

Fascist atrocities mount as US-backed regime assaults eastern Ukraine

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As the Western-backed regime in Kiev assaults pro-Russian militias in the major cities of eastern Ukraine, mass graves are coming to light in Slavyansk, the former opposition stronghold recently captured by Kiev. The government offensive is unfolding with the support of Washington and the European Union (EU), which yesterday imposed more sanctions to compel Moscow to abandon any support for opposition militias in Ukraine.

Andriy Lysenko, the spokesman for the Kiev regime's Defense and Security Council, said yesterday that "hundreds of bodies of rebel fighters" had been found in shallow graves. Lysenko claimed some of the graves "have been mined by the terrorists"—apparently implying that some of the dead were killed during the siege of Slavyansk and buried by fellow opposition fighters before Kiev's forces captured the town. Lysenko refused to give further details.

While the Kiev regime's bombardment of Slavyansk doubtless caused hundreds of casualties, its own accounts show that the far-right Ukrainian nationalist militias it has mobilized are carrying out a campaign of political terror and murder in Slavyansk. Upon capturing the city, they detained all men between the ages of 25 and 35 on suspicion of supporting or giving aid, including medical aid, to the opposition militias.

On Tuesday, Interior Ministry official Anton Gerashchenko confirmed that two Slavyansk priests had been murdered for supporting opposition forces. "We found a grave of two priests from Slavyansk, who were tortured and killed by the Ukrainian nationalists," Gerashchenko said. The bodies of two sons of one of the priests were discovered in the same grave as the priests' mutilated remains.

The Odessa diocese confirmed that Ukrainian nationalists have threatened, beaten or kidnapped

several Orthodox priests, many of whom they consider too close to Moscow. The Odessa diocese secretary, Archpriest Andrei Novikov, who has fled to Moscow fearing arrest by Ukrainian nationalist groups, said, "I'm sure if the government keeps its position, it will handle the physical liquidation of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine."

Statements by top Kiev officials during the siege of Slavyansk amounted to a blank check for its far-right forces—including fascist militias such as the Right Sector and Azov Battalion and the newly formed National Guard—to murder civilians.

President Petro Poroshenko pledged that his forces would "liquidate" opposition fighters. Adopting the tactics the Nazis used against resistance fighters in occupied Europe during World War II, Poroshenko called for disproportionate killings in retaliation for losses suffered by his regime, saying: "For every soldier's life, the militants will pay with dozens and hundreds of their own."

A BBC report on the Azov Battalion makes clear the type of fascist trash the Ukrainian regime and its backers in Washington and the European Union are unleashing on the population of eastern Ukraine. It interviewed Mikael Skillt, a white supremacist and former Swedish Army sniper now fighting with the Azov Battalion. Skillt said the unit includes "national socialists" who wear swastikas, but there is "even one liberal, though I don't know how he got there."

The Azov Battalion, which is financed by billionaire oligarch Igor Kolomoisky and has recruiters traveling internationally, is led by Andriy Biletsky, the head of the Social National Assembly (SNA). The SNA's online mission statement specifies that its goals are to "punish severely" interracial sexual relations and "to prepare Ukraine for further expansion and to struggle

for the liberation of the entire White Race from the domination of the internationalist speculative capital.”

Contacted by the BBC, the Kiev regime defended the Azov Battalion. Gerashchenko said, “The Social National Assembly is not a neo-Nazi organization.” He claimed the only non-Ukrainians in the Azov Battalion were “journalists from Sweden, Spain and Italy who have come to report on the heroic achievements of the fighters in their struggle against terrorism.”

The fascist atrocities in Ukraine are an indictment of Washington and the European powers, which publicly encouraged pro-EU demonstrations in Kiev led by far-right forces in order to topple pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych. Having built up the Right Sector and other fascist militias to crush Yanukovych’s riot police and install a pro-Western regime in the February 22 putsch, the Western governments and media are now concealing the fascists’ crimes.

The atrocities in Slavyansk further expose the hypocrisy of the advocates of “human rights” imperialism who praised Western intervention in support of the Kiev protests and the February 22 putsch, portraying the right-wing, pro-EU opposition to Yanukovych as a movement for democracy (see: “In the service of imperialism: Right-wing “intellectuals” gather in Kiev”). Their silence on the crimes of the Kiev regime highlights their role as agents of imperialism and fascist reaction.

The Western imperialist powers are stepping up their support for the Kiev regime as it intensifies its civil war and political terror in eastern Ukraine. Yesterday, US President Barack Obama announced new sanctions against Russia at a White House press conference.

The measures target firms including Rosneft, the world’s largest oil company; Gazprombank, the banking subsidiary of natural gas giant Gazprom; independent natural gas producer Novatek; and development lender Vnesheconombank. They are also directed against separatist groups in the eastern Ukrainian cities of Donetsk and Luhansk. The sanctions restrict these entities’ access to US lending and the American financial system.

Obama said, “These sanctions are significant, but they are also targeted,” adding that they were designed to limit “spillover” effects for US companies.

Although Ukrainian government forces have

repeatedly and provocatively shelled Russian border areas, Obama cynically placed responsibility for the crisis in Ukraine on Moscow. “We have to see concrete actions, and not just words that Russia in fact is committed to trying to end this conflict along the Russia-Ukraine border,” he said (see: “Moscow threatens response after Ukraine forces shell Russian border town”).

Meeting in Brussels yesterday, EU authorities imposed sanctions on “individuals or entities who actively provide material or financial support to the Russian decision-makers responsible for the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of eastern Ukraine.” These sanctions include travel bans and asset freezes affecting 72 Russian persons and entities.

“The situation in Ukraine is unacceptable,” British Prime Minister David Cameron said. “The territorial integrity of that country is not being properly respected by Russia.”

EU authorities proceeded with the new sanctions against Russia even though the economies of the EU and Russia are closely linked. With the two economies doing over \$300 billion in yearly trade, broader sanctions risk triggering an economic collapse across the region.

The Ukraine crisis has already had a serious impact on the European economy, according to figures released by the European statistics agency Eurostat, which found that EU exports to Russia have fallen 11 percent and Russian exports to the EU have declined by 9 percent.



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