

TURKEY



Operational highlights

- In 2008, some 12,980 people applied for asylum in Turkey, almost 70 per cent more than in the previous year. Despite this increase, by the end of the year UNHCR was able to reduce the average waiting period for refugee status determination (RSD) interviews from 11 months to five.
- UNHCR conducted RSD for some 9,300 non-European asylum-seekers, 162 of whom were unaccompanied minors. The Office found resettlement opportunities for some 3,800 refugees.
- The Office worked with the Ministry of the Interior, other governmental institutions and NGOs to build the capacity of the national reception and RSD system.
- With additional resources, UNHCR and its partners were able to improve assistance for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.
- UNHCR's partnerships with a variety of civil society actors raised awareness and support for refugees. UNHCR remains the authoritative source of information on refugee protection in Turkey. It acted as a catalyst in the creation of protection structures among the central and provincial authorities, religious institutions, NGOs, universities and the media.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Iraq	7,500	7,500	44	34
	Islamic Republic of Iran	2,100	2,100	40	24
	Somalia	900	900	54	47
	Various	700	700	41	42
Asylum-seekers	Afghanistan	2,800	2,800	43	48
	Islamic Republic of Iran	2,300	2,300	44	24
	Iraq	800	800	36	30
	Somalia	460	460	51	47
	Sudan	150	150	8	20
	Various	600	600	32	15
Stateless	Stateless	2,700	-	-	-
Others of concern	Various	310	-	48	48
Total		21,320	18,310		



Afghan, Somali and Uzbek refugees participating in a UNHCR vocational training on handicrafts in Ankara, Turkey

UNHCR

| Working environment |

In 2008, the total number of people of concern assisted by UNHCR in Turkey increased by about a third, to some 18,310. The country's geographic location makes it a fulcrum for mixed movements of large numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers. The sharp increase of asylum applications in 2008 was largely due to a near doubling of Iraqi applications and a four-fold rise in the number of applications from Afghan nationals.

UNHCR's operation in Turkey continues to be determined by the country's geographic limitation to the 1951 Convention, which formally excludes non-European asylum-seekers and refugees from access to the Turkish asylum procedure. Turkey instead accords these refugees temporary asylum pending UNHCR's efforts to find durable solutions for them outside Turkey. UNHCR thus assumes a direct, operational role in determining the protection needs of non-European asylum-seekers and the subsequent resettlement possibilities of recognized refugees.

Turkey's objective of European Union (EU) membership is an additional influence on the working environment for UNHCR. The accession process requires that Turkey create an asylum system in line with the EU and international standards.

| Achievements and impact |

• *Main objectives*

UNHCR's 2008 programme in Turkey focused on two themes: first, strengthening the national asylum system, and second, protecting and finding solutions for refugees. These efforts were coupled with self-reliance projects and a small measure of assistance for destitute asylum-seekers and refugees.

• *Protection and solutions*

UNHCR significantly increased the number of RSD decisions in 2008, affecting some 9,200 persons, up from 7,650 in 2007. The reduction in the average waiting period for an RSD decision from 11 months to five was a boon for asylum applicants who have to live in Turkey without welfare support.

The Office continued to process individual non-European refugees for resettlement. Most of the 3,800 refugees resettled in 2008 went to Australia, Canada, Finland and the United States. UNHCR intervened with the Turkish authorities on behalf of some 3,400 non-European asylum-seekers so that they could benefit from the national procedure for temporary asylum. In response to these interventions, 72 people were admitted to the Government's temporary asylum procedure, and were subsequently interviewed by UNHCR. Despite the Office's intervention,

however, 85 asylum-seekers were *refouled* in 2008, more than in previous years.

To support the development of Turkey's national asylum system, UNHCR focused on legislative and institutional issues and training strategies, including seminars and coordination mechanisms. This included knowledge transfer on RSD as well as support for reception and integration. UNHCR participated in the drafting of a decree to harmonize dealings with asylum-seeking separated children, disabled persons, the older people and female survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in various provinces.

UNHCR extended its partnership with a variety of civil society actors to raise awareness of, and support for, refugees. NGO engagement and local coordination mechanism have improved in some provincial cities where refugees and asylum-seekers live.

● *Activities and assistance*

Community services: UNHCR worked with satellite cities to identify service providers in various sectors. The Office also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a national foundation to foster social support for asylum-seekers throughout Turkey, although with limited results.

The Office's protection services registered 360 separated children who were either accommodated at Social Services and Child Protection Agency shelters or, in emergencies, were directly accommodated in UNHCR-contracted facilities. All separated children underwent specialized assessment, and 66 benefited from Best Interest Determination (BID) procedures. UNHCR's guidelines on separated children and BID were translated into Turkish and disseminated widely.

Thirty-eight victims of sexual and gender-based violence took advantage of specialized counselling, and another 147 people attended specialized counselling in an Ankara hospital. Two NGOs continued their psychosocial counselling for some 1,500 refugees and asylum-seekers in 10 cities. UNHCR's implementing partners relayed the concerns of refugees and asylum-seekers to local authorities.

Domestic needs and household support: Some 1,800 destitute refugees received monthly financial assistance. Overall, 350 destitute asylum-seekers, many of whom were not registered with the authorities, received one-time assistance. Even though this is an increase in the number of beneficiaries compared to 2007, a lack of sufficient funds forced a reduction in assistance amounts.

Health and nutrition: Through a contractual arrangement with hospitals, 120 asylum-seekers and refugees had access to emergency health care every month. Some 150 people underwent voluntary counselling and 39 people were tested to prevent or treat sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Some 6,500 adults received information leaflets on STDs and 1,900 refugee women and adolescent girls received sanitary supplies.

Legal assistance: UNHCR resettled some 3,800 refugees and assisted three Iraqis out of the more than 300 refugees who opted for voluntary return. It intervened in some 390 cases, affecting some 3,400 people who applied for asylum after they had been apprehended. Of them only 72 were admitted to the Government's temporary asylum procedure.

The Office monitored the legislative process and participated in the drafting of by-laws in order to harmonize the protection of persons of concern to the Office who have special needs.

UNHCR conducted three training seminars in collaboration with relevant ministries, government institutions and civil society in preparation for the creation of six reception centres. UNHCR's Guidelines on International Protection were translated into Turkish.

UNHCR welcomed the assignment of two high-ranking officials to follow up on the publication of the EU's progress report on Turkey. Two NGOs and three contracted lawyers in the border areas continued their legal counselling services, providing some 1,600 sessions for 700 non-European asylum-seekers and refugees. Implementing partners extended their field presence to 10 cities where persons of concern to UNHCR are assigned to reside.

Operational support (to agencies): The Office continued regular advocacy and public-awareness activities, such as conferences, talkshows and workshops. It also disseminated reports on asylum and refugee-related issues. UNHCR's Turkish language website was made more user-friendly. UNHCR contributed to staffing, communication and other administrative costs of implementing partners engaged in social and legal counselling programmes.

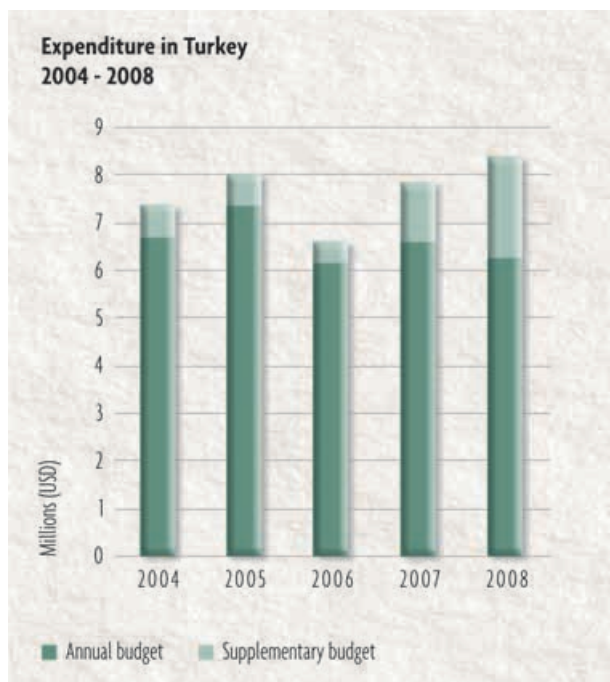
Transport and logistics: UNHCR paid the travel expenses of some 1,600 people living in satellite cities who needed to attend eligibility interviews or complete resettlement processing. The Office reimbursed the local transport fees of 53 refugee children and adults in Van in conjunction with language and vocational training.

● *Constraints*

The sharp increase in the number of asylum-seekers, many of whom had few prospects for durable solutions, posed serious challenges to UNHCR's operation in Turkey in 2008. As the authorities in provincial cities accommodating refugees have limited means for essential services, the socio-economic situation of many people of concern to UNHCR remains extremely difficult. High fees of USD 250 per adult for obligatory resident permits and complex administrative requirements to access the labour market exacerbate the problem. As a consequence, many refugees and asylum-seekers resort to informal economic activities, a practice that renders their stay illegal and leaves them at a heightened risk of exploitation. Meanwhile, difficulties aligning Turkey's asylum system to that of the EU and international protection standards persist.

| Financial information |

UNHCR's operation in Turkey was fully funded, but the budget was not enough to cover the needs of the growing number of people of concern to UNHCR. The country operation received additional contributions for capacity building in preparation for the handover of RSD responsibilities to the Turkish authorities. The Office also received additional support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Nevertheless, UNHCR's support and assistance for destitute people of concern remained fragmented. This posed severe problems for asylum-seekers, who must endure considerable waiting periods before their status can be determined.



Organization and implementation

The country programme was implemented by the Representation Office in Ankara and through field presences in Van, Istanbul and Silopi. The Office employed a total of 60 staff members in 2008, consisting of six international and 53 national employees and one JPO.

Working with others

UNHCR worked closely with the Government of Turkey (The Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the ministries of Health and Education, the Directorate General of Social Assistance and Solidarity and the Ministry of Labour) as well as the Gendarmerie and Coast Guard. Various national NGOs complemented UNHCR's efforts.

UNHCR facilitated resettlement and family reunification in close coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Office was a member of the UN Country Team and participated in the review of the UN Development Assistance Framework. UNHCR was also an active participant in the Gender and HIV and AIDS thematic groups.

Overall assessment

UNHCR provided critical protection services to refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey. The operation reflected a rights-based approach. The Office continues to support Turkey's bid to develop a fair and effective national asylum system by 2012.

Partners

Implementing partners

NGOs: Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants, Human Resources Development Foundation

Operational partners

Government agencies: Directorate for Security of the Ministry of Interior, Directorate-General Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate-General on Social Assistance and Solidarity, the Gendarmerie General Command, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of National Education, Social Services and Child Protection Agency, social solidarity foundations in the provinces

NGOs: Bar Association of Turkey, *Can Suyu*, *Deniz Feneri*, Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), Gaziantep Relief Foundation, Helsinki Citizens Assembly, Human Rights Centre and Women's Community Centre, International Catholic Migration Commission, Kaos-GL, *Kimse Yok Mu*, Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation, Van Women Association

Others: Amnesty International, Bilgi University (Istanbul), British Council, Hacettepe University, School of Social Work, IOM, Middle East Technical University (Ankara), Turkish Red Crescent Society, UNDP, UNICEF

Budget, income and expenditure in Turkey (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available ¹	Total expenditure
Annual budget	6,416,072	146,648	6,135,637	6,282,285	6,275,213
Iraq Situation SB	2,244,230	859,281	1,245,944	2,105,225	2,104,786
Total	8,660,302	1,005,929	7,381,581	8,387,510	8,379,999

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

¹ Total funds available include currency adjustments.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Turkey (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,002,746	705,609	2,708,355	0
Community services	281,207	302,150	583,357	0
Domestic needs and household support	377,441	526,317	903,758	0
Education	0	23,326	23,326	0
Health and nutrition	67,933	24,573	92,506	0
Legal assistance	532,804	374,743	907,547	0
Operational support (to agencies)	79,786	1,956	81,742	0
Shelter and infrastructure	0	816	816	0
Transport and logistics	57,721	29,871	87,592	0
Instalments to implementing partners	131	(73)	58	0
Subtotal operational activities	3,399,769	1,989,288	5,389,057	0
Programme support	2,875,444	115,498	2,990,942	0
Total expenditure	6,275,213	2,104,786	8,379,999	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				(4,284)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	367,443	296,114	663,557	
Reporting received	(367,443)	(296,114)	(663,557)	
Balance	0	0	0	
Outstanding 1st January				1,690
Reporting received				0
Refunded to UNHCR				(2,465)
Currency adjustment				775
Outstanding 31st December				0