

**For Immediate Release**

**24 November 2021**

## **HIAS Greece won a case of criminalization of protest, acquitting 2 refugees charged with resistance, disobedience, and attempted occupation of public space**

On November 18, 2021, the Three-members Misdemeanors Court of Mytilene acquitted the refugees represented by HIAS Greece who faced the charges of resistance to the police, disobedience, and attempted occupation of public space.

In 2017, in the extremely overcrowded camp of Moria which lacked adequate accommodation, medical services and policing, several people died from unidentified causes, while widespread sexual assaults spread fear among women and children, to the point that some women could not risk visiting the shower area for months. On 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017, mass-scale clashes took place between Arabic speaking and Farsi speaking residents of Moria.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017, in an attempt to find safety and having nowhere else to go, SH. from Afghanistan, and A. from Iran, with another 14 asylum seekers, gathered in the Sappho Square of Mytilene in order to protect themselves from sexual offences, as well as to protect their life, health and bodily integrity. The asylum seekers also tried to protest the poor living conditions in the Moria camp, as well as extreme delays in the asylum procedure and their entrapment on the island of Lesbos, result of the EU-Turkey statement and the accompanying policy of geographical restrictions. The Police tried to remove the 16 protestors from Sappho Square, and the protesting asylum seekers were charged with 'disobedience' and 'attempted occupation of public space', while three of the protestors, among them A. from Iran, represented by HIAS Greece, were charged with 'resistance' to the police.

This case is another example of the trend of criminalization of protest on the island of Lesbos, where, in the last 4 years hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees have been charged with unsubstantiated charges such as 'occupation of public space' and 'disobedience' while trying to peacefully protest the horrible living conditions in the Moria camp.

It is worth noting that in 2019, [HIAS Greece helped acquit more than 108 asylum seekers](#) facing almost identical charges for holding protests at Sappho Square in Lesbos.

**About HIAS**

*HIAS is the global Jewish nonprofit that protects refugees whose lives are in danger for being who they are. Guided by values and history, HIAS works in the United States and 15 countries around the world to help refugees rebuild their lives in safety and advocates to ensure that all displaced people are treated with dignity. More info at [@HIASrefugees](#), [Facebook](#) and [hias.org](#).*