

## August 2024 Ukraine Monthly Situation Report

### CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- **The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) continue their offensive, in the Donetsk province, having almost completely destroyed and occupied Chasiv Yar, New York, and several other cities. They have advanced towards large cities such as Pokrovsk and Kostyantynivka, from which civilians are already being evacuated. Some communities in Sumy province are also being evacuated.** According to the Ukrainian government, as of August 2024, the total losses of the Russian Federation (Russia) amounted to **617.000** soldiers killed.
- For its part, **the Ukrainian army continues its offensive in the Russia's Kursk province**, having established control over more than **100 settlements** and blocked a few thousand-strong Russian units, which are now squeezed between the state border and the river Seym. The Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) have taken control of the important Sudzha gas metering station, through which Russian gas flows to the European Union (EU). Russian military infrastructure (oil refineries, oil storage facilities, military airfields, and warships, etc), continues to be shelled both on Russian soil and in Ukraine's occupied territories. In the territories of Kursk province which are controlled by the Ukrainian government, **a commandant's office** has been established. It aims to ensure law and order, as well as meet the essential needs of the population. In addition, two new military and civil administrations were created in Zaporizhzhia province (in the territories under Russian occupation) in August 2024.
- **The AFRF continue to launch strikes on Ukrainian settlements and strategic energy infrastructure. On August 26, one of the largest air attacks** took place, targeting Ukrainian cities. **A total of 127 missiles and 109 drones were fired at Ukraine.** In July the targets of Russian attacks were Kyiv (for example, during one of the large scale air strikes on Kyiv on August 26, equipment at the **Kyiv Hydroelectric Power Plant was destroyed**), **Kharkiv, Ternopil, Lviv, Lutsk, Kherson, Cherkasy, Sumy, Chuhuiv, Kupyansk, Kryvyi Rih, Balakliya, Zolochiv, Chasiv Yar, Myrnohrad, Kramatorsk, Toretsk, Kostyantynivka, Nikopol** and other settlements. Apart from military facilities, critical infrastructure facilities are subjected to air strikes, as well as hospitals, residential buildings, supermarkets, and other civilian facilities.
- **On August 24, a further prisoners exchange** took place with each party swapping 115 soldiers. Interestingly, the largest number of swapped prisoners were conscripts, in particular those captured in Mariupol in 2022. At the same time, Russia continues to hold captive (with no interest in exchanging them) the soldiers of the Azov Brigade. In August 2024, court **hearings** were held regarding another 24 combatants from the Azov Brigade in Rostov-on-Don. On August 2, Ukraine managed to return the bodies of **250 fallen soldiers**. Apart from that, **11 children** were returned from Ukraine's occupied territories in August. Some of the children were reunited with their families.

### HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- According to the official information provided by juvenile prosecutors, since the beginning of the full-fledged invasion 141,141 military crimes and crimes of aggression have been **documented**, as well as 18,859 crimes against national security.

- **Russian aggression continues to demolish Ukraine’s historical and cultural heritage.** Since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion 2,024 objects of cultural heritage have either been destroyed or damaged in Ukraine, with 334 items completely destroyed. The brunt of the attacks has been borne by cultural institutions located in Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Sumy provinces as well as in Kyiv. Almost the entire territory of Luhansk province, as well as large swathes of Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Kherson provinces continue to be under temporary occupation. This prevents the government from learning exactly how many cultural institutions have been impacted by the war and Russian occupation. The total number of damaged cultural heritage sites across Ukraine has increased by eleven, bringing the total to some 1,096 objects. On August 24, Russian troops shelled the city of Hulyaipole located in Zaporizhzhia province. A local history museum was reduced to ashes.
- **The Russian army continues to inflict large-scale damage on Ukraine’s natural environment.** Over 5,500 cases of crimes perpetrated by Russian against Ukraine’s environment have been registered. The total amount of damage exceeds \$60 billion, with this figure continuing to increase. The Russian occupants are intent on building a new landfill in the Bilohirsk rayon in Crimea, which is valued at over a billion Russian rubles. A poisonous substance has been found that originates from Russia. The Russian occupiers have pitched their camps in the territory of the *Kamyani Mohyly*<sup>1</sup> nature reserve, near the village of Nazariivka, located in the Nikol parts of the Mariupol rayon. In the vicinity of the temporarily captured city of Severodonetsk in Luhansk province, a forest has caught fire yet again due to Russian shelling. Eighty households have burned down as a result.
- **Russia’s actions increase the level of danger to which the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) is exposed.** The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that an UAV hit the premises of the ZNPP behind its security zone. The plant was not affected. Nevertheless, this incident increases the risk of a nuclear catastrophe due to an escalation in hostilities taking place close to the ZNPP.
- **Reprisals and violence: Russia continues to violate human rights in occupied Crimea.** Since Russia occupied the peninsula in 2014, around 60 violent abductions have been registered, 20 of which were committed during the first month of the occupation. Rustem Osmanov, a Crimean Tatar, is being subjected to cruel treatment. The Russians are holding him captive in a detention center, without providing medical aid due to his Ukrainian citizenship.
- **Coercion and propaganda: Russia is exerting pressure and imposing its ideology in Ukraine’s occupied territories.** In Ukraine’s temporarily occupied territories, local citizens (who have been apprehended for an offense) are forced to sign contracts obliging them to serve in the Russian army to avoid incarceration. In the schools located in the occupied territories, the Russians are planning to force schoolchildren to learn ‘patriotic’ poems glorifying Russia’s war against Ukraine.
- **Russia carries out extensive looting and pillaging.** The Russians have begun to embark on the second wave of looting of what they label as ‘nobody’s’ property in Ukraine’s temporarily occupied territories. In order to seize the property of Ukrainians who left the region after it was occupied or to force them to return through blackmail, the Russian occupiers are drawing up lists of properties that they are threatening to seize if the relevant documents are not re-registered according to Russian legislation.
- **Ukraine has managed to have another 14 children brought back to its territory.** These children resided in the temporarily captured territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces.

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<sup>1</sup> Ukrainian for ‘stone graves’ - translator’s note

## POLITICAL-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

- **Ukraine’s military and political leadership are looking for ways to deprive Russia of its military and strategic air supremacy.** Russia’s strategic goal is to destroy Ukraine’s life-support infrastructure (energy, heat and water facilities) and **bring about a large-scale humanitarian crisis in the country.** The AFU are focused on carrying out asymmetrical actions aimed at undermining Moscow’s dominance in the sky (demolishing air defence systems, launching strikes on airfields where military aircraft are stationed, blowing up oil refineries and bases producing aviation fuel, destroying military enterprises working for Russian airspace forces, etc.). Ukraine’s main request to its partners vis-à-vis weaponry (apart from ‘traditional’ types of weapons) is to strengthen its air defence potential, as well as obtain permission to launch strikes deep into Russia’s rear (including air bases). Ukraine also needs to receive fast AI-based strike UAVs as well as a much larger number of fighter jets to enhance the potential of its air forces.
- [According to the estimates of Ukrainian experts](#), the air strike on August 26 was an attempt to disrupt Ukraine’s nuclear power generation. ‘These were **purposeful, though not direct steps to affect nuclear power plants in Ukraine which generate over 55% of the country’s energy production**’. As a result, at 08:50 Eastern European time power units 1, 3, and 4 of the Rivne Nuclear Power Plant were disconnected from the mains. Following the fluctuations in the national power grid, which was caused by Russia’s attack, at 17:10 Eastern European time power unit 3 of the South Ukraine Nuclear Power Plant was disconnected from the mains. On August 28, Ukraine sent [an official note to the IAEA \(nr 1242\)](#), stating that ‘the Russian Federation continues to deliberately attack Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, with the intention to disrupt the energy output of those generating most of Ukraine’s electricity. Russian attacks pose a considerable threat to the stability and safety of the nuclear power plants’.
- **A new needs assessment for Ukraine’s economic recovery.** After two years of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the updated [Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment3](#) was published by the Ukrainian government, the World Bank Group, the European Commission, and the United Nations. According to the assessment, as of December 31, 2023, the total cost of Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction for the next decade amounted to 486 billion USD (452,8 billion EUR), compared to the projected [411 billion USD](#) (383 billion EUR) of the previous year. The biggest area for reconstruction and recovery is housing construction (17% of the sum), followed by transport (15%), trade and industries (9%), agriculture (12%), energy (10%), social protection and sustenance means (9%), as well as the of management of explosive objects (7%). In all sectors the costs of clearing the rubble (as well as dismantling it, if needs be) have reached almost 11 billion USD (10,2 billion EUR).
- According to new [data](#) published by the World Bank, Russia’s invasion continues to destroy Ukraine’s economy. The **number of Ukrainians living in poverty has grown to 1,8 million people since 2020, approximately 29% of the total population.** Arup Banerji, the Regional Director for the European Union countries for the World Bank Group, believes that the situation could have been much worse, had Ukraine not received large budget support to pay pensions and salaries to teachers, doctors, and other strata of society.
- **The uncertainty in relations between the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate may jeopardize social stability in Ukraine amid war.** On August 24, Ukraine’s President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy [signed](#) the bill Nr 8371 that bans all religious organi-

zations in Ukraine whose headquarters are located in Russia. This decision was [backed](#) by the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations. At the same time, the key terms of the law will only come into force in 2025, which aggravates the situation. This may lead to the further exploitation of the religion issue in the internal struggle and by Russian propaganda.

## INFORMATION WARFARE DIMENSIONS

- **‘The situation in Kursk oblast’.** Putin has referred to the AFU’s offensive in Kursk province as ‘a situation’ under the aegis of ‘the fight against international terrorism’. Official propaganda resources have begun announcing the news under the guise of [‘the situation in Kursk province’](#). Narratives are being spread about ‘the situation in Kursk province’ having been ‘provoked and nurtured by the West’ (by Maria [Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson](#)). Russian propaganda sources either remain silent on the developments in Kursk province, or spread [narratives](#) (aimed to mobilize society) **in the spirit of WWI and WWII, with the Ukrainian army being referred to as ‘terrorists’, and the Ukrainian offensive being reminiscent of ‘the last agonizing attempts of the Kaiser and then Nazi Germany’.** At the same time, the Russian media go out of their way to [emphasize](#) that **‘Putin keeps all issues related to the social welfare in the regions affected by this acute situation under his personal control’.** **Moscow claims that the Ukrainian operation in the Kursk region [makes no sense](#) from a military strategy perspective, etc.**
- **‘About negotiations’.** According to the [version](#) provided by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘no direct or indirect negotiations’ between Russia and Ukraine ‘have been or are being conducted’. In early August, the Kremlin announced that Moscow’s readiness for peace talks with Kyiv ‘could not be doubted’. However, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei [Lavrov](#) has said that in the wake of the events in Kursk, such negotiations have lost their relevance. Ukraine’s actions have apparently rendered potential negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the conflict irrelevant. At the same time, on August 12, Putin stated that Kyiv’s actions in the Kursk province are aimed at [improving negotiation positions](#) with the help of its ‘western masters’, with Ukraine carrying out their will. Putin believes that the West is fighting Russia with Ukrainians. The Russian President has said that [‘Russia has always striven for peace and is ready to sit at the negotiation table right now’](#). This will only be possible when Kyiv withdraws its troops from Russian regions and officially abandons its NATO membership ambitions. A [narrative](#) is being promoted about Russia and the USA having to hold separate negotiations on Ukraine (without Ukraine) following the US presidential elections. Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko [believes](#) that negotiations to end the war will start with the Istanbul agreements that were discussed in the spring of 2022 (Ukraine’s neutrality). On the whole, according to the Levada Centre, in August 2024 the number of Russian respondents supporting the continuation of the war rose to 41% (a 7% increase).
- **Halting support for Ukraine by western countries.** Messages are being circulated claiming that Western support for Ukraine is decreasing, in particular, military and financial aid from [Germany](#).
- **Rejecting the Ukrainian identity.** Anti-Ukrainian narratives abound in official Russian propaganda media that reject Ukraine’s right to exist as such, claiming that there must be [‘no Ukraine’](#) and that its territory has to be denazified, cleared and neutralized. Another Russian narrative has it that ‘whatever resources or sacrifice may be needed; we are ready for them’. The Kremlin claims that Russia is ‘fighting for its independence and is ready to keep fighting for it for years, or even decades, until we reach the city of [Lviv](#), and if need be, we will continue even further’. The question of ‘Whom does Russia border’ is typically answered by ‘Russia borders whomever it wants to’. **Moscow continues to deny Ukrainian identity, subduing Ukrainian history**

to Russian imperial discourse. For example, Russia has announced the revival of the so-called ‘Troops of the Zaporozhian Cossacks’.

- **Ukraine’s temporarily occupied territories.** Russia is initiating the so-called integration measures for the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts. A “[strategy](#)” for developing of Zaporizhzhia province over the next 10 years has been concocted. Russia is also preparing the so-called elections in Crimea. In the peninsula, the right to vote will be extended to the military personnel operating in the so-called ‘special military operation’ (SMO). To conduct the elections Moscow has established [1129](#) polling stations. As of January 1, 2024, 1,481,251 voters were [registered](#) in Crimea. Near the Crimea bridge, the construction of fortifications [continues](#) to take place. In fact, the Russians are building a new bridge in parallel to the existing one.
- **‘The retribution strike’, strikes on Ukrainian civilian and energy infrastructure.** Russian propaganda media refer to the August 26 air strike of Ukrainian civilian and energy infrastructure as a ‘[historic](#)’ day, ‘repaying debts’ to Zelenskyy, while also emphasizing the ability of the Russian Army in destroying Ukrainian energy and infrastructure facilities. Russia goes to great lengths to justify its strikes, highlighting their efficiency, which aligns with Russia’s interest in achieving the goals of the so-called ‘SMO’.
- **Discrediting Ukraine’s political leadership.** Russia’s propaganda media are [circulating](#) information about Kyiv allegedly preparing a nuclear provocation in the form of ‘dirty bombs’ to be dropped near the repositories of Russian nuclear power plants. These media outlets claim that the ZNPP and Kursk Power Plants are under threat. Russian media with ties to the government [blame](#) Ukraine for ‘an act of nuclear terrorism’ that has allegedly targeted the ZNPP with a drone, which has led to the fire. Russians do not tire of spreading contemptuous descriptions of President Zelenskiy and the Ukrainian Army.
- **‘About victories and success gained by the Russian Army and losses incurred by the AFU’.** Moscow regularly updates Russian society about the achievements of its Army, including underlining the fruitful work of the Russian air defence units in shooting down Ukrainian drones, etc. Also, the level of support for the AFU’s actions in Ukraine from Russian society remains quite high - 78% (43% of the respondents fully support the AFU, while 35% would rather support them than not). 17% of Russians do not approve of the AFU in Ukraine (7% do not approve at all, while 9% would rather not approve of them). These data are provided by the [Levada Centre](#).