

HIGHLIGHTS

- Heavy fighting and hostilities in and around the war-ravaged town of Bakhmut, in Donetsk oblast, have further intensified over the past few days, taking a heavy toll on civilians who have already been under constant bombardment since the town became one of the hotspots of the war in mid-February.
- Around 3,000 civilians who remain in Bakhmut – out of a pre-war population of 72,000 people – are in urgent need of assistance and protection.
- Due to the constant threat from ongoing hostilities, residents spend most of their time in basements, hiding from the fighting, with almost no access to essential services. Schools, hospitals and markets are non-functional, and the town is disconnected from water, electricity and gas supplies.
- Despite tremendous challenges, local authorities, volunteer groups, the United Nations and humanitarian partners are making every effort to support people who are facing life-threatening needs in Bakhmut and surrounding areas.
- Since the beginning of 2023, the UN and partners have sent seven inter-agency convoys with life-saving assistance, including food, water and medical supplies to about 70,000 people remaining in Bakhmut and surrounding areas.



Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 27 February 2023. City residents at the heating point where they can get food, water and recharge their phones despite relentless shelling. Photo: OCHA Ukraine/Oleksandr Ratushniak

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Heavy fighting and hostilities in and around the war-ravaged town of Bakhmut, in Donetsk oblast, have further intensified over the past few days, taking a heavy toll on civilians who have already been under constant bombardment since the town became one of the hotspots of the war in mid-February. The humanitarian situation in the area, which was dire before the ongoing escalation, has dramatically deteriorated, leaving the remaining 3,000 civilians in Bakhmut – out of a pre-war population of 72,000 people – in urgent need of assistance and protection, according to local authorities and aid groups. Although the Government of Donetsk oblast continues to call for evacuations from Bakhmut, only very few people are still fleeing the area daily, compared to as many as 600 when evacuations were at their highest in the last quarter of 2022, according to Ukrainian authorities. At the same time, humanitarian operations became extremely challenging and limited, as hostilities and restrictions of movements impacted access for aid organizations and volunteer groups.

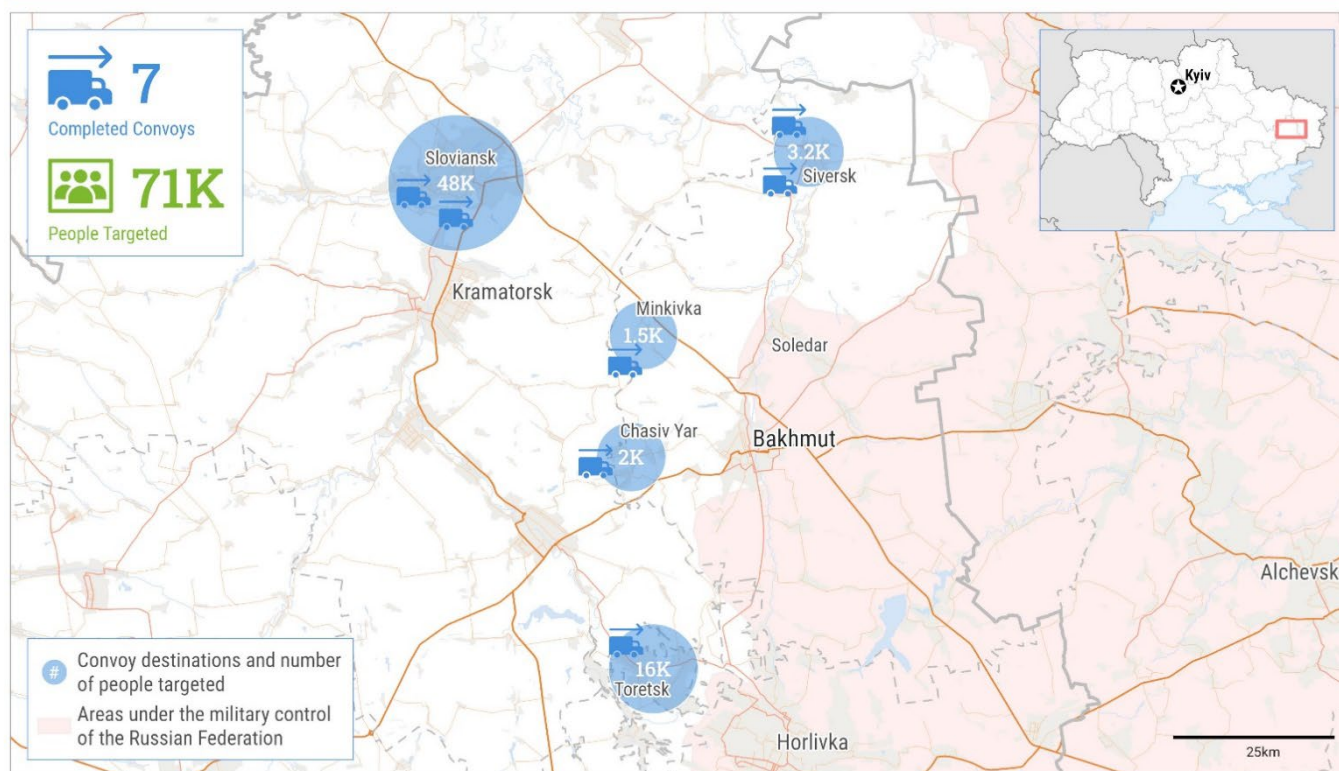
Due to the constant threat from on-going hostilities, residents spend most of their time in basements, hiding from the fighting, with almost no access to essential services, and limited supplies of food or hygiene items, according to humanitarian organizations and UN agencies. Schools, hospital and markets are non-functional and the entire population, which includes around 30 children, are dependent on aid to survive. Nearly 80 per cent of houses in Bakhmut have reportedly been destroyed or severely damaged due to the active hostilities, according to the oblast authorities. Although the United Nations has not been able to verify the information, there have been several reports from the Ukrainian authorities that most schools, kindergartens, clinics and hospitals in the city have been either destroyed or damaged. Bakhmut has no centralized water, gas, heating or electricity supplies. Only four medical workers remain in the town, according to the town administration.

The war has also impacted aid organizations providing assistance to people in Bakhmut or surrounding areas to where they had fled. At least three attacks hitting humanitarian facilities or aid workers were recorded in the area over the past few weeks. On 15 February, for example, an airstrike hit the warehouse of national NGO Proliska in Chasiv Yar, a front-line town 10 kilometres west of Bakhmut. The attack caused damage to the facility, used as a hub from where the organization and other partners – including the United Nations – sent relief supplies to people in the heavily impacted towns of Bakhmut, Avdiivka and other front-line communities. It was also a centre where civilians would gather to receive assistance in Chasiv Yar. Other attacks impacted operations in the same area.



UKRAINE – INTER-AGENCY HUMANITARIAN CONVOYS TO AREAS AROUND BAKHMUT

January to March 2023



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
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HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Despite tremendous challenges, local authorities, volunteer groups, the United Nations and humanitarian partners are making every effort to support people who are facing life-threatening needs in Bakhmut and surrounding areas. Relief activities, however, are impacted by insecurity – which on many occasions, delays assistance – and the restriction on the movement of civilians, including humanitarians and volunteers, imposed by the Government since 13 February due to the escalation of fighting.

Operations in the parts of Bakhmut allegedly under the military control of the Russian Federation are challenging, with unconfirmed reports of civilians and volunteer groups operating in the area being relocated to Donetsk city, under Russian control. The UN has no access to this area.

In the parts of the city under Ukrainian control, local authorities have established and are running two centres where civilians can get hot meals and have access to electricity to charge phones and to other basic necessities. At the same time, the Government is facilitating the evacuation of civilians from areas controlled by Ukraine to safer regions of the country, with particular focus on children with at least one parent or caretaker.

Community-based volunteer groups are working to provide assistance to people in the city, with the support of the United Nations and other larger aid groups, which are providing relief supplies. According to local groups contacted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), supplies provided by the UN and NGOs since end-2022 have so far been enough to provide people in Bakhmut with essential assistance, including water, hygiene items, medical supplies, food, and critical household items. The supplies have been stocked in basements and shelters. Since the beginning of 2023, the UN has sent at least 11 inter-agency convoys with a comprehensive package of much-needed items to reach approximately 100,000 people in hromadas in areas controlled by Ukraine in the Donetsk oblast. Seven of these humanitarian convoys, with the participation of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), provided life-saving assistance, including food, water, and medicines, to nearly 70,000 people in need in Bakhmut and hromadas in the area.

The assistance, however, must continue to be delivered in a systematic way to ensure people in Bakhmut and all front-line communities of Donetsk oblast enduring urgent needs can receive the support they need.

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