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Permanent resettlement of UNHCR refugees from Turkey

Written question No. 635 to the Committee of Ministers
by Mr Jeffrey DONALDSON, United Kingdom, European Democrat Group

Turkey's recently adopted Law on Foreigners and International Protection maintains a geographical limitation on the 1951 Geneva Convention, meaning that Turkey does not accept refugees of non-European origin for permanent resettlement in Turkey. Therefore, for the tens of thousands of non-Europeans refugees that flee to Turkey each year, the sole durable solution continues to be resettlement to a third country.

The number of refugees that are recommended by UNHCR Turkey for permanent resettlement in a third country is far higher than the number that is actually resettled each year, due to insufficient quotas for resettlement in third countries. Therefore tens of thousands of refugees are stranded in a state of limbo in Turkey for many years. In this state of limbo, under the current legislation, they cannot legally work, receive medical care nor can the children receive education. Many live in this desperate situation for over five years, leading some to take desperate action such as attempting to reach Europe by boat. In just the most recent example, last September saw 60 desperate asylum seekers drowned after their boat sank whilst attempting such a journey.

In 2010, nearly 40,000 refugees were resettled from Turkey through the UNHCR. Over 5500 were received by Scandinavia, over 6600 by Canada and over 21000 by the USA. In contrast, under one thousand were received by Europe: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom together received just 990 UNHCR refugees from Turkey for resettlement.

Mr Donaldson,

To ask the Committee of Ministers,

- What can be done to encourage a greater number of European nations to adopt a substantial but reasonable annual quota of UNHCR refugees from Turkey for permanent resettlement, so that fewer individuals in genuine need of protection need remain stranded in the long-term in desperate situations in Turkey?