

# U K R A I N E

**If this request offends in any way, please disregard with my apologies**

**We are, of course, all horrified by the images that fill our television screens**



The aid agencies are doing an extraordinary job; individuals help in ways that are inspirational. But, sometimes, we fall into the trap of giving what we **think** people need as opposed to what people **actually** need. In parts of Hungary, that shares a border with Ukraine, the warehouses are already filled with food and blankets and the like.

**Please, if you are able, this is a request to directly help**

**I am asking for donations to help traumatised families with onward travel**

**Every penny raised will directly help a family in desperate need**

**Our help is given on a voluntary basis - what we do is completely transparent**

**BACKGROUND** - I frequently visit Hungary; at the end of Lockdown 1, I spent five months there, helping Hungarian friends run their adventure business; during this time, I obtained a 'Registration Card', allowing me to remain in the country without limitation. I am now acquiring 'National Permanent Residency Permit' status; this should be granted by the end of March 2022.

My friends are working twenty hours a day; earlier this week they spent three days at the Hungary-Ukraine border (see over); the scenes are chaotic, relying solely on volunteer help. Today (Friday 4 March 2022) they have been at Budapest Keleti International Railway Station; we spoke in a video call. The platforms are overflowing with women, their children and elderly relatives, many completely traumatised, penniless; the fear of never seeing their loved ones again; the trauma of no money.

They are stranded, unable to even buy a train ticket; they don't want to remain in Hungary but to reach another part of Europe where they may have family or friends. If you can, please help by donating so we can buy onward train tickets; if you would like to help, please email me and I can provide details how you can donate:

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## THURSDAY 3 MARCH 2022

Below is an extract from notes written by my Hungarian friends

I have tidied the notes a little but the text remains as written

Zebegeény - the village where my friends live; three and a half hours from the border

Tiszabecs - a small village on the Hungary - Ukraine border

Kassa - Kassa in Hungarian but better known to us as Košice in Slovakia

Nyíregyháza - a city in north-eastern Hungary

Distances: Kiszabecs to Kassa (Košice) 200 kms Kiszabecs to Nyíregyháza 150 kms

Yesterday night we returned to Zebegeény. We brought two minibus people, most of them left in Budapest. We stayed two ladies - on the offer of the local government - in a local guest house for two nights, and we helped the fate of a family, who stayed in Budapest.

On Monday, when we arrived in Tiszabecs, we donated the donations that the people of Zebegeény gave. We didn't expect it, but it turned out that the warehouses are full of donations, food, blankets, cleaning equipment. Sorting and handling many donations is a major problem.

At the Tiszabecs border point, the volunteers - us - had to organise ourselves due to no central control. Until Wednesday evening, the disaster protection, neither the military nor the buses, which would have continued to transport the refugees had arrived.

It turned out that for most of those coming to the border someone is coming to transport them. And the others don't want to stay in Hungary, but they hurry to their relatives living in Europe. We gave information and transportation to hundreds of fully stranded refugees. Those crossing the border are untrusting, traumatized, many are constantly crying. Most of them don't speak English, they only speak Ukrainian and understand Russian. Mothers are coming, with many very small children, grandparents who belong to them, including many gypsy families, all without a father. Many people walked to the Hungarian border for three days and three nights, because they heard that it is easier or faster to get in here than from Poland or Slovakia.

In the end, we transported mothers and children to Kassa with 4 cars - four hours there, and four hours back. In three days, the four cars have completed a total of 5,000 kilometers. By the next day, we figured out that the most effective thing is to take them to Nyíregyháza - one and a half hour by car - explaining that they can continue by train from there. That the train is safe, fast, it has a toilet and the toddlers can be put down.

We have printed railway schedules in many hundreds of copies about the international trains starting from Budapest, which we gave into their hands. When we arrived at Nyiregyháza, we arranged the free ticket for ours and bought the ticket for all the refugees who were just there, BECAUSE IT IS NOT FREE. We put them on the train and made sure everyone got to Budapest safely. We told them to calm down, there will be a lot of volunteers in the West, who will help with the continuing journey there.

We have experienced that there is the biggest deficiency in their informations and consolation. If needed, we gave them HUF (forint). We bought a bus ticket.

Now at home we are working on written, printed and multiplied materials, which need to be delivered to the refugees at the right place and on time.