

## HIGHLIGHTS

# PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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### FIGHTING ALONG THE ENTIRE FRONT LINE IN DONBAS

Fighting continues along the entire front line in Donbas. On May 24, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stressed that the situation is extremely difficult: in fact, Russia has concentrated all remaining forces there for an offensive. On May 25, the head of the Luhansk Oblast Military Administration, Serhiy Gaidai, [stated](#) that 95 percent of the Luhansk region was occupied by Russian armed forces. There are more than 40,000 people in Ukraine-controlled territory of the region, of whom the vast majority do not want to evacuate. Fighting for Severodonetsk continues. The head of the Military Civil Administration, Oleksandr Struk, [stated](#) that the Ukrainian military is in a "heavy defensive position" as fighting is taking place in the outskirts of the city. [According to Serhiy Gayday](#), head of the Luhansk Oblast Military Administration, the Russian armed forces are suffering multiple casualties. According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), the battle for Severodonetsk, regardless of its outcome, is likely to prevent Russia from continuing large-scale offensive operations. The Pentagon [estimates](#) that Russia's advance in the Donbas is due in part to the geography of the terrain, with Russian forces failing to resolve the command problem, and despite a huge numerical advantage, Russian forces have [made only marginal gains](#) in the Donbas. [According to British Defense Ministry intelligence reviews](#), the priority actions for Russian units in the coming days will be the forcing of the Seversky Donets River near the partially [captured city](#) of Liman (Donetsk Region). Also, Russian armed forces are actively preparing for offensive

actions in the [Zaporizhzhya direction](#), while Kharkiv and the Kharkiv region [continue](#) to be subjected to [shelling](#).

During the week, servicemen of the United Forces grouping [repelled](#) 76 enemy attacks and destroyed dozens of pieces of equipment in Donbas. As of the morning of May 30, Ukrainian Armed Forces units continue their offensive in southern Ukraine. [According to the American Institute for the Study of War](#), a successful counterattack by the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the Kherson region could disrupt Russian military plans by forcing them to pull forces there from other directions, as well as slow the occupiers' entrenchment in the south.

As of May 29, Russia had [lost](#) over 30,000 soldiers in the war.

Here is an [overview](#) of the situation on the front by the morning of May 30.

## A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES CALL ON THE EU TO PUSH UKRAINE FOR PEACE TALKS WITH RUSSIA

Italy, Hungary and Cyprus at a meeting of EU representatives [called](#) on the EU to seek a ceasefire in Ukraine and peace talks with Russia. This contradicts the position of other EU countries, which intend to take a tough stance at the summit on May 30-31. At the same time, the draft summit's final statement says that the European Union "is adamant in its commitments to help Ukraine realize its inalienable right to self-defense against Russian aggression" and makes no mention of peace talks.

## TOWNS NEAR THE FRONTLINE AND IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY ARE THREATENED BY A HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE

The towns of Lysychansk and Severodonetsk (Luhansk Region) are on the front line of the hostilities, Russian troops are trying to encircle them, which threatens the towns with a humanitarian disaster. In [Severodonetsk](#), only a basic level of medical care is available, and there is no electricity, water supply or mobile communications. Evacuation is extremely difficult. Hromadske [reports](#) on what is happening in Lysychansk.

According to Petro Andryushchenko, adviser to Mariupol mayor, the temporarily occupied city is catastrophically short of people [to bury](#) and the capacity of makeshift morgues. The school year was extended until September 1 to teach Russian history, language and literature to schoolchildren. Read about the situation in occupied Mariupol [here](#).

## RUSSIA MAKES IT EASIER FOR RESIDENTS OF A NUMBER OF UKRAINIAN REGIONS TO OBTAIN RUSSIAN CITIZENSHIP, A PRACTICE CONDEMNED BY WESTERN COUNTRIES

On 25 May, Russian President Vladimir Putin [simplified](#) the procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship for residents of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine. Similar practices began to be applied in occupied [Mariupol](#). The Ukrainian presidential office and the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said that this decision was legally null and void. Mykhaylo Podolyak, adviser to the head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, [stressed](#) that this decree would not bring any positive consequences for this territory, Ukrainian citizens or international law. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry [stated](#) that this decision opens the way to the forced issuance of Russian citizenship to residents of the temporarily occupied territories in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions, which is a gross violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, norms and principles of international humanitarian law. The agency called on the international community to stop Russia from committing crimes against Ukraine and its residents. The US and the EU condemned the issuance of Russian citizenship in the temporarily occupied territories. The speaker of the US Department of State, Ned Price, [called](#) this practice "part of Russia's attempts to subjugate the people of Ukraine", while the head of the EU mission, Matti Maasikas, [noted](#) that no one would recognize the legitimacy of such actions.

#### RUSSIA VIOLATES THE UN CONVENTION ON GENOCIDE: EXPERT REPORT

Russia has violated the UN Convention on Genocide. This conclusion was reached independently by two expert groups, the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center, which [analyzed](#) both the documented actions of the Russian army in the captured settlements and the speeches of top Russian officials and TV propagandists. The experts declare a serious and unavoidable risk of genocide in Ukraine and back up their accusations with a long list of evidence. According to the UN Genocide Convention, its signatories, including Russia, have a legal obligation to prevent genocide, and the report calls on the international community to act. To date, the parliaments of seven countries: Estonia, Latvia, Canada, Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine have [recognized](#) Russia's actions in Ukraine as genocide.

#### NEGOTIATIONS ON LONG-RANGE WEAPONS FOR UKRAINE CONTINUE

Although Western countries have begun transferring more heavy weapons in recent weeks, Ukrainian officials say they need long-range weapons, which could significantly improve the Ukrainian Armed Forces' position at the front. On May 23, the second meeting of the Ukrainian Defense Advisory Group in the Ramstein format, which includes more than 40 partner countries, [took place](#). Representatives of a number of new countries also participated in the meeting. On the eve of the meeting, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [announced](#) that he was waiting for a decision to provide Ukraine with American MLRS multiple-launch rocket systems. During the meeting 20 countries announced new security assistance

packages for Ukraine. At its conclusion, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [noted](#) that Russian aggression is a challenge to international order and freedom, and over the past month the group was able to assist Ukraine in a coordinated manner, while refusing to discuss the specific names of weapons systems to be provided to Ukraine. A third, face-to-face meeting will be held in Brussels on June 15 on the sidelines of a NATO ministerial meeting.

The Wall Street Journal [quoted](#) U.S. officials as saying that President Joe Biden's administration wants to send long-range systems as part of an increased military aid package to Ukraine. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [said](#) that heavy weapons were at the top of the US-Ukraine negotiation agenda. The United States and Ukraine are [discussing](#) the supply of long-range weapons and limiting their use because of a possible escalation if a strike is made against Russia's deep rear.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [called](#) the supply of long-range weapons by Western countries to Ukraine "a serious step towards unacceptable escalation". [According to media reports](#), there are probably informal agreements between NATO countries on certain types of weapons that should not be provided to Ukraine so as not to provoke Russia.

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Anna Malyar [stressed](#) that Ukraine has already concluded practically all agreements on arms supplies, but it will take some time to implement them.

On 24 May, the Council of the European Union [approved](#) additional aid to Ukraine in the amount of 500 million euros for the purchase of military equipment. The funds are allocated within the framework of the European Peace Fund. Commenting on this decision, EU High Representative Josep Borrell stressed the commitment of the EU and its member states to efforts to protect Ukraine.

Die Welt, citing documents, [wrote](#) that German Chancellor Olaf Scholz refused to supply heavy weapons to Ukraine, citing agreements with NATO allies, while the country has also barely supplied light weapons since late March.

However, German Ambassador to Ukraine Anka Feldhusen [said](#) that her country was going to provide Ukraine with one billion euros in grant aid. As of May 25, the [total direct damage](#) to Ukraine's economy due to damage and destruction of buildings and infrastructure exceeds \$105.5 billion, and total economic losses are \$564 billion to \$600 billion.

[The Japanese government](#) has decided to allocate emergency grant aid to Ukraine in the amount of 166 million dollars for humanitarian purposes.

## EU TRIES TO NEGOTIATE ON OIL EMBARGO, EUROPEAN COMMISSION SUGGESTS CRIMINALIZING SANCTIONS WAIVER

Negotiations on an oil embargo for Russia as part of the sixth package of EU sanctions continue. Among others, the European Commission [proposed](#) that the ban should apply only to Russian oil delivered to the EU by tankers. By excluding the key Druzhba pipeline from the embargo, the EU tried to satisfy Hungary's objections and come to an agreement. For now, a day before a planned EU summit whose topics

will include the war in Ukraine, energy and food security, the EU has not been able to agree on an embargo, but diplomats will try to make progress on the delivery of oil products through pipelines to Central European countries, Reuters [reported](#). EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell [hopes](#) an agreement will be reached at the EU summit on May 30. Because of the sanctions, a record amount of Russian oil [continues](#) to be on ships at sea, buyers for which are extremely difficult to find because of the sanctions imposed and planned.

On May 25, the European Commission [proposed](#) to make it a crime to evade sanctions, and also presented a way to confiscate from violators the income obtained by circumventing restrictive measures. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Slovakia [called](#) for confiscation of Russian assets frozen by the European Union. It is stressed that Russia is obliged to participate in rebuilding Ukraine from the consequences of the invasion, while the EU should identify legal ways to use frozen resources as sources of funding. At the same time, if legal ways to confiscate assets cannot be found, they should be unfrozen after Russia compensates for the damage caused. At the same time, [according to the Associated Press agency](#), which cites officials, Western allies are considering the idea of lifting sanctions on Russian oligarchs in exchange for financing the reconstruction of Ukraine.

#### MEMBER OF THE RUSSIAN PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ANNOUNCES HIS RESIGNATION OVER DISAGREEMENT WITH THE WAR

Boris Bondarev of the Russian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva [has announced](#) his resignation over Russia's war against Ukraine, likely becoming the first Russian career diplomat to publicly express disagreement with Russia's actions in Ukraine. "Putin's unleashed war against Ukraine, and in fact the entire Western world, is not only a crime against the Ukrainian people, but perhaps the gravest crime against the people of Russia," Bondarev wrote. He also [said](#) in a comment to Reuters that he had expressed concerns about the invasion of Ukraine to other embassy employees, but was urged to remain silent to avoid possible repercussions. In an [interview](#) with The New York Times, Bondarev stressed that not only Russian President Vladimir Putin but also the Russian Foreign Ministry was to blame for unleashing the conflict. Russian presidential spokesman Dmitri Peskov [commented](#) on Bondarev's dismissal, saying that he was "against the general consolidated opinion of our country. Russian journalist Konstantin Eggert [says](#) in a Deutsche Welle article that the Russian Foreign Ministry is a propaganda agency, not a diplomatic one, and calls Boris Bondarev's actions a public verdict on the ministry's reputation.