

MARCH 2026

Report from the Poland–Belarus border

I want my life to be saved before it's too late. I want to apply for asylum because I'm being threatened and my life is at risk. Polish border guards won't let me apply for asylum. I'm a minor, I'm 17.

Excerpt from a conversation with an unaccompanied teenager from Morocco

Since the beginning of the year, most registered reports concerned problems related to people being stranded in Belarus or Russia. In March it was similar. Eight people who contacted organisations in March indicated the lack of access to asylum procedures, legal assistance, or medical care in their accounts. Most people who report from Belarus are unable to cover the costs of accommodation, food, or medical care. Like an unaccompanied Eritrean teenager in Minsk who, despite serious symptoms and a suspected infectious disease, cannot go to the hospital because she's afraid of being arrested for lack of valid visa and funds to cover the costs of treatment. She cannot afford a visit to a private clinic, from where, if the diagnosis is confirmed, she would have to go to the hospital anyway. Another person, a Sudanese man sleeping rough in Russia, writes:

I am writing to you to explain my current dire financial situation. I am from Sudan and have been living here for some time. I am currently facing extreme difficulty in covering basic living expenses as I am unemployed and unable to work for various reasons. I do not have a legal visa, and my savings have run out. I am currently unable to pay my rent, which puts me in a very vulnerable position. [...] Because if the police arrest me, I will be deported immediately to Sudan, and you know the situation in Sudan right now is very difficult.

Excerpt from a conversation
with a man from Sudan

An unaccompanied teenager from Morocco reported being pushbacked and that his requests for international protection were ignored by border guards. Two people reported violence at the hands of Belarusian border guards. With his permission, we are publishing the Sudanese man's extensive account of his stay in Belarus.

We didn't know what our crime was – an account from Belarus

I was displaced from Sudan and suffered greatly because of the war. I was shot, and it was very painful. I have considered returning to Sudan, but when I do, they will arrest me at the airport, and I will be imprisoned because of my tribe or skin color. Or maybe it's because of my accent, or because I'm from western Sudan, or because I'm from Darfur.

When I left Sudan, I went to Egypt, but I couldn't find any work there. However, a friend told me he could apply for me to a Russian university. He said I could come there and pay him the money upfront. He scammed me out of the money, but I contacted the university administration and applied. Thank God, I was accepted into a Russian university. After two months, I went to Russia, and the studies were good, but we were deceived. They didn't renew our visas and told us we had to pay \$1500 to continue studying. I didn't have the money, so I went from Russia to Belarus. My friends told me that if I went to Europe via Belarus, I could get all my illnesses treated there, and I was happy about that. I hoped for help.

After that, we managed to return to Minsk with the help of some kind people who drove us there. We didn't have enough money to rent an apartment, but we bought a phone. I contacted many organizations, but they didn't help us. They promised assistance within days, but I didn't see any sign of it. My friends and I suffered in the bitter cold, waiting for those promises to be fulfilled. We just wanted a shelter to go to, a place to lay our heads and sleep soundly, a safe sleep, a sleep without fear. But that day hasn't come yet. From March of last year until today, we haven't seen anything. We've only seen humiliation from the racist Belarusians who beat us and curse us with the most vile language you've never heard before.

One day, someone offered us work on his farm, and we agreed. We worked for him for a month, but he didn't pay us. We told him he would pay us soon, but three months passed, and he still hadn't paid us. We told him we were leaving and didn't want to work for him. He threatened to report us for theft if we didn't finish the month. So, three days later, we ran away. The farm was outside the city, and we walked for three days to reach Minsk without food or money for transportation. We returned to Minsk empty-handed.

One day, the police arrested us, and we didn't know why. We were detained in a prison on the Belarusian border near Latvia. We didn't know what our crime was. My friends and I were worried and resigned ourselves to death. We had lost all hope for life, for the comfortable and prosperous life we had dreamed of. But we

forgot that not all dreams come true, so we gave up. We were sad because we would never see our families again, and they wouldn't know where we had died. We were in that prison for six months. We didn't know what day it was or what the date was. We didn't know that the year had ended and a new one had begun. We entered another year, and our sorrows haven't ended yet. Those six months were filled with torture, humiliation, beatings, and starvation. We were given one meal every two days. They gave us boiled potatoes, and as for the water, I don't even want to talk about where it came from.

I'm writing this to you feeling disgusted by everything. During that time I lived with my friends, we didn't see anyone helping us, showing us kindness, or giving us even a little attention. We just wanted a tiny bit of attention; it would have meant so much to us.

This is my story from the time I left Sudan until today, and I hope you will show some concern for us Sudanese who are living through our worst days in Belarus.

Key Figures

REQUESTS MARCH 2026				
	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total	8	8	2 (2)	1 (0)
incl. in Poland	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
incl. in hospitals	nd	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
incl. in Belarus	6	6	1 (1)	1 (0)
incl. in muharrama	1	1	0 (0)	0 (0)

* Dziewczęta wliczone są do kategorii *dzieci* (na podstawie wieku) i *kobiety* (na podstawie płci).

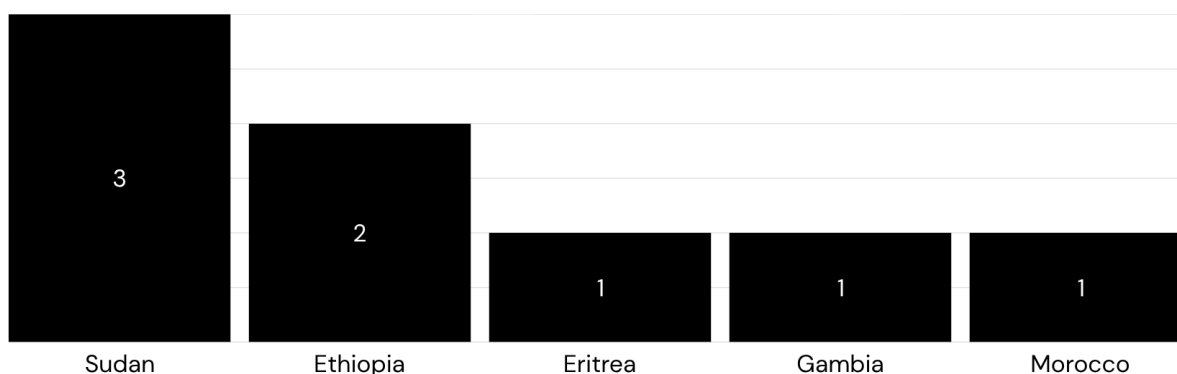


Fig. 1 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in March 2026.

SUPPORT PROVIDED MARCH 2026				
	grupy	osoby indywidualne	dzieci* (w tym MBO)	kobiety i dziewczęta* (w tym w ciąży)
Total¹	2	2	1 (1)	1 (0)
Material aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Legal aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Medical aid²	2	2	1 (1)	1 (0)
First aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hospital assistance	nd	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 MARCH 2026

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

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">– children– unaccompanied children– 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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