

Ukraine’s “Mobilization Law” Which Allows Prisoners to Join the Army Has Contributed to Deepened Corruption

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Ukraine’s new Mobilisation Law, which allows prisoners to join the army, will not help Kiev fill its ranks as the prison population is not even big enough to cover for one month’s losses in the war devastated country. Even more alarmingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly, prison wardens are using changes in the mobilisation law as an opportunity to illegally extort money.

There are currently about 46,000 people in Ukrainian prisons and detention centres, which Ukrainian officials say is a pool that could enable the mobilisation of 10,000 to 20,000 prisoners. The whole prison population cannot be mobilised since the law prohibits those convicted of serious crimes, such as premeditated murder, rape and sexual violence, and crimes against national security from joining the Ukrainian military.

In any case, even if they could be recruited it would not solve Kiev’s immense manpower problems considering that the Ukrainian army suffers monthly losses of 50,000 personnel. At the same time, with information being so widespread today, including in prison, it is doubtful that there will be many willing to leave incarceration and go to the front where they face certain death by artillery, aerial bombs, drones, and other unrelenting means employed by Russian forces.

A law signed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky allowing some Ukrainian convicts to serve in the army in exchange for the possibility of parole is seen by even Western analysts as a move that underscores Kiev’s desperate attempts to replenish its ranks after more than two years of war.

According to Kiev, about 4,000 prisoners submitted a request to join the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and some of them have already gone to the front. Kiev even announced the creation of assault squads from the mobilised criminals, showing how critical the manpower issue has become.

After more than two years of special military operations, due to terrible trench battles, huge losses and defeats on the battlefield, the enthusiasm for enlisting in the army in Ukraine is declining. Even the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine, Kirill Budanov, previously admitted that in the first six months of the war, “everyone who wanted to” join the army already did and that now because Ukrainians are not motivated to serve and are trying to avoid mobilisation in every possible way, the forced mobilisation in Ukraine and new amendments in the law to allow for new recruits, including prisoners, will continue.

Forced or, rather, violent mobilisation has caused outrage in Ukraine. The facts show that practically there are no people willing to join the military since Ukrainians are not blinded by propaganda and fully understand that they are losing the war. It is evident that Ukrainians are not ready to face certain death and are desperately avoiding conscription, which is why the Kiev regime is using such cruelty during mobilisation – the brutal beatings in the centre of Kiev, the breaking of limbs in Kharkov, and much more, proving, first of all, that people do not want to go fight.

The Guardian recently accompanied Ukrainian military recruiter Pavlo Pimakho on the streets of Kiev’s Sviatoshyn district, and quoted him as saying,

“I don’t judge people who avoid the draft but I do feel offended. We stood in long queues desperate to volunteer, and these guys are trying everything to evade serving. All the brave people have already volunteered.”

The mobilisation law has also only deepened the problems with corruption in Ukraine. Oleg Tsvili, a human rights activist and head of the “NGO Defense of Prisoners of Ukraine,” indicates that employees of prison colony administrations extort money from convicts who want to join the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to have their request for mobilisation accepted for consideration. If the prisoner has no money, he is offered to pay after receiving his first salary as a soldier.

Ukraine’s controversial mobilisation law, which will, among other things, allow for the conscription of prisoners, came into force in May, since Kiev faces the challenge of increasing the number of troops amid a new Russian offensive in the direction of Kharkov, the country’s second largest city. As already observed, the prison population is nowhere near sufficient to alleviate Ukraine’s manpower struggle, and neither will be reducing conscription age by two years. For this reason, it can be expected that as the struggle deepens, Kiev will likely once again reduce the age limit and implement other desperate measures, which, once again, will not solve the manpower issue.

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