



Media Release

European Ombudsmen call for urgent support for internally displaced persons within Ukraine

Ombudsmen at their European Regional Conference in Estonia have called on ombudsmen across Europe to raise with their national parliament the growing humanitarian crisis caused by the continuing conflict in Ukraine.

Almost 260,000 persons have been displaced throughout the country, while more than 130,000 have applied for refugee status outside of the country. Estimates show that up to 25% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are children. Authorities say that 2.2 million people remain directly affected by the conflict. Some most severely hit cities like Donetsk and Makiivka are sheltering 20,000 people with disabilities and needing help. The numbers are expected to grow as the fighting continues.

As winter approaches IDPs are forced to stay in temporary shelters such as schools, dormitories, and empty buildings, which are not suitable for harsh conditions. Others are dependent on their families, who are already suffering from the worsening economic situation. Social tensions are mounting also in Central and Western Ukraine, where most of the IDPs have fled. There have been media reports of looting, kidnapping and disrespect towards minorities, especially against Tatars in the occupied territory of Crimea. Cases of intimidation, open violence, the abuse of right to information, right to assembly and freedom of movement are being reported.

By July, a total of 4,106 Ukrainians had requested asylum in the EU, compared to 903 applications in 2013. Most Ukrainian applications for asylum were in Poland (1,082), Germany (556) and Sweden (500). In addition, 380 Ukrainians have sought asylum in Belarus.

Speaking at the conference, the Polish Human Rights Defender, Professor Irena Lipowicz, said that the displaced people wish to remain in Ukraine. However, without support they may be forced to seek refuge in other countries.

The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine was discussed by European Ombudsmen at the International Ombudsman Institute conference in Tallinn, Estonia, where ombudsmen expressed their serious concerns for the plight of the refugees and displaced persons.

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The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) was established in 1978 and more than 150 ombudsmen worldwide are members of the organisation today.

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