



MIXED
MIGRATION
PLATFORM



**MIXED MIGRATION
MONTHLY SUMMARY**

**DECEMBER
2016**

MIDDLE EAST

This summary is produced by the Mixed Migration Platform (MMP) and covers inter- and intra-regional displacement and displacement-induced mobility, drawing widely from available sources. Given the complexity of current migration trends in the Middle East, this summary gives a consolidated snapshot of mixed migration in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. Current mixed migration issues in Israel/oPt fall within the remit of the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS).

A note on terminology: Throughout the report the term 'refugees and other migrants' is used to include all persons in mixed migration flows (this may include asylum seekers, trafficked persons, refugees, migrants, and other people on the move). Any reference to specific groups is consistent with the original source.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout December, escalating conflict in Syria and Iraq, coupled with worsening winter conditions saw thousands of people newly displaced and increasingly vulnerable. With at least 6,000 Iraqis fleeing to Syria from escalating conflict in Mosul and more than 40,000 newly internally displaced from this conflict, temperatures as cold as -5 degrees Celsius and winter conditions throughout the region are posing additional challenges for those displaced. The cold weather has also affected some 85,000 Syrians trapped at the berm outside Syria's border with Jordan, as well as the estimated 41% of refugees and other migrants in Lebanon who live in substandard housing. Two Syrian refugees reportedly lost their lives trying to cross into Lebanon through snowy mountain passes in December. Between 24 November and 30 December some 110,000 people have been displaced from Eastern Aleppo, bringing

the total number of IDPs in Syria to more than 6.3 million. Thousands of Syrians are attempting to flee this conflict by entering Turkey, though borders remain essentially closed. Turkish Land Forces apprehended more than 26,000 people trying to cross from Syria into Turkey by land, a significant number, though less than in recent months. Some 2,400 refugees and other migrants were also apprehended by Turkish authorities trying to exit the country via the Evros river at Turkey's land border with Greece.

The following sections of this report describe monthly developments related to mixed migration by country, including reported arrivals, departures, internal displacement relevant to cross-border movement, and discussion of relevant policy changes.

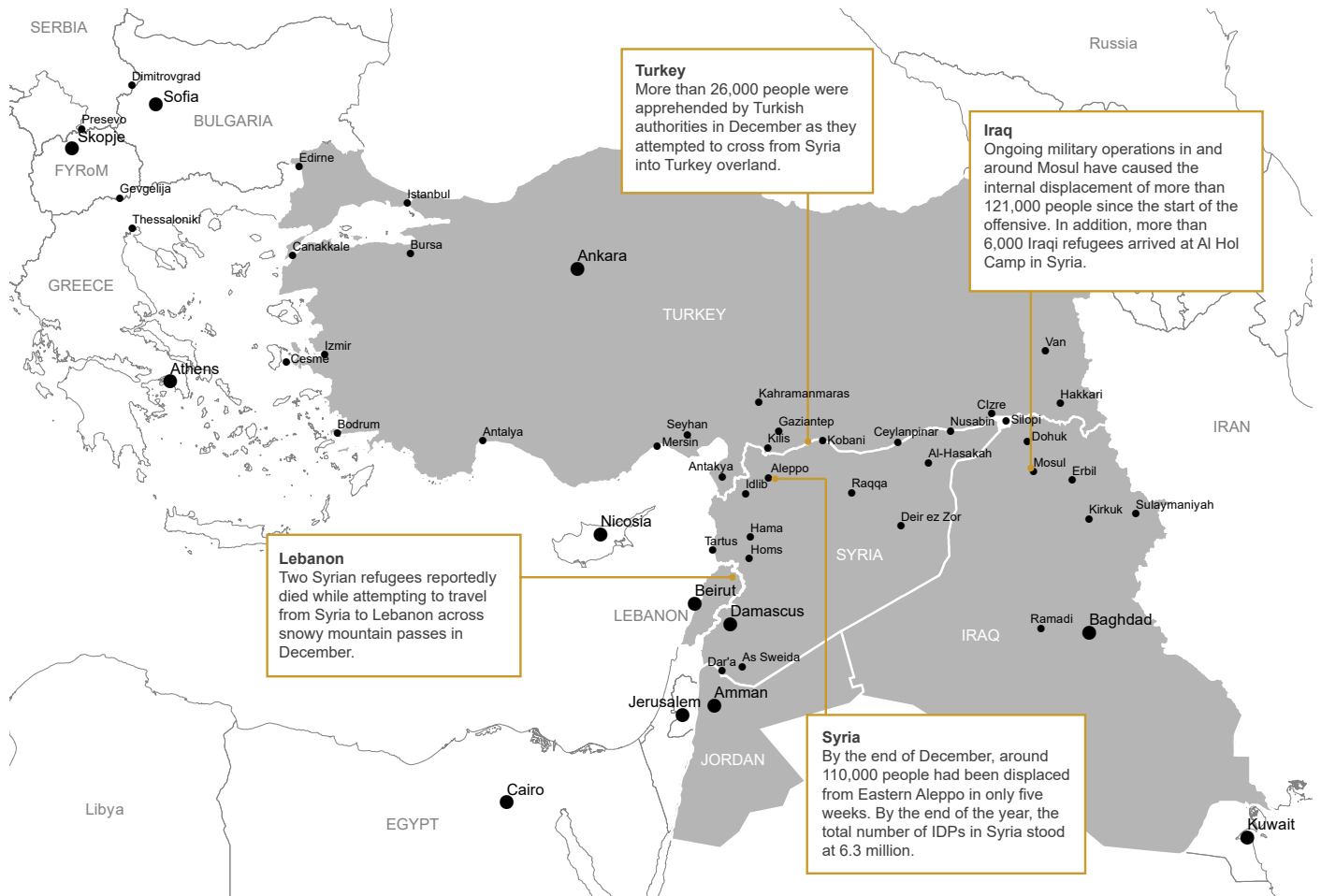


Figure 1: Overview of key developments across the Middle East (December 2016)

IRAQ

Arrivals: As in recent months, no figures were available regarding new arrivals to Iraq in December. An increase in the number of **Syrian** refugees in the country, recorded by UNHCR in December, may indicate that Syrians are continuing to enter Iraq (see Refugees and Other Migrants in Iraq below).

According to local authorities, some **1,400 Iraqis** voluntarily returned from Syria in December, as part of a government sponsored voluntary repatriation initiative. In recent months **reports** have indicated a **growing** number of Iraqis **voluntarily returning** from **Europe**. Between January 2015 and June 2016, IOM assisted **10,694** Iraqis to return home, with an unknown number returning to Iraq unassisted. **Turkish Land Forces** reported the apprehension of two people entering Iraq from Turkey between 1 October and 31 December.

Departures: Ongoing fighting in and around **Mosul** city has led to escalated displacement both within Iraq (see Internal Displacement below) and internationally. Since the advent of intensified violence in the Mosul area on **17 October**, UNHCR reports that **6,204** Iraqis have fled to Syria (as of **31 December**) and that, according to WFP, nearly **12,000** Iraqis have sought shelter at Al-Hol camp, in Hasakeh governorate, Syria. **Al Jazeera**, however, is reporting that more than 14,000 Iraqis fled to Syria from Mosul in November alone. Additionally, between 1 and 30 December some **234** people were apprehended by Turkish Land Forces while attempting to cross Iraq’s border into Turkey. Though Turkish Land Forces figures do not indicate where specific apprehensions were made, **Silopi** and **Çukurca** are the main entry points from Iraq to Turkey.

At the end of December, UNHCR reported that neighbouring countries in the region host some **239,077** Iraqi refugees. **61,005** of them are registered by UNHCR in Jordan – an increase of 358 people from **30 November** figures. According to the Turkish Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM), at the end of December there were **130,076** Iraqi asylum applicants in Turkey, an increase of 1,966 from **30 November**. As of 1 December, **24,970** Iraqi refugees were present in Syria. **28,260** Iraqi refugees were registered in Iran as of early 2016. UNHCR reports that in December, some 1,665 refugees and other migrants arrived by sea in Greece, **110** of whom were Iraqi (6.6%). This marks a 50% decrease from the 220 Iraqis that arrived in Greece in November. Iraqis comprise **15%** of all sea arrivals to Greece in 2016, the third largest group. Recent reports from **IOM** and **MEDMIG** reveal that the key drivers for refugees leaving Iraq include security concerns, lack of social justice, political and economic instability, the threat of the so-called Islamic State, and the risk of kidnapping by both state and non-state actors.

IOM research conducted in August and September addresses the risks Iraqis face when travelling to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean Route and, in some cases, returning home. At the time of the fieldwork the three main routes for exiting Iraq included flying to Turkey from Baghdad, entering Turkey by land or air from KRI (Kurdistan Region of Iraq), and entering Turkey by land via Syria. Study respondents reportedly faced bombing and crossfire, family separation, dwindling resources, arrest, and psychological trauma during their journey, often moving with the assistance of smugglers both across borders, and within Syria and Iraq.

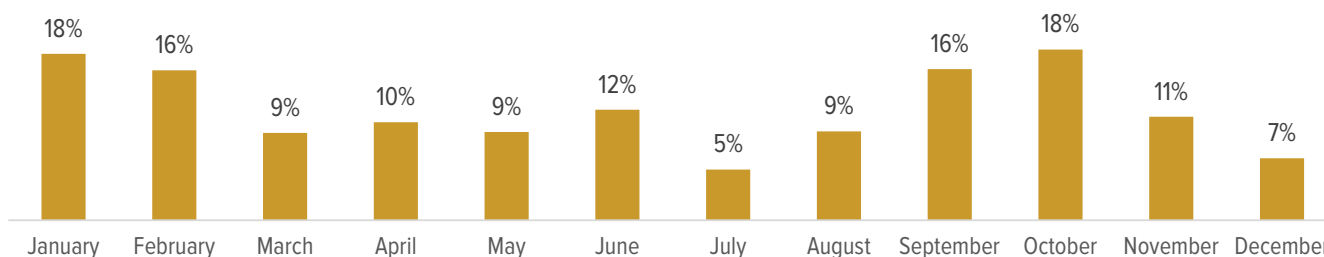


Figure 2: Proportion of Iraqis among monthly sea arrivals to Greece in 2016 (source: UNHCR)

Refugees and other Migrants in Iraq: As of 31 December, UNHCR had registered **230,836** Syrian refugees in Iraq, an increase of 1,942 individuals (0.8%) from 30 November figures. 97% of these Syrians live in KRI. Despite recent month-to-month increases, the number of registered Syrians in Iraq

remains lower than at its June 2016 peak of **249,395**. The number of non-Syrian refugees in Iraq stood at **47,431** people in September, although nationalities were not disclosed. **48,500** stateless people were reported as of end November.

Refugees and other migrants in Iraq


	Syrians	Others	Stateless
 Population of concern (as of 31 December)	230,836	47,431	48,500
% change since Nov.	▲ 0.84%	none	none

Figure 3: Refugees and other migrants in Iraq (source: UNHCR)

Internal Displacement: With the re-intensification of military operations in Mosul on **29 December**, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix reports that **121,158** Iraqis have been newly displaced (as of 31 December), 58.5% more (44,694 individuals) than 30 November figures. Within four days of the 29 December escalation in conflict, some **9,000** people had fled Mosul, with the average daily displacement figure increasing by 50% from that date. Displacement has largely been to government and humanitarian run **camps** to the south and east where **cold temperatures** are significantly affecting the newly displaced. UNHCR also reports some **75,000** people displaced from the district of Hawiga in Kirkuk since August due to increased military operations. An estimated **25,000** people were newly displaced

from Hawiga in December alone. According to UN figures, **386** Iraqi civilians were killed by violence, armed conflict and acts of terrorism in December, a significant decrease from the **1,856** deaths reported in November, but with a noticeable increase in bombings towards the end of the month.

In Iraq as a whole, **3,064,146** people have been internally displaced between January 2014 and December 2016 as a result of ongoing violence, a decrease from the 3,113,958 IDPs reported in November. This ongoing decline is likely related to the increasing number of reported returnees from other parts of the country: **1,273,824** in December compared to 1,116,658 in November.

JORDAN

Arrivals: While December arrival figures are difficult to verify due to restricted access, current arrivals to Jordan are expected to be limited. The country’s northern and northeastern borders with Syria and Iraq have remained **closed militarized zones** since 21 June, following a **suicide bombing** at the border near Rukban. Up to **85,000** displaced Syrians remain stranded outside the Jordanian border in a remote and arid location known as ‘**the berm**.’ As of 3 December, some **6,441** makeshift shelters were identified via satellite imagery near the Rukban border crossing, while **1,358** were identified at the

Hadalat crossing as of 12 November. These figures represent a **decrease** from the peaks of previous months, (**8,295** people were identified at Rukban in September, and **2,132** at Hadalat in July) though the small size and irregularity of the shelters make accurate figures difficult to obtain.

Winter conditions in December continued to **worsen** the already **dire situation** for people stranded at the berm, where limited **food**, water, and shelter as well as **disease, malnutrition, starvation, and death** have all been reported. **Humanitarian assistance** to the area

resumed on 22 November (the first such assistance since August) at a new **distribution point** north-west of Rukban. The **assistance** included **winter supplies**, food, hygiene kits, diapers, and infrastructure for water pumping and health services. Humanitarian groups have expressed **concern**, however, that the resumed aid is only a ‘band-aid’ solution and will not protect displaced Syrians from the conflict they are fleeing. **WFP** and **UNHCR** reported that aid distribution to the berm was suspended for several days in December due to heavy crowding, conflict and poor weather conditions at the distribution site.

Departures: Data on departures from Jordan is limited, though sporadic **returns** to Syria have been reported throughout 2016 and likely continued in December. The declining population of Zaatari camp (79,597 as of 19 December) has been **attributed**, in

part, to refugees voluntarily returning to Syria, though return figures are unavailable.

Refugees and other Migrants in Jordan: With an estimated **87 refugees** per 1000 inhabitants, the second highest number in the world, Jordan hosts refugees from **44** countries. As of 31 December, some **655,344** Syrians were registered by UNHCR in Jordan, an increase of only 30 people since **30 November**. Jordanian **leadership** and the 2015 Population **Census**, however, indicate that roughly **1.3 million** Syrians reside in the country. Additionally, UNRWA reports that as of October nearly **17,000** Palestinian refugees have been displaced to Jordan by the Syrian conflict. At the end of 2015, more than **2.1 million** Palestinian refugees were registered by UNRWA in Jordan.

Refugees and other migrants in Jordan


	Syrians	Iraqis	Sudanese	Yemenis	Others
 Population of concern (as of 31 December)	655,344	61,005	3,266	5,697	2,147
% change since Nov.	0.0%	▲ 0.6%	▲ 0.2%	▲ 8.4%	none

Figure 4: Refugees and other migrants in Jordan (source: UNHCR)

61,005 Iraqi refugees were registered by UNHCR in Jordan, as of 31 December, an increase of 358 people from **30 November** figures. Additionally, UNHCR reported **5,697 Yemenis** in Jordan on 31 December, an increase of 479 people (8.4%) since the figures from **November**, and an overall increase

of more than 62% since the start of **2016**. Some 3,266 Sudanese ‘persons of concern’ were also reported in December, a small increase from the 3,252 reported in November. Some 636,000 Egyptians, 22,700 Libyans and 197,000 other nationalities are also **reported to be living** in Jordan.

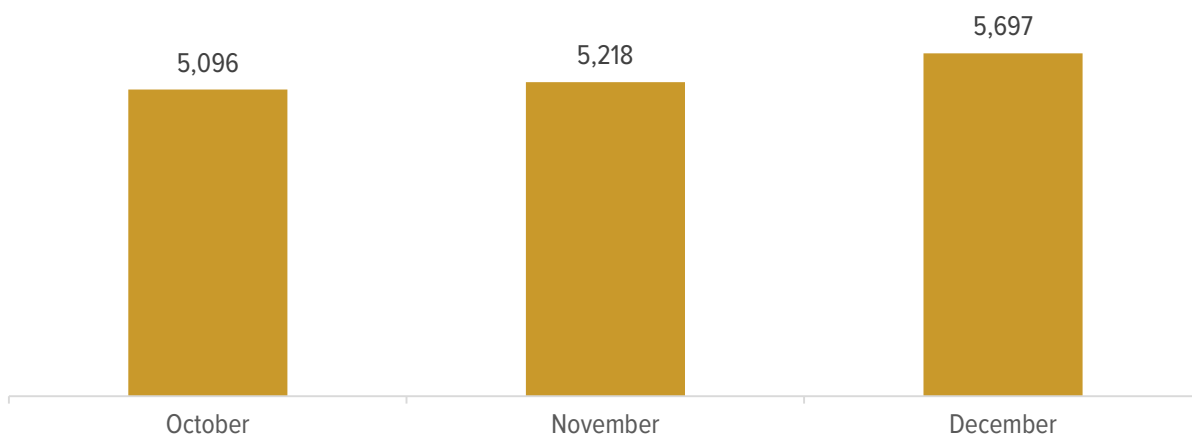


Figure 5: Increasing number of Yemenis in Jordan (source: UNHCR)

LEBANON

Arrivals: Data on arrivals has been limited since Lebanon effectively ended its ‘open door policy’ to Syrian refugees in January 2015, introducing more restrictive visa entry requirements. In October 2014, the Lebanese Social Affairs Minister, announced that the country is, in effect, no longer receiving refugees, though occasional reports indicate that some Syrians are crossing the border irregularly. In October, UNICEF reported that some 650 families had arrived from Syria, while the deaths of two Syrians entering Lebanon in December (see Vulnerability and Protection below) indicate that an unknown number of people are still entering the country irregularly.

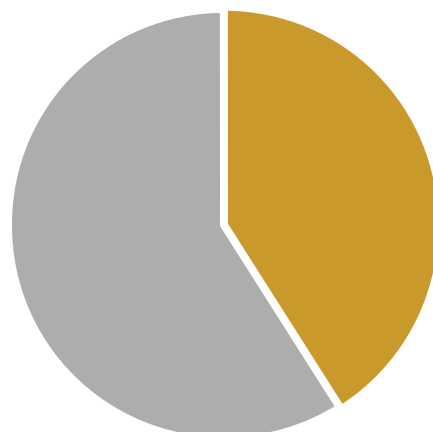
Departures: In recent months, information on departures from Lebanon has been very limited. Visa requirements implemented in January 2016, for Syrians entering Turkey from a third country by air or sea, effectively closed the transit route through Lebanon. Prior to this, thousands of Syrian refugees and other migrants passed through Lebanon each week en route to Turkey by boat (via Tripoli) or plane and, in many cases, onwards to Europe.

Refugees and other Migrants in Lebanon: As of 30 September (the most recently available data), a total of 1,017,433 Syrian persons of concern were registered by UNHCR in Lebanon, 24.2% of the country’s total population. The government of Lebanon does not recognise people fleeing Syria as refugees, but estimates that the total number of Syrians in the country is closer to 1.5 million, giving Lebanon the highest concentration of refugees in

proportion to a country’s population in the world: approximately every third person in Lebanon is a refugee. These figures have not been updated for some time. The number of Syrians registered in Lebanon has been in decline since May 2015, a result of the ongoing deactivation of refugee registration in Lebanon’s national refugee database and the government ordered suspension of new registrations on 6 May 2015. Prohibitive residency renewal fees have driven many Syrians into becoming undocumented, or moving onwards to third countries. Human Rights Watch estimates that some 70% of Syrians in Lebanon lack legal residency.

As of November, some 277,985 Palestinian Refugees were reportedly in Lebanon (PRL). Recently revised 2016 UNRWA figures estimated the number of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon to be 31,500, compared to previous estimates above 40,000 in 2015.

Vulnerability and Protection: Harsh winter conditions continued to affect vulnerable refugees and other migrants in December, an estimated 41% of whom were living in substandard shelters susceptible to rain and cold temperatures. Some 100 incidents of tents collapsing due to winter conditions have been reported in makeshift refugee settlements. With average winter temperatures ranging between -5 and 10 degrees Celsius, the typically coldest regions in Lebanon have the highest concentration of refugees. IOM reported that two Syrian refugees died entering Lebanon via snowy mountain passes.



41% of refugees live in sub-standard shelters

Figure 6: Proportion of refugees in Lebanon living in sub-standard shelters (source: UNOCHA)

Refugees in Lebanon face steadily worsening conditions including growing **food insecurity**, **inadequate shelter**, **child labour**, and **violence**, details of which are documented in a new study by IRC. A mounting ‘**anti-refugee discourse**’ directed towards **Syrians** is adding to the vulnerability of refugees and other migrants in Lebanon. In December, the

government created a new ministerial post for **refugee affairs**, though the remit of this post remains unclear.

SYRIA

Arrivals: In December, the largest recorded numbers of new arrivals to Syria came from neighbouring Iraq where **fighting** in Mosul continued throughout December. Several thousand Iraqis have crossed into Syria since the Mosul offensive began, however published estimates vary considerably. UNHCR reports that as of **31 December**, **6,204** Iraqis have fled to Syria from Mosul since **17 October**. This is an increase of 2,833 people compared to **November** figures (3,321 people). WFP reports that nearly **12,000 Iraqis** have sought shelter at Al-Hol camp, in Hasakeh governorate, Syria since October, while **Al Jazeera** reported that more than 14,000 Iraqis fled to Syria from Mosul in November alone.

As of December, UNHCR reported **46,118** refugees and asylum seekers in Syria, an increase of 3,047 people (7%) since **November**. Roughly **24,970** of these are Iraqi, with significant numbers of Afghans, Sudanese, Somalis, Pakistanis, and other **nationalities** also present. An estimated **450,000** Palestinian refugees also remain in Syria, 280,000 of whom have been internally displaced by conflict.

Departures: Millions of Syrians continue to be displaced both within Syria and internationally as the conflict continues into its sixth year. As of 31 December, UNHCR figures indicate that **4,863,863** Syrian refugees were registered in countries neighbouring Syria and in North Africa (more than 29,000 people). This marks an increase of 54,076 (1.1%) compared to the 4,809,787 people reported by the same source on 4 December.

Legal routes allowing people to leave Syria remain limited, due to growing restrictions on **borders** surrounding the country. The situation is one of tightly controlled land borders, strict visa requirements to enter **Lebanon**, a closed **Jordanian** border, visa

requirements for entry to **Turkey** by sea or air, and the construction of a **border fence** along the Turkey-Syria border.

The most recent available figures indicate that as of 31 December, **230,836** Syrians refugees were registered in Iraq, **655,344** in Jordan, and **116,013** in Egypt. Turkey’s Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) figures indicate that **2,823,987** Syrians were being granted temporary protection as of 29 December, while **1,017,433** Syrians were registered by UNHCR in Lebanon as of 30 September. Estimates for the number of Syrian refugees in Sudan, one of only two countries where Syrians can still fly without a visa, range from **5,515 registered** as of August, to unofficial estimates of **up to 250,000**.

En Route to Europe: In December, UNHCR reported 1,665 arrivals by sea to Greece, **258** of whom were Syrian. This marks a 326 person decrease in total arrivals compared to November, with 352 fewer **Syrians** arriving in Greece compared to the previous month. Reports indicate that Syrians are also attempting to enter Greece by land via the **Evros river** at Turkey’s border with Greece (see Turkey section below). Accurate figures for the number of people entering Greece using this route are unavailable, though Greek police estimate that authorities deter roughly **4,000 people** from crossing the river each month. Turkish Land Forces apprehended some **2,430** people trying to exit Turkey at the Greek border in December.

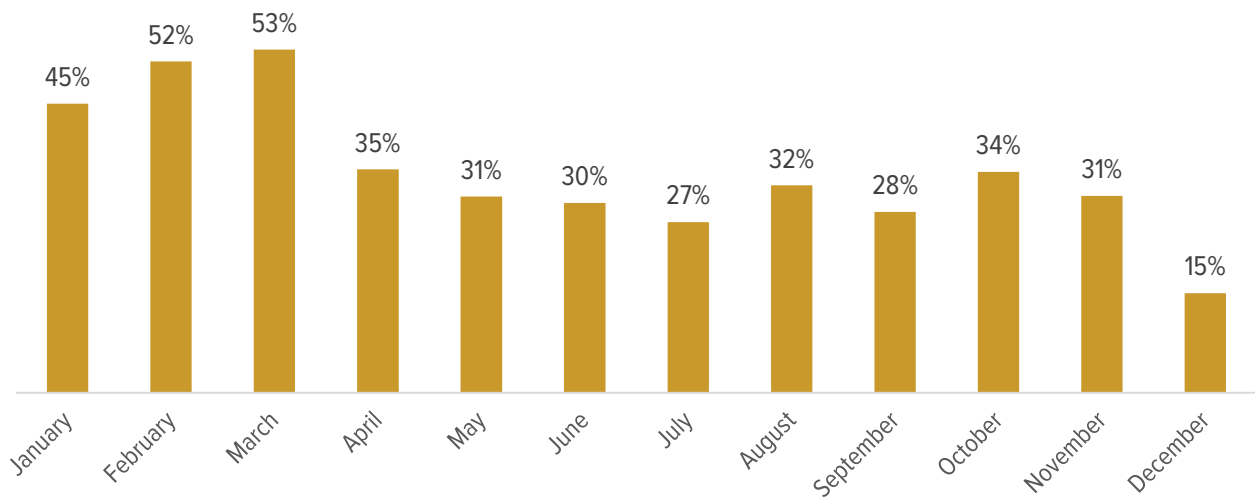


Figure 7: Proportion of Syrians among monthly sea arrivals to Greece in 2016 (source: UNHCR)

Syrians are also reportedly entering Europe **on foot** via Bulgaria’s ‘green border’ with Turkey. Some **18,802** people have been apprehended attempting to enter, exit or reside in the country ‘irregularly’ in 2016 alone. Syrians, along with Afghans, Iraqis, Pakistanis, and others have all been reported to use this route. For most people this route to Europe involves days **on foot**, over currently snowy and mountainous terrain. In recent months, violent ‘**pushbacks**’ and corruption have been reported at the Turkish-Bulgarian border with one **media report** indicating that Bulgarian authorities have admitted to the use of dogs and violent beatings against refugees and migrants.

Violent ‘**pushbacks**’ and corruption have also been reported at the Turkish-Bulgarian border where some informants from the border police indicate there is an order “not to let anyone through”. A **media report** indicates that Bulgarian authorities have admitted to the use of dogs and violent beatings against refugees and migrants at the ‘green border’ with Turkey, as well as a policy of sending people back to Turkey at unofficial border crossings.

Internal Displacement: In early December, major military operations by government forces in Eastern Aleppo displaced some **90,000** people (mainly

within the city), which came under full **government control** on **22 December**. This brought the total number of people displaced from Eastern Aleppo between 24 November and 30 December to **110,000**. Prior to this an estimated **36,000** people were **evacuated** from Aleppo with the **support** of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Syrian Arab red Crescent (SARC) between **15 and 22 December**. At the same time some **1,200** people were evacuated from besieged towns in Idlib governorate. According to WFP, **3,300** people were displaced from eastern rural Homs in the first half of December following the so-called Islamic State’s recapture of Palmyra City. Additionally, **6,000** people were displaced from the Wadi Barada area of Rural Damascus due to escalating hostilities in late December. WFP also reports that ‘**thousands**’ of people were displaced by fighting in the southern governorate of Dar’a in December, though exact numbers were not available.

As of 31 December, some **6,325,978** IDPs were reported in Syria, with the majority in Rural Damascus governorate, followed by Aleppo and Idlib governorates. This marks an increase of 180,974 (2.9%) from the **6,145,004** IDPs reported in November.

TURKEY

Arrivals: In December Turkish Land Forces reported the apprehension of **26,779** people irregularly

crossing the land border into Turkey, a decrease of 1,444 people compared to November (**28,223**), and

significantly less than October (42,342). Of the reported December apprehensions, 26,342 (98.4%) occurred at the Syrian border, 234 at the Iraqi border, 117 at the Iranian border, 3 at the Georgian border, and 83 at the Greek border. *Der Spiegel* reports that

refugees and other migrants pay smugglers roughly €1,000 to cross the Turkish border from Syria, and that an estimated one in every thousand attempts is successful.

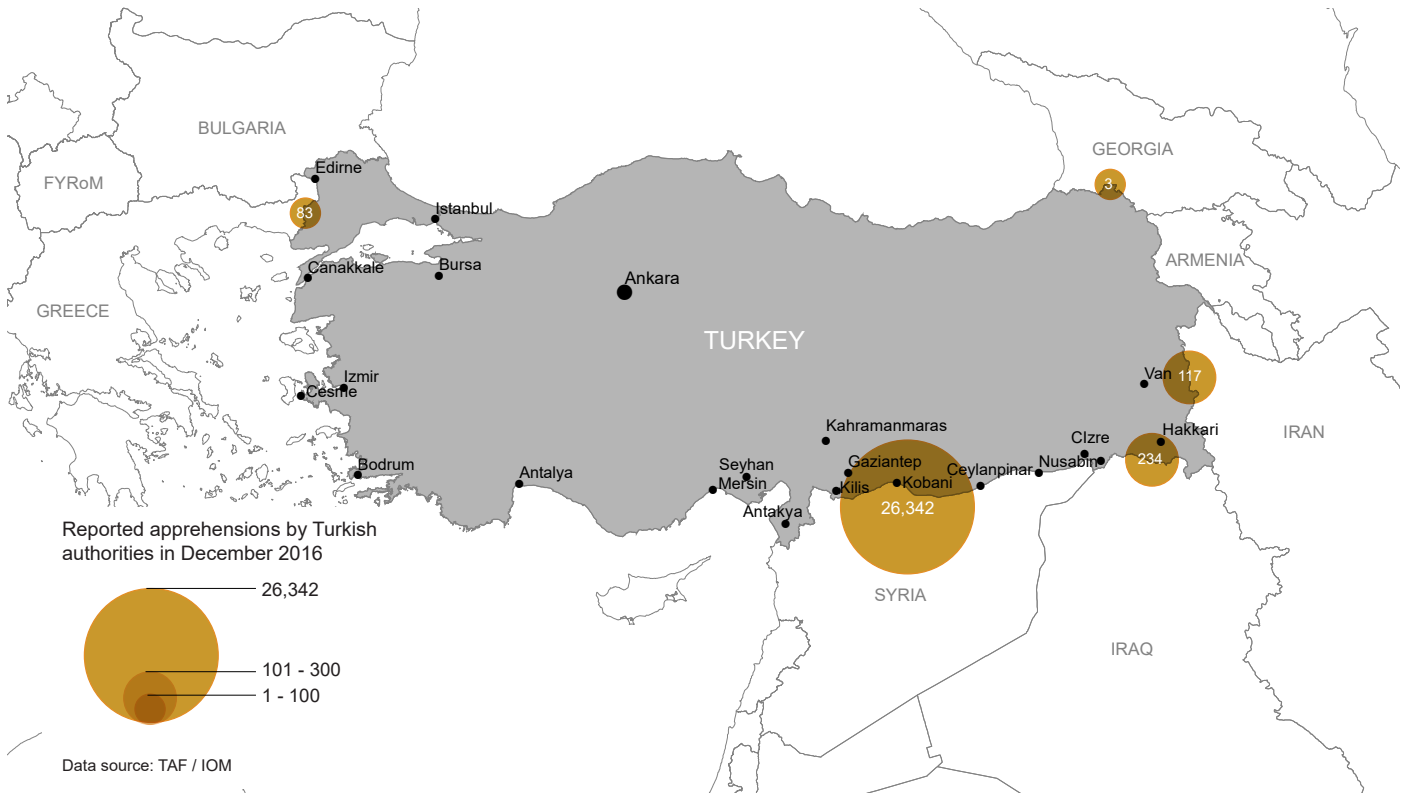


Figure 8: Apprehensions at Turkey’s land borders, by country

As of 29 December, Turkey’s Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) reported the number of Syrians granted temporary protection in the country as 2,823,987 individuals, an increase of 40,370 people (1.5%) from 1 December figures. Some 438 Syrians were admitted into Turkey for medical reasons in December. Turkey remains host to the highest number of Syrian refugees in the world. Also in December, UNHCR reported the presence of 291,209 asylum applicants in Turkey, 130,076 of whom were Iraqi (an increase of 1,966 people from November); 118,116 Afghan (a decrease of 4,270 people); 31,592 Iranian (an increase of 830 people); 3,463 Somali (a decrease of 28 people); and 7,962 from various other countries.

While informal returns from Greece to Turkey, particularly across the Evros River, have been reported in recent months, there are no figures available for December. The 83 people apprehended by Turkish Land Forces entering Turkey at the Greek land border in December, however, indicate that refugees and other migrants are continuing to use this return route.

Between 27 and 28 December, a reported 1,500

ethnic Turkmen arrived in Turkey from Syria after fleeing violence in Northern Iraq. Government officials have told Reuters that an estimated 2,000 more people are waiting in Syria’s A’zaz province, hoping to cross into Turkey.

Departures: In December the Turkish Coast Guard reported 19 ‘irregular migration incidents’ in the seas surrounding Turkey involving 781 ‘irregular migrants’, a decrease from the 34 incidents involving 1,856 people reported in November. This decrease is also reflected in the lower number of sea arrivals to Greece. UNHCR reported a total of 1,665 arrivals to Greece in December, an average of 54 arrivals each day and 326 people less than November. Of these December arrivals in Greece, 261 were Pakistani, 258 Syrian, 202 Algerian, 170 Afghan, and 110 Iraqi. These figures are significantly less than the thousands of refugees and other migrants who arrived in Greece on a daily basis prior to the closing of the Balkan Route and the implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement on 20 March, but also reflect seasonal changes, when colder weather and rougher seas make crossing more dangerous. A total of 173,450 arrivals by sea to Greece were recorded by UNHCR in 2016.

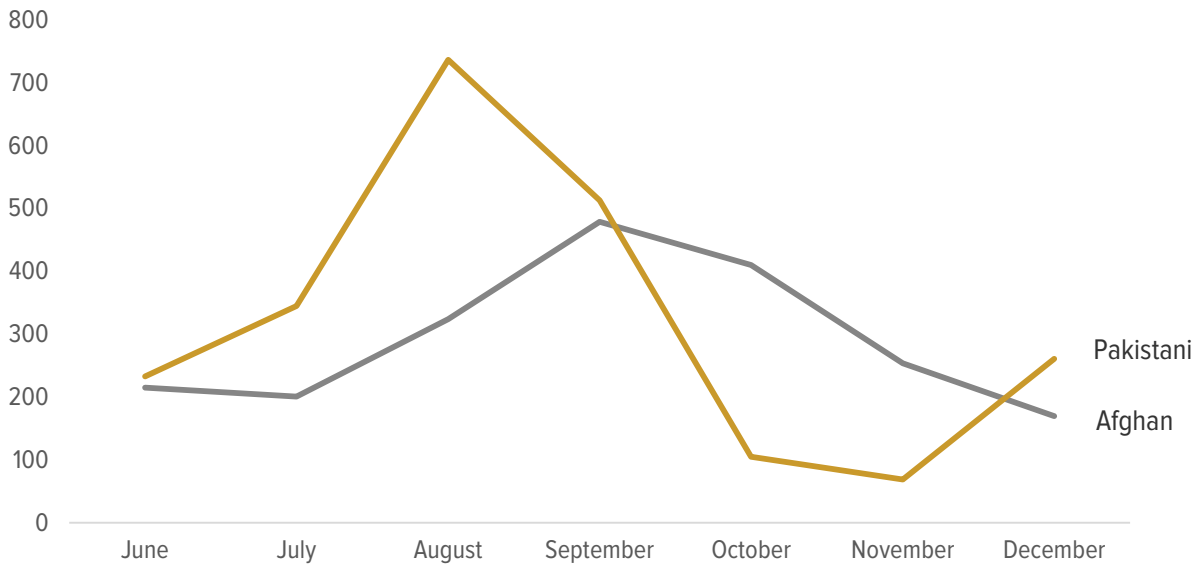


Figure 9: Number of Pakistani and Afghan sea arrivals to Greece, by month (source: UNHCR)

According to [Associated Press](#), a legal loophole in the EU-Turkey Agreement in which restrictions do not apply to those who enter Greece via the [land border with Turkey](#), is drawing refugees and other migrants to the Evros river in attempts to enter Europe. [News That Moves](#) clarifies, however, that people crossing the border irregularly may be detained and/or deported under several bilateral agreements between Turkey and Greece. Though figures on arrivals in Greece via this route are scarce, Greek police estimate that authorities have deterred around 4,000 people from crossing each month by driving patrol cars to the Greek side of the river or calling Turkish officials when they see people attempting to cross. Reports indicate that some 655 people (mostly Syrians) were arrested trying to cross the river in October alone. This is reflected by the [2,430 people](#) apprehended by Turkish Land Forces attempting to exit Turkey at this border in December. The cost to be smuggled across the river and driven to Thessaloniki or Athens is estimated to be roughly [€2,000 to €2,200](#) per person.

Refugees and other migrants (mainly Afghan, Syrian, Iraqi, and Pakistani) also try to exit Turkey via Bulgaria, where some [18,802](#) people have been apprehended by Bulgarian police while attempting to enter, exit or reside in the country ‘irregularly’ in 2016. [1,085](#) of these individuals were apprehended in [December](#). Turkish Armed Forces reported the apprehension of [33 people](#) trying to exit Turkey at the Bulgarian border in December. Most refugees and other migrants enter Bulgaria on foot through the country’s ‘[green border](#)’ with Turkey, though some cross at regular checkpoints by hiding in vehicles. Additionally, in December UNHCR reported one boat with 154 refugees and other migrants aboard arriving in [Italy](#) from Turkey. Fears that this route would gain prominence were stoked in March when [smugglers](#) in Turkey began advertising the route over Facebook, though it did not see wide use. According to IOM [less than 1,000](#) Syrians arrived in Italy via North Africa in 2016, compared to 7,448 in 2015 and 42,323 in 2014.

Refugees and other migrants in Turkey

	Syrians	Iraqis	Afghans	Iranians	Somalis	Others
Population of concern (as of 31 December)	2,823,987	130,076	118,116	31,592	3,463	7,962
% change since Nov.	▲ 1.4%	▲ 1.5%	▼ 3.6%	▲ 2.6%	▼ 0.8%	▲ 0.9%

Figure 10: Refugees and other migrants in Turkey (source: DGMM / IOM)

EU-Turkey Agreement: According to DGMM, at the end of 2016 some 800 refugees and other migrants have been returned to Turkey under the EU-Turkey Agreement of 20 March. The returned population includes people from Pakistan (367), Syria (112), Algeria (79), Afghanistan (75), Bangladesh (46), Iran (27), Morocco (24), Iraq (21), Sri Lanka (16), Myanmar (9), Congo (5), India (3), and 16 others from various countries. In December, 53 adults were returned in three groups, consisting mainly of single men from Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. According to the European Commission, the pace of returns remains slower than expected, as does the rate of relocations from Greece and Italy to other countries in Europe. Some 9,940 people have been relocated as of 31 December.

Despite fears that the EU-Turkey Agreement would create a shift in routes away from the Eastern Mediterranean Route (Turkey to Greece) towards the Central Mediterranean Route (North Africa to Italy), this has not occurred. Syrian and Iraqi arrivals in Italy in 2016 are lower than in 2015 despite an overall increase in those using the Central Mediterranean Route. Less than 1,000 Syrians arrived in Italy via North Africa in 2016, compared to 7,448 in 2015 and 42,323 in 2014. See RMMS analysis for more detail.

Vulnerability and Protection: According to IOM 5 people died along the Eastern Mediterranean Route from Turkey to Greece in December, compared to 14 in November and 2 in October. A total of 434 deaths were recorded on this route in 2016 though thousands of people remain unaccounted for in the Mediterranean. Data also indicates that 96 refugees and other migrants were reported dead or missing along migratory routes in the Middle East in 2016, a significant increase from the 32 reported in 2015, and 38 in 2014. The nationalities and locations of these individuals is unspecified. IOM concedes that routes through Iran and Turkey, used by Iraqis, Pakistanis, and Afghans, may be deadlier than current data reveals.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claims that Turkish border guards have killed at least 163 Syrians attempting to flee to Turkey in 2016. The group claims that 31 children were among those killed. Turkish authorities rejected these accusations calling them ‘fabricated’. Claims of violence at the Turkish border are not new, as detailed in a December article from Der Spiegel and a recent IOM report highlighting ‘reports of consistent abuse and violence towards people who have approached the border’. The Turkish government maintains that the claims ‘do not reflect the reality.’

Though there were no updates in November, in recent months violent ‘pushbacks’ and corruption have been reported at the Turkish-Bulgarian border. A media report indicates that Bulgarian authorities have admitted to the use of dogs and violent beatings against refugees and migrants at the ‘green border’ with Turkey. In November, Bulgaria’s defence minister announced the country aims to complete the border fence with Turkey by the end of 2016.

Additionally, 500,000 people have been displaced in Turkey’s predominantly Kurdish southeast since December 2015. Amnesty International claims that curfews and crackdowns by Turkish authorities, in response to declarations of self-governance, have forced half a million people from their homes in the last year. In March, the Guardian reported estimates by the Turkish Health Minister that 355,000 had been displaced by clashes in the region.

Turkish Borders: At the end of 2016, some 330 kilometres of border wall had been erected along Turkey’s Syrian border, with the entire 911 kilometres expected to be completed by the end of 2017. Despite this, Turkish officials claim that the country maintains an ‘open door’ policy for emergency situations. Border closures in March 2015, and the introduction of strict visa requirements for Syrians entering by air or sea, have made the border very difficult, if not impossible, to legally cross. NGOs working along the border have reported that only critical medical cases are being legally allowed into Turkey, with at most only 200 people entering per day. Aid groups estimate that ‘half a million’ people are currently living in camps in Syria’s border region, waiting to flee into Turkey.

For an overview of mixed migration in Turkey throughout 2016, please see this DRC infographic.

ISRAEL/OPT

Please see the [RMMS: Horn of Africa and Yemen – Monthly Summary](#) for more information on Israel, and the [ACAPS Palestine country overview](#).

OTHER NEWS

Harsh Winter Conditions in Greece: With cold temperatures and winter weather across the region in December, [humanitarian groups](#) are warning that refugees and other migrants could die as a result of these conditions if immediate action is not taken. In Greece, many people are living in freezing tents or on beaches as temperatures drop [below zero](#). A [woman and child](#) reportedly died when their tent in Moria caught fire after cold temperatures forced them to cook inside.

Dire Conditions for Refugees and Other Migrants in Serbia: In Serbia, more than [1,000 refugees and other migrants](#), mainly young men from Afghanistan and Pakistan were sheltering from the cold in an abandoned train depot in Belgrade, Serbia. Violence and disease are rampant in the crowded space, which people are staying in due to a reported ‘profound mistrust’ of Serbian authorities and fear of deportation in reception centres. [Temperatures](#) in Belgrade drop between -4 and -10 degrees Celsius in December, where an estimated [2,000](#) refugees and other migrants are living in abandoned buildings and containers.

Returns to Greece Approved: In early December the [European Commission](#) announced that EU countries will be able to return refugees and other migrants to Greece starting in March, deeming Greece [safe](#) for returns. Aid groups have [spoken out](#) against the decision, claiming that facilities in Greece are already operating at double capacity.

Loss of Life in the Mediterranean: In 2016, IOM’s [Missing Migrants Project](#) accounted for the deaths at sea of 5,083 refugees and other migrants, an increase of 1,306 from the 3,777 reported in 2015 figures. While the majority of these fatalities (4,579) occurred on the Central Mediterranean Route between North Africa and Italy, some [434](#) were reported on the Eastern Mediterranean Route. [Aljazeera](#) notes that while the number of refugees and other migrants arriving in Europe dropped to roughly 350,000 people in 2016, compared to more than a million in 2015, the number of drownings in the Mediterranean reached a record number.

See also **MHUB Monthly Trend Bulletins** ([accessible here](#)).

NEW RESEARCH AND REPORTS

A new **Mixed Migration Platform** [briefing note](#), released in December, looks specifically at women and girls on the move between the Middle East and Europe. The report examines the experience of women and girls travelling to Europe by providing an overview of data and literature pertaining to the decision making process, the journey to Europe, and the vulnerability women and girls might face along the way.

In a December briefing note produced by **ACAPS**, mixed migration along the Central Mediterranean Route to Europe is examined while predictions for the coming months are made. The [report](#) looks specifically at the various populations using this route and finds that protection, livelihoods, and health should be key priorities for humanitarian intervention.

In a special [children's edition](#) of 'In The Loop', **Internews** features the voices of refugee and migrant children in Greece. Focusing mainly on Afghan and Syrian children, the publication highlights the daily life experiences of children in Greece, their reasons for flight, and their hopes for the future.

UNODC has released its 2016 [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#) in which it examines the ways in which refugees and other migrants can be vulnerable to trafficking both en route and in their country of destination. Country profiles provide national level data regarding trafficking legislation.

In a new **IOM** [report](#) entitled 'Assessing the Risks of Migration along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Routes', Iraq and Nigeria are used as case studies in which patterns of migration and return are analysed in the context of safe migration. The report's findings are based on 147 interviews and highlight the risks inherent to migration and return.

A [new report](#) produced by the **McKinsey Global Institute** looks at the economic impact and opportunity of global migration, and finds that immigrants are important sources of labour, globally. The report looks at both voluntary and forced migration and argues that 'holistic integration' boosts global GDP.

In a new report from its [Data Briefing Series](#), **GMDAC** addresses key issues for disabled migrants and refugees. Drawing upon available data and research to assess needs on the ground and identify gaps in the prevailing literature, the report aims to raise awareness of the need for data on disabled people in refugee and migrant populations.

RMMS monthly summaries of mixed migration issues and news in the Horn of Africa and Yemen region are accessible [here](#). Summaries from **West Africa** are available [here](#), and 4mi reports from the **Central Asia and Southwest Asia** region are available [here](#).

The Mixed Migration Platform (MMP) is a joint-NGO initiative providing quality mixed migration-related information for policy, programming and advocacy work, as well as critical information for people on the move. The platform was established by seven partners - ACAPS, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Ground Truth Solutions, Internews, INTERSOS, REACH & Translators Without Borders (TWB) - and acts as an information hub on mixed migration in the region. For more information visit: mixedmigrationplatform.org



To be added to MMP's monthly migration summary mailing list, please contact admin@mixedmigrationplatform.org
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