

1. General Statistics

For the Russian armed forces, ill-treatment or torture is an established and habitual instrument of warfare.

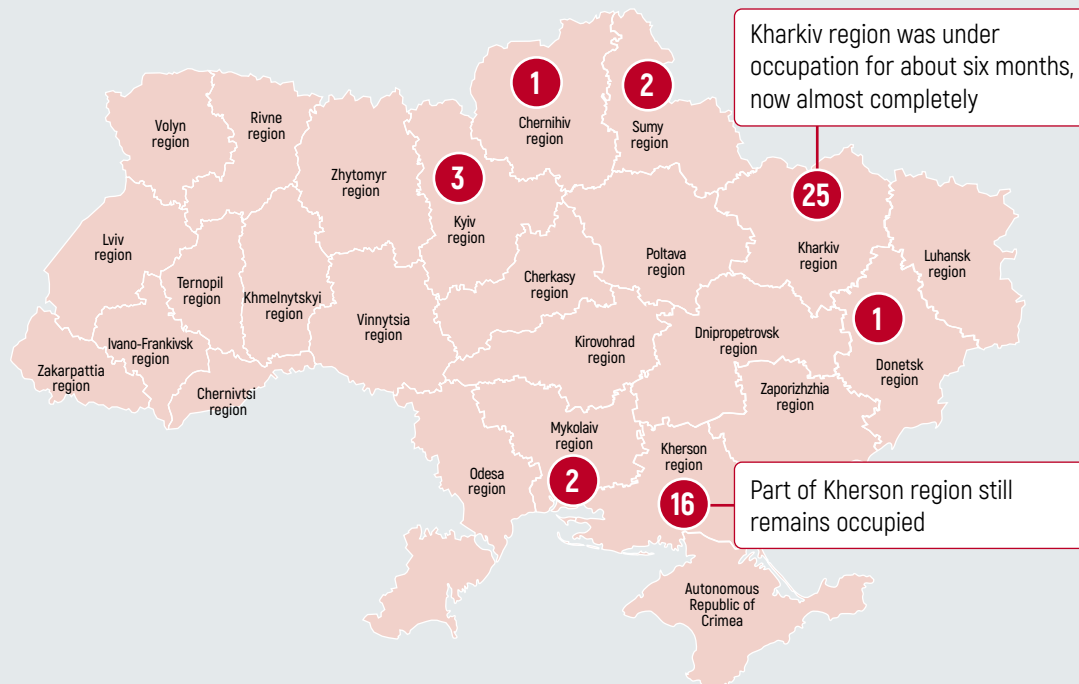


By the end of December 2022, the law enforcement bodies of Ukraine had discovered

54 PLACES WHERE TORTURE WAS COMMITTED in the liberated territories

5,079 PROCEEDINGS WERE OPENED on the facts of torture, infliction of bodily harm or other inhumane treatment

As of March 8, 2023, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine reported about 70,992 criminal proceedings for war crimes committed during the Russian armed aggression, including cases of torture. 50 torture chambers¹ were discovered in the de-occupied territories:



The smaller number of torture chambers in the territory of Kyiv region, Sumy region, and Chernihiv region can be explained by the shorter period of occupation of parts of these regions and the significant intensity of hostilities.

Death camps are set up by the forces of the Russian Federation **in all large population centers**, more often in places where Russian units, headquarters, administrative bodies (commandant's offices) are based. At the same time, premises more suitable for long-term detention of people are used – **police stations, places of temporary detention**. At the same time, places of detention are often also occasionally **non-residential or basement premises**, which additionally negatively affects the conditions of detention. Detainees do not have the opportunity to meet their basic needs. They are not provided with proper medical care.

¹ The term "torture chamber" denotes a place of long-term organized detention and torture.

The occupying **forces filter the civilian population** in the occupied territories. Denunciations and information are used as **the main source of information about civilians**. The Russian Federation also actively collects **personal data of citizens**. One of the main sources of information is the **testimony of torture victims**.

Representatives of **all social and age groups** are subjected to torture, most of the cases are related to **illegal detentions and interrogations**.

ZMINA documented the facts of torture **of prisoners of war, former soldiers and employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (retired)**, civilian pensioners who have **chronic diseases** and who were accused of aiding the Armed Forces of Ukraine, **women**, including rape of older women, individual cases of torture of children.

“REASONS” FOR DETENTION OR TORTURE:

- military service by a person (now or in the past)
- being an employer in law enforcement agencies of Ukraine or other law enforcement agencies
- being an employer in the local authorities or high informal status in the community
- voluntary activity of a person
- public demonstration of the pro-Ukrainian position (from refusal to cooperate with the occupiers to the demonstration of Ukrainian symbols)

METHODS OF TORTURE (*the list is not complete*):

- electric current, in particular, attachment to fingers or toes, earlobes, genitals (relative simplicity of this method, almost complete absence of traces of torture)
- threats of castration and castration (to men)
- rape threats and rape (to women)
- beating (blows on the body, head, ears, feet, etc.)
- various forms of traumatic immobilization (binding)
- tearing off nails, pulling out and filing teeth, breaking joints, breaking limbs, suffocation (in particular, with the use of gas masks)
- psychological pressure (threats of violence against detainees and members of their families, blackmail and disinformation, coercion to dig their “own” graves, imitation of execution, coercion to study and publicly perform the Russian national anthem, record propaganda videos)
- starving, lack of access to water, interrupted sleep

The victims note **the greater rigidity of the representatives of the non-ethnic armed formations of the Russian Federation**. There have been recorded episodes of torture motivated, among other things, by national or religious intolerance. At the same time, all Russian units are involved in the commission of ill-treatment and torture to varying degrees. As a result, **violence against the civilian population is “normalized”**. In some cases, the victims themselves perceive less violent forms of violence as somewhat “normal”.

2. Testimony of torture victims and witnesses

In the period from 01.31.2023 to 02.04.2023, ZMINA conducted a field mission to the Kharkiv region to collect testimonies of torture victims. As part of the mission, 24 victims and witnesses were interviewed. Also, the survey of these categories of persons was carried out remotely.

A total of 37 people were interviewed, including 25 torture victims and 12 torture witnesses. In particular, in the Kharkiv region:

- ▶ 8 persons from the city of Balaklia (7 victims and 1 witness)
- ▶ 3 persons from the village of Borova (1 victim and 2 witnesses, in particular, a case of testimony about torture to death)
- ▶ 2 persons from the village of Borshchivka (victim and witness)
- ▶ 2 persons from the city of Izyum (victims)
- ▶ 11 persons from the village of Pisky-Radkivski (8 victims and 3 witnesses, in particular, the case of testimony of torture to death)
- ▶ 1 person from Savyntsi village (victim)
- ▶ 5 persons from the village of Tsyркuny (2 victims, 3 witnesses, including testimony about kidnapping)
- ▶ 1 person from the village of Verbivka (victim)
- ▶ 1 person from the village of Zabavne (witness of torture and kidnapping)

Also, 2 victims and 1 witness from the Kherson region were interviewed remotely.

The most brutal cases of torture concern former servicemen and veterans of the ATO, or persons who opposed the occupation as part of the partisan movement, coordinating their actions with Ukrainian units. Among these are 2 cases of torture to death (from the village of Borova and the village of Pisky-Radkivski) and 2 cases of abduction of people (from the village of Tsyркuny, the village of Zabavne). This category also includes one of the victims from the city of Izyum, a victim from the village of Verbivka, victims from the city of Kherson. All the specified victims were not combatants at the time of their detention.

At the same time, most of the victims were civilians who were not connected to military service.



Interviewing a victim of torture in Balaklia.
Photo by ZMINA



The basement of one of the residents of Tsyркuny, in which the occupants held and beat a person. *Photo by ZMINA*

At least one case of brutal torture was recorded, which was additionally motivated by ethnic and religious intolerance on the part of the Russian Muslim military. There have been recorded cases of cruel treatment, torture, and long-term detention of aged persons, in particular, those who at the time of detention already had chronic health problems. For example, only in the city of Balaklia, men aged 70, 72 and 73 became victims of cruel treatment or torture. At the same time, one of them was illegally detained for 100 days.

The conducted surveys allow us to reach general conclusions about cases of torture in the occupied territories. At the same time, it is necessary to further study and document the crimes of torture in the occupied territories, supplement and verify the conclusions.

3. Documentation of information from open sources

To additionally complete the materials of surveys of victims and witnesses of torture, ZMINA collects information from open sources and documents messages about the facts of torture (mass media, social networks, etc.).

At the moment, **409 reports from open sources concerning cases of cruel treatment or torture have been selected.** (In particular, testimonies of victims, information about places where torture was committed, other reports about the circumstances of torture).

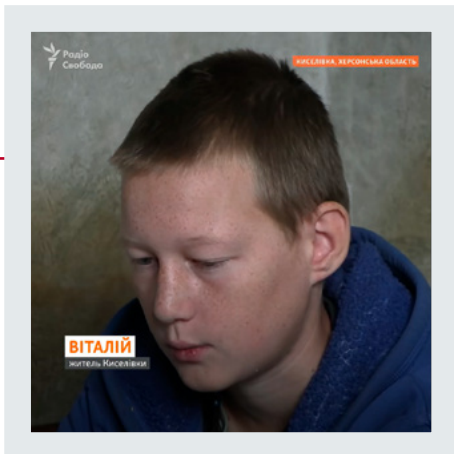
In open sources of information, reports on testimonies of victims/witnesses of torture by region are collected:



At the same time, 36 reports on the torture of prisoners of war, 14 reports on the torture of Ukrainian citizens illegally displaced in the temporarily occupied territory of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, 34 reports concerning the description of places of detention and torture, methods of torture, etc., were recorded.

Based on the selected reports, individual cases of torture, torture or **other relevant facts are documented in accordance with the standards of the US, California, Berkeley Center for Human Rights' Guideline to Open Digital Data Investigations.**

Individual examples of cases of torture

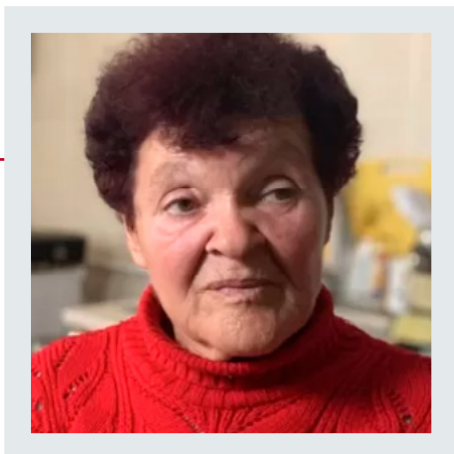


14-year-old Vitaliy

village of Kyselivka, Kherson region

The boy was held for 10 days in the basement of the Kherson Court of Appeal; he was interrogated about his connections with the Ukrainian military, beaten and tortured with electric current. According to the father, the boy had a disability at the time of his arrest.

On December 14, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, reported that cells were found in Kherson where children were kept separately.



75-year-old Lyudmyla Mymrykova

village Myrolyubivka, Kherson region

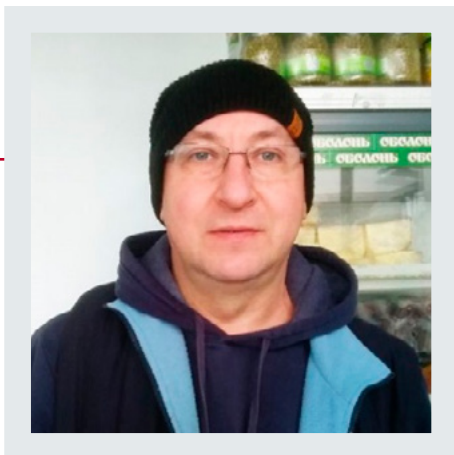
On the night of July 12-13, 2022, a drunk, armed Russian serviceman broke into the house of a former history teacher. He beat and raped the woman, cut her stomach with a knife, intimidated her and opened fire with a machine gun. According to the victim, the attacker belonged to the forces of the self-proclaimed republics (the so-called “DPR” and “LPR”).



Pensioners Mykola and Anatoliy

Village of Mokrets, Kyiv region

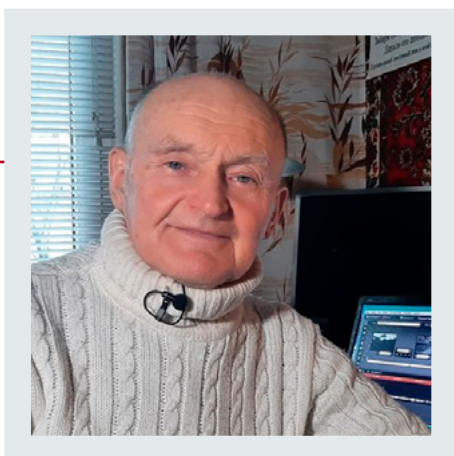
Russian soldiers tortured to death two pensioners who were trying to heat food in the oven of a destroyed house. The chest of one of the deceased was broken by machine gun butts, the head of another was broken, hands and legs were broken. The Ukrainian passport of one of the dead was also shot. The prosecutor's office established that before the torture of residents of the village Mokrets involved the commander of the motorized rifle company, Anton Struev, who personally interrogated, tortured and ordered the killing of civilians.



Anatoliy Tutov

interviewed in Balaklia

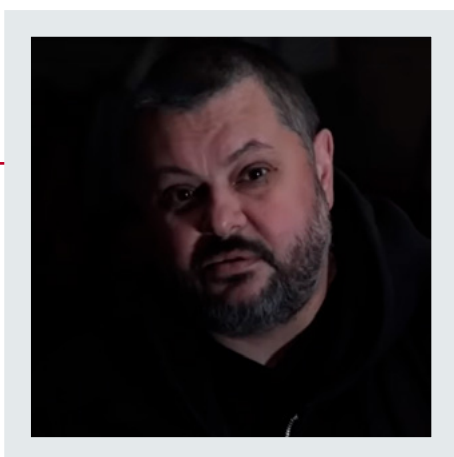
Patriotic activist, former local deputy, former member of the “SVOBODA” and UKROP parties. He was purposefully detained at his home in August 2022 by representatives of the so-called “LDNR”; held illegally until September 2, 2022. He became a victim of brutal electric torture, long days beatings, and psychological torture (imitation of shooting, threats of mutilation). The patriotic position and religiosity of the victim became the cause of greater brutality on the part of the Russian military-Muslims.



Anatoliy Garagaty

interviewed in Savyntsi

70-year-old Anatoliy Garagaty, photographer and documentary videographer. He was detained because of his active pro-Ukrainian position. Anatoliy filmed convoys of Russian military equipment. He became a victim of brutal torture with electricity and beatings. He spent 100 days in prison in Balaklia. Even under the threat of torture, Garagaty refused to record a video on his YouTube channel justifying the Russian occupation.



Oleksandr Dyakov

interviewed in the city of Kherson

The man was an active participant in the organized resistance to the Russian occupation in the city of Kherson. He is recorded with heart problems. After being detained, allegedly by the FSB of the Russian Federation, he became a victim of brutal electric torture, beatings, and psychological violence. As a result of the torture, there was a threat to his life, and the threat of amputation of his leg (which was constantly beaten). Had two operations, needs further rehabilitation.

Photo of places of illegal detention and torture (“deathbeds”)



A place of detention and torture of prisoners, a basement in the village of Kozacha Lopan, Kharkiv region. Military field telephone TA-57, used for torture by electric current, village of Kozacha Lopan.
Source: Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office.

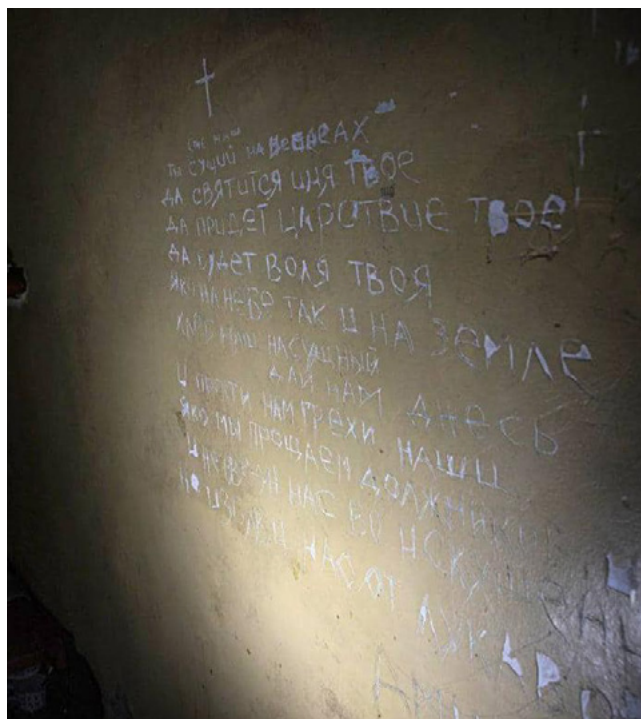
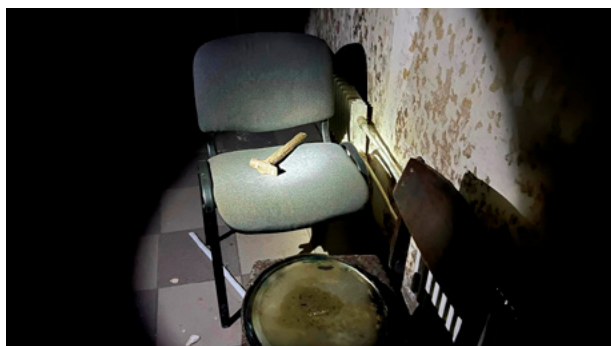


Photo of the torture chamber in the city of Balaklia. Building ties for holding captives, a possible instrument of torture. **Source: Mariana Bezugla.**

On the right of the photo: the text of the prayer is scratched on the wall by one of the chambers in the Balaklia police station. **Source: Ihor Klymenko.**

Recommendations for international partners:

1. To support the work of the **International Criminal Court and the national justice bodies** of Ukraine to conduct investigations into cases of torture and inhumane treatment committed during the Russian armed aggression, in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.
2. To call on **the International Committee of the Red Cross** to take a more active part in the search for civilian hostages, in particular to make regular visits to places of detention in the occupied territories and in Russia.
3. To call on partner countries to apply **the principle of universal jurisdiction** – the possibility of bringing to justice persons who have committed war crimes in Ukraine.

