

This report covers the week of 6 – 13 February 2017

## Highlights

- Fighting somewhat subsided, but the situation remains highly volatile in eastern Ukraine. Civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure continue to be reported.
- Government and humanitarian partners redoubled efforts to meet the most critical needs.
- New response coordination tools are launched: (needs and response tracking e-tool; a logistics center in Kramatorsk).



Avdiivka, Ukraine – at least 176 houses have been damaged or destroyed as a result of the 29 January spike in fighting. ©UNHCR

## Situation overview

The sharp spike of hostilities observed on 29 January to 3 February somewhat subsided. Yet, the security situation in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts remain extremely tense.<sup>1</sup> According to OSCE, heavy weapons, including those prohibited under the Minsk protocol, continue to be used and are present in areas along the 'contact line', including in locations where civilian population continue to reside. Indirect shelling and increasing use of heavy artillery continue to threaten the lives of people living in the conflict area, with disastrous impact in far and unexpected places. Several incidents witnessed during the second week of February demonstrate an alarming trend of indirect fire attacks by the parties to the conflict using heavy artillery from or against remote positions. This increases the risks for civilian casualties and undue humanitarian hardship for people living in these areas to occur.

Shrapnel resulting from shelling are the main cause of loss of lives and damages to infrastructure, according to OSCE. During the escalation between 29 January and 3 February, OHCHR recorded 48 conflict-related civilian casualties (all in Donetsk region): 7 deaths and 41 injuries. More civilian casualties have been reported since 3 February, but are yet to be confirmed. The somewhat lower intensity of fighting enabled the authorities, and the aid community to provide support to the victims of this tragedy.

According to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES), since 29 January, at least 209 houses have been damaged in GCA, of which 176 in Avdiivka. As of 3 February, Donetsk *de facto* authorities reported damage to some 189 houses in Donetsk, Makiivka, Dokuchaievsk, Novoazovskiy and Yasynuvatskiy districts.

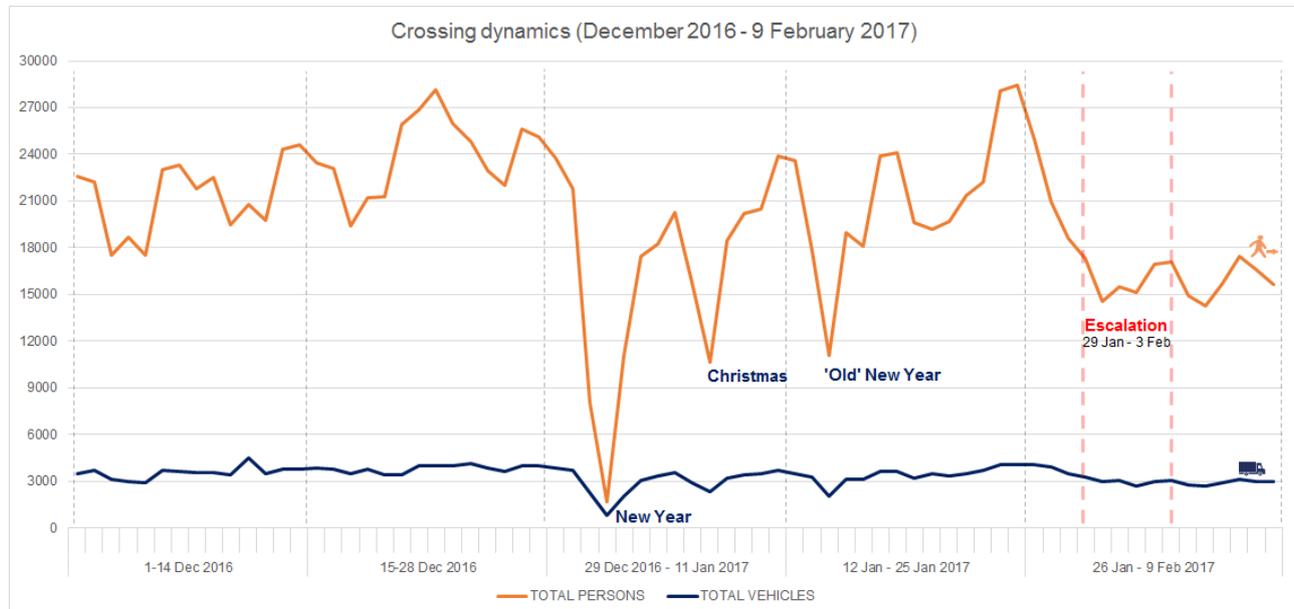
Since 3 February, at least 40 additional cases of damage to civilian infrastructure have been reported across the 'contact line' in Avdiivka, Toretsk, Marinka (GCA) Pikuzy, Donetsk and Dokuchaievsk (NGCA), and Donetsk district of Luhansk NGCA. Although by the second week of February, most power lines have been restored, a sustained ceasefire is needed to ensure comprehensive repair works which will make electricity, water and heating systems fully operational.

On 8 February, shelling damaged power lines near Toshkivka (near Popasna, Luhansk GCA – 5-6,000 inhabitants), causing a blackout of a water filtering station and shortage of water in the area. On 9 February, Krymske village was cut off from power and the local school was left without heating. Services were restored on 10 February. These cases indicate a general trend of an increasing number of incidents collaterally affecting civilians, residential areas and public infrastructure in Luhansk province. As of 6 February, Donetsk Filter Station (DFS), which serves 400,000 people in GCA and NGCA, resumed operations. Contingency measures are required to ensure that the station will continue running in case of additional power cuts. As of 7 February, all residents in Avdiivka (est. 16,000 people) are connected to centralized power supply, while three nearby settlements (450 people) in Yasynuvata district (NGCA) remain without electricity. As the hostilities somewhat subsided during the weekend, electricity supply in Horlivka, water supply in parts of Donetsk and Dokuchaievsk

<sup>1</sup> In Donetsk oblast, shelling was reported in Donetsk city and suburbs - Yasynuvata, Kruta Balka, Spartak, Zhabicheve, Zaitseve, Holmivskiy, Horlivka, Novomariivka, Sakhanka, Tavricheske, Pikuzy (former Kominternove), Leninske, Besimenne (NGCA) and in Marinka, Krasnohorivka, Zaitseve, Pisky and Opytne, Sartana, Shyrokyne, Talakivka and Pavlopil (GCA). The situation at the 'Svitlodarsk Arc' remains tense, especially, in Lunahske and Troitske area. In Luhanska oblast, hostilities were recorded in Krymske, Popasna, Lopaskine and Novozvanivka (GCA), and in Zhovte, Pervomaisk, Lozove, Veselohorivka, Kalynove and Kalynivka (NGCA). Fighting also continued at Stanytsia Luhanska.

(around 22,000 civilians were affected due to shelling on 2 February), gas supply in Donetsk and Makiivka (all NGCA) were restored. The leakage of the pipeline resulting from shelling near Avdiivka at the end of January has had ramifications for a wider area, including in Mariupol, where some 500,000 people still have to rely on a backup reservoir for water and Volnovakha and Krasnoarmiiske, which remain vulnerable to water cuts. On 8 February, shelling near Talakivka (GCA) resulted in damage to a power-substation, cutting electricity there and in Hnutove and in Sartana (500 families). In Talakivka, two schools had to be closed until electricity supply is restored.

Checkpoints were also theatre of violence. Indirect fire was reported on 9 February at the Mariinka crossing point. Since the spike in violence, the number of individual crossings in both directions has significantly decreased (see graph below). Earlier drop in individual crossings occurred between 1 and 14 January 2017 following three holidays.



Continuing railroad blockade by veterans, on the GCA side of the 'contact line', is a growing concern as this could exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, trigger humanitarian consequences and social tensions. Financial losses, rising unemployment, the diminishing capacity of affected heating stations are some of the likely consequences of the blockade. Daily train cargo crossings have dropped dramatically – from an average of 50 daily crossings to 10 since the blockade began three weeks ago. Currently the movement of cargo trains is at standstill at the crossing points Svitlanove, Fenolna and Artiomivsk-2. On the night of 10-11 February, activists blocked one more railway track that runs between Yasynuvata and Kostyantynivka (Donetsk oblast). This track is essential for the daily delivery of industrial products, including coal, in both directions. As a result of the blockade, Slovyanska Power and Heating Station, which supplies heating to the inhabitants of Mykolayivka (GCA), started working in emergency mode.

## Humanitarian needs and response

In coordination with the authorities, humanitarian organizations have covered the most urgent humanitarian needs of people affected by the escalation which started on 29 January.

Humanitarian partners provided food, water, shelter materials and relief items to affected people in Avdiivka (GCA) and those relocated to collective centres in Donetsk (NGCA). Psychosocial support is also ongoing. Reconstruction of damaged houses and infrastructure is needed, but the volatility of the situation complicates delivery. Given the relatively improved security situation, some people started returning to their homes. According to SES, as of 12 February, of those evacuated from Avdiivka (300 people, including 44 elderly and 139 children), at least 22 people have returned. More than 11,700 people have used the so called heating points since escalation of insecurity.

According to the Ombudsperson of the *de facto* authorities in Donetsk, 236 people, including 64 children, have been relocated from the conflict-affected areas of Donetsk to collective centres in Donetsk and Khartsyzk. Out of 236 people, 217 received humanitarian aid from UN agencies through local NGO and 155 – from the *de-*

*facto* 'Ministry of Emergency Situations'. Over 1,500 people in the affected locations, as well as those relocated to the collective centres, received kitchen sets, tarpaulins, bed linen, heaters, potable water and food. Humanitarian partners continue assessing needs through already established channels as well as a call centre of a partner organization.

Some 19 schools and kindergartens affected across the 'contact line' reopened last week. Yet, education cluster partners estimate that only half of the students have returned to school and less than half to kindergartens. Walking in the streets remains unsafe for many children because of ongoing fighting and unexploded ordnance contamination. Partners are tracking school damages and closures, and education and psycho-social needs.

To facilitate the smooth coordination of tracking of and responding to various needs, humanitarian partners, together with authorities at central and local levels, have worked out a joint response matrix that includes information on needs, location, type and quantity of aid provided, as well as specifies which organization and in cooperation with which partners is undertaking the response action. This system is based on the Kobo tool, which allows mobile data collection and is available to all partners. The Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs (MTOT&IDPs) and the Donetsk Oblast Military-Civil administration (DOMCA) continue to call for effective coordination among partners and for sharing inputs on both needs identified and potential planned/ongoing/undertaken response efforts to ensure coherent humanitarian action continues.

In addition, DOMCA inaugurated a 'logistics centre' in Kramatorsk established to facilitate the receipt and distribution of assistance coming in from other regions in support of people in Avdiivka. The centre has reportedly received over 400 MT of NFI and construction materials. A call centre is organized at the logistics centre to receive and keep track of information on urgent needs from Avdiivka, Marinka and Yasynuvatskiy district of Donetsk oblast, as well as information or offers on humanitarian assistance. Once fully operational, the centre will enhance an inter-agency response coordination.

Concurrently with response and coordination activities, humanitarian partners stay vigilant and continue joint preparedness measures, building on the lessons of the last week's escalation and prepare for further and potential deterioration of the situation. Humanitarian partners also shared information on available stocks in key Clusters and locations, to identify capability for the response and possible gaps. On the other hand, DOMCA Civil Defence and police departments convened a Government meeting to discuss undertaking of an "inventory" of evacuation shelters in the city of Kramatorsk as part of preparedness measures should the security situation rapidly deteriorate, amidst the recent and ongoing security situation in Avdiivka. The majority of such evacuation shelters are located in the basement facilities of public and private properties. Addresses of these shelters as well as information on actions to take during shelling are publicly available on local news sources. The meeting also discussed key civil defence measures that local authorities need to undertake in case of rapid deterioration of security situation. Additional civil defence measures, on actions to take during shelling have been made available on public in local news sources.