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Battle wages for port city of Mariupol, as abhorrent war in Ukraine drags on



The abhorrent war in Ukraine continues unabated. According to reports, the battle for the besieged southeast Ukrainian port city of Mariupol has intensified, as civilians fleeing the conflict referred to escalating violence. Russian and Ukrainian forces are engaged in street fighting, with Russian airstrikes, artillery and mortar rounds having gutted entire neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, the number of people fleeing the war has exceeded 3.5 million, the UN refugee agency announced, while adding that some 12 million people are stranded in affected areas.

On the diplomatic front, Russian and Ukrainian negotiators again met, but with little apparent progress reported.

Ukrainian leaders have demanded that Russian troops leave the country before any peace agreement can be reached.

In Washington, US President Joe Biden used blunt language in commenting on the conflict, saying Russian President Vladimir Putin's back is "…against the wall," while he warned that the latter could employ even more severe tactics in Ukraine.

Biden will travel to Brussels this week for a series of meetings with U.S. allies on the Ukraine war and the West's response.

In Moscow, the Russian foreign ministry on Monday summoned US Ambassador John Sullivan to hand him a note of protest over Biden's statement that Russian President Putin is a "…war criminal."

In a related development, support for a European Union-wide ban on the purchase of Russian oil is apparently growing inside the bloc, representing a significant shift in the continent's stance from previous weeks.

