

# From Los Angeles to Ukraine: The continuation of the war raises new horizons for social struggle

**Ukrainian journalists**  
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The May impasse in peace talks has become a catalyst for the political crisis and new social unrest in Ukraine. Following the lull and apathy described in our spring article, a new wave of public unrest has begun to sweep the country.

Since the evening of July 22, for the first time since 2022 political protests involving thousands of people have been taking place in Kiev and a number of regional centers. The reason is the adopted law No. 12414 on curtailing the powers of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO), which were supposed to be transferred from the control of Western embassies to the Office of the Prosecutor General as ordinary bodies of the presidential vertical.

At the moment, the regime is quite tolerant of these protests since the protesters have not encroached on its pillars, i.e., they have not challenged the forced mobilization, closed borders and foreign funding of the war. Rather, they have only been demanding a more effective policy of using the country as a torpedo for NATO.

On July 31, the parliament approved bill No. 13533 to repeal the scandalous law on the NABU and the SAPO. The rallies immediately stopped as if at the snap of a finger – the “guardians of democracy” have no more reasons for discontent in the country. Nevertheless, the destabilization of the regime may open up space for anti-war activities.

For now, such flashes have been flaring up spontaneously and then suddenly fading away again. There is a pervasive fear of prison terms and cruel tortures. Like in the United States, circles affiliated with the Democratic Party openly support state suppression of any discontent other than their own.

On July 11, at the entrance to the Southern Railway in Kharkov, a crowd of disgruntled passersby, as the press service of the regional enlistment office claims, “put the life and health of the district TRC servicemen at risk.” One of the officers fell down after being slapped.

The investigative and operational group were sent to the scene. The regional police press service stated the next day that as the TRC (territorial recruitment center) employees were escorting a military serviceman to a unit, he began to resist while getting out of a service car, attracting the attention of citizens. The 44-year-old participant in the conflict was detained “for causing bodily harm to a TRC employee.”

A month earlier, on the evening of June 11, a 29-year-old Kharkov resident, who had been previously convicted, was “invited to check the military registration documents” at the Novobavarsky District TRC. He locked himself in one of the rooms, set fire to the fabric with a lighter and made his way out of the second-floor window. The area of the fire was 800 square meters.

The flames engulfed several floors; those inside managed to evacuate. The suspect was detained at night and faces up to 10 years in prison. This is the first and so far the only case in Ukraine of such a building being destroyed by its prisoner during the entire war. (Footage of the incident can be seen here.)

On the morning of August 5, in the city of Cherkasy, a 49-year-old passer-by took out a pistol and a grenade during a check of military registration documents. Threatening to explode the grenade, he tried to take an enlistment serviceman hostage. In the video, the one can hear him saying that he has neither a home nor a family. After negotiations, he was detained.

That evening, on the way out of Izmail in the Odessa region, the police stopped a 45-year-old scooter driver for a document check. He pulled out some firearm and fatally wounded one of the patrolmen, a senior lieutenant, who soon died in the hospital. The driver was also hospitalized with gunshot wounds; he faces life in prison.

A number of collective self-defense acts are also noteworthy. On May 25 in Kremenchuk, during a summoning raid, two TRC employees knocked down a cyclist. After that, they were attacked by seven people, using pepper spray and a traumatic pistol. The recording shows that they smashed the SUV windshield. Poltava Regional TRC added that within 24 hours two attackers were identified and taken into custody. On July 27 in Kremenchuk, a woman smashed the rear window of a TRC bus with a stone and was detained.

On May 21 in Novyi Rozdil of the Lviv region, Nestor Didyk, a TCR senior soldier and former 2014 Maidan protester, was rudely refused when he asked someone to show his military registration documents. Within a few minutes, about eight people ran up, knocked him to the ground, kicked him in the head and broke his ribs. A few days later, the cops announced that they had identified four of the attackers: they were all local residents aged 29 to 39.

On July 25 in Poltava, a group of civilians blocked the road to an enlistment minibus carrying mobilized soldiers to a training center. The vehicle was damaged and some passengers escaped. On August 3, in the village of the Voznesensk district of the Nikolaev region, three civilians with wooden bats attacked an enlistment patrol after a document check, damaged the service vehicle and wounded its member. In turn, he fired a traumatic pistol. One of the civilians was injured.

On May 29, in the town of Kamianets-Podilskyi in the Khmelnytsky region, about 100 civilians blocked an enlistment minibus where a man was dragged by force, and slashed the tires. The confrontation lasted for several hours, until late in the evening. What ultimately happened to the kidnapped person is unclear. That same evening, in the Transcarpathian village of Velykyi Bereznyi, a real battle broke out between border guards and a gypsy camp. The border guards were conducting an inspection raid

together with the cops and the National Guard on suspicion of illegal border crossing or smuggling. A report of the incident stated:

During the clash, stones flew towards the border cars—two service vehicles were damaged. Shooting began, rubber bullets were used. As a result of the conflict, a woman was injured (in the stomach and arm) and a child was injured. Two border guards were also taken to the hospital. Eyewitnesses report that they beat the head of the outpost, the head of intelligence and his deputy. After the incident, the Roma tried to block the border unit in Velykyi Bereznyi, but it was unblocked.

Footage from Volyn appeared at the end of July showing how a Roma family chased away the enlistment group with flying stones. The scene is reminiscent of images of Palestinians being chased by Israeli occupying forces in the West Bank.

At about 11:00 p.m. on August 1 in Vinnytsia, despite the curfew, a crowd of residents gathered near the Locomotive stadium demanding the release of the kidnapped men who were there. The regional police reported:

On the night of August 1-2, about 80 people, including representatives of a public organization [Dosta Ukraine], arrived at the TRC facility demanding the release of a man who was brought in by military personnel as a person wanted for evading military service. Some of those present damaged the gates and entered the facility [about 30-40 people]. In order to push people back and prevent further violation of public order, law enforcement officers used special means. Investigators have opened a criminal case under Article 341 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (seizure of state or public buildings or structures). Five men aged 21 to 33 years who were involved in the crime were detained in a procedural manner.

The cops fought off the assault with batons. By 1 a.m. some of the people had dispersed, but the protest continued until at least 4 a.m., with several dozen people remaining on the scene. Neighbors brought them tea and coffee. An ambulance took away a pregnant woman who had been tear-gassed in the face. Nevertheless, the mobilized were eventually taken away through another exit and sent to the training center. Five men detained for participating in the assault were placed under house arrest for 60 days.

The numbers of Ukrainian military personnel fleeing have remained stable since November 2024. The right-wing Kiev-based journalist Volodymyr Boiko, who recently retired from the 241st Territorial Defense Brigade due to age, made a post on his social networks on July 8 that was widely circulated:

In the first half of 2025, 107,672 new criminal proceedings were registered under Articles 407, 408 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (unauthorized leaving of a military unit or place of service, desertion). Here are the data on the number of reports under these articles entered into the Register, broken down by month:

January 2025 – 18145

February 2025 – 17809

March 2025 – 16349

April 2025 – 18331

May 2025 – 19956

June 2025 – 17082

And in total, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion as of July 1, 2025, 230,804 cases of desertion have been registered in Ukraine (Articles 407, 408 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

I would like to emphasize that the above statistics relate only to those cases of desertion for which criminal proceedings were initiated on the basis of materials of official investigations sent by commanders of military units to the SBI [State Bureau of Investigation] or specialized prosecutors' offices in the field of defense. The real picture is much worse, since until October 2024, the SBI systematically refused to enter information on the facts of unauthorized leaving of units or places of service into the Register, and commanders of military units even had to appeal in court the inaction of the SBI investigators. At the same time, no one is looking for deserters and, despite the stories of the SBI leadership, they do not return to service. Thus, in the first six months of 2025, suspicion of unauthorized abandonment of military units was reported in only 3,538 cases (3.3 percent of the number of criminal proceedings registered during this period). During the same time, only 1,807 deserters (1.7 percent) returned to military—this is the same number of petitions for exemption from criminal liability that were sent to the court. Another 1,079 (1.0 percent) criminal proceedings were sent to the court with indictments. The materials of the remaining 97.3 percent of criminal proceedings against deserters are covered in dust ... I wrote three months ago that the number of criminal proceedings will decrease—there is no point in military unit commanders submitting materials to the State Bureau of Investigation, since deserters are now not dismissed from service, but remain on the lists of personnel. Therefore, commanders report desertion only to the Military Law Enforcement Service.

As a result of the tightening of measures against unauthorized leaving (SZCh in Ukrainian) and desertion last winter, the situation on the front lines has stabilized significantly: even Pokrovsk and Kupyansk, which were predicted to fall any day in the fall, are still holding out. But since the beginning of summer, the Russian Armed Forces have been advancing from Sumy to Zaporozhye at a record pace for this year. There may be a variety of reasons for this, ranging from a reduction in the rate of number of people who are being forcibly mobilized to a shortage of attack drones in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrsky claimed in the spring that last year Ukraine mobilized 30,000 people per month and that this rate should be maintained in the future; at the same time, the current mobilization figures are estimated at between 20,000 and 25,000 per month—practically at the level of those taking up skis. This is the basis for the assumption that the Ukrainian Armed Forces will soon suffer a “cumulative effect,” like Assad's army in Syria. Those who read Russian might be interested in our summer interview with a former Ukrainian border guard named Vadym who deserted after being ordered to transfer to the neo-Nazi 3rd Assault Brigade; gave the floor to fugitive military servicemen who were detained right when they tried to cross the Ukrainian-Romanian border and then escaped again, and also to the Ukrainian company commander who went from the Kursk region to his home in Dnepropetrovsk despite a spinal injury and is now preparing to clandestinely cross the border into Romania.

One way or another, it is still easy to meet people who have fled from their units, and no one is looking for them for six months or more. Nevertheless, Alex from Kiev, captured while trying to cross the border, told us on June 8 about changes in his training ground since last year:

They took me from Verkhovyna to Frankivsk and from there to the training ground in Rivne. It's very difficult to escape now, a ditch about two meters deep and three meters wide has been dug around the company perimeter. They're preparing posts for barbed wire right now and someone said that they'll throw a tangled barbed wire into the ditch itself. In the evening, several instructors with thermal imagers move to the perimeter to make sure no one escapes, the beasts from the fifth platoon are sitting in secret on the outer perimeter; whoever could understand, understood. They usually escape successfully during the day, just after the daytime formation. They often run across the river, but they also regularly pull out drowned ones there. Just the day before yesterday they pulled one out. It's a 10-stroke swim, but unfortunately people drown with a certain regularity. Every day, 30+ people leave each battalion, running off to their homes, sometimes the river can't cope; moreover there are swamps, quagmires. Well, we have such a battalion, in the rest everything is simpler and there is no ditch. The battalion commander has his own rules, although we are slowly pushing through anarchy. Here is a track, sometimes we listen to it near the tent on the speaker. We have already done all sorts of weird things here. The military law enforcement regularly drops in. Lyrics from real stories are here.

(The anarcho-rap he sent with the words "We are not soldiers, we are SZCh" is available for listening in Russian and Ukrainian.)

There are also still outbursts of violence by soldiers against their commanders. On the morning of July 16, at the Goncharivske training ground in the region of Chernihiv, a mobilized soldier from unit A3321 surnamed Koshel shot instructors with an automatic rifle. Senior Sergeant Kryshtal and Chief Sergeant Rekenenko were killed. Another serviceman, Senior Sergeant Skrypka, also came under fire. Four bullets hit his bulletproof vest, so he was not injured.

The shooting began when the soldiers were walking out to the firing line in pairs. Koshel suddenly turned around and started shooting the instructors in the back. One of the dead reportedly saw him for the first time that day. It is known that upon arrival at the unit, Koshel stated that he was not going to serve and wanted to leave for Russia back in 2022. On trial he said that he fully understood his actions and that he had not been acting in a state of affect. The training center in Goncharivske is widely known as "Honduras"—perhaps because they accept everyone, regardless of health problems. Many recruits end up in a military hospital in Chernigov and run away from there.

On June 13, state TV aired the story about a contract fighter from the Kirovograd region named Ruslan, who had served in the 57th Motorized Infantry Brigade in the direction of Volchansk since May 2024. In January, he returned there after having left without permission:

We had a case where a guy from the military police had his car burned because he was constantly beating up guys. So the next day, as soon as it got dark, I turned around and left. Because I started receiving threats because I was in SZCh. They decided to teach me a lesson.

After that, Ruslan ran away again. No further details about that incendiary attack are known.

On July 3, the Sumy District Court convicted a senior soldier of an airborne assault unit who, while drunk, stole an armored personnel carrier on January 31, 2025 and drove it home to a village in the Lubny district of the Poltava region. He drove several hundred kilometers. Then he said that

he abandoned the car on the side of the road because he was very tired and decided to rest. When he woke up in a forest belt, the Military Law Enforcement Service was already nearby. Despite the fact that the accused joined the army voluntarily, expressed his willingness to continue serving, and although the commander had given written consent, he was imprisoned for 7 years for armed desertion and theft of military equipment. Let others learn a lesson from this case.

David North has pointed out about the struggle against the fascistic Trump administration in the US that we are witnessing the collapse of a social order, but social consciousness is lagging behind social existence. In the realities of Ukraine, this is even more relevant. On the other hand, during political crises, mass consciousness is able to develop much faster than usual. Practice will show whether the prolongation of the war will become a trigger for such a qualitative leap, especially if rumors about the upcoming reduction of the mobilization age from 25 to 18 are confirmed.

*As journalists of the [assembly.org.ua](http://assembly.org.ua) website, we are conducting our work under extremely difficult conditions and ask for substantial donations to enable them to continue our work. From Los Angeles to the Carpathians—one path, one solution, one struggle!*



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