

# CHILDREN AND UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

AT THE POLISH-BELARUSIAN BORDER  
JANUARY – MAY 2025

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MONITORING

GRUPA GRANICA

## 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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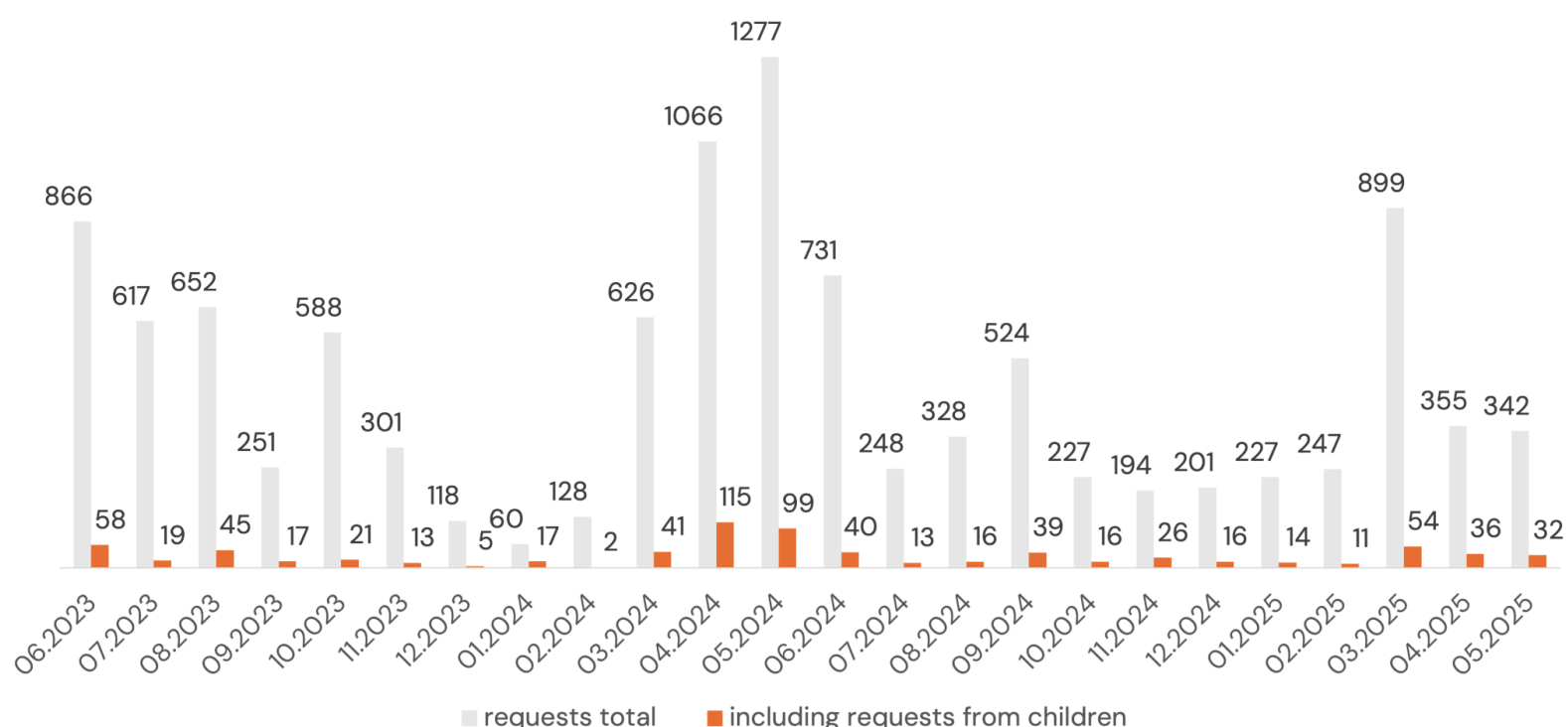
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## Reports concerning minors since the outbreak of the crisis

Since the beginning of September 2021, NGOs, grassroots organisations and activists collect data on children and adolescents crossing or attempting to cross the Polish–Belarusian border. The initial purpose of collecting this data on demographics and vulnerable groups was to determine the psychophysical condition and most important needs of people on the move, in order to provide adequate support. Over time, the scope of collected data has been expanded to more effectively monitor, document and publicise information on the situation of children and unaccompanied children at the border. Between September 2021 and the end of 2024, we registered almost 1,555 requests for support from minors.



In 2021 and 2022, almost 7% of all reports included minors. During this period, our data did not include information on the presence of minors' legal guardians. In 2023, only about 3.5% of all requests for support came from people under 18 years of age.<sup>1</sup> At least one-third of them (precisely 139 out of 414 requests) were travelling without the assistance of a legal guardian.<sup>2</sup> In 2024, reports from children accounted for over 8% of all established contact. At least 331 of the 469 minors were travelling unaccompanied.<sup>3</sup>

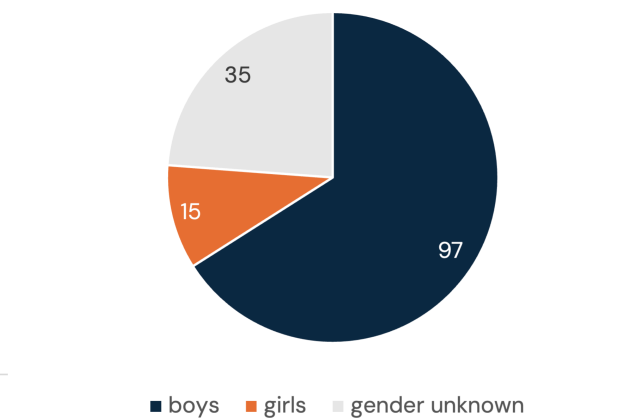
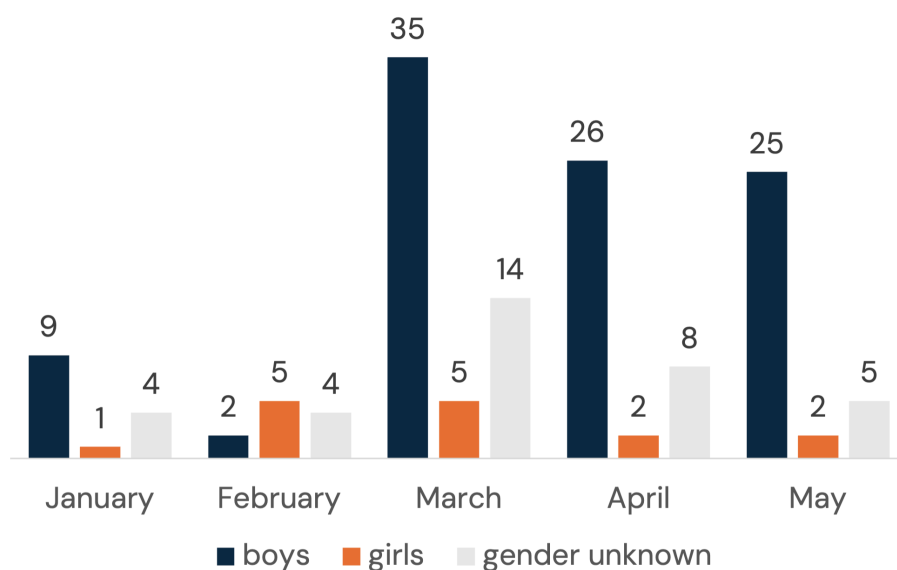
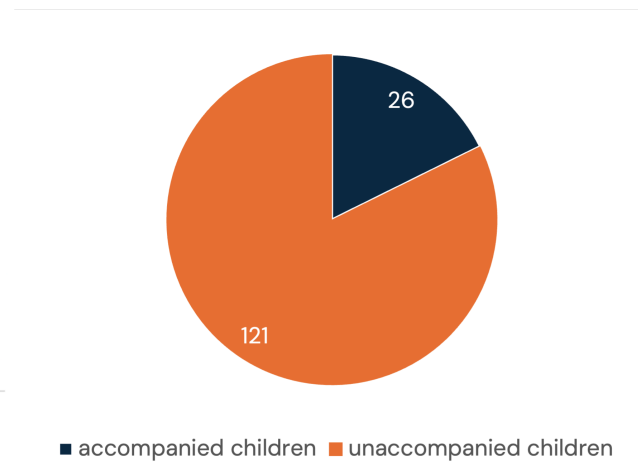
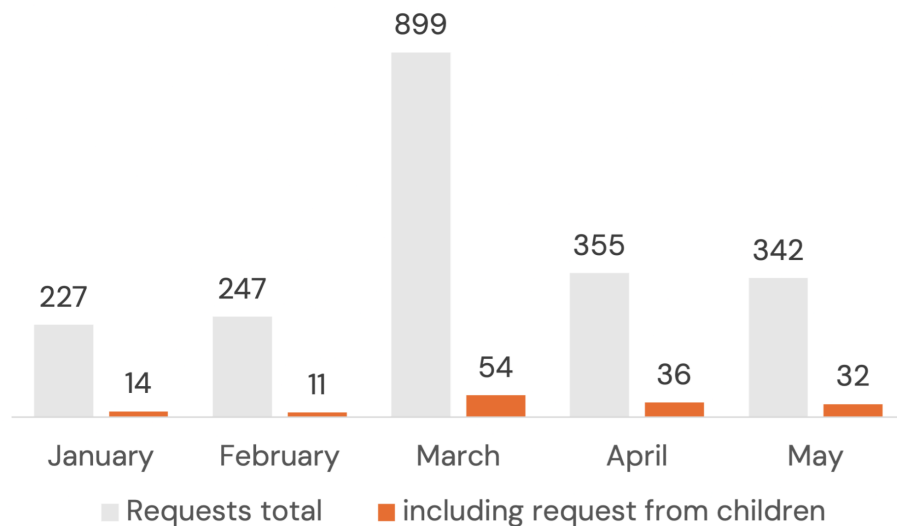
<sup>1</sup> We Are Monitoring, Pepper spray in a bottle of water, s. 22–23, August 2024, <https://wearemonitoring.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Pepper-spray-in-a-bottle-of-water-2023.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Data collected since 20/04/2023.

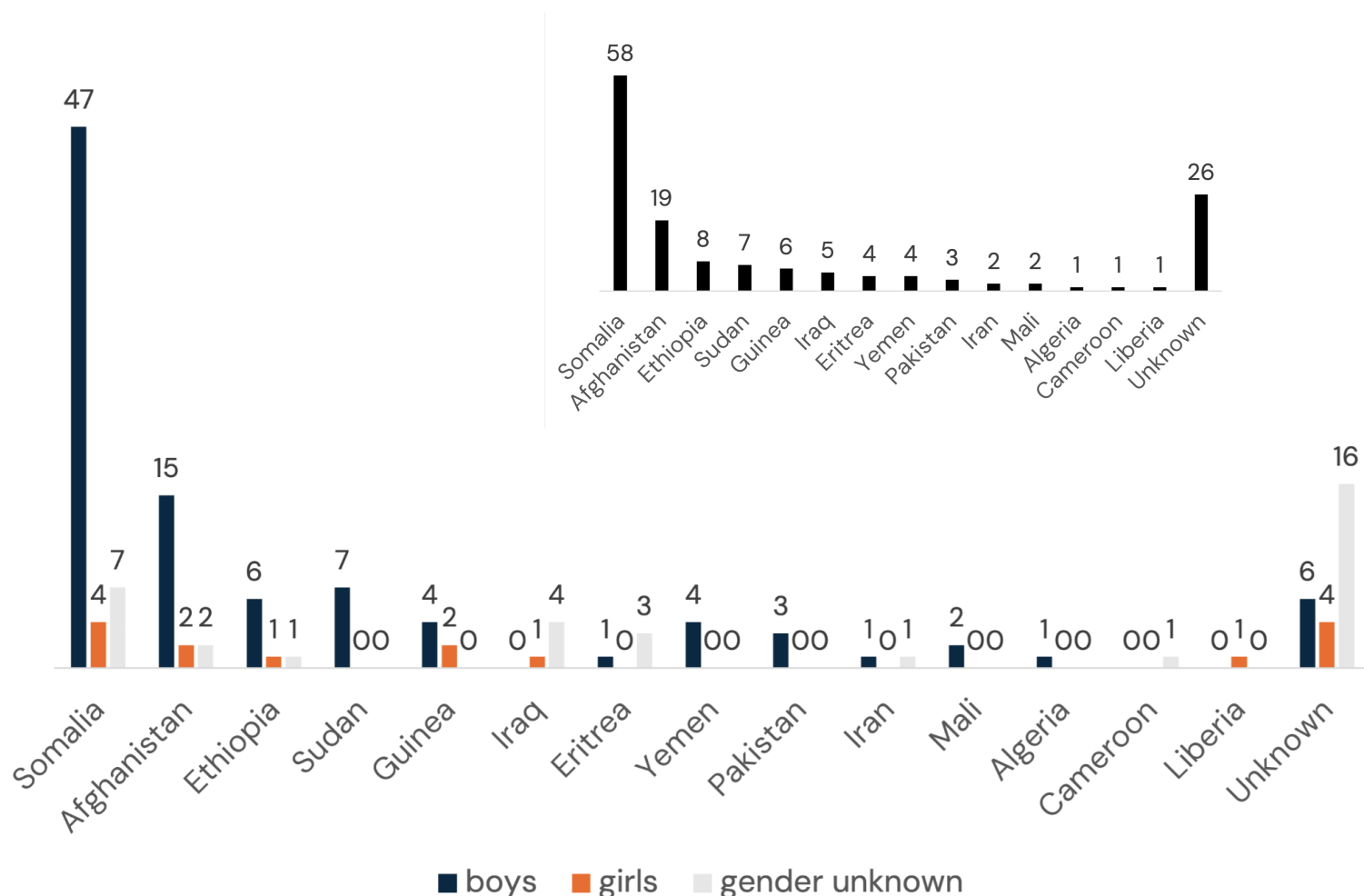
<sup>3</sup> We Are Monitoring, A summary of the year 2024 at the Polish–Belarusian border, March 2025, <https://wearemonitoring.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/WAM-summary-2024.pdf>

## Year 2025 – demographics of children and adolescents at the border

In the period from January 2025 to the end of May, we registered a total of 2,070 requests for support. 147 of all reports (over 7%) came from children, and as many as 121 of them (over 82%) travelled without a legal guardian. Girls constituted more than 10% of all children. Out of all 15 girls, as many as 10 travelled unaccompanied.



The largest number of children (58) came from Somalia. During this period, we also received reports about 19 minors from Afghanistan, eight from Ethiopia, seven from Sudan, and six from Guinea. The data largely correspond to the countries of origin of adults reporting the need for support. The exception is Afghanistan, which is listed fifth among the declared countries of origin. Due to unfavourable conditions of the interviews or individuals' reluctance to provide detailed information about themselves, in the case of 26 people the country of origin was not determined.



The registered reports<sup>4</sup> came both from children located on the eastern side of the border barrier and those who managed to get to its western side. In the five-month reporting period, we registered a total of 112 reports from children from Belarus and those located in the area between the barrier on Polish territory and the fortifications on the Belarusian side.<sup>5</sup> Minors made up 8% of all established contact from the eastern side of the barrier.<sup>6</sup> 88 of them traveled unaccompanied. 35 contacted humanitarian organizations while on the western side of the border fortifications. This is slightly less than 6.5% of all reports from this side of the barrier. Only two of them were traveling with legal guardians.

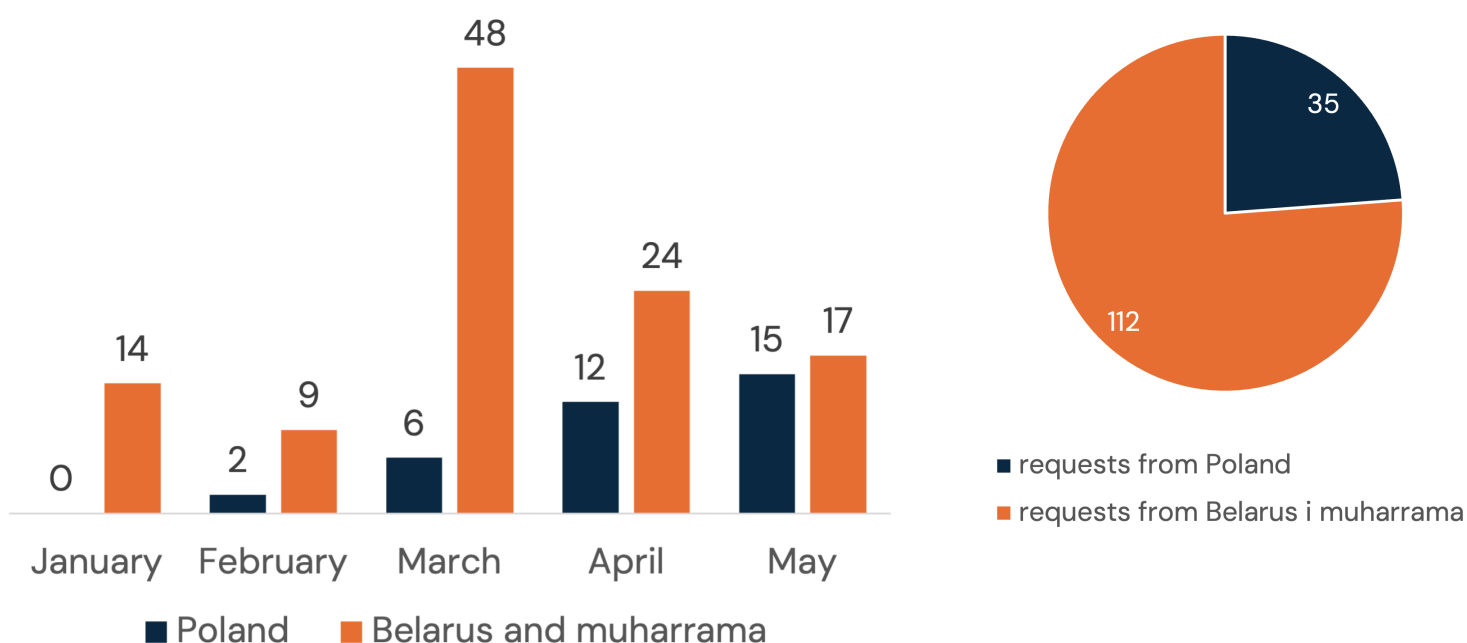
<sup>4</sup> The same people can establish contact multiple times, both from Belarusian cities and from forests on both sides of the Polish border barrier. It can happen over the course of several days, weeks or months, depending on the time and dynamics of their travel. Therefore, reports from Poland and Belarus should not be summed up.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the Polish border barrier, 5.5 meters high, there are barriers on the Belarusian side as well. The Polish border barrier is not built directly on the border line. Strip of 1-1.5 meters on its eastern side also belongs to Polish territory. The zone between the Polish and Belarusian barriers is controlled by Belarusian forces. People on the move often get trapped there. They cannot cross the border with Poland, or are repeatedly pushed back and at the same time they need permission from Belarusian forces to return to Minsk or other Belarusian cities. This zone is often referred to by Arabic-speaking people on the move as muharram – no man's land.

<sup>6</sup> The numbers that we present do not allow us to estimate, even approximately, the actual number of people staying in the zone between the barriers in a given period. They only allow us to determine downward and upward trends and moments of increased migration activity in the area of the Polish-Belarusian border.

## Belarus and muharrama

Conversations with people on the move, activists and people associated with non-governmental organizations show that the constantly expanding border barrier and the presence of services significantly slows down and complicates crossing the border. Additionally, it serves as a tool of violence, deliberately exposing people to serious injuries such as razor wire cuts, fractures, and bruises. During the pushback, people, regardless of age and gender, are forcibly forced to return to the Belarusian side, to muharrama, where they can be trapped for several days or even months. Oftentimes they are prevented from returning to the Belarusian cities from which they set out. Repeated reports say that Belarusian officers control the border strip, often preventing people on the move from going back and forcing them to make further attempts to cross the Polish barrier, regardless of the age and physical condition. In the muharrama strip, people on the move have no access to water, food, shelter or medical care. Attempts to get out often result in violence from the Belarusian services or in need to pay for permission to return to the city, usually Minsk.



Between January and May 2025 we received information about 32 minors who experienced violence at the hands of Belarusian security forces. It constitutes almost 22% of all persons under the age of 18 registered in that period. 23 of them (72%) traveled unaccompanied.

*Belarusians are beating us and we are receiving violence from them. We want to enter Poland. All my teeth are broken and my nose. And my friend can't walk.*

Excerpt from the accounts of two teenagers from Algeria traveling together,  
February 2025

*Brother, approximately we are here for 10 days. We didn't eat anything. When we came to Poland soldiers [pushed us back] to Belarus. Belarusian soldiers hit us, beat us very badly and they will transfer back to Poland. Poland transfer back to Belarus, we are very [unintelligible], we are thirsty, hungry and we can't move because Belarus also called us. Please help us brother [...] Sir, four times Belarusian soldiers transferred us to the Polish side. Polish soldiers transfer us to the Belarusian side. Before five hours the Polish soldier transferred [us] back to the Belarusian side [...] our [unintelligible] is not good, our hands is not good sir, please help us please [...] we are not in a good situation sir.<sup>7</sup>*

Excerpt from the accounts of four people from Afghanistan,  
three men and one 14-year-old, March 2025

*I tried many times but the Belarusian army beat me so hard, four times. Last time one of our friends died from a beating and a dog bite.*

Excerpt from the account of a teenage boy from Somalia,  
March 2025

*The Balusian [Belarusian] army is killing me [...] I was staying in the forest between Poland and Belarus for eight days without food and water then Belarusian soldiers very killing me [...] There is electricity that is used [by] Belarusian soldiers on my back has injured.*

*I am in Belarus. I suffered a lot between Belarus and Poland. I spent seven days without water and food. Belarusian soldiers killed me indiscriminately. They killed my friend. I am so tired that I have to go back. Please help me. I am not here. I can't eat or drink. I can't stand [on my feet].*

Excerpts of two messages sent by a sixteen-year-old Somali,  
the first from the end of March, the second from the end of April 2025

*I am a Sudanese refugee in Belarus. I am 16 years old. I previously tried to reach Poland through the forest, but I failed. All my documents were burned by the Belarusian border guards, including my phone, bag, and my ID.*

Excerpt from a conversation with a 16-year-old Sudanese,  
March 2025

*I asked many people for help but no one helped me. I came to the Polish border. They send me back. Now I'm in stage I don't have anything. [...] So even if we*

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<sup>7</sup> Transcribed from a voice message.

*come to Poland side you can't help and Belarusian police beat people when they try to go. Many people died here between Belarus to Poland road. I came here even [though] I can't walk. My body is hurting. I have been in the jungle for 18 days.*

Excerpt from a conversation with a 15-year-old girl from Somalia,  
March 2025

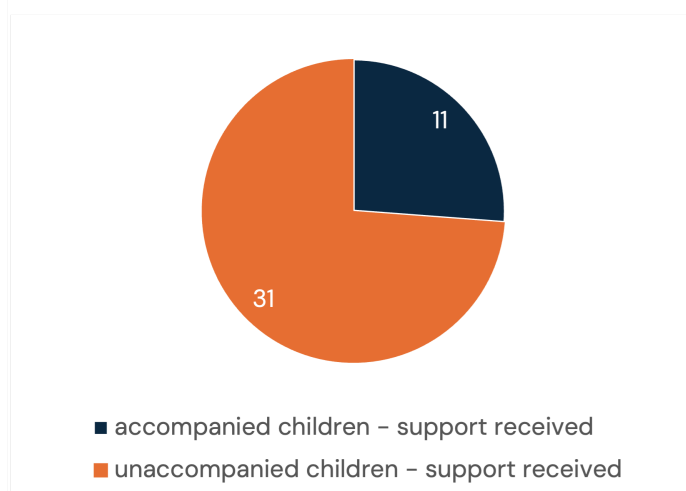
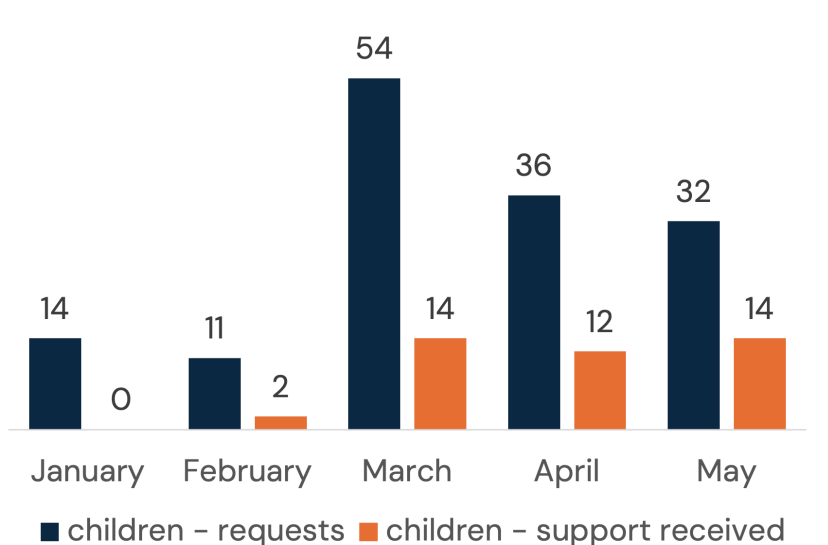
Unfortunately, even returning to larger cities in Belarus, such as Minsk, Grodno or Soligorsk, does not provide safety for adults or children on the move. People contacting non-governmental organizations report no access to asylum procedures and health care.<sup>8</sup>

*I am in difficulty, I have tried several times to pass the Polish barriers but I am mistreated by the Polish police and beaten by the Belarusians, I have nowhere to go or where to sleep, the snow will kill me if you do not help me, I will die of hunger, please help me, a 15 year old orphan, Someone brought me back to Minsk to get treatment but the hospital didn't accept because I have no money, I'm going to die.*

Excerpt from a conversation with a 15-year-old boy from Guinea,  
January 2025.

### Humanitarian, medical and legal interventions

From January to May 2025, NGOs, collectives and activists provided support to 294 people. This number includes both humanitarian interventions in the field, usually in the forest in Podlasie, often accompanied by medical and legal interventions, and interventions in local hospitals.



<sup>8</sup> Healthcare facilities in Belarus cooperate with the services. Migrants often express a justified fear of arrest or detention. Another issue with accessing health care is the lack of funds to cover the costs of treatment.



Children constituted over 14% of the 294 people encountered during the interventions. In total, between January and May, there were 42 of them, including at least three girls. The sex of the two minors who were supported was not reported. 31 of the children (74%) travelled without a legal guardian.

*Three young men from Eritrea, one is 16 years old. They are friends. They spent four months in Belarus. This is their second time in Poland. Belarusian guards took their passports. They reported violence on the Belarusian side. They came to Poland two days ago.*

Excerpt from the Humanitarian Intervention Report,  
May 2025

*The boy confirmed that he was 16 years old. At first, he was very scared, he did not want to be left alone. He asked about the international protection procedure, but he did not make up his mind. His psychophysical condition improved after he ate and warmed up. He had no medical problems. He said that his brother was killed in Sudan and he has a video of it. He said that he was pushbacked the day before. One of two phones he got was damaged – cracked screen, broken charging port.*

Excerpt from a report from a humanitarian intervention for a sixteen-year-old Sudanese boy, May 2025.

Three days earlier, the boy had reported a need for support on the eastern side of the border barrier. He was in a group of eight at the time, but as a result of pushback, the group was separated, and the boy was left alone.

People crossing the Polish–Belarusian border often suffer from wounds and cuts caused by razor wire, orthopedic injuries from falling or jumping from fences, digestive problems caused by contaminated water and bad food, injuries sustained while trekking through the forest, or extreme physical and mental exhaustion. Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières/MSF), Doctors Without Borders warns that between 2022 and 2024, as many as one third of their patients suffered from injuries caused by crossing the border barrier, including fractures and deep wounds.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes, after crossing the border, both children and adults need hospitalization. Unfortunately, medical facilities do not provide them with protection against pushback. According to aid workers, this often causes individuals to avoid going to the hospital for fear of pushback.

*We visited three boys from Somalia – 15, 15, 16 years old. They got packages of clothes, shoes, two power banks, and food. They spent nine days in the forest. They were pushbacked three times. They have been in Poland for two days. They were beaten on the Belarusian side. One has a broken arm as a result of violence*

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.msf.org/trapped-between-borders-life-threatening-consequences-increased-militarisation-poland-belarus>

*by Belarusian services. He was in a Polish hospital for one day, he was put on a cast and pushbacked. They have not eaten or drunk for a long time.*

Excerpt from the Humanitarian Intervention Report,  
May 2025

More than 27% of children requesting support between January and May 2025 reported health related issues during conversations with humanitarian organizations or activists.

*I was in the forest for three weeks, I was very hurt. One eye was severely damaged. My arm is broken and my leg is injured. When I was in the woods, I was eating one snickers in two days, I was very hungry. I was drinking dirty water, I have a stomach ache.*

Fragment of a conversation with a minor boy from Ethiopia,  
April 2025

During humanitarian interventions, medics and activists trained in first aid often provide assistance to people on the move. Among the people who received first aid in the period from January to the end of May 2025, there were four minors. Since November 2022,<sup>10</sup> Doctors Without Borders has registered 59 minor patients who received medical assistance. Between January and the end of May 2025, they met four minors. They were boys between 15 and 18 years old, who came from Yemen, Guinea, Afghanistan and Eritrea. According to the medical team, all four patients had injuries resulting from physical abuse and wounds caused by razor wire. In addition, one patient most probably had a metatarsal fracture, and two others were diagnosed with dehydration.

Between January and March 27, 2025, two legal interventions were undertaken on behalf of minors. NGO workers and activists assisted two children in expressing their desire to apply for international protection in Poland.<sup>11</sup> Both boys traveled without legal guardians.

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<sup>10</sup> Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières – MSF), Poland: Doctors Without Borders operates on the Polish–Belarusian border, 2022, <https://lekarze-bez-granic.pl/polska-lekarze-bez-granic-prowadza-dzialania-na-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej/> [access: 28/03/2024]

<sup>11</sup> Assisted Asylum Request is an operational procedure adopted by non-governmental organizations operating at the Polish–Belarusian border. Its aim is to reduce the risk of pushback of an applicant for international protection, and the process is based on a method known as protection through presence, according to which the presence of humanitarian organizations can stop the potential risk of abuse and, in this particular context, denial of access to asylum procedures, violence and illegal deportation to Belarus.

## **The situation of children on the Polish–Belarusian border after March 27, 2025<sup>12</sup>**

On 27 March 2025, the temporary restriction of the right to make an application for international protection came into force in Poland. On 6 May it was extended for another 60 days. 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 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.*

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. 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

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<sup>12</sup> Fragments of the text were published in We Are Monitoring, March 2025

Report from the Poland–Belarus border, s. 4–6,

<https://wearemonitoring.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/WAM-Report-March-2025.pdf>, April 2025

Report from the Poland–Belarus border, s. 4–8,

<https://wearemonitoring.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/WAM-Statistics-April-2025-1.pdf>

challenging in situations where apprehensions occur in forests, without witnesses, and under conditions of language barriers and stress. If the child is not immediately pushed back and considered as a minor based on visual assessment and/or documents or photos of documents presented, in case of further doubts the most commonly used method of verification is a medical examination involving an X-ray of the bones.<sup>13</sup> However, this is against the European standards of age assessment, and carries the risk of incorrectly determining that the individual is an adult.<sup>14</sup>

Majority of legal interventions carried out in the past four years took place when people on the move decided to ask for assistance in expressing their desire to apply for international protection in Poland. Since 27 March 2025, the first day of the suspension of the right to apply for international protection in Poland, legal interventions have focused primarily on supporting people in their efforts to obtain an interim measure from the European Court of Human Rights. Essentially, this document protects people from deportation to Belarus, however, on its own it does not enable them to submit an application for international protection. This form of support is provided in the field as well as in local hospitals, where those who require hospitalization, and have crossed the Polish border, are sent.

It is worth noting that the efforts to obtain an interim measure mainly concern people who, while waiting for the decision of the European Court of Human Rights, are currently in hospital in Hajnówka or Białystok. This was the case of two minors supported in their application for an interim measure from the European Court of Human Rights. One of them was a seventeen-year-old girl from Guinea who arrived at the medical facility without a phone, passport or any documents. She had spent 10 days in the forest. At the hospital, she described her experience of violence from the Belarusian services. She has crossed the border barrier several times, and each time it resulted in pushback. The border guard used pepper spray on her.

The average waiting time for a decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on interim measures was in this period typically between several hours and one to two working days. However, while awaiting the decision, individuals remain at risk of being returned to Belarus, even while receiving medical care in hospitals.

For example on April 11, Grupa Granica reported that a young man from Mali, who had been hospitalized, was pushed back to Belarus. He had been brought to a hospital in Hajnówka by ambulance, where medical staff noticed signs of confusion—he repeatedly

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<sup>13</sup>Save the Children 2025. Dzieci bez opieki na granicy z Białorusią i w polskiej pieczy zastępczej w 2024 roku, p. 74.

<sup>14</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.

asked where he was and which country he was in. He told them he was 17 years old and wanted to apply for international protection. He signed a power of attorney with a legal representative from European Lawyers in Lesvos and expressed his intention to seek asylum. Since he had no documents and had declared himself a minor, he was scheduled for an age assessment the next day. However, the following morning, around 11 a.m., Border Guard officers discharged him from the hospital. The legal representative sent all the necessary documents to the Border Guard post in Białowieża and asked for information about the boy's situation. Worried that he might be pushed back, the legal representative requested an interim measure from the ECHR. With no response from the Border Guard, she called the post around 3 p.m. and was told that the boy was already on his way back from Białystok. The officer assured her that she would be kept updated about what was happening. However, no one followed up with her, and she received no information about the results of the age test or what steps were being taken next. Later, around 6:30 p.m., the ECHR issued a decision in favor of the boy, prohibiting Poland from sending him back to Belarus. The legal representative emailed the decision to the Border Guard post around 7:00 p.m. and called again, but the officer refused to provide any information, advising her to call later. The next morning, when she called again, she was told that the ECHR decision had arrived too late—the boy had already been pushed back to Belarus. The officer expressed regret, stating, "Unfortunately, time cannot be turned back." Shortly after, the boy reached out to Grupa Granica from Belarus, saying that before being pushed back across the border, Polish officers had beaten him. He reported: "Polish police officers beat me and broke my foot and finger."

From January to the end of May, we registered information about five minor patients in hospitals in Podlasie who irregularly crossed the border with Belarus. There were four boys and one girl. All traveled without a legal guardian.

The suspension of the right to international protection also affected the only functioning road border crossing point between Poland and Belarus – Brest-Terespol – which, since the 1990s, has been the main escape route for citizens of former Soviet Union countries facing persecution. As lawyers supporting individuals reaching the Belarusian city of Brest point out, on the first day of the new regulations, individuals claiming to have experienced political repression (including torture) were turned away at the border crossing, despite declaring to Polish authorities that they feared persecution if returned to their home countries. Over the next few days, there were also documented cases of refusals to accept asylum applications from a citizen of a Central Asian country, who had been living in the Russian Federation in recent years and had documentation regarding the violence he had suffered at the hands of Russian authorities. He also reported receiving threats of being drafted to the Russian army and sent to the front in eastern Ukraine. In the case of two women traveling together from the Caucasus, an application was accepted from one who was pregnant, while the other, traveling with a

young child, was told to get out of the car and return to Belarus.<sup>15</sup>

But even before the official suspension of the right to apply for protection, information about pushbacks from the border crossing in Terespol and the refusal to accept applications for international protection by officers working there, appeared in the accounts of people on the move.

*I'm in trouble, I've tried several times to get through the Polish barriers but I've been ill-treated by the Polish police and beaten up by the Belarusians. [...] We came to Terespol and are turning back for no reason.*

Excerpt from the account of a fifteen-year-old from Guinea,  
January 2025

## **Pushbacks and violence**

According to Border Guard data<sup>16</sup>, from January 1 to May 31, 2025, the Border Guard carried out 4,437 pushbacks of people on the move from Poland to Belarus. During the same period, humanitarian organizations received reports of pushbacks from 521 people who experienced a total of 836 pushbacks.

During this period, 34 people reporting the experience of pushback to Belarus were children under 18 years old. Among them were two girls. Due to unfavorable conditions of the interviews or the reluctance of migrants to provide detailed information about themselves, the sex of 7 people was not determined. 32 of all pushbacked children traveled without a legal guardian.

When reporting pushbacks, people on the move describe additional violence they experienced at the hands of the border guard; beatings, use of irritants and stun guns, and dogs being set on them. Also theft and destruction of property are often reported. According to the collected accounts, the scale of violence by the border guard has not decreased over time. The practices described in the fall of 2021 are similar to the accounts of people who experienced pushback in the spring of 2025.

According to the reports of children pushed-back between January and the end of May, the circumstances of their detentions and pushbacks did not differ in any way from the experiences of adults. During this period, humanitarian organizations received information about 14 minors who experienced violence at the hands of officers of Polish uniformed services. 12 of them traveled unaccompanied.

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<sup>15</sup> Z. Kaciupska, T. Sieniow, Zawieszenie prawa do azylu – realia prawne i konsekwencje dla rozwoju sytuacji na granicy polsko-białoruskiej, paper presented at the 25th seminar of the Researchers at the Border, 12-13/04/2025

<sup>16</sup> Responses of the Podlasie Unit of the Border Guard to inquiries under the freedom of information procedure.

*I am a refugee who needs asylum in Poland because my parents died and I have no care. I am 15 and I need life in Poland but when the Polish army asks for asylum, they kill me and send me back.*

Excerpt from the account of a fifteen-year-old from Somalia,  
February 2025

*We are two people under the age of 18. We have been stuck in Belarus for a year now. We want to come to Europe to continue our studies. We have been to Poland several times. The police don't know where we are going and are harassing us. [...] When we enter Polish territory, they don't treat us like human beings at all, and when they send us to Brest, they harass us a lot there. Once, when I was wounded on the sole of my foot and was bleeding, they didn't take me to the hospital in Poland and deported me to Belarus. I wandered around with my injured foot for a week. Considering that I'm sixteen years old, I've been stuck in Belarus for eight months.*

Excerpt from the account of two teenagers traveling together,  
March 2025

*I was 14 [days] in Poland without any food and cold clothes. And Polish army were killing me. They sent me back to Belarus. I lost a lot of blood, these are some of the injuries inflicted on me by the Polish army. I also have allergies and they used poison and I have asthma. My age is 17 so also... They brought me back to the Belarusian border.*

Excerpt from the account of a 17-year-old boy traveling alone from Somalia,  
April 2025

*[...] Poland and Belarus they kill me both of them. Poland dog bite me and they take simcard, they broke mopile [mobile]. Me and my friends.*

Excerpt from the account of a man traveling in a group of three. At least one person was under 18,  
March 2025

*The border [guard] of Poland they make very difficult also. Poland soldier beat me very bad. One eye, I can't see now. [...] I will turn 18 after two month.*

A fragment of a conversation with a seventeen-year-old from an East African country,  
April 2025

The reports include repeated accounts of increased aggression by the Belarusian border guards towards people who return to the eastern side of the border-barrier after experiencing pushback at the hands of Polish officers.

*We tried the forest to be able to get out but we did not manage to cross the military arrested us and beat us and threw us into Lithuania they separated from our African brothers.*

Excerpt from a report by a couple from Cameroon traveling with a three-month-old baby, January 2025

## Definitions

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

**Groups** — people traveling together at the time of the report and/or during a humanitarian/legal/medical intervention. These individuals may or may not be related by family or social ties.

**Individuals** — specific people who may be part of groups

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

**Unaccompanied children/minors** — Persons under 18 years of age traveling without a legal adult guardian, including minors traveling with older siblings or other relatives who are not their legal guardians under Polish law.

**[Border] barrier**, also: wall, fence — a fortification located on Polish territory a few to several meters from the border with Belarus, in the form of a steel fence topped with a coil of razor wire and flanked by entanglements of coiled razor wire.

**Concertina** — razor wire, formed into large coils, constituting an additional part of the border infrastructure.

**Muharrama** (Arabic: forbidden) — a term used by Arabic-speaking people on the move to describe a strip of land on Polish and Belarusian territory located between the Polish border barrier and the fortifications on the Belarusian side (*sistema*). *Muharrama* in Arabic means “forbidden.” People on the move also use the longer expression المنطقة المحرمة, meaning “forbidden zone.”

**Sistema** — the fence and electronic system on the eastern side of the militarized border strip located in Poland and Belarus (*muharrama*), separating it from the rest of Belarus.

**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 assistance** — support in the form of basic humanitarian aid packages: food, clothing, water, information.

**Legal assistance** — support in procedures aimed at preventing pushbacks and enabling the submission of applications for international protection or other means of regulating stay.



**Medical assistance** — professional support provided by individuals with medical qualifications.

**Basic first aid** — support provided by individuals with basic rescue training, such as cleaning wounds or dressing trench foot.

**Assistance in hospitals** – material and/or legal assistance

**Pushback** — the forced return of people on the move to the border line or forcing them to leave the territory of Poland without properly examining individual circumstances; regardless of whether they have received return decisions and regardless of the fact that they have explicitly expressed the intention to apply for international protection in Poland. As noted by experts monitoring human rights violations on the southern borders of the European Union, pushbacks constitute a form of violence *per se*, and are commonly accompanied by other forms of physical and verbal violence.

**Reported pushbacks** — pushbacks reported to us during the given reporting period by people who experienced them directly or were eyewitnesses.

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

**Reported violence — Belarus** — forms of violence reported to us and directly experienced by people on the move, whose perpetrators, according to the victims' accounts, were members of Belarusian uniformed services.

**Number of interventions** — the number of humanitarian interventions carried out by field teams in response to a request for support or the accidental encounter of people on the move in the border area.

**Number of deceased** — the number of people on the move who have died since August 2021 on the Polish side of the Polish–Belarusian border, as well as cases on the Belarusian side that we are aware of. This does not include all deaths in hospitals or car accidents related to the migration route. Data are verified and supplemented by the Border Death Monitoring Group and published [here](#) along with detailed methodology. We expect that over time, data on more deaths may emerge, including from the period under consideration.

**Number of missing persons** — individuals whose disappearance has been reported by close relatives or travel companions, and for whom no contact has been made for at least two days.

**Injuries caused by the barrier** — injuries that occurred due to crossing the border barrier on the Polish–Belarusian border.

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>

\* virtually impossible to identify at this stage