Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1563 (2002)[1]

Humanitarian situation of the displaced Kurdish population in Turkey

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls and reaffirms its Recommendation 1150 (1991) on the situation of the Iraqi Kurdish population and other persecuted minorities, and Recommendation 1377 (1998) on the humanitarian situation of the Kurdish refugees and displaced persons in south-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq.

2. The Assembly notes with satisfaction positive developments in the humanitarian situation in the region as compared to the situation presented in the last report on the subject in 1998.

3. In particular, the Assembly welcomes the considerable decrease in violence and tension in the region over the last two years. The Assembly is aware that full security in the area is the essential precondition for mass returns of the displaced Kurdish population.

4. The Assembly strongly condemns the violence and terrorism perpetrated by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has contributed to the displacement of the population, and urges the remaining armed fighters in the region to stop all the violence.

5. At the same time, however, the Assembly expresses its deep concern at the reports of fresh village and hamlet evacuations by the Turkish security forces. These actions should be stopped immediately.

6. The revitalisation of the economy is another main precondition for mass returns. In this context the Assembly welcomes the elaboration and implementation of the South-eastern Anatolia Project aimed at the integrated economic development of the region.

7. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that the process of returns is under way and that the returnees receive financial and material assistance from the Turkish authorities.

8. Assistance in the reconstruction of destroyed villages should be given high priority. It should not be preconditioned by the obligation to enter the village guard system or people's declaration that the cause of their displacement was fear of the PKK.

9. The state of emergency in force in the four remaining provinces is impeding the economic and social revitalisation of the region, and should be lifted by the parliament as soon as possible.

10. Similarly, the village guard system continues to raise the most serious human rights concerns. It should be abolished as quickly as possible.

11. Access to the region for international humanitarian organisations should be granted. The Assembly cannot accept that respected organisations, such as Médecins sans frontières, are denied access for allegedly supporting terrorism.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 29 May 2002 (see Doc. 9391, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mr Connor).

12. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

urge Turkey to take the following steps:

a. lift the state of emergency in the four remaining provinces as quickly as possible;

b. refrain from any further evacuations of villages;

c. ensure civilian control over military activity in the region and make security forces more accountable for their actions;

d. step up investigations into alleged human rights violations in the region;

e. properly implement the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights;

f. abolish the village guard system;

g. continue its efforts to promote both the economic and social development and the reconstruction of the south-eastern provinces;

h. involve representatives of the displaced population in the preparation of return programmes and projects;

i. speed up the process of returns;

j. allow for individual returns without prior permission;

k. not to precondition assistance to displaced persons with the obligation to enter the village guard system or the declaration on the cause of their flight;

l. present reconstruction projects to be financed by the Council of Europe"s Development Bank in the framework of return programmes;

m. adopt measures to integrate those displaced persons who wish to settle in other parts of Turkey and provide them with compensation for damaged property;

n. grant full access to the region for international humanitarian organisations, and provide them with support from local authorities;

urge the member states to step up financial assistance with a view to fostering economic development in the south-eastern part of Turkey;

invite the Council of Europe Development Bank to consider positively the projects related to the returns of displaced persons in the south-eastern regions of Turkey.

13. The Assembly strongly recommends that the two parties start a dialogue and find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question recognising the cultural and social rights of the Kurdish people.

14. The Assembly invites the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to consider extending its network of Local Democracy Embassies and town twinning to the south-eastern region of Turkey.