

Refugees in Greece's Moria camp suffer in harsh winter

More than 2,000 people brave freezing temperatures in thin summer tents without any source of heating at the camp

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FILE PHOTO

By Evgenia Choros

ATHENS

Freezing temperatures and heavy snowfall since Saturday are making things even harder for the thousands of refugees and migrants staying at the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos.

The thin summer tents at the camp have been covered in snow since Saturday morning, leaving the people exposed to extreme weather conditions without any source of heating.

The overpopulated camp has over 2,000 people living in tents, according to Efi Latsoudi, a volunteer with Lesvos Solidarity.

"The situation right now [in Moria] is dramatic. There are a lot of people living in camping tents which broke last [Saturday] morning as they could not withstand the weight of the snow," Latsoudi told Anadolu Agency in a phone interview Sunday.

"Several volunteer groups distributed about 200 new camping tents, sleeping bags and blankets, but I don't think they are going to last," she said.

Despite the recent appeal from the UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to move the refugees and migrants into the mainland where conditions would be better, it appears there has not been any proper planning to deal with such a situation.

"The need for better protection will become all the more acute this weekend when temperatures on the islands are expected to drop. We are worried," read Friday's announcement by the UNHCR.

Ibrahim Kamara, a refugee from Sierra Leone, who has been living in a tent in Moria camp for the past six months, also complained about the lack of planning.

"There was no orientation, no plans or anything for this [the cold]. They never told us anything about the cold. And before that, there was heavy rain and everywhere was wet.

"I couldn't sleep in my tent. And now I can't sleep at all because my tent broke from the snow," Kamara said.

However, the situation in Kara Tepe – another refugee camp on the island – seems to be better. According to Spiros Galinos, mayor of Lesbos' capital Mytilene, refugees in Kara Tepe live in small houses which have heating.

"With the cold weather, the conditions in Moria are worse now as they are hosting double the number of people that can be fit. The camp can only host 1,500 people, but now it hosts about 3,500 people.

"There were not enough houses and that's why there are so many tents," Galinos said.

The cold temperatures are expected to continue for several more days, with Greek authorities predicting sub-zero temperatures and occasional snowfall for the North Aegean region.

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