News

A woman plays with her child in a sports hall of a high school transformed into temporary ac

A woman plays with her child in a sports hall of a high school transformed into temporary accommodation for people fleeing the Russian war of Ukraine in Przemysl, Poland, March 9, 2022. (CNS photo/Yara Nardi, Reuters)



by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

March 9, 2022

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

BALTIMORE — In response to more than 2 million refugees, primarily women and children, fleeing the conflict in Ukraine in recent weeks, the president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services said it is "alarming to see the scale of the suffering" in the region.

In a March 8 statement, Sean Callahan said CRS partners and staff inside Ukraine and in Moldova and Poland have "heard of children dragging bulky luggage, their faces wet from tears" and also have heard of "crowds huddling inside bus terminals for shelter, knee-deep in their belongings."

"The weight of the trauma lives on the faces of young and old alike," he added.

Callahan also noted that CRS, the U.S. bishops' relief and development agency, has seen "tremendous acts of solidarity and generosity" from countries receiving refugees and from those donating to CRS and Caritas partners that are providing food, shelter, relief items, counseling and information services to displaced people in Ukraine and refugees in Moldova, Poland and Romania.

"With all of this in mind, we join the pope in calling for an immediate end to the fighting," he said, adding that wars in Syria and elsewhere have demonstrated that "people will continue to suffer until there is peace."

Advertisement

During this time of conflict in Ukraine, CRS has been supporting Caritas Ukraine, an agency of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and Caritas Spes, an agency of the Romanian Catholic Church, with the following:

- Field kitchens providing hot lunches and snacks.
- Reception services at Caritas offices, train stations and other locations for displaced people with clothing, information, referrals, food, water, hygiene items and counseling services.
- Transportation of displaced families to friends, families and local social services.
- Evacuation centers providing shelter, food and counseling services for displaced families.

CRS is assisting Caritas Moldova in providing food and relief items to refugees at government-run reception centers and plans to establish additional centers.

The Baltimore-based agency also is helping transport refugees from the Ukraine border and mobilizing hosts to provide homes for refugee families.

In Romania, Caritas agencies with CRS support have mobilized volunteers, equipped facilities and helped refugee centers, currently at capacity, in serving hundreds of refugee families crossing the borders.

Caritas Poland is similarly providing assistance to arriving Ukrainians at multiple border-crossing points and supporting the shipment of relief supplies into Ukraine.

CRS is assisting the agency to prepare a cash assistance program to reach an estimated 300,000 households. It also is providing shelter to refugee orphans in coordination with the Polish government.