

Amid drone attacks on humanitarians and civilians, NP stands with frontline responders



Donetsk region, December 5, 2024—**On Monday 2 December, Ukrainian humanitarians and partners of Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), BaseUA, were targeted by two Russian Federation (RF) drones during an urgent coordinated evacuation of civilians from the Pokrovsk area in Donetsk region.** Traveling in an armored vehicle clearly marked as ‘humanitarian’, two humanitarian responders from BaseUA and 3 civilians survived the attack, with one person sustaining moderate injuries from shrapnel.

Anton Yaremchuk, leader of BaseUA who was in the vehicle, shared “we were very lucky, that the engine of the car and its wheels were not damaged. Pieces of shrapnel were stuck inside the car, including some of them in my car seat. Just 3 days later 2 lorries have been hit by FPVs (First-Person View drones) in Pokrovsk itself, we are now clearly facing a new reality. Just as at the beginning of the full-scale invasion drones changed the very nature of warfare, they are now changing the humanitarian work, making it increasingly challenging, or even impossible in

areas we could previously operate without any problems, this is extremely alarming to say the least”.

The attack comes as the world prepares to celebrate International Volunteer Day on December 5 and marks a year since volunteer Ruslan Anisenko was killed by Russian mortar fire in the city of Kherson. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, as OCHA and ICRC reported, at least 28 humanitarians have been killed and 66 injured by Russian military attacks on Ukrainian responders. This is in addition to the at least 39 thousand civilians that have been killed or injured during this war. Attacks on humanitarians, civilians, and civilian infrastructure are war crimes and prohibited under international humanitarian law.

This violation is a devastating reminder of the risks that are shouldered by Ukrainian responders every day to evacuate and provide life-saving support for civilians on the frontlines. The attack against BaseUA’s vehicle is reflective of a larger trend of targeted drone attacks against humanitarian operations. On Wednesday, December 4th another NP partner, CF Mongoose, an Odesa based organization operating in in Kherson, was also targeted by a drone attack. As two social workers with Mongoose were returning to their vehicle after supporting a civilian, they noticed a drone above. The two staff and the driver ran from the vehicle as the RF drone dropped several munitions (hand-grenades) near the volunteer vehicle. The humanitarian responders were all wearing NP-provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Evgenia Lysak, Director of CF Mongoose, shared the realities of operating amidst such attacks. “Every day civilians in Kherson risk their life. Every day people go to work not knowing if they will come home. The worst is these drones are specifically hunting civilians- this time the drone was very close to our staff. The operators on the other side 100% knew they were attacking civilians. Today, volunteers and a mother of three was under attack. Who will be next?”

“I am sickened and outraged by this attack on BaseUA and the civilians they were working to move to safety. We are hearing more and more cases of such targeting by drones which has become the biggest risk for frontline humanitarian workers in both Donetsk and Kherson,” shared Tanya Walmsley, NP Head of Mission in Ukraine. “Ukrainian authorities rely on support from the volunteer community in frontline areas, recognising the enormity of the task of keeping civilians safe, they coordinate to organise evacuations. Frontline responders must be provided with equipment and training that increases their safety and security and that of the civilians they are evacuating.”

Very few frontline responders have access to armoured vehicles which can be lifesaving in the event of a drone attack as happened to Anton and his team. If they had not been in an armoured vehicle, they would not have survived this attack. NP has recently supported the procurement of 6 armoured vehicles for local frontline humanitarian organisations working in the East of Ukraine. More support like this is critical. NP and Base UA have worked alongside one another since 2023, with a focus on frontline evacuations and psychosocial support to children.



NP urges the international community to redouble efforts to recognise and support frontline humanitarian efforts in Ukraine. Since the beginning of the war, those most in need across frontlines have been served by Ukrainian organisations like BaseUA who are often unpaid, and often unsupported with the safety support and equipment they need to protect their community. **We have an urgent responsibility to meet the needs of these responders, and to uplift and strengthen their efforts, while tirelessly advocating for protection the humanitarian workers are entitled to under International Law.**

NP is an international protection agency. Our mission is to protect civilians in violent conflicts through unarmed strategies, build peace side-by-side with local communities, and advocate for the wider adoption of these approaches to safeguard human lives and dignity.

BaseUA has been working in Ukraine since 2022 to provide essential aid and foster hope within communities. Their initiative is rooted in the belief that sustainable change can only be achieved when local communities are actively involved in their own recovery. Rather than imposing top-down solutions, Base UA works closely with residents, listening to their needs, and collaborating on projects that empower individuals to regain control over their lives.

NP and BaseUA stand united in their mission to protect civilians amid the war in Ukraine. NP supports BaseUA volunteers with:

- **Volunteer Insurance Program (VIP):** NP's VIP ensures coverage for enrolled volunteers.
- **Volunteer Resilience Program (VRP):** NP's VRP offers free and confidential counseling for volunteers.
- **Critical materials:** Addressing vital needs, NP provides resources such as fuel, stipends, and sets of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and First Aid Kits for enhanced safety.

BaseUA is also a subgrantee of the consortium supported by FCDO and led by NP, which is supporting volunteer organisations delivering humanitarian assistance in dangerous front-line locations.

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