

# Turkey

## Main Objectives

- Advise the Government of Turkey on the eligibility of asylum-seekers from non-European countries and ensure rapid and reliable determination of refugees' status.
- Assist the Government in strengthening and developing its asylum system in conformity with international standards.
- Identify and promote durable solutions for refugees through resettlement, voluntary repatriation and local integration.
- Co-operate with the Government and NGOs to ensure basic assistance and services to refugees during their stay in Turkey.
- Raise public awareness of asylum-seekers/refugees and UNHCR's mandate.



## PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2002	Dec. 2002
Non-European Refugees and Asylum-seekers	6,000	6,412
Bosnian and Kosovar Refugees	300	920
Turkish Returnees <sup>1</sup>	2,250	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,550</b>	<b>7,632</b>

<sup>1</sup>Since 1996, 2,168 persons have returned voluntarily with UNHCR's assistance.

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

Turkey maintains a geographical reservation (limitation) to the 1951 Convention (and its 1967 Protocol), such that it applies only to persons who became refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe. As a consequence, non-European refugees, particularly Iranians and Iraqis, are only granted temporary protection. However, in the context of its candidacy for EU membership, the Government of Turkey issued in March 2001 a National Plan of Action for the Adoption of the European Union Acquis (NPAAA). This Plan includes a qualified commitment to the lifting of the geographical limitation. The document also announces the Government's intention to review its legislation and regulations on asylum, and calls for intensive training of officials in refugee protection, improvement of support arrangements for refugees, and close collaboration with UNHCR and relevant NGOs.

## TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 5,697,397

UNHCR enjoys close and regular consultation with the Government of Turkey on the functioning of the asylum system, including the eligibility of individual asylum-seekers and how to ensure their protection. In 2000 UNHCR and the Government signed a three-year framework agreement on training and technical cooperation in the field of asylum.

Refugees who fail to register with the Turkish authorities within ten days of arrival or who do not present an identity document ('extra-procedural' cases) are unable to enter the Turkish asylum system. In 2000, 11 per cent of asylum-seekers who approached UNHCR in Turkey were unable to register. Recently, however, the Government has demonstrated some flexibility and provided exit permission for several extra-procedural cases accepted for resettlement.

## Constraints

As a consequence of the temporary nature of the asylum available to non-European refugees, their local integration in Turkey is not feasible. Almost all these refugees must be resettled in a third country. During their stay in Turkey, refugees are largely dependent on UNHCR's assistance and services (often supplemented by local authorities according to their means). This takes the form of food, shelter, basic health care, schooling, as well as social and legal counselling.



Kosovar refugees working at work place run by UNHCR at the Kırklareli refugee camp, Western Turkey. UNHCR/F. Ozdogru.

The difficulty of processing asylum claims within a reasonably brief period, given the procedural rules, has an impact on many aspects of the protection situation in Turkey. It also exacerbates economic and social problems, particularly in Van and the other border cities, which together house one third of the refugee population.

Voluntarily repatriation of Turkish refugees from northern Iraq remains limited. Some 2,200 persons have returned with the help of

UNHCR since 1996. If the number of returnees is to increase significantly, there must be greater confidence amongst the refugees, who will need to see: safeguards and an amnesty for returnees, a comprehensive economic and social integration package, as well as simplified and coordinated procedures endorsed by the Turkish and Iraqi authorities.

## STRATEGY

### Protection and Solutions

UNHCR's long-term strategy is to support the Government's efforts to develop its asylum institutions and capacities in accordance with international standards. This objective, which requires time and planning, can be greatly advanced by training activities held for national as well as local officials, including key units within the police, border guards and judiciary. UNHCR's cooperation with the Government on training has already had a sizeable impact on access to the asylum system: incidents of *refoulement* have been in steady decline from year to year and local officials are generally knowledgeable about national asylum policy and their own responsibility for its implementation.

UNHCR continues to aim at reducing waiting periods for the assessment of asylum claims, without bypassing procedural safeguards. The average waiting period from registration to a

first decision is currently six months and, for cases that go to appeal, an additional average wait of nine months. For 2002, the aim is to shorten the average period for a first-instance decision to four months, with an average of another four months for an appeal decision. A unit dedicated to clear cases which have been pending for a long time will be set up and the country of origin research team will be reinforced, with special funds expected from one donor.

As a consequence of Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention, UNHCR is responsible for refugee status determination and for identifying durable solutions for refugees from outside Europe. UNHCR's aim is to strengthen the Government's role in the refugee status determination process in order to gradually hand over its activities in this field. The geographical limitation is currently still an obstacle to these efforts. One of UNHCR's long-term objectives is to assist Turkey to set up a specialised office for refugee status determination. UNHCR will seek close co-ordination and compatibility between its programme for preserving international standards on asylum and protection and the NPAAA.

Turkey's conditional commitment to lifting the geographical reservation to the 1951 Convention, as well as its decision to review its asylum legislation gave rise to increased public interest in refugee issues. To foster a healthy consensus on asylum issues, UNHCR seeks to increase its co-operation with the national media, political parties, influential NGOs and civil society. UNHCR also works at the local level to improve community relations in towns with large numbers of refugees or mixed flows of migrants and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR will endeavour to facilitate the repatriation of Turkish returnees from Iraq, ensuring that their return is both voluntary and safe, prior to monitoring their reintegration in Turkey. This will involve discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the need for tighter central co-ordination of return procedures and rules, support while returns are transiting, and field visits and systematic monitoring of return areas.

UNHCR will continue to promote its policy priorities on refugee women and children, and refugees with special needs, including older refugees. Gender-sensitivity and other policy concerns will be incorporated into the training programmes and progress in the implementation of the policy guidelines will be closely monitored.

### Assistance

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers live in conditions of impoverishment worsened by the financial crisis in Turkey in early 2001. Upon registration, most of the non-European refugees, mainly Iranians and Iraqis, have been assigned by the Government to one of 25 provincial cities. After a case-by-case assessment, UNHCR provides assistance including food, medical care, primary education and, in a few cases, accommoda-

tion. As the Government or provincial authorities cover most of the needs of the European refugees (mainly Bosnians and Kosovars), UNHCR's assistance is limited to the most vulnerable cases, fewer than 100 cases in 2001. It includes food, medical care, community development activities, social counselling, basic domestic needs and educational materials.



Time for relaxation for young Kosovar refugees in front of UNHCR registration office, at Kirklareli camp, Western Turkey. UNHCR/F. Ozdogru.

UNHCR will collaborate with local authorities, particularly the health services and child-protection units, to increase their involvement in addressing the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR will also continue its efforts to persuade the Government to exempt refugees from residence permit fees and to allow asylum-seekers free access to State medical care.

### Desired Impact

UNHCR's longer term goals remain to support Turkey's efforts to strengthen its current asylum system, to help ensure continued international burden sharing and to allow for an eventual reduction of UNHCR's role in refugee status determination.

UNHCR will continue to provide basic support to non-European refugees, offering almost all of them resettlement, as this is the only durable solution available to them due to Turkey's maintenance of the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention. Durable solutions will also be pursued for Bosnian and Kosovar refugees through intensive counselling and the strengthening of partnerships.

UNHCR seeks to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and integration of Turkish returnees from Iraq.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management Structure

UNHCR's main office is in Ankara, with a presence in Istanbul, Silopi and Van. A total of nine international, nine JPOs and 60 national staff manage the country programme. Of the nine international staff, three are Regional Advisors (on gender, children and legal training) based in Ankara.

In 2002, UNHCR will continue to take the leading operational role in refugee status determination and its staff will participate in activities in the field of legal assistance, training and other forms of co-operation with the Government. There will be increased provision of training and technical co-operation aimed at strengthening Turkey's asylum system in conformity with international standards. This will occur with the collabo-

ration of Turkish academics and Government experts as well as experts from various foreign countries.

### Co-ordination

UNHCR collaborates with intergovernmental organisations including IOM (for resettlement and voluntary repatriation) and UNICEF (for refugee women and children). In partnership with seven NGOs, UNHCR provides social counselling and referral services, and organises programmes in reproductive health care and basic humanitarian assistance. UNHCR also helps promote an enabling environment for NGOs in this field. Close co-operation will continue with the national and local authorities in training and the assessment of asylum claims and other matters. UNHCR involves non-implementing as well as implementing partners in the monitoring and evaluation of projects through periodic meetings of Project Review Committees. Co-ordination mechanisms with relevant UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP) were established to achieve better co-operation on gender-related activities, education and psychosocial intervention.

#### OFFICES

Ankara

Istanbul

Silopi

Van

#### PARTNERS

##### NGOs

Association for Solidarity with Asylum-seekers and Migrants

Caritas

Human Resource Development Foundation

International Catholic Migration Commission

Inter-Parish Migration Programme

Migrants and Anatolian Development Foundation

Turkish Red Crescent Society

#### BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,424,484
Community Services	117,720
Domestic Needs	801,900
Education	20,000
Food	12,180
Health	264,000
Legal Assistance	159,600
Operational Support (to Agencies)	56,700
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	19,800
Transport/Logistics	40,900
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>2,917,284</b>
Programme Support	2,780,113
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,697,397</b>