

**March 12-13**

**A brief overview of the situation**

- 1. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CONFLICT.** Over the weekend, a certain decrease in the intensity of hostilities was noted. However, the intensity of shelling and bombardments of Ukrainian cities has not decreased. A major offensive of the Russian army is still being attempted in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblast. Hostilities are also taking place in the Mykolaiv oblast. Mariupol continues to be shelled (with land battles being fought around the city), just as Kharkiv, Mykolayiv (a school was destroyed on Sunday following an airstrike), Ivano-Frankivsk (the local airport has been destroyed), Chernihiv, Kropyvnytskyi, Lutsk, Popasna (where according to the Ukrainian police phosphorous bombs were used), Kramatorsk (an evacuation train has been hit by shelling), Sviatohirsk (an airstrike has hit the premises of one of the largest monasteries of Ukraine where refugees were hiding), and Severodonetsk. On the night of March 13, the Ukrainian troops managed to repel Russians out of Skadovsk (the Kherson oblast). However, during the daytime the Russian troops entered the city again. **On Sunday night a rocket attack was carried out on the International Center for Peacekeeping and Security in the Lviv oblast, located 25 km from the Polish border.** Some analysts consider this attack as a provocation on the part of Russia targeting NATO. The Yavoriv test range was subject to airstrikes, which has claimed 35 lives with 134 wounded. **70% of the town of Irpin is being controlled by the Ukrainian side. However, hostilities are still taking place there. An American reporter, Brent Renaud, was reported killed in Irpin. His colleague Juan Arredondo is wounded.** Another escalation attempt is to be expected on the eve of the next round of negotiations. The Russian troops continue to try to surround Kyiv from the South and to lay siege to the city. The threat of the Belarusian Armed Forces joining in the second wave of escalation remains. In view of the significant number of Russian POWs, the Coordination Unit has been established in order to deal with issues related to their treatment. The Unit is headed by the Vice Prime Minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, who is also Minister for Reintegration of Temporary Occupied Territories.
- 2. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION.** Ukraine continues to receive support from international partners with the economic pressure on Russia mounting. On March 13, the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority suspended licenses for Russian jets (about half of Russian jets are registered on Bermuda), which will considerably complicate the use of jets belonging to Russian airways. The UK government is about to facilitate the stay of Ukrainians in Great Britain, with a promise to pay the rent for landlords who are ready to provide Ukrainian refugees with housing. During the weekend, it was reported that the Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, had come to Ukraine, appearing in footage standing next to his guerrilla fighters participating in the Russian invasion.
- 3. HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION.** During the weekend, the evacuation through 'green corridors' took place in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv and Kyiv oblasts. Approximately 550 people have been evacuated from Lysychansk, nearly 400 civilians (mostly children) have been evacuated from Vuhledar, Druzhkivka and Kramatorsk. Humanitarian aid was delivered to some of these settlements. **Terror against the local population living in the territories controlled by the Russian troops is increasing.** Following the kidnapping of Ivan Fedorov, mayor of Melitopol, the Russian military detained and took to an undisclosed location the Head of the Rayon Council of Melitopol, Serhii Pryima. The mayor of Dniprorudne (Zaporizhzhia oblast), Yevhen Maveev, was also kidnapped. Over the weekend, Ukrainian volunteer, Oleksandr Kononov, was killed in his own house in Severodonetsk. There are reports providing evidence of people being beaten by Russians on the streets of Enerhodar. **At the same time, civil resistance in Kherson and Melitopol remains active. The local population continues to demonstrate holding Ukrainian flags. During the weekend, members of the Kherson Oblast Council prevented an attempt to proclaim the 'Kherson People's Republic' under the Crimean scenario.**
- 4.** Tension between internally displaced persons and representatives of communities in Western Ukraine mounts. Not only are people being evacuated, but also companies. Many people who have fled Ukraine are from Western Ukraine and IDPs from Eastern Ukraine are now taking up their jobs. Economic and logistical chains are being destroyed (especially in western oblasts) with many businesses being shut down or frozen

even in the government-controlled territories. However, the government calls up on businesses to keep working while providing them with tax breaks and privileges.

5. **INFORMATION DIMENSION.** The attack on the Yavoriv test range carried out by the Russian army on March 13 is seen by the official Russian media as an attack on an assembly of international mercenaries prior to their deployment to the frontline to fight the Russian army. According to these media reports, 180 mercenaries were killed with a significant amount of foreign weapons being destroyed. Russians report of 'captured Ukrainian military vehicles' in Volnovakha and other regions. Such information is presented as a victory of the Russian army over 'nationalists' and meant to create an illusion of the Russian troops' advance and 'liberation of territories'. Information about the heroic Russian troops successfully exterminating Nazi is being spread. Russian citizens continue to hold limited protests against the war. On March 13, nearly 658 people were detained in 35 Russian cities. This fact is interpreted in the official Russian media landscape as insignificant demonstrations. The media landscape of the RF is being gradually filled with messages about funerals (in the region of Ural) of the military men who have fallen in Ukraine. A website 'Za nami pravda' (*the truth is ours*) has been launched in the RF where 'patriotic information' will be published. It will also be possible to upload videos and photos there. The website will also be represented in Russian social networks. It may be assumed that there will be an increase in the number of such internal initiatives gathering video content with the aim to broadcast propaganda and provide an alternative to other types of content available on social networks. Information about maltreatment of Russian POWs is also being spread. Through this, the Russian government admits the fact that Russian military are held in captivity due to the hostilities. At the same time, on March 13 the central Russian TV channels disseminated the information that photos of the fallen Russian soldiers were staged. According to them 'display torsos and Photoshop are used'. In the Russian media landscape, information about Russian soldiers distributing humanitarian aid in the cities controlled by them, is being disseminated. The footage shows people taking food items on a bright sunny day in the countryside, while at the moment the Kyiv oblast is covered with snow.