

## WE ARE MONITORING

**Statistics**

**13.07–26.07.2023**

The following study contains first-hand data from people participating in the events described. We would like to thank all humanitarian organisations operating in the Polish–Belarusian border area and individuals working with them for providing us with reports of their interventions. Our sources include organisations, informal initiatives as well as individuals, often wishing to remain anonymous, so we do not mention them by name unless they have given us permission to do so. Special thanks are due to all those on the move who have chosen to share their own experiences with us.

Humanitarian workers and those working with them emphasise that the difficult context and ethics of their work often prevent them from obtaining more detailed information about the stories and situations of people on the move. During interventions, many are in such a poor psycho-physiological state that it is not possible to obtain more data without putting them at risk of retraumatization or making them feel that they owe humanitarian organisations any answers to their questions by virtue of receiving material or legal support from them.

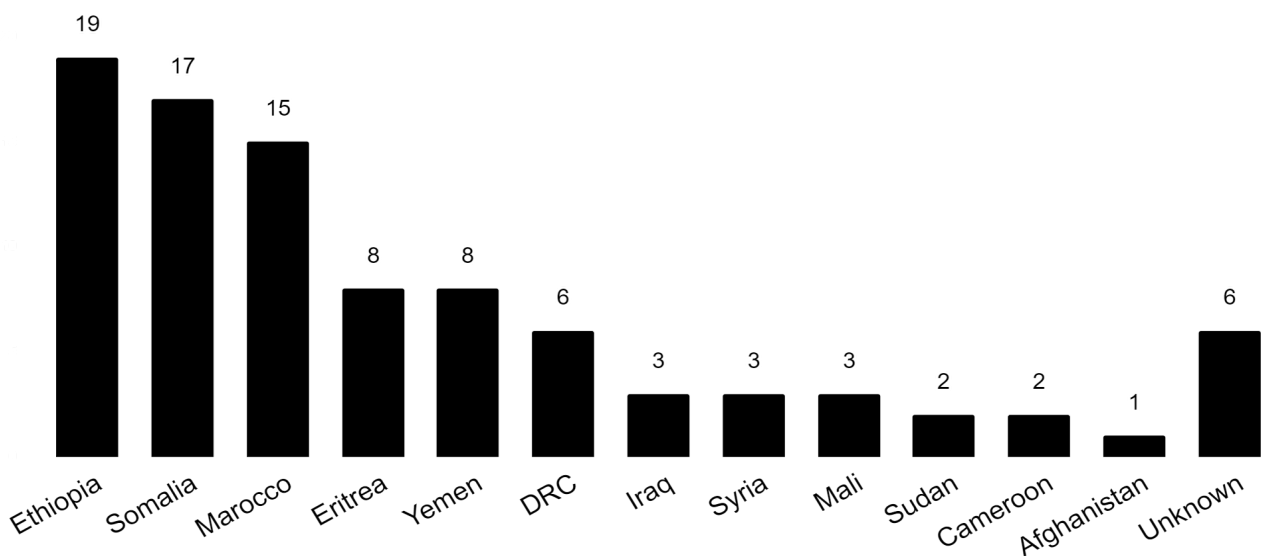
The described interventions and support provided to persons on the move took place on the territory of the Podlaskie and Lubelskie Voivodeships. For persons in Belarus, information is provided on the legal situation and access to procedures for applying for international protection in Poland and Belarus.

We hope that this brief outline of the context will help you to better understand the current dynamics of events in the border region with Belarus. For additional questions and recommendations from individuals or organisations who might also be interested in receiving the reports, please contact [wearemonitoring@gmail.com](mailto:wearemonitoring@gmail.com).

## Quantitative summary 13.07–19.07.2023

	Groups	Number of individuals	Children (unaccompanied minor)	Women (pregnant)
<b>Total requests</b>	26	93	6 (5)	12 (1)
<b>Requests from Belarus / inc. Sistiema</b>	2/0	3/0	0 (0)/0	2 (1)/0 (0)
<b>Aid provided</b>	17	64	2 (1)	10 (0)
• <b>in-kind support / inc. in hospitals</b>	17/0	64/0	2 (1)/0	10 (0)/0
• <b>Legal aid / inc. in hospitals</b>	0/0	0/0	0/0	0 (0)/0
• <b>Medical aid PL/BY</b>	2/0	2/0	0/0	1/0
<b>Reported Pushbacks</b>	8	30	1 (0)	1 (0)
<b>Missing persons reported</b>	1	3	3 (3)	0
<b>Reported violence PL/ BY</b>	1/1	1/1	0/0	0/0
<b>Injuries from the wall</b>	0	0	0 (0)	0
<b>Number of interventions</b>			23	

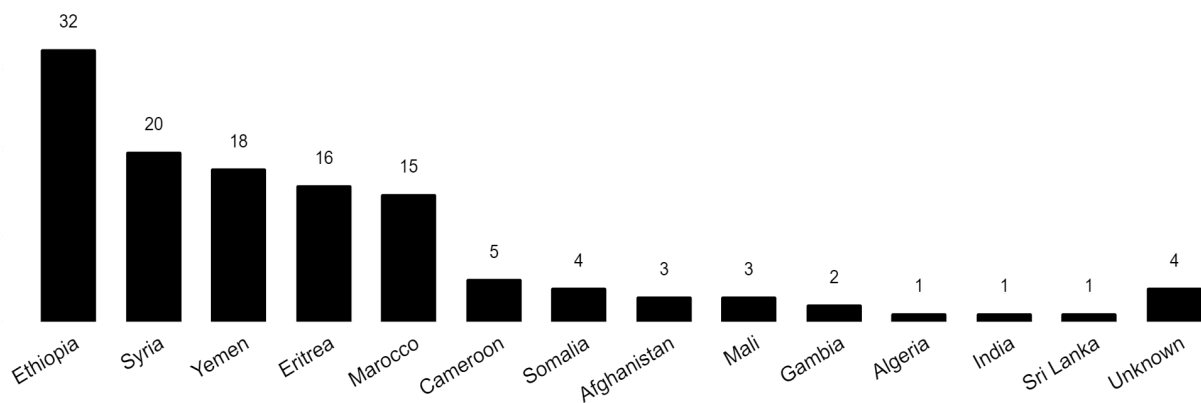
## Countries of Origin 13.07–19.07.2023



## Quantitative summary 20.07–26.07.2023

	Groups	Number of individuals	Children (unaccompanied minors)	women (pregnant)
<b>Total requests</b>	29	125	3 (1)	7
<b>Requests from Belarus / inc. in Sistiema</b>	2/2	2/2	0	0
<b>Aid provided</b>	21	97	3(1)	7
• <b>Material aid / inc in hospitals</b>	17/1	76/1	3 (1)/0	7
• <b>Legal aid / inc. in hospitals</b>	5/3	3/1	0/0	0
• <b>Medical aid PL / BY</b>	1/0	2/0	0/0	0
<b>Reported Pushbacks</b>	6	15	1 (1)	0
<b>Missing persons reported</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Violence reported PL / BY</b>	5 / 7	28 / 36	0/1	0/1
<b>Injuries from the wall</b>	3	3	0	0
<b>Number of interventions</b>			22	

## Countries of Origin 20.07–26.07.2023



## Demographics

During the reporting period, we received requests for assistance from 55 groups consisting of 218 people, a slight decrease from the first half of July. These included nine minors, six of whom were unaccompanied minors, as well as a mother with her 13-year-old son and a group consisting of three women (one of whom was 17 years old). The majority of those reporting were from Ethiopia, Morocco, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Eritrea. The country of origin of 10 people could not be determined.

## Belarus and the border area

During the reported period, there were few reports from Belarus and the strip of land between the Polish fortifications and the Belarusian Sistema, with a total of 5 reports in a fortnight. In the first week there were reports from two groups (one group of two people and a lone man), while in the second half of the reported period there were two lone people from the strip of land between the Polish and Belarusian infrastructure.

In the second half of July we received few accounts from people who had crossed the wall and could describe what the humanitarian situation was like between the fortifications. These accounts also lacked depth. Among other things, they concerned the number of people staying in the area:

*(...) that on the other side of the fence in Belarus, very close to the fence [comment by the Border Group interpreter: the interlocutor in his native language also uses the equivalent of the words "international zone"], there are many people, also families and elderly people.*



Photo: Grupa Granica



## Humanitarian, medical and legal interventions

The humanitarian organisations and cooperating persons who provided us with information managed to provide in-kind support to 140 persons travelling in 34 groups. 4 people in 3 groups were additionally provided with specialised medical assistance thanks to the involvement of medics from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and medics residing privately in Podlasie as volunteers. Organisations and individuals providing in-kind and medical support to people on the move in the border areas took part in a total of 45 successful interventions. According to humanitarian workers and people working in Podlasie, people on the move most often asked for water and dry clothes. People assisted during the reported period were sometimes very poorly prepared for the journey – one man they met, a Somali man, had no belongings with him except for the summer clothes on and his phone, while an Ethiopian woman from one of the groups was in flip-flops.

As far as medical and pre-medical first aid interventions were concerned, these included treatment of dog bites, cuts and wounds resulting from the long walk, and torpor due to poisoning from dirty water. The organisation's aid workers also encountered one case of hypothermia. This is, although it would seem counterintuitive, also possible in summer.<sup>1</sup>



Photo: Grupa Granica

## Pushbacks and violence by services

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<sup>1</sup> <https://twojdyzur.pl/blog-hipotermia/> [accessed 31.07.2023].

During the period covered by this report, a total of 14 groups (consisting of 45 individuals) reported the experience of being pushed back. Among those pushed back to Belarus were at least one woman and one child.

People who reported pushbacks to us, told of practices that had been in place for a long time on the Polish-Belarusian border – these included taking personal belongings, destroying equipment (including phones), and spraying tear gas in the face.

The woman interviewed at the end of July (and who had experienced a pushback a month earlier) also talked about the lack of access to water at the SG facility, which was particularly difficult for people after a multi-day trek through the forest [the statement is in the 3rd person singular, as this is how it was phrased by the translator from the respondent's native language into English];

*She said, there was no such kind of treatment, even when they were taking us to this prison [from the conversation as a whole it appears that to the SG post]. I was even asking, there was a lady, she came into the room and she asked her for water, because she was really thirsty at the time. She said 'ok', but she didn't come back.*

In the same account, there is a less typical statement concerning the frequent practice of being induced to sign documents that the foreigner does not understand (or, less frequently, does not know what their purpose is). This time, according to the respondent, the officers prompted with a form that contained only a few questions:

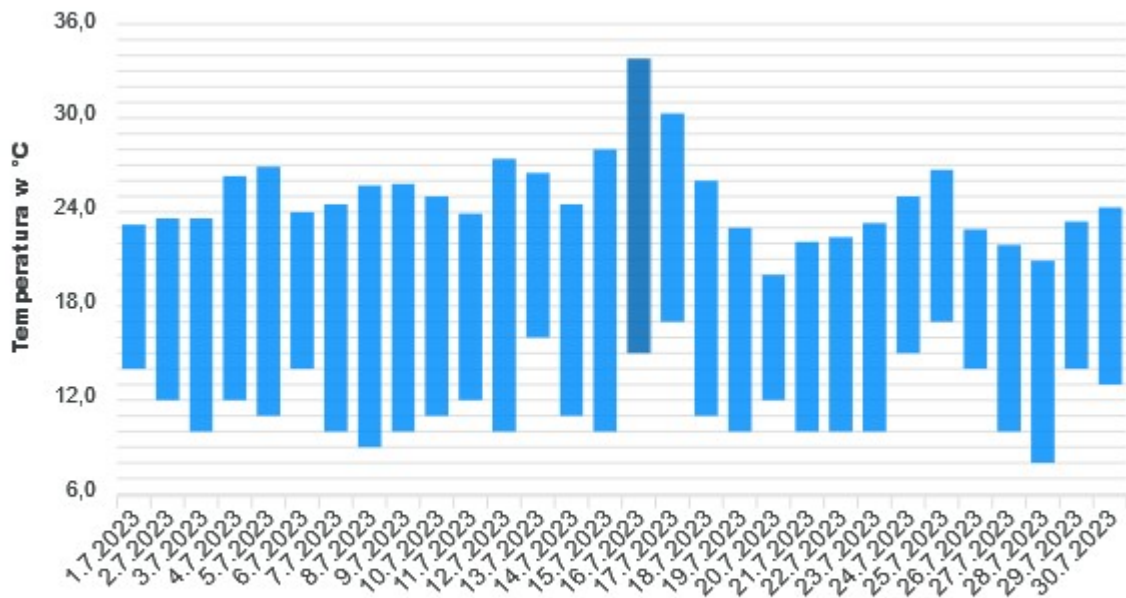
*She said it was like a blank paper and there were 2 questions, 'what's your name?' and 'what's your nationality?', basic information and a place for signature. There was no nothing, there was no nothing written there.*

There were also further recollections in the pushback accounts of things being taken away before being pushed back:

*Our clothes were with the Polish border guard and we don't have any food, we don't have any of our clothes and it's quite difficult there.*

## Temperatures by weather station Białystok<sup>2</sup>

The graph shows the daily maximum/minimum temperature on a given day in °C in July this year.



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pogodowecentrum.pl/archiwum-pogody/szczegoly-miasta/122950-99999/bialystok> [accessed 17.07.2023]