

Press release

UKRAINE: FSD WORKS TO PROTECT CIVILIANS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Sloviansk / Geneva, 28 February 2022

While the fighting claims hundreds of victims in Ukraine, mines and abandoned or unexploded ordnance that litter the territory represent an additional danger for civilians. FSD (Fondation suisse de déminage) is stepping up its awareness campaigns on social networks in order to assist the Ukrainian population to best protect themselves against this threat.

Since 2015, FSD has been carrying out awareness campaigns in the Donbass, which is impacted by an armed conflict between government forces and pro-Russian separatists. The objective: to teach people to recognize mines and remnants of ammunition present in their localities and encourage them to adopt safe behavior in order to avoid accidental explosions. These cause dozens of civilian victims each year.

Today, like the rest of the Ukrainian population, FSD staff are forced to hide in their homes. However, the awareness team continues its activity from social networks, mainly from [a Facebook page](#) specially created for this purpose, entitled BezMin.info (“without mines”). “We continue to do explosive ordnance risk education, but we have now broadened our message, explains Olena Kryvova, FSD’s deputy program manager in Ukraine. We now also advise people on measures to be taken to better protect themselves in case of shelling, on the ways to secure their accommodation from the effects of explosions, and on the behavior to adopt in the event of a chemical attacks for example.”

Key messages include: avoid staying close to windows, lying on the floor, if possible surrounded by concrete or brick walls... Dmytro Nikulin, in charge of communications for FSD Ukraine, is himself following these recommendations. He prepares Facebook posts from a mattress in the hallway of his apartment in Kramatorsk. “While our risk education efforts were focused on the Donbass region, we are now targeting the entire Ukrainian population, explains Dmytro Nikulin. So far we have reached over 657,000 people and we will intensify our efforts over the next few days.”

CONTACT

- Alex van Roy, Deputy Head of Operations (EN):
alex.vanroy@fsd.ch, +41 79 863 77 55
- Olena Kryvova, Deputy Programme Manager in Ukraine (EN):
olena.kryvova@fsd.ch, +38 050 130 23 37
- Alexandra Brutsch, Head of Communications (FR, EN):
alexandra.brutsch@fsd.ch, +41 78 807 45 50

FSD

Avenue Giuseppe-Motta 14b
1202 Geneva - Switzerland
+41 22 731 14 79
info@fsd.ch
www.fsd.ch



EXTRACTS FROM THE FACEBOOK PAGE BEZMIN.INFO

<https://www.facebook.com/BezMin.info>

Артобстрел, но рядом нет укрытия.

Что делать?

- ✘ Спуститесь на нижний этаж или используйте тамбур, коридор. Помещение должно быть из несущих стен и как можно дальше от окон
 - ✘ Ванная комната-одно из лучших мест при отсутствии укрытия. В ней нет окон, а емкость для воды может служить дополнительной броней от осколков
 - ✘ Если в состоянии распознать, с какой стороны падают снаряды, то можно выбрать для укрытия комнату в противоположной стороне
 - ✘ Ложитесь на пол. Чем ниже будете находиться, тем больше шансов выжить
 - ✘ Окна в жилье нужно заранее подготовить – заклеить скотчем «крестами», заложить диванными подушками или заставить крупной мебелью.
- Хорошей защитой от осколков будут мешки с песком.

(translation)

What to do in case of fighting close-by?

- The more concrete and brick around you, the better;
- Go down to the basement or go to a corridor (...);
- The bathroom is one of the best places when there is no other shelter (...);
- (...)
- Lie down on the floor. The lower you are, the greater your chances of survival;
- It is advisable to prepare the windows of your house in advance - tape them in the form of a “cross”, cover them with sofa pillows or with large pieces of furniture. Sandbags will be a good protection against debris.

This post has been shared over 1100 times.

FSD

Avenue Giuseppe-Motta 14b

1202 Geneva - Switzerland

+41 22 731 14 79

info@fsd.ch

www.fsd.ch

ABOUT FSD

FSD is a humanitarian organization founded in Geneva in 1997. Our experts destroy landmines and unexploded ordnance, decontaminate sites polluted by toxic waste and support populations affected by armed conflicts and situations of instability.

More information about FSD: <https://fsd.ch/en/>

FSD'S ACTION IN UKRAINE

FSD's involvement in Ukraine dates back to early 2015, a year after a conflict broke out in the Donbass region, de facto dividing this region between a part under the control of separatists and an area under government control. The objective of the FSD project then was to reduce the number of civilian victims as much as possible by teaching the inhabitants to “cohabit” with mines and unexploded ordnance in relative safety.

Today, in order to make more people aware of the risks of mines, FSD also deploys online prevention campaigns through social networks.

In 2017, FSD implemented a demining program to locate and destroy mines and unexploded ordnance. To date, almost 5 million square meters of land have been inspected and cleared and can now be used safely by the population. This has notably enabled the resumption of agricultural activities in these areas.

At the end of 2019, a new project was launched, aimed at strengthening access to education in war zones. By visiting schools and kindergartens during their mine awareness missions, FSD staff witnessed the extent of the destruction inflicted on school infrastructure and the devastating impact of the conflict on the daily lives of children. Following a special appeal for donations, FSD was able to carry out a needs assessment in schools and kindergartens located along the front line and began the rehabilitation of damaged establishments.

In 2021, FSD neutralized 299 unexploded ordnance in Ukraine and decontaminated more than 400,000 square meters of former battlefields.

More information about FSD's action in Ukraine: <https://fsd.ch/en/activities/operations/ukraine/>

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