

# Baptist response rising as war in Ukraine escalates

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*Editor's note: Compiled from Send Relief briefings.*



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Mississippi Baptists have long standing ties to the Eastern European people of Ukraine since they gained their independence from the former USSR in 1991.

Volunteers from Mississippi Baptist churches and pastors from our state have made many trips to the cities and communities of Ukraine sharing the Gospel and assisting the growing indigenous church with discipleship and training over the past two decades.

With this strong tie and the many friendships that exist, Mississippi Baptists are joining together to express concern, pray, and respond with our Southern Baptist partners in meeting the needs of the Ukraine people.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces continues to escalate and intensify. Heavy fighting and shelling continue across several towns and cities in Ukraine, with increasing human cost and humanitarian consequence.

At least 752 civilian casualties, including 227 deaths, were recorded February 24-28 by the Office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Fifteen of the deaths and 28 of those injured were children.

Most of these casualties were caused by explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including shelling from heavy artillery and multiple launch rocket systems as well as air strikes, according to the same source.

Reports of civilians trapped in towns and cities under shelling continue, including in Volnovakha and Mariupol in Donetsk oblast as well as in other locations within and beyond eastern Ukraine. Hostilities or shelling have also continued in and around major cities, such as Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Kyiv.

Clashes have also been reported near the “contact line” in eastern Ukraine, with communities on both sides severely impacted. Damage and destruction to water, electricity, and sanitation facilities, as well as road and residential infrastructure, continue to be reported across several areas, shattering people’s lives, and disrupting access to these vital services for hundreds of thousands.

Population movement remains fluid and on March 2, numbers escalated with 200,000 crossing borders to flee the conflict. As of March 3, a total of 877,000 people have crossed into Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, and other countries, according to UNHCR.

In country, more than 100,000 people have been internally displaced so far with numbers escalating, according to the same source (Real figures are considerably higher as corroboration is ongoing, albeit with delays and security challenges and some sources say IDPs may be closer to 200,000 – 300,000).

Reports indicate that 30% of those crossing will move on to Western European countries quickly, within one to three days. Women and children still represent the largest populations of

those displaced.

Southern Baptists through our joint International Mission Board (IMB)/North American Mission Board (NAMB) Crisis Response ministry program, SEND Relief, continues to be in contact with our partners on the ground (existing national ministry and other trusted partners).

SEND Relief's response continues to expand to address this major crisis. SEND Relief began responding with food relief before the invasion and continues to collaborate with national partners to provide food, shelter, transportation, clothing, and ministry to those displaced and impacted by the crisis in Ukraine.

SEND Relief has expanded response to displaced people in countries that border Ukraine. Total resources committed, planned, and in progress is \$518,488.00 and has currently served over 59,200 Ukrainians in need.

SEND Relief has a Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Disaster (SBDR) Assistance Response Team (DART) team en route to the crisis area, made up of volunteers from Southern Baptist Disaster Relief state partners.

SEND Relief anticipates that opportunities for volunteer response will increase after the SBDR DART team completes the initial assessment. Responding teams will need to meet international travel requirements, complete IMB requirements for international response prior to deployment, and be prepared to operate in hardship conditions.

The best current ways for Southern Baptists to respond is by praying and giving.



## Prayer Requests

- Pray for peace in Ukraine and Russia.
- Pray for God to change the hearts of those in power in Russia.
- Pray for God's protection for believers serving and ministering on the front lines of this crisis.
- Pray for those suffering in the areas of active conflict and for those who have lost loved ones.
- Pray that God will open people to the hope of Christ through this difficult season in their lives.
- Pray that the displaced can find a shelter and basic needs as they flee from the conflict.
- Pray for minority groups being displaced, who are often forgotten and dis-enfranchised.
- Pray for women and children displaced from home without their husbands and fathers, who are often the primary providers in these families.
- Pray that partners and the local church will have wisdom and strength during this time.
- Pray for local churches and partners in Poland, Moldova,

Hungary, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia as they seek to help those fleeing and traumatized by war.

- Pray for the SBDR DART team as they serve in response.
- Pray that as we serve together and offer compassionate ministry in these difficult circumstances that all we do would glorify our great Lord and Savior.

### **To Give**

Church gifts in support of the SEND Relief response may be given through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board utilizing the Church Mission Giving Designation Form (Pink Sheet) designating International Disaster Relief/Ukraine Conflict Response. Submit to MBCB, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205

Individual Gifts may be given directly to SEND Relief online by clicking [here](#).

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