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## **Austria: Card. Schönborn (Vienna), “refugees brutally used by Lukashenko as toys”**

Card. Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, has harshly criticised Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and his policy towards refugees from the Middle East. “What is happening at the EU-Belarus border is cynical and shameless”, Card. Schönborn wrote in his Friday column in the free newspaper “Heute”. For Card. Schönborn, Lukashenko’s calculation is simple: “He threatens the EU with new refugee flows in order to get what he wants from the EU”. The consequences for the refugees, according to the Cardinal, are serious: “Barbed wire fences, and people stranded in freezing temperatures”. It does not take much to “see the despair of these people”, Card. Schönborn said, pointing the finger at Belarus’ President in his article: “There are people in need here who are brutally used as toys by a ruler. They are used as a means of pressure. They are pushed back and forth as goods”. It is understandable, Card. Schönborn said, “that the EU does not want to give in to this disgusting power game”, but at the same time, it is time to make efforts to find a humanitarian solution. For “these people simply want a life, peace and security. They have been betrayed”. The Cardinal’s final words for each refugee at the barbed border between Poland and Belarus are bitter: “It hurts not being able to help you”.

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