

TURKEY



Operational highlights

- Nearly 8,000 people, mostly from Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Islamic Republic of Iran applied for asylum in Turkey in 2009. That number, which included some 300 unaccompanied minors, was 38 per cent lower than in 2008. However, owing to a backlog of pending cases (6,000 asylum-seekers), the waiting period for refugee status determination (RSD) averaged 13 months.

- UNHCR conducted RSD for more than 7,000 people, and nearly 5,000 applicants were found to be in need of international protection. The Office found resettlement opportunities for more than 6,000 refugees.
- UNHCR gave technical support and legal advice to the Asylum and Migration Bureau of Turkey's Ministry of the Interior. In a bid to develop an asylum system compliant with international standards and best practices, UNHCR supported the Ministry in drafting asylum legislation and

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Iraq	6,200	6,200	42	29
	Islamic Rep. of Iran	1,800	1,800	42	21
	Afghanistan	1,000	1,000	46	42
	Somalia	900	900	52	38
	Various	390	390	36	25
Asylum-seekers	Islamic Rep. of Iran	2,400	2,400	41	20
	Afghanistan	1,900	1,900	40	40
	Iraq	600	600	38	32
	Somalia	260	260	51	40
	Sudan	110	110	14	19
	Various	700	700	31	19
Stateless	Stateless persons	2,740	-	-	-
Others of concern	Various	310	-	-	-
Returnees (refugees)	Various	30	-	-	-
Total		19,340	16,260		



UNHCR distributed supplies to Chechen school children in Istanbul.

in establishing the General Directorate of Asylum and Migration.

- A ruling by the European Court of Human Rights upheld an earlier ruling that found Turkey's detention practices not to be in line with the European Convention on Human Rights. Following this judgment and UNHCR's advocacy, asylum-seekers who had been detained for prolonged periods were released and transferred to satellite cities.
- Despite UNHCR's interventions, allegedly 250 people of concern were forcibly expelled, either to their home countries or to third countries through which they had transited.

Working environment

Turkey receives mixed flows of migrants and asylum-seekers. Many of them risk their lives to reach Turkey before trying to move on to other countries in Europe. These mixed movements are mostly composed of people from Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, but arrivals from African countries have increased. The decline in the number of asylum-seekers in 2009 may be attributed partly to the relative stabilization of the situation in Iraq but also to more stringent border-control measures.

Turkey maintains a geographic reservation to the 1951 Convention that excludes non-European asylum-seekers

from refugee status in Turkey. As a European Union (EU) candidate country, Turkey has made a conditional commitment to lift its reservation to the 1951 Convention, although this is not foreseen to happen in the near future. Non-European refugees are provided only with temporary asylum pending UNHCR's efforts to find durable solutions for them.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

UNHCR's 2009 programme in Turkey focused on ensuring access to the territory and to asylum procedures; directly implementing an asylum procedure for non-Europeans; improving reception conditions and pursuing durable solutions (mainly resettlement) for refugees. It also aimed to support the Turkish authorities to draft relevant legislation and build a national asylum system in line with international standards.

Protection and solutions

Nearly 8,000 people lodged applications for refugee status with UNHCR in 2009, adding to 6,000 pending applications from previous years. Following eligibility interviews, the Office identified some 10,000 persons in need of

international protection for whom a durable solution needed to be found. More than 6,700 resettlement submissions were made in 2009, and just over 6,000 refugees departed for resettlement countries.

UNHCR remained concerned about the number of people who were denied access to Turkish territory and the right to apply for asylum. Some 250 people were allegedly detained and returned on the account of their illegal presence in Turkey without having been granted access to the asylum procedure. The Office intervened on behalf of almost 1,350 people who claimed asylum while in detention, of whom only 10 per cent were given access to the asylum procedure, leaving at least 1,200 deprived of this right.

Funding was made available and sites were identified for the construction of six reception, screening and accommodation centres for asylum-seekers and refugees; and two removal centres for rejected asylum-seekers and illegal migrants. By 2013, each reception centre will provide up to 750 most vulnerable asylum-seekers with short-term accommodation. UNHCR has trained local and national officials on reception conditions and centre management.

● Activities and assistance

Community services: Some 3,200 counselling sessions were provided by UNHCR through a network of national NGOs. Best Interest Determination assessments were conducted for 61 separated children.

Domestic needs and household support: More than 1,500 vulnerable persons of concern received either monthly financial assistance or one-time grants. Emergency accommodation assistance was made available to more than 200 persons. Nearly 1,000 sanitary-material kits were distributed to women of reproductive age.

Education: Some 1,900 refugee and asylum-seeker children received education assistance. In 2009, school attendance increased by 90 per cent compared to 2008. In addition, a USD 65,000 donation of education kits helped to ease the financial burden for refugee and asylum-seeker families.

Health and nutrition: Some 2,100 visits were made to UNHCR's contracted clinic and more than 500 people were assisted to purchase medicines. More than 4,500 men and women received information about tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases.

Legal assistance: The Office provided legal assistance to non-European asylum-seekers and refugees through independent lawyers and through three contracted lawyers working in the border regions, as well as to one European refugee in Turkey to initiate the administrative and legal procedures for his citizenship application. Within the RSD procedure, applicants were provided legal counsel by independent lawyers and one national NGO.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR helped to cover the staffing, communications and other administrative costs of implementing partners providing social and legal counselling.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR covered the travel expenses within Turkey of some 3,800 asylum-seekers who needed to attend RSD interviews.

● Constraints

The number of refugees in need of durable solutions increased due to insufficient resettlement opportunities. The absence of local integration opportunities and limited access to social protection created additional hardships for thousands of people of concern. Advocacy for a general exemption from residence fees, or *Ikamet*, which would alleviate part of the burden, continued. A major step forward was the Government's stated intent to issue a circular in 2010 that would instruct local authorities to waive the fees for those who are unable to pay.

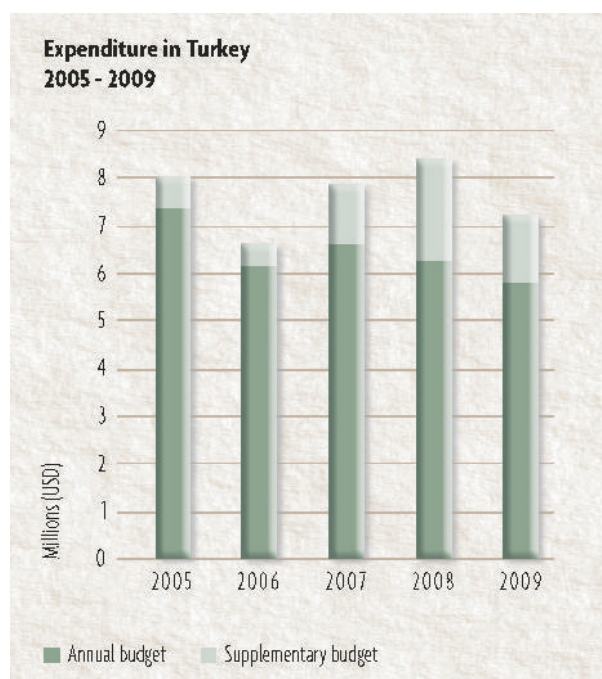
Due to UNHCR Turkey's staffing constraints, the waiting period between registration and first-instance RSD decision rose to 13 months – twice the standard length.

The absence of an agreement with the Government on terms of reference for UNHCR's operation remains a concern and a source of potential misunderstandings.

| Financial information |

The waiting period at end 2009 of 13 months between registration and first-instance decision was double the time prescribed in UNHCR's recommended procedural standards for RSD. Additional resources are required to bring UNHCR into compliance with its own standards.

In 2009, UNHCR designed a more holistic approach to securing protection in Turkey which included maximizing the use of national NGOs in advocating for protection space. Additional resources will be needed for the RSD and resettlement operation in Turkey, as well as the active involvement of civil society in advocating for sufficient protection and humanitarian space.



Organization and implementation

The country programme was implemented by the Ankara country office, a field office in Van and field units in Istanbul and Silopi. The Office employed a total of 81 staff in 2009, including five international officers, three JPOs, 53 national employees and 20 national UNVs.

Working with others

In 2009, UNHCR worked mainly with the General Directorate of Consular Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Directorate for Security within the Ministry of the Interior, which are jointly responsible for operational asylum matters. UNHCR also collaborated with the Asylum and Migration Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Education, the Social Solidarity Foundation, the Social Services and Child Protection Directorate and civil society actors. Good working relations were developed with the Religious Affairs Directorate. Regular meetings between UNHCR's partners and civil society helped identify gaps and improve protection and assistance schemes.

UNHCR worked closely with IOM to facilitate resettlement departures, as well as on migration/asylum and trafficking issues. The UN Country Team identified several cross-cutting themes that have links to UNHCR's operational activities in Turkey. This has led to greater cooperation with other UN entities in the country.

Overall assessment

Though UNHCR had to manage a large caseload with limited resources, it was nonetheless able to make more than 7,000 RSD decisions and resettle more than 6,000 people.

Challenges that remain are: access to procedures, access to persons in detention (including at airports and sea ports), the backlog of applications awaiting a decision, and the increasing number of refugees for whom resettlement opportunities are limited. Additional resources and new strategies will be required to meet these challenges.

Traditionally, UNHCR has had to fill the void left by the absence of a national institution responsible for asylum in Turkey. While important progress was made in 2009, the setting up, funding and staffing of a national asylum and migration authority within the Ministry of the Interior may still require some time.

Partners

Implementing partners

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

Operational partners

Government: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asylum and Migration Bureau of the Ministry of Interior, General Directorate for Security of the Ministry of Interior, General Directorate for Social Solidarity and Assistance, Gendarmerie General Command, Land Forces Command, Coast Guard Command, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Child Protection Agency, Presidency of Religious Affairs, Human Rights Presidency, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), Social Solidarity and Assistance Foundations in Cities

NGOs: Amnesty International, Ankara Refugee Support Group, Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers (Multeci-der), Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People (Mazlum Der), Bar Associations, Bonjour Ankara Group, Cansuyu, Caritas, Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), Helsinki Citizens Assembly, Human Rights Association, Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, International Blue Crescent, International Catholic Migration Commission, Kaos-GL, Kimse Yok Mu, Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation, Turkish Red Crescent Society, Van Women Association

Others: United Nations Country Team, International Organization for Migration, Universities

Budget, income and expenditure in Turkey (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	6,449,699	113,514	5,730,783	5,844,297	5,774,096
Iraq Situation SB	1,695,650	539,557	910,406	1,449,963	1,449,963
Total	8,145,349	653,071	6,641,189	7,294,260	7,224,059

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.

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

Expenditure breakdown	Current years' project			Previous years' project
	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,347,124	41,084	2,388,208	0
Community services	152,453	197,323	349,776	0
Domestic needs and household support	181,297	164,587	345,884	0
Education	60,450	16,214	76,664	0
Health and nutrition	77,979	68,930	146,909	0
Legal assistance	465,843	371,805	837,648	0
Operational support (to agencies)	13,081	48,440	61,521	0
Shelter and infrastructure	1	0	1	0
Transport and logistics	87,905	19,326	107,231	0
Instalments to implementing partners	216,528	257,701	474,230	0
Subtotal operational activities	3,602,661	1,185,411	4,788,072	0
Programme support	2,171,435	264,552	2,435,987	0
Total expenditure	5,774,096	1,449,963	7,224,059	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				0
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	452,096	450,160	902,256	
Reporting received	(235,568)	(192,458)	(428,026)	
Balance	216,528	257,701	474,230	
Previous year's report				
Instalments with implementing partners:				
Outstanding 1st January				58
Reporting received				0
Refunded to UNHCR				(188)
Currency adjustment				0
Outstanding 31st December				(130)