



UKRAINE RESPONSE PROTECTION SNAPSHOT

17-26 March

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Protection of Civilians

- As of 25 March, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded **2,909 civilian casualties in Ukraine (1,119 killed and 1,790 injured)**. OHCHR's figures do not yet include civilian casualties in the most heavily affected areas (Mariupol, Volnovakha, Izium, Sievierodonetsk, Rubizhne, Trostyanets) due to limited humanitarian access for verification and corroboration.
- Main areas of conflict continue to be in the northeast, southeast, and eastern parts of the country**, particularly Kyiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions. Private houses, multistory building, and medical facilities had been destroyed on a massive scale. **OHCHR highlighted** that the extent of civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian objects showed that the principles of distinction and proportionality were not respected.
- The intensity of the fighting, and notably the **indiscriminate airstrikes hitting civilians and private and communal infrastructure**, continues to trigger fear and large-scale displacement inside Ukraine and to neighboring countries. On 24 March, an office of Nova Poshta was attacked by shelling while distributing humanitarian aid to residents of Kharkiv, resulting in six civilians dead and 15 wounded (Kharkiv Regional Military Administration).
- According to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU), **at least 651 houses were destroyed and 3,780 damaged** – however, figures are considered to be much higher, as the latter only include buildings accessible for the SESU.

Evacuations / Safe Passage of Civilians

- A second safe passage operation facilitated by the ICRC and Red Cross Ukraine was completed - over 30 buses with around 1,000 people left Sumy on 18 March.** The humanitarian community and the ICRC continue to urge both parties to take practical steps to limit civilian suffering and respect International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Concrete agreements to allow for safe passage, such as the two recent safe passages out of Sumy on 16 and 18 March, are urgently needed. The Government of Ukraine continues to evacuate on average 6,500 persons on a daily basis, mostly from Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, and Kyiv regions. Under the leadership of the UN Crisis Coordinator, access negotiations for the delivery of humanitarian aid in conflict-active areas continues.
- Despite the successful evacuation from Sumy, attempts to evacuate civilians in a more predictable and systematic manner from the most affected areas continue to be hindered by ongoing hostilities.** On 21 March, several evacuation buses were shelled in different areas in Zaporizhyya region when they were leaving Mariupol – five children were reportedly injured. On 23 March, Ukrainian authorities reported that a convoy of 11 buses driving towards Mariupol to evacuate civilians was diverted by Russian armed forces.

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USEFUL LINKS: COORDINATION IN EMERGENCIES

- [Dashboard Protection Monitoring Highlights](#)
- [Protection services mapping](#)
- [List of Hotlines](#)
- [Protection Needs Tracking Matrix](#)



12.65M
Conflict-affected People



6.48M
Internally Displaced People



3.7M
Refugees

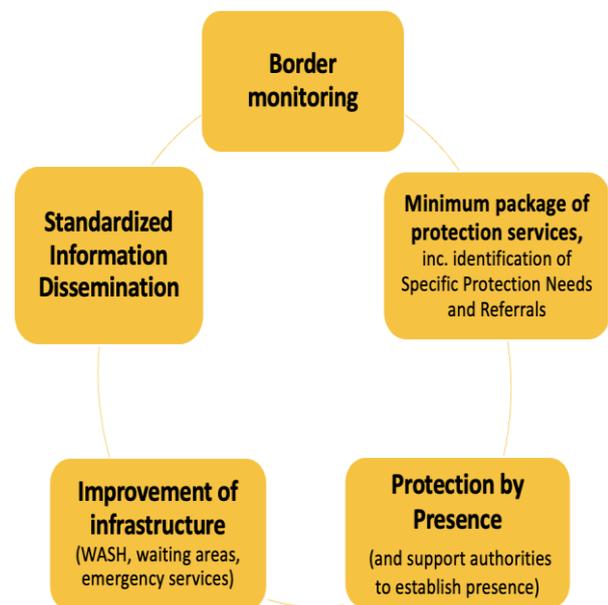
Mine Action

- Before the beginning of the war on 24 February, Ukraine was already one of the [most heavily mine-contaminated areas in the world](#) - the Government of Ukraine identified contamination of 7,000km² in Government-controlled areas and estimated 14,000km² in non-government controlled areas to be affected in Donetsk and Luhansk regions since 2014.
- Following the Russian offensive, **the risks associated to mine/ERWs dramatically increased**, potentially bringing Ukraine to the top of the most mine affected countries in the world. Reports indicate the wide use of cluster bombs by Russian Forces in inhabited areas and the use of automated remote mining systems covering large areas with sophisticated mines – which **will require urgent clearance as soon as logistically feasible and as hostilities cease**. Mine Action partners in Ukraine, with the support of GICHD, are currently consolidating mine contamination maps and mine action activities into one IMSMA system.
- According to the Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration, three children found an explosive device, most probably a land mine, in the village of Obilne near Melitopol. As a result of the explosion, the children were injured and hospitalized.

Protection Risks in Border Areas

- The Protection Cluster hosted a Working Group to develop the **Protection Response Strategy in Border areas**, including the identification of trends, risks and prioritized response activities.
- According to partners, the **key protection risks/needs on the Ukrainian side of the border** include: a) **limited presence of State authorities in border areas** (presence as of now is mostly of State Border Guards and State Emergency Services), and no permanent presence of protection authorities; b) **long queues in certain areas, some people travelling by foot and no “fast-track” lines or prioritization procedures for crossing of persons in a vulnerable situation** - including people with disabilities, pregnant women etc.; c) **presence of unaccompanied or separated children (UASC)** (please see section below for more details); d) **poor mobile/internet networks, and lack of charging stations**, which impacts people’s ability to keep permanent contact with families and access important information on crossing procedures and available services on both sides of the border; e) **poor infrastructure on crossing points** (lack of heating, lavatories, garbage collection, seating, etc.).
- **The main protection information needs identified** related to crossing procedures, how to apply for asylum, documentation required for crossing with private vehicles, validity of driving licenses in third countries, amount of cash authorized to carry; use of Ukrainian bank cards abroad – including how to access payment of pensions.
- **Human trafficking and smuggling** were raised by partners in Ukraine as growing protection concerns - although no concrete cases of human trafficking were identified so far within the territory of Ukraine. IOM developed a package of materials on the prevention of human trafficking that will be shared by the Border Guards. Partners report cases of men (particularly of 18-60 years old) resorting to smugglers to take them through irregular international border crossing points, due to presence of checkpoints where military conscription documents are reportedly granted while travelling on the main roads leading to regular border crossing points.
- **UNHCR and its local NGO partners Right to Protection, NEEKA and Tenth of April launched a Border Monitoring Tool in 17 border points** with Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary and Slovakia, aimed at identifying protection risks, availability and accessibility of critical services and facilities at border points, and to assess which information people need to cross border points legally and safely, and access protection in neighboring or other countries. Results will be frequently shared with all cluster partners via external dashboard and reports.

Key protection response activities in border areas



Child Protection

- On 17 March 2022, Ukraine established a **Coordination Hub on the Rights of Children during martial law**, co-chaired by the Minister of Social Policy and President’s Envoy on the Rights of Children. The Coordination hub is expected to **coordinate the evacuation of children**, in particular children at risk (i.e., orphans, children with disabilities), and to create adequate and safe reception conditions for them. The Coordination hub will also oversee the consular

registration of children evacuated abroad, monitor social standards for evacuated children and solve disputes related to children's rights during martial law.

- Due to growing concerns of human trafficking and irregular transportation of children out of Ukraine, authorities are taking additional protective measures and imposing requirements for separated children crossing borders. According to partners, there are cases of mothers travelling with children who are not allowed by the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service (SBGS) to leave the country without notary certified agreement of fathers. Partners report instances in which SBGS is also reluctant to allow crossing for children accompanied by non-relatives, who have agreement from parents authorized by the state child protection service (which is allowed by the legislation). Such cases are receiving counselling and legal aid by protection partners present at border areas.
- In light of the above, on 12 March, the Government adopted [Decree No 264](#) regulating crossings of children in certain situations. According to the decree, Civil-Military Administrations will organize evacuations of vulnerable children abroad only if safe accommodation within the country is not available. Ukrainian consulates in hosting countries are obliged to register all children evacuated abroad in the first 24 hours. For more information on border crossing rules for people with disabilities and vulnerable children please consult the [Leaflet](#) prepared by the Ministry of Social Policy.
For more information on legal developments please consult the Danish Refugee Council's [Legal Alert](#)

Persons with Disabilities

- In addition to measures related to child protection, the Government [Decree No 264](#) also simplified the rules for men with disabilities crossing international borders of Ukraine. According to the amendments, men with disabilities of conscription age (18-60 years) are allowed to leave the country by showing documents certifying disability - and they are no longer required to provide documents from military registration offices. Also, the person with disability could be accompanied by one adult relative disregarding his/her age and sex.
- In the Cluster's Technical Working Group on Age and Disability, the local NGO Fight for Right presented an assessment conducted on the main needs of persons with disabilities (PWD) currently in Ukraine. According to the findings, the main needs of PWD include: a) assisted evacuation from affected locations and accessible transportation to safer areas; b) MHPSS; c) accessible accommodation for IDPs with disabilities, particularly to avoid the risk of institutionalization; d) access to medicines; e) accessible individual protection counselling; f) lack of inclusive infrastructure in IDP shelters, as well as in distribution/selection of non-food items; g) limited availability of humanitarian rehabilitation aid inside Ukraine.

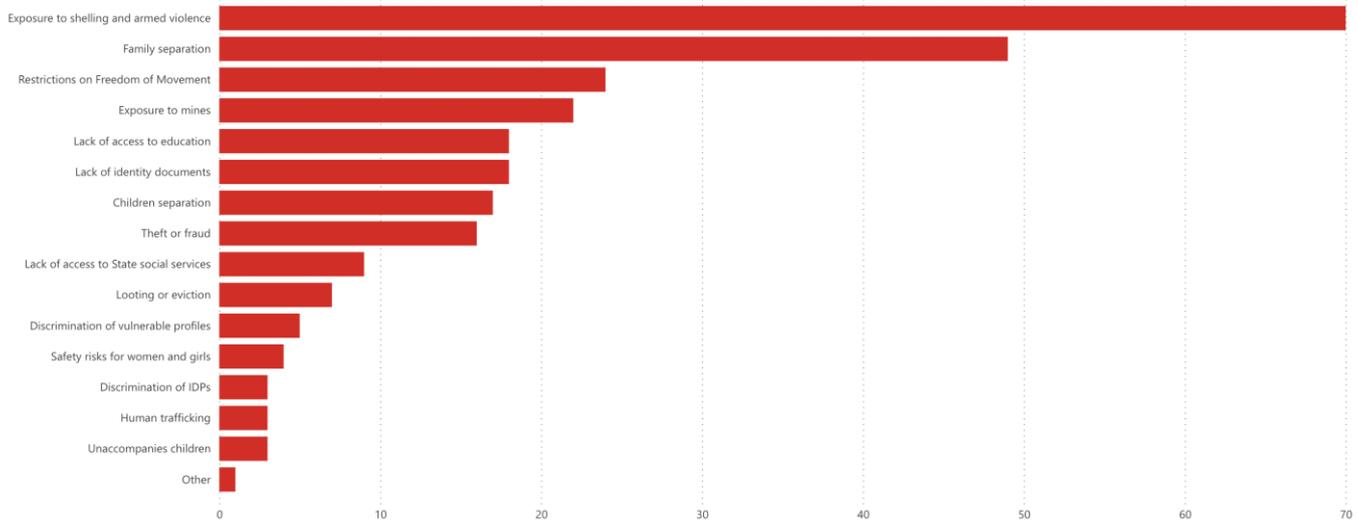


Ukrainian soldiers and militiamen carry a woman in a wheelchair while people flee Irpin on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, on March 7. (Emilio Morenatti/AP)

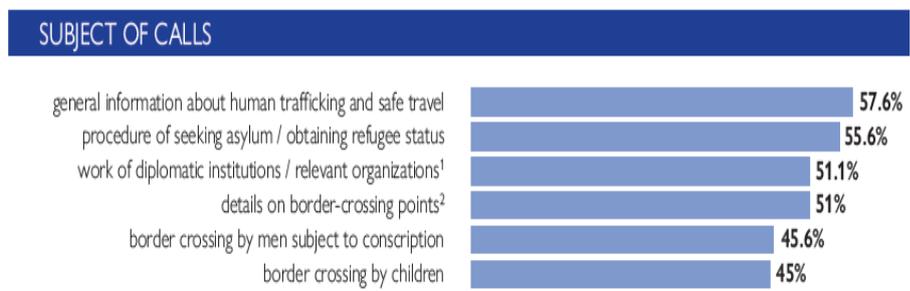
Protection Monitoring Highlights

- In comparison to previous weeks, the protection monitoring is identifying a growing proportion of IDPs willing to move further away from the locations where they are currently hosted – 60% of key informants reported IDPs' intentions to move further, particularly from locations in Donetsk, Zaporizhia, Kirovohrad, Krivoy Rog, Vinnytsa and Lviv regions.
- **Exposure to violence, shelling and mines and family separation continued to be the top protection risks identified.** In the reporting period, however, **restrictions on freedom of movement were reportedly higher than exposure to mines** (compared to trends in previous weeks). Heightened security risks due to shelling, presence of checkpoints and inability to move due to lack of humanitarian corridors from affected areas are amongst the reasons for growing concerns on freedom of movement.
- Specific concerns were identified in relation to LGBTI and gender-diverse persons. According to LGBTI organizations, transgender women are facing challenges securing exemptions from male compulsory military service at checkpoints and border crossing points - which increased the likelihood of them being forced to seek irregular routes to safety, and being more exposed to trafficking, exploitation, and abuse. Other specific needs include access to medication, including for hormone-therapy, as well as access to shelters.

Main Protection Risks Identified in the Protection Monitoring



- Accessible parts of Ukraine are already increasingly coming under pressure due to the large IDP influx. At the same time, humanitarian access remains seriously constrained in conflict-active areas, undermining the provision of humanitarian assistance.
- The increasing influx of IDPs towards the Western regions is resulting in overcrowding conditions, and straining state resources. It was reported that rent prices are on the rise in Western regions, forcing people to cross into neighboring countries in search for free accommodation. Urgent needs flagged by the affected population during the monitoring period include MHPSS support and counseling, the provision of humanitarian assistance and information.
- IDPs seeking accommodation in reception centers reported overcrowded conditions, lack of separation by gender particularly in Vinnytska and Chernivetska, and Dnipropetrovska. Other concerns included lack of sufficient running water, functional toilets and showers, and electricity. Persons with disabilities, and older persons are at risk of being particularly affected by inadequate shelter, which may cause their health to deteriorate.
- The [National Toll-Free Migrant Advice and Anti-Trafficking hotline](#) managed by IOM reported that out of 2,437 calls received since the beginning of the war, **58%** of callers sought information on safe travel routes and anti-human trafficking measures, followed by information on asylum procedures, border procedures, including crossings with children and by men in military conscription age. Oblasts with the most calls were received from **Kyiv (14%), Kharkiv (10%), Dnipropetrovsk (8%), Zhytomyr (5%), and Mykolaiv (5%).**



OPERATIONAL RESPONSE

Overview

- The Protection Cluster works in close coordination with local authorities and partners to deliver protection and assistance to address the acute needs of the affected population. In coordination with the local authorities, the Protection Cluster together with the CCCM and Shelter clusters continue to support the immediate and medium-term reception and accommodation capacity in IDP receiving locations as well as scaling up protection information, counseling and services including psychosocial support, legal aid in reception, and collective centers, border crossing points and in locations where people have fled.

- During the first month following the Russian military offensive, the Protection Cluster through different tools mapped the presence of 40 protection partners across the country, 14 of them are reporting their ongoing and planned activities to the Cluster.

Protection Partners' Response (17-24 March)

- **Individual Protection Counselling and Legal aid:** In Odesa, [UNHCR](#) is supporting a permanent consultation point for protection, legal, and social matters at the railway station. UNHCR partner organization [NGO 10th April](#) provided legal counselling for 27 at the consultation point at Odesa railway station. UNHCR is assisting between 600 to 800 people transiting daily from Mykolaiv to the western oblasts of Ukraine. [Norwegian Refugee Council](#) provided remote legal counselling for 200 persons. [NGO Proliska](#) provided protection counselling for 112 persons and social accompaniment for 247 persons from eastern regions of Ukraine. [Donbas Development Center](#) provided protection counselling for 154 persons. [NGO Right to Protection](#) provided protection counselling for 524 persons at the IBCPs. [International Organization for Migration](#) through the hotline provided protection counselling for 1,101 persons.
- **Support in Evacuations:** [NGO Proliska](#) assisted in the evacuation of 247 persons from Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv regions. [Ukrainian Deminers Association](#) supported the evacuation of 8 persons.
- **Psychosocial Support:** [People in Need](#) through their PSS hotline supported 420 persons. [NGO Proliska](#) provided PSS support for 265 persons from Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Zakarpattia regions.



- **Gender-Based Violence:** [UNFPA](#) is scaling up the delivery of life-saving reproductive health and protection services to support safe births, access to voluntary contraception and specialized services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including post-rape treatment. Three mobile clinics, including one maternity clinic, will shortly arrive in Ukraine to restore the delivery of priority reproductive health services in areas affected by conflict with the greatest needs.
- **Multi-purpose Cash Assistance:** In Lviv, [UNHCR](#) launched a large-scale multi-purpose cash program to help IDPs to cover basic needs such as rent, food, and hygiene items. Cash assistance will allow people to make their own choices while also boosting local providers. UNHCR started enrolling on 17 March and will progressively expand to other cities and regions - aiming to reach 360,000 people.

- **In-kind Assistance:** [UNFPA](#) delivered 13 metric tons of reproductive health supplies, medicines and equipment to health facilities in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia, to support women seeking health services, including the care they need to deliver safely. [Ukrainian Deminers Association](#) provided in-kind support (food, clothes, medicines) for over 750 people including people with disabilities or medical conditions, and children. [Donbas Development Center](#) provided in-kind support for 27 IDPs from Mariupol.

