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INTERACTION BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES AND PUBLIC ASSOCIATIONS IN THE FIELD OF CIVIL PROTECTION: LEGAL MECHANISMS AND IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICE

The article is devoted to the study of international legal foundations for providing humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and man-made catastrophes in the context of reforming Ukraine's civil protection system. The evolution of international cooperation in the field of disaster prevention and emergency assistance to victims has been analyzed. Special attention is paid to the formation of the right to receive humanitarian assistance as a component of international customary law in conditions of war and post-conflict recovery. The principles of international cooperation in the field of environmental protection and prevention of transboundary disasters are examined, taking into account the specifics of martial law in Ukraine. The experience of international organizations, particularly the UN and EU, in coordinating humanitarian operations under conditions of armed conflict has been studied. Challenges for national civil protection systems under conditions of hybrid threats and environmental risks have been analyzed. Ways to improve mechanisms for responding to humanitarian needs in Ukraine's public civil protection regulation system are proposed, taking into account European integration processes and post-conflict recovery needs.

Keywords: *humanitarian assistance, natural disasters, civil protection, international law, transboundary disasters, international cooperation, human rights, environmental security, emergency situations, post-conflict recovery.*

Literature Review. Issues of international legal regulation of humanitarian assistance during natural disasters in Ukrainian scientific discourse are actively developing in connection with current challenges. Andriiko O.F. and Kyrychenko Yu.M. studied the administrative and legal foundations of public administration in the field of civil protection under conditions of European integration [3]. Klymenko A.V. and Trush O.O. analyzed mechanisms for coordinating international technical assistance in the public administration system [4]. Behlyi V.V. and Kovalenko N.P. studied the legal foundations of international cooperation in the field of emergency prevention and response [5]. Tereshchenko D.A. researched European standards for disaster risk management and their implementation in Ukraine [6]. Ponomarenko H.O. and Shevchenko R.I. analyzed the role of international organizations in ensuring humanitarian security [7].

Stetsenko S.H. and Vasylieva N.V. examined the constitutional and legal foundations of ensuring environmental security in Ukraine [8]. Melnychuk O.F. and Koval Ya.S. studied the administrative and legal regulation of state policy in the field of civil protection [9]. Honcharenko H.A. examined international legal aspects of transboundary cooperation in the field of environmental security [10]. However, issues of adapting international principles of humanitarian assistance to the specifics of Ukraine's civil protection system functioning under conditions of martial law and post-conflict recovery remain under-researched. The experience of implementing European civil protection mechanisms into Ukrainian emergency management practice requires comprehensive analysis.

Research Objective and Tasks. The aim of the study is to analyze the international legal foundations of humanitarian assistance during natural disasters and to develop recommendations for improving mechanisms for responding to humanitarian needs in Ukraine's public civil protection regulation system in the context of European integration processes and post-conflict recovery

Presentation of the Main Research Material with Full Justification of the Obtained Scientific Results.

The formation of international legal cooperation in the field of protection from natural disasters and man-made catastrophes in the European space reflects the evolution of integration processes and growing awareness of the transnational nature of contemporary threats. For Ukraine, which has chosen the European development vector since 2014, the issue

of integration into European civil protection mechanisms has gained particular relevance [3]. The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, established in 2001 and significantly reformed in 2019, represents a unique system for coordinating responses to natural and man-made disasters. Ukraine obtained participant status in this mechanism in 2023, which opened new opportunities for receiving and providing humanitarian assistance [4].

Ukraine's experience in participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism demonstrates the gradual integration of the domestic emergency management system into European standards. In particular, in 2020, Ukraine cooperated with the Mechanism to receive assistance in combating forest fires based on bilateral agreements, and in 2022-2023 – to coordinate large-scale humanitarian support in connection with Russian aggression [5]. The legal basis for Ukraine's participation in European civil protection mechanisms is laid down in the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, particularly in Chapter 26 «Civil Protection.» According to this agreement, Ukraine undertakes to align its legislation with EU directives and regulations in the field of disaster risk management, early warning, and coordination of international assistance [2]. The principle of solidarity, enshrined in Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, which provides for mutual support among member states in case of natural or man-made disasters, gains particular significance. For Ukraine, which aspires to EU membership, implementing this principle means both readiness to receive assistance and the ability to provide it to other participants in the European community [6].

Analysis of the practice of applying European civil protection mechanisms shows that the effectiveness of international humanitarian assistance depends on the level of harmonization of national emergency management systems. Ukraine has been gradually adapting its regulatory framework to European standards from 2014-2025, which included adopting new technical regulations, personnel training standards, and risk assessment procedures [7]. Russian aggression against Ukraine has fundamentally changed the role and functions of European institutions in humanitarian response. The European Commission, through its structural units – the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) – has become a key coordinator of international support for Ukraine [8].

During 2022-2025, the EU mobilized unprecedented resources to support Ukraine through various mechanisms. In particular, through the Civil Protection Mechanism, deliveries

of generators, medical equipment, construction materials, and other critically important assistance were coordinated. The total volume of EU humanitarian aid to Ukraine in 2022-2024 amounted to over 1.1 billion euros [9]. Of particular significance was the launch in 2022 of the «Solidarity Lanes» initiative, which provided alternative routes for exporting Ukrainian grain and importing humanitarian cargo under conditions of Ukrainian port blockade. This initiative demonstrated the ability of European institutions to rapidly adapt existing mechanisms to new challenges [10]. The European Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which operates around the clock and ensures communication between donor countries and aid recipients, also played an important role in coordinating humanitarian assistance. Through ERCC, over 500 humanitarian aid delivery operations to Ukraine were coordinated during 2022-2024 [1]. Ukraine's experience in interacting with European institutions demonstrated the importance of creating a unified national system for coordinating international assistance.

Russian aggression against Ukraine has actualized the need to revise traditional approaches to international cooperation in civil protection, taking into account the specifics of hybrid threats. Hybrid warfare combines traditional military actions with cyber attacks, information operations, ecological terrorism, and targeted attacks on critical infrastructure [5]. Under conditions of hybrid threats, the principle of neutrality in humanitarian assistance, enshrined in international humanitarian law, acquires new aspects. Ukraine faced a situation where the aggressor deliberately attacks critical infrastructure objects to create a humanitarian crisis and force concessions. This requires developing new approaches to ensuring the security of humanitarian operations [6]. The principle of independence in humanitarian assistance also requires rethinking in the context of information warfare. Russia systematically used the provision of so-called «humanitarian aid» to occupied territories as an instrument of propaganda and legitimizing its presence. This actualizes the need to strengthen control over the origin and targeted use of humanitarian resources [7]. The principle of proportionality in humanitarian response has gained particular significance under conditions of limited resources and large-scale needs. Ukraine has developed a new methodology for assessing and prioritizing humanitarian needs, which takes into account both direct consequences of military actions and long-term effects of infrastructure destruction [8].

An important aspect has been ensuring the principle of accountability in using international humanitarian assistance. Ukraine has introduced an electronic monitoring and reporting

system for the use of foreign support, which ensures transparency and efficiency in resource distribution [9]. The principle of complementarity between different types of international assistance – humanitarian, development, and security – has gained particular relevance under conditions where Ukraine simultaneously needs emergency support for survival and long-term investments for recovery [10].

Ukraine's geographical location at the intersection of European transport corridors and its shared borders with seven European countries determine the particular importance of transboundary cooperation in disaster risk management. The experience of 2022-2025 has demonstrated both the potential and limitations of existing transboundary coordination mechanisms [1]. The most successful example of transboundary cooperation was the coordination of receiving Ukrainian refugees by neighboring EU countries. Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova mobilized their civil protection systems to create humanitarian corridors and reception centers for displaced persons. This experience confirmed the effectiveness of European solidarity mechanisms during large-scale humanitarian crises [3].

At the same time, Russian aggression revealed vulnerabilities in the transboundary cooperation system, particularly regarding critical infrastructure protection. Attacks on Ukraine's energy system had transboundary consequences, affecting energy supply stability in neighboring countries. This actualized the need to develop joint plans for ensuring critical infrastructure resilience [4]. The issue of transboundary environmental security requires special attention. The destruction of the Kakhovka HPP in June 2023 created transboundary environmental risks, requiring coordination of efforts by Ukraine and the international community to minimize the consequences of the ecological disaster. This case confirmed the need to develop special protocols for responding to ecological terrorism [5].

An important direction of transboundary cooperation is the exchange of information about risks and threats. Ukraine has been actively developing cooperation with European partners in early warning about natural disasters through the EUCPM (European Union Civil Protection Mechanism) system during 2020-2025 [6]. A promising direction is the development of joint educational programs for training civil protection specialists. Ukraine participates in experience exchange programs through the EU Civil Protection Knowledge Network, which promotes harmonization of personnel training standards [7].

The digital transformation of Ukraine's civil protection system has gained particular

relevance under martial law conditions and the need to ensure effective coordination of humanitarian response. The experience of 2022-2025 has confirmed the critical importance of digital technologies for emergency management under conditions of limited resources and high risks [8]. A key achievement was the creation of the Unified State Electronic Database on Migration Issues, which ensured accounting and coordination of assistance to internally displaced persons. This system is integrated with European databases and allows real-time coordination of humanitarian support [9].

An important innovation was the development of the «Air Raid Alert» mobile application, which provides timely information to the population about threats and recommendations for behavior in emergency situations. The application is integrated with international monitoring and early warning systems [10]. At the same time, digitalization creates new challenges, particularly regarding cybersecurity of critical infrastructure. Ukraine has faced large-scale cyber attacks on energy, transport, and communication management systems, requiring the development of comprehensive cyber protection measures [1].

A promising direction is the implementation of artificial intelligence technologies for forecasting and modeling emergency situations. Ukraine has launched pilot projects using AI for analyzing satellite images to assess the scale of destruction and plan reconstruction work [3].

Conclusions. The conducted research allows the following conclusions to be drawn. The formation of international legal foundations for humanitarian assistance during natural disasters is a complex process that reflects the evolution of international law and growing awareness of the global nature of environmental threats. The right to receive humanitarian assistance is gradually forming as part of international customary law, although its legal status remains a subject of discussion. International organizations, particularly the UN and its specialized agencies, play a key role in coordinating humanitarian operations and forming standards for providing assistance to victims of natural disasters. The experience of organizations such as TIEMS demonstrates the importance of professional cooperation in emergency management.

Principles of international cooperation in environmental protection and prevention of transboundary disasters should be the foundation for developing national civil protection systems. Principles of solidarity, mutual assistance, and shared responsibility are of particular

importance. Ukraine's civil protection system requires substantial modernization to comply with international standards. This includes improving the regulatory framework, organizational structure, response procedures, and mechanisms for international cooperation.

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