UNHCR IN THE MARMARA REGION OF TÜRKİYE

UNHCR in Türkiye
January 2026

11 provinces of the Marmara Region are covered by UNHCR İstanbul Field Office.

622,500 refugees (approx.) and asylum seekers (Syrian and other nationalities) reside in UNHCR İstanbul's area of responsibility.
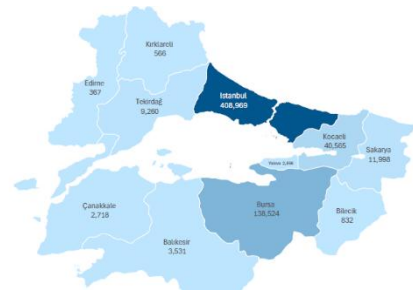
Top 5 provinces with the highest number of refugees in the region are İstanbul, Bursa, Kocaeli, Sakarya and Tekirdağ.

17,941 core relief items, including food, water, hygiene kits, and clothing distributed in 2025.

Context

To facilitate a focused and efficient implementation of the refugee response, the UNHCR Türkiye operation has delegated overall operational responsibilities to four field units serving refugees and the host community across the country. **İstanbul Field Office** plays a critical role, as the Marmara Region hosts one of the largest refugee populations in Türkiye, with 622,500 refugees from Syria and other countries across 11 provinces. The Field Office (FO) also oversees the Western land borders and monitors onward movement trends and pushback incidents.

Areas of responsibility of UNHCR İstanbul Field Office.

Key Activities

Protection Monitoring and Services: UNHCR ensures that refugees have access to registration by establishing referral mechanisms with the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs). Additionally, UNHCR actively works to improve refugees' access to legal protection, particularly for refugees at risk of deportation, in collaboration with bar associations and partners. UNHCR prioritizes child protection, the prevention of gender-based violence, and the empowerment of refugee women and children through collaboration with partners and public institutions. UNHCR also collaborates with the Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services (PDoFSS) to provide social services to refugees, support their inclusion in national mechanisms, and facilitate training and coordination with NGOs. The FO also established strong ties with municipalities to mainstream refugee inclusion in municipal services.

Community-Based Protection: UNHCR takes a community-based approach to actively involve refugees in various protection interventions. This method not only empowers refugees but also ensures their voices and needs are considered in decision-making processes. To facilitate these efforts, the FO has established a coordination platform that collaborates closely with Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs). These RLOs maintain extensive networks within refugee communities, enabling them to effectively identify and reach the most vulnerable individuals and families. Partnership with RLOs enables UNHCR to respond to the unique challenges.

Humanitarian Assistance: UNHCR collaborates with partners to provide core relief items for people apprehended/intercepted during irregular crossing attempts towards Europe and the survivors of pushbacks to meet their basic and urgent needs, including food, water, hygiene kits, and clothing. UNHCR's advocacy efforts have ensured the delivery of relief items to PDMMs, PDoFSSs, Gendarmerie (law enforcement force), and Turkish Land Forces.

Coordination and Partnerships: UNHCR actively engages with public institutions, local government structures, UN agencies, and NGOs to encourage their involvement and contributions to coordination efforts. As municipalities are one of the key service providers for refugees, the FO promotes the institutionalization of municipal responses and the enhancement of refugee support and integration.

Voluntary Repatriation Monitoring: UNHCR monitors voluntary returns of Syrian refugees and observes the interviews in Istanbul and Bursa PDMMs, as well as at Sabiha Gökçen and Istanbul Airports and Arnavutköy temporary accomodation centre to confirm the voluntary character of returns and address protection concerns.

Funding Information

UNHCR is grateful for generous contributions from its donors, who have provided both earmarked and flexible funding to support its operations in Türkiye.

US$ 210 million
UNHCR requested for the operation in Türkiye for 2026.

Funded 38%
Funding Gap 62%

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