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DRC's legal analysis of veterans' status, social support and benefits



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Introduction

The war in Ukraine has led to a sharp increase in the number of veterans and affected families, including many living with long-term injuries, disabilities, or health issues. While Ukraine maintains a comprehensive social protection system—covering medical care, housing, financial assistance, education, and transport—the system is complex, fragmented, and often difficult to navigate. Overlapping categories, delayed legislative changes, and inconsistent implementation create access barriers. Veterans and their families face challenges in proving their status or securing timely benefits due to budget constraints. Humanitarian actors play a complementary role by facilitating access to services, providing legal and psychosocial support, and filling gaps in protection for discharged service members, prisoners of war, families of the missing, and volunteers whose legal status may remain uncertain.

This document aims to consolidate dispersed laws and policies on veterans' statuses into a structured and accessible resource. By mapping entitlements, identifying how they are applied in practice, and noting areas where access is hindered, the study provides a foundation for humanitarian actors, civil society, and state partners to use in future advocacy, planning, and programme design. The purpose is not to offer immediate solutions, but to ensure that accurate, systematised information is available as a common resource that supports better coordination, evidence-driven dialogue, and informed advocacy on veterans' rights and protections.

The main legislative act that establishes the categories and statuses of war veterans is the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection" of 22.10.1993 No. 3551-XII. This law covers wars and conflicts of all periods in which citizens of modern Ukraine participated, including World War II, international conflicts, modern wars, as well as some disasters, such as Chernobyl. According to the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS), as of January 2025 there were more than 1.6 million persons, including all veterans statuses and equated to them.

As a result of the development of the modern legislative system and social guidelines, both persons who directly participated in hostilities and persons who were involved in their support (without active participation in hostilities), as well as civilians affected by wars, are generally referred to as "Veterans".

Due to the wide variety of statuses and categories within them, advocacy in this area is extremely difficult. The number of state bodies involved in the system, as well as the critical lack of awareness of those in charge, including the humanitarian sector, leads to significant stagnation in changes to national policies. The situation is further complicated by the fact that all these statuses and categories are interconnected: the multiplicity of definitions and overlapping legal provisions means that any changes aimed at one category inevitably require adjustments to the provisions governing the others to avoid legal conflicts and maintain the integrity of the regulatory framework. The situation is further complicated by the interconnected nature of these statuses and categories. Given that legal definitions and provisions overlap, any change affecting one category inevitably requires corresponding adjustments to others to prevent contradictions and preserve the coherence of the overall framework.

This dynamic is evident in the evolution of legislation on persons with disabilities as a result of war. The status, originally introduced in 1993 for victims of past wars and conflicts, became increasingly relevant with the start of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and Joint Forces Operation (JFO) and later the full-scale invasion, which led to a sharp rise of civilians killed/injured. It is also important to understand that Ukraine is making considerable efforts to support these categories of people. The social protection system is very developed and covers most areas of life in which people may need assistance. In this context, the analysis aims to clearly disclose the level of protection guaranteed by the state to ex-combatants and their families to assess their vulnerability in terms of humanitarian protection.

¹ According to the material, presented by NISS on 17 April 2025, https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2025-04/veterani-2025-prezentaciya_nisd.pdf

Key takeaways

- **Status ≠ vulnerability.** Veteran or family status alone should not be used as an eligibility proxy for humanitarian aid; assistance to active combatants is outside a typical humanitarian mandate. Prioritise needs-based targeting and support for discharged personnel and families.
- **Systems exist but are complex.** Ukraine maintains broad social-protection systems—such as veteran registry, e-certificate, veteran hubs—but these are often difficult to navigate.
- **Rapid status pathways still may face operational gaps.** Participants in Hostilities (active combatants) and some other statuses may be granted automatically via the Unified Register (data due within 5 days by a unit official), but fallback to commissions and data quality issues still occur.
- **Legislative timing matters.** Some essential protections (e.g., civilians as “persons with war-related disability”) rolled out in stages, creating evidence and access gaps; budgets can temporarily suspend certain benefits (e.g., sanatorium care).

Scope of the analysis

This document considers only modern international armed conflicts since 2014, excluding events from previous wars and the Revolution of Dignity. This approach is driven by the need to focus on the most pressing issues of modern veterans who have acquired the status as a result of the current hostilities and occupation. At the same time, there is no need to analyse all possible statuses of veterans within one sole research, as this would reduce the depth and applied value of the findings. The categories of veterans related to past wars and other historical events will be considered separately in targeted materials dedicated to the respective periods.

Veterans covered by this analysis include:

1. *Persons who have rendered special services to the Motherland*
2. *Participants in hostilities and volunteers-participants in hostilities*
3. *Participants of the war*

In matters of social protection, persons with war-related disabilities from among military personnel are equated with veterans. These persons are further classified into specific categories depending on the origin and circumstances of their injuries. The following categories will be considered in this study:

1. *Service members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine*
2. *Service members of other military formations*
3. *Participants of the ATO/JFO*

The following related categories also deserve special attention and will be considered in the context of this analysis:

1. *Deceased Defenders of Ukraine and their families*
2. *Missing persons under special circumstances and their family members*
3. *Prisoners of war and illegally detained persons and members of their families*

Defining combatants, non-combatants and civilians

To fully understand the range of military and veteran statuses under Ukrainian law, it is useful to first view them through the lens of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). IHL distinguishes two categories of persons within armed forces in both international and non-international conflicts: combatants and non-combatants. While the Geneva Conventions do not provide explicit definitions, customary IHL—now binding through established practice—offers widely accepted interpretations of these categories.

Combatants

Definition: A person who is authorised to participate directly in hostilities

Legal Basis: Under Common Article 3 (applicable to non-international armed conflicts) and Additional Protocol I (applicable to international armed conflicts), combatants are generally members of the armed forces or organised armed groups fulfilling certain criteria: (a) Members of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict, including organised armed groups. (b) Members of militias or volunteer corps forming part of such armed forces. (c) Members of other militias and members of other volunteer corps, including those of organised resistance movements, provided they fulfil certain conditions. Medics and Clerics in the armed forces are generally NOT considered to be combatants, but rather non-combatants.

Non-Combatants

Definition: A person who is not authorised to participate directly in hostilities.

Legal Basis: Covered primarily under the Geneva Conventions I and IV, which protect those who are not actively participating in hostilities. This includes civilians, armed forces medics, clerics and persons hors de combat (e.g., wounded, sick, or surrendering persons).

All other persons should therefore be treated as civilians.

Ukraine implemented these provisions into domestic legislation, namely the Instruction on the Procedure

for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, also contains provisions with a fairly clear definition of these categories.

Combatants—persons who may take direct part in hostilities and are members of the armed forces of the parties. The term "combatant" is used in armed conflict and applies to:

1. Members of militias and voluntary groups, if they meet the following conditions
 - they are under the command of a person responsible for their subordinates;
 - have a fixed distinctive emblem that can be recognised at a distance;
 - openly carry weapons;
 - conduct combat operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war.
2. Civilians who voluntarily took up arms to resist opposing forces—without the time to formally organise—may be considered lawful combatants if they openly carry weapons and follow the laws and customs of war. Non-combatants, such as medics, clerics, quartermasters, military correspondents, and lawyers, must not be targeted, as although they are part of the armed forces, they are not engaging in combat. IHL, all others are considered civilians and must be protected as such.

Humanitarian support to veterans

Aside from humanitarian organisations with a specific mandate—such as International Committee of the Red Cross or Médecins Sans Frontières, most organisations do not assist active combatants, according to the principle of neutrality. Instead, they may offer support to former combatants who have been legally discharged from military service, as well as to their family members.

It is important to note that being an active or former combatant, a relative of a combatant, or having a connection to missing or deceased service members does not automatically constitute a vulnerability criterion warranting humanitarian assistance².

² Link to source: https://globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/guidance_on_protection_assistance_to_former_combatants_eng.pdf

Discharge from military service³

For the purposes of providing humanitarian assistance to non-combatants, it is important to distinguish between two different mechanisms of being demobilised from the Ukrainian Armed Forces:

1. persons who have been *excluded* from the military registration OR
2. persons who have been *temporarily removed*

Exclusion

Upon exclusion, a person is relieved of all obligations related to military registration. Accordingly, such a person is not obliged to undergo a military medical commission (MMC) and update their credentials. **Such a person cannot be re-registered for military registration, cannot be mobilised, cannot be sent summons and is allowed to cross the state border.**

Persons subject to exclusion from the military registration are those who:

- Have been enlisted for military service
- Have been declared unfit for military service
- Reached the age limit for being in the reserve
- Terminated the citizenship of Ukraine
- Died or were declared missing or dead

Removal

Removed (deregistered) from the military register is a temporary status that does not exempt a person from military duties indefinitely and may be granted as a result of:

- Moving to another location within Ukraine for permanent residence
- Moving outside Ukraine for a period of more than three months
- Undergoing training in a military speciality

- Serving a sentence in appropriate institutions

At the same time, when moving or if the grounds for deregistration disappear, a person must re-register with the conscription centre (at the new place of residence in case of relocation).

Grounds for discharge from military service⁴

Since the full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, discharge procedures have been significantly restricted under martial law and mobilisation. Voluntary dismissal is largely prohibited, with discharge permitted only on specific legal grounds.

Age-related discharge

- The statutory retirement age is 60.
- Service members reaching this age may remain in service voluntarily.
- Those discharged on age grounds are entitled to a pension if they have either:
 - 25 years of total service, or
 - 25 years of insurance period (for those over 45), including at least 12.5 years of military or equivalent service.

Regardless of the circumstances, all persons discharged from military service (except for persons discharged for misconduct) are entitled to:

- Payment of a one-off severance payment, depending on the grounds for dismissal (reviewed in more detail below)
- Payment of compensation for unused vacation days and for unused tangible personal property
- Receipt of unreceived assistance for solving social and domestic issues
- Official proof of discharge, can include:
 - Extract of a Ministry of Defence order, and

³ In accordance with the Law of Ukraine 'On military duty and military service' of 25.03.1992 №2232-XII

⁴ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №413 of 12.06.2013, which approved the Regulations on approval of the list of family circumstances and other valid reasons that may be grounds for dismissal of citizens from service as enlisted personnel and officers

- A discharge stamp in the military ID. (*Either may serve as proof, though both together are more reliable for verification.*)

Both of the above-mentioned may be considered as proof of discharge separately by humanitarian actors; however, ensuring the presence of both types of evidence is a more reliable way to establish the fact of formal discharge from military service.

Below, we distinguish between the relevant grounds for military discharge:

1. *Medical grounds for dismissal*

The following are grounds for medical discharge:

- Determined by a Military Medical Commission (MMC) as either:
 - Permanently unfit, or
 - Temporarily unfit (subject to re-examination within 6–12 months).

- Disability also qualifies if the service member does not wish to continue serving.

• Once discharged:

- The person is removed from the military register.
- They cannot be re-mobilised.
- They fall under the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, which provides benefits based on injury/illness severity.

• The process requires:

- A service report submitted to the commander.
- Formalisation through a Ministry of Defence order, confirmed by an official extract.

During treatment (prior to discharge order):

Service members remain entitled to military support until their discharge is formally confirmed, including the following types of support:

Medical support	Service members who have been injured are entitled to free medical treatment, provision of medicines and medical devices, etc.
Retention of all benefits and salary	In accordance with the last position, rank, etc. for the period of treatment
One-time payment in case of injury	In the amount of UAH 100,000, which is paid during inpatient treatment or leave for treatment after a serious injury

In addition, service member who were discharged as a result of an injury (trauma, contusion, mutilation) sus-

tained in combat operations are provided with the following social guarantees and benefits:

A one-time lump sum payment upon discharge as a result of injury (also for those with more than 10 years of service, officers, women with children under the age of 18, and those released from captivity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In case of discharge for health reasons, service member, except for conscripts, are paid a one-time financial allowance in the amount of 50% of their monthly salary for each full calendar year of service • For mobilised service member, this is a one-time financial assistance in the amount of 4% of the monthly salary for each month of service, but not less than 25% of the yearly salary
One-time allowance for injuries that resulted in disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If incapacity is assessed in percentage terms (without formal disability status), the benefit is calculated as a percentage of 70 times the subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons, capped at UAH 211,960. <p>Example: As of 1 January 2025, the subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons is UAH 3,028. For 30% incapacity, the calculation is: $0.3 \times 70 \times 3,028 = \text{UAH } 63,588$.</p>

<p>One-time benefit for injuries that resulted in disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a service member is assigned a disability due to an injury sustained in the line of duty, they are entitled to a one-time financial allowance. The amount depends on the disability group: <p>Combat-related disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group I—400 × subsistence minimum = UAH 1,211,200 Group II—300 × subsistence minimum = UAH 908,400 Group III—250 × subsistence minimum = UAH 757,000 <p>Service-related disability (not combat):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group I—120 × subsistence minimum = UAH 363,360 Group II—90 × subsistence minimum = UAH 272,520 Group III—70 × subsistence minimum = UAH 211,960
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2. Dismissal for personal and family reasons

Such grounds for dismissal include documented:

- Need for constant care for sick family members who are persons with disabilities of group I or II
- Raising a child with a disability (including children with disabilities and persons with disabilities from childhood)
- Independent upbringing of a child under 18 years of age,
- Having three or more children under the age of 18
- Adoption of an orphan
- Caring for a person declared incapacitated by court or other persons in need of constant care, etc.
- Pregnancy or care of a child under three or under six years of age
- Caring for a child if both parents are serving
- Death or disappearance of a close relative⁵ during combat operations, or his/her posthumous awarding of the title of Hero of Ukraine

To request discharge on family grounds, service members must submit relevant documentation (e.g., medical records, birth certificates, court decisions) within their application. Official confirmation is provided via an extract from a Ministry of Defence order.

Persons discharged for family reasons receive a temporary deferral from mobilisation for the duration of those circumstances (e.g., until the eldest child in a large family turns 18) but remain on the military register. During this period, they are considered civilians and fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Policy with access to the social protection system.

Exceptions apply to service members with additional vulnerabilities, special circumstances, or over 10 years of service (e.g. those who began service in the ATO in 2014). In such cases, discharge on family grounds also entitles them to a one-off payment equivalent to dismissal on medical grounds.

3. Dismissal due to demobilisation

Demobilisation by presidential decree is a legal form of discharge for a service member mobilised during wartime. It can only take place after the end of the “special period” by order of the President. In practice, this procedure has never been applied, since martial law is still in effect and no general demobilisation has been announced. However, the mechanism exists and could be used once martial law ends and the President issues the relevant decision.

4. Dismissal due to committing official offenses

Dismissal from military service may result from official misconduct or incompetence, including the commission of a crime. These cases are regulated by the Disciplinary Statute and decided by the command. Grounds include systematic failure to fulfil contractual obligations, refusal to obey orders, and other disciplinary violations.

⁵ Husband, wife, son, daughter, father, mother or sibling (full/half) in accordance with the Law of Ukraine ‘On military duty and military service’ of 25.03.1992 №2232-XII

In addition to dismissal, penalties may include:

- Remark, reprimand, or strict reprimand
- Warning of incomplete service compliance
- Reduction in position or rank

Service member dismissed for incompetence are:

- Removed from the military register (including loss of status as liable for military service)
- Stripped of access to special benefits, pensions, or other guarantees provided to military personnel

A specific form of misconduct is the **unauthorised abandonment of a unit (UAU)**, which occurs when a service member leaves their place of service without permission, or fails to return from leave or assignment. UAU carries disciplinary or criminal liability under the Criminal Code of Ukraine, depending on the duration and circumstances. Confirmation of dismissal in such cases is provided either through a Ministry of Defence order or, in severe cases, a court ruling.

Under current legislation, a service member may be released from liability for a first instance of UAU if they voluntarily return. To do so, they must apply to their commander, police, or military law enforce-

ment authorities. An investigation will then determine whether they may continue service.

The framework highlights the serious consequences of dismissal for misconduct, which extend beyond loss of employment to the removal of legal status and benefits. While strict disciplinary measures are necessary to maintain military order, the provisions allowing first-time offenders of unauthorised abandonment to voluntarily return without liability create an important balance between discipline and reintegration. For humanitarian actors, these rules are significant as they directly affect the rights, entitlements, and long-term well-being of discharged service persons, including their access to social protection and reintegration support.

5. Dismissal upon return of prisoners of war (PoW)

Service members returning from captivity may choose to be discharged from military service. Those released from captivity and discharged on this basis are exempt from future mobilisation, unless they voluntarily agree to return. If a released former PoW decides to continue service, they are entitled to a 90-day leave of absence with full pay, taken as a single period. They may only be recalled from this leave with their written consent. (Other rights and benefits for this category are addressed below). To be discharged, the service member must submit a report to the commander, attaching a certificate of captivity. As with other categories, an extract from the Ministry of Defence order serves as confirmation.



The legal provisions recognise the unique vulnerability of service members returning from captivity by granting them special discharge rights and protections against forced remobilisation. For those who choose to remain in service, the guarantee of extended paid leave is an important safeguard for recovery and reintegration. For humanitarian actors, these rules highlight the need for tailored psychosocial, legal, and reintegration support to address the complex needs of former PoW.

Members of veterans' families ⁶

According to the general definition ⁷, family members of service member include persons who live with them, share a common lifestyle and have mutual rights and responsibilities. This includes spouses (or partners in

court-recognised cohabitation), parents with disabilities, minor children or children with lifelong disabilities, legal dependents, and persons under their care or guardianship.

The type of support provided to family members varies based on the service member's status. Families of active-duty or discharged combatants, missing or deceased defenders of Ukraine, as well as family members of PoWs, enjoy different levels of social protection.

Social support and benefits ⁸

Upon the fact of military service, the following social support is provided to the family members:

<p>Medical care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where there are no state or municipal healthcare facilities available at the place of residence of family members, they are entitled to receive medical treatment in military medical institutions. • Additionally, service members and their families have the right to sanatorium treatment and recreational services once a year, with access to reduced-cost vouchers.
<p>Housing conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of housing ⁹ for permanent residence for service members and their families who have completed at least 20 years of military service • Provision of monetary compensation for housing that was not received (once for the entire period of service) • The right to participate in housing improvement programmes for IDPs who previously served in military service and took direct part in combat operations, have III disability group or have hostilities participant status • 50% ¹⁰ discount on housing rent and utility bills
<p>Education (for children of service members)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of places in general and pre-school educational institutions, children's health camps and military lyciums • Enrolment or transfer to education at the expense of the budget without competition for family members of certain categories of service members • Free or privileged accommodation in dormitories

⁶ In accordance with the Law of Ukraine 'On social and legal protection of military personnel and their families' of 20.12.1991 №2011-XII

⁷ In accordance with the article 3 of the Family Code of Ukraine

⁸ In accordance with the Law of Ukraine 'On social and legal protection of military personnel and their families' of 20.12.1991 №2011-XII

⁹ Service members and their family members living with them who do not have housing at their place of service are provided with service housing. Service housing is provided for the duration military service.

¹⁰ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №280 of 18.04.2018, which approved the Regulations on the matter of providing housing for internally displaced persons who defended the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine



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<p>Employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferential rights in employment, including priority in hiring, the right to retain a position in cases of redundancy, and the opportunity to be nominated for professional training or retraining, with the guarantee of receiving an average salary during the training period. • Entitlement to a monthly allowance in the event of relocation to another place of residence or duty station. • Full (100%) payment of sick leave for the spouses of servicemen, regardless of the length of their employment history. • Inclusion of periods spent residing with a spouse in locations where employment in one's profession was not possible, in the calculation of the insurance record of work—up to a maximum of 10 years in total.
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It is also important to note that service members residing in rented accommodation are entitled to compensation for housing costs. The amounts are as follows:

- **Kyiv:** UAH 4,560
- **Regional centres:** UAH 3,420
- **Other settlements:** UAH 2,280

War veterans ¹¹

NOTE: In this section, the statuses are aligned in descending order of the number of benefits granted, from the largest to the smallest. This also means that persons with fewer benefits generally have the same types of support as those with more extensive support, but with some exceptions. Some types of assistance may not be provided, and other types of assistance may be provided in a smaller amount.

Since 2023, Ukraine has introduced an **electronic veteran's certificate (e-certificate)**, available through the *Diiia* mobile application. The e-certificate serves as a digital equivalent of the paper document and includes a QR code to verify status online. It is available to combatants, war veterans, persons with war-related disabili-

ties, participants of the Revolution of Dignity, as well as family members of deceased veterans and defenders of Ukraine.

The **Unified State Register of War Veterans**, managed by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, collects and stores information on these categories, including their status and the social support they receive.

Ukraine has also established a network of **veteran hubs**, operating as one-stop shops to provide comprehensive support to veterans and their families. These hubs offer multidisciplinary services, including psychological, legal, and medical assistance, as well as support for employment and social reintegration.



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¹¹ In accordance with the Law of Ukraine 'On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection' of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

Social support and benefits

The introduction of the e-certificate, the centralised veterans' register, and the creation of veteran hubs represent important steps in modernising and streamlining state support for veterans and their families. By reducing bureaucratic barriers and consolidating services, these mechanisms can improve access to benefits and ensure more efficient delivery of assistance.

Below is a comparative table of benefits and types of support provided to persons with the statuses of combatant, war veteran and persons with special services to the Motherland. A separate analysis of the respective statuses and the differentiation between the categories of persons who fall under their criteria is provided after the comparative table:

Type of support	Persons with special services to the Motherland	Participants in hostilities	War participants
Medical support and services ¹²:			
1) Free provision of medicines and medical devices ¹³	✓	✓	✓
2) Free dental prosthetics	✓	✓	✓
3) Sanatorium treatment (no budgeting)	✓	✓	✓
4) Service in military medical institutions	✓	✓	✓
5) Annual medical examination and checks	✓	✓	✓
6) The right to priority service in medical institutions and pharmacies	✓	✓	✓
7) Free rehabilitation and adaptation	✓	✓	✓
8) Free psychological support and counselling	✓	✓	
Financial support and benefits:			
1) Increased pension or social assistance (the amount may vary for war veterans, depending on the availability of state awards or medals)	✓	25% of the SM (590 UAH)	15% (UAH 354) or 10% of the SM (UAH 236)
2) Annual financial assistance to the Independence Day ¹⁴	✓	✓	✓
3) Supplement to pension or lifetime allowance in the amount of 70% of the subsistence minimum (for persons who have lost their ability to work)	✓		
4) Monthly compensation for fuel costs—50 litres of high-octane petrol	✓		
5) One-time payment in case of death—5 subsistence minimums for each family member (spouse, children under 18)	✓		
6) Free provision of a car (for medical reasons), with the right to replace it every 10 years	✓		
7) Compensation for maintenance or transport services of the provided car	✓		

¹² May be accessed through both—public and private healthcare facilities

¹³ Under Article 26 of the Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” and Cabinet of Ministers Decree №321 of 05.04.2012, self-purchased medical and assistive devices are reimbursed within the maximum state-approved prices published by the Ministry of Social Policy.

¹⁴ Persons with special services to the Motherland—3,100 UAH, Participants in hostilities—1000 UAH, War participants—450 UAH in accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №486 of 29.04.2025, which approved the Regulations on establishing the amount of a one-time cash payment for Ukraine's Independence Day for 2025

Housing conditions:			
1) Discount on housing costs		75%	50%
2) Discount on utility bills		75%	50%
3) Discount on fuel payments		75%	50%
4) Priority provision of housing (up to 2 years in case of injury)		✓	✓
5) Preferential allocation of land plots for construction and farming		✓	✓
6) Priority housing repairs	✓	✓	✓
7) Concessional loans for housing/repairs (repayment within 10 years after 5-year grace period) ¹⁵	✓	✓	✓
8) Priority improvement of living conditions with additional space (up to 20 sq. m)	✓		
9) Exemption from payment for registration of property rights during privatisation	✓		
10) Priority provision of building materials for construction and repair	✓		
11) Priority acquisition of shares at nominal value at the expense of property certificates, as well as the possibility of purchasing shares at their own expense for half the amount of the certificates (applied to certain awardees and their families)	✓		
Household and social services:			
1) Priority installation of telephones (20% basic, 50% additional work; subscription fee—50%) by both, state or private providers		✓	✓
2) Priority and free installation of a home telephone	✓		
3) Priority and free installation of burglar alarms in the home	✓		
4) Priority service by social care institutions	✓	✓	✓
5) Priority service by household, transport and utility companies	✓	✓	✓
6) Free travel in public transport of all types		✓	✓
7) Long-distance travel once every 2 years (free of charge) or once a year (with a 50% discount)		✓	
Employment and education:			
1) Payment of sick leave at 100% regardless of insurance period		✓	✓
2) Additional paid holiday (up to 2 weeks per year)		✓	
3) Additional unpaid leave (up to 2 weeks per year)			✓
4) Additional unpaid leave (up to 3 weeks)	✓		
5) State support for education (for children under 23)		✓	✓
6) Priority right to stay at work in case of redundancy	✓	✓	

¹⁵ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №980 of 27.11.2019, which approved the Regulations on procedure for using funds provided in the state budget for granting preferential long-term state loans to internally displaced persons, participants in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) and/or participants in the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) for the purchase of housing

7) Preferential right to employment in case of liquidation of the enterprise	✓	✓	
8) Non-competitive admission to vocational education institutions and advantages when applying to other institutions		✓	
9) Free or preferential education loans ¹⁶		✓	
10) Social scholarships and free dormitory accommodation		✓	
11) Free training and retraining for new professions (including in paid institutions)	✓		
Additional support after the death of a service member:			
1) Free burial with military honours	✓	✓	
2) Installation of a tombstone according to a special state standard (with the possibility of paying extra for another option)	✓		

Persons with special services to the homeland ¹⁷

The status of “**Person with Special Merits to the Motherland**” was introduced to honour individuals who performed exceptional acts of heroism during wars or hostilities and were awarded the highest state honours for their contribution to Ukraine’s defence. In most cases, this status is granted automatically once the award is conferred. It is equivalent to the *Hero of Ukraine* status in terms of social protection.

Categories of persons with special merits include:

- Individuals posthumously awarded the title *Hero of Ukraine* with the Order of the Golden Star for participation in the Revolution of Dignity
- Recipients of the *Order of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes*
- Persons who defended Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity since 2014 and were awarded the title *Hero of Ukraine* with the Order of the Golden Star

- Recipients of the *Order of Bohdan Khmelnytsky* (three degrees)
- Recipients of the *Order “For Courage”* (three degrees)
- Women awarded the *Order of Princess Olga* (three degrees)

Procedure for awarding:

The status is confirmed through a Presidential Order or other official act conferring the award. Upon receipt, the veteran is automatically registered as a person with special merits by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and authorised agencies, which issue a certificate based on award documents.

The certificate, inscribed “*A person with special services to the Motherland*”, includes the veteran’s personal details and reference to the award. Electronic certificates have also been introduced for this category.

¹⁶ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №673 of 29.08.2018, which approved the Regulations on procedure for preferential lending for obtaining vocational and technical, pre-higher and higher education

¹⁷ In accordance with the article 11 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection’ of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

Holders are entitled to the most extensive package of benefits available to veterans under Ukrainian law. This status represents the highest level of recognition for service to Ukraine and grants extensive rights and benefits, reflecting both symbolic and practical support to recipients and their families.

Social support and benefits¹⁸

Below is a list of social support and benefits provided to persons who have rendered special services to the Motherland:

<p>Medical care¹⁹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority free medical care in outpatient clinics for the person and family members (spouse, children under 18) • Priority free hospitalisation and treatment in in-patient facilities for the person and family members • Retention of the right to free medical care in a clinic after retirement • Priority free provision of medicines, medical devices and rehabilitation equipment²⁰ • Free manufacturing and repair of dentures (except for precious metals) • Free sanatorium and resort treatment (no budgeting)
<p>Financial support and cash payments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplement to pension or lifetime allowance in the amount of 70% of the subsistence minimum (for persons who have lost their ability to work) (UAH 1652) • Annual cash payment to the Independence Day • Monthly compensation for fuel costs—50 liters of high-octane petrol • One-time death benefit—5 subsistence minimums for able-bodied persons (UAH 15,140) for each family member (spouse, children under 18)
<p>Housing conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority improvement of housing conditions with additional space (up to 20 sq. m) • Exemption from payment for registration of property rights during privatisation • Free overhaul of owned housing • Possibility of obtaining a loan for construction or overhaul (with repayment within 10 years, starting from the 5th year)²¹ • Priority provision of building materials for construction and repair • Priority acquisition of shares at par value using property certificates, as well as the option to purchase shares at their own expense for half the amount of the certificates (applied to certain awardees and their families)

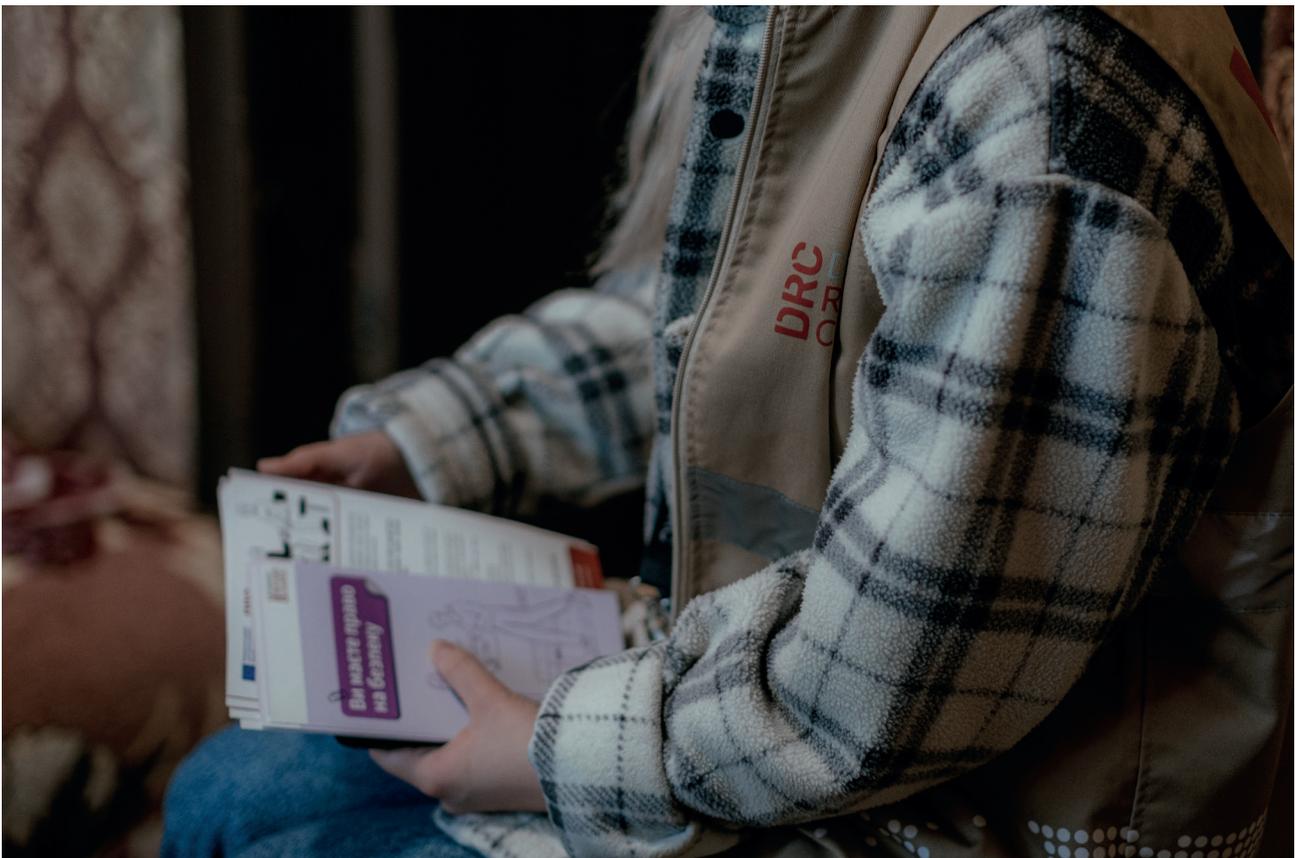
¹⁸ In accordance with the article 16 of the Law of Ukraine 'On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection' of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

¹⁹ May be accessed through both—public and private healthcare facilities

²⁰ Under Article 26 of the Law of Ukraine "On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine" and Cabinet of Ministers Decree №321 of 05.04.2012, self-purchased medical and assistive devices are reimbursed within the maximum state-approved prices published by the Ministry of Social Policy.

²¹ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №980 of 27.11.2019, which approved the Regulations on procedure for using funds provided in the state budget for granting preferential long-term state loans to internally displaced persons, participants in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) and/or participants in the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) for the purchase of housing

<p>Employment and education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferential right to stay at work in case of redundancy • Priority employment in case of liquidation of the enterprise • Free training and retraining for new professions (including in paid institutions) • Annual paid leave and additional unpaid leave (both up to 3 weeks)
<p>After death</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free burial with military honours • Installation of a tombstone according to the state standard (with the possibility of paying extra for another option)



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In the event of the death of a person recognised as having rendered special services to the Motherland, Ukrainian legislation provides a range of social guarantees and benefits to their family members.

From a humanitarian perspective, it is important to note whether the deceased was a combatant, as many of the highest state awards can be conferred during active service.

Participants in hostilities (PiH)²²

The status of **participant in hostilities (PiH)** initially applied only to veterans of past wars, including World War II and other armed conflicts. In 2015, following the events of 2014, legislative amendments significantly expanded this category to include military personnel and other individuals who took part in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) in eastern Ukraine. Since the full-scale invasion in 2022, the status has been further broadened to cover all defenders of Ukraine engaged in combat operations.

A participant in hostilities is defined as a person who has directly carried out combat missions in defence of Ukraine as part of military units or formations. In practical terms, this status is granted to military personnel and equivalent categories who were actively involved in hostilities. Recognition is formalised through the issuance of a standardised certificate, which entitles the holder to a range of benefits established by law.

According to the latest official data, accumulated by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs as of July 2025²³, this category includes almost 1.3 million participants in hostilities from past and modern warfare.

For current service members, the central condition for obtaining the status is official confirmation of direct participation in combat operations. Previously, eligibility often required either a minimum period of service in the ATO/JFO zone (typically 30 days) or involvement in a specific combat operation under an official order. However, under martial law, the duration of service is no longer a requirement; proof of participation in combat or combat missions, documented through extracts from combat orders, commanders' certificates, or departmental registers, is sufficient.

Accordingly, all military personnel and security sector staff who have taken part in hostilities are eligible for PiH status. This includes members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, the Security Service (SBU), intelligence units, the State Border Guard Service, the State Special Transport Service, and

law enforcement agencies (such as the police, National Police, Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Emergency Service, State Penitentiary Service, State Special Communications Service, State Bureau of Investigation, and NABU). It also applies to reservists, those liable for military service, and volunteers of the Territorial Defence Forces who defended Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Additionally, this status extends to members of volunteer formations who joined the defence between 2014 and 2017 and were later integrated into official military structures, as well as to volunteers who cooperated directly with the Armed Forces and other security institutions.

The progressive expansion of the participant in hostilities status reflects the evolving nature of Ukraine's defence efforts and the recognition of their merits. While the broadened eligibility ensures that all who contributed to defending Ukraine are formally recognised, it also brings significant implications for state systems tasked with providing benefits, pensions, and social support. Humanitarian organisations should be aware that this widening of status may increase demand for legal aid, psychosocial support, reintegration services, and access to entitlements, particularly for volunteers and reservists who may face challenges in obtaining proper documentation. The recognition of diverse groups under PiH status is an important step toward inclusivity, but it also highlights the urgent need for coordinated state and humanitarian responses to support veterans and their families in reintegration and recovery.

Ukraine is taking measures to promptly grant the status of PiH to all defence personnel. Procedures for entering data into the Unified Register of Veterans have been simplified—a commander's certificate of direct participation in combat is enough to obtain the status automatically²⁴. Special attention is paid to territorial defence fighters and other volunteers who joined the resistance in the first days of the invasion—they are also included in the list of combatants under the 2022 legislative changes.

²² In accordance with the articles 5-6 of the Law of Ukraine 'On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection' of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

²³ Official total published monthly by MoVA via open-data; latest file exists for 01.07.2025 Адміністративні дані в значенні Закону України "Про державну статистику", що збираються Міністерством у справах ветеранів України—Кількість учасників бойових дій 01.07.2025. xlsx—Data.gov.ua

²⁴ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №887 of 22.08.2023, which approved the automatic establishment of the status

Procedure for granting the status

The procedure for granting the status of a **Participant in Hostilities (PiH)** involves review of documentary evidence by special commissions under the relevant agencies. Each ministry or security body has its own departmental commission, while an interagency commission under the Ministry of Veterans Affairs addresses volunteer cases and disputed applications.

- **Armed Forces of Ukraine:** Ministry of Defence commissions
- **National Guard, Police, State Emergency Service:** Ministry of Internal Affairs commission
- **Security Service of Ukraine (SSU):** departmental commission
- **State Border Guard Service:** SBGS commission
- **Other military formations** (e.g., Foreign Intelligence Service, State Protection Department, Special Communications Service, Special Transport Service, State Bureau of Investigations, NABU): commissions under respective bodies
- **Volunteers outside security forces:** Interagency commission under the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

Supporting documentation may include official participation certificates (forms 1, 4, 6, 7), extracts from orders (including from the Anti-Terrorist Centre), combat reports, logs, commander or witness testimonies (minimum three, including the commander), and medical certificates. Commissions may also hear explanations from applicants or witnesses. A decision is made within one month. If approved, an order confirming PiH status is issued. If the evidence is insufficient, documents are returned for revision. Disputed cases may be escalated to the interagency commission.

2024 amendments: PiH status for defenders serving since 2014 (except SSU and intelligence agencies) is now granted automatically through the Unified State Register of War Veterans, regardless of length of

combat missions. Unit clerks or authorised staff must enter the data within 5 days of combat deployment. If the Register is unavailable, the information is submitted to departmental commissions for entry. Unit commanders are responsible for the accuracy of submitted data. If information is incomplete or inconsistent, the request is returned once for corrections; unresolved cases proceed to commission review.

Revocation of status: A PiH may lose status if:

- Convicted by a court of a grave or especially grave intentional war crime committed during hostilities; or
- Found to have used false documents to obtain status.

Revocation is decided by the same commission that granted status, with mandatory written notification and the right of appeal in court.

The procedure for granting and revoking PiH status is designed to formalise recognition while safeguarding against abuse. The 2024 amendments introducing automatic registration significantly streamline access and reduce bureaucratic barriers, representing progress toward more inclusive recognition of service members. However, reliance on unit clerks and commanders to enter and verify data introduces risks of errors, omissions, or delays—potentially affecting individuals' access to benefits and social protections. For humanitarian actors, monitoring how these procedures are implemented in practice is essential, particularly for vulnerable groups such as volunteers, those serving in less formalised units, or individuals in contested areas. Safeguards around revocation are also critical to ensure due process and to prevent misuse of disciplinary or judicial processes to deny entitlements.

Differentiation of categories of volunteers in Ukraine

Since 2014, Ukraine has introduced legal categories to recognise the participation of different types of volunteers in the ATO/JFO and the full-scale invasion. These include:

- ATO/JFO volunteers later incorporated into official Ukrainian military formations
- ATO/JFO volunteers who were never incorporated (a smaller group)
- Fighters of territorial defence units
- Members of territorial community volunteer formations

Volunteer Participants in Hostilities (Volunteers-PiH):

This status applies to individuals who joined volunteer units between 2014–2017 and took direct part in combat during the ATO without being in official military service. Once granted PiH status, volunteers are legally equated with regular combatants and enjoy the same rights, benefits, and state guarantees of social protection.

The status primarily applies to members of volunteer formations established at the beginning of the war, such as early territorial defence battalions or units like the Volunteer Ukrainian Corps "Right Sector" (DUK PS) in 2014–2015, which were not later integrated into the Armed Forces or National Guard.

Eligibility requirements:

- Participation in combat for at least 30 calendar days (continuous or cumulative) during the ATO (April 2014–24 February 2018).
- Participation had to occur in cooperation with Ukrainian official forces (Armed Forces, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Guard, National Police, State Border Guard Service, Security Service, etc.).

Supporting documentation may include:

- Extracts from combat reports or operational logs
- Certificates from military units confirming cooperation
- Notarised testimonies from at least three eyewitnesses who already hold combatant status (one must be the unit commander)
- Additional evidence, if available (medical certificates of injuries, captivity records, investigation reports, etc.)

Application process:

The volunteer (or family members, if deceased) applies for PiH status to an **interagency commission** under the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, either directly or through social security authorities. The commission, which includes representatives of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Security Service, Border Guard Service, National Police, National Guard, and veterans' associations, reviews the materials and issues a decision.

Recognition of volunteer combatants through PiH status is a critical step in including this category in the system for protecting veterans' rights outside formal military structures. By granting volunteers the same legal protections and benefits as regular service member, the law seeks to close historical gaps in recognition and support. However, the heavy reliance on documentation and witness testimony creates risks of exclusion, particularly for early volunteer fighters whose records may be incomplete or contested. For humanitarian actors, these challenges underscore the importance of legal aid, advocacy, and psychosocial support for volunteers and their families—especially in cases of denial or prolonged verification. Ensuring transparent, consistent, and inclusive application of the law will be essential to upholding veterans' rights and preventing marginalisation of those who contributed outside formal state structures.

It is additionally important to distinguish between the statuses of **territorial defence participants (TRO)** and **volunteer formations of territorial communities**, both of which emerged as new elements in Ukraine's defence sector following the **Law on the Principles of National Resistance (2021)** and, in practice, after the full-scale invasion of 24 February 2022.

The **Territorial Defence Forces (TRO)** were formally established on 1 January 2022 as a separate branch of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, replacing earlier brigades of reservists assembled through military enlistment offices. Since then, each region has its own TRO brigade as part of the Armed Forces.

TRO servicemen are subject to the same statutes, laws, and social protections as other branches of the Armed Forces. While their primary mandate is regional defence,

counter-sabotage activities, and maintaining order, the escalation of hostilities has pushed many TRO units into frontline combat. TRO soldiers may be career officers transferred from other units, mobilised soldiers, or volunteers who joined after 24 February 2022 (formally mobilised via conscription centers). All TRO servicemen receive military ranks, salaries, and combatant status when engaged in combat.

The formal integration of TRO into the Armed Forces ensures that its members have equal legal standing, benefits, and protections as regular military personnel. This framework strengthens Ukraine's territorial defence capacity by institutionalising what were previously ad hoc or reservist formations. Territorial defence fighters are covered by social guarantees and benefits provided for service members:

Financial support	Similar to other units (salary for rank/position + additional payment for participation in combat operations in the combat zone). In 2022, there were months when the TROs were not sent to the front, and soldiers received only their salaries (which caused complaints), but later the situation levelled off—most units are involved, so they also receive combat allowances.
Official status	TRO fighters are entitled to combatant status on the same basis as other military personnel, confirmed by unit orders and the Ministry of Defence commission. In cases of severe injury, they may also be granted the status of person with a war-related disability , with access to the same benefits and guarantees as other categories of wounded service members.
Medical and pension benefits	Soldiers of the TRO are subject to military medical care, and upon discharge, they are entitled to a pension on the general terms for military personnel (for service or disability).

At the start of the full-scale invasion, many volunteers aged 18–60 were quickly recruited into the Territorial Defence Forces (TRO) without strict selection. Some were later redeployed or released, but all had formally signed three-year reserve contracts or were mobilised, meaning they remain military personnel. After the war, most TRO units are expected to shift to reserve service, allowing members to return to civilian life while retaining veteran status and serving in the operational reserve.

Alongside the TRO, the **Law on National Resistance (2021)** allowed communities to form **volunteer formations of territorial communities (DFTG)**. These units, established in masse in early 2022, consist of civilians

who signed volunteer contracts to patrol, protect communities, and counter sabotage. DFTGs are not part of the Armed Forces but operate under TRO command at the operational and tactical levels.

DFTG members are civilians permitted to use personal hunting weapons or state-issued arms while carrying out defence tasks. They have no military rank, receive no salary, and serve on a voluntary basis. However, while engaged in defence, they are treated as de facto combatants. If they join combat operations with TRO approval, they must be temporarily incorporated into the Armed Forces, although in practice, many DFTGs fought during February–March 2022, particularly in urban defence.

In case of injury or death during missions, DFTG members are entitled to the same benefits as military personnel. Families of deceased volunteers receive a state insurance payment of **UAH 1 million**, and volunteers with disabilities may receive **war-related disability status** with corresponding benefits. However, community volunteers do not automatically receive combatant status; to qualify, they must be formally enlisted into the Armed Forces during combat. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs, through its interagency commission, reviews contested cases and may grant combatant status retrospectively.

DFTGs could only legally operate within their local communities. To be deployed elsewhere, they had to be disbanded, with members offered enlistment in the Armed Forces or release into civilian life. By mid-2022, many hastily created DFTGs were either integrated into TROs or disbanded. In 2023, work began to clarify their legal status, but as of June 2025, no final decision has been adopted. The Ministry of Defence has stated that DFTGs have been “optimised,” with only essential units retained and the rest disbanded.

The emergence of DFTGs reflects the vital role of local self-organisation in Ukraine's early response to the

full-scale invasion, bridging critical gaps in territorial defines. While their contributions were significant, the unclear and shifting legal status of these formations has created uncertainty for members regarding recognition, benefits, and long-term rights. The reliance on ad hoc mechanisms—such as retroactive review by the Ministry of Veterans—highlights gaps in formal integration pathways for volunteers. For humanitarian actors, these ambiguities are particularly relevant in ensuring that community volunteers injured, people with disabilities, or bereaved are not excluded from state protections and assistance. Looking ahead, clarifying the legal framework for DFTGs will be essential for recognising their contributions, ensuring equal treatment with formal servicemen, and addressing community trust in state institutions.

Social support and benefits ²⁵

Regardless of the agency or formation they served under, all persons with **combatant status** are entitled to the same package of benefits and social assistance. While these benefits are more limited than those granted to persons with *special services to the Motherland*, they still include important forms of support such as discounts on rent, utilities, and other entitlements.



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²⁵ In accordance with the article 12 of the Law of Ukraine 'On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection' of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

Medical care ²⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free provision of medicines ²⁷ • Free dental treatment • Sanatorium treatment (no budgeting) • Continuation of services in military polyclinics and hospitals after retirement/change of job • Annual medical check-ups • Priority service in medical institutions and pharmacies
Financial support and cash payments	Increase in pensions or social assistance (25% of the subsistence minimum—UAH 590)
Housing conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discount on rent (75%) • Discount on utility bills (75%) • Discount on heating fuel (75%) • Priority housing (up to 2 years—in case of injury) • Preferential allocation of land plots for construction and farming • Housing repairs (priority) • Concessional loans for housing/repairs (10 years to repay after 5 years of grace period) ²⁸
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State support for education for combatants and their children (up to 23 years) • Preference for admission to educational institutions • Non-competitive admission to vocational education institutions • Free tuition or soft loans ²⁹ • Social scholarships (as well as for their family members) • Free accommodation in a dormitory
Work and labour rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of sick leave (100% of the salary) regardless of length of service • Additional paid leave (14 days) • Preferential right to stay in the job in case of redundancy • Priority right to employment in case of liquidation of an enterprise

²⁶ May be accessed through both—public and private healthcare facilities

²⁷ Under Article 26 of the Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” and Cabinet of Ministers Decree №321 of 05.04.2012, self-purchased medical and assistive devices are reimbursed within the maximum state-approved prices published by the Ministry of Social Policy.

²⁸ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №980 of 27.11.2019, which approved the Regulations on procedure for using funds provided in the state budget for granting preferential long-term state loans to internally displaced persons, participants in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) and/or participants in the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) for the purchase of housing

²⁹ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №673 of 29.08.2018, which approved the Regulations on procedure for preferential lending for obtaining vocational and technical, pre-higher and higher education

The category of combatants is currently the largest among Ukrainian war veterans. The vast majority of defenders discharged from military service acquire this status. It should also be noted that combatant status can be granted to a person while they are still

-serving, i.e., to active military personnel who have not been discharged. This makes it necessary for humanitarian organisations to pay additional attention to confirmation of non-combatant status in order to provide assistance.

Participant of war ³⁰

The original purpose of the category was to recognise people who contributed to the wartime efforts but were not directly at the front or took part in combat. This meant home front veterans and other participants in the war effort outside of combat.

In the current conditions of a large-scale war, the status of “war participant” does not apply to new persons, as its content has not been expanded to include those who ensure the conduct of war outside of combat operations.

The status remains applicable only to conflicts of past historical periods, as well as to the ATO/JFO, subject to certain established requirements.

According to the latest official data, accumulated by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs as of July 2025 ³¹, this category includes almost 154 thousand participants of the war.

In this category, we will focus our attention on the ATO/JFO war veterans.

Procedure for determining the status

The law also provides for the granting of “war participant” status to employees or service members who carried out tasks in the ATO/JFO area but were not directly involved in combat. These individuals supported the operation without receiving combatant status. For example, this may include employees of enterprises or institutions who worked for at least 30 days in the ATO/JFO area in support of the mission. Such cases are regulated by a separate procedure established by the

Cabinet of Ministers (Resolution No. 739 of 23.09.2015). In practice, the new granting of this status is now rare and primarily applies to certain military pensioners or employees who fulfilled military duties outside combat zones during earlier phases of the conflict. The status of a “war participant” is granted through **social protection authorities**. The applicant (or their legal representative) submits a formal application together with supporting documentation that proves eligibility for the category. Evidence may include records of employment or service during a defined period, documentation of awards, or other proof of participation in military-related activities (e.g., archival certificates, orders, or equivalent documents). In cases related to ATO/JFO participation as an employee, applicants are typically required to provide extracts from orders of the Anti-Terrorist Centre, certificates of business trips to the ATO/JFO area, or similar records. Applications are reviewed by a specialised commission within the social protection authority, which determines eligibility. If approved, the applicant is officially granted veteran status and issued a certificate.

Individuals recognised as **war participants** receive a standardised certificate titled “*Certificate of Participant of War.*” This certificate differs from the *Participant in Hostilities (PiH)* certificate and serves as the official proof of status and associated rights. Alongside the certificate, recipients are also awarded a badge “*War Veteran—War Participant,*” which identifies them as belonging to this category. Importantly, all categories of war veteran certificates—including those for combatants, persons with disabilities resulting from war, and war participants—are now also available in digital format as e-certificates within the *Diia* application.

³⁰ In accordance with the articles 8-9 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection’ of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

³¹ Official total published monthly by MoVA via open-data; latest file exists for 01.07.2025 Адміністративні дані в значенні Закону України “Про державну статистику”, що збираються Міністерством у справах ветеранів України—Кількість учасників бойових дій 01.07.2025. xlsx—Data.gov.ua



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The “war participant” status highlights an effort to formally recognise non-combat contributions during earlier phases of conflict, particularly the ATO/JFO. However, its limited and historic scope means it no longer reflects the reality of the full-scale invasion, where countless support workers, volunteers, and civilians play vital roles outside combat zones. The absence of updated provisions for recognising these contributions creates gaps in legal status and entitlements for many individuals supporting the current defence effort. For humanitarian organisations, this presents two main challenges: first, navigating the complexity

of different veteran categories when providing legal aid or assistance; and second, addressing the unmet needs of unrecognised groups who may lack access to benefits despite having made significant contributions.

Social support and benefits ³²

According to the law, war participants have the least number of benefits among the three main categories of war veterans (reduced amounts of assistance) and include the following:

<p>Medical care ³³</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free provision of medicines ³⁴ • Free dental prosthetics • Sanatorium and spa treatment (no budgeting) • Continuation of services in polyclinics and hospitals after retirement or change of employment • Annual medical examination • Priority service in medical institutions and pharmacies
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³² In accordance with the article 14 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection’ of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

³³ May be accessed through both—public and private healthcare facilities

³⁴ Under Article 26 of the Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” and Cabinet of Ministers Decree №321 of 05.04.2012, self-purchased medical and assistive devices are reimbursed within the maximum state-approved prices published by the Ministry of Social Policy.

<p>Financial support and cash benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in pensions or social assistance (15% of the subsistence minimum—for recipients of medals/orders (UAH 354); 10%—for others (UAH 236)) • One-time financial assistance to Independence Day (annually)
<p>Housing conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discount on rent (50%) • Discount on utility bills (50%) • Discount on fuel payment (50%) • Priority provision of housing • Preferential allocation of land plots for construction and farming • Priority housing repairs • Preferential loans for housing/repairs (10 years of repayment after 5 years of deferral)³⁵
<p>Employment and education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of sick leave (100%) regardless of length of service • Annual leave at a convenient time • Additional unpaid leave (up to 2 weeks per year) • State support for education for war veterans and their children (up to 23 years of age)

In practice, some of the benefits granted by law to war participants—and certain other veteran categories—may not always be fully implemented. Economic constraints or decisions taken through annual state budgets can result in the suspension of specific entitlements. For example, in recent years, funding for some social guarantees, such as free sanatorium treatment, has been suspended for the following budget year. Nevertheless, **core benefits**—including discounts on housing and communal services, access to medical care, and free or subsidised travel—remain guaranteed by law.

This distinction underscores the vulnerability of certain social guarantees to budgetary pressures, which can create unpredictability for veterans and their families. While essential benefits are legally protected, the suspension of supplementary support measures can reduce the overall effectiveness of state assistance. For humanitarian organisations, this highlights the importance of monitoring changes in state budget allocations and being prepared to address gaps in social protection, particularly where suspended benefits impact the wellbeing or recovery of war participants and their households.

³⁵ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №980 of 27.11.2019, which approved the Regulations on procedure for using funds provided in the state budget for granting preferential long-term state loans to internally displaced persons, participants in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) and/or participants in the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) for the purchase of housing

Persons with disabilities caused by war³⁶

This category applies to individuals who have experienced a lasting deterioration of health and/or bodily functions due to wounds, contusions, injuries, or illnesses connected with war or military service.

According to the latest official data, accumulated by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs as of July 2025³⁷, this category includes 123 thousand persons with disability as a result of war, including both, military and civilian victims.

The status encompasses several subcategories. While these subcategories differ in the circumstances under which the disability was sustained and the procedures required to establish eligibility, they all share a common framework of benefits and social protection measures guaranteed by law.

Procedure for determining the status

Armed forces of Ukraine

This status is granted to a service member who, as a result of injury, contusion, mutilation, or illness sustained in the line of duty, has acquired a permanent disability. Confirmation requires:

1. A decision of the **Military Medical Commission (MMC)** linking the injury or illness to military service.
2. A decision of the **everyday functioning assessment (formerly MSEC)** confirming the group of disability (I, II, or III).



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³⁶ In accordance with the article 7 of the Law of Ukraine 'On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection' of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

³⁷ Official total published monthly by MoVA via open-data; latest file exists for 01.07.2025 Адміністративні дані в значенні Закону України "Про державну статистику", що збираються Міністерством у справах ветеранів України—Кількість учасників бойових дій 01.07.2025. xlsx—Data.gov.ua

Eligibility applies if the disability resulted from:

- Direct participation in hostilities (e.g. frontline injuries).
- Performance of official duties in a military conflict zone leading to illness or injury (including occupational diseases).
- Service during a special period outside the combat zone, where a causal link to military service is proven.

The application package typically includes MMC conclusions, the assessment certificate, and a commander's certificate describing the circumstances of injury or illness. The decision is formalised by the Ministry of Defence, after which the certificate can be issued.

Service members with a war-related disability may continue serving if medically able. If not, they are discharged with a military disability pension (regardless of age or length of service) and retain the right to wear a military uniform. In addition, they are entitled to one-time state insurance compensation for combat injuries, scaled by disability group:

- Group I—400 times the subsistence minimum
- Group II—300 times the subsistence minimum
- Group III—250 times the subsistence minimum

Service members of Other Security and Defence Agencies

The category also includes members of the **National Guard, Security Service of Ukraine, police, State Border Guard Service, State Emergency Service, and other defence formations**. Historically, each agency had its own departmental regulations for reviewing cases. Today, with the establishment of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and the Unified State Register of War Veterans, the process has been unified and social protection authorities now play the lead role.

Applicants must provide:

- MMC conclusion linking disability to service.
- Functionality assessment (MSEC certificate) establishing disability group and cause.
- Documentation of circumstances of injury or illness (e.g., commander's certificate, internal investigation).

A simplified mechanism has also been introduced: applications can be submitted electronically via the Diia portal or through Administrative Service Centres (ASC). Departmental structures still issue necessary certificates (e.g., on combat participation or injuries), but the final decision rests with social protection authorities.

The certificate format is uniform across all agencies. It indicates the group of disability and specifies that the disability was acquired "as a result of war" but does not distinguish between agencies. This ensures equal recognition and rights for all defenders, regardless of the formation in which they served.

The recognition of persons with disabilities as a result of war reflects Ukraine's effort to guarantee equal status and entitlements across all branches of its defence and security sector. However, the complexity of medical and bureaucratic procedures—requiring multiple commissions, certificates, and causal link confirmations—creates potential barriers for veterans, particularly those with limited mobility or access to documentation.

ATO/JFO participants

This category of veterans with war-related disabilities was added in **2015–2016** in response to the need to formally recognise injuries and disabilities sustained by participants in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and the Joint Forces Operation (JFO). The list of eligible persons is broad and reflects the diverse groups of defenders who contributed to Ukraine's defence:

- **Service members and law enforcement officers**—including members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, the Security Service of Ukraine, the National Police, and other law enforcement agencies, as well as reservists and fighters of volunteer formations of territorial communities. Eligibility applies to those who took part in the ATO in Donbas (2014–2018), the JFO (2018–2022), or the ongoing defence against Russia's full-scale invasion (since 2022), and who sustained injuries resulting in disability.
- **ATO volunteers**—including members of volunteer battalions who initially fought without official status at the beginning of the conflict. If such volunteers were injured and subsequently became persons with disabilities, they are entitled to veteran status once they are officially recognised as combatants. This applies both to volunteers whose units were later incorporated into official military structures and to those whose units remained outside them.

- **Soldiers of territorial defence and volunteer formations of territorial communities (VFTCs)** —individuals who took up arms during the onset of full-scale invasion and were wounded in combat. All those who fought as part of territorial defence forces (regardless of whether they had formally joined the Armed Forces or National Guard at the time of their injury) are eligible if a disability is established.
- **Other categories defined by law** —for example, volunteers (non-combatants) who supported the ATO/JFO in combat areas and sustained injuries there, persons engaged in confidential cooperation with intelligence who were injured during their tasks, and those involved in the direct support of combat operations. Importantly, **civilians affected by hostilities are not included in this subcategory**; they fall under a separate status of affected civilians.

For volunteers, the procedure requires submitting an application to the **Ministry of Veterans Affairs** after treatment and the collection of supporting documentation.

Individuals in this category are issued a certificate in the established form. Their data is also recorded in

the **Unified State Register of War Veterans**, and an electronic veteran's certificate is available through the *Diiia* portal.

The expansion of veteran categories to include ATO/JFO participants with war-related disabilities demonstrates the state's recognition of the diverse groups who defended Ukraine outside conventional military structures. However, challenges remain in documenting and verifying volunteer involvement, especially for those whose units were never formally integrated. These verification requirements can delay or complicate access to entitlements, creating additional barriers for some of the most vulnerable.

Social support and benefits ³⁸

The main benefits provided for persons with war-related disabilities of all categories are listed in the table below. Among the categories mentioned above (except for persons with special services to the Motherland), persons with disabilities have a wider range of support, and the guarantees that were also mentioned for the previous categories have been slightly increased in size (this applies to some discounts and payments):



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³⁸ In accordance with the article 13 of the Law of Ukraine 'On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection' of 22.10.1993 №3551-XII

<p>Medical care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free treatment and provision of medicines ³⁹ • Free dental prosthetics • Sanatorium treatment (no funding) • Free services in clinics and hospitals • Medical care in departmental hospitals • Annual medical examination • Treatment during a stay in a sanatorium (up to 4 months in a row or 5 months a year) • The right to continue military medical care after retirement or change of job
<p>Financial support and cash payments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of pensions or social assistance (I group—50% (UAH 1180), II group—40% (UAH 944), III group—30% of the subsistence minimum for people with disabilities (UAH 708)) • One-time financial assistance to Independence Day ⁴⁰ • One-time assistance in case of disability of servicemen related to the defence of the Motherland or performance of military service during hostilities (disability group I—400 times the subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons (UAH 1,211,200); disability group II—300 times the subsistence minimum (UAH 908,400); disability group III—250 times the subsistence minimum (UAH 757,000)). • One-time assistance in case of disability for service member related to military service with no participation in hostilities (disability group 1—120 times the subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons (UAH 363,360); disability group 2—90 times the subsistence minimum (UAH 272,520); disability group 3—70 times the subsistence minimum (UAH 211,960)). • Increased pension amounts (group 1—650% of the minimum wage for persons who have lost their ability to work (UAH 15,346), group 2—525% of the minimum wage (UAH 12,395), and group 3—360% of the minimum wage (UAH 8,499))
<p>Housing conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discount on rent (100%) • Discount on utility bills (100%) • Free fuel for heating (100%) • Priority housing allocation (up to 2 years; for group I—up to 1 year) • Assistance with construction and provision of land plots • Concessional loans for housing/repairs (maturity—10 years after 5-year grace period) ⁴¹ • Benefits for garages/parking lots • Free housing repairs (out of queue)

³⁹ Under Article 26 of the Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” and Cabinet of Ministers Decree №321 of 05.04.2012, self-purchased medical and assistive devices are reimbursed within the maximum state-approved prices published by the Ministry of Social Policy.

⁴⁰ Persons with disabilities of I group—3,100 UAH, II group—2,900 UAH, III group—2,700 UAH in accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №486 of 29.04.2025, which approved the Regulations on establishing the amount of a one-time cash payment for Ukraine’s Independence Day for 2025

⁴¹ In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine №980 of 27.11.2019, which approved the Regulations on procedure for using funds provided in the state budget for granting preferential long-term state loans to internally displaced persons, participants in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) and/or participants in the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) for the purchase of housing

<p>Employment and education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority employment • Protection in case of redundancies • Payment of sick leave (100%) regardless of seniority • Additional paid vacation (14 calendar days) • Preferential right to enter educational institutions (higher, vocational, pre-university) • State targeted support for education
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The list of benefits is extensive, and Article 13 of the Law currently contains nearly 20 items of basic guar-

antees. Importantly, all these benefits apply to all persons with war-related disabilities as defined in Article 7.

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