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Ukraine: Two years after Russia's full-scale invasion, the situation for the millions of internally displaced is deteriorating fast

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, millions have been forced to flee their homes and 3,7 million are internally displaced. Unless the international community acts now to protect these people, we will be confronted with an even bigger crisis later, the Danish Refugee Council warns.

The war in Ukraine continues, destroying lives, homes and communities, and millions of civilians are suffering. In January 641 civilians were killed or injured in Ukraine, continuing a trend from December 2023 of increasing civilian casualties. Verified civilian casualties in January were 37 per cent higher than in November 2023. As the war in Ukraine continues the situation for the staggering 3,7 million people forced to flee the war within their own country is growing increasingly grim.

"Now is not the time to look away from Ukraine. The increasingly dire situation of the displaced is not receiving nearly enough international attention. Unless we act now to protect these people displaced by the war, we will be confronted with an even bigger crisis later," says **Charlotte Slente**, Secretary-General of the Danish Refugee Council.

As media attention is declining the situation for the civilians is getting worse.

Eighty percent of those displaced by war have now been displaced for more than a year. And as the war continues, they are much more likely to rely solely on assistance such as state social benefits, pensions and humanitarian cash assistance. In some areas, 53% of those displaced are entirely dependent on assistance to support their families. The poverty level in Ukraine has increased five-fold to 24 percent in just one year, up from 5 percent.

Displaced Ukrainians are facing rapidly deteriorating living conditions, increasingly struggling to put food on the table, pay the rent, or pay medical expenses, rather than envisioning a future back home. Many displaced people are living in collective centres which were designed only for temporary use – what was a temporary solution is now becoming a permanent problem. Still more are struggling to find work and are dependent on humanitarian assistance to support their families.

The prospects of ending displacement for millions of fleeing Ukrainians inside and outside the country remain slim. There are significant barriers for them to return, including physical safety, destruction of property and limited access to livelihoods.

"We must not forget the millions of children, mothers, fathers — who are bearing the brunt of ongoing fighting. They have lost their houses, their livelihoods, their communities, many have nowhere to go. The international community must ensure continued support, now and in the long-term for civilians who have been forced to flee," says **Julian Zakrzewski**, country director for the Danish Refugee Council in Ukraine.

The World Bank estimates that over 1.4 million homes had been damaged or destroyed by February 2023. This number will be way higher in the World Bank's upcoming report. In addition, most areas affected by the conflict are heavily contaminated by mines and other explosive ordnance, which make them unsafe for any returns until fully cleared. This will take many years. Displaced populations need reliable and safe places to live until they can go back and rebuild their lives.

Further information:

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The Danish Refugee Council is a leading, international humanitarian displacement organisation, supporting refugees and internally displaced persons during displacement, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. We provide protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance. We support displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies — and we work with communities, civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence. Founded in Denmark in 1956, 7,500 staff, 6,200 volunteers.