

‘Joni and Friends’ Rescues Hundreds of People With Disabilities From War-Torn Ukraine

As nearly 10 million Ukrainians flee their war-torn cities, there is one population that is being left behind to suffer the trauma with very little help—people with disabilities.

There are approximately 2.7 million disabled persons living in Ukraine. While many have no way out, Joni and Friends, a faith-based ministry, is planning to rescue nearly 50 of them and their caregivers in Eastern Ukraine on Friday, March 25.

“We are still alive. God continues our lives, and that means we can do something for people who need help,” said Galyna, a Joni and Friends in-country coordinator in Ukraine.

Galyna has chosen not to leave the country but works tirelessly to secure the safety of those with disabilities, especially orphans.

“Am I afraid? Yes,” she said. “But the right decisions are always the most difficult ones.”

“Our people need encouragement, need the gospel, need support right now,” she added. “So may God help us as Christians to be this blessing and support for millions of other Ukrainians who are staying here and defending our country by doing whatever they can.”

Joni and Friends was founded by Joni Eareckson Tada with the mission to share the gospel and serve people with disabilities around the world.

Galyna will lead the group’s sixth caravan later this week. So

far, she has helped nearly 250 people reach Poland.

“At first we had 39 people,” Galyna explained, recounting one of her first rescue missions. “When we came to the border ... I looked at the line of people who were crossing on foot, and I saw a familiar face. It turned out that this woman was the mother of a boy with cerebral palsy, and he was in a wheelchair.”

“She came to me and gave me a hug,” Galyna went on, “and we managed to help her! At first, I wasn’t sure that there would be a place in the vans. But when the people from Germany came, they agreed.”

According to the group, Galyna and the caravan waited at the border for 11 hours. Finally, at 2:00 am, the group of 42 people crossed safely into Poland.

“Praise God,” she said at that time. “That is the greatest blessing, really! They are there. They are safe.”

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