

Turkey



Main objectives

- Support the efforts of the Government of Turkey to strengthen and develop new legislative and institutional arrangements for the reception and protection of asylum-seekers and refugees in conformity with international standards.
- Cooperate with the Government in capacity-building efforts, including joint training programmes designed to improve the knowledge and skills of key officials as they assume expanded responsibilities for asylum and refugee matters.
- Monitor the implementation of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the access of asylum-seekers to Turkish asylum procedures.
- Advise the Government on the protection needs of individual asylum-seekers from non-European countries to ensure efficient and fair refugee status determination (RSD), while the Government prepares to lift the "geographic limitation" to the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- Promote durable solutions for refugees, mainly through resettlement to third countries.
- Cooperate with the Government and NGOs in meeting the basic needs of asylum-seekers with a special emphasis on the protection of refugee women and children.
- Raise public awareness about the problems of asylum-seekers and refugees and support Turkey's efforts to improve their integration prospects.

Planning figures

Population	Jan 2006	Dec 2006
Iraq (asylum-seekers)	2,200	2,400
Islamic Republic of Iran (refugees)	2,000	2,000
Islamic Republic of Iran (asylum-seekers)	1,700	1,500
Other asylum-seekers	1,000	800
Other refugees	1,000	900
Iraq (refugees)	100	200
Returnees	500	3,500
Total	8,500	11,300

Total requirements: USD 7,065,521

Working environment

Recent developments

Turkey's aspiration to join the European Union has important implications for the management of refugee and asylum matters in the country. The European Union accession process has stimulated asylum reform, as Turkey must implement the extensive European Union acquis on asylum and related areas, such as migration, border management, human rights and administrative and judicial reform. Most importantly, Turkey has made a commitment to lifting the "geographic limitation", which has for several decades restricted its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention to persons uprooted by events in Europe more than half a century ago. The limitation will be lifted as soon as the necessary legislation, infrastructure and staff are in place to assume the new responsibilities which will come into being.

UNHCR's main operational counterpart, the General Directorate of Security at the Ministry of the Interior, is taking the lead in the intensive planning for these requirements now under way. The General Directorate of Security has prepared the *National Action Plan for the Adoption of the European Union Acquis in the Field of Migration and Asylum* with the support of an EC-funded "twinning" project, UNHCR and a range of non-governmental actors. The Plan maps out the development of a comprehensive national asylum system, including a specialized agency for refugee status determination, a regional network of reception centres and other measures for meeting the protection, care and long-term needs of refugees.

The Government's agreement to lift the "geographic limitation" is largely a response to European Union concerns about burden-sharing, albeit a somewhat cautious agreement. Turkey is situated in a volatile geopolitical region and following accession, its southern and eastern borders would be the ultimate borders of a yet further expanded European Union. Turkish officials are understandably concerned that their country would become a buffer zone, absorbing refugees, asylum-seekers

and other migrants, not least through the operation of readmission agreements and under the Dublin II Regulation arrangements that would bind Turkey as a Member State in the future. The National Action Plan, in its penultimate paragraph, sets 2012 as the target date for eliminating the "geographic limitation".

Turkey lies along major migration routes leading from Africa, South and South-West Asia and the Middle East into Europe. The complex nature of contemporary migratory movements poses a particular challenge for the Government's efforts to establish a new national asylum system. Like many Mediterranean countries, Turkey still interdicts tens of thousands of irregular undocumented migrants each year as they attempt to transit the country, usually with the assistance of human smugglers or in the hands of traffickers. Many originate from countries mired in conflict and civil war, and are clearly in a refugee-like situation. This includes an increasing number of African asylum-seekers who approach UNHCR without any resources and in need of emergency assistance and medical treatment.

It is expected that the implementation of constitutional and legislative reforms relating to Turkey's European Union candidacy will increase interest in voluntary repatriation among Turkish refugees in Iraq. 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 2006 as soon as a tripartite agreement between Turkey, Iraq and UNHCR has been signed.

Constraints

Some 2,200 Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers remain in Turkey. They are dependent on UNHCR's assistance due to continuing instability and insecurity in Iraq. The Turkish Government has implemented a ban on forced returns for Iraqis while most resettlement countries have frozen the processing of applications by Iraqi refugees, leaving them with no clear solution in view.

For over 1,100 Iranian refugees who entered Turkey after having resided for varying periods in Iraq, a safe return to Iraq is not possible. Acknowledging the situation, the Government has accorded these refugees temporary immigration status, but does not currently give the group access to resettlement from Turkey. With no possibility of safe return to Iraq, little prospect of resettlement and only temporary asylum in Turkey, these refugees are growing increasingly frustrated and ever more dependent on UNHCR. Meeting the basic needs of the refugees and the growing number of African asylum-seekers will place a heavy burden on UNHCR's assistance budget in 2006.

In Turkey, UNHCR finds itself attempting to keep pace with the Government's growing demands for expert advice and support for asylum system development and capacity building, while also maintaining current protection and assistance programmes. This will demand careful management, strict prioritization and the mobilization of resources beyond the indicative country envelope for Turkey, as no funds are available from the operational budget, which is fully committed to life-sustaining assistance activities and providing essential services for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Strategy

Protection and solutions

In April 2005, the Prime Minister approved the *National Action Plan for the Adoption of the European Union Acquis in the Field of Migration and Asylum*, whereby Turkey commits itself to comprehensive changes to the current legislative and institutional framework for asylum in order to meet the European Union and international standards. The Plan provides the most comprehensive overview of needs in relation to asylum system development. UNHCR will accompany the process and will offer expert advice and support to the Government within the framework of a comprehensive capacity-building strategy. UNHCR will also promote closer coordination with the Government and other key stakeholders



to ensure that training and capacity-building activities are complementary and have the maximum effect.

The Government and UNHCR have agreed that the short-term priorities for the asylum system development are strengthening RSD expertise and capacity within the Ministry of the Interior; and building Turkey's capacity for reception. A staff exchange programme will allow government officials involved in RSD 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.

The National Action Plan provides for the establishment of seven regional reception centres that



would be co-located with the offices of the national asylum authority and Government RSD decision-makers. UNHCR will facilitate study visits to European countries that provide relevant models for Turkey and will support a reception working group composed of key Government officials and civil society partners. This will allow the Turkish authorities and their civil society partners to gain experience and derive lessons learned for use in broader planning.

UNHCR will also place importance on developing the capacity of Turkish civil society to serve as advocates and service providers for refugees and views the creation of effective NGO coordination structures as an immediate priority.

While Turkey works towards the creation of new legal and practical means to protect refugees, most non-European refugees will continue to find durable solutions through resettlement to third countries. UNHCR will also facilitate voluntary repatriation, when conditions in the respective countries of origin permit return.

Assistance

Although Turkey is planning to improve reception and accommodation arrangements, UNHCR will be the main source of material support and essential services for individual non-European refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey. At present the refugees and asylum-seekers 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 Agency (SHCEK) to coordinate assistance. At the same time, SHCEK looks to UNHCR for the specialized training and material support required to fulfil these responsibilities effectively.

In addition, with the Gender and Children Team acting as a steering group, UNHCR is working together with its main implementing partners to expand legal, social and psychosocial counselling services to provincial cities where most refugees and asylum-seekers reside. Special funding from a major donor will permit UNHCR and its partners to initiate counselling programmes in up to ten new locations, relying upon the existing SHCEK and Turkish Red Crescent Society network and infrastructure.

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 and achieve solutions during their stay in Turkey.

Organization and implementation

Management structure

UNHCR has a main office in Ankara and maintains field presence in Istanbul, Silopi and Van. UNHCR will operate its programme with a total of 72 staff members: seven international staff, one JPO, 61 national staff and three national UNVs.

UNHCR has rebalanced its human resources in 2005 for both asylum systems support needs and RSD/durable solutions. This means redeployment of staff away from the RSD operation in order to support the implementation of the capacity-building strategy and to strengthen border monitoring. The RSD and the resettlement operations will nevertheless continue to require significant human resources as long as Turkey maintains the "geographic limitation".

Coordination

UNHCR coordinates its protection and assistance programme directly with the Government of Turkey, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice and SHCEK. UNHCR will also promote close cooperation between the Government and Turkish civil society by providing opportunities for dialogue and engaging Government institutions and national NGOs and foundations in joint operational activities.

Through the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the UN Country Team (UNCT) has identified several cross-cutting themes with links to UNHCR's operational activities in Turkey. The UN agencies will pursue civil society development and capacity-building activities over the next five-year period. These will include rights-based interventions in support of good governance, respect for human rights and the reduction of disparities, working in a complementary way through their Government partners. All UN agencies have shared their country programme documentation, and joint UNCT activities have been reorganized around thematic groups focusing on gender, HIV/AIDS prevention, and support for Government efforts to address the problem of internal displacement and improve conditions for returnees. A strategic planning group drives the UNDAF process and the Millennium Development Goals reporting work, along with quarterly meetings of the UNCT principals and regular meetings of the thematic working groups and the Security Management Team.

Offices
Ankara
Istanbul
Silopi
Van

Partners
Government agencies
Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Directorate General for Consular Affairs
Ministry of the Interior - Gendarmerie General Command
Ministry of the Interior - General Directorate of Security
Social Services and Child Protection Institutions
NGOs
Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants
Human Resources Development Foundation
International Catholic Migration Commission
Others
Bar Associations of Turkey
Bilgi University (Istanbul)
Caritas
Hacettepe University School of Social Work
Helsinki Citizens Assembly, Refugee Legal Aid Programme (Istanbul)
Human Rights Centre and Women's Community Centre (Van)
IOM
Middle East Technical University (Ankara)
Turkish Red Crescent Society
UNCT

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,346,404
Community services	250,850
Domestic needs	632,000
Education	41,000
Food	6,550
Health	252,000
Legal assistance	121,600
Operational support (to agencies)	73,000
Shelter/other infrastructure	80,000
Transport/logistics	33,000
Total operations	3,836,404
Programme support	3,229,117
Total	7,065,521