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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Ukraine – July to December 2024

31 December 2024

01 July 2024

Civilian casualties; prisoner exchange; state of emergency in Sevastopol and property transfer in Luhansk

According to the governor, at least five civilians died in Russian missile attacks in Pokrovsk (Donetsk region) on 24.06.24. According to media reports of 24.06.24, one person died in a Russian attack in the city of Kurakhove (Donetsk region). According to further media reports, at least one person was killed by Russian shelling of the city of Toretsk (Donetsk region) on 27.06.24. From the Kherson region, the responsible regional governor reported that a civilian was killed by Russian shelling on 26.06.24. According to the Ministry of the Interior, a Russian missile strike in Dnipro on 28.06.24 claimed at least one life. The General Prosecutor's Office stated that seven people were killed by Russian rocket fire in the city of Vilnyansk (Zaporizhzhia region) on 29.06.24. According to information from the regional governor of 29.06.24, four people were killed by Russian attacks on villages near the front line in the Donetsk region. On 30.06.24, the mayor of Kharkiv reported one person killed in a Russian airstrike.

During the latest prisoner exchange between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on 25.06.24, representatives of the Russian human rights commissioner Tatyana Moskalkova met with the Ukrainian human rights commissioner Dmytro Lubinets for direct talks for the first time. According to Moskalkova, both sides discussed "options for the return of civilians currently in detention centres". The two countries exchanged 90 people each; mainly captured soldiers, but also some civilians, including Nariman Dzhelyal, a representative of the Crimean Tatars, and two priests from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

One day after the Ukrainian missile attack on Sevastopol, which killed at least four people (cf. BN of 24.06.24), the Moscow-appointed governor, Mikhail Razvozshayev, declared a state of emergency for the territory of the city of Sevastopol on 24.06.24 until further notice. This may restrict constitutional rights, such as the freedom of movement of the city's population.

According to the Centre of National Resistance in Kyiv, the local leadership in the Russian-annexed Luhansk region is preparing the transfer of residential property to military personnel and immigrants from Central Asia. The centre recommends that Ukrainian refugees from the region keep original documents or certified copies of documents relating to residential property.¹

War effort and recruitment

Without offering any explanations, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy replaced the commander of the Joint Forces Command of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Yuri Sodal, with Brigadier General Andriy Hnатов. Previously, the leader of Ukraine's prestigious Azov regiment, Bohdan Krotevych, had accused Sodal of causing significant military setbacks and major personnel losses. According to media reports, similar accusations were raised by the Ukrainian parliament.

On 21.06.24, Ukrainian security forces in the Odessa region prevented 100 men from leaving the country illegally. They were to be driven to a border, bypassing checkpoints, and to cross the border on foot. According to the state

investigation office, all those over the age of 25 who could be called up for military service were transferred to the local recruitment centres on 25.06.24. On 27.06.24 media reported that Ukrainian border guards prevented around 20 conscripted men from fleeing across the border to the Republic of Moldova. The escape helpers are said to have received EUR 12,000 per person.²

EU-Ukraine; ECtHR and ICC

The EU officially opened accession negotiations with Ukraine on 25.06.24. The EU has also decided to extend the protection status for Ukrainian refugees until March 2026. Furthermore, the EU and Ukraine signed a security agreement on 27.06.24, which guarantees Ukraine long-term, comprehensive support.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has condemned the Russian Federation for "systematic violations" of human rights in Crimea, which was annexed in 2014. "The incidents were so numerous and interconnected that they constitute systematic violations," the court ruled on 25.06.24.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for former Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Russian Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The court based its decision on the assumption that both are responsible for missile attacks by the Russian armed forces against Ukrainian energy infrastructure between 10.10.22 and 09.03.23.³

08 July 2024

Civilian victims

According to the regional governor, two people were killed in a Russian attack on the city of Nikopol (Kryvyi Rih region) on 02.07.24. The mayor of the city of Dnipro reported that at least five people died in a Russian missile and drone attack on the city on 03.07.24. According to local authorities, Russian attacks on 04.07.24 killed one person each in the regions of Odessa and Kharkiv. According to the governor, two people were killed in another Russian attack on the Zaporizhzhia region. In addition, according to the regional governor, a Russian bomb attack in the city of Selydowe (Donetsk region) on 06.07.24 claimed five lives. According to the authorities, another three civilians were killed by Russian shelling near the city of Kherson on 06.07.24.⁴

War effort

According to Ukrainian military sources, the Russian Federation is maintaining a military presence on the border with the northern Ukrainian regions of Chernihiv and Sumy. Russian units are laying more and more minefields and carrying out acts of sabotage there. This section of the front is being closely monitored to spot any signs of Russian plans to open a new front there with the aim of exerting pressure on the numerically inferior Ukrainian troops, the sources said.⁵

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and energy infrastructure

According to the Russian nuclear authority, on 03.07.24 eight employees of the nearby Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant were injured in drone attacks on a substation in the city of Enerhodar during repair work. The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, repeatedly called for an end to the drone attacks on the nuclear power plant. The Ukrainian side has not yet issued any statement. Both sides have repeatedly blamed each other for attacks on or sabotage of the nuclear power plant.

According to media reports of 06.07.24, Russian drone attacks on the city of Sumy have disrupted the city's electricity and water supply. The media reports say that the Sumy region is being shelled almost daily from Russian positions on the other side of the border. In view of the ongoing Russian attacks on the energy infrastructure, the Ukrainian government is reportedly preparing an agreement with the EU to increase electricity imports.⁶

Court rulings and the prosecution of the "crime of aggression"

On 02.07.24, a special Ukrainian court sentenced the separatist leader of the Russian-occupied Luhansk region, Leonid Pasechnik, in absentia to twelve years in prison for "collaboration" with Moscow on the grounds that he had signed an agreement with the Kremlin on 21.02.22 that paved the way for the Russian invasion three days later. On 03.07.24, a Russian court sentenced an unnamed Crimean resident to 16 years in prison for preparing an explosive attack on a railway line. Furthermore, according to a Russian military court, the well-known Ukrainian journalist

Dmytro Gordon was sentenced in absentia to 14 years in prison for calling for the assassination of the two presidents Putin and Lukashenko.

The EU judicial authority Eurojust issued a statement saying that the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA), established in 2023, has received over 2,000 files of evidence from 14 countries. The centre intends to collect and secure documents relating to alleged violations of international law by the Russian Federation in its war of aggression against Ukraine to prepare for any potential later criminal proceedings. The ICPA therefore faces a difficult task, as there is currently no international judicial experience with the prosecution of the "crime of aggression". The offence was only added to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which forms the basis for criminal proceedings under international law, in 2010. Neither Ukraine nor the Russian Federation have ratified the Statute.⁷

15 July 2024

Civilian victims

According to media reports, a children's hospital in Kyiv and civilian infrastructure in Kyiv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih and Kropivnytskyi (Kirovohrad region) were damaged by Russian missile fire on 08.07.24. According to the reports, at least 27 people were killed in the capital, ten in Kryvyi Rih and one person in Dnipro. On 10.07.24, President Zelenskyy spoke of a total of 43 dead and 200 injured. Moscow has rejected the accusations that it attacked a children's hospital in Kiev and cited a Ukrainian defence missile as the cause. According to further media reports, a preliminary investigation by the UN Human Rights Office as well as the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice and several unnamed military experts concluded that it was a Russian missile after analysing images and videos. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) condemns the Russian attack, as the hospital uses radioactive material for cancer treatment. Furthermore, according to the responsible governor, two people were killed in a Russian missile attack on the Odesa region on 10.07.24. According to the authorities, two people were killed in Russian attacks on smaller towns in eastern and southern Ukraine on 13.07.24 near the city of Kharkiv, four in the Donetsk region and two in the Kherson region.⁸

War and recruitment

The Ukrainian public prosecutor's office stated that it has opened an investigation into the suspected shooting of two unarmed Ukrainian prisoners of war, which was allegedly carried out by Russian soldiers in the Zaporizhzhia region in June 2024.

According to media reports, tensions on the Ukrainian-Belarusian border have eased. President Alexander Lukashenko announced that after the Ukrainian troops left the sensitive area, his troops will also withdraw. Kyiv stated that Ukrainian units had merely expanded their defence positions along the border.

The Ministry of Defence in Kyiv has announced that Ukraine is seeking to recruit its male citizens subject to military service who are living in other European countries. As part of the recently signed Ukrainian-Polish security agreement, a unit called the "Ukrainian Legion" is to be created in Poland. All Ukrainians in Europe are to join this legion, according to an appeal by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov. The members of the unit are to be trained and equipped in Poland. According to Polish government information, several thousand Ukrainians living in Poland have signed up for such a planned volunteer brigade. According to Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, they have the right to return to Poland once they have left the front. Sikorski also hailed this initiative as an exemplary approach for other European countries.

In view of the mobilisation efforts of the Ukrainian armed forces, numerous conscripted men have gone into hiding to avoid the increasingly frequent checks in public areas. According to data of the Moldovan border police, around 15,000 Ukrainians of military age entered the Republic of Moldova illegally between 24.02.22 and 31.12.23. The trend gained considerable momentum in connection with the mobilisation law. Thus, more than 7,700 Ukrainians crossed the Ukrainian-Moldovan border illegally in the first five months of 2024.⁹

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant

In a resolution dated 11.07.24, the UN General Assembly called on Moscow to withdraw from the Ukrainian nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia. The legally non-binding resolution demands, among other things, "that the Russian

Federation urgently withdraw its military and other unauthorised personnel from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and immediately return the plant to the full control of the sovereign and competent authorities of Ukraine".¹⁰

Justice

According to the Russian public prosecutor's office, a court in Russian-occupied Donetsk sentenced a former OSCE employee to 14 years in prison for espionage. The Ukrainian, who comes from the region, is said to have collected data on industrial objects for a "foreign intelligence service" at the end of 2021. He was arrested in April 2022 together with other former members of the OSCE mission.¹¹

22 July 2024

Civilian casualties, missing persons and suspected war crimes

According to the regional prosecutor's office, five people were killed by Russian attacks in the Donetsk region on 18.07.24. According to the responsible regional governor, one person was killed by Russian shelling in the Kherson region on 19.07.24. In addition, the regional administration for the Russian-occupied areas of the Kherson region reported one fatality on 17.07.24 following Ukrainian shelling. According to local authorities, four people were killed in a Russian missile attack in Mykolaiv on 19.07.24. The regional law enforcement authorities reported that at least three civilians were also killed by Russian shelling in the Kharkiv region on 20.07.24. On the same day, according to police reports, one person was killed by Russian artillery fire in Nikopol (Dnipropetrovsk region). On 21.07.24, three people died in the Donetsk region and one in the Sumy region as a result of Russian shelling, the authorities stated. At the same time, Russian-controlled authorities in the Kherson region reported one person killed by Ukrainian shelling. In addition, the governor of the Lviv region announced that the Ukrainian politician and former member of parliament for the nationalist Svoboda party, Iryna Farion, was murdered in Lviv on 19.07.24. A manhunt is underway for the murderer.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, around 42,000 people are currently missing in Ukraine, most of them soldiers, but also civilians.

In its new report based on interviews with victims and eyewitnesses, the World Organisation Against Torture accuses Russian authorities and armed forces of allegedly committing crimes against humanity in the occupied territories of Ukraine between 24.02. and 31.10.22. According to the report, acts against civilians such as systematic and widespread arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and other crimes were not isolated incidents, but were based on a large-scale and coordinated chain of command and a deliberate policy orchestrated at the highest level of the Russian state.¹²

Energy infrastructure

On 16.07.24, the Ukrainian energy supplier Ukrenerho announced that emergency shutdowns will continue in several regions due to ongoing Russian air strikes on power plants and the current heatwave, which pushed electricity consumption to record levels.

Against the backdrop of the tense energy supply situation, the Ukrainian parliament has voted in favour of abolishing taxes and customs duties on the import of energy equipment such as generators, solar panels and electricity storage systems.¹³

War, recruitment, prisoner exchange and military tax

The Russian Ministry of Defence reported the capture of towns in the Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions, including the almost complete capture of the small town of Krasnohorivka (Donetsk region). The US research organisation Institute for the Study of War (ISW) confirmed the advance of Russian troops into the centre of Krasnohorivka after analysing geo-localised images. In addition, according to the Ukrainian military, Russian troop reinforcements have been detected in the Kharkiv region.

The Ukrainian investigation authority DBR reported that four Ukrainian military personnel attempted to illegally cross the border to the Republic of Moldova on 14.07.24, a physical confrontation resulted in which one deserter lost his life when he was shot by a Ukrainian border guard.

According to the authorities, a grenade was fired on a Ukrainian army recruitment centre in the small western Ukrainian town of Busk (Lviv region) on 15.07.24. A search is underway for a suspect. The government's increased recruitment efforts caused resentment in parts of the population.

Ukraine and the Russian Federation announced the exchange of 95 prisoners of war each on 17.07.24. The 54th exchange in total since 24.02.24 was arranged by the UAE.

According to media reports from 19.07.24, the Ukrainian government approved a draft law to amend the state budget and tax law. According to the bill, military tax for the Ukrainian population will be raised to finance the armed forces. According to government plans, the tax could increase from 1.5 % to 5 % of income. Around 500 billion hryvnia or EUR 12.4 billion shall be raised to finance the defence campaign by other, unspecified tax increases as well as by borrowing and reallocations of expenditures.¹⁴

Representative survey on peace negotiations

Despite Russia's refusal, President Zelenskyy has renewed his call for Moscow to take part in a second peace summit this year. According to a representative survey conducted by the renowned Razumkov Centre on behalf of the internet portal Dzerkalo Tyzhnia, only around a third of the Ukrainian population are strictly against negotiations with the Kremlin. Over 40 % are in favour of peace talks. Around a fifth of respondents are undecided. Particularly residents of central Ukraine (49 %) and southern Ukraine (60 %) are in favour of the start of official negotiations. In eastern Ukraine, a third are either in favour of or against the start of negotiations or are undecided. At the same time, over 80 % of respondents reject President Putin's call for further territorial cessions to Moscow; around 76 % reject the lifting of sanctions against the Russian Federation and around 60 % are against a neutral status for Ukraine. Kyiv's mayor Vitaly Klitschko advised President Zelenskyy not to decide on possible territorial cessions to Moscow alone, but recommended a referendum in such a case.¹⁵

29 July 2024

Civilian victims

According to local authorities, one person was killed by Russian rocket fire in Kherson and Kharkiv on 24.07.24. The authorities informed that three people were killed by Russian shelling on 27.07.24 in the Kherson region, one person in the small town of Hlukhiv near the Russian border (Sumy region) and another person near the town of Chuhujiv (Kharkiv region).

The human rights organisation Amnesty International is calling for an investigation into the use and whereabouts of anti-personnel mines in Ukraine. The Russian armed forces have deliberately placed mines in (formerly) occupied Ukrainian territories, including in residential buildings, in order to maim and kill people.

According to the local military administration, cholera has broken out in Avdiivka, which has been under Russian occupation since February 2024. Entry and exit to the city is blocked. Russian troops in protective suits are delivering a minimum amount of food to the remaining population.¹⁶

War efforts

According to the Ukrainian navy, Moscow has withdrawn all its ships from the Sea of Azov. The Ukrainian navy attributes this to successful attacks on Russian targets in the annexed Crimea and the Black Sea. According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Russian forces advanced in the vicinity of Vovchansk (Kharkiv region), Donetsk, Siversk and Toretsk (Donetsk region). While Pokrovsk (Donetsk region) remains heavily contested, Russian advances were made near Kharkiv and Avdiivka (Donetsk region). The Ukrainian military leadership, however, relativised the Russian's territorial gains, stating that the gains on the front were merely tactical in nature and did not provide an operational advantage. According to the latest ISW information, Ukrainian forces recently advanced near Vovchansk, while the Ukrainian military intelligence service HUR sees the Russian attack priorities around the Donbass.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian parliament has extended the current period of validity of martial law and mobilisation from 12.08.24 for a further three months until the beginning of November. President Zelenskyy has yet to sign the extension. The eleventh extension since 24.02.22 had been decided in May 2024.¹⁷

Recruitment and care of war invalids

The Ukrainian ambassador in Chişinău has called on the Moldovan government to extradite to Ukraine all Ukrainian men of military age who are fleeing conscription, illegally entering the Republic of Moldova and are not granted political asylum there. Both the Moldovan General Inspectorate for Migration and the Ministry of the Interior rejected this, stating that European standards regarding the rights of war refugees must be observed. According to media reports from 25.07.24, the Ukrainian border guard recently prevented eleven conscripted men in the Vinnytsia region and 15 in the Odessa region from fleeing to the Republic of Moldova.

In view of the tens of thousands of injured and traumatised soldiers, President Zelenskyy has ordered the construction of a modern rehabilitation hospital. Stabilisation centres with medical care are also required in the combat zones, he said and also instructed the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff to digitise the medical information system in order to be able to help injured soldiers and those returning home from Russian captivity more efficiently.¹⁸

05 August 2024

Civilian casualties and evacuations

According to regional governors, three people in Toretsk and one person in Hrodivka were killed by Russian shelling in the Donetsk region on 29.07.24. According to media reports from 01.08.24, another two civilians were killed by Russian shelling in Marynivka (Donetsk region). The regional governors reported on 01.08.24 that one person was killed by Russian shelling in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions, respectively. Two more people died in Nikopol (Dnipropetrovsk region). Former Russian opposition politician Ilya Ponomarev was injured in a Russian drone attack near Kyiv on 01.08.24. According to media reports from 04.08.24, one person was killed by Russian fire in the Donetsk region.

According to media reports from 05.08.24, the governor of the Donetsk region announced an evacuation order for children, their parents and legal guardians living in areas close to the front line. As a result, 744 children and their families were relocated from the town of Novohrodivka (20 kilometres from the front), to four other regions of the country. A volunteer evacuation assistant informed that the number of evacuation requests in the embattled areas of the Donetsk region has increased tenfold in the last two weeks.¹⁹

War effort

Heavy fighting continues in the Donetsk region, with Russian troops attempting to break through the Ukrainian defences. Russian attacks are mounting pressure on the strategic logistics centre of Pokrovsk. According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Russian troops are advancing further in the strategically important small town of Chasiv Yar and have crossed the natural defence line of the Seversky Donets-Donbas Canal. The Russian forces have gained approximately 57 square kilometres of territory within a week. According to the Ukrainian commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrskyj, these minor territorial gains were achieved at the price of heavy losses for the Russian units. Meanwhile, Ukraine has received its first F-16 fighter jets from the US. According to the Ukrainian General Staff, a Russian submarine from the Black Sea Fleet was sunk and the defences of the Kerch Bridge were destroyed. President Zelenskyy said in an interview that he would not agree to ceding territory as part of any peace settlement with Moscow without the consent of his people.²⁰

Energy supply

According to the state energy company Ukrenerho, the energy supply situation is currently improving. For the first time in a month, the country did not experience any power cuts on 30.07.24. Prime Minister Denys Schmyhal explained that electricity was imported from the EU to close the gap in power generation. Preparations are also being made for the cold season and alternative sources of power generation are being developed. Meanwhile, in a report for 2024 and 2025, the Ukrainian central bank predicts continued emigration due to the tense energy situation and the slow normalisation of economic conditions, it expects a trend reversal from 2026.²¹

12 August 2024

Civilian victims

According to media reports from 07.08.24, at least one person was killed in a Russian missile attack in Kharkiv. The Sumy regional military administration announced that two people were killed by a Russian bomb attack in the north of the region on 08.08.24. On the same day, two people were killed by Russian shelling in Kostyantynivka and Selydove (Donetsk region). According to Ukrainian authorities, at least 14 people were killed by a Russian missile attack in Kostyantynivka on 09.08.24. According to media reports from 11.08.24, two people died in a Russian attack near Kyiv. On the same day, Ukrainian authorities reported three fatalities following Russian attacks in the Donetsk and Kharkiv regions.²²

War effort

According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Russian troops have advanced further near Toretsk and Pokrovsk (Donetsk region). A report by the Russian National Security Council on 06.08.24, according to which the Russian armed forces have captured approx. 420 km² of Ukrainian territory since mid-June 2020, was rejected by the ISW as "vastly exaggerated", they say that actually approx. 290 km² have been captured.

After Ukrainian forces advanced into the Russian region of Kursk on 06.08.24, the Ukrainian authorities ordered the evacuation of around 20,000 people in the neighbouring Sumy region. President Zelenskyy commented on the counterattack on 08.08.24 that Moscow must "feel the consequences" of its war and explained the operation two days later as part of Ukrainian efforts to restore justice after the Russian invasion in 2022. On 07.08.24, President Zelenskyy approved the draft laws to extend martial law and general mobilisation for a further 90 days (12.08. to 09.11.24).

According to the head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, 95% of Ukrainian soldiers captured by the Russian side are tortured. They are "tortured during the first interrogations, including with metal rods and sticks, stripped of their clothes, brutally beaten and tortured with electric shocks". The information comes from Ukrainian soldiers who were released from Russian captivity.²³

Recruitment

According to media reports, protesters in Kovel (Volyn region) attempted to force their way into a local recruitment centre on 03.08.24 to demand the release of a small group of young men who, in their view, were being held there illegally as part of the country's increased mobilisation efforts. This was triggered by the temporary arrest and transfer of the individuals to the recruitment centre due to a lack of military registration documents. According to local media, they were released on the same day.

Ukrainian border guards have arrested 48 conscripts, the largest group of suspected Ukrainian draft evaders to date. They were travelling in a lorry via the Odessa region to the Moldovan region of Transnistria, which is controlled by pro-Russian forces. They are said to have paid the escape helpers the equivalent of over EUR 3,300 per person.

A survey by the news agency epd shows that in Germany generally no replacement travel documents are issued to Ukrainian men of military age who do not have a valid passport. According to the survey, the responsible ministries in the federal states confirm that it is reasonable for men of military age to travel to Ukraine to obtain a passport and to do their compulsory military service.²⁴

Judgement

According to media reports, on 08.08.24, a Russian military court sentenced a Ukrainian citizen to six and a half years in a high-security prison for allegedly attempting to assassinate Kostyantyn Ivashchenko, the then mayor of Mariupol (Donetsk region) appointed by Moscow, in August 2022.²⁵

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant

According to media reports from 12.08.24, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced that heavy smoke was seen in the northern area of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant following several explosions. The IAEA reported no impact on nuclear safety. Both warring parties accused each other of having started a fire. According to the statement of a Russian official of 12.08.24, the fire was extinguished.²⁶

19 August 2024

Civilian victims

According to media reports from 14.08.24, a civilian was killed by Russian fire in the Sumy region. The regional authorities said on 15.08.24 that one person was killed by a Russian drone attack in the Kharkiv region. On 15.08.24, the media reported that two people died as a result of Russian attacks in the Kharkiv region, one in the Donetsk region and two in the Kherson region. According to Russian media reports from 16.08.24, at least two people were killed in a Ukrainian attack in Donetsk.²⁷

War effort and corruption in recruitment centres

According to media reports, the heaviest fighting is still taking place in the Donetsk region, with Russian troops advancing towards Pokrovsk. The authorities have called on the population of Pokrovsk to leave the city. The Ukrainian General Staff has also temporarily restricted the movement of the population of parts of the Sumy region within a radius of twenty kilometres due to potential Russian sabotage and reconnaissance operations. According to the governor's statement of 12.08.24, the number of Russian attacks with guided bombs on the Kharkiv region had decreased significantly in the previous days. Nevertheless, a stricter curfew is planned for around 100 settlements in the border area due to Russian attacks. Overall, according to Ukrainian military information, the main front in Ukraine has not been relieved despite the Ukrainian advance on Russian territory.

President Zelenskyy describes the Ukrainian offensive in the Russian region of Kursk as a security measure, as the Ukrainian border region of Sumy has been repeatedly attacked from there. According to Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko, the operation is intended to create a buffer zone to protect the Ukrainian border region. Presidential adviser Mychajlo Podoljak explained that Moscow must be forced to participate in a peace summit, as it will not do so voluntarily. The Foreign Ministry stated that Kyiv is not interested in "taking over" Russian territory. The Ukrainian offensive would stop if the Russian side agreed to "restore a just peace". Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk assured that Ukraine would open humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of civilians to both the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The heads of two recruitment centres near Kyiv were arrested for accepting approximately USD 1 million in bribes for the exemption of conscripts. At least 20 recruits were declared unfit for military service on the basis of falsified medical reports.²⁸

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and corruption in the energy ministry

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 17.08.24, the safety of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has once again been jeopardised. The Russian plant management reported a Ukrainian drone attack on an access road to the nuclear power plant and spoke of a threat to personnel. The accusation has not yet been independently verified.

According to a statement by the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office on 12.08.24, one of the four deputy energy ministers and other suspects were arrested on suspicion of corruption when they accepted a USD 500,000 bribe for smuggling mining equipment from a state coal mining company in the combat zone in the Donetsk region. The newspaper Ukrainska Pravda identified the alleged main perpetrator as Oleksandr Chejlo.²⁹

Judgement

According to a statement issued by the Russian General Prosecutor's Office on 15.08.24, a court in the Russian-occupied Kherson region has sentenced a Ukrainian citizen to ten and a half years in prison for spying for the Ukrainian military. The woman, who allegedly helped Ukrainian civilians to leave the Russian-occupied territories, has already been in Russian custody for over two years.³⁰

Ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

According to a statement from the President's Office on 15.08.24, President Zelenskyy introduced a bill on ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its amendments to parliament. Ukraine already signed the statute in 2000 but has not yet ratified it.³¹

26 August 2024

Civilian victims

According to media reports from 21.08.24, one person died after a Russian attack in the Zaporizhzhia region. According to the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office on 22.08.2014, one person was killed in a Russian air strike in the Kharkiv region. According to the prosecutor's office, another four people were killed by two Russian air strikes in the Sumy region on 23.08.24. During a visit to the Sumy region on 22.08.24, President Zelenskyy had previously stated that the number of attacks and civilian fatalities there had decreased overall since the Kursk offensive was underway. According to the governor, the bodies of three civilians were recovered in the Kharkiv region on 23.08.24. The authorities also reported three further fatalities in the Kherson and Donetsk regions. According to media reports from 25.08.24, five people were killed in a Russian attack in Kostyantynivka (Donetsk region) the day before. According to Ukrainian military information, a total of four people were killed following Russian attacks on the border regions of Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Donetsk on 25.08.24.³²

War effort

The Ukrainian military informed that their armed forces are still on the defensive in the Donetsk region. President Zelenskyy described the situation in the Pokrovsk and Toretsk sectors as "difficult". 53,000 inhabitants had still been living in Pokrovsk at last count. Many of them have already complied with the evacuation orders and left the city, which is important for supplying the Ukrainian troops. The capture of the important railway junction of Nju Jork in the Toretsk sector reported by the Russian side has so far only been indirectly confirmed by the Ukrainian military leadership, as the General Staff's situation report no longer classifies the location as contested. Both warring parties have declared their intention to reinforce their troops in the Pokrovsk region, the main focus of the Russian offensive. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian armed forces group Tavria reported that Russian ground attacks in the southern Ukrainian front section in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions have decreased, but that Russian air strikes are still being flown there. According to an assessment by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Moscow has withdrawn troops from Ukraine for the first time in order to boost its defence in the Kursk region. The report says that the Russian military leadership has redeployed troops from the southern Ukrainian region of Zaporizhzhia but is trying not to weaken the main front in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk. For the first time since the Ukrainian Kursk offensive, both warring parties have exchanged 115 prisoners of war each, including Russian soldiers captured in the Kursk region, following mediation by the UAE.

After Belarus had previously announced a build-up of troops in the border area with Ukraine in response to an alleged deployment of 120,000 soldiers on the Ukrainian side, Ukraine called on Belarus to withdraw them on 25.08.24 and warned that it would make "tragic mistakes" under pressure from Moscow.³³

Energy infrastructure

Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko is forecasting a difficult winter as the damage to the energy infrastructure resulting from the Russian air strikes has accumulated. Despite power plant repairs and energy imports, a supply shortfall is expected. The extent of power cuts and heating failures will depend on how cold the winter is. The Ukrainian government is currently working on contracts for electricity imports. The air defence of the power plants that are still operational is to be strengthened as well.³⁴

New law with implications for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

On 20.08.24, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law paving the way for a ban of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UPC), which is considered to be loyal to Moscow. The law bans the Russian Orthodox Church (RPC) on Ukrainian territory. The law also provides for a ban, still to be confirmed by a court, on religious organisations associated with the RPC, which supported the Russian war of aggression. After being signed by the President on 24.08.24, the law is to come into force 30 days after publication. According to member of parliament Yaroslav Shelesnyak the individual parishes will have nine months to break away from Moscow.³⁵

Ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

On 21.08.24, the Ukrainian parliament ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), thereby fulfilling a prerequisite for the country's aspired EU accession. According to presidential advisor Iryna Mudra, the ratification will increase the effectiveness of the ICC in prosecuting crimes committed by Russian nationals on

Ukrainian territory. According to media reports, the law contains a clause according to which Ukraine will not recognise the jurisdiction of the ICC for seven years in cases in which the crimes prosecuted by the ICC may have been committed by Ukrainian nationals.³⁶

02 September 2024

Civilian victims

Media report the killing of at least seven people by massive Russian drone and missile attacks on several regions in Ukraine on 26.08.24. The governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region said that at least two people died in a Russian missile strike in the city of Kryvyi Rih. At the same time, local authorities reported one death each in Zaporizhzhia and Lutsk (Volyn region). According to the governor, another Russian missile attack on Kryvyi Rih on 27.08.24 killed four civilians in a hotel. On 28.08.24, President Zelenskyy informed that a Russian bomb attack on the city of Kupiansk (Kharkiv region) resulted in an unspecified number of casualties. According to the regional governor, a total of six people were killed by Russian attacks in the Donetsk region on 28.08.24. The governor of the Donetsk region reported that at least one person died in Kostyantynivka on 29.08.24 as a result of Russian shelling. In the city of Sumy, two people were killed in a Russian attack according to information from the public prosecutor's office on 30.08.24, while the governor responsible for the city of Kharkiv reported at least seven fatalities from a Russian bomb attack. Another Russian bomb attack in the Kharkiv region on 31.08.24 claimed two lives, according to the regional governor. On the same day, according to military reports, five people died in Chasiv Yar (Donetsk region) in Russian shelling. According to media reports from 02.09.24, three more people were killed in the city of Kurakhove (Donetsk region) by Russian shelling.³⁷

War effort

According to the military, 102 out of 127 missiles and 99 out of 109 drones were intercepted during the Russian wave of attacks on a total of 15 Ukrainian regions on 26.08.24. Nevertheless, according to President Zelenskyy, the energy sector suffered "major damage". This was the heaviest air attack since February 2022.

When commenting on the situation on the eastern front, the Ukrainian commander-in-chief, Oleksandr Syrskyy said that fierce fighting was already taking place ten kilometres from the city of Pokrovsk. According to the governor, further evacuations have been ordered in the Donetsk region due to the continued advance of Russian troops. The zone for forced evacuations has been extended to a total of 27 localities in the frontline area around Kostyantynivka and Selydove.

According to the Ukrainian border guard, no troop movements have been detected in Belarus to date. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry had previously reported major movements of troops and equipment near the border with Ukraine (cf. BN of 26.08.24).

One day after the crash of an F-16 fighter jet recently delivered by the US, President Zelenskyy dismissed the commander of the Ukrainian air force, Mykola Oleshchuk, on 30.08.24 without giving reasons and replaced him temporarily with Anatoly Kryvonoshko. It cannot yet be ruled out that the plane was downed because it was accidentally shot by the air force's own air defence. The incident is under investigation.³⁸

Energy infrastructure

Following the Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, particularly on 26.08.24, but also in the days thereafter, the Ukrainian authorities are endeavouring to assess and repair the damage. According to state utility Ukrenerho, power cuts in the country have been extended to relieve the pressure on the grid. The capital and eleven other areas in eastern and central Ukraine are affected. The previous plans for staggered shutdowns had been temporarily suspended, which meant, for example, that some neighbourhoods in Kyiv only had a twelve-hour power supply throughout the day, the utility said. Many shops, banks and restaurants maintain emergency operations with diesel generators.

According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, the attacks targeted gas compressor stations and substations that supplied power to Ukraine's military-industrial complex. Following the attacks, US President Biden said that the US would "provide Ukraine with energy equipment to repair its systems and strengthen the resilience of Ukraine's energy grid".

The air strikes also caused damage to a hydroelectric power plant in the Kyiv region. According to the authorities there is, however, no threat to the dam on the Dnipro River. The situation is therefore not comparable to the destruction of the Kakhovka dam in 2023. In addition, the Ukrainian government announced the temporary shutdown of four reactor units at the Rivne nuclear power plant, also as a result of the Russian air strikes.³⁹

09 September 2024

Civilian casualties and evacuation situation

According to the governor, one person was killed in a Russian missile attack on the city of Dnipro on 02.09.24. The governor responsible for the Zaporizhzhia region reported two fatalities on 03.09.24. According to Ukrainian authorities, at least 58 people died in a Russian missile attack on Poltava. A military training centre and a neighbouring hospital were hit. So far, there is no information on how many victims were military personnel and how many civilians. According to the public prosecutor's office, one person died in Kostyantynivka (Donetsk region) as a result of Russian shelling on 04.09.24. On the same day, a Russian missile attack in Lviv claimed seven lives, according to Ukrainian authorities. The Russian occupation authorities said that three people were killed by Ukrainian shelling in the city of Donetsk on 04.09.24. A Russian missile attack on the transport hub of Pavlohrad (Dnipropetrovsk region) on 06.09.24 claimed one life, according to the governor. The Sumy region prosecutor's office reported one person killed on 06.09.24 following a Russian air strike. According to the regional military administration, two civilians died in the city of Sumy after a Russian air strike on 09.09.24. The governor of the Donetsk region reported three fatalities in Kostyantynivka and two fatalities near the city of Toretsk from Russian shelling on 08.09.24. According to media reports from 09.09.24, a further three fatalities were reported for the Donetsk region and two for the Kharkiv region.

According to Caritas International, around 100,000 Ukrainians are currently fleeing the city of Pokrovsk (Donetsk region) and the surrounding area. Most of them are trying to find shelter in Dnipro in central Ukraine. Due to the tense security situation, the evacuation of civilians by train from the strategically important city has been suspended, the military administration informed. The departure station has been transferred to Pavlohrad, around 90 kilometres to the west. A bus service will be set up for the transfer. According to the Ukrainian railway company, the departure points for special evacuation trains will vary in future. However, regular trains will continue to run to and from Pokrovsk, where 30,000 people are still stranded. Due to increasing Russian shelling in the Sumy region, evacuation efforts have been extended to a further five villages in two districts close to the border, according to the governor responsible.⁴⁰

War effort and renewed accusations of Russian war crimes

According to data from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), which was analysed by the AFP news agency, the Russian armed forces took control of around 477 km² of Ukrainian territory in August 2024. This is the largest monthly gain since October 2022.

The Ukrainian General Prosecutor's Office again accused the Russian side of killing prisoners of war, citing corresponding internet videos. Investigations have been initiated against Russian soldiers for the alleged shooting of three surrendering Ukrainian soldiers on 27.08.24 near Pokrovsk (Donetsk region). The authorities have already registered more than 60 cases of alleged shootings during capture. The total number of Ukrainian soldiers allegedly killed in Russian captivity exceeds 110.⁴¹

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant

During his visit to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant on 04.09.24, the Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, described the situation there as "very fragile". He said that drone strikes could cause another blackout at any time, up to now there have already been eight blackouts. He had agreed to a Ukrainian request to extend the inspections to the substations that supply the Ukrainian nuclear power plants with electricity. In view of the extensive damage to a cooling tower caused by a fire in August 2024, for which both warring parties blamed each other, Grossi now assumes that the cooling tower will have to be demolished. According to the Ukrainian grid operator Enerhoatom, the power supply to the nuclear power plant was damaged by Russian shelling on 02.09.24.⁴²

Government reshuffle

On 03.09.24, President Zelenskyy announced an extensive reshuffle of his government, as well as a change in the presidential administration. He said that he intended to strengthen the government for the coming months by exchanging personnel: "The autumn will be extremely important for Ukraine. And our state institutions must be organised in such a way that Ukraine achieves all the results we need [...]". At the same time, the chairman of the parliamentary group of the ruling party "Servants of the People", Davyd Arachamiya, announced that over 50 % of the cabinet of ministers would be replaced. The dismissals would become effective on 04.09.24 and the appointments would be made on the following day, he said. The replacement of the respected Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba by his former deputy Andriy Sybiha caused an international stir. Other areas affected include defence, justice, the environment, EU integration, regional and refugee affairs. The state electricity grid operator Ukrenerho will also receive a new management. Media reports say that voices critical of the reshuffle consider it to be a consolidation of power by a small group of people loyal to the president who are linked to the head of the presidential office, Andriy Yermak.⁴³

16 September 2024

Civilian victims

According to media reports from 09.09.24, one person was rescued after a Russian attack in the city of Nikopol (Dnipropetrovsk region). The public prosecutor's office informed that three people were killed in a Russian artillery attack in the Kharkiv region on 12.09.24. On the same day, one person was killed in another attack near the town of Jampil (Sumy region), according to local authorities. Also on 12.09.24, according to government information, Russian artillery fire hit vehicles belonging to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) near the front line in the Donetsk region, killing three Ukrainian ICRC employees. The governor said that at least seven people died in Russian attacks in the cities of Odessa and Hulyaypole (Zaporizhzhia region) and in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions on 14.09.24. According to the mayor, at least one person was killed in a Russian bomb attack on Kharkiv on 15.09.24.

UN Human Rights Commissioner Volker Türk is concerned about the impact of the recent escalation of fighting on the civilian population. According to his statement to the UN Human Rights Council, he is concerned about the Ukrainian population in view of Russian attacks on civilian facilities and energy infrastructure as winter approaches. Previously, on 06.09.24, the EU announced a new aid package of EUR 40 million to provide humanitarian aid to those in need in Ukraine ahead of the winter months, particularly for repairing damaged buildings, ensuring electricity and heating and providing shelter.⁴⁴

War effort

According to Ukrainian military information, the Russian side recently succeeded only in making minor territorial gains in the Pokrovsk area (Donetsk region), which is why the Russian forces have now extended their axis of attack to the south. As a result, heavy fighting is currently taking place in the Kurakhove area, a town around 30 kilometres south of Pokrovsk.

As part of a new exchange of prisoners of war arranged by the UAE on 14.09.24, 103 people, mainly military personnel from both warring parties, were released. Ukrainian members of the police and border guards were also handed over. In total, more than 50 such exchanges have already taken place.⁴⁵

Energy infrastructure

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said on 10.09.24 that the government is in the final phase of talks with its European partners regarding the expansion of electricity import capacities. These are to be increased from 1.7 to 2.2 gigawatts. After the country has successfully survived three heating seasons, according to Mr Shmyhal, the government is now expecting the most difficult winter since the start of the war due to the systematic Russian bombings of Ukraine's energy infrastructure.⁴⁶

"Language inspectors" in Ivano-Frankivsk

In the light of the arrival of primarily Russian-speaking internally displaced persons from eastern Ukraine, the mayor of the western Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk, Ruslan Martsinkiv, has announced his intention to counteract the

increase in the use of Russian in public spaces in order to ensure that the city remains "as Ukrainian-speaking as possible". Following an appeal by a citizens' initiative, around 50 volunteers have already signed up to act as so-called "language inspectors". The aim is to be able to deploy at least 100 such inspectors. In addition to setting up a telephone hotline where the local population can complain about people speaking Russian in public, Ukrainian language courses are also to be advertised. The language patrols will, however, not be vested with any legal powers, but will merely provide information, reports said.⁴⁷

23 September 2024

Civilian victims

According to the responsible governor, two people were killed by Russian shelling in the small town of Komyshevukha (Zaporizhzhia region) on 17.09.24. Media reports of 18.09.24 report one person dead in the town of Kropyvnytskyi (Kirovohrad region) as a result of a Russian air strike. Also as a result of a Russian air strike, at least one civilian was killed in the city of Sumy on 19.09.24. According to media reports from 19.09.24, one civilian was killed in a Russian air strike in the Zaporizhzhia region. On 21.09.24, the media reported three fatalities following Russian air strikes in the city of Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk region) and two fatalities in the Kharkiv region. In addition, one civilian was reported killed by Russian shelling near the city of Kherson.⁴⁸

War effort, military financing and execution of prisoners of war

According to a statement by President Zelenskyy on 18.09.24, a comprehensive "victory plan" to end the war has now been "fully worked out" and is to be discussed with President Biden during his state visit to the US. The specifics of the plan are not yet known. Zelenskyy merely commented: "There is no alternative to peace, no freezing of the war or other manipulations that would only postpone Russian aggression to another phase." The President also declared his intention to organise another international peace summit in November, to which Moscow would also be invited. The Russian Foreign Ministry has already responded by cancelling such a summit. It would only discuss "serious proposals" that reflect the "geopolitical reality on the ground".

In order to be able to pay soldiers their frontline allowances for September, the Ukrainian parliament has passed a supplementary budget with EUR 10 billion in additional expenditure, primarily for the military. Ukrainian budget expenditure has thus reached a record EUR 81 billion. The increase in expenditure is to be financed by higher tax revenues, EU loans and savings in the social sector.

The spokesperson for the "Coordination Council" responsible for Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians in Russian hands, Petro Yatsenko, has pointed out that the number of executions carried out by Russian military personnel has increased in the course of the large-scale Russian invasion. The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine registered the execution of 32 soldiers in the period from December 2023 to February 2024 alone. According to Yatsenko, this is evidenced by photos and videos from Russian sources or footage of Ukrainian drones. The executions are not only intended to spread fear in Ukraine, but are also a signal to Russian soldiers not to surrender. He assumes that the incidents are part of Russian state policy.⁴⁹

Energy infrastructure and international support

As a result of a major Russian drone attack in the Sumy region on 17.09.24, a fire broke out in a substation, causing power outages in large parts of the region, according to the relevant military administration and the Ministry of Energy. As a result, emergency teams endeavoured to repair the damage and tap into reserve capacities for water and other supply infrastructure. According to the authorities, hospitals and waterworks, for example, were supplied with electricity via reserve lines. Later, the power supply was partially restored.

With winter approaching, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has called on Ukraine's partners to support the country's energy supply, which is under enormous pressure, in order to guarantee the supply of electricity and heat to the population. An IEA report says that Ukraine's electricity supply shortfall in the critical winter months could reach around a third of the expected peak demand. Specifically, the IEA therefore called for the following assistance: increased protection of the energy infrastructure against attacks and cyberattacks, deliveries of spare parts, accelerated decentralisation of the power supply and expansion of capacities for electricity and gas imports from the EU. Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine declared that the attacks on the power grid probably violate international humanitarian law.

According to EU Commission President von der Leyen, Ukraine will receive further EU aid totalling EUR 160 million for repair work, the expansion of renewable energies, mobile heaters and accommodation. For this purpose, frozen Russian assets in the EU will be accessed for the first time. To date, around EUR 2 billion in EU aid have been channelled into the Ukrainian energy sector. With EU support, around 25 % of the electricity demand could be secured. The remaining energy must be generated in Ukraine. Germany is also providing Ukraine with a further EUR 100 million in winter aid, Foreign Minister Baerbock said during a visit to the neighbouring republic of Moldova.⁵⁰

Appeals by Crimean Tatars rejected by Russian court

The Supreme Court of the Russian Federation (RF) has rejected the appeals of four Crimean Tatars sentenced to long prison terms. The sentences from October 2021 were based on accusations of extremism, as the four Crimean residents were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT). While HuT was classified as an extremist organisation and banned in the Russian Federation, it is permitted in Ukraine.⁵¹

30 September 2024

Civilian victims, torture, abduction and re-education of Ukrainian children

According to Ukrainian authorities on 23.09.24, one person was killed in a Russian attack in the Kherson region. According to the governor, one person was killed in another Russian attack on Zaporizhzhia on 23.09.24. Also as a result of a Russian attack, three civilians were killed in Kharkiv on 24.09.24, according to the authorities. According to media reports from 25.09.24, another person was killed in another Russian attack in the Zaporizhzhia region. The previous day, a civilian was killed by Russian fire in the Sumy region. According to the governor, at least two people were killed in a Russian bomb attack in Kramatorsk (Donetsk region) on 25.09.24. According to the responsible governor, one person died near the city of Kherson as a result of Russian shelling on 26.09.24. In the port city of Ismajil on the Danube (Odessa region), at least three people died in a Russian drone attack, the authorities informed on 27.09.24. Also on 27.09.24, at least four people were killed in a Russian missile attack in the city of Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk region). According to the authorities, at least ten people were killed in two Russian attacks on a hospital in Sumy on 28.09.24, with the second attack occurring when the rescue services were evacuating hospital staff and patients. According to the governor, a total of four civilians were also killed in two Russian air strikes in the Kharkiv region on 28.09.24, including a judge of the Supreme Court of Ukraine.

According to a communication from a commission of enquiry commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council on 23.09.24, new evidence of "widespread and systematic torture by Russian state authorities and armed forces against Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war" is emerging. According to a report forwarded to the Council, torture, including sexual violence, are used "as a common and acceptable practice [...] with impunity" in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation itself. The commission also stated that medical care for Ukrainian prisoners is deliberately withheld in Russian-controlled prisons and that doctors are even involved in torture in one prison.

According to media reports from 24.09.24, Ukrainian human rights groups, together with Freedom House, have called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate Belarus and the Russian Federation as they have evidence that "hundreds of Ukrainian children were forcibly brought to Belarus during Russia's large-scale invasion and are being "re-educated" to turn against their homeland". Accordingly, the report submitted to the ICC documents the "political indoctrination and military re-education of Ukrainian children on the territory of Belarus." In addition to information on the financing and implementation of the "re-education programme", the report also lists 18 identified institutions in Belarus and 2,219 Ukrainian children aged six and over who were affected. According to a statement by Ukrainian Human Rights Commissioner Dmytro Lubinets, nine children who had been transferred to the Russian Federation were able to return to Ukraine on 27.09.24 through the mediation of Qatar.⁵²

War effort

According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, the small town of Ukrainsk (Donetsk region) has been captured by the Russian armed forces. It is located on the fiercely contested section of the front between Pokrovsk, Kurakhove and the town of Vuhledar, which is surrounded by Russian troops. While confirmation from the Kyiv military leadership is still pending, Ukrainian military observers have been labelling the situation near Ukrainsk as Russian-controlled for days.⁵³

Energy infrastructure

According to a statement from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), EUR 70 million is to be made available to Ukraine for the winter to equip cities and municipalities with small-scale combined heat and power plants, boilers, generators and solar power systems. The BMZ hopes that this will help to rebuild the power supply and decentralise it. The Ukrainian Ministry of Energy assumes that, despite repair efforts, noticeable power cuts in winter will be unavoidable.⁵⁴

Russian judgement against Ukrainian after accusation of espionage

The Supreme Court of Russian-occupied Crimea announced on 23.09.24 that it had sentenced a Ukrainian citizen to 14 years in prison for espionage. The trial initially took place in March 2024 in the Russian region of Sverdlovsk and was later transferred to Crimea. The defendant was accused of collecting military data in the partially Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region for the Ukrainian secret service.⁵⁵

07 October 2024

Civilian casualties

According to information from the local public prosecutor's office, seven civilians were killed at a marketplace in a Russian artillery attack on the city of Kherson on 01.10.24. The regional governor has stated that a further person died in attacks in the following days. Three people, including a baby, died in a Russian drone attack in the Chernihiv region on 03.10.24. According to information from the governor, one person also died in a drone attack in the Kharkiv region on the night of 05.10.24. The authorities have reported that four people have died as a result of Russian shelling in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions.⁵⁶

Course of the war

According to consistent information from the warring parties, the fortified city of Vuhledar (Donetsk region), which had been fought over virtually continuously since February 2022, has been taken by the Russian forces. According to the Ukrainian military leadership, the retreat took place on the evening of 01.10.24 in view of the impending complete encirclement of the city and the need to protect personnel and military equipment. According to information from the regional governor, only 107 of the original population of around 14,000 have remained in the city. On 30.09.24, president Zelenskyy had described the situation on all sections of the front in Ukraine as "very, very difficult". Observers note that the Russian forces are continually advancing, particularly in the east of Ukraine, and presently at a comparatively fast pace.⁵⁷

Treatment of prisoners of war

According to a report published by the UN High Commission for Human Rights on 01.10.24, 97 % of interviewed Ukrainian prisoners of war and 51 % of their Russian counterparts have reported mistreatment and torture by security personnel of the other warring party. According to information from the UN, mistreatment and torture, including heavy beatings, electric shocks, dog attacks, simulated executions and sexual violence are practised systematically in all stages of captivity in Russia and the Russian-occupied territories, while in the Ukraine unlawful physical violence is also a common occurrence directly after combatants are seized. From the time of arrival at the detention camps, however, the report states that the Russian prisoners of war are treated correctly in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

In contrast, the Ukrainian chief public prosecutor's office has by its own account on 04.10.24 evidence of 93 instances of Ukrainian prisoners of war being executed by Russian soldiers in the battle zone. Shortly before this report, the chief public prosecutor's office had announced that it was conducting an investigation into a further such case which may be the largest incident of this type: 16 Ukrainian soldiers are alleged to have been shot dead after surrendering to Russian troops in the area close to the city of Pokrovsk (Donetsk region). Back in the spring of this year, a report published by the UN documented the executions of 32 prisoners of war from Ukraine in the period from December 2023 to February 2024.⁵⁸

Pro-Russian employee at Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station assassinated

It has been reported in the international press that the security chief of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station was killed by a car bomb planted by the Ukrainian military intelligence service in the Russian-occupied city of Enerhodar (Zaporizhzhia region) on 04.10.24. He was accused of voluntarily cooperating with the occupying authorities and denouncing pro-Ukrainian employees of the Russian-controlled power station.⁵⁹

14 October 2024

Civilian casualties

It was reported in the media on 08.10.24 that Russian attacks killed two people in the Sumy region and one person each in the Kherson region and in Sloviansk (Donetsk region) respectively. According to information from the regional governor, Russian missile attacks on the port of Odessa on 07.10. and 09.10.24 claimed one and eight lives respectively. According to the regional authorities, two people were killed in Kharkiv on 08.10.24. According to information from the governor, four civilians died in a further Russian missile attack on Odessa on 11.10.24. The regional public prosecutor's office stated on 12.10.24 that two people had been killed near Kurakhove (Donetsk region).

Ukraine's human rights commissioner, Dmytro Lubinets, reported on 11.10.24 that the Ukrainian journalist Victoria Roshchyna had died in Russian detention. The freelance journalist, who worked for Ukrainska Pravda, Radio Free Europe and Hromadske, disappeared in August 2023 while reporting from occupied eastern Ukraine. The Russian defence ministry only provided notification that she had been taken prisoner in April 2024.

Lubinets stated that the Russian authorities had confirmed Roshchyna's death. No information as to the circumstances of her death has been forthcoming to date.⁶⁰

Course of the war and recruitment

The Ukrainian military stated on 07.10.24 that Russian troops had advanced into the town of Toretsk (Donetsk region). Intensive fighting was reported on 10.10.24 from the front sectors of Lyman, Pokrovsk and Kurakhove (Donetsk region). According to an assessment by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), the aim of Russia's military leadership is to increase the pace of its advance so as to make territorial gains quickly before the autumn weather and accompanying difficult ground conditions impede the advance. According to information released by the Ukrainian government on 10.10.24, there have been almost 60 Russian air strikes on the port of Odessa in the past three months, targeting Ukraine's export capabilities, particularly with regard to grain.

Meanwhile, president Zelenskyy announced on 10.10.24 that his proposed "victory plan" is to be presented in detail at the beginning of November 2024. At the same time, the Ukrainian leadership is denying media reports alleging that Ukraine is prepared to accept a ceasefire at the current front line in return for assurances of security guarantees from the west and swift accession to the EU.

The head of the special staff for Ukraine at the German defence ministry, Christian Freuding, has reported a significant rise in Ukrainian recruitment figures since the spring of 2024 – the mobilisation bill was passed in April 2024 – stating that recruitment is now in the five-figure range. With regard to the current situation, however, Roman Kostenko – a Ukrainian MP sitting on the defence committee – claims that recruitment numbers are declining and warns that the Ukrainian armed forces will soon no longer be able to make up for their losses. According to information from individuals in the field, personnel problems also result from impaired health, stress and deficiencies in the (de-)mobilisation and rotation system. Sources on the ground also report attempts to flee into neighbouring countries and cases of corruption in connection with people smuggling and the issuance of medical unfitness certificates for men who are fit for military service.

Poland's ambitious plan to put together a "volunteer legion" from Ukrainian refugees and to train these for war deployment as part of a bilateral security treaty with Ukraine is considered to have failed due to a lack of interest from the Polish government.

According to reports in the media, recruitment officers from the Ukrainian army checked the military registration documents of men fit for military service in concert halls, restaurants and bars in Kyiv and other towns and cities. Arrests are said to have taken place where those apprehended were not in possession of the required documentation.⁶¹

Energy infrastructure

The US ambassador in Kyiv has stated that the USA has handed over nine power transformers to Ukraine. These are intended to help restore severely damaged power grids and to ensure a stable power supply, in particular for the Ukrainian towns and villages close to the front.⁶²

Accusation of interference with freedom of the press, tax increases, demographic trends

In a statement released on 09.10.24, the influential Ukrainian news portal Ukrainska Pravda revealed that the president's office had attempted to bring influence to bear on its editorial policies. According to the statement, bans are imposed on speaking with journalists and journalists are excluded from events. It is also claimed that the portal is being pressured to discontinue placing advertising on the internet site. The editorial staff have announced that any further attempts to influence its reporting will be made public. President Zelenskyy's office has yet to comment on the accusations.

According to information in the media on 10.10.24, the Ukrainian parliament has voted with a clear majority in favour of tax increases to fund the war. The focus is reportedly on increasing the war levy on employees' income from 1.5 to 5 %. The increase will not apply to soldiers. It remained unclear what other increases are to be included in the final wording of the law.

A Ukrainian government strategy paper on the country's demographic situation and trends reveals that a strongly declining population is expected in the coming years. Compared to 52 million in 1991, Ukraine's current population stands at 36 million. 31 million of these people are living in the territory controlled by Kyiv. The demographic institute at the Academy of Sciences forecasts a further decline to 29 million by 2041.⁶³

21 October 2024

Civilian casualties

According to information from the responsible regional governor, two women were killed by a Russian drone attack in the Kherson region on 14.10.24. The Ukrainian authorities report that one person was killed by Russian shelling in the port of Odessa on the same day. According to information released by the regional military administration on 15.10.24, one person was killed by a Russian air strike in the Mykolaiv region.⁶⁴

Course of the war and president Zelenskyy's "victory plan"

The competent governor stated on 16.10.24 that the evacuation of the city of Kupiansk (Kharkiv region) had been ordered, because the authorities were anticipating difficulties in maintaining supplies to the population there due to the advance of Russian forces. He stated that it was already impossible to guarantee restoration of the energy and water infrastructure by repair crews on account of continual Russian shelling. Consequently, some 7,000 people are to be taken to evacuation centres in Kharkiv. The evacuation order also applied to the small town of Borova in the Izium district (Kharkiv region). Similarly, the people remaining in Pokrovsk (Donetsk region) were also ordered to leave the city. On 16.10.24 the Ukrainian general staff reported intense fighting at the sector of the front in the village of Kurakhivka, near Kurakhove (Donetsk region). The staff stated that the Ukrainian positions were in danger of being encircled as a result of the Russian advance. It was reported in the media on 19.10.24 that a further exchange of prisoners entailing the return of 95 persons from each of the two warring parties had taken place on the previous day. The exchange was brokered by the UAE.

After president Zelenskyy's so-called "victory plan" had been declared to the Ukrainian parliament on 16.10.24, on the following days it was presented to the western allies. It comprises the following points: (1) unconditional invitation to join NATO; (2) strengthening of defence, including clearance of long-range western weapons for use on Russian territory and expansion of the war on Russian territory; (3) arming Ukraine as a means of deterrence, i.e. production and stationing of conventional weapons, investment by western armaments companies and adequate funding by western partners; (4) prevention of access to Ukrainian natural resources by the Russian side; (5) after the end of the war, deployment of war-tested and militarily experienced Ukraine as a security power for the security of Europe and NATO, including the possible replacement of US troops stationed in Europe. Initial reactions have already been forthcoming from within Ukraine and abroad: NATO secretary-general Rutte reacted reservedly to the idea of swift accession to NATO. Moscow criticised the plan as a "dictate of the USA" and an "attempt to draw the west into a direct war with Russia," noting that an end to the war would only be possible when Ukraine

recognised the "futility of its policies". Former president Poroshenko's Ukrainian opposition faction criticised the plan as unrealistic, arguing that it did not set out any concrete steps but consisted solely of demands upon the country's partners without stating any measures of its own. Presidential advisor Serhiy Leshchenko stated on 16.10.24 that president Zelenskyy is being urged by US politicians from both parties to mobilise the country's 18- to 25 year-olds, a proposal which Zelenskyy rejected on 18.10.24. Under the current provisions, this age group is required to register for military service and is not allowed to leave Ukraine at the present time.⁶⁵

Energy infrastructure

In preparation for the third winter of the war, it was reported in the media on 15.10.24 that president Zelenskyy had discussed measures to protect the energy infrastructure with the competent ministers and energy utilities. Air defence and cyber warfare methods are to be more heavily involved in protecting the supply network, for example. Plans have reportedly also been elaborated for the fast repair of damage and for decentralisation of the energy utilities. Prime minister Denys Shmyhal stated on 15.10.24 that Ukraine had sufficient supplies of natural gas and coal to "endure the winter".⁶⁶

Conference on mine clearing and poll among Ukrainian refugees on plans to return to their home country

It has been reported in the media that more than 40 countries convened for a conference in Switzerland on 17./18.10.24 to discuss measures for the humanitarian clearance of mines and residual munitions in Ukraine. In a statement they pledged their support with the "fast and safe restoration of agricultural land", the "economic and social re-integration" of victims and the production of mine clearing equipment in Ukraine. According to the media reports, mines and unexploded residual munitions have resulted in more than 1,000 casualties in Ukraine since 24.02.24, including 300 deaths. Hundreds of thousands of mines and other residual munitions are believed to be in the country. Ukraine has reportedly already cleared 35,000 km², also in order to enable the resumption of farming operations. While experts estimate that only 10 % of the surface area may be contaminated with munitions, they nevertheless recognise that the entire area must be scoured, which will affect the lives of more than six million people. The globally operative NGO Handicap International is reported to be carrying out training in the field on how to instruct people to assess risks "so as to enable them to live safely in an area until the mine clearers arrive." The government estimates the clearing costs at over EUR 30 billion.

In a poll conducted by the ifo Center for Migration and Development Economics among Ukrainian refugees in June 2024, a quarter of respondents stated that they do not intend to return to Ukraine in the long term. The institute also notes that 35 % of respondents do wish to return as soon as their home country is safe again. 4 % stated that they are planning to return soon irrespective of the security situation, 11 % have already returned and one quarter of those surveyed are undecided. The longer the war goes on, the greater the percentage of refugees who can envisage a future outside of Ukraine.⁶⁷

28 October 2024

Civilian casualties

According to information from the regional governor, two people died in a Russian missile attack on Zaporizhzhia on 21.10.24. According to information from the authorities, a total of five people died in the Sumy and Donetsk regions as a result of Russian drone attacks and shelling on 22.10.24. According to the competent authorities, one person has been killed in a Ukrainian drone attack in the city of Enerhodar (Zaporizhzhia region), which is occupied by the Russian side. On 24.10.24 the governor of the Kharkiv region reported one death after Russian attacks in the city of Kupiansk. On the same day, the competent governors reported that three people had died under Russian shelling near Pokrovsk and two people had been killed near to the front cities of Chasiv Yar and Kostiantynivka (Donetsk region). According to information from the mayor, one person died in a drone attack on a residential building in Kyiv on 25.10.24. The local authorities have reported that five people died under Russian shelling on the same day in the city of Dnipro. According to information from the governor, two people were killed in Russian attacks in the Kherson region on 27.10.24.⁶⁸

Course of the war

According to information from the Ukrainian military, Russian troops have broken through the Ukrainian defence lines and are continuing to advance on Chasiv Yar. The authorities report that evacuations have taken place to the front city of Myrnohrad (Donetsk region) and are to be carried out in Borova (Kharkiv region). Only a few dozen people are said to have remained in Pokrovsk, the main objective of the Russian advance. Ukrainian military observers report that Russian troops have advanced into the mining city of Selydove (Donetsk oblast). In view of the growing pressure on Ukrainian positions and Russian superiority in terms of soldiers and equipment, the Ukrainian general staff refer to the situation as "difficult".⁶⁹

Recruitment and corruption

Following the disclosure of numerous cases of corruption in connection with the issuance of certificates confirming unfitness for military service, after a security council meeting on 22.10.24 president Zelenskyy announced the resignation of the Ukrainian prosecutor general, Andriy Kostin, who assumes the political responsibility for the scandal. An investigation by the secret service (SBU) reportedly revealed that dozens of officials from public prosecutors' offices in various parts of the country had evaded military service by wrongfully applying for invalidity benefits and thus securing exemption from conscription. The SBU announced on 22.10.24 that in 2024 to date 64 members of medical commissions are suspects in criminal investigations and nine other people who have been charged and found guilty. According to Zelenskyy, beyond the public prosecutors' offices there are also "hundreds of cases of evidently unwarranted disability for service among customs and tax officials, in the pension fund system and in local administrations." After Kostin's resignation, prime minister Denys Schmyhal dismissed the leadership of the central commission for monitoring disability for service and senior officials at the health ministry. On the basis of a presidential order, the government is also to elaborate an act to dissolve the existing medical commission and to reform the system for assessing disability for service.

According to a statement issued by the State Bureau of Investigation on 24.10.24, six people, including three army recruitment officials, one of whom is the head of the recruiting commission, have been arrested in Kyiv on corruption charges in connection with the illegal evasion of military service. Millions of dollars and luxury cars have also been seized. The price for removal from the call-up list reportedly ranged between 2,000 and 15,000 US dollars. Over 1,000 men are said to have bought themselves out of military service. Manipulations of the military service register are also reported to have enabled draftees to leave the country.

According to information from the authorities, a man refused to submit to mustering after being seized by the police and taken to a recruitment centre in Poltava. His dead body, showing "obvious signs" of suicide, was subsequently found in a "technical room". An inquiry has reportedly been launched into the incident.⁷⁰

04 November 2024

Civilian casualties and accusations of torture

According to information from the governor, one person was killed by a drone attack in the Kherson region on 28.10.24. The authorities report that one person died on the same day in Kryvyi Rih as a result of a Russian missile attack. According to information from local authorities, four people died in a Russian bomb attack on the city of Kharkiv on 29.10.24. Three people, including two minors, were killed in an attack on a residential building on 30.10.24.

It was reported in the media on 01.11.24 that a UN-backed commission investigating human rights violations by the Russian side in Ukraine has established that torture crimes have been committed against civilians in all territories under Russian control. The commission has reportedly also ascertained that Ukrainian prisoners of war have been subjected to body searches, long periods without any clothing and sexual violence.⁷¹

Course of the war and recruitment

According to reports in the media, in September 2024 the Russian armed forces advanced more quickly in Ukraine than in any month since March 2022. From 20.10. to 27.10.24 they gained the largest amount of territory in the space of one week since the beginning of 2024. Citing information from the Russian defence ministry, it was reported on 29.10.24 that the cities of Selydove and Hirnyk (Donetsk region) had been captured, as a result of which

Russian troops were now advancing further towards the important cities of Pokrovsk and Kurakhove. The Ukrainian military describes the situation at these two sections of the front as "particularly tense".

It has been reported in the media that the Ukrainian parliament has extended martial law and mobilisation by a further 90 days. In connection with this measure, the secretary of the National Security Council, Oleksandr Lytvynenko, has announced the intention to call up a further 160,000 draftees for military service.⁷²

Deployment of North Korean troops close to Ukrainian border

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte stated on 28.10.24 that the South Korean secret service had shared evidence with NATO representatives indicating that North Korean units have been deployed in the Russian region of Kursk, which borders on Ukraine. The US Defense Department had previously reported that some 10,000 North Korean soldiers had been dispatched to support Russian troops in territories "close to Ukraine", including 8,000 in the Kursk region. The Russian Federation does not deny that North Korean units are being deployed. North Korea describes the deployment as being "in compliance with international law." While the USA and South Korea have called for the troops to be withdrawn, Ukraine's president Zelenskyy expressed disappointment at his allies' "zero response."⁷³

Sentencing by Russian judiciary in Crimea

According to reports in the media on 01.11.24, the Russian judiciary has sentenced two men in occupied Crimea to 14 and 16 years respectively in a penal colony under "harsh conditions" for working as agents for the Ukrainian secret service, SBU.⁷⁴

11 November 2024

Civilian casualties

According to information from the competent governor, Russian air strikes on the city of Zaporizhzhia on 05.11. and 07.11.24 claimed six and four lives respectively. Interior minister Ihor Klymenko has stated that in the latter attack a hospital was also hit. According to information from the competent governor, two people were killed in a Russian attack in the Donetsk region on 07.11.24. It was reported in the media on 07.11.24 that Russian shelling had killed one person in Kherson and one person in Jampil (Sumy region). According to information from the authorities, Russian drone attacks on Odessa killed one person on 08.11. and another on 09.11.24. According to information from the regional governor, Russian attacks on 11.11.24 killed one person in Zaporizhzhia and at least five people in Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine.⁷⁵

Course of the war

It was reported in the media on 05.11.24 that the Ukrainian air force had announced that 48 out of 79 Russian drones aimed at the regions of Odessa, Kyiv, Sumy, Poltava, Zhytomyr, Cherkasy, Chernihiv and Khmelnytskyi had been shot down by the Ukrainian air defences. Blackouts were reported after a Russian attack in the Zhytomyr region. The authorities have reported that people were injured in an eight-hour drone attack on Kyiv. Both warring parties are increasingly using drones, with the Russian side also deploying so-called kamikaze drones. In the face of further Russian air strikes, it has been reported in the media that the Ukrainian military and the DTEK energy utility announced on 11.11.24 that the power supply was shut down as a preventive measure in parts of Kyiv and in the Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk regions. The Ukrainian general staff have reported renewed heavy fighting in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Pokrovsk and Kurakhove.

According to Russian news agencies, the secretary of the Russian security council, Sergei Shoigu, has called on the West to quickly show a willingness to negotiate over the future of Ukraine and to recognise the realities of the current situation, in order to prevent the "annihilation" of the civilian population in Ukraine. In a statement on 08.11.24, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) came to the following assessment: "Freezing the Russian war in Ukraine along the current front lines would result in enormous advantages for Russia, while for Ukraine and the West it would increase the risks and costs of deterring or even frustrating a future Russian attempt to achieve Putin's aims by force." Meanwhile, according to reports in the media a high-ranking advisor to US president-elect Donald Trump has stated that the priority for the new US government with regard to Ukraine should be on establishing peace and not on the return of lost territories, including Crimea. The advisor added that president Zelenskyy would be requested to offer a "realistic vision for peace".⁷⁶

Judicial verdicts

The Ukrainian public prosecutor's office stated on 04.11.24 that a woman had been sentenced in Sloviansk (Donetsk region) to 15 years in prison for treason. She was found guilty of having supported the Russian side by passing information about the deployment of Ukrainian troops to the Russian armed forces in March/April 2024. The statement further revealed that thousands of legal proceedings relating to possible cases of collaboration with the Russian Federation have been initiated since 24.02.22.

Citing a source in the law enforcement authorities, the Russian news agency Tass reported on 08.11.24 that a military court in Rostov-on-Don had sentenced to Russian soldiers to life imprisonment for the massacre of a family of nine in their home in the city of Volnovakha in Russian-occupied Ukraine.⁷⁷

18 November 2024

Civilian casualties

According to information from the authorities, a total of eight people were killed in Russian attacks on the Dnipropetrovsk region on 11.11.24. It was reported in the media on 14.11.24 that two people had died in Russian attacks in the Donetsk region and one person in the Kherson region. The authorities report that one person died in a drone attack on Odessa on 14.11.24. According to information released by the Russian occupying authorities on 14.11.24, two people died as a result of Ukrainian shelling in the Luhansk region. According to information from the authorities, heavy Russian air strikes on 17.11.24 claimed a number of lives (Odessa: 2, Lemberg: 1, Mykolaiv: 2, Sumy: 10).

It was reported on 12.11.24 that the Russian human rights group Memorial had stated that approx. 7,000 Ukrainian civilians are being held by the Russian authorities as political prisoners. This figure has apparently been confirmed by the Ukrainian NGO Center for Civil Liberties.

Almost 1,000 days after the launch of Russia's major offensive, the UNHCR reports that some eleven million people in total have fled their homes and are seeking or have found refuge inside or outside of Ukraine. Since August 2024, some 170,000 people have fled the fighting in the east of the country or have been evacuated.

According to information from the UN, 2,134 Russian attacks on Ukrainian health facilities have been recorded during the Russian war of aggression to date. The WHO states that at least 197 people have died in these attacks.⁷⁸

Course of the war

According to information from the Ukrainian military, Russia's military leadership has redeployed troops to forward positions on the Ukrainian south front in the Zaporizhzhia region and is preparing for an attack which could place the Ukrainian forces under additional pressure. The defence lines have reportedly been reinforced in this section of the front. In addition, president Zelenskyy has announced that the positions at Pokrovsk and Kurakhove in eastern Ukraine are to be "substantially" reinforced. It has been reported in the media that in view of the deployment of North Korean forces in the neighbouring Russian region of Kursk, US president Biden has lifted the ban on Ukraine firing long-range missiles into Russian territory.

According to information from the competent governor, Russian attacks close to the front in the Donetsk region on 11.11.24 caused damage to the Kurakhove reservoir dam, as a result of which several towns and villages could be threatened by rising water levels. The Russian side is claiming that Ukraine is responsible for having caused the damage in an attempt to make it more difficult for Russian units to advance. According to the Ukrainian military channel Deep State, which is close to the government, Kurakhove is already surrounded by Russian units on three sides.

The Russian NGO Memorial reported on 12.11.24 that dozens of Ukrainian soldiers are being detained in the Russian Federation and are to be placed on trial, rather than being treated as prisoners of war.⁷⁹

Energy infrastructure, financial assistance

According to information from the mayor, the main pipeline for the city's heating supply was damaged in a Russian attack on Odessa on 14.11.24. A municipal heating boiler plant subsequently had to be shut down, leaving 40,000 people as well as medical and social facilities without heating. On 17.11.24 the Russian military carried out massive air strikes on targets including Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Kryvyi Rih and Odessa. According to the Ukrainian energy ministry, these attacks inflicted damage in particular on power generating and power transmission facilities. Grid

operator Ukrenerho imposed hours-long blackouts on 18.11.24 in order to avoid grid overloads and to enable repair work to be carried out.

According to an assessment by the German Red Cross on 13.11.24, the greatest concern among the Ukrainian population is that intensified Russian attacks could make it impossible to restore operation of the energy infrastructure by means of emergency repairs. A collapse of the infrastructure would disrupt healthcare substantially, and the UN fears that it would give rise to a new wave of refugees from the country. President Zelenskyy has announced a ten point plan for internal security which is also said to address the energy supply issue. Having met requirements for reforms, Ukraine is set to receive the second regular payment from the new EU aid package shortly, amounting to billions of euros. This is intended to enable the payment of wages and pensions and the restoration of public infrastructure and the energy supply system.⁸⁰

25 November 2024

Civilian casualties

The competent governor has reported that ten people died in a Russian missile attack on Odessa on 18.11.24. According to information from the authorities, a Russian drone attack on 19.11.24 claimed eight lives in the city of Hlukhiv (Sumy region). According to official information, at least two people died in Russian attacks on the city of Sumy on 22.11.24.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights released a statement on 19.11.24 asserting that at least 12,162 civilians, including 659 children, had been killed since 24.02.22. At least 26,919 civilians are reported to have been injured over the same period. In a statement released on 18.11.24, Amnesty International (AI) accuses Moscow of war crimes against children in Ukraine. On the basis of 120 videos, AI claims to have verified 17 incidents in which children have come to harm in 2024 alone. AI further asserts that research in the field has shown the Russian side to have intentionally attacked civilians and civilian infrastructure.⁸¹

Course of the war

On 19.11.24 president Zelenskyy presented his plan to strengthen Ukraine's resilience before parliament. The plan provides for massive investment in armaments for Ukraine. According to information in the media, details of the new stability plan are to follow in December 2024. Meanwhile, mandatory evacuation in the Donetsk region has continued in the face of the Russian advance. According to information from the regional military administration, almost 324,000 civilians currently remain in the Ukraine-controlled part of the region.

Ukrainian authorities have disclosed new cases of possible executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war by the Russian side in the Donetsk region. The Ukrainian chief public prosecutor's office accuses Russian troops of having executed five Ukrainian prisoners of war near the city of Vuhledar in October 2024.

President Zelenskyy has said in a TV interview that the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula can only be regained by diplomatic means, as retaking the territory by military means would entail an unacceptable loss of human life. At the same time, he pointed out that Ukraine will not legally cede any occupied territories to Moscow. Alluding to the Russian president in a speech before the Ukrainian parliament on 19.11.24, Zelenskyy stated: "Perhaps Ukraine will have to outlive someone in Moscow in order to achieve its aims and restore the entire national territory."

After Moscow deployed its new medium-range missile "Oreshnik", which flies at eleven times the speed of sound and can be fitted with nuclear warheads, against the city of Dnipro on 21.11.24, president Putin announced that the missile would continue to be tested in combat conditions. President Zelenskyy expressed the fear that Ukraine could become a "testing ground" for Russian munitions.⁸²

02 December 2024

Civilian casualties

President Zelenskyy has stated that two civilians were killed by Russian artillery fire in the city of Sumy on 26.11.24. The competent regional governor announced on 28.11.24 that two people had been killed by a Russian drone attack in the Kharkiv region. According to information by the local authorities, four people were killed by Ukrainian shelling in the Russian-occupied city of Nova Kakhovka (Kherson region) on 26.11.24. The Ukrainian public

prosecutor's office for the Kherson region has launched investigations into Russian shelling, however. According to information from the Ukrainian authorities, at least six people died as a result of Russian attacks in the Kherson region on 29./30.11. and 01.12.24. President Zelenskyy has stated that a Russian missile attack in the Dnipropetrovsk region on 30.11.24 killed at least four people. According to information from the authorities, a Russian drone attack on 02.12.24 killed one person in the city of Ternopil.⁸³

Course of the war

An analysis by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) concludes that the Russian forces are advancing in Ukraine more quickly than at any time since the begin of the full-scale invasion in 2022. According to information from a high-ranking government official, the outgoing US government is calling for the size of the Ukrainian armed forces to be increased quickly by lowering the minimum age for mobilisation to 18. The commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, Oleksandr Syrskyi, has announced that reserve troops have been redeployed to the particularly endangered sections of the front in Pokrovsk and Kurakhove (Donetsk region), in the face of the Russian advance. In addition, president Zelenskyy has replaced the commander of the ground forces, Oleksandr Pavliuk, with Mykhailo Drapatyi. By Zelenskyy's own account, this move is intended to boost the army's fighting capabilities. The Russian offensive in the Kharkiv region was successfully repelled under Drapatyi.

The Ukrainian military reported the heaviest Russian drone attack to date on the night of 25./26.11.24, comprising a total of 188 drones. 76 drones were reportedly shot down in 17 regions. The detection of 95 drones is said to have been aborted, presumably on account of electronic counter-measures. Five drones are reported to have flown in the direction of Belarus. According to reports in the media on 28.11.24, president Putin has threatened that he will not rule out deploying the new medium-range missile "Oreshnik" against decision-making centres in Kyiv.

The public prosecutor's office of the Donetsk region stated on 26.11.24 that Russian armed forces had again shot five soldiers dead immediately after they were taken prisoner in the Pokrovsk area (Donetsk region). The Ukrainian human rights commissioner, Dmytro Lubinets, is said to have contacted the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in connection with these accusations. The public prosecutor's office in Kyiv reported on 28.11.24 that a further five Ukrainian soldiers had been shot dead after being taken prisoner on 24.11.24.⁸⁴

Energy infrastructure

Energy minister German Galushchenko stated on 28.11.24 that massive Russian air strikes had targeted the energy structure throughout Ukraine, causing damage in 14 regions. This necessitated power cuts which left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity. President Zelenskyy is accusing the Russian side of using cluster munition. In view of the massive attacks, the German government is providing a further EUR 65 million for repair of the energy infrastructure.⁸⁵

09 December 2024

Civilian casualties

According to official information, one person died in a Russian drone attack on Ternopil's energy supply infrastructure on the night of 02.12.24. According to information in the media, ten people died in the city of Zaporizhzhia and two in the city of Kryvyi Rih in Russian attacks on 06.12.24.⁸⁶

Course of the war

According to consistent information from Ukrainian and Russian military blogs on 02.12.24, parts of the embattled eastern Ukrainian city of Kurakhove are already in Russian hands. The Russian army is less than 5 km away from Pokrovsk. An analysis of data from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) by the AFP news agency has revealed that the Russian armed forces captured around 725 km² of territory in November 2024. Almost 90 % of these territorial gains was located in the Donetsk region. This means that Ukraine now controls barely one third of the Donetsk region, compared to over 40 % at the beginning of 2024. According to information from president Zelenskyy, a total of 43,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and 370,000 injured since 24.02.22. Half of those injured have returned to action.

According to the ISW's assessment, Russia's drone warfare strategy has changed. The Russian side is increasingly deploying 80 to 100 Iranian-designed Shahed drones at night. In turn, Ukraine has adapted its electronic defence

strategy such that the majority of the drones are not shot down, but electronically jammed, forced to land or redirected. There has reportedly also been an increase in the number of Russian drones redirected to Belarus.⁸⁷

Energy infrastructure

According to information from the authorities, Russian drone attacks on energy installations of the western Ukrainian cities of Rivne and Ternopil on the night of 02.12.24 resulted in a partial blackout in Ternopil. Drone attacks on the region had already inflicted considerable damage on Ternopil's power supply grid in the previous week.⁸⁸

Ukrainian civilians in Russian prisons; sentence passed by Russian court in Crimea

President Zelenskyy stated on 05.12.24 that among the thousands of Ukrainian civilians in Russian prisons there are at least six mayors and district council leaders. Official sources confirmed this week that Yevhen Matvieyev, the mayor of the city of Dniprorudne (Zaporizhzhia region), who was taken prisoner back in March 2022, had died in Russian captivity. Ukraine's human rights commissioner, Dmytro Lubinets, has spoken of more than 16,000 civilians being held in captivity. According to Lubinets, 3,767 Ukrainians, in particular prisoners of war, have returned from Russian captivity to date.

According to information released by the public prosecutor's office on 04.12.24, a Russian court on the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula has sentenced a man to 15 years in prison for treason. The man was convicted of spying for the Ukrainian secret service in a trial which took place in camera.⁸⁹

16 December 2024

Civilian casualties

According to information from the Ukrainian authorities, Russian attacks in the Donetsk and Kherson regions on 09.12.24 each killed one person. At least eleven people died in a Russian missile attack on the city of Zaporizhzhia on 10.12.24, in which the Ukrainian authorities allege that a hospital was hit. It was reported in the media on 14.12.24 that two people had been killed by Russian shelling in the Kherson region.⁹⁰

Course of the war

According to information from the Ukrainian military leadership, Russian troops are three kilometres from the strategically important logistics centre of Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region. Ukrainian military observers state that Ukrainian troops are in danger of being encircled to the south of the embattled city of Kurakhove (Donetsk region). The new commander of the Ukrainian ground troops, major general Mykhailo Drapatyi, is planning a "large-scale reorganisation" of his branch of the military, which is outnumbered in terms of personnel and weapons. The restructuring is to cover the training programmes as well as battlefield and logistics management and is to involve counter-corruption measures, the use of technology and a strengthening of the role of non-commissioned officers. In an interview on 12.12.24 the director of the Ukrainian president's office, Andriy Yermak, stated that Kyiv was not yet ready to enter into talks with the Russian side, as it did not dispose of the weapons, security guarantees and international status to which the country aspired. Prior to this, president Zelenskyy had openly considered the possibility of negotiating an end to the war. The Ukrainian government is open in principle to the potential deployment of a European peace-keeping force in the country to safeguard a possible treaty with Moscow.⁹¹

Energy infrastructure

According to energy minister German Galushchenko, the Russian forces carried out a large-scale attack on Ukrainian energy installations throughout the country on the night of 12.12.24. President Zelenskyy has reported that 93 missiles and 200 drones were deployed in the attack and 81 missiles were shot down. Grid operator Ukrenerho has confirmed that the power supply was restricted all over the country. Blackouts were imposed in a number of regions as a precautionary measure to avoid grid overloads. The targets included energy facilities in western Ukraine and the military air base in Starokostyantyniv (Khmelnitskyi region).

The Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation has announced that the winter relief fund for Ukraine is to be increased by EUR 20 million to a total of EUR 90 million. The winter relief package also includes combined heat and power units, generators and repair equipment.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported on 10.12.24 that a drone attack had taken place on an official IAEA vehicle near to Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station. IAEA director Rafael Gross stated that this was a deliberate attack which was intended "to cause us damage or to intimidate us. "The IAEA specialists were not withdrawn, however. The two warring parties have accused each other of being responsible for the attack.⁹²

Situation for Crimean Tatars

Against the backdrop of International Human Rights Day on 10.12.24, the Society for Threatened Peoples (STPI) spotlighted the situation of unlawfully imprisoned Crimean Tatars. According to the STPI, repression of the indigenous Crimean Tatars has increased continually since the peninsula was occupied by the Russians in 2014. Of a total of 218 people from Crimea who are being held in Russian prisons on ethnic, religious or political grounds, 132 are said to be Crimean Tatars. They are said to be serving long prison terms, in some cases of 15 to 20 years, in inhumane prison conditions. The STPI reports that the ethnic group now accounts for only 10 to 12 % of the total population on the peninsula.⁹³

Ukrainian court passes sentence for treason

It was reported in the media on 13.12.24 that a court in Kyiv had sentenced a Ukrainian woman to 14 years in prison for treason on charges of collaborating with the Russian Federation. She is said to have drafted a letter at the behest of the Russian secret service which served the Kremlin's interests in justifying Russia's full-scale invasion on 24.02.22. Four days later, Russia's ambassador to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, cited this letter in an address. According to information from the Ukrainian public prosecutor's office, the convicted woman wrote in the letter "that the Ukrainian people support the Russian Federation's so-called 'special operation' in the Ukraine, that looting, killings and larceny had begun in Ukraine and that politicians were openly calling for Russians to be killed."⁹⁴

23 December 2024

Civilian casualties

According to information from the regional public prosecutor's office, one person was killed by a Russian drone attack in the Kherson region on 16.12.24. The police have reported that three people died in a missile attack in Kharkiv on 19.12.24. According to the relevant authorities, one person died and several people were injured when a ballistic missile struck the centre of Kyiv on 20.12.24. Ukrainian authorities reported a similar toll after an attack on Kherson on 20.12.24, which left one person dead and injured a number of people.⁹⁵

Course of the war

Russia claims to have captured the villages of Lozova (Kharkiv oblast, not the city of the same name) and Stari Terny, Trudove, Kostiantynopolske and Sontsivka (Donetsk oblast). The capture of these villages would further heighten the threat of Ukrainian troops becoming encircled in the fighting over the city of Kurakhove (cf. BN of 16.12.24). The Russian army has stated that it has captured a total of 190 Ukrainian villages in 2024.

Without stating any further details, on 22.12.24 the Ukrainian ombudsman accused Russian soldiers of having executed a further five prisoners of war – an accusation which has already been levelled at the Russians a number of times (cf. BN of 07.10.24).

Citing Ukrainian information, it was reported on 20.12.24 that following an evidently long-prepared Russian cyber attack on registers within the justice ministry's jurisdiction, online services such as registering changes of address, births, marriages and vehicles had to be suspended.

In the wake of a drone attack on Kazan, capital of the Russian Republic of Tatarstan, Russian president Vladimir Putin threatened to wreak on Ukraine many times the level of destruction incurred in Kazan. A number of drones hit residential buildings; there were no reports of any casualties. According to a report in the media, Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for the attack.

On the basis of anonymous interviews, a press article focusing on the difficulties in recruiting new Ukrainian soldiers reports that specialists from air defence units are being deployed as foot soldiers at the front on account of the shortage of troops there. The article notes that they lack the necessary training for this role, while at the same time the air defences are losing key personnel on a substantial scale. The article also refers to cases of local commanders transferring personnel to the front as a disciplinary measure.⁹⁶

High-ranking member of the Russian military assassinated in Moscow

A primed e-scooter exploded outside a residential building in Moscow on 17.12.24, killing lieutenant general Igor Kirillov and an adjutant. Kirillov is reported to have headed the Russian army's unit for chemical, biological and radiological weapons. On the day prior to the incident, the Ukrainian secret service (SBU) had issued a warrant for his arrest. The Ukrainian government is reported to have been behind the attack. Russia has been accused numerous times of breaking the ban on the use of chemical weapons in the war against Ukraine (cf. BN of 12.02., 18.03., 22.04. and 06.05.24).

On 18.12.24 the Russian authorities reported that an Uzbek national had been arrested on suspicion of having carried out the assassination and on 19.12.24 it was announced that he had been charged.⁹⁷

Civilian deaths in Russia's Kursk region

According to the acting governor of the Kursk region, a Ukrainian missile attack on the town of Rylsk on 20.12.24 killed six people – or, according to more recent information, five people –, including one child. Ukrainian troops advanced into Russia's Kursk region at the beginning of August 2024 (cf. BN of 12.08.24), since when the Russian side has been unable to force them back out of the region, despite the deployment of thousands of North Korean soldiers.⁹⁸

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Briefing Notes
BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de

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