



TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
İÇİŞLERİ BAKANLIĞI

Mr. Thomas HAMMARBERG
Commissioner for Human Rights
Council of Europe
Strasbourg

Ankara, 6 July 2010

Dear Mr. Commissioner,

I would like to thank you for meeting and exchanging views with Undersecretary Mr. Osman Güneş and other Turkish authorities during your visit to Turkey from 23 to 26 May 2010.

With reference to your letter dated 8 June 2010, I would like to provide you with an update on the current situation of asylum seekers and the return of internally displaced persons in Turkey.

Please note that due attention is paid to these issues, especially following the Abdolhane-Karimnia judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. Necessary legal and administrative changes are currently being prepared and will be swiftly put into implementation.

I would also like to confirm, Mr Commissioner, that the Turkish Government possesses the political will to improve the situation of asylum seekers and internally displaced persons.

I look forward to enhancing our cooperation in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Beşir ATALAY

Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The Government is aware of the deficiencies faced at reception centres for asylum seekers and refugees and has been working in order to alleviate them. In this respect, architectural design for seven reception centres, each with a capacity of holding 750 persons has been finalized within the scope of a EU Project on “Establishment of a Reception, Screening and Accommodation System (Centres) for asylum seekers and refugees” and has been approved by the Directorate General of Security.

These projects were initiated 18 months ago and finalized in time. During this process, several meetings were held and requirements were analysed with the support of national experts on asylum, specialists from UNHCR and the EU as well as the relevant institutions and NGOs. The design of the reception centres and respective facilities were developed in line with the *acquis* and the best practices in this field identified in the EU Member States.

In this respect, total area for each premise is divided into different sections; for family members (43 %); for men (22 %); for women (13 %) and for unaccompanied minors (2 %). The remaining 20 percent of the area is reserved as “high security division”.

There exists no detention area in these premises. The EU Commission examined and approved the project at every stage and representatives of both UNHCR and the EU Delegation in Turkey participated to steering meetings.

Implementation of the Circulars on Asylum and Migration

Ministry of the Interior instructed two chief inspectors to monitor the effective implementation of the two Circulars on “refugees and asylum seekers” as well as “the fight against illegal migration” dated 19 March 2010.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Turkey

The Turkish Government attaches great importance to the voluntary return of all displaced citizens. In this regard, the “Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project” (RVRP) was launched in 1994.

Following arduous efforts of an inter-agency commission consisting of representatives of all the stakeholders in Turkey, a document entitled “Measures on the

Issue of Internally Displaced Persons and the Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project in Turkey” was finalized in September 2005. It is worth mentioning that the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provided the basis for this document. According to the document, endorsed by the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of the Interior is entrusted with the task of implementing and coordinating the integrated Turkish strategy *vis-à-vis* the IDPs.

According to the statistical data received from the governorships of 14 provinces where “Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project (RVRP)” has been carried out, namely Adıyaman, Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkari, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, Tunceli and Van, 386.360 persons from 62.448 households left their villages due to security reasons. So far, 187.861 persons from 28.384 households have returned. A total of 95.700.000 TL (approx. € 50 million) was allocated to this project from the national budget between the years 1999-2009. Since 2009, project-based funds from the national budget have been allocated to the governorships. In 2009, 16.578.000 TL was allocated to 34 projects proposed by governorships.

The budget of RVRP for 2010 is 16.159.000 TL (approx. € 8, 3 million). Following thorough examination, appropriate funds from this amount will be allocated to the proposed projects.

According to the decision endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 2005, projects have to be conducted in conformity with the international standards as well as in cooperation with international organizations. In this respect, Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with the UNDP, initiated the “Support to the Development of an IDP Programme in Turkey”. The Action Plan for Van, a pilot project in this regard, was prepared and published in 2006.

A meeting was held on 3-5 November 2008 with the aim of developing a national action plan as well as action plans for the remaining thirteen provinces. As a result of the subsequent meetings under the coordination of governorships and with the participation of relevant state institutions and organizations, local governments, universities, professional organizations and NGOs and in light of the interviews held with IDPs, separate draft action plans were prepared addressing the needs and realities of these thirteen provinces.

Provincial action plans aim to provide effective and lasting remedies to the problems of IDPs with a holistic approach; to enhance cooperation and coordination among the institutions working in this field; to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided and to take into consideration of the opinions and suggestions of IDPs. The last meeting on the assessment of these provincial plans for the IDPs were held in Ankara on 17-18 June 2010 at Deputy Governor’s level.

Compensation of Losses Resulting from Acts of Terror and Measures Taken Against Terrorism

“Law on the Compensation of Losses Resulting from Terrorist Acts and the Measures Taken against Terrorism (No: 5233)” which entered into force on 27 July 2004, aims to compensate losses of people suffered from terrorist acts as well as the measures taken against terrorism in a prompt, efficient and just manner.

To this end, the efforts of 105 “Damage Assessment Commissions” established under the chairmanship of Deputy Governors are ongoing.

As of the end of May 2010, the amount of compensation awarded to the people applied to the commissions and negotiated settlement in 14 provinces reached a total of 1.424.971.868 TL (approx. € 731 million).

Allegations against Temporary Village Guards

Allegations against temporary village guards regarding the use of weapons for illegal purposes and the hindrance of the return of IDPs were mainly aired by the terrorist organization. The Gendarmerie, on the other hand, states that these allegations are baseless and so far, no charges have been filed against temporary village guards in connection with such claims.