
Seafarers psychologically impacted by Ukrainian conscription law

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The recent introduction of the new Ukrainian conscription law has sparked significant controversy and mixed reactions among Ukrainians.

This law, seen as a response to the substantial military pressures Ukraine faces amidst ongoing conflict, aims to strengthen the armed forces' ranks.

However, it has raised concerns, particularly among Ukrainian seafarers who have left the country and are anxious about its potential implications for their work, relocation, and family wellbeing.

Mental Health Support Solutions, part of health and wellbeing platform OneCare Solutions, explains the huge psychological impact it's having on Ukrainian seafarers.

Alexander Dimitrevich, Lead Clinical Psychologist in Eastern Europe for Mental Health Support Solutions, has been at the forefront of addressing these concerns. He said: "As part of the Mental Health Support Solutions team, I have dealt with numerous moral dilemmas brought to us by Ukrainian seafarers. These dilemmas create significant psychological impacts and involve several complex dimensions."

According to Mr Dimitrevich, many Ukrainians living abroad are experiencing heightened anxiety due to the uncertainty surrounding their moral and legal obligations. For seafarers who spend long periods outside Ukraine, the anxiety revolves around whether they will be able to renew or verify their seagoing documents, or if this law will disrupt their careers and jeopardise their families' welfare.

Mr Dimitrevich said: “The war intensifies stress among families, especially for those who are primary breadwinners and have dependent family members living both abroad and in Ukraine,” He recounted a recent case involving a seafarer facing a heart-wrenching choice between visiting his terminally ill mother in Ukraine and risking being unable to return to his wife and children in Europe, or maintaining his career and financial support for his family. He added: “This psychological conflict between duty to country and the desire to maintain safety and stability for their families can lead to feelings of shame and guilt among many seafarers.”

Continuous stress and anxiety can lead to long-term mental health issues such as depression, PTSD, moral injury, and other stress-related disorders. Mr Dimitrevich explained seafarers already deal with occupational stressors such as isolation and the physical demands of their jobs, and the added pressure of war-related stress exacerbates these challenges.

Mental Health Support Solutions, as part of OneCare Group, continues to provide vital support to Ukrainian seafarers navigating these challenging times.

(Mental Health Support Solutions)