



[The European Union Approves Fresh Sanctions on Belarus Amid Its Growing Border Crisis with Poland](#)

The ongoing humanitarian crisis on the Belarusian-Polish border has worried rights groups and security experts, with the European Union (EU) approving fresh sanctions against the Lukashenko regime in Belarus for its role in fomenting it. Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko is accused of weaponizing the crisis for political purposes, pushing large numbers of asylum seekers from countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan towards neighboring nations like Poland. Analysts contend that Lukashenko's actions are retaliation for the punitive EU measures that were previously placed upon Belarusian officials after his illegitimate re-election last year and the subsequent intimidation and violent repression of peaceful protesters, opposition figures, and journalists which has been taking place since then. Several countries and airlines have curbed their flights to Belarus in an effort to try and alleviate the circumstances. Poland has formed a rigid border, thus keeping the migrants in limbo during harsh and brutal winter conditions, and observers lament the fact that vulnerable refugees have ultimately been caught in the middle of the escalating tensions between Belarus and the EU.

The scenario which has unfolded is of grave concern to both the international community and human rights advocates. Asylum seekers are stuck between the borders of Belarus and Poland, with thousands stranded outdoors in freezing and potentially deadly conditions. While some aid groups have attempted to provide support, assistance is extremely challenging since the migrants are technically not in the realm of any particular country. What is additionally troubling is that many of those who have tried to reach safety within the EU member state of Poland have been subjected to a severe pushback from the military and police, often facing water cannons and tear gas.

One of the key elements at the center of the developments with the humanitarian crisis is the role of airlines and national air carriers. Recently, Turkey banned Syrian, Yemeni, and Iraqi citizens from flights to Minsk in an effort to close off one of the main routes that the EU says Belarus has used to fly in migrants, and the United Arab Emirates shut down its path from Dubai to Minsk. The EU has banned the Belarusian flag airline Belavia as part of the recent sanctions in relation for Belarus' takedown of a Ryanair flight, and they also plan to expand on those sanctions in this latest round of punitive measures. The bloc hopes to completely end flights into Minsk as much as possible, all in an attempt to control the influx of migrants who may seek passage into the EU from Belarus.

While the crisis currently unfolding has clearly been exacerbated by the Belarusian government, the refugees' urgent need for assistance lies on the European Union. Many rights activists have expressed that in order to address the humanitarian crisis, migrants should receive access to the EU for asylum purposes, as it is unjust for them to suffer as a result of political issues between the EU and Belarus. The ongoing situation requires major global actors like the EU and the United Nations to first prioritize the safety and well-being of the migrants who are already stranded. This is especially critical now due to the harsh weather conditions and the reports of people going days without food and water. Thus, analysts and experts believe that the dire humanitarian concerns stemming from the crisis can and should be dealt with, even if a political stalemate between the EU and Belarus persists for the time being.