



## UKRAINE: AN INVISIBLE EMERGENCY

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Front cover: A man looks at the ruins of his home near Mariupol, Donetsk region.  
This page: A woman awaits repair materials for her house in Trokhizbenka, Luhansk region.  
*All photos courtesy of Patrick Breslin for Refugees International.*



# INTRODUCTION

Ukraine is in the midst of Europe's largest internal migration crisis since World War II. In April 2014, a pro-Russia separatist rebellion in the heavily populated eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk plunged the country into bitter conflict. And yet, the impact of Ukraine's ongoing conflict and the humanitarian and early recovery needs of its more than five million conflict-affected citizens are not well publicized. Approximately two million Ukrainians are living close to the ceasefire line separating Ukrainian and pro-separatist forces, another two million live under the control of separatists, and 1.5 million have become internally displaced, overwhelming Ukraine's local governments as they search for safety, shelter, and survival.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ The Ukrainian government and separatist leaders must commit to allowing humanitarians to operate freely in order to access and provide aid to people at risk.
- ❑ The U.S. and other donors should urge the Ukrainian government and separatist leaders to improve freedom of movement for humanitarians and the civilian population by simplifying documentation and procedures and opening additional crossing points across the ceasefire line.
- ❑ The U.S. and other donors should immediately provide additional assistance to the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to undertake expanded winterization efforts in Ukraine to prevent further displacement and harm to the displaced and war-affected.
- ❑ The U.S. and other donors should provide early recovery and development assistance to Ukraine that is administered through regional and local authorities to ensure durable solutions for the displaced and their host communities.
- ❑ United Nations agencies should provide direct funding to registered local non-governmental organizations with proven skills and capacity to improve protection, assistance, and acceptance for the displaced.

# BACKGROUND

Ukraine is a diverse country of 43 million people, with strong cultural and historic ties to Russia. Since gaining independence from Russia in 1991, Ukraine has struggled to modernize and reform its industry, economy, and governance from old Soviet bureaucratic models and to reduce endemic corruption and improve services. In 2013-2014, a popular uprising known as the Maidan Revolution or Revolution of Dignity sought improved democratic governance, closer ties with the European Union (EU), and an end to corruption and impunity. The uprising led to the fall of Ukraine's pro-Russian government in February 2014.

In March of 2014, Russia invaded the Crimean peninsula, ostensibly to protect Crimea's large Russian population, and annexed it. The following month, a pro-Russian separatist insurrection began in the east of Ukraine seeking independence from the new, pro-EU government. This insurrection, aided by Russia, triggered a continuing conflict that has so far forced one million Ukrainians to flee abroad and another 1.5 million to be internally displaced.

Since the start of the conflict, the Organization for Security in Europe (OSCE) has brokered three ceasefire agreements between Ukraine, Russia, and the separatist leaders in the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Luhansk (LPR) and the People's Republic of Donetsk (DPR). The first, in September 2014, created a 15-kilometer-wide buffer zone along the line of contact that separated the forces. However, this ceasefire did not hold, as the separatists continued to push into Ukrainian territory. After conflict resumed, a second ceasefire was reached in February 2015. But by May, daily shelling and attacks had resumed in these zones. On September 1, 2015, a third ceasefire was announced which, if continued to be observed, could improve humanitarian access to many vulnerable populations. Since July 21, the separatist authorities in the LPR and DPR have almost totally blocked the operations of international relief agencies on their territory, despite the fact

that their residents lack sufficient food, medicine, safe drinking water, and shelter repair materials.

Today Ukraine has 1.5 million registered internally displaced persons (IDPs), the majority living in urban areas. The Ministry of Social Policy reports that persons receiving pensions are the largest group (59 percent), while children make up 13 percent, and the disabled 4 percent<sup>1</sup> (some IDPs chose not to register or were unable to do so). The Ukrainian government and the United Nations have encouraged the IDPs to find their own accommodations rather than staying in group shelters or collective centers (i.e. private or government-owned camps, buildings, dormitories, or sanatoriums). More than half of all IDPs (52 percent) have chosen to stay near their old homes in the reconfigured Ukrainian regions<sup>2</sup> of Donetsk



and Luhansk, closer to their families. Some are staying in the hopes of a quick return, whereas others fear their Russian language and sympathies will lead to discrimination in other parts of Ukraine. The other large concentrations of IDPs are found in the nearby regions of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhzhia, which are providing IDPs with access to local services without addi-

tional funding from the Ukrainian government.

Unfortunately, this crisis comes at a difficult time for the Ukrainian government, which is working to reduce its bloated foreign debt, meet International Monetary Fund and other donor commitments to cut energy subsidies, reduce government spending, and implement structural, anti-corruption, and political reforms, including decentralization. Now, Ukraine faces the added challenge of defending its territory against Russian-backed separatists and supporting the basic needs of the displaced.

**“The whole country is in shock.  
We did not expect this war.  
We feel alone, abandoned.”**

-Leader of women's group, Kyiv

In July 2015, Refugees International undertook a field mission to Ukraine to assess the humanitarian needs of displaced and war-affected families, as well as to examine the prospects for protracted displacement and tensions between the displaced and their host communities. RI traveled in Ukraine's buffer zone along the ceasefire line separating the opposing forces and visited government-controlled cities and villages. RI met with displaced and war-affected families, as well as with local, regional, and national government officials, heads of



local and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and United Nations staff.

## SEPARATISTS RESTRICT HUMANITARIAN AID AND OPERATIONS

International humanitarian law and principles require that humanitarian aid be based on alleviating human suffering and protecting life, and must be conducted in a neutral, impartial, and independent manner. In Ukraine, as in conflicts elsewhere, humanitarians must work with and on both sides of a conflict, and authorities must allow humanitarians to move freely. The Minsk ceasefire agreement signed in September 2014 by Ukraine, Russia, and the separatist leaders of the self-proclaimed LPR and DPR, as well as subsequent agreements, contained provisions requiring the facilitation of humanitarian access and the provision of humanitarian aid to all in need. Unfortunately, these provisions have not been implemented by all of the signatories.

Aid workers in Ukraine told RI that many local and central officials in the separatist areas were suspicious of humanitarians' independent assessments and aid priorities. UN and INGO assessments conducted in January and February of this year found the greatest humanitarian needs were among the two million<sup>3</sup>

living in the separatist-controlled areas, where hundreds of thousands were without access to drinking water, utilities, food, and medicine, and where there was widespread damage to homes, schools, and public infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> Despite the needs, UN and INGO operations have faced difficulties in gaining access to and conducting protection and assistance programs for those in need due to conditions of lawlessness, insecurity, frequently changing leadership and bureaucratic requirements, and local or central officials' reluctance to cooperate on humanitarian issues.

The UN and INGOs had set-up operations by early 2015 in the non-government controlled area (NGCA) of the LPR and DPR to provide needed food, medicine, and shelter repair materials to the large number of vulnerable people among the area's two million

residents. With their permanent staff in place, in summer 2015 they sought to expand their protection and assistance programs with INGO partners in the NGCA. Regrettably, humanitarian aid shipments into the NGCA were blocked in mid-July 2015, when separatist leaders

required the UN and INGOs to register and obtain accreditation. Ukraine objected strongly to this requirement, as they considered the separatists to be terrorists and did not want any international entities to legitimize them by going through such a process.

On September 23, 2015, separatist leaders in the LPR expelled the UN and all INGOs except the International Committee of the Red Cross, despite growing humanitarian needs including the need for vaccines to prevent a polio outbreak among the 48,000 unvaccinated

*“Every family has a story.  
Every family has suffered.”*

-Ukrainian NGO staff, Luhansk



A newly displaced woman points to destroyed buildings and a ruined garden near Mariupol.





A Ukrainian soldier explaining that the main road in Berdyanske is closed to civilians, in the buffer zone near Mariupol.

children there, as well as to get shelter repair materials delivered before winter. In the DPR, separatist officials set up their own registration and accreditation process which has resulted in the virtual suspension of relief convoys as the UN and INGOs await the outcome of this process.

One breakthrough occurred when the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), working with local separatist mayors and others in the heavily damaged city of Horlivka in the DPR, was able to deliver 260 tons of relief items and shelter repair materials on September 1, 2015. Despite continuing UN efforts to explain that some 15,000 tons of relief and winterization aid needed to be delivered before road conditions or insecurity worsened, no other humanitarian convoy shipments have been permitted into the separatist areas. While Russia provides some humanitarian aid to the NGCA, food prices there are now 60 percent higher and medicine twice as expensive as in Ukraine<sup>5</sup>. Food insecurity has risen from 14 percent of the population in March to 44 percent in August<sup>6</sup>, which suggests that Russian humanitarian aid is insufficient.

## UKRAINE HAMPERS HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Ukraine has sought to cutoff all assistance to the separatist areas and their two million inhabitants. Central authorities, according to some of the INGOs RI interviewed, have sought to discourage

humanitarians from working in the NGCA, seeing it as disloyal to Ukraine. Earlier this year, the Ukrainian government imposed burdensome and frequently changing administration, documentation, and cargo restrictions on humanitarian shipments into the NGCA. Frequent closures of government crossing points into the separatist-controlled area forced cancellations or delays of UN and INGO humanitarian convoys seeking to supply needed relief, including medicine, hygiene supplies, and materials to restore damaged pipelines and purify water. These delays hampered humanitarians' plans to stockpile sufficient relief and shelter repair materials in the NGCA to permit ongoing emergency repairs of war-damaged houses and schools and to maintain regular supplies of medicine and hygiene products to hospitals.

**“We don’t know who is manning the checkpoints, how long it will take, or what is expected.”**

-Male resident, Sartana

Humanitarians' access also worsened for the one million IDPs and war-affected residents living in the Ukrainian buffer zone when attacks and shelling increased this spring. Humanitarian

agencies that want to access the buffer zone first must clear their travel plans with Ukrainian military and civilian authorities. Almost daily shelling from May to August of this year resulted in an increase in military checkpoints within the 15-kilometer-wide buffer zone, slowing travel and preventing people from being able to flee during attacks. Many residents, already displaced several times, now live in damaged homes or apartments which need repairs before winter arrives, or else they will be forced to move again. Some local administrators and government workers have left the area, decreasing services. Some buses have stopped running. IDPs without cars have limited access to first aid or pharmacies. No ambulances or police operate in these areas. Even humanitarians with military-approved travel plans for assistance missions are subject to Ukrainian checkpoint delays and blockages.

The Ukrainian government has begun to address some of the problems faced by humanitarians at checkpoints by establishing a civilian-military coordinating group (CIMIC), which deploys English-speaking military officers to locations where humanitarians work and need assistance with checkpoint issues. The government is also setting up humanitarian logistics centers in some areas to improve access to banking, pharmacies, and food.

## FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT FOR CIVILIANS

***“I could not get a pass to return to visit my husband’s grave. I worry if I will be all right here.”***

-IDP widow in Dnipropetrovsk

In December 2014, the Ukrainian government – citing concerns over cash and property seized by the separatists – closed all banks and ended all payments to employees and those receiving pensions, as well as institutions such as schools, health facilities, orphanages, sanatoriums, or prisons and their suppliers in the NGCA. As a result of the loss of these payments, large numbers of residents left the NGCA to register as IDPs in government-controlled territory in order to resume receiving their pensions. IDP numbers in Ukraine grew from 542,000 in December to 978,500 in February 2015, and those receiving pensions increased from 17 percent of registered IDPs to 70 percent.<sup>7</sup>

In January 2015, the Ukrainian government limited access to its territory by requiring anyone seeking to cross into or out of the NGCA to apply for a pass with original identity documents, even if those documents had been lost in attacks, expired, or never issued (as was the case for many Roma residents of the NGCA). Ukrainians and human rights observers whom RI spoke to

complained that these documentation requirements and in-person application procedures were burdensome,<sup>8</sup> causing uncertainty and delays in obtaining passes and lengthy wait times at crossing points for individuals and businessmen. Many IDPs wanted to access the Ukraine-controlled territory in order to remain in contact with family members and friends on the other side, or to use the hospitals, shops, public, and private institutions they frequented before the conflict. Some wanted to bring supplies and money to disabled relatives, access bank accounts, or buy cheaper food and medicine in Ukraine. Pregnant women crossed to give birth in Ukraine in order to avoid an “illegal separatist stamp” on their child’s birth certificate. Humanitarians crossed to work and bring aid.

***“I went back to get my documents, but the new separatist authorities stamped them, and they are no good now in Ukraine.”***

-Women at IDP center in Dnipropetrovsk

The paper pass system produced long delays and presented multiple opportunities for extortion and bribes – even for humanitarians – since there was little fear of prosecution given the country’s history of non-prosecution of such acts.<sup>9</sup> The restrictions also meant that only those with documents could apply to leave the NGCA and cross into safety in Ukraine.

In July, Ukraine replaced the paper pass with an electronic system, which is a significant improvement. Unfortunately, Ukrainians without computers, electricity, or without original ID documents still cannot get an electronic pass to travel into or out of the NGCA. At the same time, the limited number of crossing points means that there are still long wait times of anywhere from three to twelve hours. The Ukrainian government should implement its pledges to increase crossing points and streamline procedures for humanitarians; expedite the passage of children, pregnant women, and the disabled through the crossing points; and permit civilians fleeing areas under attack to cross into Ukraine without a pass.

## BLOCKING SHIPMENTS OF FOOD AND MEDICINE INTO SEPARATIST CONTROLLED AREAS

This June, the Ukrainian government further tightened commerce into the NGCA by banning all public transport and blockading all commercial shipments, including food and medicine, except by rail, and restricting crossing points into the separatist areas. The UN and INGOs complained publicly that this ban and blockade



***“That area has a very high incidence of hypertension, cardiovascular disease and TB. Without medicine those patients’ conditions will worsen.”***

-UN official, Kyiv

contradicted international humanitarian laws by restricting the availability of food, medical, and hygiene supplies to a population at risk. The ban also placed a heavier burden on the UN to meet an increased need for food and medicine for the two million in the NGCA. Some local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) told RI that inflicting this kind of hardship on civilians under the control of the separatists could engender resentment toward the Ukrainian government, making eventual reconciliation much harder to achieve.

While humanitarian convoys were permitted, no simplification of bureaucratic requirements or addition of crossing points occurred. UN and INGO humanitarian convoys faced changing administration, inspection, and documentation requirements that triggered delays and/or limited the number of trucks able to pass in daylight. After numerous requests, in late August 2015, Ukraine informed the UN that it would increase the number of crossing points for humanitarian cargo and improve inspection and documentation requirements to speed such crossings.

## **SURVIVING THE WINTER: REPAIR OF UTILITIES, SHELTERS, AND CASH ASSISTANCE**

***“Without aid, some families will face eviction this winter.”***

-UN official, Kyiv

RI’s team found that both displaced and war-affected communities, particularly in the buffer zone and the NGCA, are ill-prepared for winter. From November to March, temperatures of minus 10 to minus 20 degrees Celsius (10 to minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit) are common, with frequent rain and snow. Already poor road conditions were made worse by war damages to bridges and roadways. Given these circumstances, the UN and INGOs were seeking to



After shelling damaged her grandmother’s home and that of neighbors, this child has had trouble sleeping and rarely smiles. Sartana, near Mariupol.



A woman in front of her damaged house speaks with a relief worker. Severodonetsk, Luhansk region.



repair utilities and to stockpile humanitarian goods in the buffer zone and NGCA before winter arrived.

The UN strategy to assist the most vulnerable to survive the winter has three parts: shelter repair; reconnection of water, gas, and electricity; and cash or in-kind assistance.

With insufficient shelter for the displaced and residents of war-damaged buildings, UNHCR seeks to repair one warm room per household for the many displaced and war-affected households living in the eastern part of the country, and to winterize collective centers hosting IDPs across the country. If the September 1 ceasefire holds and there is a resulting lessening of insecurity and improvement to humanitarian access, with additional donor resources the UN, NGOs, and the authorities could proceed to repair homes, utilities, pipelines, pumping stations, and purification systems, thus reducing the threat of additional displacement in winter. The World Food Program has requested \$13 million to supply food until December to 500,000 adults and children lacking adequate nutrition. UNICEF is seeking more than \$35 million to restore war-damaged water lines, pumps, and water purification systems to prevent water-borne illnesses this winter and to permit restoration of heating systems, as well as to

expand counselling to reach more traumatized displaced children to enable them to return to or remain in school.

At the same time, IDPs and war-affected residents are finding it hard to survive the combination of high inflation, a dramatic drop in the value of the currency,<sup>10</sup> declining opportunities for work, and the exhaustion of personal and family resources. Others need alternate fuel supplies or winter clothing they cannot afford, since

they lost everything in flight or as their homes were bombed. The UN is relying on international donors to help provide the most vulnerable IDP and war-affected households – the elderly, large families, those caring for unaccompanied

children, and the mentally or physically handicapped – with cash assistance to help pay rent this winter and provide others with much needed in-kind fuel, winter clothing, and bedding.

To date, the UN humanitarian appeal for Ukraine is only 40 percent funded. Therefore, the U.S. and other donors should immediately provide additional assistance to the UN and non-governmental organizations to undertake expanded winterization efforts to prevent further displacement and harm to the displaced and war-affected.

***“I survived WWII and I heard the stories of the great famine. I never expected to have such a difficult time again, but we will survive.”***

-Elderly resident of the buffer zone



A man surveys the damage to his house near Mariupol, Donetsk region.





A Facebook post launched the local NGO Station Kharkiv at the city's train station where volunteers and State Emergency Service officers welcome new IDPs in need of assistance.

## EARLY RECOVERY AND LASTING SOLUTIONS

IDPs with whom the team met in Mariupol, Volnavakha, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Severodonetsk said they wanted three things: peace, secure housing, and a job. Most IDPs live with friends or family, or are renting shared accommodation that is often overcrowded and substandard. Most rent without a lease, and are therefore subject to rent increases and non-renewals or evictions by owners who do not want the rental income registered with the government because it is subject to tax. Rents are the highest in urban areas where jobs are available. However, employers either offer IDPs lower wages or refuse to hire them. After more than a year, many IDPs have worn out their welcome with family and friends, while others have exhausted their government benefits. While only 10 percent are currently living in collective centers, one UN officials told RI that if conditions worsen, more IDPs may return to collective centers, which could lead to longer-term dependency.<sup>11</sup>

To address the risk of protracted displacement and to promote lasting solutions for the displaced and the communities which host them, the UN, the World Bank and the EU, along with the government of Ukraine, produced an Eastern Ukraine Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPA) in February 2015. This assessment linked humanitarian programs, early recovery, and targeted development efforts to provide durable solutions to reintegrate IDPs into the country's economic, social, and political life, and to begin reconciliation and peace building. The RPA outlined economically viable approaches that called for rebuilding the country's damaged infrastructure in secure areas, which could provide livelihoods to unemployed IDPs and their host communities as they renovate damaged or vacant buildings to provide needed permanent housing and public facilities.

**“We want the IDPs to stay. They are educated and motivated, but they need real jobs that use their skills. They won't be satisfied mopping floors.”**

-Regional official, Dnipropetrovsk

The plan, which has an initial projected cost of \$1.5 billion, would restore now limited social and employment services to IDPs and host communities and provide needed infrastructure. This could help to increase trust in and support for the government and promote community cohesion by expanding local economies.

The plan calls for the creation of a Multi-Donor Trust Fund for reconstruction and a Donbas Recovery Authority (DBRA)<sup>12</sup> to oversee the projects implemented by regional and local governments. By utilizing grants and development bank loans to shore up social services to war-affected displaced communities and repairing their damaged infrastructure, the DBRA would demonstrate the government's ability to deliver needed public goods.

Working through regional and local governments, the plan includes the creation of new small- and medium-sized business enterprises. RI's conversations with regional and local officials reflected their concrete ideas and proposals on how such efforts could work to utilize their underemployed, highly-educated IDPs and expand their local economies and tax base. These officials told RI that putting the unemployed

back to work would give the IDPs opportunities to either integrate locally or provide the resources and skills to go elsewhere. To date, Ukraine has created the Donbas Recovery Authority, named its head, and is establishing a consultative body that includes members of government, donors, the UN, and businesses to advise on project development. In conversations with Ukraine's government, UN agencies, and the EU, RI was told that early recovery and development programs need to start now, to ensure development financing reaches regional and local governments to relieve the increasing pressure they and host communities face and to prevent longer-term or protracted displacement.

The European Investment Bank has committed \$200 million in loans supporting the RPA approach. While continuing to press for economic reforms, Germany and the EU have pledged more



than \$500 million in loans for the reconstruction and social rehabilitation of the Donbas area. The U.S. should join other donors in supporting the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment as an important bridge between relief and development in Ukraine.

## STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

The response to the IDP crisis by the Ukrainian people and their government has been impressive. As in many conflicts, local civil society welcomed and supported the conflict-displaced families.

In cities throughout Ukraine, volunteer groups were organized from churches, mosques, synagogues, professional groups, trade unions, and even among IDPs themselves to welcome IDPs, develop transit centers, or to provide temporary housing with families, in summer camps, or repurposed buildings. Volunteers with expertise in information technology created databases of needs and resources; lawyers and teachers helped with legal information and referrals. Despite concerns about inadequate government policies and bureaucracy, volunteer groups partnered with local government to address the ongoing needs of the displaced. Volunteers reached out to businesses and the media to address the immediate needs of the IDPs, as well as to educate the IDPs about their rights, and provide information on how to find shelter, work, and treatment for illness or trauma. The UN and donor agencies also worked with these volunteer groups, some of which registered as non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

**“Ukraine is a good bet for development: it has an educated work force, WiFi is everywhere, people want to work.”**

-UN official, Kyiv

The UN's Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) set up a cluster system last December to coordinate the humanitarian response to the IDPs. UN agencies initially funded their traditional INGO partners to help, most of which were new to Ukraine. This caused frustration for the local NGOs, which wanted the UN to provide them with more support and to work in collaboration with the local governments. One local NGO told RI's team to, “Remind them [the UN and INGOs] that we are in Europe,” and that Ukraine has an educated, organized, and skilled civil society and functioning local governments.

Though well established and competently staffed, the cluster system is a mechanism of coordination suited to external actors which does not promote an effective integration of the response with neither national authorities nor civil society. In that sense it should be reviewed to better adjust to the reality of the country.

The UN and most donors recognize the value of supporting and building local civil society and NGOs to encourage their adoption of international humanitarian values and standards. Yet few donors and UN agencies are willing and/or able to directly fund such local NGOs, despite the fact that many Ukrainian NGOs have both the capacity and ability to provide less expensive but effective services and to attract volunteers. Ukrainian NGOs also have developed close relationships with local governments. In fact, in meetings with RI's team, every regional and local government official made a point of including local NGOs with whom they collaborate.

While UNHCR and other UN agencies now fund some Ukrainian NGOs through their INGO partners, RI would encourage the UN to provide direct funding to capable local NGOs in order to more effectively utilize scarce humanitarian resources and to improve protection, assistance, and acceptance for the displaced.

## CONCLUSION

The Ukrainian government is faced with the tough challenge of managing a protracted internal conflict and assisting its victims, while at the same time pushing forward a set of economic and political reform to respond to the hopes of the Maidan revolution. It is imperative that the international community provides effective and timely humanitarian and development support to the government and Ukrainian civil society in order to ensure not only that the fundamental needs of the victims of the conflict are met, but also that the humanitarian situation confronting the country does not itself become a factor of instability, further aggravating the tensions in the country.

*Dawn Calabria and Michel Gabaudan traveled to Ukraine in July 2015 to assess the humanitarian needs of displaced people and war-affected communities.*

## ENDNOTES

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8. Protection of Civilians and their Freedom of Movement in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, OSCE Special Monitoring Mission Report. May 3, 2015, p. 3. <http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smmm/156571>
9. Ibid.
10. The hryvnia went from \$8 to \$1 US dollar in early 2014 to \$23 to \$1 US dollar in 2015.
11. “Long term residence in a collective centre is likely to cause stress and tension, possibly leading to depression, social conflict, friction between or within families, conflicts between clans or ethnic groups, and other individual or psychosocial problems.” UNHCR Emergency Handbook Collective Center Rehabilitation. <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/60840/collective-centre-rehabilitation>
12. Donbas is the popular name for the areas of eastern Ukraine that have suffered the greatest amount of war damage and displacement.

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