

WAR ON UKRAINE - Media Insights #13

In this issue (1-14 August), we focus on the restoration of grain exports, a widely criticized Amnesty International report, threats to the biggest Ukrainian power plant and an ongoing repression of Russian citizens protesting the war.

Welcome to the 13th edition of our regular newsletter, where you will find an overview of pro-Kremlin narratives about the war in Ukraine. Our newsletters offer a unique insight into two different worlds - the world of Russian state media and how they interpret the ongoing "special military operation" in Ukraine and the world of facts as reported by independent media.

If you like our newsletter, [Media Insights - War on Ukraine](#), and wish to be regularly updated, please subscribe [here](#). You can find all the previous issues on our [website](#). The current edition offers these narratives, topics, and events:

Main Events and Updates

As reported by Russian media:

- The hard line of attack on Olaf Scholz and German media
- Amnesty International report
- Accusing Ukrainian armed forces of shelling the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant
- Komsomolskaya Pravda radio anchor calls to create Stalin's GULAGs for Ukrainians
- Claims of mass desertion among Ukrainian military personnel.

Reported by international media:

- First grain ship has left Odesa under grain deal
- Amnesty International report claiming Ukraine armed forces have at times [used](#) tactics that endanger civilians
- Meeting between Russian and Turkish presidents in Sochi
- Internally displaced persons are facing economic hardship in Ukraine, while refugees can become victims of disinformation campaigns abroad
- The alarming situation around Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant calls for its demilitarization and Russia's exit from the facility
- The Russian war against Ukraine must end with the liberation of Crimea - President Zelensky

Photos of the Week



The ship Razoni, which was laden with corn, [left](#) Odesa on Monday, being the first grain ship leaving Ukraine in months.

(1 August, New York Times, Photo: Oleksandr Gimarov/Agence France-Presse)



A passenger [sits](#) on an evacuation train waiting to depart from Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine, heading west to a safer part of the country, on August 2. He is one of 5.5 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine, according to an IOM report.

(5 August, CNN, Photo: David Goldman/AP)



Smoke rising after explosions near a Russian military air base in Crimea.
(10 August, [Euronews](#))

Quotes of the Week

"We proceed from the fact that there can be no winners in a nuclear war and it should never be unleashed, and we stand for equal and indivisible security for all members of the world community," - said Russian President Vladimir Putin [addressing](#) the nuclear non-proliferation treaty conference. (1 August, *The Guardian*)

"Hang in there, the namesake! We will avenge you!" Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev commented on the removal of Dmitriy Puchkov's (Goblin) channel from YouTube by Google. (4 August, [RBC.ru](#))

"This Russian war against Ukraine and against entire free Europe began with Crimea and must end with Crimea — with its liberation," Ukrainian [President](#) Volodymyr Zelensky. (11 August, *CNN*)

Media Insights

First grain ship has left Odesa under grain deal, but insecurities remain

During this week, the international media have covered the departure of the first grain ship from the port of Odesa on Monday, 1 August. The Razoni, a Sierra Leone-registered cargo ship, has left the Ukrainian port bound for Lebanon with a vital shipment of 26,000 tonnes of grain. The EU and NATO [welcomed](#) the departure of the grain shipment from [Ukraine](#) as a "first step" towards easing the food crisis caused by the Russian invasion. It was the first vessel to leave a Ukrainian port since

Moscow and Kyiv signed an agreement brokered by Turkey and the UN to permit food shipments despite the conflict. (1 August, Guardian). Ukraine's foreign minister [called](#) it "a day of relief for the world," especially for countries threatened by food shortages and hunger because of the disrupted shipments. Ukraine accounts for 10 % of the global wheat market (1 August, France 24).

Euronews [emphasizes](#) that some cereals have already left Ukraine since the start of the invasion, but none from areas occupied by the Russians, such as those on the Sea of Azov. It also reminds us that Russia has previously reportedly denied that it is using food as a political weapon and has instead blamed sanctions for the global price rises. (4 August, Euronews)

On Sunday, another four ships carrying Ukrainian foodstuffs [sailed](#) from Ukrainian Black Sea ports. The four bulk carriers were loaded with more than 160,000 tonnes of corn and other foodstuffs. (7 August, Guardian)

Amnesty International report claims Ukraine's armed forces have at times used tactics that endanger civilians and the reaction of Ukraine and Russia

In its recent report, Amnesty International [claimed](#) that the Ukrainian army was endangering the life of civilians by basing themselves in residential areas. *"We have documented a pattern of Ukrainian forces putting civilians at risk and violating the laws of war when they operate in populated areas,"* said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general.

Amnesty International report in Russian media Ukraine

- Amnesty International accused Ukraine of violating international law (4 August, [AiF](#))
- Amnesty International defends report on AFU crimes, 6 August, [ru](#)
- Amnesty International does not surrender at the mercy of violent Kyiv, 6 August, [ru](#)

[NOTE - The claim that the Ukrainian army is regularly putting civilians in danger is one of the major narratives of the Russian state media]

Foreign media emphasize that the Ukrainian reaction to the report was furious. CNN [cites](#) President Zelenskyi, who said that the report tried to "shift the responsibility" of civilian deaths in Ukraine away from Russia. *"We saw today a completely different report from Amnesty International, which, unfortunately, tries to amnesty the terrorist state and shift the responsibility from the aggressor to the victim,"* Zelenskyi said. (5 August, CNN). Politico [cites](#) foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba who said that Amnesty International must stop creating "a fake reality" in which every side of the war "is a little guilty of something." (4 August, Politico). The head of Amnesty Ukraine's office, Oksana Pokalchuk, resigned from her post, [informs](#) DW. Before, she wrote on her Facebook that this report became a tool for Russian propaganda: *"The organization created material that sounded like support for Russian narratives. To protect civilians, this study became a tool of Russian propaganda."* (6 August, DW)

In a further story development, France 24 [writes](#) that on 5 August, [Amnesty International](#) confirmed it fully stood by its accusations that Ukraine was endangering civilians by establishing bases in residential areas. The organization's Secretary General Agnes Callamard told the following in emailed comments: *"The findings ... were based on evidence gathered during extensive investigations which were subject to the same rigorous standards and due diligence processes as all of Amnesty International's work."* (5 August, France 24)

Meeting between Russian and Turkish Presidents in Sochi

The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, met his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, on Friday, 5 August, in the Russian seaside resort of Sochi. Deutsche Welle [reports](#) that, among other things, [they discussed](#) the war in Ukraine and the resumption of [grain exports](#) across the Black Sea under an agreement Turkey helped to broker. The RUSI expert Marina Vorotnyuk notes that although there is a sore point in Russian-Turkish relations – the supply of Bayraktar drones to Ukraine – Turkey has not joined other Western countries in imposing sanctions, did not close its airspace to Russian planes after February 24, and welcomes Russian tourists. (5 August, DW). Die Welt [emphasizes](#) that the Bayraktar drone has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invasion and that Haluk Bayraktar, chief of the drone production facility, ruled out the selling of drones to Russia: “Turkey supports Ukraine with military drones, and we would never do something like that.” (5 August, die Welt).

Washington Post [writes](#) that since the start of the Ukraine war, Turkey had positioned itself as a mediator between Moscow and Kyiv — a role that appeared to pay dividends last month when [Turkey and the United Nations-brokered the grain export agreement](#). Putin thanked Erdogan on Friday for his role in orchestrating that. However, a senior Turkish official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to WP, said that the country remains “committed to Ukraine’s independence and sovereignty.” (5 August, WP)

Google removed popular YouTube channel of a Russian blogger Goblin

“Well, what to do? It happened that way. It's someone else's shop. If they're out there chasing President Trump like a cat, what chances do I have? They think it's unacceptable to support the Russian Federation on their platform. Anyone who doesn't support the Ukrainian Nazis, they briskly remove. And now it's my turn.”, Dmitriy Puchkov (Goblin) on YouTube, closing down his channel with 3ml+ subscribers. (4 August, [AiF](#))

The YouTube channel of blogger Dmitry Puchkov, better known under the pseudonym Goblin, was removed for violating the hate speech policy, the press service of Google (which owns YouTube) informed. As [reported](#), the channel with 3 million subscribers was deleted on 4th August. Google said it had issued three warnings to Mr. Puchkov over the past 90 days. *“We have removed content from Dmitry Puchkov’s channel and issued a warning (strike) to him for violating our hate speech policy,” the company said. Google clarified that this policy prohibits content “that denies, downplays, or trivializes well-documented events of violence,”* including the military action in Ukraine. (5 August, [Russia Posts in English](#))

What did independent media say about the main topics?

Explosions on the Russian airbase in Crimea

During this week, one of the most important topics covered by international media was the explosions that hit a Russian military airbase in annexed Crimea on Tuesday, 9 August. The Russian defense ministry, as reported by the Russian state media RIA Novosti, [said](#) the blasts had been caused by detonated aviation ammunition: “Around 3:20 p.m., several aviation munitions detonated on the territory of the airfield 'Saki' near the settlement of Novofedorivka”. (8 August, CNN)

However, the Ukrainian version of events was different. New York Times [writes](#) that Ukrainian officials would not confirm the involvement of Ukraine’s military publicly, but a senior Ukrainian

military official with knowledge of the situation said that Ukrainian forces had carried out that attack. He added that the airbase was one from which planes regularly took off for attacks on Ukrainian forces. (9 August, NYT). Mykhailo Podolyak, the adviser to President Volodymyr Zelenskyi, said that the series of explosions could have been the work of partisan saboteurs. Partisan saboteurs are a reference to the World War II-era self-organized antifascist resistance fighters, [writes](#) Euronews. (10 August, Euronews)

Calls for the demilitarized zone around Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant and Russia's exit

U.N. chief Antonio Guterres on Thursday, 11 August, [called](#) for military activity around Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power complex to end as Moscow and Kyiv blamed each other for a renewed shelling, and the U.N. Security Council met to discuss the situation. The United States backed the call for a demilitarized zone around the plant. (11 August, Reuters). Foreign ministers from the G7 group of nations [say](#) Russia must immediately hand back control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant to Ukraine. They accused Moscow's forces of putting the entire region in danger. (11 August, BBC).

The Russian war against Ukraine must end with the liberation of Crimea - President Zelensky

Foreign media wrote this week about the [statement](#) by Ukrainian President Zelenskyi that the Russian war against Ukraine and against entire free Europe began with Crimea and must end with Crimea — with its liberation. (9 August, Deutsche Welle). France 24 [emphasizes](#) that this is a serious shift in the position of Ukrainians, who previously have suggested that it might be acceptable for Ukraine to return to the situation just before the war, meaning Crimea stays a part of Russia, so this seems to be the hardening of the Ukrainian position. (10 August, France 24).

Other news in brief

Deutsche Welle [writes](#) that Russia's Supreme Court on Tuesday declared the Ukrainian "Azov" Regiment a terrorist organization. An estimated 1,000 Azov soldiers are being held by Russia and Moscow's allied forces in eastern Ukraine. Many of them were captured when the city of Mariupol fell in May. Azov fighters are facing criminal cases as Russia accuses them of killing civilians. Under stringent anti-terror laws, the captured Azov soldiers could have fewer rights and longer jail terms, up to 20 years. (3 August, DW). Euronews [says](#) that in its statement, the Azov Regiment dismissed the ruling, accusing the Kremlin of "looking for new excuses and explanations for its war crimes." It urged the US and other countries to label Russia a terrorist state. (2 August, Euronews)

The US Treasury Department on Tuesday sanctioned Russian President Vladimir Putin's [reputed girlfriend](#), Alina Kabaeva, as part of a series of measures targeting Russian elites. 39-year-old Kabaeva is a former member of the State Duma and is the current head of the National Media Group, a pro-Kremlin empire of television, radio, and print organizations. She has recently called to support Putin's war in Ukraine. (2 August, CNN). Euronews [adds](#) that the imprisoned Russian rights campaigner Alexey Navalny has earlier called for sanctions against Kabaeva, saying that her news outlet has pioneered the Russian media's portrayal of Western commentary on the invasion as disinformation. (2 August, Euronews)

Guardian [reports](#) that long lines of Russian shoppers formed outside H&M stores in Moscow shopping centers this week when the Swedish fashion retailer reopened its doors to sell off stock before pulling out of [Russia](#) for good. [H&M halted operations in Russia](#) after the invasion of Ukraine

on 24 February but opened its doors one last time this week to clear out remaining goods. (4 August, *Guardian*)

CNN [writes](#) that bipartisan pair of US senators (Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal and Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham) called on the Biden administration to [designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism](#) in response to its invasion of Ukraine, saying they would push Congress to pass a bill issuing the designation "whether or not" it had [President Joe Biden's](#) support. (7 August, *CNN*)

Russians against the War

Russian stand-up comedian Maxim Galkin severely criticized the "special operation" Russian full-scale war in Ukraine in his recent show, allegedly in Israel (5 August, https://t.me/slvn_pomet/2501)

A Russian journalist and media manager, Ilya Krasilshchik, against whom a criminal case was opened for discrediting the Russian armed forces, reported the arrest of his bank accounts, [according](#) to RBC (3 August). Earlier, he was put on the wanted list for his post about Bucha. Previously Krasilshchik used to work for a media outlet Meduza and the company Yandex. In another [report](#) from the outlet (4 August), a teacher Irina Gen in the Russian city Penza has got five years probation for discrediting the army in conversation with a student. She was also banned from teaching for three years, [reports](#) RBC.

Russian authorities on Wednesday [raided](#) the home of a former state TV journalist, Marina Ovsyannikova, who quit after making an on-air protest against Moscow's war in Ukraine and launched a criminal case against her on the charge of spreading false information about the Russian armed forces. RBC [reported](#) later that she had been charged with spreading fakes about the Russian army. The charges were brought under paragraph "d" of part 2 of Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code (public dissemination of deliberately false information about the armed forces for reasons of political hatred). The journalist could face up to ten years in prison.



Journalist Marina Ovsyannikova [answers](#) journalists' questions as she arrives for court in Moscow on

8 August. (Photo: Alexander Nemenov/AFP/Getty Images)

In Kaliningrad, an activist received a year in prison under the "Dadinska" article

In Kaliningrad, the court sentenced activist Vadim Khairullin to one year in prison. He was found guilty of multiple violations of the rules of participation in public rallies. Khairullin went on a solitary picket with a poster "For Our and Your Freedom!" and participated three times in rallies in support of Alexei Navalny. The prosecutor's office asked the court for a suspended sentence rather than a real one. (8 August, [RFL](#))

