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Ukrainian Refugees in Southern Russia Face Tensions, Rising Housing Costs

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Evacuees from Kherson gather upon their arrival at the railway station in Anapa, southern Russia. **AP / TASS**

The arrival of more than 100,000 Ukrainians in southern Russia following Kyiv's recapture of the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson has driven up housing prices and sparked tensions with local residents, independent media reported Thursday.

Russia's military estimates it had evacuated 115,000 residents of Kherson — nearly half of the city's pre-war population — before its withdrawal in November. Kyiv and rights groups decry the evacuations as forced deportations and potential war crimes.

A report by the Novaya Vkladka and Govorit NeMoskva news sites said Kherson evacuees are the only Ukrainian refugees to be allowed Russian government-issued housing vouchers to purchase homes in southern Russia's Krasnodar and other regions.

Officials have not commented on why refugees from Ukraine's other three partially-Russian-occupied regions have not been granted housing certificates.

Interviews conducted by the news outlets revealed a high level of mistrust for the new arrivals among Krasnodar region residents. Locals accused refugees of unruly behavior, according to Novaya Vkladka and Govorit NeMoskva.

Housing vouchers have also fueled price hikes in new Krasnodar region homes to nearly double the government-imposed standard.

The Krasnodar region administration estimates more than 6,500 Kherson refugee families have received 19.4 billion rubles ($250 million) worth of housing certificates as of February.

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