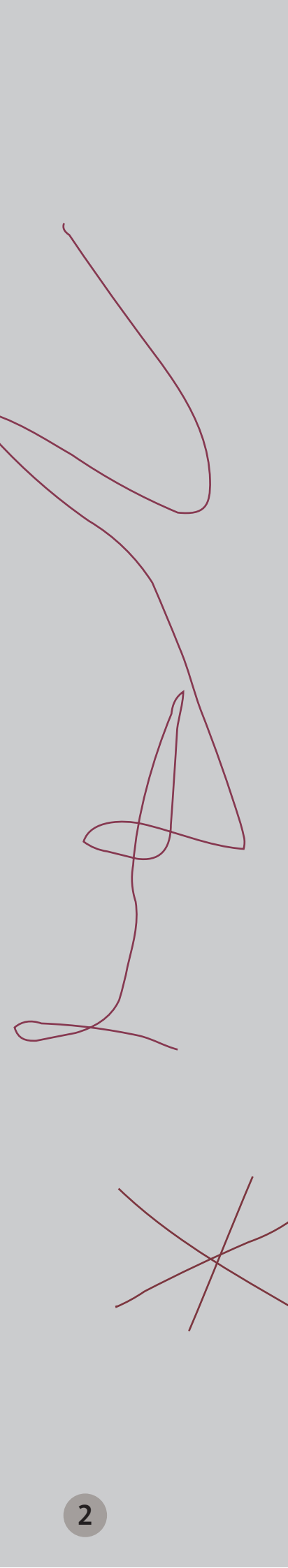


Violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine:

Summary of Events
from 01 June 2023 to 31 August 2023.





On 24 February 2022, Russia, with the support of Belarus, launched a new stage of the war against Ukraine, carrying out a full-scale invasion of the territory of our country unprecedented in modern history.

You can read about certain, in our opinion, key facts of violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) against the civilian population (in some cases - against combatants) in 2022 in our periodic digests <https://totalaction.org.ua/war-news/225>

The Eastern Ukrainian Center for Civic Initiatives (EUCCI) considers it important to inform a wide range of people, especially outside Ukraine, about war crimes committed in Ukraine.

Both parties to an international armed conflict are obliged to observe at least the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of Land Warfare of 1907 and the Regulations on the Laws and Customs of Land Warfare annexed to this Convention, the customary international law their obligations under international human rights law.

In this digest, the reader will find information on individual events of the armed conflict that took place in Ukraine from **01.06.2023 to 31.08.2023**, or that became known in the relevant period, and which affected the rights of the civilian population and, in some cases, of combatants (prisoners of war). We will try to explain why, in our view, certain acts constitute violations of IHL.

We hope that the results of our work and up-to-date information will be useful for journalists and a wide range of readers interested in the facts of IHL violations during Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine.

1

Deliberate killings, extrajudicial executions and torture of civilians.

The spring positional battles changed to a Ukrainian counter-offensive in the summer of 2023. The security and defense forces of Ukraine managed to liberate a number of municipalities, but significant areas of certain districts of the Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Kherson and Mykolaiv (Kinburn spit) regions remain temporarily occupied.

Information on human rights violations in the occupied territories is largely inaccessible to the general public. Ukrainian law enforcement officials, taking advantage of the opportunity to meet with victims and/or witnesses of crimes, continue to actively investigate crimes committed by the occupying forces in the now de-occupied territories.

On June 8 it became known that Ukrainian investigators have reported suspicion of the commission of a number of crimes, in particular violations of the laws and customs of war, by a citizen of Ukraine who, after the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 2014, received Russian citizenship and joined the ranks of the Russian Armed Forces. Investigators have established that since March 2022, as the commander of a naval unit, the man organized and controlled the processes related to the suppression of the resistance of the local population in the temporarily occupied territory of the Kherson region. In April 2022, in the village of Pravdyne, he took part in the illegal detention of employees of a private company guarding irrigation units, as well as an underage girl. The detainees were taken to a private house where they were physically abused, then shot and the house with the bodies was blown up. After the de-occupation of the village, Ukrainian law enforcement officers conducted an inspection of the crime scene and confiscated the remains of bodies with gunshot wounds on their skulls, as well as ropes tied to the wrists of those who had been tortured to death.¹ At the end of June 2023, the indictment was sent to the court.²



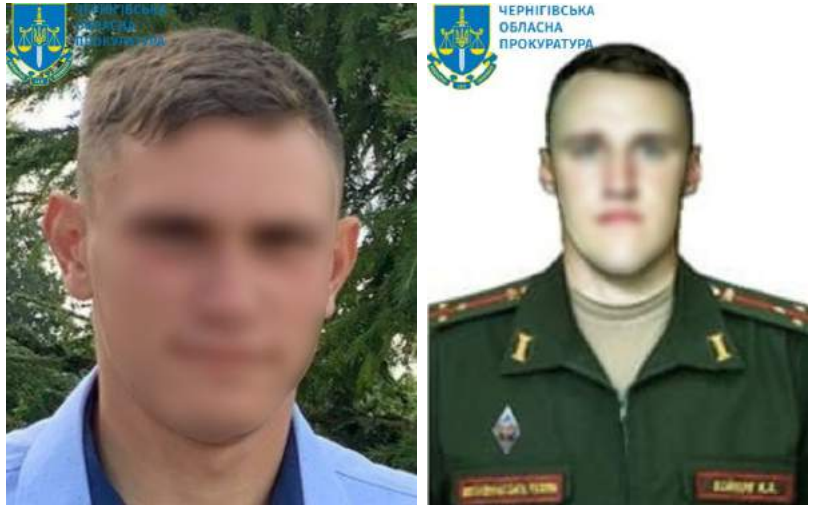
Inspection of the site where seven civilians were killed in the village of Pravdyne, Kherson region. Photo source: Office of the General Prosecutor

¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/vbivstvo-semi-civilnix-u-seli-pravdyne-na-xersonshhini-povidomleno-pro-pidozru-komandiru-pidrozdlu-morskoyi-pixotii-cornomorskogo-flotu-vmf-zs-rf>

² <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/za-vbivstvo-semi-civilnix-u-seli-pravdyne-na-xersonshhini-suditimut-komandira-pidrozdlu-morskoyi-pixotii-cornomorskogo-flotu-vmf-zs-rf>

On June 30

it became known that in March 2022 the commander of a tank platoon of the Russian armed forces and his subordinate, the tank commander, while in the village of Olshana (Chernihiv region), shot at two civilian cars with automatic weapons. In one of the cars two men were carrying bread and food to the residents of the village, and in the other two people were on their way to the hospital. All the civilians were killed at the scene. There is no reason to believe that the civilians took any hostile action against the combatants.³



Russian military personnel accused of killing civilians in Chernihiv region.
Photo source: National Police of Ukraine

On July 5

prosecutors of the Prosecutor General's office submitted an indictment to the court against the chief gunner of the "2nd Battalion of the 5th Separate Tank Brigade of the 36th Combined Arms Army of the Eastern Military District" of the Russian Federation on charges of violation of the laws and customs of war, combined with premeditated murder. According to the charge, in March 2022, during the occupation of the village of Berezivka (Bucha district, Kyiv region), the accused, along with other servicemen, shot at a civilian car that was moving along the municipality's highway. The wounded driver was pulled out of the damaged car by the military, after which the defendant stabbed him with a rifle butt and shot him in the head.⁴

On July 24

it became known that Ukrainian law enforcement officers had identified eleven servicemen of the "37th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade of the 36th Combined Arms Army" of the Russian Armed Forces and reported them as suspects. Investigators found that during the temporary occupation of certain areas of the Kyiv region in February-March 2022, suspects armed with firearms and military equipment carried out filtration measures in the occupied village of Motyzhyn and on its outskirts. While moving in armored vehicles marked "V", without warning, they opened precision fire with small arms at two cars with civilians near the landscape park in Motyzhyn, as well as on Shevchenko Street (located in the village). The cars were moving towards the military vehicles, had no signs of belonging to the Ukrainian Defense Forces and did not commit any hostile acts. Six civilians were killed by gunshot wounds.⁵



One of the civilian cars shot in Motyzhyn.
Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor

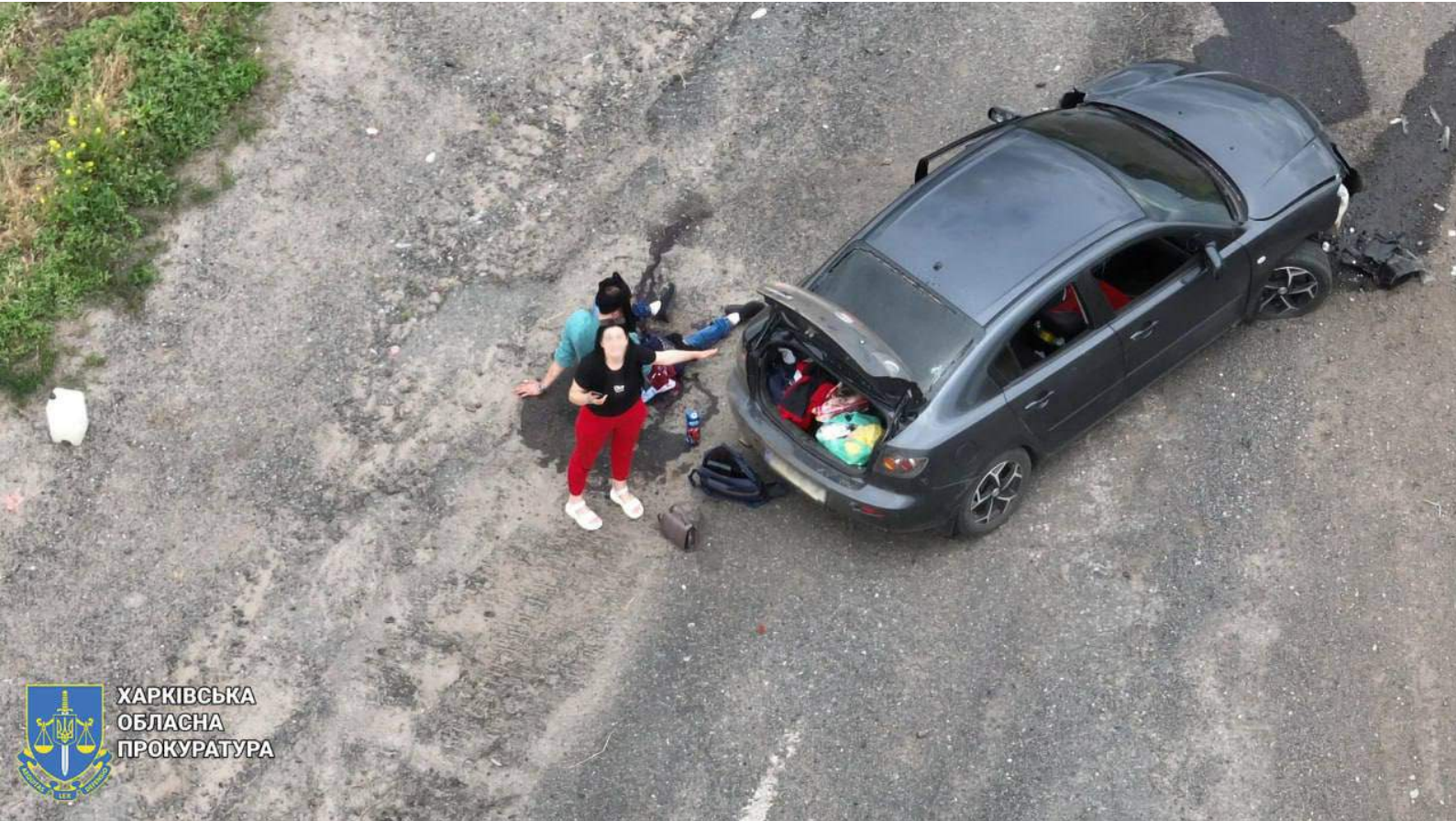
³ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/za-umisne-vbivstvo-cotiryox-civilnix-na-cernigivshhini-suditimut-dvox-rosiiskix-viiskovix>

⁴ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/suditimut-viiskovosluzbovcya-zs-rf-yakii-rozstrilyav-civilnu-osobu-v-avtomobili-na-kiyivshhini>

⁵ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/odinadcjatyom-viiskovosluzbovcyam-rf-povidomleno-pro-pidozru-u-rozstrili-avtomobiliv-z-mirnimi-meskancyami-ubucanskomu-raioni>

On August 4

the prosecutor's office sent to the court an indictment against a senior lieutenant, commander of the "1st motorized rifle company of the 1st motorized rifle battalion of the 15th motorized rifle regiment of the 2nd motorized rifle division of the 1st tank army of the Western Military District" of the Russian Federation, who, according to Ukrainian law enforcement officers, participated in the shooting of a civilian car with a married couple. The crime took place in June 2022 near the village of Velyka Komyshevka (Kharkiv region). The man was injured, but miraculously survived. Thanks to a Ukrainian quadcopter, the woman was able to reach the positions of the Ukrainian military and get help.



A woman near her wounded husband and their damaged car. Footage from a quadcopter.
Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor

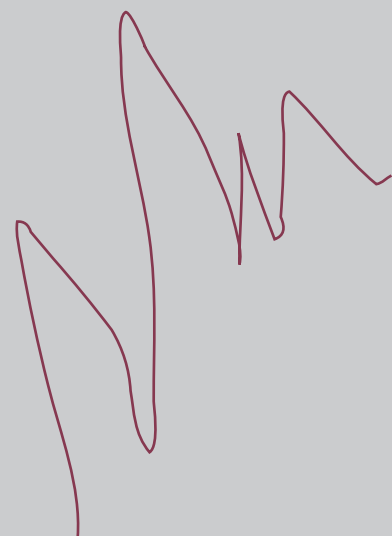
Why this is a violation of IHL:

The norms of international humanitarian law provide that the parties to a conflict must always distinguish between the civilian population and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military targets, and direct their actions accordingly only against military targets, in order to ensure respect for and protection of civilians and civilian objects (Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Articles 48, 52, Customary IHL, norms 1, 7).

Civilians have the right to respect for their person, their dignity, their right to family, their religious beliefs and their rituals, customs and practices in all circumstances. They must always be treated with humanity and protected from any act of violence or intimidation, from insults and from the curiosity of the crowd. The taking of hostages is forbidden (Fourth Geneva Convention, articles 27, 34).

Murder, torture, cruel or inhuman treatment, outrages upon human dignity, in particular degrading and humiliating treatment, corporal punishment, mutilation, rape and other forms of sexual violence, hostage-taking, forced disappearance and arbitrary detention are *prohibited* (Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Article 75, Customary IHL, norms 87, 89-93, 96, 98, 99).

Murder, torture or inhuman treatment, unlawful detention of a civilian are grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 147) and war crimes as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC Statute, Article 8 (1) (a) (i), (ii), (vii)).



Extrajudicial executions and torture of combatants.

On August 1

it became known that the investigators of the Security Service of Ukraine accused in absentia **Danila Koblik**, the battalion commander of the "74th separate guards motorized rifle brigade" of the Russian Armed Forces⁶, on suspicion of violation the laws and customs of war. Investigators found that on March 9, 2022, the Russian military under the command of the suspect, a major of the Russian Army, occupied the village of Lukashivka (Chernihiv district, Chernihiv region). The next day, during searches of the houses of the villagers, they found a serviceman of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and illegally detained two local men and a minor boy. Although the serviceman of the Ukrainian Armed Forces was retired, no longer involved in military operations and entitled to protection as a prisoner of war, the Russian major shot him with an automatic weapon during interrogation and later tortured two men and a minor, threatening to kill them.⁷

On August 14

it was announced the head of the "Prizrak" (Ghost) Brigade of the illegal armed formation of the "Luhansk People's Republic" ("LPR"), nicknamed "Shaman" **Volodymyr Demchenko**, had been granted the status of a suspect in a criminal case in absentia. Investigators of the Security Service of Ukraine established that on March 28, 2022, the suspect arrived at a private household in the village of Vilkhivka (Kharkiv district, Kharkiv region), where the Russian military was holding Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian hostages. In one of the sheds they placed a seriously wounded Ukrainian serviceman and three territorial defense servicemen. "Shaman" personally interrogated the territorial defense servicemen, beat them with his hands and feet, and then ordered them to be transported to another place. One of the Russian military asked "Shaman" what to do with the seriously wounded Ukrainian serviceman who was lying in the shed, and the suspect ordered to "execute" the man. Following the order, the militant fired a sub-machine gun at the Ukrainian serviceman, as a result of which he died instantly.⁸



Major of the Russian Armed Forces Danila Koblik, who is suspected of murdering a prisoner of war. Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor



Volodymyr Demchenko, nicknamed "Shaman". Photo source: Mirotvorets

⁶ <https://ssu.gov.ua/novyny/sbu-povidomyla-pro-pidozru-rosiiskomu-kombatu-yakyi-zakatuval-ukrainskoho-voina-pid-chas-okupatsii-chernihivshchyny>

⁷ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/komandiru-batalionu-zbroinix-sil-rf-povidomleno-pro-pidozru-u-vbivstvi-zaxisnika-ukrayini-ta-katuvanni-civilnix-osib>

⁸ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/nakazav-pidleglomu-vbiti-ukrayinskogo-viiskovopolononogo-kerivniku-brigadi-nzf-rf-inkriminovano-shhe-odin-zlocin>

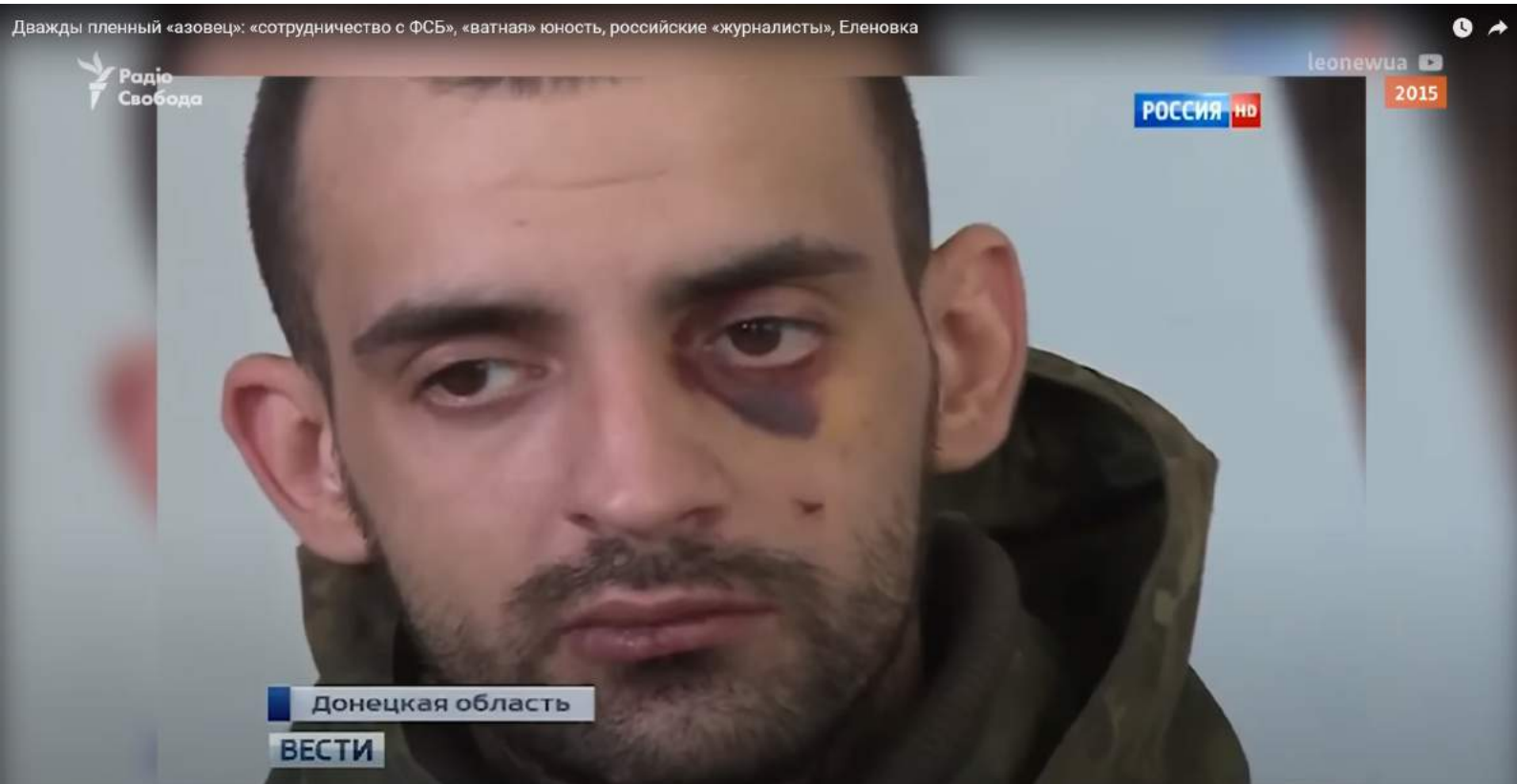
On August 20

Radio Liberty published an interview with a serviceman of the separate special purpose detachment "Azov" of the National Guard of Ukraine **Yevgen Chudnetsov**, who was twice in Russian captivity. The first time he was captured in 2015 during the fighting for the village of Shyrokyne (Donetsk region), and the second time - in the spring of 2022 during the defense of the city of Mariupol. He spent almost four years in Russian captivity. The serviceman told how his teeth were pulled out with pliers, he was electrocuted on his genitals, forced to participate in staged interviews with Russian media etc. Separately, it is worth noting the man's description of the most common methods of torturing prisoners, which the Russians call:⁹

"Тарик" - passing an electric current through the human body using a Soviet military field telephone connected to various parts of the body, especially the genitals;

"Dolphin" - a rag on the face and watering, as a result of which a person has the feeling that he is drowning in water;

"Motorcyclist" - fastening handcuffs on the hands and hanging on a metal bar, associated with blows with an electric shocker, etc.



Ukrainian serviceman Yevgen Chudnetsov during a staged interview with Russian media. Video screenshot. Source: Radio Liberty

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLF-NYwo4Z8>

Why this is a violation of IHL:

Persons who are not actively participating in military operations, in particular members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms, as well as those who have ceased to participate in military operations due to illness, injury, detention or for any other reason, shall be treated humanely in all circumstances, without any discrimination. To this end, it is forbidden to commit against the above-mentioned persons such acts as violence against life and person (all kinds of murder), causing injuries, ill-treatment and torture, abuse of human dignity (degrading and humiliating treatment). Any unlawful act or omission by the detaining power which causes the death or seriously endangers the health of a prisoner of war in custody is prohibited and shall be regarded as a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. Prisoners of war are to be protected at all times, in particular against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity (Third Geneva Convention, Articles 3, 13).

Prisoners of war are to be evacuated as soon as possible after their capture to camps in an area *far enough* from the combat zone to be out of danger. Only those prisoners of war who, because of wounds or illness, would be in greater danger by evacuation than by remaining where they are, may be temporarily retained in a danger zone (Third Geneva Convention, Article 19).

Murder, torture, cruel and inhuman treatment, outrages upon human dignity, injury, rape and other forms of sexual violence are prohibited by the norms of customary IHL (customary IHL, norms 89, 90, 92, 93 and others).

The widespread or systematic use of rape and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity constitutes *a crime against humanity* within the meaning of Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC Statute, Article 7 (1) (a), (g)).

Premeditated murder, in particular murder or wounding of a combatant who has laid down his arms or who has no means of defence and has surrendered unconditionally, torture, willfully causing serious suffering or injury, rape and other forms of sexual violence are also considered war crimes under the meaning of the Rome Statute (ICC Statute, Article 8 (2) (a) (i), (ii), (iii), (b) (vi), (xxii)).

The statement that "there will be no mercy" constitutes a separate war crime under the Rome Statute (ICC Statute, Article 8 (2) (b) (XII)).



Ukrainian law enforcement agencies continue to identify new cases of sexual violence against civilians during the Russian occupation of certain regions of Ukraine.

In June 2023 the Prosecutor General approved the *Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Prosecutor's Powers in the Field of Criminal Prosecution of Conflict-related Sexual Violence*. According to the Prosecutor General's Office, the document will improve access to justice for victims by improving the processes of investigation and prosecution, as well as by fully addressing the rights and needs of victims and witnesses in accordance with international standards. Only the main provisions of the Strategic Plan are published on the website of the Prosecutor General's Office.¹⁰

As of July 2023, since the beginning of the large-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation (24.02.2022), **215** cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) have been documented. Among the victims were 143 women and 72 men. The General Prosecutor's Office reports that at least 30 Russian servicemen have been suspected. Charges have been filed against 10 people, and two people have already been convicted.¹¹ However, a large number of cases are not included in the official statistics because traditionally many victims do not report to law enforcement agencies. For some reason, the official statistics of the Prosecutor General's Office still do not include cases of victims of sexual violence prior to the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, probably because these cases are recorded separately.

Sexual violence affects not only men and women, but also children. **13** children were recognized as victims of CRSV (as of 16.08.2023).¹² However, the actual number of children affected is much higher.



Number of CRSV cases by regions, as of 24.07.2023.
Source: Prosecutor General's Office

¹⁰ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/andrii-kostin-pidpisav-strategichni-plan-realizaciyi-povnovazen-prokuraturi-u-sferi-kriminalnogo-peresliduvannya-za-seksualne-nasilstvo-povyazane-z-konfliktom-snpk>

¹¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/rezultati-diyalnosti>

¹² <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua/>

For reference:

At the beginning of the summer of 2023, the law enforcement bodies of Ukraine investigated **2906** criminal cases on crimes committed against children and in the field of child protection in connection with the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. 35 Russian servicemen were reported on suspicion of committing crimes against children. Indictments against 30 people were sent to court, and 11 people were convicted.¹³

On June 1

the General Prosecutor's Office issued a notice on suspicion of violating the laws and customs of war against the Russian serviceman **Andrey Bublev** (codename "Bublik"), commander of the crew of the "1st rifle battalion of the 202nd rifle regiment of the mobilization reserve of the 4th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 2nd army corps of the 8th combined arms army of the southern military district" of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. According to the investigators, in August 2022, on the territory of one of the temporarily occupied villages of the Izyum district of the Kharkiv region (the name of the municipality is not given), the militant stopped a car in which two local residents – a married couple – were traveling on a fictitious pretext. After offering the couple to buy fuel from him, which was scarce at that time, he lured the couple into the territory of one of the households, where he suddenly hit the man on the head, knocking him unconscious. While threatening the woman, the perpetrator ordered her to undress and lie down on the sofa, after which he touched various parts of her body in an inappropriate manner with his hands, intending to rape her further, but he could not complete his intention because at that moment the victim's husband regained consciousness and began to look for her in the house. The militant ordered the victim to leave the house and not to tell anyone about the incident.¹⁴ In August 2023, the indictment against the soldier was sent to the court.¹⁵



Suspect Andrey Bublev ("Bublik").
Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor

¹³ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/prava-ditini-naivishha-cinnist-osnovni-cifri-ta-fakti-pro-robotu-ofisu-genprokurora-u-sferi-zaxistu-prav-i-svobod-ditei>

¹⁴ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/povidomlennya-pro-pidozru-bubljevu-ai-ta-povistki-pro-viklik-na-05062023-06062023-ta-07072023>

¹⁵ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/suditimut-rosiiskogo-viiskovogo-yakii-ciniv-seksualne-nasilstvo-shhodo-mirnoyi-zitelki-izyumshhini>

On June 1

it became known about suspicion for servicemen of the "37th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Don Budapest Red Banner of the Order of the Red Star Brigade (37 SMRB, military unit 69647)" of the Russian Armed Forces – **Sunda Arduev, Tsybikzhap Banzarov, Denis Grigoriev, Ochir Dugarzhapov and Ivan Osmolovsky**. These persons, according to investigators, during the occupation of one of the municipalities of Bucha district of the Kyiv region in March 2022 (the name of the municipality is not quoted), repeatedly raped a woman from among the local civilian population. The violence was committed in a garage on the territory of a household where the woman lived with a small child and an elderly mother.¹⁶

On June 19

it became known that during the temporary occupation of certain areas of the Sumy region, the occupying forces set up an illegal detention center at the railway station in one of the municipalities (the name is not given), where they kept people in carriages and basements. One of the methods of torture was the use of sexual violence.¹⁷

On August 10

it became known that a 30-year-old native of Dagestan, a junior sergeant of the "94th operational regiment of the Rosgvardiya", who during the occupation of the Kherson region systematically committed violence against a local female resident (the name of the municipality and the name of the combatant are not quoted), was under suspicion. According to investigators, while intimidating the woman with gang rape, the serviceman forced her to have sexual relations with him. In addition, the Russian military boasted that he detained local residents and tortured them.¹⁸



The 30-year-old Russian suspected of sexual assault. Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor

¹⁶ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/povidomlennya-pro-pidozri-ta-povistki-pro-viklik-ardujevu-sb-banzarovu-cb-grigorjevu-dv-dugarzapovu-qa-ta-osmolovskomu-im-na-26062023-28062023-30062023>

¹⁷ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/andrii-kostin-razom-z-poslom-jes-z-pitan-gendernoyi-rivnosti-ta-riznomanitnosti-pospilkuvalisya-z-zinkami-yak-perezili-seksualne-nasilstvo-pid-cas-rosiiskoyi-okupaciyi>

¹⁸ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/zalyakuvav-i-gvaltuvav-meskanku-xersonshhini-viiskovomu-rf-povidomleno-pro-pidozru>

Why this is a violation of IHL:

Women require special protection against any outrage upon their dignity and, in particular, against rape, coercion into prostitution or any other form of outrage upon their morals (Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 27, Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Article 76).

In its resolution 3318 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency Situations and During Armed Conflicts, in which it called upon the Member States of the United Nations to make every effort to protect women and children from the devastating consequences of war and to achieve a prohibition of measures such as torture, degrading treatment and violence against them.

The widespread or systematic use of rape and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity constitutes a crime against humanity as defined in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC Statute, Article 7 (1) (g)).

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are also considered war crimes under the the Rome Statute (ICC Statute, Article 8 (2) (b) (xxii)).

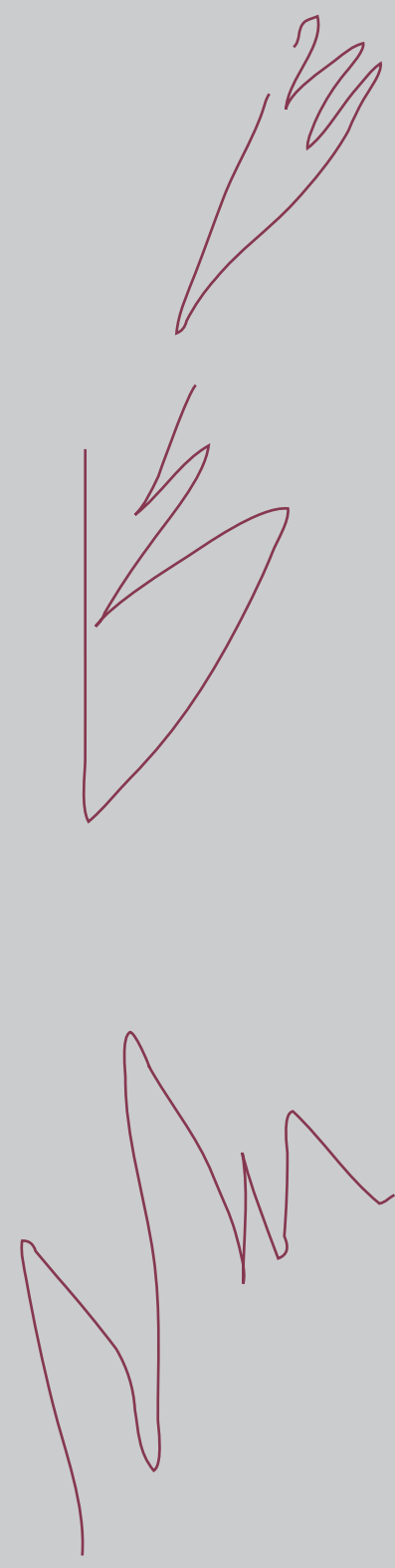
In addition, the Rome Statute specifically treats humiliating and degrading treatment as war crimes and outrages upon human dignity, (ICC Statute, Article 8 (2) (b) (XXI)).

For reference:

Sexual violence in conflict situations, in its various forms, has been widespread since 2014, that is, since the beginning of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, as EUCCI has repeatedly reported in its publications, research, and other materials.

See, for example, EUCCI's report: "**War Without Rules: Gender-Based Violence in the Context of the Armed Conflict in Eastern Ukraine**"

https://totalaction.org.ua/public/upload/book/1522852942_gon_eng_web.pdf



4

Deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian objects. Indiscriminate attacks. Violation of the proportionality in an Attack.

From the very beginning of the full-scale invasion, deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects are carried out in violation of the *principle of distinction*. The number of *indiscriminate attacks* remains consistently high. In many cases, there are indications that the combatants do not observe *the principle of proportionality* in their attacks. We recall that the essence of the latter is that attacks that can be expected to cause incidental deaths of civilians or injuries to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination of such consequences, which would be excessive in relation to the expected specific and direct military advantage to be gained, are prohibited.

In June-August 2023, the entire territory of Ukraine continued to be under the threat of missile and bomb attacks. As before, air alerts sounded in all regions of Ukraine without exception.¹⁹

Municipalities in the vicinity of active military operations, as well as those in the rear of Ukrainian troops, continued to be subjected to indiscriminate artillery, rocket and bomb attacks.

Here are just a few examples:

On June 27 the Russian military, presumably with the "Iskander-M" operational and tactical missile system, hit the city of Kramatorsk (Donetsk region). In particular, they hit the building of the popular café-pizzeria "Ria Pizza", located in the center of the city. 12 people were killed among the café's visitors and staff (including four children), and at least 65 others were injured. Numerous public buildings and structures (hotels, shops, etc.) were destroyed and damaged.²⁰



The building of the café-pizzeria in Kramatorsk, 27.06.2023. In the background the building of the hotel "Kramatorsk" can be seen. Photo source: National Police of Ukraine

¹⁹ <https://alerts.in.ua/>

²⁰ https://t.me/mvs_ukraine/26880

On June 30

the Russian military carried out a similar missile attack, probably with the "Iskander-M" operational and tactical missile system, on the school building in the village of Serhiivka (Pokrovsk district, Donetsk region).²¹ As a result of the shelling, a primary school teacher and an accountant of the institution were killed. At least six people were injured.²²



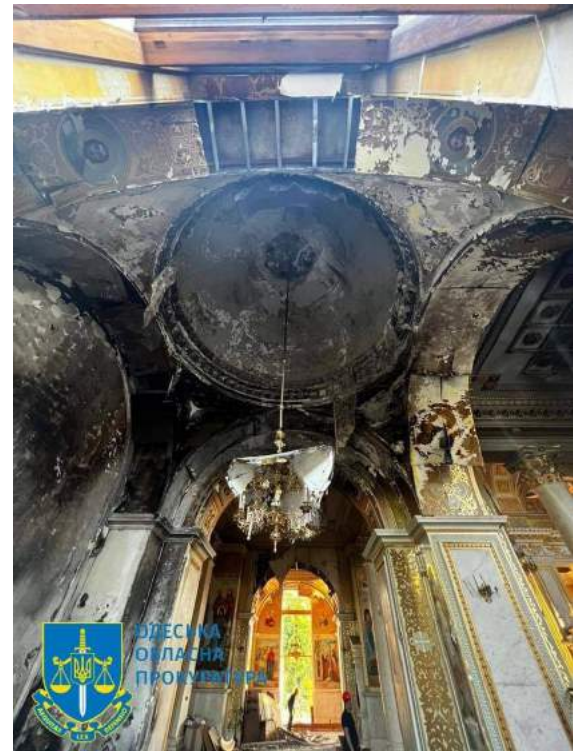
A school building destroyed by a missile attack in the village of Serhiivka, 30.06.2023.
Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor

²¹ <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/dvoie-liudei-zahynuly-shestero-poraneni-v-serhiivtsi-pokrovskoho-raionu-politsiia-dokumentuie-naslidky-raketnoho-udaru>

²² <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/dvoje-zagiblix-ta-sestero-poranenix-vnaslidok-obstrilu-skoli-u-pokrovskomu-raioni-na-doneccini-prokurori-fiksuyut-naslidki-voennogo-zlocinu-derzavi-agresora>

On July 23

the city of Odessa (Odessa region), in particular the historical center of the city, was subjected to massive shelling. A 49-year-old man was killed and at least 19 residents, including four children, were injured. A significant number of civilian objects were damaged and destroyed: residential buildings, office buildings, as well as the historical Transfiguration Cathedral.²³



Building of the Transfiguration Cathedral after the Russian shelling, 23.07.2023.
Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor

On August 7

the Russian military launched a missile attack on residential and public buildings in the center of the city of Pokrovsk (Donetsk region). It was reported that 7 people were killed (five civilians, one rescuer and one military) and at least 81 people were injured (39 civilians, including two children, 31 policemen, 7 rescuers and 4 soldiers). 12 high-rise buildings, hotels, pharmacies, shops, cafes, government offices, etc. were damaged.²⁴ After the first missile strike, rescuers and policemen went to the site of the attack. 40 minutes later, the Russian military insidiously launched a second missile attack on the same area of the city, killing one rescuer, and injuring another as well as several police officers.²⁵



Consequences of the missile attack on the city of Pokrovsk, 07.08.2023. Photo source: Donetsk Regional Military Administration

²³ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/zagibli-poraneni-ta-zaxlivi-ruinuvannya-u-centri-odesi-vnaslidok-masovanogo-obstrilu-vorogom-prokurori-rozpocali-provadzennya>

²⁴ <https://dn.gov.ua/news/onovleni-dani-stanom-na-1100-shchodo-zhertv-rashistskogo-obstrilu-pokrovska>

²⁵ <https://dn.gov.ua/news/pokrovsk-vidomo-pro-5-zagiblih-i-14-poraneni-h-civilnih-sered-poraneni-h-11-richna-ditina>

For reference:

In **June-August 2023**, on the territory of the Donetsk region controlled by the Government of Ukraine, at least **131** civilians were killed and **440** people were injured (approximate information according to the daily briefings of the Chairman of the Donetsk regional state administration/regional military administration on Telegram).²⁶

Since February 24, 2022, at least **503** children have been killed in Ukraine, not less than **1117** children have been injured and at least **1166** children have gone unaccounted for (excluding the areas under temporary occupation). The exact number of killed and injured children is still unknown.²⁷

On August 10 infrastructure in the city of Zaporizhzhya (Zaporizhzhya region) was hit by a Russian missile strike. Two guided cruise missiles hit the territory of the "Reikartz Zaporizhzhya" hotel and restaurant complex in the center of the city.²⁸ At least one person was killed and 18 local residents, including four children, were injured.²⁹



The building of the hotel "Reikartz Zaporizhzhya" destroyed by a missile strike, 10.08.2023. Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor



"I am appalled by the news that a hotel frequently used by United Nations personnel and our colleagues from NGOs supporting people affected by the war has been hit by a Russian strike in Zaporizhzhia shortly ago." - said the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, Denise Brown, commenting on the attack on the hotel in Zaporizhzhya.³⁰

²⁶ https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda

²⁷ <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua/>

²⁸ <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/u-zaporizhzhzi-vnaslidok-cherhovoho-raketnoho-udaru-armii-rf-ie-zahybli-ta-poraneni-politsiia-pratsiue-na-mistsi-obstrilu>

²⁹ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/vorog-vkotre-zavdav-raketnogo-udaru-po-zaporizhyu-rozpocato-provazhenyia>

³⁰ <https://ukraine.un.org/uk/241286-%C2%AB%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%96%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%96%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BE%D0%BE%D0%BD-%D1%82%D0%B0-%D1%96%D0%BD%D1%88%D1%96-%D0%B3%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%96%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BD%D1%96-%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%96%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%86%D1%96%D1%97-%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%83%D1%8E%D1%82%D1%8C-%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%B9-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8C-%D0%B4%D0%BB%D1%8F-%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%B8>

On August 19, in the middle of Saturday afternoon, the Russian military shelled the downtown area of the city of Chernihiv (Chernihiv region), a regional center with a population of about 280 thousand people. The missile damaged the building of the Music and Drama Theater, which is located on the central square of the city. Seven people were killed and about 156 people were injured, including women and children.³¹ Most of the victims were in vehicles or on the street near the theater building. Luckily, everyone who was in the building, got to the shelter in time.³²



The theater building in Chernihiv damaged by a missile strike, 22.08.2023. Photo source: EUCCI

³¹ https://t.me/lomako_oleksandr/1889

³² <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/ministr-vnutrishnikh-sprav-ukrainy-ihor-klymenko-pro-potochnu-sytuatsiu-u-chernihovi>

On August 23 a Shahed-type unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) used by the Russian military struck a school building in the town of Romny (Sumy region) in the middle of the working day. The building was completely destroyed.³³ The headmaster, his deputy, the secretary and the librarian were killed.³⁴



Rescuers eliminate the consequences of the strike on the school in Romny, 23.08.2023.
Photo source: Donetsk regional military administration

³³ <https://www.facebook.com/mvs.gov.ua/posts/pfbid02SjzwcgYrFgk cL96Qt4TFMbcWngeEbt5feLdKXjmK5SNHmmmAggtmq8bMocPMN6l>

³⁴ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2023/08/23/7416722/>

Why this is a violation of IHL:

Norms of international humanitarian law provide that parties to a conflict must always distinguish between the civilian population and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military targets, and direct their actions accordingly only against military targets, in order to ensure respect for and protection of civilians and civilian objects (Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Articles 48, 52, Customary IHL, norms 1, 7).

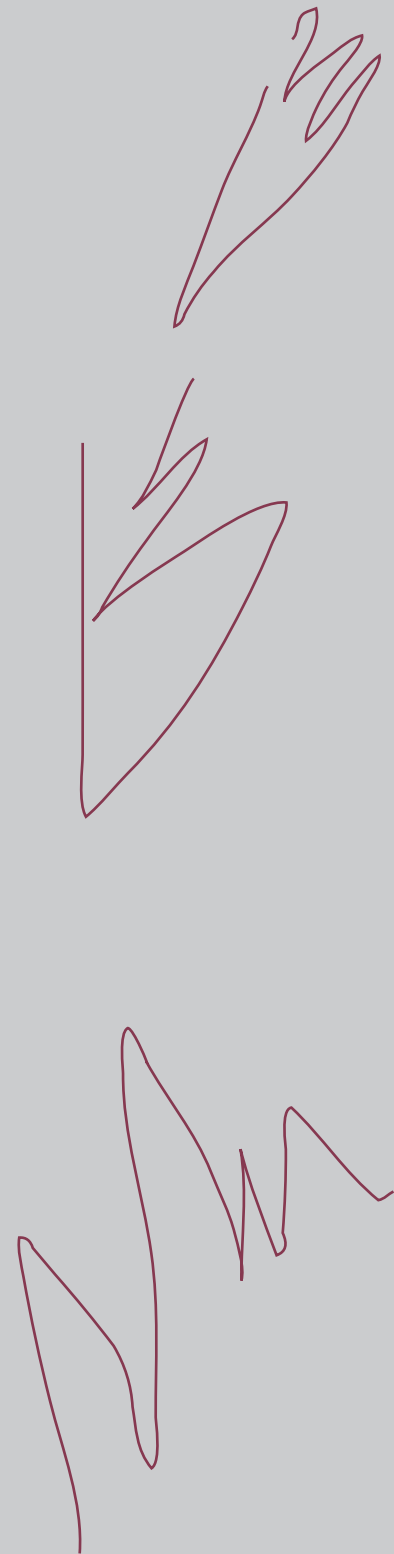
The protection of civilian objects ceases when these objects are used for military purposes.

Preventive measures during an attack provide, in particular, but not exclusively, that the person who plans an attack or decides to carry it out must do everything practically possible to ensure that the objects of the attack are neither civilians nor civilian objects and are not subject to special protection, but are precisely military targets (Additional Protocol I to Geneva Conventions, Article 57, Customary IHL, Rule 16).

Indiscriminate attacks, in particular attacks not directed against a specific military target, or attacks using methods or means of conducting military operations which cannot be directed against a specific military target, are prohibited.

In case of doubt as to whether an object normally intended for civilian purposes, such as a place of worship, an apartment building, a school, is being used in effective support of hostilities, such object shall be presumed to be used for civilian purposes (Additional Protocol and to the Geneva Conventions, Article 52).

Intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population or individual civilians, intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects, failure to comply with the principle of proportionality in an attack, and certain other related acts committed in the course of an international armed conflict are war crimes within the meaning of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC Statute, Article 8).



5

Threat to high-risk structures and facilities.

In July-August 2023, the actions of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation continued to threaten the safe operation of the nuclear facilities of Ukraine. First of all, this applies to the **Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant**, where the armed Russian military and heavy equipment continue to be stationed.

On June 6

the country was shocked by the blasting of the **Kakhovka Dam** and the **Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station** - the last (lower) stage of the Dnipro cascade of hydroelectric power stations. The Kakhovka Dam was located in the south of Ukraine, 0.5 km from the town of Nova Kakhovka (Kherson region). The cynicism of this war crime, by the way, was that the destruction of the plant took place the day after the *World Environment Day*, which is celebrated annually on June 5.



Panorama of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station and the reservoir before the destruction. Photo source: Wikipedia



The Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station after its destruction. Video screenshot. Source: Ukrainian news / State Border Control Service of Ukraine



Streets of Kherson after the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam. Photo source: alamy.com

Russia seized the Kakhovka Dam on the first day of the large-scale aggression on February 24, 2022.³⁵ On October 20, 2022 the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky in his address to the European Council reported about the mining of the dam and machinery of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station by the Russian military. The head of state noted that the dam holds a volume of about 18 million cubic meters of water and in case of its destruction more than 80 municipalities will be in the zone of rapid flooding, including the city of Kherson.³⁶

According to the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov, the destruction was carried out by the "205th motorized rifle brigade of the Russian Armed Forces" (205th SMRB, military unit 74814, Budyonnovsk, Stavropol area, Russian Federation).³⁷ In late June 2023, investigative journalists of the "Schemes" project (Radio Liberty) and "Slidstvo.Info" identified individual Russian servicemen and their commanders who may be directly involved in the blasting of the dam.³⁸

A week before the explosion of the Kakhovka Dam, on May 30, the Russian government adopted Resolution No. 873 *"On the specifics of applying the provisions of the legislation of the Russian Federation in the fields of industrial safety of hazardous production facilities and ensuring the safety of hydraulic structures in the territories on the DPR, LPR, Zaporizhzhya region and Kherson region"*, which, among other things, banned technical investigations of accidents at hydraulic structures: *"Until January 1, 2028, technical investigations of accidents at hazardous production facilities and accidents at hydraulic structures that occurred as a result of military operations, sabotage and terrorist attacks **shall not be conducted**"* (paragraph 10 of the document).³⁹ Many perceived this regulatory act of the Russian state as a planned preparation for the destruction of the dam and its hydroelectric station.

³⁵ <https://suspilne.media/210310-pivnicno-krimskij-kanal-ta-kahovsku-ges-zahopili-okupanti/>

³⁶ https://www.president.gov.ua/news/rosijskij-teror-maye-prograti-ukrayina-j-usya-yevropa-mayut-78613?fbclid=IwAR1vPzj-tisioqd-ddMfq0PjPo_u-Z6rn4Od4NV-4KgOCbTaSDb3SidwSio

³⁷ <https://www.dw.com/uk/kahovsku-ges-pidirvala-205ta-motostrilecka-brigada-vijsk-rf-danilov/a-65839276>

³⁸ <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/skhemy-kakhovska-hes-identyfikovani-viyskovi-perekhoplennya/32480831.html>

³⁹ <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202305310067?index=4>

"What is this, if not a smoking terrorist's gun?" - Oleg Ustenko, advisor to the President of Ukraine on economic issues, aptly noted in a comment to Newsweek.⁴⁰

According to very rough estimates of the KSE Institute, the amount of direct damage caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam and the hydroelectric station is at least **\$2 billion** (losses of housing and utilities, energy, agriculture, transport, ecology, industry).⁴¹

The Kakhovka reservoir, created by the Kakhovka Dam, was a source of water for a significant number of municipalities in the Kherson, Zaporizhzhya and Dnipropetrovsk regions. Residents of the densely populated cities of Kryvyi Rih, Marganets, Pokrov, Nikopol, and a number of other municipalities, faced water supply problems.

"The Kakhovka water reservoir is the second largest in Ukraine (area – 2155 square kilometers) and the first by water volume (water volume – 18.19 cubic kilometers), located in three regions of Ukraine (Zaporizhzhya, Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson) and is 240 km long. As a result of the construction of the hydroelectric facility with a length of almost 4 km, the level of the Dnipro river was raised by 16 meters. Therefore, the negative consequences of this terrorist attack for wildlife will be manifested on an area of at least 5,000 square kilometers (flooded and dry). Only the area covered by the water reservoir for the past 68 years and now open to the sky for at least many years will be larger than 1,000 square kilometers!" - the experts of the **Ukrainian environmental protection group have stated**⁴². In the analytical article "**What are the consequences of the Russian terrorist attack on the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station for the wildlife?**" a group of environmental experts gave a detailed overview of the consequences of draining the bottom of the Kakhovka reservoir and the water leakage from it, the consequences of flooding the territories below the destroyed dam, the consequences for the Black Sea, and so on.



Flooding in the city of Kherson as a result of the destruction of the hydroelectric station.
Photo by REUTERS / Oleksandr Klymenko. Photo source: NV.UA

The floods affected dozens of municipalities and large areas of agricultural land with contaminated water, killing at least 31 people⁴³ and causing the loss of homes and internal displacement of thousands of people. In particular, at least 3,614 people were evacuated from dangerous areas, including 474 children and 80 persons with reduced mobility.⁴⁴ Estimates of the impact continue to be made.

⁴⁰ <https://president.gov.ua/news/rujnuvannya-grebli-kahovskoyi-ges-bulo-dobre-pidgotovlene-j-83565>

⁴¹ <https://www.me.gov.ua/News/Detail?lang=uk-UA&id=80cfdfeb-8ffb-453c-897d-cf28f575c646&title=ZbitkCherezPidrivKahovskoiGes>

⁴² <https://uncg.org.ua/iakymy-ie-naslidky-rosijskoho-teraktu-na-kahovskij-hes-dlia-dykoi-pryrody/>

⁴³ https://24tv.ua/pidriv-kahovskoyi-ges-skillki-zhertv-i-postrazhdalih_n2330169

⁴⁴ https://t.me/Klymenko_MVS/33

Why this is a violation of IHL:

Facilities and structures containing hazardous forces such as dykes, dams, and nuclear power plants, may not be attacked if such an attack is likely to result in the release of hazardous forces and subsequent large civilian casualties. Attack is prohibited, even if such objects are military in nature (Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, Article 56). When attacking on high-risk structures and installations, special care should be taken to avoid the release of dangerous forces and excessive civilian casualties during such attacks (Customary IHL, norm 42).

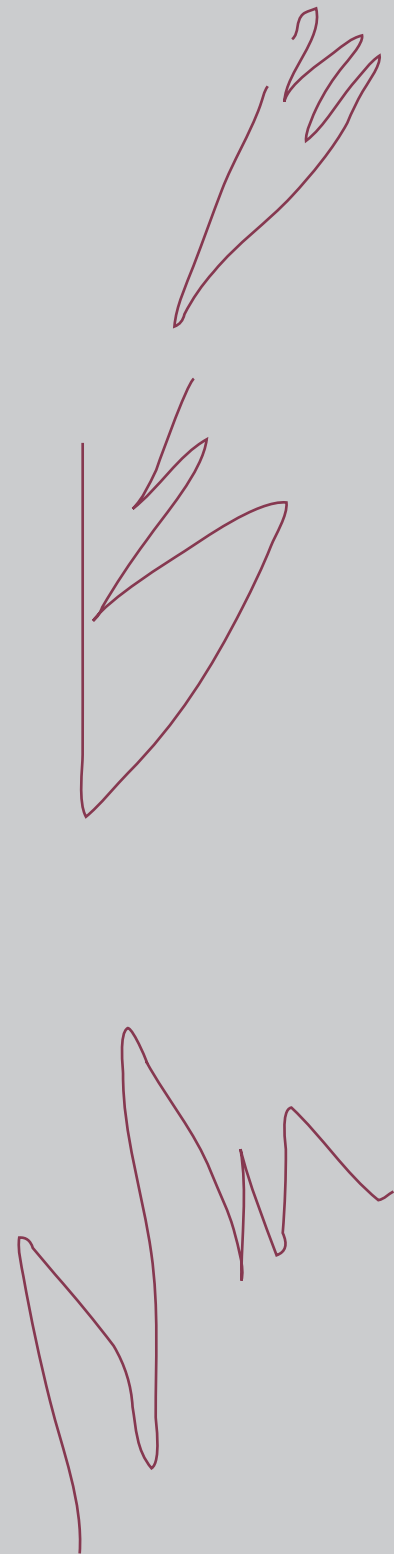
Therefore, the prohibition of attacks on these objects is not absolute. For example, the special protection against attacks on a nuclear power plant or a hydroelectric station ends if the facility generates electricity for the regular, substantial and direct support of military operations and if such an attack is the only practical way to stop such support.

A deliberate attack, when it is known that such an attack will cause incidental death or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or extensive, lasting and serious damage to the natural environment, which is clearly not comparable to the specific and immediate expected general military advantage, is a war crime within the meaning of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC Statute, Article 8 (2) (b) (iv)).

The Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station under the control of Ukraine was a purely civilian object and in no way provided significant and direct support for military operations, and since February 24, 2022 – the station was under the control of the occupation army.

The destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station caused large-scale, long-term and serious damage to the environment. At the same time, the specific and direct expected overall military advantage that the Russian Federation could achieve is completely unclear to an outside independent observer.

Russia traditionally denies its involvement in the sabotage of the hydroelectric station, which indirectly indicates the inability of the aggressor country to explain and prove the specific and direct overall military advantage it allegedly achieved.



6

Confiscation and looting of property.

The trend of confiscation and plundering of property by the occupying forces and the occupation administration (persons and organizations under its control) in the temporarily occupied territories did not change in June-August 2023. The range of types of property that become object of encroachment is still quite diverse: from domestic robbery of the local population (cars, cash, etc.), to seizure and looting of property of large enterprises in significant amounts (crops of farmers, goods and property complexes of Ukrainian enterprises, etc.). Many of these cases become known post-factum, after the investigation by law enforcement bodies is completed.

On June 5

it became known that the Office of the Prosecutor General sent to the court an indictment against the rifleman of the "748 separate operational battalion of the Rosgvardiya" (personal data of the accused are not given). According to the indictment, in March 2022, during the temporary occupation of the village of Bohdanivka (Brovary district, Kyiv region), the combatant, together with other servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces, conducted searches in the homes of local residents. In one of the cases, the accused broke into the house of a 64-year-old man, threatened him with a weapon, took away two mobile phones and all the victim's cash savings in the amount of about 163,000 UAH.⁴⁵

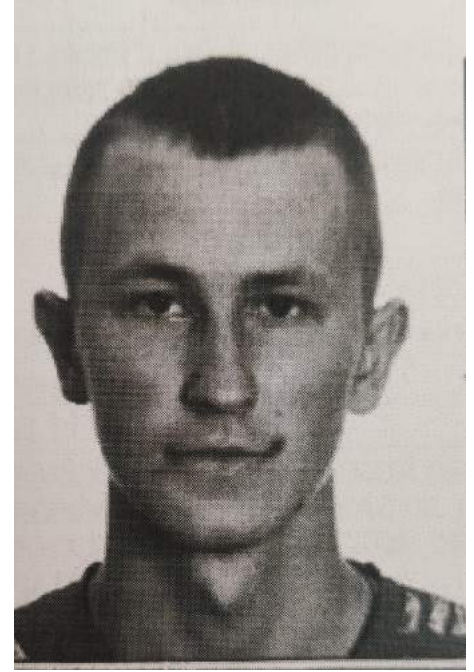


School in the village of Bohdanivka. Consequences of the armed aggression. Source: ArmiaINFORM

⁴⁵ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/grabuvav-ta-pozbavlyav-voli-meskanciv-kiyivshhini-pogrozuyuci-zbrojeyu-povidomleno-pro-pidozru-viiskovomu-rf-2>

On June 23

it became known that in April 2022 the store of a well-known Ukrainian jewelry brand in the occupied town of Izyum (Kharkiv region) was looted. Now the city is de-occupied. The police reported the suspicion of committing this crime in absentia to contract soldiers of the "military unit 91726" of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Taking advantage of the damage to the jewelry store as a result of artillery attacks, two militants entered it and stole a safe box with almost two kilograms of gold jewelry worth more than 8 million UAH.⁴⁶



Russian servicemen suspected of looting a jewelry store.
Source: the Main Department of the National Police in the Kharkiv region

On June 28

Ivankivskiy District Court of the Kyiv region recognized guilty of violating the laws and customs of war and sentenced in absentia to nine years in prison a serviceman of the "37th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Budapest Red Banner Order of the Red Star Don Cossack Brigade named after E. A. Shchadenko". **Vladimir Nomokonov**⁴⁷, who participated as part of the military units of the Russian Armed Forces in the occupation of the village Obukhovychi (Vyshgorod district, Kyiv region) in February-March 2022. While retreating from the village, he and other unidentified military personnel entered the home of a local resident and stole a washing machine, a generator and household electrical tools.⁴⁸



A Russian serviceman convicted of looting civilian property in the Kyiv region.
Source: Prosecutor General's Office

⁴⁶ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/identifikovano-dvox-rosiiskix-viiskovoslužbovciv-yaki-vikrali-na-xarkivshhini-zoloti-prikrasi-na-ponad-8-mln-grn>

⁴⁷ <https://court.gov.ua/fair/>

⁴⁸ <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/111894270>

On July 26

it became known that the prosecutor's office sent to court an indictment against a scout-sniper of the Russian Armed Forces. The Russian serviceman was alleged that during the temporary occupation of the village of Katyuzhanka (Vyshgorod district, Kyiv region) in February-March 2022, he and other servicemen broke into a private house and set up their location there. While retreating from the Kyiv region, the accused stole a chainsaw and other tools from the house.⁴⁹



Alexander Ermochenko (Reuters)

Russian soldiers on a tank with household items in the Luhansk region. Illustrative photo. Author: Oleksandr Yermochenko (Reuters). Source: Radio Liberty

On August 1

Chernihiv District Court of the Chernihiv region issued a verdict finding a serviceman of the Russian Armed Forces **Nikita Belozarov**, a native of the city of Angarsk the Irkutsk region, guilty of violating the laws and customs of war and sentencing him to 12 years in prison.⁵⁰ According to the charge, which the court found proven, the combatant used physical and moral coercion against civilians in order to obtain the information he needed, as well as committed robberies of civilians and embezzlement of property not justified by military necessity. The crimes were committed during the temporary occupation of certain districts of the Chernihiv region in March 2022. For example, in one of the episodes incriminated him, demanding the handover of money and valuables, using physical force against the victims and threatening to kill, the combatant illegally seized the victim's money in the amount of 15,000 UAH and a forged knife. In another episode, during a search of civilians' homes, he illegally took possession of a child's backpack, two jackets and children's shoes.⁵¹

These are only a few examples of looting of private property in the occupied territories, which are supported by the investigative materials of the Ukrainian law enforcement bodies.

⁴⁹ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/vikrav-maino-mirnix-ziteliv-pid-cas-okupaciyi-kiyivshhni-suditimut-viiskovogo-rf>

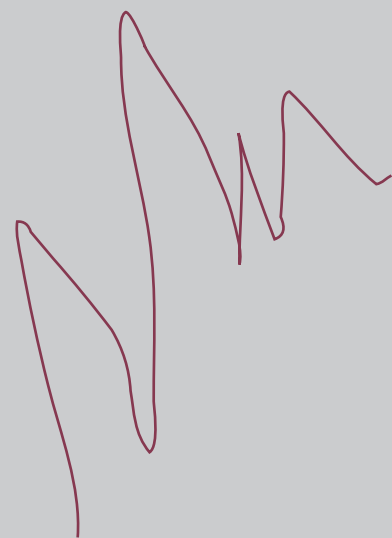
⁵⁰ <https://court.gov.ua/fair/>

⁵¹ <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/112559865>

Why this is a violation of IHL:

IHL rules prohibit robbery. It is permissible to confiscate movable public property in the occupied territory *which can be used for military operations*; private property must be respected, it may not be confiscated, except in cases where the destruction or seizure of such property is required by *urgent military necessity* (Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 53, IHL, norms 49-51).

The unlawful, wanton or extensive destruction and appropriation of property not caused by military necessity, the pillaging of municipalities, and certain other related acts committed during an international armed conflict are war crimes within the meaning of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC Statute, Article 8).



7

Arbitrary arrests and deprivation of liberty of civilians.

In June-August 2023, EUCCI continued to monitor the practice of arbitrary detentions by military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Rosgvardiya, FSB, etc. (hereinafter referred to as the "Russian military" for the sake of simplicity) and the detention of civilians of the occupied territories in illegal places of detention. Illegal deprivation of liberty is still being carried out everywhere and is clearly part of a plan or policy against certain sections of the civilian population of the occupied territories. Almost every day, there are new reports of cases of detention of people by the occupation authorities. Some of the detainees are subsequently released, while the fate of others remains unknown.

As of July 23, 2023, the National Police of Ukraine reported **79** places of detention and torture chambers found in the **de-occupied** territories.⁵²

On June 13

it became known that the Prosecutor's Office sent to court charges against two regular employees of the FSB of the Russian Federation, who during the temporary occupation of certain areas of the Kherson region ensured the establishment of the occupation authorities, suppression of resistance of the residents and persecution of the civilian population (personal data of the accused are not given). Thus, in March 2022, one of the accused, acting together with other servicemen, entered the apartment of a local resident, where he conducted an illegal search and took away valuables. Threatening to kill the family and using physical force, the male owner was taken to a captured building in the city center, where they continued to beat him, imitate the death penalty, etc., in order to make him cooperate. In another episode, in June 2022, on the instructions of another defendant, Russian special services officers entered the summer house of a local resident and, after conducting a search there, threatened to kill him and detained the man. The victim was taken to the captured building, where he was held for about 10 days in inhumane conditions, interrogated, systematically beaten and electrocuted in order to force him to cooperate.⁵³



Employees of the FSB of the Russian Federation, who are accused of violating the laws and customs of war. Source: Prosecutor General's Office

⁵² <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/zlochyny-vchyneni-viiskovymy-rf-pid-chas-povnomashtabnoho-vtorhnennia-v-ukrainu-stanom-na-23072023>

⁵³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/suditmut-dvox-spivrobotnikiv-fsb-rf-pricetnix-do-zorstokogo-povodzennya-z-civilnimi-na-xersonshhini>

On June 27

it became known that the Prosecutor's Office sent to the court an indictment against the lieutenant-colonel, commander of the battalion of the "96th operational regiment of the 46th separate brigade of the Rosgvardiya troops in the Republic of Chechnya" for violation of the laws and customs of war (the personal data of the accused are not given). According to the investigation, since the beginning of the occupation of certain areas of the Zaporizhzhya region, the accused was appointed the so-called military commander of one of the villages of the Berdyansk district. Together with his subordinates, he searched for Ukrainian patriots, took them to a prison on the territory of the local occupation command, where they were held in inhumane conditions and subjected to various forms of torture. In this way, people were persuaded to cooperate, information about other pro-Ukrainian activists was sought, and so on.⁵⁴

On July 3

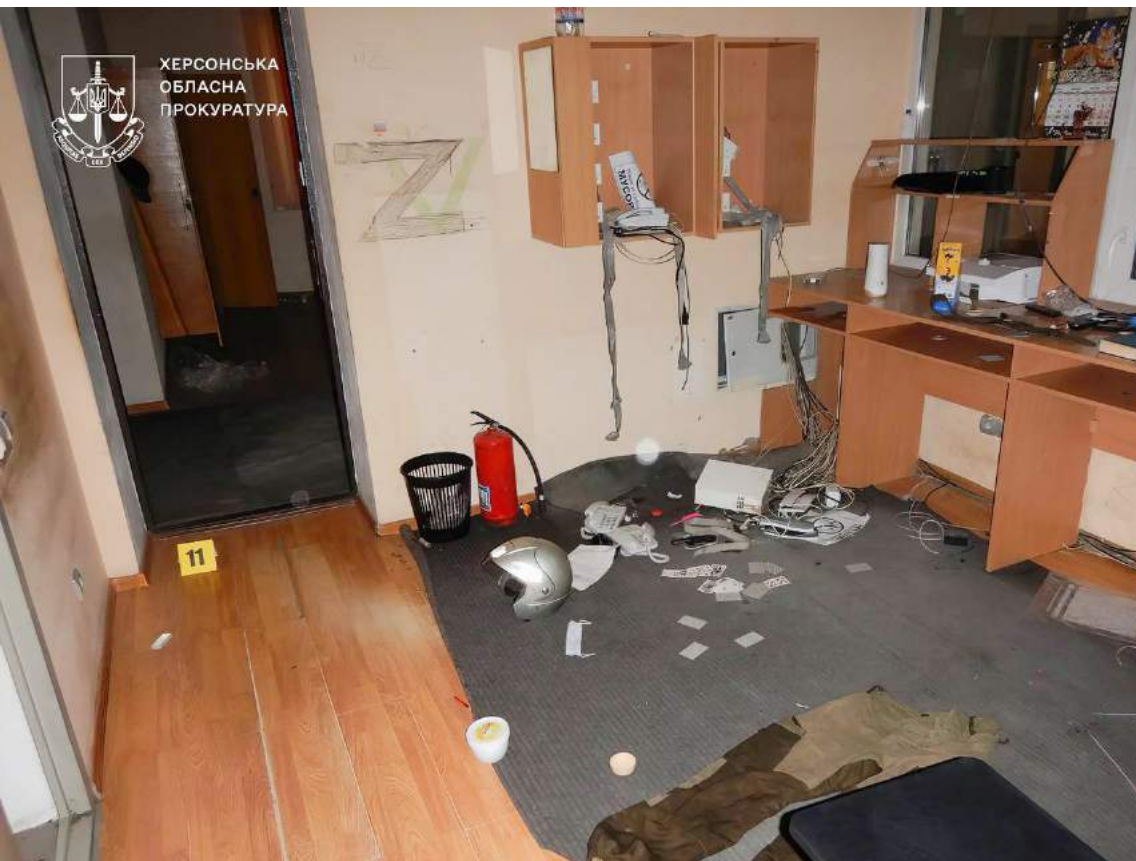
there was information about the transfer to the court of the indictment against persons involved in the functioning of an illegal place of detention in the premises of the captured temporary detention center in the city of Kherson (we remind the city was under occupation from March to November 2022). It is about the deputy head of "Rosgvardiya department for the Rostov region" - a police colonel and three other Russian servicemen (personal data of the accused are not given). According to the investigation, the Rosgvardiya serviceman led Russian servicemen in the temporarily occupied Kherson since March 2022, and in the occupied building of the local temporary detention center he organized, together with other Russian servicemen, one of the torture chambers. The defendant ordered his subordinates to illegally detain people and use violence against them. The other three defendants are the direct executors of the Russian colonel's criminal orders, identified by law enforcement officials. Investigators identified more than two hundred people who were held in the building and subjected to various forms of torture on a daily basis. At least 17 men were subjected to electric torture of their genitals.⁵⁵

It is known that the Russian military held Kakhovka journalist Oleg Baturin in the premises of this temporary detention center (the journalist describes this place as a "pre-trial detention center" located in the KhBK district of Kherson).⁵⁶ The man said that he did not know the number of people who were there, but noted that the cells were constantly full. Each cell had 4-5 beds. It was very cold. He had to sleep on bare bunks because there was no bedding. He was fed once or twice a day. The journalist remembers two detained foreigners: citizens of Spain and the Netherlands. The latter, according to the journalist's memory, was sick and in a serious condition. The journalist also saw imprisoned former ATO participants and active servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine who, for various reasons, did not have time to leave the city of Kherson or the surrounding municipalities and join their military units. Among the detainees were people whom the Russians considered "looters". The journalist heard how physical violence was used against people. Prisoners were taken to a separate room and beaten, sometimes directly in the cells. Some of them were beaten for several days in a row. According to his impressions, some people were beaten half-death.

⁵⁴ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/znushhavsya-ta-katuvav-mirnix-meskanciv-berdyanskogo-raionu-suditimut-pidpolkovnika-rosgvardiyyi>

⁵⁵ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/za-organizaciyu-kativni-u-xersoni-ta-zastosuvannya-tortur-do-civilnogo-naselennya-suditimut-rosiskogo-komandira-ta-tryox-iogo-pidleglix>

⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLgHCQsSZ2M>



Building of the temporary detention center on Teploenergetikiv Street in the city of Kherson, where Russian security forces held prisoners of war and civilians during the occupation of the city. Photo source: Office of the Prosecutor General and Kherson Regional Prosecutor's office

On July 17

the Ripky district court of Chernihiv region issued a verdict that convicted a Russian serviceman in absentia ("35th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Stalingrad-Kyiv Order of Lenin, Red Banner, Order of Suvorov and Kutuzov Brigade", Aleysk, Altai region, Russia) **Anchi Ondara**⁵⁷ to 12 years in prison for violating the laws and customs of war. According to the verdict, Russian servicemen, including the convicted person, during the temporary occupation of the village of Vyshneve (Chernihiv district, Chernihiv region), set up an illegal place of detention on the territory of a local woodworking enterprise (Tsentralna street, 1), where illegally detained persons from among the local civilian population were held, various forms of torture were used against people, confessions of assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine were extracted from people, and the property of detainees was taken. The victim questioned in court, the owner of a local shop, testified that he first encountered Russian servicemen, including the accused, on the morning of February 28, 2022, when he wanted to leave the village with his mother. The servicemen entered the yard of his house, ordered him to lie on the ground and beat him with their feet without any reason. After opening his minibus, the soldiers shared the food among themselves and then forced him to get behind the wheel of the minibus and drive to the territory of the local wood processing plant. The militants put the man's mother in the back of the vehicle. According to the man, they were detained on the territory of the wood processing plant until the evening of the same day, while the fighters constantly threatened him with shooting and demanded that he provide information on the locations of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. On March 3, the man noticed that the doors of his shop had been broken down. In order to prevent the looting of his property, he went inside the shop, where he was again detained by Russian servicemen and taken to the territory of the same local woodworking plant. There they stripped him naked, tied his hands behind his back, threw him to the ground and began to beat him. They took turns beating him with sticks, rifle butts, hands, and feet. When he lost consciousness, water was poured over him and he was left for a while and then the harassment continued. The man noted that the military tried to make him suffer as much as possible by beating him with sticks on his heels and with rifle butts on his fingers. Since he was naked outdoors for a long time, the cold caused him to lose sensitivity in his hands. During all these tortures, the fighters constantly threatened to kill him and his mother. He was released in evening of the same day. As a result of the torture, his hands, feet and fingers were broken and his internal organs were bruised, which was confirmed during the trial by the results of a forensic medical examination.⁵⁸



Russian serviceman found guilty of unlawful detention and torture of a resident of the village of Vyshneve. Photo source: the Office of the General Prosecutor

⁵⁷ <https://court.gov.ua/fair/>

⁵⁸ <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/112364078>

On August 15

it became known that the police identified and reported in absentia a citizen of the Russian Federation suspected of committing a crime during the occupation of the town of Vovchansk (Kharkiv region) in 2022. Investigators found out that from June 5 to September 10, 2022, the suspect, who held the position of "senior operative officer of the department for combating drug trafficking of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the LPR", participated in harassment of a civilian, in particular, arbitrarily detained the victim in the territory of his own home and took him to the territory of the enterprise "Vovchansk aggregate plant" (Pushkin Street, 2), where he tortured the victim with the use of electric current, a rubber truncheon, etc.⁵⁹

The town of Vovchansk, located on the border with Russia, was occupied from the end of February till September 2022. Already in April 2022, the Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office reported that the Russian military had looted the plant's equipment and taken it to the territory of the Russian Federation, and a prison was set up in the occupied premises of the plant, where they used torture against detained local residents.⁶⁰



The "Vovchansk aggregate plant" before the large-scale invasion of Russia.
Photo source: Google

⁵⁹ <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/pid-cas-okupaciyi-xarkivshhini-zorstokopovodivsyia-iz-civilnim-naselennyam-pidozryujetsya-gromadyanin-rf>

⁶⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/prokuraturakharkiv/posts/350683513759705>

Why this is a violation of IHL:

During an international armed conflict, the ground on which a party to the conflict may deprive a civilian of his or her liberty are laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention: civilians may be interned or forcibly transferred to a particular place only if it is absolutely necessary for the security of the State under whose authority they are (Article 42), and in the occupied territory for reasons of maintaining security (Article 78). In order for the deprivation of liberty in such cases to be considered lawful, it is also necessary to follow the established procedure (articles 43, 78 and others).

Enforced disappearances and arbitrary deprivation of liberty (Customary IHL, norms 98, 99) directed against civilians are prohibited.

The widespread or systematic practice of enforced disappearance, detention or other cruel deprivation of personal liberty violation of fundamental norms of international law is a crime against humanity as defined in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC Statute, Article 7 (1) (e) (i)).

Unlawful deprivation of liberty, hostage-taking and certain other related acts are also considered war crimes under the Rome Statute (ICC Statute, Article 8 (2) (a) (vii), (viii)).

For reference:

The practice of arbitrary arrests and detention of civilians in illegal detention facilities has been widespread since 2014, that is, since the very beginning of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, as EUCCI and other human rights organizations have repeatedly reported in their publications, research, and other materials.

See, for example:

Imprisoned in the "LPR Government" building

https://totalaction.org.ua/public/upload/book/1534328816_LNR_B_engl.compressed.pdf

War without rules

https://totalaction.org.ua/public/upload/book/1522852942_gon_eng_web.pdf

Surviving hell

https://totalaction.org.ua/public/upload/book/1522853480_SURVIVING_HELL_eng_web.pdf



Reference:

Since 2014, EUCCI has been documenting human rights violations committed during the war in Ukraine. Our team has undergone a series of specialized trainings to properly collect, process, and preserve victim testimony. During 2014-2021, EUCCI interviewers visited almost every city in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (on the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government) to collect dozens of first-hand accounts of human rights violations. We collected information on gross human rights violations caused by the armed conflict, including:

- unlawful detention and imprisonment;
- inhuman treatment;
- torture;
- involvement of minors in organized armed groups;
- gender-based violence.

EUCCI provides free legal assistance to any victim in the form of counseling and assistance in court proceedings.

This publication was prepared jointly by the [Eastern Ukrainian Center for Civic Initiatives](#) (EUCCI) and the German organization [KURVE Wustrow](#) – Center for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action as part of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) in Ukraine.

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We now face new challenges due to Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, but we continue our human rights work and call on all victims and witnesses of human rights violations and IHL to report such violations to us:

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