

HIGHLIGHTS

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



August 6 – 12, 2021

KILLING OF UKRAINIAN CONVICTS IN “DPR” PRISON

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Ombudsperson Liudmyla Denysova [informed](#) that three Ukrainian citizens were killed in a penitentiary facility in the uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government area of Donetsk region. One of them had previously requested to be transferred to the government controlled areas to serve his sentence. However, such a transfer had taken place in 2019 for the last time, the process was blocked by the so-called “DPR” after this. The Donetsk regional prosecution [initiated](#) investigation into the killing. According to the official information, 450 Ukrainian citizens are currently waiting for transfer from the prisons in “L/DPR” to the government-controlled areas, 70 of them are sentenced to life imprisonment. The expert of the Kharkiv Human Rights Group Andriy Didenko [notes](#) that these people are “forced hostages” and Ukraine is obliged to take care of them. The situation with convicts in the penitentiary facilities in the areas of the so-called “L/DPR” will be looked into at the [next meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group](#) (TCG). “Radio Freedom” [tells](#) about what is known about the killed persons.

PREPARATION OF “L/DPR” PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS TO RUSSIAN STATE DUMA

Mobile stations are used to [engage](#) inhabitants of the temporarily uncontrolled territories by the Ukrainian government parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in

voting at the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation. This voting is dubbed “constitutional right”. It is [stated](#) that only in the areas of the so-called “DPR”, approximately 148 thousand people filed documents to receive the possibility to vote. The Atlantic Council’s publication on countering the Russian passport policy in Donbas suggest refusal of the international community to fully or partly recognize the results of the Russian elections as a possible measure. Given that there are many participants of the conflict in Donbas among candidates at the [elections](#) and the whole process could be used as a part of legitimization of the so-called “L/DPR”, this issue is becoming especially acute.

UKRAINE-US NEGOTIATIONS

The week has been marked by a number of meetings between officials of Ukraine and the US. In Washington, [talks](#) between the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba and the Head of the Office of President Andriy Yermak with the US State Secretary Antony Blinken [took place](#). The main topic was preparation for the [meeting of presidents of the US and Ukraine](#) planned for the end of August. Considerable attention was also paid to the situation in Donbas, strengthening of strategic partnership and joint efforts to counter military aggression of Russia against Ukraine. The State Secretary Blinken confirmed the continuous US support of sovereignty, territorial integrity and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine. During his working visit to the US, the Ukrainian Minister of Reintegration of Occupied Territories Oleksiy Reznikov held a [meeting](#) with the Director of the National Security Council’s Eastern Europe and Caucasus Department Chris Smith. They discussed the possibility of the US engagement in the negotiation process regarding the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Also, it became known on the US’ appointment of the [adviser](#) for energy security Amos Hochstein who will deal with the issues of The Nord Stream 2. He consistently advocated for a critical approach to the gas pipeline construction. The US State Secretary noted that this appointment shows resolve “to push back against the Kremlin’s use of energy as a geopolitical weapon” and will facilitate the safe future for Ukraine.

DISCUSSION AROUND NORMANDY FORMAT

Continuing the discussion on the possibilities to enhance effectiveness of the instruments for settlement in Donbas, Ukrainian MFA Dmytro Kuleba [expressed](#) the view that the US is currently open to discussion of different ideas in relation to stopping the Russian aggression against Ukraine, and it should not be narrowed down exclusively to the participation in the Normandy format but “an option that would bring results” should be found. The possibilities for participation of other countries are being considered. However, the UK’s engagement in the Normandy format would not affect the negotiation process - this view was [expressed](#) by the UK Ambassador to Ukraine Melinda Simmons in the interview to “BBC-Ukraine”. She names non-adherence of Russia to its commitments the central issue. According to

the Ambassador, the UK should support the existing formats using its influence and experience in order to turn the attention to the violations of agreements.

UKRAINIAN DRAFT LAW ON TRANSITION PERIOD: DETAILS AND REACTIONS

The Ukrainian draft law on foundations of the state policy of the transition period [has been registered](#) in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine under the number 5844. The parliamentary committee on human rights, deoccupation, and reintegration of the temporarily occupied areas will prepare the document for consideration at the plenary session. The text of the draft law has not been published yet, however, the adviser of the Ukrainian Minister of Reintegration Yuna Potomkina [reported](#) that the draft law should improve living conditions for Ukrainian citizens in the occupied areas. It, among others, envisages a new approach to the documents issued in the temporarily uncontrolled parts of Donbas. School completion certificates will be recognized, whereas the situation with diplomas on higher education requires a more detailed approach - the Ministry of Reintegration is currently working on the respective draft law. She also noted that the issuance of the passports by Russia is considered as an act of coercion and people who received them continue to be recognized as Ukrainian citizens. At the same time, in the commentary [published](#) on 11 August by the Russian MFA, “concerns over degradation of the security situation in eastern Ukraine” are expressed, the statement says the Ukrainian draft law on the transition period is directed at “cleansing of the region”. In the statement of the Ukrainian MFA speaker Oleg Nikolenko in response to the [commentary](#), it is noted that implementation of peace commitments undertaken by Russia is more and more frequently replaced with loud political statements, but Ukraine will continue its work on improvement of well-being of the affected population on both sides of the contact line.