

Ukrainian officials discuss Kiev evacuation as danger of total power loss grows

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The mayor of Kiev, Vitali Klitschko, warned Sunday that Ukraine's capital city could lose all electricity, heat and water during the rapidly-approaching winter. Facing the prospect of a total blackout as temperatures drop well below freezing, officials have drawn up plans to evacuate the city's population, which stood at nearly 3 million before the war.

Concerned about ensuing panic as news of the preparations, reported in the *New York Times*, spreads, Roman Tkachuk, head of Kiev's Municipal Security Department, has since insisted that mass evacuation is just one of many scenarios that city administrators are working on and there are no immediate plans to implement such a measure. He warned against believing "misinformation."

In a recent on-the-air telethon, however, executive director of DTEK, one of Ukraine's largest energy investors, told listeners that a total loss of power to Kiev was entirely possible and it would necessarily raise the need for an evacuation of at least a "certain part of the population." The regional head of the Kiev area made similar comments a week earlier.

Nothing more has been revealed as to how the Ukrainian government intends to move millions of people out of Kiev under conditions in which neither a traffic light is on nor a train moving. As for where it intends to send them, this is also unclear.

The country's capital is currently experiencing, along with six other regions, rolling blackouts, as 40 percent of Ukraine's energy supply has been damaged or knocked offline. In the event of total loss of all electricity, its water and sewage systems will also fail.

In his recent remarks, Mayor Klitschko told the capital city's residents that they should stock up on warm clothes and power banks, the latter of which can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars. The former boxer turned right-wing politician also advised people to make preparations

to stay with friends and family outside of Kiev who are not dependent on the country's power grid and have wells and wood-burning stoves.

Kherson, a port city in Ukraine's south that is currently occupied by Russian forces, lost all utilities over the weekend. Moscow claims that Kiev, which is preparing an offensive to retake the city, attacked power lines and a nearby dam. Russian officials say that service has now been partially restored.

Bakhnut, in the eastern region of Donetsk, where heavy fighting is occurring, is also without water and electricity. Thousands of others trapped in the warzone are trying to survive in blown-out buildings, improvising makeshift stoves to stay warm. CEO of Ukrainian energy supplier Yasno, Sergei Kovalenko, told the press that Ukraine is facing a projected 32 percent power deficit.

In his nightly address on Sunday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has now perfected the look of the brave and the innocent, insisted that the desperate situation facing millions of his countrymen is simply the result of Russian "terrorism." "We must get through this winter and be even stronger in the spring than now," he declared.

Moscow's criminal, desperate and increasingly savage assault on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, however, is the logical outcome of the US-NATO use of Ukraine as a cat's paw in its bid to draw Russia into an unwinnable and disastrous war. While Washington and its allies have found tens of billions of dollars of military funding and weaponry to transfer to Kiev, so far a coalition of 17 EU countries has only managed to come up with 500 generators for the country. The resources necessary to ensure the survival of tens of millions of Ukrainians over the course of the winter are simply, it would seem, unavailable.

Spanish daily *El Pais* published a story on November 6 detailing conditions in Irpin, a town of just over 65,000

outside of Kiev. Mayor Oleksandr Markushin told the newspaper that his city is in urgent need of repairs to roofs, doors and windows, water-pumping facilities and building foundations. It also needs generators. Schools and medical facilities cannot operate. Residents are desperately awaiting help from Kiev. In two weeks time, they hope a charity will deliver some aid.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) predicts that another 800,000 Ukrainians will flee the country this winter due to the energy crisis. They will join the ranks of the 7.6 million who have already left. Of these, according to a recent UNHCR survey, 68 percent are “not yet economically active” and 47 percent are reliant on “assistance programs as their primary source of income.” Nonetheless, Western countries are cutting benefits for refugees.

Poland, which has taken in 1.5 million Ukrainians since the outbreak of the war, just announced that as of January 2023 those seeking shelter in the country will be required to cover half of the cost of their accommodations, which are currently being funded by the government. In May 2023, they will be on the line for 75 percent of the total.

In addition, Ukrainian migrants must sign up for a PESEL number, which will allow the Polish government to electronically track their movements back and forth across the country’s borders. Because various forms of state-sponsored support are tied to when a person entered Poland, the system will allow officials in Warsaw to limit refugees’ eligibility on the basis of the fact that they previously exited the country.

Further west, Britain’s “Homes for Ukraine” program, which pays families £350 a month to house refugees, is falling apart and may be axed entirely by the right-wing Tory government. Hosts initially signed up to take in Ukrainian refugees for six months, and this deadline is now approaching. However, the vast majority of people have nowhere else to go because officials throughout the country are unable to find new families to shelter them. One government representative from South Cambridgeshire told the *Guardian* on October 30: “I have about 1,600 people on my housing list at the moment and some of the London boroughs have tens of thousands.”

Several thousand Ukrainian refugees in Britain are now reportedly homeless. Currently, there are discussions in London about permanently halting “Homes for Ukraine,” as part of a massive austerity program the government of Rishi Sunak—net worth \$800 million—is preparing.

On Monday, the Irish Ambassador to Ukraine, Therese Healy, told Ukrainians wishing to seek shelter in Ireland

that they could not expect a government welcome. “I wish to highlight that available state-provided accommodation is now very restricted,” she warned. The situation, Healy claimed, exists “despite our very best efforts and wishes.”

In Germany, local officials in the eastern city of Cottbus recently told *Deutsche Welle* that the federal government has failed to fund any of the ongoing costs associated with providing long-term accommodations, education and medical care for a high-need population. There are not enough interpreters. Health care facilities are overloaded.

Elsewhere in Germany, according to the *New York Times*, sports stadiums are still being used as housing centers. There are few other available solutions and little money. “Corona isn’t over. We have an energy crisis. Our population is consumed by economic troubles,” Zeno Danner, the district administrator of Konstanz, told the newspaper, which described the crisis as posing “nettlesome” questions.

In New Zealand, the situation for Ukrainian refugees is so bad that charities working with the population report that many are considering and making plans to return to the war-battered country. Refugees are struggling to make ends meet, as well as to find medical care and English-language classes, problems widely reported everywhere. Of the mere 4,000 visas that the New Zealand government promised to grant Ukrainians, just 1,000 have been issued and only 400 people have arrived shoreside.

For its part, the United States has limited special visas for Ukrainian refugees to 100,000. Individuals must have a family member in the US already who is willing to sponsor them and prove that they will pose no financial burden on the state.



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