

# HIAS Ukraine Crisis Frequently Asked Questions



Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

Updated March 16, 2022

## What is HIAS doing in response to the Ukrainian crisis?

On February 28, HIAS deployed a humanitarian assessment team to Poland. The assessment results, which will ensure we can provide aid that matches the actual needs, have begun to be implemented. From initial reports, the most immediate needs are housing, cash, and other basic support, along with mental health services. These needs may change over time.

In this post-immediate phase of the response, as is common in many humanitarian crises, the delivery of aid is becoming less ad-hoc and grassroots and more organized and professional. HIAS is actively pursuing partnerships to provide a full complement of humanitarian assistance in Poland and elsewhere in the region.

HIAS continues to work with long-time partner **Right to Protection (R2P)** supporting their humanitarian response to the crisis. R2P is a Ukrainian NGO spun off from HIAS Ukraine in 2013 that now operates independently and is staffed by Ukrainians. HIAS has rushed funds to R2P and is in close communication with their senior leadership. Many R2P staff had to evacuate areas of conflict in recent days; some have stayed in Eastern provinces and others have relocated to western Ukraine to assist displaced persons there. R2P is continuing to serve refugees, asylum seekers (most are from Africa and the Middle East) and internally displaced Ukrainians.

HIAS is in close contact with Jewish communities in the region and has provided funding to the Jewish communities in Poland, Moldova, and Slovakia to support refugees. HIAS is coordinating with others in the international Jewish community to meet the needs of displaced Ukrainians who need support.

Donations made to HIAS' Ukraine response will fund HIAS, R2P, Jewish communities, and community-based activities in support of displaced Ukrainians. HIAS is serving both Jews and people who are not Jewish who need our help during this crisis.

- Learn more about HIAS' Ukraine Response [here](#).
- More information about HIAS in Ukraine [here](#).
- For up-to-the-minute news and updates, follow HIAS on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

## Where can Ukrainians find information and help?

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, has provided the following help-pages and phone numbers:

- **Inside Ukraine:** [UNHCR website](#) and the IDP hotline [0-800-307-711](#)
- **Hungary:** [UNHCR website](#)
- **Poland:** [UNHCR website](#) and the [Polish government website](#) for Ukrainians: (scroll down for additional languages and government hotline number: [+48477217575](#))
- **Moldova:** [UNHCR email](#) and phone number [+373 22 271 853](#) for UNHCR. A government hotline for Ukrainians refugees ('the green line') has been newly established in Moldova: [0 8000 1527](#).
- **Romania:** [UNHCR website](#) and the website of our partner, the [Romanian National Council for Refugees](#)

- **Slovakia:** [UNHCR Website](#)

The International Office for Migration (IOM) is supporting a National Counter-Trafficking and Migrant Advice Hotline for Ukrainian citizens and migrants residing in Ukraine.

- Phone numbers are 527 (free from mobile phones) and [0800505501](#) (free from landline phones).
- Hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends.
- The hotline provides information on safe border crossing; migration, including family reunification and permanent residence; visa procedures; contacts for consular institutions, public organizations helping migrants in Ukraine and abroad, associations of the Ukrainian diaspora abroad; state migration programs; consultations for foreign citizens residing in Ukraine; and information on countering human trafficking.

**HIAS Israel** is advocating for fair entry and protection policies, providing individual legal assistance for refugees, and, with local partners in Israel, assessing and helping meet the immediate needs of newly arrived Ukrainians.

- HIAS Israel (inquiries by email only): [info-il@hias.org](mailto:info-il@hias.org).

**JDC** has launched a centralized Hesed hotline in Israel, serving Jews in Ukraine and relatives in other countries. It is staffed by Russian, Hebrew, and English speakers.

- **Ukraine** phone number [+380-947-111-104](#)

### **What is HIAS currently doing to assist Ukrainians who are already in the US?**

Our HIAS NY resettlement team is actively tracking individuals inquiring about refugee processing from Ukraine, in particular persons who have ties to Lautenberg clients. They are also fielding volunteer opportunities and in-kind offers for Ukrainian refugees, including donations of housing and case management support. The volume of calls and emails is extremely high, and we are attempting to answer as many inquiries as we can. We are setting up a hotline that we expect will be able to respond to calls quickly. In English, Ukrainian, and Russian. The hotline should be operating next week.

Our legal and pro bono teams are serving Ukrainian refugees with green card applications and Ukrainian political asylum applicants. We are actively fielding requests and inquiries from law firms, potential clients, and partners about how to support Ukrainians in the US. We are also expanding our existing TPS projects to include Ukrainians and have scheduled trainings targeted to pro bono attorneys on TPS for Ukrainians and refugee specific trainings specifically for the Ukrainian population.

- For people in New York and the DC/Maryland area: [Information about HIAS' Legal Services in New York and Silver Spring, MD.](#)
- If you're outside of those two jurisdictions, a good resource for finding an immigration attorney in the U.S. is the [National Immigration Legal Services Directory.](#)

## How can I help someone get out of Ukraine?

There is no way to process immigration and refugee applications in Ukraine and airspace is closed. Ukrainians are trying to stay safe in the country and are fleeing to neighboring countries over land. Right now, the focus is on establishing mechanisms for getting humanitarian aid to people who remain in the country and providing support to organizations and communities in the region hosting refugees. Much of Ukraine is an active war zone and HIAS cannot evacuate people from Ukraine. There are currently no mechanisms to quickly resettle people from other countries in Europe to the U.S.

## Can I ship items to Ukraine?

There are some efforts underway for the public to move goods to Ukraine, but they are unofficial and HIAS cannot vouch for them at this time. The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making **cash contributions to humanitarian organizations** that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).

Donate to HIAS [here](#).

## Can Ukrainians be resettled as refugees in the U.S.? Can I sponsor a refugee?

With all refugee crises, there are three so-called “durable solutions”: Return, Integration in the country to which refugees fled, and Resettlement. In the early days of a humanitarian crisis, the priority is typically not resettlement, but rather on ensuring that refugees have access to life-sustaining services, including food, shelter, and water. With time, it will become clear how many of the Ukrainians who fled can return home, how many will stay in the countries to which they fled, and how many must be resettled to other countries.

UNHCR and resettlement states have not provided any indication that resettlement is being pursued for Ukrainians or other nationalities fleeing Ukraine at this time. The nine refugee resettlement organizations (in the U.S.) will be ready to resettle Ukrainian refugees if and when the need arises, and as always, we will be relying on volunteers to welcome refugees into our communities.

European Union member nations have committed to allowing Ukrainians and people from other countries that had been residing in Ukraine, including asylum seekers, to live and work in EU countries for at least 2 years. This [helpful resource](#) provides information about this new temporary status. It is widely expected that most people displaced from Ukraine will return to Ukraine if it is safe or stay in EU countries.

UNHCR and resettlement states have not provided any indication that resettlement is being pursued for Ukrainians or other nationalities fleeing Ukraine at this time. However, with a refugee crisis of this scope, the United States and other countries outside of Europe must share the responsibility and demonstrate solidarity for meeting the needs of the forcibly displaced. One concrete way that the U.S. can do that is through the resettlement of Ukrainians with close family in the United States.

Ukrainian Jews, Evangelical Christians, Catholics, and some members of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, can reunite with family members in the U.S. under what's known as the Lautenberg program. To qualify, the person must be the child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild of a U.S. resident, asylee, refugee, or citizen. To start the application process, the U.S. relative must apply through a resettlement agency located near where the U.S. family member lives.

- [Local U.S. resettlement agencies](#) – note: HIAS HQ is not a resettlement office and cannot accept Lautenberg program applications or discuss case information directly with clients
- [HIAS New York](#) , [HIAS Pennsylvania](#) , and HIAS Chicago are local resettlement agencies

**Please note that right now, new applications are not being accepted**, but we anticipate that will change in the coming weeks when Congress renews the law that authorizes this program. HIAS will publicize when the program is open for new applications.

For people in Ukraine who are already in the refugee resettlement process through the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) Eurasia/IOM (Ukrainian cases or otherwise), if the original address on file with the RSC has changed, email the RSC at [icc@iom.int](mailto:icc@iom.int) to provide a new location and contact details.

## Can Ukrainians get visas to come to the U.S.?

On February 13, 2022, the Department of State suspended consular services, including interview waiver services, at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. Applicants for U.S. nonimmigrant visas may apply in any country in which they are physically present and where there are appointments available. Note that the Administration has reiterated that non-immigrant visas, such as tourist visas, are only available to people who can demonstrate that they intend to remain in the U.S. for a temporary period. For the tourist visa this is generally no more than 6 months.

People who have an immigrant visa currently pending with the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv may be able to transfer processing of an immigration case to another U.S. Embassy. They must contact the receiving U.S. Embassy in that country to authorize and initiate transfer. The Embassy will have a list of requirements which must be satisfied in order to begin the transfer process.

Ukrainians with close U.S. citizen family members in the U.S. may be eligible for family-based immigrant visas. Information and eligibility information is available from the [USCIS website](#).

As each U.S. Embassy has specific application procedures, applicants should contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where they wish to apply directly. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates is available from the [State Department website](#).

## What are the options for Ukrainians in the U.S. with temporary or expired visas? Can they get financial or other kinds of help?

It may be possible to request an extension of the authorized period of stay of a tourist or other visa. Information can be found [here](#).

Ukrainians with expired visas or who are not authorized to remain in the U.S. who are currently in the U.S. are now eligible to live and work in the U.S. for 18 months under Temporary Protected Status ([news release](#)). TPS, or Temporary Protected Status, is a temporary immigration status provided to nationals of specifically designated countries that are experiencing an ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster, or other extraordinary temporary conditions. It provides a work permit and deportation reprieve to people who are in the United States at the time the U.S. government makes the designation. Ukrainians who were present in the United States on March 1, 2022 are eligible for TPS, but Ukrainians who arrive to the United States after that date are not eligible. An estimated 34,000-70,000 Ukrainians in the United States may be eligible for TPS. Nationals of Ukraine will not automatically receive TPS but must apply with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) during a defined registration period and pay requisite filing fees. Ukrainians can only apply for TPS once the designation has been published in the Federal Register, the government's record for new administrative agency rules. Based on past TPS designations, we expect that this may take two to three months. **Therefore, we advise Ukrainian nationals to speak with an immigration attorney before attempting to apply for TPS on their own to ensure 1) the period for registration has started 2) they are indeed eligible for TPS status.**

#### [More Information About Temporary Protected Status for Ukrainians](#)

Ukrainians in the United States on temporary non-immigrant visas (for example tourists and students) or who have expired visas are not eligible for federal public benefits in the U.S. Unfortunately, HIAS cannot provide financial assistance to Ukrainians in the U.S. who arrive outside of the U.S. refugee program. Different states offer different benefits available to people who have overstayed their visas, undocumented persons, asylum seekers, and others without permanent status in the United States. You should look up information specific to your state's department of health and human services, as each state has a website that describes what benefits are available.

### **Can I provide housing to a displaced Ukrainian family?**

Right now, housing in the U.S. for Ukrainian refugees is not a priority as resettlement to the U.S. is not part of the immediate response. This may change. Ukrainian refugees already in the pipeline have relatives in the U.S.

If you live in Europe, you can host Ukrainian refugees by listing your home through Airbnb. All the information you need to sign up for this program is on the [Airbnb website](#). In addition, HIAS Europe, JDC, and the ECJC are collecting information about housing availability [via this survey](#).

## What should I be advocating?

For now, the U.S. should support NGOs in Ukraine to provide humanitarian relief to the internally displaced and should support UNHCR and NGOs providing humanitarian relief in surrounding countries as they receive refugees.

The U.S. has granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ukrainians in the U.S. but there are other steps that can be taken:

The U.S. should admit Ukrainians with pending immigrant visa petitions as refugees, so they can be with their families during this crisis. There is precedent for this practice with [Iraqis who were beneficiaries of filed I-130 immigration petitions](#). These are the petitions filed by U.S. citizens or LPRs to “establish relationships to an [eligible relative](#) who wishes to come to or remain in the United States permanently.”

- There are several thousand applicants in the Ukrainian Lautenberg pipeline. The U.S. should allow these applicants and those that are newly filed to come to the United States immediately to reunite with their families while the U.S. government finishes processing their cases.
- The U.S. should also allow Ukrainians with pending immigrant visa applications to enter the U.S. as refugees.
- The U.S. should allow people who were seeking asylum in Ukraine at the time of the invasion – most are from African countries, Central Asia, and the Middle East – to come to the U.S. as refugees if that is the safest option for them.

To be kept up to date on advocacy for Ukrainians, visit the [HIAS Take Action page](#).

## Can I volunteer to help?

We strongly advise that no one travel to the region for the purpose of volunteering without having already been in direct contact with and secured a volunteer assignment from a humanitarian aid agency working on the ground.

If you're in Europe, join the [HIAS Europe Facebook group](#) to learn about how you can help.

In the U.S., visit the [HIAS volunteer page](#) and the [HIAS in-kind giving opportunities](#) page.