



BEHIND THE BARBED WIRE

A photo-journal of the hidden lives of refugees in the “EU HOTSPOT” camp on the Greek Island of Lesbos by Syd Bolton

What is Moria?

Moria is an ‘EU HOTSPOT’ camp on the Aegean island of Lesbos off the coast of Turkey, officially known as a reception and identification centre. Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) and EASO (European Asylum Support Office) have a presence there along with the Greek asylum service and some NGOs and international agencies. This camp is the place where all new arrivals are fingerprinted, where security screening is carried out along with admissibility, asylum claims examination, detention and deportation.

Photography is forbidden in this closed camp and all the photos in this exhibition were taken necessarily clandestinely to reveal the reality of life for refugees there.

Moria has an official capacity of approximately 1,500 but is frequently overcrowded. As demonstrated in the photographs people live in inhumane, insanitary conditions there many for over 12 months, in temporary prefab containers, flimsy shelters and tents, surrounded by barbed wire. Moria is inaccessible to the public and access to the site is very difficult, even for lawyers. It is 6km from the nearest town which ensures the people at the camp are kept away from contact with local services and communities. The camp also encloses an inner detention compound, used to keep unaccompanied children in ‘protective custody’ in the absence of suitable alternative care arrangements. At the moment there are approximately 25 unaccompanied children detained there.

This camp is on the frontline of the humanitarian crisis facing refugees where based on EU policy the EU-Turkey Deal aims to stop more arrivals and push people back to Turkey. Many people have risked their lives at sea and many have also died enroute in flimsy boats at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers. Despite the EU-Turkey Deal people still risk their lives searching for protection. The average daily arrivals to the Aegean islands were 68 in May 2017.

Photographer:

Syd Bolton is a children’s right solicitor (currently non-practising in the UK) who is providing voluntary assistance to refugees and to Greek legal professions and NGOs in relation to the present refugee situation there. These photographs were taken between August 2015 and September 2016 in Moria.