11/03/2022

UN: More than 2.5 million people have fled Ukraine since Russian invasion



The United Nations on Friday announced that some 2.5 million people have left Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion, while another two million are internally displaced. Around half of those who fled are children, the UN added.
Meanwhile, away from the battlefront but on the diplomatic field, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday said there had been some progress in talks with Ukraine, although he provided no details.

Conversely, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba a day earlier said a meeting in southern Turkey with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, did not result in any decisive progress.

Kuleba said the two sides couldn’t agree on the creation of humanitarian corridors for the port city of Mariupol.

Meanwhile, the European Union is proposing to spend an extra 500 million euros to finance military aid to Ukraine, the bloc’s foreign policy chief announced.

Josep Borrell said he was “certain” that EU leaders meeting in Versailles on Friday would agree to double the spending package, which has seen the Union fund weapons going to Ukraine.

The EU last month broke a long-standing taboo by agreeing to pay for weapons deliveries to Ukraine, after Russia invaded its neighbor, something that most Western countries have bitterly condemned.

EU officials said the new tranche of money would go towards reimbursing EU nations that were unilaterally sending arms requested by Ukraine.

In another related development, nearly a million people in Ukraine are without electricity, the country’s state-owned nuclear energy provider Energoatom announced on Friday, as Russia’s bombardment of Ukrainian cities continued.

Other reports have said besieged Mariupol, where Ukrainian authorities have tried repeatedly to evacuate civilians, has been without food, running water and electricity for 10 days.

Support by Romanian, Georgian Orthodox Churches

In neighboring Romania, which shares a lengthy border with Ukraine, the Romanian Orthodox Church continues to announce new shipments of aid for refugees and the displaced on a daily basis. Additionally, the Patriarchate of Romania said every Archdiocese in the country has offered to host Ukrainian women and children in facilities managed by parishes and monasteries.

Further away, but still in a related development, the Georgian Orthodox Church announced that another 10 tons of humanitarian aid have collected by the Church’s youth groups and volunteers for shipment to war-torn Ukraine.

Russian Patriarch Kirill’s response to call for end to war, by WCC action Gen-Sec

Meanwhile, a portion of statements attributed to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, His Holiness Kirill, was released on Friday by the Moscow Patriarchate’s department of external church relations, and reportedly in response to a letter sent on March 2 by World Council of Churches (WCC) acting general secretary, the Rev. Dr. Ioan Sauca.

The latter called on the Russian Patriarch to mediate so that the war ends.

In his response, the Russian Patriarch noted, among others, that “…These days, millions of Christians all over the world in their prayers and thoughts turn to the dramatic developments in Ukraine. As you know, this conflict did not start today. It is my firm belief that its initiators are not the peoples of Russia and Ukraine, who came from one Kievan baptismal font, are united by common faith, common saints and prayers, and share common historical fate. The origins of the confrontation lie in the relationships between the West and Russia.”

His Holiness Kirill also claimed that Moscow had been promised that its security and dignity would be respected, but instead the NATO alliance built up a presence on Russia’s borders.