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PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS

monthly newsletter

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COVID-19 in Donbas

According to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, as of [July 27](#) 120 cases of COVID-19 were registered in the government-controlled parts of Luhansk region, and 830 in parts of Donetsk. The self-proclaimed "[DPR](#)" claims 1611 cases of COVID-19 as of July 24, and the "[LPR](#)" 604 cases as of July 23.

International experts [report](#) "chaos" at the checkpoints on the contact line in Donbas related to the coronavirus situation. On July 23, the so-called "LPR" [lifted](#) the 14-day self-isolation requirement for those arriving from the territory of the Russian Federation, while it is still in place for those who enter from the territory controlled by Ukraine. Admission to the territory of the so-called "DPR" continues to be carried out [irregularly](#) with waiting lists, because of which people are forced to wait for their turn for several days, which puts their health and life in [danger](#).

NGOs providing assistance to IDPs and residents of Donbas, continue to study the impact of quarantine restrictions. So, on June 25-30, the East-SOS charitable foundation

carried out a monitoring [visit](#) to study the situation at the checkpoints across the contact line in Donbas. They noted that one of the main problems is that the “Act at home” (“Diy at home”) mobile app is not accessible for everyone as smartphones are needed for the app but are not common, especially among the elderly people.

The Stabilization Support Services charity presented the results of an online expert [study](#) “IDPs: life before and during the coronavirus”. The experts note that the measures that were introduced by the Cabinet of Ministers in March–April to support IDPs were not able to fully compensate for the consequences of the quarantine (namely economic crisis and growing unemployment), though they eased the situation somewhat. A [study](#) of the problems, changes and needs that have arisen due to the introduction of quarantine among internally displaced persons and people affected by the conflict in Donbas was also conducted by the Right to Protection (“Pravo na zahist”) charitable foundation.

Ukrainian NGOs, which work to protect the rights of people affected by the conflict, published an [appeal](#) to the Ministry of Health calling for the mechanism of self-isolation for those who came to the temporarily occupied territories to be reconsidered.

In a UNHCR publication, residents of Donbas talk about how the quarantine has [affected](#) their usual way of life.

News of CivilM + and organizations participating in the platform

- The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU) published a [report](#) “Monitoring the observance of human rights at the crossing of the second border checkpoints” (*text in Ukrainian*)
- On 24-29 July the German organization DRA together with the Ukrainian charity foundation East SOS organized an [international monitoring mission to Eastern Ukraine](#): to the areas affected by the hostilities. During the mission, experts from Ukraine, Germany, Russia, Poland and Norway investigated the security and socio-economic situation in the zone of armed conflict, in particular, documented the incidents of shelling of the settlements, assessed the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and collected people’s perceptions of the local elections in Ukraine (*text in [English](#) and [Russian](#)*)

Political processes and events in the conflict zone

Negotiations on Donbas

Minsk process. Ceasefire Decision

- July 8, 2020 - a video-meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) was held. The following issues were discussed: the unimpeded use of aircrafts of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine to extinguish fires in the Luhansk region near the contact line; environmental safety; development of an updated mine clearance

plan and legal aspects of the settlement of the conflict in Donbas (*text in [Ukrainian](#), [Russian](#) and [English](#)*)

- July 12, 2020 - the press secretary of the Russian President Dmitry Peskov [said](#) that if Ukraine leaves the Minsk agreements, it will be very difficult to create a new platform for negotiations (*text in Russian*)
- July 22, 2020 - a video-meeting of the TCG was held. The parties, with OSCE mediation, [agreed](#) to [comply](#) with a full and comprehensive ceasefire from 00:01 July 27, 2020. President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky [said](#) the document is awaiting signatures from all members of the Normandy Group (*text in Russian*)
- Within the framework of the humanitarian group, an exchange of lists of persons for mutual release was started. EU High Representative Josep Borrell [welcomed](#) the TCG's efforts to establish a complete ceasefire in Donbas and reaffirmed the EU's expectations of reciprocity from Russia in supporting Ukraine's efforts to fully implement the Minsk agreements (*text in Ukrainian and English*)
- July 27, 2020 - the [ceasefire](#) began in Donbas (*text in Ukrainian*)

Other negotiations

- July 3, 2020 - a meeting of political advisers to the heads of state of the Normandy Four took place in Berlin, during which Dmitry Kozak, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Russia, [said](#) that it was still impossible to talk about a breakthrough in the negotiations, as the issue of the special status of Donbas in the Constitution of Ukraine is not solved. In turn, the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak, following the results of the negotiations, [said](#) that another exchange of detainees could take place in the near future (*text in Russian*)
- July 21, 2020 - Dmitry Peskov, press secretary of the President of the Russia, [said](#) that "there are not the necessary conditions yet" to held the Normandy Summit in Berlin (*text in Ukrainian*)
- July 26, 2020 - phone talks between the Presidents of [Ukraine](#) and [Russia](#) were held, where they discussed the implementation of the Minsk agreements and certain issues of resolving the situation in Donbas (*text in Ukrainian, Russian*)

Other events

- July 3, 2020 - prior to the negotiations in Berlin, the German newspaper [Der Spiegel](#) obtained an unofficial [document](#) describing the position of Russia and its requirements for resolving the conflict in Donbas. In particular, it detailed the need to create a special status for "L/DPR" in the future Constitution of Ukraine, as well as to intensify efforts to implement the "Steinmeier Formula" (*text in German, Ukrainian*)
- July 5, 2020 - Alexander Boroday, the first "Prime Minister" of the so-called "DPR", at the congress of the Russian political party "Rodina", [announced](#) that the "DPR" would soon become part of Russia. Dmitry Kozak, Deputy Head of the Presidential

Administration of Russia, later [said](#) this issue has never been discussed (*text in Ukrainian*)

- July 5, 2020 - Alex Neizhpapa, commander of the Naval Forces of Ukraine, [said](#) that Ukraine is ready to repel a possible Russian invasion from the side of Crimea (*text in Ukrainian*)
- July 7, 2020 - the Russian political party "Za pravdu" (For Truth), chaired by Zakhar Prilepin, a writer who actively supported the so-called "L/DPR", [proposed](#) for Russia to recognise the independence of the "DPR" and "LPR", and for Abkhazia and Transnistria to hold a referendum on their entry into Russia (*text in Russian*)
- July 7, 2020 -the Unified Register of Pre-trial Investigations of Ukraine has received [data](#) on the participation of foreign citizens as mercenaries during the conflict in Donbas. The press service of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine specifically reports about 20 French citizens. The maximum punishment for them may be life imprisonment (*text in Ukrainian*)
- July 7, 2020 - The Security Service of Ukraine announced that an officer of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation was [detained](#) in Kyiv. Apparently since 2014 he has been “curating” the actions of the leaders of the so-called “DPR”, and, in particular, could have been related to the crash of Boeing MH-17 (*text in Ukrainian*)
- July 9, 2020 - a [meeting](#) took place in the President’s Office of Ukraine to establish a working group on the issues of missing persons during the conflict in Donbas. According to experts, at the moment there are around 500 people missing (*text in Ukrainian*)
- July 13, 2020 - EU Foreign Minister Heiko Maas [said](#) that a solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine will become a prerequisite for the restoration of strategic relations between the European Union and Russia (*text in Ukrainian*)
- July 15, 2020 - The European Court on Human Rights [accepted](#) for consideration an interstate [lawsuit](#) filed by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Netherlands against Russia. An analysis of the causes and possible consequences of such a move in a [publication](#) by the Graty media project (*text in English and Russian*)
- The court on the MH17 crash will [resume](#) at the end of August to decide about compensation for the relatives of the victims (*text in Russian*)
- July 22, 2020 - Defense Minister of Ukraine Andriy Taran took part in the final [meeting](#) of the OSCE Security Cooperation Forum, dedicated to summarising the results of its work under the chairmanship of Ukraine (*text in Ukrainian*)

Legislative initiatives and analysis of the conflict

- July 1, 2020 - the government of Ukraine proposed amendments to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Amending the Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated April 18, 2018 No. 328 and dated December 11, 2019

No. 1122", which will restore state payments to the families of prisoners illegally detained in Russia and released from imprisonment (*text in [Ukrainian](#) and [English](#)*)

- July 10, 2020 - President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky signed the amendments to the [law on education](#) of Ukraine, according to which residents of the temporarily occupied territories of Donbas and Crimea have the right to enroll in Ukrainian universities without passing the external independent assessment (EIT). [Analysis](#) of the law was prepared by the UHHRU (*text in Ukrainian*)
- The UNHCR prepared an overview of legislative changes related to internal displacement for May-June 2020 (*text in [Ukrainian](#) and [English](#)*)
- A view from Berlin: how German think tanks see the [prospects for resolving the conflict](#), according to the research center "New Europe" (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Maria Zolkina, expert of the "Deminitiativa" (Democratic Initiative) Foundation [analyzes](#) the last meeting of the Normandy Format and the change of Ukrainian strategy in the future (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Human rights NGOs presented a series of [reports](#) about the human rights violations that took place during the capture and occupation of [Sloviansk](#) from April 12 to July 5, 2014 (*video and text in Ukrainian*)
- "East-SOS" charitable foundation published an overview of human rights violations in the temporarily occupied parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions in June 2020 (*text in [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#)*)
- "East-SOS" charitable foundation published the results of the work of the public hot-line on illegal actions of [law enforcement agencies](#) in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions for June 2020 (*text in Ukrainian*)
- "Detector Media" published a [review](#) of mechanisms for Russian propaganda to get into the Ukrainian information space in June 2020 (*text in Ukrainian*)
- [Review](#) of the developments in the temporarily non-government-controlled territories of Donbas from June 19 to July 23 in the new issue of the Civicmonitoring bulletin published by the German organization DRA. Its separate chapters are devoted to the procedure for crossing the contact line in Zolote and Schastia, problems caused by the pandemic and the resumption of the bussing of people to obtain Russian passports (*text in English*)

Interviews and journalism

- "Everything turned into collapse, shame, bewilderment and a dead end" - [an interview](#) from Novaya Gazeta with Vadim Samodurov, the Russian political strategist who among others was behind the Novorossiya project (*text in Russian*)
- "13 theses of Dmitry Kuleba" - an [interview](#) with the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine by Radio Liberty (*text in Ukrainian*)
- An [interview](#) with Dmitry Kozak, the representative for Russia in the Normandy Format negotiations (*text in Russian*)

- [Column](#) by Yuri Yarym-Agayev, Head of the Center for the Study of Totalitarian Ideologies on the dangers of compliance with the Minsk agreements for Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- Alexandra Matviychuk, Head of the Center for Civil Liberties NGO (Kyiv) , gave an [interview](#) to Hromadske Radio about the Rome Statute and its application in Ukraine (*video in Ukrainian*)
- “When Donetsk was not mine any more”- [memories](#) of IDPs about the events of the spring of 2014 (*text in Russian*)
- Report by “Hromadske Radio” about [life](#) in the village of Slavnoe in Maryinsky district of the Donetsk region, which is located three kilometers from the contact line (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Web-project “The present time” has published the full version of the documentary “[A house from the Edge](#)” produced by Russian journalist Yulia Vishnevetskaya, who was filming people on both sides of the frontline in Donbas (*video in Russian*).
- The movie “[Bad Roads](#)” by Ukrainian director Natalya Vorozhbit was included in the competition of the 77th Venice Film Festival. All events in the movie take place in Donbas in 2015 (*text in Russian*)
- A graphic novel of short stories, “Crossroads: Nine Stories of War and Violence” created by human rights organizations, has been [published online](#) (*text in Ukrainian, Russian and English*)
- Radio Liberty published an investigation “[The executioners of Slovyansk](#)”. Journalists have identified individuals and found new details about seven of the nine participants in Girkin's "military tribunals" in Slovyansk (*text in Ukrainian*)

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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The opinions expressed in journalistic materials may not coincide with the opinions of the authors of the newsletter.



Federal Foreign Office

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