

NEWS

/

GREECE

# Far-right attacks increase tension in Greece's Lesbos

*Mob of far-right protesters attack group of refugees and migrants, sparking clashes on the Greek island.*

by Patrick Strickland

23 Apr 2018



Refugees and migrants had been holding a separate demonstration in the main square of Mytileni when they were attacked [Eurokinissi/AP Photo]

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**Athens, Greece** - A mob of far-right protesters have attacked refugees and migrants who had been holding a separate demonstration in the main square of Mytileni, the main town of the Greek island of Lesbos.

The attacks, which started at around 8pm local time (17:00 GMT) on Sunday, sparked clashes that lasted throughout the night.

The altercations began when a group of some 200 far-right protesters, who had gathered to demonstrate on behalf of two Greek soldiers [currently detained](#) in Turkey, broke through a police barrier and threw stones, bottles and flares at the asylum seekers.

"Burn them alive," some of the attackers yelled, the Greek daily Ekathimerini reported on Monday.

ANA-MPA, a state-run media agency, reported that "far-right militants" targeted women and children, while solidarity activists and [refugees](#) attempted to create a human chain to protect the victims.

According to ANA-MPA, police used tear gas to disperse the assailants, who had turned the town into a "battlefield".





[City Plaza Squat](#) @sol2refugees

[#BreakingNews](#) : fascists arrived in Sappfous sq to confront the [#RefugeesGR](#) who are peacefully protesting since tues. Riot police forms line between. Fascists launched bengal fire&bottles. Refugees form circle to protect women&children and stay calm. Children got injured [#lesvos](#)

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At least 100 people were detained, and 10 people were hospitalised due to injuries sustained during the violence, local Greek authorities told The Associated Press.

During the early hours of Monday morning, police forcibly transported the refugees and migrants, who had been occupying Sapphous Square since last week, to the overcrowded Moria camp.

"This was a well-organised action, with murderous intent, by specific extreme right, criminal and hooligan elements that have nothing to do with the island or its traditions," Syriza, the left-wing ruling party, said in a statement.





[NoBorders@Refugees\\_Gr](#)

Tonight in Sappho square Mytilene!

The men form a circle around the women and children to protect them, and hold up blankets over the kids to stop the projectiles from hitting them!!

via fb Philippa Kempson [#refugeesgr](#) [#antireport](#) [#Lesvos](#)

[10:16 PM - Apr 22, 2018](#)

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Lorraine Leete, of the Lesbos Legal Centre, a group that supports [asylum seekers](#), said the incident follows several months of increased far-right attacks on the island.

"Since November [2017], the attacks have been increasing," she told Al Jazeera by telephone, explaining that the local authorities' campaign to pressure the central government to move asylum seekers to the mainland had emboldened "far-right elements of the local population".

The office of Lesbos Mayor Spiros Galinos could not be reached for comment.

## Violence on the rise

Of the 102 incidents of violence documented by the Racist Recording Network in 2017, at least 34 targeted [refugees and migrants](#). Another seven incidents saw human rights advocates or aid workers who work with asylum seekers targeted.

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### Concern as 300 refugees and migrants reach Greek island of Lesbos

Speaking to Al Jazeera in March, Greek police said they documented [at least 133 hate crimes](#) motivated by race, national origin or skin colour in 2017. That number is nearly three times more than the number of such crimes recorded in 2016.

Tina Stavrinaki, a spokesperson for the Racist Violence Recording Network, said that "we cannot put all the islands in the same basket because each one has its own conditions and specific situations".

"Of course, the living conditions for refugees on the island have been very decisive for [the proliferation of] xenophobic rhetoric," Stavrinaki told Al Jazeera.



"Whenever we had these outbreaks, we see that the xenophobic rhetoric is not adopted by all the locals, and many resisted."

Refugees and migrants who arrived on Greek islands after the March 2016 deal between Turkey and the European Union are barred from travelling to mainland Greece unless they obtain permission from authorities.

Although a Greek court [ruled last week](#) that new arrivals will be allowed to move on to the mainland, those who arrived during that two-year period are still confined to the islands.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA NEWS