

**March 25th - April 25th, 2022**  
**Ukraine Monthly Overview**

**CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS**

- The armed forces of the Russian Federation (hereinafter: Russia) are currently carrying out a military offensive against Ukrainian forces in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts as well as in the southern regions of Ukraine. Military equipment and units have been redeployed to the regions from Belarus.
- Russian officials have announced the beginning of the second phase of the so-called special operation. The stated goal of the operation is to establish control over southern Ukraine and to create a land corridor with the Crimea and Transnistria.
- Fears of Mykolayiv and Odesa becoming the “next Mariupols” have mounted in the past weeks. The two cities lie on a strategic route connecting Transnistria with southern Ukraine and the cities have already been targeted by heavy shelling. The strategic gains sought by Russia and the hostilities it has already carried out are a subject of concern.
- The lack of modern air defence systems in Ukraine has resulted in severe damages inflicted on strategic infrastructure, including railway lines, rail junctions, and oil depots. Russian troops are known to have targeted critical infrastructure to halt weapon deliveries to the Ukrainian troops located on the frontlines of the conflict.
- The sinking of Moskva, the flagship of the Russian Black Sea fleet, has made it practically impossible for Russian forces to launch airstrikes from the Sea of Azov.
- The Ukrainian military has continued launching attacks countering the advances of the Russian troops in the Mykolayiv and Kherson oblasts. Despite Ukrainian counteroffensives, Russian forces maintain a strong foothold in the region and continue to pose a threat to Mykolayiv with potential advances targeting Odesa and Kryvyi Rih.
- Most of the Luhansk oblast has been captured by the Russian army and the oblast is facing severe issues with access to electricity, water, and gas supplies. A number of key cities in the western parts remain under Ukrainian control.
- The Ukrainian troops remain under the threat of being encircled by the Russian forces in the region of the Joint Forces Operation. The siege of the troops is likely to materialize if Russian forces succeed in the military breakthroughs they are seeking in eastern Ukraine.
- Evidence of war crimes and humanitarian law violations committed by the Russian forces is being collected in the regions liberated from Russian occupation. In addition, Ukrainian officials are assessing the cost and scale of damage inflicted on its territories due to the hostilities. As an example of the scale of damage, according to preliminary estimates, the restoration of housing stock and infrastructure in Irpin will cost approximately 1 billion USD.
- An increasing number of European governments have voiced their commitment to the reconstruction and rebuilding efforts of Ukrainian cities affected by hostilities. This support is to be channelled through frameworks offered by foundations as well as bilateral agreements. There is a clear need for EU member states to establish coordinated programs and modes of communication regarding upcoming rebuilding activities and ongoing support given in the form of arms deliveries.
- As per Ukrainian officials, 25 000 people have been killed since the beginning of the Russian invasion. However, according to data provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the invasion has resulted in 2 350 civilian deaths. The discrepancy between casualty figures has greatly damaged the credibility of international organisations, including the United Nations, in Ukrainian society.
- 2 500-3 000 Ukrainian combatants are estimated to have been killed in hostilities since the beginning of the invasion. The number of Russian soldiers killed in the war is estimated to exceed 22 000. To date, Russian officials have not provided any data on the losses Russia has incurred.

- Evacuation vehicles and hubs have repeatedly been subjected to shelling resulting in numerous civilian casualties. For example, the shelling of a railway station in Kramatorsk on April 8, resulting in more than 50 civilian deaths, provoked significant international condemnation.

## **HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS**

- Russian troops have managed to establish control over the majority of cities located along the coastline of the Azov Sea stretching from Kherson to Mariupol.
- The Russian army has continued to terrorize residents in the areas it controls and reports of arrests, abductions as well as killings of pro-Ukrainian activists have become commonplace. The Russian military administration is also seeking to hold so-called referendums in some of the areas it controls in an attempt to create new republics similar to the so-called “Donetsk People’s Republic” and the “Luhansk People’s Republic”. The steps taken to organise referendums have been coupled with attempts to incorporate captured cities into the already existing republics.
- Russian officials have ignored Ukraine’s proposals to set up humanitarian corridors. The Ukrainian government has thus made the establishment of humanitarian corridors and the granting of safe passage for civilians from conflict zones a precondition for the continuation of negotiations.
- More than 500 000 Ukrainians are known to have been forcibly deported to Russia. The deportations have divided families and resulted in children being moved across the border unaccompanied by their parents or guardians.
- Russian forces have sought to forcibly mobilise Ukrainians living in the territories it occupies. Forced mobilisations have particularly been seen in areas Russia has taken over since the beginning of the invasion.
- Areas under Russian occupation have seen drastic deteriorations in access to, for example, medications, food, transport, and mobile connections risking cascading into full-blown humanitarian catastrophes. The inhabitants of Mykolayiv and other government-controlled areas close to the frontlines of conflict continue to be subject to incessant shelling and have been cut off from water supplies.
- Ukrainian forces have pushed Russian troops back from Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy oblasts and have managed to re-establish almost full control over the Mykolayiv oblast. Demining and rebuilding efforts as well as search for the dead and wounded are ongoing in the areas liberated from Russia’s control.
- 1200 bodies of Ukrainian civilians killed due to hostilities have been found in the Kyiv oblast. According to current evidence, the vast majority were killed by Russian firing squads.
- The collection of information regarding war crimes alleged to have been committed by Russian troops in Ukraine has produced evidence of, for example, arbitrary killings, summary executions, sexual violence including rapes, abductions, and the looting of residential property. Despite the ongoing efforts by Ukrainian officials to investigate the alleged crimes, the scope and scale of the violations are adding considerable strain on the resources of Ukraine’s forensic and judicial systems. Discussions have thus emerged of a cross-European project that would support Ukraine to collect and process relevant evidence as well as aid in the provision of compensation, information, and justice to the victims of the atrocities.

## **POLITICAL DIMENSIONS**

- Negotiations between Russian and Ukrainian officials have come to a standstill. The only tangible results of negotiations thus far have been in the five exchanges of prisoners of war that have been conducted since the beginning of hostilities.
- Russia has refused to observe ceasefire even during Easter. Ukraine, for its part, has been consistently emphasizing on various platforms mediated by different international actors its willingness to return to the negotiating table in any city, be it Istanbul, Vatican City or Mariupol. Ukraine continues to voice its willingness to return to the negotiating table. However, Ukraine will only return to negotiations once the destruction of Ukrainian cities and the targeting of civilians is halted. If the situation to continue as is, negotiations are expected to resume only in the case of one party gaining an upper hand in the conflict.

- The impasse in diplomatic means to end the conflict has resulted in initiatives seeking to expand the negotiation process beyond Ukraine and Russia and frame the conflict as a threat to the military, humanitarian, environmental, and agricultural security of Europe, NATO, and beyond. Such initiatives have sought to revive international and regional institutions that have been rendered ineffective in protecting European peace.
- Russian forces refused to commit to a ceasefire on Easter Sunday, April 24.

## ECOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

- Ukraine has re-established control over the nuclear power plant and exclusion zone of Chernobyl, and rebuilding efforts have been carried out to ensure the stability and functioning of the plant. Even though the area is now held by Ukraine, the threat of a nuclear accident remains high due to missiles targeting western Ukraine launched from Belarus and Russia flying over the Chernobyl and Khmelnytskyi power plants. Furthermore, missiles launched from the Black Sea have been noted flying over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.
- The sinking of Moskva is feared to pose a looming nuclear threat. The ship may have carried nuclear warheads, and the detonation or leakage of radioactive substance into the sea risks creating an environmental disaster affecting the whole region. The scale of the potential catastrophe calls for joint action from all littoral Black Sea countries in order to retrieve the ship. However, joint action is currently hampered by the blockades imposed on the coastline and mines planted by the Russian forces.
- Russian officials have continued to threaten Ukraine and European nations with the use of nuclear and chemical weapons. Russian forces have also threatened to attack international convoys delivering arms to Ukraine.

## INFORMATION DIMENSIONS

- The past months have seen Russian sources disseminate narratives that dismiss Russia's responsibility in the war crimes it is alleged to have committed in Ukraine. The official stance remains that all evidence regarding the crimes is staged.
- Russian actions in Ukraine may be qualified as a genocide committed against Ukrainians.
- Russian official sources and [high-ranking officials](#) have continued to make claims that reject the existence of the Ukrainian state and its people. The hostilities carried out in Ukraine continue to be legitimized by claimed efforts to denazify Ukraine.
- Ukrainian children have been forcibly deported to Russian territories and attempts to enable the adoption of Ukrainian children into [Russian families have been reported](#).
- The conduct of hostilities and the acts of Russian troops have deteriorated the humanitarian situation in areas under Russian occupation. For example, Ukrainian citizens have been suffering from famine, violence and shortages of medications. In addition, civilians have been subject to systematic violence in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Luhansk, Donetsk, and Chernihiv oblasts. However, Russian sources continue to promote images and reports of Russian troops distributing humanitarian aid. These reports are supported by statements underscoring that only military objects have been targeted.
- Russia continued to vigorously demonstrate the popular support of the "special military operation". This support has been expressed through, for example, numerous rallies held across Russia and involving state-financed organization.
- Russian youth organisations are seeing increasing levels of militarisation.
- Religious leaders remain deeply engaged in efforts to support the political leadership of Russia. For example, the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church has repeatedly underscored the need to support the government and has justified Russia's aggression in Ukraine when speaking to his congregation. Messages delivered in religious services have been paralleled with pressure exerted on priests who have publicly denounced the war.
- Information regarding Russian losses in Ukraine has been classified as confidential.

- Official Russian sources have spread anti-Western sentiments, especially regarding the military aid provided to Ukraine. Furthermore, Russian sources continue to claim that the sanctions imposed on the Russian economy are illegal. Consumer prices and inflation rates have surged across Russia.
- Russian sources continue to disseminate information about foreign mercenaries and Nazis fighting in Ukraine.
- The Ukrainian army continues to be accused of violating international humanitarian law. The Head of the Investigative Committee of Russia, Alexander Bastrykin, has [instructed](#) the Committee to launch criminal proceedings against the fighters of Ukrainian nationalist alleged to have tortured Russian prisoners of war.
- Russian politicians and media sources continue to discredit the Ukrainian political leadership. The Kremlin has accused Ukraine of violating the Istanbul agreements – resolutions that have never been reached.
- Russia has denied its involvement in provoking a humanitarian, ecological or social crisis.