



NOVEMBER 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.

Demographics, trends and requests

In November 2025, we recorded reports from 51 people traveling in 39 groups. Among them were five women, one of whom was pregnant. Two individuals were children, both traveling without guardians.¹

REQUESTS NOVEMBER 2025				
	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls (incl. pregnant)
Total	39	51	2 (2)	5 (1)
incl. in Poland	6	12	0 (0)	0 (0)
incl. in hospitals	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
incl. in Belarus	33	33	2 (2)	5 (1)
incl. in muharrama	0	0	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).				

In November, we recorded requests from 33 people contacting from the territory of Belarus. There were no requests from people in the border strip on the eastern side of the border fence (the muharrama).²

¹ Among the reported health problems, the most common were: general physical weakness caused by prolonged stays in the forest; gastrointestinal issues related, among other things, to the consumption of contaminated water; irritation caused by contact with irritating substances such as pepper spray; and injuries resulting from dog bites as well as from violence inflicted by officers of both the Belarusian and Polish services. Frequently observed injuries also included numerous and extensive lacerations caused by razor wire, as well as orthopedic injuries resulting from falls or jumps from the border barrier.

[Trapped Between Borders](#) from January 2025.

² 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.

One of the people staying in Minsk reported that they had spent the previous month in the forest, had experienced a pushback, and, due to health problems after being bitten by dogs used by the Polish border guards, had been taken to a Belarusian hospital.

After a dozen or so days, they wrote again. They were still staying in Minsk, without means of subsistence and without access to even basic medical care.

I have been in Belarus for one year, life is getting worse and worse.... I have a problem now with my leg because of Polish soldiers, I can't even move freely because of the pain.

Excerpt from a conversation with a person of an unknown origin

Another man, also staying in Belarus, described multiple attempts to cross the border:

[...] we were arrested when we entered [Poland]. Yes, he pushed me to Belarus. We are in great pain. I myself had to travel ten times to get from Belarus to Poland. The time from Minsk to the border was 30 days, I was in Brest. I spent 15 days in Brest without food and water. They give us water only occasionally. Otherwise we drink spoiled water that is sitting on the ground. We are in great pain and suffering.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from an unknown origin

Nine of the 51 people were from Afghanistan. 8 came from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan, 4 from Pakistan, and 2 from Eritrea. 1 from Burundi, Cameroon, Sri Lanka, and Côte d'Ivoire. The country of origin of eight people is unknown.³

³ 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..

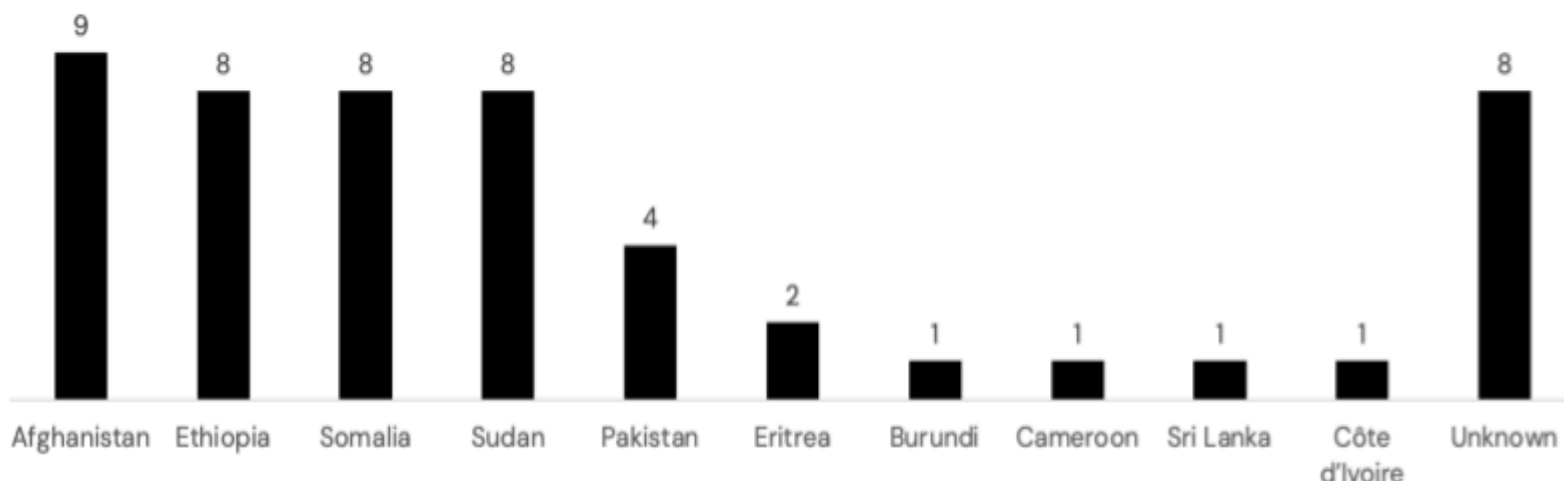


Fig. 1 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in November 2025

Support provided

In November, support was provided to 15 people; there were no minors or women among them. Only two field interventions took place, one of which was unsuccessful.⁴

The successful intervention made it possible to deliver humanitarian aid and provide first aid to six young men from Afghanistan. Two of them were suffering from trench foot, and a third complained of a headache.

It was not possible to locate a man from Ethiopia, who reported head and leg injuries in time. Five days after the unsuccessful intervention, the man contacted again from the territory of Belarus. As it turned out, he had been caught and pushed back. As a result he sustained another knee injury. After the pushback, he was taken to one of the Belarusian hospitals, where surgery was suggested, but he had no means to pay for it.

In addition, thanks to the work of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) medics, teleconsultations were provided to 9 people reporting health problems.

⁴ 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.

SUPPORT PROVIDED NOVEMBER 2025

	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total⁵	10	15	0 (0)	0 (0)
Material aid	1	6	0 (0)	0 (0)
Legal aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Medical aid⁶	9	9	0 (0)	0 (0)
First aid	1	3	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hospital assistance	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
# of undertaken interventions			2	
# of successful interventions			1	

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

Pushbacks and Violence⁷

During the same period, humanitarian organizations operating in the border area recorded information about pushbacks of 11 people including two women. Two of these individuals experienced more than one pushback. In total, 19 pushbacks to Belarus were recorded as some people were expelled more than once.

⁵ Explanations of the individual categories can be found in the glossary at the end of the report.

⁶ As part of medical assistance, 11 teleconsultations were conducted, concerning 9 individuals.

⁷ 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.

I was in the forest of Belarus, I was tortured for 24 days in the forest, I was in the middle of death. I came here. I was beaten and left in the water, with the help of God, I returned to Belarus. They broke my phone.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Ethiopia

Four people who reported being subjected to a pushback mentioned that, prior to the removal, they had been treated in medical facilities in Poland.

I actually came once, and I went to the Polish hospital. [...] but unfortunately, the Polish guards took me and promised to take me to a safe place. Suddenly, I found myself in the Belarusian forest. [...] they sent me back to the Belarusian forest. I escaped from the Belarusian guards, and I'm afraid they'll catch me. My right heart is causing me severe pain.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Sudan

I entered Poland more than once and was beaten and taken to a hospital. They did not let me communicate with you and I was taken to the Belarusian border. Kidney pain and blood loss are all caused by foot strikes by border guards. [...] Yes, I was beaten for long hours, even to the point of awareness, such as kicks, sticks, electricity, and hot pepper spray.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Sudan staying in Minsk

PUSHBACKS AND VIOLENCE NOVEMBER 2025				
	groups	individuals	minors* (incl. UASC)	women* (incl. pregnant)
Reported pushbacks	11	11	0 (0)	2 (0)
Incl. from a hospital	N/A	4	0 (0)	0 (0)
Reported violence PL	5	5	0 (0)	1 (0)
Reported violence BY	5	6	0 (0)	1 (0)
Reported violence N.N.	1	1	0 (0)	1 (0)
* Girls are included both in the category of children (based on age) and in the category of women (based on gender).				

In November, violence by Polish officers was reported by five people, while experiences of violence by Belarusian services were recorded by six persons. One of the women experienced additional violence while crossing the border; however, her account does not clearly indicate whether the perpetrators were representatives of the Polish or Belarusian services.

I tried many times to get asylum in Poland but the soldiers pushed me back five times and I faced many moral and sexual abuses. I even have an injury in my back when I was jumping the fence and I still feel the pain now and I cannot get proper medical help.

Excerpt from a conversation with a woman from an unknown origin

The second woman who was subjected to a pushback in November also described additional violence that she experienced while staying in the Polish–Belarusian border area, as well as in Latvia.

I am being physically and psychologically abused. Please help me get me out of here. I have been repeatedly abused in Poland. Three months ago, I was raped by soldiers in Brest. I had no choice but to go to Latvia. Belarusian and Latvian soldiers tortured me. Belarusian soldiers stripped me naked and laughed at me. Latvian soldiers killed my friend who was with me with electric shock. I have also been psychologically abused.

Excerpt from a conversation with a woman from Ethiopia

According to the official response from the Border Guard to request for access to public information Polish border guards carried out 115 pushbacks in November. A decision ordering expulsion from Polish territory was issued to 11 individuals,⁸ while 104 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, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

⁸ 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.

Honestly, they treated us like animals — Barkhad's pushbacks

The interviewee is Barkhad⁹ from Somalia, who travelled to Belarus at the end of 2024, shortly after completing his studies. He remained there until 4 September 2025. During this period, he experienced six pushbacks from Poland to Belarus. In the interview, he describes the most recent one.

Barkhad headed towards the Polish–Belarusian border in early August 2025 as part of a group of eight men from Somalia. After crossing the first border barrier on the Belarusian side, they were apprehended by Belarusian officers, who ordered them to lie on the ground and then kicked them, punched them, and threatened them while shouting. The officers then interrogated the group and held them in a facility for 24 hours, taking their phones for the duration of their detention. They released Barkhad and his companions the following day after learning that they intended to move towards Poland. The officers ordered them to cross the border barrier.

And then afterwards we were caught by the Belarusian guards. They took our phones, asked us questions and put us at their post for the night. The next day they gave us back our phones, asked us some questions and after they found out that we were trying to cross to Poland, they let us go, they told us to cross.

Barkhad and his companions then spent a total of one week in the forest between the border barriers. During this time, they ran out of food.

On 12 August, at approximately 5:00 a.m., they crossed the Polish border fence in the area between border markers no. 390 and 400¹⁰. Only three individuals from the group – Barkhad and two men aged 22 and 23 – managed to cross the barrier before the arrival of the officers. The remaining individuals did not cross the border fence. During a subsequent conversation with them, Barkhad learned that they had been shot with rubber bullets.

As a result of falling from the wall, one of the men who managed to reach the Polish side sustained a back injury. Barkhad sprained his ankle, which he only learned about during a medical examination after returning to Belarus. Immediately after crossing the barrier, Barkhad noticed two border guards exiting a dark green vehicle. He began to flee. The officers fired rubber bullets at the people as they were running, hitting Barkhad in the back. After noticing that the guards were no longer pursuing them, Barkhad and his companions hid for several hours. They then continued onward toward a pick-up point

⁹ The name was changed.

¹⁰ Between the locations with coordinates 52.7860028, 23.9393250 and 52.8306861, 23.9245833, likely south of the village of Masiewo.

located approximately 20 kilometres away. The group moved very slowly due to Barkhad's leg injury.

And at this point, this is when I tried to stand up, this is when I realized that my leg was severely injured and I couldn't put any weight on it. So, my two colleagues decided that they would help me and we were walking very, very slow because of my injury. It is possible that we could have covered this distance faster, but since we were just walking around the woods, avoiding the bigger roads, it took us four days to actually make this 20-kilometer journey. We did not have food, we did not have any water – the only water that we had was one that we found on a river while walking.

After some time, Barkhad and his companions were no longer able to continue on foot and contacted a humanitarian organization to request assistance. They received water, food, and mobile phones, after which they continued their journey. It took them four days to reach the pick-up point.

The driver who picked up Barkhad's group was stopped after approximately 10–15 minutes of driving. Officers in civilian clothing, traveling in two vehicles, activated their sirens and exited the vehicles, after which all individuals were taken out of the stopped car. Barkhad and his companions were restrained with plastic handcuffs, while the driver and a woman traveling with him were restrained with metal handcuffs. The officers then issued threats toward members of the group.

The driver who picked up Barkhad's group was stopped after approximately 10–15 minutes of driving. Officers in civilian clothing, traveling in two vehicles, activated their sirens and exited their cars, after which they removed all individuals from the stopped vehicle. Barkhad and his companions were handcuffed with plastic restraints, while the driver and a woman traveling with him were handcuffed with metal handcuffs. At that point, the officers threatened members of the group.

They were just threatening us. They had their pistols. They were like, if you try to run, we'll shoot you. But we were not making any trouble, we were just sitting, so they did not hit us or physically assault us.

The officers interrogated all individuals in the group. Subsequently, four additional officers, described by Barkhad as border guards, arrived at the scene and transported Barkhad and his companions to a facility in the rear of a large dark green vehicle with metal bars. Inside the vehicle, Barkhad noticed stickers with the inscription "Border Guard". The drive lasted approximately half an hour.

The driver was [with] someone I would describe as his female partner. They were handcuffed by the officers using the metal handcuffs, we were using plastic ones. And they were questioned, and we were questioned as well. [...] the border guards came and we were transferred to the border guards. They took us to a bigger complex with larger buildings and also many cars. [...] And also when we were coming out they thought that I was pretending with my foot so they pushed me out of the car.

At the facility, Barkhad and his companions were searched by officers. As he reports, the search was conducted without ensuring even basic privacy.

I would say there was no privacy, they searched us all together, and this is when they asked us to remove our clothes. But it wasn't them asking us to do it, and us consenting, it was more rather than threatening and pushing and shouting for you to remove the clothes.

Barkhad and his companions spent the night at the facility and were then questioned again by two officers – a woman and a man. According to his account, during the extensive interrogation Barkhad was misinformed that he would receive international protection if he answered the questions.

So when they took us to the interview, they were asking us very complete questions and it was covering everything, so it was where we came from up until how we got into the country, what were our intentions, who we were, what were our mother's names, everything. The lady would ask us the question and also I asked them specifically like will you grant me asylum. And they were like: "as long as you give us the answers we are looking for and if you just give us conclusive answers – yes, we will give you assistance, we'll give you asylum". And basically they were saying: "we'll give you whatever you want".

After the interview, Barkhad was given a document which he did not read in full due to being rushed by an officer. He reports that, as a result of this pressure, he felt compelled to sign it.

[...] from what I read in the document it was the conversation that we just had, but I will not be able to say that I read the whole document because they were rushing us and he was asking if I would sign it or not. I felt pressured and I just thought that my only option was to sign it but then again I cannot tell you conclusively that yes, I read the whole document and I know everything that was written on there.

Barkhad and his companions were then taken one by one to another room. An officer presented Barkhad with another document, covering its contents with a sheet of paper and asking him to sign at the bottom. The document was written in Polish, English, and Somali. Initially, the officer refused to show the contents of the document and did so only after Barkhad stated that he would otherwise not sign it. At the same time, the officer continued to rush Barkhad. The document contained a declaration waiving international protection and consent to be transferred to a location that had not yet been specified in the designated field. Barkhad did not sign the document.

And one of the officers had a separate document, he also asked us to sign this document, but he was covering this paper with another paper on his hand, so he was just pointing towards the signature place asking us to sign. So I asked this officer to remove his hand and show me the document. Initially he was refusing, but I said that I will not sign unless I read the document, and after arguing for a bit, he let me read the document. And this document was very shocking because [...] what it was saying was totally different to what we just finished in the other interview. And what was really shocking was also that this document was not only written in Polish and English, it was also written in Somali, so a language that I could actually completely understand. And what it said was shocking for me because it said that I'm not seeking any asylum at all, and I'm okay with being taken to... and then this place was blank, and then this document said that I agreed to be taken to a blank space so they could fill this later where they would take me. So he kept on pushing for me to sign this document. And initially I disagreed, I said I won't sign, and ultimately I did not sign, and so they did not force me to actually sign it, they were just pushing, and I just refused.

Through manipulation, the officer induced another man from the group to sign the document. He then took fingerprints from all three men and photographed them.

And afterwards he asked me to put my fingerprints somewhere else and I also refused this initially because I thought it would be connected to this document. Then after a while he forced me and they actually did take the fingerprint. Only two of us were taken to sign this document, the third guy was not. So later on when we were talking to the second guy, he [said that he] also initially refused to sign the document, but they told him that "okay, if you don't want to sign the document, then just write your three names, that is also fine". At the time, he didn't realise that this was similar to a signature, so he just wrote his three names on the signature space. Afterwards they also took his fingerprint, and they also took photos of us, like two pictures.

So just to describe the contrast: the first guy who was asking us the questions and taking the interview was rather calm, and this part of the situation was calm.

But the second part where they were trying to force me to sign, as well as taking the fingerprint and the picture, the officers here were a bit more crude. They were actually getting very close to you, shouting, screaming and they would also make movements like pretending that they would hit you just to scare you.

Barkhad reports that he repeatedly requested medical assistance, but his requests were ignored. He and his companions also asked for water, which they received together with biscuits approximately 24 hours later. Despite numerous requests, they were allowed to use the toilet only once during this period.

So I told officers at all the levels – the ones that caught us, [...] the border guard that took us to the facility as well as the ones that were interviewing us later, but most of the time they would just jump to their questions or just pretend they did not hear or understand. So they would just ignore that you explained that you have an injury.

[...] when we explained to them that we were in the forest for a very long time, we hadn't eaten in a very long while, we asked them for water, but they didn't give us anything during this time we were there during the night and the day [...] So during this whole period they gave us nothing, but they gave us biscuits and water the next day, when they would return us. [...] Approximately, I would say 24 hours [later].

Members of the group also requested international protection. Their requests were ignored, and the officers did not provide them with appropriate information, deliberately – according to Barkhad's account – misleading them.

[...] we asked for asylum, specifically when we were doing the interview at this facility the next day. [...] We, during the conversation, explained multiple times that we were seeking asylum, and she was also giving the impression that they were there to assist us. She was asking us to answer clearly, give as much information as we can, with the impression that they were willing to help us and offer us asylum after. So yes, we did ask them multiple times, they understood, and they also gave the impression that they were planning to help.

Two officers – a woman and a man – again handcuffed the people on the move. They placed them in a vehicle, threatening them and shouting. The officers then transported them to the border barrier near border post no. 300¹¹. The drive lasted approximately two hours. The officers returned the phones to the people on the move and pushed them across the border at around 7:00–8:00 p.m. During the pushback, Barkhad asked the guards for water, after which he was sprayed with pepper spray.

¹¹ 52°32'47.0"N 23°27'49.3"E – northeast of the village of Opaka Duża

And after they took my fingerprints and the pictures, they led us back to where we were being held and later on they came back and at one point they just asked us to wear our clothes very quickly. This when I tried to explain that I'm injured, if they can offer assistance, but they said that there's no such thing. [...] we were handcuffed as well, so when we were getting out of vehicle, again it was just the same procedure, just screaming and asking us to go. And when they were cutting the handcuffs, they were using the cutters and while they were cutting the handcuffs, they also cut my arm. So they asked us to go, they opened the gate, and we crossed the border. When we were crossing the border, this is when I tried to ask them for water, because I was the one who was speaking English. But they said they won't give us water and they pepper sprayed me as well.

After the pushback, Barkhad and his companions found themselves in the area of Brest. Barkhad emphasizes that this is an area where Belarusian guards use more brutal violence and force people on the move back toward Poland. Barkhad's group began moving north along the border toward the Grodno region, which, according to his account, is an area where it is easier to leave the border zone and where Belarusian officers use less violence. Barkhad fell behind because, as a result of the injuries he had sustained, he was moving more slowly than the others. He reports that he had difficulty crossing marshy terrain. Subsequently, officers with a dog stopped Barkhad near border post 389/390¹². They were wearing civilian clothing and were traveling by car. It was evening at the time.

Because I was walking really slow due to my injuries and the other two guys just moved ahead. So, I was walking alone. And in these parts, there's this marshy area with mud. And multiple times, I was almost getting stuck in the mud because of my injuries. But I just moved on and luckily enough, I did not exactly get stuck. So, as I was going slowly, once I got to between border point 389 and 390, this is when a dog, a car and officers arrived. And this is when I was apprehended. And this is when I started experiencing everything I was avoiding to Brest. [...] And honestly, they would treat you like animals. They would beat you, scream at you and just hold you in one area.

The officers transported Barkhad to a facility. Barkhad reports that he encountered many people on the move there, including two of his companions from whom he had become separated while moving along the border. Barkhad and his companions were beaten by officers and locked in a room. In the middle of the night, the officers, shouting, informed the detainees that they were to be taken to Poland. They then transported them to the border barrier in the middle of the night together with other people from the facility.

¹² South of the village of Masiewo.

They beat us, they threatened us. And later on, they just locked us somewhere. And afterwards, they came screaming in the middle of the night, these officers without uniforms. And they told us: you're going to go to Poland and you're not going to come back. So, they took us actually to the border.

Using an electric tool, the officers cut an opening in the border barrier and ordered the people on the move to cross again into Polish territory, threatening that if they did not cross or if they returned, their bodies would be cut. Most of the group stopped in front of the next border barrier. Polish officers arrived at the scene, beat those who attempted to cross the barrier, and sprayed Barkhad with pepper spray.

They had this electric cutter and they started cutting the fence. And they told us that if you do not cross or if you come back, we will cut you, we were cutting the fence right now. And they told us to go into Poland. [...] We were tired, we hadn't eaten in a very long time. And some of us were injured. And this was a big group. It wasn't just the two of us – it was just a bunch of us that they collected us from where they were at the station. And this is when immediately we just stopped and waited for the Polish officers to come to us. And some Ethiopian guys actually did try to continue their crossing, but they were caught immediately and they were even beaten worse. So, we were not beaten because we just surrendered as soon as we were on the Polish side. And when the officers came, they just pepper sprayed us and it was a bit too much. And this is when we were experiencing a lot of pain.

Polish officers beat some members of the group and kicked Barkhad in the head.

I tried talking to the officers since I spoke English, but immediately I tried talking to them. This is when they pepper sprayed me more. And while I was on the ground, one of them kicked me in the head.

Barkhad was then separated from his group and pushed back across the border barrier once again. He reports that, due to exhaustion, they fell asleep in the forest between the two border barriers. They were subsequently apprehended by uniformed officers, who transported them to a facility. At the facility, the people on the move were beaten by officers in civilian clothing and again pushed back across the border barrier, where they were stopped by Polish officers. Barkhad and his companions asked the Polish officers to carry out the pushback at a location from which they could travel to Minsk. These requests were ignored, and the people on the move were pushed back across the border barrier twice more, back and forth between the two sides.

So this would be the second one. The experience was similar. Immediately, they would push us to Poland. The officers would come, and they would ask us “do you like this game?”. And we were trying to explain to them, don’t push us back to Brest again. This time, take us to Grodno, but they would still push us to the Brest side. So this happened the second time, and the third time again, and the experiences were so similar: just getting caught, pushed back, being beaten, taken to the station, being beaten, pushed back again. And this happened, apart from the one we just described, two additional more.

Ultimately, Barkhad managed to leave the border zone after paying 900 dollars to an Afghan man who cooperated with Belarusian officers. Barkhad reports that he spent a total of 22 days at the Polish–Belarusian border, including approximately two weeks during which he experienced continuous pushbacks. He emphasizes that, apart from assistance provided by a humanitarian organization, he did not eat any meals during this period. At the end of the interview, Barkhad highlights the systemic nature of violence perpetrated by Polish officers.

They know that if they push you back to the Brest side, that you’ll be beaten, and they still do it regardless, because this is their plan [...], just to make you struggle more while being aware that you’re already struggling. I would like to say that this is just a part that I would like to stress: that they do things knowingly. Like, most of the actions that they take are not necessarily accidental or more of a coincidence, it’s more like every step is calculated. They know what you will experience based on the actions they take.

On 4 September 2025, after a short period of medical treatment in Belarus, Barkhad returned to Somalia.

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 together at the time of reporting and/or humanitarian/legal/medical intervention. These individuals may or may not be related by family or social ties.

Individuals – persons forming part of groups.

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

Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – minors – unaccompanied minors – individuals 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 individuals subjected to gender-based violence – victims of torture – victims of human trafficking

* virtually impossible to identify at this stage