

## Address of Rinat Akhmetov Humanitarian Center on detention of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance

Today, on 14 December, the Dnepr-1 battalion that is a structural unit of the Ministry of Interior has stopped 22 trucks carrying humanitarian help of the Rinat Akhmetov Humanitarian Center. It happened near the village of Bohatyr, 29 km from Kurakhove, Donetsk Oblast. The humanitarian aid drive was heading from Dnipropetrovsk to Donetsk with 400 tons of food on board including pasta, flour, oat flakes, biscuits, sunflower oil and condensed milk. One of the trucks transported semolina and cereals for infants.

The food was intended for the most vulnerable civilians in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, particularly the handicapped including children with disabilities, pensioners over 65 years old, single mothers, large families and families with orphaned or disabled children, WW2 veterans, soldiers injured in the Afghanistan war, orphaned children and pregnant women.

According to the UN estimates, the region is on the verge of a humanitarian disaster. At least 900,000 people are living below poverty line and need urgent humanitarian assistance. This help is the only chance to survive there without money, social allowances and jobs.

Today the official reason for the refusal to let the cargo in was an additional requirement to the shipment documents. The inspection officers had to objections to the freight as such. Representatives of the Dnepr-1 battalion of the Ministry of Interior refused to write a report. The requirements were stated in the explanatory note of the driver.

Nonetheless, we assume that an attempt of the leaders of Dnepr-1 to politicize the help was possibly the reason of detention. Valentyn Manko made corresponding statements in social networks yesterday having proposed in fact to exchange humanitarian assistance for prisoners of war.

A necessary package of documents including an official letter of the Humanitarian Center to the Ministry of Defense, the Security Service of Ukraine, the General Staff, the Road Police, the National Guard and the ATO HQ accompanied this humanitarian drive just like all the previous ones. For the past four months it has been enough to make sure that the help reaches the people it is meant for. For the past four months the State Emergency Service and a representative of the UNHCR have regularly checked the delivered aid. Tomorrow, on 15 December, the trucks are going to drive with a new package of documents and media covering the convoy.

In the 21st century, in the middle of Europe, we regrettably have to struggle for the right to deliver assistance to save lives in the area of a humanitarian disaster. Humanitarian help is turning into a speculation object for politicians.

We believe it is unacceptable to block assistance intended for civilians living on the brink of survival. Humanitarian help may never ever be used as hostage.

Today the Humanitarian Center has sent official letters to the head of state, the Ministry of Interior, responsible agencies and institutions in connection with the incident.

We call on our partners – international organizations and missions monitoring with us the humanitarian situation and sending their help to Donbass – not to stand aside in the current situation and give no way for the humanitarian help to be politicized in somebody's interest.

In turn, the Humanitarian Center states that it will continue to provide humanitarian aid transparently, in line with international standards and only to peaceful citizens. Rinat Akhmetov has always helped and always will help his fellow countrymen.

Rimma Fil,

Coordinator

Rinat Akhmetov Humanitarian Center

