

Beat: Politics

AROUND 660,000 REFUGEES HAVE NOW FLED UKRAINE TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES IN 6 DAYS

URGENT OF CEASEFIRE HUMANITARIAN CORRIDOR

Paris, Washington DC, 02.03.2022, 23:19 Time

USPA NEWS - « Around 660,000 refugees have now fled Ukraine to neighboring countries in the past six days, according to the latest government data compiled by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. At this rate, the situation looks set to become Europe's largest refugee crisis this century, and UNHCR is mobilizing resources to respond as quickly and effectively as possible." Source : UNHCR. The humanitarian Corridors, combined with a temporary ceasefire are now the most urgent priority from both parties, Russia and Ukraine whose delegations, should stress on, because too many human lives are at stake, from both sides. Ukrainian President Zelensky said almost 6,000 members of Russia's invading force had been killed since Putin launched his unprovoked war against Ukraine a week ago.

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THE HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS COMBINED WITH A TEMPORARY CEASEFIRE, ARE NOW URGENT

At this stage of the armed conflict (Day 6 of War), and since the first negotiation between the two parties Ukraine and Russia, the two delegations must insist on the capital importance of the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to evacuate the civilians, especially the most vulnerable, injured, seniors, children, disabled, etc...

War has rules, and in particular, that of not targeting civilians and the vulnerable and facilitating their evacuation to safe places and allowing them access to survival through drinking water and sleeping food, in safe place...

Besides, all neighboring countries « have to date commendably kept their borders open for refugees fleeing Ukraine. Most have fled to Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, while others have moved towards various other European countries. We are also aware that a sizeable number has moved to the Russian Federation. National authorities are assuming responsibility for the registration, reception, accommodation and protection of these refugees.

We have seen tremendous solidarity and hospitality from the countries receiving refugees, including from the authorities and local communities. UNHCR urges governments to continue to maintain access to territory for all those fleeing: Ukrainians, and third country nationals living in Ukraine, who are now forced to escape the violence. We stress that there must be no discrimination against any person or group. » Source : UNHCR-----

UNHCR has a long-standing presence in the region, including in Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia and Romania, and is coordinating the refugee response with other UN agencies and NGO partners, in support of national authorities. We are reinforcing our operations by urgently sending more resources, staff and relief items to deploy in the region while preparing to provide cash assistance via cards as needed. UNHCR child welfare and protection specialists are also ready to support national authorities.

IN POLAND MILES OF QUEUES AT THE BORDER ON THE UKRAINIAN SIDE

UNHCR field staff report miles of queues at the border on the Ukrainian side. Those who crossed the border said that they had been waiting up to 60 hours. Most arrivals are women and children from all parts of Ukraine. Temperatures are freezing and many have reported spending days on the road waiting to cross. UNHCR is liaising with the authorities who have made available assistance. It is also working with partners inside Ukraine to mobilize teams to distribute this assistance. When refugees arrive, they are registered by the authorities. UNHCR is aware of challenges faced by some third country nationals seeking to enter Poland and are in touch with the authorities to ensure that all those in need of international protection have access to procedures. Refugees who have the means are finding their own accommodation, whereas others are being hosted with local communities who have opened their homes, or sheltered in reception centers.

UNHCR has been present at the Polish-Ukrainian border since 24 February to monitor arrival trends and is moving relief supplies from its global stocks to a newly rented warehouse at the border (in Rzeszow). Our office in Poland has been inundated with requests for information and support by refugees. UNHCR is providing new arrivals with information and legal services through a Polish legal partner.

IN HUNGARY THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES IS READY TO SCALE UP

UNHCR is present at the border, assessing the number of refugees, and is ready to scale up its operational support to the Government. Arrivals are steady and waiting times vary. On arrival, following screening and registration, Ukrainians and other nationalities are guided to assembly points where they can apply for asylum and are granted temporary documentation. Support is being provided by municipalities humanitarian actors, and members of the community.

IN ROMANIA THERE ARE QUEUES OF UP TO 20 HOURS TO ENTER ROMANIA

There are queues of up to 20 hours to enter Romania. National authorities are managing accommodation and transport – new arrivals are being moved from the border to reception centres or other locations. Local communities are generously helping with transport and accommodation, while private companies are paying for hotels. Volunteers are providing interpretation services and other forms of practical support. UNHCR and partners have established a presence at all main border points – we are currently deployed at Siret and Isaccea. We are part of the government-led task force that is coordinating needs and support. We are providing new arrivals with information on asylum procedures, and, through partners, are offering legal advice and psychological support. We have also established a 24/7 emergency hotline and online help pages for refugees in Ukrainian.

IN MOLDOVA IT IS STILL TAKING 24 HOURS TO COVER THE 60 ODD KMS BETWEEN ODESSA & THE BORDER WITH MOLDOVA:

It is still taking 24 hours to cover the 60-odd kms between Odessa and the border with Moldova. New arrivals are being accommodated in temporary reception centres and additional sites are being identified. Some have found their own accommodation or are being hosted by local communities. UNHCR is providing support to enhance reception capacity and is distributing essential relief items, including blankets, sleeping bags and hygiene items. An airlift from Dubai is due to arrive tomorrow with more supplies. UNHCR's partners are present at various Moldovan border crossings, providing counselling to newly arrived refugees.

IN SLOVAKIA THE GOVERNMENT IS MAINTAINING AN OPEN & WELCOMING POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

Since 24 February, UNHCR has regularly visited four out of five main border crossing points. Arrivals to Slovakia are lower but the government is maintaining an open and welcoming policy towards refugees, and has rapidly changed asylum laws to help fast-track asylum procedures. Financial and material support is also being provided by local communities, who are supporting refugees with food and hygiene items, offers of free transport, and accommodation. Local municipalities and villages are also creating temporary shelters for refugees.

IN UKRAINE UNHCR IS ALSO RAMPING UP ITS RESPONSE IN UKRAINE TO HELP DISPLACED & CONFLICT AFFECTED PEOPLE

UNHCR is also ramping up its response in Ukraine to help displaced and conflict affected people. But the volatile situation, security concerns, lack of safe access for humanitarian workers and movement restrictions are posing major challenges for aid workers, including UNHCR staff. UNHCR continues to deliver when safe to do so, providing some assistance and engaging in protection activities like working with internally displaced community leaders to assess humanitarian needs and identify safe sites where IDPs can be received. UNHCR is also preparing to deliver assistance to internally displaced people in western Ukraine where humanitarian access is easier and is also strengthening nationwide hotlines to provide critical protection information to displaced civilians. » Source: UNHCR

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-20115/around-660000-refugees-have-now-fled-ukraine-to-neighboring-countries-in-6-days.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSiV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jedi Foster, Rahma Sophia RACHDI

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619