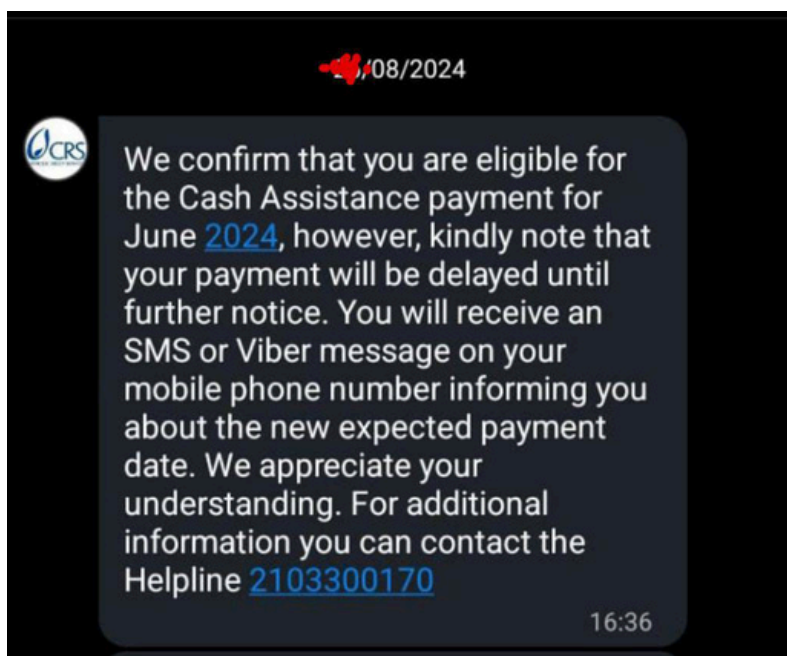


JOINT STATEMENT:

Provision of cash assistance to asylum seekers in Greece must resume immediately

17 September 2024

Asylum seekers in Greece have once again been denied their legal right to dignified living conditions after months of delay in payments of cash assistance, leaving people without an income and unable to meet their basic needs. Beneficiaries of the cash assistance program have been informed via text message that delays are occurring. However, there has been no public announcement from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum regarding the cause of the delays or how long they will last, leaving people in the dark about when to expect payments to resume.




Caption: Message sent to an asylum seeker by Catholic Relief Services, the implementing partner for cash assistance in Greece.

Cash assistance has not been paid out to asylum seekers on the Greek mainland and islands for the months of May, June, July and August [1]. This has impacted thousands of people, including families and vulnerable individuals, who are reliant on state-provided support while they live in remotely located camps, far from urban areas and without reliable provision of transport by the state to allow them to access essential services such as hospital appointments and attend necessary

appointments as part of their asylum procedures. In this context, cash support is a vital lifeline.

The cash assistance programme is financed under the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and is intended to allow Greece to meet its legal obligations to provide material reception conditions to asylum seekers which enable people to obtain a dignified standard of living [2].

The undersigned organisations are aware of multiple cases where individuals and families - including those with vulnerabilities - have been severely impacted by the extended interruption to cash payments. One family from Palestine living in Northern Greece with a 1 year old child who have not received cash assistance for multiple months, expressed desperation and severe frustration regarding the lack of financial support to cover their daily living expenses. Another case concerns an asylum seeking family with a son who has a disability, who are living in a camp in the Attica region and have not received financial assistance for many months. They shared the devastating impact of the stop to cash assistance on their ability to meet their most basic needs while living in remotely located camps, and the anxiety induced by not receiving information on when payments will start up again.



Since July 2021, cash assistance is only available to asylum seekers who can prove their continued residence in a facility operated by the Ministry, for instance a refugee camp [3]. Even when paid out, the amount of financial aid is pitiful: €75 per month for single people, €135 for couples or single parents with one child, or €210 for families of four or more, in cases where applicants are provided with catered accommodation. In a recent [report](#) by Mobile Info Team and Refugee Legal Support, 93% of people asked about cash assistance shared that the amount was insufficient to cover their basic living expenses. The lack of consistent provision of Non-Food Items (NFIs) in camps and frequent interruptions to [transportation](#) and [interpretation](#) services, has further pushed people into isolation during the asylum procedure.

Whilst the situation has become critical over the past three months, issues with delayed or missed payments of cash assistance have been frequent since the Greek government took over the provision of this service from UNHCR in October 2021 (as highlighted by NGO statements in [October](#) and [November 2021](#) and [March 2022](#)). According to statistics from the [Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#), at the end of June 2024, only 43% of asylum seekers who were eligible actually received cash assistance; on the other hand, there were approximately 8,600 eligible people living in camps who were not receiving cash assistance at this time. As [indicated by RSA](#), the cash assistance programme is set up in a way that payments are backdated by two months or not received at all by applicants who receive a decision within a short period of time.

◆ Demands to the Greek State

- Immediately resume payments of cash assistance to asylum seekers
- Ensure that applicants receive backdated payments for the months of May-August 2024
- Ensure that cash assistance payments are made immediately following registration of an asylum claim
- In cases where cash payments are delayed and the individual has been granted international protection, ensure that retroactive payments are made

◆ Demands to the European Commission

- Take action to ensure that EU funds disbursed for the purpose of cash assistance are properly managed by Greece such that it meets its legal obligations and people seeking international protection receive the support that they need to meet their basic human needs



◆ Signatories:

Avocats Sans Frontières France
Equal Legal Aid
Fenix Humanitarian Legal Aid
Greek Forum of Refugees
I Have Rights
Lighthouse Relief
Mobile Info Team
Samos Volunteers
Second Tree
Refugee Legal Support
Yoga and Sport with Refugees
Drapen i Havet
Changemakers Lab
Legal Centre Lesbos
ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth
Jesuit Refugee Service Greece (JRS)
ECHO100PLUS
Centre for Gender Rights and Equality DIOTIMA
HIAS Greece
Terre des hommes Hellas



◆ Endnotes

[1] The last payment of cash assistance was in June 2024, when applicants received a backdated payment for April.

[2] As per EU Directive 2013/33/EC and Greek laws 4375/2016 and 4939/2022.

[3] As per a Ministerial Decision: <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-allodapoi/prosphuges-politiko-asulo/upourgike-apophase-115202-2021.html>