

# Belarus

February 2022

**UNHCR mandate:** UNHCR has been working and assisting forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Belarus since 1995.

**International legal framework:** Belarus has been party to the **1951 Convention** relating to the Status of Refugees and its **1967 Protocol** since 2001.

**Access to asylum procedures:** UNHCR continuously advocates for access to asylum and supports the Government in strengthening its asylum system and policies.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN\*

|                             |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Refugees                    | <b>2,924</b> |
| Asylum-seekers              | <b>136</b>   |
| Stateless persons           | <b>6,104</b> |
| Total population of concern | <b>9,164</b> |

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN\*

| Refugees             |              | Asylum-seekers |           |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------|
| Ukraine              | <b>2,490</b> | Ukraine        | <b>51</b> |
| Afghanistan          | <b>207</b>   | Iraq           | <b>25</b> |
| Syrian Arab Republic | <b>69</b>    | DRC and Turkey | <b>10</b> |

\*Data source: UNHCR 2021 Mid-Year Statistical Report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

## UKRAINE SITUATION

At the time of updating this fact sheet, in light of the rapidly deteriorating situation and war in Ukraine, UNHCR is ramping up its response and capacity in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

UNHCR estimates that up to 4 million refugees may flee Ukraine, with more than 650,000 people having already crossed an international border in search of safety from 24 to 28 February.

UNHCR declared a Level 3 Emergency for Ukraine and a Level 2 Emergency for neighbouring countries on 25 February. UNHCR and OCHA jointly **launched** the **Humanitarian Flash Appeal** and the **Regional Refugee Response Plan** for the Ukraine situation on 1 March.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### People stranded at the EU border

As of February 2022, out of an estimated 2,000 people initially stranded at the Belarus-European Union (EU) border, around 780 (including 285 children) remain sheltered in a logistics centre warehouse near the Belarus-Poland border. An unknown number of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants remain in other regions of the country. Some 4,170 people have returned to their country of origin, most of them to Iraq.

### Counselling on asylum-procedures

UNHCR provides asylum-related counselling over the phone and in person at the UNHCR Office in Minsk and at the logistics centre warehouse. Asylum-seekers are referred to the authorities for Refugee Status Determination. 299 asylum-related consultations were provided by UNHCR from 1 September 2021 to 31 January 2022. Out of these, 170 persons expressed their wish to seek asylum and were assisted by UNHCR.

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



UNHCR has distributed through the BRC warm clothes, shoes, mattresses, blankets and food items among other aid to people stranded at the Belarus-EU border.

## Key Priorities

- Protection monitoring and access to asylum:** UNHCR regularly monitors the situation of people sheltered at the logistics centre warehouse and of other persons of concern in urban areas in the country. UNHCR provides remote and in person asylum-related counselling, helping those who want to seek asylum in Belarus by making appointments with asylum authorities, liaising with the Government counterpart on individual cases, and assisting with interpretation.
- Solutions:** UNHCR has been **calling** for the remaining people sheltered at the border to be moved to a safer and adequate accommodation, and to look for solutions based on their individual needs and circumstances.
- Strengthening asylum procedures:** UNHCR enhances the Belarusian asylum system and the quality of state Refugee Status Determination procedures through capacity-building and liaison with personnel of the asylum authorities at national and regional levels. UNHCR monitors the quality of interviews and decision-making.
- Detention monitoring:** UNHCR visits detention facilities to counsel apprehended foreigners who may be in need of international protection on the possibility to apply for asylum in Belarus.
- Capacity-building:** UNHCR conducted in February 2022 a training for interpreters and a training on Child Protection and Best Interest Procedures for relevant partner, Government and UNHCR staff.
- Health and education:** UNHCR facilitates access of persons of concern to medical services through the Belarusian Red Cross (BRC). UNHCR also supports Russian language courses for persons of concern implemented by the BRC and in collaboration with several Belarusian universities.

## Working with Partners

- Local partnerships:** UNHCR cooperates with the Ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs, as well as the Ministries of Health, Education, Labour and Social Protection, and the State Border Committee. In 2022, UNHCR has two non-governmental implementing partners: the BRC and the Refugee Counselling Service, the latter being a joint project of UNHCR and its legal partner, the Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers.
- Inter-agency coordination:** UNHCR co-chairs the Refugee and Migrant Task Force with IOM to coordinate humanitarian assistance provided through the BRC to people sheltered at the logistics centre near the Bruzgi-Kuznica border crossing point.

## Statelessness

- International legal framework:** Belarus is not yet party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, despite the Government's pledge in October 2019 to accede to both.
- Assistance to stateless people:** UNHCR and its partners provide free legal counselling to stateless persons. In 2020-2021, vulnerable stateless persons received financial aid to pay administrative fees required to apply for citizenship and permanent residence to facilitate naturalization. Overall, 231 stateless persons were assisted financially, including 120 persons in 2021.

## UNHCR Presence in Belarus

### Staff:

6 National Staff  
 2 International Staff  
 2 Deployees on mission

### Offices:

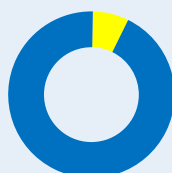
1 Representation Office in Minsk

## Financial information (22 February 2022)

Information relates to the Representation for Central Europe, which covers Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia and Slovenia.

**Financial requirements**  
**USD 5.1 M\***

Funding gap 93%  
**4.7 M**



Funded 7%  
**0.4 M**

\*This amount refers to the initial budget approved by UNHCR's Executive Committee for 2022, prior to the latest hostilities in Ukraine.

UNHCR is grateful to the donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the 2022 global programmes. Donors of USD 10 million or more are:

**Sweden | Norway | Netherlands | Denmark | Germany | Switzerland | Belgium | Ireland**

Unearmarked contributions provides UNHCR with vital flexibility in determining how best to protect and assist persons of concern who are in the greatest needs or at the greatest risks.