



# **"WOMEN'S CELLS" OF KHERSON TORTURE CHAMBER:**

## **ANALYTICAL REPORT BASED ON THE TESTIMONIES OF DETAINEES**



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“Women’s cells” of Kherson torture chamber: analytical report based on the testimonies of detainees/  
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The analytical report “Women’s cells” of Kherson torture chamber” was prepared by Human Rights Centre ZMINA within the framework of the organization’s efforts to document war crimes.

The report analyses all stages of the confinement of women by representatives of the Russian Federation in Temporary detention center (TDC) No. 1 of the Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Region, located at 3 Teploenerhetykiv Street, during the occupation of the city of Kherson, in particular, the circumstances and reasons for detention, the categories of the population that became the target for the representatives of the Russian Federation after the occupation of the city, the conditions of stay in TDC and specific violations, in particular, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, types of treatment and punishment committed against detained women, and the consequences of these violations.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

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Cover photo: A drawing on the wall of one of the cells in TDC.

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This report contains naturalistic descriptions of incidents or victims that may shock, appall or upset some readers.

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# INTRODUCTION

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as RF) launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. One of the directions of its offensive was the southern one – from the territory of Crimea, occupied back in 2014, to the territory of southern Ukraine, in particular, and Kherson region. At the beginning of March 2022, the Russian military captured the city of Kherson.

Residents of Kherson region peacefully resisted the Russian occupation – they went to assemblies and rallies<sup>1</sup>. To suppress protests and intimidate the local population to maintain control over the region, Russian troops used weapons<sup>2</sup> and kidnapped representatives of local authorities and active citizens<sup>3</sup>. After the de-occupation of part of Kherson region, law enforcement officers found eleven torture chambers and thirteen custodial settings<sup>4</sup> in which representatives of RF held and tortured civilians, residents of Kherson city<sup>5</sup> and the Kherson region.

One of these settings was Temporary detention centre (hereinafter referred to as TDC) No. 1 of the Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Region, located at 3 Teploenerhetykiv Street in the city of Kherson, in which the so-called women's cells were arranged. Local residents were held in TDC from the end of March 2022<sup>6</sup>.

This analysis studies all stages of the confinement of women in the TDC of Kherson city. In particular, the circumstances and reasons for their detention, the identification of categories of the population that became a target for representatives of RF after the occupation of the city, the conditions of stay in TDC and specific violations, in particular, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishments, committed against detained women, as well as the consequences of these violations.

The analysis was carried out on the basis of testimonies collected by the method of in-depth interviews with victims (10) and witnesses (4) during the Human Rights Centre ZMINA field missions.

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1 'Black cloud of Russian helicopters was flying.' Memories of Kherson resident about capture of the city and resistance to the occupation / Radio Liberty, 27 March 2023 <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovya-kherson-maydan-rosiyska-okupatsiya-proty-dovzhenko/32335854.html>

2 Russian military fired on rally in Kherson / BBC News Ukraine, 30 March 2022 <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/media-60835736>

3 Occupiers kidnapped 63 representatives of local self-government bodies and about 300 activists in Kherson region / Ukrinform, 25 July 2022 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3536627-nahersonsini-rosiani-vikrali-63-predstavnikov-miscevoi-vladi-i-blizko-300-aktivistiv.html>

4 Andriy Kostin: Every crime has a name, a surname and a face. We already know many of them. Others will not be able to hide even in the Russian swamps / Official website of the Office of the General of the Prosecutor of Ukraine, May 11, 2023: <http://surl.li/iyllq>

5 Prosecutors continue to record Russian crimes in Kherson – torture chambers in four buildings detected / Official website of the Prosecutor General's Office, 21 November 2022 <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/u-xersoni-prokurori-prodovzuyut-fiksuvati-zlocini-rf-vstanovleno-miscya-kativen-u-cotiryo-budivlyax>

6 According to the information from Andriy Kovanyi, acting spokesperson for the Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Region, voiced during the visit of ZMINA documentators to the TDC on 5 April 2023

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT TDC

Over 200 people were held in TDC during the occupation of Kherson. Currently, 40 criminal proceedings have been opened over the unlawful confinement of Ukrainian citizens in TDC, which were later combined into one criminal proceeding, opened on the basis of the elements of crimes provided for in Part. 1, 2 Art. 438 (Violation of laws and customs of war) and Part 7 of Art. 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Collaborationism). The prosecutor's office recognized 21 women<sup>7</sup> as victims and interrogated them. However, Human Rights Centre ZMINA managed to establish that at least thirty women were held in TDC at different times. The women, on whose testimonies the report is based, were detained during the summer – mainly in July-August 2022 and were held until the end of October when Russian troops began to retreat from the right bank of Kherson region.



■ Temporary detention center (TDC) No.1 of the Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Region, located at 3 Teploenerhetykiv Street / ZMINA

The period of confinement of women in TDC in Kherson varies from an hour to almost three months. According to official data, the age of detained women ranges from 32 to 58 years. However, according to the testimonies of the detainees themselves, the youngest of the women who stayed in TDC the longest was 21 years old.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the response from the Kherson Regional Prosecutor's Office No. 27-ref-23 dated 7 April 2023 to the Human Rights Centre ZMINA inquiry.

At the same time, according to the testimonies, there were also minors<sup>8</sup> among the detainees held in the TDC for a short time.

In the TDC, at first two, and later three cells were arranged solely for women: 21st, 6th, and 12th [the interviewed women named different numbers of the third cell, in particular, 3rd, 4th, and 12<sup>th</sup>]. Cells were located on the second floor<sup>9</sup>, interrogations were conducted on the same floor or on the third, and tortures were carried out on the first floor.

Detainees were usually immediately taken to TDC and held there until their release. At the same time, there are known cases of the transfer of detainees from other places of unlawful confinement to the TDC and their subsequent forcible transfer within the temporarily occupied territory.

In particular, Larysa Shumkova and Liudmyla Shumkova were held in the basement – the former temporary detention centre – of the Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Region (MDNP) at 4 Liuteranska Street. There were five to seven cells. According to Andriy Kovanyi, acting spokesperson for the Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Region, the premises have not been used for several decades. It was not adapted to hold people – all the cells were very small, there were no windows at all, so the detainees did not have enough air.

### ***Testimony of victim:***



*There was a hole in the door, we stuck our heads out of it just to breathe.*

There were no beds in this place of unlawful confinement – only a wooden platform, foam board sheets, and three Ukrainian police uniform jackets to lie on. Instead of access to the toilet, the representatives of RF gave women a bucket that stood in the cell all the time, and it was possible to take it out once a day. In addition, in the absence of water supply, the representatives of RF poured water into the wash basin with the same bucket that was used as a toilet. For the first day, the detained women were given neither food nor water.

Over the ten days of confinement in the MDNP, Liudmyla Shumkova and Larysa Shumkova were given food once a day. There was also no opportunity to wash or change clothes during these ten days. All the time, according to the women's testimonies, other detainees could be heard being tortured. Sometimes representatives of RF deliberately opened the doors in the cells where people were tortured so that other detainees could hear their screams.

On 5 August, the day before Larysa and Liudmyla were transferred to TDC, one person died in the MDNP's basement.

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<sup>8</sup> Testimonies of Larysa Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Odesa city, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

<sup>9</sup> The first full-fledged floor because the lower floor was a semi-basement.



### Testimonies of victims:



*On the eve of our transfer to TDC, we heard how the boys [detainees] started knocking loudly, water was pouring. And before that, someone was severely tortured.*

*The guards came, they were not pleased, the guys said: "A person is not breathing." They got confused, ran somewhere, probably to get a doctor. When those FSB officers, most likely, were already going downstairs, the rustling of a package was heard, they were dragging the body.<sup>10</sup>*



■ One of the cells in which the representatives of the Russian Federation kept people, in the basement of the Main Department of the National Police in Kherson Region (MDNP) at 4 Liuteranska Street / ZMINA

After confinement in TDC, some people were moved to other places of confinement in the temporarily occupied territory of Kherson region. In particular, on 20 October 2022, on the eve of the liberation of Kherson by Ukrainian troops, detainees held in TDC, of which there were about 120 people as of October, according to the interviewees, were released en masse.

At the same time, 36 people, including four women, were forcibly transferred from TDC in Kherson to Hola Prystan police department in, and on 29 October – to the district police department in Novotroitske village<sup>11</sup>. Russian Andrey "Zloy" and the

<sup>10</sup> Testimonies of Larysa Shumkova and Liudmyla Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Odesa city, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Testimonies of Natalia Havrylenko documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 6 April 2023.

entire group, which carried out surveillance of the detainees in the Kherson TDC after the rotation, escorted the displaced.

According to the testimonies of detainees, all those transferred from TDC were suspected of partisan activities and assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to the victims, the conditions in the Hola Prystan and Novotroitske places of confinement were terrible – the premises where people were held had not been used for a long time, it was cold and damp, there was limited access to fresh air – there was no ventilation in the premises. Food remained inadequate – half a pack of Mivina instant noodles – was given per day, sometimes local collaborators brought food from home. In Hola Prystan and Novotroitske, women were not interrogated, and cases of torture against women were not recorded.

Two women, Inna (name changed for security reasons) and Natalia, were released a month apart – in November and December 2022. Natalia managed to return to the Ukraine-controlled territory, Inna still stays in the occupied territory. Two more women, according to the testimonies of other victims and women's relatives, are still held in Novotroitske<sup>12</sup>.

## CATEGORIES OF POPULATION TAKEN TO TDC NO. 1

The grounds for detaining women and placing them in TDC varied.

There were cases of targeted detention of persons, in particular, employees of law enforcement agencies of Ukraine (for example, the Patrol Police of Ukraine). People suspected by the Russian Federation of being in contact/family ties with representatives of law enforcement agencies of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine or the resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territories of Kherson region were also detained. Posts or videos on social networks reflecting a pro-Ukrainian position could serve as sufficient proof of such involvement.

### **Testimony of victim:**



*The military came with a phone that contained a screenshot from Telegram channel "Traitors of Kherson" of my post about them. It said that "they will go back in black bags."<sup>13</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> Testimonies of the husband of one of the victims, Olesya (name changed for security reasons), documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 4 April 2023; Liudmyla Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023; and Natalia Havrylenko documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 6 April 2023

<sup>13</sup> Testimonies of Svitlana Kulaksys documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 5 April 2023.



Another "proof" was denunciations on such persons.

**Testimony of victim:**

“ On 7 July 2022, they came to my house at night, together with boy M. [investigation against this person is ongoing under Art. 111, Part 2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine], who reported on all of us. We already knew that two of our boys were detained. We understood that we will be ratted out most likely. We were ready.<sup>14</sup>

According to testimonies, a 17-year-old girl was detained for several days for a photo of her boyfriend, who is a serviceman, found in her phone<sup>15</sup>.

A former volunteer of the "Right Sector" who helped in a military hospital, an employee of the Kherson regional utility emergency and rescue service, an employee of the personnel department of the paramilitary guard, a housewife, a cadet of the Ivan Kozhedub Kharkiv National Air Force University, a gymnasium's deputy director were among the women held in TDC.

Another category of detainees are those used as hostages to detain family members and relatives, as well as acquaintances. In one of the cases, to take control of 'cash converters' – people who issued cash in hryvnias for a certain fee – representatives of RF detained a girl who worked in one of these places. She was released only when the owner of the establishment was brought to TDC<sup>16</sup>.

Olha Strohan, a resident of Chornobayivka, was taken hostage when they came to the couple's house to detain her husband. Representatives of RF left a phone number for Olha's friend and told her to let them know when Olha's husband would return home. She was released on 11 August 2022, brought home and her husband was immediately taken away.

**Testimony of victim:**

“ Did you say goodbye to him? ". "Why?" I say. "You won't see him again.

Liudmyla Shumkova and Larysa Shumkova – the aunt and mother of political prisoner Oleksandr Shumkov<sup>17</sup> – were detained for the same reason. They were searched for purposefully, and when they were detained, both were identified by names.

In some cases, however, the representatives of RF did not know the names of the detainees whose homes they broke into and decided on the spot which of those present to detain and for what reason.

<sup>14</sup> Testimonies of Natalia Havrylenko documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 6 April 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Testimonies of Larysa Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Odesa city, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Odesa city, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

<sup>17</sup> In 2017, Russia imprisoned Oleksandr Shumkov, a civil society activist and serviceman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, for his participation in the Right Sector organisation. The man served an illegal sentence in the Bryansk penal facility. On 25 December 2020, his prison term ended, and he returned to Ukraine, to his native city of Kherson.

### **Testimony of victim:**

“ They suggested taking the whole family away. One was joking, saying: ‘What do we have for a little one? Let's take the little one’ [the victim's son]. Then they wanted to take my husband. Then they decided to take only me.<sup>18</sup>

The criteria for admissibility of detention were also widely applied. In one of the cases, volunteer Lilia Pshenychna was detained for "hiding criminals," although no people were found during the search of her apartment. The day after the arrest, the church where Lilia volunteered was also searched under the pretext that pornographic films with children were allegedly filmed in the church under Lilia's leadership<sup>19</sup>.

A woman, who turned away and did not greet the Russian servicemen who entered the bus at a checkpoint, was detained for several days<sup>20</sup>.

## **CIRCUMSTANCES OF ARBITRARY DETENTIONS**

Arbitrary detention is a violation of both international humanitarian law<sup>21</sup> and human rights law<sup>22</sup>. Any detention may take place only if there are proper grounds for it and in accordance with the prescribed legal procedure. Detention in violation of these conditions will be considered unlawful and may constitute a war crime<sup>23</sup> or a crime against humanity<sup>24</sup>.

Searches and detentions took place mainly late in the evening, after curfew, or in the middle of the night and were carried out by a large number of representatives of RF – some victims report the presence of 20-30 armed security officers. Both the

18 Testimony of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

19 Lilia Pshenychna was a volunteer at the Golgotha Church, which housed 58 children from the Kherson regional children's home, the oldest child was four years old. After information about the presence of children in the territory of the church appeared on social networks, the FSB came to the church. The FSB forced the guardians to return the children to the children's home, and later the representatives of RF took the children away, probably to Crimea. See also: D. McKenzie, G. Balkiz, M. Avdeeva. A Ukrainian orphanage tried to hide its children when war began. Then the Russians came / CNN, 24 March 2023 <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/24/europe/kherson-orphanage-children-russians-intl-cmd/index.html>

20 Testimonies of Larysa Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Odesa city, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

21 Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention

22 Article 9 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 5(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights

23 Rome Statute Article 8(2)(a)(vii).

24 Rome Statute Article 7(1)(e).

time of the searches and the number of participants in the detention were probably aimed at exerting additional pressure and intimidation of the detained persons.

The testimonies of the victims also show the systematic failure to inform individuals about the reason for the searches of their private homes and subsequent detention – three of the interviewees reported that they were not given any reason, nor were they provided with any documents regarding the legal grounds for such a search and subsequent detention, two – that the primary reason for them was "checking passports".

### **Testimony of victim:**



*We did not know the reason why they came. They did not speak directly. They asked if we knew the village of Abrykosivka – this is the place of residence of my wife's parents. We replied that we knew. 'Well, if you know, it's you then.' And that's all. They didn't say anything else in the apartment.<sup>25</sup>*

In one case, already during confinement in TDC, a victim, a police employee, was taken to the building of the Suvorovskyi District Department of the National Police of Ukraine in Kherson region occupied by representatives of RF, where she was informed of the opening of a criminal case "over finding and seizing ammunition and explosive devices of military purpose." [it was about service weapon]. A month later, the victim was transferred to a pre-trial detention centre, where she was held alone in a cell for another month, after which on 20 October 2022, it was announced that the pre-trial restraint of "detention" was replaced for her with an "undertaking not to leave."<sup>26</sup>

In another case, during the interrogation, after being confined in TDC for almost two months, a victim was given documents to sign, which contained information that she was accused of espionage and stated that she would be taken away to serve a sentence of 10 to 20 years in prison according to the sanction article, in Donetsk<sup>27</sup>. The victim was not told exactly what actions constituted espionage.

Representatives of RF, who carried out detentions, sometimes presented themselves as "Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia" or "military criminal police". At the same time, they mostly did not provide official IDs or other documents and also hid their faces, wearing balaclavas. During raids on private houses or apartments, people were forced to lower their heads when moving, and when detained, a cap or other items of clothing (a fleece jacket) were put on their heads. In this way, the detainees were limited in their spatial orientation – because people were not told where they were being taken – and the ability to identify those present.

<sup>25</sup> Testimonies of the husband of one of the victims documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 28 February 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 3 April 2023.





■ The floor with the cells / ZMINA

### **Testimony of victim:**

“ I had the impression that they were detaining two terrorists. They shouted: ‘How will we transport them? Together? No! Separately’. They eventually pushed us into one off-road vehicle. They pushed machine guns in the back, directed them at us. In the car, one man holding a machine gun got on the front seat, two more sat near me and Larysa. They forced us to lower our heads, put hands on the knees, not to move, not to touch the cap (pulled over our eyes). Already in the territory of TDC, we were put in a "glass" [a sitting single-person waiting cell], held there around 20 minutes. Then we were taken out, TDC guards asked [those who brought them]: ‘Should we take them to the first floor, will you work with them?’ They told to take us upstairs. Only then did we understand what "work" meant.”<sup>28</sup>

During the detention, representatives of RF exerted psychological pressure on the detainees. They asked who Putin was (to which the person had to answer: "Our president"), pointed weapons at people in the absence of any resistance from the detainees, threatened to shoot at neighboring apartments if those who were searched did not open the door<sup>29</sup>.

28 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Odesa city, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

29 Testimonies of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

Physical force was also used during detention – in one of the cases, a victim was hit on the back of the head several times so that an earring fell out of her ear. One of the representatives of RF also tried to stick a knife under the fingernails of a detainee when her answers to questions did not satisfy him.

Representatives of RF also used physical force against minors – in one case, security officers beat the 16-year-old son of a detainee in the face and demanded that he cut his long hair<sup>30</sup>.

In addition, the victims reported that during their detention, their main documents were taken away – passports, birth certificates, as well as personal phones, laptops, and cameras. Two interviewees also reported the disappearance of personal property – bank cards and an ebook reader – after the search<sup>31</sup>.

The above-mentioned circumstances testify to the illegal nature of the detentions, taking into account the lack of reasonable grounds for their conduct, as well as non-compliance with the legal procedure and systematic violations that accompanied these detentions. Illegal detentions were applied to various categories of the population and were aimed at suppressing the resistance of the population in the occupied territory through intimidation.

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

Torture or inhuman treatment, as well as wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, are serious violations of the Geneva Conventions<sup>32</sup>, as well as provisions of human rights law<sup>33</sup>, and may amount to war crimes<sup>34</sup> or crimes against humanity<sup>35</sup>.

The assessment that certain treatment has reached the minimum level of cruelty and constitutes a violation of the right to freedom from torture and cruel or inhuman treatment or punishment is relative and depends on all the circumstances of the case, such as the duration of the treatment, its physical or mental consequenc-

30 Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

31 Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 1 March 2023, and Svitlana Kulaksys, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 5 April 2023.

32 Common Article 3, Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention

33 Article 7 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

34 Rome Statute Article 8(2)(a)(ii), Rome Statute Article 8(2)(a)(iii), Rome Statute Article 8(2)(b)(xxi).

35 Rome Statute Article 7(1)(f).

es and, in some cases, gender, age and health condition of the victim<sup>36</sup>. At the same time, the Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the case against Milorad Krnojelac noted that there is no legal requirement that would determine that the suffering of the victim must be long-lasting to establish cruel or inhuman treatment of such a person<sup>37</sup>.

In addition, inadequate conditions of confinement of people in places of deprivation of liberty, in particular, a lack of personal space<sup>38</sup>, which is aggravated by other factors: inadequate hygienic and sanitary conditions, insufficient lighting and ventilation, insects and mold in cells, limited access to showers, limited daily walks or their absence, lack of privacy when using the toilet, poor or irregular nutrition, etc. in its entirety may amount to a violation of the right to freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment<sup>39</sup>.



■ One of the cells of the TDC, in which women were kept / ZMINA

36 Muršić v. Croatia [GC], 2016, § 97.

37 Prosecutor v. Milorad Krnojelac (Trial Judgement), 15 March 2002, para. 144: <https://www.refworld.org/cases,ICTY,414806c64.html>

38 According to the Standards of the European CommTDCEE for the Prevention of Torture – Paragraphs 10 and 12 [CPT / Inf (2015) 44] of 15 December 2015) the standard for personal living space in a single-occupancy cell is six sqm plus sanitary facility. The confinement of several persons in a single-occupancy cell clearly violates the right to acceptable conditions of detention and may, in combination with other violations, be recognized as a violation of the right to freedom from cruel or inhuman treatment.

39 In particular, these criteria were given in the ECHR pilot judgment "Sukachov v. Ukraine" No. 14057/17 dated 30 January 2020, and were previously mentioned in judgment "Bilozor and others v. Ukraine" No. 9207/09 dated 20 July 2019, and "Dougov v. Greece" No. 40907/98 dated 6 March 2001.



## Conditions in TDC

Although the TDC premises are adapted for the confinement of people, the conditions in which the detainees were held there did not meet the minimum level of requirements for holding people in custody.

Women were placed in two-person and three-person cells, but from five to nine people were held in them at the same time. Some were held for only a few hours, but on average, five women were always in a cell.

As the cells are designed for a smaller number of people, women had to sleep on the floor – there were not enough mattresses for everyone, some women rolled up blankets and slept on them, there were no pillows.

At the same time, women had to sleep with a bright light – it was not turned off either during the day or at night. Wardens sometimes granted the women's requests to reduce the brightness but mostly obscenely refused them.

Hygiene was not properly ensured. In some cells, there was running water in wash basins, women had to wash themselves with water from a wash basin. According to the testimonies, the first time – approximately 21 days – the detainees did not have the opportunity to wash at all<sup>40</sup>. Later, only the women held in TDC began to be taken to the shower, being given five minutes for this. At the same time, these measures were not regular: they were taken to the shower depending on the mood of the senior in TDC – Andrey "Zloy". Women could be taken to shower every day or could not for five days in a row<sup>41</sup>.



■ Toilet in one of the TDC cells / ZMINA

40 Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 3 April 2023.

41 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

During the entire period of confinement in TDC, the women mostly remained in the same clothes in which they were detained, only occasionally it was possible to get a change of clothes in packages from home. Clothes had to be washed with Gala dishwashing liquid. Items of personal hygiene, in particular, razors, pads were not provided, only sometimes the representatives of RF gave these items from packages that relatives handed over to the arbitrarily detained, distributing them among all women at their discretion. Women independently distributed things among themselves and left them to others when they were released.

Meals in TDC were also inadequate. During the first period, until 13 August 2022, the detainees were fed only once a day – with pasta and canned food prepared by the men who were also held in TDC. Sometimes they gave tea and sea biscuits were given in the evening. Sometimes only "boiling water" – hot or warm water – was added to one meal during the day. From the middle of August, people were fed three times a day. In TDC, meals were brought in the morning and stored there until the evening, so dinner was often spoiled – in the summer, it soured without proper storage conditions<sup>42</sup>.

**Testimony of victim:**

“ In the summer, the food was often sour...it was brought, it seems, from some canteen. It was impossible to eat it: lean soups, tasteless food... There was also a smell from the toilet in the cell

At the same time, the amount of food was limited, and it was not enough for everyone. The women who were held in the 21st cell were the first to receive food and began to distribute it themselves so that the men held in the last cells would have enough.

**Testimony of victim:**

“ We tried to take as little food as possible. Only so as not to die of hunger”.<sup>43</sup>

With such meals, it was possible to somehow survive due to packages handed over by relatives, but not all of the items from them reached the detainees – the guards in TDC took some for themselves<sup>44</sup>.

Detainees mostly sat in cells all the time. At first there were no walks at all. Later, only detained women began to be taken out to TDC yard for walks – without a schedule and system. Detainees could be left here for three hours, despite the weather, in particular, in the rain.

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42 Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

43 Testimony of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

44 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

**Testimony of victim:**

*We were not very happy with walks because it was another torture.*<sup>45</sup>



■ Walking yard on the territory of the TDC / ZMINA

The collection of personal information of detainees was excessive – some respondents reported being fingerprinted and photographed six to seven times during the entire period of confinement. This may also indicate the improper storage of the data, as well as the lack of proper communication between the various departments that at different times supervised TDC. In addition, fingerprints were taken contrary to any procedure – the victims' eyes were covered with a mask and it was removed only for them to sign their fingerprints<sup>46</sup>.

Moreover, victims held in TDC in autumn (September-October 2022) reported the collection of biological samples<sup>47</sup> from them without explaining the purpose. The reasons were said to be contradictory: "coronavirus" or "for DNA". Detainees were taken out of cells one by one, put on a medical mask over their eyes, and told to say their name and place of registration. After that, the detainees were instructed to take an oral mucosa test on their own using a stick. None of the detainees gave their consent to the collection of biological material – TDC guards supervised the process and ordered to fulfill the requirements of the staff<sup>48</sup>.

45 Testimony of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

46 Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

47 Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 3 April 2023.

48 Testimonies of Larysa Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 15 March 2023.



There was no medical support at TDC at all. Sometimes the detainees received medicines in packages from relatives. There were also no medical personnel, only a chiropractor who was himself held in TDC was allowed to visit detainees.

**Testimony of victim:**

*Sometimes their doctor came by an ambulance. But he said that people who felt bad were just pretending.<sup>49</sup>*

In TDC, as well as in the territory of the entire occupied Kherson region, the so-called "referendum on the inclusion of Kherson region into the Russian Federation" was held. Everyone who was in TDC took part in the voting, it took place in one of the cells. The guards called people one by one from cells, the procedure was monitored by a serviceman holding weapons. There was no time to read what was written on the paper, the representatives of RF simply showed where to put a tick. In case of a wrong choice, physical violence was used – one of the detainees voted against and was immediately beaten.

**Testimonies of victim:**

“ A serviceman was standing with a machine gun and a woman was sitting. Her face was not visible. They showed you where to put a tick with a machine gun. I asked: ‘And the choice?’ They answered me: ‘There is always a choice.’ There could be no voluntary expression of will.<sup>50</sup>

“ A few days later, the senior came and said: ‘Congratulations, you are already in the Russian Federation.’<sup>51</sup>

The conditions of confinement in TDC in their totality and given the deliberate nature of the creation of inadequate conditions for detainees may amount to ill-treatment.

## Cases of torture and ill-treatment

“ Women are not beaten here, in Ukraine, but our hands are untied.<sup>52</sup>

Torture was mostly used during interrogations and was aimed at women who had professional links with law enforcement agencies of Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, or whom representatives of RF suspected of having ties to the Ukrainian resistance movement. Cases of torture were recorded against five of the detained

49 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

50 Testimonies of Natalia Havrylenko documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 6 April 2023.

51 Testimonies of Natalia Havrylenko documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 6 April 2023.

52 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

women. At the same time, cases of beatings during detention were recorded – one woman was brought to TDC already with a hemorrhage under her eye and hematomas on her head.

**Testimony of eyewitness:**

“ *She was beaten while still in the car. She had a hemorrhage under her eye, hematomas on her head, we saw all this when they brought her.*<sup>53</sup>

In another case, the interviewee was kicked three times when she fell while being escorted to a cell in TDC.

**Testimony of victim:**

“ *They took me to the second floor, I fell because I felt dizzy as it was stuffy. They told me: ‘Oh, you’re going to stage a concert here.’ And started beating me with the toes of their boots three times.*

Another victim was pushed on the stairs by a warden in TDC while escorting her back to cell after interrogation. The woman was led with her hands tied behind her back, she hit the railing, a hematoma remained on her leg.<sup>54</sup>

**Testimony of victim:**

“ *They don’t trust polygraph very much, they trust torture.*<sup>55</sup>

Torture with electric shocks, water and beatings were used most often.

Most of the victims who were beaten report being hit in the stomach and kidneys with feet and objects, for example, rubber batons. One of the victims was beaten on the heels with such force that she could not stand up afterwards. Eyewitnesses also report that one of the victims had her head beaten against the wall<sup>56</sup>. Some victims were handcuffed behind their backs during interrogation. As a result, victims reported swelling and numbness of limbs. Beatings were mostly used repeatedly and combined with other types of torture during interrogations.

During the interrogations, electric shocks were also used – applied to skin, fixed on the fingers. In one of the cases, a victim was tortured with electric shocks on her chest<sup>57</sup>. According to witnesses, another victim of electric shock torture had a

53 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova about one of the victims, Inna (name changed for security reasons), documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

54 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

55 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

56 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova about one of the victims, Inna (name changed for security reasons), documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

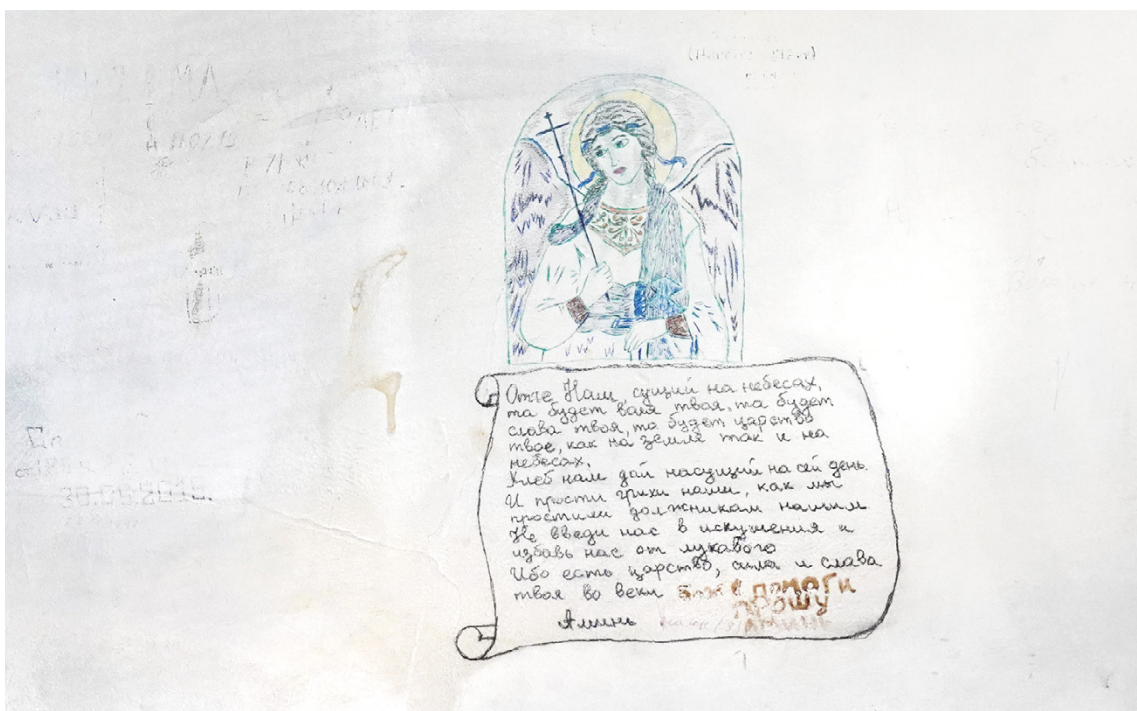
57 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova about one of the victims, Inna (name changed for security reasons), documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

heart attack<sup>58</sup>, but it is currently impossible to confirm this information because the woman is still illegally detained.

Another repeated method was the use of water – both during electric shock torture and independently. It was applied to three interviewed women. Water was poured into the mouth directly or after putting on a cotton cloth on the face, which soaked through and did not allow air to pass through.

### Testimony of victim:

“Then they threw a rag over my face instead of a hat. Before that, they asked if I was in my underwear. I was without a bra. They usually pulled a T-shirt over my husband's head and the girl from the cell. They said that I had a chance to ‘tell everything.’ One kept my mouth open, the other started pouring water. They gave a break: ‘Well, what are you going to say?’ I answered that I had nothing to say. For a moment, I pulled my hands. They then said: ‘She is strong, let's go as usual.’ They put on handcuffs, put my hands behind my back, put me on the floor. One held my legs, the second held my mouth, the third poured water, and the fourth, as it seemed to me, was filming everything on the phone. Then they stopped, told me to ‘go and think’ because they would come later.”<sup>59</sup>



■ A drawing on the wall in one of the TDC cells, text of the Lord's Prayer / ZMINA

58 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova about one of the victims, Olesya (name changed for security reasons), documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023 and of the husband of the victim documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson in Kherson region on 4 April 2023.

59 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.



The suffering inflicted on detainees was not an exception or abuse by individuals but was used by representatives of RF during the entire period of confinement during interrogations to obtain information, confessions, or to intimidate to suppress resistance in the occupied territories, and was used against women who were in an extremely vulnerable position, based on the fact of their detention and subsequent confinement in custodial settings without the possibility of using any procedural guarantees, and therefore, in our opinion, may amount to cruel treatment.

## Threats of sexual violence and harassment

Threats of sexual violence and harassment were used by representatives of RF in documented cases for the purpose of psychological pressure and assertion of their dominant position – as a demonstration of their omnipotence and permissiveness.

Two victims reported cases of forced exposure immediately upon arrest. In one of the cases, when a victim asked to be allowed to go to the toilet to put on a bra, she was threatened that the door would be broken down if she did not do it in a minute<sup>60</sup>. In another case, representatives of RF refused to leave the premises even at a direct request, and a victim had to change clothes in the presence of several representatives of RF<sup>61</sup>. Another victim reported that the representative of RF did not respond to her request to turn away so that she could change her clothes, so she decided not to change her clothes at all<sup>62</sup>.

Testimonies also show that threats of sexual violence and sexual exploitation are part of the culture of the Russian military, are not prohibited, and do not entail disciplinary consequences or any form of accountability from commanders. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that the threats were made not covertly, but in the presence of witnesses both among the detainees and other representatives of RF. In addition, threats were made against women who were held in TDC for a long time, as well as against those who were there for only two days. In particular, it is known that the guards were overly curious about one of the girls and claimed that they would "take her to the pre-trial detention center" where she would cook for them<sup>63</sup>.

In one of the cases, a victim reported threats of rape, gang rape, and sexual exploitation. As soon as the woman was brought to TDC, she was surrounded in the hall by representatives of RF, who detained her (approximately 15 people) and began to force her to undress for an "examination" – they lifted her T-shirt and pulled down her pants, touched her body [the intimate parts of the body were not touched]. All

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60 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

61 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

62 Testimonies of Svitlana Kulaksys documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 5 April 2023.

63 Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

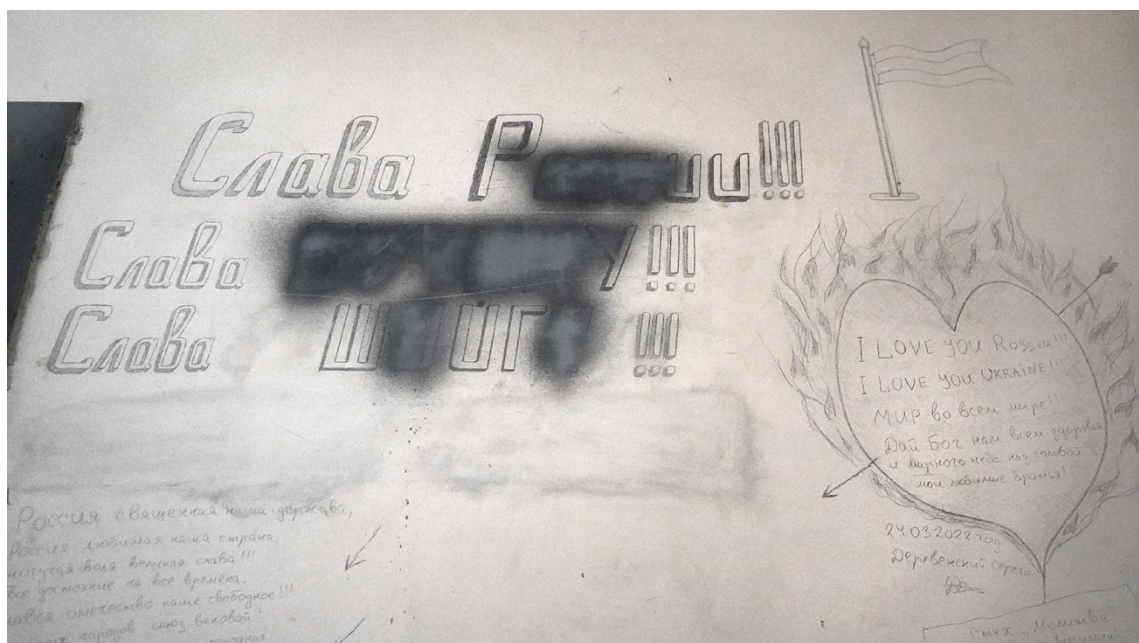
this was accompanied by comments that the woman would be raped, that she would "work hard", "be a good woman", "serve the soldiers". During further interrogations, threats of rape and kidnapping were also used against the victim's minor [16-year-old] daughter – representatives of RF stated that she would be raped and taken to Crimea or that she would go with them to Russia and be the wife of one of them<sup>64</sup>.

Deliberate use of detainees' vulnerability, humiliation, and threats of sexualized violence may amount to cruel or degrading treatment.

As mentioned above, there was also one case of sexualized violence during interrogations – one of the victims had her T-shirt lifted and her chest was beaten with electric shocks – which could be classified as torture.

## Psychological abuse and inhuman and degrading treatment

Victims were mostly subjected to psychological abuse. This was also due to the general atmosphere in TDC – degrading treatment and physical abuse of other detainees became a tool for psychological abuse of others. Collective psychological abuse was also used, such as being forced to shout "Glory to Shoigu", "Glory to Russia" and sing the Russian national anthem in the cells so that all the detainees could hear. At first, this was applied only to certain cells, and later to all but women's cells. A senior warden in TDC arranged "parades" – forced men to march in the corridor and sing Russian songs.



■ The writing on the wall in one of the TDC cells / ZMINA

64 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

### **Testimony of victim:**

“ They were marching in the corridor. I and girls lay down on the floor, looked into a gap to recognise a son or a husband by looking at their feet, recognize by sneakers, shoes.<sup>65</sup>

The women describe in detail the psychological abuse and torture used against the men who were brought to TDC and held in nearby cells. In one of the women's cells, the window looked out on a yard, where detainees were brought both day and night and systematically beaten<sup>66</sup>. The other women's cell, the 6th, was located immediately above the room where interrogations with torture were usually carried out, so women could constantly hear screams.

Moreover, representatives of RF deliberately used physical and psychological abuse against persons in the cells or in the corridor so that other detainees in TDC could see it and hear the screams.

### **Testimony of victim:**

“ Many cells, they constantly open some, and constantly these screams are heard. It was morally difficult. Both during the day and at night.<sup>67</sup>

The guards also, being near the cells, discussed the torture and abuse they used against the detainees.

An additional factor in causing the suffering to detainees was confinement in adjacent cells or cells across from family members or people they knew and the use of torture against them.

In particular, in one case, a victim realised that an acquaintance of hers was placed in the cell across from her – he was forced to stand and stay awake, to learn the Russian national anthem until morning. In the same cell, he was beaten and tortured with electric shocks connected to his genitals<sup>68</sup>.

In another case, victim's common-law husband was held in the cell opposite.

### **Testimony of eyewitness:**

“ She constantly tried to recognise her husband's voice among the screams. But try to guess. Have you ever heard your husband scream in pain?<sup>69</sup>

65 Testimonies of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

66 Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 3 April 2023.

67 Testimonies of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

68 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

69 Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova about victim Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 1 March 2023.

The tactic of using the suffering of loved ones was also used during interrogations. In particular, during the interrogation with torture, representatives of RF threatened to bring the victim's husband to watch<sup>70</sup>.

Detainees in TDC also witnessed the death of one of the detained men from torture and lack of assistance. In the evening, a moan was heard from one of the cells. The doctor, who was in TDC as a detainee, reported that the victim needed qualified medical assistance – the guards decided that they would decide something if the victim survived until morning. The next day, the man was already dead from the consequences of the beatings<sup>71</sup>.

During interrogations, threats and intimidation were used against victims. The most common were verbal threats against the victims themselves, in particular, representatives of RF claimed that the previous tortures were "trifles" and it could be worse<sup>72</sup>, they threatened that they would "take them to Donbas and let them go toward Ukraine so that Ukrainians shoot them"<sup>73</sup>.

### **Testimony of victim:**



*There were absolutely no illusions that someone would be kind or treat women humanely. You just sit and wait on tenterhooks and you understand: now they can take you away.<sup>74</sup>*

Often, verbal threats were also related to family members and relatives who were either also held in TDC or simply remained in the occupied territory. In particular, witnesses reported that one of the victims was threatened that if she did not confess, her minor daughter would be brought to her piece by piece<sup>75</sup>. In another case, a sum of UAH 88,000 was taken from a victim, which was collected for medicines for a relative with cancer, and the victim was forced to write a receipt indicating that she voluntarily transfers this amount to the "fund of RF" and is ready to cooperate with representatives of RF. At the same time, the woman was threatened: "Do you want your child and parents to be fine? Then write."<sup>76</sup>

Threats were also used as a lever of influence on the victims to stay in the occupied territories. For example, one of the victims was told that if she tried to leave, her family, as well as an acquaintance and his relatives, would be shot dead<sup>77</sup>.

70 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

71 Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 1 March 2023.

72 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

73 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

74 Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 3 April 2023.

75 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova about one of the victims, Iryna, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

76 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

77 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.



Threats were also used as a method of intimidation to destroy resistance when the victims were released from TDC. In one of the cases, before being released, a woman was sent to a "glass" [a sitting single-person waiting cell] and told to prepare for the execution. They threatened that they would let her go but she would not make it home<sup>78</sup>.

In some cases, when torture was not used – both against those victims who had previously been physically tortured and those who had not been subjected to force during interrogations – they were also threatened with possible torture. In particular, a stun gun and a baton were left on a table, ropes were tied to a chair, and there was a block with clamps under the table, through which electric shocks run – they were not connected, but left so that a victim could see them during interrogation<sup>79</sup>.

Two of the interviewees also reported that to release them or their acquaintances, the representatives of RF put forward a condition to appear in a propaganda video<sup>80</sup>. In one case, the text was dictated, in another, they ordered to "apologise to Russia" (a victim, a teacher, had a public conflict with a collaborator) and tell people to send their children to schools in the occupied territories<sup>81</sup>.



■ Improvised calendar in one of the TDC cells / ZMINA

78 Testimonies of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

79 Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 3 April 2023.

80 Russian security forces receive secret lists of Ukrainian territorial defence reservists / RIA Novosti, 20 September 2022 <https://ria.ru/20220920/teroborona-1818238179.html>

81 Testimonies of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

One of the means of psychological pressure was also the length of stay in TDC without informing the victims and their family members about their future fate, the procedures that await them, or prolonging the waiting period for interrogations. Some were informed that the interrogation would take place in two days, but it took place in six days. One victim was interrogated for the first time on the 20th day of her stay in TDC.

The lack of a system and schedule was also a factor of psychological influence. Some women were interrogated once during their entire stay in TDC, and others report four interrogations every two days.

### **Testimony of victim:**



*There were girls whom no one had touched for a month. They had a panic, then it passed, then the second began. There was a feeling that they were forgotten. It is bad when you are called, and when you are not called, it is bad also.<sup>82</sup>*

Psychological suffering was also compounded by the factor of anonymity – even when the victims were taken from cell, their ability to see was always restricted: they were blindfolded, something was put on their heads, and they were not told where they were being taken.

The unknown also extended to the status of the detainees in general – contrary to the norms of international humanitarian law and human rights law, they were held incommunicado, neither the detainees themselves nor their relatives were informed about where they were being taken, and no information about the whereabouts of the detainees was provided subsequently. Even when packages from relatives for detainees were accepted, the presence of a person was not confirmed. Most often, it was possible to find out about the location through the people who were released – they informed the relatives about those who remained in TDC.

Psychological abuse of detainees was used constantly – during the entire period of confinement, day and night, and was not limited to the time of interrogations. Individual cases of inflicting moral suffering can be classified as ill-treatment. However, given the deliberate use by representatives of RF of many different methods of psychological abuse, as well as the general conditions of confinement in TDC, they may amount to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Moreover, individual cases of psychological abuse, such as the use of torture against relatives and acquaintances and forcing women to watch these tortures, can themselves reach a level of cruelty that allows such acts to be classified as torture.

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82 Testimonies of Iryna Radetska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 4 April 2023.

## CONSEQUENCES FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH OF VICTIMS

Most of the victims were not given personal belongings seized during detention. In one of the cases, a victim was forced to sign a receipt stating that the items were given, although they were not returned. As for those victims who were detained before the rotation<sup>83</sup>, the representatives of RF took their personal belongings with them when they left.

As a result of confinement in TDC, the health condition of victims also deteriorated significantly. One of the inmates, wanting to get out of TDC as soon as possible, started taking medicines to gradually worsen her health condition. After being beaten and hit on the kidney, the victim took an excessive dose of pills at one time. The next day she felt sick while walking. For the examination, representatives of RF brought a doctor who was also held in TDC.

### **Testimony of victim:**



*He looked at me and asked if I had swallowed anything in abundance. I answered that I did. He started shouting: 'I can't help here, call an ambulance, it looks like a heart attack!'*

*The wardens said: 'Let her go to cell.' They took me away. I was lying down, breathing hard. An investigator was called. He arrived half a day later. He asked me if it felt bad and what it was. I answered that my heart ached.*

*They brought me home, not to the hospital, dad was shocked by my condition: "You brought me a corpse, take her to the hospital urgently." They took – threw me out at the entrance, rang the doorbell."*

One of the inmates had her back problems worsen due to improper placement and sleeping on the floor for a long time. Due to poor nutrition, she also lost six kg<sup>84</sup>. Another victim developed a rash and significant hair loss – it fell out in pieces<sup>85</sup>.

Victims also experience negative effects on their psychological health. One of the women confined in TDC reported that she had three panic attacks<sup>86</sup> after the interrogations. In another case, the woman noticed changes in behaviour – it is difficult to leave the house, she feels fear of repeated detention, poorer social activity, con-

<sup>83</sup> According to the testimonies of several victims, there was a rotation of units of RF that supervised detainees in TDC on 22 July 2022.

<sup>84</sup> Testimonies of Iryna Yefymova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 1 March 2023.

<sup>85</sup> Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

<sup>86</sup> Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

centration<sup>87</sup>. Victims also report increasing fear and nervousness, fear that they are being followed or that they have been released as bait to detain others<sup>88</sup>.

## REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION INVOLVED IN THE ILLEGAL DETENTION, SURVEILLANCE AND TORTURE OF PERSONS IN TDC NO.1

Representatives of various agencies of RF were present during illegal detentions. One group was probably military wearing various types of camouflage, balaclavas and holding weapons. They mostly did not have identification marks, some had "St. George's ribbons". At the same time, in one of the cases, security officers wearing military uniform introduced themselves as "Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia"<sup>89</sup> but did not show their documents. Some introduced themselves as "military criminal police".

Some victims also report that security officers wearing civilian clothes were present during detentions who mostly did not introduce themselves. They were the ones who asked the questions and later conducted the interrogations. The victims assume that they could be representatives of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of RF<sup>90</sup>.

During the pre-trial investigation, it was established that servicemen of the Federal Service of the National Guard of RF [Russian Guard] and FSB officers were involved in the commission of the specified crimes<sup>91</sup>.

According to the testimonies of the victims, Russian conscripts, mostly under 25 years of age, initially supervised TDC and tortured people. They wore uniforms, mostly camouflage, but also had blue pants with red stripes typical of the Russian police uniform.

Around 22 July 2022, rotation took place, and representatives of another security agency of RF began to work in TDC: about 14 men aged 35-40 without an established standard uniform. They were probably representatives of the Federal Pen-

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87 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

88 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova about one of the victims documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

89 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

90 Testimonies of Natalia Havrylenko documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 6 April 2023 and testimonies of the husband of one of the victims documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 4 April 2023

91 According to the response from the Kherson Regional Prosecutor's Office No. 27-49ref-23 dated 7 April 2023 to the Human Rights Centre ZMINA inquiry.



itentiary Service. The detainees themselves made such a conclusion from the fact that the regime in TDC changed – three meals a day, walks and showers without a schedule were introduced, video surveillance was provided in the territory of TDC, and more organized collective punishments were introduced. In addition, while talking to each other, they named Russian penal facilities in which they worked<sup>92</sup>. Wardens of both rotations lived on the first floor of TDC and almost did not go outside the territory of the isolator.

Thanks to the testimony of witnesses, it is also possible to establish individual representatives of RF who carried out detention and surveillance in TDC.

Victims indicate that **Andrey Sergeyevich, call sign "Zloy"** was the senior in TDC. He gave orders regarding meals, walks, and showers. "Zloy" also forced men to march and sing Russian songs. Victims testified that he took part in torture, in particular, used a stun gun and inflicted beatings with a machine gun<sup>93</sup>. He also accompanied both forcible transfers of detainees – from TDC to Hola Prystan and then to Novotroitske.

According to the descriptions, "Zloy" is a tall Russian man of standard stature, has elongated face, dark hair, and brown eyes. He's about forty years old. He has a captain rank, served in the Far East. He has a wife and a minor daughter.

**Denis** – conducted interrogations using torture of one of the victims<sup>94</sup>. Russian, spoke without an accent. Mostly he was wearing black uniform, sometimes dark green pixel.

**Aleksandr "Chernyi"** – one of the representatives of the "Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia" who detained a victim<sup>95</sup>. Dark-skinned, without a Russian accent, about 35 years old. From the conversations, the victim concluded that he could have been an employee of law enforcement agencies of Ukraine until 2014. He said that until 2014 he was "dealing" with the Ukrainian prosecutor's office and courts.

**Elnar "Bulat"** – representative of the "Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia", detained a victim together with Aleksandr "Chernyi". Has a Russian accent. Has Slavic appearance but a narrow shape of the eyes.

**Oleg** – interrogated one of the victims<sup>96</sup>, introduced himself as an FSB officer. Has tall (180-185 cm), slim, and athletic build, dark hair and brown eyes.

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92 Testimonies of Liudmyla Shumkova documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region, on 15 March 2023.

93 Testimonies of the husband of one of the victims documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region on 4 April 2023 and testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

94 Testimonies of Natalia Sosmiy documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 1 March 2023.

95 Testimonies of Olha Honchevska documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 28 February 2023.

96 Testimonies of Natalia Havrylenko documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Kherson, Kherson region, on 6 April 2023.

**Dima "Elbrus"** – detained one of the victims<sup>97</sup>. Has non-Slavic appearance, dark complexion, brown eyes.

**Ivan Mieniaylov** – according to the documents that a victim<sup>98</sup> managed to re-write during the arrest, he is a FSB major.

**Ilnar Khamzatovych Salmanov** – was present at the arrest of one of the victims<sup>99</sup>. According to the victim, he is a representative of the so-called Center for Combating Extremism and Terrorism.

## CONCLUSIONS

Having analysed all stages of confinement of women in TDC of the city of Kherson, occupied by Russian troops, several conclusions can be made.

1. Deliberate persecution of certain groups of the population, in particular, women who held positions in law enforcement agencies of Ukraine or were suspected of involvement in the Ukrainian resistance movement, is observed.
2. The grounds for persecution and detention were extremely broad, from minimal suspicion due to the publication of a post on social networks with a pro-Ukrainian position to denunciations of involvement in the resistance movement. As a result, the categories of people who were detained were not limited to those involved in law enforcement agencies or the resistance movement as female volunteers, education workers, representatives of local self-government, businesswomen, and even random passers-by whose behaviour the representatives of RF "did not like" were detained. Separately, it is worth highlighting the ongoing trend of detaining women as hostages for the further detention of their family members, relatives or employers.
3. Illegal detentions were also accompanied by additional violations: failure to notify the grounds of searches and detentions, failure to introduce the persons who carried out the detentions, as well as the use of physical force during detentions.
4. The conditions of confinement in TDC did not meet the requirements of adequate confinement and may amount to ill-treatment – this included inappropriate placement of women in cells not suitable for holding more than

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<sup>97</sup> Testimonies of Olha Strohan documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the village of Chornobayivka, Kherson region, on 5 April 2023.

<sup>98</sup> Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 3 April 2023.

<sup>99</sup> Testimonies of Lilia Pshenychna documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the city of Odesa, Odesa region on 3 April 2023.

two people, problems with access to fresh air, inadequate meals and hygiene conditions, lack of privacy when using toilet, excessive collection of personal information and biological material, as well as failure to provide medical assistance.

5. Physical abuse, namely beating, electric shock torture, and drowning of women, was used during interrogations as a means of intimidation and obtaining information or confessions and amounts to torture.
6. Psychological abuse and degrading treatment were the main method of pressure on women held in TDC and were used against all detainees. Throughout their confinement in TDC, the women were forced to listen to and witness the abuse of other detainees, including torture in cells. An additional factor of psychological pressure was the incommunicado confinement, lack of a set schedule, long waiting for interrogations, women were not told what procedures they would face when they were taken from cells. Relatives were also denied information about the place or duration of the women's confinement. Threats of violence or murder were also widely used during interrogations – personally against women or their family members or relatives, in particular children. Psychological abuse, in their totality, as well as taking into account the general conditions of confinement in TDC, may amount to torture. Also, individual cases of psychological abuse that caused severe suffering may amount to torture.
7. Threats of sexual violence and harassment, which may amount to cruel and degrading treatment, were used by representatives of RF both during detention and during interrogations. They manifested themselves in the form of forced exposure, threats of sexual exploitation and rape – both of woman personally and of the victim's child. One case of sexualized torture was also established.
8. The consequences of confinement in TDC for women are of a different nature: material, in particular, the loss of property and documents seized during searches and detention, as well as monetary savings; physical – deterioration of health, exacerbation of chronic problems, physical manifestations of stress; as well as psychological – increased nervousness, development of apathy and fear for one's own life and the life and safety of relatives.
9. It was established that various security agencies of RF participated in the detention of women and their placement in TDC, in particular, the "Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia", "military criminal police", FSB. The representatives of the armed forces of RF (conscripts) and probably the employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service after rotation supervised the detainees in TDC. According to the testimonies, the crimes against the detainees were committed by representatives of all the mentioned agencies.

- 10.** The actions of the representatives of RF in relation to victims are a violation of common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions which prohibits violence against life and personality, in particular, all types of ill-treatment and torture. In addition, both illegal detention and torture and degrading treatment are serious violations of the Geneva Conventions<sup>100</sup> and amount to war crimes. These actions may also be classified as war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, namely unlawful confinement<sup>101</sup>, wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health<sup>102</sup>, outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment<sup>103</sup>, and torture or inhuman treatment<sup>104</sup>. It is also worth noting that the research conducted by Human Rights Centre ZMINA, based on testimonies collected in individual communities of Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Kherson regions, draws conclusions about the ubiquity of torture cases – the facts of torture were not an exception or an excess of a separate military unit<sup>105</sup>. Experts of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism also recorded patterns of serious ill-treatment against the civilian population of the occupied territories<sup>106</sup>, and the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded that the use of torture by Russian authorities may amount to crimes against humanity<sup>107</sup>. Taking this into account, as well as the facts recorded within the scope of this analysis, it is possible to conclude that there are grounds to consider the actions of representatives of the Russian Federation as crimes against humanity of imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law<sup>108</sup> and torture<sup>109</sup>.

100 Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention

101 Rome Statute Article 8(2)(a)(vii).

102 Rome Statute Article 8(2)(a)(iii).

103 Rome Statute Article 8(2)(b)(xxi).

104 Rome Statute Article 8(2)(a)(ii).

105 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. <https://zmina.ua/publication/katuvannya-ta-zhorstoke-povodzhennya-z-cyvilnym-naselennyam-na-ukrayinskyh-terytoriyah-yaki-perebuvaly-pid-rosijskoyu-okupacziyeyu-na-prykladi-kyivskoyi-harkivskoyi-ta-hersonskoyi-oblastej/>

106 Report on Violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity Committed in Ukraine (1 April – 25 June 2022), 4 August 2022 / OSCE: <https://www.osce.org/uk/odihr/523811>

107 Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, 15 March 2023 / Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine: [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A\\_HRC\\_52\\_62\\_UA.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf)

108 Rome Statute Article 7(1)(e).

109 Rome Statute Article 7(1)(f).



