



**Utrecht University**

**INTERSECTIONALITY IN REFUGEE CRISIS AND  
IMMIGRATION IN GREECE: GENDER, RACE AND RELIGION**

Master's Thesis

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MA International Relations in Historical Perspective

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Wordcount: 13,591

15 June 2021



## **Abstract**

This thesis uses the theoretical framework of intersectionality to research the refugee crisis in Greece. Specifically, it researches how female refugees and immigrants who stay in Greece face different forms of discrimination depending on their gender, race, and religion.

Greece has a long history with immigration, while after 2011 and the Syrian civil war the numbers of refugee flows increased. This thesis studies the period between 2011 and 2020 while it also analyses the historical background of Greece as a host country and the Greek society regarding gender equality and sexism.

Even though gender, race, and religious discrimination are divided and defined separately in order to analyse and research their roots in the Greek society, in fact, the thesis concludes that they cannot be separated because their interaction creates this different form of discrimination that these women face. This is exactly what is called intersectionality.

**Keywords:** *intersectionality, feminism, race, racism, gender-based violence, islamophobia, refugees, refugee crisis, immigration, Greece.*

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## **A Woman, A Refugee, poem by Jade Amoli-Jackson**

A woman, a refugee,  
Or an asylum seeker, with a child  
Nobody wants to know.  
You're a refugee, asylum seeker  
Whatever, I don't want to know.  
You're dirty and a liar  
You have not been tortured  
You just depend on our generosity  
I hope they don't give you any benefits at all.

Take that dirty child away  
Why have a child, when you have no job?  
Our country is not for people like you  
Asylum seeking woman.  
What did you do to your husband?  
I guess you came here to prostitute yourself  
And that's why you claim asylum.  
I read through your lies and that's why  
I asked them to stop your support  
Because your claim has been found to be fraudulent  
You will be deported back to where you came from.

'I beg you not to deport me and my baby  
Because they will kill me and my child  
Help me, I am a refugee  
You don't know the people I ran from  
I was rich but they took everything  
They killed my husband and two of my children  
I escaped with this little girl, who is my world.  
So please help me, I need help.'

I left the officer who had done little to help  
I sat down and cried  
But crying was not going to achieve anything  
This lady saw me crying my eyeballs out  
Because I had nothing else left.  
She sat with me, told me she was a solicitor  
That she could help me if I wanted her to.  
I said 'yes' straight away  
But there was a catch  
I didn't have the money to pay her.

She told me her name.  
I felt comfortable straight away  
She was English  
A new friend and a solicitor.  
She took me and my little girl to a cafe  
Bought us tea and toast  
I think she guessed that we were starving.

After some weeks, a letter arrived  
I opened it with shaking hands  
It said 'Your appeal has been successful  
And you're entitled to Section Four Support'  
I jumped up and down like a mad woman.  
I sat and talked to my little girl  
Who was just three months old  
'Shame on that Home Office officer  
Who thought female asylum seekers  
Are not entitled to accommodation or happiness'  
But my little one was fast asleep  
And I was talking to myself.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In a world full of wars, discrimination, walls, racism, and patriarchy, the immigration and the refugee crisis continue to affect Europe, and not only, in all levels: political, economic, social, and cultural. Refugee crisis and immigration are issues that need to be addressed through the delicate balances of humanity and the capacity of a country or group of countries, such as the European Union, to assimilate and integrate into their societies a large number of people who have different cultural characteristics from people of European societies. Up to this day, the institutions and the Member States of the European Union have not managed to successfully respond to the arrival of thousands of people to their territory. One of the most important political developments globally took place when the population movements peaked in July 2015. When millions of people left their homes either to escape the war or to try to find a better life in Europe, a new era began for the whole world and particularly for the Old Continent. The movement of refugees and immigrants to Europe, and especially to Greece, is one of the greatest human tragedies. Some of them were lucky because they found a temporary home for their families and themselves. However, a lot of them, died while trying to reach their destination and plenty of them lost their families on the way. However, as if the risks, the loss, and the inhuman experiences these populations are facing are not enough, there is another issue of crucial importance in the refugee and immigration crisis that most people do not acknowledge: the violation of Human Rights, and more specifically, the different levels of discrimination they face such as racism related to their colour, their ethnicity, their religion, and their race. Additionally, the most vulnerable group of them is considered to be the female refugees and immigrants because they experience multiple discrimination and racism including sexism and gender-based violence, and religious intolerance.

Women are at greater risk of experiencing violence not only as a consequence of their ethnic origin but also because they face various forms of social exclusion or discrimination in everyday life due to their gender. Despite the common belief that European societies have evolved towards a more tolerant mentality, homophobia and sexism are very much present on a daily basis in the majority of European countries. Even though refugee and immigrant women are given limited human and legal rights

in their countries of origin what they face in Europe is not very different. Although the law guarantees gender equality, society is still infused with patriarchal standards that are commonly combined with racist ideas and lead to rapes, sexual harassments, trafficking, and sex in exchange for a passport or a “safe travel and stay” in Europe, domestic or psychological violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and “honour crimes”. The gender issues in the immigration and the refugee crisis became more prevalent when a lot of unaccompanied women or single mothers started to travel to Europe. The theoretical framework of intersectionality that is used in this thesis, indicates that in order to be effective in preventing violence against these women, society must also challenge racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination<sup>1</sup> that affect refugees, such as islamophobia and religious discrimination. Their multilevel identity in view of their gender, race, religion, and class makes female immigrants and refugees a “weaker minority” and places them in a “lower” and more dangerous position than a male immigrant or a white European woman.

Greece is a common first stop in Europe for refugees and immigrants and the conditions they live in are neither safe nor healthy. Greek society, as mentioned above regarding the majority of the European countries, is patriarchal and gender equality is not yet achieved. At the same time, women in Greece face habitual sexism and sexual harassment in their family, school, job, and every other part of their everyday life. Additionally, in Greece, racism and xenophobia are on the rise, and far-right parties and political groups have become stronger, especially after 2012 when Golden Dawn (GD) became a part of the Greek Parliament. Except racism and xenophobia’s rise, religious intolerance and specifically Islamophobic stereotypes have also increased in Greece. Both racism and Islamophobia have their roots in the creation of the Greek nation which is connected with traditional values of history, language and religion – Greek Orthodox Religion -. Hence, not only racist and xenophobic but also Islamophobic violent attacks take place against refugees and immigrants. The Greek government is not efficient in providing refugees safety and adequate services and it would not be an exaggeration to admit that immigrants are treated with indifference, to

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<sup>1</sup> Chen, Jasmin. *Intersectionality Matters: A Guide to Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Communities to Prevent Violence against Women*. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), 2017.



say the least. All the refugee camps are far away from the cities making the immigrants' integration difficult. Subhuman living conditions and isolation have had a negative influence on the refugees who, in various cases, have created their own gangs based on their country of origin, converting the camps into ghettos. The violence is continuously increasing and sometimes, even a slight disagreement between the different groups can lead to murder. In this hard, hostile, and unhealthy environment, the most vulnerable and most sensitive group are the women because of their gender. Refugee camps and detention centres are completely unsafe, especially for unaccompanied women and single mothers. For instance, Moria in Lesvos Island, the biggest refugee camp in Greece, is considered by the international community the most dangerous and unsafe camp in Europe. The camp is incredibly overcrowded, - ten times over its capacity and people live packed up in tents.<sup>2</sup> In this chaotic environment, many camp residents confirm that they live in constant fear and that when the night comes, violence rises. In January 2020, hundreds of refugees and especially women and children demonstrated in Mytilene, the capital of Lesvos Island against the horrific conditions in Moria camp with the main slogan "All Women Against Moria" and "Moria is a Women's Hell".<sup>3</sup>

Most of the time, these cases are silenced or covered up by the media and the government. The campaigns of international and national NGOs are the only effort made to protect women's rights or to support rape and sex victims. Some local communities make remarkable efforts and try to find temporary solutions, proceeding to non-institutional actions. For instance, the housing squat for refugees and immigrants "Notara 26" in Exarcheia in Athens is the most well-known project which has hosted and continues to host thousands of refugees and immigrants.<sup>4</sup> Since its opening in 2015, its main priority has been the housing of families, unaccompanied women, and single mothers. Apart from the services and the help they are granted (shelter, food, medical assistance, etc.), the main aim of this self-organised initiative is to give refugees the

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<sup>2</sup> "Ελλάδα: Οι Γυναίκες Πρόσφυγες Μιλούν Ενάντια Στη Βία, Τις Επικίνδυνες Συνθήκες Και Την Παραμέληση Από Την Πλευρά Των Επίσημων Αρχών." [Greece: Women Refugees Speak Against Violence, Dangerous Conditions and Neglect by Officials.], *International Amnesty, Greek Department*.

<sup>3</sup> Dimitrakopoulou, Violeta, Naya Tselepi. "#All Women Against Moria." *Lesvos Migration Atlas*, 22 June 2020, [lesvosatlas.net/all-women-against-moria/?lang=el](https://lesvosatlas.net/all-women-against-moria/?lang=el).

<sup>4</sup> "Notara 26, Greece's First Housing Squat for Refugees & Migrants." *YouTube*, Unicorn Riot, 8 May 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLgLIetE4xQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLgLIetE4xQ).

opportunity to make their own decisions and integrate into the neighbourhood. Notara 26 is not the only example of a housing squat in Greece. However, the right-wing government, elected in July 2019, is extremely intolerant of such projects and one of the first priorities in its agenda is to shut all of them down. Comparing the inefficiency of a refugee camp in Greece –where the law is bound to be broken in many ways- to the decency a housing squat treats refugees and immigrants, it is to wonder whether the government should display such zeal in pursuing such initiatives.

## 1.1 AIM OF THE THESIS

Based on the above analysis about women in the refugee crisis and immigration in Greece, this thesis studies how female refugees and immigrants experience intersectionality in Greece. In fact, by using the intersectional approach from feminist studies, the multiple discrimination and these women's experiences can be better understood and analysed. In order to explore holistically the thesis's main research question, the thesis also analyses the intersectionality theoretical framework, the different levels of intersectionality that the refugee and immigrant women face, and the different forms of discrimination depending on their three social identities: gender, race and religion. This main research question is used in order to study how the theory of intersectionality prevails in a real historical example that still takes place in Greece. Also, this thesis attempts to investigate further the important role of different identities such as gender, race and religion, especially those that affect minorities who face discrimination, sexism and racism. Intersectionality theoretical framework is used to make clear the different experiences in terms of gender. The different identities of a person can change the perspective of gender as well as the way gender is perceived and treated by the law, policy, and institutions.<sup>5</sup> Intersectionality theory studies that in order to be effective in preventing violence against women, society must challenge also racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination that affect women.<sup>6</sup> On a theoretical level, all the basic tools that needed for this research are analysed in the first

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<sup>5</sup> Chen, Jasmin. *Intersectionality Matters: A Guide to Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Communities to Prevent Violence against Women*. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

part of this thesis while in the second part of it, these tools are used in order to research intersectionality in the refugee and immigration crisis in Greece which started at 2011 with the war in Syria, and it continues until today. The research is based on a specific timeline, from the beginning of the huge refugee flows in 2011 until the summer of 2020.

## 1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main focus of this thesis is the theory of intersectionality, as a part of the feminism theory which is an analytical framework for understanding how the different identities of a person interact and change the level of discrimination. The intersectional approach which is the interaction between the different identities can change the level of discrimination, racism, sexism, violence, etc. For instance, black women are considered inferior to white women but also to black men as well. Other identities that can determine the way that someone experiences discrimination, are age, life stage, ability, sexuality, ethnicity, class, religious beliefs, family, geographical location, and profession.<sup>7</sup> The main focus of this thesis is on three of these identities: gender, race and religion. The academic tool of intersectionality is used in order to explain how female refugees and immigrants in Greece face multiple discrimination because of their overlapping identities. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the significance of understanding the intersection by analysing every identity separately first and then combining them.

As a part of feminist studies, intersectionality combines perfectly with race and racism theories. The feminist theoretical approach analyses the importance of the role of gender and that gender discrimination and gender-based violence is not a private issue but has an important role in public life. There is a significant connection between the feminist theory and the postcolonial critique which is the marginalization of the “silenced” object. The “subaltern” is part of “the Others”, the inferior. Regarding feminism theory, this thesis also attempts to analyse a bit more on black feminism

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<sup>7</sup> Chen, Jasmin. *Intersectionality Matters: A Guide to Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Communities to Prevent Violence against Women*. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH), 2017.

theory which is very useful for this research because it includes race as a part of its theory. Black feminism considers race and gender as combined identities that should be studied together in order to be understood holistically. In general, the most common “storyteller” is the male subject. Women are not only marginalised but have also been victims of rapes, honour killings, sexual harassment, domestic violence and gender-based violence for years. Respectively, people of the Global South, the colonized people of Africa or Latin America, black people, refugees and immigrants are marginalised and oppressed for years. When gender-based violence combines with racial discrimination it is called *intersectionality*.

Except for the main theoretical framework which is about the intersectional approach, including gender, race and religion and the relevant academic debates, other important concepts are analysed through the thesis. For example, terms such as discrimination, identity, refugee, immigrant, gender-based violence and religious intolerance are mentioned in the next chapters. All these terms are included as smaller parts of the research and they are analysed through the main case study.

### 1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding the historiography of the topic, many scholars have analysed theories about intersectionality and feminism while many more have researched race and racism. Of course, racism plays also a significant role in this thesis, and it is analysed further in the next chapters. Regarding its nature, many scholars locate the beginning of the term racism in Immanuel Kant’s philosophy which was the first reference to the racial difference on which scientific racism was based.<sup>8</sup> Other scholars argue that racism and racist ideology are connected with the Enlightenment, and specifically with theories that justify racial hierarchies in terms of biological differences, obscures the premodern past of racialisation.<sup>9</sup> One of the most important scholars who argued about intersectionality is Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights activist and legal scholar. Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality* in her essay *Demarginalizing the*

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<sup>8</sup> Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. *Race and the Enlightenment*. B. Blackwell, 1997, pp. 49-59.

<sup>9</sup> Mallin, Eric S. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2004, pp. 352–355.

*Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*<sup>10</sup>. Through her theory, she indicates that black women are marginalised and face multiple oppressions as a single one while she also has highlighted a quote from Sojourner Truth's speech in 1851 Women's Convention in Ohio: "because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which black women are subordinated"<sup>11</sup>. Patricia Hill Collins argued also about intersectionality, even if she did not mention the term itself. Through her book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* she analysed not only black feminism but also the relationship between gender and other identities such as race, class, sexuality, etc.<sup>12</sup> Also, as Bernice McNair Barnett argued in her article *Angela Davis and Women Race & Class: A Pioneer in Integrative RGC Studies*, Angela Davis was a pioneer<sup>13</sup> in researching gender at an intersectional level. Her book *Women, Race and Class* analysed the differences between black and white women but also the differences between black women and black men.<sup>14</sup> Finally, with the book *Ain't I a woman: Black Women and Feminism*, Gloria Jean Watkins (Bell Hooks) argued about sexism and racism in a radical way and it became a major work that is used for gender and race studies.<sup>15</sup> Regarding intersectionality theoretical framework in Greece is a bit marginalised as an academic theoretical tool. Only Athena Athanasiou discusses the intersectional approach in her anthology *Feminist Theory and Cultural Critique*<sup>16</sup> when she describes the "differentiation of the terms of oppression that structure women's

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<sup>10</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*, University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989, 139-167.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>12</sup> Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Barnett, Bernice McNair. "Angela Davis and Women, Race, & Class: A Pioneer in Integrative RGC Studies." *Race, Gender & Class*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race and Class*. Penguin Books, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Hooks, Bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Routledge, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Athanasiou, Athena. *Φεμινιστική Θεωρία και Πολιτισμική Κρίση* [Feminism Theory and Cultural Crisis], Nisos, Athens, 2006.

experiences based on social class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability”<sup>17</sup> but without using the term “intersectionality”.

Crenshaw, through a metaphor about an accident that takes place in an intersection, for which none of the drivers is responsible, she demonstrates how important is to take into consideration the intersection between the different identities. The dichotomised and exclusive definitions of racism or sexism cannot apply to the multiple discrimination that these marginalised groups face. They are interactive and overlapping, and this is why every person depending on their identities experience every form of discrimination differently. Although the discourses of race, gender, religion, class, sexuality, etc have their own ontological bases, it is important to study them as mutually constitutive and non-separate.<sup>18</sup> Hence, even though racism is analysed above as an ideology itself, it not really functions as a distinct ideology and structure. Usually, racism interacts with other ideologies and systems of domination and oppression which lead to different forms of discrimination such as sexism or the religious one.

What this thesis aims to do, is to use *intersectionality* theory as the main theory in order to research the case study about the refugee crisis and immigration in Greece. Regarding the case study, although there are many scholars who have written about the refugee crisis in Greece and the racism, xenophobia, sexism that exist in it, there are not enough academic tools about intersectionality and refugees’ different identities in Greece. Regarding the academic debate and the added value of this research, it can combine some theoretical tools with practical concepts which are very significant nowadays. There is not a single article, book or scholar’s research which study intersectionality especially in the refugee crisis in Greece. This topic can combine fundamental theories about feminism and race with a huge variety of recent primary sources such as articles, videos, documentaries, and interviews from people who are victims, protesters, activists, etc.

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<sup>17</sup> Athanasiou, Athena. *Φεμινιστική Θεωρία και Πολιτισμική Κρίση* [Feminism Theory and Cultural Crisis], Nisos, Athens, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira. *A Situated Intersectional Everyday Approach to the Study of Bordering*. EuBorderScapes, August 2013, pp. 7.

## 1.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND SOURCES

This thesis analyses the intersectionality in the refugee crisis and immigration in Greece. Specifically, this thesis focuses on female refugees and immigrants and how they experience intersectionality on different levels. Regarding the methodological approach of this thesis, is qualitative research while its main references will be divided into two main categories; the academic tools and the main theoretical framework and the primary sources that are used in order to analyse in-depth the case study. The thesis starts by analysing the theoretical framework of intersectionality, while during the research about the three levels of discrimination some other smaller concepts are used about feminist theory, gender-based violence, race and racism and islamophobia. These concepts are defined in parallel with the case study's analysis. In the second chapter the terms refugee, immigrant, and asylum seeker are defined in order to divide the different types of people who arrive in Greece and seek asylum. The theoretical part of the thesis is covered mostly by secondary sources such as theories and academic articles.

The case study is based more on primary sources such as interviews, documentaries, videos and articles about the situation regarding the refugee crisis and immigration in Greece. The main objective of this thesis is to find where the theory meets real-life and to research the intersectionality in real events. Primary sources are used to describe the situation of the marginalised and oppressed female refugees who face discrimination, sexism and racism because of their identities. Regarding the primary sources, the knowledge of the Greek language will allow access to Greek sources such as media, governmental documents, NGOs and research centres. Finally, the initial thought was also primary and personal research through conducting interviews with refugees, locals and people who work in Greek NGOs. Through this process, except for the extra academic value in the thesis, the marginalised female refugees and immigrants could have the opportunity to speak themselves about their lives. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a serious limitation regarding the interviews because of the lockdown and the restrictions that did not allow access to the refugee camps or the NGOs.

Regarding the bibliography and the primary sources, some of the secondary sources that are used analyse the basic concepts of feminism, postcolonial studies and the

subaltern while this thesis also includes secondary sources about the theory of intersectionality by feminist scholars like Crenshaw who was one of the first scholars who focus her research on intersectionality. The theoretical part of the thesis will be based on secondary sources which analyse the theoretical tools. As mentioned above, it is important to mention the access in Greek media and Greek primary sources.

## 1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis starts with the chapter of the introduction in which the research's topic, the aim of the specific research, the structure of the thesis and the methodology are described and explained. Except for the sources' decision and why they are important for the refugee crisis case study, the introduction chapter also includes the basic theoretical framework about intersectionality and the literature review which explains the academic gap this thesis attempts to fill. Also, it includes some of the basic definition regarding the terms that are used for this research such as gender, race and religion.

The main body of the thesis is composed of two main chapters which will be about the case study. The first main chapter is an introductory one about the situation in Greece regarding the refugee crisis and immigration, including the historical context. It also includes the background of Greek society and its patriarchal nature because the thesis is focused on female refugees and immigrants. The second main chapter focuses on the intersectionality in the refugee crisis and specifically the life of the female refugees who face discrimination in three different ways; racism, sexism, and religious intolerance. This chapter starts with gender-based violence and the inhuman conditions in the dangerous refugee camps and detention centres. However, it is important analyse the historical and political background of the other forms of discrimination, such as racism and islamophobia. Specifically, the historical background of the far-right's rise and the creation of xenophobic stereotypes in Greece are also analysed in this chapter. Even though the research's objective is to prove that these identities are interactive and overlapping, in order to delve into them through the research in this chapter are divided in order to study them separately. Finally, one of the most important chapters is the



conclusion because of the results of the research. It is followed by a list of the bibliography and the primary sources that are used during the research.

## 2 SITUATION IN GREECE; REFUGEE CRISIS AND GREEK SOCIETY

Since 2011, after the beginning of the civil war in Syria, the refugee flows, the immigrants, and asylum seekers have increased in Europe and especially in the Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Greece, and Spain. Additionally, the economic crisis which started in 2008 affected these countries and their populations. Economic crisis and other political and social norms did not help in the balance between refugees, immigrants, and the locals. People started losing their jobs and the easiest solution was to blame the foreigners, the “Others”. As a result, the economic crisis gradually became political, cultural, societal, and humanitarian and racism in Europe increased. Far-right parties and movements, and nationalism started to increase as well. Greece is one of the most common first stations for refugees and immigrants from the Middle East and Africa while it is also a common destination for immigrants from Balkan countries and East Europe. This happens because of the easiest access to Greek borders from the Mediterranean Sea or from the land borders with Turkey. Greece, as a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, has the duty to recognise the refugee status of these people and give them protection and support.<sup>19</sup> As a host country, it must provide them with legal, humanitarian, social and economic aid, of course with the help of the European Union and the United Nations.<sup>20</sup>

The first chapter will be focused on the historical background of the refugee crisis and immigration, specifically in Greece. The first sub-chapter except for immigration from the other Middle East countries and the African continent it will also analyse the Syrian civil war’s breakout which was the beginning of the biggest refugee flow in Greece. The second sub-chapter will describe Greek society regarding the patriarchy and the

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<sup>19</sup> Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status and Guidelines on International Protection, *UNHCR, 2019*.

gender inequality because this thesis focuses on the female subject. Before the main analysis of the historical background, it is important to separate and define the main legal terms for the groups of people which will be the main part of this thesis research. The definitions of refugee, immigrant, migrant, and asylum seeker are parts of a debate, and it has various definitions, theories, and perspectives that correspond to ideological forms that have been formulated by ideological bodies. However, from a legal perspective, there are some important differences as detailed below. In this research, the terms that will be used mostly are the refugee and immigrant ones. The term migrant will not be used because there is not a universal legal definition of it.<sup>2122</sup>

### ***Refugee***

A refugee is someone who is forced to flee his/her home because of special circumstances and atrocities such as war, violence, and persecution. Most of the time refugees are forced to leave their country immediately without warning while they are not able to return home unless the situation in their homeland is safe for them again.<sup>23</sup>The governments and the United Nations Refugee Agency determine if a person who seeks international protection meets the legal definition of a refugee which is based on well-founded fear because of the circumstances above.<sup>24</sup> The people who obtain refugee status are provided with legal protection under the International Law and other international conventions while they are also provided humanitarian aid from other agencies and organisations such as NGOs and European organisations for refugees.

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<sup>21</sup> A migrant is someone who is moving to a different place usually for economic reasons and better employment opportunities. Of course, migrants are free to return home and they were not forced to leave from the beginning. Although the term migrant does not have differences from the immigrant term, it is not defined by international law and does not have a universally accepted definition. It is used more as an umbrella term that includes a number of legal categories of people, such as those who migrate for job opportunities, as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. The term is not used in this thesis. “United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division.” *United Nations*, United Nations, June 2012.

<sup>22</sup> “Key Migration Terms.” *International Organization for Migration*, 17 Jan. 2020, [www.iom.int/key-migration-terms](http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status and Guidelines on International Protection, *UNHCR*, 2019.

Regarding the legal background of refugees, there is the 1951 Convention states that a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.<sup>25</sup> For the countries which are part of this Convention, there is the duty to protect and support refugees if they meet these criteria. Under international refugee law, recognition as a refugee is declaratory and not constitutive. “A person is a refugee within the meaning of the 1951 Convention as soon as he fulfils the criteria contained in the definition. This would necessarily occur prior to the time at which his refugee status is formally determined. Recognition of his refugee status does not, therefore, make him refugee but declares him to be one. He does not become a refugee because of recognition but is recognized because he is a refugee”<sup>26</sup>. Instruments adopted at the regional level complement the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and build upon its definition, by including specific reference to a number of objective circumstances which may compel a person to leave their country. However, even a country is not party to the 1951 Convention, refugees can be supported and protected by the United Nations and the General Assembly. When someone meets the criteria of the refugee statutes the High Commissioner for Refugees of the United Nations (UNHCR) must recognise and provide them with international protection.

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### ***Immigrant***

An immigrant is someone who decides to leave his/her home for a foreign country with the intention of settling there. Most of the time immigrants go through legal processes in order to immigrate to new countries and become permanent residents while many of

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<sup>25</sup> Convention relating to the Status of Refugees Art. 1A (2).

<sup>26</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status and Guidelines on International Protection, *UNHCR*, 2019, para. 28.

<sup>27</sup> “Key Migration Terms.” *International Organization for Migration*, 17 Jan. 2020, [www.iom.int/key-migration-terms](http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms).

them eventually become citizens. Immigrants decide to leave their countries in order to search for better opportunities and a better future. The most important difference with refugees is that immigrants are free to return home whenever they choose. However, in some specific cases, they are not exactly free to return, because the situation in their countries is unstable.<sup>28</sup>

The specific legal definition for an immigrant as United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) states, is a person who moves into a country other than that of his or her nationality or usual residence so that the country of destination effectively becomes his/her new country of usual residence.<sup>29</sup> This definition is adapted from the one of long-term migrant provided by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: “A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.”<sup>30</sup> The reference to 12 months as a minimum period of stay has been omitted with a view to covering those who emigrate for a shorter period of time, provided that the person has changed his or her usual residence. Whether an emigrant is considered long-term or short-term depends on the duration of stay in the country of destination.

### *Asylum Seeker*

An asylum seeker is characterised as the person who seeks international protection from dangers that exist in his or her home country, but whose claim for refugee status is not determined in a legal way yet.<sup>31</sup> Asylum seekers usually apply for protection in their host country or the country of destination. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> “Key Migration Terms.” *International Organization for Migration*, 17 Jan. 2020, [www.iom.int/key-migration-terms](http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms).

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration Revision*, Rev. 1, 1998, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> “Key Migration Terms.” *International Organization for Migration*, 17 Jan. 2020, [www.iom.int/key-migration-terms](http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms).

<sup>32</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Master Glossary of Terms* (2006).

## 2.1 GREECE AS A HOST COUNTRY

Greece as a small country with a not stable economic background did not inspire people to migrate there but the Greeks themselves migrated to other more developed countries such as the United States of America and Germany. This situation changed in the decade of 1990 after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Specifically, in 1991 the migration crisis started in Europe and specifically in Greece after the results of the Soviet Union's breakdown which created an economic and political crisis. The most common origin countries were Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania while some years later Greece started to welcome immigrants from the African continent and Asia.<sup>33</sup> In the previous decade, Greece also welcomed immigrants from Balkan countries and East Europe, but this research will be focused on the decade between 2011 and 2020.

Before delving deeper into the discrimination that females face into the refugee crisis and the immigration process, it is important to analyse the historical background of the Syrian refugee crisis, the world's largest refugee and displacement crisis in recent years which is not only related to the Syrian civil war but has also escalated to an international humanitarian issue. The Syrian war began in 2011 and it is an ongoing multisided and complicated civil war between Bashar al-Assad's government, rebel groups, the majority Kurdish society, and jihadist groups which has affected millions of people in different ways.<sup>34</sup> Syrian civil war is an ongoing conflict in Syria that started from the phenomenon of the Arab Spring which was a social mobilization against the authoritarian regimes in different countries of the Middle East and North Africa which started in Tunisia in 2010.<sup>35</sup> Other countries such as Egypt, Libya, and Syria which had similar authoritarian regimes inspired by the Arab Spring movement in Tunisia and started to create equivalent social movements. Syria's peaceful protests turned into a violent civil war in 2011, because of the violent nature of the Syrian state. The Syrian military opposed the protesters, who grew increasingly, while Western powers got

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<sup>33</sup> Kassimis Charalambos, Chrysa Kassimi. "Greece: A History of Migration." *Migrationpolicy.org*, 2 Mar. 2017, [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-history-migration](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-history-migration).

<sup>34</sup> Taddonio, Patrice. "10 Years In, Explore the Syrian Conflict in These FRONTLINE Docs." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

involved in the conflict and it became a proxy war. The turning point of these protests was on March 15, which is recognised as the beginning of the Syrian civil war.<sup>36</sup>

The Syrian civil conflict has resulted in one of the worst humanitarian crises and the largest refugee crisis after the Second World War. The total number of Syrian refugees is about 11 million who were forced to leave their homes and migrate internally or internationally.<sup>37</sup> Almost 6 million Syrians are refugees while another 7 million of them are displaced within Syria while most of them need humanitarian aid.<sup>38</sup> Also, more than 500,000 people have lost their lives because of the war itself or during their journey from Syria to other countries.<sup>39,40</sup> Most of the Syrian refugees migrated to the closest countries from their country including Turkey – which has the largest numbers of refugees -. Lebanon and Jordan. However, many Syrians travelled to the European Union. Millions of Syrians left their homes, and they started a forced journey for a better future for themselves and their children. Some of the most serious reasons that led the refugee flows to leave Syria are the violence and the human rights violations including people who have been killed. Also, except for their homes, the public facilities and the healthcare system had collapsed because of the war. Many of the hospitals were destroyed, but also the whole system collapsed including the Syrian economy. Jobless people were forced to leave their country as well, because of the poverty.

Regarding human rights violations, the Syrian civil war is characterised by a number of international organisations as a humanitarian tragedy. Because of the quickly escalated conflict between the social movements and the government, both sides became violent and violated fundamental human rights. However, the majority of the

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<sup>36</sup> “Syria: The Story of the Conflict.” *BBC News*, BBC, 11 Mar. 2016, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868).

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> “Syria: The Story of the Conflict.” *BBC News*, BBC, 11 Mar. 2016, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868).

<sup>40</sup> Taddonio, Patrice. “10 Years In, Explore the Syrian Conflict in These FRONTLINE Docs.” *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service.

atrocities were committed by Assad's government. Amnesty International, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and other international organisations researched and indicated that the Syrian government is responsible for at least 600,000 killings of people through torture methods or from poor humanitarian conditions in the government's prisons.<sup>41</sup><sup>42</sup> These practices which are common in wars and genocides should be characterised as war crimes and crimes against humanity according to Amnesty International.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, there are references to rapes and gender-based violence as tools of the Syrian government. Women Under Siege Project which is an independent initiative of the Women's Media Center reported thousands of rape cases and gender-based violence during the Syrian civil war<sup>44</sup> while many young girls are sold as slaves to ISIS soldiers who beat and rape them, re-sell them or kill them according to a report by the United Nations Human Rights Council.<sup>45</sup> Although victims included men, women, and children the majority of them were women and young girls.

As Antonio Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stated in 2014 "the Syria crisis has become the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era and a living nightmare for these people, yet the world is failing to meet the needs of refugees and the countries hosting them"<sup>46</sup>. As mentioned above, the Syrian refugee crisis escalated quickly to an international humanitarian issue. Many refugees travelled to the European Union, and this resulted in a Western crisis with the division of the governments and different public opinions about the immigration policies. In the beginning, the governments and the European Union did not know if the Syrians should be treated as refugees or economic immigrants. A xenophobic position with racism and

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<sup>41</sup> "Everything You Need to Know about Human Rights in Syria." *Everything You Need to Know about Human Rights in Syria* | Amnesty International | Amnesty International.

<sup>42</sup> "The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights." *The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights*.

<sup>43</sup> "Everything You Need to Know about Human Rights in Syria." *Everything You Need to Know about Human Rights in Syria* | Amnesty International | Amnesty International.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfe, Lauren. "Syria Has a Massive Rape Crisis." *Women's Media Center*, 3 Apr. 2013, [www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/syria-has-a-massive-rape-crisis](http://www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/syria-has-a-massive-rape-crisis).

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 2021.

<sup>46</sup> "Ten Years on, Syrian Crisis 'Remains a Living Nightmare': UN Secretary-General | | UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, [news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1086872](https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1086872).

islamophobia started to increase and to oppose immigration and refugee policies. In 2015, when the refugee crisis was at its peak the European Union failed to deal with it and European Union countries started to negotiate and heated political debates developed over closing or reinforcing borders and quota systems for the resettlement of refugees and immigrants. National and international debates, media coverage, and NGOs' contribution increased the attention about the human costs of the Syrian civil war, the responsibilities of the host countries, etc. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Greece is one of the main host countries because of the easy access to its land by the sea borders. Most of the refugees who managed to move to Greece alive have arrived by the Mediterranean Sea to the Greek islands such as Lesbos Island, Samos, Chios, Kos, etc, or through the borders with Turkey in Evros. Until the year 2015, almost 500,000 people arrived by the sea while only a small percentage of them applied for asylum in Greece.<sup>47</sup> Most of them want to travel to other European Union countries. However, in 2016 many European Union countries imposed strict restrictions on their borders and the number of refugee entries.<sup>48</sup> As a result, many refugees have stacked in Greece in the worst living conditions.

Except for the Syrian refugee crisis which is the largest factor of refugee flows, Greece is the host country for other immigrants and refugees from the Middle East and Africa. Almost 90% of the refugees and immigrants in Greece come from three different countries affected by ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. The highest percentage is almost 50% from Syria and this is the reason the Syrian civil war is analysed above. Also, the Arab Spring did not affect only Syria because after 2011 refugees from Tunisia and Libya travelled to Europe as well and specifically Greece. The rest incoming people are from Afghanistan and Iraq's conflicts. Others come from various African countries, most of them from Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia, and the Gambia. Refugees also come from other countries, such as Pakistan, Iran, and Egypt.

The main reasons that these people leave their countries except for political conflicts and wars are also the highest unemployment and the poor conditions of life. Especially

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<sup>47</sup> "Migrant Crisis: Arrivals to Greece Top 500,000." *BBC News*, BBC, 20 Oct. 2015, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34585088](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34585088).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*



in the African continent, many countries are not only extremely poor but also politically unsustainable and human rights violations are a common practice. On the other side, there is a variety of different factors that have shaped the refugee and immigrant flows to Greece. First of all, the geographical location of Greece creates easy access by the sea borders while at the same time is a crossroads between three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. This is the main reason that most of the incoming people to Europe pass from Greece. The second factor is a contradictory situation regarding the Greek economic crisis. Although because of the economic crisis which started in 2008 many Greek people are unemployed, the agricultural sector or other smaller businesses like husbandry and similar sectors remain unexploited. This is an opportunity for the incoming people to find a better life through these jobs. Finally, in Greece, the economic crisis created a multiple-level crisis that affected society, politics, culture, etc. Especially on a political level, the conflicts between the political parties increased and the immigration policies were controversial. In general, the institutional framework in Greece is a bit loose, so access to the country became easier.

## 2.2 GREEK SOCIETY; PATRIARCHY, SEXISM AND GENDER INEQUALITY

The second sub-chapter regarding the background of the situation in Greece analyses the Greek society regarding patriarchy, sexism, and gender inequality. This thesis is basically based on the theoretical framework of intersectionality which is a part of feminist studies. Because of this, except for the historical background of the refugee crisis and immigration in Greece that analysed above, it is important to research Greece as a civil society regarding gender roles and inequality. In order to research how female refugees and immigrants are treated in Greek society, it is important to delve into the patriarchy and sexism that exist in it.

First of all, after 1952 gender equality in Greece started to be established, because women gained the right to vote, while other legislations improved women's role in political, and social life, education, and employment. Hence, women started to become more visible and active. In the 1980s the Greek state started promoting gender equality through legislative and policy steps not only because of its European Union accession in 1981 but also as a result of the huge feminist movements and organizations which

started to increase in Greece as an impact of the worldwide outbreak of feminism.<sup>49</sup> Traditional gender roles in the family changed too, due to the Family Law reform of 1983 which established gender equality in marriage with equal rights and obligations regarding the nurturing of the children.<sup>50</sup> The specific law improved women's role in the family also through the abolition of dowry, and the legalisation of divorce and civil marriage.<sup>51</sup><sup>52</sup> It was characterised as a landmark for the evolution of gender equality in Greece because it was one of the "friendliest" to women.<sup>53</sup> In the same year, Greece signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) against women, which was a great legal step against gender inequality for the country.<sup>54</sup> However, the legislation against sexual violence was not established until 1984. A specific form of gender-based violence, domestic violence was still considered a private issue because of the traditional stereotypes of gender roles in the family. Only in 2006, the Greek Legislation system criminalised domestic violence including marital rape.<sup>55</sup> Marital rape was considered a huge issue, because of the traditional narrative that women are inferior to their husbands, and they have to be obedient to them. This narrative allowed men to treat their wives as their "property". As a result, marital rape was not even recognised as a term, because women were considered obligated to conduct sexual relations to their husbands. Finally, in recent decades, Greece has also addressed several other problems that women face in their workplace, such as discrimination in employment and occupation, etc.

Even though gender equality is considered constitutionally established and achieved in Greece, the reality is somehow different because of the stereotypes regarding gender

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<sup>49</sup> Tsomou, Margarita. "What Has Changed for Greek Women since the Crisis?" *Goethe Institute*, [www.goethe.de/ins/nz/en/kul/sup/fem/21269245.html](http://www.goethe.de/ins/nz/en/kul/sup/fem/21269245.html).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Davaki, Konstantina. "The Policy on Gender in Greece." *Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs*, European Parliament, 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Tsomou, Margarita. "What Has Changed for Greek Women since the Crisis?" *Goethe Institute*, [www.goethe.de/ins/nz/en/kul/sup/fem/21269245.html](http://www.goethe.de/ins/nz/en/kul/sup/fem/21269245.html).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/).

<sup>55</sup> Davaki, Konstantina. "The Policy on Gender in Greece." *Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs*, European Parliament, 2013.

roles that continue to exist in Greek society. Greece as a country is based on the narrative that according to biology, there are only two genders: male and female. All the other genders are not recognised either by Greek society or by law. Women are considered naturally associated with the domestic area and motherhood, while femininity is the main characteristic that define them. All the gender stereotypes with which people in Greece are raised continue to exist from their childhood to their adult lives, in their family, their jobs, and their education. As a result of these, sexism and patriarchy continue to grow in Greeks. Women and femininities in Greece today continue to face everyday sexism, and patriarchy, while inequalities such as the gender gap in employment including incomes, and special conditions regarding pregnancy and motherhood needs are not guaranteed for them. Sexism exists in the language as well, through sexist jokes or catcalling in the streets, while as stated in the small talk of the Onassis Stegi “every girl and woman in Greece are afraid to walk home alone in the night”.<sup>56</sup> Except for biology, gender stereotypes are also based on religion. As is analysed below in the third chapter, Greece has deep roots in its conservative state creation which was based on its religion as well. Family and partnership are deeply connected with the traditional Christian conception of family. Marriage is also connected with church and religion.

Sexism and patriarchy create a pyramid, which starts from the bottom with a huge amount of everyday “innocent” sexist jokes and stereotypes, and it eventually turns out to the top, which includes serious cases of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence includes a variety of different forms of violence including domestic violence, rape, human trafficking, and sexual harassment and actions. Of course, gender-based violence victims are not only women. Every femininity, trans person, and member of the LGBTQI++ community can face it due to how they diverge from the “normal”. Greece is witnessing daily rapes and femicides, attacks on trans people, racist treatment of different, homophobic bullying while the economic crisis increased gender-based violence in general. Unfortunately, the General Secretariat for Equality (GGI) claimed that police tended to discourage women from pursuing domestic violence charges

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<sup>56</sup> sgtathens. “8 Γυναίκες Συζητούν: Πατριαρχία, Σεξισμός Και Έμφυλη Βία Στην Ελληνική Κοινωνία | SOCIETY UNCENSORED.” [8 Women Discuss: Patriarchy, Sexism, and Gender-based violence in Greek society] *YouTube*, YouTube, 25 Nov. 2020, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_SRPOM3qnLg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SRPOM3qnLg).

instead of encouraging them to undertake reconciliation efforts<sup>57</sup>, while many cases of gender-based violence are covered up by the media or the state. Most of the times, the term femicide is not even recognised with media referring to it as “crime of passion” or “family tragedy”.<sup>5859</sup> Society continues to be built on patriarchal foundations, which accept and promote the natural heteronormality including the traditional gender roles and place women in an inferior position. These patriarchal foundations and the tolerance of them justify and normalise all forms of violence against women, including verbal, psychological, physical and sexual. Finally, regarding feminism in Greece, even though the outbreak of the crisis increased the number of the feminist movements and groups, it has never had a positive image among the wider public due to the lack of knowledge about it. Many people believe that feminism supports female supremacy, while in order to express their oppositions they use the term “feminazi”.<sup>60</sup> However, there are independent shelters, local communities, and organizations that support and provide the essential legal, psychiatric and health aid for victims of every form of gender-based violence.

The first main chapter of this thesis describes the historical background of the migration and refugee crisis in Greece while females’ journey and their stay in Greece will be analysed in the next chapters of this thesis. Regarding the political and societal crisis mentioned above, Greek society was not ready to welcome and support the refugees and the immigrants because of the unstable political background and the Greek economic crisis which affected it. Refugee and immigrant communities did not interact with Greek people while their integration is very difficult because of the stereotypes, xenophobia, racism, and discrimination that they experience. Far-right parties and movements increased also in Greece after the economic crisis, and they created a

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<sup>57</sup> *Οδηγός Συμβουλευτικής Για Τη Βία. Δεν Είσαι η Μόνη, Δεν Είσαι Μόνη. [Violence Counseling Guide. You Are not the Only one, You Are Not Alone]*, General Secretariat for Equality, [www.isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Οδηγός-Συμβουλευτικής-για-τη-ΒΙΑ.pdf](http://www.isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Οδηγός-Συμβουλευτικής-για-τη-ΒΙΑ.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Papadopoulou, Eva. “Η Πατριαρχία Δολοφονεί Και Δεν Είναι ‘Εγκλημα Πάθους.’ [Patriarchy kills and it is not a Crime of Passion] *Efimerida Ton Syntakton*, 24 Nov. 2020, [www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/269953\\_i-patriarhia-dolofonei-kai-den-einai-egklima-pathoys](http://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/269953_i-patriarhia-dolofonei-kai-den-einai-egklima-pathoys).

<sup>59</sup> Aggeli, Dialekti. “Δεν Είναι ‘Οικογενειακή Τραγωδία’, Είναι Γυναικοκτονία!” [It is not a “Family Tragedy”, it is a Femicide!] *Efimerida Ton Syntakton*, 24 Nov. 2020, [www.efsyn.gr/stiles/ano-kato/269981\\_den-einai-oikogeneiaki-tragodia-einai-gynaikoktonia](http://www.efsyn.gr/stiles/ano-kato/269981_den-einai-oikogeneiaki-tragodia-einai-gynaikoktonia).

<sup>60</sup> “Γλωσσάρι Για Το Φεμινισμό.” [Glossary for Feminism] *Socialpolicy.gr*, 23 Mar. 2017.

dangerous environment for these people in the public sphere. Racism and discrimination affect refugees and immigrants in different levels and perspectives. These discrimination's different dimensions and their interaction will be researched through this thesis, and specifically in one specific group of refugees and immigrants which is one of the most vulnerable: the women.

### 3 WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE IN GREECE AND DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The first main chapter of this thesis analysed the historical context and the political background of the refugee and immigrant flows. Similarly, it studied the background of Greece as a host country and as a society regarding sexism and patriarchy. These factors interacted and had a negative effect on the refugees' integration. People who moved to Greece have experienced the war atrocities in the Middle East or economic problems and genocides in Africa and other human tragedies before their journey to Europe. They believed that in Europe they would have the opportunity to improve their lives for them and their family, but the reality sometimes is different and dangerous. Specifically in Greece, racism, xenophobia, and nationalism, increased were exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2008. This chapter examines the different forms of discrimination against female refugees and immigrants and specifically, how they interact within the framework of intersectionality. The chapter starts with the most important part which is about the female subject in the refugee and immigration crisis and indicates how and why female experience differently every form of discrimination while it continues with the most dangerous space for them in Greece; the refugee camps and the detention centres where they live. In order to apply the theoretical framework of intersectionality is significant to analyse also the increase of racism, xenophobia and religious discrimination in Greece, and their historical background. By investigating the roots of the far-right's rise, the racism in the refugee camps, and the Islamophobic stereotypes, this thesis can explore their impact in refugee and immigrant women's experiences in Greece.

### 3.1 THE FEMALE SUBJECT; GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Racism, xenophobia, and religious discrimination are forms of discrimination that all refugees and immigrants experience in Greece. The truth is that even though everyone faces them, does not mean everyone experiences them in the same way. This thesis is focused on female refugees and immigrants, being one of the most vulnerable groups in the immigration process. By analysing the different dynamics which interact with gender this chapter studies why the females' experience is different as a result of an additional level of discrimination; the gender, which is the different socially constructed characteristics of a person. As mentioned in the previous chapters of this thesis, although Greece is a European country, it is conservative, and its society is patriarchal. In Greece, there is no gender equality at any level, while habitual sexism is something that every woman has experienced.

Gender discrimination includes sexism, homophobia, and transphobia but in this thesis, only sexism will be studied. Apart from the racist stereotypes, furthermore, there are the gendered racist stereotypes that divide the groups of people not only based on their race, colour, ethnicity, and citizenship but also in conjunction with their gender. Feminity and masculinity combined with stereotypes against immigrants divide them into two categories: the male immigrants who are the dangerous criminals and the female ones who are the vulnerable victims or the sex workers.<sup>61</sup> Gendered racist stereotypes about immigrant women consider them dangerous to public health because many of them are sex workers and at the same time a threat against the Greek nation and family due to the lack of values and morality. There is a specific narrative about immigrant women which are connected with being submissive, maid, or sex worker. On the other hand, refugee women are considered more conservative not only because of their religion but also because of their societies in their countries of origin. Both of these narratives include sexism and gender discrimination.

In November 2012, 25 immigrants who remained at the port of Mytilene, were attacked with stones by a group of strangers who approached the area by car. The stones also

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<sup>61</sup> Zavos, Alexandra, Nelli Kampouri, Maria Stratigaki. *Φύλο, μετανάστευση, διαπολιτισμικότητα* [Gender, migration and intercultural relations], Athens, 2013.

injured the second pregnant woman in the forehead, who received help from those around her, and was taken to the hospital the next morning.<sup>62</sup> The specific case indicates the xenophobia that exists in the local communities of Greece that do not hesitate to violently attack against pregnant women. Another momentous example of racist violence involving sexism is the attack on refugees and immigrants in the port of Mytilene, the capital of Lesbos Island. Locals verbally attacked young children, men, and pregnant women who were inside a boat, preventing them from disembarking. Some of the phrases that were heard were “The border was closed, why did you come? ... Back to Turkey ...”. “Leave them in the boat, otherwise they will go opposite and run”, “In the sea ...”.<sup>63</sup> All these phrases indicate the racism and the hate against the foreign people, “the Others”. In fact, someone, addressing the pregnant woman, shouted that he did not care that she was pregnant, implying that she should not have sexual intercourse. The attack ended by saying vulgarly that he was not responsible as he was not the one who left her pregnant.<sup>64</sup> This is exactly the level of discrimination, that it cannot be characterised only racist or xenophobic, because it hid another identity of this person: her gender. The man who shouted at her, attacked her because of her gender, and according to him accountable for being pregnant in his country. It is important to mention that this violent attack was not criticised by the Greek media. On the contrary, a female Greek show host who presented it, compared Greek with immigrant women by saying that “You see the immigrants who are pregnant and get on the boat and they do not care. Greek women do not have children if they cannot feed or study them”.<sup>65</sup> This phrase indicates the discrimination against a marginalised woman by a privileged one. Sometimes female refugees and immigrants do not only face gender discrimination by men, but also by women who are in a privileged position because they are Greek. This

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<sup>62</sup> “Πέταξαν Πέτρες Σε Έγκυο Πρόσφυγα Στη Μυτιλήνη.” [They threw stones at a pregnant refugee in Mytilene.], *TVXS*, 22 Nov. 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Newsroom. “Μυτιλήνη: Ένταση Και Βαριές Κουβέντες Στο Λιμάνι Της Θέρμης (Video).” [Mytilene: Tension and Heavy Conversations in the Port of Thermi (Video).], *Athens Voice*, Athens Voice, 1 Mar. 2020.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> NewsRoom. “Μωρά Μόνο Για Έλληνες: Η Τσιμτσιλή ‘Ενοχλείται’ Από Έγκυες Μετανάστριες Που Μπαίνουν Σε Βάρκα.” [Babies Only For Greeks: Tsimitsili 'Annoyed' By Pregnant Immigrants Getting Into A Boat.], *KoutiPandoras*, [www.koutipandoras.gr/article/mora-mono-gia-ellines-i-tsimtsili-enohleitai-apo-egkyes-metanastries-poy-mpainoun-se-barka](http://www.koutipandoras.gr/article/mora-mono-gia-ellines-i-tsimtsili-enohleitai-apo-egkyes-metanastries-poy-mpainoun-se-barka).

kind of sexism – from a woman to another – can present the intersectionality that these people face. It is not only about their race or their religion, but they are also considered inferior because of their gender as well. Even though Greek women face sexism and gender-based discrimination in their lives as well, the refugee and immigrant ones are even more marginalised because of the combination of their dynamics – their identities –.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the concept of the intersectionality framework started with black feminism which makes visible the mutual exclusion of “race” and “gender” and other identities. It is more connected with the discrimination against African American women, but finally, it can be used for other contexts such as the refugee crisis in Greece. Intersectionality in Greece is a bit marginalised as an academic theoretical tool. As analysed in the introduction, Crenshaw demonstrates how important is to take into consideration the intersection between the different identities, through a metaphor about an accident that takes place in an intersection, for which none of the drivers is responsible. The dichotomised and exclusive definitions of racism or sexism cannot apply to the multiple discrimination that these marginalised groups face. They are interactive and overlapping, and this is why every person depending on their identities experience every form of discrimination differently. Although the discourses of race, gender, religion, class, sexuality, etc. have their own ontological bases, it is important to study them as mutually constitutive and non-separate.<sup>66</sup> Hence, even though racism is analysed above as an ideology itself, it not really functions as a distinct ideology and structure. Usually, racism corresponds with other ideologies and systems of domination and oppression which lead to different forms of discrimination such as sexism or the religious intolerance.

### 3.2 NECROPOLITICS IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS AND DETENTION CENTRES; A DIFFERENT FORM OF RACISM

Michael Foucault defines the term racism as the imposition of a distinction between the “alive” and the “dead” in a society. This distinction played an important role in the

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<sup>66</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira. *A Situated Intersectional Everyday Approach to the Study of Bordering*. EuBorderScapes, August 2013, pp. 7.



construction of the targets of biopolitics and necropolitics.<sup>67</sup> Foucault describes it as a mechanism that introduces a “break between what must live and what must die”.<sup>68</sup> This Foucault’s theory can apply in the refugee camps and the detention centres where the refugees and immigrants live. Aside from the direct racism which includes hate speech, racial discrimination, and racist attacks -even killings-, thousands of refugees face indirect racism through their exclusion from Greek society. They are forced to live as “living dead” in inhuman conditions without being part of the cities and the social life. As mentioned in the introduction, Moria camp on the island of Lesbos is the biggest refugee camp in Greece. Moria is considered by the international community the most unsafe camp in Europe for refugees and especially for women. In this chaotic and dangerous environment, many camp residents confirm that they live in constant fear and that at nightfall, violence rises.<sup>69</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, in January 2020, many refugee women and children demonstrated in Mytilene, the capital of Lesbos Island against the inhuman and dangerous conditions in Moria camp with the main slogan “All Women Against Moria”.<sup>70</sup> In this exclusive situation, they are totally marginalised, and they do not have the opportunity to integrate into the cities around Greece, which is intrinsically racist and xenophobic.

Of course, these camps include also pregnant women and young mothers, unaccompanied children, single-parent families with children, people with disabilities, and victims of torture, rape, or other significant physical, psychological, or sexual violence who are compelled to live under these inhuman conditions. Their accommodation lacks basic standards, such as toilets and door locks while many of them are forced to live together in overcrowded rooms and some in tents, including

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<sup>67</sup> Athanasiou, Athena. *Ζωή στο Όριο: Δοκίμια για το σώμα, το φύλο και τη βιοπολιτική* [Life at the Limit: Essays on Gender, Body and Biopolitics], Athens, 2007, pp. 21-22.

<sup>68</sup> Foucault, Michael. *Society Must Be Defended*. London, Penguin Books, 2003, pp. 254.

<sup>69</sup> Ελλάδα: Οι Γυναίκες Πρόσφυγες Μιλούν Ενάντια Στη Βία, Τις Επικίνδυνες Συνθήκες Και Την Παραμέληση Από Την Πλευρά Των Επίσημων Αρχών.” [Greece: Women Refugees Speak Against Violence, Dangerous Conditions and Neglect by Officials.], *International Amnesty, Greek Department*.

<sup>70</sup> Dimitrakopoulou, Violeta, Naya Tselepi. “#All Women Against Moria.” *Lesvos Migration Atlas*, 22 June 2020, [lesvosatlas.net/all-women-against-moria/?lang=el](https://lesvosatlas.net/all-women-against-moria/?lang=el).

pregnant women and young mothers.<sup>71</sup> They lack the necessary protection and fundamental human rights, sometimes not even the right to life because many killings, rapes, and suicides have been reported there. Some of the women who arrived in these camps and detention centres do not even receive the minimum standards for their health care even though they have experienced violence or sexual abuse during their journey to Greece. Specifically, Human Rights Watch in 2018, researched the living conditions in the Greek camps and found out that they do not meet the international standards. Asylum seekers and immigrants described the conditions and said that they lack medical staff, ill-treatment, and interpreters for their access to health care for physical and mental health.<sup>72</sup> Another significant problem for female refugees and immigrants is the lack of female doctors which makes them feel completely unsafe in these centres. International standards for the detention of asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees provide: “As a general rule, the detention of pregnant in their final months and nursing mothers, both of whom may have special needs should not be avoided”<sup>73</sup> and alternative measures should be sought. The International guidelines for the detention of refugee and immigrant women also commend gender-based healthcare and the provision of appropriate health and nutritional support to pregnant and lactating women.<sup>74</sup> International humanitarian standards provide for the provision of extra bedding and clothing, as well as food or nutritional supplements to vulnerable groups, including pregnant and lactating women, according to their needs.<sup>75</sup> Obstetric and neonatal care must be accessible to humanitarian crises in accordance with international standards.<sup>76</sup> Of course, the Greek government supports the exclusion of the refugees and immigrants while police sometimes physically or verbally abuse them in ways including verbal

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<sup>71</sup> “Ελλάδα: Γυναίκες Αιτούσες Άσυλο Κρατούνται Μαζί Με Άνδρες.” [Greece: Women Asylum Seekers Are Detained Together with Men.], *Human Rights Watch*, 7 June 2018.

<sup>72</sup> “Ελλάδα: Απάνθρωπες Συνθήκες Στον Έβρο.” [Greece: Inhuman Conditions in Evros.], *Human Rights Watch*, 27 July 2018.

<sup>73</sup> UNHCR’s Guidelines on Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers February, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Geneva*, 1999, Guideline 8: Detention of Women.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

violence, humiliation, and invasion of privacy depending on their colour or their country of origin.

Regarding the gender-based violence and the gender discrimination they face in the refugee camps and detention centres, Human Rights Watch reported the detention of women and girls along with unknown men in the detention centres, who stated that this caused or contributed to their psychological and emotional distress, including insomnia, anxiety, anorexia, and crying.<sup>77</sup> Many women in these centres have suicidal thoughts or even have committed suicide.<sup>78</sup> Dependence on other asylum seekers or immigrants in terms of interpretation can undermine the quality of information communicated and violate privacy and confidentiality standards for the provision of medical and psychiatric care and the registration, identification, and processing of asylum seekers and immigrants. The lack of trained interpreters - including women - can also hinder the identification of victims of sexual and gender-based violence, torture, and other ill-treatment.<sup>79</sup> International standards provide for all staff working in the detention of migrants to be trained in the identification of symptoms of trauma or stress, as well as sexual or gender-based violence, human rights standards, and detention standards for asylum seekers.<sup>80</sup> In the past, international human rights activists have criticised Greece for failing to address allegations of police brutality and have called on investigators to investigate allegations of brutality. Under the European Convention on Human Rights, the UN Convention against Torture, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and other treaties to which Greece is a party, the government is committed to an absolute ban on torture and inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment including detention and

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<sup>77</sup> “Ελλάδα: Γυναίκες Αιτούσες Άσυλο Κρατούνται Μαζί Με Άνδρες.” [Greece: Women Asylum Seekers Are Detained Together with Men.], *Human Rights Watch*, 7 June 2018.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> “Ελλάδα: Απάνθρωπες Συνθήκες Στον Έβρο.” [Greece: Inhuman Conditions in Evros.], *Human Rights Watch*, 27 July 2018.

<sup>80</sup> UNHCR’s Guidelines on Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers February, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Geneva*, 1999, Guideline 8: Detention of Women.

reception facilities for refugees and immigrants.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, Doctors Without Borders, an international, independent medical and humanitarian organization expressed in a report their strong concern about refugee camps and detention centres in Greece and specifically in Moria<sup>82</sup>, in Lesvos Island which is one of the most dangerous camps in Europe because of the sexual abuse and the gender-based violence that take place there. From January to the end of September 2018, Doctors Without Borders has treated a total of 23 patients in their clinic, located outside the Moria camp, who reported being sexually abused, including rape, in the refugee camp. Of these patients, 14 were adults and 9 were minors, some as young as 5 years old. The responsibility for conducting a forensic examination and investigation of reports of sexual violence, as well as the protection of victims belongs to the competent law enforcement authorities and in particular to the police and the prosecutor.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.3 RACISM IN GREECE

Before the analysis of the racist attacks against refugees and immigrants and the xenophobic Greek society, it is important to mention the historical background of racism in Greece and how it increased in the last years. Regarding the term racism in Greece, it is used more as an umbrella term which includes every discrimination against marginalised groups. For example, the antiracist law in Greece passed in 2014, is not only about criminalising discrimination and hate speech on the basis of race, but also on the basis of “colour, religion, genealogical descent, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability”.<sup>84</sup> In fact, racism is only about race, while nationalism

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<sup>81</sup> “Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.” *OHCHR*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx).

<sup>82</sup> Apostolos Veizis, doctor in Doctors Without Borders, “Μόρια: Διευκρινιστική Απάντηση Των Γιατρών Χωρίς Σύνορα.” [Moria: Doctors Without Borders Clarifying Answer.], *Medecins Sans Frontieres / Doctors Without Borders*, 17 Oct. 2018.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Υπουργείο Δικαιοσύνης. 2014. «ΝΟΜΟΣ ΥΠ’ ΑΡΙΘΜ. 4285 Τροποποίηση του ν. 927/1979 (Α’ 139) και προσαρμογή του στην απόφαση-πλαίσιο 2008/913/ΔΕΥ της 28ης Νοεμβρίου 2008, για την καταπολέμηση ορισμένων μορφών και εκδηλώσεων ρατσισμού και ξενοφοβίας μέσω του ποινικού δικαίου (L 328) και άλλες διατάξεις.» [Ministry of Justice. 2014. “LAW No. 4285 Amendment of Law

and xenophobia are about ethnicity and citizenship, but of course, all these identities are overlapping under the umbrella of the intersectionality framework. In Greece, racism, nationalism, and xenophobia are really connected because of the common Greek nationalist narrative and sometimes racism is used for ethnicity or citizenship too. Additionally, racism is not only about nationalist narratives or anti-immigration policies of the different parties. Nor it is only related to racist attacks and violence. In Greece, racism grew into society and became a part of it as a social norm.

Racism and xenophobia in Greece have a lot to do with the nationalist narrative about the significance of the unified nation. The Greek nation is an idea back to 1830 and independent Modern Greece related to Greek history, religion (Greek Orthodox Religion), and a common language and it also consists of other traditional values which include culture, family values, and even traditional gender roles. Racist discourse is understood as “involving the use of ethnic categorisations which might be constructed around biological, cultural, religious, linguistic or territorially based boundaries, as signifiers of a fixed, deterministic genealogical difference of ‘the Other’. This ‘Otherness’ serves as a basis for legitimising exclusion of the members of the collectivity thus labelled.”<sup>85</sup> Hence, the Greek who is in a privileged position separates themselves from “the Other”, the threat who will corrupt the Greek culture with their different language, religion, and values. Racism is not only based on superiority or discrimination, but it also involves modes of exclusion, interiorisation, subordination, and exploitation. The construction of the ethnic and the racial characteristics is responsible for the division of people into two categories: in this case study into “the Greek” and “the Other”.<sup>86</sup>

After the elections of 2012, when the far-right party Golden Dawn (GD) became a part of the Greek Parliament with a percentage of almost 7% with more than 400,000 votes,

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927/1979 (A '139) and its adaptation to the Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008, on combating certain forms and manifestations of racism and xenophobia through criminal law (L 328) and other provisions.”] Government Gazette, Athens, Greece.

<sup>85</sup> Werbner, Pnina, and Tariq Modood. *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. Zed Books, 1997.

<sup>86</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira. “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics.” *European Journal of Womens Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2006, pp. 193–209.

racism and xenophobia increased more because of their narrative about the significance of a unified Greek nation. GD's narrative included the anti-immigration policy and the priority to the Greek culture such as the language, the religion, and the traditional values of the nation, family, and even gender roles. With this nationalist ideology, GD members hid their real far-right and neo-Nazi nature. Over the years, GD affected the increase of the anti-immigration feeling in the Greek society as well, combined with the economic crisis which changed the balance and created a multilevel crisis. After 2011, when GD's operation started, more than 350 racist attacks took place in places where immigrants live. Some of the most important violent attacks that GD members committed are the killing of Shehzad Luqman, a 27-year-old immigrant worker from Pakistan, who was murdered in January 2013, by two members of the far-right party<sup>87</sup> and the killing of Pavlos Fyssas, an activist and anti-fascist rapper.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, members of GD have attacked also Egyptian, Pakistani, and Afghani immigrants. Racist attacks have taken place not only by members of the party but also by citizens, and especially in the Greek islands where more refugees and immigrants arrive. On April 22, 2018, in Lesbos Island, a group of more than 200 people attacked 150 refugees who had gathered in Sappho Square of Mytilene, to protest about the conditions in the Moria camp. The assembled refugees, including children and women with infants, were attacked for hours with stones and crackers under racist comments and threats.<sup>89</sup>

Of course, it is important to mention that even though the other political parties and the previous governments were not far-right, they did not support an immigration policy that would have really supported and helped these people while there were specific politicians who adopted GD's ideologies. For instance, Antonis Samaras, the previous leader of the New Democracy party (Nea Dimokratia) during the campaign for elections in 2012 stated "Greece today has become a centre for illegal immigrants. We must take back our cities, where the illegal trade in drugs, prostitution, and counterfeit goods is

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<sup>87</sup> ΕΕΔΑ. "The Murder of Shehzad Luqman Was a Hate Crime." *Hellenic League for Human Rights*.

<sup>88</sup> "Δολοφονία Παύλου Φύσσα." [Assassination of Pavlos Fyssas.], *JailGoldenDawn*, <https://jailgoldendawn.com>

<sup>89</sup> "Ενημερωτικό Δελτίο Παρατηρητηρίου: Τα Γεγονότα Της 22ης Απριλίου 2018 Στην Πλατεία Σαπφούς Στη Μυτιλήνη Και Οι Εξελίξεις Ένα Χρόνο Μετά." [Observatory Newsletter: The Events of April 22, 2018, In Sappho Square in Mytilene and The Developments A Year Later.], *Observatory of the Refugee and Migration Crisis in the Aegean*, 29 May 2019.

booming. There are many diseases, and I am not only speaking about Athens, but elsewhere too.”<sup>90</sup> This phrase indicates the racist narrative that immigrants are “the Others” who are responsible for all the crimes that take place. While similarly, in 2013, as Prime Minister Samaras declared: “Our country has suffered an ‘unarmed invasion’ of hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants [...] Our cities can no longer be under occupation.”<sup>91</sup> At the same time, GD promised closed borders in order to “clear the country” from the immigrants, the foreigners, the “Others”. Also, media played an important role in racism and xenophobia's rise because of their toleration of this kind of ideologies and beliefs which legitimised GD’s and other far-right movement’s actions. Especially, the newspaper *Makeleio* is explicitly called for violence against refugees. Specifically, on April 15, 2015, the newspaper published a front page “Throw them in the sea”, referring to the refugees.<sup>92</sup> In addition, the newspaper *Makeleio* publishes articles that sometimes go beyond the Golden Dawn in hostility, with the refugees being characterised not only as Turkish actors but also as “cannibals”.<sup>93</sup> The media has also multiple times promoted racist stereotypes about refugees by describing the refugee crisis and the immigration process in Greece as a threat to Greek society. This threat can be divided into three different ways. First of all, as a threat to Greece’s already corrupted economy, by “stealing” jobs from Greek. Second, as a threat against Greek culture, by maintaining their own cultural identity, religion, language, values, etc., even as a threat to public health by contaminating the local population with diseases and dirt.<sup>94</sup> Specifically, because of the racist stereotypes mentioned above, women immigrants are considered a threat to the traditional and family Greek values while there is also a belief that women are even more dangerous because they are the ones who give birth to “new threat”. So, not only the political parties but also the society

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<sup>90</sup> “Σαμαράς: 'Οι Πόλεις Μας Έχουν Καταληφθεί Από Λαθρομετανάστες'.” [Samaras: 'Our Cities Have Been Occupied by Illegal Immigrants'], *News 24/7*, News 24/7, 9 Feb. 2018.

<sup>91</sup> “Ομιλία του Πρωθυπουργού και Προέδρου της Νέας Δημοκρατίας κ. Αντώνη Σαμαρά, στο 9<sup>ο</sup> Τακτικό Εθνικό Συνέδριο του κόμματος” [Speech by the Prime Minister and President of the New Democracy party Mr. Antonis Samaras, at the 9th Ordinary National Congress of the party], 28 June 2013 [in Greek].

<sup>92</sup> Chondrogiannos, Thodoris. “Ας Μιλήσουμε Σοβαρά Επιτέλους Για Το ‘Μακελειό.’” [Let’s Talk seriously about “Makeleio” newspaper], *VICE*, [www.vice.com/el/article/3kjzyv/hr8e-h-wra-na-milhsoyme-sobara-gia-to-makeleio](http://www.vice.com/el/article/3kjzyv/hr8e-h-wra-na-milhsoyme-sobara-gia-to-makeleio).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Siapera, Eugenia, and Mariangela Veikou. “The Digital Golden Dawn: Emergence of a Nationalist-Racist Digital Mainstream.” *The Digital Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 2016, pp. 35–59.

were not ready to welcome and handle the refugee and immigrant flows. The last ones have faced intense racism and discrimination on different levels and their integration is still an ongoing complicated issue.

### 3.4 RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN GREECE; ISLAMOPHOBIA

As analysed above regarding racial discrimination, religious discrimination in Greece is also based on the nationalist narrative about Greek values. Religious discrimination can be considered as a part of racism against whatever is different from the Greek patriotic standards. This national pride, including Greek Orthodox Religion as the main religion which represents 90% of the whole country's population, emphasises the homogeneity and the marginalisation of those who believe in a different God. In Greece, even the Greek citizens who differ from the nationalist triptych - religion, history, and language - such as the Muslim Roma communities in Thrace and the Pomak populations, are also considered a threat to the nation and treated as inferiors, as "the Others".

Unfortunately, in the Western world, racism against Muslims now exists as a social norm that provides a clear framework for a verbal or physical assault that is visible on an almost daily basis. Muslim refugees and immigrants living in Greece are likely to be victims of violence. Especially the female ones are more "visible" than Muslim men because of their appearance which includes obvious cultural characteristics such as the hijab. It is not that Islamophobia only affects women, but it affects them in a much more specific way. People have almost fetishized the headscarf and Islamophobia usually includes sexism. In December 2019, the independent organization "The House of Women, for Empowerment and Emancipation" reported through an announcement sexual harassment, abuse, and beatings of immigrant women, in the Directorate of Foreigners of Attica of Petrou Ralli.<sup>95</sup> One of the testimonies stated, "They forbade us to wear our headscarves and told us: Out of here you can be Muslims, but not here!

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<sup>95</sup> Efsyn.gr. "Φρικιαστικές Μαρτυρίες Γυναικών Από Την Πέτρου Ράλλη." [Horrible Testimonies of Women in Petrou Ralli.], *Efimerida ton Syntakton (Greek: Εφημερίδα Των Συντακτών)*, 5 Jan. 2020.



Here you are Christians ...”.<sup>96</sup> After analysing which are the different types of discrimination and violence that refugee and immigrant women face during their stay in Greece, this is the most typical example. The attack against these women in Petrou Ralli detention centre reflects exactly what intersectionality means, and how an experience can change because of the different forms of discrimination. These women were verbally and physically abused because they are immigrants, they were sexually abused because they are women, and they were forced to take off their hijabs – their religious symbol – because they are Muslim by Greek Christian men who felt superior and privileged at the time of the attack.

Historically, of the most widespread forms of religious discrimination and specifically related to the refugee and immigration crisis is Islamophobia. Even though the concept of Islamophobia was introduced in 1997 with the report “Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All”<sup>97</sup> by the British think tank Runnymede Trust, it increased during the rise of the far-right ideology in Europe in the last years and became a topical issue in the western countries, especially in those where minority communities live. Specifically, in Greece, islamophobia developed since 2015 when the refugee crisis was at its peak. This phenomenon is connected not only with ISIS’s terrorism and extremism and its attacks in different European cities but also with the refugee crisis and the immigrants from the Middle East who come to Europe. These two events help to continue the pre-existing elements of Islamophobia, the racist stereotypes about Muslims, fears about immigration, and anti-Turkey narratives. These events were enough for Islamophobia to prevail, and specifically in Greece where hundreds of thousands of Muslims live, who may be confronted daily with religious racism. According to the Annual Report in the US Department of State about International Religious Freedom in 2013, Greece is one of the countries responsible for religious discrimination and exclusion. Attacks against Muslim immigrants and refugees increased after the legitimisation of the far-right party GD which was responsible for antisemitism and racism in the public

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<sup>96</sup> Efsyn.gr. “Φρικιαστικές Μαρτυρίες Γυναικών Από Την Πέτρον Ράλλη.” [Horrible Testimonies of Women in Petrou Ralli.], *Efimerida ton Syntakton (Greek: Εφημερίδα Των Συντακτών)*, 5 Jan. 2020.

<sup>97</sup> The Runnymede Trust, 1997, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*.

sphere.<sup>98</sup> GD made assumptions about the Islamisation of Greece already before 2015 including the aversion to immigrants of all origins and the privileged hostility towards Turkey and its supposed intentions to destroy Greek culture and nation. Thus, GD portrays Turkey as the orchestrator of the refugee waves in Greece, and the refugees - permanently called “illegal immigrants” and “Turkish army”. During the refugee crisis in Greece, GD demands the expulsion of refugee children from schools, the non-construction of mosques, and, more broadly, the closure of borders and the conversion of Greece into a fortress.

Of course, Islamophobia is not only represented by the far-right party GD, but also by different conservative and even liberal organisations and parties. For example, the Church of Greece, which has a major role in the country, affected public opinion about Muslims. Similar fears about terrorist attacks and threats for the Greek nation are expressed by hierarchs of the Greek Church. Leaders are the metropolitans Ambrosios, Seraphim, and Anthimos, who systematically present the refugees as Turkish militias who attempt to Islamise the country by damaging its Christian identity. “Supposedly immigrants, but in fact sent conquerors”, as Metropolitan Ambrosios summed up the refugees.<sup>99</sup> This fear for the Islamisation of Greece which considers the Muslims as the enemy has its roots in the political conflict between Greece and Turkey. In 1830, Greece became an independent state after its liberation from the Ottoman Empire. The construction of the Greek state was based on the Greek Orthodox Religion as one of its main values. Almost 100 years later, in 1923, as a part of the Treaty of Lausanne, except for the territorial and the Treaty's political clauses, an obligatory population exchange took place between Greece and Turkey.<sup>100</sup> People who forced to leave their houses were selected according to their religion – the Greek citizens who were Muslims moved to Turkey, while the Turkish citizens who were Christians moved to Greece -. Hence, it is clear that religion played a significant role in the relations between the two countries. At the same time, liberal parties and organisations expressed Islamophobic ideas but

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<sup>98</sup> United States Department of State, *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom - Greece*, 28 July 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Enikos.gr. *Παράληρημα Του Αμβρόσιου: Απεσταλμένοι Κατακτητές Οι Δήθεν Μετανάστες*. [Ambrosios' Delusion: Missionary Conquerors the Alleged Immigrants.]

<sup>100</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Treaty of Lausanne". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 17 Jul. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Lausanne-1923>.

hid in the European democratic values. Specifically, and after the terrorist attacks in Europe, they do not focus on the threat of Islam for the Greek nation and religion but on the threat to the European heritage of the Enlightenment, open societies, and human rights.

To conclude, in Greece refugee crisis has become a humanitarian one, because of the economic crisis and the unstable political background which allowed the far-right rise. Refugees and immigrants face racism, xenophobia, religious discrimination, and sexism or gender discrimination every day. Racism can be direct through violent attacks or indirect through the exclusion of the refugees of the society, while religious discrimination is also a common practice especially against Muslims. Greek nation and its narrative have affected the xenophobic mindset of Greeks. Thus, even though there are different definitions and theories about what gender, race, and religion are when we talk about a person in real life their gender, race, and religion – and every other identity they own - are inseparable, overlapping and interlocked. This is the reason why female refugees and immigrants face multiple discrimination not only because of their race and religion but also for the reason that they are women, and they are considered inferior. Women experience the whole situation differently because their three identities – social dynamics -, race, religion, and gender are overlapping and interactive. Racism is not experienced the same by a female and a male immigrant exactly as a result of their gender. That means the creation of different experience and multiple levels of discrimination and social injustice.

## 4 CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to research how female refugees and immigrants experience different levels of discrimination in Greece's refugee crisis through the theoretical framework of intersectionality. Of course, except for intersectionality, it has been taken into consideration the different historical events that resulted in the increase of the refugee and immigrant flows to Europe.

The Syrian Civil War as a result of the Arab Spring in the Middle East created one of the biggest humanitarian crises that happened globally in the last years. Millions of

Syrians – and not only – left their homes and most of them travelled to Europe through Greece, as a first stop. The numerous flows of refugees and immigrants that arrived in Greece were unmanageable for not only the political system – due to the lack of a united immigration policy - but also for Greek society which faced its own multiple level crisis. Additionally, this thesis discussed the Greek political background that has affected racism, xenophobia, islamophobia and sexism in Greece. In fact, gender discrimination, sexism and gender-based violence are ongoing issues that are deep-rooted in Greek society. Women and girls face sexism and discrimination because of their gender on every level of their lives such as in their families, their education, their relationships or marriages and their jobs. Hence, Greece is not progressive enough in gender-based issues and the gender inequalities affect also the refugee and immigration crisis. As mentioned above, women and girls from Middle Eastern countries who travel to Greece alone, or with their children are even more vulnerable because of their gender and they face multiple levels of sexual violence such as rape, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation not only during their journey but also in Greece when the state should have protected them.

Racism is also an important factor in the discrimination that female refugees and immigrants face. Nationalism and xenophobia grew in Greek society after the creation of the Greek nation and its values. When Greece became an independent state in 1830, the nationalist narrative became a part of almost every Greek citizen around the world. Greek language, history and the common religion of Greek Orthodox Religion played a significant role in the creation of this narrative and unfortunately in the increase of xenophobia. Even though Greece has a long history as a host country for refugees and immigrants from the Global South and the Balkan countries, its society was racist and xenophobic because of the belief that “the Other” was the threat, that it would destroy the unified nation due to its different culture, language, values, and religion. In recent years, racism, xenophobia and far-right parties increased all over Europe and in Greece as well. The economic crisis of 2008 destroyed the Greek economy and created a multi-sided crisis in society, politics, culture and human nature which let racism increase. At the same time, GD, a far-right party became part of the Greek parliament, and as a result, racism and xenophobia were legitimised in Greek society through violent attacks against innocent people, killings and indirect habitual racism. The refugees and immigrants who had arrived in Greece after 2012, were the victims of this crisis and

the effects that had on them. One serious example of the refugees and immigrants' exclusion and discrimination is the way they are forced to live in the refugee camps and detention centres. The inhuman and dangerous conditions in these places affect their integration in Greece and keep them in a "dead-alive" situation. More specifically, refugee camps and detention centres are even worse and more dangerous for women and girls who arrived in Greece alone, or even with their children. These women are completely marginalised and helpless while many of them have become victims of rape, sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Religious discrimination and specifically islamophobia is also a result of the nationalist narrative of the Greek nation and the fear for the Islamic culture. Islamophobia also increased in Europe in the last few years, but in Greece is even worse due to the political ongoing conflict with Turkey and it does not only do with the refugee crisis. Muslim minorities of North Greece and Pomak neighbourhoods are totally marginalised and excluded from society. There are different anti-Islamic narratives from the far-right wing parties to the conservative ones or even the Greek church, that refugees are Turkish militias who want to Islamise Greece and Europe. Most of the times, the female refugees and immigrants became easier victims of Islamophobia, because of their appearance that include Islamic cultural characteristics such as the hijab or other headscarves.

The case of the violent racist, sexist and religious attack against the female refugees in Petrou Ralli detention centre<sup>101</sup>, that mentioned above, is the most suitable example for a clear answer in the thesis' main research question. Hence, these women experience three different levels of discrimination at the same time: racism, sexism and religious intolerance. The discrimination that female refugees and immigrants face is not just a combination of their identities. By delving deeper, it is more an interaction of their identities as social dynamics which created more social exclusion. Their race because they are refugees from the Global South, their gender because they are women and their religion because they are Muslims, interact. Specifically, the interaction of their gender, race and religion changed the way that they experience discrimination in general. Their

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<sup>101</sup> Efsyn.gr. "Φρικιαστικές Μαρτυρίες Γυναικών Από Την Πέτρου Ράλλη." [Horrible Testimonies of Women in Petrou Ralli.], *Efimerida ton Syntakton (Greek: Εφημερίδα Των Συντακτών)*, 5 Jan. 2020.

three social identities – gender, religion and race – were analysed and defined separately in the second main chapter of this thesis in order to become easier to explain their nature. In fact, when we talk about real life and real people these identities cannot be separated because they are overlapping and interlocked, and they affect each other. As a result, in order to understand and later solve the issue of the exclusion and the discrimination that refugees and immigrants face, is important to challenge them as a whole. Racism against female refugees cannot be understood if we do not take into consideration the sexism and the religious discrimination they also face. Adequately, sexism against them is a result of the intersectionality concept. They are considered inferior because of their gender, but between them and Greek women, the last ones are in a privileged position because they are not refugees and Muslims.

This thesis aimed to apply the intersectionality theoretical framework in a different case study. As mentioned also in the literature review, the term intersectionality is marginalised enough in Greece, because it started in the United States regarding the oppression that Black women face, and regarding social movements such as the Black Lives Matter and the Say Your Name. The truth is that this theoretical framework can be really helpful to understand also other political and social issues around the world. Specifically, the refugee crisis in Greece was a suitable application of intersectionality due to the multiple discrimination and the exclusion that women experience in it. By researching the common experiences of female refugees and immigrants it can be helpful in order to think about the refugee crisis and the immigration policies in a different way. Women and girls are an important part of the immigration process and the refugee flows, and they cannot be ignored. In order to understand the roots of the problem, it is necessary to include the theory of intersectionality and translate it into practice. This thesis tried to open a dialogue with women in the refugee crisis and immigration in Greece. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic was a serious limitation in this research's work, because interviews were impossible. To better understand the implications of this study, future studies could conduct interviews in order to make these women visible. Besides, in order to research marginalised people, it is necessary to listen to them and learn about their experiences. One additional recommendation for more research is the focus on another marginalised group in the refugee and immigration crisis in Greece: the LGBTQI++ community. Intersectionality could again apply in order to understand how these people's experiences are different

from female or male refugees and immigrants or even compare the different sexualities and genders.

To conclude, when we talk about humans every identity and every experience is different but no less important than the others. The first step towards starting to solve the different forms of discrimination that women experience in the refugee and immigration crisis is realising that intersectionality exists and starting to treat women as equal on the basis of gender, race, religion, class, and every other social identity of them. The refugee flows and the immigration process give Greece the opportunity to overcome several issues at the same time and be more progressive: Greece has to fight racism and xenophobia and overcome its nationalist nature which promotes the stereotypes that mould a country, a religion, or a race superior to others. Additionally, it has to fight sexism, patriarchal stereotypes, and gender-based violence and guarantee women the rights they deserve as equal to men. The multiple discrimination that women face in the refugee and immigration is not only Greek or European issue. It is an international matter and the civil society, the governments, the international and domestic NGOs, and the different organisations have to confront it, as a united body, with protective policies for these women.

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Faculty of Humanities

*Version September 2014*

## **Fraud and Plagiarism**

### **PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT**

Scientific integrity is the foundation of academic life. Utrecht University considers any form of scientific deception to be an extremely serious infraction. Utrecht University therefore expects every student to be aware of, and to abide by, the norms and values regarding scientific integrity.

The most important forms of deception that affect this integrity are fraud and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the copying of another person's work without proper acknowledgement, and it is a form of fraud. The following is a detailed explanation of what is considered to be fraud and plagiarism, with a few concrete examples. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list!

If fraud or plagiarism is detected, the study programme's Examination Committee may decide to impose sanctions. The most serious sanction that the committee can impose is to submit a request to the Executive Board of the University to expel the student from the study programme.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's documents, ideas or lines of thought and presenting it as one's own work. You must always accurately indicate from whom you obtained ideas and insights, and you must constantly be aware of the difference between citing, paraphrasing and plagiarising. Students and staff must be very careful in citing sources; this concerns not only printed sources, but also information obtained from the Internet.


The following issues will always be considered to be plagiarism:

- cutting and pasting text from digital sources, such as an encyclopaedia or digital periodicals, without quotation marks and footnotes;
- cutting and pasting text from the Internet without quotation marks and footnotes;
- copying printed materials, such as books, magazines or encyclopaedias, without quotation marks or footnotes;
- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
- copying sound, video or test materials from others without references, and presenting it as one's own work;
- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
- copying the work of another student and presenting it as one's own work. If this is done with the consent of the other student, then he or she is also complicit in the plagiarism;

- when one of the authors of a group paper commits plagiarism, then the other co-authors are also complicit in plagiarism if they could or should have known that the person was committing plagiarism;
- submitting papers acquired from a commercial institution, such as an Internet site with summaries or papers, that were written by another person, whether or not that other person received payment for the work.

The rules for plagiarism also apply to rough drafts of papers or (parts of) theses sent to a lecturer for feedback, to the extent that submitting rough drafts for feedback is mentioned in the course handbook or the thesis regulations. The Education and Examination Regulations (Article 5.15) describe the formal procedure in case of suspicion of fraud and/or plagiarism, and the sanctions that can be imposed.

Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. Each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. Utrecht University assumes that each student or staff member knows what fraud and plagiarism entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.
Name: Marina Natsia Student number:2723673
Date and signature: 12/6/2021 Marina Natsia


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