

# Turkey



## Main objectives

- Support the Government of Turkey's efforts to develop new institutional arrangements for the reception and protection of refugees and asylum-seekers, in conformity with international standards.
- Collaborate with the Government and other partners on efforts to enhance the knowledge and skills of key officials as they assume greater responsibility for asylum and refugee matters.
- Monitor Turkey's implementation of the 1951 Refugee Convention and ensure that asylum-seekers are admitted and have access to the national asylum procedure.
- Advise the Government regarding the protection needs of asylum-seekers from non-European countries and ensure efficient and fair RSD for them under UNHCR's mandate.
- Promote durable solutions for refugees through resettlement to third countries, but also through local integration and voluntary repatriation, where appropriate.

- Cooperate with the Government and NGOs in meeting the basic needs of refugees and asylum-seekers for material, medical, social and psychological support, with a special emphasis on the protection of refugee women and children.
- Raise public awareness of the problems of refugees and asylum-seekers and build popular support for Turkey's efforts to protect and assist them.

Planning figures		
Population	Jan 2005	Dec 2005
Islamic Republic of Iran (asylum-seekers)	1,500	1,000
Islamic Republic of Iran (refugees)	1,400	1,400
Iraq (asylum-seekers)	1,000	600
Iraq (refugees)	700	500
Other asylum-seekers	400	400
Other refugees	350	350
Returnees during year	50	6,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,400</b>	<b>10,750</b>

**Total requirements: USD 6,275,605**

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## Working environment

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### Recent developments

Turkey's candidacy for EU membership remains a dominant political issue, which has important implications for refugees and UNHCR's role in the country. It is possible that a critical hurdle will be overcome in December 2004, when the European Council decides whether to open formal accession negotiations with Turkey. If the Council's decision is positive, the pace of developments is likely to accelerate rapidly in all priority areas, including asylum and the related fields of migration and border management.

The Government is preparing for an intensive period of EU-related legislative and institutional reform. The EC is supporting the preparation of a detailed action plan for extending to Turkey the EU members' existing asylum and migration *acquis*. A new asylum law is also under development, and the Ministry of the Interior has produced a draft internal directive intended to bring Turkey's asylum practices into closer alignment with the EU *acquis* and the international standards advocated by UNHCR.

A major decision facing Turkey concerns the question of lifting the "geographic limitation" to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and thereby assuming full international legal obligations toward non-European refugees. The Government has made a conditional commitment to taking this important step "during the progression of EU accession negotiations".

Turkey's geographic position along historical migration routes and the complex nature of contemporary migratory movements pose a particular challenge for the Government's efforts to establish a new national asylum system. Like many Mediterranean countries, Turkey is receiving increasing numbers of migrants from African countries. Many originate from countries mired in conflict and civil war, and are clearly in a refugee-like situation; however relatively few are able to establish an individual claim to refugee status. The African asylum-seekers approaching UNHCR often have few resources, require medical treatment and cannot access any community support network comparable to those established by their Iraqi or Iranian counterparts.

Implementation of constitutional and legislative reforms relating to Turkey's EU candidacy should help to increase interest in voluntary repatriation among Turkish refugees in Iraq. In early 2004, UNHCR reached a broad consensus on voluntary repatriation to be expressed in a tripartite agreement with the Turkish Government and representatives of the Coalition Provisional Authority/Iraqi Governing Council. The agreement, however, remains unsigned. While security conditions in Iraq impede efforts to move forward with information activities and confidence-building measures, UNHCR is working on the assumption that significant returns to Turkey could begin in 2005.

### Constraints

The continuing instability and insecurity in Iraq has left nearly 700 Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers effectively stranded in Turkey and increasingly dependent on UNHCR assistance. The Turkish Government has implemented a ban on forced returns for Iraqis. However, most resettlement countries have frozen the processing of applications by Iraqi refugees, leaving them with no clear solution in view.

The situation is similar for some 1,200 Iranian refugees who entered Turkey after having resided for varying periods in Iraq. Recognizing that safe return to Iraq is not possible, the Government has accorded these refugees temporary immigration status, but this does not allow them to pursue resettlement from Turkey. Meeting the basic needs of these Iranian refugees and the growing numbers of needy African asylum-seekers will place a heavy burden on UNHCR's assistance budget in 2005.

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## Strategy

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### Protection and solutions

To meet EU and international standards, Turkey will need to make comprehensive changes to the current legislative and institutional framework for asylum, as well as major investments in human resources and infrastructure. UNHCR will offer expert advice and support to the Government within the framework of a comprehensive



Iraqi refugees. UNHCR / A. Hollmann

capacity-building strategy and an updated Cooperation Framework Agreement with the Ministry of the Interior. UNHCR's Asylum System and Capacity Building Unit will be strengthened with additional staff for this purpose. UNHCR will also promote closer coordination with the Government and key external partners to ensure that training and capacity-building activities are complementary and have the maximum possible effect.

Enhancing the Government's capacity to undertake RSD will be a major objective for UNHCR. The intensive schedule of refugee law training activities will continue. A staff exchange programme will also allow government officials handling asylum matters to work alongside UNHCR counterparts. This will facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise on all aspects of RSD, including registration, interviewing techniques and country of origin information analysis.

During the EU accession process, Turkey will be called upon to create new legal and practical means for refugees to integrate within Turkish society. While Turkey works toward this longer term goal, most non-European refugees will continue to find durable solutions through resettlement to third countries. UNHCR will also facilitate voluntary repatriation, including to and from Iraq when conditions permit.

## Assistance

Turkey is planning to improve reception and accommodation arrangements for refugees and asylum-seekers. At present, however, most non-European refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey live on the brink of destitution, and despite being remarkably resilient, have to depend on the limited financial, medical and other types of assistance provided by UNHCR.

The Government has designated the Social Services and Child Protection Institution (SHCEK) as UNHCR's partner for social services. SHCEK's network of social workers and institutions will be a great asset in ensuring the welfare of refugees and asylum-seekers (particularly women and children) who are widely dispersed across the country. At the same time, SHCEK looks to UNHCR for the specialized training and material support required to fulfil these new responsibilities effectively. With the Gender and Children Team acting as a steering group, UNHCR will work with SHCEK and NGO partners during 2005 to expand social counselling services to the provincial cities where most refugees and asylum-seekers reside.

UNHCR is working to develop the network of national NGOs and other civil society actors involved with refugees. Special funding from a

major donor will allow NGO working groups on women, children, health and legal advocacy to meet regularly and strengthen their cooperation with UNHCR. UNHCR has successfully collaborated with national NGOs to develop project proposals for submission to interested donors, and plans to continue these efforts in 2005.

### Desired impact

UNHCR is helping Turkey to build a national asylum system that offers reliable protection and real solutions for refugees, based upon international standards and best practice. Turkey's progress in this endeavour will eventually permit UNHCR to reduce its operational activities and assume the oversight role foreseen in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Until that time, UNHCR will continue to play a direct role in ensuring that refugees enjoy protection, achieve solutions and live with a minimum of dignity during their stay in Turkey.

## Organization and implementation

### Management structure

UNHCR has a main office in Ankara and maintains a field presence in Istanbul, Silopi and Van. Seven international officers, two JPOs, 55 national staff members and four national UNVs implement the country programme. UNHCR is redeploying staff away from the RSD operation in order to support implementation of the capacity-building strategy and strengthen border monitoring. The RSD and resettlement operations will nevertheless continue to require significant human resources so long as Turkey maintains the "geographic limitation."

### Coordination

UNHCR is an active member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Turkey and contributes to thematic working groups on HIV/AIDS and gender. UNHCR coordinates closely with the UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP and the World Bank in developing the UNCT's response to the issue of internal displacement in Turkey. IOM works with UNHCR to facilitate refugee resettlement and voluntary repatriation movements.

Offices
Ankara
Istanbul
Silopi
Van

Partners
<b>Government agencies</b>
Ministry of the Interior – Gendarmerie General Command
Ministry of the Interior – General Directorate of Security
Social Services and Child Protection Institution (SHCEK)
<b>NGOs</b>
Association for Solidarity with Asylum-seekers and Migrants
Caritas
Human Resources Development Foundation
International Catholic Migration Commission
Inter-Parish Migration Programme
<b>Others</b>
Hacettepe University School of Social Work
Psychological Services Institute
Turkish Red Crescent Society

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,977,841
Community services	338,000
Domestic needs	625,783
Education	41,000
Food	6,550
Health	199,000
Legal assistance	268,275
Operational support (to agencies)	54,300
Shelter/other infrastructure	44,167
Transport/logistics	41,200
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>3,596,116</b>
Programme support	2,679,489
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,275,605</b>

Turkey