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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Offene Arme e.V. is the registered name of our organisation that is based in Germany. Since 2018, it has also been registered in Greece. Before this, we were known as Chios Eastern Shore Response Team (CESRT).

To help you plan your trip, please find answers to some of the questions we are asked most frequently. We hope that this will be useful, but if there is anything else that you think should be included, or helpful information that you can provide, please let us know!

If you are a returning volunteer, thank you for coming back! For all volunteers, please be aware the situation on the island is constantly changing. We are not working in Vial camp, and we are not attending landings anymore. We have a free shop which can be accessed by all Vial residents or any asylum seekers staying in private accommodation all over the island. We are currently providing a small amount of landing packs for new arrivals in emergency situations. Other projects include the Pop Up Shop for unaccompanied minors, the Hospital Transfers project, and the Baby project.

Please be aware that we need to have at least 5 volunteers working on the team at a time, and that if numbers fall below this we will have to suspend operations until we have enough volunteers.

TRAVEL

You can travel to Chios either by plane or boat. The ferry terminal is located in the centre of Chios Town, and the airport is on the edge of town. Both are about a 15-20 minute drive from the Offene Arme e.V Warehouse. We will add you to the WhatsApp Welcome group a few days before your arrival.

There are regular daily flights from Athens, plus also (less frequently) from Thessaloniki. The ferries travel to and from Athens and also connect to other North Aegean Islands. All ferry companies offer overnight services on alternate days, to and from Piraeus Port in Athens.

The average costs of flights from three main European cities in November/December are as follows:

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- London to Chios - 275 euros
- Paris to Chios - 310 euros
- Madrid to Chios - 300 euros

The cost of the ferry from Piraeus Port in Athens to Chios is 51 euros (full fare).

Another (more complicated) option is to travel through Turkey. If you can manage to make your way to Cesme, there is a 40 minute ferry from Cesme to Chios that arrives at the Chios port. Besides requiring more connections, it requires that you carry your passport with you.

For Flights try

- ❖ www.skyscanner.net
- ❖ www.olympicair.com
- ❖ www.aegeanair.com
- ❖ www.opodo.co.uk

For Ferries try

- ❖ <https://www.directferries.co.uk/>
- ❖ www.hellenicseaways.gr/en
- ❖ www.bluestarferries.com/en/

ACCOMMODATION

Please note that Offene Arme is currently not able to provide free accommodation or any financial support for general volunteers.

The cost of accommodation significantly varies according to location and season, but the minimum would be around 200 euros per week during the low season. Of course, costs will be reduced if accommodation is shared by 2 or more people and if the stay is at least 4 weeks.

In the summer (June – September) accommodation tends to book up quickly so please make sure you make your arrangements well in advance. Also, take into account the prices will be significantly higher during this period.

The Warehouse is where we are working and have a meeting every morning at 8:30am (except Saturday and Sunday). The warehouse is located in Thimiana (Vagia 122, Kampos 82100).

The majority of volunteers choose to stay in or around Megas Limnionas, Agia Ermioni and Karfas, all of which are close to the Warehouse. We have a people-carrying van with which we

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can provide lifts to and from the Warehouse for volunteers staying in this area.

Note that if you decide to book an accommodation outside this area, you will have to find your own means of transportation. If you are willing to do so, Chios Town can also be a good alternative. Some options are given below.

Please note that all coordinators and supporters are subject to a two week trial period as a volunteer when they begin. During this time you will be required to find your own accommodation, and monthly stipend for coordinators will begin at the end of the trial period.

- www.booking.com
- www.airbnb.com
- www.chiosnet.gr/
- www.chios.gr

Platsa Studios (<https://www.chiosplatsa.gr/>)

Telephone number: +30 22710-32527

Email: info@chiosplatsa.gr

Sun Rooms (www.chiossunrooms.gr)

This guesthouse is run by Toula (Pothiti Kitromilidi), the Field Coordinator of Offene Arme e.V. Prices will differ depending on the season but are reduced for volunteers.

Whatsapp: +30 6932 631491

Email: pothitikit07@gmail.com

Stefanos

House with 3 bedrooms

WhatsApp: +30 697 729 2403

Accommodation in Thymiana (walking distance to the warehouse)

+30 697 220 6923

POLICE CHECK

Before arriving, you will be required to email over a valid Police Check from your home country, issued less than a year before your arrival date. This is required because we work with vulnerable people. If you need more details or assistance with this process please let us know.

For example, volunteers from Germany can receive a letter from our office in Germany to present alongside the application for the police check, to be exempt from paying any fees for it. Please write directly to Alexander Hirsch at kontakt@offenearme.de.

If you come from another country and think this might be useful, feel free to also write.

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CAR HIRE

Some volunteers decide to rent a car for more freedom of movement around the island outside of work hours.

This is the position of the warehouse: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/QJA9LDg8BjewbM6t8>.

There are numerous car hire agencies on Chios, so it is well worth asking around and comparing prices. Some options are:

- www.chiosrentacar.gr
- chandrisrentacar.gr
- aegeanatsalis.gr

We also have an arrangement with Vassilakis Rent A Car, who offer us good rates. Nick Vassilakis can be contacted on vassilakisnick@yahoo.com or +30 694 836 9550. Please mention you are working with Offene Arme.

For motorbikes/mopeds:

N Kovas Rent A Moto - www.rentamotochios.com

Rent A Car & Moto - www.chiosrentacar.gr

BUS

There is also a local bus service between Thymiana, Megas Limnionas and Chios town. Here is some information about the city bus. The timetable is online under:

<https://chioscitybus.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/NOTIO.pdf>.

For the first time, to get familiar with the bus, you can go to the KTEL central station there:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/EuddCBNDsgtPpECBA>.

You can buy a ticket in the office (1.60EUR per ticket one way) or directly on the bus with your card (2 EURO). To come to the warehouse, you have to stop at 'VAGIA' (TO STOP: push the stop button and go to the front, next to the driver to show him that you want to stop, because sometimes they oversee it and do not stop). This is the position of the warehouse:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/QJA9LDg8BjewbM6t8>.

COMMUNICATION

The group communicates almost entirely by WhatsApp. We strongly recommend that you bring a smartphone so that you can make the most of your experience with us. If you don't have roaming, you should arrange with your service provider to have sufficient internet data while abroad, or you can purchase a Greek SIM card locally in Chios from Vodafone, Wind or Cosmote. Also, make sure that your phone does not automatically connect to Turkish service - this can happen as we are very close to Turkey, and you may be charged a high amount of money.

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SHOPS AND SERVICES

Chios town has a number of banks with ATMs, pharmacies, supermarkets and a post office, as well as lots of shops, restaurants and bars. There are also various big supermarkets and petrol stations located near the airport and en-route to the warehouse. Megas Limnionas and Karfas are seaside villages, and both have a number of restaurants and small supermarkets. There is an ATM at Karfas. Please note that in Greece you may be limited to the amount of cash you can withdraw each day. You should also bring some form of photographic ID (passport or driver's licence), as it is a legal requirement to carry it at all times.

WHAT TO BRING/ WEAR

Loose trousers and comfortable seasonal clothes and comfortable shoes. Clothing with zip pockets (for your phone and keys) are useful. You can also bring a small rucksack and/or a bum bag. You may want to bring some clothes you are happy to get dirty for specific projects.

SCHEDULE FOR GENERAL VOLUNTEERS

A meeting is held every morning (Monday to Friday) at the warehouse at 8.30 am. On your first morning (or as soon as is practical) you will be given a general induction of Offene Arme e.V, You will normally spend your first day in the warehouse. We have several inductions for the first days and you can work at the shop or distributions after your registration with the police.

Please let us know in advance on your application form if you have any specific skills or interests.

The working day is generally finished by 16:30pm. Saturday and Sunday are rest days for general volunteers; you may wish to bear this in mind when making your travel arrangements.

During the hot summer months working hours may be changed to allow for activities to take place in the cooler evening hours.

Coordinators and longer term volunteers who take on additional responsibilities will regularly work additional hours for example on admin tasks on Saturday mornings and helping with transport of volunteers before and after the working normal working day.

MEALS

Offene Arme doesn't offer any of the meals during working hours. We recommend that you bring your food to the Warehouse, where a fridge, microwave, and drinking water are available. There is also a supermarket and many cafes around the warehouse that you can go to.

OUR ACTIVITIES

WAREHOUSE

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The warehouse is our “home” and where all clothes and other stock for distribution are sorted and stored. Daily activities vary but there will always be things to do. Any new donations must be correctly sorted. If in doubt about which tasks are required or where specific items are located, the warehouse coordinator or other volunteers will be happy to assist you. Sorting is very important for the free shop – it ensures that restock is simple for the volunteers working at this project and that only the highest quality items are provided to our beneficiaries.

FREE SHOP

We have a ‘free shop’ which is located 3.1km from Vial Camp, which is available to all asylum seekers and refugees on Chios. A number of volunteers are required to run this shop – with roles including check-in, check-out, shop floor assistant, restock and others. We serve approximately 35 beneficiaries per day in this project.

This project includes working in close proximity with camp residents and other at-risk people – which means that we take lots of precautions concerning COVID-19 and any other factors which may pose a threat to the community we serve.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other activities are carried out by the team from time to time depending on the needs arising, and our abilities to respond to these needs at any given time (e.g. emergency distributions or providing temporary assistance with other humanitarian actors on the island). To stay up to date with our current projects, check our website to read more about them.

We support other organisations that help refugees by providing supplies to them. These include Metadrasis, SMH, Praxis and other smaller NGOs here in Chios.

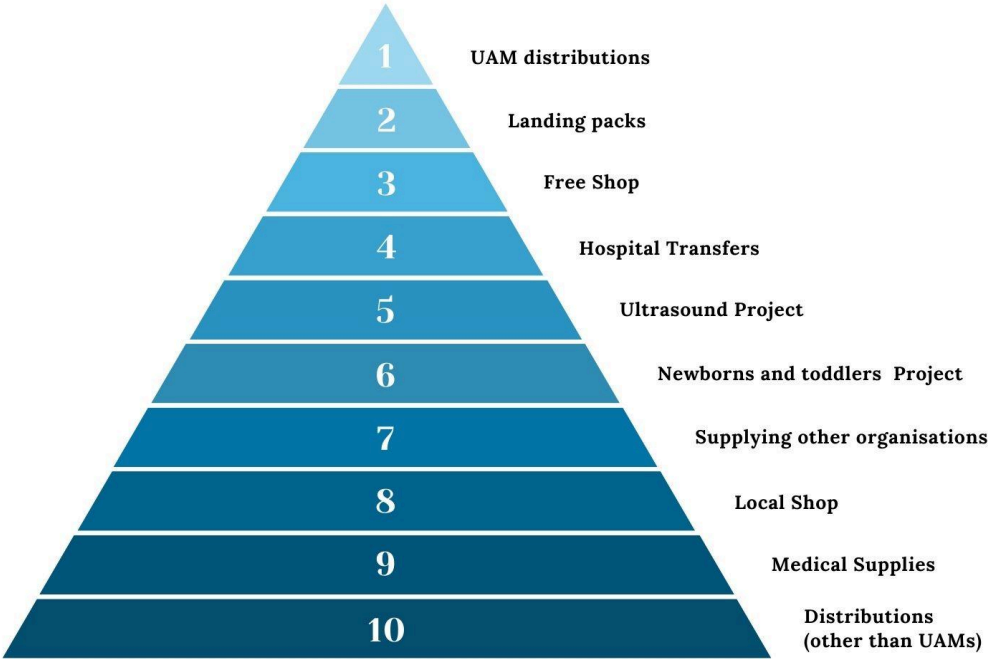
Volunteers wishing to start a new project within Offene Arme e.V must speak first to the coordinators. The project must be financially sustainable and long term for the team.

OFFENE ARME PRIORITY PYRAMID

This is our priority pyramid, showing the order of the most important projects we undertake. In times where we have limited funding, we will use this pyramid to make sure that our resources are being used to successfully complete our highest priority tasks.

You will be informed which tasks are currently being prioritised during your time with Offene Arme, and the team will work together to complete these projects.

Offene Arme Priorities



HEALTH

Please inform the team about any chronic diseases that you might have. If you have any emergency situation, the team will take you to the hospital. Usually, medical services aren't paid for in Greece, so you will only have to pay for medication.

Regarding mental health, the team views this as a priority. If you need to take any days off to maintain your mental health, it is always okay to do so. Indigo, who we partner with, also offers many psychological resources that we will share with you once you arrive.

DONATIONS

It is not mandatory to bring donated funds with you, but all donations, however small, are hugely appreciated!

We would love you to encourage your family and friends to support us. They can do this very easily by contributing to one of our fundraisers on Betterplace.

<https://www.betterplace.org/de/organisations/35624-offene-arme-e-v>

Our priorities now are running costs for the rest of this year, and purchase of NFIs for our distributions. Please share this link in your networks!

Alternatively you can bring donations in cash or send it by bank transfer to the following account:

Account Name: Offene Arme e.V.

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IBAN: DE63 5139 0000 0060 5797 09

BIC: VBMHDE5F

Bank: Volksbank Mittelhessen

Or by PayPal - <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/offenearme>

If you want to bring donations with you, such as clothes, toiletries, etc., please contact us close to your arrival date so we can tell you what is needed at that time.

INTERESTING LINKS

A few resources that you may wish to follow:

Offene Arme e.V.

- www.offenearme.org
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/421759534684819/?fref=nf>
- <https://instagram.com/cesrt.offenearme?igshid=xjdmo7ci5bsc>
- <https://www.facebook.com/chiosesrt/>

UNHCR for current data or statistics about Chios and other areas:

- <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

Are You Syrious (refugee news)

- <https://www.facebook.com/areyousyrious/>
- <https://medium.com/are-you-syrious>