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'Small Exodus' of Ukrainian Refugees Leaving Russia

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A "small exodus" of Ukrainian refugees has been leaving Russia recently, the head of Russia's Federal Migration Service told state-run news agency RIA Novosti on Thursday.

FMS head Konstantin Romodanovsky said up to 1,500 Ukrainian refugees were returning to Ukraine daily at the border point in Russia's Rostov region — the same crossing where children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov last summer claimed around 8,000 refugees had entered Russia in a single day, according to past media reports.

"This is significant. There are no [new] entries, there is a small exodus ... Of course 1,500 does not compensate for the [previous] mass entry of 8,000 people into Russia in one day, but nevertheless, it is a positive sign," Romodanovsky was cited as saying by RIA Novosti.

Fighting in Ukraine has seen a lull in recent weeks following a cease-fire agreement between Kiev government forces and separatists — with both sides reporting only sporadic violations.

As of mid-September, some 172,000 people in Ukraine had applied for asylum in Europe, including more than 168,000 people in Russia. A further 149,000 applied to stay in the country on other terms, according to UN Refugee Agency statistics.

More than 8,000 people have been killed since fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine following the ouster of then-president Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014 after mass street protests.

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