

Turkey: more needs to be done for refugees living outside camps, Civil Liberties MEPs say

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The efforts of the Turkish government to care for the high number of Syrian refugees living in refugee camps in the country must be recognised, members of the Civil Liberties Committee visiting Turkey said on Wednesday. But they also stressed that the situation for refugees outside the camps is precarious and that more needs to be done to ensure health, food, education and employment.

The seven-MEP strong delegation led by European Parliament vice-president Sylvie Guillaume (S&D, FR) on Tuesday visited a refugee camp in Nizip, close to the Syrian border, as well as families living outside the camps. They also met with representatives of local authorities, UN organisations, international NGOs and others to get a full picture of the situation of refugees.

High standard in Turkish camps, but more must be done for refugees outside

MEPs praised the commitment of the Turkish government and its efforts to provide shelter, food, healthcare and education in the refugee camps, in particular the container ones. However, they also stressed that only around 10% of the refugees live in the camps and that more urgent efforts are needed for the other, more than 2.5 million refugees in Turkey.

"There is a very clear difference between the conditions for those in the container camps and those who live out-of-camp. The situation for refugees outside the camps is highly precarious and they are in urgent need of help, especially in terms of schooling and employment opportunities", Sylvie Guillaume (S&D, FR) said.

"We have seen a lot of children in the camps and taking into account that this is going to be a long-standing conflict, more efforts should be made in schooling and integrating those children, who clearly have a need, but also hopes for a proper and decent future", Peter Niedermüller (S&D, HU) added.

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE, FR) said: "Having seen first-hand how a large number of Syrian refugees live outside the camps, it is clear that the 3bn euros need to be targeted so that the money actually goes as close as possible to these refugees".

Tanja Fajon (S&D, SI) also stressed the urgency of the situation: "We need a large-scale resettlement of Syrian refugees from Turkey, closer cooperation between Greece and Turkey instead of new walls and fences in the Southern Balkans. It would save lives".

Refugees fleeing Aleppo

MEPs also sought information on the tens of thousands of refugees currently gathering at the Syrian-Turkish border and seeking to escape the bombardments in Aleppo.

"I welcome that the border with Syria is being opened and call on Turkey to let in the people fleeing the hell of Aleppo", said Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (EPP, SE). "The EU also has to do more to support Turkey in receiving refugees. The EU funds must be agreed and disbursed fast and the UN and NGOs must be fully funded".

Jozsef Nagy (EPP, SK) said: "Turkey has to guard its borders, but also has to let in refugees. The EU should assist them with this to help the refugees stay as close as

Press release

possible to their home countries".

"A lot could be done for significant numbers of refugees close to their homes if the international community gave a little more than comforting words. Turkey's own capacities are not endless", warned Frank Engel (EPP, LU).

Note to editors

Seven Members of the Civil Liberties Committee visit Turkey 8-11 Februar to assess the situation on the ground for refugees in the country. The delegation will visit various facilities and projects for refugees to find out how the different projects work and hear from the refugees themselves as well as the Turkish government, international NGOs and other partners.

More than 2,5 million refugees are currently living in Turkey making Turkey the country in the world hosting the highest number of refugees. Around 10% of the refugees, mainly Syrians, live in refugee camps run by the Turkish authorities. The remaining 90% live outside camps often in very difficult circumstances.

The Civil Liberties Committee visit to Turkey continues today with high-level political meetings in Ankara. To schedule interviews with members, please contact press officer Rikke Uldall accompanying the delegation.

Further information

- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>

Contact

Rikke ULDALL

BXL: (+32) 2 28 42976

STR: (+33) 3 881 72033

PORT: (+32) 498 98 32 57

EMAIL: libe-press@europarl.europa.eu

TWITTER: EP_Justice