

'The refugee crisis doesn't discriminate': Utah nonprofit deploying team to aid Ukrainian refugees



Estimated read time: 3-4 minutes

SALT LAKE CITY — The situation in Ukraine has presented a humanitarian crisis, with many people looking to leave the country in the midst of the [Russian invasion](#).

In response to this crisis, [August Mission](#), a Utah-based nonprofit on Tuesday will be deploying a humanitarian aid team to Poland to assist Ukrainian refugees.

August Mission was founded by Bruce Roberts last fall after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Roberts, a veteran, said that the idea for the mission came to him after he had a "feeling that we had failed to live up to some of our commitments there."

"Myself, being a veteran of Afghanistan, I had friends and contacts there that were reaching out to me and asking for help to get their families out," Roberts said.

After this realization, Roberts formed August Mission with the mission to provide lawful recovery, resettlement and humanitarian support to refugees, displaced persons and others that had been left behind.

Roberts said that he always knew the situation in Afghanistan wouldn't be their only mission, but he didn't expect their services to be needed so soon.

"When the situation and the crisis in Ukraine happened, we knew that that fit in our mission statement and that there was going to be a massive refugee problem and a massive humanitarian crisis and that we had to help," Roberts said.

For the mission to Poland, August Mission is sending out an initial assessment team consisting of two individuals. The goal of this team will be to get on the ground and into refugee camps along the border of Ukraine and Poland, to assess what the greatest needs are and how August Mission can help.

"The refugee crisis doesn't discriminate. It doesn't matter where you are in the world, what country you belong to — it comes down to a human problem."

–Nick Fowler, August Mission

"What we leverage is our expertise, not our resources," Roberts said. "Our guys on the ground will do what we call a needs assessment to determine, 'What are the gaps? What are the needs that aren't being filled?' and then what we will do is find ways to solve those hard problems."

Nick Fowler is the director of operations at August Mission and one of two team members who will be traveling to Poland as part of the initial assessment team.

"We've been networking over the past month or so, really tracking what's developing over there," Fowler said. "Our initial trip over there is an initial assessment, talking with them, really understanding where the other organizations are in the area, what efforts they're making and essentially from there, we'll understand where we can create the biggest value."

Fowler emphasized that the situation in Poland with Ukrainian refugees is "changing daily."

"It's already started to transition into what I would call the second phase, where you have folks that aren't mobile. Maybe they don't have a car, they're not as financially well off, they're dealing with maybe some illnesses — that type of population if you will," Fowler added. "So that's, I think, when we're really going to see that border get clogged down (and) see a lot of tragedy."

"The refugee crisis doesn't discriminate. It doesn't matter where you are in the world, what country you belong to — it comes down to a human problem," Fowler said.

August Mission is a nonprofit that is fully funded by community donations.

Folks wishing to support the vision of August Mission can do so [here](#).

"We just decided that this is something bigger than ourselves and it doesn't just apply to Afghanistan, it's a worldwide problem," Roberts said. "What we try to do is go to where the greatest need is and try to solve the hard problems and right now, that need is in Ukraine."

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