

**Position Paper by United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Delegate of the  
Republic of Moldova**

**DELEGATE:** Shivangi Gaur

**COUNTRY:** Republic of Moldova

**COMMITTEE:** United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

**AGENDA:** Potential solutions for the problem of the refugee crisis in Ukraine.

***“Refugees are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children, with the same hopes and ambitions as us- except that a twist of fate has bound their lives to a global refugee crisis on an unprecedented scale.” ~Khaled Hosseini***

‡ **BACKGROUND** - The current distressing refugee crisis unfolded in Europe beginning from February 24,2022; after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Launching the invasion on February 24,2022; the Russian President Vladimir Putin told the Russian people his goal was to "**demilitarise and de-Nazify Ukraine**". Another objective was soon added: **ensuring Ukraine's neutral status**. His initial aim was to overrun Ukraine and depose its government, ending for good its desire to join the Western defensive alliance NATO. Since the onset of the Russian invasion, due to bombings and shelling on civilian properties, nearly one-third of Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes. Within Ukraine, over 6.6 million people remain displaced by the war. As of August 5,2022, UNHCR estimates there are over 6.3 million refugees present across Europe. Over 3.7 million refugees from Ukraine have registered for temporary protection or similar National Protection Schemes. More than 10.3 million movements out of Ukraine have been recorded since February 24,2022, with over 4.2 million movements back into the country. 90% of Ukrainian refugees are women, and children, and Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 are banned from leaving in order to defend the country. The invasion caused Europe’s largest refugee crisis since World War II and its aftermath and is the first of its kind in Europe since the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, and is the largest refugee crisis of the 21st century, with the highest refugee flight rate globally. The vast majority of refugees initially entered neighbouring countries to the west of Ukraine- Poland, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

‡ **MOLDOVA’S POLICY** -Moldova has a critical view of Russia's invasion, due to its own internal conflict with Russian-backed Transnistria. Moldova has sought security through a policy of neutrality, neither siding with Russia nor NATO. But in the face of the war in Ukraine, the policy is no longer enough and Moldova now needs security guarantees from major powers. In addition to the estimated 1,500 Russian troops in Trans-Dniester, there are also at least 8,000 Transnistrian troops in the breakaway region, which shares a 250-mile-long border with Ukraine. EU member states and NATO allies can help Moldova by selling weapons to Moldova’s military, which has just about 6,000 troops and is not seen as a serious fighting force.

Moldova was among the first countries to receive refugees from the Odessa and Vinnytsia oblasts. Moldovan authorities have activated a centre for crisis management to facilitate accommodation and humanitarian relief for refugees. As of 26 July, 549,333 Ukrainian refugees had entered Moldova. Prime Minister of Moldova Natalia Gavrilita said on 5 April that 100,000 refugees are staying in Moldova, with almost half of them being children. On 11 April, the UN said that Moldova was "hosting an estimated 95,000 Ukrainians." Moldova received the highest number of refugees per capita of any country despite being one of Europe's poorest countries with a population of less than 3 million. This has led to social tensions and international aid was deemed crucial to help Moldovan institutions handle the influx of refugees. 4% of the Moldovan population are currently refugees. The government of Moldova thus seeks financial aid to cope with the emergency.

Right from the beginning of the refugee influx, there was a great mobilisation from the community to support refugees. Most of the support was based on volunteers, so it was really just Moldovans going there with food carts, clothes, offering transport and accommodation to refugees whilst cooperating in identifying the services needed to protect and support them such as access to information, shelter, health services, food, clothing, education, translation and legal assistance. While state shelters have been set up to house refugees,

people have been opening their homes. About 80% of those in Moldova are hosted by families. Cash programmes have been created to support families who are providing shelter to refugees as well as cash assistance to refugees. The intent of the programme is to prevent people from opting for negative coping strategies such as resorting to sex work or having their children beg in the streets. About 2,000 people per day were being registered for the refugee cash assistance, which launched in mid-March with 24,000 people having now been enrolled. A protection working group has been created to address the risk and concerns for vulnerable groups and because of the advocacy work performed by UN Human Rights, taskforces on refugees with disabilities and Roma were created. There are currently 16 UN agencies and several INGOs and NGOs working in Moldova to assist. Since the first day of the war, the Republic of Moldova has been providing free health and immunization services to Ukrainian refugees entering the country. So far, more than 100 doses of routine vaccines, including those against measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), pertussis, tetanus have been administered to refugee children. In addition, 1150 adult refugees have been vaccinated against Covid-19 while in or transiting through the country. Moldovans recoil at theirs being called a “poor nation”, but they are currently being asked to provide far more in the way of energy and charity to aid the victims of war than most other, wealthier European countries. It will likely cost Moldova up to \$378 million a year to host as many refugees as it is now, about 3% of the country’s GDP. This coming at a time when the government is having to increase subsidies to its poorest residents in response to soaring inflation. The country is also projected to experience zero economic growth this year. Outside of the European Union and prevented from joining NATO, tiny Moldova has punched for above its weight. Moldova’s President MAIA SANDU in an interview with The Economist, referred to the current scenario as the most dangerous moment in Moldova’s history since its birth in 1991-92. The most obvious threat is military. Russia has threatened to extend the war to Moldova’s eastern border with Ukraine. As stated by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Moldova, the most fragile of war-torn Ukraine’s neighbours, needs and deserves massive support to match its generosity as a recipient of nearly half a million refugees, and to preserve its own stability.

#### † **POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO MITIGATE THE REFUGEE CRISIS**

Moldova suggests the following measures to mitigate the refugee crisis in Ukraine -

- **Ending the Conflict-** The Russian government must halt its offensive and withdraw all its troops from Ukraine.
- **Refuge and Protection Outside Ukraine-**The UN Secretary General and interested governments—including the government of China—must press Russian President Vladimir Putin to guarantee Ukrainian civilians’ safe passage to more secure areas within Ukraine and to countries that will offer genuine protection for those seeking to flee Ukraine. Countries bordering Ukraine should continue providing unencumbered access to territory.
  - EU Member States must swiftly implement the EU Temporary Protection Directive in an inclusive way to provide safety and support for all those who need protection.
  - Governments and organizations, informed by refugees themselves, should design and implement programming tailored to the specific needs of the people fleeing Ukraine, who are largely women and children. This should include transitional cash and cash-for-work programs, trafficking and gender-based violence prevention, and access to mental healthcare and childcare. Continuous monitoring can help ensure the response adapts to meet changing needs. The UN and European governments should provide adequate resources and coordination support, as necessary, to sustain a response that benefits refugees and their host communities.
  - The United States and other donor countries should direct significant financial support to the governments of refugee-receiving countries bordering Ukraine, in accordance with their level of need. Donors should work with national governments to ensure that aid is provided to NGOs and officials working at local levels in each of these countries.
- **Humanitarian Assistance Within the Borders of Ukraine-** The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the EU through its Civil Protection Mechanism, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) must accelerate efforts to develop an assistance support infrastructure in Ukraine. Donor governments must commit to sustain the generous levels of support that will be necessary and prioritize delivering aid through local organizations in Ukraine or in the region.
  - Humanitarian aid should respond to civilians’ needs for immediate relief, including food, water, safe shelter, and medical care (including medical evacuations), and prioritize cash-based assistance wherever practical. Aid should also support early recovery efforts.
  - Armed forces should guarantee safe and unimpeded access to civilians in need for humanitarian actors to deliver life-saving aid. This includes establishing and preserving safe humanitarian corridors for the movement of goods and people.

○ **Accountability for Abuses of International Humanitarian Law (The Laws of Armed Conflict)**- The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) should intensify the investigation relating to war crimes and crimes against humanity, which has been supported by a number of governments.

○ **MISCELLANEOUS**- Moldova's Government will prioritize registration procedures that collect data disaggregated by age, gender, origin, and other factors and take advantage of available EU funding and resources to effectively share responsibility for refugee reception with a view towards integration. This includes sustaining a community-based reception model and avoiding refugee camps. Moldova shall ensure access to education and other basic services like medication and food to Roma community as well as provide legal counselling in documentation for children and adults. Moldova will ensure infrastructural accessibility of the RACs for people with disabilities such as sanitary products, adaptable equipments, and well-equipped rooms. Teachers shall be trained on how to better support the inclusion of refugee children.

✦ **BIBLIOGRAPHY**: 1. [Crisis in Ukraine: Humanitarian and Human Rights Imperatives — Refugees International](#) 2. [2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis - Wikipedia](#) 3. [Tiny, landlocked Moldova struggles to deal with the fallout of Russia's war on Ukraine \(cnbc.com\)](#) 4. [Moldova Feels Impact of Putin's War in Ukraine \(foreignpolicy.com\)](#)