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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **As Ukraine approaches the first anniversary of the Russian invasion, Christian Aid’s Head of Humanitarian, Michael Mosselmans (PLEASE FEEL FREE TO REPLACE WITH A LOCAL SPOKESPERSON), reflects on the impact felt around the world – and invites congregations to join in a prayer for peace as part of a national act of solidarity.**  On Friday, February 24, 2022, Russia launched a military offensive against its neighbour, and we all watched the devastation in horror as towns and cities were bombed and people were forced to flee their homes.  The need for aid was immediate and continues 12 months on. Destruction and extensive damage to residential housing and civilian infrastructure has meant emergency shelter is in demand. Water, electricity, heating and healthcare are all under severe pressure.  This situation is exacerbating the humanitarian condition in eastern Ukraine, an area which had previously been exposed to eight years of armed conflict. An estimated 2.9 million people were already in need of humanitarian assistance in these regions.  The response to the need for humanitarian aid has been overwhelming - and thanks to Christian Aid’s generous supporters we have been able to contribute to the efforts of organisations in Ukraine to offer support.  **Christian Aid works through partners in the countries we support. In the case of Ukraine, this includes Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA), a member of the ACT Alliance, which has provided** shelter and distributed lorryloads of food as well as life-saving medical equipment, hygiene kits and emergency cash grants for those forced to flee their homes. HIA also set up two Refugee Support Points.  Ukrainian charity, Alliance for Public Health, is another example, working in every region, or Oblast – even occupied territories – with mobile testing units which can deliver first aid as well as health programmes.  **Millions of pounds has also been donated to purchase baby incubators and life-saving drugs for babies born with respiratory issues, plus other equipment such as thermal blankets and trauma kits.**  The situation is horrific and as the conflict rages on, it has triggered a disastrous ripple effect around the world with dramatic increases in global food and energy prices and disruption to trade and supply chains. People in East Africa, for example, already faced a daily struggle against the worst drought in living memory – now they are in crisis.  UN Secretary-General **António Guterres recently said ‘our** world is plagued by a perfect storm on a number of fronts’. As an organisation based on faith, Christian Aid believes, despite the heartbreak and injustice, there is hope to be found, and we stand in solidarity with our global neighbours to push through the storm. Through local initiatives, we can support the hardest hit by providing humanitarian aid and helping them restore their homes and communities and build a better future.  To mark the anniversary and further demonstrate our solidarity with Ukraine, there will be national services organised, by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic community, alongside Churches Together in Britain and Churches Together England.  These will take place on February 24 - and congregations have been invited by Christian Aid to share in the moment with a Prayer for Peace during their worship on Sunday, February 26, or as part of a community event.    Every prayer, every gift, every action brings hope. At this time of Lent we want to remember the sacrifices made, the lives lost and the work being done to restore justice.  **ENDS** | | | |