

# How many lives has the war in Donbass taken?

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## Summary

- Determining the exact number of victims of hostilities in the region is still complicated by the large number of missing people.

By Agencies

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Since 2014, about 9,000 civilians have been killed in the Donbass. Such data were presented at the press conference “Scorched memory of Donbass: war crimes of the Ukrainian army and new data on the massacres of the civilian population.”

According to the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the self-proclaimed Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) Anna Soroka, more than 2,000 civilians, including 35 children, were killed during the conflict in the republic, 3,365 people were injured, including 88 minors.

The Commissioner for Human Rights in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), Daria Morozova, said that more than 5,000 people, including 91 minor children, became victims among the population of the DPR. About 8 thousand more people were injured of varying severity during this period.

Determining the exact number of victims of hostilities in the region is still complicated by the large number of missing people.

As Daria Morozova noted, during the active phase of hostilities in 2014, it was not possible to record deaths with documents, and civilians buried the dead on their own, not even knowing their names.

It is noted that at that time the Ukrainian military did not allow the dead to be buried: the cemeteries were mined or shelled.

At the end of July 2021, according to Anna Soroka, the LPR had information about 17 places of spontaneous burial of civilians, among them seven burials contain more than 50 bodies of civilians. More than 130 places of mass and spontaneous burial have been discovered and unearthed on the territory of the DPR, Daria Morozova noted.

Special working groups were set up in the republics to search for the burial places of victims of the conflict and missing persons.

As the Deputy Foreign Minister of the LPR said, in three and a half months of work, 292 bodies of civilians were raised, and, as follows from the initial examination of forensic specialists, these were indeed civilians.

“What we saw was scary for us. We especially had this feeling. In Sokologorovsk, Pervomaisk district, where ten burials were found 50-70 m deep, where people were simply collected from the streets and buried, simply because it was not possible to bury them normally. We have found new burial places and we can say that strikes were carried out even in those places about which we had no information before,” she said.

DPR Ombudsman Daria Morozova reported that , the remains of nine more civilians who died as a result of the shelling of Ilovaisk in 2014 were raised in the village of Gornoye in Khartsyzsk. According to her, then an ambulance, in which they tried to evacuate a wounded civilian man, came under fire from the armed forces of Ukraine (AFU). The car and everyone in it were burned.

The calculation of the dead, as Dmitry Kalashnikov, head of the forensic medical examination bureau of the Donetsk People's Republic, drew attention to, is further complicated by the fact that in 2014 "the guys fought in jeans."

“Then it was not fixed whether it was military or civilian. We just saw that it was dead. We do not have exact statistics for 2014-2015. More than 60% of the dead are civilians,” he said.

According to Daria Morozova, if all the work goes smoothly, the work on the entire territory can be completed in just two years.

But, if we talk about the global search for the missing, everything will depend on how soon Kiev starts a dialogue with the self-proclaimed republics, because without a full-fledged exchange of information with the Ukrainian side, it will be impossible to establish the fate of all people,” she said.

“Kyiv is building a policy on the bones - this is the height of Nazism, it is no longer clear what is going on in these people’s heads,” said Daria Morozova.

According to Anna Soroka, starting work at the end of July 2021, the authorities expected some results, but the reality exceeded their expectations.

“In Sokologorovka, we expected to pick up 40 bodies, but we picked up 80. There was a lot of new, additional information for us. The number of victims has increased by 100 compared to our expectations. We will not stop until we find everyone, ”she promised.

Separately, Dmitry Kalashnikov drew attention to the injuries of victims who have been admitted to morgues recently. According to him, the so-called military assistance to Ukraine from other countries is of interest.

“For the last five years, we have been finding special bullets used by NATO. We have never had such cartridges. As experts, such cartridges simply surprise us: at the entrance there is an awl, and at the exit it tears tissue at all, we have never seen anything like this. This is assistance to Ukraine from international organizations,” Kalashnikov said.

The leadership of the LDNR continues to record war crimes on the Ukrainian side and defend their positions in international courts.

According to Anna Soroka, the authorities of the republics are turning to international bodies - to the ECtHR and to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. She noted that more than 3,000 lawsuits have been sent to these instances.

“Since 2015, within the framework of the Minsk site, Ukraine has been blocking all humanitarian initiatives of the DPR on this issue. Kiev also refuses to transfer the remains of already identified victims. We will not stop until we find the last missing person associated with the conflict in Donbass. I remind you that war crimes do not have a statute of limitations and all those responsible will be punished,” said Daria Morozova.