



UKRAINE

ONE MONTH SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

MARCH 2022

1 MONTH

SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF WAR



Ukrainian people's peaceful life turned to a nightmare

On the early morning of the 24th of February, a normal social life was transformed into one of violence, fear, panic and suffering. Innocent civilians started to flee from the jaws of death at their doorstep, taking with them the bare minimum that they could, and then leaping into the unknown onto the road into exile.

Women, children and the elderly had to leave their homes. Migrant students studying in Ukraine have also, in panic, taken to the road, leaving behind their belongings, in search of safe havens.

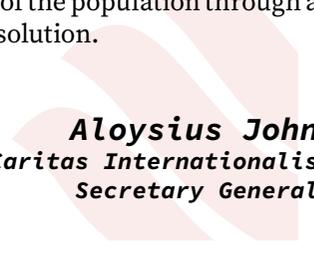
The two Ukrainian Caritas organisations - Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Spes-Ukraine - have stood by the people from the very first moments of this war and have never abandoned them even when, as in the case of Mariupol, heavy bombing forced the closure of some local centres. Thanks to the courage and dedication of their staff and hundreds of volunteers, they continued to serve the people during this time of great need and suffering.

At the same time, all Caritas organisations in neighbouring countries - including Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Moldova - are on the frontline in

assisting the millions of refugees fleeing the war, together with the support of other members of the Caritas Confederation. Caritas Internationalis is with them in solidarity and I would like to place a special thought for the millions of women and children, torn apart from their loved ones, who are at a severe risk of falling prey to human trafficking. We cannot leave anyone behind, especially those who are most vulnerable as a result of the ongoing violence in this region.

This short publication wants to bear witness of the stories of the people who are suffering severely as a result of this heinous war, and also be a witness to the valuable work of Caritas and the local Church, whose grassroots presence enables them to reach even very remote areas affected by this conflict.

There will be no winner in this war, but only suffering and the loss of dignity for innocent civilians. Each tear and cry of the children, women, the elders and migrants is a call for solidarity and compassion. Caritas Internationalis joins the Holy Father in his repeated appeals for the "abhorrent" war in Ukraine to end immediately, and for an end to the suffering of the population through a peaceful solution.



Aloysius John
Caritas Internationalis
Secretary General



We urgently need humanitarian corridors for Ukraine so that humanitarian aid can reach the suffering people. This crisis necessitates access and safe space for humanitarian aid and humanitarian aid workers and security for civilians.

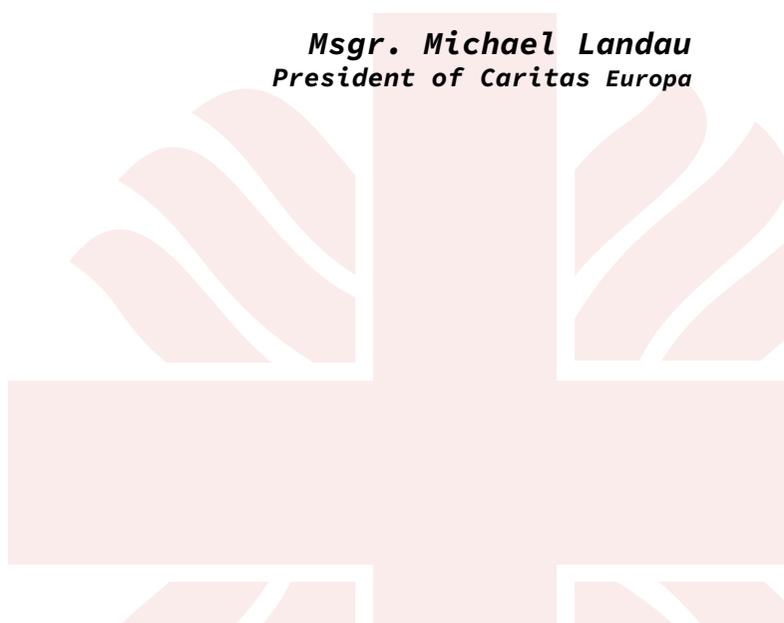
We send our thanks to the neighbouring Caritas Organizations in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Lithuania, Moldova and beyond.

We must not forget that this war means first of all enormous suffering. We are witnessing a humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine. It is important to recall that this is not about oil, gas, military or politics, but primarily the

suffering of women, children, and men.

Europe and the world must not forget Ukraine. Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Spes-Ukraine stand with the suffering people and we as Caritas Europa stand at their side with prayer, solidarity and humanitarian support. Europe has shown huge solidarity and we must help within Ukraine, but also support the neighbouring countries. We have to prepare to welcome people forced to seek refuge in the EU without discrimination. Donations are welcome and every Euro can save lives. We need European Solidarity, and we need it now.

Msgr. Michael Landau
President of Caritas Europa



WEEK 1

“I am truly proud of our team that are working hard to look to the needs of the most vulnerable, while managing their own circumstances as well. We are grateful for the outpouring of support from our partners and people of good will from abroad. Needs are growing daily.”

Tetiana Stawnychy

President of Caritas Ukraine



24 FEBRUARY
2 MARCH

AN OVERVIEW

On February 24 at 02:55 GMT, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a wide-scale “military operation” in Ukraine, carrying out missile strikes on infrastructure and on border guards. In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared martial law in the country. In the following days, civilian infrastructure are destroyed amidst the violence. Street fighting also breaks out as city officials urge residents to take shelter.

Within the first week of war, the Minister of Health of Ukraine reports around 198 civilians (including three children) are killed, and an additional 1,115 wounded (including 33 children). According to the UNHCR, over 600,000 people fled Ukraine into neighbouring countries – mainly Poland, Hungary, Moldova and Romania. Along the Polish border alone, around 77,000 people waited in queues stretching 15km for two to three days. Within Ukraine, at least 160,000 people are internally displaced as a result of the invasion.



THE CARITAS RESPONSE

The two national Caritas offices in Ukraine immediately provided humanitarian support to the population from the first moments of the war. Caritas Ukraine (the Caritas organisation of the Greek Catholic Church) and Caritas-Spes Ukraine (the Caritas organisation of the Latin rite Catholic Church), provided food, water, hygiene kits, shelters and temporary accommodation, psychosocial support and transportation.

As explains by the President of Caritas Ukraine, Tetiana Stawnychy, the Caritas network, together with the support of government and NGO partners, have been working to prepare for all scenarios several months prior to the escalation. Already since late summer 2021, particularly in eastern Ukraine, Caritas anticipated a humanitarian response in the case of a possible escalation of the conflict. Caritas trained staff and volunteers so as to increase their capacity to meet the needs of local communities and strengthen their networks. They also prepositioned temporary centres to welcome and ensure assistance to internally displaced people.. Stawnychy also said these activities have often been initiated by women

in the Caritas network, who wanted to be ready to help those most in need “with no pause in their work”.

“Our cities, homes and kindergartens have been destroyed. But no one will not succeed in destroying our aspirations for peace and freedom”, says Fr Vyacheslav Grynevych, Executive Director of Caritas-Spes Ukraine. He explained how Caritas-Spes provided vital support to women and children. Caritas-Spes runs 22 small family homes throughout Ukraine and provided safe transportation for children to Caritas centres in western Ukraine and to State centres in the eastern areas.

In order to sustain the work of the two Ukrainian Caritas organisations, Caritas Internationalis launched an emergency appeal to help thousands of people in different parts of the country, especially in critical areas such as Kramatorsk, Rubizhne, Zaporizhyya, Volnovakha, Mariupol, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Odesa, Ivano-Frankivk.

On March 1, Caritas Internationalis held an online press conference with the Caritas

Confederation and the general public to shed light on the refugee and humanitarian crises developing within Ukraine and bordering countries including Hungary, Moldova, Poland and Romania. “Caritas International reiterates that the lifesaving help to the people cannot be reached without a safe humanitarian corridor and safety for the people who are on the road to exile. There will be no winner in this war but only sufferings and loss of dignity for the innocent civilians.

Each tear and cry of the children, women, the elders and the migrants is a call for solidarity and compassion. Caritas Internationalis joins the Holy Father in his prayer for peace in Ukraine and an end to the violence and we insist on advocating for a peaceful and immediate resolution of the conflict,” said Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis Aloysius John. Moldova, Poland and Romania.



WEEK 2

“People can receive a warm tea, some food, a place to stay, blankets and whatever is needed...we hope we will face this crisis together. There is a lot of solidarity and help here in Poland. We are very thankful for the community of caritas not only in Poland but in the all world. Because of this solidarity we are able to serve and help.”

Dominika Chylewska
Caritas Poland



3 MARCH
9 MARCH

AN OVERVIEW

The UNHCR report over 1,735,068 people fled fighting in Ukraine, including 500,000 children (UNICEF), during the second week of the war in Ukraine. The majority have gone to Poland (1,027,603), Hungary (180,163), Slovakia (128,169) and the Republic of Moldova (82,762). In addition, UNHCR reports well over 160,000 people are internally displaced. According to WHO and OCHA, 18 million people have been affected by the conflict.

Heavy fighting and shelling continue across several towns and cities in Ukraine, with increasing human costs and humanitarian consequences. The most urgent needs are reported in Dnipro (central), Donetsk (east), Kharkiv

(east), Kherson (south), Kyiv (capital), Luhansk (east) and Mariupol (south-east) – home to more than 7.3 million people combined.

There is a lack of food, medicines and other hygiene products. Many shops are closed or empty. People receive pension payments on cards but cannot pay with them. There is also a fuel shortage which is making it difficult for people to leave conflict areas. OCHA reports over 650,000 people have been left without electricity and at least 130,000 people remain without natural gas supply. The deteriorating security situation prevents them from restoring critical services, including electricity, gas and water.



THE CARITAS RESPONSE

Caritas Ukraine send out the first humanitarian assistance convoy to reach the suffering victims of war in Zaporizhzhya. In Kyiv, Caritas provides hospitals with food, hygiene products and other essential products while Caritas Zhytomyr set up a temporary shelter in the local Greek Catholic Church. Through social media networks, Caritas Ukraine offices make a callout for volunteers as the situation worsens in the country.

As the violence intensifies, the first humanitarian convoys from abroad and the western region of Ukraine arrive to local Caritas Ukraine and Caritas-Spes offices. From these offices they coordinate

and distribute humanitarian services to the neediest regions such as protection, food, supplies, psychosocial and other essential support for vulnerable families, men, women, children and the elderly.

On 9 March alone, Caritas Ukraine provide and distribute over 6,437 food parcels, 1,600 hot lunches and 3,886 hygiene parcels. In the first two weeks since the outbreak of the war, Caritas-Spes supported 34,765 people, provided housing and shelter to 10,369 people (including 2,683 children) and received over 160 tonnes of humanitarian aid to be distributed to those suffering as a result of this war.



In the neighbouring countries

Caritas staff and volunteers throughout eastern Europe are working tirelessly to go out and meet thousands of refugees fleeing Ukraine, providing them with food, medicine and

Caritas **Poland** has been closely coordinating with the government, NGOs and its local diocese partners. “Tents of hope” have also been set up at the border crossings of Przemysl, Zosin, Hrebenne, Lubaczow and Dorohusk, where arrivals find the option to rest, receive food, tea, coffee, warm clothes, hygiene items, medicines.

In **Slovakia**, around 70,000 Ukrainians crossed the border and Caritas staff and volunteers from four dioceses are preparing efforts to coordinate their response to meet the refugee crisis.

While in neighbouring **Romania**, where border police have reported the entry of 45,000 refugees from Ukraine, Caritas continues to set up a number of refugee centres in various cities to offer accommodation, meals as well as transportation for beneficiaries. Caritas Romania reminds refugees to remain vigilant about individuals who propose transportation and private accommodation to refugees. There have been signs of organised crime active on both sides of the border, and the risk of human trafficking is high.

Caritas **Moldova** works with local

authorities and parishes to reach as many of the 65,000 refugees who crossed the border by offering food, water, hygiene packs as well as social and emotional assistance to hundreds of people, particularly women and children, in government refugee centres in Chisinau, Ocnita and Palanca. Caritas staff and volunteers hope to open crisis centres in additional locations as needed and capacity allows.

Caritas **Czech Republic** focuses on helping refugees from Ukraine. At this stage, the number of refugees in the country is around 25 000, but is expected to increase as the violence continues. Already before this crisis there are many Ukrainian immigrants living in the Czech Republic so staff and volunteers work to reunite refugees with their families who have settled in the country. In addition, Caritas staff help refugees apply for visas and other documentation they need.

Caritas **Hungary**, in cooperation with Caritas Diocese of Nyíregyházi and Caritas Diocese of Debrecen-Nyíregyháza, focus their efforts in welcoming refugees at the border crossing Barabás-Mezőkaszony. Here people fleeing Ukraine can rest in a warm place until relatives come to pick them up or before they reach a reception station, from where they are directed to accommodation. Refugees include Ukrainians as well as people of other nationalities who were in Ukraine when the war broke out.

WEEK 3

“With our mission, Caritas reminds the world that war is not a military, political issue, but it is, first of all, a human issue.

“The Ukrainian people are giving an incredible testimony of courage, while its neighboring countries - in particular, we think of Poland, Romania - are offering a testimony of exceptional solidarity. What lesson can we learn, we who are “near” but still far from this war in Ukraine?

“We must be grateful for the witness of the people in Ukraine and in neighboring countries and even of those further away who are sending aid and offering assistance. The lesson for me is this: in the desert of violence, the human person has the capacity to be good”.

Cardinal Tagle

President of Caritas Internationalis



10 MARCH
16 MARCH

AN OVERVIEW

As the conflict expands across Ukraine, homes, schools and hospitals are increasingly becoming targets. Despite humanitarian corridors being agreed to by Russia and Ukraine for the safe passage of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies, continuous shelling prevents around 100 tonnes of urgently needed relief supplies from reaching people in desperate need of food, water and medicines.

A reported 20,000 people were evacuated through the humanitarian corridor between Mariupol city to Zaporizhzhia. However, around 350,000 people, most of whom are living in dire conditions, are still trapped. In Sumy, 5,000 people were successfully evacuated in the span of two days but amid ongoing hostilities, gas supplies are completely cut for settlements in Irpin and Kotsiubynske and other districts are left without communications.



THE CARITAS RESPONSE

During the third week of the conflict, President of Caritas Ukraine, Tetiana Stawnychy, holds a meeting with the Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine, and both agree to work together to increase and ensure equitable distribution of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Local Caritas Ukraine offices continue to make callouts for volunteers through local and social media. While humanitarian efforts shift to focus on the needs of internally displaced people (particularly the elderly and those with disabilities). Caritas staff and volunteers provide necessary support to people heading to the borders searching for refuge in other European countries. In the Donetsk region of Krasnohorivka, where lighting and electricity services are cut, Caritas are still able to continue their pump room work and provide the only source of drinking water in the city during this time.

Since the beginning of the conflict, Caritas Ukraine has assisted more than 70,000 persons: daily providing up to 1,300 individuals with shelter and hot lunches in Caritas spaces; distributing 22,000 food baskets and 10,000 hygiene packs; receiving 400 tonnes of cargo and distributing 200 tonnes to conflict zone regions. Meanwhile, Caritas-Spes Ukraine have provided assistance to 71,693 individuals: 21,708 people are provided with shelter and accommodation; 57,021 people received food and other essential goods; 34,900 people received other humanitarian supplies and logistical support; and a total of 6,327 people receive protection assistance, including childcare support.



WEEK 4

”One Month of war. We hear a lot of sounds of war, we see a lot of signs of war, but when we speak with people around us they are full of hope, full of hope that the war will end, that their children will be saved. Thanks for your support, we know that if we will be together everything will be ok, not only in Ukraine but in the world.

Father Vyacheslav Grynevych
Executive Director of Caritas-Spes Ukraine



13 MARCH
24 MARCH

AN OVERVIEW

On 18 March, the first UN-organized convoy reached the embattled city of Sumy bringing much needed supplies to the people there including equipment to repair the water systems. The UN estimates that around 9.8 million people have either fled Ukraine (3.32 million) or are internally displaced (6.48 million), accounting for more than 23% of the country's population (check figures). Reports indicate around 75,000 children flee Ukraine each day. More than 304,000 refugees cross the border to Moldova (nearly 90% of whom are women and children). Nearly half plan to continue onward to other European countries.

Over 2,000 civilians have been killed and numerous civilian sites have been bombarded, including a theatre in Mariupol housing numerous children. Mariupol continues to be the biggest concern with a rapidly deteriorating situation. People lack access to the most basic supplies, including safe water, food and essential medicines.

According to UNDP the socio-economic impacts of the ongoing hostilities threaten to reverse decades of hard-earned gains made in development and poverty reduction in Ukraine.

Reconstruction costs are estimated to be as much as Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Romania has been the second neighbouring country receiving the most refugees after Poland. As of now, more than 535,000 persons have crossed into Romania, of which about 80,000 (15%) still remain in the country. While a variety of assistance is available at border crossings into Romanis, the process of receiving those crossing the border remains loosely coordinated without a clear system for providing assistance or accompanying those crossing into the country.

In Bulgaria, more than 108,000 people (including around 18,000 children) have crossed the border from Ukraine and the steady flow of people arriving into the country is intensifying. Even though roughly 60,000 people have transited and continued their onward journey to Turkey and Western European countries, this has now left just over 50,000 people remaining in the territory of the country looking for solutions.



THE CARITAS RESPONSE

One month into the conflict, Caritas Ukraine has assisted around 211,350 persons and provided over 89,000 food baskets as well as 41,000 hygiene kits. Each day 1,400 people receive shelter through the local Caritas network and more than 540 tonnes of humanitarian supply cargo. In addition, Caritas-Spes Ukraine has reached 141,443 individuals and provided 48,321 people with shelter and accommodation. Since 24 February, food and other essential goods have been distributed to over 174,182 beneficiaries. In addition, 78,733 beneficiaries have been provided with other humanitarian supplies and logistical assistance, and over 21,587 people have been given protection assistance during this time of crisis.

After more than 18 days into the conflict Caritas Poland, through its extensive diocesan network, continues to address the most urgent needs of the refugees by providing “tents of hope”, shelter assistance, food distribution points, free sleeping bags and mattresses as well as necessary support for

unaccompanied children and orphans. Caritas Poland is also working towards scaling up their Rapid Response Appeal in partnership with the UNHCR, and preparing approximately 2,500 places for Ukrainian children with foster families and family children’s homes.

Meanwhile Caritas Romania and its diocesan Caritas are operating 12 centres across the country, providing short-term accommodation, food, and basic services for around 350 individuals. Together with their partners, Caritas Romania works towards setting up additional centres and completed an initial cross-border transfer of humanitarian assistance materials to partner Caritas Kolomyia in western Ukraine.

Since the onset of the crisis, Caritas Bulgaria - through its diocesan structures and the local Catholic Church - has been providing critical accommodation and humanitarian assistance to those who have crossed the borders from Ukraine. To date, the efforts and

support of Caritas Bulgaria have largely been aimed at meeting the basic needs of arriving vulnerable refugees including the elderly, families, mothers and children.

Caritas Hungary has stood by refugees by providing transport, accommodation and catering for people arriving in their country, Transcarpathia (Ukraine) and in their national and cross-border organisations. Between 2 and 20 March, volunteers and staff welcomed approximately 55,000 people at the Eastern Railway Station, where they

provided weary refugees with food and information. For almost a month now, the Caritas base in Barabash have received 10,000 people - children, mothers and the elderly - arriving from Kyiv, Donetsk, and Kharkiv. Besides providing temporary accommodation, staff and volunteers organised onward travel arrangements and prepared travel packages and toiletries for refugees. In addition, Caritas also provides a regular service in the transit waiting room in the BOK hall.



CARITAS STORIES





CARITAS - SPES UKRAINE

Berdyansk:

A city occupied
only physically

The day before the start of a full-scale Russian war against Ukraine

I am so worried. We are trapped here both from the sea and from the east... However, I do not panic although I am really scared. It feels like a threat is looming over us but I know God holds everything in His hands.

The morning of February 24. The beginning of a full-scale war

A few hours after the first bombings:

There is no time to talk, we set up a bomb shelter, make sandwiches and accommodate people.

These are our short conversations with Yaroslava, a colleague who has been working for Caritas-Spes Berdyansk, for more than 9 years. When the war broke out in her city, she moved with her daughter and husband to the Caritas social centre. There they immediately began to equip the basement which has an earthen floor unsuitable for human habitation.

This was the only possible shelter in their entire area.

They took mattresses and blankets from the children's camp, food and water. They tried to spread information through messengers that one can hide if necessary in this basement. 20 people came on the first night, and on the second night

even more. At night, due to the explosions, they could not sleep at all, so they prepared breakfast for the morning." We did our job so that there was not enough time for anxious thoughts," says Yaroslava.

In a few days Berdyansk was completely occupied. Completely, but only physically, not mentally. However, on February 27, the city began living in a different reality: without gas, communications, but with Russian television - the main tool of the propaganda war. Purely physical occupation does not suit Russia. She is constantly striving to capture also hearts and heads.

Yaroslava recalls: "Goods began to disappear in stores. Pharmacies were closed. We began to prepare hot lunches to feed children with hot food at least once a day. They came to us with jars and we gave takeaway lunches. We were afraid to attract attention with crowds near our centre."

Yaroslava and her family were evacuated from Berdyansk on March 22 when a humanitarian corridor was organised for Mariupol residents who had previously been deported to Berdyansk. They joined the evacuation column and were able to leave for Zaporizhzhia, where they were met by Bishop Jan Sobilo.

"How does Berdyansk live during the occupation?" If you search in Google "News Berdyansk", you will see something like this: "In occupied

Berdyansk, the Russians shot a local resident”; “Residents of captured Berdyansk went to a rally in front of the occupiers”; “Russian invaders kidnap a priest of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in Berdyansk”; “The Russians took out five ships with Ukrainian grain from Berdyansk”. But there is even worse news that Google will not tell. Rumours began to spread about patriots disappearing somewhere in Berdyansk and when you spoke with a person yesterday, and there is no connection with him today, and no one saw him - it's very scary. We see what is happening in Mariupol, it is only an hour to drive from us, and what is happening in other small towns is really scary, “says Yaroslava.

Currently in the Caritas-Spes Berdyansk social centre there are only 7 employees left. The director of the centre, Victoria, says that the kitchen will be open while there is an opportunity to cook. Every day the centre provides more than 60 hot lunches for children and about 10 food kits for families in need. Berdyansk is holding on, despite all, contrary to the plans of the occupiers.

According to statistics collected by Caritas Spes Ukraine, the number of civilian victims is about 5,000, including 306 children. The UN has given a lower figure but notes that it is currently difficult to objectively estimate the losses. The only fact that remains unambiguous is that in

this war, the greatest losses suffer namely the civilians.

More than 9 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes. 6,600,000 have become internally displaced persons. 3,626,546 refugees have crossed the border, among them 1,770,000 children. More than 2,000 proven facts of shelling of civilian infrastructure (houses, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, etc.) have been recorded. Irpin, Bucha, Borodyanka, Gostomel, Vorzel, Ivankiv, Chernihiv, Vasylykiv, Klavdiyev, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Volnovakha, Mariupol, Okhtyrka, Stanytsia Luhanska, Shchastia, Severodonetsk, Konotop, Lebedyn, Mepostia, Melitopol, Trostyanets, Isium, Energodar Rubizhne and Berdyansk, have become cities with critical infrastructure, and some of them have become the ghost towns.

From the very beginning of the Russian aggression, the centres of the Caritas-Spes Ukraine Mission and the parish of the Roman Catholic Church of Ukraine have created a powerful network of aid:

1) In the west of Ukraine places for settlement and support of internally displaced persons have been created, and heating and food supply points have been organised for people waiting to cross the border. The central part of Ukraine has become a transit haven for internally displaced persons.

2) To the south of Kyiv, north and east, the Mission has set up shelters for people and provided them with necessities. Simultaneously, with these areas of assistance, the Mission has initiated humanitarian assistance, established humanitarian hubs and logistics routes, as well as its own network of transit routes for the distribution of humanitarian

assistance throughout Ukraine. In the month since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Mission has provided more than 300,000 social services to more than 145,000 people affected by the war.

Caritas - Spes Ukraine is grateful to the Holy Father for His support and truly effective prayer.



CARITAS UKRAINE

“Only a jumper
and a jacket
remain of my life.”

The story of
Anton



Anton Cherezov's family spent two weeks in a basement with their two children, aged 7 and 8 months old. Anton remembers his story of leaving the occupied village near Kyiv down to the smallest detail. But the nightmare of war began for him earlier than for the other members of his family. Anton was an employee of the Antonov State Enterprise.

On February 24, he was at the Gostomel airport where our legendary plane "Mriya" – the largest plane in the world – is located. Standing with a colleague outside, Anton saw a gray rocket with small wings. It hits a military unit nearby. Then the Russian invasion on Ukraine began. About 10 a.m. Anton got home and then over 30 enemy helicopters flew over his head, heading towards the Gostomel airport.

"Since the 24th of February, my family – me, my wife, 7-year-old son, 8-month-old daughter, my parents and a sister with a disability – have spent 14 days in the cellar," says Anton. "Our village Gavrylivka is located between Borodyanka, Gostomel and Bucha. There, the villages are completely occupied by Russian troops. From the first day, a convoy of Russian military equipment marched through the neighboring village for about 2 hours. Some of the people counted about 600 units there. From the second day, they have already

occupied all the forests in the area," he adds. Anton's house is located in the area of active shelling by the occupiers. He recalls that it was impossible to go outside because of non-stop shelling. Anton chopped firewood and twigs to prepare food on the fire. We tried to wash a little. In general, the family had to sit in a damp cellar all the time.

He was looking for possible options for salvation. One of them was the crossing of the Irpin River towards Guta-Katyuzhanska and further to Kyiv. But there it was necessary to cross on water. At that time the daytime temperature was minus 5 degrees. So it was almost impossible to cross the river with the children. Anton decided to go to his relatives, who also lived in Gavrilivka, to consult about leaving. I reached one intersection and saw a line of cars with the inscription "children". The inscription was intended for Russian troops to not shoot although no one could give any guarantees. People just got in cars and drove to save the children because the situation was difficult: sub-zero temperatures, damp basements, no light, no water and no gas. Russian aircraft fly over tree canopies - helicopters two metres above, and planes around three metres. They are not visible due to the insane speed. You can only hear the roar of a fighter accelerating."

From the driver at the head of the line he encountered, Anton learned that they were just going randomly towards the village of Borodyanka because no one knows the road. With the intention of catching up with the convoy as soon as possible, the man quickly returned home and in 40 minutes he and his wife, sister, and children were already in the car. They literally took only the essentials, which did not include a razor, toothbrush, or even a change of clothes for a child.

The occupiers have already stopped them at the checkpoint for 3-5 km. Soon, on the way, the family had to see terrible things: a mile-and-a-half brown road, where the blood was mixed with the swamp; civilians were maimed and people died near them. And in the nearby forests they saw tanks and equipment of the occupying forces. After getting out of there, they went to Makariv where they soon came across a convoy with signs that read "fugitives from home". The biggest problem for all of them was that no one knew where to go. People in despair pushed the children into cars and fled. The convoy rode through forests and fields.

"When we finally got to the settlement and saw people at the bus stop, I asked where we were," says Anton. They answered in Makariv. Information was received on the radio from the phone that fighting was going on in Makariv. "I asked where to go? I was shown towards the

Zhytomyr highway. We went. Powerful artillery explosions were heard along the way," he said. Before leaving for the Zhytomyr highway, they were stopped again by the Ukrainian military who were checking the situation to see whether it would be safe for them to go to the open wide highway with four lanes. Anton recalls that at that moment he was terribly shaken both by his experience and by the fear of continuing on this road, which could be the end of their journey. The family moved to Zhytomyr, then to Vinnytsia, and from there to Kamianets-Podilskyi where they were able to spend the night.

The next day the family left for Chernivtsi, and from there to Kolomyia. For two days on the road, everyone had one wish - to wash. Anton's family was housed overnight in a private kindergarten. "We got a chance to wash ourselves. Our little doll became fluffy and joyful. And our son, after two weeks in the basement and two days in the car, kept running and running around the big room of the kindergarten," said Anton. What impressed him the most was how easily the people from Caritas entrusted him, a complete stranger, with the key to the room and gave him everything he had. So when he brought his relatives to the border, he returned to Kolomyia. "I had nowhere to go. And my girls said that in this case it is best in Caritas Kolomyia because there maybe I can do something,"

Anton Cherezov became a volunteer at Caritas on the second day and lived on a couch in the assembly hall. “Want to see what’s left of my former life?” He leads to his bed and shows his shoulder, a sweater and a jacket. It turns out that

he’s lived 30 years, made good money, built something... And then, stayed in the cellar for 14 days, and has nothing.... All progress went to zero.



CARITAS POLAND

Katarzyna and
Wiktorja. Mother
and daughter
volunteer for
caritas logistics
center in Lublin



Katarzyna Kręglicka and her daughter Wiktorija, 6, have been volunteers at the Caritas Logistics Center in Lublin for about a week. They stopped counting the days. After connecting with people on Facebook who were hosting Ukrainian refugees in Lublin, they collected and donated items these families needed. They asked around about where else help was needed.

The images of the war in Ukraine didn't let Katarzyna sit still. She had to do something and contacted Caritas. At the Caritas logistics center, incoming relief supplies are sorted, packed and prepared for onward transport to Ukraine day and night. Katarzyna's job currently only involves working on weekends, so she has some free time.

She is a make-up artist, but it is currently Lent and no weddings are being celebrated. From morning to

night, she sorts relief goods together with Victoria. Katarzyna's husband Raffo is currently at home taking care of their three-year-old daughter Emilia.

“Some days I also work at the border, helping elderly people and mothers with their children. I can't sit around doing nothing and have to lend a hand myself”. Katarzyna

The older daughter Wiktorija is proud to support her mother. She does not miss kindergarten. It is boring there, she says. She has already distributed her own toys to Ukrainian children at the train station in Lublin in the first days of the war. Among them were some of her favorite toys, her mother says. Wiktorija helps sort, pack and label the packages. Sometimes she paints a heart on them for the people of Ukraine.



CARITAS ROMANIA

“I feel safe here”.

A mother and her
son fleeing the war
find a new home
in Botiz



“When I left my home in the town of Irpin (near Kyiv), bombs fell from all directions. I started to build a house there but now everything is destroyed,” tells Irina (name changed) about her escape from Ukraine. She drove to Romania with her four-year-old son. For the past week, she has been living in the refugee centre opened by Caritas Maramureş in partnership with the Greek Catholic parish of Botiz, a village a few kilometres from Satu Mare. Now the woman is smiling again. “I feel safe here. Everything is very good here,” says Irina. Another mother agrees with her. She can’t speak English or Romanian but, with her hands, she draws a heart. And then she says one word she has already learned: “Thank you!”

The refugee centre has been set up in a building in the parish yard. The original plan was to open a home for elderly people. Still, when the war broke out in Ukraine, Fr. Nicolae Huzău, the community’s priest, decided to make the building available for those seeking protection in Romania. “When we saw what was happening in the neighbouring country, we couldn’t stay away. We are Christians and we are glad that they know they are safe with us,” says Fr. Nicolae.

In a joint effort, dozens of volunteers from the village prepared the building. On a single weekend, they completed the bathrooms, which were missing sanitary ware, and equipped the bedrooms. On 1

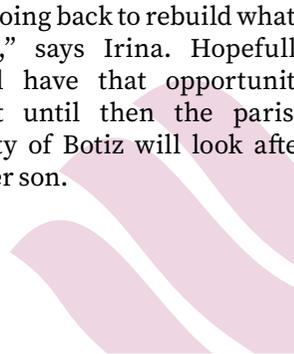
March, the first group of refugees arrived. Most of them were sent directly from Halmeu customs to the centre in Botiz. There were nights when up to 50 people slept in the centre. Volunteers prepared meals, guided them on their way, or drove them to the train station, the doctor or the hospital.

In the first two weeks, most people spent only one night in the centre in Botiz before continuing their journey to Bucharest or to countries in the West. And it wasn’t just Ukrainians who benefited from the centre’s support - there were also people from many other countries such as India, Lebanon, and Turkmenistan.

Meanwhile, more and more families - mothers and children - have decided to stay in Botiz for the time being. For several days now, the older children have been going to the village school and the younger ones to kindergarten.

“I want to go back to Ukraine. I like it there, and I am at home there. I feel good here but, when the war is over, I’m going back to rebuild what I left there,” says Irina. Hopefully Irina will have that opportunity soon. But until then the parish community of Botiz will look after her and her son.

.



CARITAS MOLDOVA

Fleeing home
again: Twice
displaced at
Moldovan Border



At border crossings at the Moldova and Ukraine border, people are exhausted, weary, grieving. Children can be seen dragging their suitcases, and mothers and grandparents rest where they can for a few hours, maybe a few nights. At tents along the road and at bus terminals and transit points, they seek warmth, food, coffee—and information. They are having to make decisions they never intended on having to make, under extreme duress: Where do I go? Who can I trust?

Many women came without their husbands, the children without their fathers. There is little privacy—no space to collect yourself, explain to your children what’s happened, and answer their questions about why you are living in a car or why it’s OK to go to the bathroom outside.

Mahamudoff Gazym stands in a small, crowded bus terminal, charging his phone. His eyes are red and he is exhausted.

“I haven’t slept in three days,” he says.

Mahamudoff is among the thousands of Ukrainian refugees who have crossed the border at Otaci, Moldova, and struggling to keep his family comfortable and unafraid while figuring out what is next. Well into his 60s, Mahamudoff is with his wife and three grandchildren. They crossed into Moldova three days before and have been sleeping in

their car ever since.

“You want to see where I live?” he asked.

In a dirt parking lot just after the border crossing, Mahamudoff walks to his car about three blocks, or five minutes, from the bus terminal. His grandchildren are peering out the window and waving. The car is packed with their belongings—not an inch of space.

“We are waiting here with no concrete plans for now,” he says. “My little grandchildren are asking me, ‘who is making all the sounds of the bombs?’ and I don’t know what to tell them. They keep asking me how long we are going to sleep in the car.”

For many people, their safety net was already worn thin. Years of conflict along the eastern border have already displaced 1.3 million people from their homes and claimed 14,000 lives. In fact, some of those who were displaced eight years ago find themselves leaving everything behind yet again.

And for Mahamudoff? He is living the experience of being a refugee once again. He had fled to Ukraine nearly 20 years earlier from Azerbaijan where he had built a new life.

“Now I am a refugee again, but where to? I don’t know,” he says.

Mahamudoff is surrounded by

people who came from different parts of Ukraine – on foot, or by bus or car— and, like him, have no place to go, no money to pay for shelter somewhere else, no extended family in another country. They're really at the mercy of the charity, the hospitality and compassion that is shown to them.

CRS is supporting Caritas Moldova to provide food and relief items to refugees at government-run reception centres in areas near border crossings, as well as providing comprehensive relief and shelter at Caritas's accommodation centres in the capital.

Caritas Moldova support includes:

Assistance transporting refugees from the border and providing them with information;

Providing accommodation, food, counselling at Caritas centres;

Mobilising community members to provide and care for childrvacant properties for refugee families, and to bring such properties up to minimum standards of accommodation;

Providing cash assistance to people to buy items in stores and while on the move.

“I know this is happening but what my eyes can see, my heart cannot accept. I want the world to see what is going on. I don't want war. We are very grateful to people in the country. They are helping us so much,” says Mahamudoff.





CARITAS HUNGARY

The charity
refugees is in the
long haul

From the very first minutes, the catholic charity Caritas Hungary has stood by the refugees. They also supported the transport, accommodation, and catering of refugees arriving in Transcarpathia or Hungary and their national and cross-border organisations.

For almost a month now, children, mothers, and elderly arriving from the border crossing point have been received day and night at the Caritas base in Barabas. Families come tired, hungry, having traveled several days to Hungary, most from Kyiv, Donetsk, and Kharkiv. In the past period, at least 10,000 people have visited the site. The Caritas organized their accommodation and onward travel, and they were given travel packages and toiletries. In addition, from today onwards, Caritas also provides a regular service in the transit waiting room in the BOK hall. Between 2 and 20 March, volunteers and staff welcomed approximately 55,000 people at the Eastern Railway

Station, providing food and information.

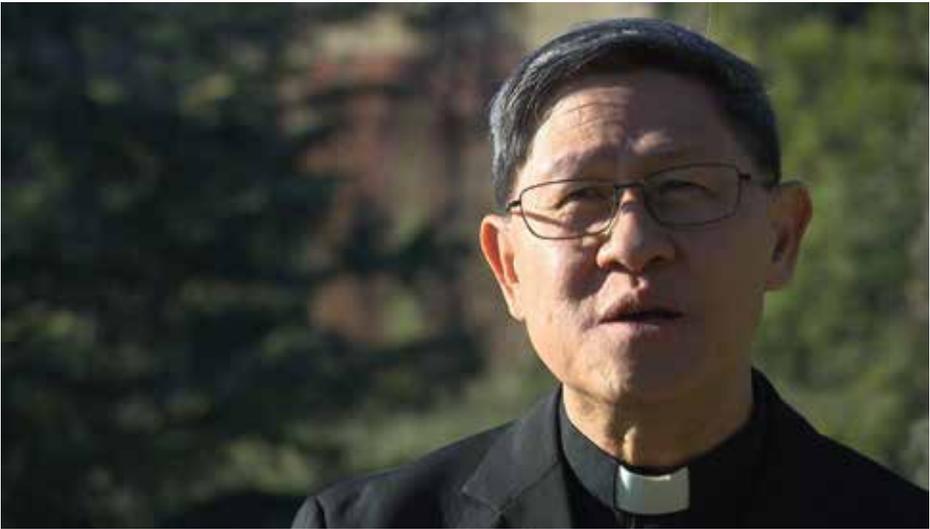
The director of the national Caritas Gábor Écsy said: “We moved on to the transition to a more permanent solution. The work of organising refugees’ care, onward travel, accommodation, and social tasks can now be carried out in a suitable location. The temporary accommodation for our volunteers has also been made more comfortable. At the same time, we continue to support Caritas cross-border organisations, which now also have to care for internally displaced persons alongside disadvantaged Hungarian families. In recent weeks, we have sent nearly 45 million Hungarian forints in material and material aid to Transcarpathia. Every day we bring them two truckloads of basic foodstuffs for cooking so that they can keep the soup kitchens running in this tough period.”





CARDINAL TAGLE ON WAR IN UKRAINE: No weapon can kill hope

by Alessandro Gisotti for Vatican News



Under the bombs but working non-stop. This is how Caritas operators are bringing help to those in need in Ukraine devastated by the Russian military aggression. Despite the difficulties on the ground, Caritas Ukraine and Caritas-Spes Ukraine continue to serve the population. Since the beginning of the conflict, assistance has been provided to over 160 thousand people. It ranges from food distribution to the provision of housing, but also psychological assistance. Extraordinary is also the commitment of all the local Caritas

offices of Europe, and in particular in those countries - such as Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary and Slovakia - which have received the largest number of refugees fleeing the war. We asked the President of Caritas Internationalis and Prefect of "Propaganda Fide", Luis Antonio Tagle, to dwell on this commitment in a world that is strangled by pandemics and conflicts and finds it difficult to look to the future with confidence.

Cardinal Tagle, for two years now humanity has been grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic. Now the war in Ukraine, unleashed by Russia and the fear - of many - of a new world conflict. Where to find hope in the face of a time that seems so distressing?

As Christians, we must trust that hope is always in God. In this season of Lent, the Church - through the Readings - invites us to renew our hope in Jesus Christ. And this hope means the triumph of love, of mercy. We now see concrete signs of this hope. No gun can kill hope, the goodness of the spirit in the human person. There are so many testimonies to this. The hope in Jesus Christ and His Resurrection is true and is seen precisely in the testimony of so many people.

Pope Francis at last Sunday's Angelus spoke of "an unacceptable military aggression." On 6 March he had said that this "is a war," not "a special military operation." You are a Filipino, not a European, what emotions does a war in the heart of Europe arouse in you?

First of all, sadness. I feel sad seeing the images, hearing the news and being close to this place where there is war. I feel sad and also a bit confused because humanity has not learned the lessons of history! After so much war and destruction, we remain so hard at heart! When I listen to the stories of my parents who lived through World War II, I can't imagine - not even imagine! - the poverty, the

suffering they endured. That generation continues to carry the wounds of war in their bodies as well, and they still have a wounded state of mind. When, when will we learn? Those are my feelings. We truly hope that we will learn from the lessons of history.

Caritas Internationalis was born 70 years ago to address the humanitarian needs that emerged from World War II. Today, what is the biggest challenge for the Caritas network with respect to the conflict in Ukraine?

It seems to me that the biggest challenge of the Caritas family network is what is precisely inscribed in its mission. The mission to always remind the world that every conflict, every disaster has a human face. Caritas' response is always humanitarian. For example, the war in Ukraine and conflicts in other countries of the world are generally presented as political, military conflicts but people are forgotten! With our mission, Caritas reminds the world that war is not a military, political issue, but it is, first of all, a human issue.

The Ukrainian people are giving an incredible testimony of courage, while its neighboring countries - in particular, we think of Poland, Romania - are offering a testimony of exceptional solidarity. What lesson can we learn, we who are "near" but still far from this war in Ukraine?

We must be grateful for the witness of the people in Ukraine and in neighboring countries and even of those further away who are sending aid and offering assistance. The lesson for me is this: in the desert of violence, the human person has the capacity to be good. The lesson for me is that even in a bad situation like war, a better humanity can emerge. But there is a challenge: the formation of the heart, of the mind. Conflicts, how do they begin? In the heart, in the decision of people. The lesson lies in the way families form their children in the values of respect for others, of listening, of compassion, of choosing a path of justice, of dialogue instead of revenge, of violence.

Is there a story, an image from this war - we are hearing about and seeing so many - that has struck you in a particular way, that somewhat represents the pain but also the strength, the goodness of people?

It is difficult to choose, but - perhaps as a Christian and as a bishop - the images that struck me most are those of people praying. This faith of the mothers kneeling before the Sacrament. Prayer, the network of prayer that unites humanity, for me, is a sign of hope despite the war. The Lord is with us. the Lord loves his family.





Total number of people assisted in one month of crisis



352000



48 331

Shelter



174200

Food



94000

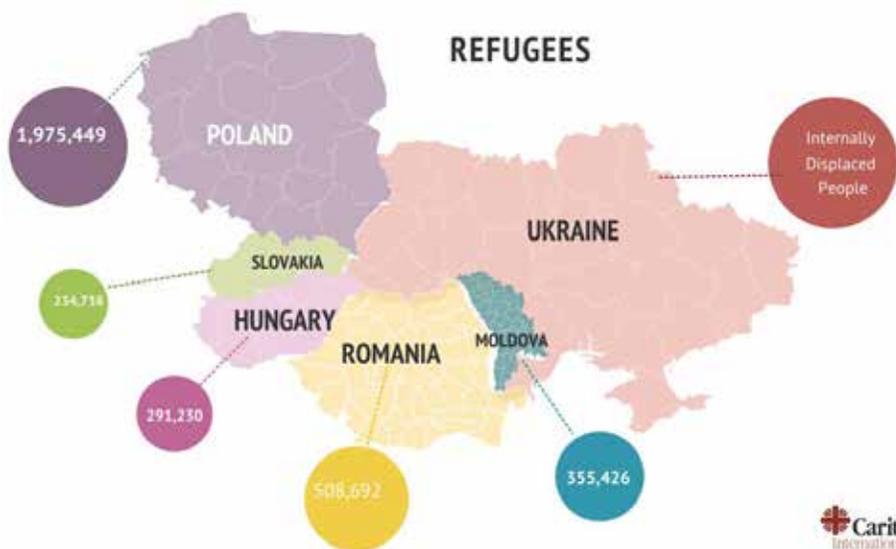
Hygiene kits



19500

Medications

REFUGEES





www.caritas.org