

# Surge in Rate of Ukrainians Heading to Russia

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**The  Moscow Times**

About 730,000 Ukrainians have left the country for Russia this year, the European head of the United Nations agency for refugees said on Tuesday, citing data compiled by Russia.

The figure, which the UNHCR said it had assessed as reliable, excluded people who would normally have crossed the border for trade or tourism purposes, the agency's European director Vincent Cochetel told a news briefing.

"The 730,000, it is the 'plus' compared to other years," he said. "Sometimes they just walk across the border, they come with plastic bags. Many of them are really destitute."

The figure suggests this year's exodus from Ukraine is bigger than previously thought.

A further 117,000 were displaced inside Ukraine, a number that was growing by about 1,200 per day, he said.

Much of Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine has since April been a battleground between

government troops and pro-Russian separatists, many of whom are ethnic Russians.

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