
EU GIVES EQUIPMENT TO HELP SERBIA CONTROL MIGRATION

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The European Union said on Wednesday (21 September) that it was providing Serbia with training and specialist equipment, including thermal cameras, to help with the flow of refugees at the Balkan country's borders.

The so-called Balkan route for migrants trying to get to Western Europe was officially shut down in March, but hundreds have since been trying to cross each day.

There are currently around 6,000 asylum seekers in Serbia, living in camps and often precarious sanitary conditions, while Belgrade has strengthened border controls and involved the army in patrols.

A statement from the EU delegation to Serbia said it had signed a million contract with the International Organisation for Migration to provide equipment worth around (\$390,000) and training to the Serbian authorities.

This will include fixed thermo-vision system, hand-held thermo-vision cameras, and also document examination and communication equipment, the statement said, adding that funding would also be provided for deploying up to 50 guest officers from EU member states.

The EU will also provide additional support to neighbouring Bulgaria, from where many migrants travel to Serbia, including significant numbers of extra border guards and vehicles, the statement said.

We will continue working together to never allow (a) return to uncontrolled migration flows of last year, while providing humane living conditions for the refugees and migrants, said Ambassador Michael Davenport, head of the EU delegation to Serbia.

Last week, Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and the governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank, Rolf Wenzel, signed an agreement in Paris on a grant for asylum seekers in Serbia.

According to the Serbian authorities, 102,000 refugees have been registered in the country since the beginning of this year, and Belgrade has warned it cannot afford to host massive numbers of people blocked from Western Europe.

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