

TORETSK. THE WAY TO RECOVERY

Report on the results of the study of the impact
of the negative consequences of the armed
conflict on the life of the community of Toretsk

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION 7

KEY CONCLUSIONS 9

SHOOTING OF URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE OBJECTS 12

- | City Council building 12
- | Palace of Culture Ukraina 14
- | Institution of general secondary education of I - III degrees N°3 16
- | Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Children 17
- | Healthcare facilities 18

DESTRUCTION OF BRIDGES 20

- | The bridge in Shcherbynivka 20
- | Horlivka – Toretsk motorway bridge 24

SHELLING OF CIVILIAN HOUSINGS 26

- | Shelling of Toretsk on August 9, 2015 28
- | Shelling of the township of Novgorodske on February 20, 2021 29

SITUATION WITH WATER SUPPLY IN TORETSK 33

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ARMED CONFLICT ON THE CITY 36

INTRODUCTION

Toretsk is a city of oblast significance in the Donetsk oblast with a permanent population of about 67,000 people¹. The Toretsk community includes 2 cities (Toretsk, Zalizne), 7 townships (Kurdyumivka, Nelipivka, Novgorodske,

Petrivka, Pivdenne, Pivnichne, Shcherbynivka) and 10 villages (Valentynivka, Dachne, Dilivka, Druzhba, Krymske, Leonidivka, Ozarianivka, Sukha Balka, Shumy, Yuriyvka)².



¹ According to the Main Department of Statistics in the Donetsk region <https://bit.ly/36tEE6S>

² <https://decentralization.gov.ua/newgromada/3758/composition>

Until 2015 inclusive, the city was called Dzerzhinsk. In February 2016, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, in compliance with decommunization legislation, renamed Dzerzhinsk to Toretsk.

In May 2017, a military-civil administration was established in Toretsk to fulfill the powers of local executive bodies and local self-government bodies.

Toretsk is a mining monotown, the leading role in its economy is played by the coal industry, which is represented by three working mines – the mines Central and Toretsk SE Toretskvugol and the leased enterprise St. Matron of Moscow mine³. Since 2003, in accordance with the state program, four subsidized mines have been closed in the city – Artem, Nova, Pivdena and Pivnichna mines.

Since May 2014, the city has been under the control of illegal armed formations (hereinafter – IAF) of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (hereinafter – the so-called DPR). On July 21, 2014, the settlement was liberated by 33 soldiers of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and 8 soldiers of the 73rd Naval Special Purpose Center. Even after the control of the Ukrainian authorities was restored in Toretsk, the city continues to suffer from heavy artillery shelling by the IAFs, as it is territorially situated on the line of contact⁴.

It should be emphasized that the closer the settlement is to the war zone, the more negative consequences the community experiences, in addition, there is an unfavorable economic

situation that does not allow to overcome those negative consequences quickly and effectively. The outflow of professional staff, lack of investment in the local economy, the complexity of logistics – all these pose obstacles to business development. In addition, there is a gradual closure of mines happening as part of coal transformation, the alternative economic activities are absent, the jobs are cut.

The purpose of this study is to reflect the impact of negative consequences on all spheres of life of the frontline city on the example of a single settlement on the line of contact.

³ Due to the fact that since 2015 the company does not pay rent, insurance premiums and wages to employees, as well as does not provide safe working conditions and misuses the property, in June 2021 the Commercial Court of Donetsk region opened proceedings on the claim of Bakhmut District Prosecutor Office on the termination of the lease agreement and the return of the entire property complex to state ownership https://don.gp.gov.ua/ua/news.html?_m=publications&t-rec&id=297296

⁴ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of November 7, 2014 # 1085 "On approval of the list of settlements on the territory of which public authorities temporarily do not exercise their powers, and the list of settlements located on the line of contact"

KEY CONCLUSIONS

One of the main negative consequences for the life of the city of Toretsk, caused by hostilities, is the destruction and damage of infrastructure, including residential buildings and public and state property.

During the period of the anti-terrorist operation/Joint Forces Operation on the territory of the Toretsk Amalgamated Territorial Community (hereinafter – ATC), 1,084 facilities were damaged or completely destroyed, including 1,056 residential buildings. According to the Toretsk Military-Civil Administration, the damaged detached houses were rebuilt by humanitarian organizations, employees of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (hereinafter – SES) with the participation of the city administration.

The total number of civilians affected by the armed conflict is 159, of whom 28 were killed.

The psychological consequences for the residents of Toretsk are still evident. Victims complain of poor sleep, irritability, constant anxiety, fear of loud noises.

In 2014, during the repeated shelling of the city, the City Council building, the Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Children, the buildings of psychoneurological and tuberculosis dispensaries, the general secondary education institution of I-III degrees #3 were damaged. Infrastructure facilities have received varying degrees of damage. The city council building suffered the most, which is not subject

to reconstruction due to the shelling and fire that took place during the liberation of the city.

Among the affected buildings of the city is the Palace of Culture Ukraina, which has always been a center of leisure and artistic education for the residents of the community. Dozens of sections and clubs for children and youth operated on its base, there was a concert hall and a winter garden. After the Palace of Culture came under artillery fire in July 2014 and was heavily damaged its work was suspended. Dozens of workers lost their jobs, hundreds of children were deprived of their usual extracurricular activities, and thousands of city residents were left without cultural activities and opportunities to realize their creative potential provided by the center.

Full-fledged restoration work began in 2019, when the palace was transferred to the balance of the Toretsk community. Prior to that, it was owned by the state enterprise Toretskvugol. As of June 2021, the reconstruction of the Palace of Culture is underway, more than 200 children are already attending open sections and clubs.

The situation with the destroyed bridge over the river Kryvyi Torets in the township of Shcherbynivka, which is a part of Toretsk, deserves special attention. In July 2014, due to the deliberate detonation of the bridge by representatives of the so-called DPR, its carriageway was damaged. The lack of sustainable road connections between the city of Toretsk

and the surrounding villages has led to a number of negative consequences for their residents, related to the inability to get to relatives, workplaces, educational institutions, medical and social institutions, and shops. Repair work began only in 2020.

On July 10, 2014, representatives of illegal armed formations of the so-called DPR, in order to prevent the advance of the Armed Forces of Ukraine from one part of the city of Horlivka to another during its liberation, blew up the road bridge of the Horlivka-Toretsk highway connecting two cities – Toretsk and Bakhmut. The bridge was of great importance for maintaining social ties between people living in the settlements on both sides, carrying out business activities, providing residents of the surrounding villages with medical and social services that they could receive in the city of Toretsk. Residents of Horlivka, which is temporarily out of Ukraine's control, cannot immediately reach Toretsk after crossing the entry-exit checkpoints (hereinafter – EECF) because the transfer has become long and expensive. Horlivka is a city of oblast significance with a population of almost 250,000, so the number of people experiencing the negative consequences of the destruction of the bridge is estimated at tens or even hundreds of thousands of people.

Currently, reconstruction works are not carried out due to the inexpediency of investing in the repair of the bridge, which is located at a distance of less than 2 km from the uncontrolled territory, and remains under the sight and threat of illegal armed formations.

Interruptions to the water supply from the Horlivka filtering station, which is located in the territory not controlled by Ukraine, remain an urgent problem for the residents of Toretsk. Residents of Toretsk and surrounding settlements are often left without water due to damage to the water supply system after shelling on the front line or accidents caused by worn-out

materials. In both cases, operational recovery work is complicated by procedural issues related to the agreement to establish a regime of silence on both sides.

During the lack of water in Toretsk, SES officers and utilities organize water supply to the city's residents, who are forced to stand in long queues to collect several canisters of water. Elderly people are especially uncomfortable, for whom it is very difficult to put heavy containers on the upper floors.

Given the seriousness of the situation, the Donetsk Oblast Civil-Military Administration is considering the possibility of building a modular filtration station separately for Toretsk or connecting to one of the existing drinking water supply systems in the controlled area.

A separate challenge for the city is to overcome the negative environmental consequences caused by the flooding of mines in the territory not controlled by Ukraine, which are connected to the mines of Toretsk by underground passages. Flooding of mines leads to subsidence of the soil and damage to urban infrastructure and industry; in violation of the drainage regime, the contaminated mine water affects the quality of groundwater and surface water on both sides of the line of contact.

Toretsk as a front-line city is also characterized by other environmental problems: destruction of vegetation due to military induced fires; pollution of the environment with heavy metals and other aggressive substances due to artillery shelling and the use of explosives; destruction of the fertile layer of soil and greenery through the construction of fortifications and construction of territories by military facilities, etc.

In May 2016, as a result of shelling, the sludge storage dam of the Torets Phenolic Plant was damaged, which holds back thousands of cubic meters of toxic waste from the plant's phenolic

and naphthalene plants. In case of its breakthrough, toxic substances can get into the river Kryvyi Torets, then into the Siversky Donets, and from there – into the Sea of Azov. Restoration work on the dam immediately after the accident was impossible due to the failure of the Russian side to provide the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination Center (hereinafter – the JCCC) with security guarantees. Only in July 2018, an agreement was reached to establish a regime of silence.

It is worth noting that there are dozens of cities along the line of contact that have very similar problems with the negative effects of armed conflict. But each of them, in fact, has its own characteristics, and to overcome the existing challenges, public authorities involved in the restoration of the infrastructure of the affected settlements must seek a special approach to each city.

SHOOTING OF URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE OBJECTS

City Council building

During the liberation of the city of Toretsk from illegal armed formations on July 21, 2014, the building of the City Council (Druzhby Street, 24a), which housed the headquarters of the so-called DPR.

According to the deputy head of the Toretsk Military-Civil Administration (hereinafter – MCA) at that time in the premises of the City Council there were no employees. In order not to endanger them, in about two weeks all the employees were evacuated to another building in the city.

The active phase began at 5-6 o'clock in the morning. When the building was already under the control of the Ukrainian military, the battle continued for more than 8 hours – DPR IAF tried to “knock out” the fighters from their positions. Militants pulled up two armored personnel carriers, two Urals with people in camouflage and “cubankas” (flat round fur hats). Submachine guns, machine guns and grenade launchers were visible⁵. Later, a tank went to

the square in front of the city council building and fired 21 shots. A fire broke out in the building due to the shelling. The Ukrainian military held the defense for many hours until reinforcements arrived.

According to the respondent, during the military operation to liberate Toretsk, in addition to the injured soldiers on both sides, civilians were wounded as well: an ambulance paramedic and a civilian who was riding a bicycle near the City Council building in the morning. The paramedic had a serious injury – he underwent surgery, and was hospitalized for two months.

On that day, social facilities near the City Council building were also affected. These are school N° 3, mining technical school, Center for Children and Youth Creativity, Palace of Culture Ukraina.

The shelled and burned four-storey building of the City Council is currently not subject to

⁵ <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30261723.html>



<https://www.petrimazepa.com/freedomfortoretsk.html>

reconstruction. According to the Toretsk MCA, the amount of damage is about UAH 39 million, according to expert estimates the building is not subject to restoration, it must be completely demolished.

“Nearby are kindergartens and schools, colleges and other children’s facilities. It is clear that this building

poses a danger, especially for children who are very curious. We have tried several times to keep it inaccessible, currently the entrance to this building is restricted, children cannot play there as before, but the building still remains a dangerous object in the central part of the city,” – said the deputy head of the MCA.



Photo before and after the military operation to liberate Toretsk on July 21, 2014

Palace of Culture Ukraina



<https://bit.ly/3xxQY1R>

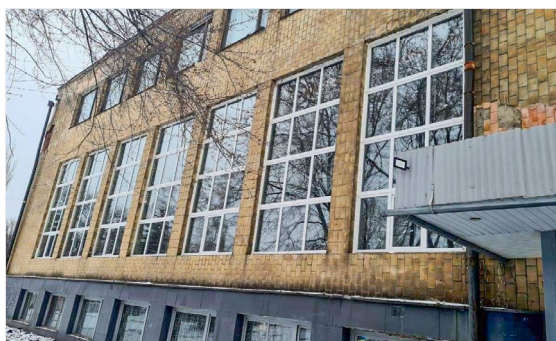
Until 2014, the Palace of Culture Ukraina played an important role in the life of the city and primarily served as a source of cultural education for the community. Dozens of creative groups, circles and sections worked on its base. The palace has a concert hall for 900 seats with an orchestra pit and a revolving stage. The Ukraina Palace itself is a multifunctional facility with an area of 9,000

m², which, according to technical and economic indicators, can accommodate up to 1,600 people at a time without interfering with each other.

The main attraction of the palace – a winter garden of 250 square meters. This is a pavilion with a glass roof, where trees and flowers from warm countries grow.



<https://bit.ly/3roGK7A>



In July 2014, during the massive artillery shelling of the city, the building of the Ukraina Palace was damaged. Immediately after the liberation of Toretsk from the so-called DPR's illegal armed formations, according to the results of the visual inspection, defects certificates were drawn up according to which the damage amounted to UAH 163,000 and UAH 77,800 respectively. Mass deformations of the building, roof, metal structure on the eastern side were detected; the operation of the 93rd substation, which provides the building with electricity, was disrupted, all entrance doors, windows glazing, all communications, and fan heaters were destroyed. But according to the director of Ukraina Palace it is the sum of only the losses which were revealed visually, without examination. According to him, the real amount is hundreds of times greater.

In January 2019, the Palace of Culture was transferred to the municipal property of the city. Prior to that, it was on the balance sheet of the state enterprise Toretskvugol. Since the foundation of the Palace in 1972, apart from the restoration of the roof, no repairs have been carried out in the building, so it is impossible to say that the abandoned state of the Palace is due to the 2014 shelling only.

During 2019-2020, the substation was restored, lighting was replaced – LED lights were installed to avoid excessive energy consumption, problems with drainage and sewerage were solved,

heating was partially restored, which had not been available since 2011.

The overhaul and restoration project developed for the entire building foresees costs of UAH 250 million, of which UAH 14 million – the cost of dismantling the old roof and installing a new one.

“During the last 2-3 years, people started paying attention to the condition of the building, but it is not easy at all to restore such a structure. The city is unable to invest tens of millions in reconstruction, given the financial situation of the community. Therefore, everything is happening thanks to the joint efforts of local authorities and the oblast state administration. We are now looking for finances to restore the roof...,” – says the director of the facility⁶.

The final stage of restoration of windows glazing in the building (352 windows) is currently underway. The total cost amounted to more than UAH 2 million – about UAH 800,000 was allocated from the city budget, UAH 1.3 million from the oblast budget.

6 T-025

As of January 2021, the Palace of Culture already has clubs, attended by more than 200 children⁷. The management of the Palace plans to restore youth centers, social infrastructure, various sections, a museum, and to open a cinema,

sports and entertainment complex. According to preliminary estimates, it is possible to employ about 50-60 people – then the activities will involve about 700 children and adults.

Institution of general secondary education of I – III degrees N°3

During the liberation of the city on July 21, 2014, the secondary school of I-III degrees N°3 was damaged by artillery shelling.

“As of the end of July, we were almost ready for the school year. But due to the fighting, the school building was severely damaged. Fortunately, none of the workers were inside during the shelling. We saw the destruction the next day when we came there. A significant part of the windows, roof, floor, walls both inside and from the facade were damaged. You can still see the marks of shots or mines on the facade cladding. The school porch was blown up, the front door was knocked out. Bullets fired at the curtains in the assembly hall. Music speakers were smashed, buffets were damaged and many other small things,” – says the school principal⁸.

One month before the school year, all the efforts of the school management together with the local authorities were aimed at rebuilding the

school. 68 double-glazed windows as well as the entrance doors were replaced, and the roof was repaired. The teaching staff was self-organized, and the parent committee actively assisted in the cleaning. New doors were installed to all classrooms. Thanks to the support of the public organization Save the Children, the physics classroom and two classrooms were renovated.

“Funds for the restoration of the school mostly came from the local budget. The management of the City Department of Education helped us a lot, and constantly supported us. It is worth noting that both teachers and the parent community responded and contributed. We are very grateful to them for that!” – the respondent notes.

Many residents, including families with children, have left the city due to the hostilities. As of September 1, 2014, the number of students in school N°3 decreased by 130 people. But within two years, almost all of them came back.

Currently, within the framework of the Emergency Loan Program for the Reconstruction

⁷ <https://dnews.dn.ua/news/759453>

⁸ T-027



of Ukraine funded by the European Investment Bank it is being implemented the project “Overhaul of the building of general secondary education institution of I-III degrees №3 ‘Specialized school with advanced study of English’. This project foresees the overhauling of internal premises (classrooms, offices, corridors, sports and assembly hall, dining room) with replacement of all communications (water, heat, electricity, Internet) and complete renovation of the material

and technical base (purchase of furniture, computer equipment, kitchen and sports equipment).

The changes will affect not only the school but the surrounding area as well. There will be a recreation area for children with benches, trash cans and lighting, a mini-football, basketball and volleyball courts, and a playground with sports equipment. Also, there will be built 8 slots car parking near the school⁹.

Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Children

On May 21, 2018, during the morning shelling of the outskirts of the city, the shell exploded on the territory of the Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation of Children and shattered windows glazing¹⁰.

The Center houses children who find themselves in difficult life circumstances and need

daily attention and support from adults. Employees of the center – practical psychologists, teachers, nurses – provide social protection for children, provide psychological assistance and conduct socio-psychological correction, taking into account the individual needs of each pupil.

⁹ <https://bit.ly/2VxO1ly>

¹⁰ <http://police.dn.ua/news/view/politsiya-toretska-evakuyue-ditej-z-tsentra-reabilitatsii>

At the time of the shelling, there were 36 children and 23 employees in the Center. The Toretsk police department was asked by the Center's management to help evacuate 28 children between

the ages of 3 and 17, and the rest were taken away by relatives. The police took the Center's staff and wards to a safe area; the children were taken to the children's ward of the local hospital.



<https://bit.ly/3wyvBs8>

Healthcare facilities

As a result of the shelling on May 24, 2018, the building of the Municipal Medical and Preventive Institution (hereinafter – MMPI) Toretsk City Psychoneurological Dispensary (43 Gaidara Street) was damaged. All windows (58 pieces) were completely knocked out, utility rooms, 2 reinforced concrete slabs, 6 door blocks and 2 Moskvich cars were damaged. Numerous shell craters were found in the adjacent territory.

Damage to the building of the Toretsk City Tuberculosis Dispensary (25 Gaidara Street) was

also recorded. As a result of hostilities, 16 windows were shattered, electricity and gas supply communications were damaged. There are no casualties among 13 patients and 3 employees of the institutions.

The police of Donetsk region reported that on this fact criminal proceedings according to part 1 of Article 258 of the Criminal code – the terrorist act are opened¹¹.

According to the Ukrainian side of the JCCC, 152-mm artillery systems and 120-mm mortars were

¹¹ <https://bit.ly/2VzZlNx>

fired at the Toretsk city on the morning of May 24. At least 35 shells and mines hit the buildings.

According to the results of the photo-fixation carried out by the JCCC observers at that

time, it was established that the enemy fired at the civilian infrastructure of Toretsk with the use of air burst high-explosive fragmentation shells¹².



<https://bit.ly/3B1wWPw>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/pressjfo.news/posts/376826242809998>

DESTRUCTION OF BRIDGES

The bridge in Shcherbynivka

In July 2014, in Shcherbynivka township, a part of Toretsk city, a bridge over the Kryvyi Torets River, which connects the settlements of the Illinivka Amalgamated Territorial Community and the city of Toretsk, was destroyed as a result of hostilities. According to the mayor of Shcherbynivka (until 2021) during the stay of the settlement under the control of the IAF of the so-called DPR their representatives tried three times to blow up the bridge:

“Personally, I did not witness these events, but we heard a very loud explosion and began to find out what had happened. Then we realized that the bridge there was damaged. Locals living nearby said unknown people came with weapons, mined the bridge and prepared for the blast. Witnesses claimed that they tried to resist this, to refuse the bombers, to which they received rude remarks addressed to them.”¹³

The carriageway of the bridge was damaged during the explosions. A large breach was formed on the outside. After the inspection, it was found that the frame structures were damaged. The issue of the bridge’s restoration was constrained by the uncertainty about ownership of the bridge. According to the respondent, at the time of getting damaged it was not on the balance of the settlement council, it was not owned by the community. No documents confirming the book value or documents for the construction of the bridge were found.

The settlement council understood the danger of a damaged bridge. Several times they applied to Ukravtodor to restore the bridge, but received



¹³ T-002

the answer that this object is not on the balance of their Service. They have also approached the Konstantinovsky District State Administration with a request to take this bridge on their balance in order to start the restoration works. The settlement council could not start repairing the bridge on its own because it did not have sufficient funding – due to the lack of large enterprises in the settlement, budget revenues were very small.

“We took care of this facility together with the deputies, sent appeals to a large number of instances, raised this issue with the city administration, and sent letters to Ukravtodor. But no real steps were taken, the bridge continued to collapse, so we asked the Road Service to take measures to prevent accidents and casualties,” – the respondent said.

In February 2015, the Road Service decided to close the road across the bridge, and traffic was officially banned there. A bypass road

was identified through the township of Petrivka, which added about 9 kilometers. The Road Service put up road signs, fences, but they were constantly disappearing – people were removing them because they did not want to use the detour road as the way across the bridge was convenient and much shorter.

In 2015, at the site of the breach in the bridge, it collapsed under a heavy truck – the bearing frames folded into a triangle.

“It was a vehicle loaded with vegetables that fell directly on the bridge. Then the car was pulled out. It was an extremely serious event, although there were no casualties,” – recalls the former head of the village.

After this incident, the breach in the bridge got even bigger, according to the report, its size constituted 3.7x14 meters. The metal fence was destroyed, and crossing the bridge became extremely dangerous. But people still moved on it – both on bicycles and on foot. Large vehicles could not pass but cars at their own risk continued to move along the free part.



The lack of a stable road connection between the city of Toretsk and the surrounding villages has created a lot of problems for their residents. The bridge posed great infrastructural importance, as it was located on the Ivanopil'ya-Kostiantynivka highway, and for many years connected settlements and districts. Earlier there used to be a passenger bus route, Toretsk – Kostiantynivka. After the traffic ceased, the short way to get to the neighboring area became inaccessible to residents.

“The breach, which was the result of the explosion, did not allow vehicles to move normally. People were afraid, however light vehicles still were crossing the bridge using the remaining line. Residents had no other choice than to walk across the bridge because some were grazing cattle on the Katerynivka side (a settlement in the Kostiantynivka district near Shcherbynivka), some went to Katerynivka to visit relatives, there was a kindergarten there, and some residents took children there. Food was transported across this bridge. We have 11 stores where goods were transported, but after the appearance of the big abyss, the traffic was carried out through Petrivka,” – the respondent notes.

According to locals, in Shcherbynivka there is a Kryvyi Torets hub railway station, which provides an opportunity for citizens to get to work in the direction of Kostiantynivka, Slovyansk, as well as Novgorod. However, they, as well as their children, who are studying in Kostiantynivka,

Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, are forced to get to this railway station on foot from a distance of four to six kilometers. After all, it is impossible to get to it by car or bus through the destroyed bridge.

The same problem is urgent for workers of mines, ore-processing plants, railways and other enterprises located in Toretsk. People from different settlements, especially in autumn and winter, are practically deprived of the opportunity to communicate with their families. It is also impossible for people to get to the hospital or school. Residents of the villages of Illinivska ATC used to sell agricultural



<https://bit.ly/3wCKpdo>

products in Toretsk and there, on the spot, bought everything they needed¹⁴. After the destruction of the bridge, they were deprived of such an opportunity.

In 2017, the Military-Civil Administration of the city of Toretsk took over the bridge into communal property of the amalgamated territorial community, after which the issues of its restoration began to be slowly resolved. In 2018, plans, specifications and estimates for its reconstruction were developed. Funds from the oblast budget (about UAH 20 million) were allocated for the restoration of the bridge. As of September 2020, the Department of Development of Key Industries of the Donetsk Oblast State Administration held a tender, concluded a contract with a contractor and began works on the reconstruction of the bridge.

“We were very happy to inform our residents about the start of work. They didn’t even believe it was possible. And when the restoration began, it was such a resonant event for our village. Everyone was happy that traffic would resume and people would be able to move around safely. At first, the repairmen made a small bypass bridge, through which it was already possible to move vehicles, which was already very good...”, – says the former head of the village.

According to the head of the Toretsk MCA, the repair works should be completed by the end of 2021. At the same time, the full movement of

vehicles will resume. According to the project design, the bridge will be equipped with barrier and railing fencing and lighting¹⁵.



¹⁴ <https://bit.ly/3iTmXDo>

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWi8kW8HyfY>

Horlivka – Toretsk motorway bridge



On July 10, 2014 at 19:50 in the area of the Mayorska station the representatives of illegal armed formations of the so-called DPR blew up the motorway bridge of the highway Horlivka – Toretsk. As a result of damage, the fragments of the bridge structure fell on the railway tracks of Mykytivka-Diliivka section¹⁶.

Through this bridge there is a road junction from Horlivka to two cities: Toretsk and Bakhmut, then Dzerzhinsk and Artemivsk. The bridge was an important object of infrastructure, and served as a so-called technological route, which shortens the way to other settlements. At that time there was an active liberation of the settlements occupied by pro-Russian formations, and the next city after Bakhmut was to be the liberated city of Toretsk, and then Horlivka. The bridge was of strategic importance for any advance in different directions of manpower, troops, equipment, because on both sides the passages were closed by established checkpoints.

According to the head of the Zaitsevo settlement Military-Civil Administration (author – before the occupation of Horlivka it was part of the Horlivka City Council), the bridge was deliberately blown up in order to destroy infrastructure that could be used by the Armed Forces of

Ukraine to get from one part of the city Horlivka to another after it was liberated.

“I was a member of the Artemivsk Volunteer Battalion at the time and learned about the bridge being blown up when we were based in Bakhmut. At the very spot where the bridge was blown up, there were at least 30 militants. Among them was a person whom I knew, Oleksiy Petrov, nicknamed Izya Katsman, a former police officer himself. And it was he who called me personally a day or two before the bridge was blown up and asked me for climbing equipment. Judging by the nature of the blast, I think they mined it from below, but not from the ground, but on the concrete structures themselves. The explosion was so strong that in the houses on Zalivna, Koltsova, and Sonyachna streets, which are located about 350 meters from the bridge itself, the windows were completely shattered by the blast wave,” – the respondent recalls.

¹⁶ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/07/11/7031612/>

The bridge completely collapsed in the part above the railway tracks. There are many videos on the Internet that are posted by the bombers themselves¹⁷.

Earlier, the residents of the village of Zaitsevo had to cover only 12 kilometers to get to the city of Toretsk. The nearest hospital, electricity company, shops and other infrastructure objects are located in Toretsk, but after the bridge was blown up, it is easier for residents of the surrounding villages to get to Bakhmut, which is 25 kilometers away, than to take a detour to Toretsk for more than an hour.

“The road has one of the strategic values in the development of any entity, trade without roads is impossible. The existence of a settlement without a connection with other settlements is also almost impossible in the modern world. Therefore, the lack of a road (bridge) for us (author – the Zaitsevo settlement) – is a huge loss that

we suffer. There is no opportunity to develop any business activity. After crossing the checkpoint the residents of occupied Horlivka cannot immediately reach Toretsk, where their relatives live and social services are located, because the road has become long and expensive. Horlivka is a city of oblast significance with a population of almost 250,000 inhabitants, so the number of people experiencing the negative consequences of the destruction of the bridge is estimated at tens or even hundreds of thousands of people,” – said the head of the Zaitsevo settlement MCA.

Currently, the reconstruction works are not carried out due to the inexpediency of investing in the repair of the bridge, which is located at a distance of less than 2 km from the uncontrolled territory, and remains under the sight and threat of illegal armed formations.



View of the bridge as of July 2020¹⁸

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=oM-chBC-EeE>

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtsModhHvxQ&t=1s>

SHELLING OF CIVILIAN HOUSINGS

According to the Toretsk MCA, 1,056 residential buildings were partially damaged or completely destroyed during the anti-terrorist operation on the territory of the Toretsk ATC. The total number of civilians affected by the armed conflict is 159, of whom 28 were killed.

Since July 2014, the city of Toretsk and its constituent settlements have been repeatedly shelled. A significant escalation of hostilities was observed in May 2018.

➔ On May 17, 2018, as a result of artillery shelling, the houses of Kurdyumivka and Novgorodske townships were damaged. In Kurdyumivka, roofs and windows were damaged in 9 houses, and windows were shattered in Novgorodske. No civilians were injured¹⁹.

➔ On May 21, houses in the cities of Toretsk, Zalizne, and Pivdenne township were

shelled. Damaged windows, roofs, broken wall, shattered windows, damaged gas and electricity supply lines²⁰. A high-voltage power line was damaged in the village of Druzhba, as a result of which 1,000 households of the village were left without electricity and access to drinking water for three days²¹.

➔ On May 28, a 15-year-old schoolgirl, Daria Kazimirova, was killed when a 120-mm mine hit a yard in a residential building in Zalizne. According to the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, during the pre-trial investigation it was established that the shooting was carried out by members of the terrorist organization of the so-called DPR from the city of Horlivka, Donetsk region²².

➔ In the evening of April 22, 2021, in Pivnichne township, a shell exploded near

¹⁹ <https://www.toretsk-vca.gov.ua/novini/2118-poshkodzheno-budinki-smt-kurdyumivka-smt-novgorodske>

²⁰ <https://www.toretsk-vca.gov.ua/novini/2144-toretsk-znovu-obstrilyano>

²¹ <https://www.toretsk-vca.gov.ua/novini/2158-u-s-druzhbi-poshkodzheno-visokovoltnu-liniyu-elektroperedach>

²² <https://uatv.ua/gpu-predstavyla-dokazy-vyny-bojovykiv-u-smerti-shkolyarky-na-donechchyni/>

the house of the multi-child family. At the time of the explosion, children and a neighbor's child were in the yard. According to the woman, the boy was thrown away by the blast wave, and he could not come to his senses for a long time. After checking on him and finding no visible injuries, they decided not to seek medical help. As a result of the shelling, the fence, the metal-plastic window in the kitchen and the front door were damaged²³.

In 2020, work was actively carried out to restore residential buildings that were damaged as a result of hostilities. Materials for the works were purchased at the expense of the oblast budget, in particular at the expense of the oblast material reserve of Donetsk region. Representatives of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine were performing the restoration works²⁴. Humanitarian organizations actively assisted in carrying out repair work.

Particular attention should be paid to the situation of the dwellers Pivdenne township that is the part of Toretsk ATC. Before the beginning of the armed conflict, about 1,500 people lived in the village. As of May 2018, due to constant shelling and the unfavorable humanitarian situation, the vast majority of the population had to leave their homes. There was no gas supply in the village, all transport connections were suspended from the beginning of the conflict, and there was no health care available. Residents were completely dependent on humanitarian aid provided by international and Ukrainian organizations. Due to the lack of outlets with critical food products, locals were forced to walk

to the nearby Zalizne for shopping. De jure, Pivdenne was under the control of Ukraine, de facto it was a "gray zone" with the most limited access to the public, the media, and humanitarian organizations²⁵.

According to the Joint Forces Operations Headquarters in April 2018, the IAFs of the so-called DPR came to Pivdenne twice a week to check the local population for loyalty to the Ukrainian authorities and to demonstrate their presence there. On May 8, 2018, the operation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to liberate the village from the control of the so-called DPR started. On May 17, the Joint Forces Operations Headquarters announced that the village was under the full control of the 24th Separate Mechanized Brigade named after King Danylo²⁶.

From that moment on, the shelling of the village intensified. On May 31, 2018, at a coordination meeting of local authorities and humanitarian organizations, it was decided to evacuate local residents from the village due to continuous fighting nearby. Residents asked to organize a "green corridor" to leave the village by car and the opportunity to pick up their belongings. At the end of May 2018, more than 45 families left the village. All evacuees were placed in the city of Toretsk²⁷.

According to the Toretsk MCA, they were approached by 12 families of Pivdenne whose homes were destroyed by fire due to shelling. Currently, 11 families are already provided with housing – apartments are provided from the city fund of resettlement housing and overhauled at the expense of funds allocated from the oblast budget (total amount of UAH 975,000).

²³ <https://novosti.dn.ua/news/311231-na-donetchine-pod-obstrel-popal-dom-mnogodetnoj-semi#>

²⁴ <https://dn.dsns.gov.ua/ua/Ostanni-novini/21015.html>

²⁵ <https://dnews.dn.ua/news/702003>

²⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=374102519749037&t=3>

²⁷ <https://dnews.dn.ua/news/702003>

The monitoring study conducted interviews with those whose homes were damaged during the shelling in August 2015 and February 2021. The following are the materials of these

interviews. For reasons of anonymity and security, the names of the respondents have been changed.

Shelling of Toretsk on August 9, 2015

In the evening of August 9, 2015, residents of Toretsk were forced to go to bed to the sound of explosions because artillery was working nearby. That evening Serhiy was at his parents' house. Around 4 o'clock in the morning, waking up from loud sounds, the respondent realized that these were "arrivals" and they were very close. Serhiy and his parents hid in enclosed areas of the house, which had no windows. One of the next explosions shattered all the windows in the house. According to the respondent, a sharp "metallic" sound was also heard. As it later became known, one of the shells hit

a high-voltage power line, one of the supports of which stood outside.

At about 5 o'clock in the morning when it was light, Serhiy went outside and saw that the slate fence from the north-eastern part of the house had been completely destroyed. In the next yard there was about 3 meters in diameter crater dug by a large-caliber projectile. The fragments of the projectile were laying in the yard, in the brick wall of the house and in the house itself. Finding the largest fragment, it became clear to the respondent that it was a projectile from a 152 mm self-propelled artillery weapon.



“The shell hit from the south-east, that is, from occupied Horlivka. I have no doubt that the shelling was carried out by an artillery battery of the Russian occupation forces stationed in Horlivka. The number of civilians who were in the affected area – about 100 people. As it became known later, the shells fell clearly in the yards on our and parallel streets in the area of about a kilometer. As far as I know, the shells fell in the yards of at least four houses. The garage of one of our neighbours

was also hit by a shell and caught fire – two cars burned down. Other damages are fences, roofs, windows and outbuildings,” – says Serhiy.

No one was killed or injured during the shelling. The total amount of material damage to the property of Serhiy’s parents amounted to about 20 thousand hryvnias. The main consequence for the respondent’s family was a strong emotional shock, which persisted for a long time. The power supply was restored on the same day. Humanitarian organizations, in particular, the Papal Foundation, repaired houses (windows, fences, roofs).

Shelling of the township of Novgorodske on February 20, 2021

On February 20, 2021, at about 5:00 am, the township of Novgorodske, which is part of the Toretsk ATC, was shelled. As a result of mortar shelling, three residential buildings on 1st Teatralny Alley, a power line and a gas pipeline were damaged.

According to the woman, whose house was damaged, the shooting started at 3 am. Many shots were heard and then suddenly a very powerful explosion was heard – the shell exploded near her house.

“The blast wave in the house caused cracking of the ceiling, the roof of the attic shattered, and the glass in the window overlooking the alley was shattered,” – the woman said²⁸.

Another resident of the alley said that as a result of the shelling, her fence and windows were damaged.

“I came here in 2019 and now I am being shot at for the first time. I had a strong shock, I was very scared. People here since the beginning of the war have become accustomed to these hostilities, but I have never heard of such a thing, it happened for the first time. I had a lot of stress, my legs became numb...,” – the respondent recalls²⁹.

²⁸ T-017

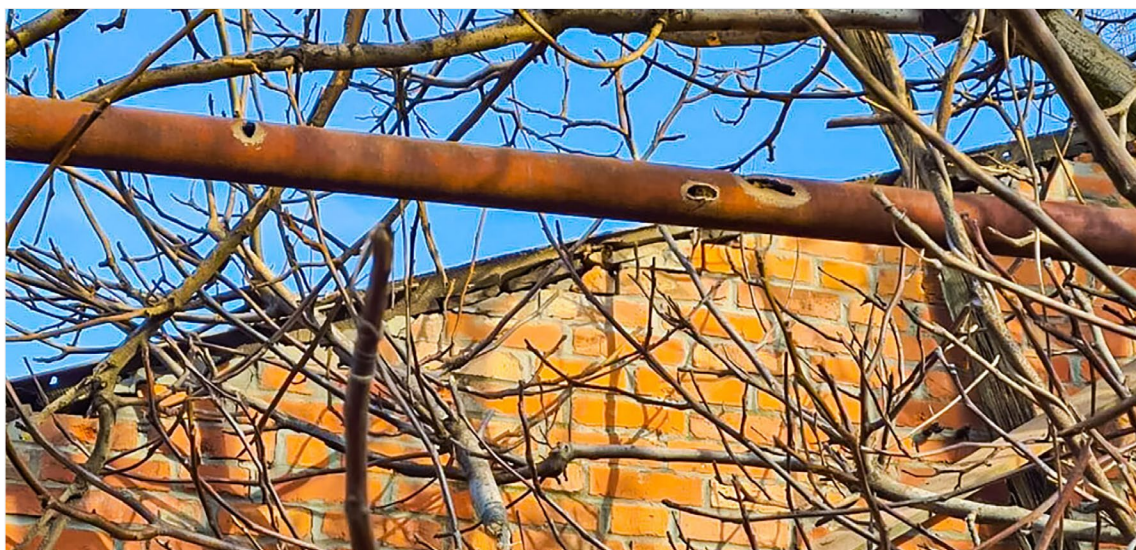
²⁹ T-018

In addition to residential buildings, the low-pressure overhead gas pipeline was subjected to multiple shrapnel damage. The emergency was brought under control within hours

after the shelling. In two days, repair works were carried out to replace the damaged section of the gas pipeline and gas supply was restored³⁰.



³⁰ <https://oblgaz.donetsk.ua/mul-novyny-donetskoblhazu/vidnovlennia-system-hazopostachannia/792-vidnovleno-hazopostachannia-v-selyshchi-novhorodske>



<https://truth-hounds.org/hto-obstrilyav-novgorodske-j-pivdenne-u-lyutomu-2021-go/>

One shell hit a local cemetery near the school #18. The school is located at a distance of 2 km from the line of hostilities. According to locals, near the school there is still an spot with mines underneath. Local authorities have repeatedly approached the SES with a request to demine the area, to which they received a reply that it is currently not appropriate in the vicinity of the front line.

The Village Council promised assistance to the victims of the shelling in the form of materials for restoration work – window glass, slate.

According to the representative of the Village Council, one of the tasks of the local authorities is to fix the fact of damage/destruction of infrastructure facilities, in particular, residential buildings:

“When a person comes to us, we must go to the place and on the basis of their application to record the fact of damage or destruction.

Then we inspect the house, make a defects certificate, so that in the future, if there are state or international programs, we can provide defects certificates, photos of damage, so that a person can receive compensation for the destroyed housing.

But confirmation of the fact of the shelling is still needed. This is done by CIMIC (author – Department of Civil-Military Cooperation). They come and record in their reports that there was shelling. If they do not reflect this, people will not be able to claim compensation. We had one precedent, when the shelling was as it were, the house caught fire but the fact of the attack was not recorded”³¹.

31 T-014

SITUATION WITH WATER SUPPLY IN TORETSK

Even before the beginning of the armed conflict, the water supply of the city of Toretsk was carried out from the Horlivka filtering station by a drinking water pipe with a diameter of 900 mm. Now this water pipeline completely passes through several gullies, the line of contact, the positions of the Ukrainian army and the army of the so-called DPR.

Residents of Toretsk and surrounding settlements are often left without water – either due to damage to the water supply system after shelling on the front line, or due to accidents caused by worn-out materials. In both cases, operational recovery work is complicated by procedural issues related to the agreement to establish a regime of silence on both sides.

According to the director of the Department of Housing and Utility of the Donetsk Oblast State Administration, there were nine serious accidents on the Horlivka-Toretsk water supply system in 2020. In the last quarter of last year

alone, the Toretsk water supply was cut off for almost 320 hours³².

Another accident on the water supply occurred on January 4, 2021. At that time, almost 38,000 residents of the Toretsk community were left without water – the town of Toretsk (28,336), the city of Zalizne (2,899), the township of Pivnichne (5,768), the township of Pivdenne (750) and partly the township of Shcherbynivka (170)³³.

On the same day, the employees of the utility company (hereinafter – UC) Water of Donbass submitted an application to the JCCC with a request to allow inspections and repairs). With permission from both sides on January 8, the repair crew was ready to take up their duties. In addition to the utility workers, many people are involved in the process: representatives of the JCCC, the OSCE, the SES, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine, who coordinate the process, accompany them to the scene of the accident, and ensure safety. The group must be preceded by sappers

³² <https://dnews.dn.ua/news/759591>

³³ <https://freeradio.com.ua/ru/vodoprovod-u-toretska-pochty-otremontyrovaly-vodu-planyruiut-dat-uzhe-zavtra-donetskaia-oha/>

with minesweepers who explore a certain area for explosives. Usually, the group included representatives of the Red Cross Society, but after two cars of the UC Donbass Water exploded on a mine in 2018, its management decided to limit the participation of their employees in escorting repair crews in dangerous conditions.

“Here is the story. The sappers passed. All right. Before us (author – repair crew) the Red Cross passed, two cars, it seems. That is, several cars drove by, and then a KrAZ vehicle with an excavator. And maybe shifted a little bit to the curb. As the sappers later said, we inspected everything here on the way, and you left the road. How come?! Don’t you see what kind of car is going, then take 1.5 meters to the side”, – the representative of CU Water of Donbass recalls³⁴.

On January 8, 2021, the repair crew, together with representatives of the organizations that accompanied them, went 1 km from the uncontrolled territory while searching for the accident site.

“Suddenly we heard a warning shot – a short machine gun burst. We stopped, waited a minute or two and started walking, but again the machine gun burst. The coordinator says – everything needs to be turned around. Went to the exit, we’ve heard – a grenade

launcher fired. Not in our direction, no, just to make it clear that we are unwanted guests. They took us to our military. They began to contact the OSCE, the leadership of the JCCC, to understand what was going on. We’ve been told to wait. About an hour later, the coordinator says – ok, we have permission, we continue the survey. We went again. Closer to the gob pile, another single shot from a machine gun sounded. We have stepped back. Stood for 10–15 minutes, just started to move, another shot. “No” means “no”. The coordinator took us out, and we didn’t do anything that day,” – the respondent said.

The next day, the repair crew was able to begin the inspection of the water pipeline accident site with the appropriate support. On January 12, the repair works were completed and the restoration of the water supply scheme with the subsequent supply of water to consumers began. In total, 14 employees of the UC Donbass Water and 4 units of heavy vehicles were involved in the works.

During the lack of water in Toretsk, SES officers and utilities organize water supply to city residents, who have to stand in long queues to collect several canisters of water. Elderly people are especially uncomfortable as it is very difficult for them to get heavy containers to the upper floors.

According to the employee of the Toretsk Department of Housing and Utility when it comes

34 T-021

to water supply the priority is made on high-rise buildings:

“Given the geography of our city, which is not small and quite scattered, we mainly bring water to high-rise buildings. People from the private sector are calling, swearing, but we can’t get to every household. There are certain points to which people are already accustomed. These should be certain places where it is convenient for both vehicles and people to reach”³⁵.

In 2015-2016, when the city was left without water for several days, there were cases when some residents of houses took water for their needs from heating radiators. Due to this, along with the problems with water supply, there were problems with the central heating of the city, because at that time no action plan for such cases was developed, no mechanisms were developed to supply water to the boiler stations.

“Now all boiler facilities have tanks into which water from the centralized water pipe comes before it is supplied to consumers. When the water supply to the city is cut, the heating network at this time adds a lot of dye to the tanks. Why is this done? Residents who take water from the system, in any case, will drain it somewhere. Water gets into

the sewer, and workers then inspect the wells. In houses where wells have most colored water, they cut off the heat supply. Unpopular method, but there is no other way. It is better to cut off 1-2 houses of morons, but the other 20 will be warm”, – the respondent notes.

The coordinator of the Strong Communities movement in Toretsk met with Oleksiy Reznikov, the Minister for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories, as part of the On the Line of Conflict project. The issue of water supply in frontline cities was voiced at the meeting.

“In terms of water supply, local authorities cannot change anything radically, because we are completely dependent on uncontrolled territories. In case of an accident or bombing we are done. The only solution is to bring water in tanks. But local authorities today do a lot in terms of landscaping. Lighting of streets, repair of roads, sidewalks. This has not been the case in Toretsk for a long time. People appreciate it, start getting used to a normal life and positive changes. But when all people, like me, have to bring home cans of water, other positive things are simply forgotten,” – the public activist notes³⁶.

³⁵ T-023

³⁶ <https://v-variant.com.ua/article/torec-voda/>

According to the director of the Department of Housing and Utility of the Donetsk Oblast State Administration, the possibility of building a modular filtering station separately for Toretsk or connecting to one of the existing drinking water supply systems in the controlled area is being considered. But so far it's just ideas without any specific details³⁷.

³⁷ <https://bit.ly/3wIeatb>

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ARMED CONFLICT ON THE CITY

In the township of Novgorodske the Toretsk phenolic plant is located, it is a Ukrainian chemical enterprise with centralized processing of phenolic, naphthalene, pyridine raw materials. One of the most dangerous objects in the

territory of hostilities in terms of causing an environmental catastrophe is its sludge storage – a special storage facility that holds back thousands of cubic meters of toxic waste from the plant’s phenolic and naphthalene production.



<https://bit.ly/3yKjP39>

In May 2016, shelling damaged the sludge storage dam, which is geographically located in the “gray zone” two kilometers from the demarcation line. Shell bursts damaged the pipeline through which water is pumped out.

According to the press officer of the Ukrainian side of the JCCC, Lieutenant Colonel Vadym Bakai, overflowing of the pipeline with water could break the dam that would lead to a rise of a poisonous mudflow, that in turn would form of a toxic cloud, pollute local river and cause death of people³⁸. It was impossible to start the restoration work on the dam immediately after the accident due to the failure of the Russian side of the JCCC to provide safety guarantees. Only in July 2018, an agreement was reached to establish a regime of silence.

Repair work was carried out in two stages. Both sides undertook written commitments to comply with the ceasefire in the area of emergency recovery operations from 10 July to 1 August 2018 to ensure the safe operation of OSCE SMM patrols and all experts involved³⁹. As a result of further negotiations, security guarantees were obtained to continue work on the hazardous facility until November 21, 2018. During this time, the sludge dams of the first and third stages were reinforced, as well as there were upgraded control wells for soil sampling⁴⁰.

At least 39 mines are currently flooded in the occupied Donbass, and not all of them have a permanent drainage system. Underground passages, which are filled with water, unite the divided Donbass. According to environmentalists, the flooding of mines in the territory not controlled by Ukraine it is the city of Toretsk and the settlements that may suffer the most⁴¹.

Experts of the state enterprise Donetsk-geologiya in the territory of Toretsk and adjacent mines took 20 samples of groundwater and water from wells and mines. Only two of the twenty samples are close to the norms of drinking water, and mine waters contain elements whose concentration exceeds the permissible values, even for domestic water. Experts have found that further flooding of mines in the area could lead to the following consequences:

- ➔ output of mine waters of increased mineralization on the area of 1400 hectares, which will lead to waterlogging and salinization of soils, as well as to the deterioration of groundwater quality;
- ➔ flooding of 2470 hectares of land, where water table lays at a depth of less than two meters;
- ➔ subsidence of land on the territory with a total area of more than 7 thousand hectares, which can lead to the destruction of buildings and structures;
- ➔ formation of new pinges over mine workings.

The French humanitarian organization ACT-ED, with the financial assistance of the European Union, involving technical experts and specialists, is developing for the Toretsk MCA the “Action Plan to prevent or minimize the risks due to the closure of coal mines” project, which should serve as an algorithm for reducing and mitigating its consequences.

38 <https://bit.ly/3e63E8t>

39 <https://bit.ly/3e6ylKM>

40 <https://bit.ly/3k7iVJS>

41 <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/donbass-realii/30944346.html>

In addition to the existing threat to the environment caused by the flooding of mines in the territory not controlled by Ukraine, the city of

Toretsk as a frontline city is characterized by other environmental problems.



Logging for the construction of fortifications and occupation of territories by military facilities



destruction of the fertile layer of soil and greenery; deterioration of oxygen renewal of air



mine fields, bombing of ecologically hazardous objects (waste heaps, sludge settlers, landfill of solid household waste, etc.)



inability to perform scheduled repairs, lack of monitoring, high risk of environmental disaster



destruction of vegetation due to military fires



death of animals and insects, destruction of grass cover and topsoil, disturbance of ecosystems



pollution of the environment with heavy metals and other aggressive substances due to artillery shelling and the use of explosives



toxic precipitation, a significant increase in morbidity, increase of cancer cases



threat of damage to transmission lines that supply electricity to environmentally hazardous facilities, as well as industrial facilities that could lead to an environmental disaster



environmental disasters, inability to take urgent measures



resettlement of wild animals to settlements due to noise pollution, resettlement of field birds



danger to city dwellers, damage to agriculture, general disturbance of ecosystems

