

IS THERE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN REFUGEES IN THE UKRAINE TRAGEDY?

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Analysis No : 2022 / 5

24.03.2022

We are on the nineteenth day of the military operation, which started after the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin made a long speech in which he recognized Donetsk and Luhansk. The developments in Ukraine, where news of the death of Russian soldiers, as well as many Ukrainians, were received, had broad repercussions both regionally and globally. The situation of the Ukrainians who had to leave their homeland has been reflected on television and social media for days. It is seen that the developments in Ukraine, which are being watched closely by the correspondents of the international media in the world, are viewed by the world public opinion with a certain degree of reaction and deep sadness. Today, in terms of the level of civilization and culture that humanity has reached, it is understood from the reactions of the international community that such events are generally despised and that it is becoming increasingly difficult to accept them in good conscience. In this context, along with the regulations envisaged, it is seen that the European Union (EU) is working on a new asylum admission decision and has started some preparations for it. As a matter of fact, the EU has announced that the people who took refuge in the EU from Ukraine, since they have biometric passports, can stay in the member states for 90 days without a visa during the first stages. It is also seen that the EU is making preparations to grant residence and work permits for up to three years within the EU borders to Ukrainians who were forced to leave their homes. Expressing that there are more people who want to escape Ukraine, even though their number still reaches 2.5 million, and that they need to be prepared for this, the authorities state that they are ready to welcome these people[1].

However, there are also indications that the EU's compassion and tolerance does not include everyone who wants to escape the Russian occupation. For example, there are news reports in the international press that students from African countries studying at Ukrainian universities are being subjected to some discriminatory treatment on the Ukraine-Poland border, and that "Ukrainian people pass first" is given priority. Korrine Sky,

one of the staff members who helped coordinate the escape routes of the African students stranded in Ukraine, told Insider that some students who went to the border experienced difficulty getting on. Ms. Sky said, Some people went to get on the bus, but black people are not easily allowed to get on the bus. Because the Ukrainians are given priority.[2] An African student who was able to reach the Ukraine-Poland border wrote on Twitter that the Ukrainian police and army were making it difficult for Africans to cross. The same student shared in a video that the authorities threatened to shoot them.

Although what the black people experienced at the Ukraine-Poland border was published as a "claim", it is not a coincidence that Western mainstream media outlets have chosen words to reinforce these claims. Some examples of these are below:

1. *BBC*, Its very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed - Ukraines Deputy Chief Prosecutor, David Sakvarelidze[3]
2. *CBS News*, This isn't Iraq or Afghanistan...This is a relatively civilized, relatively European city- CBSforeign correspondent Charlie DAgata[4]
3. *Al-Jazeera*, What's compelling is looking at them, the way they are dressed. These are prosperous, middleclass people. These are not obviously refugees trying to get away from the Middle East...or North Africa. They look like any European family that you'd live next door to.[5]
4. *BFM TV* (France), We are in the 21st century, we are in a European city and we have cruise missile fire as though we were in Iraq or Afghanistan, can you imagine!?[6]
5. *The Daily Telegraph*, This time, war is wrong because the people look like us and have Instagram and Netflix accounts. It's not in a poor, remote country any more. - Daniel Hannan[7]
6. *ITV* (UK), The unthinkable has happened...This is not a developing, third world nation; this is Europe![8]
7. *BFM TV* (France), We are in the 21st century, we are in a European city and we have cruise missile fire as though we were in Iraq or Afghanistan, can you imagine!?[9]

Similar examples of such broadcasts may be may continue. These expressions can sometimes be condescending, not only to refugees from the Middle East or Africa, but also to Ukrainian refugees. In this context circumstance, the above news reports from BBC and CBS News draw attention.

On the other hand, there are also reports that Russian students in Europe were expelled from their schools after Russia attacked Ukraine[10]. In addition to these, some excesses are witnessed in the sanctions applied separately by the US and the EU in a period of approximately twenty days. Extreme decisions such as the removal of Dostoevsky's lecture in Italy on the grounds of war[11], Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra's dismissal of Tchaikovsky from the program[12], Munich Philharmonic Orchestra's famous Russian Conductor Valery Gergiyevs dismissal on the grounds that he did not condemn Putin's plans to attack Ukraine, and even the banning of cats, whose owners are Russians, from international competitions[13] can be mentioned in this context/. These developments indicate that in some European countries, decisions are being made emotionally, and therefore, behaviors that are far from logic and justice can be displayed.

The EU, which remained silent on Greece's attempts to drown "less civilized" asylum seekers at sea, as Western media call it, is now opening its doors wide to asylum seekers whom it considers "relatively civilized". According to the latest data, more than two million people left Ukraine and sought refuge in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Poland. Jenaz Lenarcic, the member of the European Commission responsible for crisis management, announced that this number could reach several million. He said that they should be prepared for many more people who may come[14].

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that Ukraine is a part of the EU. She stated that Ukraine is one of them and they want to see Ukraine in the EU[15]. She expressed that the Ukrainians defend the EU values and principles, and therefore any support they need will be provided to them. In fact, on February 28th, 2022, Ukraine officially applied for EU membership. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy demanded that the EU make a decision on Ukraine's membership through a special process at a time when Ukraine was defending itself against the invasion of Russian forces[16].

In the current climate, EU senior officials often state that they do not favor EU enlargement. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the EU Commission Josep Borrell Fontelles explained that promising Ukraine NATO membership was a mistake, and stated that Ukraine's EU membership would not happen immediately at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF), which was held for the second time this year. In the ADF, the EU's Commissioner for Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi also said that Ukraine's EU membership will not be prompt, that every country that fulfills the conditions will become a member of the EU and underlined that it is necessary to be realistic in this regard[17]. Independent of both EU officials, just before these statements, on March 10th, 2022, French Minister of European Affairs Clement Beaune stated that Ukraine "cannot become a member tomorrow"[18]. Likewise, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also attended the ADF and noted that Ukraine's NATO membership was not a development that could materialize immediately.

All these statements were recorded after Volodymyr Zelenskiy's speech in the European Parliament on March 1st, 2022. During his speech, President of Ukraine Zelensky said, Prove to us that you are with us.[19]. After this speech, he received a standing ovation, during which even Head of European Commission Ursula von der Leyen could not hold back her tears. It seems that the rising wave of sentimentality in the Western public opinion in the face of the disaster that Ukraine has suffered has left its place to a necessary realism over time and has made it necessary to resort to sanctions that will, for example, impede the Russian economic and financial balances, so that Russia's invasion of Ukraine does not go unpunished.

Today, the reason behind Russia's invasion of Ukraine emerges as the unprincipled and indecisive attitude of the West since the early 2000s. In fact, it has been confirmed by this occupation and the influx of refugees that the Wests practices of double standards continue to this day in a similar manner. While NATO gave a membership perspective to Ukraine and Georgia at the 2008 Warsaw Summit, it remained a bystander to the Russian

Federation's violations on the territorial integrity of Georgia in 2008 and then Ukraine in 2014. In particular, with the stance followed during President Trump's term, the groundwork was laid for Russia to finish what it started in Ukraine, and Russia's attempts to attack Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity from the beginning of 2021, right after Trump left office in 2020, have been overlooked. At the end of the day, it is possible to state that humanity is faced with a picture in which the hesitant and discriminatory policies pursued by the West are not only limited to the practices in the field of democracy and human rights, but also deepened in a way that may lead to the erasure of a state from the map.

*Photograph: https://constitutionnet.org/news/constitutionalizing-ukraines-eu-nato-aspirations-genuine-conviction-or-electoral-strategy

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To cite this article: ELBİR, Hazel ÇAĞAN. 2026. "IS THERE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN REFUGEES IN THE UKRAINE TRAGEDY?." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Analysis No.2022 / 5. March 24. Accessed November 22, 2026. https://www.avim.org.tr/public/index.php/en/Analiz/IS-THERE-DISCRIMINATION-BETWEEN-REFUGEES-IN-THE-UKRAINE-TRAGEDY

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