Ukraine: Humanity & Inclusion's (HI) statement on the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and the rising civilian toll (July – September 2026)

Now in **the fifth year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, civilians continue to endure the catastrophic impact of explosive weapons in populated areas** (EWIPA), facing destruction, displacement, and long-term humanitarian consequences. **Between July and September 2026, Ukraine experienced some of the highest recorded civilian casualty levels since the beginning of the war** with **8,330 casualties and a 90% rise compared to the same period last year**[1], driven by intensifying missile strikes, long-range drones, glide bombs, artillery shelling and short-range FPV drone attacks. **During same period, Ukraine also ramped up its deep strike operations against targets inside Russian territory**, which were accompanied by reported civilian casualties.

Recent months have been among the deadliest for civilians, bringing immense loss and suffering

Between July and September 2026, the UN documented an unrelenting civilian harm in Ukraine.

In July alone, 437 civilians were killed and 2,610 injured, making it the deadliest month since May 2022. Overall, **during the first eight months of 2026, more civilians were killed and injured across Ukraine than in the entire year of 2025**, underscoring the severe deterioration in civilian protection and the mounting human cost of the war.[2]

Overall, the civilian toll in Ukraine since February 2022 to September 2026 has risen to 73,451 killed and injured, underscoring the devastating impact of indiscriminate assaults on civilians and the urgent need for strengthened humanitarian protection.

The actual extent of civilian harm – both casualties and infrastructure damage - is likely considerably higher as many reports of civilian harm, have not been possible to verify due to the lack of access to areas near frontline and to territories under Russian control.

Ukrainian airstrikes on Russian territory have also caused civilian casualties, from January to **July 2026 at least 327 civilians were killed** in Russia[3]. These figures originate solely from official Russian sources and have **not been independently verified by international observers or monitoring missions** and therefore **must be treated with caution.**

[1] Ukraine – Protection of civilians in armed conflict (September)_ENG.pdf
[2] Ukraine - protection of civilians in armed conflict (August)_ENG.pdf
[3] Civilians in Ukraine and Russia are paying an ever-higher price in the war | International | EL PAÍS English

"Life in Kyiv is constant uncertainty: you don't know if you will wake up alive in the morning or reach work safely when there are no shelters nearby and the power plant next to the metro station is under repeated attack. It is an evening reading Harry Potter with your child, suddenly interrupted by ballistic explosions outside the window and a rush to the corridor. It is watching a high-rise burn just a kilometer away, consoling yourself only with the thought that the playground beneath did not claim children's lives. It is seeing the tears of fear in your child's eyes every day. Life in Kyiv is no longer life — it is survival." — Inna, HI finance officer, Kyiv, September 2026.

Most destructive weapons for civilians

Russian forces' use of explosive weapons continues to generate a consistent pattern of civilian harm. Ukrainian forces have also conducted strikes using drones and missiles, including on Russian territory, raising concerns about the protection of civilians.

Weapons Used by Russia

Long-Range Drones (Shahed-136/131[4] ; Geran-3, Geran-4, Geran-5[5]; Italmas and Gerbera strike drones)[6]

Russia has sharply escalated its use of jet-powered Geran drones against Ukraine, launching heavy-warhead systems **deliberately targeting Ukraine's civilian infrastructure and residential areas**. Daily attacks in August and September saw hundreds deployed, with some assaults killing civilians in Kyiv and other cities.[7]

Between July and September 2026, Russian forces launched **16,086 long-range drones across Ukraine**, marking one of the most intense periods of drone warfare in the conflict. The sheer scale of these attacks had **horrific consequences for civilians**, with widespread destruction of homes, infrastructure, and disruption of daily life. [8][9].

On 2 July, Russia launched 496 Shahed, Gerbera, and Italmas strike drones in a combined attack on Kyiv, one of the largest episodes of the month; the strikes killed at least 30 civilians,

---

[4] Shahed-136/131: propeller-driven loitering munitions
[5] Geran drones : Fast strike drones, 300–600 km/h, 50–90 kg warheads
[6] Беспилотники РФ 2026: типы «Герань», «Ланцет», производство и как их сбивают; https://www.csis.org/analysis/shahed-geran-how-russia-continues-reinvent-one-way-attack-drone
[7] Russia's use of jet powered drone attacks against Ukraine soars | National Security News
[8] Ukraine war monitor
[9] July 2026 Updated Analysis of Russian Shahed-type UAVs Deployment Against Ukraine

injured more than 97, and caused severe destruction to residential buildings, a hospital, a humanitarian warehouse, and critical city infrastructure[10].

Short-Range Drones (FPV, Lancet-type, Hornet)

Russian forces continued to use FPV drones that target evacuation buses, humanitarian workers, and frontline towns. July saw the highest monthly civilian casualty toll from short-range drones since the start of the full-scale war: 111 people killed and 710 injured, nearly one in four of the month's civilian casualties. These systems did not only strike people, but they can also hunt them: OHCHR has documented drone operators targeting civilians in cars and buses, people evacuating, and clearly marked ambulances, and in July an FPV drone destroyed a Red Cross emergency-response van moments after its crew arrived to treat casualties in Vilniansk, with deaths recorded among humanitarian workers and persons with disabilities, whose remain unable to safely relocate in time without proper support.

Aerial Bombs (Guided and Unguided)

Russia's use of glide bombs remained at record levels, devastating residential areas in Kharkiv, Sumy and Donetsk. **On July 2026 c**ivilian casualties from aerial bombardments rose **143% compared to June**, reaching **105 killed and 753 injured**.[11]

Cruise and Ballistic Missiles (Iskander-M, S-400/KN-23, Zircon/Onyx antiship missiles; Kh-101, Kalibr).

Russia intensified missile attacks in July, with **429 missiles launched**[12]. Civilian casualties from missiles and loitering munitions accounted for **38% of all harm** (183 killed; 967 injured).

The combined use of cruise and ballistic missiles, glide bombs, Shahed/Geran loitering munitions, and FPV drones by Russian forces has had a devastating impact on civilians. These weapons disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups - children, persons with disabilities, women, and the elderly**,** causing extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and medical facilities, and severely restricting access to essential services. T**he use of explosive weapons in populated areas is likely to result in international humanitarian law violations regarding fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions.**

Weapons Used by Ukraine

Long-Range Drones (UAVs and naval drones)

---

[10] Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, July 2, 2026 | Critical Threats

[11] Ukraine - protection of civilians in armed conflict (July)_ENG.pdf

[12] Скільки балістичних ракет Росія випустила по Україні у липні - рекорд війни

Between July and September 2026, **Ukraine intensified its long-range strike drone campaign** against Russian energy infrastructure, striking major refineries including Omsk, TANECO, Saratov, Ryazan, and Perm, and warehouse facilities, these operations caused shutdowns, fires, and widespread fuel shortages across Russia, reducing refining output to its lowest level in two decades[13][14].

Cruise and Ballistic Missiles (Neptune, Flamingo cruise missile; FP-7 ballistic missile)

Between July–September 2026, **Ukrainian forces escalated long-range strikes on Russia** using Neptune cruise missiles, Flamingo cruise missiles, and possibly FP-7 ballistic missiles. Targets included oil refineries (Gazpromneft Moscow, Novoshakhtinsk), UAV factories (Atlant-Aero), electronics plants (Karachev Elektrodetal), ports, and Russian Navy vessels. These attacks disrupted Russia's energy infrastructure, forced refinery shutdowns, and weakened its Black Sea Fleet presence, with civilian casualties reported [15][16].

Main incidents involving civilian casualties

The following chronology highlights the most devastating attacks in Ukraine and Russia or territories under Russian control impacting civilians from July to September, underscoring urgent protection needs and accountability gaps[17]

July 2026

- On July 2, Russia launched one of its largest combined attacks on Kyiv: at least 31 civilians were killed, more than 100 were injured, and dozens of residential buildings and infrastructure facilities were damaged[18]. The destruction of homes means not only collapsed walls and shattered windows - it represents families suddenly left without shelter, possessions, or any means to rebuild their lives. For many, this devastation translates into new waves of displacement, as people are forced to leave their communities and seek safety elsewhere.
- On 6 July, Russian forces launched a large-scale missile attack on Kyiv, striking multiple residential districts; at least 19 civilians were killed and 58 injured, including children[19].

---

[13] Ukrainian drones strike across Russia, hitting refineries, Wildberries warehouse | Reuters
[14] Ukraine says its drones hit three refineries, tankers, in night of major strikes | Reuters
[15] https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/articles/2026/07/21/8044889/
[16] Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, Sept. 20, 2026 | ISW
[17] The list below is not exhaustive and does not capture all incidents that occurred between July and September 2026. The attacks mentioned were chosen due to their significant impact on civilian lives and infrastructure.
[18] Civilian Casualties Soar as Ukraine Comes Under the Deadliest Attack in Weeks, UN Human Rights Monitors Say | UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine
[19] Another Deadly Overnight Attack in Kyiv Amid Rising Civilian Casualties | UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

- On July 18, Ukrainian drone strikes hit Wildberries warehouses in Kotovsk and Elektrostal, killing eight people, injuring around 80.
- On 19 July, Russia missile attack on a vessel in the Black Sea, in Odesa region, killed 10 civilians, including 9 vessel workers and a maritime pilot, and injured 8 vessel workers.
- On 30 July, Russia missile attack on Radushne, Dnipropetrovsk region, killed 5 members of the same family - a father, a mother, and their 3 children. 4 of their other children and their 1.5-year-old grandson remain missing while DNA identification continues. The attack also injured 7 civilians.

August 2026

- On 5 August, Russia used cluster munitions contained in at least one ballistic missile in an attack on Kyiv. The attack reportedly killed three people at a sorting center belonging to Nova Poshta, Ukraine's largest private courier and mail service, and endangered civilians nearby. The strike was part of a wider Russian missile and drone attack on Kyiv and the surrounding region that reportedly killed at least 18 civilians and injured dozens.[20] 8 of those killed were civilians waiting for a train at a railway station.
- On 10 August, Ukrainian drone strike on the Russian city of Nizhnekamsk (Tatarstan) hit Tatneft's TANECO oil refinery, killed 13 people and wounded 39 others Russian officials say, though the casualty figures and details have not been independently verified by observers.
- On 20 August, Russia missile and drone attack on Kyiv city killed 16 civilians and injured at least 40. The attack left families without homes or belongings, damaged critical infrastructure, including the power grid and a medical facility, and caused severe psychological trauma to survivors and children as they witnessed scenes of destruction and fires.
- On 21 August, two drones struck an operational shopping center in Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk region, approximately 30 minutes apart, killing at least 16 civilians and injuring 130[21]. Families lost loved ones, survivors and families exposed to repeated attacks on a place associated with daily life and safety.
- On 28 August, drones struck an ammunition depot in Myla, Kyiv region, setting off secondary explosions. At least 37 civilians were killed and 42 injured. The majority of those killed were in an elderly care home at the time of the attack. The tragedy in Myla demonstrates how persons with disabilities and older residents in care facilities are

[20] Russia: Cluster Munition Attack on Kyiv a Potential War Crime | Human Rights Watch

[21] Russian attack strikes shopping centre full of civilians – UN human rights monitors | UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

among the most vulnerable during attacks, as many with mobility impairments were unable to temporally relocate or protect themselves, leaving them effectively trapped and exposed to fatal consequences[22].

September 2026

- On 1 September, Russia launched a massive attack on Ukraine using ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and over 200 drones, striking 28 locations nationwide. The assault killed 12 people, including an Indian citizen, and injured dozens more. In Kyiv Oblast, a five-storey residential building in Boryspil was damaged, leaving 4 dead and 13 injured, while 7 people were killed at a railway depot in Kyiv. Odesa suffered widespread power outages after guided bombs and drones hit the region, and a border crossing on the Romanian frontier along with export infrastructure was targeted.
- On 7 September, Russian attacks across Ukraine killed 3 people and wounded 38 others. Casualties were reported in Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Kherson, Odesa, and Sumy. The strikes damaged residential buildings, infrastructure, and caused fires and power outages, underscoring the ongoing civilian toll of Russia's daily bombardments.
- On 11 September, Russian drones struck a shopping center in Pavlohrad, southeastern Ukraine, killing 5 people and injuring 67 others, including three teenage boys aged 13, 14, and 15. Local authorities reported a total of seven deaths across five districts in the city, a key rail and logistics hub.
- On 16 September, a Russian drone struck a passenger bus in Nikopol district, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, killing five people and injuring at least seven others.
- On September 27, Russian mass strikes across Ukraine killed 14 and injured 57, heavily damaging civilian sites in Odesa and other regions, leaving families without homes, damaging medical facilities, schools, and energy infrastructure, and forcing communities into darkness, displacement, and trauma.

The **vast majority of casualties** reported between July – September 2026 occurred **in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine. Civilians were killed or injured across 14 regions of Ukraine** and the city of Kyiv.[23]

[22] Explosions reportedly kill at least 37 outside Kyiv city | UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine
[23] Protection of civilians | UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

Our Call to Action

Humanity & Inclusion (HI) strongly denounces the devastating harm inflicted on civilians by the bombing and shelling of towns and cities in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. **HI calls on all parties to respect IHL and its principles to ensure the protection of civilians and protection of humanitarian and health workers at all times.**

HI calls on all governments to urgently endorse and fully implement the **Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas**, and to uphold their commitments to restrict and refrain from such use when civilian harm is foreseeable.

We **further urge the international community to condemn and investigate violations of IHL, to strengthen accountability mechanisms, and to ensure survivor-centered assistance, including mental health support and inclusive rehabilitation services**. Protecting civilians and safeguarding essential services must remain a global priority, and states that have already signed the Declaration should lead by example, sharing concrete measures taken to implement its commitments and demonstrating genuine action to reduce civilian harm.

Humanity & Inclusion emphasizes that the use of EWIPA not only **causes civilian casualties and the destruction of infrastructure but also leads to long-term contamination of land with explosive remnants of war**. This contamination prevents safe returns, blocks access to housing, schools, medical facilities, and livelihoods. HI calls on governments and the international community to **prioritize land clearance from ERW as an essential component of civilian protection**, recovery, and sustainable development, ensuring compliance with International Mine Action Standards and inclusive principles in the planning and implementation of programs.