

## **Refugee Rights Turkey Ethics and Professional Standards- Questions and Answers:**

### **1) Who is Refugee Rights Turkey?**

Istanbul-based independent non-governmental organization (NGO), which provides specialized legal support services to refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants in Turkey. Refugee Rights Turkey (RRT) also delivers legal reference materials, trainings other expertise support services to lawyers and NGO legal practitioners, and advocates for improvements in Turkey's legislation and policies affecting refugees and migrants in line with international and European standards.

### **2) Why are "Ethics and Professional Standards" necessary?**

Refugee Rights Turkey (RRT)'s capacity to ensure the assistance services to asylum seekers, refugees, vulnerable migrants, and other person of concern (hereafter "persons of concern") depends on the ability of its staff to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.

Further, we also recognize that RRT's service provision often puts its staff in positions of unequal power relations towards persons of concern. Therefore, it is recognized that well-defined standards of work are necessary for its conduct towards persons of concern.

These standards hold the values and rules that RRT and its staff shall act by to uphold and safe-guard the necessary standards of conduct and avoid misconduct. Ethics and professionalism are essential to guarantee effective and responsible service to beneficiaries served by RRT. They are also critical for building and maintaining RRT's external reputation of integrity and competence.

These standards apply to RRT and to all its staff (including RRT's representatives, staff, volunteers, contractors and staff members of RRT's partner organizations).

Staff at all levels have a particular responsibility uphold these standards, to set a good example, and to create a working environment that supports and empowers staff.

### **3) What are "Our Ethics & Professional Standards as a Legal Assistance Provider?"**

**Refugee Rights Turkey** strictly observes the following Ethics and Professional principles in the implementation and delivery of our free of charge legal information and assistance services to asylum seekers & other vulnerable migrants:

- **We treat all beneficiaries equally** regardless of any personal differences including race, language, skin color, ethnicity, religious affiliation, political opinion, age, ability, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity;
- In order to secure equal treatment and quality of our services, we observe a **standardized service policy**, which ensures that beneficiaries who present the same type of legal questions and problems receive the same level and content of legal assistance;
- We provide **clear, accurate and realistic information & guidance** to beneficiaries regarding both favorable & unfavorable outcomes they may encounter in connection with the migration and asylum procedures they undergo and choices they will have to make; we carefully refrain from creating unrealistic expectations;

- We seek to supply accurate and reliable **information and advice for beneficiaries to actively make their own decisions** regarding their legal options – as opposed to making any substantive decisions on their behalf and without their participation and involvement;
- We provide **clear and accurate information and guidance regarding the scope, limitations and conditions of our legal assistance services** to beneficiaries; we carefully refrain from making any commitments on which we will be unable to deliver;
- We interact and communicate with beneficiaries on the basis of **mutual respect, personal courtesy and professional distance**;
- **All our legal information products, legal information, assistance, and representation services are completely free of charge**, including our online and in-person capacity building and group counseling seminars and training activities. In order to avoid any perceptions to the contrary or misunderstanding, our staff will not accept any gifts, other artefacts of monetary value or any personal favors from any beneficiary;
- **Beneficiaries can directly contact us to present their inquiries or request legal assistance, without the need for any third persons or organizations** to mediate on their behalf. We do not have any links to any third person or organizations which may falsely claim to ‘facilitate’ or ‘put in touch’ beneficiaries with our services in return for fees or other favors. We ask beneficiaries and referral actors to disregard any such ill-intentioned and fraudulent claims and false promises by any third persons or parties;
- **We observe diligence in the implementation of tasks and duties required by our legal assistance commitments** to beneficiaries and accept responsibility, and liabilities as relevant, as an organization for any negligence or errors;
- **We strictly observe the confidentiality of our beneficiaries and of any information or documents shared with us by beneficiaries** for the purpose of the legal assistance interaction; we will not share beneficiaries’ confidential information or documents with any third persons, parties or agencies without the express consent of the beneficiary;
- **We strictly observe legal obligations for the protection of personal data of our beneficiaries**, as established and safeguarded under Turkish law and international treaties; our staff will duly provide adequate information and seek beneficiary’s informed consent whenever any personal data considerations apply over the course of our legal assistance interactions;
- As a refugee legal assistance organization, we have a commitment to the integrity of the international refugee protection regime and the asylum system in Turkey;
- **We never advise our beneficiaries to make false or fraudulent claims or presentations to administrative or judicial authorities or agree to facilitate the submission of such false or fraudulent information or documents knowingly and willingly**;
- **We do not participate in or facilitate any activities that constitute a crime under Turkish and international law**;
- **We observe the “Best Interest of the Child” principle** in all of our legal assistance interactions and interventions involving children and minors;
- **We are strongly committed to providing a safe environment for all our staff and beneficiaries**; we do not tolerate any behavior or activities involving disrespect, violence, abuse, or other forms of exploitation, including gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, and other markers of personal difference.

#### 4) What is sexual exploitation and abuse?

**Sexual Exploitation:** It is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes.

**Sexual Abuse:** It is any actual or threatened sexual activity carried out by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual exploitation and abuse is a violation of human rights and constitutes acts of gross misconduct. RRT has zero tolerance for all forms of sexual wrongdoing, whether perpetrated against a recipient of assistance or a coworker. Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment violate human rights and are a betrayal of the core values of the RRT.

If you think that you have been exposed to sexual exploitation or abuse by RRT staff or have concerns or doubts about a potential case of sexual exploitation and abuse by RRT staff, you may report and make a complaint **to our Feedback or Complaint Mechanism**. In this process, please remember that your complaints are kept confidential and the information you report will not be shared with others without your consent.

#### 5) What are core principles about prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse?

RRT has the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. We take measures to protect the beneficiaries, from sexual exploitation and abuse by the staff and associated personnel, and to ensure adequate response when such abuses occur. To prevent such incidents, we adopt and carefully implement the following principles:

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by RRT staff constitute acts **of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.**
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited. **Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.**
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. **This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.**
4. Any sexual relationship between RRT staff and beneficiary that involves improper use of rank or position **is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of RRT's work.**
5. Where a RRT staff develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, **he or she must report such concerns to any senior manager.**
6. RRT staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. **Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems** which maintain this environment.

#### 6) What is corruption and fraud?

**Fraud** is any act with the objective of intentionally misleading another in order to obtain a benefit.

**Corruption**, on the other hand, is offering, giving, receiving or soliciting (directly or indirectly) anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another party. RRT has the policy of zero tolerance for fraud and corruption and is committed to take measures to prevent such incidents.

**All of our legal information products, legal information, assistance and representation services are completely free of charge**, including our online and in-person capacity building seminars and training activities. In order to avoid any perceptions to the contrary or misunderstanding, our staff will not accept any gifts, other artefacts of monetary value or any personal favors from any beneficiary;

**Beneficiaries can directly contact us to present their inquiries or request legal assistance, without the need for any third persons or organizations** to mediate on their behalf; We do not have any links to any third person or organizations which may falsely claim to ‘facilitate’ or ‘put in touch’ beneficiaries with our services in return for fees or other favors; We ask beneficiaries and referral actors to disregard any such ill-intentioned and fraudulent claims and false promises by any third persons or parties;

Be aware that any RRT services offered to you in exchange for money are fraudulent. For genuine information about RRT’s work and services, please contact us.

If you have information about RRT staff, or staff of RRT partners, being involved in corruption or fraud; report it immediately and directly to **our Feedback or Complaint Mechanism**.

**7) I have experienced or witnessed treatment or behaviour by your staff or other representatives contrary to your Ethics and Professional Standards. What should I do?**

If you are a beneficiary or other stakeholder representative and have either experienced or witnessed treatment or behaviour by our staff or other representatives contrary to the principles laid down above, you are kindly asked to report to our **Feedback or Complaint Mechanism**.

**8) What is Feedback and Complaints Mechanism?**

Feedback and Complaints Mechanism is a specifically designated mechanism with a mandate to receive and process feedback and complaints. Refugee Rights Turkey (“RRT”) is committed to receiving feedback and responding to complaints about its work and conduct from all stakeholders in a timely and appropriate manner. Feedback and complaints will be dealt with professionally, and in ways that promote fairness, transparency and accountability. RRT recognizes the importance of doing so to:

- Reaffirm the dignity and value of our stakeholders and their right to be heard and acknowledged,
- Learn from our stakeholders and adjust our programs to better meet their needs, thereby improving program quality and impact,
- Alert the organization about the cases of misconduct and to assure stakeholders that Refugee Rights Turkey does not tolerate wrongdoing.

**9) Who can apply to the Feedback and Complaints mechanism?**

All beneficiaries who receive support from the Refugee Rights Turkey can apply to our organization’s Feedback and Complaints mechanism. All stakeholders who participate in the activities of our institution and in contact with our institution can apply to our Feedback and Complaints mechanism if

they are exposed to or observe a situation contrary to the Ethics and Professional principles or to communicate their negative or positive feedback for the services they receive from RRT.

- All RRT Beneficiaries,
- Other people directly affected by policies and actions of RRT,
- Partners, donor organizations and their staff (humanitarian partners, contractors and authorities).

### **10) Which applications does the Feedback and Complaints mechanism evaluate?**

The Feedback and Complaints mechanism is a mechanism where you can share your positive and negative feedback about the legal support services offered by the Refugee Rights Turkey, the events it organizes and all its activities, and it is also an institutional structure that can be applied in case of violation of the Ethics and Professionalism principles.

Refugee Rights Turkey believes in receiving feedback and responding to complaints about the services and its conduct and improve the support we offer in line with these views.

The following categories of feedback/complaints will be evaluated:

- Negative /Positive Feedback about services,
- Operational complaints (such as delay in transactions),
- Corruption (fraud, theft and other forms of dishonesty),
- Breaches of confidentiality,
- Sexual exploitation and abuse,
- Discrimination,
- Harassment, bullying and verbal abuse.

The following categories of feedback/complaints are not accepted under the Feedback and Complaints Mechanism:

- Reports/complaints about matters unrelated to RRT,
- Reports/complaints regarding internal organization (RRT has a separate internal feedback and complaints mechanism.)

### **11) How to apply for the Feedback and Complaint mechanism?**

Refugee Rights Turkey believes in receiving feedback and responding to complaints about the services and its conduct and improve the support we offer in line with these views. For this reason, you can use any of the communication channels below, which have been specifically developed for our beneficiaries and stakeholders to send their feedback and complaints.

**RRT's Feedback and Complaints Hotline: +90 0543 329 61 90**

- The Hotline is operational during all weekdays from 10.00 AM to 5.00 PM. The Hotline currently operates in Turkish and English. Interpretation is provided upon request.
- SMS, Whatsapp, Telegram, Signal, Viber calls and messages in any language are also accepted.

**E-mail:** [geribildirim-sikayet@mhd.org.tr](mailto:geribildirim-sikayet@mhd.org.tr) or [feedback-complaints@mhd.org.tr](mailto:feedback-complaints@mhd.org.tr)

E-mails in any language is accepted and duly processed.

**Online form:** Online forms are also available in [Turkish](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Arabic](#) and [Farsi](#).



## **12) How does the Feedback and Complaint mechanism work?**

The information of each person and organization that reaches us will be evaluated with the utmost care, abiding by the principles of confidentiality. This information will not be shared with third parties for any reason other than legal obligations. During the evaluation and inquisition of the application, due attention is given to the privacy of the applicant and other relevant parties. We also remind that it will not impact the beneficiary's ability to receive or continue to receive services from RRT.

RRT is an organization that is committed to providing a service environment that does not compromise discrimination and harassment, and do not tolerate or ignore any kind of these situations that may arise.

When making a complaint, please write your report by giving the details about what happened and/or what you know about the events, including information about who is the person attempting to misconduct and, if any, other persons involved in this incident, specifying the name-surname, job of the person(s) if possible, and by adding the day and time of the incident, if possible. Complaints can be made anonymously; however, if you choose to make an anonymous complaint, please make sure that you include all details about the incident in your report.

To understand the full scope of your complaints and feedback, we may need to contact you for more detailed information about the issue you are applying to us. Applications to the Feedback and Complaints mechanism are answered within 3 working days. In this reply, the applicant is informed that the application has been received by us and how to proceed according to the content of the application.

## **13) Will I continue to receive services if I share my complaints and feedback?**

Yes. RRT reminds that submitting complaints and feedback will not impact the beneficiary's ability to receive or continue to receive services from RRT.

## **14) Can I speak face to face with RRT staff regarding my complaints and feedback?**

Yes. You can also submit your complaints or feedback face-to-face during our office hours (all weekdays from 9.30 AM to 5.30 PM). Before coming to the office, we recommend you to make an appointment by calling the number +90 543 329 61 90. You can also use the complaint boxes in our office to submit your complaints and feedback.

**15) Can I lodge a complaint about a person who is not a member of the Refugee Rights Turkey?**

RRT is solely responsible for its own staff and services. Depending on the nature of your complaint, you may need to apply to different institution or police. If you have questions about such matters, you can call our RRT general legal support line 0 850 218 48 30.