

Pamfilova Expects More Refugees from Ukraine in Russia Over Winter

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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.

Russia's human rights ombudswoman has said the country should expect a new wave of displaced people from Ukraine after the onset of winter, though the previous inflow has slowed down amid hopes of a lasting cease-fire.

Russia was "unprepared for such an unprecedented wave of refugees from a neighboring country," rights ombudswoman Ella Pamfilova said in an interview published Monday by government newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta. But she praised the local governments of several Russian regions for their efforts to accommodate the large numbers of people heading there from Ukraine.

"Now the first wave of refugees has started to decline, and because people are inspired by a possible cease-fire, many have started to return," she was quoted as saying.

"But winter is coming, which will be hard to survive in the damaged, unprepared Ukrainian

regions," Pamfilova told Rossiiskaya Gazeta. "So we should be ready for a new wave of migration, and not only from Ukraine's southeast."

Russia cut off gas supplies to Ukraine this summer over unpaid bills, and its Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk told the Reuters news agency last month that Moscow was trying to "freeze" Ukrainians during the winter.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR estimated that the number of displaced Ukrainians had more than doubled to 260,000 in early September from 117,000 one month earlier.

Russia's Federal Migration Service has made a higher estimate, saying that about a million of eastern Ukraine's inhabitants had moved to Russia by late September, including about 200,000 who have requested temporary asylum.

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