Athens

Roars erupted from the assembly as we looked on quietly. The members of the Greek Parliament, discussing the ethics of a bill passed by the governing party in the nation, were as enthusiastic in delivering their speeches as they were passionate about their party. We were graciously allowed to look onto their session as a group of students from the University of Houston who wished to understand the migrant crisis and the health policies that revolved around the issue. Our group, The Global Humanitarian Student Initiative (or GHSI), partnered with Dr. Anjali Kanojia, was to stay on the island of Lesvos for two weeks after our enlightening stay in Athens. The Athenians received us well, sharing facts about their history that would leave the most well studied historian in awe. Each step we took through the city and the museums was like taking a step back in time, realizing that each step we took brought us closer to the birth of the west. But today was different – the Athenians did not want our brief stay to only consist of stories of their incredible past, but instead wanted us to witness the most incredible product of their legendary history in action… their Democracy. As we looked down at the assembly from the balcony that wrapped around the well-lit assembly room, I entered a sort of trance. These people, who are now discussing the future of their country as a group, are the descendants of the first people to truly do so through the democratic process. Their ancestors gathered near here 2,500 years ago to discuss the future of their city state; making decisions as mundane as fishing reforms and as earthshattering as facing the Persian empire at Salamis. It was an overwhelming feeling that was cut short by the assembly suddenly drawing its attention to our group. They all smiled and applauded our presence, mentioning that they were happy to host students from the University of Houston. We remained seated and smiled as the leaders of Greece honored us during their meeting, amazed at the kindness the Greek people showed us. We knew that aiding the Greek people during the migrant crisis would require a collaborative effort where we all came together to pursue the plan of action set forth by the Greeks. Once we had left the parliamentary session, we were confident that this would be possible. Our meeting with Greek NGOs in Athens confirmed our feeling, with each group more willing than the last to work with us on Lesvos, where we would pursue such work. We were ready to set our best foot forward, and looked forward to working with the people that had already amazed us in such a short amount of time.