

Fleeing Chechen Refugees Stranded on Polish-Belarus Border

Fleeing Chechen Refugees Reported Trapped on Polish Border

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Balsat TV / YouTube

As many as several hundred Chechens fleeing the regime of Ramzan Kadyrov are reported to be trapped on the Polish border in Belarus. Balsat TV, a Belarusian opposition channel based in Warsaw, reported that some refugees had been camping “for months” after being refused entry to the country. 

Poland's Interior Minister Mariusz Błaszczyk has already announced that Warsaw has no intention of accepting the refugees. “There is no war in Chechnya, unlike some years ago,”  he said.

Błaszczyk called the situation “an attempt to open another  route for the influx of Muslims to

Europe," and claimed "as long as I am interior minister and as long as Law and Justice [Poland's ruling party] is in power, we will not put Poland in danger of terrorism."

Poland's nationalist government has pursued an anti-refugee policy since coming to power in November last year and has faced accusations of xenophobia.

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All of those interviewed by Belsat denied coming to Poland for economic reasons. "There, in Chechnya, there is no way to live. You have a friend one day and the next he can get abducted," said Abdullah, one of the men in the group. "We are telling them [Polish border guards] why we're leaving but they are not listening," said another.

"They are calling us terrorists. What kind of terrorists are we?" one Chechen woman told Belsat. Another woman told reporters that the group, including a large number of children, had not received any help aside from "the Belarusian Red Cross and Polish and Belarusian drivers."

The Polish consul in Brest, the Belarusian border city, met with the group and "told them what they needed to do to get a Polish visa," Poland's *Gazeta Wyborcza* reported.

"They are Russian citizens. They are currently in Belarus but if they want to get a visa, they need to get one on the territory of the Russian Federation," said consul Sławomir Misiak. Chechens camping on the border have argued that they are unable to do so. "How can a refugee get a visa? They don't give them to Chechens," one man told a Belsat journalist.

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Polish and international law guarantees protection to refugees who arrived without the correct travel documents, said Rafał Kostrzyński, a representative of UN Refugee Agency in Warsaw office.

"We are concerned by the reports we are reading and by the phone calls we are receiving from the border," Kostrzyński told Polish TV channel TVN24. "We want to know if all those who need it have access to the asylum procedure and what are the reasons for them being sent back to Belarus."

Poland has accepted more asylum applications from Chechnya than any other European country since war devastated the region in the 1990s. In 2013 alone, Warsaw received 12,500 asylum applications from the Russian Federation, mostly from Chechnya. The number of Chechens given asylum in the country has since become a popular argument for Law and Justice politicians arguing against accepting Syrians refugees in Poland.

With no end to Kadyrov's uncompromising rule in sight, the number of Chechen applications for asylum is unlikely to dip. According to police, Poland received 6000 applications on the country's eastern border this year alone.

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