

Spotlight turns to Moria refugee camp, Lesbos

Hundreds living in tents under freezing temperatures

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Refugees are seen at the Moria Refugee Camp in Lesbos, Greece on September 22, 2016. (Ayhan Mehmet - Anadolu Agency)

By Evgenia Choros

ATHENS, Greece

“There needs to be a massive emergency measure to make sure that thousands of people are kept warm and that they are not dying,” told an Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), also known as Doctors Without Borders, spokesperson to Anadolu Agency on Tuesday, regarding the conditions in Moria refugee camp, on the Greek island of Lesbos.

Since the heavy snowfall and low temperatures that started during the weekend, the spotlight has turned to Moria camp, where there are refugees still living in tents. Volunteers, NGOs and social media users have been sharing photos and videos condemning the situation at the camp despite the forecasts in advance that predicted severe weather conditions.

According to Kathimerini newspaper, after being asked to comment on the issue, European Commission spokeswoman Natasha Bertaud said on Monday that “the commission is aware that the situation is currently untenable, but we also have to be clear that conditions in reception centers are the responsibility of Greek authorities.”

“There have been some improvements since yesterday in the camp in Moria, but the camp has exceeded its capacity for several months now,” said Daniel Barney, MSF’s spokesperson.

“The Greek authorities have opened an emergency shelter area inside the camp that can house another 120 people that can live inside warmer facilities, but clearly the camp is over its capacity. There are about 1,000 people living inside tents in the mud,” Barney added.

The UN Refugee Agency in Greece issued a written statement on Monday saying that, along with their partner Iliaktida, they started a short-term transfer of 130 people – mostly families and children – to hotels at special rates as an emergency response to the heavy snowfall.

The Athens News Agency also reported on Tuesday night that the vessel “Lesvos” of the Hellenic Navy is heading towards the island of Lesbos loaded with beds, mattresses and heating in order to host 500 refugees, after a decision between Greek PM

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