

KEY MESSAGES ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

November 2016

- **UNHCR calls on the Government of Ukraine for a settlement of the issue of the payment of pensions and social benefits that is not discriminatory towards Internally Displaced People (IDPs).** UNHCR joins others to call on the Government to de-link the payment of pensions and social assistance from IDP registration. While recognizing that the Government has the right to combat fraud, UNHCR is concerned about the lack of procedural transparency concerning the suspension of social benefits and pensions. New regulations adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in June 2016 introduced a verification system and additional discriminating mechanisms against those receiving pensions and social assistance based on their place of residence. For the settlement of this issue, UNHCR considers irrelevant the fact that citizens in certain areas of Ukraine receive any form of compensation from de facto authorities. UNHCR suggests that draft law no. 4257 stipulating the de-linking of pensions from IDP registration be considered by Parliament.
- **UNHCR remains concerned by entrenched restrictions on freedom of movement.** The revised 21 January 2015 *Temporary Order (TO)* continues to limit freedom of movement of civilians across the line of contact. The TO has been one of the major challenges for the affected population, leading to an increased sense of isolation, impeding access to medical care and social benefits as well as disrupting family and communal links. The burden on most vulnerable persons, including the elderly, the disabled, as well as pregnant women and single parents has been particularly hard. New provisions introduced by the Government in 2016 limit the transport of commercial goods, including food and medicines into the NGCAs. This has led to a sharp deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the NGCAs, with acute shortages reported.
- **UNHCR is increasingly concerned for the treatment of civilians by parties to the conflict in areas near the line of contact and in conflict-affected areas.** UNHCR notes and increasing number of reports of alleged violence against civilians, looting, illegal occupation of properties and cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). While recognizing the usefulness of the “Anti-Terrorist Operation” (“ATO”) Telephone Hotline, an appropriate response and follow-up to allegations of violence needs to be established to ensure the security and anonymity of victims, particularly SGBV cases.
- **The Government should strengthen its efforts to assist those lacking civil documentation.** Civil registration procedures, specifically documentation for newborn children in the non-government controlled areas, should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Government should develop an administrative procedure for civil registration to substitute the current court procedures. Persistent gaps in the procedural framework will eventually result in a **growing number of undocumented children, potentially leading to a risk of statelessness.**
- **UNHCR urges Ukrainian authorities to properly address housing needs in order to prevent further displacement and secondary movements.** Housing needs for IDPs are becoming increasingly acute as prolonged displacement outlasts available assistance and individual savings. Appropriate legislation needs to ensure IDP property rights and to introduce a long-term program for compensation of destroyed housing and lost properties. The Government needs to introduce safeguards to protect IDPs with specific needs, including the disabled, from forced evictions from collective centers.
- **UNHCR urges Ukrainian authorities to formulate and adopt a comprehensive IDP strategy.** This strategy would also promote pathways ensuring IDP’s rights to durable solutions and links to recovery programs, which will allow for permanent legal, economic and social integration for all affected populations without discrimination. The Government should also ensure that sufficient resources, including financial resources, are allocated to implement the “*Comprehensive State Program for Support, Social Adaptation and Reintegration of IDPs until 2017*” and the accompanying “*Action Plan*”.
- **Authorities should ensure that political rights of IDPs are restored.** UNHCR highlights the link between voting and durable solutions, noting that the act of voting can be a crucial element of integration into the local community.

UNHCR, together with UN agencies and partners, remains ready to support authorities and communities to address the needs of IDPs and those in need of protection and assistance, wherever they may be.

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