

HIGHLIGHTS

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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RUSSIA TRIES TO SUPPRESS PROTESTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE BY FORCE, A NUMBER OF SETTLEMENTS ARE ON THE VERGE OF HUMANITARIAN DISASTER

Russian forces, in violation of international law, continue to launch artillery, missile, and air strikes to destroy civilian infrastructure in cities. [Kyiv](#) is being [shelled](#), fighting continues in the region, and a number of settlements are on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe. At the same time, the Armed Forces of Ukraine were able to [encircle](#) Irpen, Bucha and Gostomel, where there had been fierce fighting since the start of the invasion, making it [impossible](#) for Russian troops to advance towards Kyiv. The cities of [Kharkiv](#), [Dnipropetrovsk](#), [Sumy](#), and other regions were under fire. On March 21, an ammonia [leak](#) occurred at the plant due to shelling, which was [repaired](#) later that day.

According to the results of the [28th day of the war](#), Russian armed forces continue to try to blockade and occupy Chernihiv, there is no change in the Mariupol area. [Slavutich](#) is blockaded and it is impossible to leave the city. Fighting and shelling continue in the Chernihiv region, and the Ukrainian government [notes](#) that there is currently no way to organize a humanitarian corridor. Chernihiv mayor Vladislav Atroshenko [declares](#) a humanitarian disaster in the city, from which more than half of the population has left. On March 23, invading troops [bombed](#) a bridge leading from Chernihiv toward the capital. Click [here](#) for a report on the situation in Chernihiv.

As of March 24, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [notes](#) that Russia is changing its original plans for conducting combat operations in Ukraine: in some

directions it is abandoning offensive actions, but concentrating forces for an offensive against Kyiv, as well as continuing an offensive to occupy Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

At the same time, [according to the Pentagon](#), the Ukrainian military pushed back some Russian forces from Kyiv by 25 kilometers. Successful counterattacks by the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the region are also [confirmed](#) by British intelligence. [According to the Pentagon](#), Russian forces have already used about 1,200 missiles on targets in Ukraine. At the same time, according to experts, Russia still has significant reserves of missiles of different types. The situation in the regions by the morning of March 24 can be seen [here](#).

The State Service of Ukraine for Emergency Situations [states](#) that since the start of the full-scale war, about 3,780 residential buildings have been partially damaged and 651 buildings have been completely destroyed. However, the statistics do not take into account the temporarily occupied territories, and the real scale of the destruction is much higher.

Russian troops [looted](#) and destroyed the Central Analytical Laboratory in Chernobyl, taking possession of highly radioactive and radionuclide samples.

The Russian siege of Mariupol continues, with more than three weeks of fighting around the city and Russian forces shelling it around the clock. There is no water, food, electricity, heating, or communications. The mayor of Mariupol had to [leave](#) in order to continue working. The head of the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, Iryna Vereshchuk, [notes](#) that another 350,000 people remain in the city. At the moment, there are [no foreign correspondents](#) left to cover the situation. The evacuation of the city continues to be [extremely problematic](#).

The Ukrainian government has [launched](#) a program to help people displaced by the war. From March 21, cash payments will be paid to IDPs, employers who hire people from the affected regions, and families who shelter them.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff [reports](#) that some military and commanders of the Belarusian army refuse to join Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, the Belarusian leadership continues to provide comprehensive support to the Russian armed forces, providing them with airfields, roads, railroads, and hospitals. It is noted that the threat of the Belarusian army joining the invasion of Ukraine remains high; this opinion is also held by [representatives of NATO](#). The leader of the Belarusian opposition, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, [recorded](#) an appeal to the military, urging them not to participate in this war, and for those who will be forced to fight to lay down their arms and surrender to the Ukrainian armed forces.

[According to NATO](#), Russian army losses in Ukraine may range from 7 to 15 thousand dead, and total losses, including wounded, missing in action and prisoners of war, up to 40 thousand. This roughly coincides with the data of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as of March 24 inclusive, [claiming](#) 15800 combat losses among the Russian army. The Russian Foreign Ministry [said](#) that there had been two prisoner exchanges between Ukraine and Russia, while Ukraine [did not confirm](#) this information.

Meduza [tells](#) the story of a Russian contract serviceman who defected from the war in Ukraine, and the BBC [analyzes](#) the currently known information about the dead Russian servicemen.

Mine Action Operator Demining Solutions has [calculated](#) that Ukraine needs to demine almost 14% of the country.

British intelligence [said](#) that Russia is likely to try to suppress protests in temporarily occupied localities by force. Among other things, the media reported a possible intention to forcibly remove activists from the cities to Russian territory. It is noted that attempts to subdue the population through media manipulation, propaganda, and the promotion of pro-Kremlin proxy leaders have failed, and residents continue to protest the Russian occupation. The BBC [reports](#) from [occupied Kherson](#) and Hromadske reports from occupied Trostyanets (Sumy region). Protests in the city were dispersed by [shooting](#) and stun grenades, [detaining](#) participants, and using [tear gas](#).

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry [said](#) that on 19 March, Russian occupation troops illegally removed 2,389 children from the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions to Russian territory. It is noted that the forced transfer of civilians to the territory of the aggressor state has signs of abduction and is a gross violation of international humanitarian law. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry called on the international community to immediately respond to the illegal removal of children and increase pressure on Russia to stop the war.

On March 23, the governor of Belgorod Oblast [stated](#) that a shell fired "from the direction of Ukraine" exploded in one of the villages, and there were casualties. An emergency situation was [declared](#) in the villages. The Russian Investigative Committee [announced](#) an investigation into the circumstances of the incident. Ukrainian official bodies have repeatedly [stated](#) the practice of provocations by Russia, including the possibility of attacks on civilian objects, to place responsibility for this on the Ukrainian Armed Forces and to discredit Ukraine.

EU TO CONSIDER OIL EMBARGO AND DOUBLES MILITARY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO UKRAINE, EXPERTS CRITICIZE GERMAN POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA

US President Joe Biden's administration [imposed](#) new sanctions against 328 deputies of the Russian State Duma and members of the Russian elite, including the head of Sberbank, German Gref, and defense industry companies, against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine. The sanctions are coordinated with the European Union and the G7 countries.

On March 24, a NATO summit is taking place, which will presumably discuss the possibility of introducing a peacekeeping contingent to Ukraine. The proposal has already been [supported](#) by seven countries – Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Denmark. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [said](#) that sending peacekeepers to Ukraine might lead to a direct clash between Russia and NATO. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [said](#) that at the

moment NATO had no consensus on this idea, with Ukraine lacking practical support from the entire Alliance, not only from individual partners. Dmytro Kuleba stressed that Ukraine does not withdraw from the agenda the topic of closing the sky over Ukraine.

Speaking at the NATO summit, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [noted](#) that from the very beginning of the war Ukraine had been asking the Alliance for support and assistance in the form of 1% of their combat aircraft and tanks, as well as multiple rocket launchers, anti-ship weapons and air defense means. According to the president, such support will allow Ukraine to defend itself effectively and protect its civilians.

Western countries are also discussing the potential exclusion of Russia from the G20, [reports](#) Reuters. Earlier, Poland said it had proposed that the U.S. authorities exclude Russia from the group. U.S. presidential national security adviser Jake Sullivan [confirmed](#) that the possibility is being considered. China has already [said](#) it is not ready to support such an idea.

EU foreign and defense ministers [approved](#) the Strategic Compass, the EU's first defense and security concept. The 2030 Action Plan provides for the creation of a European rapid reaction force of 5,000 troops.

The governments of the European Union will [consider](#) imposing an oil embargo on Russia in connection with its invasion of Ukraine. Currently, [Germany and the Netherlands](#) are [blocking](#) a ban on Russian oil imports. The Baltic states [plan to ban](#) Russian ships from entering their ports.

The European Union will [double](#) its military and financial support to Ukraine and bring it to 1 billion euros within the framework of the European Peace Facility (EPF). The duration of the aid package is also extended by 12 months. In addition, the European Commission [proposed](#) to increase aid from the REACT-EU emergency assistance fund to EU member states hosting people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

[The United Kingdom announced](#) plans to provide additional weapons and financial aid. The Netherlands [froze](#) Russian assets and transactions worth 392 million euros. The United States is [preparing](#) a bill blocking Russia's gold reserves by about 132 billion dollars.

Latvia [imposed](#) entry restrictions on Russians who supported the war. For an overview of the sanctions adopted so far, [see](#) the BBC story.

NATO plans to provide Ukraine with additional support: in particular, equipment for protection against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, as well as assistance in cyber security, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [said](#) at a briefing on March 23. He reiterated NATO's position that the allies seek to prevent war from spreading beyond Ukraine, but agreed that Ukraine must be supported. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield [noted](#) that the United States was not going to send its troops to Ukraine, but would support its NATO allies in case of an attack on them.

The normalization of relations between Germany and Russia is impossible as long as Vladimir Putin remains in charge of Russia, Lars Klingbeil, co-chairman of the ruling SPD party and a confidant of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, [said](#). At the same time, experts on Eastern European issues [accuse](#) Germany of "short-sighted selfishness"

in relations with the Russian Federation - they note that the attempt to contain Russia through diplomacy and treaties has failed, and demand tougher sanctions. Their [open letter](#) stresses that the outbreak of war has confirmed the failure of policies pursued by Germany and the EU for decades. Germany should concentrate on actively promoting support for Ukraine now, instead of taking measures that may have an effect in the future. Among other things, they propose imposing sanctions on all Russian banks, completely disconnecting Russia from the SWIFT payment system, stopping the purchase of any raw materials from Russia, isolating Russia and imposing EU visa bans on members of the Russian government and elites close to the government, confiscating funds and assets of Russian oligarchs and companies close to Putin, and supplying Ukraine not only with light, but also with heavy defensive and offensive weapons.

OFFICIALS LEAVE RUSSIA, REPRESSIVE INNOVATIONS CONTINUE

The Russian State Duma passed amendments introducing administrative and criminal liability for defamation and fakes not only about the Russian armed forces, but also about the work of [Russian government agencies](#) outside the country.

Parliamentarians [explained](#) that the new norms may affect diplomatic missions, the Federal Guard Service and the Ministry of Emergency Situations. On March 23, the State Duma of Russia adopted in three readings at once a [law](#) extending the status of veterans and invalids of combat operations to participants of military operations in Ukraine.

Roskomnadzor [blocked](#) the news service Google. Russia also [recognized](#) the extremist activities of the company Meta and its social networks Facebook and Instagram.

Anatoly Chubais has [left](#) the post of the Russian president's special representative for sustainable development and left the country. Bloomberg notes that Chubais became the highest-ranking official who severed ties with the Kremlin after the invasion of Ukraine, while he did not make unequivocal anti-war statements in public. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has not appeared in public or in the media since March 11. The Russian Defense Ministry did not comment on this information. Thirteen days later, Vesti 24 [aired](#) a 30-second video from the Security Council with Shoigu, but journalists at Agentstvo claim that the defense minister was being prepared in a hurry to appear on the air.

The deputies of the State Duma from the United Russia party were [banned](#) from leaving the country without the permission of the head of the faction, Vladimir Vasilyev.

In the three weeks since the introduction of criminal liability in Russia for spreading "knowingly false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces," at least seven criminal cases have been [opened](#).

The European Court of Human Rights has published a [resolution](#) specifying the consequences of Russia's exclusion from the Council of Europe. It is noted that Russia will cease to be a party to the European Convention on Human Rights on

September 16, 2022. It is possible to appeal to the court, if the facts took place before September 16, 2022, even if the means of legal protection will be exhausted later. The freezing of Russian complaints is lifted immediately.