

# MARCH 2025

## Report from the Poland-Belarus border

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## Introduction

The following study is based on first-hand data obtained from persons involved in the described events. Our sources comprise organisations, informal initiatives, as well as individuals—the latter of whom often wish to remain anonymous, hence we do not mention them by name unless they have given us permission to do so. We owe special thanks to all those in transit who chose to share their own experiences with us.

Humanitarian workers and those who collaborate with them emphasise that the challenging context and ethics of their work often prevents them from obtaining more detailed information about the stories and circumstances of people on the move. During interventions, many such people are in such a severe psychophysical condition that it is not possible to obtain detailed information without risking retraumatisation or making them feel obligated to provide answers to humanitarian organisations simply because they have received support.

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. All names used in the report have been changed.

For additional questions and suggestions from individuals or organisations who might be interested in receiving reports, please contact: [dane@wearemonitoring.org.pl](mailto:dane@wearemonitoring.org.pl)

## Definitions

A glossary of terms and the definitions we have adopted can be found at the end of the report.

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## Legislative changes in Poland. Suspension of the right to seek asylum in Poland and its immediate effects.



# DZIENNIK USTAW RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ

Warszawa, dnia 27 marca 2025 r.

Poz. 390

### ROZPORZĄDZENIE RADY MINISTRÓW

z dnia 27 marca 2025 r.

#### w sprawie czasowego ograniczenia prawa do złożenia wniosku o udzielenie ochrony międzynarodowej

Na podstawie art. 33a ust. 5 ustawy z dnia 13 czerwca 2003 r. o udzielaniu cudzoziemcom ochrony na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Dz. U. z 2025 r. poz. 223 i 389) zarządza się, co następuje:

- § 1. Wprowadza się czasowe ograniczenie prawa do złożenia wniosku o udzielenie ochrony międzynarodowej.
- § 2. 1. Ograniczenie, o którym mowa w § 1, obowiązuje przez okres 60 dni od dnia wejścia w życie rozporządzenia.
- 2. Ograniczenie, o którym mowa w § 1, stosuje się na granicy państwowej z Republiką Białorusi.
- § 3. Rozporządzenie wchodzi w życie z dniem ogłoszenia.

Prezes Rady Ministrów: *D. Tusk*

Fig. 1 Full contents of the ordinance on the temporary restriction of the right to apply for international protection<sup>1</sup>

The regulation cited above is an implementing act to the recently amended Act on Granting Protection to Foreigners on the Territory of the Republic of Poland. The amendment process was widely discussed and criticized, including by social organizations. Concerns were raised about, among other things, numerous ambiguities in the content of the act, along with the hope that the relevant regulation would clarify at least some of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to Article 33a paragraph 5 of the Act of June 13, 2003 on granting protection to aliens on the territory of the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws of 2025, item 223 and 389), it is ordered as follows:

§ 1. A temporary restriction shall be introduced on the right to submit an application for international protection.

§ 2. 1. The restriction referred to in § 1 shall be in force for a period of 60 days from the date of entry into force of the Ordinance.

(2) The restriction referred to in § 1 shall apply at the state border with the Republic of Belarus.

§ 3. The Ordinance shall enter into force on the day of its promulgation.

## The legislative process

In December 2024, a draft bill was published on the website of the Government Legislative Centre, proposing amendments to the existing Act on Granting Protection. The core of the proposed change was the introduction of a mechanism allowing for the temporary and territorial suspension of the right to submit applications for international protection in cases of so-called “instrumentalization of migration” by ‘other states’ which are not explicitly named. Such a “suspension” would be enacted through an ordinance issued by the Council of Ministers, a legal act of lower rank than a statute.

According to the bill the temporary suspension of the the submission of asylum applications can only be exercised when the following conditions are met:

- An act of instrumentalization of migration is occurring;
- The actions undertaken within the framework of such instrumentalization pose a serious and real threat to national or societal security; and
- The introduction of a temporary restriction on the right to apply for international protection is necessary to eliminate threats of internal destabilization, and other measures are insufficient to address those threats.

After the first reading took place in the Sejm in January 2025, the bill was subsequently referred to a parliamentary committee for further consideration. Under public pressure, members of the committee agreed to organize a public hearing, allowing representatives of civil society to voice their opinions on the draft legislation. The hearing was held on February 4. The proposed changes were met with overwhelming criticism from the participants. Of the several dozen organizations that spoke, only the ultra-conservative think tank Ordo Iuris expressed support for the proposed amendments.

Despite this, the following day the committee adopted the draft bill. At the end of February, the Sejm passed the legislation. In mid-March, the Senate approved the bill without amendments. On March 26, it was signed into law by the President, and shortly after midnight on March 27. During the legislative process Maciej Duszczak, responsible for migration policies in Poland reassured:

*This law does not function in a normal situation. It functions in a very clearly defined situation. We have a definition of instrumentalization – it is written in a way that excludes normal situations. In fact, there has to be a very significant threat, also to the territorial cohesion of the state, etc., for this law to actually be applicable. [...] This is a kind of safeguard that we want to have in the law, which will allow us to respond appropriately to situations in which... Today, to be honest, I don't feel capable of predicting what those situations might be. That's why it's*

*an ordinance that specifies this: the place and the time, really, in which it can be applied<sup>2</sup>.*

Despite this reassurance the corresponding ordinance was published mere hours after the presidential signature effectively suspending the right to seek asylum on the territory of 'the border with the Republic of Belarus'. The immediate publication was made possible by the fact that the law did not include a *vacatio legis* period and entered into force the day after its signing.

The legislation stipulates that the suspension does not apply to the following categories of individuals provided that direct coercive measures or weapons were not used against them:

- Unaccompanied minors;
- Pregnant women;
- Individuals who may require special treatment, particularly due to age or health conditions;
- Individuals whom the Border Guard determines to be at risk of serious harm in the country<sup>3</sup> from which they arrived directly onto the territory of the Republic of Poland;
- Citizens of the state engaging in instrumentalization, from which territory the foreigners are arriving in Poland: in the current context, citizens of Belarus.

However, on the first day of the law, as reported by Grupa Granica a 17 year old unaccompanied Somali minor was pushed back from the hospital in Hajnówka which is located around 18 kilometers from the border:

*The boy said he was 17 years old. [...] The family is from a persecuted minority in Somalia. In Belarus, he experienced horrific violence. He fell off a border wall. Before an ambulance took him away, Polish officers still sprayed him with gas. In the hospital, he was unable to stand up, unable to eat or drink after starving for days in the forest. He declared his intention to seek international protection in Poland. He spent several hours in the ER, was picked up by the Border Guard, after which we learned that he had been pushed back<sup>4</sup>.*

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<sup>2</sup><https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy10.nsf/O/497638CD4EC8F2COC1258C3F0042C167/%24File/013391O.pdf>, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> This country is not explicitly specified, but it is most likely assumed to refer only to Belarus, disregarding the close cooperation between Belarus and Russia

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1H5sZQmbez/>

## Criticism

### Incompatibility with Higher-Order Law and Human Rights Standards

Various institutions—including the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Commissioner for Children's Rights, the UNHCR Representative in Poland, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Amnesty International, the Polish Bar Council, and the National Council of Legal Advisers—consider the measures to be incompatible with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which guarantees the right to asylum, as well as with Poland's binding international legal obligations, including the 1951 Geneva Convention and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. They argue that the legislation poses a threat to the lives and freedoms of foreigners seeking international protection in Poland.

One of the most significant criticisms is that the law violates the principle of *non-refoulement*—the prohibition on expelling or returning an individual seeking international protection to a territory where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

### Risks to Children and Families

Child rights experts—including the Commissioner for Children's Rights and non-governmental organizations such as Save the Children—have raised concerns about the limited scope of the designated “vulnerable groups” listed in the legislation. Specifically, the law includes only unaccompanied minors, while excluding other minors from the same level of protection. Although the bill formally allows for the submission of a joint application by a family, this is only possible if the primary applicant belongs to one of the vulnerable groups.

For example, a pregnant woman traveling with her child—qualifying as a vulnerable individual and serving as the main applicant—can submit a joint application with her child, ensuring they are not separated. In contrast, a father traveling with his child—who would be the only eligible primary applicant in that case and is unlikely to qualify as a member of any recognized vulnerable group—would most likely be subjected to pushback at the border.

In the case of unaccompanied minors, another pressing issue is the initial need to recognize them as individuals under the age of 18. This must first be noticed by the officers carrying out the apprehension, which is particularly challenging in situations where apprehensions occur in forests, without witnesses, and under conditions of language barriers and stress. If the person is even considered as a potential minor, in

case of further doubts, such as the absence of documents confirming age, the most commonly used method of verification is a medical examination involving an X-ray of the bones. However, this is against the European standards of age assessment, and carries the risk of incorrectly determining that the individual is an adult.<sup>5</sup>

### **Lack of Appropriate Competencies and Preparedness Among Authorities Responsible for Identifying Exempted Groups and Individuals**

Organizations operating in the border area and engaging directly with Border Guard officers—including Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)—have raised concerns about the discretionary nature of decisions regarding who qualifies for “special treatment on the basis of health condition.” These decisions are to be made by the Border Guard officers, often under pressure of time. However, the officers lack appropriate competencies to make such determinations, including the absence of medical education and insufficient knowledge concerning the identification of torture survivors, among other critical areas.

Moreover, people on the move are frequently intercepted at night, in forested terrain, under high-adrenaline conditions and limited visibility. These circumstances make it practically impossible to even superficially assess individual situations or identify members of vulnerable groups.

### **Ambiguity and Vagueness of the Provisions**

Representatives of civil society, non-governmental organizations, as well as the Legislative Bureau of the Sejm, raised concerns about the lack of precision in the draft during the legislative process of the amendment. Attention was drawn to the fact that the key term of the act — “instrumentalization” — was defined in such a vague manner that it opens the door to arbitrary decisions regarding the suspension of the right to protection. Another significant area that was not clarified either in the act or in the

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<sup>5</sup> According to European standards, in order to improve the reliability of chronological age assessment, it is recommended to use several different examination methods. The final evaluation should be based on a combination of these techniques. The choice of specific age verification methods should take into account the need to analyze all relevant factors—such as physical, psychological, developmental, environmental, and cultural aspects—in a way that ensures the highest possible accuracy of the results. It is equally important that the assessment be carried out by properly qualified professionals. Depending on the methods used, these may include, among others, pediatricians, general practitioners, radiologists, child psychologists, social workers, or other professionals with experience in assessing child development. See: European Asylum Support Office (EASO), *Age assessment practice in Europe*, 2014, p. 26.

ordinance is the territorial scope of the provisions — the regulation is to apply “at the state border with the Republic of Belarus,” without specifying exactly which area is covered by the suspension — in other words, how far from the borderline the “border” actually extends.

### **Consequences for people on the move from former Soviet Republics**

The regulation has suspended the right to seek protection along the *entire* border, including Terespol – the only border crossing between Poland and Belarus accessible for private transit that remains open. Thus, the policy disproportionately impacts nationals of former Soviet Union countries who have, for years, sought protection at this crossing point—for example, women with children fleeing domestic violence in Chechnya or political dissidents from Tajikistan and other Central Asia countries.

### **The effective removal of access to international protection**

Whereas prior to the enactment of these provisions it was sometimes possible to successfully submit an asylum application after crossing the green border, or at the border crossing in Terespol under the new suspension framework, this has become nearly impossible. Only individuals classified as belonging to “vulnerable groups” are eligible for exemption— provided they are granted this status that is determined arbitrarily by the Border Guard.

### **Conclusions**

The legislation reinforces the existing chaos at the border and the ongoing abuses by border service officers. The provisions it contains, which are theoretically meant to protect individuals from vulnerable groups, are not supported by any procedures that would enable their practical implementation. Its rushed adoption did not allow for additional training or the development of appropriate procedures that could support the process of identifying vulnerable groups. It stands in contradiction to the standards of the Polish Constitution and international law. Moreover, the legislative process and the surrounding debate contributed to an anti-immigration narrative that dehumanizes migrants. It enables the further erosion of human rights in Poland and creates a dangerous precedent for restricting access to fundamental rights for a specific group of people.



## **The instrumentalisation of the topic of migration in the public discourse.**

Reports and studies by social researchers show how public sentiment in Poland has changed since 2021.<sup>6</sup> The analysis of the communications of the current and previous governments, shows that the current government has not stopped the narrative against migrants, but only slightly changed it. The language that before had been openly xenophobic, but also showed migrants as a helpless tool in the hands of Lukashenko, has been replaced by a much more militaristic narrative about "Lukashenko's troops" e.g. active 'criminals', "bandits", 'recruited and equipped by Belarus'.<sup>7</sup>

We are observing the intensification of this issue in the period of the presidential campaign in which migration is often brought up. One of the graphic examples of normalising violence against people on the move in the public discourse is a video posted on March 21st by the Polish Border guard on their official YouTube channel.<sup>8</sup> The footage shows a group of people cutting through the border fence and getting across onto the dirt road adjacent to the border. As two vehicles approach and armed men get out of them we see the migrants get down as the footage cuts off for the moment of the physical apprehension. A second later we see them lying on the ground, faces down, not moving. Armed soldiers are walking around them. The footage is still available online and was later used by the Polish Prime minister in one of the videos promoting the government's information campaign in seven most common countries of origin of migrants choosing this route.<sup>9</sup>

The footage was also shared with one of the organizations by a person on the move who came across it in Belarus and was shocked by its contents. The man called upon NGOs to act and raise awareness on the issue of state brutality against migrants:

*This is not humanity.*

*Migrants are dying of hunger and cold. This is not humanity. They only want a decent life, nothing more. We are human beings, whether our skin is white, dark, or any other skin color. The organization should follow up on this humanitarian catastrophe that the Polish border guards are committing against the migrants.*

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<sup>6</sup> Bieńkowski, M. (2025). Postawy wobec uchodźców. Rola rasizmu w kształtowaniu wrogości wobec nie-białego. Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami.

<sup>7</sup> M. Krępa, M.J. Pietrusińska, *Od "narzędzi Łukaszenki" do "najemników Putina" – militaryzacja dyskursu wokół granicy w latach 2021-2024*, 25. Seminarium grupy Badaczk i Badacze na Granicy, 12.04.2025.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7WsJx96Xt4&ab\\_channel=Str%C5%BCGraniczna](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7WsJx96Xt4&ab_channel=Str%C5%BCGraniczna)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/JSKWoSx-WEw>

*They want a safe homeland, nothing more. The organization must publish everything that the border guards are doing against the migrants. The organization must publish on social media what is happening to the migrants from now on. Maybe people will sympathize with the cause.*

A comment sent along with the video material by a person on the move

In mid-March, Dariusz Sienicki, the spokesperson for the Commander of the Nadbużański Border Guard Unit, gave a statement to the media<sup>10</sup> in which he made an ironic comment about the probable death of two people in the Bug River. The comment referred to a tragedy that reportedly occurred after Belarusian forces brutally forced a group of migrants to cross the river. According to the survivors' accounts, which were shared with representatives of an NGO on the Polish side a few hours later, two people drowned during the crossing. Clearly shaken, they reported that two of their companions couldn't swim and that they saw them drowning in the river. Under pressure from a representative of one of the organizations, the authorities initiated a search operation, which was discontinued after less than two days.

Search operations were terminated on Tuesday at around 6 p.m. No trace was found of the people who were supposed to have drowned in the Bug River. Either they rescued themselves and headed for countries where social benefits are paid in pounds and euros, or they were not at all in the group that had crossed the border illegally.

Witnesses who reported drowning requested international protection in the presence of NGO representatives but were later pushed back to Belarus regardless. One of them relates what happened to him after he was transferred to the Border Guard facility<sup>11</sup>:

But when the Poland police came they took us to the police station and took our fingerprints. And they asked us to sign papers written in a language which were not understandable to us and we refused to sign. After that they push us back to Belarus.

The use of dehumanizing language, such as open mockery of death and violence against migrants, as well as the circulation of materials portraying such violence in a positive light on official channels of state services and by leading political figures, has thus far failed to elicit a decisive response from either the media or political actors. This

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<sup>10</sup> See:

<https://lublin24.pl/informacje-bialskie/nie-odnaleziono-cial-afrykanczykow-tragedia-czy-nielegalna-ucieczka/RNYMwa7Ww9Tfm6IHgPsf> [accessed 23.04.2025],

<https://pulawy.24wspolnota.pl/informacje-bialskie/nie-odnaleziono-cial-afrykanczykow-tragedia-czy-nielegalna-ucieczka/qaDEKuNrpNnBNBBxhRkF> [accessed 23.04.2025].

<sup>11</sup> In his account, the man refers to the 'Poland police'; we are keeping the original wording of his statement, while noting that it is the Border Guard that is the authority responsible for so-called returns to the border line – pushbacks.

discourse, increasingly overt in its xenophobic and racist tone, is often merely reproduced, or even strengthened, reinforcing the image of the 'other' as a threat.

## Demographics, trends and requests

Between January and March we registered distress calls from a total of 1371 persons, Out of those at least 170 were women and 68 were minors. In March only 897 individuals requested support<sup>12</sup> (75 women and 44 minors).

The majority of requests came from Belarus. Only 318 people made contact from the western side of the border barrier in the first quarter, including 12 women. As much as 311 distress calls from inside of Poland<sup>13</sup> took place in March when support was provided to 116 persons including two women and two minor boys, one of which traveled without a guardian. 75 field interventions were undertaken and 48 successful, meaning that the people on the move have been reached and assisted by the field teams.

Most common countries of origin were: Somalia (230), Ethiopia (145), Eritrea (92), Sudan and South Sudan (55), and Afghanistan (27).

85 of those supported requested to be assisted during declaring the will of applying for international protection to the Border Guard<sup>14</sup>. This is consistent with the tendency we

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<sup>12</sup> As of April 16th we are in the process of verifying data from the last three days of March. The final number might be slightly higher but the difference should not exceed 10 people.

<sup>13</sup> The number pertains to individuals who at the time of call were on the western side of the Polish border barrier. It does not include individuals who were on the Polish territory but on the eastern side of the fence.

<sup>14</sup> Assisted Asylum Request is an operational procedure adopted by NGOs and activists operating at the Polish–Belarusian border. Its aim is to reduce the risk of pushback from an applicant for international protection, and the process is based on an assumption known as 'protection through presence', according to which the presence of humanitarian organisations can deter the potential risk of abuse and, in this particular context, denial of access to asylum procedures. Migrants expressing their intention to seek protection to humanitarian workers are offered to be assisted by them when they meet with the Border Guard. Field workers and volunteers support asylum seekers during the process by providing information on the legal consequences of applying for refugee status in Poland, informing the Border Guard of their intention to apply for international protection, waiting with migrants for the Border Guard to arrive, documenting their willingness to submit an application and then accompanying them at subsequent stages. Each person seeking to apply for international protection also has the option of choosing a proxy to support them during the administrative procedure until the risk of pushback has been resolved. This is done by granting a power of attorney to a designated person.

have been observing since the last year’s spring when the higher and higher proportion of people, aside from the basic support,<sup>15</sup> also announced their intention to seek asylum in Poland, and were supported through the process. It is necessary to mention that although the procedure of ‘Assisted Asylum Request’ substantially reduces the risk of pushback it is never guaranteed that the person will not be illegally taken back to Belarus. In March 35 people reported being pushed back after having submitted themselves to the Border Guard and declaring intention to seek asylum in the presence of NGO representatives. Since the suspension of the right to seek asylum on the Belarus border on March 27th the situation has further worsened as we discussed in the next section of this report.

Additionally, access to the people requesting assistance remains restricted—On March 10, the ban on being present in the border zone adjacent to the state border (buffer zone) was once again extended for another 90 days. According to the latest regulation, the area now stretches for 78.29 km, which is longer than in previous months. A 59-kilometer section takes the form of a strip covering an area up to 200 meters west of the border line. Areas totaling 15 kilometers in length are located within nature reserves and are wider, extending about 2 kilometers into Polish territory. The widest part of the buffer zone measures approximately 4 by 4 kilometers.

<b>REQUESTS MARCH 2024</b>				
	<b>groups</b>	<b>individuals</b>	<b>minors (incl. UASC)</b>	<b>women (incl. pregnant)</b>
<b>Total</b>	430	897	44 (31)	75 (6)
<b>incl. in Poland</b>	123	311	7 (5)	11 (0)
<b>incl. from Belarus</b>	226	378	20 (18)	39 (6)
<b>incl. from Muharrama</b>	100	240	23 (12)	24 (0)

<sup>15</sup> Most commonly reported needs are: clothing, food, water, and first aid.

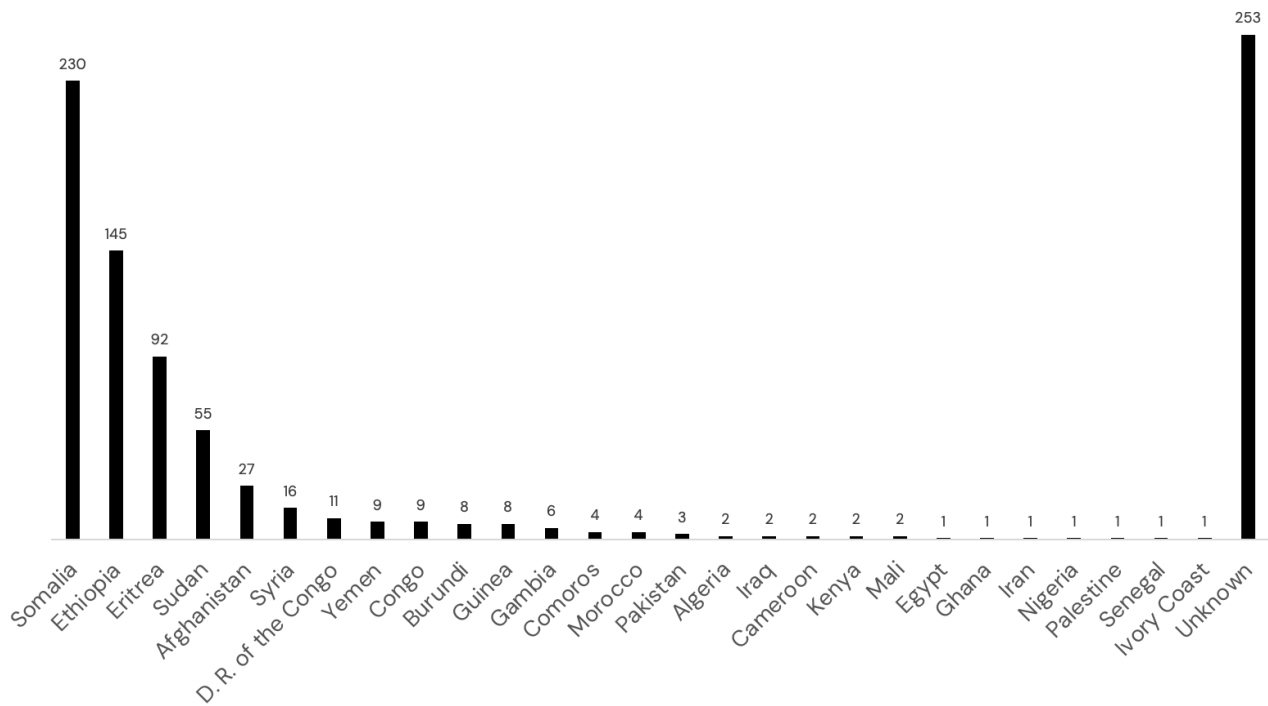


Fig. 2 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in March 2025

## Delivered assistance

<b>DELIVERED ASSISTANCE MARCH 2024</b>				
	<b>groups</b>	<b>individuals</b>	<b>minors</b>	<b>women</b>
<b>Total</b>	55	116	2	2
<b>Material aid</b>	51	109	1	0
<b>Legal aid</b>	47	96	2	1
<b>Medical aid</b>	2	2	1	2
<b>First aid</b>	26	51	0	0
<b>Hospital assistance</b>		19	0	0
<b>Number of interventions undertaken</b>		<b>75</b>		
<b>Number of successful interventions</b>		<b>48</b>		

## Pushbacks and Violence <sup>16</sup>

PUSHBACKS AND VIOLENCE MARCH 2024				
	groups	individuals	minors (incl. UASC)	women (incl. pregnant)
Reported pushbacks	123	298	15 (1)	20 (0)
Reported violence PL	57	118	9 (3)	4 (0)
Reported violence BY	66	161	18 (6)	11 (1)

In total in March we have registered 447 pushbacks reported by 298 people on the move. Podlaski Border Guard Regional Unit admitted to perpetrating 1383 pushbacks.<sup>17</sup>

BG [Border Guard] did not want to take the POA [Power of Attorney documents] or let him take it with him. They told us to bring them to the station. They handcuffed him in the back and put him in the back seat of the jeep.

In the morning I acquired information via phone call that he had signed a statement saying that he does not want to apply for international protection in Poland<sup>18</sup>.

Excerpt from the operational report from March. The person was given a POA by a man from Ethiopia to assist him in requesting international protection.

<sup>16</sup> The quotes used in this chapter come from interviews conducted with people on the move, reports from non-governmental organizations working on the Polish-Belarusian border, and excerpts from messages sent by individuals on the move to NGOs and advocates. Quotes from text messages and reports that are not direct testimonies are appropriately described. Translations of quotes from in-depth interviews are based on consecutive translations and, as such, inherently include a degree of interpreter interpretation. Translations of messages and reports were carried out to preserve the original tone of the statements. Dates, locations, and details that could identify individuals have been removed from this work to ensure the anonymity of our interlocutors. All names have been changed.

<sup>17</sup> Reply from Podlaski Border Guard Regional Unit to the inquiry in mode of access to public information requested on April 3rd 2025.

<sup>18</sup> In cases of people pushed back after an Assisted Asylum Request it is often that the Border Guard informs their representatives that they have changed their minds at the Border Guard station. However, interviews with people on the move provide evidence that the signature is often obtained by threat, use of force or manipulation. See: [I said: 'I want to stay in Poland' but they pushed me back](#), We Are Monitoring 2024, s.79, s.83, s. 88.

The man himself later confirmed that he was taken back to Belarus and reportedly beaten by Polish and Belarusian services:

[I] came back to Belarus. Beat me. Poland and Belarus beat me.

Several people reported experiencing violence from Belarusian services as a direct consequence of pushback, with one man reporting that his hand was broken as a result and the other relating that the Belarusians used 'shovel' and 'iron' on him, and that he was beaten in the face.



## Definitions

**Total requests** — The total number of reported groups/persons on the move, located in Poland, Belarus, Lithuania or Latvia. It does not consider persons staying in other European countries during the reporting period, as the report aims to illustrate the situation on the Polish–Belarusian border and the related migration route.

- **Groups** — number of groups that consist of individuals travelling together at the time of reporting and/or humanitarian/ legal/ medical intervention. These persons may or may not be related by family or social ties.
- **Individuals** — number of individual members of groups.

**Children** — all persons whose confirmed or declared age is 0–18 years.

**Unaccompanied minors** — Persons under the age of 18 travelling without an adult legal guardian, and therefore also minors travelling with older siblings or other relatives who are not their guardians under the law of Poland.

**Requests from Sistiema** — reports of groups/persons staying in the strip of land between the border fortifications of Poland and Belarus, commonly referred to as the *sistema*.

**Muharrama** — a term used by Arabic-speaking people on the move for the strip of land located between the Polish border barrier and the fortifications on the Belarusian side. *Muharrama* in Arabic means 'forbidden'. People on the move also use the longer term المنطقة المحرمة "forbidden zone". In Polish, this area is commonly referred to as *Sistiema*.

**Aid provided** — total number of people reached by organisations and entities operating in Podlasie who agreed to share information with us (GG + Ocalenie, unaffiliated residents and inhabitants of Podlasie, collectives, individuals, POPH)

- **Material aid** — support in the form of basic humanitarian aid packages – food, clothing, water, information. Including support at the hospital.
- **Legal aid** — support in procedures relating to the prevention of pushbacks and deportation and enabling the submission of an application for international protection. Including support at the hospital.
- **Medical aid** — professional support provided by medically qualified persons.
- **Medical first aid** — support provided by people with basic rescue training, such as washing wounds or dressing trench foot.
- **Aid in hospital** – material and/ or legal aid

**Reported pushbacks** — pushbacks reported to us during the reporting period by persons who experienced them directly or witnessed them directly.

**Reported violence PL** — reported cases of violence experienced directly by persons on the road, the perpetrators of which, according to the victims' accounts, were members of the Polish uniformed services: Border Guard, Police, Polish Army, Territorial Defence Forces.

**Reported violence BY** — forms of violence directly experienced by persons on the road, the perpetrators of which, according to the victims' accounts, were people belonging to the Belarusian uniformed services.

**Number of interventions** — number of humanitarian interventions undertaken by field teams in response to a report of a need for assistance or a chance encounter of persons on the road in a border area.

**Number of deceased** — number of persons on the move who died from August 2021 on the Polish side of the Polish-Belarusian border and those cases from the Belarusian side of which we are aware. The data will be verified and supplemented. We expect that there may be data on more deaths from the period considered here as well.

**Number of missing** — persons whose disappearance has been reported by next of kin or companions on the road, with a declared lack of contact of at least two days.

**Injuries from the wall** — injuries which, according to the declaration of persons on the road, occurred while crossing the security at the Polish-Belarusian border.

**Persons from vulnerable groups** — vulnerable persons on the following grounds:

Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- minors</li><li>- unaccompanied minors</li><li>- persons over 45 years of age</li><li>- senior citizens aged 60 and over</li></ul>
Medical reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- pregnancy</li><li>- chronic illness</li><li>- disability</li></ul>

Protection Needs*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- victims of sexual violence</li><li>- victims or persons subjected to gender-based violence</li><li>- victims of torture</li><li>- victims of human trafficking</li></ul>
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\* virtually impossible to identify at this stage