

OMCT
SOS-Torture Network

ZMIŃA
HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER

MI MEDIA
INITIATIVE
for Human Rights

**“YOU’RE LOYAL
TO UKRAINE
– ARE YOU
A NAZI?”**

**Torture and other violations as
crimes against humanity ———
by the Russian army in Ukraine**



The Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR) is a Ukrainian NGO that combines journalism and human rights protection to uncover Russian war crimes in Ukraine and respond to human rights violations related to Russian aggression. The MIHR office is based in Kyiv.

www.mipl.org.ua/en
Media Initiative for Human Rights
Derevlianska Street 13, 04119 Kyiv, Ukraine

f <https://www.facebook.com/MediaInitiativeForHumanRights>
x https://x.com/mihr_ua
@ <https://www.instagram.com/mipl.org.ua/>
in <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mihr-ua>
▶ https://www.youtube.com/@MIHR_ua

The Human Rights Center ZMINA (ZMINA) has been working in the field of human rights protection in Ukraine since 2012. After the beginning of the large-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine ZMINA together with 38 other NGOs launched the Ukraine 5AM Coalition dealing with the documentation of war crimes and aiming at protecting victims of armed Russian aggression in Ukraine and bringing to justice top leadership of the Russian Federation and direct perpetrators of war crimes. ZMINA is based in Kyiv.

www.zmina.ua/en
Human Rights Centre ZMINA
Yaroslaviv Val Street 33B, 3rd floor, 01054 Kyiv, Ukraine

f <https://www.facebook.com/zmina.ua>
x <https://x.com/zminaUA>
@ https://www.instagram.com/zmina_ua/
▶ https://t.me/zmina_ua
▶ https://www.youtube.com/@zmina_ua
d https://www.tiktok.com/@zmina_ua

Photo credit: All photos used in the report were provided by Human Rights Centre ZMINA and taken by Sergiy Kochmarskiy in the de-occupied regions of Ukraine in 2023.

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) works with around 200 member organisations which constitute its SOS-Torture Network, to end torture, fight impunity and protect human rights defenders worldwide.

Together, we are the largest global group actively standing up to torture in more than 90 countries. Helping local voices to be heard, we support our vital partners in the field and provide direct assistance to victims.

Our international secretariat is based in Geneva, with offices in Brussels and Tunis.

OMCT, Rue du Vieux-Billard 8, 1205 Geneva
www.omct.org

x <https://x.com/omctorg>
f <https://www.facebook.com/WorldOrganisationAgainstTorture>
@ <https://www.instagram.com/omct.official/>
in <https://www.linkedin.com/company/omct-worldorganisationagainsttorture>
▶ <https://www.youtube.com/@omct9148>

*‘You’re loyal to Ukraine — are
you a Nazi?’*

**Torture and other violations
as crimes against humanity
by the Russian army
in Ukraine**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The OMCT would like to thank all who contributed to the preparation of the current report.


We are particularly grateful to all Ukrainian human rights defenders who document, investigate, report, and promote accountability for torture and related international crimes in the context of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine.

The OMCT is grateful to the MIHR and ZMINA human rights officers who gathered testimonies for this report in the frontline areas despite significant risks to their lives and well-being, namely Artur Pryhno, Stanislav Myroshnychenko, Yelyzaveta Sokurenko, Sergiy Kochmarskiy, Albina Karman, Borys Petruniok, Yevhen Vasylyev.

We dedicate this report to Ukrainian civilians and their families – those who survived horrific torture and months of detention without contact with the outside world, those who have waited or are still waiting for their loved ones from captivity, and those dead who will never come home.

*'Justice delayed is justice denied'.
William Ewart Gladstone*





The OMCT is a member of the #UnitedAgainstTorture Consortium, a coalition of six of the world's leading anti-torture organisations established by the European Union to join forces to strengthen and expand the anti-torture movement by pooling expertise in torture prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and strategic litigation. This report was produced within the framework of the #UnitedAgainstTorture Consortium.

The report was enabled with the financial assistance of the Open Society Foundations, the European Union, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein, and Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the OMCT, MIHR, and ZMINA and should in no way be taken to reflect the position of the Open Society Foundations, the European Union, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein, and Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland.



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS:

Carin Benninger-Budel, Gerald Staberock

AUTHORS OF THE REPORT:

Maryia Kvitsinskaya, Eugenia Andreyuk, Charlotte Mancini

EDITING:

Masha Chichtchenkova, Maryia Kvitsinskaya, Eugenia Andreyuk, Charlotte Mancini, Helena Solà, Onysiia Syniuk, Lyubov Smachylo, Yelyzaveta Sokurenko, Anastasia Pantieleieva, Dzenyslava Shcherba, Kate Rudd, Evindar Başboğa

OMCT (ENGLISH ED.) = ISBN N°: 9782888940999

DESIGN: LMDK Agency

© All rights reserved. The copyright for this material lies with the OMCT. Elements of this report may be reproduced for educational purposes, including training, research, and programme activities, provided that permission is granted by the OMCT prior to use. For elements of this report to be quoted in other publications, translated, or adapted for use, prior written permission must be obtained from the copyright owner by emailing omct@omct.org.

COPYRIGHT BY

World Organisation Against Torture OMCT – 2024



CONTENTS



List of Abbreviations	12
Introduction and Contextual Background	22
I. Torture and Ill-treatment of Civilians in the context of Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict	26
1.1. Profile of a torture victim: reasons for targeting civilians	26
1.2. Circumstances of torture: arrest, interrogation and prison ritual	30
1.3. The purpose of torture: the Russian Army's 'polygraph'	38
1.4. Torture equipment and methods: ways to inflict unbearable suffering	41
1.5. Consequences of torture: broken lives	48
II. Contextual and pattern analysis of torture of the civilian population: Planned policy of serious human rights violations	50
	64
III. Legal Analysis: Crimes Against Humanity of Persecution	

List of Abbreviations



DPR/LPR	So-called “Donetsk People`s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic”
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FSB	Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of Red Cross
IHL	International humanitarian law
MIHR	Media Initiative for Human Rights
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMCT	The World Organisation Against Torture
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
POW	Prisoner of war
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary and Recommendations



This report addresses torture and other ill-treatment of Ukrainian civilians in the territories of Ukraine occupied by the Russian military in February-March 2022 and liberated later that year. It concludes that these violations were widespread, systematic and may amount to crimes against humanity of persecution against a political group.

Having seized control over some territories in the Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kyiv, and Chernihiv regions of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian military¹ started targeting a broad political group of civilians who were loyal to Ukraine, opposed the occupation, and disapproved of Russian troops, the Russian political leadership and its 'Russian world'² ideology³. This group included individuals who were overtly or covertly loyal to Ukraine, as well as those whose loyalty was simply suspected.

The Russian military and special services executed a comprehensive array of well-organised, pre-planned 'filtration' measures aimed at scrutinising the population to identify civilians who supported or were perceived to support the Ukrainian State.

Once identified, members of the persecuted group underwent arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment while in detention. This included sexual violence amounting to torture and, in some cases, forcible deportation to Russia, denial of the right to a fair trial and unlawful killing.

Physical and psychological torture and other ill-treatment were used systematically during arrests, transfers between places of detention, and in detention. Torture was a key instrument in extracting information from detainees, forcing cooperation and punishing victims. In all documented cases, survivors were held in inhumane conditions and subjected to continued psychological abuse amounting to torture and ill-treatment. Many victims report witnessing regular mass torture of other detainees. This report sketches a portrait of torture victims, including the circumstances of their arrest, interrogation, the perpetrators of the torture and its impact on victims.

1. 'Russian military' covers all military forces that operated under the de facto control of the Russian Federation, including special and intelligence services, the penal execution service, national guard, the armed forces of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, etc.

2. German Council on Foreign Relations. 'Russkiy Mir: Russian World'. May 3, 2016.

3. Reuters. 'Putin approves new foreign policy doctrine based on the ideological concept of the "Russian world"'. September 5, 2022.

While many cases of torture and other serious human rights violations remain underreported, the analysis of documented cases, which are dispersed geographically and in time, has uncovered patterns that are replicated across at least twenty places of detention. The pattern in the detention centres concerned—including unofficial and official places of detention—includes the perpetrators' chain of command, interrogation scenarios, torture methods and equipment, as well as the circumstances of detainees' arrest and release. The patterns demonstrate the intent to persecute a specific political group in a systematic, pre-planned way.

The scale and pre-planned nature of these serious human rights violations, the identification of members of the persecuted group and the involvement of Russian Federation State structures acting in a coordinated, similar manner suggests the existence of a chain of command.

Various military units controlled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation were involved in implementation of this policy. Other participating State agents included the military units of the so-called DPR and LPR, which were effectively under the control of Russia⁴, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the DPR, the Federal Security Service, the Federal National Guard Service and the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service.

The report makes the following recommendations:

To the relevant State authorities of the Russian Federation:

- Stop any policy of systematic human rights and humanitarian law violations against civilians in the territories of Ukraine, in particular, the practice of torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearances, unlawful killings and unlawful detentions;
- Immediately publish the lists of detained and abducted Ukrainian civilians, provide their families with all the information about their whereabouts and health status, release all civilians who have been subjected to enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention or unlawful deprivation of liberty during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and guarantee freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment;
- Ensure unimpeded access of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organisations to Ukrainian civilian detainees;
- Conduct effective investigations into cases of torture and ill-treatment as well as other serious human rights violations of civilians in the occupied territories of Ukraine by the relevant State authorities of the Russian Federation, ensure that those responsible for these crimes are brought to justice and provide rehabilitation and reparation for the victims;
- Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and bring its domestic legislation into full compliance with all obligations under the Rome Statute;
- Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- Abolish national legislation that provides for refusal to execute judgments of the European Court of Human Rights issued before the denunciation by the Russian Federation of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and renew cooperation with the Council of Europe and all its bodies;

4. ECHR. 'Eastern Ukraine and Flight MH17 Case Declared Partly Admissible'. ECHR 026 (2023). January 25, 2023.

- Fully cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, issue an invitation and grant them access to Ukrainian civilian detainees under Russian control and provide reliable information on their requests;
- Ensure effective cooperation with all human rights treaty bodies, including the UN Committee against Torture and the UN Human Rights Committee, as well as with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry in Ukraine and other UN mechanisms with a mandate to address cases of torture and other ill-treatment;
- Ensure full compliance with the Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 and the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977;
- Comply with the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and uphold the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

To the relevant State authorities of Ukraine:

- Ensure victims access to file complaints for torture and related crimes to independent investigation bodies,
- Ensure effective investigation of torture and ill-treatment committed by both sides to the armed conflict in the territory of Ukraine, including implementation of the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture (Istanbul Protocol);
- Ensure that those responsible for these crimes are brought to justice and provide rehabilitation and reparation for the victims;
- Launch the state-run rehabilitation programmes for all torture survivors in Ukraine regardless of whether they have been recognised as such in criminal court;
- Launch a unified and verified register of all civilians detained in the territories of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation, including those held there or taken to the territory of the Russian Federation;
- Start the process of locating civilian detainees, identifying the places of detention where they are held or tracing their whereabouts, and organising monitoring of these places, including through cooperation with relevant international organisations and civil society;
- Promote launching the OSCE Moscow Mechanism focused on detention and torture, and other ill-treatment of civilian detainees and POWs;
- Negotiate the release of civilian detainees with the Russian Federation, including identifying and engaging possible mediators to facilitate such negotiations;
- Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.



To the United Nations (UN), regional human rights mechanisms and foreign governments:

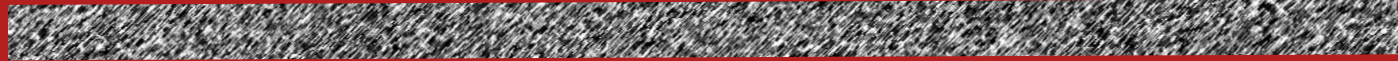
- Condemn the systematic practice of torture that amounts to crimes against humanity by the Russian-controlled armed forces against civilians in the territories of Ukraine under their control and against civilians who were forcibly transferred to the territories under the control of the Russian Federation and keeping the situation of Ukrainian civilian detainees high on the international agenda;
- Urge Russian authorities to respect their obligations towards civilians within international humanitarian law and human rights law, including by documenting and reporting the ongoing human rights violations and international crimes, requesting visits to civilian detainees and regularly inquiring with the Russian authorities about their health and detention conditions, as well as demanding the release of civilian detainees;
- Ensure the legal assessment of individual cases and the general situation under international criminal, humanitarian and international human rights law. Promote accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations and international crime of torture and other ill-treatment of civilians and POWs, including by 1) promoting the establishment of a hybrid tribunal staffed by Ukrainian and international judges to hold accountable perpetrators involved in torture and related international crimes against Ukrainian civilians during the Russian invasion of Ukraine; 2) bringing perpetrators to justice by means of extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction at domestic level or inter-State complaints under relevant treaties; 3) exploring additional targeted measures against the individuals allegedly responsible for these crimes.

To the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court:

- Ensure the scope of the investigation includes crimes against humanity of persecution under Article 7 (h) of the Rome Statute, in connection with murder, unlawful imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture, sexual violence and other inhuman acts committed against a broad political group of civilians in territories of Ukraine under the control of the Russian Federation.



Methodology



This report was prepared by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the Ukrainian human rights organisations Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR) and Human Rights Centre ZMINA (ZMINA) with the aim of providing an overview and legal assessment of patterns of torture and other ill-treatment committed by the armed forces of the Russian Federation against civilians in the territories of Ukraine that fell under their control from February 2022. The report does not include information on the torture of prisoners of war or civilians who directly participated in the hostilities.⁵

The report is based on 63 in-depth interviews with civilians who were direct or indirect victims⁶ and/or direct witnesses of torture and other ill-treatment committed by Russian troops. The interviews were conducted by MIHR and ZMINA by telephone and in person during 24 field missions to liberated territories in the regions of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kherson between November 2022 and August 2023.

Of the 63 cases documented, 38 amount to torture as defined by the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,⁷ and by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.⁸ Among the 38 documented cases of torture, 33 were reported by direct victims, two by indirect victims, and three by witnesses. Twenty-two of the cases occurred in the region of Kharkiv, nine in the region of Kherson, two cases each in the regions of Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Kyiv, and one in the Chernihiv region. The reported violations took place between February and October 2022 in over 20 places of detention.

Although the other 25 cases do not appear to meet the technical threshold for torture, they constitute cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment at the very least.⁹ They have therefore been documented to provide contextual analysis and a clearer picture of the treatment of civilians by the Russian military in the abovementioned occupied territories.

5. ICRC. 'Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law.' May, 2009

6. ICC. 'Representing Victims Before the International Criminal. A Manual for Legal Representatives. Fifth Revised Edition.' January, 2020, p. 42.

7. OHCHR. 'Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.' General Assembly Resolution 39/46. December 10, 1984.

8. ICC. 'Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.' 2011.

9. OMCT. 'Seeking remedies for torture victims. A Handbook on the Individual Complaints Procedures of the UN Treaty Bodies.' p.230. 2014.

ICRC. 'Torture and Other Forms of Ill-treatment: the Definitions Used by the ICRC.' January 1, 2016.

MIHR and ZMINA used a methodology designed by the OMCT specifically for Ukrainian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to conduct in-depth interviews with torture survivors in the context of armed conflict. It is harmonised with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol),¹⁰ OHCHR Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring,¹¹ and relevant International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Standards. It is contextualised to enable the documentation of torture and other ill-treatment during the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, taking into account local socio-political and cultural specificities.

The OMCT has provided MIHR and ZMINA with detailed questionnaires and a roadmap designed for the structural investigation of torture as an international crime during the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The OMCT delivered a series of in-person and online training and mentoring sessions on the documentation and structural investigation of these crimes to MIHR and ZMINA human rights officers. Additionally, MIHR and ZMINA human rights officers have been trained by a qualified psychologist to reduce the risks of re-traumatisation during interviews with victims and to ensure a victim-centred approach.

The evidence collected with this methodology was analysed using narrative¹² and pattern-mining¹³ techniques to reconstruct the alleged plan of attack of Russian forces against the civilian population.

10. OHCHR. 'Istanbul Protocol: Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2022 Edition).' June 29, 2022.

11. OHCHR. 'Manual on Human Rights Monitoring (Revised Edition).' January 1, 2011

12. Junaedi Saibih. 'Using Narrative Theory on Analysis of Law and Human Rights: Searching Truth on Tanjung Priok's Incident in Indonesia.' January, 2020.

13. Cristopher Clifton. 'Data Mining.' November 9, 2023.





Introduction and contextual background



The purpose of this report is to identify the patterns underlying the torture and other ill-treatment of civilians in the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russian forces from 24 February 2022. The report also seeks to provide a legal assessment of the documented cases under international criminal law, to establish whether torture—committed in conjunction with other related human rights violations—formed part of a deliberate plan or policy of attack against the civilian population, which may amount to crimes against humanity.

The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and its conflict-related international crimes were the culmination of a series of military and political events which triggered the current Russo-Ukrainian armed conflict and led to the patterns of torture and related crimes against civilians analysed in this report.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine like many former Soviet republics remained under Russia's strong political, economic, and cultural influence. For more than a decade, political power in Ukraine remained in the hands of Russian-allied political and business groups which ensured the dominance of Russian interests' in key State affairs.

A turning point came in November 2013, when a brutal crackdown on peaceful protests for Ukraine's integration to the European Union turned into a violent confrontation between protesters and security forces.¹⁴ Three months of unrest ensued, in which more than 100 people were killed and several thousand were injured, most of whom were protesters.¹⁵ The severe human rights abuses provoked a political crisis, which resulted in the removal of pro-Russian President, Viktor Yanukovich, and many other pro-Russian politicians from State power. The new political leadership started to introduce policies oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Several days after these events, in February 2014, the Russian Federation invaded the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Southern Ukraine, subsequently occupying parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Eastern Ukraine (the so-called DPR/LPR).

14. Open Society Foundations. 'Understanding Ukraine's Euromaidan Protests.' May, 2019.

15. ECHR. 'Numerous rights abuses during Ukraine's Maidan protests.' ECHR 027 (2021). January 21, 2021.

Immediately after gaining effective control over these territories,¹⁶ the Russian authorities started to commit gross systemic violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law against specific groups of civilians who opposed the Russian invasion (civic activists, journalists, local government officials, Crimean Tatars,¹⁷ and others).¹⁸ Members of these groups were subjected to enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, extrajudicial killings, denial of the right to a fair trial, etc.¹⁹

Russian authorities failed to properly investigate the cases of Ukrainian victims of torture and related violations denied them access to domestic remedies.²⁰ They also failed to cooperate with regional and universal human rights bodies in connection with these allegations.²¹ International organisations' monitoring mechanisms have been denied access to Crimea since its occupation.²² Access to the so-called DPR/LPR has been severely restricted, with a ban on access to places of detention under the control of Russian forces.²³ Members of monitoring missions have faced arbitrary detention and other forms of pressure while executing their mandates.²⁴

On February 24, 2022, at 4.50 am, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared the beginning of the 'special military operation in Ukraine.'²⁵ This marked Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian propaganda justified the invasion as necessary to protect Russian interests in Ukraine from 'Nazis'—a term used to refer to individuals who support Ukraine's independence and integration with the EU.²⁶ Ukrainian cities, military facilities and infrastructure were struck by missiles and columns of Russian troops crossed the border into Ukrainian territory from Russia, Belarus, Russian-occupied Crimea and the so-called DPR/LPR. This massive attack led to the occupation of Ukrainian territories into the regions of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kherson, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Zhytomyr and Mykolaiv.

In the territories of Ukraine occupied since February 2022, Russian troops and special services have deployed an unprecedented system to identify and segregate anyone suspected of opposing the Russian invasion, whether openly or covertly. Suspects have been deliberately subjected to enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, torture and other ill-treatment, sexual violence, deportations and other gross violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law.²⁷ In March 2023, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded that torture of civilians committed by the Russian military may amount to crimes against humanity²⁸.

This report comprises three parts. Part I provides analyses of the torture and ill-treatment committed against civilians by Russian State agents based on the evidence collected. It includes victim's profiles and circumstances, the purpose of the torture, methods and equipment used, and the impact on victims. Part II provides a contextual analysis of torture and related violations committed, giving an overview of the violations committed in newly-occupied territories. Part III provides a legal assessment of the documented cases, incorporating a preliminary evaluation of the chain of command of the perpetrators involved.

16. ECHR. *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (Application No's. 8019/16, 43800/14 and 28525/20), ECHR 026 (2023). January 25, 2023.
ECHR. *Grand Chamber decision Ukraine v. Russia (re. Crimea) - complaints concerning patterns of human-rights violations partly admissible* (Application No's. 20958/14 and 38334/18), ECHR 010 (2021). January 14, 2021.

17. PACE. Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. 'The Situation of Crimean Tatars.' Doc. 15305. June 4, 2021.

18. OHCHR. 'Human Rights Situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine.' March 6, 2020.

19. OHCHR. 'Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine 16 February to 15 May 2016.' June 2, 2016.

20. PACE. Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. 'Legal Remedies for Human Rights Violations in the Ukrainian Territories Outside the Control of the Ukrainian Authorities.' Doc. 14139. September 26, 2016.

21. Atlantic Council. 'Ukraine Scores Court Victory in Long Quest for Justice Over Russia's Crimean Crimes.' February 4, 2021.

22. Radio Free Europe. Radio Liberty. 'Council of Europe's Rights Chief Decries Abuses, Says Russia "Only Country Not Cooperating".' September 27, 2017.

23. OHCHR. 'Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine 1 August 2020 - 31 January 2021'. para 6.

24. France 24. 'OSCE Observers Held in Ukraine Released by Separatists.' May 3, 2014.

25. CNN. 'Here's What We Know About How Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Unfolded'. February 24, 2022.

26. President of Russia. 'Address by the President of the Russian Federation.' February 24, 2022.

27. OHCHR. 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.' March 15, 2023. Human Rights Council. Fifty-Second Session.

28. OHCHR. 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine'. March 15, 2023. Human Rights Council. Fifty-Second Session.

• КІМНАТА МЕД. ПРАЦІВНИКА •

Душевая

210

200

200

190

190

180

180

170

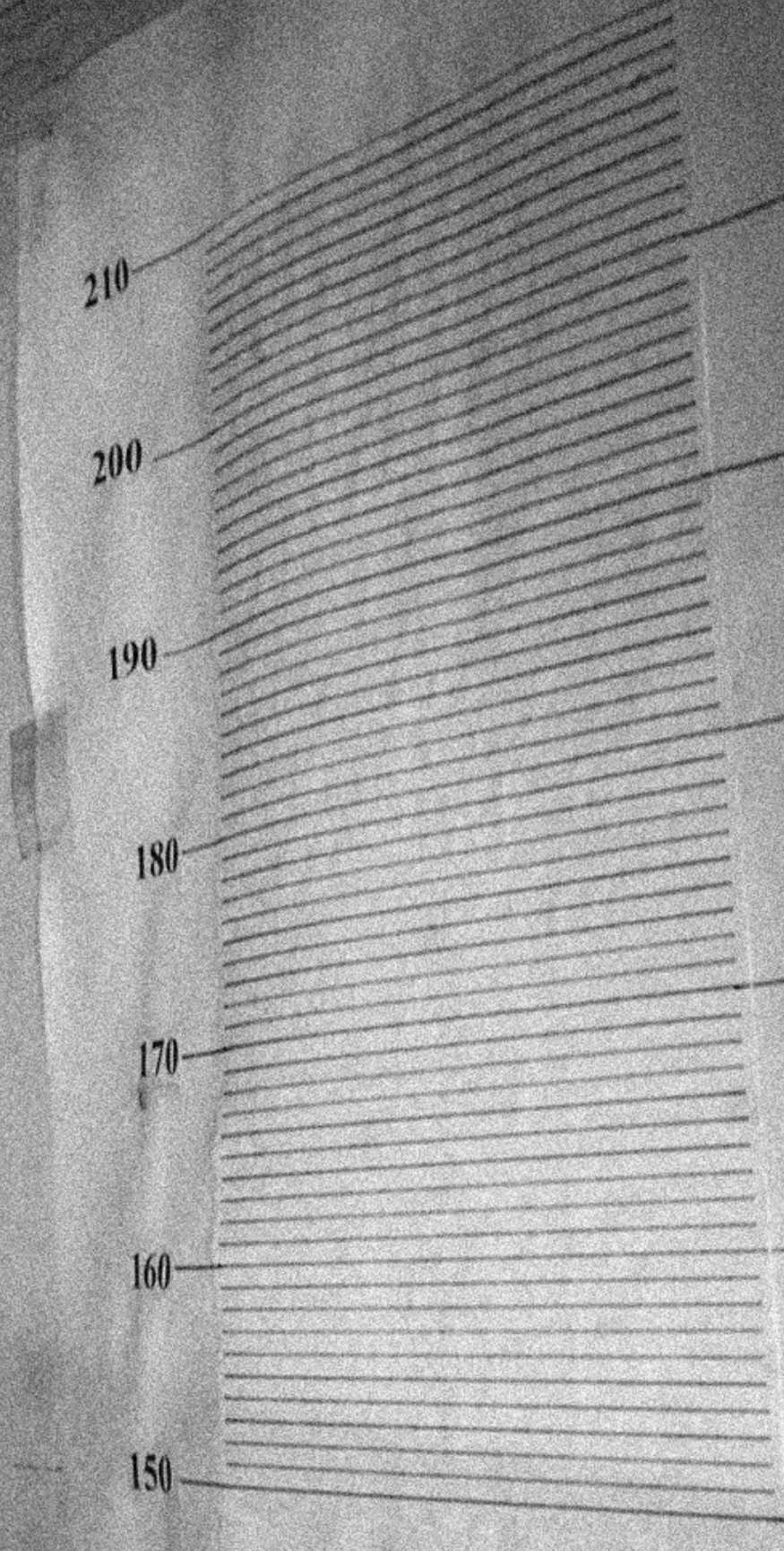
170

160

160

150

150





Torture and Ill-treatment of Civilians in the context of Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict

1.1. Profile of a torture victim: reasons for targeting civilians

Having seized control over some territories of the Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kyiv, and Chernihiv regions of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian military²⁹ has started targeting a broad political group of civilians who were allegiant to Ukraine, opposed the occupation and had a negative attitude towards Russian troops, political leadership, and the Russian-imposed ideological concept³⁰ of the “Russian world”³¹, both overtly and covertly. This also includes individuals perceived to have such opinions.

In each occupied region where cases of torture and other ill-treatment have been documented, the Russian military and special services have consistently sought common markers during broad inspection procedures to identify “suspicious” civilians. Those markers were the following:

29. ‘Russian military’ covers all military forces that operated under the de facto control of the Russian Federation, including special and intelligence services, the penal execution service, national guard, the armed forces of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics, etc.

30. German Council on Foreign Relations. ‘*Ruskiy Mir: Russian World*’. May 3, 2016.

31. Reuters. ‘*Putin approves new foreign policy doctrine based on the ideological concept of the “Russian world”*’. September 5, 2022.

- ≡ Subscriptions to Ukrainian news or Ukrainian music on their electronic devices;
- ≡ Electronic devices without any information stored in them which was perceived as hiding information;
- ≡ Contacts of their relatives, neighbors and other acquaintances serving in the Ukrainian army or law enforcement agencies on their electronic devices;
- ≡ Record of donations to the Ukrainian army and pro-Ukrainian volunteer groups in their history of banking transactions on electronic devices;
- ≡ Personal or other people's photos with elements of the Ukrainian national emblem or flag, as well as emblems or flags of the EU and the USA at home or on their electronic devices;
- ≡ Bruises, abrasions or tattoos with any patriotic or "suspicious" symbols on their bodies, detected during the filtration procedures and taken as evidence of participation in hostilities on the side of the Ukrainian army;
- ≡ Posts, comments, and likes on social media, as well as messages sent in 'private' chats on various messaging applications where the victims indicated that they did not support the Russian invasion;
- ≡ Khaki-coloured elements of plain clothing and underwear or shoes that had similarities to military attire;
- ≡ Expression of non-support for the Russian invasion in private conversations, including by phone;
- ≡ Unkempt appearance (eyes red from lack of sleep, unshaven, etc.) of the men of conscription age, perceived by the Russian military as allegedly Ukrainian servicemen posing as civilians;
- ≡ Any reason to the absence of support to the Russian invasion during questionnaires at Russian filtration points and other checkpoints;
- ≡ Place of residence near Russian army positions that were subjected to shelling by the Ukrainian army, on suspicion of being possible scouts for Ukrainian artillery;
- ≡ Residence in the occupied territories of Ukraine and absence of the Russian citizenship;
- ≡ Reputation in the local community as being those who have expressed opinions and views in favor of Ukraine's geopolitical, cultural and economic independence from Russia even before the full-scale invasion;
- ≡ Ukrainian language speakers;
- ≡ Owners of hunting weapons perceived as potential organisers of armed resistance;
- ≡ Teachers and doctors who refused to adopt the Russian standards in relevant institutions; engineers of mobile networks, refusing to install Russian mobile network infrastructure on the occupied territories; workers of the currency exchange offices who continued to exchange Ukrainian currency; gamekeepers and foresters with good knowledge of local geography and topography, etc.

Russian troops and security services arrested, detained, and subjected civilians with one or more of the abovementioned markers to torture and other ill-treatment. Civilians with multiple markers were subjected to more severe torture, allegedly because the Russian military perceived this combination of markers as a sign of more significant support for Ukraine.

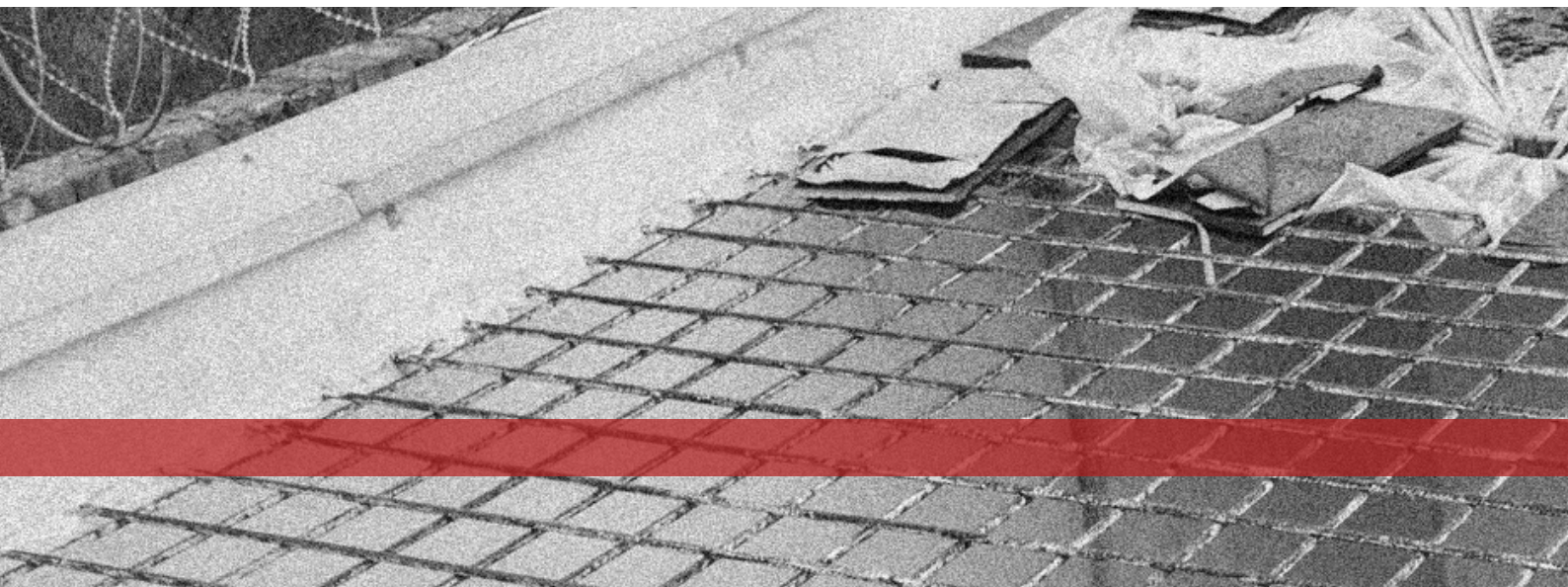
Russian-controlled forces used this logic to target specific groups of civilians who unequivocally opposed the Russian occupation. These include individuals associated with the Ukrainian army and/or security services, those who resisted cooperation with the Russian military in the fulfilment of their professional duties and those who openly dissented to the Russian occupation. Members of these groups account for 20 of the 38 (52%) documented cases of torture. They include:

- Veterans and former servicemen of the Ukrainian army who were not serving at the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022;
- Former or acting officers of Ukrainian civilian law enforcement agencies, who did not take part in the hostilities;
- Civilians who *indirectly*³² cooperated with the Ukrainian army while the territory was under the control of the Russian troops, who did not participate directly in the hostilities (e.g. where there was no nexus between the victim's actions and the damage caused to the Russian army);
- Local opinion leaders, such as civic activists, entrepreneurs, active representatives of medical workers, teachers, and other professional groups etc., who openly and persistently opposed the Russian army, including those who publicly expressed such opinions or whose dissent, though not public, became widely known in the local community;
- Heads and senior officials of local authorities who refused to cooperate with the Russian Army.

As the invasion progressed, the Russian military began to interpret signs of loyalty more broadly, targeting a wider group of civilians. They took extensive measures to identify civilians who were opposed the Russian invasion without overtly expressing dissent. As a result, the victims of torture include individuals who were opposed to the Russian occupation, as well as others who were wrongly accused.³³ These falsely-accused individuals account for 18 of the 38 documented cases (48%).

32. ICRC. 'Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law.' May 2009.

33. Interview with A.D., who was detained in the village of Pisky-Radkivski in the Kharkiv region, in April 2022.



Illustrative case: 26 year-old female schoolteacher from the village of Stary Bykiv in the region of Chernihiv, Northern Ukraine³⁴

*‘Our village was occupied in the first days of the Russian invasion. The Russian military detained and executed six or seven locals. One of them was a colleague of my father. **All those killed were ordinary residents who were simply detained in the street or in the basements of houses where they had been hiding from the shelling.** One of the villagers’ son and son-in-law were killed. She went to the Russian soldiers and asked them to hand over their bodies for a funeral and was told to leave, or be killed, too. Their bodies were discovered with broken ribs and knife wounds, along with those of others killed, near an abandoned house roughly a week later.*

*The Russian military detained and beat many men from the village. **They interrogated locals, asking if anyone had acquaintances in the Ukrainian army, if locals served in the army, and about the location of the Ukrainian army in the region.** My uncle was also beaten. A local guy, who was detained with me, said that the Russian military beat him with a machine gun and a hammer, and threatened to pour molten iron on him.*

This ordeal began after Russian military positions near the village were shelled by the Ukrainian army. The Russians thought that the locals were passing information to the Ukrainian army. One of the Russian soldiers told me that the commander let them shoot “suspicious” locals. But anyone could have seemed suspicious to them.’

Russian troops’ extremely broad interpretation of ‘suspicious’ signs, offered a wide range of reasons for targeting civilians. For instance, a group of more than 30 civilians engaged in humanitarian aid initiatives in the Donetsk region was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in detention.³⁵ According to survivors, participating in these humanitarian activities, which were not coordinated by Russian forces in the occupied territories was perceived as a failure to support the Russian army or as cooperating with the Ukrainian army.³⁶

In other instances, any information relating to hostilities on victims’ mobile phones raised suspicions of cooperation with the Ukrainian army.

34. Interview with V.A., who was detained in the village of Stary Bykiv, the Chernihiv region, in March 2022 and then forcibly transferred to the Kursk region of the Russian Federation.



Illustrative case: Thirty-year-old electric welder from the village of Petrivka, region of Kherson, Southern Ukraine³⁷

'My neighbour and I were detained on April 4, 2022. We were smoking in front of my house when the Russian soldiers approached us to check our mobile phones. They found nothing on my neighbour's phone but I had a text message from a friend saying: 'We are being heavily shelled.' The Russian soldiers communicated by walkie-talkie that they had found a 'suspicious' text message. They were told: 'You have to detain both of them: the second one may know something as well.'

They put bags over our heads and rushed us to the back of a lorry. On the way, the lorry polluted through a bad road surface in the middle of nowhere. It was evening and cold. One of the Russian soldiers said: 'Let's throw these two out of the lorry and tie them to a tree. If they are 'white' (i.e. not cooperating with the Ukrainian army), they won't freeze. And if they are 'black' (i.e. cooperating with the Ukrainian army), then let them die.'

*In the morning, we were taken to a building (later we learned it was a school in the village of Bilyayivka, Kherson). We were interrogated by Russian servicemen several times while being tortured. They kept asking the same questions: **Where was the Ukrainian military? Had we given anyone information about the Russian army? Did we have tattoos? Were we Nazis? Our torsos and kidneys were kicked and severely beaten with an automatic rifle, and they threatened to shoot us in the knees during the interrogations.***

*We spent almost 2.5 months there. **In the first month we were fed only four times and were given almost no drinking water. Before our release, we and other detainees were forced to write a statement that we would cooperate with the Russian army and hate the acting Ukrainian authorities. Due to the poor detention conditions, my neighbour lost 22 kg.***

Members of vulnerable groups were among those subjected to torture. Cases of torture have been documented that include two humanitarian volunteers, three women, five elderly people and one person with severe chronic illnesses. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that women civilian detainees were tortured less frequently than men.

1.2. Circumstances of torture: arrest, interrogation, and prison ritual

In the cases documented, victims were subjected to the most severe torture during interrogations. They witnessed Russian servicemen physically and psychologically abusing detainees on multiple occasions from the time of their arrest until their release. Such abuse most frequently met the threshold for torture during victims' arrest, transfers between places of detention and registration on arrival at the place of detention. In most cases, poor detention conditions and psychological abuse amounted to ongoing and continuous cruel or degrading treatment.

35. OMCT. 'Russia: Torture and Ill-Treatment in Detention of Humanitarian Volunteers in Occupied Ukraine.' June 29, 2022.

36. Interviews with V.G. and I.T., who were held in several places of detention in the Donetsk region from March to June 2022.

37. Interview with V.F., who was detained in Bilyayivka village in the Kherson region, from April to June 2022.

Arrest



Three typical arrest scenarios were reported:

- Arrest at place of residence or workplace by a group of 3-15 Russian servicemen or members of security services, during which victims' premises were searched, and documents and electronic devices were seized. In these cases, Russian military or security services deliberately tracked down and detained representatives of a persecuted group who had been identified based on reports, social media activity tracking, unauthorised access to local government databases, etc.;
- Arrest during filtration procedures, e.g., at checkpoints in a network of filtration facilities, or during raids on residences with the detection of any of the abovementioned markers;
- Arrest of residents or passers-by close to areas where Russian military personnel, vehicles or weapons were deployed, with victims being subsequently informed that they were suspected as acting as scouts for the Ukrainian artillery.

In most cases, victims, and their relatives, if present, were subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment during the arrest.

Perpetrators took deliberate measures to conceal their identities. Most victims had a bag placed over their heads immediately after their arrest, while in detention facilities, during transportation between locations and when being taken into interrogation rooms. If a bag was unavailable, victims were blindfolded with jackets or hats secured with duct tape wound around their heads. In one documented case, Russian servicemen communicated via walkie-talkie that they were unable to arrest two civilians as they only had one bag. The arrest went ahead only after the delivery of a second bag. Victims consistently note that even during rare interactions Russian servicemen wore balaclavas to conceal their faces.

Their arrests were accompanied by threats relating to the use of weapons, as well as by insults, strip searches and physical assaults including beatings sometimes with the use of a machine gun. In one documented case in the Kharkiv region, a local resident died from injuries sustained by beatings during his arrest. In another case, a survivor was tortured by drowning and had his earlobe cut off during the arrest.³⁸

Victims arrested during filtration procedures in the Donetsk region endured physical abuse,³⁹ went without food for days while being transported between filtration points, endured freezing outdoor temperatures with their hands tied and were denied access to toilets for many hours.⁴⁰

38. Interview with O.R., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, in June 2022.

39. MIHR. "Filtration" as a Series of War Crimes of Russia: From Collecting Personal Data to Torturing', 2022.

40. Interviews with V.G. and I.T., who were held in several places of detention in the Donetsk region from March to June 2022.

Places of detention



From the documented cases, two types of places of detention have been identified:

- Garages and basements, often located in commercial and private facilities, which served as short-term detention sites for periods of 2-14 days. These tended to be transit points where victims would be held before transfer to larger settlements.
- Detention facilities set up in penal colonies, pre-trial detention centres, administrative buildings, and infrastructure facilities, which housed civilian detainees for longer periods of up to several months.

Victims' accounts suggest that detention facilities were strategically located in proximity to command centres, including military command headquarters and commandants' offices in large cities or filtration facilities where specialised military interrogators and senior officers were stationed. Thus, civilians were held both in officially-recognised places of detention and unofficial ones.

In the Kharkiv region, three individuals detained in villages were taken to the police station in Balakliia, the nearest town where the command headquarters were located.⁴¹ They were tortured there to obtain information. One survivor from the Kherson region reported that he and at least 19 other civilians from different villages in the area were held in a school in the village of Bilyayivka, where the Russian army headquarters was located.⁴² In the Donetsk region, interrogations took place mainly in police departments and detention centres within filtration facilities. Interrogations involving torture took place in the so-called Department for Combating Organised Crime of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the DPR.

The documented cases reveal that interrogation rooms were set up in most of the identified places of detention in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. Nearly all survivors experienced severe, protracted torture during their interrogation sessions. Additionally, the conditions of detention in all identified places potentially amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and, in some instances, torture (see [Torture equipment and methods: ways to inflict unbearable suffering](#)).

41. Reuters. 'Abandoned Russian Base Holds Secrets of Retreat in Ukraine.' October 26, 2022.

42. ZMINA. 'Torture Chamber at School: an Analysis of the Testimonies of Detainees in the Village of Bilyayivka, Kherson Region', 2023.

Illustrative case: 55 year-old female accountant from Berdyansk town in the Zaporizhzhia region, Southern Ukraine⁴³

'During my detention at the commandant's office, we couldn't sleep at night because of the noise from the torture in other detainees' interrogations which went on around the clock. FSB officers would bring civilian detainees—former servicemen and people they suspected. This got much worse after the widespread arrests of civilians on Fridays and Saturdays. On those days, FSB officers visited cafes and other public places and detained people who spoke out against Russia.

The first interrogation always involved torture and would last about four hours. We closed the window in our cell but the awful screams were still audible. At one point, the FSB arrived and badly beat a man during an interrogation. He was screaming a lot and we heard the sound of a stun gun. We were all scared and crying. Another civilian detainee was badly beaten for saying that Russia had invaded Ukraine.

Another time, the Russian military asked my husband, who was held in a neighbouring cell, if he had been beaten. He replied that he had not. One of the soldiers asked him: 'Why haven't we beaten you yet?' During my first interrogation, they attached electric wires to my ankles and gave me electric shocks for about 20 minutes (with short breaks between the shocks). The FSB officers threatened to kill my husband in front of me and to put me in prison for a long time. They shouted abusive language at me and insulted me.

While I was held at the commandant's office, it was controlled by the Russian military police, the Federal Service of National Guard Troops, and the FSB. Interrogations with torture were coordinated by the FSB'.

43. Interview with O.Z., who was detained in Berdyansk town in the Zaporizhzhia region, from June to August 2022.



Torture was extensively employed during civilians' detention, even outside of interrogations. A witness detained in the Kherson pre-trial detention centre reported a recurring collective 'torture ritual' orchestrated by the administration. Male civilian detainees were compelled to vocally praise the Russian military and political command, facing beatings and torture with stun guns if they refused to comply each time guards opened their cells.⁴⁴ Detainees held in penal colony No. 120 in Olenivka⁴⁵ in the Donetsk region, testified to experiencing a 'welcome beating': a severe physical assault during the registration procedure in which they were punched, kicked and beaten with truncheons.⁴⁶

Torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment has also been documented during transfer between places of detention. Survivors from the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Donetsk regions reported that they were punched and beaten with machine guns, threatened with death and mutilation, and not fed during their transportation to places of detention in Russia or the so-called DPR.⁴⁷

Victims taken to Russia during the Russian withdrawal from Central and Northern Ukraine faced particularly harsh detention conditions in the occupied territories while awaiting their transfer. They were housed in tents in freezing temperatures without proper access to sanitary facilities, deprived of food for days and subjected to beatings. In one documented case, a civilian was forced to provide a blood donation for the Russian military.

Illustrative case: Retired man from the village of Andriivka in the Kyiv region, Central Ukraine⁴⁸

*'About ten locals were detained with me. The Russian soldiers were transporting us to their destination—we didn't know where we were. **They kept us in a tent for seven or eight days and forced us to take off our shoes in freezing temperatures. I got frostbite on my leg. One detainee tried to refuse to take off his shoes but they threatened to shoot him in his leg. Another detainee eventually had to have his fingers amputated due to frostbite. They poured water into our boots, threatened to shoot me in the leg, beat my legs with a machine gun and kept my hands tied tightly for seven days. One of my hands hasn't worked since then.***

*We were taken to a Russian field camp in the village of Myrne in the Kyiv region. **The Russian soldiers forcibly took my blood.** I wondered how much they would take: they kept on taking it until I felt sick. While I was in that village, I saw lorries with Belarusian registration plates bringing water to this Russian field camp. When we were being transported through Belarus later, a doctor examined me and told me that I'd had a stroke.'*

44. Interview with N.S., who was detained in Kherson city from August to September 2022.

45. Penal colony No. 120 in Olenivka is the former Volnovakha corrective colony (No. 120).

46. Interviews with V.G. and I.T., who were held in several places of detention in the Donetsk region from March to June 2022.

47. Interview with V.A., who was detained in the village of Stary Bykiv in the Chernihiv region, in March 2022 and then forcibly transferred to the Kursk region of the Russian Federation.

48. Interview with M.S., who was detained at Russian army positions in the Kyiv region from March to April 2022.

The perpetrators



Victim and witness testimonies indicate that units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, military units of the so-called DPR and LPR, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the DPR, the Federal Security Service, the Federal National Guard Service, the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service, and other unidentified Russian military units were involved in torturing and committing related crimes against local residents in the recently-occupied territories of Ukraine. In most cases, survivors concluded this from the perpetrators' conversations, from the uniforms used by some units and from secondary evidence, such as information from other locals about which military unit controls a particular location.

In the Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, a common thread among victims' accounts is the supervision of their arrest and/or torture interrogations by one or more senior servicemen who coordinated the other perpetrators. These senior figures actively questioned victims, recorded their testimonies and issued direct commands to other soldiers carrying out the acts of torture. The perpetrators' remarks led some victims to infer that senior servicemen were implicated in decisions regarding detainees' release or further detention.

Victims state that these senior servicemen were likely FSB officers, based on differences in their uniforms, equipment and communication style compared to other military personnel. In six of the 38 torture cases (15%), these servicemen either explicitly identified themselves as FSB officers or were identified as such by representatives of other units. In various instances in the Kharkiv region, victims noted that the individuals leading their arrest and/or conducting interrogations were 'well-spoken', handled interrogations 'like trained psychologists' and had a 'clean' Russian pronunciation typical of residents in the Central European part of Russia. In contrast, their subordinates who carried out arrests and/or direct torture often had accents typical of the North Caucasian, Far Eastern and Siberian parts of Russia, which were subsequently attributed to Buryats, Dagestanis, Chechens, Ingush, Ossetians, Tuvinians and others.

Several victims reported that the interrogators were well-prepared, possessing detailed knowledge of victims' past civic activities, personal details and information about their relatives. One the victims reported that specific interrogators were assigned to carry out different parts in a series of interrogations at the police station in Balakliia in the Kharkiv region. If a particular interrogator was absent for several weeks, the victims they dealt with were not summoned for interrogation until their return.⁴⁹

There was a clear division of roles among perpetrators in at least the following places of detention: Balakliia town police department in the Kharkiv region, Iziium city police department in the Kharkiv region, Kupyansk district police department in the Kharkiv region, Berdyansk penal colony No. 77 in the Zaporizhzhia region, temporary detention centre No. 1 in Kherson city, and a school building in Bilyayivka village in the Kherson region. Roles included guards and convoys, interrogators, torturers and supervisors. In some cases, interrogation and torture roles were performed by the same military personnel. Supervisors coordinated arrests and detention, supervised guards,⁵⁰ and participated in interrogations. Information regarding roles in other places of detention is lacking.

49. Interview with A.T., who was detained in Balakliia town, the Kharkiv region, from August to September 2022.

50. Interview with O.Z., who was detained in Berdyansk town in the Zaporizhzhia region, from June to August 2022.





1.3. The purpose of torture: the Russian Army's 'polygraph'

Obtaining information or a confession. Of the 38 identified torture victims from six different regions of Ukraine, 34 (89%) reported that the torture inflicted during their interrogations was aimed at extracting specific information:

- ≡ about the deployment and routes of the Ukrainian army, to identify local residents or other individuals directly taking part in hostilities on the side of the Ukrainian army.
- ≡ to identify local residents who were not directly involved in the hostilities but who opposed the Russian invasion or those who might have such an opinion.
- ≡ about their political opinions, particularly how they felt about the Russian invasion, the Russian people and the Ukrainian government, their opinion on the Soviet Union and historical figures or events related to the Russian-Ukrainian political or military confrontation.
- ≡ to obtain a confession of alleged cooperation with the Ukrainian army—several interviewees were coerced into confessing that they had conducted artillery reconnaissance for the Ukrainian military, served in the Ukrainian army or organised peaceful protests against the occupation while they had not done so.

In most cases, Russian servicemen clearly linked the chances of a victim's release to the relevance of the information provided, e.g. one survivor who was held in the temporary detention centre in Kherson reported that Russian servicemen said they would only release detainees who could provide information about at least ten other civilians who were not loyal to the Russian Federation.⁵¹ According to another survivor held in the same detention facility, the Russian military said the best lie-detector was torture, as they did not trust polygraphs.⁵²

Coercion. Victims were often forced to cooperate with the Russian army and civil or military administration. Such cooperation included relaying information and disseminating Russian propaganda, including through local social media channels and/or carrying out professional duties in the interests of the Russian administration. This included the coercion of local government officials, civilian police officers, teachers and doctors, among others. For example, a schoolteacher from the Kherson region reported being forced to introduce Russian curricula in a local school.⁵³

51. Interview with M.M., who was detained in Kherson city in March 2022.

52. Interview with S.H., who was detained in Kherson city from August to October 2022.

53. Interview with S.N., who was detained in Beryslav town in the Kherson region, in August 2022.

Illustrative case: Sixty-one-year-old Head of Stara Zbur'ivka village, Kherson region, Southern Ukraine⁵⁴

'Since I am the Head of the village, the Russian soldiers assumed I knew everything about my village of 2,500 inhabitants, including their opponents. They also asked me about neighbouring villages. I tried to explain that I didn't know the context or the people in neighbouring villages, but they didn't believe me. It seemed like their modus operandi was to take anyone and beat them until they confessed something useful. If I didn't answer satisfactorily, they'd immediately beat me repeatedly until I flew off my stool into the wall. Then they'd keep beating me.

I underwent a series of interrogations like that. During each one, Russian military officers beat me, forced me to stand undressed in freezing temperatures and threatened to drown me and kill other detainees if I refused to provide information. They poured water on me and then put wires on my fingers and switched on an electric current.

After that series of interrogations, an officer in a balaclava who looked like an FSB officer said that the Russians no longer had any reason to hold me. Before releasing me, he imposed several conditions: 1. I must go back to work and perform my duties as the Head of the village. 2. If any new or suspicious people appeared in the village, I must inform the Russians. 3. If someone wanted to organise pro-Ukrainian rallies, I must inform them.'

Punishment. In many cases of torture during interrogations, the perpetrators stated their motive was to punish civilians for their real or alleged cooperation with the Ukrainian army or civic position in support of Ukraine. In several documented cases, they disclosed their motive for torture as revenge for the victims' domestic conflicts with civilian collaborators.

In the broader context, all documented cases were aimed at intimidating and coercing a group of civilians who were discriminated against on political grounds. This group comprised individuals who did not—or were perceived not to—support the Russian invasion. In several cases, perpetrators voiced personal motives, such as seeking a ransom for the victim's release, alongside the aforementioned objectives.

54. Interview with V.M., who was held in several places of detention in the Kherson region from March to April 2022.

Interrogations in different regions and places of detention were conducted in similar scenarios and using similar techniques, including 'Mutt and Jeff',⁵⁵ 'Emotional Futility',⁵⁶ 'We know all',⁵⁷ 'Rapid Fire'⁵⁸ and 'preventive beating'.⁵⁹

Illustrative case: Fifty-three-year-old retired man from Balakliia town, Kharkiv region, Eastern Ukraine⁶⁰

'After my arrest, the Russian military took me to the local police station. During the first interrogation, they took me into a room and removed the bag they had put on my head at the time of my arrest. There were four soldiers in the room. Three of them wearing plastic masks. They asked about my health. When I said I was healthy, one of them hit me in the shoulder with a stun gun.

Then they started asking me questions: Why had I put a Ukrainian flag on my house? Had I served in the army? Did I know former Ukrainian servicemen in our town? Why was the Ukrainian government 'destroying' the Donetsk and Luhansk regions? When they didn't like my answers, they struck my shoulders and legs with a stun gun. In the next interrogation, they asked me how I could help the Russian troops and whether I knew local residents who didn't support the Russian invasion. Two servicemen interrogated me using a technique where one of them would ask me a question and, as soon as I started to answer, the other would interrupt and ask an unrelated question. This meant I would get lost in my answers and it was difficult for me to navigate what to answer. [Note: this appears to be an interrogation technique known as 'Rapid Fire'⁶¹].

After four interrogations, they realised that I had no useful information for them. They released me, but warned me that they would check my answers and if any of them turned out to be untruthful the servicemen would throw a grenade at my house and kill all my relatives.'

-
55. The goal of this technique is to make the source identify with one of the interrogators and thereby establish rapport and cooperation. Use of this technique requires two experienced collectors who are convincing actors. The two collectors will display opposing personalities and attitudes toward the source.' Headquarters. Department of the Army. **'Human Intelligence Collector Operations'**. FM2-22.3 (FM 34-52). September 6, 2006. p. 8-17.
56. 'In the emotional-futility approach, a collector convinces the source that resistance to questioning is futile. This engenders a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness on the part of the source. A collector gives the source a "way out" of the helpless situation. For example, "it is hopeless for your forces to continue fighting because they can no longer get supplies, but you can help end the war and their suffering." When employing this technique, a collector must have factual information. A collector presents these facts in a persuasive, logical manner. He should be aware of and able to exploit the source's psychological and moral weaknesses, as well as weaknesses inherent in his society.' Headquarters. Department of the Army. **'Human Intelligence Collector Operations'**. FM2-22.3 (FM 34-52). September 6, 2006. p. 8-13.
57. 'In the "we know all" approach technique, a collector subtly convinces the source that his questioning of the source is perfunctory because any information that the source has is already known. A collector must first become thoroughly familiar with available data concerning the source and the current situation. To begin the collection effort, a collector asks questions based on this known data.' Headquarters. Department of the Army. **'Human Intelligence Collector Operations'**. FM2-22.3 (FM 34-52). September 6, 2006. p. 8-14.
58. 'This approach may be used by one, two, or more collectors to question the source. In employing this technique, the collectors ask a series of questions in such a manner that the source does not have time to answer a question completely before the next one is asked. This confuses the source, and he will tend to contradict himself as he has little time to formulate his answers. The collectors then confront the source with the inconsistencies causing further contradictions. In many instances, the source will begin to talk freely in an attempt to explain himself and deny the collector's claims of inconsistencies. In this attempt, the source is likely to reveal more than he intends, thus creating additional leads for further exploitation.' Headquarters. Department of the Army. **'Human Intelligence Collector Operations'**. FM2-22.3 (FM 34-52). September 6, 2006. p. 8-16.
59. Victims were severely beaten during one or more of the initial interrogations, in which they were not asked any important questions. The Russian military started asking sensitive questions from the second or third interrogation, once the victim had been 'prepared' through previous beatings.
60. Interview with O.Y., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, in July 2022.
61. 'This approach may be used by one, two, or more collectors to question the source. In employing this technique, the collectors ask a series of questions in such a manner that the source does not have time to answer a question completely before the next one is asked. This confuses the source, and he will tend to contradict himself as he has little time to formulate his answers. The collectors then confront the source with the inconsistencies causing further contradictions. In many instances, the source will begin to talk freely in an attempt to explain himself and deny the collector's claims of inconsistencies. In this attempt, the source is likely to reveal more than he intends, thus creating additional leads for further exploitation.' Headquarters. Department of the Army. **'Human Intelligence Collector Operations'**. FM2-22.3 (FM 34-52). September 6, 2006. p. 8-16.

After continuously torturing civilians during interrogations, the Russian military released those who agreed to cooperate. Other groups of victims were released when the Russian military allegedly decided that they were of no use and posed no threat. Detention periods tended to range from several days to six months.

Two survivors from the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions were displaced from the occupied territories and transferred to places of detention in Russia shortly after being abducted—probably because of the de-occupation of those territories. In regions that endured a prolonged occupation, it was common for victims coerced into confessions through torture, to be transferred to Russia or occupied Crimea after falsely admitting to aiding the Ukrainian resistance.⁶² One victim reported that six other survivors held with him at the police station in Balakliia in the Kharkiv region were taken to Russia after being tortured into ‘confessing’ to passing information to the Ukrainian army.⁶³

In occupied areas of the Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions, where the Russian military had established an administration, the execution of civilians was not common. Detainees were typically released if torture resulted in life-threatening injuries. However, there were some cases of torture-related executions or deaths have been reported.⁶⁴ One torture victim held at penal colony No.120 in Olenivka, Donetsk, saw a fellow detainee’s dead body being removed after he was severely beaten in an interrogation.⁶⁵

Torture was therefore used by Russian-controlled forces as a means of punishing and deterring any expression of support for Ukraine among the local population of the occupied territories—including participation in mass assemblies, public expressions of opinion on social media, engagement in workplaces or local communities, and any form of grassroots civic activity.

1.4. Torture equipment and methods: ways to inflict unbearable suffering

Methods of torture and degrading treatment, along with deliberate inhumane conditions of detention, are consistently observed across various regions and detention facilities. In the 38 documented cases qualifying as torture in this report, victims were subjected to multiple forms of physical and psychological abuse simultaneously.

In seven out of 38 cases this included sexual violence, such as stab wounds to the genital area,⁶⁶ forced nudity and threats including the use of stun guns to the genital area, castration or rape with a truncheon. Perpetrators accompanied their verbal threats of torture with actions aimed at making the victim perceive them as real, e.g., they would undress survivors during threats of rape and hold a knife to the penis during threats of castration.⁶⁷

62. ZMINA. ‘The Kidnapped in Kherson Region Activist Sergii Tsyhipa Was Relocated to a New Pre-Trial Detention Center. He Is Being Checked by FSB.’ December 7, 2022.

63. Interview with O.R., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, in June 2022.

64. ZMINA. ‘The Children’s Writer Volodymyr Vakulenko Was Shot With a Makarov Pistol.’ November 30, 2022.

65. Interview with V.G., who was held in several places of detention in the Donetsk region from March to June 2022.

66. Interview with the relatives of A., who was detained in Borova village in the Kharkiv region, in September 2022.

67. Interview with A.T., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, from August to September 2022.

Some evidence highlights gender-based violence against men, which meets the threshold for torture. Men were more frequently targeted and subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment than women under similar circumstances, primarily due to gender role expectations, i.e. their perceived ability to engage in military resistance. In documented cases where the Russian military discovered incriminating information on mobile phones, men were detained and subjected to torture, whereas women were threatened and insulted without being detained. The gender ratio among the documented cases was 3:35 women to men.

Torture during interrogations typically lasted between 30 minutes and six hours. Russian servicemen would employ up to seven different methods of physical and psychological torture during those sessions. While certain forms of violence, such as threats and insults, do not individually meet the threshold for torture, their use in conjunction with other torture methods produced a significant cumulative effect that is tantamount to torture.

In addition to the documented torture cases, victims endured inhuman or degrading treatment that did not meet the threshold for torture in 25 other instances.

Physical torture and other ill-treatment⁶⁸

The torture methods and equipment identified corroborate the assertion that the Russian Federation-controlled forces did not generally aim to kill or permanently injure victims. Their primary objective appears to have been inducing compliance by inflicting pain.⁶⁹ However, due to the prolonged and severe nature of the torture, in some cases, victims died in detention or shortly after their release. Many of the victims we interviewed suffered disabilities and other long-term health consequences (see chapter Consequences of Torture: Broken Lives). There are at least two documented cases of victims dying due to lack of medical care following severe torture while they were detained in a school building in Bilyayivka village in the Kherson region.⁷⁰

The most common types of physical torture included:

≡ Electric shocks

Of the 38 torture victims identified, 24 (63%) underwent torture with electricity lasting 20-30 minutes. Russian servicemen employed both high- and low-voltage direct contact weapons, including stun guns and a modified military field telephone known as the TA-57 or Call to Putin,⁷¹ to administer multiple, prolonged electric shocks. These shocks were often targeted at vulnerable body parts, such as the ears, fingers, feet and genitals. Water was sometimes used to amplify the effects of the electric shocks.

Survivors report experiencing severe cardiac and muscular pain, seizures, arrhythmia, respiratory disturbances, among other forms of suffering, during torture sessions. Many fell to the ground and convulsed after losing neuromuscular control.⁷² Several victims were left with scars and other visible marks on their skin.

68. The classification of torture and other ill-treatment is taken from the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol, No. 8/Rev. 2). OHCHR. 'Istanbul Protocol: Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2022 Edition),' June 29, 2022.

69. Omega Research Foundation. 'Electric Shock Weapons.'

70. Interview with V.F., who was detained in Bilyayivka village in the Kherson region, from April to June 2022.

71. The Call to Putin torture method is widely used by the Federal Security Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation in places of detention within the territory of Russia. Russian law enforcement officers use a TA-57 military field telephone, which produces electric voltage. The bare wires of the phone are screwed to parts of the detainee's body, after which the torturer twists a knob on the side of the device to generate an electric current. The strength of the electrical voltage can be adjusted using the device. The Insider. 'The Encyclopedia of Russian Torture (Illustrated by Oleg Navalnyi),' August 24, 2018.

72. Anonymous interview (code VS-ZA-32).

== Severe, prolonged beatings

In 30 out of 38 (79%) cases, the Russian forces punched and kicked victims and beat them with rifle butts, batons and truncheons. Ad-hoc equipment such as sticks, clubs, hammers or other improvised weapons were used in many cases. The intensity of beatings varied from a few strong blows combined with other torture methods to prolonged beatings lasting up to two hours at a time. Beatings were sometimes repeated for several days in a row, increasing the victims' physical suffering.⁷³ In some cases Russian soldiers jumped on survivors' bodies while they were lying on the floor and/or put a thick cloth bag over their heads during the beating.

Blows were aimed at the head, liver, kidneys, heart, buttocks and back, as well as at arms and legs. Existing health problems were used to inflict greater suffering. For example, one victim with a spinal fracture in the Kherson region, was asked exactly where his injury was located by a Russian serviceman who proceeded violently strike it with his knee.

Many victims were severely beaten all over, with their entire torso, legs and arms turning blue from the bruises and hematomas.⁷⁴ However, in some cases, victims experienced professional beatings (on their kneecaps and heels) that left no marks. One described a technique where the torturers applied simultaneous blows to both ears with their palms, which left him feeling concussed.

== Deprivation of basic needs

In all documented cases, the detention conditions were non-compliant with international humanitarian law and international human rights law standards. In 28 out of 38 cases (73%), conditions were so poor they were tantamount to torture.

Overcrowded cells, lacking in room to sleep or fresh air. Most victims were detained in overcrowded cells or rooms where there was either no or an insufficient amount of space to sleep. Survivors had to take turns sleeping in the cells where there was little to no space for physical activity. There was a shortage of mattresses, blankets and pillows for detainees. In small settlements, civilians were often initially held in unofficial transit facilities that were ill-suited for holding people, such as metal containers, wooden boxes or basements of recreational or infrastructure facilities. Cells often lacked adequate natural light, with tiny or non-existent windows. In one documented case, 53 detainees were held in a cell intended for six people; they could only sit with their legs tucked in and could barely move.⁷⁵

Exposure to extreme temperatures and forced nudity. The detention of victims in facilities that are very cold during winter and very hot during summer has been widely documented. In some cases, victims were forced to undress in low temperatures to intensify their suffering. Several victims reported having to do push-ups several times a night to keep them warm. One victim testified that he was kept inside a metal container for five days while the outside temperature was higher than 30 degrees Celsius.⁷⁶ Another victim was forced to remain nude for around for 3.5 hours in very low temperatures.

73. Interview with S.N., who was detained in Beryslav town in the Kherson region, in August 2022.

74. Interview with A.T., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, from August to September 2022.

75. Interview with I.T., who was detained in Olenivka village in the Donetsk region, from March to June 2022.

76. Interview with S.N., who was detained in Beryslav town in the Kherson region, in August 2022.

Lack of access to adequate food or drinking water. Many victims report being deprived of food for periods ranging from three to seven days. On the days they were fed, detainees received only one or two small portions of food, which they describe as barely edible and sometimes served in dirty dishes. In penal colony No. 120 in Olenivka, Donetsk, victims were given only one-and-a-half minutes to eat. Survivors had limited or no access to drinking water, sometimes resorting to consuming untreated, non-potable water from supplies in poor condition or from rivers. One survivor who was held in a school building in Bilyayivka village, Kherson, reported that some civilian detainees resorted to drinking their own urine as they were not even provided with raw water.⁷⁷

Unhygienic conditions. Basic necessities such as bed linen, sanitary items (including for female intimate hygiene), towels and clean clothing were lacking in almost all documented cases. Showers were not available throughout the detention period lasting up to several months. In penal colony No. 120 in Olenivka, detainees who requested a shower were forced to run while being tasered with a stun gun after showering.⁷⁸

No access or limited access to toilet facilities. In almost all cases, victims were permitted to use the toilet only once or twice a day for a restricted period, or they were compelled to relieve themselves inside the cell using a plastic bottle without any privacy.

Lack of adequate access to medical care. Medical and mental health assistance was consistently denied in all documented places of detention, including after severe beatings and other forms of torture. Detainees in critical health conditions were either refused medical assistance or released, allegedly because the Russian military did not wish to deal with corpses in the event of them dying in detention.

== Deprivation of normal sensory stimulation and sensory overload

Several victims were held in a cell without light for periods lasting between six days and one month. One victim was detained in alternating conditions of complete darkness and bright light, which was left switched on at night to prevent victims sleeping.⁷⁹ In another case, a lamp emitting bright pulsating light was directed at detainees' eyes during interrogations.

== Prolonged use of restraint devices and positional torture

There are also documented cases of victims being held in stress positions for hours at a time, including overnight. These include 'swallow pose' where victims' arms are handcuffed behind their backs,⁸⁰ with arms handcuffed to a 24kg kettlebell, being hung by their feet, being forced to squat or be placed on all fours, being forced to sleep standing, being strapped overnight to a cold radiator in low temperatures to prevent them from moving or warming themselves up, and being tightly-bound or handcuffed at the hands for prolonged periods. Handcuffs, ropes, and plastic ties were used to immobilise victims during their detention.

Other commonly-reported methods of physical torture include waterboarding (pouring water into the mouth through a rag), confining victims to a one-square-meter box with their hands tied,⁸¹ stabbing and cutting off the earlobe with an axe.

77. Interview with V.F., who was detained in Bilyayivka village in the Kherson region, from April to June 2022.

78. Interview with I.T., who was detained in Olenivka village in the Donetsk region, from March to June 2022.

79. Interview with A.L., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, from June to July 2022.

80. Interview with O.G., who was detained in Iziurm town in the Kharkiv region, from August to September 2022.

81. Interview with S.P., who was detained in Kopyliv village in the Kyiv region, in March 2022.

Illustrative case: Former civilian police officer from Kherson, Southern Ukraine⁸²

*'After being arrested, we were taken to the temporary detention centre in Kherson. The Russian military offered me to cooperate with them. I refused. After being detained for a week, I was forced to undergo a polygraph. **I was asked if I had participated in rallies against Russian speakers, if I had threatened any Russian citizens, where the Ukrainian army's weapons and vehicles were located. I answered truthfully that I did not know.***

*That same day, I was taken for interrogation. At the outset of the interrogation, one of the military officers threatened to kill me, and I realised they were capable of doing so. They covered my head with my T-shirt and forced me onto a chair, handcuffing me behind my back. **Holding me in that position, one of them shocked me with a stun gun while another began punched my torso and head. Then they threw me on the floor and continued assaulting me, hitting my head and using the stun gun on my knees and feet. As I lay on my back, the handcuffs behind me inflicted intense pain on my wrists.***

The Russian military were not satisfied that I did not know the answers to their questions. Some kind of rag was thrown on top of my T-shirt over my face and they started pouring water into my mouth. I lost consciousness. They brought me round and continued asking questions. They used a stun gun on my knees and feet while pouring water in my mouth. They also threatened to bring my partner, who was being held in the same place, and make her watch them rape me with a rubber stick.

I vomited and lost consciousness again. They brought round again and said: 'Do you think that's it? We'll rest and then we'll continue.'** I could see the flash of a camera through the t-shirt that was on my face. I think they were filming the whole thing on their mobile phone. After the interrogation, they lifted under my arms and led me to a cell. **One of the guards said to me: 'Why don't you want to cooperate with us? You're loyal to Ukraine - are you a Nazi?'

Psychological torture and ill-treatment

Evidence indicates that alongside physical torture, Russian forces extensively used degrading treatment and other forms of psychological abuse. In some cases, these tactics caused survivors severe mental anguish and have had a long-lasting impact on their mental health. In those cases, the psychological abuse alone meets the threshold for torture. In other cases, it cumulatively meets the threshold for torture in conjunction with physical torture.

82. Interview with S.H., who was detained in Kherson city from August September 2022.

≡ Incommunicado detention (denial of contact with the outside world)

In all documented cases, victims were held incommunicado for a period lasting from a few days up to several months. Even where the Russian authorities confirmed victims' detention to their relatives, lawyers, or the ICRC, they continued to deny the detainees themselves any contact with the outside world. This included the denial of access to legal representation, the obstruction of any communication with relatives, including letters, meetings, and phone calls, and the refusal to accept parcels containing clothing, food and medicine. In the overwhelming majority of instances, Russian authorities failed to inform the ICRC about the detentions, and even where they did, they prohibited visits from the ICRC and other international humanitarian and human rights monitoring bodies, as well as Ukrainian diplomatic institutions, among others.

Victims report that while they were held incommunicado, the Russian military continually told them that Russia had fully occupied Ukraine or that the Ukrainian authorities and their relatives were making no effort to release detainees. Some released survivors were unable to clarify the fate of their relatives, who were located close to the hostilities at the time of their arrest. They say that this caused some of their most intense mental suffering while in detention. In fact, it triggered two suicide attempts by one female detainee.⁸³

≡ Behavioural coercion and forcing victims to witness torture or atrocities being inflicted on others

Among the documented cases, which took place across twenty detention facilities in six regions, there are instances of victims being coerced into recording videos for the torturers' social media accounts after being beaten, recording and posting videos declaring their loyalty to Russia and the Russian president, jumping around for hours after being beaten, jumping around while shouting offensive slogans, praising Russian political and military commanders, defecating on Ukrainian army uniforms and participating in torture, including administering electric shocks to other detainees. In some cases, brutal torture was used to force survivors to provide information about their acquaintances and family members to the Russian military, in the knowledge this would put them at risk of arrest, unlawful detention and torture.⁸⁴

Many survivors reported that the frequent or round-the-clock screams of other detainees being tortured caused them severe mental anguish, often leading to tears and sleeplessness.⁸⁵ For some, the profound distress caused by these screams was heightened by the sound of stun guns or the intensification of victims' screams when torturers threatened to perpetrate sexual violence against them. One survivor from the Kherson temporary detention centre described how he and his fellow detainees heard a young male in a neighbouring cell react uncontrollably, defecating out of shock, as Russian soldiers attempted to mutilate his genitals.⁸⁶

≡ Humiliation and verbal abuse, threats of death, harm to family, further torture, imprisonment, and mock executions

Survivors frequently received threats, including personal death threats, threats to kill other detainees, threats of mutilation, threats to subject their children and other relatives to torture,⁸⁷ threats to bring in the victim's relatives and force them to watch the torture, threats of long-term imprisonment, and threats of forcible transfer to Russia for further imprisonment and torture. Given their vulnerable condition following ongoing, brutal torture and the apparent impunity of their perpetrators, victims tended to perceive these threats as real.

83. Interview with V.A., who was detained in Staryi Bykiv village in the Chernihiv region, Ukraine, and then forcibly transferred to Kursk city, Russian Federation.

84. Interview with M.M., who was detained in Kherson city in March 2022.

85. Interview with O.Z., who was detained in Berdyansk town, Zaporizhzhia region, from June to August 2022.

86. Interview with M.M., who was detained in Kherson city in March 2022.

87. Interview with V.M., who was held in several places of detention in the Kherson region, from March to April 2022.

Victims report frequent alcohol and psychotropic drug abuse among Russian military personnel. This combined with the apparent lack of military discipline, low morale, and arbitrariness of the Russian military, had an intimidating effect on the local population. Many survivors report that it made them perceive all direct or indirect threats from the Russian military as genuine, which amplified their psychological distress.

Mock executions, in which Russian troops would fire one or more gunshots near the victim's head, place the muzzle of a gun in the victim's mouth and force the victim to dig their own grave, were also common.

In almost all documented cases, victims experienced numerous verbal insults and abusive language. These insults were sometimes based on victims' ethnic or political affiliation. Some of the victims were accused of being Nazis, supporting the 'Ukrainian Nazi government' and the 'genocide' of the people of the so-called LPR/DPR. These comments refer to the operations of the Ukrainian army since 2014, aimed at restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine through hostilities with Russian-controlled troops.

Illustrative case: 51-year-old private entrepreneur from Balakliia town, Kharkiv region, Eastern Ukraine⁸⁸

'I was held in the Balakliia town police station. The Russian military called me a Nazi and a terrorist. Immediately after the interrogation started, they put wires on my fingers and switched on the electric current of this device [a TA-57 military field phone]. Then they beat me with a plastic pipe so hard I screamed. It all lasted for about one-and-a-half hours.'

The next day, I was brought back for interrogation. This time they didn't remove the bag from my head. It was very thick and it was hard for me to breathe. They immediately started punching, kicking, and beating me with their truncheons. They connected wires to my body and switched on the electricity. I was tied to a chair. They also started firing a shotgun near me. They threatened to shoot me in the kneecap, cut off my ears and fingers, pull out my fingernails and rape me with a baton. They put a gun in my mouth and beat me with a machine gun. I was beaten for about two hours. I lost consciousness several times. They poured water on me to bring me round.'

My whole body was blue from the beatings after the second interrogation. When I was back in the cell, one of the soldiers came in and kicked me in the ribs, breaking them.'

A week later they interrogated me again. Russian soldiers made me jump and shout: 'Those who don't jump are Muscovites'⁸⁹ and 'Glory to Ukraine,' while giving me electric shocks. They also forced me to bark and cackle. They filmed all this on their mobile phones and laughed. Because of the beatings I couldn't jump properly so they turned up the electric current. When I started to fall due to the shocks, they said they'd beat me harder if I fell down.'

88. Interview with A.T., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, from August to September 2022.

89. The slogan 'Those who don't jump are Muscovites' was used during the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine (also known as 'EuroMaidan') to mock Russians. One of the protesters' demands was integration with the EU.

1.5. Consequences of torture: broken lives

Those who endured torture continue to grapple with its long-term consequences, as do their relatives. Even more than one-and-a-half years after experiencing torture, survivors and indirect victims continue to suffer physical and mental ailments, as well as financial hardships stemming from their inability to work and the high costs of medical treatment. The survivors of torture and other forms of ill-treatment have not received adequate comprehensive rehabilitation programmes, whether during the Russian occupation or following the Ukrainian government's restoration of control over these territories. Many victims still lack access to basic treatment and rehabilitation due to the inadequacy of healthcare infrastructure, especially in areas that were liberated after the occupation or near to active hostilities.

The widespread, systematic use of torture against civilians by Russian-controlled forces⁹⁰ has serious discriminatory consequences not only for the victims, their relatives and local communities but also for the entire society due to its cumulative effect:

Consequences for physical health. As a consequence of torture, ill-treatment and harsh detention conditions, victims endured severe trauma, including blunt trauma, crush injuries, open wounds, head injuries, broken bones, fractures, dislocations, internal bleeding, organ damage, burns, nerve damage, pneumonia, suffocation (including positional asphyxia), extreme weight loss ranging from 10 to 36 kg, sensory and motor impairment and stroke. Many survivors experienced symptoms such as vomiting blood, immobility, loss of appetite or difficulty eating, loss of consciousness and being bedridden for several weeks following the torture.

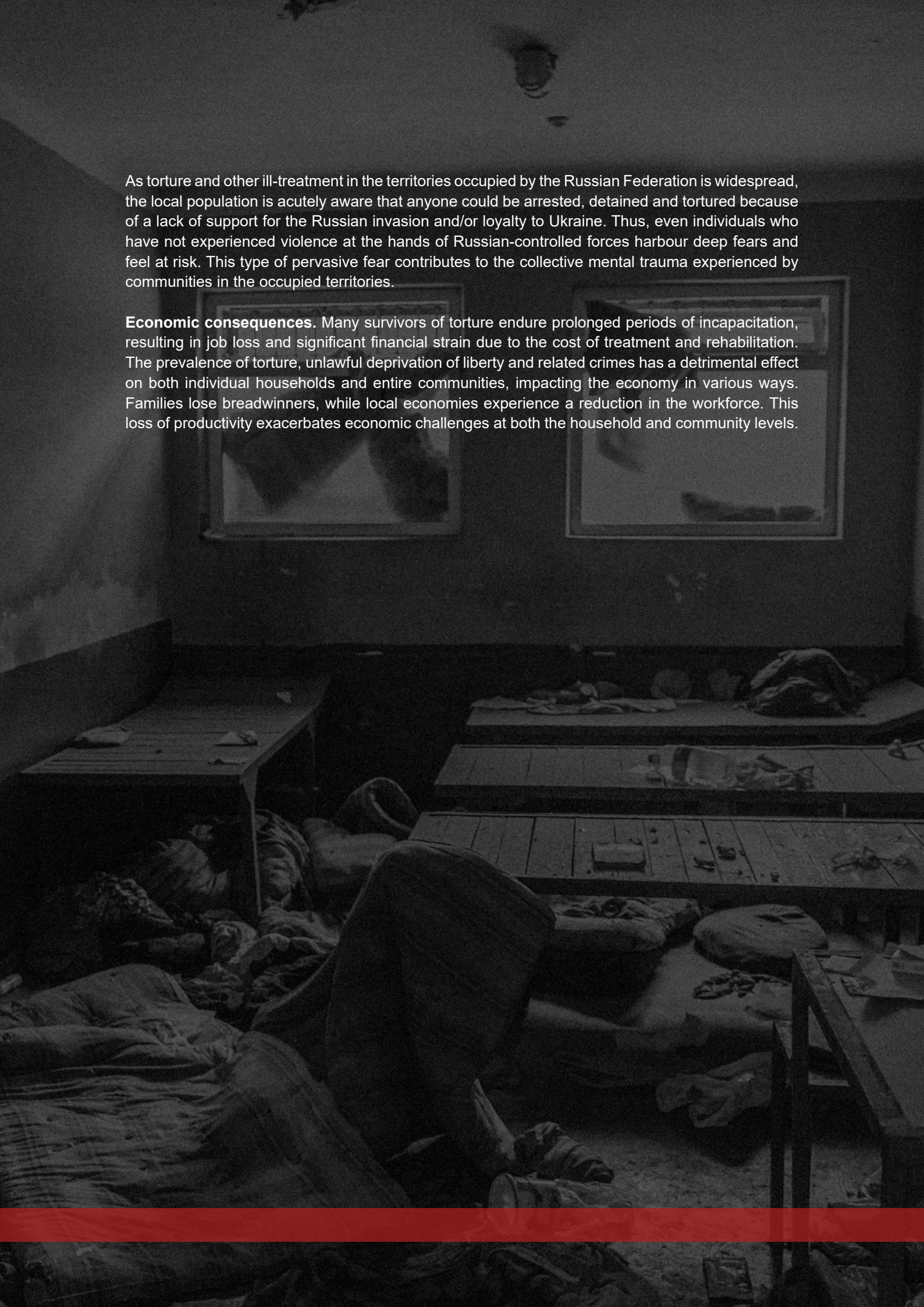
The psychological trauma endured by victims' relatives during the incommunicado detention and torture of their loved ones contributed to the severe deterioration of their physical health and the onset of conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure and neurological diseases. These new physical ailments often exacerbated pre-existing chronic conditions, further compromising victims' relatives overall health.

Consequences for mental health. Most victims and their relatives are still grappling with profound psychological distress stemming from the human rights violations they endured. Many of them broke down in tears as they recounted their experiences during interviews for this report. One victim reported experiencing hallucinations as a result of the torture and harsh detention conditions they endured.⁹¹ Survivors experience a range of psychological symptoms, including nightmares, flashbacks and intrusive memories of trauma. They also report feeling negative emotions such as guilt, fear and shame, as well as having negative beliefs about themselves and the world. Many victims have an exaggerated startle reflex, disrupted sleep patterns marked by screaming and waking frequently during the night. They experience difficulty returning to their normal daily routines. Some have minimised their social interactions and withdrawn from others, while others have turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism. Many of these torture survivors have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, mixed anxiety-depressive disorder and other mental illnesses. Psychiatrists consulted by some have stated that the effects of their mental trauma might never fully heal.⁹²

90. OHCHR. 'Widespread Use of Torture by Russian Military in Ukraine Appears Deliberate: UN Expert.' June 15, 2023.

91. Interview with M.S., who was held in several places of detention in the Kharkiv region from February to March 2022.

92. Anonymous interview (code IK-KHE-33).



As torture and other ill-treatment in the territories occupied by the Russian Federation is widespread, the local population is acutely aware that anyone could be arrested, detained and tortured because of a lack of support for the Russian invasion and/or loyalty to Ukraine. Thus, even individuals who have not experienced violence at the hands of Russian-controlled forces harbour deep fears and feel at risk. This type of pervasive fear contributes to the collective mental trauma experienced by communities in the occupied territories.

Economic consequences. Many survivors of torture endure prolonged periods of incapacitation, resulting in job loss and significant financial strain due to the cost of treatment and rehabilitation. The prevalence of torture, unlawful deprivation of liberty and related crimes has a detrimental effect on both individual households and entire communities, impacting the economy in various ways. Families lose breadwinners, while local economies experience a reduction in the workforce. This loss of productivity exacerbates economic challenges at both the household and community levels.



Contextual and pattern analysis of torture of the civilian population: a planned policy of serious human rights violations

A pattern analysis of the cases documented reveals that Russian forces' torture of the civilian population in the regions of Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kyiv and Chernihiv amounts to more than a series of isolated incidents. Indeed, it highlights that this torture was committed systematically, in the context of other serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, such as enforced disappearances, extra-judicial executions, arbitrary killings, arbitrary detention and unfair trials.

Contextual analyses demonstrate that the chain of events taking place from victims' arrest to their release or death by torture is strikingly similar in the vast majority of documented cases. This strongly suggests that Russian forces in all territories followed a common plan of attack: a plan which targeted a broad group of the civilian population based on their suspected political views.

The execution of this plan varied according to the region. It was influenced by several factors, not least the duration of the occupation which significantly impacted the Russian military's ability to deploy a civil-military territorial administration system and establish the necessary infrastructure to identify and detain members of the target group.

Identification

Russian military and special services implemented a comprehensive, coordinated set of systematised measures aimed at identifying civilians who overtly or covertly opposed the Russian invasion and the Russian political ideology denying the Ukrainian people's right to geopolitical, linguistic and cultural independence from Russia.⁹³ These measures included:

- Conducting raids on residential buildings, including searches of private areas and inspections of identification documents and electronic devices, accessing photo and video files, reviewing content from social media and messaging applications and tracking bank transactions.
- Setting up and managing a network of filtration facilities,⁹⁴ including multiple interconnected, well-organised checkpoints and detention facilities. Filtration points were used to inspect vehicles, personal belongings, identification documents and electronic devices. Civilians were questioned, their biometric data was collected and they were forced to undergo body checks, including strip searches.
- Obtaining information through interrogation with the use of torture, including the coercion of victims to gather further information and denounce others.
- Encouraging local residents to denounce members of the persecuted group to Russian troops.
- Tapping the mobile phones of local residents,⁹⁵ monitoring social media and messenger chats⁹⁶.
- Illegally accessing databases of State and local government bodies, as well as databases of educational, medical and administrative institutions, etc.⁹⁷

Arrest, detention and interrogation

Once identified, targeted civilians were subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, incommunicado detention and enforced disappearances. As of **16 June, 2024**, MIHR had recorded at least **1,763 verified cases** of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention of civilians in territories under the Russian Federation's control. Separate figures for enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are not currently available. As at the same date, MIHR had identified at least **58** places of centralised detention of civilians in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, **32** places of detention in the occupied territories liberated by the Ukrainian army, **41** places of detention in Russia and one in Belarus, which were documented on a map.⁹⁸ It is anticipated that the real number of civilian detainees is substantially higher.



Map of Places of Detention of Civilian Detainees

93. Reuters. 'Putin approves new foreign policy doctrine based on the ideological concept of the "Russian world."' September 5, 2022. The doctrine justifies aggression or political interference in the internal affairs of post-Soviet States in defence of Russia's declared geopolitical interests in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region. The doctrine also declares that Russian language and culture should dominate in these countries and denies the right of these States and their populations to make their own cultural, linguistic or geopolitical choices.

94. MIHR. "'Filtration" as a Series of War Crimes of Russia: From Collecting Personal Data to Torturing.' 2022.

95. Interview with A.T., who was detained in Balaklia town in the Kharkiv region, from August to September 2022.

96. ZMINA. 'Enforced Disappearances in Newly Occupied Territories and Use of New Technologies.' 2022.

97. Freerights Association. 'Protection of Personal Data during Wartime.' 2023.

98. MIHR. *Map of Places of Detention of Civilian Hostages*. 2022.



RUSSIA

MINSK
BELARUS

KYIV
UKRAINE

ANKARA
TURKEY

Kostroma
Nizhny Novgorod
Ivanovo

MOSCOW

Smolensk
Kaluga

Yaroslavl
Oryol

Kursk

Lipetsk
Tambov

Voronezh

Cherepovets
Shakhty

Taganrog
Rostov-on-Don

Krasnodar
Novorossiysk
Sochi
Stavropol

Astrakhan

BLACK SEA

GEORGIA

CASPIAN

SEA



Places of detention of civilian detainees outside Ukraine

1. Narovlya filtration facility, Belarus
2. Correctional Facility No. 1, Anokhovo, Smolensk region, Russia, 215503
3. Correctional Facility No. 2, 9 Dmitrova Gora St., Vyazma, Smolensk Oblast, Russia, 215000
4. The pre-trial detention center No. 2, 9 Krasnaya Square, Novozybkov, Bryansk Oblast, Russia, 243020
5. Colony-settlement No. 3, Surazh, Bryansk region, Russia, 243500
6. The pre-trial detention center No. 1, 2A Sovetskaya St., Bryansk, Bryansk Oblast, Russia, 241050
7. Correctional Facility No.1, 1 Pirogova St., Kursk, Kursk Oblast, Russia, 394030
8. A tent camp for Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians, Glushkovo, Kursk region, Russia, 307450
9. Correctional Facility No. 11, Malaya Loknya, Kursk region, Russia, 307835
10. The pre-trial detention center No. 2, 7 Lenina St., Stary Oskol, Belgorod Oblast, Russia, 309514
11. Correctional Facility No. 4, 2 Privokzalnaya St., Alekseevka, Belgorod Oblast, Russia, 309850
12. Shebekino, Belgorod region, Russia, 309291
13. Correctional Facility No. 7, 3 Timiryazeva St., Valuyki, Belgorod Oblast, Russia, 309996
14. Women's Correctional Facility No. 9, Razdolye, Valuyki, Belgorod Oblast, Russia, 309992
15. Correctional Facility No. 1, 10 Industrialnaya St., Semiluki, Voronezh Oblast, Russia, 396901
16. The pre-trial detention center No. 1, 56 Zhelyabova St., Voronezh, Voronezh Oblast, Russia, 394030
17. The pre-trial detention center No. 2, 39 Sovetskaya St., Borisoglebsk, Voronezh Oblast, Russia, 397160
18. Correctional Facility No. 9, 40-Letitia Oktyabrya St., 9, Borisoglebsk, Voronezh Oblast, Russia, 397160
19. The pre-trial detention center No. 2, 38, 1a Rabochaya St., Kamyshin, Volgograd Oblast, Russia, 403873
20. Correctional Facility No. 19, 99 Ordzhonikidze St., Surovikino, Volgograd Oblast, Russia, 404412
21. Correctional Colony-12 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia for the Volgograd Region, 86 Aleksandrova St., Volzhsky, Volgograd Region, Russia, 404117
22. Men's Correctional Facility of General Regime No. 12, 94 Morskaya St., Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, Rostov Oblast, Russia, 347803
23. Correctional Facility No. 1, 22 Tsentralnaya St., Trudovoye Village, Zverevo, Rostov Region, Russia, 346319
24. The pre-trial detention center No. 2, 175 Lenina St., Taganrog, Rostov Region, Russia, 347910
25. The pre-trial detention center No. 1, 6 Vorovskogo Square, Stavropol, Stavropol Territory, Russia, 355002
26. T-2 Prison, Dekabristov Street, Yeniseisk, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Russia, 663185
27. Prison, 114 Gorky St., Minusinsk, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Russia, 662606
28. The pre-trial detention center No. 1, 63 Barrikad Street, Irkutsk, Irkutsk Oblast, Russia, 664001
29. The pre-trial detention center No. 2, 29 Krasnaya St., Kashin, Tver Oblast, Russia, 171640
30. Lefortovo Detention Center, 5 Lefortovskiy Val Street, Moscow, Russia, 111250
31. Multifunctional Migration Center, Warsaw Highway, 64th kilometer, building 1, Sakharovo village, Moscow region, Russia, 142161
32. The pre-trial detention center No. 2, Kineshma, Ivanovo region, Russia, 155815
33. Pakino Correctional Facility, Vladimir region, Russia, 601960
34. The pre-trial detention center No. 1, 9 Yanvarya Street, 5A, Vladimir, Vladimir Oblast, Russia, 600021
35. Correctional Facility No. 6, 261A Pervomaiskaya St., Melekhovo, Vladimir Oblast, Russia, 601967
36. Correctional Facility No. 5, Shakhtarsky, Tula Oblast, Russia, 301626
37. Correctional Facility No. 1, Komsomolsky district, 1 Dimitrova Ave, Donskoy, Tula region, Russia, 301780
38. The pre-trial detention center No. 1, 27-b Pervomaisky Ave, Ryazan, Ryazan Oblast, Russia, 390013
39. Correctional Facility No. 2, 1 Krasnaya St., Ryazhsk, Ryazan Oblast, Russia, 391964
40. Prison, 1 Severnaya St., Verkhneuralsk, Chelyabinsk Oblast, Russia, 457670
41. Prison, 17 Uralskaya St., Balashov, Saratov Oblast, Russia, 412315
42. Federal Correctional Institution IK-23 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation for the Saratov Region, 20A Zelenaya St., Kamenskoye, settlement. Kamenskoye, Saratov region, Russia, 410003
43. Federal Correctional Institution SIZO-1 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia for the Khabarovsk Krai 680038, Khabarovsk Krai, Khabarovsk, 6 Znamenshchikova St.



Kursk

KYIV

Belgorod

Voronezh

UKRAINE

Dnieper

Shakhty

Taganrog

Rostov-on-Don

Sea of Azov

BLACK SEA

Places of detention of civilian detainees in the occupied territories of Ukraine

1. The pre-trial detention center, 23 line 4, Luhansk, Luhansk region, Ukraine, 91000
2. Equipped colony, Pervomaisk, Luhansk region, Ukraine, 93200
3. Sukhodilsk Correctional Facility no. 36, 46 Karpynskoho Street, Sukhodilsk, Luhansk region, Ukraine, 94420
4. Sverdlovsk Correctional Facility no. 38, Valianivske, Luhansk region, Ukraine, 94835
5. Makiivka Gymnasium of the Krasnorechensk Village Council of Svatove District, Luhansk Oblast, 1 Shkilna St., Makiivka, Luhansk Oblast
6. Kalininska Correctional Facility, Horlivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 83000
7. Makiivska Correctional Facility no. 32, 141 Kirova St., Makiivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 86100
8. Western Correctional Facility no. 97, 62 Toreza str., Donetsk, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 83000
9. Central District Hospital, 178 Kirova St., Donetsk, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, 83000
10. Isolation Prison, 3 Svitloho Shlyakhu Street, Donetsk, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, 83000
11. Hospital No. 15, 1 Dzherelna Street, Donetsk, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, 83000
12. The pre-trial detention center No. 5, Kobozeva Street, Donetsk, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 83086
13. Snizhne Correctional Facility No. 127, Snizhne, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 86500
14. Correctional Facility no. 120, Olenivka, Molodizhne, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 85710
15. Starobeshevo, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 87201
16. Filtration camp, Sartana, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 87592
17. Pryazovsk Correctional Facility, 61 Uralsky Lane, Mariupol, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 87500
18. The pre-trial detention center, 52 Kamenskaya Str., Mariupol, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 87500
19. Mariupol Kalmius department of the State Migration Service of Ukraine, str. Kontrolna 54, Mariupol, Donetsk region, Ukraine
20. Novoazovsk Correctional Facility, Novoazovsk, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 87600
21. Filtration camp, Mangush, Donetsk region, Ukraine, 87400
22. Commandant's office in the village of Rozivka Rozivka, Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine 70300
23. Tokmak Police Department of the Polohiv Police Department, 43 Tsentralna St., Tokmak, Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, 71700
24. Melitopol Police Department, 26 Chernyshevskoho St., Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, 72300
25. Melitopol City Police Department, 37 Chernyshevskoho St., Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, 72300
26. Berdiansk City Military Commissariat, 29 Universytetska St., Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, 71100
27. Prymorska Correctional Facility No. 145 (formerly Berdiansk Correctional Colony No. 77), 1 Promyslova St., Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Ukraine, 71100
28. Berdiansk District Police Department, 3 Hretska St., Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Ukraine, 71100
29. Energodar police department, 17 Budivelnikiv avenue, Energodar, Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, 71500
30. Police Department, 9 Travnia Avenue, 1, Kamiianka-Dniprovsk, Zaporizhzhia region, 71300
31. Dniprorudne Police Department, 1 Heroiv Praci Street, Dniprorudne, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, 71630
32. Nova kakhovka Police Department, 24 Dniprovskiy Ave.
33. Kakhovka Police Department, 153 Melitopolska St., Kakhovka, Kherson region, Ukraine, 74800
34. Novokakhovka city department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Nova Kakhovka, Kherson region, Ukraine, 74900
35. Department of the North Crimean Canal, Tavriysk, Kherson region, Ukraine, 74988

- 📍 36. Chaplynka District Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in Kherson Oblast, 46 Hrushevskoho St., Chaplynka, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 75200
- 📍 37. Novotroyitske Police Department, Bankova Street, Novotroyitske, Kherson region, Ukraine, 75301
- 📍 38. Kalanchak Police Station, 20 8 Bereznya St., Kalanchak, Kherson region, Ukraine, 75800
- 📍 39. Orhidea Hotel, 93 Myru Ave. in Henichesk, Kherson region, Ukraine, 75500
- 📍 40. Higher Vocational School No. 17, 88, Paris Commune St., Genichesk, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 75500
- 📍 41. Children's camp Slava, 1 Popovycha str., Skadovsk, Kherson region, Ukraine, 75701
- 📍 42. Skadovsk Police Station, 82 Nezalezhnosti St., Skadovsk, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 75701
- 📍 43. Temporary detention center, 25 Gorky St., Hola Prystan, Kherson region, Ukraine, 75601
- 📍 44. Temporary detention facility, 33 Proletarska St., Oleshky, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine 75100
- 📍 45. Unofficial pre-trial detention center, Tarasa Shevchenko, 66, Chongar, Kherson region, 75570
- 📍 46. Oleshki Police Department, Proletarska Street, 38, Oleshki, Kherson Oblast, 75100
- 📍 47. School No. 1, Lyubymivka, Kherson region, Ukraine, 74822
- 📍 48. Rybalchenskaya institution of complete general secondary education, 57A Stepova Street, Rybalche, Kherson region, Ukraine, 75621
- 📍 49. Police station, Likarnyanyi provulok 3, Verkhniy Rohachyk, Kherson region, Ukraine, 74400
- 📍 50. Filtration point, Armyansk, Ukraine
- 📍 51. Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation building, 46.10559, 33.69011
- 📍 52. The coast of the Arabat Spit, Gengorka village, next to the Roksolana boarding house
- 📍 53. The pre-trial detention center No. 1, Simferopol, 3 Spera St., Simferopol, Ukraine
- 📍 54. The guardhouse of the military commandant's office of the garrison, 15 Bakinskaya St., Sevastopol, Ukraine
- 📍 55. Admiral F.F. Ushakov State Maritime University, building 8/22, 7, Geroyev Sevastopol St., Sevastopol, Ukraine
- 📍 56. Pavlo Nakhimov Black Sea Higher Naval School of the Order of the Red Star, POW camp on the territory of the school, 1 Pavla Dybenko Street, Sevastopol, Ukraine
- 📍 57. Technical underground building of the North Crimean Canal pumping station
- 📍 58. The pre-trial detention center n°2, Elevatornyi provulok d 4, Simferopol, Crimea, 295052, Ukraine





MOSCOW

Smolensk

Kaluga

7

Bryansk

Oryol

14

15

Kursk

16

BELARUS

12

2

1

11

4

8

5

3

6

KYIV

UKRAINE

Dnieper

18

23

19

21

20

25

24

32

22

26

27, 28, 29, 30, 31

Sea of Azov

BLACK SEA

Places of detention of civilian detainees in the occupied territories of Ukraine liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine

1. Foundry near the Viknaland enterprise, 22-B Vyshneva St., Dymer, Kyiv region, Ukraine, 07330
2. Katyuzhanka secondary school, Katyuzhanka, Kyiv region, Ukraine, 07313
3. Military town, Proskurivska Str., Gostomel, Kyiv region, Ukraine, 08289
4. Sprinter base, Kozarovychi, 50°45'36.1»N 30°20'56.5»E
5. Shop «Obzhora», 270 Svyato-Pokrovska St., Gostomel, Kyiv oblast
6. The house near which six civilians were shot on February 27, 2022, Staryi Bykiv, Chernihiv region, Ukraine 50.58994, 31.64313
7. Field camp in the village of Hremyach, Chernihiv region, Ukraine, 16020
8. Yahidnyanska Secondary School, Yahidne, Chernihiv Oblast, Ukraine, 15562
9. School basement, Vyshneve, Chernihiv Oblast, Ukraine, 15070 51.770433, 31.217067
10. Woodworking enterprise, Vyshneve, Chernihiv oblast, Ukraine, 15070
11. Vitalcenter Rehabilitation Center, 135 a, Andriivka, Chernihiv region, Ukraine, 15554
12. Pakul Forestry of the State Enterprise «Chernihiv Forestry», Chernihiv region, Chernihiv district, Mykhailo-Kotsiubynska settlement territorial community, Pakul village, 25 Chernihivska str.
13. Horodnya Police Department of the Mena Police District, Horodnya, Chernihiv region, Ukraine, 15100
14. Service station, Boromlia village, highway H12, coordinates 50°36'56.7 «N 34°58'01.5 «E, Sumy region. Ukraine 42621
15. Police Station, 34 Blahovishchenska St., Trostianets, Sumy region, Ukraine, 42600
16. Railway station, 40th Army Square, 10, Trostianets, Sumy region, Ukraine, 42602
17. Balakliya Police Department, Balakliya, Kharkiv region, Ukraine, 64200
18. Kochubeyivka Village Council, 80 Menonitska St., Kochubeyivka, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 74012
19. Bilyayivka Educational Complex, 115 Tsentralna St., Bilyayivka, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 74221
20. Beryslav Machine-Building Plant, Beryslav, Kherson region, Ukraine, 74300
21. Beryslav Police Department, 6 Gogol St., Beryslav, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 74300
22. Bilozerka District Court of Kherson Oblast, 97 Dmytro Yavornytskyi St., Bilozerka, Kherson Oblast, 75000, Ukraine
23. Kherson Court of Appeal, 295 Kherson Rifle Division St., 1A, Kherson, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 73000
24. Temporary detention center, Teploenergetikiv Street, 3, Kherson, Kherson region, Ukraine, 73009
25. Kherson Regional Council, 1 Svobody Square, Kherson, Kherson region, Ukraine, 73000
26. Kherson Regional State Administration, 1 Svobody Square, Kherson, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 73003
27. Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Oblast, 4 Lutheranska St., Kherson, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 73000
28. Department of the Security Service of Ukraine, 1 Lutheranska St., Kherson, Kherson Oblast, Ukraine, 73000
29. Dnipro department of the city of Kherson of the State Migration Service of Ukraine, 29 Zalaegerseg street, Kherson, Kherson region, 73000
30. Kherson detention center, Perekopska street, 10, Kherson, Kherson region, 73003
31. Suvorovsky Department of the Police of the Kherson City Department of the Umvs of Ukraine in the Kherson Region, 10 Mayakovsky Street, Kherson, Kherson Region, 73003
32. Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Komsomol district, Filatova street, 30, Kherson, Kherson region, 73027

In most verified cases, the Russian authorities failed to inform victims' lawyers or relatives about the detention of their family members. They also ignored all enquiries about the fate of the victims made by Ukrainian authorities, UN special procedures, the ICRC and other relevant entities. Even where relatives or lawyers did manage to ascertain a detainee's whereabouts through prisoners of war who had been released, the Russian military, detention facility administration, Ombudsperson's Office and Prosecutor's Office would refuse to confirm such information.

In most documented cases of arbitrary detention, victims' lawyers and the ICRC report that no warrants or decisions of courts or military administrations were issued for administrative arrest or pre-trial detention under criminal proceedings. This excludes cases where individuals were transferred to the so-called LPR/DPR and Crimea. Only in a limited number of cases, were such decisions issued by Russian military administrations or local units of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation established in the occupied territories.

All victims report undergoing one or more interrogations in which they suffered physical and/or psychological torture, including sexual violence. In some cases, the psychological abuse inflicted during interrogations amounts to ill-treatment without meeting the threshold for torture. Torture was primarily used during interrogations to obtain information about other civilian residents who opposed the Russian invasion, including those who had not actively expressed such an opinion. These findings align with OHCHR conclusions stating that at least 91% of OHCHR interviewees released from incommunicado detention attested to having undergone torture and other ill-treatment, particularly during interrogation.⁹⁹ These findings support the hypothesis that torture played a key role in Russia's plan of attack, as a tool for vetting the local population to identify individuals who are not loyal to the Russian Federation.

Victims were deliberately held in inhumane conditions and were subjected to degrading treatment and other forms of psychological abuse throughout their detention. Many survivors report that after their arrest, Russian-controlled forces forcibly collected their fingerprints and DNA samples for unknown purposes.

99. OHCHR, 'Detention of Civilians in the Context of the Armed Attack by the Russian Federation Against Ukraine, 24 February 2022 - 23 May 2023,' June 27, 2023.



Release, transfer or extrajudicial killing

In the documented cases, one of three scenarios would occur following one or more interrogations:

1. Release of the detainee (most common scenario):

- ≡ Where the Russian military concluded that victims did not pose a threat to Russia's military, political and ideological control over the occupied territory (including where they obtained this information as result of their interrogations); where it was impossible to obtain such information; or where there was a serious deterioration in victims' state of health as a result of torture, etc.
- ≡ Accidentally, due to the withdrawal of the Russian military, operational confusion during the rotation of Russian troops or during the transportation of detainees between places of detention.

2. Death of the detainee by torture or extrajudicial killing:

- ≡ Where victims were in poor health prior to detention and the torture was fatal;
- ≡ Where victims were perceived as a significant threat to Russian political and military control;
- ≡ Perpetrator excess, e.g. where perpetrators were under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or emotionally unstable due to certain contextual circumstances (e.g. military failures).

3. Transfer of detainee to detention facilities in Russian territory or territories occupied by Russia prior to 2022 (Crimea and the so-called LPR/DPR):

- ≡ To initiate a criminal investigation and subsequent court proceedings;
- ≡ To label civilian detainees 'prisoners of war';
- ≡ To use prisoners in a prisoner exchange for Russian POWs under political arrangements with the Ukrainian government;
- ≡ For further detention for unknown purposes without legal grounds.

After enduring continuous torture during interrogations, civilians who agreed to cooperate with the Russian military were released. Many were forced to write a statement or record a video stating they had not been subjected to violence, in which they agreed to cooperate with the Russian Federation and expressed their lack of support for the acting Ukrainian authorities. Other victims were released when the Russian military allegedly realised that they were of no use and posed no threat. Their detention periods generally ranged from a few days to six months.

Two survivors from the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions were transferred to places of detention in Russia shortly after being abducted—probably due to the de-occupation of their regions. In regions occupied for longer periods, torture victims tended to be transferred to Russia or occupied Crimea after they 'confessed' under torture to having helped the Ukrainian resistance.¹⁰⁰ One victim reported that six other survivors detained with him at the Balakliia police station in the Kharkiv region were transported to Russia after they were tortured into 'confessing' to having passed information to the Ukrainian army.¹⁰¹

100. ZMINA. 'The Kidnapped in Kherson Region Activist Sergii Tsyhipa Was Relocated to a New Pre-Trial Detention Center. He Is Being Checked by FSB.' December 7, 2022.

101. Interview with O.R., who was detained in Balakliia town in the Kharkiv region, in June 2022.

The destination of forced transfer of civilian detainees by the Russian military appears to have been determined by the geographical proximity of the initial place of detention to Crimea, the so-called LPR/DPR or Russia. Detainees from southern regions of Ukraine were most often transferred to Crimea, whereas detainees from eastern regions were transferred to the LPR/DPR and detainees from northern and central regions, to Russia either directly or via Belarus.

In areas of the Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions that were occupied for longer periods, where the Russian military had established an administration, the execution of civilians was generally avoided and usually detainees were released when torture resulted in life-threatening injuries. Nonetheless, some executions and deaths in detention were reported.¹⁰² One victim, detained in penal colony No. 120 in Olenivka, Donetsk region, witnessed the removal of another detainee's body after he was beaten to death during an interrogation.¹⁰³

The numerous, recurring patterns of torture and ill-treatment observed at each stage of victims' ordeals point to the existence of a deliberate plan or policy to attack the civilian population. In addition to the similarity of scenarios occurring between victims' arrest and release, deportation or unlawful killing, these patterns include the identification of a 'target group' of civilians, who were subjected to arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance.

The pattern of attacks on civilians differed somewhat in the regions of Kyiv and Chernihiv (**Central and Northern Ukraine**) where the occupation lasted less than two months, during which time active hostilities were taking place nearby. Due to the brevity of the occupation in these regions, Russian Federation-controlled forces were unable to establish civil-military administrations to replace the local authorities, meaning that only military commandant's offices were operational in these regions.

Key differences with other occupied territories in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, include:

- A narrower set of measures was used to identify targets, with significantly fewer documented cases of the Russian military deliberately tracking down specific individuals and having knowledge of their backgrounds. In the regions of Kyiv and Chernihiv, Russian troops primarily detained civilians for refusing to disclose their mobile phone information or for residing near or passing by a Russian military concentration area, which the Ukrainian army had recently shelled.
- A wider number of markers were interpreted as revealing civilian's opposition of the Russian invasion and/or cooperation with the Ukrainian army. This included the interpretation of local residents' neutral behaviours as suspicious or threatening, and wider targeting of individuals who did not actively endorse the invasion. The population in central and northern regions of Ukraine was more widely perceived as 'hostile' towards the Russian army, as a higher proportion among them support Euro-Atlantic integration and Ukraine's independence from Russia.¹⁰⁴
- More cases of detainees being forcibly transferred to the Russian Federation via Belarus due to the swift withdrawal of Russian troops from these regions.
- A less-developed network of places of detention for civilian detainees, who were often held in the basements of military commandants' offices or private or infrastructural facilities near Russian army positions.
- Arrests and interrogations involving torture were mostly carried out by Russian military personnel (as opposed to Russian security services).

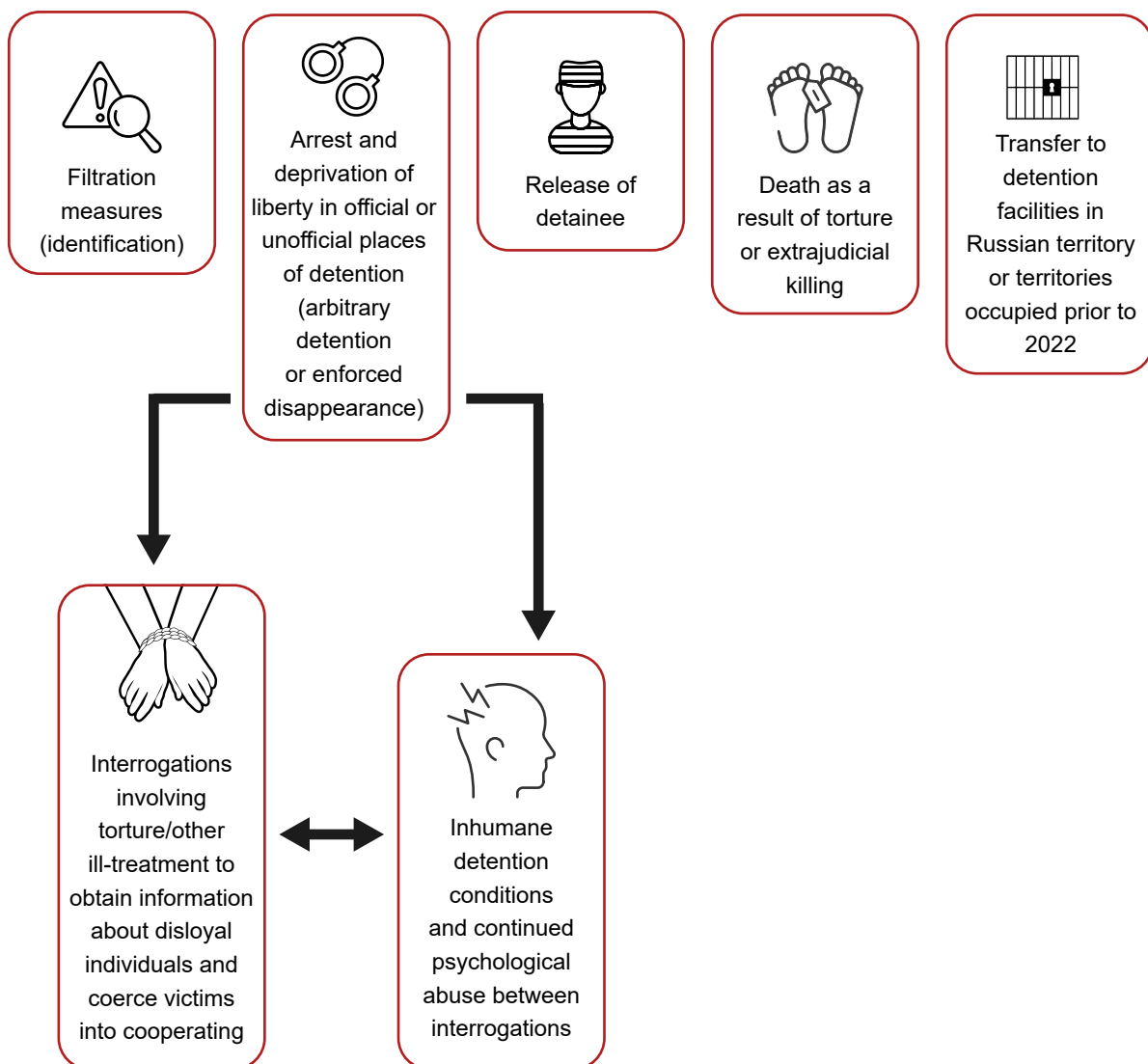
102. ZMINA. 'The Children's Writer Volodymyr Vakulenko Was Shot With a Makarov Pistol.' November 30, 2022.

103. Interview with V.G., who was held in several places of detention in the Donetsk region from March to June 2022.

104. Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. 'Geopolitical Orientations of Residents of Ukraine. June 2021'. June 18, 2021.

This variation in patterns of torture and related violations across the different occupied regions of Ukraine appears to support claims that Russian-controlled forces targeted civilians based on their *perceived* disapproval of the Russian invasion. It also reveals how the level of planning and coordination of torture and related human rights violations ramped up as the Russian Federation solidified its administration in the occupied territories.

Pattern of attacks on civilians in the territories occupied by Russian Federation-controlled forces from February 24, 2022





A pattern analysis of the cases documented reveals that Russian forces' torture of the civilian population in the regions of Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kyiv and Chernihiv amounts to more than a series of isolated incidents. Indeed, it highlights that this torture was committed systematically, in the context of other serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, such as enforced disappearances, extra-judicial executions, arbitrary killings, arbitrary detention and unfair trials.

Contextual analyses demonstrate that the chain of events taking place from victims' arrest to their release or death by torture is strikingly similar in the vast majority of documented cases. This strongly suggests that Russian forces in all territories followed a common plan of attack: a plan which targeted a broad group of the civilian population based on their suspected political views.

The execution of this plan varied according to the region. It was influenced by several factors, not least the duration of the occupation which significantly impacted the Russian military's ability to deploy a civil-military territorial administration system and establish the necessary infrastructure to identify and detain members of the target group.





Legal Analysis: Crimes Against Humanity of Persecution

The assessment of the cases documented by the OMCT, ZMINA and MIHR shows that the crimes committed by the Russian armed forces and security services ('the perpetrator group') against the Ukrainian civil population in territories under the Russian Federation's control since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022 may amount to crimes against humanity of persecution under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹⁰⁵.

First, **in contravention of international law**, the perpetrator group severely **deprived individuals of their fundamental rights**. From the time of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian armed forces and security services intentionally denied numerous civilians their rights to liberty, security, freedom from torture, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and belief and, in some cases, life.

Second, **the perpetrator group targeted the civilian population based on their identity on political grounds**, including their actual or perceived political affiliations, values, positions or opinions. Documented cases indicate that the civilians targeted by the Russian armed forces and security services in territories that fell under the Russian Federation's control from the beginning of the full-scale invasion possessed one or several markers.¹⁰⁶ These markers are linked by one common criteria: real or perceived support for the Ukrainian State, and *de facto* opposition to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ideas on which the 'Russian World' geopolitical doctrine is based.¹⁰⁷ The pattern in which the Russian military forces and security services systematically targeted civilians who were perceived to oppose the Russian invasion shows the specific intent to discriminate against this political group, with the aim of identifying and suppressing all individuals who were not aligned with the Russian doctrine. In accordance with the jurisprudence of international criminal tribunals,¹⁰⁸ the targeted group of civilians was *de facto* discriminated against, i.e. victims actually suffered discriminatory consequences.¹⁰⁹

105. For the interpretation and application of Article 7 of the Rome Statute, see: ICC, 'Elements of crimes,' 2013, p. 7.

106. See Chapter I, 'Plan of attack against the civilian population.'

107. Reuters, 'Putin approves new foreign policy doctrine based on the ideological concept of the "Russian world."' September 5, 2022. This doctrine justifies aggression or political interference in the internal affairs of post-Soviet States in defence of Russia's declared geopolitical interests in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region. The doctrine also declares that Russian language and culture should dominate in these countries and denies the right of these States and their populations to make their own cultural, language and geopolitical choices.

108. ICTY, Prosecutor v. Jadranko Prlić, Case No. IT-04-74-T, Judgment (TC), May 2013, 29, para. 73; ECCC, Case 002/02 Judgment (Supreme Court Chamber), December 23, 2022, para. 886.

109. See Chapter II, point 2.5.

The multiple attacks on civilians perceived as opposing the Russian invasion, even when they did not publicly express their views, suggest that thousands of civilians in the Russian-occupied territories are potential victims of persecution. According to credible polling services, at least 25% of the population of the Eastern Ukraine and 32% of the population of Southern Ukraine opposed closer integration with Russia six months before the full-scale invasion.¹¹⁰

Third, **this persecutory conduct has been committed in connection with other crimes enshrined in Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Rome Statute.** As highlighted in Chapters I and II, the Russian armed forces and security services perpetrated multiple killings, acts of torture, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, unlawful imprisonments, enforced disappearances and other inhumane acts against the group of civilians targeted in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.

Fourth, **the persecutory conduct of the perpetrator group was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population.**

An attack is a ‘course of conduct involving the multiple commission of acts against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organisational policy to commit such attack.’¹¹¹ The term ‘attack’ encompasses circumstances where there is mistreatment of the civilian population.¹¹² In addition, the State or organisational policy is interpreted as an active promotion or encouragement to commit such attack against a civilian population¹¹³. The term ‘systematic’ refers to the organised nature of the acts of violence and the improbability of their random occurrence,¹¹⁴ following a regular pattern based on a common policy, notwithstanding the formal adoption of such policy by the State.¹¹⁵ ‘Widespread’ means a massive, frequent, largescale action, carried out with considerable seriousness and directed against multiple victims.¹¹⁶

The multiple serious human rights violations committed against the civilian population of the Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kyiv and Chernihiv regions of Ukraine occupied from February 2022 and liberated later that year constitute an attack. This attack included various forms of persecution, including but not limited to killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, unlawful imprisonment, torture and inhumane treatment, sexual violence, denial of fair trial, forced transfer and violations of freedom of movement, systematic violations of freedom of expression, and other inhumane acts.

The documented cases demonstrate that the civilian population was the primary target of attack. All victims were civilians residing in residential areas of Ukrainian territories controlled by Russian troops. They were not engaged in hostilities, nor did they pose any military threat to the Russian army. Therefore, it is clear that the attack was directed at the civilian population.

110. Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. ‘Geopolitical Orientations of Residents of Ukraine. June 2021.’ June 18, 2021.

111. ICC. ‘Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.’ 2011; ICC, Prosecutor v. Callixte Mbarushimana, «Decision on the confirmation of charges,» ICC-01/04/01/10, December 2011, 16, para. 266.

112. ICTY, Prosecutor v. Jadranko Prlić, Case No. IT-04-74-T, Judgment (TC), May 2013, 29, para. 35.

113. ICC. ‘Elements of crimes.’ 2013, p. 3.

114. ICTY, Prosecutor v. Kunarac, Kovac and Vukovic, Judgment, IT-96-23-T and IT-96-23/1-T, February 2001, 22, para. 429.

115. ICTR, Prosecutor v. Musema, Judgment, ICTR-96-13-T, January 27, 2000, para. 204.

116. ICTR, Prosecutor v. Musema, Judgment, ICTR-96-13-T, January 27, 2000, para. 204; ICTR, Prosecutor v. Ntakirutimana, Judgment, ICTR-96-10/ICTR-96-17-T, February 21, 2003, para. 804; ICTR, Prosecutor v. Niyetegeka, Judgment, ICTR-96-14-T, May 2003, 16, para. 439.

This attack was carried out under the Russian State policy aimed at establishing and enforcing absolute political and military control over the territories of Ukraine occupied from February 2022. This policy was implemented directly by members of the Russian armed forces and security services through:

1. Identification of as many civilians as possible in residential areas who could potentially pose a military, political, cultural or ideological threat to the control of the Russian Federation over occupied territories, with the intent to isolate, suppress and/or neutralise them.
2. Suppression and punishment of civilians disrupting the propaganda narrative of alleged support for the Russian invasion.
3. Intimidation and suppression of civilians who were active or perceived as being active at the level of grassroots civic initiatives to stop the manifestation of any civil or political activity. This encompasses the prevention of street protests, expression of opinions on social networks and chats, at workplaces, and any other forms of protest against the Russian invasion.
4. Intimidation and coercion of local opinion leaders, local government representatives, and employees in vital sectors of local communities such as education, healthcare, communications, etc., compelling them to collaborate with the Russian army and administration.
5. Dissemination of propaganda about the legitimacy of the Russian occupation administration to create the illusion of broad support for the Russian invasion among the local population in the occupied territories.

In his public statements and speeches, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin indirectly acknowledged the existence of a policy, planned actions and a command to commit these acts, justifying the aggression against Ukraine with the need to protect Russia's interests in Ukraine.¹¹⁷ He stated the need to neutralise supporters of Ukraine's independence from Russia (Russian propaganda labels supporters of Ukraine's independence 'Nazis'¹¹⁸), to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and to ensure its neutral status.¹¹⁹

The documented crimes, committed by the Russian armed forces and security services in twenty detention facilities across six regions of Ukraine, reflect a methodical, organised approach that excludes isolated acts or the spontaneous occurrence of violence:

1. Systematic identification of a target group of civilians in residential areas;
2. Similar chain of events taking place between time of arrest and release or death as a result of torture or forced transfer to detention facilities;
3. Similar circumstances of arrests;
4. Use of the same types of detention facilities located near Russian command centres or in filtration facilities and use of torture chambers;
5. Similar chain of command of perpetrators involved in arrests, detention and interrogations with commission of acts of torture;
6. Use of similar interrogation scenarios and purposes of torture;
7. Use of similar torture methods and equipment.

The same types of crimes were committed against civilians belonging to the same political group, identified based on the same markers, following the same scenario of events in different locations and regions of Ukraine under Russian control from February to October 2022. Considering the scale and systematic nature of crimes committed against a selected political group of civilians in different places of detention since the full-scale invasion, it would be

117. President of Russia. 'Telephone Conversation with President of France Emmanuel Macron.' February 28, 2022.

118. President of Russia. 'Address by the President of the Russian Federation.' February 24, 2022.

119. President of Russia. 'Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians."' July 12, 2021.

improbable for such an attack to have been carried out by uncontrolled groups. The involvement of high-level military authorities and the employment of significant financial and military resources further corroborate the systematic nature of the attack. In addition, the fact that the Federal Security Service, Federal Penitentiary Service, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Federal National Guard Service and other Russian-controlled units acted in a coordinated and similar manner presupposes, in fact, that those units were responding to a single command that was superior to the commander of each of those units.¹²⁰

Complaints in connection with the various cases of torture committed by the Russian military were submitted to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation and courts within the existing domestic remedies. However, the victims either received no information or had their complaints referred to other departments without any criminal cases or formal investigation being initiated. The promotion of impunity by investigative and judicial authorities sustains a policy of persecution and further encourages military units to commit these international crimes.

Lastly, the Russian armed forces and security services who perpetrated the crimes had knowledge of the widespread or systematic attack against the civilian population and knew their conduct was—or was intended to be—part of it.¹²¹

The knowledge of the perpetrator can be implied based on the circumstances.¹²² Proof that the perpetrator knew all characteristics of the attack or the precise details of the plan or policy of the State or organisation is not required.¹²³

The attack perpetrated by the Russian armed forces and security services against the civilian population in the occupied territories of Ukraine was conducted in the context of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which started on February 24, 2022. Given that the members of the Russian armed forces and security services acted in a coordinated, organised manner, following the Russian State policy, it can be assumed they knew their behaviour fitted into the plan of attack against the civilian population.

Given the above, the documented cases of killings, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and unlawful imprisonment, and enforced disappearances committed by Russian Federation-controlled forces in Ukrainian territories against a targeted group of civilians may amount to crimes against humanity of persecution as defined in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.¹²⁴

On March 2, 2022, the ICC Prosecutor opened an investigation into the situation in Ukraine based on referrals received by 43 State's Parties.¹²⁵ The scope of investigation encompasses any past and present allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed on any part of the territory of Ukraine by any person from November 21, 2013 onwards. Accordingly, investigations into crimes against humanity of persecution in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine fall under the ICC's jurisdiction, and the allegations made in this report should therefore be considered.

While it is impossible to draw comprehensive conclusions about **the scale of the crimes committed** at this stage, the broad determination of the persecuted group for attack by the Russian military strongly suggests that the number of victims in the occupied territories could be significant.

120. ICTY, Prosecutor v. Tihomir Blaškić, Case No. IT-95-14-T, Judgment (TC), March 3, 2000, para. 467.

121. ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, p. 7; ICTY, Prosecutor v. Kunarac, Kovac and Vukovic, Judgment, IT-96-23-T and IT-96-23/1-T, 22 February 2001, para. 418. See also ICTY, Prosecutor v. Vasiljević, Judgment (TC), IT-98-32-T, November 29, 2002, para. 32; ICTY, Prosecutor v. Kunarac, Kovac and Vukovic, Appeals Judgment, IT-96-23-T and IT-96-23/1-A, June 12, 2001, para. 99.

122. ICTY, Prosecutor v. Tadić, Opinion & Judgment (TC), Case No. IT-94-1-T, May 7, 1997, para. 657.

123. ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, p. 3.

124. ICC, 'Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,' 2011.

125. ICC, *Situation in Ukraine*, ICC-01/22.

All interviewees reported witnessing the torture of others. Twenty out of 38 (53%) reported seeing and hearing mass torture in places of detention when all or almost all detainees were subjected to torture on multiple occasions. Eighteen interviewees (47%) witnessed the torture of several detainees who were held in the same cell. In addition, victims reported having witnessed mass atrocities in Ukrainian territories under Russian control. One victim witnessed around 30 Ukrainian army veterans being abducted and tortured in a village with a population of 2,500 inhabitants in the Kharkiv region, which was under Russian military control for several months.¹²⁶

The cumulative effect of the crimes has spread fear, panic and a profound sense of defencelessness against the perpetrators among the entire persecuted group in the occupied territories. All members of this group are aware they could be severely tortured, unlawfully imprisoned for many months or even killed at any time simply for being perceived as supporting the Ukrainian authorities or opposing the Russian invasion. This intimidating effect is compounded by the lack of effective domestic and international remedies and the inability to obtain information about victims who are still in detention or whose whereabouts are unknown.

The Russian Federation denies independent monitoring mechanisms access to all territories under Russian control, which currently accounts for 17.9 % of the territory of Ukraine. Therefore, it can be assumed that similar international crimes are still ongoing there.

126. Interview with relatives of V.V., who died from injuries caused by torture in Pisky-Radkivski village in the Kharkiv region, in July 2022.



OMCT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
P.O Box 21, 8 rue Vieux-Billard
1211 Geneva 8
Switzerland
Tel: + 41 22 809 49 39
omct@omct.org

OMCT EUROPE
Rue Franklin 111
1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: + 32 2 218 37 19
omcteuropa@omct.org

MEDIA INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Derevlanska Street 13
04119 Kyiv, Ukraine
Tel: +38 095 415 95 46
info@mipl.org.ua

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE ZMINA
Yaroslaviv Val Street 33B, 3rd floor
01054 Kyiv, Ukraine
Tel: +38 067 502 08 01
info@zmina.ua

