

Shelling Kills 3 Red Cross Workers in Eastern Ukraine

By [AFP](#)

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A Russian strike on Red Cross vehicles in eastern Ukraine killed three people, President Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday.

"Today, the occupier attacked the vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross humanitarian mission in Donetsk region," Zelensky said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed that three of its staffers had been killed when shelling hit a site of a planned frontline aid distribution in the region. It did not say who was behind the shelling.

"I condemn attacks on Red Cross personnel in the strongest terms," ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric said in a statement.

"It's unconscionable that shelling would hit an aid distribution site," she added.

"Our hearts are broken today as we mourn the loss of our colleagues and care for the injured," she said. "This tragedy unleashes a wave of grief all too familiar to those who have lost loved ones in armed conflict."

The attack happened in the village of Virolyubivka, several miles away from the front line in Donetsk.

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The Red Cross said its team was preparing to distribute wood and coal briquettes to vulnerable households to help them prepare for winter when their vehicles were hit.

Two other staff members were wounded in the attack, the Red Cross said, adding that the aid distribution "had not begun, and no residents were affected by the explosion."

The ICRC did not provide any details about the staff members who were killed, but Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights Dmytro Lubinets said they were Ukrainian citizens.

Vehicles 'clearly marked'

There was no immediate comment from the Russian side, which routinely claims it only strikes military targets.

The Red Cross highlighted that its teams "are regularly present in the Donetsk region, and our vehicles are clearly marked with the Red Cross emblem."

"The deaths of three ICRC colleagues come amid a sharp rise in the number of humanitarians killed around the world over the last two years," it said.

The UN Humanitarian mission to Ukraine said 50 aid workers were killed or injured in Ukraine in 2023, including 11 killed in the line of duty.

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The ICRC called "for the respect of international humanitarian law, including by taking every precaution possible to ensure that those engaged in humanitarian activities are not targeted or caught in hostilities," in its statement on Thursday.

The strike came just days before Spoljaric is set to carry out a long-planned visit to Moscow — her second visit since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, ICRC spokesman Jason Straziuso told AFP.

Spoljaric is due to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and other senior government officials on "critical issues in conflicts globally, such as the respect of international humanitarian law, prisoners of war, the fate of the missing, and protections for humanitarian workers," he said.

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