

# Protests in Ukraine demand return of soldiers from the front

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In an indication of growing fatigue with and opposition to the NATO proxy war against Russia in the Ukrainian population, protesters gathered in cities throughout Ukraine on Friday to demand the return of their friends and family members at the front. Some of them have been deployed without pause since the very beginning of the bloody NATO-provoked war on February 24, 2022.

Testifying to the widespread frustration in Ukraine with unending mobilization, protests were held in the capital city of Kiev, as well in smaller cities such as Ternopil, Odessa, Dnipro and others throughout the country.

In Kiev, family members and friends of deployed soldiers prepared a document demanding that both President Volodymyr Zelensky and General Valery Zaluzhny clarify exactly how long soldiers are expected to remain at the front. After gathering on Independence Square, protesters marched to the office of President Zelensky to present their demands, such as the passing of a bill to limit mobilization to 18 months of service.

According to the appeal, within Ukraine, despite the “general mobilization” declared at the start of the war, “some are serving without the terms of release known to them, while others are not serving at all.”

“The situation of uncertainty about the terms of service leads to the deterioration of the moral and psychological state of servicemen, to social tension between military and civilians, as well as to the demoralization of personnel,” the document stated.

“Our relatives have been at the front since February 24. Many servicemen have never been home. Their families wake up and go to sleep with only one thought they want to hear: I’m alive, I’m going home. We wrote a collective appeal, where we ask that we be given the terms of service and demobilization, which

should be according to the law according to the Constitution of Ukraine,” stressed protester Anastasiya Chuvakina.

Protesters insisted they will continue to gather in Kiev and throughout the country until the government and military make public the terms of mobilization.

“We will seek to clarify the terms of demobilization. Let it be a year and a half, let it be a little longer, but they should know the terms. They should know that the country for which they give their lives stands behind them,” said one soldier’s wife.

In July, Ukraine’s parliament voted to extend martial law and mobilization for another 90 days until November, marking the eighth extension since the beginning of the war. Many reports from Ukraine have documented the criminal methods through which men are forcibly drafted into the army after being effectively kidnapped on the streets and in shopping malls.

Despite calls for parliament to approve a bill limiting deployments at the front to 18 months, Zelensky’s own Servant of the People political party holds an outright majority in parliament and will be unlikely to move any legislation forward that could potentially impair the war effort without the President’s support. The office of President Zelensky has yet to publicly state how long his government believes soldiers are expected to serve at the front.

Zelensky’s much publicized four-month long “counteroffensive” has now effectively ended with tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers reportedly killed over the summer in a barrage of senseless charges at Russian defenses that according to the *New York Times* actually resulted in a net loss of Ukrainian-held territory.

In much of east Ukraine, Ukrainian soldiers are now on the defensive, attempting to hold onto cities such as

Avdiivka. Located just 40 miles from the major city of Donetsk, the city “arguably has more strategic value than Bakhmut,” according to the *Washington Post*. Bakhmut, colloquially known as the “meat grinder,” was seized in May by Russia after a months-long battle that resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of both Russian and Ukrainian soldiers.

According to figures by the Russian government, Ukraine has lost 90,000 soldiers in just four months of its counteroffensive operations.

In August, Ukraine’s main supporter, the United States, estimated total Ukrainian deaths at 70,000, with 100,000 to 120,000 wounded, while retired United States Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor has estimated that up to 400,000 Ukrainians soldiers have been killed in action. Whatever the true number, it is clear that the Ukrainian Armed Forces are in desperate need of soldiers to continue the war following Zelensky’s failed counteroffensive. The pre-war Ukrainian population was under 30 million, and it has significantly shrunk since, with at least 6 million having left the country since the beginning of the war.

Amid the ongoing carnage at the front, Ukrainian men continue to flee the country illegally as unemployment skyrockets and the destruction of the Ukrainian economy, which was already the poorest country in Europe before the war, continues.

A recent story from *Business Insider* highlighted the dilemma facing many working class Ukrainians. The outlet referenced the story of war veteran Bohdan who was forced to hide his identity for fear of being identified by the country’s fascistic security forces. Bohdan spoke of the horrors at the front and was now supporting the attempts of his 21-year-old son Artem to escape the country before he was conscripted.

According to Bohdan, apart from facing death at the front, “There is not much work or quality education for young men during wartime, so some of them want to leave, but they can’t.”

Recently, Ukrainian news outlet *Slovo y Delo* reported that thanks to the war, Ukraine had entered the top 10 list of countries with the highest unemployment rates in the world.

According to data from National Bank of Ukraine, the country’s unemployment rate of 21.1 percent in 2022 was actually an improvement from the previously projected 26 percent. Other countries on the top 10 list

include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Botswana and Palestine.

Meanwhile, the Zelensky government plans for a further expansion of the conflict with the use of the newly delivered army tactical missile system (ATACMS) missiles from the United States, which can strike targets more than 100 miles away and employ cluster munitions.

Last week, in an online address to the parliamentary summit of the Crimean Platform, Zelensky warned that his country would be ramping up its attacks on Crimea and within Russia, signifying a further escalation of the nearly two-year long war. “We have not yet gained full fire control over Crimea and surrounding waters, but we will,” Zelensky said. “This is a question of time.”



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