

# RESEARCH GUIDE

# WAR IN UKRAINE

**"For predators and human traffickers, the war in Ukraine is not a tragedy,  
it's an opportunity – and women and children are the targets."**

*António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN*

PREPARED BY  
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## MAJOR FORMS OF TRAFFICKING

- Forced Labor/ Forced Child Labor
- Child Soldiers
- Sexual Exploitation/Sex trafficking
- Illegal Adoption/Pregnancy Trafficking
- Organ Trafficking
- Forced Begging
- Forced Marriage

### SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

**Migrants** – Migrants are people who move away from where they typically reside. Migrants move for a variety of reasons including, employment opportunities, to escape violent conflict, for environmental factors, educational purposes, or to reunite with family. This can include both moving within their own country (internally) or to another (externally), which can be both temporary or permanent. Both types of migration may be either forced or voluntary. The term ‘migrant’ has traditionally been used to refer to voluntary migration, in contrast to forced migration to escape violence and/or persecution.

**Refugees** – Refugees are generally defined as people who have fled their country due to war, conflict, violence, or persecution, to seek safety in another country. Under the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of refugees, a refugee is someone who is unwilling or unable to return to their home country out of well-founded fear of persecution. Being recognized as a refugee legally under this definition affords refugees certain protections and support in most countries.

**Internally Displaced People** – Internally displaced people have been forced to flee from their home due to violence, conflict or natural disasters, but remain within their country. As they are still within their native country, they remain under the protection of its government, even if that government is the reason for their displacement. They are not afforded many protections under international law, and are amongst the most vulnerable people in the world.

## QUICK STATISTICS

Approx. **13 million Ukrainians have been displaced** (since February 24, 2022)

**6.6 million** are **still internally displaced** within Ukraine

**7,977,980 refugees** from Ukraine recorded **across Europe**

**14,819,745 border crossings** from Ukraine (since February 24, 2022)

**4,940,057 Ukrainian refugees** registered for **Temporary Protection** or similar national protection schemes in Europe

*statistics provided by [UN](#) and [IOM](#)  
last updated Jan 17th 2023*

**Asylum-Seekers** – Asylum-Seekers are people who have left their country seeking international protection from conflict and/or persecution by applying, or preparing to apply, for asylum in another country. If the government considers that an asylum-seeker is at risk of persecution in their country of origin, they will be granted ‘refugee’ status in that destination country. Asylum Seekers are those who have yet to be legally recognized as a refugee in the country they are seeking asylum in. They are waiting to receive a decision on their claim, a process which can take many years, as proving conflict and persecution to the level legally required is often difficult.

**Returnees** – Returnees are former refugees who have returned to their country of origin after being displaced either spontaneously or in an organized fashion, but have not yet been fully (re)integrated.

**Stateless People** – Stateless people do not have the nationality of any country, such that no state recognizes this person as a citizen according to the state's law. This may be due to incompatible legislation across countries, discrimination/denationalization, from birth, state succession, displacement and forced migration. Stateless people often face significant challenges to accessing basic rights, including education, healthcare, employment.

**Roma Community** – Romani people, or Roma, are a traditionally migratory ethnic group located principally in Europe, and have been historically oppressed in the region. In Ukraine, an estimated 10-15% of the Roma Community lack identification documents and are therefore prevented from accessing social assistance programs from the state, which increases their vulnerability to human trafficking.



Conflict between Ukraine and its neighboring country, Russia, has been ongoing since 2014, but a full-scale war between the two states began on February 24, 2022. To date, the war has displaced over 13 million people, leading to increased vulnerability to human trafficking on many levels.

Both domestic and foreign nationals are being exploited by traffickers within Ukraine as well as externally by traffickers abroad, particularly in other parts of Europe, Russia, Central and Eastern Asia, and the Middle East. The most prevalent forms of trafficking include sex trafficking, labor exploitation, forced commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Forced labor occurs in a variety of industries including construction, manufacturing, agriculture, criminal activity, prostitution and street begging.

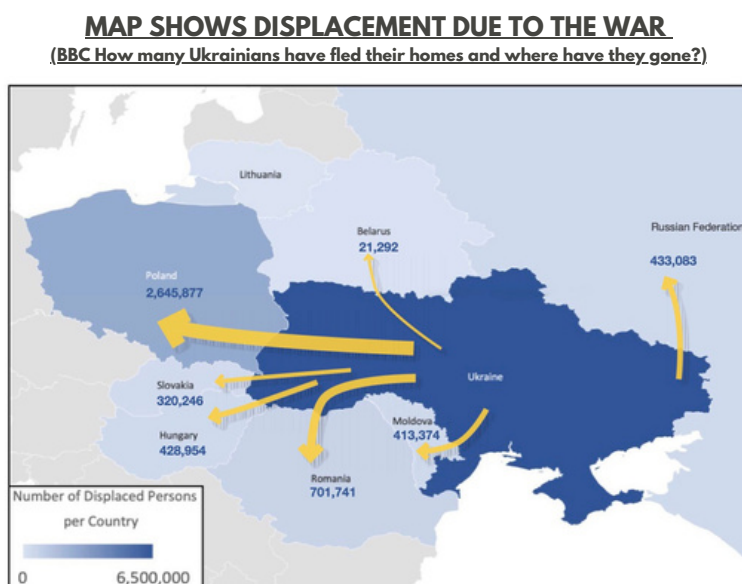
Earlier conflict with Russia in eastern Ukraine and Crimea had also led to the displacement of over 1.5 million people. In areas affected by the previous conflict, unemployment, aid restrictions, and barriers to obtaining and renewing documentation caused a series of escalating vulnerabilities. Prior to the war in Ukraine, around 104,000 children were living in state-run orphanages, where officials have reportedly been complicit or willfully negligent in the trafficking of children.

Ukraine had significant issues relating to human trafficking, even prior to the Russian invasion in February of 2022. Like other former Soviet Republics, Ukraine faced challenges in transition from a command to a market economy. Since the fall of communism, the number of people being trafficked into and within the region heavily increased, with a disproportionate effect on women. Many factors such as socio-economic conditions, corrupt politicians and officials, new and inadequate laws and policies, and the highly profitable human trafficking market, continue to facilitate the prevalence of human trafficking in Ukraine and the broader region. Ongoing gender inequalities, stereotyping of trafficking victims, and policy that takes a crime-centered rather than victim-centered approach all hinder solutions to the issue. Recent reports cite courts and law enforcement, including anti-trafficking officials, as complicit in the failure to arrest and properly prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking. They have also failed to provide adequate training and education in the prevention of trafficking.

At the same time, it is important to note that Ukraine has a strong track record passing human trafficking legislation. Ukraine led the way in Europe, adopting human trafficking policy before the landmark Palermo Protocol, making it among the first in the region to pass legislation to try and combat the issue.

Human trafficking-related issues were also exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which opened an increased supply for commercial sexual exploitation. The pandemic caused economic hardship globally, keeping children out of schools, adding new social distancing and health related guidelines, and challenging effective judicial, law enforcement, and support services, all leading to increased risk for vulnerable persons in Ukraine.

As shown on the map, almost 8 million refugees have been displaced across international borders; while 6.6 million are still internally displaced since the start of the war. Both categories of refugees are at-risk of trafficking and exploitation. Although Poland has received the most internationally displaced persons, Moldova received a higher ratio of displaced persons in comparison to its population, necessitating further aid. The majority of refugees are women and children, since men between the ages of 18 and 60 years old face mandatory conscription and are prevented from leaving the country.



*Map statistics are not updated but body text statistics reflect current numbers, updated Jan 17th 2023.*



There is a direct established relationship between conflict and human trafficking. This appears in the trafficking of people into and within areas of conflict, as well as the trafficking of those displaced as by conflict. Political and economic instability, the lack of social services and protections, and mass uprooting of communities and networks, leads to a significantly heightened risk of human trafficking during any conflict. Such risks are even more prevalent for already vulnerable groups.

In the context of Ukraine, this includes the Roma Community and foreign nationals who are often people of color. Many reports and clips of foreign students and professionals facing racial discrimination at Ukraine borders have been released across media globally. Refugees of war are also at an increased risk of human trafficking due to a lack of social support networks, access to basic resources and employment, discrimination by local populations, and challenges to gaining legal status in a host country.

Reports from aid workers, human rights experts, and UN officials suggest that the war in Ukraine has already resulted in a human trafficking crisis. As previously mentioned, human trafficking was already a major issue within Ukraine and in neighboring countries, where the majority of war refugees are fleeing, including Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Hungary, it is likely to become a regional ongoing crisis going forward. Border crossings and refugee shelters are hotbeds for human trafficking networks, where people fleeing the conflict are desperate for transportation, better shelter, work, and basic necessities such as food and clothing and do not have the resources to check the background of those offering services. There have been numerous reports of suspicious individuals approaching refugees and offering to meet their needs.

Hundreds of unaccompanied children reported in camps and at border crossings, and the ongoing disappearances of refugees, continue to raise suspicions of an increase in trafficking. Mostly well meaning citizens in the intake countries, volunteering their homes for shelter, are cause for additional concern. Governments in Poland and the United Kingdom offer compensation to those who open space in their residences to refugees, but few mechanisms exist to ensure volunteers are acting in good faith. Alarms have also been raised with respect to volunteer aid workers, as many locations do not require strong background checks. A lack of coordination in many of these high-risk areas continues to facilitate the goals of human traffickers and maintain systems of exploitation targeting victims of the war.

## 2021 TIP REPORT

The Trafficking in Persons Report, or TIP Report, is an annual report issued by the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. It ranks governments based on their perceived efforts to acknowledge and combat human trafficking.

**Tier 1:** Countries and territories whose governments fully comply with the Act's minimum standards.

**Tier 2:** Countries and territories whose governments do not fully comply with the Act's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

**Tier 2 Watch List:** Countries and territories whose governments do not fully comply with the Act's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and:

- The estimated number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing and the country is not taking proportional concrete actions; or
- There is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year.

**Tier 3:** Countries and territories whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

Ukraine is classified as Tier 2 in the 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report released by the U.S. State Department. Among the top countries where Ukrainians have fled, Poland, Moldova, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic (Slovakia) all received Tier 2. Romania was listed as a Tier 2 Watchlist. Finally, Russia ranked as a Tier 3 in 2021, as it does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so.

## KEY ORGANIZATIONS

Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Parties

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Anti-Slavery International

Ukrainian Women's Fund

the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons

Feminoteka in Poland

Hungarian Baptist Aid in Hungary

eLiberare in Romania

La Strada International

Hope for Justice

Children on the Edge



## MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY SURROUNDING COUNTRIES

In light of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, all Member States of the European Union, except Denmark which has set its own protection initiatives, agreed on and the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), which was agreed on and came into force on the 4th of March 2022. As part of this, all individuals that were residing in Ukraine prior to the 24th, February 2022, regardless of nationality, can enter the EU. This includes all individuals fleeing the war, such as Ukrainian nationals and their families, stateless persons, refugees, permanent and legal residents not able to return safely to their country of origin. They do not require travel and medical documents, with customs and veterinary controls relaxed. As part of the TPD, people fleeing the war are eligible for a residence permit, access to healthcare, education, housing, child protection, and access to the labor market as well as the freedom to move to other member states of the EU. Importantly, all individuals fleeing this war may apply for asylum in a country of the EU in addition to the support and protections of the TPD.

The UK Home Office has implemented the Ukraine family scheme for Ukraine citizens and residents with British family members, as well as the Ukraine sponsorship scheme (Homes for Ukraine). Under this scheme, permanent or settled UK residents may sponsor and accommodate Ukrainian nationals and their family members for up to 6 months after a security check for both the Ukrainian nationals and their UK sponsors. In addition, temporary visa concessions, extensions and new asylum seeking policies have been announced by the Home Office. Ukrainian nationals fleeing war can stay in the UK for three years under these new measures where they are eligible to access healthcare, education, housing, employment opportunities as well as welfare benefit payments, such as Universal Credit, and public services, such as free transport across UK rail services.

For country specific regulations, please [click here](#).



## ANTI-TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

All 15 Eurasian countries, including Ukraine, have ratified the Palermo Protocol, otherwise known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Ukraine has also ratified several conventions on forced labor, child labor, employment policy as well as the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Although Ukraine has ratified these international agreements, national legislation, policies, and practices do not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. This is due to inadequate law enforcement and court reviews of cases which may be influenced by entrenched corruption.

## UKRAINE NATIONAL LEGISLATION

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 24th Mar 1998 | Criminal Code Article 124-1  |
| 25th Sep 1999 | The Programme for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women and Children - Decree of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers No 1768   |
| 5th Apr 2001  | Criminal Code Article 149  |
| 5th Jun 2002  | Complex Programme on Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings 2002-2005  |
| 25th Dec 2002 | Cabinet of Ministers Resolution on the Establishment of the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings   |
| 12th Jan 2006 | Criminal Code Article 149 (amendment passed)   |
| 7th Mar 2007  | State Programme on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings to 2010   |
| 5th Sep 2007  | Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 'Provision on the Interagency Board on Family, Gender Equality, Demographic Development and Combating Human Trafficking' No 1087 |
| 20th Sep 2011 | Law of Ukraine on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings   |
| 18th Jan 2012 | Regulation of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers 'On National Coordinator in the Field of Combat against Human Trafficking' No 29  |
| 21st Mar 2012 | State Targeted Social Programme on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the Period until 2015   |
| 23rd May 2012 | On Approval of the Procedure for the Declaration of the Status of a Victim of Trafficking in Human Beings  |
| 25th Jul 2012 | On Approval of the Procedure for payment of a one-time benefit to victims of trafficking in human beings   |
| 22nd Aug 2012 | On Approval of the Procedure for Interaction of Agents for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings   |



## USEFUL LINKS

- The European Commission's guide in [English](#), [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#)
- [The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's](#) recommendations on anti-trafficking prevention methods
- [Anti-Slavery International's resources on the situation in Ukraine](#)
- [United Nations University Report: Fighting Human Trafficking in Conflict](#)
- [Updates on displacement data by the UNHCR](#)
- [The International Labor Organization's page on Ukraine](#)
- [Freedom Fund's Ukraine Crisis Anti-Trafficking Response resources page](#)

## HELPLINES

**Poland** – La Strada Poland Helpline: (+48) 22 628 99 99

**Hungary** – National Hotline: (+36) 06 80 / 20 55 20

**Moldova** – La Strada Moldova: (+373) 0800 77 777

**Romania** – Hotline against Trafficking: (+40) 0800 800 678

**Slovakia** – Slovak Crisis Centre DOTYK: (+421) 903 704 78

**United Kingdom** – Modern Slavery Helpline: (+44) 08000 121 700

## MORE INFORMATION

**For more resources, please visit Human Trafficking Search's page focused on Ukraine:**

<https://humantraffickingsearch.org/ukraine-human-trafficking/>

**For more resources on all forms of human trafficking and modern slavery, please visit Human Trafficking Search.org and select or enter in specific search terms in the Global Database.**

<https://humantraffickingsearch.org/traffickingresources/>

# REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Migrants [www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/introduction-human-migration/](http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/introduction-human-migration/)
- UN Migrant definition <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Emergency-handbook.pdf>
- International legal definition of refugee, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html>
- Internally displaced people definition: <https://www.unhcr.org/internally-displaced-people.html>
- Asylum seekers: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/frequently-asked-questions.html?query=what%20is%20a%20migrant>
- Returnees: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/55600/unhcrs-mandate-for-refugees-stateless-persons-and-idps>
- Statelessness: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/ending-statelessness.html>
- Roma Community: <https://theconversation.com/explainer-who-are-the-roma-19402>.
- Council on Foreign Relations: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>
- BBC: How many Ukrainians have fled their homes and where have they gone?
- Internally-displaced Persons: [https://humantraffickingsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/IOM-IDP-Estimates-UKR-16MAR2022\\_Round-1-full-report\\_v2.pdf](https://humantraffickingsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/IOM-IDP-Estimates-UKR-16MAR2022_Round-1-full-report_v2.pdf)
- BBC: How the sex trade preys on Ukraine's refugees
- Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime
- BBC: Treatment of African nationals in Ukraine
- The Exodus Road Ukraine Crisis: How Refugees Are Vulnerable to Human Trafficking
- Huffington Post Inside The Human Trafficking Tragedy Unfolding On Ukraine's Border
- UPI Experts say desperate refugees are finding new danger after leaving Ukraine
- MSN With mostly women and children fleeing Ukraine, European authorities fear a surge in human trafficking
- [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18)
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- 2021 Trafficking in Persons report
- Dean, L., 2020. Diffusing Human Trafficking Policy in Eurasia. Policy Press.
- <https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/conflict-in-ukraine-what-do-we-know-about-the-internal-displacement-situation-so-far>
- <https://ecre.org/ukraine-displacement-as-the-number-of-refugees-and-idps-pass-11-million-concerns-grow-over-vulnerable-groups-eu-allocates-17-billion-euro-in-support-civil-society-struggle-to-keep-up-with-ukrainian/>
- Data collection on trafficking in human beings in the EU
- <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Information-Sheet---Access-to-territory-asylum-procedures-and-reception-conditions-for-Ukrainian-nationals-in-European-countries.pdf>