

# USCRI UPDATE: THE HUMANITARIAN AND DISPLACEMENT SITUATION IN UKRAINE

## OCTOBER 2024



*This is an update and supplement to USCRI's March 2024 [report](#) on the Humanitarian Situation in Ukraine.*

### Mass Displacement

The mass displacement crisis continues in Ukraine. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [reports](#) that over 6.7 million refugees from Ukraine have fled for protection in other countries. Over 6 million Ukrainian refugees are hosted by European countries, and about [400,000 Ukrainians](#) are hosted by Canada and the United States. Poland previously hosted the largest number of Ukrainian refugees, but many refugees have migrated a second time to other European countries due to higher income opportunities and better social security. Germany now hosts the largest number of Ukrainian refugees.

The Ukrainian refugee situation has become more complex due to the prolonged conflict. Many refugees from Ukraine have kept in close contact with family and friends through short-term visits to Ukraine. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates the number of returnees, which include short-term visitors and permanent returnees, at [around 4.6 million](#).

UNHCR [reports](#) that there are nearly 3.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), as of February 2024. IOM [reports](#) that 70% of internally displaced people are displaced for over a year.

## Civilian Deaths and Destruction

Over the spring and summer of 2024, the security situation has deteriorated in Ukraine, leading to high levels of civilian deaths and displacement. The [United Nations \(UN\) verified](#) that 11,743 civilians in Ukraine were killed and 24,614 injured between February 24, 2022, and August 31, 2024. Conflict also [destroyed](#) 1,358 educational facilities and 580 medical facilities. Between January and August, Sumska, Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivska, and Donetska oblasts had the [highest number](#) of attacks on civilian areas. September 2024 was the [deadliest month](#) for civilians since October 2022—at least 208 civilians were killed, including nine children, and 1,220 were injured. Attacks were during the daytime and targeted at populated civilian areas, which led to high civilian casualties. [Glide bombs](#) filled with shrapnel have also devastated civilian areas due to their ability to go largely undetected before detonation.

Recent major attacks on civilians include:

- On July 8, Russia launched missiles on [five](#) Ukrainian cities—Dnipro, Kramatorsk, Kryvyi Rih, Kyiv, Pokrovsk, and Sloviansk—killing at least 31 civilians. Russia targeted Ukraine's largest [children's hospital](#), as well as a maternity clinic and apartments. The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) [surveyed](#) the aftermath to try to collect evidence of war crimes committed by Russia for targeting civilians.
- On August 27, a barrage of Russian drones and missiles on [multiple cities](#) killed at least five people. The next day, on a day of mourning those losses, a Russian missile struck civilian structures in [Kryvyi Rih](#), where eight people were wounded.
- Starting September 1, Russia struck [Kharkiv](#) city in a series of attacks, starting with a missile and following with aerial glide bombs, that resulted in seven civilian deaths and 136 injuries.
- On September 19 and 28, attacks on medical facilities and a boarding house for older veterans in [Sumy](#) city killed at least seven civilians and injured 31.
- In October, missiles and loitering munitions attacks in the [Odesa](#) region killed 14 civilians and injured 28. Attacks targeted vessels, a mushroom farm, and seaports.
- On October 15, Russia attacked the southern city of [Mykolaiv](#), killing one person and injuring at least 16. The attacks hit a restaurant, residential buildings, and civilian cars.
- On October 25, attacks on over 20 apartment buildings in [Dnipro](#) and Mechnikov Hospital killed five civilians and injured 21. Mechnikov Hospital is one of the largest medical facilities in Ukraine and treats critically wounded civilians.

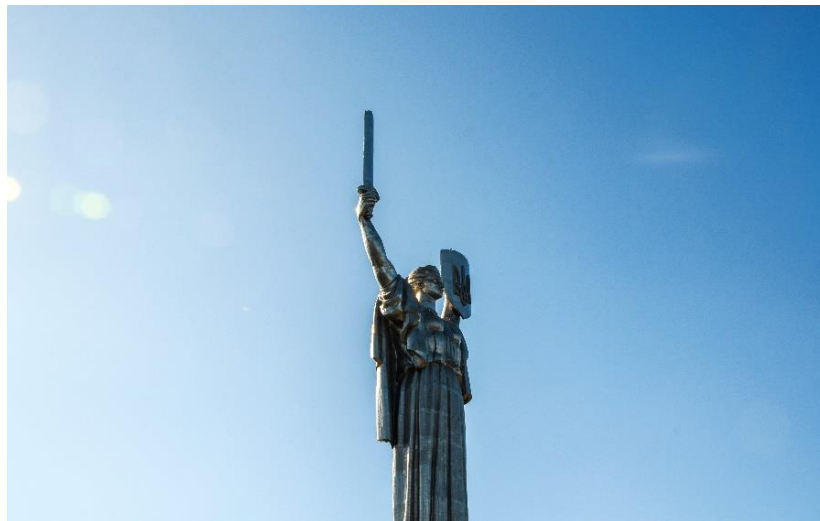
On October 28, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) confirmed that North Korean troops are in Russia and have been deployed to the Kursk region. NATO stated that the deployment marked a "[dangerous expansion](#)" of the war, which poses increased risks to civilians and Ukrainian forces.

## Survival Challenges Ahead

People in Ukraine brace for another winter without key energy infrastructure, due to targeted Russian attacks on energy generating facilities. Ukraine is heading into winter with [more than 60%](#) of its energy generation capacity lost. On August 26, Russia launched [more than 200 missiles](#) on Ukraine's energy sector. As a direct result, eight million households lost power, and Kyiv experienced a blackout. Due to decreased energy generating capacity, Ukraine is forced to issue [rolling blackouts](#) this winter, which can severely impact older people, children in hospitals, and people with disabilities. Nearly one million children in Ukraine who attend school online are impacted.

In front-line oblasts, local authorities estimate that there are [more than 862,000 at-risk](#) vulnerable people, including children, older persons, people with disabilities, and Roma populations. Evacuations from front-line areas continue. In August, attacks in Donetsk and Sumy oblasts led to displacement, and about 4,000 people evacuated. In October, [two evacuation trains](#) left the Cherkasy region with 58 people, including 11 children. In other front-line areas, many people face difficult decisions on leaving their property and livelihoods to face uncertainty as a forcibly displaced person.

The [deteriorating security situation](#) in Ukraine meant that 28% of all departures from Ukraine between January and September were people who left for the first time since the full-scale Russian invasion. When Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, was heavily attacked, there was a peak of people who left Ukraine for the first time at 35% of all departures. Safety, security, and energy-related concerns were the top drivers of outward movement.



## Humanitarian Aid Needs

An estimated [14.6 million people](#) need humanitarian assistance in Ukraine—about 40% of Ukraine's population. The full-scale Russian invasion led to [increased poverty rates](#) from 5% to 24% in 2022. Nearly half of all households (44%) struggle to secure everyday needs. Recently, displacement and property destruction are causing a [significant rise in homelessness](#). Many children are unable to go to school due to security reasons, and only [half](#) of Ukraine's 3.9 million children have attended school in person since the start of the full-scale war.

Ukraine also needs assistance with demining. It has become one of the most heavily mined places in the world—the [total land area](#) contaminated with unexploded mines is estimated to be four times the size of Switzerland. The total cost to demine Ukraine is estimated to be around [34.6 billion dollars](#), and total eradication may take years. A lack of funding and expertise for demining has resulted in civilians, including farmers, to look for ways to demine themselves without specialized protection. Boys and men are at high risk of being injured or killed due to unexploded mines, making up [90%](#) of those injured or killed. Contaminated land has led to a significant loss of farming communities' livelihoods, and the ripple effects [threaten African countries](#) that rely on Ukrainian grain imports.

In 2023, [only 64% of the necessary funds](#) were raised for humanitarian relief efforts. Aid reached about 10.5 million people and included access to clean water, delivery of vital supplies, and heating. This year, [only 52% of the necessary funds](#) have been raised, but the assistance needs are diverse. People in frontline areas need evacuation and relocation assistance, and people who are returning to liberated areas need resettlement assistance. Furthermore, people are still in need of regular and emergency health services. Community-based and international organizations continue to mobilize humanitarian aid in front-line areas, but they are mostly unable to reach Russian-occupied territory. Humanitarian aid providers have also reported an increased need for specialized mental health for trauma in children, forcibly displaced people, and people returning from active conflict.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is [increasing](#) throughout Ukraine, including sexual and physical violence, domestic violence, trafficking, and exploitation. Conflict-related sexual violence is perpetrated throughout front-line areas, particularly in places with high military presence. Since February 24, 2022, there have been [342 cases of sexual violence](#) (against 236 men, 94 women, 10 girls, and 2 boys) involving Russian armed forces and authorities. Most of these cases involve GBV in the context of detention during conflict. A UN Commission of Inquiry [reported](#) that prisoners of war are sexually abused and tortured during captivity.

GBV and sexual violence is also increasing as a byproduct of war. In the context of war, [several conditions](#) have increased the risk of GBV throughout Ukraine. Rolling blackouts and less access to police contribute to the increased risk. Intimate partner violence is also rising due to displacement, economic strife, increased alcoholism, and the return of veterans.

Interrupted access to sexual and reproductive health services puts survivors of GBV and maternal health at risk. In hard-to-reach areas, the lack of maternal health threatens the health and safety of newborn babies and infant health. In this protracted conflict, [children](#) are negatively impacted in areas of education, mental health, basic health, and GBV. Children are also at [risk of family separation](#) due to loss of parents or caregivers, evacuation, relocation, and sending children away for safety.

## Vulnerabilities and Exploitation

Mass displacement puts people in Ukraine at risk for exploitation. Organized crime and human trafficking networks [were already entrenched](#) in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion. [Children living in state-run facilities](#) are particularly at risk, as these institutions have a history of being negligently or willfully mismanaged. [People of Roma ethnicity and third-country nationals](#) are also at risk as they may be ineligible for refugee assistance abroad or experience discrimination when trying to access their protection rights.

Refugees and internally displaced persons report that it is difficult to find decent and sustainable work. Language is often reported as a hurdle to finding jobs among refugees. The resulting economic hardship puts refugees at risk of [exploitative work and forced labor](#). Women also face additional pressures, such as running a single-parent household and providing for extended family members. Insecure housing due to a decrease in state-run housing and assistance for refugees have led to private and employer hosting schemes that may expose refugees to the risk of sexual abuse and labor exploitation.

## International Protection

In 2022, the European Union (EU) acted quickly to implement its Temporary Protection Directive to protect refugees from Ukraine. Temporary Protection [provides refugees the right](#) to residence, housing, health care, education, and work in the EU. On September 28, 2023, the Council of the EU (council of government ministers) agreed to extend the temporary protection scheme until March 2025, providing refugees with more certainty about their status. On June 25, 2024, the Council extended the scheme further until March 2026.

Around [4.2 million](#) refugees have registered for Temporary Protection in the EU. While all EU countries have agreed to grant temporary protection, access to benefits differ between EU countries. For example, [refugees in Germany](#) reported that they most often turn to friends, relatives, and compatriots when in need of support, whereas [respondents in Switzerland](#) reported that they received a wide range of assistance from Swiss authorities. Refugees have also reported that the process to access benefits is harder in some countries, such as [France](#), due to paperwork and language barriers.

On April 25, 2022, the United States launched a humanitarian parole program called Uniting for Ukraine (U4U). As of December 2023, [more than 170,000](#) Ukrainians have been sponsored through U4U. Through Canada's emergency protection scheme, [over 290,000](#) Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Canada and received temporary residence. In 2023, Canada launched a [permanent residency program](#) for Ukrainian nationals with family members in Canada.

## Decreasing Support for Extended Protection

While the EU, the United States, and Canada were quick to respond to a mass displacement crisis at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, most of the protection measures enacted were temporary. As the full-scale war enters its third year, refugees and local communities need more certainty about temporary protection schemes. The Canadian temporary residency program [stopped accepting new applications](#) on March 31, 2024. Humanitarian parole in the United States under U4U typically grants parole of up to two years, after which people must re-apply for protection. The EU Temporary Protection Directive extends only until March 2026, unless it is re-extended.

While initial surveys on refugees' intentions revealed that there was a high intention to return to Ukraine, refugees are [concerned about](#) diminishing economic opportunities and housing, in addition to security and safety. In February 2024, UNHCR [reported](#) that 65% of refugees expressed a desire to return to Ukraine, versus 77% from 2023. Refugees increasingly want the option to stay permanently in their host countries, especially as families and children establish ties in communities and schools.

People in Ukraine are fleeing a worsening situation, yet refugee-hosting countries—for example, [Slovakia](#) and the [United States](#)—have reported slightly decreased public support for welcoming and assisting refugees. UNHCR reported that [the most vulnerable refugees](#) in eastern European countries are not able to access identity documents, health care, housing, and jobs. Refugees are also [at risk of homelessness](#) as protection schemes become less robust. For example, the Hungarian government ended housing assistance for thousands of refugees, and refugees in the UK are at risk due to inadequate support for finding accommodation.

*For more information about Ukraine from USCRI, see:*

- [Ukrainian Allies Resources](#)
- [USCRI Update: The Humanitarian Situation in Ukraine March 2024](#) (March 2, 2024)
- [Lautenberg Program Fact Sheet](#) (September 30, 2022)
- [Documentation and Benefit Eligibility for Ukrainians](#) (June 2022)
- [Information on Uniting for Ukraine Program](#) (May 2022)
- [Information on Uniting for Ukraine Program and Temporary Protected Status for Ukraine](#) (May 2022)
- [USCRI Backgrounder: The Russian and Ukraine Crisis](#) (February 24, 2022)

