

To:

United Nations Secretary-General
President of the United Nations Human Rights Council
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

President of the European Commission
European Commissioner for Crisis Management
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Date: 06.03.2022

We, the undersigned organisations, call on the United Nations, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to jointly support and set up, as a matter of urgency, an uninterrupted supply chain of humanitarian assistance to the affected populations within the country, and to establish safe humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians from Ukraine.

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, targeting several large cities including Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Meriupol and Zhitomir, and bombing neighbourhoods within those areas, inevitably resulting in countless civilian deaths. The escalating war actions are causing tremendous humanitarian crises affecting millions of people. Those staying in cities and villages in Ukraine are in urgent need of warm shelter, food, water, basic medicine and other essential supplies. Additionally, more than 100,000 people have been internally displaced since the invasion began,¹ and the number of displaced people will continue to grow. At the moment, meeting the essential needs of internally displaced people is extremely difficult in Ukraine due to martial law, curfews and threats to the lives of volunteers.

UNHCR² estimates that due to the war, up to five million people will flee Ukraine. As of 3 March 2022, one million refugees were estimated to have fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries —

¹ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ukraine>

² <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/invasion-could-drive-5-million-ukrainians-flee-abroad-un-2022-02-25/>

including Moldova, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia.³ As the situation worsens, an estimated four million people may flee Ukraine in the coming weeks and months.⁴ We highly appreciate the efforts thus far of governments, international institutions and millions of citizens in European countries — especially those in Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, Czechia, Hungary and Lithuania — in organising comprehensive support for all refugees from Ukraine.

What is now urgently needed is the provision of basic, essential health supplies and medication for people in Ukraine, including those internally displaced, by means of revised importation rules and distribution networks. People who belong to vulnerable and discriminated groups — such as people who use drugs, people in prison, gay and other men who have sex with other men, sex workers and trans people — must not be overlooked in these efforts. Notably, Ukraine has the second largest population of people living with HIV, people with tuberculosis and drug-resistant tuberculosis and opioid dependency in Eastern Europe and Central Asia⁵, and the country has developed successful and progressive harm reduction and treatment programmes, supported by the global community. To sustain those achievements and preserve human life, we ask you to ensure essential provisions including opioid agonist therapy, ARV therapy, and tuberculosis diagnostics and treatments.

Ukraine urgently needs humanitarian corridors supported by intergovernmental and multilateral organisations. On 1 March, the UN General Assembly adopted with overwhelming support (including by the European Union) a resolution demanding “all parties to allow safe and unfettered passage to destinations outside of Ukraine and to facilitate the rapid, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those in need in Ukraine, to protect civilians, including humanitarian personnel (...) and to respect human rights.”⁶

Following negotiations between the two sides on 3 March, Ukraine and Russia have agreed tentatively to create humanitarian corridors⁷ in the worst-affected areas of Ukraine, where civilians are most at risk from the war. But in reality, there is no clarity on how these passages could be implemented.

In line with this, we call on your organisations to:

- Urgently establish safe, open and uninterrupted corridors for humanitarian workers and supplies, including essential food and medicine, to reach people in need throughout Ukraine (particularly in cities in eastern, southern and central Ukraine currently under attack).

³ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/3/62206a824/news-comment-1-million-refugees-fled-ukraine-week.html>

⁴ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

⁵ <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/eastern-europe-central-asia/ukraine>

⁶ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_ES-11_L.1_E.pdf

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUGZnwFP5Ps>

- Create a coordinated and agile system for assessing needs and tracking available services and supplies' shortages and organising coordinated international response to address it.
- Urgently support the establishment of inter-agency safe corridors for the evacuation of all people wishing to leave Ukraine, regardless of nationality, to neighbouring countries.
- Organise transport of lifesaving cargo both for internally displaced people in Ukraine and refugees outside the country.
- Engage in a sustained and coordinated manner with local and national authorities of neighbouring countries, and of expected destination countries, to ensure:
 - Continued safe entry and passage of people fleeing Ukraine (without the need for visas or other burdensome administrative requirements).
 - Distribution of food, COVID-19 personal protective equipment and medicine, including antiretroviral therapy (ARV) and/or opioid agonist treatment, without discrimination.
 - Safe and uninterrupted circulation of essential food and medicines — including utilisation of the simplified control procedures for the export, transportation and provision of medicinal products containing controlled substances, as recommended by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB).⁸
- Help to ensure the parties to the conflict take the necessary measures to account for protected people, including prisoners of war and detainees.
- Apply all efforts to negotiate this issue with both Russian and Ukrainian authorities through all possible channels, to ensure safe and effective humanitarian corridors are established as quickly as possible.

Yours faithfully,

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| Anna Dovbakh Executive Director Eurasian Harm Reduction Association | Naomi Burke-Shyne Executive Director Harm Reduction International |
| Yuliia Kalancha Executive Director TB Europe Coalition | Pieter Vanholder Executive Director European AIDS Treatment Group |

⁸ https://www.incb.org/incb/en/news/news_2022/incb-statement-on-ensuring-availability-of-and-access-to-controlled-medicines-in-ukraine-and-neighbouring-countries.html

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| Iulia Dorokhova Director Charitable organization "All-Ukrainian League "Legalife" | Lella Cosmaro Sr Officer LILA, Italian League for Fighting AIDS – Italy |
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| Deutsche Aidshilfe | |
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