



REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF MONITORING VISIT

of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union/UHHRU Monitoring of human rights violations of residents in Svatove (destruction of urban infrastructure, injuries) due to improper storage of ammunition

(Svatove, Luhansk region)

SCOPE OF WORK WITHIN THE MONITORING VISIT:

Purpose of the visit: gathering the information about real destruction and injured citizens (documentation of the consequences after the ammunition depots explosion)

Location of the visit: Svatove, Luhansk region

Dates of the visit: November 3-7, 2015

Membership of the group:

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- Alexey Bida, alexeybida@gmail.com, tel. 050-888-69-79, head of the group.

Aspects to be evaluated:

To question the victims of the ammunition depots explosion. To record real destruction of the urban infrastructure.

VISIT DESCRIPTION:

11/04/2015, 3:00 p.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida, Juliya Krasiy

Interviewee: chief of police in Svatove district Sergey Aleksandrovich Lukashov

It happened on 29 October, 2015 (Thursday). The first messages to the police started coming at 7:35 pm. I was at home at that time, having dinner. I saw and heard everything from the very beginning. I heard some plopping outside the window. I thought first that it was some kind of fireworks or pyrotechnics. Then I heard more and more. I opened the window and saw fire coming from the depots. The cellphone connection was down immediately. I dialled the police dispatch center via landline telephone and was told that people call the police and tell that there is the fire and explosions in the area of RAW depots. After this I gave the command to the desk officer to alarm the personell of the police station and wait for further instructions.

We have rapid response teams working and four patrol cars. One of the cars was not far from me and it immediately took me to Lunacharskogo block. The last house was №14. During the whole trip there we heard very loud explosions. And there was so much glow as if it was the daytime. We were

standing next to the bridge where a new gas station was being built. We could see the rockets flying to the sky. There were all kinds of them – „Grad”, „Smerch”, „Uragan”, flying in every direction.

People were looking out of their windows. Many of them could not understand what was happening around. I took the walky-talky from the patrol officer. All the cars were also equipped with the walkies. As cellphone connection did not work, I used the walky to give a command to everybody arriving to the area office to form the groups and safely move out there in the direction of Lunacharskogo for people evacuation. Eventually during the first 30 minutes there were about 15 police officers and in 15-20 minutes about 40 police officers arrived. Several officers came by their own cars. The assembly point was defined. We took walkies for connection. According to my directives, we examined houses, ran around the flats, because there were loads of explosives at the depots and there was an urgent need to evacuate either to basements or rather to the bomb shelter (which is in school № 8).

The bomb shelter of the school No 8 was opened up. Some of the locals knew that there existed a bomb shelter. My colleagues opened it up and started letting and directing people inside. There was a general panic around. When people ran outside of their homes and saw people wearing camouflage pattern uniforms, they thought we were militaries. Those people started talking to each other and did not want to come with us, so we had to persuade them. There were also those who could not physically walk. We came up with cars and took them either to their relatives at the other end of the town or to the bomb shelter.

When the bomb shelter started to overfill, we took people to the pretrial detention center of the area office. That is a former bomb shelter. About one hundred people were there. We received the phone calls with requests to take people out. We asked them to call the State Emergency Service. They replied that the help would not arrive. We advised them to hide in the basements. But in Svatove which is situated mainly on salt marshes there are basically almost no basements in the town. Half a meter or one meter down, and you can see the water coming. That is why people do not have lots of deep cellars. In those cases we were sending cars and bringing people to the area office; we had 12 cars.

There were some bedridden paralysed patients, who could be brought only with stretchers.. We called the ambulance and evacuated them to other districts. There were children cerebral palsy. I saw the situation when a grandmother was walking, or hardly running and dragging a 5 year old girl with a cerebral palsy. We picked them up. In about two hours there was nobody left in the houses.

Thanks God, the flown out missiles did not explode inside the town. Because they were not in a combat mode. Actually, they were like bars of metal, came in and broke the wall, without exploding. If they had exploded, we would have a lot more victims. A woman in the shop was killed by a direct hit.

When everybody was evacuated, flats were abandoned. Windows and doors were mostly blown out by a explosion wave. And in the shops, after having evacuated people, we distributed the officers, built improvised shelters and they were standing there till the morning to exclude forays. They were located in Lunacharskogo and Zheleznodorozhnikov blocks. There were almost no officers in the private housing area as there were no shelters and one could get under fire. The last explosion took place at about 2 a.m. It was a serious explosion. I have already returned to the area office. It felt like the whole building was shaken. I thought something got into that building but it occurred to be a TNT explosion. The explosion was extremely strong. After the midnight outbursts decreased, and in the morning the fire was put out by firefighter tanks.

People were in the bomb shelters till the morning. There were some explosions in the morning, but since nothing was flying to the town people started to disperse.

In the town there were some deflagrations. One house in the private housing area was burnt down. People went out of the town after the beginning of explosions. Then the house was directly hit and burnt up. It was at Vos'mogo Marta street, the first right turn. There also was a deflagration in a many-storied house in Lunacharskogo block. Police officers were putting down the fire in all the ways possible.

At the very beginning, people were acting upon their life experience. The connection was lost and our actions were not synchronised with anyone. Then, in the building of school No 6 around midnigh there

was created a kind of headquarters. Because the windows in the building of the District State Administration were blown out. However „Grad” flew even in the school yard.

In the bomb shelter of the school № 8 there were places to sit. But there were no supplies of water or food. Indoor sewerage was not working. And I don't know if there are any equipped bomb shelters in Svatove at all.

We saw some officers of the State Emergency Service when they were moving off the depots. They were going to put out the fire, but did not manage to come closer.

There are 4 deceased people - 1 civil and 3 militaries. There are not more than 10 people wounded. Generally they were slightly injured by broken glass. Five military people were hospitalized with burns and shrapnel wounds. My colleague and I were contused. I called the next day to a military hospital. My colleague did the same later. I saw with my own eyes the two civilians being thrown away by the explosion wave.

About 400 people applied to the police with allegations of lost property. We passed all the cases to the Security Service of Ukraine.

11/04/2015, 4:20 p.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida, Juliya Krasiy

Interviewees: Members of the Public Council of Svatove District State Administration

The meeting with the Deputy Mayor was planned and the contacts of some injured persons were received. The next day arrangements were planned.

11/05/2015, 11:40 a.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida

Interviewee: aggrieved person №1.

On October 29, 2015 me, and my wife were at home. At about 7:30 p.m. my wife paid attention to the sounds of fireworks. We had a CCTV monitoring. I turned on the cameras and saw the glow near the City Gaz Enterprise and Road District State Enterprise. We supposed that if it were something serious, there would be an announcement. There were no sirens, no loud speakers, nobody was notifying on the streets. Some say that the militaries were walking around the block and many-storied houses, but in the private housing area we didn't see them. Then explosions started and something was flying apart. We prepared our clothes and documents, food and water. We prepared for the departure but still were staying at home.

After 10 p.m. explosions started to calm down. Some things inside our house fell down (pendants on the ceiling lamp). We cleaned the house and I went to the market to see what the situation was. We examined the market with the security staff. The windows were blown out, roller blinds were bent inwards by the explosion wave. We decided to wait for the morning and then liquidate the consequences. At about 11:20 p.m. I came home.

The lights in the town went out. We had the gas and decided to drink some tea. But I did not manage to reach the kitchen. At 11:30-11:40 p.m. the powerful explosion was heard, and I was thrown out into the corridor by the explosion wave. The window glass fell down. The first thing I saw – there was no roof and there were flames of fire. I saw my wife. Plastic panels from the ceiling in the kitchen collapsed down on her. She was in the state of hysteria. I ran outside to see what happened and what was on fire. I saw that the porch in the neighboring yard was burning. In 3-4 metres from our house. I grabbed the buckets and started putting out the fire with water to avoid spreading it to the house. The neighbors were not at home. I tried to call the State Emergency Service. I reached them on 101 number at 00:02 a.m. on October 30, 2015. There is a record on the phone. According to the document, which they gave to the neighbors, the call was made at 01:40 a.m. At 00:41 a.m. I reached 102. The firefighters came at about 01:00 a.m.



The police came in the evening of October 30. When the State Emergency Service came and started putting out the fire, we began to bring out our stuff and load it into the car to move out. We managed to transport part of our things. We moved out of Svatove. There was no electricity and we went in the direction of Goncharovka to the gas station. We filled up the tank and went to the center of Goncharovka village. The head of the village organized the point of shelter-care facility in the school, where you could sit, have a sleep, drink some tea and have a sandwich. I believe that he has done his work properly. There were about 50 people from Svatove whom I knew. In the morning we returned to Svatove, I left my wife at my sister's and went home at 07:00 a.m. The State Emergency Service haven't been there already. The neighboring house was burnt down. A damage report was drawn up about our house. I attach the photocopy of it. There was a lot of trash. I dug out some of our stuff – the washing machine, the heating stove, the bed. The house, the garage, the yard buildings were damaged. Neither me, nor my wife had serious physical injuries. I punctured my feet with nails when I was running with the buckets putting out the fire.

11/05/2015, 12:30 p.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewer: Alexey Bida

Interviewee: aggrieved person №2.

I, lived at the address ... with my husband and my son. The owner of the house, my husband's grandmother, was in care of her son, my husband's father. Now he is laying claim to the compensation, and we are proposed 10,000 UAH as damage compensation.

At 08:00 p.m. we went out and heard the sounds of explosions. There was no announcement about what was happening. At 08:30 p.m. we went out by car with the whole family in the direction of Goncharovka to our relatives. At 11:30 p.m. the neighbor informed me that our house was on fire. We left our son at the relatives and went back to Svatove. At first, we were not let in at the entrance, but nevertheless we managed to come through and approached the house. The firefighters were there. However the house was not being watered already, they overwatered the yard building not to let the fire spread to the neighbors. I felt sick and fainted. My husband took me to the ambulance. They helped me. We spent the night in the car. The military provided us with 10 litres of petrol to keep some heat in the car. The next day we were proposed to stay for the night at the district state administration, or to go for a week to Kremennaya. The list of the burned-out property is in the attached photocopy.



11/05/2015, 2:30 p.m.

Svatove Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida, Juliya Krasiy

Interviewee: Deputy Mayor of Svatove, Lyudmyla Vasylivna Zhadanova

The explosions took place at the military supply depots. There was no civil defence announcement, no alarm sounds, maybe for the reason that there was nobody in the administration to deal with it. I came to the town council around midnight. We had the windows blown out. At 01:00 a.m. I went to the police. Then there happened a direct hit, when a woman was killed. About 04:00 a.m. happened the last powerful explosion. That was the explosion which caused the biggest destruction by the explosion wave.

And in general there were three big explosions. There was a fire on Shchorsa Str. This house and the houses nearby were practically destroyed. There are a lot of houses with blown out windows and broken slate. All houses at Lunacharskogo block are damaged, that block is the closest to the depots. Reparation or replacement of rooves is needed; there are also smashed windows and doors.

In the morning after the explosions we walked around the flats with the aim to assess the scale of damage and give the first aid to the lonely and old. We gathered the information and created teams who closed the windows for the disabled. At 08:00 a.m. we bought PE foil and started distributing it together with nails to the people. During the first night the temperature reached -8°C , the next night it was about -2°C . In the evening there were opened three mobile kitchen trailers and warming centres. The town lacked the gas and in the most parts there was no electricity. We took food from the kitchen trailers to some streets. We were helped by some local volunteering entrepreneurs. The next day the organisations with humanitarian assistance arrived. Unfortunately, this assistance was rendered on a noncentralised basis. It was not agreed with the administration. Humanitarian assistance was distributed from the buses outside in the streets. What was there and who received it – this is unknown. Some people got three packages, some of them got none. I suppose that this kind of help must be targeted, to those who really need it. Unfortunately, these organisations worked on TV cameras and never came back again.

The evacuation was conducted by the State Emergency Service. But mostly people were departing by their private transportation. The bomb shelters are indicated in our town [the observers did not see any indications in the town]. There is a big bomb shelter at the private enterprise of the bakery products factory. But it is inactive now. Most people went to the school № 8. That is where our Mayor took the blankets. The State Emergency Service helped with something there. One civilian was killed, and I do not have any information about the injured ones. By the morning of November 4, 2015 we had received 1667 requests from the citizens whose flats or houses were damaged. But people also address the social service offices. We draw up the registers together with them. Tomorrow at 5 p.m. these registers will be closed.

Pre-school educational institutions were damaged. The most heavily damaged one is kindergarten „Malyatko” at Lunacharskogo block. Starting from today, schools are working. More than 600 pupils of the school № 8, which was damaged the most, are now divided among other schools.

11/05/2015, 4:10 p.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida, Juliya Krsiy

Interviewee: aggrieved person №3, the daughter of the deceased woman



The daughter of the deceased woman was in a very stressful emotional condition. Questioning was impossible. Personal contacts were taken.

11/05/2015, 5:30 p.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida, Juliya Krsiy

Interviewee: aggrieved person №4.

I reside at the address ... with my wife and a son.

On October 29, 2015 my wife and I stayed at home with our son. After 08:00 p.m. the explosions occurred in the south-eastern part of the town. We heard them and understood that the ammunition depots were exploding. There was no information available about this. We have the loudspeaker at the street and all around the town there are loudspeaker communications. It is located at Ukrtelekom building. Also I am aware that there are minimum three alarm warning sirens at the enterprises.

We brought water to the basement. My son was standing in the basement doorway. My wife and I were standing at the house entrance. After 8 p.m. something hit the corner of the building. Two hard steel plugs broke into the house. One of them broke the window and came inside. It damaged one of the bearing beams in the walls and smashed the windows. The second one hit the window frame and damaged the second bearing beam. After that it exploded, and the shutters flew apart around the yard

and partly damaged the roof. I ran into the room and saw that the fire started. I threw out the hard steel plug together with the belongings and the furniture which had already caught fire.

We stayed at home till 03:00 a.m., when there was the most powerful explosion. Before 02:00 a.m. we closed the wholes with blankets. The explosion was so hard that a blanket was blown away. In the morning there was neither gas nor electricity. In 24 hours gas was turned on. Electricity was on again only after we had bought the cable to replace the broken one. We replaced it in three days. As of now I have not got any help from the state. Only friends and neighbors were helping me.

11/06/2015, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Svatove Luhansk region

Photofixation of destructions at Lunacharskogo and Zheleznodorozhnikov blocks



Boarding school in Svatove



District hospital in Svatove, maternity ward



School № 8



Pre-school educational institution (kindergarten) „Malyatko”

11/06/2015, 2:00 p.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida, Juliya Krasiy

Interviewee: aggrieved person №5.



I was at home. I was going to have dinner. At 08:00 p.m. I heard some cannon shots, to which I have already got used. When the shots intensified, I looked through the window in the kitchen and saw the fire in the direction of the City Gaz Enterprize. The shots got more frequent, and the missiles started flying towards our block. I took the documents and quickly went outside. I got into the car with my acquaintance, we took my parents from their house and departed from the city towards Goncharovka. When we entered my parents' house suddenly there was a missile explosion exactly at the neighbors' house two houses away from ours. I was hit by the explosion wave. We were standing nearby the town at the turn to Plotina. A police car came about 08:00 p.m. and announced that there are missile explosions and we had to go. In Goncharovka we filled up the tank and went to Troitsk. In Troitsk we filled the tank again and decided to come back home. But by that time we were not allowed to Svatove at the check-point in Duvanka at about 10-11 p.m. We returned to Troitsk and stayed there for the night. We contacted the State Emergency Service – they proposed us to stay at their building. We went to the cafe to eat and stayed there till the morning. At night I was informed by the phone call that my flat was destroyed. About 09:00 a.m. we went back to Svatove. And all together went to see my flat. The fire was already put out. My neighbors were handling with it. The firefighters firstly refused to come. First, the fire was put out with water, then with compotes. Several soldiers were outside and after they found out that I was the owner, together we entered the flat. They examined the flat for the presence of explosive items. They said that we must not enter the bedroom as the ceiling panels were too caved in.

The doors, the window glass were smashed, the ceilings crumbled. In the bedroom the corner of the house was broken out. We began to take out the furniture from the kitchen and the living room. After

we had put the stilts back in the bedroom, we took out the furniture from there as well. The balcony descended up completely.

A neighbor from below, from the fourth floor, is an aggrieved person № 6. She lives alone. Her bedroom was totally burned out. When the shell hit the building, she was inside.

11/06/2015, 5:00 p.m.

Svatove, Luhansk region

Interviewers: Alexey Bida, Juliya Krasiy

Interviewee: aggrieved person №7.

For the reason of being busy at work, the interview was cancelled. The aggrieved person will be questioned online.

CONCLUSIONS:

The plan of evacuation was not developed. There was no alert announcement about danger. The evacuation of the citizens was not organised properly. The bomb shelters were not indicated.

The humanitarian assistance was not organised on a centralised basis. Work of volunteer organizations was not coordinated with local authorities, local and regional administrations. Lists of victims may be closed for those who did not requested assistance before November 6, 2015.

The cases of aggrieved persons have been transferred to the Foundation for Strategic Affairs of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union.

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