



## Recommendation 1151 (1991)<sup>1</sup>

# Reception and settlement of refugees in Turkey

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly recognises the efforts made by Turkey in trying to meet the needs of Bulgarian and Iraqi refugees in its territory.
2. The influx of refugees into Turkey is the result of events occurring outside its frontiers - in Iraq in 1988, and in Bulgaria in 1989 - for which it can in no way be held responsible.
3. Turkey considers that the Bulgarian and Iraqi citizens whom it has received in its territory do not fall within the scope of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
4. However, these persons who left their country to escape persecution need protection and must be regarded as "de facto refugees".
5. If the refugees' living conditions have to be judged in the light of those of the local population, it is normal that the living conditions of the Bulgarian refugees settled in the richer regions of western Turkey should be better than those of the Iraqi refugees in the poorer regions of the south-east.
6. However, the treatment received by the refugees depending on their origin, although similar in some ways, is very different in many others.
7. The Turkish authorities clearly wish to integrate the some 200 000 Bulgarian refugees in the country into Turkish society as quickly as possible by offering them the possibility of acquiring Turkish nationality after twelve months' stay in Turkey.
8. In December 1989, the Council of Europe's Social Development Fund granted a loan to Turkey for the construction of 20 000 housing units for Bulgarian refugees.
9. The Bulgarian refugees are still confronted with numerous problems relating to family reunification, compensation for the loss of property in Bulgaria and recovery of social security rights.
10. The same Turkish authorities seem to be conducting a policy towards Iraqi refugees which is intended rather to discourage their integration, in particular by letting living conditions in the camps deteriorate, by not authorising education for refugee children and by preventing international humanitarian aid organisations from entering the camps.
11. In April 1990, Turkey withdrew the authorisation given to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to build an accommodation centre for Iraqi refugees at Karabiyik, near Yozgat, although the sum needed for the project was totally covered.
12. The Assembly notes that Turkey limits the application of the term "refugee", as defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, to people who have fled their country as a result of events occurring in Europe.

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1. Assembly debate on 24 April 1991 (4th and 5th Sittings) (see [Doc. 6267](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, Rapporteur : Mr Eisma). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 April 1991 (5th Sitting).



13. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

13.1. verify that refugees in Turkey, irrespective of their origin, enjoy the rights, including the right to education, and the freedoms defined in the European Convention on Human Rights and in its additional protocols ;

13.2. invite member states to show more solidarity towards Turkey by financing, possibly through humanitarian aid organisations, specific projects for the benefit of Iraqi refugees ;

13.3. invite the Governing Body of the Social Development Fund to make sure that the timetable of the housing project for the Bulgarian refugees is adhered to ;

13.4. invite Turkey :

a. to withdraw its geographical reservation to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees ;

b. to grant, in the meantime, to the refugees the status of "de facto refugees" ;

c. to allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to build an accommodation centre for Iraqi refugees ;

d. to accept the offer of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to help the authorities to reunite refugees' families ;

e. to consider the possibility of appealing to the Council of Europe Social Development Fund to help also the Iraqi refugees ;

f. to follow the practice of other member countries as regards the reception of refugees by accepting international humanitarian aid and authorising regular access to camps by governmental and non-governmental organisations with recognised competence in dealing with refugees ;

13.5. invite member states to increase their refugee quotas, thus contributing to relieving the heavy burden on Turkey by allowing those Iraqis who have expressed the wish to obtain refugee visas from them ;

13.6. invite Bulgaria :

a. to respect minority rights, not only by providing the necessary legal framework, but by ensuring that laws and international instruments in the field of human rights are applied ;

b. to improve community relations in the country, drawing on the work already done by the Council of Europe ;

c. to find a solution to the problem of compensation for the loss of property and rights which the Bulgarian refugees have acquired over years of work in Bulgaria.