

War in Ukraine. Day 388. Monthly update 2023, #1.

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Justice. “There can be no peace without accountability,” [said](#) Roberta Metsola during her March address at the “United for Justice” conference, hosted by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine in Lviv, Ukraine from 3-5 March. Discussions on the accountability for the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine remain a top priority. In his address President Zelenskyi informed that over 70000 Russian war crimes have already been recorded, therefore it is essential to ensure accountability of Russia for the committed crimes. In the frame of conference, Minister of Foreign Affairs Wopke Hoekstra launched the Dialogue Group on Accountability for Ukraine. The Dialogue Group is a coordination mechanism that offers countries, international organisations and stakeholders from civil society a platform to discuss and align national and international accountability initiatives, reads the statement. The Group will focus on the four streams:

- the support of international parties for Ukraine;
- actions being taken by regional and international institutions;
- national investigations;
- ongoing documentation initiatives on the part of civil society.

The Group envisages participation of the representatives of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the EU, civil society and, in every case, a representative from Ukraine.

On March 17, 2023 International Criminal Court [issued warrants](#) of arrest for two individuals in the context of the situation in Ukraine: Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova. The official statement of ICC says that Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, and Maria Lvova-Belova, Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation are allegedly responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population (children) and that of unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation. The crimes were allegedly committed in Ukrainian occupied territory at least from 24 February 2022.

Human rights. “Russian authorities have committed a wide range of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in various regions of Ukraine, many of which amount to war crimes”, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine [said](#) in a new report. The war crimes mentioned in the report include attacks on civilians and energy-related infrastructure, wilful killings, unlawful confinement, torture, rape and other sexual violence, as well as unlawful transfers and deportations of children. The Commission has found that a series of the consistent attacks Russia undertook against Ukraine “may amount to crimes against humanity”.

On March 11, Ukrainian human rights defender Maxym Butkevych, who had been captured by Russian forces in eastern Ukraine in June 2022, was [sentenced](#) to 13 years’ imprisonment by the so-called Supreme Court of the Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR). The court’s ruling claims that Butkevych confessed to allegedly having deliberately targeted and wounded civilians. Butkevych is a co-founder of Hromadske Radio, an independent media outlet, and Ukraine’s leading advocate for refugees and migrants, who stood up for the most marginalised, promoted tolerance, and condemned hate speech. In March 2022 he put his work in the humanitarian field on hold and joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [condemned](#) the sentence as illegal, null, and void. Ukrainian human rights NGOs [condemn](#) Russia’s practice of using prisoners of war as tools of propaganda and demand freedom for Maksym Butkevych, other Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian hostages.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [adopted](#) a mechanism on obligatory evacuation of children from frontline territories. From now on, the basis for mandatory evacuation is the decision of the regional military administrations, agreed with the military command and the Coordination Headquarters for the mandatory evacuation of the population. Compulsory evacuation of children will be carried out under the supervision of one of their parents or other legal representatives.

On March 6, Ukraine [launched](#) its Updated National Action Plan for Women Peace and Security. The launch of the Ukrainian updated WPS National Action plan provides an opportunity to reflect on the WPS agenda in practice, learning from the experience of the Ukrainian government and civil society in updating and implementing the plan. It is also an opportunity for Member States to take stock of how to include the WPS agenda in the international response in the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Another round of prisoners of war [exchange](#) took place between Ukraine and Russia. On March 7, as a result of the negotiation process, Ukraine brought back 130 of its defenders in exchange for 90 Russian servicemen.

Ukraine has [demanded](#) the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate grisly [footage](#) circulating on social media showing Russian forces shooting to death a Ukrainian prisoner of war. In the video, the Ukrainian soldier is seen smoking a

cigarette in a trench. He says "Glory to Ukraine!" before being shot with automatic weapons. Dmytro Lubinets, the Ukrainian parliament's human rights commissioner, [stated](#) that the shooting of the captured Ukrainian serviceman is a violation of the Geneva Conventions. According to the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War, signed by Russia, POWs must be guaranteed life and humane conditions of detention. Executions or ill-treatment of prisoners of war are considered war crimes.

Resistance movements. "Resistance of the Nation," a new movement opposed to the occupation, is [observed](#) across the Crimean peninsula. The group set fire to a car displaying the "Z" symbol in Feodosia and warned of more to come. At the same time, "Yellow Ribbon" activists continued their campaign in Crimea. According to Ukraine's Special Operation Forces' National Resistance Center, more than 130 yellow ribbons – a symbol of resistance – were painted in public places in Simferopol alone. Previously, a similar movement had been observed in the Kherson region during its occupation.

As for the recent activities of resistance movement in Kherson region, on March 11 Members of the Atesh underground resistance movement have [blown up](#) a section of the railway between the settlements of Abyrkosivka and Radensk in order to hamper the logistic infrastructure of the Russian forces.

Cities under the attack. As the 13th month of war is passing by, Russia continues to use terror tactics against the Ukrainian civilians across the country. During the night of March 9 Russian missiles once again [targeted](#) several Ukrainian regions and cities. In **Kyiv**, an energy infrastructure object was damaged as well as different premises in residential areas across the city. As a result of the shelling three people were injured and 40% of the city residents were deprived of heating.

The population of the city of **Kherson**, which was liberated back in November, [shrank from 330 000 residents before the war to about 60 000](#). One of the reasons for such an outflow is [constant shelling](#) from across the Dnipro river by the Russian forces. In the morning of March 11 [three people were killed](#) on their way to a grocery store, three others, including an elderly woman, were injured as a result of the attack, according to Kherson regional governor Oleksandr Prokudin. In total, Kherson has been shelled [more than 2000 times](#) since its liberation.

Fierce battles are continuing to take place in the **Donetsk region** as well as heavy shelling of the population. On March 11, Russian [shelled](#) Konstantynivka, a city in Donetsk region, five times using artillery munition, leading to the death of one person and the injury of three others. On March 14, Kramatorsk, another city in the Donetsk region, [suffered](#) from a Russian attack on a residential area in the city centre, leaving nine people wounded.

Occupying Russian forces continue to regularly [attack](#) the **Kharkiv region**. In particular, they launched 11 missiles at Kharkiv in the early hours of March 9, leaving the city without water, power, or heating.

Energy security. Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) [suffered](#) a complete loss of external power for 11 hours after the March 9 massive missile attack. It was the sixth time the power plant [was de-energized](#) and stayed in blackout mode. ZNPP had to rely on emergency diesel generators for reactor cooling and other essential nuclear safety and security functions in the latest incident. The rest of the nuclear power plants in Ukraine decreased their power, due to the missile attack threat. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team of experts remains present at the plant observing the situation. The situation at the plant remains fragile, as the shelling in the region was heard at the plant. After the recent massive shelling, the situation in the energy sector has been fully [restored](#) across Ukraine on March 13.

Food security. This year's exports of Ukrainian agricultural products may [maintain](#) last year's figure of more than \$20 billion. Last year's forecast did not take into account a part of the de-occupied Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Kherson regions. A significant part of these regions still needs to be inspected and cleared of mines for sowing. For this reason there is a risk 2% of the total national agricultural area, may not be sown.

According to the [Global Food Security Index](#), Ukraine performs the weakest in the Sustainability and Adaptation pillar, with a score of 43.5 out of 100. Ukraine has consistent gaps in developing policies to protect and adapt its natural resources, particularly its agricultural water sources. Despite having a sufficient supply of food in the country, Ukraine's availability score is low owing to weak armed conflict, supply-chain infrastructure, corruption and political instability, and absence of a food security agency or strategy.

Sanctions. As of March 13, the Council of the European Union decided to prolong the restrictive measures targeting Russia for another six months, until 15 September 2023. The decision envisages prolonging existing restrictive measures related to travel restrictions for natural persons, the freezing of assets, and a ban on making funds or other economic resources available to the listed individuals and entities. Sanctions will target 1 473 individuals and 205 entities as a consequence of Russia's ongoing unjustified and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, [says](#) the statement.

Last week Canada introduced [another round of economic sanctions](#) against Russia origin or related businesses. Therefore, as of March 10, it is prohibited for any person in Canada and any Canadian outside Canada to import, purchase or acquire any goods from Russia or from any person in Russia. This includes iron and steel, sheet piling of iron or steel, railway or tramway track construction material of iron or steel, tubes, pipes and hollow profiles, of cast iron, other tubes, pipes and hollow profiles, as well as Aluminum and articles thereof. Meanwhile, from March 1, Turkish government [halted](#) transit of goods Sanctioned by EU and the USA to Russia.

Sport. On February 10, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyi addressed the participants of the virtual summit of Sport Ministers, convened by the UK Government. He called [upon the participants](#) not to support Russian athletes in partaking in the Olympic Games, even with no national symbols on display. The President drew upon the episodes of Russian aggression since 2014, when the Crimean peninsula was occupied by Russian soldiers without any insignia. Moreover, according to Zelenskyi, 228 Ukrainian athletes and coaches died during the year of full-scale invasion, while only a few Russian athletes have spoken out to condemn the terror of their state. Finally, he warned that if such a participation were to happen, it is only a matter of time before the terrorist state forced its athletes to contribute to the war propaganda. In addition, Vadym Huttsayt, Minister of youth and sports of Ukraine, as well as the Olympic committee [stated](#) that if Russian and Belarusian athletes are allowed to compete as 'neutral athletes', it will lead to a Ukrainian boycott of the Paris summer Olympics of 2024.

Recent polls. The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation published the results of the [survey](#) according to which, in 2022, the share of citizens who use Ukrainian in everyday life increased compared to 2021. While in 2021 this figure was 64%, in 2022 it rose to 71%. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, a consensus has largely emerged in Ukrainian society that the ban on Russian cultural products is a necessary step to protect Ukraine. This opinion prevails in all regions, with only the South showing roughly equal shares of those who agree and disagree.

The results of a [sociological survey](#) conducted by the Razumkov Centre from 22 February to 1 March 2023 showed the following results regarding Ukrainians' trust in public institutions. Among the state and public institutions, the most trusted are the Armed Forces of Ukraine (96% of respondents trust them), volunteer organisations (88%), volunteer units (87%), the National Guard of Ukraine (86%), the State Emergency Service (85%), the President of Ukraine (83%) and others.

Recent studies. The Economist Intelligence Unit has published [a report](#) on democratic performance in 2022. According to the report, Ukraine's score in the 2022 Democracy Index declines compared with 2021, from 5.57 to 5.42. However, there were also many positive developments, not least in the way in which the war has given rise to a sense of nationhood and national solidarity. Ukraine's score for the categories of functioning of government, political participation and political culture all improve.

The Atlantic Council think tank has published [a report](#) with the analysis of pro-Kremlin narratives. During the 2014–2021 interwar period, the three most prominent recurring narratives included "the Ukrainian army and voluntary formations being brutal", "Ukraine becoming a failed state after it followed Europe", and "Ukrainians being Nazis". For the period representing the seventy days prior to the invasion the primary narratives observed were "Russia is seeking peace", "Russia has a moral obligation to do something about security in the region", "Ukraine is aggressive", "the West is creating tensions in the region", and "Ukraine is a puppet of the West".

Watchlist. It's Oscar time. Though this year's Oscar award for the documentary movie was awarded to the representatives of Russia. Nevertheless don't miss a chance to watch '[A House Made of Splinters](#)', a truly beautiful and heartbreaking story of an orphanage for children in Lysychansk, Donetsk region. What strikes the most is the impact of the 9 years of war in the region which leads to broken lives that have impact on children.

Another recommendation is recalling February - March 2023 through the eyes of Ukrainian filmmaker Nadia Parfan who decides to return to Ukraine once the war breaks out. '[I Did Not Want to Make a War Film](#)' - is a personal essay film, she documents her painful return home.

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