

WAR ON UKRAINE - Media Insights #4

Between 23-29 May we have monitored Russian state media to detect their main war & propaganda narratives, as well as the independent international media to assess their coverage of the Russian war in Ukraine and anti-war/peace protests.

Between May and October 2022, we will be issuing a weekly newsletter containing the results of our monitoring, looking at the main propaganda narratives detected on Russian media during the week. This will be complemented by news from independent international media sources to distribute these insights outside the country. The newsletter will include main spotlights from Russian and international news coverage focusing on relevant information, key propaganda and disinformation narratives, statistics, quotes, interviews, expert opinions, independent views, as well as other pertinent developments. This is the fourth issue of the newsletter covering the period 23-29 May. All previous issues (since the beginning of monitoring on 4 May) can be found on our [website](#).

You can subscribe to the public newsletter [Media Insights - War on Ukraine](#) [here](#).

Main Events and Updates

From 23 - 29 May, the monitored **Russian media** reported on:

- Genocide
- Ukraine shoots and shells civilian areas
- Davos
- Henry Kissinger
- Soros
- Ukrainian - Polish relations
- Life on territories captured by Russia

In the same period, **international media** coverage of the war focused on:

- An independent report was issued on Russia inciting genocide in Ukraine.
- Ukrainian troops are outnumbered and underequipped in the east of Ukraine.
- Davos focused on the Russian war in Ukraine, including a keynote speech by Zelensky and addresses by Kissinger, Soros and others.
- Resignation of the top Russian diplomat at UN Boris Bondarev in a protest against Russian aggression in Ukraine.
- A big row between Poland and Germany, as allegedly Germany didn't keep the promise to send tanks to Poland to replace those that Poland sent to Ukraine.
- The EU is working on an agreement's to impose an oil embargo on Russia.
- Danger of a world famine because of Russia's blockade of Ukraine's grain exports.
- Resistance to Russian occupation and the realities of living in the newly occupied territories that are far from the Russian "liberation" narrative.

Photos of the Week



Natalya Perova and Liudmila Annenkova during their action at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow on 29 May (*Telegram Channel 'Stop War'*)



Russia launched three "Propaganda Vans" and 12 big TV screens in captured Mariupol (26 May, [MRPL city](#))

Quotes of the Week

On Russia inciting genocide:

"We have no time at all, we believe that there is a very serious risk of genocide," Azeem Ibrahim of the New Lines Institute said. "Every country that is a signatory to the Genocide Convention, and that's 151 countries including the Russian Federation, every country has to do whatever it can to put a stop to this, otherwise they will also be in breach of the convention." (27 May, [CNN](#))

On Kissinger:

"It seems that Mr. Kissinger's calendar is not 2022 but 1938, and he thought he was talking to an audience, not in Davos, but in what was then Munich," president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky said. "By the way, in the real year 1938, when Mr. Kissinger's family was fleeing Nazi Germany, he was 15 years old." (26 May, [CNN](#))

Media Insights

What were the main narratives on Russian state media?

Mariupol returns to a peaceful life

- Mine clearance has started in the Azovstal plant. 4 of 5 hospitals, public transport, and gas stations where fuel is sold without limitations resumed operations, all of which became possible after the last remaining Nazis surrendered. Russians drove away those prisoners of war, fearing that Mariupol residents will lynch them. Azov Sea is the internal sea of Russia;

Russian success in Donbas and despair of Ukrainian politicians

- The Azov battalion are cowards who preferred to surrender to a bullet in the head. This constitutes the largest military defeat of Ukraine, who lost 20,000 troops there, and more “cauldrons” are looming for the Ukrainian military in Donbas amid incessant Russian gains of further territories and Ukrainian retreat;
- Giving Ukraine the western weapons will not change anything on the frontlines. The US is giving Ukraine weapons to advertise them and boost its own weapons sales. Ukrainian army sustains high losses of hardware, ammunition and personnel every day, measured in the hundreds, as they deployed thousands of untrained territorial defense battalions;
- Kyiv keeps Ukrainian soldiers in Severodonetsk against their will. Those soldiers who want to surrender or withdraw have a hard time understanding why the Azov battalion in Mariupol was allowed to surrender while they must keep fighting. The Ukrainian front is collapsing and by 5 June (100 days of blitzkrieg) the situation may be different and consistent with forecasts (about Ukraine’s surrender). Ukraine shoots and shells civilian areas and blames the Russians, prepares a pool of fake materials to show to the West;
- Allegedly admitted in General Milley’s recent address, US military superiority no longer exists, and China and Russia present a considerable challenge to the US. (23 May, Russia 1/Smotrim - [60 minutes](#))

Ukraine insults historical memory

- Courting of Zelensky by Duda threatens Kyiv with Polonization of western Ukraine. Ukraine is losing sovereignty by giving Polish citizens equal rights, Zelensky cedes territory of Ukraine to Poland. Ukraine is insulting its historical memory and betraying Bandera’s cause by embracing Poland after massacres and oppression and is giving up lands like they did in the medieval ages. General rant against Poland for defeating Russia in the 1920’s;

Russia is victorious, treats prisoners well, and Putin raises pensions

- Russia was victorious in Donbas in a number of settlements, Ukrainian nazis retreated after a rout, and the residential area of Severodonetsk is under Russian control;
- Local residents in Kherson Region actively cooperate with Russian law enforcement and show weapons caches set by the Ukrainian Army.
- Russia treats Ukrainian POWs well, feeding them three meals per day. Russia takes Ukrainian soldiers abandoned by their own to hospitals. Prices on the grain will increase, but it’s not Russia’s fault, as the West doesn’t want to lift sanctions dooming all people in the world to starvation. The Russian economy faring well even under sanctions;
- Putin will raise pensions by 10% starting from June, as well as salaries and social benefits. Putin cares about wounded Russian troops who are being treated in the best military hospitals, and those who are eager to return to the war in Ukraine as heroes. Russian hypersonic Tsirkon precisely hit the target in the White Sea.

(29 May, Russia 1/Smotrim - [News of the Week](#) (Vesti nedeli) with Dmitry Kiselyov)

Russia is an active communicator in international peace negotiations process

Putin discussed with Macron and Scholz the situation in Ukraine

Russian President Vladimir Putin [spoke](#) over the phone with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz about the situation in Ukraine. Putin warned them about the dangerous nature of the continued pumping of Western weapons into Ukraine and warned about destabilization risks that come with it. In addition, he spoke about the current affairs and frozen

negotiations by the Kyiv regime. (28 May, [RIA](#))

Western support for Kyiv fades away

The United States called on Ukraine to cede to Russia

Former US Secretary of State Kissinger urged Kyiv to make concessions in negotiations with Moscow. (24 May, [RIA](#))

The West is preparing to betray Kyiv

"The surrender of the most stubborn Ukrainian nazis at Azovstal, as expected, undermined the spirit of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Soldiers are retreating, deserting and surrendering. Those who are not yet mobilized are running from summons to the army. But the fighting spirit of their Western patrons faded even more noticeably. Immediately after the liberation of Mariupol, Ukraine disappeared from the front pages of the leading Anglo-Saxon media. Lost somewhere are combat reports under the headings '88th day of the war, 89th day of the war' ..." Further in the RIA article the author provides "analysis" of some leading western media, including NYT editorial piece from last week. (25 May, [RIA](#))

Zelensky's office reported calls from the West to cede territory

Advisor to the head of the Office of Volodymyr Zelensky, Mikhail Podolyak, announced signals coming from the West to cede territory. According to him, "pro-Russian lobbyists in Europe are beginning to raise their heads little by little." (25 May, [RIA](#))

Shinzo Abe: Zelensky's position on NATO and Donbas led to a special operation

"The position of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky on NATO membership and the refusal to resolve the conflict in Donbass led to the start of the Russian special operation. This opinion was expressed by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in an interview with the Economist." (29 May, [Rossiskaya Gazeta](#) [RG])

[NOTE: Although the article refers to the Economist in the first paragraph, it doesn't link to this credible media and then cites Ria Novosti in the second paragraph already.]

Mélenchon appealed to the European Union, asking them not to hurry with the admission of Ukraine to the EU

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the left-wing party "Unsubdued France" and ex-presidential candidate, said on the air of the BFM TV channel that the European Union should not "on emotions" decide on Ukraine's entry into the organization. (29 May, [Gazeta.ru](#))

"Genocide" by "Kyiv regime"

Reunited: Poignant footage of war-separated Donbas families meeting

A series of 12 propaganda photos were shared with captions, trying to prove that "in Ukraine, by communicating with relatives living behind the front line, one could pay with their freedom and even their life. Now, when city after city is being liberated [by Russians], these long-awaited meetings are happening. For those who survived." (27 May, [RIA Novosti](#))

What did independent media say about the main topics?

On Russia's genocide of Ukrainians

Leading experts accuse Russia of inciting genocide in Ukraine and intending to 'destroy' the Ukrainian people.

The New Lines and Raoul Wallenberg Centre report points a finger directly at Moscow, accusing Russia's top officials of orchestrating incitement to genocide and laying the groundwork for future genocide by repeatedly denying the existence of a Ukrainian identity.

In one of the most chilling parts of the report, the group makes a direct comparison with the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, urging the world to act before it's too late: "*The details of the mass murder of over 7,000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men in Srebrenica only emerged before the international community when it was too late to prevent a genocide that occurred in a matter of days. In 2022, we have the capabilities to accurately track similar atrocities as they unfold and respond accordingly.*" (27 May, [CNN](#))

On Davos, Kissinger and Soros

The war in Ukraine was dominating the agenda at the World Economic Forum while any Russian delegation was absent, according to Kate Moody's [report](#). Zelensky's speech was met with a standing ovation, and the Russian House in Davos this year was rebranded as a Russian War Crimes House (23 May, *France 24*). The Russian War Crimes House is the centerpiece of a determined campaign by Ukraine to keep the war at the top of the agenda at this [annual gathering of politicians and corporate chieftains](#), [writes](#) NYT.

Henry Kissinger suggests that Ukraine cede its territory while George Soros warns of the beginning of the Third World War

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Mr. Kissinger [said](#) the failure to restart negotiations with Russia would have dire long-term consequences for stability in Europe. "Ideally, the dividing line should be a return to the status quo ante," he added, apparently referring to a restoration of Ukraine's borders as they were before the war began in February. His statement was criticized by many, including Garry Kasparov, the Russian chess grandmaster and political activist, who [wrote on Twitter](#) that Mr. Kissinger's latest position on Ukraine was not only immoral but had been "proved wrong over and over". (24 May, *NYT*)

Meanwhile, the philanthropist George Soros has [warned](#) at the Davos Forum that Russia's [invasion of Ukraine](#) threatens to be the "beginning of the third world war and our civilization may not survive it". He added: "Repressive regimes are now in the ascendant and open societies are under siege. Today China and [Russia](#) present the greatest threat to open society." (24 May, *Guardian*)

"Zelensky condemns Kissinger idea for negotiations with Russia as 1938-style appeasement"

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has made a blistering attack on former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who suggested on 24 May that peace negotiations should be aimed at creating borders along the "line of contact" in Donbas as it existed on the eve of the Russian invasion. Kissinger was speaking by video link to the Davos Forum. (26 May, [CNN](#))

On sanctions

European Council chief is "confident" Russia oil ban issues will be resolved by the next meeting on Monday

European Council chief Charles Michel is "confident" that any issues over a proposed ban on Russian oil imports will be resolved by the next council meeting on May 30. Addressing a news conference alongside Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson in Stockholm on Wednesday, Michel said that although he was "still confident" the bloc will be able to resolve any issues, it will require "a lot of dialogue." (26 May, [CNN](#))

Orbán declares a state of emergency in Hungary due to war in Ukraine

The new state of emergency empowers Orbán's government to approve measures by decree, citing the economic crisis caused by the war and the sanctions against Russia. Critics fear that the move will only serve to tighten Orbán's grip on power in the Central European country, threatening fundamental rights and diminishing the importance of parliament. (25 May, [Politico](#))

On battlefield

Russian attack in Donbas is 'largest one on European soil since WWII'

Guardian [cites](#) Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, who said the Russian offensive in the Donbas is "the largest one on European soil since WWII". Kuleba tweeted that it was "too early" to conclude that Kyiv already has all the weapons it needs to defend itself against the Russian offensive (24 May, Guardian). France 24 [reports](#) that on 24 May, Russian forces launched an all-out assault to encircle Ukrainian troops in the twin cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk. (24 May, France 24)

Outside reactions (global perspective, international affairs impacted by the war)

Putin made a 'big strategic mistake' in Ukraine, NATO chief says in Davos

The NATO chief termed the invasion a "game changer" both for European security and the wider international order, and said it has "shattered peace in Europe." Paradoxically, as a result of the war, Putin is now getting "more NATO on his border, and more members of the alliance", Stoltenberg said, referring to the increasing likelihood that [Sweden and Finland](#) will be admitted to the alliance, which currently has 30 members. (24 May, [WP](#))

Germany 'flabbergasted' at Poland's accusation of broken promise on tanks

The German government has rejected claims by Polish President Andrzej Duda that it had gone back on its word to send tanks to replace those that Poland had sent to Ukraine. (25 May, [Politico](#))

Opinion: The secret planning that kept the White House a step ahead of Russia

Blinken and other officials gave the Washington Post new details this week, describing a series of behind-the-scenes meetings over the past year that helped forge the U.S.-led coalition to support Ukraine. His narrative validates President Dwight D. Eisenhower's observation in a 1957 speech: "Plans are worthless, but planning is everything." (26 May, [WP](#))

On Citizenship for gained territories

Ukraine calls the Putin "passport plan" a crime

Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Ministry [condemned](#) a new Russian decree that would expedite the process of obtaining Russian passports for Ukrainians living in Russian-occupied regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. Authorities in Kyiv called the policy illegal and argued that it underscores Russia's overarching goal to annex and integrate more Ukrainian territory. (26 May, [WP](#))

Opinion: In occupied Kherson, Russia is imposing a grim, hopeless reality by Yulia Mendel

On May 25, the Russian leader signed a [decree](#) offering fast-track Russian citizenship to residents of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, a worrying sign of what is to come. Though Kherson did not suffer as much shelling or bombing as some other regions, Russians still proved they did not care about civilian infrastructure, [destroying](#) a school and the [biggest mall](#) and [shelling](#) some residential areas. They brutally killed Ukrainians fighting as part of territorial defense units. Then they systematically intimidated locals by [detaining the most active](#) residents, [robbing the homes of local activists](#), and kidnapping local politicians and [journalists](#). (27 May, [WP](#))

Danger of global famine

War Raises Famine Fears as Russia Chokes Off Ukraine's Farms and Exports

World leaders called on Tuesday for international action to deliver 20 million tons of grain now trapped in Ukraine, predicting that the alternative could be hunger in some countries and political unrest in others. Ukraine and Russia ordinarily account for about one-quarter of the grain traded internationally; in recent years, Ukraine had exported an average of about 3.5 million tons of it per month. In March, only 300,000 tons were shipped out. Ukraine's agriculture ministry says that the Black Sea blockade has prevented 14 million tons of corn, 7 million tons of wheat, and 3 million tons of sunflower seeds from reaching world markets. Ukrainian officials have accused Moscow of stealing Ukraine's produce and then selling it abroad as Russian. (24 May, NYT)

Russification of the occupied territories and resistance to the occupation

Melitopol residents resist Russian occupation

While Russian media promote the narrative of the warm welcome of "liberators" in the occupied Ukraine's territory, the reports by the international media show that there is a growing resistance to the Russian occupation. The BBC [report](#) claims that since at least the mid-March a partisan warfare has been active in Melitopol, a small town in Kherson region (25 May, BBC). From 20 March to 12 April, partisans eliminated 70 Russian soldiers during their night patrol. They also blew up a bridge and derailed a Russian armored train.

Other people protested in other forms - they sang patriotic songs at night or hung posters in the street with the Ukrainian flags. "Russian forces were truly shocked to see that the local population was not happy to see them. Those soldiers really believed that they were liberators," - the [report](#) quotes a local citizen.

Russia is depopulating parts of Ukraine, forcibly removing thousands across the border

Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have been processed through a series of Russian "[filtration camps](#)" in Eastern Ukraine and sent into Russia as part of a systemized program of forced removal, according to four sources familiar with the latest Western intelligence — an estimate far higher than US officials have publicly disclosed. (27 May, [CNN](#))

Other topics

A Russian soldier is found guilty in the first war crimes trial

Vadim Shishimarin, a 21-year-old tank commander, pleaded guilty to killing 62-year-old Oleksandr Shelipov in the northeastern Ukrainian village of Chupakhivka on February 28 after being ordered to shoot him. He was [sentenced](#) to life imprisonment. Moscow has denied its troops targeted civilians during the invasion while Ukraine says more than 11,000 crimes may have occurred. (23 May, BBC)

The leaders of France and Germany have urged Russia's Vladimir Putin to hold "direct [and] serious negotiations" with Ukraine's president

Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz [spoke](#) to Putin by phone for 80 minutes and "insisted on an immediate ceasefire and a withdrawal of Russian troops", according to the chancellor's office. France and Germany also urged Putin to release 2,500 Ukrainian fighters taken as prisoners-of-war at the Azovstal steelworks plant in Mariupol. (28 May, BBC)

Anti-war/peace protests

Russian diplomat, Boris Bondarev, who served as a counsellor in Russia's mission to the United Nations in Geneva [resigned](#) on May 23 in a protest against Russia's aggression in Ukraine. The 41-year old diplomat wrote: "For 20 years of my diplomatic career I have seen different turns of our foreign policy but never have I been so ashamed of my country as on Feb. 24 of this year." His resignation is the most high-profile gesture of protest so far made by a Russian diplomat over the war in Ukraine (23 May, NYT).



Boris Bondarev, right, at a United Nations meeting in Geneva this month. (Credit: Mark Henley/Panos Pictures)

The Guardian dedicated an article to the high-profile Russian defectors protesting against the Russian aggression in Ukraine, mentioning the diplomat Boris Bondarev and the former Gazprombank Vice President Igor Volobuyev, who occupied his post until February 2022.

Volobuyev, who has Ukrainian origin and lived in Ukraine till 18 years of age, escaped Russia by pretending to go on holiday. A few days later, he crossed from Poland into Ukraine. Now he spends his days trying to convince officials to provide him with Ukrainian documents and allow him to sign up for military service. "I want to go to the place where I can defend my homeland with a weapon, I'm trying every day," he said, in an interview in the suburbs of [Kyiv](#). "I am never going back to Russia."

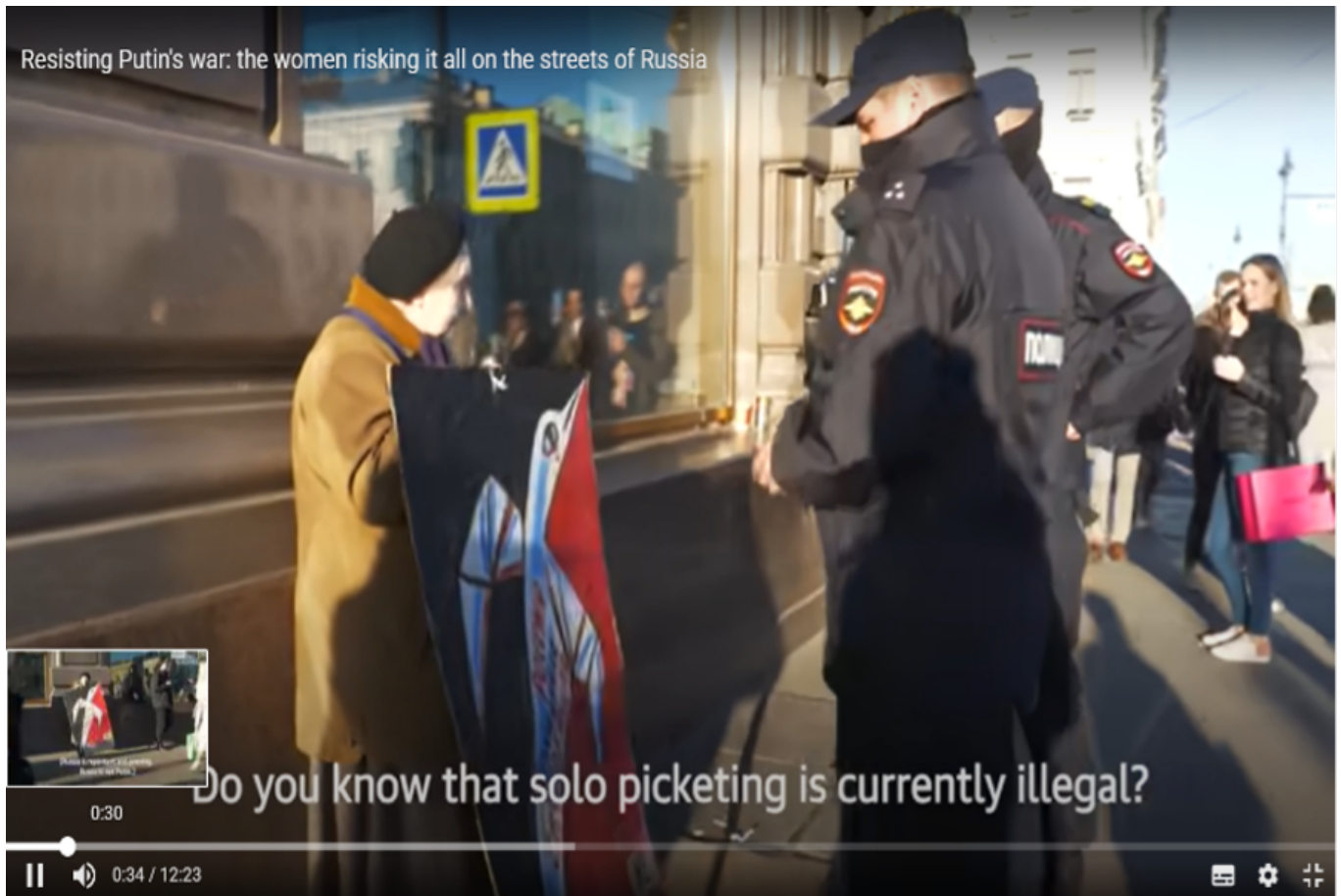


Volobuyev (Photo: Gleb Garanich/Reuters)

According to Guardian, [hundreds of thousands of Russians are believed to have fled the country](#) since Putin launched the war, and many intellectuals, journalists and activists have voiced their opposition to the conflict. However, among the political and business elites, defections have been extremely rare, and therefore remarkable.

Another example of high-profile opponents of the regime is Oleg Tinkov, a self-made billionaire who set up one of Russia's leading banks. In one of a series of critical Instagram posts, Tinkov wrote: *"I don't see ANY beneficiary of this crazy war! Innocent people and soldiers are dying."* After his statements, Tinkov said he was forced to sell his assets at a knockdown price to an oligarch loyal to the Kremlin.

A twelve-minute video [report](#) by the Guardian *"Resisting Putin's war: the women risking it all on the streets of Russia"* tells about three brave women protesting against the Russian aggression in Ukraine in Sankt Petersburg: Daria Kheikinen, Elena Osipova and a young woman whose name was not disclosed. Daria records anti-war videos on social networks while the two other women make solo pickets on the streets of the city. The reaction of passengers to their protests varies - while some are whispering words of support and admiration for their bravery, others swear at them with words like "bastard" and "dirty bitch." (26 May, Guardian).



Elena Osipova at her solo picket in Moscow while policemen inform her that solo picketing is a public action and hence is illegal.

A 51-year old Russian blogger, Nika Belotserkovskaya, who is currently living in France was [arrested](#) in absentia by a Moscow court for “spreading fakes against the Russian armed forces” and put on the international wanted list ([KP](#), 24.05). The blogger was accused of publishing false evidence of using Russian armed forces for the destruction of cities and civilians in Ukraine, including children, on her Instagram page. (24 May, [NTV](#))



A Russian theater and movie director, Kirill Serebrennikov, wrote in his Telegram a text on the war on Ukraine that was reposted on [Meduza](#). The text is called "*Red nail polish*" - a reference to a photograph from Bucha showing a murdered woman's hand with a fresh manicure. *"The soldiers of my country entered another country and started to destroy it. Killing people. Destroying homes. Coffins and stolen household appliances are coming to Russia from Ukraine, cripples and hatred are returning. These bombs of returning hatred with the power of several Hiroshima's are blowing the life of my country to pieces."*



Celebrities against the war

Nargiz Zakirova, a famous singer of Uzbek origin, was [denied](#) entrance to Russia for the next 50 years. Zakirova's lawyer assumes that this ban was caused by her Instagram posts where she expressed her support for Ukraine. *26 May, RBC*).



A British singer and actor Harry Styles [made](#) a call for Ukraine during his recent New York concert when he waved the country's flag during his performance on the stage. (24 May, *IndiaTVNews*)



[Here](#) is the Russian version of the newsletter #4.