

UN Says More Than 16,000 People Fled East Ukraine in Past Week

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Residents wait to board a bus to leave town near the local office of the communist party, which organises the departure of residents from the town, in the eastern Ukrainian city of Slovyansk.

Some 16,400 people have fled their homes in eastern Ukraine in the past week, many citing deteriorating security and fears of abduction, and the number of displaced within the country has risen to 54,000, the United Nations said Friday.

"We are seeing a sharp increase in [internal] displacement in Ukraine," Melissa Fleming, chief spokeswoman of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, told a news briefing.

"Displaced people cite worsening law and order, they say that they fear abductions and that there are human rights violations as well as the destruction of state services," Fleming said. "And some say that they have received personal threats on account of their political opinion or ethnic or linguistic background."

The figure of 54,000 includes 12,000 who fled Ukraine's Crimea region, which was seized by Russia in March and subsequently annexed after protesters ousted Kiev's Moscow-supported president.

Another 110,000 people have left Ukraine for Russia so far this year — only 9,500 of whom have sought refugee status — while 700 Ukrainians have gone to Poland, Belarus, the Czech Republic and Romania, Fleming said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin called Friday for a long-term ceasefire in Ukraine to allow talks between envoys of the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian rebels in eastern regions are fighting to break away from Kiev.

Putin said the violence has forced "tens of thousands" of people to seek refuge, including in Russia. Nearly 100,000 Ukrainian citizens have turned to the Russian Migration Service looking for various types of status that would allow them to live in Russia, the body's deputy head was quoted as saying Friday by Itar-Tass.

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