

TURKEY



IN SHORT

Main Objectives

- Strengthen UNHCR's partnership with Turkey for the protection of non-European refugees.
- Continue to participate in ensuring the reliable and rapid determination of the status of non-European asylum-seekers.
- Identify and facilitate durable solutions for refugees through resettlement, voluntary repatriation and local integration.
- Reinforce the protection system in Turkey through training and distribution of information aimed at government agencies, the judiciary and civil society.
- Facilitate and assist voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees from northern Iraq, and of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees to their countries of origin.

Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Non-European Refugees & Asylum-Seekers	6,000	6,000
Bosnian Refugees	600	250
Kosovar Refugees	650	300
Returnees	2,100	2,800
Total	9,350	9,350

**Total Requirements
USD 4,573,978**



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WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

UNHCR's main task continues to be the provision of international protection, material assistance and durable solutions for non-European asylum-seekers in Turkey, which maintains the geographical reservation to the 1951 Convention.

Provided they register promptly with the authorities, non-European refugees are granted temporary asylum by the Turkish authorities following a status determination procedure in which UNHCR plays a key role. UNHCR seeks durable solutions (usually resettlement) for those thus recognised. Pending achievement of a solution, most non-European refugees and some asylum-seekers receive assistance from UNHCR to meet the cost of food, health care, lodging and children's education. Legal and social counselling are also provided, directly and through government and NGO services, with special attention to women and children.

The number of individual asylum-seekers from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq approaching UNHCR is currently about 7,500 per year, of whom 30 per cent are recognised as refugees. As non-European refugees are only granted temporary asylum in Turkey, nearly all have to be resettled. In 1999, at least 1,600 refugees will have departed to countries of resettlement.

A larger presence of UNHCR staff in the border areas since 1996 has permitted better monitoring and intervention in favour of refugees and asylum-seekers, in cooperation with local and national authorities. Progress has also been made in the improvement and fair implementation of the Turkish asylum procedure, training in refugee law and the development of a favourable academic legal environment. In January 1999, Turkey extended the time limit for registering for asylum from five to ten days from date of entry into Turkey. This has contributed to a steady decrease in recent years in the number of incidents of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Following the mass exodus of refugees from Kosovo in the Spring of 1999, some 18,000 Kosovars found asylum in Turkey, including over 8,000 evacuated from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Nearly all voluntarily repatriated after the arrival of the United Nations Mission and KFOR in Kosovo. Some 2,000 Kosovars returned with the assistance of UNHCR/IOM, the

others returning by their own means, many with travel documents issued by the Turkish authorities. A total of 102 persons currently remain in the refugee centre in Kirklareli province, and a few hundred more in the cities; they are under no pressure from the Government to return. The Government and Turkish private sources covered all the assistance needs of the Kosovar refugees during their stay. Much of the shelter at the Kirklareli centre was originally provided by UNHCR in connection with the Bosnian influx of the early 1990s. UNHCR provided and continues to provide a number of services to the Kosovar refugees in Turkey, including tracing, family reunification and social counselling. It also advises the Government and NGOs working with the refugees.

UNHCR made a one-off contribution of tents, plastic sheets and blankets to survivors of the earthquake that hit the country in 1999.

Constraints

The build-up of asylum-seekers and other foreigners in the border cities, especially Van, is causing local tensions that may have an adverse effect on access to asylum in Turkey.

Some asylum-seekers are still unable to apply for asylum, either for failure to comply with the ten-day rule or for lack of proof of identity. Turkish returnees face reintegration problems due to the difficult socio-economic situation in areas of return.

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

Protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey has been much improved in recent years. In 2000, UNHCR will continue to assist the authorities and society to develop strong institutions and practices that benefit the refugees and at the same time enable Turkey to cope with the growing influx of asylum-seekers. UNHCR will work for greater flexibility with regard to personal documentation requirements and a further extension of the time limit within which asylum-seekers must register. The judiciary's increased involvement in the protection of refugee rights is expected to enhance the scope of the protection system in Turkey.

UNHCR will continue to perform its function of advisor to the Government on the status of non-



European asylum-seekers in Turkey. To improve the climate of asylum in eastern Turkey, training programmes in refugee law will continue to be held with the Ministry of Interior and will be extended in 2000 to the Gendarmerie and to judges and prosecutors of the District Courts held in areas bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq.

UNHCR will expand its activities aimed at Universities, NGOs, Bar associations and civil society in order to disseminate refugee law and protection principles through lectures, workshops, media programmes and publications. For this purpose, increased use will be made of the Internet in 2000.

Activities will be stepped up in 2000 to heighten awareness among UNHCR's partners of the special needs of refugee women and children. To this end, UNHCR will seek the cooperation of other UN agencies and Turkish governmental and non-governmental agencies. In training courses, more attention will also be paid to the problems of statelessness. Turkey's adherence to the Conventions of 1954 and 1961 will continue to be strongly advocated.

Given the temporary nature of asylum in Turkey for non-European refugees, resettlement will continue to be promoted by UNHCR on the principle of burden-sharing. Voluntary repatriation is very rarely a feasible solution for non-European refugees.

UNHCR will continue to counsel the remaining Bosnian and Kosovar refugees in Turkey on durable solutions. Generally this will mean voluntary repatriation or local integration; resettlement will be limited to a few cases of family reunification or other special circumstances.

Assistance

All programme activities in Turkey are closely linked to the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. In Ankara, Istanbul and other provincial capitals, financial aid and health care are only provided to recognised refugees, while in the border cities of Hakkari and Agri asylum-seekers are provided with subsistence allowances, medical care and accommodation, pending determination of their status. In view of the high number of direct applications in the border city of Van, and to reduce the waiting period for status determination, single male asylum-seekers there are invited to Ankara for refugee status determination. The local

travel and accommodation costs of these asylum-seekers are covered by UNHCR.

Special attention will be paid to activities, including education, that benefit refugee women, particularly the vulnerable and needy. Refugees will be referred to local clinics contracted to UNHCR, where they will receive health services and basic information on health-related issues such as family planning and other aspects of reproductive health. Children will continue to receive basic care. As part of the response to the problem of children's education, small, informal education groups have been established among the refugees in every city where the authorities have grouped refugees together. However, UNHCR will pursue access to formal education for refugees. Unaccompanied minors will be assisted with registration formalities and transportation. Temporary foster families will be found when family reunification is not possible. UNHCR will provide Bosnian and Kosovar refugees with basic food rations, domestic items, health services, counselling, education and sanitary supplies. UNHCR aims, in the medium term, to withdraw from assisting these two refugee groups, with the possible exception of a small residual group of vulnerable persons.

The Government of Turkey cooperates with UNHCR in the voluntary repatriation of returnees to Turkey, in close coordination with UNHCR in Iraq. The programme will continue to provide emergency assistance to returnees from northern Iraq and to facilitate their socio-economic reintegration in Turkey. This assistance will consist of emergency packages including food for two months and domestic items, as well as a small income-generating project. Moreover, some school facilities and health services in south-eastern Turkey will be upgraded to benefit both the resident population and the returnees, thereby facilitating the reintegration process.

Desired Impact

Turkey has a long tradition of providing asylum to victims of persecution from Europe and Western Asia. Today's challenge is how best to continue to build on this tradition to bring such practice into line with the international system of refugee protection. Turkey is already well down that road, having applied the 1951 Convention to refugees from Europe and having set up an asylum system for non-Europeans. At the same time, Turkey will continue to seek the cooperation of friendly governments in the sharing of its sizeable burden of

asylum, which originates in circumstances beyond its own control.

UNHCR aims to help Turkey strengthen its current asylum system, to enable it to cope in the long-term with potential future demands placed on it. At the same time UNHCR will help ensure continued international burden sharing. Although the latter objective will still justify an active, operational UNHCR presence in Turkey for the foreseeable future, UNHCR's programme aims to gradually hand over a significant part of its activities, especially in the fields of training and status determination, as well as social care.

UNHCR's public information campaigns are expected to have a significant impact by increasing public sensitivity to refugee issues. Interest in refugee protection is steadily increasing among Turkish NGOs and in universities and professional associations, and should accelerate the development of refugee policy and institutions in the years to come.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

UNHCR works with a total of 40 staff (seven international, 28 national and five Junior Professional Officers). Most are engaged in determining the status of non-European asylum-seekers and in processing resettlement applications. Among the seven internationals, there are three regional coordinators for refugee women, refugee children and adolescents and training issues in Ankara.

Coordination

UNHCR works closely with the various implementing agencies and the authorities. In order to improve services for refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees, UNHCR urges greater involvement of national NGOs and government institutions, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior. Other UN agencies, such as UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Country Team and WHO, will also continue to assist the Office in their areas of competence. A coordination mechanism with relevant NGOs and UN agencies will be established to ensure continuity of programme activities and to dovetail UNHCR's humanitarian assistance with national services and development programmes.

Offices

Ankara
Istanbul
Silopi
Van

Partners

NGOs

Anatolian Development Foundation
Association for Solidarity with
Asylum-Seekers and Migrants
Human Resource Development Foundation
International Catholic Migration Commission
Turkish Red Crescent Society
YORET

Budget (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	899,261
Community Services	344,000
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	208,900
Education	6,840
Food	62,160
Health/Nutrition	237,600
Legal Assistance	1,028,500
Operational Support (to Agencies)	283,800
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	16,200
Transport/Logistics	38,800
Total Operations	3,126,061
Programme Support	1,447,917
Total	4,573,978

