

**The Mayors, Ministers, Royal House & Dutch Government**  
The Netherlands

**Date:** 29 August 2023

**Urgent Appeal: Re-evaluation of Temporary Protection Termination for Non-Ukrainian Nationals & Eviction from the Reception Centers**

Dear Sir/Ma,

We write to you in our capacity as a concerned group in the Netherlands, who fall under the risk of losing the right to the temporary protection directive. It is now a huge concern that a threat with a loss of protection status has both professional and deeply human implications.

As “Derdelanders” we represent the group of non-Ukrainian nationals currently residing in the shelter for Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands provided by the municipalities. Your recent correspondence letter, which outlines the termination of the temporary protection status effective September 4, 2023, and eviction of the shelters has been received with great concern, disbelief, and dismay. As this has caused profound distress and a reminder of the war distress experienced during the war breakout in Ukraine.

Throughout history, especially during the gravest global conflicts, nations have unfailingly stepped forward to provide a sanctuary to displaced victims, regardless of nationality. For instance, during WWII, countless non-Jewish individuals were granted protection due to the overarching danger of the Nazi regime. Similarly, we non-Ukrainian nationals found ourselves amidst a harrowing conflict in Ukraine, and our pain, loss, and suffering, though we may not be Ukrainian by birth, are no less real.

The fact that we were residing in Ukraine during the Russian invasion makes us as many victims of the conflict as Ukrainian citizens. Past European crises have seen nations rally together to protect all affected, not merely by citizenship but by the tangible impact of the crisis.

History has shown us that during periods of conflict, nations have risen to the occasion by offering refuge to those in distress, regardless of their nationality. The Dutch government response should stem from understanding the depth of our struggles rather than purely focusing on the color of their passports. The essence of protection should pivot on human experience rather than administrative distinctions.

To underscore the importance of equitable treatment, we must highlight some statistics. Of the countless souls affected by the war, as third country individuals we might represent a minority, but our narratives of upheaval are no less significant. Many have lost their homes, livelihoods, studies, jobs, and loved ones, sense of security and have faced the same terrains of devastation.

Our previous status in Ukraine, whether for work or study, should not diminish the adversities we encountered due to the war nor undermine the magnitude of our sufferings. The criteria for protection should be grounded in humanity and not the technicalities of one's paperwork, passport or background.

The EU Directive 2001/55/EC, established in response to the Yugoslav wars, set out minimum standards for granting temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons. It stresses solidarity and equitable treatment. By distinguishing the rights of non-Ukrainian nationals based on their temporary resident status in Ukraine, the Dutch government potentially infringes on the spirit of this Directive.

Legally, the EU Directive 2001/55/EC was designed to address mass displacements. It emphasizes solidarity among member states and fairness in granting protection. So, therefore, by differentiating rights based solely on world class citizenry and previous temporary residence status, it inadvertently deviates from the very ethos of this directive. The law not only directs us but also holds us accountable to uphold the rights of every individual seeking refuge.

The EU's approach to mass displacements is centered on collective responsibility and fairness in offering protection in all member states. This directive emphasizes that displaced persons, regardless of the complexities of their status, should be accorded equal consideration and protection.

Beyond legal obligations, there's a moral imperative to consider. Everyone of us has a unique story riddled with trauma, loss, and the persistent quest for safety. Our stories echo with tales of upheaval, uncertainty, and trauma. Each one of us sought refuge in the Netherlands, not as opportunists, but as desperate souls looking for sanctuary.

Our journey to the Netherlands was not one of choice but of sheer necessity, driven by the instinctual need for survival. While we might not be Ukrainian by nationality, the impact of the conflict on our lives makes our experiences indistinguishable from their Ukrainian counterparts.

One pivotal yet oft-overlooked dimension is the profound relationships and bonds we have cultivated with the Ukrainian community during our time in Ukraine. Our experiences, interwoven with those of the local Ukrainians, have rendered distinctions between us almost negligible. In the midst of shared workplaces, academic institutions, neighborhoods, and even families, we have played active roles in the cultural, social, and economic tapestry of Ukraine.

Evicting or removing us is not just about displacing a number of individuals; it's about breaking communities that were forged in solidarity during some of Ukraine's most challenging times. Our shared struggles, joys, and daily life in Ukraine have intertwined our fates inextricably with the Ukrainian populace. To sever this bond abruptly based on nationality, without acknowledging the depth of these shared experiences, overlooks the very essence of human connection and the universality of suffering during times of conflict. Recognizing these bonds and relationships should inform our perspective, urging us to see beyond the administrative labels of nationality and instead appreciate the shared human story they represent.

Forcing us to leave will expose us to numerous risks – be it returning to a destabilized region, facing unemployment or destitution, or the psychological toll of being thrust from a place of relative safety poses a genuine threat. Moreover, the psychological ramifications of such a move can't be underestimated. Our trust in international sanctuaries will be irrevocably broken, leading to a broader loss of faith in global systems of protection.

The Dutch reputation for fairness, justice, and humanitarian support is at stake. The international community is watching, and history will judge the decisions made during these challenging times.

We have followed all the rules of law, exercised our fundamental human rights to reach out to the Dutch government, some of us have legally objected through our lawyers but our objections were ignored without any acknowledgement. We, therefore, feel like our lives and rights don't matter.

Some of our other initiatives are as follow:

**Online petition on Change.org**

- We've had over 1200 signed petitions. See link: <https://derdelanders.org/sign-a-petition/>

**Peaceful Demonstration or Protest;**

- On August 7, we held our first peaceful demonstration in The Hague,
- on the 14th of August, we also initiated another demonstration,
- and on Friday, August 25, we had another demonstration, which led to a discussion with the IND officials, specifically the communication manager, Ilona De Ruyter. They agreed to discuss our struggles, situations and demands with the council, and promised to send us a confirmation when this is done, and yet we still haven't heard from them.

You can see more information about this on our X page - formerly Twitter. Here at <https://x.com/derdelanders>

## Journalism

- Our struggles have gained a lot of attention by the press and media outlets across the country to cover our stories and several interviews were also conducted. You can search with the keywords "Derdelanders uit Oekraïne" on google to find out more.
- Stories were covered, shared, published and more still yet to be released.

## Website Creation

- We created a website to organize ourselves as a community to tell our stories to the world and relay our messages, goals, objectives and demands.
- You can visit our website at [derdelanders.org](https://derdelanders.org) to learn more about our stories.

We initiated all these steps to get the attention of the Dutch government to respond to us as people who also have human rights, according to the Dutch Human Rights Constitution laid down in chapter 1, article 1 & article 5 of the Constitution [Grondwet nederland].

Ignoring and neglecting our concerns as individuals in the Netherlands will be violating the Dutch General Equal Treatment Act, Article 1, section 1, under b & c and Article 1a, section 2 [Algemene wet gelijke behandeling]. Should any one of us lose our residence rights after September 4 without being heard, then it will be a violation of the "Algemene wet gelijke behandeling" and "Grondwet nederland".

We want the Dutch government to engage in an open dialogue. Transparent and compassionate dialogue can bring understanding. Thereby, fostering open communications with representatives from our affected group allows our concerns to be heard and understood rather than a collective dismissal. By listening to our lived experiences, concerns, and hopes, policies can be more empathetic and effective.

While we recognize the challenges associated with the mass influx of refugees, it is imperative that decisions are made based on empathy, justice, and in accordance with international obligations. We urge the Dutch government to reconsider this decision, engage in constructive dialogue, reinstate our protection and uphold the humanitarian values that the people of Netherlands and the EU stand for.

With deepest respect,

Isaac, Karim, Kaadija, Yousef, Elliot, Bensmail, Anass, Nadis and Ansuria  
Team Leaders, Derdelanders

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