



January 19, 2014 WASHINGTON, D.C.

TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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UKRAINE UPDATE #29

Members of Ukraine's government, parliamentarians, and regional officials met yesterday in **Kyiv** for negotiations aimed at ending the crisis in Ukraine. The interim government in Kyiv offered to give more powers to the regions, but refused to negotiate with the rebels in Eastern Ukraine until they disarm. The talks failed to result in a breakthrough solution to the crisis and another round of negotiations is scheduled to take place on Monday.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met today with his European counterparts in London. They agreed to sanction key sectors of Russia's economy if Moscow tries to disrupt the May 25 presidential elections in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government is carrying on with anti-terrorist operations in Eastern Ukraine. Pro-government military troops seized separatist bases in **Slavyansk** and **Kramatorsk** in the Donetsk region overnight and are continuing anti-terrorist operations in other towns in region.

NCSJ spoke today with the Jewish community representatives in **Kramatorsk**. They said that the situation in the city is very unstable. Deadly violence is taking place in the suburbs of Kramatorsk, and people are currently unable to leave town. The general feeling of anxiety and uncertainty about the future is widespread among the town's population.

NCSJ also contacted the Jewish community of **Mariupol**. They reported that the situation as of today is more stable, especially in comparison with the violent events that took place in the city last week. However, Jews and non-Jews alike are concerned about their security, and many residents, especially the elderly, are reluctant to leave their homes.

Hesed centers in Mariupol are receiving additional funding and have stepped up efforts to provide Jews in need with food and medicine. Jews are not being targeted, but there is a concern about holding public Jewish celebrations and events, due to the general decline in security and potential provocations.

We have received several reports from the Eastern regions of Ukraine that violent clashes and deaths resulting from the government's anti-terrorist offensive are contributing to public dissatisfaction with the central government. Pro-Russian media are contributing to divisions among the population and general confusion about who is responsible for deadly violence in the region. Older residents seem more sympathetic to pro-Russian sentiments.

NCSJ also spoke with Jewish community representatives outside of the **Donetsk and Lugansk** regions. According to the **Kharkiv** Jewish community, the situation in the city is stable. The population however is concerned about recent referendums in Eastern regions, and a potential move by the Donetsk and Lugansk regions to join Russia.

The number of Kharkiv Jews applying to make *aliyah* has increased. Because of simplified application procedures, many are already on the way to getting Israeli passports.

NCSJ also contacted the Jewish community in **Mykolaiv**, in Southern Ukraine. The situation in the city is stable, and there are no reports of anti-Semitic incidents. Jewish community programs are being held as scheduled.

Jewish community leaders in Mykolaiv said that the situation in Southern Ukraine in general is different from the east of the country. However, they expressed concern that the developments in Donetsk and Lugansk regions could spread to other regions of Ukraine.

In Western Ukraine, the situation in **Lviv** is calm, and tourism is on the rise. Lviv's Jewish community representatives traveled to a nearby small town for the dedication of a Holocaust memorial there. Lviv is also holding a "Days of Jewish Culture and Yiddish Language" festival from May 15- May 19, featuring theater performances, films, exhibitions, and lectures about Jewish culture and traditions.

While the situation is stable in Lviv, people are worried about recent developments in Eastern Ukraine. Similar to the sentiments expressed by Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovs'k representatives, Lviv residents are concerned about the spread of unrest outside of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

As always, NCSJ will continue to monitor the situation throughout Ukraine, and provide you with timely and critical updates.

About NCSJ

NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia, founded in 1971, represents the organized American Jewish community in monitoring and advocating on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews living in the 15 successor states of the former Soviet Union.

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