



Arbitrary detentions and capture of civilian hostages in the northern regions of Ukraine

Analysis of documented testimonies

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation (RF) against Ukraine in 2014, the aggressor state has been detaining civilians in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

23 000
people considered
missing

1 122
civil hostages
registered by MIHR

161
place of
detention



According to the records of the State Security Service of Ukraine (SSU), 301 Ukrainian citizens were being held in detention in the occupied territories of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts as at 24 February 2022. This group included military personnel who had been apprehended during their assigned missions as well as civilians who had been brought in on politically motivated charges such as espionage, involvement in acts of sabotage, or terrorism. Moreover, individuals of political significance have been unlawfully detained and held in the occupied Crimea and in the Russian Federation. The Crimean Tatar Resource Center has documented 241 political prisoners and those subjected to legal proceedings during the occupation of Crimea of which 172 are indigenous Crimean Tatars.

The Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR), a Ukrainian NGO, has been researching such facts in connection with the detention of civilians in occupation since 2016¹.

Since the onset of a full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, there has been a surge in unlawful detention of civilians in the occupied territories by the Russian military — often without any justifiable reason.

As at 22 February 2023, the National Information Bureau has accounted for 963 civil hostages taken in various parts of Ukraine according to the records in its [Registry](#) of Civilian Hostages. The report titled [“Detention of Civilians in the Context of the Armed Attack of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, 24 February 2022 to 23 May 2023”](#) published on 27 June 2023 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) contained the data on 864 documented instances of arbitrary detention committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine between 24 February 2022 and 23 May 2023.

According to the data collected by MIHR, there were 1122 civilians being held hostage by the Russian Federation as at August 2023. However, there may be many times more cases like that as people keep getting detained in the occupied territories every day. In May 2023, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine [reported](#) on 23,000 individuals who are officially considered missing under extraordinary circumstances due to hostilities. In particular, they included the persons deprived of personal liberty as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Some of the missing individuals are being held by Russia in the occupied territories of Ukraine while others have been transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation.

In the report dated 27 June 2023, the OHCHR identified a total of 161 detention facilities used for holding individuals in connection with the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Out of the total, 124 facilities are located in the territory of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation — in particular, 5 of them are located in Crimea. The remaining 35 detention facilities which include pre-trial detention centers (SIZOs), penal colonies, and temporary tent camps, are in the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the OHCHR investigators have discovered two locations located in the Republic of Belarus which are being used by the Russian armed forces as temporary or transit detention facilities for the individuals detained in connection with the armed conflict including prisoners of war who were transferred from the northern regions of Ukraine.

MIHR has identified over 80 active detention facilities in the occupied territories of Ukraine and in Russia. According to the victims’ accounts, Ukrainians were apprehended without their personal belongings and forcibly relocated to specifically designated facilities in the Russian Federation including detention centers and prisons. For detailed accounts of the detentions, documented testimonies of released hostages, and a map of the detention sites, follow this link to the report titled [“Missing in the Occupation: the Map of Places where Russia is Holding Ukrainian Captives”](#).

MIHR documenters are guided by the [recommendations](#) of the International Criminal Court and regularly attend training courses on the proper documentation of the accounts of victims of war crimes. The individuals who submit their statements sign informed consents where they willingly state the purpose of using the documented information.

MIHR is a member of the Coalition of Ukrainian Public Organizations [“Ukraine.5AM”](#). It is the Ukraine.5AM Coalition that coordinates the joint activities of the organizations which are collectively documenting testimonies and other evidence of violations and crimes committed during the armed conflict in Ukraine since February 2022.

To document the information, the organizations use the I-DOC investigation documenting system.

This document consists of two parts. The first part describes the detention facilities in three oblasts: Kyiv (I), Chernihiv (II), and Sumy (III) oblasts as well as the routes of transporting civil detainees based on specific evidence. The other half contains our assumptions as to the possible qualification of the actions committed against the civil population of the occupied territories.

[1] In 2018, working in collaboration with its partners, MIHR compiled the analytical publication titled “Prisoners of War. International Practice on the Release of Prisoners of War, Hostages and Political Prisoners: Conclusions for Ukraine”

THE ROLE OF I-DOC SYSTEM IN MIHR ACTIVITIES



Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine, MIHR began to document the accounts of witnesses of international crimes committed in the territory of Ukraine and outside its borders, but in the context of an international armed conflict. The documenters also interview direct victims of such crimes and the civilians released from Russian captivity. The need of systematizing the information on war crimes for subsequent use became clearly evident shortly after the beginning of the full-scale invasion as documented testimonies started to pile up.

Therefore, the members of the Coalition of Ukrainian Public Organizations "Ukraine.5AM Coalition" all agreed to use the I-DOC system for the analysis and systematization of investigations of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The I-DOC investigation documentation system is a tool that facilitates processing facts related to grave violations of international standards in the field of human rights and criminal law. The I-DOC system enables creating folders for documentation and evidence, facts specific to criminal incidents and contextual facts, the suspects and the associated institutions, the victims and the witnesses. The database structure allows efficient overview of categories as well as visualization and analysis of various models and relationships. The concept of this tool was developed by Iliia Utmelidze utilizing the taxonomy of the ICC Matrix of Cases and the [Case Matrix Network](#) (CMN).

It is the I-DOC system that is used for registering all the collected testimonies and evidence by MIHR. Most of them contain the necessary information for qualifying the actions of the Russian Federation as international

crimes. This system appears to be the most optimal tool for registering this type of data.

Each registered document is reviewed by a data processing specialist who enters the geographical location and the details of the incident — i.e. the events that occurred or the crimes committed.

The system allows assigning the following statuses to the registered people:

- **victim:**
a person whose rights were violated. Those can be the fundamental human rights such as the right to life as well as other rights such as the right to own property.
- **witness:**
a person who observed violations of the rights of others or heard about violations from others; it can be a person who knows about the violation by virtue of their position (e.g.. investigator, prosecutor, or judge);
- **suspect:**
a person who is guilty of a crime and has been convicted of such acts; a person suspected of committing a crime; it can also be a person who, in the investigator's opinion, may be involved in the commission of a crime.

106 documents were registered by MIHR

as of August 31, 2023

The appropriate type of violation can be selected upon entering data into the system. It is also possible to create links between documents or clusters to facilitate building a case around the registered events, to present all the collected evidence of the commission of the crime in question or, eventually, expose the culprits.

As at 31 August 2023, the MIHR contribution to the I-DOC amounted to 106 registered documents. The contributions to the database included the documented witness accounts of multiple occasions of the detention of civilians by the Russian military during the occupation of Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy oblasts as well as photographic materials. Despite being occupied since in the first days of the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, they were quickly liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). It was those territories that became the focus of the first field surveys, interviews of witnesses and victims of war crimes, and visits to the places of detention of civilians by the Russian military.

This analysis is intended to show where and under what conditions the Russian military detained Ukrainian civilians and how they treated the detainees, describe the most notorious places where the Russians held Ukrainian civilians in the territory of three regions, and show the routes of deporting Ukrainians to the territory of Belarus and Russia. Certain witness testimonies registered on the I-DOC system by the MIHR data processing specialist have been expanded into brief testimonies by the analysts to illustrate the most common violations committed by representatives of the Russian Federation against Ukrainian civilians during the international armed conflict. For each





testimony, the registration number of the document in the I-DOC system is given with the associated details of the victim, witness, and event provided and the relevant relations shown. It was those testimonies of the registered victims or witnesses that were chosen to illustrate the violations against the civilian population as those accounts contain the most detailed information about the places of illegal detention of civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy oblasts.

The adoption of the I-DOC documentation system has enabled MIHR to see the connections between the registered categories and analyze the statistics of violations in the above-mentioned territories.

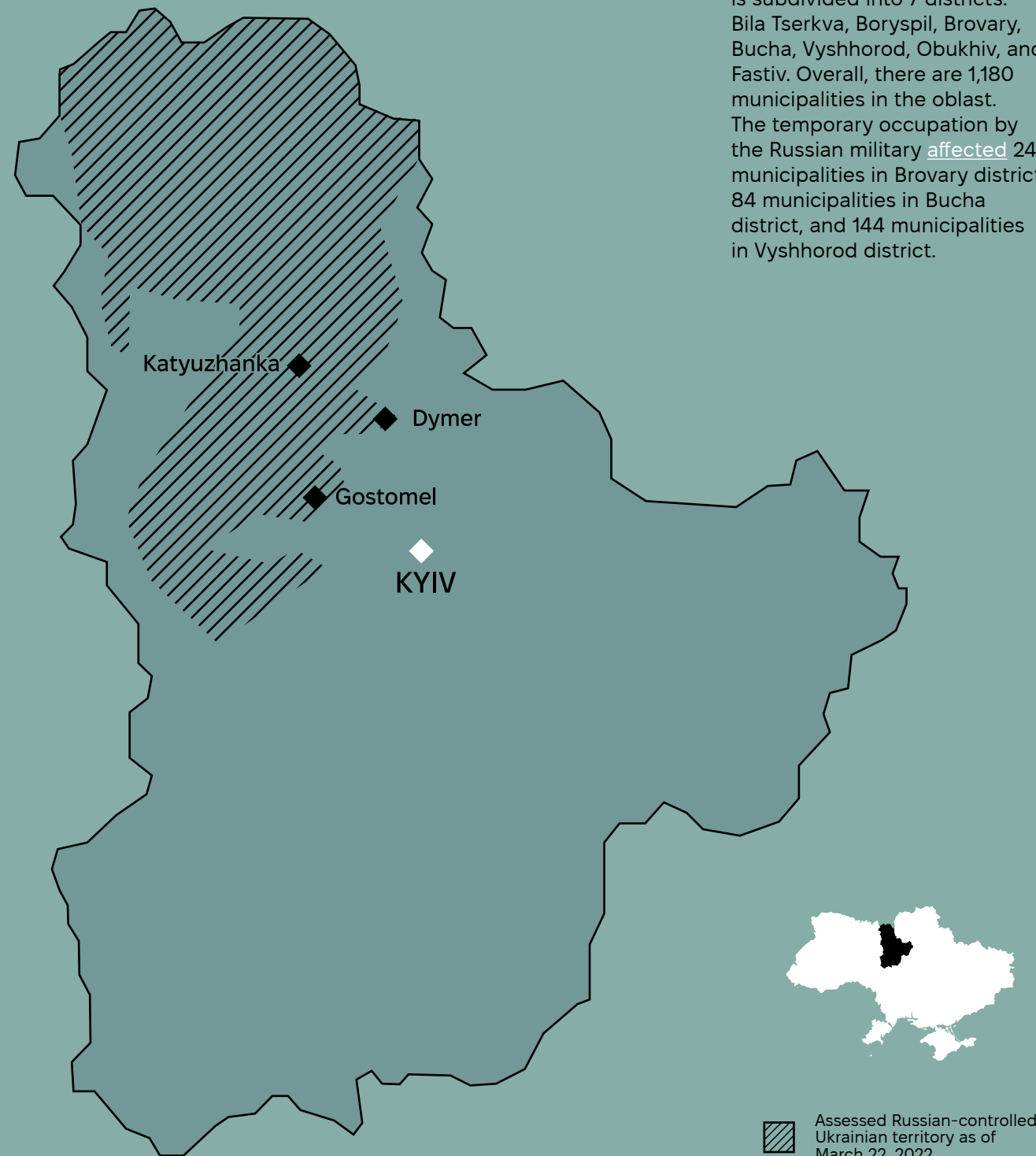
Information collected from open sources has provided important details to supplement the testimonies on arbitrary detentions, hostage-taking, torture and other crimes committed against the civilian population which were obtained by MIHR documenters during the interviews. It is the information from reliable open sources that informs the investigations of the documenters in the three selected regions and enables them to compare the testimonies of civilians, victims or witnesses of forced detention and abduction against the information about the movements of the Russian military in those territories. The next part of this document will enable the analysis of the collected information and supplementing it with the evidence of the relevant events. As far as future plans are concerned, MIHR intends to supplement the data already registered on the I-DOC system with new evidence and record the documents specific to violations against civilians in the three oblasts based on the information from open sources.

KYIV OBLAST

Oblast Description

 28 131 km²
 1,8 M at the end of 2022
  7 districts
  1180 municipalities

Kyiv oblast is situated in the north of Ukraine with the administrative center in Kyiv. It borders on Belarus in the north. The oblast is subdivided into 7 districts: Bila Tserkva, Boryspil, Brovary, Bucha, Vyshhorod, Obukhiv, and Fastiv. Overall, there are 1,180 municipalities in the oblast. The temporary occupation by the Russian military [affected](#) 24 municipalities in Brovary district, 84 municipalities in Bucha district, and 144 municipalities in Vyshhorod district.



The Brief Chronology of Events

- On 24 February 2022,** Russian forces which had amassed in Belarus crossed the state border of Ukraine. [The temporary occupation of Kyiv oblast began.](#) Russian troops landed near Hostomel while convoys of heavy vehicles entered Ukraine from the north crossing the Chernobyl exclusion zone.
- On 25 February,** Russian troops were advancing towards Kyiv. The occupiers set up temporary bases in numerous municipalities of Kyiv oblast including the settlements of Ivankiv and Dymer, the villages of Obukhovychi, Katuzhanka and other neighboring localities.
- On 27 February,** the Russian army took full control over the settlements of Nemishayeve and Vorzel. In other words, a sizable part of Kyiv oblast was occupied by Russian forces in the last days of February. The fighting between the Russian army and the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) for the towns and villages of Kyiv oblast raged on till 21 March.
- On 21 March,** the Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated the village of Moshchun and the settlement of Makariv.
- On 28 March,** the Ukrainian flag was raised over the town of [Irpin.](#)
- On 31 March** Ukrainian troops liberated the town of [Bucha](#) and the settlement of Hostomel.
- On 2 April 2022,** the entire Kyiv oblast was [liberated.](#)

During the occupation

1 370
civilian residents
of Kyiv oblast dead

714
of which tortured
[to death](#)

During the temporary occupation of Kyiv oblast municipalities, the Russian military detained civilians at their whim. Hundreds of people were taken like that: some of them were tortured to death, others were released after several days in detention while still others were transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation. As at 7 July 2023, 317 people were missing during the active hostilities in the territory of Kyiv oblast. [According](#) to police intelligence, 190 civilian residents of Kyiv oblast currently remain in the territory of the Russian Federation.

Detention Facilities and Transfer Routes

MIHR documenters have collected information about several dozen detention facilities set up in Kyiv oblast. For the purposes of this paper, we have focused on three main detention facilities where people were brought in from the neighboring areas.

- I** Open-air detention facilities: the field in Makariv district near the Golf Club and the pit near the village of Katuzhanka;
- II** The foundry shop near “VIKNALAND” company and territory of “VIKNALAND” production site;
- III** The refrigerating chambers in Hostomel.

THE PIT NEAR THE VILLAGE OF KATYUZHANKA

01. Witness

ID Witness

Olha — testifies about her abducted brothers Oleh and Andrii.

The Abduction

On 29 March 2022 Olha's elder brother Oleh and her younger brother Andrii were detained in the settlement of Dymier. According to Olha, the Russian military first entered the house where Andrii, her younger brother, lived and took him away. Before taking Andrii, they searched his home, turned everything upside down and found the picture of his elder brother Oleh who lived separately. The Russians used the photo of Oleh to identify him in the street while he was walking with his child to Andrii's place. Oleh was detained as well.

The Place of Detention

Andrii and Oleh were taken to a field whose location still remains unidentified. Once there, the men were beaten and then put into a pit near the village of Katyuzhanka. According to Oleh, there were 11 people in the pit. Eventually, Oleh and a few other civilians were taken out of the pit. The younger brother, Andrii and two other men, one of whom was the brothers' neighbor, were kept in.

The Russians took Oleh to a nearby house which overlooked the road and told him and the others to stay in because

the house was rigged with explosives. It was only in the morning after the traps had been defused that the men were able to leave.

During the time in the pit, the Russian military beat up Andrii with a rod leaving him with a broken leg. They broke Oleh's leg as well. In the morning the civilians were finally able to vacate the building, but since Oleh was not able to walk on his own, he decided to stay in. *"The people who drove by, saw that he had been left behind as he couldn't walk",* says Olha.

Oleh's Release

Oleh came home after being held captive in a pit near the village of Katyuzhanka.

Andrii's Transfer Route

At present, Andrii remains Russia's prisoner. His family finally got a letter from him in August 2022. Andrii wrote a few words to his brother: *"Hi there! I'm fine. Say hello to Mom, Olya and the children. I miss you a lot and hope to see you again one day".*

THE FIELD IN MAKARIV DISTRICT NEAR THE GOLF CLUB

02. Victims

² ID Victim

³ ID Victim

Mykyta² and Mykola³.

Mykyta, a civilian resident of the village of Andriyivka.

Mykola, a civilian resident.

Mykyta's Abduction

On 3 March 2022, the Russian military entered the village of Andriyivka and took up station at a farm in the outskirts of the settlement of Makariv near Andriyivka. The farm was opposite Mykyta's house where he and his family lived. The Russian military started knocking on the doors of the local residents checking all the men and looking for weapons. According to Mykyta, it was then that detentions of civilians began. The Russians would kill anyone wearing clothes with a camouflage pattern. However, in the village, military fatigues were popular workwear.

Mykyta's entire family — himself, his wife, child, mother and father — were taking shelter from the shelling in the basement of their house. On the afternoon of 3 March 2022, Mykyta's father Oleksandr left the shelter to use the toilet. He was immediately taken by the Russian military. They also entered the basement and ordered Mykyta out. The Russians searched the house and asked the men if they had any weapons. Mykyta showed them an old, rusty shotgun with no shells and a low-power BB gun. Eventually, both the father and the son were taken away. *"I was taken outside the village. They said they would ask me some questions, and if my story checked out, they would let me go. It turned out that nobody bothered to talk to me one-on-one about anything",* recalls Mykyta.

Mykola's Abduction

On 3 March 2022, the Russian military detained Mykola on a road in the fields between the villages of Yasnohorodka and Severynivka together with two other civilians who also happened to be walking that road.

The Place of Detention

Mykola and the two other men were kept in a trench for the first day. They were doused with gasoline because the civilians would refuse to explain the reason for their presence in the area where they had been detained.

"I was lucky to be wearing weather-resistant work clothes — the gasoline only got to the body through the creases. The other boy's casual clothes, however, soaked through causing half of his skin to come off. I saw it later when we were both examined in a medical tent in a camp in Kursk oblast", testified Mykola.

This is what Mykyta recalls about the place he was brought to after the abduction: *"They tied my hands and put on a blindfold. They did it all in their signature style, as roughly as possible, and took me to a field outside the village. This is where I heard my father's voice".* One of the civilians, Mykyta's neighbor, was allowed to go home to look after his sick old mother. A friend of Mykyta's who lived nearby was also held in that field: he had been abducted, too, but the captors had not allowed him to go free. There were other detainees in the field. It was there that Mykyta heard Mykola who was later held together with him.

In the field, all the civilians were lying on open ground under rain and snow. The Russian military abused the civilians while asking questions: where the positions of the Ukrainian military were, how many soldiers there were, and where their headquarters were. They did mock executions, they tortured the detainees breaking some people's fingers. Mykyta says that he could die any day.

During the time the civilians were held at the open-air detention site, the outside temperature was 15 degrees below zero. The people were starved for at least four days. They were first fed on 7 March 2022. No water was given either. This is what Mykola recalls: *"They ordered us to take off our shoes. They would pour water into the shoes, but they would not let us drink".*

"We were to stay down. Just lying and waiting to die. That is what happened to one of us. The poor guy had diabetes and kept groaning. At one time, we realized that he was no longer answering. I don't remember his name, but he lived not far from our village", says Mykola.

According to Mykola, the man constantly begged for water and then died: *“And when they were taking us away (from the field), one of the armed Russians said there was a “300th” who would not stand up. The guy’s body was found by a friend of mine in a mass grave while looking for me”.*

The Transfer Route

On the third or fourth day of staying in the field, the abducted civilians were assembled together. Mykola helped the others to put their shoes on since their hands were tied behind their backs, but his were tied in front of him. It was the Russians who ordered him to do it.

“I was wearing rubber overshoes. It was below zero, their feet were swollen and just would not fit their shoes. I had no idea where we were and how bad I was. He helped us all into a vehicle, and the convoy (of the Russian military) went on the move leaving that field”, recounts Mykyta. The Russians were set to move the civilians, but then came under fire. When the Russian convoy started to take fire, the detained Ukrainians were left lying in the field. The Russians said they were leaving the abducted civilians unprotected for a reason: should they get killed, it would be the Ukrainian military’s fault. The detained were lucky to survive the attack unscathed — only one person suffered a concussion.

After the shelling, the civilians were finally loaded into a truck and moved towards Chornobyl. The people were first brought to an unknown building on Ukrainian soil. There were even more prisoners. From that assembly point, they were taken to Belarus by helicopter. Later, the abducted civilians were taken by plane from Belarus to a prisoner of war (POW) camp in Kursk. From the camp, both Mykola and Mykyta were transferred to Kursk SIZO No. 1. Mykyta was eventually returned to Ukraine. Mykola, however, was left in Kursk SIZO No. 1 and then moved to Maximum Security Penal Colony No. 1 of Tula Oblast of the Russian Federation on 7 May 2022.

The Release

Mykyta was returned to Ukraine following toe surgery required after suffering from frostbite during his time in the pit. Shortly before the release, he was operated on at Kursk Military Hospital on 21 April 2022.

On 4 February 2023, Mykola was returned to Ukraine under the terms of a POW exchange.

As far as the other two civilians detained together with Mykola, no information is available at the moment. As at Mykola’s release, the men were being held at Maximum Security Penal Colony No. 1 of Tula Oblast.

“VIKNALAND” — DYMER

Kyiv oblast 

Dymer community is situated in Vyshhorod district of Kyiv oblast. The community consists of 34 municipalities with the administrative center in [Dymer](#).

“VIKNALAND” is the name of the company which produced plastic windows. The enterprise is located in a five-storey building at 22-Ye Vyshneva Street, Dymer, Vyshhorod district, Kyiv oblast, 07330. The enterprise is in close proximity to Kyiv-Ivankiv motorway. The company is situated next to a suite of industrial facilities which is commonly referred to as “The Foundry Shop” or “The Foundry” by the locals. The witnesses often mention that hostages from various localities of the Dymer community were held either on the territory of “VIKNALAND” or “The Foundry Shop”.

The Russian military used the premises of “VIKNALAND” as makeshift quarters. It appears that they set up headquarters in the general manager’s office. One of the abducted

civilians also showed the space where the abducted people had been held. The space, which is similar to a garage built inside a large shop, measures approximately 5x5 m. There is a heavy-duty compressor in the middle. The detainees slept on the floor. They ate whatever was brought by the captors and drank water from a canister by sucking from the hose. The man also showed the place where people were beaten and tortured. It all happened near the door to the holding space. [The place](#) was also used for imitated executions.

According to the testimony of the locals, after the Russian military had left the territory of Dymer, some 17 civilians remained on the territory of “VIKNALAND” enterprise and were helped out of the detention facility by the local residents. The fate of other civilians detained during the occupation remains unknown.

This is documenter Natalia's testimony.

Natalia, a documentary journalist, has been chronicling the detention and disappearance of civilians in the Kyiv region since the early days of the full-scale invasion. In her testimony, she furnishes a list of the names of civilians detained by the Russian military. Drawing from testimonies she amassed from relatives of civilian detainees and from civilians who, once released, were able to recount their time in Russian captivity, Natalia also describes the detention

locations, conditions, and the paths taken to transport civilians from the Kyiv region to Belarus and Russia. Natalia possesses knowledge about the unwarranted detentions, abductions, and vanishings of 40 individuals from the Kyiv area. **Regarding 6 of these individuals, she learned that one of their detention sites was on the premises of the Viknaland enterprise.**

04. Witness

⁴ ID Witness⁵ ID Victim

Olha⁴ testifies about the abduction of her husband Vasyl⁵, a civilian.

The Abduction

On March 5, 2022, around five in the evening, Vasyl cycled towards "VIKNALAND", reaching the end of Dymer.

The Transfer Route

Olha recounts that she learned of her husband's location and the routes used to transport him and other civilians to the Russian Federation only through witnesses.

"We received a letter from my husband from inside Russia. It lacks specifics on his location; there's no address, nothing. It merely states, 'Alive and well', and beyond that, we're in the dark. While we're uncertain of his current location, we did come across a photograph aired on a Russian TV channel. It unmistakably showed

him, a fact later officially confirmed by the Russian side. On August 30, 2022, we spotted an image of a man labeled as 'Captured' with accompanying details such as his name and date of birth. Subsequently, when lists of names were published in a Telegram channel, his name also appeared, referencing the photo on the Russian TV channel," Olha says.

It's confirmed that Vasyl was held at Bryansk Pretrial Detention Center No.2.

The woman also attests to the disappearances in the Dymer community during its occupation, noting, *"In areas like Dymer and Kozarovychi, very many people were taken. We have a group chat with over a hundred members. The vast majority of them are civilians, with a small fraction being military personnel."*

05. Witness

⁶ID Witnesses

⁷ID Victim

⁸ID Victim

Yana⁶ testifies about the detainment of her father Serhii and Oleksandr, a person she knows. Serhii⁷, a civilian resident of the village of Dymer, worked in the village of Novi Petrivtsi, at a furniture factory. Oleksandr⁸, a civilian resident of the village of Havrylivka.

Serhii's Abduction

On February 26, 2022, Serhii was confronted by the Russian military outside a grocery store, close to the Ukrposhta branch in Dymer. Witnesses describe the sequence of events as follows:

On the day of his abduction, Serhii went to a grocery store in Dymer after learning from friends a food delivery, a rare occurrence during the occupation. Afterward, he intended to deliver a food package to his daughter Yana in Demydiv. Outside the store, he chanced upon a former classmate, and the two struck up a conversation. This classmate later recounted hearing the rumble of heavy military vehicles approaching. Seeking cover, the classmate ducked behind a nearby structure while Serhii headed towards his daughter. It was then that the Russians spotted Serhii, shouting, "Hey, man." Serhii responded, "What's the matter, guys? I'm headed home." They countered, "No, come over here." Despite Serhii's protests of wanting to go home, a group of Russian soldiers alighted from their vehicle, assaulted him, forcibly dragged him into an armored personnel carrier, and took him away to an undisclosed location.

Oleksandr Kharchenko, a local who assumed leadership of the united territorial community during the occupation of [Dymer](#), informed Yana about her father's detention. He remarked, "My men have him due to misconduct," and assured that Serhii would be set free on March 19.

Serhii's father held the position of village council head for 18 years. Yana asserts that names of her grandfather,

father, and herself were all included in lists provided to the Russians by local collaborators. She emphasizes, "...all of us, our names, were on those lists, even though my surname changed over 14 years ago. This list included local deputies and individuals from the communal farm."

Oleksandr's Abduction

On March 8, 2022, Oleksandr, an acquaintance of Yana's, vanished. He was detained in Dymer close to the fire station while he was in a car with his wife and child. It's believed he was held either at Viknaland or on the premises of Lyvarnia.

The Transfer Route

On March 19, 2022, contrary to expectations of his release, Serhii was transferred from his holding location to an undisclosed site.

Yana mentions the rampant abduction of civilian men from the village, stating, "Even licensed hunters were not spared. The Russian forces primarily targeted men."

The current locations of Serhii and Oleksandr remain a mystery. Unverified sources suggest they might be imprisoned in Bryansk Pretrial Detention Center No.2 and Kursk Pretrial Detention Center No.1, respectively. These detentions have yet to be acknowledged by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

06. Witness

⁹ID Witness

¹⁰ID Victim

Nadiya⁹ testifies about the abduction of her family member Oleksandr¹⁰. Oleksandr, a 23-year-old civilian from the village of Kozarovychi, was employed at a hardware store in Dymer.

The Abduction

On February 24, 2022, he began transporting store supplies to safety with the store owner, commuting between Dymer and Kozarovychi. When Russian forces occupied Dymer

on March 2, 2022, Oleksandr went off the grid. Nadiya, concerned, visited his Kozarovychi residence only to discover his car in the yard with its tires slashed. A neighbor recounted witnessing unfamiliar vehicles entering the premises and Russian soldiers ransacking the property.

There are claims that Oleksandr was forcibly removed from his home. Nadiya, upon reaching the residence, found it in disarray with no signs of occupancy. She recalls, *"The interior was chaotic, belongings strewn everywhere, and not a soul in sight. Neighbors informed me about the Russian presence and that Sasha was repeatedly ushered in and out of the house with his hands raised."* Eyewitnesses suggest that apart from Oleksandr, 3 or 4 other civilian men were present, all of whom were made to kneel by the Russian forces during the house search.

Nadiya recalls observing a vehicle, possibly linked to the Russian command, patrolling the village, seemingly identifying potential civilians for detention. *"We noticed a vehicle, a UAZ, commonly referred to as 'bobik', cruising around our area. It passed our location twice, heading into the alleyway. This wasn't just any ordinary vehicle – it was not a typical armored personnel carrier,"* Nadiya explains.

In mid-March 2022, a group of civilians previously held captive at "VIKNALAND" were released by the Russian military. A fellow villager, upon his release, confirmed that Oleksandr had also been detained there. This individual recounted being transported with a group from the detention site, being driven around in a vehicle for some time, and eventually being left at the outskirts of Dymer. They were instructed to head home, keeping their hands raised. Meanwhile, Oleksandr remained at "VIKNALAND".

The Transfer Route

Nadiya says she is unaware of the exact date Oleksandr was transferred from the Kyiv region. She speculates that this relocation might have occurred on March 24. By March 27, 2022, she believes that Oleksandr, along with other civilians, might have been relocated to the Bryansk region, specifically to Pretrial Detention Center No.2 in the city of Novozybkov.

07. Victims

¹¹ ID Victim

¹² ID Victim

Vasyl¹¹ testifies about the abduction of his son Dmytro¹². Both Vasyl and Dmytro are civilian residents of Dymer. Before the abduction, Dmytro used to work as a journalist.

The Abduction

Vasyl, his wife and his son Dmytro were at home in the village of Kozarovychi at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. According to the father and mother, they knew that the Russian military had entered the village: *"The Russians parked at the side of the road just outside our house. There were about 70 soldiers and a convoy of various vehicles – APCs, some specialized vehicles and the like"*. On 2 March 2022, the Russian military kicked the family out of their house and searched it. Vasyl's wife recalls that after the search the soldiers took some things and left: *"One Russian soldier armed with an assault rifle stood guard outside while the other three came inside. They searched our home, but it wasn't clear what they were looking for. In the end, they stole a watch and took our mobile phones"*.

On 3 March 2022, the family saw an RPG round lying in the yard. Vasyl: *"Our house took a direct hit from an RPG. The shot was fired from behind our neighbor's house. We were shocked and disoriented. All the doors came*

unhinged and the windows were shattered by the blast. We decided to move to our neighbor's place two houses down the street for a while". Later, Vasyl and Dmytro decided to come back to assess the damage.

This is what Vasyl recalls about the abduction of his son and himself: *"Dima and I decided to check on our house. As we were approaching it, 5 men armed with assault rifles jumped us, some Asians... they were wearing military uniforms and some kind of helmets. They started shouting "Hands up!" and "Down on the ground!" I could tell they were Russian from their accents. They knocked us down, searched us, took off our boots and fired shots near our ears. After that, they put us up, covered our heads with jackets to blindfold us, and took us in an unknown direction. When I tripped and fell down, they dragged me by the collar. I finally stumbled to my feet, and continued walking. Finally, they brought us into some building. They wrapped Dima's head in adhesive tape so that he couldn't see and just pulled a hat over my face. Then they undressed us"*.

The Places of Detention

Vasyl and Dmytro were initially brought to the warehouse in Lesi Ukrayinki Street in the village of [Kozarovychi](#)¹³. The warehouse was later destroyed in the fighting. Vasyl was held in the corridor of one of the storage spaces for two hours guarded by a Russian soldier armed with an assault rifle. After that, the man was locked inside a dark garage where he stayed for three days with his hands tied. According to the prisoner, every evening the captors would throw him some food to eat.

On the night of 8 March 2022, Vasyl was brought out of the garage and put into a military Ural truck with other civilian prisoners including Dmytro. After a long drive, the civilians were brought to the territory of "VIKNALAND" in Dymer. The blindfolded prisoners were escorted into a large room, which looked like a garage, with a compressor in it. According to Vasyl, the equipment was used to charge batteries. On the first night, the abducted civilians slept on the cold cement floor and did not have any water. On the following night, the men who were locked up in the garage looked for cardboard for makeshift beds, made a latrine from an empty barrel and found leftovers of distilled water. They spent two nights like that before being separated.

If the civilians tried to take a sneak peak at the surroundings through the blindfolds, they would be kicked by the Russian soldiers.

Vasyl's Release

Vasyl was added to the group of civilians who were released on 11 March 2022. On that day, the Russian military moved 9 civilians from the "VIKNALAND" to the outskirts of Dymer and let them walk free. The other group of civilians which included Dmytro was taken further by the Russians. Vasyl asked the captors where his son was being taken, but they only said: *"When the war is over, he will be home in no time"*.

After his release, Vasyl reached the village of Kozarovychi on foot, but the Russian military guarding the checkpoint on the road which led to the village refused to let him in. He was supposed to say the number of the brigade which was holding civilians at "VIKNALAND". *"It was the Russian soldier who had looked after us that told the guards about the 83rd Brigade. That guy was in Kozarovychi and then in Dymer. I don't know his rank, but he was unable to roll his Rs. He was young and tall, and he would always carry his Kalashnikov. I mean, he was a member of the 83rd Brigade"*, says Vasyl.

Dmytro's Transfer Routes

At 3am on 31 March 2022, the Russians withdrew from the village taking the abducted civilians with them. Dmytro is presumed to be held at Pretrial Detention Center No. 2 in Novozybkov, Bryansk Oblast of the Russian Federation.

Abduction of a Group of Volunteers

On 18 March 2022, the Russian military abducted four civilian volunteers in the village of Lisovychi. The volunteers were assisting in the evacuation of civilians and distributing humanitarian aid. Those were Roman and four other civilians. On 19 March, the Russians abducted Yulia, a volunteer from the same group. All the civilians were brought to the detention facility at the territory of "VIKNALAND" enterprise.

08. Victims And Witness

¹⁴ ID Victim
¹⁵ ID Witness

Roman¹⁴.

The testimony of Roman's wife¹⁵.

Roman is a civilian resident of the village of Mykolayivka who did volunteer work.

The Abduction

On 18 March 2022, Roman and other civilians drove to Demydiv village council to meet with volunteer Yulia, load their vehicle with food and deliver it to their civilian neighbors. When the men arrived at the village council,

they realized that they would need help delivering the food to their neighbors in the village. Since mobile networks in the area were down, the men drove to Mykolayivka to ask their local friend to assist them with her car. The men was giving a ride to a civilian villager who wanted to evacuate later on that day. When the men entered

[13] This might be the warehouse Vasyl mentions

Mykolayivka, they saw an IFV (infantry fighting vehicle) and a roadblock. The military told them that civilians would be allowed to pass once the military operation is over.

While they were waiting, a volunteer friend arrived in a van. They waited near the roadblock for two and a half hours. Suddenly, they were swarmed by the Russian military who ordered the men to step out of the vehicles and take off their clothes as the soldiers looked for tattoos. After the search, they were allowed to put their clothes back on. The Russian military then tied their hands with adhesive tape, pulled hats over their faces, threw them into the boot of a van and drove them in an unknown direction.

The Place of Detention

The Russian military took the detained men to the "Foundry" near "VIKNALAND". According to released civilian, there were 17 people at the place of detention when they were brought in. Another civilian was brought later on that day and Yulia joined them the following day. On the evening of 18 March 2022, the Russians released some of the civilians.

The people were subjected to interrogations or even tortured upon finding messenger chats in their phones with whatever mentions of war. The Russian soldiers suspected the detained of passing valuable information about the positions of their army to Ukrainian forces. One of the civilians was beaten and tortured by the Russians who hit his lips with an electric shocker. Another civilian

from Kozarovychi had his fingers broken by the Russians for measuring water levels at the dam which had been blown up. The Russians tortured the man trying to extort the names of the dam maintainers since they needed to have it repaired. Another civilian from Kozarovychi was detained for picking up rations which had been scattered in the field. They shot his two dogs and searched his home. The man was abducted after the Russians had found World War II shells at the man's home. The Russians thought him to be a gunner.

During the time in detention, the abducted were forced to write letters of agreement promising to assist the Russian army, to report on the positions of the Ukrainian army, not to carry weapons and not to resist the so-called LPR and DPR. They were also ordered to confirm the obligations out loud so that the Russian military could take videos.

The Transfer Routes

On 23 March 2022, 17 civilians were taken from "VIKNALAND" to Hostomel. The Russians had a list with letters G or D near each name: the G stood for "Hostomel" while the D meant "release". One of the man was first put on the "release" list, but when the Russian soldiers realized they were short of prisoners, they added him to the transfer group.

On 25 March 2022, Roman and the other civilians were moved from Dymer to Hostomel and then to Belarus to end up in Pretrial Detention Center No. 2 in Novozybkov, Bryansk Oblast of the Russian Federation.

09. Victim

ID Victim

A civilian resident who wished to keep his name private. Civilian resident and volunteer.

The Abduction

The man was abducted on 18 March 2022 while evacuating civilians from the village of Kozarovychi in his car. The Russian military ordered him to stop and told him that civilians were only allowed to be evacuated to Belarus. He objected since the people wanted to reach the safety of Ukrainian-controlled territory. The man was detained for refusing to obey.

The Place of Detention

The man was initially brought to Dymer. He spent 6 days at the detention center set up at the territory of "VIKNALAND" where more than 20 abducted civilians were being kept. Some of them were tortured. "I witnessed them discharge two electric shockers into a guy", recalls the man.

The Transfer Routes

Eventually, a civilian man and more than ten prisoners were transferred from Dymer to Belarus. From Belarus,

the civilians were moved to Russia, Bryansk oblast, the city of Novozybkov, Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 2.

He recounts the movement of civilians to the Russian Federation with remarkable clarity: "On 23 March 2022, we were picked up from Dymer, 14 people in total. A woman was picked up on the way to our destination. We spent our first night in Hostomel at the territory of the airport. After that, they drove us to Belarus, where we spent another night, in two Ural trucks. Each Ural was carrying 35-37 people. About 90% were civilians except a few military".

The Release

According to the civilian, there were approximately 200 people from Kyiv oblast held at Pretrial Detention Center No. 2 in Novozybkov, Bryansk Oblast, during the time he spent there. The man returned to Ukraine under the terms of a POW exchange.

Yulia, a civilian volunteer, delivered humanitarian aid to the nearest localities.
Interviews from public sources.

The Abduction

On March 19, 2022, at 4:45 p.m., Yulia was halted by the Russian military at a checkpoint in the village of Lytvynivka. They forcibly disrobed her and took her prisoner. Even before this incident, the Russians had threatened her with detention, indicating their awareness of her volunteer status. *"The Russians frequently patrolled our community. Among them was a high-ranking officer with the call sign 'Baikal'. I had just delivered medical supplies to a five-story building. After dropping off the supplies, I was heading back when I was halted at the checkpoint. They insisted I stay, stating they needed to converse with me. They mentioned that a senior officer would engage in this conversation since they believed I possessed vital information. Following this, they assured, I would be set free,"* the volunteer testified. Contrary to their words, after the discussion, they did not release her. Colleagues of Yulia approached the Russians, pleading for her release. Their requests were denied, with the Russians claiming she had acted improperly by informing the Ukrainian military of the Russian army's position.

VIKNALAND

"Before our transfer to Hostomel, they compelled us to write a receipt, affirming our non-objection to cooperating with the Russian Federation. Those who resisted were whisked away, subjected to torture until they agreed," Yulia explains the rationale behind relocating civilians to Russian territory. She portrays the procedure of the document signing vividly: *"Three special forces operatives, their faces obscured by balaclavas and donning bulletproof vests, bore a distinct emblem on their backs: 'Spetsnaz' [Special Forces]. They were*

the architects of our pain." These operatives assaulted civilians with police batons and deployed stun guns against them.

The Transfer Routes

Detailing the journey and the appalling conditions they endured, Yulia recounts, *"Initially, our group of 33 was transported to the Hostomel airfield. We endured a full day under fire. Animals would've received kinder treatment than what we experienced. Subsequently, we were moved to Belarus, specifically to the city of Narovlya. From there, our route led us to the Belbek airport in Crimea, eventually culminating in our confinement in the Bryansk region, within the walls of Pretrial Detention Center No. 2."*

Within the confines of Pretrial Detention Center No. 2, Yulia observed the cruel rituals preceding interrogations: before these sessions, men were offered cigarettes, a perverse gesture of relaxation, ahead of getting brutally kicked during the questioning. *"Men were beating us up. Women only distributed uniforms. All the other procedures, including checkups, blood tests and gynecological exams, were always performed by men,"* Yulia reveals.

The woman was interrogated about the Ukrainian military's positions, the strength of its personnel, and the equipment they used. Additionally, she was questioned about ways to repair bridges and a damaged dam.

The Release

On April 9, 2023, Yulia was repatriated to Ukraine during a prisoner of war exchange between Ukraine and Russia.

THE REFRIGERATING CHAMBERS — HOSTOMEL

[Hostomel](#) is a municipality in Bucha district of Kyiv oblast of Ukraine and the administrative center of Hostomel territorial community. The city was awarded the "Hero City" status on 6 March 2022. The municipality is situated on the river Irpin 12 km to the north-west of Kyiv. Hostomel is home to "Antonov" international cargo airport targeted by Russian forces on 24 February 2022.

The detention facility in Hostomel was used for holding civilians who were brought immediately after detention. It was also a transit point for civilians moved from other detention facilities before they were transferred to Belarus. For example, those who had been held at the territory of "VIKNALAND" company, were later moved to Hostomel.

From “VIKNALAND” to Hostomel. A stopover before crossing into Belarus.

8.1 Victim

ID Victim

Roman.

One of the released men witnessed civilians being thrown into a stationary refrigerating chamber with radiators hanging from the walls. Roman also was there. The Russians brought the hostages from the “VIKNALAND” holding area to the that place in an Ural. The vehicle entered the

hangar with the Mriya cargo plane to unload the civilians who were ordered into the refrigerating chamber. The Russian military made a list of the detained persons, and the released men counted 20 fellow prisoners held in Hostomel.

9.1 Victim

ID Victim

A civilian resident who wished to keep his name private.

The civilian man was in the same group with Yulia and Roman. The man says that three more people were added to the “VIKNALAND” group in Hostomel. There

was a 70-year-old man, who could barely stand, among the civilians. “It appeared that they intended to trade us”, says men.

11. Witness

¹⁶ ID Witness

¹⁷ ID Victim

¹⁸ ID Victim

The testimony of Natalia¹⁶ about her husband Yevhen¹⁷, her sister’s husband Serhii¹⁸ and her nephew. All the men are civilians.

Serhii's Abduction

Serhii vanished on March 7, 2022.

Yevhen's Abduction

The Russian military established their base at School No.2 on Proskurivska Street and set up a checkpoint within a forest, in close proximity to the city council. On March 17, 2022, they advanced into the street where Natalia's family resided, proceeding to plunder civilian properties, transporting suitcases and bundles with loot on their military vehicles. The local populace was horrified. That day, Russian troops forcibly entered Natalia's mother-in-law's house by breaking down the gate and ramming a truck through the fence. They conducted a search and appropriated some items. On the morning of March 18, around 10:00 a.m., a Russian BTR armored personnel carrier approached Natalia's residence. Armed Russian soldiers raided the house. Both Natalia and Yevhen were stripped bare. While Yevhen was restrained outside, Natalia and Yevhen's brother were escorted to their mother-in-law's house for another search. Natalia recalls, “The were primarily looking for weapons and phones. Rumors circulated that my husband had fired at them. Post the abduction, as I searched for our men, neighbors told me that

the Russians frequently used alleged weapon possession as a pretext for detention. I am aware of the existence of lists according to which people were executed.”

Yevhen is an ethnic Russian, a fact known to the Russian military. As he knelt at gunpoint, one Russian soldier seized the family's laptop that Yevhen had stashed in a child's backpack. Attempting to inform his Russian relatives about the events in Ukraine, Yevhen's messages on his cell phone were discovered by the Russians. This discovery might have prompted his abduction.

The Place of Detention

Through witnesses, Natalia ascertained that Yevhen had been detained at a military camp in Hostomel.

The Transfer Route

On April 25, 2022, a released prisoner claimed to have seen Yevhen. The captives were transported via Belarus to the Russian Federation, specifically to Bryansk Detention Center No.2. The ICRC has verified that both Serhii and Yevhen are captives in the Russian Federation, though the exact location remains undisclosed.

12. Witness

¹⁹ ID Witness

²⁰ ID Victim

The testimony of Natalia¹⁹ about her husband Yevhen²⁰.

Yevhen, a civilian was employed at a repair company. He traveled to Hostomel for work on February 17, 2022.

Yevhen's Abduction

Together with fellow workers in Hostomel, Yevhen resided in a two-story building. This very house was chosen by the Russian military as their quarters, with them settling on its second floor. By early March, the city endured bombardment, prompting civilians to seek shelter in basements. Yevhen went off the grid since then. As of March 11, 2022, when the city's evacuation commenced, a few returning civilians informed Natalia that Yevhen left home on March 7 and had since vanished.

The Transfer Route

Following the initial prisoner of war exchange, Natalia came across a photo of her husband online and understood that he was being held in Bryansk Pretrial Detention Center No.2. This information was subsequently corroborated by Yevhen's fellow inmates who were released in subsequent exchanges. In August 2022, Natalia received a letter from Yevhen, which assured her of his well-being but offered no further specifics.

13. Victim

A civilian resident who wished to keep his name private.

The Abduction

On March 8, 2022, the man, alongside a companion, aided in the evacuation of civilians, transporting them via truck to areas of relative safety. It was during their mission to rescue more women and children that they were intercepted by Russian forces. These soldiers boarded the vehicle with the volunteers and accompanied them to the rendezvous point where the civilians anticipated their arrival.

Detailing his arrest, the man recounts: *"Upon reaching our destination, individuals donned in black attire and masks dragged us from the vehicle, thrusting us onto the ground and physically assaulting us. Accusations of us being spotters and spies were hurled at us amidst the beating. They bound my wrists with plastic ties. Just then, the sound of mortar fire resonated. Russian soldiers, grabbing me by the arms, ushered me blindly to an unknown location, my eyes already duct taped. Some 100-150 from where I was detained, the deafening noise of armored machinery filled my ears. I was flung to the ground adjacent to one such vehicle, and they began kicking my face, ribs, and arms. The beating dislodged the duct taped hat from my eyes, revealing a massive assembly of armored units. The sheer number was staggering, easily hundreds, parked tightly side-by-side. I came to the realization that I was at their main base, situated across from the Hostomel market. Russian military leaders were interrogating men, trying to ascertain the whereabouts of another reconnaissance team."*

The volunteers endured torture; a bag was fastened around their heads, obstructing their airways. Civilians told the Russian forces that their passage through the green corridor was sanctioned by an agreement with them. Yet, the Russians countered with accusations that these civilians were spies. To hinder any escape attempts, their legs were wedged between the treads of a tank. In such a precarious position, any movement

would result in the armored vehicle crushing their legs. The man remained pinned like this under the snow for five hours.

Judging by the distinct accent of the Russians, they were Kadyrovites. Ultimately, they hoisted the man onto an armored personnel carrier and transported him into a forested area. He wasn't alone; the carrier was cramped with captives piled atop one another, four of them in total.

The Place of Detention

The civilian recounts how he was treated by the Russian military in the detention center: *"They took us to some forest. Shortly after, my hat fell off, revealing numerous armored vehicles hidden amongst the trees. The only ones present were Kadyrov's men and Buryats. Nearby, about 3-4 meters away, was a deep pit, three meters in depth, filled with deceased Ukrainian soldiers in uniform. It became clear to me that they intended to lead me to this pit. I couldn't ascertain the exact number of bodies, as they swiftly forced us into the pit, atop the fallen soldiers. They warned that any attempt to escape would be met with gunfire. For three days, we remained exposed to the elements in that pit. Snow fell continuously, and we had to shelter ourselves with the bodies of the deceased for warmth. They subjected us to interrogations, inflicting gunshot wounds to our heads, yet their line of questioning remained unclear to us."*

The hostages were deprived of food and water for three consecutive days. Three days post-detention, the civilians were herded onto armored vehicles bound for an undisclosed location. Among those being transported, only three were men alive; the remainder were corpses. Around March 12, 2022, the convoy halted, with the audible hum of military generators in the background. Subsequently, the civilians, still handcuffed causing their hands to swell, were guided into chilly, dark refrigeration units.

"I found myself confined in an unlit cell, isolated from other captives. My blindfold was removed so I could see, but the overwhelming darkness rendered it pointless. I remained in that bleak space until dawn." Subsequently, he was relocated to another frigid cell that already housed 28 inmates. To combat the biting cold, they huddled closely, often stacking themselves during sleep. During questioning sessions, Russian officials asked civilians about the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the ATO. They coercively demanded Volodymyr Zelensky's contact details and Stepan Bandera's address of residence, using weapons as intimidation.

Throughout the interrogation, the man suffered physical torment: he was rendered toothless, his ribs and arms were injured, and the Russians inflicted blows with sticks, batons, kicks, and even hurled a chair at him. Typically, this violence was meted out by a pair of Russian soldiers: one poised with an assault rifle aimed at him, while the other dealt the blows. Their brutalities were routinely captured on film. Moreover, the captive had sustained a shrapnel injury during a bombardment. However, the medical attention he received was cursory at best—his leg was merely bandaged after the shrapnel was extracted. By March 19, he had been subjected to four separate interrogations and was led to the execution site on five distinct occasions. The mock executions were carried out near a refuse pit. The man recalls one fellow prisoner being fatally shot by the Russians due to his mental breakdown. Subsequently, his

fellow detainees buried him. As they lowered his body into the pit, they observed contusions covering his entire lifeless body.

"We heard that there were special forces outside the door. They often came to us with the supervisor of this freezer. He was the only person who came in without a mask, his name was Sergey. If they show me his picture, I will recognize him," the man says.

The Transfer Route

On March 19, 2022, civilians were filtered, and those who were to be taken away were separated. The man was on this list. He and other civilians were brought to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, to the shelter above Unit 4. Then people were taken to Belarus, where they were kept in a hangar. There, the man learned that his acquaintances were among the abducted civilians. The detainees spent 3 days in Belarus, then they were taken in convoys of 5-6 cars to Bryansk Detention Center No.2 in Russia. During his stay in this detention center, he was interrogated and tortured. Later, the man was transferred to Pretrial Detention Center No. 2 in Taganrog.

The Transfer Route

On May 6, 2022, the man returned to Ukraine during a prisoner of war exchange.

14. Victim

ID Victim

Oleksandr, a civilian man, used to drive a tractor before the abduction.

The Abduction

On the day of his abduction, Oleksandr and his family were hiding in the basement of their house from the shelling. When Russian military entered into the yard, Oleksandr came out of hiding and was immediately surrounded by the soldiers. He was arrested on the accusations of being a Maidan activist. The Russians found chats with mentions of war on his mobile, and said he was "just the man they were looking for". The man was brought into the center of the town and put together with other detained persons. At first, they were ordered to lie face down and were tied. After that, the men were put in an armored vehicle. The Russian military tied them to the vehicle as sitting accommodations and covered them with tarpaulin. This is how they traveled around for two and a half days with the Russians sitting on top of their bodies. For the night, they would untie the prisoners from the vehicle, tie them together, secure their legs to an IFV and leave in the open. It was only on the fourth day that the civilians were given porridge leftovers from the meal eaten by the Russian military. Before that, they were starved and not allowed to use the toilet. The refrigerating chambers in Hostomel were visited by the Russian First Channel crew who even managed to do a story about the prisoners.

Detention Facilities and Transfer Routes

On 3 March 2022, six detained civilians were delivered to another brigade of the Russian military. The men were once again tied to an IFV and moved to the pit near the village of Katyuzhanka where the soldiers imitated their execution. On 4 March, the men were transferred to a place which looked like a canteen in Hostomel. On 5 March, they were put into the refrigerating chambers where other detained persons were being held. According to Oleksandr, there were 125 people from Kyiv oblast in the refrigerating chambers. On 7 March all the civilians were transferred to Chernobyl. However, two men were separated and never seen again, their fate remaining unknown. The civilians spent a night at Chernobyl NPP. On 8 March, they were moved across the border to Homel in Belarus. However, two hours later, the civilians were returned to Chernobyl. On 9 March, they were once again brought to Homel, this time to the local airport. From there the civilians were flown to Kursk. On 14 March, the man was brought to SIZO No. 1 in Kursk, the Russian Federation, where he stayed with other civilian prisoners including a 70-year-old person.

The Release

On 14 April 2022, Oleksandr was brought to Ukraine under the terms of a POV exchange and returned home.

CHERNIHIV OBLAST

Oblast Description

↔ 31 865 km² ⊕ 5 districts ◆ 1510 municipalities

Chernihiv oblast is a region adjacent to Ukraine's northern border. It borders on the territories of the Russian Federation (80 km from Chernihiv) and Belarus (50 km from [Chernihiv](#)).



The Brief Chronology of Events

- **On 24 February 2022**, the northern parts of the oblast were occupied.
- **As at 3 April** the oblast was fully liberated by the Ukrainian forces.
- **On 6 April** the Ukrainian army regained control over the state border of Ukraine in Siversk operational area.

Among all the Ukrainian regions which suffered from Russia's full-scale invasion, Chernihiv oblast took some of the heaviest tolls.

It was the proximity to the border that caused Chernihiv oblast to take the first blow of the full-scale invasion of the Russian army. The invasion of Chernihiv oblast started with a missile strike on the command post of Nizhyn air base, the attacks on border guard stations and the training division of the 1st Tank Brigade in [Honcharivske](#). Countless convoys of Russian vehicles streamed into Ukraine from the north-west through "Senkivka" border crossing point where the borders of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus converge. Russian forces also entered Chernihiv oblast from Sumy oblast: the troops moved from the direction of Baturyn via Ichnya and Nizhyn districts aiming for Boryspil.

The armed forces of the Russian Federation pushed forward in an attempt to surround Chernihiv. The Russian military deployed vehicles to many occupied villages near Chernihiv: Tovstolissya, Terehivka, Malynivka, Chernysh, Sednev, Berezanka, Voznesenske, and Kyselivka. Russian MLRS systems fired on Ukrainian positions from Chernysh, Malynivka and Terehivka. The Russians set up offensive headquarters in the town of Vyshneve in Ripky district 35 km from Chernihiv. They also set up a large logistics center there.

The main objective of the Russian army was to capture Kyiv. Russian troops intended to reach the northern and north-eastern outskirts of the capital from Siversk operational area. Step by step, they took control over swathes of Chernihiv oblast advancing towards Kyiv. If captured, the city of Chernihiv was to become a logistical springboard for the rush towards Kyiv.

The Places of Detention

During the occupation, the Russian army established its rules in populated areas and resorted to arbitrary and illegal actions against the civilian population. Numerous places of detention and torture set up by the Russian military were discovered after the liberation of the captured towns and villages of Chernihiv oblast. Many local civilian residents were taken to those places where they sustained mutilations and bodily injuries of varying degrees of severity, and some of them were found killed. A large number of people are considered missing, and their fate still remains unknown. Some of the civilian hostages were transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation where they are being illegally held in Russian penitentiaries.

The MIHR experts examined two locations in the village of Vyshneve in Chernihiv oblast where civilian hostages had been held.

Overall, the Russian invasion of Chernihiv oblast lasted over a month.

Vyshneve

The village of Vyshneve with a population of about 547 people is located 30-35 km north of Chernihiv and 40 km from the state border of Ukraine with Belarus. The occupation of Vyshneve lasted over a month: the Russian military entered the village on 25 February 2022 which was liberated by the Ukrainian army on 4 April 2022.

Capturing Vyshneve was strategically important for the Russian army because the village provides access to Rivnopillia which connects it with roads that go around Chernihiv and towards Kyiv. The Russian military set up offensive headquarters and command and logistics posts in Vyshneve. It was from [Vyshneve](#) that they coordinated the advance on Chernihiv and fired on the city.

Oleksandr Kraskivskyi, the headman of the village of Zamglai, Chernihiv oblast who was held in Vyshneve, shares details of a Russian military base containing a huge number of personnel and equipment which was set up there: *“They were building some serious entrenchments. There were more vehicles than I could count and a great many men. The Russians set up a major base there with barracks and commandant’s headquarters. They had tanks, APCs and the like”*. The Russians set up

a “commandant’s office” — the occupation administration which, according to the victims’ testimony, was headed by the “commandant” with the call sign “Zakon”, Kostya Zakon.

The important fact is that in addition to the military there were representatives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) among the Russian army personnel stationed in Vishneve: it was the FSB that interrogated most of the detained persons. Those facts are corroborated by the testimonies of the victims and their relatives.

The Russian military set up detention facilities for civilian detainees and prisoners of war at their headquarters in Vyshneve. This document sheds light on two such facilities:

- I The territory of a woodworking enterprise also known as “the sawmill” (former canning factory);
- II Vyshnivsky general secondary educational institution of the I-II level.



The school in Vyshneve, where Ukrainians were held.
Photo: Viktor Kovalchuk

THE TERRITORY OF A WOODWORKING ENTERPRISE OR "THE SAWMILL"

One of the headquarters of the Russian military was set up at the territory of a woodworking enterprise at 1 Tsentralna Street in Vyshneve. It also contained a detention area for civilians. [According](#) to the head of

Vyshniv local government district Taisia Terebylo, about 30 people were held on the premises of the "sawmill" including both civilians and captured military personnel.

01. Victim

The testimony of Natalia, Andrii's wife, a civilian.

The Abduction

At about 3pm on 25 March 2022, Andrii, a civilian, was detained in the village of Novoukrainske of Chernihiv oblast (3 km from the village of Vyshneve). More than 30 armed Russian soldiers came to search his home and the adjacent territory resulting in the abduction of the man who still remains a Russian prisoner. This is what Andrii's wife Natalia recalls about that day: *"On 25 March 2022, a convoy roared [past our house], we are [located] 3 km from Vyshneve. [That is why] we decided to have lunch in the bathhouse. The whole family was at the table. While we were having lunch, we heard footsteps. The door swung open and people in military uniforms came in. They pointed their assault rifles at us and radioed someone "found a family here". They ordered everyone out. When I came out, they took my husband away... I saw very many soldiers, our yard, the pond, and the entire household were surrounded. There was a prisoner transport truck or something similar parked on our vegetable patches. An APC was idling right outside the bathhouse. My mother and my daughters were order to stay near the bathhouse guarded by an armed [Russian] soldier. My husband and my son-in-law were taken behind the bathhouse. After a while my son-in-law was released (he stayed with us later), but my husband was left for questioning. I saw him through a crack sitting on a stump, his head down, while the Russians were asking questions. There were some 30 Russian military around, and that is not counting the others who searched our yard and our*

house". According to Natalia, the search of the house and the questioning lasted about an hour, from 2pm to 3pm. Her son-in-law was the first to be released: he says that they mostly wanted to know if he had served in the military or had any relation to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and they also "undressed me and looked for tattoos or bulletproof vest wear marks on my body". The Russians turned the place upside down and stole many things. Natalia remarks: "They searched my husband's study with particular attention. Everything with data storage was taken: the computer, our phones (since the mobile networks were down, they were all lying in one place), the tablet, my husband's dashcam recorder, his video camera – pretty much everything. They [also] took our flashlights, which were quite expensive, as well as the registration papers for the tractor and my driving license". After the interrogation, the Russian military detained Andrii and took him to Vyshneve where they had set up a military base. After being released from the Russian pre-trial detention center, the prisoners who shared the cell with Andrii later told Natalya that after the abduction of Andrii they were held on the territory of the woodworking enterprise in Vyshneve for several days.

The Transfer Routes

Andrii still remains a prisoner of the Russian Federation and is being held in Maximum Security Penal Colony No. 1 of Tula Oblast. Those facts were established based on the testimony of former hostages who had been held together with Andrii at the detention center.

VYSHNIVSKY GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OF THE I-II LEVEL

The premises of the village's only school (Vyshnivsky GSEI of the I-II level) at 1 Pushkina Street was the second largest place of holding civilian hostages. The Russian military occupied the school and the kindergarten and set up their headquarters [there](#) including the office of the "commandant" of the Russian occupation administration Kostya Zakon. The Russians held and tortured civilians in the basement of the school. It was not only the residents of Vyshneve that were brought to the torture chamber — it

was the people from other villages, too. According to the victims' accounts and information from open sources, up to 19 civilians were subjected to torture in the basement of the school^[21]. This is what prisoner Andrii's wife Natalia recalls about the witnesses' accounts: "When the mobile networks were [still] up in Vyshneve and people were still staying in their homes and [they] could see people being walked into the basement of the school with bags on their heads. They were taken and beaten".



The school basement in Vyshneve,
where Ukrainians were held.
Photo: Viktor Kovalchuk

[21] The data collected by NGO "Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv"

Oleksandr, a civilian.

The Abduction

On 23 March 2022, the Russian military detained Oleksandr, the headman of the village of Zamglai in Chernihiv oblast. The Russian army attempted to enter and occupy the village, but Oleksandr engaged in negotiations with the Russians on behalf of the locals and did whatever he had to do to keep the Russians out of Zamglai. Oleksandr was detained and taken to the basement of the school in the village of Vyshneve, Chernihiv oblast (1 Pushkina Street) where he was held captive for 1.5 days and subject to torture. This is what he recalls about the experience: *"I went to negotiate and they put me into a Tiger – an armored car mainly used by the FSB. They ordered me to go down on my knees and said "he is coming with us". [The put a] bag on my head, threw me into a Tiger, zip-tied my hands and drove me away. Although I could not see where exactly, I am a local and I drive around all the time so I know every turn of the local roads. That's how I realized that I was being taken to Vyshneve. [When we reached the destination] I was pulled out of the Tiger, that car, and walked into the basement. Just 30 minutes later they started to interrogate me. I was sure that I was in the school because this is the only building in the area which has a basement like that".*

The Place of Detention

According to Oleksandr, after being walked into the basement of the school, he was interrogated by three members of the FSB of the Russian Federation who were aged 27-28 and the Russian "commandant" who represented the occupation authority in Vyshneve. They were all wearing balaclavas so he could not see their faces. Oleksandr was tortured during the interrogation. After that he was put into a tiny closet: *"I was the only person in that closet. Still, I could hear voices [the voices of other inmates]. There was a [Russian] soldier who would knock on the door and ask if I was still alive. He would then knock on the other doors to check [on the other inmates]. This is how I realized there were other people in holding".*

Oleksandr says that his first interrogation was the most terrifying: they kicked him in the kidneys, in the liver and in the face, they threatened to chop off his fingers and kill him: *"They roughed me up all right. They mostly kicked and punched, but they did not use any objects. They kicked me a lot, and they hurt my legs. I could not understand why they kept hitting my legs. Only about half an hour later, when my feet got badly*

swollen, did I realize their intention: they wanted to hurt you so that you could neither walk or run. I could not move or walk around because my legs hurt like hell from the swelling caused by muscle injuries. They also punched me in the ribs, and they hit from behind in the kidney area. When my hands were tied, one of them kicked [me] really hard while I was sitting on a chair – so hard that I fell off the chair in pain. When I fell off [the chair], they continued kicking me in the head. However, when I took the fall [from the chair], the capron band that was holding my hands behind my back snapped. The Russian military tied my hands in front of me with adhesive tape. They kept beating me: after doing so for half an hour they would take a breather and then return to continue with the beating. They would also grab my finger, put a knife to it and threaten to cut it off". After the beating Oleksandr was dragged into a room (a closet) and thrown on the floor: *"While I was in the closet, I bit on the tape that was holding my hands, and it snapped in two. There was a pea coat [on the floor]. I reached into a pocket, found a box of matches and lit one up to look around".*

In the morning, the prisoner was taken for another round of interrogation and beating: *"The night was uneventful. They came back for me in the morning. This team, however, used a different beating technique. They used the palm of their hands to hit my ears and [damage] the eardrums – one of my ears is still a little deaf".* The interrogators were mostly interested to know about the AFU positions.

The victim says that it was the soldiers of the regular Russian army that detained him. However, he insists that the tortures were conducted by the members of the FSB and, possibly, the GRU of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the school housed the occupation "commandant's office" headed by the "commandant" known under the nickname "Zakon" who was in charge of everything that was happening at the school.

The Release

Oleksandr was released at about 4pm on the evening of 24 March. The aforementioned "commandant" of Vyshneve brought him to the village. The Prosecutor General's Office commenced criminal proceedings into the abduction of Oleksandr.

SUMY OBLAST

Oblast Description

↔ 23 834 km²

⊕ 5 districts

◆ 1490 municipalities

Sumy Oblast is a north-eastern region of Ukraine which borders on the territory of the Russian Federation.



▨ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian territory as of March 22, 2022

The Brief Chronology of Events

- **At about 5am on 24 February 2022,** Russian forces targeted a number of municipalities of Sumy oblast from the territory of the Russian Federation using Grad MLRS. Following the attack, Russian tanks and armored vehicles invaded Ukraine from Kursk and Belhorod oblasts of the Russian Federation along the entire length of the border (560 km) which separates Sumy oblast from the Russian Federation killing Ukrainian border guards on [the way](#).
- **By 6 March** they had advanced 60-140 km into Ukrainian territory and had captured a number of municipalities in Okhlyrka, Sumy, Romny and Konotop [districts](#). Certain elements of the Russian forces entered Sumy on the first day of the invasion, but failed to take control of the city.
- **On 6-8 April** Sumy oblast was completely liberated: all the elements of the Russian forces retreated from the advancing AFU.
- **On 11 April** the units of the 5th Border Guards Detachment restored control over the part of the state border of Ukraine in Sumy oblast previously lost.

*According to Dmytro Zhivytskyi, the head of the Sumy Regional Military Administration, about 120 civilians died during the occupation of the region. However, those official figures may just scratch the surface of the actual body count. Furthermore, a large number of people disappeared during the occupation and their fate remains unknown.

About 120 civilians died during the occupation of the region*

The main efforts of the Russian Federation in the Siversky and Slobozhansky operational areas, which include Sumy oblast, were focused on the rapid occupation of the regional center and the subsequent advance on Kyiv from the north-eastern and eastern [directions](#). Sumy oblast was to become a [staging area](#) for the capturing of Kyiv which was the ultimate goal of the Russian command.

Russian troops invaded four out of the five districts of Sumy oblast.

The fiercest battles in the Sumy oblast were fought for the city of Okhlyrka. The success of the Russian offensive depended on capturing the city due to its strategic location. If the city had fallen, the Russians would have gained access to the direct route to Poltava, Myrhorod, Gadyach and further to Kyiv and even Kharkiv. Since 24 February the Russian forces pounded the city with artillery and aviation for 30 days. Although Okhlyrka did not fall, it is considered to be one of the most damaged cities of Sumy oblast.

The occupied cities of Sumy oblast included, among others, Trostyanets, Konotop, Buryń, Romny, and Putivl. For some of them such as Trostyanets (24 February-26 March 2022) and Konotop (25 February-4 April 2022) the Russian occupation lasted especially long — more than a month. In addition to that, the villages of Boromlya, Krasnopillya and Lebedyn territorial communities were occupied during the first days of the invasion. The large swathe of territory from the city of Konotop to the city of Bilopillia (about 100 km wide) was also captured by the Russians.

The Detention Facilities and Transfer Routes

During the occupation, the Russian army established its rules in populated areas and resorted to arbitrary and illegal actions against the civilian population. Numerous places of detention and torture set up by the Russian military were discovered after the liberation of the captured towns and villages of Sumy oblast. Many local civilian residents sustained mutilations and bodily injuries of varying degrees of severity from the tortures of the Russian military, and some of them were found killed. A large number of people are considered missing, and their fate still remains unknown. Some of the civilian hostages were transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation where they are being illegally held in Russian penitentiaries.

The MIHR experts examined two locations in the territory of Sumy oblast where civilian hostages had been held.

- ❶ Trostyanets Railway Station;
- ❷ The building of the former SE "Boromlya PMK 145".

TROSTYANETS RAILWAY STATION

Sumy
oblast



Trostyanets Railway Station
Image: freepik.com

The city of Trostyanets was under occupation for more than a month. After its liberation by the Ukrainian army, a makeshift detention facility was discovered in the basement of the city's main railway station at 10 40th Army Square which had been used for holding civilian prisoners. During the occupation of Trostyanets, the Russian military set up headquarters in the station buildings. According to open-source data and the victims' testimonies, the personnel belonged to:

→ the 4th Guards Kantemirovskaya Tank Division named after Yu. Andropov, a structural unit of the 1st Guards Tank Army of the Western Military District of the Russian Federation;

→ illegal militia groups of the self-proclaimed LDPR controlled by the Russian Federation which had joined the Russian forces in the city of Trostyanets.

According to the facts available at the moment, the basement of the railways station was used for the illegal holding of at least 10 civilians. All the prisoners were subjected to torture and held in inhuman conditions. The tortures may have led to the death of one individual whose body has not been found causing the Prosecutor's Office to commence criminal proceedings and assign the missing status. Three persons were transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation and subsequently put into Russian SIZOs.

01. Victim

ID Victim

Ihor, a civilian resident.

The Abduction

Ihor was detained in the street between 10am and 11am on 24 March 2022. According to his testimony, he had gone out for bread and was walking towards the building

behind the railway station. He was detained by the Russian military near the station: *"I often went out to buy bread. Some private entrepreneurs used to come there and sell flour. Well, that's what I wanted to: my wife gave me 500 hryvnas and told me to go and buy*

some flour. There is a warehouse, and that's where I headed. The place is behind the railway station, it is called "Eldorado". There I was walking [past the station], I was just about to pass the bridge when I saw a Russian APC. I hid under the bridge and waited for them to leave. The APC drove past. I got out [into the street] and was just about to cross the warehouse territory. [Then suddenly] two Russian soldiers armed with assault rifles started chasing me. They cocked their weapons and told me to follow them. I asked why I was being detained, but they told me to shut up and walk. They held me at gunpoint, so I didn't have much choice".

The Place of Detention

Right after the detention, Ihor was subjected to long torture. Then the crippled man was thrown into the basement, where he stayed for two days before the liberation of the city on 26 March 2022 when the advancing AFU made the Russian military leave the city in a hurry. According to the victim's testimony, there were other civilian hostages in the room where he was held. Ihor says that the doors to the railway station where he was brought were barricaded so he was forced to squeeze in through a broken window: "I just started to climb when they suddenly grabbed me by the legs [quite violently] and pushed me [into that window]".

Without any questions or explanation, the Russian military began beating Igor and abusing him physically: "There was a whole gang of Russians. They knocked me to the ground, made me assume the "swallow" position, tied my hands behind my back and tied by legs with metal cables. Then the beating began. They took my documents (which prove my disability after an incident in the line of duty), that certificate, they stole the 500 hryvnas, my watch and my phone. After that, they kicked me, pulled a hat down [onto my face], and wrapped the hat with adhesive tape to blindfold me. They beat me again and again. Then they lit up cigarettes. They started to put out the ends against my spine. Once done, they grabbed me, dragged me onto the landing of the stairs and said: "Let's treat this Ukrop to a proper roller coaster!" And then they started to drag me up and down the stairs. They couldn't stop laughing while dragging me around. I was all blue from the bruising. They [also] hit me on the face. They would kick me and beat me with the butts of their rifles — they did whatever they wanted to. I was very sore, my face was swollen beyond human semblance". According to the victim's testimony, the Russian military threatened to shoot him several times. They imitated execution by pulling the bolt of their assault rifles and putting the muzzles to his head. Ihor begged them to stop and said: "Stop messing with me! Just shoot me and be done with it!". During the beating, the Russians broke Ihor's ribs.

The crippled Ihor was dragged to a room and was finally allowed to lie on the floor. According to the victim, the conditions of his detention were unbearable. The room measured 4 by 4 meters. There were at least 5 other inmates besides Ihor. Ihor's and the other prisoners' eyes, hands and feet were tied. The Russian military did not provide any medical assistance to the detainees despite the fact that Ihor had warned them about his disability which sometimes causes seizures that require injections. They did not allow them to use the bathroom either. This is what Ihor recalls: "They dragged and dragged me around and finally put me into some room. As my vision was limited [because of the blindfold], I only noticed Styrofoam crumbs on the floor. The Russians had put it there intentionally — we were supposed to use as litter [instead of going to the toilet], you see... But I couldn't do. Well, another civilian and I somehow helped each other by holding bottles with our hands which were tied. That's what we did — we peed in bottles. We were tied and blindfolded all the time. One civilian spent 11 days there, others stayed there 5 days, and I spent 2 days there. I could barely feel my hands and my feet because those [metal] cables dug deep into on my flesh. My eyes were covered, and my hands and feet were tied".

The Release

Ihor was released on 26 March 2022. His release coincided with the liberation of the city of Trostyanets from the Russian army. In the last week of March, the Ukrainian army began shelling the city, so the Russian military, which had set up base at the Trostyanets railway station, began to plan an escape. Ihor could hear the Russians talk loudly: they were deciding the fate of the hostages: "... One of the armed guards who had been watching us all the time said: "What shall we do about them? How about we off them, huh? Just throw a grenade in there [into the room where the people were held], they are useless". Another [Russian soldier] said they ought to ask the superiors which he did. After coming back, he said: "They are all bound — they will die anyway. No need to waste ammunition!" [Eventually] they fled and left us in the lock-up". Ihor's testimony bears evidence to the fact that the Russian military simply abandoned the people to die a slow and painful death in torment because they had been lying bound by the hands and feet, blindfolded, without food and water, and some of them without clothes or footwear (for example, Ihor's sneakers had been removed and he was lying barefoot in the cold March weather). However, one of the hostages managed to free his hands and help the others. This way all the people in the room managed to survive.

02. Victim

Oleksandr, a civilian.

The Abduction

Oleksandr was abducted by the Russian military from his home in the town of Trostyanets on or around March 13 or 15, 2022. The victim recalls the circumstances of his detention as follows: *"I was at home. Russian soldiers came, asked for my passport, and I showed it to them. They asked me what I was doing here. They told me to give them my phone. I gave them the phone, but it was turned off, because we had no electricity for two days [at that time]. They said I would go with them to check the phone. There was no reason, they just took it away for no reason. I have a military ID card that says I was not drafted into the armed forces, I was discharged as a reservist. They took me to the railway station. And there they kept me near the bomb shelter."* Oleksandr spent more than 11 days locked up with other civilian hostages in the basement of the Trostyanets railway station.

The Place of Detention

Throughout his captivity, Oleksandr remained blindfolded, his limbs restrained. Bathroom breaks were not permitted, and there was no medical care whatsoever. To quench their thirst, prisoners assisted one another, given that their hands were bound. Oleksandr recounted, *"Enduring a blindfold, confined to a pit, incapable of even standing... Confined to either sitting or lying... It distorts your grasp on reality. Deprived of sight, you're left disoriented—unaware if it's day or night, or the passage of time..."*

Private conversations were forbidden; silence engulfed us almost the entire time." Oleksandr shared this confined space with at least five other individuals.

Oleksandr's testimony highlighted the relentless physical maltreatment and abuse the prisoners endured at the hands of the Russian military. During his confinement in the basement, injuries, ranging in severity, were sustained by at least five inmates. Furthermore, Oleksandr reported a man being tortured to death by Russians. This individual, apprehended between the city's center and its train station, faced brutal beatings and had his hands bound with ties. He put up a fervent resistance and vocal opposition to the Russians' deeds, as a result of which the Russians beat him to death. Presently, his whereabouts remain unknown; his body hasn't been discovered, and legal proceedings are underway. Oleksandr added that several prisoners, taken to undisclosed locations, have yet to return, their fate unknown.

The Release

Oleksandr's captivity ended on March 26, 2022, amidst the city's de-occupation by the Ukrainian forces. The Russian guards, in a bid to evade the advancing Ukrainian military, deserted the prisoners in the basement, leaving them to a grim fate. Oleksandr, however, managed to break free from the metallic restraints binding him and subsequently aided others in their escape.

03. Victim

A civilian resident. For security reasons, his name is private.

Date of disappearance/murder: unknown for certain, but between March 18 and March 24. Reported missing, body has not yet been found, criminal proceedings initiated.

The Abduction

Between March 18 and March 24, 2022, a civilian man was unlawfully detained by the Russian military near the center of Trostyanets, close to the railway station. He was subsequently taken to the Trostyanets railway

station where he faced detention and torture before vanishing. Fellow detainees presume that he might have been killed, although his remains haven't been located. Currently, he's listed as missing and there are active criminal proceedings regarding his case. Oleksandr, a witness who shared captivity with the man, recounts

that he was already in the basement upon Oleksandr's arrival. Oleksandr's confinement spanned from around March 15 to March 26, 2022. Another captive, Ihor, who was also imprisoned in the Trostyanets railway station's basement during this period, mentioned that Oleksandr informed him of a man who was tortured to death before Ihor's arrival on March 24, 2022. This account is believed to be about the aforementioned civilian, suggesting he was likely detained near March 18, 2022, and disappeared by March 24, 2022.

The Place of Detention

Oleksandr, who shared captivity this man in the basement of the Trostyanets train station, recalls, "The

man was detained between the center and the train station, brutally assaulted, and bound with ties. As he voiced his disapproval of the Russians' actions, he was assaulted again. With each intensifying outcry against the Russians, the beatings intensified until he was eventually beaten to death." Ihor, another civilian detainee, recalls: "Oleksandr told me about a cell mate who was killed; he was there before I took his place." It is also known that the man's hands were tied when he was assaulted.

The Disappearance (Murder)

Criminal proceedings have been initiated in connection with the crime against the man. He is currently listed as missing.

04. Witness

²² ID Witness

²³ ID Victim

The testimony of Oleksandra²², Roman's ex-wife.
Roman²³, a civilian resident.

The Abduction

In the Perekalky residential neighborhood of Trostyanets, Roman was taken by the Russian military around March 16 or 17, 2022. A former ATO fighter, retired lieutenant colonel, and now a civilian, Roman was taken from his residence following an unauthorized search. His ex-wife recounted that neighbors witnessed the Russians escorting Roman from his home with a sack covering his head. Subsequently, another detainee, Oleksandr, confirmed that post-arrest, Roman was relocated to the basement of the Trostyanets railway station where he was imprisoned alongside other civilian hostages, including Oleksandr himself. Although each hostage had their eyes covered, Oleksandr identified Roman through his distinctive voice, given that they had been previously acquainted. Oleksandr testifies: "Roman was the first to be brought in. He was apprehended somewhere in the Perekalky district, a local residential neighborhood [in Trostyanets]. Roman underwent two interrogations alongside me and was brought back both times. However, after his third interrogation, he didn't return; he was escorted to an unknown location and hasn't been seen since."

The Place of Detention

Based on the testimonies of fellow detainees in the basement, every individual was blindfolded, with their hands and feet tied. Because their hands were tied, the hostages were unable to drink water on their own and assisted each other. Toilet facilities were unavailable. Medical assistance was not provided. Communication among prisoners was prohibited. Additionally, it's evident that each hostage underwent torture.

The Transfer Route

Another civilian captive, who shared the basement of the Trostyanets train station with Roman, revealed that Roman was moved prior to the assault on Trostyanets that started in the latter part of March 2022. The town was subsequently liberated on March 26, 2022, meaning that Roman's departure preceded this event. Svitlana, Roman's daughter, believes her father is presently incarcerated within the Russian Federation at Kursk Pretrial Detention Center-1.

05. Victim

ID Victim

A civilian resident who wished to keep his name private.

The Abduction

At about 9am on 12 March 2022 the members of the illegal militia groups of the self-proclaimed DPR controlled by the Russian Federation detained the man and his father-in-law near Trostyanets Railway Station. The men were going to collect personal belongings from their house located near the station. The civilian believes that the Russian military and the members of the illegal militia groups of the self-proclaimed DPR controlled by the Russian Federation went on a hunt for civilians to replenish the exchange fund.

The Transfer Route

The man said about his time in the Russian SIZO, that it was obvious that we had been picked up for the numbers, just to have someone for exchange.

The Release

The man was released under the terms of a POW exchange on 19 April 2022.

06. Witness

ID Witness

A testimony of a civilian resident who wished to keep his name private.
Oleh, a civilian.

The Abduction

On March 12, 2022, around 9:00 am, representatives of the Russia-controlled illegal group DPR apprehended Oleh along with another civilian close to the Trostyanets railway station. The men were on their way to retrieve personal belongings from a residence in proximity to the station. One freed individual's testimony indicated that representatives of the DPR were responsible for the detention.

The Place of Detention

Bags were placed over the heads of the two civilians before they were transported to the detention facility situated within the Trostyanets railway station building.

The Transfer Route

That same day, Oleh and the other civilian were relocated to the Russian Federation, specifically to Russian Pretrial Detention Center No. 2 in Stary Oskol, located in the Belgorod region.

The Release

While the man detained alongside Oleh was released during a prisoner of war exchange on April 19, 2022, Oleh remains captive in Russia.

THE BUILDING OF THE FORMER STATE ENTERPRISE "BOROMLYA PMK 145"

The village of Boromlya in Sumy oblast located 17 kilometers from the city of Trostyanets was under occupation for more than a month: from 24 February to 26 March 2022. After the liberation of the village by the Ukrainian army, a makeshift detention facility was discovered in the basements of the former State Enterprise "Boromlyanska PMK 145" at 13 Kharkivska street which had been used for holding civilian prisoners. According to Vasyl Romanika, the chairman of Boromlya village council, the people who ended up in the torture chamber set up in the former PMK 145 were brought from within 20-30 km away. In particular, many were brought from the village of Veliky Bobryk (20 km from Boromlya), at least 2 people were brought from the village of Hrebenykyivka (17 km from Boromlya) and at least 1 person — from the city of Trostyanets (17 km from Boromlya).

During the occupation, the building of the former PMK 145 housed the Russian military headquarters. This fact is supported by the number of Russian military personnel

and the presence of military vehicles on the territory — "two BUK launchers and other serious machinery" which Vasyl Romanika saw with his own eyes.

According to the evidence collected so far, at least 3 civilians from the village of Boromlya were held at that detention facility. All the prisoners were subjected to sadistic torture and held in inhuman conditions. As far as the other 3 people detained in Boromlya are concerned, they are known to have been transferred to the territory of Russia for further detention in Russian pre-trial detention centers, and are believed to be in the Belhorod oblast of the Russian Federation. One of the witnesses claims that in addition to PMK 145 the Russian military and the members of illegal militia groups of the self-proclaimed LDPR controlled by the Russian Federation were also based in the local school, in the club, and in the village council building. According to the witness, detention areas were set alongside the headquarters and the barracks.

07. Victim

ID Victim

Stepan, a civilian.

The Abduction

Stepan was detained outside his house located at 36 Kharkivska Street between 3pm and 4pm on 13 March 2022. The detainment happened in his garage where he was repairing his car. Stepan was approached by six Russian military armed with assault rifles who ordered him to go "face on the ground". Then they searched him: "They immediately reached for my ID and my phone. I had a map installed on my phone and they asked what it was [the map looked suspicious to them]. [I said] I was a land surveyor [which explains the map]". During the detention, the Russian military humiliated Stepan, disrespected his honor and dignity, and subjected him to torture. Before shoving him into the car, the Russians searched and beat the victim: "They searched me as soon as they detained me. Then, they did it again before putting me into the car. While giving me a pat-down, they order me to spread my legs and face the wall. Then, they hit me hard on the leg. After a violent kick [from one of the soldiers] I limped [from the sprain] for about a year". According to another civilian hostage

by the name Volodymyr, Stepan and he were forced to crawl 100 meters to the car on their knees holding their hands behind their backs. When they reached the vehicle, the Russians covered their eyes with hats so they couldn't see. "It was still cold so we were wearing knitted hats which the Russians pulled over our eyes almost blocking our vision completely. All I could see was the ground under my feet".

While detaining Stepan, the Russian military picked up Volodymyr and Igor, random civilians who were out in the street to bring water to their homes: "...a guy named Volodymyr was carrying water from the well and they took him; and there was also a random guy named Igor who was on his way to the well, and he was detained, too".

The Place Of Detention

According to Stepan, all the hostages were pushed into a white Gazelle truck and taken to the territory of the former industrial enterprise, the so-called PMK 145 (the

former SE “Boromlyanska PMK No. 145”). Once there, they were put into a basement. The victim recounts that the Russian military interrogated him at length about the maps found in his phone, and he desperately tried to explain that it was related to his profession since he is a land surveyor. Overall, the victim was imprisoned for 8 hours. When the three men were brought to the territory of the former PMK 145, they were put in different rooms and tortured there individually. According to Stepan, the torture began as soon as they arrived. He was beaten by several men. He could not see their faces because he was lying face down and his eyes were blindfolded — furthermore, the attackers were wearing balaclavas: “... Then they brought me to the territory of the former PMK 145... I used to work there, so I know the place well. They walked me to the basement. Once there, I was put in the “swallows” position. They beat me and cut my fingers. They tried to make me admit that I was giving out their locations to somebody. I replied that I just wasn’t able to do it because I didn’t know

anything. They kept on beating me. They kicked me and hit me rifle butts. They put me on the floor face to the left. There was no light [in the basement] so they were using their flashlights. They shined light on my hand which they wanted to cut. They cut the tendons on my left hand. All the fingers have [already] healed except for the little one”. After the torture, Stepan still suffers from health issues — in particular, he cannot use his left hand normally.

The Release

Stepan was released on 13 March 2022: “I came home between 10pm and 11pm. Volodymyr and Ihor were released a little earlier, and I was released later: the Russians must have been busy with my phone. After that, they returned my phone and let me go. Later, on 15 March, I left for Rivne oblast along the humanitarian corridor. I returned to Boromlya after its liberation from the Russian occupiers”.

08. Victim

ID Victim

Volodymyr, a civilian.

The Abduction

On March 13, 2022, between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., Volodymyr was apprehended in a residential area on the street, near Stepan’s garage situated at 36 Kharkivska Street. Volodymyr recounted that he was en route to collect water with a bucket in hand. Along the way, he encountered Stepan and paused to converse with him: “I set the bucket down and began to smoke. Suddenly, six individuals approached us. I attempted to retrieve my bucket and depart, but they ordered me to halt and place the bucket down. Subsequently, they instructed me to kneel.” Volodymyr is convinced they were from the Russian military due to their discernible Russian accents. The victim recounts: “They ordered us to kneel and began inspecting our documents. I had none, as I was simply on my way to get water. They discovered maps on Stepan’s phone, as he is a land surveyor. After a search, they directed both me and Stepan to move toward their vehicle on our knees. With hands restrained behind our backs, we covered a distance of 100 meters on our knees.” At that moment, Ihor, who had also ventured out to collect water, was walking nearby. He too was seized along with Volodymyr and Stepan. Throughout this detention, the Russian military subjected Volodymyr to degradation and torture, including a forced 100-meter crawl on his knees with his hands bound.

The Place of Detention

The trio had hats pulled down over their eyes before being

forced into a car, specifically a white Gazelle minivan, and transported to the former Boromlyanska PMK No. 145 located at 13 Kharkivska Street. Volodymyr identified the location by the distinct sound of a large gate opening, a sound he associated exclusively with the former PMK 145 enterprise. Upon arrival, the Russians ordered Volodymyr to kneel and proceeded to search him. Volodymyr recalls one of the commanders reassuring him, stating: “Don’t worry, we’ll sort this out. Perhaps we’ll exchange you, or maybe even release you.” He was detained in the basement of the former enterprise for roughly 5 hours.

When Volodymyr was taken to the premises of the former PMK 145, he was made to kneel once more and subjected to another search. Soon after, two individuals escorted him to the basement. He recounts: “Two people guided me. On our descent to the basement, still blindfolded by the hat, I tripped over a wire and fell. They retaliated by beating me with the butts of their rifles. My assailants numbered two: one spoke with a Russian accent, and the other sounded either Georgian or Chechen. I did not see their faces as I was blindfolded by the hat”. During an intense interrogation, Volodymyr was pressured to admit to allegedly relaying some information to Stepan. He tried to explain that he had never passed any information and was merely a regular retiree. Even revealing his Russian ethnicity to his captors offered minimal reprieve: “While I was lying on the cold concrete, the Georgian approached and demanded, ‘Stretch out your hands. Which finger should we sever?’ Resigned, I responded for him to choose any. He menacingly placed a knife to

one of my fingers but refrained from cutting. At this point, the Russian interjected, 'Why torture him? He's Russian' To which the Georgian retorted suspiciously, 'What if he's an informant?' After enduring another agonizing 30 minutes, I was transferred to a different cellar and incarcerated. Shortly after, they ushered in Stepan and Ihor. A Russian man, perhaps the leader, provided us with cardboard so we would not sleep on the hard concrete. As I laid down, I heard moans, either from Stepan or Ihor." Following an excruciating 1.5 hours in that confined space, both Volodymyr and Ihor were granted their freedom.

Volodymyr recounts that each of the three detained men, including himself, endured torture in separate rooms.

Reflecting on the ordeal, he shares the lingering aftermath of the brutality he experienced: "Upon returning home, I discovered a large gash on my head, and my back was in immense pain. While my wounds have mostly healed, my head remains in constant pain, for which I take painkillers."

The Release

On the evening of March 13, 2022, between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., Volodymyr was freed, along with another captive, Ihor. Stepan obtained his release a few hours later, approximately between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. that same night.

09. Victim

ID Victim

Ihor, a civilian resident.

The Abduction

Ihor, a resident of Sumy, had been visiting his parents in the village of Boromlia shortly before the full-scale invasion began. On March 13, 2022, between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., he ventured out of his parents' apartment to collect water. However, as he was exiting the apartment building, Russian military personnel apprehended him. Alongside Ihor, Stepan and Volodymyr, both locals of the village of Boromlia, were also detained. Ihor attests that there was no discernible reason for their arrest. He recalled spotting roughly 12 Russian soldiers patrolling near the building upon his departure. Contrarily, during their cross testimonies, both Stepan and Volodymyr stated that all three of them were detained by a group of 6 Russian soldiers.

The Place of Detention

Ihor was forcibly taken into a minivan, and together with two other men, transported to the basement of the former Boromlyanska PMK No. 145 building situated at 13 Kharkivska Street: "...There used to be the PMK 145 there with a basement. They dragged me and the two others into that basement. Even though they covered our eyes with hats, we could discern our surroundings well enough to recognize that it was PMK. And when they eventually released us from the basement, the location was evident."

Both Ihor and Volodymyr spent approximately 5 hours in Russian captivity.

Upon their arrival at the premises of the former PMK 145, the three men were segregated and tortured in separate rooms. Ihor's harrowing account details his brutal treatment by around 7 individuals who continually kicked him for close to an hour: "...In that basement, 7 people battered me for about an hour. Their objective remains unclear to me. It was evident from their dilated pupils that they were under the influence of some potent substance. Though their faces were masked, their eyes, with visibly enlarged pupils, gave away their intoxicated state. They attempted to shatter my kneecaps but kept missing them. Two men were holding my arms while five others were kicking my head. I don't know why they did it, but they were in some drug-induced frenzy. Their aggression was so extreme that it seemed they had consumed some powerful drugs. In the midst of this onslaught, one of them grabbed my arm, mangled two of my fingers, and even tried to sever one. They forcibly bent my fingers in the opposite direction, making an attempt to slice off one. Another [perpetrator] tried to cut off my finger, but his trembling hands resulted in a deep gash, cutting my finger only halfway. Their erratic behavior prevented them from accomplishing their intentions." Ihor recalls that the Russian soldiers searched through his phone, but found no evidence, primarily because mobile services in the village of Boromlia had been disrupted for nearly a week by then: "They suspected we were spying on them. But our phones were rendered useless since they had decimated all the mobile networks!"

After enduring a brutal assault, a severely injured Ihor was thrown into a different section of the basement, where he remained for roughly 2 to 2.5 hours. Subsequently, both he and Volodymyr were set free. Ihor recalls that he barely made it home: *"I walked as if I was drunk due to the concussion I sustained, yet I managed to reach home. I recuperated there for about 3 days, after which I boarded a humanitarian bus to Sumy."*

The aftermath of the torture has left indelible marks on Ihor: *"They fractured my jaw and kept kicking me for an hour. I don't know what they wanted to achieve; they seem to be sick people. They broke my jaw and crushed a tooth to a point that its removal, in fragments, was necessary at the hospital. Another tooth, also damaged, had to be extracted. My jaw, broken from the attack, was wired shut for the 23 days in hospital. Because of my broken jaw, I couldn't eat and ended up losing 21 kilograms of weight. I also sustained a concussion. [After release from captivity], I could not leave Boromlia for three, during which time my arm*

began showing signs of gangrene, stemming from wounds they inflicted when fracturing my fingers. The hospital administered a regimen of seven antibiotics over a span of 12 days to counter the onset of septicemia. Due to a particularly violent blow to my head, part of my face has lost sensation from nerve damage. My vision in one eye has been affected as well."

The Release

Ihor was set free around 7-9 p.m. on March 13, 2022, along with another detainee, Volodymyr: *"They detained us until the evening, eventually releasing us, having come to the realization that they had achieved nothing and were unsure of their own intentions. I had kept my passport in my pocket, which they handed back before letting me go."* Three days post his liberation from captivity, Ihor embarked on a humanitarian bus to Sumy, seeking urgent medical care at a hospital due to the grievous harm inflicted upon him during his time in Russian captivity.

OUR ASSUMPTIONS ON THE QUALIFICATION OF THE CRIMES



This part contains the analysis of the aforementioned cases in the context of war crimes under Article 8 and / or the relevant elements of crimes against humanity under Article 7 and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. This part of the document explains how the committed actions documented in the I-DOC system by the MIHR data processing specialist can be qualified from the legal standpoint.

Arbitrary detention of civilians during an armed conflict as well as organized mass deportation of civilians, torture, and murder are grave violations of international humanitarian law and ought to be classified as war crimes at the very least. Such actions may contain a combination of the necessary elements to qualify them as crimes against humanity according to their definition.

Crimes against humanity are specific acts detailed in Article 7 of the Rome Statute which are directed against any civilian population, including rights and freedoms and / or civilian objects that are not military targets. Such an attack against civilian population must be widespread or systematic, and there must be a connection between the individual conduct and the attack. Furthermore, the perpetrator must know that the conduct was part of or intended the conduct to be part of such an attack.

It can be assumed that the detention and imprisonment articulated in the first part of this document constitute a violation of Article 7(1)(e) of the Rome Statute, which **prohibits imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty** in violation of fundamental rules of

international law. Such an assumption is based on the fact that civilians are detained in the occupied territories, then deported in an organized manner to specifically allocated places of detention where they are held en masse at the detention facilities of the criminal justice system of the Russian Federation separately from Russian prisoners.

Such detention may not go unnoticed by the authorities of the Russian Federation at the federal level, since the placement of civilians in the detention facilities of the criminal justice system in disregard of the criminal justice procedures is impossible without a political approval to justify it. Furthermore, the financial resources in connection with holding prisoners in correctional facilities and pre-trial detention centers on the territory of various federal subjects of the Russian Federation cannot be provided without the knowledge and consent of the Russian government which must at least allocate appropriate budget funding.

The deportation of civilians onto the territory of the Russian Federation is committed in grave violation of the laws and customs of war such as:

- attacks on civilian population including murder;
- inhuman treatment of detained civilians;
- enforced disappearance of persons;
- persecution on the grounds of self-identification as Ukrainian.

We are aware of the fact that the same serious (grave) violations of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 can be qualified as war crimes and crimes against humanity simultaneously which is why the distinctive elements of those international crimes have been provided alongside — therefore:

The conditions of the holding of civilians at the detention facilities described by the victims attest to widespread practices of inhuman treatment allowing to consider the recorded testimony as evidence to the fact of **inhuman treatment of the detained civilian victims in the places of detention** which constitutes the war crime provided by Article 8(2)(a)(ii).

The testimony to the effect of torture which has been confirmed by civilian witnesses deserves special attention: it would be safe to assume that the victims were subjected to prohibited treatment — **torture** which ought to be qualified as crime against humanity of torture under Article 7(1)(f) of the Rome Statute or at least as war crime of torture under Article 8(2)(a)(ii) of the same.

The documents registered in the system include numerous testimonies on attacks on civilians committed by the Russian military including killings of civilians. According to the provisions of Article (8(2)(a)(i) of the Rome Statute, willful killing of civilians is qualified as a war crime and, given the contextual circumstances reflected in the testimony, widespread killings of civilians may be covered by the qualification wording of Article 7(1)(a) of the Rome Statute in the totality of recorded circumstances since the government policy of the Russian Federation bears no evidence of taking all necessary reasonable measures to stop or prevent them while being aware of the situation (see the above arguments to support the claim regarding the deliberate government policy of the Russian Federation on the treatment of civilian population in the occupied territories).

Some of the documented testimonies contain the elements of the crime of **enforced disappearance of persons** since the occupation administration bodies and / or the Russian military or security agencies engaged in undocumented detentions. Furthermore, they do not provide the information about the fate or whereabouts of the detained persons and deprive them of their right to legal protection. The system contains registered cases of enforced disappearance of civilians as illustrated above. Witness accounts often lead to assumptions on the whereabouts of missing persons. However, official confirmations by the Russian side are still absent. Such factual circumstances may be qualified as war crimes under Article 8(2)(a)(vii) or Article 7(1)(i) of the Rome Statute according to the presence of elements of crimes against humanity. **Other inhumane acts** which are committed deliberately to inflict great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health combined with the aforementioned prohibited treatment may be qualified under Article 7(1)(k) of the Rome Statute. The testimonies detailed above and registered in the system may fit such a definition.

International humanitarian law prohibits **persecution which may be qualified as a war crime or a crime against humanity depending on the elements**. Such a crime includes persecution based on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, or gender grounds or other grounds which are universally recognized as

impermissible under international law. According to the Rome Statute, persecution is defined as “intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the identity of the group or collectivity”.

The aforementioned qualifying attributes are mentioned in the testimonies registered in the system. The recorded testimonies refer to situations when representatives of the Russian Federation applied physical force against Ukrainian civilians in the occupied territories upon learning about their loyalty to their state. When the representatives of the Russian Federation military or its law enforcement agencies found textbooks on the history of Ukraine or Ukrainian flags while searching the homes of civilians, those findings were perceived as a reason to initiate persecution on political grounds (i.e. on the grounds of demonstrating one’s Ukrainian identity). Not only could the loyalty to one’s people lead to detention, but it could also lead to cruel torture. Therefore, the analysis of the documented evidence leads to the assumption on violations of Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute.

If the number of documented testimonies is insufficient for a clear conclusion about the presence of signs of crimes against humanity being committed in the occupied territories, it is more than enough to prove the commission of **war crimes**. The very fact of the groundless and still undocumented detention of civilians in the occupied territories with the deprivation of the right to challenge their detention and the deprivation of the right to defense constitutes both a violation of Article 8(2)(a)(vii) of the Rome Statute — the war crime of unlawful confinement and the war crime of **denying a fair trial** under Article 8(2)(a)(vi) respectively. In some cases, such actions of the Russian military fall under Article 8(2)(a)(viii) of the Rome Statute and constitute the war crime of **taking hostages**.

By and large, the detentions of civilians as detailed above show similarities in the behavior of the Russian military in the three regions of Ukraine. It was important to demonstrate the absence of clearly identifiable similarities among the detained civilians such as profession, age or belonging to any particular activist groups. However, all the detained civilians could all be identified as being persecuted for their self-identification with the Ukrainian people or Ukrainian political group. It was only gender that was the only definitive factor: most of the detained civilians were male. However, women were detained as well.

Since the described actions took place simultaneously in all the three oblasts (Kyiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv), we can therefore assume that the detention of civilians was an administrative practice used by the Russian military, and did not happen only in isolated cases. It is safe to say that the deprivation of liberty imposed on the civilians was not due to imperative security considerations. On the contrary, under occupation, the civilian population became the main target of persecution, and it was the civilians who suffered from the largest greatest number of violations. The testimonies show that the Russian military searched the homes of civilians purposefully and systematically.

The Russian military provided various reasons for the detention of civilians. For example, they claimed that the detained civilian was helping the Ukrainian military by providing information about the positions of the Russian army. They sometimes claimed that the civilian is considered a Ukrainian nationalist and, therefore, is the enemy of Russia. Such answers to the questions about the reasons for the detention were heard from Russian soldiers in different occupied territories in the same period of time. However, the Russian side did not formalize its suspicions in the form of decisions or in any other documented manner. Although the Russian side did not substantiate the verbal accusations or claims, some of the persecuted persons refused to demonstrate loyalty to the armed forces or the authorities of the occupiers.

None of the reasons provided by the Russian military and / or occupation authorities gives a legitimate right to arbitrarily and documentedly detain civilians, subject them to torture and transfer (deport them) to the territory of Belarus and Russia without their consent and to deprive them of the right to a judicial appeal against the treatment and deprivation of liberty. However, such similarities among the detention arguments may indicate the presence of a certain instruction for pre-planned actions.

The testimonies reveal that the Russians had a clear goal: first to take all the detained civilians to a single place of detention on the territory of Ukraine, and then to transfer them to the territory of Russia and place them into pre-trial detention centers prepared for Ukrainians or other places of deprivation of liberty of the penitentiary service of the Russian Federation.

Such actions may attest to the existence of an organized plan or even state policy. Detention of civilians in the occupied territories did not represent isolated cases. The details of the cases described above lead to the conclusion that the actions of different military units were coordinated as civilians from different places of detention were eventually transferred out of Ukraine using the same routes to end up either in a detention center or a correctional facility for convicted criminals on the territory of the Russian Federation. The civilians were brought to the detention or correctional facilities without the appropriate decisions rendered by the justice system of the Russian Federation.

We also realize that at this stage of documenting it is difficult to identify all the necessary elements of grave violations of rights of the civilian population in order to credibly assert that Russia has indeed committed crimes against humanity. However, MIHR continues to enter documented evidence to the I-DOC system in order to populate the database with all the elements which pertain to the violations of rights of the civilian population during the armed conflict in the territories occupied by Russia.



Norwegian
Helsinki Committee

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