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For Immediate Release

Nova Ukraine Funds the Escape of Mariupol Refugees Deported to Russia

San Francisco, CA, May 15 — Hundreds of Ukrainian refugees from occupied cities such as Mariupol who were deported to Russia are finding their way back to freedom thanks to Nova Ukraine, a partner organization in Europe, and Uber.

Large groups of refugees from these cities in eastern Ukraine were shipped to Russia after first being detained in “filtration camps.” After surviving this ordeal, those allowed to leave find themselves trapped deep within Russian borders. Volunteer crews in Russia have stepped up to evacuate the refugees across the Russian border to safety in Latvia and Estonia. There, Nova Ukraine’s partner organization Rubikus, a German nonprofit group funded by Nova Ukraine, coordinates housing, logistics, and further transportation to other countries in Europe. Volunteers in Europe work with each refugee family to develop a safe travel plan specific to their situation, taking into account medical needs, disabled dependents, and pets.

Nova Ukraine has contributed a \$50,000 grant dedicated to supporting these rescue efforts. The ride-sharing service Uber has also partnered with Nova Ukraine to provide free vouchers for refugees who arrive in Estonia to hail rides to new destinations in Europe.

In the past six weeks, Nova Ukraine with Rubikus has assisted over 600 families evacuated from Russia using this logistics route, and continues to receive evacuation requests from an average of 20 families per day. According to Lyudmyla Denisova,

Ukraine's ombudsman for human rights, at least 1 million Ukrainians have been forcibly relocated to Russia.

Ukrainians rescued from Russia describe a harrowing journey, from the devastation in Mariupol, the degradation and abuse in "filtration camps," and the eventual escape from Russia.

Once they arrive at "filtration camps" — usually Russian-run police stations — the refugees are fingerprinted, interrogated and debriefed to ascertain their political loyalties. They sleep on chairs and rugs, with no access to toilets or showers. Families are separated, and some refugees are stripped naked and examined for pro-Ukrainian tattoos and military scars.

Refugees "pass" filtration in large measure thanks to the advice obtained via internet chat rooms: how to clear their phones of evidence of pro-Ukrainian sentiment, what to say when interrogated, and how to plan their way back across the border.

Those who "pass" filtration are then allowed to leave. The fate of those who do not is currently unknown.

[About Nova Ukraine](#)

Nova Ukraine is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine and strengthening the country's democratic society. Founded in 2014, Nova Ukraine has redoubled its efforts in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We work with our partners in Ukraine and around the world to help refugees and provide humanitarian efforts to those impacted by the war.

For more information, contact yulia@novaukraine.org or see our website, novaukraine.org.