



Voices of Children Charitable Foundation
NGO "Kharkiv Institute of Social Research"

CHILDREN AND WAR IN UKRAINE

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Introduction

The second month of the war has passed. The number of the perished children increased to 213, of the wounded ones - to 389¹. Terrible events in Bucha, Gostomel and other towns in Kyiv region and in Mariupol give the understanding that the number of injured and dead children is much higher. The constant shelling of houses and streets in many Ukrainian cities and towns, the obstruction and shooting of humanitarian corridors, the use of illicit weapons, ill-treatment and torture in the occupied territories suggest that there will be more. To all this are the illegal removal of children from Ukraine, the risks of their adoption in Russia, and the recruitment of teenagers to take part in combat.

It is scary to record and describe the plenty of war crimes committed by the Russian military, because of which absolutely everyone suffers, including children. It is scary to understand that the consequences of war include orphanhood, health problems, children's mental trauma and stress. However, the collection and analysis of such data is necessary to understand the scale of the problems and the steps that should be taken first.

We offer you a report that briefly describes the key events of the second month of the war, related to the situation, problems and needs of children in Ukraine and abroad.

The methodology is based on the analysis of statistics, data from official state sources, media materials, as well as data obtained from a survey of parents among the internally displaced persons that dwell in compact settlements. Eleven interviews were also conducted with psychologists and parents under the occupation and in the active combat areas, as well as with families who were forced to move to the west and center of Ukraine and abroad.

¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-213-ditei-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf>

Children under occupation and in active combat areas

The deaths and injuries of children as a result of the Russian army actions in the territory of Ukraine cannot be described only in terms of accidental victims of the war. Such a description is possible only in the context of violations of international humanitarian law, as the absolute majority of children were killed and wounded as a result of war crimes by the invading army.

The main international law governing the protection of victims of war, as well as limiting the methods and means of warfare are set out in the Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907, the Geneva Conventions for the Protection of Victims of War of 1949. Besides, the rights of children in armed conflict are governed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Below are the examples of war crimes in Ukraine committed by Russia that directly affect Ukrainian children.

Prohibition of specific methods and means of warfare

The Hague Convention of 1907

Article 23. *It is especially prohibited: to use poison or poisoned weapon; to declare that there will be no mercy; use weapons, shells or substances that can cause unnecessary suffering*

Unfortunately, illicit means of warfare have been used in Ukraine many times. These include, above all, the use of weapons, shells or substances that can cause unnecessary suffering. These are phosphorus bombs, cluster shells, incendiary bombs and so on. Such weapons inflict more severe injuries and damage than other

munitions. For example, white phosphorus causes not just burns, but deep wounds, from bone damage to tissue death.

On March 30-31, the Russians **used phosphate munitions several times in the settlements of the Donetsk region**. In particular, the occupiers used such shells in Maryinka, Krasnohorivka and Novomykhailivka. Eleven wounded civilians from the Mariinsky community were taken to the Kurakhiv City Hospital, including four children.²

On April 4, the occupiers fired cluster munitions at Mykolayiv. Besides residential buildings, Russian troops fired with prohibited munitions at the city hospital, the regional hospital, the center for preventive diseases, the orphanage, 11 kindergartens, 12 schools, 1 vocational school, 2 branches of out-of-school educational institutions³. 10 adults were killed, including a child⁴, and 61 persons were injured.

² <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/zbroya-rosiji-v-ukrajini-kasetni-bombi-ta-fosforni-boyepripasi-shcho-ce-de-vikoristovuvali-50231969.html>

³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/obstril-httpstelegraphfileb9e1cd5e4e48577f05787jpg-s-maryanske-zaboronenimi-kasetnimi-bojepripasami-rozpocato-dosudove-rozsliduvannya>

⁴ <https://www.nta.ua/fosforni-ta-kasetni-boyeprypasy-rosiya-zastosovuye-proty-ukrayincziv-zaboronenu-zbroyu-shho-vidomo/>



Cluster munitions in the village of Maryanske, Dnipropetrovsk region

departure of local residents during the siege of settlements, taking food from the families, looting local shops, destroying facilities where food is produced or stored, and so on. Some settlements are already in the state or are on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe.

According to the United Nations, nearly half of the 3.2 million children that haven't moved from their homes, may be at risk of malnutrition. About 1.4 million people were left without access to water. Another 4.6 million people have only limited access to it.⁶



On the night of April 10, 2022, Russian military **carried out artillery shelling with PTM-1 cluster shells in the Nemyshlyany and Kyiv districts of Kharkiv**. As a result, a number of residential buildings were damaged.⁵

In addition, in the occupied territories, the **Russian army uses hunger as a prohibited method of warfare**. In particular, this is performed by the inadmissibility of humanitarian aid, impeding the

Geneva Convention

Article 55. *The occupying state is obliged to provide the population with food and medical supplies by all available means; in particular, to supply the necessary food, medicals and other supplies if the resources of the occupied territory are insufficient*

On March 25, in **Melitopol, the Russian military blocked the distribution of humanitarian aid to the city's residents** - 13 tons of food and two tons of baby food and medicine ⁷.

*The queue for humanitarian aid in the school yard in Chernihiv.*⁸

⁵ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/obstril-dvox-raioniv-xarkova-zaboronenimi-kasetnimi-snaryadami-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

⁶⁶ https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/ukraine-russia-putin-news-04-11-22/h_35115a10f3f74af44e2fcd470f3c7b71

⁷ <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-dopomoga-melitopol-pereshkoda/31770598.html>

⁸ Photo by Yevhen Maloletka

On April 11, in Kherson, the Russian military **seized a humanitarian warehouse with medicals, food stuff and baby food.**⁹

On April 23, another **evacuation of Mariupol residents was disrupted.**¹⁰

Attacking or bombing civilian objects



The village of Vilkhivka, Kharkiv region, after the deoccupation of the Russian armed forces

attacks, the Russian military is destroying homes, schools, hospitals, shops, historical and cultural sites. Even after the end of the war, it will be impossible to return and live in a large number of towns and villages, as the infrastructure there is practically destroyed.

On April 2, 2022, the Russian occupiers **fired artillery at a hospital in Balaklia, Kharkiv Oblast.** At that time there were patients and staff. The shelling damaged the hospital building.¹⁴

¹¹The vast majority of attacks by the Russian military are aimed at civilians and civilian objects. In Mariupol, 95% of buildings were destroyed¹², in Kharkiv region, more than 2,000 residential buildings were destroyed¹³. There is almost nothing left of Okhtyrka in Sumy region, Volnovakha in Donetsk region, Gostomel in Kyiv region and many other settlements of Ukraine. There are no military facilities near most of the places of impact of the projectile of Russian invaders.

As a result of non-selective

The Hague Convention of 1907

Article 25. *It is prohibited to attack or bomb unprotected cities, settlements, houses or buildings in any way.*

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention

Article 51. *Non-selective attacks are prohibited. Non-selective attacks include attacks not aimed at specific military installations.*

⁹ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=817255505896940&id=100028374940771

¹⁰ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/444>

¹¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/zvilnena-vilxivka-na-xarkivshhini-maize-povnistyu-znishhena-okupantami-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

¹² <https://nv.ua/ukraine/events/rossiya-razrushila-95-zdaniy-mariupolya-50233992.html>

¹³ <https://2day.kh.ua/ua/kharkow/na-kharkivshchyni-zruynovano-ponad-2000-zhytlovykh-budynkiv>

¹⁴ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/obstril-rosiiskimi-viiskami-likarni-v-okupovanii-balakliyi-na-xarkivshhini-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>



As of April 23, **347 health facilities had been damaged, 36 of them destroyed.** In addition, 78 ambulances were disabled.¹⁵

*The hospital in Balaklia, Kharkiv region, after being shelled*¹⁶

As of April 24, **1,500 educational institutions were damaged** by the war, and **102 of them were completely destroyed.**¹⁷

As a result of constant shelling of settlements, numerous civilian victims are registered, often children they are who die or suffer injuries of varying severity.



*Kindergarten in the village of Bogdanovka, Kyiv region*¹⁸

On April 9, as a result of artillery shelling by the Russian military in the village of Stanislav in Kherson region, a **14-year-old girl got a gunshot wound to the neck with spinal cord injury.**¹⁹

On April 11, the Russian armed forces fired at the civilian infrastructure of Kharkiv. **A one-and-a-half-month-old child and a 12-year-old teenager died. Another 4 children aged 1, 4, 5 and 9 were injured.**²⁰

¹⁵ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3463962-vorogi-poskodili-347-ukrainskih-likaren.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/obstril-rosiiskimi-viiskami-likarni-v-okupovanii-balakliyi-na-xarkivshhini-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

¹⁷ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-213-ditei-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf>

¹⁸ Photo from the Ukrainian Witness Project <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/04/14/248252/>

¹⁹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-183-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf>

²⁰ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-191-ditina-zaginula-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf>



A 4-year-old boy got a severe laceration wound to the back. He was returning home with his father when the enemy shelling of one of the districts of Kyiv began. The shell hit the yard - a father and son got shrapnel wounds.²¹

On April 13, armed forces of the aggressor state shelled the village of Nadezhdivka in Kherson region. A **15-year-old girl was wounded in the chest** as

a result of an enemy projectile hitting a household. The teenager is currently in hospital, her condition is serious.²²

On April 18, due to the shelling of a residential area in the village of Berestovo, Bakhmut district, Donetsk region, a **16-year-old boy was injured**.²³



A woman near the body of her 15-year-old son, who died on April 15 during the shelling of residential buildings in Kharkiv²⁴

²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/1923262167984511/posts/3037697449874305/>

²² <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/vorozii-obstril-s-nadezhdivka-na-xersonshini-z-poranennyam-ditini-rozpozato-rozsliduvannya>

²³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-205-ditei-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-uf>

²⁴ Photo by Mstislav Chornov

Murders and shelling of children

Geneva Convention

Article 3. *The following acts concerning persons who is not engaged in active combat shall be prohibited and shall be prohibited at any time and in any place:*

a) *violence against life and personality, including all forms of murder, mutilation, ill-treatment and torture;*

b) *hostage-taking;*

c) *abuse of human dignity, including abusive and degrading treatment.*

woman were staying, after that they fired, killing the child on the spot and murdering the mother two days later in the same basement.²⁷ **The body of a 15-year-old boy with gunshot wounds** was also found in Vorzel.²⁸

Besides the children killed and injured as a result of attacks on civilian objects, there have been cases of deliberate murder and shelling of children of all ages.

On April 16, in the Novovorontsov district of the Kherson region, the Russian **occupiers fired at a group of teenagers, killing one boy.**²⁵.

Tortured and burnt bodies of three people, one of which belongs to a child, were found in Izium district of Kharkiv region.²⁶

During the occupation of the town Vorzel, Kyiv Region, the aggressor's servicemen **threw a smoke grenade into the basement of a house where a 14-year-old child and a**

Cruel degrading treatment and torture

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 37. *States Parties shall ensure that no child is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention

Article 77. 1. *Children are treated with special respect and are protected from any kind of indecent assault. The parties to the conflict shall provide any protection and assistance they need, given their age or for any other reason.*

The events in a number of settlements in Kyiv, Chernihiv and other regions witness the repeated cases of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and torture by the Russian occupiers against children, which led to injuries and deaths. Numerous reports of rape and sexual abuse of children have also been reported.

During the registration of criminal offenses committed by Russian military in the towns of Gostomel and Bucha, Kyiv region, **bodies of 4 and 10-year-old children with injuries were found**, as well as the **burnt body of a 17-year-old boy.**²⁹

²⁵ <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/u-hersonskiy-oblasti-okupanti-obstrilyali-ditey-odna-ditina-zaginula-2039245.html>

²⁶ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-v-ukrayini-zaginuli-176-ditei>

²⁷ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf-v-ukrayini-zaginulo-165-ditei>

²⁸ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-183-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf>

²⁹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf-v-ukrayini-zaginuli-197-ditei>

In the villages of Borodyanka and Korolivka in Kyiv region, **burnt bodies of a 16-year-old girl and a 10-year-old boy were found**.³⁰

In Irpen, three Russian occupiers **with extreme cruelty raped and beat a woman and her 15-year-old daughter** in front of her another daughter. Both are dead.³¹

The **rapes of a 14-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy** were revealed in Bucha.³²

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 34. The States Parties are obliged to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

In the village of Yagidne, Chernihiv region, **residents were forced to stay in five small rooms of a bomb shelter throughout March**, where they were driven down by the Russian occupiers. Among the 350 detainees there were 65 children, including infants. Due to lack of space, people slept sitting, just on the sand, some days passed without light and access to fresh air³³.



Civilians in the basement of a school in the village of Yagidne, Chernihiv region³⁴

³⁰ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-191-ditina-zaginula-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf>

³¹ https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=526195135528430&id=100044138451142

³² <https://www.facebook.com/100002085647117/posts/5086917408054397/>

³³ <https://hromadske.ua/posts/konctabir-yagidne-rosiyani-cilij-misyac-trimali-v-pidvali-vse-selo>

³⁴ Photo by Olga Menyailo <https://hromadske.ua/posts/konctabir-yagidne-rosiyani-cilij-misyac-trimali-v-pidvali-vse-selo>

Kidnapping and forced deportation of children

Since the beginning of the war, the Russians have forcibly relocated more than 500,000 Ukrainians to Russia, including 121,000 children.³⁵ In March 2022, under the pretext of evacuation, **12 minor patients** of the Regional Children's Bone and Tuberculosis Center of Mariupol **were forcibly evacuated** by the Russian Armed Forces **to the temporarily occupied territory of the pseudo-republic of the DPR. Another 14 children** - pupils of two family-type orphanages - together with three foster parents were **illegally transported by the Russian occupiers from Mariupol to Rostov region of the Russian Federation.**³⁶

On April 20, it became known that in the village of Stara Buda, Kyiv region, as a result of the shelling of a family house, two children aged 6 and 8 were injured. On the same day they were **forcibly transported by the Russian military to the city of Mozyr in the Republic of Belarus.**³⁷

In April, the Russian occupiers, in cooperation with local traitors, **organized the forced deportation of more than 50 Izyum residents.** Buses with people crossed the state border at the Chuhunivka checkpoint and then headed in an unknown direction ³⁸.

People are deported to the most remote and depressed regions of Russia - Siberia, the Far East, the North Caucasus, Chechnya, Sakhalin, which will make it even more difficult to find and return Ukrainian citizens home³⁹. They are taken away their documents and personal belongings, means of communication. At the same time, documents are issued that prohibit leaving Russian regions for two years.

Geneva Convention

Article 49. *It is prohibited, regardless of the motives, to carry out forced individual or mass resettlement or deportation of persons under protection from the occupied territory to the territory of the occupying state or to the territory of any other state, regardless of whether it is occupied or not.*

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention

Article 78. *No party to the conflict shall take measures to evacuate children other than its own citizens to a foreign state, except in the case of temporary evacuation required for urgent health reasons or the treatment of children or, if they are not in the occupied territories, with their safety*

³⁵ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3462129-kislitsa-v-oon-zagarniki-ak-nacisti-vivozat-ukrainciv-iz-zahoplenih-teritorij.html>

³⁶ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/primusova-evakuaciya-ditei-z-mariupolya-do-rf-ta-psevdorespublik-rozpacato-rozsliduvannya>

³⁷ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-205-ditei-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-f>

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/max.strel.9/posts/1740435009497051>

³⁹ <https://www.dw.com/uk/rosiia-prymusovo-deportovala-piv-miliona-ukraintsiv-zelenskyi/a-61461946>



Deportation of Mariupol residents to Russia ⁴⁰

Filtration camps are an integral part of this replacement. At least 20,000 Ukrainians are being held in filtration camps on the Mangush-Nikolske-Yalta line and about 5-7,000 in the village of Bezymenne, Donetsk region.⁴¹ People are catastrophically short of food, warm things, medicine. According to deportees, in the camps they were brutally beaten. **Children over the age of 14 are also subjected to filtering**, which includes psychological and physical violence, phone checks, interrogations, pressure and threats.⁴²

Cases of separating children from their parents have been reported. Even more tragic is the situation with the possible adoption of abducted children from Ukraine. **Russian authorities are preparing a regulatory framework to transfer Ukrainian orphans to Russian families.**⁴³

Child abductions are also carried out as a means of obtaining weapons or influencing local authorities during the occupation of Ukrainian territories.

In late March, the Russian military **abducted two minor sons from a resident** of a town in Kharkiv region **to exchange for weapons he owned.**⁴⁴

On April 17, the Russian military **kidnapped the 16-year-old son of the head of the military administration** of Zaporozhia district Oleg Buryak at a checkpoint in Vasylivka.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2022/04/23/7341577/>

⁴¹ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3462129-kislitsa-v-oon-zagarniki-ak-nacisti-vivozat-ukrainciv-iz-zahoplenih-teritorij.html>

⁴² <https://hromadske.ua/posts/ya-prosila-boga-pomerti-shvidko-pro-golod-strah-i-filtracijnij-tabir-vustami-17-richnoyi-divchini-z-mariupolya>

⁴³ <https://news.liga.net/all/news/rossijskie-okkupanty-pohitili-ukrainskih-detey-teper-ih-hotyat-razdat-rossijanam>

⁴⁴ https://t.me/mvs_ukraine/10127

⁴⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/bonmtf/videos/502976684618450>

Recruitment and participation of children in the war

Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention

Article 77. *The Parties to the conflict shall take all practicable measures to ensure that children under the age of fifteen do not take a direct part in combat and, in particular, the Parties shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces.*

When recruiting people who have reached the age of fifteen but have not yet reached the age of eighteen, the parties to the conflict tend to prefer the elderly.

During the second month of the war, there were repeated cases of Ukrainian children being used in the war.

Thus, the Center for Combating Disinformation at the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine warned that Russia uses children deported from the territories temporarily seized by Moscow for propaganda purposes. Kremlin media spread disinformation about how "the Ukrainian regime, imitating the Third Reich, sends children to fight"⁴⁶.

Children are also recruited to take an indirect part in gathering or transmitting military information to the occupiers, transporting weapons, etc.

In the Kharkiv region, a **12-year-old teenager used the Internet and telegram channels to send information about the location of equipment, checkpoints and the servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine** with the intention of receiving a monetary reward. A similar fact was recorded in Luhansk region.

In Chernihiv region, during the occupation of one of the villages, a minor local resident was instructed by the Russian Armed Forces representatives to **conduct reconnaissance of the positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine**.

In Kharkiv region, a local 17-year-old resident distributed laudatory materials in support of the aggressor's actions in Ukraine via the YouTube channel⁴⁷.

In addition to the participation of children in the information war, the occupation authorities of the self-proclaimed People's Luhansk and Donetsk Republic are mobilizing children who took part in so-called "patriotic clubs" to join the ranks of illegal armed groups. The occupiers have been mobilizing underage members of these clubs since the age of 16. Among the teenagers there are already dead, in particular, Ivan Shifman, a member of the so-called military-patriotic sports club "Heirs of Victory" of the Territorial Headquarters of Komsomolsk NGO "Military-Patriotic Movement "Young Guard-Unarmy".⁴⁸

Recommendations

- Due to the significant continuous shelling, as well as the destruction of a large number of hospitals, schools and other children's institutions, the state's evacuation potential should be strengthened, especially for children from the occupied territories and the active combat areas. The situation in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Kherson regions needs immediate attention.

⁴⁶ https://t.me/znua_live/31797

⁴⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/irina.venediktova.31/posts/5402698946409663>

⁴⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/100044138451142/posts/522481019233175/?d=n>

- Due to the many dangers of occupation and combat, awareness-raising activities with parents are required. The importance for children to follow the rules of safe behavior during air strikes, in the bomb shelters and at home should be emphasized. Parents should limit their children's stay in places where they may be wounded or injured.
- It is necessary to promote the recording of all crimes committed by the Russian military, in particular those related to murder, mutilation, abuse and rape of children. An integral part of this process of forming trust and informing citizens of the necessity to apply to law enforcement agencies with their statements and evidence of the existing crimes.
- It is important to increase the delivery of humanitarian aid to epy settlements that are on the edge of a humanitarian catastrophe or already suffer from it. Preventive measures in such situations are as follows: forming the stocks of food, water and medicines in areas that may suffer from Russian aggression in the future.

Replacement of children in Ukraine and abroad

According to UNICEF, 4,8 million children were forced to leave their homes because of the war⁴⁹. About 2 million children went abroad and 2,8 million became internally displaced persons⁵⁰

This month evacuation from Donetsk, Luhansk, Cherson, Zaporizhia and Kharkiv regions has considerably increased. In a number of settlements of these regions the mayors again and again appealed and are still appealing to the local residents to evacuate totally. Regular trains and buses are arranged to the central and western regions of Ukraine, part of them are free of charge. Besides, **evacuation often involves the substantial risk of bombing and shelling by the Russian invaders.**



The car from Bucha, Kyiv region⁵¹

Thus, regular disruptions of humanitarian corridors and shootings at cars trying to leave the active combat areas have been recorded.

On March 31, **five buses came under the aiming enemy fire** as they tried to get into the besieged city of Chernihiv to evacuate people.⁵²

⁴⁹ <https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/majzhe-dvi-tretini-ukrajinskikh-ditej-buli-zmusheni-zalishiti-svoji-domivki-oon.html>

⁵⁰ https://twitter.com/UNICEF_UA/status/1517170288391335939?cxt=HHwWWhsC99diViY4qAAAA

⁵¹ Photo by Metin Aktas

⁵² <https://www.facebook.com/denisovaombudsman/posts/512451220236155>

On April 16, in the Iziurm district of the Kharkiv region, **the occupiers fired at a car in which a family from the city of Iziurm was trying to evacuate.** A 15-year-old girl was injured.⁵³

In April, while clearing the area in the Kyiv region, police found **the shot car and the bodies of a family** who tried to evacuate from the village of Gavronshchina. Among those killed were a 2-year-old boy, two women, a 14-year-old boy and his grandmother.



Children in the bomb shelter of the Azovstal plant in Mariupol have been waiting for the humanitarian corridor for 2 months. About 1,000 civilians, including children, remain in the basement of the plant.⁵⁴



An 11-year-old girl was shot in the jaw at a Russian military checkpoint as her family tried to leave Mariupol. When she was brought to a hospital in Zaporizhia, she was unconscious. The girl was immediately connected to a lung ventilation system. The child is much better now.⁵⁵

In addition, the facts of destruction of railways and shelling of railway stations have been recorded.

So, on April 7, Russians **bombed the railway station in Mykolaiv.**⁵⁶

⁵³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-202-ditini-zagynuli-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf-v-ukrayini>

⁵⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/100002085647117/posts/5086917408054397/>

⁵⁵ <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/04/5/248114/>

⁵⁶ <https://espresso.tv/rosiyani-rozbombili-zalznichniy-vokzal-u-mikolaevi-mer>



On April 8, **7 children died as a result of the OTR-21 Tochka-U shelling of the Kramatorsk railway station** in the Donetsk region, where more than 4,000 people were waiting to be evacuated.⁵⁷

Shelling of the Kramatorsk railway station⁵⁸

On April 18, during the morning shelling by Russian troops, **several missiles hit near the Main Railway Station in Lviv.**⁵⁹

A major problem during the evacuation is the separation of parents and children for an indefinite time. This happens due to different reasons: the ban for men to leave Ukraine; parents and children leaving the country separately before the war for vacations or other reasons and not being able to return home; the need to return to occupied territories and leaving kids with relatives, etc. An even worse situation is the loss of a child during evacuation and shelling.

Thus, on April 5, **a 4-year-old boy who was lost during an evacuation** from the Vyshhorod district of the Kyiv region **was found dead.**⁶⁰

On April 22, a unit of the National Guard of Ukraine in Rubizhne **found two children whose mother was missing.** Later, the children were transferred to their father in Poltava.⁶¹

Overall, after leaving for the safe territories of Ukraine, IDPs no longer face problems that existed at the beginning of the war. There is no heavy traffic on the roads, a significant number of military checkpoints have been removed, and the curfew has been reduced. The number of people moving both inside of Ukraine and abroad has decreased slightly.

We drove without any lines and waiting. The only thing is that I have three children, and they felt nauseous on the road. This slowed us down. When we reached the border, we stood there for several hours. Officers didn't inspect us; on the contrary, they treated children with sweets and juice.

From an interview with parents

The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine has recorded a significant number of Ukrainians returning home. As of April 23, **the number of people entering Ukraine**

⁵⁷ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-cerez-zbroinu-agresiyu-rf-v-ukrayini-zaginuli-197-ditei>

⁵⁸ Photo from the Telegram channel: Zelenskiy / Official

⁵⁹ https://t.me/zalizni_zminy/516?fbclid=IwAR328GrjLdjowCBm3yoJIAA2481h3OfyGwBiB3qdrhY7WQoS6Uu9ZHt9cQ

⁶⁰ <https://novynarnia.com/2022/04/06/zagubyvsya-evakuacziya/>

⁶¹ <https://www.facebook.com/100072443376686/posts/164143556010423/>

exceeded the number of those who left. More than 24,000 people left Ukraine last night, 15,000 of them crossed the border with Poland, and the rest went to Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova. Over the past 24hrs, 33,000 people came to Ukraine, 30,000 of them were Ukrainians.⁶²

In the western regions of Ukraine, there is also a decrease in the amount of internally displaced persons. However, so far, this can be monitored only indirectly — seeing the reduction of humanitarian aid inquiries, the emergence of housing options for rent, and so on. Most people return to Kyiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions. Residents of western and central regions, who left at the very beginning of the war, are also coming from abroad.

We decided to return because it's mostly quiet in Lviv. We left then almost immediately because we had two small children, and my husband and I were afraid to stay there with them. So I went to Poland. But renting a house costs money, and my younger son needs to see a doctor who continues receiving patients at home. Now the situation is more or less predictable, so we are coming back.

From an interview with parents

However, the decision to go back home should coincide with the official statements of the local authorities on the safety of arrival in the previously occupied settlements and areas where active combat took place. After all, during the retreat, the Russian troops carried out active work on mining territories and installing explosive devices on civilian infrastructure, housing, playgrounds, etc. In this case, adults and children who are unaware of the challenges of mine risk are at high risk of serious injury or even death. In addition, the return should be preceded by the restoration of utilities and at least partial adjustment of the infrastructure of settlements.

Thus, in Trostyanets, Sumy region, **5 children already died because of the mines and tripwires** left by the Russian occupiers.⁶³

On March 30, in Chuhuiv district of Kharkiv region, **two cars hit mines**, 2 people died and 5 wounded, including a six-month-old baby.⁶⁴

On April 23, near the village of Novokyivka, Mykolaiv region, **a 9-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl from got mine injuries and shrapnel wounds** as a result of a mine detonation.⁶⁵

Ukrainians who are currently moving abroad are already doing this more deliberately and consciously. They study assistance programs, job offers and rental housing. Some countries, such as Poland, Germany, Moldova, Romania and others accepted a lot of Ukrainians. Places for temporary stay of Ukrainian citizens continue to work there. Also, some states direct their citizens to provide shelter to Ukrainians, providing some monetary compensation.

⁶² https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=324669226438621&id=100066866381279

⁶³ <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/u-trostyanci-na-sumschini-5-ditey-pidirvalisya-na-zalishenih-rosiyanami-minah-i-roztyazhkah-2039059.html>

⁶⁴ <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/819434.html>

⁶⁵ https://t.me/pgov_gov_ua/3810

Schools abroad are generally ready to accept children, in some countries even entirely Ukrainian classes are organized. For the most part, various creative and sports activities for children are also free of charge. Ukrainians are given the opportunity to receive free medical care.



The father says good-bye to his 4-year-old daughter and wife, who are being evacuated to Poland.⁶⁶

It should be noted that due to the different number of refugees and different procedures, Ukrainians receive the status of temporary protection in other countries quite unevenly. Some receive status immediately, some have to await for more than a month, and some, after losing temper, go to another country or return home. At the same time, the Ukrainian authorities have not yet been provided with information on the number of Ukrainian citizens who have received temporary protection or refugee status in their host countries. Data from the UN and EU countries differ.⁶⁷

We had been waiting for more than a month to get a humanitarian visa in Australia. We came here because we have relatives here. However, we couldn't wait any more, so we went to Croatia, because it is difficult without a visa, your status in the country is unclear. You can't rent a house or find a job. And everything is very expensive - medicine, food, you will not last long here on your own savings.

From the interview with parents

⁶⁶ Φοτο: AP/Emilio Morenatti

<https://www.facebook.com/594022430618124/posts/5355743097779343/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=524510339030243&set=pcb.524510395696904>

We were issued a status certificate rather quickly. However, we have not seen the money yet. The certificate, of course, allows you to place a child in school, but I would like some help to buy food and clothes.

From the interview with parents

However, **most refugees plan to return home**. One of the reasons is the difficulty of arranging your life abroad. Ukrainian certificates of education abroad are hardly considered acceptable by employers, and ignorance of the country's language is also a significant obstacle. And although language courses are organized for Ukrainians in most countries, it is still extremely difficult to get a job in your specialty.

The problem of employment also worries internally displaced Ukrainians. A significant flow of IDPs overloaded the labor market with supply. In addition, finding housing remains a problem. At the same time, the host communities of Ukraine provide refugees with free medical care, organize the placement of children in kindergartens and schools, provide humanitarian assistance and information support if necessary.

Recommendations

- It is necessary to continue outreach on the evacuation of families with children from areas that are regularly shelled or at high risk of active combat.
- Public awareness of safety measures in critical situations should be strengthened to prevent separation with relatives and loss of children. There should also be the information on the child's belongings with the contacts of parents and close relatives.
- It is important to give the citizens clear signals prohibiting or allowing them to return to the previously occupied territories. Such statements should be accompanied by arguments about the security and infrastructure capabilities of specific settlements.
- It is necessary to monitor the number of temporary protection statuses received by Ukrainians abroad.
- It is important to intensify informative work at the state level to prevent children from being affected by mines and other explosive devices. To do this, it is necessary to deploy information campaigns in the media, develop posters, distribute booklets on mine danger.

Children's needs for psychological help

Children are among the most vulnerable categories in times of war. Stress they experienced may heavily affect the future of a child that saw events and things that might traumatized them. Some parents notice appalling consequences: sleep and appetite disorder, feelings of fear, anger outbursts, high level of distraction, sadness and helplessness or anxiety and hyper active behavior. Early work with trauma consequences and overcoming psychological tension would help to avoid health problems that often come after stress (mental disorders, cardiovascular diseases, weakening the immune system, etc.).

Monitoring the psycho-emotional state of children and teenagers that suffered from war and **providing psychological help in case of problem signs is extremely important.**

Kharkiv Institut of Social Research held an exploring survey among parents of minor children that are internally displaced persons from compact dwelling places (CDPs). It was an entire sample of 2 CDPs in Lviv and Poltava cities. These CDPs were chosen as psychological help might be relevant in the places where people can only live together with few places to stay alone and relieve mentally. 69 parents were surveyed via interview method with a closed survey. The survey was held from March 28 till April 11, 2022. Below there are the results that clearly state the need for psychological help for families with children who suffered from war.

The half of respondents has 1 child under 18, 43% - two minor children, 7% - three of them. 6% of parents marked that their child has a disability; 9% have the status of a child that suffered from military actions and armed conflict before February 24, 2022.

Most families (65 %) have been living in CLPs for more than 2 weeks for the moment of survey, the third - less than 2 weeks; 6 % - 1-3 days.

The half of the respondents have moved from Kharkiv region (49 %), 16 % - from Kyiv city and Kyiv region, the others (1-6 %) are from northern, eastern and southern regions of Ukraine.

Most parents indicated that they feel safe completely or close to that (67%). At the same time, **the third of them (33%) - rather or completely do not feel safe.**

Almost half of the respondents plan to move in the next couple of days to another place: 25% want to go abroad, 23% - plan to move inside of Ukraine.

Psychologists says that at least a month is necessary for a basic adaptation to new environment. By that time, even if the family is located in the safe place, people can feel various emotions: fear, helplessness, empathy. Often that makes people take decision to move abroad right after they reached the first safe place.

According to my own observations at least a months is necessary for adaptation. To feel you have enough sleep, food. It takes 2 weeks to have a rest and 2 weeks to understand that you are not there already. There is so called getback - apathy

or tears. Adrenalin was before. You need to recover your physiological functions: sleep, nutrition, and then adaptation starts.

From the interview with a psychologist

We moved to Lviv, however, we couldn't feel calm. We had to run to a bombproof, read the news constantly to know what's going on. My son was nervous all the time, he was crying and didn't want to go anywhere. I understood that we had to move further, where we can sleep normally and not be afraid that they are going to bomb us at night.

From the interview with parents

On the average, adults estimated their psycho-emotional state for 4.9 out of 10. **State of their children they indicated on a pretty similar level - 5.1 out of 10.**

How do you estimate your psycho-emotional state, if 1 - extremely bad, and 10 - very good? (%)

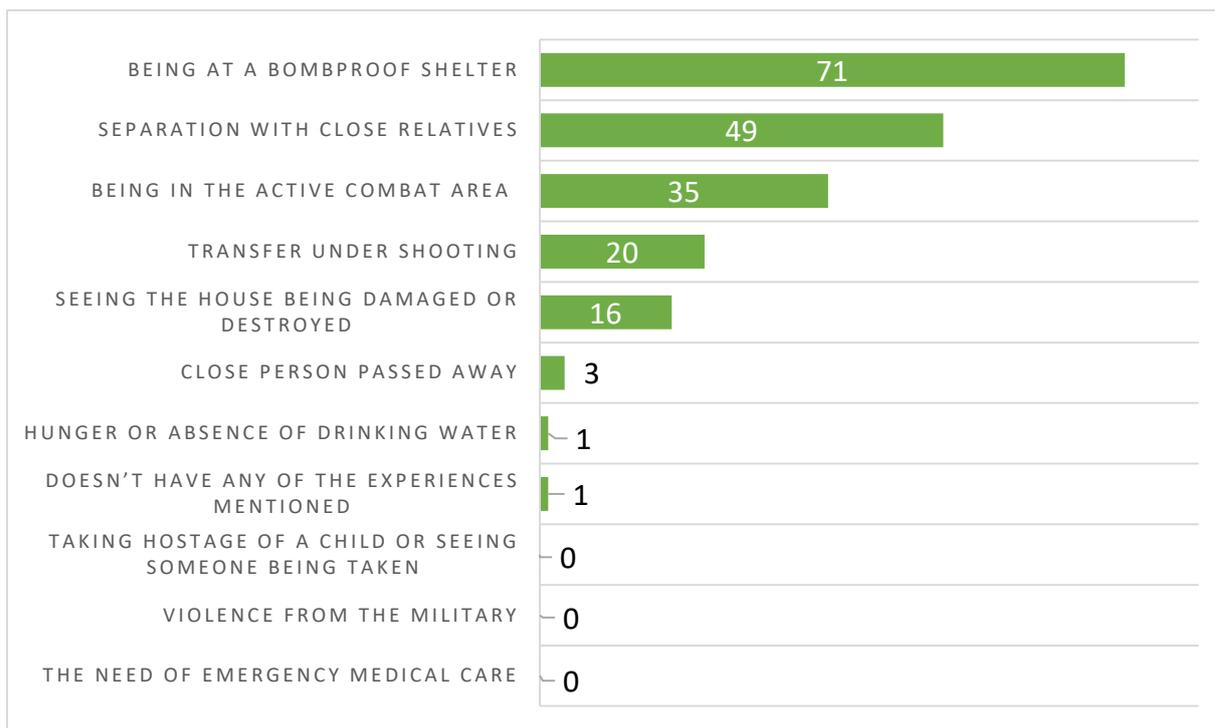
Points	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	3	6	19	19	20	17	8	6	1	1

How do you estimate psycho-emotional state of your child, if 1 - extremely bad, and 10 - very good? (%)

Points	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	2	11	11	17	17	18	14	8	1	1

Most of children have experience of staying in a bombproof since the war started (71). The half of children was separated from their close relative (a parent or both of them, sister/brother, grandmother/grandfather). The third of children were in the area of military actions (35%). 20% of them were taken away by their parents under shooting. 16% of children saw damage or destruction of their own living place. Also, a few children have their close person passed away and experienced hunger or/and absence of drinking water (dr.1).

Drawing.1 Does your child have the following experience since the beginning of war? (%).



A 3-year-old girl that had to live 50 days in Kharkiv metro with her parents after her home was destroyed. The child was afraid to die when she heard loud sounds, she was afraid to come closer to the stairs that lead out of the metro station.

Psychologists say that staying in a bombproof shelter can pass calm enough if it lasts for a short period of time. It also can provoke anxious thoughts, sleep disorder, psychological tension for children and adults as well. In the extreme cases there can be the fear of going out, claustrophobia, panic attacks.

Separation with at least one of the parents is hard for children. Often they are separated with their father that stops participating a full part of communication and bringing up a child. The father's role comes only with phone calls. According to one of the psychologists surveyed, it would be beneficial if families are taught **how to enhance the role of the father in a child's life**, what to pay attention to, what to talk about. At the same time separation with mothers, brothers and sisters often happen as well during moving to safe places.

During the interview psychologists indicated that transfer can be also

stressful for the child. Surveyed parents and psychologists gave a few examples of small road challenges as well as stressful events.

I was driving in the car with 3 children, they had nausea, so we had to stop often. The elder child was hysterical. We didn't sleep enough, it took us more than 6 days to get to Denmark and around 2 weeks to get back to sleeping and nutrition routine.

From the interview with parents

During my meeting with an 8-year-old, she started to pee. Then I started to work with the mother. I turned out that human trafficking was a part of their road abroad. They were brought to a brothel. They were told that the kid would be taken away and the mother should be working for them. They managed to get our og that place but the mother and the child lived though a great stress and now they face health consequences.

From the interview with a psychologist

The most difficult situation of psycho-emotional state of children is at the occupied territories and in the active combat areas. Children hear shooting and bomb carriers' noise everywhere. A lot of children are afraid to get out of safe places. Besides, we had numerous witnesses of cruel behavior and tortures that took place in Bucha, Hostomel, Irpin, Iziom and other cities. On the east, north and south of the country frequent cases of shots fired at children, injuries and even rapes are registered. Children saw their parents murdered, their houses destroyed, they were under shooting when simply walking in the streets. These are extreme trauma events that might come as a post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and phobias. Overcoming these consequences is much harder. That's why revealing children that suffered from trauma events and working with them should be the first step after their transfer from dangerous places.

Psychologists say that it's hard to work with children that have come through this kind of sufferings. For this they need experience and knowledge how should a psychologists work in order not to harm during therapy. Also, psychologists stated that there are a lot of useful materials on trauma psychology, stress disorders, aggression and panic attack. Psychologists support each other, organize supervision and share their experience of successful reduction of negative effect of war on child's consciousness.

Extremely relevant topic! I observe a great level of burnout, sometimes I see lack of professionalism of my colleagues, because it differs so much from what we were doing before the war. At the same time, I like the fact that nische organizations joined pscylogists' support. There are a lot of useful literature, pieces of advice, tranings; we communicate at specially organized telegram channels.

From the interview with a psychologist

Survey results confirm the consequences after trauma events for children that psychologists stated. $\frac{2}{3}$ of parents noticed the feeling of fear after the beginning

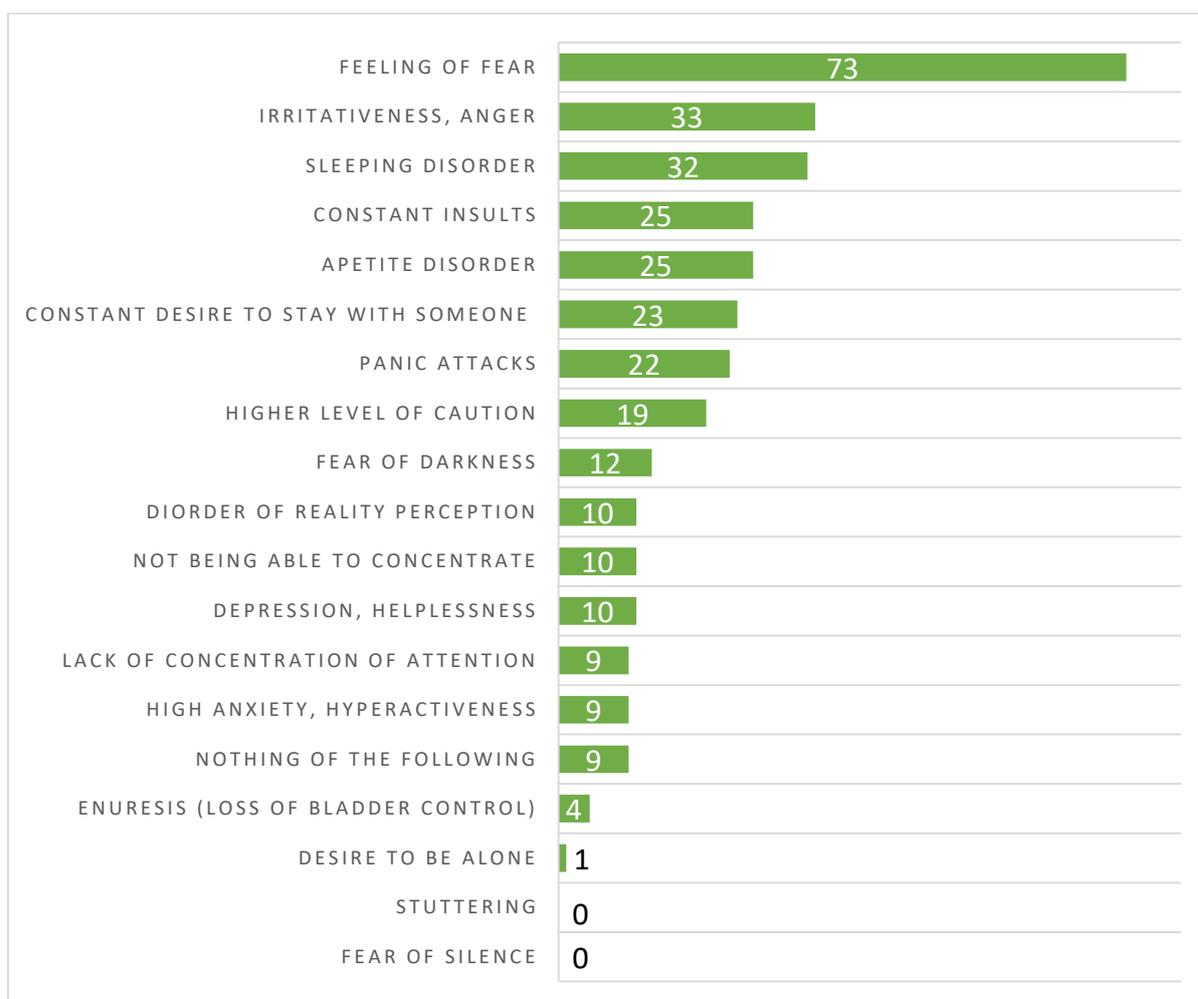
of was (73%). Often irritability, outrage, sleep and nutrition disorder, insults, desires to stay with someone constantly, panic attack and increased anxiety were noticed frequently (dr.2). Parents also say that children are depressed and cannot concentrate. For this reason children often ignore school or studying is hard for them.

During the interview psychologists explain different behavior as a result of different forms trauma can take, and age of a child influence this process.

If children are under 7, they show aggression more frequently. Especially those coming from Mariupol and Melitopol. I'm working with a 5-year-old child that doesn't let even a grandma come close. Teenagers suffer from anxiety, sleep disorder, loss of appetite. They can be more reserved, lose appetite or on the contrary eat more than usually.

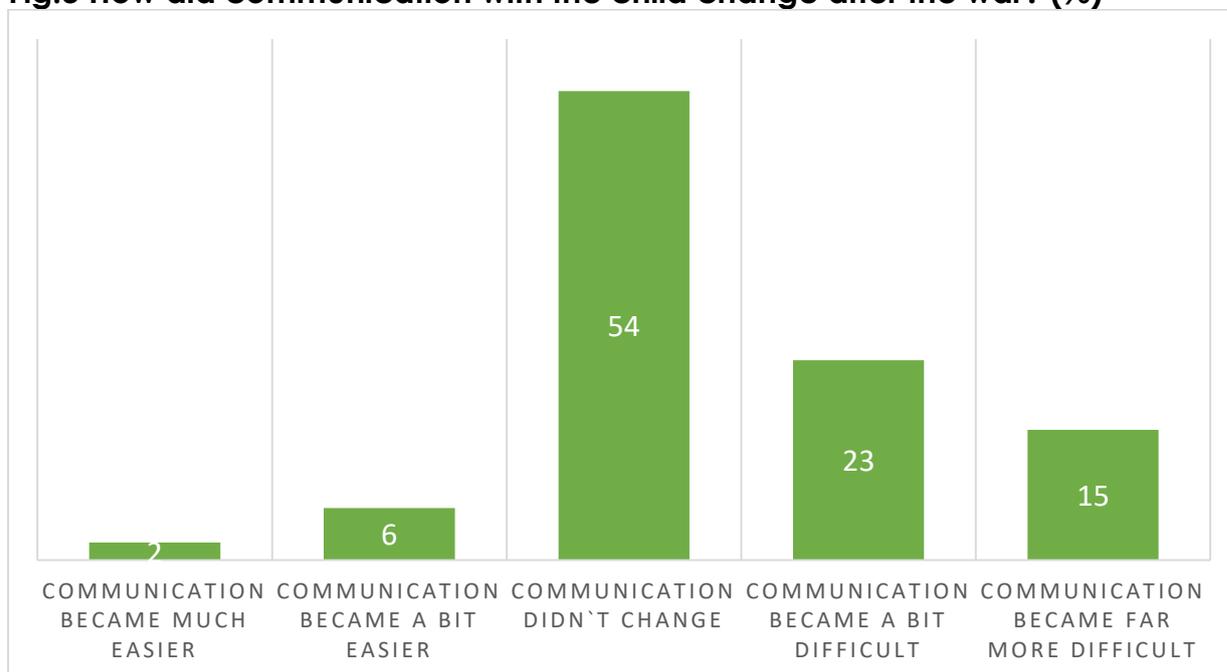
From the interview with a psychologist

Drawing 2. Did you notice the following signs about your child that was unusual in peaceful times? (%)



A significant number of parents also pointed out more difficult communication with their children after the start of the war (38%). 8% of respondents, on the contrary, noted the facilitation of communication, 54% - noted that nothing has changed (Fig. 3).

Fig.3 How did communication with the child change after the war? (%)



According to psychologists, parents **should not ignore the change in the child's behavior**. Manifestations of fear or aggression, defocusing and apathy of the child may over time increase or develop into other, more complex psycho-emotional states, as well as affect health. Stress very often affects the immune system, so many people after the war fell ill with covid-19 and other viral diseases. **Stress activates what has been hidden or chronic. All this is exacerbated. For example, there was latent autism, it became apparent. There were heart problems and they didn't notice it, they became noticeable.**

From the interview with a psychologist

More than half of the surveyed parents consider it necessary for their child to communicate with a psychologist (62%). Almost all parents were also in favor of involving children in creative activities (95%), communicating with peers (98%), visiting cultural and artistic institutions and events (theaters, museums, excursions, etc.) and returning to the educational process (98%). According to parents, they want to return their children to a certain daily routine, to find activities for them that could distract them from the difficult situation in life. It should be noted that most parents also consider the conditions in the CDPs not very comfortable for their children.

To what extent do you think the following is necessary for your child at the moment? (%)? (%)

	Very necessary	Rather necessary	Rather unnecessary	Not required at all	Difficult to answer
Communication with a psychologist	42	18	14	22	4
Involvement in creative classes (clubs, sections, etc.)	70	25	5	0	0
Communicating with peers, being more in the team	86	12	0	2	0
Visiting cultural and artistic institutions and events (theaters, museums, excursions, etc.)	78	18	3	0	1
Return to the learning process	86	12	0	1	1
More comfortable / comfortable stay	68	15	11	6	0
A more balanced diet (vitamins, etc.)	69	14	9	8	0
Improving sanitary and hygienic living conditions	62	21	7	9	1

From the point of view of psychology, creative classes can be a good start so that children can begin to comprehend the trauma and stress. Support groups also work well for teenagers.

Art therapy, ie drawing, making something with your own hands is very useful, especially if it is children under 14 years. The child may not be aware, but because of the picture he is experiencing the events of his life, trying to express their feelings on a piece of paper. If you give him such an opportunity, he can more easily transfer events, conditionally speaking, throw it out in art. In addition, such

interventions are safe, we do not ask the child, we do not injure him. We drew with children, with adults, and I drew with fighters, and it worked.

From the interview with a psychologist



Psychologist of the Voices of Children Charitable Foundation conducts group classes with children at the CDP in the west of Ukraine

The results directly indicate the need for psychological assistance to a significant number of children who were forced to leave their permanent place of residence. A significant number of public organizations have joined the organization of such assistance, but the demand still exceeds the available offers of assistance. Parents of young children are especially worried about the difficulty of finding creative and

developmental group activities.

Here, in Khmelnytsky, you can take a child to creative classes, but they admit only from the age of six, and we are four. I would very much like to somehow switch the child so that she is distracted, communicate with other children, change the situation at home, which is so tense, because our father is at war, and we are all worried about it.

From the interview with parents

There are also many online psychological support services for adults and children affected by the war. The Ministry of Health, the National Psychological Association, public organizations and international foundations that care for children's rights, actively publish and disseminate useful advice for parents - how to explain to the child what is happening around; how to get used to the new environment; how to help a child in an anxious situation, how to cope with stress, and others. Hotlines and support chatbots were also launched (Office of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, Institute of Cognitive Modeling, Czech NGO "Man in Need", NGO "La Strada-Ukraine", Voices of Children Charitable Foundation, etc.).

The situation is more complicated with psychological assistance under the occupation and in the active combat areas. It is impossible to arrange systematic psychological support there, there is a lack of specialists, telephone and Internet communication does not always work. These are often situational initiatives implemented by local social workers, medical staff, and teachers who have an understanding of children's psychological support. The organization is usually

funded by its own forces and charitable contributions, less often with the support of international and national NGOs. Volunteers and activists who organize various group classes with children in bomb shelters and the subway can join this work. However, there should be more of such support and the level of professional training of volunteers should be higher to provide at least first aid in the field.

Recommendations

- It is important to conduct regular assessments of the condition and needs of IDP families with children, this will prevent the complication of psycho-emotional health of children and parents and will allow more targeted organization of psychological assistance to IDPs.
- It is necessary to establish and promote all possible types of psychological support for children in the territories occupied or where active hostilities are taking place (online, telephone assistance).
- Due to the lack of psychological assistance to war-affected families, regular opportunities should be provided for volunteers to learn the basics of first psychological assistance, who are ready to work both in a safe area and in settlements where active hostilities are taking place (including bomb shelters or online assistance).
- The CDPs should provide regular classes with children - creative, developmental, sports and others. Such classes help to distract and stabilize the psychological state of children.
- It is necessary to carry out explanatory work with parents on attentiveness to changes in the psycho-emotional state of children and, if necessary, use the services of psychological support offered by both private psychologists and public organizations working to protect children's rights in Ukraine.
- The state's efforts to establish state/municipal psychological support services for children and families affected by the war in Ukraine need to be intensified.
- It is important to organize the training for school psychologists to work with traumatic experiences or critical events in the child's life.

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