

Review: Greece, Turkey and the international refugee situation 11-13 October 2017

New arrivals by sea, 10-12 October: Aegean islands.

Lesvos, **385**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **8,362**. Chios, **193**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **5,799**.

Samos, **40**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **4,454**. Leros, **0**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **376**

Kos, **47**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **638**. Tilos, **0**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **159**

Kastellorizo, **5**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **1,176**. Others, **0**. Total arrivals since 1 January: **1,034**

Total sea arrivals since 1 January 2017: 21,998

Total sea arrivals since 1 August 2017: 10,036

Total sea arrivals 10 12 Oct: 670 – up 126 on 6-9 Oct

Total summer sea arrivals (1 June – 30 September): 11,909

Relocations from the islands, 10-12 October

Lesvos, **178**. Total relocations since 15 August, **1,823**.

Chios, **79**. Total relocations since 15 August **2,228**.

Samos, **4**. Total relocations since 15 August **1,143** Leros, **17**. Total relocations since 25 August **409**.

Kos, **10** Total relocations since 15 August **1,507**. Others, **7**. Total relocations since 25 August **767**.

Total relocations since 15 August: **7,877** - **295** since 9 October

Total number of people on the islands: **14,406**

(numbers below up to and including 1 August 2017)

Total refugee numbers in Greece: 63,314.

Islands: **14,406** – up 186 on 9 October

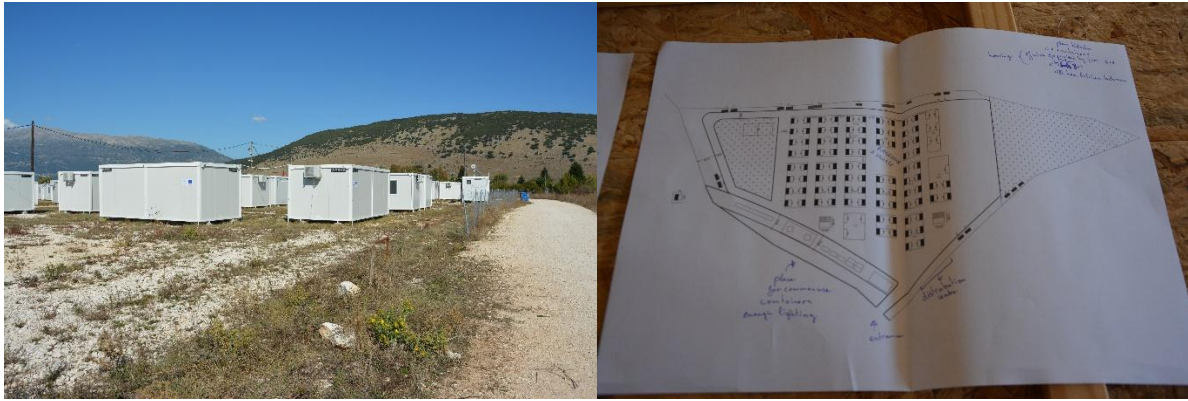
Mainland: **46,948**.

Of which: **35,348** in permanent/semi-permanent camps.

235 in 'reception and identification centre'. **3,676** in 'pre-removal centres'.

8,250, 'self-settled' (government estimate); **8,672** 'housed' by 'civil society organisations' (government estimate) including camps and 'accommodation'.

11,600 in accommodation: **9,039** in apartments; **2,125** in hotels; **21** with host families; **415** in facilities for unaccompanied minors



Wednesday 11 October

- 1) Greece – Refugees: Agia Eleni, Koutsochero incidents; MSF ‘island detention centres are breeding grounds for mental illness’; aid groups call for urgent winterisation measures; Turkish coastguard ‘pushed back’ 679 refugees attempting to sail to Greece; Lesbos’ mayor refuses plans to reduce overcrowding at Moria; overcrowding at Vathy, Samos; camp closures announced; workshop for jobs and CV consultations in Athens for refugees**

An incident at Agia Eleni camp, Ioannina, saw a fight broke out. One man, understood to be on medication for his psychological state, became extremely distressed and angry, and threatened to burn the camp down, harming other residents. He ran away from the camp, and was being questioned by police today. InterSOS did not attend the camp today, as a result of the unrest.

A refugee at Koutsochero attempted suicide by hanging himself at Koutsochero camp, Thessaly, earlier. He survived the attempt, and is now in hospital, but quite apart from the increasing mental distress people find themselves in (see next note, below) we must also remember that Koutsochero itself is a camp with a number of problems.

First, its location. It is some 25km from Larissa – not extraordinarily far, but much too far to walk – and in a remote location unserved by public transport. One MdM staffer described it, before my first visit, as being ‘like the Moon’. It’s not an inaccurate description. The camp is about 100 yards off a main road, (the E92 Ioanninon, which leads to Larissa to the East, Trikala to the West, and Ioannina further North-West), and is effectively so sun-blasted that very little grows in the dusty valley-cleft it sits in.

Second, for some time now there has been an extraordinarily bad problem with proper integration. In Spring, when people were moved from the islands to Koutsochero, the population already there (about 800 people) were horrified by the idea that the ‘islanders’ (maybe 300 people) were coming, fearing that they would be aggressive or disruptive.

For two populations already on edge due to their recent experiences at home and reaching Europe – and do bear in mind that the new arrivals were specifically selected to be moved to mainland camps from the islands because they were considered particularly vulnerable and at-risk, including in terms of their mental state – this was a terrible development, and tension, pressure and occasional violence resulted (we could, of course, ask why more was not done to help the newcomers and longer-term residents mix).

Third, the people moving from the islands had been told by those working at the island detention centres that they would be moving to cities in Greece. Perhaps those staff and volunteers had been told this was the case, and perhaps the government started with the idea that they would be. In any

case, they arrived instead at a sun-blasted collection of isoboxes, in dust, on the edge of a major road, many miles from anywhere.

<https://twitter.com/daphnetoli/status/917785143489777664>

MSF reports that the capacity of the island detention centres to deal with the cases of mental illness and distress within them has been 'overwhelmed' and is in any case the poor mental health of refugees is exacerbated or indeed caused by their incarceration on the islands.

In the report 'Confronting the Mental Health emergency on Samos and Lesbos', MSF cite serious neglect, dire living conditions and the resulting behaviour as the causes of the emergency. I would add that the situation is getting worse, rather than better, as thousands of new arrivals landed on the islands (11,909 from 1 June to 30 September, 8,822 from 1 August to 9 October) this summer and have been crammed into already over-full detention centres, because every day that passes makes people's own view of their situation more bleak, and because the Greek government, since taking over the funding of the response on the islands on 1 August has seen a series of aid organisations leave, many – including medical organisation Medecins du Monde – simply because the government has refused to renew their contracts.

The Greek government replaced MdM's team (which provided primary physical and mental health care on Lesbos) with one doctor and three nurses. There are more than 5,000 men, women and children at Moria camp alone.

The report states: 'These people have survived bombing, extreme violence and traumatic events in their home countries or on the road to Europe, but shamefully it's what they face on the Greek islands that leads them into despair, hopelessness and self-harm. Every day our teams treat patients who tell us that they would prefer to have died in their country than be trapped here.'

<https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/ays-daily-digest-10-10-17-alarming-mental-health-situation-65c5d710afb2>;

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2017_10_mental_health_greece_report_financial_low.pdf

More than 40 rights and solidarity groups operating in Greece have signed a call for Greek authorities to take urgent action to prepare the Greek island detention centres for Winter, under the hashtag #opentheislands.

They point out that around 11,000 people on the islands do not have appropriate accommodation, and that people died last year as a result of the failure of the government and others to Winterise camps on the islands and mainland: <https://opentheislands.wordpress.com/statement/>

The Turkish coastguard says it has pushed back 697 people who had left, or were attempting to leave, Turkey in the first ten days of October: <https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/ays-daily-digest-10-10-17-alarming-mental-health-situation-65c5d710afb2>

Lesbos' mayor, Spyros Glinos, has refused EU requests to move some refugees from Moria to another location on the island: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/10/10/greece-faces-a-rerun-of-its-refugee-winter-of-discontent>

There are now 3,000 people crammed into the Vathy detention centre on Samos, a 'facility' with a capacity of just 700, overcrowding which is repeated on every island with a detention centre. One refugee at the centre noted: 'There is only one shower cabin, and even that is without hot water. And we have drinking water only for a few hours daily.'

Concerningly, the government's policy is to force them to remain on the islands throughout the winter.

Agapis Terzidis from Keelpno, the Greek Center for Disease Control, which was meant to hire Greek doctors on behalf of the state to replace aid agency medical teams, including MdM, (see above) said: 'In a place that is made for 2,000 people and holds 6,000, no matter how many doctors you put in service, they won't be able to make a difference.'

<https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/10/10/greece-faces-a-rerun-of-its-refugee-winter-of-discontent>; <http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/refugees-on-greek-island-sleep-rough-as-winter-looms/932062>

Elefsina camp is scheduled to close on 21 October, followed by Trikala on 28 October, and then three others, which will close at gaps of seven days each. Refugees living at the camps will either be moved to accommodation, or into one of the 'permanent camps':

<https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/ays-daily-digest-10-10-17-alarming-mental-health-situation-65c5d710afb2>

Organization Earth is running workshops and CV consultations designed to help refugees in Greece find jobs. The sessions run daily at Konstantinoupoleos Street 44, Athens —

map: <https://goo.gl/maps/9DSUvSQfH4U2>

To sign up for a workshop in Arabic, message Basil Garaa at basil@organizationearth.org, or for a workshop in Farsi, message Amin Rustaqi at amin@organizationearth.org. For English, Urdu or Pashto, message Dimitra Giazitzi at dimitra@organizationearth.org

2) Greece – economy and society. New transgender law passed;

Greece has passed a law which will make it easier for transgender people to gain legal recognition for their sexual status. The law means it is no longer necessary for a medical diagnosis to be given, and that people can change gender, officially, twice. Though they must not be married when they apply, and the final decision will still be made by a court.

The Greek Orthodox Church, and the Greek far-Right predictably opposed the measure. Slightly more disappointing – especially given its recent attempts to present itself as 'socially-liberal' – is that the main opposition party, Nea Demokratia, voted against the measure. Its members claimed it was to take attention away from Greece's economic problems. Which seems an odd image for governance: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-rights-gender/greece-passes-sex-change-law-opposed-by-orthodox-church-idUSKBN1CF1TE>

3) Refugees – Australia to move refugees from one island camp to another; cholera immunisation for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh; 11,000 more refugees arrived from Rakhine state, to Bangladesh, in the last 24 hours; France says it 'will honour' refugee promises; Norwegian trailblazer on refugee rights 'honoured'; Chinese artist's refugee exhibition opens, criticism of US; EU pledges more money to UNRWA

Papua New Guinea has ruled that the Australian detention centre for refugees on Manus island is illegal. Australia has responded by saying it will move all the refugees there. To another island detention centre, Nauru.

Before we are too critical, we should note that the EU's policy on refugees entering the bloc from the East is virtually identical to that of Australia: lock them up in detention centres for up to (and over) 18 months.

Which makes it all the more damning that Papua New Guinea has ruled the practise illegal:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/10/world/australia/australia-refugees-manus.html>

The UN has launched the world's second largest ever an oral cholera immunisation drive, for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

More than 10,292 cases of diarrhoea have been reported and treated from across the Bangladesh settlements and camps over the last week, and the World Health Organisation warns that a cholera outbreak is a serious risk.

Dr N Paranietharan, WHO Representative to Bangladesh said: 'Emergency vaccination saves lives. The risk of cholera is clear and present, and the need for decisive action apparent.'

More than 900,000 vaccinations have been sent to Bangladesh, and are being delivered by 200 mobile teams: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57847>

UNHCR also reports that 11,000 more refugees have entered Bangladesh from Rakhine State, Burma/Myanmar, in the last 24 hours: <https://frontnews.eu/news/en/15261/New-surge-of-refugees-from-Myanmar-in-Bangladesh-11-thousand-per-day>

French President Emmanuel Macron has told UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi that his country will honour its commitment on refugees, by offering 10,000 places for resettlement in France and extra funding. It is unclear whether this includes refugees on the EU relocation programme. France has taken just 3,984 people under the scheme, compared to the 19,714 it was supposed to take: <http://www.africanews.com/2017/10/10/france-to-honour-commitment-to-aid-refugees/>

Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian scientist, champion skier, Arctic explorer, oceanographer, and humanitarian whose work advocating the rights of displaced people won him a Nobel Prize, and as the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees set in place many of the laws and rights which enable people fleeing war and other disaster to cross international borders, was born 156 years ago today. His 'Nansen passports', no longer used, were the direct forerunner and inspiration behind the documents travel allowances granted to refugees. Google has chosen to honour the anniversary of his birth with an animation: <https://qz.com/1098510/fridtjof-nansen-norwegian-explorer-humanitarian-activist-and-creator-of-the-nansen-passport/>

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's installation 'Good Fences Make Good Neighbours' and his video documentary 'Human Flow' have gone on show in Washington DC. The video ends at the US border with Mexico.

He said: 'What Donald Trump did is set up a very bad signal to the world. The United States has such powerful strength and has plenty of resources and really can handle this much better. We're all immigrants. Trump's father is an immigrant from Germany ... To set up a policy to push people away, to limit people who can stay, I think it's absolutely outrageous ... Power really has to be represented by generosity and confidence. Where is our confidence to help other people?'

<https://pagesix.com/2017/10/10/ai-weiweis-public-art-installation-is-dedicated-to-refugees/>

The EU has pledged to give €9.5m more to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for 2017. The donation comes on top of €82m already donated, and along with similar increases paid by Japan and the US, seems to signal a statement of commitment to UNRWA in the face of Israeli calls for it to be closed down because it caters solely to Palestinian refugees.

Israel's campaign is unlikely to end here, however, and those of us who have the capacity, reason and opportunity to speak about it, should be prepared to do so:

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/eu-contributes-additional-eur-95-million-support-palestine-refugees>

4) Turkey – conviction of Wall Street Journal reporter; Turkey-Iraq oil pipeline to reopen, 'sidestepping' Iraqi Kurdish region; US ambassador to Turkey speaks out against arrest of US consulate employee

A Turkish court has convicted a Wall Street Journal reporter in absentia.

Ayla Albayrak, a dual Finnish and Turkish citizen, was sentenced to more than two years in jail, on terror charges. She had written an article two years ago about the Turkish civil war against its Kurdish citizens.

The Journal says it will appeal the decision. Gerard Baker, the paper's editor in chief, said: 'The sole purpose of the article was to provide objective and independent reporting on events in Turkey, and it succeeded. This was an unfounded criminal charge and wildly inappropriate conviction that wrongly singled out a balanced Wall Street Journal report.'

Turkey claims that the journalists it has arrested are, in fact, spies for foreign states, and inciters to terrorism against Turkish people: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/turkey-sentences-wall-street-journal-reporter-to-more-than-two-years-in-prison/2017/10/10/74031b38-adf8-11e7-9b93-b97043e57a22_story.html?utm_term=.fca96a14d1c1

Iraq's oil minister Jabar al Luaibi has announced that his government will reopen the Kirkuk Ceyhan oil pipeline, which passes through land snatched by IS in 2014, and has been recently liberated. This would effectively bypass the pipeline which carries oil to Turkey from the Iraqi Kurdish region: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-oil-turkey-pipeline/iraq-to-reopen-oil-pipeline-to-turkey-bypassing-one-in-kurdistan-idUSKBN1CF0SZ>

US Ambassador to Turkey, John Bass, has spoken on the ongoing visa suspension between the two states, which resulted from the arrest of a US consulate staffer in Istanbul. He said: 'The employee works in an office devoted to strengthening law enforcement cooperation with Turkish authorities and ensuring the security of Americans and Turkish citizens. Furthermore our colleague has not been allowed sufficient access to his attorney.'

'Particularly disturbing is that some Turkish officials apparently have provided information about the allegations to certain news outlets—again without informing the accused or his legal counsel. The news organizations repeated allegations that in his official capacity working for our embassy – the employee spoke with members of the Turkish government, police, or prosecutors about law enforcement matters.'

'Let me be clear: strengthening law enforcement cooperation between the United States and Turkey was the employee's job. Speaking to and traveling with Turkish police was a part of his regular duties and the Turkish government has not shared any information to indicate the employee was involved in any illegal activity.'

<https://tr.usembassy.gov/ambassador-john-bass-statement-suspension-visa-services-turkey/>

5) Iraqi civil society 'recovering' after IS removal

Al Shahid reports that as IS is being removed from Iraq, the state's civil society is regenerating. Iraqi Prime Minister Haida al-Abadi has announced that the city of Hawija was liberated on Thursday, meaning IS now only has a small territory left in Iraq, in Anbar Province. They are unlikely to give this up easily, and there are other concerns for Iraq's future, including potential conflict with the state's Kurdish population and between its Shia and Sunni groups, but for much of the state, it is a chance to attempt to rebuild: <https://alshahidwitness.com/iraq-civil-society-rises-ashes-daesh/>

6) Catalan independence – Puigdemont 'postpones' declaration; Spanish PM responds with sarcasm

Carles Puigdemont, the President of the Catalan Parliament, has said that instead of making a unilateral declaration of independence, Catalunya wants to enter into negotiations with the Spanish government about the region's future.

He says that Catalunya has 'earned the right' to be an independent state, which is certainly one view of the situation, but a major tripping point is likely to be that the Spanish government does not believe it has. He added: 'If everybody acts responsibly, this conflict can be resolved calmly. It won't be us that prevents that from happening.'

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/catalonia-independence-spain-latest-news-updates-referendum-region-a7993346.html>

Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy responds to Puigdemont's statement by asking whether Catalunya has declared independence or not, and said he would wait until Monday for a response. He said he was considering suspending Article 155 of the Spanish constitution, which would mean the Catalan parliament would no longer be allowed to meet and pass laws:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/11/spanish-government-to-hold-crisis-talks-on-catalan-independence>

Thursday 12 October

1) Greece – economy and society. Privatisation agency wants gas deal bids finalised by Christmas; Greek court rules that Russian should be extradited – Justice Minister must decide where; Greek property prices fall further; IMF prediction raises fears of new bail-out need

Greece's privatisation agency TAIPED is believed to want the final bids for 66 per cent of the country's gas grid DEFSa, in place before Christmas. The sale is one of many forced on the Greek government under the terms of the bail-out agreements between it, the EU and IMF.

Spain's Regasificadora Del Noroeste (Reganosa) and a consortium of Italy's Snam, Spain's Enagas, Belgium's Fluxys and Dutch Gasunie were given permission last month to carry out due diligence before they submit binding bids:

<http://www.ekathimerini.com/222353/article/ekathimerini/business/greece-said-to-seek-final-bids-for-gas-grid-sale-before-year-end>

A Greek court has ruled that Russian national Alexander Vinnick should be extradited to Russia, a meaning Greek courts have now ruled that he should be extradited to both Russia and the US.

The US wants Vinnick to stand trial for Bitcoin fraud worth \$4bn. Russia, which made its extradition request after that of the US, says it also wants Vinnick to stand trial for fraud, but has not revealed what its charges would relate to.

The Greek Justice Minister Nikos Paraskevopoulos will make the final decision on where Vinnick will be sent: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-russia-cyber-extradition/u-s-russia-in-extradition-tug-of-war-over-bitcoin-fraud-suspect-in-greece-idUSKBN1CG0T8>

Greek property prices are the 'worst' performing (though we should note that falling property prices are bad for people who own property, but actually quite good for people who do not) in Europe, having fallen by 1.2 per cent in the last year. Prices in all other EU states rose, except in Italy where they fell by 0.2 per cent. Property prices have dropped 43 per cent in Greece since 2008, 46.5 per cent in Thessaloniki: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/222369/article/ekathimerini/business/greece-remains-the-worst-performing-property-market-in-the-eu>

The IMF's Fiscal Monitor predicts that Greece's primary budget surplus will be 2.2 per cent more than its GDP in 2018.

This is significant because the EU prediction – and that of the Greek government – was 3.5 per cent, and the state's most recent bail-out relies on this being the case. It is only a prediction, but if correct (and these predictions are regularly 'altered' after preliminary releases) but it could result in Greece needing a further bail-out of around €2.3bn, rather than exiting the bail-out process in August 2018.

<http://www.ekathimerini.com/222379/article/ekathimerini/news/imf-report-suggests-new-measures-necessary>

2) Refugees – UK right-wingers call for child refugees to have same rights post-Brexit as under EU; Refugees in Chad expected to live on 18 cents per day; Myanmar/Burma government makes misleading statement on refugees in Bangladesh; Hungarian Catholic bishop speaks out against state's treatment of refugees;

UK Conservative politicians Nicky Morgan (former Education Secretary) and Tim Loughton (former Children's Minister) have called for refugee children to have the same rights to remain and for family reunification as they have in the EU, after Brexit: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/11/conservative-mps-nicky-morgan-tim-loughton-brexit-retention-of-child-refugees-rights>

Roughly 70,900 refugees from the Central African Republic now live in Chad, where resources are so low there are too few medicines, too little food and they are expected to live on just 18 cents per day: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-chad-refugees-aid/in-chad-refugees-on-aid-pittance-turn-to-knitting-and-hairdressing-idUSKBN1CG0NW>

Ministers from the Myanmar/Burma government have visited Rakhine state, to – in the words of the state's news agency – 'take steps to begin the verification and repatriation of refugees who fled to Bangladesh after the deadly terrorist attacks in August.'

The terror attacks of course drove no refugees to Bangladesh. Instead, the flow of more than 500,000 people began on 25 August, when the Myanmar/Burma military began its attack on Rohingya civilians. Rohingyans, who are denied citizenship by the state, are also very unlikely to benefit from 'verification and repatriation':

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/?q=news/11/10/2017/id-11700>

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Vac (Hungary), Miklos Beer, has spoken against dividing refugees into 'Muslim' and 'Christian' categories, and favouring the latter over the former.

It's a significant moment because it reveals splits in the Catholic Church in Hungary, which was conspicuous as the only religious group in the country to fail to speak out against the xenophobia

displayed in Ócsény, where residents threatened a guesthouse owner who planned to host refugees with legal asylum status in Hungary for a short vacation.

Beer said: 'Why are we looking for a thousand reasons why we are not doing something? Christians' religious wars in Europe are similar to battles in the Middle East, and Jihad's original meaning in the Quran is being misinterpreted.

'Every religious system can be manipulated. A senseless fear is created when people hear about terrorists and generalize about a whole population. We – Hungarians and Muslims - don't know one another.

'It really bothers me that, well, Christian refugees can come but Muslims cannot come. Well, I don't know what Jesus Christ would say about that.'

Hungary has accepted zero refugees under the EU's relocation programme, and attempted to take the EU to court to be allowed to continue to ignore the programme.

<https://budapestbeacon.com/religious-leaders-convene-discuss-hungarys-treatment-refugees/>

3) Turkey – German journalist's trial for 'terrorism' begins;

The trial of German journalist Mesale Tolu has begun in Istanbul.

She has been in jail with her young son since 30 April, and faces charges of both being part of a terrorist organisation, and publishing terrorist propaganda, and could be jailed for 10 years.

She is accused of being a member of a Turkish Communist organisation (which prior to 15 July 2016, when a coup was attempted and crushed in Turkey) was not a terror organisation. She was arrested on the grounds of an anonymous statement which alleged she had attended funerals and memorials for party members and that she also attended women's meetings. The statement was made in 2015.

Her lawyer, Ezgi Gungordu, points out that the trial is illegal, on the grounds that the European Court of Human Rights states that people can organize or take part in a ceremony for the dead regardless who the dead person is. He also notes that the indictment is 118 pages long, and 117 pages are made up of the history of the MLKP (Marxist-Leninist Communist Party) and the Communist movement in Turkey. The other page is the anonymous statement. There is no evidence in the indictment that she ever attended a meeting of the MLKP.

It is hard not to conclude that she has been arrested as a foreign journalist, in an attempt to put off other foreign journalists from visiting Turkey, and reporting on what is happening there:

<http://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-prosecution-of-german-journalist-mesale-tolu-unlawful/a-40899888>

4) Israel and US announce departure from UNESCO

Israel and the US have announced that they will leave UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural protection body, with the latter citing 'anti-Israeli bias'.

UNESCO has been extremely critical of Israel's policy in the lands it has seized beyond the boundaries agreed on the state's formation in 1948, and earlier this year declared Hebron a 'Palestinian World Heritage Site'.

The latter declaration upset Israel both because (as it pointed out) Hebron also has a long Jewish history (it is, for example, the site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs, an important Jewish site) and also

(as it did not point out in as many words) because it was tacit recognition of 'Palestine' as a state in the eyes of the UN; an absolute red line for Israel (as it means Israel would have to be answerable to crimes against international law committed against another sovereign state – Palestine is a full member of UNESCO, though not of the UN where it has 'observer' status).

However, there is, from the US perspective, more to the declaration than the state has indicated.

First, Donald Trump's claim that he will put 'America first' does not leave much space for international cooperation on culture, multilateral operations, and education for people outside of the US – all foci of UNESCO.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the US has since the second Gulf War was specifically vetoed by the UN, been looking for ways to reduce the UN in reality and in the eyes of actors across the world.

It cannot very well simply walk out of the UN – such a measure would be too clearly designed to destabilise, would cast the global political system into chaos and would be roundly and fiercely criticised; the US would in effect become a global pariah, albeit one whose wealth and control over the international oil market would cushion the impact of this somewhat.

But what it has already done – consistently voting against aid measures suggested by the UN; privately briefing journalists against the international organisation for a variety of reasons, ironically including both that it has too much power (it 'orders' sovereign states around) and too little power (it is just an ineffectual 'talking shop' which never gets anything done) and never offering 'solutions' in private or public, to these problems; refusing to contribute to humanitarian responses as part of the UN, even in situations where its own government aid body, USAid, is operating – has been designed to weaken the UN and reduce its ability to act.

This withdrawal is a part of this continuing policy. The US is pulling out of one part of the UN. It sets a precedent, and it draws questions about which *other* parts of the UN might be 'unnecessary' or 'acting irrationally'. And it has the advantage of being 'covered' by the fact that the US is a close ally of Israel. It can honestly point to its close relationship with the state, and use that fact to 'justify' its decision to unilaterally withdraw from a part of the sole international cooperative body on Earth.

It is, in effect, the 'perfect storm' for the US. A genuinely destabilising action against the UN, (which the US believes acted beyond its position when refusing permission for the second invasion of Iraq) which fits Trump's domestic focus, and is 'excused' by its alliance with Israel.

It is worth noting that Israel did not withdraw from UNESCO in response to any of the UN body's measures, reports and actions of the last five years. It announced it would leave only *after* the US did, this evening: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41598991?ocid=socialflow_facebook

Friday 13 October

1) Greece – refugees. Katsikas plans (and opening date?); Refugees' future post-'programme

A meeting this morning between humanitarian actors in Ioannina focused on plans for the reopening of Katsikas camp, on the outskirts of the city.

Oxfam, the agency in charge of managing the camp, and its preparation for opening, said that the work to make it habitable will be finished on 15 December. But no-one yet knows precisely when refugees will be moved there.

There will be 100 containers, 90 of them 6mx6m, (provided by IOM) and ten 7mx3m (provided by Oxfam). Containers already on site will not be used for living space.

Camp capacity will be 400 people, and the plan is for it to be a camp primarily for families. But actors including the military admit they do not know where the people will be moved from: Evros detention centre was cited as one potential place, because it has a capacity of 700 and yesterday there were 1,200 people there, but some of them were moved to Agia Eleni, Ioannina, arriving at 12.30am and one would hope that spaces would be found for people to move from a severely overcrowded detention centre in less than two months and two days – I think this is, however, an instructive example in the kind of ‘immediate’ rather than fore-planned response we are still tied up in, despite the response being now more than 28 months old. ‘The islands’ was the other potential place from which people will be moved.

A meeting has been set for next Wednesday, 18 October, at which actors will attempt to decide on what services and facilities will be provided. The army wants a kindergarten, and lots of trees. Both are good ideas, for different reasons, and we should support that. But it’s hardly a comprehensive plan.

Having visited the site today, a very small amount has been done (if anything) since April, and because they are moving isoboxes (containers) in from Diavata and Agios Andreas, (which closed on 22 December 2016), and containers will probably have to be cleared to make space for them, we are not yet even at the starting point for work to begin.

On the other hand, I once lost a €50 bet with a representative of the Greek engineering corps on whether Kavala would be ready by the deadline they set, so I am not going to pretend I am an expert. Even so, it’s a very large job, at this point, with only 63 days including weekends to complete it.

Full minutes will be provided asap.

Habibi.Works, in Ioannina, held a session with Greek people and refugees to help the latter understand more about what they will need to be able to live in Greece. The story is linked below, but it’s something we should be focussed on. In the next three to six months, a large number of refugees will be leaving the ‘programme’ and expected to take their place in Greek society.

This is no easy task, and we need to ensure they at least have every assistance – including all the information – they need to achieve it. The alternative is mass homelessness, and potentially chaos.

This is not inevitable, but only if we make sure it does not happen:

http://www.proinanea.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=48267:2017-10-12-17-16-46&catid=26&Itemid=4

2) Greece launches ‘tax lottery’; Germany to extend border controls with Austria, Greece; arrest of Greek and Albanian nationals on suspicion of drug offences; Pakistani workers attacked – again; IMF reassures Greece, EU, new bail-out will not be needed; Greece (and Hungary) EU’s worst for gender equality

The Greek government is launching a ‘lottery’ to encourage people to pay their taxes. Greece loses €11bn-€16bn per year in tax evasion, and the lottery will be entered by people declaring their transactions online. The jackpot will be €1,000, and 1,000 people will win, so the cost will be roughly €1m per month. If it manages to recoup an eleventh of the tax lost each year, it will pay for itself almost one hundred times over. Though there is, of course, no guarantee that it will:

<http://www.ekathimerini.com/222387/article/ekathimerini/business/greece-dangles-jackpot-prize-to-curb-tax-dodgers>

German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere says Germany will extend its border controls with Austria and on flights from Greece, for at least six more months. The restrictions, which were introduced in 2015, and were due to expire on 11 November:

<http://www.ekathimerini.com/222398/article/ekathimerini/news/germany-extends-passport-controls-on-austrian-border-flights-from-greece>

A 39 year-old Greek and a 26 year-old Albanian have been arrested in Aitolokarnania, Western Greece, on suspicion of drug-dealing. They were stopped and found to be in possession of more than 21kg of cannabis: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/222386/article/ekathimerini/news/two-arrested-in-western-greece-for-drug-trafficking>

Greece's Pakistani community and anti-racism organisations are staging demonstrations this evening in protest against the latest in a line of vicious attacks against Pakistani workers.

Vakas Hussein and Ashfak Mahmoud, two workers in Aspropyrgos, were beaten by a gang with iron bars and knives, and hospitalised, on Saturday. The gang told them they would burn them alive.

Police say 75 similar incidents have taken place so far this year:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/protests-planned-pakistani-migrants-attacked-171011112420238.html>

The IMF says that if Greece posts a 2.2 per cent GDP surplus – as it predicts (and would be significantly lower than the 3.5 per cent the EU predicted when setting the most recent bail-out response) – it will not require the Greek government to take further measures to make up the 'shortfall'. This is significant as it means Greece will not require an extra bail-out, which had been a severe concern:

<http://www.novinite.com/articles/184226/The+International+Monetary+Fund+does+not+Want+New+Measures+from+Greece>

Greece and Hungary rank worst in the EU for gender equality. Sweden and Denmark are rated best. However, the European Institute for Gender Equality notes that across the entire bloc, equality is progressing at 'a snail's pace': <https://euobserver.com/social/139413>

3) Syria – IS suicide bombers kill Kurdish and Syrian people

IS suicide bombers have killed dozens of people – including Syrian internally-displaced people and Kurdish fighters – with car-bombs in Deir ez-Zour region. IS is under heavy attack in the region, which is its de facto HQ in the state, and is losing ground:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/suicide-attacks-refugees-deir-az-zor-refugees-171012223403045.html>

4) Turkey – HRW alleges 'abuse' of prisoners; Amnesty marks 100th day since arrest of human rights campaigners; Turkish troops enter Syria

Human Rights Watch has reported a series of 'serious abuses' committed against people in custody in Turkey, including beatings, threats, sexual assaults and threats of sexual assault. Around 60,000 people have been arrested and remanded in custody since the failed coup of 15 July 2016:

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rights-group-reports-growing-evidence-abuses-turkey-50432400>

Amnesty International has marked the 100th day since eleven human rights campaigners – including its Turkey director, Idil Eser – were arrested in Turkey, to point out some of the absurdities of the arrest. Turkey claims the eleven are suspected of terrorist activity:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/10/turkey-10-people-100-days-in-prison-10-absurd-reasons-why/>

Turkish troops have entered Turkey in a convoy of 12 armoured vehicles, to police and enforce the de-escalation zone in and around Idlib. The zone is one of several created under the ‘Astana Agreement’ between Russia, Iran and Turkey in May 2017, but the Syrian forces of Bashar al Assad and Russian aircraft have launched a series of attacks on the city in recent weeks:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/turkish-troops-enter-northern-syria-operation-171013001304475.html>

5) Qatar – blockade has ‘strengthened state’

Qatari economist Ali Sharif Al Emadi says that since the blockade on his state by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt and others began on 5 June, Qatar has in fact strengthened its economy and standing by building new alliances and exploring new markets, in Italy and South Asia amongst others:

<http://www.newsweek.com/qatar-quickly-adapting-saudi-led-blockade-683599>