

# Turkey in short

## Main Objectives

- Further strengthen UNHCR's partnership with the Government of Turkey for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Ensure rapid and reliable refugee status determination of asylum-seekers from non-European countries.
- Identify and promote durable solutions for refugees through resettlement, voluntary repatriation and local integration; offer social counselling and support for refugees, with a special focus on women and children.
- Facilitate and assist the voluntary repatriation from northern Iraq of Turkish refugees, and of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees from Turkey to their countries of origin.
- Raise public awareness of asylum-seekers/refugees and UNHCR's mandate.



## PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2001	Dec. 2001
Non-European Refugees and Asylum-Seekers	7,000	6,000
Bosnian and Kosovar Refugees	670	300
Turkish Returnees	2,250	2,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,920</b>	<b>8,850</b>

**TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 5,662,130**

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

As a consequence of the application by Turkey of a geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention (recognising only refugees from Europe), non-European refugees, particularly Iranians, are only granted temporary protection in Turkey. The Government continues to rely on UNHCR's assessment of the eligibility of non-European asylum-seekers, and nearly all these refugees need to be resettled through UNHCR. Lately, the number of Iranian refugees who were previously living in northern Iraq has increased. The large increase in applications for asylum by non-Europeans since April 1998 has put a strain on UNHCR's staff and financial resources, resulting in delays in adjudication.

In the context of Turkey's candidacy for membership of the European Union, UNHCR helps and encourages Turkey to uphold best international practice for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. In the past two years, UNHCR has taken on new responsibilities to assist the Government to train its personnel in refugee law and in the application of Turkey's 1994 Asylum Regulation. As a result, protection of refugees from non-European countries has improved. Closer co-operation with the Government in training activities also increased the Government's confidence in the fairness and impartiality of UNHCR's advice.

Refugees without private means are largely dependent on UNHCR's assistance during their stay in Turkey. This takes the

form of food, shelter, basic health care, schooling, as well as legal and social counselling. Recently, UNHCR has entered into new partnerships with national NGOs and local authorities to supplement its assistance.

The great majority of Kosovar refugees opted for voluntary repatriation in 1999. For the remaining European refugees (as well as Bosnians), UNHCR seeks to ensure due respect for the rights refugees enjoy under the terms of the 1951 Convention. The Office also provides limited material assistance to refugees, as well as counselling geared towards durable solutions, including local integration.

Support for UNHCR's mandate from the political leadership, the higher levels of administration and influential NGOs, as well as the public at large, is crucial for the adoption of policies which would enable the transfer to the Turkish authorities of responsibilities for protection and assistance.

## Constraints

Given the temporary nature of asylum for non-European refugees, their local integration in Turkey is not feasible. Almost all these refugees must be resettled in a third country.

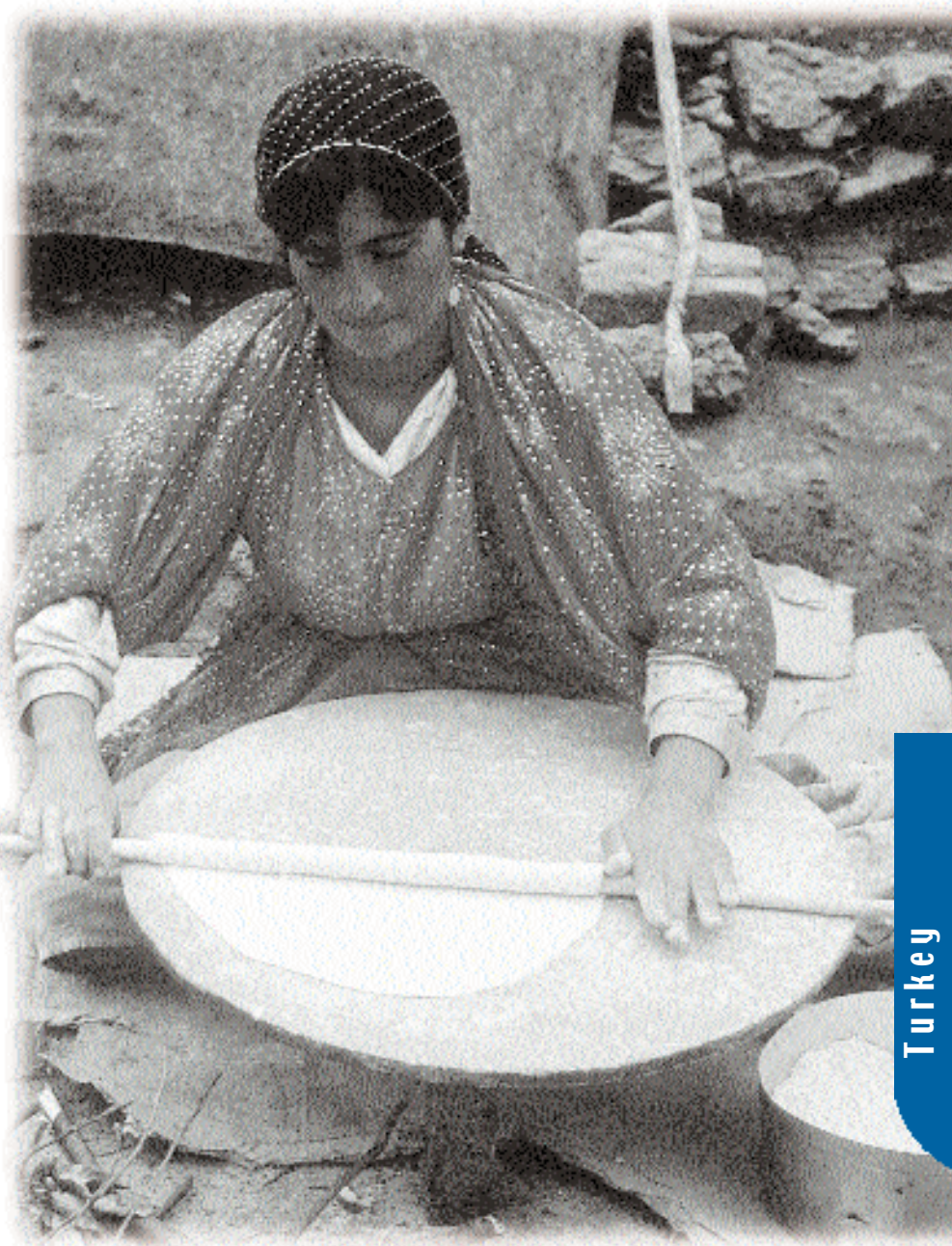
A failure to process asylum claims reasonably promptly will have a potentially negative impact on many aspects of the protection situation in Turkey. Some of the consequences are: individual security problems in border areas; frustration among asylum-seekers; growing assistance costs; and increased stress for staff assessing eligibility. UNHCR shoulders the burden of direct operational responsibility for refugee status determination and durable solutions. Refugees and asylum-seekers are scattered throughout the country; adding difficulty when addressing the social and material needs of this population.

## STRATEGY

### Protection and Solutions

Given Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention, UNHCR must continue to handle refugee status

determination. Despite a continuing high level of new applications, progress has been made in reducing the backlog, using streamlined procedures, more staff (funds permitting) and the transfer of more responsibility to the field office in Van. The aim is to reduce the average waiting period for the first interview to a period of six weeks in the border areas and eight weeks elsewhere. Similarly, the average waiting period from first interview to completion of the appeal stage should not exceed six months in the border region or nine months else-



Turkey

where. Achieving these targets will mainly depend on UNHCR's ability to obtain adequate funding for its refugee status determination activities.

As a candidate for membership of the European Union, Turkey is expected by the end of 2000 to have produced a National Plan of Action for the Adoption of the EU Acquis (NPAAA) on

asylum standards. UNHCR will seek close co-ordination and compatibility between its own programme and the NPAAA. In so doing, it will seek increased funding from the EU.

UNHCR will start to transfer an important part of the refugee status determination process to the Government. This may take several years and will not be accomplished fully while the geographical limitation is maintained and non-European refugees must be resettled.

UNHCR will seek to persuade and assist the Government to create a specialised office for refugee status determination. This would be in line with the observations of the European Union concerning Turkey's progress on its candidacy for entry into the Union. The creation of a specialised office would also be necessary in the context of an eventual transfer of responsibility for refugee status determination for non-Europeans from UNHCR to the State.

UNHCR's expanding programme of training and technical co-operation is also enhancing its dialogue with the Government on the general improvement of the Turkish asylum system to bring it in conformity with international standards. Training and public awareness programmes aimed at the Ministry of Interior, police, judges, universities, NGOs, bar associations and civil society, will be continued to improve the climate for asylum. Other improvements to the asylum system will include a database of refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey and the creation of a pool of interpreters to assist government staff.

UNHCR's strategy for advocacy has focused in the past on the Government; the key determinant of migration and asylum policy in Turkey. Nevertheless, an increased effort is now devoted to raising public awareness of UNHCR's mandate and the plight of refugees of all national and ethnic origins.

## Assistance

Most refugees and many asylum-seekers rely on UNHCR's limited resources for material support. In addition to a minimal monthly subsistence allowance, medical costs are covered, and, in a few cases, accommodation. Travel costs are paid for refugees invited to Ankara for refugee status determination and resettlement interviews. For refugee women and children, support includes education, social counselling, and specialised health and psychological care. Direct support for the remaining Bosnian and Kosovar refugees is being steadily reduced, as durable solutions are implemented. UNHCR strives to involve local authorities, health services and Turkish NGOs in addressing the social, psychological and material needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in Turkey. Given its own limited funding, UNHCR gives priority to the special needs of refugee women and children.

The voluntary return of Turkish refugees from northern Iraq is facilitated by UNHCR, in co-operation with the Government and UNHCR offices in Iraq. Reintegration is eased somewhat by a return package, including a basic two-month supply of food and domestic items. UNHCR staff conduct follow-up visits.

## Desired Impact

The immediate impact of UNHCR's current activities will be an efficient and fair asylum procedure in Turkey, making temporary asylum in Turkey a viable option while durable solutions are sought, such as resettlement to a third country. UNHCR's longer-term goal is the gradual assumption by the Turkish Government (and wider society) of UNHCR's current responsibilities, principally refugee status determination, training of personnel and social assistance to refugees. Public relations activities will help ensure that this process occurs in the context of receptive and well-informed public opinion.

# ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Management

UNHCR's main office is in Ankara, with a presence in Istanbul, Silopi and Van. A total of eight international, nine Junior Professional Officers and 27 national staff manage the country programme. Of the eight international staff, three are Regional Advisors (on gender, children and legal training) based in Ankara. In 2001, UNHCR will reinforce its capacity to undertake refugee status determination and resettlement processing through an implementing partner. Training and support for staff have been stepped up, with equal emphasis on maintaining the quality of the refugee status determination procedure and helping staff to cope with stress. A task force in the Ankara office will plan and monitor activities in support of UNHCR's policy priorities for women and children. Further measures will be taken to improve the security of premises, especially in Van.

### OFFICES

Ankara	Istanbul
Silopi	Van

## Co-ordination

UNHCR collaborates not only with seven implementing partners, but also with intergovernmental organisations including IOM (for resettlement and voluntary repatriation) and UNICEF (for refugee women and children). UNHCR involves non-implementing as well as implementing partners

in the monitoring and evaluation of projects through periodic meetings of Project Review Committees. UNHCR actively supports the UN Resident Co-ordinator system in Turkey in various ways, including by participating in the CCA/UNDAF process and convening the inter-agency caucus on gender.

### PARTNERS

#### NGOs

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

### BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	952,903
Community Services	226,450
Domestic Needs/Household Support	676,950
Education	35,000
Food	91,500
Health/Nutrition	240,000
Legal Assistance	1,462,300
Operational Support (to Agencies)	208,100
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	30,000
Transport/Logistics	51,900
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>3,975,103</b>
Programme Support	1,647,027
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,622,130</b>

