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№ 3, February 2018

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBASS

Activities of European civil society, aiming at the resolution of the violent conflict in eastern Ukraine

On 4th December 2017 in Vienna, civil society organizations and activists from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries founded a joint international [platform CivilM+](#) to push for peace and the rule of law in eastern Ukraine.

The platform's aim is to streamline civic actors' efforts in spheres like human rights protection, peacebuilding, education and information, humanitarian work, and to work on rebuilding the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk as peaceful, integrated and developed regions of a democratic Ukraine and united Europe. CivilM+ seeks to promote the involvement of the regions' population as well as refugees and displaced persons in these activities. CivilM+ offers its participants opportunities for cooperation, elaboration of joint positions, mutual support and solidarity, improvement of qualification and close coordination of work.

The newsletter is devoted to the work carried out by civil society organizations and initiative groups from Ukraine, Russia, as well as international organizations, to overcome the consequences of the hybrid military conflict in the eastern regions of Ukraine.

This newsletter will be published regularly; the next issue will be published in April 2018.

You can send your information for the newsletter or ask any questions at: newsletter@civilmplus.org

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1. Political processes and the situation in the conflict zone

- At the end of January, Kurt Volker and Vladislav Surkov, the official representatives of the United States and Russia, [held a formal meeting and negotiations](#) on the conflict in Ukraine (*text in Russian*)

- February 2, 2018 - OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (OSCE SMM) [published data on the detection of weapons](#) in disregard of current agreements on both sides of contact line (*text in English*)
- February 13, 2018 - Heather Nauert, the official representative of the US State Department, issued a [statement](#) on the occasion of the 3rd anniversary of the Minsk Agreements. [Representatives from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany also made an appeal](#) for compliance with the agreements, publishing a note on the website on the agreements' anniversary (*text in English*)
- February 15, 2018 - Martin Sajdik, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office, issued a [statement](#) following a regular meeting of the tripartite group (*text in English*)
- February 16-18, 2018 – Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine, held [a series of bilateral meetings with European and American politicians](#) at the annual Munich Security Conference (*text in Russian*)
- February 17, 2018 - Petro Poroshenko outlined the conditions for a possible dialogue with Russia during his [speech](#) at the Munich Conference (*text in Russian*)
- February 17, 2018 - far-right radicals [attacked the office of Rossotrudnichestvo](#) - the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation. The OSCE SMM [published a report](#) on this issue. Russia [demanded the OSCE](#) to intervene in the situation (*text in Russian and Ukrainian*)
- February 17, 2018 - Sigmar Gabriel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, announced [the readiness for a gradual lifting of sanctions](#) against Russia in the margins of the Munich Conference (*text in Russian*)
- February 19, 2018 - The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission published a [video](#) on the presence of military personnel in densely populated areas and on the usage of civilian assets for military purposes, which could increase danger to civilians (*text in Russian and English*)
- February 26, 2018 - Rebecca Harms, the member of the European Parliament from Germany, stated that [most of the members of the European Parliament consider it wrong to talk about lifting sanctions](#) against the Russian Federation until the occupied territories of Ukraine are returned. The same was said by Marie Yovanovitch, the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- A number of residential buildings were damaged in settlements near the frontline during shelling in February. Yevhen Kaplin, the head of the "Proliska" humanitarian mission published this on his Facebook page: [February 1-2](#), [February 16-17](#), [February 21](#) (*text in Russian*)
- Relatives of the victims of the MH-17 plane crash prevailed in a class action. Due to this action, Igor Girkin will have to pay a large contribution for each of the victims. The relatives of 25 persons were involved in the lawsuit. A number of media outlets, such as "[Deutsche Welle](#)", "[Meduza](#)" and "[Yevropeyska Pravda](#)" noted that this was a symbolic compensation. In an interview for "[Dozhd](#)", Igor Girkin commented that he does not mind paying this money (*texts in Russian and Ukrainian*)
- The Hudson Institute published an [analytical report](#) (the so-called Rasmussen Report) "Can the UN unite Ukraine?" on the eve of the Munich Conference.

"Vostok-SOS" Charitable Fund prepared a brief summary of the report. [Full text of the report](#) is in English (*text in Russian and English*)

- Russian officials [Konstantin Kosachev](#) (Head of the Council of the Federation Committee on Foreign Affairs) and [Dmitry Peskov](#) (press secretary of the President of the Russian Federation) expressed doubts that the so-called "Rasmussen Report" properly covered the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the prospects for its resolution on a high quality level (*text in Russian*)
- Grigory Yavlinsky, Russian politician and the leader of the "Yabloko" political party, [announced that he is ready to replace Vladislav Surkov](#) in official negotiations with the US on the resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- A peacekeeping contingent from [Sweden](#), [Germany](#), [Finland](#) and [Belarus](#) may be sent to Donbass (*text in Russian*)

2. Public initiatives dedicated to overcoming the consequences of war and searching for opportunities for dialogue

- February 10, 2018 - an open discussion "[Minsk Agreements: Implementation Practices and the Different Points of View](#)" was held in the "Human rights in the World" discussion club in Voronezh on the prospects of the Minsk Agreements (*text in Russian*)
- February 21, 2018 – a [public action](#) organized by the relatives of Ukrainian political prisoners in Russian prisons was held in Kyiv near the Presidential Administration Office of Ukraine (*text in Ukrainian*)
- In late February, activists who have been writing letters to Oleg Sentsov [began to receive replies that he had left the colony](#). However, his lawyer later denied this information (*text in Ukrainian*)
- February 21, 2018 - citizens of Saint Petersburg [congratulated Ukrainian citizens on the anniversary of Euromaidan](#) and brought flowers to the General Consulate of Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- February 26, 2018 – "26 minutes for Kremlin prisoners", a [public action of solidarity and support for Ukrainian political prisoners](#), was held near the Russian Embassy in Kyiv. The action was organized by the NGOs Center for Civil Liberties and "Crimea-SOS" and PEN America. No fewer than 64 persons are detained in Russia and in annexed Crimea on trumped-up criminal charges (*text in Russian*)
- "[How is the gap between Ukrainian and Russian societies growing and who is trying to overcome it?](#)" - journalist Yuliya Abibok talked with Ukrainian and Russian activists involved in various dialogue initiatives (*text in Russian*)
- Updates on the [health issues and lawsuit](#) of Stanislav Klykh, Ukrainian political prisoner in Russia (*text in Russian*)
- Iryna Herashchenko, the representative of Ukraine in the humanitarian subgroup of the Tripartite Contact Group and the First Deputy Chair of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, said [there was no current communication regarding the exchange of Roman Suschenko and Oleg Sentsov](#) (two Ukrainian political prisoners), and noted that it is better to keep silent about the exchange processes in order not to harm it (*text in Ukrainian*)

- The team of the department for De-occupation and Reintegration of the [All-Ukrainian Civil Movement "Syla prava"](#) is drafting the Law "On acquittal" to provide changes to the Criminal and Criminal Procedural Codes, as well as to adjust the acquittal process and its applicability to those who committed crimes of low-to-medium severity during the military conflict. [All of concerned persons are welcome to join the discussion of the draft law](#) (*text in Russian*)

3. Legal initiatives and analytics on war conflict

- February 13, 2018 – a round table "[UN Peacekeeping Mission - Opportunities and Risks for a Secure Peace](#)" was held in Kyiv within the framework of the "Dialogue on Peace and Secure Integration" national platform. Ukrainian analytical organizations took part in it. The [review](#) of the results of the round table can be found here (*text in Ukrainian*)
- The [law on the reintegration of Donbass](#) was adopted. A [brief review](#) can be found on the "Ukrayinska Pravda" website (*text in Ukrainian and Russian*)
- Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine, [signed the law](#) on the reintegration of Donbass (*video in Ukrainian*)
- "[It's time to stop calling it "hybrid warfare". The enemy is real, and deaths are not hybrid, but real ones](#)"- a piece on the recently adopted law on the reintegration of Donbass by Yevhen Zakharov and Mykola Kozyrev (*text in Russian*)
- Vyacheslav Likhachev, the Coordinator of the Department "Documentation of Human Rights Violations in the Zone of Military Conflict" of the Vostok-SOS Charity Fund, has [commented](#) on the law on the reintegration of Donbass (*text in Ukrainian*)
- "[What's the price for peace in Ukraine](#)" – piece by Andrei Novak on the necessity for the UN contingent to be supported by European political actors (*text in English*)
- "Rasmussen Report": a [brief analysis and review of official responses](#) in the "Nastoyashee vremya" review (*text in Russian*)
- "[Peacemakers for Donbass: one step forward and two steps back](#)" - an analytical piece by journalist Kristel Nean on the so-called "Rasmussen Report" (*text in Russian*)
- "Vostok-SOS" Charitable Fund published a [review of human rights](#) violations in particular areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions for January 2018 (*text in Russian and English*)
- "[The Lost Voice: Is Muteness Everlasting?](#)" report, dedicated to electoral rights and elections in the liberated territories of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, was published by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Kharkiv Human Rights Group continues to gather and process data about violations of human rights in the temporarily occupied areas of Luhansk and Donetsk regions. [Overview](#) of the situation for January (*text in Russian*)
- The "Justice for Peace in Donbass" coalition of public organizations and initiatives published the January issue of the "[Human Rights in the Southeast of Ukraine](#)" bulletin. It covers human rights issues both in occupied and controlled areas (*text in Ukrainian*)
- "Ukrainskaya Pravda" columnist, Pavel Kazarin, [sums up the development of](#)

4. Assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and affected civilians

- A regular [court session on the appeal of human rights activist Tatyana Kotlyar](#) was held at the end of January in Obninsk (Kaluga region, Russia). She is accused of fictitiously registering refugees from Donbass in her flat (*text in Russian*)
- "Donbass-SOS" NGO's piece on [the rights of prisoners](#) serving sentences in the occupied area of Donbass (*text in Russian*)
- A team from "Vostok-SOS" visited a number of rural paramedical and obstetric stations in the villages of Teple, Nyzhn'oteple and Vidrodzhennya in the frontline zone. [Medical equipment](#) was delivered to all of the stations. [Humanitarian aid](#) was also delivered to the villages of Travneve and Hladosovo despite the lack of roads (*text in Russian*)
- Observers from "Vostok-SOS", during a monitoring visit to the frontline area, [gathered data](#) about the so-called "services" for the transportation of seriously ill seniors. According to current Ukrainian legislation, such persons should be personally present while processing documents, receiving welfare benefits, etc. (*text in Russian*)
- New Year [presents](#) for children were distributed in the areas near the frontline by representatives of "Vostok-SOS" and Pact (*text in Russian*)
- A piece by "Deutsche Welle" about the lives of Ukrainian ex-servicemen and possibilities for [rehabilitation after military discharge](#) - (*text in Russian*)
- Children from IDP families [recorded an audiobook](#) for children with visual impairments in the framework of the all-Ukrainian social project "Listening to Veselka TV: Children for Children" (*text in Ukrainian*)
- "Vostok-SOS" [issued an appeal](#) to the government on the urgent need to regulate social services to those who have been released from captivity (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Candidates to become members of the [Central Electoral Commission stood for the electoral rights of IDPs](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Social entrepreneurship can be an effective tool for social and economic rehabilitation after the conflicts. Two [interregional information campaigns](#) on this topic were held in the framework of the DRA project "Overcoming the consequences of the war together" (*text in Russian*)
- To reduce the stigma surrounding psychotherapeutic assistance, a targeted amount of information campaigns, ["I trust the psychologist"](#), have been implemented within the framework of the DRA project "Overcoming the consequences of the war together" (*text in German*)

5. Interviews and opinions

- ["Putin can still change his strategy towards Ukraine"](#) - an exclusive interview with Kurt Volker, the US official representative. The interview was given at the end of January, on the eve of an official meeting with Vladislav Surkov (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Ihor Kozlovsky - a historian and scholar of religion from Donetsk, who spent almost two years in captivity and was released during the exchange of prisoners in late

December 2017 - in an interview for "Wiener Zeitung" newspaper [reflects on a possible](#) amnesty for those who were forced to fight on the side of the so-called "LPR" and "DNR" and regret the decision, but cannot lay down arms due to the fear of imprisonment in the area under the control of the Ukrainian government (*text in German*)

- ["War in Donbass in the style of manga"](#): an exhibition of a Japanese artist about the war in Donbas opened in Mariupol (*text in Russian*)
- Sophie Lamborschini, associate doctoral researcher from Center March Bloch in Berlin has published a piece ["In the Borderlands of War of Eastern Ukraine. Making Borders by Mapping Needs and Social Practices"](#) (*text in English*)
- The entry regulations of Ukraine have changed for Russian citizens since January 1, 2018. How the new system works was checked out by ["Novaya Gazeta"](#) (*video in Russian*)
- ["Peace in the Name of War"](#) - an analysis of scenarios after the possible UN peacekeeping introduction in Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- The story of Sergey Korotkoikh, who joined the "Azov" volunteer battalion to take part in combat operations in the eastern part of Ukraine, obtained Ukrainian citizenship and was involved in the creation of the "Natsionalni Druzhyny" ("National Companies" paramilitary group, a registered NGO): ["Belarus citizen from "Azov" Battalion: Nazi, Adventurer or Hero"](#) (*text in Russian*)
- [Review](#) of the history of the creation of "Natsionalni Druzhyny" at the end of January and with opinions from human rights defenders (*text in Russian*)
- Alexei Kortnev - rock musician and the leader of the "Neschastny Sluchay" band (Russia) - speaks about the future of the military conflict in Ukraine and his attitude towards the annexation of Crimea in the [interview](#) on the occasion of the band's anniversary (*text in Russian*)
- ["Invisible battalion: how Ukrainian female-soldiers have achieved equality for their right to fight"](#) - Hanna Hrytsenko's report (*text in Russian*)
- Journalist Alina Sopova on her [impressions of work in the frontline area](#) and the policy of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine toward journalists (*text in Russian*)
- ["Prayer for Peace"](#) - the text of Yevhen Kaplin, the head of the "Proliska" humanitarian mission, about combat operations in the eastern part of Ukraine (*text in Russian*)

Supported by the government of Germany as a part of the DRA project "Dialogue for mutual understanding and rule of law: European NGOs together to overcome the Donbass conflict"



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