5,000+ killed in Ukraine: UN concerned, Donetsk rebel leader talks of 'offensive'

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The United Nations human rights office made the announcement on Friday saying that 262 people had died in the last nine days alone. This, they noted, is the "*most deadly period*" since the Minsk agreement in September, which should have paved the way towards a ceasefire.

"*The significant escalation in hostilities has taken the toll to 5,086 individuals and we fear the real figure may be considerably highe*r," UN human rights spokesman Rupert Colville told a news briefing in Geneva.

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The UN refugee agency also hit out at the Ukrainian government, with the Geneva based organization saying that government security regulations were making it difficult to deliver aid to those affected in the east of the country and it is making it more difficult for those who have been displaced.

Meanwhile, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, leader of the self-proclaimed People's Republic of Donetsk, says his anti-government forces aren't interested in a truce with Kiev and will instead try to push Ukrainian forces back to the borders of the Donetsk region. While talks with Kiev have been ruled out for the moment, Zakharchenko said discussions would continue concerning prisoner exchanges.

"*There won't be a ceasefire. There will only be exchanges of prisoners. Our fighters need to*

return home," he said on Friday, as reported by TASS.

Aleksandr Turchynov, who is the head of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, hit out at the rebel forces in Donetsk for rejecting the ceasefire. He says the situation is being exacerbated in the east because the rebels are continuing their offensive.

Tensions in eastern Ukraine have significantly risen in the past two weeks, Deputy Chief of the OSCE mission in Ukraine Alexander Hug told RT on Thursday. He called for the Minsk documents to be followed especially the ceasefire in east Ukraine.

"It is important that the weapons are quiet, heavy weapons are withdrawn, so the civilian population can be given a reprieve and some tranquility, especially now when the tensions have risen significantly in the past two week," Hug said.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin says responsibility for the deteriorating situation in the east of Ukraine lies with those who give "*such criminal orders*".

"*The Kiev authorities have given an official order to start large-scale military operations practically throughout the whole line of contact,*" he said. "*The results of this are many people have died and have been wounded. This has happened not only amongst soldiers from both sides, but even more tragically, amongst innocent civilians, which includes children, pensioners and women.*"

Putin was speaking 24 hours after a deadly attack on a trolleybus in Donetsk left nine people dead and 20 wounded. The Donetsk self-defense forces blamed government forces for launching mortar rounds on the transportation vehicle.

The Russian President added that there could not be "*no other way to end the conflict, except for peace talks and showing political will*."