

JULY 2025

Report from the Poland–Belarus border



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Introduction

This study is based on the data obtained from individuals involved in the events described. Our sources include organisations, informal initiatives, and individuals—many of whom prefer to remain anonymous. We only name organisations or individual activists when explicit permission has been granted.

Most of all, we extend our sincere thanks to all people who crossed or tried to cross the Poland-Belarus border, and chose to share their experiences. It is thanks to them that we know the full extent of violence, mistreatment and abuse perpetrated by the Polish and Belarusian authorities. All of their names in this report have been changed.

NGOs, activists and others involved in the response stress that the challenging context and ethical considerations of their work often make it difficult to obtain detailed information about the stories and circumstances of people on the move. Many individuals are in such severe psychophysical condition during interventions that requesting information risks retraumatisation or may lead them to feel obligated to respond merely because they have received support.

The interventions and assistance described in this report took place in the Podlaskie and Lubelskie Voivodeships. For individuals in Belarus, only information on the legal situation and procedures for applying for international protection in both Poland and Belarus can be provided. No direct support is possible for NGOs and activists operating in Poland.

For additional questions please contact: 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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Since 2021, we have been collecting reliable information regarding the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border. Your support will allow us to continue this work.

Another Extension of the Suspension of the Right to Apply for International Protection

On 23 July, the Sejm extended for the second time the suspension of the possibility to apply for international protection at the border with Belarus. The previous extension had taken place in May. The Act enabling the temporary and territorial suspension of the right to submit applications for protection¹ was signed on 26 March 2025. The following day, the Council of Ministers issued a regulation which, in practice, blocked the submission of such applications.

This time, 381 deputies voted in favor of extending the restriction, 19 voted against, and none abstained. The extension of the temporary suspension of the right to international protection has been in force since 25 July of this year for a further 60 days.

Suspension of the Right to Apply for International Protection at the Border with Lithuania

At the beginning of July, a draft regulation was published on the website of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in the register of legislative works, providing for the suspension of the right to submit an application for international protection at the border with Lithuania. As stated in the description of the Project Objectives:

“An analysis of the current situation at the Polish–Lithuanian border leads to the conclusion that the conditions for introducing a temporary restriction on the right to submit an application for international protection, [Article 33a(1) of the Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection to Foreigners within the Territory of the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws 2025, item 223)], have been met. Namely, instrumentalization is taking place – actions undertaken by the state bordering the Republic of Poland (Belarus) within the framework of such instrumentalization constitute a serious and genuine threat to state or societal security, and the introduction of restrictions is necessary to prevent this threat.”

Planned date of adoption of the draft by the Council of Ministers: third quarter of 2025.

Situation at the Polish–German Border

On 7 July, Poland temporarily reinstated border controls with Germany and Lithuania. The background to this decision consisted of reports in traditional and social media concerning the increasing scale of entry refusals issued by the German police to foreigners, as well as the growing activity of grassroots “patrols” that sought to monitor the situation in the border region.

¹ Act of 21 February 2025 amending the Act on Granting Protection to Foreigners within the Territory of the Republic of Poland, enabling the temporary and territorial restriction of the right to submit applications for international protection, Journal of Laws of 2025, item 223 (Poland).

These “entry refusals” concern individuals who crossed the Polish–German border and, at the moment of encountering German authorities, lacked legal residence in Germany – even in cases where they expressed the intention to apply for protection in that country². “Returns” (Zurückweisung in German) currently constitute one of three mechanisms by which foreigners are returned from Germany to Poland, alongside transfers under the EU’s Dublin III Regulation and those conducted on the basis of a bilateral agreement. Information about the growing scale of such “returns” mobilized far-right circles—particularly the newly established Border Defense Movement (ROG)—which began to organize “patrols” aimed at intercepting individuals returned to Poland and conducting informal border checks on roads near official crossing points.

At the turn of June and July, the issue of the German border also became the subject of an intense narrative conflict in the media. The core of the dispute concerned the interpretation of the situation at the border with Germany. According to ROG, German authorities were “illegally transferring people to Poland” on an unprecedented scale, and the official statistics of both states were, in their narrative, unreliable. According to the opposing view, including representatives of the Polish government administration, the return of people to Poland was carried out “in accordance with the law”³. Analysts⁴ note that the tense situation deepened political and social polarization, ultimately leading to an image and institutional crisis of the state. Importantly, the debate began to extend far beyond the issue of migration, becoming a fundamental dispute about the state’s monopoly on the use of force, the loyalty of uniformed services, and Poland’s

² The first rulings of the Administrative Court in Berlin have already been issued, establishing that asylum seekers are entitled to benefit from the Dublin procedure before receiving an automatic entry ban at the border. For further details, see: Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration, *VG Berlin: Keine Zurückweisung an der Grenze* [Administrative Court in Berlin: ‘No’ to Pushbacks at the Border], 17 June 2025, <https://www.asyl.net/view/vg-berlin-keine-zurueckweisung-an-der-grenze>

³ This article focuses on the situation at the Polish–German border from the perspective of nationalist mobilization and the governmental response. For this reason, it does not address the legality of the actions undertaken by the German authorities, which requires separate analysis. The prevailing narrative in the media, political discourse, and nationalist circles does not differentiate between the legal bases for the ‘returns’ of migrants to the Polish border. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that the issue of legality remains far from clear-cut. In the reasoning of the judgment of the Administrative Court in Berlin of 2 June 2025, it was emphasized that, under the EU asylum procedure—namely, the so-called Dublin system—Germany is obliged to conduct a full procedure to determine which Member State of the European Union is responsible for examining an application for international protection, provided that such an application has been lodged on German territory. In the case concerning three Somali nationals who had been ‘returned’ to Poland from Frankfurt (Oder), the Court observed that even in respect of individuals who are not entitled to enter Germany, the Dublin procedure should be carried out at or near the border. During the proceedings, the German government argued that, pursuant to Article 72 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Member States retain the possibility of derogating from EU law in exceptional circumstances. The Court held, however, that the government had not sufficiently demonstrated the existence of circumstances that could justify such a derogation.

⁴ European Analytical Collective *Res Futura*, *ROG and the Border Crisis: Patriotic Initiative or Instrument of Destabilization?* <https://resfutura.pl/rog-i-kryzys-na-granicy-patriotyczna-inicjatywa-czy-narzedzie-destabilizacji/>

geopolitical orientation, with a real risk of further escalation and the destabilisation of public life⁵.

At the time the debate intensified (late June–early July), official statistics concerning the Polish–German border were as follows:

Readmissions [based on the bilateral agreement] from Germany to Poland:

- 2023 – 564 persons,
- 2024 – 357 persons,
- by 22 June 2025 – 89 persons.

Transfers in the framework of the Dublin procedure [the Ministry of Interior and Administration (MSWiA) used the term “returns⁶” in its communication, although in fact these were transfers]:

- 2023 – 404 persons,
- 2024 – 331 persons,
- by 22 June 2025 – 225 persons⁷.

Determining the precise number of “entry refusals” is somewhat more difficult. Here, one can rely solely on data from the German Federal Police. Based on figures from 2024 and 2025 – up to the end of April 2025 – it can be said that the monthly number of entry refusals fluctuated between 412 (November 2024) and slightly over one thousand (1,190 in April 2024⁸), while the first four months of 2025 did not show an upward trend. In the period immediately preceding the emergence of alarming rumors of a sudden rise in returns, and during ROG’s activities, the figure stood at slightly over 600 cases per month: from 8 May to the end of July it was 1,816, which equates to roughly that monthly average⁹.

At the same time, July saw almost daily media reports of attacks against foreigners residing in Poland. On 14 July 2025, in Wałbrzych, a Paraguayan national was beaten after allegedly recording children at a playground – a claim later found by police to be false.

⁵ European Analytical Collective *Res Futura*, *ROG and the Border Crisis: Patriotic Initiative or Instrument of Destabilization?*

<https://resfutura.pl/rog-i-kryzys-na-granicy-patriotyczna-inicjatywa-czy-narzedzie-destabilizacji/>

⁶ Oryg. *zawrócenia*.

⁷ Ministry of the Interior and Administration, post on the X (Twitter) platform, 1 July 2025, https://x.com/MSWiA_GOV_PL/status/1940100851349299314 [accessed 10 August 2025].

⁸ Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Clara Büniger, Christian Görke und der Fraktion Die Linke– Drucksache 21/189* [Response of the Federal Government to the parliamentary interpellation of MPs: Clara Büniger, Christiana Görke and the Left – Document 21/189], 20.06.2025, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/006/2100612.pdf>

⁹ BR24, *Die Gewerkschaft der Polizei beklagt die hohe Arbeitsbelastung durch verschärfte Grenzkontrollen* [The Police Union Complains about the High Workload Caused by Stricter Border Controls], 6 August 2025.

The following day, a workers' hostel housing foreigners in the same town was attacked¹⁰. In the second half of July, a kebab shop in Głogów, run by a man from Bangladesh, was twice assaulted¹¹. According to local police and media, during one of the incidents the perpetrators threatened the owner with death and held a sharp weapon – a machete or cleaver – to his face. They also left a sticker on the window reading “White pride worldwide.” The perpetrators were detained the same day. On 19 July, anti-immigrant demonstrations took place in several dozen cities¹².

The reinstatement of border controls on the Polish–German border was also addressed by the Ombudsman, Marcin Wiącek. He noted that the Schengen Borders Code¹³ allows such decisions to be made. At the same time, he stressed that persons subject to “returns” are entitled to humanitarian assistance from the Polish state, and that the suspension of the right to apply for protection in Poland, combined with returns from Germany, had trapped these individuals in a legal limbo:

“Regardless of a person’s legal status under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Poland, they must be provided with humanitarian assistance—so that they have food, a place to sleep, and access to medical care. This is the duty of every authority. It does not matter what provisions regulate this person’s status [...]. Those who cross into Poland from Belarus today avoid contact with Polish authorities and head straight to Germany. They know they have no chance of international protection in Poland and attempt to reach another country. German authorities, in turn, either do not allow them to enter Germany, or—using the provisions of the Dublin III Regulation—readmit them to Poland. Migrants thus fall into a legal trap.”¹⁴

¹⁰ P. Gołębiowski, ‘Paraguayan Beaten in Wałbrzych: Police Prevented Further Acts of Nationality-Based Aggression,’ *Gazeta Wrocławska*, 16 July 2025, <https://gazetawroclawska.pl/paragwajczyk-pobity-w-walbrzychu-policjanci-nie-dopuscili-do-wiekszych-aktow-agresji-na-tle-narodowosciowym/ar/c1p2-27787541>

¹¹ Based on: D. Szczyrkowski, ‘Second Attack on a Kebab Shop in Głogów: First a Machete, Now Gunshots Fired,’ *Interia*, 31 July 2025, <https://wydarzenia.interia.pl/dolnoslaskie/news-drugi-atak-na-kebab-w-glogowie-najpierw-uzyli-maczety-teraz-nld.22170564>

¹² A. Easton, ‘The Far Right Organized a Nationwide Protest Against Immigration,’ *BBC*, 19 July 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/polska/articles/ckg5vxrmi6jo>

¹³ Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) [2016] OJ L77/1, consolidated version 10 July 2024 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/399/oj>

¹⁴ N. Fabisiak, ‘Ombudsman in the Media on Border Control with Germany and Lithuania and the Presidential Elections,’ Public Information Bulletin of the Ombudsman, 7 July 2025, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-gazeta-prawo-wybory-granica>

Demographics, trends and requests for support at the Poland–Belarus border

In July 2025, we recorded assistance requests from 277 individuals traveling in 168 groups. Women constituted 13% of the total number of cases (36), including two who were pregnant. Reports concerning minors accounted for slightly over 11% of all requests for assistance. The majority of these minors – 78% – were traveling unaccompanied.

REQUESTS JULY 2025				
	groups	individuals	children total (incl. UASC)	women and girls (incl. pregnant)
Total	168	277	32 (25)	36 (2)
incl. in Poland	64	134	10 (6)	7 (0)
incl. in hospitals		19	1 (1)	2 (0)
incl. in Belarus	82	107	16 (14)	26 (2)
incl. in Muharrama	15	24	6 (5)	2 (0)

In July, we recorded reports from 107 individuals making contact from the territory of Belarus and from the border strip on the eastern side of the border barrier (muharrama). A total of 24 persons were located within the muharrama¹⁵. They were traveling in 15 groups. Among them were at least two women and six children, five of whom were unaccompanied. Eighty-three individuals made contact from within Belarus, primarily from larger Belarusian cities.

They said that in Belarus they experience unimaginable violence at the hands of uniformed officers. They said there are two main centers from which people are taken to the border – in Hrodna and Brest. In the area of Hrodna, the officers are

¹⁵ The figures we present do not allow for an approximate estimation of the actual number of people present in the zone between the barriers at any given time. We publish them because they enable the identification of upward and downward trends, as well as the recording of periods of increased migratory activity along the Polish–Belarusian border. Individuals are present in the “muharramy” zone either prior to attempting to cross the barrier or immediately following a pushback. This area takes the form of a strip ranging in width from a few meters to several kilometers, with an approximately 1.5-meter-wide strip adjacent to the barrier lying on Polish territory. The entirety of the zone remains under strict control by Belarusian authorities, who, according to reports from migrants, often detain individuals in specific locations, preventing their return deeper into Belarus and/or occasionally ordering them to re-enter Poland or move to another location. The frequency and nature of these interventions are variable.

more humane. In the area of Brest, they are particularly cruel – they beat people very severely and abuse them. Their stories were accompanied by gestures of punching the face, the eyes, and the whole body. Reportedly, many people die as a result of these beatings. Both of them claimed to have witnessed the deaths of their companions. They said that in the forest on the Belarusian side there are about 300–400 people, mainly from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and that there are quite a few women and families with children. They emphasized how extremely difficult it is to survive on the Belarusian side, with many people living for very long periods only on grass and leaves. They said that many suffer injuries as a result of falling from the fence. They knew that in Poland they could not apply for protection and that they had to continue their journey in order to be able to ask for asylum. They found this very surprising, asking why Poland had suspended the right to asylum...

Excerpt from a field intervention report concerning two men from Afghanistan

62 out of all 277 reports came from individuals from Afghanistan, 35 persons were from Somalia, 34 from Eritrea, 29 from Ethiopia, and 18 from Sudan. The country of origin of 71 persons was not established.¹⁶.

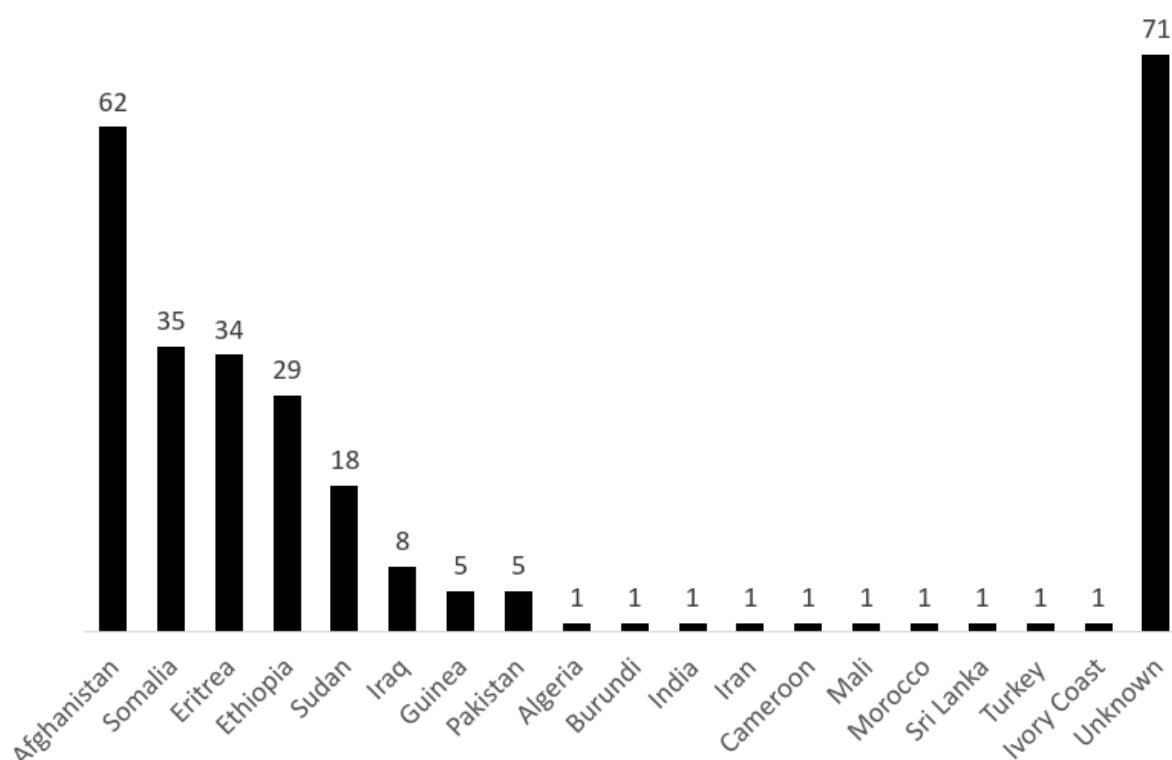


Fig. 1 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in July 2025

¹⁶ The largest group of individuals whose country of origin could not be determined consists of those contacting NGOs from the territory of Belarus, primarily from inland areas. Due to the inability of organisations and collectives operating in Poland to provide any form of support to them, demographic data on these individuals is not actively collected, and information about country of origin is recorded only if the person includes it in their request. Other cases in which the country of origin is unknown usually involve individuals who could not be reached during field interventions..

Support provided

In July, assistance was provided to 108 individuals traveling in 53 groups. Among them were nine children (8%), five of whom were traveling unaccompanied, four women, and a non-binary person.

SUPPORT PROVIDED JULY 2025				
	groups	individuals	children total (incl. UASC)	women and girls (incl. pregnant)
Total¹⁷	53	108	9 (5)	4 (0)
Material support	53	108	9 (5)	4 (0)
Legal support	12	12	1 (1)	2 (0)
Medical aid	4	4	0 (0)	0 (0)
First aid	14	35	4 (4)	0 (0)
Support in hospitals		15	1 (1)	2 (0)
# of undertaken field interventions		51		
# of successful field interventions		40		

Medical and field interventions were combined. Legal interventions in July took place exclusively in hospitals, primarily in the context of assisting individuals in submitting applications for an interim measure from the European Court of Human Rights, which, in the context of the Polish–Belarusian border, provides individuals with temporary protection against pushbacks.

¹⁷ Explanations of the individual categories can be found in the glossary at the end of the report.

Out of 51 field interventions undertaken, 11 were unsuccessful¹⁸, while 40 resulted in effective assistance. In one of the reports, activists noted the fear and stress experienced by people on the move due to concerns about contact with Polish Border Guard officers, which often accompanies such interventions.

Their first time here, the intervention was somewhat tense. They were very anxious about potential contact with the Border Guard. During our meeting, we could hear sounds resembling dogs barking and shouting, so they were eager to move on. One of them had an ankle joint injury (a dislocation or sprain) from jumping off the fence, another had wounds on his hands from the concertina. They were wearing wet trousers and were quite cold. Medical assistance was provided in haste, under considerable time pressure. The strange noises in the area caused them great stress. The wound was cleaned, although not as thoroughly as would have been ideal, and the other man's ankle was stabilized with a bandage. [...] They had previously experienced pushbacks, but we do not know how many. They told us they had been beaten by officers on the Belarusian side. They also said they had not been given food for five days. From the context, it appeared this was not due to a lack of food, but rather that they were in some form of detention or under the control of Belarusian officers, who withheld food from them.

Excerpt from a field intervention report concerning three men from Afghanistan

In July, nearly 42% of all individuals encountered during humanitarian interventions presented with health-related issues (39 out of 93 individuals). Four were patients of the medical humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), while the remaining individuals received basic first aid.

They crossed the border in a group of eight, but two of them were detained by the border guards. They arrived in Moscow about a month ago. After crossing the border from Belarus, they were pushed back from Belarus to Poland almost daily [...] They experienced violence from authorities both in Poland (including the use of gas) and in Belarus. They said that Belarusian authorities allowed 50 people to cross the border daily. People had no food for two weeks and usually ate grass in the Belarusian forests. They said that some died of starvation. [...] One of them walked 20 kilometers without shoes. All of them had an early stage of trench foot. One of them fell while crossing the barrier, complained of severe ankle and knee pain, and was limping. Another had several cuts on his leg caused by

¹⁸ The failure of a field intervention most often indicates that it was not possible to reach the location indicated by the individuals in time. Such situations typically result from difficulties in determining the exact location of the group or from loss of contact, which may be caused by a drained phone battery or the detention of the group by authorities before support could arrive. In the case of some groups, it is possible to confirm that individuals were pushbacked. After a certain period, they re-establish contact to request assistance from the eastern side of the border barrier.

barbed wire. They were slightly infected. We cleaned and disinfected the wounds. Two other people had scabies. One of them had their entire body covered with smaller scratch wounds. Another person had a mild burn on their wrist.

Excerpt from a field intervention report concerning six emn from Afghanistan

We received a call for medical assistance from a young man from Eritrea, who reported problems with his blood sugar levels. Upon arrival, it was found that he suffers from diabetes and had a supply of insulin with him, but no glucometer, and he had not eaten for a long time and was afraid to administer the insulin himself. The medic measured his blood sugar and administered insulin. The man ate soup and drank tea, received water, a food package, as well as clothing and shoes. He was soaked from the rain. He was in good mental and physical condition and demonstrated strong awareness. He had been in Poland for two days, but had previously been pushbacked three times and spent four months in Belarus. The medic left him an electronic glucometer so that he could monitor his blood sugar levels independently.

Excerpt from a field intervention report concerning a lonely man from Eritrea

Hospital

In July 2025, we received information concerning 19 patients who were hospitalized after crossing the green border (in hospitals in Hajnówka or Białystok). Among them was at least one unaccompanied adolescent boy and two women. In the case of 11 patients, the European Court of Human Rights issued a decision granting an interim measure¹⁹, all of which avoided pushback.

During the same month, officers of the Polish Border Guard carried out pushbacks directly from hospitals in the cases of at least seven patients.

It is sad that a Polish soldier beat me, tortured me, took me to the hospital, put me in a car, and then threw me out at the Belarusian border [...] Polish soldiers beat me, took me to the hospital, and then in a car threw me out at the Belarusian border.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Ethiopia who was pushed back from the hospital

¹⁹ The interim measure issued by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) generally provides protection, for the period indicated by the Court, against expulsion to Belarus and thereby, in practice, may enable individuals to initiate administrative procedures leading to the regularization of their stay. The average waiting time for a Court decision whether to grant the requested measure ranges from several hours to as much as 1–2 working days. In the meantime, as practice in recent years has shown, applicants for interim measures remain at risk of pushback, even when hospitalized.

Border Related Deaths

In July, the Border Death Monitoring Group (BDMG) recorded at least four border-related deaths. On 1 July, a Territorial Defense Forces (WOT) soldier observed a body drifting in the river current; it was recovered on 4 July, when the current carried it ashore on the Polish side near the village of Stary Bubel²⁰. On 24 July, in the vicinity of Kuzawka, the fire brigade recovered the body of another man²¹. On Tuesday, 29 July, a joint patrol of the Border Guard (SG) and WOT observed a body floating in the Bug River. While approaching the site to retrieve the deceased, they encountered the remains of yet another person²².

In July, funerals were also held for additional individuals who had drowned in the Bug in previous months. Two were buried in the parish cemetery in Janów Podlaski on 30 July. Their identities remain unknown. Another individual was buried in the cemetery in Koroszczyń on 8 July. In total, the deaths of at least 11 individuals who drowned in the border river Bug between mid-March and the end of July were confirmed.

In addition to the above confirmed cases of border deaths, during the same period up to the end of July 2025, the Border Death Monitoring Group also received reports and testimonies concerning two further deaths in transit, whose identities and circumstances could not be verified. According to the Group's methodology, information about deaths of people in transit provided through testimonies (from fellow travelers, family members, or witnesses) must be substantiated with additional details such as the deceased person's identity, the location of death, or visual evidence (photographs, video) that corroborates the claim. In the absence of such supporting information, these two cases have, for now, been recorded only in the internal database. Should the requisite details become available, they will be considered verified and added to the public list.

According to the Group, by the end of July, as a consequence of the actions of Polish and Belarusian border regimes, at least 102 individuals had lost their lives.

²⁰ TVN24, Ciało znalezione w Bugu [Body recovered from the Bug river], <https://tvn24.pl/lublin/stary-bubel-cialo-znalezione-w-bugu-st8543050>

²¹ Dziennik Wschodni, Kolejne ciało wyłowione z Bugu. Policja ustala tożsamość mężczyzny, [Another body recovered from the Bug River. Police are trying to identify a man] <https://www.dziennikwschodni.pl/biala-podlaska/kolejne-cialo-wylowione-z-bugu-policja-ustala-tozsamosc-mezczyzny.n.1000364788.html>

²² Polska Agencja Prasowa, Kolejne ciała w Bugu na granicy z Białorusią. Policja ustala tożsamość dwóch mężczyzn, [More bodies in the border river Bug. Police are identifying two men] <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/kolejne-ciala-w-bugu-na-granicy-z-bialorusia-policja-ustala-tozsamosc-dwoch-mezczyzn>

Pushbacks and Violence ²³

In July, we documented information concerning pushbacks of 45 individuals. Among them were at least three women and one girl: an underage Somali who had requested assistance from Belarus, where she was located in early July following her expulsion from Poland. Another woman established contact with humanitarian organizations from the forest on the western side of the Polish border barrier, where she was traveling with a male companion. Unfortunately, activists were unable to reach her in time, and she experienced a pushback prior to the arrival of support.

We received a request for assistance for a man and a woman from Eritrea. We found only one person, a sleeping man; the woman was not visible nearby. We gave him a power bank, food, clothing, and hand warmers. He was in good condition, slightly chilled and soaked from the storm. His clothing was torn, but he had no injuries. When asked about the woman, he said that she had been captured by authorities and taken to Belarus [...]

Excerpt from the field intervention report concerning a man from Eritrea

Out of 45 people who were pushed back as many as 22 had experienced more than one pushback. In total in July we received information about 234 pushbacks from Poland to Belarus.

Three men from Afghanistan. About 25-yr. One with very sore right shoulder [...] In the woods for seven days – during this time they have hardly eaten or drunk. One day on the Polish side. After two pushbacks. They talked about brutal beating and dog attacks on the Belarussian side. One was showing a long bite wound, partially healed. They said Polish officers didn't beat them but took them far from the place where they crossed. They crossed around Grodno and were pushed back around Brest – they didn't know why services on both sides take them one place or another. They called it 'football'.

Excerpt from a field intervention concerning three men from Afghanistan

²³ 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.

PUSHBACKS AND VIOLENCE JULY 2025

	groups	individuals	children total (incl. UASC)	women and girls (incl. pregnant)
Reported pushbacks	27	45	1 (1)	4 (0)
Incl. from hospitals		7	0	0
Reported violence PL	15	31	0	2 (0)
Reported violence BY	18	35	1 (1)	1 (0)
Reported violence N.N.	2	2	0	0

I have experienced a lot of violence, my entire body was battered and thrown into Belarus. I really need medical treatment now; my right hand has been crushed and my eyes were sprayed so that my vision is completely gone. From my jaw to my back, my body is bruised from a stick. Please, I am in Belarus and I need treatment.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man. Country of origin unknown

I was on Polish territory. I received food but was not given protection. I was detained by Border Guards and beaten, and a dog bit me in the leg. Then I was thrown back to the border and taken to Minsk. I have no right to treatment or life, please help me.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man. Country of origin unknown

If I enter Poland, they will catch me and send me back to Belarus. [...] I experienced all kinds of problems in Poland and my life is not good. They pepper-sprayed me with tear gas and kicked me in the ribs.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Somalia

Reports of violence perpetrated by Polish state officials were documented in the cases of 31 individuals, including two women. One of the women, in communication with a humanitarian organization in Poland, provided an account of her stay in the border zone.

I need your help, I am sick. One week [ago] I was in the forest and I stayed there for six days. I finished my food in three days, after that it was too hard to stay in the forest without food. We think or decided to try to cross, but when we were walking, changing places we saw men in the forest. They were trying to rape me. Fighting all and we are running too much in the night and hiding from them. I was very scared to stay lonely with bad condition. After that we were four women, but we were all scared. When I checked my phone to call my friends, [it was] not working, the screen [was] broken. And in the morning when I [was] walking I found my one friend and urgently changed place in the freezone, walking for too many hours without food. We eat from the forest to get energy. After one day, [we got a] chance and crossed Poland border at night. We [were] running and walking for too many hours without food but finally me and my friend. We were very tired. We couldn't breathe and sleep. After that they came and took me and my friend [...]. Sprayed my eye and they beat me. How can they drop [...] me to the Belarus border [when I] am a woman and sick? [...] my body color changed to white color and my leg is not working I can't walk.

Excerpt from a conversation with a woman from Somalia, at the time in Belarus

In July 35 people, including an unaccompanied boy and a woman reported that they experienced violence at the hands of the Belarussian authorities. 20 people reported suffering violence on both sides of the border fence.

We met them by accident. Three guys from Afghanistan. 5 days in the woods on the Polish side – 15 in total. Several pushbacks. They experienced violence: they were beaten and attacked by dogs. On both sides of the barrier. One had dislocated elbow, [...] they didn't have any phone.

Excerpt from an intervention concerning three men from Afghanistan

**Testimony of a pushback of a man who contacted one of the NGOs from Minsk.
Country of origin unknown**

On July 6, 2025, I departed from the city of Hrodna, Belarus, heading toward the Polish border with four friends (I was the fifth in the group). After walking approximately 20 kilometers, we reached the restricted zone between Belarus and Poland. There, we were captured by Belarusian border police.

On the first day:

We were detained without any legal procedure. Our phones were confiscated, and our money was stolen. We were beaten and tortured by the authorities. We were transferred to a camp with inhumane conditions, where we were again physically abused.

On the second day:

They returned our phones. They gave us a pair of scissors, and forced us to move toward the Polish border. We were pushed into Polish territory against our will, while the Belarusian officers laughed and mocked us, saying they wanted the Polish authorities to see us crossing illegally.

On the Polish side:

We were captured by Polish border police. They beat us severely and sprayed us with pepper spray in the face and body. Our phones were confiscated again. Then, we were forcefully pushed back into Belarusian territory.

Upon return to Belarus:

The Belarusian police tortured and beat us again, without mercy or assistance. We were left in extremely poor physical and psychological condition, without proper food or water. We were released on July 9, 2025, and I returned to Minsk on the morning of July 10, 2025. I still suffer from visible injuries in my leg, and I have witnesses who can confirm everything that occurred.

"I fainted when they told me, because I could not believe we would have to go through this again." – Desta's pushback.

River crossing.

Desta is from northern Ethiopia, from which she fled due to the civil war. She has been in Belarus for three months. Within one month, she crossed the border twice and experienced two pushbacks.

The second pushback occurred after Desta crossed the Polish-Belarusian border in a group of seven individuals from Ethiopia, approximately 20 years old: one woman she knew previously and five men. Prior to this, they had spent five days in the forest between the Polish and Belarusian border barrier. Desta does not recall the exact location or date of the crossing. She identifies a water feature – a small lake or river – through which they crossed to reach the other side.

The first time that we entered was in an area called Brest from the Belarus side, [...]the second time when we entered... I don't remember the number, the border [post] number, but there was this small lake [...], river-like water body that we have crossed through. [...] the river was so deep. You could go in deep and you could never get out. For us, because of our height, we couldn't manage to stand in the river. [...] the river is not like, you know, running water. It's calm and it stays at one place. And you can go into the middle of the river and then jump from one side to the other. And that's how we cross.

With the assistance of the men, everyone managed to cross to the other side. According to Desta, this occurred around 21:30.

When we were crossing the river, the men in our group helped us because we needed their support. They helped us cross safely, and all seven of us made it.

After crossing the river, they ran to distance themselves from the border until they heard a drone.

Pushback from Poland to Belarus.

I don't remember exactly how many kilometres we ran from the border but we definitely did run. We ran a lot and later we heard the sound of a drone and then we hid again. [...] I don't know how we were caught but I think maybe it's because we were too scared or maybe it's because of the drone that saw us. But it could be the reason.

Four officers arrived on the scene, who zip-tied Desta and her female companion and, using force, ordered them to remain in place with their heads down and not to look up.

The men were beaten severely. Desta reported that before the officers forced her to lower her head, she saw that there were four of them.

We were pulled to put our heads down, and they put this kind of plastic handcuff on us. But the men, they beat them, they used force and beat them. And we were told not to see, but we saw that they were beaten. Once we were caught, they really beat them up very badly and they used every force necessary. They were stomping over their stomach and they were walking all over their body and beating them really badly and they really mistreated them.

Desta did not inform the officers that she wished to seek international protection, nor did she hear others in the group do so. The officers did not speak to them in a language they could understand—Desta emphasized that they had no chance to say anything.

We didn't even have a chance to speak. We couldn't even say a word. The only words that I understood from what they said was "go, go". And when they put our head down, I understood it. Other than that, I didn't understand anything.

The officers then transported them by van to the Polish–Belarusian border. According to Desta, the journey took about one and a half hours. Despite empty seats being available, the officers forced two of the men to sit on the floor of the vehicle with their heads down.

So they drove the car for around one hour and thirty minutes before they dropped us off. [...] all of us were sitting in [...] a car seat, but two people were sitting under our legs, on the ground. [...] there was a place to sit, but the soldiers ordered for those two guys to sit on that floor, not on the chair, not on the car seat.

After removing the zip ties, the officers pushed all seven people through a gate to the Belarusian side. Desta reported that they were rushed with kicks. The pushback occurred at dawn, at a different location than where the group had crossed the border.

So once we were at the border between Poland and Belarus, they opened the gate and they were just trying to rush us and kick us with their legs and said: "Hurry up, go, go, go".

In Belarus.

Shortly thereafter, on the Belarusian side, Desta and her companions were detained by Belarusian authorities with dogs. One of the Ethiopians was attacked and bitten by a dog. Officers destroyed their mobile phones.

The Belarusian border guards, they have dogs. And one of the dogs has beaten one of our friends. And once the dog bit him, they put us into their cars. And they take our phones and they broke our phones. And then they drove us to

another location and said: "From now on, this is Europe. You can get into Europe. And from here you can go to Europe". And from that place, they sent us to another place.

The Belarusians transported them to the Lithuanian border. Desta reported that the area was marshy. There they met Somalis who warned them that Lithuanian authorities shoot migrants on sight and advised them to move to a safer place.

And we decided to go back, but we were hungry. We were hungry and we were in a very bad condition. Some of us were sick. Some of us were beaten. "So let's look at the trail of the cars". And we decided to go back. [...] So the Somalis that we met at that place told us that it was the Lithuanian-Belarusian border, not the Polish border. So if they caught us, they would shoot us. If they see us, they will shoot us. So it's very dangerous. And let's get out of this place.

On the way back, the group was again detained by Belarusian authorities.

Pushback from Latvia to Belarus.

If you are going to die, you will die there, not in Europe.

The Belarusians took Desta and her companions to the point where the borders of Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia meet. Six Somali men were with them. Desta reported that the journey lasted about four hours. Upon arrival, Belarusian officers cut the Latvian fence and ordered them to go into Latvia. The woman recalled that at this stage they were hungry, exhausted, and did not want to attempt further crossings.

We were hungry. We had nothing. And then we don't want this. We don't want to try, at least for today, because we are so hungry and we have nothing. And we are so out of energy. And they took them to the Latvia and Lithuania borders. And then they took them to Latvia. They drove for more than four hours to take them there. And then they cut the fences of the Latvian border and then they said: "Go in". And they forced us to go into the Latvian border. And they locked the door. They locked the fences.

On the other side, they were detained by Latvian authorities.

They asked us who cut the fence. We said, 'It wasn't us. They cut the fence. Belarusian soldiers cut the fence and let us in.

The guards put Desta and the other woman in a car and told them not to look, while the accompanying men were beaten and kicked.

So they put us [...] into the car and they [said] do not watch. And they put our heads down for me and my friend, for the two women. And for the men, [...] she said, they treated them as if they were bulls. And they kick them so much and so

hard that you would be shocked. [...] they gave sticks to each other and they told them to beat each other up, between the men there [...] and they told them to never come back to Europe. [...] And if you're going to die, you're going to die there and not in our continent, not in Europe. And they put us back, they were beating us [...]. There was blood in the car and they told us to clean the blood, to clean the sweat, whatever there is. And we were forced to clean it. And then we cleaned the car and then, they sent us back to Belarus.

Desta reported that when the groups reached the Belarusian side, Belarusian authorities instructed them to return beyond the Latvian border. At this stage, the psycho-physical state of the entire group was very poor. They had not eaten for several days, and the men had injuries.

So they said they're going to send them back there. [...] And I fainted when they said that, because I failed to believe we're going to continue again. [...] And then they were about to send us [back] and they saw Latvian soldiers [...] lining up. So they put us into some kind of room and then we asked them for some food and water because we were so down. And they said: "Ask your brothers to feed you". That's what they said. [...] And the Latvian border is the worst border ever. The people... The dead bodies that exist in there... It's a pile of dead bodies there. Because people are dying there of hunger, it's very troubling to see something like that. [...] [It] is very horrific on the Latvian border.

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 individuals.

Children/minors — all persons under 18 years old.

Unaccompanied Children/Minors — Children travelling without a legal guardian.

Requests from Muharrama — reports of groups/persons requesting assistance from muharrama

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*.

Sistiema – ogrodzenie i system elektroniczny odgradzające zmilitaryzowany pas pogranicza białoruskiego od głębi terytorium Białorusi.

Support total— total number of people reached by organisations and entities operating in Podlasie who agreed to share information with us (Grupa Granica, Ocalenie, unaffiliated residents and inhabitants of Podlasie, collectives, individuals, Podlaskie Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe)

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 regularization of stay such as 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 provided to migrants hospitalised as a result of border crossing.

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 field interventions — number of 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 — all known victims of the border regimes of Poland (also acting as a member state of the European Union) and Belarus are individuals who died along the Eastern European migration route, on the Polish-Belarusian border, and on its both sides. Cases of people who died outside of these areas but whose deaths are connected to the attempt to cross this particular

border are considered individually by the Border Death Monitoring Group (BDMG), in order to avoid the arbitrary inclusion or exclusion of specific individuals. The data continues to be verified and updated. It is expected that, over time, additional information may surface regarding further deaths, including from the period covered here.

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 — persons considered vulnerable in the context of Poland–Belarus border based on following grounds::

Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minors - unaccompanied minors - persons over 45 years of age - senior citizens aged 60 and over
Medical reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pregnancy - chronic illness - disability
Protection Needs*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - victims of sexual violence - victims or persons subjected to gender-based violence - victims of torture - victims of human trafficking

* virtually impossible to identify at this stage