

Press Review 08

13 March until 19 March 2017

International Asylum Seeker/Refugee Policy Issues

[Turkey threatens to unilaterally suspend EU refugee deal](#)

Deutsche Welle, 15 March 2017

With relations between Turkey and the EU deteriorating, particularly given the diplomatic row currently unfolding with Germany and the Netherlands, Turkey's foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu threatened on Wednesday to suspend the refugee deal. Cavusoglu's declaration comes just days before the one year anniversary of the EU-Turkey deal in which irregular migrants in Greece would be returned to Turkey and in exchange, Syrian refugees living in Turkey would be resettled in Europe. Additionally, the EU would accelerate visa liberalization for Turkish nationals as well as increasing financial support to aid Turkey's refugee population. Cavusoglu has complained that the 'EU has been wasting our time on the visa liberalization issue' and confirmed that at present Turkey would not be complying with the agreement by allowing the readmission of irregular migrants from Europe.

Many European leaders have praised the refugee deal for diffusing an impending political crisis between EU member states over how to manage the huge wave of migration. Indeed, in 2015 over one million migrants came into the EU, with most fleeing extreme poverty and conflict in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Until the Balkan route was closed in early 2016, most migrants arriving to mainland Europe travelled from Turkey's Aegean coast.

[Child refugees attempting suicide amid increasing desperation among thousands of trapped migrants in Greece](#)

Lizzie Dearden, The Independent, 15 March 2017

Leading human rights organisations such as Save the Children and MSF have pointed out the critical conditions refugee face in Greece and the harshness of the European policy, with research carried out by Save the Children showing more than 5,000 minors are living in shocking conditions and causing a mounting mental health crisis. Moreover, a MFS study has shown rocketing rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, trauma and psychosis affecting the refugees in the camps.

One year after the EU-Turkey deal has been signed, refugees' conditions in Greece have steadily worsen. On the one hand, the Central Med route became the first way to reach European coast costing the highest number of lives ever. On the other hand, the deal stranded thousands of people in Greece, especially on the Aegean sea islands such as Lesbos, Kos, Chios, Samos, in currently overcrowded tents camps which were supposed to be temporary, under threat of deportation to Turkey, while their asylum applications are processed, but legal blocks have slowed transfer.

According to UN figures almost 13,000 asylum seekers are trapped on Greek islands— far above the 8,700 capacity – and a backlog in claims is expected to grow amid legal disputes over whether Turkey can be considered a safe country for deportations. Many tent camps lack proper shelter, heating and fuel and consequently, several asylum seekers have died from hypothermia, carbon monoxide

poisoning and a gas blast during a period of extreme cold over the winter, with at least 13 dying so far this year on European soil.

The uncertainty triggered by this situation deeply and increasingly impacts on the wellbeing of refugees, and many children and adolescents have committed suicide or acts of self-harm as a result. While the European Union and UK government provide money to support Turkey and Libya, the condition for migrants and refugees remain extremely dangerous and with very little or non-existent tutelage.

[Yemen migrant boat attack kills at least 42](#)

BBC News, 17 March 2017

In the wake of an attack on a mosque in the Kofal military base in Yemen, which killed 22 people on Friday, the International Organisation for Migration has reported that 42 people have been killed when a boat carrying Somali refugees was fired at from a helicopter. Some of the dead were carrying UNHCR identity documents. Around 80 survivors were rescued after the incident, which occurred near the Bab al-Mandeb strait off the Yemen coast. According to a port official, many of the survivors, in addition to three Yemeni traffickers, were subsequently taken to prison.

It has yet to be identified where the boat was travelling to and from, in addition to who is responsible for the atrocity. One of the Yemeni traffickers alleges that the boat was fired at by a military vessel and a helicopter gunship. This allegation remains unconfirmed.

[Germany to use voice analysis software to help determine where refugees come from](#)

Amar Toor, The Verge, 17 March 2017

German authorities plan to use automated software to analyse the language variations and dialects of asylum seekers to verify their claimed place of origin. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) plan to start trials of the speech analysis software within two weeks and a fully roll it out in 2018. The project foresees to record speech samples to be used during the assessment or confirmation of the nationality claimed by the asylum seeker.

Since 1998 Germany has used speech analysis to assess claims of origin. In cases of uncertainty, recorded clips of conversation with the applicant are sent to a linguistic expert who can listen for dialectic variations such as differing names for food. Linguistic experts such as Professor Monika Schmid, who studies 'language attrition', particularly among migrants, argues that such analyses can be fraught. Such analysis is extremely challenging and many factors must be taken into account. It is as simple as a machine simply identifying the origin of the language spoken.

[South Sudan's refugee crisis now world's fastest growing, Uganda and region in critical need of help](#)

UNHCR, 17 March 2017

South Sudan's refugee crisis is the fastest growing in the world and is placing an enormous strain on the already depleted resources of neighbouring countries who are having to accommodate the refugees. The alarming rate of displacement has occurred as a result of 'a famine produced by the vicious combination of fighting and drought', the UNHCR reports. Indeed, there are now 1.6 million people displaced from South Sudan, with half having crossed the border into Uganda. Currently, there is an average of over 2,800 refugees arriving into Uganda every day.

According to the UNHCR, the situation in Uganda is an ideal opportunity to apply the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). UNHCR describes the CRRF as an approach designed to

‘integrate humanitarian efforts with development ones’ by, for example, providing land to refugees and allowing them to work. Uganda and five other countries agreed to support the CRRF, but the UNHCR warns that without significant additional support the CRRF approach is at risk of failing due to lack of funds. Currently, funding for South Sudanese refugees in the region is at 8 percent of what is required and the UNCHR’s own funding appeal requires over a quarter of a billion dollars.

[Italy panics as North Africa migrants surge](#)

Middle East Monitor, 18 March 2017

Italy will host a meeting between European and North African countries next week in a bid to strengthen support for an agreement it struck with Libya to fight people smuggling as migrant arrivals surge. So far this year more than 16,000 migrants – a 36 per cent increase on the same period last year – have been rescued at sea and brought to Italy after Libya-based people smugglers piled them onto flimsy boats.

The prime minister of the UN-backed government in Tripoli, Fayezi Al-Seraj, will meet with Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni and interior ministers from eight European countries including Germany and France on Monday. During the meeting European governments will try once again to find an agreement about migration with Al-Seraj. Indeed, last month, Italy pledged money, training and equipment to help Libya fight people smugglers, a deal that was endorsed by European Union member states. Yet, the authorities in eastern Libya have rejected the deal struck between Rome and Tripoli. Moreover, Libya is still far from stable, the country remains mired in factional fighting and lawlessness. As part of the deal, Italy and the EU have promised to fund migrant camps on Libyan soil, but they need UN agencies to help manage them. Those same agencies have said Libya is not safe for migrants. Italian opposition 5-Star Movement highlighted that Italy is fearing for its diplomats in Libya and wished to close the embassy while there are no issues to leave there asylum seekers.

Regional Displacement Issues

[Somalia: UN Envoy for Somalia Condemns Bomb Blasts in Mogadishu](#)

UN News Service, 13 March 2017

Twin blasts in Mogadishu, which reportedly killed a number of civilians, have been strongly condemned by Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia. Keating said that amidst the great suffering caused by the severe drought, ‘the timing and suffering caused by today’s blasts are outrageous’.

The first explosion near the General Dhagabadan training facility of the Somali National Army reportedly only killed the suicide bomber. However, the second attack at the Weheliye Hotel in Mogadishu, which Al-Shabaab has since claimed responsibility for, targeted hotel staff and guests, along with motorists and pedestrians.

[Burundi Declares Malaria Epidemic](#)

Moses Havyarimana, The East African, 13 March 2017

A malaria epidemic has been called in Burundi after more than nine million cases of malaria were recorded in the last year, marking a 13 percent increase in the number of malaria-related cases. According to Burundi’s Health Minister Dr Josiane Nikimbere over 3,700 people have died from the disease since 2016, with climate change and prolonged drought exacerbating the issue. Kirundo, Muyinga and Kayanza in northern Burundi and Cankuzo in eastern Burundi appear to be the areas

worst affected by the increase in the number of people affected by the mosquito-borne disease. The World Health Organisation will work with the Burundian Ministry of Health to devise a response plan and battle the epidemic, which is expected to cost in the region of \$3.1 million. Burundi last declared a malaria epidemic in 2002.

[Face to face with the Eritrean exodus into Ethiopia](#)

James Jeffrey, Irin News, 16 March 2017

During the last month alone, 3,367 Eritreans have arrived in Ethiopia, according to Ethiopia's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs. There are around 165,000 Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers in Ethiopia, according to the UN refugee agency. Thousands more Eritreans live in the country outside the asylum system.

People have been steadily escaping from Eritrea, mainly because of military conscription, religious persecution and, recently, land division. Since the first refugee camp for Eritreans, Shimbela, opened in 2004 the situation have been evolving. At the beginning the newcomers were Eritrean belonging to the Kunama ethnic group, the most marginalised one among the nine groups characterising the Eritrean population. Nowadays they are more than 6,000, but recently also people from other groups have been arriving. Most of them are very young, for example in Hitsats, the newest refugee camp most of the refugees are younger than 35. Overall, Eritrean people are suffering and being very vulnerable to trafficking, kidnaping and extortion. People complain about their President and the international community, which does not intervene efficiently.

From the 12 entry points, Eritreans are taken to a screening centre for registration in the town of Endabaguna. Then, they are assigned to one of four refugee camps in the Tigray region, North Ethiopia, bordering Eritrea.

[DRC unrest 'may delay' voter registration](#)

News24, 14 March 2017

Espousing joint sentiments on Tuesday, the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace (CJP) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) warned that the rising instability in central Democratic Republic of Congo could derail voter registration for the upcoming election due to be held in December, and called for calm. Of particular concern is the fact that four CENI offices in the central Kasai region have been set on fire.

Following the death of the tribal chief and militia leader Kamwina Nsapu at the hands of government forces, there has been growing unrest in the central Kasai region, which has left at least 400 people dead. Fears for the region have intensified after two UN experts and their Congolese staff went missing. News 24 did not report how many Congolese staff went missing. According to News 24, no new information has emerged regarding the experts' fate. Again, News 24 did not mention the fate of the Congolese staff.

[Mutilated corpses again reported in Burundi, UN expert says](#)

News24, 14 March 2017

Speaking to the UN Human Rights Council on Monday, the president of the UN commission of inquiry on Burundi, Fatsah Ouguergouz, shared reports that mutilated corpses are once again emerging in Burundi amidst the deepening political crisis. Most of the time, neither the victims nor the perpetrators can be identified. This follows similar reports in 2015 and early 2016. Moreover,

allegations of torture and forced disappearances continue to emerge in Burundi, with Ouguergouz warning that 'the quasi-total impunity for the perpetrators of these violations particularly troubles us'. Burundian authorities so far deny the abuse.

Since President Nkurunziza unconstitutionally remained for a third term, Burundi has been overwhelmed by violent unrest and a political crises. Hundreds have died and nearly half a million people have fled the country. Following the failure of peace talks between the government and the opposition, the UN-secretary general has warned of 'an even deeper crisis' should Nkurunziza position himself for a potential fourth term in office.

[12 killed on Ethiopia border with South Sudan](#)

News24, 16 March 2017

At least 12 people were killed and nearly two dozen kidnapped in western Ethiopia, in the Gambella region, in an attack blamed on cattle herders who crossed the border from South Sudan.

Since the war in South Sudan has begun, according the UN Ethiopia welcomed more than 342 000 refugees, yet this does not protect Ethiopia from the violence on its borders. Steadily there are incursions allegedly carried out by the from the Murle ethnic group who wanted to kidnap children in order to force them to work as labourers and as shepherds for their cattle.

[MONUSCO expressed serious concern over recent developments in Kananga](#)

MONUSCO, 18 March 2017

Clashes between Kamwina Nsapu militia and government security forces between 14 and 17 March has resulted in high numbers of deaths. MONUSCO has condemned the deaths and the actions of both sides. In particular, the disproportionate use of force by government forces, the targeting of civilians and the attacks by the militia against state institutions. MONUSCO has also criticised Congolese forces in Kananga for restricted its freedom of movement, thus reducing its ability to exercise its mandate.

South Africa

[SA, Nigeria to form xenophobia-busting monitor](#)

News24, 14 March 2017

Following a number of attacks on migrants by South African locals and their businesses in Pretoria and Johannesburg last week, the South African foreign minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and the Nigerian foreign minister Geoffrey Onyeama held a meeting to find a solution to the rising tensions. A number of South Africans allege that the migrants targeted in the attacks were involved in crime, particularly singling out African migrants, including Nigerians, for running brothels and drug dens.

The two foreign ministers agreed to a quarterly forum to be made up of representatives from South Africa and Nigeria, which will include immigration officials, business associations and civil society groups. The intention is that this forum would act as an 'early warning' system to 'track and deter xenophobic attacks against Nigerian migrants'. According to the Onyeama, there are 800,000 Nigerians in South Africa, with the majority living in Johannesburg. The Nigerian government further confirmed that 20 Nigerians were killed in South Africa last year, however the South African government has not confirmed whether all these deaths were due to anti-immigrant violence. In the wake of demonstrations outside South African owned MRN and DSTV offices in Abuja, Onyeama

cautioned against Nigerian retaliation. He emphasised that any groups in Nigeria who are calling for the expulsion of South African businesses and citizens are not speaking on behalf of the government.

[Home Affairs turn screws on migrants: Changes five Acts, border processing centres, citizen panel](#)

Karl Gernetzky, Sunday Times Business, 17 March 2017

Home Affairs Minister Malusi Gigaba speaking at an international migration conference said that South Africa must begin strategically managing migration rather than focusing on compliance. By the end of the month the draft of the White Paper will be delivered to the cabinet. It includes amendments to at least five Acts, including the Immigration Act and the Marriage Act.

Home Affairs has been moving towards stricter restrictions on the current migration and refugee policy. Among the most significant proposed changes there is the suspension of the right to work and study for asylum seekers while the decision is pending. The applications have to be assessed within 120 days. The applications will be lodged directly at the border at specific 'processing camps' probably managed by the Border Management Authority that is supposed to deal with all aspects of cross border movement of people and goods. This is an ambitious target as currently the asylum system is working extremely slowly. 1,082,669 asylum seekers have been registered between 2006 and 2015. South Africa has also deported 369,000 people from 2012 to 2017, with Home Affairs estimating that 95% of asylum applications are from economic migrants as opposed to political refugees.

Furthermore, the White Paper removes the automatic progression from residency to citizenship as well as it wants the introduction of a points-based system to determine eligibility criteria for long-term visas, which puts an end to a process of automatic citizenship for long-term residents.

Despite the evidence, Home Affairs considers this policy framework as a shift towards a more 'Afro-centric' immigration regime, leveraging the development potential of migration, particularly at a regional level.

[Rosettenville community marches against crime](#)

Victor Magwedze, Eyewitness News, 18 March 2017

The members of the Reclaim Our Community Movement in the Rosettenville community have organised another march on Saturday to demonstrate against the problems with crime, drugs and prostitution, which they believe are rife in the area. The group plan to hand over a memorandum to the MEC for Community Safety Sizakele Nkosi-Malabane because they are dissatisfied with the lack of action from the authorities regarding these issues.

Simphiwe Hlafa, a member of the Reclaim Our Community Movement, has spoken of the group's efforts to unify the community and including foreign nationals during this march following the previous demonstrations held in Rosettenville this year, which have so far been violent and xenophobic.