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PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1. Political processes and the situation in the conflict zone

- Aggrieved parties in eastern Ukraine **speak out about possible peacekeeping mission for Donbass** (*text in Russian*)
- September 11, 2017 - **Vladimir Putin**, president of Russia, during a phone conversation with Angela Merkel **announced his readiness to supplement the proposal for a UN mission in the Donbass** to protect OSCE observers not only on the line of delineation, but also in other places where inspections are conducted (*text in Russian*)
- September 20, 2017 - **Petro Poroshenko made a speech at the UN General Assembly**. He stressed that it is necessary to introduce a group of peacekeepers to Donbass, among which there should be no representatives from the Russian Federation. He also declared the importance of international support (*text in Russian*)
- September 21, 2017 – A **meeting between Petro Poroshenko and Donald Trump** took place. The presidents discussed the introduction of a UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass. They agreed that its main goal is de-occupation, restoration of sovereignty and peace for Ukraine (*text in Russian*)
- September 29, 2017 - "**First Steps in Establishing Peace. International Experience** ": round table organized by the Ministry for Temporary Occupied Territories and IDPs. The issue of civil society participation in this process was also discussed (*text in Russian*)
- October 18, 2017 - the **Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group, Martin Sajdik**, **made a statement on the increase in the number of ceasefire violations** up until the end of October. The text of the statement is available in **Russian** and **English** (*text in Russian and English*)

- October 27, 2017 - an **escalation of the situation in Donbass is inevitable** - the first deputy chairman of the OSCE SMM (*text in Russian*)
- November 13-19, 2017 - The level of violence in Eastern Ukraine increased - **more than 9,000 violations of the ceasefire** occurred within one week, according to the OSCE SMM (*text in English*)
- November 21, 2017 - **a military coup started in the so-called "LNR"**. Armed people without identification signs blocked the streets near government buildings and law enforcement agencies. Igor Plotnitsky fled to Russia, **Igor Cornet proclaimed himself the "head of the LNR"** (*text in Russian*)
- November 21, 2017 - **The Kremlin took the side of the head of the "Ministry of foreign affairs"** in his conflict with Plotnitsky (*text in Russian*)
- December 7, 2017 - for the first time in three years, a **meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine and Russia took place** in Vienna (*text in Russian*)
- December 11-17, 2017 - **the OSCE SMM recorded about 16,000 violations of the ceasefire** - one third more than the previous week, therefore, the head of the OSCE SMM calls for restraint (*text in Russian*)
- December 18, 2017 – Novolugansk, the Ukrainian settlement near the line of disengagement, **was fired at from a "Grad" by the "DNR"**. Due to the consequences, this is comparable to the shooting at the beginning of 2017 - as a result, 8 people were injured, dozens of houses, a school, and a kindergarten were destroyed, damaged or burnt (*text in Russian*)
- December 19, 2017 - **Russia has suspended the work of Russian representatives** in the *Joint Center for the Control and Coordination of issues related to the ceasefire regime (JCCC)* in Donbass. The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regards this as a provocation** aimed at undermining the **Minsk agreements** (*text in Russian*)
- December 26, 2017 - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation announced that they **hope for a promotion of the UN Mission in Donbass** in 2018 (*text in Russian*)
- December 27, 2017 – Oleksandr Zakharchenko signed the decree to **pardon Ukrainian soldiers for the exchange of prisoners** (*text in Russian*)
- December 29, 2017 - the **SBU has classified the list of persons transferred to the ORDLO** (*text in Russian*)
- **Ukrainian and Russian media on the process of the largest exchange of prisoners** in the history of the military conflict in eastern Ukraine (*text in Russian*)

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

- September 9, 2017 - **the "Festival of Opinions" took place in Severodonetsk**. It was organized by the "Vostok-SOS" charitable foundation together with UNICEF Ukraine and the **"86: Afterwords/Severodonetsk" Festival of Cinematography and Urbanism**. The participants of the festival participated in 24 discussions on the safety of people in the ATO zone, the ways of supporting universities moved from the occupied territories to other regions of Ukraine, the work of the media as well as the experience of providing assistance to forced migrants and similar topics in other countries (*text in Russian*)
- September 14, 2017 – **an international conference on social entrepreneurship as a tool for overcoming the consequences of the war** was held in the Dnipro city for the first time in Ukraine. Experts from 6 countries expressed their readiness to help their Ukrainian colleagues. An open informational platform was created as a result of the conference (*text in Russian*)
- September 21, 2017 - **The "common kitchens" public events were held in St. Petersburg and Voronezh to celebrate the International Day of Peace**. In these events, people from Ukraine and Russia took part by sharing their thoughts on current events whilst drinking tea (*text in Russian*)
- The same **"common kitchen"** event took place in Kyiv to discuss the situation of those who have moved from the occupied territories (*text in Russian*)
- September 24, 2017 - St. Petersburg hosted **an anti-war march**, attended by about 200 people (*text in Russian*)
- October 1, 2017 - the art-group **"Rodina" ("Homeland") held "No Violence March" artistic anti-war action in St. Petersburg, Russia** (*text in Russian*)
- October 24-26, 2017 – as part of the DRA project "Dialogue for mutual understanding and rule of law: European NGOs together to overcome the Donbass conflict" **representatives from civil societies in Ukraine, Russia and Germany had a trip to the conflict regions**. The participants of the group met up with the representatives of NGOs and initiatives from the Luhansk and Donetsk regions (*text in Russian*)
- October 26, 2017 - Iryna Gerashchenko, **the first deputy of head of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, had a meeting with** representatives from a number of NGOs from the CivilMPlus initiative group in Kyiv. A wide range of issues regarding the creation of the European civic platform were discussed, with a focus on pushing for peace in the conflict in Donbass (*text in Ukrainian*)
- November 22, 2017 - an international conference **"Ukraine: A Forgotten Humanitarian Crisis in Europe"** was held in Berlin, organized as part of the work of the consortium of international organizations ACCESS (*text in English*)
- December 4, 2017 - the International civil platform **CivilM+ for the peaceful overcoming of the conflict in eastern Ukraine** was created in Vienna (*text in Russian and English*)
- December 6, 2017 - the participants of the CivilM+ platform held a session **"Strengthening the influence of civil society in the conflict in**

Donbass" within the framework of the OSCE civil society parallel conference before the OSCE Council of Ministers took place (*text in English*)

- **The Ukraine NGO Forum**, dedicated to strengthening the capacity of NGOs that work with the consequences of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, **created a map of organizations dealing with questions surrounding the dialogue** (*text in Ukrainian*)
- A **five-day training for teenagers from Donbass took place in the Chernigov Human Rights House** as the part of the project "Against All Forms of Xenophobia and For Achievement of Equality, Including Equality of Minority Representatives". They will explore forum theater and other methods to discuss xenophobia and diversity. After the training they will be able to organize such events at home (*text in Russian*)
- **The story of political prisoner Denis Bakholdin**. A Russian citizen, who took part in anti-war civil actions and who moved to Ukraine, was detained in Russia on charges of belonging to the "Right Sector" political party. Denis Bakholdin needs international support (*text in Russian*)
- Oleg Sentsov, Ukrainian film director, was sentenced to 20 years in Russia due to his anti-war and anti-occupation activism. As another level of pressure put on him, he was sent to the prison facility in Yamal peninsula in September, 2017. **Here is the letter Oleg sent from the transit prison in Tyumen city, and the information about the solidarity campaign for him** (*text in Russian*)
- The Ukrainian-German peacebuilding project **"Strengthening civil society for the transformation of memory culture - non-violent ways to resolve the brutal past of Donbass"** has started. More details from the participants (*text in Ukrainian*)
- **"Letters of Peace" for Ukrainians and Russians** - Varvara Darevskaya, civil activist from Russia, visited the conflict zone in the spring and summer of 2014, where she collected and sent letters and postcards from both acquaintances and strangers. Being the **"peace postwoman", she delivers the letters to places where no official mail works** (*text in Russian*)
- Texts of letters and information about Varvara's trips can be found **on her Facebook page** (*text in Russian*)

3. Legal initiatives and analytics on war conflict

- **Analysis of the Donbass Reintegration Bill** (adopted on the first reading on October 6, 2017). The bill assumes the recognition of the Russian Federation as an aggressor. Analysis by "Ukrainska Pravda" (*text in Russian*), "Vostok-SOS" charitable foundation (*text in Russian*), "Euromaidan Press" (*text in English*)
- The **report "Strengthening the role of civil society in Donbass"** was

published after the strategic seminar "Involvement of Civil Society in the Conflict Resolution Process in Donbass". The seminar was organized by the DRA e.v. in cooperation with "Civil Solidarity" Platform (CSP). It is available in **English** and **Russian**. The report was **presented** during the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (*text in English*)

- Social payments for IDPs, **analysis of changes** (*text in Russian*)
- **Review of human rights violations** in some parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, September 2017 (*text in Russian*)
- The **"Human rights violations in the south-eastern part of Ukraine"** newsletter №9 (*text in Ukrainian*)
- More than 100.000 citizens cannot vote in local elections. Why the IDPs were deprived of the right to vote and what legal solutions are possible - **solution by the "Group of Influence" public holding** (*text in Ukrainian*)
- **Research on the problem of employment of IDP women** (*text in Ukrainian*)
- Review by writer and journalist Anne Applebaum on historical parallels and origins of the conflict in Ukraine **"Why Putin wants to control Ukraine"** (*text in English*)
- **Humanitarian access and local organizations in Ukraine: a study** (*text in English*)
- The non-combat **losses of the Armed Forces of Ukraine** and other paramilitary formations have exceeded 10,000 since 2014, the military prosecutor's office of Ukraine reports. Up to 360 thousand of those who took part in the ATO suffer from PTSD (*text in Russian*)
- Ukraine **has transferred the evidence for Russia's kidnapping of Donbass orphans in 2014 to the ECHR**. The other lawsuits filed against Russia are also in process (*text in Russian*)
- Hungary **blocked the Ukraine-NATO summit as a reaction to the adoption of the law on education in Ukraine**. According to Hungary's officials, this law violated the rights of national minorities (*text in Russian*)
- **The struggle for power in the "Lugansk People's Republic"** in 25th Newsletter of Civicmonitoring.org: **Changes in "LNR" and "DNR": October 21 - November 28, 2017** (*text in English*)

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

- September 6, 2017 - "The Snowball Effect of the problems of IDPs. The fourth year without a thaw" - **public action near the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine** (*text in Russian*)
- September, 2017 - The humanitarian team of the "Vostok-SOS" charitable foundation **visited 13 cities and villages of Eastern Ukraine and**

provided assistance to 250 families, a local hospital, a school and other cultural centers (*text in Russian*)

- October 9, 2017 - a **voucher project for 19 settlements along the line of contact** was started by the NGO "The Country of Free People". 3,600 households have already received vouchers (*text in Ukrainian*)
- October 13, 2017 - an **open letter about the situation of people in prisons in Crimea and uncontrolled territories of Donbass** was published, signed by NGOs. The letter describes numerous cases of human rights violations against these persons. It also stated that the situation has not changed in almost three years (*text in Ukrainian*)
- **The history of the "AKCenter" initiative**, which started to support IDPs since summer 2014 in Kharkiv (*text in Russian*)

5. Interviews and opinions

- A **series of interviews with young people living in Donetsk**: "Is it easy to be young after the war?" (*text in Russian*)
- Many universities were forced to move from uncontrolled territories to different regions of Ukraine. **The experience of the Gorlovka Institute for Foreign Languages of the Donbass State Pedagogical University**, now in Bakhmut (Donetsk region), is told by its director (*text in Russian*)
- It has become harder to live in Donbass since the beginning of military actions and industrial decline. The war affected the local communities of the front-line cities and villages. **Local activists have learned to manage most problems on their own** (*text in Russian*)
- **Elderly women** from the frontline city of Zolotoe in Luhansk region **describe the situations they have to face** (*text in Russian*)
- "On both sides": **the story of volunteers from the "Responsible Citizens" initiative group**, which was set up in Donetsk to assist local residents and was subsequently expelled (*text in Ukrainian*)
- NGO hubs were **opened in Kramatorsk, Liman, Severodonetsk and Starobelsk cities** to consult with NGOs and civil initiatives on organizational development and fundraising issues and to create partnerships and establish contacts with the government and donors. They have reached many goals in 6 months. What does it mean for Donbass? (*text in Ukrainian*)
- **School instructions on how to behave with explosive devices, an inaccessible budget for the renovation of the hospital, the return of electricity after half of a year absence**: life in the Ukrainian controlled territories on the front line (*text in Russian*)
- Maksym Kurochkin, the Ukrainian playwright who lived in Moscow for many years, **gave a long interview to Focus magazine about his return to Ukraine and modern Ukrainian theater** (*text in Russian*)

- **Vygaudas Usackas**, former EU ambassador to Russia (2013-2017) - **on the possible ways of development of the conflict in Ukraine**, as well as on diplomatic measures to be taken against the authorities of the Russian Federation (*text in English*)
- **Yuri Volodarsky**, a literary critic who lives in Kiev, shared his **opinion about the attitudes of the Russian-speaking literary community of Ukraine** (*text in Russian*)
- October 23, 2017 - **Presentation of the graphic novel "Crossroads. Nine stories about war and violence"**, prepared by NGOs from different countries (*text in Ukrainian*)
- **An open letter** from photographer and public activist Viktoria Ivleva **"Russians forgot about the war in Ukraine"** (*text in Russian*)
- Interview with **Valentina Cherevatenko**, Russian human rights activist, **on the situation and prospects for dialogue processes** between Ukrainian and Russian societies (*text in Russian*)
- **Interview with Vyacheslav Likhachev**, expert from the "Vostok SOS" charitable foundation, about the **investigation into crimes committed by the Ukrainian military in the ATO zone** (*text in Ukrainian*)



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



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