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The first anniversary of the Russia's invasion of Ukraine

February 24, 2022, will go down in history, not only as the day Russia unleashed a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, vastly escalating the conflict it first orchestrated in 2014 into an open war that now threatens the freedom and prosperity of all Europeans. For millions of Ukrainian citizens, this date is the moment their lives were turned upside down and plunged into a nightmare that continues to this day, an unending fight for their lives and their families' lives, for their dignity, for everything they have achieved in life, for their children's future.

Thousands of Ukrainian families, fearing for their lives, fled the country in a **great exodus** that began within hours after the invasion, seeking asylum and assistance from their western neighbors.

Poland was one of the first countries to open its borders to Ukrainian refugees, and it is the western country that has taken in the most Ukrainians, by far.

February 24, is also the date when the Western world was put to a great test of its solidarity and humanity, suddenly confronted with the decision whether to help Ukraine or to remain a passive bystander, in effect supporting revanchist designs of Putin's Russia.

Polish government and non-governmental organizations mobilized to receive and assist this vast wave of war refugees

mainly women and children, the elderly and the disabled.

The Polish government rapidly drafted and enacted legal regulations that not only facilitated the acclimation of Ukrainians to life in Poland, but also enabled them to work here, to use Polish health care and their children to study in Polish schools.

Countless Polish citizens, deeply sympathizing with their neighbors' plight, offered to help the refugees as soon as they learned of the invasion.

Volunteering their services for weeks on end, they helped at border crossings, train and bus stations, and reception facilities. They provided physical and psychological support. They held fundraisers, donated food, medicine and hygiene products to refugee assistance centers all over the country. They organized humanitarian aid transports to Ukraine with their own financial and logistical resources.
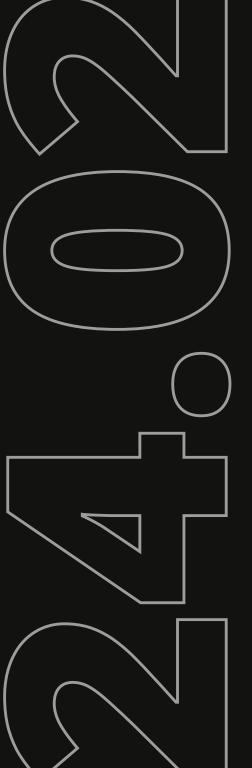
Thousands of Poles
 have opened their homes
 to Ukrainian families,
providing them with decent
living conditions when they
had no idea where they
would find shelter.

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Photos, text and graphic design: Maciej Biedrzycki