

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

Bakhmut, Donetsk oblast - Kostiantyn Liberov















KEY THEMES

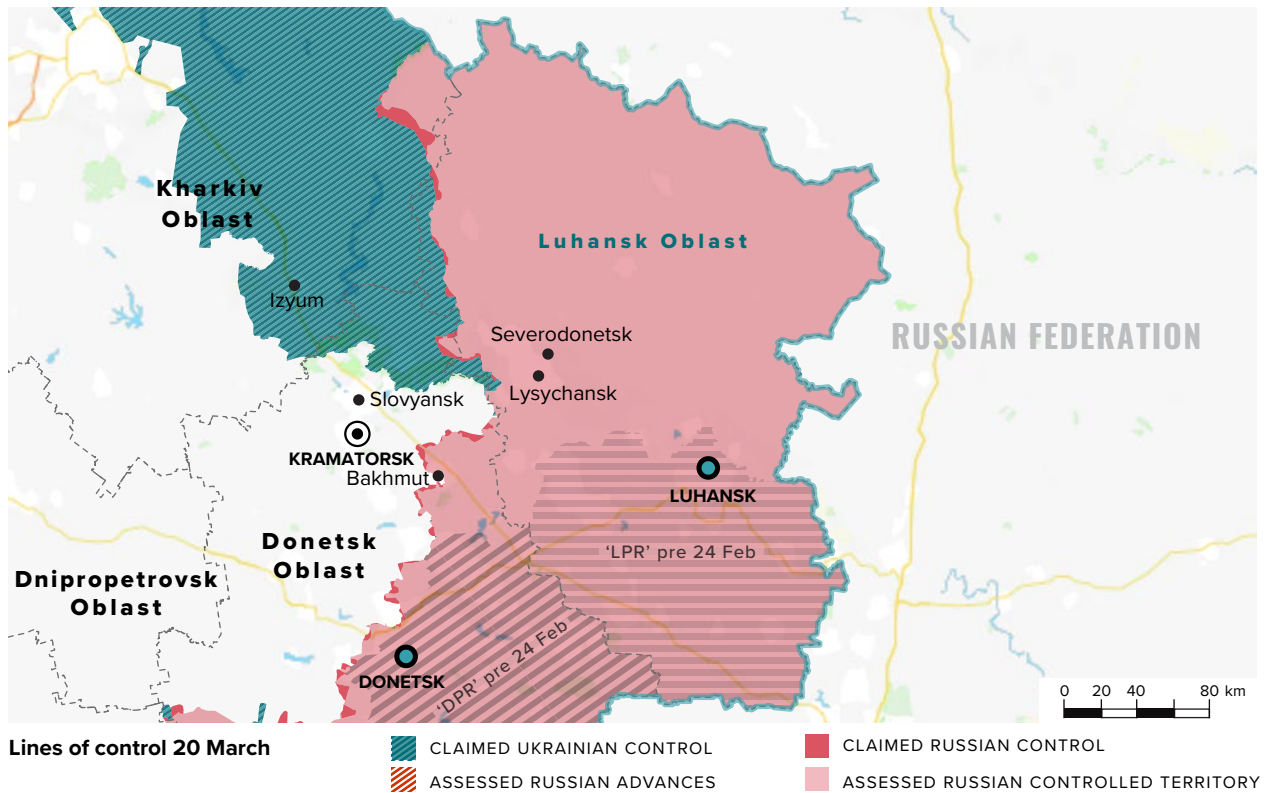
- › Throughout occupied areas, research participants expressed disillusionment with certain aspects of their territories' 'integration' into the Russian Federation. This is true for a range of respondents, including some who expressed strong anti-Ukrainian views, and some who, on the other hand, said they hoped for liberation. Key complaints included pressure to obtain Russian passports and the onerous bureaucracy that doing so entails, and the use of heavy-handed indoctrination tactics in schools.
- › With security conditions in the northeastern sections of Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts continuing to decline, further displacement is likely. Families escaping from Kharkiv oblast hotspots such as Kupyansk district and the Vovchansk area will in many cases be able to remain within their home oblast, as is often their preference. However, this option is becoming less viable for Donetsk oblast evacuees, as the front line inches closer to the relatively safe havens of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.
- › Throughout the government-controlled areas surveyed, public concerns related to socioeconomic conditions, equitable resource distribution, and fair treatment under the law loom large. This is especially true in cities like Zaporizhzhia and Mykolaiv, where the threat of incoming fire and power cuts has receded (albeit not vanished). Of particular concern are unemployment, provisions for displaced persons, perceptions of unfair mobilization practices, and frustration with the continued disrepair of damaged housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND AID ACTORS

- › To the extent that frustration with de facto authorities in occupied areas yields an opening for outreach to their populations, Kyiv and its supporters should strike a contrast with Russian propaganda tactics by providing actionable information and concrete support. Outreach should take the form of, inter alia, continued support to students and teachers working within the Ukrainian education curriculum while under occupation (see our forthcoming piece *Education in Front-line and Occupied Areas*), and information about how to safely leave occupied parts of Ukraine through the routes available.
- › As recommended in the previous **Situation Report**, stakeholders should support information campaigns to educate residents of highly insecure areas under Ukrainian control, including northeastern Kharkiv, front-line parts of Donetsk oblast, and sections of Kherson along the Dnipro River, about the financial and housing support available to them upon evacuation.

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)

Per Ukrainian authorities, **less than 5%** of Luhansk oblast remains under government control, with comparatively stable **battle lines** drawn around the settlements of **Kreminna** and **Svatove**, amid periodic Russian attempts to storm **Bilohorivka**. Key informants reported a substantial military presence in the newly-occupied settlements of **Starobilsk**, **Novoaidar**, **Novopskov**, and Rubizhne, as well as long-occupied areas such as **Antratsyt**:

I'm feeling more and more anxious around people in camouflage; even just looking at them makes me want to run away. There are so many of them, so many strangers not from around here, and it's as if they all smell of blood. (Woman, Antratsyt)

Per local sources, there is **no internet access** in Severodonetsk and Starobilsk; one respondent claimed that troops "do not allow" locals to access the internet. Respondents in areas occupied prior to 2022, such as **Voznesenivka** (Chervonopartizansk) and **Panchenkove**, reported increased police-led security checks, speculating these may be motivated by rumors that **Ukrainian reconnaissance units** have entered the occupied territories in preparation for a spring counterattack. Meanwhile, **in areas occupied in 2022, respondents reported an atmosphere of distrust** as neighbors denounce each other to local authorities,

who detain and torture those suspected of pro-Ukrainian views:

They searched my house for four hours. They turned everything inside out. Luckily, I'd managed to throw my phone into the well outside. My neighbors turned me in. Then, guys showed up in masks with weapons. They put me in handcuffs. [...] **My son is fighting for Ukraine. They found his uniform and took me to the detention center. I was there for 18 days. They tortured me ... knocked out three teeth, and broke two ribs.** (Man, northern Luhansk oblast)

Meanwhile, **the bureaucratic processes of 'integration' into the Russian Federation remain onerous.** For example, **community social media platforms** report that locals are being made to provide translations of documents from Ukrainian to Russian in order to receive passports, despite a Kremlin **decree** exempting residents of 'new subjects' from this requirement. While Russia plans to **raise the draft age** from 18–27 to 21–30, Luhansk authorities are making efforts to register those **born in 2006** for military service. This may, respondents said, be an effort to compensate for shortages of men suitable for conscription left in the oblast. Meanwhile, servicemen and the elderly claiming pensions from both Ukraine and the de facto authorities were cited by one respondent as the only thing keeping local economies afloat.



POPULATION: no official estimate

MAIN CITIES: **Donetsk** 901,645 (Ukrainian gov't est. 2022); **Mariupol** 425,681 (est. 2022); **Makiivka** (part of greater Donetsk city) 338,968 (est. 2022); **Horlivka** 239,828 (est. 2022); **Yenakieve** 76,673 (est. 2022)

OCCUPIED DONETSK OBLAST

De facto authorities **reported** nine civilian deaths from incoming fire between 9–21 March, including one child. The majority of reported deaths and injuries occurred in Donetsk city, although two residents of **Volnovakha** were also allegedly killed.

Donetsk city residents interviewed during the reporting period voiced consternation that Mariupol – which received a **visit** from Vladimir Putin on 19 March – is, in their view, consuming all the resources available to their de facto authorities. One described it as an up-and-coming place to do business, noting that an acquaintance was planning to open a fast-food chain there. These accounts contrast strongly with testimonies from Mariupol residents themselves, who continue to speak of neighbors eking out an existence on aid parcels and living in buildings that are unsafe for habitation. Resentment toward Mariupolites on the part of Donetsk residents could be linked to propaganda: pro-Kremlin Telegram channels, for example, have published a **series** of strikingly similar posts that paint Mariupol residents as ungrateful and antagonistic toward their Donetsk neighbors.

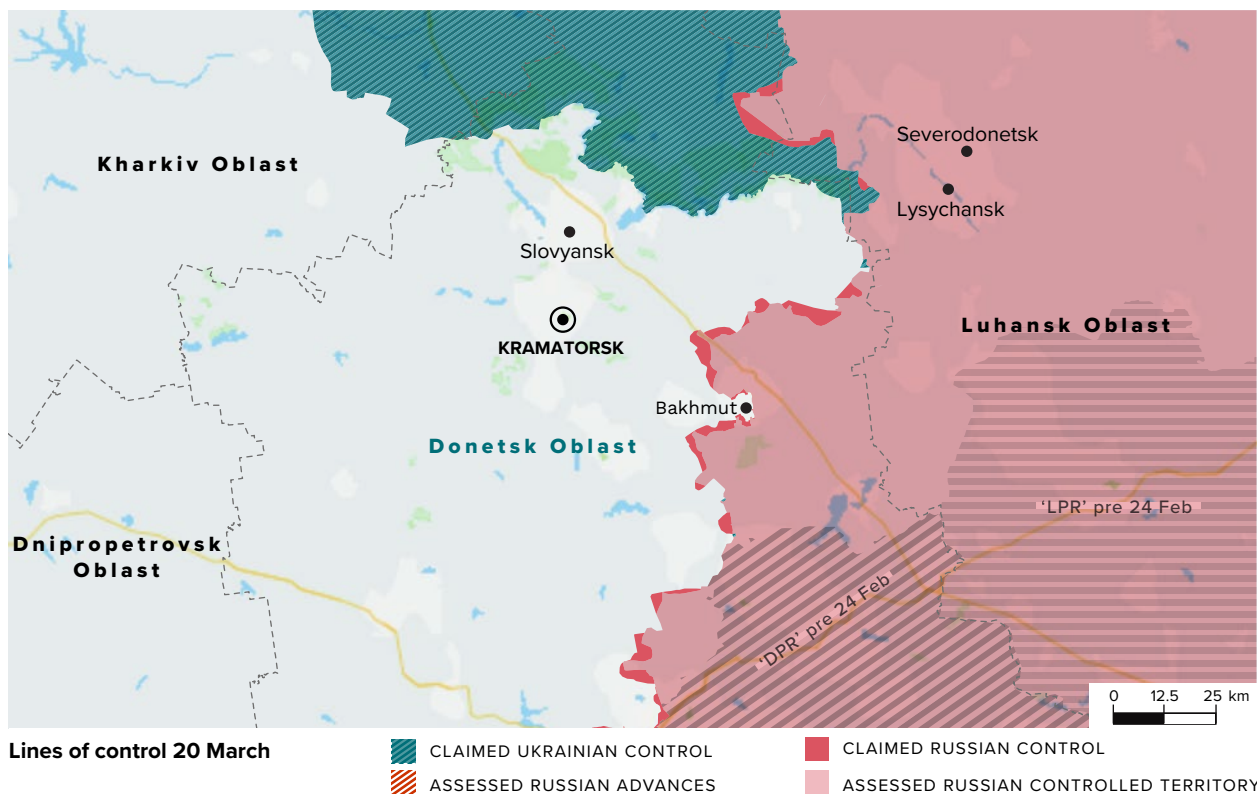
In other respects, the perspectives of respondents in Donetsk and Mariupol align – particularly on the view that the process of ‘integration’ into the Russian Federation is proving a bit tiresome.

In both cities, **locals characterized acquiring Russian passports as a grueling, yet unavoidable chore.** They also opined in equal measure that the school curriculum has been hijacked by an indoctrination agenda. A schoolteacher in the Donetsk city suburbs, who professed strong support for Russia, complained,

Instead of being an online teacher, I'm becoming an online pioneer troop leader. And that's not what I want to be doing.

She went on to speak of **deep disillusionment with the ‘integration’ process** in her social circle, driven by the persistent danger and poverty in which she and others live. Granted, she hinted that **this disillusionment is more likely to manifest in further de-politicization than in protest:**

Integration is proceeding in fits. [...] People are overwhelmed with disappointment. Because what's happening isn't what we wanted in 2014. Among themselves, people are saying that we were simply fooled, but you can't change anything now. [...] When you start thinking about everything that's happening, it's scary, so it's better not to think, but to live. To solve everyday, practical issues.



POPULATION: no official estimate; roughly 350,000 **remain**, per the 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)

Heavy fighting **continues** along the front line of Donetsk oblast, in particular in Bakhmut, **Avdiivka**, and **Vuhledar**. According to the **wartime administration**, 22 civilian lives were lost between 9–21 March. Key informants also reported increased strikes in settlements further from the front, for example, **damage to six multi-story buildings** in the center of Kramatorsk on 14 March.

As per previous reports, **respondents remain extremely satisfied with the provision of humanitarian aid**, giving it a perfect score on a ten-point scale. However, cash assistance initiatives seem to be making very tentative inroads. Only one elderly respondent, in Slovyansk, reported regularly receiving financial aid from an unspecified ‘international organization.’ Other respondents said they or their friends had registered on the online platform **E-dopomoga** in May 2022, but did not know of anyone who had yet been approved for direct cash assistance. Further, research participants claimed that little to nothing is being done to reconstruct damaged buildings, as local authorities and volunteers only clear away debris and provide makeshift fixes to partially damaged structures.

Evacuation from front-line areas continues, especially from the town of **Kostyantynivka**. **#VseBudeDobreUkraina** was noted as being particularly

helpful in facilitating evacuations. Nonetheless, all respondents in the oblast expressed a desire to stay. Indeed, for one, only those with “nothing to lose” could afford to leave: for her and others, evacuation would mean putting their property at risk of being occupied in their absence. Others felt constrained by their lack of a “financial cushion” and by sentimental or practical ties to their hometowns. Indeed, one social worker in her 40s reported regularly undertaking the **long commute to Dnipro** to visit her mother in cancer care, even renting a prohibitively expensive apartment in the city. Nonetheless, she still felt bound to stay in her hometown of Kramatorsk.

Respondents expressed a belief that Bakhmut could soon fall, and characterized this as a strategic and moral loss for Ukraine:

It would mean Russian forces might be able to move towards Kramatorsk. Apart from that, giving up Bakhmut would damage the spirit of the Ukrainian army, and, perhaps, it will lead to western partners losing faith in the ZSU [Ukrainian military]. (Woman, 40s, Kostyantynivka)

Despite fears of the battles ahead, research participants reported some positive trends, including **improved transport** within the region thanks to the efforts of the **Donetsk Railway**, alongside stable prices, consistent power access, and comparatively low levels of crime.



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

Dnipropetrovsk oblast came under heavy fire during the reporting period, with attacks targeting the **Nikopol**, **Synelnykivskyie**, **Kryvyi Rih**, and **Dnipro** districts. Nikopol district saw some of its heaviest bombardments of the war: on 9 March, rocket, artillery, and drone **attacks** killed one man and injured six, including two children, in Nikopol city; **artillery fire** on 10 March killed two people and wounded five in **Chervonohryhorivka** and **Marhanets**; **attacks** on 15 March killed two women and wounded five in Marhanets.

A Nikopol city realtor in her 40s described her nonchalant reaction to the attacks on 9 March:

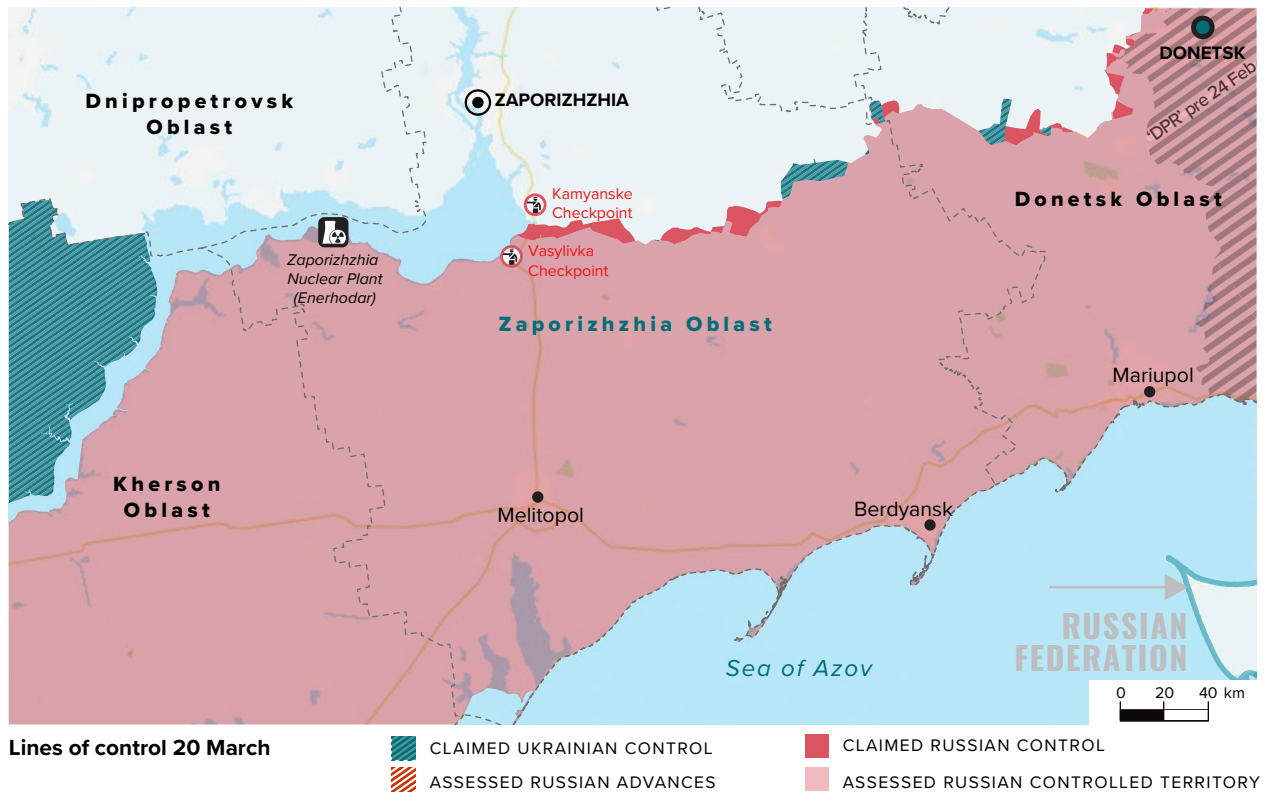
The walls were shaking. I woke up, went into the hallway, stood for a while, and then went back to sleep as if nothing had happened. I'm already so used to [shelling] that I almost forgot to mention [this night] among all the shelling recently.

The woman added that neither she nor her relatives plan to leave the region, despite the regularity of attacks. All respondents surveyed in the region shared this view, including internally displaced persons (IDPs). More than **393,000 IDPs** have settled in Dnipropetrovsk oblast since the start of the full-scale invasion, according to

Mykola Lukashuk, chair of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council. However, **multiple sources reported that some displaced individuals have returned to their homes in front-line regions** and even in occupied territories.

Displaced pensioners reported difficulty making ends meet amidst rising prices. A retired miner in his 50s displaced from **Zolote** in Luhansk oblast said that his pension previously covered his family's expenses, but it had become more difficult to afford everything with inflation. This view was shared by a pensioner in her 60s displaced from Kramatorsk in Donetsk oblast, who noted that her pension barely covered her groceries. **IDPs surveyed also spoke critically of humanitarian aid, citing poor coordination and ineffective aid-in-kind.** One woman reported that her daughter received products of little use like hand sanitizer, soap, and masks after standing in line for two days.

Multiple respondents also offered lackluster reviews of local authorities. A pensioner in his 70s said that the quality of the regional bureaucracy had declined, based on his experiences with pension authorities and the court system. The aforementioned realtor from Nikopol stated that residents rarely bother filing paperwork for partial reimbursement for repairs, citing examples of local authorities repairing individual homes for show on social media while leaving others to address damages at their own expense.



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

Zaporizhzhia oblast came under punishing attacks during the reporting period. On 9 March, **S-300 missile strikes resulted in the disconnection of the occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) from electricity for 11 hours**. No civilian casualties were reported between 9–21 March, despite daily shelling.

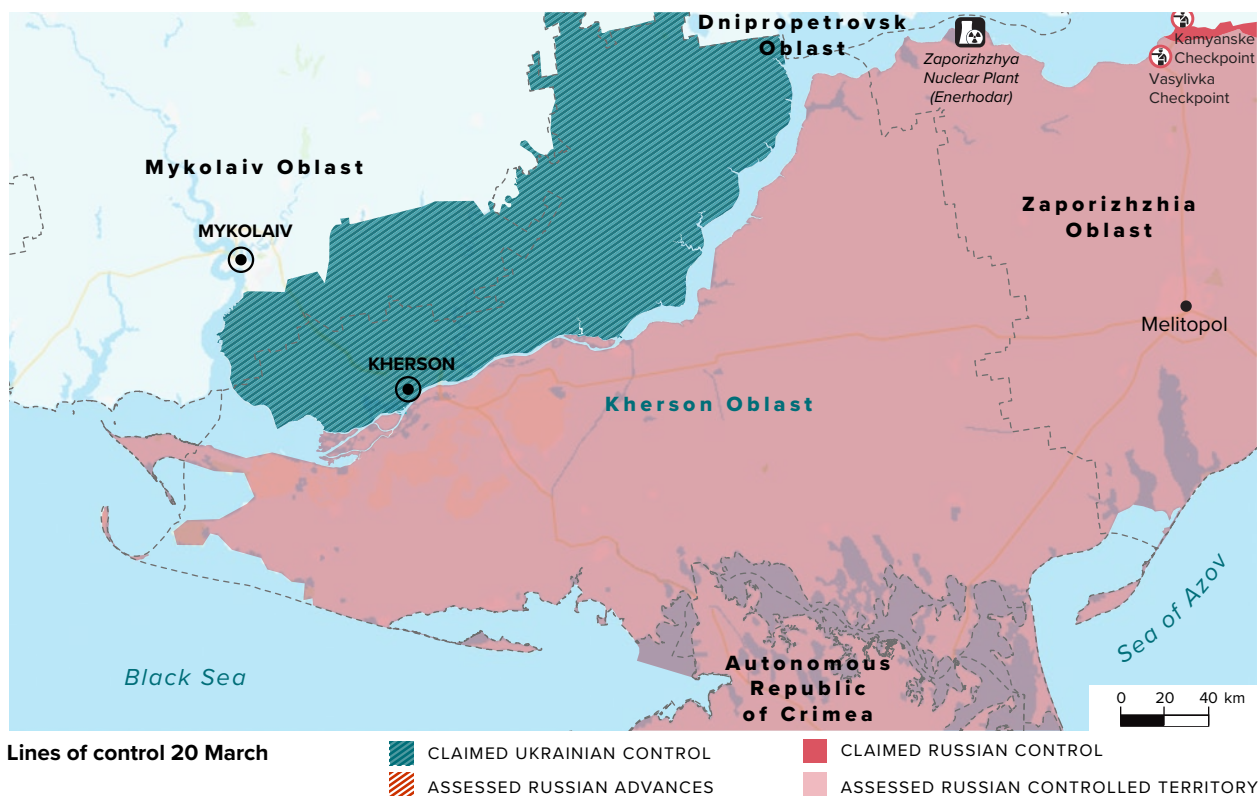
Respondents displaced to Zaporizhzhia city gave positive assessments of humanitarian aid, which contrasted with accounts from native Zaporizhzhians mentioned in past **Situation Reports**. A civil servant in her 30s from Melitopol reported that the **Right Here** distribution hub for displaced Melitopolians serves the largest number of IDPs, with many visiting daily to pick up food and other necessities. However, **all surveyed criticized local authorities** and characterized the city as unprepared for the flow of people from occupied territories, even as they noted that **street lights** and **trolleybus service** have returned.

Although travel between government-controlled and occupied Zaporizhzhia **remains closed**, sources said that many plan to leave occupied territory unless it is liberated during the anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive. A displaced school principal in his 40s from Melitopol said that many of his acquaintances planned to depart via Crimea, barring liberation in the spring.

In occupied Zaporizhzhia, a **Melitopol woman characterized life for pro-Ukrainian residents as “a horror that cannot be described in words.”** She spoke of an unyielding barrage of Russian news broadcasts that locals increasingly believe, emphasizing that Melitopol will be part of Russia forever. Indeed, de facto authorities are increasing efforts to ‘integrate’ Melitopol into Russia: locals face growing **pressure** to accept Russian passports, while the city was **declared the regional capital** on 3 March. Residents were described as split between those who wanted the “Russian world,” and those who had remained to care for elderly relatives. The woman explained how her fear that neighbors could report her to the de-facto authorities had impacted her psyche:

You have to limit your contacts. [...] There’s constant fear and economic hardship that is killing people morally, and unfortunately, physically. [The occupation regime is] killing us; there’s a genocide in every aspect of our city.

Sources described a deteriorating economic situation in occupied Zaporizhzhia as prices soar, goods remain in shortage, and the provision of utilities remains unstable. The aforementioned Melitopol woman noted that doctors are forced to use substandard medical supplies and are regularly pressured to treat Russian troops, whose presence in the city has grown.



POPULATION: 1,001,598

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

KHERSON OBLAST

Between 9–21 March, Russian attacks reportedly **killed** 12 civilians in Ukrainian-controlled areas, and caused extensive damage to public transport infrastructure, medical facilities, and homes. Across the Dnipro River, members of the occupation administration in Nova Kakhovka fell victim to apparent partisan attacks. The **Atesh** movement took credit for an **attempt** to assassinate the deputy head of the city's de facto administration on 13 March, while unidentified persons **killed** a local police commander with a car bomb on 17 March.

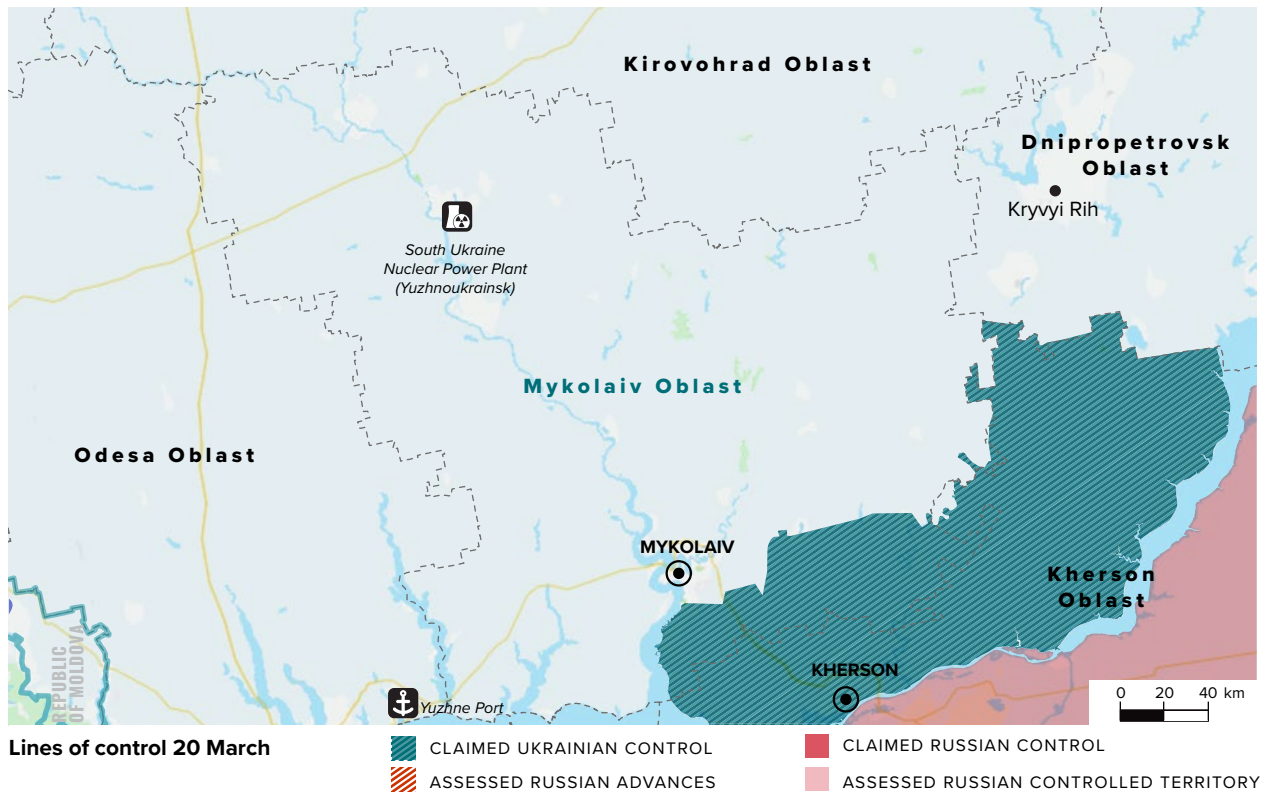
As in previous reporting periods, **respondents in Kherson city voiced exasperation with local authorities, a feeling they suggested was compounded by increasing despair at the security situation.** They expressed particular dissatisfaction with the medical system, which a disabled respondent described as “functioning only nominally,” and with the pace of repairs to housing. Another admitted that when it came to civilian evacuations, “they are doing something, after all.” However, she continued:

During the occupation, if people asked those monsters for something, there was a reaction — and a very quick one! But now it's impossible to even get an appointment with our [officials].

[...] I hope you aren't lying to me about this interview being anonymous, because I'm certain I could lose my job. (Woman, Kherson city)

As in the previous reporting period, respondents in Kherson city said that incoming fire often made basic errands impossible. However, **respondents in the quieter, southern portion of the occupied areas characterized occasional Ukrainian strikes as an unpleasant inconvenience — or as a morale booster, depending on their political leanings.** Interviewees characterized the public there as divided between those desperately waiting for liberation, and those who have accepted the occupation either reluctantly or enthusiastically. One young man spoke disparagingly of Russian state symbols and repressive tactics, but also called for compromise between the warring sides:

[The occupiers] don't give out aid — here it's different. Either you get a passport with a chicken on it [a reference to the double-headed eagle on the Russian passport], or you sit there with no money. I'm leeching off my granny at the moment; I've become her personal slave in the garden and greenhouses. [...] Granny gets a Russian pension ... I don't know if we'd be able to eat properly if not for those 10,000 roobs [rubles]. [...] If the Ukrainians stopped whacking us, then everything would be super. [...] They all need to just negotiate about everything already and start rebuilding everything they've smashed up.



POPULATION: 1,091,821 (gov't est. **2022**)

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

MYKOLAIV OBLAST

So many people are returning from captivity with ... forms of bodily abuse. Of course, we're thankful that they're alive. But at what price? Their trauma and anger will spread to the local population. (Man, 40s, Mykolaiv)

The areas surrounding Ochakiv and Kutsurub remain the most frequent targets of strikes in Mykolaiv oblast. Despite attacks in major population centers such as Mykolaiv city remaining rare, several respondents expressed trepidation at the possibility of the west losing interest in arming Ukraine, and of Russia gaining the upper hand.

Respondents reported significant social tensions with frequent verbal altercations between strangers, street fights, and domestic violence. Public transport and lines for humanitarian aid were characterized as particularly volatile spaces, with the latter also being home to "linguistic provocateurs" who start altercations on the basis of language. In terms of threats to social cohesion on a national scale, **several respondents described the conduct of mobilization as "unfair,"** arguing that men in Mykolaiv were being conscripted more actively than elsewhere.

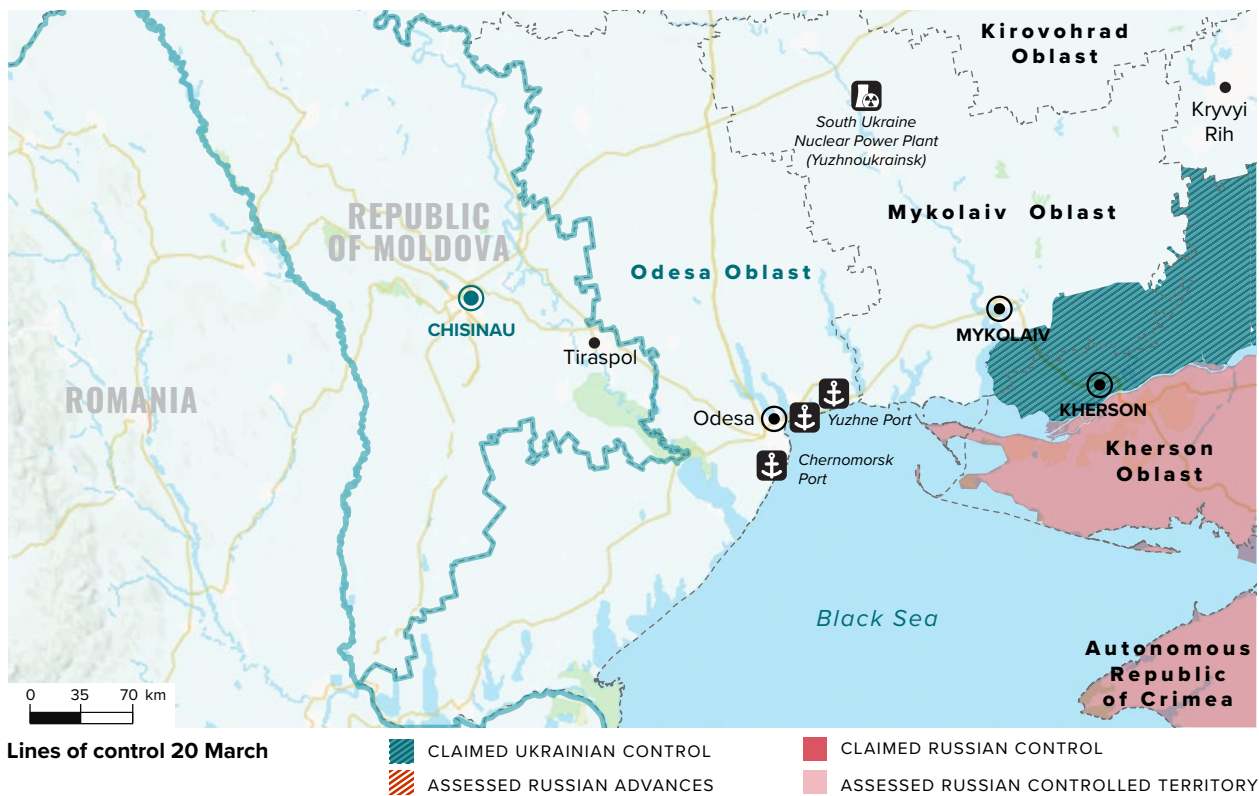
In some cities, like ours, they're digging up our sick men, and in others they don't even touch the young and healthy. (Woman, 60s, Mykolaiv)

Respondents also worried about the return of traumatized ex-prisoners of war:

Research participants across Mykolaiv oblast continue to report stable access to electricity, internet, and heating. Key informants stated that heating providers responded leniently to those unable to make payments; local authorities estimate that locals are currently **indebted** for heating to the tune of over 365,000 hryvnias (approximately 10 million USD). **Substandard water supply and access to medical care remain sore points.** In particular, respondents complained of a lack of doctors and ambulances and the unavailability of on-demand tests at private medical clinics.

A general sense of distrust colored respondents' views of the local authorities. Corruption was perceived as widespread and only perfunctorily addressed. Per one elderly female respondent, the local authorities used Mykolaiv residents' "unbreakable" spirit as an excuse for failing to address practical issues.

Respondents seem content, however, with authorities' concerted efforts to bring suspected collaborators to justice. Indeed, according to regional military administration head Vitalii Kim, Mykolaiv region is a leader in dealing with **cases of treason** and collaboration.



POPULATION: 2,351,392 (2022)

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

ODESA OBLAST

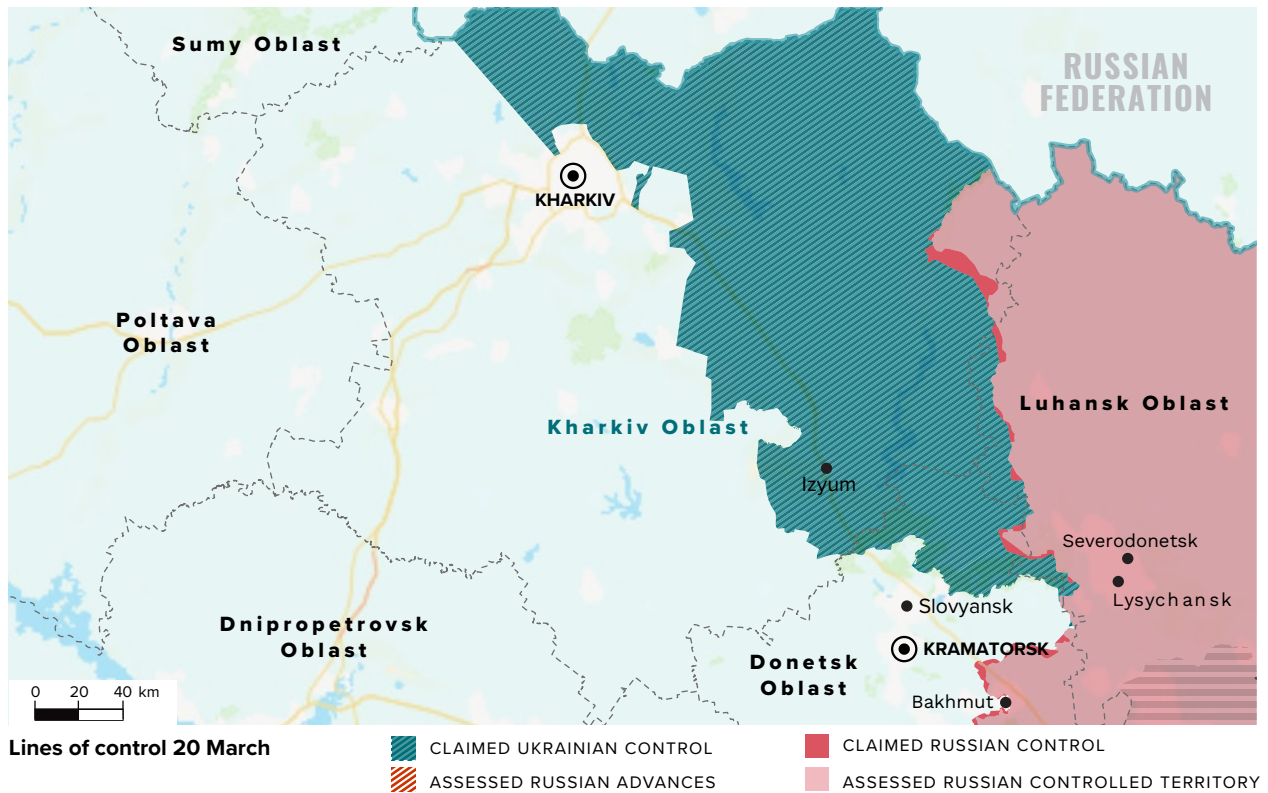
Almost a month of relative calm came to an end on 9 March when Odesa oblast was **shelled overnight**, part of an 81-missile barrage launched by Russia across the country. No casualties were reported, but electricity was **turned off overnight** as a preventive measure. A research participant characterized the attack as the worst event of the reporting period in the region.

Political upheaval continued with President Zelenskyy's dismissal of Odesa Regional Administration (ODA) chairman Maksym Marchenko on 15 March. The move was made in conjunction with the removal of ODA heads in Luhansk and Khmelnytskyi and marks the **second time** the region's ODA chairman has been removed since the start of the full-scale invasion. While no official explanation was provided for the move, Anatolii Boyko of the Odesa branch of the Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU) **speculated** that it was tied to the 6 March **arrest** of Odesa ODA deputy chairman **Ihor Tkachuk** on rumors of corruption and the 5 Jan **arrest** of former Odesa ODA deputy chairman Oleh Muratov on bribery charges. Local sources offered limited insight about local authorities in interviews that took place prior to the announcement of Marchenko's removal from his post.

Amid the 18 March announcement that the Black Sea Grain Initiative would be **extended** for at least 60 days, **respondents expressed concern about the region's economic prospects.** Research participants spoke of tightening budgets as savings run low and prices continue to rise. A man in his 50s from **Podilsk** said that a dire lack of jobs in small cities has led to out-migration:

There are very few vacancies, there's practically nowhere to work. People are getting poorer every day and the situation is already critical, especially in small towns. In our surrounding settlements, everything is closed.

Still, as Odesa continued to see a steady inflow of IDPs, new arrivals expressed optimism about the local economy. A logistician in his 50s recently displaced from Kharkiv oblast to Odesa noted that he hoped to find work at one of the port city's many logistics firms. He offered a positive assessment of humanitarian aid, a view shared by most local respondents. Local sources also spoke of ongoing mobilization efforts, and a pensioner in her 60s noted a large number of injured soldiers in hospitals. The aforementioned man from Podilsk added, "You basically don't see any men on the streets, everyone is probably waiting out [conscription] at home."



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

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

KHARKIV OBLAST

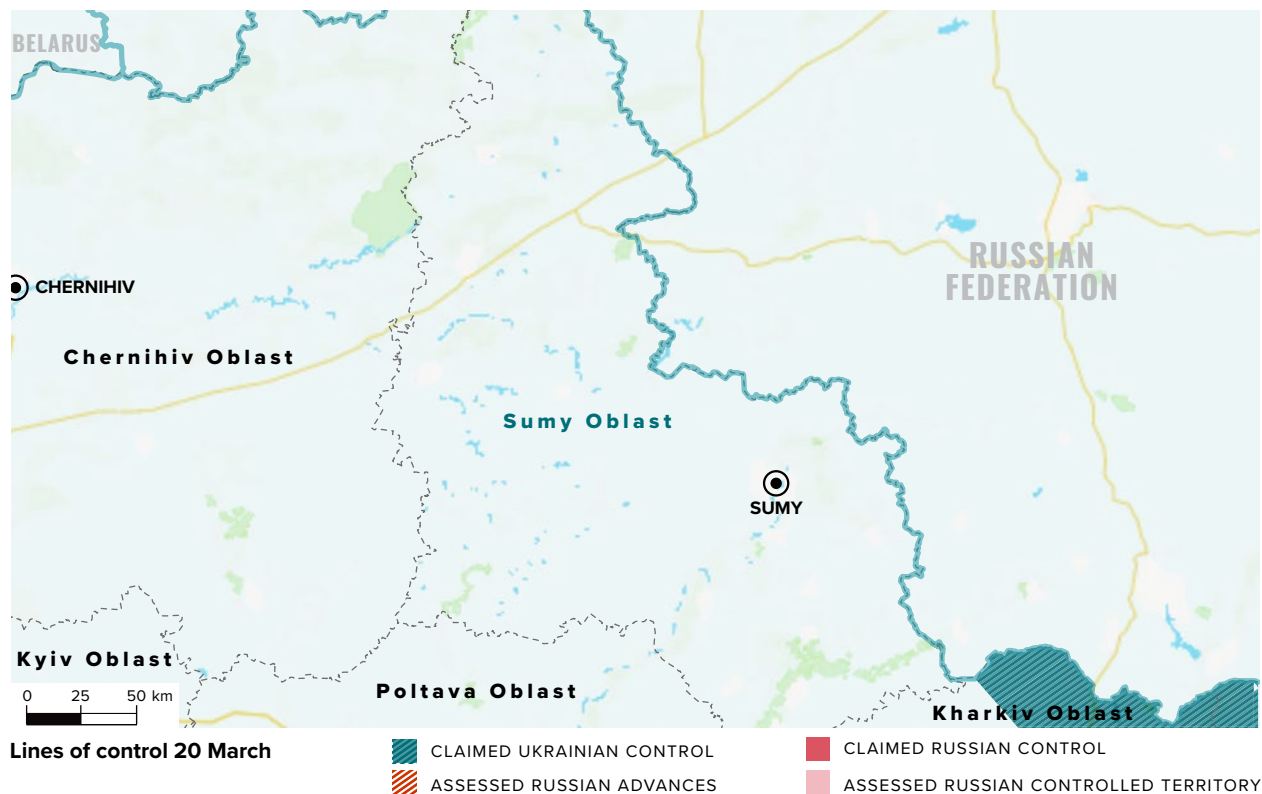
The security situation in Kharkiv oblast deteriorated slightly during the reporting period. In the oblast's northeast, Russian forces **appeared** to advance by several kilometers through rural areas south of **Dvorichna** between 11–14 March. Occupying forces may now be well under 10 km from the outskirts of the town of **Kupyansk**, per Ukrainian **open sources**, as **efforts to evacuate civilians from Kupyansk hromada continue**. Various settlements along the Russian lines of attack in Kupyansk district came under **regular fire**, including Dvorichna, **Velykyi Burluk**, **Hryanykivka**, and **Kolodyazne**, where a civilian was **killed** on 14 March. Border **settlements** of Kharkiv district were also hit, as was **Vovchansk**, where a **strike** that appeared to target a fire station took the life of a civilian on 14 March. On 15 March, oblast authorities reported that an educational facility in Kharkiv city was **damaged** by an S-300 strike.

Respondents in Kharkiv city voiced a range of outlooks concerning the impact of the security situation on the public mood — from optimism that the city would continue to rebound from the dark, dangerous winter as the weather warmed, to fear that the 15 March attack heralded the return of the era of regular strikes and power outages. In Lozova, meanwhile, a woman in her 20s expressed

trepidation over the escalation in the northeast of the oblast: “There are rumors that the Russians might go for Kupyansk again, and that’s worrying.”

On the plus side, oblast governor Oleh Synyehubov said in an 18 March media **appearance** that “absolutely all children” have been evacuated from areas near “the very frontline.” Zhytomyr city, he reported, is **ready** to host 500 families with children from the Kupyansk area free of charge, although he admitted that **many IDPs prefer to stay within the oblast**, necessitating the preparation of free “temporary accommodations” in Kharkiv city.

In the same interview, Synyehubov addressed the upcoming sowing season, claiming that 20 percent more land in the oblast would be cultivated than last year. 250,000 hectares of mine-contaminated land could realistically be cleared in the near future, he added, although he did not specify a timeline. It should be noted that Kharkiv did not make the list of **priority areas** for demining established by a national commission on 20 March, nor did neighboring Sumy and Chernihiv — other oblasts where agricultural land is heavily contaminated. (The areas on the list are Mykolaiv and Cherkasy.)



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

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

SUMY OBLAST

Large population centers in Sumy oblast are largely spared from strikes, yet the rural areas surrounding border villages such as Khotin, Bilopil-ly, Shalyhyne, and Serednya-Buda continue to be attacked on an **almost daily basis**.

Respondents in both rural and urban areas reported stable access to basic services, such as water, electricity, heating, and medicine. Indeed, local authorities regularly publish announcements regarding medical access, such as **mobile medical units**, **free rehabilitation assistance**, and **electronic prescriptions**. Frequent traffic accidents are reported by local media, often blamed on **poor street lighting**. Nonetheless, respondents reported that the crime situation in the oblast remained unremarkable “thanks to God,” claiming that **violent incidents tended to be the result of mental health crises**.

As per previous reports, **respondents continue to be dissatisfied with the provision of humanitarian aid**, categorizing it as a five on a ten-point scale. Some respondents from border villages reported not having received aid “since almost the start of the war.” A man with a serious heart condition from Bilopil-ly claimed he had not qualified to receive heating firewood in the winter despite

being unable to physically cut and prepare it himself. Respondents in the border regions reported a perception that other hromadas had better aid provision. Dissatisfaction was also expressed by a member of the Territorial Defense Forces who claimed distribution of supplies was determined not by need, but by whether commanders “cared” enough:

There are guys who are still in their own clothes. They can't get the right size for them, even though we've asked many times for their uniforms to be sewed, to no avail. We even asked volunteers, but got no reply. But the neighboring battalion were given shoes from abroad by volunteers. (Man, 50s, Baranivka)

Perceptions of unfair aid distribution could even lead to political consequences:

It turned out some boxes of humanitarian aid had been sitting in our boss's clubhouse. They were discovered totally by accident. In order to avoid going to prison, he signed up to serve in the military. You know how things are in the village, people like to take their swipes. (Man, 60s, Harbuzivka)



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

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

CHERNIHIV OBLAST

Attacks on Chernihiv oblast subsided during the reporting period, although the region was **targeted** during the Russian missile barrage launched on 9 March. Ukrainian defense forces **shot down** a cruise missile over the **Prylutskyi district**, with no casualties or damages reported by authorities.

A growing number of returnees was reported alongside what sources characterized as stable and improving utility provision; on 28 Feb, street lights in Chernihiv city were **turned on** for the first time since attacks on energy infrastructure commenced in October. Respondents also reported an influx of IDPs from other front-line regions to Chernihiv oblast, including from Donetsk, Kherson, and Kharkiv oblasts. The Chernihiv Regional Administration estimated that the region's population had reached **up to 95%** of its pre-24 Feb 2022 numbers, based on data collected from mobile telephone operators.

Local sources offered mixed assessments of reconstruction efforts across the region, which was heavily damaged during the opening months of the full-scale invasion. A teacher in her 20s stated that "what can be rebuilt has been rebuilt," noting that winterization of damaged residential units was prioritized while the **damaged** Chernihiv Stadium

remained untouched. **Multiple respondents described the housing market as dead**, and a sales associate in her 30s noted that she hadn't seen any new construction in Chernihiv city. A pensioner in his 60s added that finding an apartment is an "absolute nightmare." According to a Feb 2023 **report** by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the condition of housing has a strong effect on whether displaced Ukrainians hope to move back to their places of origin, explaining in part why many hesitate to return even to areas like Chernihiv city that no longer experience active fighting and were retaken months ago.

Respondents observed a renewed vigor to mobilization efforts in the region; the aforementioned pensioner stated that it is "basically impossible to leave the city without receiving a conscription notice" and that his neighbor "leaves for work earlier and tries to avoid stopping anywhere during the evening." A saleswoman in her 50s noted the rising number of injured men and military funerals in the region. **Mobilization has created labor shortages**, according to local sources, especially prevalent at factories and farms. Even so, respondents had mixed feelings about the region's economic prospects; while one research participant spoke jubilantly about new small business openings like stores and coffee shops, another expressed pessimism and said growth was limited to the service sector.

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