

## **BULLETIN ON IRREGULAR CROSSINGS 5 (1-31 MAY 2018)**

### **SUMMARY:**

- In a tragic accident in May 2018, 7 Afghan people, two of whom were children lost their lives in sea during an irregular crossing from Çanakkale Ayvacık coast.

- 3.398 people were apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard Command units while trying to irregularly cross via sea in May 2018. There is a 34% increase in this number compared to the number in April. Among the apprehended, Syrians are the first largest group and they are respectively followed by Afghans and Central Africans as it was the case in April 2018.

- 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 as it was in the previous months. The second coast was Aydın Didim.

- 1509 people were apprehended by joint operations of Gendarmerie, Police and Coast Guard in May 2018. 15 organizers (smugglers) were apprehended jointly by these forces and 7 organizers were apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard.

-According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data number of people who irregularly crossed to Greece from Turkey by sea in May 2018 is 2916. This number is 3,8% (116 people) lower than the number in April 2018. The most common destination is Lesvos and second destination is Dodecanese Islands while it had been Samos or Chios in the previous months. .

- According to the report published by International Organization for Migration (IOM) dated April 2018, the number of those who irregularly crossed to Greece by land is 3975. This number is three times higher than the number in March 2018.

- According to the same report 103 people irregularly crossed from Turkey to Bulgaria by land in the first three months of 2018.

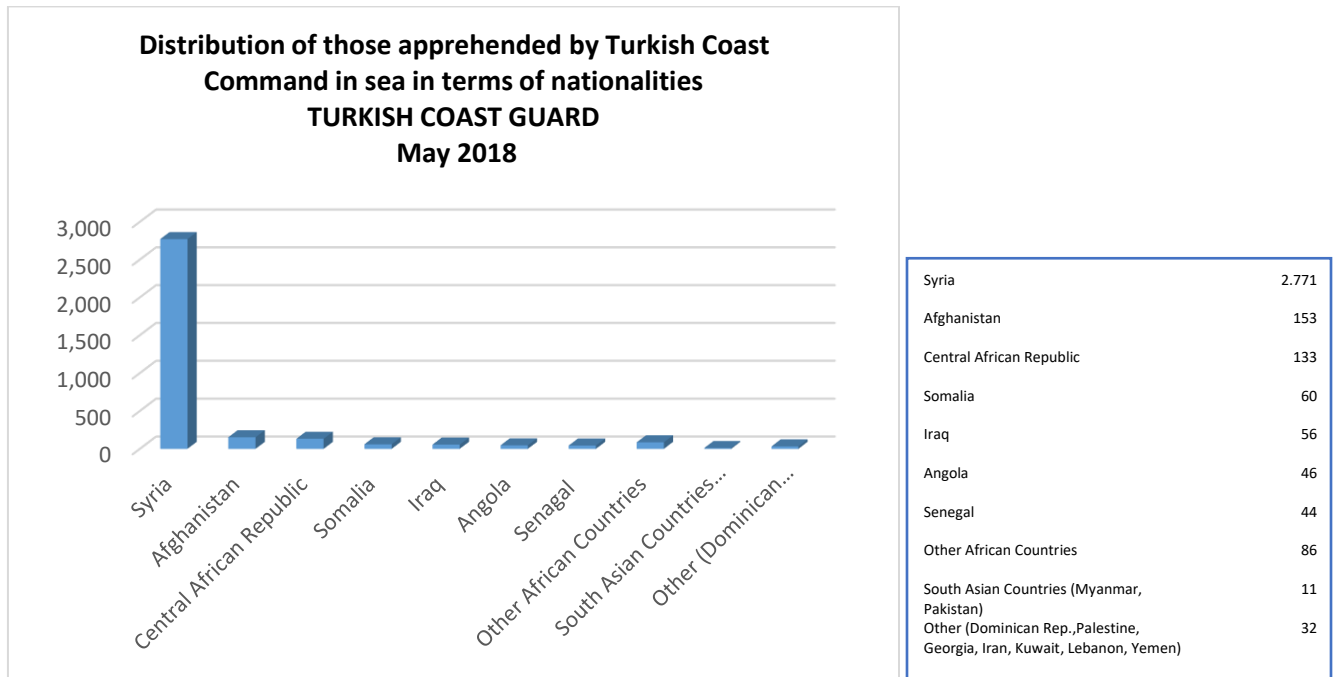
- According to the numbers published daily by Turkish Armed Forces (TAF); the number of people who were apprehended while irregularly crossing from Turkey to Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Georgia via land borders is 5226 in May 2018. There is a 51% percent increase (3451 people) compared to the number in April 2018. 5112 of these people were apprehended on western land borders during irregular crossings to Greece and Bulgaria. The remaining 114 people are those who were apprehended on southern, eastern and northeastern land borders while irregularly crossing respectively to Syria, Iran, Iraq and Georgia.

- According to the TAF's data the number of those apprehended while trying to cross irregularly to Turkey from Syria, Greece, Iraq and Iran via land borders is 26266 in May 2018. 25105 of these people are apprehended on southern and eastern borders. 1161 of them are apprehended while irregularly crossing from Greece to Turkey by land.

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

**3398 people were apprehended by Coast Guard Command during irregular crossings via sea in May 2018. There is a 34% increase (864 people) in this number compared to the number (2534) in April 2018.** It is important to highlight that there has been a continuous increase in the number of those apprehended by Coast Guard Command units during irregular crossings by sea since February 2018.

Distribution of people apprehended by Coast Guard in May 2018 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

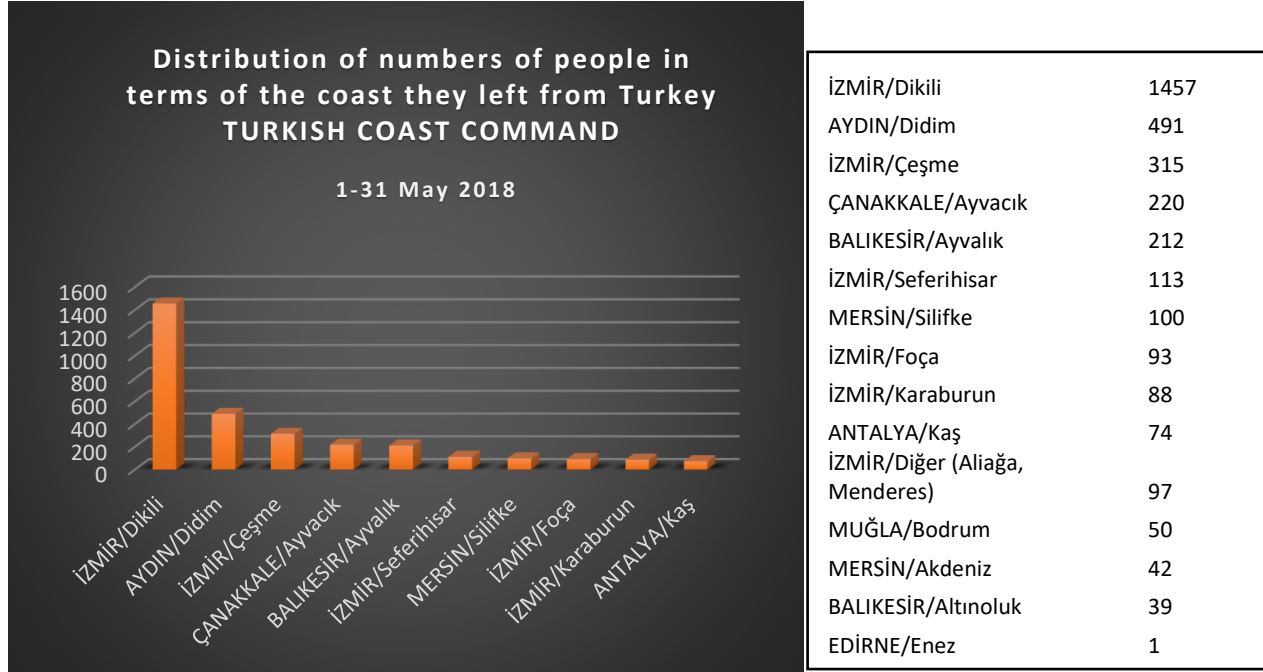
**\* There may be differences between the numbers Turkish Coast Guard provides on daily basis and the total number published at the end of the month (For May 2018, total of the numbers published on daily basis is 3392 while the number given in the statistics for the whole month is 3398, this graph is prepared by relying on the daily published data).**

When we look at the distribution of the nationalities declared by those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard units, the first and second largest groups are respectively Syrians and Afghans, as it was the case in March and April. There is an increase in the number of Syrians compared to previous month while there is a 43 people-decrease in number of Afghans with respect to their number in April. The third largest group is the citizens of Central African Republic and their number increased two times compared to their number (67) in April 2018.<sup>1</sup> The fourth largest group is Somalians in May 2018, while it was Pakistanis in the previous month. It is seen that number of Pakistanis has significantly decreased but it is hard to say whether it is a regular tendency or not. Fifth group is Iraqis as it was the case in April 2018, it is not possible to observe a regular increase or decrease in their numbers compared to previous months.

<sup>1</sup> For a short assessment regarding recent situation in Central African Republic please see April 2018 Bulletin on irregular crossings:

<http://www.multeci.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/D%C3%9CZENS%C4%B0Z-GE%C3%87%C4%B0%C5%9ELER-B%C3%9CLTEN%C4%B0-4-1-30-N%C4%B0SAN-2018.pdf>

While there was no regular tendency of increase or decrease in the numbers of Senegalese; their number increased two times in May compared to April 2018.



**Grafik 2:** Distribution of those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard in terms of the coast they left from the country.

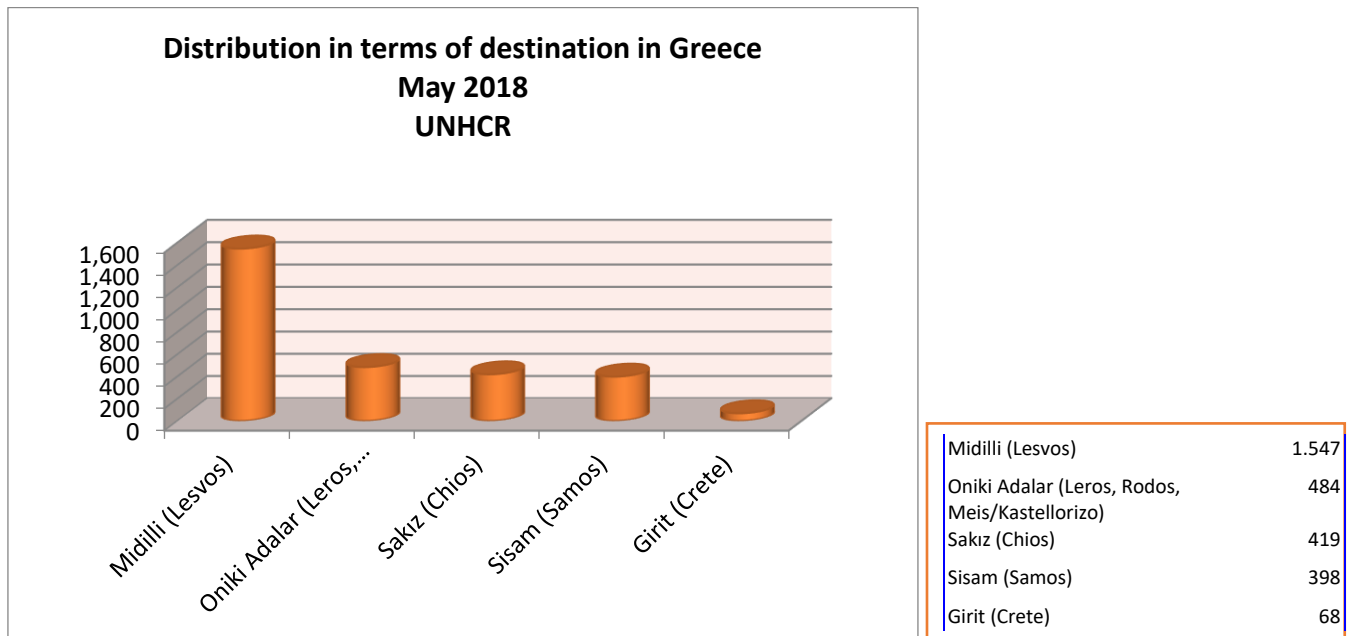
When we look at the distribution of the apprehended people during irregular crossings via sea in terms of the coast from which they left Turkey; the first coast is İzmir Dikili in May 2018 as it was in the first four months of 2018. The second coast is Aydın Didim and the third one is İzmir Çeşme while it was at the second place in last month. Regarding the distribution of these numbers in terms of provinces; majority (2163) of the people left the country from the coasts in İzmir. Mersin Akdeniz and Balıkesir Altınoluk are the coasts on which irregular crossings incidents occurred in May while there were no incidents in previous months. As mentioned in previous issues of this bulletin, Mersin Silifke is one of Mediterranean coasts where the number of irregular crossing incidents is relatively low. However, it draws attention regarding the large numbers of people apprehended in one incident and regarding the vehicle used such as wood vessel or fishing vessel. In addition, while inflatable boats are used in the incidents on other coasts, it is possible to see vehicles like speedboats and fiber boats in the incidents that took place on Muğla Bodrum coast. The ranking regarding the distribution of those apprehended in terms of the coasts they left the country from is also in place for the ranking related to distribution of the incidents in terms of the coasts. 26 irregular crossing incidents took place on the coast of İzmir Dikili, 9 incidents on Aydın Didim, 6 incidents on İzmir Çeşme and 4 incidents on Çanakkale Ayvack and Balıkesir Ayvalık.

In May 2018, a tragic event took place. 7 Afgan people, two of them were children lost their lives in sea in an irregular crossing incident in which people left the country from Çanakkale Ayvack coast and 12 people were rescued by Coast Guard units.

**Note:** According to the daily numbers published by Turkish Coast Guard Command regarding the people that were collectively apprehended by Gendarmerie, Police and Coast Command units is 1509 in May 2018. There is an increase of 442 people compared to the number in April 2018. It is seen that there is a steady increase in the number of those collectively apprehended in the course of 2018. In joint operations, 15 smugglers were apprehended in May 2018. 7 organizers were apprehended by Coast Guard Command among these organizers there were people who were Syrian, Lebanese and Iranian and Turkish nationals.

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

**Number of those who irregularly crossed by sea from Turkey to Greece is 2916 in May 2018. This number 3,8% (116 people) lower than the number in April 2018. Therefore, a slight decrease is observed in the number of people who irregularly crossed to Greece in May 2018 while there has been an upward tendency in this number since February 2018.** Distribution of those people that have irregularly crossed to Greece via sea in terms of the island they arrived in as follows:

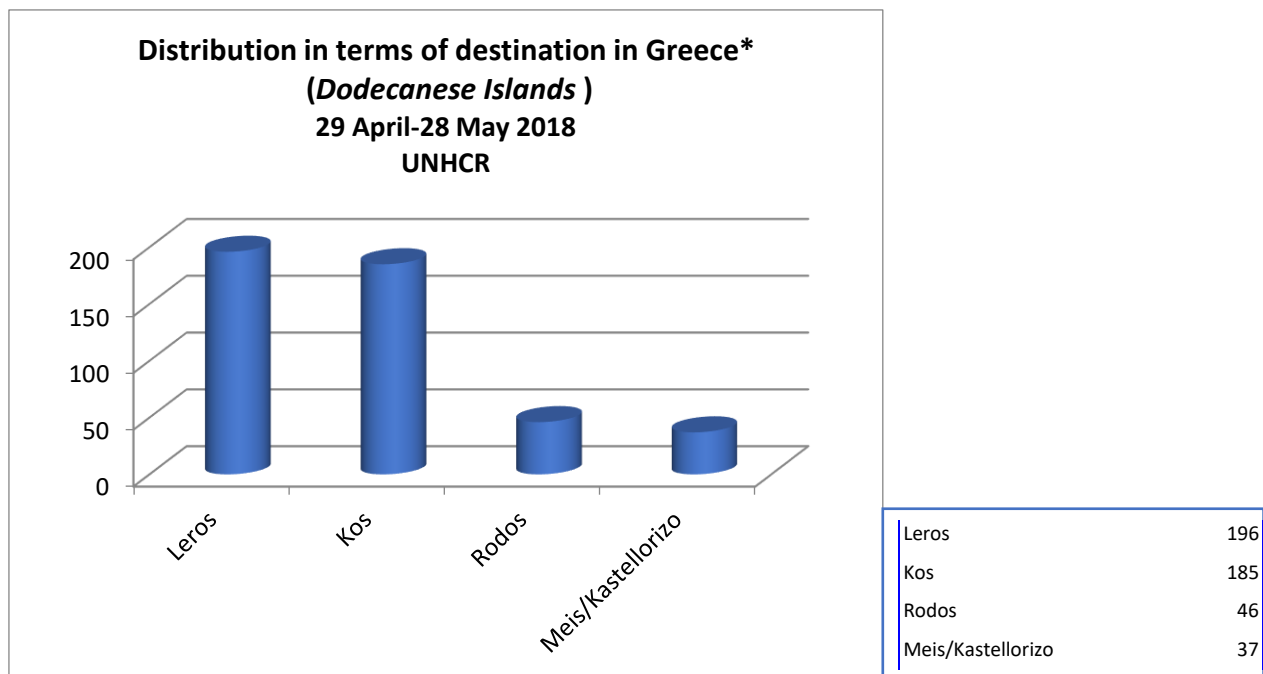


**Graph 4:** According to data provided in Dashboards monthly published by UNHCR, the distribution of people who irregularly crossed to Greece via sea terms of the island they arrived in.

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

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

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63922>

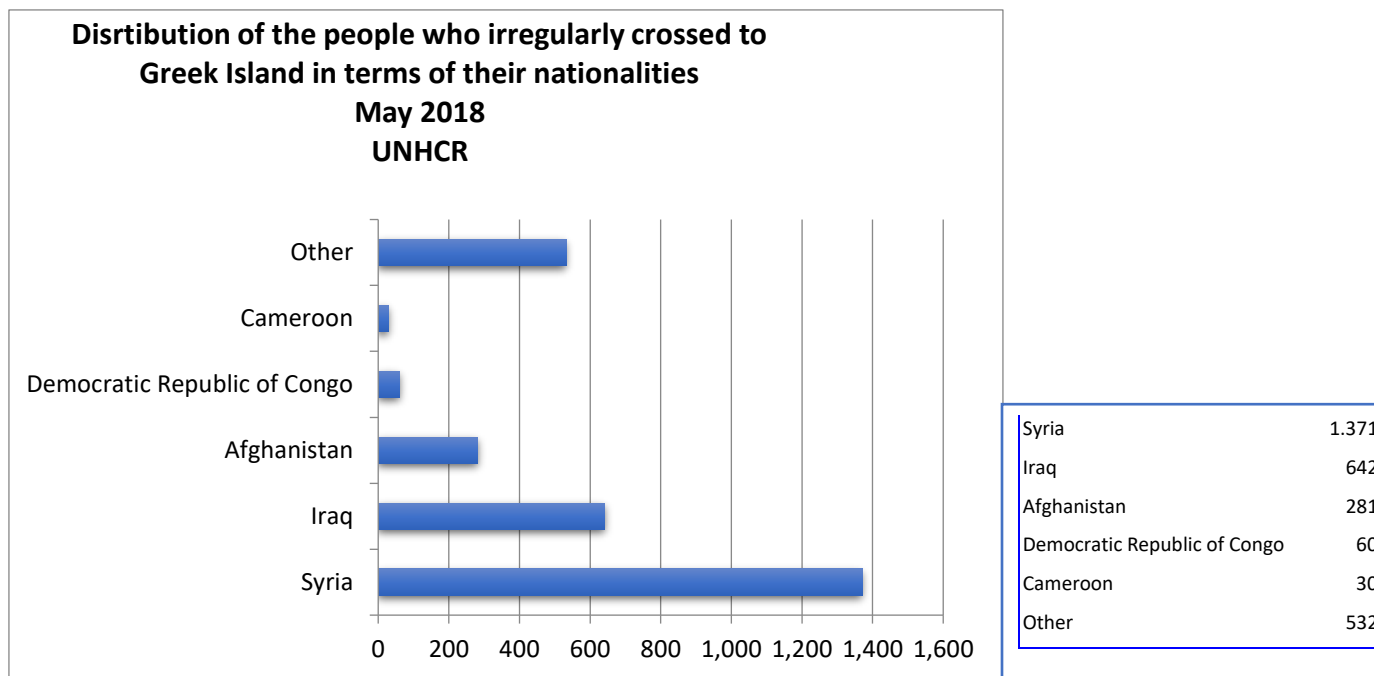


**Graph 4.1:** Distribution of the people who irregularly cross to Dodecanese Islands, According to UNHCR' s data published on the link <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

\* Due to the fact that UNHCR does not update daily 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 29 April 2018 and 28 May 2018.

As seen in the graphs of May 2018; as it was the case in the previous months, the biggest number of people irregularly crossed to Lesbos. Second biggest number of people irregularly crossed to Dodecanese Islands instead of Chios or Samos as it was the case in previous months. Number of those who irregularly crossed to Dodecanese Islands increased more than two times in May 2018, compared to the number in April. There is a decrease in the number of those who irregularly crossed to Lesbos, Chios and Samos compared to the numbers in April 2018 (the numbers in terms of the islands were respectively 1828, 418 and 555 in April). However, given the date range in the graph above, number of those who irregularly crossed to Leros increased more than twice and the number for the crossed to Kos increased three times in May compared to numbers in April 2018. In addition, there is a 76% increase in number of people who irregularly crossed to Rhodes, while there is a slight decrease in this number for Meis with respect to the numbers in April. It is not possible to track the tendency in number of those who irregularly crossed to Greek islands other than the numbers regarding Lesbos and Chios, of which there has been an upward tendency since February 2018 till May 2018.

According to the numbers given in April and May 2018 Dashboards of UNHCR, the distribution of those who irregularly crossed to Greek islands in terms of nationalities the overall trend has not changed; the first largest group is Syrians, second groups is Iraqis and the third one is Afghans. Their graphical distribution is as follows:



**Graph 5:** Distribution of those who irregularly crossed to Greek Islands in terms of nationalities

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

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

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63922>

The slight decrease in number of those who irregularly crossed to Greece via sea and the increase in number of those apprehended during irregular crossings by Turkish Coast Guard may be seen as the events compatible with each other. Additionally, the law aiming at speeding up the asylum procedures, making the appeal process for declined applications shorter, potential restrictions on asylum seekers' freedom of movement, and a target to increase number deportations to Turkey was adopted by Greek Parliament on May 15, 2018.<sup>2</sup> This may be another factor that have affected the decrease in the numbers. Despite the overall decrease in number of those who irregularly crossed to Greek islands, number of those people who have crossed to Dodecanese Islands increased and this may be stemming from the fact that living conditions in the most commonly crossed islands such as Lesbos and Chios are quite poor.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, there are intense right violations and clashes that took place between different ethnic groups in Moria Camp in Lesbos at the end of May. Even the ones who got refugee status and the people with vulnerabilities could not cross to mainland.<sup>4</sup>

**Note:** According to the numbers provided in IOM's (International Organization for Migration) Mixed Migration Flows In The Mediterranean April 2018 regarding the irregular crossings to Greece by land in the first four months of 2016, 2017 and 2018<sup>5</sup> are as follows:

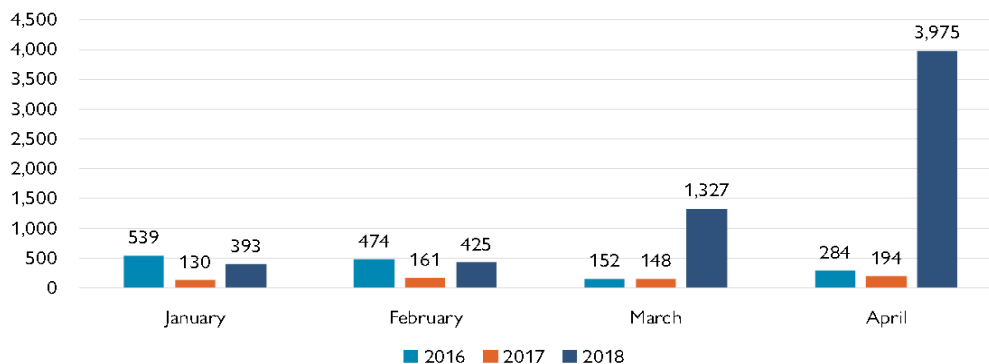
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/228694/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-changes-asylum-rules-to-fight-camp-overcrowding>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/228940/article/ekathimerini/news/police-conduct-survey-at-vial-hotspot-on-chios>

<http://www.legalcentrelesbos.org/category/news/>

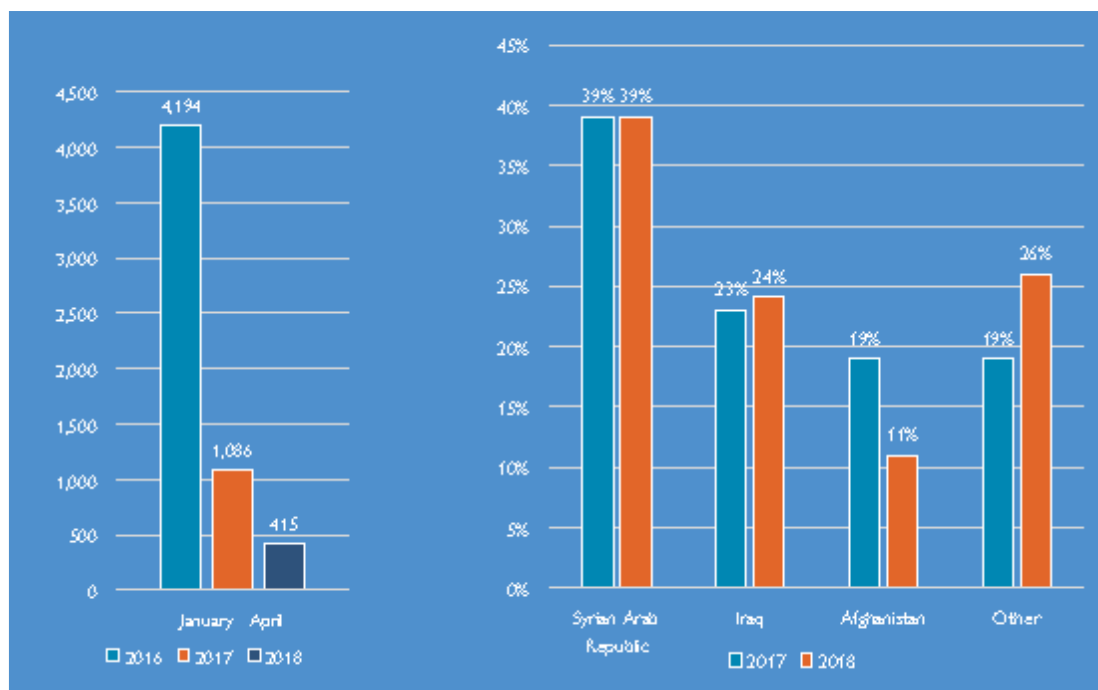
<sup>4</sup> [ibid]

<sup>5</sup> s.25, [http://migration.iom.int/docs/Flows\\_Compilation\\_Report\\_April\\_2018.pdf](http://migration.iom.int/docs/Flows_Compilation_Report_April_2018.pdf)



As seen in the graph, the number of people who irregularly crossed to Greece by land in April is approximately three times higher than the number in March 2018. There is a steady and rapid increase in the numbers since February 2018. Since the report including the numbers for May 2018 has not been released yet, the numbers regarding May 2018 could not be provided.

According to the same report; the numbers regarding the irregular crossings to Bulgaria by land in the first four months of 2016, 2017 and 2018 are as follows:<sup>6</sup>



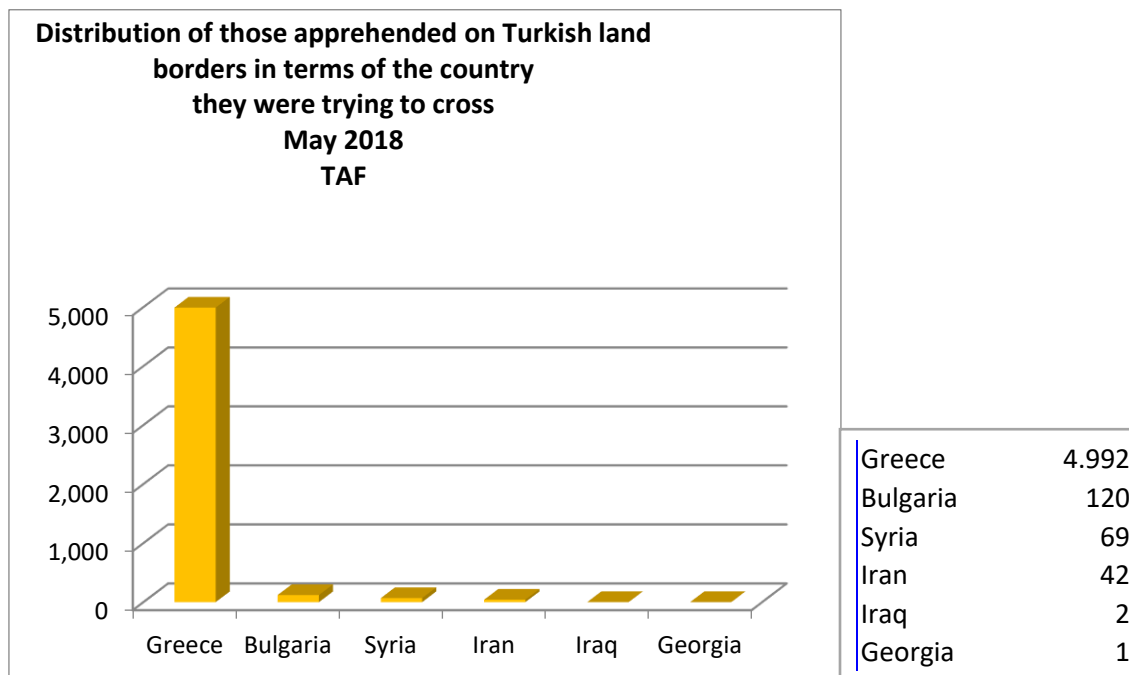
The numbers given in the graph on the right hand side indicates the number of those who were apprehended on land borders while either entering or leaving Bulgaria in January, February, March and April in relevant years. As seen in the graph 415 people were apprehended on Bulgarian land borders in the first three months of 2018. The report states that one over four (¼)(103 people) of these people

<sup>6</sup> [ibid], p.33

were apprehended while irregularly crossing to Bulgaria from Turkey. The graph on the left hand side indicates the distribution of the people who were apprehended while irregularly crossing to Bulgaria in terms of their nationalities. May 2018 report has not been published yet therefore the numbers regarding May 2018 could not be provided.

**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, Iran and Georgia through land borders is 5226. There is 51% (3451 people) increase in this number compared to April 2018.* The number of those apprehended by TAF Border Units has been increasing since March 2018. 5112 of 5226 people apprehended in May 2018 are the ones apprehended on western land borders. The remaining 114 people were apprehended on southern, eastern and Northeastern land borders during irregular crossings respectively to Syria, Iran, Iraq and Georgia. Distribution of these people 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 it was the case in previous four months in May 2018, most of the people apprehended were the ones who were trying to irregularly cross to Greece by land borders. Their number increased by 58% compared to April 2018, the number for May 2018 is 4992. While there was a downward trend in number of people apprehended while irregularly crossing to Greece by land in the first three months of 2018, the trend in this number became upward after March 2018 and continued to be so through April and May. As also stated in our April 2018 Bulletin, this increase in number of those apprehended during irregular crossing to Greece by land has reflected upon the news reports stating that the irregular crossings



through Evros River increased and Greek authorities were quite worried about the issue.<sup>7</sup> People have tended to land borders for irregular crossings and this may be originating from the situation of asylum seekers in the Greek Islands was getting worse and from the law brought to the Parliament by the government and adopted by Greek Parliament in May 2018.<sup>8</sup> This law reinstates the Asylum Service Director Decision which traps the people on the islands and restricts their freedom of movement and which was annulled by Greek Council of State in April 2018 and the law makes deportations easier.<sup>9</sup> Because of these circumstances, it is possible that people tend to irregularly cross directly to mainland instead of the islands. In addition, it is reported in the news that Turkey increased security on Turkish-Greek border to prevent irregular crossings,<sup>10</sup> and this may be affecting the increase in the number of those apprehended.

Despite the sharp increase in the number of those apprehended during irregular crossings to Bulgaria through western land borders in April 2018. After March, this tendency did not continue in May 2018 and there is a slight decrease (8 people) in May compared to April.<sup>11</sup>

In the eastern borders a person was apprehended on Turkish-Georgian border in May 2018, for the first time since previous months. While there was an increase in number of those apprehended during irregular crossing to Iraq in April, there is a significant decrease in this number in May 2018. Number of those apprehended while irregularly crossing to Iran increased in March 2018 compared to previous months. There were not apprehensions on Turkish-Iranian border in April and it is recorded that 42 people were apprehended on this border in May 2018. There is a 48% decrease in the number of those apprehended while trying to irregularly cross to Syria on southern land borders in May 2018 compared to April 2018.

According to the daily data published by Turkish Armed Forces ***number of the people apprehended by Border Units while they were trying to irregularly cross by land to Turkey from the countries with which Turkey shares land borders (Syria, Iraq, Iran and Greece) is 26266 in May 2018.*** 25105 of these people are the ones who apprehended during irregular crossing through southern and eastern land borders. As it was the case in the previous months, in May 2018 there were no people that were apprehended while irregularly crossing from Bulgaria to Turkey. 1161 people were apprehended during irregular crossing from Greece to Turkey on western land borders. Distribution of those apprehended while trying to irregularly cross to Turkey from Syria, Iran, Iraq and Greece via land borders in terms of the country they were coming from is as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.multeci.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/D%C3%9CZENS%C4%B0Z-GE%C3%87%C4%B0%C5%9ELER-B%C3%9CLTEN%C4%B0-4-1-30-N%C4%B0SAN-2018.pdf>

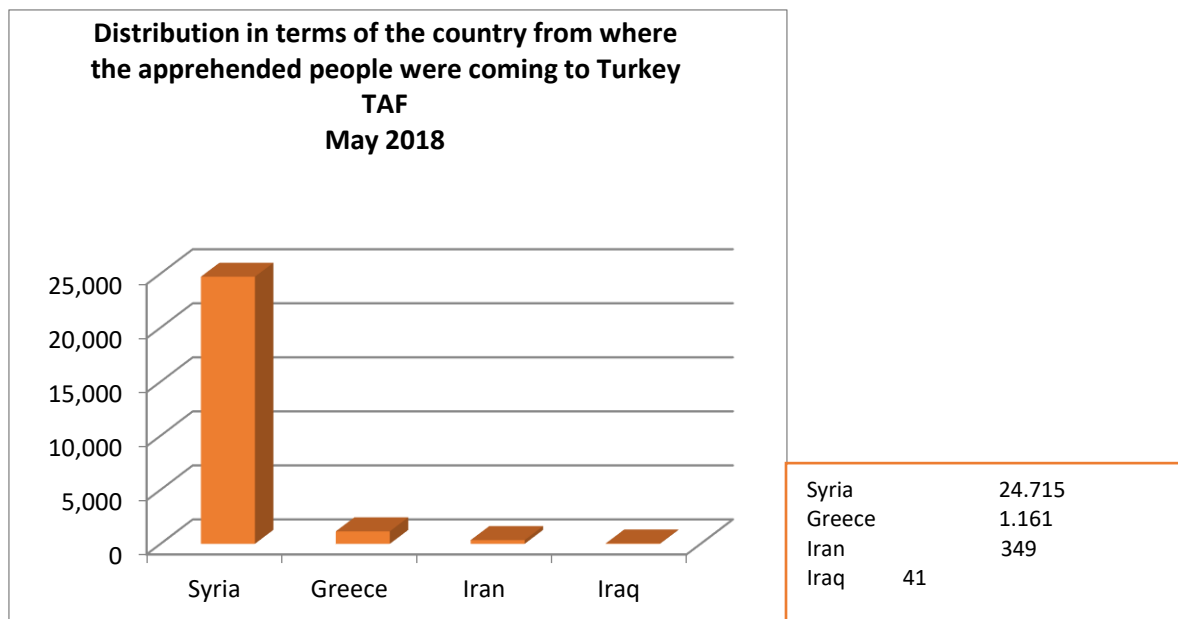
<sup>8</sup> <http://www.legalcentrelesbos.org/category/news/>

<sup>9</sup> [ibid]

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ekathimerini.com/228838/article/ekathimerini/news/influx-via-evros-dips-as-migrants-return-to-idomeni>

<sup>11</sup> For a short assessment regarding Turkish-Bulgarian border:

<http://www.multeci.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/D%C3%9CZENS%C4%B0Z-GE%C3%87%C4%B0%C5%9ELER-B%C3%9CLTEN%C4%B0-4-1-30-N%C4%B0SAN-2018.pdf>



**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.

While there was an increase in the number of people apprehended during irregular crossing from Syria to Turkey in April, it was followed by a decrease of 3165 people in May 2018. This decrease may be stemming from the fact that armed clashes relatively decreased in the West of Syria and that the construction of observation points in Idlib was completed by Turkey.<sup>12</sup> Following the sharp increase in number of those apprehended while irregularly crossing from Iran in March 2018, the downward trend which started in April continued in May 2018. It is probable that the decrease in this number is related to the policies carried out by Turkey. The Wall which continues to be built on Turkey-Iran border, the temporary detention center which is stated to be constructed in Iğdır and collective repatriation of Afghans with charter flights are the examples of such policies.<sup>13</sup>

There is an increase of 405 people who were apprehended while irregularly crossing from Greece to Turkey in May 2018, compared to the number recorded in April. As stated in April 2018 Bulletin this decrease may be due to Germany postponing the starting date for the right to family reunification for Syrians under subsidiary protection which was expected to start in March 2018 and rescheduled it as August 2018. Germany also made usage of this right more difficult.<sup>14</sup> Besides, the poor conditions in which the refugees live, the discrimination to which they are exposed to and widespread hate speech may be other factors leading the people to return back to Turkey from Europe by reversely passing Balkan route.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> <https://news.sol.org.tr/turkey-complete-construction-observation-posts-syrias-idlib-within-week-174696>

<sup>13</sup> For a review of this situation please see April 2018 Bulletin  
<http://www.multeci.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/D%C3%9CZENS%C4%B0Z-GE%C3%87%C4%B0%C5%9ELER-B%C3%9CLTEN%C4%B0-4-1-30-N%C4%B0SAN-2018.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> For a more comprehensive information regarding this subject please see:  
<http://www.multeci.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/D%C3%9CZENS%C4%B0Z-GE%C3%87%C4%B0%C5%9ELER-B%C3%9CLTEN%C4%B0-4-1-30-N%C4%B0SAN-2018.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-44240903/refugee-crisis-the-syrians-abandoning-europe?utm>  
<http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/9233/sharp-increase-in-refugee-suicides-in-hesse-germany>