



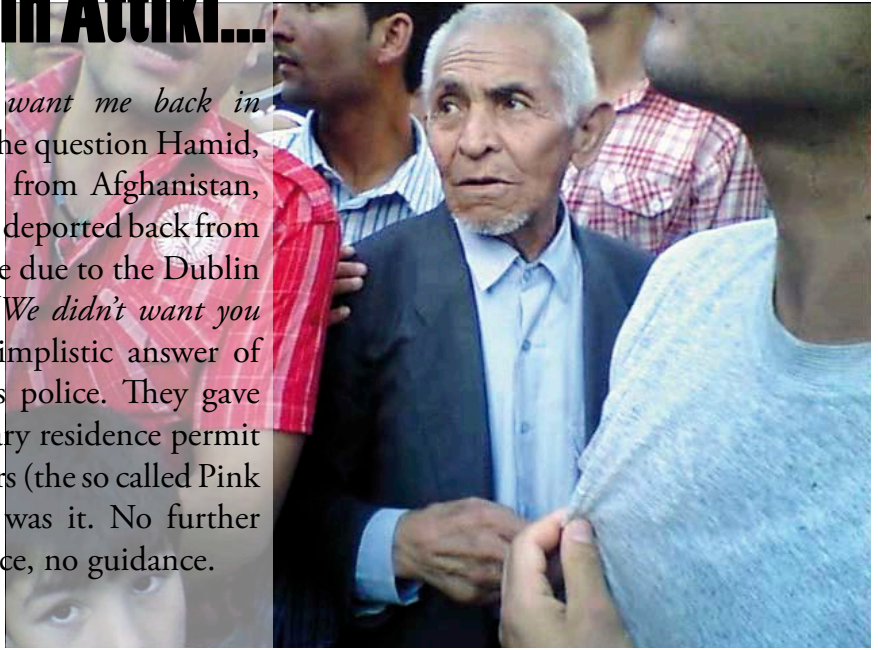
**Why did you
want me
back in Greece?**

*A Dublin II
Deportation Diary*

Athens & Patras 28.06.-02.07.2010

The first two days in Attiki...

“Why did you want me back in Greece?” This is the question Hamid, a young refugee from Afghanistan, asked after being deported back from Austria to Greece due to the Dublin II regulation¹. “We didn’t want you here!” was the simplistic answer of the Greek aliens police. They gave him his temporary residence permit for asylum seekers (the so called Pink Card) and that was it. No further help, no assistance, no guidance.



Based on European law, every day refugees fingerprinted in Greece are sent back from Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Britain, Sweden, Finland... in short all 30 countries that have signed the Dublin II regulation. In 2009 one third of the applications for transfers back to Greece actually took place.² Apparently, Greece is currently following the strategy of not replying to the return requests

of other Schengen member states resulting in the automatic acceptance of the refugees’ deportation after the expiration of the deadline. What all these individual stories of failure in the quest for asylum in Europe tell in common is that the responsible authorities in the European countries all assure the deportees of

their access to their rights in Greece: of a fair asylum procedure, of access to housing, social welfare, food, work etc. At the same time, Greece has been repeatedly condemned by international organizations such as the UNHCR, AI, ECRE, Human Rights Watch and NGOs from different countries such as Pro Asyl and NOAS for not respecting refugees’ rights and for not being a “safe host country”, i.e. since Greece is repeatedly violating the principle of non-refoulement³.

“I have been deported from Suisse, Italy and Austria!”

Hamid (24, from Afghanistan) was deported from Austria in 2010. “They took me in the dark of the morning hours. I was brought to the airport. When I arrived in Greece the airport police gave me a paper. They said: ‘Go to the aliens police.’ There was no interpreter. I went there. They just gave me a Pink Card. Then they told me to go. I went to the Greek Refugee Council (GCR), but they said the state is responsible for me. They also said that they have not been paid and that most of their lawyers are not working anymore. I went to the UNHCR, they said: ‘We know that the situation here is bad.’ I slept on the streets. I ate in churches, but some of them also closed recently. I got sick, but I couldn’t pay my medicine. Then I decided to return back to Afghanistan, but they said I have to wait. Then they said you have to pay your own ticket to Afghanistan if you want to return. How can I pay? So I cannot even return. I have only this Pink Card. What should I do with this Pink Card? It is nothing!”

“I have been deported from Suisse, Italy and Austria!” “I have been deported from Germany!” “I have been deported from Finland!” “I have been deported from Britain!” “I have been deported from Austria!” “I have been deported from Belgium!” The stories intermingle, a shooting fire of voices outraged and in anger. Attiki Square, the centre of Athens. Located in a part of the city

¹ The Dublin II regulation was adopted in 2003 and has been ratified by 30 European countries. It is European Union law that determines the EU Member States responsible to examine an application for asylum seekers seeking international protection and provides for the transfer of an asylum seeker to that Member State. Usually, the responsible Member State will be the state through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU. It is the corner stone of the Dublin System, comprised of the Dublin Regulation and the EURODAC Regulation, which establishes a Europe-wide fingerprinting database for “unauthorized” entrants to the EU and leads to thousands of inner-European deportations each year.

² Amnesty International 2010: The Dublin II Trap: Transfers of Asylum Seekers to Greece.

³ The principle of *non-refoulement* is the cornerstone of international refugee protection, and obliges states not to return anyone to a country where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations.

that apart from the Greek neighbours has been inhabited since some years by many Afghan refugees. They ask: *“Who are you? - What are you doing here? - What difference does it make if you report our situation? - There have been many journalists and NGOs coming here, but nothing changes! It just becomes worse.”* And then so many questions about asylum in Europe: *“How is the situation in other European countries? - Where can I get asylum?”* –

“Will I be sent back again if I try once more?” – *“Where can I find help for my sick child?”* There is no master plan, no general solution, and no easy answer. The refugees are excited and stressed from the pressure of finding a safe haven, a future for themselves and their families. *“If Greece does not want us, why don't they let us go elsewhere?”*



The Attiki Square is filled up with of a mixture of people, some have just arrived and seek a way out, others have been already returned back. In one of the corners the women sit together, the children play on the grass behind the benches. Adela is worried about her child. Her eldest son Wahid (15) left on his own to Germany to increase his chances of getting asylum and because they did not have enough money to leave all together. Next to her sits Fatima. She came to Greece with her five year old daughter.

“My eldest son lives in Sweden. He has been recognized and has a Swedish passport now. On this ground we could apply for a Visa to join him in Sweden. The Swedish embassy in Iran issued Visas for me, my eldest daughter (12), my second son (9) but not for my youngest child.” She shows her passport with the three Visas. *“I sent my two children who had a Visa to Sweden, but I was forced to go with my small daughter illegally from Turkey. What can I do? I don't know why they didn't give me a Visa for my youngest daughter! What sense does it make?”* Each woman has a sad story to tell. They come with their children alone or with their husbands or brothers. Tahera is anxious about the wellbeing of her three year old girl. *“It is a few months that I am in Greece. My daughter has been born sick, but since the six months in Greece her condition has worsened. She cannot breath, her lungs don't work well.”* For one week she has been in the hospital. Then the doctors said the child has to be operated, but it cannot be done in Greece. She should take it

to Germany that would be better. *“My daughter has to be operated within the next 5 days, the doctor said. It is now 20 days from these 5 days. I try very hard to leave, but how?”* Mariam is also worried. *“We are trapped in Greece. My husband became depressive because of all our problems, because he cannot find work. We have no place to stay, no money for food. We live in friend's houses, but*



we can never stay for long. To eat we have to go to the church and to Caritas or to collect food from the rubbish. We used to collect also other things from the garbage bins and sell them once a week on a night market for one or two Euro. That was all our earnings, but now the neighbours protested against the market and the police closed it down.” Then, her eyes averted in shame, she whispers: *“My husband became drug addicted. What can I do? We didn't apply for asylum, because there is no asylum in Greece. Without the asylum seekers card no organization can help him, they say. I have asked everywhere!”*

The issue of health is a basic problem among the undocumented as much as for the asylum seekers. The economical crisis is definitely a worsening factor for the living conditions not only for Greeks but also for others, especially the disadvantaged parts of the population in Greece – i.e. refugees. *“We are soft, so we break first,”* tells Adam from Sudan concerning the economical crisis of

Greece. Access to medical treatment is already an obstacle but it is even more difficult to get free medicine. Usniya, mother of two children, has diabetes. It is now four years she is unable to buy the medicine she needs. We met her the first time on the Friday evening bazaar where she was sitting on the pavement, leaning on a wall next to the metro line selling second hand games, clothes and other things found in the rubbish. Her face was pale, her whole body in pain. *“The first time I went to the doctors, they told me to come back with a translator. The second time they gave me a receipt to buy the medicine I need myself but I have no money.”* She

lives nearby Attiki Square in an Afghan hotel. We are looking for her, but she does not appear on the square. When we ask the others about her wellbeing people tell us her hotel had just been raided by police. She is living with her family on the streets now.

A bit further away from the women a group of deportees from Germany, Austria and Switzerland are chatting in German about their shared

plight. *“How long were you in Germany? Almost a year. And you? I was deported from Austria after a period of 14 months.”* “Schubhaft” is an Austrian term used for the practice of detention: the biggest group of Dublin-deportees at Attiki comes from Austria.

Simin Ahmadi (30, Afghanistan) and her family were deported from Austria in September 2009. In 2001 she had fled together with her husband from Afghanistan to Iran when she was about to be forced into an unwanted marriage with her cousin. In Iran she gave birth to her two little daughters (now 3 and 5 years old). The family was under constant threat of their relatives who persecuted the escapees also to Iran in order to kill her. The scars of the assault that almost killed her still show signs of the stabbing on her body. The rough road to Europe cost them not only their wedding rings that they had to sell among all their other belongings, but put their lives repeatedly into danger. In Greece the whole family was detained upon arrival and then freed only to find themselves homeless and without support on the streets of Athens. It was a question of survival to leave Greece and apply for asylum somewhere else. In their case it was Austria, the country, which after a period of 13 months never gave them an answer to their asylum request, the country that deported them back to Greece. “When my children play with other children they ask each other: from where have you been deported? I was deported from Austria. And they always ask: when will we return to Austria?” Simin her husband and her two little daughters lived in Traiskirchen, Hainfeld, Ramsau and Payerbach. But they had no luck: “They came in the morning and brought us to Vienna. We had a lawyer from Diakonie, he just said ‘I am sorry.’” In Athens they had to stay for three days imprisoned at the airport, where the police gave them a pink card upon release. They have been waiting since more than nine months now for a shelter, that the Greek



“I wish another life for my daughters.”

Refugee Council is trying to find for them. “The first days after our deportation we had to sleep in the park.” The smaller daughter was bitten by insects and had an allergic reaction. “We went to the Doctors of the World. They just laughed when we asked for medicine and said we had no money to pay for it. Another Afghan then gave us the money for the medicine.” It was a documentary in German television that has helped us to survive till now. They collected some money to pay for our rent.⁴ Now we collect garbage. We go to the market and search the dustbins at the end of the day. We wash the vegetables and pickle them. I am afraid my children might become sick. We try to eat two times a day at places of the churches. A breakfast is not possible. The people they fight for the best place in the cue. Sometimes somebody steps on the children.” In Austria Simin lost a third child in a spontaneous abortion in the fifth month: “I was so stressed about the deportation to Greece. In the back of my head there is a shrapnel from a bomb attack. The doctor in Austria said they could not deport me like this, but nobody cared.” Her husband who is most of the time silent finally speaks: “We had a long journey. We both did not have much chance to go to school or to learn. I wish another life for my daughters.” – “They should be free and go to school, this is my biggest dream!” Simin adds, and in this moment her face looks much younger than before.

⁴ Report about the situation of the family from March 2010 see: <http://www.welt.de/die-welt/politik/article5364663/Gestrandet-in-Athen.html> and <http://www.wdr.de/tv/bab/sendungsbeitraege/2010/0303/fluechtlinge.jsp>

Yousouf (39, from Ghazni/Afghanistan) was deported from Austria in May 2010. He had travelled with his family through Greece to Austria. He lived there with his wife and his child for 2 ½ years - first in Kärnten then in Graz in a pension of a mountain village. First he got a yellow paper, then a white one. Before his deportation he was brought to detention in Vienna, district 9. Fourty days ago he was deported without his family. His wife and his child were not at home, when the police came in the early morning hours to surprise them. He could warn them. Upon his arrival in Greece he was directed to the Aliens police by the airport police and received a Pink Card. There was no interpreter to explain to him what was going on. Now he is homeless and without money living on the streets: "I cannot even deport myself back to Afghanistan. They now take 700 Euro from everyone who wants to return. I am on a waiting list since the day I returned. I don't have any contact with my family since I was deported. I have no idea where they are now! We applied for asylum in Austria, but we were rejected twice because of our fingerprints in Greece. I tried to tell them how bad Greece is, I showed them photos, I told them I could tell them more than 30 witnesses that would prove the truth of my words. But they replied that it was just bad before because we had not applied for asylum yet and the structures support only asylum seekers. Then they said: 'This time when you return, you will receive the Pink Card and all the support you need concerning housing and welfare.' But it was not true."

Mustafa (18, from Afghanistan) was deported from Germany in March 2010. He is very quiet in the beginning observing and listening to the discussions of the others. Only when the others leave he starts talking about his story. "I was under-aged when I arrived in Greece in 2007, and I was under-aged when I arrived in Austria a few months later. I wanted to apply for asylum, but they found my Greek sim-card in my mobile phone and they told me they will send me back. Then I tried to apply for asylum in Germany. I arrived at the Athens airport on the 24th March of this year. They tore my documents from Germany and just told me: 'Go to the police station!' On the paper they changed my birth date from 1992 to 1990. I don't know why. I went to the police station for one week every day, but they never let me in. Then it was my turn and the officer asked me: 'Do you want the Pink Card?' I was so disappointed from Greece. I said: No! Then I left. What should I do with this card? Since three years I am running around Europe trying to get asylum. I spent a lot of money which I have to pay back one day and now I don't have even money to call back home and tell my mother that I am alive."

Ali Jan (40, from Afghanistan) was deported back from Blankenburg/ Oldenburg, Germany in 2004. Upon his return, he fell victim to police forces who beat him. He was treated by the Centre for the Victims of Torture. We met him after the hotel he was living in was raided. "They only gave me a Pink Card when I returned and then I experienced one of the most violent incidents of my life. In Germany they told me that I will receive protection in Greece. Instead I was threatened and assaulted by state employees. I fled from Afghanistan because of terror, and I was sent back to terror from Germany to Greece." We look together at his papers. He has kept proof of everything he experienced in Greece, from his time in Germany and his deportation, but he is very afraid to give us copies. "Please don't show the papers anywhere. Use them and then destroy them immediately!" This is how safe refugees feel in Greece!

German Dublin II cases are more seldom but still many. After years of campaigning and documenting the failing asylum system in Greece, the German High Court suspended Dublin-deportations to Greece in nine cases. On this basis it is still possible to avoid deportation with the help of lawyers at the moment. The whole procedure is not easy to explain, there is no simple to answer to the question: "Where can I go?" For each case there are other opportunities and other difficulties. It makes a difference if someone has family, if he will be recognized as under-aged or not etc.

Deportees from Germany we speak to, have in most cases been returned long time ago. Others have been caught by the police or border guards in the trains close to the Austrian-German border. They never managed to contact specialised lawyers or support groups. In sum: the access to information⁵ in advance to their arrival but also after and the chance to appeal⁶ decides about their future.

Attiki Square is a small place close to the metro line. It has a few trees, a little bit of green. On the one side there are a hand full of coffee bars and a restaurant. Nothing special - neither nice nor ugly. The square mirrors the current police actions against undocumented migration. Sometimes you find it totally empty – meaning police controls have increased. Sometimes it is full of Afghan refugees – meaning police is controlling less. These days it is very crowded. Still police is patrolling, but there is no other place to go. During lunch time small groups of young men hang around chitchatting with each other or just sitting alone and thinking about the future that the next day might bring, about how to survive, about how to leave this country. In the early afternoon the sun is slowly disappearing into the smog of the city, it is not so hot and the square fills with women, their small children and unaccompanied minors.

⁵ A web-guide for refugees was created to give access to understandable information: <http://w2eu.info> – there are also leaflets to print that gather information about Dublin II in different European countries and give contacts to NGOs that can provide contacts to specialised lawyers.

⁶ The access to legal means for people who pass the Dublin II procedure is controversial in Germany. Some federal states already decided that there has to be information on a planned Dublin deportation in advance to make legal means possible. But there is no consistent procedure for whole Germany. The awaited decision of the German High Court will have to take a firm stand on this question.



Reza (19, from Afghanistan) was deported from Germany in 2010. He came to Greece the first time in 2008. He was 17 years old and he decided to apply for asylum since he had severe health problems, being treated in the following for one month in the hospital of Sparti for Hepatitis. He decided to leave Greece due to lacking medical support and because he was sure he had no chance for asylum here. He had remained homeless, without work, money and food. In summer 2009 he arrived in Hungary, where he applied for asylum. When they found his fingerprints in Greece he escaped and left to Austria where he arrived in August 2009. The police arrested him and he was quickly informed that Austria asked Greece to return him there, because of his asylum application. When travelling from Austria to Germany

he was caught in the train near Passau in November 2009. The 'Bundespolizei' initiated a medical "age-assessment" and changed his date of birth from 1993 to 1991. He stayed in detention until his deportation without having access to any lawyers. Before being deported from Germany back to Athens, the German civil servants told him that he should go to the Greek Refugee Council to find support upon arrival. On 16th of February 8:45 a.m. he was deported with a Lufthansa flight from Munich to Athens. Back in Greece he arrived at the airport. Without being detained he was left to go with a Greek note to visit the aliens police within three days upon arrival to receive his Pink Card. He was issued the Pink Card on the 19th of February 2010, with his age being changed to 18 and his date of birth too. They gave him some addresses of churches and other places to find support. He went to GCR for support, but there they just "laughed in desperation", as he says, because of the massive workload. Reza needed a means to survive, so he went to work in the seasonal work of Thiva, in the onion and potato harvest. There is no constant work, sometimes they only earn only 3 Euro a day or they don't even get paid at all while lacking legal means to claim their wages. "I will not stay in Greece. I cannot stay in Greece!"

Just another day of crisis in Omonia and Attiki

No taxi to be seen, on the way the Sudanese and Somali Communities in Omonia, Athens. It is strike-time and so everybody has to walk – many join the demonstration. It is one of these protests that became daily routine in Athens, since the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fond (IMF) dictates Greek politics. The tear gas in the air cuts our breath.

The demonstration is fading, it is one of these hot days, but the mood is not boiling over. Protests continue. They need a long breath now. But under the surface there is a permanent tremor, like the whisper of cracking ice before it breaks. Some African workers move forward with the rhythms of their drums – not too enthusiastic, but smoothly swinging. Their banner says: Open the borders! They are only few protestors today – the sleepy lion fragmented – but you can feel the atmosphere at several places of the city. It seems just a matter of time until one small incident can start another revolt.



The demonstration ends at Omonia. A step out and into the other world of those who say: What do you mean by 'crisis'? For us crisis is permanent and this is absolutely not new.

The streets of Omonia are another mirror of reality: Since the governmental operation 'secure the centre of Athens' started, police raids every few hours the

Today the colourful area beneath Omonia, full of migrant and Greek shops, call centres, multi-ethnic food stores and small African, Kurdish and Arab restaurants, a place normally overcrowded with migrant street-vendors seems abandoned and quite. Only those who are not able to move anymore, lost in the abyss of heroine or other drugs, hang around

in Athens. The unknown detention periods they will have to face belong to the many question marks of the Greek asylum policy. Most of them will be set free at some point, issued another white paper, an order to leave the country within 30 days – a small protection just until the next raid or until they manage, to find their way to flee from Greece.

Entering Omonia feels like putting a burning glass between you and the world, which confronts you with a heavy load of violence, but also concentrated hopes and expectations - if you risk a deeper look. Later in the evening a young Afghan journalist talks about the opinion of an Austrian colleague. He draws the picture of Omonia as a place of war more dangerous than Kabul. The rule of competing "warlords" who fight over the power of the streets is incomprehensible for the outsider like the bush to the tourist. The police forces are just another actor in this game.

A bit further to the north is the coffee bar of the Sudanese in a small side street. African kids play on the street next to some drug users. "They have become one with us in our family", says Adam talking about the drug users. "We have no problems with them, they belong to our neighbourhood!" Inside Sudanese, Somalis, Eritreans and Northern Africans men are drinking their tea while watching the Football World Championship. Gregory turns around showing his papers: "This is the pink card. It is the card they give to the deported, you know? I don't know anyone who got it before his first return. Here they give papers only for some short time after your deportation. The pink card is a 5-6 months paper. When you go to renew it they will take it away from you in most of the times and issue another white paper, which means 'leave the country'."

Omar (from Darfur/Sudan) was deported twice from Finland - the last time in October 2009. In 2005 he arrived through the land border to Turkey and was first arrested in Komotini. He left Greece and went to Finland. After two months his fingerprints were found. He was detained for four days and returned to Greece. Nobody listened to his asylum claim. In 2008 he tried again to apply for asylum in Finland. After 11 months and an asylum application his fingerprints were found again. "They told me that Greece was a good country for refugees. They said Greece is responsible for me and I am not allowed to apply for asylum here. I told them I was there before, and Greece does not help refugees. I don't like Greece because they don't give anything to us! They replied: 'No problem! They will give you everything!' The court made its decision and I was sent back." In the airport they gave him a paper to sign that he didn't understand. Then he went to the police and got his Pink Card. The Pink Card he received should have been renewed two months ago, but for some reason the police does not do it. "I was deported 8 months ago. I went more than 15 times to renew my papers. Now my girlfriend came from Finland. We want to marry, but the municipality told me I need a passport to marry. I told them: 'I have no passport. I am from Darfur. I didn't come like a tourist to Greece with the airplane. I travelled through thousand dangers to flee from my country! I am a refugee and I have no passport!' You know, they don't renew my paper; they don't let me marry now. What can I do? I sell CD's on the streets to survive. When I leave my room it is possible that I won't return, because the police can arrest me. I cannot even have a SIM-Card or open a bank account – very simple things I cannot do." In the next days his girlfriend will have to return to Finland. They have fought to get all the papers they need to marry but it wasn't enough.

streets of downtown Athens. It is not the first time though. In preparation of the Olympic Games 2004 similar police operations led to the "cleaning" of the city centre for the tourists, whereby expulsing all "the unwanted" – be they drug users, dealers, migrants, homeless etc. - into the streets south of Omonia. Pushing migrants into the same corner with the drug economy and consume increased the number of addicted migrants and migrant dealers, thus making it easier for the Media and the dominant discourse to illegalise and criminalise migrants.

motionless. A big bus, surrounded by riot police is standing at the next corner, already half full with *sans-papiers*. The streets are now under control of civil and riot police. They are swarming out to catch the "lawless" and fill their bus with their preys, which will later bring once again another load of undocumented behind the bars of one of the overcrowded police stations



Mary (25, from Eritrea) was deported from Norway in June 2010. She had arrived in Greece in 2009. She came in a dinghy to Mytilini and stayed for 1 ½ months in detention. She remembers the protests of the noborder activists: “And then the German embassy came. Freedom! Freedom!” Although she soon made some positive experiences with her new friends, she was out of luck from then on. In Athens she was lucky for the last time: she got a place in a hotel for a few days together with some Eritrean and Afghan women. But after a short time they were kicked-out by the owner. Therefore she had to sleep on the street for some days until her planned departure from Greece. In these three days of homelessness she was sexually abused and raped on the streets of Athens. Although she cried for help nobody stopped to help her. Bleeding and unconscious she was found by a Nigerian passer-by. She managed to leave the country and arrive in Norway, where she lodged an asylum application. In her asylum interview she spoke about her traumatic experiences in Greece. She was pregnant from the rape and had an abortion. But the officers said only: “You are a Dublin!”

“The police officer in Greece told me: ‘Now you are free!’ But where is the freedom? Greece is not freedom, it is garbage!”

After 9 months the police entered her room at 6 o’clock in the morning and arrested her during sleep. She was deported back to Greece together with another Eritrean woman. They resisted. The policemen explained to them that they would be deported nevertheless and closed their mouths with tape. She cried all the time in the airplane. Four policemen accompanied the deportation. They kicked her legs and feet when she was trying to move. “The police officer in Greece told me: ‘Now you are free!’ But where is the freedom? Greece is not freedom, it is garbage!” She has now a Pink Card, no home and works for 10 Euro a day. She has to be happy about the fact that she is not unemployed. But she cannot stop crying. “I have no money to take the bus or the train and go to some organisation for help. I have no food, no family, nothing!” She often forgets what she is about to do. For a few days she can stay in a temporary shelter, a small room that she shares with a lot of other women. She leaves the room only to go to work. On her way to work she always feels someone being after her. “I try to make myself invisible.”

border crossing. “We were 50 or more, most of us were Africans. We had to pass this river. There was one small boat, we put the children inside and choose the smallest women to join them in the boat. Most of the others had to walk through the waters that had risen because of heavy rainfalls some days earlier. They linked their arms to a chain and started going. The water was deep and when the first person went head under water the chain broke. Only a few were able to swim and reached the other side. We tried to find the others, but they were carried away by the river. Police came and we begged them to search for the others. But they only found the dead bodies of two African women.” One tear is finally finding its way to her cheek, but there is no energy left for grief: “Now they let us free to come here – but I have to find out if my husband is alive or if he is dead. I need to know. My children are asking me every day since.” She sighs deeply: “How can I find him?”⁸

A young man steps in and asks for a lighter. His gaze is faded away and he can hardly walk or speak. He takes the lighter and disappears again. “He was not always like this, he was my friend and three years ago he made it to Netherlands. After his deportation, he gave up on his life. His soul is broken. I see him sometimes when he picks up food from the garbage. Many get lost like him.

It is what happens with us, when we lose our hope.”

It is only 15 minutes of walking from Omonia to Attiki Square. The closer you come the more obvious is the presence of Afghans. Today everybody on the square is concerned about a tragic story. One woman with three small boys has just arrived from Evros river. Fatima lost her husband on the

It is early in the night only a few walking minutes away from Attiki Square. Three young Afghan refugees are walking together on the street. Suddenly, two police motorbikes appear out of the dusk with turned on sirens. The boys are surprised and afraid. They have no papers. Spontaneously they run away. This suspicious reaction alarms the state ‘cowboys’ so they jump of

7 In the first half of 2010 at least 50 refugees were found dead in Evros’ river. See also report on this incident in June: http://sofiaecho.com/2010/07/02/926788_migrant-deaths-on-turkish-greek-border-spark-unhcr-concern and <http://clandestinenglish.wordpress.com/2010/06/30/june-2010-clandestina-report/>

8 Until today there are no proofs for his death and no ones for his survival. For the follow-up of the quest for the lost family members in Evros see: <http://infomobil-w2eu.blogspot.com/>

and one of them catches one of the minors. He grasps him from his shirt highly aggressive. The boy is afraid, falls down. The officer beats him with his fist on his head. An old man comes out of a shop near by and shouts to the officer: "What are you doing? Don't hit the small boy!" "Shut up," the officer is outrageous. "Don't beat him," the old Greek man is shocked by the 'rambo' beating the small kid. The police officer turns to the old man now

"What did the boy do? Why do they beat this child? This is all due to this horrible fascist neighbourhood movement."

this child? This is all due to this horrible fascist neighbourhood movement. They believe they are the only "real" and "clean" Greeks, but in reality they are just shit. They call the police and complain about the migrants. Unfortunately there are many of them and we are only a few. We cannot say anything!" He leaves shaking his head seemingly frustrated. The three boys are brought all together to the police station. A few hours ago it was a normal

machine drives along the square, like a sarcastic symbol for the fascist interpretation of cleanness. It is after midnight. About 20 Bangladeshi stand silent in front of their demolished room of prayer in middle the shreds of their religion. "It happens regularly. Often the only thing we can do is to go and be at least witnesses." The broken glass in the mosque and all the destruction reminds one of the early 90s in Germany, of the pogroms directed against migrants used by the politicians to abolish the right of asylum.

Since two years Greece has observed an increase in anti immigrant behaviour, racism and organized right wing/fascist groups. Their propaganda infiltrates the neighbourhoods and the simple Greek citizens mind. In Athens the area round Viktoria, St. Panteleimon Church and Attiki Square have become a site of struggles reflecting these developments. Once a lively neighbourhood, a meeting point for the young and the old for both Greeks and immigrants and close to the city centre, it is now just a bit less than a war zone - a space of dispute with increasing incidents of neo-Nazi assaults and violence symbolic for the uprising of traditional fascist groups such as Chrissi Avgi. A core group of neo-Nazis and far right residents of the area organised a fascist neighbourhood movement in St. Panteleimon Church, which uses stereotypical images such as the alien as "criminal", "dangerous" and "dirty" to win more combatants. It started with the expulsion of immigrants from public squares, with threats, and peaked in assaults and systematic destruction of migrant shops or religious places. All this under the eyes of the government whose left hand, the police, has defined their role diplomatically in protecting the neo-Nazis instead of their victims. The 1st of May 2010,



threatening him verbally. Meanwhile the other policemen hunt the other two. The second officer has stayed on the bike and seems a bit anxious about the state of mind of his colleague who meanwhile stopped beating the boy. Still outraged he stands up, pushing the boy to the other side of the street, to the opposite direction of the police station. His colleague drives next to him shouting "Panagiotti, Panagiotti" as if he wanted to tell him: "Don't!" It seems as if he tries to look out for a dark corner to continue the beatings without witnesses. The shouts bring him back to reality and the officer brings the boy to his colleague. While they put the youngster in handcuffs another Greek passant is asking: "Why are they doing that? He is so young." A man passes by with his dog, he is angry: "What did the boy do? Why do they beat

neighbourhood with a high rate of immigrant population living next door to the Greeks. Now it is nothing more than a site of racist violence. Just 15 minutes later, the neonazis are demonstrating at the Attiki Square. There were 30 persons in the beginning, then up to 200. They are beating Afghans forcing them to leave what they think is theirs - the square, the neighbourhood, the country. For some hours they attack everything they dislike: Muslim places of prayer, migrant hotels and shops. The policemen continue arresting migrants sharing the same aggressive mood. The haunt continues. The square is empty. A cleaning

the 2nd of June, the 8th of June, the 30th of June... an endless list of racist and fascist crimes that remain unregistered and not reported. The neo-Nazis continue to frighten the neighbourhood and to bring violence and horror to the streets of St. Panteleimon and Attiki till today. In their own public statements the police just as Chrissi Avgi refers to the victims of fascist attacks as logical consequence of gang wars between competing migrant groups. In a recent incident where a young immigrant was badly beaten by neo-Nazis the aggressors demanded from the ambulance not to treat the “illegal migrant”, since they thought he was just threatening the public health that “we Greeks pay and we are supposed to have”, as they write, in times of economical crisis. Apart of migrants themselves all neighbours disagreeing with the neo-Nazi neighbourhood movement, the antiracist solidarity groups and even the house owners who rent flats to migrants

are personally threatened. Mariam says: *“The Greek neighbours don’t like us to be here. They say we are too loud. We are many people on this square every day. Yes, it is loud. But we are here because we don’t have any place to go. We have no home, our kids can’t go to school, and our men do not find work. Where should we go? ... I cannot walk anymore into the centre of the city. I am afraid. I don’t go out anymore because I am afraid. There are these racist groups, they sometimes attack us, they beat us without any reason.”*

It is long after midnight. The strike is over. The refugees’ questions remain: *What can you do for us? How can you help us? One should ask back: What exactly do you need from us? How could we start moving together?*

Then the refugees ask more practical questions and make concrete requests: *How can I get out of here? Which country is best for me?*

It is not enough to report. Convince your government to accept more refugees and stop sending them back here! You should not come only for some weeks in the summer for a Noborder Camp.

“It is not enough to report. Convince your government to accept more refugees and stop sending them back here!”

We need Noborder everyday! To feel free, like these days last summer. And you must also come to Athens!

We will return, that’s for sure. We hope for the old and new friends they might also find an exit, a way. We will meet some of them again - hopefully somewhere else. We will spread their stories and their hopes. And we will stay in touch – the only realistic promise for the moment.

Last exit Patras

According to FRONTEX in 2010 Greece accounts for more than 88% of the undocumented migration into Europe. Although immigration numbers are decreasing this year the country is still a hub of immigration with a growing population of undocumented being trapped within its borders.



It has been increasingly difficult to enter, but also to leave the country due to militarised borders and high investments in border control and management through FRONTEX⁹ and border agencies of other European countries. This development is strongly

connected to the newly elected PASOK government (October 2009) and their migration policies. Up to now we have only heard promises of improvements but what we see is a worsening of the situation on many levels. Until now the Dublin II deported together with

all the other asylum seekers in Greece have no chance for asylum. Therefore, they will use every opportunity and take every risk to try again and again to leave and some of them will lose their lives on their way in the trucks to Italy.

⁹ Frontex is the European Union’s border agency and active at various points of the external border of the EU. Due to its focus on border security, fundamental rights of refugees and migrants are often neglected in Frontex operations, while the agency is actively externalising the border through its policy and practice of inhibiting migration already at its points of departure.



Reza (from Afghanistan) was deported from Germany in the first months of 2010. His story sounds like a horror fairy tale. "On my way to Germany I had to fight with bears and Mafia, confront frightened village population and aggressive border guards." He was first caught in Hungary, but escaped from detention. Then he was arrested in Austria. Together with other refugees he was supposed to be deported back to Greece, but he and his friend went on hunger strike. He suffered hunger, thirst, cold and loneliness until he succeeded to reach Germany. He wanted to go to Germany from the beginning. But in Athens, his money got lost in the very beginning. It was all the

"Good news for you: You don't need to make an asylum application, because we will send you back to Greece!" (German civil servant at the aliens police)

money he had gathered to continue his journey, so he had to claim asylum in Greece. "I really tried to live in Greece. But it is so difficult here. When I had no work I slept on the streets. I had to go to the churches to ask for food. When I found work in a bakery, I was happy, but then the boss did not pay me. I asked him for my money but he started shouting at me and pushed me against the machine that was pressing the loaves. My hand went into the machine and I had to go to hospital. I had no health insurance and so I had to pay for the after treatment. I could not pay and since then my left hand is weak and useless. I only wish to reach the day that I will stand on my own feet, the day

that I will know that here I can stay, now I am safe." Reza's asylum claim in Greece was rejected. The asylum recognition rate in Greece by that time was with less than 1% the lowest in Europe. Reza decided to leave. "They found my fingerprints also in Germany and again I escaped. I am in real fear of my safety in Afghanistan. I cannot be returned. I tried everything to stay in Germany. I asked help from lawyers. In the end I lost control. I don't know what happened exactly. Returning back is not an option for me. I have no other choice to survive than staying in Europe. When I understood I was losing the fight for my rights everything turned black in front of my eyes. I lost all feelings and started beating my head against a wall. All the blood... I faded away. My body went crazy I think. I couldn't calm down. There was no road, no help to find, no exit. This is when I threw myself

in front of a truck. I just wanted to die. You know, if you start your life as a small child having only problems and dangers, the latest when you become an adult you can throw away your brain. I never succeeded to reach my dreams and realize my hopes. Therefore sometimes I have this thought that it is better to kill myself in order not to think anymore. But for some reason I was not hit by the truck that day. It was not my destiny. The 'Bundesamt' told me that it would take three months for them to see whether Greece would accept me back or not. It was a horrible time. I was not here and not there – just waiting. When the three months were over we were so happy. With my friends we made a small party and I felt so relieved. I didn't know. In the end I could stay for some months more. My heart became warm about Germany. It was very nice, I played football at Marl Hüls and I went to language classes. I had my own room and everything I needed - a normal life. I didn't know. Until the night that they took me from my house, I didn't get any answer to my asylum claim. I didn't even get the chance to claim for asylum.

They didn't allow me to tell my story and they didn't want to hear about the difficult situation I suffered in Greece or about my problems in Afghanistan.”

When he starts speaking about his deportation he whispers nearly without breathing: “They came at 5 o'clock in the morning. I saw police in front of the door,

I wanted to jump out of the window but there was also police. ‘Gehen Sie zurück!’ – ‘Go back!’ they said. They brought me to the airplane: ‘We will deport you now and you will be a good child and stay quiet and calm, okay?’ The airplane was full of tourists who were happy to go for vacation and we were so sad to be forced to return because of Dublin.”

When Reza arrived in Athens, he went to the aliens' police and they gave him a Pink Card. He had no money, no place to sleep. “The only thing I brought with me from Germany was a pair of football shoes. I didn't need them anymore here, so I gave them as a present to one of my friends.” After a few days sleeping in a park he decided to try again to return to Germany. He has not lost hope. “Here in Patras life is very hard. We have no



shelter; there are mosquitoes everywhere. When we enter the trucks, they find us and beat us. They come in the night and arrest us. I am here since one month, we never know if we can sleep in the night

or if police will catch us and in the worst case they might deport us to Turkey. If we have

food, it spoils in the heat. If we want to clean ourselves, wash our clothes and take a shower at the beach where the Greeks spend their summer time, people tell us it is not our turn and it is not our right. The people of Patras don't perceive us as equals. We are not wanted here. We are the ones they blame for everything bad. There are many reasons why Patras is

very bad for us, but I have seen so much worse in my life, that I cannot think anymore about my problems here or I will go crazy one day. The worst thing in my life is not Patras, it was the day of my deportation!”

“The airplane was full of tourists who were happy to go for vacation and we were so sad to be forced to return because of Dublin.”

“I will return to Germany, that's sure!” Reza says. “In Germany I found friends and I could imagine to have

a normal life. I loved Germany ever since I was a child and first heard about it. Here I feel like someone whose hands and feet are cut off. Until now my life was like the life of a small child. I had no chance to take it in my own hands. I had so many difficulties that I don't feel at all as if I had a life until today. I want to become independent from peoples money, from the state, from social workers. There was never somebody on my side to stand by me. I was always alone on this road. I just want to start to build up my own life at a place where I am safe.”

P.S. Reza arrived back to Germany at the end of July 2010 and was sent to the deportation-prison in Ingelheim. Anyway, he still thinks he is lucky. The first time he managed to enter a truck in Greece it was a fridge and he run out of oxygen after some hours so that he could have died. A few hours later he woke up in an Italian hospital, where they kept him for one night only to deport him back to Greece the next morning. He says it is a big miracle that he survived and that he finally managed to escape again from Greece. He hopes the 'Bundesamt' will listen to his story this time.

In February 2009 [Finland](#) resumed the returns, having halted transfers of asylum-seekers to Greece since June 2008. Despite a judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court, that gave the base for this decision, the Finnish Immigration Service still refrains from transferring certain vulnerable groups (women, medical cases, unaccompanied children) to Greece. Families with children and unaccompanied children registered as adults in Greece were nevertheless transferred until May when the Finnish Administrative Court decided seven cases regarding the transfer of families to Greece and ruled that families with children should not be returned.

On 7 May 2009 the [Norwegian](#) Immigration Appeals Board resumed conditional returns to Greece, having temporarily halted them in February 2008 to gather further information about possible violations of the rights of asylum-seekers. Henceforth the Appeals Board will determine in each case whether or not return to Greece is appropriate, taking into particular account the asylum-seeker's vulnerability (Conditional returns to Greece: www.cisionwire.com/utlendingsnemnda/conditional-returns-to-greece).

In the [Netherlands](#) the transfers had been halted by Dutch courts, which expressed their concern about the Greek asylum procedure. At the end of 2008, however, the Council of State ruled that a Somali asylum-seeker could be transferred to Greece, since there were no concrete indications that she would be refouled from Greece (Council of State, Ruling No. 200805917/1, 29 December 2008). On 28 May 2009 the Dutch State Secretary for Justice announced that the Netherlands would resume Dublin transfers to Greece. On 23 June 2009 the Minister of Justice informed the House of Representatives of the Dutch Parliament about agreements, with the Greek authorities, that they will be

informed with at least 10 days' notice of the transfer of asylum-seekers; no more than 40 asylum-seekers are transferred within one week; and a Dutch official will be present during the transfer. Moreover, it is ensured that the asylum-seeker can file an asylum claim at the airport. For Somalis from South and Central Somalia deportations from Netherlands to Greece



are generally suspended after a general interim measure by the European Court of Human Rights in June 2010.

From [Austria](#), deportations according to Dublin II happen regularly. While the Federal Asylum Agency reportedly stated that it would make use of the sovereignty clause in particularly vulnerable cases, the Asylum Court does not systematically allow such persons to stay in Austria but has an increasingly restrictive approach, even against families with smaller children.

In [Germany](#), particularly vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and families with small children and severely sick persons are not sent back to Greece. In September 2009 the constitutional court stopped a deportation in a summary proceeding, so as to enable the court to assess

precisely what legal standards apply to interim measures in Dublin cases so as to guarantee the right to asylum and to an effective legal remedy. Since September 2009 there were more suspensions. In the latest decisions the court refers specifically to the Lisbon Treaty and the principle of solidarity among States and emphasizes that it might also be an

obligation for the transferring country to abstain from transfers to Greece under the principle of solidarity among Member States. A ruling by the Court is expected in the coming months.

In [Switzerland](#) leading decision is pending before the Swiss Federal Administrative Court as to whether and under what conditions it is mandatory for Switzerland to apply Article 3(2) in the context of Dublin transfers to Greece, which means to take the responsibility for "Greek" cases. While this appeal is pending, the court has suspended all such transfers to Greece if applicants lodge an appeal. This has led to a series of court decisions suspending transfers to Greece, but the jurisdiction is not consistent. Notably vulnerable persons are generally not deported to Greece, this means families with very small children, unaccompanied minors and severely sick persons.

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