

AUGUST 2026

Report from the Poland–Belarus border

I am writing to you with the last hope I have left. Today, I am not simply making an administrative request. I am entrusting you with my life, or rather, what remains of it. I am a foreigner living in Belarus. I am completely alone. I have no family, no friends, no support network. But my loneliness is not my only struggle. I live with an amputated right arm. In a world designed for able-bodied people, every minute is a physical and psychological ordeal. As a disabled foreigner, I am invisible. I have no rights, I cannot work, and I have no means of support. Imagine for a moment my life: facing the cold, hunger, and total isolation, with only one arm, in a country that is foreign to me and offers me no future. Every day is a humiliating struggle for survival. I feel trapped in my own body and in this country. My soul is weary of crying in silence. My goal is not to beg, but to demand the right to live in dignity. I want to leave Belarus. I want to go where my disability will not be a death sentence, where I can receive care, support, and be treated as a human being. I implore you, do not turn your back on me. You are my only hope for freedom and survival. Without your help, my story will end here, in utter indifference. Awaiting your desperate response

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

In August we registered requests from 13 people, four of whom were in Poland at the time. One successful field intervention involved a man from Afghanistan travelling alone. In addition, we were able to provide support to three patients at the hospital in Biała Podlaska who had been admitted after crossing into Poland through the Terespol border crossing.

He was in good physical and mental condition, apart from some pain in one foot. He received food, water and a power bank. He had no significant medical needs. He had spent one day in the forest, without pushbacks.

Excerpt from a humanitarian intervention report

Seven of the recorded requests for support came from people who were stranded in Belarus. Among them were two women from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of whom was pregnant. Both described problems accessing basic medical care, as well as their difficult financial situation.

I can't afford to pay for my studies. I don't even have enough to eat, which has plunged me into a desperate situation and left me homeless. [...] I'm not eating. Finding a place to sleep is complicated. How can I manage all this, especially as a woman?

Excerpt from a conversation with a woman from the DRC staying in Belarus

Two people reported experiencing pushbacks from Poland to Belarus. In both accounts, alongside descriptions of their pushback, they also described violence they had experienced while travelling through Lithuania, Latvia and Russia.

I am in Belarus now. I was in Poland and the authorities caught me and told me they will help with my asylum seeking. They told me they will take me to a camp in Lithuania. After being taken to the Lithuanian authorities, they have taken me to the Latvian army where they have harmed me badly and I have been attacked by their dog and I was injured badly and they have taken me to the Belarus forest.

Excerpt from a conversation with a man from Somalia

I was arrested in Russia and forced to sign a document with the Russian army to gain my freedom after they fabricated charges against me. I escaped from them through the hospital, then fled to Belarus and went to the Polish border. The border guards caught me, and when I told them what happened, they didn't care and sent me back to the border.

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

We didn't want to put another country, we wanted to write "Poland" – Hajar's¹ pushback

Hajar crossed the Polish-Belarusian border for the first time in April 2024, in a group of ten people.

It was just me, the rest were boys. [...] After we entered Poland, we walked ten kilometres. Then the army caught us. [...] They sprayed the boys who were with me and my husband with pepper spray. [...] They didn't beat me, they beat the boys and my husband. [...] There was a person [in the group] with a broken leg. He had metal [screw] in his leg. They hit him in the leg. Afterwards, he couldn't walk on his own.

The officers searched all the men. One of the officers took their shoes and destroyed them. They were then all taken to a Border Guard post, where they spent seven hours without food or water, from ten in the morning until five in the afternoon.

¹ The interviewee's name has been changed.

They wanted to search me too. [...] I told them: "I'm Muslim". [...] They didn't search me. I preferred to be searched by a woman.

They took us to the camp, to the [Border Guard] post. [...] It wasn't a prison. There were chairs, we were just sitting there. There was a big [room], there was a computer and some people there. [...] We asked for asylum, they refused. They treated us badly.

Hajar's husband, who was present during the interview, also described what happened at the Border Guard post:

There was a woman with him, I don't know whether she was a civilian, from the army, or from the services. She was wearing civilian women's clothes. But she had a computer. She spoke English and French. She told us: "Speak English or French". I said: "I speak French". And that was it. She started asking us questions in French. "How old are you?", "Address, city, street?" Lots of questions.

Hajar says that there was no interpreter present.

They shouted at us that we had to sign the documents. [...] We were scared. We didn't want to put another country, we wanted to write "Poland". [...] None of the ten of us were allowed to write "Poland".

They questioned us. [...] "Where are you going?" We told them, "To Poland." They said: "No, don't write that you are going to Poland, say: we are going to Germany." It was sad, but we had to write "Germany". Then they took our fingerprints and gave us documents saying that we were not allowed to enter Poland for three years.

[...] They searched us at the Border Guard post. They took our phones. Then, when they told us we had to leave, a soldier came in, he was very angry. He destroyed our phones. [...] Then they drove us to the [border].

There was one vehicle with me and my husband, and another vehicle with the boys. They sprayed them with pepper spray inside the vehicle and shot at them with guns [inaudible].

The border guards made Hajar and her husband get out of the van and then pushed them through a gate in the border wall onto marshy terrain near border post no. 635². The remaining members of the group were pushed back at a different location. At the time of the pushback, the men were still not wearing shoes.

² An area by the Wołkuszanka River, near Lubinowo.

They threw us out in the afternoon. [...] But I don't remember which day it was, because we were in the forest for a month.

We walked for forty minutes. We found a way out. [...] We have a video from the swamp. It was very big. There was dirty water there.

Key Figures

REQUESTS AUGUST 2026				
	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total	13	13	0 (0)	4 (1)
incl. in Poland	4	4	0 (0)	2 (0)
incl. in hospitals	3	3	0 (0)	2 (0)
incl. in Belarus	7	7	0 (0)	2 (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).

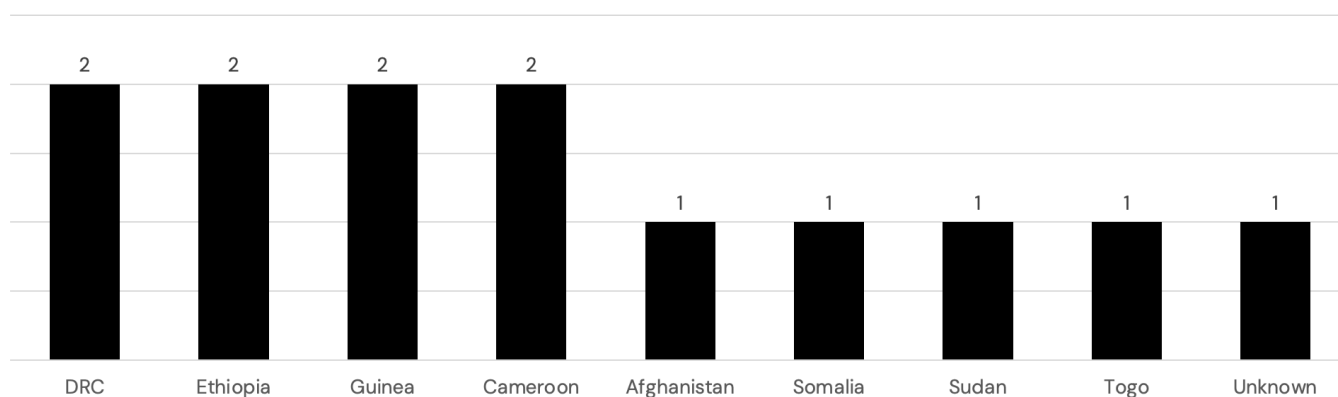


Fig. 1 Countries of origin of those reporting a need for support in July 2026.

SUPPORT PROVIDED AUGUST 2026

	groups	individuals	children* (incl. UASC)	women and girls* (incl. pregnant)
Total³	7	7	1 (1)	1 (0)
Material aid	4	4	1 (1)	2 (0)
Legal aid	3	3	0 (0)	2 (0)
Medical aid⁴	2	2	0 (0)	1 (0)
First aid	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Assistance in hospitals	3	3	0 (0)	2 (0)
Psychological help	2	2	0 (0)	1 (0)
# of undertaken interventions			1	
# 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 VIOLENCE AUGUST 2026

	groups	individuals	minors* (incl. UASC)	women* (incl. pregnant)
Reported pushbacks	2	2	0 (0)	0 (0)
Incl. from a hospital	0	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).

³ Explanations of the individual categories can be found in the glossary at the end of the report.

⁴ As part of medical assistance, 2 teleconsultations were conducted, concerning 2 people, including 1 woman.

Definitions

Total requests – the total number of reported groups/people on the move, located in Poland, Belarus, Russia, 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	- minors - unaccompanied minors - individuals over 45 years of age - senior citizens aged 60 and over
Medical reasons	- pregnancy - chronic illness or illness - disability - injury
Protection Needs*	- 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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