

Displaced by the war in Ukraine, some African students struggle to continue their education

by [Anthony Akaeze](#) in the [June 15, 2022](#) issue

Months after Russian soldiers invaded Ukraine, some displaced African students determined to continue their education are finding it difficult to gain residence permits in Germany.

This is happening against the backdrop of many European countries—particularly those closest to Ukraine geographically—demonstrating unprecedented hospitality in welcoming millions of refugees.

Before the war, an estimated 76,000 foreign students were studying in Ukraine, and one-fourth of those were from Africa. Unlike Ukrainian students who have secured residence permits to continue with their education in Germany, their African counterparts are still battling for such acceptance. Among the Africans seeking to be accepted by German universities and granted residency permits are Egyptians, Algerians, Cameroonians, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Liberians, and Gambians.

At the time of publication, about 30 African students had been admitted to a university in the German state of Hessen, following efforts by individuals and organizations negotiating on their behalf. But without securing residence permits from German authorities, the admission may amount to nothing.

“It’s not been an easy journey,” said Eddy Duru, a Nigerian-born German councilor and the founder of RARDUJA International, an organization focused on migration and humanitarian issues. He has been working with others to assist the students in their quest to resettle in Germany.

The next hurdle for the students and their advocates is to convince German authorities to grant the students three-year residence permits. Currently, Hamburg—one of Germany’s 16 federal states—issues a six-month provisional residency right to non-Ukrainian students coming from Ukraine. But this offers little security for students who will not be returning to Ukraine any time soon.

Some have suggested the students should seek asylum as refugees in Germany, but Duru doesn't believe that would be in the students' best interest.

"We wouldn't want the African students to go through the rigors of asylum. . . . We want to see that they are directly absorbed and that they continue their studies. They were students. Ukrainians did not take asylum. They were given straight three-year visas to stay and every other [right as well]."

Some wonder why the African students don't just return to their home countries to complete their education. The answer often is that there is no equivalent education available.

Kensede Obong Okosun, an African PhD student based in Germany for many years, says the blame should be laid at the doorstep of bad leadership in some African countries.

"I hear that many Nigerian students chose to remain in Ukraine amidst the chaos," she said. "For them, dodging bullets is preferable to the pandemic of hunger and impoverishment currently bedeviling the Nigerian populace while inhumane politicians, who have lost connection with their inborn human essence of love, compassion and kindness, flaunt the collective wealth of the people which they have illegally amassed for themselves." —Baptist News Global