

Belarus

February 2024

Access to asylum: UNHCR and partners focus on ensuring unhindered access to territory, refugee status determination procedure and fair decision-making on asylum applications.

Self-reliance and inclusion: While urgent needs remain, UNHCR is prioritizing self-reliance and socio-economic inclusion through community-based approaches while strengthening partnerships with development actors.

Ukraine and mixed-movement situations: UNHCR continues to lead and coordinate the Ukraine refugee response including the implementation of the 2024 Refugee Response Plan (RRP) in close collaboration with relevant government entities, UN agencies and NGOs.

UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS (as of 30 June 2023)*

Refugees	31,604
Asylum-seekers	359
Stateless people	5,587

Top three countries of origin*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	31,257	Ukraine	272
Afghanistan	139	Afghanistan	24
Georgia	47	Syrian Arab Republic	11

*UNHCR 2023 Mid-Year Trends and UNHCR data finder

UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

Legal Assistance and documentation: UNHCR monitors access to territory and protection. 396 refugees received legal counselling or assistance from UNHCR and its partner Refugee Counselling Service from October 2023 to February 2024 with 4002 refugees since the beginning of the refugee response.

Support to the most vulnerable: From October 2023 to February 2024, 144 refugees were supported with emergency cash assistance, and 1,712 refugees received essential items, such as hygiene kits, and other items, this is a total of 3757 since the beginning of the refugee response.

Coordination: Continuing to lead and coordinate the refugee response, UNHCR collaborates closely and engages in consultations with relevant Government counterparts, UN agencies, and NGOs. A cash coordination taskforce is being established to strengthen coordination of cash assistance implemented under the RRRP 2024.

Self-reliance and Inclusion: UNHCR continues to identify gaps and advocate for refugee inclusion in national services and development plans, as well as for promoting effective access to government social protection systems.

HIGHLIGHTS

Protection monitoring and profiling

UNHCR completed its final 2023 Protection Monitoring and Profiling survey, based on 731 interviews conducted from October to December 2023. Most refugees from Ukraine chose Belarus for several reasons: 38% cited family and friends already here, 12% mentioned available accommodation, and 9% highlighted cultural similarities and job opportunities.

Working in partnership

On 15 December 2023, the UNICEF and UNHCR signed an LOU and joint work plan in line with the Global Strategic Framework. It aims to build on previous efforts and strengthen collaboration, particularly regarding the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people. The work plan will be implemented in 2024-2025.

Child protection

In late 2023, UNHCR distributed drawing sets to 20 children, including refugees from Ukraine, in temporary accommodation centres for asylum-seekers (TAC) in Vitebsk and Mogilev regions.



The participants of the art workshop ©UNHCR Belarus

On 28 September 2023, UNHCR and its partner hosted an art workshop in Gomel for refugee children, in line with the global art contest "Hope away from home." Art professionals guided the children in crafting their unique artworks for the contest, fostering creativity, and facilitating new friendships and connections.

Key Priorities

- **Access to territory:** UNHCR is in the process of enhancing collaboration with the State Border Committee of Belarus (SBC) to optimize their protection interventions and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, and other forcibly displaced.
- **Asylum procedures:** To enhance the Belarusian asylum system and improve the quality of the state refugee status determination procedure (SRSDP), UNHCR engages in capacity building and collaborates closely with asylum authorities at both national and regional levels. This includes facilitating government counterparts' participation in training activities, such as online courses on international refugee law and statelessness conducted by the [International Institute of Humanitarian Law](#).
- **Community empowerment and self-reliance:** UNHCR is actively exploring opportunities to broaden its network of partnerships by diversifying collaborations with stakeholders.
- **Detention monitoring:** UNHCR regularly receives information from its government counterparts (MOI, SBC) on foreigners in detention. UNHCR's partner – Refugee Counseling Service – visits individuals in detention to provide asylum counselling, introduce SRSDP, present available assistance as well as make referrals where relevant.
- **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA):** UNHCR is leading efforts to enhance capacity building of staff and partners and raising awareness among refugees about SEA, including information on how to seek support and services for the Ukraine situation and the mixed-movement situation.
- **Coordination:** UNHCR's efforts focus on **strengthening coordination and referral mechanisms** for the Ukrainian response and mixed movement response, particularly through the 5Ws method and service mapping.

Working with Partners

- In close collaboration with the **MOI's Department on Citizenship and Migration and the State Border Committee**, UNHCR works to maintain the protection space in Belarus and promote the inclusion of forcibly displaced in national systems.
- UNHCR currently partners with **the Refugee Counselling Service** and strengthens its partnerships with the **Minsk Bar Association and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), UN development agencies**, including through its membership with the UNCT, particularly focused on socio-economic inclusion.
- Collaboratively, efforts are in action with IOM to strengthen coordination in addressing the **mixed-movement situation** in Belarus. This includes establishing a coordination and technical forum and advocating for access to borders for protection monitoring.
- UNHCR works with partners to support their **Accountability to Affected People (AAP)** mechanisms to ensure that communities are meaningfully and continuously involved in decisions that directly impact their lives.

Statelessness

- According to the Government of Belarus, there are 5567 stateless people in the territory as of December 2023. The Government has pledged to accede to the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on Stateless and is committed to continue progress towards accession. UNHCR is prioritizing awareness raising, technical support, and socio-economic inclusion of stateless people.

UNHCR Presence in Belarus

Staff:

8 National Staff
 2 International Staff
 1 International UNV

Offices:

1 Country Office in Minsk

*UNHCR's presence in all regions is ensured through its partnership project Refugee Counselling Services.

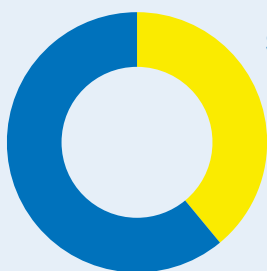
Financial information (September 2023)

Financial requirements

\$ 4.3 M

Funded 39%
 \$ 1.7 M

Funding gap 61%
 \$ 2.6 M



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