

## **BULLETIN ON IRREGULAR CROSSINGS 4 (1-30 APRIL 2018)**

### **SUMMARY:**

*-According to Turkish Coast Guard data 2.534 people were apprehended while trying to irregularly cross by sea in April 2018. There is 37% increase in this number compared to the numbers in March. Among those apprehended Syrians are the first largest group and they are followed by Afghans. The third largest group consists of the people from Central African Republic.*

*- According to data published by Turkish Coast Guard, the distribution of those apprehended during irregular sea crossings in terms of the coast they left from in Turkey; the largest number left the country from İzmir Dikili coast. There is a significant increase in number of those who left from İzmir Foça.*

*-In April 2018, irregular crossing incidents identified by Turkish Coast Guard most frequently occurred in İzmir Çeşme and the second coast was İzmir Dikili. There was one irregular crossing incident in each of the following coasts Hatay Samandağ Çevlik, Çanakkale Küçükküyü and İstanbul Silivri. No irregular crossing incidents had occurred in these coasts for a long time.*

*-1067 people were apprehended by joint operations of Gendarmerie, Police and Coast Guard in April 2018. Besides, 17 organizers (smugglers) were apprehended jointly by these forces and 4 organizers were apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard.*

*- According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data number of those who were irregularly crossed to Greece from Turkey by sea in April 2018 is 3.032. This number is 24% (591 people) higher than the number in March 2018. When we look at their distribution in terms of the destination points (islands), it is seen that the most common destination is Lesvos as it has been the case in previous months. Second island is Chios while it was Samos in March 2018. There is a decrease in the number of those who irregularly crossed to Dodecanese Islands compared to the number in March 2018.*

*- Among those who irregularly crossed to Greek Islands in April 2018, the largest group is Syrians and they are followed by Iraqis. The third group is Afghans.*

*-According to the report published by International Organization for Migration (IOM) dated March 2018, the number of those who were irregularly crossed to Greece by land is 393 in January, 425 in February and 1.327 in March. The ranking in terms of nationalities is as follows: Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans.*

*-In the first three months of 2018 (January, February and March) the number of those who irregularly crossed to Bulgaria by land is 286. Among those the largest groups is Afghans and they are followed by Syrians. The third largest group is Iraqis.*

*-According to the numbers published by Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) on daily basis the number of people who are apprehended while irregularly crossing from Turkey to Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq and Iran via land borders is 3.451 in April 2018. There is an increase of 66% (1.368 people) when compared to the number in March 2018.*

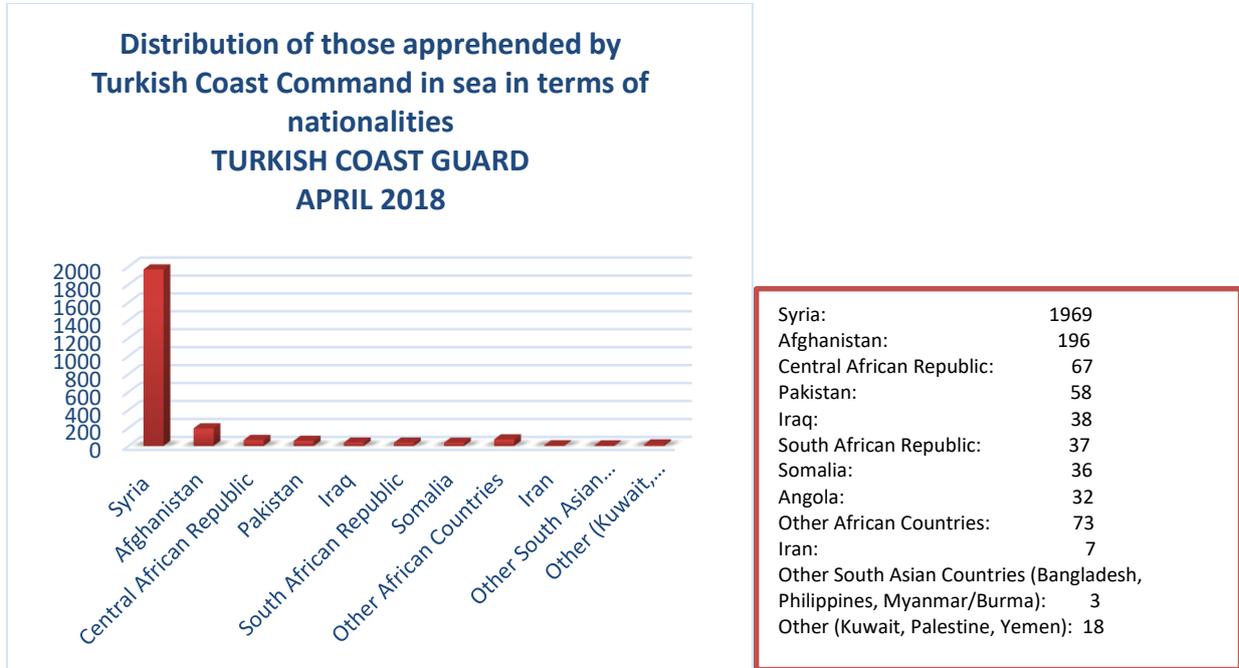
*-3286 of these 3451 people are those who were apprehended on western land borders while trying to cross to Greece and Bulgaria and the rest of them (165 people) are the ones apprehended on southern and eastern borders while irregularly crossing to Syria and Iraq.*

*-According to TAF's data the number of people apprehended while trying to cross irregularly from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Greece to Turkey by land is 29253 in April 2018. 28497 of them are apprehended while irregularly crossing to Turkey through eastern and southern land borders, and most of them were coming from Syria.*

**ACCORDING TO THE DATA PROVIDED BY TURKISH COAST GUARD COMMAND;**

**2534 people were apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard units during irregular crossings via sea in April 2018. This number was 1849 in March 2018 and it is seen that there is an increase of 37% (685 people) in April 2018 when compared to March.**

Distribution of these people in terms of their declared nationalities is as follows:\*



**Graph 1:** Distribution of those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard during irregular crossing by sea in terms of the nationalities they declared

\* There may be small differences between the numbers Turkish Coast Guard provides on daily basis and the total number published at the end of the month (total of the numbers provided on daily basis is 2536 but the total number given by Coast Guard for April is 2534)

When we look at distribution of the nationalities declared by those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard units, the first and second largest groups are respectively Syrians and Afghans in April 2018 as it was the case in March. These two groups are followed by the citizens of Central African Republic and Pakistanis. Although there were not any Afghans among those apprehended in February 2018 when the comparison made by relying on the numbers registered in January and March 2018 it is seen that there is a slight increase (an increase of 78 people compared to the number in March 2018) in April 2018. However, it is deduced that this increase may not be directly related to the sharp increase in number of Afghans who were entered to Turkey from eastern borders. Therefore, it has been stated that the Afghans apprehended while they were leaving Turkey irregularly and with whom International Organization for Migration has interviewed were the ones who have been registered in Turkey for a long time.<sup>1</sup>

The number of Angolians who were the second largest group among those apprehended during irregular crossings by sea in January and February decreased at the ratio of one over seven in March when compared to the number in January (number of Angolians in terms of the months: 238 in January, 107 in February, 50 in March, 32 in April). The reason for the higher numbers registered in the first two months may be the protests and violence against civilians which were increased during the presidential elections held in August 2017.<sup>2</sup> When compared to other African countries

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Inter Sectoral Working Group İzmir, 04.05.2018 tarihli toplantı notları

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.crisis.acleddata.com/angola-september-2017-update/>

regarding the pre and post election period violence Angola has witnessed relatively a less violent election period. However, it is widely reported in the sources that the oppression against the opposition has increased in this ex-Portuguese colony and in some places clashes have taken place between the supporters of opposing parties. One of officers of UNITA (The National Union for The Total Independence of Angola) which is the strongest opponent to the ruling party MPLA (The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) has died, many people have been injured and residential areas have been destroyed during these clashes.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the decrease in number of Angolians apprehended during irregular crossings may be an indicator of that a relative stability has been assured in the country.

Even if their numbers are not as high as Angolians in the first four months of 2018, another salient group in this time period were Central African Republic nationals (212 Central Africans in total were apprehended by Coast Guard units in January, February, March and April 2018). This increase in numbers of Central Africans may be stemming from the political violence which came to the head in 2014 after that the Muslim armed group named as Seleka staged a coup against Christian president of the country, Francois Boziza in 2013, and this violence still continues in the country. As stated in Human Rights Watch's report<sup>4</sup> covering the events of 2017 on Central African Republic, in spite of the fact that president Faustin-Archange Touadéra's government which came to the power after 2016 elections has had control over the capital Bangui and surrounding areas and despite the existence of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in the country, large part of the country has been deprived of security and stability and important cities of the country have been still under the control of different armed groups. It is stated in the same report referred that 249 civilians were killed by various armed groups in total in the South-eastern and North-western provinces of the country between May and September 2017, additionally 20 people were killed in October 2017. In addition to these, The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) registered 20 violent events against civilians in January 2018 and 22 in February 2018 and 14 in March 2019.<sup>5</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) declared in September 2017 that more than one million people were displaced because of the crisis which started in 2013 and still continues and UN Peacekeeping Mission decided to renew its duty of term for one year and to add 13000 soldiers and polices in its forces in December 2017 and International Committee of the Red Cross stated in its release in January 2018 that the situation in the country was getting worse and half of the country population were in need of humanitarian aid.<sup>6</sup>

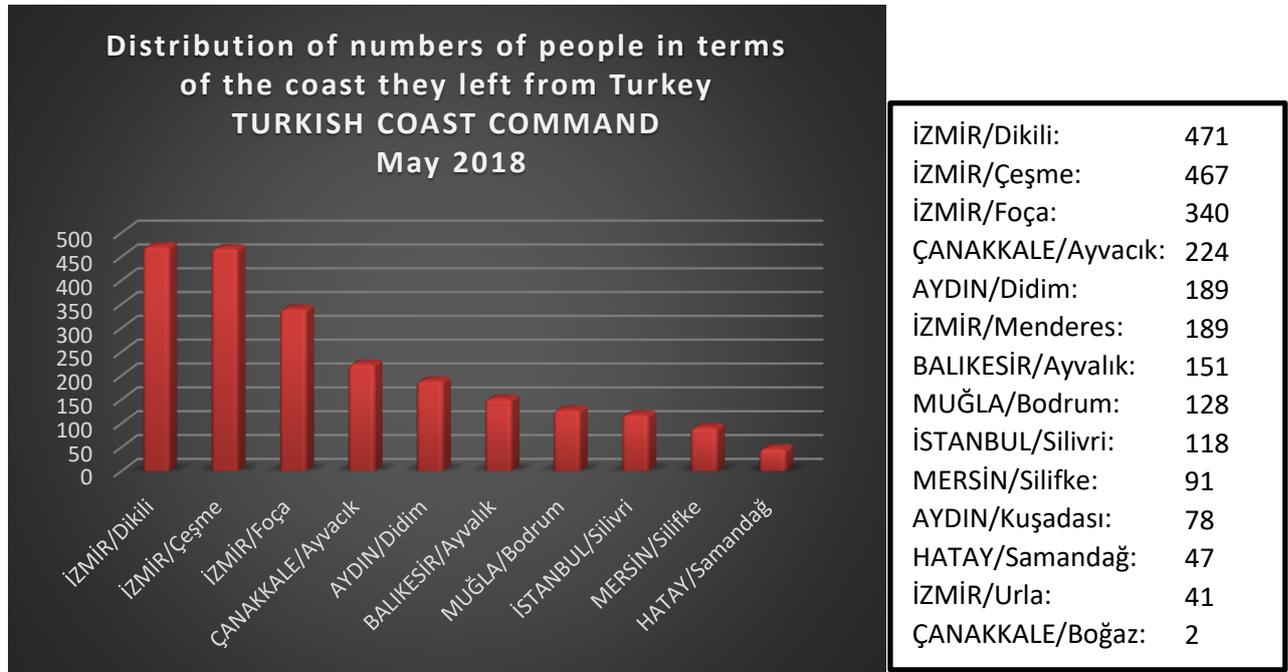
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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/angola>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/central-african-republic>

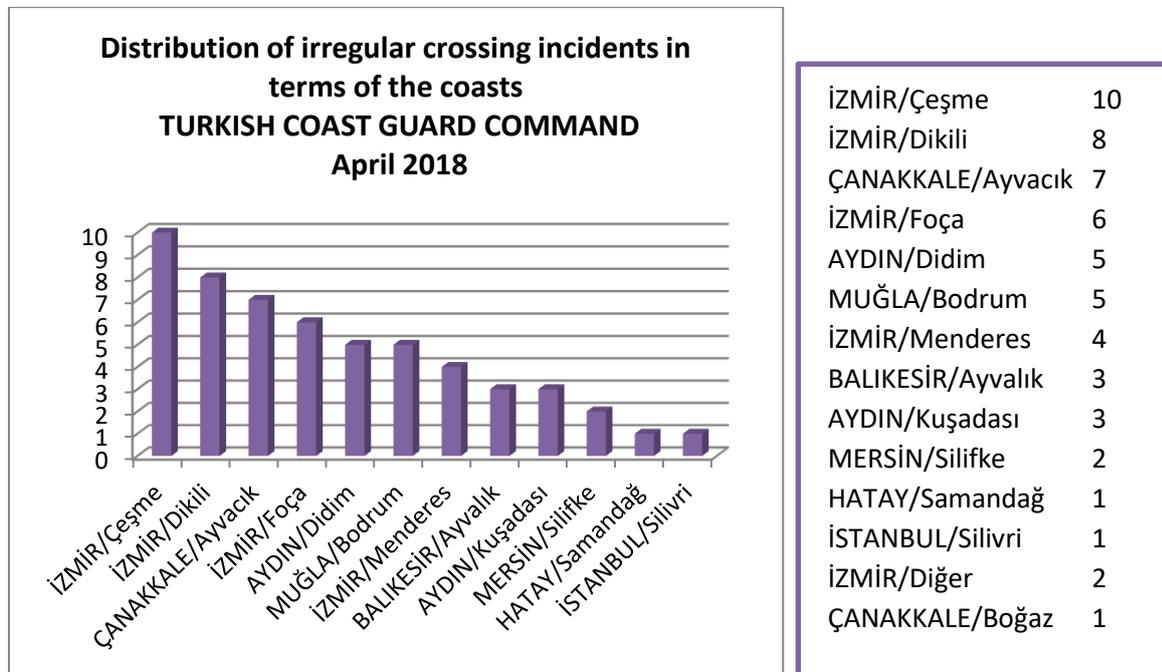
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.acleddata.com/dashboard/#140>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13150044>



**Graph2:** Distribution of those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard in terms of the coast they left from the country.

When looked at the distribution of those apprehended by Coast Guard units during irregular crossings via sea in terms of the coast they left the country from the first coast is İzmir Dikili as it was in previous months. Second one is İzmir Çeşme as it was in January and February. There is a significant increase in the number of those who were left from İzmir Foça coast in April 2018 compared to February and March 2018. Regarding the distribution of those numbers in terms of provinces, 60% (1508 people) of the people who were apprehended by Coast Guard units were the ones who tried to left the country from İzmir. The second province with highest number is Aydın (267 people) and the third province is Çanakkale. They are followed by Balıkesir and Muğla.



**Graph 3:** According to Coast Guard Command data distribution of irregular crossing incidents in terms of the coast on which these incidents took place

In April 2018 an irregular crossing incident took place in Hatay Samandağ Çevlik. No incidents have taken place in Çevlik since the incidents in 2016. According to Coast Guard Command data, one

incident took place in İstanbul Silivri in April. There were no incidents on this coast in the first three months of 2018.<sup>7</sup> Çanakkale Küçükkuyu is another coast on which there has been no incident for a long time, however, irregular crossing incidents started to re-occur in April 2018. The reason for this may be such that previous routes are started to be used again due to overall increase in the irregular crossings..

As highlighted in our March 2018 bulletin; while mostly infloatable boats are used for the irregular crossing incidents which take place on Aegean coasts which are mostly in İzmir, the vehicles such as speedboats and Ro-Ro ships are used on the Mediterranean coasts. The occurrence of irregular crossings incidents on these coasts are relatively low and which are preferred by smugglers to reach to Italy and Southern Cyprus.<sup>8</sup> For example, in an incidents took place on Mersin Silifke coast a Ro-Ro ship with 79 people was apprehended by Coast Guard units while it was going to Trieste port in Italy and the ship was brought to Aydın Kuşadası after apprehension.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in the single incident that took place on Hatay Samandağ Çevlik a speedboat was used. Another coast used by smugglers for irregular crossings to Greece through the sea is İstanbul Silivri. The vehicles used on this coast are the fishing vessel types capacity of which are suitable to carry large numbers of people in one time.<sup>10</sup> The vehicles such as fiber boats and speedboats are used on Aegean coasts except the ones in İzmir and on the coasts of Çanakkale and Balıkesir which fall into the borders of sea of Marmara.

**Note:** According to the daily numbers published by Turkish Coast Guard Command regarding the people collectively apprehended by Gendarmerie, Police and Coast Command units, 1067 people were apprehended in April 2018. For March 2018 this number was 631, and there is a 70% increase in April compared to March 2018. Additionally, in April 2018; 2 Syrians, 1 Pakistani and 1 Turkish smugglers were apprehended by Coast Guard Command units. The number of smugglers who were apprehended collectively by Gendarmerie, Police and Coast Command were 17 this month.

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<sup>7</sup> Regarding this incident there is no information about the country to which the people apprehended by Coast Guard units were trying to irregularly cross, however, in the news report related to the incidents took place on this coast in previous years there are statements that the people left the country from this coast to reach to Greece irregularly by sea.

<http://www.haberturk.com/istanbul-da-gocmen-kacakligi-operasyonu-1762185>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/mersinde-insan-kacakligi-suphelisi-9-kisi-ad-40793286>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.sahilguvenlik.gov.tr/baskanliklar/genel\\_sekreterlik/guncel\\_faaliyetler/09-15%20nisan%202018.asp](http://www.sahilguvenlik.gov.tr/baskanliklar/genel_sekreterlik/guncel_faaliyetler/09-15%20nisan%202018.asp), list of daily activities in which it is stated 250 irregular migrants were apprehended in 5 incidents

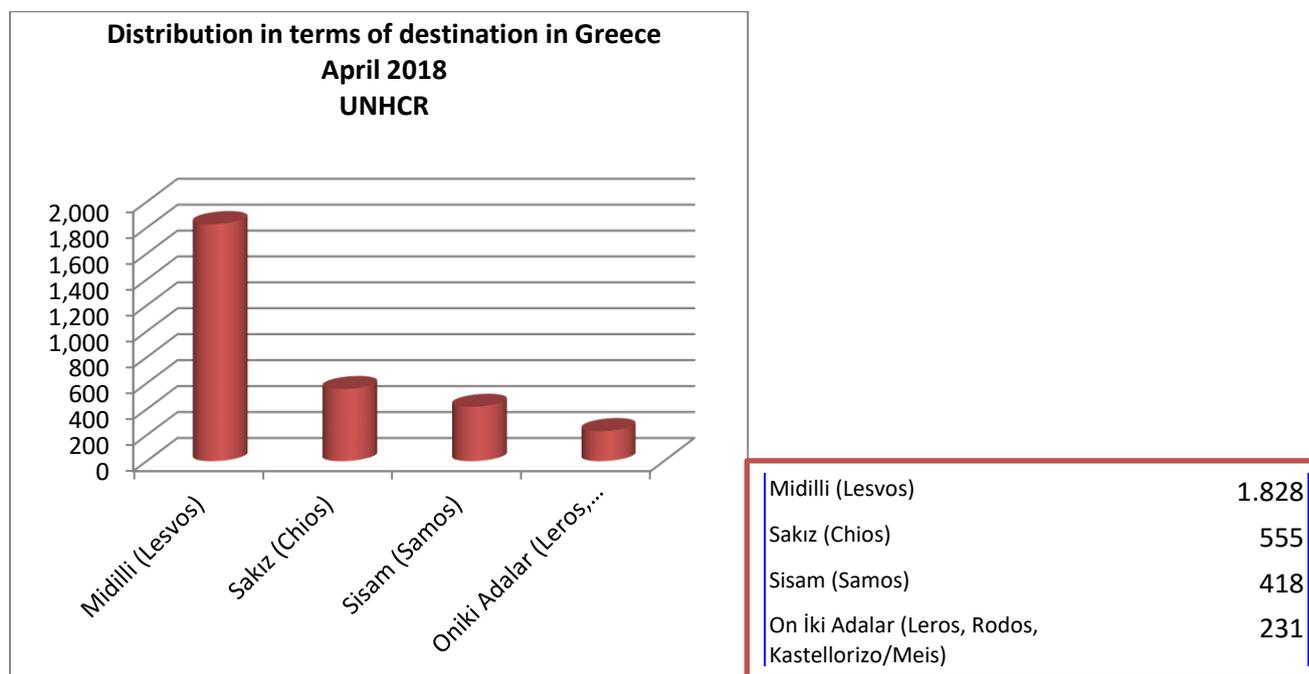
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cnnturk.com/yurttan-haberler/istanbul/balikci-teknesine-kacak-gocmen-operasyonu>

<https://m.timeturk.com/istanbul-da-gocmen-kacakligi-operasyonu/haber-808402>

**ACCORDING TO UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) DATA;**

**Number of those who irregularly crossed from Turkey to Greece via sea in April 2018 is 3.032. There is a 24% (591 people) increase in this number compared to the numbers in March 2018.**

Distribution of the people arrived in terms of the island is as follows:

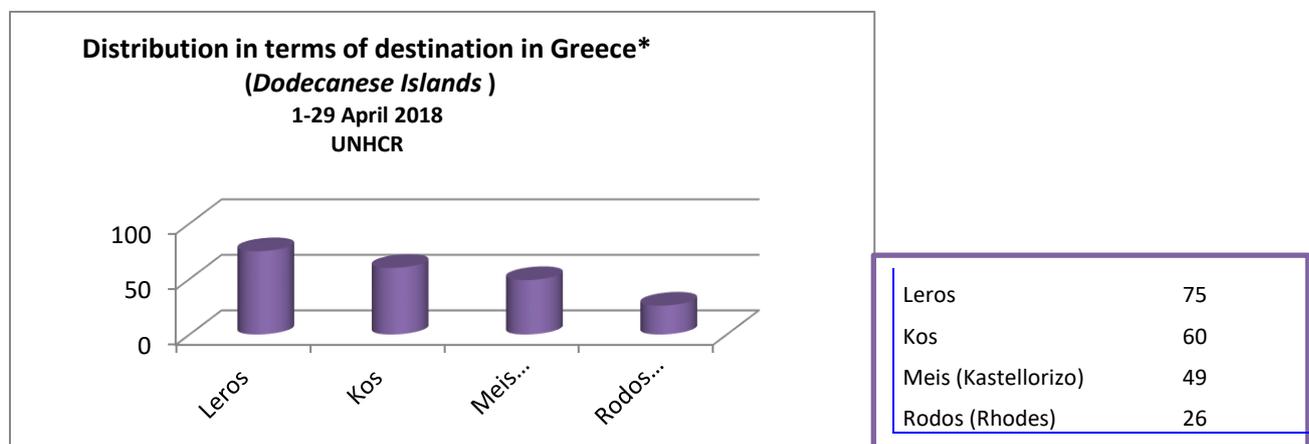


**Graph 4:** According to data provided in Dashboards monthly published by UNHCR the distribution of people who irregularly crossed to Greece via sea terms of the island they arrived in

**Source:** Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard March 2018 and April 2018

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63494>

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63019>



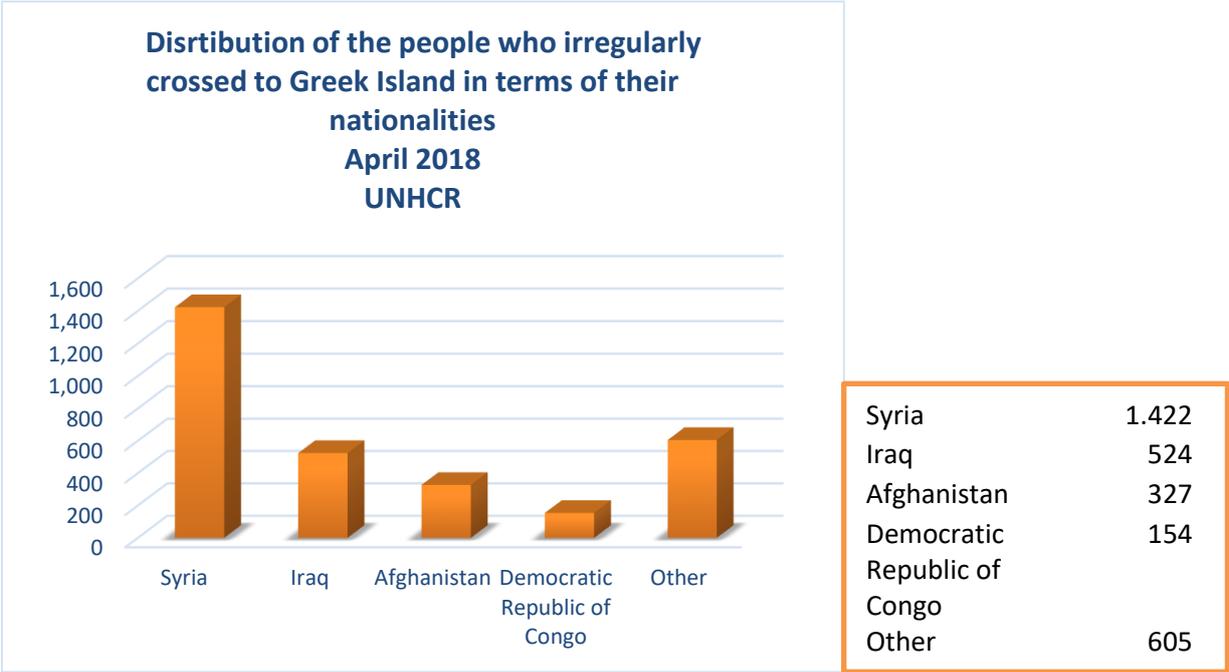
**Graph 4.1:** Distribution of the people who irregularly cross to Dodecanese Islands, According to UNHCR's data published on the link <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

\* Due to the fact that UNHCR does not update data on a monthly basis and that the numbers regarding Dodecanese Islands are not indicated separately on the dashboards, this graph is prepared by relying on the daily data between 1 and 29 April 2018.

As seen in the graphs; as it was the case in the previous three months, the biggest number of people irregularly crossed to Lesvos in April 2018. Chios became the second mostly crossed island in April 2018, while it had been Samos in January, February and March. The third island is Samos. For Dodecanese Islands, the first island is Leros, followed by Kos. While the number of those who irregularly crossed to Leros between 25 February and 1 April was 151, there is a 50% decrease in this number in April 2018. There is a 25% decrease in the number of those who arrived in Kos, too (25 February-1 April: 233 people). Number of the people who irregularly crossed to Rhodes increased by

six compared to the numbers in between 25 February -1 April (4).. The number of those who irregularly crossed to Kastellorizo doubled, their number had been 27 between 25 February -1 April. There is a decrease in number of those who irregularly crossed to Dodecanese Islands with respect to the numbers in March 2018 in spite of the fact that in general number of those who irregularly crossed to Greece has increased and there is an increase in number of those who irregularly arrived in the big islands such as Lesbos, Samos and Chios. However, it is not possible yet to say that there is a gradual increase or decrease trend in numbers of those who irregularly crossed to Dodecanese islands other than Kos for the first four months of 2018.

According to the numbers given in March and April 2018 Dashboards of UNHCR, among those who irregularly crossed to Greek islands the largest group is Syrians and second one is Iraqis. The third group is Afghans. The distribution of their numbers in April 2018 is as follows:

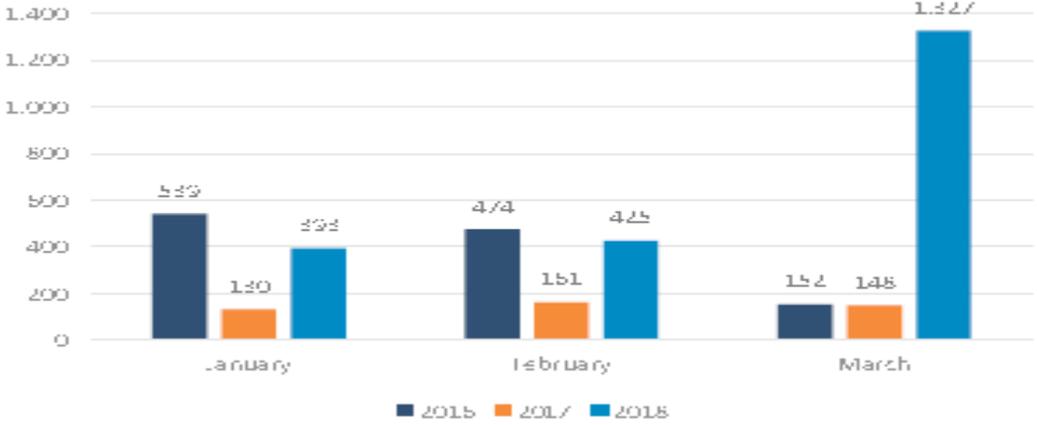


**Graph 5:** Distribution of those who irregularly crossed to Greek Islands in terms of nationalities  
**Kaynak:** Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard March 2018 and April 2018  
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63494>  
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63019>

**Note 1\*:** As mentioned above there is a significant increase in the irregular crossings to Greek Islands. It is worth to mention that the Greek Council of State annulled Asylum Service Director Decision dated June 7, 2017 which obligates the ones who irregularly crossed to the islands to stay at the island they crossed at first and therefore disregards freedom of movement. The decision of Council of State which was announced on April 17, 2018 states that imposing geographical restriction on asylum seekers prevents equal distribution of asylum seekers over Greek territory and therefore this brings a burden on the island that affects economic situation and public order when compared to the other regions of the country and it leads to that people have to live in overcrowded facilities for an extremely long period and in very bad living conditions. The High Court also states in its decision that Asylum Service Director Decision restricting freedom of movement of the asylum seekers is deprived of legal base and it does not put any significant public interest justification that provides a ground for necessity of this restriction in accordance with Article 31 (2) of 1951 Geneva Convention.

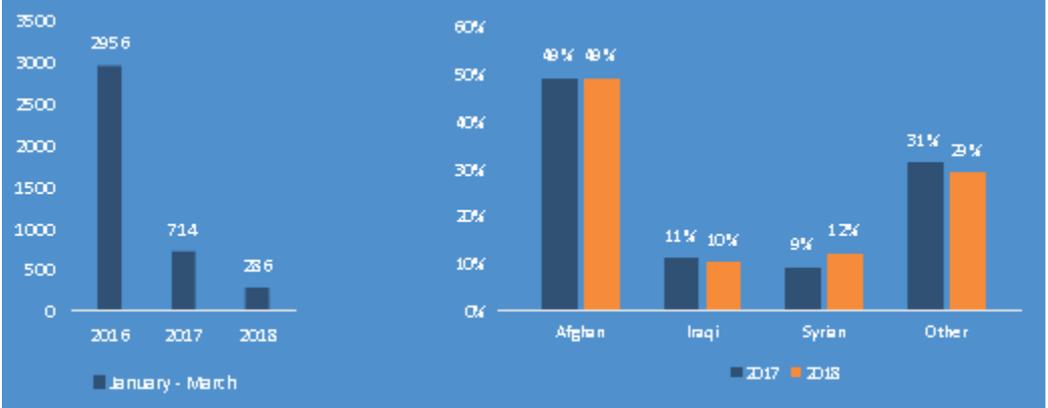
\*<https://www.ecre.org/top-greek-court-annuls-island-restriction-for-new-asylum-seekers/>

**Note:** In March 2018 issue<sup>11</sup> of the compilation report of International Organization for Migration (IOM) titled as “Mixed Migration Flows in Mediterranean” the number of those who irregularly crossed to Greece by land in the first three months of 2016, 2017 and 2018 is given as follows:



As seen in the graph, there is a sharp increase in the number of those who irregularly crossed to Greece by land in March 2018, the numbers are three times higher than the numbers in February 2018. According to information provided in this report, 37% of all registered migrants are Syrians, 27% of them Iraqis and 12% of them are Afghans. In the press release<sup>12</sup> published by IOM in May there is no information regarding the number of people who irregularly crossed to Greece by land in April.

According to IOM’s Mixed Migration Flows in Mediterranean March 2018 report, the number of those who irregularly crossed to Bulgaria by land in the first three months of 2016, 2017 and 2018 and their distribution in terms of nationalities are as follows:<sup>13</sup>

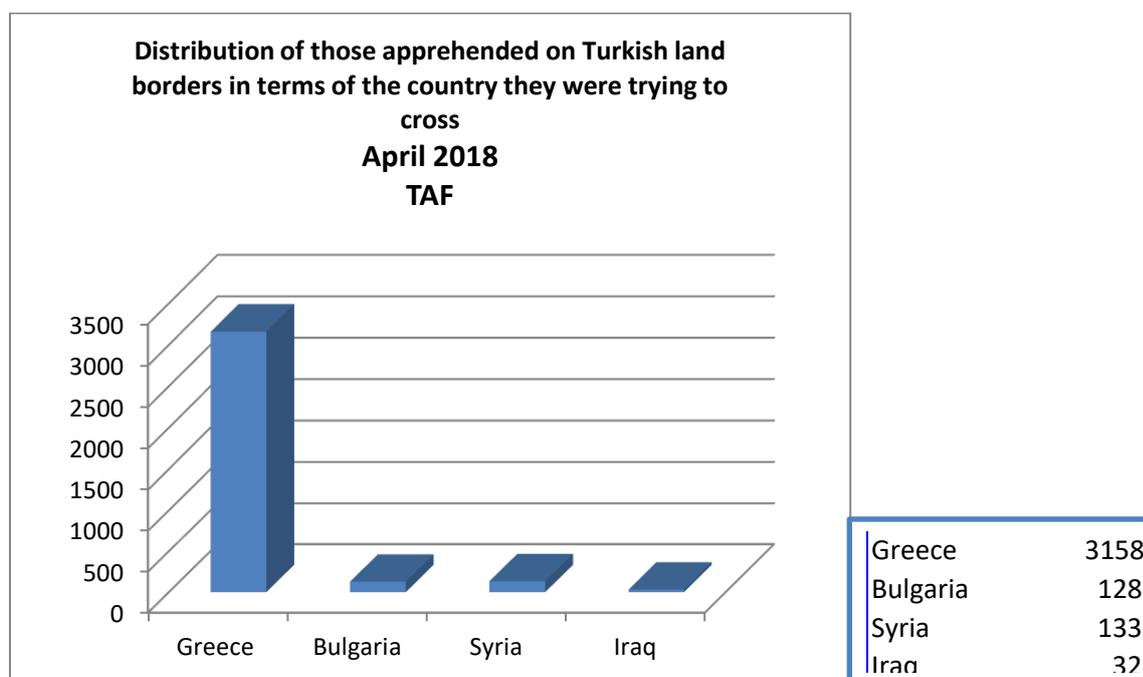


According to these, 286 people irregularly crossed to Bulgaria by land in the first three months of 2018. Regarding the distribution in terms of nationalities, it is seen that the first group is Afghans as it was the case in 2017. However the ranking of Iraqis differs from the one in 2017. The Iraqis were the second largest group in previous year, in 2018 they were replaced by Syrians. The report including the numbers for April 2018 has not been released yet.

<sup>11</sup> [http://migration.iom.int/docs/Flows\\_Compilation\\_Report\\_March\\_2018.pdf](http://migration.iom.int/docs/Flows_Compilation_Report_March_2018.pdf) , s.23  
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-25338-2018-deaths-reach-628>  
<sup>13</sup> s.26

**THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE APPREHENDED WHILE IRREGULARLY CROSSING ACCORDING TO TURKISH ARMED FORCES (TAF-TSK) DATA:**

According to the daily numbers published by Turkish Armed Forces *number of those who were apprehended while trying to irregularly cross to Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq and Iran through land borders is 3451 in April 2018, there is an increase of 1368 (approximately 66%) with respect to the number in March 2018.* 3286 of those people are the ones apprehended on western land borders while trying to irregularly cross to Greece and Bulgaria and the remaining 165 people were apprehended while irregularly crossing to Syria and Iraq on southern and eastern borders. The distribution of them in terms of the country they were trying to cross is as follows:



**Grafik 6:** Distribution of the numbers of people who wanted to leave from Turkey through land borders in terms of the country to which they would like to arrive in, according to the data published by TAF.

As seen in the graph, most of the people apprehended were the ones who would like to irregularly cross to Greece. It is seen that the number of those apprehended while irregularly crossing to Greece through land borders increased with respect to the previous months and in April 2018 the number is 64% (1235 people) higher than the number in March 2018. This situation has reflected upon the news stating that the irregular crossings on Evros River increased a lot in European press. In Helena Smith’s news report in The Guardian, it is stated that Greece has tightened the security on the land border with Turkey because of the rapid increase in the irregular crossings.<sup>14</sup> The news report quotes UNHCR’s statement which indicates that in April 2018 approximately 2900 people irregularly crossed to Greece through land borders and this number is higher than the total number in 2017. In another source, it is stated that the number of those apprehended after irregularly crossing to Greece through Evros River is 1658 in March 2018.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the following statement of Greek Migration Minister Dimitris Vistas was quoted: “I’m not scared about the islands because we know what we have to do. What is really worrisome is the huge increase through Evros.”<sup>16</sup>

The number of those who were apprehended by Land Forces Command border units while trying to cross to Bulgaria, another country on western land borders increased sharply with respect to the numbers in the first three months of 2018. This number was 70 in March 2018 and became 128 in

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/29/greece-reinforces-land-border-with-turkey-to-stem-flow-of-migrants>

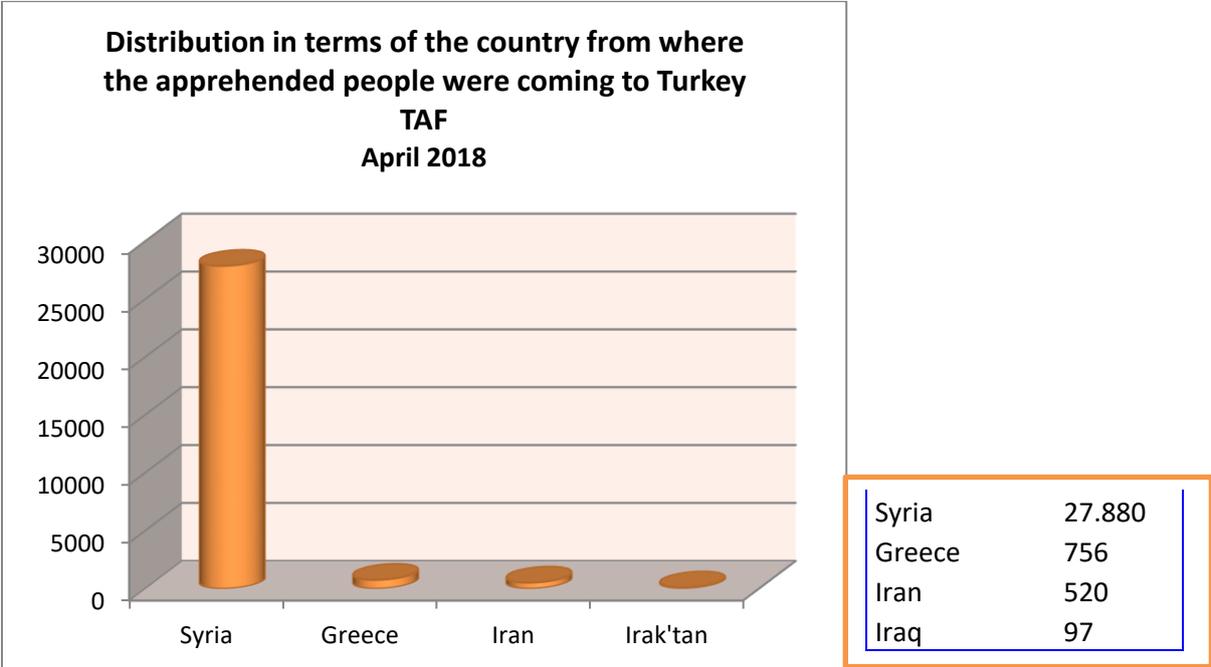
<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/227622/article/ekathimerini/news/more-than-1650-migrants-crossed-greeces-northeastern-border-in-march>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/228018/article/ekathimerini/news/minister-drafts-action-plans-amid-fears-over-migrant-influx>

April 2018 by a 83% increase. This increase can be considered as a sign of general upward trend in irregular crossings. However, the number of those apprehended on Bulgaria-Turkey border is significantly lower than the ones apprehended on Turkish-Greek border. In addition regarding the other side of the border; according to the numbers published by International Organization for Migration on a weekly basis, 163 people irregularly crossed to Bulgaria by land between March 25 and April 29, 2018. The reason for this may be tightened border controls which have become much more easier with the completion of the 242km-long border fence in 2017 and push-backs as it is stated in Council of Europe’s report published on April 19, 2018 by Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees, Tomáš Boček, regarding the fact finding mission visit on November 13-17, 2017.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding southern and eastern borders, most of the people apprehended are the ones who trying to irregularly cross to Syria. They are followed by the ones who were trying to cross irregularly to Iraq. There was a sharp decrease (39 people) in number of those who were apprehended during irregular crossing to Syria in March, there is a significant increase (133 people) in this number in April, although it is not as high as the numbers in January and February. Number of those apprehended during irregular crossings to Iraq increased two times compared to March 2018 however it is not possible to say whether it is a regular trend or not.

According to the daily data published by Turkish Armed Forces **number of the people apprehended while they were trying to irregularly cross by land to Turkey from the countries with which Turkey shares land borders is 29253 for April 2018**. 28497 of these people were apprehended while crossing through eastern and southern borders. Due to the fact that there were no people who were trying to cross to Turkey from Bulgaria, the ones who were apprehended while trying to irregularly cross to Turkey through western borders were coming from Greece and their number is 756. Distribution of those who were apprehended while irregularly crossing to Turkey from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Greece in terms the country they were coming from is as follows:



**Graph 7:** Distribution of the people apprehended while trying to irregularly cross from Syria, Greece, Iraq and Iran to Turkey through land borders in terms of the country they were coming from.

<sup>17</sup> Council of Europe, “Report of the fact-finding mission by Ambassador Tomáš Boček, Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees, to Bulgaria, 13-17 November 2017”, 19 Nisan 2018, s.3

As it was the case in previous months, among those who were apprehended during irregular crossing via eastern and southern land borders, the largest number was coming from Syria in April 2018. Although there was a decrease (5000 people) in March with regard to February, it is seen that there is again an increasing trend in numbers in April 2018. Number of those who were coming from Syria increased by 2653 people in April compared to March. Despite the increased border controls and the wall constructed on Turkish-Syrian border, this increase in numbers may be stemming from various reasons. The bombardments still continue in West of Syria. People had to leave their homes because of the chemical attack which took place in Eastern Ghouta. Some regions in Homs and Hama were captured by Regime forces and therefore number of people who have moved to Idlib has increased. Number of the people who were apprehended while trying to irregularly cross from Iran to Turkey is 520 in April 2018. This number is significantly higher than the number in January and February however it is 54,5% lower than the number in March 2018 (1145 people).

As it is known, the big rise in number of Afghans who irregularly crossed to Turkey in March became the prior agenda of Turkey. According to the numbers provided by minister of the interior Süleyman Soylu in his speech on April 25, 2018, number of Afghans who irregularly crossed to Turkey through Iranian border in 2018 is 29899, whereas this number was 45259 for the whole of 2017.<sup>18</sup>

**Note 2:** Afghans reach to Turkish borders after walking for a very long time by passing through difficult roads and by putting their lives and body integrity in danger.



A group of Afghan migrants walk along a path on mountains after crossing the Turkey-Iran border near Erzurum, eastern Turkey, April 11, 2018. REUTERS/Umar Balmas



<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-afghanistan/afghans-make-long-trek-west-before-turkey-secures-border-idUSKBN1HQOLY>

There were various comments which were also reflected in the press regarding the reasons behind this huge increase in numbers of Afghans coming from Iranian border. According to Yashar (Yaşar) Yıldız, president of Afghan Turks Association, migration of Afghans to Turkey is not a new issue, while the reason for the rapid increase in irregular crossings is the wall which is being constructed on Turkish-Iranian border. Interior Minister Soylu stated that the wall will be 144km long when it is

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/afgan-multeciler-geri-gonderiliyor-adana-yerelhaber-2753865/>

completed. 76 km of it has been completed so far.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Yıldız said that Afghans who were waiting in Iran due to weather conditions have started to cross to Turkey as the weather started getting warmer. In another assessment it is stated that Afghans living in Iran cross to Turkey because of the economic problems, unemployment and the fear that Iran would repatriate them.<sup>20</sup> Hacettepe University Migration and Politic Research Center Director Associate Professor Murat Erdoğan highlights that an important factor affecting the rapid increase in number of Afghans is that Iran's control on its borders is loose due to the fact that it does not get any support like the one Turkey gets from European Union, despite 3 million Afghans live in the country as well as the ongoing war, hunger and "exhaustion" in Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> Despite these statements focusing on the role of Iran regarding the increase in numbers of Afghans irregularly crossing to Turkey in early months of 2018 and they indicate that the Afghans coming to Turkey are the ones living in Iran; Metin Çorabatır president of the Research Center on Asylum and Migration says that the people who irregularly crossed to Turkey through Iranian border in the first three months of 2018 were not the ones coming from Iran, but they were new migrants coming directly from Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> As for the reason for this situation he draws attention to unemployment in Afghanistan, increasing impoverishment and difficulties to meet basic needs by referring to 2017 data of the Asia Foundation.

In addition to these comments and assessments, one of the reasons for the increase in numbers of Afghans who irregularly crossed through eastern borders in 2018 may be the increase in the attacks of Taliban and ISIS in the country. 103 attacks, including the most violent attacks in Kabul and ISIS attacks against Save The Children offices in Jalalabad, were registered on the website Storymaps.esri.com between January 1 and April 30, 2018.<sup>23</sup> It is observed that these attacks were widespread all over the country. According to the research conducted by BBC between the dates 23 August and 21 November 2017 and published on January 31, 2018, Taliban threat covers 70% of Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> According to the same research, although ISIS controls a relatively small region in Nangarhar which is on the border with Pakistan, it (ISIS) carries out large-scale attacks which caused the deaths of many people in big cities such as Kabul.

As mentioned before, there is a 54,5% decrease in number of those who were apprehended while irregularly crossing to Turkey from Iran. This decrease in numbers may be stemming from that 7100 Afghans that were repatriated as it stated by minister of interior Süleyman Soylu in his previously mentioned speech<sup>25</sup> on April 25, 2018 and from that this process would continue. In addition, another factor which makes this decrease easier may be the wall constructed on Turkish-Iranian border. It is understood from the Minister's speech that this repatriation policy will be in place in the upcoming period, too. These are some developments that are the indicators of this evaluation. For example, a detention/removal center with 5000-person capacity will be constructed in Iğdır; Düziçi Temporary Accommodation Center will be transformed into a detention/removal center with 4000-person capacity and its capacity will be increased and it is targeted that the capacity of these centers will be increased over 15000-person. In addition to these, as widely covered in the national press Afghans are repatriated collectively with charter flights and this may be another factor affecting the decrease in numbers of those who try to irregularly cross to Turkey.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, as reflected in the press, too regulations of the governorships which impose bans on "the foreigners without travel permit" for going out a particular city or for entering a particular city and which inflicts punishments

<sup>19</sup><https://www.refugeenewsturkey.org/single-post/2018/04/07/T%C3%BCrkiye-do%C4%9Fru-son-d%C3%B6nemde-giderek-artan-Afgan-g%C3%B6%C3%A7%C3%BCn%C3%BCn-nedeni-%C4%B0ran-s%C4%B1n%C4%B1r%C4%B1na-%C3%B6r%C3%BClen-yeni-duvar-m%C4%B1>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.haberler.com/afgan-multecilerin-turkiye-ye-gocunde-iran-in-rolu-10743670-haber/>

<sup>21</sup><https://www.refugeenewsturkey.org/single-post/2018/04/07/T%C3%BCrkiye-do%C4%9Fru-son-d%C3%B6nemde-giderek-artan-Afgan-g%C3%B6%C3%A7%C3%BCn%C3%BCn-nedeni-%C4%B0ran-s%C4%B1n%C4%B1r%C4%B1na-%C3%B6r%C3%BClen-yeni-duvar-m%C4%B1>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-43668567>

<sup>23</sup> <https://storymaps.esri.com/stories/terrorist-attacks/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42863116>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/afgan-multeciler-geri-gonderiliyor-adana-yerelhaber-2753865/>

<sup>26</sup> Konuya ilgili basında yer alan haberlerden bazılarında şu linklerden ulaşabilirsiniz:

<http://www.haber7.com/erzurum/2602783-erzurumda-778-afgan-gocmen-ulkelerine-gonderildi>

<http://grihat.com/6-bin-846-afgan-gocmen-sinir-disi-edildi/>

<https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/afgan-gocmenler-ulkelerine-gonderiliyor>

on the transportation firms which transports the passengers without travel permits may be other factors leading to the decrease.<sup>27</sup>

Regarding the western borders, even if it is not in the same proportion every time there is a steady decrease in number of those apprehended while irregularly crossing from Greece to Turkey by land in January, February and March 2018, however this trend changes in April 2018 and the number for April 2018 is two times (54%) higher than the number in March 2018. As mentioned in the previous issues of this bulletin, one of the reasons for this increase may be pushbacks even if there were no such news in March and April it is possible that they are not reported. The other reason may be that as reflected in German and Turkish press in April,<sup>28</sup> Germany implements the policy of non-permitting family reunification for Syrians and therefore Syrians return to Turkey irregularly by reversely passing through Balkan route. In the news report in Deutsche Welle on April 12, 2018 it is stated that because of the policy mentioned above the refugees who are mostly Syrians with residence permits return back to Turkey via Evros River to reunite with their families by paying money to smugglers.<sup>29</sup>

The legislation named as Second Asylum Seekers Package that came into the force on 17 March 2016 forms the legal basis for this policy of Germany. With this legislation, subsidiary protection status was placed in the law.<sup>30</sup> Subsidiary protection status holders have much more limited rights than the ones who have refugee status and the ones who have subsidiary protection status have to get one-year-residence permit<sup>31</sup>, renewing it after one year. According to the legislation mentioned above, subsidiary protection status holders could have the right to family reunification only after living two years with residence permit, and supposedly they should have been able to benefit from this right by March 2018 in terms of time period determined in the law. However, with a new law made by the newly formed coalition government in March 2018, this period to have right to family reunification was extended to the end of July 2018.<sup>32</sup> According to this new law, family reunification right will be granted for hardship cases on humanitarian ground as well as for 1000 people in every month and by this way these people will be able to enter Germany. However, it is stated that according to a new law draft under preparation this number would be limited to 1000 people who can benefit from family reunification under humanitarian grounds.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For news reports related to this issue, see:

<http://hatay.gov.tr/suriye-uyruklu-yabancilar-ile-ilgili-basin-aciklamasi>

<https://www.haberler.com/suriye-uyruklu-yabancilara-yol-izin-belgesi-8315155-haber/>

<http://ilkha.com/haber/71540/yol-izin-belgesi-bulunmayan-yabancilarin-il-disina-tasinmasi-yasaklandi>

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yol-izin-belgesi-olmayan-yabancilara-bilet-sa-40652017>

<http://www.bursa.gov.tr/yol-izin-belgesi-hakkinda-karar-duyurusu>

<http://www.karamanca.net/haber/587770/karamanda-afganlilari-tasiyan-turizm-firmasina-ceza.html>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/ailelerini-getiremeyen-suriyeli-siginmacilar-turkiyeye-donuyor-3224614>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/syrian-refugees-leaving-germany-over-family-reunification-policy/a-43358055>

<sup>30</sup> [a.g.y]

<sup>31</sup> <http://legal-dialogue.org/subsidiary-protection-instead-full-refugee-status-complicates-family-reunification>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/8116/family-reunification-in-germany-what-s-next>

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.proasyl.de/news/realitaetsflucht-in-der-regierung/?utm\\_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=0d9992894e-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_05\\_07&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_3ec9497afd-0d9992894e-422320997](https://www.proasyl.de/news/realitaetsflucht-in-der-regierung/?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=0d9992894e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_05_07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-0d9992894e-422320997)