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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK

DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL




DRC Ukraine

# DRC Quarterly Protection Monitoring Report

## Executive Summary

## Overview

During July–September 2026, the protection environment across DRC's monitored areas continued to deteriorate. Intensifying hostilities, the expanding use of drones against civilians and vehicles, and deepening housing insecurity compounded existing vulnerabilities in Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson and Sumy Oblasts.

According to OHCHR, at least 437 civilians were killed and 2,610 injured across Ukraine in July 2026. This was a 30% increase compared with June and the highest number of civilians killed since May 2022. DRC's household survey[1] across all monitored areas showed that conflict remains the overwhelming driver of displacement, with 95% of respondents citing shelling and attacks on civilians as reasons for leaving. Explosive ordnance was identified as a barrier to freedom of movement by 26% of respondents, and 39% reported barriers to obtaining documents, most often because of lengthy administrative procedures and their cost.

Three cross-cutting trends shaped the quarter. First, displacement is no longer delivering lasting safety: evacuations expanded, but many people could not leave safely, while attacks on host communities and unaffordable rents drove repeated displacement and returns to unsafe areas. Second, state services are withdrawing from frontline areas, as the suspension of administrative and compensation services in Donetsk Oblast left residents travelling long distances to exercise their rights. Third, housing insecurity has become a driver of protection risks, linked to discrimination, gender-based violence (GBV), family separation and returns to unsafe areas.

Across risks, older persons, persons with disabilities and people with reduced mobility were consistently identified as most affected, as they are least able to leave, reach shelter or secure accessible accommodation.

[1] https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Protection-of-Civilians-in-Armed-Conflict-July-2026

# Methodology

The analysis is guided by DRC's Analytical Framework, which incorporates the Global Protection Cluster's Protection Analytical Framework (PAF). Between 1 July and 30 September 2026, DRC protection teams combined household surveys with qualitative data collection in seven oblasts.

| Method | Coverage |
|---|---|
| **Household survey** | 244 households (538 individuals; 59% female; 50% conflict-affected non-displaced) |
| **Key-informant interviews (KIIs)** | 71 (55 female, 16 male): local authorities, community leaders, collective and transit-site staff, social workers, humanitarian workers and veterans |
| **Focus-group discussions (FGDs)** | 73, reaching 431 participants (332 female, 99 male) |
| **Locations** | Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson and Sumy Oblasts |

The report also draws on secondary information from the Protection Cluster, oblast military administrations, OHCHR and INSO.

**Limitations.** Convenience, non-probability sampling was used. Qualitative data reflect community perceptions and reported experiences and are not statistically representative. Findings may be affected by perception bias and by differing awareness of protection terminology among respondents.

# Protection Risks at a Glance

All nine protection risks remained present across monitored areas, and four increased in at least one oblast compared with April–June 2026.

| Protection risk | Most affected areas according to protection monitoring | Headline finding |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Freedom of movement and forced displacement** | Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson | Evacuations expanded, but many people could not leave safely, and repeated displacement is becoming more common. |
| **2. Attacks on civilians and civilian objects** | Donetsk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia | Drones are extending the threat to roads, vehicles, evacuation points and humanitarian operations. |
| **3. Mines and other explosive ordnance** | Kherson, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv | Remote mining and ordnance left after attacks are adding new hazards to residual contamination. |
| **4. Child and forced family separation** | Donetsk, Kherson, Sumy | Families are separating in stages, and older persons are increasingly left behind. |
| **5. Discrimination and denial of resources** | Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Sumy, Mykolaiv, Kherson | Exclusion is concentrated in the rental market and in stigma towards IDPs based on their place of origin. |
| **6. Disinformation and denial of access to information** | Donetsk, Kharkiv, Sumy, Kherson | No systematic disinformation was recorded, but outages cut frontline areas off from warnings and information. |
| **7. Gender-based violence** | All areas | Housing and economic insecurity prevent women from leaving abusive situations. |
| **8. Legal identity, remedies and justice** | Donetsk, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson | State institutions withdrew from frontline areas, and compensation payments were suspended in parts of Donetsk Oblast. |
| **9. Forced eviction and insecure tenure** | Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Kherson | Verbal tenancies leave displaced households exposed to rent increases and short-notice requests to vacate. |

# Key Findings by Protection Risk

## 1. Freedom of Movement and Forced Displacement

Restrictions on freedom of movement remained high across all areas and increased in Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts. Across monitored areas, 95% of surveyed respondents cited shelling and attacks on civilians as reasons for leaving. Around 18,000 residents, including 1,317 children, left Donetsk Oblast in September alone, yet 56% of surveyed[2] respondents there intended to remain in their homes and 79% reported barriers to freedom of movement, an increase of 46% compared with April–June.

Mandatory evacuation expanded across the eastern and southern frontline, but this did not translate into a corresponding ability to leave safely. Rents of UAH 10,000–15,000 per month in safer regions compared with pensions of UAH 3,000–4,000 kept many households in high-risk areas. In Kherson Oblast, people displaced from Dariivska Hromada reported leaving on their own by tractor and motorcycle under the threat of drone attacks.

Displacement is also failing to provide lasting safety. Around 50% of evacuees arriving at Voloske Transit Centre had experienced repeated displacement, which suggests that it is becoming more common among newly evacuated people, although this figure is not directly comparable with household survey data. In Kharkiv and Sumy Oblasts, FGD participants reported that unaffordable rents and evictions are driving returns to unsafe areas.

[2] https://dn.gov.ua/news/ne-zvolikaite-z-evakuatsiieiu-tse-zberezhe-vashe-zhyttia

## 2. Attacks on Civilians and Civilian Objects

Attacks on civilians remained very high and increased in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts. The most significant change was the expanding use of FPV and other drones against roads, vehicles, evacuation points and humanitarian operations, which extended the threat into transport routes and host communities.[2]

Attacks also generated cascading effects beyond physical damage. In Novodonetske, Donetsk Oblast, residents were without electricity for 16–18 days, the hospital is not operating and there is no public transport. In the Mykhailivka starostynskyi district of Donetsk Oblast, police and firefighters are no longer able to respond to calls due to insecurity, and in Mykhailivka village, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, no designated bomb shelters were identified. Older persons and people with reduced mobility, who make up a growing share of those remaining in frontline settlements, are least able to reach shelter.



## 3. Mines and Other Explosive Ordnance

The risk posed by mines and other explosive ordnance remained high, with no evidence of a meaningful reduction, and 26% of surveyed respondents across monitored areas identified explosive ordnance as a barrier to freedom of movement. Contamination combined longstanding hazards with new ones: remote mining was recorded as a risk along access routes to Kherson city, and authorities in Donetsk Oblast warned that unexploded ordnance may remain on roads, in yards and in damaged buildings after attacks.

The scale of residual contamination is significant, with 563 explosive items identified on the right bank of Kherson Oblast between 3 and 9 September alone[3]. In Kharkiv Oblast, residents reported that they continue to avoid forest belts and plantations even where nearby agricultural land has been cleared, which shows that clearance alone does not restore confidence in land that was previously contaminated.

[3] https://khoda.gov.ua/news/rozminuvannia-khersonshchyny-03092026-09092026



## 4. Child and Forced Family Separation

The separation of children from their caregivers remained rare. Instead, the risk manifested mainly through the geographical separation of adult family members, older relatives remaining behind, and growing pressure on families unable to relocate or live together. The risk increased in Donetsk Oblast, where July saw an annual high of 21,499 evacuees, around 45% of whom had limited mobility. FGD and KII participants reported that women and children typically leave first, while men and older relatives remain because of work, fear of mobilisation or the need to protect property.

In Zaporizhzhia Oblast, it was reported that shortages of accommodation for large and multigenerational households create pressure on families to separate after evacuation, although no resulting separation was confirmed. In Sumy Oblast, eligibility rules for collective centres under Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 728 threaten to separate families: under the resolution, working-age IDPs in collective centres who are unemployed and not registered with an employment centre may lose their right to reside there, a requirement that is particularly difficult to meet in rural communities with limited employment opportunities.

## 5. Discrimination and Denial of Resources

Monitoring found no systematic or intentional discrimination in access to assistance or public services. Instead, exclusion arose mainly from structural barriers, eligibility criteria and insecurity. Stigma linked to place of origin was reported, including prejudice towards IDPs from Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in Mykolaiv Oblast, while displaced Kherson residents reported returning home after facing hostility in Vinnytsia Oblast.

FGD and KII participants reported that some landlords refused IDPs, families with persons with disabilities or young children, large households and households with pets. Exclusion in the private rental market was most frequently linked to household characteristics and[3] care needs rather than financial capacity alone. These practices interact with high rents (see section 9) and with landlords' reported preference for tenants perceived as having greater purchasing power, including military personnel. In Sumy Oblast, participants also reported that sellers offer substantial discounts for cash, leaving holders of state housing certificates at a disadvantage in the housing market.

Social cohesion nevertheless remained an important protective factor: in Donetsk Oblast, only 1% of surveyed respondents reported poor intercommunity relations, and in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, all respondents described these relations as acceptable, good or very good.

## 6. Disinformation and Denial of Access to Information

No systematic disinformation or deliberate denial of information was recorded during the quarter, but practical barriers to information remained significant. In frontline communities, it was reported that disrupted electricity and mobile networks increasingly cut people off from life-saving security and evacuation information. Among displaced populations, the main gaps concerned housing options, entitlements and remedies, as households attempted to navigate unfamiliar service systems after relocation.

In Donetsk Oblast, power outages disrupted mobile coverage and, in some areas, the air raid warning system, while Novodonetske, Nekremenne and Ocheretyne experienced prolonged or complete loss of mobile coverage. It was reported that older persons and people without digital skills or devices were excluded from information shared through messaging apps and community chats. Newly displaced people were identified as a group that also lacked information on housing, entitlements and where to seek help.



## 7. Gender-Based Violence

No marked increase in disclosed incidents was identified, but GBV remains substantially underreported because of stigma, fear of retaliation, economic dependency and limited access to specialised services. Housing insecurity emerged as both a driver of risk and a vulnerability factor, as women described being unable to leave abusive partners because they had nowhere else to live.

Economic coercion was also reported, including pressure on women to give up child support in exchange for property rights. Safety in public spaces remained a concern. In Novopokrovka, Kharkiv Oblast, women and girls reported feeling unsafe moving alone in the evening[3], with some citing the large number of newly arrived residents and military personnel as additional factors. In Donetsk Oblast, the presence of military personnel and ongoing population movements were noted as potential concerns, although no related incidents were confirmed. Fear of retaliation and low confidence in police deter survivors from seeking help, while specialised services remain limited in rural and frontline areas.

## 8. Legal Identity, Remedies and Justice

Barriers to legal identity and remedies remained widespread and intensified in Donetsk Oblast as state institutions withdrew from frontline areas due to insecurity. Across monitored areas, 39% of surveyed respondents reported barriers to obtaining documents, most often because of lengthy administrative procedures, followed by their cost. Shelling-related loss of passports, educational records and other personal documents is compounded by destroyed or inaccessible archives and name discrepancies requiring additional proof of identity.

In Donetsk Oblast, migration services were suspended in Kramatorsk, Sloviansk and Oleksandrivka from 14 September, the CNAP reception and the social protection department in Kramatorsk closed, and housing compensation payments were suspended from 21 August. Elsewhere, missing ownership documents, informal property transactions and co-owners living in occupied areas or abroad blocked access to compensation and housing certificates.

The absence of ownership documentation continued to prevent households from proving property rights and accessing remedies. In Kharkiv Oblast, HLP concerns centred on lost ownership documents, unresolved inheritance, property registration and unauthorised extensions. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, the DRC legal aid team observed that where title documents had been lost or destroyed and records were missing from Technical Inventory Bureau (BTI) databases and archives, individuals often had to resort to court proceedings. This added costs and delays amid lengthy judicial procedures and court backlogs.
Hostilities increase demand for documentation, compensation and legal assistance while restricting the work of institutions, commissions and notaries. Pre-existing informal practices, such as unregistered property transactions and incomplete inheritance, become major obstacles once formal proof of rights is required. An additional barrier is the inconsistency in court practice in cases involving the registration of property rights. This can lead to lengthy court proceedings and, in some cases, requires individuals to reapply to the court under a different procedure.

### 9. Forced Eviction and Insecure Tenure

Monitoring did not establish systematic unlawful forced eviction, but insecure tenure is widespread among displaced households. Of those renting accommodation, 78% of surveyed households lived in accommodation based on a verbal agreement with the owner. Displaced tenants reported sudden rent increases and short-notice requests to vacate, although accounts varied and the legal grounds were not verified.

In all areas assessed (apart from Donetsk Oblast),reporting on this risk, FGD and KII participants shared examples of IDPs who repaired rented or abandoned properties at their own expense and then faced rent demands, rent increases or requests to leave. In Kherson Oblast, tripartite agreements between owners, tenants and humanitarian organisations offer a model for protecting displaced tenants against sudden eviction.

## Recommendations

### Donors and Foreign Diplomatic Missions

- Provide flexible, multi-year funding for integrated protection programming in frontline and receiving areas, including case management, legal aid, GBV, child protection, MHPSS and HLP support, with the flexibility to shift to mobile, remote and individual modalities as security deteriorates.
- Fund accessible evacuation and post-arrival support, including transport for people with reduced mobility, accommodation suitable for large and multigenerational households, and orientation on services, shelters and entitlements for newly displaced people.
- Invest in tenure security and affordable housing, including rental support that is accessible to households with informal tenancies, HLP legal aid for complex compensation and co-ownership cases, and long-term social and affordable housing options.

### Protection Actors (Civil Society, UN Agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations)

- Use tripartite agreements between property owners, tenants and implementing organisations in all shelter repair interventions, and provide legal counselling on tenancy rights, rental agreements and eviction.
- Expand mobile legal aid, case management and individual psychosocial support in areas where state institutions have relocated or group activities are unsafe, and strengthen child protection case management at transit centres and in receiving communities.
- Strengthen survivor-centred GBV services linked to housing and livelihoods support, including confidential referral pathways, information on legal aid and hotlines, and recurring safe-space activities for women and adolescent girls.

- Continue monitoring eviction practices, exploitation risks in the informal rental market, community concerns about recontamination of previously cleared areas and conflict-related disinformation.



## National and Local Authorities

- Ensure continuity of documentation, social protection and compensation services for residents of areas where offices have been suspended, through mobile services, remote procedures and clear public information on relocated service points.
- Update official territorial classifications promptly to reflect changing security conditions, so that people leaving deteriorating areas can register as IDPs and access assistance without delay.
- Apply mandatory evacuation and collective accommodation rules, including Cabinet of Ministers Resolutions No. 953 and No. 728, with individual assessment and household-level safeguards to prevent avoidable family separation and loss of accommodation without alternatives.
- Promote the formalisation of rental agreements, extend rental assistance to tenants with verbal agreements, resolve co-ownership barriers to the use of housing certificates, and ensure damage assessment commissions are adequately staffed.

This report was created by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, Ministry or DRC. The European Union, Ministry or DRC does not bear responsibility for them.

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