

HIAS Ukraine Crisis Frequently Asked Questions



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

Updated March 28, 2022

What is HIAS doing in response to the Ukrainian crisis?

HIAS, the international Jewish humanitarian organization, has a long history in Ukraine, having worked to resettle Jews after World War II and the end of the former Soviet Union. In 2001, HIAS established an office in Kiev to help Ukrainian Jews and other religious minorities seeking to migrate to the United States, and later began assisting people from across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia seeking asylum in Ukraine. In 2013, HIAS Ukraine helped establish **Right to Protection (R2P)**, an independent Ukrainian NGO providing legal and humanitarian aid to internally displaced people (IDPs) from Eastern Ukraine. Until the current invasion, R2P had 10 offices across the country and 162 staff, 85 of whom were based in the East, including Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Dnipro, and East Oblasts.

We are constantly adapting to meet the needs and adding more services every week. Here's how we are responding to the crisis today:

- **Inside Ukraine**, our partner Right to Protection (R2P) provides mental health and psychosocial programming through in person and remote support and operates a hotline 15 hours a day, seven days a week to provide information about services, evacuation, refugee status. R2P is conducting protection monitoring at checkpoints and monitoring visits to those who have not left their homes, and also distributing food and non-food items. We have just sent a Ukraine Response Coordinator to the country to support R2P and build out additional HIAS programs in the country and on the border.
- **In Poland**, HIAS has Emergency Response staff in Warsaw and will be adding staff at the border with Ukraine in Rzeszow. HIAS is hiring technical staff to focus on child protection, cash assistance, and mental health and psychosocial support, and through our partner, CADENA, providing child-friendly spaces, psychosocial aid, and logistics. HIAS is working with Airbnb to provide emergency housing in Poland.
- HIAS Europe has provided financial assistance to **Jewish communities** in Poland, Moldova, and Romania. It has placed a Relocation Officer in Moldova, with more staff to come in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, to help people relocate to Western Europe. HIAS is also exploring ways to support other **Western Europeans** seeking to support newly arrived refugees. HIAS will work on partnership opportunities with local communities, municipalities, the private sector, and other governmental and NGO partners.
- **In the U.S.**, HIAS is providing legal advice to Ukrainians applying for Temporary Protected Status and is about to launch a hotline for questions about asylum and refugee issues, staffed by English, Ukrainian, and Russian speakers.
- **HIAS Partners** include, in addition to R2P: **Foundation Our Choice**, a Polish NGO established by Ukrainians in 2009, which is providing shelter and cash for rent through the HIAS-Airbnb partnership; **VOICE**, which supports women's rights and women-led organizations in emergencies, and began an assessment in Moldova, Slovakia, and Poland this week; and **CADENA**, an INGO focused on disaster and crisis prevention and response, which is providing food, blankets, clothes, and psychosocial support to refugees at the Ukraine-Poland border.

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 others 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.

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](#)

For help in the U.S.:

- 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.

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.

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. HIAS welcomes the Biden Administration’s commitment to bring 100,000 Ukrainians to the U.S., through a full range of legal pathways, including the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The Biden administration has also said that it has sped up visa processing for relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent residents and dedicated more staff to handle applications for humanitarian parole. The White House also announced that it will provide more than \$1 billion in new funding toward humanitarian assistance to support people within Ukraine. HIAS looks forward to working with the Administration to ensure Ukrainians and other vulnerable populations can access the promised U.S. welcome and protection.

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

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 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, we are awaiting further details about the 100,000 Ukrainians President Biden announced the U.S. would be welcoming. In the meantime, if you live in the U.S. or Europe, you can register your home on [Airbnb.org](#), which is the non-profit arm of Airbnb and a partner of HIAS in matching refugees with housing. You can also register your home on the [Ukraine Take Shelter site](#). In addition, HIAS Europe, JDC, and the ECJC are collecting information about housing availability [via this survey](#).

What should I be advocating?

HIAS welcomes the White House's March 24 [announcement](#) to allow **100,000 Ukrainians and others to come to the United States** through a full range of legal pathways, including the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. While welcome, the announcement does not provide any essential details, including the number of people who will be admitted as refugees, through parole, or through private sponsorship. The Biden administration has said that it has sped up visa processing for relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent residents and dedicated more staff to handle applications for humanitarian parole. The White House also announced that it will provide more than \$1 billion in new funding toward humanitarian assistance to support people within Ukraine. (The U.S. has already provided more than \$123 million to help European countries receive and host millions of

Ukrainian refugees.) HIAS applauds the announcement on March 3 of Temporary Protected Status for Ukrainians which will allow Ukrainians in the U.S. prior to March 1 to apply for work permits and deportation protections. TPS is expected to benefit up to 70,000 Ukrainians in the U.S. on temporary student, tourist, or business visas.

Advocacy Asks:

- There are several thousand applicants in the Ukrainian Lautenberg pipeline. **These cases should be expedited and allowed into the U.S. to reunite with their families and finish their case processing in this country.** The processing of cases of new Ukrainian applicants who qualify for the program should also be expedited.
- **Ukrainians with pending immigrant visa applications should also be expedited and able to enter the U.S. as refugees.** These are the petitions filed by U.S. citizens or permanent residents to “establish relationships to an [eligible relative](#)” who wishes to come to or remain in the United States permanently.
- The Biden administration should also **provide resettlement opportunities to the estimated 5,000 asylum seekers and refugees**, primarily from Afghanistan, but also from other major refugee producing countries, who were also living in Ukraine.
- The U.S. should **process pending refugee applications from Ukrainians at all processing posts.** Any more detailed questions about refugee processing should be referred to PRM.
- With Ukrainians now approaching the U.S.-Mexico border in efforts to find safety in the United States, we again urge the administration to provide fair and meaningful access to the U.S. asylum system to all people seeking safety at our southern border and to **repeal Title 42.**
- Ukrainians currently in the United States with work, tourist, and other temporary visas are now applying for asylum. **The U.S. should ensure the asylum system has sufficient resources and staff to process applications in months, not years.** Nobody should have to wait for years for a decision on their case – years that they cannot bring over their parents, spouse, or children who may also be at risk.
- HIAS welcomes the **European Commission’s** decision to provide [Temporary Protection](#) to those fleeing Ukraine into the EU, including Ukrainians, asylum seekers, and stateless individuals unable to safely return home. Protection includes access to residence permits, education, social assistance, and the labor market.
- HIAS also welcomes the EC’s issuances [operational guidelines](#) for border guards in EU member states, which allow for special emergency support lanes to channel humanitarian aid, modified border checks for certain categories of individuals, temporary border crossing points, and the suspension of custom. The U.S. and international community should **support NGOs, in particular locally led civil society actors, and multilateral organizations** in Ukraine and the region to provide timely and sufficient levels of humanitarian relief. All donor states should respond generously to the appeal ([Progress - UNHCR Ukraine Appeal](#)).

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.