Civilian casualties in Ukraine hit one year record

The level of violence in the conflict area in eastern Ukraine remained high throughout July. Numerous ceasefire violations caused civilian casualties and damages to critical civilian infrastructure. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded 73 conflict-related civilian casualties (8 fatalities and 65 injuries) in July, even more than in June when 69 casualties (12 killed and 57 injured) were recorded, the highest number of casualties in a single month since August 2015. The average monthly civilian casualties recorded in June and July were twice as high as in September 2015 to May 2016, when 34 casualties on average were recorded.

Shelling has become the major cause of civilian casualties in recent weeks, as it occurs more frequently during the day and in populated areas. Landmines and explosive remnants of war, responsible for the majority of civilian casualties during periods of relative calm, are now the second most important cause of casualties. Since the beginning of the conflict, 22,137 people have been wounded and 9,553 killed, some 2,000 of the fatalities were civilians.¹

Urban areas such as the suburbs of Donetsk city, the towns of Yasinuvata and Dokuchaievsk (NGCA), Marinka and Avdiivka (GCA) have become the scene of frequent and heavy shelling. However, fighting also occurred in numerous places along the contact line, including in the vicinity of checkpoints. Luhanska oblast witnessed a significant increase in combat activity, particularly in the Popasnianskyi raion.

Water supply has become a difficult task

The bulk water supply company ‘Voda Donbasa’, which continues to serve people on both sides of the ‘contact line’ in Donetska oblast, reported numerous service interruptions due to damage to water pipelines and other essential infrastructure. These interruptions have caused water shortages, particularly to residents living in Volnovakha, Vugledar and Dokuchaievsk where shortages lasted several days. Work to repair damages, has been impacted by ongoing exchanges of fire, limiting access and putting repair teams in danger.

Ensuring water supply to families on both sides of the ‘contact line’ has become an extremely difficult task in both Luhanska and Donetska oblasts as new damages occur almost on a daily basis. ‘Voda Donbasa’ informed recently that it has received humanitarian aid in form of chemicals for water purification and equipment worth 2.8 million USD since the beginning of 2015. In Luhanska oblast where the water supply company has been split up as a result of the conflict, aid provision in NGCA is even more challenging.

¹ These are conservative estimates by OHCHR based on available data, the actual number of casualties is believed to be higher.
Humanitarian situation at checkpoints improves

Thanks to enhanced response efforts by humanitarian partners and the Ukrainian Government, the humanitarian situation at the five operating checkpoints on the ‘contact line’ improved considerably in July although the number of people crossing increased. The State Border Guard Service recorded 873,000 people crossings in July (compared to 816,000 in June).

Again, people had to wait for long hours in hot summer temperatures, particularly at the busiest checkpoints in Zaitseve and Marinka. In July, drinking water, sheds, latrines and health care were available on the GCA side of all operating checkpoints (Zaitseve, Marinka, Novotroitske, Pyshchevyk and Stanytsia Luhanska), yet the needs still exceed the current response capacity in times of rush. The State Emergency Service assisted in the installation of sheds provided by partners. Response efforts need to be continued as drinking water has to be refilled regularly and sanitary facilities need to be operated and maintained. More efforts will be needed to prepare checkpoints for the winter period.

To date, the pedestrian checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska is the only checkpoint where an ambulance is permanently on duty. The other crossing points are served by local ambulances which reacted quickly to calls during the reporting period. Partners had been advocating for the local authorities to ensure that medical personnel and ambulances are made available, and it is a most welcome development that advocacy yielded results.

People continue to travel across the ‘contact line’ in order to visit relatives, buy food and other goods, receive social payments and look after property. To address the pressing needs of people residing in NGCA, the Ukrainian Government is considering reopening logistic centres at the checkpoints where people would be able to withdraw their pensions and buy food and goods. The Deputy Minister for Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs (MTOT), Heorhiy Tuka, informed on 27 July about the Governments’ plan to raise the limits for goods transfer across the ‘contact line’ from currently 50 kg to 200 kg, and even up to 500 kg for those people who would buy goods in the logistic centres. The official did not mention a timeline for this reform which could considerably improve access to goods for many conflict-affected people.

Meanwhile, the security situation at and in the vicinity of the checkpoints remains a serious concern as bomb shelters are largely unavailable and shelling occurs regularly. During the reporting period both the GCA and NGCA side of the Zaitseve area witnessed combat activity. Sniper fire and mortar shelling occurred at the checkpoint in Maiorsk (0-CP of Zaitseve). However, operations were not suspended for a longer period as this...
had been the case in previous months. Landmines, UXO and ERW in areas around the checkpoints present an additional threat to civilian’s security. Demarcation has been further improved by partners in recent weeks, and mine risk education activities are ongoing.

### IDP verification hampered by Resolution 365

New regulations for the verification of the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) continue to be a concern for both IDPs and the local Departments of Social Protection (DoSP) which face difficulties to implement the rules in light of understaffing, underfunding, access and security concerns. According to Resolution 365 (adopted on 8 June), mobile teams of administration officials and/or security forces need to check and verify the IDPs’ place of residence and their living conditions. However, reports indicate that the teams could either not be set up or work at a very slow pace, blocking the procedure of verification and leaving IDPs without the social benefits to which they are entitled.

Partners recounted that only certain social workers of DoSPs were allowed to perform residence evaluations, and many of them have to commute by unreliable public transport to remote settlements which causes considerable paperwork delays and sometimes exposes the mobile teams to security risks. Moreover, there is no mechanism set up to inform IDPs about the upcoming visit; thus, people who are not home during the day face additional difficulties in getting their status verified. Many IDPs who are deprived of state support have become fully dependent on humanitarian assistance provided by humanitarian partners.

Upon request of Protection Cluster partners, the Ministry of Social Policy agreed to create a Working Group consisting of Ministry officials and NGOs which is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Social Policy to work on much needed amendments to Resolution 365. The first meeting took place on June 24. Protection Cluster partners are advocating for non-discriminatory access for IDPs to social benefits and urge the Government to delink pensions from the status of IDP. Current regulations continue to force pensioners residing in NGCAs to register as IDPs in order to receive their regular pensions. The Protection Cluster calls on the Government of Ukraine to restrain from introducing additional verification mechanisms for payment of pensions and social benefits to IDPs, which are not established by law for citizens of Ukraine who have not been displaced.

### 1.1 million people estimated to be affected by food insecurity

According to the latest WFP Food Security Update for Ukraine published in July 2016, the number of conflict-affected people who are food insecure is estimated at 1.1 million. While the total number of people in need of food assistance remains the same as in the beginning of 2016, the percentage of people in need of immediate food assistance has decreased. At the same time, more people are currently in need of livelihood interventions. In terms of programmes recommended, the Food Security Cluster (FSC) encourages partners to focus their efforts on the provision of business opportunities to build livelihoods, especially targeting IDPs who experience difficulties in getting their status verified and do therefore not receive social benefits. More specifically, unemployed adults (18 to 50 years old) who do not receive any social payments have been identified as a new vulnerable group in need of food assistance.

As for livelihood projects, Food Security partners are encouraged to start procurement processes and make stocks available for the coming planting season (starting around mid-February). Provision of animal feed for winter preparation continues to be a priority for FSC partners until the end of the year.
Markets continue to be monitored on a regular basis. The latest WFP market update indicates that the food basket remains most expensive in Donetsk NGCA, followed by Luhansk NGCA. Of all commodities in the food basket, meat remains the commodity with the highest cost (around 15 per cent of the total cost of the food basket). In June, food security partners reached more than 500,000 people in both GCAs and NGCAs, despite the continuous restrictions on access. However, funding for the food security sector is alarmingly low and if no additional funding is confirmed in the coming months, humanitarian organisations on the ground will have to revise operational plans and decrease the number of people they can assist.

**HCT retreat**

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) held an expanded retreat in Kyiv on 22 July to take stock of the situation with regards to the ongoing conflict, adapting the humanitarian coordination to changing needs and prepare a handover of certain responsibilities to the Government. Participants of the retreat included HCT members, donors and humanitarian partners.

All clusters presented their transition plans, which will be periodically reviewed and adapted to the situation. Recommendations stemming from all Cluster plans highlight that the geographic scope of Cluster activities should be limited to Donetsk and Luhanska oblasts (with the exception of Protection which will continue to look into the five eastern oblasts where IDP presence is the highest). The Kyiv-based coordination will focus on advocacy and Government capacity building.

The HCT decided to deactivate the Early Recovery/Livelihoods Cluster. The cluster will transfer activities to other clusters (Food Security and Emergency Shelter Cluster) and keep some capacity in inter-cluster settings to ensure mainstreaming in other clusters’ work. The second part of the HCT expanded retreat will take place in mid-September and will focus on the results of the Inter-Agency-Vulnerability-Assessment (IAVA) and the next Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC).

**HRP 2016: 23.4 per cent funded**

As of 31 July, the Financial Tracking Service (FTS - https://fts.unocha.org) indicates that the HRP 2016 received US$ 69.7 million, or 23.4 per cent of the US$ 298 million required. OCHA has received indications from various sources that the actual funding might be slightly higher (28 per cent), as some donations are yet to be recorded into the FTS. However, some sectors, for instance health and food security, remain critically underfunded and more funding is needed to uphold humanitarian interventions until the end of the year.

Three convoys facilitated by the Logistic cluster arrived in Donetsk and Luhansk NGCA in July, carrying 5 MT of WASH items and 700 MT of construction materials. The Government of the Russian Federation delivered 400 MT of assistance on 21 July, according to the Russian Emergency Ministry (EMERCOM).