

To the attention of the Members, Donors,
Partners, Volunteers and Collaborators of
the Geneva Red Cross

War in Ukraine and Red Cross action

Key information

March 3rd, 2022

Dear Members, Donors, Partners, Volunteers and Collaborators,

You may have questions about the action of the Red Cross in connection with the war in **Ukraine**. For example: "what does the Red Cross do?"; "What does the Geneva Red Cross do in particular?"; "How can I help?".

Below you will find information that may be useful to you. The sources are as follows:

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC);
- Swiss Red Cross (CRS) ;
- *Radio Télévision Suisse* (RTS) ;
- Internal meetings at the Red Cross in Switzerland, in the presence of the 24 directors of the cantonal Red Crosses (including the Geneva Red Cross) and collaborators of the Swiss Red Cross, the umbrella organization of the cantonal Red Crosses which is also active in supporting various national societies of the Movement abroad.

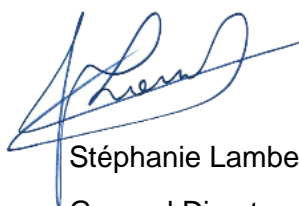
The Geneva Red Cross, which you support or serve in various ways, does not currently have a role to play in the emergency aid action for the victims of the appalling situation in Ukraine. However, together we can do our best to help ensure that questions about the Red Cross receive the right answers.

The mission of the Geneva Red Cross is recalled in the introduction to the section below "Actions carried out by the Red Cross Movement". The actions that could be carried out in the future with refugees from Ukraine are mentioned there.

In this troubled and alarming period, we would like to send you our warmest messages. Let's continue our essential action together. And, as Jean Pictet, author of the Fundamental Principles, so rightly said: *the Red Cross does not despair of the individual and demonstrates by actions its faith in existence.*



Matteo Pedrazzini
President



Stéphanie Lambert
General Director

Table of content

Current situation	4
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Actions carried out by the Red Cross Movement	5
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International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	5
Ukrainian Red Cross	6
Red Cross in neighbouring countries	6
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Swiss Red Cross (SRC)	6
Geneva Red Cross	6

How to help?	8
---------------------------	----------

Volunteering in Geneva	8
Volunteering Abroad	8
In-kind donations	8
Financial donations	8

Questions and answers	9
------------------------------------	----------

My relatives cannot leave Ukraine. What to do ?	9
I have relatives in Ukraine who have health problems. What to do ?	9
I have no news of relatives in Ukraine. What to do ?	9
Is there a list of soldiers who fell during the conflict?	9

Current situation

People in eastern Ukraine and elsewhere have already endured eight years of conflict. But today, the escalation and spread of the conflict throughout the country is causing death and destruction on a frightening scale.

The logistics system has collapsed except for the west of the country. Extensive damage to infrastructure has left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity or water. Bomb-damaged bridges and roads have cut off communities from deliveries of food and other goods.

Ukrainian Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) teams are currently safe in bomb shelters in central Kyiv. It is thus difficult to have regular access to the streets of Kyiv because the situation is too dangerous (street fights, aerial bombardments). It is almost impossible to move around the capital and other cities.

Reception centers are being established in schools and other community buildings to accommodate increasing numbers of displaced people.

More than one million refugees have fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries, according to the latest government data compiled by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. This number is increasing hourly and rapidly and it is estimated that it could reach 4 to 5 million people.

Various movements of refugees coexist: inside the country from the cities to the rural areas and from the east to the west of the country; outside the country mainly to Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and from the Donbass to Russia.

On the front line, it is the neighboring states that are affected by the influx of refugees.

Then will probably come Italy, Germany and Spain where the Ukrainian communities are the most important.

In Switzerland, if arrivals were to be individual, eastern Switzerland would probably be the most affected by the arrival of refugees (cantons of Schaffhausen, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Thurgau, Saint-Gall and Glarus).

If arrivals were to be coordinated by the Confederation – which is currently under discussion – there will certainly be a more even distribution.

In Switzerland, the opening of reception centers for refugees from Ukraine is being examined at the federal level.

Currently about 7,000 people from Ukraine live in Switzerland, especially single women or women with children, which will certainly generate requests for family reunification. Over the past few days, 150 asylum applications have arrived from Ukraine to Switzerland.

For the moment, the Swiss Red Cross informs that the State Secretariat for Migration of the Swiss Confederation (SEM) assumes that there will not be a large influx of refugees in the

short term since, as indicated, at first the refugees arrive mainly in the neighbouring countries of Ukraine.

Reception of refugees – whose system has yet to be planned at the international level – is rather expected in the medium term in Switzerland.

However, we must also prepare for a scenario of a larger and faster arrival of refugees.

Note that the State Secretariat for Migration has confirmed that refugees from Ukraine do not need a visa to enter Switzerland.

Actions carried out by the Red Cross Movement

As a reminder, the “Red Cross” is not a single entity but a Movement (the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent).

Each entity – like the Geneva Red Cross – is independent and carries out its specific mission in line with the 7 Fundamental Principles, in particular humanity, impartiality and neutrality.

The Geneva Red Cross supports vulnerable populations living in the canton of Geneva. In particular, it fills gaps in the areas of health, daily support, social integration and basic training.

It does not create duplication but responds to needs without sufficient solution in the canton and reaches vulnerable people "off the radar".

Examples of recent projects in this direction are:

- Dental clinic for the working poor;
- The “Red Cross Presence” service, which provides a reassuring presence at home for people losing their autonomy;
- Assistance with registration for vaccination for vulnerable people or people without health insurance.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC's mission is to provide assistance to people affected by armed conflict and violence, and to promote laws that protect the victims of war.

The ICRC has been present in Ukraine since 2014. Its operations in the country are among the ten largest ICRC operations in the world, with a team of more than 600 staff.

The ICRC helps people by providing cash, food and hygiene items. The ICRC also supports hospitals and primary health centers by providing them with medical equipment and preparing them for emergencies. It repairs water pumping and distribution stations and helps households repair their damaged homes.

Another key role of the ICRC is to call on the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and thus in particular to protect the civilian population and detainees. Civilian objects must not be targeted, as well as essential infrastructures (water, gas, electricity, schools, medical structures). Humanitarian actors must be able to intervene and have access to civilians.

Since the outbreak of war, the ICRC has thus continued its bilateral and confidential dialogue with the parties to the conflict in order to protect those affected by the fighting.

Ukrainian Red Cross

The Ukrainian Red Cross has distributed aid for more than 2,000 people sheltering in Kyiv. Its stock of 30,000 food and hygiene packets for the displaced has already been donated.

Red Cross in neighbouring countries

National Red Cross societies in neighboring countries are generally active. For example, the Polish Red Cross is very supportive of the many refugees who have arrived in Poland.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Swiss Red Cross (SRC)

The IFRC supports and coordinates the efforts of national societies such as the Ukrainian Red Cross and neighboring countries in this specific case.

The IFRC is appealing for 100 million francs to help 2 million victims of the war in Ukraine.

The CRS is also involved in raising funds to support the Ukrainian Red Cross and has notably made a digital donation platform available to its Ukrainian sister society.

Geneva Red Cross

To translate communications between medical staff and sick refugees arriving in Geneva, the Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation Service of the Geneva Red Cross may need to recruit Ukrainian language community interpreters. Supporters for school integration who speak Ukrainian will probably have to be recruited for the families. However, the number of recruitments needed remains uncertain at this time.

Other actions could be put in place depending on the needs that would not find a response elsewhere.

In the future, the help of the Geneva Red Cross and other cantonal associations will be offered in a complementary way if needs cannot be met by the public authorities, in particular in the event of a large influx of refugees. A pool of specific volunteers could be mobilised.

The Geneva Red Cross could, for example, intervene to:

- Help with the school integration of children: intercultural mediation, school support;
- Contribute to the well-being of refugee children: organize leisure activities thanks to the action of the Geneva Red Cross Youth;
- Create pairs between young volunteers based in Geneva and young refugees;
- Participate in the social integration of refugees: in particular through the activities of the Cultural Integration Center located at rue de Carouge 50 as well as its unique library which offers books in 298 languages;
- Support elderly refugees by organizing integration and health promotion activities via the Seniors from here and elsewhere service;
- Allow refugees to dress for free thanks to its second-hand clothing shops Vêt'Shop located at rue Leschot (corner rue de Carouge), rue Lissignol (opposite Manor) and soon at the future Henri Dunant 2 (new arcade).

Hoping that the refugees will be able to return to their country relatively quickly, knowing that it will take time to rebuild housing and infrastructure, it will be a question of mobilizing more of the assistance service for the return and resettlement of the Geneva Red Cross.

How to help?

Many people volunteer to collect clothes or goods, or even to go there to help the victims. Currently, aid is mainly at the level of financial donations as explained below.

Volunteering in Geneva

It is still too early to specify any future needs and coordinate the intervention of volunteers in the canton.

Volunteering Abroad

Volunteers are not dispatched to regions in crisis. Only specialists trained in such missions are.

In-kind donations

The Ukrainian Red Cross issued a message asking not to offer or send unsolicited goods. There is no ability to save storage. It must also first succeed in setting up a solid supply chain and humanitarian access (safe humanitarian corridors to evacuate and access people). The ICRC also strongly discourages the sending of unrequested goods which would absorb coordination capacities.

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Financial donations

Financial donations are very welcome and most helpful. In particular, they make it possible to cover the most urgent humanitarian needs: emergency medical services, essential medicines, health supplies and equipment, drinking water and hygiene, hygiene kits, bed linen, cash, shelter and protection for people who have had to leave their homes. There is also a need for mental health care and psychosocial support. For the moment it cannot be estimated whether donations would be useful to the Geneva Red Cross in favor of possible future refugees from Ukraine who will arrive in Geneva. We therefore refer you to the following Red Cross entities:

To make a donation to the Ukrainian Red Cross

<https://donate.redcrossredcrescent.org/ua/donate/~my-donation? cv=1>

To make a donation to the ICRC

<https://www.icrc.org/fr/don/crise-en-ukraine>

To make a donation to the IFRC

<https://donation.ifrc.org/?campaign=e8952a8a-5096-ec11-a2db-005056010027>

To make a donation to the SRC

<https://www.redcross.ch/fr/crise-en-ukraine-soutenez-l-aide-d-urgence>

Questions and answers

My relatives cannot leave Ukraine. What to do ?

The situation in Ukraine is currently very volatile and confusing. The Ukrainian Red Cross and the ICRC have very limited capacities, because for security reasons freedom of movement is extremely restricted depending on the region.

Neither the Ukrainian Red Cross nor the ICRC currently have the possibility of carrying out evacuations. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is committed to the development of safe corridors for emergency evacuations as soon as possible.

I have relatives in Ukraine who have health problems. What to do ?

Currently, it is very difficult to access people affected by the war. There are no safe escape routes yet.

We recommend that you stay in constant contact with your loved ones.

Make sure children know/have the contact details (e.g. name and phone number) of a contact person.

I have no news of relatives in Ukraine. What to do ?

If you have no news of relatives in Ukraine, you can contact the Swiss Red Cross Tracing Service on 058 400 43 80 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 1.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. The service will accompany you and support you in your research.

Is there a list of soldiers who fell during the conflict?

So far, there is no reliable information on this.