



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

UNHCR

Representation in Greece

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Notre/Our code: GREAT/HCR/973

Subject: Response to query related to UNHCR's observations of Syrians readmitted to Turkey

Dear [REDACTED]

Following your addressing to UNHCR (of 2/10/2016) requesting information on UNHCR's observations of the situation of Syrian nationals readmitted to Turkey from Greece under the EU-Turkey Statement, and as a follow-up to our letter addressed to you on the 13th of June 2016, we provide you with the below update, which has also been communicated to the Greek authorities.

As stated in our letter of 13th of June 2016, a thorough assessment of the individual circumstances of each asylum applicant, including those belonging to minority groups, is required in Greece before an asylum seeker is returned to Turkey, in accordance with relevant international, European, and national standards.

We also indicated in our correspondence to the Greek authorities (letter of 4th May 2016 to the Asylum Service, notified to you on the 13th of June) that Syrian nationals, whose individual circumstances have been duly assessed by the Greek Asylum service, who do not fall within one of the specific categories established in the Greek law, and who are returned from the Greek islands to Turkey, should, in principle, be able to avail or re-avail themselves of the temporary protection regime in Turkey.

On this matter, we wish to highlight the following issues: UNHCR's monitoring ability; (re)acquisition under the temporary protection regime; and access to rights under the said regime.

With regard to UNHCR's ability to monitor the situation of readmitted Syrian nationals, UNHCR considers this issue to be a priority and has benefited from the Turkish authorities' cooperation on this matter. There are, however, three specific challenges: First, UNHCR does not benefit at this stage from unhindered and predictable access to pre-removal centres in Turkey and to the Duzici reception centre. Since April 2016, UNHCR has made sixteen requests for access to the Reception Centre in Duzici, which was granted twelve times. During these visits, UNHCR was able to conduct individual interviews with 45 of the 82 Syrians who were readmitted as of 7 November 2016. Second, UNHCR needs to seek authorization to visit the centre at least five working days in advance

Ms. [REDACTED]

which, in practice, does not allow for timely monitoring of some individual cases. Third, UNHCR does not systematically receive information on the legal status and location of individuals who have been readmitted from Greece and is not always able to track their location and monitor their situation once they have left the reception centre.

With respect to temporary protection status for Syrians nationals readmitted from Greece, the process that we have observed is the following: Upon arrival, Syrian nationals are sent to the Düziçi Reception Centre, a closed facility, where they undergo pre-registration. Currently, this process is completed within seven days. Once pre-registration is completed, Syrians are referred to a city where they wish to reside and are requested to contact the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMM) in order to complete the registration procedure and be able to access the rights and services afforded by the temporary protection status. According to the Turkish authorities, instructions have been sent to all Governorates requesting that temporary protection status be activated for those whose security clearance was received at the place of pre-registration, and that persons with specific needs readmitted from Greece should be prioritized.


Out of the 82 Syrian nationals readmitted from Greece, UNHCR is in a position to confirm, based on direct contacts, that 12 of them (re)acquired temporary protection. Despite its best efforts, UNHCR has not been able to contact the majority of the others. Thirteen other individuals contacted are still in the process of completing the procedure or waiting for the reactivation of their status. UNHCR is not in a position to assess the average length of this procedure.

Lastly, with regard to access to rights, Syrian nationals readmitted from Greece and who are able to reacquire temporary protection status face the same conditions as the 2.7 million Syrians currently benefitting from this legal status in Turkey. In terms of access to education, 59 per cent of over 1 million school-aged Syrian children are enrolled in formal education programmes, which indicates significant progress since the start of this year. Access to the labour market has been legally authorized since January 2016 for Syrians, whether or not they are temporary protection beneficiaries, although under specific conditions and limitations. Approximately 10,000 work permits had been issued as of September. Regular updates on the situation are posted on UNHCR's website at:

<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/documents.php?page=1&view=grid&Language%5B%5D=1&Country%5B%5D=224>

I trust that you will find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,


Philippe Leclercq
Representative

