

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



ZAID HYDARI

Executive Director, Co-Founder

I, like so many of us, am mesmerized by history, asking elders questions about where they were when major events occurred. Undoubtedly, we will be asked similar questions by our children and grandchildren, about what we were doing when the world turned inward and chose to revert back to darker times, closing doors to those fleeing violent conflicts. I sincerely believe that we must not give up in our efforts to stand with those who have been deprived of their homes and their history, and too often, their voice.

Record levels of human displacement are one of several important social issues facing us and our planet. Developments over the course of 2016 and into early 2017 have not only adversely affected refugees themselves, but have contributed to

a more difficult environment in which to advocate for them. We must push back on all fronts. That is why RSN is not only committed to expanding efforts in capacity building and legal service delivery in the Mediterranean, but it is also scaling up our advocacy and awareness-raising areas of work in the U.S. RSN has made a great deal of progress towards both goals in 2016. Such efforts lay the critical groundwork to meet the challenges ahead.

As always, I extend a very large thank you to all those who have supported our efforts. As we recap our work in 2016, we hope to make more connections with various partners going forward to help tie our work to other ongoing initiatives and continue to build strength in the broader fight for rule of law, access to justice, and human rights.

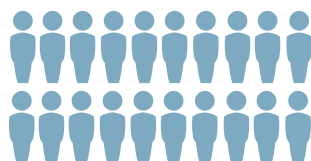
2016 REFUGEE STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

In 2016, Turkey remained the largest host country of refugees in the world. While Syrians make up the majority of refugees in Turkey, significant populations from other nearby States contribute to these historic figures.

Since our organization's founding in 2014, Turkey has been, and will continue to be, a primary focus for RSN's activities around refugee rights.

Additionally, in this past year, RSN extended efforts to other important host countries in the Mediterranean region, namely Greece and Bulgaria. While Greece is a well-documented destination for refugees, RSN has identified some of the pressing needs of refugees in Bulgaria, a host state not as widely acknowledged, where needs are expected to persist.

3,201,490
TOTAL REFUGEES IN TURKEY



2,910,281 SYRIAN REFUGEES

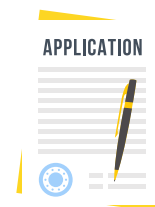


291,209 NON-SYRIANS



65.3
MILLION

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY FORCIBLY
DISPLACED WORLDWIDE (Source: UNHCR)



19,418

NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS
IN BULGARIA IN 2016 (source: Bulgarian
State Agency for Refugees)



176,732



NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARRIVED BY LAND
OR SEA TO GREECE IN 2016 (Source UNHCR)

<http://www.unhcr.org/58b449f54>

CAPACITY BUILDING

One of our primary activities is to support direct service providers in key refugee host countries. In Turkey, we work with Refugee Rights Turkey (RRT) to operate a Center for Refugee Rights in Istanbul (the Center). Over the course of 2016, the Center accomplished a great deal. Specifically:

2650

NUMBER OF CLIENTS WE HAVE
ASSISTED THROUGH DIRECT
LEGAL SERVICES

194

NUMBER OF REFUGEES WHO HAVE
ATTENDED GROUP KNOW-YOUR-RIGHTS
COUNSELING SESSIONS

166

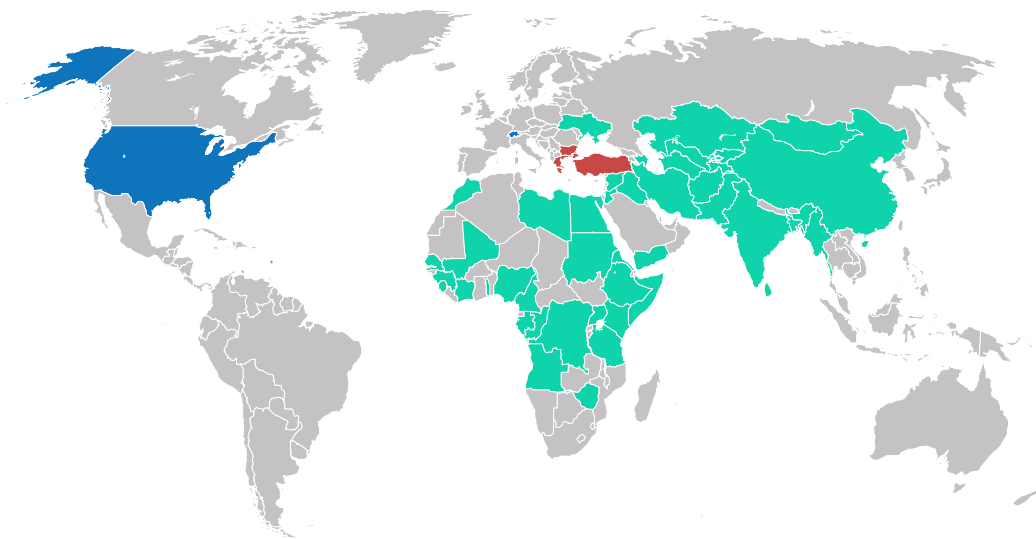
NUMBER OF LAWYERS TRAINED
IN WORKSHOPS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS OF
INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE PROTECTION IN TURKEY

194

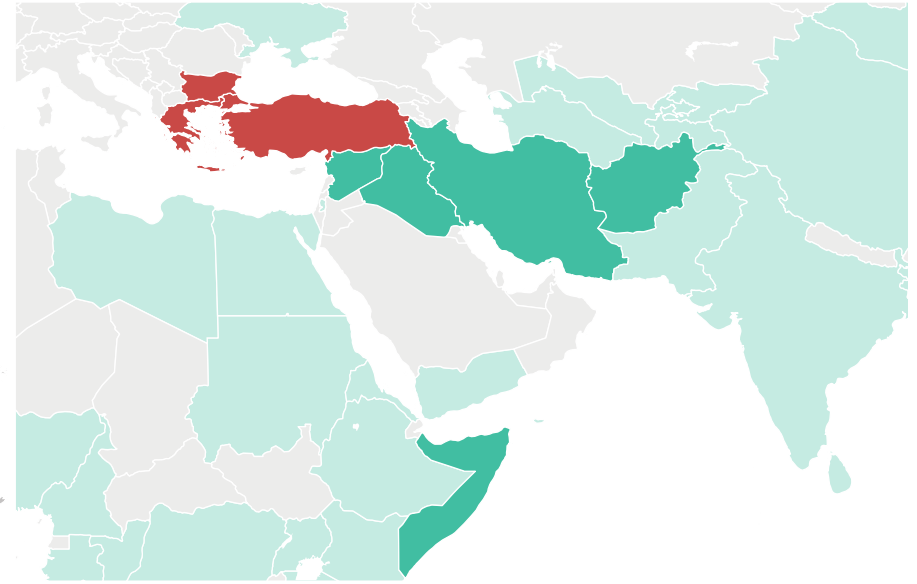
NUMBER OF CLIENTS WE HAVE
ASSISTED WHO WERE IN DETENTION

The Center is made possible by generous support by the US Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), as well as new support in 2016 from the Tent Foundation. RSN seeks contributions from a variety of actors to bolster work on the ground in Turkey.

RSN's Global Reach



- Advocacy & Awareness Raising Locations
- Beneficiaries' Countries of Origin
- Program Locations



The five countries in dark green, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia make up the majority of the clients we serve.

*Beneficiary info based on Center data from 2016

In addition to our joint efforts with RRT in Turkey, RSN built relationships with critical national NGOs operating in Greece and the Sofia-based Center for Legal Aid-Voice in Bulgaria (CLA), thereby expanding our global reach.

Legal Fellowship

RSN's engagement with law students, members of diaspora communities, and other community members interested in supporting refugee rights, puts us in an ideal position to identify, screen, select, and train fellows from the US, for placement in the field, where they can contribute directly to refugee rights initiatives.

In 2016, RSN hosted Fordham Law School graduate Urooj Rahman, to lend support to RRT's legal services programs as well as RSN's advocacy and awareness-raising efforts. RSN also expanded relationships in the field and placed its first fellows beyond Turkey. Violeta Haralampieva received the support of Boston University School of Law to work with CLA in Sofia and RSN in NY. Shala Gafary was backed by the Blossom Hill Foundation to work with the Greek Council for Refugees in Athens, HIAS in Lesvos, and RRT in Istanbul.

RSN continues to support young professionals and connect them with meaningful opportunities in the refugee and migration field.

NEW RSN TEAM MEMBERS



RSN is happy to have brought on new members of the team. Kamyar Jarahzadeh joined as a full-time Program Officer tasked with Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and Compliance of our federally funded program. It is of tremendous importance to RSN to keep our program under review to measure effectiveness and impact, as well as strengthen systems to ensure conformity with regulations. Kamyar has been a tremendous asset to the team and we look forward to his continuing contribution going forward.

We also benefitted greatly from Hannah Ahern's contribution to RSN as a 2016 summer intern. Hannah is in her third year at Fordham University School of Law and brought her previous experience working with human rights bodies in the Americas to RSN. She assisted with fundraising and comparative legal research.

RAISING AWARENESS

RSN staff have participated as speakers in a number of events, including at NY area universities, law firms, and before coalition meetings of other NGOs. RSN has published in media outlets and on the web and in social media, to spread important messages of the impact of rights-based humanitarian programming for refugees and the increasing needs of forcibly displaced populations.

We continue to cultivate a network and community of individuals that understand the complexity and therefore need for nuance and sensitivity when it comes to issues of forced migration and the region in which we work. By showcasing the talents of refugees and diaspora communities, RSN's efforts directly confront and oppose efforts to fuel xenophobia and stigmatize refugees based on the actions of a few.



ADVOCACY

In 2016, several efforts were undertaken at the global level to address the record levels of human displacement. RSN participated in a number of these critical events and ongoing activities, contributing our unique vantage point. With declining US commitment to refugee assistance, engaging governments and institutions has become all the more important.

As a new member of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the International Detention Coalition, RSN aligned efforts with partner organizations and joined campaigns on the part of coalitions to channel critical civil society perspective to governments and international intra governmental agencies.

In June, RSN staff and a Senior Program Officer of RRT attended UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs, a critical networking and engagement opportunity held at UNHCR headquarters. RSN presented on the 4th Annual Strategic Litigation Roundtable, giving our perspective on the EU-Turkey deal and the potential legal challenges that were being considered by various stakeholders. The EU-Turkey Deal garnered a great deal of attention and RSN (and particularly our primary partner RRT), was called upon by several parties to provide commentary and perspective. The critical monitoring role that RRT carries out with the support of RSN, uniquely situates us to address questions concerning the deal's legality and sustainability.



RSN was present at a number of events before and after the Sept 19 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants.



RSN Executive Director Zaid Hydari and RRT Senior Program Officer Nur Ozkut with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in Geneva, June 2016.

2016 was also an important one for refugees and migrants at the United Nations level. RSN participated in the civil society coalition events leading up to the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants and the ensuing New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. RSN was part of a push from civil society to ensure that the documents culminating in the Declaration that governments drafted, served the interests of refugees and human rights and at the very least, avoided backsliding on existing commitments.

While the final version of the Declaration fell short of RSN's vision, public pressure by RSN and other refugee rights organizations did prevent drafters from including seriously regressive language on child detention. In response to the final Declaration, RSN released a statement and submitted it to the civil society coalition for dissemination.

The NY Declaration also kicked off the multi-year processes leading up to a Global Compact on Refugees and a Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration. As the Migration Compact process began, we participated in the Informal meeting between UN Member States and civil society, the private sector, diaspora communities and migrant organizations to exchange views in advance of the UN intergovernmental negotiations. RSN read a formal statement advocating for more open and active participation opportunities at the UN level for refugee and migrants, and a greater range of organizations that represent and serve these communities.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

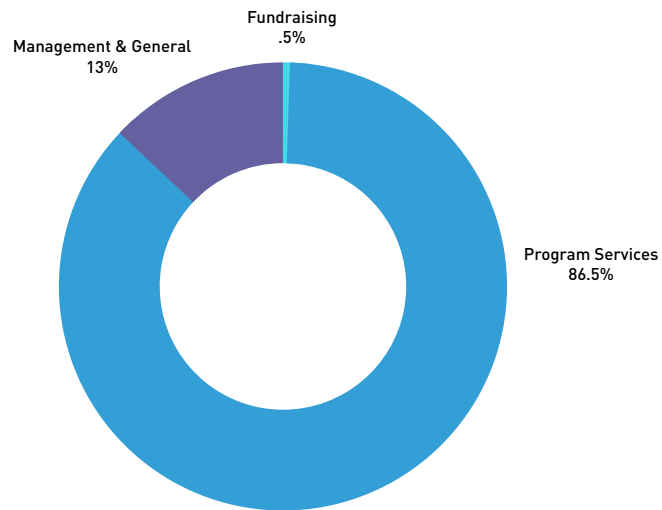
The Board of Directors is proud to report that, in the face of growing challenges, RSN continues to provide support and hope to courageous and resilient refugees and the organizations that assist them. Since its launch, RSN has become a sought out and invaluable voice in the ongoing refugee crisis. During this critical time, the Board remains dedicated to expanding services for refugees and migrants through the prudent growth and support of RSN.

This year we have streamlined and strengthened our [Board of Directors](#), increased the number of talented [RSN staff, interns and fellows](#), and expanded the nature and scope of programs and services supported by RSN.

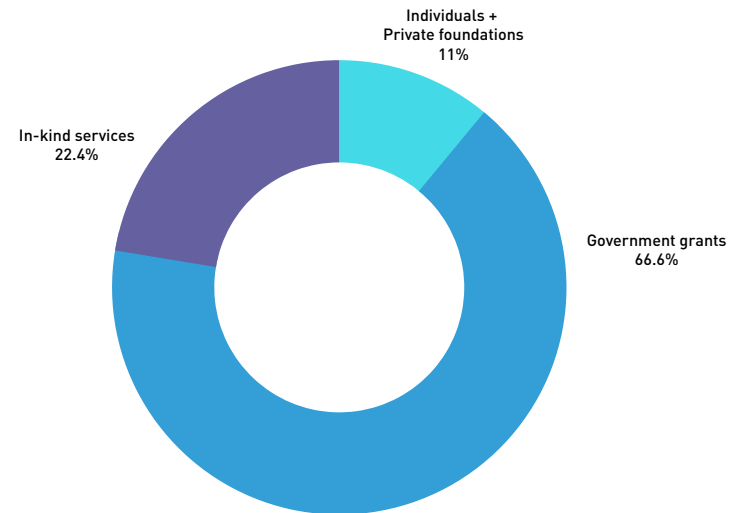
Immediately following the unrest in Turkey last summer, some members of the Board met with Zaid Hydari and RRT staff in Istanbul to ensure the viability and security of RSN programming there. Members of the Board also visited refugee camps and met with potential partner organizations throughout the Mediterranean, two of which became hosts to RSN fellows. In short, RSN continues to grow and strengthen in the face of unprecedented need and uncertainty.

The Board of Directors is humbled by the programs and initiatives that RSN and its partners have accomplished. Your support throughout the year has made it possible and we thank you. Never has it been as important to continue in solidarity with migrants and refugees. The Board asks for your continued commitment to increase access to justice for the world's most vulnerable in 2017 and beyond.

FINANCIALS



OPERATING BUDGET= \$963,574



INCOME = \$990,684

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to:

Tent Foundation

US Department of State, Bureau of Population,
Refugees, and Migration

White & Case LLP

Boston University School of Law

Leitner Center for Law and Justice at Fordham University School of Law

Blossom Hill Foundation