



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on March 7, 2016

After Migrant Numbers Reach Record Highs, EU Summit Aims to Stem Flow

Meeting at a summit in Brussels on March 7, European Union (EU) leaders and Turkish representatives attempted to reach an agreement aimed at stemming the flow of migrants into Europe. EU President Donald Tusk (shown, front center right) announced back on February 24 that formulating a joint action plan with Turkey “remains a priority, and we must do our utmost for it to succeed.”



“This ultimately means that the high numbers we are still witnessing have to go down, and quickly so. This is also why we decided to organize a special meeting with Turkey on 7 March.”

Upon his arrival in Brussels for the summit, French President François Hollande (shown, front left) declared that to avoid having refugees arrive in Greece, “we have to cooperate with Turkey.”

Turkey and the EU signed an agreement November in under which Ankara agreed to curb the number of refugees it will allow to cross Turkey into Greece in return for three billion euros (\$3.2 billion) in aid and having the EU speed up processing of Turkey’s application for EU membership.

Turkish representatives attending the Brussels summit on March 5 demanded an additional €3 billion from the EU by 2018 to help deal with the refugee crisis. European Parliament President Martin Schulz said that this latest demand was in addition to the €3 billion the EU has already pledged to help Syrian refugees in Turkey.

“Turkey is ready to work with the EU, and Turkey is ready to be a member of the EU as well,” Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (shown, front center left) said in a statement to reporters quoted by the AP. Davutoglu expressed hope that the talks “will be a success story and a turning point in our relations.”

The AP reported that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, speaking to a group of women’s trade union members in Ankara, accused the EU of failing to make its payments to Turkey for the refugee fund and also criticized the Europeans for refusing to take in more refugees.

“We are not sending them. They are going [to Greece] by sea and many of them are dying,” said Erdogan, adding, “We have rescued close to 100,000 from the sea. Others are puncturing their boats and causing their deaths.”

Britain’s *Guardian* reported on March 7 that EU leaders attending the summit would urge Turkey to increase efforts to stop more of the migrants from Syria and neighboring countries from making the dangerous journey across the Aegean Sea to Greece. An estimated 1,000 to 2,000 people make that trip every day, with more than 35,000 of them unable to travel beyond Greece as a result of Macedonia closing its southern border.

However, Turkish officials are looking to the EU to take more of the refugees off its hands. Turkey’s ambassador to the EU, Selim Yenel, told the BBC World News program *Hard Talk* last week: “If the burden is going to be lifted from Turkey we should hear something about resettling people,”



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presumably in Europe. “This is not what is happening; we are still debating these issues.”

An article posted by the Greek online publication ekathimerini.com noted that Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte (shown, front right) and German Chancellor Angela Merkel (shown, in orange) spent five hours meeting with Davutoglu in Brussels on the eve of the summit in an attempt to secure commitments from Turkey to stem the migrant flow. The report stated that more than one million people — mostly Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans — entered Europe last year, with most eventually settling in Germany.

The total has only increased during 2016, according to a February 23 report from Reuters. Citing figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the report said at least 102,500 people have landed on various Greek islands including Samos, Kos, and Lesbos this year, along with 7,500 in Italy. In 2015, the 100,000 mark was not reached until the end of June.

Reuters quoted IOM spokesman Itayi Viriri, who was speaking during a news briefing, as stating, “We’ve reached that figure in two months as opposed to last year when it was reached by the summer.”

A more recent report from AFP on March 3 cited figures reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noting that between January 1 and February 29, 2016, 131,724 migrants and refugees crossed the Mediterranean Sea, of whom 122,637 arrived in EU member Greece. The report said that figure is comparable to the total registered in the first half of 2015, when 147,209 refugees arrived in Europe.

AFP noted that non-EU member Turkey is now the principal country of asylum for Syrian refugees, hosting between two million and 2.5 million of them. Lebanon has taken in 1.2 million Syrian refugees. The refugee crisis began when tens of thousands of Syrians, Iraqis, and other refugees fleeing violence and unrest in the Middle East began entering Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary. Most of these immigrants were enroute to Germany and other more prosperous western European countries, where they sought to settle permanently.

Former Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) offered his explanation for the reasons behind the European refugee crisis in an [article reprinted by The New American last September](#). In that article, Paul noted that while we all sympathize with the plight of the displaced people, we must keep in mind “that this is a man-made crisis and it is a government-made crisis.” The former congressman, who is well known for his advocacy of a non-interventionist U.S. foreign policy, wrote:

The reason so many are fleeing places like Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq is that US and European interventionist foreign policy has left these countries destabilized with no hopes of economic recovery. This mass migration from the Middle East and beyond is a direct result of the neocon foreign policy of regime change, invasion, and pushing “democracy” at the barrel of a gun.

The Syrian refugee crisis has implications for the United States as well as Europe, though the number of such refugees being admitted to the United States has so far been relatively small.

Following a press appearance in Berlin last September with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, during which Secretary of State John Kerry revealed the Obama administration’s plan to drastically increase the flow of refugees, including those from Syria, into the United States, more than half of the nation’s governors openly opposed allowing refugees from Syria to settle in their states. One of the first was Texas Governor Gregg Abbott, who sent an open letter to President Obama in November that stated, in part,



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As governor of Texas, I write to inform you that the State of Texas will not accept any refugees from Syria in the wake of the deadly terrorist attack in Paris [on November 13].

Further, I — and millions of Americans — implore you to halt your plans to accept more Syrian refugees in the United States. A Syrian “refugee” appears to have been part of the Paris terror attack. American humanitarian compassion could be exploited to expose Americans to similar deadly danger. The reasons for such concerns are plentiful.

Europe will have a difficult time figuring out how to accommodate the waves of refugees fleeing the turmoil in Syria, while securing the EU’s borders and also protecting its citizens from potential terrorists embedding themselves among the refugees.

The United States must also remain vigilant, so that we do not face a repetition of such a crisis in our own country.

Photo: AP Images

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