

# Turkey

## AT A GLANCE

### Main Objectives and Activities

Strengthen UNHCR's partnership with Turkey for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers; ensure the provision of a speedy, reliable and fair refugee status determination procedure for non-European asylum-seekers; identify durable solutions for refugees through resettlement, voluntary repatriation and local integration; reinforce the protection system in Turkey through capacity-building efforts, such as training for government officials and the judiciary; 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 and refugee issues.

### Impact

- Training in refugee law was given to about 150 officials at central and provincial levels, including local magistrates and border guards. As a result, implementation of the national asylum system improved and incidents of *refoulement* decreased.
- A Co-operation Framework was concluded between UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior to strengthen the national asylum system through training and technical collaboration over a three-year period (2001-2003).
- Refugee status determination proceedings were initiated by UNHCR for 3,024 new cases (representing 5,777 persons) in 2000. The national backlog of pending cases was stabilised and, in the border areas, it decreased by 16 per cent compared to 1999.
- Increased and accelerated resettlement of refugees was achieved, with a positive impact on the well-being of refugees.



| Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population    | Persons of Concern |                                     |                 |                   |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|   | Total in Country   | Of whom UNHCR assisted <sup>1</sup> | Per cent Female | Per cent under 18 |
| Islamic Republic of Iran (Asylum-seekers) | 3,100              | 3,100                               | -               | -                 |
| Iraq (Asylum-seekers)                     | 1,900              | 1,900                               | -               | -                 |
| Islamic Republic of Iran (Refugees)       | 1,400              | 1,400                               | 44              | 32                |
| Iraq (Refugees)                           | 640                | 640                                 | 49              | 49                |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina (Refugees)         | 630                | 560                                 | -               | -                 |

<sup>1</sup>In addition, UNHCR assisted 264 Turkish returnees in 2000.

| Income and Expenditure (USD) |  |                                    |                       |                   |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Annual Programme Budget      |  |                                    |                       |                   |
| Revised Budget               | Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup> | Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup> | Total Funds Available | Total Expenditure |
| 5,270,405                    | 700,075                                | 4,526,773                          | 5,226,848             | 5,176,644         |

<sup>1</sup>Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

- Throughout the year, an average of more than 3,500 refugees and asylum-seekers received food, healthcare, education, social counselling and assistance for local travel.
- As a result of UNHCR's efforts to sensitise local authorities and parents, 300 refugee children attended local schools in Turkey.
- New procedures to deal with urgent social problems among refugees and asylum-seekers significantly improved the speed and extent of UNHCR's assistance to vulnerable individuals.

- As a result of UNHCR's advocacy and public awareness activities, NGOs, human rights groups, universities and individual researchers showed a greater interest in asylum and refugee issues.
- 264 Turkish refugees returned from northern Iraq with UNHCR's assistance, and 330 Bosnian and Kosovar refugees repatriated voluntarily.

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### The Context

Following the formalisation of Turkey's candidacy for European Union membership in late 1999, the EU called on Turkey to remove, in the medium term, its geographic limitation to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol (limiting application to persons who became refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe). Although Turkey did not contest this request, it is understood that it will not act on it for some time. In the meantime, however, Turkey wishes to expand its expertise and capacities in the field of asylum.

Despite the geographical limitation, non-Europeans who meet the refugee definition are granted temporary protection by Turkey, pending resettlement to third countries through UNHCR. Access to the asylum system is however limited, for all nationalities, by procedural rules, notably the requirement to make an asylum claim within ten days of entering Turkey, and to provide some form of official identification within 15 days. In 2000, 11 per cent of asylum-seekers who approached UNHCR were unable to register in the Government procedure because of these rules.

Largely due to voluntary repatriation, the number of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees assisted by UNHCR decreased to about 600 persons during the year. The Government covered most of the needs of the refugees sheltered in a centre in Kırklareli province. UNHCR provided assistance to the refugees in Istanbul, which included food and non-food items, health care, legal and social counselling, educational materials and community development activities. A new assistance policy for European refugees in Turkey was formulated for 2001: while counselling services will be strengthened, material assistance will be limited to the most vulnerable.

In 2000, 264 Turks repatriated voluntarily from northern Iraq with UNHCR's assistance, bringing the total number of assisted returnees since 1996 to some 2,170.

### Constraints

Staffing for refugee status determination could not be maintained at the desired levels, due to funding problems and the non-filling of Junior Professional Officer (JPO) posts. As a result, the national backlog of pending cases could only be stabilised, not significantly reduced.

### Funding

The funding shortfall, which was compounded by an unforeseen increase in the number of refugees eligible for assistance, severely curtailed most operations in the second half of the year. Assistance was reduced for in-country travel, social counselling services, reproductive health care, training, capacity-building and public awareness activities; in some cases, assistance was cancelled altogether. Apprised of this situation, some embassies in Ankara agreed to co-fund in-country travel. Funds were also obtained locally for research into the situation of refugee women, as well as social counselling for refugees in the border city Van.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

### Protection and Solutions

In 2000, UNHCR remained closely involved with the Government's asylum procedure, through training programmes and through regular contacts with the national and provincial authorities. Asylum-seekers meeting the admissibility requirements for the national procedure (a third of whom had entered the country without valid travel documents), enjoyed effective protection in Turkey, pending status determination and a durable solution. UNHCR intensified its dialogue with the Government on the situation of "extra-procedural" cases (applicants who failed to meet procedural requirements for admission to the national asylum procedure). The authorities were generally responsive to UNHCR's efforts to avoid deportation of such persons.

During the year, UNHCR continued to advise the Government on the eligibility of non-Europeans for temporary protection in Turkey and, in order to do so,

carried out individual assessments of all applicants. UNHCR also reviewed its own refugee status determination procedures. The main changes were the suspension of the automatic right to an appeal interview for cases rejected on credibility grounds; the provision in writing of reasons for rejection; and observation of interviews by refugees' representatives. Progress was made in the mainstreaming of gender sensitivity, so that all eligibility officers became qualified to assess gender-related persecution.

UNHCR and the Government continued to work together on the training of Turkish officials in refugee protection and the application of Turkey's domestic asylum rules. Training programmes were extended to all relevant services, including police officers, judges and public prosecutors working in the border towns. All training programmes covered the special needs of women, children and other vulnerable groups. UNHCR staff carrying out field visits reported increased understanding of and sensitivity to refugees' social problems among local officials who had attended the training programmes. At the end of the year, UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior agreed on a Co-

operation Framework to guide the implementation of further training and capacity-building activities during the period 2001-2003.

Increased and accelerated resettlement of non-European refugees was achieved following the streamlining of internal procedures. The implementation of a comprehensive system for following up on family reunification and the introduction of Canada's Urgent Protection Pilot Project, led to solutions for some problematic cases and a decrease in the number of long-stayers. In 2000, a total of 2,334 refugees were resettled, exceeding the targets set at the beginning of the year. The average wait from recognition to departure declined to eight months, also exceeding targets.

Bosnian and Kosovar refugees continued to repatriate voluntarily (330 returned in 2000). For those remaining in Turkey, a survey was conducted among those housed at a Government guesthouse in Kırklareli province to determine their wishes and identify opportunities for a durable solution: either return or local integration. Uncertainties about procedures affected the voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees from northern Iraq. Nevertheless, some 264 persons



returned in 2000 and UNHCR continued to monitor their return.

## Activities and Assistance

**Community Services:** About 1,900 refugees and asylum-seekers received social and legal counselling throughout Turkey from UNHCR and NGO partners. Counselling services were introduced for the first time in Istanbul and in the border areas (Agri, Hakkari and Van), through implementing partners. Improved co-ordination within UNHCR and between the Office and its Turkish partners (the creation of an Inter-Unit Committee for Special Cases and a Gender and Children Team) resulted in a more comprehensive response to especially vulnerable individuals and to problems such as domestic and gender-based violence. A research project into the problems of refugee women and children in the border areas was started with one of UNHCR's implementing partners. Refugee children were included in UNICEF's immunisation programme in Agri, Hakkari and Van.

**Domestic Needs/Household Support:** The number of people receiving material assistance rose by more than 40 per cent during the first half of 2000 to 1,550 persons per month, due to the arrival of new asylum-seekers and a backlog of cases pending at the border. As a result of the application of stricter criteria and financial constraints, the number fell to 1,000 persons during the second half of the year. Some 30-40 persons per month, required to come to Ankara for eligibility and resettlement interviews, received local travel assistance. Emergency packages, consisting of mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets and food rations, were distributed to Turkish returnees.

**Education:** Turkish regulations allow refugee children and asylum-seeking children with valid residence permits to attend national primary schools. In 1999, school attendance was very low, on account of parents' misgivings and the lack of awareness of the rights of these children on the part of some local authorities. In 2000, about 15 per cent of the children of primary school age were encouraged, through sensitisation of their parents and the local authorities, as well as assistance for uniforms and materials, to attend local schools. Although this was an improvement on the previous year, it was well short of the 50 per cent enrolment target. In addition, some 500 refugee children received home education kits.

**Food:** The number of Bosnian refugees receiving food assistance fell from 340 to 236. At the entry point of

Silopi, a total of 264 Turkish returnees were given hot meals and two-month family food packages.

**Health/Nutrition:** A total of 1,720 persons received medical care through the clinics in Ankara contracted by UNHCR to treat refugees, and 2,460 persons were treated at state hospitals in border and satellite cities. About 6,700 people were given medicines. Sanitary items were distributed to roughly 600-650 refugee women each month.

**Legal Assistance:** During the year, 3,024 new applicants for asylum were recorded. The new applicants and their dependants accounted for 5,777 persons, of whom 68 per cent were Iranian, 29 per cent Iraqi and three per cent other nationalities. At the end of 2000, there was a backlog of 2,509 applications pending (including cases awaiting a decision in the first instance, appeals, and applications to re-open cases). This sizeable backlog of 5,209 persons was only six per cent shorter than at the end of 1999. UNHCR continued to co-operate with the Government on the training of officials in refugee law. Officials of the Gendarmerie and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Interior, and Justice participated in the first inter-ministerial study tour on asylum and refugee issues, which took place in the Netherlands in June 2000. A second collection of Turkish jurisprudence on asylum, migration and refugee issues was published and translated into English. To raise public awareness, UNHCR organised conferences, photo exhibitions and media events, with a special emphasis on its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and asylum issues related to Turkey's accession to the European Union.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** UNHCR covered some support costs (staff, communication and office supplies) for three implementing partners, which provided social counselling services for refugees and asylum-seekers in Istanbul and in Van, and for Bosnian and Kosovar refugees in Kirklareli camp.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** UNHCR covered the costs of short-term stays in hotels and rental accommodation for 18 female heads of household and 17 victims of domestic violence. The number of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees accommodated in the Kirklareli centre, where housing was in earlier years partly covered by the Government and partly by UNHCR, decreased from 250 persons in January to 116 persons in December 2000.

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR funded transport facilities needed for the delivery of social and legal counselling services; this included the maintenance and repair of vehicles, fuel and insurance.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

UNHCR maintained its main office in Ankara, supported by three offices in Istanbul, Silopi and Van. These offices were administered by a total of 35 staff (four internationals, three JPOs and 28 nationals). In addition, three Regional Advisors (for refugee women, refugee children and legal training) were based in Ankara. Thirty-four project staff were employed through a partner to assist UNHCR with refugee status determination and resettlement activities in Ankara and Van. UNHCR also maintained a presence in the border city of Agri, through a lawyer retained under contract. UNHCR continued to maintain links with the office in Baghdad with regard to the voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees, as well as with the office in Brussels with respect to EU developments and fund raising possibilities.

### Working with Others

In 2000, UNHCR continued to benefit from excellent co-operation and support by the Government, particularly the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior. Co-operation with provincial and sub-provincial authorities in all refugee-affected areas continued to run smoothly. The Office worked with three international and three national NGOs, as well as the Turkish Red Crescent Society, providing social counselling and health care services for refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR also worked closely with IOM on organised departures for resettlement to third countries, family reunification and voluntary repatriation of refugees, and with UNICEF on issues concerning refugee children, such as expanding the national immunisation programme to include refugee children. The Office continued to participate in regular UN Country Team meetings to address common as well as agency-specific issues.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

To a large extent, UNHCR achieved its objectives in Turkey, exceeding them in some respects, while in others needing to do better in 2001, especially with regard to reducing the backlog of pending refugee assessments.

The approval of the three-year Co-operation Framework opened the way for more structured co-operation with the Government to improve the protection of refugees in Turkey in the medium term and to effect a phased handover of some of UNHCR's operational responsibilities. The training programmes and accompa-

nying study tours had a very positive impact and were favourably received by the participants. They were part of a broader co-operation between UNHCR and the authorities which yielded positive results in terms of improved access to the asylum system, a decrease in *refoulement* incidents and heightened interest by the Government in the long-term strengthening of its asylum procedure. The inclusion of gender-related policies in the training programmes increased the sensitivity of many local authorities to the social problems of refugees and, consequently, improved the physical and social security of groups at risk.

UNHCR is clearly not equipped to deal with the whole gamut of social problems experienced by refugees and asylum-seekers. The new partnerships being established aim to increase the involvement of both Turkish NGOs and local government services as a strategy for long-term improvement and sustainability. The new co-ordination and monitoring structures introduced by UNHCR in 2000 resulted in a significant improvement of services to vulnerable individuals and a greater understanding of gender and children issues among UNHCR staff.

In Turkey, UNHCR was able to establish itself as a reliable source of information, not only for the local media, but also for the international media. Indeed, asylum and refugee issues received broad media coverage in 2000. NGOs, human rights groups, universities and individual researchers showed a growing interest in these issues.

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### Offices

#### Ankara

Istanbul  
Silopi  
Van

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### Partners

#### Government Agencies

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Interior  
State Ministry

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#### NGOs

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

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#### Other

ARGEN (construction society)  
International Organisation for Migration  
Turkish Red Crescent Society  
United Nations Children's Fund  
United Nations Population Fund

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| Financial Report (USD)                      |                         |                |                       |       |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Expenditure Breakdown                       | Current Year's Projects |                | Prior Years' Projects |       |
|   |                         | notes          |                       | notes |
| Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination    | 969,222                 |                | 0                     |       |
| Community Services                          | 59,362                  |                | 36,114                |       |
| Domestic Needs / Household Support          | 887,936                 |                | 25,590                |       |
| Education                                   | 8,514                   |                | 355                   |       |
| Food  | 22,779                  |                | 1,947                 |       |
| Health / Nutrition                          | 330,314                 |                | 42                    |       |
| Legal Assistance                            | 914,931                 |                | 59,117                |       |
| Operational Support (to Agencies)           | 172,030                 |                | 10,945                |       |
| Shelter / Other Infrastructure              | 30,243                  |                | 33,079                |       |
| Transport / Logistics                       | 29,031                  |                | 37,542                |       |
| Instalments with Implementing Partners      | 19,162                  |                | (89,880)              |       |
| <b>Sub-total Operational</b>                | <b>3,443,524</b>        |                | <b>114,851</b>        |       |
| Programme Support                           | 1,681,466               |                | 1,169                 |       |
| <b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b> | <b>5,124,990</b>        | (3)            | <b>116,020</b>        | (6)   |
| Unliquidated Obligations                    | 51,654                  | (3)            | 0                     |       |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>5,176,644</b>        | <b>(1) (3)</b> | <b>116,020</b>        |       |

#### Instalments with Implementing Partners

|                                |               |  |                 |  |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Payments Made                  | 1,105,765     |  | 52,554          |  |
| Reporting Received             | 1,086,603     |  | 142,434         |  |
| <b>Balance</b>                 | <b>19,162</b> |  | <b>(89,880)</b> |  |
| Outstanding 1 January          | 0             |  | 647,261         |  |
| Refunded to UNHCR              | 0             |  | 234             |  |
| Currency Adjustment            | 0             |  | (8,580)         |  |
| <b>Outstanding 31 December</b> | <b>19,162</b> |  | <b>548,567</b>  |  |

#### Unliquidated Obligations

|                                |               |            |               |            |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| Outstanding 1 January          | 0             |            | 165,460       | (6)        |
| New Obligations                | 5,176,644     | (1)        | 0             |            |
| Disbursements                  | 5,124,990     | (3)        | 116,020       | (6)        |
| Cancellations                  | 0             |            | 23,564        | (6)        |
| <b>Outstanding 31 December</b> | <b>51,654</b> | <b>(3)</b> | <b>25,876</b> | <b>(6)</b> |

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6