

UKRAINE

After the crisis in Crimea and the civil war in the Donbass region, the number of displaced people from Ukraine had risen to about 3 million, mostly of whom were internally displaced.

With the escalation of the conflict starting on 24th February 2022, this already volatile situation has turned into a full-scale emergency. People are fleeing their homes to try to find safety elsewhere within the country and are crossing borders into neighbouring countries. The situation remains extremely dangerous for anyone inside Ukraine and the vulnerability of those forced to flee is rapidly increasing. As of 21 March 2022, 3,557,245 people have fled the country to Poland (2,113,554 people), Romania (543,308 people), the Republic of Moldova (367,913 people), Hungary (317,863) or Slovakia (253,592).

A regional refugee response is being carried out in support of refugee-hosting countries' efforts. The response plan brings together UN, NGOs, and other relevant partners, and primarily focuses on supporting the host country governments to ensure safe access to shelter for refugees and third-country nationals fleeing from Ukraine, in line with international standards. It also focuses on the provision of critical protection services and humanitarian assistance, while displacement dynamics and needs continue to grow exponentially.

The Holy Father has, on numerous occasions, called for peace and for the opening of humanitarian corridors so civilians can find safety. The Catholic church, through its many actors, namely Caritas Ukraine, Caritas Spes, Malteser International, Jesuit Refugee Service, and other organisations present inside Ukraine and in the neighbouring countries, seeks to accompany and serve Ukrainian displaced people.

We join the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) in their call: "Religion cannot be used as a means to justify this war. All religions, and we as Christians, are united in condemning the Russian aggression, the crimes that are being committed against the people of Ukraine and the blasphemy that is the misuse of religion in this context".

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