

RAU Input to the Main part of the RABIT OpPlan

3. DESCRIPTION AND GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

Background

Owing to its geographical location, Turkey has been one of the most important entry points for migrants, who intend to reach the European Union (EU). Moreover, as of the end of October 2019, Turkey's Ministry of Interior estimated that around 4.9 million migrants are in Turkey, of which over 3.6 million are Syrians.

The implementation of the EU-Turkey statement from March 2016, with its stipulation that the Turkish authorities are to effectively patrol their borders and territories both at land and sea, has significantly reduced the number of migrants who managed to leave Turkey and enter the EU illegally [REDACTED]

Nevertheless, in 2019, the Eastern Mediterranean route - which is comprised of the Greek and Bulgarian land borders and the Greek sea borders with Turkey, as well as the route from Turkey to Cyprus - registered a 46% increase, with more than 82 000 migrant detections, and ranked first among all the migratory routes. The very intense migratory pressure on the Greek Aegean islands mainly contributed to this major increase despite the 40% decrease on the Greek land border with Turkey and notwithstanding the significant number of preventions by the Turkish authorities both at sea and on the land borders.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In 2019, 23 persons have reportedly lost their lives (35 during the implementation of the JO) while crossing the sea. According to IOM reports (which also include figures from Turkish sources), in 2019, 71 fatalities were registered in the Eastern Mediterranean (132 during the implementation of the JO).

The procedure for registration and identification of migrants in the hotspots is well established, and nearly all migrants (98.8%) were registered properly in 2019. 0.72% of the persons screened were assumed by screeners to have falsely claimed their nationality. [REDACTED]

Latest developments

On 28 February 2020, after a military conflict in Idlib (Syria), the Turkish authorities discontinued migration controls in the Aegean region at land and sea borders. Immediately, migrants from Edirne and other regions of the country - mainly from Istanbul - travelled by bus, taxi or cars to the Greek-Turkish border. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Turkey announced that nearly 100 000 would-be migrants approached the Greek borders.

Justification 1

Justification 1

Justification 1

Justification 1

Justification 3

[REDACTED]

Justification 1

Fatalities

Crossing the Aegean Sea in winter is in itself more dangerous in harsh weather. The sudden increase of the flow from Turkey, however, may further increase the potential of casualties, as migrants may board unseaworthy dinghies and in higher number than their recommended capacities. Furthermore, based on news that local residents on the Aegean islands tried to prevent migrants from disembarking, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Justification 3

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Justification 1

Justification 1