCR has identified close to 1.2 million refugees in 63 countries in need of resettlement for 2018.<sup>50</sup>

UNHCR told us that one of the problems they face is keeping up-to-date data on refugees who have been registered with them to ensure that those who are in a vulnerable situation are prioritised.<sup>51</sup> They are working with partner NGOs in different countries to train and support them in identifying and updating data on vulnerable refugees who are candidates for resettlement. States should provide greater support for UNHCR and its partners in this data collection to prioritise those most in need of resettlement.

The process of resettlement also needs to take into account the needs of the refugee in the country of destination. It is vital not to transfer a person from one situation of vulnerability into another, and to ensure that their specific needs will be met. This is not always the case, and some women who are survivors of SGBV, for example, have been resettled in locations where there were no suitable psychosocial support services. Ideally there should be a continuity of information and integration of services along the resettlement pathways.

Offering a regular path to a place of safety – including expanding and accelerating family reunion opportunities – would prevent women facing the dangers involved in irregular routes, and also help to regulate who is arriving in a country and to plan effective reception and integration programmes for them. As the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, François Crépeau, has argued, states should aim to “take over the mobility market from smugglers”, rather than seeking to curtail it.<sup>52</sup> Helping refugees to enter a country legally to study, work or reunite with family is a way of fostering regular migration and better integration of these refugees.

Several informants in our research highlighted how the trend towards a 'Fortress Europe' approach is implicated in a wider loss of faith in European political institutions, co-operation and the European Union itself. As one refugee woman activist in Greece put it to us:

If European governments won't support each other hosting the refugees, and they're willing to sell out on the human rights which are supposed to be the foundation of the EU, then what does this tell us about the future of politics in Europe? It scares me.



## CONCLUSIONS

The failure amongst states to share responsibilities in hosting refugees impacts on displaced women and girls in serious ways. As part of this, governments have eroded the safe and legal routes available for refugees, which has gendered impacts. Women and girls are left stranded in unsafe conditions, unable to rejoin family who could offer them shelter. Protection for survivors of gender-based violence is inconsistent at best under asylum and refugee policy and practice. Indeed, the criminalisation of irregular journeys by refugees makes displaced women ever more at risk of exploitation and abuse by traffickers and unscrupulous officials.

While several European political leaders, including the British Prime Minister Theresa May,<sup>53</sup> have highlighted their government's generosity on humanitarian funding, including to GBV survivors, our research reveals how it cannot be an either/or: aid instead of protection. Treating refugees with humanity requires both assistance and legal safeguards. Likewise, it is disingenuous for governments to condemn people-smugglers and human-traffickers whilst they simultaneously close down safe and legal routes for refugees to reach a place of safety.

While others have rightly highlighted the importance of refugee family reunification and reunion for children,<sup>54</sup> our research in Greece shines a light on its neglected and gendered implications for women. The right to family life is vital for refugees and living with their family can reduce issues of stress and illness and help them to integrate better into host societies. Enabling extended family and care-givers to be united with their

families can help to reduce the burden on state care facilities. Separation and the long and difficult processes of reunification or reunion can be particularly difficult for women who may be left alone to cope with children and elderly relatives. It is thus vital for all countries to facilitate family reunification and reunion and to make sure that refugees understand and have access to legal procedures necessary to undertake these processes. Yet in practice, asylum seekers and refugees are facing difficulty in accessing family reunification/reunion because:

- A restrictive definition of 'family' means that adult children and siblings, members of extended families, care-givers, families formed during displacement, are excluded from the reunification criteria.
- Even for those who meet the criteria, lack of access to information and to legal assistance is a real barrier to a successful application.
- Thousands of refugees are waiting for many months or years for their applications for family reunification to be processed, which adds to the stress and anxiety that they experience.

We urge all politicians of all political persuasions and all governments – both in Europe and further afield – to ask themselves what they would want for their own families, were they to suffer the trauma of forced displacement? If they themselves, or their mothers, sisters or daughters were to be subject to the kinds of indignity, lack of

safety, inadequate assistance and protection experienced by refugee women and girls who have made their way to Greece, or indeed in other contexts affected by the refugee crisis, how would they feel? And we ask them to consider demonstrating the same empathy, humanity and solidarity that they would surely feel for their own family, with those from another family, another home, another country.

## Notes

- 1 For example, for an analysis of the specific impacts of displacement for unaccompanied adolescent boys and men, see CARE International and Promundo (2017) *Men and boys in displacement: Assistance and protection challenges for men and boys in refugee contexts*
- 2 [www.unhcr.org/admin/hcspeeches/56dec2e99/women-refugees-asylum-seekers-european-union-ceremony-mark-international.html](http://www.unhcr.org/admin/hcspeeches/56dec2e99/women-refugees-asylum-seekers-european-union-ceremony-mark-international.html)
- 3 UNHCR Handbook Chapter VI, paragraphs 181-188, [www.unhcr.org/4d93528a9.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/4d93528a9.pdf)
- 4 [www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/legal/3d58ddef4/guidelines-international-protection-1-gender-related-persecution-context.html](http://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/legal/3d58ddef4/guidelines-international-protection-1-gender-related-persecution-context.html)
- 5 [www.refworld.org/pdfid/58b014c94.pdf](http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/58b014c94.pdf)
- 6 Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection
- 7 See [www.unhcr.org/uk/new-york-declaration-for-refugees-and-migrants](http://www.unhcr.org/uk/new-york-declaration-for-refugees-and-migrants)
- 8 See [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Recommendations.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Recommendations.aspx)
- 9 Amnesty International, 7 April 2016, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/04/greece-refugees-detained-in-dire-conditions-amid-rush-to-implement-eu-turkey-deal/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/04/greece-refugees-detained-in-dire-conditions-amid-rush-to-implement-eu-turkey-deal/)  
Human Rights Watch, 19 May 2016, [www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/19/greece-refugee-hotspots-unsafe-unsanitary](http://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/19/greece-refugee-hotspots-unsafe-unsanitary)  
Save the Children, 20 September 2016, [www.savethechildren.net/article/aid-organisation-calls-urgent-action-after-fire-moria-detention-centre-lesvos](http://www.savethechildren.net/article/aid-organisation-calls-urgent-action-after-fire-moria-detention-centre-lesvos)
- 10 Interviews, 2 and 3 November 2017
- 11 Interviews, 2 and 3 November 2017
- 12 Data from the exercise is available from the website of the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Migration Policy. It should be noted that unaccompanied men and boys also constitute a significant vulnerable category, as described in CARE International and Promundo (2017), *Ibid*
- 13 Interview, 7 November 2017
- 14 EU Gender Equality Action Plan 2016-2020
- 15 Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection
- 16 Interview, November 2017
- 17 Women's Refugee Commission (2016) *No safety for women on the European route*
- 18 Women who have moved out of the camps into apartments in urban settings report finding this accommodation more secure and more conducive to living more normal lives, cooking for themselves and their families, and having proper hygiene facilities. Many of our respondents underlined the desirability of moving as many refugees as possible, and especially women and families, out of camps and into this type of accommodation in urban settings.
- 19 ECRE (2016) *The implementation of the hotspots in Italy and Greece*
- 20 MSF (2017) *Confronting the mental health emergency on Samos and Lesbos*
- 21 Interview, 1 November 2017
- 22 Figures provided by Ecumenical Refugee Programme of the Church of Greece
- 23 A study by the British Red Cross found that the majority of sponsors in family reunion cases were men, and 95% of the applicants were women and children: British Red Cross (2015) *Not so straightforward*
- 24 Interview, 1 November 2017
- 25 Interview, 7 November 2017
- 26 Source: Hellenic Republic Ministry of Migration Policy
- 27 Interview, 8 November 2017
- 28 Interview, 9 November 2017
- 29 Interview, 3 November 2017
- 30 This woman's case was relayed to us by an NGO working with refugee women
- 31 [www.dw.com/en/germany-limits-refugee-family-unification-for-those-arriving-from-greece/a-38898465](http://www.dw.com/en/germany-limits-refugee-family-unification-for-those-arriving-from-greece/a-38898465)
- 32 Interview, 1 November 2017
- 33 Interview, 8 November 2017
- 34 Interview, 7 November 2017
- 35 European Commission (2016) *Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement*
- 36 Bosworth M, Fili A, Pickering S (2016) 'Women's immigration detention in Greece: Gender, control and capacity' in Guia M, Koulis R, Mitsilegas V (eds) *Immigration detention, risk and human rights*
- 37 [www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/11/08/refugee-employment-australia-juggling-dreams-and-reality](http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/11/08/refugee-employment-australia-juggling-dreams-and-reality)
- 38 <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/03/report-on-the-legal-rights-of-women-and-girl-asylum-seekers-in-the-european-union>
- 39 <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/03/report-on-the-legal-rights-of-women-and-girl-asylum-seekers-in-the-european-union>
- 40 European Parliament resolution of 8 March 2016 on the situation of women refugees and asylum seekers in the EU (2015/2325(INI))
- 41 <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/development-blog/an-afghan-refugee-girl-s-message-for-european-heads-of-state-we-have-been-spun-around-aimlessly-by-europe>
- 42 Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece
- 43 European Commission (2017) *Communication on the delivery of the European Agenda on Migration*
- 44 [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech)

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**PHOTOS**

- p1, Berivan, from Aleppo, Syria, and her daughter, at Vasilika refugee camp, Greece © Konstantinos Tsakalidis / CARE 2016
- p4, Amina, from Afghanistan, and three of her children at the Adasevci refugee camp in Serbia; her husband and another son are in Germany © Toby Madden / CARE 2016
- p7, Two Yazidi refugee women who had fled persecution in Iraq at the Presevo refugee camp in Serbia © Toby Madden / CARE 2016
- p9, A refugee woman at a clothing distribution at Belgrade refugee centre, Serbia © Toby Madden / CARE 2016
- p18, Tuba Haqyar, from Afghanistan, at the Elefsina refugee camp near Athens, Greece © Orestis Seferoglou / CARE 2016
- p20, An Afghani mother who has been living in Schisto refugee camp, Greece, for almost two years, talking on her mobile to her 15-year-old son who is in Sweden © Anna Pantelia / CARE 2017