

Humanitarian implications of armed conflict escalation in Zaporizka oblast

OVERVIEW

About the report

Aim

This report aims to outline the recent escalation of the armed conflict in Zaporizka oblast, its likely development in the next three months, and current and potential humanitarian impacts. Since the humanitarian crisis in Zaporizka oblast is underreported, and a limited number of assessments have been produced since the escalation, this report aims to support humanitarian response planning.

Methodology

The report is based on a secondary data review, mainly of publicly available sources, complemented by a joint analysis meeting with humanitarian responders and nine key informant interviews. These interviews involved representatives of Ukrainian and international NGOs, international organisations across different clusters, and the regional administration. The scope of the forward-looking analysis is limited to the next three months due to uncertainty over the likely change in US foreign policy towards Ukraine.

Limitations

This report is not an exhaustive analysis of all the latest and potential armed conflict developments and their humanitarian impacts. The absence of publicly available evidence does not mean the absence of other impacts, which may have occurred. The anticipated humanitarian impacts use analysis based on current data and contextual knowledge and may not necessarily materialise, as unpredictable factors may influence the development of the situation.

Summary

The Russian Armed Forces have increased their ground operations and made small territorial gains in Robotyne and Vremivka axes. Continued advances on these fronts would allow the Russian forces to disrupt the Armed Forces of Ukraine's logistics routes along the N15 road connecting Zaporizhzhia city with Donetsk oblast. An increase in air attacks has accompanied the escalation of ground conflict, mainly in frontline areas and Zaporizhzhia city. These attacks have included the use of glide bombs in frontline areas since June 2024 and in the city since 22 September, leading to heightened safety and security risks for civilians and humanitarian responders. The escalation has aggravated humanitarian impacts, notably in frontline settlements, where the people are largely older and struggle to meet basic needs at the same time that humanitarian access is constrained.

The escalation of air and ground attacks is likely to continue for the next three months, deteriorating the humanitarian situation. In frontline areas, civilians will face increased protection needs, notably access to bomb shelters, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and mitigation, and mental health and psychosocial support. They will also need shelter, livelihood, and WASH assistance, especially given the cold winter months, as well as health needs and educational support, including electronic learning devices. Displacement from frontline settlements will likely be moderate but will place additional strain on collective shelters in Zaporizhzhia city, although the majority of frontline community members, especially older people, are unlikely to leave their homes. Continued attacks on electrical infrastructure will result in increased outages, both scheduled and unplanned, with prolonged or even permanent disruptions to electricity in frontline settlements.

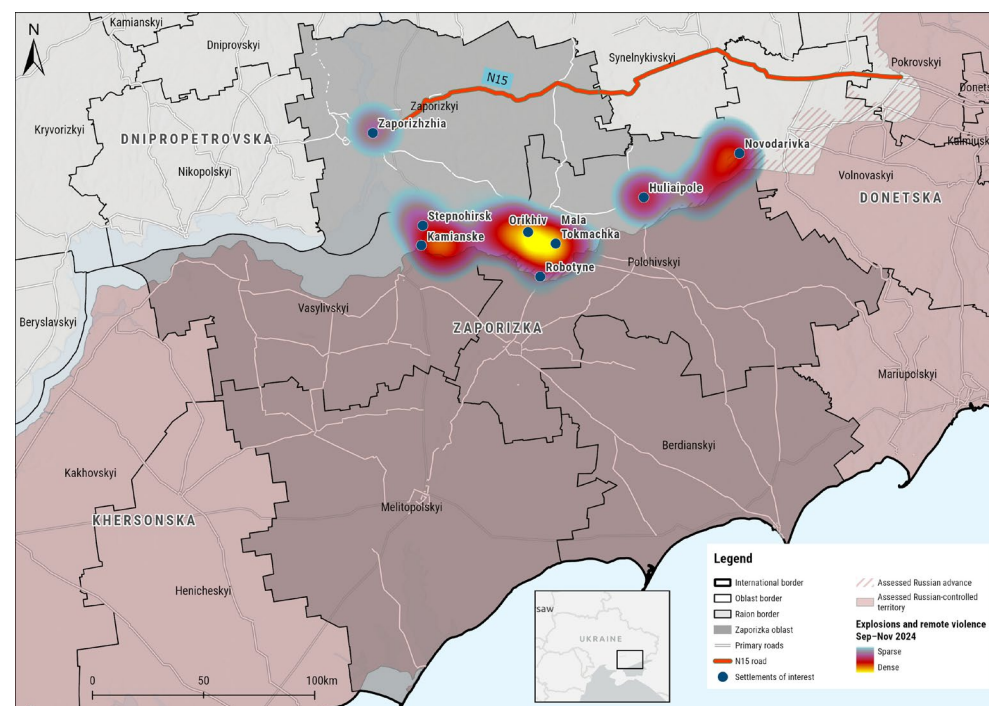
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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Air and shelling attacks

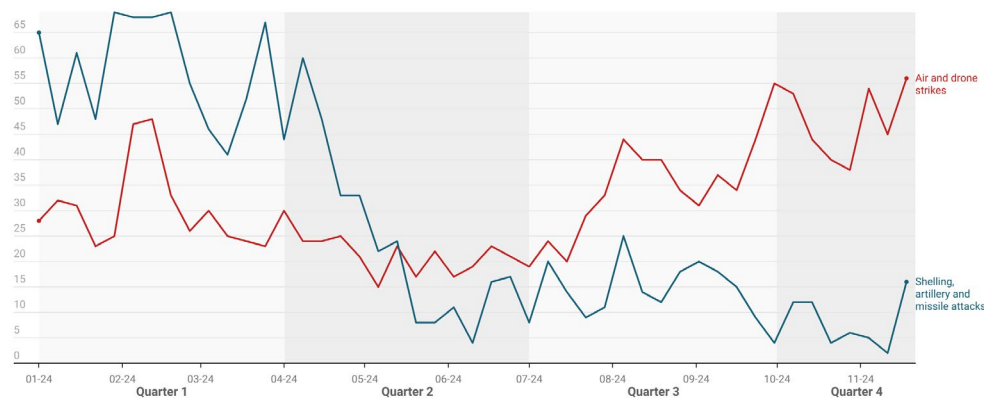
Map 1. Explosions and remote violence heat map (September–December 2024)



Sources: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 09/12/2024); ISW (14/12/2024)

In this section, we analyse the remote attacks on Zaporizka oblast that ACLED has categorised as “explosions and remote violence.” The majority of these attacks have been in the form of shelling, artillery or missile attacks, and air or drone strikes. In Zaporizka oblast, the attacks numbered about 100 weekly between November 2022 and February 2024, decreased to about 25–30 weekly in June, and then escalated to reach an average of 55 weekly from September–November, even peaking at about 70 in some weeks (ACLED accessed 23/11/2024).

Figure 1. Attacks in Zaporizka oblast in 2024 (weekly data)



Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 23/11/2024)

While the increase in remote violence has not reached pre-summer levels, the attacks have become more intense. Notably, since May–June 2024, shelling, missile, and artillery attacks have been less frequent but have been causing more civilian fatalities per attack on average. The main driver of the increase in fatalities is missile strikes, which, while less frequent, cause a higher number of civilian casualties. At the same time, air and drone attacks have been increasing (ACLED accessed 23/11/2024; OHCHR 12/12/2024). These attacks have also caused more damage to public infrastructure (ACAPS accessed 23/11/2024).

Air attacks have also begun to involve glide bombs, such as the KAB and FAB models. These were first used in frontline raions in June 2024 and against Zaporizhzhia city on 22 September and have been regularly used since (ISW 23/09/2024; ACLED accessed 23/11/2024). Air attacks have killed 44 civilians and injured 268 since 22 September, compared to 16 killed and 84 injured from January–September (OHCHR 12/12/2024). Glide bombs explode into shrapnel that flies up to 0.25km, making them highly destructive. Dropped from aircraft beyond the front line, these bombs glide towards their targets and can damage up to 50 houses (NYT 28/10/2024; Radio Svoboda 02/12/2024; BBC 19/05/2024; Defense News 28/06/2024; TKI 16/05/2024). With a typical range of 40–65km, some even reaching up to 90km, they can easily reach Zaporizhzhia city, which is only 25–35 km from different locations on the front line (TKI 16/05/2024; ISW 23/09/2024; Defense Express 10/10/2024). Defence against glide bombs is difficult, as they are hard to track on radars (NYT 25/05/2023; Defense News 28/06/2024). The most effective defence would be to shoot down the aircraft that release them, which is difficult given Ukraine's stretched air defence and the distance at which the bombs are dropped from the front line (NYT 25/05/2023; ISW 23/09/2024).

In 2024, as in previous years, most remote attacks have taken place near the front line, particularly in Huliaipilska, Malynivska, Malotokmachanska, Orikhivska (Polohivskiy raion), and Stepanohirska (Vasylyvskiy raion) hromadas. Most of these attacks target Ukrainian forces but have also been reported to hit civilian casualties (ACLED accessed 23/11/2024).

Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant

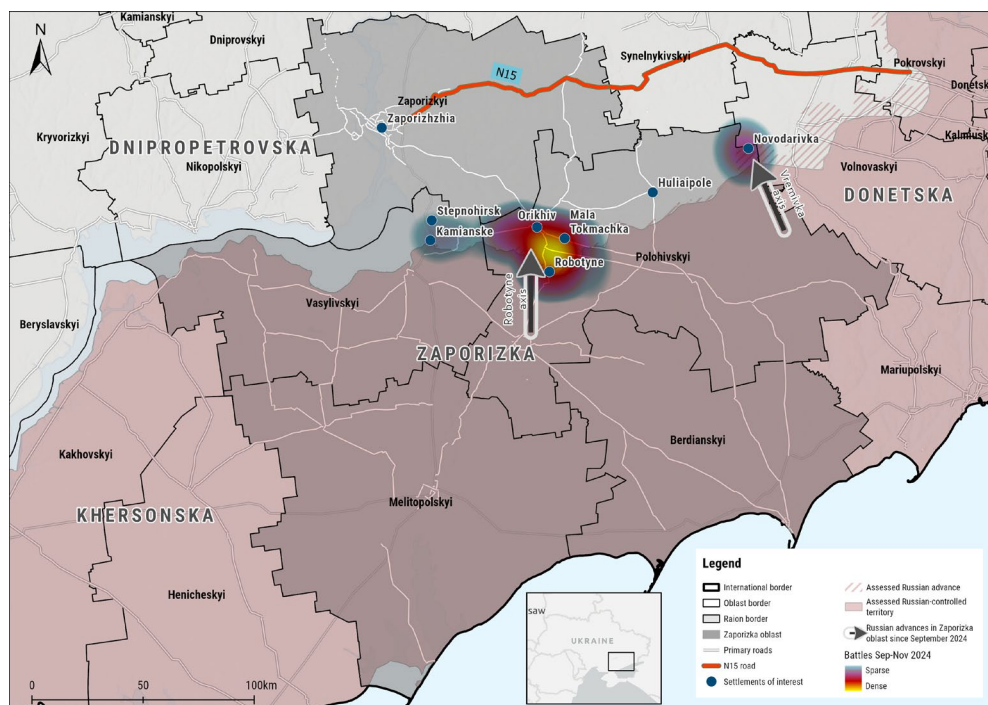
The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), the largest nuclear power plant in Ukraine and Europe, is located near Enerhodar city on the Kakhovka Reservoir. It remains the only nuclear facility exposed to and heavily affected by military activity (IAEA 03/09/2024). Russian forces have occupied the ZNPP since March 2022 (Ukrainska Pravda 12/03/2022). Key concerns include the presence of Russian military personnel and equipment, the use of the plant as a military base, frequent hits from drones or missile debris, and repeated disconnection from power supplies (Uatom accessed 20/11/2024; EPravda 06/09/2022; DW 03/03/2023; IAEA 07/11/2024).

Since the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion, ZNPP has faced repeated shelling and frequent disconnection from the grid owing to infrastructure damage. This has raised the risk of a nuclear accident, as the plant relies on electricity for vital safety functions, such as reactor cooling (Independent 03/11/2022; UNSC 15/04/2024). In cases of outages, the facility depends on diesel generators to maintain cooling (DW 03/03/2023; UN 08/02/2024). In 2024, Russia has continued to systematically shell substations linking ZNPP and other Ukrainian nuclear plants, further escalating nuclear safety risks (The Guardian 20/11/2024).

In April, all six reactors at the ZNPP were placed in cold shutdown. While the International Atomic Energy Agency continues to advocate freezing operations until the conflict ends, there have been reported Russian attempts to redirect electricity to occupied Crimea and plans to restart at least one reactor to supply Enerhodar city, heightening the risk of a nuclear accident (DW 03/03/2023; Slovo i Dilo 13/04/2024; Ukrinform 22/11/2024).

Ground offensive

Map 2. Battles heat map (September–December 2024)



Sources: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 09/12/2024); ISW (14/12/2024)

In mid-October 2024, Russian forces resumed ground offensives in Zaporizka oblast, making small but noticeable territorial gains between October–December (ISW 13/10/2024 and 11/12/2024). Russia's operations in the oblast have focused on two directions: Robotyne axis (including Mala Tokmachka, Novodanylivka, and Orikhiv settlements) and Vremivka axis (including Novodarivka settlement) (Hromadske 04/11/2024).

Russia's current escalation in Zaporizka oblast comes after a prolonged stalemate following Ukraine's June–December 2023 counteroffensive. After retaking several key settlements, such as Levadne, Novodarivka, Piatykhvatky, and Robotyne settlements, the Ukrainian forces subsequently transitioned from assault operations to active defence where the front line remained relatively stable (Military 21/09/2023; TKI 06/10/2024).

Currently, Russia occupies the majority of Zaporizka oblast – 74% according to the latest available data, including Berdianskyi, Melitopolskyi, and, partially, Vasylivskyi and Polohivskyi raions (ACAPS accessed 18/11/2024; Kyiv24 08/10/2024).

Three-month outlook

The scope of the forward-looking analysis is limited to the next three months due to uncertainty over the likely change in US foreign policy towards Ukraine. In the next three months, further ground conflict escalation is likely to follow the current trend of advances along Vremivka and Robotyne axes, providing Russian forces with the opportunity to disrupt Ukrainian logistics along the N15 road between Zaporizhzhia city and Kurakhove city via shelling and air strikes in case of advances. One key informant noted that several small hromadas, such as Hulyapilska, Orikhivska, and Stepanohirska, where 2,000 people or fewer resided were at risk of coming under attack and even being seized in the near future (KII 27/11/2024 a).

On Vremivka axis, ground conflict escalation in Zaporizka oblast is an extension of Russian forces' offensive operations in Donetsk oblast. If this continues, the frontline areas on the eastern edge of Zaporizka oblast are likely to face the impact of Russian forces' attempt to consolidate their advances and push North to increase their ability to disrupt the N15 road (TCH 25/11/2024; RBC 02/12/2024; TKI 16/10/2024).

On Robotyne axis, Russian forces are likely to continue offensive operations towards Orikhiv, which would give them another opportunity to disrupt the N15 road (MIG 30/10/2024; TKI 06/10/2024). Advancing in this direction would also allow Russian forces to push Ukrainian troops further away from the rail line connecting Crimea with other Russian-occupied territories (Inform.zp.ua 26/02/2024; Krymr 23/03/2024).

Besides concentrating efforts towards Vremivka and Robotyne axes, Russian forces may also be preparing to push north from the Kamianske–Piatykhvatky direction towards Zaporizhzhia city, which would put southern Zaporizhzhia city under artillery range (Ukrinform 09/11/2024; RBC 02/12/2024). Anticipating possible escalation, the Ukrainian Government was reported in November 2024 to have allocated UAH 1.3 billion (USD 31 million) for the construction of fortifications around Zaporizhzhia city and further to defend the city and nearby areas against potential ground attacks (Glavcom 24/11/2024).

Russia is likely to continue its strategy of creating pressure on civil populations and critical infrastructure via air and drone strikes (Ukrinform 15/10/2024). Newer glide bomb models can reach 70–90km, and Russia is scaling up production (Ukrinform 25/09/2024; Defense Express 01/10/2024 and 10/10/2024; OKO 12/11/2024). If these newer glide bombs are deployed in Zaporizka oblast, locations further from the front line may be targeted more frequently.

The Ukrainian army continues to experience a shortage of personnel related to the slow pace of mobilisation and reported losses, as well as a shortage of ammunition related to delays in production in Ukraine and delivery to Ukraine by allies. Given this, Ukrainian forces in Zaporizka oblast are likely to continue employing active defence strategies in the next three months (Texsty 15/10/2024; Politico 18/11/2024; TKI 11/12/2024).

HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS

The recent escalation in conflict has had a notable impact on the civilian population living in Zaporizka oblast, heightening their needs. If the escalation continues, some of these civilian needs are likely to develop or intensify. In 2024, about 91% of the people living in government-controlled or frontline areas of Zaporizka oblast (1 million out of 1.1 million) are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 03/01/2024; RadioSvoboda 15/10/2024). 70% of the population of the government-controlled territory lives in a large city (likely Zaporizhzhia) (IOM 01/11/2024 a). Among those remaining in the front line, mainly rural communities, most people are older, and about 20% may have disabilities (CORE 20/11/2024; Suspilne 06/10/2024; RCC 02/11/2024; KII 30/10/2024; KII 15/11/2024 b).

Internal displacement

As of 31 October, Zaporizkyi raion hosts nearly 160,000 IDPs, with no significant change compared to 31 August. IDP figures for the other raions of Zaporizka oblast are not publicly available (IOM 12/11/2024 a; IOM 12/11/2024 b). Some key informants reported that the number of IDPs appeared to have already increased in their areas of operation (KII 12/11/2024; KII 14/11/2024; KII 19/11/2024; KII 26/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 a). Protection Cluster data shows that after remaining fairly stable at a monthly average of 1,700 from July–September, the number of people provided with transportation services (mostly for evacuation) increased by one-fourth to nearly 2,300 in October (Protection Cluster accessed 27/11/2024 a; KII 15/11/2024 a). That said, only 1% of the surveyed IDPs in Zaporizka between August–October were displaced in the past three months (IOM 01/11/2024 a). Transportation was provided mostly in six hromadas, two of which bordered frontline hromadas, while two were by the N15 road, which is likely to become a target if the front line advances further (Protection Cluster accessed 27/11/2024 a).

People not evacuating: closest to the front line, in Vasylivskyi and Polohivskyi raions, the police and volunteers currently provide evacuation on request (Suspilne 15/10/2024; Ivan Fedorov Telegram 15/10/2024; 1news 03/12/2024; Zaporizka Police Facebook 11/12/2024). Yet, few people use this opportunity; in October, the police evacuated only 25 people (Novyny 01/11/2024). While by mid-October, evacuation from frontline communities had not been mandatory for families with children, with continuing ground invasion, it was implemented in six communities of

Polohivskyi and Vasylivskyi raions in early December (Suspilne 15/10/2024; GOU 11/12/2024). Many of those who remain in frontline communities have experienced Russian occupation before and are making preparations to survive the winter, particularly in light of the lack of utilities in some locations (IOM 01/11/2024 b; IOM 01/11/2024 a; Deep State accessed 11/12/2024; Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 19/10/2024). Livelihoods are among the key reasons why people remain, displace within the same area, or return, as they depend on farms and vegetable gardens, IDP benefits are low, and jobs are hard to find (Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 19/10/2024; IOM 19/09/2024, 15/11/2024, and 04/09/2024; KII 12/11/2024; KII 15/11/2024 b; KII 19/11/2024; KII 14/11/2024). Other key reasons for remaining include perceived incapacity to evacuate with impaired mobility, the fear of conscription, restrictions on bringing large luggage and animals on transport, and uncertainty about available aid in new locations (Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 19/10/2024; KII 15/11/2024 a; KII 30/10/2024). While evacuation information is shared via radio and digital media, ACAPS could not confirm if radio broadcasts, crucial for some older people, provide aid details in target locations. Key informants noted that humanitarian responders are trying to address this gap by distributing leaflets (KII 15/11/2024 a; KII 19/11/2024). According to three key informants, concerns around humanitarian aid access in frontline areas discourage people from leaving, specifically fear of receiving less support elsewhere (KII 12/11/2024; KII 15/11/2024 a; KII 15/11/2024 b). In reality, humanitarian aid is more readily available in Zaporizhzhia city (OCHA accessed 02/12/2024).

Anticipated impact: a gradual increase in displacement from frontline areas to Zaporizhzhia city is likely in the coming months due to the continued frontline movements and escalation of ground attacks. Some of those new IDPs will transition via Zaporizhzhia city, while other will remain there. People who self-displace will be at higher risk of not receiving necessary assistance. The level of displacement Zaporizhzhia city residents towards other parts of the country will remain low despite a small increase.

Protection

Communities across Zaporizka oblast face a range of protection risks, which the escalation has further aggravated. These include safety and GBV risks.

Safety risks

Frequent large-scale attacks on Zaporizhzhia city, some occurring as much as ten times a day, have killed and injured civilians, including children, and damaged civilian infrastructure, such as residential and public buildings (ACLEd accessed 23/11/2024; Kyiv Post 23/09/2024; AP 29/09/2024; Radio Svoboda 19/10/2024; Ukrainska Pravda 19/10/2024; Ukrinform 21/10/2024; TKI 05/11/2024; Pravda 08/11/2024; zprz.city 11/11/2024). Similar impacts have been reported elsewhere in the oblast (ACLEd accessed 23/11/2024; Suspilne 19/11/2024; TKI 18/11/2024). Most of the recorded civilian infrastructure damage (about 70%) has occurred in Zaporizkyi raion, the

most urbanised region of the oblast (ACAPS accessed 23/11/2024; Airwars accessed 06/12/2024). The escalation in remote attacks has also increased risks related to unexploded ordnance. For example, the 10 October attacks on Zaporizhzhia city left 2,000m² of land contaminated with fragments of ammunition or debris. On 4 November, sappers neutralised over 100 fragments of unexploded ordnance in two raions (Suspilne 11/10/2024 and 05/11/2024).

Since the recent escalation, the need for an adequate number of bomb shelters has become a key priority. Missiles and bombs released from the nearby front line leave people little to no time to run to a bomb shelter, an issue further aggravated given the use of glide bombs, which are harder to detect on radars, giving people less time to seek shelter (NYT 28/10/2024; VOA 26/09/2024; KII 26/11/2024). In early October, there were about 1,400 bomb shelters in Zaporizka oblast, 83% of which were in Zaporizhzhia city (zprz.city 08/10/2024; Zaporizhzhia City Council 10/10/2024). Gaps remain; for example, there are no bomb shelters in a frequently targeted energy sector company (zprz.city 16/11/2024). Public authorities recognise the insufficient number of bomb shelters as a key problem and are currently investing in building more (Radio Svoboda 02/12/2024; zprz.city 09/10/2024; Suspilne 19/10/2024). Key informants also reported a lack of ready-to-use bomb shelters in certain rural settlements (KII 12/11/2024; KII 30/10/2024). Sirens are also lacking in some locations, making air alarms inaccessible to those who do not use mobile phones (KII 30/10/2024). Only about one in ten bomb shelters is accessible for wheelchair users (Suspilne 10/10/2024 and 18/10/2024). Bomb shelters in schools are dedicated to students and staff only and available to the general population only after school hours (RIA-M 19/09/2024).

Anticipated impact: threats to safety are likely to increase with the continued increase in air attacks, as will the need for adequate bomb shelters.

Gender-based violence

The escalation of the armed conflict has aggravated the very high risk of GBV in frontline areas (Health Cluster 03/10/2024). As Russian troops advance, their reported history of engaging in conflict-related sexual violence suggests a higher risk for more women (OHCHR 19/03/2024; KII 14/11/2024). In frontline areas, infrastructure damage, the lack of streetlights, and an increasing number of abandoned buildings also heighten the risk of GBV for women and girls (USAID/DRC 05/2024). Economic vulnerability and mental health deterioration resulting from the prolonged armed conflict, including veterans' trauma, are also among the key drivers of intimate partner violence (IPV). Both drivers are worsening in the oblast, suggesting aggravated IPV risk (CARE 26/08/2024; DRC 05/2024; Protection Cluster accessed 27/11/2024 b; KII 15/11/2024 b; KII 14/11/2024). Some women in rural areas perceive the state response to GBV to be slow and unreliable, while humanitarian GBV response has been more comprehensive in Zaporizkyi raion than those in the front line (USAID/DRC 05/2024; KII 14/11/2024; Protection Cluster accessed 27/11/2024 a).

Anticipated impact: with the likely continued advance of the front line, and continued increase in air attacks, negative impacts on mental health, livelihoods, and infrastructure will increase the overall risk of GBV.

Shelter and camp coordination and camp management

Housing damage and restoration

Housing in both Zaporizhzhia city and rural areas closer to the front line has sustained severe conflict-related damage, which has even increased with the recent escalation. In terms of housing and restorations in Zaporizka oblast, the most urgent needs are the restoration of damaged houses from the recent increase in shelling, as well as housing provision for IDPs and those who have lost their homes to shelling (ZODA 10/11/2024). According to the World Bank, housing damage within the 22 months of war between 24 February 2022 and 31 December 2023 in Zaporizka oblast amounts to USD 1,723.4 million. Following the recent escalation in violence, housing damage is likely to increase accordingly (WB et al. 15/02/2024). Among the mentioned needs that responders could potentially provide are building materials, the payment of contractors, material assistance, and the installation of modular houses (Radio Svoboda 15/10/2024).

Damage trend in Zaporizhzhia city: there has been a significant increase in the damage to apartment buildings and private houses in recent months. From 22 September to 20 November 2024, shelling by guided aerial bombs partially destroyed four apartment buildings and five private houses and damaged 308 apartment buildings and 1,165 private houses in Zaporizhzhia city. This represents 34% of the total figure of damaged and destroyed apartment buildings and private houses in the city since February 2022 (1news 22/11/2024).

Damage trend in rural areas: frontline settlements had already suffered from extensive damage prior to the latest escalation. From April–May 2024, Stepanohirsk was assessed to be 76–100% damaged, and Orikhiv 51–76% (REACH accessed 28/11/2024). Some settlements, such as Robotyne and Piatyhatky settlements, were almost completely destroyed during the fighting in 2023 (Suspilne 03/09/2024). Likewise, a July 2024 assessment found that nearly all respondents from Zaporizka, most representing settlements in the 20km zone from the front line, reported damage to their homes, such as roofs and windows, and needed winterisation repair assistance (CORE 20/11/2024). According to several key informants, people in heavily damaged settlements survived shelling by staying underground most of the time (KII 12/11/2024; KII 26/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 a).

Anticipated impact: a continued increase in air attacks will likely cause further damage to civilian housing and increase needs for shelter assistance. In frontline locations that are already heavily damaged, this could lead to an increase in the partial or complete destruction of already damaged housing, resulting in extreme shelter needs that the cold winter months

would aggravate. People in areas further away from the front line, including Zaporizhzhia city, are also likely to face increased needs for shelter repairs owing to air strike damage.

Collective sites

Insufficient space in collective sites: by 3 December, Zaporizka oblast had 2,343 spaces available out of a total of 6,729 in 63 collective sites on 15 November (CCCM Cluster/REACH accessed 03/12/2024). Developing new collective shelters is challenging in the context of increased air attacks and damage in the city (KII 15/11/2024 a).

Challenges associated with living in collective sites: many collective sites are organised in student dormitories and public facilities such as former hospitals, resulting in a lot of challenges for the people staying there for extended periods (KII 12/11/2024). According to round 13 of the REACH collective site monitoring from June–July 2024, such challenges include a lack of disability-friendly bathing facilities (reported in 96% of assessed collective shelters), a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure (76%), non-gender-segregated toilets (71%), the shared use of private spaces for other purposes (46%), and inadequate training for collective site managers (36%). These challenges may lead to a lack of appropriate access for people with disabilities, increased GBV risk, and the improper handling of sensitive situations by management and staff (REACH/CCCM Cluster 12/11/2024). Access to food and NFIs appears to have improved between March–October, but considerable gaps remain (REACH accessed 27/11/2024).

According to several key informants, many collective sites are struggling to cover the cost of rent, utilities, and staff, with the increasing cost of utilities causing some to close (KII 12/11/2024; KII 21/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 b; KII 19/11/2024). The escalation of air attacks in the past month has added to running costs, including an increasingly severe need for construction materials, replacement windows, roof repairs, and other repair works.

Anticipated impact: conflict developments in Donetsk, Kharkivska, and Zaporizka oblasts are expected to drive further displacement to Zaporizhzhia city, likely leading to a shortage of available space in the coming months (KII 19/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 a; KII 27/11/2024 b; Svoi.City 22/11/2024). Increased occupancy of collective shelters are likely to exacerbate existing gaps within those shelters. Needs in construction materials and repair works are likely to increase, and some collective sites may not be able to cope with the increased repair costs associated with repairs, compounded by increased cost of utilities.

Electricity, heating, and winterisation

Electricity

The availability of electricity in Zaporizka oblast follows the Ukraine-wide trend of the resumption of scheduled blackouts since 18 November 2024, after large-scale Russian attacks on the energy infrastructure (PJSC Zaporizhzhiaoblenergo Telegram 17/11/2024). Access to reliable electricity is much more constrained in frontline areas (Censor 03/12/2024).

While no consolidated information on power outages in Ukraine exists, an analysis of published outage schedules for Zaporizka oblast indicates that by the end of November, renewed power outages were not yet as severe as they were in July–August. Current scheduled outages typically last from three to four hours per day (Suspilne 25/11/2024).

Until 3 December, thousands of people in 51 settlements along the front line in Zaporizka oblast did not have access to electricity (Censor 03/12/2024). One key informant noted that certain locations, such as Malynivska hromada, have not had access to electricity for over a year (KII 27/11/2024 a).

Anticipated impact: power outages are likely to worsen during the rest of the winter as air and drone attacks continue to target the energy infrastructure. Many families will likely be unable to fully meet their basic needs given limited access to electricity, heating, and heating materials, along with increased energy loss owing to housing damage.

Heating and winterisation

Central heating is mainly available in urban areas (CORE 20/11/2024). The heating season in Zaporizka oblast began on 31 October (Zaporizhzhia City Council 31/10/2024). People living in Zaporizhzhia city and Zaporizkyi raion have access to heating during winter, with the additional provision of modular boiler rooms by humanitarian responders (KII 27/11/2024 a; Ukrainian Red Cross 30/10/2024; Akzent 19/11/2024). In rural areas, people rely on coal, wood, briquettes, fuel, or gas for heating (Suspilne 24/10/2024). In July, in frontline areas, 90% of surveyed households, most of which were just 20km from the front line, reported damage to their heating systems, 93% were concerned about their access to heating in the winter, and 41% could not cover the cost of utilities (CORE 20/11/2024).

Anticipated impact: with one in three households could not access markets to buy heating materials, and as applications for government subsidy on utilities, gas, and fuel should be submitted online, gaps are likely to persist and worsen with air attacks, advancing front lines, and damages to housing and infrastructure (OCHA 27/11/2024; CORE 20/11/2024; Zaporizhzhia City Council 28/10/2024).

Livelihoods and basic needs

Impact of the armed conflict on livelihood access: since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, nearly 400 enterprise facilities have been damaged in Zaporizhzhia city, and nearly 180 business entities have left, especially with the recent conflict escalation (Radio Svoboda 02/12/2024; KII 14/11/2024). This has not been reflected in unemployment estimates (DRC accessed 09/12/2024; IOM 05/12/2023, 20/03/2024, 03/07/2024, 04/09/2024, and 01/11/2024 a).

Overall trends in basic needs: in late 2023, two in three households had an income below the national subsistence minimum. This ratio slightly increased further by July 2024, with the increase of the subsistence minimum (IOM 05/12/2023, 20/03/2024, 03/07/2024, 04/09/2024, and 01/11/2024 a). Data on whether households' economic situation in the oblast has improved or deteriorated between 2023–2024 is contradictory, with some signs of slight improvement (DRC accessed 09/12/2024; IOM 05/12/2023, 20/03/2024, 03/07/2024, 04/09/2024, and 01/11/2024 a; Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 19/10/2024). At the oblast level, there is no data on the impact of the recent conflict escalation on people's capacity to meet their basic needs.

Trends in frontline areas: in July 2024, of the surveyed households, most of which were within 20km of the front line in Zaporizka oblast, 74% had a monthly income of less than UAH 6,000 (USD 143, the 2023 subsistence minimum), compared to about 52% in the whole oblast in 2024 (CORE 20/11/2024; DRC accessed 09/12/2024). Livelihood and basic needs trends in frontline areas were slightly negative between September 2023 and May 2024 and have been stable since or are slightly improving in some locations, potentially linked to people harvesting their own crops in the summer (REACH et al. accessed 09/12/2024; Protection Cluster accessed 09/12/2024; Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 19/10/2024). Yet, humanitarian responders note that there is little to no infrastructure left in some frontline settlements, so work opportunities are severely limited, and people rely on humanitarian assistance to survive (KII 27/11/2024 a).

Anticipated impact: as air attacks are likely to remain frequent and destructive and continue driving increase damages to civilian infrastructure, they will continue to affect businesses' ability to operate, negatively impacting people's jobs. In rural areas, infrastructure damage and the contamination of farmland with explosive remnants of war are likely to further affect livelihood access.

WASH

A lack of access to water in Zaporizka oblast is primarily an issue in frontline settlements, with the escalation merely worsening an already difficult situation. On 3 December, around 40 frontline settlements were without access to water (Censor 03/12/2024). Many more frontline areas have limited access to drinking water, some for more than a year. Regular shelling

makes repairs difficult, while in other situations, the location of infrastructure that needs repair has become Russian-occupied territory (KII 12/11/2024). One key informant observed that access to water is currently normal in Zaporizhzhia city (KII 14/11/2024). In November, humanitarian responders reported a high need for hygiene products, both in frontline communities, some of which have not received them for months, and in Zaporizhzhia city and Zaporizkyi raion (KII 30/10/2024; KII 12/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 a).

Anticipated impact: the increasing scale of damage caused by gliding bombs, missiles, and drones are likely to increase needs for repairs to water infrastructure in Zaporizhzhia city and front line movements are likely to constrain access for water delivery to front line areas.

Education

By mid-December, there were between 126–217 damaged educational facilities reported in Zaporizka oblast, out of more than 1,000 (Save Schools accessed 12/12/2024; Suspilne 22/09/2024; ACAPS accessed 12/12/2024; Ukrainian State Statistics Service accessed 12/12/2024). At least eight were damaged between September–November (ACAPS accessed 12/12/2024).

In Vasylivskiyi and Polohivskiyi raions, education is conducted remotely given the high risk of attacks (GOU 02/08/2024; Offline School accessed 25/11/2024 a). Despite the Government of Ukraine and humanitarian responders providing electronic devices and the Government reporting no more needs among students, humanitarian responders report that unmet needs remain, excluding some students from education access (GOU accessed 28/11/2024; Education Cluster accessed 02/12/2024; KII 12/11/2024). Children in rural frontline areas may be particularly affected, as more than 90% of households near the front line experience power outages that last an average of 21 hours daily. Before the full-scale invasion, nearly twice fewer rural than urban households in Ukraine also had internet access, which has likely further deteriorated because of conflict-related damage (CORE 20/11/2024; Rubryka 01/09/2021).

Even with devices, remote learning is less effective than in-person education. Parents can choose in-person education for their children in Zaporizkyi raion if the school has a bomb shelter (UNICEF 29/08/2023; Radio Svoboda 15/10/2024; Offline School accessed 25/11/2024 a; Offline School accessed 25/11/2024 b). Between October–December, 10,000 or about 20% of schoolchildren in the oblast, half of them in Zaporizhzhia city, learned in-person (Radio Svoboda 15/10/2024 and 02/12/2024). As the attacks have intensified, in-person education has completely moved from classrooms to bomb shelters (Radio Svoboda 15/10/2024; Ukrinform 04/10/2024; KII 12/11/2024; KII 14/11/2024). Many schools and kindergartens still lack them, and efforts to build or renovate are still underway (Suspilne 20/09/2024; zprz.city 17/10/2024, 23/10/2024, and 24/10/2024; KII 12/11/2024; KII 14/11/2024). The shelters are overcrowded and noisy, so learning is not very effective either; only about one in eight school shelters in

Ukraine have conditions conducive to learning (Rokada 09/2024; KII 12/11/2024). Consequently, whole underground schools are being built in Zaporizkyi raion. Following the intensification of attacks, the number of those planned has increased from 7 to 12, and the first one is to open in December (Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 25/08/2024; zprz.city 23/10/2024 and 24/10/2024; Radio Svoboda 02/12/2024).

Anticipated impact: the need for underground schools and bomb shelters that are conducive to learning will persist in Zaporizhzhia city and Zaporizkyi raion. Education in Vasylivskiyi and Polohovskiyi raions will continue to be conducted remotely, meaning that the risks of lack of access to education for students without electronic devices or connectivity will remain.

Physical health

Impeded access to healthcare

By January 2024, 25% of the about 150 healthcare facilities in Zaporizka oblast had been damaged, and 14% were partially functional or nonfunctional (WHO 27/03/2024 and 23/06/2024). The latest damage includes an attack on an oncological hospital, where doctors were injured (ACAPS accessed 12/12/2024; NPU 26/09/2024; Suspilne 07/10/2024; zprz.city 08/11/2024).

The escalation of attacks and increase in fatalities suggest a concurrent potential increase in the number of people injured (ACLEd accessed 23/11/2024). There have been multiple reports of people, including children, receiving trauma surgery, intensive care, or other emergency healthcare services (Suspilne 25/09/2024 b, 05/11/2024, 11/11/2024, and 18/11/2024; zprz.city 15/11/2024). Yet, the media have not reported healthcare incapacity to meet increased needs. Before the escalation, general and trauma services were nearly fully available in Zaporizka oblast. In July 2024, however, emergency surgery was not or only partially available in a third of the hospitals expected to provide it (WHO 06/08/2024). Access may improve as a trauma ward is to be renovated (zprz.city 29/10/2024). In July, Zaporizka oblast was also reported to be struggling with the availability of specialised healthcare in other domains, including prosthetics and orthotics, both important in the view of casualties (WHO 06/08/2024). As regular attacks are likely to continue, they create a risk of deterioration in access to specialised healthcare.

Access to healthcare in Ukraine is much lower in rural areas, with nearly half fewer primary healthcare doctors per 10,000 population than in urban areas (WHO 01/11/2024). Based on survey data, healthcare access is more constrained in rural areas of Zaporizka oblast than in other rural areas of Ukraine (DRC accessed 25/11/2024). Mobile clinics and the first mobile pharmacy are reaching villages away from the front line (Suspilne 27/09/2024; KII 12/11/2024; KII 14/11/2024). In frontline areas, in the few locations from which data was available, hospital and emergency medical services were functional. That said, while primary healthcare

was available, some essential supplies, such as syringes, were already lacking or nearly unavailable even before the escalation (Novyny Oryhova 26/09/2024; zprz.city 17/11/2024; REACH accessed 09/12/2024).

Anticipated impact: the advancement of Russian forces and regular remote attacks, both likely to continue damaging healthcare facilities and impeding supply deliveries, imply that healthcare access may further deteriorate, particularly affecting those who need timely or regular access to healthcare and medication.

Increased health risks

The escalation of the conflict may further increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases, as frequent nighttime attacks in frontline areas and Zaporizhzhia city, which are likely to continue, along with the fear of such attacks disrupt sleep and heighten stress, which has been linked to impaired blood pressure regulation and an increased risk of hypertension (Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 19/10/2024; NYT 28/10/2024; Health Cluster 03/10/2024). Cases of gastrointestinal diseases have been reported in Zaporizka oblast, along with a rise in hepatitis A cases (Health Cluster 03/10/2024; Suspilne 14/10/2024; zprz.city 05/11/2024). There are frontline settlements lacking stable access to drinking water, which may increase this risk, and the continuing ground invasion and remote attacks are likely to further disrupt such access (Sensor 03/12/2024; Suspilne 14/10/2024; KII 26/11/2024; KII 12/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 a). People in frontline areas are also at a very high risk of acute respiratory infections (Health Cluster 03/10/2024). Continued house damage, the release of polluting substances from damaged infrastructure, and continued attacks on the energy system further aggravate this risk (Health Cluster 03/10/2024; WHO accessed 29/11/2024; ACAPS accessed 28/11/2024; WHO 12/09/2024; Holden et al. 15/08/2023).

Mental health

Media reports highlight that deliberate and often unexpected attacks on their homes and neighbourhoods cause signs of inflicted distress, such as shock, intense fear, and disorientation, among adults and children (Suspilne 23/09/2024, 12/10/2024, 15/10/2024, 18/09/2024, and 21/10/2024). The shock of receiving damage to their homes is worsened by a lack of funds to repair the damage, which leaves visible reminders of traumatic events (Suspilne 25/09/2024 a). These are common elements of a stress reaction to traumatic events (ScienceDirect accessed 29/11/2024; Finnish Red Cross accessed 29/11/2024; MIT Health accessed 29/11/2024). Before the recent escalation, three in four households in the oblast reported intense stress lasting at least two weeks in the past six months, similar to Donetska oblast despite less intense hostilities (REACH 03/09/2024). Both in the frontline areas and in Zaporizhzhia city, people live in constant fear of attacks, aggravated by the use of glide bombs over the past months (Suspilne 20/10/2024; Vidbudova Zaporizhzhia 19/10/2024; NYT 28/10/2024). Compared to 2023, the fear of

being killed, injured, or having their property damaged by armed violence has increased in 2024 (DRC accessed 25/11/2024). The higher the exposure to insecurity-related traumatic events or chronic stress, the higher the risk of such mental health conditions as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, which have also been confirmed in Ukraine among adults and adolescents (Karatzias et al. 10/01/2023; Kurapov et al. 27/07/2023 Goto et al. 25/03/2024).

Severe mental health impacts, such as the loss of limb control, have been reported among children in Zaporizka oblast, echoing more of such impacts in other frontline oblasts (KII 15/11/2024 b; STC 09/12/2024). There is a strong correlation between parents' and their children's deteriorated mental health, and interviewed humanitarian responders observed that supporting the caregiver is key to helping the child (Martsenkovskiy et al. 25/09/2023; REACH et al. 01/08/2024; KII 15/11/2024 b). That said, providing comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support to caregivers and their children can be challenging, as only 7–21% of households in Zaporizka oblast recognise the need for psychological support (REACH 03/09/2024; ProtectionProtection Cluster accessed 27/11/2024 a).

Anticipated impact: with the likely continued escalation in air attacks, the effects of uncertainty and stress on the affected population's mental health are likely to be further heightened.

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS AND RESPONSE

Access constraints

Humanitarian access has deteriorated in Zaporizka oblast since the escalation of air attacks in September 2024. In Zaporizhzhia city, increased safety and security concerns from the use of glide bombs have affected overall access. Closer to the front line, shorter-range weapons, including short-range drones, pose a more constant threat (OCHA 27/11/2024; ACAPS 29/10/2024; KII 30/10/2024; KII 26/11/2024). That said, Zaporizka oblast has a lower number of reported access incidents (excluding Luhanska oblast) across Ukraine, both in ACAPS' data collection of publicly reported incidents and in OCHA's data collection of incidents reported by its partners. This has not changed with the September conflict escalation (ACAPS accessed 12/12/2024; OCHA 13/11/2024 and 27/11/2024).

Some responders have reported receiving permits from the oblast administration to access areas within 20km of the front line. Even with permits, personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine at checkpoints may restrict access to certain areas depending on the security situation (KII 14/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 a; KII 30/10/2024). Key informants also reported that the mobilisation of humanitarian staff has affected humanitarian operations (KII 27/11/2024 a; KII 19/11/2024).

Anticipated impact: the likely continued increase in air attacks on the oblast and Russian advances are likely to lead to a further deterioration of humanitarian access in Zaporizka oblast. This would materialise through an increase in the number of incidents affecting humanitarian responders and facilities, including within Zaporizhzhia city, and further restrictions on access to areas closer to the front line. Increased Russian targeting of the N15 road would restrict humanitarian movement on it.

Response capacity

Key informants observed that limited resources and limited capacity constrain some responders' capacity to sustain or expand their aid. Some organisations have staff and volunteers who are tired and lack the opportunity to recover, lack the staff to expand emergency operations, and expect a decrease in funding (KII 12/11/2024; KII 15/11/2024 a; KII 30/10/2024).

Responders' reactions to the escalation are diverse. Some humanitarian responders have modified the nature of their assistance and, in certain cases, are working with local authorities to develop plans to respond to the escalation. Key informants have also observed that some responders do not expect the situation to worsen and are operating as usual (KII 27/11/2024 a; KII 14/11/2024; KII 27/11/2024 b). Others have stopped providing aid in some high-risk hromadas or are anticipating doing so in the near future (KII 30/10/2024; KII 12/11/2024). Responders are aware of the dilemma of aid provision where evacuation is advised, but finding a balanced solution has been challenging, as ceasing aid would contravene humanitarian principles (ACAPS 26/04/2024; KII 15/11/2024 a).