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PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS

Activities of European civil society, aiming at the resolution of the violent conflict in eastern Ukraine

On 4th December 2017 in Vienna, civil society organizations and activists from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries founded a joint international [platform CivilM+](#) to push for peace and the rule of law in eastern Ukraine.

The platform's aim is to streamline civic actors' efforts in spheres like human rights protection, peacebuilding, education and information, humanitarian work, and to work on rebuilding the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk as peaceful, integrated and developed regions of a democratic Ukraine and united Europe. CivilM+ seeks to promote the involvement of the regions' population as well as refugees and displaced persons in these activities. CivilM+ offers its participants opportunities for cooperation, elaboration of joint positions, mutual support and solidarity, improvement of qualification and close coordination of work.

The newsletter is devoted to the work carried out by civil society organizations and initiative groups from Ukraine, Russia, as well as international organizations, to overcome the consequences of the hybrid military conflict in the eastern regions of Ukraine.

This newsletter will be published regularly; the next issue will be published in March 2018.

You can send your information for the newsletter, ask any questions or unsubscribe at: newsletter@civilmplus.org

CONTENTS

1. Political processes and the situation in the conflict zone
2. Public initiatives dedicated to overcoming the consequences of war and searching for opportunities for dialogue
3. Legal initiatives and analysis of the conflict
4. Assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees and affected civilians
5. Interviews and opinions

1. Political processes and the situation in the conflict zone

- December 26, 2017 – Grigory Karasin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the

Russian Federation stated that [Russia hopes to see progress in the situation with a UN peacebuilding mission in Donbass](#). He added that "a border closure between Donbass and Russia is unacceptable" (*text in Russian*)

- January 3, 2018 - Sigmar Gabriel, Foreign Minister of Germany, came to Ukraine for a two-day visit. He stressed that [the conflict in Eastern Ukraine concerns the whole of Europe](#), and stated that the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass should be extended to the entire territory beyond the control of the Ukrainian government (*text in Russian*)
- January 18, 2018 – a meeting of the tripartite contact group took place in Minsk. A [comprehensive and stable ceasefire was determined as the main task](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 23, 2018 - Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine, [had a meeting with Kurt Volker, the US Special Representative](#) for Ukraine. Both parties stated the peaceful settlement of the situation in Donbass was a priority (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 23, 2018 - The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (OSCE SMM) recorded 65 explosions. On this day, there were fewer violations of the ceasefire regime compared to the previous day with 280 explosions. The access of the OSCE SMM continued to be limited. Details - in the [Ukrainian](#) and [English](#) versions of the report (*texts in Ukrainian and English*)
- January 24, 2018 - Dmytro Hutsulyak, the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine on anti-terrorist operation related issues said that no [violations of the ceasefire regime were recorded in the ATO area for the first time in a long time](#) (*text in Russian*)
- January 23, 2018 – Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe adopted [Resolution 2198 “Humanitarian consequences of the war in Ukraine”](#) (*Text in English*)
- According to representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the visit of the US Special Representative for Ukraine [is the reason for the sudden silence in the ATO area](#) (*text in Russian*)
- Iryna Herashchenko, the First Deputy Chair of the Verkhovna Rada, [reports on the working meeting of the President of Ukraine with representatives of the tripartite contact group](#) in Minsk. The key tasks for 2018 are to maintain the ceasefire regime, to intensify the process of searching for missing persons, to remove heavy weapons from the line of contact, to create a special group to restore Ukraine's control over the Ukrainian-Russian border and to restore unencumbered access for the OSCE SMM to the whole territory (*text in Ukrainian*)
- The prisoner swap carried out on 27 December, 2017, involving 73 Ukrainians held captive in the so-called "DPR"/"LPR", and 233 persons captured by Ukraine: A [video](#) and articles in "[Meduza](#)" and "[Novaya Gazeta](#)". The exchange was planned according to a formula "306 by 74". But some of the prisoners refused to return to the so-called "DPR"/"LPR". One woman refused to go back to Ukraine. (*text in Russian and Ukrainian*)
- The [SBU has blacked out the names and lists of captives](#) Ukraine released during

the prisoner swap (end of December 2017) with the uncontrolled territories of Donbass. It is noted that 103 hostages remain in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions (*text in Ukrainian*)

- During the swap, [28 individuals, who were held on the uncontrolled territories, were released](#), as stated by Georgiy Tuka, the Deputy Minister for Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Hugues Mingarelli, the Head of the EU Delegation stated that [compliance with the Minsk Agreements is the only way to settle the situation in Donbass](#) and to end the war. By doing so, he reacted to the opinion of Arsen Avakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, who previously said that a new working format is needed to change the situation (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Dmytro Tymchuk, the head of the "Informational resistance" group, analyzes [how the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" use Ukrainian weapons](#) left in Crimea during the annexation by the Russian Federation (*text in Russian*)
- January 11, 2018 - Angelino Alfano, Italian Foreign Minister and the current head of the OSCE, [announced his intention to visit Ukraine and Russia](#) to discuss the issues surrounding the Donbass conflict (*text in Russian*)
- January 11, 2018 - Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, [expressed his hope for the normalization of relations](#) between Ukraine and Russia during his meeting with media directors, and [announced his readiness to transfer ships](#) and military equipment from annexed Crimea to mainland Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- January 18, 2018 - Alexander Zakharchenko, the "Head" of the so-called "DPR", [issued a decree banning travel to Ukraine](#) for state employees of the "DPR" (*text in Russian*)

2. Public initiatives dedicated to overcoming the consequences of war and searching for opportunities for dialogue

- Famous Ukrainians [sent New Year's greetings](#) to the inhabitants of Donbass (*text in Ukrainian*)
- "Ni na yotu" ("Not one iota") music band from Syktyvkar (Russia) presented a [music video for the anti-war song "Neznayka in the War"](#). The musicians note that they wanted to demonstrate how easily ordinary people can be influenced by the state and its propaganda (*text in Russian*)
- "Onuka" music band (Ukraine) released a [new song "Guns Don't Shoot"](#), an anti-war manifesto and a call to mercy (*text in Russian*)
- ["Non-military prisoners" article](#) on the journalist Roman Sushchenko, film director Oleg Sentsov and other Ukrainian political prisoners in Russian prisons (*text in Russian*)
- The conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the possibilities for the peace process were the main themes of the lectures by Goran Lojancic, Balkan peacekeeper, expert of the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue during his visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg. [Video of a lecture](#) in Moscow is available online (*text in English*)
- The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union created a website for [the "Memorial](#)

[Map" project](#), which gathers data about those who have died during the conflict in Eastern Ukraine (*text in Russian, English, Ukrainian*)

3. Legal initiatives and analysis of the conflict

- January 18, 2018 – Ukrainian parliament had passed the law “On special aspects of the state policy on ensuring Ukrainian state sovereignty over temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions” (№7163). The final version of the text of law is not published yet. For it to come into force, the final version of the law is to be signed by the Ukrainian President. [Text of the draft law from 4.10.2017](#) is available on the Verkhovna Rada's official website. The Russian Federation was for the first time officially named as an occupant and invader. [Analysis of the law](#) – on the BBC website. (*texts in Ukrainian and Russian*)
- January 16, 2018 – A group of Ukrainian civil society organizations published a [Petition to the Parliament of Ukraine](#) regarding the Draft Law “On special aspects of the state policy on ensuring Ukrainian state sovereignty over temporary occupied territories” (registr. 7163) (in version for second reading) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 24, 2018 – Ukrainian human rights defenders [analyze the amendments introduced before the second reading of this law](#) and possible consequences of its enforcement in practice (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 24, 2018 – Human rights defenders representing 7 Ukrainian NGOs [appealed](#) to the President of Ukraine. They claim the need for a second reading and reconsideration of the aforementioned law (№7163), as some of its measures may lead to a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the region (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Round-table on “Human rights guarantees in accordance with international standards. International experience and practical support to civilians suffering from the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine with the aim of achieving peace and mutual understanding”, organized by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Minutes from the event are available [via the link](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the [needs of the civilian population of Donbass and the situation in the region](#): number of people in need of humanitarian aid and protection estimated at 3,4 million people. 60% of people living along the “contact line” suffer daily from shelling (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 6, 2018 - Anatoly Polyakov, a volunteer from Russia who moved to Ukraine after having spent 9 months held captive by so-called "LPR" forces, on the draft law [“On the legal status of persons illegally convicted or deprived of liberty by illegal armed groups and foreign law-enforcement bodies”](#). The law will be considered by the Parliament in 2018 (*text in Russian*)
- January 17, 2018 - News on [permutations in the governing bodies of the so-called “LPR”](#) after the upheaval in December 2017 was published on social media (*text in*

Russian)

- “Vostok-SOS” published a [review on human rights violations in particular regions of Luhansk and Donetsk taken place in December 2017](#) (*text in Russian, Ukrainian, English*)
- Human Rights Watch published its annual report on the state of human rights in the world. [Its part on Ukraine](#) has a significant focus on the [situation in Donbass](#). It says, “Ukrainian authorities took several positive steps to facilitate civilians’ crossing of the contact line. But ... exposure to landmines and shelling, and long waits in extreme temperatures continued to cause civilians undue hardship” (*texts in English*)

4. Assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and affected civilians

- January 19, 2018 - [UN World Food Program stops its food aid program in Eastern Ukraine due to lack of funding](#). Since the beginning of its work in November 2014 and until June 2017 around 970, 000 of people from the most vulnerable groups of Donbass had received help (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 15, 2018 – Meeting [“Civil society in conflict regions – is there anyone?”](#), organized by charity fund Vostok-SOS, took place in Kyiv. Several NGOs working next to the line of demarcation talked about their work and plans for the future (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 17, 2018 – The Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers [has increased monthly financial aid](#) given to children and pensioner IDPs to cover costs for housing to 1.000 Hryvna (29 Euros) per month (*text in Russian*)
- January 17, 2018 – Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union published a study on the observance of IDPs’ social rights. The most common problems are a lack of housing and delays with state financial aid to IDPs. [Full text of the study](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 19, 2018 – a [meeting between Viktor Muzhenko, Commander-in-Chief of Ukrainian military forces, and Alan Ashliman, Head of ICRC office in Ukraine](#), took place (*text in Ukrainian*)
- January 24, 2018 – George Tuka, Deputy Minister on Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs announced [the imminent opening of a service issuing Ukrainian passports](#) along the contact line. So far, there will be no need for people from occupied territories to travel further in Ukraine to obtain documents (*text in Russian*)
- Thomas de Waal, expert on Eastern Europe at Carnegie Europe – presents his analysis of [faults and mistakes of Ukrainian state policy in solving the problems of IDPs and residents of occupied territories](#) (*text in English*)
- Teenagers organize school discos in Shchastya, city by the frontline – [interviews](#). (*text in Russian*)
- [Documentary published on flooded houses](#) in the frontline village Chigari prepared

by the Humanitarian Mission “Proliska” (*text in Russian*)

- [Zolote – a typical checkpoint in the “grey zone”](#) with two separated villages on both sides of the border. Its inhabitants have to walk kilometers to take their children to school and pick them up (*text in Russian*)
- A [temporary floating bridge](#) was built in Novogrigoryevka village by volunteers and Ukrainian military forces and hence, transport links were established. The village Novogrigoryevka was almost cut from the world due to landmines and ruined roads from the very beginning of the armed conflict in the Donbas (*text in Russian*)

5. Interviews and opinions

- 1 January, 2018 – A two-year term of Ukraine's work in the UN Security Council expired. The Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN, Volodymyr Yelchenko, at the UN Security Council [speaks on developments with peacekeeping forces in Donbass](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Ihor Kozlovsky, a professor of religious studies released from captivity, gives an [interview on his experience](#) (*text in Russian*)
- Analysis of the situation of [missing Ukrainian military personnel from Donbass](#) – could they have been taken to Russia and held in captive as labor slaves? (*text in Russian*)
- Based on data from the Ukrainian authorities, by November 2017 around 6500 people have been kept illegally in prisons of uncontrolled territories of Luhansk region. [The story of one of them](#) is told by his wife. (*text in Russian*)
- Radio “Swoboda” issued a [list of movies recently released about Eastern Ukraine](#). (*text in Russian*)
- December 17, 2017 – a report “[Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Eastern Ukraine](#)” has been published by the Belgian NGO International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) in cooperation with the Ukrainian NGO Truth Hounds. It presents new evidences for the invasion of military forces of the Russian Federation and a list of human rights violations by so-called “DPR/LPR” and Ukraine. The report is based on data received during 24 field missions to 43 settlements along the contact line (*text in English*)
- Varvara Darevskaya, Russian civil society activist tells story of her work – [connecting people from uncontrolled territories and rest Ukraine as well as with those from Russia](#). She says, “I’m asking those who write to turn off emotions and concentrate on another human being from the other side. Talk to him as not as to an enemy, but as a person who just has a different opinion”. (*text in Russian*)
- Playwright Michael Kaluzhsky published an [essay “Humanism is out of fashion”](#) reflects on the story of a Russian school student and his speech in Bundestag and why it is considered undesirable to appeal to change Russian history. (*text in Russian*)

- [On the situation of NGOs and human rights defense in post-soviet conflict areas](#): an article by Maria Turovets, prepared in the framework of the project "Peaceful conflict transformation in the post-Soviet space" by the Center for Independent Social Research, Berlin (CISR e.V. Berlin) (*text in Russian*)
- Alexander Hug, Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special monitoring mission presents his [view on the shortest possible way to resolve the conflict in Donbas](#) (*text in Russian*).

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