

**September 19th - September 27th, 2023**  
**Ukraine Situation Report**

**CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS**

- **The Russian army, [supported by private paramilitary groups](#), continues to advance in the Donetsk (near Bakhmut) and Kharkiv provinces (near Kupyansk). Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), continue their counteroffensive in several directions, in particular in the Zaporizhzhia province (near Tokmak). Fighting also continues in the Black Sea and on the islands located in the Dnipro River delta. On the night of 26 September, Russian troops once again shelled the [Orlovka-Isakcha](#) checkpoint, located on the Ukrainian-Romanian border, which led to a cargo terminal and a passenger ferry crossing being damaged. Ukraine continues to shell Russian military objects in Crimea. For example, on 22 September, the [headquarters](#) of the Russian Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol was destroyed. While the Russian government previously claimed that Crimea was well protected, it now tells citizens not to ignore the air raid sirens. However, this does not mean that Ukraine shells civilians.**
- According to the Ukrainian government, as of 27 September, **total losses of Russian troops** amount to almost [277.000](#) killed soldiers. It is likely that Russia will resort to a new draft wave to influence the situation on the front. Ukraine would then be forced to organize a new round of mobilization, although as of today there are no plans to [accelerate](#) mobilization.
- **The Russian army continues to launch massive strikes on Ukrainian cities and port infrastructure.** New attacks have targeted objects of Ukrainian energy systems. For instance, following a shelling on 21 September, almost 400 settlements in different provinces were partly [cut off from](#) electricity. On 25 September, some settlements in the Odesa province were left [without](#) electricity. The cities of [Kyiv](#), [Kharkiv](#), [Lviv](#), [Odesa](#) (objects on the UNESCO World Heritage List were damaged), [Kherson](#), [Rivne](#), [Beryslav](#), [Kryvyi Rih](#), [Kremenchuk](#), [Slovyansk](#), [Kostyantynivka](#), [Kurakhove](#), [Drohobych](#), and other settlements as well settlements of Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy provinces located on the Russian border were subjected to shelling. Russian troops have also attacked the [port infrastructure](#) in Izmail rayon of Odesa province.
- **The publication of [a list of reforms](#), which further military aid from the USA may soon depend, has evoked a strong response from Ukrainians.** Some experts believe that this time one must seriously take deadlines and fulfill all requirements, otherwise Ukraine will not be eligible for new weapons. However, other experts believe that Ukraine's allies should not be demanding tight deadlines (the list mentions a 3-month deadline) given that Ukraine finds itself in a very difficult situation ahead of a possible large-scale shelling of its energy infrastructure. At the same time, Ukraine continues to reform its legal system. On 21 September, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a [bill](#) that regulates the issue of realisation of rights and freedoms of people who belong to national minorities (communities) in Ukraine, which is a key step to comply with the requirements of the EU membership.

*This Ukraine Situation Report is prepared in the framework of the project "Building Resilience in Conflict Through Dialogue" funded by the European Union*

## HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- According to the official information [provided by juvenile prosecutors](#), 504 children have been killed and over 1.125 wounded with various degrees of severity. 19.546 children are believed to have been deported. Since the full-scale invasion, the number of people with limited abilities in Ukraine has grown up to [300.000](#). This information was provided by the Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine, Oksana Zholnovych.
- Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, 2.804 Ukrainian settlements [remain](#) under occupation, while 687 settlements have been liberated. Since Putin's announced the beginning of mobilization in Russia on 21 September 2022, the Russian army [has lost](#) over 8.762 square kilometers of previously occupied Ukrainian territory.
- Russia has started to carry-out "[energy terror](#)". During the past two weeks, Russian troops attacked regional energy substations. For example, on the morning of 27 September, [398 settlements](#) were left without electricity.
- Ukraine's economy has [adapted](#) to the *force majeure* reality of the war. Ukraine's real GDP has grown by 0,8% compared to the first quarter of 2023.
- The United Nations (UN) humanitarian institutions had asked international donors to allocate \$3,9 billion to respond to Ukraine's needs in 2023. However, [only 50%](#) of the sum has been granted. The UN coordinator in Ukraine, Denise Brown, has emphasized that "the life of Ukrainians has become even more difficult than it was a year ago due to the protraction of the war and constant attacks on civilian infrastructure".
- Ukraine's Energy Minister, Herman Halushchenko, stated that as a result of the war Ukraine has lost approximately [80% of wind generation capacities](#). Most wind stations are in Southern Ukraine, where conditions for this are ideal. However, today parts of these territories are temporarily occupied, with effectively all wind generation capacities lost.
- The head of the UN Commission for investigating the events in Ukraine, Erik Mørse, [has said](#) that the Russian occupiers have tortured Ukrainians so brutally that some of the victims died. The UN has also registered cases of women being raped. In Rostov-on-Don, the Russians organized a show trial of [24 Azov fighters](#). Russia wants to sentence them to life imprisonment for defending Mariupol.
- According to the results of [research](#) conducted by "Vazhnyye Istorii" and the Conflict Intelligence Team, mobilised Russian soldiers are killed in Ukraine on average four and a half months after being sent to the front lines. Every fifth Russian soldiers does not live longer than two months at the front. Ukraine's General Staff has [said](#) that in the territory of Krasnodar Krai, the Russians are calling on prison inmates to sign a contract with the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF).
- The blockade of deep-water ports has already [had its impact](#) on export of Ukrainian grain. It has shrunk by 51% to 1,57 million of tons from 3,21 million of tons in the corresponding period of the previous year. As of 27 September [seven](#) vessels have left Ukrainian ports through a new humanitarian corridor that was established on 10 August.

- The Ministry for Emergency of the occupational authorities in Crimea has [published](#) a reminder for rescuers on its website which states that the task of the rescuers is to not only “evacuate civilians, but also cultural property”. Ukraine fears that Russian occupying authorities intend to transfer material and cultural property from Sevastopol museums to Russian territory.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed the [mining](#) of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). Moreover, according to a new statement by Ukraine’s Energy Minister, Ukraine purchased about [500 tons of diesel fuel](#), while also having agreeing on a corridor with Russian troops through which the fuel was to be delivered to the occupied nuclear power plant to avoid an accident.

### INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- **Integration of new territories.** Messages are being spread constantly about the necessity of further integrating the newly occupied territories of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and parts of the Donetsk province. The Federation Council has [created](#) special committees tasked with deepening “integration processes” (announced by Valentina Matviyenko). Dmitri Rogozin has been appointed the “[senator](#)” of Zaporizhzhia province. On the whole, [after the elections](#) held in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces, the so-called executive and legislative branches of power were established. Each region is represented in the Federation Council by two “senators”. Russia’s propaganda machine is spreading information claiming that Ukraine is “torturing” the inhabitants of Kherson province, branding the [evacuation](#) of civilians due fighting and security threats as “deportations”.
- **The West’s fatigue from Ukraine, decreasing aid, including its humanitarian aspect.** Russian messages claim at Ukrainians are receiving less aid from the EU. Moscow asserts that Ukrainians, who have received temporary protection from EU countries (in particular, from [Poland](#)), are being “deported”. According to the Kremlin, Warsaw abandons refugees against a backdrop of conflicts inside Poland between Ukrainians and Poles.
- **Global South against double standards of the West regarding Ukraine.** Narratives are being [promoted](#), claiming that the countries of the Global South are opposed to Ukraine being on the agenda, while also “accusing the West” of double standards. These narratives declare that Western countries cannot impose their views on the situation in Ukraine on the countries of the Global South. A theory is also being promoted about the need for a new system of international security, in which the Global South and Russia would play a major role. These narratives are being voiced with references to the articles that have apparently been written by Western experts.
- **Russia is fighting against the West, the USA and NATO.** The war is usually represented as a war against the West. Russia continues to claim this is a battle between good and evil. For example, Moscow says that Russia “has put up a fight against the West” in Ukraine, while it is the West who displays aggression ([Karahnov](#)). The term “satanisation” of the West is also being used, which, according to Russia, lowers moral barriers. Other narratives claim that “hundreds and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens are being massacred to fight the hated Russians”. Support for Ukraine is interpreted as escalation which the Kremlin says brings “a big war” one step closer, with

- Russia trying to avoid it by balancing and speaking about its interests. At the same time, the Kremlin's media are promoting a theory, according to which the USA [are pushing](#) the world (and Ukraine) towards escalation, otherwise "a change of leadership will take place in the USA".
- Russian politicians (in particular, [Sergei Shoigu](#)) continue to use the rhetoric about the West driving Ukraine to "self-destruction" through weapons deliveries and engaging its military in Ukraine.
  - Western countries are accused ([by Maria Zakharova](#)) of [allegedly](#) preparing strikes on the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea fleet at Sevastopol on 22 September. Russian media continue to cast aspersions on the deliveries of weapons to Ukraine. Moscow never stops [claiming](#) that Ukraine is using American missiles ATACMS to pursue its terrorist goals of launching strikes on civilian infrastructure on cities located in the Donbas and Crimea.
  - **Denying the shelling of Ukrainian civilian infrastructure.** In Russian propaganda media the shelling of Ukrainian civilian infrastructure continues to be largely [interpreted](#) as strikes on military targets with "high-precision weapons". At the same time, the destruction of the port infrastructure in Odesa is [interpreted](#) as "retaliation for the terrorist attack on the Kerch bridge and other attacks on objects of civilian infrastructure in Russia".
  - **Russia cannot lose.** Narratives abound about Russia's strong position and the inability of Ukraine to liberate its temporarily occupied territories. As usual, stories allegedly written by American experts [are being circulated](#), which claim that Russia is achieving its goals in Ukraine and that "Ukraine will have to cede Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in order to reach a peace settlement with Russia". "The only way to put an end to everything is Ukraine's unconditional surrender". "Kyiv is not in a position to dictate any terms to Moscow".
  - **The Ukrainian government is corrupt, full of conflict and unstable.** Official Russia media are [circulating](#) messages about tension between Valerii Zaluzhnyi, Commander-in-Chief of the AFU and President Zelenskyy. In particular, they blame Zelenskyy for "Kherson being surrounded a year ago". At the same time, Russian narratives claim that Zelenskyy tries to pin the blame on Zaluzhnyi, and the level of political competition between them is rising. Russia also tries to prove that foreign leaders have [supposedly](#) stopped listening to Zelenskyy.
  - **Discrediting the Ukrainian army. The AFU's counteroffensive has failed.** Messages are galore about the catastrophic losses incurred by the Ukrainian army during its summer counteroffensive. In particular, [a link](#) to articles supposedly written by American experts claiming that Ukraine lost 70.000 soldiers last summer, is being shared. According to stories, Putin claims that Ukraine has achieved nothing on the battlefield. Also, the investigation of the incident of "a Ukrainian missile hitting Polish territory" in November 2022 has been addressed by [Shoigu](#). The AFU is referred to as a "[monster](#)" that is in need of a "tranquilizer" in the form of Western weapons. Moscow asserts that the USA supports a further escalation of the war. The AFU are [accused](#) of [shelling](#) civilians and concealing information thereof. At the same time, Russia denies committing any war crimes. Such accusations are referred to as "quotes" from American media.
  - Russia denies sustaining any [losses](#) following the strike of the AFU on the [headquarters](#) of the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol on 22 September. The death of Admiral Sokolov continues to be denied.

- **The victories and achievements of the Russian army and the losses of the AFU.** [Analytical reports](#) are being circulated related to the losses incurred by the AFU and the failure of NATO's training programme. Russia claims that 60.000 soldiers of the AFU have been trained according to the NATO standards. Russian media concludes that the Ukrainian military has got "no benefit from Western training". Moscow emphasizes the absence of fighter jets in Ukraine despite the promises made by the West.