The Moscow Times
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Death Toll Hits 28 in Occupied East Ukraine Strike – Russian Rescuers

By AFP

February 04, 2024



Lysychansk, in the Luhansk region, fell to Russian forces after a brutal battle at the start of Moscow's offensive in 2022. **Russian-installed authorities of Lysychansk / TASS**

Russia said Sunday the death toll from a Ukrainian strike on a bakery in the occupied eastern city of Lysychansk climbed to 28 people, including a child.

The strike hit almost two years into Russia's grinding offensive in Ukraine, where the front has barely moved in months but attacks have intensified this winter.

Moscow's occupation forces Saturday said Kyiv struck a building that housed a bakery popular with locals on weekends.

Ukraine has not yet commented on the strike.

Lysychansk is a city in the occupied Luhansk region that fell to Russian forces after one of the

most brutal battles during Moscow's long offensive in summer 2022.

Before the Russian army entered Ukraine, it had a population of around 110,000 people.

"Search operations continue on the site of the collapsed bakery... 28 people, including a child, have died," the Russian emergency situations ministry posted on Telegram.

Occupational authorities in Luhansk said there were 18 men, nine women and one child among the dead.

They did not give the child's age.

Russia released images of an almost completely destroyed building, with rescuers combing the rubble in the dark, where they found a corpse and a wounded woman who was evacuated on a stretcher.

The one-story building had a large sign on it that read "Restaurant Adriatic."

Russia alleged Saturday that Ukraine had used Western weapons in the strike and said it expected swift and "unconditional condemnation" from the international community.

On Saturday, the Ukrainian army's daily report said aviation "struck 12 areas where enemy personnel were concentrated."

It also said its forces "struck one area of enemy concentration."

Wounded brought to regional capital

Rescuers have so far saved 10 people from the wreckage, according to the Russian emergencies ministry.

The Russian-installed health minister of the occupational Luhansk government, Natalia Pashchenko, said they were brought to medical facilities in the main city of Luhansk.

She said four of them are in "the most critical state" while two others are in a "severe state."

The city of Luhansk has been under pro-Russian separatist control since 2014.

The Moscow-installed head of Luhansk, Leonid Pasechnik, declared a day of mourning in the Russian-held region and vowed retaliation against Ukraine.

The Ukrainian army, meanwhile, said Sunday that its forces repelled 27 Russian attacks near Avdiivka — which Russia has tried to capture for months — and the nearby village of Novokalynove.

Russia has tried to seize the industrial city — which has been a symbol of Ukrainian resistance after it briefly fell to Moscow-backed separatists in 2014 — since October.

Russian forces control territory to the north, east and south of Avdiivka.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier this week that Moscow's forces "reached the

outskirts of Avdiivka."

Ukraine has said its forces are holding out, with footage from Avdiivka showing a city of ruins.

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https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/02/04/death-toll-hits-28-in-occupied-east-ukraine-strike-russian-rescuers-a83967