

# Ukraine crisis

Urgent action needed to address the effects of the conflict on civilians



Photo credits : Piero Cruciatti/SIPA/Ritzau Scanpix

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Response to the humanitarian situation in Ukraine

1. **Enhance efforts for a peaceful resolution to the crisis.** The cessation of hostilities is needed to end the suffering of people in Ukraine and enable access to lifesaving assistance.
2. **Uphold the obligation to respect International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and protect civilians by all parties to the conflict.** IHL principles of humanity, distinction, and proportionality must be upheld by all actors. In addition, diplomatic efforts must aim at putting an immediate end to the armed conflict.
3. **Condemn the use of cluster munitions - and any other internationally banned weapons - and call on all parties to stop the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects** in towns, cities, and other populated areas due to the high risk of harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure. DRC urges all parties to guarantee protection of civilians.
4. **Ensure rapid, unhindered, and principled humanitarian access to those, and for those, affected by the conflict** and secure safe and timely humanitarian corridors to enable the protection of the rights and meet the needs of the civilian population regardless of their place of residence, ethnicity, and nationality without discrimination. Parties to the conflict have an obligation under IHL to ensure humanitarian actors can safely reach populations of concern to deliver impartial humanitarian assistance, and that the right of evacuees to determine destination of choice is respected.
5. **Support lifesaving protection and humanitarian assistance to the affected population in Ukraine** in accordance with evolving needs and in line with humanitarian principles. Assistance to those who cannot or choose not to leave for any reason including, but not limited to age/gender/family unity/ means, or ability, as well as to those coming back from neighbouring countries is critical.
6. **Enable flexible and timely scale up of the humanitarian response** through supporting effective coordination by all engaged actors, addressing bureaucratic impediments for aid delivery, including ensuring unambiguous exemptions from conscription of humanitarian aid workers, and providing programming and funding flexibility to allow for timely adaptation to a fluctuating situation.

## Response in neighbouring countries and other host countries

7. **All neighbouring countries and EU Member States have an obligation to support people fleeing conflict in Ukraine, and ensure their access to territory and protection, regardless of their origin or nationality.** Discriminatory practices vis-à-vis people seeking to escape the conflict are unacceptable. All people fleeing Ukraine, must be able to leave the country and access the EU (European Union) and other neighbouring countries without discrimination and in compliance with the principle of non-refoulement and international human rights law.
8. **Mobilise support to host countries including through transfers and other solidarity mechanisms** to ensure the delivery of timely life-saving protection and humanitarian assistance, adequate reception, and access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and necessary services for all those fleeing the conflict and with a specific focus on the most vulnerable, consistent with the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality.
9. **Enable swift, informed, and effective access to rights under the applicable protection schemes** in accordance with the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), in compliance with the EU asylum acquis and without discrimination.

## Response to the broader implications of the Ukraine crisis

10. **Increase global aid budgets in accordance with needs to avoid redirection of funding from other humanitarian crises to national social support for refugees and asylum seekers.** Essential funding to the massive humanitarian needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries should come from funds set aside for emergencies and/ or additional funds, not taken from existing crises. Taking the long view, by avoiding the worsening of already devastating humanitarian crises is essential to ensuring that donor states, humanitarian actors, and most importantly everyday people do not find themselves responding to new preventable crisis.
11. **In line with the recommendations from the Global Crisis Response Group on food, energy and finance and the call to action from the UN Secretary General, respond to the rising levels of food insecurity globally** exacerbated by repercussions of the Ukraine crisis on global food, energy and fertilizer prices and supplies ([The 2022 Global Report on Food Crises](#)).
12. **Secure exemptions for humanitarian aid delivery, including to countries and crisis in other context**, which may be impacted by wide ranging sanctions. Country wide exemptions to essential commodities and financial services in conflict affected countries must be ensured.
13. **Enhance political efforts and stabilisation/policy dialogue initiatives to decrease the risks of spill-over effects** in the Western Balkans, Georgia, and Moldova. Engage with duty-bearers to reduce political instrumentalization and polarization, which threatens the application of humanitarian principles and especially put at risk humanitarian access in frozen conflict zones in neighbouring countries.

# Response in Ukraine

Since the outbreak of the conflict on 24 February 2022, civilian casualties continue to mount across the country. According to UNHCR, at least 24 million are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including up to 7.7 million people newly internally displaced. With the view to ensure that conflict- and displacement-affected people in Ukraine are assisted in coping with the effects of the escalating conflict, **DRC calls on States, donors, and the humanitarian community for attention to the following urgent priorities:**



Photo credits: Getty/Laurent Van Der Stockt

- 1. Enhance efforts for a peaceful resolution to the crisis.** The cessation of hostilities is needed to end the suffering of people in Ukraine and enable access to lifesaving assistance.
- 2. Uphold the obligation to respect International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and protect civilians by all parties to the conflict.**
  - **Uphold the IHL principles of humanity, distinction, and proportionality.** Namely, civilians are not a target. All parties to the conflict are called upon to stop the targeting of civilians including alleged summary executions / targeted killings of civilians, rape, and sexual violence. Parties to the conflict are further called upon to stop targeting civilian infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, homes, water facilities and electricity lines. This extends to the prohibition of the use of civilian infrastructures for military purposes. The use of illegal weapons as well as the illegal use of weapons (as in indiscriminate attacks) is prohibited.
  - **Collect, analyse, and share information, evidence, and testimonies on IHL violations and the impact of armed conflict** including summary executions/targeted killings of civilians, rape and sexual violence, persons killed and injured by explosive weapons, indiscriminate attacks, and indiscriminate weapons.
  - **Maintain and amplify diplomatic efforts and dialogue with Russian and Ukrainian authorities** with a view to ensuring accountability for all violations of IHL and putting an immediate end to the armed conflict.

**3. Condemn the use of cluster munitions, and any other internationally banned weapons, and call on all parties to stop the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects** in towns, cities, and other populated areas due to the high risk of harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

- DRC is appalled by the alleged use of cluster munitions - and other prohibited weapons - and joins the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) in **strongly condemning the use of cluster munitions in the Ukraine conflict, and the death and injury of civilians.**
- The use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas (EWIPA) kill and injure civilians but also damages or even destroys roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, and other vital infrastructures upon which civilians rely. EWIPA cause mental trauma and force people to flee. In line with the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), **DRC calls on all parties to the Ukrainian conflict to stop the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects** in towns, cities, and other populated areas due to the high risk of harm to civilians.
- DRC also calls on all states to attend the ongoing diplomatic negotiations and adopt a political declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas that includes wording on the avoidance policy (or presumption of non-use) of explosive weapons with wide area effects in areas populated by civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- **Support efforts to survey and map dangerous and contaminated areas** as well as explosive weapons casualties and affected communities, identifying explosive ordnances, and providing explosive ordnance risk education.

**4. Ensure rapid, unhindered, and principled humanitarian access to those, and for those, affected by the conflict** to enable the protection of the rights and meet the needs of the civilian population regardless of their place of residence, ethnicity, and nationality without discrimination. Parties to the conflict have an obligation under IHL to ensure humanitarian actors can safely reach populations of concern to deliver impartial humanitarian assistance.

- **Support efforts to ensure timely, safe humanitarian corridors for civilians to evacuate conflict areas** as well as for the access of humanitarian services to reach civilians including in NGCA's. The right to determine destination of choice for evacuation must be respected.
- **Commence, sustain, and enhance the provision of humanitarian aid and protection services and the establishment of operational mechanisms** to support humanitarian actors through supply lines and capacity building allowing the fair, impartial and unhindered access to people in need. An increasing number of civilians have lost access to protection and humanitarian assistance, along the shifting contact line/actual combat areas, in and around major cities, but also within the "Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA)."
- **Urgently encourage, coordinate and secure exemptions from sanctions to aid delivery to avoid negative consequences for NGOs** (Non-Governmental Organisations) in areas of Ukraine that depend on Russian currency and banks, as well as other areas impacted. The impact of sanctions on Russian financial institutions, goods, and services on the humanitarian sector's ability to deliver aid is a major concern. The scope of the sanctions on Russia (especially on the financial and energy sectors) has the potential to impact operations across the Ukraine response context, including in countries of reception for those fleeing Ukraine. It is therefore **essential that governments who impose sanctions consider how conflict affected populations maintain access to essential goods and services that are provided by the private sector.**



## 5. Support lifesaving protection and humanitarian assistance to the affected population in Ukraine

in accordance with evolving needs and in line with humanitarian principles. Assistance to those who cannot or choose not to leave for any reason including, but not limited to age/gender/family unity/ means, or ability, as well as to those coming from neighbouring countries is critical.

- **Support agencies, including civil society and local organisations, providing protection of civilians and access to protection mechanisms** by ensuring that measures are in place for accountability to affected people (AAP), and by providing e.g., emergency protection assistance including shelter and NFIs (Non-Food Items), legal aid, psycho-social support, multi-purpose cash and food assistance, basic shelter repair, vital heating systems, emergency explosive ordinance risk education, as well as marking of areas contaminated with explosive remnants of war, when feasible.
- **Ensure that lifesaving interventions and specialised services for child protection and GBV responses are available and accessible**, including procedures to identify and provide gender and age support for survivors of violence, abuse and exploitation, and available capacity to coordinate, identify, support, and reunite families in a safe and child friendly manner.
- **Ensure freedom of movement, the right to family unity and the ability to seek and enjoy asylum and protection** for all irrespective of age/gender/country of origin/nationality, means, or ability.
- **Pay early attention to solutions to displacement**, including facilitating access to civil documentation in displacement, assessing and addressing legal obstacles for return and legal aid needs and ensuring focus on the allocation of funding for e.g., compensation schemes, moratorium on mortgage etc.

## 6. Enable flexible and timely scale up of the humanitarian response

through supporting effective coordination by all engaged actors, addressing bureaucratic impediments for aid delivery, including ensuring unambiguous exemptions from conscription of humanitarian aid workers, and providing programming and funding flexibility to allow for timely adaptation to a fluctuating situation.

- **Support effective coordination for a timely and functional humanitarian response.** Ensure Inclusion of new actors, local authority structures, local actors and initiatives in coordination structures and avoid parallel coordination mechanisms. Support and underpin existing authority coordination in accordance with needs. A comprehensive mapping at Oblast level of humanitarian partners and their activities, as well as Oblast specific humanitarian and authority coordination mechanisms must be done for both GCA (Government controlled areas) and NGCA (Non-Government controlled areas). Linking these mappings to humanitarian led coordination mechanisms at sub-national levels will allow for effective coordination of services, including cash coordination which remains a main modality of intervention. Effective coordination must as a priority ensure swift response and scale up in areas affected by fighting as soon as access is possible.
- **Identify and address bureaucratic impediments within Ukrainian law which complicates the effective distribution of humanitarian aid.** Seek clarity on the scope and duration of exemptions under Martial law, and the foreseen process following a redaction of exemptions, including potential retroactive requirements.
- **Provide effective and unambiguous exemptions to military conscriptions for all national humanitarian aid workers** to accommodate humanitarian operations and effective aid delivery in Ukraine. Exemptions should have a clear timeline, ensuring that communication to relevant Oblast authorities has been effectively completed.
- **Provide the necessary funding and programming flexibility to enable timely adaptation to a rapidly changing situation**, including, ensuring that funding to local actors and initiatives can be effectively channeled and disbursed enabling protection and humanitarian assistance to reach the affected populations including in conflict areas. While access is difficult and limited in actual combat areas there are local responders and volunteers operating under extremely difficult circumstances. Sustainability of local response must be ensured through adequate support and investments in structure and capacity as needed.

# Response in neighbouring countries and other host countries

The conflict in Ukraine has forced millions of people to cross borders into neighbouring countries. Within the first three months of the conflict 7 million border crossings from Ukraine have been recorded. To help ensure that people from Ukraine seeking protection in neighbouring countries receive protection and humanitarian assistance **DRC calls on States, donors, and the humanitarian community for attention to the following urgent priorities:**



Photo credits: DRC, Poland, March 2022

## 7. All neighbouring countries and EU Member States have an obligation to support people fleeing conflict in Ukraine, and ensure their access to territory and protection, regardless of their origin or nationality.

- **Ensure that all people fleeing Ukraine can access the EU and other neighbouring countries without discrimination** and in compliance with the principle of non-refoulement and international human rights law. Discriminatory practices vis-à-vis people seeking to escape the conflict are unacceptable. Both DRC and local partners are registering instances of non-Ukrainian third-country nationals fleeing Ukraine whose rights are neglected at European borders, in terms of access to assistance or the territory or in actively promoting their transfer elsewhere. Provisions for Roma people and stateless people are also a concern.
- **Facilitate and ease border crossings** as provided for by the European Commission's guidelines for external border management, and refrain from requesting specific ID documents to those seeking to escape the conflict, as this can de facto limit access to safety. EU Member States are also encouraged to call on support from the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) for registration of persons fleeing Ukraine where needed to ensure timely and effective response.
- **Take specific needs, risks, and vulnerabilities into account in the humanitarian response efforts in the border areas.** Women, children, and the elderly make up the majority of the refugees, creating specific needs, including protection from exploitation and trafficking risks. A growing number of unaccompanied minors require particular attention in terms of ensuring timely and appropriate identification, registration, and support.
- **Extend support and provide access to safety and protection for those fleeing the Russian Federation** due to risk of persecution and/or military conscription, including through facilitating safe pathways.

## 8. Mobilise support to host countries including through transfers and other solidarity

**mechanisms** to ensure the delivery of timely lifesaving humanitarian assistance, adequate reception, and access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and necessary services for all those fleeing the conflict and with a specific focus on the most vulnerable, consistent with the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality.

- **Demonstrate effective responsibility sharing among EU Member States** in accordance with arrivals and existing capacity and needs in host countries. Ukrainian refugees are moving quickly from border countries to other countries of destination in Europe in particularly towards countries with a large diaspora population of Ukrainians.
- **Accelerate and advance coordination efforts under the Solidarity Platform** as provided for by the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) including preparing for and supporting the transfer of refugees from the neighbouring countries and Moldova in a safe manner and in accordance with the arising needs for and request by the respective host countries. The activation of the TPD is a crucial step towards ensuring quick access to protection and to alleviate pressure on the EU Member States bordering Ukraine, as well as other EU Member States receiving large numbers of refugees. To ensure effective solidarity under the TPD, all Member States must step up their capacity to receive people that have been forced to leave Ukraine.
- **Respect requests from EU Member States to refrain from transferring Dublin returnees** with the view to alleviate the pressure on the asylum systems unless the aim is family reunification.

## 9. Enable swift, informed, and effective access to rights under the applicable protection

**schemes** in accordance with the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), in compliance with the EU asylum acquis and without discrimination.

- **Provide timely and accessible information on the registration process for temporary protection** to all those covered by its scope to allow for informed decision making and rapid access to registration and access to rights.
- **Facilitate and support effective and swift access to services** including health care, education, labour market, and housing in the neighbouring countries and other host countries as provided for by the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) and ensure that refugees are assisted in navigating the different assistance schemes available.
- **Monitor and understand movements into Ukraine** to facilitate adequate assistance and response both in neighbouring countries and upon arrival in Ukraine and accommodate potential pendular movements by ensuring that registration and rights under the TPD remain valid.
- **Ensure effective access to protection and rights for those not covered in the personal scope of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD)**. For third country nationals that will not be covered by the TPD, access to fair and efficient asylum procedures, leave to remain, and residence permits should be made available in accordance with needs and existing national schemes. For those who can return safely to their home countries, residence permits that allow time to make travel arrangements, as well as access to embassies and support for return travel, are needed.
- **Maintain access to international protection and rights in compliance with the EU asylum acquis** for all other asylum seekers and refugees and avoid preferential treatment of some groups over others.

# Response to the broader implications of the Ukraine crisis

The global ramifications of the Ukraine crisis are increasingly evident and urgent action to mitigate the humanitarian consequences is needed. **DRC calls on States, donors, and the humanitarian community for attention to the following urgent priorities:**



Photo credit: DRC, Algeria

## 10. Increase global aid budgets in accordance with needs and avoid redirection of funding from other humanitarian crises towards the Ukraine crisis.

- **Mobilise additional aid** to respond to the massive humanitarian needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries and refrain from redirecting funding from existing crises to avoid worsened crises and devastating human costs.
- **Urgently reconsider the use of ODA (Official Development Assistance) for domestic refugee responses.** Redirecting development aid from resilience and peace-building efforts, aimed at preventing conflict and displacement in the world's poorest and most fragile countries to refugee reception in donor countries interrupts and undoes long-term efforts and can have unintended long-lasting global implications including for peace, stability, and displacement.

## 11. In line with the recommendations from the Global Crisis Response Group on food, energy and finance and the call to action from the UN Secretary General, respond to the rising levels of food insecurity globally exacerbated by repercussions of the Ukraine crisis on global food, energy and fertilizer prices and supplies (The 2022 Global Report on Food Crises).

- **Provide the funding needed by humanitarian aid actors to prevent famine.**
- **Simultaneously, ensure that all people in need have access to social protection systems** which requires global and urgent action to financial crises that contribute to increased food prices. It is essential, for example, to ensure governments and populations have access to liquidity to be able to respond to shocks that arise and ensure adequate protection of vulnerable populations.
- **Keep markets open** and resist pressure to impose export restrictions, avoiding sanctions on essential commodities such as food and fertilizer.
- **Ensure early action and flexibility in response modalities** to increase food security in recognition of the price volatility due to the conflict.

**12. Secure exemptions for humanitarian aid delivery**, including to countries and crisis in other context, which may be impacted by wide ranging sanctions.

- **Guarantee exemptions from international sanctions to aid delivery** to enable conflict-affected populations to maintain access to essential goods and services that are provided and ensure that exemptions are translated into national legislation.
- **Ensure country wide exemptions to essential commodities and financial services in conflict-affected countries reliant on sanctioned suppliers**, where no alternatives exist. It may be helpful to look to how and why the EU sanctions and US sanctions differ in relation to gas supply in this regard, given the disparate effects on the general population and economies, in developing the exemptions framework.

**13. Enhance political efforts and stabilisation initiatives to decrease the risks of spill-over effects** in the Western Balkans, Georgia, and Moldova, including the risk of reduced humanitarian access in frozen conflict zones.

- **Engage with duty-bearers to reduce political instrumentalization and polarization**, which threaten the application of humanitarian principles and especially put at risk humanitarian access in frozen conflict zones in neighbouring countries.
- **Intensify stabilisation efforts and policy dialogue** to decrease the risk of spill-over effects in the Western Balkans, Georgia, and Moldova.



Photo credit: DRC, Somalia

## How We Help

DRC's coordination structure around the Ukraine crisis response is adjusted and reinforced to provide for sufficient attention to all elements of engagement. This includes a continued, adapted response in Ukraine, engagement in neighbouring countries, the wider Europe and in Denmark. DRC as such applies a holistic, com programmatic approach in its Ukraine crisis response. Operating within Ukraine since 1998 and currently with around 250 staff DRC has scaled up its operation in the country to deliver lifesaving assistance and emergency response to people affected by the conflict. DRC has set up a response structure in neighbouring countries and is by now registered in Poland and Moldova with Romania in process. This places DRC in a strong position to assist Ukrainians crossing borders in search of refuge and international protection there or as they transit towards other European countries.

Within the wider Europe, DRC is scaling up its existing operations in Italy, Greece, Georgia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to engage in asylum counselling, protection, reception, and inclusion support to people arriving from Ukraine.

Given its Danish origin, DRC's engagement in Denmark, is framed by its role as a national refugee mandated civil society organisation with a defined role in the asylum procedure and refugee integration work in Denmark. Therefore, DRC engages with Ukrainian diaspora, a network of more than 6,000 volunteers, immigration authorities and municipalities to establish an overview of the need for help and provide direct support including legal aid to the people of Ukraine already arriving in Denmark, while preparing for new arrivals.



Photo credits: DRC, Moldova – Chisinau, March 2022



Founded in 1956, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is Denmark's largest international NGO, with a specific expertise in forced displacement. DRC is present in close to 40 countries and employs 9,000 staff globally.

DRC advocates for the rights of and solutions for displacement-affected communities and provides assistance during all stages of displacement: In acute crisis, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. DRC supports displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies. DRC works with civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and inclusion.

Our 7,500 volunteers in Denmark make an invaluable difference in integration activities throughout the country.

DRC's code of conduct sits at the core of our organizational mission, and DRC aims at the highest ethical and professional standards. DRC has been certified as meeting the highest quality standards according to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

HRH Crown Princess Mary is DRC's patron.

To read more about what we do, see: [www.drc.ngo](http://www.drc.ngo)

**DRC** DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL  
• We are there