CROSSING THE CONTACT LINE:
April 2020 Snapshot

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AT EECPs

- EECPs continued to operate in a restricted mode for the quarantine period. Hence, crossing through EECPs requires a special permission from both sides. However, even after getting approval to cross the contact line from one side, the other side may not allow the crossing. SBGS may allow crossing if a person has an urgent issue and by the decision of the JFO Headquarters. Thus, people submitted requests and waited for a decision. More than 10 cases were reported when people were allowed to cross the GCA side but were blocked on the NGCA side of the EECP. Consequently, these people had to return to GCA.

- The quarantine, implemented to stop the spread of the COVID-19 has become a trap for thousands of internally displaced persons and other citizens who have residence registration on one side of the contact line, but actually live on the other side. Before the closure of EECPs, thousands of pensioners went to the GCA side every day to receive their social benefits. Residents of NGCA, who are quarantined for the last 45 days, do not have access to different state services and funds.

- Over 200 attempts to cross the contact line on five EECPs were identified during April. In most cases, appeals for a permission to cross were rejected even though some people had serious reasons to cross. In particular, R2P observed cases where parents got separated from their children because of different residence registration or when individuals travelled for purposes of medical treatment or attending funerals.

- On 16 April, Ukrainian government and the NGCA side exchanged prisoners of war at Maiorske EECP. 20 people were returned to the GCA side in exchange for 14 persons returned to the NGCA side, 4 more people refused to return to NGCA. Returning citizens were placed on a two-week self-isolation.

CASES OF CROSSINGS

- Stanitsya Luhanska EECP

  Over 120 attempts to cross the contact line was observed at Stanitsya Luhanska EECP. The problem with people who stranded for days at Stanitsya Luhanska EECP, was partially resolved on 1 April. 27 of them were allowed to cross to NGCA side, and 14 people were allowed to cross from NGCA. But, during April, the number of people waiting for a permit to cross the contact line increased every day. In mid-April, the number of those people was over 60. On 25 April, 25 of them were allowed to cross to NGCA (3 of them were blocked on the NGCA side and had to return), and 20 people crossed from the NGCA side.

  On 4 April, permission was given to transport a deceased from NGCA to GCA at Stanitsya Luhanska EECP.

- Novotrotske EECP

  On 11-12 April, 2 women were allowed to cross at Novotrotske EECP from NGCA to GCA due to receiving treatment;

- Marinka EECP

  On 11-12 April, 2 women with cancer were allowed to cross at Marinka EECP from NGCA to GCA.

  On 25 April, a woman with NGCA residence registration, was allowed to cross at Marinka EECP for the purpose of burying her father on the GCA side.

  An elderly man with brain cancer who was temporarily in Germany for treatment and had NGCA residence registration, was rejected to cross the contact line at Marinka EECP, despite severe illness and the seriousness of the reason for his immediate return home.

A man was returning home to NGCA to his wife's funeral after working abroad. He was not allowed to cross the contact line at Novotrotske EECP despite the provided death certificate.

*NGCA – (non-)government-controlled areas; EECP – entry-exit checkpoint; JFO – Joint Forces Operation; SBGS – State Border Guard Service*