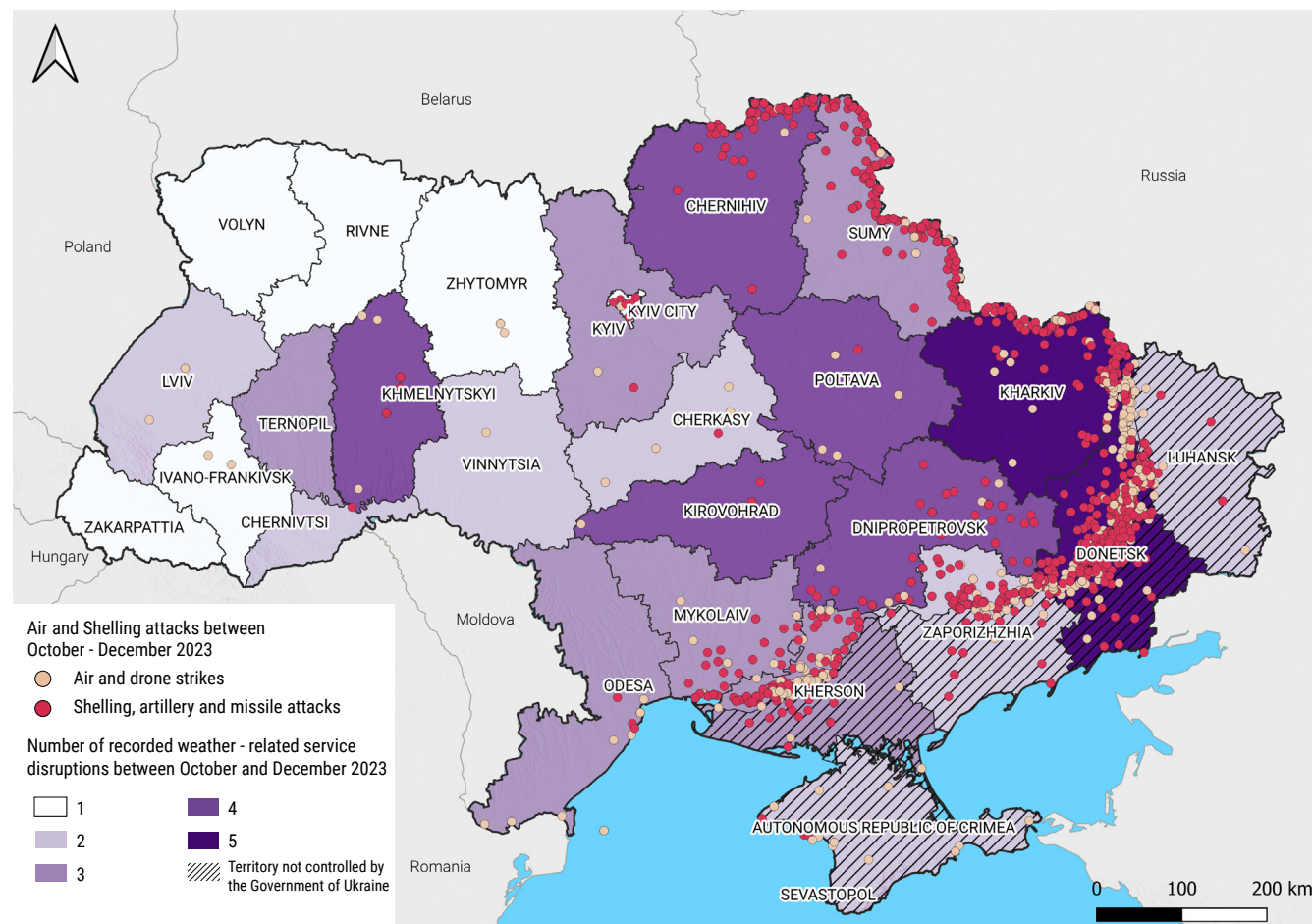# UKRAINE
Quarterly humanitarian access update

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, AND DECEMBER 2023

- Widespread air strikes, severe winter weather, and telecommunication disruptions increased access severity scores for nearly all Ukraine oblasts between October–December.

- Since mid-December, and particularly on 29 December, large-scale attacks throughout Ukraine caused civilian casualties, damaged infrastructure, and led to temporary power cuts in major cities far away from the front lines.

- Shelling in frontline areas and along the border with the Russian Federation remained the main constraints to humanitarian movements.

- Extreme winter weather caused power outages throughout Ukraine in November–December, affecting 21 of 24 oblasts. It also affected humanitarian movements and constrained access to certain areas, potentially leaving some people without much-needed assistance.

- On 12 December, a large-scale cyberattack on Ukrainian mobile operator Kyivstar left more than 24 million without cell phone services for several days.

- Administrative constraints, such as difficulties for international staff from certain countries to receive D-07 visas, as well as local humanitarian staff conscription and military document verification, increased during the October– December 2023 period.

- Kherson oblast remained the most dangerous area for humanitarian responders, where most reported attacks on humanitarian responders and facilities occurred.

Map 1. Increased air attacks and weather-related service disruptions in Ukraine, October–December 2023

Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 17/01/2024). See full map on page 15.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this report

Aim: this report aims to compare access challenges across different Ukraine oblasts to inform humanitarian responders and support their decision-making. It is part of the ACAPS quarterly analysis of access constraints, with the last report published on 8 November 2023.

Methodology: this analysis is based on changes in the access severity model between 1 October and 31 December 2023, which ACAPS developed using data collected from secondary sources, including ten key informant interviews with local and international humanitarian responders conducted between 3 and 13 January 2024.

A short description of the methodology is available in the last section of this report.

The complete methodology, access events dataset, and access severity model API are available on the ACAPS Ukraine Hub website.

Limitations: the analysis relies primarily on publicly available data, which is unlikely to be comprehensive because of the dynamic conflict situation.

MAIN ACCESS DEVELOPMENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Increased air attacks and drone strikes

Figure 1. New civilian infrastructure damage reported weekly between October–December 2023
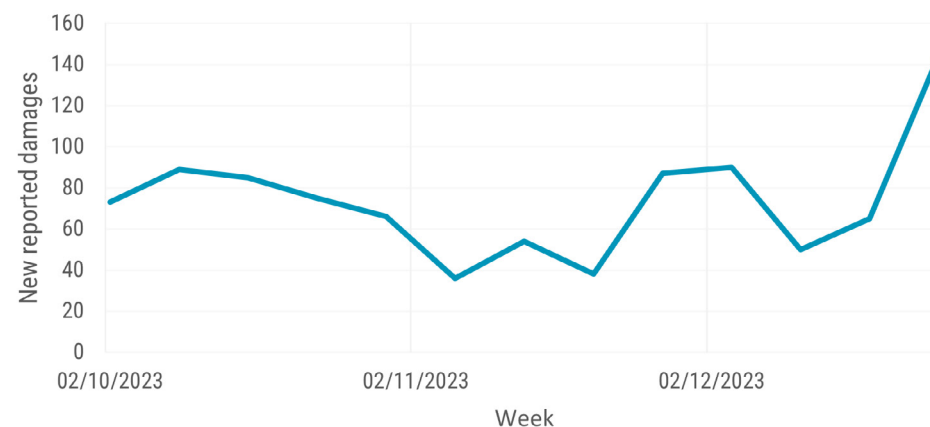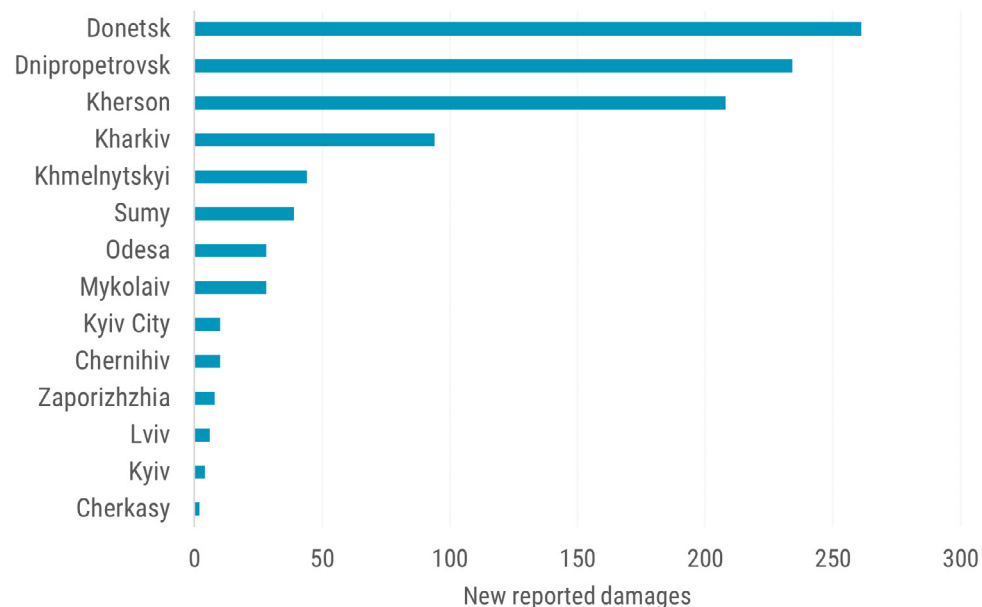

Source: ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024

On 29 December 2023, Russia launched wide-scale missile and drone attacks targeting major cities throughout Ukraine, including in Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, and Zaporizhzhia. The attacks killed about 40 civilians and injured over 130. The strikes continued during the following days (BBC 29/12/2023; OCHA 31/12/2023). The attacks increased security constraints for civilians and humanitarians throughout Ukraine, disrupted utility provision because of critical infrastructure damage, and destroyed housing and other civilian infrastructure (ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024). People with damaged or destroyed houses were temporarily displaced (KII 08/01/2024 a). Regardless, the attacks did not affect humanitarian access, especially since larger cities were expecting an escalation of attacks in the winter (KII 03/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 a; KII 08/01/2024 a; KII 03/01/2024 b).

Humanitarian access continued to be the most constrained in areas close to the front line and borders with the Russian Federation, where shelling was constant throughout the fourth quarter (Q4) and the security situation was more dynamic (KII 05/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 c).

A large wave of air strikes from 12–13 December similarly damaged civilian infrastructure and led to power cuts (OCHA 13/12/2023).

Figure 2. New civilian infrastructure damage reported by oblast between October–December 2023


Source: ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024

Attacks on humanitarian responders

Attacks on humanitarian responders, including volunteers, continued but at a lower level than during the July–September period. Public reports indicate at least 12 instances of humanitarian responders coming under attack. Additional incidents not publicly reported are accounted for in the access severity scoring. The continued indiscriminate targeting of humanitarian responders and infrastructure, including many unreported close calls, complicates the last-mile delivery of in-kind assistance (KII 08/01/2024 a).

Chernihiv oblast: on 15 November, shrapnel injured a volunteer delivering food assistance by car in Novhorod-Siverskyi raion (NPU Chernihiv 15/11/2023). On 12 December, Russian drones attacked a bread distribution site for civilians in Novhorod-Siverskyi, although no injuries were reported (Ukrainska Pravda 24/12/2023).

Map 2. Attacks on humanitarian responders between October–December 2023
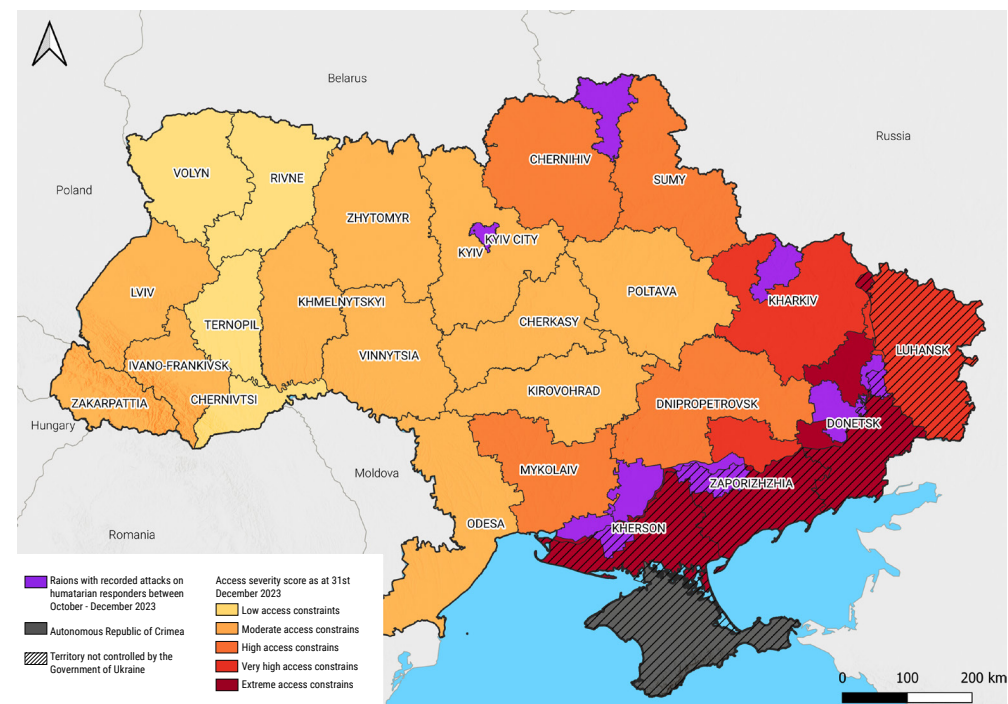
Sources: ACAPS using data from NPU Chernihiv (15/11/2023); Ukrainska Pravda (22/12/2023 and 24/12/2023); Zmina (14/10/2023, 18/11/2023, 29/11/2023, and 22/12/2023); Ukrinform (08/10/2023, 31/10/2023, 10/11/2023, 30/11/2023, and 06/12/2023); OCHA (20/12/2023). See full map on page 16.

Donetsk oblast: on 14 October, a Russian drone attack targeted a van delivering bread to Avdiivka (Zmina 14/10/2023). On 30 November, a mortar attack hit an area where humanitarian aid was being distributed, injuring three civilians in Toretsk (Ukrinform 30/11/2023). On 22 December, shelling hit a car in Pokrovsk raion, injuring two volunteers (Ukrainska Pravda 22/12/2023).

Kherson oblast: reports indicate multiple incidents in Kherson oblast, the most dangerous oblast for humanitarian responders, especially in areas near the Dnipro River. Five separate incidents injured five responders and killed one (Ukrinform 08/10/2023, 31/10/2023, 10/11/2023, and 06/12/2023; Zmina 18/11/2023; OCHA 20/12/2023).

Kyiv city: loitering munition hit the apartment of an INGO staff member during the 22 December attack on Kyiv city (Zmina 22/12/2023).

Zaporizhzhia oblast: on 28 November, a drone attack on a truck distributing humanitarian aid in Stepnohirsk killed one civilian and injured three (Zmina 29/11/2023).

Winter weather

Figure 3. Number of weather-related access events by week
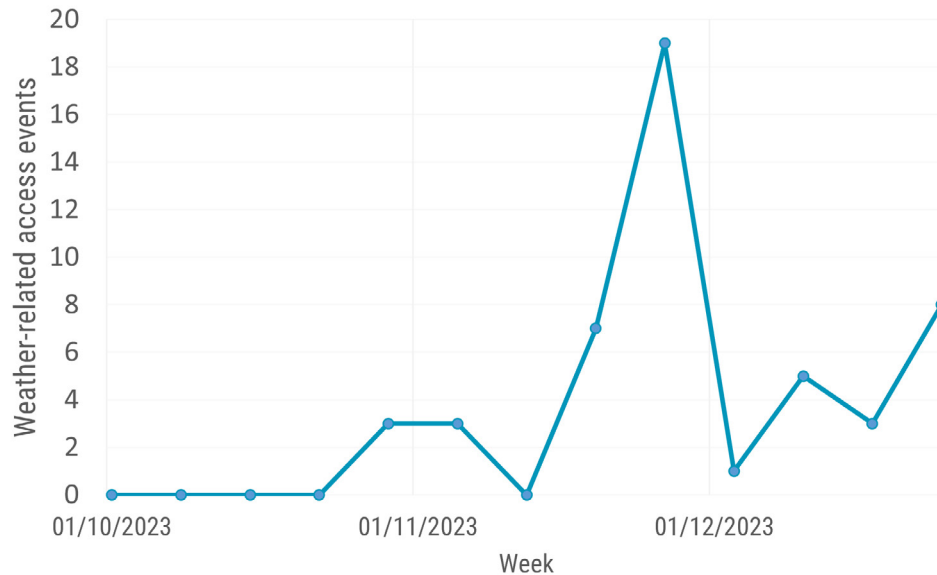
Source: ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024

Access severity scores increased in most Ukraine oblasts as a result of severe winter weather in November–December. Storms and freezing caused power outages in 21 oblasts in a period when access to heating was essential. In areas most affected by hostilities and shelling, existing infrastructure damage and security constraints aggravated these outages, perhaps leading to extended periods without electricity.

In some cases, winter weather conditions slowed humanitarian movement, and access to certain remote areas became more constrained (KII 08/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 c). These constraints increased the likelihood of people in rural areas not receiving sufficient assistance during the cold winter months, such as cash or in-kind assistance for solid heating fuels (KII 09/01/2024).

In early November, 14,500 subscribers from 77 settlements in Chernihiv and several thousand from Khmelnytskyi, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, and Poltava oblasts lost power after heavy winds damaged power lines (Ukrinform 05/11/2023 and 04/11/2023). A large storm from 25–27 November left more than 2,000 localities in 16 oblasts without electricity and closed 14 highways (AP 27/11/2023; RFE/RL 27/11/2023). The storm halted humanitarian movements in

certain localities for days (KII 05/01/2024 a). In Russian-occupied territories, the same storm left nearly 500,000 people in Crimea and 190,000 people in Donetsk without power according to Russian officials (Moscow Times 27/11/2023).

In December, freezing rain and continued severe winter weather caused power cuts in Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Khmelnytskyi, Kirovohrad, Luhansk, Sumy, and Ternopil oblasts (Suspilne 15/12/2023; Pokrovsk News 19/12/2023; MRPL 19/12/2023; Tribun 21/12/2023; Ukrainian Ministry of Energy 26/12/2023 and 27/12/2023). On 27 December, 20 settlements in Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, and Kharkiv oblasts remained without power because of bad weather (Ukrainian Ministry of Energy 27/12/2023). While services were restored in many locations, certain settlements remained without power as at early January 2024 (Ukrainian Ministry of Energy 27/12/2023; Ukrainska Pravda 02/01/2024).

Telecommunication disruption

Figure 4. Number of access events involving telecommunication cuts by week
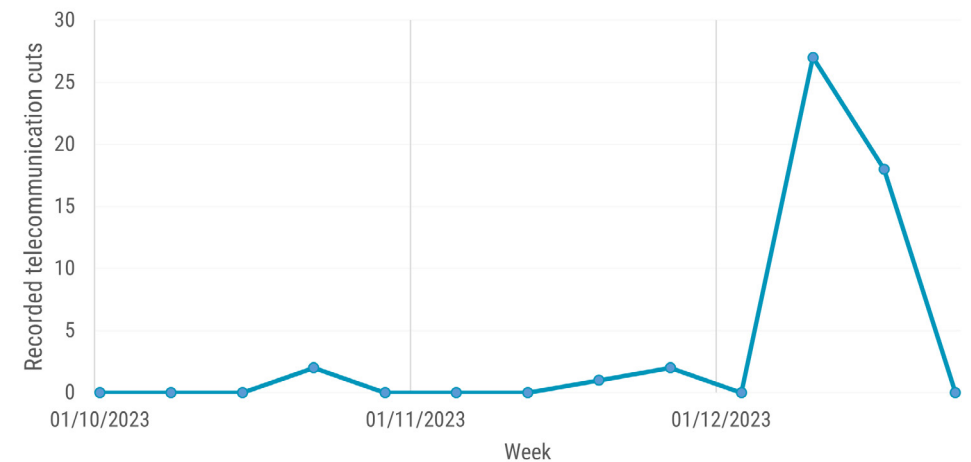
Source: ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024

On 12 December, a large-scale cyberattack on Ukrainian mobile phone provider Kyivstar left more than 24 million subscribers without cell phone services for several days (Reuters 05/01/2024). Kyivstar subscribers were also unable to manually change their data connection to that of another provider, meaning they were only able to purchase sim cards from other providers, causing large queues (Reuters 05/01/2024; KII 05/01/2024 a). Around 1.1 million people live in remote locations where Kyivstar is the only provider available (Reuters 05/01/2024).

Some humanitarian responders experienced significant operational impacts resulting from the mobile phone disruptions, as they were unable to contact local authorities to receive permission to travel to certain high-risk areas, temporarily halting operations (KII 05/01/2024 a). Humanitarian movements also slowed down, as internal security and monitoring procedures were more difficult to implement (KII 08/01/2024 a).

Mandatory evacuation of minors

Between October–December, authorities announced several new mandatory evacuation orders for minors, primarily in areas heavily affected by conflict and where Ukrainian authorities are unable to restore access to utilities.

Donetsk oblast: in mid-October, oblast authorities called for the mandatory evacuation of 240 children from Toretsk and 19 from Marinka hromada and provided a special train to Zhytomyr oblast. Around 40,500 children remained in Ukrainian-controlled areas of Donetsk oblast at the start of October (Suspilne 15/10/2023).

Kherson oblast: on 23 October, Ukrainian authorities called for the mandatory evacuation of 802 children and their families from 23 settlements of the oblast (MinRe Telegram 23/10/2023). As at 6 December, 149 children remained in eight of the settlements under mandatory evacuation, while all children were evacuated from the other 15 settlements (Zmina 06/12/2023).

Russian passport requirements

In Russian-occupied territories, the Russian passport requirement continued to restrict civilians' access to assistance and livelihood opportunities. For example, in Luhansk oblast, assistance for the purchase of coal and firewood for heating during the winter was restricted to those holding Russian passports (Espreso 20/11/2023). In Zaporizhzhia oblast, the de facto authorities announced that medical care will only be available to people with Russian citizenship starting on 1 January 2024 (BBC Telegram 06/10/2023). Employment opportunities are likely to become more limited for those who refuse to take up Russian passports, as a new law limits the share of 'foreign' workers in businesses operating in those areas, including people who only hold Ukrainian passports (National Resistance Center 03/11/2023; Suspilne 16/11/2023).

Continued impacts of the Kakhovka dam destruction

The Kakhovka dam destruction continued to affect people's access to drinking water. Well water testing in Pokrovske, Myrove, and Tomakivska hromadas (Nikopol raion,

Dnipropetrovsk oblast), where access to piped water had not yet been restored, found it unsafe for consumption (Dnepr info 04/10/2023). On 8 December, Ukrainian authorities stated that the construction of a pipeline expected to provide drinking water to one million people affected by the Kakhovka dam destruction was 87% complete (Ministry of Infrastructure Facebook 08/12/2023).

In Russian-occupied territories, the scale of continued impacts is unclear, but reports suggest that Kakhovka hromada and neighbouring settlements are relying on bottled water (MOST 12/12/2023).

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS IN TERRITORIES UNDER UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT CONTROL

Several administrative constraints continue to hamper humanitarian organisations' ability to reach people in need. This section focuses on the constraints for organisations operating in territories under Ukrainian control. The low level of humanitarian and media reporting and extreme humanitarian access constraints in Russian-occupied territories prevent a comprehensive monitoring and analysis of administrative constraints in those territories.

Ukrainian visas

Humanitarian organisations report difficulties in getting D-07 visas for international staff whose nationalities are on a list of countries with a supposedly high probability of onward migration, mostly from Africa and the Middle East. These difficulties have increased since 1 November (KII 03/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 b; KII 08/01/2024 a). While no official public list of affected countries is available, the list of 70 countries with a supposedly high probability of onward migration appears to be the same as the list of countries ineligible for visa-free or e-visa entry (MFA 15/06/2021; Expatpro accessed 18/01/2024; EWB 27/12/2017).

Staff from these countries are often unable to receive Ukrainian visas from Ukrainian consulates in Poland, where international staff usually apply for D-07 visas, and are instead asked to reapply in their countries of origin. These delays cause additional costs to humanitarian organisations, potential job contract losses for international staff, and, in some cases, the expiry of Schengen visas during the process (KII 05/01/2024 b; KII 08/01/2024 a). Staff from these countries also experience longer checks at border crossings into Ukraine (KII 03/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 a).

International staff from visa-free countries wishing to stay longer than 90 days in Ukraine and all international staff from other countries require D-07 visas (MFA 15/06/2021). Staff

from some countries also require a Schengen visa to transit via neighbouring countries into Ukraine (EC accessed 18/01/2024).

Military conscription

There are reports of military conscription of humanitarian staff throughout Ukraine. Conscription of staff created staffing constraints and reluctance among certain male staff and private businesses hired by humanitarian organisations to travel to certain locations (KII 03/01/2024 a; KII 04/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 c; KII 12/01/2024; OCHA 25/01/2024). Two options exist for humanitarian organisations to apply for conscription of their staff. NGOs implementing UN-funded projects may apply for local staff on those projects to be exempted. Organisations can also seek a 'critical entity' designation from the Government of Ukraine (DRC 06/03/2023). That said, the process is yet to be fully finalised, and exemptions have only been possible for staff implementing UN-funded projects and a few specialised INGOs (KII 03/01/2024 a; KII 08/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 c). Exemption is also only possible for staff with up-to-date military records (KII 05/01/2024 b; KII 08/01/2024 a).

The October–December 2023 period saw Ukrainian authorities intensifying military record checks at checkpoints, including on humanitarian organisations' male staff (KII 05/01/2024 a; KII 08/01/2024 a). On 17 November, Kherson oblast authorities announced that they would be strengthening checks at checkpoints to find people ignoring previously received conscription summons (NV 17/11/2023). For one INGO, this meant that local responders have started prioritising female staff and men not subject to conscription (usually because of medical exemptions) to travel to certain areas (KII 05/01/2024 a). Between 28 December 2023 and 6 January 2024, authorities increased checkpoints in Kyiv city and oblast. While checkpoints are related to security checks and criminal investigations, military records can always be verified during stops (UNIAN 28/12/2023; KII 03/01/2024 a). On 30 November, Zakarpattia oblast authorities announced additional checkpoints to prevent the illegal border crossing of men ages 18–60 (Zakarpattia OMA 30/11/2023).

Permits and authorisations to access high-risk areas

Authorities continued to require permits or authorisations for access to high-risk areas close to the front lines or the border with the Russian Federation. Depending on the oblast, approval may come from oblast authorities, local authorities, local military authorities, and other state entities, such as border control or the police (KII 05/01/2024 c; KII 09/01/2024).

In general, these requirements have become part of organisations' standard operating procedures in high-risk areas and do not represent an additional burden or constraint.

Advanced communication with authorities facilitates the process and usually helps resolve issues at checkpoints (KII 05/01/2024 a). That said, smaller organisations with fewer connections to authorities or local commanding officers may face more difficulties in negotiating access at checkpoints if they are denied passage despite prior approval (KII 05/01/2024 c).

Humanitarian importation law

Since 1 December, a new digital system for declaring the importation of humanitarian aid has been in effect. The Ukrainian Government originally planned for it to be mandatory, but following responders' feedback, they made it optional until 1 April. Feedback indicated that the process would be too burdensome for small organisations and impossible to comply with for informal international volunteer networks not formally registered in Ukraine (EPravda 19/10/2023; MinRe 21/11/2023; KII 03/01/2024 b). Until then, the pre-existing paper declaration form remains available. The new digital system requires the tracking and reporting of imported humanitarian goods from import to distribution (KMU 25/11/2023; MSP 02/12/2023). As the new system is currently optional, its actual impact on humanitarian operations is too early to assess, but reports indicate some small technical problems in the initial days of the rollout (KII 03/01/2024 a; KII 05/01/2024 a; KII 08/01/2024 a).

UPDATE ON THE MOVEMENT OF UKRAINIANS VIA RUSSIA AND BELARUS

Leaving Russian-occupied territories via Russia and Belarus

New arrivals at the Kolotilovka-Pokrovka border crossing with Russia indicate that many of the people leaving Russian-controlled territories are fleeing frontline villages on the left bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson oblast as the conflict intensifies, and Russian forces are reinforcing their defensive positions (RFE/RL 09/11/2023 a). Others are fleeing the increasing restrictions on access to services and livelihoods for people without Russian passports (The Insider 10/10/2023).

In October, reports indicated long wait times of up to several days on the Russian side of the Kolotilova-Pokrovka border crossing in Sumy oblast. Those without money for a hotel room or afraid to lose their spot in line sleep outdoors in freezing conditions. A temporary accommodation providing shelter and food set up by the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations is no longer present, leaving many to rely on assistance from local volunteer groups (The Insider 10/10/2023; BBC 12/10/2023). As at mid-December, there were still some delays at the border, as Russian border guards limited operations on their side of the crossing given

winter weather and short daylight time (Meduza 16/12/2023). Additional periods of multi-day bottlenecks at the border crossing could put civilians waiting to cross in grave danger during the cold winter months.

Passage through Russian checkpoints, especially the final checkpoint in Novoazovsk (Donetsk oblast) before crossing into Russia, is challenging and arbitrary. Russian forces conduct extensive searches to find indications of collaboration with the Ukrainian armed forces or the Security Service of Ukraine. People who hold Ukrainian passports only and men under 65 have a higher chance of being denied passage (RFE/RL 09/11/2023 a; Suspilne 14/12/2023).

For people returning to territories under Ukrainian control via Belarus, the Ukrainian Government is considering arranging temporary accommodation for those arriving via the Makrany-Domanove border crossing (Volyn oblast). A volunteer-run centre is already present, providing food and shelter for the night (Ukrainska Pravda 25/11/2023).
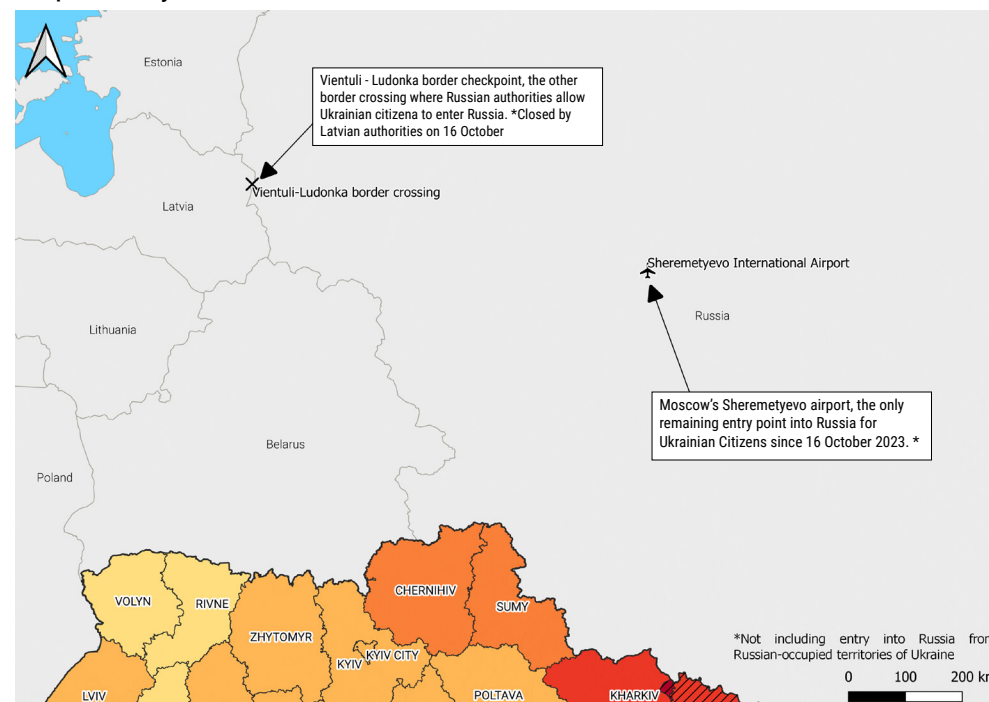
Map 3. Leaving Russian-occupied territories and returning to territories under Ukrainian control
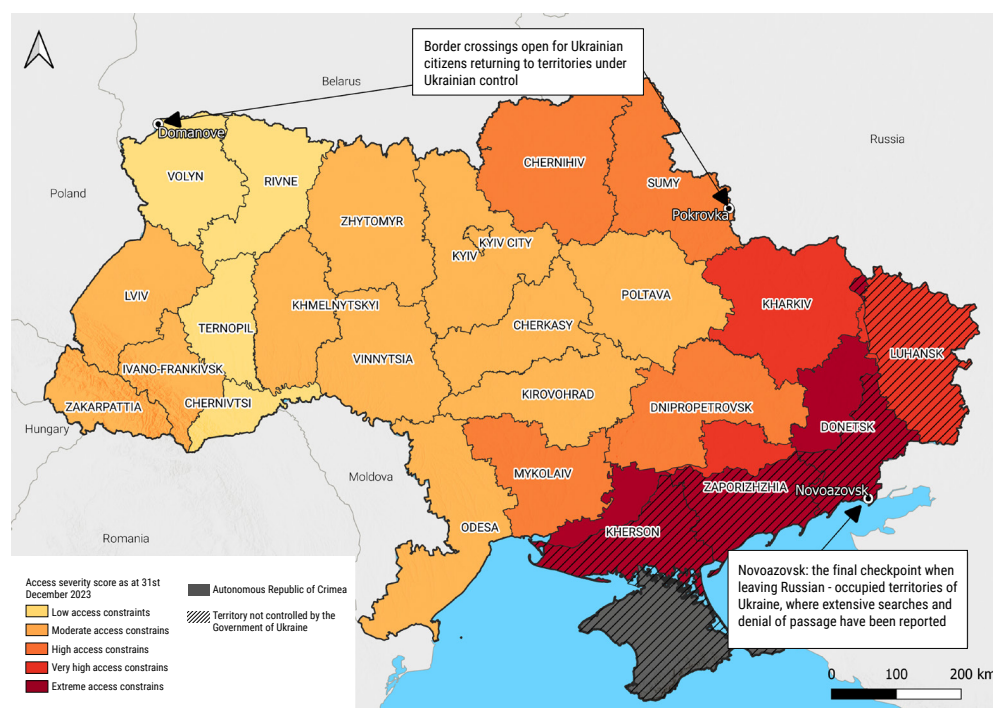
Sources: ACAPS using data from RFE/RL (09/11/2023 a); Ukrainska Pravda (25/11/2023). See full map on page 17.

Entering Russian-occupied territories via Russia

Map 4. Entry to Russia for Ukrainian citizens

Sources: ACAPS using data from ERR (12/10/2023); Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets Telegram (03/11/2023); Interfax (16/10/2023). See full map on page 18.

From October–December, Ukrainians' ability to enter Russia and travel back to Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine became more constrained.

Since 16 October, Ukrainian citizens have only been allowed to enter Russia via Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport (ERR 12/10/2023; Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets Telegram 03/11/2023). In their original decision restricting entry points for Ukrainian citizens, Russian authorities also allowed them to enter via the Vientuli-Ludonka border crossing with Latvia. Latvian authorities closed that border crossing on 16 October, leaving Sheremetyevo airport as the only remaining option (Interfax 16/10/2023).

These restrictions have limited the options of Ukrainians seeking to travel to Russian-occupied territories via Russia, as many did so previously via the various land borders between Russia and European countries. For example, between 1 September and 10 October, a daily average of 127 Ukrainian citizens crossed into Russia from Estonia (ERR 12/10/2023).

Russian authorities are interrogating and searching the electronic devices of Ukrainian citizens arriving at Sheremetyevo airport. Some Ukrainians have reported being denied entry to Russia on the basis of their social media posts and browsing history (Petro Andryushchenko Time Telegram 22/10/2023; RFE/RL 09/11/2023 a and 09/11/2023 b).

ACCESS TRENDS IN OBLASTS FACING THE HIGHEST CONSTRAINTS

Map 5. Access severity score for oblasts with the highest access constraints as at 31 December 2023
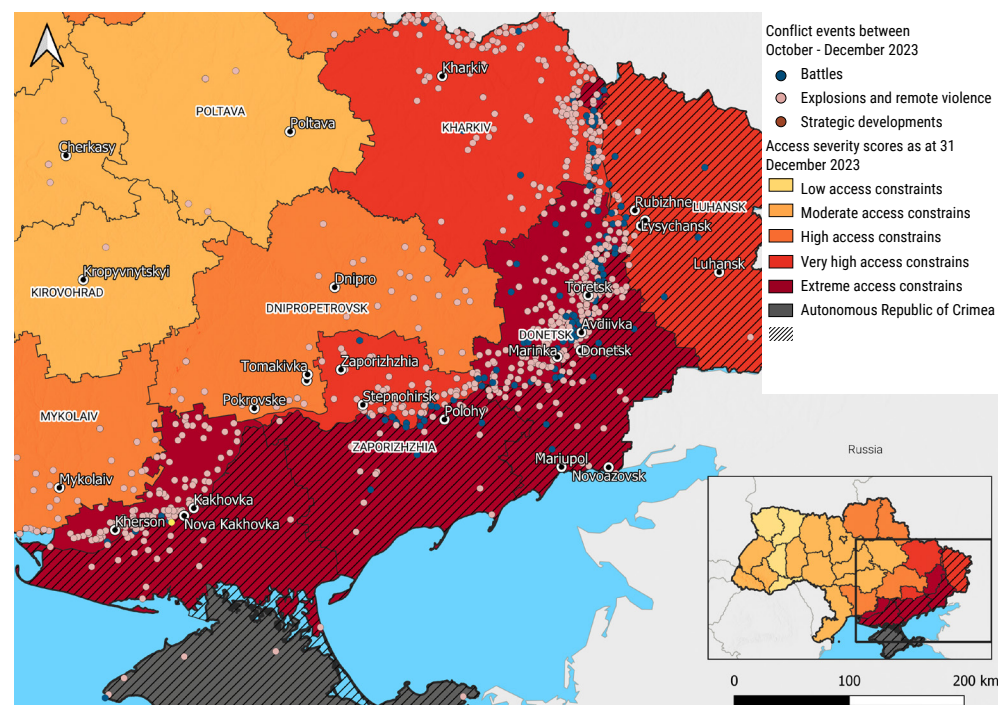
Sources: ACAPS using data from ISW (05/01/2024); ACLED (accessed 17/01/2024)
See full map on page 19.

Table 1. Humanitarian access severity scores for oblasts with the highest access constraints

OBLAST	ACCESS OF PEOPLE IN NEED TO HUMANITARIAN AID	ACCESS OF HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS TO PEOPLE IN NEED	PHYSICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SECURITY CONSTRAINTS	ACCESS SCORE
Donetsk	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.8
Kharkiv	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.7
Kherson	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.8
Luhansk	5.0	3.9	2.8	3.9
Zaporizhzhia	5.0	4.2	3.5	4.2

Table 2. Humanitarian access severity scores for oblasts with the highest access constraints without accounting for the territory's controlling authority

OBLAST	ACCESS OF PEOPLE IN NEED TO HUMANITARIAN AID	ACCESS OF HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS TO PEOPLE IN NEED	PHYSICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SECURITY CONSTRAINTS	ACCESS SCORE
Donetsk	3.5	5.0	4.5	4.3
Kharkiv	2.5	4.9	4.0	3.8
Kherson	3.5	5.0	4.5	4.3
Luhansk	3.5	3.9	2.8	3.4
Zaporizhzhia	3.5	4.2	3.5	3.7

Donetsk oblast

Access severity score: 4.8/5.0

Access severity trend since Q3 2023: deterioration

Raions with the highest number of events: Donetsk, Mariupol, Pokrovsk

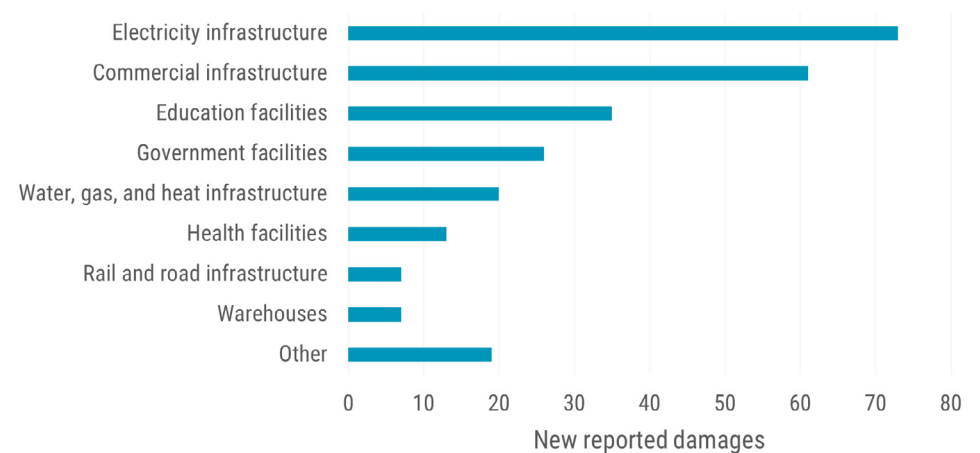**Most recurrent access events:** physical prevention of the use of services and assistance

The main access development in Donetsk oblast from October–December stemmed from Russia's repeated offensives in Avdiivka since 10 October and subsequent access disruptions (ISW 10/10/2023). The constant shelling of the city and its surroundings severely restricted humanitarians' ability to reach the city, citizens' access to basic services, and evacuation efforts (Pryamiy 14/10/2023; Ukrainska Pravda 23/10/2023; Suspilne 19/12/2023). With no cell phone service in the city, residents seeking assistance to evacuate needed to use other means to contact volunteers or have relatives living in safe areas call volunteers on their behalf (Suspilne 24/10/2023). Over 1,200 people remained in Avdiivka as at 24 December, with many deciding to stay despite the constant shelling because they felt that the evacuation route was even more dangerous (Suspilne 19/12/2023; TSN 24/12/2023). Overall, conflict intensity in the oblast increased in the October–December period, and Donetsk remained the oblast where most (62%) of the recorded armed clashes in Ukraine occurred, primarily in Avdiivka, Bakhmut, Marinka, and Ocheretyne hromadas (ACLED accessed 17/01/2024).

Donetsk was also the oblast in Ukraine with the highest number of shelling incidents, with 39% of the reported incidents in the country between October–December (ACLED accessed 17/01/2024). As a result, more than a quarter of new infrastructure damage recorded in Ukraine during that period occurred in Donetsk oblast, affecting a variety of essential services, such as electricity, education, water, heat, and healthcare (ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024).

The constant shelling of the Kurakhivska Thermal Power Plant between 28–30 December damaged power lines, eventually stopping the power plant from generating electricity (Suspilne 31/12/2023). Shelling also affected people's ability to reach locations where services and aid were available. Fear of shelling was the primary barrier preventing people from accessing markets and automatic teller machines in Toretsk, even when locations were operational (REACH 10/2023).

Reports indicate a lack of basic utilities in Russian-occupied territories. Cold winter weather has aggravated the impact on the population. In Mariupol, the central heating system was repaired but started leaking when turned on (KII 03/01/2024 a). The local population reported being weary of using electric heaters given power outages and the risk of fires (NV 29/11/2023).

Figure 5. Newly recorded infrastructure damage in Donetsk oblast between October–December 2023

Source: ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024

Kharkiv oblast

Access severity score: 4.7/5.0

Access severity trend since Q3 2023: deterioration

Raions with the highest number of events: Kupiansk, Izium

Most recurrent access events: landmine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) casualties

Heavy shelling and the presence of landmines and UXO continued to heavily constrain access in the oblast.

From October–December 2023, the oblast experienced at least 22 civilian casualties (injuries and deaths) from landmine and UXO explosions, the highest for any oblast during this period. Most (13) occurred in Izium raion (Espreso 15/12/2023; Kharkiv ODA 02/10/2023; Suspilne 04/10/2023 and 31/10/2023; Ukrinform 11/10/2023, 13/10/2023, 14/10/2023, 16/10/2023, 17/10/2023, 18/10/2023, 20/10/2023, 26/10/2023, 02/11/2023, 05/11/2023, 08/11/2023, 12/11/2023, 15/11/2023, and 16/11/2023).

The number of recorded shelling incidents went down from 1,416 between July–September to 877 between October–December. Despite the decrease, the rate of attacks remained extremely high, driving security constraints and hampering civilians' access to services.

Dvorichna, Petropavlivka, and Vovchansk were the most affected raions. During the same period, most armed clashes occurred in Dvorichna and Petropavlivka hromadas (ACLED accessed 17/01/2024).

Heavy shelling has damaged power lines and substations, leading to power cuts compounded by the disruptions caused by the severe winter weather. As at the end of December, over 27,000 consumers in the oblast did not have access to electricity because of shelling (Ukrainian Ministry of Energy 31/12/2023).

Figure 6. Newly recorded infrastructure damage in Kharkiv oblast between October–December 2023
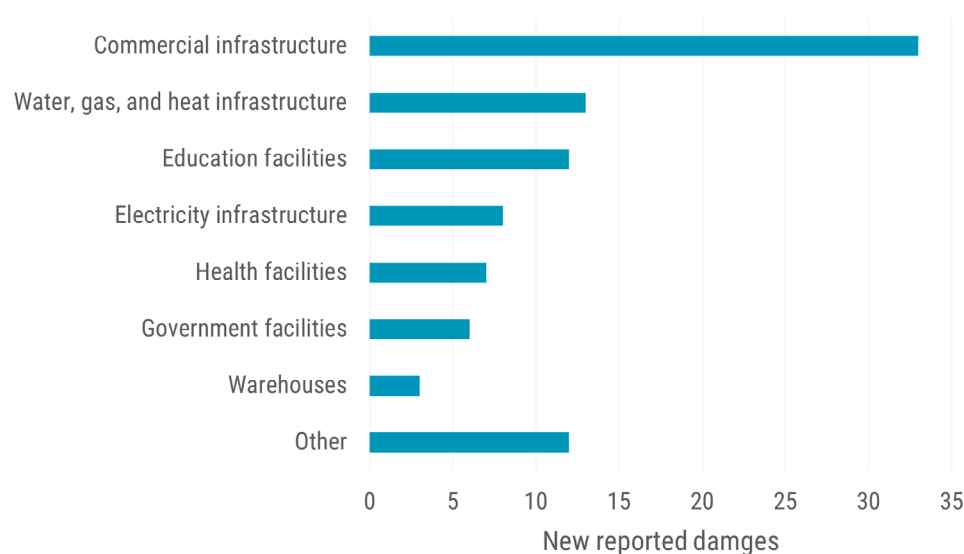
Source: ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024

Kherson oblast

Access severity score: 4.8/5.0

Access severity trend since Q3 2023: deterioration

Raion with the highest number of events: Kherson

Most recurrent access events: physical prevention of the use of services and assistance

Conflict intensity in Kherson oblast increased during the October–December period. Ukrainian forces engaged in military operations on the left bank of the Dnipro River and made some limited advances in coastal areas, including the town of Krynky, where half of the reported armed clashes occurred (ISW 16/12/2023; ACLED accessed 17/01/2024).

Kherson oblast remained the most dangerous oblast for humanitarian responders. Public reports detail six instances of responders, including volunteers, and facilities coming under fire. The events reported include a drone strike on an evacuation minibus in Beryslav raion on 31 October, an attack on the premises of a local NGO in the oblast on 5 December, and the destruction of two humanitarian warehouses on 20 December (Ukrinform 31/10/2023; IRC 05/12/2023; OCHA 20/12/2023). One volunteer was killed during the October–December period (Ukrinform 06/12/2023).

Overall, regular shelling and air strikes continued to drive safety constraints for civilians despite recorded incidents decreasing from 326 in October to 186 in December, mostly affecting Beryslav, Kherson, and Tiahynka hromadas (ACLED accessed 17/01/2024). 21% of the damage recorded in Ukraine during the October–December period occurred in Kherson oblast (ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024).

During the October–December 2023 period, landmine and UXO explosions caused at least nine civilian casualties (injuries and deaths), making Kherson the second most affected oblast during this period. All were in Beryslav raion (RFE/RL 24/12/2023; Suspilne 02/10/2023, 04/10/2023, and 05/10/2023; Ukrinform 03/10/2023, 15/10/2023, 08/11/2023, 09/11/2023, and 15/11/2023).

As at 31 December, nearly 40,000 consumers in 45 settlements, including over 13,000 in Kherson city, were without power (Ukrainian Ministry of Energy 31/12/2023). The heavy shelling of areas under Ukrainian control meant that for around 30 settlements, electricity was not restored before winter. These settlements were mostly located within 10km of the right bank of the Dnipro River, and local authorities have recommended that the population evacuate (RFE/RL 22/10/2023).

Figure 7. Newly recorded infrastructure damage in Kherson oblast between October–December 2023
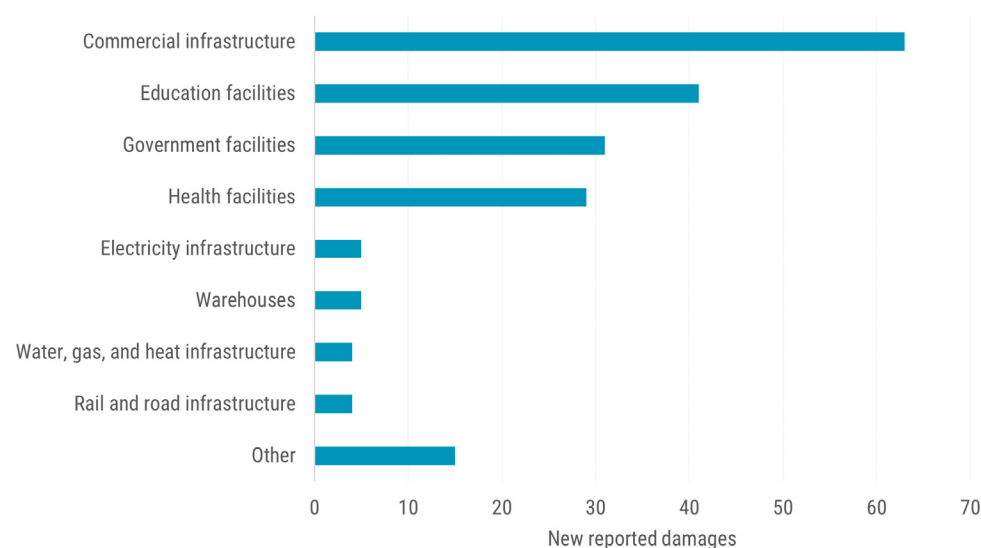
Source: ACAPS accessed 24/01/2024

In Russian-occupied areas, civilian access to services and utilities is especially constrained within the 15km zone extending inland from the left bank of the Dnipro River because of active shelling and continued hostilities. De facto local authorities announced on 13 November that heating would not be provided throughout this zone (MOST 13/11/2023). They also stated that mobile phone connectivity in that zone was unstable (MOST 19/12/2023; Andrey Alekseenko Telegram 19/12/2023). In Kakhovka, part of the de facto local administration, including the pension and social funds offices, has evacuated to localities beyond the 15km zone, leaving remaining residents without access to administrative services (TASS 13/11/2022; MOST 12/12/2023). Russian forces are fortifying nearby Nova Kakhovka, increasing security concerns for the remaining local population as Russian troops place landmines in public areas and install military infrastructure in residential buildings. The closure of certain streets restricts civilians' free movement (RFE/RL 15/11/2023).

Luhansk oblast

Access severity score: 3.9/5.0

Access severity trend since Q3 2023: deterioration

Raions with the highest number of events: Sievierodonetsk

Most recurrent access events: presence of Russian-occupied areas and physical prevention of the use of services and assistance

The access severity score for Luhansk oblast remained the lowest among frontline oblasts given the low numbers of reported damage to civilian infrastructure and landmine and UXO victims. Civilians and humanitarians continued facing high access constraints primarily driven by the restrictions and policies of Russian authorities and disruptions to the provision of basic services and utilities.

Reported shelling incidents in Luhansk oblast continued to decrease during the October–December period. There were 240 incidents during this period, compared to 324 between July–September. During the same period, reports indicated that armed clashes were mostly in Krasnorichenske, Kreminna, and Kolomyichykha hromadas (ACLED accessed 17/01/2024).

Heavy shelling in Ukrainian-controlled areas meant that electricity and water supply restoration was not possible in areas retaken by Ukrainian forces. The distribution of generators, solar accumulators, and solid fuel provides some access to heat and electricity for those reached by assistance (Ukrinform 16/11/2023).

In areas Russian-occupied areas, service provision has been disrupted in many cities and settlements. Reports indicate disruptions to water, heat, or both throughout Sievierodonetsk raion settlements, settlements around Pervomaisk (Luhansk raion), and in Svatove raion (Suspilne 09/10/2023; Ukrinform 15/10/2023 and 29/11/2023). Similar disruptions are also likely to affect other locations. Compensation for coal and firewood purchases is only available to Russian passport holders, limiting certain households' capacity to purchase solid fuel for the winter season (Espreso 20/11/2023). Access to mobile communications is limited in Lysychansk, Rubizhne, and Sievierodonetsk cities (Ukrinform 21/11/2023 and 16/12/2023; SD 12/12/2023).

Russian forces have continued the military takeover of civilian infrastructure in Luhansk oblast, increasing security risks for civilians, restricting their access to services, and causing further displacement. In Lysychansk, the Russian troops have set up a military hospital in a residential building where civilians still live (Ukrinform 08/10/2023). Russian forces have also displaced civilians in Berezove to areas closer to the Russian border as they turned the village into a military town (Ukrinform 27/10/2023).

According to Ukrainian oblast authorities, there were shortages of vaccines for children, particularly of tuberculosis, whooping cough, diphtheria, and tetanus vaccines in Russian-controlled areas of Luhansk (Artem Lysohor Luhansk OVA Telegram 04/12/2023).

Zaporizhzhia oblast

Access severity score: 4.2/5.0

Access severity trend since October 2023: deterioration

Raions with the highest number of events: Vasylivka, Polohy

Most recurrent access events: presence of Russian-occupied areas and physical prevention of the use of services and assistance

Shelling and air strikes continued with similar intensity between October–December, making Zaporizhzhia the second most targeted oblast in Ukraine during this period. Huliaipole, Malynivka, Orikhiv, and Stepnohirsk were the most affected hromadas (ACLED accessed 17/01/2024).

Conflict intensity decreased slightly in the October–December period compared to the July–September period, with a substantial decrease in reported armed clashes in Malynivka and Orikhiv hromadas. At the same time, the number of reported armed clashes increased in Polohy hromada and remained stable in Tokmak hromada (ACLED accessed 17/01/2024).

Ukrainian oblast authorities announced that, in territories under their control, central heating infrastructure was only active in Zaporizhzhia raion. Central heating in areas of Polohy and Vasylivka raions under Ukrainian control was not operational given their proximity to active conflict, but solid fuel was distributed to communities near the front line (Ukrinform 16/11/2032).

In Russian-occupied areas, damage to gas pipelines meant that individual gas heating was unavailable in Polohy city, the main heating system in the city, and only people who had access to solid fuel and heating appliances had access to heat. Damage to the power lines in the city also limited the electricity supply and caused temporary overloading (RFE/RL 22/10/2023).

METHODOLOGY

The data behind this report came from publicly available and unpublished sources circulated within the response. The narrative presented was based on data analysis and a secondary data review. The access severity scores were calculated using the oblast-level data collection of events related to access constraints. The collected access events are available in the humanitarian access events dashboard and dataset. ACAPS has predefined 75 event types and grouped them into 35 subindicators, nine indicators (I1–9), and three pillars (P1–3). The indicators receive a score between 0–3, and the pillars receive a score between 0–5. The final access severity score is an average of the three pillar scores.

Pillar 1: access of people in need to humanitarian aid

    I1. Denial of the existence of humanitarian needs or entitlements to assistance

    I2. Restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance

Pillar 2: access of humanitarian organisations to people in need

    I3. Impediments to enter the country (bureaucratic and administrative)

    I4. Restriction of movement within the country (impediments to freedom of movement and/or administrative restrictions)

    I5. Interference into implementation of humanitarian activities

    I6. Violence against humanitarian personnel, facilities, and assets

Pillar 3: physical, environmental, and security constraints

    I7. Insecurity or hostilities affecting humanitarian assistance

    I8. Presence of landmines, improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war, and UXO

    I9. Physical constraints in the environment (obstacles related to terrain, climate, lack of infrastructure, etc.)

More information on ACAPS' humanitarian events monitoring and access scoring system is available in the methodology note. For Ukraine's oblast-level scoring, the calculations were done on a continuous numerical scale instead of thresholds, allowing for decimals and a more nuanced result. The resulting scores were classified into the following groups:

    0–1 low access constraints

    1–2 moderate access constraints

    2–3 high access constraints

    3–4 very high access constraints

    4–5 extreme access constraints

New for this report

Since 20 December, events for the following subindicators are no longer logged in our access events dataset, as the access severity scoring for those subindicators is based on external datasets:

7.1. – Violence inhibits the affected population from moving freely and safely to where humanitarian assistance is available: scoring based on ACLED's conflict events

7.2. – Public services (hospitals, schools, and other civilian facilities) are targeted or attacked: scoring based on ACAPS' civilian infrastructure damage data collection

9.2. – Severe disruption of infrastructure: scoring based on ACLED's conflict events.

The impact of conflict intensity and damage on humanitarian access is analysed in the narrative whenever relevant.

Limitations

The analysis relies on publicly available data, which is unlikely to be comprehensive in a dynamic conflict situation such as Ukraine's. Reported data may come with a delay, meaning some published data may no longer be applicable at the time of analysis. This analysis collected data through a review process to ensure that selected subindicators for a given oblast are still relevant. The evolving situation and the amount of data collected mean that some inaccuracies will likely remain.

Detailed information is lacking on the humanitarian response and the access constraints faced by humanitarians in Russian-occupied areas.

There are no access scores for Crimea and Sevastopol, as there is insufficient information to produce a reliable score. Russia has occupied these areas since 2014, and entering from Ukraine has been impossible since.

Map 6. Ukraine's humanitarian access severity as at 31 December 2023
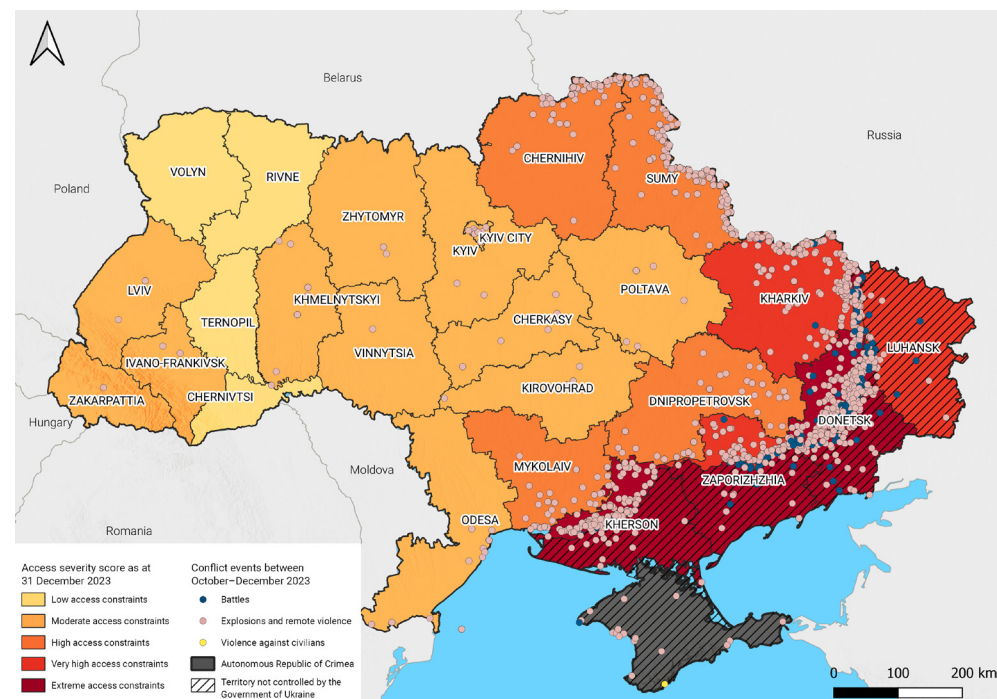
Sources: ACAPS using data from ISW (23/10/2023); ACLED (accessed 06/10/2023)
See full map on page 20.

Table 3. Access severity table as at 31 December 2023

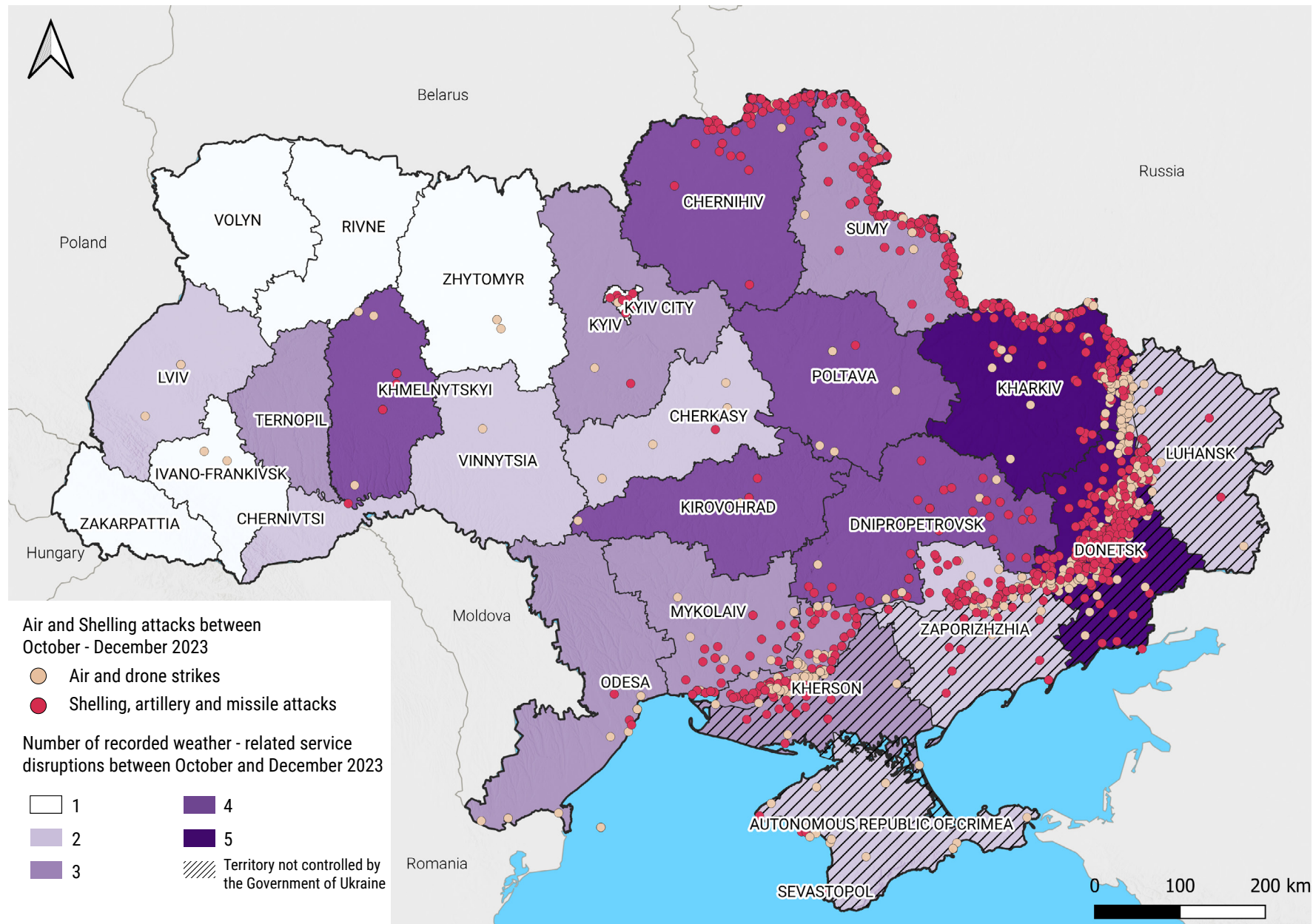| OBLAST	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	P1	P2	P3	ACCESS
Cherkasy	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	0.4	1.8	1.2
Chernihiv	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.8	0.9	1.4	1.6	3.0	2.3	2.0	1.3	3.8	2.4
Chernivtsi	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	1.2	1.5	1.5	0.4	1.5	1.1
Dnipropetrovsk	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.7	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.0	0.7	3.7	2.1
Donetsk	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.3	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.8
Donetsk*	1.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.3	3.5	5.0	4.5	4.3
Ivano-Frankivsk	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.1	1.2	1.5	2.0	0.4	1.5	1.3
Kharkiv	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.9	3.0	2.3	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.7
Kharkiv*	0.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.0	3.0	1.9	3.0	2.3	2.5	4.9	4.0	3.8
Kherson	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.3	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.8
Kherson*	1.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.3	3.5	5.0	4.5	4.3
Khmelnytskyi	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.6	1.2	1.5	1.5	0.4	1.8	1.2
Kirovohrad	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.4	2.3	1.5	1.5	0.4	2.3	1.4
Kyiv	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.7	1.2	0.8	1.5	0.9	1.5	1.3
Kyiv City	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.8	0.9	0.0	0.1	3.0	1.5	1.9	0.7	2.5	1.7
Luhansk	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.4	1.5	1.5	2.0	5.0	3.9	2.8	3.9
Luhansk*	1.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.4	1.5	1.5	2.0	3.5	3.9	2.8	3.4
Lviv	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.8	0.9	0.4	0.2	1.2	2.3	2.0	0.8	2.0	1.6
Mykolaiv	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.5	0.9	0.7	1.6	3.0	2.3	2.0	0.9	3.8	2.2
Odesa	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.8	0.9	0.0	0.7	3.0	2.3	2.0	0.7	3.3	2.0
Poltava	1.2	2.4	0.0	0.5	0.9	0.0	0.3	1.2	1.5	3.0	0.6	1.6	1.7
Rivne	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8	1.9	0.4	0.9	1.0
Sumy	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.5	0.9	0.0	1.7	3.0	2.4	2.0	0.6	3.9	2.2
Ternopil	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	1.2	1.5	1.5	0.4	1.5	1.1
Vinnytsia	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.2	1.2	1.5	1.5	0.4	1.6	1.2
Volyn	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.8	0.9	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.8	2.0	0.7	0.5	1.1
Zakarpattia	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.8	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.5	2.0	0.7	1.3	1.3
Zaporizhzhia	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.1	1.6	2.5	2.3	5.0	4.2	3.5	4.2
Zaporizhzhia*	1.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.1	1.6	2.5	2.3	3.5	4.2	3.5	3.7
Zhytomyr	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.1	2.5	0.8	1.5	0.4	1.8	1.2

*Scores not considering the territory's controlling authority
Note: indicator scores are out of 3; pillar and overall scores are out of 5.

MAP 1. INCREASED AIR ATTACKS AND WEATHER-RELATED SERVICE DISRUPTIONS IN UKRAINE, OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2023

Air and Shelling attacks between October - December 2023

○ Air and drone strikes

● Shelling, artillery and missile attacks

Number of recorded weather - related service disruptions between October and December 2023

1
2
3
4
5
Territory not controlled by the Government of Ukraine

Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED (accessed 17/01/2024). See full map on page 15.

MAP 2. ATTACKS ON HUMANITARIAN RESPONDERS BETWEEN OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2023

Belarus

Russia

Poland

VOLYN

RIVNE

CHERNIHIV

SUMY

ZHYTOMYR

KYIV CITY

KYIV

LVIV

KHMELNYTSKYI

POLTAVA

KHARKIV

LUHANSK

TERNOPIL

CHERKASY

IVANO-FRANKIVSK

VINNYTSIA

ZAKARPATTIA

CHERNIVTSI

KIROVOHRAD

DNIPROPETROVSK

DONETSK

Hungary

Moldova

MYKOLAIV

ZAPORIZHZHIA

Romania

ODESA

KHERSON

Raions with recorded attacks on humatarian responders between October - December 2023

Autonomous Republic of Crimea

Territory not controlled by the Government of Ukraine

Access severity score as at 31st December 2023

Low access constraints

Moderate access constrains

High access constrains

Very high access constrains

Extreme access constrains

0   100   200 km

MAP 3. LEAVING RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND RETURNING TO TERRITORIES UNDER UKRAINIAN CONTROL

Border crossings open for Ukrainian citizens returning to territories under Ukrainian control

Novoazovsk: the final checkpoint when leaving Russian - occupied territories of Ukraine, where extensive searches and denial of passage have been reported

Access severity score as at 31st December 2023

- Low access constraints
- Moderate access constrains
- High access constrains
- Very high access constrains
- Extreme access constrains

- Autonomous Republic of Crimea
- Territory not controlled by the Government of Ukraine

Belarus

Russia

Poland

Domanove

VOLYN

RIVNE

CHERNIHIV

SUMY

Pokrovka

ZHYTOMYR

KYIV CITY

KYIV

LVIV

KHMELNYTSKYI

POLTAVA

KHARKIV

LUHANSK

TERNOPIL

CHERKASY

IVANO-FRANKIVSK

VINNYTSIA

DNIPROPETROVSK

DONETSK

ZAKARPATTIA

CHERNIVTSI

KIROVOHRAD

Hungary

MYKOLAIV

ZAPORIZHZHIA

Novoazovsk

Moldova

ODESA

KHERSON

Romania

0   100   200 km

Sources: ACAPS using data from RFE/RL (09/11/2023 a); Ukrainska Pravda (25/11/2023).

MAP 4. ENTRY TO RUSSIA FOR UKRAINIAN CITIZENS

Vientuli - Ludonka border checkpoint, the other border crossing where Russian authorities allow Ukrainian citizena to enter Russia. *Closed by Latvian authorities on 16 October

Vientuli-Ludonka border crossing

Sheremetyevo International Airport

Russia

Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport, the only remaining entry point into Russia for Ukrainian Citizens since 16 October 2023. *

*Not including entry into Russia from Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine

Sources: ACAPS using data from ERR (12/10/2023); Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets Telegram (03/11/2023); Interfax (16/10/2023).

MAP 5. ACCESS SEVERITY SCORE FOR OBLASTS WITH THE HIGHEST ACCESS CONSTRAINTS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

Conflict events between October - December 2023
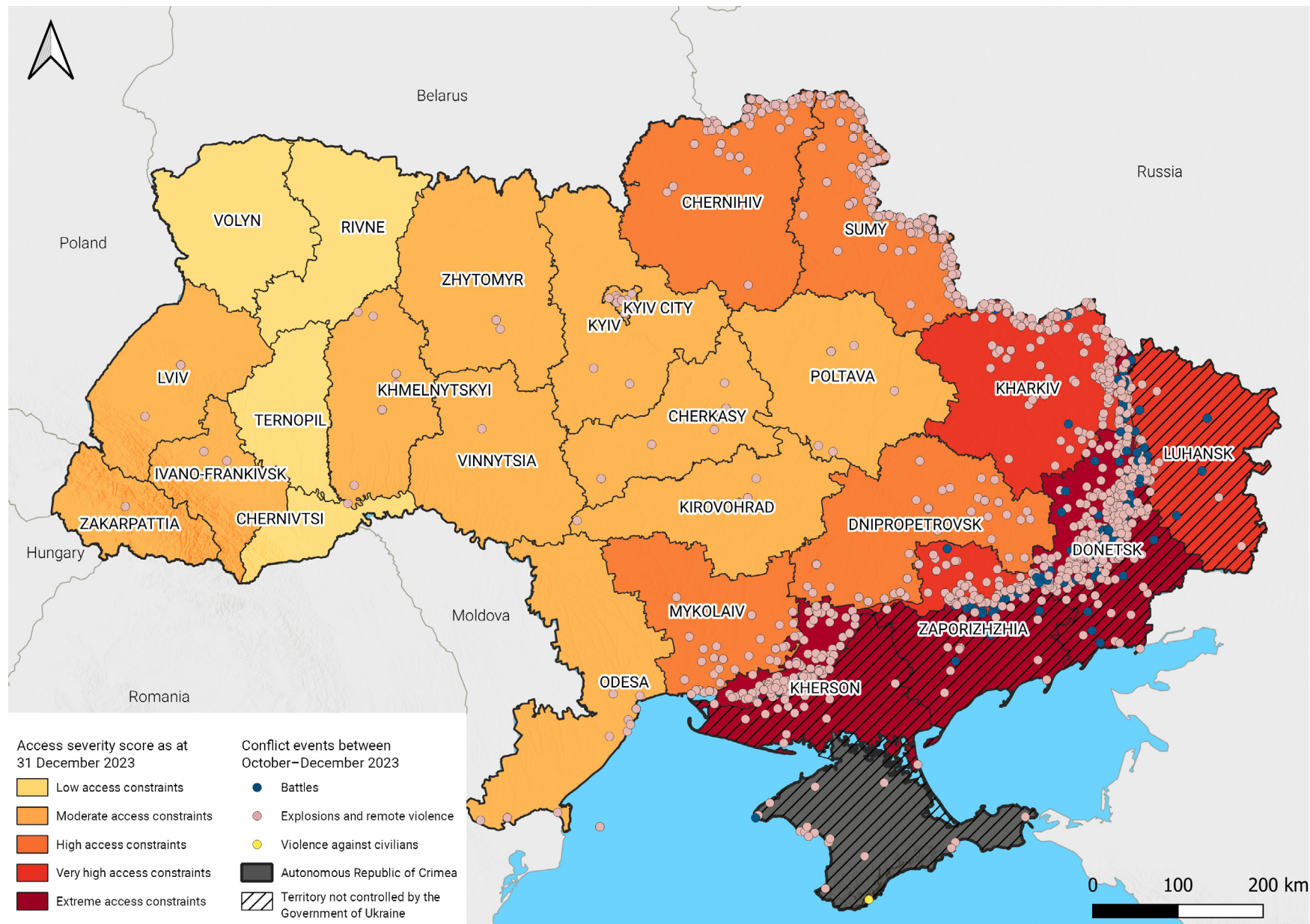
- Battles
- Explosions and remote violence
- Strategic developments

Access severity scores as at 31 December 2023

- Low access constraints
- Moderate access constrains
- High access constrains
- Very high access constrains
- Extreme access constrains
- Autonomous Republic of Crimea

Sources: ACAPS using data from ISW (05/01/2024); ACLED (accessed 17/01/2024)

MAP 6. UKRAINE'S HUMANITARIAN ACCESS SEVERITY AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

Access severity score as at 31 December 2023

- Low access constraints
- Moderate access constraints
- High access constraints
- Very high access constraints
- Extreme access constraints

Conflict events between October–December 2023

- Battles
- Explosions and remote violence
- Violence against civilians
- Autonomous Republic of Crimea
- Territory not controlled by the Government of Ukraine

Sources: ACAPS using data from ISW (23/10/2023); ACLED (accessed 06/10/2023)