

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; advise the Government on the protection needs of individual asylum-seekers from non-European countries and ensure efficient and fair refugee status determination (RSD) for them under UNHCR's mandate; promote durable solutions for refugees

through local integration, resettlement to third countries, or voluntary repatriation – including to and from Iraq when circumstances permit; build partnerships with the Government and NGOs aimed at meeting asylum-seekers' needs for material, medical, social and psychological support, with a special emphasis on the needs of refugee women and children; and raise public awareness of the problems of refugees and build popular support for Turkey's efforts to protect and assist them.

Persons of concern

Population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Islamic Republic of Iran (refugees)	2,000	2,000	41	31
Islamic Republic of Iran (asylum-seekers)	1,700	1,700	38	24
Iraq (asylum-seekers)	1,400	1,400	48	37
Bosnia and Herzegovina (refugees)	500	150	-	-
Various countries (refugees)	500	350	-	-
Various countries (asylum-seekers)	400	400	-	-
Afghanistan (asylum-seekers)	300	300	43	55
Somalia (asylum-seekers)	200	200	42	22

Impact

- The Government's draft national action plan for the adoption of the EU *acquis* in the field of migration and asylum is protection-oriented and incorporates many of the international standards and good practices long advocated by UNHCR.
- UNHCR provided refugee protection training to some 880 Turkish officials in 26 seminars and workshops, focusing in particular on the core team of officials at the Ministry of the Interior who are planning Turkey's new asylum system.
- During 2004, UNHCR issued more than 1,700 decisions at the first instance, appeal and re-opening stages of the mandate RSD procedure, recognizing 1,690 persons as refugees. The wait for first instance decisions increased slightly, and the backlog of pending applications for refugee status rose by 12.5 per cent.
- A total of almost 2,300 refugees left Turkey for resettlement in third countries. The continuing suspension of RSD for Iraqis reduced the number of refugees needing resettlement, making it impossible to meet the target of 3,000 departures for 2004.
- UNHCR provided financial assistance, medical care, education, emergency accommodation, local travel and, along with its partners, social and psychological counselling services to an average of 2,600 refugees and asylum-seekers per month.
- UNHCR played a catalytic role in helping civil society partners to develop project proposals for submission to donors. Two projects approved in 2004 have expanded legal and counselling services for refugees and asylum-seekers in Van.
- UNHCR's Gender and Children Team in Turkey developed new indicators of progress in gender and age mainstreaming and established a new framework for cooperation with the Government on the reception of minors.

Working environment

The context

Turkey's campaign to join the EU has had a transforming effect on the working environment for UNHCR in 2004. The accession process has become the driving force behind Government efforts to reform the national asylum system, with EU minimum standards largely setting the benchmarks and substantive agenda. Turkey has agreed that it will lift the "geographic limitation" – which has for several decades restricted its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention to persons uprooted by events in Europe during the accession process – as soon as the necessary legislation and institutional structures are in place and provided that its EU partners commit to burden-sharing arrangements.

Turkey intensified its planning for the new national asylum system during 2004. An EU-funded "twinning" project on migration and asylum got underway in March, with support from the Governments of Denmark and the United Kingdom. By the year's end, this project had almost achieved the completion of a comprehensive national action plan for meeting the requirements for EU membership in the fields of migration and asylum. In December 2004, Turkey's EU candidacy entered a new phase when the European Council of Ministers decided that formal accession talks would begin in October 2005.

Constraints

Conflict and instability in Iraq hindered efforts to achieve solutions for the Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey, as well as for Iranian refugees who entered Turkey comparatively recently, having previously found protection in Iraq. The Turkish authorities consider that the Iranians should return to Iraq

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual and Supplementary programme budgets					
	Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	6,732,210	576,713	6,153,773	6,730,486	6,730,486
SB³	1,776,200	0	607,415	607,415	607,416
Total	8,508,410	576,713	6,761,188	7,337,901	7,337,902

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

³ The supplementary programme figures apply to the Supplementary Appeal for the Iraq Operation.

Note: The supplementary programme budget does not include a 7 per cent charge (support costs) that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



Turkey: Voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees from Iraq.
UNCHR/F. Ewe Lee Teoh

when conditions permit. In March 2004, the Government offered these Iranian refugees temporary residence permits, but it has not permitted them to be resettled. With safe return to Iraq impossible and few prospects for resettlement, the some 1,500 Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers remain stranded, as are the almost 1,200 Iranian refugees who entered Turkey from Iraq.

Instability and insecurity in Iraq also blocked progress on voluntary repatriation for some 13,000 Turkish refugees. In January 2004, UNHCR reached agreement in principle with the Turkish Government and Iraqi authorities on the text of a tripartite agreement on voluntary repatriation, but the agreement remained unsigned at the end of the year. Security conditions in Iraq also prevented UNHCR from initiating a dialogue with the refugees on repatriation or working on related confidence-building activities.

Funding

The Annual Programme budget for UNHCR's operations in Turkey covers life-sustaining assistance and essential services for refugees and asylum-seekers and staffing for the large, labour-intensive mandate RSD and resettlement operations. UNHCR also received generous additional contributions from the European Commission and key government donors for the intensive programme of training and other asylum system development activities in 2004.

In Turkey, UNHCR normally assists non-European refugees and asylum-seekers for an established period while they await resettlement. The assistance budget was strained in 2004 by the needs of the Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers and the Iranian refugees who entered Turkey from Iraq. They can discern no solution at present and are growing increasingly dependent on aid. The budgetary shortfall was further aggravated by a large increase in the number of destitute asylum-seekers from African countries, including many separated children needing emergency accommodation.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

In 2004, UNHCR strengthened the newly renamed Asylum Transition Planning Unit with additional experienced staff and developed a comprehensive strategic framework for supporting asylum system development in Turkey. An important element of the new strategy is experiential learning through staff exchanges, traineeships and joint RSD with Turkish officials, the ultimate goal being the handover of responsibility for operational protection activities, including RSD, to Government institutions. In November 2004, a Turkish police official began the first three-month traineeship in country-of-origin information research and analysis at UNHCR's Ankara office.

During the transition process, UNHCR will continue to carry out mandate RSD for non-European asylum-seekers, with the dual purpose of advising the Government on their eligibility for temporary asylum and identifying refugees needing resettlement. In 2004, UNHCR received over 2,200 new applications for refugee status (more than 3,900 persons), roughly as many as the previous year. Iraqi arrivals rose almost three-fold to 964 persons, most of them Assyrian and Chaldean Christians. Resettlement remained the only viable durable solution for most non-European refugees in Turkey, with 2,292 persons departing in 2004. Progress on voluntary repatriation was very limited in 2004, with only a few Iraqis returning home spontaneously and 15 Turkish refugees repatriating with UNHCR's assistance.

UNHCR strengthened its capacity for prevention and response to SGBV during the year. Eight UNHCR staff members with different language skills received training as SGBV resource persons, and UNHCR held four workshops for implementing partners to disseminate the SGBV guidelines and develop an effective referral network.

Activities and assistance

Community services: UNHCR and its implementing partners provided social and psychological counselling services in Ankara and Istanbul to more than 1,100 persons, on average, each month. UNHCR also fielded 23 missions to provide counselling on legal and social issues in the provincial towns where refugees and asylum-seekers live. The Inter-Unit Committee for Special Cases (IUCSC) ensured that 64 separated children were cared for, with solutions identified on the basis of a best interests of the child determination (BID) by a child welfare professional.

Domestic needs/Household support: An average of 660 refugees received regular monthly financial assistance from UNHCR during 2004. In addition, the 1,170 Iranian refugees (who had been living in Iraq) received five assistance payments during the year.

Education: UNHCR helped over 560 refugee and asylum-seeker children attending Turkish primary schools with grants for uniforms, books and supplies. UNHCR also distributed more than 480 home education kits. With support from UNHCR, a Turkish foundation offered vocational and recreational programmes for children in Van.

Food: On average, UNHCR provided food assistance to 10 vulnerable refugees per month. Food packages were distributed to 15 Turkish refugees returning from Iraq.

Health/Nutrition: A monthly average of 1,288 refugees and asylum-seekers received health care and medicines through clinics, hospitals and pharmacies working under contract with UNHCR. Pregnant and lactating women were offered advice on prenatal and mother-child health care, and men and women received family planning counselling. An average of 439 women and adolescent girls obtained sanitary materials each month on a 20 per cent co-payment basis.

Legal assistance: In addition to UNHCR's regular programme of asylum capacity-building activities, the Government implemented an ambitious programme of training workshops and planning seminars, with support from the European Commission and European governments. The entry of new partners for asylum system development has allowed UNHCR to focus upon areas where its expertise will have the greatest impact. UNHCR staff members from the Turkey operation, Headquarters

and the Brussels and Budapest offices contributed to 26 training events attended by 880 officials.

UNHCR offered legal counselling to refugees and asylum-seekers directly and through legal assistance agreements with lawyers in Istanbul and the eastern border towns of Agri and Hakkari. UNHCR also held training seminars for lawyers in Ankara, Edirne and Istanbul, in cooperation with the local bar association, and organised a one-day "Dialogue on Protection at the Turkish-Bulgarian Border" for government officials and civil society partners from both countries.

UNHCR worked intensively to engage Turkish civil society in advocating and service provision for refugees. A three-day workshop in May 2004 and follow-up consultations held in December drew the participation of 45 national NGOs, foundations, universities and professional associations.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR helped to cover the staffing, communication and other administrative costs of its implementing partners for social and psychological counselling and public awareness activities. Two Turkish United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) also supported resettlement and voluntary repatriation activities.

Shelter/Other infrastructure: During 2004, over 640 persons received emergency accommodation assistance for varying periods, including separated children, single parent families, survivors of domestic violence and SGBV and other persons in a socially, psychologically or medically vulnerable situation.

Transport/Logistics: UNHCR facilitated local travel for an average of 85 refugees and asylum-seekers every month, enabling them to attend RSD interviews or complete resettlement processing in Ankara. UNHCR also covered the transportation costs of children attending vocational and recreational programmes in Van, as well as the cost of transporting the belongings of 15 Turkish returnees who arrived in January 2004.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR managed the Turkey country programme from a main office in Ankara, and through field presences in Istanbul, Silopi and Van, with 74 staff

members, comprising nine international officers including two JPOs, 63 national staff and two UNVs.

The Inspector General's Office (IGO) conducted an operations review and inspection of selected aspects of the Turkey operation in December 2003, issuing a report in February 2004. The IGO validated UNHCR's strategic vision for the development of Turkey's national asylum system, but called for a more decisive realignment of the operation and resources in support of this objective, in order to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the EU accession process.

Working with others

UNHCR worked closely with Turkish Government ministries and agencies on operational protection matters and strengthening the national asylum system. UNHCR also collaborated with an international NGO, a Turkish foundation and a university to provide social and psychological counselling services in Ankara and Istanbul, as well as with a national NGO on public awareness activities. The Office continued to cooperate closely with IOM on the departure of refugees for resettlement, family reunification and voluntary repatriation. UNHCR participated actively in UN Country Team security management activities and in thematic working groups on HIV/AIDS and gender equality, as well as UN inter-agency collaborative efforts to study and address the problem of internal displacement in Turkey.

Overall assessment

During 2004, UNHCR began to see significant returns from its investment made in refugee protection training and capacity-building over the years. The Government's draft national action plan for migration and asylum is protection-oriented and reflects many of the international standards and good practices that UNHCR has advocated, even exceeding EU minimum standards in certain respects.

UNHCR's exit strategy in Turkey is the establishment of a well-functioning national asylum system that conforms to international and EU standards. The Office moved decisively this year to strengthen its capacity to provide expert advice and technical support for asylum system development within a new strategic framework. While working toward this goal, however, UNHCR must maintain the integrity, quality and efficiency of the ongoing protection, solutions and assistance programmes. These considerations take on added

importance, as the Government looks increasingly to UNHCR as a model and source of good practice in RSD.

It will, however, be a considerable challenge to pursue asylum system development and maintain current operations with the same level of resources as in 2004. For example, strengthening the Asylum Transition Planning Unit with experienced staff redeployed from the Mandate RSD operation has translated directly into an increased backlog of pending asylum applications and longer waiting periods for asylum-seekers. UNHCR in Turkey must therefore continue to mobilize additional resources to meet the increasing demand for expert advice and support for asylum capacity-building, while also providing protection, solutions and essential assistance for mandate refugees. These dual demands will continue until the Government has established the legislative framework and infrastructure and allocated the necessary resources to take on these new and broader responsibilities, in cooperation with Turkish civil society.

Offices

Ankara

Istanbul
Silopi
Van

Partners

Government agencies

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of the Interior
 General Directorate of Security
 Gendarme General Command
Ministry of Justice
Social Services and Child Protection Institution (SHCEK)

NGOs

Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants
Caritas
Human Resources Development Foundation
International Catholic Migration Commission
Istanbul Inter-Parish Migration Programme

Others

Bar Associations of Turkey
Hacettepe University School of Social Work
IOM
Turkish Red Crescent Society
United Nations Country Team

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,900,080	417,345	2,317,425	0
Community services	185,847	0	185,847	19,638
Domestic needs / household support	764,342	135,580	899,922	8,649
Education	45,456	144	45,600	0
Food	3,417	129	3,546	0
Health and nutrition	297,908	3,752	301,661	0
Legal assistance	296,346	10,219	306,565	0
Operational support (to agencies)	56,537	1,280	57,817	2,520
Shelter and infrastructure	131,263	0	131,263	0
Transport and logistics	29,616	38,967	68,583	0
Instalments with implementing partners	4,463	0	4,463	(30,808)
Sub-total operational activities	3,715,276	607,416	4,322,692	0
Programme support	3,015,210	0	3,015,210	0
Total disbursements	6,730,486	607,416	7,337,902	0
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	246,797	0	246,797	
Reporting received	(242,334)	0	(242,334)	
Balance	4,463	0	4,463	
Prior years' report				
Instalments with implementing partners				
Outstanding 1 January				38,560
Reporting received				(30,808)
Refunded to UNHCR				(5,983)
Currency adjustment				(1,769)
Balance				0
Unliquidated obligations				
Outstanding 1 January				39,331
Disbursements				(17,813)
Cancellations				(21,518)
Outstanding 31 December				0