

## HIGHLIGHTS

# PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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### ZAPORIZHZHYA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT BURNED DUE TO SHELLING, FIRE EXTINGUISHED

Due to continuous shelling there was a fire at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe. Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky stressed in an emergency [video](#) that the fire could become "the second Chernobyl and even more". At the moment, radiation is normal, the fire has been [extinguished](#), and the nuclear power plant has been taken over by Russian troops. However, the plant's employees [told](#) the media that Rosgvardia fighters burst into the plant and are preparing to booby-trap it. It is not possible to check whether this information is true or not.

The fire did not affect the main equipment of the plant, [said](#) the IAEA. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, commenting on the fire on the territory of the nuclear power plant, [demanded](#) to close the sky over Ukraine.

Commenting on the situation, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson [said](#) that the reckless actions of Vladimir Putin posed a direct threat to all of Europe. During an emergency meeting with Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, the parties agreed that the main priority now is to force the Russian side to immediately stop the hostilities in the NPP zone. US President Joe Biden [said](#) the same. The shelling of the Zaporizhzhia NPP became the main news in the world media.

### RUSSIAN ARMY CONTINUES SHELLING CITIES, NUMBER OF REFUGEES EXCEEDS ONE MILLION

The shelling of Ukrainian cities and fighting continues. In Chernihiv, [shelling of residential neighborhoods](#) and two schools on March 3 [killed](#) at least 47 people and injured 18 more. In [Kharkiv](#), at least 13 people were injured by shelling of the city center, with at least 34 civilians killed and 285, including 10 children, wounded as of the morning of March 3 in the Kharkiv region. Fighting is going on in [Enerгодар](#) (Zaporizhzhia region), [Bucha](#) (Kyiv region), [and elsewhere](#).

The Russian military has [seized](#) a TV tower in Kherson, possibly using its capacity to spread disinformation "about the alleged surrender of Ukraine and the signing of a peace treaty with Russia.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki [stresses](#) that the ultimate goal of the Russian military campaign is the capture of Kiev as well as all of Ukraine, but Russia is running out of military reserves and equipment that can be added to the aggression. [According to the US Department of Defense](#), Russian forces have launched 480 missiles of varying power since the start of hostilities in Ukraine. Most of the missiles (230) were launched directly from the territory of Ukraine, more than 160 more from Russia, about 70 from Belarus, and less than 10 from the Black Sea. According to the Ukrainian General Staff, as of the morning of March 5, the [number of casualties](#) among Russian servicemen reached 10,000. Vladimir Putin held a meeting of the Russian Security Council, during which he [said](#) that "the special military operation is going according to schedule, according to plan" and promised multi-million dollar payments to the families of the dead soldiers. Part of the meeting was held behind closed doors. He also had a conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, after which he [said](#) that the situation in Ukraine could worsen because Russia's ambition is to take over the entire country. The Russian president [assured](#) that "statements about the alleged shelling and bombing of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities do not correspond to reality and are elements of an anti-Russian disinformation campaign. At the same time, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [warned](#) that the Russian army might be preparing for a provocation, as a number of missile launchers on Ukrainian territory have been redirected toward Russia. [Mariupol](#) and [Nikolaev remain](#) the most tense directions by the evening of March 4.

The Verkhovna Rada Committee on Human Rights, Deoccupation and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories [appealed](#) to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently take all necessary actions to open humanitarian corridors for safe evacuation of civilians from Volnovakha. Three thousand people are [left](#) in the nearly destroyed city, with no water or light. More than 1,500 people were [evacuated](#) from the towns of Bucha and Irpen in the Kyiv region, which had been subjected to heavy shelling the day before. The Russian army is de facto besieging [Kherson](#), thereby creating a humanitarian disaster, and local authorities are asking for a green corridor so that medicine and food can be brought into the city. In [Akhtyrka](#), Sumy region, there is no heating and no electricity, and Russian troops are also bombing Sumy. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrel [stressed](#) that the humanitarian situation in Ukraine is becoming more difficult due to constant bombing by the Russian army and

called on Vladimir Putin to allow the creation of humanitarian corridors in Ukraine. [According to the UN Human Rights Office](#), as of the morning of March 4, 331 civilians have been killed and 675 others wounded during Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, [said](#) the number of refugees reached one million two hundred thousand during the first week of the war. The EU has [supported](#) a plan to grant temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees, as well as foreigners and stateless persons with permanent residence permits in Ukraine and those who have received international protection in Ukraine. This status implies legal residence, the right to work and access to health care and education systems for one year with the possibility of extension for up to two more years. Temporary protection status in the EU will take effect in the next few days. The decision is unprecedented because the mechanism, developed in response to the war in the former Yugoslavia, has not been used before.

## SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

The United States is imposing [personal sanctions](#) against Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov, as well as against 19 major Russian officials, businessmen and 47 individuals associated with them. The UK, in turn, has put a number of other Russian officials on its sanctions lists. Singapore [imposed sanctions](#) on Russian banks. Switzerland [banned](#) the export of dual-use, security and defense goods to Russia, as well as transactions related to the assets of the Bank of Russia. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [adopted](#) a law on the compulsory seizure of Russian property in the country. The Verkhovna Rada Committee on Anti-Corruption Policy [addressed](#) the Council of the European Union, the European External Action Service, parliaments and governments of foreign countries with a call to expand the list of banks disconnected from SWIFT to full coverage of the Russian and Belarusian banking systems, the list of entities subject to sanctions – all Russian and Belarusian public sector enterprises, as well as to take a number of other sanctions measures. The EU is [researching the possibility](#) of disconnecting new banks from the SWIFT interbank payment system from Russia, said EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Josep Borrell.

He also [noted](#) that Russia's leadership is solely responsible for the consequences of sanctions.

The UN Human Rights Council [voted](#) to investigate Russia's actions in Ukraine. Ukraine and the EU [signed a memorandum](#) unblocking the first tranche of macrofinancial assistance to Ukraine worth 600 million euros. The total amount of the aid is 1.2 billion euros. In addition, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, [announced](#) the allocation of at least 500 million euros for humanitarian aid in connection with the war in Ukraine. On March 3, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [said](#) that Russia should prepare for reparations, and once again [called](#) on Western countries to close the sky over Ukraine so that Russian missiles and air strikes would stop killing civilians, or to assist Ukraine by providing it with warplanes.

A [meeting of NATO](#) foreign ministers was held on March 4. In his address, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called on the alliance states to take urgent action to stop Russian aggression. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that further escalation of hostilities in Ukraine was likely and demanded an immediate halt to the war and the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine without any conditions. A decision to close the skies over Ukraine [could not be reached](#). According to Jens Stoltenberg, NATO is not a party to the conflict, while the Alliance is responsible for preventing escalation and preventing the war from spreading beyond Ukraine, so a decision was made on military non-interference. At the same time, a [petition](#) to NATO to close airspace over Ukraine gathered more than 1 million votes. Former NATO commander in Europe Philip Breedlove and former US Special Representative to Ukraine Kurt Volker [called](#) on the West to urgently assist Ukraine, provide intelligence, aviation, and ensure a partial "closure of the skies". On 4 March, Zelensky in a video address [criticized](#) NATO for refusing to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine. According to him, "the leadership of the Alliance gave the green light for further bombing of Ukrainian cities and villages".

#### THE SECOND ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS TOOK PLACE, THE PARTIES SAY IT IS POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS

A second round of Russian-Ukrainian [negotiations](#) was held in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. According to the communiqué, the sides "reached an understanding" on the provision of humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of people and delivery of food and medicine "to the places of most fierce fighting" – with the possibility of a temporary ceasefire, but only for the duration of the evacuation and only in relevant areas. A third round of negotiations is also planned. The Russian side [says](#) that "some agreements will have to be fixed through national ratifications," without specifying any details. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [said](#) that the military operation will continue despite the negotiations. The Ukrainian presidential office [stressed](#) that Ukraine's position on the negotiations with the Russian Federation remains tough: Ukraine will not make any concessions and will continue to fight for its territorial integrity.

#### REPRESSIONS AGAINST THE MEDIA AND PARTICIPANTS OF ANTI-WAR PROTESTS CONTINUE IN RUSSIA

On March 4 in Russia the law was [passed](#) that stipulated criminal responsibility for dissemination of "knowingly false information about activity of the armed forces of RF" (punishment can be from a fine of up to 1.5 million rubles to 15-year imprisonment), for "discrediting use of Russian troops" (the first violation results in administrative responsibility and the second one – in a fine of up to 300 thousand rubles or 3-year imprisonment) and for "appeals to sanctions" (a fine of up to 500 thousand rubles or forced labor of up to 3 years).

The country has de facto introduced military censorship. The BBC [stated](#) that the adopted law criminalized the very process of independent journalism. Because of this, a number of media outlets have announced a work stoppage or a decision to remove materials about the war in Ukraine and to refuse to cover the military operations. The State Duma also passed a law that provides for up to three years in prison for calling for sanctions against the Russian Federation.

Because of its coverage of the war in Russia, Roskomnadzor blocked more than 10 opposition Russian and foreign media outlets, including Meduza, BBC Russian Service, Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle; [Facebook](#) and Twitter were blocked; Roskomnadzor also sent several demands for [Telegram](#) to remove channels with information about Russian prisoners of war. "[Ekho Moskv](#)" was liquidated, CNN, Bloomberg, and "Dozhd TV" suspended operations, and "Novaya Gazeta" [removed](#) a number of materials related to the war in Ukraine, due to Russia's adoption of a "fake news" law about the actions of Russian servicemen.

As a result of the ongoing anti-war protests, more than 8,000 people were detained in at least [124 Russian cities](#). The Russian Prosecutor General's Office [threatens](#) protesters with liability under the article on participation in the activities of an extremist organization. A draft law on conscription of anti-war protesters on the territory of the so-called "L/DPR" was [introduced](#) to the Russian State Duma. [According to Ukrainian intelligence](#), there is a possibility of introducing martial law in Russia in the near future. Russian presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov [denies](#) such a possibility. If martial law is declared, general mobilization, military censorship, closure of borders, curfews and restrictions on movement within the country will [become possible](#).