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# Russia Sees Fewer Ukrainian Refugees Than Officials Expected

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People board transport to move to Ukrainian city of Dnipro during an evacuation of civilians in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, Tuesday, April 19, 2022. **AP Photo/Andriy Andriyenko/TASS**

Russia has spent one-tenth of its expected budget on Ukrainian refugees as some emergency accommodation sites remain empty, according to public procurement data and interviews with officials.

"Official figures say more than 1 million refugees have entered Russia, but we're not feeling it," Yelena Rusakova, a Moscow municipal deputy who volunteers to assist refugees, told The Moscow Times Russian Service.

Rusakova added that refugee centers in the northwestern Novgorod region remained empty, while sites in the Ryazan and Nizhny Novgorod regions east of Moscow were on the verge of closing.

Procurement data shows Russia spent 776 million rubles ($11.4 million) between March 12-May 1 instead of an allocated 7 billion rubles ($103 million) on accommodating 95,000

Ukrainian refugees.

Activists said most Ukrainians leave Russia's temporary accommodation centers in an attempt to travel on to Europe or western Ukraine.

Several Ukrainians at a Voronezh refugee center recently said they had come to Russia because it was closer than Europe, while a member of a 5,000-member Telegram group for Ukrainian refugees seeking to leave Russia said he was given no other option.

"Many cannot and do not want to live in a country that has wiped their lives off the face of the earth," said an unnamed lawyer who helps Ukrainian refugees.

Political analyst Konstantin Kalachev said that Moscow "overestimated the country's appeal" even for Russian-speaking Ukrainians fleeing the war.

"Even those who were sympathetic to Russia seem to be disappointed with the special operation," he said.

The UN estimates Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced more than 5.5 million Ukrainians to flee the country, with nearly 3 million crossing into Poland.

More than 800,000 Ukrainians have fled to Romania, 500,000 to Hungary and 400,000 to ex-Soviet Moldova.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed on April 30 that 1,062,692 people have been "evacuated' to Russia from Ukraine and pro-Moscow republics in its southeast since the beginning of the invasion.

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