

PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO TURKEY: VISAS

You should be aware of the problem dealt with in the attached papers about immigrants from Turkey. In essence we are one of the few countries in Europe which does not require visas from Turks. But we are having to refuse entry to growing numbers of Turks and also face problems with asylum seekers.

Unless there is an improvement, the Home Office envisage that we might have to contemplate imposing visas on Turks (although that does not actually affect the asylum problem). The Turks would take that as a great insult: they are trying to get other Europeans to remove their visa requirements. It is not a happy subject to have to tackle during a visit intended to improve relations. But you may at least have to put down a marker that we have a problem and would welcome anything he (oral) can do to ease it.

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(C.D. POWELL)

Mered

mt

31 March 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

*cepc
+ other
recipients*



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

31 March 1988

Dear Charles,

Following further discussion with the Home Office, I should be grateful if you would replace the passage on visas in my letter of 30 March with the following:-

"Whether or not he raises the possibility of the UK's imposing a visa regime for Turks, the Prime Minister may wish to say that we have this year noted a marked increase in the number of Turks seeking asylum in the UK. We are considering ways of seeking to control the flow more effectively, but a very real problem exists. Can Mr Ozal do anything to help? This is of course quite separate from the issue of Community discussions about the harmonisation of visa policies and procedures. But unless a solution can be found we may reluctantly have to contemplate a visa solution to the current asylum problem."

I attach a self-explanatory Background note.

I am sending copies of this letter to Philip Mawer (Home Office) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
L Parker

(L Parker)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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BACKGROUND

1. Seven EC member states require visas for Turkish nationals. The UK, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Italy do not. There is some pressure within the EC for harmonisation. Turkey was one of 17 countries considered by Ministers of the Interior in Copenhagen on 9 December 1987 for possible addition to a combined list of 50 countries for which all EC countries already require visas. We reserved our position. Ministers of the Interior will look at this again at the beginning of June.

2. The Turks know that harmonisation has been discussed. They are acutely sensitive about the possible extension of visa requirements to EC member states which do not currently have them. They regard visas as an affront to a country which is a member of NATO and an applicant to join the EC. Indeed, they have their own unrealistic ambitions to have current visa requirements (mostly of very long standing) abolished. They argue that the visa requirement has encouraged Turks to seek admission by bogus asylum claims.



3. We face apparently growing immigration problems from Turkish nationals. The number refused entry rose from 716 in 1985 to 1195 in 1986 and 1411 (provisionally) in 1987. This would not in itself justify a visa requirement, although it could point in that direction.

4. There is also a growing problem of asylum seekers. As at 20 March, some 104 Turks had sought asylum this year compared with 90 in the whole of 1987. Total asylum applications in Western Europe as a whole rose to over 25,000 in 1987, 4000 more than in 1986. However visa requirements, in those member states which have them, have not yet had much effect in reducing the number of political asylum applications. It is not easy to remove determined asylees (cf Tamils, Iranians). A large group of 19 Turks, including children, who arrived here on 20 March, threatened violence, including self-injury, if separated, deported or otherwise made the object of hostile action.



5. In the circumstances, it would be wise to put down a marker with the Turks that if the situation does not improve we may be compelled to take action to deal with this influx of asylees, including possibly (though only with great reluctance) the imposition of visas.



13.1.11

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