

‘Anti-Migrant’ Protesters Set Fire, Throw Stones at MSF Clinic in Greece

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has warned that “violent riots” outside a new government coronavirus clinic set up to provide care to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees amid the coronavirus pandemic represent a growing “anti-migrant” movement in Greece.

MSF said “anti-migrant” protesters attacked its pediatric clinic outside the Moria refugee camp in Lesbos after targeting the launch of a new government coronavirus clinic being inaugurated by Greece’s President Katerina Sakellaropoulou on Thursday.

The demonstration quickly turned violent, MSF said, with a fire being lit outside the pediatric clinic, while some demonstrators “threw stones” into the facility, where staff were treating patients, including children.

In a statement sent to *Newsweek*, Marco Sandrone, MSF’s Lesbos field coordinator, said: “MSF strongly condemns the violent attacks on its pediatric clinic and the new Government COVID-19 facility outside Moria yesterday.”

“In what world do we live in, where children and pregnant women being treated by doctors are subject to people throwing stones at them?” Sandrone questioned.

Sandrone said the situation became so intensified that the organization’s medical teams eventually had to be “evacuated by bus from the scene.”

“It is just utterly incomprehensible that attacks like this can occur in in any setting,” the MSF field coordinator said.

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The incident was not a solitary one, with humanitarian groups working to support migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, facing a growing wave of backlash from anti-migration groups and local communities.

“For some time now, we have been witnessing a rise in aggressive behavior towards asylum seekers and refugees, as well as humanitarian organizations and volunteers who have repeatedly been targeted and harassed for simply trying to provide assistance to vulnerable groups on Lesbos,” Sandrone said.

“This incident highlights a malignant symptom that needs to be addressed now,” he said, calling on authorities to “take all necessary measures against the growing anti-migrant rhetoric, aggression and violence circulating on Lesbos, and to take action against those who have harassed and attacked humanitarian actors without impunity immediately.”

MSF Sea@MSF_Sea

Violent riots outside #Moria camp, where anti-migrant protestors gathered in opposition to the President’s visit to inaugurate new COVID-19 hospital. A fire was lit outside the MSF clinic while others threw stones into the clinic where 50 staff were treating women and children.

Thursday’s incident comes after MSF was forced to shut down its own coronavirus clinic in July after facing a fine and the threat of criminal charges from local officials after widespread opposition to the facility’s launch.

An MSF spokesperson told *Newsweek* at the time that they believed local officials had received complaints from local residents or groups that have previously expressed opposition to the clinic.

“The isolation center was the only place on Lesbos providing a safe space in which people from Moria with COVID-19 symptoms could be isolated and offered medical care,” MSF said at the time in a statement shared with *Newsweek*.

Now, MSF’s new center is set to continue to provide care to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. However, the clinic is likely to continue to face opposition from anti-immigration groups.

So far, there has not been an outbreak of coronavirus at the Moria refugee camp, despite widespread overcrowding and limited access to sanitation.

However, humanitarian organizations like MSF have said it is crucial to stay vigilant, warning that an outbreak at the camp could cause major devastation to already vulnerable groups.

On the whole, Greece has had relatively low numbers of coronavirus cases identified. As of Friday, the country had 7,934 confirmed coronavirus cases identified, with 235 cases resulting in death, according to an online tracker maintained by the Johns Hopkins University.

Newsweek has contacted the Greek government for comment.



A boy walks in a improvised tents camp near the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos on June 21, 2020. MSF says it has seen growing opposition to its efforts to support migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Lesbos, Greece. ARIS MESSINIS /AFP/GETTY

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