



Press Release
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Europe's largest refugee camp Moria and surrounding Olive Groves destroyed by fire

Multiple fires broke out in the refugee camp Moria, with an official capacity of 2,700 but housing 13,000 refugees. The camp has been in partial lockdown since March and in full quarantine after last week's COVID-19 outbreak. Years of frustration, neglect, lack of resources and failing EU policy has led to an expected outburst of complete unrest which ignited fires that then spread across the whole camp due to strong winds.

This morning it can be confirmed that most of Moria camp and the surrounding areas have been destroyed by the fire. So far, no statement about casualties has been released by officials. The camp is now closed and all 13,000 residents are without shelter.

Due to massive overcrowding in the main camp, the surrounding Olive Groves have been occupied by 7,000 people for the last years. Movement On The Ground (MOTG) has taken an active role in improving the living conditions in this area. MOTG were directly responsible for an area, which hosted 3,000 people.

The Olive Grove where Movement On The Ground operates focused on providing dignified living conditions, self-organisation by the community, collaboration with the local Greek community, fire protection and access to many facilities. This morning, all tents/structures, educational and training facilities, washing facilities, offices, food lines, wifi network and community areas are damaged and need to be rebuilt or replaced.

Luckily, we can confirm our 20 field coordinators and 150 resident volunteers are unharmed.

Our full focus is now on the 13,000 people who are without shelter and the local population who are facing the aftermath of the tragedy.

MOTG has been working for the last years directly with Moria Camp Management, UNHCR (both international) and grassroots organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières and Better Days.

Quote from MOTG Olive Grove Manager Ali Shams Eddin who was present at the scene.

"The situation continued to unfold and erupt during the evening. It started with unrest amongst the community, which led to the outbreak of fires. This then spread throughout the camp to many areas. It became uncontrollable due to the wind. Our main concern during the evening was protecting the most vulnerable. Women, children and the unaccompanied minors living inside the safezone of Moria camp. We also worked closely with the fire brigade to try and control the flames. As we deal with the aftermath, our focus remains the same. Helping as many people as we can."

Crisis response

Movement On The Ground will be there for both the refugee population and local residents on Lesbos during this time. We will provide crisis support to camp management and other field actors. Considering the urgency of this emergency situation, we are now heavily relying on support and donations to rebuild the community.

Please help and donate at www.movementontheground.com/donation.

Images for use

Our press pack provides permission for the use of two images.

Image 1: Photo Credit Thanasis Voulgarakis

Depicting the blaze spreading through the north of the Olive Groves surrounding Moria camp.

Image 2: Photo Credit Hashmat Karimi

Depicting the aftermath of the fire and what remains of shelters in Zone 4 of Moria camp.

Movement On The Ground

Movement On The Ground (MOTG) is a Dutch foundation established in 2015 in response to the on-set of the European migration crisis. Motivated to change the game of humanitarian aid for refugees, MOTG has made its mission to provide dignified, sustainable and innovative responses which benefit both refugees and host populations. At the core of its mission is the "Camp to campUs" philosophy, a belief that all refugee camps should be more inclusive and self-sufficient enabling refugee populations to feel safe, empowered and connected to their host community.

For more information visit <http://movementontheground.com>

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