



Deutscher **Anwalt** Verein

Press Releases

## Ensure independent legal advice as part of initial humanitarian aid!

Acceleration of procedures in Greek refugee camps is essential – but not at the expense of the rule of law

**Berlin (DAV). The European Parliament is currently devoting its attention to the situation in the Greek refugee camps, in particular in the Moria camp on Lesbos. The conclusion: the situation is catastrophic; the most basic needs cannot be met. Procedures are to be streamlined. The German Bar Association (DAV) welcomes this, but calls for continued compliance with constitutional principles. In particular, people must have access to independent legal advice.**

500 people sharing one toilet, only one paediatrician for the entire refugee camp, once again only summer tents available for the imminent cold winter – there is a lack of everything on Lesbos. With a capacity for 3,000, there are currently between 12,000 and 14,000 people in the Camp in Moria.

According to EU estimates, the current changes in Greek asylum law will lead to more efficient asylum procedures. The German Bar Association welcomes the efforts to speed up these procedures. The current extremely lengthy procedures have a devastating effect on the mental health of those affected. Independent and individual legal advice for the people in Moria must be guaranteed at all costs. Therefore accelerated procedures must not take place at the expense of the rule of law.

The DAV demands that the new Greek asylum law be accompanied by appropriate funding: *"Independent legal advice is a necessary component of initial humanitarian aid in crisis situations. To this end, the necessary funds must be made available directly to volunteering organisations by EU institutions as well as by national governments"*, emphasises **Philipp Wendt, DAV's Chief Executive Officer**.

In 2016, together with the Council of European Bar Associations (CCBE), the DAV founded the non-profit organisation European Lawyers in Lesbos (ELIL), which offers independent pro bono legal advice to asylum seekers in the Moria Camp on Lesbos. Over the past three years, 144 lawyers from 17 countries have volunteered to offer free legal advice to more than 9,000 people seeking protection in the Greek Moria Camp. Projects such as these are generally supported solely by the civil society and receive no funding from the EU or EU member states.

*"We also need more solidarity from the Member States in taking in refugees. This ranges from the distribution mechanism, which is not implemented by many states, to the proposals for a Common European Asylum System, which has been blocked for years,"* says **Philipp Wendt**. *"We welcome the fact that the European Commission intends to present new proposals in the first half of 2020 to break the deadlock."*

*European Lawyers in Lesvos provides refugees with access to free legal advice at Camp Moria on the Greek island of Lesvos. The project relies on donations and urgently needs support! Further information can be found [here](#).*

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