

# EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT



Belgrade, Serbia - Afghan refugees Zala, Shanzai and Shahay Ahmadi, attend extracurricular activities in the centre for accommodation of asylum-seekers, making the best of the opportunities at hand in pursuit of their dreams.

## TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

Between 1 January and 30 September, there has been a 31 per cent reduction of arrivals to Europe compared to the same period in 2017, showing a continued declining trend of arrivals to Europe. In total, 99,600 refugees and migrants arrived via the three Mediterranean routes to Europe compared to almost 143,000 arrivals during the same period in 2017. Arrivals in September were also lower this year than in 2017, with nearly 15,100 arrivals in September 2018 reaching Europe compared to 21,300 in September 2017. As of 30 September, most confirmed arrivals so far this year have been to Spain with some 42,700 arriving by land and sea compared to 35,600 in Greece and some 21,100 in Italy. The most common nationalities amongst arrivals in 2018 so far were Guineans, Syrians, Moroccans and Malians.

**CYPRUS:** In 2018, 392 people arrived by sea, most commonly Syrians.

**GREECE:** 35,600 refugees and migrants have arrived by land and sea with 66% arriving by sea so far in 2018. This marks an almost 48% increase compared to the 24,000 people who arrived during the same period in 2017. Arrivals in September reached some 5,300, the most arrivals in a single month in 2018 so far. The number of interceptions or rescues by the Turkish Coast Guard in the Aegean in September (2,680) were also higher, an 80% increase compared to August 2018 (1,484). The average daily number of sea arrivals to Greece in September was 133, higher than the 103 average daily number of arrivals in August. At the Greek land border in Evros, a total of over 12,200 people have crossed into Greece in 2018 so far, with

Mediterranean  
**99,600**  
 arrivals in 2018 <sup>1</sup>

**1,853**  
 estimated dead/missing in 2018 <sup>1</sup>

**Greece<sup>2</sup>**  
**35,600**

4,049	4,170	5,345
Jul	Aug	Sep

**Italy**  
**21,100**

1,944	1,491	947
Jul	Aug	Sep

**Spain<sup>2</sup>**  
**42,700**

8,940	7,022	8,568
Jul	Aug	Sep

**Cyprus**  
**392**

0	103	216
Jul	Aug	Sep

**New asylum applications in Europe <sup>3</sup>**

Jan-Sep 2018:	<b>468,000</b>
Jan-Dec 2017:	<b>819,000</b>
Jan-Dec 2016:	<b>1,323,000</b>
Jan-Dec 2015:	<b>1,471,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> [data.unhcr.org/mediterranean](http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean) as of 30 September 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Greece and Spain both include sea and land arrivals; Spain includes sea arrivals in the Mediterranean and to the Canary Islands.

<sup>3</sup> Sources: Eurostats for EU+ countries (Only partial data for August and September 2018. All data is provisional and last updated 7 November 2018); UNHCR for Eastern Europe (as of 30 June 2018), Turkey (as of 31 May 2018) and South Eastern Europe (as of 30 September 2018).

# 34,705

**Relocated in total** <sup>4</sup>
<sup>4</sup>Source: [European Commission](#), as of 30 October 2018.

 from **Greece**

## 21,999

(33% of 66,400)

 from **Italy**

## 12,706

(32% of 39,600)

# 1,755

**Returns EU-Turkey statement** <sup>12</sup>
<sup>12</sup>Source: [Ministry of Citizen Protection](#), Greece as of 30 October 2018.

some 1,400 crossing during September compared to 980 whom arrived through Evros the previous month. The most common countries of origin of arrivals by sea were Syrians (30%), Afghans (23%) and Iraqis (20%).

**ITALY:** Just over 21,100 refugees and migrants arrived by sea by the end of September, an 80% decrease compared to the same period in 2017 (over 105,410). Just under 950 refugees and migrants reached Italian shores in September, an 85% decrease compared to those who arrived in September last year (6,290). Monthly sea arrival figures in September 2018 were the lowest since February 2013. In September, 61% of arrivals by sea to Italy departed from Tunisia, 15% from Turkey and 5% from Algeria. Among the various nationalities arriving by sea in Italy in September the majority were from Tunisia (21%), followed by Eritrea (15%), and Sudan (8%). As of 30 September, over 3,250 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) reached Italian shores.

**SPAIN:** A total of 42,700 refugees and migrants have reached Spain both by land and sea so far in 2018, representing an increase of 147% compared to the same period in 2017 (17,040). In September, nearly 8,570 refugees and migrants arrived to Spain via land and sea borders of which 88% (37,400) arrived by sea. The most common nationalities of sea arrivals in Spain so far this year are Guineans (25%), Malians (16%), Moroccans (15%), Ivoirians (8%) and Gambians (7%).

**WESTERN BALKANS:** As of 30 September, some 16,140 refugees and migrants were reported to have arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina including some 3,710 who arrived in September – the increasing arrivals trend continues with a 62% increase in comparison to the 2,300 whom arrived the previous month. Among those, 34% were from Pakistan followed by Syrians (14%), Iranians (13%)

and Afghans (10%). Most have arrived via Greece and other countries. Many of the refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina attempt to move onwards through Croatia and presently there are approximately 1,450 accommodated in shelters throughout the country. In September, of the total 3,900 refugees and migrants assisted in Serbia, according to Serbian authorities, 3,410 were accommodated in 15 different governmental Reception/Transit or Asylum Centres, an increase compared to the 3,170 accommodated in August.

**Dead and Missing:** So far in 2018, 1,853 people have died or gone missing while trying to reach Europe by sea. An increase in relation to the numbers crossing to Europe via the Central Mediterranean route, 1 in every 8 people attempting the crossing in September died or are missing, compared to 1 in 49 during the course of 2017. Most deaths occurred along the Central Mediterranean route (1,245 or 67%) with 490 (26%) of the deaths along the route to Spain. The number of deaths in the Western Med (490) and Eastern Med (118) have both more than doubled compared to those in the same period last year (133 and 38, respectively). Along land routes, at least 78 refugees or migrants are known to have died so far this year at or near European borders, more than in the whole of 2017 (75). Some 51 deaths along land routes were recorded in the first eight months of 2017.

## OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey **4.0 million**

**Refugees and asylum seekers** <sup>5</sup>

 Syrian Arab Republic **3,589,000**

 Afghanistan **170,000**

 Iraq **142,000**

 Other nationalities **56,000**
<sup>5</sup> Source: UNHCR as of 30 October 2018

Ukraine **1.8 million**

**Internally Displaced Persons** <sup>6</sup> and **Conflict Affected Persons** <sup>7</sup>

 Refugees: <sup>8</sup> **3,225**

 Asylum seekers: <sup>9</sup> **5,954**

 Stateless persons: <sup>10</sup> **35,294**
<sup>6</sup> Residing more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA).
<sup>7</sup> Estimated number of conflict-affected people living along the line of contact in government-controlled areas (GCA) and non-government controlled areas (NGCA).
<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 01/07/2018
<sup>9</sup> UNHCR as of 25/10/2018
<sup>10</sup> State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 01/01/2018

# KEY DEVELOPMENTS

**Spain:** UNHCR applauded Spain and Haiti's landmark decisions to join international agreements to address statelessness.

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**Italy:** On 24 September, the Council of Ministers approved a law decree introducing important developments on asylum.

1

**Malta:** Fifty-eight distressed survivors aboard the Aquarius 2 rescue ship disembarked in Malta on 30 September.

2

**Ukraine:** UNHCR noted the decision of 4 September by the Supreme Court of Ukraine, ensuring hundreds of thousands of elderly people in the non-government controlled areas (NGCA) will have easily-available access to their pensions.

4

Includes Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)). The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**ARMENIA:** [Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with the UN Secretary General António Guterres](#) on 24 September at the UN Headquarters in New York. The Secretary-General and the Prime Minister exchanged views on the recent developments related to the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, with the Secretary-General underlining the UN's support for the important efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

**ESTONIA:** On 12 September 2018, the Parliament of Estonia adopted amendments to the Citizenship Act expanding the Estonian language learning opportunities for people who seek Estonian citizenship. The amendment will come into effect from 1 January 2019. Following amendments to the Citizenship Act, Estonia will start providing free Estonian language courses and paid study leave from work for all refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, as well as stateless persons who meet the conditions for naturalization. Language is an essential part of integration and can help people pursue productive lives and contribute to their new communities.

**GREECE:** The increased arrivals on the Aegean islands in September have exacerbated the already critical conditions in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs). Many reports by the media and aid

organizations covered the situation ([MSF](#), [HRW](#), [IRC](#), [AI](#)), including a [report](#) from International Rescue Committee (IRC) stating that mental health needs in Moria remain a key concern. UNHCR has [urged](#) Greece to address overcrowded reception centres on Aegean islands, particularly on Lesbos and Samos. In Lesbos, the number of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) reached the highest this year on 20 September with 565 UASC on the island, 406 of whom in Moria. Asylum Service staff on Lesbos [sounded the alarm](#) over the conditions in Moria, claiming that if arrival flows continue at the current rate, the Service will not be able to keep the situation under control. This month the Government increased transfers from the islands in response to the situation and 1,550 of those eligible were transferred to the mainland. This was assisted by the additional accommodation the Ministry of Migration Policy contracted through fast-track procedures in the mainland. Nevertheless, more accommodation is quickly needed, particularly as overcrowding is increasingly affecting many mainland sites, also as a result of the increased land arrivals this year. In some areas, frustration and tension amongst asylum-seekers and refugees has increased. In Malakasa, a clash between Afghan and Syrian nationals on 28 September resulted in the death of a Syrian asylum-seeker. UNHCR and partners continue to support the Government of Greece

who leads the refugee response, including through accelerating the transfer of eligible asylum-seekers from the islands to the mainland to ease the situation on the islands.

**HUNGARY:** The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) published a [report](#) on Hungary criticizing the authorities for reported ill-treatment during forced removals, the lack of safeguards to prevent such ill-treatment and the mandatory detention of asylum-seekers in the transit zones. The CPT observed that physical conditions in the transit zones have improved but that the environment remains unsuitable for asylum-seekers, including families with small children and UASC. The Committee recommends revising the policy regarding the holding of foreigners in transit zones and that a no-tolerance message on ill-treatment of detained persons is communicated to police officers from high-ranking authorities.

**ITALY:** The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi and the Regional Bureau for Europe Director Ms. Pascale Moreau visited Italy between 12-14 September. During the visit, they met with refugees and attended meetings with Italy's President of the Republic, Prime Minister, Ministers of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Transport. The High Commissioner also attended a press conference at the Foreign Press Association where he answered questions regarding the situation in Libya, search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and safe legal pathways among other things. Grandi also delivered a speech at the conference on the Iraqi-Syrian crisis at the Pontificia Università Urbaniana at the Vatican.

On 24 September, the Council of Ministers approved **1** a law decree introducing important and worrying developments on asylum. The law decree approved by the Council of Ministers lists provisions including the abolition of humanitarian protection, inclusion of other specific forms of protection (e.g. protection for health related matters) and limitations to residence registration for asylum-seekers. In a [note to the press](#), UNHCR confirmed that it will share technical comments with the Government of Italy, stressing the need for provisions to comply with the principles enshrined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

**MALTA:** Fifty-eight distressed survivors aboard the **2** Aquarius 2 rescue ship disembarked in Malta on 30 September. UNHCR issued a statement showing appreciation for Malta for its decision to allow the rescued people from the NGO ship Aquarius to be disembarked, ending their ordeal after days at sea. Upon their arrival and screening France, Germany, Portugal and Spain offered to receive these people

from Malta. UNHCR [commended](#) the leadership and solidarity of all five countries which has been key to resolving this situation and should be an example to others. Humanity, compassion and unwavering commitment to saving lives and ensuring access to international protection for those in need must be kept central to the question of how Europe manages its frontiers, on sea or land.

UNHCR continues to encourage the establishment of predictable arrangements in the Mediterranean for the disembarkation of people rescued at sea.

**SPAIN:** UNHCR [applauded](#) Spain and Haiti's landmark decisions to join international agreements **3** to address statelessness, a situation faced by millions of people deprived of basic rights because they are not considered as nationals by any State. Spain, which was already party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, adhered to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness on 25 September. The country also established a national statelessness status determination procedure in 2001 and has amended its legislation to help avoid new statelessness cases.

**UKRAINE:** On the 4 September, The Supreme Court **4** of Ukraine issued a decision, ensuring hundreds of thousands of elderly, internally displaced people and residents of the non-government controlled areas (NGCA) in eastern Ukraine will have easily-available access to their pensions. Before the ruling, burdensome logistical and legal requirements meant many vulnerable people were unable to receive their monthly payments. Less than half of the 1.2 million people claiming a pension in the NGCA in August 2014 were still doing so in July 2018. "This decision is a lifeline for thousands of elderly people who were unable to receive the pensions they rely on, and it's plainly the right thing to do," said Pascale Moreau, Director of UNHCR's Europe Bureau. "While recognizing Ukraine's ongoing reform efforts, we urge the Ukrainian authorities to rapidly implement the decision, and bring relief to the many people who rely on these payments for life's basic essentials." Five years in to the conflict, eastern Ukraine continues to endure intense fighting. UNHCR continues to urge the international community to support the 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the conflict.

# REFUGEE STORIES

## It's time to make education a priority

By Vera Dragovic-O'Donnell, UNHCR Serbia



Limited access to education magnifies the challenges of life in exile – finding work, staying healthy, holding on to dignity and hope. It also limits the potential of refugee women and girls to rebuild their lives, protect themselves against abuse and take a lead in shaping the lives of their communities.

For the second year, Serbia has been encouraging and supporting comprehensive enrolment of refugee and migrant children to public schools across the country.

The Ahmadi\* family of seven fled Afghanistan almost three years ago, reaching Serbia in 2016. Since arriving in Serbia, the family has been accommodated in an Asylum Centre near the Serbian capital Belgrade. When last year Serbian authorities opened doors to public schools to all refugee and migrant children, Shanzai and Shahay who missed school for a while could finally go back to classes.

Shanzai and Shahay attend school regularly, taking a mini shuttle bus provided by the local authorities every day. The girls say they like their Serbian friends and the school atmosphere.

## German mayor sets example of how to welcome refugees

By Josie Le Blond in Altena, Germany

Mayor Andreas Hollstein sees refugees as a benefit for his community and when unprecedented numbers arrived in Europe seeking safety, he volunteered to take more than his town's fair share.

Since then, he has worked tirelessly to make sure the newcomers are welcome in his town of Altena in western Germany and to create an atmosphere conducive to integration, an achievement for which he has been nominated for the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award.

The town has struggled in recent years. Factories have closed and the population has dwindled. Now the mayor



has managed to turn things around, promoting a vision of a community thriving once again, essential to the long-term wellbeing of the refugees and the people hosting them. He has highlighted the positive effects of the refugee influx, stressing the potential and skills brought individually by the newcomers.

The advantages of improving refugees' self-reliance and enabling them to have access to the labour market are recognised by the mayor, volunteers and refugees alike. It boosts the local economy and benefits the host population, while providing long-term opportunities for newcomers.

## UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award

The annual prize honours those who have gone to extraordinary lengths to support refugees and displaced people.

### 2018 Winner

[Dr. Evan Atar Adaha](#), surgeon and medical director at a hospital in Bunj, north-eastern South Sudan, is the 2018 winner of UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award. The award is in recognition of Dr. Atar's for his outstanding 20-year commitment in providing medical services to people forced to flee conflict. Dr. Atar treats all those in need of care regardless of their background - a commitment that has earned him the respect of refugee and local people alike His work shows the difference that one person can make, even when facing incredible odds.



### 2018 Regional Finalists

UNHCR has announced four finalists for the Nansen Refugee Award. These are individuals or organisations short-listed out of more than 450 nominees for the main award and whose work UNHCR wanted to highlight as particularly outstanding.

They are:

[Samira Harnish](#) (USA) for setting up 'Women of the World in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her organisation has helped over 1,000 refugee women become self-reliant in the US.

[Mayor Andreas Hollstein and the volunteers of Altena](#), Germany for tireless work in welcoming refugees to their small town – taking in more than their official quota.

[Tuenjai Deetes](#) for devoting four decades of her life to ending statelessness in Thailand

[Reclaim Childhood](#) from Jordan for 500 empowering refugee girls through sport and building better links with their local communities.

