



UNOG Bi-Weekly Press Briefing: Belarus-Poland Crisis - OHCHR-UNHCR

12-11-2021 | Edited News

Shotlist

STORY: Belarus-Poland Crisis – OHCHR, UNHCR

TRT: 2 mins 11s

SOURCE: UNTV CH

RESTRICTIONS: NONE

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH / NATS

ASPECT RATIO: 16:9

DATELINE: 12 November 2021 GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

SHOTLIST

1. Exterior wide shot, United Nations flags flying.
2. **SOUNDBITE (English): Elizabeth Throssell, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “It is a terrible situation, we are seeing people in terrible circumstances, in the bitter cold, even reports that people have died. And that’s why it is really so important. This is why the High Commissioner has spoken out and other UN agencies have spoken out really clearly about this. The human rights of migrants and refugees have to come first. It is really important they must be respected under international human rights refugee law, but as for the political dimension to this, I would leave that to others to address that.”**
3. Medium shot, inside the press conference room, showing speakers and participants, large-screen TV showing the press briefing being broadcast on Zoom.
4. **SOUNDBITE (English): Shabia Mantoo, spokesperson, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): “The human rights and the safety of refugees and migrants are paramount and we do believe that we have said it many times that refugees and asylum seekers and migrants to achieve political ends is unacceptable and must stop and that is completely deplorable.”**
5. Medium shot, journalists attending the meeting and speakers.
6. **SOUNDBITE (English): Elizabeth Throssell, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “We do underscore though that the human rights of people who are along the border should be of paramount concern; we have expressed - and the High Commissioner has stressed in her comments - that the strong security focus and politically charged responses on both sides, and that includes the increased deployment of troops and accompanying inflammatory rhetoric, they only exacerbate the vulnerability and risks that migrants and refugees face.”**
7. Close shot, a journalist seated and masked listening to the press briefing.
8. **SOUNDBITE (English): Elizabeth Throssell, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “The human rights of these people, the human rights of these migrants and refugees, and that’s regardless of their nationality, status or circumstance, they must be fully respected under international human rights and refugee law.”**
9. Medium-shot, journalists seated and masked taking notes, a TV screen in the background showing two speakers.
10. **SOUNDBITE (English): Elizabeth Throssell, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “Although we are following developments very closely, we do not have a presence there, we do not have access there, so the reports that you’ve been hearing, we are not in a position to confirm them.”**
11. Medium shot, participants listening to moderator, while a technician supervises the briefing on Zoom.
12. Close shot, journalists taking notes of the briefing.
13. Close shot, participants taking notes.

Story

Belarus-Poland crisis: human rights of trapped migrants are paramount, says UN

Amid growing concerns about the plight of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers at the Poland-Belarus border, UN agencies on Friday urged all parties to respect their human rights and to refrain from using them for political ends.

The development follows news footage earlier in the week showing migrants located between the countries, attempting to dodge teargas to make their way through razor wire, following weeks of rising tension.

“It is a terrible situation, we are seeing people in terrible circumstances, in the bitter cold, even reports that people have died,” said Liz Throssell, spokesperson, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). “And that’s why it is really so important. This is why the High Commissioner has spoken out and other UN agencies have spoken out really clearly about this. The human rights of migrants and refugees have to come first. It is really important they must be respected under international human rights refugee law, but as for the political dimension to this, I would leave that to others to address that.”

Echoing that message, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) spokesperson Shabia Mantoo told journalists in Geneva that the human rights and the safety of refugees and migrants were “paramount...we do believe that we have said it many times that refugees and asylum seekers and migrants to achieve political ends is unacceptable and must stop and that is completely deplorable.”

The border became a flashpoint after the European Union imposed sanctions on Belarus on the basis of alleged grave human rights violations there, and the diversion of a commercial flight between two EU nations by Belarus in May, in order to remove a leading dissident, according to news reports.

In recent weeks, UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet also expressed concern at “persistent allegations” of “widespread and systematic torture of protesters” in Belarus, following the crackdown on protests at the re-election of President Alexander Lukashenko in August last year.

Highlighting that the human rights of the migrants and refugees should be fully respected “regardless of their nationality, status or circumstance”, Ms. Throssell added that the “strong security focus and politically charged responses on both sides - and that includes the increased deployment of troops and accompanying inflammatory rhetoric - they only exacerbate the vulnerability and risks that migrants and refugees face.”

Responding to questions over unconfirmed reports that migrants have been subjected to mock executions by soldiers, Ms. Throssell noted that OHCHR was following developments “very closely...we do not have access there, so the reports that you’ve been hearing, we are not in a position to confirm them”.

ends