TURKISH RED CRESCENT
COMMUNITY BASED MIGRATION PROGRAMME

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS
TEAM

ACTIVITY REPORT
APRIL 2020
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As a member of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Turkish Red Crescent follows-up the tracing, family reunification and Family Message which are transmitted to it by the migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees through National Societies and International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) as part of the ‘Restoring Family Links’ (RFL) activity, and fulfills its obligations within the framework of Geneva Convention—which the State of the Republic of Turkey is a party to—as well as the National Regulation and Cooperation Protocol with the Directorate General of Migration Management for tracing.

Temporary Protection Regulation Article 49 determined on 13/10/2014 by the Council of Ministers, in the Article 91 of Law on Foreigners and International Protection dated 4/4/2013 and numbered 6458, upon the letter of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs dated 13/8/2014 and numbered 8027 “(1) Foreigners under this Regulation may apply for family reunification in Turkey to reunify with his or her spouse, children who have not attained maturity and dependent children who have attained maturity, who are in another country. These applications shall be evaluated by the Directorate General and necessary actions may be carried out in cooperation with relevant public institutions and organizations, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

(2) Family reunification procedures for children who are identified to be unaccompanied shall be immediately initiated without waiting for the request of the child.”

As part of this, the institutions mostly cooperated and needed for cooperation are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directorate General of Immigration, Asylum and Visa; Directorate General of Bilateral Political Affairs); Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM); Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MoFLSS); General Command of Gendarmerie; Ministry of Justice Forensic Medicine Institute; Directorate General of Security and district governorates.
Family Reunification service covers the efforts to reunite the family members who fall apart from each other on the migration route due to war or crises in cooperation with national and/or international government agencies, national and/or international non-governmental organizations and components of Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement within the framework of rights provided by the Geneva Conventions and the Temporary Protection Regulation of Law on Foreigners and International Protection of the Republic of Turkey. Family reunification requests desired to be realized in Turkey are forwarded to Turkish Red Crescent through 16 Community Centers in 15 cities of Turkey; Turkish Red Crescent branches in cities where Community Centers are not found; 168 Call Center and directly through e-mail; field activities of Turkish Red Crescent ESSN Program, and through other NGOs while the ones to be realized outside Turkey are forwarded to Turkish Red Crescent through the National Societies (Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) of other countries. The cases with the criteria determined in line with the legal ground and capacity by the RFL Unit are prioritized according to their protection needs and vulnerability, then the processes regarding the cases are initiated. Directorate General of Migration Management works in coordination with the Provincial Directorates General of Migration Management; Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services; provincial directorates of the ministry and district governorates during the family reunification processes. The process is commenced upon exchanging an external correspondence with the relevant government agencies as per the request from other National Societies for family reunifications to outside of Turkey, and with the Provincial Directorate of Immigration Office of the city, where the family reunification will be performed, for family reunifications into Turkey. However, be it known that the ultimate decision makers for family reunifications requested to be made from Syria into Turkey are the district governorates while it is the Director General of Migration Management for the family reunifications planned to be made from other countries into Turkey. Nevertheless, bureaucratic advocacy and facilitation during all family reunification processes are performed under the coordination of the Turkish Red Crescent RFL Team and with the support of Community Center Protection Personnel.

SERVICES:
FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Data shows the case number between April 2017-May 2020 (including).
TRACING

Tracing service covers the efforts to trace the family members who fall apart from each other on the migration route due to war or crises in cooperation with national and/or international government agencies, national and/or international non-governmental organizations and components of Red Cross - Red Crescent Movement within the framework of rights provided by the Geneva Conventions.

The requests for tracing the disappeared people in Turkey are forwarded to the Turkish Red Crescent through Secure File Exchange (SFE) system by the National Societies of other countries as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross. The application received is checked by the RFL Officer for compliance with the criteria determined in accordance with the legal basis. In case the application is considered in compliance with the criteria, the process is commenced.

According to the case story and the consent of the tracer, partial data of the person to be traced (name-surname, birth date, nationality, gender) is shared with the Ministry of Internal Affairs Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM); the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MoFLSS); Directorate General of Security; Gendarmerie; related Provincial Governorate; the Ministry of Justice Forensic Medicine Institute; directorates of cemetery; municipalities, and some NGOs, and requested to be scanned within their databases. The relevant requesting National Society or ICRC is informed in line with the feedback of the institutions. If the person to be traced is found, any information about him/her will not be shared with the tracing person within the framework of ‘Right to Disappear’ in case the person to be traced does not give consent.

Data shows the case number between February 2014-May 2020 (including).

* Among the people found by the Red Crescent, 1 refused to communicate.
FAMILY MESSAGE

Family Message ensures communication among family members who do not have any other communication sources, within the framework of the rights provided by the Geneva Conventions.

Family Message of prisoners mostly in Syria and Iraq conveyed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from prison, detention centers, orphanage and camps to their relatives in Turkey are subject to censoring done firstly by the guardian or institution officers, and then by the ICRC. This censoring is required for the Family Message to serve its purpose and to ensure the well-being of the people as well as that they hear from their families, and give information about themselves. Then the letters are forwarded to the Turkish Red Crescent through Secure File Exchange (SFE) system. The forwarded letters are subject to the censoring by RFL Officer for the last time and sent to the recipient by mail together with the Official Letter and an empty draft letter for the recipient to write back if the recipient gives consent to take the letter. The reply of the recipient is again sent by mail to the Turkish Red Crescent and the process starting with the censoring is followed backwardly. Nevertheless, video-conference service is also provided more efficiently yet less often especially for the unaccompanied minors.

Total Family Message 1,253

Data shows the case number between January 2017-May 2020 (including).

*The reason for failing to transmit the letters is the lack of contact information in the letter from abroad.
REGULAR COOPERATIONS:

- A protocol was signed between the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) and Turkish Red Crescent for the research of the partial data of people traced by the Turkish Red Crescent in DGMM database within the scope of tracing activities on 11.10.2017.

- Standard Procedures were determined and put into effect in order to trace the disappeared Afghan people, which were requested from the Turkish Red Crescent to be traced, within the database of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 04.04.2018. Although UNHCR transferred the recording work to DGMM in September 2018, the cooperation is continued considering that there is a possibility to reach data in the retrospective records.

- Steps are taken for the protocols desired to be signed between the two institutions as part of the tracing of people who probably died in Turkey -especially in boat accidents in Aegean Sea-, through the meetings made with the Ministry of Justice Forensic Medicine Institute on 21.02.2019 and 27.11.2019.

- A Sponsorship Agreement was signed on 25.03.2020 to increase the number of cases realized positively and to come through in a shorter span of time through developing the RFL software and accelerating RFL processes -which are carried out traditionally- using machine learning technologies as part of the Microsoft AI4HA (Artificial Intelligence for Humanitarian Action) Project. It is planned that the first phase of the project will be completed at the end of 2020.
SUPPORTING SERVICES:

As part of increasing the recognition of the Turkish Red Crescent RFL service:

• Trainings and presentations are given to the personnel of national and international NGO, MoFLSS Social Service Centers, and Turkish Red Crescent.

• Brochures were printed in 4 languages including Arabic, Persian, English, and Turkish to be placed in the Community Centers as well as cooperating institutions and organizations.

• An introductory video on RFL activities is broadcasted at Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers.

• A short film was shot and waits to be broadcasted in order to increase the recognition of RFL services by the beneficiaries and institutions.

• Field service is offered, when needed, through Trolley Chat Box which acts as a communication station and involves equipment such as telephone, charger, tablet, and generator in order to prevent that family members lose track of each other on the sudden influxes of migration circumstances.
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS ACTIVITY REPORT

SEMINAR STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Syrian</th>
<th>Afghan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Local People</th>
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<td>146</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>110</td>
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</table>

The seminars reflect the data between October 2018-May 2020. Seminars in March-May were suspended due to COVID and started to be provided again online in July.

Number of people reached through seminars

**2,410**

TRAINING STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local People</th>
<th>Turkish Red Crescent Personnel</th>
<th>Other NS/ICRC Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The trainings reflect the data between November 2018-May 2020. Trainings between February-May were suspended due to COVID.

Number of people reached through trainings

**125**
CASE SAMPLES:

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

A woman, who drifted apart from his son on the migration route from Afghanistan to Europe, continued the migration route and made a request for family reunification to Finnish Red Cross for his son upon reaching Finland, and her request was forwarded to RFL team by the Finnish Red Cross. It was learned that her son was under care at a state institution in Turkey as he was unaccompanied and the process was followed through the cooperation of the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services and the Embassy of Finland. Upon the evaluation of request by the Embassy of Finland, it informed that the woman had a right to family reunification, and the child was called twice to the embassy in Ankara for DNA sampling and visa interview. During the process, an external correspondence was exchanged with MoFLSS for bringing the child under protection into Ankara with a ministry personnel, and all logistic expenses were met by the Turkish Red Crescent. When it was informed that the result of the DNA Test of the child and his mother as well as the visa interview was positive by the Embassy of Finland, a Social Examination Report prepared by the Finland Migration Office on the location where the child would be accommodated was sent to the MoFLSS and an external correspondence was exchanged to revoke the protective care for the child decision of the Ministry upon approval of family reunification to the best interest of the child. Negotiations with the Embassy of Finland were also continued to prepare an emergency travel document for the child. Upon the positive realization of all processes, family reunification of the child was ensured with the Approval of the Ministry and the assent of the family, and in a way that all transportation expenses to be met by the Turkish Red Crescent and that he was accompanied by a Turkish Red Crescent personnel, at the Helsinki Vantaa Airport on 18 December 2019.
‘Two members of a family composed of 9 members were apart from each other while trying to pass the Iranian-Turkish border on the migration route from Afghanistan to Europe and those two went on their migration route and reached France, but they were taken under protection as they were minors. Minors under protection stated at the institution that their family was in Turkey and they wanted to reunite with them. Having the right for family reunification in France, the minors requested from the French Red Cross for family reunification with their family members living in Turkey. French Red Cross conveyed the request for family reunification of 7 members to Turkish Red Crescent.

After the French Red Cross conveyed the request of the minors to the Turkish Red Crescent RFL Team, the required works were initiated in Turkey for family reunification process that had started in France and a Persian-speaking personal of RFL Team went to Uşak, where the family lived in, as part of the support by the Turkish Red Crescent for their family reunification processes. The required preparations were made for the visa meetings of the family in Istanbul and the family was accompanied through Istanbul.

Following an expectancy for almost 8 months, family reunification of 7-member family in France was approved by the French Consulate. Thereon the Turkish Red Crescent RFL team went to Uşak, where the family resided in, helped them in the processes of going abroad from Provincial Immigration Office, ensured their transportation to Istanbul, and provided both financial and logistic support in obtaining the Emergency Travel Documents, which were issued as none of the family members had a passport, thus substituted passport, from the French Consulate. Upon receiving the Emergency Travel Documents, the family, having no hindrance in traveling to France, firstly traveled to Paris Charles De Gaulle Airport from Istanbul Airport in accompany of RFL personnel and went to Toulouse, the city where their siblings lived in France. With the involvement of French Red Cross in Toulouse, the family members who had been apart from each other since February 2017 came together with each other.’
In November 2019, in a case of tracing for a mother and daughter, which was conveyed from German Red Cross to the Turkish Red Crescent, it was stated that the disappeared people were not heard of since 2017. The Turkish Red Crescent added the information of the minor to a list which composed of partial data of unaccompanied minors reported to be disappeared in Turkey, and it was shared with the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services. However, the ministry stated that no record was found in the database regarding the people in the list that we shared. (It should be considered that there are impediments leading to the mismatching of data such as different spellings of the names while transforming them from Arabic alphabet to Latin alphabet, minors choice of nicknames or different names during the record process.)

Apart from these difficulties, the coordination among the different units of the Turkish Red Crescent usually brings along the convenience of getting positive results. The minor and her mother, who could not be found in the ministry database, were simultaneously researched at the database of Community Centers of the relevant cities through getting in touch with those Community Centers, regarding the possibility that they could be among the beneficiaries of Community Centers, but no positive result was achieved. Lastly, it was detected that they were ESSN beneficiaries at Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation, and the presence of the persons to be traced was confirmed through phone call and visit to their household. The positive result of the tracing was shared with the German Red Cross.
It was informed by the International Committee of the Red Cross to the Turkish Red Crescent that a girl (14 years old), whose mother and father had been detained in Iraq and who had stayed at the same prison with her mother, was registered to the orphanage upon the death of her mother and father, and that the girl, having the right to see her family through video-conference, requested to meet with her grandmother, who lived in Gaziantep. However, it could not be possible to directly get in contact with the grandmother since the address and telephone information of her were missing. The support of Gaziantep Community Center was asked for the case followed by the RFL Head Office, and having only the neighborhood information, the neighborhood mukhtar was visited and the address was confirmed. It was stated that the grandmother was researched as part of the humanitarian aid, then she was visited at her household and informed that her granddaughter was alive and wanted to see her. The grandmother, both surprised and happy, accepted the request and the video-conference was made for the minor. We were informed that the minor was very happy upon the video-conference and wanted to meet with her aunt when she had the same right again.