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‘Black Foreigners in Ukraine’ Help Students Escape Ukraine & Access Aid

The global collective of volunteers helps students navigate transportation, pay for temporary housing, and purchase food as they face discrimination to escape war

From Twitter Spaces, to Creating Safer Spaces!

As of Friday, February 25, 2022, there has been a small, but mighty effort of dedicated individuals around the globe, connected by technology, who are working to help Black, African and other marginalized foreigners and students escape Ukraine. This effort is under the collective organization of [Black Foreigners in Ukraine \(BFU\)](https://blackforeignersinukraine.org).

Black Foreigners in Ukraine (BFU) supports individuals by providing funds for transportation, connecting people to on-the-ground volunteer escape vehicles, transferring crypto funds for food and temporary housing, and working to create partnerships with universities so that students may continue their studies upon leaving Ukraine.

After widespread reports of racism and xenophobic discrimination at various transport stations and border points in Ukraine, civilians around the world mobilized and have coordinated efforts to get foreigners safely out of Ukraine – with a focus on Black and African students.

“To achieve what we have in the last 2 weeks, as BFU, is nothing short of a miracle. To see us – all strangers – put our lives on pause to take on a mission to rescue Black and African students from Ukraine, has really shown me that there is still hope for humanity. I am grateful to be a part of this Black Foreigners in Ukraine movement and am committed to this work,” said Glory Attaochu, a member of BFU – who is known by her voice and for leading Twitter Spaces that share the atrocities of students experiences on the ground in Ukraine and their testimonies once they reach safety outside of Ukraine.

The BFU logistics and ground transportation team navigates people to train stations, bus stations, taxis and other transport vehicles, so that they may embark on what has sometimes become an over 30-hour journey, to safely exit Ukraine.

“The joy that comes with knowing another person is safe is divine,” said Ayodeji Babalola — who works on the logistics team to safely navigate people seeking refuge to border and transport points in Ukraine.

The BFU medical team has on-the-ground doctors largely at the Poland border who help receive refugees and offer medical aid upon their arrival. After many people stood outside in the freezing cold and snow – for days on end – this became a critical part of this work. The BFU team also includes efforts to create partnerships with universities in Europe that are offering to receive student refugees and accept their transferred credits so that they may complete the education that they traveled so far from home to pursue.

BFU helped coordinate a medical caravan which was established by Dr Awofa Gogo-Abite who had himself fled Ukraine into Poland. He however felt compelled to return and assist students who were undergoing medical emergencies as a result of the harsh conditions they had to endure fleeing from cities within Ukraine as well as at the border crossings. There were reports of Black and African students having to walk for hours because they had been denied access onto free rescue buses and trains, followed by lengthy waits at the border in freezing conditions.

“Difficult times either bring out the best or the beast in us. That is an undeniable reality of the human experience. However, we must at all times reinforce the core value of humanity. It was heart wrenching for me despite preparing my mind for the worst. My soul was troubled the moment I crossed over and nothing mattered more than seeing how I could contribute to alleviate the situation for those who are seen to be lesser beings by the genetic accident of the geography of their birth and the activity of their melanocytes,” said Dr. Gogo-Abite.

Dr. Gogo-Abite himself endured frostbite, but still helped resuscitate a student during a medical emergency and continued to assist other students in distress. There were reports of students experiencing frostbite, hypothermia and shock among other ailments while waiting days to get across the border into Poland.

“In a short time, I saw swift progress and kind-hearted souls who didn't deny this reality, but rather stepped in to help. In the end, it's a win-win. The border conditions didn't improve for just a specific group of people but entirely for everyone. My soul is at peace and I can move on to gather the pieces of my new reality,” he continued.

The BFU finance and fundraising team works to secure funds – largely in crypto – to disburse to students and foreigners fleeing Ukraine who are in need of housing, Airbnb or hotel accommodations, food, water, clothing and other necessary supplies for survival. BFU has received, and disbursed, more than \$15,000 in aid to people stuck and trying to escape Ukraine. For funds transparency, please see a recent [post breaking down funds raised and disbursed](#) on social media. BFU's public [Etherscan wallet](#) also allows individuals to look up crypto wallet transactions. The BFU collective also features its [procedures for disbursing funds](#) to students in need on its [website](#) – as there have been people taking advantage of this work and requesting funds, despite likely not being in Ukraine or seeking refuge.

The BFU collective's social media team uses platforms including [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), to share resources like this [crypto wallet guide](#), information on clogged and efficient border points, and

updates from students on their well-being. The team also works to provide transparency of how donations are used, as promised, to support Black, African and other foreigners in need. Please see the following hashtags on social platforms: #AfricansinUkraine, #BlackPeopleinUkraine, #BlackForeignersinUkraine, #StudentsInKherson and #CaptiveInKherson.

Since the start of this Russian invasion of Ukraine, thousands of students from Africa and Asia have been treated as less than human in trying to flee Ukraine. We are calling for support in the areas of funding, partnerships, evacuation and on-the-ground volunteers for these efforts by Black Foreigners in Ukraine (BFU). With the leadership of the BFU tech team, this is the official website of this effort that is sharing resources for Africans and Black people leaving Ukraine: blackforeignersinukraine.org. This [URL](#) directs folks to a form to report missing persons, request funds and to request ground transportation, navigation and other forms of support. Please visit the [BFU website](#) to see how you can support this work.

A March 1, 2022, [NBC News](#) article cites “Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's minister of foreign affairs, who tweeted Tuesday that Africans needed to evacuate the country safely,” and references the [following tweet](#) stating that Africans “need to have equal opportunities to return to their home countries safely.”

The [NBC News](#) article citing Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues: “However, do not be misled by Russian disinformation,” the statement read. “There is no discrimination based on the race or nationality including when it comes to the crossing of the state border by foreign citizens. The first-come, first-served approach applied to all nationalities.” This contradicts the first-hand accounts, video and images posted to social media.

Please see a summary of accounts below and links to social media videos and posts painting pictures of the horrific scenes and experiences of Black and African foreigners, that mirror that of other marginalized groups, attempting to survive and to escape Ukraine. These images and accounts contradict an additional [recent March 2, 2022, posting from Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) about equal opportunities for citizens in Ukraine to safely exit the country. It should be noted that the bulk of Black and African people trying to flee Ukraine are medical students and not Ukrainian nationals as a March 2nd [New York Times Instagram post](#) misstated.

There have been videos shared on social media that suggest the authenticity of these claims. Please see the links below.

- [Black Foreigners in Ukraine Instagram Post](#)
- https://twitter.com/damilare_arah/status/1497653254339059716?s=21
- https://twitter.com/damilare_arah/status/1497654141350522880?s=21
- <https://twitter.com/mikewhoatv/status/1497701040816328715?s=21>
- <https://twitter.com/mikewhoatv/status/1497648041817522182?s=21>
- https://twitter.com/damilare_arah/status/1497674728819077124?s=21
- https://www.instagram.com/tv/CadRZetAhsR/?utm_medium=copy_link

- <https://twitter.com/yodifiji/status/1497299763695435779?s=21>
- <https://twitter.com/yodifiji/status/1497552635188195335?s=21>

Again, we are calling for support in the areas of funding, partnerships, evacuation, on-the-ground volunteers, as well as media and community amplification of these efforts by Black Foreigners in Ukraine (BFU). Please visit the BFU website to see how you can support this work at blackforeignersinukraine.org.

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