

HIGHLIGHTS

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR CHRONICLES

№112, 22–28 September, 2022

DE-OCCUPATION CONTINUES, MOST ACUTE SITUATION IN DONETSK OBLAST

The de-occupation of Ukrainian territory continues. For example, the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) have [liberated](#) the village of Kupiansk-Vuzlovyi in Kharkiv Oblast, where a large railway junction is located. It was crucial for the Russian armed forces because it was part of one of the routes via which they transported equipment to the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the situation is particularly acute at the moment in Donetsk Oblast. The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) [notes](#) that attempts by the Russian armed forces to conduct offensive operations near Bakhmut and to the west of Donetsk were unsuccessful.

The Russian armed forces continue to shell regions of Ukraine. On September 26, the airport in [Kryvyi Rih](#) (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast) was targeted by a missile strike, destroying infrastructure and making it impossible to be used further. Odesa was [repeatedly](#) attacked by Shahed-136 kamikaze drones, which Russia has begun to purchase from Iran. A number of administrative and residential buildings were [damaged](#).

MOBILISATION IN RUSSIA: UP TO 1.2 MILLION PEOPLE TO BE DRAFTED, PEOPLE FLEEING THE COUNTRY

Mobilisation in Russia began on September 21. Russian authorities announced that they intended to conscript around 300,000 people, who were in the reserves, however government sources have told the media that the real number is [up to 1.2](#) million people. British intelligence [believes](#) that the Russian command will send most of the mobilised to the frontline with minimal military training, which is likely to result in significant casualties. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy [appealed](#) to Russians and urged them to avoid participating in the mobilisation. He reiterated that all Russian prisoners of war would be

treated in accordance with conventions, and moreover, they could stay in Ukraine if they wished.

After the mobilisation was announced, people started trying to leave the country. Traffic jams many kilometres long have appeared at the [Upper Lars](#) border crossing (border with Georgia), and queues have also been observed at the borders with Kazakhstan and Finland. [Meduza](#) published a report from there and [Novaya Gazeta](#) has published photos. A number of countries, including [Lithuania](#), [Latvia](#), [Estonia](#) and the [Czech Republic](#), said they would not let in or grant humanitarian status to Russians leaving because of mobilisation, while Germany [announced](#) that it was ready to receive them.

The Russian Ministry of Defence has [stated](#) that the mobilisation does not provide for restrictions on movement, but Russians have already been denied exit to the country. Human rights activists [said](#) that these refusals were illegal.

Ukrainian intelligence [has said](#) that Russia has resorted to a policy of disproportionate mobilisation of the population in various regions in order to destroy the intelligentsia and ethnic groups.

State and pro-government media have been given [guidelines](#) on how to cover the events. It is suggested to explain the mobilisation with the argument that “the people of Russia must unite against the threat of NATO”. A special emphasis is planned to be put on the fact that mobilisation will allegedly affect only “1% of the total number of persons liable for military service”, but this does [not correspond](#) to reality.

Demonstrations against mobilisation and the war have taken place in at least 52 Russian cities. [According](#) to OVD-Info, 2402 people have been detained at the protests. [Dagestan](#) is one of the regions of Russia where mobilisation has met with widespread resistance. Protesters have been brutally [detained](#), physically abused and [tortured](#). About two dozen military registration and enlistment office buildings have been [set on fire](#). In [Irkutsk Oblast](#), a local resident protesting against mobilisation, opened fire at the military enlistment office, while in [Ryazan](#) one person tried to set himself on fire. Novaya Gazeta [published](#) an infographic of the protests, while Donbass Realii collected [experts’](#) opinions on the possibility of their further development.

[Bloomberg](#) notes that the mobilisation in Russia will increase the economic downturn and cause a growth in inflation, with the negative effects being felt for at least several years.

RUSSIA PREPARES TO ANNEX UKRAINE’S OCCUPIED TERRITORIES FOLLOWING “REFERENDUMS”

Preliminary results of the “referendums” in the occupied territories of Ukraine have been announced, with [almost 100%](#) of the people who took part in them allegedly voting in favour of becoming part of Russia. However, Russia does not fully control any of the occupied regions and it is not known how many residents remain or how many of them participated in the vote. There are multiple testimonies that the occupation administrations [forced](#) residents to [participate](#) in the “referendums”. Hromadske has been [reporting](#) on their progress.

Analysts from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology [note](#) that with any transparently organised polls or referendums, an absolute majority of the population in all the regions in

the south and east of the country would support Ukraine's independence rather than reunification with Russia.

Already on September 28, representatives of the "[LPR](#)" and the occupation administrations of the [Kherson](#) and [Zaporizhzhia](#) Oblasts addressed Russian President Vladimir Putin with a request to be incorporated into Russia. Sources in the State Duma say that Russia may formally annex the occupied territories of Ukraine on [September 30](#) or [October 4](#). British Defence Intelligence [notes](#) that Russian leaders hope through the annexation to justify the war and consolidate patriotic support, but this will not be possible because of growing public discontent with the mobilisation.

According to [lawyers](#), the results give Moscow a pretext to interpret the attacks on these territories as attacks on Russia, which could lead to a new round of escalation.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council, [said](#) that when these territories are "taken into Russia," they will be defended by the Russian Armed Forces, which includes that the army will be able to use "any Russian weapons, including strategic nuclear ones". Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [stressed](#) that Ukraine would not give in to threats of the possible use of nuclear weapons. Intelligence agencies in the US and [allied](#) countries have [stepped up](#) monitoring to track Russia's preparations for a possible nuclear strike on Ukrainian territory. In addition, Western countries are [devising](#) response plans in case Russia begins to implement its threats against Ukraine and [are warning](#) the Kremlin about possible consequences behind the scenes.

LARGEST PRISONER EXCHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE, 215 PEOPLE RETURNED TO UKRAINE

Ukraine has managed to release [215](#) people from Russian captivity – the largest exchange since the start of the full-scale invasion. This included the release of 188 men who had defended the Azovstal plant in Mariupol. Five of the Azovstal [commanders](#) released are in Turkey under guarantees of protection and security from President Recep Erdogan and will remain there until the end of the war.

The return of ten [foreigners](#) has also been secured, of who two are US citizens, five are British and one each from Sweden, Croatia and Morocco. Some of them had been sentenced to death in the so-called L/DPR. Suspilne [reports](#) on the details of the exchange. Russia is currently holding 2500 Ukrainians - this number includes both service personnel and civilians. At the same time, in the last few exchanges it has not been possible to get civilians included in them, the Minister for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories Iryna Vereshchuk [said](#).

A total of [800](#) prisoners have been returned to Ukraine since February 24, and talks are under way on the possibility of an "[all-for-all](#)" exchange.

The Coordinating Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War has [announced](#) that it has already managed to reach an agreement on the exchange of all the wounded.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION BEGINS DISCUSSIONS ON EIGHTH SANCTIONS PACKAGE

The European Commission has [proposed](#) an eighth packet of sanctions against Russia, which includes new restrictions on trade and a legal basis for an oil price cap. And Poland, Ireland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia [have proposed a ban on diamond imports](#) from Russia, the world's largest producer of rough diamonds.

US PROVISIONALLY AGREES TO ALLOCATE 12 BILLION DOLLARS IN AID TO UKRAINE

The US Congress has preliminarily [agreed](#) to allocate about \$12 billion for military assistance, intelligence and direct budget support for Ukraine. In particular, a new [military](#) aid packaged in the amount of \$1.1 billion is being [drafted](#). A bill to allocate these funds is scheduled to be reviewed in Congress on September 30. Also, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken [announced](#) \$457.5 million additional aid to support [civil security](#) and law-enforcement in Ukraine.

[Lithuania](#) is to give Ukraine winter uniforms for 25,000 service personnel.

DEBUNKING FAKES

THE HOLDING OF "REFERENDUMS" IS NOT AN EXERCISE IN THE "RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION", DESPITE RUSSIA'S CLAIMS

Russian propaganda media ([1](#), [2](#)) are spreading reports that that the partially occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts allegedly want to join Russia, and, on this basis, "have the right to self-determination" under the UN Charter. This claim is false, spread to justify and legitimise Russia's pseudo-referendums in the territories it is occupying. Among others, media outlets are citing an [interview](#) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov gave to Newsweek.

However, the [text](#) of the UN Charter does not contain mention of the notion of a "referendum". Article 1 of the Charter states: "The Purposes of the United Nations are: <...> To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace". Article 2 of the Charter stresses that UN members shall not infringe upon the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

The UN Declaration refers to the right of peoples to self-determination. However, it emphasises that no state has the right to take any action which would "dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states". Neither the full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine, nor the occupation of part of its territory, nor the forced organisation of "referendums", nor the planned annexation have anything to do with friendly relations between nations, nor with the consolidation of peace; they are in direct violation of Article 2 of the UN Charter and the UN Declaration.

Moreover, according to Ukrainian law, questions of [changing](#) the country's territory can only be decided by a Ukraine-wide referendum and holding it in wartime conditions is [prohibited](#).

This argument is also actively promoted by other Russian politicians. For example, the speaker of the Federation Council, Valentina Matviyenko, [said](#) that referendums in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine were held “in full compliance with international norms and the UN Charter”. She also equated the holding of them with the realisation of the “de facto right to lift”, which once again confirms Russian officials’ incompetence and disregard for human rights issues.

Neither [Ukraine](#), nor the [international community recognise](#) the results of the “referendums”.