

About 730,000 Have Left Ukraine for Russia Due to Conflict - United Nations Body

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The figure strips out seasonal data and numbers for people who would normally have crossed the border for trade or tourism purposes, UNHCR's European director Vincent Cochetel told a news briefing.

"The 730,000, it's the 'plus' compared to other years," he said. "They are not tourists. We've seen them at the border, just like in any other conflict. They walk, sometimes they just walk across the border, they come with plastic bags. Many of them are really destitute."

A further 117,000 people are displaced inside Ukraine, a number that is growing by about 1,200 per day, he said.

Russia's Migration Service has said it has this year received applications from some 168,000 people who had fled Ukraine. Cochetel said the 730,000 figure included those people who had asked Russia for protection.

Pro-Russian separatists opened fire on unarmed Ukrainian soldiers on Tuesday as they crossed back into Ukraine from Russia where they had taken shelter from fighting, Kiev defence officials said.

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