

## May 2024

### Ukraine Monthly Situation Report

#### CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- The Russian army continues to advance in Donetsk and Kharkiv provinces. It is also [concentrating its forces](#) near the Ukrainian border to potentially open a new frontline to the north of Kharkiv. **Since 10 May the Russian Federation (Russia) has been attempting to either capture or destroy the city of [Vovchansk](#) which is located close to the border. The city has suffered significant damage, with the majority of its almost 18.000 residents having been forced to leave their homes.**
- **According to the President of Ukraine, Russia launches some 3000 [guided bombs](#) every month on Ukraine, in addition to other types of munitions** ( on 25 May alone the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) used about 1000 FPV drones). Meantime, the Ukrainian army continue to shell Russian oil refinery facilities and companies linked to the Russian defence industry. Ukrainian drones have inflicted damage on the radar system *Nebo SVU* and four Russian KS-701 *Tunets* class patrol boats (two were destroyed) in Crimea, the *Voronezh-M* early-warning radar system on Russian territory, as well as other important military objects. In May, several partners greenlighted Ukraine using Western weapons to attack military objects located in Russian territory. This could prevent the AFRF from breaking through the Ukrainian border.
- **The Russian army continues to carry out massive strikes on Ukrainian settlements. Constant country-wide attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure facilities , have led to the introduction of rolling blackouts on an almost daily basis.** [Odesa](#) and Kharkiv (on 25 May the home improvement store *Epicentr* was [shelled](#), claiming the lives of at least 19 civilians, with over 50 civilians injured), [Dnipro](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#), [Kherson](#), [Mykolayiv](#), [Sumy](#), Nikopol (a kamikaze drone attacked an [ambulance](#) on 29 May, killed the driver), [Snihurivka](#), [Zhmerynka](#), [Kramatorsk](#), [Kostyantynivka](#), [Zolochiv](#), [Chuhuiv](#), [Konotop](#), and other settlements, as well as settlements, located close to the Russian border in Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy provinces, have been subject to air attacks.
- In several settlements in the Kharkiv and Donetsk provinces, families with children continue to be forcibly evacuated. On 29May, a decision was made to evacuate civilians from the city of [Lyman](#) due to constant shelling. It is located close to the frontline. Evacuations are also being conducted in a few settlements of Sumy province.
- According to the Ukrainian government, **the overall losses incurred by Russian troops** amounted to over [508.000](#) killed soldiers as of the end of April 2024.
- **On 31 May, the first (in a long time) prisoner exchange took place. [75 prisoners of war](#) were returned to Ukraine, among them civilians.** On the same day, Ukraine returned the bodies of [212 of its fallen soldiers](#).
- **Ukraine's Mobilisation campaign.** In May 2024, the Ukrainian parliament adopted (and the President later signed it) Law No. 11079-1, which allows certain categories of [prisoners to mobilize](#) into the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). The [convicted](#) will be granted conditional release (with the exception of those convicted for serious crimes) on the condition that they express a desire to defend their country. Previously, convicts were prevented from fighting in the war even if they wanted to. In May 2024, approximately 700 convicts signed contracts with the AFU.

## HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- **According to the official information provided by juvenile prosecutors, since the beginning of the full-fledged invasion, over 1904 children have been [affected](#) by Russian armed aggression.** As of the morning of 30 May, 2024, 550 children had been killed, and over 1354 sustained injuries of various degrees of severity. Most of the children were affected in the following provinces: Donetsk - 534 children, Kharkiv - 389, Kherson - 152, Dnipropetrovsk - 139, Kyiv - 130, Zaporizhzhia - 108, Mykolayiv - 107. 133,235 war crimes and crimes of aggression have been [documented](#), as well as 17,577 crimes against Ukraine's national security.
- **Amid the full-fledged invasion Russia is deporting Ukrainian children en masse from the occupied territories of Ukraine.** On 1 May, three children were [brought back](#) to Ukraine from the temporarily occupied territories of Kherson province. On 8 May, 11 children [were saved](#), among them two orphaned girls. On 24 May, 6 children [were returned](#) from Russian occupation. Since early 2024, 78 children have been returned from the occupied parts of Kherson province to Ukraine. On 31st May, another five deported orphans were [brought back](#) to Ukraine.
- **Russia is [holding](#) at least 403 Ukrainian women in captivity, including illegally detained civilians.** Among the captives there are women whose whereabouts had been unknown since 2014, who had gone missing. Russia ignores all requests demanding the release of all the captives. The conditions under which Ukrainian women in Russian captivity are being held do not comply with the Geneva Convention III on the treatment of prisoners of war. The Russians continue to deny representatives of the International Committee of Red Cross access to the places of detention of prisoners of war and civilians, of which there are more than 100 in the Russian Federation and in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.
- **The high level of social tension and fear among Ukrainians following active mobilisation measures is palpable.** It makes some people resort to dangerous ways of avoiding conscription which can lead to tragic consequences. In May, ten male bodies [were discovered](#) in the river of Tysa. According to official data, since the start of the war at least 32 men have drowned in the Tysa. It is likely that they were trying to avoid mobilization by swimming to neighbouring countries. The exact number of those drowned in the river is unknown. However, it is believed to exceed the official data.
- **The Russian army continues to inflict enormous damage on the environment.** Invading Russian troops shelled the territory of the Yampil forestry in the Lyman territorial community, leading to a large fire [breaking out](#). It consumed approximately 741 acres of coniferous trees. A Russian landmine [killed](#) a horse included in the Ukrainian Red Data Book (*an official national red list of the threatened animals, plants and fungi that are protected by the law in Ukraine - translator's note*). This horse was one of a kind - the only example of horses in the wild fauna, the herds of which were acclimatized in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Forests are [burning](#) around the temporarily occupied cities of Rubizhne and Severodonetsk located in Luhansk province. At the same time, the occupation authorities have failed to take any measures to eliminate the consequences of forest fire.
- **The Russian occupiers are [taking](#) containers full of grain from the temporarily occupied parts of Kherson oblast to the Republic of Karelia.** These containers belong to Chinese and Kazakh logistics companies which offer a buffer zone meant to circumvent the sanctions and deliver materials to other countries. The Russian occupiers use the stolen grain from Ukraine as a 'currency' to pay for the import of sanctioned goods.
- **Russian aggression continues to destroy Ukraine's historical and cultural heritage.** Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian attacks have [destroyed](#) more than 3000 cultural objects and institutions. It would take 3 billion USD to restore Ukraine's entire cultural heritage. As of 2 May, 2024, 1,978 cultural institutions were damaged. As of 6 May, 2024, 1,062 objects

of cultural heritage were damaged. UNESCO has [verified](#) 387 incidents of Ukrainian cultural objects having been damaged. Due to a Russian missile attack on the Factor-Druk printing house, about 20.000 books for adults and children were [destroyed](#), among them school textbooks. Ukraine has [lost](#) 1,6 million books from its library stores.

## ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

- **Macroeconomic support from the IMF.** Representatives of the IMF and the Ukrainian government have agreed on the Fourth revision of the EFF at the level of personnel. [A four-year agreement reached between Ukraine and the IMF on the expanded financing](#), which is part of the package of international aid of 122 billion of USD, continues to ensure strong support for Ukraine's economic program. In the second half of 2024 Ukraine's economic activities are expected to decelerate, which reflects the recent large-scale attacks on the energy sector and the repercussions (connected with the war) on confidence. In the meantime, in the second half of 2024, a moderate increase in inflation is expected. **Also, the IMF expects from Ukraine to:**
  - speed up the reform of tax policies, stipulated in the National Income Strategy;
  - proceed with legislation reforms aimed at enhancing the capacities of the Bureau of Economic Security of effectively fighting serious economic crimes;
  - adopt changes to the Customer Code.
- According to the [data](#) of the International Financial Corporation (IFC), **Ukraine can attract 200 billion USD of private investment.** According to the World Bank, 486 billion USD is required to reconstruct Ukraine. The IFC believes that over a third of this sum can be covered by the private sector.
- **Domestic lending and insurance against military and political risks.** The National Bank of Ukraine is finalizing work on its [Strategy for Loan Development](#) that will provide an opportunity to exploit the potential of the banking system to support economy. The Supervisory Board of the Export and Credit Agency has adopted the products of the Agency aimed to ensure investment against military and political risks, meeting the requirements of the Law of Ukraine 3497-IX 'On making amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On financial mechanisms for stimulating export activities' regarding insuring investment in Ukraine against military risks'.
- **Paradoxes of labour market and the rise of poverty.** A unique situation occurred during the war. A rather high unemployment rate is accompanied by a lack of qualified personnel. In April 2024, the [unemployment rate](#) in Ukraine stood at 16,8%. According to these estimate, an increase of 3% after reaching its lowest point since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. [The proxy indicator of the poverty rate](#), which indicates the percentage of people forced to save on food, reached 17,9% in April 2024.

## INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- **About negotiations. The goals will be achieved.** Controversial statements are circulating about Russia's readiness for a dialogue. However, Moscow constantly rejects this claim, finding fault with Ukraine or Western countries. The West is always blamed for escalation, disregarding Russia's interests (stated by Putin in an [interview](#) for Xinhua). On 24th May in Minsk, Putin [said](#) that Russia supports the idea of conducting peace talks with Ukraine, claiming that the [renewal](#) of negotiations with Ukraine is possible by taking into account the current reality 'on the ground', as well as the results of the Istanbul negotiations. However, Putin questions the legitimacy of Zelenskyy as Ukrainian president (on 20th May Zelensky's 5-year-term as president expired. The Constitution forbids presidential elections in Ukraine during martial law). At the same time, Russian diplomats and leaders believe that at this stage Russia and Ukraine are 'very far' from taking practical steps towards negotiations

on settling the conflict ([Polyanski](#) at the UN). Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov has [said](#) that currently 'there are no preconditions for peace talks since neither Ukrainian or Western politicians are ready for a serious conversation and are only 'parodying' such a dialogue'. Against the backdrop of these statements, the messages promoted by the Russian Minister of Defence, Andriy [Belousov](#), are aimed at achieving Russia's goals of 'reaching victory, ensuring that military and political goals of the special military operation (SMO), which were set by the President, be achieved'.

- **'Nuclear drills'**. Statements about negotiations are being made against a backdrop of nuclear threats and an increase in the possibility of using nuclear weapons with the involvement of Belarus. In his speech during the 9th May parade in Moscow, Putin [said](#) that Russia's strategic forces were in full combat readiness. Back in early May 2024, Russia [announced](#) (on Putin's instructions) nuclear drills with the use of a tactical nuclear weapon. According to Putin's [messages](#), Russia is not trying to escalate the situation by holding non-strategic nuclear drills in the territory of Belarus. He says these are taking place routinely. On 24th May, Putin [said](#) that Russia had regularly held nuclear drills and that now they are being held by Russia's allies in Belarus.
- **About the temporarily occupied territories. Denying Ukraine's linguistic identity.** Russia is implementing a policy of eradicating Ukrainian identity in the temporarily occupied territories. Moscow has begun spreading disinformation about the ostensibly waning interest in learning the Ukrainian language at schools located in the occupied territories, in particular, in parts of Kherson province that are controlled by Russia. [According](#) to Russia, the Ukrainian language as a school subject is taught to students from 1-4 grades in 44 schools (out of over 100) of the region, while in the middle and senior grades the language is not studied.
- **Glorification of the combatants in the so-called SMO, Russian political elites.** At all official events in Russia, the combatants of the so-called SMO are referred to as new Russian elites. It is also claimed that additional benefits will be [introduced](#) for them. Messages about the payments for the SMO fighters and members of their families enjoying the good life are being spread by Russian officials ([Belousov](#)).
- In all Russian regions events are being held to perpetuate the memory of the so-called 'heroes of the SMO' (memorial plaques, school desks of heroes, etc.). Putin has referred to all those who take part in the SMO as heroes, [likening](#) them to WWII veterans. On 7th May, following the inauguration ceremony, Putin [held](#) a meeting with those unit commanders participating in the SMO.
- **Russia's historical lands.** In his fifth inaugural speech Putin spoke about the reunification of Russia's historical lands with Russia. The present Russian discourse implies not simply the concept of the Russian world as the Russian language and culture, but the Russian imperial expansion of previous centuries as a pretext for at least including these territories into the sphere of Russian interest.
- **'Putin works around the clock'. Russian citizens support the President.** Russia's official propaganda channels disseminate narratives about Putin's effectiveness. Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry [Peskov](#) continues to [spread](#) messages about Putin's enduring concerns about Russian citizens, and his commitment to working continuously around the clock, non-stop, 24/7, .
- **'Russia is fighting neocolonialism'**. Moscow is constantly searching for ways to legitimize the SMO as a war against Western dominance and hegemony. Official media outlets spread propagandist [narratives](#) claiming that "free" Russia is fighting the Western world for traditional values, against neocolonialism and so-called 'hegemonism'. Moscow claims that the SMO is part of Russia's global objective in this fight.
- **Anti-European narratives, 'Europe has buried Ukraine'**. In Russian propagandist sources, messages [abound](#) about the EU allegedly growing disappointed with Ukraine and the prospect of its victory over Russia. Moscow also claims that the aid provided to Ukraine is ineffective.

- **Discrediting Ukraine's political leadership.** Russia is constantly [sharing](#) propagandist narratives about President Zelensky's alleged illegitimacy (on 20th May Zelensky's 5-year-term as Ukraine's president expired. The Constitution forbids presidential elections during martial law) and his desire to implement total mobilisation in Ukraine. Moscow claims it is impossible to hold peace talks with the ostensibly illegitimate President. The Kremlin is also [discrediting](#) the Global Peace Summit in Switzerland, which Moscow claims legitimizes the allegedly illegitimate Ukrainian government. Russia is promoting narratives about Ukraine dragging the countries of Central Asia into the war through [the calls](#) of Ukrainian officials encouraging them to attend the Global Peace Summit.
- **'About victories and success achieved by the Russian army. Losses incurred by the AFU'.** Traditional narratives about the Russian army's successes (in particular, in the Kharkiv [direction](#)) continue to circulate. At the same time, the Russian official media remain silent on the air strikes on residential areas in Kharkiv and the *Epicentr* hypermarket, which resulted in numerous casualties. Russia is spreading [fake news](#) about Ukrainian citizens fleeing cities due to the policies pursued by the Ukrainian government and mobilisation.
- **Shelling Ukrainian energy infrastructure.** Propagandist [materials](#) are circulating about Russia successfully destroying the Ukrainian energy grid during missile attacks and the inability of the EU to help Ukraine solve energy-related problems. At the same time, Russia denies launching strikes on civilian infrastructure or residential areas of Ukrainian cities. For example, on official propagandist channels, one will rarely watch a piece dedicated to the shelling of civilian infrastructure in Kharkiv or Zaporizhzhia.