

## **Ukraine: Millions of displaced traumatised and urgently need help, say experts**

*GENEVA (05 May 2022) - UN human rights experts and the Global Protection Cluster Coordinator are alarmed by the scale of displacement in Ukraine and call for urgent action to protect internally displaced people. They issue the following statement:*

“Since 24 February, nearly 12.8 million people are estimated to have been displaced in Ukraine, most of whom have not left the country. According to the most recent estimates, 7.7 million people are internally displaced as a result of the conflict, which is equivalent to 17.5 percent of the entire population. These are people who have had to leave their homes and everything behind in a desperate attempt to escape death and destruction. They are traumatised and need urgent protection, including psychosocial support.

This conflict has been causing extreme human suffering, with thousands of civilians killed and injured, and countless others living through daily bombardment and violence. Homes, schools, hospitals, care institutions and entire cities have been destroyed. Mines and explosive remnants of war continue to pose alarming threats to civilians, including those remaining in their homes and those fleeing the conflict. We are appalled by the disturbing reports of violations of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law which may amount to war crimes.

The humanitarian situation is dire. Internally displaced people, the majority of whom are women and children, have lost everything they had – their homes and belongings, their livelihoods, their support networks, and in many cases their loved ones. Many of them face shortages of food, water, basic items and energy, and lack access to health services and medication. We are also worried about the secondary effects of the conflict and displacement on food production which are forecast to affect the availability of food in Ukraine and also globally.

Multiple forms of gender-based violence are being reported such as sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Women and girls on the move - at border crossing points or transit and collective centres and in bomb shelters - experience particularly high insecurity and risk of violence, including trafficking in persons. Numerous families have been separated during displacement, and unaccompanied and separated children are particularly vulnerable to the risks of trafficking, violence, abuse and exploitation.

We are also concerned by the appalling humanitarian situation of older people and people with disabilities. They are often among the last to flee conflict zones and face many challenges during displacement, living in poorly equipped temporary shelters and struggling with chronic health conditions without access to proper health care and rehabilitation centres. Many of them are still in conflict zones because of mobility limitations or reliance on others for care, and face challenges in accessing bomb shelters or safe areas. We are especially concerned about those persons with disabilities, including children, living in institutions for persons with disabilities who

face barriers to access humanitarian assistance and evacuation on an equal basis with others.

Alongside internally displaced people in Ukraine, the estimated 13 million people who are stranded in areas affected by the conflict are experiencing acute risks as well. Their lives and security are threatened, and they are largely unable to access life-saving assistance due to ongoing attacks and insecurity.

We urge the establishment of more humanitarian corridors with satisfactory security guarantees for the delivery of humanitarian aid and safe passage for the evacuation of civilians, as well as evacuation centres whose civilian character must be respected.

While local and international humanitarian organisations as well as government authorities are providing humanitarian assistance to the best of their ability, they must be given as much support as possible. Access to life-saving protection, child protection, mental health and gender-based violence services is more critical than ever. We call on the international community and donors to provide sustained and increased support for the response to internal displacement and the [Ukraine Flash Appeal](#), and other critical efforts to protect the human rights of all civilians who remain in Ukraine.

We urge the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law to protect civilians. [We reiterate our call](#) for accountability for the horrific crimes already documented and our support for the initiatives established to investigate these allegations.

In order to bring an end to this immense suffering, we strongly urge the parties to establish a humanitarian ceasefire and call for negotiations for peace.”

ENDS

**UN experts:** Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons; Gerard Quinn, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and Tlaleng Mofokeng, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

*The experts are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent of any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.*

This statement is co-signed by the **Global Protection Cluster (GPC) Coordinator**, William Chemaly.

*For further information and media requests, please contact:*

*Natália Ferreira de Castro (+41 22 917 91 71/ castro4@un.org) or write to ohchr-idp@un.org*

*For media enquiries regarding other UN independent experts, please contact  
Jeremy Laurence (+ 41 22 917 7578 / jeremy.laurence@un.org )*

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