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PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBASS

Results of monitoring actual occurrences, related to the hybrid war 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

The selection of news presented in the Newsletter is subjective. The opinions expressed in the published materials may not coincide with the opinion of the authors and participants of CivilM+.

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1. Political processes and the situation in the conflict zone

- Kurt Volker, the US State Department Special Representative for Ukraine, said at a panel discussion at the Hudson Institute that the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" were created by Russia to mask the role of Russia in the ongoing conflict, and [should be](#)

eliminated as violating the Constitution of Ukraine (*text in Russian*)

- The officials of the Federation Council reacted to Kurt Volker's words, and said that the "LPR" and "DPR" "are parties of the Minsk agreements", and without their consent "there will not be any peacekeepers there" (*text in Russian*)
- March 1, 2018 – The Verkhovna Rada adopted a resolution "On the appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the international community on preparation of illegal presidential elections in the temporarily occupied part of the territory of Ukraine: in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol" with a call to condemn Russia's actions (*text in Russian*)
- March 2, 2018 – US President Donald Trump extended the US sanctions against Russia for a year due to the situation in Donbass, which "continues to pose a threat to US national security" (*text in Russian*)
- March 3, 2018 – Representatives of the Ukrainian side of the Joint Center for Control and Coordination (JCKK) accused militants of an artillery attack from subartillery and small arms on residential areas in the town of Shchastya (Luhansk region) (*text in Russian*)
- Anatolii Matios, the Chief Military Prosecutor of Ukraine believes that the practical application of the law "On the reintegration of Donbass" will entail new problems (*text in Russian*)
- Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said that the US State Department's approval of the sale of Javelin missiles and launch facilities opens the front of international defense support for Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- Darka Olifer, Press Secretary of the Representative of Ukraine in the Tripartite Contact Group, analyzes the situation of the Minsk agreements observation. The release of hostages, the return of mobile communications throughout the territory of Donbass and the creation of a tripartite humanitarian search initiative for the missing persons are among the priorities of the work (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Iryna Herashchenko, the First Deputy Head of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, took part in the preparation of the statement of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council on supporting the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemning the assistance that Russia provided to "LPR" and "DPR". She also describes the negotiations on the release of hostages and the appeal of the Verkhovna Rada to the parliaments of foreign countries with a request to support the release (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 4, 2018 – The Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea warned citizens of Ukraine about criminal responsibility in case of participation in Russian presidential elections in the occupied Crimea (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 5, 2018 – The Council of the European Union decided to extend sanctions against 13 people from former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's circle of close associates into next year (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 6, 2018 – Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov announced the deploying of a peacekeeping mission to Donbass as "impossible" without the consent of the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 7, 2018 – Dmytro Hutsulyak, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine on ATO issues, said that the leadership of the "LPR" and "DPR" determine additional measures to conceal the Russian military presence (*text in Ukrainian*)

- March 7, 2018 – Elmar Brok, European Parliament Commissioner for foreign affairs, stressed that the main goal of the UN mission in Donbass is not to freeze the conflict, but to [return control over the border to Ukraine](#). He also added that Russia has not taken any actions to resolve the conflict (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 8, 2018 – [The Minister and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland held a meeting with the US Special Representative for Ukraine in Poland](#). During the meeting the need for close cooperation between these two countries for the de-escalation of the conflict in Donbass was reaffirmed (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 9, 2018 - [Volodymyr Ruban, head of the NGO, "Officers' Corps" Center for Hostage Liberation, was detained at a checkpoint on the contact line in Donetsk region](#). He is accused of planning an assassination attempt on the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko (*text in Russian*)
- [The North Atlantic Alliance officially recognized Ukraine's aspirations to join and added the country to the list of "aspirants of NATO"](#). More in the “Yevropeyska Pravda” article on the significance of this event (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 13, 2018 – During a joint briefing with Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission, [Petro Poroshenko stated that more participation from European diplomats is needed](#) for the release of hostages held both in the temporarily occupied territory of Donbass and in Russian prisons. They also discussed the [format of a peacekeeping mission](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- March 23, 2018 – Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, during a joint press conference with Pavlo Klimkin, Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, qualified Russia as "[an aggressor country](#)" that bears direct responsibility for the armed conflict in the territory of eastern Ukraine (*text in English*)
- March 26, 2017 – The Tripartite Contact Group adopted a [statement of commitment to the ceasefire regime](#), which was to start March 30. Ertuğrul Apakan, head of the OSCE SMM, [welcomed](#) this decision (*text in Russian*)
- March 29, 2018 – The leaders of the "Normandy format" countries reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Minsk agreements in all its aspects. [Statement by the President of Russia Vladimir Putin, Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, President of France Emmanuel Macron and President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko](#) (*text in Russian*)
- Viktor Yanukovich, former President of Ukraine, admitted that [in 2014 he had asked Russia to send army troops](#) to Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty published an [investigation into Ihor Plotnytsky, the leader of the so-called "LPR"](#), who went missing after the power coup in Luhansk (*text in Russian*)
- The "Informaciyny Sprotyv" initiative group began to publish [the lists of Russian military personnel who were killed in Ukraine](#) in 2014 (*text in Russian*)

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

- March 2, 2018 – [Russia and Ukraine exchanged captured service members](#) at the “Hoptivka” checkpoint. 2 persons were released on each side, while the liberated Russians were FSB servicepersons (*text in Russian*)
- March 4, 2018 – the documentary play ["The War is Near"](#) is shown on stage during

[Teatr.doc in Moscow](#). It is an antiwar play in three parts about the events in Donbass, Crimea and Syria. The first part is a diary from Luhansk about how the ordinary and scary war came to this peaceful city. The second part is about the Syrian war. The third part of the play is "Engagement", the documentary project based on the materials of the case of Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Gennady Afanasiev and Alexei Chirniy (*text in Russian*)

- March 10, 2018 – a [presentation of the CD with a collection of anti-war songs](#) by various singers took place in St. Petersburg. 21 bands took part in production, some of the songs are available online (*text in Russian*)
- March 19, 2018 – near the Verkhovna Rada the ["Invisible voters" public action](#) took place. The main demand was to pass a law on voting rights for IDPs, which has been postponed since last year (*text in Ukrainian*)
- More than [20 tons of children's clothes and bed linen](#) have been sent to the residents of Luhansk region from Sweden and Latvia (*text in Russian*)
- The educational course ["Forum-Theater for Negotiating and Peacebuilding Activities"](#) was successfully finished by civil activists from 11 cities of Ukraine. The educational course was supported by DRA e.v. within the framework of the project "Overcoming the consequences of the war together" (*text in Russian*)
- In Donetsk, the army of Ukraine, with support from local activists, [distributed posters about the huge public action for united Ukraine](#) which took place in 2014 (*text in Russian*)
- On March 7-12, 2018, the [survey on Russian-Ukrainian relations was conducted by the Levada Center \(Russia\) and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology \(KIIS\)](#) in the framework of joint monitoring of dynamics of attitude of Russian/ Ukrainian residents to a neighboring country, and opinions about possible diplomatic relations between these countries (*text in Russian*)
- The mother of the captive Russian soldier Victor Ageyev [appealed to Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump and EU leaders](#) for support in his release (*text in Russian*)

3. Legal initiatives and analysis on war conflict

- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published a new report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, which covers the period November 16, 2017 – February 15, 2018. A significant part of the report is devoted to the situation in Donbass (*text in [Ukrainian](#), [Russian](#) and [English](#)*)
- [Analysis of the draft law "On hostages"](#) and what it gives to those who survived captivity, published by OpenDemocracy (*text in Russian*)
- Oleg Ignatov (Carnegie Moscow Center) [analyzes the law "On the reintegration of Donbass"](#) (*text in Russian*)
- [Narrative of the conflict between "Naftogaz" and "Gazprom"](#) oil companies: the shortest gas conflict in the history of Ukrainian-Russian relations (*text in Russian*)
- The case of [restoring pension payments to IDPs is considered a precedent by the Supreme Court](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- The "Right to Protection" Charitable Foundation issued a February [digest on the situation regarding the rights of IDPs](#) and those affected by the conflict and a monitoring [report on freedom of movement while crossing the contact line](#) via

checkpoints (*text in Ukrainian and English*)

- The mission of the Kharkiv Human Rights Group went to the ATO zone to research the [situation on the checkpoints](#) (*text in Russian*)
- People with IDs from the so-called "DPR" and "LPR" will be [allowed to stay in Russia for an unlimited period of time](#) and to work without permits (*text in Russian*)
- "Vostok-SOS" charitable foundation with DRA e.V. published the [report "We Live Like in a Reservation"](#) based on the results of the international monitoring group mission to Luhansk and Donetsk regions' areas near the contact line (*text in Russian, Ukrainian and English*)
- The Documentation Center of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union continues the historiography of the hybrid military conflict in the east of Ukraine, based on the history of certain Donbass cities. This time, [the history of the Popasna](#) district center continues the series of analytical materials (*text in Ukrainian*)
- "Vostok-SOS" charitable foundation published [a report of human rights violations in some areas of Luhansk and Donetsk regions](#) in February 2018 (*text in Ukrainian, Russian and English*)

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

- The story of Tatyana Samsonova, a resident of the Smolensk region, who was charged with the accusation of "fictitious registration" of a refugee family from Donbass in her flat. The court [ended with her full acquittal](#) (*text in Russian*)
- [Street demonstrations in support of Denis Bakholdin](#), a Russian anti-war activist currently accused of taking part in the ATO on the side of Ukraine, took place in a number of countries on March 10. He was arrested a year ago (*text in Russian*)
- The participants of "Babylon13" group of documentary filmmakers were dressed in T-shirts with the slogan "[Free Oleg Sentsov!](#)" at the Shevchenko Prize award ceremony (*text in Ukrainian*)
- [A Ukrainian court has issued a positive decision regarding the members of a foreign combatant's family](#), confirming for the first time that it is unsafe for them to return to Russia (*text in Russian*)
- The "Civil Assistance" NGO has said that refugees from Ukraine are [often expelled from Russia](#) in violation of laws (*text in Russian*)
- People released from captivity in December 2017 [have not yet received the assistance promised by Ukraine officials](#), said representatives of "Vostok-SOS" Charitable Foundation during a press conference (*text in Russian*)

5. Interviews and opinions

- An investigation by "Ukrainska Pravda" on the [Russian special services' methods to recruit foreigners](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Dmitry Trenin (Carnegie Moscow Center) [on the path of Russian and Ukrainian development](#) (*text in Russian*)
- Journalists of the "Zaborona" project are investigating [the fate of Ukrainian soldiers, who went missing in 2015](#) during the "Debaltsevo mousetrap" (*text in Ukrainian*)

- [Interview with Natalya Kozarenko](#), coordinator of the network of UHHRU public offices, on transitional justice and analysis of the reasons that made the Donbass conflict possible (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Of the almost 500 women killed during the war in Donbass, only two of them were military personnel. [What women face during war](#), described by Oleksandra Matviychuk, human rights defender (*text in Russian*)
- [Why is there no powerful anti-war movement in Russia?](#) The analysis by Andrei Arkhangelsky (*text in Russian*)
- Radio Liberty prepared a [test "What do you know about Donbass?"](#) (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Article by Olga Musafirova on [rescuing captives as a business](#) and ways to confront it (*text in Russian*)
- Video of "Novoe vremya" and "Radio Liberty" about a [hospice for elderly people](#) left by relatives in settlements near the contact line, which was opened by civil initiatives (*text in Russian*)
- How possible is an [environmental disaster](#) in Donbass? A special project by "Hromadske" is devoted to this issue (*text in Russian and English*)
- Alexei Polikovsky, a columnist of "Novaya Gazeta", reflects on the [peculiarities of attitudes to the Ukrainians and Russians who died as the result of the war](#) (*text in Russian*)

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