

The new law on mobilization: Is Ukraine turning into a giant prison?

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This article was submitted to the World Socialist Web Site by Maxim Goldarb, a Ukrainian socialist who opposes the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. Goldarb is the head of the Union of Left Forces - For a New Socialism party, which has been banned by the Zelensky regime, and he is being persecuted by the NATO-backed Ukrainian government for his anti-war stance.

“The Ukrainian people are doing the dirty work of what we never wanted to do here in the United States.”

—Mark Esper, former US Secretary of Defense

A major recent event, both for the tens of millions of Ukrainian citizens in Ukraine itself and for the millions of Ukrainian refugees in other countries, was the adoption of a new mobilization law by the government of Volodymyr Zelensky.

Any literate lawyer will tell you that in law school they were taught to always, when studying this or that law, to look in depth, to understand the logic of the legislator, his goals in creating the law. The goals of this law officially declared by the authorities—“to put in order the registration of Ukrainians liable for military duty, to level the gaps in the legislation on military registration, dealing with available human resources, etc.”—appear to be at most of secondary significance. The main goal, which clearly shines through all the verbal legislative wisdom, political aplomb and quasi-patriotic slogans, seems to be the government’s inexorable desire to maximize the fulfillment of the formula of exchanging money and weapons for lives.

It is hardly a coincidence that almost immediately after Zelensky signed this law, the US authorities very quickly resolved the issue of allocating \$61 billion in military funds for Ukraine, which had been stalled for a year.

But let’s get to the point. The new “mobilization” law, which comes into force on May 18 of this year, sharply tightens the rules of compulsory mobilization. The law introduces stricter registration of persons liable for military service. Virtually every man between the ages of 18 and 60, no matter where he is or how he feels about the war being waged in Ukraine, will have to report himself to the military authorities, as well as to carry a military ID card with him at all times.

In addition, the draft age for mobilization has been lowered from 27 to 25.

From the moment the law enters into force, Ukrainian men have 60 days to update their data in territorial manning centers (TMC). If the data is not updated within this period, administrative liability will be imposed in the form of heavy fines. Think about it: in a

country with an average salary of 400 euros, the “mobilization” fine will range from 400 to 600 euros! If the fine is not paid, it opens the way to blocking the accounts and further seizure of their property by the authorities.

These are some of the main innovations of the law. According to the authorities, they will allow to take many conscripts who do not want to fight out of the “shadows,” will put these people on the other side of life, will make them outlaws. After all, they will be banned from public service, and service in municipal institutions. What’s more, simply because they don’t have military registration documents, these Ukrainians will be easy and desirable prey for all sorts of patrols, police and informers. According to rough estimates, there could be about a million of them in Ukraine right now.

Before the adoption of this law, the detention of people in the streets, although it happened often enough, was still an illegal action on the part of the authorities. This gave Ukrainians a chance to protect themselves through legal mechanisms. Now this legal path to protect themselves from the arbitrary actions of the authorities has been effectively abolished.

At the same time, the authorities are no longer obliged to actually serve a summons to make a person come to the TCR [Territorial Center for Recruitment and Social Support, the agency that enacts the mobilization]. Now its non-delivery is legalized: the postal service marking it as “not served” will officially mean that the citizen has received the summons!

People who fail to comply with the requirements of the new law can be deprived the right to drive a car, forcibly detained by the police and taken to the TCR, and fined. At the same time, the filing of an appeal by a citizen against a court decision on his punishment does not suspend the effect of the appealed decision! This is an obvious legal absurdity, the consequence of which will be the shattered fates of people due to what are often unlawful and, moreover, unenforceable judicial decisions: in essence, this law has abrogated the right to a fair trial and the right to file an appeal!

Moreover, without a military ID card, military conscripts will not be issued a passport abroad. This also applies to young men who are 18 or older, and who had been able to leave Ukraine even before coming of age. That is, in order to be able to receive Ukrainian documents abroad, they will have to go back to Ukraine for a military registration document. But since they won’t be allowed to leave Ukraine again after that, this makes no sense. Moreover, in the new law it is stipulated that not only passports,

but also all consular services abroad for all men from 18 to 60 years of age will be provided only upon presentation of a military ID card.

Thus, for tens of thousands of Ukrainians who do not have military IDs, obtaining consular services has become impossible without returning to Ukraine.

Even before the law was passed, thousands of them had applied to consulates and other state bodies abroad to obtain consular services in advance, without which their legal status in EU countries becomes problematic. This has created huge queues in countries where there are many refugees from Ukraine: Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany and others. People hoped that if they applied for the documents before the law came into force, a passport could be issued without presenting a military ID.

However, already on April 23, the Ukrainian authorities imposed a ban on issuing documents by consulates even before entry into force of the law: an order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine “temporarily suspended the performance of consular actions on the applications of Ukrainian male citizens aged 18 to 60 years old.” This is the clearest litmus test of the meaning of the new law on mobilization: the forced return and sending of thousands of Ukrainians into a war in which they do not want to participate.

More and more Ukrainian men are desperately trying to flee the country, unwilling to die for someone else’s selfish purposes.

In 2023 alone, according to the BBC, more than 90 Ukrainians died in the mountains of Romania while trying to to illegally cross the Ukrainian-Romanian border to escape the war. Twenty-four died trying to escape by swimming across the border river Tisa. The number of those who managed to leave Ukraine is estimated in the tens of thousands.

Fulfilling the “precepts” of NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg that the war in Ukraine would “take years,” the Ukrainian authorities has also targeted with this law the younger generation, those under 18 years of age: according to the most conservative estimates, there are about half a million 15-18 year olds left in Ukraine today. In addition, several hundred thousand Ukrainian students are also taken into account. Thus, we are talking about the immediate future of almost one million young Ukrainians, still potentially a “living force,” which, according to the authorities, will be used together with the weapons supplied to the country.

The country is today becoming more and more like a giant prison for its own trapped and disenfranchised population. Now, the authorities even seek to force those back inside who had used any means necessary to escape.

But like any prison, it has its own commandant’s office, guards and a privileged few “inmates.” A very important point in the law is that it actually openly divides men of draft age into “two sorts”: those who are protected from mobilization, and... everyone else.

Thus, exemption from mobilization is granted to all members of the police, special services and other law enforcement agencies—that’s at least 300,000 armed adults, who are mostly engaged in hunting down their fellow citizens, suppressing dissent, and performing punitive police functions.

In addition to them, all heads of state authorities, including deputies, ministers, their deputies and so on, as well as not only

employees of strategically important enterprises, but also their owners (in Ukraine, as a rule, these are oligarchs) will not be mobilized. It is all too obvious who such a norm was written for: the ruling oligarchic regime has exempted itself from mobilization, its top officials and oligarchs, as well as its armed support in the form of police and special services.

One important point: while granting protection from mobilization to judges, investigators and prosecutors, the legislators somehow did not do the same for lawyers. Why? The answer is simple: the authorities do not need those who should and can protect people from arbitrariness; the authorities need the fear and helplessness of the people.

It is not the rich minority, but the poor majority—the unemployed, workers, peasants, teachers, doctors, office workers—that will be sent into the bloody meat grinder. Now, with the adoption of the new law, the number of men deprived of basic human rights, who will be captured and hunted down like animals and sent to the front, will increase many times over.

The profits of those who benefit from this war will also increase many times over, as I have already written about many times. These huge profits will be divided up between the military-industrial complex, its lobbyists in the American and European establishment, and the Ukrainian oligarchic top brass.

Roger Waters, leader of Pink Floyd, said the following on the reasons for the war: “The best thing that’s happened to them in the last 10 years is the conflict in Ukraine. Because it’s good for business. Part of the business is making money which they make through war, through the production of weapons, selling them and making profit. It is not you and me, it’s not you, ordinary people who invest in the war industry, but only the bigwigs. And in wartime, their profits skyrocket.”

Ordinary Ukrainians will get only another round of new deaths and misfortune.



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