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PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBASS

Results of monitoring actual occurrences, related to the hybrid war in Eastern Ukraine

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 September 2019.

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

The selection of news presented in the Newsletter is subjective. The opinions expressed in the published materials may not coincide with the opinion of the authors and participants of CivilM+.

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1. News of the CivilM+

Statement: Ceasefire, release of prisoners and unhindered access for international organisations: five years of non-implementation of the Minsk Protocol raise questions about its efficacy

On 5 September 2014, the Minsk Protocol based on the results of consultations within the Trilateral Contact Group concerning joint steps towards the implementation of the Peace Plan of President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko and the initiatives of President of Russia V. Putin was signed in Minsk. Known as Minsk I, the document stipulates a series of steps needed to resolve the international armed conflict. Six months later, on 12 February 2015, amidst continued full-scale fighting, another agreement on the “Package of Measures to Implement the Minsk Agreements” (known as Minsk II) was signed to assist the implementation of the Minsk I provisions.

Now, five years later, many of the agreements set forth in the document have not lost their relevance. However, the CivilM+ international civil society platform notes the continued lack of progress in their implementation.

The first and central provision of the Minsk Protocol was to ensure an immediate bilateral ceasefire. Despite cessation of the active phase of the fighting in subsequent years, this provision has not been fully implemented. Ceasefire negotiations are ongoing both within the Tripartite Contact Group and at a high level in the Normandy format. While truce has been announced from time to time on certain dates and occasions such as the start of school year, Christmas, Easter, and others, practice shows that even where truce is respected, it does not last long. The change of power in Ukraine has brought about a revival of the negotiation process. On 6 June 2019, Ukraine’s representative in the Trilateral Contact Group, the country’s former second president Leonid Kuchma said that the Ukrainian armed forces were prohibited from responding to fire from the rebels during «windows of silence.» The next step was the withdrawal of Ukrainian and rebel forces from their frontline positions near Stanitsa Luhanska. Then the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk agreed on a ceasefire starting on 21 July 2019. However, this decision has not yet led to an actual ceasefire. The OSCE SMM continues to report ceasefire violations on a daily basis (34 to 130 explosions daily). Since the beginning of the current truce, at least six Ukrainian servicemen have been killed and nine wounded by shelling.

[...] The Minsk agreements are currently the only formalised instrument for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Given the lack of progress in their implementation, we, members of the CivilM+ international civil society platform committed to ending the conflict in Donbas, call on all parties and stakeholders to the process:

- to insist on the enforcement of the specific provisions which save lives, such as an immediate bilateral ceasefire; continuous monitoring on the Ukrainian-Russian state border and its verification by the OSCE, together with the creation of a security area in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation; ensure Ukraine’s control of its border with the Russian Federation;
- to release immediately all hostages and illegally detained persons; to remove illegal armed groups, military hardware, fighters and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine;
- to examine the gaps and limitations of the current negotiation process and to upgrade it for making real progress towards peace;
- to support broad, direct and substantial involvement of civil society and especially groups affected by the international armed conflict in the peaceful settlement;
- to direct efforts towards reconciliation and reintegration of communities, to provide assistance to victims of the international armed conflict, particularly by

facilitating access to public services and payments for people living in the uncontrolled territories to ensure the fullest possible exercise of their civil rights;

- to facilitate unbiased documentation of human rights violations and other war consequences in ORDLO and to ensure access for international humanitarian organisations so they can effectively provide assistance to the local civilians;
- to encourage other urgent steps towards a peaceful settlement, in particular, facilitate humanitarian demining, improve the situation at checkpoints, and support state and society initiatives to restore the region.

Based on many years of fieldwork experience in the conflict zone, members of the CivilM+ international civil society platform are prepared to present their proposals concerning ways to improve the humanitarian situation and restore the rule of law in the conflict region to the newly elected President of Ukraine, other parties to the Normandy-format negotiations, and to members of the Minsk Trilateral Contact Group working on a resolution of the international armed conflict in Donbas. We are also prepared to participate in joint efforts to develop an action plan aimed at restoring contacts between the Ukrainian authorities and the Ukrainian citizens living in the temporarily uncontrolled territories.

Read the full statement on [CivilM+ Website](#).

Announcement: Second International Forum on Eastern Ukraine

On November 13 in Kyiv, the CivilM+ platform will host the Second International Forum on Donbass “Reintegration in Eastern Ukraine – improving the humanitarian situation and enhancing people-to-people contacts in the conflict region”.

While addressing a variety of topics, the forum will particularly focus on:

- physical barriers and fears hampering communication between populations living on different sides of the frontline,
- rule of law in the territories the Ukrainian state temporarily does not control,
- relations between displaced populations and the host communities,
- transparency and efficiency of local governance in conflict-affected territories.

Detailed information and the registration form are available [here](#).

2. Political processes and the situation in the conflict zone

- July 24, 2019 - [64 more prisoners were transferred to prisons controlled by Ukraine](#) from prisons in the Luhansk region at the time of its occupation (*text in Ukrainian*)
- July 31, 2019 - the russian court [refused to transfer the Ukrainian political prisoner Alexander Kolchenko](#) to correctional labor instead of serving a sentence in a colony (*text in Russian*)

- August 1, 2019 - [demining has begun in the area of Stanitsa Luhanskaya](#), as reported by Martin Saydik, special representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Tripartite Contact Group (TCG) after another meeting within the TCG (*text in [Russian](#), [English](#)*)
- August 7, 2019 - [President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky and President of Russia Vladimir Putin held a telephone conference](#) during which they discussed the importance of strict observance of the ceasefire established on July 21, as well as the separation of forces and assets from the contact line in the Donbass. The attitude of the media towards this conversation [varies](#) (*text in [Ukrainian](#), [Russian](#), [English](#)*)
- August 7, 2019 - A meeting was held between the President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky and the military leadership of the country, during which it was [reported that since the beginning of the armistice on July 21, 6 Ukrainian militaries were killed](#) (*text in [Ukrainian](#), [Russian](#), [English](#)*)
- August 8, 2019 - Ambassador Martin Saidik, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) [expressed his regret at the failed meeting of the TCG Security Working Group](#) (*text in [Russian](#) and [English](#)*)
- August 13, 2019 - [Roman Bessmertny was relieved of the duties of the representative of the Ukrainian side](#) in the working subgroup on political issues of the Trilateral Contact Group (*text in [Ukrainian](#)*)
- August 13, 2019 - President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky issued a [decree on the simplification of obtaining Ukrainian citizenship by foreign volunteers](#) who fought in the Donbass, as well as Russians who are persecuted for political reasons. The provisions of this decree are of [concern](#) to human rights defenders (*text in [Ukrainian](#)*)
- August 14, 2019 - Russian political prisoner [Denis Bakholdin who opposed against the Russian occupation of part of Ukraine was released](#) in Russia (*text in [Russian](#)*)
- August 19, 2019 - French President Emmanuel Macron during a joint press conference with Vladimir Putin [said that the meeting in the "Norman format" will be held in a few days](#) (*text in [Russian](#)*)
- August 21, 2019 - Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik, said that the [ceasefire which began on July 21, is the most effective of all such attempts](#), and according to OSCE not a single death of civilians was recorded due to shelling. At the meeting, issues of repairing the bridge in Stanitsa Luhanskaya, the water supply of certain territories of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, as well as the implementation of the “Steinmeier formula” were discussed (*text in [Russian](#) and [English](#)*)
- August 21, 2019 - German Foreign Minister [Heiko Maas called on Russia for a constructive position on the resumption of negotiations](#) on the Donbass, and pointed out the need for an open [dialogue](#) between the parties (*text in [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#)*)
- August 22, 2019 - In response to a [statement by Donald Trump about the need to expand the G7 format to G8 due to the renewal of Russia's membership](#) in it,

Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky put forward a number of [conditions](#), in particular, the return of Crimea to Ukraine, the release of Ukrainian political prisoners and sailors, and the cessation of hostilities in the Donbass. Leaders from Germany, France and the UK [agreed with this position](#) (*text in English, Ukrainian, Russian*)

- August 23, 2019 - Ukrainian citizen [Roman Ternovsky, who had been recognized as a political prisoner by Memorial, was released](#) in Russia (*text in Ukrainian*)
- [Ukrainian-Russian exchange of detainees](#) and convicts should occur before the end of August, but still hasn't happened. The Insider assumes that Russia demands that [the BUK driver be included in the lists for exchange](#) (*text in Russian*)
- The chief military prosecutor of Ukraine, Anatoly Matios [said that over the past two years over one and a half thousand petitions were sent to the ECtHR and the International Criminal Court in The Hague](#) about the “genocide” carried out by Ukraine (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Preparations are taking place for a [meeting of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine in the Donbas](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Ukraine has [completed the transfer of the MH17 case to the Netherlands](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)

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

- July 25, 2019 - a [round-table on religious freedom was held in Kyiv](#), the participants of which adopted a [resolution](#) on citizens of Ukraine illegally held by the Russian Federation and cooperation of religious and public organizations to release them (*text in Ukrainian*)
- August 7, 2019 - [A volunteer camp organized by DRA e.V. was launched in Slavyansk, with 18 participants from 10 countries worldwide](#). In the morning, volunteers [helped](#) families affected by the conflict, and in the afternoon, they studied the life of the city and became acquainted with its activists (*text and video in English and Russian*)
- The Russian anti-war initiative “Fires of Eirene” [confirms adherence to its statement in support of Oleg Sentsov and in defense of Ukrainian political prisoners](#) made a year ago (*text in Russian*)
- Representatives of the civil society of Ukraine [presented five solutions for the de-occupation and integration](#) of Crimea and Donbas (*text in Ukrainian*)
- An anonymous art group in Russia [posted a street political installation “Teeth of War”](#) (*text in Russian*)
- The Documentation Center of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union [took part in the release of the second film by “Hromadske TV” “Those killed in captivity. Hromadske’s investigations”](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)

- 75 leaders of non-governmental organizations addressed an [appeal to the President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky to protect the electoral rights of displaced persons](#) *(text in Ukrainian)*
- The UATV channel, broadcasting to a foreign audience, has launched a [series of vlogs to dispel the myths of Russian propaganda](#) *(text in Ukrainian)*

4. Legal initiatives and analytics on war conflict

- August 14, 2019 - The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a resolution [specifying the procedure for providing assistance to internally displaced persons](#) *(text in Ukrainian)*
- London-based research group Forensic Architecture has [cataloged evidence of Russian intervention in the battle of Ilovaisk](#) for a case at the ECtHR *(text in English)*
- NATO Defense College has released an [article on the concept of “hybridity” in the context of warfare methods](#). According to the author, the impetus for understanding the “hybridity” in the Western community was the beginning of a hybrid war in eastern Ukraine *(text in English)*
- Attorney Volodymyr Glushchenko - on the [procedure for determining compensation for destroyed property in accordance with a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted on July 10, 2019](#). He notes that for the first time this problem was recognized at the national level, but this is only the first step to introduce a full-fledged procedure for compensation *(text in Ukrainian)*
- Kharkiv human rights group [presented the results of the project on the missing persons in the east of Ukraine](#). For 2014-2018, the organization collected information about 4649 cases of disappearance of people, of which 3484 were found *(text in Ukrainian)*
- [Monitoring of the events in the so-called “L/DPR” from August 3 to 16, 2019](#) - from the project “European Support for Effective Monitoring of Human Rights”, implemented by DRA e.V. together with a number of public organizations *(text in English)*
- Charity Fund “Right to Defense” published a [monitoring report “Crossing the demarcation line through the check-points”](#) for July 2019 *(text in Ukrainian)*
- The portal “Texty.org.ua” gathered [analytics on the number of ceasefire violations in the Donbas](#) and came to the conclusion that the current ceasefire cannot be called successful: “Positional war has resumed in eastern Ukraine” *(text in Ukrainian)*

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

- August 5, 2019 - The Ministry of Social Policy [has published an updated statistics on internally displaced persons](#), they are registered at 1 397 304. Experts

[comment](#) on why this number is one hundred thousand less than a year ago (*text in Ukrainian*)

- August 13, 2019 - [an action was held in Odessa in support of Ukrainian prisoners of war and political prisoners](#). Public organizations established 121 traps in the city center in terms of the number of people illegally held by Russia (*text in Ukrainian*)
- August 16, 2019 - The humanitarian mission "Proliska" [launched an electric car for the transport of persons with disabilities, no- and low-mobility people, people aged 75+, and families with children under 3 years old at the Stanitsa Luhanskaya](#) in the 800-meter section from the destroyed bridge over the Seversky Donets river to the checkpoint on the territory controlled by the government of Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- The public organization "Proliska" begins the [project "Assistance to victims of mines and explosive objects"](#) and opens the reception of applications for participation in the project (*text in Ukrainian*)
- On the humanitarian [program of the East-SOS Foundation in July](#). The Foundation visited 11 settlements and cities in the zone of 0-20 km from the contact line (*text in Russian*)

6. Interviews and opinions

- [Interview with Roman Bessmertny, who served as the representative of the Ukrainian side in the subgroup on political issues](#) of the Tripartite Contact Group - on its work and why negotiations in the Minsk format have reached an impasse (*audio in Ukrainian*)
- [Interview with the ex-chief of the General Staff of the Armed forces of Ukraine Viktor Muzhenko](#) - about the events near Ilovaisk (*text in Ukrainian*)
- [Interview with Kurt Walker](#), US Special Representative, on the eve of his trip to Ukraine. He [commented](#) on whether the President of the United States, Donald Trump, will have the [opportunity to participate in meetings on the "Norman format"](#) (*text in Ukrainian and English*)
- [Interview of Ekho Moskvyy with John Huntsman, US Ambassador to Russia](#): "Ukraine must regain its integrity in accordance with the Minsk agreements <...> efforts and determination based on Moscow's readiness to rectify the situation should be at the forefront" (*text in Russian*)
- Alexey Kushch, economist - about [why Russia "united" Donetsk and Lugansk into the so-called "Cross-border concern" Donbass Railways](#)" (*text in Russian*)
- Alexandra Dvoretzkaya (Charitable Foundation "East-SOS") - about the [people she met at the check-point of Donbas](#) (*text in Russian*)
- [Interview with Marina Pugacheva, lawyer, head of the Mariupol Women's Association "Bereginya"](#) - on working with residents of the "buffer zone" and internally displaced persons (*text in Russian*)

- Interview with Alexander Pavlichenko, Executive Director of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, about [what should be the strategy for the return of Crimea and Donbas](#) (text in Ukrainian)
- [About life in the dilapidated city of Aleksandrovsk](#), located in the territory not controlled by Ukraine near Luhansk - in the exclusive report "Donbass.Realii" (text in Ukrainian)
- [About how Oliver Stone's films about Ukraine are filmed promoting Russian propaganda](#) messages in the Detector Media publication (text in Russian)
- [Where the money for coal from occupied Donbass goes to](#) - in the report by "Donbass.Realii" (text in Ukrainian)
- Radio Liberty [talks about the life of Vera Vodolazskaya](#), a nurse from Avdeevka, who saved the lives of servicemen (text in Russian)
- [Interview with the film crew of the film "Kyiv-War Train"](#) about a train running between Kyiv and Konstantinovka, located on the contact line: "I would like this film to be the beginning of a dialogue between people" (text in Russian)

About the platform CivilM+

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.

Supported by the government of Germany as a part of the DRA project "Dialogue for mutual understanding and rule of law: European NGOs together to overcome the Donbass conflict"

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