



Ukraine

20250327 COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE ARMES EXPLOSIVES UKRAINE

Drones and missiles: HI warns of their devastating impact on civilians

In its latest report on the bombing of populated areas in Ukraine, HI highlights the intensification of bombings and artillery fire by both Ukraine and Russia and the increasing use of drones and cruise and ballistic missiles, which have particularly severe consequences for civilians.

20 major explosive weapons incidents involving civilians reported from January to March 2025

From January to March 2025, airstrikes, bombings, and missile attacks have continued to severely affect the civilian population. In January, 139 civilians were killed, and 738 were injured, an increase of 40% compared to December 2024.

*“Among the most destructive weapons, the intensive use of drones and cruise and ballistic missiles poses an existential threat to civilians, with disastrous consequences. Since the beginning of the year, there have been particularly devastating strikes in Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Sumy,” said **Elliot de Faramond, HI Senior Advocacy Officer***



Drones and missiles: an increasing threat to civilians

In January 2025, drones accounted for 27% of civilian deaths and 30% of injuries. Used by both parties, drones terrorize the population by restricting their access to schools, hospitals, and their homes. “Suicide” drones, such as the Iranian Shahed, which Russia has been using extensively since September 2022, pose significant risks to civilians due to their low radar signature and detonation upon impact.

Missiles, particularly those such as the Iskander-K, Iskander-M, and KH-22, carry explosive charges of up to 900 kg and have an extremely wide impact radius, making them especially dangerous for civilians, often leaving them only a few minutes to find shelter.

For example, in March alone, five attacks in Ukraine involved “suicide” drones targeting residential buildings and civilian infrastructure. On March 6, a hotel was struck by a ballistic missile, killing four civilians and injuring 32 others, including two children. Two ballistic missiles also hit a restaurant and an administrative building in Kryvyi Rih, injuring 14 civilians, including two children and four women, and damaging residential buildings, educational institutions, sports facilities, shops, a pharmacy, and vehicles.

On March 24, a missile strike on the city of Sumy resulted in over 100 casualties, nearly a quarter of whom were children. This tragic incident once again highlights the disproportionate impact of the conflict on civilians as the war in Ukraine enters its fourth year.



Mykola, 72, victim of a Russian drone



Mykola Koribko, 72, currently lives in a center for internally displaced persons in Mykolaiv, southern Ukraine. Before the war, he lived in Tyahynka, near Kherson, with his wife Lidiia. Their lives changed dramatically on December 27, 2023, when Mykola was severely injured by a grenade explosion dropped from a Russian drone.

“We were warned of an imminent attack on the village and had to leave quickly. I was gathering our belongings and animals when I went to the village center to try to get an internet connection. That’s when a grenade fell nearby. My arm was torn off instantly, and I lost consciousness. I don’t know how long it lasted. Then I screamed, ‘Help me, I am dying,’ and they rushed me to the hospital.”

Mykola suffered multiple injuries. After a long hospital stay, he was transferred to Mykolaiv for rehabilitation, a difficult and painful process.

HI supported Mykola with rehabilitation, including physiotherapy sessions. HI's protection teams also referred him to other organizations, enabling him to receive a mobile toilet, a blood pressure monitor, a phone, and a small table for his room.

HI supports survivors of explosive ordnance and raises awareness among communities

Like Mykola, HI teams in Ukraine identify individuals affected by the use of explosive weapons, to best meet their essential needs.

Several times a week, HI conducts awareness sessions on explosive ordnance risks and protection measures for children, adults, and NGO staff in the regions of Kharkiv, Poltava, and Dnipro in eastern Ukraine, as well as in the Mykolaiv region in the south. HI teams have also started raising awareness in newly accessible areas, often hard to reach. HI targets host communities, internally displaced people, returnees, and other humanitarian actors (local and international NGOs, UN agencies, volunteers).



During these sessions, HI teams share information on detecting dangers and best practices for staying safe. Since February 2022, 86,695 people have participated in these sessions.

The devastating effects of explosive weapons in populated areas

Since February 2022, 42,505 civilians have been killed or injured in Ukraine, and the first months of 2025 have seen an intensification of bombings and artillery fire. The vast majority of civilian casualties (94%) and destruction of vital infrastructure (education, healthcare) occur in areas controlled by Ukraine.

The widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the resulting civilian suffering have led to one of Europe's largest humanitarian crises, with 12.7 million people currently in need of humanitarian aid in Ukraine.

When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, their effects are devastating, injuring and killing civilians, and destroying essential civilian infrastructure and services. Women, children, people with disabilities, and older people are the most vulnerable, often being the least able to seek shelter in time during air raids. Children, for example, are seven times more likely than adults to die from explosion-related injuries.