



Ukraine Refugee Crisis

Last updated May 4, 2022

Background and Overview

Since February 24, 2022, the UNHCR has reported more than 2.5 million Ukrainians fleeing the military invasion by Russian forces. This is the largest mass migration in Europe since World War II. The majority of refugees fleeing Ukraine are women and children due to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's order for men ages 18-60 to help in combat. Refugees could eventually number up to seven million and an additional seven million are expected to be internally displaced.¹

The majority of refugees have fled to other European countries. Over one million, about three-fifths of the total population, have arrived in neighboring Poland. Other countries with significant arrivals include Hungary and Slovakia.²

On March 3, 2022 the UN Special Rapporteur expressed concern about reports of racist threats and discrimination against non-White people who are fleeing violence. Black Africans, people from India and Pakistan, and people of Middle Eastern descent have reported being pushed back in lines at the border, being denied access to bomb shelters, and being refused at shelters or other temporary accommodations.³ The UN, the International Organization for Migration, and U.S. leaders have all called for humane treatment and access to protection for all who are fleeing, including third-country nationals.⁴

Relief for Ukrainians currently in the US

On March 3, 2022 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ukrainian nationals and those who last resided in Ukraine and the registration period opened on April 19. TPS is available for Ukrainians who have resided in the US since at least April 11, 2022. TPS applicants undergo background checks and receive work authorization. TPS for Ukraine has been designated for a period of 18 months, though this period can be extended by the administration. An estimated 800 of the 28,000 Ukrainians who may be eligible for TPS are here in Massachusetts.⁵

As of March 4, 2022, deportations to Ukraine have been suspended. In addition, DHS announced a number of measures to create more flexibility in immigration services for Ukrainians, including flexibility around requests for extension of status and off-campus employment for international students.⁶

Uniting for Ukraine Program

In late March, President Biden announced that the U.S. would welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainians and others fleeing the Russian invasion. In April 2022, the administration announced the Uniting for Ukraine program, which allows Ukrainians with a financial sponsor in the U.S. to apply for humanitarian parole to enter the country. Individuals arriving through this program will generally be granted humanitarian parole status for up to two years.

¹ <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/ukraine-humanitarian-crisis-refugees-aid>

² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=28194&LangID=E>

⁴ <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-agency-calls-for-end-to-discrimination-against-third-country-nationals-fleeing-ukraine/6472312.htm>

⁵ <https://cmsny.org/tps-ukraine-022522/>

⁶ <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/immigration-help-available-to-those-affected-by-special-situations-including-the-invasion-of-ukraine>

Future Arrivals: Refugee Resettlement and Asylum Seekers

Before refugees can be resettled in the United States, they must register with the U.N. and begin the process with local authorities. Specific resettlement efforts to the U.S. in response to the current crisis are not yet known, though we can expect arrivals from a limited number of Ukrainian refugees who were on the path to resettlement prior to the most recent events.

For the current fiscal year (ending September 30, 2022), the number of refugees that can be resettled in the U.S. from Europe is capped at 10,000. The Biden Administration could increase this quota for Ukrainians and other nationals fleeing invaded areas. The Biden Administration could also give authorization for travel to the U.S. and allow for issuance of humanitarian parole once here, similar to the process undertaken for the evacuation of Afghans this past year, and expedite the processing and entry of those with pending refugee or family based petitions.

Several thousands of Ukrainians have also been arriving at our southern border seeking protection, and the number of Ukrainians seeking asylum at our borders or after arriving in the US is likely to increase in coming months. At least 200 Ukrainians who sought protection at our borders have settled in Massachusetts. To guarantee that Ukrainians and all other asylum seekers are afforded their right to ask for protection at our border, we must end harmful policies like Title 42 and the Migrant Protection Protocols (also known as "Remain in Mexico" program) that turn away those who would qualify for protection and leave them vulnerable to danger in Mexico or their home countries.

How To Help

There are many community efforts underway in Greater Boston and Western Massachusetts, and other areas of the state to help support Ukraine. The Boston Globe is maintaining a list of different charities, actions, and initiatives [HERE](#).

The [Center Makor](#) is coordinating opportunities to volunteer to host a Ukrainian family.

Refugee resettlement agencies in Massachusetts are also providing some assistance to Ukrainian arrivals, though they generally do not have refugee status or qualify for refugee benefits. In addition, refugees from Afghanistan, Haiti and other countries are already in our communities. Monetary and in-kind donations and volunteering are very helpful ways to support important resettlement efforts in our communities. Learn more at the links below about volunteering and other services:

[Ascentria Care Alliance](#)
[Catholic Charities Boston](#)
[International Institute of New England](#)

[Jewish Family Services MetroWest](#)
[Jewish Family Services of Western Mass](#)
[Refugee Immigrant and Assistance Center](#)