

# Ukraine Update<sup>1</sup>

## Deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the east

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# OCHA

This report covers the period of 29 January – 6 February 2017

### Highlights

- Increased insecurity triggered new civilian casualties and widespread humanitarian needs across the 'contact line'.
- Water and heating provision for some 1.1 million people is at risk.
- Humanitarian partners and authorities mobilized a coordinated response.
- An inter-agency rapid needs assessment mission took place on 1 February.

Heavy fighting in eastern Ukraine has intensified since 29 January. The use of heavy artillery, including multi-rocket launchers (MLRS "GRAD"), was widely reported. Preliminary OHCHR estimates indicate at least 63 civilian casualties (12 deaths and 51 injuries) between 1 January and 3 February, including 48 (7 deaths, 41 injured) between 29 January and 2 February. These casualties were caused by shelling from artillery, tanks and MLRS. The rapid increase of hostilities triggered new, urgent humanitarian needs along the 'contact line', in both Government and non-Government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (GCA and NGCA – see map on page 4).

Unanimous calls for a full, stable ceasefire remain unheard, even if the number of reported security incidents has somewhat decreased as of 4 February. Continuous loss of lives, concerns around protection of civilians and the concurrent, sustained damages of critical civilian infrastructure are of utmost humanitarian concern. Access to water and heating for some 1.1 million people in Donetsk oblast is at risk as inter-dependent infrastructure – electricity, water, with a knock on effect on heating – is yet to be fully restored.

On 30 January, the last power line to Avdiivka and the Coke Plant, which provides heating to local communities, sustained damage, leaving residents without power, water and heating supply for 48 hours. Donetsk Filter Station stopped working due to destructions of electricity infrastructure affecting some 400,000 people in GCA and NGCA. On 1 February, as a result of electricity supply cut off to Verkhniokalmiyska Filter Station, around 800,000 people in parts of Donetsk city and surrounding areas had no access to water for 24 hours. Since 1 February, a water pipeline leakage near Avdiivka disrupted water supply to almost 500,000 residents Mariupol, who now rely on a backup reservoir. On the night of 4 to 5 February, more shelling damaged electricity infrastructure serving the town of Horlivka (190,000 people).

Repair teams continuously tried to restore the power lines but came under fire despite the reports of local ceasefire agreements to enable the works. Restored lines are repeatedly damaged, nullifying the efforts to ensure the operation of critical infrastructure. With temperature as low as -17C the systems are barely managing to maintain acceptable temperature inside people's houses as well as local hospital, schools and other critical social infrastructure. Continuous shelling, also, poses a major risk due to the proximity of industrial plants and water stations with chlorine gas storage. In case of damage, consequences would be short of environmental catastrophe.

In Luhansk province (GCA), heating supply has come under additional threat after a group of veterans of volunteer battalions blocked the movement of cargo trains in the Luhansk–Lysychansk–Popasna railway section. The blockade has affected the supply of coal delivery from NGCA to the heating station in Schastia (Novoaidarskyi raion), according to the Ministry of Temporary Occupied Territories and IDPs (MTOT&IDPs) and has incurred financial losses of about 37 million UAH (US\$ 1.32 million). The veterans demand the release of prisoners of war by the *de facto* authorities. There are reports that the group plans to block additional parts of the railroad. On 30 January, a portion of the railroad Luhansk–Lysychansk–Popasna near the 'contact line' was dismantled, and the incident is being investigated.

Avdiivka has been a long-term hotspot with about 16,000 people, including 2,500 children still residing in town, which is less than a half of its pre-conflict population<sup>2</sup>. Following the 30 January incident that stopped the supply of power, heating and water, the town was using a small back-up reservoir to maintain minimum to medium functioning of the heating system. Repair teams were able to restore the electricity supply on 5 February, however, the ongoing hostilities still pose a risk of new or repeated damage to the infrastructure. The city continues to mainly run on three high-power generators to



Avdiivka, Ukraine - soup kitchens have been organized for people affected by the recent escalation of crisis in eastern Ukraine © OCHA/O.Kuzikov

<sup>1</sup> The information in this update was compiled by the OCHA Ukraine Office based on multiple sources, including UN agencies, joint rapid inter-cluster assessment and internal reports.

<sup>2</sup> According to the State Statistic Services of Ukraine as of January 2014 the population of Avdiivka was approximately 35,090 people.

ensure minimum services. Some 11 heating points, with field kitchens, water and food have been established. Yet, another incident on the night of 2 February hit the areas where these services were provided, taking the life of one person and leaving two injured. Electric power remains absent in five settlements in Yasynuvatsky district (Tonenke, Pivnichne, Vesele, Vodiane, Kamenka) located near Avdiivka.

As of 6 February, some 186 houses, including eight multi-storeyed buildings, have been damaged in the town. A total of 298 people, including 139 children, have been evacuated. Some 20 critically ill patients of the local hospital were evacuated to Kostyantynivka. Additional reports are coming of people fleeing the town on their own, however there are no estimates available at this point in time. Schools closed for a few days, and are now reopening. Some 11,789 people have received some form of assistance at the humanitarian centre (hot food, heating, mobile phone recharge, etc.)

The situation also deteriorated in the vicinity of Mariupol over the past few days. On 3 February, 18 private houses, power and gas supply were damaged by shelling in Sartana (GCA). Local authorities managed to quickly restore the power and gas supply to the town. Affected people are receiving shelter assistance to cover immediate repair needs.

Hostilities have further escalated in the areas of Luhanska oblast, namely, in Triokhizbenka (Novoaidarskyi raion) and in Troitske, Komyshevakh, Vrubivka, Zolote, and Popasna (Popasnianskyi raion). As a result of shelling, a school in Triokhizbenka has suspended learning activities. Local authorities have started repair works and humanitarian partners are mobilizing additional support. Over 20 residential houses have been damaged in Komyshevakh, Zolote, Troitske, and Vrubivka. International humanitarian organizations plan to repair damaged buildings in Vrubivka which suffered biggest losses. In addition to residential destruction, the power lines in Popasna and Vrubivka were also damaged, cutting electricity supply. By 6 February, the authorities have restored power in both settlements by using generators.

Overall, at least 18 schools in GCA and NGCA have been impacted, damaged or closed, due to high insecurity. Some 2,600 students in 13 schools in GCA do not have access to education. The Education Cluster reports of at least five education facilities being damaged in NGCA of Donetsk and Luhansk during the first week of February.

In Donetsk city, shelling led to civilian casualties, caused damage to residential housing and infrastructure. As of 3 February, *de facto* authorities estimate that some 130 houses, including 7 multi-storey buildings, were damaged over the course of one week. Several schools and kindergartens were also hit. In Makiivka, two schools, a kindergarten, two clinics, and a penal colony also suffered damages. Over the last week, gas supply was interrupted for at least 130 houses in Pikuzy (former Kominternove), up to 1,000 people in Yakovlivka settlement (Yasynuvata area), and 1,200 users in Donetsk and Makiivka. Multiple impacts on gas and electricity supply system were reported in Makiivka (53 houses were temporarily left without heating) and Kuybyshevsky district of Donetsk. About 300 civilians from Yasynuvata as well as Kuybishevskyi and Kyievskyi districts of Donetsk city were relocated to collective centres.

## Humanitarian needs and response

Among the key needs is provision to the affected communities with power generators to ensure continuous work of critical infrastructure, such as electric and water supply stations, hospitals, educational facilities, etc. As the number of affected people continues to grow, the key humanitarian needs include food, water, heaters, warm clothes, bed linen, blankets, hygiene items, and emergency shelter materials.

The Government of Ukraine, as well as the *de facto* authorities in Donetsk, appealed to international organizations to support civilians in the areas of potential displacement. Humanitarian partners are mobilizing and providing life-saving assistance to the affected population. On 1 February, an inter-agency rapid assessment mission to Avdiivka was organized to assess humanitarian situation and needs.

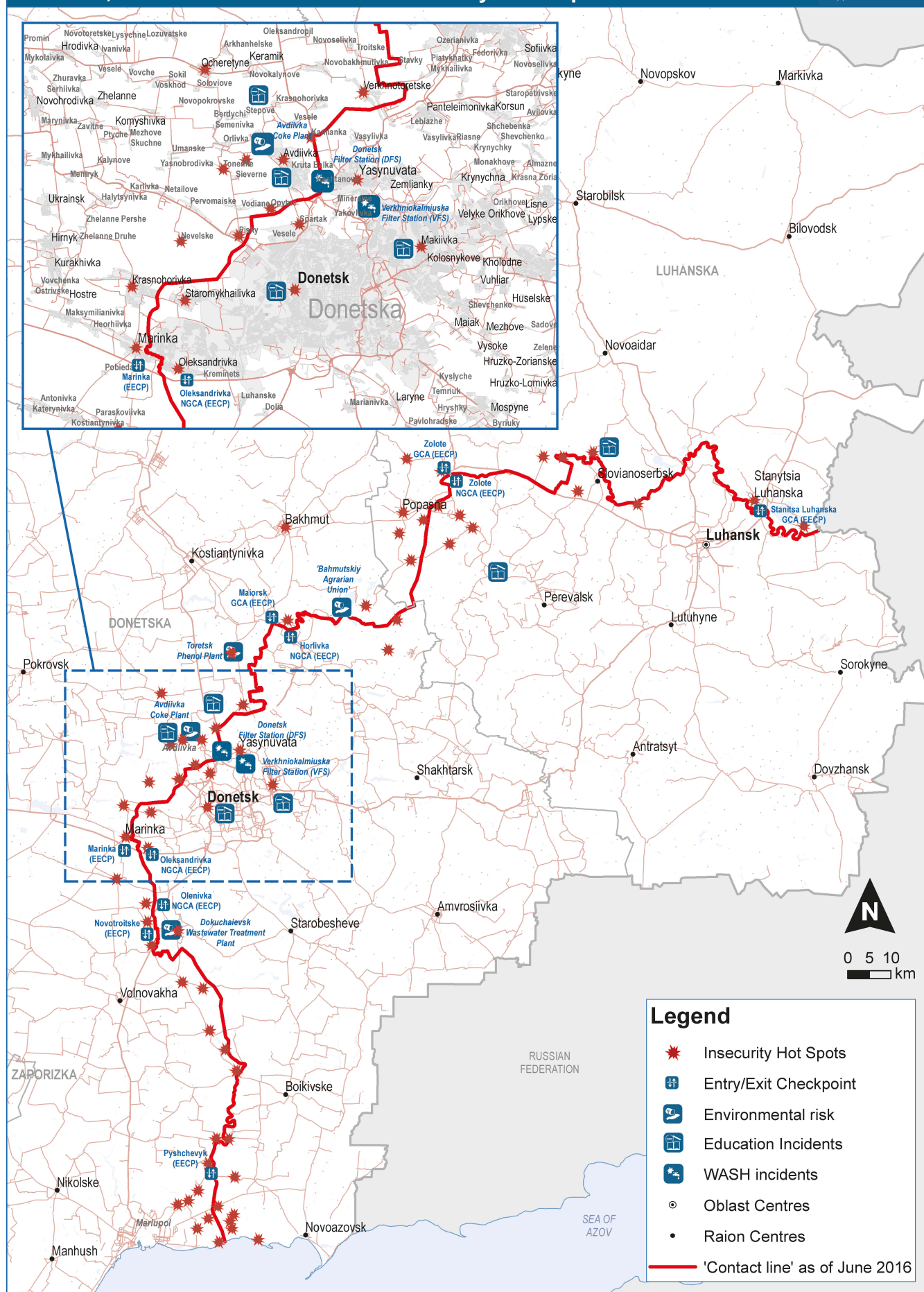
MTOT&IDPs and oblast administrations are coordinating efforts of international and local organizations in GCA, providing daily updates on the current needs. With the support of OCHA, Donetsk oblast administration and MTOT&IDPs are working on common tools for tracking humanitarian needs and response to ensure the maximum level of coherence among international, national and state actors. Donetsk oblast administration has established a 24/7 hotline for affected population as well as a Call Centre for humanitarian assistance.

On 30 January, the UN contacted Donetsk *de facto* authorities and initiated a coordinated response targeting conflict-affected population. In addition, OCHA called a coordination meeting with all humanitarian organisations on the ground in order to assess the needs and response capacity as well as to ensure necessary advocacy efforts required for the rapid response. In the absence of unified (centralized) source of reliable information, the humanitarian community, with the support from local NGO partners and administrative bodies, managed to collect a list of urgent needs. Despite challenges with access and the lack of registration, OCHA obtained approval from the humanitarian committee to bring in a joint humanitarian convoy. Partners mobilised available resources and, in coordination with the *de facto* authorities, assisted over 1500 people living in the affected areas, as well as those who were relocated to collective centres. Assistance included kitchen sets, tarpaulins, bed linen, heaters, potable water and food items. Humanitarian needs are being further assessed through established channels and a call centre of one of the partners. OCHA is collecting all available information to ensure rapid assistance/response, as well as putting in place contingency plan and working out delivery modalities.

In Kyiv, OCHA and MTOT&IDPs work together with local authorities and humanitarian partners at Kyiv and regional level to ensure preparedness for a worst-case scenario, whereby water in the water reservoir in Avdiivka is exhausted leading to the disintegration of the heating, water and sewage systems. The UN partners and Government have jointly updated evacuation and contingency plans should the situation further deteriorate.



## Ukraine, Donbas Area: Increased insecurity - Hot Spots



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Source: ESPE "Kartograph", OCHA, ESSE, RSD. | Feedback: OCHAukraine@un.org | Document: Ukraine, Donbas-Luhanska oblast, Increased insecurity Hot Spots, RSD\_OCHA\_A3\_Avdiivka\_0602017\_v1. Creation date: 24/02/17

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