

HIGHLIGHTS

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



May 14 – 20, 2021

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WELCOME THE ADOPTION OF THE LAW ON WAR CRIMES

On 20 May, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [adopted](#) the law that foresees the implementation of the norms of international humanitarian law and international criminal law into the national legislation.

By entering into force, the law will:

- Abolish a statute of limitations with regards to crimes of aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Allow reclassification of such crimes that were investigated according to the general criminal code provisions.
- Allow for universal jurisdiction with regards to such crimes. It means that prosecution and administration of justice can be done in any country regardless of the place of a committed crime, citizenship, or a place of residence of a suspect or a victim.

It also means the hope for justice for victims of atrocities committed in Donbas since 2014 and for their relatives, as well as for the inevitability of the punishment for offenders.

“Adoption of this draft law sends a message to the occupied territory. Criminal responsibility is individual, and those who commit atrocities will suddenly realize that the situation may change and they will have to bear responsibility. This will save lives’ - [underscores](#) Olexandra Matviychuk, the head of the Centre for Civil Liberties that spent five years advocating for the adoption of this law. The Centre is a member of the CivilMPlus platform. Read more about the prosecution of war crimes in Donbas in the CivilMplus [publication](#).

ZELENSKY CONSIDERS A REFERENDUM TO DECIDE ON WAYS TO RETURN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF DONBAS

The President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy [held a press conference](#) to mark his two years as the incumbent. He stated that to achieve peace in Donbas, a meeting with the President of Russia is being planned, as well as the involvement of the USA to the process. He said that the plans of Ukraine with regards to ending the war in Donbas and returning the occupied territories could be [defined through a referendum](#).

Various experts have analyzed the two years of Zelenskyy's presidency. Mr Skorkin, the analyst from the Moscow Carnegie Center [said](#) that 'Zelenskyy is past the crisis, it's unlikely that he will reject the idea of new sanctions against internal enemies and the offensive rhetoric towards Russia'. Radio Liberty [describes](#) the main stages in the president's actions on Donbas.

NEGOTIATIONS TO OPEN THE ENTRY-EXIT CROSSING POINTS IN DONBAS

On 19 May, during a meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Ms Haidi Grau, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in TCG, [expressed](#) her concern over the increase in the use of heavy weapons, located in violation of the line of withdrawal. Such issues as the ceasefire, water supplies for the residents of Donbas, protection of private property were also on the meeting's agenda.

The Humanitarian subgroup [focussed](#) on discussing mutual security guarantees for the opening of the entry-exit crossing points (EECPs) 'Shchastia' and 'Zolote' from the non-government-controlled side. The coordinator of the subgroup Ambassador Toni Frisch confirmed his commitment to visit the EECPs to assess if the conditions for their opening were met. Later, however, the representatives of the self-proclaimed 'LPR' [denied](#) that the agreement on the simultaneous opening of the EECPs had been reached. As of now, the majority of the EECPs along the contact line [remains blocked](#) by the so-called 'L/DPR', with short random openings. This situation creates grave obstacles for people travelling across the contact line. [According to Oleksii Arestovych](#), Ukraine's representative in the TCG, the nearest months may see the abolishment of fines for people from the occupied territories who have to enter Ukraine via Russia due to the situation with the EECPs.

Mr. Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's minister on the issues of reintegration, [stated](#) that the preparations to roll-out the vaccination for people living in the occupied territories are almost finished. Soon, they will have an opportunity to receive their jab in the entry-exit crossing points.

International humanitarian organizations [hope](#) that the movement through the EECPs in Donbas will resume next month.

ONGOING INVESTIGATION INTO THE CASE OF VIKTOR MEDVEDCHUK

Ukraine's secretary of the National Security and Defence Council Mr. Oleksii Danylov [said](#) during a political talk-show that it may be possible to 'exchange' Viktor Medvedchuk charged with state treason to the Ukrainians convicted in the Russian Federation, upon the relevant decision of the president of Ukraine. Ukrainian investigative journalists have [published](#) the recording of Medvedchuk's conversations with the representatives of the so-called 'L/DPR' back in 2014. According to Medvedchuk, the president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and the then-president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko gave him credentials for these negotiations.

THE LAW ON PROSECUTIONS *IN ABSENTIA* HAS ENTERED INTO FORCE

On 14 May, the law 'On introducing amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code to improve certain provisions related to a special pre-trial investigation' [entered into force](#) in Ukraine. From now on, a groundless refusal of a suspect to appear upon a call, as well as his or her stay in the aggressor state or in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine can serve as a ground to start a special pre-trial investigation. Such a measure as an arrest *in absentia* can be applied in such a case.