

March 4

A Brief Situation Overview in Ukraine

1. **THE COURSE OF HOSTILITIES.** Fighting continues around Kyiv, as the Russian troops are trying to find a way into the city. The main forces remain a dozen kilometers away from the capital and trying to get to the Zhytomyr highway. **Weather conditions make it impossible for armored vehicles to move off-road, and Russian troops are becoming an easy target for artillery, drones and anti-tank weapons on the roads. Heavy fighting continues around Mykolaiv.** On March 4, the Russian troops tried to enter the city but were repelled from the city by the evening. Meanwhile, the Russian side further controls the town of Voznesensk in the Mykolaiv Region which could lead to the capture of another nuclear power plant in Yuzhnoukrainsk. **Kherson is currently under Russian control. Continuous fighting is taking place around Mariupol, Kharkiv, Sumy – all remaining under heavy shelling. In Zhytomyr, a missile strike destroyed a school and a fire broke out in the university building in Irpin as a result of the shelling.** This is not the first case of destruction of an educational institution, hospitals and other civilian facilities are also being attacked.
2. **INFORMATION FACTOR.** The Russian forces seized control of television towers in Kherson and Melitopol, broadcasting Russian channels instead of Ukrainian ones. Facebook, Twitter, and almost all opposition media outlets were shut down in Russia last night. **As of today, it is difficult to access Russian websites in Ukraine, and Ukrainian websites in Russia and Crimea.** Tools such like VPN do not enable access. There is no stable mobile communication in the cities where the fighting is taking place. **In the Kherson region, the Russian side blocked Ukrainian mobile operators, while Ukrainian operators have blocked the ability to call from Ukrainian numbers to Russia and Belarus** in order to block intelligence channels. More and more observers are pointing out that **the spreading information in Russia about the casualties will not necessarily lead to an end of the war.** On the contrary, it is expected that propaganda will use this information for revenge call, thus mobilizing the population in Russia. However, the scale of the losses could be a factor in the decline of the morale of Russians, including Russian soldiers.
3. **NEGOTIATIONS.** The third round of talks, previously scheduled for early next week, could take place during the weekend according to a conversation between German Chancellor Scholz and RF President Putin. **The conversation did not lead to an agreement on a cease of hostilities in Ukraine. The only tangible results in the near future could be a temporary ceasefire and the organization of humanitarian corridors for civilians.** The representative of the Ukrainian delegation M. Podoliak stated on March 4 that the position of President V. Zelensky is not to yield to the interests, territory or sovereignty of Ukraine.
4. **ECOLOGY.** The Russian forces are trying to establish control over all nuclear power plants in Ukraine. The night battle near the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and the resulting fire could become a turning point in understanding the scale of Russia's attack on Ukraine's nuclear energy sector. It was followed by an emergency meeting of

NATO Foreign Ministers during which no decision was taken on blocking the airspace over Ukraine. As of now, only one of the 6 reactors at the Zaporizhzhya NPP is operating. **According to operative information, the Yuzhnoukrayinska NPP in the Mykolaiv area could be the next station seized by the Russian forces.**

5. **HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION.** The humanitarian crisis is intensifying in cities where hostilities are taking place, as well as in cities captured or surrounded by Russian troops. There is a shortage of food, medicines, no light and heat due to accidents on the networks. **Humanitarian corridors for civilians from Kharkiv and Mariupol are expected to be organized,** as agreed at the talks in Belarus. In Kyiv, the situation has somewhat improved, bread deliveries to stores normalized, but it is given out in limited quantities. **Sowing season is approaching in Ukraine and disruption are expected.** This could have a consequence on certain countries (including in the Middle East) that are depending on supplies from Ukraine.