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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Says 390,000 Ukrainians Have Registered as Refugees

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People, who have fled the fighting in the eastern regions of Ukraine, queue to receive food at the "Zharki" health resort outside the village of Rybnoye, east of Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

After fleeing to Russia from Ukraine's conflict-torn east, nearly 390,000 people have formally registered as refugees, Russian children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said late Wednesday.

More than a quarter of the refugees — about 100,000 of them — are children, spread across 72 of Russia's 85 regions, Astakhov announced via Instagram.

In total, some 870,000 residents of eastern Ukraine are currently in Russia, Federal Migration Service head Konstantin Romodanovsky said Wednesday. However, the majority of those have not formally sought refugee status, Romodanovsky said, RIA Novosti reported.

The UN Human Rights Committee earlier this week put the confirmed number of refugees at 275,000, but said the actual number was likely much higher.

Representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia previously told The Moscow Times

on condition of anonymity that at least some of the refugees hailed from regions not affected by the fighting, having used the conflict as a pretext for emigration.

About 2.9 million members of Ukraine's total population of 44 million worked as labor migrants in Russia last year, according to the Federal Migration Service.

The five-month conflict in Ukraine between pro-Russian — and allegedly Moscow-backed — separatists and government forces ended in a shaky cease-fire on Sept. 5.

The total casualty count, including civilians and combatants, stood at 3,500 in eastern Ukraine's rebel-held Donbass region, according to UN estimates. Donbass' prewar population was 6.5 million.

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