

# Prayer Briefing *Black Sea-Mediterranean*

Ukraine · Türkiye · Hungary · Libya · Tunisia 2026-02-22

151.9 million people

Ukraine's chernozem — black earth — is among the most fertile soil on the planet. For generations, smallholder farmers have planted winter wheat in September, watched it emerge in spring, and harvested in June, sending grain through Black Sea ports to become bread in Tunis and Tripoli and Cairo. Four hundred million people eat because this soil is productive and these ports are open. This week, four years into war, 4 million Ukrainians have no home. Seventeen thousand have been killed in the past three months. The Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant operates on its sole remaining power line. Women's organisations that built shelters, legal aid, and protection from the ground up are being dismantled by funding cuts — driven toward collapse, says UN Women, at the moment they are most needed. One in every ten landmine casualties in the world's most heavily mined country is a child. Two thousand kilometres south, Libya pumps fossil water from beneath the Sahara at eight times the rate it can be renewed — an aquifer that took millennia to fill, emptied to bake the bread the war interrupted. In Tunisia, the winter wheat is struggling in below-average rain. The grain corridor that feeds North Africa is broken at both ends: by artillery in the north and by aquifer depletion in the south. The soil can still grow wheat. The question is whether anyone is permitted to farm it, and whether the water to replace it will last.

**17.5K**

killed

**3.8M**

displaced

**1/5**

overdrawing water

## How Life Circulates

### Black Soil Grain Production

- Ukraine's chernozem — black earth — is among the most fertile soil on the planet, producing wheat and sunflower oil that feeds 400 million people across North Africa and the Middle East.
- Spring planting begins in weeks, but 3.8 million displaced people cannot return to fields under shelling — and the landscape is the most heavily mined on earth, where one in ten landmine casualties is a child.

### Caucasus Pastoral Transhumance

- Georgian and Azerbaijani shepherds move flocks between highland summer pastures and lowland winter grazing — a transhumance rhythm thousands of years old that sustains mountain villages through cheese-making and wool production.
- The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its aftermath have severed traditional cross-border grazing routes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, confining herders to shrinking pastures and disrupting the seasonal movement on which flock health depends.

## What Is Being Taken

The primary resource extracted from this bioregion is grain — Ukrainian wheat and sunflower oil that feeds 400 million people across North Africa and the Middle East, shipped through Turkish-controlled straits that function as the world's most consequential chokepoint. War has not stopped the extraction but has weaponised it: port access becomes a bargaining chip, grain prices become a geopolitical instrument, and the farmers who grow the wheat are displaced from the fields that produce it. Libya's fossil water — pumped from the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer through the Great Man-Made River at 817% of renewable supply — is being extracted at a rate that guarantees eventual depletion. This is not irrigation; it is mining water that fell as rain tens of thousands of years ago. Tunisia imports wheat from the same Black Sea corridor the war disrupts, paying prices set by artillery fire in Donetsk. The cost bearers are everywhere: Ukrainian farmers who cannot reach their fields, Libyan aquifers that cannot refill, Tunisian families whose bread prices are determined by a war they did not start.

## This Week

**Feb 19** — Caritas Ukraine reports that four years into war, 4 million people have no home. President Tetiana Stawnychy describes civilian losses, the housing crisis, and adapting humanitarian aid with no peace in sight.

*Pray: For the 4 million Ukrainians who have no home as the war enters its fifth year — that shelter holds, that communities endure, and that peace is not beyond reach.*

**Feb 20** — UN Women reports that women and girls in Ukraine face a deadly triple crisis: war, systematic energy attacks, and deep cuts in international donor funding that are driving women's organisations toward collapse and dismantling front-line protection systems.

*Pray: For the women's organisations being defunded at the moment they are most needed — that the shelters stay open, the legal aid continues, and the work of protection survives the withdrawal of those who should be funding it.*

**Feb 18** — FAO GIEWS reports below-average precipitation in Tunisia's key northern producing regions of Bizerte and Tabarka, constraining early winter wheat establishment and development.

*Pray: For the farmers of Bizerte and Tabarka watching winter wheat struggle in dry soil — that the rains come before the growing window closes, and that bread remains affordable for Tunisian families.*

### Seeds of Hope

Women's organisations across Ukraine — co-ordinated through the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, co-chaired by UN Women, NGO Girls, and CARE Ukraine — have built front-line protection systems for survivors of gender-based violence, shelters, legal aid, and psychosocial support. Deep funding cuts in January 2026 are dismantling this architecture, and the organisations are being driven toward collapse. That they continue to operate is resistance against both the war and the defunding. In Donetsk and Luhansk, the ICRC maintains presence where few others can. In mined fields across the country, demining teams — including Chivas, a dog trained to indicate danger to children — teach mine safety awareness in the world's most heavily mined country, where one in ten landmine casualties is a child. In Tunisia, farmers in Bizerte plant winter wheat despite below-average rainfall, because not planting is not an option.

## For Prayer

### For Ukraine's homeless...

For the 4 million Ukrainians who have no home as the war enters its fifth year — 17,471 killed in the past three months, 3.8 million displaced, the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant on its sole remaining power line. That shelter holds and peace is not beyond reach.

### For the women's organisations...

For the women's organisations across Ukraine being driven toward collapse by deep funding cuts — the shelters, the legal aid, the psychosocial support they built from nothing during four years of war. That their work survives the withdrawal of those who should be funding it.

### For the children in mined fields...

For the children of Ukraine, the world's most heavily mined country, where one in every ten landmine casualties is a child — for Chivas the demining dog and every team working to make the soil safe enough to farm and the playgrounds safe enough to play.

### For Libya's fossil water...

For Libya, pumping water from beneath the Sahara at eight times the rate it renews — an aquifer that took millennia to fill, being emptied to compensate for the grain the war interrupted. That those who govern this resource understand what cannot be replaced.

### For Tunisia's wheat...

For the farmers of Bizerte and Tabarka watching winter wheat struggle in below-average rainfall — and for every Tunisian family whose bread price is determined by a war 2,000 kilometres away and a weather pattern they cannot control.

### For those under shelling...

For the civilians of Donetsk and Luhansk where the ICRC maintains presence others cannot — for those who remain because they cannot leave, and those who cannot return because there is nothing to return to.

### For the grain corridor...

For the Black Sea grain corridor that feeds 400 million people — that ports open, that ships sail, that the wheat grown on the most fertile soil on earth reaches the bakeries of North Africa and the Middle East. That food is not a weapon.

*The most fertile soil on earth grows wheat that feeds 400 million people. The people who farm it have no homes. The women who hold its communities together are being defunded. And beneath the Sahara, an aquifer that took millennia to fill is being emptied to bake the bread the war interrupted — as though time itself can be borrowed from the ground.*

## Psalm 22 (Lament)

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?  
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer.*

As you read this briefing on Black Sea-Mediterranean, consider: *What does it mean to share a world with people whose water, food, and safety are determined by decisions made far from where they live? — Where do you see resistance and hope in this data — and what does it ask of you?*