

Region must reconsider decision to close PIKPA

On 16 July 2018, following a hearing at the court of Mytilene and an inspection of the PIKPA refugee camp, an application for interim measures against the camp was rejected. The application was submitted by 5 hotel owners and 2 individuals both in the Neapoli area of Mytilene, and referred to risks of lost profits, environmental degradation, risks to public health and detrimental effects on the quality of life in the area. The Municipality of Lesvos as well as the Lesvos Hoteliers Association supported the application for the interim measures.

The application was filed during a three-week period in which PIKPA, an informal structure hosting roughly 100 refugees, was hosting an additional almost 350 Kurdish refugees who had fled the hot spot Moria camp after incidents of violence. Groups who support the operation of PIKPA camp, including Lesvos Solidarity and other groups, collectives and citizens, now feel justified by the decision, which has undermined claims that PIKPA is a danger to public health and the environment. (Here we refer to the claims made by the hotel owners and the warnings of the hygiene service too).

PIKPA's open social space continues to operate according to the principles of solidarity and active participation to find solutions to emergencies and social issues related to the ongoing refugee situation. Today PIKPA is operational and continues to develop solidarity actions to support vulnerable refugees in the site of PIKPA.

The decision of the Region of the North Aegean, based on the report of the Hygiene Service, to ban the operation of PIKPA, is still in force. An appeal against this decision was filed on 12 July 2018. The observations of the Hygiene Service (following an inspection carried out during the emergency when almost 350 extra Kurdish refugees were hosted on the site) were taken seriously by PIKPA and have long been resolved.

We ask the Region of the North Aegean to reconsider its decision to ban operations in PIKPA, and to take into account the decision of the court that rejected the arguments that PIKPA's existence caused risks to public health and the environment.

One of the arguments of the Region against revoking its decision is the 'informal' nature of the structure of PIKPA. We therefore call upon the Region to take into account the essential role that PIKPA plays, its history of refugee support, and its international stature as a symbol of solidarity. The Region should also bear in mind the effort PIKPA makes to preserve and promote the values of social cohesion, the quality of life for all citizens, and the preservation of public health and the environment.

With his statement, Minister of Migration Dimitris Vitsas recognised the importance of the role of PIKPA. We ask the Ministry to take into consideration

the open and independent nature of PIKPA camp, which has allowed it to respond to the huge need for hospitality and support for refugees.

We would like to express our enormous gratitude, both to the residents of PIKPA and the Kurdish refugees who were hosted in the camp, for their unwavering support. We would also like to send a big thank you to everyone in Greece and abroad who continue to support PIKPA through the [#savepikpa](#) and AVAAZ campaigns. Your support is essential to the future of PIKPA. All letters and messages of support will be sent to the Region of the North Aegean, the Municipality of Lesvos and the Ministry of Migration.

CONTACT

If you wish to contact PIKPA camp, please call (0030) 6934727091 or e-mail communicationspikpa@gmail.com.