

1-Dec-16 World View — Europeans wonder if Turkey will reopen the refugee floodgates

Description

This morning's key headlines from GenerationalDynamics.com

- Mediterranean migrant traffic to Italy and Greece continues, despite cold weather
- Europeans wonder if Turkey will reopen the refugee floodgates

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Rescuing an overcrowded migrant boat off the Libyan coast (Reuters)

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About 171,000 migrants reached Italy after crossing the Mediterranean Sea so far this year, a new record. The previous record was 170,100 for all of 2014. The number arriving in Greece so far this year totals another 171,731, but this figure is well below the 2015 figure of 883,393, thanks to the EU-Turkey refugee deal.

More than three times as many migrants reached Italy this November as did so in the same month last year. On Monday alone, Italian and international rescuers reportedly pulled 1,400 people from the water to rescue them from drowning.

The EU-Turkey refugee deal has substantially reduced the number of migrants traveling from Turkey across the Aegean Sea to Greece. Those migrants are generally from war zones in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe are from African countries, according to the International Organization for Migration:

- Nigeria: 35716
- Eritrea: 20000
- Guinea : 12352
- Ivory Coast: 11406
- Gambia : 11022

The process of Mediterranean migrant traffic has become an extremely efficient and cynical assembly line. People-smugglers launch overcrowded rubber boats from the Libyan coast, with absolutely no pretense that the rubber boats will reach Europe. The migrants are told to use their radios to call for help from European rescuers while they are still close to the Libyan coast. There is a high risk that the overcrowded rubber boats will sink or capsize before rescuers can find them. There have been 4,655 cases of deaths of missing at sea recorded in the Mediterranean so far this year, compared to 3,771 cases in the whole of 2015.

The cold weather is making the trip far more deadly. Nonetheless, more migrants are making the trip because they want to cross before winter, and because people-smugglers are telling migrants that the EU is going to close the Mediterranean Sea route. [BBC](#) and [International Organization For Migration](#) and [International Business Times](#)

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- [EU migrant crisis moves to Italy as Austria begins closing border \(13-Apr-2016\)](#)
- [Refugee crisis: Turkey ridicules Europe as Hungary closes Croatia border \(17-Oct-2015\)](#)

Europeans wonder if Turkey will reopen the refugee floodgates

The EU-Turkey refugee deal seems to be hanging by a thread. Last week's vote by the EU parliament to recommend ending negotiations for Turkey's membership in the EU has infuriated the Turks, especially president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who said angrily, "Look, if you go further, the border gates will be opened. You should know that."

In fact, there are reports from Greece's intelligence unit that Erdogan has ordered that refugees be lined up along the Aegean Sea, ready to cross to Greece. The report indicates that as many as 3,000 refugees would cross every day, which would amount to about one million in a year.

Other reports indicate that some European nations are almost in a state of panic, and are making preparations. Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Croatia and Hungary are reportedly planning to build fences and barriers that would effectively divide Europe in two, and seal off most of the continent.

However, some analysts are doubting would ever launch this "nuclear option." The threat of ending the EU-Turkey refugee deal is a huge piece of leverage for Turkey in negotiations on any subject, and once he abrogated the deal, he would lose his negotiating leverage and invite retaliation.

In the past I've suggested my own possible scenario, which I've never seen discussed in the media. Ending the EU-Turkey refugee deal isn't a binary on or off decision. For example, Erdogan could move some of his troops from the coast along the Aegean Sea to southeastern Turkey to meet the threat from the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Protection from PKK would be perfect cover for a decision that would permit a small to moderate increase in the refugee flow. This would serve notice to the EU that more troops could be moved away at any time, to increase the refugee flow some more. This would permit Turkey to retain its negotiating leverage, although the fact that it was cold-blooded extortion would still be perfectly obvious. [Independent \(London\)](#) and [Pro Thema \(Greece\) \(Trans\)](#) and [Express \(London\)](#) and [Hurriyet \(Ankara\)](#)

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