

Anatomy of a systematic crime

How Russia persecutes civilians



Reconstruction of events in the northern regions
of Ukraine during the occupation

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ACRONYMS

RF — Russian Federation
RB — Republic of Belarus
RAF — Russian Armed Forces
TOT — Temporarily Occupied Territories
PGO — Prosecutor General's Office
MIHR — The Media Initiative for Human Rights
"LPR" — The Russian-appointed occupation administration, calling itself the Luhansk People's Republic
"DPR" — The Russian-appointed occupation administration, calling itself the Donetsk People's Republic
FSB — Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
FSIN — Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation
ICC — International Criminal Court
ICRC — International Committee of the Red Cross
SSU — Security Service of Ukraine
RS — Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
ODIHR — Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE — Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
ChNPP — Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant
TDU — Territorial Defense Unit
GC — Geneva Conventions
IHL — International Humanitarian Law
ATO — Anti-terrorist operation
JFO — Joint Forces Operation
IHL — International human rights law
OHCHR — Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Authors of the report:

Hanna Rassamakhina, Lyubov Smachylo, Andriy Kryvko.

Editors:

Olha Reshetylova, Tetyana Katrychenko, Andriy Yakovlev,
Anastasia Panteleeva, Stanislav Miroshnychenko.

When Russian military forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine and occupied the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions in February and March 2022, they committed numerous crimes against the Ukrainian civilian population. These include massive and prolonged missile attacks on civilian infrastructure, crimes against property, deportation of children and adults from Ukraine, mass detentions, torture, and illegal imprisonment on the territory of the Russian Federation.

This report details the circumstances of civilian detentions during the occupation. It is based on in-depth interviews with 143 victims and witnesses. These interviews have been included in a specific I-DOC database created to analyze and systematize investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity. Using I-DOC, the report reconstructs the circumstances of the crimes and connections to alleged perpetrators. This report is the second part of the research on this topic, with the first part presented by the MIHR in 2023¹.

The documented evidence indicates that the reason behind the mass detentions of civilians in the occupied territories by Russian forces was the slightest suspicion that the population did not accept the occupation and, therefore, was not loyal to the Russian troops.

Civilians were subsequently held in inhumane conditions and subjected to systematic torture.

Cases of executions and deaths of detainees as a result of torture have been recorded.

It has been established that some of the detainees were deported from Ukraine through Belarus to Russia. The report reconstructs the routes used to transport these civilians.

In Russia, the detained and forcibly deported civilians were placed in pre-prepared penitentiary facilities; most of them still remain there. No charges have been brought against them.

To date, efforts by Ukraine and the international community have failed in securing the release of the majority of those deported to detention facilities in Russia.

As of October 1, 2024, the MIHR has documented and entered into the I-DOC system data on 399 victims detained in the northern regions of Ukraine during their occupation. Some civilians were taken to Russia by Russian military forces. Others were released during the occupation or through repatriation efforts of the Ukrainian government.

MIHR has confirmed the release of 112 individuals in total. It is important to emphasize that the actual number of detainees is significantly higher, and MIHR continues to identify and document cases of enforced disappearances.

Numerous units of the Russian Armed Forces and other state structures, such as the Federal Security Service (FSB), Military Police, the Federal Penitentiary Service, and the Investigative Committee of Russia, were involved in the detention, deportation, and imprisonment of these individuals in the Russian Federation. All these bodies collaborated at each crime stage, each performing specific functions. Significant material and human resources were employed to organize the crime. Such coordinated actions by Russian state structures over an extended period would have been impossible without direct orders from Russia's highest military and political leadership. This indicates the existence of a unified Russian state policy in committing systematic and large-scale crimes against the civilian population. The report provides evidence of the involvement of specific Russian structures in the crimes under investigation.

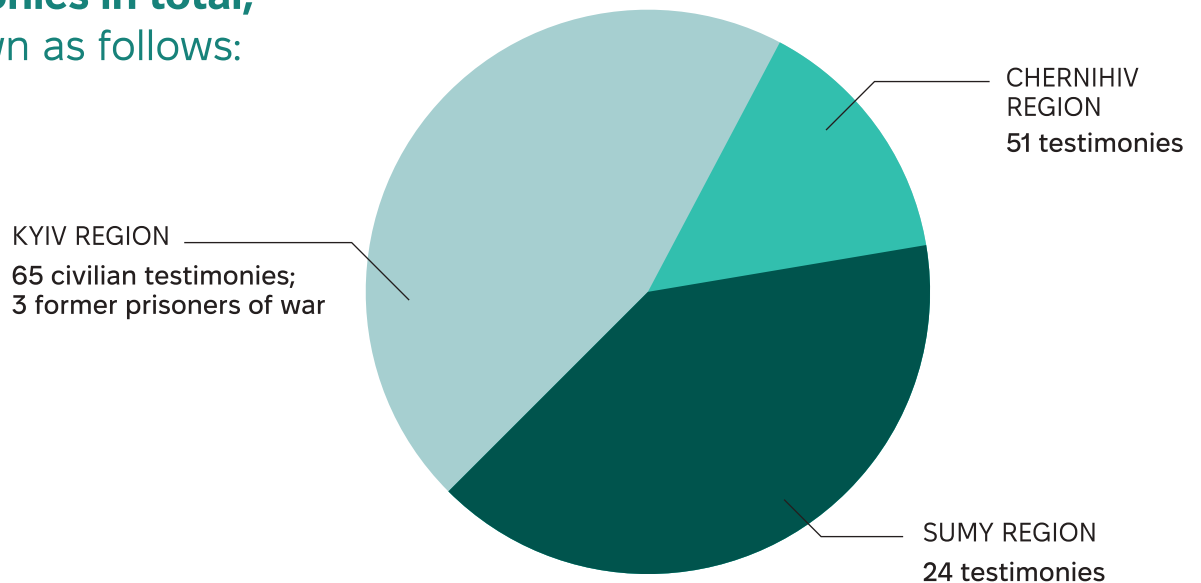
1. Arbitrary detentions and capture of civilian hostages in the northern regions of Ukraine. Analysis of documented testimonies, Media Initiative for Human Rights, 2023.

While writing the report, several sources of information were utilized:

(01)

- **Testimonies** from victims of crimes, witnesses of these crimes, relatives of victims, and former prisoners of war.
- The report includes only those testimonies documented by the MIHR and entered into the **I-DOC database**.
- Testimonies from former prisoners of war are used in the report only in terms of establishing the circumstances related to crimes committed against civilians. The testimonies were collected by the MIHR through in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted under the standards of the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol)² and the OHCHR Human Rights Monitoring Training Manual³.
- All individuals whose testimonies were used in the report consented to the documentation and use of the information they provided.

The report includes **143 testimonies in total**, broken down as follows:



Of the 140 civilian testimonies, 22 were provided by individuals held in Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) facilities in the Russian Federation, later released, and returned to Ukraine. Their testimonies help reconstruct all stages of the crimes under investigation, including the routes used to transport victims through Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, as well as the conditions in Russian penitentiary facilities. From the time of detention in Ukraine until their release, these victims were held alongside other Ukrainian civilians and/or prisoners of war. They contacted various Russian military units and other Russian-controlled entities. Therefore, their testimonies contain information about many other victims and the Russian entities involved in committing crimes at each stage.

24 field missions were conducted by the MIHR throughout 2023 and 2024

During these trips, MIHR documenters investigated detention sites of victims in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions, collected evidence, and interviewed witnesses.

METHODOLOGY

(02) — **Data from the Unified State Register of Court Decisions** and the monitoring of court proceedings conducted by the MIHR.

In preparing the report, the Unified State Register of Court Decisions⁴ and data from monitoring court proceedings related to the armed conflict were used to analyze all verdicts issued since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in criminal cases under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (violation of the laws and customs of war). This analysis identified patterns in the commission of war crimes in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions of Ukraine. The analyzed verdicts also provide information about the Russian military units stationed in the northern regions of Ukraine during the occupation.

(03) — **Data from open sources.**

The report incorporates information from the media and official websites of Ukrainian government bodies, including the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Ukrainian state entities authorized for tracking missing persons during martial law, etc. It also includes information from authoritative websites of Russian government bodies.

All data collected using this methodology were analyzed to identify patterns and commonalities in the investigated crimes and reconstruct the probable joint intent and plan of the Russian Armed Forces and other Russian-controlled entities.

I-DOC SYSTEM IN MIHR ACTIVITIES

Since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the coalition of Ukrainian civil society organizations named 'Ukraine.5AM'⁵, including MIHR as its member, has begun using I-DOC, a system for analyzing and systematizing investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity. I-DOC allows for handling facts related to severe violations of international human rights and criminal law standards. The system enables the creation of catalogs with documentation and evidence, criminal incidents, contextual facts, suspects, involved institutions, victims, and witnesses. Its database structure facilitates an efficient overview of documented crimes and the ability to reflect and analyze various patterns and connections. MIHR utilizes I-DOC to record all gathered testimonies and evidence.

I-DOC is effective for analyzing and systematizing data on war crimes and crimes against humanity. For each document entered into the system, the registrar specifies the geographical location and details the incidents, which are the events or crimes that occurred.

The system allows to assign statuses to registered people:

victim — an individual whose rights have been violated; these can be fundamental human rights, such as the right to life, as well as other rights, such as loss of property;

witness — an individual who has observed violations of the rights of others or heard about such violations from others. This can include individuals who know about the violations due to their role (e.g., investigator, prosecutor, judge);

suspect — an individual convicted of a crime, suspected of committing a crime, or allegedly involved in the crime according to various allegations.

All testimonies used in this report have been entered into the I-DOC database.

The data analysis conducted by the I-DOC system allows for drawing conclusions and generalizations and organizing the information. The patterns identified in the investigated crimes using I-DOC are outlined in this report.

4. Unified State Register of Court Decisions.

5. "Ukraine 5 AM Coalition" is a coalition of human rights organizations that collect and document war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the Russian armed aggression in Ukraine. MIHR is a member of a coalition.

142,203 crimes were registered by the investigative authorities of Ukraine

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, the Russian Armed Forces have been committing widespread crimes against the civilian population. Ukrainian law enforcement agencies and Ukrainian and international non-governmental organizations have been documenting these crimes. As of September 15, 2024, the investigative authorities of Ukraine have registered 142,203 crimes related to an aggressive war with violation of the laws and customs of war⁶. A significant part of these crimes involves attacks on civilians. The attacks committed by the Russian military against the civilian population of Ukraine include

massive and continued missile attacks on civilian infrastructure that are not military targets⁷, crimes against property, illegal detentions and enforced disappearances of civilians, torture, conflict-related sexual violence, and murder. International organizations have repeatedly concluded in their reports that the civilian population of Ukraine has been the victim of war crimes and alleged crimes against humanity committed by the Russian Armed Forces.

This study focuses on arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, inhumane treatment, murder, and the forced displacement of civilians from the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, followed by their unlawful detention there.

While analyzing the documented testimonies, MIHR identified patterns in the commission of crimes against the civilian population, including shared features and stages that link events occurring at different times and locations. These crimes can also be united by a common intent and objective. The existence of common characteristics allows for formulating and testing the hypothesis regarding the legal nature of the investigated crimes.

The timeframe

— The timeframe of the study covers the period from February 24 to April 3, 2022, concerning the initial stages of the crimes that occurred in Ukraine and are described in this report, and from February 24, 2022, to the present in terms of the subsequent stages of the investigated crimes — the transfer and detention of detainees on the territory of the Russian Federation⁸.

The geographical scope

— The geographical scope of the study includes the occupied territories of the Kyiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions in Ukraine. After the de-occupation of these areas, documenters have had continuous access to the sites where the crimes were committed. However, not all crimes in the de-occupied territories can be thoroughly investigated at this time, nor can all circumstances be fully reconstructed, as many witnesses and victims have either been killed or are currently in the Russian Federation, where they have been unlawfully transferred⁹. The study also examined violations committed at detention sites on Russian territory from February 24, 2022, to the present.

The objective

— The objective of the report is to describe the analyzed testimonies and information obtained according to the report's methodology, identify the similar behaviors of the organizers and perpetrators of the crimes, legally qualify the events, and draw conclusions.

By examining a limited number of crimes committed in the occupied territories of three regions of Ukraine, this report thoroughly reconstructs the circumstances of their commission, as well as the connections and interactions among the perpetrators, including various military units and other organized structures under RF control. The report outlines events and circumstances that unfolded over an extended period, starting from the detention of civilians in Ukraine in February and March 2022, their subsequent forced transfer to Belarus and Russia, and their detention in places of incarceration in Russia. Most of these detainees still remain in detention facilities on Russian territory.

6. According to the website of the Office of the Prosecutor General.

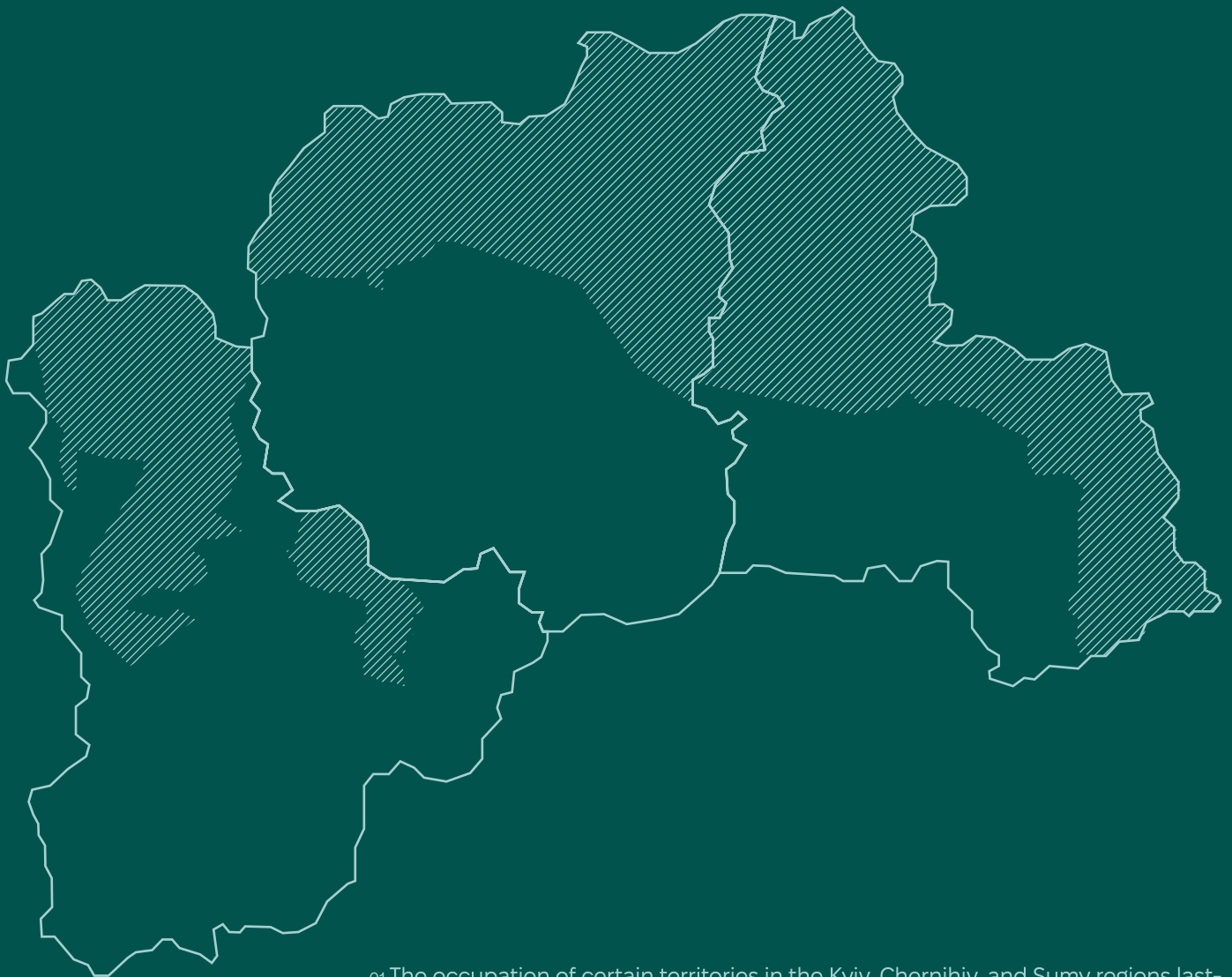
7. To date, the International Criminal Court has issued four arrest warrants on suspicion of crimes against humanity in Ukraine, consisting of the mass destruction of civilian infrastructure, including arrest warrants for former Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov.

8. Report On Violations And Abuses Of International Humanitarian And Human Rights Law, War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity, Related To The Arbitrary Deprivation Of Liberty Of Ukrainian Civilians By The Russian Federation, ODHHR OSCE, 19.04.2024 has such a conclusion: "...the Mission notes that the practice of arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Ukrainian civilians has occurred on a massive scale and has revealed signs of a systematic, consistent, deliberate pattern of conduct targeting specifically Ukrainian civilians. This makes the Mission conclude that there are reasonable grounds to believe that both the war crime of "unlawful confinement" and the crime against humanity consisting of "imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law" have been committed by individuals involved in the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Ukrainian civilians, including members of the Russian armed forces or occupying authorities."

9. Shot in the head, hands tied: another mass grave discovered in Kyiv region. Radio Svoboda, 13.06.2022. For example, a mass grave with seven bodies was found in the forest near the village of Vorzel in Kyiv region. However, no witnesses or surviving victims have been found who could testify about the circumstances of these killings.

Circumstances of Investigated Crimes Committed in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy Regions of Ukraine

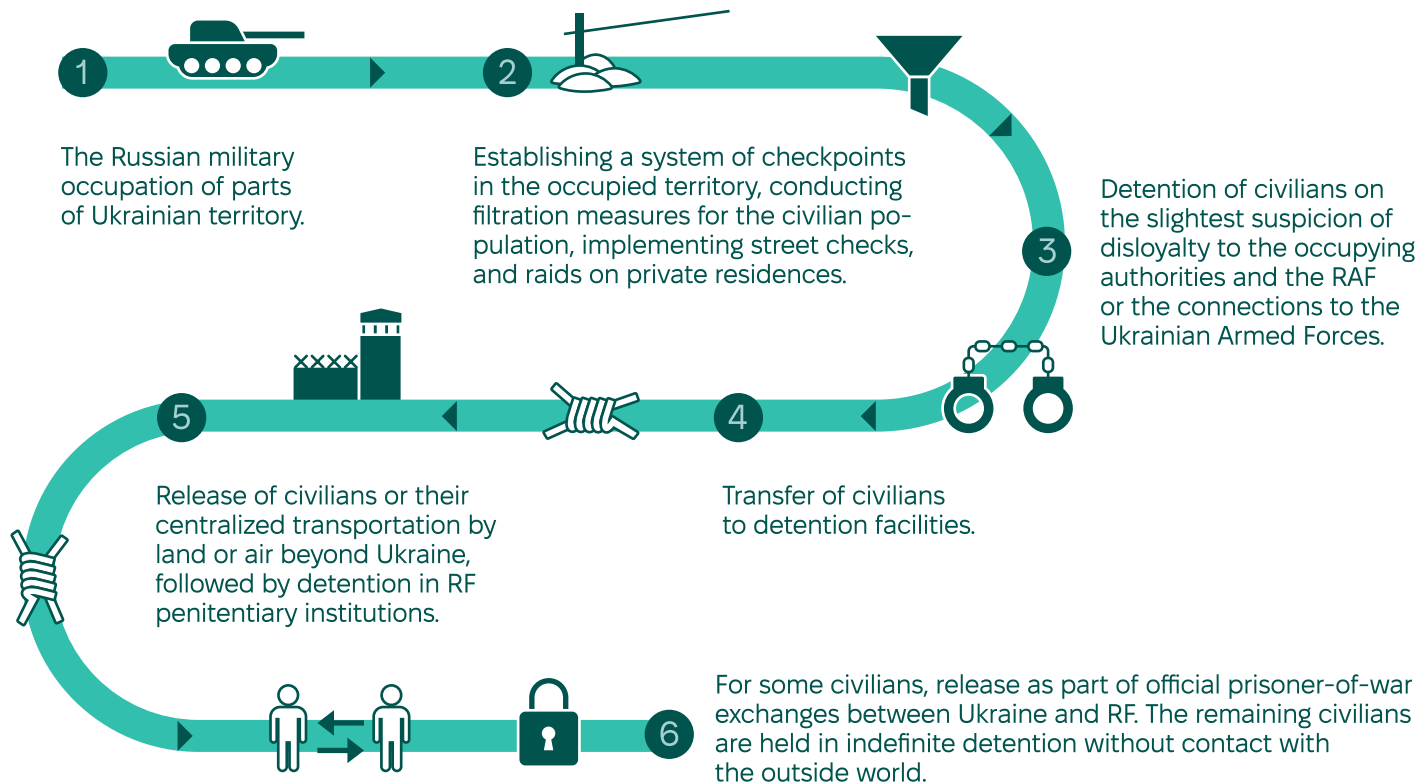
from February 24 to April 2, 2022



01 The occupation of certain territories in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions lasted for about a month. After that, the RF army rapidly and chaotically withdrew from these areas. The availability of unrestricted access to these locations following their de-occupation allows for the documentation of testimonies, the reconstruction of the circumstances surrounding attacks on the civilian population, and the identification of patterns in the actions of Russian military forces.



02 **By analyzing the testimonies, MIHR identified the following stages of crime common to the three studied regions:**



03 This sequence of actions by the perpetrators is shared across all temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. However, there were specific characteristics in the Kyiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions¹⁰.

04 Under the guard of Russian military personnel, detained civilians were held in outbuildings, garages, basements, and outdoors. The conditions in the detention facilities in the three northern regions of Ukraine are similar to those in other occupied areas.

05 However, the detention of civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions was often chaotic and random. Analysis of the testimonies reveals that Russian soldiers primarily targeted categories of individuals who were most frequently detained across all occupied territories—these include ATO/JFO participants, volunteers, civil activists, journalists, and officials whom the Russians sought to coerce into collaboration. At the same time, civilians with no connections to these groups or to active military personnel also became victims of detentions. Often, civilians were groundlessly detained because they happened to catch the eye of the Russian military.

06 Due to a lack of evidence, it is hard to clearly define the groups of civilians targeted in the northern regions of Ukraine. Most detainees remain in indefinite captivity on the RF territory or are considered missing. However, based on the analysis of available testimonies, MIHR suggests that the Russian military had an overall intent to detain anyone who supported Ukraine's independence and opposed its occupation.

07 To date, there is no information about detention facilities for civilians or prisoners of war established by the RF Armed Forces in the northern regions of Ukraine that meet the minimum standards set by the Geneva Conventions. The detention sites investigated by MIHR in enclosed spaces were cramped and lacked sufficient ventilation. There are also instances of people held outdoors. Russian soldiers did not provide detainees with ample food or water, and there was no free access to showers or toilets. Almost everywhere, detainees were rarely allowed outside for

10. Supra 8, p.21 more about the practices of deprivation of liberty in various TOT of Ukraine.

walks. In the early stages of detention, women and men could be held in shared cells. Civilians were also often held alongside prisoners of war, which is prohibited by the Geneva Conventions¹¹. The analysis of testimonies reveals that medical care was not always provided and was typically given only to those in severe condition, usually after interrogations, torture, or exacerbation of chronic diseases¹². This was done solely to preserve life. There are reports of executions and deaths resulting from torture in some locations. At the same time, occasionally, civilians were released from detention. In particular, MIHR has documented a case where, during the withdrawal from the Kyiv region, Russian soldiers released a group of civilians because they lacked transportation to take them along. There are also known instances where detainees were executed under similar circumstances to avoid having to release them.

⁰⁸ These characteristics of the crimes in the northern regions can be attributed to several reasons.

⁰⁹ **The first reason** is that the detentions examined in this report occurred during a brief period of occupation in the northern regions of Ukraine. As a result, the Russian policy towards civilians in these areas was not sufficiently established. By February 24, 2022, the RAF and other Russian-controlled entities had eight years of experience interacting with civilians in the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. This meant that practices for dealing with civilians opposing the occupation were well-developed¹³. However, in northern Ukraine, RF troops unexpectedly encountered resistance from the local population. This is evident from the testimonies of victims and witnesses of the detentions. Additionally, Russian soldiers were unprepared for the high number of casualties and military defeats they experienced from the first day of the full-scale invasion.

¹⁰ **The second reason** likely lies in the fact that active hostilities were ongoing during the occupation of the three northern regions, placing Russian military personnel in constant danger. After the first martial defeats, when it became evident that the Russian advance had stalled, the level of violence against civilians significantly increased. These changes in the treatment of civilians in the northern regions became particularly obvious after March 5, 2022.

¹¹ A quote from a witness, a former prisoner of war, who was held at Russian combat positions in the Kyiv region in March 2022.

"The main question the Russians kept asking was why they were shot from every house. They probably expected to be warmly welcomed. What's more, they drove me crazy in some situations. There was a tree line where we stayed, a field, then a village, and a road. Their equipment and infantry were in the tree line. We were in the closer tree line and saw civilian vehicles driving down the road. They gave the order, 'Vehicles!' First, a sniper fired at the vehicles, followed by shooting. Civilians fell from the car—corpses of civilians: a woman, children, a man. I saw them shoot up two cars full of civilians right before my eyes. I turned to the Russian and said, 'F..k, and you ask why they are shooting at you from every house?!'"

¹² A quote from a witness, a civilian employee of the ChNPP, who stayed there with the Russian military personnel and observed their rotations during the occupation of the Kyiv region.

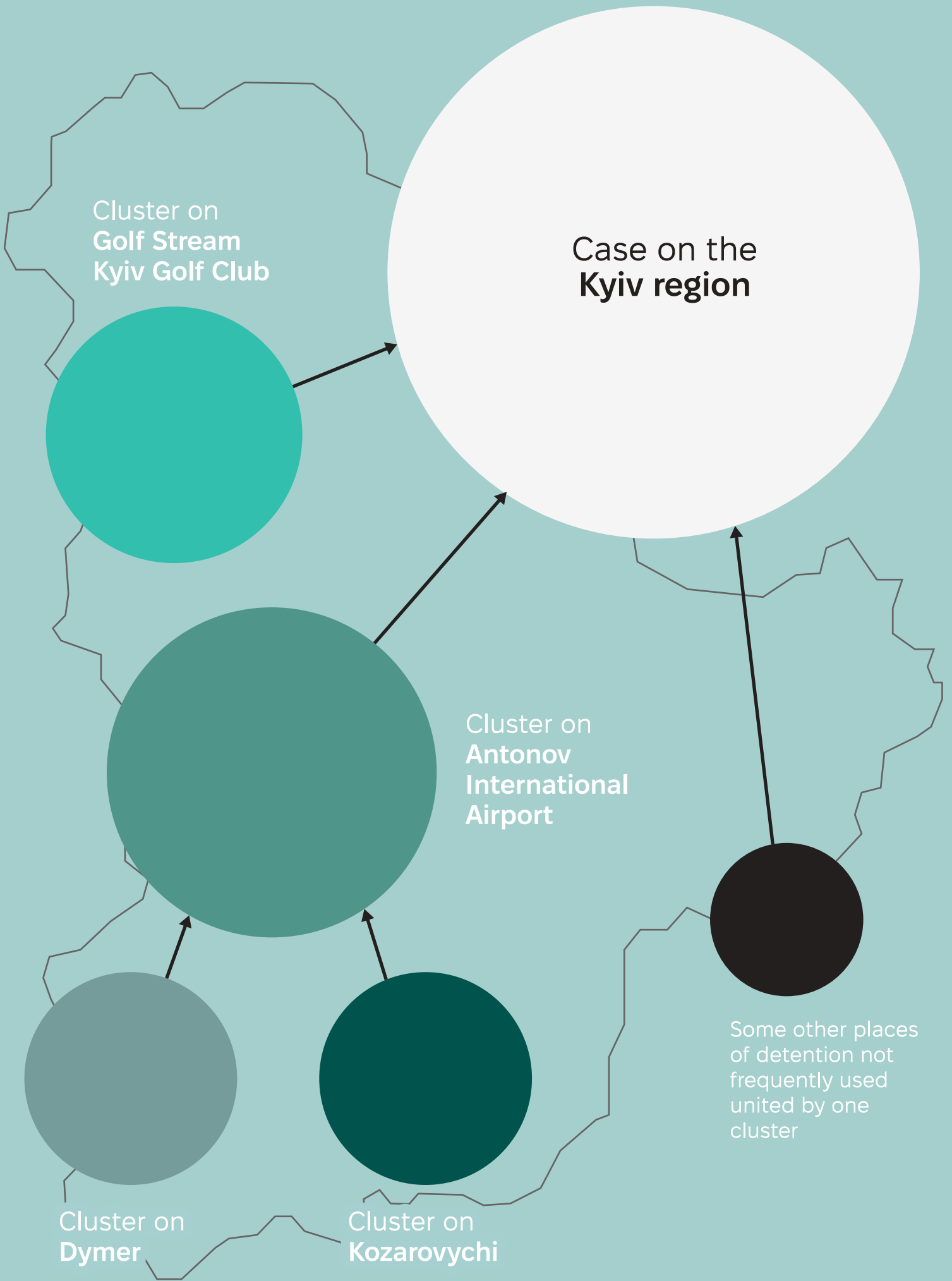
"The Russians would arrive looking beaten down. It was fear. They all had this glassy, vacant look in their eyes that was terrifying to see. And with time, it only got worse—they came back increasingly aggressive."

¹³ This report analyzes the persecution of civilians in the northern regions of Ukraine in February and March 2022 based on specific cases of individual victims.

11. Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Article 84.

12. For example, to people at risk of diabetic coma Testimony 1, K.O.

13. European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber judgment in an inter-State Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea), June 25, 2024. The European Court of Human Rights has found the government of the Russian Federation responsible for the administrative practice of human rights violations in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.



KYIV REGION

¹⁴ The Kyiv region was partially occupied from February 24 to April 2, 2022. During this time, RF military forces committed numerous crimes against the civilian population.

After the region was liberated, **1,590 bodies were found, including 1,202 civilians**¹⁴. Mass graves of murdered civilians were also discovered¹⁵.

¹⁵ During the occupation of the Kyiv region, Russian military forces designated several primary locations for holding detained civilians. One of the largest was the Antonov Airport in Hostomel.

¹⁶ Detained civilians from nearby settlements, as well as from other detention sites, were brought to this location. One of the intermediary detention sites from which people were later transported to Antonov Airport was the compressor room of the foundry in the village of Dymmer, Vyshhorod district, located at 22-B Vyshneva Street. In Dymmer, 58 unjustifiably detained civilians were held in inhumane conditions. On March 26, 2022, some of them escaped, others were released by Russian soldiers, while the rest were forcibly transported to RF, where they are being held in colonies and pre-trial detention centers. The whereabouts of several individuals remain unknown. The detention facility in Dymmer is detailed in a previous MIHR report on civilian detention sites in northern regions¹⁶.

¹⁷ This section also describes an open-air detention site—a field close to the "Golfstream" golf club. The detainees held there were subjected to extreme brutality and torture.




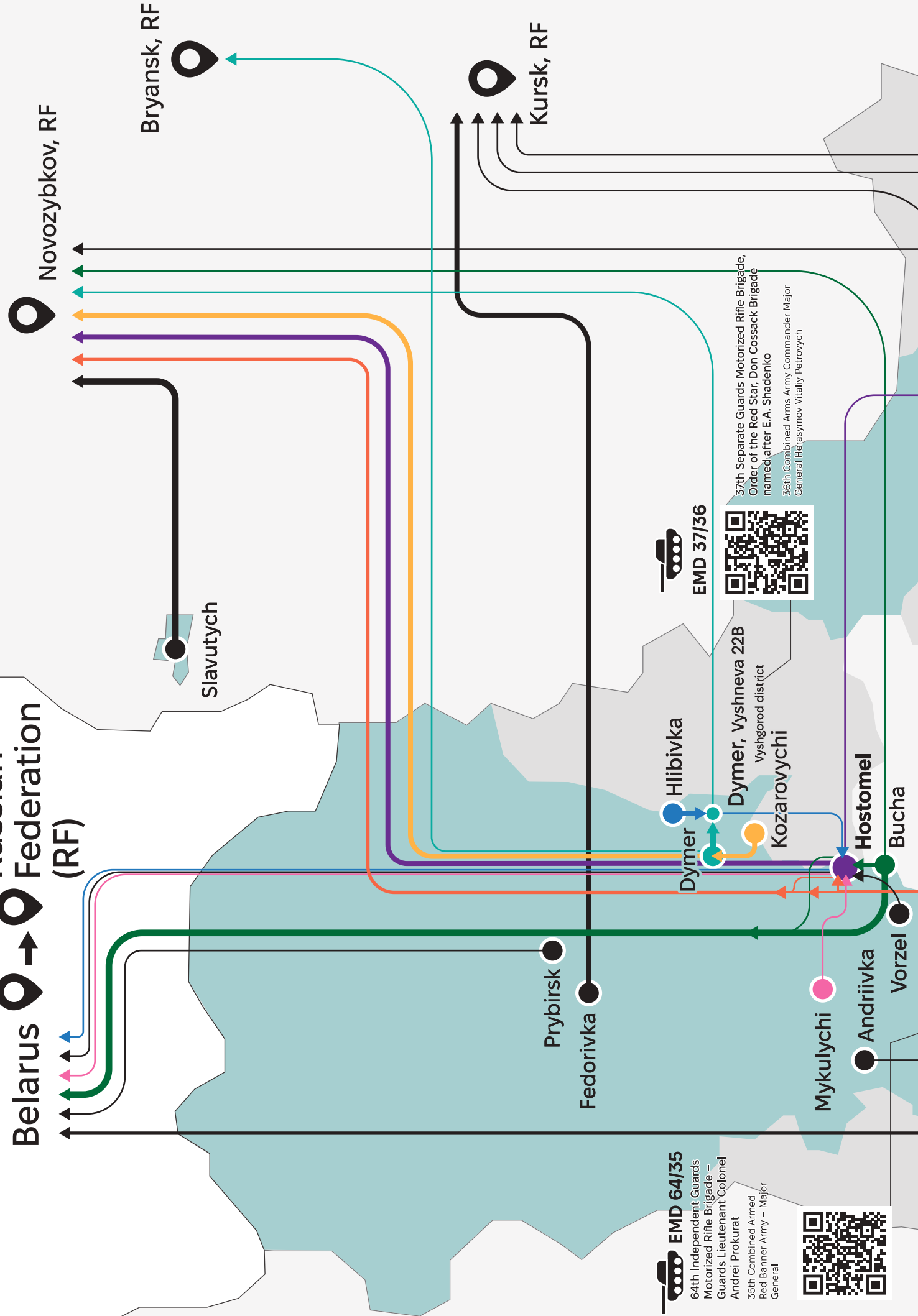
Photo from the MIHR field mission

¹⁴ Bodies of almost 1.6 thousand people found in Kyiv region after the-occupation - police, Ukrinform, 18.09.2024.

¹⁵ Police find eight mass graves of civilians killed by the occupiers in Kyiv region, New voice, 2.05.2022.

¹⁶ Supra 1.

Belarus → Russian Federation (RF)



EMD 64/35
64th Independent Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade – Guards Lieutenant Colonel
Andrei Prokurat
35th Combined Armed Red Banner Army – Major General



EMD 37/36



37th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade, Order of the Red Star, Don Cossack Brigade named after E.A. Shadenko
36th Combined Arms Army Commander Major General Herasymov Vitaliy Petrovych

Novozybkov, RF

Bryansk, RF

Kursk, RF

Hlibivka

Dymyrska, Vyshneva 22B
Vyshgorod district

Kozarovychi

Hostomel

Bucha

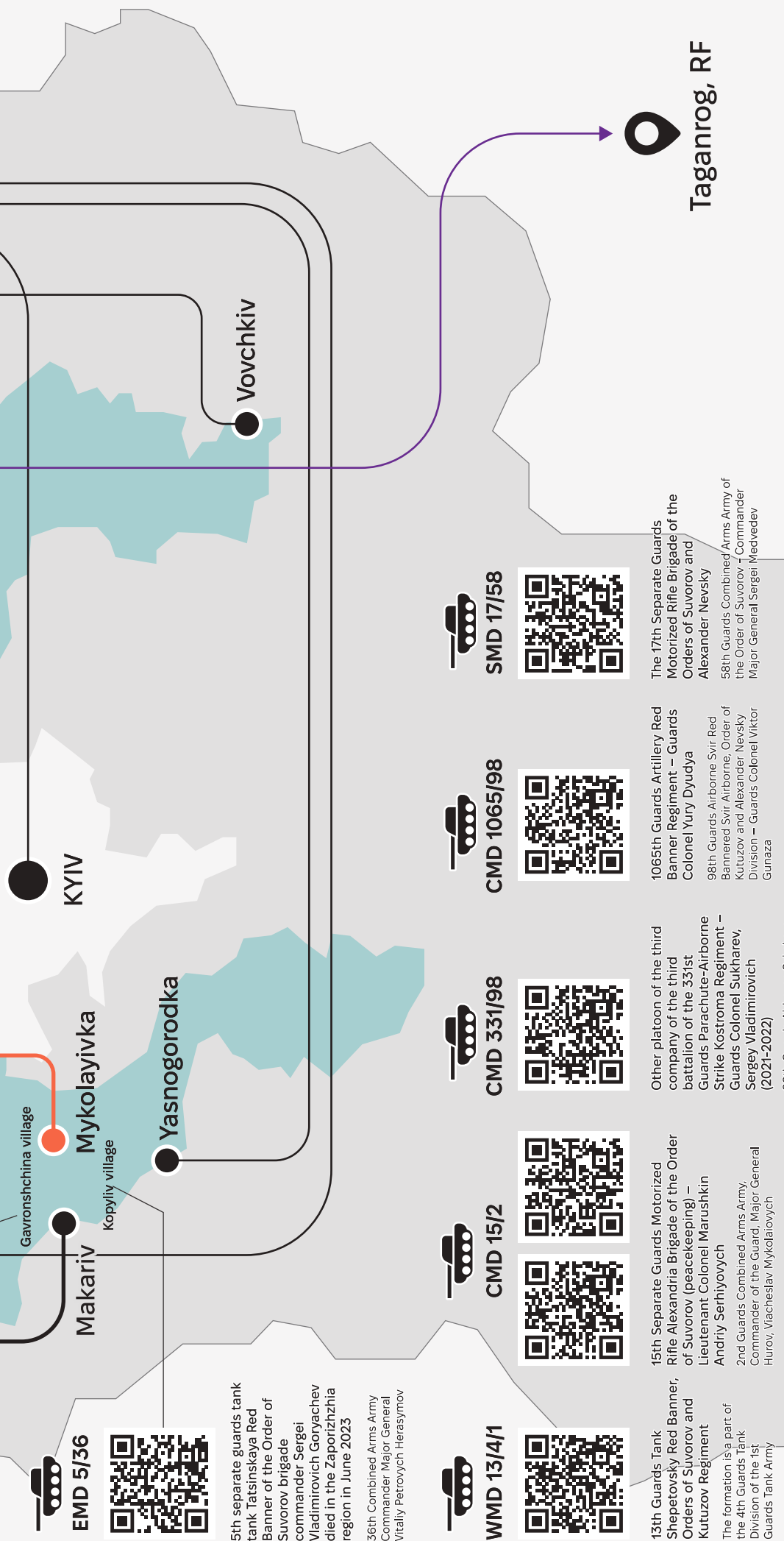
Prybirska

Fedorivka

Mykulychi

Andriivka

Vorzel



EMD 5/36

5th separate guards tank tank Tatsinskaya Red Banner of the Order of Suvorov brigade commander Sergei Vladimirovich Goryachev died in the Zaporizhzhia region in June 2023

36th Combined Arms Army Commander Major General Vitaliy Petrovych Herasymov

WMD 13/4/1

13th Guards Tank Shepetovskiy Red Banner, Orders of Suvorov and Kutuzov Regiment

The formation is a part of the 4th Guards Tank Division of the 1st Guards Tank Army

CMD 15/2

15th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Alexandra Brigade of the Order of Suvorov (peacekeeping) – Lieutenant Colonel Manushkin Andriy Serhiyovych

2nd Guards Combined Arms Army, Commander of the Guard, Major General Huron, Viacheslav Mykolajovych

CMD 331/98

Other platoon of the third company of the third battalion of the 331st Guards Parachute-Airborne Strike Kostroma Regiment – Guards Colonel Sukharev, Sergey Vladimirovich (2021-2022)

98th Guards Airborne Svirskaya Red Banner Division, Orders of Kutuzov and Alexander Nevsky

CMD 1065/98

1065th Guards Artillery Red Banner Regiment – Guards Colonel Yury Dyudya

98th Guards Airborne Svir, Red Bannered Svir Airborne, Order of Kutuzov and Alexander Nevsky Division – Guards Colonel Viktor Gunaza

SMD 17/58

The 17th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade of the Orders of Suvorov and Alexander Nevsky

58th Guards Combined Arms Army of the Order of Suvorov – Commander Major General Sergei Medvedev

Taganrog, RF

Symbols and notation:

- WMD – Western Military District
- EMD – Eastern Military District
- SMD – Southern Military District
- CMD – Central Military District
- Areas of active military operations
- Units of the Russian army
- Routes of transportation
- The thickness of the line indicates the number of people deported in a particular settlement
-▶ It is unknown where people were taken to



Kyiv region

Antonov Airport



¹⁸ Antonov Airport is located in Hostomel, 25 kilometers from Kyiv and 130 kilometers from Ukraine's state border with Belarus. At the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion, the airport became the scene of intense fighting. The airfield was capable of handling military and cargo aircraft. On February 24, 2022, RAF deployed troops there by helicopter, aiming to seize the airport. Their plan included landing paratroopers from planes, who would then advance to Kyiv to occupy the Ukrainian capital¹⁷. However, during the battle on February 24, Ukrainian forces damaged the airport's runway, rendering it unusable for aircraft landings. As a result, instead of Hostomel, the airborne assault landed in Gomel, Belarus, and proceeded toward Ukraine using ground vehicles. Although Ukrainian forces initially repelled the attack on the airport, it was captured by Russian forces¹⁸ later that day. Throughout the occupation of the Kyiv region, Antonov Airport served as a Russian military command center, a base for military equipment repairs, and a field hospital, functioning as a logistical hub for the occupying forces. Antonov Airport also became a site for holding Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war. The exact number of individuals detained there during the occupation is unknown. However, a comprehensive analysis of testimonies from victims suggests that at least 150 people were held at this location.

At least
150 people
were held at
this location

¹⁹ The detainees were held at the territory of Antonov International Airport. Initially, only Ukrainian defenders captured during the advance on Kyiv were present there. During witness interviews, it was established that the first detained civilians were brought to the airport on March 4, 2022. However, civilians might have been there earlier. Propaganda media from Russia, which were present in Hostomel from the first days of the invasion and filmed the capture of the airport, also indicate that civilians and military personnel were held at the airport. One such video from the channel 'RIA Novosti' shows civilians alongside Ukrainian prisoners of war, one of whom was later identified¹⁹. However, the video claims that only prisoners of war are present at the airport.

²⁰ The final withdrawal of Russian troops from the Kyiv region was completed on April 3, 2022. However, Ukrainian prisoners of war and detained civilians were removed from the airport no later than March 31, 2022.

²¹ It is difficult to determine whether the airport was designated in advance as a logistics hub for Russian forces and a detention site for civilians and prisoners of war before the full-scale invasion or if this decision was made by the Russian military leadership after seizing the airport. However, all actions taken by the Russian military at the airport indicate coordination and cooperation among various units of the Russian Armed Forces, the National Guard of Russia, the FSB, and other state structures.

¹⁷. Stopped the Russian landing in Hostomel and survived. How the North was defended in February 2022. Special project. Radio Sloboda, 24.02.2023.

¹⁸. Ibid.

¹⁹. Hostomel — what said Ukrainian POWs, Videonews 24/365, 4.03.2022.

1. The Story of How Civilians Ended Up at the Airport. Chronology

²² The documented circumstances of civilian detentions allow for the identification of patterns in the behavior of Russian military personnel and for testing hypotheses regarding the legal nature of these detentions and subsequent unlawful actions taken against the detained civilians. Below, we outline the events that preceded the forced transportation of civilians to the Antonov Airport.

March 2, 2022

The village of Mykulychi, Kyiv region

²³ Witness K.O.²⁰, a civilian residing in the village of Mykulychi, Kyiv region. On March 2, Russian troops entered the settlement. Later that day, three RF soldiers in green uniforms entered his yard and checked his phone. They found messages related to military actions at the onset of the war. Upon seeing this, one of the soldiers remarked, *"This is our guy."*

²⁴ K.O. was taken to the center of the village, where he met another detained civilian, K.S. Both of them had their hands tied, their eyes blindfolded, and they were placed on top of a Russian APC, which was then covered with tarpaulin. Russian soldiers sat on top of them. Thus, covered with tarpaulin, they were driven in the APC until the evening. Then, they were brought to an unknown location, tied to the APC tracks, and left there overnight. The Russian soldiers remained in the APC. That night, the temperature dropped to 4–5 degrees below zero Celsius. Throughout this time, the detainees K.O. and K.S. were not given food or water nor allowed to use the bathroom.

²⁵ That same evening, on March 2, 2022, a civilian vehicle passed by the APC. Russian soldiers fired on the car, forcing it to stop. Inside the vehicle were four civilian men. They were detained and severely beaten. One of the men was stabbed with a bayonet from an automatic weapon. They were then tied up and placed with K.O. and K.S.²¹ The wounded man did not receive any medical assistance²².

March 3, 2022

²⁶ In the morning, all the detainees were again laid on the APC and transported until evening. That evening, they were taken to a new location at a Russian military position, where there were other soldiers and a lot of military equipment. K.O. saw from under the tarp covering him that the place was on the outskirts of his village, Mykulychi. The detainees were handed over to other Russian soldiers, also in green uniforms. From fragments of their conversations, K.O. heard that the GRU²³ or FSB was expected to arrive soon. Later, a military truck carrying ammunition arrived, with soldiers in black uniforms. The ammunition was unloaded, after which six detainees were placed in the empty truck. They were transported in it for about a day, during which they were not given any food or water or allowed to use the bathroom.

March 4, 2022

²⁷ In the morning, the detainees were taken to the forest to other Russian positions. There, they were interrogated one by one about the locations of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and weaponry, with simulated executions. K.O. believes the interrogations were conducted by the FSB. Two new detainees were also brought in. After the interrogations, the detainees were ordered to lie in a pit and were forbidden to talk or move; for this, the Russian soldiers beat them with the butts of their rifles. A few hours later, a Russian military SUV arrived at the position where the civilians were being held. All eight detainees were loaded into this vehicle and taken to a facility resembling a supermarket. K.O. cannot specify what kind of facility it was, as all detainees had their eyes covered. At night, K.O. heard Russian soldiers bringing items into the building that they had taken from the homes of local residents.

March 4, 2022

²⁸ In the morning, all the detained civilians were transported to the Antonov Airport. K.O. stayed there until March 8, when he, along with other detainees, was taken to Belarus and then to a detention center in Russia.

20. Testimony 1, K. O.

21. Testimony 8, K. S.

22. As of August 2024, these four men were held in an in-communicado detention center in the Russian Federation. They have not been formally charged, and their fate is unknown.

23. The Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces.

March 5, 2022

The town of Vorzel, Kyiv region

²⁹ Witness P. B.²⁴, a retired civilian. On March 5, 2022, Vorzel was occupied by Russian troops. In the morning that day, P. B. left his house to find water and food. In the town center, he met an acquaintance and stopped to talk. Three Russian soldiers approached them; one of whom, the witness believes, was Buryat, while the others had Slavic features. The soldiers checked P. B.'s and his acquaintance's mobile phones and accused them of being gunners. They were struck several times with the butt of a rifle and forced to strip down to their underwear. Later, P. B. and the other man were taken to a dugout near Vorzel. They spent the night lying on the ground without clothes, with their hands tied behind their backs. In the dugout, they were beaten with the butts of weapons, and P. B. had two teeth knocked out.

March 6, 2022

³⁰ In the morning, P. B. and another detainee were allowed to get dressed. The Russian soldiers put them in a truck and took them to the Antonov Airport. P. B. had his eyes covered, but he could partially see from underneath the blindfold. Along with them, 30 to 40 other civilians were brought to the airport, all with their eyes blindfolded. They were forced to kneel on the ground with their hands behind their heads. A Russian soldier approached P. B. and began to ask questions, including where 'Tochka-U' and biological weapons were located, as well as the positions of Ukrainian Armed Forces units. When P. B. could not answer, the Russian soldier started kicking him and threatened to execute him. The other detainees around him were also interrogated and beaten. P. B. suspects someone among the civilians was killed at that time, as he heard gunshots.

³¹ After that, P. B. and two unfamiliar men were put into a truck, taken to a field near Vorzel, and thrown out onto the ground. They remained on the ground with their hands and feet bound, their eyes taped shut. After a while, they managed to free each other and walked through the field toward Vorzel. Along the way, they encountered a group of Russian soldiers standing in the same field with equipment. P. B. and the two other men were stopped and forced to strip down to their underwear again. P. B. mentioned that they had already been detained by other soldiers, interrogated, and released. The soldier who stopped them contacted someone via radio and asked about 'three Khokhols.' Someone on the other side of the radio responded that they had indeed been detained and released and asked, 'Why didn't you kill them?' Then, P. B. heard over the radio, 'Do whatever you want with them; we'll come in the morning and, if necessary, take them.'

³² After the detainees were allowed to dress, they had bags placed over their heads and taken to a wooded area closer to the village of Kycheieve to the established Russian positions. There, they were placed in a pit. P. B. was stripped again, left only in his trousers and without shoes. Next to the pit, a man was tied to a tree. He had a bleeding wound on his head.

³³ P. B. and the two other civilians were forced to lie on the ground in the pit. Then, Russian soldiers approached and began to kick them in the ribs. P. B. had several ribs broken, which subsequently healed improperly. He believes that the person who beat them had specialized medical knowledge, as he was able to dislocate joints and break bones with a single blow. No medical assistance was provided to him or the others in the pit.

³⁴ After being beaten, P.B., two other civilians, and the man with a head wound, who had been untied from the tree, were lying on the ground in the pit. The temperature that night dropped to minus 9 degrees Celsius. P.B. heard a machine gun being reloaded and waited for a shot. However, the Russians fired a burst of automatic weapons over the detainees' heads.

³⁵ P. B. and the others spent the night in the pit. From time to time, the Russian soldiers forced them to shout, 'Glory to Russia!' Those who did not shout loudly enough were beaten. During the night, the man with the head wound died. To keep warm in the freezing cold, P. B. covered himself with the man's body and stayed that way until morning.

March 7, 2022

³⁶ On the morning of March 7, P. B. and the two other detainees were transported to the Antonov Airport. On March 10, he was taken along with other detained civilians and prisoners of war to a filtration camp in Belarus and later to a pre-trial detention center in Russia.



Photo from the MIHR field mission

'Do whatever you want with them; we'll come in the morning and, if necessary, take them.'

March 7, 2022

The town of Bucha, Kyiv region

³⁷ Witness L.Yu.²⁵ testifies about her husband, Ye.V., a civilian. He lived in Bucha and stayed behind during the occupation to take care of the house and pets. On March 7, 2022, Ye.V. and a neighbor drove to the home of relatives who had fled Bucha to feed their dogs. On the way, a Russian APC started pursuing them and blocked their car. Russian soldiers forced Ye. V. and his neighbor out of the car, threatening them with weapons, yelling that they were gunners gathering information on Russian troop movements. After that, their hands were tied, and they were placed in the APC and taken to Russian military positions near the town of Vorzel²⁶, about five kilometers from where they were detained. They were thrown into an open pit approximately one and a half meters deep with several people inside, living and dead. Russian soldiers, wearing balaclavas, kicked the detainees, breaking the ribs of some. They also shot over the heads of the detainees, simulating executions. The temperature dropped to minus 5 degrees Celsius at night, and the detainees lay on the ground without warm clothing. After their detention on March 7 until March 9, 2022, Ye. V. and the others in the pit were not given food or water and were not allowed to use the bathroom, forcing them to relieve themselves in the pit. Despite having his hands tied, Ye. V. managed to get out of the pit and attempted to escape, but Russian soldiers quickly caught up with him and threw him back into the pit.

March 7, 2022

³⁸ In the morning, Ye.V. and the other surviving detainees in the pit were transferred to the detention site for civilians and prisoners of war at Antonov Airport. The witnesses who were held alongside Ye. V. reported he lost his sanity due to the trauma he had endured. He would run around the cell, screaming non-stop. On March 11, 2022, Russian soldiers removed him from the cell.

March 12, 2022

³⁹ On the same day, the remaining detainees were informed that Ye. V. had died from myocardial rupture. Witnesses who buried Ye. V. reported that there was a rope around his neck, and his body was covered with signs of beatings and bruises. He was buried in a mass grave on the airport grounds. In 2023, Ye. V.'s body was exhumed, and a DNA test confirmed his identity.

Photo from the
MIHR field mission



25. Testimony 3, L. Yu.

26. In the morning of the same day, the witness was taken from this pit to the Antonov airport P. B.

27. Testimony 4, R. Yu.

March 8, 2022

The town of Hostomel, Kyiv region

⁴⁰ Witness R.Yu.²⁷, a civilian. On March 8, 2022, an evacuation of civilians from Hostomel was announced. R.Yu. and a friend were volunteering to help civilians leave the occupied territory. At the entrance to Hostomel, Russian soldiers in green uniforms stopped them and fired shots into the air. They pulled R.Yu. and his friend out of the car and forced them to lie on the ground while conducting a search. R.Yu. explained that they were assisting with civilian evacuations. The soldiers communicated via radio, and it was confirmed that a green corridor for civilians had indeed been announced that day.

⁴¹ The soldiers agreed to let R.Yu. pass but insisted on accompanying him to verify that he was assisting with the evacuation. They arrived at an address in Hostomel where, as R.Yu. informed, women and children required help. Shortly after their arrival, a group of Russian soldiers in black uniforms and masks appeared. They dragged R.Yu. out of the car, forced him onto the ground, began beating him, and accused him of being a gunner and a scout. They tied his hands behind his back, taped his eyes, and led him away. R.Yu. could see through the tape that they took him to a large gathering of Russian military equipment opposite the Hostomel market. There, he was thrown to the ground again, beaten, and accused of collaborating with the Ukrainian Armed Forces. They demanded to know the whereabouts of others in his group. R.Yu. was then tied to the tracks of a tank or another vehicle, where he lay on the ground for about five hours. During this time, people with Caucasian accents approached and interrogated him again. He could not see their faces.

⁴² Near evening that day, R.Yu. and two or three other men (he couldn't determine the exact number) were placed on an APC or another airborne combat vehicle and transported to a

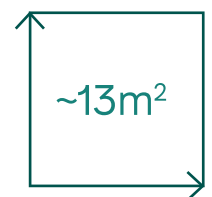
forest. There, they were thrown off onto the ground. During the fall, the tape on R.Yu.'s eyes shifted, allowing him to see Russian military equipment around and a large pit nearby filled with the bodies of men in Ukrainian military uniforms. R.Yu. and the others were pushed into the pit on top of the corpses²⁸. The Russian soldiers warned that anyone who tried to climb out would be shot. They remained in the pit for three days. During that time, it rained and snowed. To survive the cold, R.Yu. and the other survivors covered themselves with the corpses. From time to time, the Russian soldiers fired shots over the pit. R.Yu.'s hands were bound with plastic handcuffs that cut off circulation, causing his hands to swell and lose sensation. Throughout this period, they were given no food or water.

⁴³ For three days, the men were repeatedly pulled out of the pit for interrogations. However, R.Yu. could not understand the questions because his ears were taped with duct tape. When he didn't answer, they would beat him. Around March 12 (R.Yu. had lost track of time), he and two other survivors from the pit were placed on armored vehicles and transported to the Antonov Airport. On March 19, 2022, R.Yu., along with other civilian detainees and prisoners of war, was transported to a filtration camp in Belarus and later to a pre-trial detention center in Russia.

2. Conditions of Detention at the Airport in Hostomel

⁴⁴ Civilians and prisoners of war at the airport were held in non-operational cold storage rooms of the cafeteria.

⁴⁵ Witnesses interviewed by the MIHR described the cells as small rooms with concrete floors without windows or artificial lighting. There were three such cells, each approximately 13 m² with no beds or mattresses, so the detainees slept on the floor. There was no heating, and the night-time temperature was below zero degrees Celsius. At various times, up to 30 people were held in each cell. A quote from a witness detainee at Antonov Airport:



"We lay on bare concrete, without pillows, mattresses, or planks. About 27-28 men were placed in our cell, and we slept on each other because space was limited. It was warmer that way. One person would climb on top of another when they froze, and we would swap places."

⁴⁶ Detainees did not have free access to toilets. There were buckets in the cells for them to relieve themselves. The floor was soaked with urine. People were taken outside once a day for a few minutes. The premises were not ventilated. Food was provided once every two days, and several days would pass without food. Only 2-3 liters of water were provided per day for each cell.



Up to
30 people

⁴⁷ Military personnel and civilians were held together. They were beaten and tortured, and some were subjected to mock executions. Detainees were forced to work, including cleaning toilets and unloading trucks with the corpses of fallen RF soldiers. They were also made to bury the bodies of deceased Russians and killed Ukrainians—both civilians and prisoners of war²⁹. The bodies were buried on the airport grounds in mass graves. After de-occupation, some of these graves were discovered, and the bodies were exhumed. Cases of executions have been documented at the airport. This was established through testimonies from civilians detained in occupied territories and later released during prisoner exchanges between Ukraine and RF³⁰. A witness's quote:



**2-3 liters of
water per day**

"I was interrogated about four times and taken out for execution about five times. There was a garbage pit where all the trash was thrown. We used that pit as a toilet. They would make you kneel, grab you by the collar, your hands tied behind your back, hit you under the knees, and you would fall to the ground on both knees. They would point a gun to your head, pull the trigger, shooting near your ear. Then, they would lift you up and take you back to the cell. Not everyone got fake shots; some were actually killed. You stepped out and didn't know if you would come back."

⁴⁸ The exact number of executions at the airport has not been determined. Since the procedures for recording criminal cases do not account for specific types of crimes outlined in Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, the MIHR has not received from law enforcement

28. Previously, this pit was used to keep P. B. та V. Y.

29. Testimony 1, K. O.

30. Testimony 2, P. B.

any information regarding the total number of executions of Ukrainian civilians by Russian military personnel, nor about those executed at the Antonov Airport.

⁴⁹ The guards of detainees at the airport mostly had their faces masked. Even when their faces were uncovered, it was hard to remember them in the dark cells. The testimonies from victims reveal the guards were primarily soldiers of the Russian National Guard. They treated the detainees brutally, beating them for any request and often without any reason. In all testimonies regarding detention at the airport, there is only one mention of a Russian soldier who engaged in dialogue with the detainees, had an uncovered face, and introduced himself as Serhii. On one occasion, when the detainees began to accuse him of the war initiated by Russia, he agreed that it was a wrong decision.

⁵⁰ Most witnesses indicate that the beatings and torture outside of interrogations were carried out by the Russian National Guard military personnel.

⁵¹ The inhumane conditions resulted in at least one detainee going insane during their time at the airport. Some interviewed individuals also reported experiencing auditory and visual hallucinations while there.

⁵² All detainees were automatically presumed guilty by the Russian military of collaborating with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, providing them with information about the movements of Russian troops, and being disloyal to Russia. In early March 2022, following significant combat losses and military setbacks, the Russians realized the total hostility of the civilian population. As a result, every detainee was suspected of collaborating with the Ukrainian Armed Forces, leading to inhumane treatment.

⁵³ During the occupation, civilians and military personnel held at the airport were gradually transported to Russia. The routes and circumstances of these transfers are analyzed in detail in part 2 of the report. None of those interviewed by the MIHR were acknowledged with properly documented charges during their unlawful detention in Ukraine. This indicates a shared intent among the crime perpetrators, as the deportation of civilians to Russia was in no way dependent on the circumstances of their detention or the existence of any charges against them.

⁵⁴ To date, an officer of the Russian National Guard has been served with a notice of suspicion under Article 438 of the CCU—violation of the laws and customs of war, including cruel treatment of civilians³¹. According to the investigation, he, along with others, held and tortured civilians and prisoners of war at the Antonov Airport.

3. Interrogations

⁵⁵ All victims were regularly interrogated. They claim that the interrogations at Antonov Airport were conducted by FSB agents, identified as individuals in black uniforms with 'FSB' insignia. Their faces were covered.

⁵⁶ Most of the known interrogations involved the use of beatings and torture. There are also reports of interrogations conducted without violence, particularly with prisoners of war in the early days of the full-scale invasion. Typically, during the interrogations, individuals were beaten with sticks and the butts of rifles. One interviewed individual mentioned being struck with a stool during an interrogation. Detainees were threatened with execution, weapons were pointed at them, and they were subjected to electric shock torture.

⁵⁷ A quote from a witness detainee at Antonov Airport: *"They asked me what secrets I knew. They wanted me to reveal Zelenskyi's secrets, to tell them where Bandera lived, and about chemical laboratories. I looked at him and said, 'What connection can I have with Zelenskyi?' He would take a gun, point it at my groin, and say, 'I'll shoot your valuables off right now. Where does Bandera live?'³² Then they asked if I knew any military personnel or participants of the ATO."*

⁵⁸ Many detainees had injuries, broken bones, and bruises after the interrogations. They did not receive adequate medical care. Military medics at the airport provided detainees with Ukrainian medications, likely stolen from local pharmacies. However, many individuals needed wound dressings and treatment for fractures. There were also people with diabetes and other conditions requiring regular medication, but they did not receive it.³³

31. Torture chamber in Gostomel: Kyiv region police serve notice of suspicion to Russian serviceman who detained citizens at the airport, web-site of the National Police of Ukraine, 12.02.2024

32. Stepan Bandera, 1909-1959, Ukrainian politician, one of the practitioners and theorists of the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the twentieth century.

33. Testimony 2, P. B., Testimony 1, K. O., Testimony 4, R. Yu., Testimony 7, K. D.

Field Near Golf Club "Golfstream"



Golf Club "Golfstream". Collage

1. The Story of How Civilians Ended Up at the Field. Chronology

February 28, 2022

Golf Club "Golfstream"

⁵⁹ Witness Ch. O.³⁴, a civilian from the village of Dmytrivka in the Makariv district of Kyiv region. On February 28, 2022, around 11 AM, he was walking home along the road between the villages of Dmytrivka and Havronshchyna, approximately one kilometer from the golf club. Ch. O. heard two bursts of gunfire, and then Russian soldiers approached him, forced him to kneel, covered his eyes with a hat, and taped it. He didn't have time to see their faces or count the number of the soldiers. They placed him in an APC and took him to a field near the golf club. There, several soldiers with Caucasian accents, whom Ch. O. suspects were so-called 'Kadyrovites,' interrogated him in turn. They took all his documents, threw them on the ground, and confiscated his phone. During the interrogations, they asked standard questions about his possible collaboration with the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the location of Ukrainian military units. After several hours, a helicopter landed at the golf club, and Ch. O. and a few other detainees were loaded onto it and taken away in an unknown direction³⁵. Later, Ch. O. was transferred to a detention center in Russia.

34. Testimony 11, Ch. O.

35. To date, the military units that were stationed in Makariv district of Kyiv region during the occupation and whose servicemen were involved in war crimes have been identified. These include the 64th separate motorized rifle brigade of the 35th Combined Arms Army of the Eastern Military District of the Russian Armed Forces, known as the Bucha Butchers. For more information on the units that were present in Kyiv region, see Section 3 of the report. All the units identified in the Kyiv region belong to the Russian Army. The testimony of Ch.O. established that a military helicopter of the Russian Armed Forces arrived in Makariv district of Kyiv region to transport detained civilians outside the territory of Ukraine. The helicopter was not performing combat missions, but arrived to pick up the detained civilians. This fact reliably indicates the coordinated interaction of various branches of the Russian Federation's troops during the commission of the crimes under investigation on the territory of Ukraine and their subsequent transportation to the territory of the Russian Federation. In the case of Ch.O., it is also significant that at the time of his transfer outside Ukraine, the Russian military did not have any specific charges against him, except for the standard "cooperation with the AFU". He was detained when he was walking down the street in civilian clothes, without any signs of belonging to military formations. It is also important to note that he was taken to the territory of the Russian Federation without any documents on the reason for his detention.

36. Testimony 6, H. M.

March 3, 2022

Makariv district, Kyiv region

⁶⁰ Witness H. M.³⁶, a civilian. That day, Ukrainian artillery fired on Russian soldiers in the village of Makariv. After the shelling, the Russians began to search houses, looking for men and checking whether they collaborated with the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to H. M., those found wearing elements of military uniform were executed on the spot. However, camouflage clothing is everyday work attire in rural areas.

⁶¹ Around midday on March 3, H. M. was in the basement of his private house with his parents, wife, and child. His father went outside and encountered three Russian soldiers who aimed their guns at him. The soldiers accompanied H. M.'s father back to the basement where the family was and demanded to see any weapons. H. M. showed them a pneumatic shotgun and an old, broken gun. After that, both H. M. and his father were taken to a field near the golf club, where they remained for three or four days.

6 or 7 March 2022

⁶² The Russian soldiers placed H. M. and others who were in the field into a military truck and transported them to Belarus and subsequently to a detention center in Russia.

2. Conditions of Detention at the Field



⁶³ The Golf Club ‘Golfstream’ is a suburban club in the Kyiv region. The club’s territory includes an administrative building and several large golf fields. The club is enclosed by a fence. Russian military forces occupied the club on February 27, 2022. At that time, they also seized the surrounding villages. During the occupation of the Kyiv region, Russian soldiers brought numerous civilians to the golf club’s fields. Witnesses do not specify the exact number of individuals held there, as they were all blindfolded and had their hands and feet bound. The Russian military prohibited the detainees from speaking.

⁶⁴ People were held in the open air for several days; the maximum period reported by witnesses was five days. One night, the temperature dropped to 15 degrees Celsius below zero. A distinctive feature of this detention site was that Russian soldiers forced civilians to remove their shoes or poured water into them and prohibited the prisoners from taking them off. As a result, many civilians suffered from frostbite on their feet. Later, during their transfer to Russia, the frostbitten areas of their legs became infected. Additionally, survivors report that some were stripped naked in the field and doused with gasoline, resulting in chemical burns. Victims received no or insufficient medical assistance³⁷.

⁶⁵ The mentioned torture practices—pouring water into shoes and dousing the detainees with gasoline—are not typical of the other detention sites we investigated. These forms of torture could have been introduced at the initiative of certain military personnel who were at the golf club and tortured Ukrainian civilians. Such methods were not widespread in other detention sites established by Russia in Ukraine, which MIHR is aware of. However, in the golf club’s field, these tortures were employed against many detainees, which indicates that the use of such torture methods faced no resistance from the Russian military.



⁶⁶ People lying in the field were constantly beaten and threatened with execution. Shots were fired over their heads, and they were forbidden to get up. Many could not move because their hands and feet were tightly bound with ropes and plastic handcuffs. In low temperatures, individuals would completely lose sensation in their extremities. One witness reported that after his release, one of his hands remained numb and unresponsive. There were also cases of amputations among those who were in the field. These amputations occurred while individuals were detained in Russia and after their release from detention sites in Russia and their return to Ukraine.

⁶⁷ During their time in the field, at least one of the detained civilians died. He had diabetes, and witnesses heard him constantly asking for water. The Russian military did not provide him with any diabetes medication. One night, when the temperature was at its lowest, he died³⁸. Later, his body was found and identified in one of the mass graves near the golf club. Throughout their time in the field, detainees were not given water or food and had no means to warm themselves.

⁶⁸ On witness’s accounts, on March 6 or 7 (witnesses cannot recall exactly, as they lost track of time during their days in the field), Russian military vehicles stationed on the golf club’s territory began to line up to leave. At that time, Ukrainian artillery started shelling the field. The detainees were told to continue lying on the ground, and one of them heard a Russian soldier say, “*Let your own soldiers kill you.*” Witnesses heard explosions just a few meters away. The Russian vehicles and soldiers suffered losses during the shelling. When the shelling ended, the living civilians in the field were loaded onto vehicles and taken to Belarus and, consequently, to a detention center in Russia. No reports of the Russian military remaining at the golf club afterward are available. Testimonies also indicate that at least twice since February 28, 2022, detainees from the field were transported by helicopter to Belarus³⁹.

Photos from the
MIHR field mission

3. Interrogations

⁶⁹ People were interrogated in the field. Russian soldiers would occasionally approach and ask the same questions repeatedly: the locations of Ukrainian military units, weapons, and how the person had assisted Ukrainian forces. In the vast majority of testimonies documented by MIHR, these questions were not specific and were of a general nature. During interrogations, Russian soldiers threatened detainees with execution, beat them with their feet and rifle butts, and broke their fingers.

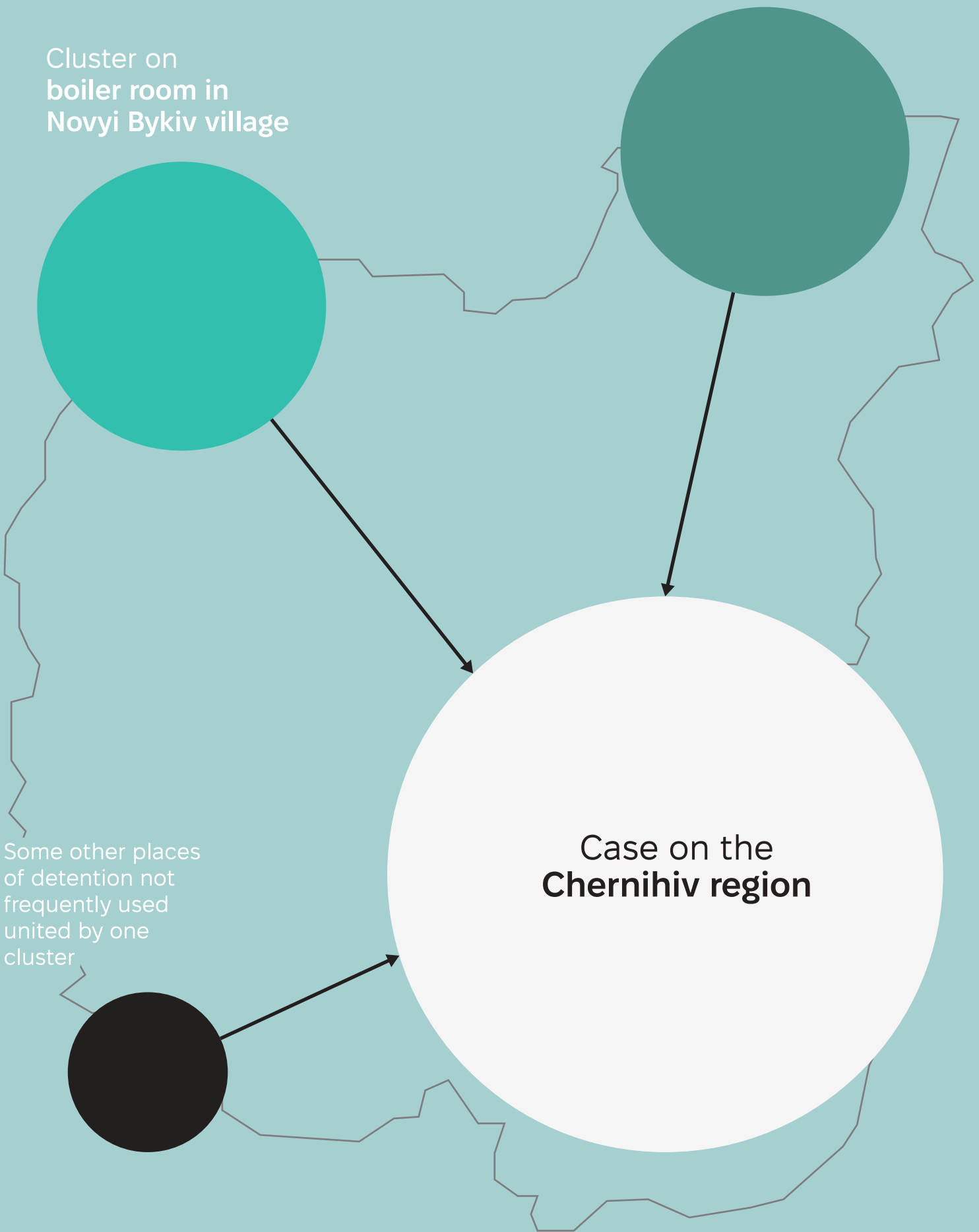
37. Testimony 10, Z. M. Testimony 11, Ch. O.

38. Testimony 11, Ch. O.

39. Testimony 11, Ch. O. Testimony 12, S. M.

Cluster on school in Vyshneve village

Cluster on boiler room in Novyi Bykiv village



Some other places of detention not frequently used united by one cluster

CHERNIHIV REGION

⁷⁰ Two-thirds of the Chernihiv region in Ukraine was under partial occupation from February 24 to April 3, 2022. Nearly 700 civilians⁴⁰ were killed there. To date, no official data is available on the number of civilians missing or deported to Russia from the Chernihiv region.

Nearly **700 civilians**
were killed there.

⁷¹ As in other northern regions of Ukraine, in the Chernihiv region, Russian soldiers detained, beat, and tortured civilians. They also set up a system of checkpoints where they constantly checked people.

⁷² The detainees were held in various locations, such as seized administrative and utility buildings or outdoors. In this report, we describe detention sites investigated by the MIHR: the basement of a school building in the village of Vyshneve, a woodworking facility in Vyshneve, and a boiler house in Novyi Bykiv. MIHR is also aware of other detention sites, such as the police department in the town of Horodnia at 24A Shevchenka Street and the premises of the SE 'Chernihiv Forestry' in the village of Pakul at 25 Chernihivska Street. Another widely known detention site is in Yahidne, where Russian soldiers held over 300 civilians in a school basement, using them as human shields⁴¹.




Photo from the
MIHR field mission

40. Russians occupied 2/3 of Chernihiv region: data on casualties, destruction and recovery from the JFO, Freedom Information Portal, 31.03.2023.

41. Appeal in the Yagidny case. Sentence of all fifteen Russian servicemen upheld, MIHR 28.05.2024.

Bryansk, RF

Russian Federation (RF)



Belarus



Kursk, RF



Belgorod, RF

Chernihiv region

Petrivka
Stara Rudnia

Zamglai

Vyshneve

RELEASED

Novoukrainske
Velyka Vys

Terekhivka

Mykhailo-Kotsiubynske

CHERNIHIV

Majuhivka

Lukashivka

Shestovytsia village

Yakubivka



CMD 74/41

74th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade, Order of Kutuzov and Order of Suvorov Commander – Lieutenant Colonel Pavlo Oleksiyovych Yershov
41st Guards Combined Arms Army Commander – Lieutenant General Serhiy Ryzhkov



WMD 1, 2




Medical company corpsman's unit of the receiving and sorting platoon of the wounded collection and evacuation unit
1st Guards Tank Regiment Cherkovskiy, twice the Order of Lenin, Order of the Red Banner, Order of Suworov, Order of Kutuzov and Order of Bohdan Khmelnytsky
The regiment named after Marshal of the Armored Forces N.E. Katukov is part of the 2nd Guards motorized rifle division – Lapin, Denis Alexandrovich, colonel

WMD 1/2






1st Guards Tank Cherkov twice Order of Lenin, Red Banner, Orders of Suworov, Kutuzov and Bogdan Khmelnitsky regiment named after Marshal of Armored Forces M.E. Katukov.
2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division – Lapin, Denis Alexandrovich, Colonel

WMD 147




147th Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Simferopol Red Bannered Order of Suworov, Kutuzov and Alexander Nevsky Regiment – Guards Colonel Vitaly Gorshkov

CMD 21/2

The 21st Separate Guards Red Banner Omsk-Novobuzka Motorized Rifle Brigade (Heavy) of the Order of Bohdan Khmelnytsky
as part of the 2nd Guards Combined Arms Army

CMD 40/41




40th engineer regiment
41st Guards Combined Arms Army Commander – Lieutenant General Serhiy Borysovych Ryzhkov

CMD 385/2






385th Guards Artillery Brigade – Guards Colonel Oleksandr Viktorovych Pomyrkin
2nd Guards Combined Arms Red Banner Army – Guards Major General Huror, Vlashe Slav Mykolayovych

CMD 55/41




CMD 55/41

CMD 55/41




CMD 55/41




CMD 55/41




CMD 21/14




CMD 21/14




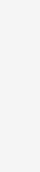

CMD 21/14




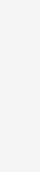

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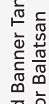
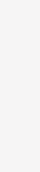

CMD 80/90

CMD 80/90

CMD 80/90

CMD 80/90





80th Guards Red Banner Tank Regiment – Victor Balatsan
90th Guards Armored Division – Guards Colonel Ramil Ibatullin

A separate logistics team support
41st Guards Combined Arms Army Commander – Lieutenant General Serhiy Ryzhkov


21st Mixed Aviation Division
14th Air Force and Air Defense Army – Commander Lieutenant General Vladimir-Melnikov

55th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (Mountain) (55th SGMRB(M), military unit 55115) – Colonel Denis Barylo




41st Guards Combined Arms Army Commander, Lieutenant General Serhiy Ryzhkov

35th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade of the Volgograd-Kyiv Order of Lenin, Order of the Red Banner, Order of Suworov and Order of Kutuzov, 2nd Class – Kuryhin Oleh Volodymyrovych



41st Guards Combined Arms Army Commander – Lieutenant General Serhiy Ryzhkov

Symbols and notation:

- WMD – Western Military District
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- █ – Areas of active military operations
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- – Routes of transportation
- The thickness of the line indicates the number of people deported in a particular settlement
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Chernihiv region

School Basement in Vyshneve Village



School basement in Vyshneve village. Photo from the MIHR field mission

⁷³ In the village of Vyshneve, 30 kilometers from the border with Belarus, during the occupation of the Chernihiv region, Russians held civilians in the basement of a secondary school located at 1 Pushkin Street. The Russian military set up a command and logistics center in the school. During the occupation, at least 20 people passed through this detention site. It is difficult to determine the exact number of detainees, as they were held in separate, small cells and did not interact⁴². Witness K.O., who spent one and a half days in the basement, heard the voices and screams of other detainees.

⁷⁴ The commandant in charge of two detention sites in Vyshneve—at the school and the woodworking enterprise—has now been identified⁴³. It is Kostiantyn Smirnov, a colonel of the Russian Armed Forces. The Chernihiv District Court in the Chernihiv region is hearing two criminal cases in which Kostiantyn Smirnov is the defendant. He is charged with crimes committed during his time in the Chernihiv region in February and March 2022⁴⁴.

At least
20 people
passed
through this
detention site

1. The Story of How Civilians Ended Up in the School Basement. Chronology.

March 23, 2022

⁷⁵ In the morning, a convoy of Russian soldiers arrived in the village of Zamhlai. K.O., the village headman, went to negotiate with the Russian military to ensure the safety of civilians. They tied his hands, put a bag over his head, and took him in a military vehicle to an unknown location. Knowing the area, K.O. realized that he was being taken to Vyshneve. There, the man was placed in the school basement and immediately interrogated.

March 24, 2022

⁷⁶ In the evening, after being brutally beaten, K.O. was brought back to the place where he had been detained and released.

42. Testimony 22, K. O.
43. I am the law here. Torture chamber in Vyshneve, Suspilne Chernihiv, 13.06.2024.
44. Cases No. 743/263/24, 743/908/24.

2. Conditions of Detention in the School Basement

⁷⁷ In the basement of the secondary school, the detainees were kept in small rooms. There was no lighting, and they had to sleep on the floor. The temperature at night in March was below zero Celsius. While the witness, K.O., stayed in the basement, he was not provided with water or food.

3. Interrogations

⁷⁸ In the school basement, detainees were subjected to physical and psychological violence. Russian soldiers kicked the prisoners in the head, legs, and ribs. The purpose of the interrogations was to obtain information about gunners, informers of the Ukrainian Army, and the location of Ukrainian troops and weapons. They slapped the detainees on the ears to damage their eardrums.

⁷⁹ Witness K.O. recounts, *“Most of the time, they hit me with their hands or feet. I couldn’t understand why they were hitting my legs. Then, about half an hour later, when my legs swelled up, I realized they were doing it intentionally so that a person couldn’t walk or run.”*

Woodworking facility in the village of Vyshneve



Woodworking facility in Vyshneve. Photo from the MIHR field mission

⁸⁰ The woodworking facility is located in Vyshneve at 1 Tsentralna Street. Civilians and prisoners of war were held on its territory in large utility premises without furniture. There was no lighting or heating, and the doors were constantly open. By witnesses’ accounts, up to 20 people were held here simultaneously.

1. The Story of How Civilians Ended Up in the Woodworking facility. Chronology

March 25, 2022

⁸¹ The victim, H.A., served in the State Border Guard Service until 2018 and was an ATO participant. At the time of the full-scale invasion, he was a civilian. During the occupation, he lived with his wife and two children in a detached house in the village of Novoukrainka near Vyshneve. On March 25, he was having lunch at home with his family when Russian soldiers arrived—some entered the building while others remained outside. There were, in total, at least 20 people in black and sand-colored uniforms. An APC was parked in the garden. Several soldiers took H.A. out of the house, led him aside, and began to interrogate him. Meanwhile, the others searched the house and asked H.A.'s wife where the weapons were hidden. After the search, the soldiers entered the APC, took H.A. along, and drove away.

March 26, 2022

⁸² H.A.'s wife had heard previously that Russian soldiers were holding civilians in Vyshneve. She went to the woodworking facility but failed to learn anything about her husband.

March 28, 2022

⁸³ H.A.'s wife went to Vyshneve again. This time, the Russian soldiers told her that there was no one left at the sawmill; everyone had been taken away.

⁸⁴ In May 2022, H.A.'s wife received a call from a released Ukrainian prisoner of war, who informed her he had been with H.A. in Detention Center No. 1 in Kursk, Kursk region, Russia. Later, the Russian Ministry of Defense confirmed that H.A. was detained in connection with the so-called special military operation and was being held in an FSIN facility. As of September 2024, H.A. remains held in Russia.

March 26, 2022

⁸⁵ The victims, K.O. and P. Ye., are civilians. On March 26, they were walking along the road between the villages of Stara Rudnia and Petrivka in the Chernihiv region when a 'Kamaz' truck carrying Russian soldiers passed by. The soldiers stopped, detained the men, and took them to the woodworking facility in Vyshneve.

⁸⁶ Two days later, on March 28, 2022, Russian troops left Vyshneve. They took K.O. and P. Ye. with them.

⁸⁷ On January 10, 2023, P.Ye.'s wife was contacted by witness R.M., who informed her he had stayed with both men, K.O. and P.Ye., in Detention Center No. 1 in Donske, Tula region, Russia. As of September 2024, Russia has not confirmed the men being held in any FSIN facility. The fate of the detained men remains unknown.

2. Conditions of Detention in the Woodworking facility

⁸⁸ The civilians were held with their hands and feet tied and with bags placed over their heads. Their hands were bound with plastic ties, which impaired blood circulation and caused the hands to lose sensitivity. The Russian soldiers took away the shoes and outer clothing of witnesses R.M. and R.O. The detainees were held in a large room without lighting or heating on a concrete floor. The temperature at night dropped below zero Celsius, and water was dripping from the ceiling.

⁸⁹ The detainees were not given water or food. They were forced to lie on the concrete floor at all times and were prohibited from communicating with each other.

⁹⁰ The detainees were constantly beaten. Every two hours⁴⁵, guards would enter the room, force the detainees to kneel, and then start beating them. They were beaten with feet, sticks, and rifle butts. On one occasion, a witness was forced to kneel for half a day⁴⁶. Another prisoner of war was hung on an electrical wire without clothing and left hanging for six days⁴⁷.



Were not given **water** or **food**

45. Testimony 28, R. M.
46. Testimony 20, R. M.
47. Testimony 31, O. A.
48. Testimony 20, R. M.

⁹¹ A mobile crematorium was located outside the building on the street. The witnesses testified that it had worked continuously. They could tell it was a crematorium because of the smell and distinctive smoke⁴⁸.

⁹² Witnesses also mentioned executions on the enterprise premises. Witness R.M., when brought to the building, saw the corpse of a Ukrainian soldier lying on the floor. The guard warned him that the same thing would happen to R.M.

⁹³ Witness R.O.: *“One day, they brought in one of ours, a Ukrainian, who was drunk. He started telling them they were idiots. A couple of hours later, they took him outside. There were two gunshots, and we didn’t hear from him again. I don’t know who he was.”*

3. Interrogations

⁹⁴ The detainees were taken for interrogations daily, sometimes twice a day. During the interrogations, they were beaten, occasionally, by two or three people, with sticks, rifle butts, and kicked. Witness R.M. had his ribs broken during one of the interrogations.

⁹⁵ Witness R.O.: *“I was interrogated by a Chechen who wanted to cut off my ear or finger. I was so stressed that I thought, ‘Just cut that finger; I can still work without it.’”*

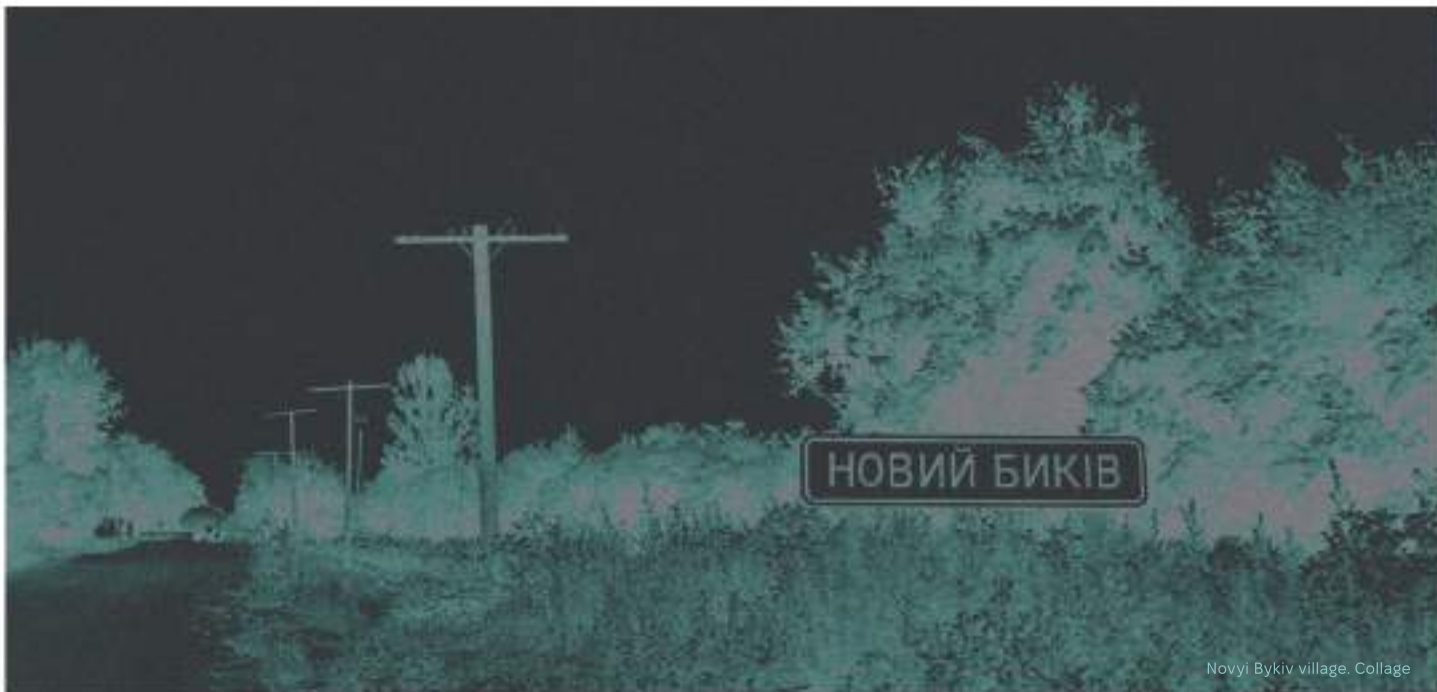
⁹⁶ Witness R.M., a former soldier and ATO participant, during interrogation, was threatened with having his hand cut off ‘so that it would never hold a weapon again.’

⁹⁷ During interrogations, the detainees were required to confess to assisting the AFU and collecting information on the location of Russian troops. They were also subjected to Russian propaganda narratives that Ukrainians turned against their ‘brotherly nation,’ were going to be the first to attack Russia, and that there were biological laboratories in Chernihiv.



Photo from the MIHR field mission

The premises of a boiler house in Novyi Bykiv village



Novyi Bykiv village. Collage

⁹⁸ The village of Novyi Bykiv was under occupation from February 27 to March 31, 2022. During the occupation, Russian soldiers carried out two mass executions of civilians in this village⁴⁹.

⁹⁹ In Novyi Bykiv, civilians were held in the basement of a boiler house near the village club building, which served as the headquarters for RF troops. One of the executions in Novyi Bykiv occurred in the basement of the boiler house. During the occupation, at least 40 people passed through this detention site.

At least
40 people
passed
through this
detention site

1. The Story of How Civilians Ended Up in the Boiler house. Chronology

March 19, 2022

¹⁰⁰ Victim D.M. was walking with T.V. to a friend's house in the center of the village when they were stopped by RF soldiers. The men were searched and accused of collaborating with the AFU. D.M. and T.V. were taken to the basement of a detached house.

March 20, 2022

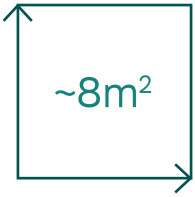
¹⁰¹ The house where D.M. and T.V. were held was shelled by artillery and nearly destroyed. After that, they were moved to a cellar in another private yard, where they remained for several days. During this time, they were given water and food, and they were not beaten or tortured.

March 22, 2022

¹⁰² That day, D.M. and T.V. were transferred to the basement of the boiler house near the club building, where at least ten other detainees were held at that time.

49. "They were taken out one by one and shot!": mass killings during the Russian occupation in Chernihiv region, Radio Liberty, 29.04.2022.

2. Conditions of Detention



More than
20 people

¹⁰³ The basement of the boiler house is a small space of about 8 m². It was damp and dark, with no heating or lighting. On witness D.M.'s account, more than 20 people were held inside including five elderly individuals. The guards would constantly beat the detainees, especially brutally, on the days when the Ukrainian Armed Forces were shelling Russian positions in Novyi Bykiv.

¹⁰⁴ The detainees were held in the boiler house with their hands bound and eyes covered, unable to move. One of the elderly detainees⁵⁰ broke his leg while descending the stairs to the basement. After that, he lay immobilized on the floor for a day without medical care. A day later, he was examined by a doctor and released.

¹⁰⁵ The detainees were given food and water daily; witness D.M. was assigned to perform this task. The guards constantly threatened the detainees with execution. They ordered them to sing and dance as a condition to avoid death⁵¹. Some were held in the boiler house for several days. The others, including D.M., remained in such conditions until the end of the village's occupation.

¹⁰⁶ The Russian soldiers offered detainee D.M. to choose which of the prisoners would be executed. He refused, and then they told him that he would be executed instead. A guard took D.M. outside, made him kneel, and began shooting near his ear.

¹⁰⁷ On the evening of March 30, one of the guards took three detainees outside. After a while, he returned and said he had shot them. There was blood on his shoes. The victims were Oleksandr Lysak, 52, Volodymyr Vovk, 38, and Mykhailo Ivashko, 64.

¹⁰⁸ On March 31, 2022, after Russian troops withdrew from Novyi Bykiv, the detainees who remained in the basement of the boiler house managed to release themselves.

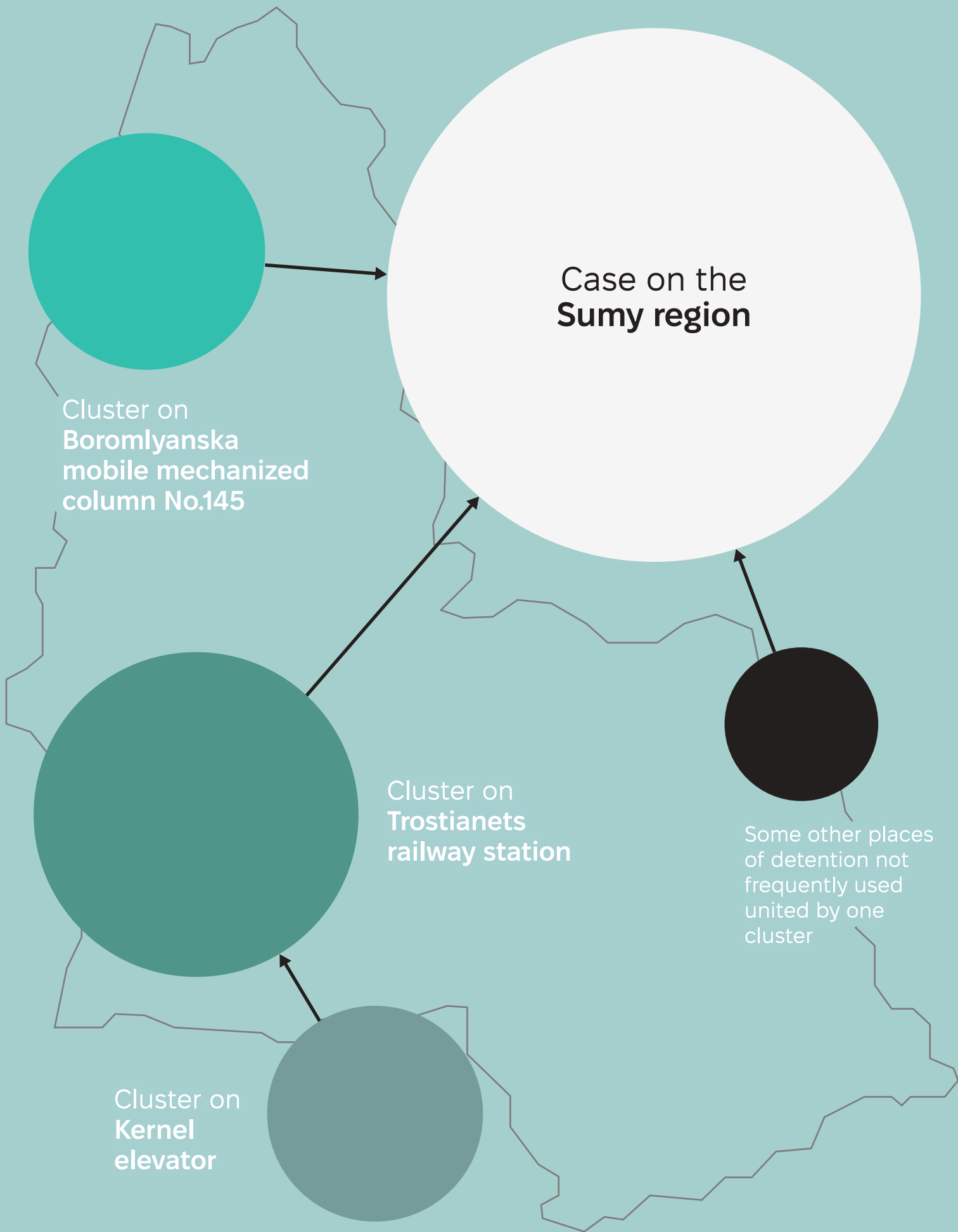
3. Interrogations

¹⁰⁹ The detainees were interrogated daily. For this purpose, they were taken from the boiler house's basement to a nearby club building, where the Russians had their headquarters. During the interrogations, they were constantly beaten and threatened with having their fingers cut off. People were stripped naked while being searched for tattoos on their bodies.

¹¹⁰ During the interrogations, prisoners were also asked about cooperation with the AFU, the weapons, and the location of AFU military equipment and units in the surrounding villages. The Ukrainian forces continually shelled RF troops in Novyi Bykiv. On the first days of the occupation, the AFU blew up the bridge between the villages of Novyi Bykiv and Staryi Bykiv.



50. Testimony 29, T. V.
51. Testimony 27, D. M.



SUMY REGION

¹¹¹ The Sumy region was partially occupied from February 24 to April 6, 2022. 256 civilians are known to have been killed during the occupation.

No official data is available on the number of missing persons or those forcibly taken to RF.

¹¹² The MIHR is aware of two main sites Russian forces designated during the occupation of certain areas in the Sumy region, where civilians detained from various settlements in the region were taken. These were the railway station in Trostianets and the former State Enterprise “Boromlianska Mobile Mechanized Column No. 145” (PMK 145) in the village of Boromlia. Additionally, there were at least three smaller interim detention locations in the region: the Kernel Grain Elevator in Trostianets, the Police Station No. 1 of the Okhtyrka District Police Department, and a house occupied by Russian soldiers. Three detainees are known to have been held at a Brick Plant in Trostianets. This report describes two sites where most civilians were detained—the train station and PMK 145. MIHR has previously documented the stories of people who were held in these locations in detail.





CMD 3/47



3rd Motorized Rifle Division
3rd Motorized Rifle Division 47th
Tank Czestochowa Red Banner
Order of Kutuzov Division – Guards
Lieutenant General Sergei Kisiel



WMD 1/2



1st Guards motorized rifle
regiment of Sevastopol Red
Banner Regiment of the Order
of Alexander Nevsky named
after the 60th anniversary of
the USSR – Major Ananichev
Oleksandr Mykhailovych
(April 10 – July 11, 2022;
died in action)

2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Taman
Order of the October Revolution
Order of the October Revolution,
Suvorov Division named after
M. I. Kalinin – Guards Colonel
Medvedev Serhiy Viktorovych



WMD 1/2/1



1st Guards Chortkiv twice
awarded the Order of Lenin,
the Red Banner, the Orders
of Suvorov, Kutuzov and
Bohdan Khmelnytsky
Tank Regiment named after
Marshal of Armored Troops
M.E. Katukov – Lapyn, Denys
Oleksandrovych, Colonel

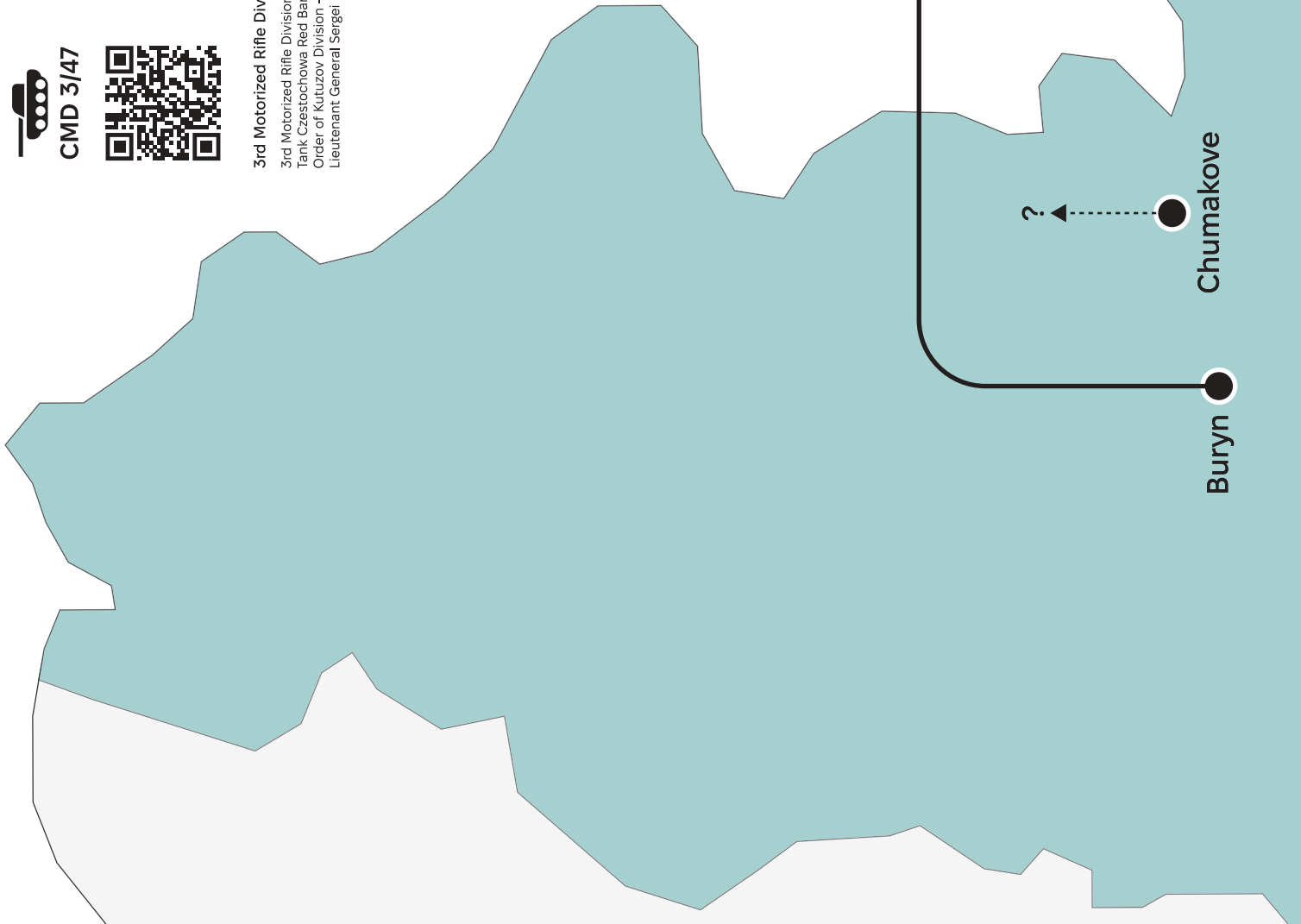
2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Taman
Division named after Mikhail
Kalinin, Order of the October
Revolution, Order of the Red
Banner, Order of Suvorov 1st
Guards Tank Army – Lieutenant
General Serhiy Kisiel



WMD 6/12/4



6-а танкова рота
The 6th Tank Company of the 12th
Guards Tank Regiment
“Shepetivsky” (Safonov I.S.)
of the 4th Guards Tank Division
“Kantymivska” (Colonel Evgeniy
Zhuravlev)

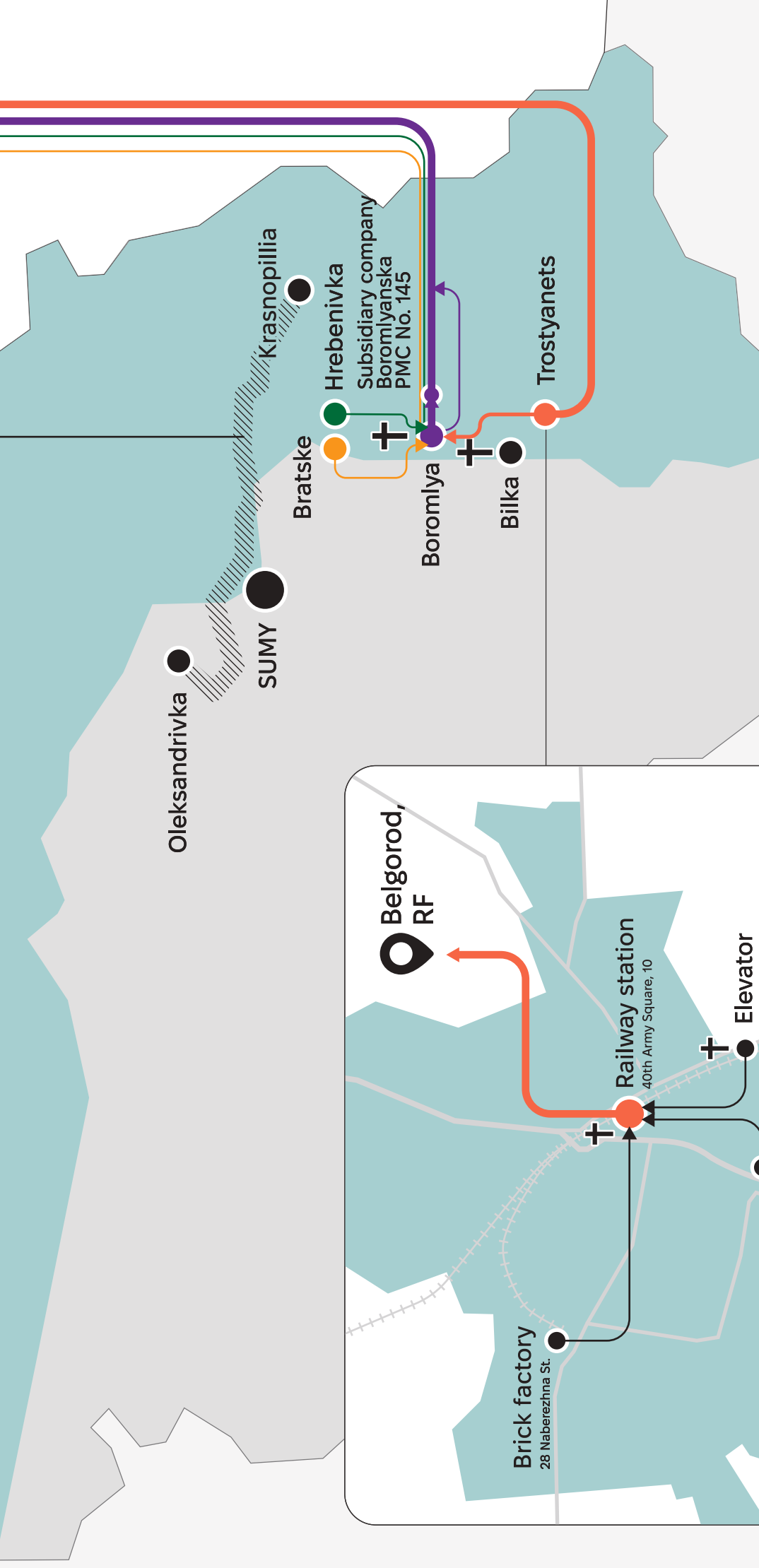


Kursk, RF



Belgorod, RF





Symbols and notation:

- WMD – Western Military District
- EMD – Eastern Military District
- SMD – Southern Military District
- CMD – Central Military District



- Areas of active military operations
- Units of the Russian army
- + – A person tortured to death was found
- – Routes of transportation
- The thickness of the line indicates the number of people deported in a particular settlement
- → – It is unknown where people were taken to

Sumy region

Railway Station in the Town of Trostianets



Railway Station in the Town of Trostianets. Photo from the MIHR field mission

¹¹³ At the Trostianets railway station, Russian military personnel were stationed with approximately 50 soldiers, as victims report. Among them were regular RF military personnel in pixelated uniforms and members of the Russian National Guard in black uniforms.

¹¹⁴ The station housed an operating room and a blood transfusion point for treating their wounded. Civilians were detained and tortured in the basement of the station.

¹¹⁵ For some victims, the station was the first place of detention, while for others, it was the second. From testimonies, the MIHR is aware of at least 13 people held in the basement of the railway station during the occupation. Civilians detained in Trostianets were brought to this location.

At least
13 people
were held in
the basement
of the station

1. The Story of How Civilians Ended Up at the Railway Station. Chronology

○ March 12, 2022

¹¹⁶ S. O. and H. O. were walking from one house to another to pick up some things when a civilian car approached them, with a soldier in a uniform with a 'DPR' patch. The soldier ordered them to hand over their phones and documents for inspection. H. O. didn't have his documents on him, while S. O. placed his phone on the car's hood. The soldier did not introduce himself, took the phone, and drove to an unknown location. S. O. and H. O. were unsure what to do and stood waiting. The soldier returned with other military personnel, placed bags over S. O.'s and H. O.'s heads, forced them into the vehicle, and took them to RF.

¹¹⁷ P. V. was detained along with three other men—K. S., K. T., and K. I.—as they were passing by the railway tracks and the 'Kernel' elevator, guarded by Russian soldiers. RF soldiers explained they had an order to detain all suspicious people since March 13. The men walked to the forest edge, which raised suspicion, leading to their detention. Initially, they were held at the elevator in Trostianets on Hryshyna Street, 26a, where they spent 15 hours in a dark room. One detainee was subjected to a mock execution; another was beaten with a rifle butt. Following this, the detainees had their hands bound and hats pulled and taped over their eyes. The men were then placed in a car and taken to the railway station, where shelling began. They spent about an hour at the station before being transported to the 'Boromlianska PMK 145' in Boromlia village.

March 24, 2022

¹¹⁸ Zh. I. was going to a warehouse near the station to buy flour when he was approached by two Russian soldiers with rifles. They retracted the breech blocks and ordered him to go with them. Under the threat of their guns, the victim was forced to climb through a broken window into the station waiting room and later dragged into a room downstairs. Although the victim's eyes were blindfolded, he most likely was taken to the basement, where five other detainees were held. Zh. I. was held in the basement until March 26.

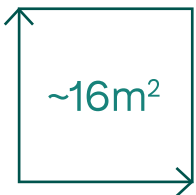
March 26, 2022

¹¹⁹ On March 26, the AFU began shelling the railway station. One of the Russian soldiers remarked, *"What shall we do with the detainees? Maybe we'll just kill them? Let's throw a grenade; what do we need them for?"* After that, the Russian soldiers decided to leave the station. One of the detainees overheard, *"They're tied up here, so they'll just die anyway. Why should we waste bullets on them?"* The Russians fled, leaving the detainees locked inside. One detainee, F. O., managed to untie his hands and feet. Zh. I. had a key from his apartment that resembled a screwdriver, which he used to unscrew the grate on the window. This way, the civilians managed to release themselves.

The exact date is unknown

¹²⁰ B. V. was carrying tobacco to a relative. While he was crossing a bridge in Trostianets, Russian soldiers emerged from under the bridge, fired shots into the air, and forced him to the ground. B. V. showed his documents and explained where he was going. Initially, the soldiers planned to let him go; then, they contacted other Russian military personnel to determine what to do with the detainee, but to no avail. Eventually, B. V. was taken to a seized police station. He was searched, and they took away his chain with a cross and money. His hands were tied, and a hat was pulled over his eyes. He spent the night in the basement of the police station. The next day, he was transported to the railway station, where soldiers dragged the victim into a room through a window. A few hours later, the man was transported to a third detention site—SE 'Boromlianska PMK 145.'

2. Conditions of Detention



At least
5 people



Were not
given **water**
or **food**

¹²¹ The victims were lowered into the basement of the station through a broken window, almost all of them blindfolded and handcuffed. As Zh.I. testified, *"I started to climb through the window, but they suddenly threw my legs over, basically tossed me inside."*⁵²

¹²² The civilians were held in a small 16 m² room with a concrete floor. At least five people were confined there at a time. The detainees were not provided with food or water and had no access to a toilet. Some victims were barefoot despite the outside temperature below zero degrees Celsius. The detainees also testified that they were forced to stand in the 'swallow' position when a detainee, standing on one leg with their hands clasped behind their back, had to bend forward and lower his head down. At the same time, the hands are handcuffed.

¹²³ At least two victims had their hands and feet bound with cables used to connect the railroad cars. Five interviewees reported being beaten with hands and feet on their bodies, and some were struck in the face. They were also beaten with rifle butts. At least one detainee had his blood drawn forcibly, suspecting it was for wounded Russian soldiers. Two victims had their fingers cut, and another was shot in the buttocks. In one known case, a detainee had a cigarette extinguished on his back and was thrown down the stairs, leaving his body covered in bruises. Most victims suffered psychological abuse, including execution threats. At least four interviewees endured mock executions, and one detainee died from torture.

¹²⁴ Zh.I. testifies: *"They started kicking me, tied my hands and feet, pulled a hat over my head, and wrapped it along with my eyes with tape. They beat me, then started smoking and extinguished their cigarette butts on my back. After that, they grabbed me, and since there was a stairwell on each floor, one of them said, 'Let's arrange a roller coaster to this Ukrainian.' They started dragging me up and down the stairs, and because of that, I was completely bruised."*⁵³

52. Testimony 34, Zh. I.

53. Testimony 34, Zh. I.

125 The railway station employees who returned to their jobs after the town was liberated reported that there were many traces of blood in the basement of the station, where people had been detained.

126 During detention, one victim's face swelled, and his body turned blue from the beatings. The cables that bound his limbs cut off blood circulation, causing them to lose sensitivity. After his release, the victim was diagnosed with broken ribs and burns on his legs, though he could not recall what caused the burns. The victim also mentioned suffering severe psychological trauma, spending some time in a psychiatric hospital:

"The stress was immense. After my release, I stayed in a psychiatric hospital. For almost a year, I didn't sleep at all. I would fall asleep for two hours, wake up, and wander around like a zombie."⁵⁴

127 At the time of the interview, another victim still had scars from the cables on his hands. Another victim's hands had been handcuffed so tightly that the soft tissue on his hands was worn down to the bone, and the wounds began to decay.

3. Interrogations

128 During interrogations, Russian soldiers forced detainees to confess to collaborating with the Ukrainian Armed Forces. One detainee was accused of being a partisan, an artillery fire gunner, and a member of the Okhtyrka sapper battalion. However, the detainee didn't know if such a battalion existed as he had no connection to AFU. This shows that the Russian soldiers concocted accusations during the interrogations.

129 "They initially accused me of being a partisan commander, then a gunner, and later claimed I was a fighter in some Okhtyrka sapper battalion, although I didn't even know if such a battalion existed. Basically, they were making up all sorts of nonsense. The soldiers interrogating me beat me all over my body, including my face. They broke three of my ribs and shot me in the buttock. They fired shots during the interrogation, including near my ear, all while constantly asking questions."⁵⁵

130 When taken for interrogations, the detainees were asked how they ended up in this detention site and where they were from. The interrogators would ask, 'Maybe you have a rifle or a knife?' The men denied it, but the Russians didn't believe them.

131 Some victims believe that civilians were held there as human shields. There was also an instance when a detainee was beaten without any interrogation, although the others were questioned. He assumes that they had no time to interrogate him.

132 One of the victims testified that during interrogations, a 'good cop, bad cop' tactic was used, where one soldier would threaten, and the other would say, "You see, we're normal." At times during the interrogations, the Russian military would talk about the 'Russian world.'

54. Testimony 34, Zh. I.

55. Testimony 35, B. V.

Photo from the
MIHR field mission



SE 'Boromlianska PMK 145'



1. The Story of How Civilians Ended Up at SE "Boromlianska PMK 145." Chronology

March 13, 2022

¹³³ R.S. was repairing his car near his garage when six Russian soldiers with assault rifles approached him and ordered him to lie face down.

¹³⁴ At that time, K.V. was walking past the garage. The Russian soldiers ordered him to kneel down. They searched the men and found a map and photos of military equipment on R.S.'s phone. R.S. explained that he was a land surveyor and used the map for his work.

¹³⁵ Shortly after, P.I. was passing by to fetch water. He was also detained. All three men were put in a minivan and brought to the premises of the PMK 145. They were brought to the sports club 'Olympiets.'

March 14, 2022

¹³⁶ That day, Russian soldiers entered M. O.'s house, brought him outside, and checked his phone. They found a photo of a Ukrainian soldier with a weapon. M. O. was placed in an APC and taken to PMK 145.

¹³⁷ Ya. A., a retired Ministry of Internal Affairs officer since 2006, was visited by eight Russian soldiers at 5 a.m. They began beating him and asking where his weapons were and how he was working for AFU. They pulled a hat over his face and transported him in a military vehicle to the PMK 145 site, where he was placed in an iron trailer.

¹³⁷ After the de-occupation of the Sumy region, a dead Ukrainian civilian was found at PMK 145. At least one person was executed there. Another civilian was shot simply for wearing camouflage clothing.

¹³⁹ At least six people were transferred from PMK 145 to a penitentiary facility in the Belgorod region of Russia.

March 15, 2022

¹⁴⁰ O. A. was detained by Russian soldiers under unknown circumstances. It was later determined that he was being held in Correctional Colony No. 4 in the Belgorod region. At least two detainees were taken to the RF territory in the Belgorod and Kursk regions without prior detention at the Trostianets railway station or in the PMK 145.

March 18, 2022

¹⁴¹ Sh. S., a former military officer, was driving his car to bring food to his grandmother when communication with him was lost. Later, his mother learned from Russian soldiers that he had been detained because he was an officer and had been taken to Russia. His current whereabouts remain unknown to his family.

March 23, 2022

¹⁴² R. I. was driving with his girlfriend to Sumy when Russian soldiers stopped their car at a checkpoint in the village of Chumakove. After inspecting R. I.'s phone and finding something suspicious, they released his girlfriend but detained him at the checkpoint. It was later revealed that he is being held in Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 1 in Kursk, Russia.

2. Conditions of Detention

¹⁴³ On the premises of PMK 145, civilians were held in an iron trailer and in the basement of the 'Olympiets' sports club, where the detainees were interrogated and tortured.

¹⁴⁴ In the iron trailer, detainees were forced to lie down at all times. Most interviewees stated that they spent two days lying on the floor without being allowed to use the toilet. A sniper was stationed on the roof, and if he saw through the trailer's window that men were trying to get up, he would immediately fire shots at the roof. Ya. S. testifies, *"They didn't give us food, they didn't give us water, they didn't give us anything; we weren't allowed to get up."*⁵⁶

¹⁴⁵ It was freezing outside. To keep warm, the detainees rubbed each other's legs so vigorously that they ripped the skin off.

¹⁴⁶ Russian soldiers would beat the detainees with their hands and feet. They attempted to shatter one man's kneecaps and cut another witness's finger tendons with a knife. At least two detainees had their fingers cut off, while others experienced mock amputations. One more victim had a finger on his hand crushed, and during the beatings, his jaw was also broken, and a tooth was knocked out.



Were not given water or food

Visible signs of torture

*"They laid me on the floor facing left. They shone flashlights on the hand they cut so I could see it. Plus, they hit me on the sides."*⁵⁷

¹⁴⁷ One of the witnesses shared that he was forced to stand in the 'swallow' position. *«They brought us on an APC, beat us, subjected us to psychological pressure, and promised they would hand us over to the Kadyrovites, who would stab all of us to death.»*⁵⁸

¹⁴⁸ The detainees bore visible signs of torture. One had a torn ear and a broken nose. Another had a gunshot wound on his foot. Almost all detainees had bruises and hematomas. The victim's toe tendon, which was cut with a knife, never healed properly.

3. Interrogations

¹⁴⁹ One of the victims was accused of passing the coordinates of Russian military equipment locations to the Ukrainian fighters. His phone was smashed, and he was pressured to provide the phone numbers and addresses of ATO participants and Ukrainian military personnel. In another instance, a detainee was forced to confess that he was exposing Russian positions. They asked where the AFU was located. Some Russian soldiers even asked the detainees if they weren't tired of living in poverty.

¹⁵⁰ The witnesses revealed that Russian soldiers were searching for 'Banderites' and Nazis, wearing black uniforms with white armbands.

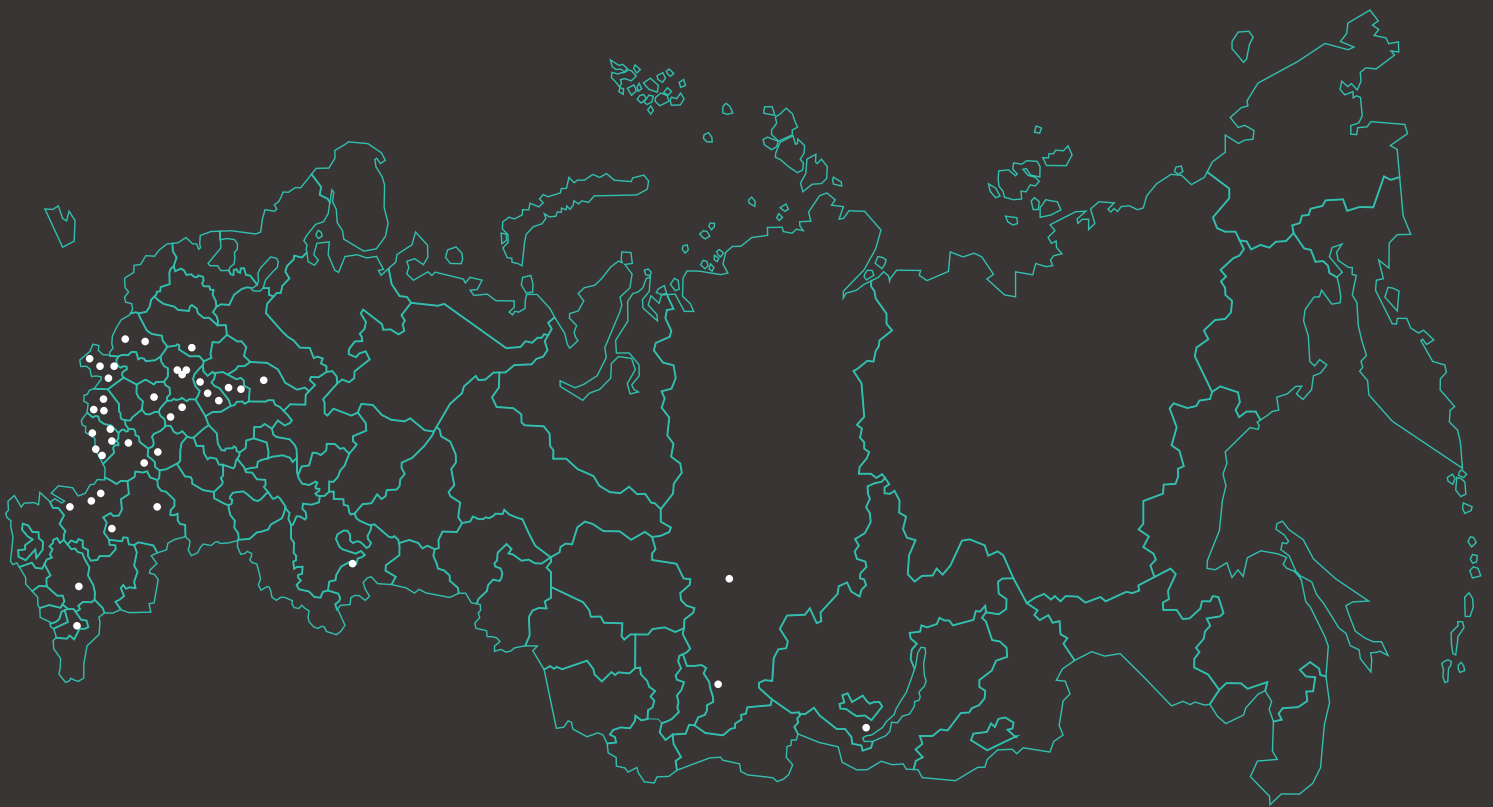
¹⁵¹ To date, the MIHR is aware of 34 civilians from the Sumy region held in FSIN facilities in Russia.

34 civilians from Sumy region held in FSIN facilities

56. Testimony 52, Ya. A.
57. Testimony 42, R. S.
58. Testimony 37, S. S.

Deportation of Ukrainian civilians from the northern regions beyond the borders of Ukraine

Detention in places of imprisonment in the territory of the Russian Federation and Belarus



153 The deportation of Ukrainian civilians to the territory of the RF is a widespread phenomenon that has been ongoing since 2014⁵⁹. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, the number of deported civilians has significantly increased.



59. The decision of the Grand Chamber of the ECHR of 25.06.2024 in the case of Ukraine v. Russia established massive systemic human rights violations in Crimea after its illegal annexation in 2014, including the illegal deportation of Ukrainian prisoners from detention centers in Crimea to the territory of the Russian Federation. Also see the PACE report "Deportations and forced transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to the Russian Federation or to Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied: create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators" of 25.04.2023, which indicates the deportation of children from Crimea to the Russian Federation since 2014.

¹⁵⁴ During the hostilities, various categories of people have been deported from Ukraine to the RF and RB. These include residents of frontline areas, particularly civilians, who were illegally detained by Russian military forces and subsequently imprisoned⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁵ These individuals suffer the most from violations of their rights: they are indefinitely deprived of their freedom and contact with the outside world, and are subjected to various forms of torture and cruel treatment.

¹⁵⁶ According to Russian legislation, only those sentenced to imprisonment by court verdicts, as well as suspects, defendants, and accused individuals in criminal cases, may be held in FSIN⁶¹. This section presents facts demonstrating that FSIN lacks the authority to detain Ukrainian civilians even under Russian national law, not to mention that the circumstances and conditions of their detention violate IHL standards.

The number of Ukrainian civilians held in FSIN facilities

¹⁵⁷ The exact number of Ukrainian civilians detained by Russia is unknown. The main reason is the *incommunicado* regime that Russia has imposed on them. This regime is characterized by the captives being in complete isolation from the outside world, with no contact whatsoever. As a result, there is almost no information about their place of detention. Those who were transported to Russian territory and whose testimonies are used in this report were released from FSIN facilities during prisoner exchanges between Ukraine and Russia. However, only a few dozen civilians have been freed through official exchanges. Little is known about the rest of the detained civilians.

¹⁵⁸ Only Russia has full information about them. Ukraine does not receive such data. Representatives of the ICRC, who are supposed to visit the captives, are generally not allowed to see them⁶². It should be noted that the right of the ICRC to visit prisoners and detained civilians without hindrance is enshrined in Article 143 of the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

¹⁵⁹ Since its establishment in 2016, MIHR has been systematically working to search for and account for Ukrainian prisoners of war and detained civilians, documenting the testimonies of those who were detained and their relatives. The collected data is systematized and summarized. This allows for the identification of the circumstances under which a person ended up in places of detention, the routes of their transportation within Ukraine and beyond to Belarus and Russia, the conditions of their detention, and other relevant information.

¹⁶⁰ An important source of information about detained civilians is the testimony of those who have been released from places of imprisonment in Russia, including both civilians and prisoners of war. They provide accounts of those who were with them in various detention facilities. This data can be analyzed to learn about the whereabouts of individuals in detention, for whom Russia has not provided information to the Ukrainian side and about whom the ICRC has no knowledge. MIHR receives information about missing persons directly from the victims' relatives and from open sources. As a result of this work, as of September 2024, MIHR has reliably confirmed the detention of 1,887 Ukrainian civilians in places of imprisonment on Russian territory. An additional 890 individuals have been released through various means.

1,887 civilians were detained in places of imprisonment on Russian territory as of September 2024

890 individuals have been released

60. "Deportation of Ukrainian citizens from the territory of active military operations or from the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine to the territory of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus", Ukraine 5AM Coalition, read more about the circumstances of the deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation and Belarus.
61. Regulation on the Federal Penitentiary Service, paragraph 3.
62. Coordination Center: ICRC representatives are unable to record the state of health of prisoners, Ukrinform, 01.05.2023.



Detention facility in Kursk region, RF. Collage

Routes of civilian deportation from Ukrainian territory

1. Intermediary filtration points along the deportation route

Of the
399 detainees
identified by MIHR,

287 were taken
to Russia

¹⁶¹ Some civilians from three northern regions of Ukraine were transported to Russia by Russian military forces. Of the 399 detainees identified by MIHR, 287 were taken to Russia. Although civilians and prisoners of war were detained in different regions, at different times, and by different units of the RAF, the deportation process was coordinated and centralized. Eventually, these individuals ended up in one of several pre-arranged locations outside Ukraine. In most cases, the people were first taken to intermediary filtration points, where they stayed for several days, usually no more than five. At the filtration points, detainees were interrogated again, personal files were created for them, and DNA samples were taken. Civilians received minimal primary medical care. Most detainees, by the time they arrived at the filtration points, had serious injuries or chronic illnesses—such as bone fractures from beatings, skin burns from electric torture, frostbite, or loss of sensation in limbs after spending extended periods with their hands and feet bound.

¹⁶² An analysis of testimonies suggests that the transportation to intermediary filtration points was necessary for Russia to create a registry of detained civilians and prisoners of war, gather information about them, and determine their subsequent locations of confinement.

¹⁶³ In contrast, in the places of detention on Ukrainian territory, which are examined in this report, records of detained civilians were not preserved. Here is a quote from a former prisoner of war who was held by Russian forces at the "Antonov" airport:

"They would come in with a list of names on a sheet of paper, which they would often mix up. For some reason, they took our home addresses, but they constantly confused the data—how many people they had, who they were, who they had sent out, and who they hadn't. So, some work was being done, but it was chaotic and unorganized."

¹⁶⁴ As mentioned in the previous section, people were sent beyond Ukraine from the detention site near the "Golfstream" golf club without any documents or information about them.

¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the primary centralized records of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war were created at the intermediary filtration points located outside of Ukraine. It is likely that when detainees were transported to Russia and Belarus, interrogation protocols conducted with civilians in Ukraine were not always transferred with them⁶³. This somewhat supports the argument that the targets of illegal detentions, torture, enforced disappearances, and other crimes against civilians were not individual persons who posed a real threat to Russian forces, but rather groups of civilians. These groups were united by various characteristics such as loyalty to Ukraine, hostility toward Russia, or real or perceived assistance to the AFU.

63. In some places of detention in Ukraine after the de-occupation, interrogation protocols were found. This indicates that protocols and other documents were not transferred or were not transferred in full.

64. Testimony 4, R. Yu.

¹⁶⁶ An important detail in the testimonies is that some detainees, both prisoners of war and civilians, were given the same documents (certificates) at the filtration points stating that they were "opposing the special military operation."⁶⁴ Another source of information regarding the reasons for deportation comes from official responses by the Russian Ministry of Defense to inquiries from the relatives of detained civilians and prisoners of war. These responses indicated that they were detained for opposing the special military operation (SVO).

¹⁶⁷ Testimonies documented by MIHR reveal two intermediary filtration points for civilians detained in three northern regions of Ukraine: a warehouse in the town of Narovlya, Belarus, and a tent camp near the village of Glushkovo in Russia's Kursk region.

¹⁶⁸ The exact locations of these points have not yet been determined, despite numerous testimonies from those who were held there. This is due to the fact that Russian military forces disoriented the detainees, preventing them from understanding who was detaining and escorting them, where they were being taken, and where they were held.

Many testimonies indicate that on Ukrainian territory, civilians were detained and guarded by regular Russian military personnel, and their transportation beyond Ukraine was carried out by Russian military forces or the Russian National Guard, sometimes in coordination with the Russian military police. At the intermediary filtration points, the National Guard and Russian military police were responsible for the initial registration of civilians and prisoners of war. In the penitentiary facilities, the FSIN handled the detention of civilians and prisoners of war.

2. Filtration point in the town of Narovlya, Republic of Belarus

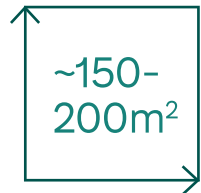
¹⁶⁹ The district center of Narovlya is located in the Gomel region, 53 kilometers from the Ukrainian border. The name of the settlement is known from the testimonies of detainees⁶⁵ who were able to glimpse road signs along the route when they were being transported from Ukraine. Detainees were brought to a place resembling an agricultural facility or warehouse. They were held in a large room measuring 150 to 200 square meters⁶⁶. Wooden pallets were on the floor, and people slept on them. Prisoners of war and civilians were housed together. Food was provided in extremely insufficient amounts, although they were fed daily. There was access to a toilet and a sufficient supply of water. Witnesses reported that guards could strike detainees for not obeying orders quickly enough. There are no testimonies regarding systematic brutal beatings at this filtration point.

¹⁷⁰ Witnesses identified the following structures that were responsible for their detention at the filtration camp in Narovlya: the Russian National Guard, the Russian military police, and the military forces of Belarus⁶⁷.

¹⁷² In Narovlya, personal files were created for all detainees, and they were issued temporary identity documents⁶⁸. Individuals were interrogated again, mostly without beatings or other forms of torture. DNA samples were taken from them, a primary medical examination was conducted, and minimal medical assistance was provided.

¹⁷³ Civilians stayed in Narovlya for several days, with those interviewed by MIHR not exceeding five days. After this, individuals were transported in groups to penitentiary facilities operated by the FSIN of Russia. The witnesses we interviewed were taken to detention centers in Bryansk and Kursk, but they were also sent to other FSIN facilities. Generally, they were transported by road.

53 kilometers
from the Ukrainian
border



65. Testimony 1, K. O., Testimony 4, Yu. R., Testimony 2, P. B., Testimony 6, H. M., Testimony 13, M. K.

66. Testimony 2, P. B., Testimony 13, M. K.

67. Testimony 13, M. K., Testimony 2, P. B.

68. This is a certificate that certifies the identity of a person who is accompanied by the Russian Armed Forces as a person who is countering a special military operation.



3. Tent camp near the village of Glushkovo in the Kursk region

¹⁷⁴ This tent camp served as a temporary detention point. According to testimonies⁶⁹, its establishment began in early March 2022. Civilians and prisoners of war, predominantly detained in three northern regions of Ukraine, were brought here. Likely, after the withdrawal of the Russian army from Kyiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions, the need for this camp ceased, and it was dismantled in April 2022.

¹⁷⁵ The camp consisted of large tents set up in a field. The detainees lived in these tents. Medical points were also established, including operating rooms. The tents included a kitchen, a dining area, and interrogation rooms, among others.

¹⁷⁶ In March 2022, the air temperature in the area dropped to minus 15 degrees Celsius. It was very cold in the tents. Detainees were not given water; they collected snow from outside, melted it on a stove, and drank it. Food was provided daily, but in insufficient amounts. People in the dining area were given up to one minute to eat.

¹⁷⁷ Force was rarely used against detainees in the tent camp. Beatings occurred, but they were not systematic (unlike in detention places in Ukraine and especially in Russian detention centers, where beatings and torture are routine practices).

¹⁷⁸ Testimonies mention that the administration and staff of the tent camp were part of the Russian military police structure⁷⁰. Interrogations, according to the detainees, were conducted by FSB officers in civilian clothes. The questions during the interrogations mostly matched those posed to civilians while in detention in the occupied territories of Ukraine: whether the individual collaborated with the AFU, where Ukrainian military units were located, and so on. Force was used only minimally during interrogations, and there are no testimonies of torture.

¹⁷⁹ Many detainees required medical assistance. In this camp, most suffered the consequences of their time in detention in Ukraine, in unheated premises or simply outdoors, with their hands and feet bound. Many had lost sensation in their limbs, which had swollen and begun to rot⁷¹. In the tent camp, amputations were performed on the injured, including high amputations where legs were removed above the knee. Other amputations occurred later during their time in detention centers.

¹⁸⁰ Those with minor health issues (such as bruises or soft tissue injuries) were not provided medical care. If an individual was able to move independently and their life was not in danger, they were considered not to require medical assistance.

¹⁸¹ All witnesses who were in the camp had DNA samples taken, underwent X-rays, and occasionally had voice samples collected; their faces were digitized. After the formation of personal files, the military police and National Guard of Russia handed over the detainees along with these files to FSIN personnel, who then transported them to further FSIN facilities in Russia.

This temporary detention point existed from early March 2022 until April 2022

Detention of civilians in FSIN facilities on the territory of Russia

69. Testimony 7, K. D. The witness later met a civilian detainee in the detention center who had been in the tent camp in early April 2022 and saw the camp being dismantled.

70. Testimony 7, K. D.

71. Testimony 7, K. D.

¹⁸² Among the FSIN facilities mentioned by the victims, there is not a single one where beatings and torture were not applied. Victims whose testimonies are used in this report were never held together with Russian prisoners; for detainees from Ukraine, FSIN always provided separate floors or even separate penitentiary buildings. All testimonies indicate that civilians were either brought to an empty FSIN facility that had been preemptively vacated of Russian prisoners or were held separately from Russian prisoners with no contact between them.

1. "Reception"

¹⁸³ The "reception" refers to the first day after arriving at a new FSIN facility. This day is characterized by brutal beatings and humiliation of the detainees. MIHR has not documented any exceptions to this practice. Everything described below equally applies to both civilians and military captives.

¹⁸⁴ Immediately after arriving at the prison, in all the documented cases, civilians were beaten. Typically, individuals were pushed out of the vehicles that transported them and had to walk through a line of guards who continuously struck them with truncheons and electroshock weapons. In some places, service dogs were unleashed on the detainees. They then underwent a medical examination, personal files were created for the detainees, and they were sometimes interrogated. All of this was accompanied by beatings, humiliation, and intimidation. The reception process could last several hours, and there are documented cases of death following the reception⁷².

¹⁸⁵ A witness's quote: "We arrived at the prison in a prisoner transport vehicle. The doors opened, and we said we were having difficulty walking, our legs had gone numb. And they replied, 'There are many people here with frostbite, it's not a big deal; they walk on their hands.'⁷³"

¹⁸⁶ Most of those interviewed believe that this treatment on the first day is intended to psychologically break the detainees.

¹⁸⁷ The facilities of the FSIN are located in various regions of the RF, thousands of kilometers apart; however, the described torture and abuse occur everywhere.

2. Conditions during detention in FSIN facilities

¹⁸⁸ Analysis of testimonies shows that the conditions of detention for Ukrainians in prisons within the RF were part of systematic humiliation, destruction of identity, and any will to resist.

¹⁸⁹ Individuals were often brought to prisons already beaten and exhibiting signs of frostbite. Medical assistance was only provided to those in critical condition, unconscious. In cases of broken ribs, necrosis of frostbitten tissue, and other similar injuries, help was most often not provided, or the person might receive only pain relief⁷⁴. However, there are known instances of necessary medical assistance being given. One of the victims suffers from diabetes. In the detention center in Kursk, due to the lack of necessary medication, he entered a diabetic coma. He lost consciousness, could not move, and, according to his cellmates, the guards planned to take him to the morgue. A paramedic from the detention center was called, who convinced the guards to take him to the hospital. The man was hospitalized in the intensive care unit of a civilian hospital in Kursk, where he stayed for three weeks until his condition stabilized. Another civilian had his toes amputated in a military hospital in Kursk due to frostbite sustained while detained in occupation in Ukraine⁷⁵.

¹⁹⁰ The attitude of the staff toward detainees was not neutral. Several testimonies mention instances of humanity from the guards, but these were always a result of personal choice. Overall, the norm in FSIN facilities is hatred from the guards and their complete impunity. Some of those released report sadistic tendencies among the guards, who took evident pleasure in torturing Ukrainians.

¹⁹¹ A quote from a witness, a former prisoner of war:

"We had a civilian guy in our detention center; he had a tattoo on his chest of an eagle holding a trident in its claws. When the detention center guards saw this tattoo, they said to him: 'Here's a brick, wipe it off, do whatever you want.' He didn't wipe it off; they beat him constantly, and then in Novozibkov, through beatings and mockery, they turned the guy into a vegetable, meaning he completely lost himself. They tormented him so much that he was nothing—just a vegetable. To put it bluntly, he wets himself. They brought him to such a state that he doesn't understand where he is, who he is, or what he is. We thought he had been exchanged, but he wasn't."

72. Testimony 7, K. D.

73. Testimony 10, Z. M.

74. Testimony 13, M. K.;

Testimony 2, P. B.

75. Testimony 6 H. M.

In FSIN facilities, prohibitions and rules are imposed that cause constant suffering to the detainees



Frostbite places were treated with brilliant green

¹⁹² In places of detention, there is insufficient food. The quality of food ranges from very poor (for example, boiling water with cabbage, which is considered soup) to more or less acceptable. There are numerous accounts of detainees losing consciousness from hunger. In various places of detention, civilians are starved until irreversible consequences for the body occur. Food is never sufficient and balanced with the necessary amount of protein⁷⁶.

¹⁹³ In FSIN facilities, prohibitions and rules are imposed that cause constant suffering to the detainees. For instance, in the detention center in Donskoye, Tula region, prisoners were forbidden to sit during the day, and at night they were twice forced to stand for two hours⁷⁷. Detainees often stood for ten hours straight, which disrupted blood circulation in their lower extremities, causing swelling and loss of sensitivity. When people fell due to exhaustion, guards would enter the cell and beat everyone inside. There are accounts of how guards forced detainees to memorize the Russian anthem and sing Soviet songs⁷⁸. Those who did not sing were beaten. Sometimes detainees were forced to watch propaganda programs on Russian television.

¹⁹⁴ Many civilian detainees and prisoners of war had frostbite⁷⁹ due to inadequate conditions of detention in Ukraine. This is detailed in Section 1 of the report. There were no leniencies in the regime for individuals with such injuries; they were also beaten. Those with frostbitten feet sometimes could not get out of bed or maintain their balance. The cells reeked of rotting bodies. Because of this smell, the guards further insulted and mocked the sick. Medical assistance was not provided everywhere⁸⁰. In some facilities, frostbite places were treated with brilliant green. Sometimes the sick did this themselves, as the medical staff refused to approach them due to the stench. In some places, antibiotics were prescribed. When gangrene began, civilians were hospitalized in facilities outside the prison, where amputations were performed. One victim's testimony recalls the exchange of Ukrainian prisoners in April 2022. They were transported to the exchange location by plane, and the guards demanded that individuals with frostbite wrap the affected areas of their bodies in garbage bags to prevent the unpleasant smell of rotting tissues in the plane⁸¹.

3. Interrogations

¹⁹⁵ All civilians whose testimonies are used in this report were interrogated in FSIN facilities. This was conducted by the Federal Security Service (FSB) or the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation. The interviewed individuals identified these officials by their uniforms, patches, and insignia. On the protocols that detainees signed, they sometimes saw the rank and place of service of the person conducting the interrogation. Several cases were documented where civilians were transported for interrogations outside the prison to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation⁸². In some locations, interrogations were also conducted by members of the Russian National Guard. There are instances where during interrogations, in addition to an FSB officer, special forces personnel were present and tortured detainees during questioning. Interrogations can occur with or without the use of torture. During interrogations, civilians are asked the same questions as those in detention facilities in Ukraine immediately after capture, including questions about cooperation with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, participation in the ATO/JFO, and the location of Ukrainian military units. Some questions repeat narratives of Russian propaganda, such as those about biological laboratories in Ukraine, biological and nuclear weapons, and the Right Sector.

¹⁹⁶ There is no information suggesting that the numerous interrogations are being conducted as part of initiated criminal cases. One of the interviewees recalls how an investigator from the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation irritably asked the guards why they were bringing civilians for interrogation and what information he could possibly obtain from them⁸³.

4. Legal status of civilian detainees

¹⁹⁷ None of the civilians detained by Russian military forces in the northern regions of Ukraine, about whom MIHR has information, were formally charged or held legally accountable on Russian territory. The only document providing information about a detainee's status is a certificate identifying the individual as someone who resisted the "special military operation" (SVO). Civilians received these certificates in filtration camps. At the same time, the concept of "resisting the SVO" is not established in Russian law, and such an offense does not exist

76. Ukrainian defender lost 77 kg in Russian captivity - Lubinets, Focus, 7.12.2024. The majority of military and civilians returning from places of detention lose significant weight.

77. Testimony 10, Z. M.

78. Testimony 6, H. M.; Testimony 14, M. A

79. Testimony 6, H. M.; Testimony 14, M. A.; Testimony 10, Z. M.; Testimony 4, R. Yu.

80. Testimony 2, P. B.

81. Testimony 14, M. A.

82. Testimony 7, K. D.; Testimony 14, M. A.

83. Testimony 7, K. D.

in either the Russian Criminal Code or the Code of Administrative Offenses. Sometimes, relatives of civilians detained in Russia receive letters from FSIN institutions with information about the detainees, which also state that the person was detained for "resisting the SVO."

¹⁹⁸ The detention of civilians in Russia under an incommunicado regime, without notification of the reasons for detention, and for an indefinite period, violates IHL. The Fourth Geneva Convention contains an exhaustive list of grounds for the detention and deportation of civilians of a belligerent state, followed by their placement in detention. To date, MIHR has no information indicating that Russia has complied with the requirements of the Geneva Conventions when detaining Ukrainian civilians⁸⁴.

¹⁹⁹ The status of civilians held without formal charges in Russian FSIN institutions is not regulated by any norms of Russian national legislation, IHL, or IHRL. They are individuals whom Russia has arbitrarily detained during an international armed conflict and is unlawfully holding on its territory. Due to the legal uncertainty, there is not even a consistent term to describe these individuals. In the public domain, terms like "civilian hostages," "civilian prisoners," and "illegally detained civilians" are used.

5. Transportation of deported civilians within the territory of the Russian Federation

²⁰⁰ Detainees are frequently transported between various FSIN institutions. By the end of 2022, the majority of civilians and prisoners of war who had been taken to Russia had been transported at least once. Currently, according to information from released civilians and prisoners of war, all detainees have been moved between multiple detention facilities.

²⁰¹ The conditions of detention in these facilities are nearly identical. The transportation of a large number of detainees requires additional FSIN resources. This raises the question of the purpose behind such constant transportation.

²⁰² According to the victims, transportation is used as an additional means of pressure on civilians and prisoners of war. A person, even in conditions of constant abuse and inhumane treatment, partially adapts to the environment in one facility, forming friendly bonds with other prisoners, and the regime and behavior of the staff become predictable. People learn how to avoid beatings and torture. However, being transferred to a new facility throws the prisoner back into total uncertainty, depriving them of even the smallest sense of control over their life. During transportation, the process of "reception" always repeats. All of this serves as an additional method of demoralizing the detainees, so they completely lose hope for release.

6. Deaths of civilians in FSIN facilities and return of bodies⁸⁵

²⁰³ According to victims' testimonies, MIHR is aware of civilian and prisoner of war deaths in FSIN facilities. Deaths are also reported during the repatriation of the bodies of the deceased.

²⁰⁴ Based on MIHR data, since the start of the full-scale invasion, more than 100 bodies of civilians and prisoners of war who were captured in the occupied regions of Ukraine have been returned from places of detention in Russia. The exact number of returned bodies is not disclosed.

²⁰⁵ Some of the deceased have been identified through testimonies⁸⁶. However, most of their names remain unknown. For example, one witness described how a man groaned for a long time in a neighboring cell before a guard shouted that they had a corpse. The sound of the body being carried through the corridor could be heard. There are many such reports, but they do not allow for a determination of the total number of deaths in FSIN facilities. The causes of death mentioned by witnesses are mainly systematic beatings, torture, and the lack of medical care.

²⁰⁶ Of the 287 civilians identified by MIHR, who were detained by Russian forces in the northern regions of Ukraine and taken to Russia at the start of the full-scale invasion, a significant portion remains imprisoned. As of now, efforts by the Ukrainian government to free these people are known. This is specifically addressed in Paragraph 4 of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's "Peace Formula." However, as of September 2024, MIHR has no information on any substantive negotiations regarding the release of civilians captured by Russia.

More than
100 bodies
of civilians and
prisoners of war
have been returned

⁸⁴. For more information on the legal assessment of Russia's actions, see Part 4 of this report.

⁸⁵. "Mission to rescue: what happens in Russian captivity and how to prevent the deaths of Ukrainian soldiers", MIHR, 21.02.2024. Given that Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war are often held together, this report provides insight into the circumstances of the deaths of Ukrainian civilians in the FSIN.

⁸⁶. Testimony 7, K. D. This witness and others reported the death of a civilian due to beatings during the "reception". The identity of the deceased was established by comparing the testimonies of several released prisoners who were with him in the SIZO. The death occurred in 2022, but the body has not yet been returned to Ukraine, and the deceased's relatives have not been informed of his death.

Those involved in crimes against the civilian population



²⁰⁷ As of September 2024, Ukrainian courts have issued **94 verdicts** in cases under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (CCU)⁸⁷. The number of cases heard or being heard with the presence of the accused is six⁸⁸.

²⁰⁸ In the majority of cases initiated by Ukrainian investigative bodies under Article 438 of the CCU, the identities of the suspects have not been established. Russian military personnel and officers of other RF structures try to hide their faces and other identifying information while committing crimes. During detention, transportation, or interrogations, the eyes and ears of the victims are covered, and they are forbidden to raise their heads. When civilians are transported to an FSIN facility, attempts are made to hide the name and location of the facility from the captives by painting over stamps and labels with the institution's name on furniture and other items. When signing interrogation protocols, detained civilians usually see only the space for their signature, with the rest of the text covered. Thus, they cannot see the name or rank of the person who interrogated them and cannot identify the perpetrators. The Russian military personnel who committed the studied crimes on the territory of Ukraine are partly still in the RAF and are participating in combat operations in Ukraine⁸⁹. Some of them are in Russia, while others have died in combat, making it difficult or impossible to trace them.

²⁰⁹ The identification of perpetrators who belong to the FSB, the National Guard of the RF, the Investigative Committee, and the Russian Military Police is even more difficult, as they mostly participated in crimes outside of Ukraine. As for FSIN officers, their involvement in crimes against Ukrainian civilians deported from the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions has been recorded by us exclusively on Russian territory.

²¹⁰ The holder and controller of information about suspects in war crimes committed in Ukraine, including the units and structures to which they belong, is the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) of Ukraine. To obtain this information, MIHR sent a request to the PGO. However, they responded that this information is not subject to dissemination and cannot be provided upon requests from public organizations.

²¹¹ Despite this, the data collected and processed by MIHR is sufficient to establish patterns and overall trends in the crimes we have studied. The analysis reflected in Sections 1 and 2 of this report provides enough grounds to believe that each criminal act described is neither isolated nor the result of individual perpetrators' intentions. Instead, all of these acts are part of a unified intent and policy that connects the perpetrators with their command. The analyzed facts of the presence of the RAF in the northern regions of Ukraine, as well as the involvement of other Russian structures in the crimes we investigated, sufficiently demonstrate the awareness of middle and senior commanders about the crimes committed by their subordinates. This is why the commanders of these units may also be culpable for the crimes committed. Nevertheless, there is no information as of today that Russia is investigating these crimes or holding those responsible accountable.

²¹² This section provides data on the military units that were present in the three northern regions during the occupation, as well as other Russian structures involved in the crimes under investigation. The information in this section is corroborated by official reports from Ukrainian authorities and data from international organizations' reports. We are convinced that there are reasonable grounds to consider the command of the listed units responsible for the crimes under investigation.

87. Supra 4.

88. According to the data of the trial monitoring conducted by the MIHR.

89. "There are almost no personnel". The brigade involved in the events in Bucha is almost destroyed, Radio Liberty, 11.08.2022. The 64th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade of the 35th Combined Arms Army of the Eastern Military District of the Russian Armed Forces, which committed crimes against civilians in Bucha and the village of Andriivka, Kyiv region, subsequently suffered significant losses in Ukraine. It is likely that many of the perpetrators of the crimes under investigation are no longer alive.

Units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and other structures involved in the crimes under investigation

* The names of units are indicated on the maps

Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB)

²¹³ The FSB is part of the executive branch of the Russian Federation and is the successor to the Committee for State Security (KGB) of the USSR. In June 2022, the United States imposed sanctions on the FSB for its involvement in violations of IHL and IHRL on the territory of Ukraine⁹⁰. The head of the FSB since 2008 has been General of the Army Alexander Vasilyevich Bortnikov.

²¹⁴ Testimonies used in this report mention the involvement of FSB officers in the investigated crimes. In particular, victims report the presence of the FSB in detention locations on Ukrainian territory (such as Hostomel airport, the village of Dymer in Kyiv region), in intermediary filtration points outside Ukraine (such as the village of Glushkovo in Russia's Kursk region, and the city of Narovlya in the Gomel region of Belarus), and in all FSIN facilities where the interviewed civilian detainees were held. FSB officers primarily conduct interrogations, often using torture, cruel, and inhuman treatment.

²¹⁵ Reports by international organizations note the presence of the FSB in the TOT and its involvement in violations of the rights of Ukrainian citizens. Numerous reports from the United Nations Monitoring Mission on Human Rights in Ukraine⁹¹ (UNMMRU), the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine mention the FSB's involvement in documented violations⁹². A report by the British non-governmental organization Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) also provides a detailed analysis of the FSB's role in preparing and facilitating the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022⁹³.

Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN)

²¹⁶ The FSIN is an executive body of the Russian Federation, managed by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. It performs law enforcement, control, and supervision functions in the area of enforcing criminal punishments for convicted individuals, detains persons suspected or accused of committing crimes, as well as defendants under custody, and provides their protection and transport. The head of the FSIN is General of Internal Service Arkady Alexandrovich Gostev.

²¹⁷ The leadership and rank-and-file officers of the FSIN are involved in the commission of the crimes we have studied, as they ensure the indefinite detention of civilians detained in the northern regions of Ukraine. Since none of the witnesses or victims interviewed by MIHR in Russia were granted the status of convicted, suspected, or accused persons, the FSIN had no authority to detain them.

90. "US imposes new round of sanctions against Russia", Voice of America, 28.06.2022.

91. Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, Human Rights Council, 15.03.2023., Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, Human Rights Council, 19.10.2023., Supra 8.

92. Report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Violations in Ukraine to the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council, Human Rights Council, 18.03.2024.

93. Preliminary Lessons from Russia's Unconventional Operations During the RussoUkrainian War, February 2022–February 2023, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 29.03.2023.

"Work hard and show **no mercy**"

²¹⁸ Therefore, the only lawful action the FSIN should have taken concerning the detained Ukrainian civilians would have been their immediate and unconditional release. Such actions would comply with the national legislation of the Russian Federation, IHL, and IHRL.

²¹⁹ The FSIN is mentioned in the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine as follows: "A former special forces officer recounted that at the very start of the full-scale invasion, a general heading a regional FSIN office held a meeting with personnel assigned to prisons in the Russian Federation, where Ukrainian prisoners of war were held. The general declared that 'Nazis are not human' and ordered his staff to 'work hard and show no mercy.' The special forces officer clarified that this meant the use of physical violence against detainees, including beatings with rubber batons, electric shocks using tasers, and other methods. Based on his personal experience and knowledge of the FSIN's operations, he stated that due to the hierarchical structure of the penitentiary service, such treatment could only have occurred with the permission of his unit commander⁹⁴. Furthermore, the involvement of this structure in the commission of the studied crimes is evident, as without its participation, it would have been impossible to use 51 penitentiary facilities to detain Ukrainian civilians on Russian territory.⁹⁵"

Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation (IC RF)

²²⁰ The IC RF is a federal body responsible for criminal justice proceedings and other powers in accordance with Russian law. The Chairman of the IC RF since 2011 has been General of Justice Alexander Ivanovich Bastrykin.

²²¹ In the analyzed testimonies, there is information indicating that investigators from the IC RF interrogated civilians in FSIN facilities on Russian territory. This is also mentioned in the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism report: "*Regardless of the type of detention facilities, whether official or not, the Mission was informed that they typically maintain contact with the Federal Security Service (FSB) or penitentiary authorities, including through regular visits by FSB agents and Investigative Committee officers to conduct interrogations.*⁹⁶"

94. Supra 92.

95. According to the interactive map of places of detention created by the MIHR, as of September 2024, we have identified 51 such institutions in the Russian Federation. There may be more.

96. Supra 8.

Photo from the MIHR field mission



Legal analysis of the investigated crimes

²²² The circumstances of the treatment of civilians from occupied territories, as detailed above, allow the following conclusions:

- (01) Russian military personnel had unlimited freedom of action during the detentions of civilians, often based on orally conveyed suspicions.
- (02) The criteria for detention were arbitrary. While they may have been linked to ensuring the security of the occupying administration or forces, they were not clear enough for civilians to predict what behavior might lead to their persecution by Russian military personnel.
- (03) Detained civilians were placed in criminal justice detention facilities on Russian territory⁹⁷, and in makeshift detention centers on the occupied territories. According to Russian law, such facilities are designated for those convicted of crimes, suspects, the accused, or those on trial in criminal cases. None of the witnesses interviewed by the MIHR held any of these statuses.
- (04) There is reason to believe that detention centers for Ukrainian civilians in Russia were, if not pre-prepared, at least planned for this purpose⁹⁸.
- (05) The investigated facts allow the conclusion that all individual unlawful acts committed against civilian victims (illegal detentions, deprivation of liberty, torture, cruel and inhumane treatment, executions, killings, and others) were not isolated incidents. They were part of a premeditated and coordinated set of actions.
- (06) The nature of the detentions and subsequent actions against civilians reveals a coordinated interaction among various branches of the RAF, the FSB, the Russian National Guard, the FSIN, the Russian military police, the IC RF, and others. Additionally, in Section 2, there is mention of the presence of Belarusian Armed Forces personnel in the town of Narovlya, Belarus. Although this report does not specifically investigate their involvement due to insufficient data, their presence indicates a broader range of actors involved in these crimes.
- (07) The execution of the investigated crimes, deportations, and the detention of civilians involved significant human and material resources. This included the use of ground and air transport for the centralized transfer of detained civilians, their guarding, record-keeping, provision of medical care, and conducting interrogations. Although the detention conditions and the quality of medical assistance for Ukrainian civilians were and remain extremely poor, a large staff was required to manage all stages of these crimes in all detention facilities.
- (08) The use of significant material and human resources can only be authorized by the middle and senior levels of command of the structures involved in the crimes. Ordinary perpetrators of these crimes do not have the authority or power to make such decisions.
- (09) The prolonged and unjustified detention of a large number of civilians without any legal status, coupled with the Russian political leadership's refusal to negotiate their release, suggests a premeditated policy of systematic persecution of the civilian population, orchestrated at the highest levels of Russia's military-political leadership.

IV

97. Detention centers, prisons, colonies, etc.

98. In their testimonies, all the interviewees stated that they had never been held in the FSIN facilities with Russian prisoners, only with Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war. This clearly indicates that the facilities were designed specifically for Ukrainians.

223 Consequently, the mass attacks on civilians, composed of the investigated crimes, exhibit characteristics of crimes against humanity.

224 Crimes against humanity are characterized by their targeting of civilian populations and by their widespread and systematic nature⁹⁹. The Rome Statute of the ICC defines a widespread and systematic attack as follows:

"An attack directed against any civilian population means a course of conduct involving the multiple commission of acts referred to in paragraph 1 against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit such an attack."

225 Crimes against humanity (CAH) are committed through acts that, under other circumstances, could be classified as war crimes (WCS). The distinguishing criterion between CAH and WCS is the context in which they are committed: CAH are always carried out within the framework of a widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population, which is at least partially understood by the perpetrators.

226 The characteristic of the widespread nature of the attack is a quantitative feature of CAH. This can be deduced from the number of victims or the extent of the attack over a large geographic area. The systematic nature of the attack is qualitative and implies an organized pattern of violence that makes random occurrences unlikely. Each individual act of violence in this context must align with a pre-determined plan or policy. The subjective element of crimes against humanity requires both intent and awareness (as per Article 30 of the RS) regarding specific acts and the overall context in which they are committed.

227 Due to their systematic nature, crimes against humanity are more dangerous to the societal interests protected by international criminal law than war crimes. For instance, the killing or unlawful detention of a civilian by a soldier outside the context of a widespread and systematic attack constitutes a war crime. However, the same act within the context of such an attack qualifies as a crime against humanity.

228 Applying the aforementioned legal principles to the factual circumstances, we conclude that the individual crimes against the civilian population described in Sections 1 and 2 of this report should be considered, at a minimum, as war crimes. However, when viewed collectively, taking into account the interconnectedness and shared intent of all participants, they very likely constitute CAH. For the acts of persecution against civilians to qualify as crimes against humanity, it is necessary to meet the criteria of both widespread and systematic nature. Therefore:

99. Crimes against humanity are criminalized in Article 7 of the RS: For the purpose of this Statute, "crime against humanity" means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack: (a) Murder; (b) Extermination; (c) Enslavement; (d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population; (e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; (f) Torture; (g) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; (h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court; (i) Enforced disappearance of persons.

1) The widespread nature of the investigated crimes

229 As mentioned earlier, the widespread nature of an attack in the context of committing CAH is a quantitative characteristic. International criminal law does not establish a minimum number of victims required for an attack to be considered widespread. This is an evaluative category, determined on a case-by-case basis in the commission of a potential CAH.

230 As of September 2024, there is no official data on the number of civilians detained in the northern regions of Ukraine. The MIHR has documented 399 cases of detentions. However, these are only the cases known to the organization. Additionally, not all witnesses and victims known to MIHR are willing to testify about the crimes committed against them.

231 Although the exact number of detained civilians in the northern regions is unknown, the widespread nature of the attack becomes apparent when all available data on crimes against civilians in the northern regions of Ukraine and in the occupied territories as a whole are analyzed comprehensively.

232 Most reports and studies on violations of IHL during the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict contain data on the systematic detention of civilians in temporarily occupied territories. This is particularly evident in reports from the OSCE¹⁰⁰, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine¹⁰¹, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine¹⁰², and others.

233 In the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism report, it is noted:

"As the Mission established, the practice of arbitrary detention of Ukrainian civilians was widespread and demonstrated characteristics of systematic, consistent, and intentional behavior specifically targeting the civilian population of Ukraine. This leads the Mission to conclude that the contextual element of crimes against humanity is present, and that at least some instances of arbitrary detention of Ukrainian civilians may qualify as crimes against humanity."¹⁰³

The widespread nature of the attack is also partially supported by the nature of civilian detentions described in Section 1 of the report. As shown by the description of individual cases, detentions sometimes occurred merely because people were near military equipment or personnel of the RAF, or in settlements previously shelled by Ukrainian forces. Consequently, RAF soldiers considered all local adults as potential "fire spotters," suspecting them of collaborating with Ukrainian forces.

234 Simply being present in an area controlled by the RAF at certain times created a danger for civilians, significantly increasing the likelihood of being detained and, as a result, subjected to torture, inhumane treatment, or deportation beyond Ukraine. All of this suggests the widespread nature of the crimes in the context of crimes against humanity.

2) The systematic nature of the investigated crimes

235 The systematic nature of crimes is a qualitative characteristic of CAH. When crimes are systematic, they are not the result of isolated, unrelated criminal acts. Instead, each perpetrator is somewhat aware that their actions are part of the implementation of a common plan or policy. In the case of the investigated crimes, all the perpetrators acted in a coordinated manner. At every stage of the crimes, none of the perpetrators questioned why the detained civilians were being held or how they should be treated¹⁰⁴. However, it is likely that the perpetrators did not have a complete understanding of the broader policy or the full scope of civilian deportations, as described in Sections 1 and 2 of the report. For instance, a Russian soldier who detained a person in a combat zone because they appeared suspicious was unlikely aware that the detainee would later be transported to a filtration point outside of Ukraine and subsequently placed in a FSIN facility, where they would be held indefinitely without formal charges. It is also unclear whether FSIN leadership, when ordering the placement of Ukrainian civilians in their facilities, knew the circumstances and reasons for their detention in Ukraine. However, the lack of full awareness among all perpetrators regarding the circumstances of the attack on civilians does not negate the element of systematicity in the attack. All actions were coordinated, and collectively they constitute a singular, large-scale criminal act—an ongoing potential crime against humanity.

100. Web site of the OSCE.

101. Web site of the Un human rights monitoring mission in ukraine.

102. Web site of the United Nations Ukraine.

103. Supra 8.

104. In this regard, the case of witness P.B., whose circumstances of detention are described in Part 1 of the report, is illustrative. The Russian military detained him in the Kyiv region at the beginning of the occupation, interrogated him with the use of torture and released him without explanation after a while. Not far from the place where he was released, P.B. came across another group of Russian military, who contacted those who had detained P.B. earlier by radio. At the same time, the military did not ask about the reasons for the detention. P.B. heard them ask on the radio: "Why didn't you kill him?" The man was detained again, taken to the Antonov airport in Kyiv region, and then to Russia. Such coordinated actions by the Russian military can be traced in all the testimonies of the victims. In none of them are there any cases when the detention caused protests from the Russian military or other officials at further stages of the crimes, or an intention to release civilians because of the illegality of their detention. There is evidence of difficulties that perpetrators had in detaining civilians, but this usually related to the resources for their detention. For example, civilians could not be accepted in a certain place of detention because it was overcrowded, there was not enough transport for transportation, there was no food, etc. This sometimes led to disputes between the perpetrators of crimes, but the question of why detainees were deprived of their liberty and kept in inhumane conditions never arose.

To the authorities of the Russian Federation:

- 1 — Immediately cease the practice of unlawful detention and imprisonment of Ukrainian civilians. Release all civilians unlawfully held in the territory of the Russian Federation and temporarily occupied territories (TOT) of Ukraine.
- 2 — Initiate investigations into the legality of the presence of Ukrainian civilians in FSIN facilities.
- 3 — Urgently compile and provide the Ukrainian side with lists of detained civilians held in the Russian Federation, including information on their current whereabouts.
- 4 — Grant safe and unimpeded access to representatives of the ICRC to detained Ukrainian civilians.
- 5 — End the practice of holding civilians incommunicado, and ensure their right to unrestricted communication with their families.
- 6 — Conduct effective investigations into cases of torture, cruel, and inhuman treatment by representatives of the RAF and Russian state bodies towards the civilian population of Ukraine, and hold those responsible accountable.
- 7 — Ensure the application of the norms of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocol I to detained civilians who are being held in conditions of imprisonment on Russian territory.
- 8 — Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and bring national legislation in line with the provisions of the Rome Statute.
- 9 — Ensure the payment of fair compensation to Ukrainian civilians who were unlawfully detained during the armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

To the authorities of Ukraine:

- 1 — Ensure effective collection, accounting, and systematization of information about civilians detained by the Russian Federation.
- 2 — Ensure effective investigation and prosecution of individuals responsible for unlawful detention of civilians, torture, other forms of cruel treatment, and deportation to the territory of the Russian Federation.
- 3 — Implement the provisions of Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the ICC into the Criminal Code of Ukraine.
- 4 — Ensure effective cooperation with the International Criminal Court regarding the investigation of probable crimes against humanity committed in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

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

- 1 — Facilitate the investigation of crimes against humanity committed in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine related to persecution, killings, unlawful deprivation of liberty, enforced disappearances, torture, and other forms of cruel treatment.
- 2 — Pay attention to the signs of a unified state policy in the actions of various state structures of the Russian Federation involved in the persecution of civilians in the occupied territories of Ukraine, and strive to establish the circumstances and individuals involved in the development and implementation of such a policy.

Patterns

Location	KYIV REGION			CHERNIHIV REGION		
	At the time of arrest	Antonov Airport	Golf Club "Golfstream"	At the time of arrest	School Basement in Vyshneve village	Woodworking facility in Vyshneve village
The lack of water	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
The lack of food	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Inability to go to the toilet	✓		✓		✓	
Improper t° conditions (cold/rain/snow)	✓		✓			✓
The lack of light in the place of detention		✓			✓	✓
Tied hands	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tied legs	✓		✓			✓
Blindfolded	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Beatings during interrogations	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Torture with electric shocks		✓				
Beatings outside of interrogations	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Other forms of torture and ill-treatment	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Imitation of an execution	✓	✓				
Other forms of ill-treatment (psychological pressure, threats)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Deaths (as a result of torture, beatings, and failure to provide medical care)	✓	✓	✓			✓

		SUMY REGION				RUSSIAN FEDERATION
	Boiler House in Novyi Bykiv village	At the time of arrest	Railway Station in the Town of Trostianets	SE "Boromlianska PMK 145"	Kernel Grain Elevator in the Town of Trostianets	Pre-trial detention centers
	✓		✓	✓		
	✓		✓	✓		✓
			✓	✓	✓	
				✓		
	✓				✓	
	✓		✓		✓	
			✓		✓	
	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	✓		✓			✓
						✓
	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓		✓	✓		✓
	✓		✓			
	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓		✓	✓		✓

The Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR) is a Ukrainian NGO that combines journalism and human rights advocacy to expose Russia's war crimes in Ukraine and respond to human rights violations related to Russian aggression. MIHR investigates war crimes, torture, enforced disappearances, and violations of civilian and military rights in the context of war. The organisation also documents other human rights violations, monitors war-related trials, prepares analyses and recommendations, and engages in national and international advocacy to achieve justice and ensure human rights and freedoms.

More information about the activities of the Media Initiative for Human Rights:



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