

SOLIDARITEE

Annual Report 2022-23



Hard copies are printed on recycled paper. We are committed to ensuring accessibility within all of our operations, and online versions can be shared in plain or large-text format for those would benefit from this.

Key Figures

In the 2022 - 2023 academic year

£115,000

committed in funding for trauma-informed legal aid and mental health support services

270

student volunteers equipped with knowledge and skills to advocate for refugee rights



93,000

accounts reached with infographics and educational content across Instagram and Facebook

Our Partners

Between January and July 2023, here are just some of the achievements of our partner organisations....

750

people were supported with legal support and case management relating to themselves or an immediate family member

2500

people received support via online chat and hotline channels, answering key queries from people who may otherwise have no access to a lawyer

126

people received 1:1 support from a psychologist, helping them to process their experiences, cope with the symptoms of PTSD and other mental health conditions, and navigate their legal process

800

people attended group legal information sessions, informing them of their rights and what will be required of them within the asylum process



Who We Are: Mission, Vision and Values

SolidariTee is a charity led by students and young people, all of whom are currently volunteers, working to make **lasting, dignified change in the way refugees and other forcibly displaced people are treated in the UK and Europe.**

Our vision is a world in which **every person forced to flee their home because of who they are or what they believe has access to their fundamental legal and human rights,** and is able to receive the necessary support to rebuild their life, family and community in peace and safety.

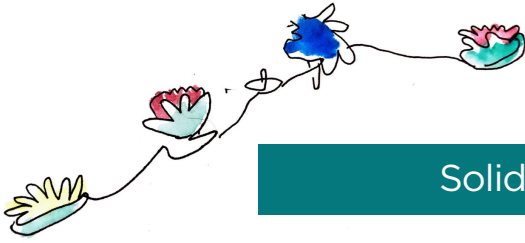
Our mission is to further a **lasting, compassionate solution to the 'refugee crisis' in Europe by enhancing the provision of holistic, accessible services for those navigating the asylum system.** We do this in two ways: (1) by working with grassroots NGO partners in Greece to provide trauma-informed legal aid and mental health support, and (2) by equipping students with the tools, knowledge and confidence to dismantle the hostile environment and stand up for refugee rights.

With increasingly **hostile environments and borders, and no state-provided legal aid,** our work is perhaps more important now than ever, with thousands of people forced to live in overcrowded camps, held in detention centres, or sleeping in the open. We are the **only funder in the region specifically focused on trauma-informed legal aid, and on bridging the gap between legal aid and mental health support,** and have seen incredible impacts from the implementation of our trauma-informed strategy for refugees and asylum seekers suffering from the effects of PTSD and other conditions.

We currently have **more than 200 volunteers across over 20 universities,** who host conferences, podcasts, and carry out other awareness-raising and advocacy activities within their local and student communities. They also fundraise to support our local partners in Greece, through a combination of events and through the sale of our custom-made t-shirts designed by artists who are themselves refugees.

We hope you enjoy reading this report, and welcome any questions or feedback that you may have.





Dear all,

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report, covering the 2022-23 academic year. More than eight years on from 2015, the year that the 'refugee crisis' in Europe reached its height of media attention and charitable support, people are often surprised that SolidariTee still exists. Partly, they are surprised that there is still a need for our work, but many times onlookers also question how we have succeeded in achieving our objectives for so many years, in the face of dwindling media attention and, with each passing year, a younger generation of students who may not even really remember the news headlines of that year.

What many people don't realise is that the necessity for legal aid never had all that much to do with the number of arrivals, nor with media attention. In 2023 alone, at least 48,000 people reached Greece in search of safety, most of whom will find themselves in refugee camps, detention centres, or sleeping on the streets. With the handful of legal aid and mental health NGOs that exist, it is already impossible to provide the support needed to prevent unjust deportations, abuse, and detention for even half of these people, never mind when international border mechanisms and conflict escalations lead to even larger numbers of people who make it to Greece in search of safety. The humanitarian context is so underfunded in Greece that the need for grassroots NGO services has never gone away, and we are one of, if not the only funder specifically supporting trauma-informed legal aid designed to be holistic, dignified and empowering.

Still with no paid staff, and having been able to provide £115,000 in grant funding over 12 months (Dec 22 - Nov 23), the only good answer to the other question people ask, as to how we have continued to deliver on our aims, was shared with me by a previous student director in the form of a movie quote on the next page. Ultimately, no generation of young people ever has really cared about what the voices of authority think is impossible.

**due to pushbacks and obstacles to registering an asylum application, the real number is likely far higher*

Unlike other charities with a campus presence, whose operations and cashflow don't live and die by their student chapters, our student teams make up SolidariTee's bread and butter. Whilst that can make things hard at times - we're all young, at very transient life stages, and figuring things out as we go - there is a unique grit, determination, and sense of energy found within a community of young volunteers and activists. Though the student spaces we operate in are often somewhat more privileged, this driving force for change is replicated all over the world by other young organisers and change-makers, often working in much more difficult conditions than us, and we draw inspiration and motivation from them constantly.

So, when the political landscape has become ever more hostile towards refugees, survivors of trafficking, and others forced to leave everything behind, and the public's attention is pulled to other crises, we have stayed. Together, we have provided life-altering support to people in a context that almost no-one outside of the Greek humanitarian landscape is talking about.

We remain eternally grateful to all of our supporters, volunteers and community members, and hope that the following pages will give you a sense of our work and our impact. In particular, a huge thank you to Louisa Cowell & Beth Molyneux, student presidents in the 22-23 academic year, without whom none of SolidariTee's work would have been possible.

Thanks for reading,



Alexa Netty, CEO



Alexa has volunteered with SolidariTee since 2019, and works full-time in a humanitarian programme quality and accountability role. She holds degrees in psychology, neuroscience & behaviour, and in veterinary medicine, and has specific expertise in trauma-informed humanitarian response.

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“According to all known laws of aviation, there is no way a bee should be able to fly. It's wings are too small to get its fat little body off the ground.

The bee, of course, flies anyway, because bees don't care what humans think is impossible.”

-Narrator, The Bee Movie”

From our communities



Thank you for helping me to solve this problem. Now, I will be **able to reunite with my children** and bring them to live with me, here, in Greece. **There is nothing more important for me at the moment.**



Finally, I was empowered and strong to report the incident to the police and denounce my husband for his violent behavior against me. **I am grateful to the lawyers for their patience and help (...)**

Legal aid doesn't exist in a vacuum; families, children and the lasting effects of previous experiences often profoundly affect a person's experience of seeking safety in Greece.

Both of these quotes and image come from the Irida Women's Centre, one of our 2023 grant partners. Irida operate a community centre in Northern Greece, specifically supporting self-identifying women over the age of 18. The centre is near to approximately 30 refugee camps in remote areas, as well as a large refugee population living in urban areas.

They operate a child-safe space within their centre, and work with clients who frequently deal with legal and protection issues such as domestic violence and child custody disputes.

Q&A with our student leaders

Q: why do you think it's important to volunteer (if you can) whilst at uni?

"Obviously as students, we're often balancing lots of things and it can feel hard to find the time to fit in volunteering. But we also have to remember that we're in a really privileged position globally to be able to take 3-4 years to study something we love, and make memories and friends at the same time."

The great thing about SolidariTee is that it's designed to work around a student schedule, so it's best suited to making an impact in the time you have available. For me, it was the perfect way to mobilise the privilege I had as a student to actually make a difference, and at the same time it contributed to much to my overall uni experience, bringing me into contact with so many amazing people and allowing me to build so many new skills."

Q: what skills did you build or develop whilst volunteering with Soli?

"SolidariTee exposed me to the internal workings of an international charity, from finance to comms to strategy and education. It gave me a chance to manage projects, create content, build organisational strategy, and organise events. On the 'softer' side of things, it honed my communication skills, made me multi-task like a pro, and educated me about the refugee context in Greece, and the value of legal and psychosocial aid."

Q: what makes SolidariTee unique?

The people: SolidariTee attracts such a wonderful group of hard-working, principled, passionate people who it's a joy to work with.

The mechanism: you're contributing directly to change in a very sustainable way.

The flexibility: you can make your work with SolidariTee what you like, you get out of it what you put in and it's designed to fit around your uni workload and other commitments."



The answers to this Q&A were shared by Beth Molyneux, who was student vice-president during the 22-23 academic year, and previously team lead for Oxford. Having graduated from her Masters, she now works at an international humanitarian NGO.

Our approach to grant funding

In Autumn 2022, we launched applications for SolidariTee grant funding. We set up a designated grant committee comprised of both trustees and independent reviewers, and selected 8 organisations to receive grant funding out of 27 applicants.

During this grant cycle, we made a shift from focusing solely on legal aid, to seeking specifically to **bridge the gap between legal aid and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)**. As such, we were particularly interested in working with partners throughout 2023 who are taking trauma-informed approaches to providing legal aid, and who were including or collaborating with dedicated mental health services to provide more holistic support to their clients. You can read more about this in our 2023 grant information pack*.

Trauma informed approaches take into account the impact that trauma may have had on the way a person experiences the world, and the challenges they may be facing, long after the trauma itself has happened. It is generally grounded in a strengths-based approach, which emphasises **the resilience and individuality** of the person being supported, and which recognises the brain's responses to trauma as being the best responses to cope and survive with unimaginable pain and suffering, as opposed to being dysfunctional or 'bad' coping mechanisms.

Not everyone who is forced to flee persecution shows symptoms of post-traumatic stress (PTSD), but almost everyone has experienced horrific and **overwhelmingly frightening events**, either in the country from which they fled, or on the deadly journeys in search of safety, where abuse and violence are commonplace.

*available on the 'apply for a grant' page of our website

Shockingly, a 2022 study **found that almost two thirds (64%)** of Syrian refugees in Greece who participated in the research were diagnosed with PTSD, a condition that frequently brings intense fear, flashbacks, disrupted sleep, and re-activation of their traumatic memories in any situation where the context is similar to the one where the trauma occurred.

Unfortunately, the asylum process, in Greece and in other countries, is woefully ill-equipped to support people who have experienced trauma, despite this often being integral to an asylum seekers' experience.

A person who has a panic attack, cries, or can't bring themselves to share the microscopic level of detail required about what happened to them with a stranger in their interview is likely to receive a rejection within their asylum application, for an **'inconsistent' or 'not credible' story**.

A person who is seeking asylum on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity, and who has been forced to conceal this due to risks to their life, is equally likely to receive a rejection if their internalised shame or fear of retribution lead them not to be able to share details about their life and partners.

And unfortunately, a person who is one of the lucky few in Greece who is able to access legal aid from an NGO may still be at risk of re-traumatisation, since the process involves **recounting the persecution** a person has fled in detailed chronological order to allow the legal team to support them in gathering evidence and presenting their story in a way that will be permitted by the asylum authorities.

For all of these reasons, and in particular through consultation and innovation amongst many of our grassroots partners, it became clear that the legal-mental health barrier was one that needed to be bridged.

*Source: Theofanidis, D., Karavasileiadou, S., & Almegewly, W. H. (2022). Post-traumatic stress disorder among Syrian refugees in Greece. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 13, 911642.*

Who we supported

Having focused our funding strategy on organisations who could move the needle in the humanitarian legal & protection landscape towards a more trauma informed approach, we chose organisations who complemented each other in terms of service provision, geographic coverage, and target population.

Some of our 2023 partners were most expert in supporting asylum seeking children and parents; others supported primarily young men and boys aged 16-25, a group often vilified and denied services. Still others focused on supporting women, or people of diverse sexual and gender identities, whilst a final partner, AMERA International, ran a training programme focussed on 'trauma-informed lawyering' to raise collective capacity and knowledge base across the whole legal space.

In total, £115,000 was disbursed within the grant cycle. Due to the differing timing of each organisations' programme, funding was received at different times, and 6-monthly progress reports are in turn received at different times. This means that the actual impact that our partners were able to create was far higher than fits neatly into our annual report period, but we have provided key statistics from within this time period to give a detailed sense of the scale of their work.

We really hope you enjoy reading more about the real-world difference that each organisation has made, and are happy to answer any questions that readers may have.

Whilst our funding has, in most cases, been used to cover the salary of a lawyer, psychologist or caseworker, we do not generally 'restrict' income for a specific use, and all of our partners receive funding from multiple sources. As such, we don't try to make claims that directly attribute the support that any client/s receive to SolidariTee specifically, but instead focus on the totality of what is made possible.

Our 2023 Partners

Read on for a detailed update per partner....

Organisation Name	Period covered by SolidariTee funding	Region of Greece	Type of service provided	Type of client supported
AMERA International	Jan - Dec 2023		AMERA hosted a 9 month training programme called the Therapeutic Legal Assistance Model, focused on building the capacity of asylum lawyers to support people who have experienced complex trauma.	
Congolese Community of Greece	Jan - Oct 2023	Athens	SolidariTee supported CCGreece to employ a social worker, supporting clients with administrative challenges relating to asylum registration, application or renewal of documents, and training and support relating to the importance of mental health	People living in refugee camps near Athens or urban housing, including families and people seeking employment
DCI Greece	Jan - Jun 2023	Athens & Lesvos	DCI Greece provide holistic case management, which can include 1:1 or group mental health sessions alongside legal representation and support at all stages of the process	Children (both unaccompanied and accompanied) and families, in particular survivors or those at risk of FGM, trafficking and torture
Fenix	Jan- Dec 2023	Athens & Lesvos	Fenix provide holistic legal aid, incorporating a mixed team of lawyers, psychologists and social workers, alongside a dedicated advocacy team	Clients with additional vulnerabilities, in particular children wrongly classified as adults, people seeking asylum on the basis of their sexual or gender identity, people with disabilities or complex medical conditions, and survivors of torture and modern-day slavery
Irida Women's Center	Jan- Dec 2023	Thessaloniki (Northern Mainland)	Irida facilitate a safe community space where women receive 1:1 legal aid, inclusive of court representation, and mental health support. The center operates a Child's Safe Space for young children, enabling mothers to have private time and space to have their legal appointments and focus on their wellbeing.	Self-identifying women, including single mothers with infants, refugee women experiencing domestic violence in Greece, and mothers experiencing barriers to custody of their children
Mobile Info Team	Jan- Dec 2023	Thessaloniki (Northern Mainland)	MIT focus on communication with displaced communities, reaching tens of thousands of people through social media and hotlines, as well as providing legal case support for high-risk individuals	Clients who have experienced multiple unjust rejections, who are at risk of detention or deportation, and who are undocumented due to system failures
Velos Youth	Jan 2023 - Feb 2024	Athens	Velos also operate a safe space for teenagers and young people who have fled, often without their families, and provide tailored legal support and advice relating to the asylum system as well as employment & transition to adulthood support	Young people aged 16-25 years old, often who have been left without support for years

SolidariTee began distributing funding under this grant cycle in December 2022. By the end of this reporting period in July 2023, SolidariTee had provided £65,000 of the total funding pledged, which rose to £115,000 by November 2023.

During the reporting period, SolidariTee also provided funding to A.Ss.I.S.T., bringing our total number of partners supported to 8. This partnership ended earlier than the others, and as such there is no reporting to share specific to this period.



AMERA International

SolidariTee were delighted to work with AMERA as our training partner in 2023. AMERA designed and delivered a **9-month training programme** focused on 'trauma-informed lawyering' which was closely aligned to SolidariTee's response strategy. The programme aimed to **build the knowledge and capacity of legal professionals** and organisations in supporting people who have experienced trauma or who have **mental health needs within a legal setting**.

The course was based upon a framework known as the Therapeutic Legal Assistance Model that the AMERA team extensively researched and developed in-house, with the delivery of the 2023 course in partnership with SolidariTee being the **first time globally** that the programme had been offered.

The programme featured sessions covering topics including:

- legal submissions addressing mental health
- psychological effects and legal consequences
- case management and coordination
- representing survivors of torture
- vicarious (second hand) trauma
- accessible legal services for refugees with mental health needs


The training ran from April to November 2023, and consisted of 16 sessions. The **entire course was free of charge and fully funded** by SolidariTee, with 24 participants being accepted onto the programme. Participants worked at legal NGOs across the Greek islands and mainland, and consisted mostly of Greek lawyers.


This was the first time that SolidariTee had engaged in more **innovative funding approaches** designed to provide opportunities for **legal and humanitarian professionals to learn from and with each other** within a structured programme delivered by expert facilitators.


Our objective was to create lasting impact which **raises the standard of legal representation for clients across the entirety of Greece**, whilst also supporting the legal NGO community to build their own professional skills within an incredibly difficult operating context.

At the mid-point review and progress report in July 2023, **100%** of attendees who gave feedback reported a positive impact on their confidence and on the quality of their representation.

At the end-of-course evaluation and workshop attended in-person by the CEO's of both AMERA and SolidariTee, participants reported three key impacts:

 **The way that they thought about the impacts of trauma and mental health**, both on their clients and their corresponding legal claims, had changed substantially

 **Participants had been positively impacted by the sense of community** - many people spoke about the sense of validation and support that came from having a place to share thoughts, learn and debrief on cases in an environment outside of legal working groups.

 **Participants were significantly more aware of the impact of their work on their own mental health, and vice versa.** This was reported as an extremely important realisation for many, within a context and profession where one's own mental health as a responder is less discussed and humanitarian worker burnout can still be a taboo topic.

SolidariTee is working to build on these learnings within our future strategy, and would like to extend our thanks to all those who attended.



Congolese Community of Greece



CCG are an organisation led and run by and for migrants and refugees of all backgrounds, but particularly those of Congolese heritage, focusing on supporting cultural inclusion and helping people to integrate into Greek society and feel welcome.

The organisation was established in 1991 and originally served to bring together all Congolese people living in Greece, including students, people new to the country, and those who were born in Greece. In 2014 & 15, when the number of people arriving in Greece in search of safety and to seek asylum rose dramatically, CCG pivoted their work to focus particularly on supporting refugees. In addition to providing cultural and social opportunities for children and families, the organisation also provides employability advice, and is part of wider advocacy efforts within refugee and migrant-led fora.

In 2023, SolidariTee funded CCG to employ a social worker. In addition to promoting and raising awareness about mental health, stress management, and coping strategies, the team's social worker was also able to support people in dealing with bureaucratic and administrative issues affecting their ability to live safely in Greece. **In the first 6 months of the project, CCG's social worker was able to hold over 690 consultations.**

CCG has supported people of a range of nationalities, including people from Congo and DRC, Cameroon, Iran and Ukraine. In many cultures, mental health is often a taboo subject, so the benefit of mental health promotion is widespread. **In addition, the CCG team continually emphasise the agency and competence of each individual,** expressing the fact that, with support, many people are able to navigate many of the administrative requirements of appointment registrations, taxes, and securing accommodation by themselves.



Defence for Children International - Greece

DCI-Greece focus specifically on supporting children on the move, both accompanied and unaccompanied, and parents with children.

With a Greek lawyer, children's rights expert, and psychologist all part of the DCI-Greece team, the team is able to provide holistic case management comprising of both legal representation and mental health support in-house.

Unfortunately, many women seeking asylum who have newly arrived in Greece have experienced sexual violence, either in the country from which they fled, on their journey, or in Greece itself, where a lack of accommodation, cash support or the right to work force people into the hands of traffickers and predators. Many such incidents lead to pregnancy, requiring an **additional level of in-depth psychological support** to equip people to navigate the experiences that they have endured and prepare for their next steps.

Other parents have fled and made arduous journeys with children, and still other children and young people have been forced to flee alone, with family members unable to leave with them, or indeed being part of the societal persecution that they are forced to flee. Whilst unaccompanied children often do receive more protection from the state, DCI-Greece advocates strongly for the best interests of the child to be considered in cases where children are accompanied. **Oftentimes, children are regarded as an afterthought by asylum services within their parents' legal processes**, with devastating consequences for children who might be subject to FGM or other forms of violence were they to be deported with their families.

Between January - June, FDCI - Greece were able to provide holistic case support to 527 individuals across 263 cases. were able to provide holistic case support to 527 individuals across 263 cases. DCI-Greece also conduct extensive advocacy with their team of Youth Ambassadors, at the national and European level.



Fenix Humanitarian Legal Aid

As one of the very first organisations SolidariTee ever supported, the influence our two organisations have had on each other has been reciprocal. **As some of the pioneers of holistic legal aid grounded in humanitarian principles within this context**, Fenix also have a dedicated advocacy strand, and conduct research, publish reports, and engage in strategic litigation at the national and international level.

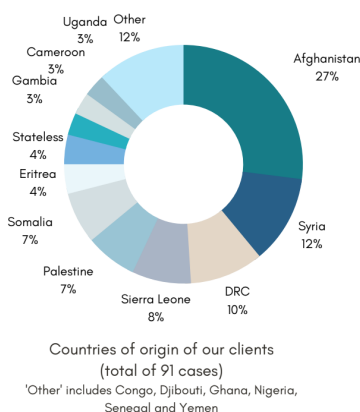
Fenix focus on clients who have additional vulnerabilities, and have developed significant expertise in supporting people of diverse sexual orientation and/or gender identity. With a person's identity being very difficult to 'prove' to an asylum service, claims based on persecution as a result of sexuality or gender identity often require expert, tailored support. With good reason, many clients may be very afraid to talk about their identity or experiences, so integrated support from protection and mental health colleagues is key.

During 2023, Fenix published a report, 'Waiting to Be Heard', discussing the psychosocial ramifications of Greece and the EU's hostile asylum procedures, including testimonies from affected community members, contributing compelling additions to the body of research and evidence supporting trauma-informed migration policies.

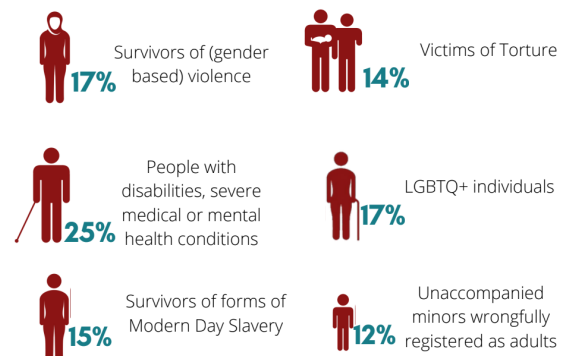
OUR CLIENTS



NATIONALITIES



VULNERABILITIES



Above: Mavrovouni refugee camp, Lesvos (left), data about clients supported, January-June 2023 (right)



Irida Women's Center



Irida run a community centre focused on protection and empowerment, open to all self-identifying women over the age of 18. They are based in Northern Greece, where there are many refugee and asylum seeking women living in urban areas as well as in far-flung camps with very little access to service provision.

In addition to offering integrated protection support and a range of skill building and livelihoods-focused classes, **Irida also offer a child-friendly space** within their centre. This is crucial in enabling women to be able to meet with their lawyer and discuss sensitive issues with their full focus, and without exposing their children to histories that they are too young to understand.

The Irida centre supports women with a variety of legal issues; seeking asylum in the first instance is certainly one key need amongst their community, but there are many other issues affecting women in particular, both before and after receiving refugee status. As such, the team offer court representation for Asylum and Migration, Civil and Criminal Law.

Child custody cases are often a particular challenge - if mothers are unable to prove that they are related to their children due to documents being lost or stolen, this can cause enormous problems, and even lead to mothers being accused of abducting their children. **Additionally, gender-based and domestic violence tends to disproportionately affect women,** made worse when there are few options for escape within refugee camps or without the right to work, and making reports to the authorities, especially as someone with precarious legal status, may be incredibly difficult. Irida supports women to find solutions that work for them, and provides a safe, welcoming space to build community, cook and eat meals, and receive support on navigating life in Greece.

Between Jan - December 2023, **140 women received legal support, and 132 women attended group psychosocial** and mental health sessions within the centre.

Right: two children performing 'karaoke' in the child-friendly space





Mobile Info Team



Mobile Info Team take a unique and highly wide-reaching approach to information provision and engagement with displaced communities.

MIT publish informative Facebook posts in 7 languages, with key news and accessible breakdowns of laws and policies and explanation for people facing challenges in relation to lodging an asylum application or receiving asylum support as to what they need to do. **Between January - June 2023, these posts reached over 965,000 accounts.**

In addition, their message hotline **via WhatsApp and Facebook was able to respond to messages sent by over 2500 people** during the same period. During this same time, over **300 people received in-person information** relating to their rights and what to expect within the asylum process at in-person group sessions, and **23 people received in-depth legal support relating to highly complex or specific cases** involving the release of people held in detention, or who had received multiple rejected asylum applications despite having a legitimate need for international protection.

Following a year of research, in February 2023 MIT released their **detention report**, uncovering the shocking conditions that people were forced to endure for months or years for no crime other than wishing to apply for asylum or being arbitrarily deemed 'dangerous'.

In addition to their in-depth research and advocacy efforts, MIT's ability to connect with such a large segment of the refugee population is one of a kind. Humanitarian agencies globally are becoming more aware of the importance of 'information as aid'. **Providing accurate information to dispel fear, rumours and feelings of powerlessness is one of the most important elements** to supporting anyone's mental health who has experienced trauma, and to avoiding people falling into abuse or missing their opportunity to apply for asylum as a result of rumours or misinformation.

Velos Youth



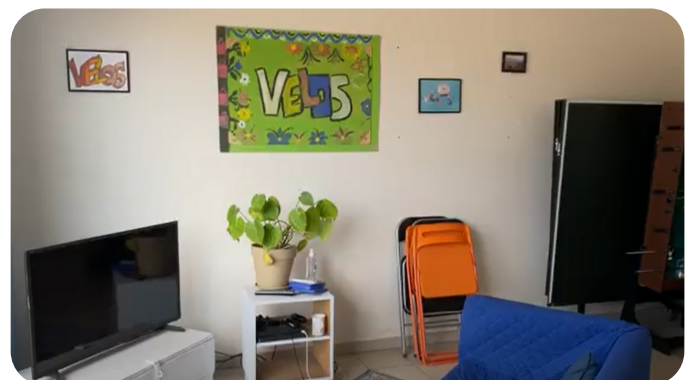
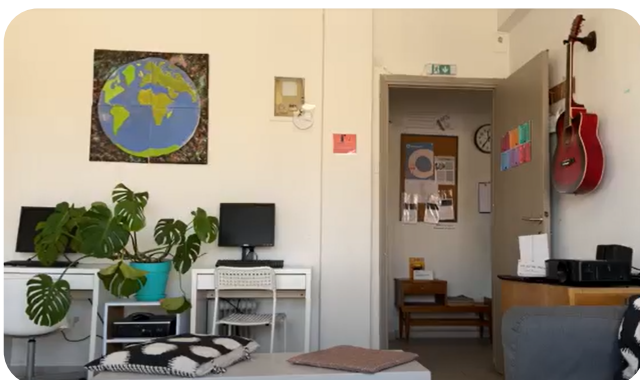
VELOS
YOUTH

Velos Youth run an integrated programme supporting **young people of all genders between the ages of 16 and 30**, providing a safe space as well as support with what is termed 'transition to adulthood', including language classes, employability guidance, and support from a social worker.

In 2023, SolidariTee funding enabled Velos to hire their first in-house lawyer. Legal support has complemented the other programmes on offer, and the team's legal expert is now able to support their centre visitors with their asylum claims, as well as with other common issues facing young people who are on the move or who have newly arrived in Greece. These issues range from accessing ID cards and renewing residence permits to advice when looking for work, to avoid falling into the hands of exploitative employers.

Young men and boys who are refugees are often particularly marginalised within Greek society, and left out of NGO efforts which frequently prioritise women and children. Labelled 'terrorists' and 'freeloaders' in the same breath, misinformation and fear-mongering creates additional barriers towards finding community and safety in a new host country, and single men of certain nationalities are often regularly rejected for asylum, despite having experienced severe persecution, violence and even torture.

By being able to offer young people a place to relax, share food, play games, and attend professional consultations all under one roof, and through its refugee leadership at the CEO level, the centre plays a unique role in being able to connect with a community for whom mental health concerns are often particularly large; no matter what someone has experienced, living alone in a country where you don't yet speak the language without your family is frightening enough.





Advocacy & Communications

In February 2023, following a successful monitoring and advocacy-focused trip at the end of 2022, we were able to **release an 18 minute documentary, recorded with 5 of our 2022-23 partner organisations.** This was the first piece of content that we had produced of this kind, and has provided us with a key outreach and educational resource introducing the SolidariTee strategy and **explaining the importance of connecting legal aid to mental health support, whilst amplifying the work of grassroots actors.** We would like to express our thanks to volunteer filmmaker Sophie Cowell for production and editing of this video, which is available on YouTube.



In July, **SolidariTee, along with STAR (Student Action for Refugees), Universities of Sanctuary and the VOICES network delivered a petition to No. 10 Downing Street,** expressing our opposition to the Illegal Migration Bill (sadly now Act).

This was a key moment of unity for us in being able to connect with other groups involved in working jointly with university communities and refugee and asylum-seeking communities. Together, we emphasised that universities should be places of inclusion and compassion, and that our **student and academic communities were standing up to say 'not in our name' together.**

Education & Information

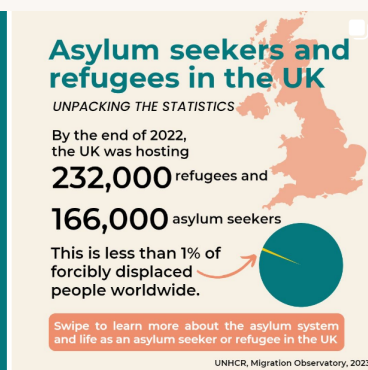


Social Media

Throughout the academic year, we continued to publish thoughtfully researched **infographics and mythbusters**. Research and content creation is led by our central social media team, providing a mechanism for students to **learn about refugee issues and advocacy principles** through developing materials used to inform others. University teams also managed their own social media pages, and received social media training focused on respectful, appropriate narratives and portrayals.

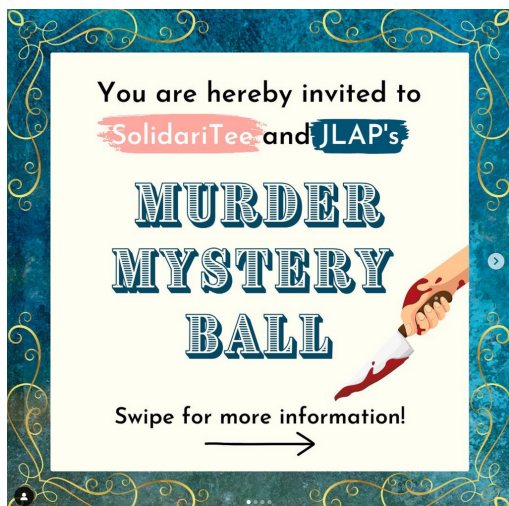
Learning Events

SolidariTee has a dedicated outreach team, seated within the student central team. In addition to our **annual conference 2023, themed 'Accountability in Action'**, we were able to host 3 other major events throughout the academic year. We received funding from the **University of St Andrews to host a half-day conference focused on inclusion**, and held a panel event focused on the ways that **gender and sexuality intersect with experiences of migration** in Oxford. We also held a **'careers in the refugee sector'** event in London, and an **online panel event** with speakers focused global displacement outside of Europe. In total, we were fortunate to have been able to connect with dozens of expert speakers whose work spans across activism, academia, NGO management, legal aid and humanitarian response throughout the year.



Regional Events

SolidariTee student teams are incredibly creative and dynamic, working hard to bring the conversation about the importance of welcoming refugees and the critical funding gap for support services into as many parts of student life as possible. In addition to our explicitly educational events, here are a selection of some of the other fundraisers and events organised throughout the year. It's clear that the key to building a fun, impactful movement across the student community comes from partnerships and teamwork, so we remain incredibly grateful to all of the student societies who have supported or collaborated with SolidariTee teams.



SolidariTee Lancaster collaborated with the Lawyers Against Poverty Justice Fund (JLAP) to host a murder mystery ball.



Teams at Leeds and Oxford both hosted jazz nights featuring student talent, which have proven hugely popular each time!



The Courtauld team held a t-shirt embroidery event with their uni's arts and crafts society. They also held a speaker event, bake sale, and vintage clothing sale during the year, linking fundraising to sustainable fashion and education.



The St Andrews team held a 'bring a friend' cheerleading session hosted by the cheer society. They also held a talk, wine and cheese night, and the uni's Sunday League ran a football match raising money for SolidariTee.

Our Leadership

Board of Trustees



Following a strategic review in 2022, we have been pleased to welcome several new trustees in 2023. Our board of 11 trustees now includes people who are currently studying, as well as graduates who have volunteered as part of SolidariTee's student chapters, in addition to more experienced professionals with expertise in asylum law, NGO management and strategic development, and who have worked operationally within refugee support organisations in Greece. Our board also includes a number of people who have lived and family experience of forced displacement. We seek to embed accountability to those most impacted in all that we do, including within our governance, and consider accountability to refugee communities as well as towards our student volunteers. Though the board may seem large for a charity of our size, it was a necessary step to allow the harmonisation of a range of perspectives and skillset without losing the early-career and youth-led input into our charity, and we have already noticed a huge improvement in our ways of working. Our board includes our volunteer CEO, who has received safeguarding training, as well as a separate safeguarding lead.

Student Leadership

We consider our student presidents, who are appointed each academic year, to be as integral a part of our leadership as any other role (if not more so!). In addition to organising our annual conferences and leading peer support and training workshops for the wider student team, our student leadership team also feeds into key decisions about our strategy and advocacy priorities. In 22-23, the presidents were Louisa Cowell and Beth Molyneux, who both achieved incredible things.

Each university team also has one or more dedicated team leads, who receive regular 1:1 support and peer mentorship from a fellow student who is a member of the central team (university fundraising coordinators). In addition to a detailed handbook and key resources shared throughout the year, a training day was hosted for team leads in summer/ autumn of both 2022 and 2023.

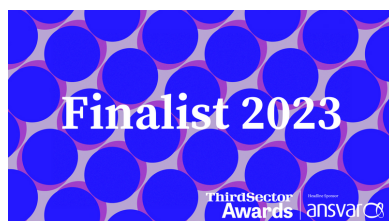
We do not require prior experience in leadership for any of our roles, as part of a commitment to dismantling barriers to volunteering and perpetuating inequities, but welfare and support are key priorities throughout the year. We recognise that volunteering can be challenging, especially when being juggled with a degree, and being the type of volunteering which feels very 'direct'. To avoid contributing to feelings of stress and pressure amongst a group of young people who are likely already very aware of the world's injustices, we set targets which are more focused on activities than on individual fundraising performance, and do not over-emphasise fundraising as the only metric of success. At the same time, all of our students know that the money that they raise is going directly to NGOs who need their support, in 'real-time' - this balance between real-world impact and ensuring sustainability within the volunteering experience is something we continue to focus on.



Above: students wearing our Elpida Home t-shirt collection

Recent Awards

In 2023, SolidariTee and legal firm Osborne Clarke were announced winners of the Business Charity Awards in the legal category for our partnership within OC's Refugee Action Group. SolidariTee were also shortlisted for the Third Sector Volunteer Team of the Year award.



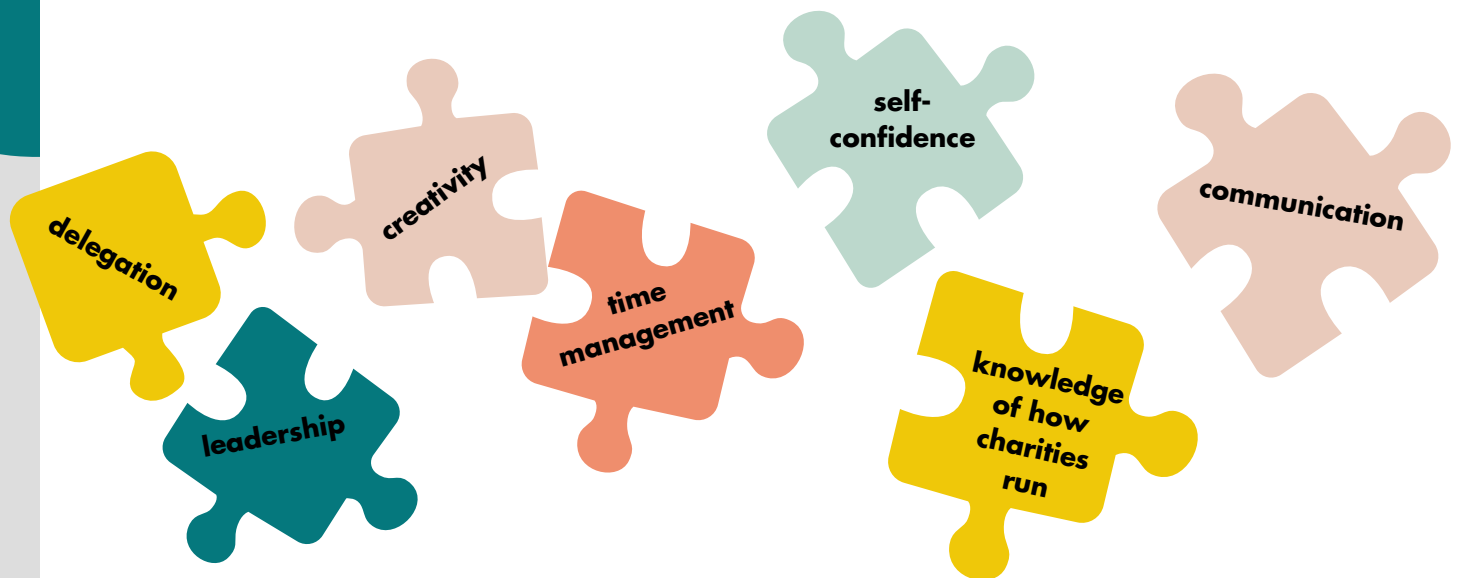
What did our volunteers gain?

Though we're mindful of our privilege as a volunteer community, and recognise that it is not 'about us', it's also an important part of our mission to ensure that people who volunteer with us take something meaningful away from their experience.

This not only helps to ensure our sustainability and succession of volunteers once current team members graduate or move on, but is a cornerstone in creating a community of people who are better informed about the solutions to issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers, and who are able to use their voices for years and decades to come.

At the end of the 2022-3 academic year, we conducted reflective end of year calls with a sample of team leads, with a view to evaluating how closely we had been able to achieve our objectives in terms of volunteer experience, and also to capture the diversity of knowledge and experiences taken away by our volunteer communities.

Many of our graduate volunteers in 2022-23 and in previous years have gone on to work at international humanitarian agencies, in major national UK-based charities, and in numerous other social-impact roles. Here are some of the self reported skills which were developed, and shared during the end-of year review meetings:



SolidariTee, a movement led by students and young people, has an energy unlike any other organisation I've worked in. By volunteering with SolidariTee, you are joining a movement of people committed to upholding human rights - and the enthusiasm and determination of our volunteers shines through in our campaigns, events, and fundraising. More than solely a fundraising body, volunteers at SolidariTee work tirelessly to change the harmful narratives in the media about forcibly displaced people - this is done through social media posts that both educate and myth-bust against harmful tropes. Finally, what makes SolidariTee truly unique is the people - at SolidariTee, you will meet the kindest, most passionate individuals, who will become friends for life.

-Quote from Rosie Nicholls, director of Team SolidariTee in 2022-23, and previously Durham team lead. Rosie led the exit interviews which reflected on skills, achievements and challenges at the end of the year.

Challenges, Learning and Improvement

Running any kind of charity is not without its challenges. We are committed to a culture of continual learning and self-reflection, so that we can do the best by every volunteer who chooses to dedicate time to the cause, and to every staff member and client who walks through our partners' doors.

Student Team

Many regional teams experienced challenges in being able to register as a society within their university, which in turn made it more complicated to host events on campus. We can't always change this; sometimes being part of a national charity does not meet society criteria, but in learning from this we have communicated more clearly with teams that we can support with venue hire costs up-front, knowing that this will help us to raise more money as a result.

Partner NGOs

With a shrinking civil society and funding landscape in Greece, many of our partners experienced income unpredictability as a result of other donors rapidly pulling out. We conducted a survey to understand the funding priorities of NGOs in Greece, and have adjusted our funding strategy for 2024 and 2025 to support organisations in remaining resilient and future-proof. We have also learnt that we have the potential to play a key role in providing opportunities for organisations to connect, coordinate and knowledge share. We have made changes to our remote management and safeguarding approach, knowing that very often, funders are some the only bodies who can mandate and improve standards across the humanitarian landscape.

Organisational Learning

In a post-pandemic culture, we have noticed that students are more discerning in how they choose to spend their time. We had concerns about having smaller numbers of volunteers since the 2020-21 academic year, but have now realised that remote and pandemic volunteering was in fact an anomalously large year in terms of team size for us, and that a focus on quality volunteering experiences and impact is a more appropriate strategy for us, alongside diversified income streams.



Looking Ahead: Student Leadership 2023-24

In the 2022-23 academic year, we appointed Lauren Brickell and Ben Logan as student team leads for the following academic year, and they began work to build new teams of volunteers. Below you can find short pieces that they each wrote about the aspects of SolidariTee, and the future plans they have co-created, that are most important to them.

Ben Logan



A play on words, SolidariTee is defined by the solidarity of its volunteers with both displaced populations and one another. Far from an individual effort, our outputs from fundraising to awareness represent the collective action of a network of diverse, but like minded, young activists across the UK and beyond. From t-shirt stalls to conferences, as SolidariTee has grown, so to have the opportunities to bring together a new generation of changemakers - and friends! Looking ahead, we plan to continue building this community through, including through providing opportunities for Soli alumni to engage with our events, aiming to continue to inspire a sense of solidarity in young people that lasts well beyond their time at university.

By funding essential asylum services, SolidariTee supports young people to empower direct real world impact, providing student volunteers with hands-on experiences unique for our age. This last year we diversified the types of aid we fund, to embed psychological support into our legal aid approach. In doing so, we hope to help facilitate comprehensive and lasting asylum solutions. To solidify our commitment to reliable funding, this year we plan to return to our roots through centring t-shirt sales at the core of our awareness and fundraising efforts. A 'soli-T' not only visually demonstrates support for refugee rights, but tangibly underpins essential professional services which work to uphold the protection of displaced populations.

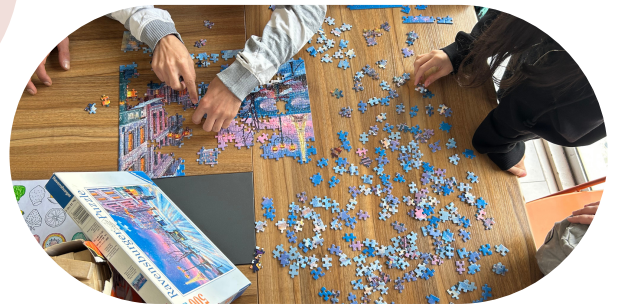
Favourite SolidariTee event that you've attended so far?

My favourite event would have to be the LGBTQIA+ and forced migration event last year at Oxford. This was the first panel I chaired, which was an amazing opportunity I was empowered to pursue through SolidariTee. The issue discussed is also close to me, and the turn out was amazing!

One fact about refugees that you wish more people knew:

Not necessarily a fact, but I wish people stopped treating words like 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' as labels so often - it reduces people simply to their legal or migration status.





Lauren Brickell

As political hostility towards displaced people becomes increasingly normalised, our work remains as vital as ever: combining our core values and traditions with fresh approaches will be key to amplifying SolidariTee's reach this year. Alongside our annual Week of Action, our university teams have been creative in planning novel events which raise funds and awareness: from art exhibitions to a Spring Ball, and even a Mario Kart tournament! Meanwhile, we have two central team conferences to look forward to this year, in London and Edinburgh; as well as some more podcast episodes to expand our digital presence.

This fusion of continuity and novelty applies equally to our ethics. Sustainability remains integral to our identity: we are proud that our most recent t-shirts - the Dream collection - are vegan, 100% cotton, and carbon-neutral, and our culture of sharing resources minimises waste at events. Furthermore, whilst we strive to raise and allocate funds in the most effective ways possible, with minimal operating costs, our values are never compromised, ensuring accountability to and dignified representation of those forcibly-displaced. A core new aim, though, is to diversify our array of events, in order to reach a wider audience, extending awareness of SolidariTee both within and beyond student communities. Similarly, we seek to welcome a broader range of volunteers, by increasing the flexibility and accessibility of roles and projects: SolidariTee should be something everyone can get involved with!

After all, it is our volunteers, and their inspirational dedication, which truly animate this organisation. Therefore, as we look ahead, our final priority is to cultivate an environment conducive to mutual learning and support: we want students to feel empowered to lead projects, initiate conversations about refugee-related issues, and have the confidence to stand in solidarity with all those forcibly-displaced.

Favourite SolidariTee event that you've attended so far?

My favourite SolidariTee event to date has to be last year's annual conference, since it brought to a wider audience a key theme in academic debates over humanitarian aid - 'Accountability to Affected Populations' - and provided a forum to hear from such inspiring speakers, as to how this can truly be upheld.

Favourite quote?

"It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks." - Dina Nayeri



Future Plans and Next Steps



The leadership team and board of trustees have engaged in a strategic review, with a view to finalising our 2024 & 2025 strategy to maximise our capacity to adapt to changing global events affecting refugees, and continuously improve the opportunities and enablers of success for our student community.



1 Develop multi-year partnerships

In recent years, the humanitarian sector has moved towards more equitable relationships with partners, and has encouraged donors to engage in multi-year agreements with partners to provide them with the support to plan ahead and adapt their work. We have always been a flexible funder, but in 2024 we will implement 2-year grants to reduce the administrative burden on organisations and develop more stable relationships. With other funders providing grants covering as little as 3 months, longer-term partnerships were prioritised by the partners we surveyed.

2 Invest in student leadership training & community building

Our in-person training sessions post-covid have been really well received by those who attended, so we plan to build on this by facilitating more opportunities for real-world connection at events across the UK. Many of our volunteers are taking on their first ever leadership roles, so we plan to expand our training in this area in more depth, to support the next generation of organisers in staying true to their values whilst leading campaigns and teams.

3 Develop our organisational resilience

In 2024 and 2025, we plan to make strategic use of consultants and training and CPD opportunities to both enhance in-house capacity and build links with experts to improve our work in areas such as our digital engagement strategy. We also plan to diversify our income streams away from exclusively community fundraising to boost our grant-giving potential whilst retaining the direct pipeline from student fundraising through to grant-giving.

4 Support the capacity of NGO professionals

We plan to continue to offer formal and informal support and training in areas including mental health first aid, monitoring & evaluation, safeguarding and trauma-informed approaches.

2022 & EARLY 2023

During this year, 81,130 new asylum claims were lodged in the UK. By the end of 2022, 132,182 applications were still waiting for a decision, with 2/3 of these applications having left individuals and families without a decision for over 6 months. News outlets revealed that hundreds of asylum-seeking children had gone missing, possibly kidnapped, within asylum accommodation.

MARCH 2023

The Illegal Migration Bill is introduced to parliament. Termed the 'Refugee Ban Bill' by many refugee campaign groups and NGOs, the Bill set out to prevent anyone who had arrived in the UK via small boat crossings being able to apply for asylum. International refugee law runs contra to this, and is clear that how a person arrives in search of safety should not be assessed, but rather the 'why' should be instead.

APRIL 2023

The UK Government confirms plans to house asylum seekers on a Barge, the Bibby Stockholm. Following this, Legionella was discovered on board, leading to evacuation and subsequent reopening. A man later died of suspected suicide following being forcibly housed there. A damning report is also released in the same month about appalling conditions in Brook House detention centre following an official inquiry.

JUNE 2023

The UK announces that 'hundreds' of migrants from Albania have been returned there, following months of fueled misinformation about the rights and credibility of those seeking safety from Albania, disregarding the very real threats to personal and political safety that exist for many people.

JULY 2023

The Illegal Migration Bill (now Act) passes into law.

By the end of 2023 at least 23 people had died attempting to cross the Channel in a year. The Rwanda plan continues to be debated in Parliament, despite having been ruled unlawful by the Supreme court at the end of 2023. Asylum seeker claims have been rushed through the system under misguided rhetoric surrounding 'clearing the backlog' of applications, with those granted refugee status hurriedly evicted and made homeless in freezing temperatures.

Greece & EU

A timeline of key events affecting refugees and displaced people

2022

At the end of 2022, Greece implemented a closure of the programme which provided accommodation to extremely vulnerable asylum seekers, ESTIA II. People were provided with just days' notice before being transferred to remote camps in places they did not know, in conditions unsuitable for their needs and/or vulnerabilities. NGOs published numerous advocacy reports documenting the impact of the closure.

MARCH 2023

The European Court of Human Rights finds that Greece has violated the rights of asylum seekers in case A.D v. Greece. The case relates to a pregnant woman who was housed in a camp in Samos, where the conditions were found to constitute ill-treatment.

MAY 2023

For two months, the Greek Asylum Service website was down, preventing people from being able to lodge asylum claims. This had ramifications for people who were then at risk of being unjustly detained as a result of incorrect documents, and who therefore had no access to the (small amount of) cash assistance provided to asylum seekers.

JUNE 2023

More than 600 people die in the Pylos shipwreck off the coast of Greece, from a boat of 750 people attempting the deadly crossing from Libya. Credible evidence has come to light that the Greek coastguard's actions and omissions directly contributed to these deaths.

Asylum applications in the first half of 2023 were at their highest (519,000) for any same period since 2015-16.

In summer 2023, devastating wildfires in Greece led to the deaths of 18 migrants, many others of whom suffered incredibly cruel and unfounded treatment in relation to the fires. Moreover, the new EU Pact on Asylum and Migration was agreed in December 2023, with devastating ramifications on the rights of asylum seekers across Europe. The Pact gives states the right to deviate from protocols in 'crisis' situations, and denies people seeking safety freedom of choice or movement upon their arrival at Europe's border countries.

Global

A non-exhaustive timeline of key displacement events during the reporting period

SEPTEMBER 2022

An estimated 8 million people were displaced by devastating floods in Pakistan, which submerged a third of the country at their worst point. Pakistan also hosts 1.3m registered refugees from Afghanistan, and an estimated 1.5m Afghans living in Pakistan without documentation. One year on, in October 2023, Pakistan ordered all undocumented migrants to leave the country or be deported in an 'unprecedented crackdown'.

FEBRUARY 2023

Catastrophic earthquakes destroyed almost 50,000 buildings, killing over 55,000 people in Turkey and Syria, and impacting an estimated 15.7 million people. Millions were displaced from their homes and are now living in temporary camps in extreme weather conditions. Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees globally, including over 3.5m Syrians, and inside Syria, prior to the earthquakes, 15.3m people were already in need of humanitarian assistance.

MARCH 2023

One year on from the escalation of conflict following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 5 million people are estimated to be internally displaced within Ukraine. By the end of 2023, more than 6m refugees from Ukraine had been recorded globally, many of whom are hosted in neighbouring countries with limited financial resources and protection and integration support. Despite the large amount of international support, funding for neighbouring host countries is already drying up from international donors, with devastating consequences for the most marginalised communities.

APRIL 2023

Large-scale fighting in Sudan displaces 5.7 million people within the first 6 months - almost one million people per month. By January 2024, this number has risen to 7.6m, of whom 1.4m are displaced across borders, with very little media attention or international awareness.

At the time of publishing this report, devastating bombardment of Gaza has continued via land, air and sea for over 100 days since events on 7th October, in which Hamas attacks killed over 1200 people in Israel and led to the capture of hostages, of which approximately 132 people are still being held. More than 25,000 people have been killed in Gaza by the Israeli military, with 1.7m people displaced. Siege conditions imposed on Gaza have led to real and increasing risk of famine. We call for an immediate and unreserved ceasefire adhered to by all parties to the conflict, and for safe passage for those forced to flee persecution and attacks.




Thank you!

Thank you so much for taking the time to read our impact report covering the 22-23 academic year. To view our annual accounts and full trustees' annual report, please visit the Charity Commission website, where they are available to view and download.

If you'd like to get in touch with a question, feedback, or to reach out about a collaboration or donation, please send comms@solidaritee.org.uk an email and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

Thank you to all our supporters who have made all of what is written in this report possible - we truly wouldn't exist without the power of collective impact.

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