



stories that move

Dramaturgy Packet

Compiled by: Mikayla Goetz and Anna Rae Lutz

ALIYAH Short

The information in this packet is not a reflection of the views of Boots on the Ground, ALIYAH, or the team members of either.

Aliyah עלייה - to ascend, a term used to describe immigrating to Israel

“It is impossible to put a number on how corrosive such everyday realities can be, but a shocking statistic sends a clear message ... more than one third say that they consider emigrating because they no longer feel safe as Jews,” FRA’S director Michael O’Flaherty was cited as saying in a foreword to the study.

- Michael O’Flaherty is Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights.

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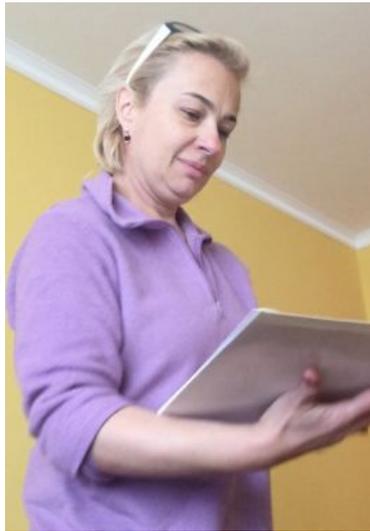
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Introduction to the Story

The ALIYAH script is pulled directly from interviews done in Ukraine in 2018. This story is inspired by the European Claims Conference documents of Olena-Hanna Vdovikovska - a warrior mother and survivor of the Holocaust. Her granddaughter, Mila, is now a refugee from the conflict in the Donbass Region. With no home, Mila looks to immigrate to Israel to begin anew. Her grandmother buried her Jewish identity to save her life, and two generations later, Mila must dig it up to do the same. Both Mila and her Mother were interviewed by our team in Lviv in March of 2018.



Anna
Inspiration for Olena



Juliana
Inspiration for Mila



Helena Munde
Inspiration for Mama

“Then the situation changed and it was really very hard to work in our region. The war situation pushed me to make the move, especially after a grenade landed in our backyard.”

“It’s not about being weak, of course it makes us stronger. Mama made a better life for me and now I have to make a better life for my baby. It’s natural to want to live better.”

-ALIYAH

Ukraine not *the* Ukraine

By: The Embassy of Ukraine in the USA

Ukrainian delegation had a very productive UNGA week this year: dozens of international meetings, treaty signings and interesting discussions. In all that we were surprised to notice one outdated cliché.

Let us help you to use the words related to our beautiful country correctly.

It is Ukraine, not *the* Ukraine.

“The Ukraine” has been commonly used in English during the Soviet times. Since the fall of Communism and Ukrainian independence in 1991, it is “UKRAINE”.

“Ukraine” is the only politically correct term and expresses respect to the country and its nation. “The Ukraine” is a favorite myth of the Russian propaganda as a nostalgia for the Soviet Union and justification of the centuries of occupation and persecution.

By the way, it is Kyiv, not Kiev.

“Kiev” comes from the Russian way of pronouncing Ukraine’s capital name during the Soviet era. But “Kyiv” is a Latin transliteration of the city’s name in the Ukrainian language and is the only official one.

The Holocaust in Ukraine

By: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



German police take aim at Jews from Ivangorod who have just finished preparing their own grave. Ivangorod, Ukraine, 1941-43

Conflict in Ukraine during the year 2014 has demonstrated the importance of World War II and Holocaust history to the country. As the swastikas that appear in propaganda there demonstrate, the messages and symbols of the conflict that took place more than seven decades ago still resonate. Ukrainians must reckon with that painful legacy, a task scholars at the Museum will support through research and honest dialogue about the past.

UKRAINE'S COMPLICATED HISTORY

Ukraine experienced a brief independence during World War I after the collapse of Imperial Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Soon, though, it was subsumed into Poland in the west and the Soviet Union in the east. The years between the establishment of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the German invasion in June 1941 brought their own misery. A famine

caused by economic changes and forced Soviet collectivization of farms resulted in the death of millions of men, women, and children living in Ukraine, which was called “the bread basket of Europe.” Purges targeted intellectuals and Communist Party leaders, and after 1939, Soviet authorities targeted a wide range of “class enemies” in the western territories it annexed according to its agreement with Germany, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

On the eve of the invasion in 1941, Ukraine was home to the largest Jewish population in Europe. The fate of those Jews depended on many factors, including the local occupying authority and whether they were among the very few evacuated to the interior of the Soviet Union ahead of the invading forces. While scholars are still researching the scale of the Holocaust in Ukraine, they estimate at least one and a half million Jews were killed there. The Museum is in the process of gathering written records and oral testimony to fully tell the story of what happened in Ukraine during the Holocaust.

What we do know is that following the brutal invasion of the Soviet Union by the German military, special forces called *Einsatzgruppen* arrived with orders to kill civilians perceived to be enemies of Nazi Germany. They divided the local population in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, identifying the Jews and recruiting local collaborators. Most Jews in Ukraine were shot to death close to where they lived, not deported to distant camps. Their executioners were German but also Ukrainian, Russian, and other local collaborators.

After the war, Soviet authorities tended to minimize the uniquely Jewish tragedy that occurred during the occupation, while in the West the inaccessibility of Soviet archives compelled scholars to write the history of the Holocaust in the East using German documents. Following Ukraine’s declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, scholars have begun piecing together a more complete history of the Holocaust in Ukraine.

PROMOTING SCHOLARSHIP ON UKRAINE

The fates of Ukrainians, both Jews and non-Jews, during that tumultuous time remain a subject of debate, with political rhetoric relating that history to the present conflict. As historian Wendy Lower writes, “Writing the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine has been and probably will continue to be a very complicated, politically perilous endeavor.” In an effort to make facts and analysis about that period widely available, the editors of the Museum’s scholarly journal, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, have collected articles on Ukraine in a special edition, available for free for a limited time.

The special edition of the journal (published by Oxford University Press) represents more than a decade of research and writing on Ukraine by the Museum. The Museum's archival collection includes millions of pages of materials from Ukrainian archives and from archives of the former Soviet Union. The Museum's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies has sponsored a number of programs devoted to the Holocaust in Ukraine (and, more broadly, in the former Soviet Union) and granted fellowships to scholars researching this subject, including contributors to this special issue. Just this year, the Mandel Center launched a major initiative that will continue to bring attention and new research to scholars and educators as they seek to understand the experiences of Ukrainians during the Holocaust.

We invite you to learn more about the Holocaust in Ukraine by reading the special issue of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* and exploring the links to a variety of Holocaust Encyclopedia articles and other publications available below.

The Einsatzgruppen: Babi Yar

By: The Jewish Virtual Library, A Project of Aice



Aftermath of the Babi-Yar massacre. At least 34,000 Jews died here in late September 1941.

Babi Yar is a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev where Einsatzgruppen mobile squads killed at least 34,000 Jews over a one week period in September 1941. Russian estimates put the number of killed at nearly 100,000. Today, Babi Yar has come to symbolize the horrific murder of Jews by the *Einsatzgruppen* as well as the persistent failure of the world to acknowledge this Jewish tragedy.

With the initiation of Operation Barbarossa, Germany's assault on the Soviet Union, the mobile killing units of the Einsatzgruppen operated over a wide area of Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea. There were four main divisions of the Einsatzgruppen - Groups A, B, C and D. All under Heydrich's general command, these groups operated behind the advancing German troops to eliminate political criminals, Polish government officials, gypsies and Jews. Jews were rounded up in every village, transported to a wooded area, or a ravine, stripped, shot and buried.

On September 19, 1941, the German army captured Kiev, Ukraine. Within a week, a number of buildings occupied by the German military were blown up by the Soviet secret police and in retaliation, the Germans proceeded to kill all the Jews of Kiev.

An order was posted throughout the city in both Russian and Ukrainian:

Kikes of the city of Kiev and vicinity! On Monday, September 29, you are to appear by 7:00 A.M. with your possessions, money, documents, valuables and warm clothing at Dorogozhitshaya Street, next to the Jewish cemetery. Failure to appear is punishable by death.

From the cemetery, the Jews were marched to Babi Yar, a ravine only two miles from the center of the city. A truck driver at the scene described what he saw:

I watched what happened when the Jews – men, women and children – arrived. The Ukrainians led them past a number of different places where one after another they had to remove their luggage, then their coats, shoes, and overgarments and underwear. They had to leave their valuables in a designated place. There was a special pile for each article of clothing. It all happened very quickly ... I don't think it was even a minute from the time each Jew took off his coat before he was standing there completely naked....

Once undressed, the Jews were led into the ravine which was about 150 meters long and 30 meters wide and a good 15 meters deep... When they reached the bottom of the ravine they were seized by members of the Schultpolizei and made to lie down on top of Jews who had already been shot. That all happened very quickly. The corpses were literally in layers. A police marksman came along and shot each Jew in the neck with a submachine gun ... I saw these marksman stand on layers of corpses and shoot one after the other ... The marksman would walk across the bodies of the executed Jews to the next Jew who had meanwhile lain down and shoot him.

Over the next week, 33,771 Jews were murdered at Babi Yar. Over the following months, Babi Yar remained in use as an execution site for gypsies and Soviet prisoners of war. Soviet accounts after the war speak of 100,000 dead and while research does not substantiate such a number the true figure will likely never be known.

Historian Abram Sachar provides a description of the extermination at Babi Yar:

Nearly 34,000 Jews of the ghetto were brought to a suburban ravine known as Babi Yar, near the Jewish Cemetery, where men, women, and children were systematically machine-gunned in a two-day orgy of execution. In subsequent months, most of the remaining population was exterminated ...

... The Jews in their thousands, with such pathetic belongings as they could carry, were herded into barbed-wire areas at the top of the ravine, guarded by Ukrainian collaborators. There they were stripped of their clothes and beaten, then led in irregular squads down the side of the ravine. The first groups were forced to lie on the ground, face down, and were machine-gunned by the Germans who kept up a steady volley.

The riddled bodies were covered with thin layers of earth and the next groups were ordered to lie over them, to be similarly dispatched. To carry out the murder of 34,000 human beings in the space of two days could not assure that all the victims had died. Hence there were a few who survived and, though badly wounded, managed to crawl from under the corpses and seek a hiding place.

In August 1943, with the Red Army advancing, the Nazis dug up the bodies from the mass graves of Babi Yar and burned them in an attempt to remove the evidence of mass murder. Paul Blobel, the commander of *Sonderkommando 4a*, whose troops had slaughtered the Jews of Kiev, returned to Babi Yar. For more than a month, his men and workers conscripted from the ranks of concentration camp inmates dug up the bodies. Bulldozers were required to reopen the mounds. Massive bone-crushing machinery was brought to the scene. The bodies were piled on wooden logs, doused with gas, and ignited.

When the work was done, the workers from the concentration camp were killed. Under cover of darkness on September 29, 1943, 25 of them escaped. Fifteen survived to tell what they had seen.

Despite efforts to suppress the memory of Babi Yar, after the war the Soviet public at large learned of the murders through newspaper accounts, official reports and belles lettres. In 1947, I. Ehrenburg in his novel *Burya* ("The Storm") described dramatically the mass killing of the Jews of Kiev in Babi Yar. Preparations were made for a monument at Babi Yar as a memorial to the victims of Nazi genocide. The architect A.V. Vlasov had designed a memorial and the artist B. Ovchinnikov had produced the necessary sketches.

But after the Soviet anti-Semitic campaign of 1948, an effort was made to eliminate all references to Babi Yar with the objective to remove from Jewish consciousness those historical

elements that might sustain it. Even after the death of Stalin, Babi Yar remained lost in the "memory hole" of history.

Intellectuals, however, refused to be silent. On October 10, 1959, novelist Viktor Nekrasov cried out in the pages of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* for a memorial at Babi Yar, and against the official intention to transform the ravine into a sports stadium. Far more impressive was the poem *Babi Yar* written by Yevgeni Yevtushenko published in the same journal on September 19, 1961:

No gravestone stands on Babi Yar;

Only coarse earth heaped roughly on the gash:

Such dread comes over me.

With its open attack upon anti-Semitism and its implied denunciation of those who rejected Jewish martyrdom, the poem exerted a profound impact on Soviet youth as well as upon world public opinion. Dmitri Shostakovich set the lines to music in his 13th Symphony, performed for the first time in December 1962.

Russian ultranationalism struck back almost immediately. Yevtushenko was sharply criticized by a number of literary apologists of the regime and then publicly denounced by Premier Nikita Khrushchev in *Pravda* on March 8, 1963. The theme of a specific Jewish martyrdom was condemned. But Babi Yar would not remain suppressed. It again surfaced during the summer of 1966 in a documentary novel written by Anatoly Kuznetsov published in *Yunost* (Eng. tr. 1967). Earlier that year the Ukrainian Architects Club in Kiev held a public exhibit of more than 200 projects and some 30 large-scale detailed plans for a memorial to Babi Yar. None of the inscriptions in the proposed plans mentioned Jewish martyrdom. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union did the new Ukrainian government acknowledge the specific Jewish nature of the site and an appropriate rededication was held.

By the 2000s, plans were underway for the creation of a Jewish Community Center and an appropriate Jewish memorial on the site. No stranger to controversy, the new use of the site has been challenged by some as being too close to the massacre site and being built therefore on sacred soil.

What was the Holodomor?

From: holodomor.org

The term Holodomor refers specifically to the brutal artificial famine imposed by Stalin's regime on Soviet Ukraine and primarily ethnically Ukrainian areas in the Northern Caucasus in 1932-33.

In its broadest sense, it is also used to describe the Ukrainian genocide that began in 1929 with the massive waves of deadly deportations of Ukraine's most successful farmers (kurkuls, or kulaks, in Russian) as well as the deportations and executions of Ukraine's religious, intellectual and cultural leaders, culminating in the devastating forced famine that killed millions more innocent individuals. The genocide in fact continued for several more years with the further destruction of Ukraine's political leadership, the resettlement of Ukraine's depopulated areas with other ethnic groups, the prosecution of those who dared to speak of the famine publicly, and the consistent blatant denial of famine by the Soviet regime.

“Please return the grain that you have confiscated from me. If you don't return it I'll die. I'm 78 years old and I'm incapable of searching for food by myself.”

(From a petition to the authorities by I.A. Rylov)

“I saw the ravages of the famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine: hordes of families in rags begging at the railway stations, the women lifting up to the compartment window their starving brats, which, with drumstick limbs, big cadaverous heads and puffed bellies, looked like embryos out of alcohol bottles ...”

(as remembered by Arthur Koestler, a famous British novelist, journalist, and critic. Koestler spent about three months in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv during the Famine. He wrote about his experiences in “The God That Failed”, a 1949 book which collects together six essays with the testimonies of a number of famous ex-Communists, who were writers and journalists.)

Our father used to read the Bible to us, but whenever he came to the passage mentioning ‘bloodless war’ he could not explain to us what that term meant. When in 1933 he was dying

from hunger he called us to his deathbed and said “This, children, is what is called bloodless war...”

(as remembered by Hanna Doroshenko)

“What I saw that morning ... was inexpressibly horrible. On a battlefield men die quickly, they fight back ... Here I saw people dying in solitude by slow degrees, dying hideously, without the excuse of sacrifice for a cause. They had been trapped and left to starve, each in his own home, by a political decision made in a far-off capital around conference and banquet tables. There was not even the consolation of inevitability to relieve the horror.”

(as remembered by Victor Kravchenko, a Soviet defector who wrote up his experiences of life in the Soviet Union and as a Soviet official, especially in his 1946 book “I Chose Freedom”. “I Chose Freedom” containing extensive revelations on collectivization, Soviet prison camps and the use of slave labor came at a time of growing tension between the Warsaw Pact nations and the West. His death from bullet wounds in his apartment remains unclarified, though it was officially ruled a suicide. His son Andrew continues to believe he was the victim of a KGB execution.)

“From 1931 to 1934 we had great harvests. The weather conditions were great. However, all the grain was taken from us. People searched the fields for mice burrows hoping to find measly amounts of grain stored by mice...”

(as remembered by Mykola Karlosh)

“I still get nauseous when I remember the burial hole that all the dead livestock was thrown into. I still remember people screaming by that hole. Driven to madness by hunger people were ripping the meat of the dead animals. The stronger ones were getting bigger pieces. People ate dogs, cats, just about anything to survive.”

(as remembered by Vasil Boroznyak)

“People were dying all over our village. The dogs ate the ones that were not buried. If people could catch the dogs they were eaten. In the neighboring village people ate bodies that they dug up.”

Ukraine, with a centuries-long history of persecution, could elect a president with Jewish Heritage

By: Sabra Aryes, Los Angeles Times

Reporting from Kiev, Ukraine — Ukrainian presidential candidates Volodymyr Zelensky and Petro Poroshenko will face off in a much-anticipated debate on Friday night. At the same time, a block away at Kiev's central synagogue, hundreds of the capital city's Jews will be sitting down for a Passover Seder.

“It was suggested that I should invite Zelensky to the Seder supper,” said Ukraine's chief rabbi, Moshe Reuven Azman. “But I don't want to do something political. He will be at his debate. We will be here.”

Zelensky, the candidate leading in the polls, has Jewish heritage. But it rarely comes up in the public discussion of this country's hotly contested presidential election. Zelensky, 41, is a comedic actor who stars in a hit television comedy about a schoolteacher who is elected president after a video of him ranting about the corruption of the political elite went viral. The actor shocked the nation when he declared his intention to run in Ukraine's real presidential election, and further when he gained the most votes in the first round. Zelensky has rarely discussed his religious background, saying his beliefs are personal and will remain that way even if he is elected in Sunday's polling

In a 2016 interview with a TV talk show, well before he became a political candidate, Zelensky told a reporter: “I have Jewish blood. I am a Russian speaker, and I'm a citizen of Ukraine. Voters don't seem to care either way. His anti-establishment campaign is leading in the polls by nearly 40 percentage points against President Poroshenko, 53. Experts still say it's a remarkable turn for Ukraine, with its centuries-long history of persecution of Jews.

In the 17th century, Cossacks massacred entire Jewish communities in Ukraine during an uprising against the Polish rulers. The Russian czars restricted Jews from certain professional and educational opportunities. Almost 1 million Ukrainian Jews were killed from 1941 and 1944

during World War II. Over the course of two days in 1941, some 34,000 Jews were executed in a ravine just outside central Kiev known today as Babi Yar.

Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, an atheist state, was rampant. Soviet passports listed Jewish as a nationality. Now, Russia, involved in separatist fighting in eastern Ukraine, is spreading false propaganda portraying the country as a fascist state where nationalists readily speak of killing Jews. But even though anti-Semitic violence and vandalism are growing in France and other European countries, human rights monitoring groups say such attacks and crimes in Ukraine have decreased during the last decade.

In 2018, there was a drop in anti-Semitic vandalism from the previous year and an increase in the arrest and prosecution of those accused of perpetrating such crimes, according to the 2018 Report on Xenophobia in Ukraine published by the Congress of National Minorities of Ukraine. “There have been no acts of anti-Semitic violence in Ukraine over the last two years and relatively little anti-Semitic vandalism,” wrote Halya Coynash, an analyst with the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, a nongovernmental organization in Ukraine. “Political will is important in this issue, as are statements of concern from international organizations about the level of anti-Semitism,” said Vyacheslav Likhachev, a human-rights monitor with the Congress of National Minorities of Ukraine. He said law enforcement reforms helped lead to more enforcement. “The government understood that the pressure was on and so they tried to do something about it.”

Given its history, “it’s a miracle that Ukraine has the possibility to have a Jewish president,” Azman said. Perhaps more than anything, it shows that Ukraine is a democratic, normal Western country that has distanced itself from its past Soviet traditions, Azman said. The rabbi cautioned that there could be consequences if Zelensky does win and his presidency doesn’t meet his supporters’ expectations.

“If he does well, Ukrainians will say, ‘OK, he’s a Ukrainian,’” he said.

But if the country’s economy takes a turn for the worse or the parliament blocks the president’s initiatives, “they could blame it on him being a Jew.” Still, Azam said, he’s optimistic about Ukraine. The country’s prime minister, Volodymyr Groysman, is Jewish, he noted. Ukrainians “finally understand that the Jewish people aren’t the problem, corruption is.



Falling Through The Cracks: Improving Ukraine's Assistance to Conflict-Affected Areas

By: Center for Civilians in Conflict

Regular artillery shelling, small arms fire, fields filled with unexploded ordnance, active land mines, illness, lack of food, unsanitary living conditions, insufficient wood and coal for winter – these are daily challenges facing civilians living along the contact line in eastern Ukraine. Civilians there have regular exposure to the Ukrainian military, sporadic visits from local and international non-profits, and few – if any – interactions with local or national government. The fighting has scarred the physical and social landscape of Donbas, shattering buildings, pitting roads, and upending the lives of over one million Ukrainian citizens. Residents of the area have seen their very existence transformed – from mothers, fathers, children, farmers, factory workers, and coal miners – to survivors of war internally displaced in their own country. While the operational tempo and intensity of hostilities vary, and recent months have seen a decline in civilian casualties, systemic shortcomings by state authorities still hamper efforts to provide urgently needed assistance to conflict-affected civilians. In recent years, Ukrainians have become more vocal in demanding respect of the human rights they are guaranteed by the Ukrainian Constitution. Free healthcare facilities for injured, a navigable system for acquiring and maintaining pensions, assistance to repair and rebuild damaged homes, or temporary resettlement for civilians whose homes were destroyed are all things that people expect from the government.

Citizens also feel, whether they publicly say so or not, a fundamental need for the government to acknowledge its responsibility and address the harms caused by the conflict. A combination of journalism, civilian activism, and advice from local and international NGOs, including CIVIC, has raised state awareness of gaps in fulfilling civilians' rights and needs. With insight from studies, recommendations, and routine work with the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and other institutions, the Ukrainian government has begun taking concrete steps to better protect and assist civilians in the conflict zone, including those wounded within it. Moving military equipment further away from civilian property, conducting regular meetings with local civil society in an attempt to better address allegations of harm, and other protection actions have helped lay the groundwork for cooperation between official institutions and civilians. One important step toward increased cooperation was the May 2014 creation of the Civil-Military Cooperation Directorate of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (CIMIC), which has taken the lead in coordinating efforts to better focus Ukrainian military personnel on civilian protection. To the full extent of its legal authority, CIMIC has proactively sought positive change. Through the work of CIMIC (with CIVIC's support), the Commander of the Joint Force Operations (JFO) signed the Order "On establishment of the Provisional Group on collecting and analyzing data on

cases when civilians were injured or killed,” which established the Civilian Casualty Tracking Provisional Group (CCTPG). “With the purpose to track and analyze civilian harm and thereby help to better prevent casualties among the civilians” in the JFO zone, members of the CCTPG play an important role as protection actors in “support of the [military] commanders of the operational units.” While these are steps in the right direction, the fact remains that Ukraine still lacks a systematic approach or mechanism to assist civilians harmed in the conflict.

Well-meaning foreign and domestic initiatives are ad hoc and, by definition, insufficient. Local data collection initiatives capture some instances of civilian harm, but this data is rarely investigated, aggregated, or analyzed, leaving claims unverified and a gap in the government’s understanding of patterns of harm to civilians. Over the course of our research, civilians repeatedly reported that the process of registering harm with the local government and military-civil administrations is bureaucratic, confusing, and lengthy. Local administrators are often confused about the process themselves and thus unable to accurately guide potential claimants. Many state bodies, even those whose primary or secondary charge is the provision of assistance to civilians, are overwhelmed by numerous and contradictory functions and a persistent lack of resources with which to carry out their mission. To date, the Government of Ukraine has neither clearly delineated the roles nor means of coordination between the various ministries involved in providing assistance to conflict-affected civilians. Without a strong lead agency, Ukraine lacks a coherent, whole off-government approach. Mapping, analysis, and understanding of gaps in the government’s approach is a crucial step to establishing effective state mechanisms to deliver the help harmed civilians need and deserve. This report is based on research conducted in eastern Ukraine to analyze structural gaps at the local and national levels of the government, and the military policies and procedures to help civilians harmed by the fighting in government-controlled areas of Ukraine.

Being Caught in Conflict: To Stay or Go?

By: Mikayla Goetz, Center for Civilians in Conflict



“Ukraine is a good country. Ukranians are good people. I love Ukraine. But I cannot stay.”

She wakes up in the morning and puts a hot water kettle on the stove as she has every morning in this kitchen for twenty years. She looks out her window as the snow outside piles taller than her youngest grandchild.

At the age of 80, she is alone.

Piece by piece, her family has immigrated to Israel. They could no longer sustain a life in their hometown of Luhansk, which is now a conflict zone. She looks into the once-serene streets she played in as a child. Those streets now see great violence, but she has hope that peace will one day return to her town. Or at least she used to.

In her words: I had a big family. Husband and two children, grandchildren, and grand grandchildren. My husband died. My husband was Jewish. When my children found no work here, they call family in Israel and they left. They would always tell me to come be with them, but

it's really not easy to leave everything where you've lived so many years. But it's very hard to live in Luhansk. Money hard. Prices for food is very high. Pension payment is very little. So I try to survive and then one day I wake up and see I am alone, and my children are in Israel, and I am old. So I decided to leave.

It's very difficult to leave everything. I don't have anyone in Luhansk. I had my best friend – suddenly she died. We were friends for fifty years. She would call me every evening and we would talk for two hours. Then she didn't call me for a few days and I asked someone to come and visit with her and when they came they found her dead.

She was dead for three days in her apartment.

But still, I was raised here. I was born here. I studied here in Ukraine. So it's part of my life. It's my country. I live in Ukraine. I'm used to... I don't want anything else. But...

I don't have much choice.

She stares off for a moment, letting the weight of her words sink in. She reaches for her tea cup and accidentally knocks over a stack of crossword puzzles. After sharing so much pain with great composure, this seemingly small disruption is her breaking point. “My crosswords are failing!”

She cries out with great distress as she gingerly lowers herself to the floor. One by one, she carefully reaches for the puzzles, picking up the pieces and holding each to her chest as she tries to put the pile back together.

“I have no one to talk to. Only crosswords. I am very glad you came.”

The conflict in Ukraine has entered its sixth year, and there are no signs that it will end any time soon. Over 10,000 civilian casualties have been recorded, and civilians continue to suffer from the consequences of warfare – mostly from shelling, small arms fire, and landmines/explosive remnants of war. The current situation is preventing a return to a normal, peaceful life for all civilians.

CIVIC recently completed research into the assistance available to conflict-affected civilians in Ukraine and found that it was woefully inadequate. Because of structural gaps at the local and national levels of the Ukrainian government, NGOs and the Ukraine military are often the first providers of assistance to civilians along the contact line, a 500km stretch separating Ukrainian government and non-government-controlled areas. For civilians living in the JFO (Joint Force Operation) zone, like the woman featured here in Mikayla's post, that means access to assistance including healthcare, medicine, food, and shelter can be dangerously limited.



An elderly man navigating his life in the conflict zone while living alone. “I am alone here. It’s very dangerous to be alone at my age. If I suddenly fall down, I have no one to help.”

In May 2014, seeking to better support civilians harmed by the conflict, the Civil-Military Cooperation Directorate was formed within the Armed Forces of Ukraine (CIMIC), which has taken the lead in coordinating efforts to better focus Ukrainian military personnel on civilian protection. While this is a promising step, to date, not all CIMIC posts are fully staffed or properly funded and CIMIC officers are not always able to reach civilians in need.

Additional insight into prevailing harm patterns, key assistance actors and mechanisms, and gaps that impede the effective delivery of assistance to conflict-affected populations is available in our forthcoming report, to be released later in 2019.

What are the Steps Required to Make *Aliyah*?

By: Ezra International

The process of *Aliyah* is long, usually about 9 months, from the time the decision is made to setting foot in Israel, but it can sometimes take longer than 4 years. This requires patience and perseverance for both the Jewish families and local teams who help them. There are 6 main steps:

- 1. Connect.** Local teams and volunteers connect with local Jewish families through word of mouth, informational events, local Jewish organizations and the Jewish Agency.
- 2. Assess.** Local teams assess the most urgent *Aliyah* needs for each family, including: documentation issues, passport expenses, and transportation to distant Israeli consuls/Jewish Agency offices.
- 3. Document Search.** Local teams help gather and fund documents for family members, to prove Jewish roots, including: birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates, divorce decrees, parental permissions, military permissions, and other permissions particular to country.
- 4. Appointments.** Local teams help arrange or provide transportation to appointments at Israeli Consuls or Jewish Agencies in each nation, involving: long distances, overnight stays and multiple visits.
- 5. Airport.** Local teams help arrange or provide transportation to the airports for: people, some with special needs and pets and luggage.
- 6. Support in Israel.** Local teams provide material aid and comfort to families upon their arrival in Israel. Situations are assessed and humanitarian aid is provided that includes: baby baskets, food vouchers, bus passes, clothing, help to pay bills, and more.

What are Barriers to *Aliyah*?

Poverty. In countries that are rife with corruption, people are often exploited and impoverished, including Jewish families. Families do not have money for documents and permissions that are needed to make *Aliyah*, nor for passports. They cannot afford overnight trips to consulate offices. Some have astronomical debts on their utilities and cannot leave until these are paid.

Fear. Families leave when the fear of staying is greater than the fear of leaving. Fears include: going to the unknown, having to start again, learning a new language, finding work, finding a place to live, leaving the country permanently, and many more.

Ignorance. Many Jewish families in remote areas of impoverished and corrupt countries do not have essential information. There may often be a lack of knowledge about Israel, about the Law of Return, about available resources and about their Jewish identity.

Bureaucracy. An enormous amount of hard work to obtain documentation is required for *Aliyah*. Multiply this for families. The wall of bureaucracy includes, complex paperwork, numerous permissions, bribery and corruption, understaffed institutions, uncooperative officials, lost documents, and proof of Jewish identity.

Family Ties. It is very difficult to leave family members behind. Family ties include elderly parents, family members who cannot leave due to extenuating circumstances, complications from divorce, family members with health issues, extended family of cousins, nieces, nephews, no one who will tend the gravestones of loved ones, leaving family members (mixed marriages) where some do not have the right to make *Aliyah*, family members, for example a spouse, who does not want to make *Aliyah*.

Why do People Make *Aliyah*?

Anti-Semitism and Expulsions. Over the years by far the most significant reason is anti-Semitism. At different times, nations and city states expelled Jews from their territories upon penalty of death.

There is currently an increase in *Aliyah* from France, Italy, North America, South America, former Soviet Union and UK. Throughout history, the Jewish people have made *Aliyah* for many reasons:

- They've been prohibited from practicing Judaism
- They yearn for a new life
- They've been expelled from their home country
- Persecution (The Crusades, Inquisition, Pogroms, The Holocaust)
- Economic relief from poverty
- Better education
- Life-threatening illness and inadequate healthcare access in their home country.
- Wanting to live with their relatives who have made *Aliyah* before them
- Freedom from intolerance and persecution
- Better future for their children
- Economic and political instability/ war.
- To live a Jewish lifestyle more free

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