

# CRITICAL AREAS

## SITUATION REPORT

KEY THEMES › RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND AID ACTORS

LUHANSK OBLAST (OCCUPIED) › OCCUPIED DONETSK OBLAST › NORTHERN DONETSK OBLAST (GCA)  
› DNIPROPETROVSK OBLAST › ZAPORIZHZHIA OBLAST › KHERSON OBLAST › MYKOLAIV OBLAST ›  
ODESA OBLAST › KHARKIV OBLAST › SUMY OBLAST › CHERNIHIV OBLAST



Bahmut, Donetsk oblast - Olena Maksymenko













## KEY THEMES

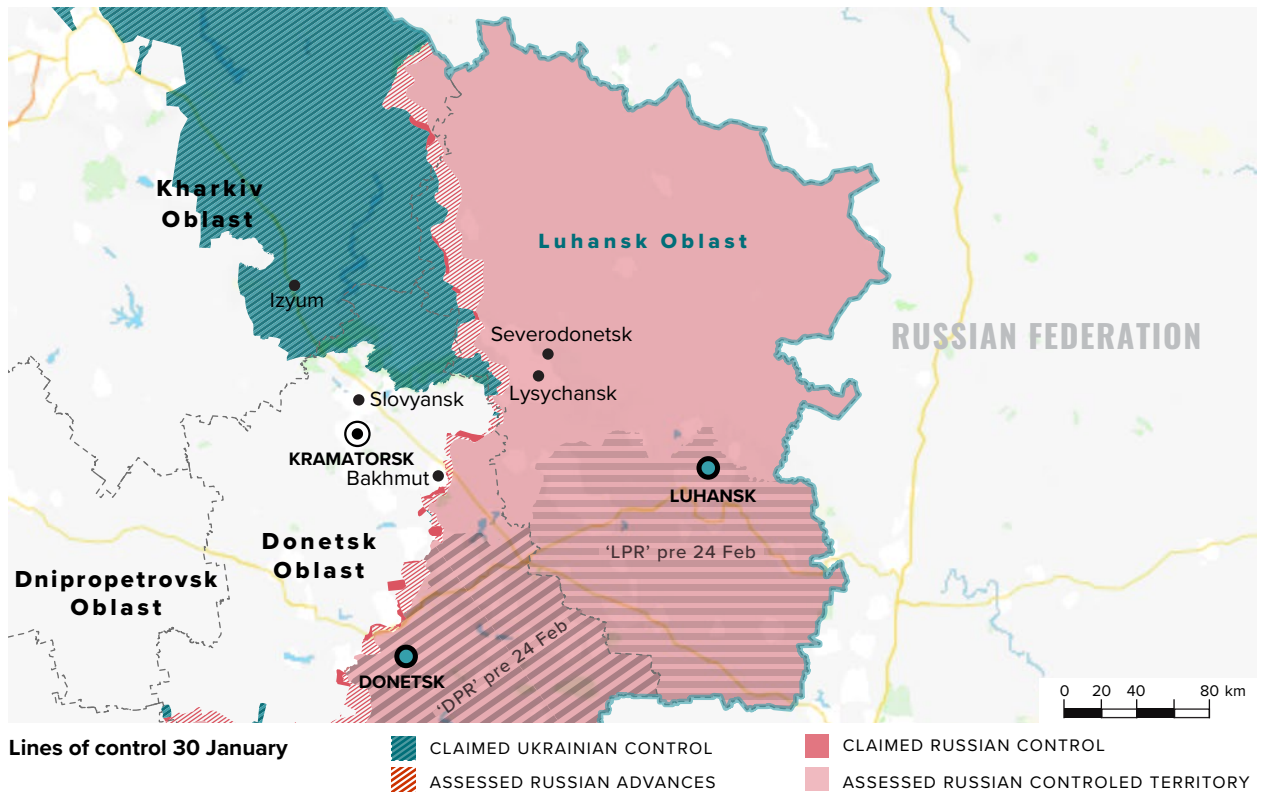
- › Residents of rear areas under Ukrainian control appear increasingly alarmed by the scale of mobilization, and by the high military death toll on the frontlines. Numerous local sources believe the true numbers of dead and wounded far exceed official figures, while some also characterize conscription practices as intrusive and/or corrupt.
- › Some residents of Sumy and Zaporizhzhia have responded positively to the dismissal of their oblast governors, but question whether this latest stage of the battle against corruption will prove more than symbolic.
- › Despite some improvements, inadequate aid to households and enterprises in need of financial and/or in-kind assistance to repair combat-related damage remains a common grievance in areas including Kherson, Mykolaiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv.
- › Throughout Ukrainian--controlled areas, but particularly in Sumy, Chernihiv, and Odesa, local sources remain deeply concerned about the economic impact of unpredictable power outages, especially on agriculture and industry, but also on small businesses.
- › The administrative and economic integration of occupied territories into the Russian Federation continues at a steady clip. In Luhansk oblast, this process has coincided with an increasing reluctance to speak to researchers on the part of residents of areas occupied in 2022. Throughout occupied Donbas, attitudes toward the integration process largely ranged from resignation to disillusionment during the reporting period, with some lamenting Moscow's disinterest in restoring the area's signature industries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND AID ACTORS

- › Strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms over the distribution of humanitarian aid to ensure it is disseminated transparently and beneficiaries perceive the process as fair.
- › Scale up mine clearance activities and explosive ordnance education for the civilian population, considering frequent casualties in different regions of Ukraine and the large portion of Ukraine's territory that is **contaminated**.
- › Increase funding for emergency cash distribution and medium-to-long-term targeted grants to support small businesses in areas particularly affected by unpredictable power outages.
- › Expand PSS for conflict-affected people with a particular focus on trauma, domestic violence, and grief coping mechanisms.
- › Per previous Situation Reports, encourage and/or facilitate the evacuation of civilians from occupied areas. Step up information campaigns on how Ukrainians can safely depart Russia after evacuating there.

### MAP LEGEND

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|  CAPITAL                   |  OBLAST CAPITAL                        |  'LPR' / 'DPR' CAPITAL |  NOTABLE SETTLEMENTS |
|  CLAIMED UKRAINIAN CONTROL |  CLAIMED RUSSIAN CONTROL               |  'DPR' PRE 24 FEB     |  'LPR' PRE 24 FEB  |
|  ASSESSED RUSSIAN ADVANCES |  ASSESSED RUSSIAN CONTROLLED TERRITORY |   |   |



**POPULATION:** 2,102,291 (Ukrainian gov't est. 2022).

**MAIN CITIES:** Luhansk 397,677; Alchevsk 106,062; Severodonetsk 99,067; Lysychansk 93,340; Khrustalnyi (Krasnyi Luch) 79,533; Dovzhansk (Sverdlovsk), 62,691; Rubizhne 55,247

## LUHANSK OBLAST (OCCUPIED)

De facto authorities allege that recent incoming fire has killed over a dozen civilians, including a small child. Alchevsk, Kadiivka (Stakhanov), Rubizhne, Zolote, and Kreminna were among the settlements reportedly targeted. The main incident was a HIMARS strike on 28 Jan that occupation forces say killed 14 civilians at a **Novoaidar** hospital. Ukrainian governor-in-exile Serhiy Haidai **claims** the dead were Russian combatants. The occupation administration of **Starobilsk** also reported an explosion near the home of the outgoing 'mayor' on 22 Jan, **alleging** that Ukrainian forces had targeted him with a missile. According to a local source, the incident prompted house-to-house searches and arbitrary detentions in the days that followed.

As a possible signal of a further tightening of control over civilian movements and communications, **local sources in areas occupied in 2022 were unusually reluctant to speak to researchers** – with poor connectivity just one of the reasons they cited. This finding may support **reports** from Serhiy Haidai to the effect that occupation forces are taking extraordinary measures, including forcible relocation, to prevent civilians from leaking their coordinates. Moreover, complaints of stricter checkpoints from locals in the Luhansk city area suggest enhanced 'security' measures may extend to rear areas as well.

Meanwhile, **integration with the Russian Federation is progressing**. Luhansk oblast, along with other occupied areas, will now 'officially' run on Moscow **time**. Administrative service centers reportedly **opened** in nine cities on 25 Jan; here, de facto 'LPR' constituents can register their place of residence, apply for Russian passports, and sign up for various state subsidies. Residents of the 'LPR' and other occupied territories who fail to receive Russian passports reportedly may soon be hit with income tax rates of 30 percent, the standard **rate** for foreigners, as opposed to 13 percent, the rate for citizens and official tax residents. Businesses are hurriedly re-configuring their finances and paperwork to comply with Russian law – to which several local sources in Luhansk city attributed delays in the payment of salaries.

In general, **cost of living was a major concern for key informants** interviewed during the reporting period – who, as noted, resided mostly in rear areas occupied in 2014. Per one Luhansk city woman,

Prices are going up for absolutely everything. ... It's like they're messing with us. Yeah, it's great for the soldiers and for the Ruskis who've come here as guest workers since their salaries are 100,000 [rubles] and up. But what about locals earning 20-30,000?



**POPULATION:** no official estimate

**MAIN CITIES:** Donetsk 901,645 (Ukrainian gov't est 2022), Mariupol 425,681 (est 2022), roughly **160-180,000** remaining; Makiivka 338,968 (est 2022) Horlivka 239,828 (est 2022); Yenakieve 76,673 (est 2022)

## OCCUPIED DONETSK OBLAST

Russian and 'DPR' forces announced the seizure of several more settlements in the vicinity of Bakhmut, including **Soledar** (see Donetsk GCA). The tone in which de facto authorities discuss the latest conquest seems to have some locals aghast. Per a Kremlin supporter from the Donetsk city area:

*Pushilin has announced that Soledar's been wiped off the face of the earth. I just don't get why he's saying this. What is he, proud? There were people living there, after all! Our people!*

Meanwhile, the Donetsk city and Horlivka area has remained subject to frequent incoming fire, while Mariupol continues to serve as a rear base. Per Ukrainian authorities, Russian forces have **amassed** several thousand troops there for an attack on **Vuhledar**. **Local and open sources report that the anticipated new wave of mobilization in 'DPR' territory has yet to arrive.**

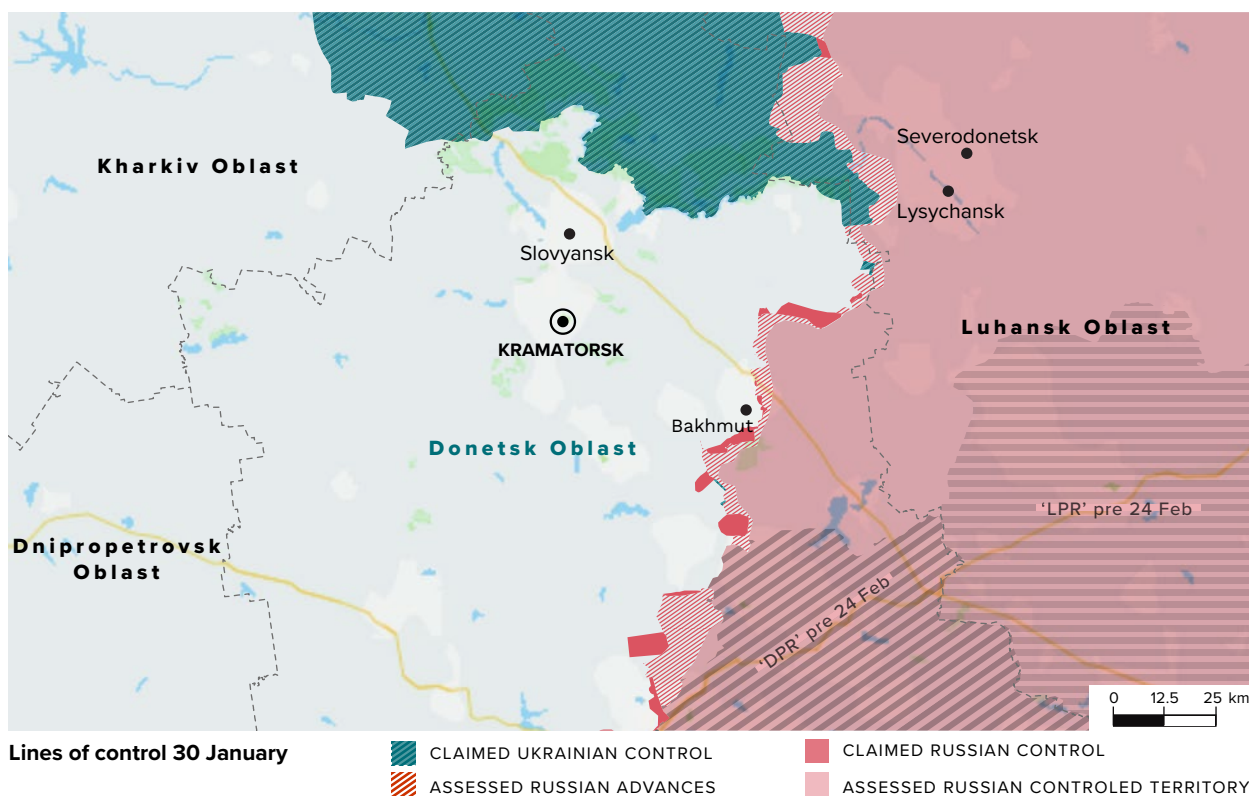
**Utility provision remains shaky** throughout the so-called republic. Russia's defense ministry **announced** the construction of a new pipe to carry potable water in from Rostov oblast, aimed at tackling shortages in the Donetsk city area. Meanwhile, some homes in greater Donetsk city remain unheated, leading to an apparent **spat** between 'DPR' head Denis Pushilin and the officials he chose to blame. In Mariupol, the absence of central heating remains a given, with households reliant on electric and gas heaters.

**As in other occupied territories, formal integration into Russia continues. Utility fees** in most locales are due to rise 20 percent, per the Russian tax code – although a number of unsafe locales, yet to be specified, will apparently be **exempt** from payments. On 18 Jan, authorities **reported** that Mariupol's port had begun shipping goods to cities in southern Russia.

On 22 Jan, the Kremlin **replaced** Mariupol's acting mayor, Konstantin Ivashchenko, described by one local man as "a thief and an alcoholic," with Oleh Morhun, who once served as the city's acting police chief under Ukrainian jurisdiction. "I hope he'll be better than Ivashchenko," remarked a local woman, "but it generally feels like no one cares about anybody." To the extent that "caring" means facilitating the region's economic recovery, her feelings may reflect reality. The occupiers speak of plans to **restore** the Azov shipyard, clean Mariupol's waterways, and open a plant to recycle the tons of construction and demolition waste that have accumulated in the city's public lots. Yet enterprises previously synonymous with the city – the Ilyich steel mill and Azovstal – are **unlikely** to be revived.

In Donetsk city, too, **local sources characterized the integration process to date as expensive and disappointing.** Per a middle-aged laborer:

*People are starting to realize no one cares about them. And that although we've returned to Russia, we're surrounded by capitalists, same as before. Until we return to communism, nothing good will come.*



**POPULATION:** no official estimate; roughly 350,000 remain, per governor, as of 6 July

**MAIN CITIES:** Kramatorsk 147,145, roughly 50,000 remain as of 7 June; Slovyansk 105,141, roughly 23,000 remain as of 15 June; Bakhmut 71,094; Pokrovsk 60,127

## NORTHERN DONETSK OBLAST (GCA)

Following the **capture** of **Soledar**, Russian troops and Wagner Group mercenaries continued **making slow but steady gains in and around Bakhmut**, with the village of **Blahodatne** captured on **29 Jan**. The reporting period saw **intense fire-fights** for control of settlements such as **Druzhba**, **Pivnichne**, **Pivdenne**, and especially **Krasna Hora**, whose **capture** would significantly increase pressure on Bakhmut. Russian troops have steadily approached **Chasiv Yar**, which experiences **frequent shelling**, including a **24 Jan** strike on an apartment building that killed one resident. The town is mere kilometers from **Kostyantynivka** and lies on a main **supply line** for Bakhmut.

Unsurprisingly, our local sources were largely pre-occupied with security dynamics. Per a respondent in Kostyantynivka, which also **came under fire** during the reporting period, “We keep hearing more and more strikes coming from the Bakhmut direction, they’re louder, it’s dangerous and scary. I know a lot of wounded, and sometimes we have to bury our dead.” Kramatorsk also experienced **near-daily strikes during the reporting period**, with **kindergartens**, **hospitals**, **schools** and **industrial sites** suffering damage and a **20 Jan** attack killing one resident. For those who choose to leave, evacuation trains **run daily** from Pokrovsk.

These continual strikes lead to major damage to homes and other buildings across the region, with nearly all towns and cities in need of reconstruction aid. Multiple respondents, however, noted that local utility companies **only provide assistance repairing windows and roofs**. Power and heat supply in Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, and Kostyantynivka remains irregular, as does mobile internet, though water and gas are rarely interrupted. Respondents in these cities said that **locals are in need of winter aid such as firewood and warm clothes**, and that larger towns are starting to see the return of medical specialists and dentists. Stores are mostly stocked with food and other goods, though a respondent in Kostyantynivka noted **food shortages** over the reporting period. **Lyman**, however, **remains in dire shape** and locals require constant deliveries of humanitarian aid to survive:

The city was 90 percent destroyed and our house was partially damaged. There is no electricity in the apartment buildings and the private sector, and people try to make repairs where possible... There are very few residents, mostly elderly people. Most residents have nowhere to go back to, their homes aren’t in any shape to live in. And those people whose homes can still be restored need building materials. (man, 60s, IDP from Lyman)



**POPULATION:** 3,096,485 (gov't est 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Dnipro 968,502; Kryvyi Rih 603,904 (2022); Kamianske 226,845; Nikopol 105,160; Pavlohrad 101,430

## DNIPROPETROVSK OBLAST

The two-week reporting period passed relatively quietly, following the shock of the 14 Jan attack on a Dnipro city apartment block (see [19 Jan Situation Report](#)). The southern **district** of Nikopol, located across the Dnipro River from the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, continued to see the bulk of the incoming fire, with **Myrove** and **Marhanets** hromadas **targeted repeatedly**.

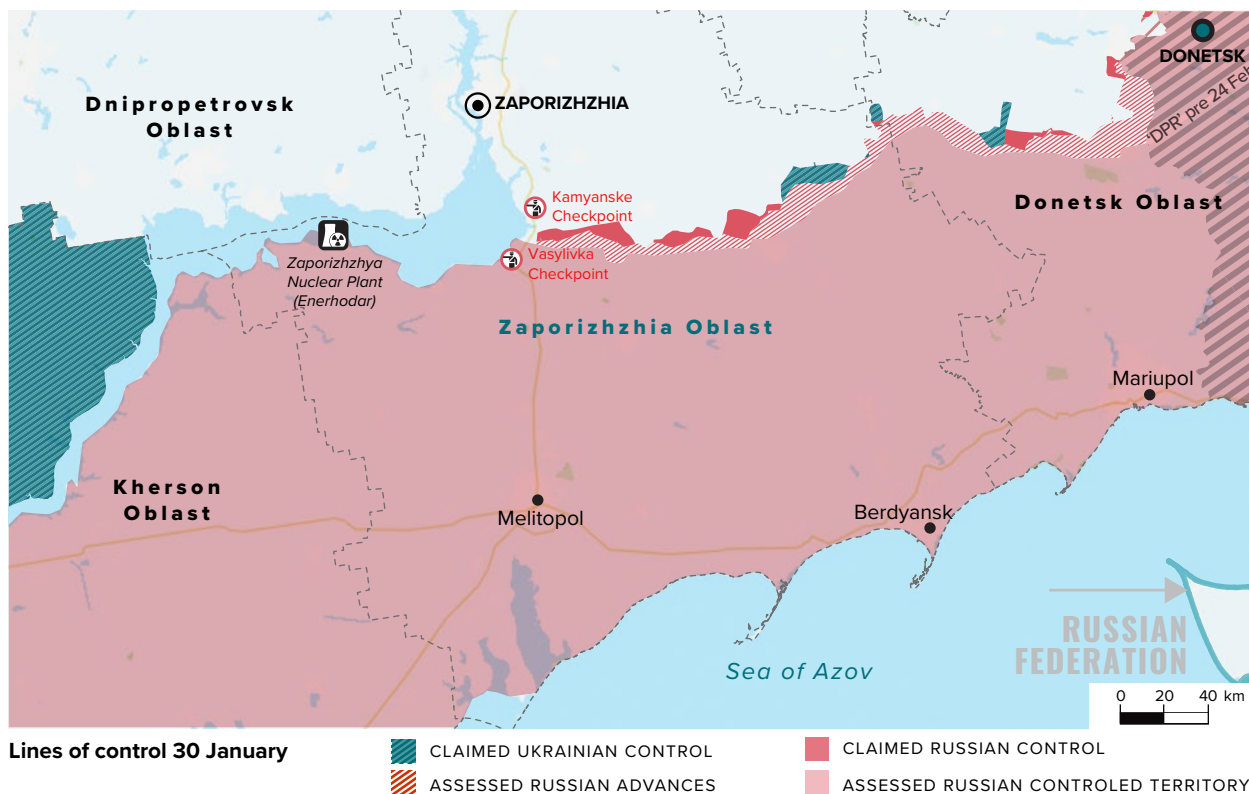
The main political news of the period was the **dismissal of the oblast governor, Valentyn Reznichenko, in connection with a series of corruption allegations** that came to a head in January (see Zaporizhzhia Oblast). Several media reports **suggest** Reznichenko may have funneled 1.5 billion hryvnias (over 40 million USD) in state funds to a building firm owned in part by a close friend. Yet interviews with local sources, which occurred before the dismissal was announced, yielded mostly positive assessments of authorities, focusing on developments such as the Dnipro city administration's 17 Jan **decision** to allocate one million hryvnias (about 27,000 USD) per household to the survivors of the 14 Jan missile strike.

As in other research locations (see Mykolaiv, Chernihiv), **local sources express frustration with what they see as unfair or corrupt mobilization**

**practices.** In at least one case, this frustration was compounded by horror at the staggering human cost of the war:

*At work now I look around to check there's no one following me hoping to hand me a conscription notice. [It's as if] we owe everyone, but no one owes us anything. ... They're going around catching people and saying, go fight. And we aren't opposed to going to fight, but how come those who are able to pay 5-8,000 USD are sitting around happily? And where did that money come from? ... There are entire hospitals full of wounded. I deliver aid to hospitals and I see it with my own eyes, but they're never going to tell us how many are wounded and dead because it would demotivate us. When the war ends, in a few years, we'll find out how many people died at Bakhmut. (man, 30s, Dnipro city)*

Notably, every respondent commented on the overwhelming numbers of wounded soldiers and civilians in hospitals. Along with the man quoted above, a journalist in her 50s averred that the true scale of deaths and injuries was being closely guarded from the public.



**POPULATION:** 1,638,462 (gov't est 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Zaporizhzhia 710,052; Melitopol (occupied) 148,851 but fewer than 75,000 remain; Berdyansk (occupied) 106,311; Enerhodar (occupied) 52,237

## ZAPORIZHZHIA OBLAST

The frontline in Zaporizhzhia oblast saw a **spike in firefights over the reporting period**, with a record 224 strikes on 21 settlements on **20 Jan**. The following day, Russian authorities announced they had begun a **new offensive** in the region, as mid-sized towns like **Orikhiv** and **Hulyaipole** came **under fire**. Ukrainian authorities have subsequently **advised** locals to limit their movements. Despite the attacks, the line of contact has not moved significantly, and Ukrainian authorities claimed that the Russian army **suffered** heavy losses. Energy infrastructure continues to be targeted by Russian strikes, and two people **died** in **Kamyanske** on 29 Jan after triggering a landmine.

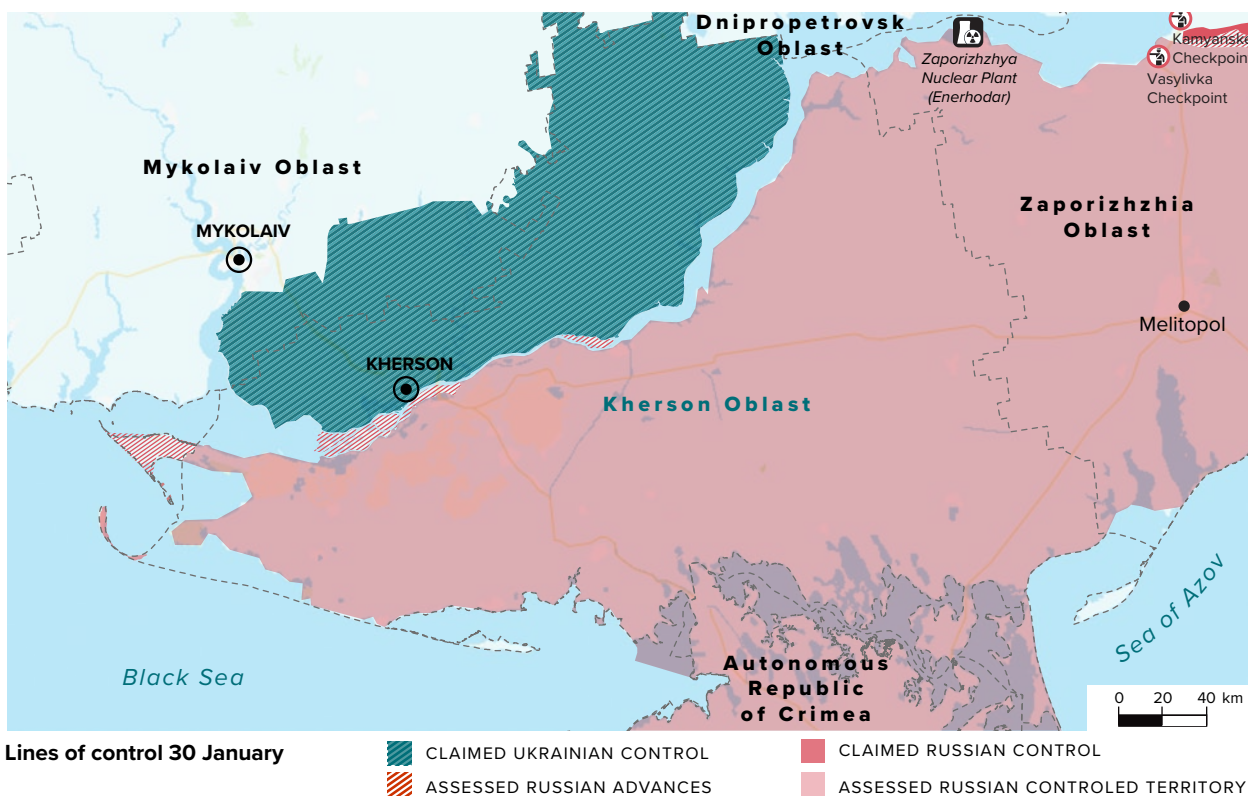
Zaporizhzhia oblast **governor Oleksandr Starukh was dismissed on 24 Jan in connection with a series of dramatic corruption allegations** that shook Ukraine last month. Local sources responded positively to the dismissal, with some even anticipating deputy head Zlata Nekrasova's resignation: "People took Starukh's resignation with hope, this somehow cheered them up. But everyone is waiting for news of a new appointment." A major grievance with the local government was the distribution of aid, particularly regarding support to people with damaged homes.

Multiple sources noted that IDPs in Zaporizhzhia continue to open businesses, especially small shops and cafes, further embedding them in their new communities and potentially decreasing the likelihood of returning home. However, respondents also noted that there are discrepancies regarding which IDPs have access to aid:

**The displaced people from Zaporizhzhia region receive assistance in district hubs, but there are no hubs for Donetsk and Luhansk people... this isn't right. And local residents, they also need more help, but there is practically nothing for them. (male, 20s, Zaporizhzhia)**

Travel between government-controlled and occupied parts of Zaporizhzhia oblast through the **Vasylivka-Kamyanske** checkpoint continues to be closed, with respondents expressing doubts that it will open again in light of the attempted Russian offensive. Efforts to integrate occupied Melitopol into Russia were stepped up during the reporting period, with **over 800** Russian police officers brought in, plans to **open** new prisons (Melitopol mayor Ivan Federov estimates that **700 civilians** are currently held prisoner), and preparations underway for **local elections** (as in other occupied areas). The region continues to show signs of resistance, including a 24 Jan car **bombing** in Berdyansk.





Lines of control 30 January

CLAIMED UKRAINIAN CONTROL  
ASSESSED RUSSIAN ADVANCES

CLAIMED RUSSIAN CONTROL  
ASSESSED RUSSIAN CONTROLLED TERRITORY

POPULATION: 1,001,598

MAIN CITIES: Kherson 279,131; Nova Kakhovka (occupied) 44,427

## KHERSON OBLAST

Artillery and rocket attacks continued along the Dnipro River, which divides Kherson's Russian-controlled left bank from the liberated right bank. Major reported security incidents on the right bank included a 25 Jan artillery strike that **killed** two civilians in **Beryslav**, a 26 Jan rocket attack that **killed** one employee at the **Kochubeivka** village council, and a series of strikes on 29 Jan that **killed** three and damaged an oblast hospital in Kherson city.

The recovery of right-bank Kherson continues in fits and starts, hampered by a volatile security situation and what residents say is **systemic mismanagement by local and oblast authorities**. On 24 Jan, oblast governor Yaroslav Yanushevych was dismissed together with his counterparts in Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Sumy following corruption **allegations**. Whether this will help to rehabilitate the reputation of local officials is unclear. In the words of one Kherson city man in his 40s, though:

**It's hard to imagine that views of the authorities could get any worse. But they're trying – they've got a friendly competition going for who can be the worst.**

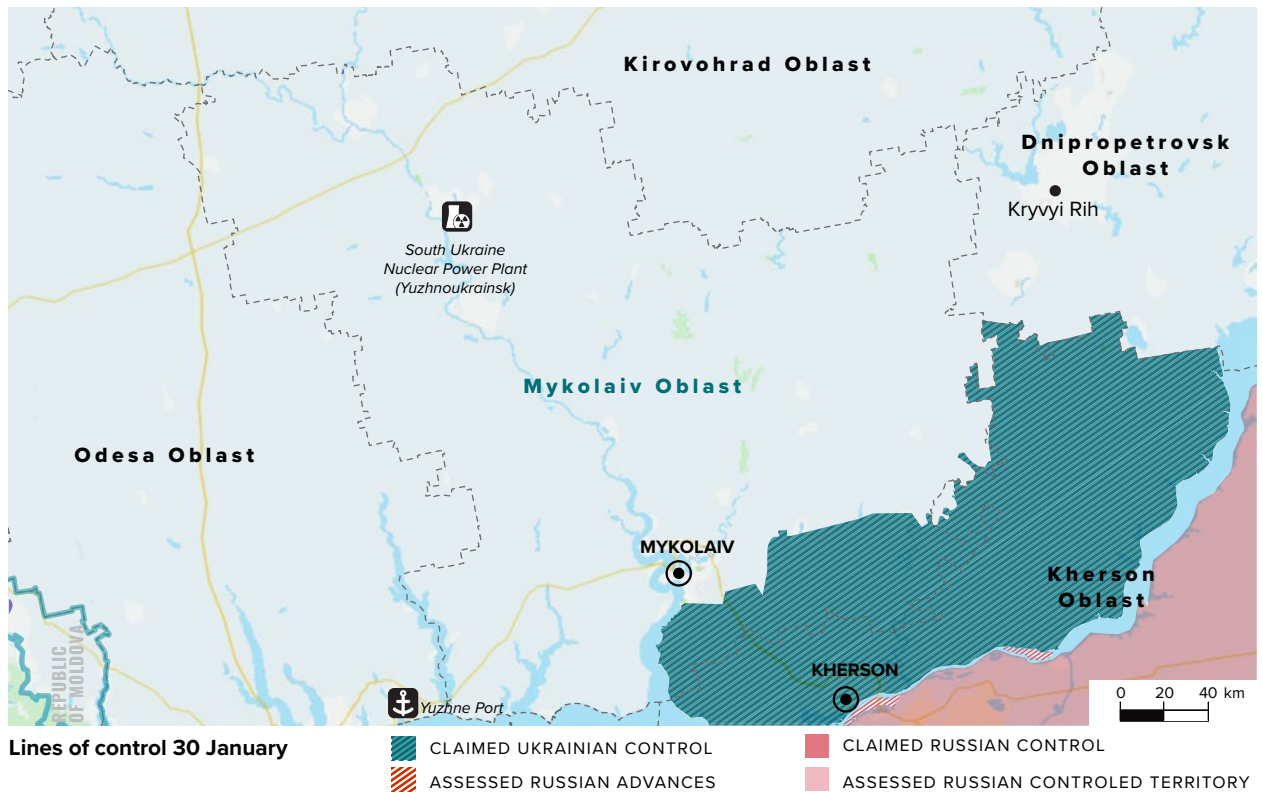
Availability of medical care was a sore point for respondents. On one hand, a woman in **Velyka Oleksandrivka** spoke positively of the free

consultations and medication provided by Doctors Without Borders in that hard-hit rural area. Yet in Kherson city, where demand for care is greater and standards may be higher, people speak of chaos. With the **outflow of doctors, frequency of grave injuries from incoming fire, and dearth of medical equipment**, medical staff are reportedly triaging quite ruthlessly. Per a man in his 40s who had struggled to get care for his ailing mother:

**No one views patients over 70 as people – I'm not even talking about those 80 and up. No one's interested. ... They don't want to admit people for inpatient care at that age at all.**

Respondents also complained about lack of access to basic medicines. One man, a market trader, was so disturbed by perceived price-gouging at pharmacies that he now saw some of the former occupiers' policies in a good light:

**When it comes to pharmacies I side with the Russian ghouls — they categorically and unambiguously closed down all the commercial pharmacies. That's the right thing to do! Right now they're just writing whatever price they feel like on the label. And people are still buying, because they need the treatment. (man, 30s, Kherson city — he was likely referring to the occupiers' policies of price controls for basic medicines, and of opening Russian government-affiliated pharmacies at medical institutions.)**



**POPULATION:** 1,091,4821 (gov't est 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Mykolaiv 470,011 (2022), est. 230,000 present as of 24 June; Pervomaisk 62,426

## MYKOLAIV OBLAST

Mykolaiv oblast continues to enjoy relative respite from the constant shelling it experienced prior to the Russian retreat from Kherson, though the region does see **occasional strikes (especially** in coastal **Ochakiv)**. Mines continue to pose a danger to residents; in **Liubomyrivka** village, a car **hit a mine** on 21 Jan, wounding three adults and one infant. Notwithstanding security threats, power outages, or persistent issues with drinking water, during the reporting period respondents noted a **wave of returnees and new IDPs to Mykolaiv city**, potentially driven by cheap rent and improving communal infrastructure (for example, streetlights were **turned on** for the first time since the start of the war). Residents say this gives rise to increased feelings of normalcy in a long-suffering city:

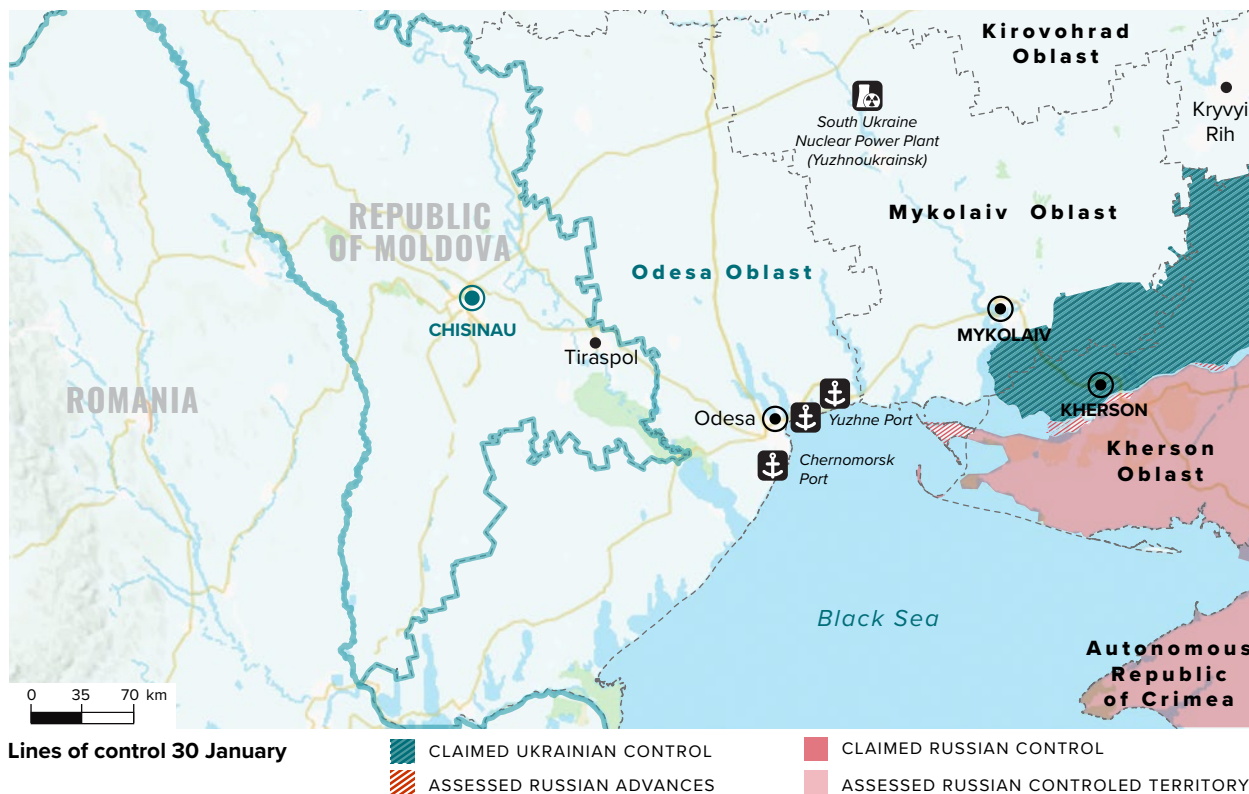
People have started coming back, our social circles have expanded, we've started talking to each other again. **We're meeting in cafes... returning to our old lives. Phone calls are more than just a short "how are you?"** We're starting to share more details of what life looks like now. (woman, 40s, Mykolaiv).

Nearly all respondents noted a sharp increase in the mobilization of men: "We see summonses everywhere, in public places, on the street." Many reported that conscription officers had started

**enlisting significantly older men, sometimes those with health conditions**, provoking frustration among locals.

Stores continue to be stocked, but price hikes on gas, food, and medicine make these essential commodities less accessible. Locals report **few affordable options for medical care**, with free options often requiring long lines or wait times. Multiple sources said that humanitarian aid has been greatly reduced in the oblast capital and that much of what remains is resold in stores and street markets. Rebuilding damaged homes continues to be a major need, with city officials prioritizing **support to condominiums and homeowners' associations**, which locals say **sometimes comes at the cost of supporting individual households to make necessary repairs**.

In spite of whispers of corruption in the Mykolaiv mayor's office, respondents were unusually **sanguine about their local authorities**, possibly in light of the improving living conditions in the city. President Volodymyr Zelensky **visited** the oblast capital with the Danish prime minister in late January, and spoke about the possibility of **opening Mykolaiv's ports to grain exports**, which would provide jobs and spur economic development.



**POPULATION:** 2,351,392 (2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Odesa 1,010,537; Izmail 69,932; Chernomorsk 57,983; Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyyi 47,727

## ODESA OBLAST

The key security incident of the reporting period was a 26 Jan **hit** on several unspecified components of the oblast's energy grid, which occurred in tandem with strikes throughout the country that morning. While no casualties were reported, the impact on day-to-day life was stark.

Oblast officials **announced** immediately after the strike that repairs would take "some time." According to local sources, parts of Odesa city spent the next four days without power. Businesses shut down, and electrical transport stopped running, keeping people from work and crucial errands. Odesa's energy shortages may pale in comparison to the wide-ranging struggles of more war-torn oblasts, but they still put the **long-term survival of small businesses at potential risk**. In the telling of a restaurant owner in Odesa city,

**It felt like we were starting to get back into the swing of things — we'd gotten used to the scheduled power outages and using the equipment [i.e. generators] to prepare pizza and the other dishes on our menu. But... due to the emergency shutoffs, we had to close down our facility and send all the service staff on vacation at our expense. (man, 50s, Odesa city)**

Local sources in Odesa city report a steady influx of IDPs, accompanied by a steady trickle of people leaving for the winter due to the unstable power supply. Other parts of the oblast also continue to see numerous comings and goings. For example, in **Dolynske**, IDPs are being steadily lured by low housing prices and effective aid provision. At the same time, residents are being conscripted in noticeable numbers, per a local teacher who said several colleagues had gone off to fight.

As in other research locations, respondents are preoccupied with the **busy pace of mobilization**, and with the firm **belief that the numbers of dead and wounded on the Donbas frontline are far higher than the government admits publicly**. One, a civil servant in Odesa city, noted that men in his line of work appear particularly likely to be conscripted. "I've already managed to bury five people I know," he added.



**POPULATION:** 2,598,961 (gov't est 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Kharkiv 1,421,125; Lozova 53,126

## KHARKIV OBLAST

Since mid-January, a series of Russian air attacks have been recorded in **Chuhuiv**, **Kupyansk**, **Izyum**, and **Kharkiv** districts. The daily incidents have resulted in severe damage to **civilian infrastructure**. Artillery strikes killed three people and injured six on **20** and **26 Jan**. On 29 Jan, a missile **hit** an apartment block in the center of Kharkiv, killing one civilian and injuring two. Landmine detonations on **21** and **27 Jan** in the Izyumskiy raion resulted in four casualties, pointing to the **critical need for mine clearance activities and explosive ordnance education**.

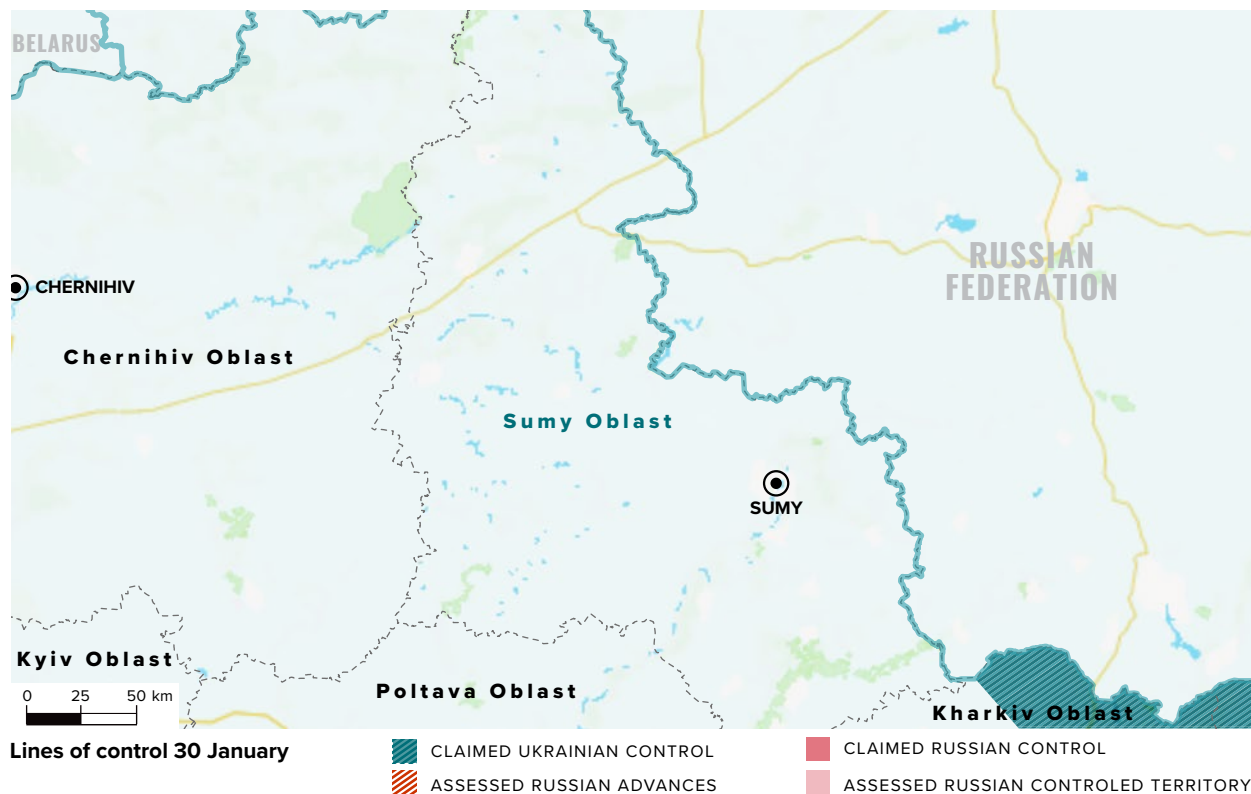
Despite the security situation, utility provision in the oblast and capital city is relatively stable. Short-term electricity and water outages occur immediately after the shelling of critical infrastructure, but respondents praised local authorities for addressing these promptly. For instance, a resident in her 20s noted: “Quite often, there is heating, water, and electricity in my apartment, which is, in my opinion, an indicator of the good work of local authorities,” adding, “local authorities strive to support business in the region.”

However, this positivity is not universal and Kharkiv interviewees stressed that people are polarized in their attitudes toward local authorities. As a retired man from **Vovchansk** put it:

Some respect and understand the decisions of the local administration, while others only notice cases of money laundering, corruption, and banditry. Everyone is confident in the central government in Kyiv, but opinions differ regarding the local administration.

Respondents identified the socio-economic situation in the region as their key concern. **All interviewees complained of high unemployment and the negative consequences of the relocation of key enterprises to other parts of the country.** Nevertheless, respondents continued to note some positive economic dynamics in Kharkiv city, where some enterprises and shops have **resumed** operations. **Given the early, perhaps premature, indications of economic recovery, Kharkiv city respondents expressed their intention to stay put unless the security situation deteriorates significantly.**

As in previous reporting periods, respondents spoke of a need for swifter housing reconstruction, noting that **renovation** is relatively prompt in Kharkiv city center while residents of other areas, (such as **Staryi Saltiv**, experience long waits.



**POPULATION:** 1,035,772 (gov't est. 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Sumy 256,474; Konotop 83,543; Shostka 71,966

## SUMY OBLAST

Sumy oblast border raions (**Bilopilskiyi**, **Pu-tyvylskiyi**, **Hluhivskiyi**, **Sumskiyi**, **Shostkynskiyi**, **Krasnopilskiyi** and **Velykopysarivskiyi**) continue to suffer from Russian attacks. An artillery strike on **23 Jan** killed a 19-year-old girl and injured her family members. A missile **damaged** a state-owned enterprise in Shostka during a series of strikes on five territorial hromadas on **31 Jan**.

Among the most frustrating developments respondents noted were **"daily funerals [of the Ukrainian military] throughout the region"** and the **apparent corruption of some local officials**. On 24 Jan, President Zelenskyy **dismissed** the oblast governor, after which the Security Service of Ukraine **searched** the office of his deputy and the home of the head of the oblast council. Some respondents welcomed the dismissal and regretted that the officials in question had "not been punished for theft."

**Local sources had a gloomy outlook on the economy**, which they identified as their primary concern. "Everything will be horrible," per a Sumy city man in his 50s, whose views were fairly representative. However, **respondents did note the emergence of new income-generating activities in the region**, including logistics, the sale of electrical

equipment, production of instant food for humanitarian kits, and work in humanitarian organizations' call centers.

Among the main impediments to economic recovery are frequent power outages. According to a middle-aged business owner: "The enterprise works according to the power cuts schedule. Production volume has declined, and some employees' contracts have been terminated. In addition, we're experiencing some difficulties with the market, as some of my customers are in the occupied areas."

Despite the pessimism, many respondents plan to stay put due to family ties, work commitments, or a desire to help.

Although humanitarian aid is being delivered to the region, some local sources have given up trying to access it after several unsuccessful attempts. A middle-aged woman complained that despite meeting the qualifications for aid, she has not received any to date, unlike others in similar circumstances. **Locals would benefit from greater clarity around the criteria for receiving aid, as perceived inequity may lead to grievances and social resentment.**



**POPULATION:** 959,315 (gov't est 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Chernihiv (282,747); Nizhyn 65,830

## CHERNIHIV OBLAST

As in previous reporting periods, the northern region of Chernihiv oblast (**Novhorod-Siverskyi** and **Koryukivskyi**) has been experiencing daily shelling. On 29 Jan mortars **struck** villages 11 times. As a result of continued attacks, power outages have become more frequent.

**Interviewees identified mobilization as a major concern.** According to one man from **Kolychivka**, "Every third man in the village has already been conscripted. The number of funerals has significantly increased." A respondent in his 30s from Chernihiv city added, "A new wave of mobilization is causing panic among my friends."

Respondents noted the sporadic reopening of businesses. However, they stated that they could "only afford the essentials" (man, 40s, Chernihiv city) and **did not anticipate a quick economic recovery in the region, owing to frequent blackouts and proximity to Russia and Belarus.**

An entrepreneur in his 40s added that much of this agricultural region has been **contaminated** with mines, and that "this year [2022], [only] 30 percent of fields were sown." The oblast's periodic, weather-related struggles with logistics and transportation could also undermine commerce: for example, rising **water** levels in the Desna and

Seim rivers temporarily suspended travel between Novgorod-Siverskyi and Baturynskyi districts during the reporting period. (On the plus side, the pontoon bridge across the Desna **re-opened** 23 Jan, easing travel to Chernihiv city – see **19 Jan Situation Report**.) At the same time, some are working to develop new marketable skills: "Young people have begun to study new professions online," per a Chernihiv city man in his 30s, "since courses are free."

**Most interviewees characterized local authorities' performance as satisfactory**, stating they help repair buildings, provide **generators** for shelters, and install **modular houses**. However, some respondents complained about corruption and unfair or inefficient aid distribution. As one stated, "**There have been many promises to restore homes; people have been waiting, but have never received help.**" In the village, many houses have been destroyed, but owners have only been given a few wooden boards. Is it possible to rebuild a house with a couple of boards?" Nevertheless, respondents do not intend to flee and voiced the need for financial assistance and psychological support to cope with grief, "endless stress" (woman, 50s, Chernihiv city), and "domestic violence" (man, 40s, Kolychivka).

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