

Social resistance in Ukraine on the eve of the funding crisis

Ukrainian journalists**22 November 2025**

The journalists from the assembly.org.ua website submitted this report to the WSWS on the occasion of the anniversary of the October Revolution on November 7, and shortly before the eruption of a massive corruption scandal gripping the Zelensky government, with the following note: “The development and continuation of our media depends solely on its audience. Please support our work on this fundraising page for further coverage of topics that are forbidden or invisible to the pro-capitalist press. Many thanks to everyone!”

The confrontation between the people and the state in Ukraine is developing dynamically. Just as we were preparing our previous October review of newly emerging collective anti-war action, a new incident of labour collective's resistance to territorial recruitment centers (TRC) occurred in the Dnepropetrovsk region.

On October 20, a TRC team raided the premises of some private enterprise in Kamenskoye (Kamianske). Security guards forced them to leave, but the workers pursued the visitors outside the gates after word got out that TRC had grabbed one of their colleagues. During the conflict, one TRC representative threatened them with a pistol, while another pepper-sprayed into the eyes of an employee filming the incident. This is at least the second such incident after Kovel in Volyn.

Two days earlier, on October 18, near a supermarket in the city of Dnieper (Dnipro), police and TRC employees allegedly located a citizen wanted for violating military registration rules. When he refused to go with them, passersby came to his aid and attempted to free the man, striking the military servicemen several times and damaging the service vehicle. However, they were unable to free the kidnapped man.

On the other side of the country, in Ternopil, on the evening of October 13, TRC employees blocked the car of Sergiy Zadorozhnyi, head coach of the local football club Nyva, near a shopping mall. This also led to a mass brawl with civilians. Zadorozhnyi, who had a reservation, later left, but the clash continued amid chants of “Shame!” in the crowd. Police stated that no one contacted them or medical facilities with bodily injuries.

On October 17, around midday, on a road near the village of Plebanivka near Ternopil, two people in a Mercedes Benz G-Class reportedly cut off a TRC vehicle, took a mobilized one who was being transported to a training center, and fled the scene. One of the enlistment agents sustained a leg injury due to being hit by a car. Police detained the suspects later that day, according to the

regional TRC.

In the neighbouring Lviv region, a businessman from the village of Opaka drove an Audi Q7 to the TRC building in Drohobych on the morning of November 6 and blocked their Seat Alhambra. When the driver, a security guard, exited the service car, the businessman struck him with a metal pipe. The victim was diagnosed with an open head wound. After the attack, he fled the scene, together with a conscript who was on the premises, and was detained later. A criminal case has been initiated under the article on hooliganism. Half a year ago, in the same town, there was a short strike by bus drivers against the mobilization of their colleague.

The fifth and largest conflict with the TRC in the city of Odessa for the week happened in the early hours of October 30 at the 7th Kilometer industrial market. A crowd of warehouse workers overturned their bus, broke its windows, and physically injured an enlistment group, forcing them out of the market. The regional TRC also claims that protesters used batons and pepper spray. According to the market's deputy director, Irina Tkach, their entrepreneurs and staff were not among the crowd. An asphalt plant, supermarkets and post branches are also located nearby. The Security Service of Ukraine has opened a criminal case for the obstruction of mobilization activities; the defendants face five to 15 years in prison. The incident may have been the most militant labour protest in Ukraine since Independence Day 1998, when striking coal miners clashed with riot police in front of the Lugansk Regional State Administration.

The same day, in the region of Poltava, police escorted a man kidnapped from the street to the Kremenchuk District TRC's assembly point. During the paperwork and search, in response to a cop's question about the presence of prohibited items or substances, he pulled out a pistol and fired several shots. As a result, two TRC representatives were injured in the legs by bullets. The shooter was detained. Also on October 30, a court in Odessa convicted an unemployed resident who, on June 12 of this year, used tear gas against a TRC employee and wounded him in the chest with a knife. The man was sentenced to five years in prison with two years of probation. The leniency of the sentence was influenced by sincere repentance, a full admission of guilt, the presence of a minor child in his care, and the transfer of 250,000 hryvnias (around \$5,940) to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

On the other side of the Ukrainian South, annexed by Russia since 2022, there are other reasons for labour protest due to the

absence of forced mobilization. On November 17, about 20 employees gathered in Melitopol near the Russian prosecutor's office of the Zaporozhye region. Since they work at the Voinikov & Co agricultural enterprise in Berdyansk, they demanded an end to its seizure and payment of wage arrears. Two months ago, on September 25, the company's territory was seized by representatives of Partner Union LLC. Since that time, salaries have not been paid, and shareholders have not collected rent for the land.

On the evening of November 16, a 37-year-old resident of a village in the Sambir district of the Lviv region violated traffic rules while driving an Alfa Romeo. While talking to the police near the car, the driver took out a grenade and detonated it. He received injuries and was taken to the hospital. Local media call him a runaway military serviceman.

With the October 25 (or November 7 according to the new style) approaching, we spoke with a 37-year-old Kharkov resident nicknamed Red October, who fled from the 122nd Airmobile Battalion of the 81st Airmobile Brigade. "My nickname is more of a reference to my birthday and red leaves. But if someone associates it with the great victory of all workers, that's also not bad," he explains. Regarding the state's fight against the avalanche of desertions, he told us:

I went into SZCh [unauthorized leaving of a unit] through the hospital. I had hypertension, they took my blood pressure and took me to the medical unit in Kramatorsk, and from there I took the train home. I'm not hiding, I roam freely around the area. My brigade has so many SZCh that they haven't even opened a [criminal] case against me. Doesn't the SBI [State Bureau of Investigation] have any other work? There are already half a million like me. When I first joined the army, no one even knew what SZCh is. Even if it's not half a million, but rather 250,000, that's still a lot. No SBI could handle that many cases. Plus, in the units, SZCh cases are handled by ordinary soldiers, usually those who refused [to fight] or are wounded. And when they hand over all the cases to the SBI, almost all of them are filled with mistakes, and the SBI returns them to the unit, while the soldiers who handled them have already been transferred, and other soldiers are doing the same. A Sisyphean task.

I was mobilized in the summer of 2023, and in the summer of 2024, I went into SZCh, primarily because they wouldn't give me leave. A month before my SZCh, a guy who had been fighting from the very beginning went out and ran away from training to become an FPV drone operator. They didn't catch him. Incidentally, I was also an FPV operator. My buddy, who lives in Ternopil, even went over the mountains to Romania after SZCh. I gave the army a chance, a whole year, went to combat [missions], did everything conscientiously, and put up with all the injustice, and now I believe such an army shouldn't exist.

The month of October 2025 a has already ~~new~~ unauthorized leaving a military unit and desertion: 21,602 such cases officially, compared to 17,000-18,000 per month during the summer and with around 30,000 mobilized personnel per month.

Overall, the fugitive drone operator is skeptical about the state's ability to stop this flow. He continued, based on his own experience:

I don't quite understand how drones can be used for these purposes [to prevent soldiers from fleeing]. And how can they help if the person has already left the front line and is moving away from the front? We don't have enough drones to properly carry out combat missions. A drone can spot someone fleeing their position. But there's a problem: that person is holding an automatic rifle, four magazines, and at least a couple of grenades. If they don't have all that, then there's no point in bringing them back. But from what I've seen, people who abandon the front line aren't afraid of anything anymore. Personally, when I refused to serve as an infantryman a second time, I said no one would force me to go back; they could shoot me right away, so why bother? And after that, they transferred me to drone operators. There were hundreds of people like me in the battalion; they didn't leave right after their first combat missions, and command is trying to persuade them to take up other roles, like mortar, driver, mounted anti-tank grenade launcher, or drones, or, at worst, they transfer them.

Ukraine's expected depletion of financial resources "until the end of the first quarter of 2026" can mean the final act of the war drama due to the lack of money for the army. In this bloody stalemate, the least illusory solution appears to be the most negative scenario for Ukraine: some heavy military fail, which in turn opens the way to some compromise, just as the severe military defeats in Donbass of 2014 and 2015 paved the way for the previous peace agreements in Minsk. This might well be why Trump said "let's see in six months," and Putin reacted so calmly to the US sanctions strike.

To ensure that a new ceasefire does not lead to the preservation and strengthening of the Maidan-born right-wing regime, it is necessary to revive the historical memory of the working class about the revolutionary anti-war legacy of 1917, as well as to elaborate its horizontal cooperation, both when it comes to social protests against the hunting down of men by the state on the streets and the leaving of the fenced prison called a "country of freedom and democracy."



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