

March 6th

A brief overview of the situation in Ukraine

- 1. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CONFLICT.** The Ukrainian army remains in control of Kyiv, while fighting continues in the nearby towns of Irpin, Hostomel, and Bucha. Large-scale shelling of Irpin has taken place on March 6, including during the evacuation of residents. A relative lull in the Mykolayiv region is reported. Pro-Ukrainian rallies continue in Kherson, Melitopol, Nova Kakhovka, Starobils'k and other cities that are under full or partial Russian control. Constant combat operations continue around Mariupol, Kharkiv, and Sumy. **In Kharkiv, the Russian military fired a missile at a television tower.** The broadcasting of Ukrainian channels has been interrupted, which threatens the provision of early warnings to the population about shellings. An Orthodox church was destroyed in the Kyiv region as a result of Russian shelling. **The increased number of missile strikes indicates that Russian troops are following the strategy of creating a humanitarian crisis** by destroying both civilian and military infrastructure. Ukrainian troops were able to shoot down several Russian planes and cruise missiles, destroying columns of the Russian army. **One of the columns destroyed near Kharkiv was carrying police equipment – batons, shields, helmets. This equipment was assessed no longer for fighting but rather for the repression of protests among the civilian population.**
- 2. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION.** Large-scale anti-war rallies are taking place in Russia on March 6. A rally was announced in Moscow by A. Navalny's team. About 4,000 people have been detained in different cities of the RF during the day. **Today, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow delivered a speech where he justified Russia's aggression against Ukraine through the narrative that Ukrainians wanted to hold a gay parade in Donbas.** After a sermon like this, one can expect either an acceleration of the movement towards the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – which is in unity with the Moscow Patriarchate, or the marginalisation, and even pogroms, of this structure in Ukraine which includes thousands of communities. Today, for the first time during the war, there has been a live YouTube broadcast of the service in St. Michael's Cathedral in Kyiv. Until now, such broadcasts were not carried out for security reasons.
- 3. NEGOTIATIONS.** Israel is trying to mediate between Russia and Ukraine, through in-person discussions of Israeli Prime Minister N. Bennett with V. Putin and by phone discussions with V. Zelensky. Representatives of the Office of the President of Ukraine have stated that V. Zelensky is ready to negotiate on any issue provided that no preconditions are put forward, but the Russian side is not yet ready to abandon its ultimatums.
- 4. ENVIRONMENT.** In the Mykolayiv region Russian troops have tried to advance to the north of Mykolayiv. There is a possibility that they will try to seize the South Ukrainian NPP, which is located near the city of Voznesensk. **In Kharkiv, the Institute of Physics and Technology (where the experimental nuclear facility is located) is under shelling.** Should it be damaged, a large-scale environmental disaster could occur.
- 5. HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION.** As of March 5, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded 1,058 civilian casualties (351 dead, 707 wounded); 45% of these are in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. About 1 million people have left Ukraine, more than 1 million have moved to the western regions of Ukraine. The humanitarian crisis continues and intensifies in the cities/towns that are on the front lines or under the control of the Russian army. **Despite preliminary agreements, it has not been possible to organise humanitarian "green" corridors in Mariupol, Irpin and other cities.** Russian troops are shelling cities, including during the evacuation of civilians. At least four people (including two children) have been killed as a result of shelling of the evacuation vehicle in Irpin. Bucha is surrounded and constantly subject to enemy fire; residents are unable to leave the town or receive assistance. On March 6, Ukrzaliznytsia (Ukrainian Railways) has organised an evacuation train from Lysychansk (Luhansk region). Ukrzaliznytsia also withdrawn the previously allocated refrigerated rail cars to transport Russian victims, as the Russian side did not demonstrate interest in evacuating its victims. **A number of cities have been shelled with cruise missiles on March 6, including Vinnytsia where the airport was destroyed.** The airport is located near small towns and villages. The city also has a large concentration of migrants from Kyiv and Kharkiv. To date Vinnytsia is one of the hubs for internal displaced. A cruise missile was shot down over Kyiv. The main Donetsk-Mariupol gas pipeline was damaged during combat operations in the Donetsk region, which could lead to many settlements being disconnected from gas supply. While the Ukrainian Red Cross Society is working without "green corridors" and in close cooperation with the authorities in order to help civilians evacuate and receive humanitarian aid, **the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has made a formal statement that it cannot operate without satisfactory security guarantees. Such a**

position and inaction are discrediting the perception of the Ukrainian Red Cross staff and volunteers who are forced to respond to a huge number of challenges and receive hate attacks due to the lack of assistance from the International Committee. In Ukrainian social media, there are calls for the ICRC to become more actively involved in the work on the front lines instead of remaining in Lviv or other relatively safe cities.

6. **INFORMATION DIMENSION.** Official Russian propaganda is gaining momentum. Messages about mass support for the “denazification of Ukraine” by Russian actors and various public figures are being spread in the information space. Flash mobs of youth in support of the war and support for the actions of the RF leadership are being reported. Calls for terror against dissidents are spreading, “cleansing of the ranks of actors, the intelligentsia”. Anti-Western narratives are being prepared against European companies that adhere to sanctions (“Opel worked for the Nazis during the war”, “Siemens used prisoner of war labour during World War II” etc.). There is a gradual change from the narrative about the “special operation in Ukraine” to “the West attacked Russia”. On March 6, a press conference was held in CADLR where its self-proclaimed leader stated that Ukraine planned to attack the DNR on March 8. There are parallel discourses (denazification and war with the West, struggle for the rights of Russian speakers, etc.) highlighting a search for legitimization of the war. It can be expected in the future that information pressure, new narratives and misinformation will be intensified by the Russian authorities. At the same time, according to the RF, the download of VPN by Russian users has increased by more than 1200% since the beginning of the war. To reduce such isolation of the RF from information, it would be advisable to reduce the cost of using such services for citizens of the RF.