

February 2026

Report from the Poland–Belarus border

I am currently living in Belarus. My life is in danger: schooling, rent, food. I don't work; it's so difficult that I am desperate. It's hard for me to survive in this country. I can't even [afford to] eat twice a day. I don't know why I set foot in Belarus after I left Africa because of the war. I came to Belarus hoping for a better life, but here I am again, suffering. Instead of going back to Africa, I am waiting for my country to be a little more stable before I return.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Ivory Coast

In February, we received calls from 28 people. Six of them were in the territory of Poland. About two of them we know from an eyewitness report, who spotted a border guard truck — a vehicle commonly used during pushbacks — near a town in the Podlasie region. Next to the vehicle were two people who had been captured by the Border Guard officers. The remaining four people requested humanitarian support near the Terespol border crossing. However, before they could be reached, contact with the group was lost, which could have been due to their phones running out of battery or their apprehension by the authorities.

As in January, most reports came from people who were stranded, often for many months, in Belarus. Among them were at least three women, including one who was pregnant and one traveling with a child. The testimonies collected repeatedly mention difficulties related to securing basic necessities, such as food and shelter. Access to medical care is particularly costly and complicated.

I am writing to you with deep fear, pain, and desperation. I am currently living in Belarus, and I feel completely helpless. I am suffering from a severe and worsening eye condition. Every day my vision becomes more blurred and painful. There are moments when I struggle to see clearly, and it terrifies me. The thought of permanently losing my eyesight fills me with fear and anxiety. I cannot properly work, I cannot live normally, and even simple daily activities have become overwhelming challenges. I feel trapped in a situation where I cannot access the medical care I urgently need. [...] I am alone in this struggle, and my condition continues to deteriorate. The pain is not only physical – it is emotional and psychological as well. I live each day in fear that tomorrow my vision may become worse. Healthcare is a basic human right, yet I am unable to secure even the most essential treatment.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man,
country of origin unknown

I am a citizen of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and I fear for my life and safety if I am forced to return to my country. [...] I am alone and in a vulnerable situation. I urgently need legal advice and guidance on how to proceed safely and lawfully.

Excerpt from a conversation
with a man from DRC

I am from Sudan now in Minsk. I migrated from the war and in Belarus I have no one I know, and I have no place to live because it is very cold in Minsk. I have no money to eat. I hope you help me please. My whole family died because there is no-one other than my wife and children. [...] My mother and sisters died in the war, I have no one to ask [but] you.

Excerpt from a conversation
with a man from Sudan

Two people decided to share their experiences of pushback. One of them was a woman from Guinea. Polish border guards pushed her back to the eastern side of the border fence in early February, when the average daily temperature in Białowieża ranged between -17°C and -20°C.

I have an illness that makes me very tired. It's been two weeks since I was at the Polish border asking for help, but the Polish border soldiers returned me.

Excerpt from a conversation with a woman from Guinea

According to data from the Border Guard released under the Freedom of Information Act, officers carried out 18 pushbacks in February.

I am originally from Eritrea. I crossed the Ethiopian border when I was 10 years old and I was in Ethiopia for five years. I bought Ethiopian passport and I started the process to Belarus and then... [...] But Polish army had beaten me at my leg and now I can [not] walk long ways. Please remember I am in a bad place and in pain [...] I tried to cross the border with my friends and we jumped to Poland and they ran but I couldn't because I am overweight and I did run almost 500m and the Polish army started fire to me and I broke my leg. And I can't do more walk.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Eritrea

Three people reported violence by Belarusian security forces. These were the same men whose fears of being detained and pushed across the Russian border we quoted in our January report. At the time, they said: *If our neighbors report us, the security forces will come and take us to the Russian border.* That is exactly what happened a month later.

A few days ago, the police came to our house, arrested us, and threw us in jail for five days. After that, they took us in a car and left us in the forests, about one kilometer from the Russian border, where the temperature was -19 degrees Celsius. When they knocked on the apartment door, we didn't open it. One of our friends tried to escape from the third floor but fell and is now in the hospital with fractures. Then they broke down the apartment door and entered. We faced death in the forests bordering Russia. We want something tangible to save our lives. We ask for your help; our lives are threatened in any case. We are in a very difficult situation; we cannot move forward nor go back. The immigration department told us that next time if we return to Belarus and are arrested, they will take us to the Ukrainian border. We risk our lives to live in peace. We cross forests for kilometers and enter Polish territory. The army treats us with extreme hostility, as if we were criminals. They beat us severely and mercilessly, then take us to the worst places in Belarus, where the most brutal Belarusian army forces are stationed. You have various injuries and wounds, and they, too, have no mercy. They inflict all kinds of torture on you.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Chad

Key Figures

REQUESTS FEBRUARY 2026				
	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total	19	28	2 (1)	3 (1)
incl. in Poland	2	6	0 (0)	0 (0)
incl. in hospitals	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
incl. in Belarus	16	21	1 (0)	3 (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).

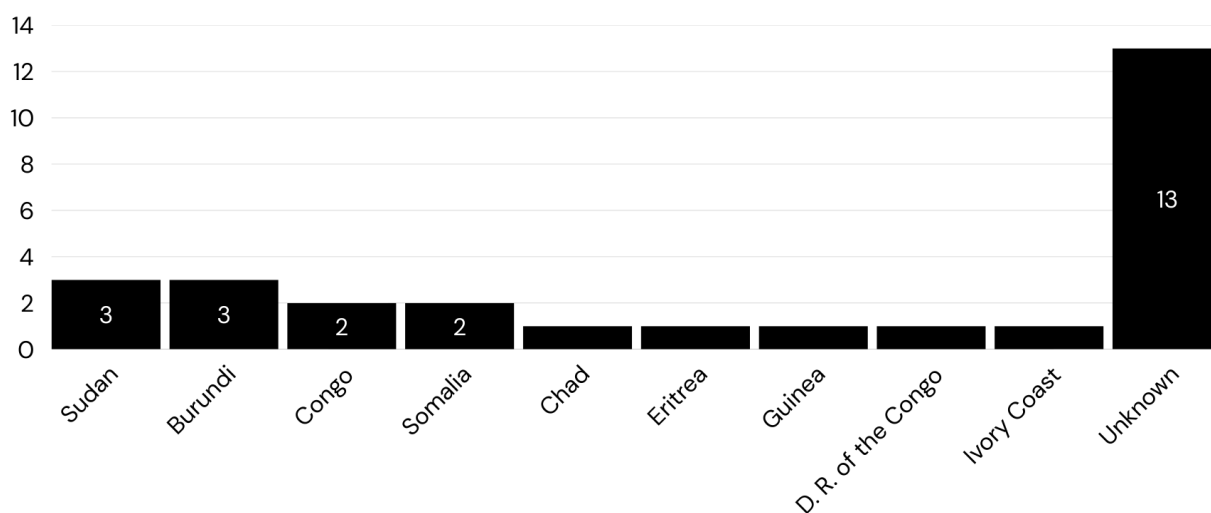


Fig. 1 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in February 2026.

SUPPORT PROVIDED FEBRUARY 2026

	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total¹	1	1	0 (0)	0 (0)
Material aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Legal aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Medical aid²	1	1	0 (0)	0 (0)
First aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hospital assistance	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Psychological support	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
# of undertaken interventions			0	
# of successful interventions			0	

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

¹ Explanations of the individual categories can be found in the glossary at the end of the report.

² As part of medical assistance, 1 teleconsultation was conducted.

PUSHBACKS AND VIOLENCE FEBRUARY 2026

	groups	individuals	minors* (incl. UASC)	women* (incl. pregnant)
Reported pushbacks	3	4	0 (0)	1 (0)
Incl. from a hospital	N/A	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Reported violence PL	1	1	0 (0)	0 (0)
Reported violence BY	2	3	0 (0)	0 (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).

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 المنطقة المحرمة (“forbidden zone”). Individuals stay there either before attempting to cross the barrier or immediately after being subjected to a pushback. The zone takes the form of a strip ranging from several metres to several kilometres in width, with an approximately 1.5-metre section directly adjacent to the barrier located on Polish territory. The entire area remains under the strict control of Belarusian services which, according to peoples’ accounts,

often hold individuals in specific locations, preventing them from returning further into Belarus and at times forcing them to attempt another crossing into Poland or forcibly moving to another location. The frequency and character of these interventions vary.

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 vulnerabilised groups – individuals who are facing specific risks in the context of Poland–Belarus border regime 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 or illness - disability - injury
Protection Needs*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - survivors of sexual violence - individuals subjected to gender-based violence - survivors of torture - individuals affected by human trafficking

* often difficult to identify at the intervention stage unless disclosed by an individual

The study is based on data obtained from individuals who witnessed or participated in the events described. We would like to thank all non-governmental organisations, collectives, activists operating at the Polish–Belarusian border for sharing their reports and notes from the interventions carried out. Special thanks are due to all people on the move who decided to share their own experiences.

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