

REFUGEES STUCK BETWEEN BELARUS AND POLAND

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More than 1000 refugees from the Middle East are gathered and stuck at the border between Belarus and Poland. Polish forces are using tear gas and violence against people trying to cross the border. The refugees are sleeping outside with minimalistic access to food, water, and shelter, which has led to several deaths. Both Belarus and Poland are violating several human rights, and ACHRS opposes these violations against asylum seekers.

More than 1000 refugees, mainly civilians from the Middle East, including women and children, are stuck at the border between Belarus and Poland. As thousands of refugees moved towards the Polish border on November 8, this marked a new peak of people trying to enter Poland from the Belarusian side. At the border, there was significant activity from both military transport and police cars on call towards the border area. In recent months, the Polish border guard has reported hundreds of illegal border crossing attempts daily.

The Polish Minister of Defense was quick to state on Twitter that Poland has more than 12,000 personnel at the border, and that they are mobilizing the territorial defense forces. Several videos show large numbers of armed soldiers stationed on the Polish side of the border. The soldiers are using tear gas against people trying to cross the border-fence and pushing them back with force.

Anton Bychkovsky, a spokesman for the Belarusian border guard, said the refugees did not pose a security threat and did not behave aggressively. He further said that the refugees chose to organize themselves in this way to avoid forced deportation from the Polish side, and at the same time get international attention directed at Poland's human rights violations.

Belarus' abuse of people on its borders amounts to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and in some cases may constitute torture, which violates Belarus's international legal obligations. The counterattack of the Polish forces violates the right of asylum under EU law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Additionally, this creates a chain of refoulement risks in violation of international refugee law, and exposes people to inhuman and degrading conditions, which violates both Polish and EU law.

ACHRS condemns the actions of both Belarus and Poland as they violate asylum seekers' human rights along their border. We urge Belarus, Poland, and the EU to accept the refugees and asylum seekers, as these individuals have the right to seek asylum. Additionally, the authorities should stop the abuse immediately and hold those who abuse their powers accountable.