

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



I HAVE
RIGHTS.

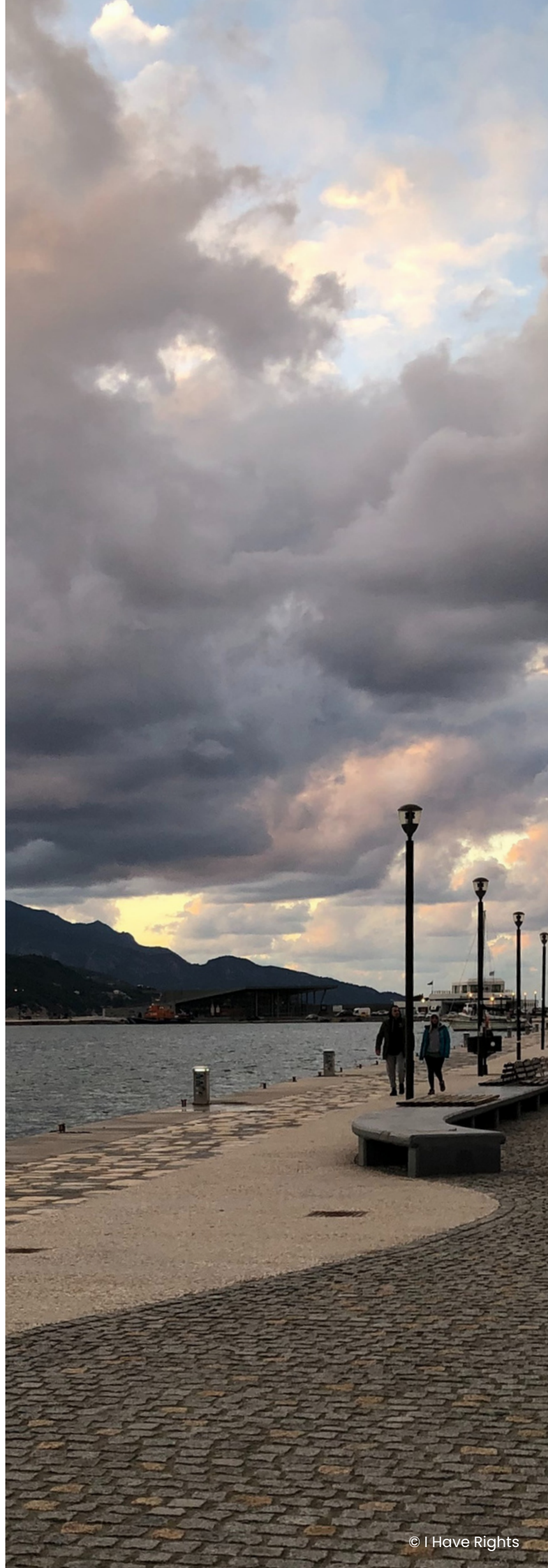


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FOREWORD

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Dear reader,

2023 was a defining chapter in I Have Rights' work on Samos. While the challenges faced were high, our shared commitment to upholding the rights of people on the move only strengthened.

In 2023, Samos saw a 300% increase in the number of individuals seeking safety. In response, the authorities resorted to detaining thousands of people in inhuman and degrading conditions in the EU-funded Samos Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC). It was against this backdrop that the I Have Rights team rallied together, recognising the urgency of the situation and the crucial role we had to play in defending the rights of those affected. Our casework, advocacy, and litigation teams worked to provide support to hundreds of clients.

This Annual Report stands as a testament to the resilience of those who, in the face of adversity, continued to assert their rights and seek a better, safer life. Through the stories shared within these pages, you will see the impact of our casework in supporting our clients, the strides made in advocacy, and the battles fought to secure justice.

Thank you for joining us, for your support, and for standing with us as we strive to ensure that everyone can say: "I Have Rights."

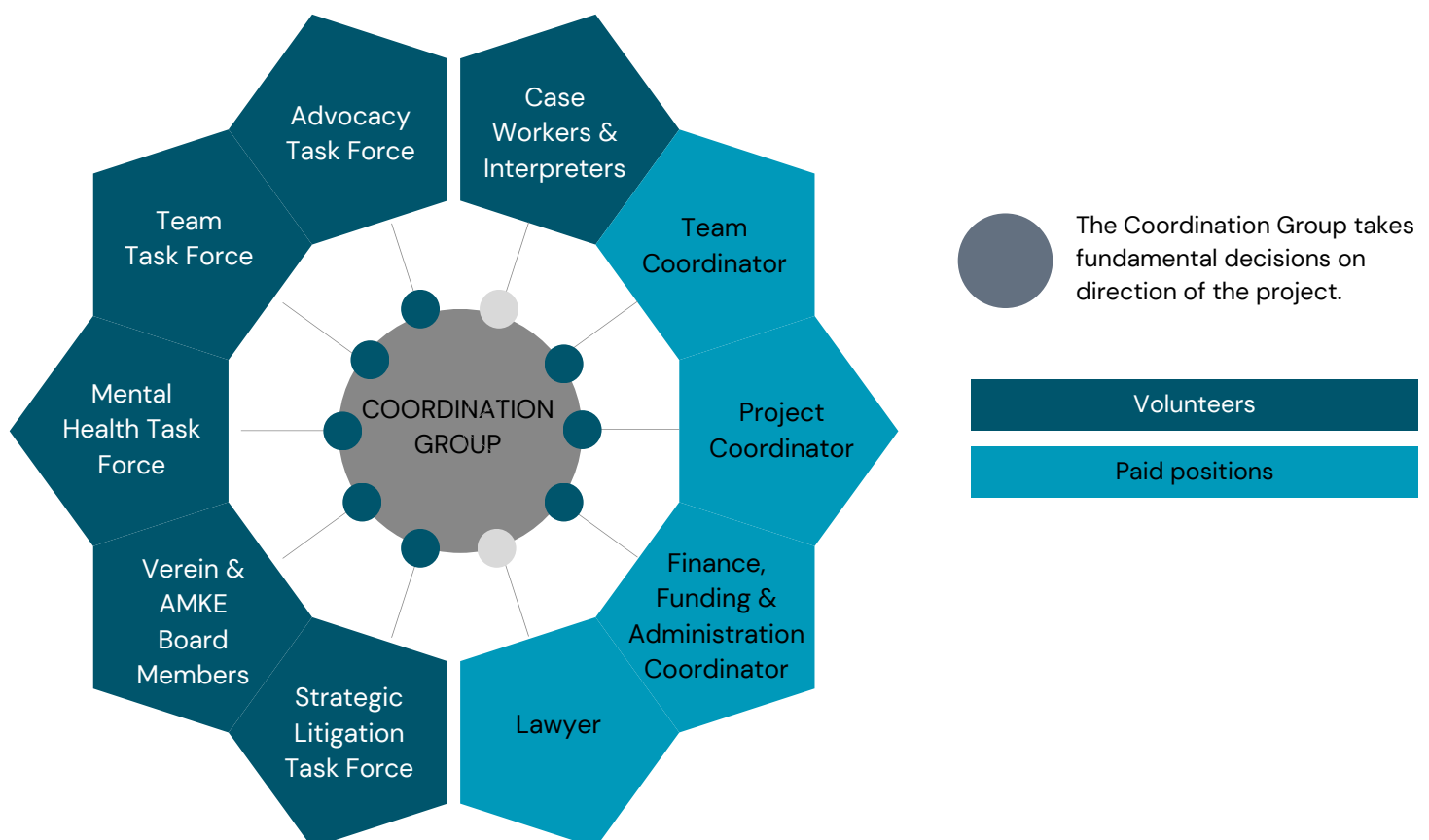
Sincerely,

The I Have Rights Team

STRUCTURE

I Have Rights e.V. (IHR) is a German-Greek human rights organisation based on the island of Samos, Greece. Samos is one of the five hotspot islands in Greece, serving as a key point of entry for people seeking safety in Europe. IHR provides independent and free legal information and representation to people on the move at the EU's external border on Samos and supports them in asserting their rights.

IHR has two legal entities: a German and a Greek association (Verein and AMKE). IHR's paid staff is comprised of the Project Coordinator, Greek Lawyer, Team Coordinator and Finance and Administration Coordinator. The organisation is structured into various teams, each responsible for different aspects of IHR's work.



CASEWORK TEAM

The casework team runs IHR's core activity by providing one to one legal information and representation to people on the move on Samos. It consists of the **Project Coordinator**, **Greek Lawyer**, three to four Caseworkers and an in person team of interpreters on Samos. The team is supported by remote volunteer interpreters in 14 languages.

ADVOCACY TEAM

The advocacy team monitors human rights compliance on Samos and calls for structural change. The team consists of the **Project Coordinator** and one or two long-term volunteers.

LITIGATION TEAM

The litigation team supports the legal team in bringing legal challenges to defend the rights of people on the move. The team consists of the **Project Coordinator** and 10 remote volunteers, comprised of lawyers and/or previous IHR caseworkers.

MENTAL HEALTH TEAM

The team offers peer-to-peer emotional support to IHR's team on Samos to support them in their work. The mental health team consists of ex-Samos based volunteers.

TEAM TASK FORCE

The team task force is responsible for the recruitment, onboarding and human resources of IHR, coordinated by the **Team Coordinator**.

FINANCE COORDINATION

The **Finance Coordinator** is responsible for the accounting, financial planning and funding of IHR.

The coordination group, which serves as the primary decision-making body, is composed of members of each team, as well as board members and employees. At IHR, we prioritise flat hierarchies and consensus-based decision making. During meetings, the team receives updates from the teams and discusses strategic matters.

COORDINATION
GROUP





VISION & VALUES

Our vision: safe and regular routes to access a fair and dignified European asylum system that i) upholds the rights of people seeking safety and ii) recognises the effects of climate crisis, poverty and precarity caused by the economic exploitation of the Global North.

SOLIDARITY

To achieve our aims, we work in cooperation and solidarity with local civil society, NGOs and people on the move. We act in solidarity with people on the move, and with all marginalised and discriminated individuals and groups.

DIGNITY

Every asylum seeker should have access to independent, individualised and confidential legal counselling. We are independent from political parties, governmental institutions, other state actors or religious organisations. Our work should not be influenced by our donors.

EQUALITY

We support our clients. Our services are free and open to provide equal access to legal support for people on the move on Samos, irrespective of their legal status, origin, religion, social and educational background, gender, sexual orientation, and regardless of our sympathy. We commit to continuously working towards overcoming discriminatory structures in our association. We reflect on our privileges and act accordingly.



CASEWORK TEAM

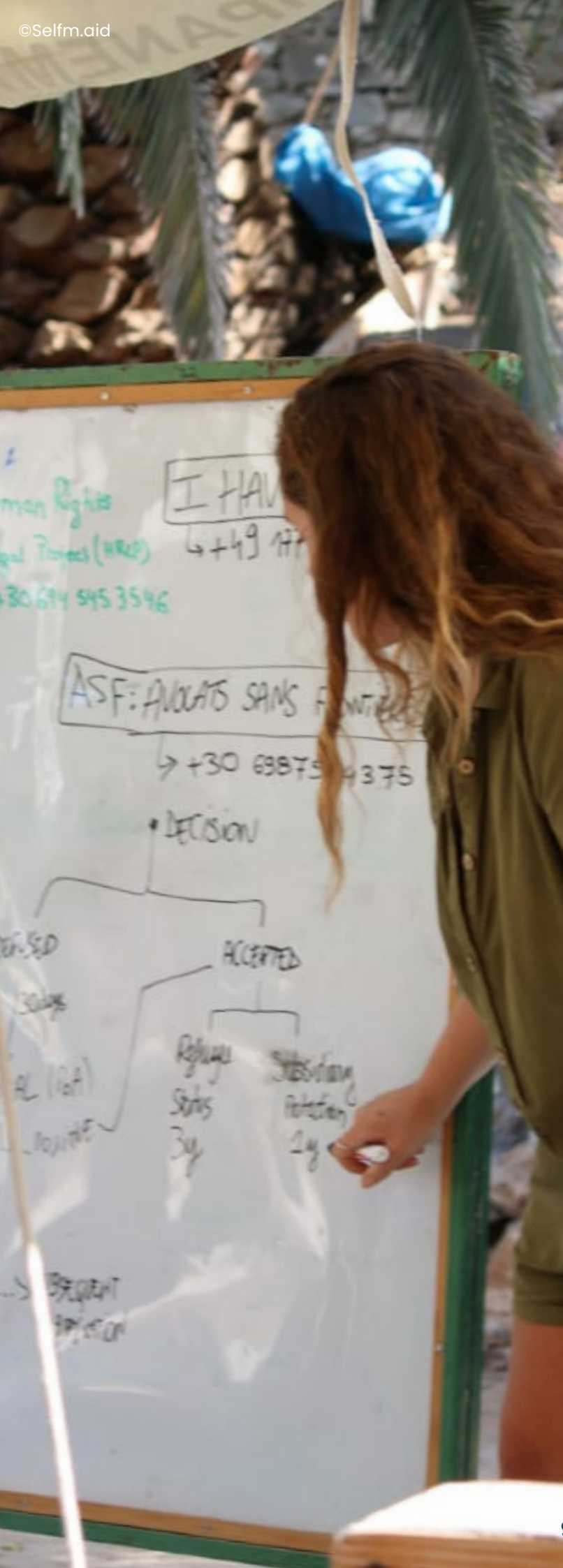
Access to legal information for asylum seekers is a right under EU law. During our interview preparation appointments, clients have the opportunity to talk with us in a safe and supportive environment and receive information about their rights.

INFORMATION

People contact us with a wide range of inquiries related to their asylum procedure. The workload for each case varies significantly from person to person. While some questions can be addressed in a one-hour appointment, interview preparations typically require eight hours of clinic work per client.

We run a hotline information service which receives hundreds of messages a day. Additionally, we conduct phone appointments with those who are unable to leave the CCAC.





WORKSHOPS

In collaboration with Avocats Sans Frontières and the Human Rights Legal Project, two other legal NGOs on Samos, the team holds legal information workshops hosted by NGOs with community centres on the island.

The goal of workshops is to engage in community outreach and provide individuals with essential information on the asylum procedure and their rights. In 2023, we held 13 legal workshops, at 3 different locations.

REPRESENTATION

Alongside providing information to people on the move, IHR's Lawyer legally represents some of our clients, which allows us to provide them with additional support.

For example, the lawyer accompanies clients to their interview and submits a memorandum with supporting information in support of their asylum claim. She also undertakes legal actions, like requesting the lift of a geographical restriction, appeals against rejections and accompanying clients to hearings before the Appeals Committee.



© I Have Rights.
Client is not shown.

IMPACT STORY

A young asylum seeker was referred to us after they received two rejections on their asylum claim. They feared they would face persecution in their country of origin due to their sexuality as a homosexual.

Our caseworkers provided legal information on LGBTQI claims and prepared the client for their subsequent application, explaining to them their rights but also the challenges in undertaking this procedure. They worked with the client and other professionals in finding evidence to support the subsequent application, including country of origin information, which is an important component to this procedure.

After supporting the client for over a year they were called for an interview to talk about their fears of returning to their country of origin. Our lawyer held

in-person sessions with the client to prepare them for the interview and accompanied the client to their interview.

At first, the subsequent application was rejected, but following an appeal submitted by our lawyer, the Appeals Authority found the evidence submitted was sufficient and that our client was credible. They also accepted the information which was collected about the criminalisation of same-sex relations and homophobia in their country of origin.

Thanks to the client's resilience, our team's efforts and collaboration with psychologists and social workers, our client was finally granted refugee status. They can now continue their life in Greece after years of insecurity.

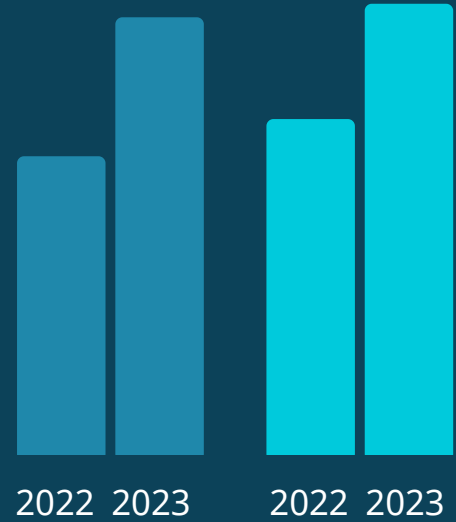


2023 IN NUMBERS

The casework team supported **374** new clients, preparing **292** for their asylum interviews

New clients seen

Interview prep



We worked on **11** family reunification cases

 We responded to **11,445** messages on our hotline

We accompanied **15** clients to their interviews

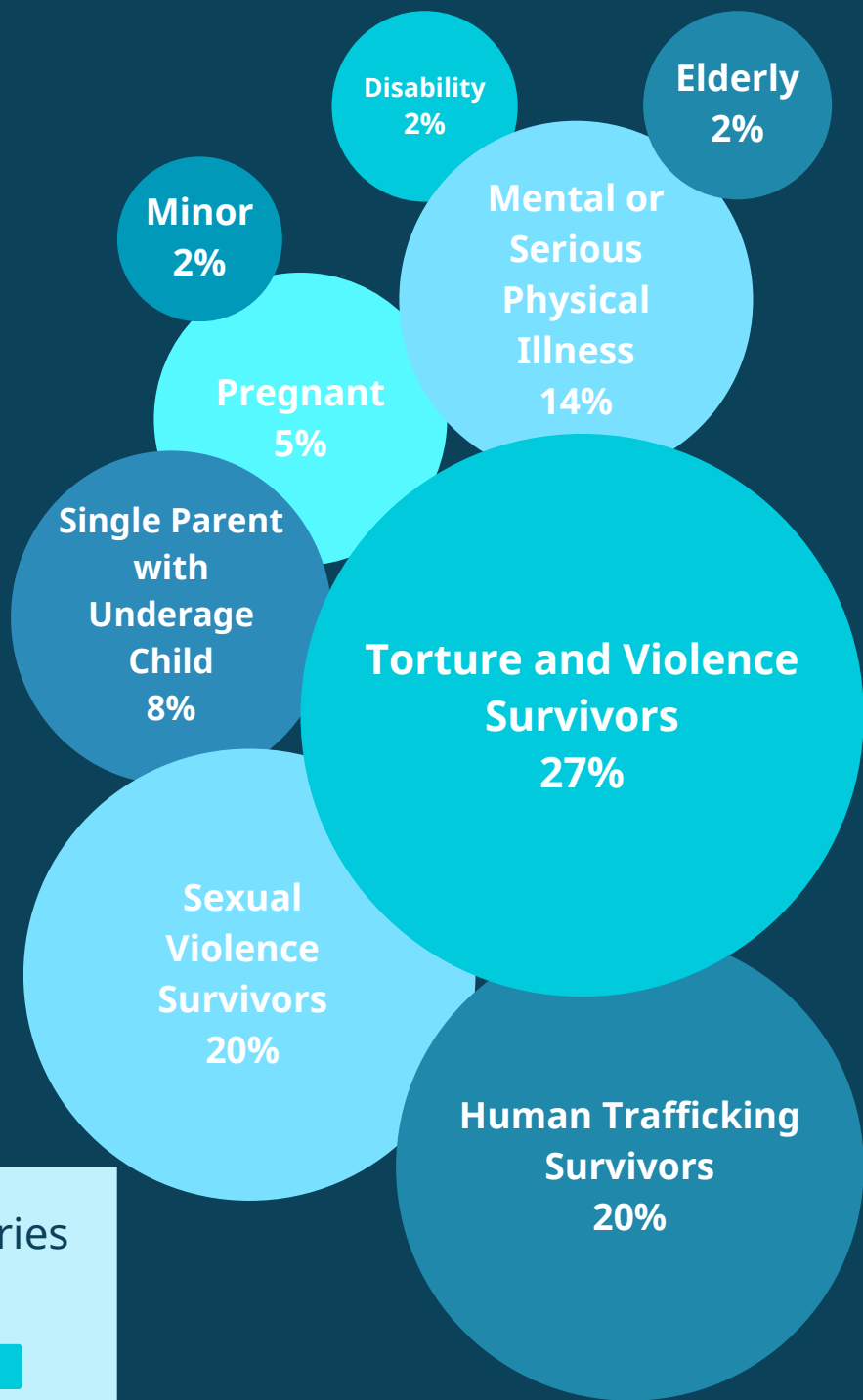


We formally represented **45** new clients 

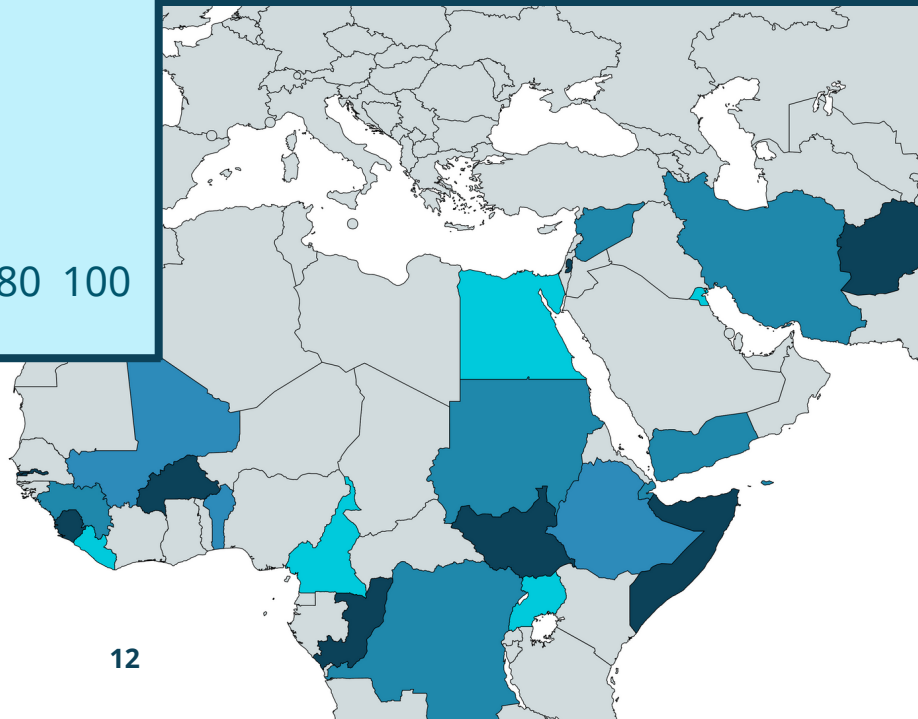
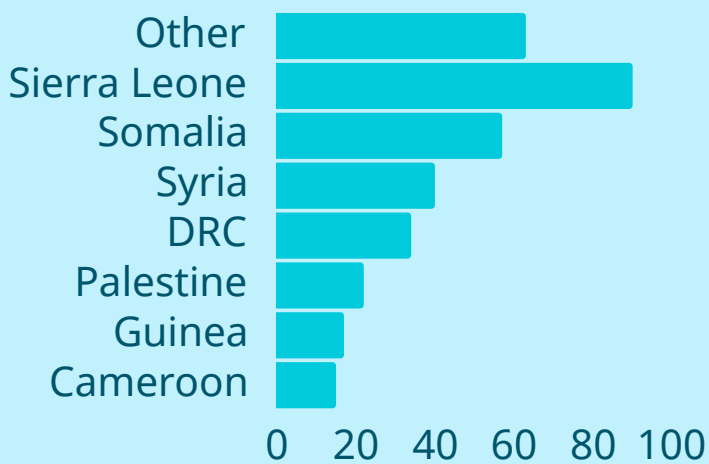
40% of our clients fit the legal **definition of vulnerability**

Many of these clients fit **more than one category**

While vulnerable persons are entitled to additional protections in practice **they are not afforded them**



Our clients are from **24** countries



“ **THANK YOU FOR THE PREPARATION,
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GOOD
THOUGHTS, THANK YOU FOR
EVERYTHING THAT YOU DID.**

**YOU HAVE GIVEN ME THE
CONFIDENCE FOR TODAY.**



*A text from our client, received
before their asylum interview .*





© Sam Jubb

ADVOCACY

The advocacy team monitors human rights compliance on Samos and calls for structural change. The team works with people on the move to bring attention to border violence and advocate for dignified asylum policies and practices across Europe. Our work was covered by national and international media 24 times in 2023. To achieve our goals, we work closely with other organisations and networks:



Border Violence Monitoring Network



Δίκτυο Καταγραφής Περιστατικών Ρατσιστικής Βίας

Regionally, we are a member of the Border Violence Monitoring Network, a Balkan-wide network that documents and advocates against border violence.

In 2023 we engaged in 12 joint advocacy projects with BVMN including four policy briefs and thematic reports. We also contributed to 12 monthly reports.

In Greece, we are a member of the Racist Violence Recording Network, an initiative of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece to record instances of racist violence and hate crimes. In 2023, we recorded 6 hate crimes for the Network.

ADVOCACY GOALS

DETENTION

We advocate **against detention in all forms** including the use of camps, especially those that are de facto detention centres, isolated and excluded from local society like on Samos.

We advocate for the **closure of CCACs** and for integration of people into society in **dignified housing**.

PUSHBACKS

We advocate against pushbacks and the use of violence as a tool of border enforcement. Instead, we call for safe and regular routes for people to seek safety.

We understand **pushbacks as a violation** of the prohibitions of non-refoulement and torture and at times of arbitrary killing and enforced disappearance. Despite the risk of criminalisation, we document pushbacks and call for them to end.

ACCESS TO ASYLUM

We advocate for a **fair asylum procedure**, where people's claims are **thoroughly analysed**. Inherent to this is that people are provided with access to territory, dignified accommodation, access to health care and their essential needs are met.

ACTIONS

In 2023, the advocacy team engaged in 58 advocacy projects, including:

DETENTION

- A joint contribution with IRC to the **EU Ombudsman** which showed that the Samos CCAC fails to comply with human rights standards.
- Led on a **joint statement signed by 22 organisations** on CCACs constituting unlawful detention in inhuman and degrading conditions.
- With BVMN we presented key challenges in immigration detention in Greece to the OHCHR Secretary-General.

ACCESS TO ASYLUM

- With BVMN we lobbied the EU's Anti-Trafficking Directive's reform. Based on our data on asylum experiences for survivors of human trafficking, our amendments were included in the rapporteur's recommendations.
- We campaigned with other organisations **against the EU's New Pact** by showing how the proposals would block access to asylum.

PUSHBACKS

- A **joint submission** with Human Rights Legal Project to the Council of Europe's GREVIO on the violation of women's rights during pushbacks. Our evidence was included in GREVIO's report on Greece.
- We **presented evidence** with BVMN to the **European Court of Human Rights** on the methods of pushbacks in Greece and the lack of access to effective remedies in Greece for survivors of pushbacks.

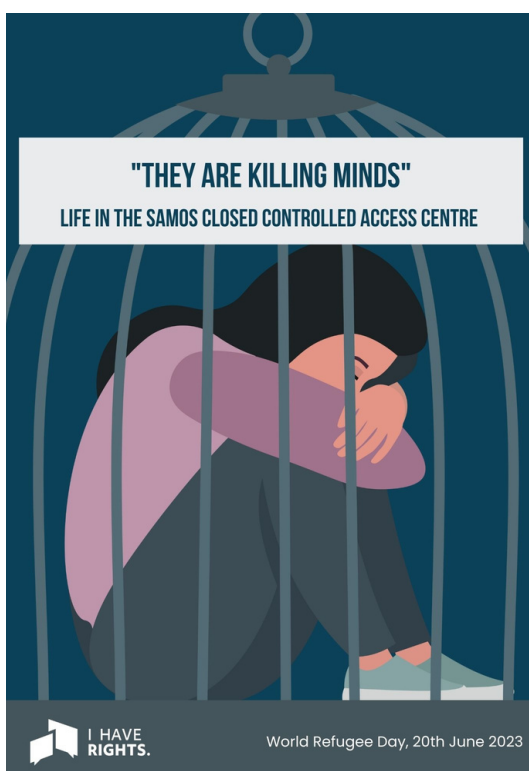


OUR REPORTS

DE FACTO DETENTION

This report demonstrated that the CCAC is a place of unlawful de facto detention, which violates the right to liberty and the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment under national and international law.

The report's impact was to shifting the discourse on the Samos CCAC from being an 'accommodation' centre to site of de facto detention. It was presented to MEPs in Brussels, colleagues across Europe and acts as a baseline resource for demonstrating the CCAC's detention practices as being unlawful.



THEY ARE KILLING MINDS

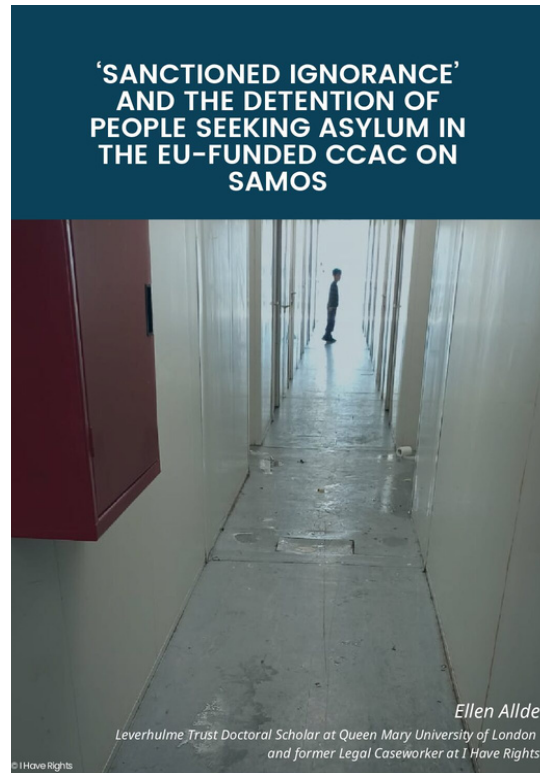
In this report, we collected testimonies from people in the CCAC to create a picture of the conditions people are subjected to in the EU-funded structure. This called into question claims from the Greek and EU authorities of CCACs being a "humane" approach to migration.

The goal was to create a report that was led by people on the move in line with our values of solidarity. This was successful in making a report that was human-centred and accessible.

SANCTIONED IGNORANCE

IHR team member Ellen Alde published her research on how the Samos CCAC is a site of neo-colonial bordering. In particular, Alde shows how ignorance is a tool for the authorities to exert control through:

- The sudden changes of rules in the CCAC, including on entry/exit, food provision, asylum interview dates.
- Long wait times for appointments, interpreters, food, medical support.
- The legal challenges in advocating against detention.



SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

This report was based on testimonies and research collected by the whole IHR team. It analysed and found trends among survivors of human trafficking.

The report shows the failure of Greek and EU authorities to fulfil their legal obligations towards survivors including to:

- Identify survivors;
- Provide first level protection;
- Recognise victims of human trafficking.

Read more about our work with survivors of human trafficking on Samos on page 22.

IMPACT STORY

ADVOCACY ON THE EU'S NEW PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

2023 saw the precipice of negotiations on the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum between the European Parliament, Commission and Council. Aiming at closing the deals before the end of the year, co-legislators rushed towards an agreement, at the risk of adopting measures that would jeopardise fundamental rights of people on the move.

Within this framework, together with BVMN and its member organisations, we engaged in advocacy against the Screening Regulation of the Pact. Through a [briefing](#) to allies in the Parliament and a [policy paper](#) aiming at making the Regulation more understandable to civil society, we demonstrated how the screening procedures currently in place on Samos have subjected people on the move to arbitrary detention, inhumane and degrading treatment and, more broadly, violations of their fundamental rights. Therefore, to avoid these practices being expanded to all of the EU's external borders, we made recommendations in order for safeguards to be added or strengthened to the Regulation.



LITIGATION

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The litigation team supports the casework and advocacy teams in challenging human rights abuses on Samos, defending the rights of IHR's clients and to promote structural change. In 2023, the litigation team engaged in 17 litigation initiatives including:

- Rule 9 submission in *Safi and Others v. Greece*. With the Human Rights Legal Project we presented **evidence of persistent practices that severely violate human rights at Greek borders**.
- Rule 9 submission in *M.S.S. v Belgium and Greece*. With the Mobile Info Team based in Thessaloniki, we presented evidence of continued severe deficiencies in Greece's asylum and reception procedures.
- Third Party Intervention in the cases of *A.B. v. Greece* and *D.G. v. Greece*. With BVMN we presented evidence of pushbacks and the lack of effective domestic remedies available to survivors.
- We made five complaints to the Greek Ombudsman. This includes a complaint on behalf of two clients who report to have been forced to sleep for weeks in a makeshift shelter due to severe overcrowding in the Samos CCAC.



IMPACT STORY

SUCCESSFUL LITIGATION BEFORE THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2023, **three women** supported by IHR **won in cases before the European Court of Human Rights**. Over the year, the Court found that the three applicants, all of whom were pregnant upon arrival to Samos and had been forced to live in inhuman and degrading conditions in the old Samos camp (*A.D. v. Greece* 55363/19; *M.L. v. Greece* 8386/20; *M.B. v. Greece* 8389/20).

As well as providing a form of, albeit late, justice to the women, the rulings are important cases in **the Court's case law on the treatment of asylum seekers**. This is for at least two reasons. First, *A.D.* was the **first time** that the Court condemned the living conditions faced by an asylum seeker in a Greek hotspot as inhumane and degrading treatment. Secondly, because in all cases the Court applied the rule of exhaustion of domestic remedies with some **degree of flexibility and without excessive formalism, rejecting the Government's objection** that the applicant had not submitted any written reception requests to the competent authorities or domestic courts, and had, therefore, failed to exhaust domestic remedies.





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SPECIALISED PROJECT FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ON SAMOS

We are proud to run a specialised project focusing on survivors of human trafficking. Trafficking, which is a form of modern day slavery, is different to smuggling, which involves the irregular movement of someone across a border.

Starting in May 2023 and running until April 2024, our project provides specialised legal support and representation to survivors while engaging in advocacy and litigation to challenge current systems that violate their rights.

1

Casework team

2

Advocacy team

3

Strategic Litigation Task Force

1

- Legal representation
- Legal counselling
- Referrals to psychologists, social workers and national mechanisms
- Monitoring of treatment of survivors in the CCAC
- Trainings on the rights of survivors

2

- Targeted EU advocacy leading to reform of EU law
- Report on the violation of survivors' rights on Samos
- Online webinar disseminating report findings
- Workshop on the treatment of survivors on Samos

3

- Complaint to the EU Ombudsman on survivor's treatment in asylum interviews
- Complaint to the Greek Ombudsman
- Letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings

CASEWORK

Since May 2023 we:

- Worked with **27 clients** who are survivors of human trafficking.
- Sent **20 referrals** to the Greek National Referral Mechanism on behalf of survivors.
- Formally represented **five survivors** of human trafficking.
- Accompanied **five survivors** to interview.

ADVOCACY

- Briefing to MEPs regarding the European anti-Trafficking Directive (2011/36/EU). All our recommendations for reform were accepted by the Parliament's rapporteur meaning we influenced EU wide change to increase the protection of survivors.
- With the Human Rights Legal Project we made a joint submission to GREVIO raising concerns about the lack of assistance provided to survivors of human trafficking on Samos. GREVIO cited our submission in their evaluation report on Greece.
- Our report "Unidentified, unrecognised and denied support" analysed the 53 total cases of survivors of human trafficking supported by IHR. We present evidence of the violation of their rights at every stage of the asylum and reception procedure.
- We held a webinar and an in-person workshop to raise awareness about the violations of survivors' rights on Samos.

LITIGATION

- Representing 13 survivors, we made a complaint to the Greek Ombudsman on the unlawful treatment of survivors on Samos.
- We sent a follow-up letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons to request a response to our communication sent in October 2022. We called on the Rapporteur to investigate on Greece's compliance with its international legal obligations and to condemn its failure to recognise survivors of human trafficking.

“

**I FEEL GOOD HERE AND SAFE TO
TALK ABOUT MY STORY,
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE TALKED
ABOUT IT IN DETAIL.**

IT'S LIKE A RELEASE.

”

- A text from our client

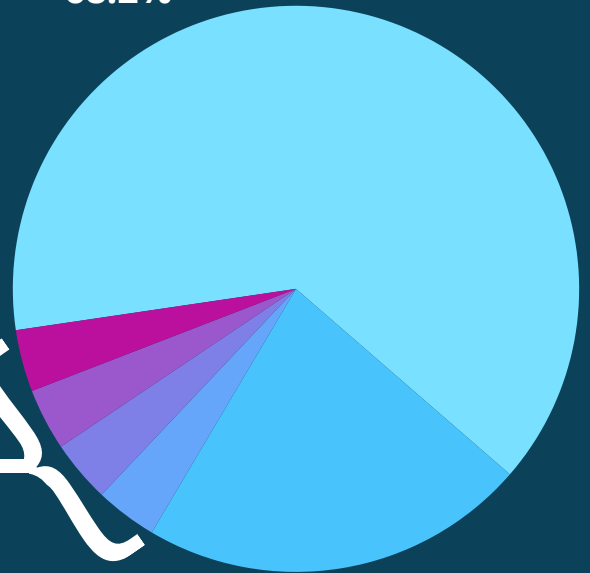


ANNUAL BUDGET

144,401.55 €

Employment cost

68.2%



Office and housing

22.1%

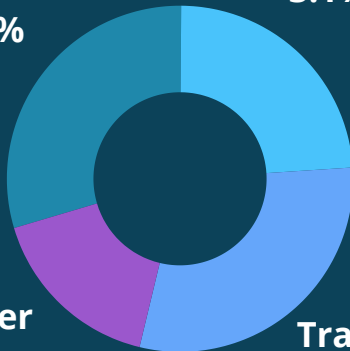
Association cost

AMKE cost

3.1%

Verein cost

3.8%



Other

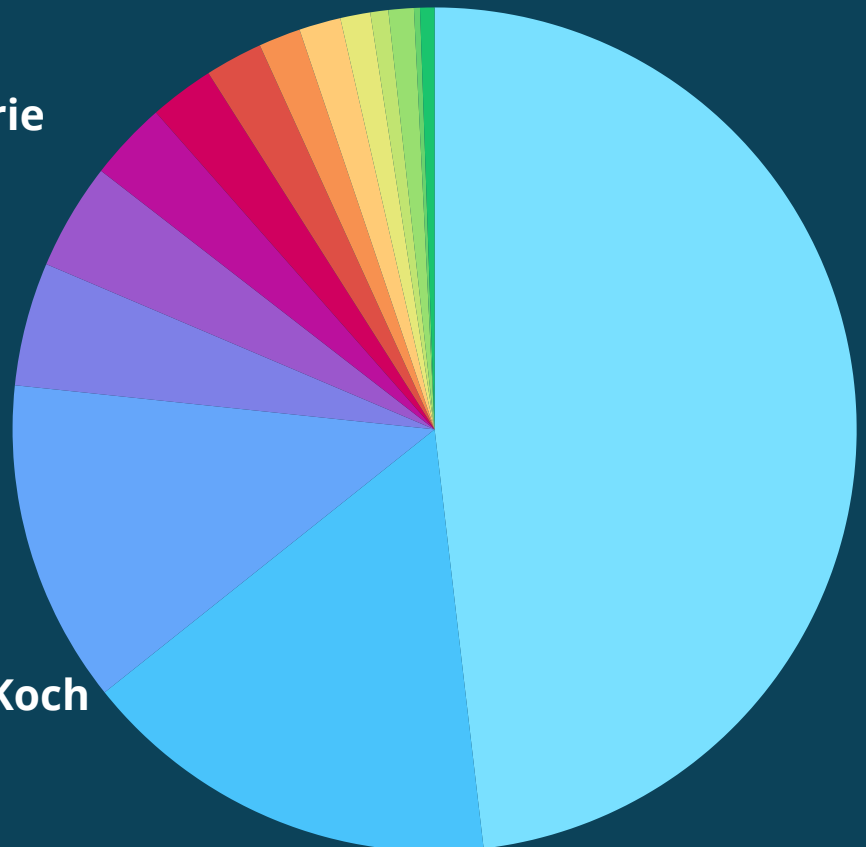
2.1%

Travel cost

3.8%

OUR 2023 FUNDERS

- UNO Flüchtlingshilfe
- Deutsche Postcode Lotterie
- Choose Love
- Donations
- Heidehof Stiftung
- Sebastian Cobler Stiftung
- Marlow Refugee Action
- GLS Treuhand
- Holtfort Stiftung
- For Refugees
- Stiftung :do
- Freundeskreis Cornelius Koch
- Project Elpida
- Frontline Defenders
- Other income





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We are incredibly thankful for the hard work and dedication of everyone who has contributed to IHR. We are deeply grateful for the trust our clients have put in us and we are fortunate to collaborate with other organisations on Samos who share our commitment to defending the rights of people on the move.

We are especially grateful to the foundations and individuals that have generously supported our efforts through their financial contributions. Without your generosity and solidarity, our work would not be possible.





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RIGHTS.**



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