



Turkey



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	954,000–1,201,000
Percentage of total population	1.3–1.6%
Start of current displacement situation	1984
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	1,201,000 (1992)
New displacement	Undetermined
Causes of displacement	Armed conflict, deliberate policy or practice of arbitrary displacement, generalised violence, human rights violations
Human development index	83

During the past 25 years, the Turkish armed forces have engaged in conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the south-eastern provinces of the country. A policy of burning down villages to prevent them from being used as PKK bases, as well as indiscriminate attacks against civilians by both parties, led to the internal displacement of between 954,000 and 1.2 million people during the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of whom were displaced between 1991 and 1996. Though the south-east has become more secure, fighting has continued sporadically since 2004. In August 2010, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire which was subsequently extended until 2011; however this was the seventh such ceasefire, and the government has disregarded them all.

In 2010, most IDPs were living on the edges of cities, both within affected provinces (for example in Batman, Diyarbakir, Hakkari and Van) and elsewhere in Turkey (in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir). They had settled among the urban poor with whom they shared limited access to housing, education and health care; for those outside the south-east this was compounded by discrimination and acute social and economic marginalisation. Problems particularly identified among forcibly displaced communities included trauma, limited access to education, and high levels of unemployment, particularly among women. Child labour and domestic violence were reported to be increasing in urban centres.

The vast majority of IDPs are Kurdish, and their displacement and current situation is tied to the government's failure to recognise the Kurdish identity. In the last few years, the government has taken a number of unprecedented steps towards a "democratic opening" to address the Kurdish issue, including steps which could have significant bearing on the response to displacement. Human rights associations have nevertheless condemned continued discrimination and the use of existing legislation to stifle freedoms; they have called repeatedly for human rights violations against Kurds to be addressed and for state agents who have perpetrated them, many of them members of government "village guard" militias, to be punished.

Relatively few IDPs have returned to their places of origin; in July 2009, the government reported that only a little over 150,000 people had returned. Others have commuted between cities and their villages of origin. The intermittent insecurity has discouraged returns and even threatened new displacement,

and people have been discouraged by the continuing presence of village guard militias and of close to a million landmines in the provinces bordering Syria and Iraq. IDPs areas of origin also have fewer economic opportunities, social services and basic infrastructure.

The government has taken significant steps to respond to the displacement, with an emphasis on support for returns. In 1994, it launched the Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project, and from 2006 it commissioned a national survey of the number and situation of IDPs, drafted a national IDP strategy, adopted a law on compensation and launched a comprehensive programme in Van Province to address rural and urban situations of displacement. It started in 2009 to draw up plans for 13 other provinces affected by displacement, based on the Van pilot plan. These provincial action plans are intended to form the basis of a comprehensive national response.

The provincial action plans being developed in 2010 included stronger measures to support settlement options other than return for IDPs in the affected governorates. However, civil society observers continued to voice concerns over the continuing situation of IDPs. They have criticised programmes for the lack of support which they offer to returnees, and for their lack of transparency, consultation, consistency, and adequate funding. The pilot action plan in Van has been criticised for failing to acknowledge the underlying Kurdish issue and the insecurity in areas of return, while the other provincial plans will not address the situation of IDPs in cities outside the south-east.

Progress for IDPs in Turkey has been influenced by regional institutions such as the EU, the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe. In his most recent report in 2009, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights underlined the need for a comprehensive plan to address the socio-economic problems faced by IDPs and to ensure "sustainable durable solutions". This was reiterated in the EU's annual progress report in 2010 which also highlighted the need to address the situation of urban IDPs and to resolve the obstacles to sustainable return. If IDPs are to achieve durable solutions, the international community should continue to raise these concerns, and encourage wider efforts at reconciliation.