

HIGHLIGHTS

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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MASSACRE IN BUCHA: HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS KILLED BY RUSSIA

On April 1, the mayor of Bucha (Kyiv region) [announced](#) that the city had been liberated from the Russian occupiers. A [mass grave](#) was discovered in the city, where about 300 people were buried; dozens of murdered people lay in the streets, some of them with their hands tied or naked. On April 2, Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Anna Malyar [reported](#) that the entire Kyiv region has been liberated; Ukrainian Interior Minister Denis Monastyrsky [stresses](#) that dozens of villages and towns in the Kyiv region liberated from the occupiers are not yet safe, and [demining efforts are underway](#) – which will take at least ten days. At the moment it is impossible to name the exact number of dead civilians, but, according to Denis Monastyrsky, it will be measured in hundreds. Civilians who have not left the occupied settlements are receiving humanitarian aid, and some have been taken to medical institutions in Kyiv for treatment.

Photo reports on the situation in the region are published by “[Babel](#)”, “[Levyi Bereg](#)”, “[Suspilne](#)”, and [Meduza](#).

On April 3, Prosecutor General of Ukraine Iryna Venediktova [reported](#) that 410 bodies of murdered civilians had been removed from the territory of Kyiv Region, which had been liberated from the occupants - these victims were being examined by forensic experts for documentation of Russian crimes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [stressed](#) in a video message that “Russian culture and humanity died along with the Ukrainians to whom Russia came,” and announced the creation of a special justice mechanism in Ukraine to investigate and

prosecute every crime committed by Russian troops through the joint work of national and international investigators, prosecutors, and judges. War crimes in Bucha and other cities during the Russian occupation will be the subject of a UN Security Council review on April 5. He added that the crimes of the Russian armed forces were made possible by years of Western indecision toward the Russian regime. [During his visit to Bucha on April 4](#), Volodymyr Zelensky stressed that the longer Russia delays negotiations, the worse it is for it and the war situation in general, and assured that Ukraine will do everything to bring those responsible for the murders to justice in courts.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [said](#) that the murders of Bucha residents by the Russian military were intentional and demanded that the G7 countries impose new devastating sanctions against Russia. Mikhail Podolyak, adviser to the head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, [showed](#) photographic evidence of war crimes by Russian occupants in the Kyiv region and harshly criticized European partners who do not dare to counteract Russia resolutely.

The Russian Ministry of Defense [did not acknowledge](#) the war crimes committed in Bucha, called the published photo and video evidence of the Russian military crimes a "provocation," and assured that not a single local resident had suffered from violent actions during the occupation of the city. Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Antonov [said](#) that the Ukrainian military allegedly shelled Bucha immediately after the Russian troops left, and that this resulted in civilian deaths. Antonov said that it was "obvious" that "the Kyiv regime is trying to shift the blame for all its crimes onto Russia" and that reports of Russian forces killing civilians in Bucha were "false accusations," which "have already been completely refuted by the Russian Defense Ministry." At the same time, The New York Times [published](#) satellite images of Bucha with bodies of dead people on the streets. The images were taken during the Russian occupation of the city.

At the same time, the main intelligence directorate of the Ukrainian Defence Ministry released a [list](#) of Russian servicemen involved in the committing of war crimes in Bucha in the Kyiv Region. Mediazona [analyzed](#) in detail one of the videos with evidence of crimes in the city, confirming its credibility.

Russia [demanded](#) that the UN Security Council convene a meeting on 4 April, the first deputy permanent representative of Russia to the UN, Dmitriy Polyanskiy, said. He [announced](#) that the meetings were being called "against the backdrop of the disgusting provocation of Ukrainian radicals in Bucha." Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the UN, Sergey Kisliitsa, [says](#) Russia's presence in the UN is incompatible with its principles and goals. The British representation to the UN, which is in charge of the Council during April, [said](#) that they would not meet on April 4, but would meet on April 5 for a planned extraordinary UN Security Council meeting to discuss Russian aggression against Ukraine and the killings in the suburbs of Kyiv.

RUSSIA'S WAR CRIMES IN BUCHA: THE WORLD DEMANDS THAT THE PERPETRATORS BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

UN head António Guterres [said](#) that he was "shocked" by photos from Ukrainian towns where occupants have been rampaging and called for an "independent investigation".

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss [condemned](#) the mass murders of civilians in the liberated towns and villages of Kyiv region, stressing that those responsible for the crimes of Russian troops in Bucha, Irpin and other Ukrainian cities must be brought to justice, and the Putin regime will not be allowed to hide its responsibility for these atrocities. MI6 British intelligence chief Richard Moore [added](#) that extrajudicial executions were part of the plans for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki [appealed](#) to the leaders of the European Union to reconsider their policy on the Russian regime. He said that "the crimes committed by Russia against nearly 300 residents of Bucha and other towns outside Kyiv should be called acts of genocide and punished accordingly," the EU should confiscate all Russian assets in Western banks and sever all trade relations with Russia. EU ambassadors are [scheduled](#) to discuss expanding sanctions against Russia on April 6. European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell [said](#) that Russian authorities are responsible for the crimes committed during the occupation and stressed that the perpetrators will not escape responsibility. A [statement](#) posted on the European Council website said the EU stands in solidarity with Ukraine and that Russian authorities "are responsible for the atrocities committed while they controlled the area." The EU added that those responsible for the war and other crimes, as well as government officials and warlords, "will be held accountable," and said that work on further sanctions was being expedited.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen [called](#) for an urgent investigation into war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. The European Union is [ready to send](#) investigative teams to document war crimes in coordination with the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

U.S. President Joe Biden [called](#) for the trial of Russian President Vladimir Putin as a war criminal, and said he would push for stronger sanctions.

Polish President Andrzej Duda [said](#) that the photos from Bucha prove the fallacy of the belief that one must seek compromise at any cost. According to him, the Ukrainian army needs three things: "Weapons, weapons and weapons again.

French and German leaders made statements about the massacre of civilians by the Russians in Bucha and other occupied towns and villages. German Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz [stressed](#) that these were the consequences of the actions of the Russian army, because "Bucha was controlled by the Russian military just a few days ago." He also added that international organizations must have access to these territories in order to document the crimes. French President Emmanuel Macron [noted](#) that "the Russian authorities will have to answer for these crimes. Officials from many countries, including [Canada](#), [Israel](#), [Japan](#), [New Zealand](#) and others, strongly condemned the war crimes committed by Russia.

New sanctions against Russia for war crimes in the Kyiv region were announced in the [United States](#), as well as in [Germany](#). British Prime Minister Boris Johnson [said](#) his country would tighten sanctions against Russia and increase military aid to

Ukraine after the killing of civilians near Kyiv. "I will do everything in my power to starve Putin's war machine," Johnson promised in a statement.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS: RUSSIAN ARMY COMMITS EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS, RAPES, MURDERS OF JOURNALISTS

Human Rights Watch has [published a report](#) on war crimes committed by the Russian Armed Forces in the temporarily controlled parts of Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Kyiv regions. It speaks about the shelling of civilians, extrajudicial executions, rape, and looting of civilian property. "The cases we documented represent deliberate brutality and violence against civilians in Ukraine... [These crimes] should be investigated as war crimes," Human Rights Watch Europe and Central Asia director Hugh Williamson [said](#). Human rights activists noted that all parties to the armed conflict have an obligation to respect international humanitarian law, the laws of war and human rights, which prohibit murder, sexual violence, torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners and civilians. "Anyone who orders, deliberately commits, aids or abets such acts is responsible for war crimes. Commanders who were aware of these crimes but did not try to stop them or punish those responsible are also responsible for war crimes," the report said.

British Ambassador to Ukraine Melinda Simons [accused](#) the Russian army of knowingly using rape as a weapon of war, stressing that there is enough evidence to speak of conscious and approved actions by the army, not solitary crimes.

Ukraine's Ministry of Culture and Information Policy [reported](#) that since the start of the full-scale invasion, Russian armed forces have already committed 74 crimes against members of the media, including 19 foreigners. Also, 18 journalists have been killed. Journalists suffered the most in Kyiv and Zaporizhya regions. One of the dead is photojournalist Max Levin, who collaborated with Reuters, BBC, Associated Press, LB.ua, and hromadske, among others. On March 13, he was covering military operations in Kyiv region and went missing. On April 2, the Office of the Prosecutor General [reported](#) that Max Levin was found dead in the Vyshgorod district of the Kyiv region. The investigation says that the unarmed journalist was killed by two shots. "Reporters Without Borders" [stressed](#) that such actions against journalists are war crimes. Max Levin's memorial texts are published by his colleagues [here](#) and [here](#).

UKRAINE UNDER SHELLING, SITUATION CRITICAL IN MANY SETTLEMENTS

On March 31, Russian occupation troops [left](#) the "exclusion zone" near the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Pripyat, [looting](#) the ChNPP premises before retreating and taking with them [captured members of the National Guard of Ukraine](#). On April 3, the command of the Airborne Assault Troops of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [reported](#) that it had managed to take under control a section of the Ukrainian-Belarusian border near Pripyat in the Kyiv region.

On April 2, Russian armed forces launched a rocket attack on an airfield in [Mirgorod](#) (Poltava region) and shelled residential areas of Kharkiv and the [region](#), settlements in [Luhansk](#), Donetsk, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions. The situation is critical in the villages of Kherson Region that were temporarily occupied by Russian troops: the shelling destroyed almost all social infrastructure. As a result of the shelling of Kremenchuk (Poltava region), the infrastructure of an oil refinery was [destroyed](#).

On April [3](#) and the night of [April 4](#), Russian troops carried out airstrikes on Odessa. Mayor Gennady Trukhanov talks about the situation in the city in an [interview](#) with Ukrainska Pravda. On the evening of April 3, Russian forces [shelled](#) Mykolaiv and Ochakov (Mykolaiv region), killing at least eight people and damaging residential areas and civilian infrastructure. On the night of April 5, Mykolaiv was shelled with [cluster munitions](#), which are prohibited for use against residential areas. As a result of the shelling, civilian buildings, including a children's hospital, were damaged. At least 10 people were killed, including one child, and 61 others were wounded. For the first time since February 24, there was a strike on [Ternopil](#), targeting an oil depot. Almost all cities in the Luhansk region are under constant mortar fire. Sergei Gaidai, head of the Luhansk military administration, [told](#) Suspilnoye about the situation in the region, the [evacuation](#) of people, the environment and the work of "administrations" in the occupied territories. Because of the shelling of Kharkiv 7 people were killed, 34 were wounded. Residential buildings in the town of Izyum (Kharkiv region), which has been blockaded by Russian occupants since the beginning of March, are almost 80% [destroyed](#), there is no electricity, heat or water in the city, and the number of victims cannot yet be calculated. In the Donetsk region, the situation has not improved: Mariupol remains under blockade, and the green corridor promised to the Red Cross has not worked. For more on the attempts to evacuate civilians and the military scenarios the region is preparing for, see an [interview](#) with Pavel Kirilenko, head of the Donetsk Regional Military-Civil Administration. The situation in Kherson region is critical, 67 settlements remain without electricity and water supply. Chernihiv is 70% [destroyed](#), city mayor Vladislav Atroshenko said. He noted that the clearing of the remains of the occupation troops and de-mining continues in the region. About life in the city [told](#) local residents. About the situation in the regions by the morning of April 4 [tells](#) "Hromadske", a summary of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces as of 06:00, April 5 – [here](#).

RUSSIA FOCUSES ON SEIZING DONBAS, U.S. INTELLIGENCE SAYS PUTIN AIMS FOR "VICTORY" BEFORE MAY 9

U.S. Presidential National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [said](#) that Russia will focus its offensive efforts in eastern Ukraine, with the goal of seizing the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Now Russia is moving troops from northern Ukraine to Belarus and from there to eastern Ukraine. At the same time, he noted that Russia will continue rocket and air strikes against all major Ukrainian cities.

The British Defense Ministry [reports](#) that Russia continues to consolidate forces for an offensive in Donbas and is redeploying mercenaries from the private military company Wagner to the area. They also suggest that Mariupol is a likely key target of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, as control over it would provide a land corridor to Crimea.

According to the latest U.S. intelligence estimates, Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking some sort of "victory" in Ukraine by May 9, when Russia holds a military parade for "Victory Day," [according to CNN](#), citing U.S. officials.

PRISONER OF WAR EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE, RUSSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS DEMAND OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRISONERS OF WAR

On April 1, an "86 for 86" [prisoner-of-war exchange](#) took place in the Zaporizhzhya region. Eighty-six Ukrainian servicemen and the same number of Russian servicemen were released. The released Ukrainian servicemen [reported](#) that torture had been used against them in captivity. At the same time, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry [stressed](#) that the Russian statement about Ukraine's alleged refusal to comply with the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War was untrue and another misinformation.

Russian human rights activists published an [appeal](#) to Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, urging him to set up a National Reference Bureau for Prisoners of War and take other steps to comply with Russia's international obligations in accordance with international legal standards for humane treatment during armed conflicts. It is noted that so far, the Russian media have published only once information about the exchange of 10 Russian prisoners of war and once information about the transfer to the International Committee of the Red Cross of the list of more than 500 captured Ukrainians, while there is no official information about the fulfillment of the vast majority of Russia's obligations in this sphere.

MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE GROWS

On 1 April, [German media](#) reported that the German Defence Ministry had decided to approve deliveries of BMPs to Ukraine from the former GDR stocks, which are now in the Czech Republic.

On March 31, British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace [said](#) that more lethal weapons would be sent to Ukraine to counter Russian aggression. In particular, Britain is discussing the possibility of arming Ukraine with anti-ship missiles to protect it from Russian warships shelling coastal cities, The Times [reported](#). It notes that "while some allies, including the U.S., Germany and France, want to wait until Russia is active on the coast before providing more lethal weapons, Johnson has made it clear that it must be provided immediately."

The U.S. Defense Department will [provide](#) a security package to Ukraine worth up to \$300 million - this includes machine guns and drones. Also, for the first time since the war, the U.S. will help the allies hand over Soviet tanks to Ukraine, according to an anonymous U.S. government official quoted by the [NYT](#).

ANTI-RUSSIAN SANCTIONS INTENSIFY

The United Kingdom [added](#) 14 more people to its sanctions list, mostly associated with Russian media, and froze the assets of three companies that helped Russia circumvent sanctions.

The U.S. Treasury Department [imposed](#) sanctions on 13 Russians and 21 Russian companies operating in the high-tech sector, including for the Russian military. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken [believes](#) that Russia has failed in all the goals for which it started the war, and that sanctions against Russia should remain in effect until the war is over.

In the Netherlands, Russian [assets](#) worth almost 516 million euros were frozen.

The Baltic states were the first in the EU to refuse to buy gas from Russia, the head of Latvia's natural gas storage operator Conexus Baltic Grid Uldis Baris [said](#). The EU may impose an embargo on Russian oil and gas on April 6 - this was [reported](#) by the Financial Times citing sources. Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio [said](#) that Italy would support sanctions against Russian gas.

Georgia [will not impose economic sanctions](#) against Russia, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said, explaining such a decision by the fact that the sanctions are not in the national interest.

Economic Truth [analyzed](#) how sanctions contribute to Russia's demilitarization.

THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES' INTERDICTION OF PROTESTS IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE

Russia's planned "Crimean scenario" in the Kherson region failed, so the tactics were [changed](#): the Russian armed forces sought to block the evacuation of people and the delivery of humanitarian aid, resorted to kidnapping activists and representatives of the Ukrainian authorities, and tried to form a loyal attitude toward the occupiers. On April 1, it [became known](#) that the Russian armed forces had assigned several collaborators to lead Kakhovka, which they had previously occupied, claiming that the Ukrainian authorities were allegedly failing in their duties. The city's legal authorities refused to cooperate with the occupiers.

Protests continued: on March 31, residents of temporarily occupied [Gola Prystan](#) and on April 3, residents of temporarily occupied Kakhovka (Kherson region) by Russian military forces marched against the occupation. In Kakhovka, the Russian military [opened fire](#) on the protesters to disperse them. According to preliminary information, there are [wounded and kidnapped](#). The Russian military also resorted to the same methods of suppressing the protest in [Energodar](#) (Zaporizhzhya Region).

The head of the Ministry of Reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, Iryna Vereshchuk, [said](#) that as of April 3, 11 heads of local communities from Kyiv, Kherson, Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv and Donetsk regions were in captivity.

Donbas Realii [reported](#) on the situation in the temporarily occupied settlements in Luhansk Region and the possibility of civil resistance there.

FIRE AT AN OIL DEPOT IN BELGOROD REGION, RUSSIA BLAMES UKRAINE

On April 1, a [fire](#) broke out at an oil depot in the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border. Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of the Belgorod region, [stated](#) that the cause of the incident was an air strike carried out by two helicopters of Ukrainian troops. Russian presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov [said](#) that the explosion at the oil depot in Belgorod was not conducive to comfortable conditions for the continuation of negotiations. [The Ukrainian Defense Ministry](#) neither confirmed nor denied the information about the involvement of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the explosion of the oil depot. See the [reactions](#) of the sides here. Later the same day, Russian pro-Kremlin media [reported](#) that a shell "fired from Ukraine" fell in the Belgorod region. Conflict Intelligence Team investigative journalists, however, [determined](#) that the missile had actually been fired from Russian territory.