



# Migration and Asylum in Turkey.

## An insight on the situation of asylum seekers fleeing from Syria.

**MigraMed Meeting**

**Rome**

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# Migration and Asylum in Turkey: history

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- Turkey, despite the stereotype of being mainly a sending country, nowadays is also a **transit and receiving country** for migration fluxes.
- 60s: men workers, to Europe
- 70s: new markets (Middle East, Libia) and family reunification to Europe
- 80s: military coup:turkish seeking asylum in Europe. Later in the 90s, kurdish asylum seekers.
- 90s on: diversification.

# Migration and Asylum: Why Turkey is increasingly chosen as destination?

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- Geographical position
- Change in the economic policies: liberalization, effort to enter globalized market. Growth of a vast informal labour sector.
- Relatively relaxed visa policy and border controls
- Political turmoils in the border countries (Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, collapse of Soviet Union...)

# Migration and Asylum: reasons and typologies

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- Labour migrants (gender differentiated working sectors. Entering with tourist visa, overstaying the duration = becoming illegal. Despite new laws, mostly without working permit. Former USSR and “Turkiç” countries)
- Irregular migrants, trying to reach Europe. 90.000 apprehended/year. (African countries, East)
- Asylum seekers (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan... Somalia, Sudan, RDC)



# Asylum procedures

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- **Turkey signed 1951 Declaration, maintaining “geographical limitation”: limited access to protection for non-EU.**
- UNHCR in charge for RSD and resettlement procedures, for non-EU.
- Ministry of Interior/General Directorate of Security/Department of Foreigner’s, Border and Asylum: referral to satellite cities, residence permits and fees.
- No right to work, nor to accomodation/financial assistance by state. Limited access to education for children, social and medical assistance.



# Asylum in Turkey. 2011 UNHCR Figures

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Type of population	Origin	Total in country	Total in country
		Jan 2011	Dec 2011
<b>Total</b>		<b>991,300</b>	<b>993,400</b>
<b>Refugees</b>	Iran	3,000	4,800
	Iraq	6,600	6,700
	Afghanistan	2,200	3,300
	Various	2,200	2,100
<b>Asylum-seekers</b>	Iran	1,800	3,000
	Iraq	1,700	300
	Afghanistan	2,500	2,000
	Various	1,800	1,700
<b>Returnees (ref)</b>	Turkey	500	500
<b>IDPs</b>	Turkey	964,000	964,000
<b>Stateless</b>	Stateless	5,000	5,000



# Migration and Asylum: a look at future

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- Consequences of EU – Turkey pre-access talks:
  - Increased control at borders, especially with Greece. Readmission Agreements with Greece (2003), Syria (2001), Romania (2004), Kyrgyzstan (2003), Ukraine (2005). Will the same happen with border to Bulgaria?
  - Increased attention on topic and networking.
- “Transit migrants” becoming “long-term residents”: asylum seekers who are refused refugee status, refugees waiting for referral to third countries. Labour migrants involved in family networks. African migrants that can’t afford smugglers prices. No integration programs.

# Caritas Turkey' projects for Refugee and Migrants, in Istanbul

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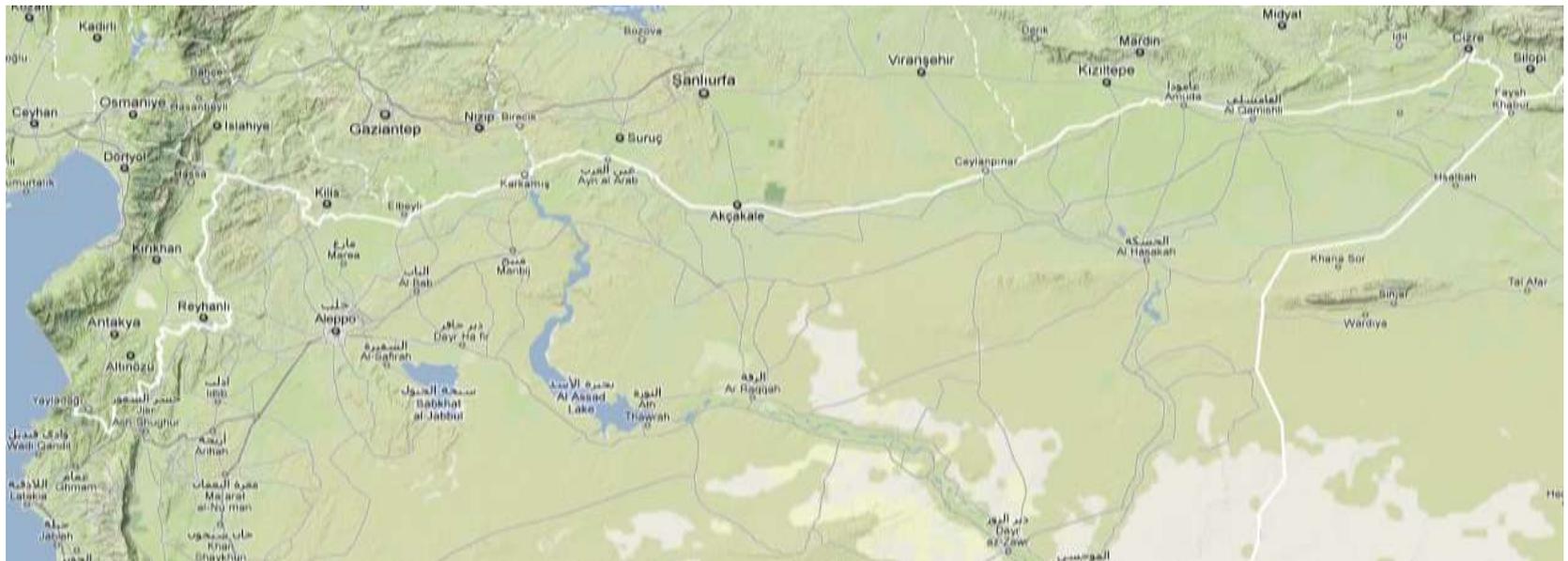
- **Refugee and Migrant Service:** counselling, medical and food assistance, follow-up of individual cases, networking and advocacy. Since 2008, open to non-Iraqi and every religion.
- Adult Scholarship Project for Refugees and Migrants, in cooperation with Istanbul Interparish Migrant Program - IIMP
- Education Program for Armenian Migrant Children Project
- Refugee Women Solidarity and Support Group Project
- Support to Union of Young Refugees in Turkey – UYRT



# Update on situation of people fleeing from Syria to Turkey

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- Turkey and Syria sharing a border longer than 850km. People who fled Syria from April 2011, using mainly Güveççi gate and Karbeyaz gate, in the south of Hatay province.
- September 2009: bilateral agreement to lift visa requirement. Moving to/from Syria was easy and normal for villagers on both sides of the border, who also share family relations.



# Conflict in Syria – short facts

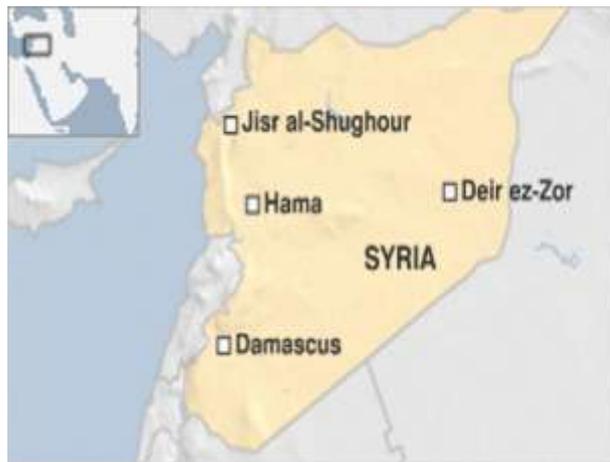
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- Assad family has power since 1971. President Bashar al-Assad inherited power from his father Hafez in 2000. He is recognized to have open up the country's economy, but continued to jail critics of the regime and maintained a stranglehold on media.
- 18/03/11 Southern town of Deera: inspired by the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt, some teenagers painted on their school' walls the revolution slogans. They were jailed. Residents protested, calling for their release, and using slogans against Assad. Security forces opened fire, wounding and killing several. In the following days the protest went on, police shooting more people and protesters burning government buildings.
- Under the emergency law - in place since 1963 - authorities banned political parties and follow arresting protesters. Also journalists and UN observers are barred.
- 21/04/ 11 Assad lifted the emergency law ana declared his will make reform process faster. International media reported of arbitrary, firing at unarmed crowds, cut communication lines, road blocked and hospitals raided. According to UN, more than 1,100 persons have been killed since protests began.
- There has been crowded rallies of Assad supporters in the capital. Military command also appear to be loyal to President. Damascus and Aleppo has seen regularly but limited protests, possibly due to strong security control.
- EU

# Seeking protection in Turkey

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- 29/94/11: **252 Syrians flee their country and seek asylum in Yayladagi village region.** An old tobacco factory in Altinozu village was opened as a temporary camp, with Red Crescent providing tents, meal, medicines, blankets and mattresses. Camp was controlled by military and it was not allowed to enter to visitors.
- 03/05/11: **Coordination of Refugee Rights on Turkey made a press release,** containing some recommendations to Turkish government to ensure protection to people escaping from Syria.
- From 07/06/11: Following violent operations of Syrian army in **Jisr al-Shughour** - a town 20 km away from Turkish border – an increasing number of Syrian nationals move north and seek protection across the Turkish border. **According to official number given by Hatay governorate, 11.700 Syrian are hosted in tent camps, at 24/06/11. Some thousand are (were?) also settled just by the border, in Syrian territory, in precarious tents.**



# Caritas Turkey field visit – Hatay region, 14-16 June 2011

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## People contacted and visited

- - Hatay governorate personal secretary
- - Altınözü village mayor and district governorate
- - Yayladağı village mayor and district governorate
- - Red Crescent camp responsables in Altınözü and Yayladağı
- - Amnesty International researcher
- - Human Rights Organization president in Hatay
- - UNHCR's legal advisor in Hatay
- - DEMP (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) city director
- - Altınözü District Management Director
- - Helsinki Citizen's Assembly and Medicines sans Frontier team in Hatay
- - Support to Life team in Hatay



# Caritas Turkey field visit – Hatay region, 14-16 June 2011

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- **Turkey is keeping the borders open** for Syrian asylum seekers.
- **State showing a better organization** compared to 1991 (mass arrival of people from Iraq).

## **DEMP (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency)**

Coordination and Communication Center under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Distribution** of aid items and camp management: Red Crescent personnel, and staff provided by government.

**Authorities saying that all the needs are responded by the state at the moment.**

DEMP supported Hatay Governorate with 3.750.000 TL. Hatay Governorate is registering and keeping records of people movements.







**Yayladağı Camp:** 49 km from Hatay, easily accessible with a new-built road. Just 5 km from Yayladağı border gate. There are two camp areas close to each other. 3700 persons and 400 tents in one camp. The other camp had 500 tents but it was empty at the moment of visit.

- Caritas Turkey was given **different figures about number of persons/tents in the camps**. Registration and record keeping system may not be so accurate.
- From several sources, it is said that since beginning there has been movement of people back-forth across the border. Number of people who went back to Syria is uncertain.

- **Service provided in the camps:**  
shelter, food (3 hot meals a day), hygienic items, security, social activities, education, religious services, translation.
- **Items needed:** pampers, women sanitary napkins, slippers, underclothes for children, toothbrush, toothpaste, towels, shoes, materials for the activities for children, washing machines.
- **Medical assistance** is provided at the border, through ambulances; in the camps, through dedicated tents, and by transporting seriously wounded persons to public hospitals in the closer cities such as Hatay and Gaziantep.



# Evolution of situation

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- 17/06/11 Visit of UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie.
- **18/06/11 A team of 20 persons from 10 Agencies (Including UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, WFP, OCHA...) and journalists were accepted to visit the camp.**
- 19/06/11 Media reporting some refugees' testimonies, about syrian army intervening in small city of Bdama, 2 km from border, arresting people and closing local bakery, source of food for asylum seekers.
- 20/06/11 Syrian President Bashar al-Assad made a speech promising reforms and called asylum seekers back to Syria. Turkish President Abdullah Gül stated that those promises are not enough.
- 21/06/11 Blocks set on main road that connect Alep with Turkey. Media reported tanks and troops reaching Khirbet al-Jouz and Managh villages; hundred persons crossing into Turkey through barb wires, took to the camps by trucks.
- 22/06/11 Syrian Foreign Ministry Velid Muallid made a speech, asking people who fled to Turkey to come back, and asking Turkey's cooperation to facilitate their return, reminding of the good relations intercurring between the two countries.

# Caritas Turkey perspectives

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- **Concerns about people situation in middle - long term:**
  - Living conditions in the camps. Both material and psycosocial.
  - Future need for less precarious accomodations?
  - Access to asylum and legal status.
- **Few families already approached Caritas in Istanbul.** They are receiving assistance trough Refugee Service. One is christian. “Syria is vulnerable to sectarian tensions”, as it sees presence of Christian, Alawite and Kurdish minorities, refugees from Iraq, labour migrants from Asia ana African countries. Christians in Syria are feeling the threads of increased conflict and chaotic situation.
- **Impact on local level:** people expressed different feelings about arrival of Syrian refugees. Media describing villagers bringing help on two sides of the border. But tension raised in Hatay, due to religious and political reasons.



# Caritas Turkey perspectives

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- **Keep following and reporting about the situation** through Caritas Antakya, people from Orthodox Church, UNHCR, DEMP, local mayors, governorates, Red Crescent, NGOs, and contact persons in the camps.
- **Following the needs** in coordination with district governorates, Red Crescent, DEMP and UNHCR. It is possible to bring aid to the camps from outside, but the condition is that Red Crescent would do the distribution. Therefore, we consider **it is needed to wait for better assessment**.
- **Possibility to assist by providing materials for children:** one contact person who is working in Yayladagi camp - organizing activities for children - will inform in detail about items needed.





Thanks!