

UN: Death Rate 10 a Day in East Ukraine Despite Cease-Fire

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses the 65th session of UNHCR's Executive Committee meeting at the UN European headquarters in Geneva Oct. 1.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine is still claiming about 10 lives a day among government troops, pro-Russian separatists and civilians despite a cease-fire agreed in early September, the United Nations said on Wednesday.

Over 3,660 people have died and 8,766 been wounded in eastern Ukraine since fighting broke out in mid-April when armed separatists declared they were setting up their own state, the office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said.

The overall death rate has dropped sharply since the cease-fire began, according to the latest monthly report by the nine international monitors and 24 support staff sent in March to the former Soviet republic now at odds with Russia.

A surge in civilian casualties in late August, the report said, followed an influx of foreign fighters including former or current Russian servicemen "on leave" to back up the separatists as the Ukrainian army was gaining the upper hand.

"The situation has improved since the cease-fire, but it is still concerning," Gianni Magazzini, of the office of UN high commissioner for human rights, told a news conference to present the report.

Since the cease-fire was agreed in Minsk between Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, Russian President Vladimir Putin and separatist chiefs, at least 331 deaths have been recorded in the conflict area, it said.

In a separate statement, High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called on both sides in the fighting — largely around the industrial and coal mining cities of Donetsk and Luhansk — to "halt the attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure once and for all."

The report said the separatist fighters, portrayed in the Moscow media as defending their regions against a "fascist regime" in Kiev, "continue to terrorize the population in areas under their control."

The fighters, it said, were "pursuing killings, abductions and torture" and seizing property and businesses at will. They abducted people for ransom and forced labor or to be exchanged for their own men captured by Ukrainian forces.

But the report also recorded allegations of human rights violations by some of the volunteer battalions fighting alongside the poorly equipped Ukrainian army that were sent in to police regions recaptured from the separatists in August.

"The [Kiev] government needs to exercise more control of all its forces, including the volunteer battalions, and to ensure accountability for any violations and crimes committed by their members," it declared.

Among the dead in the conflict, at least 1,078 were Ukrainian servicemen and volunteers, according to the report, although it noted that "the reporting of Ukrainian military casualties is imprecise and contradictory."

Also included were the 298 passengers of a Malaysian airliner shot down over separatist-controlled territory on July 17, and some 1,300 separatist fighters and civilians in the Donetsk region and some 842 in and around Luhansk.

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