August 2018

Safe access to territory is a pre-requisite to ensure that persons in need of international protection are able to seek and access protection. Maintaining and strengthening access is essential to ensure that all those seeking asylum are afforded the opportunity in a safe and dignified manner.

Partnership with Border Authorities to support safe access to protection

UNHCR continues to strengthen its cooperation with the Turkish Coast Guards, the Gendarmerie General Command, Turkish Land Forces and the national institutions in charge of management of the borders of Turkey. This cooperation extends to the central and the local levels to monitor trends, promote protection-sensitive border management and promote referrals to the relevant procedures and assistance for persons in need of international protection.

UNHCR is operational, with the support of six partners, along the western land borders and in the western and southern coastal areas (Edirne, Balikesir, Canakkale, Izmir, Mugla, Aydin, Antalya and Mersin), to work with national stakeholders and to assist refugees and asylum-seekers by providing humanitarian assistance in the form of non-food items, interpreter support, support the identification and referral of persons with specific needs, and provide information and counselling to persons with protection needs on relevant procedures.

UNHCR works closely with the Gendarmerie General Command to strengthen technical know-how and skills in responding to mixed migratory movements. The aim is to increase awareness and responsiveness of Gendarmerie units to persons with different protection needs in line with international principles and the national legal framework.

In this framework of cooperation, a series of joint field visits are undertaken to the border regions in 2017 and in the first quarter of 2018 where the majority of arrivals are observed. Per the frequency and scale of the cross-border movements, six locations in Eastern and Southeastern borders of Turkey were visited (Hatay in December 2017 and Sanliurfa, Gaziantep, Igdir, Erzurum, Van in 2018). These joint visits aim to identify trends, needs, and challenges at the field level to inform on the response mechanisms in view of protection principles. The Gendarmerie General Command and UNHCR organize comprehensive training events targeting Gendarmerie personnel from various locations, including border areas, on international refugee law. A total of 185 Gendarmerie personnel participated at the workshops. To ensure an inclusive, multi-disciplinary approach, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), the prosecutor's offices and the national police are engaged in training events.

UNHCR's Protection Training Manual for European Border and Entry Officials, which is designed to facilitate the training of border and entry officials on the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in the context of mixed migration movements, was translated into Turkish language and serves as a training tool. In addition, UNHCR developed a Guidance Handbook on Irregular Migration and International Protection for Gendarmerie Command staff operational in the field, which was published and shared by the Gendarmerie General Command with Gendarmerie personnel

in the field to promote consistent implementation of standards and compliance with principles in operational engagement.

Interceptions and apprehensions at land and sea borders

Western Sea and Land Borders

Turkish Coast Guard statistics[1] for interceptions at the **Western sea borders** in 2018 show a monthly increase in apprehensions when compared to the same period in 2017.

- January-July 2018 has seen a total increase of 61% in apprehensions when compared to the same period in 2017.
- This correlates with an increase (41%) in arrivals to Greece in the same period demonstrating an overall increase in individuals attempting the crossing.[2]
- TCG statistics show that Syrians continue to make up the vast majority of individuals apprehended.
- In 2017, the number of Pakistanis, Afghans and Iraqis intercepted decreased significantly, while at the same time there was an 89% rise in apprehensions of persons from African countries in comparison to the same period in 2016. In 2018, apprehension numbers of African nationals, mainly from Central Africa, Angola, and Somalia, in the first seven months have shown an increase of a 163% compared to same period in 2017. In 2018, Syrians make up (9,219) 61% of intercepted individuals, followed by Afghans (1,272) 8%, Central Africans (830) 5%, Iraqis (647, 4%) and Angolans (539) 4%.
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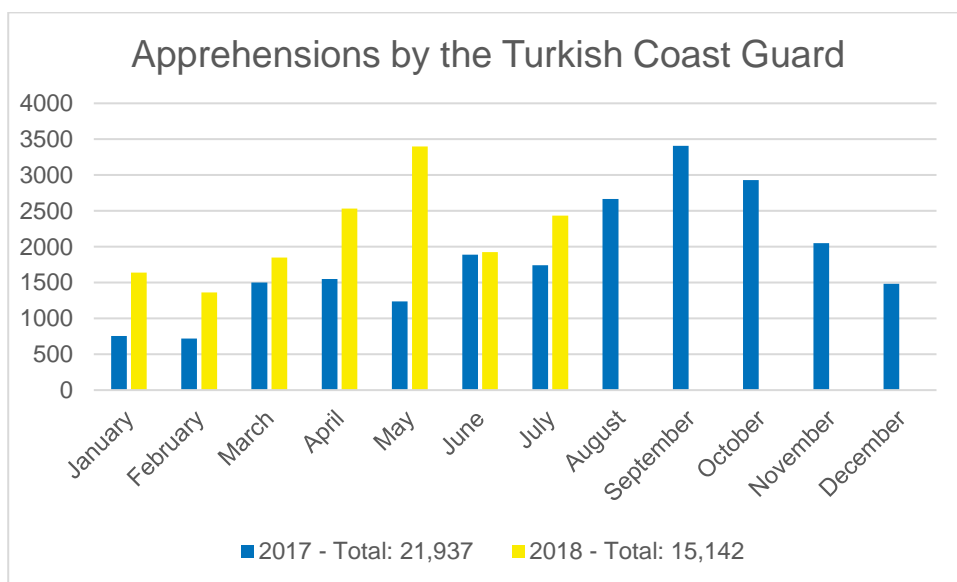
Graph 1: Monthly apprehensions/interceptions/rescues by Turkish Coast Guard.
Source: TCG website, interception/apprehension figures

[1] Turkish Coast Guard website: http://www.sahilguvenlik.gov.tr/baskanliklar/harekat/faaliyet_istatistikleri/duzensiz_goc_istatistikleri.html (Accessed 8 August 2018)

[2] Source UNHCR Operational Portal Mediterranean Situation website, data per 31 July 2018.: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179 (Accessed 8 August 2018)

Apprehensions at the **Western land borders** continue to increase steadily since 2016, reflecting the shift of attempted crossings from the sea to the land borders.

- January-July 2018 has seen a total 75% increase in apprehensions at Western Land borders compared to the same period in 2017. More specifically, an 84% increase at the Turkish-Greek border, but a 36% decrease at the Turkish-Bulgarian border when compared with 2017.[3]
- July 2018 saw a 54% increase in apprehensions when compared to June 2018 and a 168% increase when compared to July 2017.
- A similar increase was observed at the Bulgarian border where apprehensions in July 2018 reflected a 327% increase when compared to June 2018, but an overall 14% decrease when compared to July 2017.
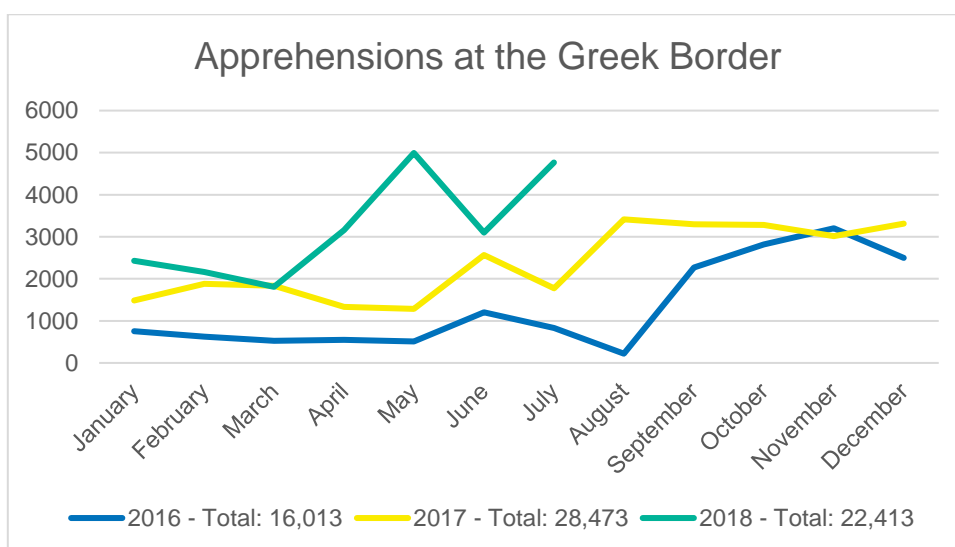
Graph 2: Monthly Breakdown of intercepted persons at Turkey - Greece border
Source: Turkish Armed Forces Command website, Daily activities of Turkish Land Forces Command figure
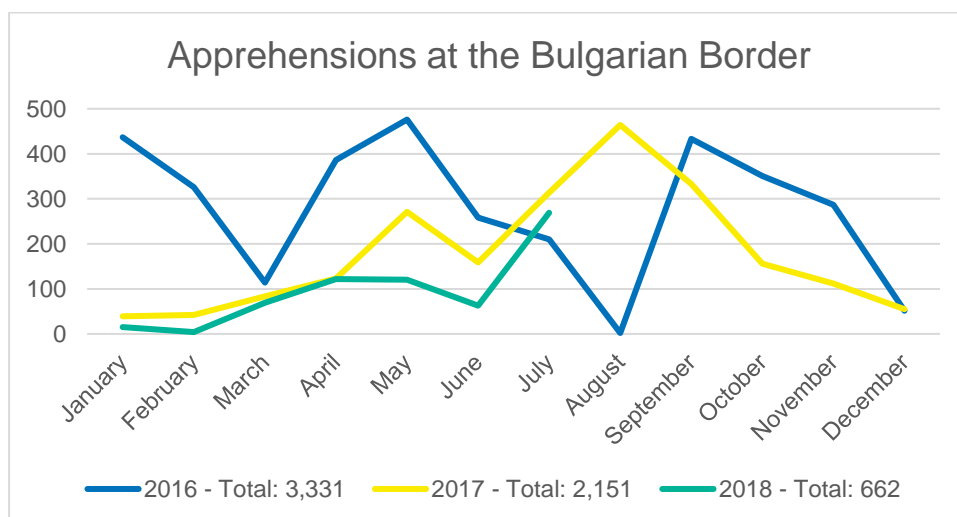
Graph 3: Monthly Breakdown of intercepted persons at Turkey - Bulgaria border
Source: Turkish Armed Forces Command website, Daily activities of Turkish Land Forces Command figures

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[3] Source: Turkish Armed Forces Command website, Daily Activities of Turkish Land Forces Command figures.

Black Sea Border

The route from Turkey to Bulgaria and Romania through the Black Sea was observed in the period of August-November 2017, from the provinces located in the Black Sea region of Turkey. Six incidents of arrivals in Romania, involving 536 persons, were recorded by Romanian authorities during this four month period of 2017. Following intensified operations by law enforcement entities conducted against the smugglers and strict controls in the hinterland, no further crossings have been identified to date.

Mersin Sea Border

Mersin was observed as a departure route from Turkey to Cyprus and Italy. While apprehension numbers remain relatively low, indicating that it is not a frequently used departure route, some ten incidents involving 785 individuals were reported in Turkish media[4] between January and May 2018. The intended destinations of these intercepted individuals remain unknown.

Eastern and South-eastern Land Borders

A slight increase in apprehensions to date in 2018 at the **Turkey-Syria border** by Turkish Land Forces[5] was observed compared to the same period in 2016 and 2017.

- When compared to the same seven-month period in 2017, a 2% increase was observed in 2018.
- The first quarter of 2018 saw a marked decrease in apprehensions when compared with the fourth quarter of 2017.
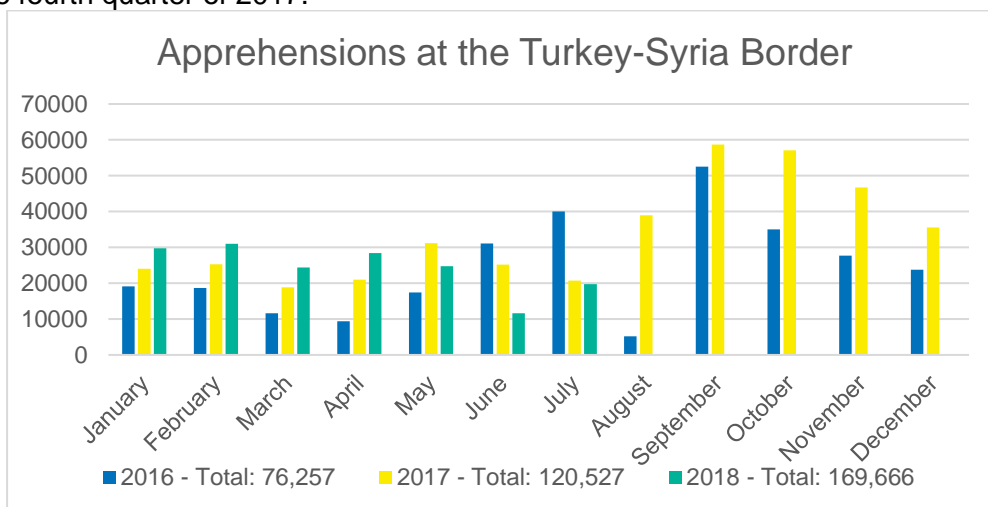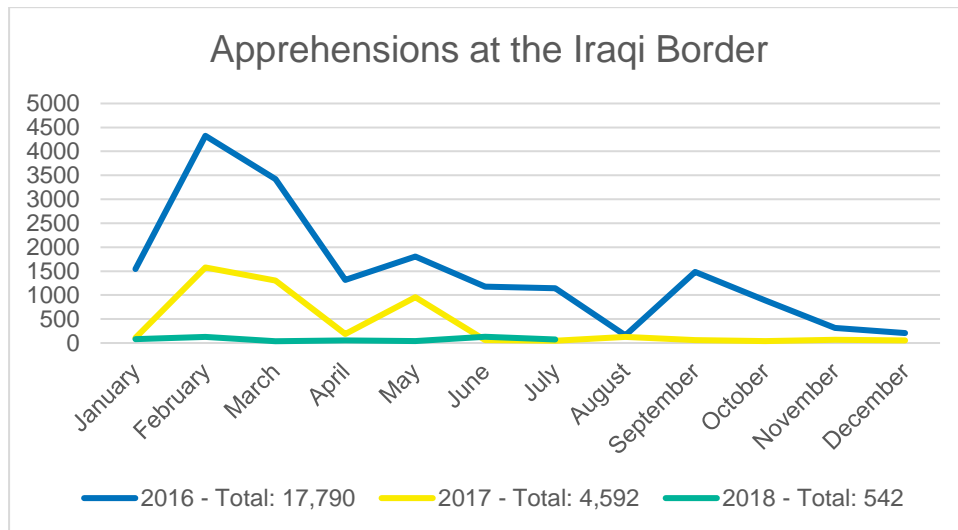

Graph 4: Monthly Breakdown of apprehended persons at Turkey - Syria border
Source: Turkish Armed Forces Command website, Daily activities of Turkish Land Forces Command figures

- May, June and July 2018 show an overall 27% decrease when compared with the same period in 2017.
- It is noted that July 2018 saw a 70% increase on the previous month, June 2018.

At the **Turkey-Iraq border**, though numbers[6] remain very low overall, the first quarter of 2018 saw a 47% increase (244 individuals) in apprehensions by the Turkish Land Forces when compared to the last quarter of 2017 (166 individuals). However, a total 87% decrease in apprehensions in 2018 until July 2018, is observed when compared to the same seven-month period in 2017.

Graph 5: Monthly Breakdown of apprehended persons at Turkey - Iraq border
Source: Turkish Armed Forces Command website, Daily activities of Turkish Land Forces Command figures

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External and Donor Relations

Thanks to UNHCR's donors for supporting our access to territory and border analysis activities in Turkey and for their unrestricted and regional funds in 2018:

European Union | United Kingdom | United States | Canada | Norway | France | Germany | Private donors Australia | Finland | Sweden | Netherlands | Private donors Spain | Denmark | Australia | Switzerland | Private donors Republic of Korea | Italy | Belgium

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LINKS
Regional Portal - Syria Regional Refugee Response | Regional Portal - Mediterranean | UNHCR Turkey website | Facebook | Services Advisor | UNHCR Help

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[6] Ibid