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PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS

monthly newsletter

- COVID-19: how the pandemic has affected life in the zone of armed conflict, including in uncontrolled territories. Analysis and useful links
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COVID-19 in the Donbas

According to the [Ministry of Health](#) of Ukraine, as of June 26, 76 cases of COVID-19 were registered in the part of the Luhansk region controlled by the Ukrainian government, and 412 - in the controlled part of Donetsk region. The self-proclaimed "[DPR](#)" reports 1029 cases as of June 23, and "[LPR](#)" - 471 cases as of June 22.

Despite the fact that the Ukrainian side [opened](#) the Novotroitskoye checkpoint on June 22, and on June 25 representatives of the self-proclaimed DPR opened their side, on June 28 "DPR" unilaterally [closed](#) the checkpoint, citing the worsening situation with the pandemic in the territory controlled by Ukraine.

But even during the short time when the checkpoint was open, many citizens faced [difficulties](#) when entering the territory controlled by the government, especially if they did not have a smartphone to install the application "Act at home". The application was

designed to monitor the self-isolation of citizens. On June 25, more than 30 people [were stuck](#) at the Novotroitskoye checkpoint because of the lack of smartphones.

Local authorities have prepared places for observation for those who do not use the application and/or cannot find themselves a place to isolate for two weeks. With the support of the German organization DRA and the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland), the Vostok-SOS Charitable Foundation [monitored](#) such places in the Luhansk region. The main conclusion is that medical facilities are [not ready](#).

Denis Kazansky, a journalist and participant in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk, recorded [video material](#) about why “L/DPR” closed the checkpoints again and what the observation facilities look like in non-Ukrainian territories.

While there was a gradual resumption of movement across the contact line, the Right to Defense Charity Fund monitored the work of checkpoints in Stanitsa Luganskaya, Mayorskoye and Maryinka for 4 days. The results of their monitoring are presented in the report in [Ukrainian](#) and [English](#) . Radio Liberty also produced [material](#) on the crossing of the checkpoints after a three-month quarantine.

“Many people, who actually live in state-controlled territory found themselves on the other side of the contact line and were unable to go to work and/or reunite with their families. Thus, in fact, one can say that a process of disintegration, rather than reintegration, has been taking place since mid-March” - human rights organizations published their [position](#) and developed recommendations to reduce the negative consequences of crossings the checkpoints in quarantine conditions. Publication is available in [Ukrainian](#) and [English](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already difficult humanitarian situation in the Donbas. The “Drukarnia” Civil Society Center (Slavyansk), East-SOS, and the “New Way” charitable foundations have launched a joint [project](#) “Civil-humanitarian response to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in eastern Ukraine”, designed to support the most vulnerable civilians living near the contact line.

News from CivilM + and member organizations

War crimes in Donbas. Challenges of holding of perpetrators to account



- CivilM+ platform made a [public statement](#) to the German government, given the fact that Germany began its six-month presidency in the European Council on July 1. CivilM + members are asking Germany to use this time to give new impetus to the settlement of the armed conflict in the Donbas (*text in [Russian](#), [Ukrainian](#) and [English](#)*)
- Collection of publications “[War crimes in the Donbas. Challenges in terms of holding perpetrators accountable](#)” was published. It was prepared as part of the activities of the CivilM + platform. Compiled by: Citizen and Army Human Rights Initiative (Moscow), Luhansk Regional Alternative Human Rights Center (Kyiv) (*text in [English](#), [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#)*)

- Within the framework of the “Conflict Map” project of the CivilM + Platform, the publication “[Current challenges faced by residents of non-government controlled areas when applying for Ukrainian passports](#)” was published. New challenges in the context of the simplified procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship by Ukrainian citizens”. The publication is written by Alena Luneva, human rights activist and advocacy manager at the ZMINA Center for Human Rights (Kyiv, Ukraine) (*text in [English](#), [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#)*)
- The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU) has prepared [material](#) on children affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine. It was prepared after the discussion “Children have no place in the war!” at the international festival of human rights documentaries DocudaysUA (*text in Ukrainian*)
- UHHRU held two more webinars on transitional justice. They were devoted to the issues of criminal [liability](#) for war crimes and [prosecution](#) of international crimes in the International Criminal Court (*text and video in Ukrainian*).

Political processes and events in the conflict zone

Minsk process. Expansion of the Ukrainian composition of the TCG

On June 9, 2020, another round of consultations began in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) on the peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in the Donbas. The working groups [discussed](#) the issues of ensuring unhindered access for the OSCE SMM to the temporarily uncontrolled territory of Donbas, as well as the opening of new [checkpoints](#). The Ukrainian side also emphasized the need to coordinate the parameters of a political settlement with the interests of more than one and a half million people who were forced to leave their homes due to the conflict.

At the meeting of the TCG held on June 15, the results of the work of the socio-economic working group [were discussed](#) regarding the renewal of Ukrainian legislation in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, an inventory of public and private property, the environment, water supply and the provision of mobile connection by Ukrainian operators.

For the first time since 2014, the dialogue in the TCG [involved](#) representatives of the temporarily occupied regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine as part of the Ukrainian delegation. They will participate in the work of the TCG groups on an ongoing basis. The territories of the Donetsk region in the TCG are [represented](#) by journalists Denis Kazansky and [Sergey Garmash](#), and Luhansk - by lawyer Vadim Goran and doctor Konstantin Libster. “Hromadske Radio” [shares](#) more about them and the reasons for their participation in the TCG.

Boris Gryzlov, permanent representative of Russia in the Minsk negotiations accused Kyiv of intending to abandon negotiations with representatives of the “DPR” and “LPR” on the implementation of the political part of the Minsk agreements. He [referred](#) to the fact that this is a violation of the political part of the agreements.

Yevgeny Tsymbalyuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to international organizations in Vienna, [said](#) that attracting representatives of uncontrolled territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to work in the Tripartite Contact Group (TCG) will facilitate the negotiation process and force Russia to take on the obligations of a party to the conflict. He also [emphasized](#) that the sovereignty of Ukraine in the territories of Donbas occupied by Russia should be restored, which implies the abolition of Russian legislation, the tax system and currency introduced there.

The EU delegation, in its [statement](#), responded positively to Ukraine's decision to strengthen its political representation in the TCG, involving internally displaced persons in the negotiations.

The international Civil Society Platform CivilM + appealed to the Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine with a proposal to [create an independent civilian consultation group](#) to accompany the Minsk talks.

Maria Zolkina, political analyst of the Ilya Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, is [sure](#) that this initiative has positive aspects. The best option, in her opinion, would be an invitation offered by the OSCE for IDPs to join the TCG, which would enable them to be the "official representation" of the uncontrolled territories in the negotiations.

Andriy Yermak, Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, [said](#) that the group of consultants and experts from the Ukrainian side will be expanded in the future.

Restrictions on the work of the OSCE SMM in the temporarily occupied territories

- freedom of movement of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (OSCE SMM) in Donbas continues to be subject to restrictions by the so-called "LPR/DPR" (*text in [Ukrainian](#), [Russian](#) and [English](#)*)
- Yevgeny Tsymbalyuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to international organizations in Vienna, said that at present the activities of the OSCE SMM are actually [divided](#) into three separate branches due to restrictions in the uncontrolled territories related to the COVID-19 pandemic, while the Ukrainian party [does not restrict](#) the movement of the OSCE SMM monitors (*text in [Ukrainian](#)*)
- According to the press service of the Joint Forces Operations, for the period from 1 January to 18 June 2020 they have [recorded](#) 485 cases of obstruction of the activities of the OSCE SMM by the so-called "L/DPR" (*video in [Ukrainian](#)*)

Other events

- June 3, 2020 - a working visit of the Ukrainian delegation to Germany took place. Particular attention was given to achieving peace in Eastern Ukraine (*text in [Ukrainian](#), [English](#) and [Russian](#)*)
- June 8, 2020 - court hearings on the crash of Boeing MH17 resumed in the Hague. A daily [report](#) on the progress of the review is conducted by the Graty media project. In particular, the court demanded the declassification of satellite [imagery](#), which could have captured the process of launching a rocket that shot down the aircraft. According to experts, the process can be significantly complicated due to the

coronavirus [epidemic](#). A detailed [analysis](#) of the consequences of the lawsuit for Russian officials is published by The Insider (*text in Russian*)

- June 12, 2020 - NATO granted Ukraine the [status](#) of an enhanced opportunities partner. The Russian Foreign Ministry [spokeswoman](#) Maria Zakharova said that this would destabilize the settlement of the conflict in Donbas (*text in English and Russian*)
- June 16, 2020 - the Prosecutor General of Ukraine announced the [suspicion](#) of violation of the laws of the war in Slavyansk in 2014 by the former leader of the so-called "DPR", Russian citizen Igor Girkin (Strelkov) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- June 18, 2020 - Russian President Vladimir Putin [announced](#) a possible complication of relations between Ukraine and Russia due to a statement made by President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky about the responsibility of the USSR for unleashing World War II (*text in Russian*)
- 19 June 2020 - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine commented on the [statements](#) of the so-called "L/DPR" about the possibility of residents of these territories of Donbas to vote in a referendum on amendments to the Constitution of Russia, [saying](#) that this is another violation of the state sovereignty of Ukraine (*text in Ukrainian*)
- 19 June 2020 - Leaders of the EU countries decided to [extend](#) sectoral sanctions against Russia for another 6 months due to the lack of progress in the fulfillment of the Minsk Agreements (*text in Russian*)
- OSCE SMM [reported](#) on recorded truck movements from Russia to the so-called "L/DPR". They recorded five military-type trucks that crossed the border of Ukraine in a place where there is no checkpoint (*text in Ukrainian*)

Legislative Initiatives and Analysts on the Conflict

- The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a [decree](#) providing that payment of accommodation for unemployed IDPs will be continued during the time of the quarantine and for a month after its completion (*text in Ukrainian*)
- The importance of ratifying the Rome Statute for Ukraine and the possibilities of its application for investigating Russia's participation in the conflict in the Donbas is described in the article by Anna Malyar, Ph.D., criminologist, expert of the CivilM + platform (*text in [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#)*)
- East-SOS Charitable Foundation published the [results](#) of the hotline which documented violations of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies in Donetsk and Luhansk regions in May 2020 (*text in Ukrainian*)
- East-SOS Charitable Foundation published a review of human rights violations in the temporarily occupied parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions for May 2020 (*text in [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#)*)
- Central Election Commission of Ukraine adopted a [resolution](#) "On the procedure for determining the electoral address of a voter who does not have a registered place of residence", which, among other things, enables IDPs to [exercise](#) their right to vote (*text in Ukrainian*)

- Radio Liberty published an [analysis](#) of the possible scenarios for the development of the situation in the East of Ukraine in connection with a future referendum on amendments to the Constitution of Russia, including the fact that residents of the occupied territories with Russian passports will be able to [participate](#) in this vote. According to the [data](#) of June 12 there are more than 100 thousand Russian passports issued in the “LPR” alone (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmitry Kuleba [talked](#) about what hinders negotiations with Russia on the Donbas (*text in Russian*)
- A book “[Belarusian Donbass](#)” was published by Belarusian journalists. It talks about the role of Belarus and the participation of Belarusians in the conflict in eastern Ukraine (*text in Ukrainian*)

Human Dimension of the Conflict

- On June 2, 2020, the Geneva Call humanitarian organization published a [statement](#) and [video](#) dedicated to International Children's Day. According to the statement 750 [schools](#) have been destroyed or damaged since the beginning of the conflict. The organization calls on all parties of the conflict to commit themselves to protecting children. According to the [UN](#), during the entire time of the conflict in the Donbas, 147 children have been killed and 392 have been injured (*text in English, Russian*).
- Since early May, miners have been on [strike](#) in different cities in the territory of the so-called “LPR”. They have been demanding their unpaid wages. More than a hundred people remained underground for several days. Information appeared in the media about the use of violence and torture against protesters. A detailed [report](#) on the progress of the protests is published by the BBC. Experts also [analyze](#) the importance of miners' strikes in the development of the economy of uncontrolled territories (*text in Russian*).
- President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky [proposed](#) amendments to the law on higher education. According to the proposed amendments, graduates from uncontrolled territories will be able to enter universities in Ukraine without undergoing an external independent assessment (EIA). EIA is currently mandatory for all graduates and its results are a determining factor for admission. Zelensky’s proposals [received](#) a positive reaction from human rights defenders and social activists, but they were subjected to harsh criticism on social networks, often using hate speech (*text in Ukrainian*)
- A further simultaneous exchange of persons held in captivity will [depend](#) on the access of the Red Cross to their places of detention in temporarily occupied territories, said Galina Tretyakova, Ukraine’s representative in the humanitarian subgroup of the TCG (*text in Russian*)

Interviews and Journalism

- A History of [Female Sappers](#), working on mine clearance in the Donbas, published by the WoMo portal (*text in Russian*)
- A screening and discussion of the [film](#) “(Im)mortal. (Un)Forgotten War” about the victims of the conflict in the Donbas took place in Kyiv (*text in English, Ukrainian*)

- Andriy Yermak, Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, gave a long [interview](#) to the “Left Bank” media. Yermak spoke about the prospects of meetings in the Normandy format. He also emphasized that his signature on the notorious protocol on the creation of a “consultative council” within the framework of the TCG does not have legal force (*text in Russian*)
- [Interview](#) with Tatyana Durneva, Executive Director of the Public Group “Influence Group” (“Grupa Vplvvu”), on decisions of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine, allowing IDPs to vote without registration at their place of residence, (*video in Ukrainian*)
- Russia is [fighting](#) a war with the Ukrainian language in the Donbas, reports Radio Liberty (*text in Russian*)
- German media [report](#) that representatives of ultra-right groups from Germany, Sweden and Finland are being trained in military camps in Russia, after which they often join military operations in eastern Ukraine as part of the so-called “L/DPR” (*text in English*)
- Interview with Sergey Garmash, representative of the uncontrolled territories in the TCG, following the results of the next [meeting](#) group (*text in Russian*)

About CivilM +

The international CivilM + platform was established in 2017. It unites 19 organizations and three independent experts from Ukraine, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia and France. Within the CivilM + network, they contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Donbas. In particular, they inform their governments and communities about the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, implement projects in the spheres of peacebuilding, transitional justice, dialogue and human rights. Follow the platform news on CivilM + [Website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

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