

New Nonviolent Peaceforce Assessment Highlights Deteriorating Security, Widespread Tensions across Ukraine

Odesa, Ukraine - 24 March 2026: Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) today released Community Preparedness and the Future of Communities in Ukraine, a localised assessment revealing increasing insecurity, rising community tensions, and critical gaps in readiness for potential ceasefire scenarios across five frontline and border-adjacent oblasts: Kharkiv, Donetsk, Kherson, Odesa, and Mykolaiv.

Conducted through 130 key informant interviews with diverse community members and focus groups—including host communities, displaced civilians, returnees, and veterans' families, between mid 2025 and early 2026, the assessment uncovers urgent humanitarian, economic, and psychosocial needs amid shifting geopolitical pressures, including a significant drop in US support, and simultaneous ceasefire skepticism.

"Ukrainian communities continue to demonstrate incredible strength, but at the same time, also deep exhaustion and growing apathy. Facing extreme risks daily, with further worsening of the security situation, they find it difficult to believe in possibility of a ceasefire," said Anastasiya Marchuk, NP's Head of Mission in Ukraine. "The findings of NP's assessment will equip donors, humanitarian organisations, and authorities to align programming with civilian realities—carving out pockets of peace now, for sustainable recovery later."

Utilising Nonviolent Peaceforce's community-focused approach, the assessment findings highlight how civilians perceive deteriorating security (62 percent nationwide), widespread tensions (60 percent), and low expectations for a near-term ceasefire (most deem it unlikely within six months).

"When talking about the prospect of a ceasefire and what it may mean, we must center the people living through the conflict. Frontline communities will feel its impact first and most deeply, and incorporation of their experiences, needs and perception into the agenda is essential." said Marchuk. "This assessment aims to bridge that gap and bring these voices into the room."

Worsening Security and Immediate Needs

Security dominates concerns—cited nearly by a quarter of respondents as the top priority, with 62 percent reporting deterioration—near-total in eastern oblasts like Donetsk (90 percent) and Kharkiv (75 percent) as of January 2026.

"Security perceptions have worsened across Ukraine since mid-2025, with eastern regions hit hardest, naturally, as they experience active hostilities and frontline shifts, and tensions rising fastest where aid doesn't match needs," said Martha Gillberg, Programme Development Coordinator. "Dialogue must start now, not only on an international level, which continues to be imperative, but even within the Ukrainian communities themselves, in order to prevent new or exacerbating tensions."

Drone and missile threats persist even in relatively stable southern areas like Odesa, where less than a tenth of the surveyed population perceive any security improvement. There is a correlation between respondents reporting an improvement of security situation and a perceived possibility of ceasefire in the coming 6 months. This sheds light on an important dependency between the feeling of improved safety and the mental readiness to believe a ceasefire to be likely or credible.

Housing and jobs follow as top concerns, alongside mental health support and rebuilding trust between people, while tensions affect 60 percent of communities, mainly over scarce resources, political divides, and friction between locals and displaced people.

Future Recovery Priorities

People want jobs. They want to rebuild their homes and schools, while prioritising the need for safety and mental health support once a solid ceasefire is achieved.

For returnees in particular, security comes first as a perceived missing need, but jobs and community dialogue are also essential despite doubts from past failed truces.

Notably, most surveyed Ukrainians still trust that their regions can engage and lead recovery efforts but highlight that real progress depends on external factors outside of Ukraine's control. As such, there are low expectations that the local authorities would prioritise reconstruction and reopening of schools until an official end in hostilities, and even then, there might be limited progress due to lack of trust.

There is clear trust between civilians and aid organisations, with respondents reporting that aid organisations reach underserved communities and match their most urgent need. This shows an opportunity for aid organisations to play a critical role in ceasefire monitoring, as well as implementation given the high community confidence.

Key Recommendations

Based on the outputs of this assessment, NP calls on international community and all stakeholders with leverage to:

- Help community groups and civilians plan for different futures and explain government decisions clearly, through trusted local organisations
- Support people to understand properly what a ceasefire really entails, and how it is meant to work before any truce starts,
- Create regional groups where locals can tell leaders what they need and be heard, and
- Add trust-building and mediation to all emergency aid now, not later

"Communities are seeking active role in development of sustainable peace solutions which will account for real safety and include a clear roadmap for community recovery, from jobs to infrastructure and access to services" concluded Marchuk.

ABOUT NONVIOLENT PEACEFORCE:

Nonviolent Peaceforce (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. NP's duty of care programming aims to reduce the physical risks volunteers are exposed to as well as support the psychological resilience of volunteer networks and the communities they serve.

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