

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Fortress Europe Facts and figures

GLOSSARY

A refugee is a person who has fled from their own country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution and their government cannot or will not protect them.

Asylum procedures are designed to determine whether someone meets the legal definition of a refugee. When a country recognizes someone as a refugee, it gives them international protection, as a substitute for protection in their country of origin.

An asylum-seeker is someone who left their country seeking protection but has yet to be recognized as a refugee. During the time an asylum claim is being examined, asylum-seekers must not be forced to return to their country of origin.

Refoulement is the forcible return of someone to a country where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations. International law prohibits the transfer of anyone to a place where their lives or freedoms are at risk – this is known as the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Push-backs happen when people are pushed back to the country they are trying to leave – or in some cases into the high seas – shortly after they cross the border, without an opportunity to challenge their forced return. The deportation of a group of people without looking at each case individually is a **collective expulsion** and is prohibited under international law.

THE FACTS

At the end of 2013, the countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees were: Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Kenya, Chad, Ethiopia, China and the USA.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria in 2011, more than 2.8 million Syrians have fled their homes. By the end of April 2014 only 96,000 had reached Europe and sought asylum.

In 2013, 48 per cent of all irregular entrants and 63 per cent of all those arriving irregularly by sea to Europe came from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia, countries torn by conflict and wide spread human rights abuses.

In just two weeks in October 2013, more than 400 people lost their lives in two shipwrecks off the coast of Lampedusa, an Italian island in the Mediterranean. In two consecutive shipwrecks on 11 and 12 May 2014, at least 50 people lost their lives between Libya and Italy and hundreds more are missing feared dead.

THE MONEY

In 2007-2013 the European Union (EU) allocated almost €4 billion for asylum procedures, integration, return of third country nationals and border control. Almost half of this (€1,820 million) was allocated for border control. Just 17 per cent (€700 million) was allocated to support asylum procedures.

ALLOCATION OF REFUGEE AND EXTERNAL BORDERS FUNDS IN SOME MEMBER STATES 2007-2013

	Refugee Fund	External Borders Fund
Bulgaria	€4,295,548.61	€38,131,685.92
Greece	€21,938,521.14	€207,816,754.58
Spain	€9,342,834.50	€289,394,768.35

In 2012, €20 million was earmarked by the EU to help Turkey “strengthen the border surveillance capacity”. The same year, the humanitarian aid to Turkey – where 280,000 Syrians had sought protection since the Syrian crisis broke out in 2011 – was merely €3.8 million from the European Commission and €10.5 million from all EU member states.

EU RESPONSE TO IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, became operational in 2005. Its main task is to co-ordinate joint operations between member states on the external sea, land and air borders of the EU.

The EU and member states have sought to create a **buffer zone** by entering into cooperation arrangements with neighbouring countries that help them block irregular migration towards Europe.

The European Border Surveillance System (**Eurosur**) became operational in December 2013. It includes information exchange technology that is used by national authorities of EU member states and Schengen participating states (the 26 European states that have abolished passport control between their borders) to strengthen border control cooperation both between states, including bordering non-EU countries, and with Frontex. It is estimated that the cost of Eurosur for the period 2011 to 2020 will be €338 million.

In **Bulgaria**, stationary and moving cameras and motion sensors cover a 58km stretch along the border with Turkey. The system is used not only to apprehend migrants and refugees who have crossed the border into Bulgaria irregularly, but also to stop them even reaching the Bulgarian border. The cameras stationed at the border track any moving object on Turkish territory within 15km of the border.

READMISSION AGREEMENTS

EU readmission agreements set out the procedures for the expulsion of non-EU citizens present in the EU without authorization to their country of origin or transit. Although readmission agreements should only concern irregular migrants, there are serious concerns that asylum-seekers may also be sent back to transit or source countries through readmission agreements, without access to asylum procedures. This can happen, for example, in member states with systemic deficiencies in their asylum procedures such as Bulgaria and Greece.

RIGHTS AT RISK AT EU BORDERS INCLUDE:

- Right to life
- Right to liberty and security of the person (prohibition on arbitrary detention)
- Prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- Right to leave any country, including one’s own
- Right to seek and to enjoy asylum from persecution
- Right to effective remedy
- Prohibition of collective expulsion
- No one may be expelled, extradited or otherwise forcibly removed to a State where there is a real risk that he or she would be subjected to the death penalty, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (*non-refoulement* principle).
- The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence
- In all actions concerning children [...] the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration

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