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REPORT FROM THE EUROPEAN POLICE CONFEDERATION (EuroCOP)
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

Report on the situation and working conditions of police officers and other public services in
the refugee camps of Lesbos and Chios (Greece).

1.- General health conditions in the refugee camps in the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios.

At the request of the Greek Police Association, a representation of the European Police Confederation (EuroCOP) traveled to the islands in the north of the Aegean to know more about the general conditions and the working conditions of police officers in the reception centers on the islands. For this, the President of EuroCOP, Àngels Bosch, the President of the Greek trade union P.O.A.S.Y. and the delegate of EuroCOP, expert in occupational hazard prevention, Juan José Llaguno, formalized visits to the shelters on the island of Lesbos and Chios, as well as meetings with police officers, chiefs and leading police officers, leaders of different emergency teams, health officials, local politicians and neighborhood representatives.

However, to understand the situation of the officers, it is essential to have a global view on the humanitarian crisis which lead to the influx of refugees to the islands in the Greek Aegean:

The humanitarian crisis in this part of Greece began in 2015, when the authorities of Turkey closed the passage way that migrants and refugees coming from the Middle East and Africa were taking to cross Turkey in order to access Bulgaria and Greece through the north and, from there, the rest of Europe. The construction of a wall in Ebro prevented the passage through this country and the routes changed, the objective becoming to reach the nearest Greek islands, mainly Lesbos, Samos, Kos, Rhodes, Lemnos and Chíos, which are only 5 or 6 miles off the Turkish coast. The East Aegean Sea has a maritime border of about 870 kilometers, which makes control over the coast very difficult. The land border control between Greece and Turkey has been reinforced with police personnel from Greece and FRONTEX, however it remains insufficient.

The massive arrival of refugees to these islands took the local population by surprise as well as the authorities, at local, national and European level. At first, the local population received the refugees, who arrived in waves, providing them with food and shelter. They were mainly Syrian refugees fleeing the war in their country, whose goal is to access the center of Europe or America, where they have relatives or acquaintances. More than 130,000 refugees have arrived on the island of Lesbos since 2015. Most refugees come from countries that are afflicted by a political or humanitarian crisis or are in a state of war, making it difficult to return refugees to their countries of origin.

The conditions these refugees find are not good; the infrastructure proves insufficient to deal with the situation, and refugee camps start to be established, yet with a lack of sanitary conditions, accommodation, doctors, etc. The arrival of NGO volunteers from around the world made it possible to improve some of these conditions, however, the arrival of winter and the increase in refugees, continuously arriving on the coasts, reaching over 95,000 immigrants in Greece in 2016 did not help. The island of Lesbos has reached the limit, seeing all the local resources of health care, security, emergencies, etc., being devoted to the attention and care of the refugees.

It is important to bear in mind that Greece is immersed in an economic crisis that has lingered on for years and which it has difficulties to get out of. In addition to having suffered a very significant decline in wages and an increase in prices, it lacks the capacity to create public

employment (which translates into its inability to allocate more and new resources, or to increase the number of emergency services to deal with the humanitarian crisis of the refugees on the islands of the periphery). This meant that the islands resources that were dedicated to taking care of the resident population were overloaded, leaving volunteers and the European institutions as the main actors who could increase the capacity to take care of the new needs.

In 2016 a Refugee Camp was set up on the island of Lesbos, with a capacity for 2,500 people, as well as another similar one on the island of Chios, the latter with a capacity for 1,300 refugees. Both camps have a pavilion located in the center where all the services that can be provided are gathered: security, medical, as well as reception and processing of documents and transfers of refugee applications.

The objective of the camps is for the refugees to have decent living and sanitary conditions while they wait for the resolution on their transfer request.

The capacity of these camps was soon exceeded, becoming insufficient and saturated. For example, "Moria" camp, in Lesbos, designed for 2,500 people, accommodated up to 10,000 people, which led to the spontaneous creation of a settlement of people in the adjacent lands, yet with no control, right next to the barbed wire of "Moria" camp, which currently hosts some 2,000 refugees, according to estimates. If the hygienic, safety and health conditions of "Moria" camp are very bad, due to excessive occupancy and poor maintenance of the facilities, those of the camp that arose around it are deplorable or, rather, non-existent.

In Lesbos, near the capital, Mytilene, a camp called "Kara Tepe" was established with a capacity for 2,000 people. It was intended to only host families, but as it is currently fully occupied, newly arrived refugees with families are transferred to "Moria". Sanitary and safety conditions in this "Kara Tepe" are better than in the rest.

Furthermore, it is estimated that on the island there may be about 4,000 non-registered refugees at this moment.

The same situation can be found in the camp of "Souda", on the island of Chios, designed for 1,300 refugees, currently hosting 1,985 people. The design of all the refugee camps is similar, consisting of an area closed off by barbed wire which surrounds the whole compound, with a policed access control. This access control is not intended to prevent free movement of the occupants of the camp, but to control, for example, what is taken into the camp.

The camp has an area of streets, with accommodation made from industrial containers, which constitute the rooms and homes. In other cases, large tents are used to house a series of smaller tents. These are also organized into streets, which is where the people tend to be. In other cases, only simple tents are used without further shelter. The occupancy of the different areas of the camps is organized by gathering refugees of the same nationality and religion, or who present similar characteristics (families, single men, etc). The toilets are located next to the pavilions and there are currently about 6 toilets for every six hundred people.

In the center of the camp, completely surrounded by the streets of the settlement, separated by metal gates, and controlled by police officers, is the "service pavilion". This area is where

the newly arrived refugees are received, where they undergo a first medical check and assessment, as well as a first identification and data collection. Every day, an average of 150-200 people is attended in "Moria" and about 100 in "Souda".

Health care is also located in this service area and is carried out by health professionals from the island, supported by voluntary health professionals, providing care services during the morning and afternoon. In "Moria" there is a doctor and a nurse, available from 8:00 until 21:00. In "Souda" there are two doctors and a nurse in the morning, and in the afternoon one doctor and a nurse. There is an area within the pavilion where sick people, pregnant women in the last phase or who have just given birth can stay. **During the night, in case of emergency, police officers are responsible to decide whether a person needs medical attention and therefore to be transferred to medical facilities outside of the camp or not. In such cases they also have to carry out the transfer.**

Frontex staff are also in this area, usually translators and administrative staff, to support health and safety personnel. However, **they inform us that, since July 1st, the FRONTEX staff has stopped carrying out the procedures for the registration of immigrants who arrive on the island, and the Greek police service must now take care of this procedure.**

There are three separate and protected areas in the camps, one is occupied by women in "vulnerable situation", single women, pregnant women or young children; another area by unaccompanied minors and a third by "sensitive or at-risk persons" or vulnerable adults. These three zones present better sanitary conditions than the rest of the facilities.

In the center of the Moria camp, there is an additional area, completely fenced and controlled by the police, which is the "detention center". Here is where all immigrants and foreigners who have committed crimes or have a criminal record and who are awaiting to be returned to their countries of origin are placed. The average occupancy of the detention center is 150 people, although sometimes it reaches 200 people, coming from the all corners of Greece as it is the only center with these characteristics in the country.

Refugees from up to 40 different countries are accommodated in the camps, with different religious cults, on occasions in confrontation, and with different languages. 50% of the refugees are from Syria, a country at war, the remaining come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Kurdistan, Algeria, Somalia, Egypt, Congo, etc. and all share the objective of leaving the island to go to countries in Central Europe or America.

In the camp there are people who are fleeing from armed confrontations, often finding themselves in a camp with people belonging to the ethnic or religious group that led them to escape. These, in turn, are also there due to the same reasons, yet inversely, leading to a buildup of tensions and clashes.

The average stay of the immigrants and refugees in the reception camps can reach 8-10 months.

In the camps, children usually receive specific attention facilitated by NGO volunteers, who carry out various activities, including entertainment and education.

In the camp of "Moria", the hygiene conditions are deplorable, from a general state of filth throughout the camp, with saturated garbage containers, to the state of the toilet and common shower facilities, installed in metal containers and with toilets that nobody cleans, all this with a proportion of six toilets for an average of 600 users, which causes the pipelines to break and the sewage waters to go out into the open. In the "Moria" camp, the fecal waters flow right across the access door, so to enter or exit the camp you have to walk through the stream that crosses the door. In the camp of "Souda" we encountered rats during the visit.

In order to "get attention" and be transferred to other areas or have their demands met, it is common for some refugees to start fires, forcing the firefighters come. It is important to note that in Lesbos the fire department has a single station in the capital, Mytilene, which serves the entire island, and which consists of a staff of only two people.

2.- Working conditions of police officers

On the island of Lesbos there are 460 police officers who provide all citizen security services on the island and who must also carry out the tasks required in the refugee camps, on an ongoing basis.

The police officers who work in the camps are exposed to the unsanitary conditions previously exposed. The prevailing sanitary conditions in the reception centers, directly affect the police officers, who are exposed to the risks of diseases and epidemics, in the same way as the occupants.

In "Moria", where over 10,000 people are accommodated, an average of 12-15 officers are permanently working on the premises, in addition to another 6-7 in the "detention center" area. More officers are also needed in "Souda": there are currently 12 per shift, yet a minimum of 15 per shift proves to be necessary.

Vehicles are required to patrol the external perimeter of the camps. Sometimes, the police do not have fuel to use the vehicles, some of which are over twenty years old.

The majority of officers assigned to the detention center, which was created 13 months ago, did not volunteer for the assignment and some have been carrying out their service here since its inception, without any rotation of the forces stationed there.

The working shifts are of 8 hours per day, in morning and evening shifts, with a sequence of six working days and one off. However, this schedule is not respected, as overtime is daily business, reaching 12-15 hour shifts. Moreover, rest days often disappear, reaching sequences of 14-21 days of continuous work, because when an incident that requires additional backup personnel takes place in the refugee centers, the officers that are off duty are called in and/or the shift of those who are on duty that day is prolonged.

The working hours or condition of the assignment can be modified up to 4 hours before the shift. None of the work modifications, concerning relief, schedule, extension of working day, working on the day off, change of post, etc., are compensated in any way, neither with time off nor economically.

The facilities for the officers inside the camp are basic, they consist of barracks that act as an office, with a table and chairs. All chairs are very simple, without abiding to the minimum ergonomic requirements established by EU regulations, and the officers informed us that they had to buy them themselves. In addition, they practically do not have any office supplies.

There is another facility intended as the officers' bathrooms / toilets, which does not meet the sanitary conditions or minimum cleaning standards, as there is no staff to clean them.

Citizen Security duties in the entire island are covered by a single patrol in an old police car, with much mileage, that is also used to cover the services in the refugee centers. The distances on the island are large, and there can be trips of up to an hour and a half by car between the capital and other important locations.

The camp of "Moria" has become the second largest population on the island, by number of inhabitants, after Mytilene, the capital, which has between 25,000 and 30,000 inhabitants. The fact that police officers have been assigned to cover the duties required in the camps has left the other areas of the affected islands unprotected, and has caused an overload of work for the officers that must provide policing services in these other areas of the islands.

The amount of officers who are currently dealing with the situation is the same as it was before the crisis, reinforced by some 200 volunteers from other parts of Greece, a number which reveals itself far from sufficient.

Police officers do not receive any specific training to carry out the tasks they must perform nor any retraining either.

They do not have psychological support, neither prior to the performance of their duties, nor during the period of time in which they must provide the services.

The uniforms are acquired by the officers themselves with their own money, as the replacement rate of the uniforms is not sufficient. Working conditions in the camps make it necessary to have more items of uniform than those available. Since there are no changing rooms or specific facilities for the officers in the camps, they have to go to and from the workplace wearing their uniform and change their clothes and wash them in their homes. This fact, furthermore, affects the families of the police directly, since they must wash their uniforms in the family home, with the consequent bacteriological risk for the rest of the members of the family.

There is no health policy, neither preventive nor reactionary. Officers are not given any training on prevention recommendations for the health risks they are exposed to, nor on protective measures to be taken. There are epidemic outbreaks in the camps, which the officers are also exposed to, without special measures being taken. Moreover, no register is kept on the cases in which officers have been victims of attacks or injuries during the performance of their duties.

Similarly, they are unaware of the possible contagious diseases to which they may be exposed to and not provided with any health controls. There is no vaccination plan established for the officers, or any plan to monitor the health of the officers assigned to the camps, who should be

able to undergo frequent periodic medical check-ups to assess their physical and mental health.

They have protective gloves, but no other elements that seem necessary, especially regarding hygiene and washing their uniforms. The health and hygiene measures were adopted by the police under their own initiative, both regarding the washing and disinfection of their clothing, and the use of prevention means (gloves, etc).

The police installations, where they carry out their work, are located in the center of the camp. The camps are surrounded by up to three meters high fences, with a single access in the case of "Moria" and two in the case of "Souda". There are no emergency doors or an emergency and evacuation plan for the police station area, the detention center of "Moria" or for the rest of the camp, neither in "Moria" nor "Souda". There are also no hydrants to extinguish a fire and only the existence of several extinguishers was observed.

The coexistence of the different nationalities, cultures and religions, crammed into precarious conditions, are the spark that ignites numerous verbal conflicts, fights and fires that frequently take place in Moria. The fires are common and last year some police vehicles were burnt down. The firefighters face similar problems to those of the police: insufficient staff, lack of material resources and no adequate health surveillance policy. The reception camps do not have surveillance and control cameras and "Moria" camp doesn't even have metal detectors. The officers denounce the existence of prostitution, rape, robbery, violence or drug trafficking as well as the impossibility of taking adequate measures with such reduced forces.

At the entrance of the "Moria" camp, in Lesbos, the officers are permanently, throughout the performance of their duties, exposed to the fecal waters of the stream that crosses the entrance door, with the consequent sanitary risk, in addition to the strong stench it gives off.

There is a lack of translators to enable the police to approach and get to know the people in the camp, most of the time it is other refugees who act as "translators", but with many limitations.

Police officers are obliged to make decisions that often exceed their powers and knowledge, for example, during the hours when there is no medical assistance, it is the police themselves who have to decide whether to transfer the person to the emergency room or have them stay in the camp until the arrival of a health professional.

On the island there are 200 coastal officers. Their main task is maritime control and to manage the entry of boats in the ports of the island. However, they are the people who, in first instance, attend the refugees who arrive at the coasts. The conditions of these officers are not much better than those of the Citizen Security officers, since there is not enough staff and it is usual for a single officer (maximum two) to have to manage the arrival of the various refugee boats (the average of people per boat is 45-50 people). They work an average of 75 hours per week, as the working shifts are continuously being prolonged due to lack of personnel.

Working directly with the humanitarian crisis, the dead, drowned, children, etc., affects the mental health of the police and the other public services involved. The majority reported an increase in personal problems in their private life.

All the officers with whom we were able to speak presented clear symptoms of "Burnout", which they were unaware of. The need to establish a psychological support service for the officers became clear, for all those who must work in the environment where the consequences of the current migratory crisis strike the hardest. All agreed that the humanitarian need and the situation in the camps is worsening by the day.

FRONTEX officers receive psychological support during their working hours, but not the Greek officers, who must receive support while off duty and with the added difficulty that, for example, there is only a single psychologist for the whole island of Lesbos.

The worst conditions are found, by order of severity, in "Moria" on the island of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kos and Lemnos. The need to cover the security services in such oversaturated camps has led to a lack of police officers for the rest of the services on the islands. Yet, no additional posts, which are essential, are being created so as to respond to the real needs of the emergency services. As a result, the police, medical and firefighting staffs are terribly worn out.

The EuroCOP representation personally attended the arrival of a boat in Molivos, with some 50 immigrants from Turkey, **together with the only officer of the Greek Port Police available during the shift**, as was the case during the previous arrival and will certainly be in the next: *"I feel cheated, I wonder what I'm doing here alone. I fear that any day, while attending an immigrant landing, I will encounter one or several who will react badly and I will end up feeling threatened, but you know what? Even though I carry a weapon, I can assure you I will not use it because I am not going to risk my life or anyone else's for nonsense that neither they nor I are to blame for."* His testimony illustrates that the daily pressure to which he is subjected is taking its toll and he is aware that this instability begins to affect his performance at work and his relationship with his family. He openly recognized that he needs psychological support.

3.- Participation of FRONTEX

FRONTEX is the forces the European institutions have mobilized to the islands in order to support the local authorities to face the situation of humanitarian crisis that afflicts these islands of Greece. The main functions of this force are:

- Registration and record of the refugees that arrive on the islands.
- Translation work.
- Drivers.
- They do not perform any control or policing tasks.

Currently there are 60 people permanently carrying out the aforementioned tasks, and have the following means:

- 1 English vessel
- 1 Lithuanian vessel
- 1 Portuguese vessel
- 1 Italian vessel
- 1 Lithuanian aircraft

Since the onset of the humanitarian crisis, around 4,000 FRONTEX personnel have at some point worked on the island. Currently there is a permanent staff of 60 people and, among other changes, since the 1st of July, the refugee registration and record service has been removed, meaning this task must now also be carried out by the Greek police.

4.- Non-compliance with European Union regulations in matters of occupational health and safety and protection of police officers.

Furthermore, the following European Directives on protection and surveillance of workers' Health and Safety have been breached and violated, in at least, the Articles indicated below:

– DIRECTIVE OF THE COUNCIL of 12 June, 1989 relative to the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the health and safety of workers at work (89/391/CEE) Article 2.2, Articles 6 to 12, relative to the obligations of the employer, and Articles 14 and 15 regarding Health Surveillance and Specific Risks.

– DIRECTIVE OF THE COUNCIL of 30 November, 1989 concerning minimum health and safety requirements in the workplace (first specific directive pursuant to Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391 / EEC) (89/654/EEC) Article 6 to 8. Annex I, Annex II.

– DIRECTIVE 2003/88/EC: CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE ORGANISATION OF WORKING TIME Articles: 3 to 8. Article 12. Article 17. Article 22.

5.- Conclusions and proposals:

- The refugee crisis is not a local problem that only affects the islands where the reception camps are located or for the country where they come to, in this case Greece, but is a problem affecting the whole of Europe and must be dealt with as such. If Greece is part of the southern border of Europe, all of Europe must take responsibility in managing the situation. Therefore, the emergency personnel, police, health professionals, etc. services required in order to deal with the refugee crisis must be managed directly by Europe and not be limited to the attention that local services, NGOs and aid workers or volunteers can provide.
- Emergency services are overwhelmed and Greece is submersed in a serious economic crisis, meaning that using solely its own means is not enough to cope with this new situation, especially considering that the deficit requirements impede Greece to make new calls for public procurement for emergency personnel, including the police, to expand the forces as the situation would require.
- Procedures for the transfer of emigrants to the continent, or their return, should be streamlined and the length of the immigrants stay in the camps should be reduced. Immigrants are crammed into shelters, in poor sanitary conditions, and procedures must be streamlined to either regularize their situation or expedite the returns.
- A health plan must be implemented in the reception camps.

- Police officers and assistance services that will provide services in these camps require specific training, with continuous psychological and health support.
- A prevention health plan, including specific training on the symptoms derived from certain diseases and the actions required, to enable police officers to identify the risks and, above all, implement the adequate protection measures, and provide them with the necessary personal protection equipment. Establishment of a clinic in the RIC, staffed with health professionals, nurses and doctors (at least one pathologist or a surgeon and a psychiatrist) that also provide attention to police officers.
- Increase in the number of police officers, in order to provide adequate services, allowing rest periods that are long enough for the officers to recover, both between shifts and between working days. In addition, it is essential to appoint leaders and police chiefs from mainland Greece to the islands. (On each island there are about 150 police officers sent from the Greek mainland, but there are no chiefs among them.)
- Urgent deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard of the European Union is necessary, but as long as this is not possible, the most conflictive areas must be reinforced with police missions from other European countries (in the same way that police forces are deployed outside European borders).
- Provide Frontex with the appropriate means in terms of staff and equipment, so that they can manage the situation. The amount of Frontex personnel should be sufficient to take care of the records of people arriving at the coast, as well as the return procedure in cases of negative resolution and participate in the returns so that they are carried out in the most humane manner possible.
- Develop adequate emergency, evacuation and security plans for the refugee camps.
- Adequate working equipment, vehicles, uniform, etc. and adequate financial compensation for the hardship of the working conditions.
- Adequate police facilities, with decent changing rooms and toilets and a place for washing and disinfecting working clothes.
- Organization of the refugees in the camps by origin, religion, etc., so as to avoid putting people who may have ideological differences in the same zone and avoid, as far as possible, confrontations to arise.
- Effective and real separation of vulnerable people.
- Need to urgently implement a service of trusted translators to enable communication between the different actors.
- Financing must be made possible as well as mechanisms to carry out specific police training in refugee crisis management. This must be done without delay.
- A follow up, under the supervision of the European institutions, is needed to measure the long-term psychological impact on the police officers who are dealing with other human beings

in extreme circumstances, in this case focused on the Police officers working in the refugee camps in the Aegean.

From EuroCOP we ask the heads of European police forces to cooperate by promoting and sharing the best practices for monitoring the health, safety and well-being of those who are working directly with this humanitarian crisis.

We call upon the European Commission and the rest of European institutions and states to make appropriate commitments, consider a better organization of services and make decisions bearing in mind that they can and should be implemented in practice. This would also reduce the daily stress suffered by police officers and the rest of public services in the refugee camps. The situation in the camps reflects that the measures taken so far are proving insufficient. It is up to all European governments to find viable solutions for the management of this crisis.

The European Police Confederation (EuroCOP) is an organization that brings together 35 associations and police unions across Europe.

Based in Luxembourg and Brussels, we represent the interests of almost half a million police officers from 27 European countries. At present, EuroCOP is addressing issues ranging from cross-border police cooperation or the terrorist threat, to the evaluation and creation of a safer work environment for police officers. In this regard, we contribute to debates on European policies and provide added value by offering the perspective of professionals in

the field: police officers. EuroCOP was created in November 2002 and is an independent, secular, non-profit organization, with no affiliation to any government or political party. Funded solely through contributions from its members, EuroCOP is open to any organization representing police officers in Europe. EuroCOP represents the voice of European police officers, ensuring their rights, security, values and their position in society. We are a member organization of the Council of Europe.

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