

Statement by 5 of the Accused of the Moria 35

On the 20 April, we are scheduled to attend trial in Chios after waiting nine months, trapped on Lesbos, while 30 of our brothers unjustly have waited in prison for this same time period.

Our humanity has been denied since we stepped foot in Europe, the supposed cradle of democracy and human rights. Since we arrived we have been forced to live in horrible conditions, our asylum cases are not taken seriously, and most Africans are denied residency in Europe and face deportation. We are treated like criminals, simply for crossing a border that Europeans can freely cross.

Now 35 of us have been accused of rioting, destroying property, and violence, however, it was actually the police who have attacked us in a violent and racist raid on the African section of Moria Detention Centre on the 18 July 2017, the day we were arrested. On the 18 July, a group of migrants of many different nationalities and races gathered to protest that we are being kept prisoners on Lesbos island in inhumane conditions. To break up the protest, the police shot tear gas canisters into the group of migrants who were protesting outside the main gate of Moria Detention Centre. It was the police in full riot gear who attacked unarmed migrants with stones, batons, and tear gas. More than an hour after the clashes ended the police surrounded only the African section of Moria Detention Centre. It was the police who damaged property by braking the windows and doors of the containers where we were living. Without concern for people who were inside they threw tear gas into the closed containers. They dragged people by their hair out of the containers. They beat anyone they found with batons, their boots, their fists, including a pregnant woman. It seems we were targeted only because of our skin colour – because we are black. It was in this violent and racist attack that we were also beaten and arrested. The police continued to beat us inside the police station, while we were in handcuffs, and they denied us medical attention for days afterwards.

The week after we were violently arrested, the police returned and again raided Moria Detention Centre, arresting many Africans who were notified that their appeals had been rejected, and who were then deported to Turkey. We believe that this raid was in order to continue to terrorize migrants and silence any resistance. With coordination of UNHCR and the Greek Asylum Service, the pregnant woman who had been beaten was transferred to Athens in the days after the police attack on our community. We believe that her transfer to Athens and the deportation of several Africans was also in order to get rid of any witnesses to the police's attack against us.

However, the authorities can not stop the truth from coming out about how Greece and Europe treat migrants in Lesbos. It is the violent attack by the police against African migrants which must be investigated. It is the police who must be brought to justice.

We and our 30 brothers in prison must be freed. We do not trust that the authorities who have treated us as less than human will treat us fairly in this case and we know that we will only achieve justice in this case through solidarity from Greeks, Europeans and other people who see us as their equals.

Stand in solidarity with the Moria 35

For more information and to take action go to freethemoria35.wordpress.com.

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