

Advocates Abroad is an all-volunteer humanitarian organization dedicated to protecting the lives and legal rights of refugees. We make this statement in response to a video that was released which distorted who we are and what we do. This video led to shocking threats of rape and murder against our Executive Director and our volunteers. By our last count, there were 37,000 of these threats.

We are concerned with what matters most, protecting the lives and safety of our team, of refugees, and all who are impacted by our work. We came to Greece in peace to bring peace to refugees from whom peace was brutally stolen. Our commitment to working in peaceful presence is unshakeable, and we urge everyone to refrain from violence or threats. We also ask that government law enforcement protect all of those who are at risk from those who threatened violence in response to the video.

We are also dedicated to the integrity of the Greek asylum system that determines whether refugees we work with can remain in Greece. We have seen this system work as it should to award many of our refugee clients' asylum. These decisions have saved the lives of refugees and allowed them to begin their lives anew in Greece. We have had the opportunity to work with those who manage the system and offer our advice for reforms that would make it better, and we are glad that in many cases our recommendations were followed.

We also know that many of our volunteers are guests in Greece, and we have been warmed by the hospitality that has been extended to us by many of our Greek friends. Whether we are Greek citizens or guests, we want our work here to benefit the country that has welcomed us and many of our clients.

Those who filmed the video spliced informal comments made by our director and presented them entirely out of context to make it appear that we do not stand for the people, institutions, and principles we serve. Those responsible for the video are extremists whose goal is to incite violent opposition to refugees and those who serve them. The death and rape threats that resulted from their video demonstrate their intentions. The video suggested that in our preparation of refugees as they go through the asylum process, we encouraged them to be untruthful. This is not true. We have never encouraged or instructed misrepresentation or lies, nor will we ever do so. We encourage refugees to remember the depth of their trauma and to accurately represent that pain.

In response to the video, we reaffirm our commitment to preserving the integrity of the asylum process. That process requires that refugees tell the truth about what has happened to them and what led them to flee to Greece, and we tell the refugees we work with that they must tell the truth in their interviews and in the written statements they provide to the asylum service. As all lawyers do with all clients, we meet with our clients to prepare them for the process and for interviews. This is not only ethical, but in line with a lawyer's obligations of client preparation.

While the threats we have been subjected to are heartbreaking, they only strengthen our resolve to do our work for refugees. We have been threatened with violence, but they have been violence's victims, and they have a right to seek sanctuary. We promise that we will continue to protect that right, that we will do this honestly, with respect for the legal systems we are part of and the countries that welcome us to do this work.

Sincerely,

Ariel Ricker, and all of Advocates Abroad