

BULLETIN ON IRREGULAR CROSSINGS 3 (1-31 MARCH,2018)

SUMMARY:

-According to Turkish Coast Guard data 1849 people in total were apprehended in March, 2018 while trying to cross via sea irregularly.

- In the first three months of 2018 Syrian nationals were the largest group that was apprehended by the Turkish Coast Guard (3.423); second largest group was Angolians (395); followed by Afghans (232).

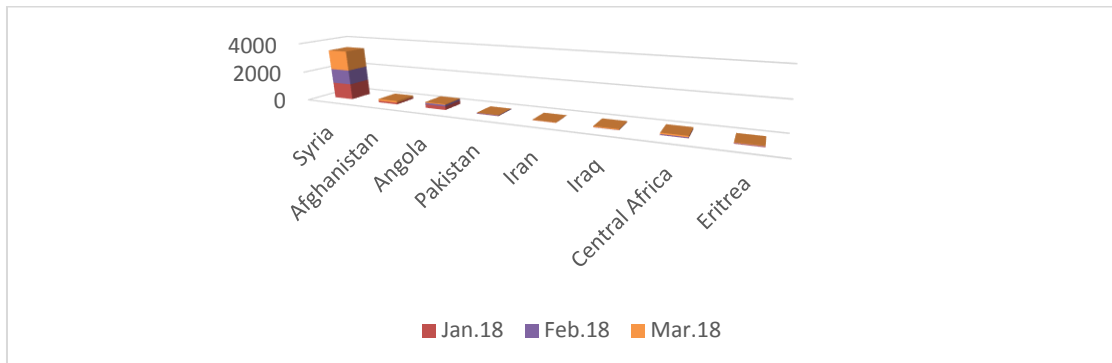


Figure 1.1: Distribution of the most frequent nationalities among the ones apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard In January, February and March 2018

In the first three months of 2016, most frequently declared nationalities respectively are Syrian (14.106), Afghan (4.052), Pakistani (715), Iraqi (233), Eritrean (90), from other African Countries (including North African) (92), Myanmar (Burmese) (66) and from other Southern Asian Countries (12). In January, February and March 2018 the Pakistanis and Afghans have changed ranks. Order of declared nationalities were Syrian (1.542), Pakistani (454), Afghan (178), Congolese (166), from other African Countries (312), Iraqi (43), Sri Lankan (43) and from other Southern Asian Countries (21).

In the first three months of year 2018, from the South Asian Countries (except Pakistan) only one person (a Cambodian) was apprehended. A decline was observed compared to other years.

-In the first three months of the year 2018, the irregular crossing incidents identified by Turkish Coast Guard most frequently occurred in İzmir Dikili coast (38 incidents). This is followed by İzmir Çeşme (14 incidents) and Aydın Kuşadası (9 incidents).

In the first three months of the years 2016 and 2017, the coasts in which the irregular crossing incidents occurred most frequently are respectively İzmir Dikili and İzmir Çeşme. However, in the first three months of 2018 the third coast is Aydın Didim instead of Aydın Kuşadası.

-According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data; number of the people who irregularly crossed from Turkey to Greece through sea is 2.441 in March 2018.. For the dates between February 25 and April 1, 2018 this number is 2.668.

- According to UNHCR data number of the people who have arrived in Greece irregularly via sea in January, February and March 2018 is 5.330 in total. When we look at the distribution of those people in terms of the island they arrived, we see that most of them arrived in Lesbos (2.856), then Samos (1.374) and Kos (526).

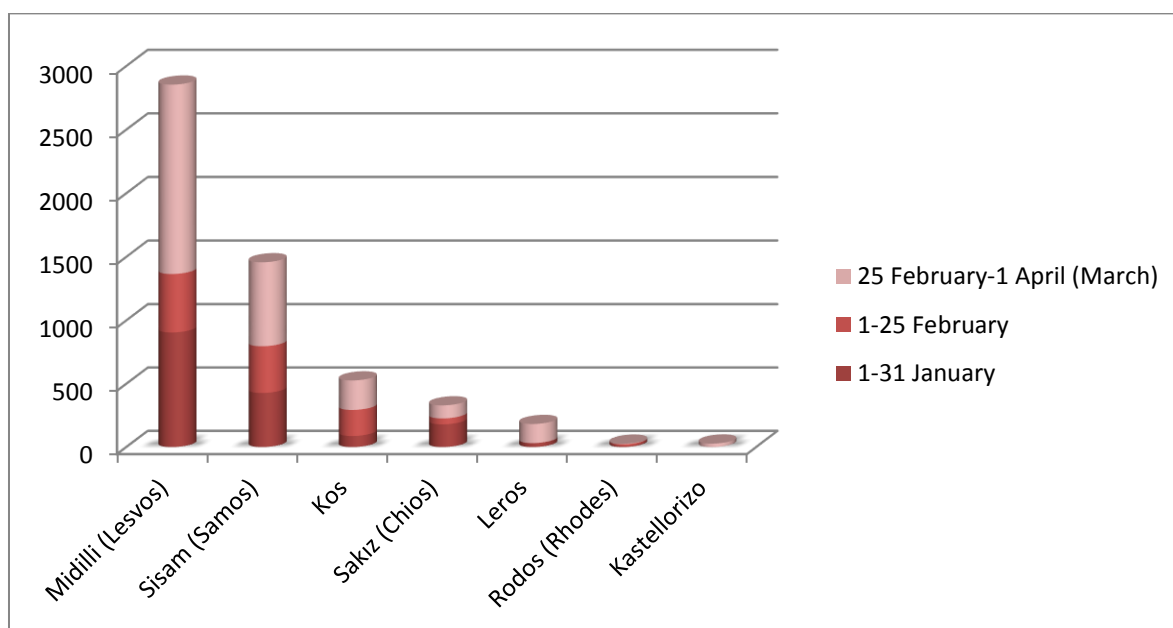


Figure 3.1: The distribution in terms of the islands where irregularly crossed ones arrived in and in terms of the time frame (months)

According to the Dashboard published by UNHCR in March 201; among those who irregularly crossed to Lesvos and Samos, the largest group is Syrians and they are followed by Iraqis in the first three months of 2018

According to January, February and March 2016-2017-2018 UNHCR data the change in the number of those who irregularly crossed through the sea to Greece is as follows:

	January	February	March
2016	67.415	57.066	26.971
2017	1.393	1.089	1.526
2018	1.633	1.256	2.441

Table 3.1: The change in numbers of those who irregularly crossed via sea to Greece according to the numbers in yearly data of UNHCR; in the first three months of years 2016, 2017 and 2018

* There may be differences between total of the numbers published on a daily basis and the total numbers given related to the months.

- According to the data provided by International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the first three months of the year 2018; 818 people in total irregularly crossed to Greece through land borders. For Bulgaria this number is 253 as of 25 March 2018.

-The number of those who were apprehended by Turkish Armed Forces (TAF-TSK) Land Forces Command Border Troops while trying to cross irregularly from Turkey to Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iran and Iraq is 2083 in total (according to the numbers published on a daily basis). As it was the case in previous months, in March there were no attempts to cross irregularly from Bulgaria to Turkey by land. The number of apprehended ones who were irregularly crossing from these borders (except Bulgaria) to Turkey is 26.649. 26.304 of the total number were the ones who were trying to cross from eastern and southern borders.

- According to the daily data published by Turkish Armed Forces, in January, February and March 2018; the numbers of those who were apprehended while trying to cross from Turkey to Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iran and Iraq are respectively 2.642, 2455 and 2083. On the western borders, 2442 people were apprehended while trying to cross to Greece and Bulgaria in January. For February this number is 2265 and 1993 for March.

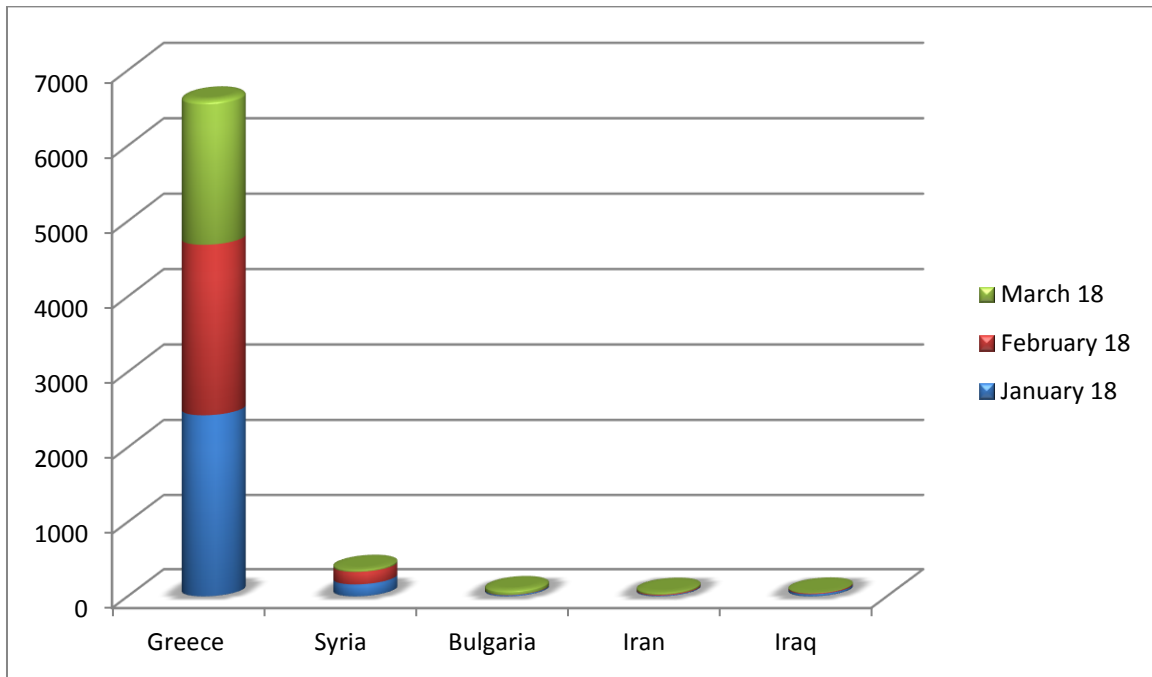


Figure 4.1: According to the daily data provided by TAF, distribution of those who were trying to cross from Turkey to other countries via land borders in terms of the country they were trying to cross and the months

-Total number of those apprehended by Turkish Land Forces Border Units while trying to irregularly cross to Turkey by land borders are respectively: 30576 in January, 31860 in February, 26649 in March. Distribution of those people in terms of the country they came from is as follows:

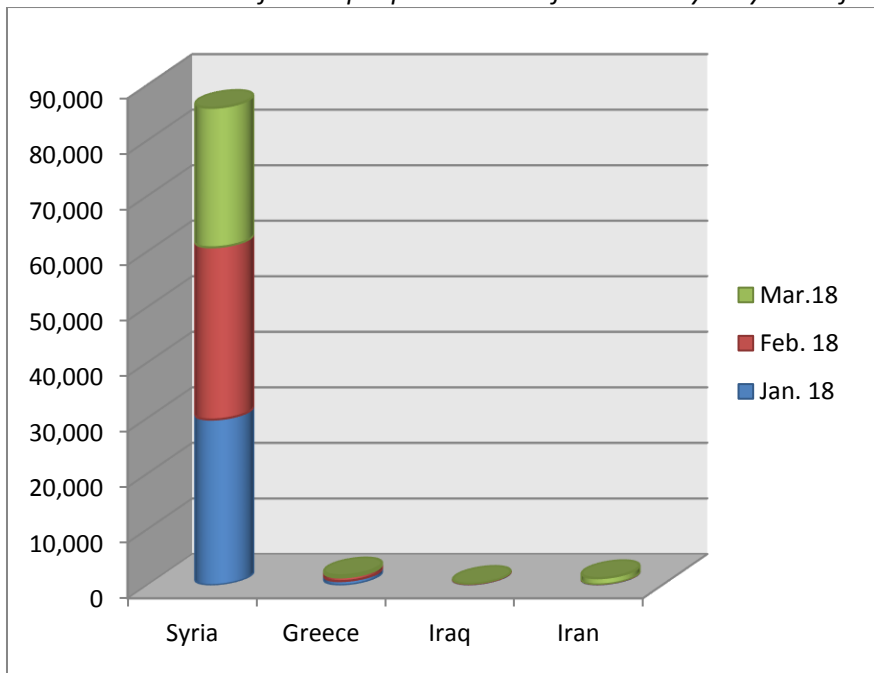
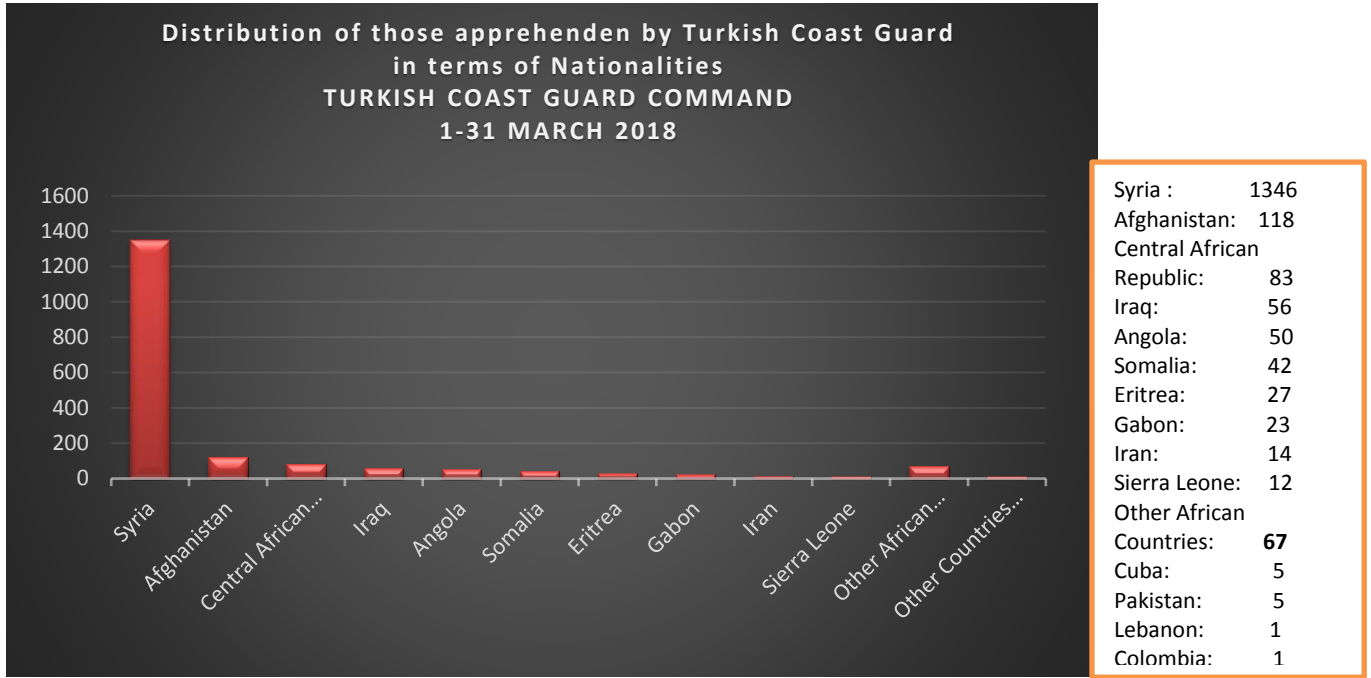


Figure 5.1: Distribution of those apprehended by Border Units while trying to irregularly cross to Turkey through land borders based on the daily numbers published by TAF.

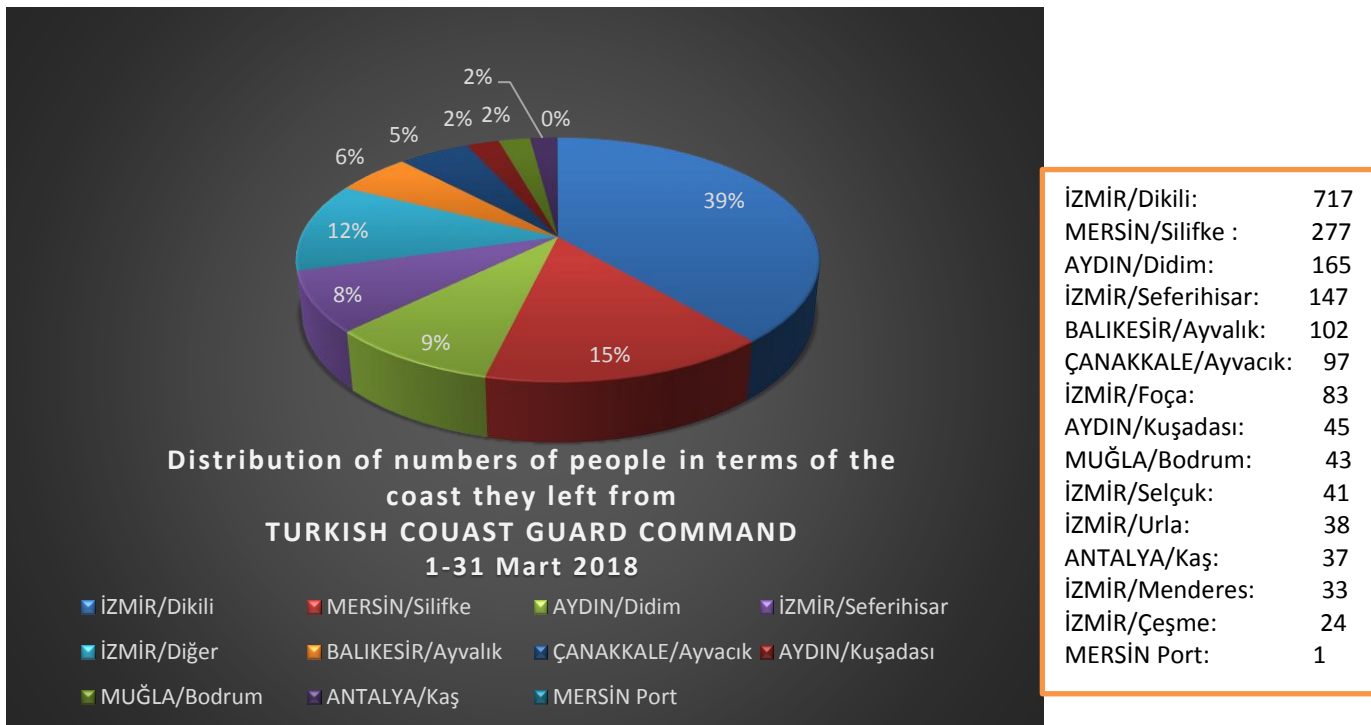
**ACCORDING TO DATA PROVIDED BY TURKISH COAST GUARD COMMAND;
1849 people were apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard units during irregular crossings by sea in March 2018.**

Distributions of those people in terms of nationalities they declared and the coasts from there they were trying to leave are as in the following graphs:*



Graph 1: Distribution of those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard during irregular crossing by sea in terms of the nationalities they declared

* There is a difference between the data Turkish Coast Guard provides on daily basis and the total number Coast Guard gives for March 2018. Therefore, the graphs are prepared by relying on the daily numbers, 1850 in total.



Graph2: Distribution of those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard in terms of the coast they left from the country.

As seen in the graphs; among the ones apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard units during March 2018, Syrians are the largest group, and they are followed by Afghans, People from Central African Republic and Iraqis respectively. As it was the case in January and February 2018, İzmir Dikili was the most frequented point of departure. One organizer (smuggler) was apprehended in March 2018.

Note 1: According to Turkish Coast Guard Command data; the numbers of those who were apprehended in the sea are respectively 1640 and 1363 and 1849 for January, February and March 2018. The number of people apprehended collectively by Gendarmerie, Police and Coast Guard is 387 in January, 438 in February and 631 in March.

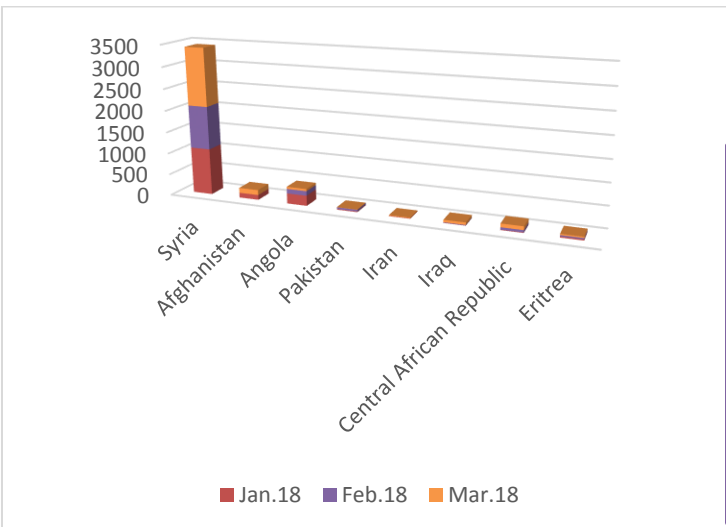
Additionally,, according to the statistics published by Turkish Coast Guard Command; the change in the number of people apprehended in terms of years and months is as follows:

	January	February	March
2016	5.506	8.747	8.530
2017	756	719	1.501
2018	1.640	1.363	1.849

Table 1.1: The change in numbers of apprehended people in years and months according to the data provided by Turkish Coast Guard Command.

As seen in the table above, for relevant months (January, February and March) while there was a sharp decrease in the number of those apprehended in 2017; there was an increase in 2018; however, these numbers are not as high as the ones in 2016.

Distribution of number of the apprehended people with most common nationalities in January, February and March 2018 is as follows:



	Jan.18	Feb.18	Mar.18
Syria	1082	995	1346
Afghanistan	114	0	118
Angola	238	107	50
Pakistan	15	40	5
Iran	11	0	14
Iraq	3	13	56
CAR	10	52	83
Eritrea	24	29	27

Figure 1.1: Most commonly encountered nationalities among those apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard in January, February and March

Most commonly encountered nationalities among those who were apprehended by Turkish Coast Guard In the first three months of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 are as follows:

Years	Nationalities							
	Syria	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Iraq	Africa prominent nationality	Other African countries	South Asia prominent nationality	Other South Asian countries
2016 (January, February, March)	14.106	4.052	715	233	Eritrea: 90	92	Myanmar (Burma): 66	12
2017	1.542	178	454	43	Congo:	312	Sri Lanka:	21

(January, February, March)					166		43	
2018 (January, February, March)	3.423	232	60	72	Angola: 395	608	Cambodia: 1	0

Table 1.2: Distribution of those who apprehended during irregular crossings by Turkish Coast Guard In the first three months of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 in terms of nationalities and the change in numbers of those people according to the daily data provided by Turkish Coast Guard

As seen in the table, contrary to other nationalities there is a gradual increase in numbers of the people of African nationalities. There is a sharp decrease in number of the people from South Asian countries other than Pakistan.

Note 2: According to data provided by Turkish Coast Guard, distribution of irregular crossing incidents in terms of the coast and the months in which the incidents took place in 2018 is as follows:

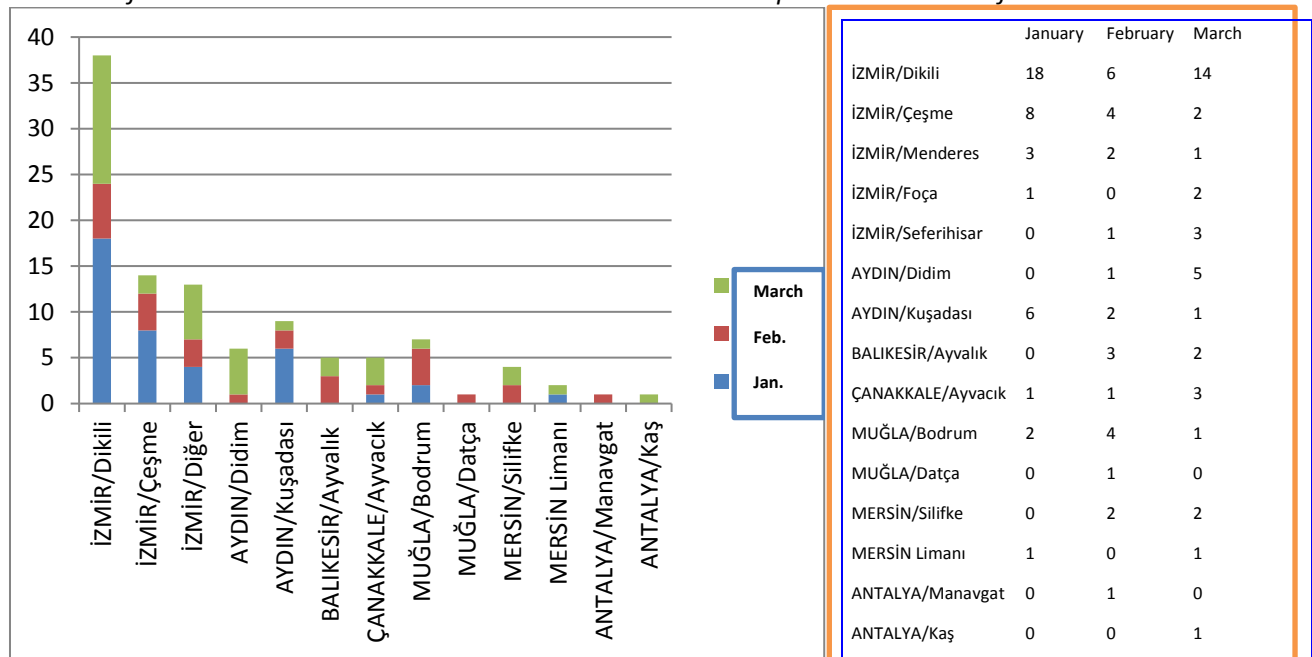


Figure 2.1: Distribution of the incidents in terms of the coast and the months based on Turkish Coast Guard data

When we look at the ranking of the coasts in terms of frequency of the incidents recorded by Turkish Coast Guard Command in January, February and March 2018; it is seen that people tried to irregularly cross by leaving Turkey most frequently from İzmir Dikili during these three months. Dikili is followed by İzmir Çeşme and the third coast is Aydın Kuşadası according to this ranking. While the frequency of irregular crossing incidents have decreased throughout three months; on the coasts İzmir Çeşme and Menderes and Aydın Kuşadası this frequency have increased on the coasts İzmir Seferihisar and Aydın Didim.

In addition to that, for the coasts of Mersin Silifke and Antalya Manavgat in spite of the fact that the incidents rarely take place on these coasts, they are noticeable regarding large numbers of the people apprehended while trying to cross in one irregular crossing incident.

As also reflected in the press,¹ in the years 2015 and 2017 Mersin was preferred by smugglers for irregular crossings to Italy through Mediterranean Sea. This has been the case for the first three months of the year 2018. 399 people who were apprehended in Mediterranean Sea during irregular crossing left Turkey from Mersin Silifke coast in February and March. Antalya Manavgat was the other departure point in the Mediterranean coast in the first three months of the year 2018. 195 people were apprehended in a single incident that occurred on this coast. In the statement reported in

¹ <https://www.timeturk.com/mersin-de-171-kacak-gocmen-kurtarildi/haber-1223>
<https://www.dunya.com/gundem/mersinde-156-kacak-gocmen-yakalandi-haberi-372530>

various newspapers, it was stated that the aim was to reach to Italy via Mediterranean Sea.² It is seen that the vehicles used in the incidents on Mediterranean coasts in 2018 differ from the ones used on Aegean coasts. Mostly they are not inflatable boats as used on Aegean coasts; yachts, fiber boats and Ro-Ro ships are used.

Notwithstanding that there is a difference between the total numbers of people apprehended given on monthly basis and the numbers given on the tables published on daily basis; distribution of frequencies of the incidents took place on the coasts in the first three months (January, February and March) of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 is as follows:

	2016			2017			2018		
	January	Feb.	March	January	Feb.	March	January	Feb.	March
İZMİR/Çeşme	16	35	43	4	5	15	8	4	2
İZMİR/Dikili	13	37	51	1	1	2	18	6	14
İZMİR/Karaburun	2	2	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
İZMİR/Seferihisar	2	3	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
İZMİR/Foça	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
İZMİR/Other(Çandarlı, Mordoğan, Uzunada, Menderes)	0	5	1	0	1	1	3	2	1
AYDIN/Didim	26	25	10	1	0	1	0	1	5
AYDIN/Kuşadası	3	7	6	1	2	4	6	2	1
BALIKESİR/Ayvalık	3	6	2	0	0	1	0	3	2
BALIKESİR/Diğer (Edremit, Altınova)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
ÇANAKKALE/Ayvacak	16	12	9	2	6	2	1	1	3
ÇANAKKALE /Other (Lapseki, Küçükkuyu)	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
MUĞLA/Bodrum	20	11	11	3	0	0	2	4	1
MUĞLA/Diğer (Datça, Marmaris, Fethiye, Ortaca)	2	4	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
MERSİN/Silifke	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
MERSİN/Other (Port, Bozyazı)	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1
ANTALYA/Kaş	7	13	8	1	2	0	0	0	1
ANTALYA/Other (Manavgat, Kalkan, Akçay)	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
İSTANBUL/Büyükçekmece	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
EDİRNE/Enez	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2.1: Distribution of numbers of the incidents published by Turkish Coast Guard on daily basis in the first three months of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018; in terms of the coasts and the changes in number of the incidents

² <https://www.ulusal.com.tr/yurt/antalya-da-gocmen-kacakligi-operasyonu-h192403.html>

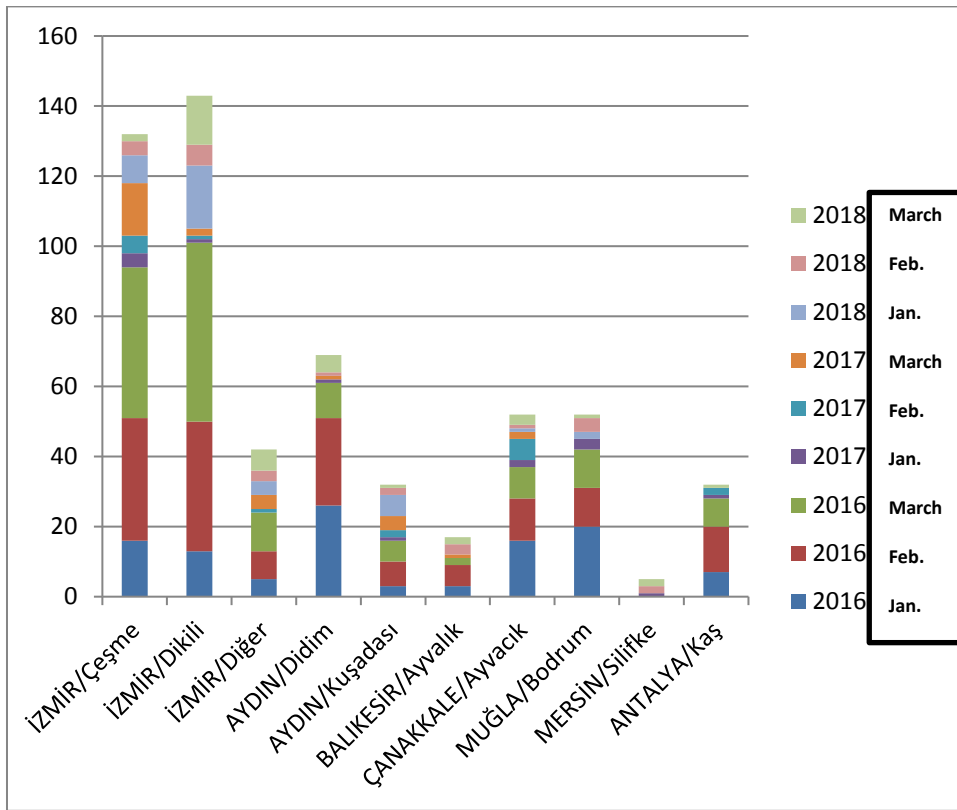
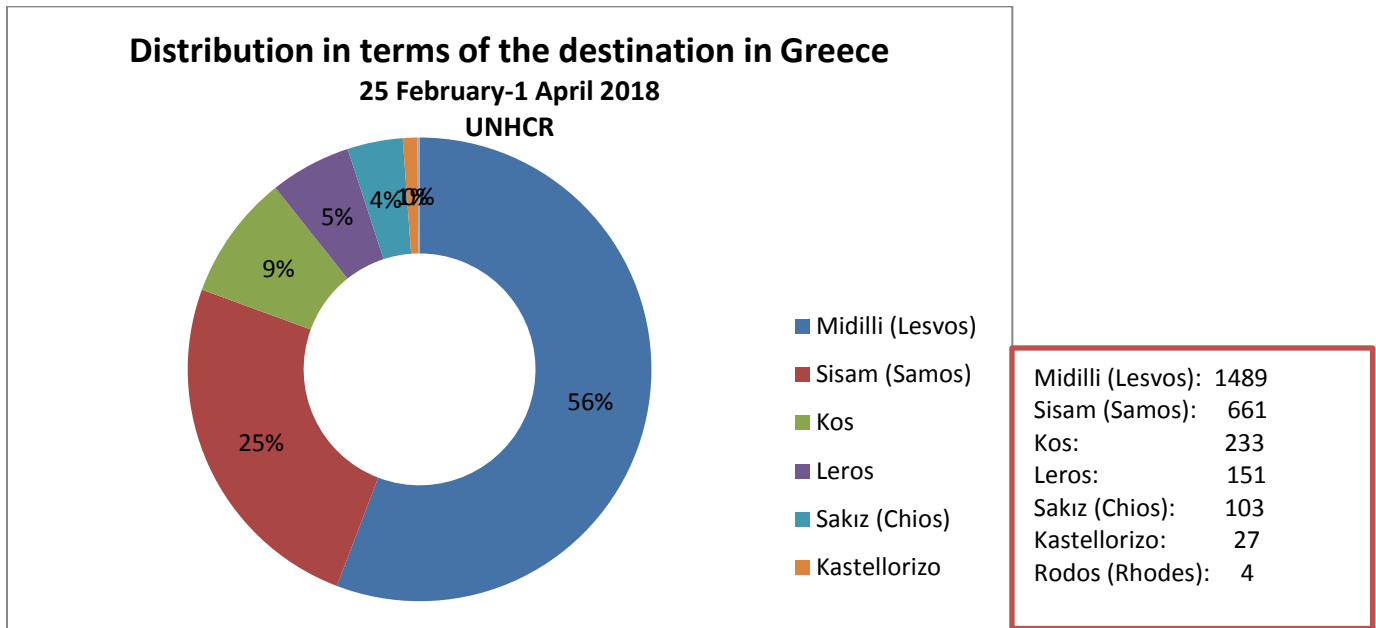


Figure 2.2: Distribution of the irregular crossing incidents that took place on the departure points from Turkey in first three months of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the coasts according to daily data provided by Turkish Coast Command.

In parallel with the decrease in irregular crossings the incidents decreased too in the relevant time period mentioned. The coast with the highest incident occurrence is İzmir Dikili, the second one is İzmir Çeşme and the third one is Aydın Didim. These are followed by Çanakkale Ayvacık and Muğla Bodrum. As seen in Table 2, in line with the decrease in irregular crossings in general, it is deduced that no irregular crossings incident took place on the coasts of İzmir Karaburun, Çanakkale Lapseki and Küçükkuşu and Edirne Enez in 2017 and 2018. There is only one incident in İstanbul Büyükçekmece. Even if it is not included in the information provided through tables and graphs, another noticeable point is that inflatable boats were used in 2016 in the incidents on Mediterranean coasts. Commercial yachts, commercial ships and speed boats were used as vehicles in 2017 and in 2018 on these coasts. The reason may be that the Mediterranean route is used in irregular crossings which aims at crossing as many people as possible at once to the European countries other than Greece, such as Italy.

ACCORDING TO THE DATA PUBLISHED BY UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR);

In March 2018, 2,441 people arrived at Greece via sea after they left from Turkey. The number of those who crossed irregularly between 25 February and 1 April 2018 is 2,668 and the distribution of them in terms of their arrival points in Greece is as follows:**



Grafik 3: According to the data taken from UNHCR

<http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179> for the distribution of arrivals in Greece in terms of the destination.

**** Since the data update on UNHCR website is not on a monthly basis, the numbers for the distribution in terms of the destination in Greece are for 25 February-1 April 2018.**

As seen in the graph in the time frame including March, most of the people who irregularly crossed arrived in Lesvos as it was the case in January and February. This was followed by the arrivals in Samos. The third island is Kos as in February and the fourth island is Leros, as a change from Chios. 27 people crossed irregularly to Kastellorizo, which was not a point of arrival in the previous months.

Note 3: Based on the daily data published by UNHCR in January, February and March in 2018 the number of the people who crossed irregularly to Greece via sea is 5.401 in total (The number given in Dashboard for these months is 5.330* in total). The distribution of those numbers is as follows:

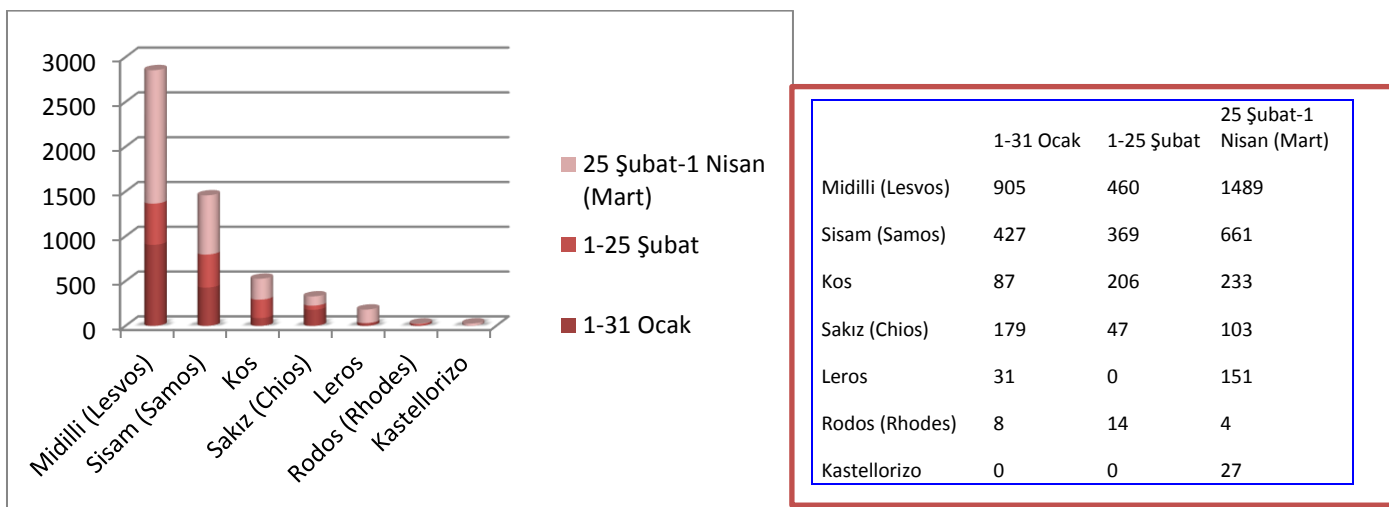


Figure 3.1: Distribution of the people who crossed irregularly to Greek islands in terms of the island they arrived in and in terms of the time frame (months)

*The numbers published on daily basis differ from the numbers given in total.

According to UNHCR data,* number of the people who arrived in Greece irregularly via sea in the first three months of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 is as follows:

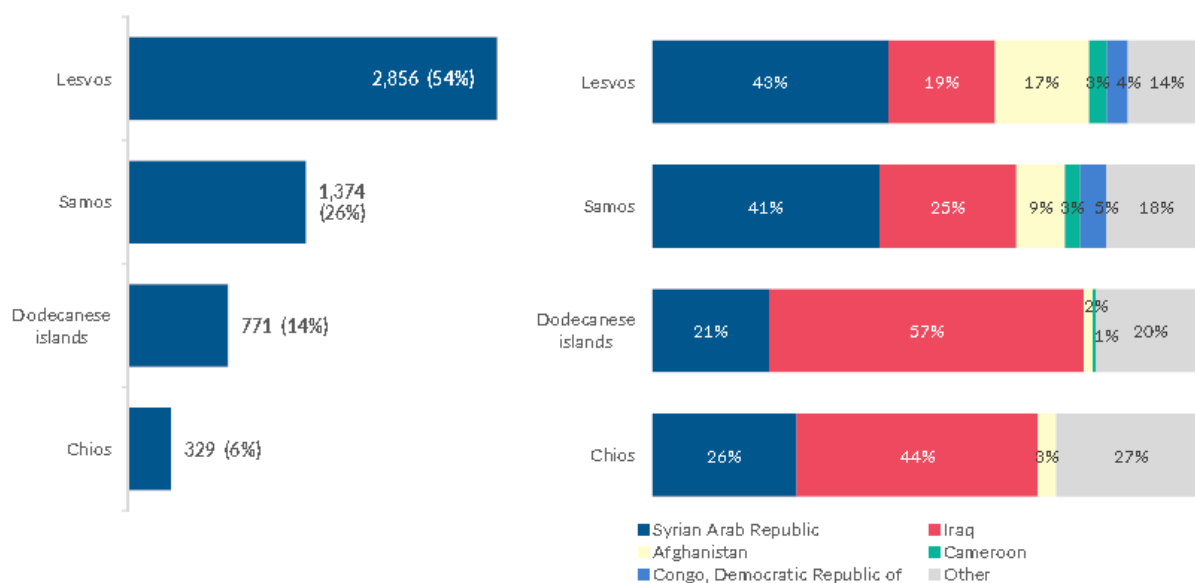
	January	February	March
2016	67.415	57.066	26.971
2017	1.393	1.089	1.526
2018	1.633	1.256	2.441

Table 3.1: According to UNHCR's yearly data distribution of those irregularly crossed to Greece via sea in the first three months of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the change in the numbers in years.

*The numbers published on daily basis differ from the numbers given in total.

The decrease in general in numbers of the people who irregularly crossed via sea is related to EU-Turkey Statement which was signed on 18th of March, 2016. In the Seventh Progress report on the implementation of EU-Turkey Statement published by European Commission in September 2017, it is stated that although there is a slight increase in daily arrivals in Greece, these numbers are significantly lower than the numbers in pre-Statement period.³ However, in an assessment by the NGO Are You Syrious by relying on UNHCR data, it is stated that irregular crossings increased by a hundred percent and only in March 2018 1480 people who crossed irregularly by land to Evros region were registered; this number being more than two times higher than the number in February.⁴

According to the graph in Dashboard** published by UNHCR at the end of March 2018, distribution of the people who arrived in Greek island in the first three months of 2018 in terms of the destination and their nationalities is as follows:



**Source: UNHCR Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard.

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63019>

Note: According to the data published on weekly basis by International Organisation for Migration (IOM);

425 people crossed to **Greece by land** in March 2018. The total number for 2018 is 818. 19 people between February 25 and March 3, 2018 and 36 people between March 4-31, 2018 (55 in total) crossed to Bulgaria by land. According to data dated as March 25, 2018, 253 people in total have crossed to **Bulgaria** in 2018.

10 people crossed irregularly to **Cyprus** between February 24 and March 4, 2018. According to last data dated as March 6, 2018, 47 people in total have crossed to Cyprus since the beginning of 2018.

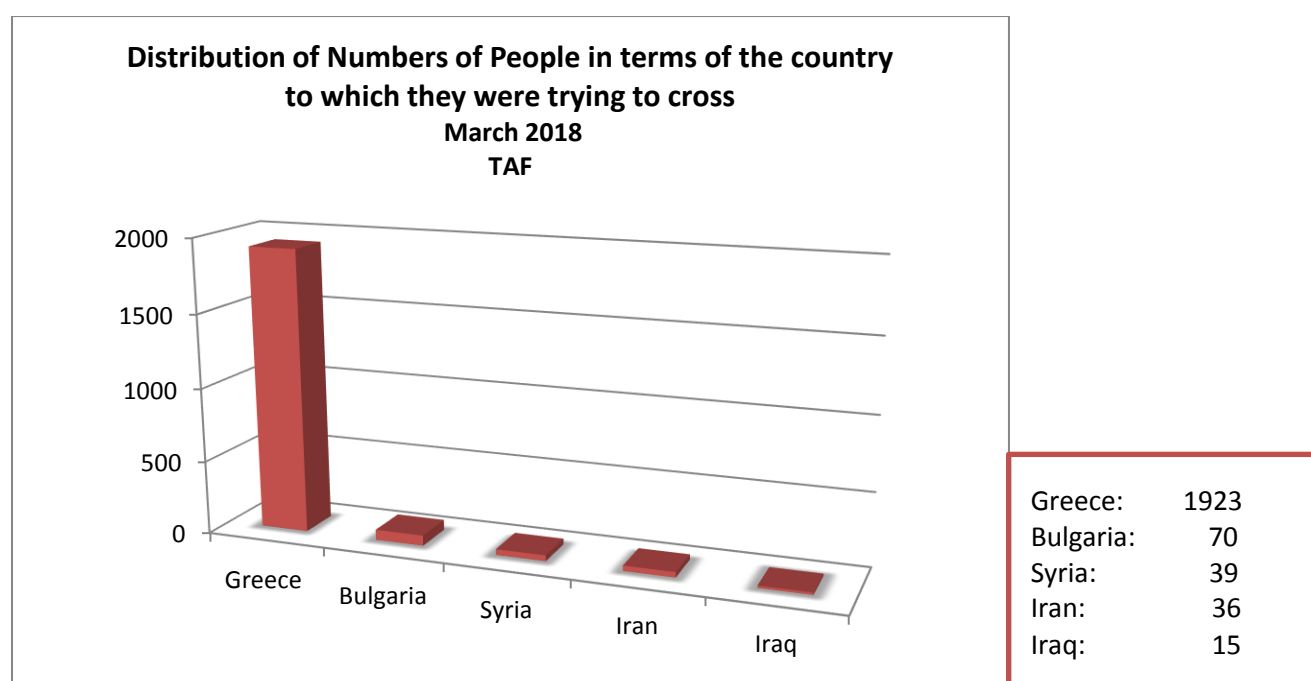
³ European Commission, "Seventh Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement", 6 Eylül 2017, s.2. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20170906_seventh_report_on_the_progress_in_the_implementation_of_the_eu-turkey_statement_en.pdf

⁴ <https://medium.com/are-you-syrious/ays-daily-digest-20-04-2018-are-we-heading-back-in-2015-c12bad1cb654>

THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE APPREHENDED WHILE IRREGULARLY CROSSING ACCORDING TO TURKISH ARMED FORCES (TAF-TSK) DATA:

The data published by TAF on daily basis in March 2018 shows that the total number of those apprehended while they were trying to **cross to Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq and Iran from Turkish land borders is 2083.*****

Distribution of the numbers of people who left from Turkey and were apprehended during irregular crossings in terms of the countries they were trying to cross to is as follows:



Graph 4: 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.

*** There may be differences between the numbers published on daily basis on TAF's website and the numbers given on weekly basis.

As it is the case for irregular crossings via sea, first destination for irregular crossings from Turkey to Europe through land borders is also Greece. There is a decrease in the irregular crossings to Bulgaria which is the other destination for irregular crossings through western land borders from Turkey to Europe compared to previous months. For the southern and eastern land borders, the most common destination for irregular crossings is Syria; but there is a sharp decrease in number of those who were apprehended while trying to irregularly cross to Syria.

Note 4: Based on the daily data published by TAF; the numbers of those apprehended on land borders while irregularly crossing to Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iran and Iraq are respectively 2.642, 2455 and 2083 for the months of January, February and March in 2018. For January, 2442 people out of 2642; for February, 2265 people out of 2455 and for March 1993 people out of 2083 were apprehended while they were trying to cross irregularly through western land borders. For these three months there is a gradual decrease in number of the people who were trying to cross to Greece by land. However, there is a significant increase in this number of those apprehended during irregular crossing to Bulgaria by land when compared to the number recorded in February.

According to the numbers published by Turkish Armed Forces on a daily basis, the change in the number of those who were apprehended during irregular crossing by land in terms of the country intended to cross for the months January, February and March is as follows:

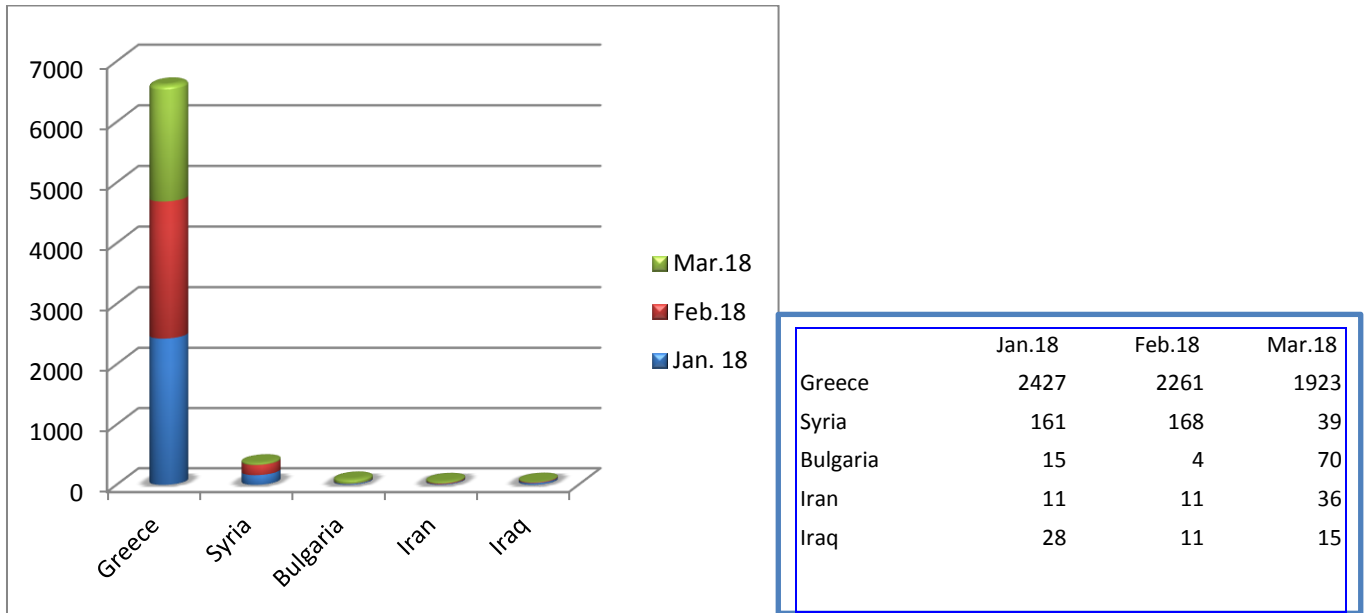
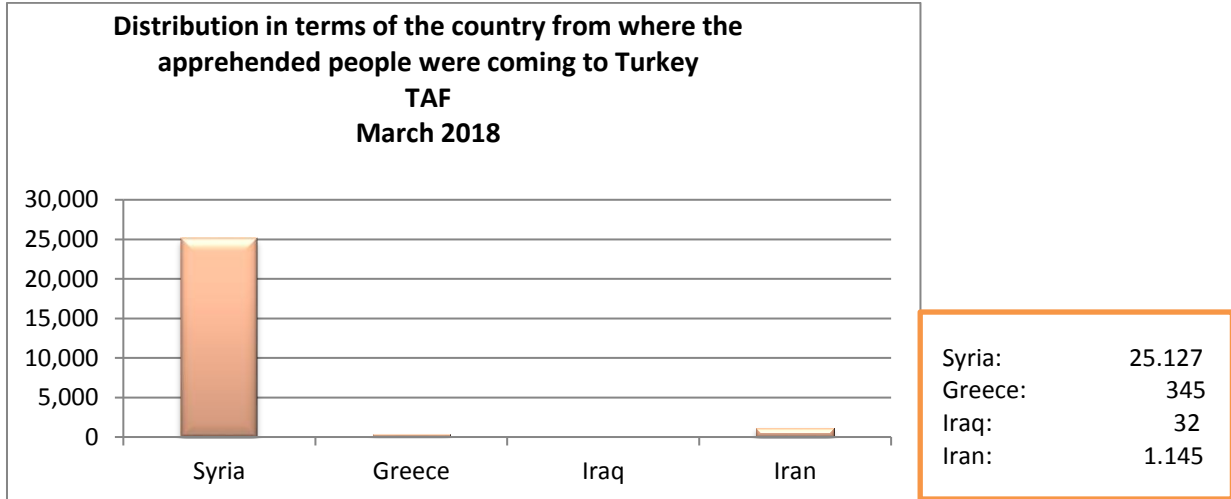


Figure 4.1: Distribution of the people who were apprehended during irregular crossing in terms of the country they were trying to reach and the months, according to daily data provided by TAF

According to daily data published by TAF, **number of the people who were apprehended while they were trying to irregularly cross by land to Turkey from Greece, Syria, Iran and Iraq is 26649 for March 2018. 26304 of these people were apprehended while crossing through eastern and southern land borders.** Distribution of these people in terms of the country they were coming from is as follows:



Graph 5: 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.

As seen in the graph provided according to the data published by TAF on a daily basis, among the people who were apprehended during irregular crossings through land borders the biggest number was coming from Syria in March 2018, as was the case in January and February 2018. The second largest group among those who were trying to cross irregularly to Turkey through eastern and southern borders were the ones who were coming from Iran. For March, there is a sharp increase in number of those people coming from Iran. The ones who were apprehended during irregular crossing to Turkey at Thracian border in western Turkey were coming from Greece. There was no crossing to Turkey through Bulgarian borders.

Note 5: The numbers of those apprehended by Land Forces Command Border Units on land borders while irregularly crossing to Turkey are respectively 30576, 31860 and 26649 for the months of January, February and March in 2018.

Distribution of numbers of the people who were apprehended on land borders during irregular crossing from Syria, Greece, Iraq and Iran to Turkey in terms of the country they were coming from and in terms of the months is as follows:

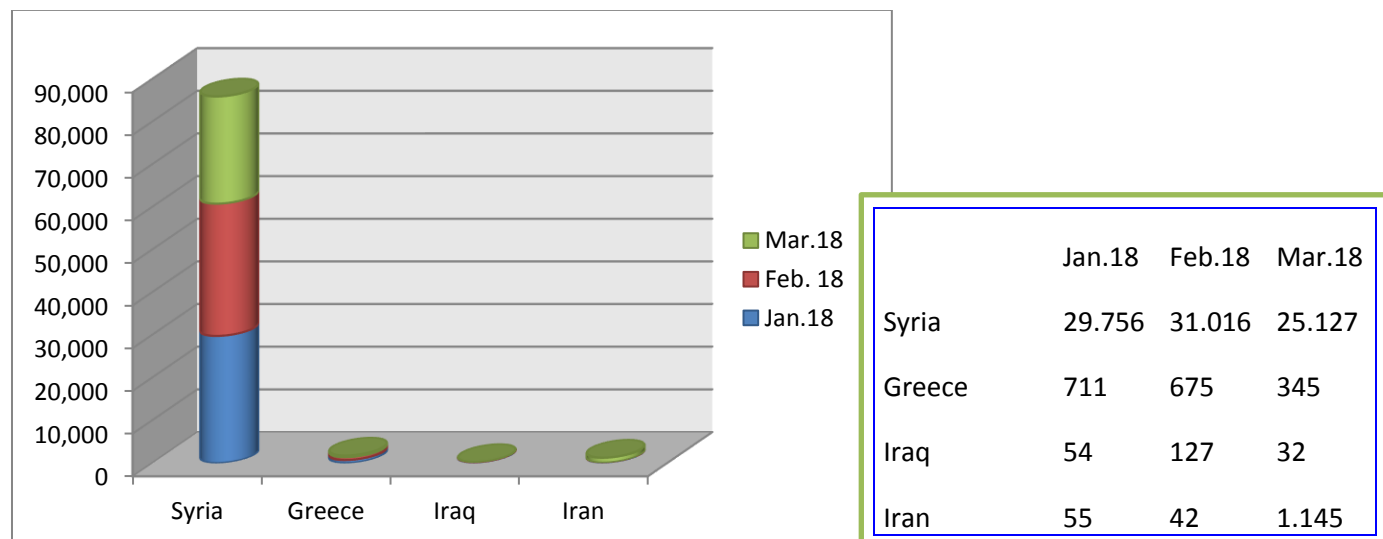


Figure 5.1: According to daily data published by TAF distribution of the people apprehended on land borders by Border Units while irregularly crossing to Turkey in terms of the country they were coming from and months

Among those apprehended on land border while irregularly crossing to Turkey, number of the people who were coming from Syria increased in February with respect to the number in January. However, this increase was followed by a decrease by 5000 people in March 2018. This may be stemmed from the wall constructed on Turkish-Syrian border; which was reported that it was about to be completed⁵ and also due to the military activity which has increased throughout the border. Regarding the number of those who were apprehended during irregular crossings from Iran to Turkey, there is a sharp increase in March when compared to the number recorded in January and February. This increase is a sign of the recent development which took an important place on agenda of the country that large numbers of Afgan nationals have started to enter irregularly Turkey from esatern borders. Regarding the western borders, there is a decrease in number of the ones who come from Greece throughout the months of January, February and March 2018. Despite this decrease in numbers, it is highly possible that there were people among those who were apprehended during irregular crossing from Greece to Turkey who wanted to return from Europe to Turkey because of the restrictions on refugees' rights, and people whowere pushed back by Greek security forces. It was intensely reported in 2017 that there were push-backs on Evros river and it is possible that these push backs continue in 2018. This corresponds to the news broadcasted by Aljazeera channel on January 28, 2018. The news includes interviews with the push-backed refugees by Greek security forces on Evros river and highlights that the people are push-backed by violating international law.⁶ Greek Council for Refugees press release enclosed a report including interviews with Council's push-backed applicants on February 20, 2018 that it has been known that push-back incidents have always been continuing. However, recently there has been an increase in applications of pushback victims, including victims with vulnerabilities and pushbacks have become systematic..⁷ In addition, the news reports on Turkish media on March 2, 2018 stated that 29 refugees who were Afghans, Pakistanis and Iranians were embarked on inflatable boats and pushed back by Greek police .They asked for help by calling

⁵ <https://www.artigercek.com/toki-baskani-suriye-sinir-duvari-bitiyor>

⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/evros-river-forced-pushback-refugees-edge-eu-180128105408674.html>

⁷ <http://www.gcr.gr/index.php/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/790-anafores-gia-systimatikes-epanaprothiseis-ston-evro-apo-eksypiretoymenous-tou-esp>

156 and they were rescued by the teams of Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) while they were about to freeze.⁸

There were no people who were apprehended by Turkish Land Forces Border Units while irregularly crossing from Bulgaria to Turkey by land in January, February and March 2018. However, in February 2018 update of the report Bulgaria 2017 published on Asylum Information Database coordinated by European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), it is stated that even if there were no officially reported pushbacks the media resources have reported mass pushback events.⁹

⁸ <http://www.umhd.org.tr/?s=314>

⁹ AIDA [Asylum Database Information], Country Report: Bulgaria, 2017 Update, s.11
<http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/bulgaria>