Kiev ‘punishes’ civilians in Donetsk with travel permits and drugs blockade

At Donetsk’s drug addiction treatment facility, doctors received their last shipment of medicines from Ukraine in September. Earlier this month, the remaining 52 patients prescribed buprenorphine had their medications stopped, and while there are dwindling supplies of methadone remaining, doses will be scaled down starting this week, and will run out completely on 1 March. There are 155 patients remaining in the clinic on methadone, and 380 across the region. The doctors at the clinic have worked six months without payment, receiving one small subsidy from the new Donetsk rebel authorities. One nurse has left after her house was destroyed, but the majority of clinic workers have stayed, despite the lack of salary. Now they have to explain to the patients that their treatment will end. “The International Committee of the Red Cross just needs an official memo to take it across but we can’t get the documents signed,” confirms Pavlo Skala of the HIV Alliance in Kiev.

By Shaun Walker, The Guardian

Drug Addicts Are Dying in Crimea Because They Can't Get Therapy

"It seems like all the time I hear about someone else who has died," Igor, a Crimean OST patient and activist who organized the video appeal, told VICE News. He had just learned that another former OST patient, also named Andrei, died last week of an overdose in Simferopol. Eight patients he knows have died, Igor said. Of the 800 drug users who had previously received OST in Crimea, at least 80 have died since the programs were shut down, mainly from suicide and overdose, according to United Nations AIDS envoy Michel Kazatchkine. As well as Russia shutting down the program in Crimea, the conflict has also meant that the Ukrainian government has stopped distributing OST drugs in the rebel-held east of the country.

By Alec Luhn, Vice News.

HIV in der Schwarzmeerregion: Der verborgene Kampf

War in Ukraine threatens to worsen HIV crisis.

The methadone and other OST supplies have already been paid for by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, which distributed money to civil organizations like Alliance Ukraine. All Kiev needs to do is sign off on their delivery, but Skala feared that could take “weeks or months.”

That might be too late for the roughly 150 methadone patients at Donetsk’s drug addiction treatment facility who face termination of their treatment within one week. According to Yulia Drozd, the center’s deputy director, 60 percent of these individuals are HIV-positive and many have Hepatitis C or tuberculosis. By Michael Pizzi, Al Jazeera America

Marginalised Groups Struggle to Access Healthcare in Conflict-Torn East Ukraine

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance Ukraine which runs many OST centres as well as other harm reduction programmes, has said that stocks of antiretroviral drugs, OST and other life-saving treatments will have run out by February. More than 300 OST patients in Donetsk and Luhansk have lost access to treatment since the conflict began, while a further 550 patients on methadone will run out of drugs soon if emergency supplies cannot be delivered. By Pavol Stracansky, Inter Press Service News Agency

Eastern Ukraine Running Out of Meds for HIV, TB and Opiate Substitution

In a press release, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Ukraine (Alliance Ukraine) says that Eastern Ukraine has the highest prevalence rates of HIV and TB in the country. "One in five new infections are registered in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (regions) which are home to nearly a
Arrely Klepikov, executive director of Alliance Ukraine, asserts in the press release that "unless centralized supplies of vital medicines are sanctioned by the Government of Ukraine through international humanitarian organisations within the next one or two weeks, we are facing a humanitarian catastrophe in the East." By Julie Davids, The Body Pro

At least 80 people have died in Crimea since Russian law banned opioid substitutes, says UN special envoy

Some 800 people had been caused “intense and unnecessary suffering,” with “severe withdrawal symptoms,” Michel Kazatchkine told journalists in a telephone briefing from Geneva on 20 January. More than 40% of the 806 people who had been enrolled in substitution treatment programmes in Crimea had tested positive for HIV, he said, and “the vast majority, if not all” had returned to injecting illicit drugs. This practice is the primary driver of the high prevalence of HIV infection in Ukraine and Russia By Richard Hurley, British Medical Journal