

# DECEMBER 2025

## Report from the Poland–Belarus border



## 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.

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

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## Demographics, trends and requests

In December 2025, we recorded requests from 80 people traveling in 47 groups. Among them were 8 women and a 13-year-old boy traveling unaccompanied.

REQUESTS DECEMBER 2025				
	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls (incl. pregnant)
<b>Total</b>	47	80	1 (1)	8 (0)
<b>incl. in Poland</b>	8	38	1 (1)	0 (0)
<b>incl. in hospitals</b>	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>incl. in Belarus</b>	39	42	0 (0)	8 (0)
<b>incl. in muharrama</b>	1	2	0 (0)	0 (0)

\* Girls are included both in the category of children (based on age) and in the category of women (based on gender).

42 people contacted from the territory of Belarus and from the border zone on the eastern side of the border barrier (*muharrama*).<sup>1</sup> One request was sent from within the muharrama itself; it concerned at least two people who had ended up there as a result of a recent pushback from Poland.

[...] I entered Poland and the police arrested me in the forest. They unleashed a dog on me, and the dog bit me. They took me to the police station but didn't take me to the hospital. They only gave me gauze and plastered the wounds. They told me to give them my phone [...] but they kept telling me to be quiet, that there was no phone, and that they would take me to the camp. This never happened until I found myself at the Belarusian border. Polish police sent us back to Belarus. The

<sup>1</sup> 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 “muharrama” 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.

Internet is not working well now, it's cold, and we don't know where to go. We haven't eaten for nine days, and we've been in the forest for 33 days. The dog bit me more than six times, and my friend was injured by the fence. We need fire now, the temperature is extremely cold today.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man staying on the eastern side of the border barrier

The remaining 40 people contacted from cities in Belarus. Their accounts regularly included reports of concerns related to feared loss of accommodation, lack of funds for food or medication, experiences of violence or fear of violence, and limited access to medical care. In cases where individuals' health conditions required hospitalization or the purchase of medication, similarly to previous months, persons frequently related that due to economic difficulties they were unable to cover the costs of treatment or medication.

While attempting to cross the border I was severely beaten, leaving me unable to walk. I experience excruciating back pain, to the point where I feel as though my vertebrae have been seriously damaged. I am now bedridden, exposed to the cold and rain, with no means of treatment or protection.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Iraq

In the registered requests, information repeatedly appeared about raids carried out by Belarusian authorities on places of accommodation used by people on the move. After describing the violence accompanying a police operation, two of the men wrote:

I am now in Minsk where I have these problems due to the blitz of the police, I have no money to buy treatment.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Sudan

I am right now in Minsk [...]. I sleep outside [...]. Yesterday the police followed me and the policeman chased me. I ran but they caught three of my friends and put them in the police car and left. So I am not safe anymore. They found us sleeping outside.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man of unknown origin

Accounts from Belarus also regularly included information—expressed either directly or indirectly—about a deterioration in mental health, manifested in feelings of resignation, anxiety, fear, and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts. One of the eight women who contacted from the territory of Belarus described her experiences and state of mind as follows:

I don't even have the strength to speak, ma'am. This country traumatizes me every single day of my life. Have you ever heard of Belarus?

Madam, I assure you, it's pure torture here! A year of torment. I was beaten by Belarusians who tortured me because I couldn't pay for a room. They made me sleep on public benches. I spent two weeks sleeping on public benches. I lost my phone. A friend helped me get a new SIM card [...]. While wandering the streets of Minsk, I became everyone's target. People stared at me like I was crazy until, on November 20, 2025, a man passed by and saw me. He assaulted me. That day, I screamed at the top of my lungs, but there was no one to help me. My visa has expired, and I currently don't have the money to renew it because it requires a lot of money. I'm so traumatized that I'm afraid to sleep.

Excerpt from the conversation with a woman from Cameroon.

Of the total 80 people, 33 were from Afghanistan. Nine people came from Sudan, eight from Ethiopia, five from Somalia, four from Morocco, three from Eritrea, two from Cameroon, and two from Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, one person each was from Iraq, Burundi, and Egypt. The country of origin of 11 people was not determined.<sup>2</sup>

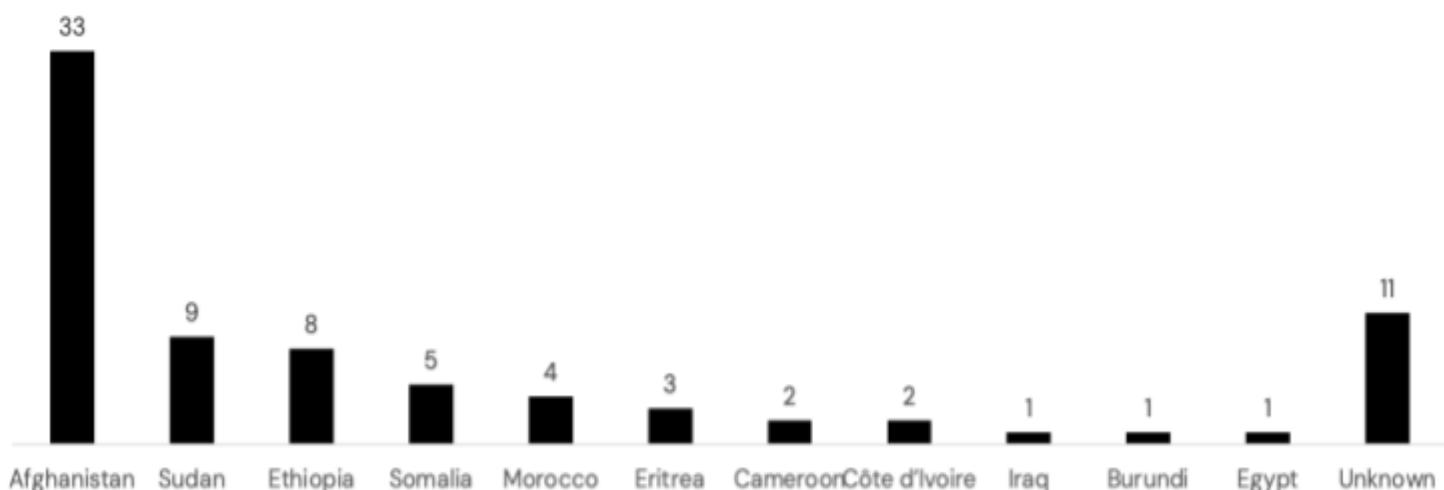


Fig.1 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in December 2025.

## Support provided

In December, support was provided to 41 people traveling in 14 groups, including the unaccompanied minor mentioned above. Only one of the 8 field interventions carried out during this period was unsuccessful.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The largest number of individuals whose country of origin is not 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..

<sup>3</sup> 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

## SUPPORT PROVIDED DECEMBER 2025

	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
<b>Total<sup>4</sup></b>	14	41	1 (1)	3 (0)
<b>Material aid</b>	6	33	1 (1)	0 (0)
<b>Legal aid</b>	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Medical aid<sup>5</sup></b>	10	10	0 (0)	3 (0)
<b>First aid</b>	5	17	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Hospital assistance</b>	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b># of undertaken interventions</b>			<b>8</b>	
<b># of successful interventions</b>			<b>7</b>	

\* Girls are included both in the category of children (based on age) and in the category of women (based on gender).

One of the successful interventions involved a group of ten people from Afghanistan. After several days, members of the group reported that, following the humanitarian intervention, all of them were apprehended and taken back to Belarus.

We encountered 10 people from Afghanistan in the forest, not 12. One of them was a 13-year-old unaccompanied child traveling with the group. Two people had left before we arrived. We provided food, water, clothing, power banks, sleeping bags, and tarpaulins. Medically, we assisted two people with frostbite on their feet, one person with stomach pain, one with fever, and one with an eye injury caused by branches during the march.

Field intervention note

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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.

<sup>4</sup> Explanations of the individual categories can be found in the glossary at the end of the report.

<sup>5</sup> As part of medical assistance, 10 teleconsultations were conducted, concerning 10 individuals.

Support was provided twice to a 26-year-old man from Afghanistan traveling alone, who reported breathing difficulties resulting from a heart condition.

In Kabul, he ran a small grocery shop. He has been in Belarus for four months. This was his first time in the forest—four days on the Belarusian side and three on the Polish side. He crossed the fence over the top as part of a group of several to a dozen people; he does not know exactly how many. He is certain that he saw two people detained by the Polish authorities and does not know what happened to the others. He saw everyone fleeing. He was very afraid of being detained in Minsk and deported to Afghanistan. He witnessed the detention and deportation of other Afghans. He showed us his passport, from which Belarusian authorities had torn out the page with the Belarusian or Russian visa. He feared that, if detained again, he would face imprisonment and deportation to Russia, and subsequently to Afghanistan. [...]

He was in relatively good condition, but his jacket and winter trousers were torn and soaked. He was sleeping when we arrived. [...] He spoke about shortness of breath while fleeing from the authorities—this was the result of breathing difficulties caused by a heart condition. We cleaned and dressed his trench foot and bandaged his knee; he reported fairly severe pain.

Field intervention note

As many as 19 of all individuals encountered during humanitarian interventions reported health problems. First aid was administered to them by humanitarian organization staff members or activists. One such case involved a 25-year-old man from Afghanistan traveling alone, who requested support and medical assistance due to skin problems.

At the time, he appeared to be in fairly good physical and mental condition. He confirmed that his skin was itchy. We established this mainly through gestures, as he spoke only Pashto. Using gestures as well, we explained how to apply the scabies treatment, using the wet wipes we had brought for him. In addition, we left him a set of clean clothes, shoes, and other basic items.

Field intervention note

In December, medical staff from Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) conducted teleconsultations for 10 people staying in Poland and Belarus.

## Pushbacks and Violence<sup>6</sup>

During the same period, humanitarian organizations operating in the border area recorded information about the removal of 26 people. Among them were a 13-year-old unaccompanied minor who had previously received support in Poland, as well as three women. 6 of these individuals experienced more than one pushback. In total, 40 pushbacks to Belarus were recorded in December.

When I tried to enter Poland, I was violently beaten by border guards, resulting in severe injuries to my ribs and my left jaw. I have photographs and clear medical evidence, and I was hospitalized. I have now been discharged, but my condition is still very bad.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Iraq

### PUSHBACKS AND VIOLENCE DECEMBER 2025

	groups	individuals	minors* (incl. UASC)	women* (incl. pregnant)
<b>Reported pushbacks</b>	14	26	1 (1)	3 (0)
<b>Incl. from a hospital</b>	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Reported violence PL</b>	7	9	0 (0)	1 (0)
<b>Reported violence BY</b>	5	6	0 (0)	2 (0)
<b>Reported violence N.N.</b>	5	11	1 (1)	2 (0)

\* Girls are included both in the category of children (based on age) and in the category of women (based on gender).

In December, requests from 6 individuals included incidents of violence by Belarusian officers, while experiences of violence by Polish services were recorded 9 times. One woman was forced by Belarusian officers to cross the border barrier. She broke her right

<sup>6</sup> The quotes used in this chapter come from interviews conducted with people on the move, reports from non-governmental organizations working on the Polish-Belarusian border, and excerpts from messages sent by individuals on the move to NGOs and advocates. Quotes from text messages and reports that are not direct testimonies are appropriately described. Translations of quotes from in-depth interviews are based on consecutive translations and, as such, inherently include a degree of interpreter interpretation. Translations of messages and reports were carried out to preserve the original tone of the statements. Dates, locations, and details that could identify individuals have been removed from this work to ensure the anonymity of our interlocutors. All names have been changed.

arm while falling. She and the people she crossed the wall with were then detained by Polish officers and subsequently pushbacked.

During my attempt to cross the border through the forest with three boys, we were threatened by Arabic men who yelled at us and demanded all the money we had. Despite our pleas that we were broke, they refused to let us go easily. Two of them even tried to assault me, and I cried out for mercy. When they didn't get what they wanted, they punched me and spat in my face. Unfortunately, the torment didn't end there; we finally reached the border, only to be caught by Belarusian soldiers who forced us to climb a wall. I fell and broke my right hand. Afterward, the Polish authorities apprehended us and sent us back to Belarus, subjecting us to insults and punches.

Excerpt from a conversation with a woman from Eritrea

The second woman who was pushbacked in December described the violence she experienced on the Belarusian side of the barrier after the pushback. Separating people during pushbacks and abandoning them alone is a practice used by Polish services that appears regularly in the accounts of those subjected to removals. In women's accounts, an additional risk they face to a greater extent in such situations is sexual violence.<sup>7</sup>

I attempted to cross the border of Belarus–Poland several times. But at my last attempt Polish soldiers threw me out alone to the Belarus forest and I got raped there in the forest.

Excerpt from a conversation with a woman from Eritrea

December requests also included accounts of violence experienced during attempts to cross the Belarus–Latvia border.

In the hope of crossing the border and reaching the European Union, we went to the Latvian border for the fifth time and entered through the fence into the forest and after eight kilometers into the forest we were arrested by the uniformed Latvian guards by beating us with sticks and electric shocks and stripped of our winter clothes and sprayed with cold water from the I was very tired and suffered several injuries, including a head injury, injuries on the ribs, knee and back, and now I'm suffering from sleep and waking up to a nightmare and the imagination of the guards, I suffer from psychological disorders and pain in the kidneys.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Sudan

According to the official response from the Border Guard to request for access to public information Polish border guards carried out 155 pushbacks in December. A

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<sup>7</sup> [Joint submission on Poland to CEDAW committee. WAM, BVMN, May 2025.](#)

decision ordering expulsion from Polish territory was issued to 112 individuals,<sup>8</sup> while 43 people were pushed back under the Regulation of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration of 13 March 2020. The largest groups affected were nationals of Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

### **We felt as if we were not human — an account from the Polish–Belarusian border area. September 2025.**

Hello, I'm from Sudan.

At first, I came to Russia to study and I had no intention of immigrating to Europe. I started my studies at the university, and everything was going well. However, when the war in Sudan started, everything changed. My brother could not send me money. I tried to balance work and study so that I could pay my university fees and cover my personal expenses. I began working two days a week in construction and going to university.

But the problem I faced was not just the challenges at work, such as the racism I experienced due to my skin color and the offensive language. The real issue was that they did not pay me. Every day, they would tell me they would pay me the next day. I would go to another place and encounter the same treatment. I couldn't report them to the police because I was not allowed to work legally.

When the time came to pay the university fees, I could not afford it and was expelled from the university. I could not return to my country because of the war and I didn't even have enough money for a flight ticket. I was literally homeless.

I tried to find a safe place where I could feel free and secure. I didn't search for anything else, so I went to Belarus and met some Sudanese people, each with their own story. We

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<sup>8</sup> We cite the number of pushbacks based on data from the Border Guard, broken down by two legal bases: Article 303b of the Act on Foreigners of 12 December 2013 and the Regulation of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration of 13 March 2020. It should be emphasised, however, that regardless of the legal basis applied, most documented cases of pushbacks from Poland to Belarus follow a similar pattern. After being apprehended on the Polish side, persons are usually either first transported to a Border Guard facility and only then taken back to the border, or forced to return directly to Belarus without prior transfer to a facility. In the border zone, they have no access to food, water, medical assistance, or shelter, and often suffer from the effects of tear gas, without any possibility of removing it from their bodies or clothing. Numerous testimonies indicate that at every stage of apprehension, persons are frequently subjected to additional violence, including the use of tear gas, beatings, threats, and mockery. Theft and destruction of property, as well as the ignoring of expressed intentions to apply for international protection, are widespread. Furthermore, conditions at the border enable other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment. For example, abuses reported in winter include forced stripping of clothing and prolonged exposure to cold water, snow, or frozen ground, causing serious physical suffering. Article 303b of the Act on Foreigners of 12 December 2013.

went to the forest—five of us—and met another five Sudanese people there. We were all Sudanese. We were arrested by Belarusian border guards.

In fact, the treatment by the military at the border points wasn't as bad as in Brest; they were somewhat less harsh. We entered the border searching for a better life in Poland, but the Polish border guards dealt with us using rubber bullets and pepper spray. My friend was shot in the face with a rubber bullet, another one was shot in the foot, and I was bitten by a dog in my leg.

Seven of us, including myself, were sent directly to Brest, while the other three were taken to the camp. They were interrogated and then sent to Brest. They usually return us to the points 296, 272, 284, 269, and 303 because they know what happens there.<sup>9</sup>

After that, we were arrested by Belarusian border guards, and they beat us with everything they had for half an hour in front of them, telling us that we would be sent to Poland. We were then put into a small car, packed like luggage, unable to breathe. They handed us over to forces wearing masks, who also tortured us.

The Polish guards treat you brutally if they find you in the forest. There are no cameras, so they beat you, smash your phone, and spray pepper spray into your eyes. We asked them for help—food and water—and to return us to the points we were at, but no one listened. They sent us back to the same Brest points.

We were many in Brest, with Afghans and people from other nationalities, including Eritreans and Somalis. There were about 40 of us, and we were sent back twice a day, in the morning and evening. After about two or three hours, we were lying on the ground, then sent back to Belarus. We requested international protection, but no one responded to us. We asked for food, but no one helped. This was the situation in the forest, a place devoid of humanity, where we were treated like animals, not humans. Even when we needed a doctor, they wouldn't send us. One of my friends, named Mustafa, would tell them he was sick and asked to see a doctor, but they didn't send him.

This continued for 21 days. Every morning and evening, they would send us to the same points, and then bring us back. Sometimes they would beat us, asking why we returned. We drank from stagnant water, and if someone new arrived with food, they would give it to us. Every two days, we might receive three dates. Mustafa couldn't bear it and died at point 284 at the end of September 2025.

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<sup>9</sup> Reports of exceptional brutality by Belarusian services in the area around Brest appear multiple times in testimonies from 2025.

We felt like we were not humans but animals, treated this way. It is truly heartbreaking to see this from these so-called developed countries, which claim to value freedom, democracy, and humanity.

## Definitions

**Total requests** – the total number of reported groups/people on the move, located in Poland, Belarus, Lithuania or Latvia. It does not consider individuals 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** – individuals travelling or residing together at the time of reported event such as pushback, humanitarian/legal/medical intervention. These individuals may or may not be related by family or social ties.

**Individuals** – number of individual persons.

**Children/minors** – all individuals under 18 years old.

**Unaccompanied Children/Minors** – individuals under 18 years of age travelling without a legal guardian. This category also includes minors travelling with older siblings or other relatives who are not their legal guardians under Polish law.

**Border barrier** (also: wall, barrier, fence) – a fortification located on Polish territory several to several-teen metres from the border with Belarus, in the form of a steel fence topped with coils of razor wire, with additional entanglements of concertina razor wire positioned alongside it.

**Concertina** – razor wire formed into large coils, constituting an additional element of border infrastructure.

**Muharrama** – a term used by Arabic-speaking people on the move to describe the strip of land located between the Polish border barrier and the fortifications on the Belarusian side (referred to as the *sistema*). In Arabic, muharrama means “forbidden”. People on the move also use the longer term الممنوعة المحرمة (“forbidden zone”).

**Sistema** – the fencing and electronic security system separating the militarised Belarusian border zone (muharrama) from the rest of Belarusian territory.

**Support total** – total number of people or groups 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), provided during field interventions or in hospitals.

**Legal aid** – support in procedures aimed at preventing pushbacks and enabling the submission of an application for international protection, provided during field interventions or in hospitals.

**Medical aid** – professional support provided by individuals with formal medical education during field interventions or remotely.

**Medical first aid** – assistance provided by individuals without formal medical education or after basic first-aid / rescue training (e.g. wound cleaning or treatment of trench foot).

**Aid in hospital** – material and/or legal aid provided to individuals hospitalised as a result of crossing the Polish–Belarusian border.

**Pushback** – the forced return of migrants to the border line or compelling them to leave Polish territory without proper examination of their individual circumstances; regardless of whether they received return decisions, and even if they explicitly expressed their intention to apply for international protection in Poland. Experts monitoring human rights violations at the EU's external borders note that pushbacks constitute a form of violence *per se* and are commonly accompanied by additional physical or verbal violence.

**Reported pushback events** – pushbacks reported to us during the given reporting period by individuals who experienced them directly or witnessed them firsthand. The number of pushback events may be higher than the number of individuals.

**Reported violence** – reported cases of violence experienced by people on the move that do not constitute the act of pushback itself. Subdivided into categories depending on the perpetrators: Polish services, Belarusian services, or unidentified (Polish or Belarusian). One person may experience violence from multiple perpetrators; the categories must not be summed to determine the number of individuals.

**Reported violence PL** – reported cases of violence experienced directly by people on the move, 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** – reported cases of violence experienced directly by people on the move, the perpetrators of which, according to the victims' accounts, were people belonging to the Belarusian uniformed services.

**Reported violence N.N.** – reported cases of violence in which, based on the wording of the account and the location provided, it is not possible to determine whether the perpetrators were Polish or Belarusian 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 people on the move 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 sustained while crossing border fortifications at the Polish–Belarusian border, such as orthopaedic injuries, fractures, sprains, or wounds caused by razor wire.

**Individuals from vulnerable groups** – individuals who are vulnerabilised in the context of Poland–Belarus border based on following grounds::

Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- minors</li><li>- unaccompanied minors</li><li>- individuals 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></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- disability</li> </ul>
Protection Needs*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- victims of sexual violence</li> <li>- victims or individuals 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