

**Wednesday, March 23rd, 2022**

## **Ukraine Situation Report**

### **CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS**

- . Civilian infrastructure continues to be subject to shelling and attacks carried out by troops of the Russian Federation (hereinafter: Russia), including in the cities of Kyiv (parking lot near a shopping mall), Brovary (warehouses storing vegetables and meat), Boryspil (airport), Kharkiv, Chernihiv (strategic bridge over the river of Desna), Mariupol (local museum of art), Trostyanets, Okhtyrka, Irpin, Rubizhne (residential buildings), Ocheretyane (railway station), Selydove (one of the largest ore mining and processing factories in the region) and others.
- . Russian troops are reported to have used white phosphorus munitions in Irpin and Hostomel regions.
- . Ukrainian forces have recaptured Irpin and are close to regaining control over Hostomel, encircling Russian troops to the north-west of Kyiv. Despite these gains, Russian forces remain in hiding in nearby villages and are reported to have carried out acts terrorizing local populations.
- . Ukrainian troops have undertaken a counterattack in the Mykolayiv oblast and fighting for control over Rubizhne in the Luhansk Oblast continues. If Russian forces capture the town of Rubizhne, they will be able to move behind the lines of the Ukrainian Joint Forces Operation troops.
- . Prior to the NATO summit kicked off on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>, US President Joe Biden reiterated the risk of Russia using chemical weapons to carry out further provocations. These provocations are feared to take place in Ukrainian and Russian territories.
- . Ukrainian diplomats have been expelled from Belarus, which may signal that Belarus is preparing to launch an invasion into Ukraine.
- . Ukrainians have submitted nearly 5000 documents to the united platform collecting evidence of war crimes committed by the Russian forces. The platform is managed by the Attorney General's Office and will support the work of the International Criminal Court.

### **HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS**

- . Humanitarian 'green corridors' continue to be set up. However, approval could not be obtained to secure the humanitarian corridors in a number of settlements. The evacuation convoy captured in Berdyansk on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> has not been permitted to proceed to Zaporizhzhia.
- . Nearly 60 000 inhabitants have been forcefully evacuated from Mariupol to Russian territories. Reports suggest that forceful evacuations continue and some inhabitants have had their passports confiscated.
- . The bodies of Russian soldiers killed since the beginning of the invasion have not been collected in the Sumy and Mykolayiv oblasts. The stranded bodies have been placed in special bags and remain in open air. Ukrainian officials are working on identifying the soldiers with the help of artificial intelligence and social network analysis tools in order to inform the relatives and families of the deceased.
- . Local authorities in the encircled cities of Mariupol, Kharkiv, and Chernihiv are unable to bury deceased citizens in local cemeteries due to constant shelling. Bodies have been interred in mass graves.
- . Pro-Ukrainian activists in Kherson, Henichesk, Chonhar, and other cities in southern Ukraine continue to be subjected to acts of repression by the Russian authorities. Russian Guards have been deployed in the cities to quell protests.
- . Russia is making plans and preparations to roll out the Russian currency in the recently occupied territories in Kherson as well as in other settlements. These plans speak of attempts to establish the so-called 'Kherson People's Republic' similar to the 'Donetsk People's Republic' (DPR) and 'Luhansk People's Republic' (LPR). In comparison to the DPR and LPR, the attempted annexation of Kherson is unlikely to feature a (staged) referendum due to the lack of collaborators in the region.

- . The Ukrainian government is implementing measures to control the prices of critical food and non-food items.
- . The sowing season has begun in Ukraine. However, Russian troops have shelled agricultural machinery and have reportedly planted mines into fields with the aim of thwarting sowing activities. Thwarting agricultural activities directly affect all Ukrainian exports. The risks faced by the agriculture and export industry is aggravated by the destruction of several Ukrainian seaports and the blockades imposed on the remaining ones.

## **INFORMATION DIMENSIONS**

- . Russian news sources continue to spread information about the ‘crimes committed by the Ukrainian army’ against civilians and the Ukrainian Armed Forces are alleged to have shelled a village in the Belgorod oblast. These acts have been called war crimes, as according to Russian sources the settlements host Russian humanitarian missions.
- . Regional Russian media (Orenburg, Chelyabinsk, and others) continue to spread information regarding Russian casualties. The Russian Orthodox Church has disclosed the names of 28 fallen soldiers from the Kostroma oblast.
- . The Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia is increasingly vocal regarding the casualties of the invasion. The Union is giving interviews and issuing statements.
- . The inhabitants of Crimea have reported of numerous funerals held for soldiers killed in the hostilities. Bodies are being returned to the peninsula by rail.
- . Russian media sources continue to spread information about Russian doctors treating Ukrainian soldiers.
- . The Russian Federation Council has adopted the bill proposed by the party United Russia to recognize the participants of the invasion of Ukraine as combat veterans. Such a step could potentially increase the number of those willing to participate in the hostilities.
- . The Federation Council has adopted a law regarding the administrative responsibility for public actions. The law seeks to discredit the actions of Russian authorities opposing or challenging state narratives.
- . Members of the Russian parliament, the State Duma, have been banned from leaving Russia without authorisation.
- . Investigations into “a foreign interference with Russian state affairs” will be launched.
- . A law criminalising the ‘spreading of false information and publicly discrediting state authorities of the Russian Federation operating abroad’ has been passed. Violators of the new bill face up to 15 years of imprisonment.
- . Public rallies in support of President Putin’s policies and actions in Ukraine continue to be held by government-controlled organisations. The size of the recent rallies is notably smaller than the ones held previously.
- . Russian sources continue to disseminate information regarding Ukraine’s alleged preparations for an aggression against the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. These narratives have been spread in the internal information space of the Russian Federation, Donetsk and Luhansk oblast as one of the arguments legitimizing the launch of the “operation against Ukraine”.
- . Individuals making public statements and demonstrating against the invasion continue to face condemnation.
- . News and narratives regarding positive developments in the Russian economy despite Western sanctions are being spread actively.