



Why Russia is a Terrorist State

**An evaluation and report of evidence against Russia by
the UK Friends of Ukraine and the case for designation
as a state sponsor of terrorism**

OUR WORK IN 2023



POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

18

A total of 18 UK MPs and Peers taken to Ukraine on two separate delegations



HUMANITARIAN AID

7

Seven aid convoys organised, delivering thousands of items of aid to those in need



STRENGTHENING TIES

319

Engagement and literature on support sent to Councillors from all 319 Councils in England



TWINNING COMMUNITIES

7

Discussion on twinning with seven councils and agreements signed by Leeds and Havant



EDUCATION

100

Supported English Language Camps delivering lessons to over a hundred children



RECONSTRUCTION

65

First delivery of 65 solar panels to Chernihiv as part of our reconstruction efforts

About the UK Friends of Ukraine

The UK Friends of Ukraine was founded following the One Year Anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We want to keep up the momentum in terms of support from the UK during the years ahead and after the war through the reconstruction effort.

Our organisation is run on a not-for-profit basis. We have a track record in work in the UK Parliament, which we want to use to support Ukraine.

Since forming we have a wide range of projects that include delivering humanitarian aid, twinning Councils, improving conversational English in Ukraine and reconstruction.

We are supported by an Advisory Board and work closely with Our Partners in the UK and Ukraine.

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Why Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism

With thanks to Lead Author Stephen Hoffman

Foreword

By Cllr Alex Rennie, Director of UK Friends of Ukraine and Leader of Havant Borough Council

Two years ago Europe was asleep at the wheel as mass build up of troops on the Ukrainian - Russian border led to a war many in the West thought wasn't possible. We then watched, first in horror, as tanks rolled across the countryside towards Kyiv and then in solidarity as the bravery of the people of Ukraine shone through in the defence of their country.

But throughout the last two years, it has been clear that war and conquest is not an honorable endeavor for Putin's Russia. They have brutalised occupied populations, raped and tortured women; and kidnapped children from their homes. The actions of Russia over the last two years are the actions of a despotic regime that uses war crimes as a way of attempting to subdue the people of Ukraine.

Over the last year the UK Friends of Ukraine has been at the forefront of supporting Ukraine achieve victory. We have taken Members of Parliament to Ukraine, delivered humanitarian aid and supported education projects and efforts for reconstruction.

Throughout this time, I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of British people, who have donated humanitarian aid, thrown their doors open to strangers via the Homes for Ukraine scheme and donated money to charitable causes. They have done this as they know Ukraine's fight for freedom is Europe's fight for its future and we cannot let them Fail.

People in the UK see Russia for what it is, a despotic regime of pure evil. That's why we have launched a grassroots campaign calling on the UK Government to designate Russia a state sponsor of terrorism.

This report aims to bring together the many examples of state terrorism by Russia, collected from publicly available sources, many of which are harrowing. It serves though as a reminder that we cannot stand idly from a distance while such horrors are happening in Europe.

My thanks for the report goes to its lead author Stephen Hoffman, our Communications Manager, who has put countless hours of research into making this report possible.

Why Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism by UK Friends of Ukraine

1. Introduction

UK Friends of Ukraine are calling for the UK Government to recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, as, throughout its invasion of Ukraine since 2014 and the full scale invasion of Ukraine since 24 February 2022, Russia has applied the tools of terrorism through its Army and pro Kremlin mercenary proxies, with the aim of terrorising Ukraine and its people into submission.

Specifically, we are calling on the UK Government to pass legislation to recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, similar to how the U.S. Government through the U.S. Secretary of State has passed legislation to recognise countries such as Iran and North Korea as state sponsors of terrorism. We believe that the House of Commons and House of Lords could put pressure on the UK Government to do so by voting to support a resolution recognising Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism and calling on the UK Government to listen to UK Parliament and enact legislation in line with the will of Parliament.

Russia's war crimes in Ukraine both since the full scale invasion of Ukraine began and for 10 years since it first invaded and occupied parts of Ukraine are beyond evil, even during times of war. They are based on trying to terrorise Ukrainians into submission and are a clear form of state terrorism through bombing on an industrial scale leading to mass murder and destruction across Ukraine, mass kidnapping and mass torture.

As of 11 January 2024, since Russia began its full scale invasion of Ukraine according to figures provided by the Ukrainian Government, at least:

- 10,200 Ukrainian civilians have been murdered;
- 520 children have been murdered and a further 1,200 injured;
- 19,300 injured civilians;
- 167,200 civilian buildings have been destroyed;
- 123,201 war crimes have been registered;
- On 30 July 2023 Russian Children's Commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova, said in a report that more than 700,000 Ukrainian children had been taken from Ukraine to Russia since the start of the full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many of these children will have had attempts to brainwash them, so they are opposed to an independent Ukraine, free of Russian occupation and influence.

- The Ukrainian Government has stated that over 19,500 Ukrainian children have been abducted from Ukraine to Russia as of 8 January 2024, according to information from the UN. Of that number, included are 3,900 orphans or those without parental care. Only 387 children have been brought back so far, according to the Ukrainian national database, Children of War. The number refers only to those cases that were officially recorded and the real figure is believed to be considerably higher. Only a few of these children have been returned home.

The actual numbers could sadly end up being considerably higher, as information from many locations with intense hostilities is not yet available or confirmed. Furthermore, it is particularly hard to gather information from areas of Ukraine currently occupied by Russia and every time Ukraine has liberated parts of Ukraine, as seen in Bucha, Irpin, Kharkiv region and parts of Kherson region, they have discovered despicable war crimes committed by Russia's Army.

On top of this, there have been many reports of rape carried out by Russian soldiers against Ukrainian women and men, the abduction and torture of Ukrainian officials to occupied parts of Ukraine or to Russia itself and horrific abuse of Ukrainian Prisoners of War. Furthermore, Russia has caused long lasting environmental destruction, such as Russia's destruction of the #Nova #Kakhovska Dam on the morning of 6 June 2023.

Russia systematically violates human rights, international law, UN regulations and a number of other international obligations, wages aggression on the territory of other countries, has committed numerous war crimes and also carries out hostile actions of an economic nature, in particular in the field of energy.

Russia's continuing invasion and occupation of parts of Ukraine is an attempt to alter borders by force through state sponsored terrorism. It is a crime against peace.

The forms of terror that Russia uses against Ukrainian citizens are crimes against humanity. The many forms of terrorism in its invasion of Ukraine include mass bombardment of Ukrainian civilians, mass executions, abductions include the abduction of children on a mass scale, torture and sexual abuse.

Furthermore, by burning and looting Ukrainian lands, not allowing Ukraine to export agricultural products for a long time, Russia brought the threat of famine to many countries in Africa and Asia. Moreover, Russia is exploiting Ukrainian nuclear power plants to blackmail Ukrainians and the international community.

At the behest of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Russian Federation has directed and authorized the indiscriminate targeting of densely populated civilian areas and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and Chechnya, Georgia and Syria as well. This has resulted in the murders of countless innocent men, women and children. Furthermore, the Russian Federation has committed numerous summary executions against innocent civilians and have attempted to cover their atrocities with mass graves across Ukraine. Putin is a leading international terrorist in our view, running the country for the purposes of terrorism, as we are seeing right now in the full scale invasion of Ukraine.

We agree with Ukraine's Foreign Minister, Dmytro Kuleba, who on 7 January 2024 said Russia's destruction of Ukrainian cities with missiles and drones on a daily basis is part of its primary military "strategy," which can be phrased as if you can't capture something, you have to utterly destroy it. He said it at a joint press conference with Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoko Kamikawa in Kyiv. Specifically, he stated "I emphasised to my counterpart that the main Russian military strategy is this: if you can't capture something, you have to completely destroy it. That is why Russian missiles and drones destroy Ukrainian cities every day. They can't capture us so they are trying to destroy us."

We should be shocked, but 9 years of Russian terrorism in Ukraine means sadly we have come to expect horrific acts of terrorism by the Russian occupier.

Every single day in its invasion and occupation of Ukraine, Russia shows itself to be a terrorist state, with its hands dripping with the blood of so many innocent Ukrainians. All the evidence in deeds by Russia demonstrate that it is a terrorist state and therefore it is incumbent for the UK Government to view Russia for the terrorist state it undoubtedly is.

That is why we are calling on the UK Government to proscribe Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, following the examples of Governments in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, whilst leading the way for other members of the international community to follow. We hope that many of you can amplify our voice by supporting the campaign.

If you agree with us that the UK Government should recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, please sign our petition [via the link](#).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. Crimes by Ukrainian region

The Tribunal for Putin (T4P) has collated Russian war crimes by Ukrainian regions and produced the following data as of 12 January 2024. Their database represents one of the largest concentrations of information about the war in Ukraine. It records probable war crimes (incidents) that T4P have been able to document. The information contained in the database makes no claim to be complete and final. The true total for certain war crimes is almost certainly significantly higher than those T4P have been able to document, especially in areas where the war is most intense and areas occupied by Russia. The total number of recorded war crimes by region according to T4P are the following:

- Kharkiv region - 15,283
- Zaporizhzhia region - 10,377
- Donetsk region - 9,722
- Kherson region - 5,906
- Chernihiv region - 4,000
- Luhansk region - 3,510
- Kyiv region - 3,336
- Mykolaiv region - 2,438

¹ War.ukraine.ua, Russia's war crimes, 11/01/2024, <https://war.ukraine.ua/russia-war-crimes/>

² Radio Free Europe/Radio Free Liberty, More Than 700,000 Ukrainian Children Taken To Russia Since Full-Scale War Started, Official Says, 31/07/2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-children-taken-ukraine/32527298.html>

³ Deborah Amos, Russia deports thousands of Ukrainian children. Investigators say that's a war crime, 14/02/2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/14/1156500561/russia-ukraine-children-deportation-possible-war-crime-report>

⁴ Kyiv Post, Qatar Acts as Intermediary to Return Ukrainian Children from Russia, 06/10/2023, <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/22808>

⁵ Senator Lindsey Graham, S.Res.623 - A resolution calling on the Secretary of State to designate the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism, 23/06/22, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-resolution/623/text>

⁶ Yuri Zoria, Ukraine FM Kuleba: Russians can't capture us so they are trying to destroy us, 07/01/2024, <https://euromaidanpress.com/2024/01/07/ukraine-fm-kuleba-russians-cant-capture-us-so-they-are-trying-to-destroy-us/>

⁷ Sky News, Ukraine war live, 10/01/2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/14/1156500561/russia-ukraine-children-deportation-possible-war-crime-report>

⁸ Dinara Khalilova and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Ombudsman: Putin's Jan.4 decree will facilitate granting Russian citizenship to deported Ukrainian children, 06/01/2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/lubinets-putins-jan-4-decree-will-facilitate-granting-russian-citizenship-to-deported-ukrainian-children/>

⁹ Vindobona, Alarming number of abducted children in the Ukraine war, 08/01/2024, <https://www.vindobona.org/article/alarming-number-of-abducted-children-in-the-ukraine-war>

- Dnipropetrovsk Region - 2,390
- Sumy region - 2267
- Odesa region - 1,003
- Zhytomyr Region - 742
- Cherkasy Region - 204
- Khmelnytskyi Region - 118
- Kirovohrad Region - 103
- Lviv Region - 70
- Rivne Region - 60
- Poltava Region - 55
- Vinnytsia Region - 32
- Ivano-Frankivsk Region - 14
- Ternopil Region - 13
- Volyn Region - 9
- Chernivtsi Region - 6
- Zakarpattia Region - 1

According to T4P, the total number of war crimes as of 17 January 2024 by region has come to 61,659. These are only figures they have been able to collate, hence why the figures are lower than the Ukrainian Government's figures.¹⁰

3. Definition of terrorism, international terrorism and state sponsors of terrorism

UK Friends of Ukraine views the actions of the Government of the Russian Federation, at the direction of Russian President Vladimir Putin, as sponsoring acts of terrorism.

The Terrorism Act of 2000 defines terrorism, both in and outside of the UK, as "The use or threat of one or more of the actions listed below, and where they are designed to influence the government, or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public. The use or threat must also be for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause."

Actions specifically recognised by the UK Government as terrorism include:

- Serious violence against a person;
- Serious damage to property;
- Endangering a person's life (other than that of the person committing the action);
- Creating a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public.

¹⁰ T4P, T4P's database of war crimes: Statistical information, 12/01/2024, <https://t4pua.org/en/stats>

UK Friends of Ukraine believe that going by what the UK Government itself defines as acts of terrorism, the Russian state is guilty of acts of terrorism in Ukraine and also has a record of terrorism in Chechnya, Georgia and Syria. Clearly the Russian state has been guilty of serious crimes against humanity, in this case the Ukrainian people, considering that since the full scale invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2023, as of 4 January 2024, at least 10,000 Ukrainian civilians have been murdered, 18,500 injured and 515 children murdered.

We also believe the Russian state is clearly guilty of endangering the lives of Ukrainian civilians, given that since the full scale invasion of Ukraine began at least 120,000 Ukrainian civilian buildings have been destroyed. These civilian buildings have deliberately been targeted by the Russian state and directly endanger those living, working and visiting these civilian buildings.

Furthermore, it is clear that in its mass bombardment of Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, the extensive evidence of war crimes in liberated and occupied Ukrainian territory, as well as its crimes against the environment such as the destruction of the Nova Kakhovska Dam in Kherson region in June 2023 the Russian state is creating a serious risk to the health or safety of the Ukrainian public. All this highlights by the UK Government's own definition of terrorism and acts of terrorism, Russia is guilty of state sponsored terrorism.

The Terrorism Act of 2000 goes on to note that "The use or threat of action, as set out above, which involves the use of firearms or explosives is terrorism regardless of whether or not the action is designed to influence the government or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public or a section of the public.

Importantly, the Act includes action outside the UK.

In the same Act, international terrorism is defined as "Terrorism that goes beyond national boundaries in terms of the methods used, the people that are targeted or the places from which the terrorists operate."

In its invasion and occupation of Ukraine, Russia's state sponsored terrorism represents international terrorism. This is because it has crossed national boundaries in the methods used, the Ukrainian civilians targeted. We also posit that many of the acts of terrorism committed in Ukraine have been committed by Russian state operatives such as the Russian Army or through its proxies such as the Wagner Group, from occupied Ukrainian territory in places like Crimea, Donetsk or Luhansk, formerly occupied

Ukrainian places such as Bucha and Irpin, as well as other nations who have allowed their soil to be used by the Russian state for the purposes of terrorism, such as Belarus.

It must also be pointed out that Russian state terrorism has directly crossed UK boundaries with the murder of Alexander Litvinenko on UK soil on 23 November 2006 and the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal on UK soil on 4 March 2018, which led to the killing of a British civilian called Dawn Sturgess.

The Russian state has also committed acts of international terrorism in Georgia and Syria.

Speaking of state sponsored terrorism, Dr. Steve Hewitt, Senior Lecturer in American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham wrote the following:

““What is state terrorism? It is similar to non-state terrorism in that it involves politically or ideologically or religiously inspired acts of violence against individuals or groups outside of an armed conflict. The key difference is that agents of the state are carrying out the violence.”

Whilst it is true to say that Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine could be defined as an armed conflict, we believe Russia's actions in Ukraine since 2014 to the current day involving the mass targeting of Ukrainian civilians are state terrorism. This is because the acts of terrorism are inspired by the Kremlin's ideological commitment through Russian imperialism to destroy the independence of Ukraine and subjugate it to Russia through terrorising its civilian population. After all, in a speech shortly before the full scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Putin explicitly denied that "Ukraine had ever had “real statehood and that the country was an integral part of Russia’s “own history, culture, spiritual space.”

Dr. Hewitt went on to say that "Russian intelligence, including in the Soviet era, has long deployed murder as a tactic against those deemed as threats to the state or to a particular leader."

Political scientist Ruth Blakely has previously highlighted that state terrorism is not only about the destruction of those targeted, but it is also driven by the “opportunity afforded by the harm to terrorize others.”

We believe the Russian state from its president Vladimir Putin downwards has used the invasion and occupation of Ukraine as an opportunity to terrorise Ukrainian civilians on a grand scale.

Concluding his musings on state terrorism Dr Hewitt noted that "what unites these acts is an aspiration to punish but to intimidate more widely as well."

We consider that Russia's acts of state terrorism in Ukraine are united by the aspiration to punish the Ukrainian state for choosing a path of independence outside the control of Russia and to try and intimidate Ukrainians away from supporting its independence.

It is clear for the UK Government to see if it stops diverting its eyes that Russia is guilty of terrorism, international terrorism and a state sponsor of terrorism.^{11 12 13}

4. Ukrainian calls to recognise Russia as a terrorist state

We are heeding the call of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who first asked the United States (U.S.) Congress and the White House to add Russia to the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism in April 2022. He has since extended the call to governments around the world, which of course includes the UK.

We are also listening to the message of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) who has appealed to the U.S. Congress and Parliaments worldwide to encourage their governments to recognize the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism noting that "the Russian Federation has for years supported and financed terrorist regimes and terrorist organizations, including being the main supplier of weapons to the Assad regime in Syria and supporting terrorists in the Middle East and Latin America, organizing acts of international terrorism, including the poisoning of the Skripal family in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the downing of a civilian Malaysian airliner and other acts of terrorism." That is all on top of Russia's terrorism in its full scale invasion of Ukraine.¹⁴

¹¹ UK Crown Prosecution Service, Terrorism, Accessed 05/01/2024, <https://www.cps.gov.uk/crime-info/terrorism>

¹² Dr. Steve Hewitt, Terrorism by the State is still Terrorism, Accessed 05/01/2024, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/terrorism-by-the-state-is-still-terrorism.aspx>

¹³ Billy Perrigo, How Putin's Denial of Ukraine's Statehood Rewrites History, 22/02/2022, <https://time.com/6150046/ukraine-statehood-russia-history-putin/>

¹⁴ Senator Lindsey Graham, S.Res.623 - A resolution calling on the Secretary of State to designate the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism, 23/06/2022, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-resolution/623/text>

5. UK Government proscription of Wagner Group and why it shows it should also designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism

The UK Government's proscription of the Wagner Group came into force on 15 September 2023, after an order was laid in the House of Commons on 6th September 2023. It meant that the UK Government classified the Wagner Group as a terrorist organisation and made support for the Wagner Group illegal. Announcing the proscription on 15 September 2023 the UK Home Office stated that "Belonging to the Wagner Group or actively supporting the group in the UK is a criminal offence, with a potential jail sentence of 14 years which can be handed down alongside or in place of a fine." ¹⁵

A report by the UK House of Commons Select Committee of July 2023, we are grateful to Dr Stepan Stepanenko of UK Friends of Ukraine for making us aware of through an opinion piece he wrote in October 2023, pointed out that "The proscription of Wagner as a terrorist organisation was a painstaking process that took over a year and involved a multitude of evidence submissions and speeches at the Houses of Parliament. While these speeches identified the terrorist activities of the group, they also pointed to the intrinsic link between the group and the Russian state."

The same report added that the Wagner private military company (PMC) "has been primarily state-funded and that the Russian Government facilitated its activities directly."

Adding to the statements from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Security and Counter-Terrorism, Admiral Lord West of Spithead addressed in the House of Lords on 11 July 2023 saying: "There is no doubt that the Wagner Group is state funded and is a proxy of the Russian Government. It has been very useful to Putin in the past for plausible deniability of his grey-zone operations."

Additionally, Former UK Home Secretary, Suella Braverman when announcing the UK Government's proscription of the Wagner Group as a terrorist group in September 2023 said "Wagner is a violent and destructive organisation which has acted as a military tool of Vladimir Putin's Russia overseas. While Putin's regime decides what to do with the monster it created, Wagner's continuing destabilizing activities only continue to serve the Kremlin's political goals."

¹⁵ Home Office, Wagner Group Proscribed, 15/09/2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/wagner-group-proscribed>

Given the UK Government recognises a proxy of the Russian state doing the work of the Russian state in Ukraine on behalf of the Putin regime as terrorists, surely they should recognise the Russian State through its Army acting on Putin's orders, who've committed similar atrocities and worse, as terrorists too. The actions of the Russian state whether through its state funded clients like the Wagner Group or through Russia's official military arm, the Russian Army have both committed numerous acts of terrorism across Ukraine.

The UK Government rightly proscribed the Wagner Group as terrorists, but wrongly fails to proscribe Russia as a terrorist state. As Dr Stepanenko said in his calls UK Friends of Ukraine back calling for the UK Government to recognise Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, " those who control and fund, and benefit from the activities of terrorists, are themselves terrorists.

What Dr Stepanenko said also has been taken on board when it comes to other state sponsors of terrorism. For instance, one of the reasons the U.S. Government has proscribed Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism is not only through its direct sponsorship of terrorism through the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, but also through its creation of, control of, funding of and benefiting from the activity of terrorist groups acting on its behalf such as Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Houthis.^{16 17 18}

6. Consequences of recognising Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism

The consequences of the UK Government recognising and listing Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism could lead to the confiscation of sanctioned Russian assets and handing the financial assets over to Ukraine. It could lead to wide ranging powers in the areas of sanctions on Russia and immunity of Russian state officials. Thus, UK Friends of Ukraine believe recognising Russia as a terrorist state would strengthen the UK's sanctions against Russia.

The U.S State Department currently lists four countries as state sponsors of terrorism, 'for having consistently provided support for acts of international terrorism'. Syria has been on the list since 1979, Iran since 1984, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) since 2017 and Cuba (again) since 2021. Iraq, Sudan and Libya previously featured on the list.

¹⁶ Erika De Benedetto, UK Declares Wagner Group a Terrorist Organization, 14/09/2023, <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/18038-uk-declares-wagner-group-a-terrorist-organization>

¹⁷ Lord West of Spithead, Wagner Group House of Lords Debate, Hansard, 11/07/2023, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-07-11/debates/D78BA6D5-D5E1-4F0D-BB6C-87993AFCD29/WagnerGroup>

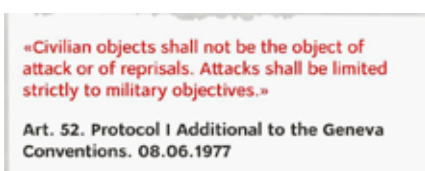
¹⁸ Dr. Stepan Stepanenko, Russian Terrorism and British Silence, 15/10/2023, <https://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/22698>

The designation of these states as sponsors of terrorism has important economic repercussions for all countries that continue to engage with the designated state, as they may fall foul of US secondary sanctions. At the same time, the designation removes the immunity before federal and state courts in the U.S to which foreign states are normally entitled to. We could expect similar repercussions if the UK Government took the lead and other nations followed by recognising Russia as a terrorist state. It would both strengthen sanctions thereby playing a role in weakening the Russian war machine and increase the tools to bring to justice those working for the Russian state who have actively supported the full scale invasion of Ukraine, which could include those working for the Russian state in the UK.

It could also make it easier for private UK citizens, the UK Government and members of the UK Army to take legal action in British courts, including government employees in relation to Russian state actions in Ukraine and in other areas of the world which have been victims of Russian state terrorism, including Chechnya, Georgia, Libya, Syria Sudan and the Central African report. Successful plaintiffs could execute their judgments against frozen Russian assets and these assets could then be handed to Ukraine to finance its reconstruction. In effect, it would make it easier for Russia to financially pay Ukraine in a way that would make it easier for Ukraine to rebuild its country in the wake of Russia's wanton destruction across Ukraine.¹⁹

Finally, it would make it illegal in the UK to actively support Russia's state sponsored terrorism in Ukraine or belong to parts of the Russian state such as the FSB and Russian Army key to Russian state sponsored terrorism, as currently is the case in regards of the Wagner Group, proscribed by the UK Government on 15 September 2023.

7. Russia's mass bombardment of Ukrainian civilians and civilian buildings



Russia has savagely targeted Ukrainian civilians, civilian buildings such as train stations, shopping malls, schools, hospitals, homes, bomb shelters and civilian

¹⁹ European Parliament, Russia's war on Ukraine: Designating a state as a sponsor of terrorism, 11/10/2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/738218/EPRS_ATA\(2022\)738218_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/738218/EPRS_ATA(2022)738218_EN.pdf)

infrastructure such as energy plants. Russia is deliberately targeting and bombarding Ukrainian civilian buildings and anywhere they live in, work in or in the case of energy infrastructure rely on to heat and light their homes and power their daily lives. The purpose is simple to try and terrorise and cower the Ukrainian people into submission, which is clear state sponsored terrorism. It is obvious that the main target of the Russian Army is Ukrainian civilians who are paying the price in so much suffering.

To date 120,000 Russian troops have destroyed more than 120,000 civilian infrastructure facilities. This infrastructure includes power plants, schools, kindergartens and numerous residential buildings, all vital to the daily lives of Ukrainian civilians, which we take for granted in the UK.

The sheer level of bombardment by the Russian state through its Army is shown by the fact that up to 4 January 2024, the Russian Army and its proxies such as the Wagner Group have fired thousands of missiles at Ukrainian cities and towns. ²⁰



"People began to kindle fires at the entrance to the basement to cook food. The first firewood was the frames from the balconies, which were broken by shells."

says an eyewitness to the destruction of Chernihiv

²⁰ War.ukraine.ua, Attacking civilians or civilian objects, 04/01/2024, <https://war.ukraine.ua/russia-war-crimes/>



8. Examples of Russia's Assault on Civilian Infrastructure

According to international humanitarian law as defined in The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, deliberate attacks on unarmed, noncombatant targets may well be considered a war crime. Moreover, if the actions are of a widespread and systematic nature, they may also constitute crimes against humanity. The acts of Russian state terrorism targeting civilian infrastructure follow a pattern of war crimes committed by the Russian state where the use of missiles against civilians is sanctioned by the Kremlin and acted upon by Vladimir Putin's commander, not just in Ukraine, but also previously in Syria and Chechnya, as highlighted by Janine Di Giovanni of the Reckoning Project, an organisation that records, investigates and brings to the light of day Russian war crimes.^{21 22}



ILLUSTRATION BY DOUG CHAYKA.

9. Russian mass terrorist attack on Kyiv and Kharkiv on 2 January 2024

²¹ Sabra Ayres and Nadia Burdia via The Reckoning Project, Russia Attacked a Ukrainian Shopping Mall With a Missile. The War Hasn't Been the Same Since: 26/06/2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2023/06/russia-ukraine-war>

²² Janine Di Giovanni, Vladimir Putin's Inhumane Blueprint to Terrorize Civilians in Chechnya, Syria—And Now Ukraine, 23/02/2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2023/02/vladimir-putin-chechnya-syria-ukraine>



Drone view of a damaged building in the center of Kyiv as State Emergency Service provides assistance to the victims and puts out the fire on Jan. 2, 2024, in Kyiv, Ukraine. (Kostiantyn Liberov/Libkos/Getty Images)

On 2 January 2024 Russia unleashed a new large-scale terrorist attack on Ukraine, targeting Kyiv, the surrounding region, and Kharkiv with 99 missiles, preceded by a wave of 35 Shahed drones. The attack murdered 5 and injured 135 people. Among the injured are children. A 91 year-old woman was killed in a missile strike on Kharkiv that also wounded dozens and a married couple was killed in an attack in the area around Kyiv, local Ukrainian officials said.

Ukraine's Air Force reported that a total of 72 Russian missiles were shot down over Ukraine, including 59 Kh-101/555/55 cruise missiles, three Kalibr cruise missiles and all of the 10 Kh-47M2 Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missiles launched. The Air Force also reported that all of the 35 Shahed drones had been downed.

Critical infrastructure, as well as industrial, civilian and military facilities came under attack. Several high-rise residential buildings in Kyiv and Kharkiv were severely damaged.

From 29 December 2023 to 2 January 2024, Russia has attacked Ukraine with at least 500 missiles and drones in the past five days, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on 2 January 2024, during a phone call with UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak that "Russia will answer for every life (that it has) taken away," Zelenskyy said on Telegram in response to the terrorist attacks of 2 January 2024.

The significant increase in indiscriminate attacks by Russia targeting Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure in late December 2023 and January 2024 show that Russia is increasing the intensity of their terrorist attacks on Ukraine and its people.

Consequently, it is incumbent that the UK Government recognises and designates Russia as a terrorist state.^{23 24}

10. Russian mass terrorist attack across Ukraine of 29 December 2023



Some of the aftermath of the largest Russian air attack on Ukraine since the start of the full-scale war on Dec. 29, 2023. (Interior Ministry/Telegram)

In the early morning hours of 29 December 2023, Russia launched its biggest terrorist attack in Ukraine, the largest wave of missiles and drones yet seen in Russian full scale invasion of Ukraine, with hundreds of missiles and drones hitting the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and other cities and regions across the country, including in Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa and Zaporizhia regions. At least 57 people were reported to have been murdered in the attacks, while 160 others were injured.

²³ Alexander Query and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Ukraine war latest: Russia's latest large-scale air attacks on Kyiv, Kharkiv kill 5 injures, 130, 02/01/2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-war-latest-russias-latest-large-scale-air-attacks-on-kyiv-kharkiv-kills-5-injures-129/>

²⁴ Olena Harmash and Tom Balmforth, Russia pounds Ukraine's two biggest cities in new wave of attacks, 02/01/2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-launches-drone-attack-kyiv-ukraine-says-2024-01-02/>



Aftermath of shelling in Kyiv

In Kyiv city , At least 32 people were reported to have been murdered while at least 35 others were injured. It was the deadliest attack on Kyiv since the beginning of the full scale invasion, said Kyiv Mayor, Vitali Klitschko.



First responders work around the destroyed shopping mall that was hit by Russia's massive strike on Dnipro on Dec. 29, 2023. Russia's air attack killed at least six and injured 30 people in Dnipro, according to the local authorities. The strikes on Dnipro were part of Russia's largest air attack against Ukraine that targeted multiple cities across the country with 158 missiles and drones. (Photo by Ozge Elif Kizil/Anadolu via Getty Images)

In Dnipro, a maternity hospital and shopping centre were attacked. 7 people, including a child and a police officer were murdered, while 30 others were injured. A house, 8 administrative buildings and 24 high-rise buildings were also destroyed or damaged.

In Odesa, falling drone debris caused a fire at a residential building, murdering 2 people and injuring 15, including two children. A total of 5 people died in Odesa city, while 27 others were injured. 21 residential buildings were also damaged in the city.



The aftermath of the Russian mass missile attack on Lviv on Dec. 29. (Maksym Kozytyski/Telegram)

In Lviv, one person was murdered and 30 others injured, while 3 schools and a kindergarten were damaged by drones. 13 residential buildings were also damaged. The fatality was later identified as basketball player Viktor Kobzystyi, who played for Ukraine's national basketball team in the 2001 and 2005 European Basketball Championships and coached several basketball teams, including WBC Dynamo Kyiv.

In Kharkiv, 3 people were murdered and 13 others injured in three waves of missile attacks that damaged a warehouse, an industrial facility, a medical facility and a transport depot.



The aftermath of the Russian Dec. 29 nationwide missile attack on Zaporizhzhia. (Yurii Malashko/Telegram)

In Zaporizhzhia, 9 people were murdered and 13 others injured. Several industrial facilities were hit, a house was destroyed and several multi-storey buildings were damaged.

"A maternity hospital, educational institutions, a shopping centre, high-rise buildings and private houses, a commercial warehouse, a parking lot. Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia and our other cities. Today, Russia has struck with almost everything it has in its arsenal," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.



AIR FORCE

Aftermath of the rocket crash in Smila



In Konotop, Sumy region, 3 people were injured when an apartment building and a vehicle service station were damaged, due to a Russian missile attack.

In the afternoon of 29 December 2023, Russia launched several more missiles at Ukraine, and one of them hit Smila in the Cherkasy region. 9 people including a child were injured after a missile struck a residential area of Smila damaging 51 houses.

What happened on 29 December 2023 showed that Russia is not letting up in its state sponsored terrorism in Ukraine, which is why the UK Government should recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism ^{25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41}

²⁵ BBC News Ukraine, Massive attack on Ukraine: Lviv, Kyiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Smila - many dead and wounded, 30/12/2023, <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/czkjyp9g9ymo>

²⁶ Natalie Ostiller and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Update: Death toll in Dec.29 Russian attack on Kyiv rises to 32, 30 injured, 04/01/2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/update-death-toll-in-dec-29-russian-attack-on-kyiv-rises-to-32-30-injured/>

²⁷ Alexander Query and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Russia's latest large scale attack on Kyiv, Kharkiv kills 5, injures 130, 02/01/2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-war-latest-russias-latest-large-scale-air-attacks-on-kyiv-kharkiv-kills-5-injures-129/>

²⁸ Radio Svoboda, The numbers of victims in the Dnipro missile attack has increased - the authorities, 31/12/2023, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-dnipro-zhertvy-udar-rf/32754184.html>

²⁹ Alexander Query, Olena Zashko and Irynka Hromotska, 'Hit the Kremlin': Kyivans don't hold back after Russia's mass attack kills 9, wounds 30 in the capital, 29/12/2023, <https://news.yahoo.com/hit-kremlin-kyivans-dont-hold-224925139.html>

³⁰ Daria Shulzhenko and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Ukraine war latest: Russia's largest air attack on Ukraine kills 30, injures over 160, 29/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-war-latest-russia-unleashes-largest-attack-in-months-killing-30-and-injuring-over-160/>

³¹ Elsa Court and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Russia launches largest air attack on Ukraine since start of full-scale war, 29/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/russian-strikes-injure-at-least-7-in-kyiv-casualties-reported-in-lviv-dnipro-kharkiv/>

³² Illia Novikov and Hanna Arhirova, Russia launches the biggest aerial barrage of the war and kills 30 civilians Ukraine says, 29/12/2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-aerial-attack-missiles-drones-fe3fb596cdea0035573a6a677f17070c>

³³ Martin Fornusek and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Update: Death toll of Russian Dec.29 attack against Odesa rises to 5, 30/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/death-toll-of-russian-dec-29-attacks-on-odesa-rises-to-5/>

³⁴ Daria Shulzhenko, Update: Russian attack injures 15 in Lviv, 29/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/update-russian-attack-injures-15-in-lviv/>

³⁵ Ukrainska Pravda, Famous basketball player killed in Lviv by Russian missile attack, 29/12/2023, <https://news.yahoo.com/famous-basketball-player-killed-lviv-130502781.html>

³⁶ Kyiv Independent News Desk, Update: Death toll of Russia's mass air attack on Ukraine rises to 41, 30/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/death-toll-in-russias-air-attack-rises-to-40/>

³⁷ James Waterhouse: Ukraine war: Russian attack on Ukraine cities hits deadly new level, 29/12/2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-67843312>

³⁸ Ivan Lyubsyh-Kirdey, Yuliia Dysa and Tom Balmforth, Russia's biggest air attack of war kills 31 in Ukraine, officials say, 30/12/2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-launches-massive-air-attack-ukraine-least-10-dead-kyiv-2023-12-29/>

³⁹ Daria Shulzhenko, Governor: 4 killed, 10 injured in Russian missile attack on Zaporizhia, 29/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/governor-1-killed-10-injured-in-russian-missile-attack-on-zaporizhzhia/>

⁴⁰ Dinara Khalilova and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, Updated: Russia attacks Cherkasy Oblast, at least 9 injured, 29/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/governor-russia-attacks-cherkasy-oblast-at-least-6-injured/>

⁴¹ Ukrainska Pravda, Russians attacks Konotop with missiles, damaging apartment building and service station, injuring three people, 29/12/2023, <https://news.yahoo.com/russians-attack-konotop-missiles-damaging-051326423.html>

11. Terrorist attack on village cafe and store in Hroza



The aftermath of Russia's attack against the village of Hroza, Kharkiv Oblast, on Oct. 5, 2023. (Oleh Syniehubov)

At 1:15pm On 5 October 2023, a village store and cafe in the northeastern Ukrainian village of Hroza in Kharkiv region was hit by a Russian Iskander ballistic missile, causing the murder of at least 51 civilians, including a 6 year old boy. At the time of the attack, at least 60 people gathered in the local cafe for a memorial service for a deceased resident. The attack was a bloody reminder of the moral depravity Russian state terrorism has reached.

Hroza is a small village that lies around 30 km west of Kupyansk in Kharkiv region. The village's population didn't exceed 100, meaning that over half of the village's residents may have been murdered by Russian terrorism.

Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy denounced the strike in the village of Hroza as a "demonstrably brutal Russian crime" and "a completely deliberate act of terrorism." "Russian terror must be stopped. All those who help Russia circumvent sanctions are criminals. Everyone who still supports Russia supports evil," Zelenskyy said. Zelenskyy

added that “Russia needs this and similar terrorist attacks for only one thing: to make its genocidal aggression the new norm for the whole world.”^{42 43}

12. Russia's terrorist attack on Kremenchuk shopping mall with a missile



The following information on this specific act of terrorism came mainly from The Reckoning Project.

On the afternoon of 27 June 2022 Comfy, a popular electronics and home appliances store in the Amstor shopping mall in the town of Kremenchuk, almost 200 miles southeast of Kyiv, was attacked by the Russian Army, as well as the rest of the Amstor shopping mall. At around 3:50 pm on 27 June 2022., the air raid sirens went off across Kremenchuk. Shoppers were instructed to leave Comfy and the other stores in the mall and many of the mall employees followed that directive. Vyacheslav Yakymenko aged 23 and a Comfy employee did not have time to leave the store and the mall. Shortly after 3:50pm, a missile slammed into the game appliance store, the force of its blast ripping through much of the mall. The aerial bombardment by the Russian Army would leave at least 21 murdered and over 70 injured. It is just one example of Russian state terrorism directly targeting Ukrainian civilian infrastructure and civilians, just as other state terrorists and non-state terrorists do.

The terrorist attack consisted of two Kh-22 missiles, a Soviet-designed weapon developed to destroy ships and aircraft carriers. According to the Ukrainian security service, the missiles were launched by a Russian strategic bomber that took off from a military airfield a few hundred miles southwest of Moscow. The missiles hit within seconds of each other, striking the back of the Amstor mall, landing in the Comfy store's

⁴² Dinara Khalilova and the Kyiv Independent News Desk, UPDATED: Russian attack on Kharkiv Oblast village kills 51, including 6-year-old child, 05/10/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/governor-russian-attack-on-kharkiv-oblast-village-kills-49-including-6-year-old-child/>

⁴³ The Associated Press, A look at Russia's deadliest missile attacks on Ukraine, 05/10/2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-missile-strike-85dea3d9af59589d372333a23de9130a>

rear storage area and about 1,500 feet away from the neighbouring Kredmash factory, which made machinery to mix asphalt.



Rescuers clear rubbles from the missile strike on Amstor mall in Kremenchuk, June 28, 2022. BY GENYA SAVILOV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES.

Since the war began, Amstor hadn't closed, and the city's residents still crowded its corridors. The mall's CCTV camera filmed Larysa, the Comfy store's cleaning lady, busy keeping the bustling store in order. You could also see Artem Utorov, the shopping assistant, on his way to grab a quick Americano at the coffee stall from Olga, the barista and Yakymenko rebooting his computer. These are just some of the civilians targeted by Russian terrorism.

At the moment of the missile strike, one CCTV camera caught a blinding white light, smoke and then darkness. This footage captures the coldhearted quick reality and devastating impact of Russian state terrorism against Ukrainian civilians and the infrastructure they work and visit, places that should be safe for people to go about their daily business but are not due to Russia's terrorism. What we saw on the afternoon of 27 June 2022 was mass murder in the middle of a regular working day. The Russians, having attacked a civilian mall instead of a military target, were sending a clear and brutal message, no Ukrainian civilians were safe and all were potential targets of the Russian Army in its full scale invasion of Ukraine.

The Comfy outlet bore the brunt of the damage, with 11 of the approximately 21 fatalities, being murdered by a Russian Army missile strike on the mall.

The assault on Kremenchuk was not the first time Russia had aimed a Kh-22 missile at civilian targets in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office stated from the evidence they had gathered up to 26 June 2023 that the same kind of missile was also used in at least three separate attacks in May 2022, in Kramatorsk, in a bombardment of a recreation centre in Zatoka in the Odesa region and in the city of Lozova in the Kharkiv region. Dozens were injured in those incidents. Two days before the Kremenchuk tragedy, according to Ukrainian military analysts, a Kh-22 missile killed six

people in Sarny, in the Rivne region. What happened in Kremenchuk was not a one off, but a clear pattern of Russia deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure and civilians in an attempt to terrorise Ukrainian civilians into accepting Russian occupation of its land and subjugation of Ukrainian independence. They have not succeeded in their strategy of terrorism. Indeed, it has just made the vast majority of Ukrainian civilians even more determined to liberate their land from every single Russian occupier.

The terrorism attacks after the attacks on Kremenchuk on 27 June 2022 have not stopped and have caused the blood of many Ukrainians to flow across Ukrainian land. The hands of the Russian Army and parts of its army such as their Air Force are caked with the blood of Ukrainian civilians. These hands are the hands of terrorists carrying out the orders of the chief terrorist running the Russian state in Putin, who uses terrorism as part of his attempts for the Russian state to control Ukraine and make it a vassal state of Russia. Evidence of this is shown by the fact that shortly following the attack on Kremenchuk, at least 21 people were murdered and 35 injured when, according to Amnesty International, at least two Kh-22s hit a resort and hardware store in the town of Serhiivka. At the beginning of 2023, another Kh-22 missile, which a spokesperson from the Ukrainian Air Force says was launched near Kursk, struck a nine story residential building in the city of Dnipro, murdering at least 46 people and injuring 79.

While Russian forces had struck residential apartment buildings in several cities prior to May 2022, the wave of attacks in the spring of 2023, in the view of Ukrainian defence experts, represented a new surge in which Kh-22 missiles were being used on civilian targets. With local citizens being the sole casualties within the small radius around each blast, The Kremlin appeared to be intentionally sanctioning the use of missiles against noncombatants, in our view as a strategy to attempt to terrorise them and reduce morale for the fight to maintain Ukrainian independence.

Its time the UK Government called a spade and spade and recognised Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.^{44 45}

13. Targeting of a nine story residential building in the city of Dnipro

⁴⁴ Sabra Ayres and Nadia Burdia via The Reckoning Project, Russia Attacked a Ukrainian Shopping Mall With a Missile. The War Hasn't Been the Same Since: 26/06/2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2023/06/russia-ukraine-war>

⁴⁵ Janine Di Giovanni, Vladimir Putin's Inhumane Blueprint to Terrorize Civilians in Chechnya, Syria—And Now Ukraine, 23/02/2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2023/02/vladimir-putin-chechnya-syria-ukraine>



Rescue workers clear the rubble from an apartment building that was destroyed in a Russian rocket attack at a residential neighbourhood in the southeastern city of Dnipro, Ukraine, January 15, 2023. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka)

On 14 January 2023, at around 3:30pm, a Russian Kh-22 missile struck a nine-story residential building in Dnipro on Naberezhna Peremohy Street, Sobornyi District on the right-bank part of the city, destroying one entrance and 236 apartments. 46 people were murdered including 6 children and 80 injured, 12 of whom were in critical condition and 14 children also injured. This Russian terrorist attack left around 400 people homeless and the attack destroyed over 70 apartments in a sprawling complex that housed not only local residents, but many people displaced from elsewhere in the country.^{46 47}

14. Targeting of Serhiyvka village in Odesa Region

⁴⁶ Stanislav Pohorilov, Russian attack on Dnipro: Death toll rises to 46 people, 19/01/2023, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/01/19/7385596/>

⁴⁷ Siobhan O'Grady and Anastacia Galouchka, In Dnipro missile strike: Nine floors of random death and destruction, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/01/19/dnipro-victims-building-missile-strike/>



[1/10] Rescue workers work at the scene of a missile strike at a location given as Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, Odessa region, Ukraine, in this handout image released July 1, 2022. State Emergency Services of Ukraine/Handout via REUTERS

On 1 July 2022 at around 1am, at least 21 people including two children, one of whom was a two year old boy, were murdered in Serhiyivka near Odesa, after two Russian missiles struck a multi storey block of flats and a recreation centre and rehabilitation centre administered by Moldova, which amongst other things was being used as a holiday camp. Three people, including a child, were murdered in the strike on the holiday camp, said the state emergency service. Ukraine's security service said in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack that further 38 people, including six children and a pregnant woman, were taken to hospital with injuries. Most of those murdered and injured were asleep when the missiles struck. The apartment block was flattened.

Odesa's then military spokesperson, Sergei Bratchuk, said the missile attack was carried out by "strategic aircraft" from the direction of the Black Sea.

Responding to the terrorist attack, Andriy Yermak, the Chief of Staff to the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said "A terrorist country is killing our people. In response to defeats on the battlefield, they fight civilians."

Zelenskyy denounced the strike on the apartments and seaside site as "conscious, deliberately targeted Russian terror and not some sort of error or a coincidental missile strike."

We agree with Zelenskyy and Yermak, which is why we are calling on the UK Government to recognise Russia and designate it as a state sponsor of terrorism.^{48 49}

15. Kramatorsk train station terrorist attack



Kramatorsk, which had a pre-war population of about 157,000, is the administrative centre of the Kramatorsk region in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine.

On 8 April 2022 at around 7:30 am, 61 Ukrainians were murdered when a Russian missile carried out a terrorist attack that hit Kramatorsk train station where thousands of people had gathered to board trains to evacuate the area. Ukraine's Prosecutor General's office said that nearly 4,000 people, mainly women and children, were at the station at the time.

⁴⁸ Lorenzo Tondo and Samantha Lock, Russian missile attacks on town near Odesa kills at least 21 says Ukraine, 01/07/2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/01/russian-missile-strikes-on-odesa-apartments-and-recreation-centre-kill-17-ukraine-says>

⁴⁹ Iryna Nazarchuk, Russian missile strike near Ukraine's Odesa kill 21, 02/07/2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/ukraines-zelenskiy-celebrates-retaking-snake-island-2022-07-01/>



Rocket debris with the message in Russian was visible on the grass outside the station

Debris from one of the rockets could be seen lying on the grass near the station. The message in Russian "Za detei", meaning for or on behalf of the children, had been daubed on the missile in white.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned the attack. Writing on Instagram shortly after the attack, he said: "Lacking the strength and courage to stand up to us on the battlefield, they are cynically destroying the civilian population. "This is an evil that has no limits. And if it is not punished, it will never stop." He added that there were no soldiers at the station.

In February 2023, Human Rights Watch, in a joint investigation with the SITU research group, said strong evidence suggested that the missile strike on the Kramatorsk train station in eastern Ukraine was a "clear war crime" by Russia. The report said the ballistic missile that targeted the train station was loaded with banned cluster munitions that dispersed dozens of small bombs. "The evidence strongly indicates that the missile that killed and wounded civilians at the Kramatorsk train station was launched from Russian-controlled territory in eastern Ukraine. The attack was a violation of the laws of war and a clear war crime," the report said.^{50 51}

⁵⁰ RFE/RFL, Kramatorsk marks anniversary of deadly Russian missile attack on train station, 08/04/2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukrainians-kramatorsk-memorial-anniversary/32355193.html>

⁵¹ BBC News, Kramatorsk station attack: What we know so far, 09/04/2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-61036740>

16. Russian terrorist attack on Vinnytsia

On 14 July 2022, the Russian Navy in a terrorist attack launched a missile attack on the central Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia murdering 29 people, including 3 children younger than 10 years old. Furthermore, the terrorist attack injured over 100 people.

Vinnytsia is one of Ukraine's largest cities, with a pre-war population of 370,000. Thousands of people from eastern Ukraine, where Russia has concentrated have fled since Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine began.

Ukrainian officials said Kalibr cruise missiles fired from a Russian ship in the Black Sea damaged a medical centre, offices, stores and residential buildings in Vinnytsia, a city 268 km (167 miles) southwest of the capital, Kyiv. The missiles are high quality precision missiles. Russia knew they were targeting civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure deliberately. In our view it was done deliberately as a form of state terrorism.

"It was a building of a medical organisation. When the first rocket hit it, glass fell from my windows," said Vinnytsia resident Svitlana Kubas, 74. Kubas added that "When the second wave came, it was so deafening that my head is still buzzing. It tore out the very outermost door, tore it right through the holes."

In response to the terrorist attack in Vinnytsia, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy repeated his call for Russia to be declared a state sponsor of terrorism. The strike happened as government officials from about 40 countries met in The Hague, Netherlands, to discuss coordinating investigations and prosecutions of potential war crimes committed in Ukraine. "No other country in the world represents such a terrorist threat as Russia," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address of 14 July 2022. He went on to say in the address "No other country in the world allows itself every day to use cruise missiles and rocket artillery to destroy cities and ordinary human life."

On Telegram, Zelenskyy wrote, "Vinnytsia. Missile strikes in the city centre. There are wounded and killed, among them a little child. Every day, Russia destroys the civilian population, kills Ukrainian children, directs rockets at civilian objects. Where there is nothing military. What is this if not an open terrorist attack? Inhuman. Country of killers. A country of terrorists."



| Liza was described as sweet and kind by her speech therapist



📷 Liza Dmitrieva's pram lies by the road in Vinnytsia after the attack on Thursday. Photograph: Efrem Lukatsky/AP

Zelenskyy said that among those killed was a 4 year-old girl named Liza Dmitrieva, whose mother was badly wounded. A video of the little girl, twirling in a lavender dress in a field of lavender, was widely shared on social media. "Today, our hearts are bleeding, and our eyes are full of tears because our family of many thousands has lost one of our own," the charity Down Syndrome wrote. It said: "They were just on their way from a speech therapy class and they just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time." Zelenskyy's wife, Olena Zelenska later posted that she had met this "wonderful girl" while filming a Christmas video with a group of children, who were given oversized ornaments to paint. "The little mischievous girl then managed in a half an hour to paint not only herself, her holiday dress, but also all the other children, me, the cameramen and the director ... Look at her alive, please," Olena Zelenska wrote in a note accompanying the video.



| The medical centre in the Jubilee centre was all but destroyed

Maksim Zharii, who was 7, was murdered alongside his mother Viktoriia. Residents from their village have been asked to come out on 15 July 2023 today on the streets and meet their coffins. Ukrainian police said he was attending an appointment at the medical centre on the ground floor of the Jubilee centre. There's nothing left of the clinic itself but fire-blackened walls.

A 7 year-old , Roman, was one of dozens of victims of Russia's terrorism attack on the central Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia. His head, arms and legs were severely injured in a Russian rocket strike. His mother died in the explosion and was identified days later only through a DNA test. Roman was transferred to a hospital in Germany for special treatment. Burns covered 40% of his body.

Russia also hit a building called Officers' House on Victory Square. The only military thing about it appears to be its name, which dates back to Soviet times. It's a concert venue and there was a show due on the night of the Russian terrorist attack. One of the group was in the middle of a soundcheck when the missiles smashed through the

building. He died later in hospital. Other band members were injured outside.^{52 53 54 55 56}
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17. Izium apartment building terrorist attack



On 9 March 2022, an apartment building in Izium in eastern Ukraine was hit in a Russian terrorist attack that Human Rights Watch (HRW) later said that at least 44 people were murdered. Russian forces took control of the city and surrounding area beginning in late March and occupied it for six months. At the time of the strike, HRW said the area was under the control of Ukrainian forces who were trying to keep Russian troops from entering the city.

⁵² Maria Grazia Murru and Hanna Arhirova, Russian missiles kill at least 23 in Ukraine, wound over 100, 15/07/2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-terrorism-ce25b78b4325ad0157d1b0361e5ed7e>

⁵³ Sarah Rainsford, Ukraine war: Four-year old Liza killed by Russian attack on Vinnytsia, 15/07/2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-62181726>

⁵⁴ Peter Beaumont, Social media posts chart life and death of girl in Russian strike, 14/07/2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/14/social-media-posts-chart-life-and-death-of-girl-in-russian-strike>

⁵⁵ The Guardian, Ukraine war live: Zelenskyy calls Russian missile attack on Vinnytsia an 'open act of terrorism', 15/07/2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/jul/14/russia-ukraine-war-live-news-un-hails-critical-step-for-ward-in-resuming-grain-exports-russia-shells-mykolaiv-mayor-says>

⁵⁶ RFE/RL Current Time, 'Burns cover 40 percent of his body': Young boys survives Russian attack that killed his mother, 25/07/2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-child-victim-attack-russia-germany-/31959076.html>

⁵⁷ The Associated Press, A look at Russia's deadliest missile attacks on Ukraine, 05/10/2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-missile-strike-85dea3d9af59589d372333a23de9130a>

Dozens of civilians were sheltering in the basement and while the building was close to the front lines, HRW found no evidence that Ukrainian forces were using the building for military purposes at the time. “Generations of families in the basement were entombed by this single attack,” said Richard Weir, senior crisis and conflict researcher at Human Rights Watch. “We found no evidence to justify treating the apartment building as a legitimate military target, or that Russian forces tried to avoid or minimise the destruction of so many civilian lives.”

A HRW report detailed the terrorist attack and told the story of Mykhailo Yatsentiuk, an electrician in his sixties who had lived in the building with his wife, Natalia, for three decades, raising three children and six grandchildren. Natalia and 6 others from his family, ages 3 to 96, were murdered in the attack. Yatsentiuk survived because he left the basement to make his granddaughter tea.^{58 59}

18. Chasiv Yar Terrorist attack



Rescuers extract a body from a residential building damaged by a Russian military strike in the town of Chasiv Yar, in Donetsk region, Ukraine on 10 July. Photograph: Gleb Garanich/Reuters

Late On 9 July 2022, Russian rockets smashed into apartment buildings in eastern Ukraine, murdering at least 43 people in the town of Chasiv Yar in the Donbas region of Ukraine, which had a population at the time of 12,000 residents. The buildings were mostly home to people who work in nearby factories. At least 6 people were dug out of the rubble. 3 residential buildings were destroyed.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, Ukraine: Iziium apartment victims need justice, 22/03/2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/22/ukraine-izium-apartment-victims-need-justice>

⁵⁹ The Associated Press, A look at Russia’s deadliest missile attacks on Ukraine, 05/10/2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-missile-strike-85dea3d9af59589d372333a23de9130a>

Chasiv Yar is located around 20 km (12 miles) southeast of Kramatorsk.

In response to the terrorist attack, Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy said “Anyone who orders such strikes, everyone who carries them out in ordinary cities, in residential areas, kills absolutely consciously,” he said in an address to Ukrainians on Sunday night. He said that “After such hits, they won’t be able to say that they didn’t know or didn’t understand something.”

Andriy Yermak, the Ukrainian President’s Chief of Staff, said the strike was "another terrorist attack," and that Russia should be designated as a state sponsor of terrorism as a result. We agree with him, which is why we are calling on the UK Government to recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.^{60 61 62}

19. Russian terrorist attack on a convoy of cars on the outskirts of the city of Zaporizhia



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE
The convoy had planned to go to the Russian-occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region

In the early hours of 30 September 2022, In yet another example of Russian state terrorism, 4 Russian missiles targeted a convoy of cars on the outskirts of the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, murdering 30 people, including children.

⁶⁰ Francesca Ebel, 15 killed in Russian strike in Ukraine, 20 believed trapped, 10/07/2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-donetsk-b7856bb5e64b0a04de78d281fe71926a>

⁶¹ The Associated Press, A look at Russia’s deadliest missile attacks on Ukraine, 05/10/2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-missile-strike-85dea3d9af59589d372333a23de9130a>

⁶² Max Hunder, Emergency services: Death toll from collapsed Donbas apartment block rises to 43, 12/07/2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/death-toll-collapsed-donbas-apartment-block-rises-35-emergency-services-2022-07-12/>

Ukrainian officials said the missiles were launched from an S-300 anti-aircraft missile system and hit a column of vehicles sent to ferry people to safety from Russian-occupied territory. A huge crater next to a row of vehicles in the city of Zaporizhzhia testifies to the violence of the attack. Windows and windscreens were smashed in.

BBC News saw half a dozen bodies lying at the scene, apparently civilians. Baggage and coats strewed the tarmac. One survivor told the BBC her boss had been killed in the attack. "She had two kids. I left the cafe to use the restroom when it happened. I ran back and tried to find her. The cafe was demolished, there were many bodies around. It was all so very horrifying," Viktoriia Yosypenko said.

Reacting to the terrorist attack on the outskirts of the regional capital of the Zaporizhzhia region, Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia was a "state-terrorist". He said Russia launched 16 rockets on the city and vowed to punish perpetrators for "every lost Ukrainian life".^{63 64}

20. Uman terrorist attack



Firefighters stand amid rubble while their colleagues extinguish a fire at a residential building, April 28, 2023, in Uman, central Ukraine, after an overnight Russian missile attack.

YEVHENII ZAVHORODNII/GLOBAL IMAGES UKRAINE/GETTY

⁶³ James Waterhouse and Yaroslav Lukov, Ukraine war: Survivors speak of horror as Zaporizhia convoy hit, 30/10/2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-63086697>

⁶⁴ The Associated Press, A look at Russia's deadliest missile attacks on Ukraine, 05/10/2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-missile-strike-85dea3d9af59589d372333a23de9130a>

On 28 April 2023, an apartment block was blasted at night by 2 long range Russian cruise missiles in the city of Uman, in yet more evidence of Russian state terrorism. Uman is around 215 km (134 miles) south of Kyiv. At least 23 people were murdered in the terrorist attack, including 3 children, two 10 year old children and a toddler. Another of the victims was a 75-year-old woman who lived in a neighboring building and suffered internal bleeding from the huge blast's shock wave, according to emergency personnel at the scene.

Halyna, a building resident, said she and her husband were covered in glass by the blast. They saw flames outside their window and scrambled out, but first Halyna checked whether her friend in a neighbouring apartment was OK. "I was calling, calling her (on the phone), but she didn't pick up. I even rang the doorbell, but still no answer," she told The Associated Press. She used the spare keys from her friend's apartment and went inside to check on her. She found her lying dead on her apartment floor.^{65 66}

21. Terrorist attack on busy market in Kostiantynivka in eastern Ukraine



Firefighters responded to the blaze caused by the explosion at the market street.

President of Ukraine/Telegram/Reuters

⁶⁵ Andrea Rosa, Hanna Arihova and David Rising, Russian missile and drone attack in Ukraine kills 23 people, 28/04/2023,

<https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-war-missile-attack-54c9ceec1418a0780aa0cee1427a540d>

⁶⁶ The Associated Press, A look at Russia's deadliest missile attacks on Ukraine, 05/10/2023,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-missile-strike-85dea3d9af59589d372333a23de9130a>

On 6 September 2023, 17 people were murdered and at least 32 injured when a Russian missile struck a busy market in Kostiantynivka in eastern Ukraine. The Russian terrorist attack turned an outdoor market into a fiery, blackened ruin, where weeping civilians looked for loved ones among the mangled, burned bodies scattered across the ground.

About 30 pavilions were damaged, along with 20 shops, an administrative building, an apartment building and some power lines, according to Ukraine's General Prosecutor's Office.

"There was no military target here. This is a peaceful neighbourhood in the city centre," Stefan Slovak, who lives in Kostiantynivka said.

"They are shooting at peaceful civilians. Are we soldiers here? Are we shooting at them? No! So why? They are just trying to destroy the Ukrainian nation," said resident Nadezhda Negoda.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the strike was deliberate. He has visited the town many times on trips to the front line. "Those who know this place are well aware that it is a civilian area. There aren't any military units nearby," Zelenskyy said during a news conference in Kyiv with visiting Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. He said the strike reflects the situation on the battlefield. "Whenever there are any positive advances by Ukrainian defense forces in that direction, Russians always target civilian people and civilian objects," he said.^{67 68}

22. Targeting of Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure

In its indiscriminate targeting of Ukraine's civilian infrastructure and Ukrainian civilians, a form of state sponsored terrorism, one area Russia has focused on is decimating Ukraine's energy infrastructure, particularly in the winter months, with Russia's campaign targeting Ukrainian energy first starting in October 2022. The deliberate targeting of Ukraine's energy infrastructure by Russia is aimed at destroying the spirit of the Ukrainian population, leaving them without power and essentially freezing them into submission. It is both clear terrorism and a war crime. We believe Ukrainian President,

⁶⁷ Mystyslav Chernov, Russian missile turns Ukrainian market into fiery, blackened ruin strewn with bodies, 07/09/2023,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-blinken-counteroffensive-6c1545768d77d927a5cda148fc197e3c>

⁶⁸ The Associated Press, A look at Russia's deadliest missile attacks on Ukraine, 05/10/2023,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-missile-strike-85dea3d9af59589d372333a23de9130a>

Volodymyr Zelenskyy has correctly referred to the attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure as "energy terrorism."

The terrorist attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure in the winter of 2022/23 that began in October 2022 caused widespread disruption to daily life across Ukraine, plunging the country into darkness for extended periods of time and denying the civilian population access to light and heating. According to a report from the Atlantic Council, it resulted in the destruction of approximately 61% of Ukraine's electricity generation capacity and damaged over 50% of the country's energy sector more broadly.

Thanks in large part to the efforts of Ukrenergo along with others including the country's biggest private power company, DTEK, Ukraine was able to restore and repair enough infrastructure in the winter of 2022/23 to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. In the winter of 2022/23, Ukraine's energy companies started a massive repair and maintenance campaign with the Ukrainian Government reporting that 62% of Ukraine's thermal power plant units had been repaired by 5 September 2023 and maintained and are ready for the winter of 2023/24, along with 68% of hydropower plants and 80% of transmission power lines. These efforts will continue up to the onset of cold restricting further work. However, significant amounts of damage caused by Russia's attacks has yet to be repaired and replacement parts have been hard to come by, especially autotransformers.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), stated that the average Ukrainian household had to endure 5 weeks without power during the winter of 2022, according to estimates carried out by the UNDP and World Bank that were reported on in April 2023. That is 35 days in the dark, sometimes in below freezing temperatures. Energy affects every aspect of daily life and when it fails, communities suffer deeply. It disrupts healthcare, people's work, children's education and it also severs connections between Ukrainians when in wartime they need it most. It is no wonder given this, that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has referred to Russia's attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure as energy terrorism.

In April 2023, the UNDP and World Bank calculated that \$10 billion in damages to Ukraine's energy infrastructure from 24 February 2022 to April 2023 had been caused by Russia and Ukraine's capacity to produce electricity for the same time period had been reduced by 61%. As of April 2023, the UNDP and the World Bank calculated that 12 million people in Ukraine had no or limited access to energy, 22 out of 36 power generation plants were damaged, destroyed or inaccessible and a large part of the heating infrastructure in war-affected areas were broken beyond repair. All of this has badly undermined Ukraine's overall energy capacity. For example, before the onset of

Russia's winter 2022/203 bombing campaign, Ukraine had an estimated 13.6 gigawatts (GW) of thermal capacity, but only 4GW remained by the spring of 2023. All this damage caused by Russian terrorism left the most vulnerable at risk of freezing to death during winter months. It also has meant small businesses striving to stay afloat with no internet connection, no lifeline to the outside world. Moreover, the hospitals and health centres relying on emergency generators are left anxiously wondering how long they will keep running and what they will do when they finally give out. This is the human consequences of Russia's energy terrorism, it's literally a matter of life and death.

According to an article by Adrian Prokrip of the Wilson Centre, of the roughly 1,200 missiles and drones launched by Russia as of 5 September 2023, almost a quarter hit energy facilities. By 5 September 2023, 43% of Ukraine's power transmission infrastructure and the distribution infrastructure in many of Ukraine's regions was destroyed.

Russia's campaign of destruction against Ukraine's energy infrastructure amounts to criminal violations of the laws of war. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, set up by the UN Human Rights Council, has found that "these attacks by the Russian armed forces were disproportionate and that they constituted the war crime of excessive incidental death, injury, or damage". In a statement to the UN General Assembly in October 2023, the inquiry's chair flagged ongoing investigation into these attacks as potential crimes against humanity.

Russia again targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure from 25 April 2023 to 24 May 2023, the Autumn of 2023 and carried on its deliberate bombardment of Ukraine's energy infrastructure into the winter of 2023/24.

On 27 April 2023, one power sector employee was murdered and 4 employees were injured while repairing the power grid in the Kharkiv region. Between 28-29 April 2023, Russian military forces attacked the Donetsk region, leading to one energy generation facility being disconnected from Ukraine's energy system. Between 30 April 2023-1 May 2023, Russian military forces launched a massive terrorist attack which caused significant damage to the power distributing networks. As a result of the attack, a part of Dnipro city and the Dnipropetrovsk region were disconnected from the power supply and over 18,000 residents in Kherson city and its region were also disconnected due to multiple shellings. On 3 May 2023, Russia attacked energy facilities in the Sumy region using guided air bombs and as a result of the attack, a power substation in the Sumy region was significantly damaged. Also on 3 May 2023, 3 power company employees were murdered in the Kherson region due to Russian shelling. On 4 May 2023, Russian military forces attacked a generation facility in the Donetsk region, with the overhead

power lines in the region damaged due to heavy Russian shelling. As a result, more than 100,000 consumers, including coal mines, were disconnected from the power supply in the Donetsk region. On 10 May 2023, Russian military forces attacked the administrative building of “Kharkivoblenergo”, a power Distribution System Operator (DSO). On 14 May 2023, two high-voltage overhead lines in the south west and east of Ukraine operated by Ukrenergo were damaged. On 15 May 2023, Russian military forces shelled a Thermal Power Plant (TPP) in the Donetsk region. On 18 May 2023, Russia launched another massive terrorist attack on the whole of Ukrainian territory using missiles and drones, in the process damaging several energy facilities. On 19 May 2023, 3 energy sector employees were murdered due to a Russian drone attack in the Sumy region. On 22 May 2023, Russia launched a massive terrorist attack using missiles and drones. As a result of the attack on 22 May 2023, Ukraine’s power grid was damaged in several regions. Damage caused by the 22 May 2023 Russian terrorist attack, included 24 settlements in the Dnipropetrovsk region being disconnected from the electricity supply, more than 246,000 residents being disconnected in the Zaporizhzhia region as a result of damages to the power infrastructure and substations and the last power line connecting the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear power plant (ZNPP) with the Ukrainian energy sector being temporarily cut off due to the Russian terrorist attack.

In the early hours of 21 September 2023, Russia launched a wave of airstrikes targeting Ukraine’s energy infrastructure. The attack involved 43 cruise missiles, 36 of which were shot down by Ukrainian Air Defence Forces. The remainder of these missiles hit energy facilities in central and western Ukraine. At least two people were murdered in the strikes, which caused damage to approximately 40 buildings and led to partial blackouts in Ukraine’s Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Rivne and Zhytomyr regions. Ukraine’s electricity grid operator, Ukrenergo said that the Russian bombardment on 21 September 2023 was the first major enemy attack on the country’s power infrastructure in 6 months.

Furthermore, according to the Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure Task Force, as of 24 May 2023, Russia occupied, damaged or destroyed about 50% of the country's installed power capacity, thousands of kilometres of electric, gas and heat networks, transformers, compressor stations, heat-only boilers and other infrastructure facilities.

According to a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) between February 2022 – February 2023 conducted by the World Bank, as of March 2023, damage to the energy sector of Ukraine was estimated at \$10.6 billion, including \$6.5 billion damage in the power sector only. The total needed for recovery and reconstruction of the energy

sector was estimated to be \$47 billion in March 2023 and sadly that figure has only increased since then.

Another way you can see the damage caused by Russia's energy terrorism as described by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is by looking at the impact of different sources of energy. Research from Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure showed that at the beginning of 2022 there were 12 Thermal Power Plants in Ukraine (TPP) providing thermal energy. They had a total installed power capacity of 21.5 gigawatts (GW) (excluding the plants located in the territories temporarily occupied by Russia before 24 February 2022). TPP's use coal as a primary fuel and its share of Ukrainian electricity production was 23.8%. Since 2014, two TPPs with an installed capacity of 3.3 GW have been located in the occupied Donbas region. All TPP's under Ukrainian control before 24 February 2022 were either destroyed or damaged. The majority of TPP's were attacked by Russia more than once. DTEK Energy, the largest operator of TPPs in Ukraine, estimated damages from Russia's attacks on these plants at \$160 million. In total, the facilities of the company were attacked 30 times and more than one thousand pieces of equipment were damaged. The TPPs of the state owned Ukrainian company Centrenergo were targeted during 13 out of 15 massive Russian missile attacks and were hit 32 times during the 2022/23 heating season.

At the beginning of 2022, the total installed power capacity of combined heat and power plants (CHPs) was 6.1 GW (excluding the plants located in the territories temporarily occupied by Russia before 24 February 2022). Most CHPs are using natural gas as a primary fuel. In 2021 the share of CHPs and cogeneration units in electricity production in Ukraine was 5.5%. As of 24 May 2023, around 8% of the installed capacity from CHPs is under Russian occupation, while at least 48% of installed capacities (including 2/3 capacities of CHPs used for balancing the power system) have either been destroyed or damaged as a result of Russian terrorist attacks.

At the beginning of 2022, there were ten large hydropower plants (HPPs) in Ukraine with a total installed power capacity of about 4.7 GW (101 units in total). Hydropower plays a key role in the functioning of the Ukrainian power system and makes up just under 6% of electricity production in Ukraine. All of the Ukrainian hydropower facilities have either been damaged or attacked by Russia. During the 2022/2023 heating season, there were more than 30 missile hits on Ukrainian hydropower facilities.

Ukraine has a large renewable energy sector including solar power, onshore wind power and offshore wind power. Renewable energy made up 8.1% of Ukraine's electricity production in 2021 and was growing rapidly. 25% of Ukraine's renewable

energy facilities were under Russian occupation as of 24 May 2023 and 6% of Ukraine's total renewable energy capacity for the same time period had been destroyed or damaged. As of 24 May 2023, 13% of Ukraine's solar power capacity was under Russian occupation and 8% of the total installed solar capacity had been destroyed or damaged. As of 24 May 2023, Russia occupied much of the south of Ukraine, where the highest wind potential is available. Thus, approximately 80% of Ukraine's wind generation capacities by May 2023 were located in territories occupied by Russia. As of 24 May 2023, at least 10 wind turbines are known to be damaged or destroyed as a result of the hostilities by the Russian army (about 1 % of the total installed wind capacity).

Further evidence of Russia's energy terrorism is illustrated by evidence provided by the Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure illustrating Russia's targeting of Ukraine's energy distribution networks. The electricity distribution systems in Ukraine include more than 800,000 kms of overhead with about 200,000 transformer substations operated by 32 distribution system operators (DSOs). As of the beginning of January 2023, over 1,000 overhead lines and more than 8,000 transformers were damaged or disconnected due to continuous shelling and hostilities (not including power infrastructure disconnected due to emergencies). About 290,000 km of Ukraine's gas distribution networks are operated by 45 gas distribution system operators (DSOs) in Ukraine. From 24 February 2022 to 24 May 2023, more than 7,000 km of distribution networks in eastern and southern Ukraine had been destroyed or damaged (approximately 12% of the distribution networks in eastern and southern Ukraine). For the same time period, 5,000 gas distribution control units were either suspended or damaged.

Ukrainian oil refineries and gas processing facilities have also been deliberately targeted by Russia in what amounts to energy terrorism. After 24 February 2022, the work of the Shebelynka Gas Processing Plant (GPP) was suspended due to Russian hostilities and the plant was later damaged by a Russian missile attack. In September 2022, the Russian military forces continued regular shelling of the Shebelynka GPP and its fuel reservoirs. Multiple Russian missile attacks also destroyed the Kremenchuk Refinery (in total, Russia shot 32 missiles at the Kremenchuk Refinery up to 24 May 2023) and damaged the facilities of Odesa and Lysychansk Refineries (the latter is owned by Rosneft, the second largest Russian state-controlled Company after Gazprom). As a result, the Ukrainian oil refinery industry had been destroyed by 24 May 2023 and the country was almost 100% dependent on imported petroleum products.

Russia has also deliberately targeted Ukrainian oil depots, evidence from the Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure highlights. From 24

February 2022 to 24 May 2023, over 30 Ukrainian oil depots had been destroyed or significantly damaged in almost all the regions of Ukraine. According to Ukraine's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, as of 24 May 2023 the destruction of oil depots by the Russian military forces resulted in the additional emission of 499,000 tons of pollutants into the atmosphere. For comparison, the emissions of Ukraine's largest industrial polluter are estimated at 220,000 tons annually.

Evidence from the Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure also illustrates the deliberate destruction and damaging of Ukrainian fuel stations by Russia. In 2021, there were more than 7,500 fuel stations in Ukraine, including petroleum, natural gas and electricity charging stations. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion up to 24 May 2023, Russia's terrorist attacks had either destroyed or damaged more than 300 fuel stations. It is impossible to accurately estimate the number of fuel stations damaged or destroyed due to Russia's occupation and ongoing hostilities.

Another way Russia has attacked Ukraine's energy infrastructure is through cyber-terrorism the Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure has pointed out. From 24 February 2022 to 24 May 2023, over 1.2 million cyber attacks had been carried out on Ukraine's energy infrastructure facilities. It should also be mentioned that Russia began intensive cyber attacks on the Ukrainian energy sector even before the full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022. For instance, from December 2021 to February 2022, Russia repeatedly tried to inflict maximum damage to the work of Ukrainian energy companies, including interfering with the work of dispatch centres and smart grids. In 2022, more than 3 million cyber attacks were carried out on Ukraine's Naftogaz's network infrastructure, 12 times more than in 2021.

Furthermore, according to figures up to 24 April 2023 cited by the Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure, In addition to the inflicted damages, Russia also took control of Ukraine's mineral deposits worth at least \$12.4 trillion. This led by April 2023 to Ukraine losing 63% of coal deposits, 11% of its oil deposits, 20% of its natural gas deposits, 42% of its metal deposits and 33% of deposits of rare earth elements and other critical minerals, including lithium.

It should also be noted that the actual damages and losses most likely will be higher as there is no complete information on Ukrainian facilities located in the temporarily occupied territories and no publicly available information on the detailed damages caused to the country's energy infrastructure facilities in areas of heavy hostilities and in areas occupied by Russia.

Russia's energy terrorism is continuing to the present day. On 8 January 2024, a wind turbine in Ukraine was destroyed and a wind farm partially shut down following a "massive night attack" by Russian drones, said local industry officials. UK developer Elementum Energy partially shut down its 100 megawatt (MW) Dnistrovska wind farm after it was damaged on 8 January, the Ukrainian Wind Energy Association (UWEA) said. An amateur video showed a 5.5MW turbine collapsing to the ground, with others still standing around it, as a consequence of the Russian terrorist attack.

Russia's systemic targeting and decimation of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has caused indiscriminate long lasting misery to Ukraine's civilians that has put their lives and livelihoods at risk. It is further evidence that Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism and the UK Government as a vital ally of Ukraine and opponent of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine should recognise Russia's actions as terrorism and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.^{69 70 71 72 73 74 75}

⁶⁹ Suriya Evans-Pritchard Jayanti, Russia resumes bombing campaign of Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure, 22/09/2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russia-resumes-bombing-campaign-of-ukraines-civilian-energy-infrastructure/>

⁷⁰ Stephen Minass, Ukraine's energy fightback, 08/11/2023, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/ukraine-s-energy-fightback>

⁷¹ Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure Task Force, Ukraine energy sector evaluation and damage assessment - X - as of May 24, 2023, 24/05/2023, https://www.energycharter.org/fileadmin/DocumentsMedia/Occasional/2023_05_24_UA_sectoral_evaluation_and_damage_assessment_Version_X_final.pdf

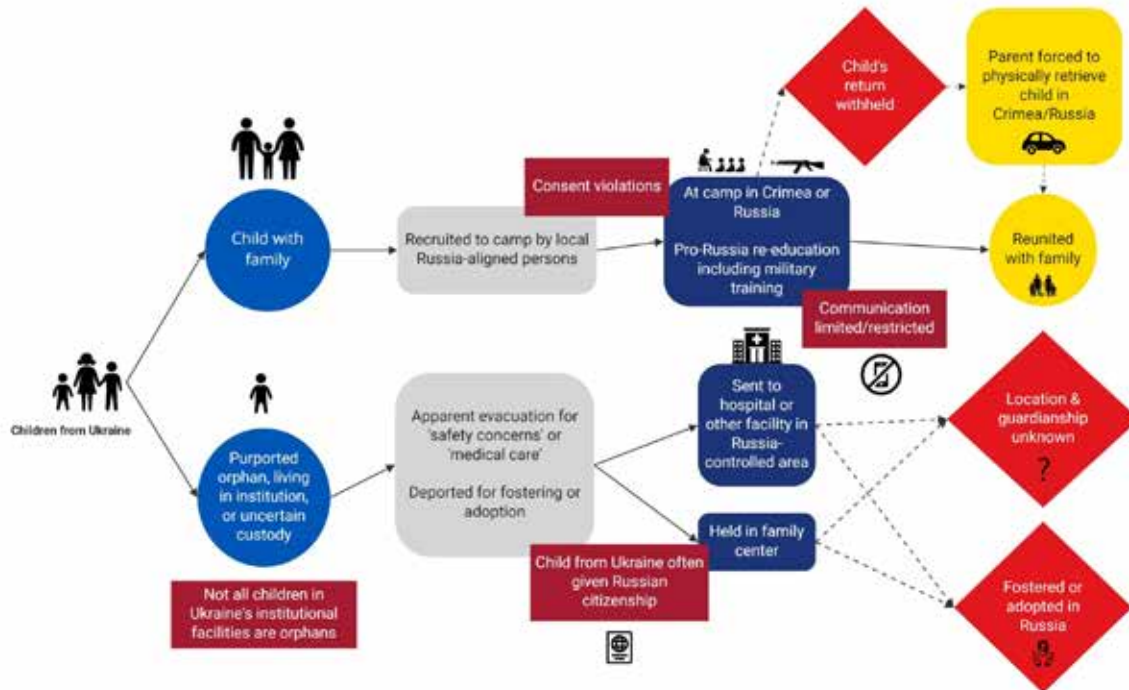
⁷² Jaco Cilliers, Uncovering the reality of Ukraine's decimated energy infrastructure, 12/04/2023, <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/blog/uncovering-reality-ukraines-decimated-energy-infrastructure>

⁷³ Cosmo Sanderson, GE wind turbine 'destroyed after massive Russian drone attack', 09/01/2024, <https://www.rechargenews.com/wind/ge-wind-turbine-destroyed-after-massive-russian-drone-attack/2-1-1581005>

⁷⁴ Adrian Prokip, How will Ukraine's energy sector fare in the upcoming winter? 05/09/2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/how-will-ukraines-energy-sector-fare-upcoming-winter>

⁷⁵ Dr. Aura Sabadus, Ukraine braces for another winter of Russian attacks on power grid, 13/11/2023, [Ukraine braces for another winter of Russian attacks on power grid - Atlantic Council](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/ukraine-alert/ukraine-braces-for-another-winter-of-russian-attacks-on-power-grid/)

23. Russia's mass abduction of Ukrainian children



On 14 February 2023, a detailed report came out of a detailed and extensive program coming from right at the heart of the Russian state, that was abducting and indoctrinating Ukrainian children on a mass scale. The report was carried out by the Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) at Yale’s School of Public Health (SPH). The sophistication of the operation pointed to the program being controlled from the top of the Russian government, concluded the report, undertaken in collaboration with the U.S. State Department. "It is a massive logistical undertaking that does not happen by accident," Nathaniel Raymond, Executive Director of Yale University Humanitarian Research Lab, told NPR.

The report showed that up to February 2023, Russia has held more than 6,000 children from Ukraine in over 43 camps and other facilities for systematic re-education, and in some cases foster/adoption from the Black Sea to Russia’s Far East.

The report discovered that children from Ukraine aged four months to 17 years old have been held at camps and other facilities since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Filippo Grande, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has said of Russia's treatment of Ukrainian children that: "Giving [Ukraine’s children Russian] nationality or having them adopted goes against the fundamental principles of child protection in situations of war... This is something that is happening in Russia and must not happen."

The report documented Russia's systematic relocation, re-education and in some cases foster or adoption of Ukraine's children. These activities constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity including Geneva Conventions and Convention on the Rights of the Child. UK Friends of Ukraine believe they are also a form of terrorism, given it involves terrorising Ukrainian children and their families, as well as deliberately targeting Ukrainian children.

The network of facilities are primarily camps, but also include a psychiatric hospital and a family centre, stretching across 4,000 miles from the Black Sea to the eastern coast of the Pacific Ocean, including sites in Siberia and Magadan region in Russia's Far East, a location 1,300 miles from Alaska and approximately 3,900 miles from Ukraine's border with Russia. There are at least 43 facilities in the abduction network. This includes 12 camps around the Black Sea, 7 in illegally annexed Crimea, as well as 10 clustered around Moscow, Kazan, and Yekaterinburg. 11 of the camps are located over 500 miles from Ukraine's border, including two camps in Siberia and one in Russia's Far East.

75% of the camp's facilities appear engaged in pro-Russia re-education, including documented military training.

Around 10% of camps suspended children's return to their homes, including two locations where children's returns appear to have been indefinitely suspended.

At least 32 (78%) of the camps engaged in systematic re-education efforts that exposed children from Ukraine to Russia-centric academic, cultural, patriotic, and/or military education. This shows clear attempts at Russification, as well as attempting to wipe out Ukrainian identity and culture.

Officials across all levels of Russia's Federal Government and regional administrations have been engaged in this systematic effort to re-educate and transfer children. At least 12 of these individuals were not on U.S. and/or international sanction lists at the time the report came out on 14 February 2023.

The children from Ukraine include those with known parents or guardians, purported orphans, children living in institutional facilities, many with documented disabilities, and children with unknown/unclear guardianship status.

Two camps hosted children alleged to be orphans who were later placed with foster families and enrolled in local schools in Russia. 20 children from these camps were reported to have been placed with families in the Moscow region and enrolled in local schools there.

At two camps, Artek and Medvezhonok, children's returns were suspended indefinitely according to parents. Medvezhonok is one of the largest camps identified, at one point hosting at least 300 children from Ukraine.

Intentionally separating children from their parents, even temporarily, can constitute a war crime and, in some cases, a crime against humanity,” said Kaveh Khoshnood, faculty director HRL Yale SPH. Khoshnood added that “Parents have reported signing power of attorney for their child to an unknown entity & being unable to contact their children or camp administrators. In several cases, the scheduled return of these children to their families has been indefinitely delayed or cancelled.” It is unknown how many of Ukraine’s children Russia currently holds and how many have been released to their families. “Russia's actions are an urgent human rights and child welfare emergency,” stated Khoshnood. “This report is the first comprehensive effort to document this disturbing and allegedly illegal pattern of child separation, indoctrination, and forced adoption.”

There is little information on the explanation given to children regarding delays in their return. An official at the Medvezhonok camp told a boy from Ukraine that his return was conditional: the children would be returned only if Russia recaptured the town of Izyum, the report said. Another boy was told he wouldn’t be returning home due to his “pro-Ukrainian views,” the report said.

Some parents were told that their children will be released only if they physically come to pick them up. Relatives or people given power of attorney were not allowed to pick up the children. Travel from Ukraine to Russia is difficult and expensive, and men between the ages of 18 and 60 are forbidden from leaving the country, in effect meaning only the mothers of the children may retrieve them. “A significant portion of these families are low-income and have not been able to afford to make the trip. Some families were forced to sell belongings and travel through four countries to be reunited with their child,” the report found.

Russia is led by an alleged war criminal. In March 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for President Vladimir Putin as well as Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia’s so-called Commissioner of Children’s Rights. The court said that the pair bear responsibility for 2 war crimes: the “unlawful deportation” and “unlawful transfer” of people, including children, from Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine into Russia (and Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula Russia illegally annexed in 2014). Neither individual is likely to stand trial. However, evidence that Putin empowered Lvova-Belova to set up a child deportation scheme is mounting.

The report by researchers at Yale University gives a detailed account of Russia’s child-deportation campaign. By scouring social media platforms, local news reports and satellite images, the analysts uncovered a network of 43 Russian facilities to which Ukrainian children had been moved since February 2022. Many of the camps are in Crimea and southern Russia, close to Ukraine. But some are farther afield: one was identified in Magadan, a far eastern region nearly 4,000km (2,500 miles) from the

Ukrainian border. The researchers say that at least 6,000 children have been transferred to the camps, but the figure is probably far higher.

Sometimes, the study claimed, Russia presents the facilities as recreational camps to parents, seeking to gain their (potentially forced) consent for children to travel. Guardians may wish to send infants out of the war zone, feel pressure from occupying forces to send them away, or simply believe that the camps offer children a free holiday. Some return home after an agreed-upon period. But the facilities may refuse to send them back, citing “safety concerns” (for example, if their parents live in territory that has been recaptured by Ukrainian forces). Some parents have had to travel to Crimea or Russia to recover their children.

The camps instill a Russo-centric worldview in the children. These educational programmes involve classes based on the Russian curriculum, talks from veterans and even military training. There are reports of psychological and physical abuse, too. One teenager who was reunited with his family in March after months at a facility in Crimea told Ukrainian media that children who expressed pro-Ukrainian sentiment were punished. He claimed to have seen a girl with bruising on her back, apparently caused by a beating.

“Re-educated” Ukrainian children, as the study calls them, contribute to the Kremlin’s propaganda campaign, which casts the Russian invasion as a liberation of Ukrainians from a Western-backed fascist regime. In February children deported from Mariupol, an occupied city in south-eastern Ukraine, appeared at a rally in Moscow celebrating the invasion’s first anniversary. A 15 year old girl was chosen to “thank” the soldier who “saved” her from the city.

Parts of the camp network are designed to facilitate permanent displacement. The Yale researchers identified two Russian facilities involved in the deportation of infants who were under the care of the Ukrainian state before the invasion (be it in children’s homes or medical facilities). Russian officials say that many such children are orphans, a claim Ukraine denies and that it is moving them into foster care with Russian families. It is important to note that international law treaties prohibit the forcible transfer of children between countries.

Russia has insisted such camps are part of a humanitarian project for abandoned war traumatised orphans. However, Ukrainian officials have said that Russia has deported thousands of children without parental consent. Furthermore, these children would not have been traumatised by war in the first place if Russia hadn’t launched an unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

Officially, the Ukrainian Government has documented over 19,000 children abducted by Russia, but they told CBS News in November 2023 that they worry the actual number could be closer to 300,000 children.^{76 77 78 79 80 81}

24. Top Russian official confirms Russia's taking Ukrainian children to Russia.

A top Russian official in March 2023 said that her Government was taking Ukrainian children to Russia. She said they were voluntarily taken from regions of Ukraine previously occupied or occupied by Russia in Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhia regions, but many believe that what in fact happened were deportations. The Telegram post by Russia's Commissioner on Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, confirmed reports that since the start of Russia's full scale invasion on 24 February 2022, Russia has taken many Ukrainian children to Russia or areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia.

Lvova-Belova wrote that parents in the Ukrainian regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv had "voluntarily" sent their children to "sanatoriums" and health camps in occupied Crimea and the Russian region of Krasnodar for "rest" and protection from hostilities. She failed to mention that the hostilities were caused by Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, where its actions have sought to terrorise Ukrainians into submission.

Lvova-Belova sought to justify delaying the return of Ukrainian children, saying the situation on the front line in Ukraine meant it was often not safe for parents to get them back. Again, she unsurprisingly ignored the inconvenient facts that these children would not have been taken in the first place but for Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine and that it wasn't safe for them to return due to Russia occupying and invading large swathes of Ukraine. Lvova-Belova added that 89 children remained in Southern Russia.

⁷⁶ Humanitarian Research Lab at Yale School of Public Health, Russia's systematic program for the re-education and adoption of Ukraine's children, 14/02/2023,

<https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/apps/sites/#/home/pages/children-camps-1>

⁷⁷ Twitter/X, Humanitarian Research lab Twitter thread of 14/02/2023,

https://twitter.com/HRL_YaleSPH/status/1625555937233600513

⁷⁸ Helen Sullivan, Thousands of Ukrainian children put through Russian re-education camps, US report finds, 15/02/2023,

<https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/15/ukraine-children-sent-russia-re-education-camps>

⁷⁹ Brendan Cole, Russia admits the truth on deporting Ukrainian children, 16 02 2023,

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/russia-admits-the-truth-on-deporting-ukrainian-children/>

⁸⁰ Cecilia Vega, Ukrainians accuse Russia of kidnapping, indoctrinating Ukrainian children, 19/11/2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukrainians-accuse-russia-of-abducting-indoctrinating-children-60-minutes-transcript/>

⁸¹ The Economist, Why Russia is deporting Ukrainian children, 14/04/2023,

<https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2023/04/14/why-russia-is-deporting-ukrainian-children>

In reporting Lvova-Belova's comments, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) said that the forced deportation and adoption of Ukrainian children is a violation of the Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. The ISW added that the move is part "of a wider ethnic cleansing campaign." The ISW went on to state that "Lvova-Belova's claim that a certain number of Ukrainian children are being returned to their families does not negate the reality that the vast majority of abducted children do not return to Ukraine."

Lvova-Belova's comments back a picture provided by evidence of the mass taking of children to Russia, which reports from researchers such as those from Yale University, has involved what amounts to the abducting and deporting of Ukrainian children. In May 2022, the Ukrainian Commissioner for Children's Rights noted that more than 180,000 children had been illegally transferred to the occupied territories, while representatives of the Russian state such as Lvova-Belova admitted that since the beginning of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine, over 183,000 children had arrived in Russia. In October 2022, the U.S. Government estimated that around 260,000 Ukrainian children were taken to Russia. In June 2022, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed concerns to the UN's Human Rights Council about the disappearance of children in temporarily occupied territories, particularly children from Ukrainian institutions such as children's homes. Over the summer of 2022, the number of Ukrainian children taken to Russia rose to 307,000 children according to Russian media and to 728,000 in January 2023. We believe all these children have been forcibly displaced by Russia, whether they were abducted or not, as without Russia's invasion and occupation of Ukraine, these children would not now be in Russia or in Ukrainian territory occupied by Russia.

Lvova-Belova herself has been personally involved in the process of displacing Ukrainian children. In February 2023, in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Lvova-Belova informed Putin that she had adopted a 15 year old child from the Russian occupied city of Mariupol. She said that she had adopted the child "thanks" to Putin.

Lvova's Belova's comments and own actions highlight that Russia is engaged in taking children from their homes in Ukraine and on the back of clear evidence from Yale University researchers and others, the evidence points to a systematic scheme from the Russian state targeting Ukrainian children. UK Friends of Ukraine believe the way the

Russian state is carrying out this scheme amounts to series crimes against humanity and terrorism.^{82 83 84}

25. Why Russia is abducting Ukrainian children



IMAGE: ALAMY

Russia is abducting Ukrainian children and attempting to indoctrinate them through the Orwellian named re-education camps to try and eradicate Ukrainian identity and subsume it to Russian identity. It is a form of cultural genocide and cultural imperialism in our view.

The camps try to instill a Russo-centric worldview in the children. Educational programmes involve classes based on the Russian curriculum, talks from veterans and even military training. There are reports of psychological and physical abuse, too. One teenager who was reunited with his family in March 2023 after months at a facility in Crimea told Ukrainian media that children who expressed pro-Ukrainian sentiment were punished. He claimed to have seen a girl with bruising on her back, apparently caused by a beating.

⁸² Brendan Cole, Russia admits the truth on deporting Ukrainian children, 11/03/2023, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/russia-admits-the-truth-on-deporting-ukrainian-children/>

⁸³ European Parliament, Russia's war on children: forcibly displaced Ukrainian children, April 2023, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747093/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747093_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747093/EPRS_BRI(2023)747093_EN.pdf)

⁸⁴ The Moscow Times, Putin's children's envoy reveals she adopted child from Mariupol, 16/02/2023 and updated 27/11/2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/02/16/putins-childrens-envoy-reveals-she-adopted-child-from-mariupol-a80249>

“Re-educated” Ukrainian children, as the HRL reports calls them, contribute to the Kremlin’s propaganda campaign, which casts the Russian invasion as a liberation of Ukrainians from a Western-backed fascist regime. In February 2023 children deported from Mariupol, an occupied city in south eastern Ukraine, appeared at a rally in Moscow celebrating the invasion’s first anniversary. A 15-year-old girl was chosen to “thank” the soldier who “saved” her from the city.

By indoctrinating children, Russian President, Vladimir Putin and the Russian state as a whole, based on the denial of an independent Ukrainian identity, hopes to inspire loyalty to Russia in the parts of Ukraine that he claims as his own. The abducting and indoctrination of children for these ends is not just a war crime, but terrorism as to carry it out involves the indiscriminate targeting of Ukrainian children, as well as the terrorising of Ukrainian children and their families.⁸⁵

26. Several thousand children forcibly relocated to Russia Human Right Watch (HRW) says

A report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) on 13 March 2023 stated that since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine last February, thousands of children in Ukraine have been separated from their families and forcibly transferred to parts of Ukraine occupied by Russia and Russia itself since Russia’s full scale invasion began on 24 February 2022.

“Human Rights Watch has documented Russia’s forcible transfer of children from Ukrainian residential institutions. Inter-country adoption is prohibited during armed conflict; the forcible transfer of civilians from occupied territory is a war crime,” the report stated.

In May 2022, the Russian Parliament amended a law to allow authorities to grant Ukrainian children Russian citizenship, a move that facilitates the guardianship and adoption of Ukrainian children for Russian families. According to an HRW investigation, an adoption website lists children from Ukrainian regions, and Russian officials have said that hundreds of Ukrainian children have already been adopted.

As of March 2023, about 100 institutions, which housed more than 32,000 children before the war, were located in areas that are partially or fully under Russian occupation, according to official Ukrainian Government figures.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ The Economist, Why Russia is deporting Ukrainian children, 14/04/2023, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2023/04/14/why-russia-is-deporting-ukrainian-children>

⁸⁶ Clara Bauer-Badef, Several thousand Ukrainian children ‘forcibly relocated to Russia’, HRW says, 14/03/2023, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/several-thousand-ukrainian-children-forcibly-relocated-to-russia-hrw-says/>

27. Children 'beaten for supporting Ukraine'. 17 kids returned after being held in Russian-occupied Crimea

In late March 2023, 17 Ukrainian children were rescued and returned to their families, after a supposed 'summer camp' in Russian-occupied Crimea turned into six months of effective captivity. The children were forced to sing the Russian national anthem and report facing punitive measures, including beatings, if they expressed pro-Ukrainian views.

The rescue mission was launched by the Save Ukraine Centre who explain that the children and young teenagers are from parts of the Kharkiv and Kherson regions previously under Russian occupation. They were taken to occupied Crimea or to Russia, purportedly just for summer camps, however after Ukraine's Army drove the invaders from the children's homes, Russia refused to return them. Officially, the parents were told that they could come and collect the children, however this was physically next to impossible, as the invaders, in retreating from Kherson, had blown up the bridge. In order to get to the children, they would have needed to travel first to Poland, then Belarus, then Russia and to occupied Crimea. There were also legitimate grounds for fearing that the parents would also be seized and prevented from returning.

The children told Current Time how they'd had to get up each day with the Russian national anthem. A small Ukrainian flag which one of the girls had in her room was set alight, by somebody called Astakhov, who was supposedly in charge of 'safety.' He told the kids "Come and watch how your country burns." Then they gathered us together and said "Ukraine, they're terrorists, they kill people, children. Ukraine doesn't need you. They took sticks and hit you if you were for Ukraine. You had to say that you're for Russia."

The abuse abducted Ukrainian children experienced here was not an outlier either. A former member of Ukraine's disgraced and dissolved Berkut special police, Valeriy Atakhov, abused abducted Ukrainian children in Crimea, Russian independent magazine the Insider claimed on 26 March 2023, after conducting an investigation. The magazine identified Atakhov as the person who threatened and beat Ukrainian children that were illegally taken to the so-called "educational" facilities. The Insider's journalists spoke with 17 children, who were recently returned to Ukraine, and with their parents.

The children were beaten, threatened and forced to stay in a cellar, 16 year old Vitaliy said.^{87 88}

28. Ukrainian Official states that over 4,000 Ukrainian orphans abducted by Russia

Russia forcibly moved 4,390 Ukrainian orphans, semi-orphans, and children without parental care to its territory or the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, then Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said on 28 March 2023.

More than 16,000 Ukrainian children are confirmed to have been deported by Russia since the start of the full-scale invasion up to 28 March 2023, according to the government website Children of War. However, Ukraine's then ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said on 24 March 2023 that the real number of Ukrainian children forcibly taken by Russian troops could be "tens, or even hundreds of thousands."⁸⁹

29. Russia abducted over 19,500 Ukrainian children according to Ukraine's Reintegration Ministry

Invading Russian forces kidnapped 19,514 children from temporarily occupied Ukrainian territory from the beginning of the full scale invasion of Ukraine to 28 March 2023, according to Ukraine's Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories.

By 28 March 2023, around 4,390 Ukrainian children, including orphans and those deprived of parental care, were being held in Ukrainian territories illegally occupied by Russia according to the Ukrainian Government, though many believe the numbers are much higher.⁹⁰

30. 24 abducted Ukrainian children returned to Kherson region

⁸⁷ Halya Coynash, Children 'beaten for supporting Ukraine'. Seventeen kids returned after being held in Russian-occupied Crimea, 27/03/2023, <https://khpg.org/en/1608812029>

⁸⁸ New Voice of Ukraine, Former 'Berkut' officer abuses Ukrainian children, 27/03/2023, <https://english.nv.ua/nation/former-berkut-officer-abuses-ukrainian-children-kidnapped-from-crimea-50313515.html>

⁸⁹ Kyiv Independent News Desk, Official: Over 4,000 Ukrainian orphans forcibly moved by Russia, 28 03 2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/official-over-4-000-ukrainian-orphans-forcibly-moved-by-russia/>

⁹⁰ New Voice of Ukraine, Russia abducted over 19.500 Ukrainian children from occupied territories, Reintegration Ministry says, 29/03/2023, <https://english.nv.ua/nation/russia-abducted-over-19-500-ukrainian-children-from-occupied-territories-50314088.html>



Kherson Oblast Governor Oleksandr Prokudin and the children who returned to Ukraine after being abducted by Russia pose for a photo on the outskirts of Kherson on April 10, 2023. (Oleksandr Prokudin via Telegram)

24 Ukrainian children from the Kherson region who had been illegally deported by Russia returned home on 10 April 2023 the then Kherson Regional Governor, Oleksandr Prokudin, reported. The city of Kherson and other settlements in the region on the Dnipro River's west bank were liberated by Ukrainian forces in November 2022 after eight months of Russian occupation.

The rescue mission was organized by the NGO Save Ukraine, which “made incredible efforts so that the young residents of the region could finally see and hug their relatives,” wrote Prokudin.

According to the NGO volunteers, Russian forces interrogated the children “for 13 hours” during the mission and later forced them to participate in a propaganda report.⁹¹

31. Decree signed by Putin of 4 January 2024 could make it easier to deport Ukrainian children

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on 4 January 2024 that will facilitate granting Russian citizenship to deported Ukrainian children, which, in turn, will allow for adopting them as Russians and changing their identity, Ukraine’s Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said on 5 January 2024.

⁹¹ Kyiv Independent News Desk, Governor: 24 kidnapped children from Kherson Oblast returned to Ukraine, 10/04/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/governor-24-deported-children-from-kherson-oblast-returned-to-ukraine/>

The decree states that Ukrainian orphans and children left without parental care can receive Russian citizenship by Putin's personal decision without taking into account all or some requirements of federal legislation. A citizenship application for such a child can be submitted by their legal guardian or the head of a Russian organization responsible for the child.

According to Lubinets, Russia aims to grant Russian citizenship to more of the deported Ukrainian children so that they would not count as Ukrainians remaining on their territory anymore. Lubinets said on Telegram on 5 January 2022 that "It (the decree) means that for deported Ukrainian children who are currently in Russian institutions or under the care of Russian families, Russian citizens can submit applications for accession to citizenship, which Putin will satisfy without any demand. We understand the terrible consequences of such actions because the next step after they receive the 'citizenship' of the Russian Federation will be the adoption of children as Russians, and after that - the change of their personal data."

There is already a precedent for what the decree is trying to implement when you consider that In late November 2023, Lubinets confirmed the first recorded case of a changed identity of a Ukrainian child illegally adopted by a Russian citizen. Originally named Marharyta Prokopenko, the child was abducted from a children's home in the then occupied Kherson city, adopted by a Russian lawmaker's family, granted Russian citizenship and renamed Marina Mironova. Her birthplace was purportedly changed in the records as Russian Podolsk. "In one moment, it may happen that not a single Ukrainian child will remain in the Russian Federation because all of them may become Russians within the next 3 months," added Lubinets in his telegram post.

The latest decree from Putin and the fact that a Ukrainian child illegally adopted by a Russian citizen has had her identity changed and given Russian citizenship shows that the Russian state in our view is planning to transfer children from one national group to another. It is part of an attempt to turn Ukrainian children against their own homeland and in support of Russia. The children in question have often been forced into it and their friends and family have been psychologically terrorised by the way their children have been taken. What Russia is doing amounts to serious crimes against humanity and in the way Ukrainian children are being deliberately targeted state terrorism. It is also being committed on a mass scale given that by 29 September 2023, Ukrainian authorities had identified over 19,000 Ukrainian children who had been illegally deported to Russia since the beginning of the full scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022. Only 387 children have been brought back so far, according to the national database Children of War. Putin's decree will only worsen Russia's mass abuse of Ukrainian children.

32. Reuters report of 11 January 2024 finds further proof of child abductions



A Reuters report of 11 January 2024 confirmed what previous investigations had found, the abduction and deportation on a mass scale of Ukrainian children. The report traced two groups of children, both from the Kherson region who had been abducted and deported.

The report also highlighted how orphaned children and others without parental care were directly targeted. Ukrainian authorities believe that Russia has removed more than 4,000 children who are orphaned or not in parental care.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Mariya Lvova-Belova are pictured together in February 2023. Sputnik/Mikhail Metzel/Pool via REUTERS

One group of children, all teenagers, was taken to Crimea, then to occupied Henichesk in the Kherson region. 6 of these teenagers, whose relatives are dead or unable to care for them, were abducted from a Ukrainian orphanage firstly to camps in Crimea and then to Russian controlled Henichesk. 5 of them are still in Russian-held territory with little prospect of returning to Ukraine. Two teenage girls who have since returned to Ukraine told Reuters that Russia's Children's Commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova met them in Henichesk early last year, where she offered them some deeply unappetising choices. She told one girl she could study at any Russian university. The other girl was told she could become part of a Russian family. No dissent was allowed. When Nastia, aged 16, sang Ukraine's anthem, "The police came and threatened to sew our mouths shut."

The second group of children the Reuters report investigated, consisted of 48 toddlers and infants removed from a care home in the Kherson region. They were bussed to Crimea in October 2022. These toddlers, Reuters learned, have ended up in a Crimean tuberculosis sanatorium and two nearby orphanages. One staff member who worked at one of the Crimean orphanages remembered the arrival of the toddlers. "They didn't understand what was happening, where they were. They were screaming all the time," they said.

Reuters also analysed a cache of files obtained from the regional administrative database by a Ukrainian hacking group, Kiborg. These files contain the detailed movement and transfer of Ukrainian children out of the Russian-controlled Donbas region and deeper into Russian territory.

The abduction of Ukraine's children is supported by a vast Russian state and pro Kremlin machinery to deport, house and re-educate. In its investigation, Reuters found that a network of pro-Kremlin actors and helpers was involved in taking the two groups of orphans they investigated from the Kherson region. This included Lvova-Belova, members of the Russian Parliament (Duma), officials in Russian occupied Crimea and Ukrainian doctors and teachers who chose to collaborate with Russian authorities. In some cases, the children are being exploited in TV shows and in online videos for their propaganda value.

It is important we do not lose sight of the unimaginable human misery caused by Russia's mass kidnapping of Ukrainian children. The deportations have come at an enormous human cost when you consider siblings have been divided, vulnerable youths have been turned against each other and preschool children with no blood relatives to claim them, have been hidden from view in Russian-held territory. Returning these children is an arduous task, volunteers and officials in Ukraine say and the job gets harder with every day that passes, as the children get older and are more indoctrinated

to Russian state influence. Almost all have been “brainwashed,” Mykola Kuleba, head of Save Ukraine, a nonprofit organisation that helps to retrieve Ukrainian children from Russian controlled territory, told Reuters. Kuleba added that “We will never be able to take them back, because they hate, hate Ukraine now.”

A number of cases of those children kidnapped by Russia, puts a horrifying human face to the numbers. Marharyta Mykhailivna Prokopenko was born on 31 October 2021. She was at a Kherson Regional Children’s Home. She has since been adopted by Russian politician Sergei Mironov and his wife Inna Varlamova. Her name, according to the Russian state registry documents, has been changed to Marina Mironova.

Diana Serhiivna Berenzon and her twin sister Svitlana Serhiivna Berenzon were born on 17 May 2021. They were due to be returned to their mother from Kherson Regional Children’s Home, but the outbreak of Russia’s full scale invasion postponed the social workers’ hearing on the return. Two months after the girls were moved from the Home in Kherson, their mother and her partner were killed by an anti-personnel device.

Mykola Romanovych Voldodin was born on 4 January 2019. He was taken from the Kherson Children’s Home. He was later seen at the Yolochna orphanage in Crimea in photos taken at the facility and posted online by the Rosgvardiya Russian paramilitary police force.

Oleksandr Viktorovych Samoilenko was born on 2 April 2018. Olesksandr’s name was on a child’s locker at the Kherson Regional Children’s Home. He went missing from Kherson in October 2022.

The fact that children younger than 5 were abducted and deported shows the sheer moral depravity of Russia’s attempts to terrorise and indoctrinate Ukraine’s future generations into submitting to the will of the Russian occupier. Those under 5 in particular are defenceless and alone.^{92 93 94}

33. Arrest warrant for Putin in part due to child abduction

On 17 March 2023, in part due to the Russian state’s abduction of Ukrainian children, the International Criminal (ICC), issued an arrest warrant for Russian President, Vladimir Putin. An arrest warrant was also issued for Maria Lvova-Belova, the oxymoronically named Russian Commissioner of Children’s Rights.

⁹² Twitter/X, Mari Sato Twitter/X thread of 11/01/2024,

<https://twitter.com/saitomri/status/1745411203482943814>

⁹³ Mari Sato, Maria Tsetkova, Polina Nikolskaya and Anton Zverev, A Reuters special report: How Russian officials and their collaborators spirit away Ukraine’s children, 11/01/2024,

<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ukraine-crisis-children/>

⁹⁴ Twitter/Z, Polina Nikolskaya Twitter/X thread of 11/01/2024,

https://twitter.com/reporter_polina/status/1745454683131711885

According to a statement put out by the ICC, there are “reasonable grounds to believe” that Putin is directly responsible for overseeing the forced kidnapping and relocation of over 16,000 Ukrainian children since the start of the full-scale invasion. Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelenskyy acknowledged in his nightly address of 17 March 2023, in response to the issue of the arrest warrant, that the actual number may be much higher. “The aggressor’s state policy is evident in its decisions to separate children from their families, deprive them of contact with relatives, hide them in Russian territory, and scatter them in remote regions. These actions represent a grave evil committed by the state,” Zelenskyy said in his address.

The ICC said at the time the arrest warrants were issued for Putin and Lvova-Belova, that the pair bear responsibility for two war crimes: the “unlawful deportation” and “unlawful transfer” of people, including children, from Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine into Russia and the illegally annexed Crimea.

The U.S. Ambassador to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Michael Carpenter said that Russia has relocated almost 2,000 children from Ukraine from 1 January 2023 to 17 March 2023.^{95 96}

34. UK Government’s response so far to Russia’s abduction of Ukrainian children

In mid July 2023, the UK Government imposed sanctions on a number of Russians, involved in the mass abduction of Ukrainian children. British officials said the deportations were designed to “erase Ukrainian cultural and national identity” via the relocation of Ukrainian children to a network of re-education camps. “In his chilling program of forced child deportation, and the hate-filled propaganda spewed by his lackeys, we see Putin’s true intention: to wipe Ukraine from the map,” commented the then British Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly.

We believe the UK Government should go further by recognising that the mass abduction of Ukrainian children is a clear example of Russian state sponsored terrorism and it is another reason why Russia should be recognised and designated as a terrorist state by the UK Government.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Kyiv Independent News Desk, Zelenskyy calls Putin arrest warrant ‘historic’, discusses frontline situation with military, 17/03/2023,

<https://kyivindependent.com/zelensky-icc-decision-to-issue-arrest-warrant-to-putin-historic/>

⁹⁶ The Economist, Why Russia is deporting Ukrainian children, 14/04/2023,

<https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2023/04/14/why-russia-is-deporting-ukrainian-children>

⁹⁷ Vladyslav Havrylov, Russia’s mass abduction of Ukrainian children may qualify as genocide, 27/07/2023,

35. Rape and other forms of sexual violence

In this section of the report, we will highlight information about how Russian soldiers have used rape and other forms of sexual violence as a weapon of war against Ukrainian women. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are despicable war crimes and in our view particularly heinous forms of Russian state terrorism.

Russia has used sexual violence as a “weapon of war”, a deliberate “military strategy”, in its conquest of Ukraine, United Nations (UN) investigators have said. These UN investigators have even relayed allegations of Russian soldiers carrying Viagra.

The UN has said it has investigated cases in Ukraine of “sexual and gender-based violence” against people ranging from 4 to 82 years old. As of September 2022, 43 criminal proceedings had been initiated, according to the UN. The number of cases of sexual violence is sadly likely to be much higher, as many go unreported.

In Late November 2022, Wayne Jordash KC told Reuters that inquiries in the capital Kyiv show that some of the sexual violence involved a level of organisation that ‘speaks to planning on a more systematic level’. Jordash, who is part of a Western backed team that provides legal expertise to Ukraine, said in late November 2022 that it was too early to conclude how widespread the practice was because investigations at the time in what were recently recaptured areas of the northeast and south of Ukraine, were at an early stage. However, the patterns suggest that sexual violence ‘maybe even more frequent’ in territories that were occupied for longer periods, Jordash added.

The mass rape of Ukrainians by Russia’s soldiers and its proxies are an example of indiscriminately targeting and violating Ukrainian women, terrorising them and their families. It is more evidence of Russian state terrorism in Ukraine and UK Friends of Ukraine believes provides more proof of why the UK Government should recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.^{98 99 100}

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-mass-abduction-of-ukrainian-children-may-qualify-as-genocide/>

⁹⁸ War.Ukraine.UA, Rapes, <https://war.ukraine.ua/russia-war-crimes/rapes/>

⁹⁹ Mick Krever, Clarissa Ward and Scott McWhinnie, In newly liberated villages, Ukrainian investigators uncover horrific claims of Russian sexual violence, 03/11/2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/02/europe/russia-ukraine-kherson-sexual-violence-intl/index.html>

¹⁰⁰ Sam Corbishley, Russian generals ordered soldiers to use rape as a weapon in Ukraine, 24/11/2022, <https://metro.co.uk/2022/11/24/russian-generals-encouraged-or-ordered-rape-to-be-used-as-a-weapon-17819574>

36. Further evidence of rape by Russian across Ukraine revealed

An investigation by the Daily Mail on 10 December 2023, showed systemic sexual abuse happened in areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia. Russian soldiers invaded the home of Nataliya (not her real name), pinned her to the bed and took it in turns to rape her at gunpoint in front of her terrified 6 year old daughter. She remembered screaming at them afterwards, fighting them to leave her sobbing daughter alone, clawing at their faces before they beat her with a gun and she fell to the ground. Nataliya couldn't stop them as they stumbled towards her frightened little girl and subjected her to the same horrific abuse.

In another house thirty minutes down the road from Nataliya, Maria (not her real name) remembered the sound of the Russian soldiers breaking down her door and slurring their words as they shouted at her to undress. The 3 men took it in turns to rape her repeatedly. The soldiers left her traumatised and alone and as she lay shaking on her bed, she could hear the screams and cries of her neighbours. Maria, learned that by the end of the night they had raped every woman and girl living on her street in the Kyiv region.

The harrowing Daily Mail investigation also revealed that another woman was allegedly attacked by Russian soldiers while they forced her teenage son to watch, a common tactic by Russia's soldiers aimed at traumatising generations of Ukrainians. The Daily Mail also revealed that a mother was raped for several hours by an officer after he dragged her to an abandoned classroom in Kharkiv.

The Daily Mail highlighted the case of Anastasiya (not her real name), who didn't fight when several drunk Russian soldiers dragged her into an abandoned home, where broken glass and photos of a couple they killed covered the floor. She knew that she couldn't say no or scream as she so desperately wanted to do because if she did, she would never be able to go back to the little girl who was hiding in the basement of their home down the street. As the soldiers stumbled towards her, all she remembers was staring at a bookshelf to her left as they took it in turns to rape her. Anastasiya had gone outside to search for food after her husband never returned from the same journey, but it was at this moment the group of soldiers found her and dragged her to the abandoned home.

Another deeply disturbing case uncovered by the Daily Mail was that of Kateryna (not her real name), from a village in the Kharkiv region. Kateryna has never told prosecutors or the police about how a drunken soldier came to a school where she and her family had been hiding from the occupying forces in a village in the Kharkiv region.

The soldier became aggressive and started waving his gun in the air before he lined all of the Ukrainians up, children, women and the elderly, in the school hall and threatened to hurt them all. Then he saw Kateryna and dragged her away from her terrified child and Mother in law to a classroom upstairs, where he raped her repeatedly for hours until the rays from the morning sun rippled through the cracked windows. “In the morning, he finally left and they were able to get out,” Yulia Gorbunova, a lawyer and senior researcher for Human Rights Watch (HRW) who spoke to Kateryna in the early days of the war, said. “She showed me her injuries and the bruises on her body,” Gorbunova said. Gorbunova stated that “It has stuck with me ever since, she said she didn't want to report it or talk about it.”

According to the Daily Mail investigation, in many cases, the Russian soldiers would shoot dead the women's husbands, or threaten to do so, as soon as they tried to defend their wives and stop them from being raped.

“They use sexual violence as a type of weapon, they want to destroy people psychologically and physically,” Anna Orel told, a Project Coordinator at the Andreiev Family Foundation's Assisto project, where she helps survivors of rape in Ukraine, told the Daily Mail. “Their aim is destruction, humiliation and intimidation of women and their families,” Orel, who works in collaboration with Women for Women International, told MailOnline. She added that “They rape victims because it leaves a mark on every aspect of their lives. Some women we helped have said they feel like they are slowly dying.”

Ukraine's Prosecutor's Office told the MailOnline in December 2023 that it was currently investigating some 230 reports of sexual violence by Russian soldiers, lawyers and activists on the ground say the figure will be much higher due to the stigma and fear of reporting.

Reading the Daily Mail investigation is absolutely soul destroying, but it is just the tip of the iceberg in Russia's organised state terrorism against Ukrainian women through the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence. ¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Rachael Bunyan, Mothers reveal how they let Russian soldiers rape them in order to protect their children - some of whom were forced to watch: Horrific ordeals were endured... only for Putin's troops to rape their little girls anyway, 10/12/2023, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12592023/Mothers-reveal-let-Russian-soldiers-rape-order-protect-children-forced-watch-Horrific-ordeals-endured-Putins-troops-rape-little-girls-anyway.html>

37. Ukraine opens a case against two Russian occupiers who raped a woman and committed violence against her daughter in the Brovary District of the Kyiv region

On 14 March 2023, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine opened a case against two Russian soldiers who allegedly committed sexual violence against a child and raped her Mother in the Kyiv region. All this happened in front of her father, who was beaten.

According to the investigation, the crime was committed by Russian soldiers from the 15th Separate Motorised Rifle Brigade in the Brovary district of the Kyiv region. Most of the crimes allegedly occurred on 13 March 2022, when Russian soldiers were drunk and broke into the yard of a house where a young family lived. The soldiers allegedly beat the father with a metal pot and forced him to kneel, while his wife was raped. They also sexually assaulted their 4 year old daughter. One of the occupiers stated he would "make her a woman" before the violence.

The whole family survived after that. The investigation believes that the soldiers involved were two Russian snipers aged 28 and 32. The latter allegedly and the other returned to Russia. Ukraine's Prosecutor's Office gave his name as Yevhenii Chernoknizhnyi. Journalists found his phone number, but his brother picked up the phone and said that Yevhenii had also died.

The two snipers are included in the general list of 6 suspects who are alleged to have committed sexual crimes in the Brovary district. Allegedly, after attacking a young family, they broke into a neighbouring house where an elderly couple lived, who were beaten by Russian soldiers. They also allegedly raped a 41 year old pregnant woman and a 17 year old girl. In another house where several families lived, the Russians gathered everyone in the kitchen and allegedly raped a 15 year old girl and her Mother. Prosecutors said that all the victims survived and received medical and psychological help.¹⁰²

38. EU sanctions two high ranking Russian military officials for sexual and gender based violence

On 7 March 2023, the EU sanctioned 9 individuals and 3 entities for their role in committing serious human rights violations and abuses, particularly sexual and gender

¹⁰² Oleksiy Yarmolenko, Reuters: Ukraine opened a case against two occupiers who raped a woman and committed violence against her daughter in Kyiv region, 14/03/2023, <https://babel.ua/en/news/91560-reuters-ukraine-opened-a-case-against-two-occupiers-who-raped-a-woman-and-committed-violence-against-her-daughter-in-kyiv-region>

based violence. This was the first time the EU introduced sanctions aimed at those involved in sexual violence.

Major-General Nikolai Kusnetsov, Commander of the Dzerzhinsky division special forces unit of Rosgvardia and Colonel Ramil Ibatullin, who served in the Russian occupation troops in the Donbas region (2014-2017) and took part in Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine as commander of the 90th Guards Tank Division, are on the sanction list.

Kuznetsov's unit was part of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine and members of his unit systematically participated in acts of sexual violence and rape in Ukraine in March/April 2022. The division under Ibatullin command took part in the offensive towards Chernihiv and Kyiv in March 2022. During the offensive, members of his division committed acts of sexual and gender-based violence against the Ukrainian civilian population.

The listed individuals and entities will now be subject to an asset freeze in the EU and travel ban to the EU. Moreover, persons and entities in the EU will be prohibited from making funds available, either directly or indirectly, to those listed.^{103 104}

39. First sentence for sexual violence alleged in a village in the then occupied Chernihiv region

On 2 November 2022, the Novozavodsk District Court of Chernihiv, in northern Ukraine, handed down a sentence in absentia to two Russian servicemen who were accused of abusing residents of an occupied village in Chernihiv region in March 2022. Ruslan Kuliev was sentenced to the maximum possible 12 years of imprisonment, and the co-accused Andrii Chudin to 10 years. This was the first judgment delivered by a Ukrainian court on war related sexual violence.

On 9 March 2022, a village near the city of Chernihiv was occupied by servicemen of the 80th Tank Regiment of the Russian Army. Thirteen of these soldiers settled in a house where an elderly woman and her grandniece and grandnephew lived.

¹⁰³ EU Neighbours East, Sexual and gender-based violence: EU sanctions hit two high-ranking Russian military officials, 08/03/2023, <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-eu-sanctions-hit-two-high-ranking-russian-military-officials>

¹⁰⁴ Rubryka, EU sanctions two Russian commanders for violence against Ukrainian women, 07/03/2023, <https://rubryka.com/en/2023/03/07/yes-sanktsiyi-proty-vijskovykh-rf/>

The commander of the occupiers, 30 year-old Ruslan Kuliev, is accused of having pursued the girl who was twice younger than him for over a week. According to the indictment, Sergeant Andrii Chudin kept the girl's older brother, a former conscript of Ukraine's National Guard, in handcuffs in the yard, forcing him to spend nights without proper clothing in the freezing cold.

Kuliev allegedly beat and strangled the girl and threatened he would kill her brother if she did not have sex with him. However, he did not achieve his goal. An aunt came to help. The brother and sister are her nephews and their landlady is her own mother. When the telephone connection disappeared, the aunt called Natalya went to visit her family, despite the presence of the enemy occupiers.

Natalya and her nephew testified in a closed court session on 18 October 2022. The victim girl was not interrogated in court. Only a video recording of her testimony during the pre-trial investigation was played at the hearing. After Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine last February, the law was amended to allow the use of video testimony of victims and witnesses as evidence in court.

"There were more than a thousand [Russian soldiers] in the village, not counting the equipment. I was in shock," Natalya said in an interview with Sudovyi Reporter after the trial. Upon arrival, "a Russian soldier was chopping firewood. Then he followed me. He said that he would let go of neither Sasha nor Masha. He would not let anyone in. I did not sleep for two nights. I promised that I would come the next day. But there was such shelling that it was impossible to go outside. [Russians] did not live in [my] village, but they robbed us. They went into houses and took food and everything they needed," Natalya recalled.

Natalya went on to state that "When I first came, Sasha's eyes filled up with tears. He said: 'Aunt, take Masha!.' He said that the Commander was after her, and he could not do anything because he was tied up. My mother interceded a couple of times, then the commander hit her so hard that she fell down and hit her head on the couch so that she lost consciousness and [had to be] doused with water."

What is alleged to have happened in a village in the Chernihiv region is further evidence of Russia using rape as a weapon of war in its invasion and occupation of Ukraine.¹⁰⁵

40. In liberated villages of Kherson region, Ukrainian investigators uncover claims of sexual violence

¹⁰⁵ Iryna Saliy, First sentence for sexual violence in the Ukraine war, 10/11/2022, <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/108703-first-sentence-sexual-violence-ukraine-war.html>

A CNN report of 3 November 2022 highlighted the work of Ukrainian investigators in regions of Kherson liberated by Ukraine's Army in October 2022, who have been uncovering claims of sexual violence. CNN interviewed the then Prosecutor, Oleksandr Kleshchenko.

In two weeks of work in the Kherson region up to 3 November 2022, a team of investigators from Kyiv documented 6 allegations of sexual assault. The real number is almost certainly much higher, they believe.

Tatiana, age 56, says she is one of the victims. CNN withheld her last name and that of her village to protect her identity. Walking over broken glass, she showed CNN into her brother's house, where she says two Russian soldiers forced their way through her door on 26 August 2022. Tatiana said, "They walked around those rooms. One stayed there and the other one, who raped me, came in here. He came in, walked a little bit around the room and here in this place, he started groping me. I told him, no, no, I am not of the age that I can give you something, look for younger girls." He pinned her against the wardrobe, Tatiana said, and tore at her clothes. "I was crying, begging him to stop, but with no success. The only thought I had was to stay alive," Tatiana said. The Russian soldier warned her not to tell anyone, she recalls. "I didn't tell my husband right away, but I told my cousin, and my husband overheard. He said, 'You should have told me the truth, but you kept silent. I was very ashamed, I wish that he and all his kin were dead, Tatiana said."

Tatiana spent three days at home, in a daze, too ashamed to step outside. Then, in an act of incredible bravery, she said she confronted the Russian soldier's Commander. "His commander found the head of his unit. He came to see me and told me, I punished him severely, I broke his jaw, but the most severe punishment is ahead. Like shooting. The commander asked me, Do you mind this? I said, I don't mind, I wish all of them will be shot."

In Novovoznesens'ke, a village liberated in Kherson region, Ukrainian investigators uncovered two more cases of rape, allegedly by Russian soldiers.¹⁰⁶

41. Ukrainian women recount rape by Russian soldiers

On 12 August 2022, ABC News published a report of interviews it had conducted with Ukrainian women, who were allegedly raped by Russian soldiers.

¹⁰⁶ Mick Krever, Clarissa Ward and Scott McWhinnie, In newly liberated villages, Ukrainian investigators uncover horrific claims of Russian sexual violence, 03/11/2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/02/europe/russia-ukraine-kherson-sexual-violence-intl/index.html>

Victoria, a 42 year-old Ukrainian woman, told ABC News she and another woman, a neighbour, were raped by two Russian soldiers occupying her village near Kyiv in March 2022. Another soldier, a commanding officer who was not involved in the assault, threatened Victoria, she said. "He looked at me and said, 'You see, our boys have had a drink and want to have fun. I understood that something terrible would happen,'" Victoria recounted. Two of the soldiers took the women to a house converted into headquarters for the Russian occupiers and raped them, the victims stated.

Victoria's neighbour, 44-year-old Natalya, recounted the events to ABC News. "He says, do you want everything to be fine with your son? So, get upstairs and do as I tell you," Natalya recalled, describing her encounter with one of the Russian soldiers she said raped her. Natalya added that "He was like an animal...And that rifle was hanging around and swinging." Natalya stated she later learned the soldiers killed her husband after she was taken away. It's unclear how many soldiers or which ones were involved in the killing. The family buried her husband the next day.

The two Russian soldiers the women say raped them had not been identified by mid August 2022, but faced international arrest warrants, according to Kateryna Duchenko, who in August 2022 was the Ukrainian Prosecutor in charge of sexual violence cases committed by Russian soldiers. Both cases are being investigated with slim chances of the suspects being taken under custody or doing any prison time, Duchenko said in August 2022.

There is much credible evidence of rape being used as a systemic weapon of war by Russian soldiers in Ukraine targeting and terrorising Ukrainian women and their families.¹⁰⁷

42. First Russian in court accused of raping a Ukrainian woman

In late June 2022, the first trial of a Russian soldier accused of raping a Ukrainian woman during Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine and could be the model for similar prosecutions.

Mikhail Romanov aged 32 in June 2022, was accused of murdering a man and then repeatedly raping his wife in front of her child. Romanov was tried in absentia as his whereabouts were unknown, for instance he could be still fighting in Ukraine, on leave

¹⁰⁷ Tom Soufi Burrige, Ibtissem Guenfoud, Natalya Kushnir, Dragana Jovanovic, Britt Clennett and Duraid Al Munajim, 'I wanted to take off my skin': Ukrainian women recount rape by Russian soldiers, 12/08/2022, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wanted-off-skin-ukrainian-women-recount-rape-russian/story>

back in Russia or even dead. Ukrainian prosecutors accused Romanov of shooting dead a male civilian in the region around Kyiv on 9 March, shortly after the full scale Russian invasion began and then raping the man's widow, aged 33.

It is alleged that Romanov and another soldier shot dead the husband, named Oleksiy, at point blank range in the village of Bohdanivka, northeast of the capital. They raped the man's wife and then returned twice to rape her again, it is alleged.

The alleged victim shouted to her 4 year old son to stay hidden in the boiler room while she was allegedly raped for several hours, The Times reported. "[The younger soldier] told me to take my clothes off. Then they both raped me, one after the other," she told the newspaper. The victim added that "They didn't care that my son was in the boiler room crying." Romanov is believed to have been serving with the 239th regiment of the 90th Guards Tank Division at the time of the alleged rape.¹⁰⁸

43. Rape of 19 year old Ukrainian woman in Mariupol

A story came out in the Washington Post on 8 June 2022 of a 19 year old Ukrainian woman called Kateryna was raped in Mariupol.

It was just before sundown when two soldiers wearing black balaclavas burst into the Mariupol basement where Kateryna had been sheltering with neighbours since the first days of the full scale invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2022. She quickly realized they were Chechen fighters from Russia's North Caucasus region, part of a force that gained a reputation for particularly harsh cruelty toward civilians who remained in the Ukrainian port city. They had rifles slung over their shoulders, she recalled and they seemed drunk.

"We need to check documents," she remembers one of the soldiers saying to the people huddled in the basement. As she rose to get hers, one of the men stopped her, put his hand to her cheek and complimented her on the definition of her nose. "He asked me what my name was," she said. She sensed what was going to unfold.

Kateryna told The Washington Post that she had been sitting just inside the door to the basement, with a 75 year old woman and the lady's pet Chihuahua, when the Chechens entered on 26 March 2022. It was the first time any soldiers had been inside the building since the area was taken by Russian forces a few weeks earlier. The one soldier told her she needed to come upstairs to be "examined." The sound of shelling thundered

¹⁰⁸ Nick Squires, First Russian soldier appears in court accusing of raping Ukrainian woman, 23/06/2022, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2022/06/23/russian-soldier-appears-court-accused-raping-ukrainian-woman>

around them, and she told him she was afraid to go up, but he led her to an empty second-floor apartment and instructed her to bend down and rest her hands on the couch. “He showed me what I had to do,” she said. “I told him that I didn’t want to, But he told me that he would kill me,” Kateryna stated. She got on her knees and begged for her life, but he lifted me up in silence and did what he wanted,” Kateryna said.

Artem, 38, an Azovstal steel plant worker Kateryna had befriended, said that when the soldiers arrived, he was at the hospital visiting his Mother, who had ventured out and been hit by shrapnel from an explosion. However, he corroborated Kateryna’s story, saying he later returned to the basement and heard from multiple neighbours who had witnessed her being taken upstairs.

Kateryna was just one of numerous women raped by Russian soldiers and pro-Russian proxy soldiers. Rape was clearly being used as a weapon of war to terrorise Ukrainian women and their families.¹⁰⁹

44. Rape of a Ukrainian woman in a village near Borodyanka

On 9 March 2022, a Russian soldier raped Anna in a village near Borodyanka and threatened to imprison her husband if he interfered.

On 9 March 2022, Anna spent the night with her husband at home. 3 Russian occupiers knocked on the door of their house. Earlier in the day, soldiers came to the couple’s home and confiscated their phones and laptops. The occupiers ordered Anna to help them “find other women.”

Russian soldiers were holding Anna’s husband at gunpoint and threatening to imprison him if he interfered. They forced her to knock on all the doors in the neighbourhood. Anna said the Russians shot one man while he was trying to save his wife.

The occupiers took Anna to an abandoned house. They forced the women out of a broken window. Anna said that Russian soldiers were rude and discussed the age of women. One woman was taken upstairs while Anna was left alone with another occupant. “I asked him how old he was. He said he was 19, and I said I could be his mother. I have a son his age. I asked how old his mother was, but he didn’t answer. I think this woman was my age,” said Anna, adding that the attacker “did terrible things.”

¹⁰⁹ Loveday Morris, She was raped in Ukraine. How many others have stories like hers?, 08/06/2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/08/ukraine-rape-sexual-violence/>

After the rape, the occupier threatened Anna. He said that if she wouldn't listen to him, he would take her to the headquarters to "serve all the soldiers." When the soldier left the room, the woman took a risk and ran away.

Anna ran to her neighbour, but she could not calm down and went home. There Anna heard the whisper of her husband, he was hiding on the roof. The couple spent the night in the cold. Anna told her story to The Telegraph on 25 April 2022.

What happened to Anna and her husband was a clear example of Russian soldiers using rape as a weapon of war to terrorise Anna and her husband. The fact that Russian soldiers after raping Anna ordered her to find other women, shows that rape was being used as a systemic tactic against Ukrainian women by Russian soldiers .¹¹⁰

45. Russian soldier and wife discussing rape of a Ukrainian woman identities revealed

The identities of a Russian soldier and his wife who discussed the rape of Ukrainian women in a phone call, were revealed following an investigation by RFE/RL on 15 April 2022. The investigation found that Roman Bykovsky, 27, and his wife, Olga Bykovskaya, whose maiden name is Pinyasovaya, were the couple behind a shocking call that led to fears of the mass rape of Ukrainian women by Russian soldiers.

During the call, which Ukrainian law enforcement bodies in the Kherson region in the country's south said they intercepted before publishing it in early April 2022, a woman can be heard giving permission to a man to rape Ukrainian women. "Yes, I allow it. Just wear protection," the woman says between laughs.

Reporters from RFE/RL's Russian Service and Schemes, an investigative project run by RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, received the telephone numbers of the participants in the call from sources in Ukraine's law enforcement bodies and used the numbers to find the social media accounts of Bykovsky and his wife.

¹¹⁰ Danielle Sheridan, 'You'll help us find others': Ukrainian rape victim ordered to help Russian troops hunt for women, 25/04/2022, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2022/04/25/help-us-find-women-ukrainian-rape-victim-taken-door-to-door/>

Born and raised in Oryol, Russia, a town about 350 kilometres southwest of Moscow, the Bykovskys moved to Crimea a few years after Russia seized the peninsula from Ukraine. Social media posts by Bykovsky's mother, Irina Bykovskaya, show that he is a member of Russia's Army.

When contacted by RFE/RL, Bykovsky confirmed his identity and said he was in Sevastopol, the Crimean port where Russia's Black Sea fleet is based. However, he denied he was the man on the call. Olga Bykovskaya confirmed her husband was in Sevastopol, saying he was wounded and being treated in a hospital when RFE/RL contacted her.

Despite Bykovsky's denial, his voice and that of his wife match those heard on the call intercepted by Ukrainian law enforcement, RFE/RL and Schemes reported.

While they may have been joking during their call, the publication came amid a growing number of evidenced allegations by Ukrainian women that they had been raped by invading Russian soldiers. In a report published on 3 April 2022 Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented the first reported rape allegations. Many more followed after Russian forces withdrew from cities and towns around Kyiv.

On the same day as the HRW report, the then UK Ambassador to Ukraine, Melinda Simmons, called rape an element of Russia's unprovoked full scale invasion of Ukraine. "Though we don't yet know the full extent of its use in Ukraine, it's already clear it was part of Russia's arsenal. Women raped in front of their kids, girls in front of their families, as a deliberate act of subjugation," Simmons wrote.

The fact that the rape of Ukrainian women was being joked by a Russian soldier and his wife, showed a culture that treated Ukrainian women as objects to be horrifically violated by Russian soldiers.¹¹¹

46. The rape of Ukrainian women and girls in Bucha

In April 2022, Ukraine's then Ombudsman for human rights Lyudmyla Denisova told the BBC they were documenting several cases of rape. Denisova said that "About 25 girls and women aged 14 to 24 were systematically raped during the occupation in the basement of one house in Bucha. Nine of them were pregnant. Russian soldiers told

¹¹¹ Mark Krutov and Valeria Yehoshyna, Russian soldier and wife discussing rape of Ukrainian women identified by RFE/RL, 15/04/2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-rape-russian-soldier-wife-bykovsky/31805486.html>

them they would rape them to the point where they wouldn't want sexual contact with any man, to prevent them from having Ukrainian children." ¹¹²

47. The rape of women in the Kyiv region

On 11 April 2022, BBC News reported a story of first-hand testimony that provided evidence of Ukrainian women being raped by invading Russian soldiers.

In a quiet, rural neighbourhood 70km (45 miles) west of Kyiv, BBC News spoke to Anna, who is 50. The BBC changed her name to protect her identity. Anna told the BBC that on 7 March 2022 she had been at home with her husband when a foreign soldier barged in. "At gunpoint, he took me to a house nearby. He ordered me: 'Take your clothes off or I'll shoot you.' He kept threatening to kill me if I didn't do as he said. Then he started raping me," she said.

Anna described her attacker as a young, thin, Chechen fighter allied with Russia. "While he was raping me, 4 more soldiers entered. I thought that I was done for, but they took him away. I never saw him again," she said. She believes she was saved by a separate unit of Russian soldiers.

Anna went back home and found her husband. He had been shot in the abdomen. "He had tried to run after me to save me, but he was hit by a round of bullets," she said. They both sought shelter in a neighbour's house. They couldn't take her husband to hospital because of the fighting. He died of his injuries two days later.

Down the road from Anna's house, the BBC heard another chilling story. A woman was allegedly raped and killed, with neighbours saying it was done by the same man who raped Anna, before he went to Anna's house. The woman was in her 40s. She was taken out of her home, according to neighbours and held in the bedroom of a house nearby whose occupants had evacuated when the war began. There are large bloodstains on the mattress and duvet. In a corner is a mirror with a note written in lipstick, appearing to suggest where the victim was buried. Oksana, a neighbour, told the BBC it had been left there by Russian soldiers who found the woman's body and buried her. "They [Russian soldiers] told me she had been raped and that her throat was either slit or stabbed, and she bled to death. They said there was a lot of blood." The woman was buried in a grave in the garden of the house.

¹¹² Yogita Limaye, Ukraine conflict: 'Russian soldiers raped me and killed my husband', 11/04/2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-61071243>

In April 2022, Andrii Nebytov, the then police chief of the Kyiv region, told the BBC about another case they were investigating at the time in a village 50km (30 miles) to the west of Kyiv. A family of 3, a couple in their 30s and their young child, lived in a house on the edge of the village. "On 9 March (2022), several soldiers of the Russian Army entered the house. The husband tried to protect his wife and child. So, they shot him in the yard," said Nebytov. Nebytov went on to state that "After that, two soldiers repeatedly raped the wife. They would leave and then come back. They returned three times to rape her. They threatened that if she resisted they would harm her little boy. To protect her child, she didn't resist." When the soldiers left, they burnt down the house and shot the family's dogs. The woman escaped with her son and then contacted the police. Nebytov stated his team met her and recorded her testimony.¹¹³

48. Rape of 29 year old Ukrainian woman in the Kharkiv region

On 1 April 2022, a report came out about a Ukrainian woman called Lyuba. Lyuba could not evacuate after the Russian invasion because her seriously ill mother could not get out of bed. Soon, 3 Russian servicemen entered their apartment to take all the food out of the house, but one Russian remained in the apartment. He raped Lyuba for more than a week and then "confessed his great love and said he wanted to send her away from the war." Lyuba refused, saying she would not leave her mother. Then the Russian military shot Lyuba's elderly mother in front of her.

The story was told by Vira on her Facebook profile , who is Lyuba's friend.¹¹⁴

49. Rape of 33 year old Ukrainian woman in the village of Shevchenkove, in the Kyiv region

On 28 March 2022, a news report in the Times came out of how Natalia (not her real name), a 33-year-old Ukrainian woman, said drunken Russian occupiers had raped her for several hours. As reported by The Times, they shot her husband in the yard of their house in the Kyiv region.

Natalia's 4 year old son hid in the boiler room, while two drunken occupiers put a gun to the woman's temple, forced her to undress and raped her. According to the woman, the

¹¹³ Yogita Limaye, Ukraine conflict: 'Russian soldiers raped me and killed my husband', 11/04/2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-61071243>

¹¹⁴ War.Ukraine.Ua, A Russians soldier raped 29-year-old Lyuba from the Kharkiv region and then shot her elderly mother, 01/04/2022, <https://war.ukraine.ua/crimes/a-russian-soldier-raped-29-year-old-luba-from-the-kharkiv-region-and-then-shot-her-elderly-mother/>

soldier who shot her husband before raping her told her: “You better shut up. Otherwise, I’ll take your child and show him his mother’s brains scattered around the house.”

The Russian occupiers returned about 20 minutes after they first raped Natalia, to rape the woman again. The soldiers “were so drunk that they could barely stand on their feet.” “Eventually, they both fell asleep in the chairs. I crept into the boiler room and told my son that we had to run very fast. While I was opening the gate, my son was standing next to his father’s body, but it was dark... He did not understand that this was his father.”¹¹⁵

The rape of Natalia and the terrorism they caused her son are a particularly vile form of terrorism.

50. Rape of a Ukrainian woman in front of her child in Brovary

On 27 March 2022, Maria Mezentseva, a Ukrainian and at the time the head of Ukraine’s delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), told Sky News about the rape of a woman in Brovary, a town and eastern suburb of Ukraine’s capital Kyiv, that took place in front of her child. The rape was alleged to have been carried out by a Russian soldier.

Speaking to Sky News, Sophy Ridge on 27 March 2022, Mezentseva said “There is one case which was very widely discussed recently because its been recorded and proceeded with by the Prosecutor’s Office and we’re not going into details, but it’s quite a scary scene when a civilian was shot dead in a small town next to Kyiv. His wife was, I’m sorry but I have to say it, raped several times in front of her underage child. After the attack, the Russian soldier is believed to have threatened the rape victim’s child.

What happened in Brovary, is yet another example of rape being used as a particularly abhorrent war crime.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ War.Ukraine.Ua, Two occupiers shot her husband and then raped a 33-year-old Ukrainian woman in the village of Shevchenkove, Kyiv region, 28/03/2022, <https://war.ukraine.ua/crimes/two-occupiers-shot-her-husband-and-then-raped-a-33-year-old-ukrainian-woman-in-the-village-of-shevchenkove-in-the-kyiv-region/>

¹¹⁶ Harry Taylor, Russian soldiers raping and sexually assaulting woman, says Ukrainian MP, 27/03/2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/27/russian-soldiers-raping-and-sexually-assaulting-women-says-ukraine-mp>

51. Russia's war crimes in occupied Ukrainian land

In this section we will highlight examples of Russian state terrorism in Ukrainian land currently occupied by Russia.

The Geneva Convention states that “Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault.”

More and more evidence is emerging on a regular basis from women who escaped or were liberated from territories occupied by Russia and have spoken of how the Russian occupiers raped them. Russian soldiers raped these women at night. During the day. In front of their children, sometimes after the Russians had murdered the women’s husbands.

52. Mariupol



FILE - An explosion erupts from an apartment building at 110 Mytropolytska St., after a Russian army tank fired on it in Mariupol, Ukraine, Friday, March 11, 2022. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka, File)



This March 26, 2022 image from video shows the makeshift graves of two women who were killed at 110 Mytropolytska St. in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol when a Russian tank opened fire on their building on March 11. Residents say the city was full of makeshift graves such as these, with thousands killed during the Russian siege. (AP Photo)



A photo of destroyed block of flats in Mariupol

Mariupol was once a flourishing and prosperous city of over 500,000, which has become a decimated wasteland and hell on earth, firstly due to the siege of the city and now due to its current occupation of the city.

During the final weeks of fighting before Mariupol became occupied by Russia in late May 2022, its Mayor at the time of the siege, Vadim Boychenko estimated that over 20,000 civilians had been killed during the siege of Mariupol. To put this into context the Mayor noted that this was twice the number of deaths recorded in the entire two-year Nazi occupation of the city during World War 2.

Preliminary figures reported by Mariupol's local authorities as of the 7th of July 2022 estimated that over 22,000 residents had been pronounced dead and more than 50,000 Ukrainians deported to Russia or occupied territories in Donetsk and Crimea regions. These figures are not final, as it is impossible to accurately count the exact number of victims under collapsed buildings or in mass graves and makeshift cemeteries without accessing these territories. In other words, the final figures are likely to be higher, most probably significantly higher.



FILE - Rubble from the damaged Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre sits after the March 16, 2022, bombing in Mariupol, Ukraine, in an area now controlled by Russian-backed separatist forces, on Monday, April 4, 2022. The bombing of the theater, which was used as a shelter, stands out as the single deadliest known attack against civilians to date in the Ukraine war. (AP Photo/Alexei Alexandrov, File)



FILE - Debris covers the inside of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre following a March 16, 2022, bombing in Mariupol, Ukraine, in an area now controlled by Russian forces, Monday, April 4, 2022. The bombing of the theater that was used as a shelter stands out as the single deadliest known attack against civilians to date in the war. (AP Photo/Alexei Alexandrov, File)



FILE - Debris covers the inside of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre following a March 16, 2022, bombing in Mariupol, Ukraine, in an area now controlled by Russian forces, Monday, April 4, 2022. The bombing of the theater that was used as a shelter stands out as the single deadliest known attack against civilians to date in the Ukraine war. (AP Photo/Alexei Alexandrov, File)



FILE - A truck drives past the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol, Ukraine, following the March 16, 2022, bombing when the theater was used as a shelter, in an area now controlled by Russian forces in Ukraine, April 27, 2022. (AP Photo/Alexei Alexandrov, File)



Maria Kutnyakova, an IT specialist, who was nearby the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol, Ukraine, on March 16, 2022, when it was bombed, poses for a photo at the Lviv Regional Academic Puppet Theater in Lviv, Ukraine, on April 2, 2022. Her mother and sister were inside. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka)



Gallina Kutnyakova, teacher and survivor of the bombing at the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol, Ukraine, poses for a photo at the Lviv Regional Academic Puppet Theater in Lviv, Ukraine, on April 2, 2022. The March 16, 2022, bombing stands out as the single deadliest known attack against civilians to date in the war in Ukraine. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka)

One of the worst Russian war crimes committed in Mariupol which will live long in infamy was the targeted bombing of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre on 16 March 2022. The theatre was being used as a makeshift shelter by over 1,000 civilians. Despite large lettering placed on the ground outside the theater spelling out the word “CHILDREN,” Russia hit the building devastatingly and deliberately. Current estimates from investigations carried out suggest that at least 300 civilians were murdered in this one Russian terrorist attack. Some estimates, including an investigation carried out by the Associated Press (AP) in early May 2023, said the toll was even higher, reaching 600.

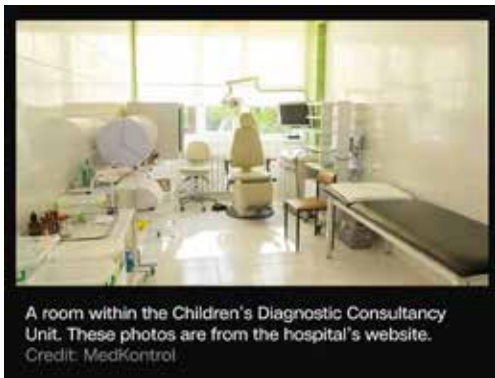


Images of the demolition were posted on social media by an aide to Mariupol's Ukrainian mayor

Russia has since tried to destroy all evidence of this terrorist attack and in late December 2022, An adviser to Mariupol's Mayor in Exile, Petro Andriushchenko, reported on Telegram that Russians are relentlessly tearing down bombed out buildings in the city writing "While Mariupol in exile thinks about cultural de-occupation, the occupants in Mariupol demolished half of the Drama Theatre. So, in two days, there will not even be a physical memory of it." Andryushchenko, added that despite demolition, the truth about the theatre bombing "will not stay hidden no matter what they do. There is enough video evidence, witness testimonies and those who survived."



Exterior of the Children's Diagnostic Consultancy Unit.
Credit: MedKontrol



A room within the Children's Diagnostic Consultancy Unit. These photos are from the hospital's website.
Credit: MedKontrol



Rescuers carry a pregnant woman out of a maternity hospital in Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast, which was bombed on March 9, 2022, by Russian forces. The woman and her unborn child did not survive the attack. (Photo: Evgeniy Maloletka via Instagram)



▲ A woman stands outside a maternity hospital that was damaged by shelling in Mariupol. Photograph: Mstyslav Chernov/AP

Another horrific Russian war crime that represented state terrorism committed in Mariupol was the bombing of its maternity and children's hospital, Mariupol's City Hospital No. 3 on the afternoon of 9 March 2022. It comprised a Children's Diagnostic Consultancy Unit, which hosted children with immune diseases, among other illnesses and a women's health building and a maternity ward. At least 4 people were murdered and 16 people were injured. The terrorist attack also caused at least 1 stillbirth.

Russia appeared to set the stage to justify a terrorist attack on hospitals in Mariupol in the days leading up to the terrorist attack. On 7 March 2023 Russia's UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenzya told the UN Security Council that the Ukrainian military, according to local residents, had driven out all personnel from Mariupol's maternity hospital No.1 to convert it to a combat position. Just a couple of hours before the attack, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said hospital No. 3 was empty of staff and patients and being used as a firing position. Unsurprisingly, CNN who looked into Russia's claims, found no evidence to support Russia's allegations that there were

military positions set up at Hospital No. 3 on the afternoon of March 9, pointing out it was civilians who emerged from the bombed out buildings.

The terrorist attack on the maternity and children's hospital happened just a week before the terrorist attack on the drama theatre. On 9 March 2022, a Russian pilot made a sortie to drop heavy unguided bombs on a residential area in Mariupol. The pilot must have known it was a residential area, given the maternity hospital was located in the very city centre. Most likely, the pilot also knew the site was a hospital. After the attack, Russian officials didn't deny it. They instead made unsubstantiated claims that there were Ukrainian military personnel inside the hospital. However, there were only medics and patients.

Both the terrorist attacks in Mariupol highlight that Russia is waging a deliberate war against Ukrainian civilians, developed and supported from the Kremlin downwards. Indeed, in a speech on 8 December 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin admitted to targeting civilian infrastructure. "Yes, we are doing this," he said.

This attack on hospitals in Ukraine wasn't the first of its kind and it was not the last. Indeed, one can see a deliberate pattern of hospitals being targeted by Russia. For instance, days before the Mariupol maternity hospital was destroyed, a Russian pilot dropped more heavy unguided bombs on central Chernihiv. The terrorist attack destroyed a cardiac hospital and hit residential buildings, murdering 47 people.

The day before the Mariupol tragedy, a Russian aerial bomb hit the intensive care unit of the Iziium City Central Hospital, again in a residential area in the city centre.



A view of Iziium City Central Hospital in Iziium, Kharkiv Oblast, which was destroyed following Russian attacks on March 8, 2022. (Photo: Jose Colon/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

Nor was the destruction of Mariupol's Maternity and Children's hospital an outlier. An analysis of satellite and open source intelligence data (OSINT) by the Ukrainian

Healthcare Centre (UHC) revealed that it only took about a month for Russia's military to destroy or severely damage eight out of 10 healthcare facilities in Mariupol. Russian troops bombed Mariupol's only psychiatric hospital, four out of five of the city's hospitals providing care to mothers and children, five out of six general hospitals, and around three-quarters of the city's primary care clinics.

In the two districts where Russian troops first broke into the city, over 90% of the healthcare infrastructure was destroyed.

Unlike the maternity hospital, most of the damaged healthcare facilities were not targeted separately. They were destroyed in a deliberate carpet-bombing campaign of large residential areas.

In early April 2022, Russian forces forcibly deported the staff and patients at Mariupol City Hospital No. 4 to Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine. "Armed men came to the medical facility and gave an ultimatum that doctors and patients had to go out and get into the occupiers' vehicles," Mariupol's City Council reported on 7 April 2022.

In late March 2022, the same incident happened at Mariupol City Hospital No. 1 and Maternity Hospital No. 2. Clearly this was a deliberate strategy and campaign of terrorism directed at Mariupol's hospitals and those working in them by the Russian state.

It's important to remember what Ukrainian cities were like before Russian occupation and what Russian bombardment and occupation, which Russian state propaganda in Orwellian language describes as liberation, means for a Ukrainian city. For Mariupol, that means going back to 2014. Talking about Mariupol, Ukraine expert, Paul Niland stated the following:

"Mariupol was always a special city with a diverse population including a large ethnic Greek community. Located on the Azov Sea in southern Ukraine, it was warm and sunny for most of the year. Though the air was thick from the heavy industry located in the heart of Mariupol, local residents tended to be proud of their city and fiercely loyal. War first came to Mariupol in spring 2014 when Moscow (Russia) attempted to seize control of the surrounding Donbas region during the initial stages of the ongoing eight-year conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The city was taken over by Russian forces but this occupation proved mercifully brief. Following liberation, Mariupol gained in significance as the largest city in the Donbas still under Ukrainian control. Located just a few kilometres from the front lines of the simmering conflict with Russia, it became an administrative and economic focus as well as a showcase for the higher living

standards and greater personal freedoms offered by Ukraine. While regions of eastern Ukraine under Russian occupation withered and stagnated, Mariupol flourished. Though almost every single building in Mariupol has now been razed to the ground, it is the people who really matter. The personal stories of Mariupol residents deserve to be heard."

Niland talked to some survivors of the siege of Mariupol by Russia, all of whom described it as hell.

Niland also pointed out that Putin ordered the destruction of the city despite knowing hundreds of thousands of civilians were unable to flee. That highlights how as all state and non-state terrorists do, the Russian state's Armed Forces acting on the orders of its leader Putin, deliberately targeted and terrorised Mariupol's civilians.

Talking about those who have stayed in the city, Pavlo Kovtoniuk, Ukraine's Deputy Health Minister from 2016-2019 wrote in the Kyiv Independent on 9 March 2023 that:

"Those remaining are mostly people who could not leave, the elderly, chronically ill, or people with limited mobility. Deprived of enough food, clean water, plumbing and heating, they are barely able to survive. The remnants of the surviving healthcare facilities have been unable to support the city's growing health crisis. Many people have dropped out of their treatments for chronic health conditions due to a lack of necessary drugs. Mounting mental health problems remain entirely unmet. Many people are unable to access a doctor either because there are too few or because they cannot get to one. Many emerging life-threatening conditions are either underdiagnosed or undertreated. In the summer of 2022, Mariupol residents lived on the brink of an epidemic of infectious diseases. The lack of care has contributed to the city's immense death toll."

Many environmentalists and public figures declared that Mariupol was on the verge of a humanitarian and ecological disaster back in the Spring of 2022. In May 2022, the official City Council of Mariupol raised an alert regarding the risk of wildlife extinction in the Azov Sea due to the bombardments of Azovstal, which could damage the reservoir containing thousands of tonnes of concentrated hydrogen sulphide.



This Nov. 16, 2022 image from video shows some of the new graves which have been dug since the Russian siege began, at the Staryi Krym cemetery on the outskirts of the occupied Ukrainian city of Mariupol. Most are marked only by number. The Associated Press estimated at least 10,300 new graves in and around Mariupol — 8,500 in this cemetery — by analyzing satellite imagery from early March through December, noting sections where the earth had been disturbed. (AP Photo)

In late December 2022, an AP investigation into life in occupied #Mariupol also underlined that no matter what the Russian occupiers do in Mariupol, they are building upon a city of death. By late December 2022 over 10,000 new graves scarred Mariupol, the AP found and the death toll might run three times higher than an early estimate of at least 25,000. The former Ukrainian city was also hollowed out, with Russian plans to demolish well over 50,000 homes, the AP calculated.

Speaking of what those remaining in Mariupol in the winter of late 2022 and early 2023 had gone through, Ukraine's exiled City Council of Mariupol reported that the city's residents had lived through that winter without heating. They stated that "People used plastic film to cover shattered windows. They have no heating and suffer from the cold. The occupying administration does nothing about this situation. The genocide of the civil population of Mariupol continues."



Writing on a balcony in Mariupol, "We are cold. Help", the winter of 2022-2023.

Those remaining in Mariupol, live a thoroughly miserable existence. In June 2023, Ukrainer, a Ukrainian news and research organisation, highlighted how the remaining

residents of occupied Mariupol suffer from constant military raids. Those who attempt to leave the city have to undergo Russian filtration camps. Nearly 90% of the city's residential areas, including hospitals, nurseries, and schools, were destroyed as a result of non-stop shelling by the Russian army. The city's electric, water and gas networks are severely damaged.

Mariupol's seaport has been converted into a military base by the Russian invaders. They exploit it for the illicit exportation of Ukrainian grain and metal. By the end of December 2022, all Ukrainian staff members who refused to collaborate with the occupiers were dismissed and replaced by workers from Russia. Russia has not just destroyed a city, they are now exploiting and stealing what is left to enrich themselves and punish Ukrainians remaining in Mariupol who do not help them do this.

What has been done to Mariupol, those who lived there and those who remain there can be accurately described as crimes against humanity. According to the United Nations, "crimes against humanity" are distinct from "random, accidental, or isolated acts of violence" and reflect a "methodical type of violence." They must be "committed in furtherance of a State or organizational policy." Clearly, that has happened in Mariupol with amongst other things the destruction of Mariupol's hospital infrastructure, the bombardment of nearly all of Mariupol's residential infrastructure and the targeting of its Drama Theatre, where people were sheltering from Russia's siege of the city.^{117 118 119}

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¹¹⁷ Paul Niland, Putin's Mariupol Massacre is one of the 21st century's worst war crimes, 24/05/2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-mariupol-massacre-is-one-the-worst-war-crimes-of-the-21st-century/>

¹¹⁸ Kyiv Independent, Official: Russia demolishes half of Mariupol theatre, 23/12/2022, <https://kyivindependent.com/official-russia-demolishes-half-of-mariupol-theatre/>

¹¹⁹ Paul Kirby, Mariupol theatre demolished 'to hide Russian crimes', aide says, 23/12/2022, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-64075088.amp>

¹²⁰ Lori Hinnant, Mystyslav Chernov and Vasilisa Stepanenko, AP evidence points to 600 dead in Mariupol theater airstrike, 04/05/2022,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-mariupol-theater-c321a196fbd568899841b506afcac7a1>

¹²¹ Reuters, Russia begins demolition of bombed Mariupol theatre, 24/12/2022,

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-begins-demolition-bombed-mariupol-theatre-2022-12-23/>

¹²² Ukrainer, Mariupol: News from the Occupied City, 16/06/2023, <https://www.ukrainer.net/mariupol-news/>

¹²³ Pavlo Kovtoniuk, Russian troops in Ukraine act as if international law does not exist, 09/03/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/pavlo-kovtoniuk-russian-troops-in-ukraine-act-as-if-international-law-does-not-exist/>

¹²⁴ Katie Poglase, Gianluca Mezzofiore, Livvy Doherty and Sarah-Grace Mankarious, Anatomy of the Mariupol hospital attack, 17/03/2022,

<https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2022/03/europe/mariupol-maternity-hospital-attack/index.html>

¹²⁵ Lori Hinnant, Vasilisa Stepanenko, Sarah El Deeb and Elizaveta Tilna, Russia scrubs Mariupol's Ukraine identity, builds on death, 23/12/2022,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-erasing-mariupol-499dceae43ed77f2ebfe750ea99b9ad9>

¹²⁶ Alasdair Sanford, Ukraine war: More than 1.9 million internally displaced by Russia's invasion, says UN, 10/03/2022,

53. The occupation of Vilne in Donetsk region



The view of Vilne village. Vilne is translating as "Free." Photo source: Volnovakha.city

Russian forces first occupied the village of Vilne in Donetsk region on 10 March 2022. The villagers who remained suffered Russian looting and betrayal of collaborators, while those who fled the war and repressions just want to go home.

Despite the fact that many Ukrainians have resettled in other places in Ukraine because of the war, only 100 out of 1,000 inhabitants left Vilne village after Russia's occupation as of March 2023, according to estimates by Olena Koniushok and Svitlana Fomenko, who work in Vilne's cultural departments. Olena and Svitlana explained to Euromaidan Press in March 2023 that the villagers often did not leave because Russians, who also settled in empty houses, immediately looted abandoned properties.

Olena Koniushok and Svitlana Fomenko initially had no intention of leaving their little village of Vilne, even after the Russian occupation that began in March 2022. However, shortly after that occupation, some of their colleagues were detained and beaten by the Russian military and Olena and Svitlana left their village in Mid March 2022, later learning that the Russian military had been searching for them. They also learned that their parents and grandparents were captured by the Russian occupier.

One of the largest detentions of civilians happened in June 2022, just as the cousins were planning online activities for displaced persons. While previously, no more than 10

<https://www.euronews.com/2022/03/10/ukraine-war-zelenskyy-condemns-russia-war-crime-over-mariupol-hospital-airstrike>

people at a time were detained, this time, 41 people with patriotic views were transported from Vilne to Starobieshevo, near the regional capital of Donetsk. Some were taken with their entire families, including children and the elderly. The Russians confiscated their documents and cellphones and fed them soup once a day. People from neighbouring villages were also detained that day. The detained villagers were only released after 21 days. The Russians offered to transport them to Russia and warned them not to return to the village. By then, the Russian occupiers had moved into the villagers' homes and stolen their cars and money. Out of 41 people detained that month, only 10 escaped the Russian-occupied territories, some via Estonia and others via Zaporizhzhia. Another 30 people returned to their village.

The parents of Svitlana and Olena were among those released and it took them six days to travel 250 kilometres to Zaporizhzhia. Like most Ukrainians who fled their homes because of the war, they settled in a neighboring region. The 14 person extended family by March 2023 was gathered in Poltava region, in Ukraine's east.

Some villagers also were simply evicted from their homes, especially those who were identified as pro-Ukrainian, by neighbours who helped the Russian occupiers. Many villagers were detained and transported to prison colonies because of the lists compiled by local collaborators.

In Vilne, once a Russian soldier approached a family with many children and told the woman that he would come for a bath and she should prepare everything for him and make some food. Following that, the youngest child began stuttering. The second time, the woman's husband was at home. He asked a Russian soldier what he was doing. In response, the Russian soldier fired multiple shots under the man's feet.

On 10 March 2022, when the Russian military first entered Vilne, they killed the father of Svitlana and Olena's mutual friend. He was in his yard, running to his basement, when a Russian soldier shot him. Afterwards, the soldier came up to the man's relatives and mockingly asked, "What will I do if I am a sharpshooter?"

Even during Soviet rule, Ukrainian was taught in Vilne's school, while many schools in the neighboring villages taught Russian. It was only in 2022 that a Russian language program was introduced. "Perhaps the Ukrainian school was preserved in Soviet times due to patriotic people. It is ridiculous that the school is now Russian for the first time," Svitlana told Euromaidan Press. All songs and prayers, recorded by ethnographers in the village, were in Ukrainian. At home, Vilne villagers communicate in Ukrainian.

The head of Vilne's youth centre was detained and beaten but was released and then immediately left the village. As of March 2023, he volunteered for Ukraine in Poland, where he received a volunteering prize. He also helped Olena and Svitlana in online projects for displaced persons of Donetsk region.

The terrifying experience residents of Vilne went through was similar to what Ukrainians have experienced across all areas occupied by Russia. The way Russia operates in the occupied territories of Ukraine indiscriminately targeting civilians and causing mass suffering is a form of state terrorism.¹²⁷

54. Russia's terrorism in Melitopol

Melitopol has been under Russian occupation since shortly after Russia launched its full scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.



¹²⁷ Orysia Hrudka, Their village is occupied by Russians, but they unite online, 20/03/2023, <https://euromaidanpress.com/2023/03/20/their-village-is-occupied-by-russians-but-they-unite-online/>



As of 26 March 2023, Over 500 Melitopol residents were in Russian captivity as Russian occupation authorities conducted a rigorous filtration of civilians in the Russian occupied city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region, its exiled Mayor, Ivan Fedorov reported on Telegram. According to Fedorov, after each explosion in the city, the occupation administration intensifies filtration measures, keeps residents in torture chambers and organizes kangaroo courts.

The enemy chose Melitopol as a logistical and administrative hub as the city accounts for 70% of traffic to the temporarily occupied Crimea, Fedorov said.

For the words "Glory to Ukraine" and any other statements of a pro-Ukrainian position, people are fined RUR 30,000 (\$388) or held in a basement.

The Russians force prisoners to film videos "confessing to sabotage" to use in propaganda and to recruit new batches of Russian military to the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region, Fedorov said. This is why Russian occupation authorities try to confine residents to their homes en masse, so that Ukraine receives less information, he said.

It was reported by Fedorov on Telegram on 4 February 2023 that the Russian occupation authorities in Melitopol had announced the "renaming" of 86 of Melitopol's streets. "They dismantled the monument to (Ukrainian national poet Taras) Shevchenko but were afraid of public condemnation and justified themselves by moving the 'Kobzar' to another place, announced the renaming of 86 streets, alleys and squares named after 'Ukronazis'," Fedorov said. A Kobzar is a traditional Ukrainian bard. Fedorov noted

that the occupying authorities want to rename streets after academics, heroes of the Second World War and a Kyivan Rus prince.

Fedorov has also previously reported that the Russian occupation administration is teaching local collaborators from Russian occupied Melitopol how to evacuate in the event of a counter-offensive by the Ukrainian Army.



Child studying by distance learning according to the Ukrainian curriculum Photo RIA Melitopol

In February 2023, The Centre for Journalist Investigations [CJI] learned from a resident of Melitopol that the Russian invaders were not content with threatening to take people's children away from them if they did not register them in occupation schools. They were also foisting Russian citizenship on parents who could not otherwise register their children in such schools. It is part of a campaign to convince Ukrainians that they are Russians. The woman in question that the CJI interviewed explained that, until January 2023, she had not sent her child to a school teaching according to Russian standards. The occupiers were, however, more and more often threatening to take parents' rights away if their children did not attend such schools and she had finally gone to the school to find out what kind of documents were needed to enroll her child. Some of the demands, like a medical examination, were entirely reasonable. Others were not, such as the requirement that the children's parent or parents have Russian citizenship. She was told that, without this, the child would not be accepted at the school, with this meaning that the threat of having her child taken from her remained. CJI noted that Russia's own normative acts on registering children in school makes no such demands, with parents or other legal guardians required only to present a passport or other

document, confirming their identity. This does, indeed, appear to be yet another ruse to force people on occupied territory to take Russian citizenship.

Russia encountered stiff resistance from educational workers and parents in occupied Melitopol as soon as it began trying to force kindergartens and schools to function under their control. The Mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov reported in December 2022 that 90% of the city's educational workers had refused to collaborate with the occupiers. Russia, typically, reacted with terrorism. On 28 March 2022, they abducted Iryna Shcherbak, Head of the Department of Education within the City Council, after she refused to collaborate with the Russians and restart schools under a Russian syllabus. Several school directors were also abducted, although they, at least, were later released.

In September 2022, RIA Melitopol reported the abduction of two teachers and two senior students from Berdyansk studying according to the Ukrainian curriculum (through distance learning).

In August 2022, Ivan Fedorov reported that the Russians were intensifying pressure on parents. He said that parents who did not want their children to attend Russian occupation schools were first issued with 'warnings' and then fined 40 thousand roubles and threatened with having the children taken from them.

In Melitopol, the Russian occupier has tried to wipe away its Ukrainian identity and impose a Russian imperialist identity, often through threatening and terrorising its residents. It is yet more proof that Russia is acting as a terrorist state in its invasion and occupation of Ukraine.^{128 129 130}

55. Russian terrorism in other occupied parts of Zaporizhia region

On 14 June 2023, the General Staff of the Armed forces of Ukraine reported that Russian forces continue to steal grain and private property from the occupied parts of Zaporizhzhia region. Local farmers are reportedly coerced into selling grain at low prices or their stocks are simply confiscated.

¹²⁸ New Voice of Ukraine, Russians holding over 500 Melitopol residents in torture chambers, Mayor says, 26/03/2023, <https://english.nv.ua/nation/russians-hold-over-500-melitopol-residents-held-in-torture-chambers-mayor-says-50313407.html>

¹²⁹ New Voice of Ukraine, Russian invaders to 'rename' 86 streets in occupied Melitopol, Mayor says, 05/02/2023, <https://english.nv.ua/nation/russian-invaders-to-rename-86-streets-in-occupied-melitopol-mayor-says-50302193.html>

¹³⁰ Halya Coynash, Russia forces parents in occupied Ukraine to take Russian citizenship or lose their children, 14/02/2023, <https://khp.org/en/1608811813>

According to the report, Russian trucks have been spotted carrying stolen household appliances, furniture and other property of the locals from the village of Ocheretuvate toward the city of Tokmak. Russian vessels also continue to load stolen grain in the occupied port city of Berdyansk with plans to ship it to Russia.

Ukrainian officials have repeatedly accused with strong evidence Russian forces of stealing grain from the occupied territories since last year. Ships have been spotted several times from 24 February 2022 to June 2023 loading stolen agricultural products in the occupied port city of Berdyansk in Zaporizhzhia region.

The way Russia is stealing the property and grain of Ukrainians in occupied parts of Zaporizhzhia often at the point of an occupier's gun is an example of terrorism based on indiscriminately targeting Ukrainian civilians and their livelihoods often through attempts to terrorise them based on coercion to give up their private property and grain.¹³¹

56. Russian attempts to wipe out Ukrainian identity in occupied Luhansk region

On 21 January 2023, all schools and other educational institutions in the Russian occupied Luhansk region were ordered to remove a huge number of works of Ukrainian literature and history. The covering letter from the so-called 'Ministry of Education' of the Russian proxy Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) claimed that the measures were taken in order to get rid of "literature of an extremist nature, reflecting the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism." The letter and list, received from an unnamed source, were posted on 21 January 2023 by Oleksiy Artiukh, the Chief Editor of Tribune.

Russia began strictly censoring all information in these pseudo 'republics' from the beginning of its military aggression against Ukraine in 2014, so this point is likely to only concern those places which Russia has gained control of since its full scale invasion began on 24 February 2022. The Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group believes it is telling that these proxy 'republics' and Russia are intent on eliminating any material, even of a monitoring or research nature, which contradicts the propaganda being fed to children and young people in the occupied territories of Luhansk region.

Both pseudo 'republics' announced that they were removing the Ukrainian language's status as official language back in 2020, with moves to eliminate Ukrainian from the school curriculum also reported. From 2014 to February 2022, Russia continued to deny any direct control over these fake 'republics', control that has now been confirmed in a judgment by the European Court of Human Rights. As well as its military engagement,

¹³¹ Martin Fornusek, General Staff: Russian forces loot grain, property in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, 14/06/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/general-staff-russian-forces-loot-grain-property-in-zaporizhzhia-oblast/>

Russia also poured vast amounts of money into propaganda measures, aimed at instilling 'Russian world' ideology in occupied Donbas and brainwashing Ukrainian children and young people into seeing Ukraine as the 'enemy.'

The purge of Ukrainian material in schools is an extension of this and one that demonstrates just what it is that Russia so fears and wants to eliminate.

In condemning the list, Ukraine's then Ombudsperson on the state language, Taras Kremin, called the 'prohibition' of Ukrainian works of literature and history, which included even comics for children and teenagers, an attempt to eradicate Ukrainians' national identity.

These measures to wipe out Ukrainian identity and brainwash children in the Luhansk region are a form of cultural terrorism in our view, aimed at indiscriminately destroying Ukraine's vibrant independent culture and national identity.¹³²

57. The destruction of Popasna in Luhansk region



Popasna after Russian strikes Photo Luhansk Regional Administration

In mid August 2022, Russia's proxy 'Luhansk republic' (LPR) stated that there was no point in trying to rebuild Popasna, a city in Luhansk region, which became known beyond Ukraine for Russia's savage methods of warfare, including the apparent beheading of a Ukrainian soldier.

¹³² Halya Coynash, Ukrainian works of literature and history banned as 'extremist' in Russian occupied Luhansk Oblast, 27/01/2023, <https://khpg.org/en/1608811749>

Before Russia's full-scale invasion began on 24 February 2022, Popasna had a population of over 20,000. Russia's attempts to seize the city began in the middle of March 2022 and ended with the Ukrainian Army's retreat on 7 May 2022. It is believed that Russia used both Wagner Group mercenaries and 'Kadyrovtsi,' the forces linked with the brutal Kremlin installed leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov.



Popasna Image from the Russian military drone posted by CNN

A lot of the evidence of Russia's tactics that amounted in our view to terrorism and of horrific war crimes initially came from Russian or 'pro-Russian' sources. On 5 May 2022, CNN posted drone footage, which they said had come from a pro-Russian Telegram channel. In his comments in response to the drone footage, Serhiy Haidai, the then Governor of the Luhansk region, was quoted as saying that the Russians are not just destroying Popasna but are wiping it off the map of Luhansk region. In the centre of the city, by August 2022 all buildings have either been destroyed totally or badly damaged, with most seemingly hit by Russian artillery or rocket fire.

Although the drone footage showed Ukrainian defenders being taken away, with their hands on their heads, a chilling photo posted by Haidai on 5 August 2022 suggested worse atrocities. The photo showed what appeared to be an impaled head and the hands of a Ukrainian prisoner of war outside a house in Popasna. While the scene cannot be checked while Popasna remains under Russian occupation, geolocation tests suggested that the location is that shown on the photo.

What happened to Popasna was part of a pattern of the destruction and crimes against humanity found across the occupied territories in the Luhansk region occupied by

Russia after 24 February 2022. For instance, the devastation that the Russian forces caused to Sievierodonetsk and neighbouring Lysychansk in Luhansk is as massive as what was seen in Popasna. According to Haidai, as of the end of July 2022, Sievierodonetsk had no water, gas or electricity. Haidai also reported that in Sievierodonetsk, as in Mariupol, makeshift ‘showers’ were established in the street, due to the lack of running water in most apartments.

It is clear that in Popasna and in other parts of Luhansk region, the Russian invader has brought terrorism to these cities, towns and villages.¹³³

58. Trying to force those in Occupied parts of Ukraine to take Russian citizenship



Photo UNIAN

It was reported on 14 April 2023 by the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group that after intensifying measures to coerce people in the occupied parts of Ukraine into adopting Russian citizenship, Russia was planning measures to terrorise those still using their Ukrainian citizenship and to keep them under ‘surveillance’.

Russia’s Interior Ministry prepared a draft presidential decree in April 2023 which, once signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin, would envisage surveillance over so-called ‘Russian citizens’ deemed to be secretly retaining their Ukrainian citizenship. This move follows an illegal federal ‘law’ signed into force by Putin on 18 March 2023, which tried to deny Ukrainians citizenship of their own country. The new ‘law’ claims that Ukrainians can ‘terminate Ukrainian citizenship’ merely by making the relevant application for

¹³³ Halya Coynash, Russia razes Ukrainian city to the ground and says ‘there’s no point’ to rebuilding it, 15/08/2022, <https://khp.org/en/1608811032>

Russian citizenship and for their Ukrainian citizenship to 'be terminated.' According to this document, a person's Ukrainian citizenship ceases to be valid from the moment they make such an application.

Although Ukraine does not, in principle, allow dual citizenship, it recognised, after Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, that Ukrainians were being forced to take Russian citizenship on the occupied peninsula. If people cannot obtain employment, medical services, education for their children or face deportation from their native land as 'foreign nationals', they are not penalised by Ukraine for taking Russian citizenship and certainly remain citizens of Ukraine. Russia is now using similar methods of coercion in other parts of Ukraine under occupation, while cynically also demanding a further legally meaningless document 'rejecting Ukrainian citizenship.'

According to the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, essentially any Crimean Tatar or other Ukrainian on occupied territory is already under Russian surveillance if they are known to have pro-Ukrainian views. The proposed Russian presidential decree would extend such repressive measures to cover anybody on occupied territory, including Crimea, who had received Russian passports, signing the relevant statement that they renounced their Ukrainian citizenship and was then found to be using rights enjoyed by Ukrainian citizens (pension, other labour rights, etc). Information about these alleged 'offenders' would be passed to Russia's FSB [security service] which has played an active part in repression in all occupied parts of Ukraine.

Withholding medical services and medications such as insulin is being used as a Russian state terrorism tactic to force residents in Russian-occupied parts of Zaporizhia region to become Russian passport holders, according to a report by Ukraine National Resistance Centre on 3 June 2023. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on 30 May 2023 said that 1.5 million Ukrainians in the occupied territories of Ukraine had been issued Russian passports in the 9 months up to May 2023. Ukrainians who refuse to obtain Russian passports are often threatened with deportation or with being forcibly mobilised into the Russian military.

Nor was the withholding of insulin unique to the Zaporizhia region. Mariupol City Council in exile reported on 6 September 2023 that in occupied Mariupol, it really has become "a Russian passport or your life" for local diabetics. The council learned from a Mariupol resident suffering from diabetes that he was refused insulin at the local hospital because he does not have Russian citizenship. Mariupol's exiled Mayor Vadim Boichenko noted that "this is the occupiers' policy aimed at Russification of the city at any price." In a city devastated by Russian bombing and shelling as highlighted above in the report, Russia is also making humanitarian aid contingent on residents being able

to produce Russian passports, with the same true of employment and the ability to move about freely. As Boichenko puts it, “people have to choose, either receive a document and have at least some kinds of rights, or simply die.”

In July 2023 the Centre for Journalist Investigations (2023) learned from residents of occupied Hornostaiivka in an occupied part of Kherson region, that a local resident, aged between 63-65, had died after being refused medical treatment because he didn't have a Russian passport.

The threat of deprivation of medications and medical care seems a coordinated strategy by the Russian state towards Ukrainians living in the occupied territories when you consider that on 10 August 2023, Oleksandr Dudka, the Russian appointed ‘head’ of Lazurne in Kherson region issued a statement. He announced that medicines and in the first instance, insulin, purportedly purchased from the Russian state budget, would not be issued to “citizens of another country, that is citizens of Ukraine.”

Dudka then went on to repeat threats issued earlier by Russia and other pro Kremlin collaborators. Showing threatening parents who refused to send their children to Russian occupation schools also seems a clear strategy of the Russian state to terrorise Ukrainians living in occupied parts of Ukraine to obtain a Russian passport and Russian citizenship. Dudka waved a piece of paper around saying that they had a list of all children whose parents had not enrolled them in the Russian occupation ‘schools.’ Such parents would first face ‘administrative, then criminal’ liability and would then be put on coaches and taken to the demarcation line between government controlled and occupied territory.

The attempts to force Ukrainians in occupied parts of Ukraine to obtain Russian citizenship and a Russian passport and give up their Ukrainian citizenship is often done in a way which seeks to and often succeeds in terrorising Ukrainian civilians in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Often the threat of being deprived of healthcare is being used as a weapon of coercion and in our view terrorism to force Ukrainians living under Russian occupation to obtain a Russian passport and Russian citizenship. It is a form of state terrorism by Russia. ^{134 135 136}

59. Russia's war crimes in Liberated Ukrainian lands

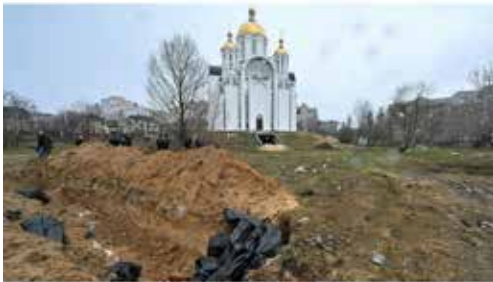
¹³⁴ Halya Coynash, Terror methods against Ukrainians who don't ‘renounce their citizenship’ in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine, 14/04/2023, <https://khp.org/en/1608812122>

¹³⁵ Rachel Amran, Russian forces in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast withhold insulin to residents who refuse Russian passports, 04/06/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/russian-occupied-zaporizhzhia/>

¹³⁶ Halya Coynash, Ukrainians in occupied territory refused life-saving insulin unless they take Russian citizenship, 08/09/2023, <https://khp.org/en/1608812742>

In this section, we will highlight examples of Russian war crimes that amount to state terrorism committed in areas liberated by the Ukrainian Army from Russian occupation. The evidence revealed in Ukraine's liberated territories is extensive and heartbreaking.

60. Bucha



A mass grave is seen behind a church in the town of Bucha.
Sergei SUPINSKY / AFP



Workers line up bodies for identification by forensic personnel and police officers in the cemetery in Bucha, north of Kyiv, on April 6, 2022, after hundreds of civilians were found dead in areas from which Russian troops have withdrawn around Ukraine's capital, including the town of Bucha. (Ronaldo Schemidt/AFP)



Bucha resident Tetiana Ustymenko weeps over the grave of her son, buried in the garden of her house, in Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, on April 6, 2022, during Russia's invasion launched on Ukraine (RONALDO SCHEMIDT / AFP)



Field engineers of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine conduct mine clearing among destroyed vehicles on a street of Bucha on April 5, 2022, as Ukrainian officials say over 400 civilian bodies have been recovered from the wider Kyiv region, many of which were buried in mass graves (Gehya SAVILOV / AFP)



Damaged building of the Continent housing complex pictured in the city of Bucha on April 5, 2022 (The Kyiv Independent)



Doors ripped off in a Bucha apartment block

After Bucha was liberated from Russian occupiers by Ukrainian troops on 1 April 2022, significant evidence of abhorrent Russian war crimes committed in this city in the Kyiv region was discovered. Bucha was occupied for over two months from the earliest days of the full scale invasion of Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022.

Photographs from Bucha showed a scene of devastation, with hunks of charred and destroyed tanks and armoured vehicles lined up along one street, along with dead bodies.

In the almost 6 weeks spent under Russian occupation, residents of Bucha said they were subjected to searches, robbery, torture and summary execution. “There are lots of improvised burial places, here and there, in backyards, in dead ends,” said Bucha Resident Vladyslava Lyubarets in April 2022. She added that “Lots and lots of people just went missing. Here in Bucha, Russians would take food, jewellery and people would give it all up just to stay alive. Phones were the first thing they used to take away from us. They made people kill their poultry, and if they refused, Russians would simply shoot the hens and take the carcasses with them. For many elderly women here, that poultry was their only hope to survive. Many people here had almost no food for two weeks. I will never forget the day when a senior kissed a neighbor’s hands just because she brought a boiled egg and some fresh water.”

“They got me out for an execution,” said Yuriy Snegiriov, 57. “This is what they told us: ‘We’ve been commissioned to deprive you of allowance.’ By saying that, they meant killing. We know they had an order to do that, but in my case, they eventually let me be.”

At least 20 dead men were lying in the street as Ukrainian troops entered the town in early April 2023. Some of them had their hands tied behind their backs. 16 of the 20 bodies seen by the Associated Foreign Press (AFP) lay either on the pavement or by the verge. Three were sprawled in the middle of the road and another lay on his side in the courtyard of a destroyed house. An open Ukrainian passport lay on the ground next to the person who had his hands tied behind his back with a piece of white cloth. Two other people had white cloth tied around their upper arms. In early April 2022 a Ukrainian official told AFP the dead men could have been killed in a bombardment or shot by Russian soldiers and police would investigate. Bucha's then Mayor, Anatoly Fedoruk, told AFP by phone in early April 2022 that all of the 20 dead had been shot in the back of the head. “Those people were just walking and they shot them without any reason. Bang,” said a Bucha resident who declined to give his name citing safety reasons. “In the next neighborhood, Stekolka, it was even worse. They would shoot without asking any questions.”

Some human remains have been burnt. In April 2022 Ukraine's national police showed journalists a pile of unidentified, charred bodies in Bucha on April 5, near a small playground. Four of the bodies belonged to women and two to men. One of the female bodies was very small and may have been a child, said the then head of the National Police in Kyiv region, Andrii Nebytov. He said Russian troops most likely found the

victims in a basement where they may have taken shelter, before gunning them down, then gathering the remains into a pile and setting them on fire.

An estimated 67 bodies were found buried in a mass grave near a church in Bucha, the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office said in April 2022. Then Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova stated at the time of the gruesome discovery that 18 bodies had been located so far, 16 with bullet wounds and two with bullet and shrapnel wounds. "This means that they killed civilians, shot them," said Venediktova.

ITV News Correspondent Dan Rivers, who was in Bucha shortly after its liberation, heard accounts of rape and mass executions and was shown mass graves in the city after the Russians withdrew. All of this illustrates that the evidence of horrific Russian war crimes in Bucha is extensive.

As the town was liberated, one woman, Halyna Tovkach, 55, told the Guardian that she was searching for the body of her husband, Oleg, 62. He was killed by Russian soldiers along with their neighbours, two young boys and their mother, as they tried to escape the town on 5 March. "It is a war crime," said Tovkach's son.

The then Deputy Mayor of Bucha Mykhailyna Skoryk and the Head of the Ritual Service, Serhiy Kaplich stated on 8 August 2022 that at least 458 Ukrainians died in Bucha during the invasion and occupation of the city by Russian troops. According to them, specialists established that 419 people died in connection with military actions, that is, they were killed by weapons. Of them, 116 were found in a mass grave near the church of St. Andrew the First-Called and another 50 bodies were found unburied. Among the dead were also 12 children under the age of 2, most of whom were shot in cars.

Sky News and Bellingcat verified drone footage that appeared to show Russian military vehicles firing towards a cyclist in Bucha. Drone footage shortly after the liberation of Bucha, appeared to show two of their military vehicles shooting towards a cyclist. This was a clear war crime. Sky News geolocated the clip to Yablonska Street in Bucha. The drone footage showed a person cycling on a road before getting off the bike near the junction with Yablonska Street and pushing it around the corner. A military vehicle is seen firing one shot down the street and at least a further five once the cyclist turns the corner. The vehicle, a BMD-2 infantry fighting vehicle, appears to have the letter V marked on the side, which the Russians use to differentiate their equipment from Ukraine's. Other vehicles in the area also have the V marking.

Professor Michael Clarke, former Director General at the Defence think tank RUSI, told Sky News: "The V is very important for unit identification, for other vehicles and from the air, as the Ukrainians use most of the same equipment as the Russians."

A second vehicle then fires and smoke or dust is seen rising at the point where a body and bicycle are seen next to each other in aftermath footage. The drone footage has also been verified by Bellingcat.

The Guardian journalist Luke Harding videoed an eyewitness account from #Bucha shortly after its liberation. The video gave a horrifying and powerful insight into Russian war crimes in Bucha. It is no wonder that Harding described his trip to Bucha and other liberated suburbs of Ukraine's capital Kyiv called Borodyanka and Hostomel as one of his most harrowing trips as a foreign correspondent.

In Bucha, Borodyanka and Hostomel, Harding gave an insight into the suburban horror the Russian occupiers caused. The team he went with included the videographer Volodymyr Yurchenko, interpreter Olesia Horianinova, producer Ekaterina Ochagavia and Guardian head of video Katie Lamborn. They filmed a cellar where one young victim was executed. What makes the video particularly powerful is that you hear from residents of these three places who lived through this Russian occupation nightmare and are still alive to bear witness to Russian war crimes.

One interviewee is Natasha, a resident of Bucha. Her nephew was shot in the head by Russian soldiers who had been interrogating him in a neighbour's basement. The body was subsequently buried in a nearby garden. Natasha herself was threatened by a Russian soldier, who said he would blow her up with a grenade.

Hearing how Natasha's nephew was so savagely murdered is a reminder that behind every single Russian war crime terrorising Ukrainian civilians, is an individual with so much to live for murdered, a family torn apart and people who will never see the face or words of a loved one ever again.

In Bucha Harding reported on how Russian soldiers stole residents' cars and then destroyed them by having their tanks run over their cars. It seems that the Russian occupying soldiers were doing all they could to humiliate and cause pain to the residents of Bucha.

The bodies of more than 900 civilians were found in the area surrounding Kyiv, shortly after the withdrawal of Russian forces in early April 2022, Kyiv region's then police chief, Andriy Nebytov said corpses were abandoned in the streets or given temporary burials.

He said an estimated 95% of victims died from gunshot wounds, adding that under Russian occupation people “were simply executed in the streets.” He said the most victims were found in the commuter town of Bucha, where more than 350 had been discovered by early April 2022.

In June 2022, a Russian independent media source called Vazhnye Istorii identified eight Russian paratroopers who were in the town of Bucha in March 2022, on the day when at least eight local residents were shot there.

In late July 2022, the Security Service of Ukraine identified 4 more Russian soldiers who committed atrocities in Bucha. They were soldiers from the 64th Separate Motorised Rifle Brigade of the 35th Combined Army of the Russian Federation. The 4 soldiers in question were on the territory of Bucha and brutally tortured a local family. They broke into the home and tried to obtain information about the location of Ukrainian troops by threats. The Russians tortured the homeowner and planned to shoot him. Fortunately, he managed to escape. Then the occupiers threatened to mutilate and murder his wife, in order for her to reveal the location of her husband. Despite physical abuse and moral pressure, the wife withstood the abuse, and eventually the troops left her home.

An 8 month visual investigation by the New York Times on 22 December 2022 concluded that the perpetrators of a massacre along Yablunska Street in Bucha were Russian paratroopers from the 234th Air Assault Regiment led by Lt. Col. Artyom Gorodilov. The evidence showed that the killings were part of a deliberate and systematic effort to ruthlessly secure a route to the capital Kyiv and target any Ukrainian civilians in the way. Russian soldiers interrogated and executed unarmed men of fighting age and killed people who unwittingly crossed their paths, whether it was children fleeing with their families, locals hoping to find groceries or people simply trying to get back home on their bicycles. 36 Ukrainian victims murdered along Yablunska Street were identified. Some of the most damning evidence implicating the 234th Air Assault Regiment included phone records and decoded call signs used by commanders on Russian radio channels. It all points to a brazen and bloody campaign of terrorism that turned a quiet suburban street into what residents have dubbed the “road of death.”



Journalists witnessed bodies lying on the street

It is very easy to become desensitised or overwhelmed by all the killing in Ukraine, but what happened in Bucha reminds us that in Ukraine human beings and families just like ours have been destroyed thanks to Russian terrorism and nor as we highlight below was what happened in Bucha unique. ^{137 138 139 140 141}

61. Borodyanka



Local residents say they were prevented from digging for survivors after buildings were turned into rubble

¹³⁷ British Friends of Ukraine Facebook thread on Bucha, 03/04/2022, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0Su2rr7U7jTKyPA8LQzgStYqLibRJtxqchhvdmv7iUubNS1V2MqdJ7ZibvLYm2aBI&id=100079376379263

¹³⁸ Luke Harding, Ekaterina Ochagavia, Marina Shupac, Volodymyr Yurchenko and Katie Lamborn, Inside Ukraine's suburban horror: 'I have nothing left' - video, 14/04/2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2022/apr/14/inside-ukraines-suburban-horror-i-have-nothing-left-video>

¹³⁹ Kostia Andreikovets, At least 458 Ukrainians died in the Bucha community as a result of the actions of the Russians, 08/08/2022, <https://babel.ua/en/news/82626-at-least-458-ukrainians-died-in-the-bucha-community-as-a-result-of-the-actions-of-the-russians>

¹⁴⁰ Oleg Panfilovych, The Security Service of Ukraine identified 4 more soldiers of Russia who abused the civilian population in Bucha, 29/07/2022, <https://babel.ua/en/news/82196-the-security-service-of-ukraine-identified-4-more-soldiers-of-the-russian-federation-who-abused-the-civilian-population-in-bucha>

¹⁴¹ Yousur Al-Hlou, Masha Froliak, Dmitriy Khavin, Christoph Koettl, Haley Willis, Alexander Cardia, Natalie Reneau and Malachy Browne, Caught on Camera, Traced by Phone: The Russian Military Unit that killed dozens in Bucha, 22/12/2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/22/video/russia-ukraine-bucha-massacre-takeaways.html>



(Briar Stewart/CBC)



(Gleb Garanich/Reuters)

Borodyanka is in the Kyiv region. It is 60 km east of the city of Kyiv and was liberated in late March 2022.



Vitaliy Lusyi, 43, says he was tortured by Russian soldiers after they incorrectly suspected he was stealing ammunition from them. (Briar Stewart/CBC)

When Russian troops stormed into Borodyanka in the initial days after the full scale invasion, Vitaliy Lusyi, 43 told Briar Stewart of CBC in late May 2022 that young Russian soldiers told him they were there to root out Nazis in the community 60 km east

of Kyiv. However, in the days that followed, as large swathes of Borodyanka were bombed and hit by airstrikes, he said soldiers began interrogating him, before torturing him over two days and forcing him to kneel in a shallow hole in the dirt. "I was thinking of how to stay alive," said Lusyi in an interview outside of his family home. He added that "they were beating me hard and everything was in pain." The electrical worker was visited by investigators twice since the community of 13,000 was liberated at the end of March 2022.

Borodyanka suffered some of the most devastating damage in parts of the Kyiv region that were occupied by Russia. In the town multi-storey apartment buildings had collapsed into piles of rubble. In a report released by Amnesty International on 6 May 2022, the organisation said Russian airstrikes hit eight residential buildings in Borodyanka in the first two days of March 2022, murdering at least 40 people. What happened were clear indiscriminate war crimes targeting Ukrainian civilians.

By Late May 2022, Stanislav Kozynchuk, a Prosecutor with the Kyiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, told CBC News that his team had identified more than 220 Russian soldiers suspected of committing war crimes in Borodyanka. The cases range from soldiers destroying buildings, shooting at vehicles and murdering civilians.

Several witnesses told BBC News in early April 2022 that Russian troops stopped attempts to dig survivors out of wrecked buildings and threatened people who wanted to do so at gunpoint.

Ukrainian officials said in April 2022 that the Russians may have committed worse atrocities in Borodyanka than in Bucha, where bodies of men who looked to have been summarily killed were found lying in the street after the Russians pulled out and several hundred other bodies were in a mass grave. One witness told BBC News in early April 2022 that they saw civilians being killed by Russian sniper attacks in Borodyanka.

A local priest, Father Dmytro, told BBC News he had witnessed Russian snipers killing civilians. He said "It was the 2 March near the petrol station. We were driving along, followed by two civilian cars. They just shot them, it was an execution."

According to Jeremy Bowen of BBC News, the worst killing in Borodyanka might have come when several large blocks of flats were destroyed. In early April 2022, Bowen saw a line of big cream-coloured buildings, of which several had been flattened. Tons of concrete and steel collapsed into the cellars under the flats. Several people said dozens of civilians were lying dead under the rubble. Ukrainian police said in early April 2022 it could be hundreds.

According to Bowen, from what he witnessed, he believed "The biggest bomb sites in Borodyanka could only have been hit by air strikes or ballistic missiles. The laws of war state civilians are protected and killing them is a crime unless they are involved with military action."^{142 143}

62. Irpin



Homes in Irpin were often taken over by Russia's occupying forces and just destroyed



Police say this apartment was struck by a Russian rocket targeting a resident as he smoked a cigarette at his balcony. © Tahar Hani, France 24

¹⁴² Briar Stewart, Among the ruins of Borodyanka, prosecutors are investigating 400 war crime accusations, 20/05/2022, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.cbc.ca/amp/1.6460060>

¹⁴³ Jeremy Bowen, Borodyanka: 'There are a lot of people left under the rubble', 06/04/2022, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-61007427.amp>



A building damaged by shelling in Irpin's town centre. © Tahar Hani, France 24



Charred vehicles outside a police station in Irpin, where a police officer was shot dead by Russian forces. © Tahar Hani, France 24



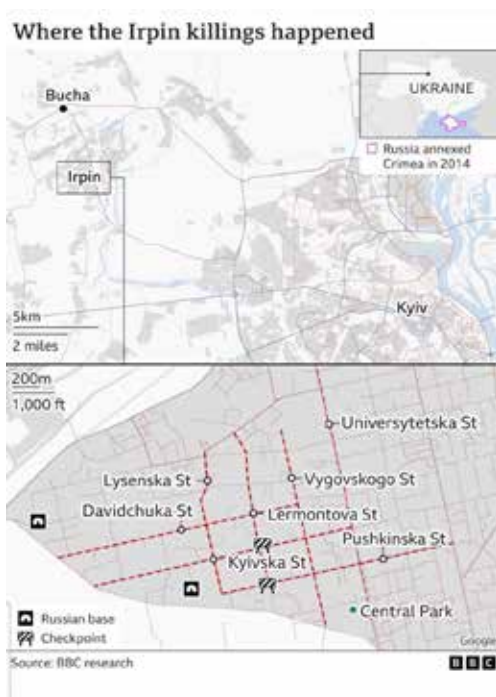
Russian troops set up firing positions here and in another building used as a checkpoint

Irpin was another town in the Kyiv region. Irpin is on the doorstep of Kyiv and in early March 2022 Russian troops intent on conquering Ukraine's capital Kyiv, occupied the town. It was liberated by Ukrainian troops on 28 March 2022.

11 units of the Russian Army and police are alleged by Ukraine's intelligence and prosecutors to have taken part in the occupation and destruction in Irpin, Bucha and nearby Hostomel. Among them was the 141st motorised regiment, otherwise known as

the notorious Kadyrovtsi from Chechnya. So was the 234th airborne assault regiment, whose servicemen were once rewarded for taking part in the occupation of Crimea.

In a report on 8 June 2022 By Zhanna Bezpiatchuk of BBC Ukrainian, it was highlighted how in a corner of Irpin, the brutality of the Russian occupation was clear from the start. The body of a young woman in a red coat would remain in the street for four weeks, lying where she had been trampled not once, but over and over again, under the wheels of Russian armoured vehicles.



By 8 June 2022, the bodies of 290 civilian victims had been found and witnesses and prosecutors spoke of a month of terror in a narrow zone in the town's south-western quarter. A disproportionate number of victims were women. Ukrainian prosecutors stated by 8 June 2022 that they had details of 161 men, 73 women and one child. Many were shot dead. Others died by artillery fire or starved to death. There were also accounts of violence against civilians, of shootings and summary executions and of people being held by force in a basement. Most of the suspected war crimes identified by prosecutors and witnesses, happened in mid March 2022 and then in the final days before the Russian withdrawal.

During the occupation, Pushkinska Street became a vital artery, a route to safety for civilians. Bezpiatchuk pointed out that if you made it out to Universytetska Street, then it was a short drive to the ring road and a Ukrainian held position. All the way down

Universytetska Street, Bezpiatchuk reported that civilian cars were riddled with bullets and shrapnel.

Close to Central Park, near the junction with Pushkinska, one of the then local deputies Artem Hurin said in June 2022 that he saw bodies in three cars and an elderly man lying dead on the street.

Armoured vehicles were stationed behind almost every house in Pushkinska Street, according to Hurin, who served as a military volunteer when Irpin was under attack.



The bodies of a man and a woman in a pink coat were found in this car after the Russians left.

On 8 March 2023 local residents risked constant shelling and gunfire to bury 4 people shot by the Russians in a shallow grave beside a bus stop where Davidchuka Street meets Lysenka Street in Irpin. We buried a civilian woman in a pink coat in her 40s with a man. They were killed in the car," resident Tetyana told Bezpiatchuk . Tetyana added that "Two Territorial Defence volunteers were shot dead in their car." The volunteers were later identified as local residents Dmytro Ukrainets and Sergiy Malyuk.

Those who survived the ordeal are still in shock at the violence unleashed by "racist Russian and Chechen soldiers," as Konstantin Godoskos, a Ukrainian national of Kazakh origin, described the invaders to France 24 in late April 2022. Russian soldiers entered Godoskos's apartment block and shot dead the building's caretaker. "The poor man didn't even carry a weapon," he says. "I saw this happen several times, soldiers killing people who were simply walking in the street."

On top of the murders, Godoskos said he witnessed "even more horrible" scenes, including sexual violence inflicted on women and children. He said "I saw them rape women and young girls. One of them was just 15. They took her to a basement. They weren't Chechens or other nationals, they were Russian soldiers no older than 20. She managed to escape in the end because her rapists were so drunk they forgot to tie her up."

Godoskos said he was forced to hurriedly bury 74 bodies during the town’s occupation, after pleading in vain for proper burial at the local cemetery. “I told [the Russians] they were Christians and foreigners, just like me,” he says. I begged them to lay the dead to rest in a cemetery, according to our faith, but they refused and ordered me to dig holes in people’s gardens and bury them there.”

Other residents were shot at random or “the second they pulled out their phones,” said a Ukrainian Army officer to France 24 in April 2022. He explained that “the Russians were desperate to prevent people from documenting the massacres they carried out here.”^{144 145 146}

63. Hostomel



Maksym Maksymenko’s shot-up car in Hostomel, Ukraine. Russian forces opened fire on the vehicle on February 28, 2022 while Maksym was trying to evacuate with his mother, mother-in-law, wife, and their toddler son. Maksym and his wife were wounded, his mother died. © April 2022 Richard Weir/Human Rights Watch © April 2022 Richard Weir/Human Rights Watch

¹⁴⁴ Zhanna Bezpiatchuk, Russia's reign of terror in a quiet neighbourhood near Kyiv, 08/06/2022, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61667500.amp>

¹⁴⁵ Adrien Vautier and Laurence Cornet, Irpin one year after liberation: A city symbolizing Ukrainian resistance, 10/04/2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/04/10/irpin-one-year-after-liberation-a-city-symbolizing-ukrainian-resistance_6022383_4.html

¹⁴⁶ Tahar Hani, In ruined Kyiv suburb, residents ask, ‘What have we done to Putin to be slaughtered like this?’, 22/04/2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220422-in-ruined-kyiv-suburb-residents-ask-what-have-we-done-to-putin-to-be-slaughtered-like-this>

Hostomel is a village near the city of Kyiv. Russian forces tried to occupy Hostomel on the first day of their full scale invasion on 24 February 2022 and to seize control of the town's military airport. Russian forces then occupied the area for much of March 2022, before pulling out on 31 March 2022.

On 25 February 2022, shortly after its full scale invasion of Ukraine began, the Russian occupiers in Hostomel opened fire on more than ten cars, using various kinds of weapons. The lowest recorded number of hits in these vehicles was 38, the highest was 178.



Russian forces opened fire on the car of Maksym Maksymenko on February 28, 2022 in Hostomel, killing his mother and wounding Maksym and his wife. © April 2022 Richard Weir/Human Rights Watch

Russian forces opened fire on Maksym Makysymenko's car in Hostomel on 28 February 2022 while Maksym was trying to evacuate with his mother, mother-in-law, wife and their toddler son. Maksym and his wife were wounded and his mother was murdered.

On 28 February 2022 Russian forces opened fire on two vehicles carrying 9 civilians who were trying to flee the area. On 3 March 2022, they shot at a vehicle with 4 men who were going to negotiate delivery of humanitarian aid. This is clear evidence of Russian state terrorism deliberately targeting and terrorising Ukrainian civilians.

According to Ukrainian enforcement officers, 11 victims and 41 witnesses to the crime were identified during the investigation. Furthermore, 57 examinations were ordered and 9 experimental investigations were carried out; footage from cameras located near

the places of shootings and a video record of a witness were received. Among the victims are a Russian citizen, a German citizen and employees of the Bucha District Police Department.

“Russian soldiers at checkpoints opened fire on passing vehicles without any apparent effort to verify whether the occupants were civilians,” said Belkis Wille, senior crisis and conflict researcher at Human Rights Watch (HRW). He added that “The obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants is a constant as is the prohibition on targeting civilians, whether in their homes, on the streets, or in their cars.”

On 25 February 2022, servicemen of the consolidated detachment of the National Guard of the Russian Federation units from the cities of Kemerovo and Novokuznetsk of Kemerovo region, as well as the mobile special force from the Krasnoyarsk Krai, failed to complete the combat task of capturing Kyiv, retreated and took positions in the village of Hostomel. Being in the area of Shevchenko and Sviato-Pokrovska streets, for more than 6 hours, the Russian military shot at cars with civilians inside, as drivers were trying to leave the combat zone and make it to Kyiv. 5 people were killed and 6 more were injured in these attacks.

On 28 September 2022 five Russian servicemen were notified that they were under suspicion of shooting civilian cars with people inside in Hostomel in February 2022.

In late December 2023, Germany identified the Russians suspected of targeting civilians in Hostomel, including a German citizen. According to Spiegel, Marco Buschmann, Germany’s Federal Minister of Justice, in an interview with DPA news agency said the individuals suspected of the bombardments and the officers responsible had been identified. "If we catch the perpetrators, we will press charges and if Ukraine or another country we cooperate with catches these people, we will provide evidence so that charges can be successfully pursued," Buschmann said.

What happened in Hostomel is further evidence of Russian terrorism and nor was it unique when you consider that HRW pointed out from 24 February 2022 to 2 May 2022 Russian forces had fired on civilian vehicles in 3 separate incidents in Ukraine’s Kyiv and Chernihiv regions, murdering 6 civilians and wounding 3. In one case, they pulled a man from a van and summarily executed him.^{147 148 149}

¹⁴⁷ Valentyna Romanenko, Civilian cars in Hostomel have been shot at for six hours: security forces post footage of Russian war crime, 28/10/2022,

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/09/28/7369436/index.amp>

¹⁴⁸ European Pravda, Germany Identifies Russians Suspected of War Crimes in Hostomel, Kyiv Oblast, 27/12/2023, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/eng/news/2023/12/27/7176288/>

¹⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, Ukraine: Russian forces fired on civilian areas, 02/05/2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/02/ukraine-russian-forces-fired-civilian-vehicles>

64. Trostanets



Ludmyla Savchenko, whose husband Mykola was killed by Russian soldiers. Photograph: Anastasia Taylor-Lind/The Guardian



Police officers observe heavily damaged buildings in Trostanets. Photograph: Anastasia Taylor-Lind/The Guardian



The view from Trostanets train station, which was used as a military position by Russian soldiers. Photograph: Anastasia Taylor-Lind/The Guardian



A resident of Trostianets pushes her bicycle past destroyed Russian military equipment. Photograph: Anastasia Taylor-Lind/The Guardian

Trostianets is a city in the Sumy region of Northeastern Ukraine, around 59 km from the regional city centre, Sumy, and around 20 miles from the Russian border. It was occupied by Russia on the first day of its full scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and liberated by Ukraine around a month after.

In early April 2022, Channel 4 news put together a video report on mass graves discovered amid evidenced claims of war crimes in the city. The report came from Channel 4's Chief Correspondent Alex Thomson.

Evidenced war crimes against the people of Trostianets have come to light. It includes reports and confirmed sites of mass graves, torture and civilians being shot in the back of the head. There are pictures of men of fighting age with hands bound behind their back murdered and blindfolded. There was also a report of a human body being covered in human faeces. Civilian buildings were targeted, severely damaged and wrecked, including hospitals.



A car with the letter Z, a symbol of support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, near the train station in Trostianets, occupied by the Russian army and heavily damaged by the Ukrainian army when it recently retook the town. Photograph: Anastasia Taylor-Lind/The Guardian



A hand written card taped to the wall in the basement of Trostianets train station, which was used as a military position by Russian soldiers. Photograph: Anastasia Taylor-Lind/The Guardian

The Guardian journalist Shaun Walker and photographer Anastasia Taylor-Lind spent two days in Trostianets in Ukraine in early April 2022 after 30 days under Russian occupation. It gave an insight into what happens to a place occupied by Russia. Systematic looting and violence were found to be commonplace during the occupation. Russian troops sprayed the town with graffiti about their hometowns, or childish slurs about Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Russian soldiers stole many cars and painted them with Zs. Then they roamed around town in them and drove some of them out in their departure column. They systematically looted most of the shops. Daria, who owns a beauty salon, had everything stolen from it. This included the hair dyes, shampoos, nail polishes, sofa, chairs and art on the walls. They tried to steal the air conditioning unit but couldn't get it off the wall. Other shops were also stripped bare. Daria also told Shaun Walker she'd personally seen soldiers loading flat screen TVs onto the top of a tank. Every shop in the centre was empty. Some had even painted "everything here has already been stolen" outside in an attempt to prevent repeat intruders. In the basement of the railway station there was a makeshift field hospital for wounded Russian soldiers. On the walls was written the most jarring thing: cards written by Russian kids thanking the soldiers for their service and for "ensuring a peaceful sky."

Further information from the Guardian report highlighted the murder of Ludmyla Savchenko's husband Mykola by Russian soldiers in Trostianets. "I'm just popping out for five minutes," he told her. He never came back to her and their 6 children. He was brutally tortured and then killed with a shot to the heart and one to the head.

What happened in Trostianets during Russia's occupation is yet more proof that Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism.^{150 151 152}

65. Lyman



Forensic technicians work at a burial site near the recently recaptured city of Lyman (EPA)

Two separate mass burial sites, for civilians and soldiers, were found in October 2022 on the edge of the cemetery in the town of Lyman in Donetsk region, which had been liberated from Russian forces, shortly before the soul destroying discovery.

Some of the 78 remains recovered by 12 October 2022 showed signs of having met a violent end. There were body parts, gunshot and shrapnel wounds, smashed ribs and skulls and severe cuts. Some of the dead were very young, with a year old baby girl buried with her parents.

¹⁵⁰ Alex Thomson, Mass graves discovered amid new claims of war crimes on eastern border, 06/04/2022,

https://m.youtube.com/watch?fbclid=IwAR075oA6CktRLpN1LcGB1hrl9c71GNTE4JWs_i-npchiDCKYxvzv5do_r1I&v=Lv6fbUIelEs&feature=youtu.be

¹⁵¹ Shaun Walker and Anastasia Taylor-Lind, 'Barbarians': Russian troops leave grisly mark on town of Trostianets, 05/04/2022,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/barbarians-russian-troops-leave-grisly-mark-on-ukraine-town-of-trostianets>

¹⁵² Twitter/X, Ronan Leo Tynan Tweet of 6 April 2022,

<https://twitter.com/RonanLTynan/status/1511774305012572160>

Ukrainian authorities expected to find around 200 bodies at the burial site, one of several discovered in areas that had been occupied.

Among the corpses taken out and zipped into black body bags were Ukrainian soldiers in torn and frayed combat uniforms. Some had signs of having been handcuffed and blindfolded and with bullet holes in their heads, according to Ukrainian officials who were on the scene.

Large swathes of Lyman were destroyed in the fighting during months of Russian occupation and it is unclear how many of the deaths were the result of deliberate killings and torture or due to missile and artillery strikes, or even natural causes in a town where there has been no power and water and threadbare medical services.

Some elderly and sick people were found starved to death, Ukrainian officials said. None of these people would have suffered and been terrorised but for Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine and occupation of Lyman, which brought Russian state terrorism to this part of Donetsk region.

Local residents told Kim Sengupta, a journalist from The Independent of summary executions in October 2022. "I know of a father and son who were taken away for questioning," said Nicolai Yurchenko, a 59 year-old former carpenter. He went on to tell Sengupta that "There were arguments and the old man was shot. The son tried to save his dad, and he was killed as well. We don't know what happened to their bodies."¹⁵³

66. Sviatohirsk

¹⁵³ Kim Sengupta, Signs of torture on bodies found in Ukrainian town liberated from Russia, 12/10/2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/lyman-mass-grave-torture-exhumed-ukraine-war-crime-s-b2201040.html>



A destroyed Russian tank lies near a church in the city of Sviatohirsk, Donetsk

Sviatohirsk is a town neighbouring Lyman. In October 2022 local residents described how trigger-happy fighters from the separatist DNR and LNR (pro-Russian self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk “Republics” run by pro Kremlin proxies and their armed forces controlled by the Kremlin) would open fire at the slightest provocations, or, at times, because they were scared. Svetlana, 38, told Sengupta that she ensured her children stayed indoors after curfew with frequent outbreaks of gunfire at night. “There were men from DNR who wore ordinary clothes but carried guns. I don’t think they were trained properly and would often shoot for no reason. People were hurt.”¹⁵⁴

67. Izium

¹⁵⁴ Kim Sengupta, Signs of torture on bodies found in Ukrainian town liberated from Russia, 12/10/2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/lyman-mass-grave-torture-exhumed-ukraine-war-crime-s-b2201040.html>



📷 Russia's 20th combined army used Iziium's school number two as a military command and detention centre, the report said. Photograph: Jamie Wilson/The Guardian

The bodies of more than 500 civilians were found in areas occupied by Russia in early October 2022, shortly after they were liberated by Ukraine's forces. Out of 534 bodies, 226 were women and 19 were children, the head of Kharkiv's police said.

In April 2022 Russian forces seized Iziium, after a month-long battle. Six months later Ukrainian troops liberated the city in the north-east of the country, during a counteroffensive. At least 447 victims were found at a mass burial site uncovered in Iziium, including the remains of 22 Ukrainian soldiers, as well as several torture chambers.



📷 School number six in Iziium. Photograph: Jamie Wilson/The Guardian

A report by the Centre for Information Resilience in July 2023 named four militia units that allegedly abused civilians and prisoners of war. All were from the so-called Luhansk and Donetsk people's republics and all took their orders from Russia, who were their ultimate commanders. The Kremlin established these pro-Kremlin puppet administrations in 2014 after its illegal military takeover of some of the eastern Donbas region. Investigators found the units based themselves in schools and kindergartens, a pattern seen in other occupied areas. Between April and July 2022, the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) 5th battalion, a part of the 204th infantry regiment, lived in Iziium's school number six.

A 48 year-old electrician called Ihor told Human Rights Watch (HRW) in October 2022 that Russian soldiers arrested him in his flat, put a bag over his head, and beat him as they dragged him to their car. They drove him to school number six and locked him in a storage cupboard, he recalled. He was accused of possessing marijuana. Half an hour later they took him out, kicked and slapped him and called him a fascist. A commander asked him to identify members of Ukraine's territorial defence forces, who had fought against Russia in the Donbas. The next day he was released. Another resident, 19 year old Zhenia, said he was beaten and hit on the head.

Russia's 20th Combined Army used Iziium's school number two as a military command and detention centre, the Centre for Information Resilience report added. 1 unit stationed there was the LPR's Russia legion, an outfit associated with the pro-Kremlin nationalist writer Zakhar Prilepin. In May 2023 Prilepin was injured and his bodyguard killed when his car was blown up.

The Russian and pro-Russian units at School Number Two posted pictures of Ukrainian soldiers, captured in the fight for Iziium. They were photographed against a pink background with distinctive wallpaper, identified as belonging to the school. Survivors said they were routinely beaten. At least two civilians died there.

The Centre for Information Resilience investigation located a third torture site, run by soldiers from the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). A DPR unit, Oplot ZP, from the 60th brigade, operated from a compound next to Iziium's municipal boiler plant. A second unit, known as "veterans" and from the same brigade, stayed in a nearby building. Survivors reported being imprisoned and tortured inside the twin bases, including with electric shocks. ¹⁵⁵ ¹⁵⁶

68. Kidnapping, false imprisonment, torture, disappearing and murder of Ukrainian civilians, prisoners and local government officials

On a daily basis, we learn more detail about the barbarity of Russian soldiers' actions in Ukraine. We have become so used to stories of hostage taking (also called abduction), false imprisonment, torture, and murder of Ukrainians, that we can no longer be shocked about the further horrors being committed by Russia's Army. There are also Ukrainians who have disappeared without trace from areas occupied by Russia. Nobody in Ukraine is safe from Russian soldiers' terrorism, including unarmed men, women or children, prisoners and local government officials. They are kidnapping city deputies, journalists and their relatives and other civilians as hostages to try to pressure and silence Ukrainians from revealing, reporting and exposing Russia's war crimes for the world to see. They are also silencing them in other ways, such as torture and murder.

Along with war crimes like torture, rape and executions, Russia has also taken civilian hostages in the areas it has occupied, at times transferring them to prisons both in Russian occupied Ukrainian territory and Russia for reasons unknown. The hostages include people taken off the streets, psychiatric patients and inmates of Ukrainian prisons now under Russian-occupied territories.

Russia exploits international law loopholes to keep these Ukrainians locked up. Ukraine cannot easily exchange them as prisoners of war, as it would jeopardise millions living

¹⁵⁵ Maryam Zakir-Hussain, Ukraine police says bodies of more than 500 civilians found in Kharkiv including children, 08/10/2022,

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/ukraine-bodies-kharviv-dead-izium-b2198352.html>

¹⁵⁶ Nick Hopkins, Jamie Wilson and Luke Harding, Militia units commanded by Russia named in Iziium abuse investigation, 18/07/2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/18/russian-human-rights-abuses-took-place-in-izium-ukraine-investigation-finds>

under occupation, creating the perpetual threat that any civilian in occupied territory could become a hostage, human rights defenders and officials have warned.

Holding “civilian hostages” constitutes a war crime along with violating several other conventions Russia could be brought to justice for, said Mikhail Savva, a Russian born legal expert at the Ukrainian Centre for Civil Liberties. “If there are no charges against civilians, every party to the Geneva Conventions is obliged to return them as soon as possible,” Savva, a former Russian political prisoner, told the Kyiv Independent in December 2023. Savva said Russia exploits this loophole phrase in the Geneva Convention to keep Ukrainian civilians in legal limbo. “We can say Russia has a system of war crimes against Ukrainian civilians. Holding a civilian (in custody) for a long term without legal authorization is a war crime of deprivation of liberty and access to justice,” Savva told the Kyiv Independent.

The precise count of adult Ukrainians, who are suffering as civilian hostages of Russia remains elusive. Ukraine’s Reintegration Ministry stated as of 4 December 2023 there are 763 civilian hostages in Russia and Russian occupied areas, while Ukraine’s Human Rights Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets stated in December 2023 that in total, around 28,000 Ukrainian civilians are currently in Russian captivity. Ukrainian human rights activists sharply contest these official figures, suggesting they could be as high as 8,000. “I’m very afraid that the 8,000 missing civilians include those whom we will never find,” Olga Romanova, the exiled head of Russia Behind Bars, a prominent Russian NGO protecting convicts’ rights, told the Kyiv Independent in December 2023. Olga added that “I vividly remember rapidly shrinking lists of missing civilians as all of those mass graves were discovered after Izium’s liberation.”

Ukraine’s Coordination Headquarters for Prisoners of War Treatment’s Spokesperson, Petro Yatsenko, told the Kyiv Independent in December 2023 that only 140 civilian hostages have returned to Ukraine during several prisoner of war exchanges.

The fate of many more Ukrainian “civilian hostages” remains uncertain. “Russia hides Ukrainians after (they are) being sentenced by courts,” Romanova said, adding her Russia Behind Bars NGO traced 460 Ukrainians. Romanova and her colleagues from Russia Behind Bars cheer when they find a Ukrainian with charges in Russian detention centres. “It means they are alive,” she said.

According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, 407 forced disappearances and arbitrary arrests of civilians were recorded in areas seized by Russia in the first 6 months of the full scale invasion of Ukraine. Most were civil servants, local councilors, civil society activists and journalists. Russia has kidnapped

132 Ukrainian officials since 24 February 2022, most of them in the Kherson region, according to Ukraine's Zmina Human Rights Centre.

Many of those held hostage have been tortured or murdered. This state sponsored kidnapping, false imprisonment, torture and murder by Russia of Ukrainian civilians is another form of terrorism. It provides further proof of why it is time that the UK government recognised and designated Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. ^{157 158 159}

69. Denial of medical care for Ukrainian human rights activists illegally detained in Russia and Russian occupied territories

Front Line Defenders (FRD), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Physicians for Human Rights stated on 14 December 2023, that they were deeply concerned about the denial of adequate medical care to Ukrainian human rights defenders illegally detained in Russia and Russian occupied territories of Ukraine.

They highlighted the case of Ukrainian human rights defender and civic journalist Iryna Danylovysh, who was forcibly kidnapped in Russian occupied Crimea on 29 April 2022 by occupying law enforcement authorities. Her whereabouts remained unknown for 13 days until her attorney located her in the pre-detention centre in Simferopol on 11 May 2022, prosecuted on fabricated charges of terrorism. Eventually on 28 December 2022, the Feodosia City Court sentenced Iryna Danylovysh to 7 years of prison. Iryna has had a chronic ear infection (otitis) since November 2022, which she had contracted in the pre-trial detention centre in Simferopol. She reportedly suffers from constant pain and hearing loss, recurring headaches and loss of coordination, but the centre's administration has repeatedly refused adequately to treat these conditions while she was in their custody.

Between 22 March and 6 April 2023, Iryna Danylovysh went on a "dry" hunger strike, refusing food and water, to protest the penitentiary authorities' refusal to provide her with adequate medical assistance. Finally, the authorities agreed to allow a medical examination, which took place the week of 10 April 2023, but according to her father,

¹⁵⁷ Alexander Khrebet, 'I'm afraid we'll never find them:' Russia holds thousands of Ukrainian civilians hostage, 04/12/2023,

<https://kyivindependent.com/im-afraid-well-never-find-them-russia-holding-thousands-of-ukrainian-civilian-s-hostage>

¹⁵⁸ Yuras Karmanau, Russians try to subdue Ukrainian towns by seizing Mayors, 03/11/2022,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-entertainment-climate-and-environment-europe-e4e8d5a847aff39c78871c7ab1cb9c10>

¹⁵⁹ Katya Denisova, Kherson Mayor's son calls on Zelenskyy to help free father from Russian captivity, 12/01/2024,

<https://kyivindependent.com/kherson-mayors-son-calls-on-zelensky-to-help-free-father-from-russian-captivity/>

Bronislav Danylovych, who was able to communicate with her, it did not include appropriate diagnostic tests and medical treatment.

Despite the precarious state of her health, after her appeal hearing Iryna Danylovych was first transferred to a penal colony in Krasnodar, Russia, and from there to a penal colony in Zelenokumsk in the Stavropol Region of Russia, more than 900 km from Crimea.

Bronislav Danylovych reported that a doctor in the Zelenokumsk penal colony, responding to his daughter's complaints of pain and dizziness, stated that "the pain will go away when she goes deaf."

On 26 October 2023, Bronislav Danylovych reported that his daughter was taken to a local hospital, but no one there conducted a medical examination, as the doctor only copied the information from her medical record. Her family fears that lack of timely medical treatment for her ear infection may cause the infection to spread to her central nervous system and brain, with potentially life-threatening consequences.

What has happened to Iryna is not a one off, but part of a pattern. Another case which is testament to the kidnapping of Ukrainian human rights activists by Russia and the subsequent denial of medical care, is the case of Iryna Horobtsova, a humanitarian volunteer and human rights activist from Kherson. She was abducted on 13 May 2022 from her parents' home by Russian occupying forces and is being held, according to her relatives, in a detention centre in Russian occupied Simferopol, on the Crimean peninsula. No formal charges have been brought against her. Her family members reported that they were not allowed to pass anything to her, including the medicines she was prescribed to take. Furthermore, her lawyer continues to be denied access to his client and to any information about her detention conditions and health.

Her family continues to have concerns, based on Horobtsova's brain aneurysm, which predated her abduction and which requires that her health condition be closely monitored. According to her sister, Iryna has suffered from severe headaches and her doctors linked them to the aneurysm. There are also concerns about her psychological state, as HRW reported in April 2023 that she has been subjected to threats and pressure from Russian security forces and held in solitary confinement for a prolonged period.

Further highlighting the systemic and organised nature of Russia's kidnapping of Ukrainian human rights activists and their denial of medical treatment, On 14 August

2023, the Ukrainian human rights organisation ZMINA published a list of 21 Ukrainian political prisoners held by the Russian authorities whose health and possibly lives are in danger due to being denied access to medical care in the penitentiary facilities in which they are held. This list includes three Ukrainian human rights activists from Crimea.

Under international law the prohibition of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute. This prohibition is explicitly set out in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as well as Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and articles 1, 2, 15 and 16 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). Russia has ratified both treaties, but clearly is only paying lip service to its signature.

The kidnapping of Ukrainian human rights activists by Russia and the withholding of the medical treatment they require are both clear war crimes by Russia and a deliberate tactic by the Russian state to indiscriminately target those most likely to challenge the Russian invasion and occupation of parts of Ukraine. It is also an attempt to terrorise these people and their families and therefore is a form of state terrorism.¹⁶⁰

70. Further Examples of Ukrainian civilians being held in Russian run jails

An Associated Press (AP) investigative report of 17 January 2023 hosted on PBS News website, investigated the many Ukrainian civilians being held in Russian run jails.

A case the report highlighted was that of Vita Hannych. Russian men in military uniforms took Vita Hannych away from her house in eastern Ukraine in April 2022. She never returned. Her family later learned that Hannych, who had long suffered from seizures because of a brain cyst, was by 17 January 2023 being held in custody in the Russian occupied part of the Donetsk region. Her daughter Alina Kapatsyna told the AP in January 2023 that it remained unclear why her mother, “a peaceful, civilian and sick person” who had never held a weapon, was detained.

Hannych was wearing only a sweatsuit and slippers when she was seized by Russian forces occupying her village of Volodymyrivka several weeks into the full scale invasion of Ukraine. Hannych was jailed in Olenivka, another Russian-controlled city, according to a letter from the Kremlin installed Prosecutor’s Office in the Donetsk region. Olenivka

¹⁶⁰ Front Line Defenders, Denial of medical care to Ukrainian human rights defenders illegally detained in Russia and Russian occupied territories, 14/12/2023, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/denial-medical-care-ukrainian-human-rights-defenders-illegally-detained-russia-and>

jail staff told Kapatsyna's grandmother that Hannych was a sniper, allegations her family deems absurd, given her medical condition.

Anna Vorosheva, who spent 100 days in the same facility as Hannych, recounted squalid, inhumane conditions: putrid drinking water, no heat or showers, having to sleep in shifts and hearing new prisoners screaming from being beaten.

Donetsk authorities labeled Hannych a prisoner of war (PoW) and in January 2023 told her family she was imprisoned in the occupied city of Mariupol.

Hannych is one of the hundreds and perhaps thousands of Ukrainian noncombatants believed to be held by Russian forces for months following their full scale invasion of Ukraine. Some are deemed to be prisoners of war, even though they never took part in the fighting. Others are in a sort of legal limbo, not facing any criminal charges or considered to be PoWs.

In January 2023, Russian lawyer Leonid Solovyov told the AP he had amassed more than 100 requests concerning Ukrainian civilians. He said he was able to help 30 to 40 confirm the person they looked for was in Russian custody without any legal status, just like his client in January 2023, Mykyta Shkriabin. The student from northeastern Ukraine's Kharkiv region was detained by Russia's military in March 2023 and had been held up to at least January 2023 without charges or any legal proceedings. Shkriabin, then 19, was sheltering from the fighting in a basement with his family, according to his mother, Tetiana. During a break, he went out for supplies and never returned. Tetiana Shkriabina told the AP that she learned from witnesses that Russian soldiers seized him. Months later, Solovyov got confirmation from Russia's Defence Ministry that Shkriabin was detained for "resisting the special military operation." When Solovyov filed a complaint to Russia's Investigative Committee contesting the detention, it confirmed that there were no criminal probes opened against Shkriabin, that he was neither a suspect, nor an accused. Shkriabin had not been labeled a POW, Solovyov said, adding in January 2023 that "His legal status is simply a hostage."

The hostage taking and imprisonment of defenceless Ukrainian civilians provides more proof that the Russian state is indiscriminately targeting and terrorising Ukrainian civilians in a way that makes it no different to a terrorist group. It highlights why Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Hanna Arhirova and Dasha Litvinova, Hundreds of Ukrainian civilians believed held in Russian-run jails, 17/01/2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/hundreds-of-ukrainian-civilians-believed-held-in-russian-run-jails>

71. The opening of a new prison for political prisoners abducted from Kherson and Zaporizhia regions

According to a report by the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group of 27 January 2023, Russia opened a new remand prison, or SIZO, in occupied Crimea in 2022 and is using it for some of the many civilians it has abducted from occupied parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia region. People are thrown into this new prison and held incommunicado, with no official charges, acknowledgement of their whereabouts and no access to a lawyer.

These are civilians who, in most cases, had been abducted by the Russian invaders from their homes in occupied parts of the Kherson or Zaporizhzhia regions, tortured and then illegally taken to occupied Crimea and imprisoned in one of the two SIZOs.

Russia's political persecution of Ukrainian citizens began shortly after its invasion and annexation of Crimea, and the original SIZO in Simferopol had long been notoriously overcrowded. It is, however, likely that the speed in opening SIZO No. 2, on the territory of Prison Colony No. 1, was linked with the huge increase in abductions of Ukrainians from all parts of Ukraine that fell under Russian occupation since 24 February 2022. According to CHRG's information, Russia began moving imprisoned civilians to SIZO No. 2 in July 2022, with some having previously been held in what has now become SIZO No. 1.

According to the Kherson Regional Prosecutor's Office, at the beginning of 2023 at least 1,100 civilians had been kidnapped by the Russian occupier in the Kherson region alone, with at least 474 still held prisoner.¹⁶²

72. The arrest of Ivan Drozd

In the early days of the full scale invasion as Russian troops were occupying large swaths of territory outside of Kyiv, one local village resident was relieved to see what he thought were Ukrainian troops. The resident, Ivan Drozd, shouted the common Ukrainian salute "Slava Ukraini!" (Glory to Ukraine!) to the soldiers, not realising they were Russia's invading forces.

The Russian troops immediately arrested Drozd on the spot, his partner Hanna Mushtukova told the Kyiv Independent, citing a fellow villager who was arrested with Drozd but later released.

¹⁶² Halya Coynash, Russia opens new prison for Ukrainian political prisoners abducted from Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts, 27/01/2023, <https://khp.org/en/1608811727>

More than 19 months later, Mushtukova doesn't know anything of Drozd's whereabouts, except for a short four-word letter she received months after he wrote from a Russian prison. "Alive. Healthy. Not sick," the letter reads, Mushtukova told the Kyiv Independent in early December 2023. She hinted he may have been forced to write the letter that way.

Drozd was a 28 year old farmer with no military experience when he was captured and imprisoned by the Russian troops. His partner Mushtukova has no information on his exact whereabouts. "I'm counting the days. But the uncertainty and anticipation of the unknown are hard to wrap my head around," Mushtukova said.

For Mushtukova's partner, prison conditions are unknown. She neither knows if Drozd has a lawyer nor if he is being charged at all. She told the Kyiv Independent that Russia labeled him a prisoner of war without any explanation, even though he is a civilian.¹⁶³

73. Ukrainian civilians arrested on false sabotage and/or espionage charges

According to the Kyiv Independent, as of 4 December 2023, hundreds of Ukrainian civilians have been arrested in Russia on espionage or sabotage charges after going to the country to visit their relatives or to work. Many of them are sent to detention centres and are deprived of access to lawyers.

In its investigation on the matter, the Kyiv Independent highlighted the case of Serhii Karmazin. Karmazin was a Ukrainian civilian who came to Russia to visit his sister after the start of the full-scale invasion. He was arrested in February 2023 on sabotage charges. The FSB, Russia's security service, claimed he had set railway equipment in the Moscow region on fire and planned to blow up an oil refinery for \$1,000 on behalf of Ukraine's Security Service.

Lawyers have not been able to access Karmazin, who is kept in Moscow's infamous Lefortovo Prison, infamous for Joseph Stalin regime purges and the Soviet KGB jail for political prisoners. The Wall Street Journal reporter, Evan Gershkovich, has been held there.

There are "hundreds of people (like Karmazin) who come to Russia for a job or to their families, mostly to work" who have been charged with espionage, said Olga Romanova, a prisoner rights defender for Russia Behind Bars.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Alexander Khrebet, 'I'm afraid we'll never find them:' Russia holds thousands of Ukrainian civilians hostage, 04/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/im-afraid-well-never-find-them-russia-holding-thousands-of-ukrainian-civilians-hostage>

¹⁶⁴ Alexander Khrebet, 'I'm afraid we'll never find them:' Russia holds thousands of Ukrainian civilians hostage, 04/12/2023,

74. The kidnapping of Ukrainian prisoners

Some Ukrainian civilians kidnapped by Russia have managed to return through their own actions without help from the Ukrainian state. Mykhailo (not his real name) is one of them, who spent 1.5 years in Russian-run prisons.

Serving his prison term in Ukraine since 2019, Mykhailo aged 37, was among around 2,000 inmates Russian troops took from a prison in Kherson region following its occupation of the region, his lawyer, Anna Skrypka from the NGO Protection for Prisoners of Ukraine, told the Kyiv Independent in December 2023. Russian forces sent inmates from four prisons in Ukraine's south through a series of camps in occupied territories before they ended up in Russian prisons close to Ukraine, according to Skrypka.

From the Ukrainian prison where he had been serving his sentence, Mykhailo was sent to occupied Simferopol, the administrative center of Russian occupied Crimea. He told the Kyiv Independent that he was taken to a prison housing inmates with tuberculosis even though he was healthy.

A couple of weeks later, the inmates were gathered in the prison's courtyard and made to stay there the entire day until midnight. Mykhailo says they weren't given any food or water so they wouldn't need to use the bathroom on the road to a prison in Russia's Krasnodar Krai, located across the Kerch Strait from Crimea. While being transferred, the group spent one night at a prison in Kerch, but Mykhailo says he did not eat for a little over two days until they reached the prison in Krasnodar Krai.

In each new location, the welcome ritual remained unchanged. The Spetsnaz, Russian special forces, would stand in two rows facing one another with their dogs. Prisoners who had just arrived were made to run down the middle of the special forces as they beat the new inmates with batons and shouted at them to move faster, Mykhailo told the Kyiv Independent. "The Spetsnaz beat us three times in two days," said Mykhailo.

Mykhailo spent 5 days in quarantine upon his arrival in Krasnodar Krai. As he was being escorted to the dining hall for the first time after that initial period, he shouted "Slava Ukraini!" (Glory to Ukraine!) to the other inmates. He doesn't remember the duration of the beating he endured for that. Guards sporadically beat him for war-related disputes with Russian inmates and refusal to obtain Russian citizenship, something the guards frequently asked him to do, he said. Once, he was beaten after arguing with the guards that Russia would not be able to seize Odesa region along with his hometown, Izmail.

<https://kyivindependent.com/im-afraid-well-never-find-them-russia-holding-thousands-of-ukrainian-civilian-s-hostage>

When his original prison term imposed by the Ukrainian court approached, conditions deteriorated. "The last 2 months were hell," he said. Mykhailo said the guards didn't let him sit for weeks, which caused severe swelling in his legs. They would draw billy sticks if they spotted him sitting. "The last 6 days (of his time in prison in Krasnodar Krai), they beat us constantly," he said, adding that there was no medical assistance.

The prisons in the occupied territories of Ukraine are described as a "black hole," because it's "almost impossible" to send real lawyers without Russian Security Service ties there, said Olga Romanova, a Russian prisoners' rights defender.

Threats to extend his sentence didn't turn Mykhailo away from believing he could return to Ukraine. With money sent to him by Skrypka, his lawyer, Mykhailo took a ferry to Russia. It was the only way to return to Ukraine as the bridge over Kerch Strait was closed after a Ukrainian drone attack. Following a night in a Rostov hostel room full of Russian soldiers returning from the front lines, he bought a box of "good cigarettes" to bribe Russian border guards. It helped him return to Ukraine via the Kolotilovka border crossing, the sole operational link between Ukraine and Russia.

Mykhailo believes he was fortunate to be able to return home to Ukraine. When he arrived at a central Ukrainian station in mid August 2023, he embarked on a 6km walk home, so he could feel a free man. "Mum met me. We kept silent for a while and then cried," he said.¹⁶⁵

75. The story of Leniye Umerova

¹⁶⁵ Alexander Khrebet, 'I'm afraid we'll never find them:' Russia holds thousands of Ukrainian civilians hostage, 04/12/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/im-afraid-well-never-find-them-russia-holding-thousands-of-ukrainian-civilians-hostage>



Crimean Tatar marketing specialist Leniye Umerova, 25, during a court hearing in Moscow on July 4, 2023. Umerova was detained on her way to occupied Crimea in December 2022. She went there to see her father, who had been diagnosed with cancer. Russia accuses her of espionage providing no evidence. (Screenshot from a video)

On 18 October 2023, the Kyiv Independent told the story of Leniye Umerova. Umerova, a 25 year old Crimean Tatar marketing specialist who was born in Crimea, went to university in Kyiv, and sought refuge in Turkey after the start of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2022.

In December 2022, Umerova decided to travel to Russian occupied Crimea to look after her father, who had been diagnosed with cancer. She had a long journey to Georgia, where she caught a bus to Sevastopol, Crimea's largest city.

Umerova was detained at the Georgian-Russian border. She was the only passenger with a Ukrainian passport, according to her brother, Aziz Umerov. On 16 May 2023, one of Russia's leading propagandists, Olga Skabeeva, interrupted her talk show to share "breaking news" with the Russian people. The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) uncovered a spy, Skabeeva said, who had been feeding information about Russian military infrastructure and equipment to Ukrainian authorities. "A (criminal) case was opened into espionage. The lady will be imprisoned for 20 years," Skabeeva said. The woman she was referring to was Umerova.

"She never had anything to do with the special services or armed forces. She is just a regular hipster girl," her brother, Aziz, told the Kyiv Independent in October 2023.

Olha Skrypnyk, the head of the Crimean Human Rights Group, believes there are "clear signs" that Russia has fabricated the case against Umerova for political reasons. Olha believes the fact that it took Russia five months to press charges against Umerova indicates that they needed this time to falsify the evidence against her. To keep her under custody before pressing the trumped-up charges, Olha thinks Russia used methods that Umerova herself compared to those of the 1990s gangster movies. "Intimidation, threats, abductions," as Umerova described what happened in one of her letters from Russian captivity.

Skrypnyk told the Kyiv Independent that if Russia "had at least something to accuse Umerova of, they would have done it right away." The human rights activist expects that the Russian court will continue extending Umerova's term in detention. During the last hearing in late September 2023, she was ruled to stay under custody until 4 January 2024. Skrypnyk has stated that the arrest of Umerova is "yet another confirmation of the systemic nature of the persecution (of Crimean Tatars)." He added that "It also shows that Russia can make up a criminal case against anybody."

"The only 'crime' and the reason for my sister's imprisonment was her refusal to receive a Russian passport in 2014 (in Crimea)," her Brother told the Kyiv Independent.

Russia invaded and illegally annexed the Ukrainian peninsula in 2014, violently suppressing any resistance to its illegal takeover of Crimea. Over nine years of occupation, Crimean Tatars, the indigenous people of the peninsula, have been the main target of Russia's brutal repressions. With every year of occupation, cases of human rights violations in Crimea have grown. As of February 2023, there were 180 political prisoners in Russian occupied Crimea, including 116 Crimean Tatars, according to Ukraine's Human Rights Ombudsman, Dmytro Lubinets. What has happened to Umerova should not be shorn from the context of the organised and mass oppression of Crimean Tatars by the Russian state.

"Leniye Umerova tried to visit her sick father in occupied Crimea. Now Russia wants to sentence her to 20 years in prison," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said during the Crimean Platform summit in August 2023. "This is just one of the many examples of repression by the occupiers against Ukrainian citizens in Crimea, against the Crimean Tatar people, against the Muslim community of Crimea," Zelenskyy said.

Umerova was 16 when Russia occupied Crimea. She left the peninsula for Kyiv in 2015 to finish high school since she was told that she wouldn't be able to graduate from high school in Crimea without first obtaining Russian citizenship. By that time, her brother was already in Kyiv, where he had relocated to study in a university. Their parents, however, chose to stay in Crimea. "They said that they were born in exile in Central Asia

and dedicated their whole lives to return to their land," said Aziz Umerov. Aziz added "If, for us, the struggle began in 2014, and our lives had been relatively calm before that, our parents and grandparents have been going through it their whole lives."

In 1944, the Soviet regime falsely accused the entire Crimean Tatar people of collaborating with Nazis. Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin soon ordered the deportation of all Crimean Tatars from the peninsula. They were allowed to return home only in the late 1980s.

"They (parents) simply could not give up their home to Russia, to our historical enemy, and decided to stay," Aziz Umerov stated.

Aziz Umerov said that in 2014, people could rally with Ukrainian flags, shouting "Crimea is Ukraine." Now, he says, even liking some pro-Ukrainian posts on social media could lead to imprisonment. He knew that traveling to Crimea during the full-scale invasion could be dangerous for his sister and he tried to stop her. "But she wanted to see her dad. She did not know when she would be able to see him again and if she ever would," Umerov says.

"I crossed off the days in the calendar today, and it turned out that soon it will be nine months that I'm being held here, in this country," Umerova wrote in a letter from captivity in September 2023. She added that "It seems that yesterday I tried to visit my father, but everything happened not as expected. A moment, and at the border, after checking documents and personal belongings, four unknown men approach you and force you to get off the bus and do everything as they say."

Later, Umerova would tell her family that the "unknown men" were Russian FSB officers dressed in civilian clothes. They took her from the "Verkhniy Lars" checkpoint in North Ossetia to the police station in nearby Vladikavkaz. They took her personal belongings and interrogated her for seven hours, she wrote. That's when the whole complex "scheme" to justify keeping Umerova under custody began. "Late at night, they told her she had to go to some hotel they had already picked and continue the conversation with them in the morning," Aziz Umerov said. As Umerova was put in a taxi, she did not have to say the hotel's address to the driver, as he already knew where to take her. While driving in the countryside, a Russian traffic police stopped the taxi. "They informed her that she was in the border zone, which foreigners were prohibited from entering without a special permit," says Umerov. "So, they detained her." At around 3 am she was brought to a local court that ruled to send her to a detention center for foreigners. With the help of lawyers, hired by Umerova's family, the court reversed the ruling.

In the middle of the night, Umerova was kicked out of the detention centre without any means or permission to contact her relatives, who were on the way from Crimea to pick her up. "As soon as she got out, a car with 4 men pulled up to her. They put a bag over her head, drove her to another part of Vladikavkaz, and kicked her out of the car," Umerov says. Lost, Umerova tried to look for help on the street when another police squad arrived. "They issued her a report for malicious disobedience," Aziz Umerov told the Kyiv Independent. Aziz added that "The next day, the court arrested her for 15 days." During that time, Umerova was allowed to have brief phone calls with her parents, which Russia would later use to prolong her arrest. "On the 13th day of her arrest, she was issued another protocol for disobedience, for allegedly not ending her (phone) conversation on time," Aziz Umerov said.

Several more protocols for disobedience followed, according to Aziz Umerov. She was soon transferred to a detention facility in the nearby Russian town of Beslan. "There was complete falsification of everything just to keep her in custody while the criminal case against her was being falsified," Aziz said

"I remember that on the first day in prison, during the search of my personal belongings, I thought how this whole thing reminded me of an action-packed gangster movie from the 1990s," Umerova wrote in her letter.



Leniye Umerova and her lawyer, Dmitry Dinze, during a court hearing in Moscow on July 4, 2023. (Aziz Umerov)

To have a chance to see their daughter in Beslan, Umerova's parents rented an apartment right next to the facility she was kept in. Their short meetings were recorded on camera and they were allowed to speak Russian only, Aziz stated.

However, one day in early May 2023, as the parents came to see Umerova, they were told she was no longer there. "They learned that the FSB officers came and took her in an unknown direction," Umerov recalls. Later, they would find out she was transferred to Moscow with the Lefortovo district court pressing espionage charges against her.

Then, Russian propaganda created the whole "FSB uncovered a Ukrainian spy" story without mentioning that Umerova had been illegally detained months ago.

In a letter from captivity, Umerova wrote that what happened to her is "gross evidence of contempt for human rights, freedoms, and dignity, which was formed as a result of someone's aggressive ambitions and has become a terrible norm for almost 10 years."

What happened to Umerova is an example of Russia's indiscriminate terrorism towards Crimean Tatars and their targeting of Ukrainian civilians for kidnapping and imprisonment.¹⁶⁶

76. The Targeting of Ukrainian Mayors

An Associated Press (AP) article of 3 November 2022, investigated and reported on how after its full scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia deliberately targeted Ukrainian Mayors. Ukrainian and Western historians say the tactic of kidnapping civilian administrators such as Mayors is used when invading forces are unable to subjugate the population. It is a clear war crime.

Not long after the full scale invasion of Ukraine, soldiers broke down the office door of the then Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov. They put a bag over his head, bundled him into a car and drove him around the southern city for hours, threatening to kill him. Fedorov, 34, was one of over 50 local leaders who had been held in Russian captivity since the war began on 24 February 2022 up to 3 November 2022 in an attempt to subdue cities and towns coming under Russia's control. Like many others, he said he was pressured to collaborate with the invaders. Some like Fedorov have been released in prisoner exchanges and others have been released upon Ukraine's liberation of occupied territories. The Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), a group of local leaders from

¹⁶⁶ Daria Shulzhenko, She wanted to visit her sick Father in occupied Crimea. Russia wants to imprison her for 20 years, 18/10/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/a-regular-hipster-girl-crimean-tatar-faces-20-years-in-russian-prison-on-trumped-up-charges-of-espionage/>

across Ukraine, said that as of 3 November 2022, out of the more than 50 abducted officials, including 34 Mayors, at least 10 remained captive.

“The bullying and threats did not stop for a minute. They tried to force me to continue leading the city under the Russian flag, but I refused,” Fedorov told The Associated Press by phone last month in Kyiv. “They didn’t beat me, but day and night, wild screams from the next cell would tell me what was waiting for me.”

As Russian forces sought to tighten their hold on Melitopol, hundreds of residents took to the streets to demand Fedorov’s release. After 6 days in detention and an intervention from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he was exchanged for 9 Russian prisoners of war and expelled from the occupied city. A pro-Kremlin figure was installed as the Mayor of Melitopol in his place.

“Kidnapping the heads of villages, towns and cities, especially in wartime, endangers all residents of a community, because all critical management, provision of basic amenities and important decisions on which the fate of thousands of residents depends are entrusted to the community’s head,” said Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko, head of the AUC.

In the southern city of Kherson, one of the first seized by Russia in its full scale invasion and subsequently liberated by Ukraine in November 2022, Mayor Ihor Kolyhaiev tried to stand his ground. He said in April 2022 that he would refuse to cooperate with its new, Kremlin backed overseer. Kirill Stremousov, the Deputy head of the Russian-installed regional administration in November 2022, repeatedly demonised Kolyhaiev as a “Nazi,” echoing the false Kremlin narrative that its attack on Ukraine was an attempt to “de-Nazify” the country. Kolyhaiev continued to supervise Kherson’s public utilities until his arrest on 28 June 2022. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirmed that Kolyhaiev was in Russian custody, the Mayor’s son Svyatoslav said on 17 September 2023. Ukrainian authorities said in July 2022 that occupying Russian forces had detained the Mayor after he refused to collaborate with them. Svyatoslav Kolyhaiev said the ICRC had officially confirmed his father’s status on 13 September 2023, adding that both the Mayor’s health state and his exact whereabouts remain unknown. On 11 January 2024, Svyatoslav called on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to help free his father, who as mentioned was kidnapped by Russian forces 18 months ago while the city of Kherson was under Russian occupation. Kolyhaiev’s son said in an Instagram post that he has already sent “more than one hundred appeals to all state human rights structures,” relevant organisations and the Ukrainian Presidential Office, made requests to the UN Human Rights Council and written letters to Ambassadors of other countries. He said that all the responses he received expressed “only concern” while there was no response from Zelenskyy’s office about progress made toward his father’s release. “Please understand me as a son.

Remember that you also have children. I am asking for your help, Mr. President. Please take this situation under your personal control. Human life is at stake," Svyatoslav said, urging Zelenskyy not to "stay silent." Svyatoslav believes his father's return home could be "a driving force" in exchange for the rest of the civilians held captive by Russia.

Viktor Marunyak, head of the village of Stara Zburivka in the southern Kherson region, is famous for appearing in Roman Bondarchuk's 2015 documentary "Ukrainian Sheriffs," an Academy Award contender. The film explores the invasion of eastern Ukraine by Russia that began in 2014. While the film didn't win an Oscar, it cemented Marunyak's reputation. After Russian troops seized Stara Zburivka in the spring of 2022, Marunyak held pro-Ukrainian rallies and hid some activists in his home. He was eventually taken prisoner. He told the AP in November 2022 that "At first, they put (electrical) wires on my thumbs. Then it seemed not enough for them, and they put them on my big toes. And they poured water on my head so it would flow down my back. Honestly, I was so beaten up that I didn't have any impressions from the electric current." After 23 days, Marunyak was "released to die," he said. Hospitalised for 10 days with pneumonia and 9 broken ribs, he finally left for territory controlled by the Ukrainian Government.

Ukraine's government has tried to swap captive officials for Russian POWs, but Ukrainian officials complain unsurprisingly that Russian officials sometimes demand Ukraine release hundreds for each Ukrainian in a position of authority, prolonging negotiations.

The kidnapping of Ukraine's Mayors by Russia are organised war crimes aimed at trying to make it much easier for Russia to terrorise Ukraine and its people into submission. Thankfully, they have not succeeded.^{167 168 169}

77. The murder of Ukrainian Mayors

Several mayors have been killed, a particularly heinous crime by the Russian state. Following the discovery of mass burials in areas recaptured by Kyiv, Ukrainian and foreign investigators continue to uncover details of extrajudicial killings of Mayors.

¹⁶⁷ Yuras Karmanau, Russians try to subdue Ukrainian towns by seizing Mayors, 03/11/2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-entertainment-climate-and-environment-europe-e4e8d5a847aff39c78871c7ab1cb9c10>

¹⁶⁸ RFE/RL, Red Cross: Mayor of Ukrainian city of Kherson is in Russian custody, 18/09/2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-kherson-mayor-red-cross-russia-custody/32597782.html>

¹⁶⁹ Katya Denisova, Kherson Mayor's son calls on Zelenskyy to help free father from Russian captivity, 12/01/2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/kherson-mayors-son-calls-on-zelensky-to-help-free-father-from-russian-captivity/>

The body of Olga Sukhenko, who headed the village of Motyzhyn, near the capital city Kyiv, was found in a mass grave next to those of her husband and son after Russian forces retreated. The village had a prewar population of about 1,000. Residents said Sukhenko had refused to cooperate with the Russian occupier. When her body was unearthed on the outskirts of Motyzhyn, her hands were found tied behind her back.

Mayor Yurii Prylypko of nearby Hostomel was gunned down in March 2022 while handing out food and medicine. The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office later said his body was found rigged with explosives.¹⁷⁰

78. The abuse of, threatening of and kidnapping of Ukrainian nuclear power plant workers



Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Ukraine. Image: Ralf1969, Wikimedia Commons

An investigative report by the AP on 5 October 2022, shone a light on the treatment of nuclear power workers by Russia at the occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).

Before the full scale invasion of Ukraine, Europe's largest nuclear facility with its 6 reactors provided jobs for about 11,000 people, making Enerhodar with its prewar population of 53,000 one of the wealthiest cities in the region. However, after Russia occupied the city shortly after the full scale invasion, that once-comfortable life turned into a living Russian induced nightmare. The invaders overran the ZNPP, about 6 km (nearly 4 miles) from Enerhodar but kept the Ukrainian staff in place to run it.

¹⁷⁰ Yuras Karmanau, Russians try to subdue Ukrainian towns by seizing Mayors, 03/11/2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-entertainment-climate-and-environment-europe-e4e8d5a847aff39c78871c7ab1cb9c10>

In early November 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that Russia was taking ownership of the plant. With his decree, he ordered the creation of a state company to manage the facility and said all workers now need Russian permission to work there. Ukraine's state nuclear operator, Energoatom, said it considers Putin's decree "worthless" and "absurd." It said the plant would continue to be operated by Energoatom as part of the Ukrainian energy system.

Reports of intimidation of the ZNPP staff and kidnapping began coming out in the summer of 2022. Rafael Mariano Grossi, Head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's atomic watchdog, told The Associated Press in November 2022, about reports of violence between the Russians and the Ukrainian staff.

As of 5 November 2022, About 4,000 ZNPP workers had fled. Those who stayed cited threats of kidnap and torture, underscored by the abduction in early October 2022 of the then ZNPP director Ihor Murashov, who was seized and blindfolded by Russian forces on his way home from work. Murashov was freed shortly after being forced to make false statements on camera, according to Petro Kotin, who was head of Energoatom in October 2022. Kotin told the AP that Murashov was released at the edge of Russian controlled territory and walked about 15km (9 miles) to a Ukrainian held area. "I would say it was mental torture," Kotin said of what Murashov suffered. Kotin went on to state that "He had to say that all the shelling on the ZNPP was made by Ukrainian forces and that he is a Ukrainian spy ... in contact with Ukrainian special forces." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described Murashov's abduction as "yet another manifestation of absolutely uncovered Russian terror."

More than 1,000 people, including plant workers, were abducted from Enerhodar, although some have been released, the exiled Enerhodar Mayor Dmytro Orlov estimated in October 2022. Kotin also estimated in November 2022 that between 100 to 200 of those abducted were still being held in captivity by Russia. Orlov said the first abduction was on 19 March 2022, when Russians seized his deputy, Ivan Samoidiuk, who spent 333 days in Russian captivity, with almost half of that time in solitary confinement, before being released, on 17 February 2023, as part of an exchange of prisoners. The invaders tried and failed, to 'persuade' Samoidiuk to collaborate, to convince him that "Russia is here to stay." He told the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group that he was held in solitary confinement in occupied Melitopol for the first 138 days and was then moved to a commercial building where hostages were held in totally unheated and unsuitable premises. The Russian occupiers have set up places of imprisonment and torture on all occupied territories, including the holding facilities in police stations. They imprison 10 -15 people in very small cells, with some hostages held in these conditions for six months or more, according to the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group. Samoidiuk believes that tens of thousands have been put through

such hell. The hostages are also held in total isolation from the world, and in an information vacuum.

After March 2022, abductions then accelerated, Orlov said. “Mostly, they took people with a pro-Ukrainian position, who were actively involved in the resistance movement,” he said. Orlov alleged they were tortured at various locations in Enerhodar, including at the city’s police station, in basements elsewhere and even in the ZNPP itself. “Terrible things happen there,” he said. “People who managed to come out say there was torture with electric currents, beatings, rape, shootings. ... Some people didn’t survive.” ZNPP worker Andriy Honcharuk died in a hospital on 3 July 2022 shortly after the Russians released him, beaten and unconscious, for refusing to follow their orders at the facility, Orlov said.

Oleksii, a worker who said he was responsible for controlling the plant’s turbines and reactor compartment, fled Enerhodar in June 2022 when he learned Russian troops were looking for him. He asked not to be identified by his full name by the AP for fear of reprisal. Many plant employees “visited the basements” and were tortured there, Oleksii said. Oleksii added that “Graves appeared in the forest that surrounds the city. That is, everyone understands that something horrible is happening,” he said. He added that “They abduct people for their pro-Ukrainian position, or if they find any Telegram groups on their phone. This is enough for them to take a person away.”

In May 2023, Russia also imposed draconian measures on the staff at ZNPP. It increased the increased pressure and threats on the plant’s employees and forbade the workers to communicate with each other. As of mid May 2023, only 2,500 ZNPP workers were still operating the ZNPP . In contrast, there were about 11,000 employees at the ZNPP before the beginning of the war . The duress under which NPP staff are having to operate is an imminent threat to the safe operation of the ZNPP.

The abduction, torture and murder of those working at ZNPP and the surrounding city of Enerhodar is a grave example of Russia terrorising a whole city and a whole group of workers.^{171 172 173}

¹⁷¹ Hanna Arhirova, Ukraine nuclear workers recount abuse, threats from Russians, 05/10/2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-business-153cc4ffe3a9eede8f852d22abd5ed01>

¹⁷² Halya Coynash, The Russians “Treat torture as entertainment” - Enerhodar Deputy Mayor held hostage for almost a year, 28/03/2023 <https://khpg.org/en/1608812032>

¹⁷³ Cooperation for Restoring the Ukrainian Energy Infrastructure Task Force, Ukrainian energy infrastructure evaluation and damage assessment - X (as of 24 May, 2023, https://www.energycharter.org/fileadmin/DocumentsMedia/Occasional/2023_05_24_UA_sectoral_evaluation_and_damage_assessment_Version_X_final.pdf

79. Ukrainian civilians who have disappeared without trace

On 25 January 2023, the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, highlighted the case of Larysa Hryhorivna Dolya, as part of a report on Ukrainian civilians who have disappeared from territories in Ukraine occupied by Russia since its full scale invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2022.

Larysa Hryhorivna Dolya has not been seen up to 25 January 2023 since fighters linked with the notorious Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov turned up at her home in the village of Tarasivka, Zaporizhzhia region, on 11 January 2023 and took her away. She is one of many Ukrainian civilians whom the Russian invaders have claimed to have 'deported' from occupied territory, but who have simply disappeared.

Dolya was not seen from 11 January 2023 to at least 25 January 2023 when the KPHG report came out. The Kadyrov fighters who seized Dolya told her family that they were taking her for interrogation and that she would return in 2 days. Her relatives went to the Russian military command on 12 January 2023 and were then told that the paramedic was in 'prison'. The Russians claimed that this was because Dolya had both refused to accept Russian citizenship and to collaborate and had, they alleged, encouraged other Ukrainians to not take Russian money.

On 18 January 2022, the Russians told Larysa's brother that she had been 'deported' to government controlled territory from occupied Vasylivka. She had not, however, arrived in government controlled Zaporizhzhia by 25 January 2023 and there were clearly grave concerns as to why the Russians were lying.

The news of her disappearance came just days after Ivan Fedorov, the exiled Mayor of Melitopol, reported on 15 December 2022 that residents of occupied parts of Vasylivka in an occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region were being deported and vanishing without trace. Fedorov explained that on 15 December 2022, that the Russian occupiers had closed the only route out of occupied territory via Vasylivka, to government controlled Zaporizhzhia. The Russian occupiers had claimed that this was merely for the New Year break and that the route would again be opened on 15 January 2023. This, however, did not happen.

There are a huge number of civilians whose kidnapping has never been admitted or revealed, but who are believed to be imprisoned and have almost certainly been or are being tortured, by the Russian invaders. Many of these people have disappeared without a trace. It is another method of Russia terrorising Ukrainian civilians.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Halya Coynash, Ukrainian civilians disappear without trace after the Russians claim to have 'humanely deported' them, 25/01/2023, <https://khpg.org/en/1608811734>

80. Ecocide

“Ecocide is the willful destruction of ecology, of the environment, as a weapon of war,” said David Zierler, a historian of science and author of *The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam and the Scientists Who Changed the Way We Think About the Environment*. Throughout its full scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has committed acts of ecocide, which could scar Ukraine’s land for generations. The Ukrainian Government defines ecocide as the “mass destruction of flora and fauna, poisoning of air or water resources and also any other actions that may cause an environmental disaster.”



Deers at Sukholuchchya state residence, Kyiv region, Ukraine
© Diana Rudenko

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has highlighted that Ukraine has a high diversity of habitats and species. It is part of a broader region stretching across Central and Eastern Europe sometimes referred to as the “Green Heart of Europe.” This includes rare steppe ecosystems, coastal wetlands, alpine meadows, ancient beech forests and extensive peatlands. The country shares a part of the Danube Delta, the second-largest river delta of continental Europe and the largest reed-bed in the world. It includes vast pine, oak and birch forests and peat bogs in the Polysia region of northern Ukraine. The Carpathian mountains in the western part of the country are home to ancient beech forests and alpine meadows. Importantly, rare steppe ecosystems survive in the central and eastern parts of Ukraine. The territory of Ukraine contains habitats that are home to 35% of Europe's biodiversity, including 70,000 plant and animal species, many of them

rare, relict, and endemic. They include European bison and brown bears, lynx and wolves as well as sturgeon, the world's most threatened group of species.

Since the start of the full scale invasion of Ukraine up to 12 January 2023, Ukraine's Environment Ministry recorded almost 2,300 instances of environmental damage caused by the fighting. About 2.9 million hectares of the country's protected areas, home to thousands of species of plants and animals, by January 2023, were at risk of destruction, the Ministry estimated. Another 3 million hectares of forests, about a third of the total forests in Ukraine, by January 2023, had already been affected by the fighting. Of these, at least 23,300 hectares had been completely burned down. Illegal logging has been documented at many of the 18 national parks and nature reserves that have been illegally occupied by the Russians. The war, Ukrainian officials and scientists have said, is also to blame for the deaths of thousands of dolphins in the Black Sea, killed by mines and sonar from Russian submarines. Other dangers, notably the risk of damage to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, occupied by the Russians since early March 2022, still lurk.

By January 2023, the combined environmental damage caused by the invasion amounted to more than \$46 billion, for which we believe Russia should pay war reparations. Air pollution, at \$27 billion, accounted for the bulk of the sum. In only ten months of the full scale invasion, over 42 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, roughly the same as the annual emissions of Bulgaria, were released into the atmosphere as a result of the war, Ukraine's Environment Ministry stated. Forest fires caused by shelling, as well as Russian attacks on Ukrainian depots, had caused 680,000 tons of oil and fuel to go up in flames by January 2023, were mostly to blame for the emissions.

The war has poisoned large areas of Ukrainian farmland. Dangerous chemicals and fuels, released from exploded rockets and the tens of thousands of artillery shells that are being fired by both sides every day, have leaked into the ground along the length of the front line. Such contamination can harm local ecosystems and crops decades after the guns have gone quiet, says Olexiy Angurets, the author of a report on the war's impact on the environment. Damage to farmland had already cost Ukraine \$18 billion by January 2023, Ukraine's Environment Ministry said.

UK Friends of Ukraine believe the Russian state is guilty of ecocide, as Russia has taken deliberate aim at Ukraine's environment, including its rivers, forests, fields, fauna and animals.^{175 176 177}

81. The amount of environmental war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine

On 21 October 2023, Ukraine's then Economy Minister, Yuliia Svyrydenko said Ukraine had already documented 2,500 environmental war crimes committed by Russia since its full scale invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2022. "(Russians) brutally kill Ukrainians, they destroy our cities and villages, they destroy our forests, our great natural resources, fields and lakes," Svyrydenko said.¹⁷⁸

82. Destruction of the Kakhovska Dam



At 2:50 am on 6 June 2023, the Kakhovska Dam, built in 1956, was blown up by Russia according to the Ukrainian Government. Eyewitnesses told journalists that there was a

¹⁷⁵ The Economist, The war has devastated Ukraine's environment too, 12/01/2023, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/01/12/the-war-has-devastated-ukraines-environment-too>

¹⁷⁶ World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Assessing the environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine, accessed 10 01 2024, <https://wwfcee.org/our-offices/ukraine/assessing-the-environmental-impacts-of-the-war-in-ukraine>

¹⁷⁷ Clara Gutman-Argemi, Ashley Ahn and Brawley Benson, Ukrainians are accusing Russia of ecocide. What does that mean? 09/06/2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/09/ecocide-ukraine-russia-dam-war-crimes/>

¹⁷⁸ Kyiv Independent News Desk, Economy Minister: Russia has committed 2,500 crimes against the environment, 21/10/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/economy-minister-russia-has-committed-2-500-crimes-against-the-environment/>

deafening explosion in the early morning, with the sky turning white and windows breaking as far as 80 km away.

Russian soldier Yegor Guzenko, who was fighting in the Kherson region at the time said that Russia blew up the Dam to stop the Ukrainian Army advancing. He also said that the Russian Army should also blow up other dams on the Dnieper.

Ukraine's Centre for Strategic Communication has collected all the facts that indicate the involvement of the Russian occupation forces in the destruction of the Dam. Russian troops captured Nova Kakhovka and the Kakhovska Hydro Electric Power Plant (HPP) at the end of February 2022. They took personnel hostage and almost immediately interfered with the technical work of the facility. They blew up the structures of the North Crimean Canal to supply water to the occupied Crimea. According to the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the invaders mined the Kakhovska HPP back in April 2022. The next month, they began to discharge water from the reservoir, which even led to the flooding of the embankment in a neighbouring village. During the liberation of the right bank of the Kherson region, in August 2022, the Armed Forces of Ukraine put a bridge near the HPP out of order with high-precision strikes, without damaging the dam and other facilities of the HPP. On 5 September 2022, the occupiers turned off the Kakhovska HPP, as a result of which parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions were left without electricity. In February 2023, while maintaining control over the HPP, Russians deliberately discharged water from the reservoir to drain it and cause economic damage to Ukraine, as well as to leave Ukrainians without access to drinking water. After the partial destruction and deliberate opening of the locks of the Kakhovka HPP by Russians, Ukraine was losing thousands of cubic metres of water every day. The Ukrainian authorities called on the international community to put all available means of pressure on Russia to close the locks and restore hydraulic structures to prevent environmental and social catastrophe. The destruction of the Dam was carried out by blowing up a huge number of explosives placed by Russians in advance. The shelling by Ukrainian MLRS, which Russian propaganda used to disseminate disinformation about the destruction of the Dam, is incapable of inflicting such damage. In Autumn 2022, information appeared about Russia's intentions to blow up the Dam of the Kakhovska HPP to prevent the Summer-Autumn campaign of Ukraine's Army in the south of Ukraine. At that time, the Ukrainian authorities tried to draw the attention of the world community to this threat and its consequences. The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the European Council on 20 October 2022. Ukraine proposed to place an observation mission at the facility. Before fleeing from the right bank of the Dnipro, the Russian invaders carried out the deportation of the local population under the guise of "evacuation." They intimidated people with a possible blowing up of the Kakhovska

HPP. When retreating in November 2022, the invaders damaged the Dam, which is why the water level in the reservoir began to fall. After retreating to the left bank, Russians retained control over the main facilities of the Kakhovska HPP.

Article 56 of Protocol I of 1977 to Geneva Conventions 1949 states that “dams, dykes and nuclear electrical generating stations, shall not be made the object of attack, if such attack may cause the release of dangerous forces and consequent severe losses among the civilian population.” The destruction of the Dam by Russia was a key war crime that indiscriminately harmed Ukrainian civilians and Ukraine’s environment. It was also a form of state sponsored terrorism and ecocide.

The Kakhovska HPP is in the city of Nova Kakhovka in Ukraine's Kherson region. The city is currently under Russian occupation. The Kakhovska Dam is huge and is one of 6 dams that sits along the river, which stretches all the way from the very north of Ukraine into the sea in the south. The blown up Dam contained around 18 million cubic meters of water. The Kakhovska HPP provided electricity to over 3 million Ukrainians.

Images that circulated on social media on the day of the destruction of the Dam showed a massive breach in the Dam, with water already unleashed across the warzone and flooding downstream in the direction of Kherson.

Damage to Ukraine's Nova Khakovka dam



Satellite images show damage to roadway



Aerial video shows breach of larger sections of the dam

Source: Planet Labs, President Zelensky tweet



A CNN analysis of satellite imagery from Maxar showed the Dam was damaged just days before suffering the structural collapse. The satellite images showed the road bridge that ran across the Dam was intact in May 2023. However, imagery from 5 June 2023 showed a section of the same bridge missing. Analysis of lower-resolution satellite imagery suggested the loss of the bridge section took place between 1 June and 2 June 2023. CNN could not independently verify whether the damage to the road bridge played a part in the Dam's collapse, or whether it was destroyed in a deliberate attack.

The Dam is extremely important and serves a number of purposes. It holds back a vast reservoir that supplies water for a host of communities upstream. Farmers upstream of Kakhovka rely on the water to grow their crops, so its destruction could impact tens of

thousands of people if it recedes far enough and causes issues with irrigation for farmers and local residents.

The Dam is also a vital channel carrying water from the Dnipro river to Russian occupied Crimea, meaning water supplies there are likely to be affected. It was reported immediately after the destruction of the Dam that the water level at the North Crimean Canal was already starting to drop. Millions of people in Crimea were dependent on the Kakhovka reservoir for fresh water.

A Twitter thread on 6 June 2023 by Mustafa Nayyem, head of Ukraine's Agency for Restoration, explained the significance of Kakhovska Dam's destruction. As a comparison, Loch Ness contains more water than all English and Welsh lakes put together but is less than half the size of this water that was being released in the immediate aftermath of the Dam's destruction.

The power plant is a crucial component of Ukraine's energy infrastructure. According to Ukraine's state hydroelectric power company, the damage caused by the breach is "impossible to repair."

Mohammad Heidarzadeh, senior lecturer in the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the University of Bath, said the Kakhovska reservoir is one of the largest dams in the world in terms of capacity. "It is obvious that the failure of this Dam will definitely have extensive long-term ecological and environmental negative consequences not only for Ukraine but for neighbouring countries and regions," Heidarzadeh told Science Media Centre, adding that the Kakhovska Dam was an "embankment" Dam, which means it was made of gravel and rock with a clay core in the middle. The town of Nova Kakhovka in Kherson region is largely submerged, with the local soccer stadium being completely gone. "These types of dams are extremely vulnerable and are usually washed away quickly in case of a partial breach... a partial damage is sufficient to cause a complete collapse of the dam because water flow can easily wash away the soil materials of the dam body in just a few hours," Heidarzadeh added.

Ukraine's President's Office stated in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of the Dam that at least 150 tonnes of motor oil were released into the Dnipro River. According to the President's Office, there was a risk of 300 additional tons of machine oil leaking into the river.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called an emergency Security Council meeting in response to the destruction of the Dam. Zelenskyy said that "At 2:50am this

night, Russian terrorists carried out an internal detonation of the structures of the Kakhovska HPP. About 80 settlements are in the flooding zone. It was ordered to carry out evacuations from risk areas and to provide drinking water to all cities and villages that were supplied with water from the Kakhovska Reservoir. At the NSDC meeting, a set of international and security measures was agreed upon to hold Russia accountable for this terrorist attack." "The destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Plant Dam only confirms for the whole world that Russian forces must be expelled from every corner of Ukrainian land," the President of Ukraine said. "Not a single metre should be left to them, because they use every meter for terror. It's only Ukraine's victory that will return security," Zelenskyy added.

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83. Why Russia is responsible for the environmental devastation caused by the destruction of the Kakhovska Dam

"Russia is illegally invading and occupying Ukraine, therefore Russia is to blame for this, there's no point in even having that discussion, in my eyes," said Jonathon Turnbull to WIRED news in 2023. Turnbull is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oxford who has studied the ecological impacts of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The Dam's destruction is not a scorched-earth tactic he argues, but a "drowned earth" tactic.¹⁸³

84. Ecocide due to the destruction of the Kakhovska Dam

¹⁷⁹ British Friends of Ukraine, What we know about #Kakhovska Dam terrorist attack by Russia, 06/06/2023,

<https://www.facebook.com/britishfriendsofukraine/posts/pfbid0ZQMbcWGxSuLNqcXEyTY4p2WbHwUAQKE246g7nmL4h7w48JNbs737tbV8kFNQBB4Xl>

¹⁸⁰ Twitter/X, Mustafa Nayyem Twitter thread of 06/06/2023,

<https://twitter.com/mefimus/status/1665942435384508417>

¹⁸¹ Twitter/X, Oleksii Reznikov tweet of 06/07/2023,

<https://twitter.com/oleksiireznikov/status/1666081031697612801>

¹⁸² Centre for Strategic Communications, Who blew up Kakhovka HPP, 06/06/2023,

<https://spravdi.gov.ua/en/who-blew-up-kakhovka-hpp/>

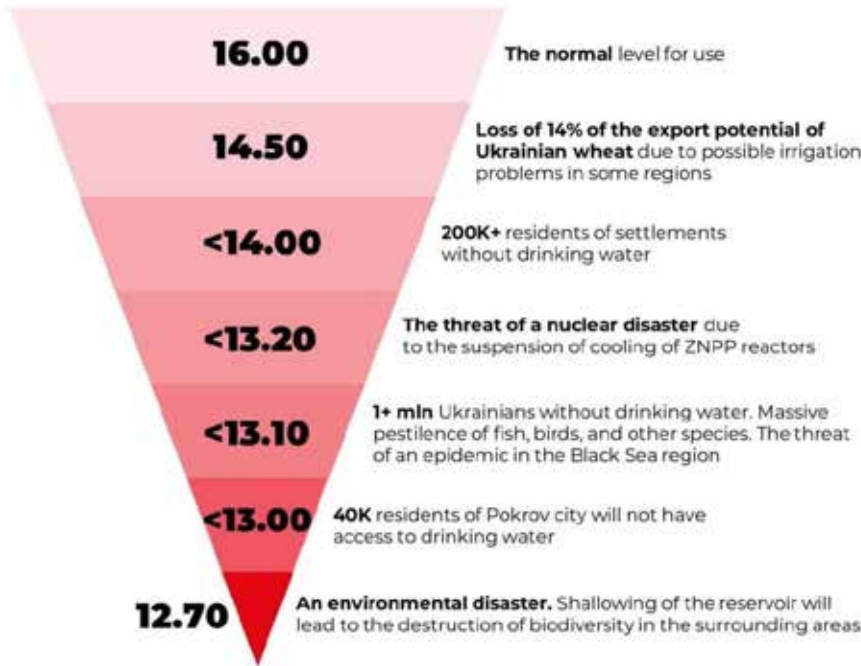
¹⁸³ Chris Baraniuk, The Kakhovka Dam collapse is an ecological disaster too, 08/06/2023,

<https://www.wired.com/story/ukraine-is-in-an-environmental-crisis-too/>

ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER DUE TO THE EXPLOSION OF THE KAKHOVKA HPP

TOP
LEAD

Levels of the utilization of the Kakhovka reservoir, water level mark, meters of the Baltic Normal Height System



Source: Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine

 t.me/uawarinfographics

The destruction of the Kakhovska Dam did not only cause a massive flood and a humanitarian crisis, but also unleashed a series of severe environmental impacts, which in our view make Russia guilty of ecocide and environmental terrorism. The breach of the Dam has disrupted the ecological balance of the area, leading to contamination, habitat destruction and devastating long term consequences for the region’s natural resources.



📷 'The collapse of the huge Nova Kakhovka dam unleashed a catastrophic flood that wrecked over 40 towns and villages and one of the world's most valuable agricultural regions.' Photograph: Daniel Carde/Zuma Press Wire/Shutterstock

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called the catastrophe an ecocide, in reference to Article 441 of Ukraine's criminal code, which defines it as the mass destruction of flora or fauna, poisoning of the atmosphere or water, or other large-scale environmental crimes. Zelenskyy called it an "environmental bomb of mass destruction."

1 million Ukrainians lost access to drinking water, the flood impacted 100,000 residents in 80 settlements and 140,000 were left without electricity as a result of Russia blowing up the dam, Ukraine's then Economy Minister, Yuliia Svyrydenko said on 21 October 2023. This included pollution of water and soil, death of animal and plant life and the drying of the Kakhovska Reservoir.

Heorhiy Veremiychyk, of the National Ecological Centre of Ukraine (NECU), said the impact of the Dam's destruction would be severe, believing it would range from the obliteration of habitats to the contamination of drinking water. In the path of the flood water lie homes, farms, wetlands, meadows and national parks. Much of the wildlife living in these habitats will probably be wiped out, Veremiychyk has stated.

The breach of the Dam unleashed a flood that submerged vast expanses of agricultural land, villages and towns downstream. As the floodwaters surged through the breached dam, they carried with them a significant quantity of industrial lubricant, estimated to be around 150 tonnes. This immense volume of hazardous substances resulted in the severe contamination of the river Dnipro, posing a grave environmental threat. Environmental experts believe that the presence of industrial lubricant in the river not only endangers aquatic ecosystems, but also raises concerns about the long-term consequences on the region's biodiversity and water quality. The toxic nature of the

lubricant can have detrimental effects on aquatic organisms, including fish, plants and other wildlife that depend on the river for their survival. The contamination could also disrupt the delicate balance of the ecosystem, leading to the decline of certain species, habitat degradation and long-lasting ecological damage.

By 7 June 2023, the flooding had already resulted in the loss of approximately 10,000 hectares of agricultural land, according to the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine. These once fertile lands for Ukrainian farmers on the right bank of the Dnipro in Kherson region are now expected to remain submerged, rendering them unusable for future agricultural activities.

The consequences extend beyond the direct impact on agricultural lands. With the destruction of the water reservoir, the availability of water for irrigation is severely compromised. This absence of irrigation water is expected to lead to the desertification of formerly productive lands.

Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food also reported on 7 June 2023, that the ecological disaster caused by Russia's destruction of the Dam disrupted 31 irrigation systems supplying fields in Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. These systems, which provided irrigation for half a million hectares in 2021, supported the production of four million tons of grain and oilseeds, with an estimated value of around \$1.5 billion.

The Dam played a vital role in regulating the flow of the river Dnipro, which supported a diverse range of habitats and species. The sudden release of floodwaters has led to the loss and alteration of critical habitats, such as wetlands, riparian zones and floodplain areas. These habitats are essential for the survival and reproduction of many species, including fish, birds, amphibians and plants. Fish species in the Dnipro River and its surrounding waterways are particularly affected. Stranded fish, such as the thousands seen in videos near the village of Maryanske, face a high risk of death for being cut off from their natural habitats. A video shared online by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Chief of Staff, Andriy Yermak, depicted what appeared to be thousands of wriggling fish stranded on dry ground near the village of Maryanske, which is north of the Kakhovska Reservoir. On 7 June 2023, Ukraine's Agricultural Ministry estimated that up to 95,000 metric tons of fish may be lost and warned against consuming fish swept downstream due to the potential for contamination and the risk of botulism. Birds that rely on the waterways and wetlands, reptiles like the Caspian whip snake and vulnerable mammals such as Nordmann's mouse were also at risk.

In a lengthy blog post, the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG) described how dozens of fish species were likely affected by the destruction of the dam. It included the beautiful Eurasian spoonbill. “These animals,” the authors of the blog post wrote, “have no means of survival in the turbulent flow.” Biologists with UNCG also expect large losses of endemic plants and important species such as giant oaks.

The receding waters also exposed bird habitat on islands in the reservoir to predators, which could jeopardise the nests of yellow bittern (*Ardeola ralloides*) and other rare species. Important wetlands along the reservoir, including the Velyki and Mali Kuchuhury archipelago could suffer from desiccation and ecologists are concerned that invasive plants, such as ragweed and goldenrod, will colonise newly exposed sediment.

The potential economic loss to Ukraine's fishing industry in the region could reach Hr 4 billion (\$108 million), while preliminary estimates of 7 June 2023 indicated that the economic losses from the harm caused to the region's biodiversity could amount to Hr 10.5 billion (\$284 million).

The Dam played a crucial role in supplying water to communities upstream. Its breach disrupted the normal flow of water, potentially leading to water shortages for residential, agricultural and industrial purposes. The loss of a reliable water source can have far-reaching consequences, affecting daily life, sanitation and economic activities in the affected areas. After the destruction of the Dam, the water source had by 7 June 2023 been "effectively cut off" for 94% of the irrigation systems in Kherson region, 74% in Zaporizhia region and 30% in Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine's Ministry of Agriculture stated.

“The destruction of the Kakhovska (Dam) will lead to the fact that fields in southern Ukraine next year might turn into deserts. Not only will farmers and water users suffer without the Kakhovska reservoir, but sources of drinking water for settlements have disappeared, said Ukraine's Ministry of Agriculture.

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Dam, The Black Sea in the southern Odesa region was turning into a "garbage dump and an animal cemetery" as house fragments, furniture, mines and ammunition are floating in the water after Russia's blowing up of the Dam, Ukraine's State Border Guard said on 10 June 2023. They added that a fish

plague had also begun. "The consequences of the ecocide are terrible," Ukraine's State Border Guard said in a Facebook post.^{184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191}

85. Environmental destruction in the city of Chernihiv

By late August 2022, the city of Chernihiv's streets, fields and forests provide a grim catalogue of the many types of environmental damage inflicted by Russian troops and of the contamination caused by different weapons systems. The city is within a few dozen kilometres of the border with Belarus, where Russian troops massed for the invasion and from where they launched missiles. It endured a 41 day siege with attacks that tainted water, air and soil, destroyed natural resources and damaged a key water treatment plant. Some of the effects lasted only hours, while others will be felt for years and yet more could linger permanently without clean-up efforts.

At the Epicentr K building supplies superstore that was badly hit then went up in flames, the acrid smell of burnt plastic still lingered months later. Chemicals released in smoke settled across the city and other toxins probably leached into groundwater from the burnt ruins after months of rain.

There is medium term environmental damage at a key water treatment plant in the city, damaged in repeated shelling, so by the end of August 2022 it no longer had the capacity to treat all the sewage piped in after heavy rains.

¹⁸⁴ Lei Nguyen, The environmental impact of the Kakhovka dam explosion in Ukraine, 28/06/2023, <https://earth.org/the-environmental-impact-of-the-kakhovka-dam-explosion-in-ukraine/>

¹⁸⁵ Kate Tsurkan, Ministry: 10,000 hectares of arable land expected to be flooded in Kherson Oblast, 07/06/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/agriculture-ministry-10-000-hectares-of-land-in/>

¹⁸⁶ Julian Borger, Fields of southern Ukraine 'could turn into deserts' after Dam destruction, 07/06/2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/07/ukraine-dam-flood-kakhovka-reservoir-destroyed-kherson-oblast-floodwaters-peak-dnipro-river>

¹⁸⁷ Erik Stokstad, Destruction of Ukrainian Dam threatens nature reserves, rare species, 09/06/2023, <https://www.science.org/content/article/destruction-ukrainian-dam-threatens-nature-reserves-rare-species>

¹⁸⁸ Chris Baraniuk, The Kakhovka Dam collapse is an ecological disaster, 08/06/2023, <https://www.wired.com/story/ukraine-is-in-an-environmental-crisis-too/>

¹⁸⁹ Hannah Thomas-Peter, Ukraine war: 'Ecological catastrophe' - Five environmental impacts of Nova Kakhovka Dam collapse, 07/06/2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-war-ecological-catastrophe-five-environmental-impacts-of-nova-kakhovka-dam-collapse-12898154>

¹⁹⁰ Kyiv Independent News Desk, Economy Minister: Russia has committed 2,500 crimes against the environment, 21/10/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/economy-minister-russia-has-committed-2-500-crimes-against-the-environment/>

¹⁹¹ Asami Terajima, Ukrainian border guards: Black Sea in Odesa Oblast turning into 'garbage dump and animal cemetery', 10/06/2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/ukrainian-border-guards/>

A city oil depot, set ablaze in a bombing, burned for days, causing breathing problems and releasing chemicals that will have settled on the ground and sunk into water supplies.



Environmentalist and politician Hanna Hopko surveys the damage to a tree in a forest outside Chernihiv caused by Russian attacks during the 41-day siege of the city. Photograph: Misha Lubarsky/The Observer

There are trees and whole areas of woodland destroyed by shelling and bombs that will take decades to grow back. Their ecosystems will also need years to recover, meaning Russia has robbed the people of Chernihiv of an important resource.



Kateryna Polyanska, an ecologist and analyst, collects a soil sample from a bomb crater outside the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv. Photograph: Misha Lubarsky/The Observer

In Chernihiv there are also shell craters in the forest that contain clues to the deadly long-term legacy of even those munitions that did not kill or injure anyone. “There are toxic materials in a crater after the explosion,” said Kateryna Polyanska, an analyst with the activist group Environment People Law. “A lot are landing in agricultural fields and these can migrate through the food chain through agricultural production. Also, these elements can leach through the ground soil to our rivers, then go to our bodies.”¹⁹²

86. Pillaging of Askania-Nova Nature Reserve



Askania-Nova Nature Reserve (Photo: Асканія-Нова / Facebook)

Russian occupiers stole animals from the Askania-Nova nature reserve in Kherson region, according to the Ukrainian National Resistance Center (NRC) on 7 November 2023. “The occupying administration is transporting these animals to the Safari Park Zoo in Krasnodar, Russia,” the NRC said. The NRC went on to say that “This act is being carried out under the pretext of a “cooperation agreement,” which is invalid because it is signed by a Russian puppet who lacks legitimate authority as the reserve's Director. In reality, the enemy is simply stealing animals and destroying a unique nature reserve.”

Additionally, the NRC reported that Russian military personnel had been observed on the reserve's premises.

¹⁹² Emma Graham-Harrison, Toxins in soil, blasted forests - Ukraine counts costs of Putin's 'ecocide', 27/08/2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/27/destroyed-nature-ukrainians-race-to-gather-evidence-of-putins-ecocide>

In a previous report, activists from the UAnimals movement said that the occupiers had effectively established their own administration at the Askania-Nova biosphere reserve.

This inhumane treatment is nothing new from Russian forces in Ukraine. In March 2023, the Investigative Journalism Centre, citing Russian registration documents, reported that the Russian occupiers were planning to shoot wild animals in the Dzharylhach National Nature Park, which is located in the occupied part of Kherson region.¹⁹³

87. Oskil downstream from the Donets River

In the Spring of 2022, to prevent Russian troops from crossing the Donets River, downstream from the Oskil, Ukrainian forces blew up the reservoir's floodgates. The move helped slow the Russian advance, but it also spelled doom for the Oskil. The water level plunged, exposing great swathes of the reservoir's bed. Birds that once nested in the area disappeared. Some 2 million fish are thought to have died. Local wells have dried up. All this happened due to Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine, which hasn't just terrorised Ukraine's people, but its environment as well.¹⁹⁴

88. Ecological destruction caused by fire

Fires sparked by attacks had damaged over 100,000 hectares of natural ecosystems by the end of 2022 according to satellite data from the European Forest Fire Information System. The State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine had recorded 78 times more fire incidents than during the same period last year by the end of 2022.¹⁹⁵

89. Protected areas of Ukraine's environment devastated by the war

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, by 30 April 2022, at least 900 protected areas together covering 1.2 million hectares or 30% of all protected areas in Ukraine, had been affected by shelling, bombing, oil pollution and military maneuvers.¹⁹⁶

90. Destruction of Ukraine's Emerald Network

¹⁹³ New Voice of Ukraine, Russian occupiers pillage Askania-Nova Nature Reserve, committing ecocide, 07/11/2023, <https://english.nv.ua/nation/russian-occupiers-pillage-askania-nova-nature-reserve-committing-ecocide-50366357.html>

¹⁹⁴ The Economist, The war has devastated Ukraine's environment too, 12/01/2023, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/01/12/the-war-has-devastated-ukraines-environment-too>

¹⁹⁵ WWF, Assessing the environmental impact of the war in Ukraine, accessed 10/01/2024, <https://wwfcee.org/our-offices/ukraine/assessing-the-environmental-impacts-of-the-war-in-ukraine>

¹⁹⁶ WWF, Assessing the environmental impact of the war in Ukraine, accessed 10/01/2024, <https://wwfcee.org/our-offices/ukraine/assessing-the-environmental-impacts-of-the-war-in-ukraine>

The Emerald Network is a European-wide protected area network established to protect species and habitats that are threatened to become extinct on a continental scale. This network is designed to comply with the Bern Convention requirements. According to the plan, following Ukraine's joining the EU, the Emerald Network will receive considerable funding for the protection and restoration of species and habitats in its areas. Currently, the Network consists of 271 sites, covering 10% of Ukraine's area.

Some territories of the Emerald Network are under threat of complete destruction. According to Oleksii Vasyliuk of the Ukrainian Conservation Group, an NGO, a fifth of the country's 377 Emerald network sites protected under the Bern Convention have been degraded by military action. These include many unique steppe habitats of the highest nature value as well as the dense forests growing along the Siverskyi Donets River, which provide shelter, food and nesting sites for protected birds of prey. As troops concentrate here, they jeopardise the integrity of this biodiversity hotspot.¹⁹⁷

91. Destruction of valuable wetland areas

As of 30 April 2022, At least 14 Ramsar sites, valuable wetland areas that have been internationally recognised according to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, were under threat of destruction. This included the expansive shallow marine lagoons and the biggest island of the Black Sea in Karkinitzka and Dzharylgatska bays, the Dnipro river delta, a refuge for nature in a region known for its huge agricultural fields and the bogs, meanders and natural meadows of the Desna river floodplains in the Sumy region.¹⁹⁸

92. Damaging of Ukraine's farmland

Ukraine is a very large agrarian country, where the largest part of its economy consisted of the production of and export of agricultural products. Agricultural land occupies 70.5% of the country's total area, 57% of which is tillable land (up to 86% in some regions). The combat activities that have taken place in Ukraine have significantly damaged Ukraine's fields for ploughing and other mechanised farming activity, as well as brought about long-term chemical and biological contamination of the fertile soils. Thousands of fired shells, detonated and burned military equipment, abandoned in the fields and plantations, will remain as a massive and unlimited source of contamination

¹⁹⁷ WWF, Assessing the environmental impact of the war in Ukraine, accessed 10/01/2024, <https://wwfcee.org/our-offices/ukraine/assessing-the-environmental-impacts-of-the-war-in-ukraine>

¹⁹⁸ WWF, Assessing the environmental impact of the war in Ukraine, accessed 10/01/2024, <https://wwfcee.org/our-offices/ukraine/assessing-the-environmental-impacts-of-the-war-in-ukraine>

of Ukraine's soils and groundwater with iron, aluminium, copper and other heavy metals and their compounds for hundreds of years.¹⁹⁹

93. Air pollution

Military activities that have been causing fires on industrial and infrastructural objects, the residential sector and natural ecosystems. Emissions of volatile compounds as a result of damage to industrial objects, have emitted large quantities of greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the air. According to preliminary estimates of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, due to the increased consumption of fuel and lubricants by military equipment between the beginning of the full scale almost 4 million tons of carbon dioxide were thought to have been emitted into the atmosphere over the first 150 days of the full scale invasion of Ukraine.

According to the official data of the Armed Forces of Ukraine published by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, as of 12 October 2022, the emissions of pollutants into the air were recorded as follows:

- Combustion of petroleum products – 499,473 tonnes of combustion products;
- Forest fires – 43,486,822 tonnes;
- Fire of other objects – 5,847,897 tonnes.²⁰⁰

94. Environmental Impact of mines

By 2 March 2023, 20% of Ukraine was mined. Moreover, for the same time period, 33% of Ukrainian fields that were previously cultivated and sown are located on this territory. Today, this area is an ideal springboard for dangerous alien plants. It should be understood that even after the victory, even after demining (which will take tens of years), it will not be possible to grow anything on this land for a very long time.

¹⁹⁹ Oleksiy Angurets, Pavlo Khazan, Kateryna Kolesnikova, Maksym Kushch, Cernochova Marcela and Havranek Miroslav, 20/03/2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376981280_Environmental_consequences_of_Russian_war_in_Ukraine_2022

²⁰⁰ Oleksiy Angurets, Pavlo Khazan, Kateryna Kolesnikova, Maksym Kushch, Cernochova Marcela and Havranek Miroslav, 20/03/2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376981280_Environmental_consequences_of_Russian_war_in_Ukraine_2022

At least 200,000 square kilometres of land will need to be demined in Ukraine and most of this territory will not be suitable for agricultural work.²⁰¹

95. Environmental impact of rockets

One of the biggest threats not only to the population of Ukraine, but also to the entire ecosystem is rockets. During flight, they emit nitrogen, water vapor, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and brown gases. Also, the rocket flight destroys the corridors of migratory birds. In addition, Russian missiles sometimes hit critical infrastructure, such as oil depots or factories full of chemical substances. All this gets into the atmosphere, water and soil.

Rockets and projectiles that are fired in daily terrorist attacks by Russia all over the territory of Ukraine cause damage at the site of impact. During the explosion, iron, copper and sulfur are emitted. It can take years, sometimes decades, for the soil on where a projectile explodes to recover. As a result, environmentalists forbid the use of an area after an explosion.²⁰²

96. Economic cost of Russia's ecocide

According to the Ukrainian state website EcoZagroza, as of 2 March 2023, Russia has caused enormous losses to Ukraine. The website states that Russia would have to compensate almost Hr.987 billion (\$27 billion) for the damage caused to Ukraine's air alone. If we are talking about the soil, then they estimate the amount of damage is Hr.843 billion (\$23 billion). However, according to ecologists, the real damage significantly exceeds these figures and it is impossible to calculate them.

97. Economic impact of Russia's state sponsored terrorism in Ukraine

Ukraine's economy has been absolutely devastated by Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine and the various forms of Russian state sponsored terrorism, we have outlined in the report.

One area the economic impact has been most acute is Ukraine's infrastructure, which has been indiscriminately bombarded by Russia in acts of state terrorism since the full scale invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2022. The Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) has estimated that as of 1 September 2023, the total documented direct damage

²⁰¹ Daryna Kolomiiets, Eco-acopalyse now: How Russia is destroying Ukraine's environment, 02 01 2023, <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/13707>

²⁰² Daryna Kolomiiets, Eco-acopalyse now: How Russia is destroying Ukraine's environment, 02 01 2023, <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/13707>

to Ukraine's infrastructure caused by a full-scale Russian invasion has reached \$151.2 billion (at replacement cost). The ongoing invasion and occupation continues to result in the destruction of residential buildings, educational institutions and infrastructure, leading to an increase in the overall damage.

**Total estimate of infrastructure damage by industry
in monetary terms, as of September 1st, 2023**

Property type	Damage, \$ billion
Housing	55,9
Infrastructure	36,6
Assets of enterprises, industry	11,4
Education	10,1
Energy	8,8
Agriculture and land resources	8,7
Forests	4,5
Transport	3,1
Healthcare	2,9
Utilities	2,7
Trade	2,6
Culture, sport, tourism	2,4
Administrative buildings	0,5
Digital infrastructure	0,5
Social sphere	0,2
Financial sector	0,04
Total	151,2

As of the beginning of September 2023, the largest share of damages remains within Ukraine's housing sector, amounting to \$55.9 billion. In total, by September 2023, 167,200 housing units had been destroyed or damaged as a result of hostilities, comprising 147,800 private houses, 19,100 apartment buildings and an additional 3,500 dormitories. The regions of Ukraine most severely affected by the destruction of housing stock include Chernihiv, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson Kyiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv and Zaporizhia.

In second and third place in terms of damages are Ukraine's infrastructure and industry sectors, with \$36.6 billion and \$11.4 billion in damages, respectively caused by Russia's

full scale invasion up to 1 September 2023. Since the start of the full scale invasion up to early September 2023, 18 airports, civil airfields, at least 344 bridges and overpasses and over 25,000 km of state and local highways and communal roads have been damaged. Damages in the industry sector encompass at least 426 large and medium sized private enterprises and state-owned companies that have been damaged or destroyed due to the war.

Ukraine's education sphere, according to experts from the KSE Institute's "Russia will pay" project, has been significantly affected. As of the beginning of September 2023, the war has caused \$10.1 billion in damages in this area, marking an increase of over \$400 million compared to June 2023. The total number of damaged and destroyed educational facilities has exceeded 3,500, including more than 1,700 secondary education institutions, over 1,000 preschools and 586 higher education institutions. According to Ukraine's regional military administrations, the highest number of destroyed and damaged educational institutions is found in the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Mykolaiv and Zaporizhia regions.

Ukraine's healthcare sector has also been economically devastated. According to KSE, direct losses in the healthcare sector continue to escalate, estimated at \$2.9 billion as of 1 September 2023. In total, the war up to early September had led to the destruction or damage of 1,223 medical facilities, including 384 hospitals and 352 dispensaries.²⁰³

98. Cultural War Crimes



²⁰³ Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), The total amount of damage caused to the infrastructure of Ukraine due to the war reaches \$151.2 billion - Estimate as of September 1, 2023, 03/10/2023, <https://kse.ua/about-the-school/news/the-total-amount-of-damage-caused-to-the-infrastructure-of-ukraine-due-to-the-war-reaches-151-2-billion-estimate-as-of-september-1-2023/>

"Attacking a country's culture is to attack its humanity. Historic monuments, works of art and archaeological sites, known as cultural property, are protected by the rules of war," stated the International Committee of the Red Cross (which is guided by principles, including the Geneva Convention 1949) in 2017. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in 2014, it has had terrible consequences for Ukraine and its people, including massive damage to the entire Ukrainian culture sector, due to cultural war crimes committed by the Russian state.

Heritage, be it in the form of monuments, customs, stories, songs, old photos or in other forms, constitutes an important part of our personal and national identity. This includes who we think we are, our language, the groups we associate ourselves with and whom we consider kin, friend or foe. Our sensation that we share views about heritage with others gives us the feeling that we have a shared identity and makes us feel we belong somewhere. Therefore, Ukraine's heritage through its culture is key to Ukrainian national identity and the nation's national cohesion. After all, heritage is the cornerstone of who we are, how we feel about ourselves and our affiliations.

Heritage that is shared with others gains in importance and influence. If a society is a group of people that is conscious of having at least one thing in common, then a society that identifies itself as a group because of its shared heritage would consider that heritage as crucial for its existence. National heritage becomes a crucial reference point for all members of that nation, none more so than in Ukraine.

Consequently, the destruction or damaging of a site of national importance or of a site that has religious importance is not only an attack on humanity's treasures. It is not only an affront to the international community, the treasures of human genius as some organisations would like to put it, or our self-indulgence. It is an irreparable damage to the social groups that are defined by these sites, in the case of Russia's cultural war crimes, it often causes irreparable damage to Ukrainians. It is a destruction of the very foundations of their identity and therefore of their being.

Considering that heritage sites often live for thousands of years, the systematic destruction is something that must be on the one hand seen in its totality (like the effects of hundreds of years of natural erosion, but also be recognised as a conscious, systematic attack against the principles at the foundations of humanity. It is not only wiping people from the face of the earth. It is making sure they never come back. It is making sure that not even shadows exist in the underworld. It is an attempt to wipe out Ukraine's national identity.

Since its invasion of Ukraine first began in 2014, Russia has tried to undermine and wipe out Ukraine's vibrant and independent culture built on its unique history. Ukraine's Government has demonstrated with clear and credible evidence that Russian state forces have targeted Ukrainian churches, libraries and looted the country's most important museum. They have sought to replace Ukraine's culture with enforced Russification on the altar of Russian imperialism, as those running the Russian state and enforcing its mandate see Ukraine as part of Russia and Russian culture. Cultural war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine, amongst other crimes, include the harming and destruction of important Ukrainian cultural artefacts and sites by the Russian occupying forces such as museums, theatres, churches, libraries and art galleries. Although individuals are not being targeted physically in this type of war crime, they are psychologically and cultural buildings and artefacts are being targeted. UK Friends of Ukraine believe this systemic targeting of Ukraine's cultural buildings is a form of cultural terrorism.

From the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the importance of protecting the country's cultural heritage was obvious to some in the international community. "We must safeguard the cultural heritage in Ukraine, as a testimony of the past but also as a catalyst for peace and cohesion for the future," Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of UNESCO, the UN's cultural protection agency, said at the start of the full scale invasion of invasion of Ukraine.

The deliberate cultural war crimes being committed by Russia in Ukraine in our view is tantamount to what is called cultural genocide, which is defined as attempting to eradicate from the face of this planet the testimony of a people, of a religious group.

1 month after the full scale invasion began on 24 February 2022, the effects were being reported, as workers went on desperate rescue missions. In Lviv, at Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum, the country's largest art museum, staff were seen struggling to move heavy baroque pieces and a giant piece of religious art, the 18th Century Bohorodchany iconostasis, to safety. BBC News reporters saw empty display cabinets at the Museum of the History of Religion and at the Latin Cathedral, sculptures were wrapped in foam and plastic to protect them from the threat of shrapnel.

On 19th October 2022, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, imposed martial law in 4 Ukrainian territories illegally annexed by Russia, shortly after illegally annexing 4 Ukrainian regions on 30 September 2022. According to The Art Newspaper, when he did that, he also "explicitly 'legalised' the looting of the country's cultural heritage in the name of 'preservation'". Another decree signed by Putin on the same day as the declaration of martial law announced the introduction of "special measures" in Crimea,

illegally annexed by Russia in 2014. A Russian plan to “evacuate” Crimean museums became known before the publication of Putin's decrees of 19 October 2022. On 15 October 2022, the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture declared that removing the most valuable objects from the museums of Crimea and other occupied territories was in blatant violation of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Shortly before December 2022, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy tweeted after a phone call with the Ecumenical Patriarch, the first among equals of the Eastern Orthodox Church, that more than 200 churches had been destroyed from 24 February 2022 to late November 2022, by Russia. Sadly, that number has risen significantly since.

Damage to Ukraine's cultural sites has been extensive, according to UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation). As of 20 December 2023, UNESCO has verified damage to 334 sites since 24 February 2022, 125 religious sites, 147 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 29 museums, 19 monuments, 13 libraries and 1 archive. This includes 21 damaged sites in Chernihiv region, 1 damaged sites in Dnipropetrovsk region, 85 damaged sites in Donetsk region, 11 damaged sites in Kherson region, 39 damaged sites in Kyiv region, 56 damaged sites in Kharkiv region, 34 damaged sites in Luhansk region, 1 damaged site in Lviv region,, 8 damaged sites in Mykolaiv region, 49 damaged sites in Odesa region, 12 damaged sites in Sumy region, 2 damaged sites in Vinnytsia region, 12 damaged sites in Zaporizhia region and 3 damaged sites in Zhytomyr region.

Cultural heritage sites damaged by Russia include the house of the 19th century Ukrainian philanthropist Vasyl Tarnovskyi in Chernihiv, the museum of famous artist Maria Prymachenko near Kyiv and the hermitage of Sviatohirsk Lavra, the largest wooden church in Ukraine, in the Donetsk region.

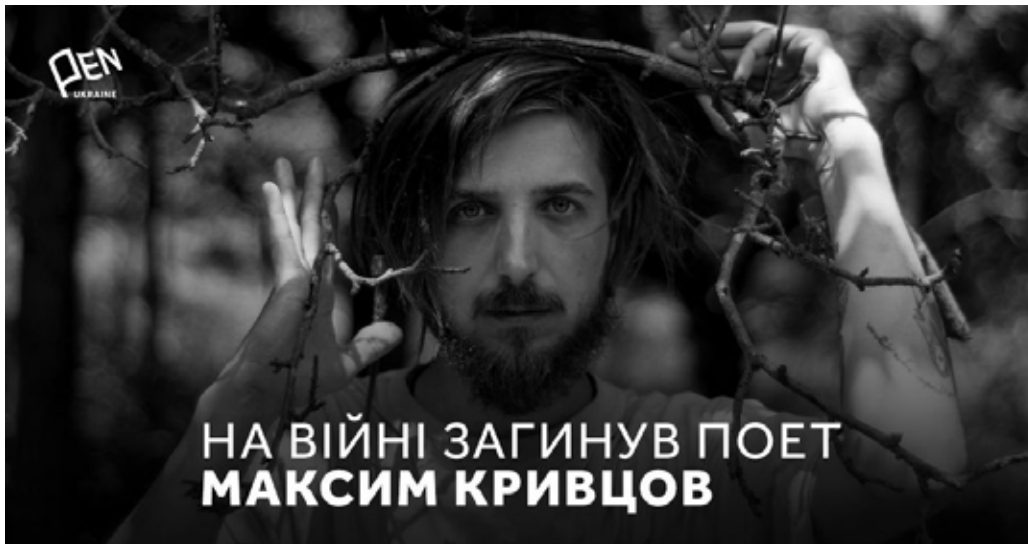
As of mid-December 2022, according to Ukrainian Ministry of Culture data, 1,132 items of cultural infrastructure had been damaged with 403 completely destroyed. These include architectural monuments, museums, schools, universities and cultural centres. The figures for the same time period demonstrated that the regions of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, Sumy and Kherson had been badly affected, with Donetsk the hardest hit, as 80% of its cultural infrastructure has been damaged.

According to the Wounded Culture Project set up by “Territory of Terror” Memorial Museum, the Foundation of Cultural Heritage of Ukraine,” Aspichi In and the Museum Crisis Centre, official data, since 24 February 2022 has highlighted that 500 cultural

objects and institutions had been damaged, including more than 30 museums. In our view this is almost certainly an underestimate, given it is very hard or impossible to record data from areas occupied by Ukraine and areas of heavy hostility.

According to Yaroslava Savchenko, a culture expert at the Foundation for the Support of Fundamental Research NGO, nobody knows the exact amount of cultural heritage destroyed in Ukraine, partly because records have yet to be digitally updated. What we do know is that Russia has been committing cultural war crimes on an industrial scale in Ukraine. ^{204 205 206 207 208 209 210}

99. Impact of Russian war crimes on those working in Ukraine' cultural sector



²⁰⁴ Dr. Evangelos Kyriakidis, The destruction of heritage, in Ukraine and elsewhere, is an extreme form of affront to humanity, 02/09/2022, <https://heritagemanagement.org/the-destruction-of-heritage-in-ukraine/>

²⁰⁵ Beverley D'Silva, The battle for Ukraine's cultural gems, 22/08/2023, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20230821-the-fight-to-save-ukraines-cultural-spaces-and-heritage>

²⁰⁶ Konstantin Akinsha, Vladimir Putin's martial law decree has given Russian forces 'legal' cover to loot art in Ukraine, 28/10/2022,

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/10/28/vladimir-putin-martial-law-ukraine-looting>

²⁰⁷ Museum Crisis Centre, The Wounded Culture Project, Accessed 08/01/2024,

<https://www.mccukraine.com/wounded-culture>

²⁰⁸ Tetyana Kurmanova, Ukraine: War crimes against cultural heritage, 03/01/2023,

<https://iwpr.net/global-voices/ukraine-war-crimes-against-cultural-heritage>

²⁰⁹ Bill Whitaker, Ukraine accuses Russia of looting museums, destroying churches as part of heritage war, 12/11/2023,

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-accuses-russia-museum-looting-church-destruction-60-minutes-transcript/>

²¹⁰ UNESCO, Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO, 20/12/2023,

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco>

Impersonal statistics do not tell us of the personal impact or reflect the deep and life-changing impact of this war on individuals, like Maksym Kryvtsov, a young Ukrainian poet. People like Maksym Kryvtsov were the cultural heartbeat of Ukraine. Ukrainian poet and soldier Maksym Kryvtsov, was killed on the front line, the writers' association PEN Ukraine said in a statement of 7 January 2024. Kryvtsov was among the participants of the EuroMaidan Revolution, one of the most crucial events in modern Ukraine's history that ended the ruling of pro-Kremlin Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in 2013-2014, PEN Ukraine reported. He then joined Ukraine's Armed Forces as a volunteer after Russia started the war in Ukraine's Donbas. In 2022, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Kryvtsov "returned to the front line, where he published his book 'Poems from the Loophole,'" PEN Ukraine wrote. In late December 2023, PEN Ukraine included the publication in its list of best Ukrainian books of 2023.

Numerous other Ukrainian who have contributed to Ukraine's vibrant independent culture have also had their lives cut short by Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine. Volodymyr Vakulenko, a talented young Ukrainian writer, was murdered during the Russian occupation of Izium. As of 25 October 2023, 2 lists compiled by PEN Ukraine suggested that the full scale invasion of Ukraine had already claimed the lives of at least 65 Ukrainian cultural figures. Some were murdered as civilians in missile attacks or during Russian occupation, others after joining the Ukrainian Army to defend their country.

All of these deaths have contributed to what experts believe is Russia' campaign against Ukrainian culture, which in our view is cultural terrorism. "(Russian President Vladimir) Putin has said that Ukraine has no right to exist as a state, so they (Russians) are trying to erase all evidence of this existence," Olha Honchar, Director of Lviv's Memorial Museum of Totalitarian Regimes, told the Kyiv Independent in late October 2023. Honchar added that "If you have a pro-Ukrainian position, engage in culture, language, literature, history, then you are a target for destruction on the occupiers' lists."



Ukrainian conductor from Kherson Yuri Kerpatenko holds a concert of his Gilea chamber ensemble. (Pavlo Blahyi/Facebook)

Before he was murdered, Kherson locals knew Yuri Kerpatenko, a conductor at the Kherson Region's Philharmonic, as a man of principle. "If he didn't like something, he would voice it strongly," Kerpatenko's colleague Maksym Lozovyi told the Kyiv Independent. He thinks that may have been the case when the Russian occupiers asked Kerpatenko to hold a concert at the philharmonic to create the illusion of a "thriving" cultural scene under what was then a 7 month-long occupation. According to local authorities, 46 year old Kerpatenko repeatedly refused to cooperate with the invaders until one day, Russian servicemen shot him through the closed door of his apartment.



Ukrainian film editor Viktor Onysko (front) talks to his colleagues during the shooting of Roman Bondarchuk's movie "The Editorial Office" in Kherson Oblast. (Darya Averchenko)

Ukrainian film editor Viktor Onysko was also killed. When Russia poured thousands of its troops into Ukraine, the 40 year old Kyiv native joined the Ukrainian Army, feeling it was unfair to wait for others to stop the invasion. He served on the front line near the city of Soledar in Donetsk region. On 30 December 2022, the film editor turned company commander with the call sign "Tarantino" was withdrawing his troops from the area when Russian forces spotted their positions, opening heavy fire and killing Onysko.



"Chevona Kalyna" collage by Liubov Panchenko. (60s. The Lost Treasures)

Liubov Panchenko belonged to the Sixtiers, a Ukrainian dissident movement that revived the country's culture during the Khrushchev Thaw. The influential though not very well known artist and fashion designer was surrounded by prominent intellectuals of her time, like Alla Horska and Viacheslav Chornovil, most of whom fell victim to Soviet repression. Regardless of what she was working on, costumes, illustrations, fabric collages, embroidered towels, or shirts, Panchenko always relied on Ukrainian tradition, using national ornaments and other authentic elements. A native of Bucha, a suburb just west of Kyiv, Panchenko faced Russian occupation alone at the age of 84, deprived of social services available to her before the invasion. When a projectile landed in her yard, a neighbour came to help and found the woman "beyond exhausted" from a month of hunger, said the head of the Ukrainian Sixtiers Dissident Movement Museum Olena Lodzyska, who knew Panchenko personally. After Ukraine liberated Bucha, Panchenko was hospitalised but died shortly thereafter in April 2022. "What we saw at the hospital was a skeleton covered with skin," Lodzyska told the Kyiv Independent in late October 2023.



Ukrainian ballet dancer Oleksandr Shapoval plays the role of Espada from "Don Quixote" on the stage of Ukraine's National Opera and Ballet Theater in Kyiv. (National Opera)

In 2021, after almost two decades at Ukraine's National Opera and Ballet Theatre, award winning ballet dancer Oleksandr Shapoval finished his career on stage and focused on teaching. The 47 year-old Kyiv native felt he could not stand aside, trading sophisticated choreography classes for the position of a grenade launcher in an assault squad in Ukraine's Territorial Army. He died near the Donetsk region when he was evacuating his fellow Ukrainian soldiers.

Olha Pavlenko from the region of Kirovohrad was murdered in a Russian terrorist attack aged 38. She was a talented artist, cook and researcher of Ukrainian cuisine. Pavlenko's most notable achievement was what she called "the red book of Ukrainian culinary art," preserving authentic recipes from across the country. She spent two years creating the book "Live Ukrainian Cuisine," based on the findings from her expeditions, archive records, and folklore, the artist's mother, Raisa Pavlenko, told the Kyiv Independent. At the start of the full scale invasion of Ukraine Olha and her daughter evacuated to the U.S., but in April 2022, they returned home to the village of Uspenka, for several months, during which she planned to work on the book's second edition. On 27 June 2022, she went to pick up a new phone from the nearest shopping mall, Kremenchuk's Amstor, right before a Russian Kh-22 cruise missile hit the building. Olha's body was identified by DNA testing and a piece of green dyed hair.



Artist Yulia Danylevska's tile "stories" vividly convey life under occupation in Kherson (Credit: Yulia Danylevska)

People like Yulia Danylevska were also the lifeblood of Ukraine's cultural sector and have had their lives torn asunder by Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine. She documented life under occupation of Kherson city before it was liberated, by drawing with permanent marker pens on white tiles. Her stories are colourful, dramatic renditions of her observations, of Mariupol, looters, a burning house and other wartime symbolism. "I didn't want to paint piles of corpses... so I decided to show subtle moments that could remain unnoticed compared to the other crimes of the Russian army," she posted. In one of her artworks, "the occupier's hand removes a gold earring from the ear of a

Ukrainian woman". As fighting in Kherson intensified, she continued to work, even through a 26 day blackout. "I am not afraid, even though people are being kidnapped in Kherson, and not all of them come back," she wrote in the early months, adding "for the occupants, I am a 'no-name', they are not aware of the modern art." But when the block in which she and her husband lived was badly bombed, they decided they had to leave. "I was very scared, life was too dangerous." In essence she was terrorised to leave, by Russia's acts of state terrorism deliberately and indiscriminately targeting Ukrainian civilians. By late August 2023, she was in a safer place, though far from her home. However, since the full scale invasion, her art feels more "gloomy", not helped by the disappearance of a friend, the artist Viacheslav Mashnytski. He established the city's Museum of Contemporary Art in his own home and has been missing since October 2022. "We don't know if it was murder or kidnapping, or a violent attack, it's still under police investigation," she says. "We are waiting every day for news, but the hope is very little."



On 1 July 2023, the acclaimed Ukrainian essayist, novelist and poet Victoria Amelina was murdered in a Russian missile attack in Kramatorsk in Eastern Ukraine, which targeted the restaurant at which she was eating. The attack that murdered Amelina in a popular restaurant crowded with civilians in eastern Kramatorsk, murdered 13 people and injured over 60. After the full scale Russian invasion in February 2022, she trained as a war crimes researcher, which meant traveling to frontlines and bearing witness to extreme violence and suffering. Amelina, 37, won the Joseph Conrad literary prize in 2021 for works including *Dom's Dream Kingdom* and had been nominated for other

major awards including the European Union Prize for Literature. Her funeral in Kyiv was attended by many.^{211 212 213 214 215}

100. Destruction of Ukrainian Art



📍 Inside the home of Ukrainian artist Polina Rayko in Oleshky, Kherson. The house is now under water. Photograph: Ukrainian Art History @ukr_arthistory

²¹¹ Beverley D'Silva, The battle for Ukraine's cultural gems, 22/08/2023,

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20230821-the-fight-to-save-ukraines-cultural-spaces-and-heritage>

²¹² Victoria Amelina, Ukraine and the meaning of home, 06 07 2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/06/victoria-amelina-novelist-kramatorsk-russia-ukraine-war-meaning-of-home>

²¹³ Emma Graham-Harrison, Ukrainian writer Victoria Amelina dies after being wounded in Kramatorsk strike, 03/07/2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/03/ukrainian-writer-victoria-amelina-dies-after-being-wounded-in-kramatorsk-strike>

²¹⁴ Daria Shulzhenko, Ukrainian poet Maksym Kryvtsov killed on front line, 08/01/2024,

<https://kyivdependent.com/ukrainian-poet-maksym-kryvtsov-killed-on-front-line/>

²¹⁵ Dinara Khalilova, These Ukrainian artists, writers were killed by Russia's war, 25/10/2023,

<https://kyivdependent.com/these-ukrainian-artists-writers-were-killed-by-russias-war/>



Art painted on the walls of Polina Rayko's house. Photograph: Yescom

A great artistic loss to Ukraine caused by Russia, was the work of the late artist Polina Rayko. She began painting at 69, to process her grief after the death of her husband and losing her only daughter in a car crash. She painted every inch of her house, in Oleshky, in southern Ukraine, in a fantastical folk art style. It was considered a national treasure, drawing many visitors. However, in June 2023, Russia deliberately blew up the huge Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power station in a Russian controlled area of Kherson city. The resulting flood is believed to have engulfed Rayko's house museum, as well as villages and towns downstream of it.

“The last thing we know is that the neighbours said the first floor of their house was flooded, which means that Rayko’s will be submerged up to the roof,” said Simon Khramtsov, an artist and designer from Kherson, who works with the foundation that preserved Rayko’s work. He added that “If something survives, it will be fragmentary.”



Perhaps the most famous of Polina's predecessors in the same artistic tradition, painter Maria Prymachenko, has also been a target of Russia's war crimes. Her fantastical paintings were praised during her lifetime by the likes of Pablo Picasso. An attack on her native Ivankiv in March 2022, which is around 50 miles north west of Ukraine's capital Kyiv, set a museum housing many of her works on fire, some were lost and locals risked their lives to save 25.





In early November 2023, Odesa Fine Arts Museum suffered extensive damage from aerial strikes that cracked walls, blew out windows, did harm to art works and left an enormous crater in front of the building. The museum has one of the most extensive collections of art from Ukraine. Thankfully, the collection of more than 12,000 pieces of art was evacuated to a safe place as soon as the war began in February 2022.

In early March 2022, a Russian fire smashed the windows of the Kharkiv Art Museum, which housed 25,000 masterpieces by Ukrainian and world artists.

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101. Destruction of cultural artefacts

The flood caused by Russia's destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Station also caused the damage of priceless Ukrainian cultural artefacts. The flood submerged Scythian and Cossack burial mounds, old Cossack settlements and Tyagyn Fortress, a monument of Lithuanian and Crimean Tatar architecture from the 14th and 15th Centuries.²²¹

102. Destruction and looting of Ukrainian museums and their collections

The Kherson regional history museum used to have one of the most impressive collections of its kind in Ukraine, with treasures from prehistory to the modern era. When Russian soldiers fled the Kherson region in the face of a Ukrainian counterattack in November 2022, they ransacked the entire collection in a clear act of cultural terrorism. Vast swathes of the collection were systematically looted, including gold and silver artefacts, items from ancient Scythian and Sarmatian burials, rare ceramics, weapons and the entire numismatic collection. According to Ukraine's then Minister of Culture in early January 2023, Oleksandr Tkachenko, 80% of the museum's contents were stolen. His Deputy Minister at the time, Kateryna Chuieva, said that with the region still under attack, the full extent of the losses may be yet to emerge. "Documenting all the losses in the museums of Kherson will take time because it is still dangerous," Chuieva said, adding that investigators were currently recording and collecting evidence for future criminal proceedings.

²¹⁶ Ivan Strakhov, Odesa Museum of Fine Art damaged in bombing, 07/11/2023,

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/11/07/odesa-museum-of-fine-arts-damaged-in-bombing-a83014>

²¹⁷ Russian forces almost destroyed this Ukrainian artist's work. Now it's becoming a global symbol of peace, 09/03/2022,

<https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/maria-prymachenko-paintings-ukraine-peace-symbol/>

²¹⁸ Emma Graham-Harrison, 'Masterpiece' house is the latest victim of Putin's war on Ukrainian heritage, 12/06/2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/12/masterpiece-house-is-latest-victim-of-putins-war-on-ukrainian-heritage>

²¹⁹ Beverley D'Silva, The battle for Ukraine's cultural gems, 22/08/2023,

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20230821-the-fight-to-save-ukraines-cultural-spaces-and-heritage>

²²⁰ Natalia Datskeyvch, Russia destroys Ukraine's historic heritage, steals rare collections from museums, 01 06 2022,

<https://kyivindependent.com/russia-destroys-ukraines-historic-heritage-steals-rare-collections-from-museums/>

²²¹ Beverley D'Silva, The battle for Ukraine's cultural gems, 22/08/2023,

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20230821-the-fight-to-save-ukraines-cultural-spaces-and-heritage>

As in the Kherson region, Russian forces have also been removing collections wholesale from other Ukrainian museums. The Mariupol city authorities reported that the occupying forces took away items including original works by city native Arkhyp Kuindzhi as well as artists Ivan Aivazovskyi and Mykola Dubovskyi and 3 19th century icons. In the local history museum in occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhzia region, a collection of Scythian, Hunnic and Sarmatian gold as well as silver coins from the Dukhobora treasure were stolen.

On the night of 7 May 2022, Russian missiles hit the museum and historic home of Ukraine's famous poet and philosopher Hryhoriy Skovoroda, located in the village of Skovorodynivka in Kharkiv region. The building was severely damaged and a number of valuable exhibits were buried under the rubble.



In Chernihiv, the Russian Army destroyed the former museum of Ukrainian antiquities, a 19th-century building built in the Gothic Revival style, most recently serving as a youth library.

In April 2022, Mariupol's city council reported that Russian occupiers had looted a unique 700 piece collection of coins and medals from a local museum in Mariupol. They

allegedly transported the collection to another part of the Russian occupied Donetsk region.^{222 223}

103. Destruction of Ukrainian churches

By 24 April 2022, Russian forces had destroyed 7 Ukrainian Orthodox churches, which they currently largely illegally occupy. This included the Nativity Cathedral in Sievierodonetsk, St Catherine's Church in the town of Shchastia, a cultural heritage site, which has been partially destroyed, St Mitrophan's Church in Lysychansk and the Church of St Matrona of Moscow in the city of Rubizhne, St Michael's Parish in Popasna, a newly built church in Rubizhne, St George's and Holy Trinity Church in the settlement of Troitske has had its windows smashed as a result of the war.

In the Kharkiv region, the Church of the Holy Myrrh-Bearing Women, the Uspensky (Assumption) Cathedral and the church of Queen Tamara in Pyatyhatky were damaged by Russia by March 2022, according to the Kharkiv Eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

On 13 March 2022, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church said a church on the grounds of Yatsevo cemetery, located on the northeast outskirts of Chernihiv near the village of Novoselivka, called the Church of St. Theodosius, caught fire as a result of Russian shelling, while 22 residents of Novoselivka were sheltering inside it. Due to incessant Russian shelling, it was several hours before the civilians inside could escape, Church officials said. 12 days later, on 25 March 2022, then Mayor of Chernihiv Vladislav Atroshenko told Ukraine's public broadcaster, Suspilne, that burials had stopped at Yatsevo, one of the city's 5 active cemeteries, as it was "in a combat zone," while the number of dead being buried daily in Chernihiv had more than quadrupled from pre-war levels.^{224 225 226}

104. Conclusion

²²² Tetyana Kurmanova, Ukraine: War crimes against cultural heritage, 03/01/2023, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/ukraine-war-crimes-against-cultural-heritage>

²²³ Natalia Datskeyvch, Russia destroys Ukraine's historic heritage, steals rare collections from museums, 01 06 2022, <https://kyivindependent.com/russia-destroys-ukraines-historic-heritage-steals-rare-collections-from-museums/>

²²⁴ Twitter/X, Hromadske International Twitter post of 12/03/2022, <https://twitter.com/Hromadske/status/1502731401765871618>

²²⁵ Storyful, Ukrainian military graves found damaged after Russians leave Chernihiv, 12/04/2022, <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/chernihivs-yatsevo-cemetery-shows-signs-202646018.html>

²²⁶ Roman Petrenko, The Russians have destroyed 7 Orthodox churches in Luhansk region alone, 24/04/2022, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/04/24/7341753/>

Since its invasion and occupation of Ukraine began in 2014 Russia has murdered, tortured, raped and pillaged at will across Ukraine. Russia has also deliberately sought to destroy Ukraine's culture and environment. That has only intensified since Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine began on 24 February 2022. In its actions in Ukraine the Russian state has indiscriminately targeted Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure, based on trying to terrorise Ukrainian civilians into accepting the Russian invasion and occupation of its lands.

It is clear to UK Friends of Ukraine from all the evidence we have gathered in this report that Russia is acting as a terrorist state and therefore a state sponsor of terrorism in their actions in Ukraine. Furthermore, even though this is an in depth report, it is only a snapshot of Russia's state terrorism in Ukraine, as sadly a report on all of Russia's war crimes that amount to terrorism in Ukraine would run to thousands of pages. On top of this, Russia has committed acts of state terrorism since 2000 on UK soil, in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria and across Africa. It is for all of these reasons and based on the evidence we have highlighted in this report that we believe Russia is a state sponsor of terrorism

The UK Government has been a steadfast ally of Ukraine since 24 February 2022, providing much needed military and humanitarian aid, as well as a strong package of sanctions against the Russian state. With the commitment made by UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak on 12 January 2024 to provide military funding for Ukraine in the next financial year of £2.5 billion, the UK Government will by the end of the next financial year have provided almost £12 billion in support to Ukraine. We also recognise that support for Ukraine comes from across the political spectrum and should the Labour Party become the next UK Government, we are confident that UK Government support for Ukraine will be maintained.

Nonetheless, despite the valuable support the UK Government has provided, the UK has not yet taken the step that the Ukrainian Government has been calling for, for nearly 2 years now, namely recognising Russia as the terrorist state it undoubtedly is. That needs to change and we need to show both that Russia's terrorism in Ukraine will go unnoticed and that we have listened to our Ukrainian allies. That is why we are calling on the UK Government to recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. If you agree with us that the UK Government should recognise and designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, please sign our petition [via the link](#).²²⁷

²²⁷ Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, PM in Kyiv: Ukraine support will not falter, 12/01/2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-in-kyiv-uk-support-will-not-falter>

