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Russia's Refugee Numbers Plummet to All-Time Low – Research

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People board buses during their evacuation, with a Soviet MiG-17 fighter jet monument in the background, in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, Saturday, April 9, 2022. **AP Photo/Andriy Andriyenko/TASS**

Russia accepted an all-time low number of refugees so far this year despite authorities boasting of hundreds of thousands Ukrainians being brought into the country to escape war at home, researchers said Monday.

Interior Ministry data revealed that only two people have been granted refugee status between January and March 2022, according to the Civic Assistance Committee, a Moscow-based NGO.

The overall number of refugees totaled 304 as of April 1 — a 30% drop from 431 people in January-March 2021.

"Never before has Russia had such a small number of refugees recognized by the authorities," the Civic Assistance Committee said.

At the same time, nearly 4,700 mostly Ukrainians have been granted temporary asylum in

Russia and more than 141,500 citizens of mostly ex-Soviet republics handed Russian passports as of April 1.

Russia's Defense Ministry has claimed that more than 1 million people have been "evacuated" from Ukraine and its eastern pro-Moscow breakaway republics to Russia since the February invasion.

The report's authors note that Russian law formally considers the relocated Ukrainians forcibly displaced persons.

"But the problem is that no one was granted forcibly displaced person status in the first quarter of 2022 at all," the Civic Assistance Committee said, citing Interior Ministry data.

It added that the low number of refugees, temporary asylum holders and forcibly displaced persons is likely explained by the lack of information, resistance from officials or Ukrainian nationals' unwillingness to apply for that status.

"It's obvious that the Russian authorities' plan to reduce the number of officially recognized refugees continues to be effective even under these conditions," the Civic Assistance Committee said.

The Civic Assistance Committee was established in 1990 to help refugees and migrants displaced by conflicts as the Soviet Union fell apart.

Russia branded the organization a "foreign agent" in 2015.

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