

May 2026

Report from the Poland–Belarus border

"We've sealed the Polish–Belarusian border! Thanks to responsible decisions, not a single immigrant illegally crossed the Polish border in 2026!"

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of National Defence, Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz

In May we registered reports from 40 people, of whom 26 were located in Poland. Some of them, such as a young man traveling alone from Sudan, requested support after crossing the barrier on the Polish–Belarusian border. As we read in an excerpt from the report of a successful field intervention: He was in good physical and psychological condition. He had gotten wet and lost his shoes while crossing a river. He had been pushed back five times. One or more times into Lithuania, and then into Belarus. Unfortunately, according to information provided by another aid group, shortly after meeting with the volunteers the man was pushed back to Belarus.

Requests for support were also submitted by groups of people who found themselves in Poland after crossing the Lithuanian border. Among those we managed to reach were citizens of Afghanistan and Pakistan, including six young men traveling together:

We met six young men, around twenty years old, in fairly good physical and psychological condition. We were able to give them tea, food, water, and power banks. They didn't need new clothing or medical assistance. They had traveled from Afghanistan through Russia, Belarus, Latvia, and Lithuania. This was their first time; they had not previously experienced any pushbacks.

Excerpt from a humanitarian intervention report

We wish that if we died, write about us. We were looking for a decent life only around us.

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

Consistently since the beginning of the year, a large share of registered reports have come from people stranded in Belarus or Russia. The accounts we've received repeatedly mention a lack of access to asylum procedures, legal aid, or medical care. A woman traveling alone, eight weeks pregnant, currently in Minsk, described having no access to

even the most basic healthcare due to lacking documents and money. A man from Guinea described similar difficulties:

I am writing to you today to request help and protection as a person with a disability, currently in a very difficult situation here in Belarus. I have a disability resulting from the amputation of one arm, which prevents me from independently meeting my basic needs. Because of my situation, I am currently unable to travel safely, access adequate medical care, or find suitable accommodation in Belarus.

According to data provided by the Polish Border Guard under public access to information regulation, Border Guard officers carried out 15 pushbacks in May.

They beat us until we couldn't feel anything – Samya's¹ pushback

I'm from Eritrea. I'd stayed in Ethiopia for six years and now I've stayed in this country [Belarus] for six months. And I want to apply for asylum in Poland.

There's no peace in our country. There's no freedom in our country. And you can't work, you can't function. We can't exist in that country. That's why we came here.

First crossing

It was October 2025, around 11 p.m., when Samya and five men began to cross the Polish-Belarusian border near Grodno.

We cut the wires and we [...] crossed the border. [...] After the crossing, almost all of us had [injuries]: one guy had a cut on his leg, one guy... His head was hit severely, another person could not move because of the injury they sustained. And another guy also had back pain, like myself, a back, a lower back problem.

When Samya jumped from the fence, she injured her spine. She was unable to move and was detained by Polish officers just beneath the fence. They were wearing military-style uniforms in shades of green, brown, and black.

When they first met us, they started pepper spraying us. And there was a woman soldier and that's who was doing the pepper spray. [...] They [the officers] asked for our phones, they took our phones, and then they searched us. [...] I was beaten where I was, lying on the ground.

¹ The interviewee's name has been changed.

And the weapons that they used to beat you, they have pepper sprays, they have dogs with them, they have sticks, they have everything. [...] They handcuffed the men, but not me.

The soldiers ordered the dogs to bite us. [...] The dog bit me, but because I was wearing a jacket, it got my jacket. And also I was wearing gloves and everything, so I didn't have any injuries from that.

I didn't have any blood. I just sustained an injury, but there was no blood coming out of me. But there was a lot of blood coming out of the men.

I was in severe back pain, but there were a lot of them. I couldn't count them and [I can't] give you definitely a definite number, but when they search you and violate you, I experienced sexual assault. [...] I was lying on the ground and it was not just one person who searched me. It's multiple, multiple soldiers, you know, who touched me inappropriately.

I couldn't see them, unfortunately, because they don't even allow you to look up to them, to look at them. They wouldn't allow that. [...] if you even try to look up [at] them up slightly, they'll probably pepper spray you. So, you wouldn't even, like, dare to do that. [...] When they search you, they touch every part of your body. And you know, they touch you into places where they're not supposed to touch you.

The soldiers were speaking very loudly, but because I was in pain, I didn't notice what they were saying, but I think they were maybe insulting us. [...] I spoke [to] them in my local language, but I was just speaking, but I knew nobody would understand me.

Samya's pushback

The officers then ordered Samya and her companions into a car. As she couldn't move on her own, men from her group carried her inside.

I didn't see the license plate. But I know it was a white and blue car. [...] The guys in my group were the ones who carried me into the car. [...] The car was small, and we got in through the back side. [...] it had no seat at the back. The only seat there was the two front seats. And everybody outside was sitting on the floor, on the floor of the car. So, basically, there was no place to sit. So I was lying on the ground.

One person, one soldier was driving, the other person was with him, was the police officer or the soldier, I mean. So there were two people.

I was guessing probably around an hour, an hour and a half is the amount of time that we drove. And because I was in pain, I don't know if I remember exactly the time because I was focused on the pain in my back. [...] The way he drove the car was in a way that was kind of painful for me, how he drove it. It was full of bumps and ups and downs. And it was not like a smooth, normal car ride.

When Samya and her companions arrived at the border², the officers pushed back the entire group of six through the same gate. She couldn't move on her own.

[...] the driver made sure the car was closer to the gate. And my friends, who were at the time in the group, carried me outside of the gate. [...] And then that's how we were pushed back. The soldiers took all their handcuffs. [...] Nobody was wearing handcuffs when they were [being] pushed back.

From the time we crossed to the time they pushed us back, it took probably one and a half hours or two hours. [...] The only number that I saw when we were getting pushed back was 296³.

As far as their injury is concerned, they were better than me. [...] but I was in a very bad situation. So they couldn't leave me because I'm also their friend and I'm also a woman.

There was a lot of cold.

Belarus

When we went back to Belarus, the Belarusian soldiers got us and they also beat us a lot. They beat us until we couldn't feel anything. And especially they beat the men in our group. [...] And they also beat me because they said: "Move!". And I couldn't move, because my back hurt and I couldn't do any movement. But that's the reason why I was beaten.

There were a lot of them. [...] They have the flag of Russia. That's how I differentiate them. [...] There were people who wore black clothes and there were people who wore, like, normal dark and green military uniforms. [...] They had weapons.

Belarusian authorities sent two members of Samya's group to the camp. The remaining four people, including Samya, were released.

² A few kilometers northwest of Brest, around the village Opaka Duża.

³ Border post number 296 is located near the village of Opaka Duża.

The ones who were severely injured, like myself, didn't go to the camp. But for the people who were kind of okay, they sent them to the camp.

They beat us severely. And the ones that were like myself, were severely injured. They put us to the side, and then we got a taxi to go back home. But there were a lot of groups, so at that time we were separated.

We took a taxi to somewhere else, not Minsk. The place where we are sitting, where we are right now, that's where I took a taxi. [...] I'm in a bad place here right now, and my visa is expiring.

I feel on my lower back and I couldn't move for many days, I couldn't stand for long and I couldn't do anything, even food. My friends are serving me food, taking care of me, right now I couldn't get medical attention while I'm in Belarus.

Key Figures

REQUESTS MAY 2026				
	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total	20	40	1 (0)	5 (1)
incl. in Poland	8	26	0 (0)	1 (0)
incl. in hospitals	N/A	2	0 (0)	1 (0)
incl. in Belarus	10	11	1 (0)	4 (1)
incl. in muharrama	1	1	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).

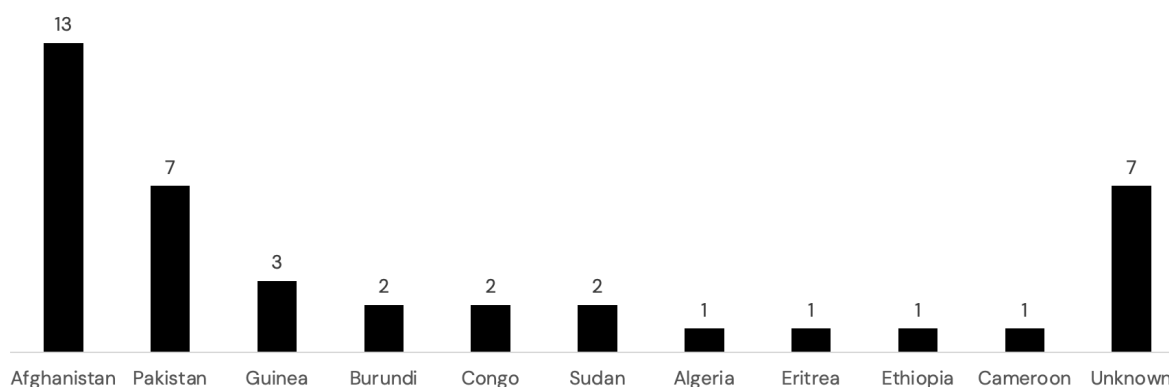


Fig. 1 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in May 2026.

SUPPORT PROVIDED MAY 2026				
	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total⁴	11	23	1 (0)	3 (1)
Material aid	6	18	0 (0)	1 (0)
Legal aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Medical aid⁵	5	5	1 (0)	2 (1)
First aid	1	1	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hospital assistance	N/A	2	0 (0)	1 (0)
# of undertaken interventions			5	
# of successful interventions			4	

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

⁴ Explanations of the individual categories can be found in the glossary at the end of the report.

⁵ As part of medical assistance, 7 teleconsultations were conducted, concerning 5 people, including 2 women (one of whom was a minor)

PUSHBACKS AND VIOLENCE MAY 2026

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