



For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

Use of explosive weapons: In Ukraine, parts of the country cut off from the world

MONTREAL, February 24, 2024 – Two years after the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, an estimated 25% of the country has been exposed to intense fighting. By destroying essential infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and schools, the massive use of explosive weapons has isolated certain areas and their communities from the rest of the world, exacerbating humanitarian needs.

Humanity & Inclusion (HI) has been present in these areas since the beginning of the conflict, providing assistance to all victims of war. It advocates for an inclusive humanitarian response, which takes into account the disproportionate consequences of the use of explosive weapons on the most vulnerable people.

A fragmented territory and disproportionate consequences

In some areas, such as Kharkiv and Dnipro in the east, and Mykolaiv and Kherson in the south of the country, the frequency of bombings and the extent of the contamination by explosive remnants of war have cut some communities off from the rest of the world.

The direct and indirect impact of the use of explosive weapons on civilian populations is particularly high among those most at risk, especially older people, children, and people with disabilities.

"People most-at-risk disproportionately remain in areas highly impacted by the conflict, either because they are reluctant to or are unable to leave. Isolation, constant shelling, and a lack of essential care has mental health and psychosocial impacts and will affect communities most-at-risk and their caregivers for years to come," explains Anna-Marie Robertson, HI Ukraine Advocacy Officer.

After two years of hostilities, access to healthcare is one of the biggest humanitarian needs encountered by HI's teams in Ukraine.



Caption: Antonina, aged 68, having a physical therapy session with HI physical therapist Maria Topka. Novomoskovsk - Ukraine. T.Nicholson / HI

An urgent need in hard-to-reach areas

At present, 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian aid in Ukraine. Some activities, such as healthcare, the delivery of humanitarian aid and explosive ordnance risk education are crucial in hard-to-reach areas, where a large majority of older people, including a high proportion of people with disabilities, have remained despite the relentless airstrikes.

"After two years of war in Ukraine, the humanitarian situation is at its worst, and the needs of the civilian population are immense. The impact of this war illustrates the enormous challenges and devastating consequences of the use explosive weapons in populated areas. The adoption by Canada of the Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) is a step in the right direction towards putting an end to the damage caused to civilian populations by such bombardments. Our government made a commitment two years ago to implement this Declaration. It must use all diplomatic means at its disposal to ensure the protection of civilians in Ukraine and guarantee rapid, unimpeded humanitarian access to the affected areas," explains Anne Delorme, Executive Director of HI Canada.

An organization at the forefront of assistance to isolated communities

In remote areas of Ukraine as elsewhere where it operates, HI has put a multi-sectoral response in place, including rehabilitation and psychosocial support, explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), delivering humanitarian goods to conflict-affected populations, providing essential hygiene items and cash to meet the most urgent needs of displaced people, while advocating for an inclusive humanitarian response.



HI teams are currently providing rehabilitation and psychosocial support to nine Ukrainian hospitals, most of them close to the front line in the Kharkiv and Dnipro regions, where there are many war-wounded. Mobile teams also go to centres for internally displaced people and do home visits to provide rehabilitation services to vulnerable people who can't reach health facilities.

Raising community awareness of the dangers of explosive remnants of war is essential, all the more so in isolated areas where "risky" behaviour is very common. HI is therefore providing Conflict Preparedness and Protection and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education sessions to enable children, adults, and humanitarian workers to spot the danger signs in areas contaminated by explosive ordnance and to protect themselves by adopting safe behaviour.

About Humanity & Inclusion

HI has been one of the leading civil society organizations in the process that has led to the recent signing of the Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA), adopted in November 2022. As part of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), HI aims to continue monitoring the humanitarian impact of the use of EWIPA, the implementation of the Political Declaration and to hold States accountable to their commitments.

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