

EAST SOS STATEMENT

on the Humanitarian Blockade of Temporarily Occupied Oleshky

For more than four months, the temporarily occupied city of Oleshky in Kherson Oblast has been under a humanitarian blockade. According to information from the Kherson Regional Military Administration, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, and local residents, food supplies to the city have been virtually cut off since late May 2026, medicines are unavailable, drinking water is critically scarce, and electricity and gas supplies are unstable or have been completely cut off.

Before the full-scale invasion, more than 24,000 people lived in Oleshky. According to various estimates, between 1,000 and 3,000 residents remain in the city as of September 2026, including at least 47 children, according to the [Ministry for Communities, Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine](#). People are surviving on what they can grow in household gardens and produce on their smallholdings, as supplies from outside the city have been blocked by the occupation authorities.

Leaving the city remains extremely dangerous due to mined roads and ongoing drone attacks, while the wounded and those killed cannot be evacuated. The city hospital is operating on its remaining fuel supplies for generators and could cease functioning completely at any moment. Ukraine cannot independently organize a safe evacuation, as establishing a humanitarian corridor requires the consent of the occupying side. Despite prolonged negotiations conducted by the Ukrainian authorities together with the Ukrainian Red Cross Society with the Russian side, Russia refuses to agree to a corridor, thereby deliberately keeping civilians under blockade.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Andrii Sybiha, [stated](#) that Russia is deliberately obstructing the evacuation of civilians from Oleshky and blocking humanitarian organizations' access to the city.

East SOS considers the deliberate deprivation of civilians of access to food, water, medical care, and the opportunity to evacuate to be the use of starvation and blockade against civilians, which is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. The Russian Federation, as the occupying power, bears responsibility for these violations.

Since February 2026, the team of the East SOS War Crimes Documentation Program has been systematically collecting testimonies about the situation in temporarily occupied Oleshky. During this time, the team has documented around 30 testimonies from city residents. The Foundation is currently preparing the collected materials for submission to Ukrainian national law enforcement authorities and is also ready to share them with competent international bodies and monitoring missions in compliance with witness protection and confidentiality requirements.

The humanitarian catastrophe in Oleshky is not an isolated case but part of a broader pattern of actions by the occupation authorities in temporarily occupied hromadas (communities) across Kherson Oblast. A similar situation has developed in the Hola Prystan hromada, including Hola Prystan, Stara Zburivka, and Nova Zburivka, as well as the villages of the Velyka Kardashynka starosta district, where people have been living for months without electricity or gas and without a stable food supply, while humanitarian organizations have no safe access. The international community's silence or growing acceptance of such blockades only encourages their repetition in other hromadas.

In light of this, East SOS calls on the Government of Ukraine and national and international humanitarian organizations to:

1. Continue demanding that Russia agree to the urgent opening of a humanitarian corridor to evacuate civilians from Oleshky and other nearby hromadas, prioritizing children, older people, and those who are ill or injured, while systematically informing the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the OSCE, and other relevant bodies or providing them with information about known human rights violations for use in negotiations with Russia;
2. Ensure proper documentation of the blockade, the deprivation of civilians of life-sustaining resources, and obstruction of evacuation as possible war crimes, including by creating a unified database of incidents concerning Oleshky and neighboring hromadas and launching a support and rehabilitation program for people who have left the towns and villages, with an opportunity for them to voluntarily provide testimony for the purpose of holding those responsible to account;
3. Consistently inform the international community and the media about the actual situation in Oleshky and neighboring hromadas, drawing on a single multilingual resource containing verified information about crimes,

and counter attempts by occupation propaganda to shift responsibility for the blockade onto Ukraine;

4. Provide financial support to volunteer initiatives engaged in evacuating civilians despite the existing risks, as well as supporting civilians who have made the decision to leave.

East SOS continues to monitor the situation in Oleshky and stands ready to contribute to humanitarian response and the documentation of crimes committed by the occupation authorities within the Foundation's available capacity and subject to security conditions.

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East SOS