

Analytical report

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT OF CIVILIAN POPULATION IN UKRAINIAN TERRITORIES THAT WERE UNDER RUSSIAN OCCUPATION

**(on the example of Kyiv, Kharkiv,
Kherson regions)**



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PRAGUE CIVIL SOCIETY CENTRE

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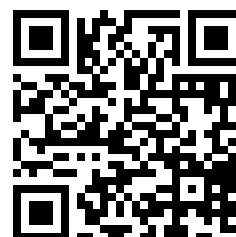
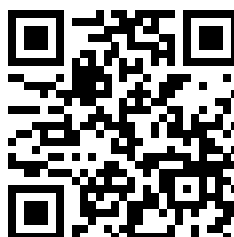
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This publication may contain naturalistic depictions of incidents or victims that may shock, appall or dismay some readers.

Human Rights Centre ZMINA works in the area of protection of freedom of speech, freedom of movement, combating discrimination, preventing torture and ill-treatment, combating impunity, protecting human rights defenders and civil society activists in the territory of Ukraine, including the occupied Crimea, as well as protecting the rights of people who suffered as a result of armed conflict. The organisation conducts information campaigns and awareness raising programs, monitors and documents cases of human rights violations, prepares researches, analyses, and seeks change through national and international advocacy.

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A metal baton used to beat civilians in Borschivka village, Kharkiv region. Photo taken by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA during a field mission on February 2, 2023

This report analyses the cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment documented by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Kherson regions in January-March 2023, as well as data collected from open sources. The research includes the general overview of the systematic practices of torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population in the newly occupied territories, the analysis of the types of places of unlawful detention and torture, the peculiarities of the detention of civilians and categories of local residents who were at the greatest risk of torture and ill-treatment (former Ukrainian military personnel, ATO/JFO participants, former and current employees of law enforcement and security agencies, civilian volunteers, political and civil society activists, representatives of government agencies and local self-government bodies, local entrepreneurs, opinion leaders, participants in the resistance to the occupation, as well as people with a pro-Ukrainian stance), information about structures involved in torture and ill-treatment, methods of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment, as well as individual documented cases of torture. The information and testimonies presented in this research were properly collected and documented by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in accordance with international standards and submitted to the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, national investigative bodies, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, International Criminal Court – with the prospect of their further investigation, presentation to national and international audience. This will contribute to the identification of Russian military personnel involved in the commission of torture, their prosecution, and the compensation for victims of torture.



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GENERAL CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

In 2014, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AF of RF) occupied the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (ARC). Major military and infrastructure objects were captured. The military operation was carried out by units in unmarked uniforms. At the beginning of the conflict, the authorities of the Russian Federation (RF) denied the participation of AF of RF in the occupation.

Ukraine recognised¹ 20 February 2014 as the date of the beginning of the occupation of the Crimean peninsula. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in its admissibility decision in the case “Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)” No. 20958/14 recognised² that Russia is responsible for securing human rights in the Ukrainian Crimea because it exercised actual control over the peninsula from 27 February 2014.

The occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea were not recognised by the international community, which was reflected in UN General Assembly Resolution No. 68/262 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine”³ of 27 March 2014. Later, the corresponding position has been repeatedly reaffirmed in other international legal documents.

Immediately after the occupation of the Crimean peninsula, RF unleashed armed aggression in eastern Ukraine, in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. According to the definition provided by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in its reports for 2016, 2017, and 2018⁴, the non-international armed conflict between Ukraine and anti-government armed groups (the so-called “DPR” and “LPR”) has been ongoing since 30 April 2014 at the latest, in parallel to the international armed conflict with the participation of Russia since 14 July 2014 at the latest.

As a result of the armed aggression of RF in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, on 15 April 2014, the Government of Ukraine announced the beginning of the Anti-Terrorist

1 Law “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine” <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1207-18#Text>

2 Grand Chamber Admissibility Decision in the case of Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea) (app nos 20958/14 and 38334/18) <https://www.refworld.org/cases,ECHR,60016bb84.html>

3 UN General Assembly Resolution No. 68/262 of 27 March 2014 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine” A/RES/68/262 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/455/17/PDF/N1345517.pdf>

4 The Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Report on Preliminary Examination Activities 2017 https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/itemsDocuments/2017-PE-rep/2017-otp-rep-PE_ENG.pdf



Operation (ATO) in the east of the country (from April 2018 to February 2022 – Joint Forces Operation).

The occupation was accompanied by a crackdown on large-scale civil resistance. On 26 February 2014, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People (self-government representative body of the Crimean Tatars) together with other pro-Ukrainian activists organised a rally in support of the territorial integrity of Ukraine near the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. On the night of 26-27 February, Russian special forces seized the Crimean parliament. Later, RF prosecuted the rally participants on charges of organising mass riots (the so-called “26 February case”⁵). At the same time, the so-called “referendum on the status of Crimea”, not recognised by the international community, was held only on 16 March 2014.

Disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings of civilians have been taking place on the Crimean peninsula since the beginning of the occupation. The first victim was Reshat Ametov, a Crimean Tatar activist who went on a solitary picket against the occupation on Lenin Square in Simferopol on 3 March 2014. From there, he was kidnapped by three people from the so-called “Crimea Self-defence” units (a paramilitary formation organised by Russian agents during the occupation), who approached Ametov, took him out of the square, twisted his hands, put him in a car, and took him in an unknown direction. On 15 March, his body with traces of torture was found in the village of Zemlianychne of Bilohirsk district, 60 km from Simferopol. There were numerous signs of torture on the man’s body, his head was tied with tape, his eyes were gouged out, and handcuffs lay next to him. The cause of death was a stab wound to the eye. In September 2019, the National Police of Ukraine and the Prosecutor’s Office of the ARC brought charges of Ametov’s abduction against Yevgeny Skripnik (head of the “Crimea Self-defence” group, a retired serviceman of AF of RF) and two of his subordinates: Aleksandr Rudenko and Aleksandr Bagliuk. All three suspects were out on the international wanted list.

For the first seven years of Russia’s occupation of Crimea, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission documented⁶ 43 cases of enforced disappearances in Crimea, the most recent of which occurred on 23 May 2018. Of the 43 victims of enforced disappearance, 11 people (all men) remain missing, and one man is in custody. According to the conclusions of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), enforced disappearances in Crimea were probably committed by armed groups, such as “Crimean Self-defence” and Cossack groups;

5 “Report of the International Expert Group. “26 February case”. Part 1. Reconstruction and legal analysis of the events of February 26, 2014 near the building of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Simferopol / Under the general editorship of R. Martynovskyi, D. Svyrydova – Kyiv, 2017. - 98 p. https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Web_26_02_Crimea_Analit_Zvit.pdf

6 Enforced disappearances in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation: information report / UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, 31 March 2021 <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/UKR%20BN%20on%20Enforced%20dis%20Crimea%20.pdf>



representatives of the Federal Security Service of RF; other law enforcement agencies, in particular the “so-called Crimean police”. Abductors used torture and ill-treatment to force victims to self-incriminate or testify against others and in retaliation for their political stance or affiliation with political organisations. No one has been prosecuted in connection with these cases of enforced disappearances, as well as the cases of torture and ill-treatment documented by OHCHR.

In 2014-2022, RF in Crimea systematically suppressed any kind of resistance to the occupation, persecuted certain ethnic and religious communities, which it considered disloyal and dangerous. The Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People was put on the list of extremist organisations of the Ministry of Justice of RF. Religious organisations Hizb ut Tahrir and Jehovah’s Witnesses continue to be persecuted as they are recognised as “terrorist” or “extremist”. The community of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is under pressure. In addition to the punitive anti-extremist and anti-terrorist legislation, the occupying power used charges under criminal articles of illegal possession of weapons and ammunition, sabotage, espionage, etc., to prosecute the disloyal population of Crimea. The actual reason for many cases of detention and fabrication of criminal cases was an open demonstration of disagreement with the occupation (such as in the cases of Volodymyr Balukh and Oleh Prykhodko). Many pro-Ukrainian activists had to leave the peninsula under threat of arrest. Independent mass media were eliminated in Crimea, and human rights organisations have practically no access to the territory of the peninsula. Local grassroots initiatives are subjected to constant pressure, threats, administrative and criminal prosecution (for example, the Ukrainian Cultural Centre, Crimean Solidarity).

During detentions and searches, as well as during pre-trial detention and serving unlawful sentences in prison, political prisoners were subjected to ill-treatment and torture, in particular, in the forms that RF used in the newly occupied territories of Ukraine in 2022, in particular, electric shock torture (for example, in the cases of Vladyslav Yesypenko, Aziz Akhtemov, Asan Akhtemov, Nariman Ametov⁷).

In the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the forces of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR” were involved in violations of the rights of civilians, in particular, murders, kidnappings, and torture. The human rights situation here was even worse than in the occupied Crimea, in particular, due to the actual absence of any legal regulation. Since 2016, the so-called “DPR” has been using the death penalty as a form of punishment⁸.

A prison of the so-called “Ministry of State Security of the DPR” has been arranged in the premises of the Izolyatsia art foundation on 3 Svitlyi Shliakh Street in Donetsk

7 Review of observance of human rights and norms of international humanitarian law in Crimea for 2021 / Crimean Human Rights Group, 26 January 2022 https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/zvit_2021_ua-2.pdf

8 “DPR” formation allows death penalty, “LPR” punishes with life imprisonment/ Radio Liberty, 28 June 2016 <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27825663.html>



city since 2014. According to numerous testimonies, unlawfully held prisoners were subjected to various types of torture there, including beatings, traumatic immobilization, strangulation, and electric shocks⁹.

Since the beginning of the large-scale aggression of RF against Ukraine in 2022, terror against the Ukrainian civilian population has turned into one of the main tools of warfare used by the Russian armed forces. Cases of ill-treatment and torture have been recorded from the first days of the invasion¹⁰. The scale of such crimes far exceeded anything that happened in the occupied territories since 2014.

Ukraine 5AM Coalition of human rights organisations, which includes Human Rights Centre ZMINA, documented a large number of cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity during Russia's large-scale armed aggression against Ukraine (indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, rape, looting, deportation and illegal transfer of the population, etc.). Crimes continue to be committed by numerous Russian units under the control of the Ministry of Defence of RF, the Federal Security Service, the Federal Penitentiary Service, the National Guard of RF, and others.

Documenting and prosecuting the perpetrators of torture and other related grave international crimes is essential to restore justice for the victims and prevent future recurrence of these crimes. At the same time, the process of prosecution must be independent and impartial, while civil society has an important role in the process of establishing the facts, investigating them, and supporting the victims.

9 See for example: M. Andrushevska, V. Khekalov. Izolyatsia: voices from the basement. Torture of civilian population in Donbas carried out by separatists and Russians with the support of Russia. Testimony of former captives <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/a65b1aec-fe78-4967-a815-f9f010872ea4>; Arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment in the context of armed conflict in eastern Ukraine 2014-2021 / OHCHR https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/UkraineArbDetTorture_UA.pdf

10 See Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (OHCHR) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/a77533-independent-international-commission-inquiry-ukraine-note-secretary>



METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The *aim of the research* is to contribute to the establishment of justice for the civilian population who suffered from torture and ill-treatment in the territories of Ukraine that were under Russian occupation through establishing and investigating individual facts, combating impunity for these crimes, as well as informing a wide range of stakeholders about the laws and trends in the commission of these crimes by RF.

The *subject of the research* is cases of torture, other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment against civilians during the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine in Kyiv region in February-March 2022 and in Kharkiv region in April-September 2022.

While working on the report, the following *tasks* were set:

1. To investigate the circumstances of torture, other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment in the Ukrainian territories under Russian occupation, as well as the general logic of RF's behaviour in the areas occupied by its military units.
2. To identify vulnerable categories of the civilian population that faced the risk of torture more often than others.
3. To facilitate the identification of Russian units that committed torture, to describe the patterns of their behaviour with the civilian population, the goals and objectives that they tried to pursue in this way.
4. To form a generalised picture of the commission of torture, to point out possible features and differences at various stages of the occupation, for a preliminary assessment of the general array of facts of torture in the occupied territories, the scale of crimes committed by Russian units.

Definitions. The concept of “**torture**” in the sense of Article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment (1987)¹¹ is the main one for this research. Here, “torture” is understood as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information

¹¹ Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_085#Text



or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.” At the same time, pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions is not considered torture.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines torture as “intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, upon a person in the custody or under the control of the accused; except that torture shall not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to, lawful sanctions.”¹² Thus, in both cases, the emphasis is on the intention to inflict severe suffering on a victim of torture, to force them to do some kind of action.

The concepts of “**cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment**” are related to the concept of “torture”. The definition of the fact as “cruel treatment” means that no specific purpose to inflict suffering on a victim has been proven, while the level of inflicted suffering is less than in the case of torture.¹³ So, for example, improper conditions of detention or threats of torture (without committing it), psychological pressure can be interpreted as cruel treatment, not torture. At the same time, a combination of various circumstances of ill-treatment that aggravate each other (improper conditions of detention, lack of access to medical care, inadequate nutrition, lack of access to drinking water and toilet, combined with psychological and physical violence) can be defined as torture.

Degrading treatment means treatment that humiliates or debases an individual, showing a lack of respect for, or diminishing, their human dignity, or when it arouses feelings of fear, anguish or inferiority¹⁴. It can also be defined based on a series of cultural and individual psychological characteristics of a victim¹⁵. Degrading treatment is usually one of the components of ill-treatment or torture.

It should be noted that in international legal practice, the prohibition of torture is absolute. At the same time, in each specific case, investigative bodies and court determine whether a certain fact can be characterised as torture (see, for example,

12 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_588#Text

13 What is the definition of torture and ill treatment? / International Committee of the Red Cross <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/faq/69mjxc.htm>

14 See the definition from the glossary of the European Commission's European Migration Network https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/degrading-treatment-or-punishment_en

15 See the interpretation of Article 3: Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, The Human Rights Act 1998 (the UK) on the website of The Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-act/article-3-freedom-torture-and-inhuman-or-degrading-treatment>



the practice of interpreting Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights on the prohibition of torture in the ECHR practice¹⁶).

With this in mind, the final legal definition of the documented cases is not the task of this research. Documented testimonies of torture victims and witnesses will be submitted to national investigative bodies and international justice mechanisms for processing.

Quantitative parameters of the research. As part of the research, documentators interviewed 45 people, including **28 victims**¹⁷ of and **17 witnesses** to torture and ill-treatment. While victims are persons who directly suffered from ill-treatment or torture, witnesses are persons who were not directly subjected to torture but provide information about the circumstances of their commission against other persons (they eyewitnessed the consequences of torture of other persons, provided assistance to victims, were detained unlawfully together with victims of torture, etc.). In some cases, witnesses were representatives of local authorities who knew about torture in their community; doctors who provided assistance to victims of torture; families of the injured or killed. At the same time, such a definition is preliminary, it is not an alternative to official investigation procedures regarding the determination of a person's status, assessment of damage caused to them, etc. Usually, victims of torture are also witnesses.

Authorship. The Human Rights Centre ZMINA, in cooperation with the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), developed a methodology for recording torture based on international standards for monitoring the observance of human rights and the Istanbul Protocol (Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment developed by a group of international experts and presented to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 1999)¹⁸, as well as the practice of documenting international crimes by Ukrainian NGOs, in particular Truth Hounds (regarding the entry of documented cases into the I-DOC database and the registration of these cases). Within the framework of the project, a Plan of interviews with those subjected to torture during the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine was developed.

The main *research tools* are the method of in-depth interviews (interviewing survivors and witnesses to torture) and the method of documenting information about the facts of torture in open sources of information.

Given the above, two main **types of testimony** about cases of torture were recorded within the framework of the research. First, these are direct testimonies of torture

16 Guide on Article 3 – Prohibition of torture (Ukrainian) https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Art_3_UKR.pdf

17 In research and interviews, the synonym "survivor" is used.

18 Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Istanbul%20Protocol%20in%20Ukrainian.pdf>



victims or witnesses (persons who were detained unlawfully together with a victim or in some other way became eyewitnesses to the commission of torture or ill-treatment). Second, these are relevant reports on torture in open sources of information, documented according to the standards of the Berkeley Protocol¹⁹ (a practical guide of the Human Rights Centre at the University of California, Berkeley, which was presented to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2020). This includes statements by government agencies, verified data from social networks, media publications, etc. For the purposes of the research, information about places, circumstances of torture, testimonies of survivors and other information was documented.

The properly collected information can be used to defend the interests of survivors and hold the perpetrators of torture and ill-treatment to account. At the same time, summarising the array of collected information will allow to better assess and illustrate the scale of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine since the beginning of RF's large-scale military invasion.

In addition, the documented facts of torture and ill-treatment are entered into I-DOC, the unified electronic database of war crimes documentation of Ukraine 5AM Coalition. Several human rights organisations working together to document war crimes and crimes against humanity have access to this database as a data repository and analytical tool.

The collected data were also submitted to investigative bodies and the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine which conduct relevant investigations. The comprehensiveness and flexibility of cooperation and communication of state and non-state actors, up to the level of recording individual cases of crimes, will contribute to the effectiveness of investigations and bringing the guilty to justice.

19 Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations: A Practical Guide on the Effective Use of Digital Open Source Information in Investigating Violations of International Criminal, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/OHCHR_BerkeleyProtocol.pdf



The basement of the Baldruk Publishing House, which was used as a place of illegal detention and torture, Balakliya city, Kharkiv region. Photos taken by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA during a field mission on February 3, 2023





FACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT CONDUCTED

General overview of
systematic practices of torture and ill-treatment of civilians in the newly occupied

DOCUMENTATION OF TESTIMONIES OF VICTIMS AND WITNESSES TO ILL-TREATMENT AND TORTURE

Between January 31 and February 4, 2023, ZMINA had a field mission to Kharkiv region to collect testimonies of torture victims. Within the framework of the mission, 24 survivors and witnesses were interviewed.

Also, the interviews of these categories of persons were carried out remotely.



In Kharkiv region a total of 34 people were interviewed, including 23 torture victims and 11 witnesses to torture.

- 8 people from Balaklia town (7 victims and 1 witness)
- 3 people from Borova village (1 victim and 2 witnesses, in particular, the case of testimony of torture to death)
- 2 people from Borshchivka village (victim and witness)
- 2 people from Iziium town (victims)
- 11 people from Pisky-Radkivski village (8 victims and 3 witnesses in particular, the case of testimony of torture to death)
- 1 person from Savyntsi village (victim)
- 5 people from Tsyркunь village (2 victims, 3 witnesses)
- 1 person from Verbivka village (victim)
- 1 person from Zabavne village (witness to torture and abduction)

Найбільш жорстокі випадки катувань стосуються колишніх військовослужбовців і ветеранів АТО чи осіб, які у складі партизанського руху протистояли окупації, координуючи свої дії з українськими підрозділами. Серед таких — 2 випадки катувань до смерті (із селища Борова і села Піски-Радьківські) та випадок викрадення людини (село Забавне). До вказаної категорії також належить одна з жертв із міста Ізюм, жертва із села Вербівка, жертви з міста Херсон. Усі вказані жертви на момент затримання не були комбатантами.

**Two survivors and one witness from Kherson city were interviewed remotely.**

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

At the same time, most of the survivors were civilians who were not related to military service (they were not former military personnel, had no relatives who were military personnel).

At least one case of torture was recorded, which was additionally motivated by ethnic and religious intolerance on the part of Russian Muslim soldiers.

The cases of ill-treatment, torture, and long-term detention of elderly persons, in particular, those who already had chronic health problems at the time of detention, were recorded. For example, only in Balaklia town, men aged 70, 72, and 73 became victims of ill-treatment or torture. One of them was illegally detained for 100 days.

On 13-16 March 2023, ZMINA had a field mission to previously occupied settlements of Kyiv region. During the mission, six witnesses and two victims of ill-treatment and torture were interviewed.

The documented cases of torture relate to the first stage of RF's full-scale invasion (March 2022). They act as a kind of chronological referent of Russia's later practice of terror against the civilian population, in particular, cases of unlawful detention, interrogations, and torture committed in Kharkiv region in May – September 2022. Interviews with torture victims and witnesses will continue in view of the need to collect evidence of crimes committed against them, restore their rights, and establish justice.

RECORDING REPORTS OF TORTURE FROM OPEN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

To supplement the materials of interviews of torture victims and witnesses, ZMINA collected and recorded reports of torture in open sources of information (mass media, social networks, statements by government agencies and local self-government bodies, etc.).

472 reports of ill-treatment or torture were collected from open sources. (In particular, the testimonies of victims, information about places where torture was committed, other reports about the circumstances of torture).



From the total number of reports in open sources of information, 385 reports on testimonies of torture victims/witnesses were collected by regions:

Number of torture reports

Kyiv region



Kharkiv region



Chernihiv region



Sumy region



Donetsk region



Luhansk region



Kerson region



Mykolaiv region



Zaporizhzhia region



At the same time, out of the total number of torture reports, 36 cases involved prisoners of war. There were 14 reports of torture of Ukrainian citizens illegally displaced to the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Also, 37 of the recorded reports relate to the description of places of detention and torture; methods of torture; reports by international human rights organisations on known cases, etc.

Based on the selected reports, individual cases of torture, the discovery of torture chambers or other **significant facts were recorded in accordance with the standards of the Berkeley Protocol. In total, 300 research cases from open sources were collected following the appropriate procedure.**

The collection of testimonies according to the Berkeley Protocol took place with regard to their credibility, reliability, and completeness, the relevance of these testimonies to the information collected as part of the interviews.

Reports of torture, places, and circumstances of torture in those regions (districts, settlements) that were not represented in the array of interviews from field missions



for objective and subjective reasons were also recorded. For example, reports of torture committed in Kozacha Lopan village, Kupyansk town, Vovchansk town (Kharkiv region) were collected. At the same time, the testimonies collected in Balaklia and Iziium towns, Pisky-Radkivski village and other villages were supplemented and verified by reports from open sources. This made it possible to create a more accurate general picture of the circumstances of torture in the region.

A series of testimonies of specific victims were verified similarly.

For Kherson region, from which it was possible to collect separate testimonies at the moment, as well as for other liberated areas (in Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Donetsk, Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions), the collection of data from open sources made it possible to describe the general context of the situation with the commission of torture and compare the collected information with the existing array of recorded interviews.

Collected and properly preserved materials from open sources of information will be an additional argument for the investigation into relevant cases by national and international mechanisms of justice and the defence of the rights of torture survivors. The relevant work will continue.



Witness interview,
Kharkiv region.
Photo taken by the
Human Rights Centre
ZMINA during a field
mission on January 31,
2023

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SYSTEMATIC PRACTICES OF TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT OF CIVILIANS IN THE NEWLY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

According to the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, as of 19 December 2022, a total of 5,079 criminal cases over torture or other ill-treatment were opened. In the Unified Register of Pretrial Investigations, 54,607 crimes related to the aggression of RF were registered, in particular, 52,279 crimes over violations of the laws and customs of war. At the same time, 54 places of ill-treatment of the population, so-called "torture chambers" (hereinafter referred to as "torture chambers"²⁰) were discovered in the territory of Ukraine.

20 Prosecutor's Office discovers 54 torture chambers and records more than 5,000 cases of torture in de-occupied territories – response to inquiry / ZMINA, 22 December 2022 <https://zmina.info/news/na-deokupovanyh-terytoriyah-vidnajdeno-54-kativni-zafiksovano-ponad-5-tysyach-vypadkiv-katuvan-ogp/>



As of 31 March 2023, the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine reported 75,119 criminal cases registered under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (violation of the laws and customs of war)²¹. The National Police of Ukraine found 52 places of unlawful detention and torture of citizens in the de-occupied territories, in particular, 27 torture chambers in Kharkiv region, 16 – in Kherson region, three – in Kyiv region, two – in Sumy and Mykolaiv regions each, one – in Donetsk and Chernihiv regions each²². In the reports mentioned above, the National Police and the Prosecutor General's Office actually reported the discovery of places of unlawful detention and torture in the areas captured by RF after 24 February 2022

When evaluating these data, we must take into account the actual number of communities and settlements in the respective regions that were captured by Russian forces and the duration of the occupation. For example, in Kyiv region, 254 settlements were under occupation²³ (24 in Brovary district, 85 – in Bucha district, and 145 – in Vyshhorod districts), and the occupation period itself lasted from 24 February to 2 April 2022²⁴. The occupied areas of Chernihiv and Sumy regions were also liberated at the beginning of April 2022.

In contrast, the occupation of part of Kharkiv region lasted until the beginning of September 2022. Some settlements of Kupyansk district on the left bank of the Oskil River are still controlled by RF. Also, parts of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions are still occupied.

Probably, the specifics of the behaviour of different Russian military units in different occupied areas of Ukraine are different. At the same time, the official statistics of Russian war crimes, given above, allow us to make several assumptions.

First and foremost, **the commission of war crimes by Russian troops, including ill-treatment and torture, is systemic**. Torture of the civilian population is used as an element of a broader policy of identifying citizens disloyal to the occupation and suppressing civil resistance.

Second, in one form or another, **various Russian units and units of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR” resort to ill-treatment of the civilian population and/or the commission of the crime of torture**. The communication of Russian forces with civilians in occupied settlements was mostly accompanied by violence. In particular, this hap-

21 Infographics of the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine <https://www.gp.gov.ua/> (archive: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230331150631/https://www.gp.gov.ua/>)

22 Crimes committed by Russian military during full-scale invasion of Ukraine (as of 23 March 2023) / National Police of Ukraine, 23 March 2023 <https://www.npu.gov.ua/news/zlochyny-vchyneni-viiskovymy-rf-pid-chas-povnomasshtabnoho-vtorhnennia-v-ukrainu-stanom-na-23032023>

23 254 settlements were under occupation in Kyiv region (PHOTO) / My Kyiv Region, 19 August 2022 <https://mykyivregion.com.ua/news/na-kiyivshhini-pid-okupacijeyu-perebuvali-254-naseleni-punkti-foto>

24 Irpin, Bucha, Hostomel and entire Kyiv region freed from invaders / Facebook page of Deputy Minister of Defence H. Maliar, 2 April 2022 <https://www.facebook.com/ganna.maliar/posts/2124154511076913>



pened at the time of the establishment of the occupying administration and the first contacts (during searches, “filtration” of civilians, etc.). Accordingly, the repeated occupation of a settlement or the rotation of Russian units in the occupied territory increases the risks for the civilian population.

Third, the situation of the civilian population in the areas occupied by AF of RF does not depend so much on the specific unit of the occupiers controlling this territory, as on the duration of the occupation and the intensity of military operations in this area.

Preliminary estimates of official statistics indicate that a greater number of crimes against the civilian population were committed in the areas that were occupied for a longer time. There is a direct correlation between the duration of the occupation of a certain area and the number of civilians who suffered, in particular, not as a result of military operations, but from war crimes or alleged crimes against humanity that are not directly related to them. During the lasting occupation, with a relatively lower intensity of military operations in a specific area (actually in the rear of Russian army units), Russian units performing police functions resort to ill-treatment and torture of the civilian population. In particular, the Federal Security Service (FSB) of RF is involved in systematic “filtration” of the local population, interrogations accompanied by torture.

Thus, a lower intensity of military operations in the occupied territories may cause greater suffering for certain groups of civilians who will be subjected to ill-treatment or torture.

To date, the largest number of places of unlawful detention and torture of civilians was found in Kharkiv and Kherson regions – in those areas that were under occupation longer than others. At the same time, a large part of Kherson region remains occupied as of March 2023. In Kherson region, RF also massively used the practice of enforced abduction and deportation of the civilian population, including children²⁵.

The first documented cases of unlawful detention and torture date back to February-March 2022. War crimes and alleged crimes against humanity were committed en masse against the civilian population in the occupied territories of Kyiv region, in particular in the towns of Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, and others²⁶. At the moment, the in-

25 Russia using enforced disappearances as warfare method – human rights defenders / ZMINA, 30 August 2022 <https://zmina.ua/event/rosiya-vykorystovuye-nasylnycki-znyknennya-yak-metod-vedennya-vijny-pravozahysnyky/>; Deportation of Ukrainian citizens from the territory of active military operations or from the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine to the territory of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus: analytical report; Ukraine 5 AM Coalition / ZMINA https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/01/deportation_ukr.pdf

26 About 1,300 cases on Russian war crimes opened in Kyiv region – Ministry of Internal Affairs / Ukrinform, 6 April 2022 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3450175-na-kiivsini-vidkrili-blizko-1300-sprav-pro-voenni-zlocini-rosii-mvs.html>; War crimes committed in February-March 2022 in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy regions / Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (UN OHCHR) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/a77533-independent-international-commission-inquiry-ukraine-note-secretary>



vestigative bodies report filing of indictments on separate episodes of torture in this region²⁷. The investigation into the entire array of committed international crimes, the identification of the involved soldiers and officers, commanders of units, is likely to be long-lasting given a large number of such cases.

At the same time, the available information about the facts of international crimes allows us to assume the existence of several patterns of ill-treatment or torture in various occupied areas. At the initial stage of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, such cases often occurred spontaneously at the moment of direct contact between Russian units and the civilian population²⁸. (There are a lot of reports on spontaneously committed extrajudicial killings of civilians, cases of ill-treatment and torture, rape, etc.)²⁹. The motivation for this behaviour of Russian units could be, in particular, the unfavourable situation on the battlefield for them. War crimes against civilians could be an irrational reaction of "retaliation" for military defeats.

The situation with the commission of international crimes changes in the areas that have been under occupation for a longer time. Russian forces try to implement a system of occupation administrations, organise management of the captured territories. Here already the representatives of the occupation authorities are involved in cases of ill-treatment, torture or other crimes.

For example, in various newly occupied regions of Ukraine, representatives of the occupation administrations, "police bodies", servicemen of AF of RF, FSB representatives are involved in kidnappings, cases of ill-treatment and torture. The number of torture cases as a tool of interrogation and inquiry is increasing. In these cases, we are mainly talking about the existence of permanent "specialised" places of unlawful detention and torture, so-called "torture chambers".

27 For example, on 15 February 2023, the Prosecutor General's Office reported submission of indictment to court against two servicemen of the 83rd Guards Air Assault Brigade of RF over their participation in the torture of former ATO participants in Katiuzhanka village, Vyshgorod district, Kyiv region - see also Two more Russian soldiers to be tried for war crimes / Prosecutor General's Office, 15 February 2023 <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/shhe-dvox-viiskovix-rf-suditimut-za-vojenni-zlocini>

28 Conclusions based on testimony from Kyiv region about the period between 24 February 2022 and 31 March 2022

29 Killings of civilians: Summary executions and attacks on individual civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy Regions in the context of the Russian Federation's armed attack against Ukraine / Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 2022 https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/2022-12-07-OHCHR-Thematic-Report-Killings-UKR_0.pdf



A man who witnessed torture and murder of fellow villagers in the Kyiv region. Photo taken by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA during a field mission on March 15, 2023

ILL-TREATMENT AND TORTURE OF CIVILIAN POPULATION AT THE INITIAL STAGE OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S LARGE-SCALE INVASION IN KYIV REGION

Between 13-16 March 2023, a group of Human Rights Centre ZMINA researchers interviewed torture victims and witnesses in Kyiv region. The relevant work was carried out in view of the processing of research materials previously collected in the liberated territories of Kharkiv region and individual testimonies about torture that took place in Kherson city.



A total of six witnesses and two victims of torture were interviewed in Kyiv region. Accordingly, this information can be considered as a reference to the main body of evidence.

All the collected testimonies about ill-treatment and torture in Kyiv region relate to the initial stage of the Russian large-scale invasion (24 February 2022 –31 March 2022). By 2 April 2022, the Ukrainian troops liberated the occupied territory of Kyiv region.

As of March 2022, Russian troops did not develop an extensive network of places of unlawful detention, interrogation, and torture of civilians in Kyiv region as happened later in Kharkiv and Kherson regions.

Moreover, the interviewed victims and witnesses report the overall disorganisation of the Russian troops, the lack of established patterns of treatment of the civilian population.

The level of aggression expressed by Russian forces towards local residents seriously varied depending on the composition of the unit, the place and moment of interaction between civilians and Russian military.

According to the testimony of those interviewed, approximately until the beginning of March 2022, some Russian units behaved “correctly” with the civilian population (they did not commit violence, in particular, when checking men for the presence of traces of the use of weapons). At the same time, violence against the civilian population was typical of other combatants, especially those identified as “Buryats” by survivors and witnesses.

Realising the level of civil resistance to the occupation, the Russian units rapidly changed their attitude towards local residents: communication with Russian forces not accompanied by violence was increasingly perceived as an exception to the rules.

At least from mid-March 2022, the Russians began to regard the residents of the occupied settlements of Kyiv region as a direct threat to their safety³⁰. This, in a situation of active military operations, extremely increased the risks for the civilian population.

The interviewees testify that in the occupied settlements, where the Russian units were stationed, the local population was banned from leaving their houses and moving along the streets. Any violation of this prohibition was associated with the risk of murder. According to the occupying forces, local residents moving through a settlement could potentially have information about the locations and movements of Russian units, hence the Russian military saw them as spotters of artillery and air strikes.

30 Based on the testimonies about the circumstances of occupation in February-March 2022 collected by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Kyiv region.



As a result, the Russian forces did not try to define those disloyal to the occupation but decimated any local residents who could be perceived as a “threat” for various reasons. Among such cases are the shootings of civilian pensioners because of the camouflage color of their everyday clothes which clearly differed from military uniforms. Presumably, the large number of summary executions of civilians in Kyiv region at the beginning of the large-scale invasion is linked to such perception of the civilian population.

Many cases of torture in the territory of Kyiv region in March 2022 led to the death of the victims (extrajudicial killings of people aggravated by the commission of torture). Tortures were carried out by Russian army units which usually did not perform police functions – did not carry out “filtration” of the population, interrogations, or anything else.

During an interview, one of survivors testified that a Russian unit, which detained him at the beginning of March 2022, was not ready for that. The Russian military did not have standardised procedures for dealing with prisoners or civilian detainees (command orders) and did not conduct interrogations. At the same time, it also meant a greater unpredictability of his situation, a higher risk of extrajudicial killing due to “excessive act.” Also, holding a captive in the conditions of active military operations could be perceived by an army unit as an unnecessary burden.

The conditions of the survivor’s detention were extremely bad at a certain point (the man spent several days in a closed wooden box on the street; he could not straighten up; at night the temperature dropped to -10 Celsius). ZMINA also documented the case of the use of civilian captives as **human shield** during an engagement with Ukrainian units (the captives were forced to walk along a potentially mined route in front of a Russian unit; civilians were placed on the armour of Russian military equipment advancing into the area of the engagement).

Survivor’s testimony:



They stopped, there was some kind of checkpoint, it must have been theirs. They drove by, drove directly into the forest, the car stopped, I heard the door open. I thought: ‘We’re screwed’. Went out. ‘You’re on the left, you’re in the middle, you’re on the right, go,’ they didn’t explain anything... We go forward, and they stay 30 metres behind us. And then they started [shouting]: ‘Don’t turn around, go.’ And so we walked through this whole forest towards a radio tower. We reached asphalt, then they said: ‘Climb here’, and put us in a combat vehicle. This machine gunner or sniper began to move towards the positions. It was very cold, the vehicle was moving along the field. Then we got out of the vehicle, started moving on foot: we are ahead, they are behind us. Only then did I realise that we were moving in the direction of a bridge.



I didn't see our boys directly, but one of them [Russians] said: 'I see two ukrops [derogatory Russian slang term used to refer to Ukrainians] in Nazi uniform.' A shootout began. One of the soldiers pushed us to lie down, so we lay down along the foundation."

Interviewees talk about the greater brutality of the units which consisted of natives from the North Caucasus, Far East, and Siberian parts of Russia ("Buryats," "Caucasians," and others). They also pointed to a large number of other crimes – mass cases of looting, extrajudicial killings (which were not preceded by torture), rapes.

Based on the conducted research, a conclusion can be made that **the first experience of the interaction of Russian units with the civilian population of Kyiv region, which was totally disloyal to the occupation, contributed to the development by the Russian leadership of a system of filtration of the entire population of the occupied areas which was later implemented in Kharkiv and Kherson regions. The exposure of mass cases of war crimes in Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, and other settlements of Kyiv region forced RF to modify its strategies to deal with the civilian population with a practically unchanged overall goal.**



Witness interview, Kharkiv region. Photo taken by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA during a field mission on February 1, 2023

STUDY OF CASES OF TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT IN KHARKIV AND KHERSON REGIONS

As of 20 October 2022, according to the Kharkiv Regional Military Administration data, 544 settlements of Kharkiv region were liberated, 32 were under occupation. In total, 32% of the territory of the region suffered from the occupation. The facts of the commission of war crimes against the civilian population mostly became known immediately after the liberation of populated settlements – in September-October 2022, in particular, based on the reports of the National Police of Ukraine and other official structures involved in the investigation. At the same time, individual reports of small local mass media, social networks, testimonies of victims were published much later, mainly when their authors no longer felt endangered due to the publication of such information.



ZMINA has been documenting torture cases since September 2022. In this period of time, open sources of information published a whole series of reports about discovered places of detention and torture and their victims.

Between 30 January and 4 February 2023, ZMINA and OMCT had a field mission to Kharkiv region to interview witnesses and survivors. The main restrictions for human rights defenders related to access to these territories had already been lifted at that time. The security situation improved, which had a positive effect on the victims' willingness to testify. In addition, it was possible to interview some victims remotely.

Separate testimonies about the torture of civilians in Kherson also provided an opportunity to compare the probable similarities and differences in the situation of the civilian population in various occupied regions.

The results of the interviews allow us to formulate generalised conclusions about the peculiarities of ill-treatment and torture in the newly occupied territories. Developed hypotheses require further verification efforts.

GENERAL TYPOLOGY OF PLACES OF UNLAWFUL DETENTION AND TORTURE

Bodies of the National Police of Ukraine discovered 25 places of torture³¹ in the liberated territories of Kharkiv region. Earlier, on 20 October 2022, it was reported about four torture chambers discovered in Izium and Kupyansk towns, three – in Kozacha Lopan village, two – in Shevchenkove village, two – in Vovchansk town, and one – in Velykyi Burluk, Pisky-Radkivski, Borova, Lyptsi villages each. This list does not include Balaklia town, where two places of permanent detention and torture of civilians were discovered.

In general, the definition of all places of unlawful detention of local residents and prisoners of war in temporarily occupied territories is problematic. In this context, **torture chambers** are defined as places of long-term detention, to which unlawfully detained persons were brought in an organised manner for a long time. Usually, it is about several dozen to several hundred people held captive at the same time.

However, a large number of survivors point to separate places where they were unlawfully detained or subjected to torture, for example, garages, basements or abandoned premises. Such places are usually not defined as torture chambers. Neverthe-

31 Kharkiv police did not stop their work from the first day of massive invasion – Volodymyr Tymoshko / Main Department of National Police in Kharkiv Region, 2 January 2023 <https://hk.npu.gov.ua/news/z-pershoho-dnia-masovoho-vtorhnennia-kharkivska-politsiia-ne-prypyniala-svoiu-robotu-volodymyr-tymoshko>



less, information on the facts of ill-treatment and torture should not be limited to cases recorded in torture camps.

Despite the difficulty of identifying all places of unlawful detention and torture, it is possible to give a preliminary typology of such places of unlawful detention in the liberated territories based on the evidence collected.

1. SPONTANEOUS PLACES OF UNLAWFUL DETENTION OR TORTURE

Some of the interviewees reported episodes of unlawful detention which were essentially interim or temporary (lasting up to several days), in particular, when unlawfully detained residents of small towns and villages were transported by transit to places that served as a permanent place of detention. Garages, private houses, basements in the territory of industrial facilities, camping sites, etc. spontaneously acted as temporary places of detention.

At the time of the unlawful detention of survivors, the Russian units were probably determining which location, from the available alternatives, could be used for interim detention³². In some cases, survivors were severely tortured in these places (beatings, electric shocks, etc.) by the units that detained them³³. Torture could also be used at the moment of detention or during the transportation of a survivor to a place of detention. A case of brutal beating of a survivor (on the head and hands with metal sticks), attempted suffocation using water in his apartment was documented³⁴.

2. ORGANISED PLACES OF UNLAWFUL DETENTION OR TORTURE (TORTURE CHAMBERS)

The vast majority of interviewees testified to cases of ill-treatment or torture in places that were specially arranged for long-term unlawful detention. This refers both to cases of violence directly in the place of detention (in the cell) and, especially often, during the so-called “interrogations”.

Usually, for unlawful detention, the occupying forces used the most appropriate places for this: police stations that already had cells, temporary detention centres (for example: police stations in Balaklia, Iziium, Kupyansk towns; pre-trial detention centre in Kherson city, etc.). An additional advantage of police stations for occupying units could be their location in the central part of towns, not far from administrative institutions.

32 In the testimonies from Balaklia town, the "Gorgaz premises" were mentioned as a temporary place of detention; there are known cases of detention and torture of civilians in the basements of outbuildings, garages, etc.

33 Survivors from Balaklia and Iziium reported cases of torture before being transferred to a place of long-term detention

34 Testimony of a survivor from Balaklia town, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA



In addition, the occupying forces set up other places of unlawful detention. As a rule, there were several such locations in larger settlements which often simultaneously served as local bases (sometimes for accommodation) of individual Russian units. These units were mainly responsible for unlawful detention and ill-treatment and torture.

For example, according to the testimonies of those interviewed in Balaklia, a police station was used as a base, a place of detention and torture by Russian FSB units. The premises and basement of the Baldruk printing house (at the time of the occupation – the “commandant’s office”), opposite the police station, were probably used by AF of RF units. The premises of a local administrative services centre were at the disposal of units of the occupying “people’s police”. According to local residents, instruments of torture were also found here.

In Iziium town, Human Rights Watch, based on interviews with survivors, identified seven places of detention and torture of local residents³⁵. At the same time, most of the known cases of torture, including those documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA, took place in the territory of the police station.

In Kozacha Lopan village and its surroundings, according to information from open sources, three places of detention and torture were identified – in a railway station basement (signs of PMC Wagner³⁶ presence were found in its territory); in the basement of a grocery store in the centre of the village (the “people’s militia” was based here); in the territory of the Hoptivka border crossing point.

In Vovchansk town, places of torture were found in the local station of the National Police and in the territory of the Vovchansk Aggregate Plant. In Lyptsi village, a torture chamber was located in one of the administrative buildings, the “people’s militia of the LPR” was based here.

In Pisky-Radkivski village, a torture chamber was located in a private house opposite the commandant’s office of the Russian troops.

In Borova village, the place of torture was located in a school and the premises of a local tourist centre.

35 Among the places of detention and torture recorded by HRW are the central police station, secondary school No. 6, secondary school No. 12, the Iziium Optical and Mechanical Plant, the Iziium Municipal Industrial Water Supply and Sewerage Enterprise, the Town Railway Polyclinic, and a private house. Presumably, the list includes locations where individual people were detained and tortured (“spontaneous places of detention”). The National Police of Ukraine points to the discovery of four “torture chambers” (places of permanent detention and torture of a large number of people) in Iziium.

36 In one of these torture chambers, an inscription in Russian remained: “We will rise on the ruins of fallen cities. And we will write your names in the book of dead!”. According to data from open sources, this is the slogan of PMC Wagner. See: Russians tortured people in railway station basements and store in Kozacha Lopan (photo) / Kharkiv Times, 20 September 2022 <https://times.kharkiv.ua/2022/09/20/rosiyani-katuvali-lyudej-u-pidvalah-vokzalu-ta-magazinu-u-kozachij-lopani-foto/>



Some witnesses note that new places of detention/torture of the local population were created at a time when “traditional” (cells of police stations, temporary detention centres) were already full of detainees. That is, the occupying administration systematically built a network of facilities for unlawful detention and torture of civilian population and prisoners of war.

Separately, we point out that cases of ill-treatment or torture also occurred outside any localised places of detention, for example, in private households or garages that were not used for detention. In one known case, a survivor was severely beaten and threatened with death in the back of a civilian pick-up truck used by a Russian unit. The man was specially taken out of the place of detention for torture.

SEARCH FOR AND SELECTION OF TORTURE VICTIMS BY OCCUPYING UNITS

During the capture of the territories, Russian troops faced strong resistance from the civilian population which was unexpected for them. Known cases of collaborationism on the part of the local population could not guarantee the safety of the occupying administrations. Accordingly, Russian units tended by default to regard all local residents as a potential threat to themselves.

Because of this perception of the civilian population as a threat at the initial stage of the invasion, in particular in Kyiv region in March 2022, a large number of war crimes and crimes against humanity, in particular extrajudicial killings, which had no clearly defined cause, were recorded.

Later, taking into account the experience gained in communicating with disloyal civilians, RF developed a large-scale filtration system in the newly occupied territories of Ukraine. Violence against civilians has probably become less unpredictable and more systematic and pervasive.

Units performing police functions in the occupied territories tried to identify and subject to filtration the most threatening target groups for RF. Among them: former military personnel, participants in the Anti-Terrorist Operation / Joint Forces Operation which has been ongoing in Donbas since 2014 (ATO/JFO); employees of law enforcement agencies; pro-Ukrainian civilian residents (ready for active or passive resistance; so-called “fire spotters”); representatives of local government agencies and self-government bodies; civilian volunteers; entrepreneurs.

The interviewed and identified survivors mostly belonged to one or more of the specified groups. At the same time, the conventionality of the categories used to define these population groups, in fact, indicates the arbitrary nature of the detentions.



PECULIARITIES OF DETENTION OF CIVILIANS

Most of the interviewees report that they were detained purposefully. In particular, on the basis of denunciations (most often) or other information about them. Also, RF constantly and systematically collected personal data of the local population. In particular, the witnesses point to the cases of seizure of documents of territorial recruitment and social support centres ("military enlistment offices"), where personal data of conscripts³⁷, of village or local councils (which kept lists of citizens with personal data). Presumably, other seized documents were also used to identify target population groups. Torture of detainees was also used to obtain information from them.

Testimony of survivor whose relative is a serviceman:



Because the Russians later, when they captured a military enlistment office, used those documents to pick out everyone who served in ATO...

It is worth separately pointing out the unreliability of the information on the basis of which civilians were identified as disloyal. There were cases of denunciations due to domestic conflicts between civilians³⁸, identification of persons as "spotters" based on rumours³⁹, etc.

In addition, civilians could be detained at checkpoints for any other reasons. The occupying forces massively practiced checking the mobile phones of civilians. The discovery of any "suspicious" contacts or information indicating a pro-Ukrainian position was the reason for detention⁴⁰. The overt use of a mobile phone was often perceived as a threat.

Testimony of survivor:



If you are walking with a phone, they could [stop] you like this: "Come here, let me see what applications you have on your phone..."

Some interviewees indicate that they were detained during raids. The occupying forces took such measures, in particular, to confiscate hunting or other weapons from the civilian population.

37 Such cases are known from the testimonies collected in Balaklia town

38 For example, testimonies about cases of denunciations due to domestic conflicts collected by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Pisky-Radkivski village.

39 Testimonies collected by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Iziium town

40 Checking a survivor's mobile phone was a standard procedure during unlawful detention or search (Balaklia, Iziium, Kherson, etc.). Survivors in Balaklia town, Borshchivka village points out that the reason for the aggression was the preliminary removal of any compromising information from a mobile phone ("Why is your phone empty?")



CATEGORIES OF DETAINED SURVIVORS

1

Former military personnel, ATO/JFO participants, former and current employees of law enforcement and security agencies



Given the significant level of resistance in the occupied territories, this category is perceived by RF as one of the most threatening. Former military personnel is considered potential organisers of underground armed struggle, members of local units of territorial defence, etc. The Russian forces purposefully tried to collect all available information about such persons. In fact, measures to subject to filtration and identify ex-servicemen, ATO participants are the main task of individual Russian units in the occupied territories (mostly witnesses identify them as FSB of RF).

The reason for the detention of a large number of civilians was any connection with the Ukrainian armed forces. Family members of servicemen and ATO/JFO veterans were unlawfully detained.

During the interrogations, most of the detainees were asked to provide information known to them about the personnel of Ukrainian military units and territorial defence, places of deployment or other target categories mentioned below.

Representatives of the Ukrainian security agencies were detained by the Russians in view of their professional competences which were perceived as a threat, as well as taking into account the potential or actual circumstances of participation in the resistance to the occupation⁴¹.

2

Civilian volunteers, political and civil society activists



The occupying forces perceived civilian volunteers as a threat, in particular people engaged in the delivery of essential goods to occupied settlements, evacuation or other similar activities. Volunteer activity usually involves high mobility, frequent crossing of checkpoints, which, in turn, is associated with the risk of gathering information about Russian units⁴².

Cases of detention of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society volunteers⁴³ were recorded in Kherson city. In open sources of information, there are numerous reports of enforced disappearances or cases of torture of volunteers, in particular, foreigners.

41 Testimony of survivor from Pisky-Radkivski documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

42 Testimony of survivor from Balaklia documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

43 Volunteer Nataliya Shatilova-Pohasiy: "Help yourself is the principle by which Kherson residents live now / UNIAN, 28 February 2023 <https://www.unian.ua/war/volonterka-nataliya-shatilova-pogasiy-dopomozhi-sobi-sam-princip-za-yakim-zaraz-zhivut-u-hersoni-12162345.html>



The category of political and civil society activists in this case is widely perceived. Any factual confirmation of a pro-Ukrainian position, active civil society or political activity worsened the situation of detainees (for example, membership in pro-Ukrainian political parties, participation in Euromaidan protests of 2013-2014, etc.).

3

Representatives of government agencies and local self-government bodies



Russian units tried to establish contact with representatives of local authorities, exerted pressure on these people. The attitude to the fact of occupation (willingness to cooperate or not accepting it and passive sabotage) determined their position.

In addition, Ukrainian officials, remaining true to their oath, had a series of obligations that directly contradicted the request of the occupying contingent, for example, they could not provide information about the residents of the communities. At the same time, the actions of some of the officials who cooperated with the occupiers are being investigated by investigative bodies of Ukraine under the charges of Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code "Collaborationism".

The Russian units with police functions considered representatives of local authorities as a source of information about the situation in a settlement or community, units of the Ukrainian forces in the vicinity, local veterans of the armed forces, activists, etc.

This category should also be distinguished from political activists as the occupying contingent mainly tried to use the authority resource of officials⁴⁴.

Testimony of the head of a united territorial community:



They [the Russians] cut open safe boxes here, rummaged through all the documents. In accordance with the current legislation, we removed everything before, all accounts and register, all stamps. They couldn't get the information they needed. They pressured me to provide them with a conscript register. We said that it is not there because we had already submitted it.

4

Entrepreneurs, opinion leaders



Just like the Russian administration tried to use the authority resource represented by officials of local government agencies, cases of detention of entrepreneurs and people with a high informal status in communities were re-



corded. Their awareness and ability to influence a local community were of considerable interest to the Russian forces.

In addition, some survivors testified about cases of unlawful detention of such persons for ransom.

5

Participants in resistance to occupation, people with pro-Ukrainian stance



This category of victims is probably the most numerous. Conventionally, the term “participants in resistance” (often these people were defined by RF as “fire spotters”) can be used to refer to civilians who were detained on suspicion of aiding the Ukrainian military or organised sabotage groups⁴⁵. Often such information was unreliable, based on rumours and denunciations. Often, the occupying forces could not confirm the authenticity of such accusations. At the same time, any public manifestation of a pro-Ukrainian position could be grounds for detention, increasing the risk of torture, especially when there were other potential “reasons.”

The statistical data mentioned further in the text of the report are illustrative and refer only to the evidence documented and interpreted within the framework of the research.



Within the framework of this research, the documentatooes interviewed 45 people.

Among them, 28 were identified as "victims" of torture, 17 – as witnesses⁴⁶.

At the same time, in 33% of all testimonies, the documented cases of torture were in one way or another related to the Ukrainian military as a target group. In particular, these are cases of torture of current Ukrainian military personnel, members of organised resistance (members of partisan groups), ATO/JFO veterans, military pensioners, and civilian members of service members' families.

53% of testimonies related to civilians who have no direct links to the Ukrainian military, border guards, territorial defence units. This category includes testimonies of pro-Ukrainian activists or other persons who were victims of torture (43% of the collected testimonies).

⁴⁵ For example: Russians torture and kill pro-Ukrainian activists in Kherson and Mykolaiv regions / Suspilne, 11 May 2022 <https://suspilne.media/238210-na-hersonsini-ta-mikolaivsini-rosiani-katuut-ta-vbivaut-proukrainski-nalastovanih-aktivistiv/>

⁴⁶ See the Methodology section of this report on the limitation of defining the formal status of "victim"/"witness"



A person's participation in ATO/JFO was the strongest independent motive for detention and torture. At least two such cases of torture resulting in the death of former/current military personnel were recorded.

The greatest brutality during the torture was used against former ATO participants and a former member of a nationalist party.

Detention and torture of civilians were often associated with several motives combined (for example, a volunteer whose relative is a serviceman; a representative of the authorities demonstrating a pro-Ukrainian position, etc.). Among the interviewed survivors, there were two representatives of local authorities who became victims of torture, one more person from this category defined himself as a "witness". One of the reasons for the detention of those persons was their entrepreneurial activity.

The majority of all testimonies (about 78%) refer to cases of deliberate detention. Such detentions mostly took place on the basis of denunciations, obtained access to documents with personal data or information obtained from other victims under torture.

FILTRATION OF CIVILIAN POPULATION AND OVERALL ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR

The occupying units actually carried out "filtration"⁴⁷ of the civilian population, taking into account the categories mentioned above. At the same time, this classification is partially conditional. The motives for the detention of most of the interviewed victims were complex (a retired serviceman who actively demonstrated a pro-Ukrainian position; a patriotic civil society activist and entrepreneur; a volunteer whose relatives are service members, etc.). If several "reasons" coincided, the risks of harsh treatment and torture for a detainee increased. At the same time, the following factors were the most critical: military service in ATO/JFO zone; proved fact of assistance to the Ukrainian military; membership in patriotic organisations or political parties.

Separately, it is worth emphasising the overall atmosphere of terror against the civilian population at the time of the occupation of a settlement. Witnesses often point to cases of unmotivated aggression by individual Russian units or individual military personnel. They happened everywhere – as an element accompanying illegal searches and looting. There are widespread cases of beatings, intimidation with the use of weapons, destruction of abandoned housing and civilian infrastructure without any military necessity.

Many recorded episodes, which often turned out to be less significant in the context of torture or murder, can be classified as "ill-treatment". In addition, an overall at-

⁴⁷ "Filtration" usually refers to the purposeful selection of representatives of a certain group of civilians who are detained, may be interrogated, subjected to ill-treatment or torture.



mosphere of fear was created when local residents witnessed beatings and torture but could not do anything about it.

Testimony of survivor:

“Three Russians and [...] a fellow villager were walking along the road at the same time. One of them (a Russian) said something to him, he grumbled. They immediately began to pound him. The Russians were beating this man with their hands, feet, and machine gun butts for a very long time. And you can't do anything, because they have machine guns. We started to shout, but he hissed at us – and we fell silent. How could we intervene?”

Also, the witnesses indicate that the grounds for detention and ill-treatment could have been violations not related to creating a threat to Russian units. Thus, curfew violators, “local alcoholics”, and “drug addicts”⁴⁸ were detained and subjected to ill-treatment.

We can conclude that in small settlements, the civilian population suffered more from spontaneous, unmotivated aggression by the occupying forces, in particular, from formations that did not take an active part in military operations.

According to the collected evidence, in one of the small villages, a unit of the occupiers carried out a public “check” of all men of military age for the presence of characteristic traces of the use of weapons or tattoos⁴⁹. This humiliating procedure was accompanied by intimidation with weapons, several men were isolated and beaten.

Testimony of survivor:

“The next day they re-registered all men under 35 years old. Everyone was undressed, they looked at their shoulders, fingers (calluses), checked their tattoos, looked for traces of a bulletproof vest. One had an eagle tattoo, they immediately put a bag over his head and took him to the basement. We don't know what they did to him.”

Presumably, cases of spontaneous aggression against the civilian population are more characteristic of representatives of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR” and the so-called “Caucasians”. Cases were recorded when military personnel with signs of alcohol or drug intoxication subjected civilians in the occupied territories to ill-treatment, at the same time, this could lead to more serious negative consequences – beatings, mutilations, rapes⁵⁰. In one of the settlements, a unit of the Russian special forces forcibly held former servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) in the cellars of their own houses for a long time⁵¹.

48 Testimony of survivor from Balaklia town documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

49 Testimonies about the circumstances of the occupation of Borschivka village documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

50 Cases of ill-treatment committed by the military with signs of alcohol or drug intoxication are known from testimonies from Balaklia town, Pisky-Radkivski village, Tsyrkuny village

51 Testimonies from Pisky-Radkivski village documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA



UNITS INVOLVED IN TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

Interviewed witnesses and survivors, as a rule, cannot accurately indicate a Russian unit involved in certain cases of torture, cruel or degrading treatment. Mostly, the survivors identified the military based on indirect signs – features and general quality of uniform, accent, and appearance. In some cases, the Russian military called themselves. Also, the identification of occupying units often took place based on the collective experience of communication with them (for example, according to the testimony of all interviewees, units identified as the FSB of RF were accommodated at a police station of Balaklia town, this fact was “widely known”).

The Russian military, who were directly involved in torture during interrogations, tried to hide their identity in the vast majority of cases, in particular, using balaclavas, covering the face while holding the survivors (during more brutal torture, victims could be held with a “bag on their head” which excluded visual contact and created difficulties for breathing).

Interviewees from Kherson city indicate that representatives of a unit that detained them tried not to use names or callsigns in communication, maintaining anonymity⁵².

Testimony of survivor:



I couldn't understand where I was – they weren't talking. All wore masks. They did not name each other, saying only 'Hey!', 'Oh!', 'Come here!'

Interviewees who were unlawfully detained in “torture chambers” also testify to the efforts of the Russian military to limit domestic contacts with detainees to a minimum. The functions of guarding and meeting the basic needs of the detained Ukrainians were carried out by separate units or individuals (for example, identified as the so-called “LPR” forces by survivors at the police station of Balaklia). Visits to the cells by Russian personnel were associated with the threat of violence.

Most of survivors also indicate that they were held in places of detention until they had visible signs of torture, usually beatings⁵³. In this way, the Russian units tried to hide the facts of torture.

Aggressive patterns of behaviour with the local civilian population were characteristic of all Russian units. The lack of management capabilities and the poor quality of staff in the occupying units potentially worsened the situation of civilian residents. Spontaneously, according to the testimonies of survivors, representatives of the so-called “DPR/LPR” or foreign ethnic formations of the Russian army (“Caucasians”, “Buryats”, etc.) were often more aggressive towards the population.

⁵² Testimonies of survivors from Kherson city documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

⁵³ Similar Testimonies of survivors from Balaklia town and Kherson city documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA



At the same time, several units performed police functions. According to the materials of the collected testimonies, for example, it is said that the FSB of RF instrumentalised torture as a generally accepted method of obtaining the necessary information from the local population. All interviewees who went through interrogations, which were almost always accompanied by torture, indicate an approximate list of questions such as: “Who do you know among military personnel or veterans?”; “Who sympathises/helps the Ukrainian army?”, “Do you have information that could be useful for us?”⁵⁴

Testimony of survivor:



*Do you know what the first question is during interrogation? ‘What are you doing here?’ I say: ‘My brother serves [in army].’ ‘Where does he serve?’ ‘In Kyiv.’ ‘Are you a moron? F**k your brother who serves in Kyiv, I can’t reach him. Tell me who served here!’*

In Balaklia town, journalists identified many Russian officers who, in particular, were responsible for “cooperation with local self-government bodies” and “organisation of work with the local population to identify persons with a negative attitude towards servicemen of AF of RF.” Persons involved in these crimes were given Russian military awards⁵⁵.

Among the groups of units identified by the interviewees, the following can be singled out:

1

Representatives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation



Usually, interviewees identify all Russian military personnel units by the higher quality of equipment. Determining the entire unit as belonging to the FSB often took place based on individual cases of contextual representation (for example, offers of cooperation on behalf of the FSB) or facts “commonly known” in the local community.

FSB representatives were also indirectly identified through the methods of interrogation, torture, and detention used. For example, through objective, logical interrogations with recording of the detainee’s answers with a slightly lower level of violence; overall higher organisation of conveying and holding processes (specialised skills); the use of torture methods that cause severe suffering but prevent accidental death of a detainee (for example: severe beating of limbs).

⁵⁴ Testimonies from Balaklia town documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

⁵⁵ The occupiers forgot a flash drive when fleeing from Kharkiv region. Skhemy identifies FSB commanders and curators / Radio Liberty, 2 February 2023 <https://youtu.be/p9suHYIj0mg?t=1236>



More often, survivors were inclined to identify the natives of the Central European part of RF (ethnic Russians (Slavs) which also distinguished them from “Caucasians” (“Chechens”, “Ingushs”, etc.)⁵⁶ as FSB representatives.

2

Russian Federation army units



Russian army units were mainly identified by survivors by the colour of their camouflage (“green”, “swamp-green”) and the quality of their equipment.

Russian army units were involved in many cases of ill-treatment or torture of the local population, mutilation, abduction, and unlawful detention of people, etc.⁵⁷ in Kharkiv and Kherson regions, as well as torture and extrajudicial killings in March 2022, in particular those recorded in Kyiv region.

At the same time, the vast majority of civilians were interrogated by FSB representatives or units performing police functions.

According to available evidence, for example, in Balaklia town, army units occupied the premises of a local printing house. Captives (probably mostly military personnel or veterans) were held and tortured in its basement. At the same time, the detention conditions were worse than those in the police station where FSB representatives were accommodated. There were court boxes, specially delivered to hold prisoners, in the basement. Men and women were held together, all in the same room, they did not have a place to sleep, access to a toilet or running water.

Some interviewees point to cases of aggressive reaction of the Russian military to the survivors’ use of the Ukrainian language during interrogations (threats of torture, etc.). Anticipating such intolerance, the civilian population mainly used the Russian language in communication with the occupying contingent. Instead, the use of the Ukrainian language could be perceived as a declaration of opposition to the occupation.

Some of survivors in their testimonies talked about the involvement of representatives of the units, which were mainly formed from residents of the North Caucasus, Far East, and Siberian parts of Russia who were not ethnic Russians and were visually different (the so-called “Caucasians”, “Chechens”, “Dagestanis”, “Ingushs”, “Buryats”, etc.), in torture and ill-treatment. In such cases, the marker of strong ethnic and religious differences replaced the correlation of servicemen with a specific military unit in the testimonies of survivors. As a rule, interviewees pointed to greater aggressiveness and brutality of “Cauca-

56 In Kherson city, individual interviewees identified Russian Guard units that performed police functions and were involved in the detention and torture of civilians by the colour of their camouflage (“blue”, “blue-black” as opposed to “swamp-green” of military units).

57 Testimonies from Borova village documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA



sians” and their poorer self-organisation. In places with a mixed representation of Russian units, for example, in Balaklia, they could perform the role of a “force component” (according to the testimony of individual survivors, involved in more brutal cases of torture⁵⁸, intimidation, spontaneous acts of aggression).

A case was recorded when ethnic and religious differences became the cause of more brutal torture by “Caucasians” of a survivor who actively practiced Christianity and prayed regularly. He was also identified as a patriotic political activist which significantly worsened his situation.

Individual interviewees pointed to cases of violence by the Russian military identified as “Buryats”⁵⁹.

Testimony of survivor:



People are sitting in a basement. An offensive is underway, the ‘Buryats’ enter. The basement opens, an old lady comes out, and a “Buryat” shoots her. The body of the dead woman was with other people in the basement for a week.

3

Units of so-called “DPR” and “LPR”



When it comes to involvement in cases of torture and cruel and degrading treatment and punishment by representatives of units formed from the population of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions⁶⁰, the interviewed survivors usually identified them by worse equipment, a specific accent, or when they called themselves.

In different settlements, this group could be involved in performing various tasks, more or less involved in cases of ill-treatment and torture. So, for example, units of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR” could only perform the functions of the armed guard of detainees, or directly commit torture.

58 Testimonies of several survivors from Balaklia town documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

59 Testimonies of survivors from Borova village, also testimony from Andriivka village, Kyiv region

60 On 25 January 2023, in its decision on the admissibility of the case *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* regarding the events in eastern Ukraine and Flight MH 17, the European Court of Human Rights indicated, among other things, that RF had effective control of all the areas that were captured from 11 May 2014 due to their military presence in the east of Ukraine and the decisive level of influence it had in these territories as a result of the military, political and economic support for the “DPR” and “LPR”. The court recognised beyond a reasonable doubt that the Russian military had been actively present in Donbas since April 2014 and that a large-scale deployment of Russian troops had taken place no later than August 2014. It also found that the Respondent State had a significant influence on the military strategy of the separatists, that it provided weapons and other military equipment to the separatists on a significant scale during the early stages of the creation of the “DPR” and “LPR” and in the months and years that followed, and that it carried out artillery shelling at the request of the separatists. There was also clear evidence of political support for the “DPR” and “LPR”, in addition, RF played an active role in their financing https://twitter.com/ECHR_CEDH/status/1618247383556538369



In some localities, “torture chambers” were set up by representatives of the “people’s militia” of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR”.

In general, the array of collected evidence indicates that these units are the lowest in the informal hierarchy of Russian military structures. According to those interviewed, any spontaneous contacts with these formations could be more threatening. They committed spontaneous violence against civilians while drunk⁶¹, motivated their aggression with personal reasons and anti-Ukrainian propaganda clichés (“*You were bombing Donbas for eight years*”)⁶².

Testimony of survivor:



It looked like it was “LPR-DPR”, somewhere from there. They stood at a check-point [...]. They were drunk, intoxicated with drugs, alcohol, something mixed up.

In general, it is often difficult for interviewed survivors and witnesses to accurately identify a Russian unit that occupied a settlement or was involved in torture. At the same time, Russian units did not act independently from each other. In the context of the occupation, the victims simultaneously point to the FSB of RF, army units, units of the so-called “LPR/DPR”.

The testimony statistics below refer to torture cases after March 2022⁶³:

The FSB of RF is usually involved in electric shock torture as an element of interrogation (49% of all testimonies after March 2022). Representatives of the so-called “LPR/DPR” are mentioned in 30% of the testimonies. Mentions of army units are less numerous (about 24% of testimonies).

41% of respondents identify combatants who were not ethnic Russians (“Buryats”, “Caucasians”).

The identification of representatives of certain units by a survivor or a witness does not necessarily mean that they were directly involved in ill-treatment or torture. At the same time, the above figures indicate that the majority of Russian forces in one way or another were involved in the arresting, transferring, or guarding victims and facilitated the commission of torture.

Some of survivors and witnesses, being in a situation of strong psychological stress, could not in any way identify a unit that committed the violence.

Interviewed survivors of and witnesses to torture cases that occurred in Kyiv region in March 2022 had difficulty in identifying the Russian occupying units involved in

61 Testimonies from Balaklia town documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

62 Testimonies from Pisky-Radkivski village documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

63 Statistical data relating to the facts of torture that took place from April to September 2022, documented in Kharkiv region and Kherson city; 37 people were interviewed, of which 25 were identified as victims, 12 as witnesses.



the torture. The array of collected testimonies in Kyiv region refers to Russian army units with a mixed ethnic composition (ethnic Russians, “Buryats”, “Caucasians”).

METHODS OF TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT AND PUNISHMENT

Most of the interviewees, who were detained unlawfully, testified that torture was used against them as an integral element of interrogations⁶⁴. At the same time, there were cases of torture during the detention of a person or outside the place of permanent detention⁶⁵.

It is worth noting that after servicemen, veterans, and patriotic activists were identified, they were detained purposefully. In certain cases, torture was used as a tool of punishment, was particularly cruel and involved a risk to life. Some interviewees testified about the cases of their relatives being tortured to death. Indirect testimonies about such cases were also recorded (witnesses pointed to found bodies with traces of torture, mutilations, bodies of civilians who, according to external signs, were executed)⁶⁶.

Some survivors testify to the explicitly declared intentions of the Russian military to subject to filtration and unlawfully detain, interrogate, and beat literally all civilians in a settlement.

Testimony of survivor:



What surprised me also was when they started talking to me more or less, they said: ‘Two more months – and we will take everyone [...] from the old to the young, they will go through prison. And we will know everything about everyone!’. They had a tactic – to take all of us away, beat us, and interrogate to find out what we know.

In the testimonies collected after March 2022⁶⁷, about 60% of the testimonies of violence (ill-treatment or torture) were in one way or another related to interrogations or other forms of obtaining information. Torture was committed at the time of interrogation or before it. In at least three cases, survivors exchanged themselves for relatives who had been detained earlier or were otherwise at risk of torture or murder.

64 Cases of interrogation without torture are rare. All interviewees perceived such interrogations as an anomaly.

65 Testimonies from Balaklia town, Tsyркunу village, Pisky-Radkivski village documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA.

66 Testimonies from Balaklia town documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA.

67 Statistical data relating to the facts of torture that took place between April and September 2022, documented in Kharkiv region and Kherson city; 37 people were interviewed, of which 25 were identified as victims, 12 as witnesses.



PHYSICAL TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

It is possible to single out several common types of ill-treatment or torture, the purpose of which was to inflict physical pain on the victim. The most common among them is electric shock torture. Most of the interviewed victims in one way or another indicate that they were tortured by electric shocks (even those who were not beaten).

For electric shock torture, the Russian military used TA-57 military field phones massively. A peculiar “advantage” of this method of torture was the ability to vary the level of inflicted suffering – by weaker or stronger electric shocks, attachment of electrodes to different parts of the body – hands, feet, earlobes, in the worst case – to the genitals⁶⁸. The use of electric shockers was less traumatic. The use of electric shocks as an interrogation tool did not leave noticeable visible marks on survivor’s body, unlike the consequences of beating.

Various cases of beatings were also very common. Beating with blows of hands or feet, metal or plastic pipes, wooden clubs or special police batons. According to the testimony of survivors, the cases of repeated beatings during one day or during interrogations the next day were particularly traumatic. Some of the interviewees point to efforts not to hit those interrogated in the face or the body to hide the fact of torture, to prevent cases of death due to damage to internal organs. At the same time, many were beaten on the body. The traditional trauma of the victims – cracks or fractures of the ribs which could not heal properly causing permanent suffering. At least one case was recorded where survivor died due to internal organ damage as a result of the beating.

Testimony of survivor:



You shot down the plane, didn't you?.... Then they beat him with their feet and butt. His kidneys were beaten off, his lungs were beaten off. The ribs then healed wrong. After the hospital, the liquid was pumped out for a long time. After Kharkiv, after the hospital, we buried him before the New Year.

More brutal forms of traumatising detainees were also used. In particular, cases of intentional breaking of limbs, traumatising and breaking joints were recorded. The invaders stepped on the faces, joints of survivors and bodies of people who were sleeping on the floor. From the testimonies of representatives of local self-government, it is known about cases of rape and castration of the victims.

The brutality of the torture was intensified against persons whose help to the Armed Forces of Ukraine or the forces of resistance to the occupation was proven. If a victim pleaded guilty, which the Russians sought through torture, it only increased the suffering of a detainee.

⁶⁸ Torture with electric wires attached to the genitals is recorded in open sources of information on cases of torture of prisoners of war.



The situation of the victims worsened in case of any form of passive resistance (known misinformation, expression of complaints about detention or the very fact of occupation). Such persons, mostly ex-servicemen, but also patriotic activists, were subjected to more brutal methods of physical and psychological torture. Individual victims literally distinguished between less severe torture as a tool of interrogation and more severe as a form of punishment with a significant risk of death.

Testimony of survivor:



They say: they've taken on you, they're going to kill you most likely. They will beat, beat and kill you. There were many people here, who were beaten so often, and they were killed, and they are gone. So, when they scared me, shot with a weapon, put a gun into my mouth, I told them: 'You'd better shoot me, don't mock me.' And they laughed.

Among the victims subjected to greater brutality, a case of permanent traumatic immobilisation (tying up a survivor), specific forms of beating (hits on the head with a metal helmet on, blows on the heels with sticks, constant blows to the same part of the body), a case of drowning (pouring water into the mouth through a towel thrown over the face) were recorded.

Such physical cruelty was accompanied by psychological torture which will be discussed below. Open sources of information also record alleged cases of pulling out nails, pulling out or sawing off teeth⁶⁹.

According to documented evidence, some victims were deported to the territory of RF which in general may be more typical of settlements closer to the state border with RF. Some victims were forcibly transferred by Russian units from occupied settlements to the territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine. (Survivors usually called this practice "deportation").

In some cases, torture occurred due to the conditions of detention of civilian detainees. In all places of detention, basic sanitary and domestic needs of the victims were not met. They did not have the opportunity to fully wash themselves, in some cases there was no access to running water or a toilet in a cell, access to walks and fresh air. Some of the places of detention (basement premises) were absolutely not adapted to this. At the same time, even in the cells of police stations, certain places of detention had absolutely unacceptable conditions.

So, for example, several people were interviewed who had been held in a 1.5 by 3 m cell for a long time, which used to be a utility room but was converted to hold people. There was no running water and toilet here. Up to seven to eight people were con-

69 'Teeth were sawed off with a file, tortured with electricity': Law enforcement officers found 22 Russian torture chambers after de-occupation of Kharkiv region, / ZMINA 21 October 2022 <https://zmina.info/news/pylyaly-zuby-napylkom-katuvaly-strumom-pislya-deokupacziyi-harkivshhyny-pravoohoronczy-vyyavyly-22-kativni-rosiyan/>



stantly held in the cell, if there were two beds (others slept on the floor). If there were no windows in a cell, there was no artificial lighting for a long time. After it appeared, the light was not turned off around the clock. In the summer period, artificial ventilation of premises was very limited.

In general, all known places of detention were overcrowded.

Also, all interviewed survivors who were detained complained about inadequate food. They could leave the cells once or twice a day for a few minutes to go to the toilet under escort, with bags on their heads.

Victims usually had no access to medical care even when emergency services were working in the occupied towns. A survivor was given medical assistance, as a rule, only when there was an unequivocal threat to life as a result of torture or detention conditions.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND DEGRADING TREATMENT

Survivors suffered greatly due to psychological abuse, insults, and degrading treatment. Among these, threats and intimidation directly during detentions or interrogations (threats of increased physical torture, mutilation (cutting off the phalanges of fingers, cutting off ears, threats of execution, castration), threats of rape can be singled out. There were also recorded cases of threats to torture or kill relatives. Some interviewees actually exchanged themselves for relatives who had already been detained at that time⁷⁰.

It is worth considering the expectation of interrogation and physical torture as a form of psychological pressure. All detainees were constant witnesses to the torture of their cellmates. They heard the screams, saw the consequences of beating others; in some cases, they were survivors of/witnesses to violence in a cell.

Some interviewees say that they were forced to relieve themselves on Ukrainian military uniforms⁷¹.

The possibility of release from detention was associated with passing an interrogation, which in turn meant the threat of physical suffering from torture. There is at least one recorded case where the anticipation of physical torture was even more traumatic than the torture itself. Some interviewees declared their desire to die after experiencing physical suffering⁷².

70 Testimonies from Verbivka village, testimonies from Kherson city documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA

71 "Forced to go to toilet on Ukrainian military uniform": Volodymyr from Pisky-Radkivski was taken to basement because of chevron / ZMINA, 27 February 2023 <https://zmina.info/articles/zmushuvaly-hodyty-v-tualet-na-ukrayinsku-vijskovu-formu1/>

72 Testimonies from Balaklia town documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA



Testimony of survivor:



You have two thoughts: I want to be released quickly, but I do not want an interrogation. But you clearly understand that until you go through this interrogation, you will not be released.

All interviewees detained unlawfully were held incommunicado. Relatives could not establish the whereabouts of survivors. Russian units refused to provide such information even in situations where the family knew exactly about the place of detention. In most cases, relatives of the victims received information about the place of detention from other survivors who were released. Such persons could purposefully find relatives of cellmates to report the fact and place of detention.

Being held incommunicado was perceived as being associated with the risk of murder or deportation. In the territories liberated from occupation, cases of disappearance are common, some of the persons gone missing were later found murdered with traces of torture.

Testimony of survivor:



I was worried that no one knew where I had gone.

As a rule, survivors could not (or could in a very limited way) receive packages from relatives or volunteers. In a situation of extremely poor detention conditions, this was often critical.

The cases of intimidation with weapons – putting a gun in the mouth (sometimes with damaged teeth) or mock shooting – were recorded. For such purposes, unlawfully seized hunting weapons were used in particular.

Psychological abuse and humiliation were often accompanied by physical torture. For example, some survivors were required to publicly recite Ukrainian patriotic slogans or sing the national anthem while being tortured by electric current⁷³. Those interviewed in Kherson also point to the requirements of studying and publicly performing the national anthem of RF, “greeting” the guards with the slogans “Glory to Russia! Glory to Putin! Glory to Shoigu!”. Ignoring such demands triggered beatings.

Some of the interviewees were forced to record propaganda videos in support of the Russian occupation as a guarantee of release from detention. For some of them, such public statements were unacceptable, perceived as betrayal, and were particularly traumatic psychologically.

⁷³ One of survivors was forced to jump while being tortured with electric shocks, shouting “He who does not jump is a Muscovite.” Such torture continued for at least an hour.



The testimony statistics below refer to cases of torture and ill-treatment after March 2022⁷⁴

46 % of interviewed victims indicate that they were tortured by electric shocks. At the same time, indirect or contextual evidence about torture is not taken into account here⁷⁵.

85 % of survivors pointed to cases of single blows or systematic beatings. This includes evidence of blows to the head or limbs as a tool of intimidation; cases of severe beatings on the body, head or limbs with the use of plastic or metal pipes or wooden bats as an element of punishment or interrogation. The interviewed female survivors were not beaten.

Cases of harsh personal searches, intimidation with the mutilation of a child, intimidation with rape, and other cases of psychological violence should be considered as an element of ill-treatment of detained women.

All cases of electric shock torture relate to interrogations, mostly carried out by units identified as the FSB of RF.

At least one case of electric shock torture, which was not accompanied by beating, was recorded.

Electric shock torture was usually assessed by survivors as more traumatic and threatening. At the same time, the consequences of brutal beatings were often more critical (injuries and broken bones and joints; recorded cases of beatings to death).

At least three people were tortured again after being released. Various Russian units could be involved in various episodes of torture in such cases.

The information and testimony presented in this research were properly collected and documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in accordance with international standards described in the Methodology section. Testimonies of torture victims and witnesses were handed over to the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine and national investigative bodies, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, the International Criminal Court – with the prospect of their further investigation, presentation to national and international audience. This will contribute to the identification of Russian military personnel involved in the commission of torture, their prosecution, and the compensation for torture victims.

ZMINA will make every effort to advocate the results of the research, promote further investigations, and restore the violated rights of torture victims.

⁷⁴ Statistical data relating to the facts of torture that took place between April and September 2022, documented in Kharkiv region and Kherson city; 37 people were interviewed, of which 25 were identified as victims, 12 as witnesses.

⁷⁵ Identification of specific victims by contextual evidence was limited. Only the persons who were directly interviewed by the documentators are mentioned in the research as "victims".

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be made based on the collected testimonies. At the same time, they must be confirmed by further research into cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment committed during the Russian armed aggression in Ukraine.



An interview with the representative of local self-government, Kharkiv region.
Photo: ZMINA



Terror against the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories

There is constant terror against the civilian population in all territories occupied by Russian units. The establishment of the occupying power, the development of administrations and bodies performing police functions are directly related to threats to local residents. In this situation, ill-treatment or torture becomes one of the tools of a planned and systematic attack on the civilian population to enforce loyalty and suppress any forms of active or passive resistance, and in this context these are not only war crimes but also crimes against humanity.

Torture-related crimes are widespread. First, some of these cases of violence are spontaneous. Russian units, which had everyday contacts with the civilian population whom the occupying authorities continue to perceive as a threat to themselves due to the high level of resistance, are involved in them. This applies to literally all groups of the civilian population and at least partially allows us to understand the nature of numerous international crimes in the occupied territories.

The duration of the occupation of a certain region leads to the institutionalisation and instrumentalisation of torture. The establishment of a system of administrative management in such areas leads to the fact that the occupying authorities, police, and military units begin to persecute certain groups of civilians more actively and purposefully.

Second, Russian documents found in the de-occupied territories show that the widespread practice of unlawful detention and torture of civilian population was authorised at the level of the highest military and political leadership of RF. The collected evidence confirms the conclusions of international experts about the planned systemic nature of the terror against the civilian population in the occupied territories, which occurred, in particular, due to “filtration” and torture of individual target groups⁷⁶.

RF could have revised its approaches to interaction with the population in the occupied territories after realising the scale of civil resistance. This was also facilitated by the discovery of war crimes in Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel and other towns and villages of liberated Kyiv region. At least from April-May 2022, the “filtration” of the civilian population will begin in the occupied territories. Cases of unlawful detention, interrogation, and torture become more controlled, systematic, and comprehensive.

Thus, the development of a network of torture chambers (places of permanent unlawful detention and torture) was an element of a wider policy of terror against the civilian population in the occupied territories. Torture was a common practice in dealing with the local population, authorised by the top leadership. In view of this,

76 See Wayne Jordash 02 March 2022 Kremlin pre-planned and helped finance Kherson torture centre s, international investigators say <https://edition.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-03-2-23/index.html>



spontaneous acts of violence against civilians by the Russian units were not perceived as something unacceptable because they generally fit into the overall logic of behaviour in the occupied territory. Collectively, this only worsened the situation of civilians.

Persecution of certain categories of population. Torture as element of interrogation and punishment

Among the population groups that were persecuted, the following can be singled out: former military personnel and ATO/JFO veterans; employees of law enforcement agencies; civilian volunteers; civil society and political activists; representatives of government agencies and local self-government bodies; entrepreneurs and informal leaders of local communities. Perhaps, the most numerous and at the same time the most poorly defined “group” are the so-called “resistance participants” (often defined by RF as “fire spotter”). In fact, these are any civilians who were suspected of assisting the Ukrainian military, and who in one way or another demonstrated disloyalty to the occupying authorities. The source of information about such people is mostly denunciations or other unverified information. Also, Russian units systematically collect personal data of the local population from all available sources.

If any of the listed conditional “signs” are combined, this significantly increases the risk of detention and torture for a person. At the same time, civilians can be detained arbitrarily for any accidental contact with the occupying contingent (for example, when passing checkpoints, researching information on personal gadgets, etc.). Unlawful detention significantly increases the risk of further ill-treatment or torture.

At the moment, when an occupying administration is already established fully, units performing police functions actively use torture as an element of the procedure for finding out and obtaining the information they need.

In the occupied territories, the Russian authorities continue to systematically develop a network of institutions used for the permanent unlawful detention of civilians and torture, so-called “torture chambers”. Various Russian units were involved in the functioning of such “facilities” in various settlements.

The absolute majority of interrogations, even those of civilians who were detained by accident, were accompanied by torture. All interviewees perceive interrogation without torture as an anomaly. The most common form of torture during interrogation is electric shocks. Also, the vast majority of interviewed victims were victims of repeated beatings. Other types of physical torture were also used. The victims were under constant psychological pressure, witnessed the torture of other people, and became victims of various forms of intimidation. The interviewees also indicate that



they were held incommunicado in almost all cases, without informing their relatives. This, in turn, was perceived as a threat to life (disappearance) or deportation to the territory of RF. The conditions of the unlawful detention of civilians, which in some cases were very long, were completely unsatisfactory and can be assessed as acts of cruel treatment.

Former or current military personnel, ATO/JFO veterans can be called the group that is in the highest risk zone. At the same time, the occupying authorities actively detained members of their families. The brutality of the torture of military personnel was usually higher. At the same time, any actual confirmation of claims against the detained person (including recognition of rejection of the occupation or assistance to the Ukrainian army) significantly increased the cruelty of torture and the associated risks.

In more critical cases, torture was used by Russian units as a tool of punishment. Cases of death of victims which was a direct consequence of torture were recorded.

Negative consequences for torture victims, their families, and local communities

Separately, it is worth pointing out the strong negative consequences for the victims of torture and their environment. The interviewed survivors very often have physical injuries and psychological traumas. The situation is complicated by the impossibility of receiving qualified medical care and psychological help (due to lack of money, lack of specialised doctors). Some survivors become reserved in their traumatic experience and do not seek any help. This situation is also very traumatic for the families of survivors.

Survivors are often not ready to testify about cases of torture, they do not trust law enforcement agencies, especially in cases of collaborationism between representatives of local authorities or police with the occupying power. As a result, it is more difficult to document and investigate information about the facts of torture in such cases.

The civilian population's experience of the occupation which was accompanied by mass cases of violence (murders, torture, looting), has an extremely negative impact on the life of the entire community, especially in small settlements. It is about both physical damage and collective psychological trauma. Cases of collaborationism among local residents with the occupying authorities only worsen the situation and increase tension in the community.

These negative consequences are long-term, so overcoming them may require significant resources.



Value of research results

Within the framework of the research, based on the testimonies collected in individual communities of Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Kherson regions, the general situation with the commission of torture by Russian units was reconstructed. Further work should focus on verifying and supplementing previously collected data.

The Human Rights Centre ZMINA researchers paid special attention to the proper documentation of discovered cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment committed during the Russian armed aggression in Ukraine. Based on international recommendations, a standard was formed for interviewing torture victims, documenting information about torture in open sources of information, as well as in the course of interviewing witnesses and victims and conducting field missions to de-occupied areas. This, in turn, will allow submitting properly collected and documented data for further investigation, will facilitate identifying perpetrators and holding them to account, and will bring justice for the victims closer.

The conducted research testifies to the ubiquity of torture cases and their instrumentalisation as an element of intimidation and means of interrogation. The scale of recorded cases indicates that the situation may be worse in other newly occupied regions of Ukraine that are still under Russian control. At the same time, this confirms the urgent need for further documenting evidence and contributing to the investigation into these cases, bringing the perpetrators to justice.

It is not enough to consider documented cases of ill-treatment and torture as a separate type of crime. The facts of torture were not the exception or excess of a single military unit but instead, fit fully into the wider context of the occupation. The results of the research, as well as the testimonies of the victims, confirm the planned campaign of terror against the civilian population. Precisely because of this, the collected information should be evaluated in view of the prospect of bringing comprehensive charges against the occupying power.



Recommendations

A large number of state and non-state actors are involved in documenting and investigating cases of war crimes, including torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment committed during the Russian armed aggression in Ukraine. At the same time, given the scale of these cases, the existing capacities are still not enough, they must be constantly strengthened.

In the process of restoring the territories that were under occupation, special attention should be paid to restoring the stability of the affected local communities. The consequences of committing war crimes are not limited to direct physical damage. Special attention should be paid to the physical and psychological rehabilitation of torture victims and their families.

INDIVIDUAL DOCUMENTED CASES OF TORTURE



Witness interview, Kharkiv region.
Photo: ZMINA



Photo: ZMINA

Serhiy Pohorielov,

resident Kopyliv village, Bucha district, Kyiv region

The man was detained on 3 March 2022 when he was trying to assess the consequences of the bombardment of the village that took place the day before – he went outside to check the condition of his friends' houses. The Russians found screenshots of a map of the area in Pohorielov's phone. After a Russian unit commander found out the circumstances of the detention, the man was severely beaten. Until 14 March, Pohorielov was unlawfully detained at the base of a Russian army unit stationed in the village. At the same time, between 4 to 8 March, he was held in a locked wooden chest on the street almost around the clock, including at night.



Screenshot from video
BFMTV

From 8 March, the man has been held in unsuitable basement premises together with other captives. The described conditions of detention were absolutely unsatisfactory. On 10 March, Pohorielov and several other captives were put in a military vehicle and taken to the area of the alleged engagement with Ukrainian troops. They were forced to walk ahead of the Russian unit through the forest, apparently being wary of mines or ambushes. The lives of the captives were put at risk directly at the moment of the combat engagement. The man expected the opportunity to escape during the fight but did not dare to do so. Later, Pohorielov witnessed the looting by the Russians who held him. On 14 March, he and other detainees were able to free themselves as the Russians were retreating.



Photo: "Dani-Info"

Anatoliy Tutov,

entrepreneur from Balaklia
town, Kharkiv region

Patriotic activist, former local council member, former member of Freedom and UKROP parties. He was detained at his home on 9 August 2022 by representatives of the so-called "LPR/DPR". Until 2 September 2022, FSB representatives unlawfully detained a man at the National Police station in Balaklia. During the period of detention, he was repeatedly beaten, subjected to electric shock torture and psychological torture (mock shooting, threats of mutilation). The patriotic position and piety of the survivor became the cause of greater brutality on the part of the Muslim Russian military.



Photo: ZMINA

Anatoliy Harahaty,

interviewed in Savyntsi village,
Kharkiv region

70-year-old Anatoliy Harahaty, a photographer and documentary videographer, captured convoys of Russian military equipment on video at the beginning of the occupation of the village. He was arrested on 28 May 2022 due to denunciation. Harahaty became a victim of brutal electric shock torture and beatings. He spent 100 days in detention at the Balaklia police station. Even under the threat of torture, he refused to record a video justifying the Russian occupation for his YouTube channel. *"I am 70 years old, there is not much left, I want to die an honest and decent person, which I was all my life, so that I would not be ashamed to meet with the souls of my parents,"* Anatoliy Harahaty said.

**Oleksandr Diakov,**

interviewed in Kherson city

Screenshot from video
UkrainianWitness

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

**Oleksandr Hlushko,**interviewed in Izium town,
Kharkiv region

Photo: ZMINA

In 2018-2020, Oleksandr Hlushko participated in the anti-terrorist operation in eastern Ukraine. On 5 May 2022, the Russian military came to his house. The man believes that the reason for the detention was denunciation. For a long time, he was held in a basement of the utility premises. Hlushko was interrogated and tortured, especially brutally after a failed escape attempt. They beat his feet and head, did not feed him. He spent five days tied up in a “swallow” position. After the man, according to him, was “turned into a vegetable”, Hlushko was thrown out on the side of the road. He was treated in a local clinic under a different name. In August 2022, the occupiers detained him again and held him for 14 days at the National Police station in Izium where he was tortured with electric shocks. He was freed after the retreat of Russian units from the town. Hlushko requires long-term physical and psychological rehabilitation.



Photo: ZMINA

Anatoliy Vabishchevych,

witness from Pisky-Radkivski
village, Kharkiv region

The man tells how the Russian military held a raid to detain former military personnel and ATO participants after the occupation of the village in the summer of 2022. About 15 people were detained in the village, some of whom were not military personnel. A close relative of Vabishchevych was severely beaten with butts in the yard of his own house. The victim's kidneys were beaten off, ribs were broken, and lungs were injured as a result. Doctors in Izium and Kharkiv tried to save the man, but he died from the injuries.

Torture and ill-treatment of civilian population in Ukrainian territories that were under Russian occupation (on the example of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson regions): analytical report / B. Petruniok, O. Hnatiuk, T. Pechonchyk; ZMINA Human Rights Centre. – Kyiv, 2023. – 60 p.

