



REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN UKRAINE

1 September – 30 November 2024



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OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Photo cover page

A residential building destroyed as a result of an attack by the Russian Federation on Zaporizhzhia city on 7 November 2024.

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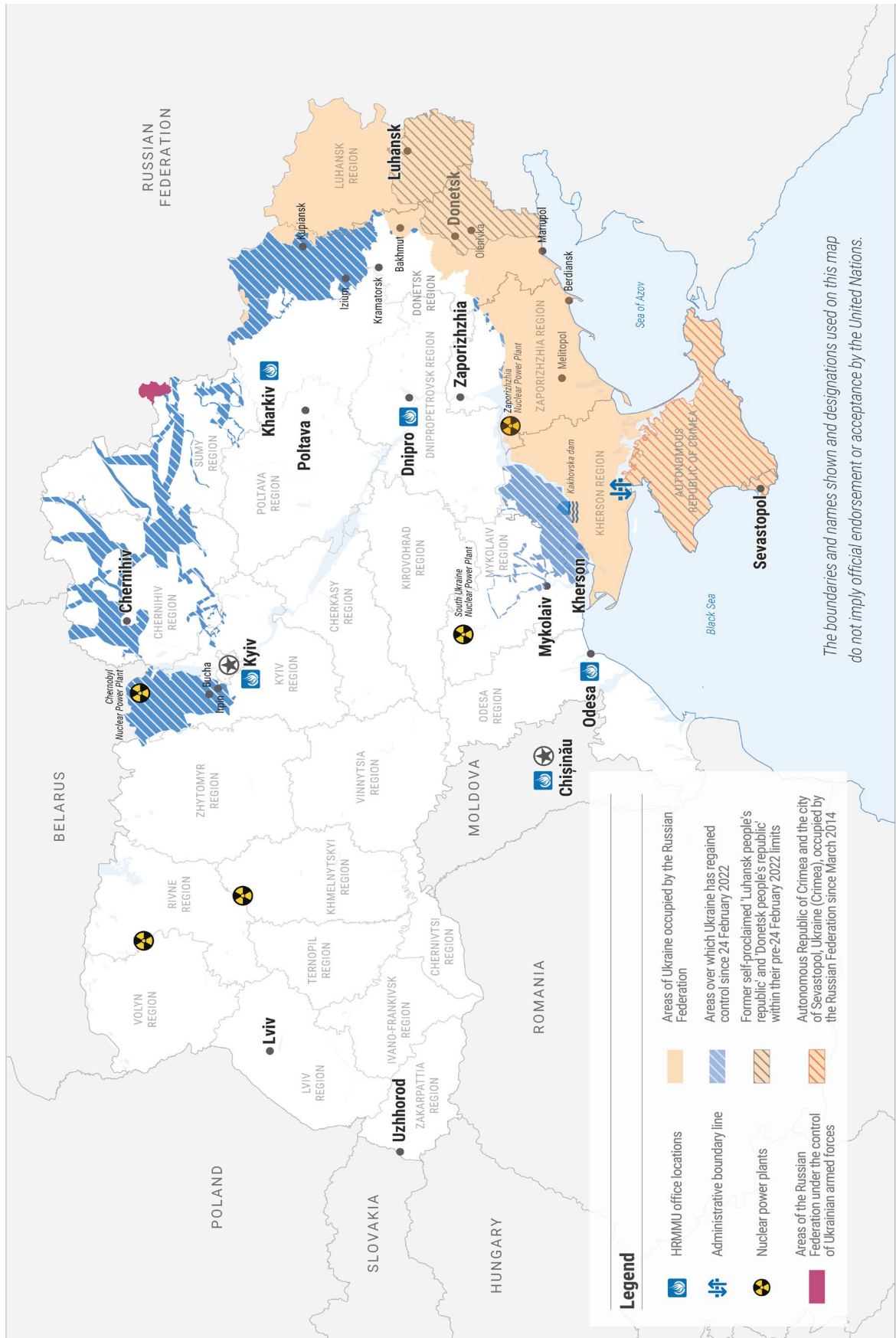


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UKRAINE: UN HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING MISSION IN UKRAINE

As of 30 November 2024



Creation Date: 17 December 2024 Source: OHCHR HRMMU

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This forty-first report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the human rights situation in Ukraine covers key developments between 1 September and 30 November 2024. It is based on the work of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU).
2. In September, civilian casualties surged to the highest monthly toll since July 2022. The increase was primarily due to intensified military operations by Russian armed forces, especially in Donetsk region. The use of aerial glide bombs and short-range drones contributed to the high number of civilian casualties and harm to communities.
3. In the reporting period, Russian armed forces also conducted large-scale coordinated aerial attacks against Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure. The attacks disrupted electricity and dependent services such as water, heating, and transportation services in multiple regions. Ukrainian authorities enacted rolling power cuts nationwide, as the attacks further exacerbated the already significant electricity deficit in Ukraine due to previous attacks. The continued attacks deepened concerns about the impact of these attacks on civilians during the winter period.
4. Since the end of August 2024, OHCHR has recorded a significant increase in credible allegations of executions of Ukrainian servicepersons captured by Russian armed forces, involving at least 62 individuals in 19 incidents. In addition, OHCHR verified the killing by first-person-view drones of three Russian and one Ukrainian servicepersons who were *hors de combat*, severely wounded on the battlefield.
5. Ukrainian women and men held in Russian captivity as POWs and retained medical personnel suffered torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, by Russian authorities, consistent with previous findings by OHCHR on the systematic and widespread use of torture of Ukrainian POWs. The Russian Federation prosecuted at least 10 women POWs under domestic anti-terrorism legislation for their membership in specific military units, which appears inconsistent with their combatant immunity from prosecution for mere participation in hostilities or lawful acts of war. In addition, the legal proceedings against them involved multiple violations of the POWs' right to a fair trial.
6. Russian POWs suffered torture or other forms of ill-treatment by Ukrainian authorities, mostly in transit locations at the initial stages of captivity, consistent with OHCHR's previous findings. OHCHR documented the death in custody in a transit location of one Russian POW, and continues to follow-up on credible allegations of the deaths of two other men in the same location resulting from torture.
7. In violation of its obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), the Russian Federation continued to implement Russian legislation in its entirety across territory of Ukraine which it occupies, resulting in further restrictions to fundamental rights and freedoms, property ownership, and cultural rights.¹ Prosecutions against Jehovah's Witnesses for practicing their faith, as well as against individuals expressing support for Ukraine or criticism of the Russian authorities, continued. The implementation of Russian legislation on 'abandoned' property violated IHL provisions prohibiting unlawful confiscation of property and affected both the right of displaced persons to return to their homes and the right to adequate housing.
8. The Russian Federation expanded its activities to teach children in occupied territory military skills for service to the Russian State through a new federal strategy on culture, changes to the educational curriculum, and the further incorporation of military training into school and recreational programmes. These measures may violate the obligations of the occupying Power under IHL, in particular by compelling allegiance to the Russian Federation, and enlisting children in formations subordinate to it. They also undermine children's right to freely choose their own cultural identity.
9. In territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine, new legal provisions regarding religious organizations entered into force; these prohibit the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine, as well as Ukrainian

¹ See OHCHR, [Human rights situation during the Russian occupation of territory of Ukraine and its aftermath](#), March 2024.

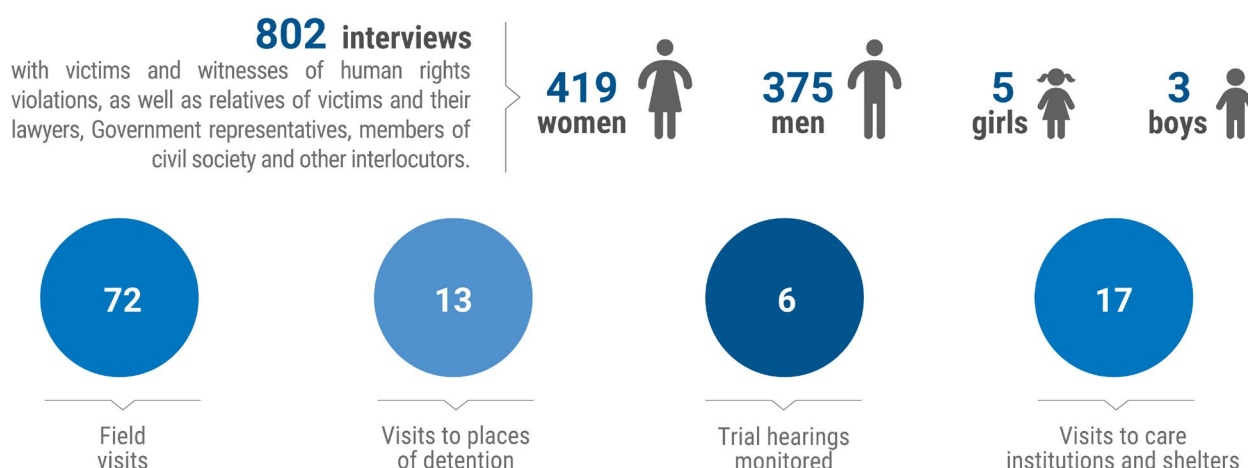
religious organizations found to be affiliated with counterparts in the Russian Federation. The law introducing these provisions established disproportionate restrictions on the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief.

10. The right to conscientious objection to military service has continued to be subjected to undue restrictions in law and practice.

II. METHODOLOGY

11. This report is based on the work of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU).²
12. The information contained was gathered during 72 field visits, 13 visits to places of detention and 17 visits to care institutions and shelters, monitoring of 6 trial hearings, and 802 interviews³ with victims and witnesses of human rights violations, as well as their relatives and lawyers, Government officials, members of civil society and other interlocutors. The report also draws from court documents, official records, and other relevant material, including from open sources.
13. Verification of alleged violations in occupied territory of Ukraine was often complicated or delayed because of multiple challenges. The Russian Federation has not granted OHCHR access for independent monitoring. Individuals face difficulty moving from occupied territory to territory controlled by Ukraine due to the absence of crossing points, numerous internal checkpoints in occupied territory, and the need to travel vast distances through the Russian Federation. Also, many people are hesitant to share accounts via telephone or electronic messaging services out of concern that conversations may be overheard or intercepted.
14. Findings are included in the report where they meet the "reasonable grounds to believe" standard: namely where, based on a body of verified information, an ordinarily prudent observer would have reasonable grounds to believe that the facts took place as described, and where legal conclusions are drawn, that these facts meet all the elements of a violation.

OHCHR ACTIVITIES IN THE REPORTING PERIOD



Creation Date: 17 December 2024

Source: OHCHR HRMMU

² HRMMU was deployed on 14 March 2014 to monitor and report on the human rights situation throughout Ukraine, with particular attention to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, and to propose recommendations to the Government and other actors to address human rights concerns. For more information, see A/HRC/27/75, paras. 7-8.

³ With 419 women, 375 men, 5 girls, and 3 boys.

III. IMPACT OF HOSTILITIES ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

- 15. The number of civilian casualties in the reporting period remained high, with September 2024 seeing the highest number of civilian casualties since July 2022. The vast majority of civilian casualties (98 per cent; 555 killed and 3,022 injured) in the reporting period was caused by the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. Two per cent of the casualties (19 killed and 60 injured) resulted from incidents involving mines and explosive remnants of war.
- 16. About 72 per cent of civilian casualties (417 killed and 2,221 injured) occurred near the frontline, most of them in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine, as a result of offensive operations by Russian armed forces, particularly in Donetsk region. Increased use of powerful aerial glide bombs in populated areas, including for the first time in Zaporizhzhia city, and the use of short-range drones carrying explosive devices, particularly in Kherson region, contributed to civilian harm.
- 17. About 26 per cent of casualties (138 killed and 801 injured) resulted from the use of long-range missiles and loitering munitions. In particular, the number of loitering munitions launched by Russian armed forces across Ukraine increased significantly in the reporting period, with nearly 2,000 launched each month in October and November 2024, compared with just a few hundred per month in the first half of the year. In addition to casualties from attacks and falling debris from intercepted munitions across the country, near-daily attacks and air raid sirens disrupted civilian life and caused increased anxiety.

A. Overall civilian harm

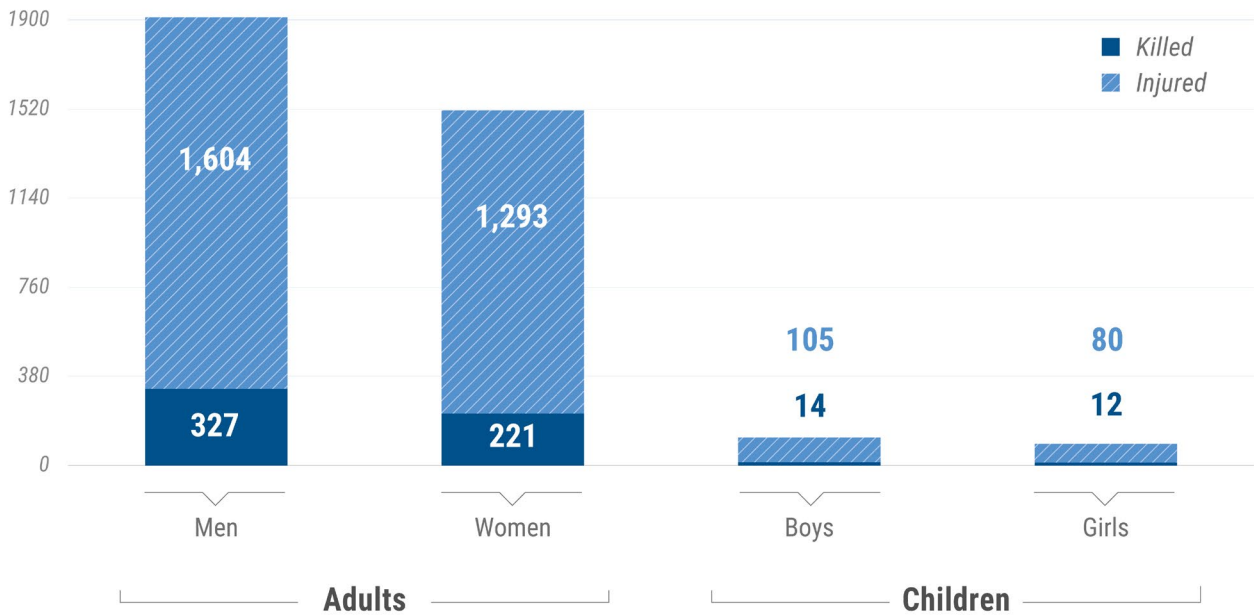
“Her husband was screaming hard, ‘Do not leave me!’ He didn’t want to let her go.”

– A witness who saw a woman bus passenger killed during an airstrike on 30 November 2024 in Tsarychanka. The killed woman left behind four children.

- 18. OHCHR verified that conflict-related violence during the reporting period killed 574 civilians and injured 3,082 (1,931 men, 1,514 women, 119 boys and 92 girls). Among the casualties were 36 healthcare staff, 10 humanitarian workers, and 33 emergency service workers.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, BY AGE AND SEX

From 1 September to 30 November 2024



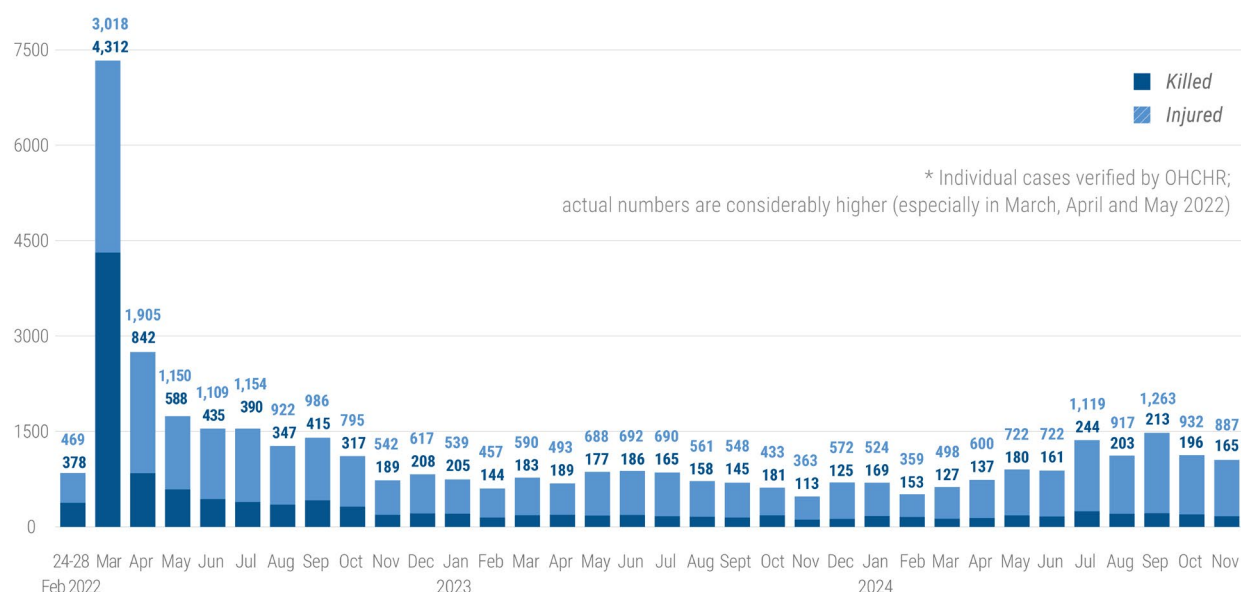
Creation Date: 17 December 2024 Source: OHCHR HRMMU

19. The majority of verified civilian casualties (93 per cent; 539 killed and 2,870 injured) occurred in territory controlled by Ukraine, mainly in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kherson regions, while seven per cent (35 killed and 212 injured) occurred in territory occupied by the Russian Federation, mainly in Donetsk region.
20. Russian authorities reported that 71 civilians were killed and 333 injured in attacks launched by Ukrainian armed forces in Belgorod, Nizhny Novgorod, Rostov, Kursk, Voronezh, Tver, and Moscow regions, and Udmurt Republic in the Russian Federation. OHCHR has established the names of two women killed and eight civilians (five men and three women) injured in different locations of the Russian Federation. Due to lack of access and limited publicly available information, OHCHR has not been able to verify the circumstances of these incidents.
21. The vast majority of civilian casualties (98 per cent: 555 killed and 3,022 injured) were caused by the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas, such as artillery shells and rockets, bombs, missiles, loitering munitions and other explosive munitions dropped by unmanned aerial vehicles. Older persons constituted a disproportionately high share of civilian casualties documented by OHCHR. Although those over age 60 make up 25 per cent of the general population, they accounted for almost half of civilian deaths (190 of 395) and one third of injuries near the frontline (732 out of 1,983),⁴ reflecting that older persons make up the majority of civilians remaining in these areas.⁵ In one example, when an artillery shell struck near the central market in Kherson city around 9:00 a.m. on 1 October, all six of those killed and four of the six injured were over 60.

⁴ Based on records for which the age is known.

⁵ Older persons are more often unable or reluctant to leave their home due to limited financial resources, uncertainty about where they would relocate, concerns over abandoning their property, farm animals or pets, or strong emotional ties to their land.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES SINCE 24 FEBRUARY 2022,* BY MONTH



Creation Date: 17 December 2024 Source: OHCHR HRMMU

22. Mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) killed 19 civilians and injured 60 in the reporting period (60 men, 7 women, 7 boys and 5 girls). This represents a 13 per cent increase compared to the preceding three months. ERW and mine-related incidents disproportionately affected men (often farmers) and boys (85 per cent of all cases). The majority of civilian casualties occurred in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kherson regions. Two incidents killed three deminers. For instance, on 10 September, two men emergency workers were killed in Sumy region while trying to defuse unexploded ordnance.
23. US authorities announced in the reporting period its decision to deliver anti-personnel landmines to Ukraine. Any use of anti-personnel landmines by Ukraine in the current conflict would be a violation of its obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, to which Ukraine is a State Party.
24. During the reporting period, hostilities damaged or destroyed at least 171 educational facilities and 115 medical facilities in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine, and 6 educational facilities and 5 medical facilities in the territory occupied by the Russian Federation. Medical and educational⁶ facilities enjoy protection under IHL. Intensified hostilities along the frontline resulted in increased damage to civilian infrastructure, in particular in Donetsk and Sumy regions. For example, an aerial bombardment of Sumy city by Russian armed forces on 19 September damaged three healthcare facilities, including the Geriatric Boarding House for War and Labor Veterans, where one resident was killed and 13 others injured, including a medical worker. The majority of the victims were older than 60 years.

B. Means and methods of warfare causing significant civilian harm

Aerial bombs

25. Aerial bombs, including glide bombs, launched by Russian armed forces killed 108 civilians and injured 755 in the reporting period in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine.⁷ Aerial glide bombs carry large amounts

⁶ Geneva Convention IV, art. 18; Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions (Additional Protocol I), arts. 12 and 48; ICRC IHL Customary Rules 7, 28 and 38.

⁷ In the previous three-month period, at least 125 civilians were killed and 606 injured by aerial bombs.

of explosive material which – when deployed in populated areas – usually cause extensive civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects and infrastructure. While Russian armed forces have launched aerial glide bombs against Kharkiv city since early 2024 and Sumy city and region since August 2024, they began also deploying them against Zaporizhzhia city on 22 September. The use of these powerful weapons in such populated areas where they were previously not used puts even more civilians at risk of death and injury. In Zaporizhzhia city, at least 25 civilians were killed and 221 injured in this reporting period, compared with 3 killed and 5 injured in the previous period. Most of the casualties (12 killed and 172 injured) resulted from aerial glide bombs. For example, on 7 November, glide bombs struck an apartment building, killing eight civilians including a one-year-old boy, his mother and his grandmother, as well as a private home, killing a 20-year-old and seriously injuring his mother. Another bomb hit an oncology centre where cancer patients were undergoing chemotherapy at the time, causing severe damage to the facility and injuries among staff and patients.

First-person-view drones

“The drone flew up a second time, saw that we were moving and decided to finish us off!”

– A woman who, together with her husband, was severely injured by an FPV drone attack on 3 October 2024 in Tokarivka village.

26. The number of civilian casualties caused by short-range drones carrying improvised explosive devices and mines increased in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine, where such attacks killed 67 civilians and injured 528 in the reporting period.⁸ The drones used in the attacks were in the majority of incidents likely so-called first-person-view (FPV) drones. These drones are equipped with cameras which provide their operators on the ground with real-time direct view from the drone of areas being traversed and potential targets. In principle, this allows an operator to be able to assess with a higher degree of certainty whether a potential target is a military objective or a civilian person or object.
27. In the part of Kherson region controlled by the Government of Ukraine, such attacks killed 35 civilians and injured 373 in the reporting period, accounting for half of the region’s civilian casualties (96 killed; 722 injured). While such attacks previously affected mainly settlements along the Dnipro river, which marks the current frontline between Russian and Ukrainian armed forces, OHCHR verified civilian casualties from similar attacks deeper into Kherson city in the reporting period.
28. In 28 of the incidents in Kherson region documented by OHCHR (killing nine and injuring 65), the civilians were driving in cars or ambulances (see paragraph 34, below) when they came under attack. OHCHR reviewed drone footage of the attacks in some of the incidents. In these cases, there was nothing in the footage to suggest that the cars would be military objectives. For example, around midday on 2 September, an FPV drone dropped an explosive device on a moving car in Kindiika, killing a 60-year-old doctor and injuring his 56-year-old wife. Footage from the drone published on social media shows a civilian car driving on a road and the explosive device hitting the windshield of the car.
29. In territory occupied by the Russian Federation, such short-range drones killed 10 civilians and injured 50, mainly in Donetsk city and Horlivka. For example, in one incident on 5 October, a drone struck a bus in Horlivka during the morning commuting hours, injuring six civilian passengers.

⁸ In the previous three-month period, at least 42 civilians were killed and 390 injured by short-range drones in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine.

C. Casualties among first responders, medical workers, and humanitarian workers

"We live here in danger, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week."

– A doctor of a hospital in Nikopol, Dnipropetrovsk region, less than 10 kilometres from Russian Armed Forces positions.

30. OHCHR documented a high number of casualties among emergency workers (6 killed; 27 injured),⁹ medical workers (3 killed; 33 injured), and humanitarian workers and volunteers (5 killed; 5 injured), primarily in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine in the reporting period.
31. In at least one case in the reporting period, a so-called "double-tap" attack – successive attacks on the same location within a relatively short time interval – killed and injured first responders who had arrived at the impact site of the initial strike.¹⁰ On 28 September, two loitering munitions struck the Saint Panteleimon Clinical Hospital in Sumy city approximately 45 minutes apart, killing six civilians and injuring 17. At least one police officer and one medical worker were killed, and another police officer and two medical workers injured. Most of the fatalities resulted from the second strike.
32. OHCHR has previously documented several incidents in which such "double-tap" attacks have killed and injured first responders.¹¹ Conducting a second attack during the timeframe in which first responders would foreseeably be on scene to assist victims would likely, at the very least, raise concerns regarding a lack of precaution required under IHL to minimize the harm caused to civilians.¹² If the documented attacks were conducted with the purpose of killing or injuring first responders or other civilians, they would constitute deliberate attacks on civilians and may amount to war crimes.¹³
33. Drones dropping explosive devices also killed and injured several emergency workers (3 injured), medical workers (1 killed; 17 injured), and humanitarian workers (2 killed; 3 injured).
34. Drones also dropped explosive devices on marked ambulances on at least eight occasions in the reporting period, killing 1 medical worker and injuring 17. Six of the incidents took place in Kherson region, one in Kharkiv region and one in Sumy region.
35. Drone attacks also struck humanitarian workers. On 6 October, for example, what appears to be an FPV drone struck a convoy of two vehicles evacuating civilians from frontline areas in a part of Donetsk region controlled by the Government of Ukraine, killing one of the humanitarian volunteers and injuring another. The first vehicle in the convoy was clearly marked as a humanitarian evacuation vehicle.
36. In another example – the deadliest attack for humanitarian workers documented by OHCHR in the reporting period – artillery shells struck trucks of the International Committee of the Red Cross distributing humanitarian assistance near Government-controlled Viroliubivka (Donetsk region) on 12 September, killing three humanitarian workers and injuring two. The trucks were clearly marked with the Red Cross emblem. Ukrainian authorities reported that a Lancet loitering munition, which is equipped with a camera, was flying over the distribution location at the time of the attack.

⁹ One emergency worker was killed and two injured in territory occupied by the Russian Federation. The remaining 30 casualties occurred in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine.

¹⁰ First responders include emergency workers, medical personnel, and police officers.

¹¹ OHCHR, [Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine: 1 March to 31 May 2024](#), July 2024, paras. 35-37.

¹² Additional Protocol I, art. 57; ICRC IHL Customary Rule 15.

¹³ Rome Statute, art. 8(b)(i).

37. In several of the drone attacks, the emergency workers, medical personnel, and the humanitarian workers or their vehicles were clearly marked, such as in the attacks on the ambulances. Since most drones are equipped with cameras providing the drone operator with real-time views of potential targets, these markings would, in principle, have been visible to the operator (see also section on FPV drones above), raising concerns of unlawful targeting, noting in particular the large number of such attacks.

D. Attacks on energy infrastructure of Ukraine

“We feel like prisoners.”

– A person with disabilities who was unable to leave their apartment for a long period of time without the use of an elevator due to the power cut.

38. Russian armed forces launched two large-scale, coordinated attacks against energy infrastructure across Ukraine in the reporting period, on 17 and 28 November. These large-scale attacks followed nine similar attacks between March and August 2024 and came in addition to frequent smaller attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure.¹⁴ Each attack involved approximately 200 munitions, including cruise, ballistic, and hypersonic missiles and loitering munitions, making them some of the largest aerial attacks since February 2022. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation confirmed it had targeted critical energy infrastructure.¹⁵
39. While many of the munitions were intercepted, others struck energy generation and transmission facilities, including thermal and hydroelectric powerplants and critical substations. The attacks disrupted electricity and dependent services such as water, heating, and transportation services in multiple regions. Ukrainian authorities enacted rolling power cuts nationwide, as the attack further exacerbated the already significant electricity deficit in Ukraine due to the previous waves of strikes. As of the end of November, power cuts of up to eight hours daily were in force nationwide, creating significant hardship for the civilian population. New damage to energy infrastructure heightened already serious concerns for civilian health and well-being during the upcoming winter period, in particular with regards to older persons, those with disabilities, low-income households, and those who have been internally displaced.
40. The damage to power plants from attacks also impacted the central heating for some nearby communities. In one community in eastern Ukraine, for example, central heating had not yet been turned on for about 13,000 inhabitants as of 5 November due to the extensive damage to a nearby power plant. A member of the local administration told OHCHR that alternative sources of heating were being installed, but that the process was expected to be completed only by the end of the year. In the meantime, people were using electric heaters in their homes. In a community in western Ukraine, three out of five schools switched to remote education and kindergartens suspended operations due to a lack of capacity of alternative heating sources.

E. Attacks on civilian vessels and seaport infrastructure

41. The reporting period saw increased attacks on seaport infrastructure, mainly by Russian armed forces. OHCHR documented eight attacks by Russian armed forces on civilian vessels and seaport infrastructure in Government-controlled territory (all in Odesa region) and two attacks by Ukrainian armed forces on port infrastructure in occupied territory (both in Zaporizhzhia region). Notably, between 2 and 20 October, OHCHR recorded six

¹⁴ For more information, see HRMMU, [Attacks on Ukraine’s Energy Infrastructure: Harm to the Civilian Population](#), September 2024.

¹⁵ Russian Ministry of Defense, Telegram posts on 17 and 28 November 2024 (available at: https://t.me/mod_russia/45806 and https://t.me/mod_russia/46302).

attacks using ballistic missiles and loitering munitions on the seaports in Odesa region. The attacks damaged several vessels and port infrastructure, and killed 15 civilians and injured 37, including 32 port workers and members of ship crews. According to Ukrainian authorities, the damaged vessels were civilian ships carrying civilian cargo.

F. Drone attacks against persons *hors de combat* and orders to afford “no quarter”

“I don't recall training on IHL. During our military training and later commanders told us not to take [UAF] as prisoners of war. It is logistically cumbersome.”

– A Russian POW regarding the instructions of “no quarter” he received.

42. During the reporting period, OHCHR verified four incidents captured on video¹⁶ of drones attacking and killing three Russian servicemen¹⁷ and one Ukrainian serviceman who appeared to be *hors de combat* due to serious injury.¹⁸ For example, drone video footage of one of the incidents shows a heavily wounded Russian serviceman lying on the ground, without a weapon in his hands, when an FPV drone targets and strikes him dead. In another incident, video footage shows a Ukrainian serviceman heavily wounded and burning when he is targeted by a drone which dropped an explosive ordnance directly on him. OHCHR geolocated all the incidents depicted on video footage.
43. IHL prescribes that the wounded and sick of all parties to the conflict should be respected and protected.¹⁹ Attacks on persons *hors de combat* are prohibited under IHL. A person who has been rendered unconscious or is otherwise incapacitated by wounds or sickness, and therefore is incapable of defending themselves is considered *hors de combat* provided that the person abstains from any hostile act. Making a person the object of attack in the knowledge that the person is *hors de combat* is a grave breach of international humanitarian law and a war crime.²⁰
44. In a statement echoing previous remarks by Russian officials and military commanders,²¹ on 29 October, the Head of the Chechen Republic stated that he had ordered Chechen military commanders of the Russian armed forces, not to take prisoners but rather to “annihilate” them. While the Head of the Chechen Republic rescinded the order five days later, it is still available online as of reporting.²² IHL prohibits ordering that there shall be no survivors, threatening an adversary therewith or conducting hostilities on this basis. Declaring that “no quarter” will be given is a serious violation of IHL and a war crime.²³

¹⁶ Recorded by reconnaissance and/or FPV drones and published on social media.

¹⁷ Two of the incidents took place in summer 2024 but were verified during the reporting period.

¹⁸ An analysis commissioned by OHCHR geo-located each incident and established the approximate time period.

¹⁹ Additional Protocol I, art. 10.

²⁰ See Art. 12 of Geneva Convention I, art. 12; and Additional Protocol I, arts. 41 and 85(3)(e); Rome Statute, Article 8(b)(vi).

²¹ See OHCHR, [Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine: 1 March to 31 May 2024](#), July 2024, para. 63; OHCHR, [Treatment of prisoners of war and update on the human rights situation in Ukraine: 1 June to 31 August 2024](#), October 2024, para. 52.

²² See https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/5204 (accessed 20 November 2024).

²³ Hague Regulations, art. 23; Additional Protocol I, art. 40; Rome Statute, art. 8(2)(b)(xii).

IV. Treatment of POWs and persons *hors de combat*

A. Torture and ill-treatment of Ukrainian POWs and retained medical personnel

"In captivity, the most difficult for me was not the beating that I endured. The most difficult was to sit there and hear young and strong men screaming for their mothers when they were beaten."

– A Ukrainian servicewoman describing the stress and fear felt when hearing men POWs tortured.

45. During the reporting period, OHCHR interviewed 42 Ukrainian POWs and retained medical personnel (31 men and 11 women) following their release from Russian captivity. The majority had spent more than two years in captivity. All interviewees provided credible and detailed accounts of torture during their captivity, including beatings and other forms of violence during the so-called "admission procedure".²⁴ Thirty-five of the interviewees were subjected to frequent and/or prolonged torture, including in multiple locations. These accounts are consistent with previous OHCHR findings that torture and ill-treatment of Ukrainian POWs in the hands of the Russian Federation has been widespread and systematic.²⁵
46. Since 24 February 2022, OHCHR has interviewed a total of 35 women POWs and medical personnel held in Russian captivity, out of whom 29 reported torture and ill-treatment. The 11 women POWs and retained medical personnel interviewed during this reporting period had all been subjected to torture and ill-treatment including sexual violence, beatings, stress positions, electric shocks, strangulation, prolonged solitary confinement, prolonged standing or physical exercises, humiliation through forced singing of Russian patriotic songs or shouting of Russian slogans, sleep deprivation, violence, and threats of death or physical violence. They also reported poor quality and insufficient quantity of food, severe overcrowding, unsanitary conditions in cells with insects, lack of access to water, toilet, shower, and hygiene items (including those related to menstruation), and lack of medical care (including sexual and reproductive health services for women such as access to gynaecologists). Most of the women described a state of almost constant stress and fear during internment, leading some to continued health problems.
47. The use of sexual violence continued to be prevalent, against both women and men. Of the 42 POWs interviewed during the reporting period, 32 (22 men and 10 women) reported being subjected to sexual violence, including rape, electric shocks and beatings to genitals, forced nudity, beatings while nude, and threats of rape and castration. In one case, a woman POW reported that law enforcement officers raped her nearly every day over a two-and-a-half-month period in 2022 to elicit information.
48. Six women provided specific information about torture, sexual violence, and degrading treatment perpetrated in one detention facility in Russian-occupied territory of Ukraine. They described how all women POWs and detainees were taken from their cells, blindfolded by bags over their heads, and led to the basement. Afterwards, when they were locked in a room and their hoods removed, the guards ordered them to strip naked and "throw away" their clothes. Having heard many death threats from the guards and seeing a tiled room that evoked the appearance of an execution chamber, the women panicked, thinking that they were about to be executed. The guards then opened the door and ordered the women to move to a shower room nearby. On the way to and from

²⁴ Also called "welcome beatings". Upon arrival at the place of internment, POWs must pass through a corridor lined with guards who subject the POWs to prolonged beatings, threats, dog attacks, tasing, stripping and stress positions.

²⁵ See OHCHR, [Treatment of prisoners of war and update on the human rights situation in Ukraine: 1 June – 31 August 2024](#), October 2024.

the shower, the naked women were subjected to view by jeering male guards and prisoners. The interviewees described extreme psychological suffering from the forced nudity, humiliation, and the fear that they were about to be executed.

Execution of Ukrainian servicepersons captured by Russian armed forces

“Brother, we won’t bring you with us, we won’t bother with you.”

– A witness quoting to OHCHR the last words of a Russian serviceman to a heavily injured Ukrainian serviceman found on the battlefield just before executing him.

49. Since the end of August 2024, OHCHR has recorded a significant increase in reports of executions of Ukrainian servicepersons captured by Russian armed forces. OHCHR assessed allegations related to 19 of incidents in the reporting period, involving the killing of 62 individuals, as credible. For the 19 incidents, OHCHR obtained and analysed video and photo material showing the executions or dead bodies, or conducted detailed interviews with witnesses. OHCHR verified according to its methodology five of the incidents, involving the execution of 15 Ukrainian servicemen. For example, a video of one incident shows four Russian servicemen line up and fire automatic rifles at 10 seemingly unarmed Ukrainian servicemen whose bodies then fall to the ground. OHCHR geolocated and chronolocated the incident as an area west of Mykolaivka village in Donetsk region at the end of September, and identified the parties involved.
50. OHCHR also verified the execution of 11 Ukrainian POWs that occurred in previous reporting periods. In one of the incidents, on 29 July 2023 in occupied territory of Zaporizhzhia region, Russian servicemen took two Ukrainian POWs from a basement where they were being held to a wooded area. One of the Russian servicemen then shot and killed a POW who had been severely wounded prior to his capture. Afterward, the second POW was questioned and pressured to reveal information about the Ukrainian armed forces. In total, since 24 February 2022, OHCHR has verified the execution of 68 Ukrainian POWs and servicepersons *hors de combat* (all men) by Russian armed forces.

Prosecution of Ukrainian POWs and violations of fair trial guarantees

“Investigators showed me a map of corpses in Mariupol and said: Every corpse must be attributed to someone.”

– Ukrainian man POW recalling Russian investigators trying to compel him to confess to killing civilians in Mariupol and attribute all dead persons to Ukrainian armed forces.

51. OHCHR interviewed 10 Ukrainian women POWs who were being tried or had been convicted by courts in the Russian Federation for membership in terrorist organizations and attempted seizure of state power. The charges were based on the fact that they belonged to specific military units of the Ukrainian armed forces.²⁶ This prosecution

²⁶ The Russian Government has designated the Azov Regiment and Aydar Battalion of the Ukrainian Armed Forces as terrorist organisations and consider all members to be engaging in terrorism.

of Ukrainian POWs under domestic anti-terrorism legislation of the Russian Federation for acts which constitute mere participation in hostilities would be inconsistent with their status as combatants. Under IHL, combatants cannot be prosecuted for mere participation in hostilities, or for lawful acts of war committed in the course of the armed conflict, even if such acts would otherwise constitute an offense under domestic law.²⁷

52. Six women POWs described how investigators intimidated them into waiving their right to a lawyer during the initial investigations into their cases. One woman shared how the investigator seemingly ended the interrogation, and once her lawyer departed, continued questioning her and used threats to compel her to sign a confession.
53. Eight women noted that their legal aid lawyers, at the stage of pre-trial investigation, had shown no interest in preparing a defence strategy, did not visit them in places of internment and, in some cases, verbally abused and intimidated them into signing self-incriminating testimonies. One female POW told OHCHR that the legal aid lawyer showed her a picture of her daughter and threatened she would never see her daughter again.
54. Moreover, 26 out of 42 POWs interviewed during the reporting period, including five men²⁸ and two women who were tried or convicted, provided credible and reliable accounts about being tortured during interrogations to extract forced confessions and testimonies about war crimes or conflict-related crimes such as terrorism and seizure of state power. Nineteen POWs told OHCHR that during repeated questioning, Russian investigators pressured them to admit that they committed or witnessed crimes that never took place in reality, promising in return that they would be included in POW exchanges sooner. None of the 15 POWs interviewed by OHCHR during the reporting period who were tried or sentenced had a lawyer during initial interrogations in their criminal cases.
55. During the reporting period, judges appointed by the Russian Federation in occupied territory convicted 20 Ukrainian POWs (all men) for various other crimes, including ill-treatment of civilians, murder, and intentional destruction of property. The POWs received sentences of up to 27 years of imprisonment. OHCHR notes that POWs belonging to the Azov regiment received significantly longer prison sentences compared to others, sometimes convicted on identical charges.

B. Torture, ill-treatment and death in detention of Russian POWs

"In the face of capture, a fellow (Russian) soldier shot himself dead. I didn't understand his decision then. When I recalled this moment afterward, in the torture house, I was thinking that I had to shoot myself as well".

– A Russian POW describing his mental state when detained and tortured at a transit facility.

56. During the reporting period, OHCHR interviewed 25 Russian POWs in Ukrainian internment facilities, including in the newly opened camp "Zakhid-4" in Lviv city. All but one reported experiencing torture or ill-treatment in 2024 at one or several stages of captivity. Fourteen POWs were subjected to sexual violence.

²⁷ Under customary IHL, individuals entitled to POW status have combatant immunity and cannot be prosecuted for having participated in hostilities, or for lawful acts of war committed in the course of the international armed conflict, even if such acts would otherwise constitute an offence under domestic law. POWs charged with crimes or subject to disciplinary sanctions are entitled to due process and fair trial guarantees. No sentence or punishment may be passed on them unless it is delivered by an impartial and regularly constituted court. Geneva Convention IV, arts. 99-108. See also ICCPR, art. 14; Geneva Convention III, arts. 102-108; Additional Protocol I, art. 75(4).

²⁸ During the reporting period, OHCHR interviewed 5 men POWs who were tried for war crimes.

57. Consistent with OHCHR's previous findings, torture and ill-treatment predominantly occurred in transit places before POWs were transferred to official places of detention. In addition, seven POWs were beaten during "admission procedures" or while escorted out of cells in official places of detention.
58. Torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, appeared to be particularly prevalent in one transit facility controlled by Ukrainian forces and located close to the frontline in an eastern region.²⁹ Twelve of the 25 Russian POWs interviewed in this reporting period were held in this facility, providing detailed and consistent information on their treatment and conditions of detention. They consistently told OHCHR that POWs who were brought to this location underwent torture commonly described as the "admission procedure" that consisted of severe beatings with plastic tubes, batons, and a whip, dousing with cold water, and dog attacks. The POWs interviewed had also been strapped to a chair and received electric shocks, including – in 11 cases – with clamps attached to genitalia. In this same transit facility, OHCHR documented the death of one Russian POW and continues to follow-up on credible allegations of the deaths of two others (all men) resulting from torture in May and June 2024.³⁰ In addition, POWs held at this location were forced to work for nine hours daily digging pits and tending a vegetable garden. Only POWs who worked received food, once per day in the evening. The Office of the Prosecutor General launched a criminal investigation into the allegations of torture at this facility. The Coordination Headquarters on Treatment of POWs, the General Staff of Ukrainian Armed Forces, and the Ministry of Defence also confirmed investigations are ongoing.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS IN TERRITORY OCCUPIED BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

59. In violation of its obligations under international law,³¹ the Russian Federation continued to implement Russian legislation in its entirety across the territory of Ukraine which it occupies, leading to further detention of civilians, many of whom were tortured or ill-treated, as well as ongoing restrictions on fundamental freedoms, property ownership, and cultural rights.

A. Rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security

"If you ask many questions or hire lawyers to disturb my work, we will just bury her and you will never see her again."

– Relative quoting the response of an official of the Russian Federation when asked about the fate and whereabouts of a family member.

Detention of civilians

60. Civilians detained by the Russian Federation generally remain in custody for prolonged periods. Updated information about the treatment and conditions of civilian detainees becomes available only when detainees are released, since independent humanitarian monitors lack regular access to civilian detainees held in occupied territory of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Cases documented by OHCHR showed that civilian detainees have suffered death in custody, torture and ill-treatment, and have complained of inadequate medical assistance

²⁹ Alleged location withheld for protection purposes.

³⁰ Since February 2022, OHCHR documented the summary execution of 25 Russian servicemen *hors de combat* (all in 2022 and early 2023), in addition to the cases of death in custody outlined above.

³¹ See OHCHR, [Human rights situation during the Russian occupation of territory of Ukraine and its aftermath](#), March 2024.

in places of detention. The occupying authorities did not duly inform family members about the location and fate of detainees.

61. In line with previously identified patterns, two-thirds of the 18 released civilians interviewed by OHCHR (nine men and nine women) during the reporting period described enduring torture or other forms of ill-treatment in detention, including beatings, mock executions, electric shocks, suffocation and dire conditions of detention. Nine (three men and six women) were subjected to sexual violence, including application of electric shocks to genitals, forced nudity and threats of sexual violence. One of the women who was subjected to sexual violence also suffered a miscarriage as a result of torture by electric shock.
62. On 19 September 2024, Ukrainian journalist Viktoriia Roshchyna died in custody of the Russian Federation, according to information her family received from Russian officials on 10 October. Roshchyna had disappeared in August 2023 while reporting from occupied territory in the Zaporizhzhia region. Until April 2024, her relatives had not received any information about her status or whereabouts despite requests. At no point prior to her reported death did her family receive information about her health, the conditions of detention or any formal charges. The cause of death remained unknown at the time of reporting.
63. In addition, in the course of the reporting period, OHCHR verified two deaths in custody which occurred before that period. In one case, a civilian man was detained by Russian armed forces in Kyiv region in March 2022 and transferred to a facility in the Russian Federation where he died in the spring of 2024 after being held in inhumane conditions of detention and without adequate medical assistance for prolonged periods. In another case, a civilian man was detained for several days by Russian armed forces in the village of Hornostaivka, Kherson region, in June 2023. He was severely beaten, released in a critical health condition and died the same day. Since 24 February 2022, OHCHR has documented the deaths of 29 civilian detainees (23 men and 6 women) as a result of torture, absence of medical assistance, and/or inhuman conditions of detention in Russian-occupied territory of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.
64. Other cases also raised concerns about whether civilians in detention in occupied territory of Ukraine or in the Russian Federation, particularly those with serious medical conditions, received adequate medical assistance. For example, family members and the lawyer of a Crimean Tatar man with a pre-existing heart condition held in detention since 5 April 2023 told OHCHR that the authorities had not provided him with needed surgery.³² In another case, family members and the lawyer of a man in detention since 2019 told OHCHR that the authorities, despite numerous requests, had been slow in providing treatment when he had contracted tuberculosis, which had worsened his overall state of health. In both cases, courts denied their requests to be released under a provision of Russian law stating that dire health conditions prevent the possibility of detention.³³ The mother of a completely blind man with a heart condition who was taken into custody in September 2024 told OHCHR that Russian authorities had refused a request to perform an examination required to confirm his blindness, a condition which also deemed “incompatible with detention” under Russian legislation.
65. Furthermore, all interviewed individuals who had been released after prolonged periods of detention reported having lost teeth or suffering from other irreversible dental problems as a result of lack of access to, or inadequate, dental care and malnutrition and, in some cases, vitamin D deficiency due to lack of exposure to daylight.
66. Family members could not obtain information about the fate or whereabouts of detained civilians, despite making various attempts. OHCHR documented eight such cases during the reporting period. Some families had filed official complaints for missing persons. Despite indications that the missing persons had been taken into custody by Russian authorities, the authorities did not provide family members with concrete and reliable information on their whereabouts and fate. In two cases, relatives were threatened with detention or violence against those detained when they approached the authorities for information.

³² The Committee against Torture requested the Russian Federation to abstain from enforcing the judgement against the man, who previously spent 3 years under house arrest, however he was taken into custody. The communication was published by the victim's lawyer on [Facebook](#).

³³ Decree №3 of the Government of the Russian Federation, 14 January 2011.

Summary executions

67. In the reporting period, OHCHR verified the summary executions of two civilian men which had taken place earlier. For example, on 9 May 2023, two Russian servicemen came to a private house in Kherson region and killed a 64-year-old civilian resident. Since 24 February 2022, OHCHR has verified the summary execution of 170 civilians (142 men, 23 women, 3 boys and 2 girls) in areas controlled by Russian armed forces, including in places of detention.
68. According to the Russian newspaper “Kommersant”,³⁴ on 8 November 2024, the Southern Military District Court in Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation, sentenced two Russian servicemen to life imprisonment for killing nine civilians in Volnovakha, occupied Donetsk region, in October 2023.³⁵ The verdict is subject to appeal and has yet to become final.

Conflict-related sexual violence

69. Since February 2022, OHCHR has documented 370 cases of sexual violence (against 252 men, 106 women, 10 girls, and 2 boys) perpetrated by members of the Russian armed forces, law enforcement authorities, and penitentiary services. Of these, 306 cases occurred in the context of detention, against 88 civilian detainees, 209 POWs and nine retained medical personnel (sexual violence in the context of detention affected mainly men and boys, with 246 men and one boy subjected to it, and 59 women subjected to it). Another 62 cases occurred against civilians in residential areas, the majority of whom were women and girls (45 women, 10 girls, 6 men, and 1 boy), and two cases (women) during processes of so-called “filtration”.

B. Civic space and fundamental freedoms

Freedom of religion or belief

“Faith in the Lord helped preserve my mind from falling into madness!”
– A priest describing the conditions of his detention in occupied territory of Zaporizhzhia region.

70. During the reporting period, Russian authorities continued to restrict the exercise of freedom of religion or belief in violation of their obligations under IHL and IHRL.³⁶ “Anti-extremist” legislation was used as a tool for targeting members of certain religious communities.
71. In Crimea, Jehovah’s Witnesses faced criminal prosecution based on the designation of their religious community as an “extremist” organization in the Russian Federation in 2017. During the reporting period, at least four Jehovah’s Witnesses (three older women and one man) were indicted on criminal charges related to the practice of their religion. In addition, on 3 October, the Russian-appointed Supreme Court of Crimea increased the sentences of two male Jehovah’s Witnesses from Krasnohvardiyske from six-year suspended sentences to six years in a penal colony. The men were initially convicted for discussing the Bible and religious doctrine in July 2024.³⁷

³⁴ See: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7295168> (last accessed 11 November 2024).

³⁵ For details on the case, see OHCHR, [Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2023 – 30 November 2023](#), 13 December 2023, para. 46.

³⁶ For more information, see Report of the Secretary-General, [Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine](#) (A/HRC/53/64), para. 30.

³⁷ One of the main activities of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is proselytizing, which includes Bible reading.

72. Muslim organizations also faced difficulty exercising their right to freedom of religion. On 21 October, the Russian-appointed Supreme Court of Crimea deregistered the Muslim organization “Alushta” after an application by the Russian-appointed Ministry of Justice in Crimea, which claimed that the community disseminated “extremist materials”. In 2023, the organization was fined 100,000 rubles on the same charges, and the imam of the group was fined for “illegal proselytizing activities”.
73. Two Greek Catholic priests who had been detained by Russian occupying authorities since November 2022 were released during a prisoner exchange in June 2024. One of them reported being subjected to torture and ill-treatment in two different detention facilities in Russian-occupied territory of Donetsk region. This included regular beatings, prolonged stress positions, and being forced to crawl long distances on asphalt during a so-called “admission procedure”.

Freedom of expression and opinion

“When you are showing them your passport, they ask, ‘Why aren’t you smiling? Why are you so sad?’ It’s a challenge to stay in control and keep yourself from saying too much.”

– A Ukrainian describing the experience of life in occupied territory.

74. According to public court records, Russian-appointed courts in the occupied territory, including Crimea, convicted 91 (48 women and 43 men) people during the reporting period for the administrative offence of “discrediting the Russian armed forces” and 22 people (11 women and 11 men) for “displaying Nazi symbols or showing disrespect for the Russian state”. Residents of occupied Crimea were convicted for sharing in social media Ukrainian songs, for calling the Russian offensive against Ukraine a war, for posting pictures containing Ukrainian national symbols or colours, for example, a picture of sweets in blue and yellow. OHCHR also documented two new convictions in criminal cases for “discrediting the Russian armed forces”. OHCHR has previously raised concerns that the offenses referred to in this paragraph are used to restrict freedom of expression, and in particular, to silence criticism of Russian military actions.³⁸ The cases documented during the reporting period reinforced this assessment.

C. Economic, social and cultural rights

Rights to education and to cultural identity and training of children in military skills

“The educational programme was built in such a way that it gave the impression that there is no such national identity as ‘Ukrainian’.”

– A girl who attended school in occupied Donetsk city.

75. OHCHR has previously reported on Russian suppression of expressions of Ukrainian culture and identity in occupied territory, and the implementation of such policies specifically targeting children.³⁹ During children’s summer holidays and the start of the school year, the occupying authorities re-enforced the policy of compelling children to be loyal to the Russian State, including by teaching them military skills for future service.

³⁸ OHCHR, [Human Rights Situation during the Russian Occupation of Territory of Ukraine and its Aftermath](#), March 2024, paras. 50-55.

³⁹ Ibid., paras. 127-136.

76. On 11 September 2024, the Russian Federation adopted the “Strategy of State Cultural Policy until 2030”, which all federal ministries must follow in developing and funding state programmes. The strategy states that its “most important task is the integration of new subjects of the Russian Federation – the Donetsk People’s Republic, Luhansk People’s Republic, Zaporizhzhia region and Kherson region into the Russian cultural-humanitarian space”.⁴⁰ The strategy refers to other priorities such as “maintaining and popularizing traditional Russian spiritual-moral values” and “maintaining an all-Russian civil identity”. One of the strategy’s intended results is to increase the number of children taking part in recreational activities “with a military-historical theme”.⁴¹ These provisions contradict the obligation of the occupying Power to respect the manners and customs of protected persons, and negatively affect the right of residents of occupied territory, including children, alone and in community with others, to freely choose their own cultural identity and to access and participate in their chosen cultural life.⁴²
77. Activities to compel Ukrainian children and youth in occupied territory to demonstrate loyalty to the Russian Federation were incorporated into summer recreational activities and the Russian education curriculum for the 2024-25 academic year.⁴³ This included use of propaganda in education as well as training of children in military skills, in violation of IHL and IHRL.⁴⁴ Over the 2024 summer, Russian occupying authorities sent children from occupied territory of Ukraine to “camps” in Crimea and in the Russian Federation, where both girls and boys received military training and participated in activities focused on reinforcement of Russian patriotism and identity. For example, children sang the Russian anthem, carried the Russian flag, and celebrated Russia Day. Children were also exposed to Russian propaganda supporting its ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine. Reportedly, tens of thousands of Ukrainian children in occupied territory participated in such camps this year.⁴⁵
78. In addition, the Russian organization “VOIN” (the Centre for Military-Sports Training and Patriotic Upbringing of Youth), which was created in 2023 with the support of the President of the Russian Federation and financed by its Government, expanded in summer 2024 its activities to the occupied territory of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk regions.⁴⁶ VOIN organizes basic military training, drills, fire and tactical medicine exercises, and drone operation courses for boys and girls aged 14 years and older. Reportedly, 600 children from occupied Donetsk region participated in its activities in the Volgograd region of the Russian Federation.⁴⁷
79. From 1 September 2024, Russian occupying authorities introduced a new compulsory subject for both boys and girls in the 8th grade, the “Fundamentals of Security and Defence of the Homeland”. This subject consists of 170

⁴⁰ Government of the Russian Federation, Order No. 2501-p of 11 September 2024 “State cultural policy for the period up to 2030”, p. 16, at

<http://static.government.ru/media/files/jlx0zkwFvU0sCnXlQTwpZO0RqTMMVL7v.pdf>.

⁴¹ Government of the Russian Federation, Order No. 2501-p of 11 September 2024 “State cultural policy for the period up to 2030”, p. 37.

⁴² Geneva Convention IV, Art. 27; ICESCR, art. 15; Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 29(1)(c); Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment no. 21.

⁴³ IHL requires an occupying Power to respect the allegiance of residents of occupied territory to their country and forbids compelling residents to “swear allegiance to the hostile Power”. Hague Regulations, art. 45.

⁴⁴ The occupying Power is prohibited from enlisting children in formations or organizations subordinate to it, including those devoted to political aims (Geneva Convention IV, art. 50; Commentary of 1958, p. 288), and from using pressure or propaganda for the voluntary enlistment of protected persons (Geneva Convention IV, art. 51). Moreover, all States are obligated to provide education that it is “culturally appropriate” (CESCR, General Comment no. 13 on “Right to education”, para. 6) and “respects the child’s own cultural identity, language and values” (CRC, art. 29; Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 1 on “the aims of education”, para. 4).

⁴⁵ For example, the Russian-appointed Ministry of Education and Science of the so-called ‘Luhansk people’s republic’ announced that over 25,000 children had attended summer camps and recreational activities in various regions of Russia for “rest and recreation” in 2024. <https://t.me/minobrlnr/15227> (accessed 18 October 2024).

⁴⁶ See <http://government.ru/news/47893/> (accessed 18 October 2024).

⁴⁷ See <https://rg.ru/2024/04/16/centr-voin-zarabotal-v-10-novyh-regionah-v-tom-chisle-na-novyh-territoriiah.html> (accessed 18 October 2024).

hours of military training including on the main types of grenades, small arms, hand-held anti-tank grenade launchers, and sniper rifles.⁴⁸

80. The occupying authorities also established “cadet classes” focused on military and patriotic education for children aged 12 to 17 in areas of Ukraine that they have occupied since 2022. Cadet classes have been widespread in occupied Crimea since 2015, where various Russian institutions, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs or units of the Russian armed forces, oversee the secondary education of children by providing specialized training with the aim of preparing them for a career in the respective institution.⁴⁹

Unlawful expropriation of property

81. Russian occupying authorities in occupied territory of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions implemented legislation adopted in 2023 and 2024⁵⁰ which established procedures for expropriation of residential “abandoned property”. According to these procedures, individuals are required to prove ownership of property in occupied territory or risk ownership being transferred to local councils of the occupation authorities.⁵¹ In occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, there are additional requirements that individuals must present themselves in person to confirm ownership of their property. Furthermore, Russian legislation provides for limitations in buying or selling property for those who do not have Russian citizenship, which has in practice created a requirement for Ukrainians to obtain a Russian passport in order to make transactions regarding their personal property.
82. Under IHL, an occupying Power is prohibited from confiscating private property.⁵² Furthermore, the imposition of the Russian system of property registration introduces a far-reaching change to the existing legal and institutional order, in violation of IHL.⁵³ IHL also forbids the occupying Power from compelling residents to “swear allegiance to the hostile Power”,⁵⁴ implicit in the obligation to acquire Russian citizenship in order to protect or enforce their property rights.
83. The expropriation of property also impacts the human right to adequate housing, as well as the right of persons displaced from occupied territory to return eventually to their homes.⁵⁵ During the reporting period, OHCHR

⁴⁸ See e.g. <https://xn--90amtk.xn--90akw.xn--p1ai/data/documents/FRP-OBZR-2024.pdf> (accessed 24 October 2024).

⁴⁹ On education of children in Crimea, see Report of the Secretary-General, *Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol* (A/79/258).

⁵⁰ See <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/> (occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions), <https://khogov.ru/documents/zakon-hersonskoj-oblasti-ot-01-10-2024-%E2%84%96-64-zho-ob-osobennostyah-priznaniya-imushchestva-raspolozhennogo-na-territorii-hersonskoj-oblasti-beshozyajnym-i-o-priobretenii-prava-gosudarstve/> (occupied territory of Kherson region), and <https://zo.gov.ru/docs/show/379> (occupied territory of Zaporizhzhia region).

⁵¹ OHCHR, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 March – 31 May 2024*, July 2024, paras. 48-50.

⁵² IHL provides that private property must be respected and cannot be confiscated (Hague Regulations, art. 46). Moreover, extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly, is qualified as a grave breach of IHL (Geneva Convention IV, art. 147).

⁵³ Since occupation is to be a temporary *de facto* situation and does not lead to a transfer of sovereignty, the occupying Power is required to respect the existing laws and institutions of the occupied territory as far as possible. Hague Regulations, article 43; Geneva Convention IV, art. 47; Additional Protocol I, art. 4. See also ICRC, Commentary to article 47 of the Geneva Convention IV.

⁵⁴ Hague Regulations, art. 45.

⁵⁵ IHRL recognizes adequate housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 25 and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 11.1), and provides that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law (ICCPR, art. 26). According to the norms of customary international humanitarian law, displaced persons have the right to return voluntarily and in safety to their homes or places of habitual residence as soon as the reasons for their displacement cease to exist, and the property rights of displaced persons must be respected (ICRC IHL Customary Rule 132). See also Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principle 21, and Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons (the Pinheiro Principles), Principle 10.

interviewed 21 displaced individuals (19 women and two men) currently residing in Government-controlled territory who owned residential properties in occupied territory, including in Mariupol. Eight interviewees reported that their homes had been completely destroyed and that they had lost all their belongings. Three interviewees were aware that their apartments were being occupied without their permission, in one case by members of Russian armed forces. All interviewees said that they had no intention of traveling to occupied territory to claim ownership of or re-register their property, or to apply for compensation from the Government of the Russian Federation for their destroyed real estate. They explained that they did not want to obtain Russian citizenship and that the journey involved risky, difficult, and long travel to occupied territory, including checkpoints and questioning while traveling through the Russian Federation. Some also expressed fear that they would be detained by Russian authorities for their actual or perceived pro-Ukrainian views or connections to persons serving in the Ukrainian armed forces.

VI. HUMAN RIGHTS IN TERRITORY CONTROLLED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF UKRAINE

A. Civic space and fundamental freedoms

Freedom of religion or belief

84. On 23 September 2024, legal amendments related to religious organizations entered into force. The law introducing these amendments invoked “national (or public) security” as a ground for restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom of religious associations; however, neither the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) nor the European Convention on Human Rights include “national security” among the permissible grounds for such a restriction.⁵⁶ The amendments also established disproportionate restrictions on the freedom to manifest one’s religion or belief.⁵⁷
85. The amendments prohibit the activities of “foreign religious organizations based in a state responsible for armed aggression against Ukraine or occupation of its territory”, and specifically prohibit the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, if a court finds that a Ukrainian religious organization is affiliated with a prohibited foreign religious organization, it could order the Ukrainian religious organization’s dissolution.⁵⁸ There is concern that once this provision is implemented, it may impact the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC).
86. The dissolution of a religious organization is a severe restriction that affects the ability of individuals to practice their religion or belief together with others and threatens the viability of the community as a whole, which requires very serious reasons by way of justification. Ukraine has not demonstrated the necessity and proportionality of this measure, such as by showing why less restrictive measures, such as measures restricted specifically to individuals responsible for wrongdoing, would not be satisfactory and sufficient.⁵⁹
87. Furthermore, the amendments state that a religious organization shall be dissolved if its “authorized persons” are convicted of various crimes, including those against national security, or if the organization is involved in “repeated facts” of spreading the “propaganda of the ideology of the Russian World”, vague terms that do not give fair

⁵⁶ See OHCHR, [Treatment of prisoners of war and the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 31 August 2024](#), paras. 114–115. In accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the European Convention on Human Rights (which Ukraine ratified in 1997), national security cannot be considered as a legitimate aim for restricting freedom of religion.

⁵⁷ ICCPR Articles 18 (3) and 19 (3) provide that any limitation on the right to freedom to manifest one’s religion or belief and of expression shall be proportionate and necessary to achieve the legitimate aims. Under the authoritative interpretation by the Human Rights Committee and the Siracusa Principles, such limitations shall be non-discriminatory in intent or effect (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, para. 8; CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 32; E/CN.4/1984/4, art. I.A.9).

⁵⁸ Law “On the protection of constitutional order in the sphere of activities of religious organizations” (Law No. 3894-IX).

⁵⁹ CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, para. 8; CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 35; E/CN.4/1984/4, art. I.A.10.

notice of what the law requires.⁶⁰ These provisions can result in entire religious communities being held responsible for the conduct of specific individuals. Furthermore, the overbroad and ambiguous formulation may put in jeopardy the right to freedom of expression.⁶¹

88. The amendments also prohibit Ukrainian religious organizations that are affiliated with another organization holding a prohibited affiliation, enabling the dissolution of many interconnected religious organizations without an individual case-by-case assessment. Finally, on the basis of an administrative decision that a Ukrainian religious organization has a prohibited affiliation, State entities are ordered to cancel all contracts for lease of property to the religious organization, even before a court has taken a decision on the religious organization's dissolution. Since the State owns and leases out historic church buildings across Ukraine, this may result in religious organizations losing access to these premises. In the past, OHCHR has observed that some church buildings had been closed and rendered inaccessible to the community after rental contracts were cancelled, a situation which, particularly in communities with few churches, may limit exercise of freedom of worship and contribute to social tensions.
89. In addition, on 17 October 2024, OHCHR documented three successive incidents of violence between supporters, clergy and parishioners of different Orthodox communities in Cherkasy city. The series of events was initiated by a group of unidentified individuals wearing camouflage without insignia who forcefully evicted UOC clergy and parishioners from UOC premises around 4 a.m. According to UOC, at least 10 men and four women among their followers were injured and required medical treatment. Law enforcement officers present on the site in at least two of these incidents did not appear to effectively separate supporters of different communities until late morning. Police reported opening a criminal investigation for hooliganism in relation to the event. OHCHR continues to monitor the authorities' reaction to the incident.

Conscientious objection to military service

"We should cut off your genitals so cowards like you can't reproduce!"

– A Jehovah's Witness repeating to OHCHR what he was told by a conscription officer when he tried to conscientiously object.

90. Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the right of conscientious objection to military service allows no restrictions or derogation.⁶² The right to conscientious objection to military service is also enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine.⁶³ However, domestic law in Ukraine unduly restricts this Constitutional right only to some forms of religion or belief, excluding others, contrary to applicable obligations of equality before the law and non-discrimination under the ICCPR.⁶⁴ Furthermore, military service mandated under the legislative framework in relation to conscription during mobilization, while granting exemptions on other bases, does not appear to allow for any exemptions to military service for reasons of conscientious objection, even for those religions or beliefs that otherwise would qualify for exemptions under domestic law in Ukraine. Thus, during the

⁶⁰ The Government of Ukraine informed OHCHR that it plans to adopt a resolution in 2025 with an exhaustive list of criteria for defining the ideology of "Russian world".

⁶¹ ICCPR, art. 19; CCPR/C/GC/34, paras. 21 and 34.

⁶² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 18 and 4. See also [A/HRC/56/30](#) paras. 5-6, citing relevant decisions of the Human Rights Committee.

⁶³ The right to object to military service on the basis of religious belief and to perform alternative non-military service is enshrined in article 35(4) of the Constitution of Ukraine.

⁶⁴ According to the Government of Ukraine, the process of bringing the Law of Ukraine "On Alternative (Non-Military) Service" in line with Article 35 of the Constitution is ongoing, and on 4 October 2024, an interdepartmental working group was created to prepare proposals for legislative amendments to allow for alternative non-military service during martial law.

reporting period, courts handed down five decisions convicting conscientious objectors belonging to religious communities which would otherwise be eligible for alternative non-military service under domestic law, for evading military service. The individuals were sentenced to one and three years of imprisonment.⁶⁵ In three cases, courts inter alia highlighted the lack of legal regulations providing for the exercise of this right during periods of mobilization and martial law. In one case, the court considered conscientious objection as itself evidence of the individual's intent to evade military service, while it did not address the defendant's arguments regarding conscientious objection at all in another.

91. During the reporting period, OHCHR documented the cases of five men who were assigned to military duty and transferred to a military training facility after attempting to exercise their right of conscientious objection to military service.⁶⁶ In all cases, the men were arbitrarily detained between two to four days by military personnel responsible for conscription and subjected to ill-treatment or torture. They faced threats of violence and 'being sent to the frontline', and four of them were subjected to beatings and suffocation and being dragged across the floor.

B. Administration of justice and accountability

Prosecution for "collaboration activities"

"Are we being jailed because we survived?!"

– Rhetorical question of a woman detainee accused of collaborationism.

92. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine reported opening 348 new cases of "collaboration activities",⁶⁷ down from 511 new cases in the previous three-month period. Ukrainian courts also issued verdicts in cases of "collaboration activities" involving 250 individuals (148 men and 102 women), all of which received guilty verdicts. Based on analysis of the court verdicts, OHCHR found that in approximately six per cent of cases, individuals were prosecuted for actions that could lawfully be compelled by the occupying Power, including obtaining positions involving the provision of social payments or humanitarian assistance to the population.⁶⁸ While OHCHR had previously documented a high number of individuals convicted in these cases, this continues a downward trend in such cases in 2024, as compared to 2022 and 2023.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Arrest or detention as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights as guaranteed by the Covenant is arbitrary, see Human Rights Committee, General Comment No 35 on article 9 (liberty and security of person) (CCPR/C/GC/35), para. 17.

⁶⁶ Four individuals are not actively serving at the time of reporting, while one individual still undergoes military training.

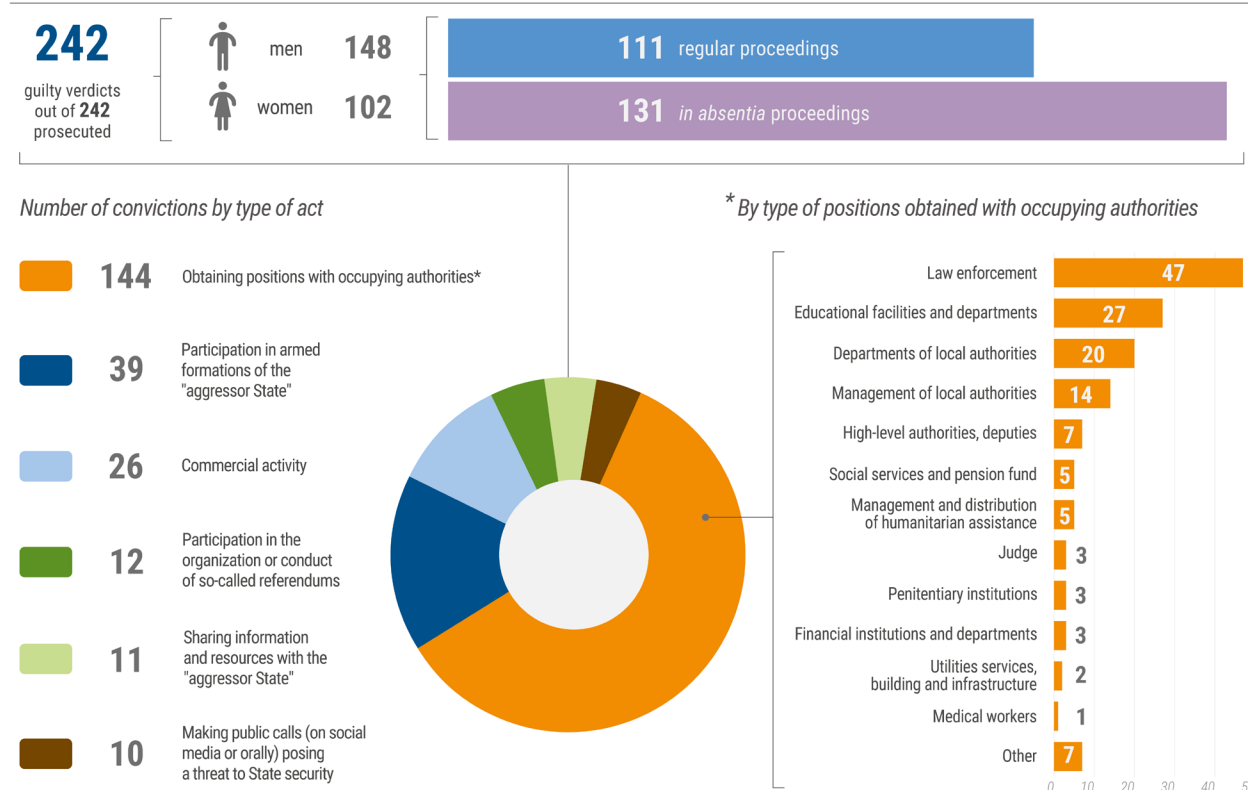
⁶⁷ On 3 March 2022, Parliament amended the Criminal Code of Ukraine by introducing article 111-1 on "collaboration activities". The law defines the offence of collaboration in broad terms and with imprecise language, causing uncertainty for individuals residing in occupied territory about how to regulate their conduct to avoid liability under the law.

⁶⁸ Article 51 of Geneva Convention IV provides that the Occupying Power may compel protected persons to work for public utility services, or for the feeding, sheltering, clothing, transportation or health of the population of the occupied country.

⁶⁹ See, OHCHR, [Treatment of prisoners of war and the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 31 August 2024](#), para. 116.

VERDICTS IN CASES OF "COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES" (ART. 111-1 OF THE CRIMINAL CODE OF UKRAINE)

From 1 September to 30 November 2024



Creation Date: 17 December 2024 Source: OHCHR HRMMU

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

93. On 9 October 2024, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted the implementation law amending the Criminal Code of Ukraine, prior to ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).⁷⁰ The law was signed by the President of Ukraine on 22 October and, on 25 October, Ukraine deposited its instrument of ratification with the United Nations. Thus, Ukraine will become a Member State of the ICC starting from 1 January 2025.⁷¹ Ukraine's instrument of ratification included a formal declaration, pursuant to article 124 of the Rome Statute, excluding the Court's jurisdiction over war crimes allegedly committed by Ukrainian nationals for a period of seven years from the Statute's entry into force for Ukraine.
94. The implementation law partially harmonized Ukrainian domestic criminal legislation with the provisions of the Rome Statute by introducing crimes against humanity and command responsibility into the Criminal Code of Ukraine. Further amendments will be required to bring Ukrainian criminal legislation fully in line with the Rome Statute, in particular with regard to provisions on war crimes and the crime of aggression.⁷² Nevertheless, the declaration excluding the Court's jurisdiction over war crimes allegedly committed by Ukrainian nationals for a

⁷⁰ Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine in connection with the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and amendments thereto", at <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4012-IX#Text>.

⁷¹ According to article 126 of the Rome Statute, the Statute enters into force on the first day of the month after the 60th day following the deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification.

⁷² With a view to further integrate the Rome Statute into the domestic framework, two draft laws were registered with Parliament on 2 September 2024: the draft Law of Ukraine "On criminal liability for international crimes" (Registration No. 11538) and the draft Law of Ukraine "On amendments to the criminal and criminal procedure codes of Ukraine in connection with the adoption of the law of Ukraine 'on criminal liability for international crimes'" (Registration No. 11539).

period of seven years from the Statute's entry into force for Ukraine detracts from this otherwise very positive development.

C. Conflict-related sexual violence

95. In total, since 24 February 2022, OHCHR has documented 51 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by members of the Ukrainian armed forces, law enforcement authorities, and penitentiary services against 43 men and eight women, including 26 POWs and 25 civilians. These cases consisted largely of threats of rape or threats of other forms of sexual violence.

VII. TECHNICAL COOPERATION

96. During the reporting period, OHCHR continued sustained advocacy efforts with the Government of Ukraine, in particular regarding the rights of conflict-related detainees, the treatment of POWs, and strengthening of human rights protections and gender equality. It also broadly engaged with local officials exiled from occupied territory to continue documenting the human rights situation among their communities.
97. OHCHR published a report containing an update on the treatment of POWs and developments on the human rights situation in Ukraine.⁷³ HRMMU also published a bulletin on the attacks on the energy infrastructure of Ukraine and the resulting harm to the civilian population, drawing on the data and expertise of members of the UN Country Team in Ukraine.⁷⁴
98. In consultation with the UN Team in Ukraine, OHCHR prepared a joint UN submission for the annual report of the United Nations Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence. OHCHR also was the main contributor for the 2024 third quarter Global Horizontal Note, which compiles information on the six grave violations against children in times of war and feeds into the annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

99. OHCHR continues to advocate for the implementation of recommendations in its past reports, most of which remain relevant. The violations documented in the current reporting period highlight the need for further progress in protecting human rights, and, in particular, to implement the following recommendations:
100. To all parties to the conflict:
- a) **Respect and ensure full compliance with IHL, in particular, in the conduct of hostilities, and the treatment of protected persons;**
 - b) **Take all feasible precautions, in light of experience, to avoid or at the very least minimize civilian harm, including through the careful selection of means and methods of warfare;**
 - c) **Not to use anti-personnel mines under any circumstances;**
 - d) **Ensure prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged violations of IHL and IHRL, including military actions causing excessive civilian harm, and ensure that alleged perpetrators, including members of the military and security forces and persons in positions of command are duly prosecuted;**
 - e) **Provide gender-sensitive reparations and support to victims and survivors, including medical, psychological and legal support services, with particular attention to the specific needs of women, girls, men and boys;**

⁷³ OHCHR, [Treatment of prisoners of war and the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 31 August 2024](#).

⁷⁴ HRMMU, [Attacks on Ukraine's Energy Infrastructure: Harm to the Civilian Population](#), September 2024.

101. To the Russian Federation:

- f) Immediately cease its use of armed force against Ukraine and withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine, as per United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1 on the "Aggression against Ukraine", adopted on 2 March 2022, and the binding order of the International Court of Justice on provisional measures of 16 March 2022;
- g) Immediately cease attacks utilizing high-yield aerial glide bombs and missiles with wide area effects in populated areas and against civilian infrastructure;
- h) Immediately cease and publicly condemn summary execution, torture, sexual violence and ill-treatment against POWs and civilian detainees, and end all unlawful practices relating to detention;
- i) Provide independent monitors, including OHCHR, with regular, unimpeded and confidential access to all places where Ukrainian POWs and civilian detainees are held;
- j) Ensure adequate conditions and medical care for all detainees in its custody, in line with IHL and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules and Bangkok Rules), including by providing appropriate medical treatment, particularly for detainees with life-threatening conditions and disabilities;
- k) Strengthen cooperation and dialogue with OHCHR, including by providing OHCHR meaningful access to the occupied territory of Ukraine;
- l) Respect freedom of religion or belief in the occupied territory, in accordance with its obligations under IHRL and IHL;
- m) Fulfil obligations under IHL in the territory of Ukraine under its occupation and respect Ukrainian laws in force unless absolutely prevented from doing so, including on matters of housing, land and property;
- n) Cease practices of enlisting children in formations or organizations subordinate to the Russian Federation, and respect children's rights to education and full participation in cultural life, which includes their rights not to be subjected to indoctrination through education and to freely express and develop their cultural identity;

102. To Ukraine:

- o) Ensure that POWs and civilian internees are treated in full compliance with IHL and IHRL, in particular by protecting them from torture or ill-treatment at all times, including at the initial stage of captivity;
- p) Align provisions in the law on collaboration activities with international law and human right standards, and refrain from prosecution of individuals for conduct which they can be lawfully compelled to carry out under IHL;
- q) Amend the law "On the protection of constitutional order in the sphere of activities of religious organizations" to align fully with IHRL;
- r) Take means necessary to recognise, in domestic law, the right of conscientious objection to military service in accordance with the scope of the right under ICCPR art. 18, and refrain from any restrictions to the enjoyment of the right, including by ensuring that alternative service arrangements are applicable to all forms of military service, and by conducting effective investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of arbitrary deprivations of liberty, ill-treatment and torture of conscientious objectors;
- s) Fully harmonize its domestic criminal legislation with the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and withdraw its declaration under article 124 of the Rome

Statute of the International Criminal Court, which temporarily restricts the jurisdiction of the Court over alleged war crimes committed by Ukrainian nationals;

103. To the international community:

- t) Urge the parties to the conflict to fully respect IHRL and IHL, and work collectively to ensure respect for IHRL and IHL, including through accountability, the provision of remedy and reparation for violations, and prevention of further violations;
- u) Call for OHCHR and other independent human rights monitors to have the fullest possible access to all areas of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation, including places of internment and detention, in order to facilitate comprehensive monitoring and accountability;
- v) Assist actors providing psychological services and other types of support to victims and survivors of gross human rights violations, including sexual violence, with attention to the respective specific needs of women, girls, men and boys; and
- w) Sustain attention and humanitarian assistance to people impacted by the war, including those internally displaced, with a focus on persons in vulnerable situations such as older persons and persons with disabilities.

