

# 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 refugee status; assist the Government in strengthening and developing its asylum system in conformity with international standards; identify and promote durable solutions for refugees, mainly through resettlement, but also through voluntary repatriation and local integration; co-operate with the Government and NGOs to ensure the provision of basic assistance and services to refugees during their stay in Turkey and raise public awareness of asylum-seekers and refugees and UNHCR's mandate.

## Impact

- In 2002, applications for Refugee Status Determination (RSD) dropped by 10.5 per cent



as compared to 2001, to 2,432 cases (representing 4,530 persons), confirming a trend started in 1998. UNHCR initiated RSD for 2077 new cases. The number of recognised cases increased by five per cent as compared to 2001. A special unit was established with funding from the EU High-Level Working Group on Migration and Asylum (HLWG) and five additional eligibility assistants started working with UNHCR in May 2002. UNHCR's country of ori-

Persons of Concern				
Main Origin / Type of Population	Total In Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Asylum-seekers	2,590	2,590	40	---
Islamic Rep. of Iran (Refugees)	1,820	1,820	41	30
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Refugees)	570	150	43	36

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
5,773,483	1,574,536	4,204,847	5,779,383	5,244,491

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions restricted 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.

gin information gathering and analytical capacity was strengthened and as a result, the backlog of cases pending RSD was reduced by 49 per cent. The average wait for a first interview was within the targeted time of two months, and the average wait for a first decision was three months from the date of interview.

- UNHCR continued emergency intervention to prevent *refoulement* of asylum-seekers and in the majority of cases secured their admission to the asylum procedure.
- Training to strengthen the national asylum structure continued in accordance with the three-year Co-operation Framework Agreement which was concluded in 2000 with the Ministry of Interior. UNHCR held four introductory seminars on Refugee Law and one advanced RSD training session benefiting 182 government officials.
- A total of 2,918 refugees departed for resettlement to a third country and 1,309 refugees were still awaiting departure at year's end (due to stringent security checks initiated by some resettlement countries after the events of 11 September).
- An average of 3,200 refugees and asylum-seekers received monthly food rations, medical care, education, accommodation, local travel assistance and social counselling services.
- The Office's Gender and Children team, created in 2001, developed a set of practical guidelines for caseworkers covering such issues as domestic violence, rape, separation, divorce and child custody.

## Working environment

### The context

UNHCR's work in Turkey was increasingly influenced by Turkey's candidacy for accession to the EU, which became a focus of public discussion in the context of the parliamentary elections in late 2002. The newly-elected administration continued to pursue pro-European policies, especially through the National Action Plan for the adoption of the EU *Acquis*, which included the development of the asylum agenda.

Due to Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, non-European

refugees were admitted and registered for temporary asylum in Turkey through UNHCR's offices. In most cases, UNHCR's eligibility decisions were confirmed by the authorities. Towards the end of 2002, public discussion and Government deliberations were increasingly focused on the conflict over Iraq, and Turkey's handling of a potential influx of asylum-seekers.

### Constraints

Resettlement departures from Turkey rose by approximately 10 per cent. However, the quota of 3,200 refugees was not fully met due to longer waiting times and security checks by resettlement countries. Preparations for a crisis in Iraq and contingency planning delayed discussions with the authorities on finding solutions to other important protection issues. Almost half of the UNHCR staff in Turkey received training for a possible emergency, and emergency-related work made increasing demands on their time.

### Funding

The planned expansion of the legal counselling programme to cities in central Turkey was postponed due to budgetary constraints. The number of refugees requiring assistance increased significantly in 2002 due to delays in departures to third countries in the wake of the events of 11 September. As a result, the allocated budget for 2002 proved to be inadequate, and UNHCR was obliged to reduce the subsistence allowances given to refugees. However, UNHCR's core protection work was able to continue, thanks to external funding through the HLWG Co-operation Framework.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

The Government's procedures and much of UNHCR's work were still driven by the geographical limitation that Turkey maintained in its application of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol (i.e., recognising only European refugees). However, discussions were initiated between the Government and experts on refugee law, on ways to adapt the asylum system if the

limitation were to be dropped in the future. A co-operation protocol was signed with the Gendarmerie General Command on training and capacity-building, and the Government and EU partners involved UNHCR in bilateral co-operation programmes on asylum matters.

Despite external constraints following the events of 11 September 2001, the streamlining of resettlement procedures significantly raised efficiency in 2002. UNHCR's in-depth follow-up on vulnerable cases led to a reduction in the number of long-stayers.

With respect to European refugees in Turkey, counselling on local integration and repatriation prospects resulted in the identification of durable solutions for most of the small caseload of Balkans refugees, whose number decreased to 11 cases in December 2002. The Turkish authorities actively supported the local integration and repatriation options offered to these refugees, and 50 per cent of the cases chose the second option.

## Activities and assistance

**Community services:** An average of 900 to 950 refugees and asylum-seekers per month received social and legal counselling from UNHCR and implementing partners. To ensure the effectiveness of the Office's protection, assistance and durable solutions activities, 20 missions were carried out to provincial cities where refugees and asylum-seekers reside. Increased psycho-social assistance and counselling needs were identified and responded to by professional psychologists and psychotherapists.

**Domestic needs/household support:** Basic living allowances were provided to an average of 1,230 persons per month.

**Education:** A total of 444 asylum-seekers, including refugee children, received education assistance and 558 home-education kits were distributed. Seventy per cent of the 723 children of primary school age attended local schools (up from 40 per cent in 2001). Some 38 teachers from the refugee community in Van were assisted through informal education services.

**Food:** Food assistance was provided to refugees during the year.

**Health/nutrition:** In 2002, 11,954 medical consultations were delivered to refugees and asylum-seekers through the contracted clinics, hospitals and pharmacies. In addition, an average of 432 women per month received sanitary supplies.

**Legal assistance:** UNHCR provided significant input to ensure that the draft asylum law adhered to the standards of the 1951 Geneva Convention. UNHCR provided guidance to an inter-ministerial Task Force on migration and asylum, and helped organise a study tour for 11 key government officials (to observe the Swedish national asylum system). This was funded by the HLWG project and the Swedish Migration Board.

UNHCR also provided feedback on a draft law on Work Permits for Foreigners.

In addition to organising four introductory seminars on refugee law, and an advanced RSD workshop, UNHCR contributed to civil society seminars by providing resource persons or helping with administration of the events. Training sessions were held at the Ankara and Van Bar Associations and presentations were given at various universities and international symposia. UNHCR staff members also regularly gave presentations on international protection at NATO Partnership for Peace training events.

Procedures were put in place for the identification of separated children and the provision of minimum care and protection in Turkey.

Eligibility staff systematically provided information about the RSD procedure at the beginning of an interview. In addition, an information leaflet for asylum-seekers was updated and translated into five languages (Arabic, Farsi, French, Russian and Turkish).

**Operational support (to agencies):** UNHCR bore the administrative costs (staffing, communication and office supplies) of an implementing agency which provided social and legal counselling services in Istanbul. Two national UNVs were also hired in 2002 to provide support to the Durable Solutions Unit in Ankara.

**Shelter/other infrastructure:** Direct assistance for accommodation was provided to vulnerable per-





A UNHCR monitoring team near the border with Iraq is trying to proceed to Cukurca while avalanches and landslides block the road.  
*UNHCR / J. Herrera*

sons including victims of domestic violence, female heads of household, unaccompanied minors and other people with special needs.

**Transport/logistics:** On average, 76 refugees per month received local travel assistance, enabling them to go to Ankara for eligibility interviews and for interviews with the relevant embassies for resettlement formalities. Some 100 asylum-seekers, including refugee children, attended vocational training courses at the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation (TEGV) in the border city of Van. The transportation costs were borne by UNHCR.

## Organisation and implementation

### Management

UNHCR in Turkey operated through the main office in Ankara and maintained its field presence in Istanbul, Silopi and Van. The country programme

was managed by 70 staff members (six international staff, 60 national staff and four JPOs) based in the Ankara, Istanbul, Silopi and Van offices. In 2002, UNHCR's operation in Turkey was reinforced by ten staff (including five eligibility assistants), for a period of 18 months, with special funding from the EU, to address the backlog of RSD applications, strengthen UNHCR's capacity to gather and analyse country of origin information, and reinforce capacity-building measures.

### Working with others

In 2002, UNHCR worked with three international and four local NGOs to provide social and psychological counselling and health care services for refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR closely collaborated with IOM on organised departures of resettlement cases, family reunification and voluntary repatriation of refugees. UNHCR continued to participate in regular UN Country Team meetings to address common and agency-specific issues, as well as thematic group meetings relevant to its

mandate. UNHCR also participated in regular planning and joint activities of the UN Country team, such as policy priority issues, HIV/AIDS programme co-ordination and security issues.

UNHCR was invited to eight advocacy and public awareness events organised by Istanbul, Bilgi, Marmara, METU (Middle East Technical University) and Bogazici Universities. The Istanbul Chambers of Commerce and UNHCR organised a brainstorming session on illegal migration issues. The Social Research Foundation, Amnesty International, and the Bar Associations of Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and Van organised training sessions with the participation of UNHCR.

## Overall assessment

The National Action Plan on Asylum (NPAA), an important part of Turkey's efforts to adapt its systems to the EU *Acquis*, provided a framework for UNHCR's legal advice and capacity-building activities. UNHCR was able to deepen its partnerships with certain sectors of the Government involved with asylum issues, particularly the General Directorate for Security, the Ministry of Interior and the Gendarmerie General Command, on issues of access to the asylum procedure and prevention of *refoulement*.

As the Government was planning and shaping its asylum processes, UNHCR focused on quality control of its own RSD work, with a view to setting examples and sharing useful practical experience with government partners. The backlog was addressed, the waiting period between first interview and first decision was reduced, the quality of reporting was raised, individual data collection was increased, and vulnerable cases were dealt with more effectively.

Activities involving NGOs, research and educational institutions in awareness raising and public information activities about refugees and asylum made a substantial impact. Increasingly, UNHCR's initiatives to highlight the particular needs of women and children in RSD and assistance work were recognised by NGOs and government partners.

Offices
Ankara
Istanbul
Silopi
Van

Partners
<b>Government Agencies</b>
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Interior
Prime Ministry (Crisis Management Centre for Iraq Crisis)
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
<b>NGOs</b>
Anatolian Development Foundation
Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants
Caritas (Istanbul)
Human Resources Development Foundation
International Catholic Migration Foundation
Istanbul Interparish Migration Programme
<b>Others</b>
Bar Associations of Turkey
IOM
Turkish Red Crescent Society (Kizilay)
United Nations Country Team

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Annual Programme Budget		Annual Programme Budget	
	Current Year's Projects	notes	Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,176,128		8,732	
Community Services	89,780		58,450	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	972,254		29,609	
Education	56,050		2,507	
Food	848		17,415	
Health / Nutrition	242,082		46,883	
Legal Assistance	186,742		484,473	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	36,975		74,672	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	33,489		4,000	
Transport / Logistics	32,022		31,608	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	(1,399)		(704,041)	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>2,824,971</b>		<b>54,308</b>	
Programme Support	2,375,013		71,775	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>5,199,984</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>126,083</b>	<b>(5)</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	44,507	(3)	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,244,491</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>126,083</b>	
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>				
Payments Made	221,025		276,213	
Reporting Received	222,424		980,254	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>(1,399)</b>		<b>(704,041)</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0		744,830	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		1,114	
Currency Adjustment	0		(39,675)	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>(1,399)</b>		<b>0</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1st January	0		145,983	(5)
New Obligations	5,244,491	(1)	0	
Disbursements	5,199,984	(3)	126,083	(5)
Cancellations	0		19,900	(5)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>44,507</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>0</b>	

Figures which cross-reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(5) Schedule 5