

Ukraine's Upcoming Winter: Energy Shortages, Power Outages, Impacts on a Demoralized Population

By [Ahmed Adel](#)

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The upcoming winter could be the toughest for Ukraine during the conflict so far due to a shortage of energy resources and the poor psychological state of the population, The Washington Post reported. The report added that the consequences of prolonged power outages could range from cutting off water and heating to damaging the country's economy.

The American outlet noted that power outages are a fact, but estimates of their severity vary. "The best-case scenario is just four hours of power cuts a day, but it could also end up being 20 hours of darkness or more a day in the depths of Ukraine's frigid winter."

But the biggest casualty may be the psychological state of Ukrainians, according to The Washington Post. About two and a half years after Russia launched its special military operation, with little prospect of a Ukrainian victory on the horizon and following a series of battlefield setbacks in recent months, the population has reached its breaking point.

The newspaper added that the population's willingness to make territorial concessions rose from 10% in May 2023 to 32% a year later.

The director of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, Anton Hrushetsky, noted that cold, dark days could change Ukrainian attitudes to the conflict. In his words, the population is now overwhelmingly against peace with Russia "at any cost," but opinion polls show an increase in the number of people willing to make difficult compromises to end the conflict.

He described "a growing tiredness, and this causes more conflict, because people are more psychologically unstable."

Ukraine's Energy Minister, **German Galushchenko**, said half of its electricity generation capacity had been lost earlier. He said that his state is now living with restrictions, even in the summer.

Ukrainian **President Volodymyr Zelensky** previously said some 9 gigawatts of Ukraine's power generation capacity had been destroyed, representing 80% of thermal power and one-third of hydropower. At the same time, Ukraine's largest private energy company, DTEK, said some 90 percent of its coal-fired power plants had been damaged or destroyed.

It is also recalled that Ukraine's Ministry of Energy said on March 22 that the country's

energy system had suffered the largest attack in recent times, whilst Igor Sirota, director general of Ukrhydroenergo, said the country lost about 20% of its regulation capacity due to damage to the Dnieper hydroelectric power station in Zaporozhye.

Russia began carrying out massive high-precision missile strikes against vital infrastructure and command posts in several Ukrainian regions and cities on October 10, 2022. Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that Moscow was forced to strike such blows in response to Ukrainian attacks on its own energy facilities, a factor The Washington Post does not mention.

The Washington Post noted that “the bulk of Ukraine’s energy production this winter will still be concentrated in large power plants, allowing Russia to inflict maximum damage with targeted missile strikes — as was demonstrated clearly last month when Moscow’s forces carried out one of the biggest bombardments since the war began.”

Ukrainian **Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha** said in a statement on September 21, citing Ukrainian intelligence reports, that Russia is “preparing strikes on critical facilities” of the country’s nuclear energy system “on the eve of winter.” The attacks will target “open distribution devices of nuclear power plants and transmission substations,” which created “a high risk of a nuclear incident that will have global consequences.”

Although this is highly unlikely, it does point to the immense fear that the **Kiev regime has in facing long periods of cold and darkness**, a factor that will only continue to demoralise the parts of the population that are still against peace with Russia, whether it be because they believe Kiev regime propaganda that victory can still be achieved or out of blind ultra-nationalism.

Nonetheless, in a press release, **Danielle Bell**, head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, said:

“This winter will be bad enough with people likely having to cope with scheduled blackouts across the country. Any additional attacks leading to prolonged electricity blackouts could have catastrophic consequences.”

This will be the third winter that Ukrainians will suffer through, and by all accounts, it will be the most difficult experience the country will have had since World War II. Although European Commission **President Ursula von der Leyen** and the Director of the International Energy Agency presented on September 19 a report on the immediate measures that need to be taken to strengthen Ukraine’s energy security and help it face the coming winter, there is nothing that either can do if Russia decides to continue attacking Ukrainian energy resources. Only Zelensky’s willingness to achieve peace with Moscow can prevent Ukrainians from having a brutal winter, but there are no serious signs from him that he wants to pursue this.

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Ahmed Adel is a Cairo-based geopolitics and political economy researcher. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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