

# A SUMMARY OF THE YEAR 2024 AT THE POLISH-BELARUSIAN BORDER

**WAW** WE ARE  
**WAW** MONITORING

**GRUPA GRANICA**

# A summary of the year 2024 at the Polish–Belarusian border

Warsaw, March 2025

**In 2024, we recorded 3183 pushbacks from Poland to Belarus, affecting a total of 1555 people on the move.**

**Among them, at least 301 people were from vulnerable groups.**

**165 people experienced pushbacks despite expressing intention to apply for asylum in Poland in the presence of the BG while assisted by NGO representatives.**

**487 people reported having experienced pushback more than once.**

**172 people reported that they required medical care during or immediately before the pushback. 13 people had previously been hospitalised.**

**703 people reported experiencing violence by the Polish border services, with 629 of these incidents occurring during pushbacks.**

**676 people reported experiencing violence by the Belarusian border service.**

**In 2024:**

**5615 people on the move asked Grupa Granica for support.**

**There were 1419 humanitarian interventions during which 3408 people were successfully assisted. Among them were:**

- 356 women,**
- 249 children (226 unaccompanied minors).**

**1622 people expressed their wish to apply for international protection in front of the BG assisted by NGO representatives.**

**From January 2024 to December 2024, at least 15 people died in the Polish–Belarusian border area.**

**In total, we know of at least 90 people who died between August 2021 and March 2025.**



## Introduction

The following summary of 2024 events on the Polish–Belarusian, was compiled by the We Are Monitoring Association thanks to the involvement of people and institutions, most of whom operate in an informal solidarity network called Grupa Granica. GG is a horizontal, independent coalition bringing together experts, non-governmental organizations, activists and residents of Podlasie, all involved in acts of solidarity and monitoring activities on the Polish–Belarusian border, since August 2021.

The most important events of the past year have been gathered in a short timeline followed by the quantitative summary of trends and dynamics on the border. Since December 2023, we have been observing the actions of the new government. Any expectations for the end to repression against civil society and decriminalization of solidarity were quickly dashed by the resumption of the “case of the Hajnówka five” now facing trial for providing assistance to the family of nine in the spring of 2022. The initial talk of 'humanitarian pushbacks' and attempts to improve the image of the Border Guard, quickly gave way to xenophobic rhetoric further fueling a sense of threat from migration. This was particularly visible during European Parliament and Presidential election campaigns. The second half of the year is marked by the state's abandonment of even a semblance of rule of law and humanitarianism regarding people crossing Poland–Belarus border. Exemption of services from criminal liability for improper use of weapons, the introduction of a buffer zone at the border, the announcement of the widely criticized Migration Strategy and, finally, the commencement of work on a regulation (currently in effect) allowing for the temporary, territorial suspension of the right to seek asylum in Poland.

In August 2021, 32 people from Afghanistan crossed the Polish–Belarusian border in Usnarz Górne, where they were detained by Polish services. Their applications for international protection were ignored and they were trapped in the border zone. Polish authorities prevented them from entering the country, while the Belarussian services blocked their return. For over two months, these people were deprived of access to water, food, medical care and shelter. Finally, they were pushed to the Belarussian side – this was the first, and therefore symbolic, pushback on the Polish–Belarusian border. Now, three and a half years later, its circumstances are being investigated by the European Court of Human Rights. Since then, 11,000 pushbacks were reported by people migrating through this border. Polish Border Guard admitted to 14,266 pushbacks in 2024 alone. Reports of 13 pushbacks, transcribed from accounts of migrants themselves, can be read in the study

I want to stay in Poland' but they pushed me back: 12 months of the new government on the Polish–Belarusian border published on December 13.

*They're like savages, if I'm being honest. And if there's, like, any legal measures that could be taken against them, I really, like, wish that [...]. Or if a legal measure is not possible, I will be very glad if there's some kind of awareness, if there's some kind of awareness being created for [about] this, for the people.*

Kiras from Ethiopia about the actions of the Border Guard. Excerpt from the interview.



# The Timeline of Events

## JANUARY

6.01 8.01 15.01 16.01 18.01

**ON JANUARY 6**, Belarusian media reported<sup>1</sup> the death of a Yemeni man on the eastern side of the border barrier.<sup>2</sup>

**ON JANUARY 8**, the funeral of Abdullahi Abdirashid Mohamed took place at the Muslim cemetery in Bohoniki. The man was 25 years old and came from Somalia. He died on October 22, 2023 in a Border Guard vehicle.<sup>3</sup>

**ON JANUARY 15**, the District Prosecutor's Office in Hajnówka announced a decision (from December 2023) to change the charges brought against four people providing humanitarian aid on the Polish-Belarusian border in March 2022. It also announced that charges had been brought against a fifth person – a resident of Podlasie.<sup>4</sup>

**ON JANUARY 16**, the spokesman for the District Prosecutor's Office in Warsaw, Prosecutor Szymon Banna, announced the initiation of proceedings in the case of overstepping of authority by the Border Guard during the events in 2021 in Usnarz Górny, when group of people, mainly from Afghanistan, were trapped between the cordons of the Polish and Belarusian Border Guards for over two months.<sup>5</sup>

1 State Border Committee of the Republic of Belarus, *Polscy Strażnicy Graniczni wyrzucili dwóch uchodźców na granicę, jeden z nich zginął*, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

2 Border Death Monitoring Group, *Lista Zmarłych*, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

3 A. Rodowicz, *Nowa władza, stara bieda, cicha nadzieja. Pogrzeb Abdullahima w Bohonikach*, OKO.press, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

4 Szpila Collective, *Sprawa #H5, Przebieg zdarzeń*, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

5 Polish Press Agency, *Prokuratura prowadzi śledztwo w*

**ON JANUARY 18**, the Regional Court in Białystok issued a judgment in the case of a complaint by a Syrian citizen about the act of detention and forced return to the border line (pushback), which took place on May 16, 2023, in the area subject to the Border Guard commander in Białowieża. It was yet another instance where the Court accepted the foreigner's account as a sufficient basis for recognizing that the border crossing and pushback took place. It emphasized that the fact that Border Guard does not keep records of forcibly returned migrants cannot be interpreted to the disadvantage of the persons affected by those actions.<sup>6</sup>

**IN JANUARY**, Niech Żyją! coalition, in cooperation with the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland, published the report "Concertina Kills" devoted to the impact of razor wire entanglements on animals living on the border. The report contains extensive photographic documentation of concertina razor wire along the border with Belarus. It is overgrown, barely visible, and therefore poses an even greater threat to animals that get stuck and die in the wire fences. The authors argue that institutions responsible for animal welfare and its monitoring do not fulfill their task when it comes to animals mutilated by concertina. They recommend dismantling the wire and replacing it with a tool less harmful to animals.<sup>7</sup>

*sprawie przekroczenia uprawnień przez funkcjonariuszy Straży Granicznej w Usnarzu Górnym*, 2024, [access date: 25/02/2025].

6 Central Database of Administrative Court Rulings, *Wyrok WSA w Białymstoku z dn. 18.01.2023 r., sygn. IISA/Bk 664/23* [access date: 25/02/2025].

7 Fundacja Niech Żyją!, *Raport Concertina zabija*

## FEBRUARY

26.02 28.02

**ON FEBRUARY 26**, the Polish Border Guard signed contracts for the construction of electronic security systems for the Polish-Belarusian border on the Bug, Svisloch and Istoczanka rivers. The total cost of the investment exceeds PLN 364 million.<sup>8</sup> This is the next stage of expanding the border barrier. The fence, 5.5 meters high and 187 km long, was built in 2022, topped with razor wire and supported by a 206 km long electronic protection.<sup>9</sup> In the autumn of 2023, it was reinforced with another line, of razor wire (concertina).<sup>10</sup> In 2024, further works were carried out on the sections of the border running along the rivers. Both investments are co-financed by the European Union: Financial Support Instrument for Border Management and Visa Policy under the Integrated Border Management Fund for 2021-2027.<sup>11</sup>

*2023-2024, 2024* [access date: 25/02/2025].

8 Border Guard Headquarters, K. Szwed, *Zapora elektroniczna na rzekach granicznych z Białorusią*, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

9 The last section of the electronic barrier was commissioned on June 15, 2023.

10 M. Choładowski, *Kryzys na granicy polsko-białoruskiej. Pogranicznicy: Plot nie wystarcza, konieczny drut żyłkowy*, Gazeta Wyborcza, 2023 [access date: 25/02/2025].

11 Department of European Funds of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, *Instrument Wsparcia Finansowego na rzecz Zarządzania Granicami i Polityki Wizowej w ramach Funduszu Zintegrowanego Zarządzania Granicami 2021-2027*, 2021 [access date: 25/02/2025].

## MARCH

**ON FEBRUARY 28**, the trial of Ieva Raubisko began in Latvia. A year earlier, Raubisko called an ambulance and border services to a group of Syrians, and also, as their representative, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to issue a decision prohibiting their removal from the territory of Latvia (to Belarus), thus temporarily securing their stay in the territory of the European Union.<sup>12</sup> In order to make sure that Syrians don't experience another pushback, Ieva entered Latvia's emergency zone (similar to the one functioning in Poland in 2021-2022). She was accused of organizing illegal border crossings and faces up to two years in prison.

**IN EARLY MARCH**, the Regional Administrative Court considered two more complaints about pushbacks by the Polish Border Guard, carried out in the spring of 2023. Citizens of Ethiopia and Afghanistan were turned back at the border despite injuries that prevented them from walking. In both cases, the court, in a non-final judgment, found the Border Guard's conduct to be improper.<sup>13</sup>

12 Front Line Defenders (FLD), *Refugee rights defender charged for assisting Syrian asylum seekers at the Latvia-Belarus border*, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

13 Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, *Mężczyzna ze złamaną nogą wywieziony na granicę w bagażniku – kolejny wyrok stwierdzający bezskuteczność pushbacków*, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

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**ON MARCH 11**, the Belarusian Border Guard reported finding the body of a Syrian citizen near a gate in the Polish border fence. The man was buried in Minsk.<sup>14</sup>

**ON MARCH 14**, the Polish border guard found the body of a 32-year-old Pakistani near the town of Soroczka Nózka. The day before, his family and companions contacted one of the humanitarian organizations informing them about his poor condition. The organization failed to find the man in time. The circumstances of his death are being investigated by the District Prosecutor's Office in Suwałki.

**ON MARCH 14**, the head of the District Prosecutor's Office in Hajnówka, Jan Andrejczuk, informed on the case of a human skull found in February 2024. Initial expert examination showed that it most likely belonged to a person from a Middle Eastern country. The case is being investigated by the District Prosecutor's Office in Hajnówka.<sup>15</sup>

**ON APRIL 8**, Grupa Granica received information about the death of a woman, probably from Ethiopia. The woman was reported to have died two days earlier, from hunger, in Muharrama, on the eastern side of the border barrier. The information was provided by people who witnessed her death.<sup>16</sup>

14 Border Death Monitoring Group, [Lista Zmarłych](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

15 W. Stelmach, [Zwłoki migranta znaleziono przy granicy z Białorusią](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

16 Border Death Monitoring Group, [Lista Zmarłych](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

**ON APRIL 9**, the Belarusian Border Guard reported finding a body at the border barrier, near the large animal gate. According to the report, the deceased man was from Afghanistan. He was 36 years old.

**ON APRIL 21**, a Syrian citizen reported the death of his brother, which occurred on April 2, 2024, in Muharrama. According to the report, both men experienced a brutal pushback, during which they were beaten, their food taken away, and their phones destroyed. A day and a half later, one of them died. The other man buried his brother in the forest and marked the grave with a stone inscribed with personal information. Because his phone was destroyed, he was unable to mark the location of the burial. The deceased was 28 years old.<sup>17</sup>

**IN MAY**, the "case of the five" began. The District Prosecutor's Office in Hajnówka filed an indictment against five people who provided humanitarian aid to a nine-person Iraqi family with small children and an Egyptian citizen on the Polish-Belarusian border in March 2022.<sup>18</sup> Initially, all of them have been charged with the crime of facilitating unlawful stay in the territory of the Republic of Poland.

17 Ibidem.

18 Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights [hfhrp] [Prokuratura Rejonowa w Hajnówce skierowała do sądu akt oskarżenia przeciwko pięciu osobom, które udzielały pomocy humanitarnej rodzinie z Iraku i obywatelowi Egiptu na pograniczu polsko-białoruskim](#), Instagram, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

**ON MAY 7**, the Belarusian Border Guard reported another dead person found two days earlier at the Polish-Belarusian border. The circumstances of the death are unknown.<sup>19</sup>

**ON MAY 14**, the Council of the European Union approved the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. It was already accepted by the European Parliament on April 9. The vote in Brussels concluded a long legislative process. Most of the regulations apply from 2026. Poland voted against the regulations, arguing that they do not correspond to the specific situation of countries bordering Belarus and Russia and do not ensure an appropriate balance between responsibility and solidarity.

**ON MAY 15**, human remains were found near the border fence on the Belarusian side. They probably belonged to 55-year-old Issam from Yemen. According to information provided by his 14-year-old son, in the winter of 2023 and 2024, he, his father and sister were pushed back by Polish services. On January 6, they were hiding on the Belarusian side and that is when they separated and never found each other again. The daughter had initiated a search, as a result of which the remains were found four months later.<sup>20</sup>

19 Border Death Monitoring Group, [Lista Zmarłych](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

20 Ibidem.

**ON MAY 17**, information about the death of a man, probably from Syria. According to his travel companions, who reported the event, the man died on the Belarusian side of the border, where he was then buried in the forest. At the request of the family, the identity of the deceased was not disclosed.<sup>21</sup>

**ON MAY 28**, a group of several dozen people attempted to cross the border barrier. As a result of the incident, a Polish soldier got seriously wounded.<sup>22</sup>

**ON MAY 29**, Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Minister of Interior and Administration Tadeusz Siemoniak and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz visited Dubicze Cerkiewne, where they met with the command of the uniformed services.<sup>23</sup> They announced the restoration of the buffer zone.<sup>24</sup> In the evening of the same day, a draft regulation appeared on the website of the Government Legislation Centre. It contained a list of municipalities (27 localities) where the entry ban will apply.<sup>25</sup>

21 Ibidem.

22 Border Guard Headquarters, K. Grzech, [Atak cudzoziemców na polsko-białoruskiej granicy](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

23 Portal TVN24, [Będzie strefa buforowa, na miejscu "najbardziej doświadczeni komandosi"](#), Premier i ministrowie na granicy, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

24 M. Chrzczonowicz, [Tusk chce powrotu do „strefy buforowej” na granicy polsko-białoruskiej. Czego nie zobaczymy?](#), OKO.press, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

25 M. Chrzczonowicz, [To nie będzie 200 metrów. Jest projekt rozporządzenia o „strefie buforowej” przy granicy](#), OKO.press, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

## JUNE

6.06 7.06 9.06 12.06 19.06 29.06

**ON JUNE 5**, it was revealed that a few weeks earlier, three soldiers had been detained for using firearms on the Polish–Belarusian border.<sup>26</sup> Two of them were accused of exceeding their authority. After this information, Prime Minister Donald Tusk obliged the Minister of National Defense, Władysław Kosiniak–Kamysz, to prepare changes to the law: “The provisions of the law should clearly support the Polish soldier when he uses weapons in self–defense and in defense of Polish territory near the border. He must have a sense of legal security”.<sup>27</sup>

**ON JUNE 6**, the General Command of the Armed Forces informed that the life of the soldier injured on May 28 could not be saved, despite immediate first aid and the efforts of doctors in the days following the incident.<sup>28</sup>

**ON JUNE 7**, the Border Guard for the first time officially admitted in a press release the use of smoothbore weapons on June 5–6, 2024.<sup>29</sup>

26 M. Wyrwał, E. Żemła, [Polscy żołnierze zakuci w kajdanki na granicy z Białorusią. W wojsku wrze](#), Portal Onet, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

27 Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers, [Żołnierze i funkcjonariusze muszą czuć wsparcie państwa](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025]

28 General Command of the Armed Forces [ @DGeneralneRSZ ], [„... krwi własnej ani życia nie szczędzić” Z przykrością informujemy, że 6 czerwca w godzinach popołudniowych w Wojskowym Instytucie Medycznym w Warszawie, otoczony wsparciem rodziny i żołnierzy zmarł ugodzony nożem żołnierz 1 Brygady Pancerniej](#), [X], 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

29 Podlaski Oddział Straży Granicznej, K. Zdanowicz, [Koniec tygodnia na polsko–białoruskiej granicy](#), 2024 [data dostępu: 25.02.2025].

**ON JUNE 9**, the European Parliament elections took place. The preceding campaign was dominated by racist and xenophobic rhetoric from politicians from the largest parties. The issue of migration on the Polish–Belarusian border was brought to the forefront.

**ON JUNE 12**, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration signed a regulation on the no–entry zone at the Polish–Belarusian border. The so–called Buffer Zone came into effect the following day.

**ON JUNE 19**, another victim of the Polish–Belarusian border regime was identified. The family of the deceased asked not to disclose his details to the public. The man went missing in January of 2024 and was from Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

**ON JUNE 19**, Sejm: the lower chamber of Polish parliament adopted a draft law exempting soldiers from criminal liability in the event of exceeding their authority to use direct coercion or firearms. It also enables the participation of the Armed Forces in military operations conducted in peacetime.<sup>31</sup>

30 Border Death Monitoring Group, [Lista Zmarłych](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

31 Ministry of National Defence, [Projekt ustawy o zmianie niektórych ustaw w celu usprawnienia działań Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Policji oraz Straży Granicznej na wypadek zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

**ON JUNE 19**, a woman with an eye injury caused by a gunshot was admitted to hospital in Hajnówka. Egala Association reported the incident.<sup>32</sup> The woman reported that she was walking along the fence on the Belarusian side, looking for someone who would share food with her, when she suddenly heard a shot. According to her it was fired by one of two uniformed people on the Polish side of the fence.

**ON JUNE 29**, during a night intervention in the forest, an NGO workers encountered an armed civilian. Posts about militia groups of masked people whose goal is to stop people from crossing the border into Poland started to appear on social media along with invitations to join them.

*I was coming back from the forest with a man from [...], we were going to the place where the Border Guard was supposed to pick him up. Suddenly a man dressed in camouflage emerged, he had a gun with him. The light flashed in our eyes, his hand on the holster, he asked: *Swój czy obcy?* [Ours or foreigners?]*

*There were many of us, activists, white people, and the man from [...] was hidden at the back and that was the only reason why we managed to avoid problems. One of the colleagues came back to talk to this civilian and heard that he was afraid for the safety of his family and*

32 K. Rochowicz, [35–latka z urazem oka na granicy polsko–białoruskiej. “Widziała osoby w mundurach”. Mamy komentarz](#), Portal Gazeta.pl, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

*his mission was to “catch the wogs”. He said that when he came across larger groups, then he called the guard, but when the group was smaller, he stopped them himself.*

Excerpt from the field intervention report, June 2024

**ON JUNE 29**, a racist incident recorded by one of the organizations operating on the border. They received a message from a man who was beaten by an unknown perpetrator while on his way to a center for foreigners. The physical attack was reportedly accompanied by racist insults.

*On Thursday evening I was travelling from the fingerprint processing centre in Poland to the camp where I was supposed to stay. When I tried to board the train to the town where the camp is located, I was attacked by a white man loudly saying in English: “blacks, blacks, refugees”. He hit me in the right eye and I fell to the ground. The railway security immediately called an ambulance and I was admitted to the hospital. Upon my arrival at the hospital I was X–rayed. The doctors told me that my right finger was broken and that my eye needed surgery. After this incident I felt uncertain and scared to leave the camp.*

Fragment of a message from a man beaten on his way to the center after applying for international protection, June 2024.

## JULY

11.07 12.07

**ON JULY 11**, the lower chamber of Polish parliament: Sejm, debated the act on the use of weapons (full name: Government draft 'Act amending certain acts to improve the activities of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, the Police and the Border Guard in the event of a threat to state security').<sup>33</sup>

**ON JULY 12**, the joint parliamentary committees introduced their amendments, which were then voted on.<sup>34</sup>

**ON SEPTEMBER 1**, a woman named Solafa died in a Belarusian hospital after reportedly spending six days in the border zone. The woman grew up in Syria and was of Kurdish origin. She was 28 years old.<sup>35</sup>

**ON SEPTEMBER 10**, the Minister of Interior and Administration signed a regulation<sup>36</sup> extending the Buffer Zone by another 90 days. The regulation came into effect on September 11. Non-governmental organizations have been protesting against the restrictions for months,

33 Ministry of National Defence, [Rządowy projekt ustawy o zmianie niektórych ustaw w celu usprawnienia działań Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Policji oraz Straży Granicznej na wypadek zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

34 M. Chrzczonowicz, [Można strzelać. Sejm przyjął ustawę o użyciu broni. Co wprowadzono?](#), OKO.press, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

35 Border Death Monitoring Group, [Lista Zmarłych](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

36 DJournal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, [Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 9 września 2024 r. w sprawie wprowadzenia czasowego zakazu przebywania na określonym obszarze w strefie nadgranicznej przyległej do granicy państwowej z Republiką Białorusi \(Dz. U. 2024 poz. 1345\)](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

## SEPTEMBER

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arguing that the possibility of obtaining permission to enter the zone, declared by the government, was a fiction.<sup>37</sup>

**ON SEPTEMBER 11**, a press conference of the Border Guard, Police and Polish Army was held in Białystok, for the 90 days of the buffer zone. The spokeswoman of the Podlaskie Border Guard Unit, Border Guard Major Katarzyna Zdanowicz, stated: "We registered over 6,170 attempted illegal border crossings, while in the same period prior to the introduction of the zone, we registered over 17,000 such attempts".<sup>38</sup> At the same time, at the end of August, non-governmental organizations were already noticing a renewed increase in the number of requests for support on the Polish side of the fence. They emphasized the selective treatment of data by the Border Guard, which once again failed to consider the occurrence of other factors affecting the number of crossings during that period, such as the Chinese-Belarusian military exercises held between July 8 and 19 on the Belarusian border.

**ON SEPTEMBER 13**, a meeting of the inter-ministerial Migration Team took place,<sup>39</sup>

37 Doctors Without Borders, [Lekarze bez Granic wzywają do zapewnienia pomocy potrzebującym na granicy białoruskiej](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

M. Chołodowski, [Rząd zadowolony ze strefy buforowej. Grupa Granica sprzeciwia się przemocy i bezprawiu. Gazeta Wyborcza](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

38 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, [Podsumowanie 90 dni funkcjonowania strefy buforowej na granicy z Białorusią](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

39 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration,

## OCTOBER

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where the current status of work on the Polish Migration Strategy for 2025–2030 was presented. The meeting gathered representatives of the Ministry of Interior and Administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy. Due to the governmental character event, representatives of the social side were not included.

**ON SEPTEMBER 23**, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement on the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border, critical of the Polish government.<sup>40</sup> The document was preceded by a visit by representatives of the Council of Europe to Poland on 16–18 September (they also held meetings with human rights activists) and their exchange of letters, with the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Senate, on the situation at the border. Commissioner Michael O'Flaherty noted the government's efforts to improve working conditions for officers. At the same time, he clearly indicated areas in which Poland violates international standards regarding the treatment of foreigners seeking protection, and presented recommendations. He pointed out that the regulations introduced in 2021, creating a legal basis for the practice of pushbacks to Belarus, do not ensure full respect for international human rights standards, including the European Convention on

[W MSWiA o polityce migracyjnej](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

40 Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights, [Poland needs to respect its international human rights obligations on the Belarusian border, says Commissioner O'Flaherty](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

Human Rights (consideration of the individual situation of each foreigner). In the statement, the Commissioner also calls for dialogue with experts from social organizations and an end to the criminalization of humanitarian aid.

**ON OCTOBER 2**, the Office of the Ombudsman published further correspondence between the Ombudsman and Border Guard Commander General Robert Bagan, following the Ombudsman's visits to selected Border Guard outposts on the Polish-Belarusian border. The visits confirmed earlier reports of Border Guards preventing legal representatives from taking part in administrative procedures conducted against their principals. Failing to deliver information and updates on case status was also mentioned among other things. Moreover, as the Ombudsman noted, officers question the credibility of declarations of intent to apply for international protection in the Republic of Poland, which foreigners carry with them when detained in a paper form. Challenging these declarations usually results in a pushback. The Ombudsman once again reminded that the expression of the foreigner's intention to apply for international protection has consequences in the form of the Border Guard's obligation to enable them to effectively submit a written application for international protection as soon as possible and to register such an application.

**ON OCTOBER 8**, according to a report by the Belarusian services, an ambulance was called to three people from Iran on the eastern side of the border barrier. The group included two

## OCTOBER

10.10

brothers, one of whom died after the arrival of Belarusian border guards.<sup>41</sup>

**ON OCTOBER 10**, the Senate adopted a law authorizing Poland's ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons against Enforced Disappearance<sup>42</sup>. The president signed it on October 18. The ratification of the convention should force state authorities to investigate the practice of pushbacks as a cause of enforced disappearances. Undocumented detention and pushbacks to Belarus, violating the principle of non-refoulement, significantly increase the risk of disappearance.

**IN OCTOBER** in line with the government's earlier announcements,<sup>43</sup> vertical poles of the border fence were reinforced with horizontal elements intended to prevent them from being bent by car jacks.<sup>44</sup>

**ON OCTOBER 12**, during the KO convention,

41 Border Death Monitoring Group, [Lista Zmarłych](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

42 The International Convention defines the crime of enforced disappearance as "the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person.

43 Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Parliamentary Committees, [Pełny zapis przebiegu posiedzenia Komisji Administracji i Spraw Wewnętrznych \(nr 6\) oraz Komisji Obrony Narodowej \(nr 9\) z dn. 20.03.2024](#) [access date: 25/02/2025].

44 Ibidem.

12.10

Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced a draft version of migration strategy for Poland. Its most controversial part was a temporary territorial suspension of the right to asylum.<sup>45</sup> The announcement sparked criticism from human rights defenders,<sup>46</sup> other parties in the government coalition,<sup>47</sup> and representatives of the Belarusian opposition, fearing that the suspension would also affect Belarusian citizens fleeing the regime of Alexander Lukashenko.<sup>48</sup>

**ON OCTOBER 15**, the document *Regaining Control. Ensuring Security. A Comprehensive and Responsible Migration Strategy for Poland for 2025–2030* was presented.<sup>49</sup> The strategy was adopted through a split decision with four ministers from the Left party objecting against it. On their social media, the ministers stated that the direct reason for voting against the strategy was the rejection of the amendment on the need to comply with the Constitution.<sup>50</sup>

45 Donald Tusk – official profile, [Donald Tusk: Konwencja Koalicji Obywatelskiej](#) (the topic of migration appears from 33:40 to 39:10), YouTube, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

46 [List organizacji pozarządowych do premiera Tuska z dn. 14.10.2024](#) [access date: 25/02/2025].

47 Polish Press Agency, [Hołownia: prawo do azylu jest w prawie międzynarodowym „święte”](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

M. Dolak, [Fala komentarzy po zapowiedzi Tuska. Głos oburzenia z Lewicy](#), Portal Wirtualna Polska, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

48 pl.belsat.eu, [Łatuszka ma nadzieję, że Białorusini wygnani przez Łukaszenkę do Polski będą mogli liczyć na status uchodźcy](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

49 Chancellery of the Prime Minister, ["Odzyskać kontrolę. Zapewnić bezpieczeństwo" – strategia migracyjna na lata 2025 – 2030](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

50 Anna Maria Żukowska, [\[@AM\\_Zukowska\]](#), [Została](#)

## NOVEMBER

17–18.10

**ON OCTOBER 17–18**, the European Union Council summit took place in Brussels. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk presented the government's position on the direction of European migration policy. At the meeting, Tusk spoke of migration and migrants as a threat: *European leaders are increasingly aware that the methods we have used so far, including the migration pact, do not respond to the threat posed by mass, illegal migration.*<sup>51</sup>

**ON OCTOBER 23**, Belarusian services reported finding a man's body at the animal gate near the village of Kamieńsk close to the Polish town of Czeremcha. According to the Belarusian services and the video material they published, the deceased man was dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, while his body was covered in bruises and dried blood. Personal details of the man were not provided. He came from Bangladesh and was 43 years old.<sup>52</sup>

**ON NOVEMBER 16**, the Belarusian Border Guard informed that the body of a person from Yemen was found the day before in the swamps of the Svislotsk region.<sup>53</sup>

[przyjęta ze Zdaniemami Odrębnymi czworga ministrów konstytucyjnych @ Lewica](#), Portal X, 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

51 Chancellery of the Prime Minister, [Jednomyslność Rady Europejskiej w sprawie migracji](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

52 Border Death Monitoring Group, [Lista Zmarłych](#), 2024 [access date: 25/02/2025].

53 Ibidem.

## DECEMBER

28.11

**ON NOVEMBER 28**, workers repairing the Polish border fence found the body of a "non-white" man. There were no documents, only a destroyed phone. The prosecutor's office in Suwałki determined that he was probably a 28-year-old Eritrean.<sup>54</sup>

**ON DECEMBER 11**, a draft act introducing an amendment to the currently applicable Act on granting protection was published on the website of the Government Legislation Center<sup>55</sup>. The amendment would allow for the introduction of a temporary, territorial suspension of the possibility of submitting an application for international protection in the event of "instrumentalization of migration" by Belarus or Russia. The "suspension" would be introduced by a regulation of the Council of Ministers.

54 Ibidem.

55 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, [Projekt ustawy o zmianie ustawy o udzielaniu cudzoziemcom ochrony na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej](#), 2024, [access date: 25/02/2025].



# The Border in Numbers

Fig. 1. The border in numbers  
October 2021 - December 2024

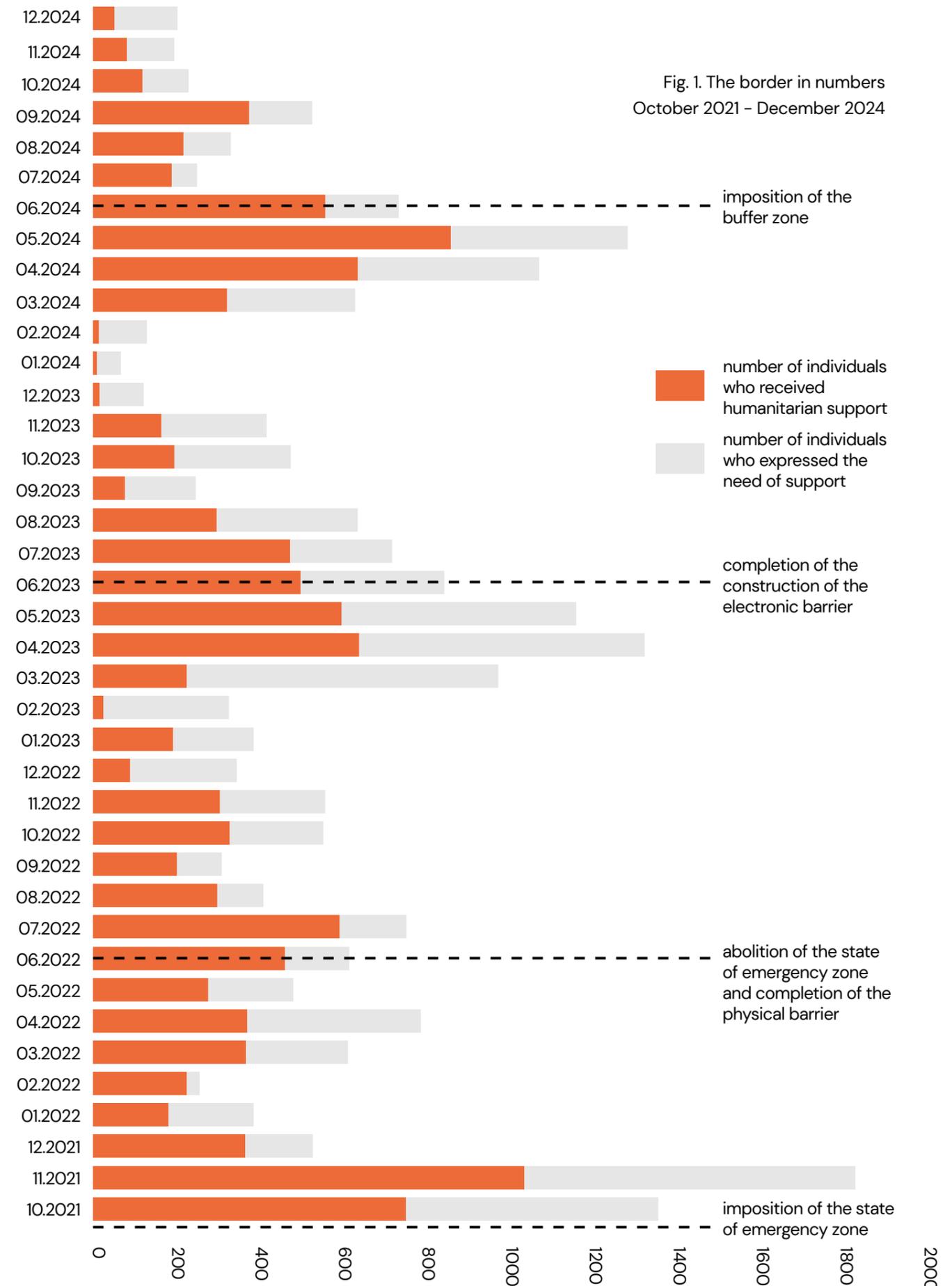


Fig. 2. Demographics of individuals expressing a need for support in 2024.

According to the methodology we adopted, underage women are included in both the "women" and "minors" categories.

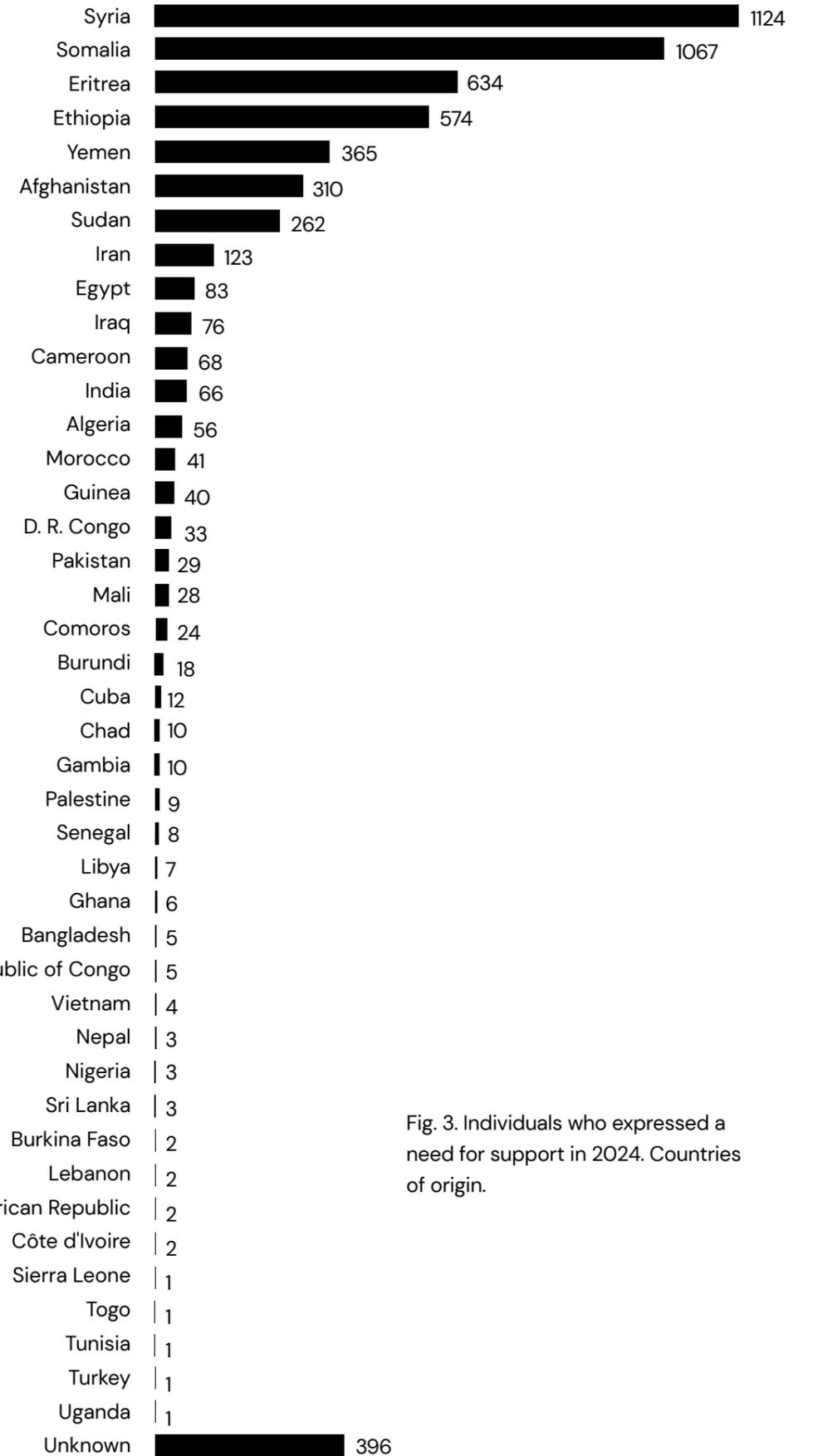
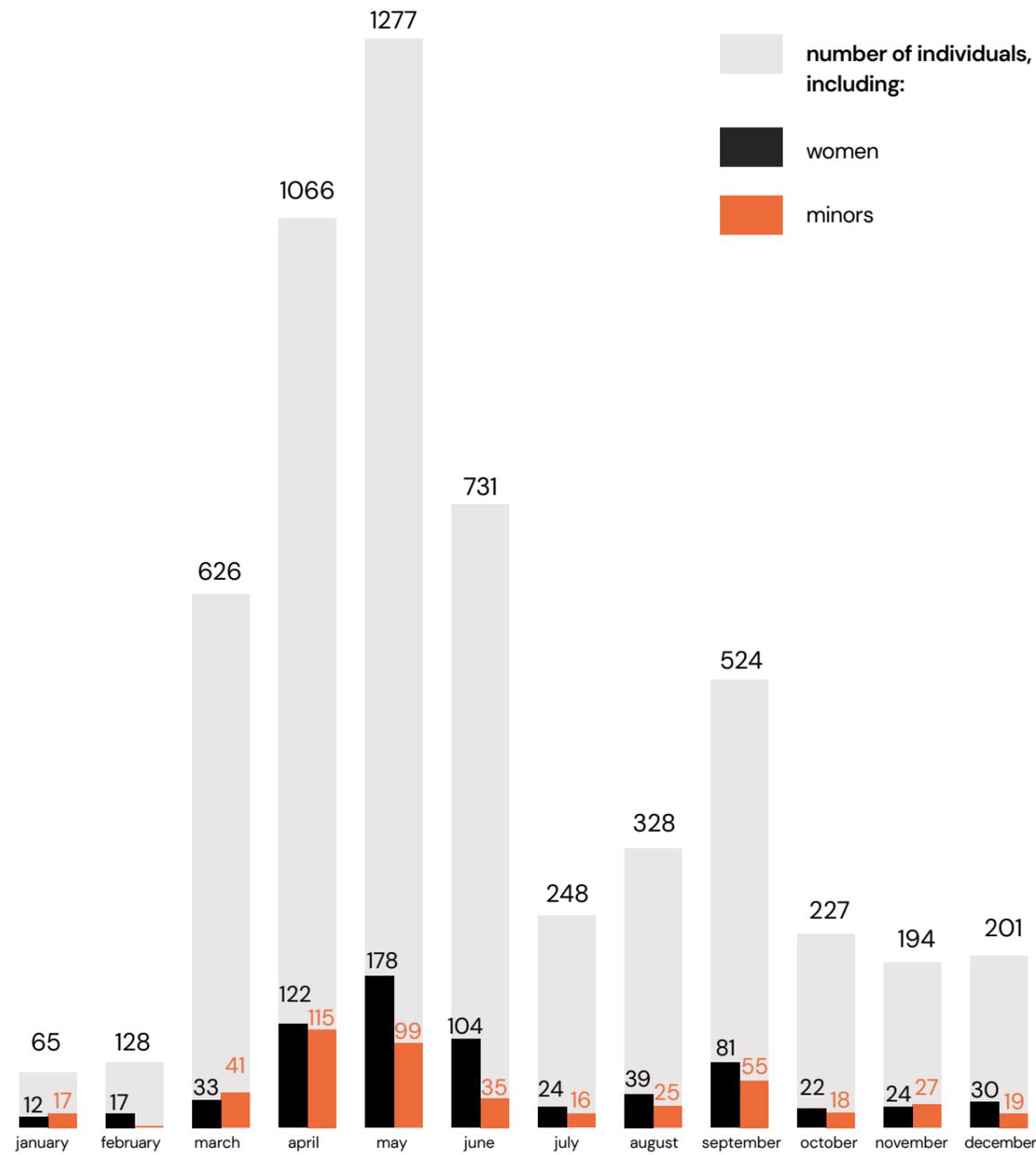


Fig. 3. Individuals who expressed a need for support in 2024. Countries of origin.

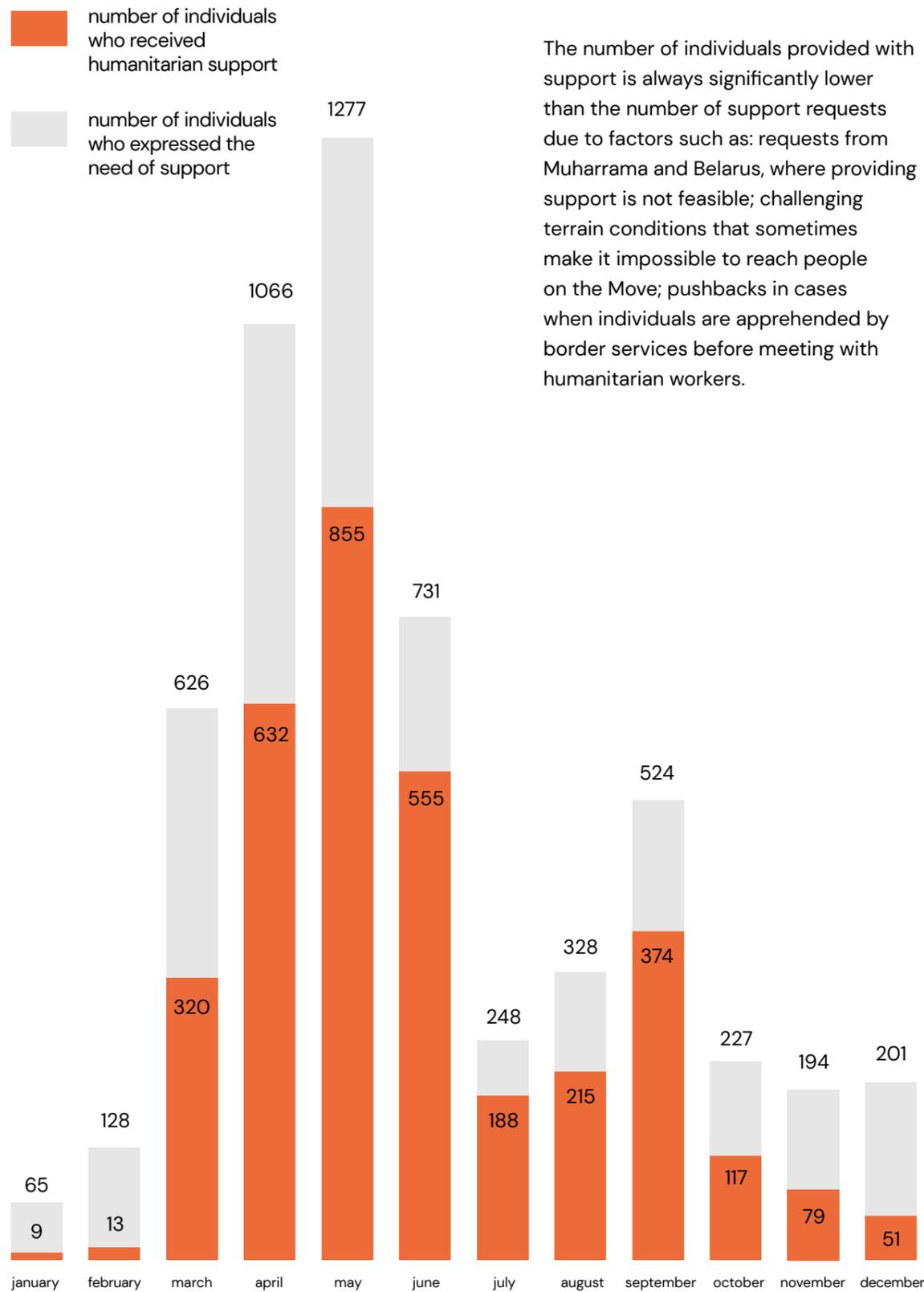


Fig. 4. Number of individuals provided with humanitarian support in 2024

The number of individuals provided with support is always significantly lower than the number of support requests due to factors such as: requests from Muharrama and Belarus, where providing support is not feasible; challenging terrain conditions that sometimes make it impossible to reach people on the Move; pushbacks in cases when individuals are apprehended by border services before meeting with humanitarian workers.

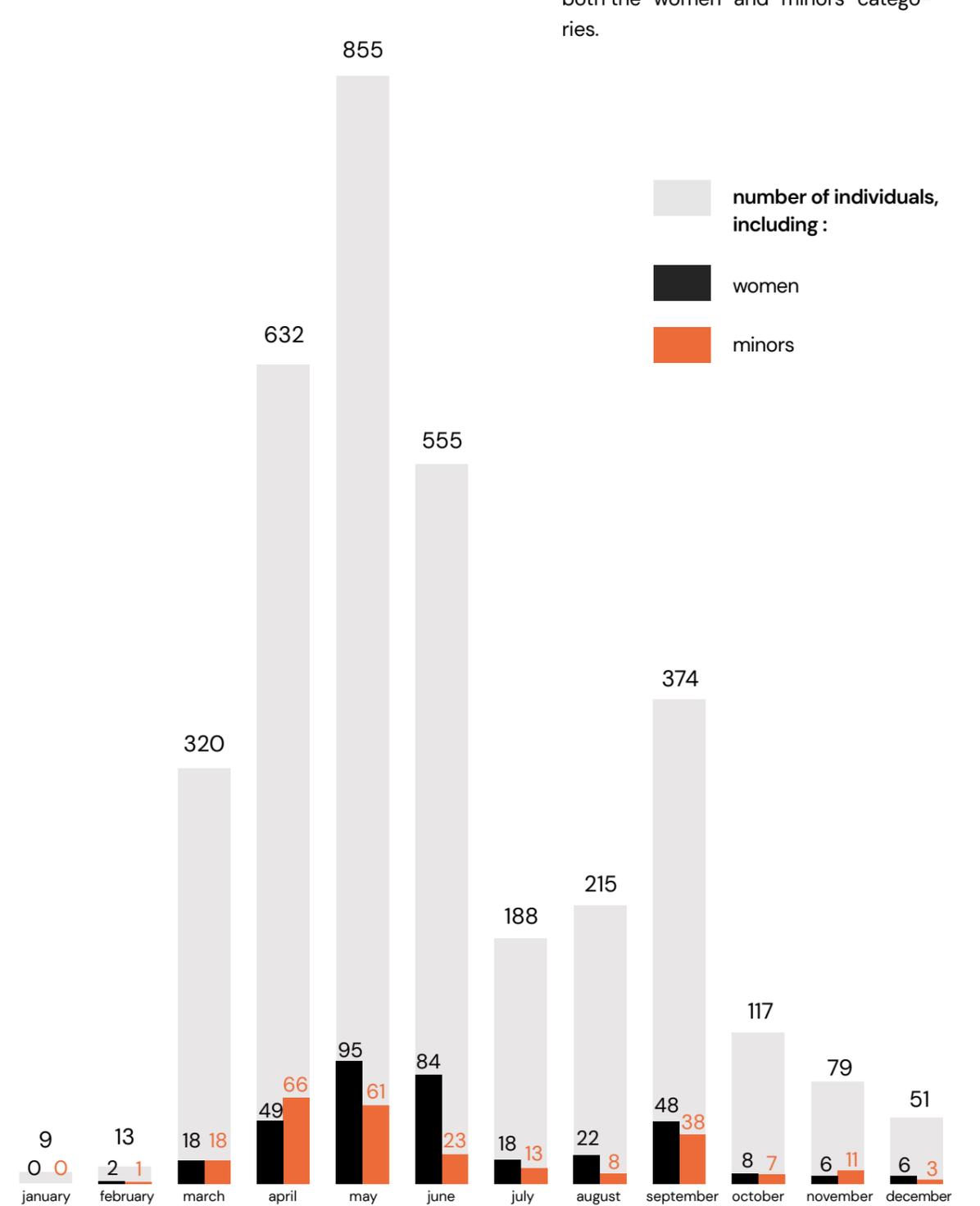


Fig. 5. Demographics of individuals who received humanitarian support in 2024.

According to the methodology we adopted, underage women are included in both the "women" and "minors" categories.



Fig. 6. Number of Assisted Asylum Requests in 2024

The Assisted Asylum Request is an operational procedure adopted by non-governmental organizations operating at the Polish-Belarusian border. Its goal is to reduce the risk of pushbacks for individuals seeking international protection. This process is based on the principle known as „protection through presence,” according to which the presence of humanitarian organizations can help prevent potential abuse and, in this specific context, the denial of access to asylum procedures, violence and illegal pushback to Belarus.

■ number of individuals who received humanitarian support  
 ■ Assisted Asylum Request

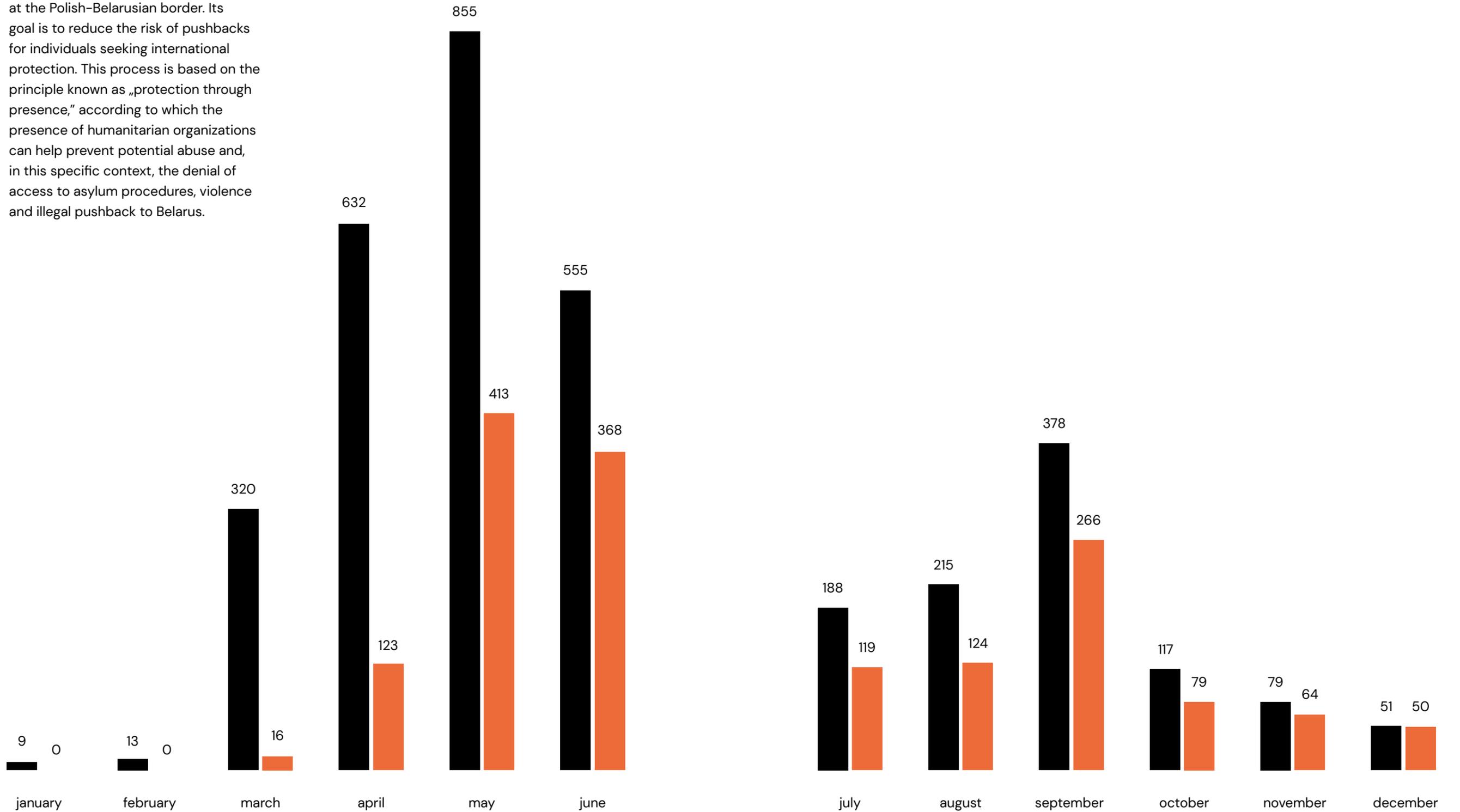


Fig. 7. Number of pushbacks despite Assisted Asylum Request in 2024

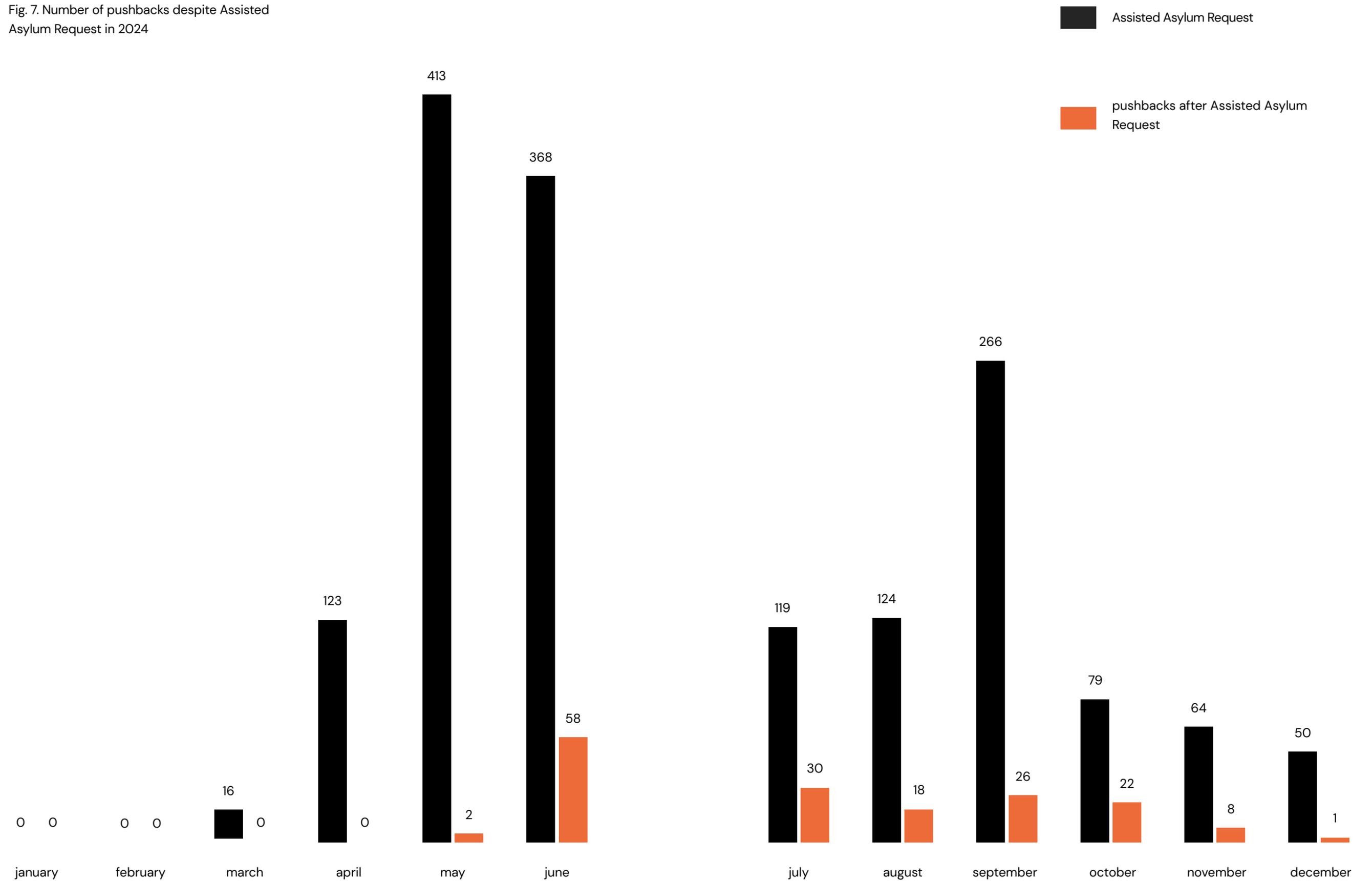
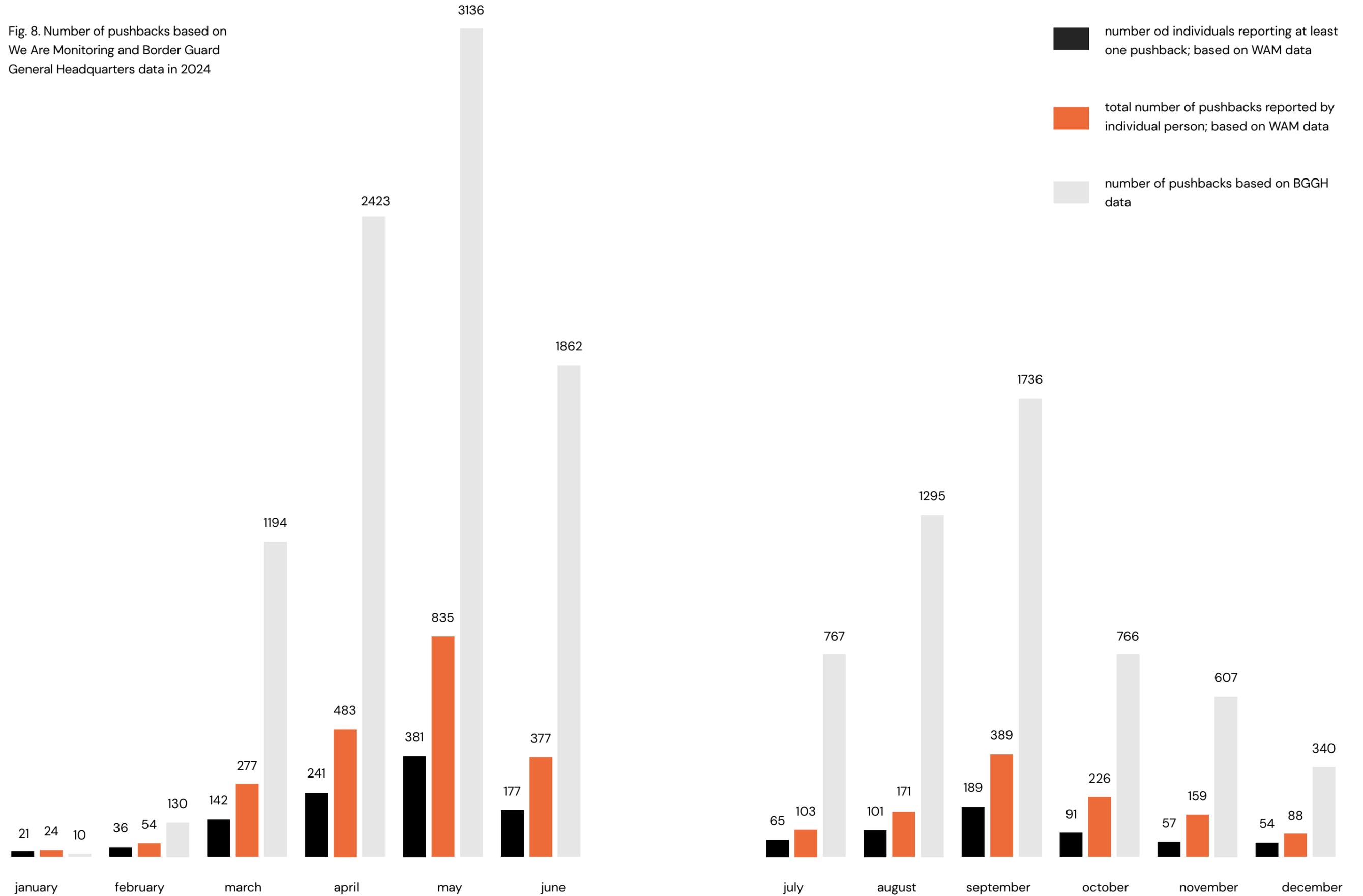


Fig. 8. Number of pushbacks based on We Are Monitoring and Border Guard General Headquarters data in 2024



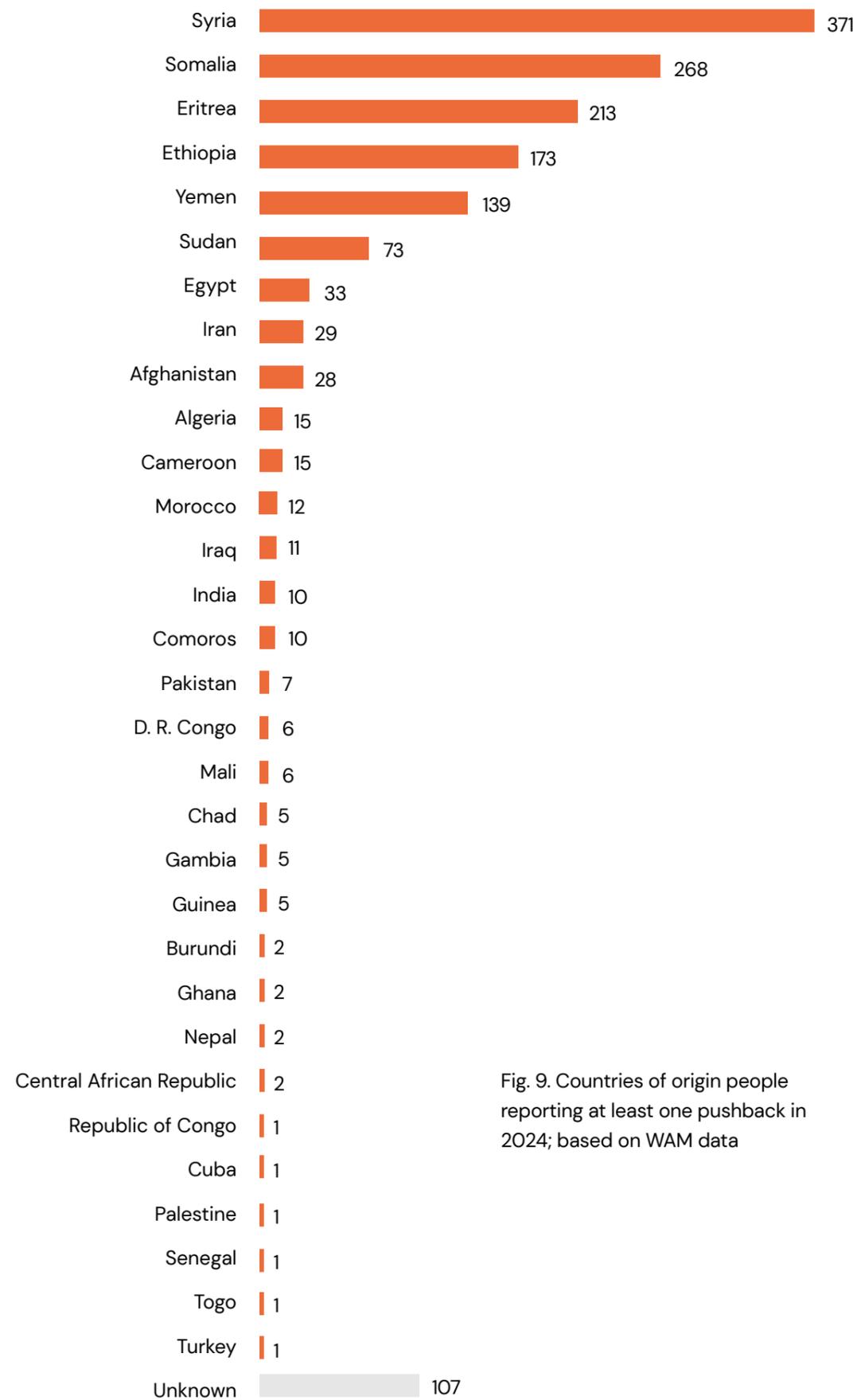


Fig. 9. Countries of origin people reporting at least one pushback in 2024; based on WAM data



# A summary of the year 2024 at the Polish–Belarusian border

Warsaw, March 2025

WRITTEN AND EDITED BY:  
We Are Monitoring Association

PHOTOS:  
Egala Association archives

PROOFREADING:  
Iga Ciszewska

DESIGN AND TYPESETTING  
Zofia Zatorska,  
based on the graphic design of Michał Dąbrowski and Karolina Kotowska

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The We Are Monitoring Association is part of the Granica Group coalition. Together with other organizations, informal initiatives and local residents, we co-create a solidarity network of humanitarian aid on the Polish–Belarusian border. Since 2021, we have been working for human rights by collecting, analyzing and sharing data on the scale of movement, provision of support, abuses of power and various forms of violence, including institutional, experienced by people on the move. We also collect testimonies from those who experienced pushbacks.

Our work also aims to complement the public discourse on migration by creating a space for expression for people whose rights to freedom of movement and seeking safety have been denied.

**GRUPA GRANICA**

Grupa Granica is a coalition of Podlasie residents, humanitarian workers, aid workers and activists from all over Poland and abroad. It brings humanitarian aid to people on the move who are seeking a safe and dignified life for themselves and their loved ones. It creates a broad social movement born in response to the ongoing crisis on the Belarusian border since the summer of 2021. It helps people in the most difficult situation – when they are deprived of the most basic human rights, including right to health and life protection. It also works in hospitals and centers for foreigners. It organizes legal aid, psychological support and material support.



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