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TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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UKRAINE UPDATE #20

The continuing separatist protests in Eastern Ukraine are generating concern about further destabilization in the country.

Pro-Russian groups are still occupying government buildings in Donetsk and Lugansk. In Kharkiv, Ukrainian authorities have reclaimed the government administration building and arrested 70 pro-Russian protesters.

In Lugansk as well, pro-Russian groups continue to occupy the Ukrainian Security Service's (SBU) regional headquarters. There have been unconfirmed reports of 60 hostages being held there.

Ukrainian acting Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said today that the current crisis in Eastern Ukraine will be resolved within 48 hours, warning of the possible use of force if negotiations fail.

There is little evidence that support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine is growing. Ukraine's Party of Regions, generally critical of the interim government in Kyiv, called on pro-Russian protesters to give up their weapons.

Yesterday, the European Union announced that the U.S., EU, Russia and Ukraine will hold four-sided talks next week. In a phone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the U.S. and the EU must focus during the upcoming talks on fostering dialogue among Ukrainians, and not on bilateral relations between Russia and Ukraine.

NCSJ has contacted the Jewish community in Kharkiv. According to Jewish community leadership the situation is stable. Recent unrest occurred in the center of Kharkiv, and other areas of the city have not been affected. Protests did not affect civilians; office buildings,

banks, and stores are operating normally. Media accounts of the unrest and violence in the city are overblown, they said.

NCSJ also spoke with the Jewish community in Dnipropetrovs'k. They reported general anxiety about Russia's destabilizing role in the region. In addition to concern about Russian instigators inciting unrest in the region, the community representatives are alarmed over Russia's use of economic pressure on businesses and manufacturers in Eastern Ukraine. Many jobs have already been negatively affected by customs delays at the Russian border, and factories that rely on exports to Russia risk losing total access to that market if unrest continues or worsens.

We received reports that interest in aliyah in Eastern Ukraine has grown. While the numbers of applications are not huge, they are higher than they were before the crisis.

The Jewish community of Crimea reported that the situation is stable, although the population is undergoing a period of adjustment. Several banks in Crimea are not functioning, and some bank accounts are frozen. Anatoly Gendin, Chairman of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Crimea said that some Jewish community organizations' accounts have been affected.

NCSJ also contacted Jewish communities in Western Ukraine. In Uzhgorod, the situation is stable, and Jewish community programs and events are being held as scheduled. Interest in emigration is slightly higher there as well, especially among young people.

In Lviv, the Jewish community is expanding its programs and is actively preparing for Passover. Levels of emigration have not increased, community leaders reported; moreover, close to 1,700 people emigrated to Lviv from Crimea. Community representatives also said that recent Russian media reports about an alleged attempt by the Right Sector to seize the Lviv's regional prosecutor's office on April 9 are inaccurate.

NCSJ will continue to monitor the situation 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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