

THE MIGRANT CRISIS

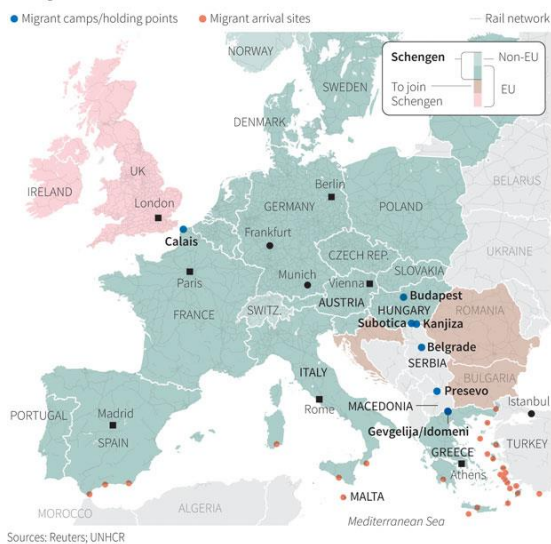
By Rebecca Hodge

EUROPE

A large influx of migrants into the European Union (EU) have led to many dilemmas concerning borders, nationalism, and Islamic terrorism. Hundreds of thousands of migrants cross into Europe every year, due to civil war, forced labor, security crises, and poverty. Economic migrants seeking economic gain and asylum seekers fleeing persecution and violence commonly travel together. There is also overlap between economic migrants and asylum seekers that is not well-addressed by inconsistent asylum application processes.

Europe's migrant crisis

Hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing wars and economic migrants escaping poverty have arrived in the European Union in an unprecedented wave. Nearly all first reach the EU's eastern and southern edges and then press on illegally for richer and more generous EU countries further north and west.



Sources: Reuters; UNHCR

Greece and Italy have served as the major points of entry for migrants, due to proximity with the Mediterranean. These are also the countries hardest hit by economic crisis. The Dublin Regulation, an EU law, keeps asylum seekers in these entry-point states as they are required to remain in the first European country they enter, and that country must examine their asylum applications. Traveling elsewhere could result in deportation back to the first European Union country they entered.

Many of the frontline countries have stopped enforcing the Dublin Regulation, passing migrants through to secondary locations. Germany and Sweden are the overwhelming majority in receiving and granting asylum requests.

There are migrant detention centers across the continent, many of which have been charged with abuse and neglect, violating Article III of the European Convention on Human Rights. Italy's Bossi-Fini immigration law stipulates migrants must secure work contracts before entering the country, with illegal migration and aiding illicit migrants punishable by fine or law. Similar laws concerning detention centers and prison time for illegal migration and aid have appeared in Greece and Hungary.

The financially struggling entry-point states have been unable to keep up with demands and needs for migrants. Northern and western countries find better asylum centers and resettlement policies but are difficult to reach and often require assistance from smugglers.

Polarized politics and a resurgence of nationalism have diminished humanitarian efforts in many European countries. Several countries have cited security concerns, leading to anti-Muslim approaches to immigration policy. Economic crisis has led to a view towards migrants as economic competitors, though some experts say migrants could boost economies as workers, taxpayers, and consumers while making up for declining birth rates and aging populations in European countries.

Source: [Council on Foreign Relations](#)

SOMALIA

Somalia was created in 1960 from a former British protectorate and Italian colony. Starting in 1991, the country fell into anarchy after President Siad Barre's military regime was overthrown, splitting the country into rival fiefdoms.

Starting in 2006, a vicious fight over the capital Mogadishu broke between Islamist forces, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Ethiopian intervention, and African Union forces. An internationally backed government was installed in 2012, but insurgents aligned with Al-Qaeda still pose a threat.



Civilians displaced from the civil war, after losing their homes.

All sides in the conflict beginning in 1991 have committed serious human rights violations. Nearly 900,000 civilians fled Mogadishu alone starting in 2007. Thousands of civilians have been killed, and uncountable numbers have seen loved ones murdered or raped. Ethiopia, Eritrea, the United States, and other international forces have exacerbated the conflict.

TFG forces have carried out murder, rape, and looting in various neighborhoods. The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) have used mortars, artillery, and rockets in response to insurgent attacks, but regularly hit civilian homes and spaces. Insurgents kept the conflict going but are fragmented, with many abuses coming from the militant Islamist Al-Shabaab group.

The United States, United Kingdom, European Commission, and others have not condemned the TFG nor the ENDF. They have instead supported the TFG through monetary donations and the U.S. military launching air strikes on terrorist targets in Somalia. These strikes have killed multiple civilians.

Sources: [BBC News](#), [Human Rights Watch](#)

TURKEY & THE KURDS

Turkey, situated between Europe and Asia, has had major strategic importance since established as a modern secular republic in the 1920s by Kemal Atatürk. After Atatürk's death in 1938, progress towards democracy stalled with the army ousting government after government that challenged secular values.

About one fifth of the population is formed of Kurds, an ethnic group without its own nation state found in the mountains of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Armenia.

Between 25 and 35 million Kurds inhabit a mountainous region straddling the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Armenia. They make up the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, but they have never obtained a permanent nation state. Their hopes for a homeland fell apart in the 1920s, but they continued to fight for independence.



The city of Cizre, destroyed after fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK.

Turkish authorities have treated Kurds harshly since uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s, resettling Kurds, banning Kurdish names and costumes, restricting the use of the Kurdish language, and redesignating Kurdish ethnic identity as "Mountain Turks." In 1978, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was established to fight for an independent state within Turkey. In 1984, armed conflict broke out, killing over 40,000 and displacing hundreds of thousands.

Fighting has continued, with the PKK now demanding for greater cultural and political

autonomy rather than full independence. A 2013 ceasefire was short-lived, after a suicide bombing blamed on the Islamic State (IS) occurred in a Kurdish-majority town and the PKK attacked Turkish authorities in response, believing them to be complicit. South-eastern Turkey has seen a great deal of conflict that has killed thousands, many of which are civilians.

Sources: BBC News ([Turkey](#), [The Kurds](#))

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan has struggled with instability and conflict throughout its modern history, with the strict Islamic Taliban acting as a major force starting in 1994 and sparking a brutal civil war. The United States led an invasion that ousted the Taliban in 2001, but they continued to be a presence with some recent comebacks.

In 2004, an internationally recognized government was set up alongside a new constitution but has struggled to unify the country. NATO foreign combat troops had been maintaining security up through 2014, when their mission formally ended, and Taliban activity resurged.

The rampant conflict in Afghanistan has led to widespread instability, with many human rights abusers in power. Militias, warlords, and Taliban forces have taken advantage of the power vacuum. They use bombings and assassinations including against "soft targets" such as schools, teachers, and religious figures in an act of terrorism against civilians.



An Afghan citizen and a member of Western military forces.

Afghans have struggled with poor international security and financial assistance, alongside a weak and corrupt government. Human rights abuses are rampant throughout the country, with thousands of civilians dying as a result of violence and thousands more displaced, particularly in southern Afghanistan. The Taliban and other anti-government forces routinely targeted teachers, students, and schools, both committing war crime and devastating education.

Sources: BBC News ([Afghanistan](#), [The Taliban](#)), [Human Rights Watch](#)