

P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

Escalation of hostilities across Ukraine putting 7.5 million children at risk

Kyiv, 24 February – All the children in Ukraine – at least 7.5 million under 18-year-olds – are in grave danger of physical harm, severe emotional distress, and displacement, following an escalation in hostilities overnight, says Save the Children.

Explosions have been heard in the capital Kyiv and other major cities such as Kharkiv, forcing children and families into basements and bomb shelters. Parents are reporting trying to calm terrified children. Thousands of others are fleeing the capital, mostly by car. Temperatures in the capital are dropping below freezing, and displaced children may face long nights and days exposed to brutal conditions.

In Eastern Ukraine, more than 400,000 children live in the areas at high risk of the direct impacts of the presence of soldiers and artillery, including being injured or killed by guns, landmines and explosive weapons, or being displaced from their homes. At least 100,000 of these children and their families are already known to have left their homes since Monday, and are currently sheltering with friends, relatives and strangers, often in cramped conditions.

Save the Children is urgently calling on all parties to the conflict to agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities, to reduce the risk to children's lives and wellbeing. While hostilities are ongoing, all actors must adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by ensuring that civilians and civilian objects, especially schools and hospitals, are protected from attack. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas risks severe harm to civilians, especially children, and should be avoided at all costs.

Irina Saghoyan, Save the Children's Eastern Europe Director, said:

"Ukraine's children are caught in the crossfire of this adult war. It should never have come to this. Our most immediate concern is the risk to their health and wellbeing – in conflict, everything is on the table – death, injury, sexual violence, protection risks. Children are terrified. They are hearing explosions, they are being asked to flee with just the clothes on their backs. The risk to their mental health and potential for long-term trauma cannot be underestimated.

"We are also gravely concerned about displacement and the subsequent soaring humanitarian needs. Any family forced from their home needs help with shelter, food, clean water – the absolute basics. We are also at the end of winter, with temperatures regularly below zero. Many children living in this conflict zone already don't have enough food to eat or clothes to keep them warm. The thought that many of these children may be forced to find inadequate shelters in the instance of mass displacement – where they'll be exposed to the freezing rain, wind and snow – is incredibly distressing."

Save the Children has been operating in Ukraine since 2014, delivering essential humanitarian aid to children and their families. This includes supporting their access to education, providing psychosocial

support, distributing winter kits and hygiene kits, and providing cash grants to families so they can meet basic needs such as food, rent and medicines, or so they can invest in starting new businesses.

Bei Interviewanfragen wenden Sie sich bitte an unsere Pressestelle.

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.