



Voices of Children Charitable Foundation
NGO "Kharkiv Institute of Social Research"

CHILDREN AND WAR IN UKRAINE

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Introduction

The second year of Ukrainian-Russian war continues to cause many losses for Ukraine — the Russian army regularly shells the civilian population and civilian infrastructure. As of May 31, 2023, 483 children have already died, 989 have received injuries of varying degrees of severity¹. More than 2,900 cases of crimes against Ukrainian children by the Russian invaders are being investigated².

The population of the temporarily occupied territories suffers from the lack of medical care, social services, communal infrastructure, sufficient food and elsewhere of drinking water. The problem of involving Ukrainian children by the Russian occupiers in propaganda and military operations remains urgent. Thousands of children have been deported, many of them may not return home.

We present you a report that briefly describes the key events of three months of the second year of this war, which are related to the situation, problems and needs of Ukrainian children.

The methodology is based on the analysis of statistics, data from the official sources and media materials. Seven interviews were also conducted with public representatives, parents under the occupation and in the active combat areas, with families which were forced to move to relatively safe regions of Ukraine and abroad.

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¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-483-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-28398>

² <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/andrii-kostin-zlocin-proti-ditini-ce-zlocin-proti-koznogo-z-nas>

War crimes against Ukrainian children

Shelling, bombing and mining of civilian objects



Destroyed high-rise building in the city of Zaporizhzhia , dated from March 2³

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 8,895 civilians have been killed in Ukraine, from February 24, 2022 to May 21, 2023. Among the casualties there were 275 boys and 218 girls, while the gender of 30 children remains unidentified. Additionally, among the 15,117 recorded injuries, 445 boys and 314 girls were affected, with the gender of 276 children yet to be determined. The majority of these casualties and injuries was caused by the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including heavy artillery and MLRS shelling, as well as air attacks⁴.

³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/vorog-zavdav-udar-po-bagatopoverxovomu-budinku-v-zaporizzi-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

⁴ UNHCR believes that the actual number of civilian casualties is much higher, as there are delays in receiving information from some areas of intense fighting and many reports of civilian casualties still

According to the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, as of May 31, the most children suffered in the Donetsk region - 462, Kharkiv - 279, Kyiv - 128, Kherson - 102, Zaporizhzhia - 91, Mykolaiv - 89, Dnipro - 73, Chernihiv - 71, Lugansk - 67⁵.

Shelling and bombing of civilian infrastructure have not subsided this year, but in May there was a significant surge in the intensity of shelling in Ukraine. So, in May alone, air defense forces shot down 154 missiles, of which: 7 Kinzhals, 26 Calibers, 13 Iskanders of various modifications. The most massive rocket shelling occurred on May 29, when Russian occupants launched 37 cruise missiles and 11 Iskanders. 403 enemy drones were shot down in a month⁶.

On March 2, the Russian armed forces shelled one of the residential areas of Zaporizhzhia. The missile hit a five-story building and as a result it was destroyed. From under the rubble of the house, the specialists of the State Emergency Service released the bodies of 13 dead people, in particular an 8-month-old child⁷.

On March 5, Russian rockets hit a private house in the village of Ponyativka, the Kherson region. Mother and her two sons of 7 and 15 years old died⁸.

On March 13, 2023, the armed forces of the Russian Federation shelled the village of Solonchaky, the Mykolaiv region. The parents of a 7-year-old boy died. The child was hospitalized with injuries⁹.

On March 22, as a result of the Russian missile attack on residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia, three children of 7, 8 and 9 years old were injured¹⁰.

need to be confirmed. This applies, for example, to the settlements of Mariupol (the Donetsk region), Lysychansk, Popasna and Severodonetsk (the Luhansk region), where, according to reports, there were numerous cases of civilian deaths or injuries. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-civilian-casualties-2400-22-may-2023-enruuk>

⁵<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-483-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-28398>

⁶ <https://t.me/MykolaOleshchuk/72>

⁷ https://t.me/dsns_telegram/14358

⁸ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-464-ditini-zaginula-v-ukrayini-za-rik-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf>

⁹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/dvoje-zagiblix-ta-cetvero-poranenix-sered-yakix-7-ricna-ditina-cerez-obstril-mikolayivshhini-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

¹⁰ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-465-ditei-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf>



On April 7, as a result of enemy shelling of Stanislav, the Kherson region, two children of 3 and 10 years old were injured¹¹.

On April 21, as a result of Russian shelling of the village New York, the Donetsk region, a 9-year-old boy was injured¹².

On May 3, as a result of massive Russian shelling of the Kherson region, 21 people were killed, 48 were injured, including two children of 6 and 17 years old¹³.

A wounded woman with a child in the supermarket, the Kherson region, May 3¹⁴.

On May 15, as a result of enemy shelling a 13-year-old girl was injured in Nikopol, the Dnipro region, ¹⁵.

On May 23, as a result of the Russian missile hitting a residential building in Toretsk, the Donetsk region, a 2-year-old boy was injured.

In general, as of May 10 almost 18.5 thousand multi-storey residential buildings and more than 142 thousand private estates were destroyed or damaged in Ukraine because of the massive bombing and shelling by the armed forces of the Russian Federation¹⁶.

Also, as of May 31, 3267 educational institutions were damaged, 261 of them were completely destroyed ¹⁷.

As of May 25, 2023, 1,520 objects of cultural infrastructure, except for cultural heritage monuments suffered losses. Almost one third of them (541) - were destroyed. Club facilities, libraries, museums, theaters, philharmonic society, art education institutions (art schools and colleges) were damaged and destroyed on the territory of 216 territorial communities¹⁸.

¹¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-467-ditei-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-24492>

¹² <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-470-ditei-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-25565>

¹³ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-478-ditei-zaginulo-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-3>

¹⁴ https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/6108?fbclid=IwAR0HHliGrOS1aOIEjyUuw7H5i1fQ7kU0gWMPet9TsTg3BAARGhBuvLAkeMI

¹⁵ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-481-ditina-zaginula-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-2>

¹⁶ <https://mtu.gov.ua/news/34275.html>

¹⁷ <https://saveschools.in.ua/>

¹⁸ <https://mkip.gov.ua/news/9265.html>

As of May 2023, 1,451 medical infrastructure facilities and 591 health care facilities were damaged¹⁹.

On March 9, the Russian military shelled Zaporizhzhia again. As a result, several critical infrastructure facilities were destroyed. The blast wave and debris damaged the buildings of two educational institutions²⁰.

On March 15, at around 10:00 a.m., the Russian military launched a missile attack on the Shevchenkivskyi district of Kharkiv. As a result of enemy shelling, the educational institution was partially destroyed. Windows in residential buildings were broken. Residents' cars were damaged²¹.



Medical facility after being hit by a Russian missile, Dnipro, May 26²²

On April 28, as a result of Russian shelling of civilian infrastructure a rocket hit a 9-story residential building in the city of Uman, the Cherkasy region. The entrance to

¹⁹ <https://moz.gov.ua/article/news/viktor-ljashko-nasha-meta-%e2%80%93-vidbuduvati-krasche-nizh-bulo->

²⁰ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/raketnii-obstril-objektiv-kriticnoyi-infrastrukturi-zaporizhya-rozpocato-rozsliduvannya>

²¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/obstril-rosiiskimi-viiskovimi-civilnoyi-infrastrukturi-xarkova-rozpocato-provadzennya>

²² <https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/4849>

the high-rise building was completely destroyed. The dead include four children: 8 and 10-year-old girls and 15 and 1.5-year-old boys²³.

On May 17, the Russian military shelled residential areas in the city of Kherson and populated areas of the region once again. In the regional center, an enemy projectile hit a high-rise building. The local hospital in Beryslavskiy district was also damaged²⁴.

On May 26, the Russian army shelled the healthcare facility in the city of Dnipro²⁵. 32 people were injured, including children²⁶.

Ukraine continues suffering from the mining of civilian objects by the Russian military, as well as the contamination of territories with the remnants of weapons. This poses a significant danger for local residents and people who are in temporarily occupied territories, active combat areas or return to the de-occupied territories of Ukraine.

On March 10 in the village of Lyman in the Mykolaiv region, a man brought home a cluster shell found in the garden. The ammunition exploded near a 9-year-old boy. The child received shrapnel wounds²⁷.

On March 12, a 13-year-old boy from the village of Lubomyrivka, the Mykolaiv region. The minor child was on the territory of the household and stepped on an unknown object, which detonated. This child received explosive injuries, shrapnel wounds to the body and limbs²⁸.

On March 21, due to the detonation of a mine on the outskirts of the village a 16-year-old boy was injured in the village of Lepetykha, the Mykolaiv region²⁹.

On May 15 a 17-year-old boy came across explosives left by the Russian army in the village of Trifonivka, the Kherson region. He was seriously injured by the detonation³⁰.

In March 2023, the Interactive map of incidents related to explosive objects and persons affected by them was presented. It was developed by the Ministry of Reintegration together with the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the Mine Action Center of the State Special Service of Transport (DSST). The introduction of such a map made it possible to start collecting information on victims of mines and unexploded shells for the first time. In addition,

²³<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-475-ditei-zaginulo-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf>

²⁴<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/vranci-okupanti-pocilili-u-likarnyu-ta-bagatopoverxivku-na-xersonshini-pravooxonci-dokumentuyut-naslidki>

²⁵<https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/4873>

²⁶<https://t.me/dnipropetrovskaODA/4892>

²⁷https://t.me/chat_s_shayhet/1532

²⁸https://t.me/chat_s_shayhet/1590

²⁹<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-464-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-23121>

³⁰<https://t.me/khersonskaODA/5859>

specialists began to assess their needs, systematize and store such data in the Mine Action Information Management System³¹.

In total, as of the end of May, 174,000 square kilometers of Ukraine were contaminated with remnants of Russian mines and unexploded shells³². Since February 24, 2022, the pyrotechnic units of the State Emergency Service have neutralized more than 396,000 units of explosive objects, including almost 3,000 units of aerial bombs, and surveyed an area of about 88,399 hectares³³.

In addition, the occupiers use schools, hospitals, kindergartens and other civilian objects to place equipment and/or arrange military headquarters there, treat wounded soldiers. At the same time, they often force local residents to visit these facilities in order to use them as a "human shield" from the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

On April 12, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine announced that mobilized units of the Russian occupation forces had arrived in the city of Skadovsk, the Kherson region. Personnel were placed in the buildings of educational institutions³⁴.

On April 28, it became known that servicemen of the Russian occupation forces were dwelled in the local school building in Lubyanka, the Luhansk region. The occupiers also converted the local hospital in the town of Kalanchak, the Kherson region, into a military hospital, where a large number of seriously wounded Russians were taken to on April 27³⁵.

On May 16, it became known that in Yasynuvata, the Donetsk region, the Russian occupiers are using the buildings of one of the local schools to house the personnel. Military equipment is hidden in the schoolyard, basements serve as shelters³⁶.

On May 17, it was discovered that the kindergarten building of Yuryivka, the Zaporizhzhia region, is used by the Russian occupiers to accommodate personnel. At the same time, civilians who were evacuated from settlements close to the line of combat live on the territory of the kindergarten³⁷.

³¹<https://minre.gov.ua/2023/03/18/minreintegracziyi-vidpovidatyme-za-napovnennya-bazy-danyh-postrazhdalyh-vid-min-ta-nevybuhnuvshyh-boyeprypasiv/>

³²<https://dsns.gov.ua/news/ostanni-novini/nasa-golovne-zavdannia-priskoriti-tempi-gumanitarnogo-rozminuvannia-iuliia-sviridenko>

³³<https://dsns.gov.ua/uk/news/ostanni-novini/pirotexniki-dsns-prodovzuiut-ocishhuvati-zemliu-vid-bojepripasiv-iaki-zalisiv-po-sobi-vorog-sergii-kruk-pro-robotu-saperiv-na-mikolayivshhini>

³⁴<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02tiNNw4Z8rmn7hnkNGBLtuPeLajrHiKU8nsAC89XmYKoRs3BUq2oD84u4nH8aejjNI>

³⁵<https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid02yvfzf6RDTpUdb13fRc8RP3MKDdR92yw87HyLNXdndKof21bDVPT8Nyso8wr6Nwil>

³⁶<https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/rosiiany-prodovzhuyut-vykorystovuvaty-zaklady-osvity-na-tot-dlya-rozmishhennya-vijskovyh/>

³⁷https://www.zsu.gov.ua/new_page/64646d13d75d722aeec055b7

Use of illicit means of warfare

Russia goes on using indiscriminate weapons and weapons that can cause excessive damage and suffering on the territory of Ukraine. The occupiers use cluster, phosphorous and thermobaric ammunition against the civilians. Petal mines are common; they are of green or olive color, which makes them very difficult to detect. As a result of the explosion, a person is guaranteed to injure his/her lower limbs.

Thus, on March 17, a 66-year-old woman was blown up by an anti-personnel petal mine in the forest nearby Izyum, the Kharkiv region. She was brought to the hospital with critical injuries³⁸.

On March 25, Russian troops shelled the town of Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region with Grad MLRS and artillery. The invaders used phosphorous bombs. One man died³⁹.



Consequences of the attack on Kurakhove, the Donetsk region⁴⁰

On April 3, the Russian army shelled the town of Kurakhove, the Donetsk region, with cluster munitions and rockets. A shopping mall, branches of Ukrposhta and Ukrtelecom, a hospital, and several high-rise buildings were damaged⁴¹.

³⁸ <https://t.me/synegubov/5725>

³⁹ <https://suspilne.media/425499-rosijski-vijska-obstrilali-casiv-ar-na-doneccini-zagynuv-colovik/>

⁴⁰ Consequences of the attack on Kurakhovo, April 3, Photo: Roman Padun.

<https://suspilne.media/434568-rosijski-vijska-obstrilali-kurahivsku-gromadu-kasetnimi-boepripasami-toreck-dvoma-raketami/>

⁴¹ https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/7347

On April 5, the occupiers shelled the town of Oleksievo-Druzhkivka, the Donetsk region, with cluster shells. As a result, two civilians died⁴².

On April 18, a woman stepped on an anti-personnel petal mine in the town of Balaklia, the Kharkiv region. She was hospitalized with a laceration to her foot⁴³.

On May 5, the Russian military used prohibited phosphorus and incendiary munitions in the town of Bakhmut, the Donetsk region⁴⁴.

On May 10, the enemy massively attacked the village of Malokaterinivka, the Zaporizhzhia region. Eight people were injured by cluster shells. Three of them are ambulance workers who arrived on call, five are local residents⁴⁵.

Murder, wounding, cruel treatment and sexual abuse of children

After the de-occupation of the Ukrainian territories, evidence of murders, torture and cruel treatment of the residents, particularly children, by the Russian occupiers are still being registered.

On March 30, under the procedural guidance of the Prosecutor General's Office, three servicemen of the Russian Federation were identified and notified of suspicion of violating the laws and customs of war (Part 2 of Article 28, Part 1 of Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). The suspects are military personnel of the 37th Separate Guards Motorized Rifles of the Don Budapest Red Banner Brigade of the Red Star Order (37th OMBR, Military Unit 69647) of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. According to the investigation, in March 2022, the suspects, together with other military personnel of the Russian Federation, occupied one of the settlements of the Kyiv region. After 20 days of occupation, the Russian military, including the suspects, began to systematically break into the yard of a private house where two women and a minor girl lived. They always did it in groups of three people, being different every time. The suspects, constantly demonstrating their weapons and taking into account the absence of men in the house, took one of the women to the garage, where they raped her one by one. Others remained outdoors at this time to prevent possible resistance from relatives and neighbors⁴⁶.

On April 4, under the procedural leadership of the Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, three Russian servicemen were notified in absentia of suspicion of violating

⁴² https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/7383

⁴³ <https://www.facebook.com/DSNSKHARKIV/posts/pfbid0tLRTwRsQQQTa7aSt3LEvYPRbCuiEt9wQ2io6g7Ma3TfZ2btgLXGNubvuRzX6WEeml>

⁴⁴ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2023/05/5/7400917/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.zoda.gov.ua/news/65353/minuloji-dobi-vorog-znovu-gativ-po-mirnih-mistah-i-selah-zaporizkoji-oblasti.html>

⁴⁶ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/povidomleno-pro-pidozru-tryom-rosiiskim-viiskovim-yaki-pid-cas-okupaciyi-gvaltuvali-zinku-na-kiyivshhini>

the laws and customs of war (Part 2 of Article 28, Part 1 of Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). Law enforcement officers have identified the Russian soldiers who raped a young girl in the Kharkiv region in the spring of 2022⁴⁷.

On April 20, the Office of the Prosecutor General sent an indictment to the court against the grenade launcher of the 2nd platoon of the 6th squadron of the 2nd battalion of the 137th Guards Parachute Regiment of the 106th Division of the Russian Federation on the fact of cruel treatment of the civilian population, combined with intentional killing and other violations of the laws and customs of war (Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). The investigation established that on March 6, 2022, the Russian military fired with grenade launchers and small arms at civilians in the town of Irpin, the Kyiv region, who were trying to evacuate from the town in their own cars with the inscriptions "CHILDREN" and "EVACUATION". As a result of the shelling of six cars, five people died and seven more, including a young child, were injured of varying degrees of severity⁴⁸.

On May 31, a serviceman of the 76th Guards Airborne Assault Chernihiv Division of the Airborne Forces of the Russian Federation was informed of the suspicion of shooting two civilian cars in Bucha, the Kyiv Region. Four people were fatally wounded: a mother, two minor children and a neighbor. Other persons who were in the car were also injured. Among them is the father of the deceased family⁴⁹.

In addition, on April 17, the Gulagu.net project published a video with confessions of war crimes committed in Ukraine by ex-commanders of the Wagner PMC units Azamat Uldarov and Oleksiy Savichev, pardoned by Putin and recruited as part of Prigozhin's "Project K" program. They told the details of the shooting of more than 20 Ukrainian children and teenagers, the blowing up of a pit with 60 wounded prisoners and the "500th" (those who decided to leave the war and refused to carry out orders to kill Ukrainians), the clearing of residential buildings with the killing of everyone, including children⁵⁰.

The Media Initiative for Human Rights, which documents war crimes, reported that on May 24, 2023, two teenagers Tigran Ohannisyan and Mykyta Khangarov (both born in 2006) in the temporarily occupied city of Berdyansk, the Zaporizhzhia Region, were charged by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation with allegedly preparing sabotage on railways. The charges were preceded by months of abuse, detention and torture of the children and their families. The children were assigned local lawyers, one of whom offered to slander himself. Since September 30, 2022, Tigran and Mykyta have been harassed by Russian law enforcement agencies.

⁴⁷<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/identifikovano-tryox-rosiiskix-viiskovix-yaki-pid-cas-okupaciyi-xarkivshhni-zgvaltuvali-molodu-divcinu>

⁴⁸<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/rozstrilyav-avtivki-yaki-namagalisy-evakuyuvatisya-z-irpenya-suditimut-viiskovogo-rf>

⁴⁹<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/rozstril-avtivki-simiyi-z-ditmi-v-buci-povidomleno-pro-pidozru-viiskovomu-rf>

⁵⁰<https://suspilne.media/472756-zafiksovano-187-vipadkiv-skoenna-zlociniv-seksualnogo-harakteru-z-boku-vijskovih-rf-ofis-genprokurora/>

Then Tigran was kidnapped from his house where he lived with his grandmother. For five days, the relatives did not know anything about the whereabouts of the child. At that time, Tigran was brutally interrogated by "investigative authorities" with beatings and electric torture. The investigators demanded that the boy confess to the preparation of the sabotage on the Melitopol Railway, which was supposed to prevent the units of the armed forces of the Russian Federation from receiving the supplies necessary for conducting military operations in Ukraine. Five days later, after the child's disappearance was publicized in the media, Tigran was released on the condition that he would every day report to the local "law enforcement agencies". Mykyta Khanganov then managed to avoid arrest, but later he was also obliged to visit the investigators daily and participate in the so-called "investigative activities" - interrogations, investigative experiments, etc.⁵¹.

Many testimonies of cruel treatment, unacceptable living conditions, abuse are also reported by children returned from deportation.

"We were kept in rooms without anything: no beds, nothing, only mattresses. We slept on the floor, on these mattresses without pillows, covered with jackets."

"When we arrived at the camp and were accommodated in a room, there were cockroaches in our wardrobes, there were cockroaches in the dining room as well. We had to sleep on dirty, smelly sheets and pillows."

"They forced us to sing the Russian national anthem, and demanded that we stand up to it. And when we disobeyed, they threatened to send us to the insane asylum."

"When they took us, they said that we were going to improve our health, that there would be some entertainment. And every evening they held "conversations about important things", where they told us that Ukraine is terrorists, that they will drive us out of the country. At the same time, we were threatened with basements or isolation cells for speaking Ukrainian."⁵²

From the press conference with the returned children

"Those who were for Ukraine, were beaten. Almost everyone from the Kherson region is for Ukraine. They were beaten with a metal stick. They said that they would take us to a boarding school, we would be kept there and understand everything. The girl was hit on the back, she had a bruise. Once we were sitting in the hall, someone shouted "Glory to Ukraine!" and someone answered "Glory to heroes!". These children were taken away, and I don't know what happened to them."

⁵¹ <https://mipl.org.ua/terminovo-rosiya-obvynuvachuye-ukrayinskyh-ditej-u-dyversiyi-yim-zagrozhuye-vid-10-do-20-rokiv-uvyaznennya/?fbclid=IwAR0OaERKMLA0h62PidYD44bdN2OJpYRMXHVgiLrQxAEhF7Fi2EExAwE2GN8>

⁵² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SY7BMeZGKHI&t=3052s>

*From an interview with a child returned from deportation*⁵³

As for sexual violence, since the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine and as of May 22, investigators of the National Police have initiated 70 criminal proceedings on the facts of conflict-related sexual violence committed by the Russian military against at least 79 victims (women, men, children) in the following territories: the Kherson region — 40; the Kyiv region — 19; the Donetsk region — 6; the Kharkiv region — 6; the Zaporizhzhia region — 5; the Luhansk region — 2; the Chernihiv region — 1. In order to detect and record sexual crimes in the de-occupied territories of the Kyiv region, the Chernihiv region, the Sumy region, the Kharkiv region, the Donetsk region, the Zaporizhzhia region, the Mykolaiv region and the Kherson region, eight specialized police mobile groups were established to interview the victims. According to the police, the oldest victim of sexual violence perpetrated by the Russian military is 82 years old. 13 criminal proceedings have been initiated on the facts of sexual violence against children by the Russian military. In eight criminal proceedings, injured children have been identified, the youngest of them is four years old⁵⁴. This crime was recorded in the Kyiv region, the Russians committed it "actually in the presence of the child's parents."⁵⁵

According to the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, as of mid-May, 187 cases of sexual violence in wartime conditions were recorded, of which 13 involved minors. 16 servicemen of the Russian Federation were notified of the suspicion of committing crimes (all in absentia), indictments were sent to the court against five persons, and one person was convicted. Currently, the largest number of cases of sexual violence have been recorded in the Kherson region — 67, in the Kyiv region — 52, in the Zaporizhzhia region — 7, in the Chernihiv region — 4, in the Sumy region — none⁵⁶.

At the same time, crimes of a sexual nature against adults and children by the Russian military are significantly more. Many people do not report what happened to them because of shame, psychological trauma, disbelief that justice can be achieved and the perpetrators be punished. Another part of the victims is in the temporarily occupied territories and cannot or is afraid to report this to the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine. There are also many cases where victims may not even identify nakedness, sexual harassment, forced observation of children in sexual acts as crimes.

⁵³ <https://t.me/andriyshTime/7991>

⁵⁴

<https://www.facebook.com/ivan.vyhivskyi.npu/posts/pfbid037RZRVJH71TOnreu6ompo2rvFTtygD2bzVmWUaMbUL9UaUmq4s86QVUBNuG4aTEtAl>

⁵⁵ [https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3712828-nacpolicia-stvorila-visim-specgrup-iz-dokumentuvanna-seksualnih-zlociniv-rosian-v-](https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3712828-nacpolicia-stvorila-visim-specgrup-iz-dokumentuvanna-seksualnih-zlociniv-rosian-v-ukraini.html?fbclid=IwAR1dcukg4ulPtIPMlIbSIC1mFUSkvw2lllqveaGpy73QOOV-93x2MrIDyiY)

[ukraini.html?fbclid=IwAR1dcukg4ulPtIPMlIbSIC1mFUSkvw2lllqveaGpy73QOOV-93x2MrIDyiY](https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3712828-nacpolicia-stvorila-visim-specgrup-iz-dokumentuvanna-seksualnih-zlociniv-rosian-v-ukraini.html?fbclid=IwAR1dcukg4ulPtIPMlIbSIC1mFUSkvw2lllqveaGpy73QOOV-93x2MrIDyiY)

⁵⁶ <https://suspilne.media/472756-zafiksovano-187-vipadkiv-skoenna-zlociniv-seksualnogo-harakteru-z-boku-vijskovih-rf-ofis-genprokurora/>

Thus, the Commission for Investigation of Violations in Ukraine, authorized by the UN Human Rights Council, documented cases of forced nakedness discovered in Ukraine in the Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kyiv regions, as well as in the Russian Federation. The victims were men, women and one 17-year-old boy. Such actions were carried out during detention, at filtering points and checkpoints, in particular for the purpose of humiliating the victims during torture and detention or to check the presence of tattoos. Such nakedness went beyond what would be acceptable as part of security checks. Regarding sexual violence, the Commission found that most of the victims were women who were alone at home. The rape was committed at gunpoint, with extreme brutality and acts of torture such as beatings and strangulation. Attackers sometimes threatened to kill the victim or her/his family if she/he resisted. In some cases, several soldiers raped the same victim, or the same victim was raped several times. In one case, the victim was pregnant and tried to beg the soldiers to spare her. A few days later, she miscarried. Family members, including children, were sometimes forced to watch as the attackers raped their loved ones⁵⁷.

Kidnapping and forced deportation of children

According to official statistics, as of May 31, 393 children are considered missing, 19,484 have been deported to the territory of the Russian Federation. It is impossible to establish the exact number of children who suffered due to active combat and the temporary occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine. According to the data of open sources, announced by Russia, the number of deported children is much higher - 744 thousand⁵⁸.

The occupiers continue forced "medical examinations" for children in the temporarily occupied territories in order to have grounds for the deportation of Ukrainians. After examination, the vast majority of children are prescribed "treatment" in the Russian Federation, which parents cannot refuse, because then they are threatened with depriving them of parental rights. So, since the beginning of the year, 75,000 children were examined in the Donetsk region, and 39,000 of them were brought to the Russian Federation. In the Luhansk region, 94,000 were "examined" and 66,000 were "diagnosed with pathology"⁵⁹, after which they were taken away. At the same time, cases were recorded when doctors demanded money from parents in order not to "detect pathology". A mandatory requirement for the "treatment" of children in Russia is the passport of the enemy state for the child, which is issued under the accelerated procedure. If the child is under 14 years old, the parents are forced to submit an application for recognizing the child as a "citizen of

⁵⁷ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0AEPlwKzS3tTLSP1k3Eso-GgMEdZp7NY8nAF99Gy3p7eXdWvV7882Ug

⁵⁸ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-483-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-28398>

⁵⁹ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/rosiyany-vyvezly-ponad-100-tys-ditej-zi-shodu-ukrayiny-na-likuvannya/>

the Russian Federation", threatening to deprive them of parental rights in case of refusal⁶⁰.

There is other evidence of abduction and deportation of children to Russia. Thus, during the monitoring of mass media and pro-Russian Telegram channels, prosecutors discovered a video in which representatives of the Wagner PMC, led by their leader, illegally deported two families of local residents along with two minor children from the city of Bakhmut, the Donetsk region, on April 16, 2023. It has also been established that during April 17-18, 2023, armed Wagner servicemen took two more families with small children to an unknown destination from this settlement. In total, three boys and one girl were illegally deported⁶¹.

On May 5, it became known about the removal of 50 children without parents from the Luhansk region. They were sent under the pretext of health improvement to the republican center "Solnyechnyi Beryeg" ("Sunny Seashore"), located in Dagestan. The organizers of the kidnapping of children are the Women's Movement of the United Russia. In such camps, children are ideologically influenced. In front of them propagandists are speaking who impose the Kremlin's vision of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, children are often not returned to their parents if they do not come for them in person⁶².

According to the Commissioner of the President of Ukraine for the Rights of the Child, more than 70 camps have been created in the Russian Federation for the re-education of 20,000 children deported from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in order to destroy their identity⁶³.

Another reason to deport Ukrainian children is the so-called "evacuation" of local residents from the temporarily occupied territories. The invaders are trying, under the pretext of taking care of people, to relocate Ukrainians to sparsely populated areas of Russia. On the one hand, people are lured by housing certificates and cash assistance, and on the other hand, they are pressured, introducing travel passes and other rules that complicate the lives of Ukrainian citizens⁶⁴.

It is also worth noting that on April 27, Putin signed a decree "On the peculiarities of the legal status of certain categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Russian Federation", which defines persons living in the territories occupied by Russia, who expressed a desire to retain their current citizenship and refused to take Russian passports, as "foreign citizens" and stateless persons currently living in the Russian Federation. In fact, this decree establishes the compulsory involvement of residents of the temporarily occupied territories to obtain Russian

⁶⁰ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/rosiyany-vyvozyat-ditej-z-tot-pid-pryvodom-nadannya-medychnoyi-dopomogy/>

⁶¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/primusovo-deportovali-ditej-iz-baxmutu-prokurorami-zafiksovano-cergovi-zlocini-ucasniv-tak-zvanoyi-pvk-vagner>

⁶² <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/rosiyany-vyvezly-shhe-50-ukrayinskyh-ditej-z-luganshhyny/>

⁶³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5vvrB1YsqU>

⁶⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-HCHEeSkcl&t=628s>

passports, and also establishes the conditions for the deportation of Ukrainians who do not agree to become citizens of Russia⁶⁵.

International organizations and experts continue to recognize and record cases of deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation. Thus, on March 15, the report of the Independent International Commission for the Investigation of Violations in Ukraine was published. Three main cases have been identified in which the Russian authorities have relocated Ukrainian children from certain areas controlled by the Russian authorities in Ukraine to other such areas or to the Russian Federation. We are talking about the following categories of children: those who lost their parents or temporarily lost contact with them during hostilities; separated from their parents when one of the parents was detained at filtration points; those who were in care facilities. The Commission considered cases of displacement of 164 children aged 4 to 18 years from the Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kherson regions. In all situations considered by the Commission, the displacement of children did not meet the requirements established by the International Humanitarian Law. The relocation was not justified by safety or health reasons. There were no grounds to indicate that the relocation of children to the territory controlled by the government of Ukraine was impossible. It is also likely that the Russian authorities did not try to establish contact with the children's relatives or with the Ukrainian authorities. Despite the fact that the displacement had to be temporary, for various reasons, most of them became prolonged, and parents or legal caretakers and children faced a number of obstacles in establishing contact, family reunification and the return of children to Ukraine. Parents and children informed the Commission that during the children's stay in the Russian Federation or in the Russian-controlled territories of Ukraine, in some cases, social services informed the children that they would be transferred to care institutions, foster families or adopted. The parents also told the Commission that in some facilities the children were dressed in dirty clothes, shouted at and scolded. Nutrition was poor, and some children with disabilities did not receive adequate care and medication. Children expressed a deep fear that they might be permanently separated from their parents, caretakers or relatives⁶⁶.

On May 4, 2023, a report was also issued on violations of International Humanitarian Law and Law on human rights, war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the forced displacement and/or deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation. It was prepared by a group of international experts within the framework of the implementation of the OSCE Moscow mechanism. The mission confirmed that the forced displacement and/or deportation of Ukrainian children to the temporarily occupied territories and to the territory of the Russian Federation have been accompanied since 2014 and continue to be accompanied by various violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. The

⁶⁵ <http://prezident.org/articles/ukaz-prezidenta-rf-307-ot-27-aprejja-2023-goda-27-04-2023.html>

⁶⁶ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf

report also provides credible evidence that some of these violations, if identified, may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, violation of international criminal law⁶⁷.

It should be noted that an important event in the recognition of the deportation of Ukrainian children was the fact that on March 17, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the President of the Russian Federation Putin and the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the office of the President of the Russian Federation Lvova-Belova on suspicion of committing a war crime — illegal deportation of the population (children) and illegal transfer of the population (children) from the occupied territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation⁶⁸.

In total, as of May 31, only 371 deported children managed to return to Ukraine⁶⁹. It is extremely difficult to return children home, because mostly the Russian authorities want to keep Ukrainians in Russia. For this purpose the process of adoption of deported minors continues. For the most part the return process is handled by international and national public organizations that help parents come to Russia for their children. At the state level the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Ministry for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine are responsible for the return of children.

Thus, on March 22, 17 children returned to Ukraine, whom Russia deported from the Kherson and Kharkiv regions during the occupation. The return was realized thanks to the Save Ukraine charitable organization⁷⁰.

On March 23, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights reported the return to Ukraine of two more children — a 9-year-old girl and a 16-year-old boy⁷¹.

On May 19, also with the assistance of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, a 14-year-old girl was returned to Ukraine from the Russian Federation⁷².

On May 27, it became known about the return of another child. The Russians deported to Shakhtarsk a 17-year-old boy, who studied in Mariupol, . The SOS Children's Towns — Ukraine Charitable Organization and the Ukrainian Network for the Rights of the Child were also involved in the return of the child⁷³.

⁶⁷<https://www.helsinki.org.ua/articles/prava-ukrainskykh-ditey-ochyma-ekspertiv-moskovskoho-mekhanizmu-obsye-analytyka/>

⁶⁸<https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and>

⁶⁹<https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-483-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-28398>

⁷⁰<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1078410300216364>

⁷¹https://t.me/dmytro_lubinetzs/1967

⁷²https://t.me/dmytro_lubinetzs/2484?fbclid=IwAR2aKVqDY0748LcuZZ06DtHsZvvArA0A_yFEAiSx0L9lp7kijbgZpb3A6rU

⁷³https://t.me/vereshchuk_iryana/1920

One of the important implementations for, in particular, the return of Ukrainian children home was the launch on April 6 of the Reunite Ukraine mobile application from the American company Find My Parent and the National Police of Ukraine. Its main function is to search for children who have gone missing, as well as to reunite family members who have been internally displaced, have left Ukraine or have been illegally deported to the Russian Federation, Belarus or the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine⁷⁴.

Another important step in this direction was the launch of the Bring Kids Back UA action plan in May. This is a set of measures of the Ukrainian authorities, foreign governments and international organizations for the return of Ukrainian children deported by Russia, their reintegration and socialization. The Center for the Protection of Children's Rights has already been established, which will work with children who have been victims of crimes or have witnessed them. In the institution professionals will receive information from children and their families, conduct a medical examination and provide the necessary assistance⁷⁵.

Recruitment and participation of children in war and propaganda

Russian propaganda is most actively spread among children through educational institutions. For this, the occupation authorities have already destroyed Ukrainian school books and imported their own with distorted history and pseudo-historical events in Ukraine and Russia. They also brought Russian teachers or "retrained" local ones.

According to the Minister of Education of Russia, as of March, the occupation authorities brought to temporarily occupied territories 4,811,079 Russian school books, 744 sets of visual materials (maps, tables, portraits of scientists and other materials) and 834 sets of state symbols. More than 20,000 teachers and managers have received advanced training⁷⁶.

On April 6, the Artek children's center also reported on the training of counselors to headmasters for all schools in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk, the Luhansk, the Zaporizhzhia region and the Kherson regions. 6,000 specialists from 49 regions of Russia were trained⁷⁷. In fact, these positions involve the organization of propaganda for children in educational institutions.

⁷⁴ <https://chicago.mfa.gov.ua/konsulski-pitannya/mobilnij-dodatok-reunite-ukraine?fbclid=IwAR2khXMZJMDi9zXEFg5Nt8h7HxLBDCVzQM2oLQNmgZqGfOw5LXmdT6rVx4>

⁷⁵ <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-oznajomivsya-z-planom-povernennya-nezakonno-deport-83261>

⁷⁶ <https://minobr74.ru/press/item/10970>

⁷⁷ <https://t.me/bpshkola/26357>



Classes under the program "I am a citizen" in the Zmina all-Russian children's center , where among the participants there are also Ukrainian children from the temporarily occupied territories⁷⁸

In addition, preparations are in progress for the gradual removal of Ukrainian language and literature from the curriculum. Thus, on September 1, Ukrainian language will stop being a compulsory subject on the temporarily occupied territories of the Zaporizhzhia region. Ukrainian language can be chosen in the curriculum as a native language with three hours per week. After removing it, the number of Russian language and literature classes will increase from six to nine per week. At the same time, it is reported that allegedly 60% of parents have written a refusal to learn Ukrainian language⁷⁹.

Propaganda, as well as partial militarization, continues through classes on "patriotic education", the creation of "Dvizhenie Pervykh" (Movement of the First) centers, as well as children's summer camps, where children from the temporarily occupied territories are actively recruited. Only in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk region it is planned to send 16,000 Ukrainian children to school summer camps, and another 8,000 to the regions of Russia⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ <https://t.me/bpshkola/26012>

⁷⁹ <https://t.me/bpshkola/27566>

⁸⁰ <https://t.me/bpshkola/27501>

The Russian authorities do not stop their attempts to recruit Ukrainian children to participate in gathering intelligence data, spreading propaganda, destabilizing the situation in Ukraine, and to directly participate in military operations.



In spring Ukrainian special services identified 160 Telegram groups associated with the Redan youth movement, which came to Ukraine from the territory of the Russian Federation. The groups had a total of 1600 participants, most of them minors aged 12-17. It was established that this movement is an informational and psychological operation organized by the Russian Federation⁸¹. The participants of the movement were directed to organizing mass fights and various provocations in public places.

16-year-old Bohdana Nescheret with the codename "Docha"⁸²

The journalists of "Slidstvo.Info" also made a material about Ukrainian children, who are raised by Russia as soldiers for the war with Ukraine. One of the characters of the article is Bohdana from Alchevsk, the Luhansk region. The girl's father, Roman Nescheret, worked in the State Security Service under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine before the Russian invasion of the Donetsk region in 2014. According to the girl, she now serves with her father in the illegal military formation "Ghost" which was mentioned earlier⁸³.

Depriving of humanitarian aid

Humanitarian situation remains difficult on a significant part of the temporarily occupied territories, and in some areas a humanitarian crisis is forming. First of all, the population has significantly limited access to medical care. Many hospitals were converted by the occupiers into military hospitals.

⁸¹ <https://kyiv.tsn.ua/pidlitkoviy-ruh-redan-160-grup-na-1600-uchasnikiv-vikrili-u-telegram-kanalah-kiyivschini-2278837.html>

⁸² <https://www.slidstvo.info/warnews/pidlitky-perevertni-iak-z-malenkykh-ukrainsiv-vykhovuiut-soldativ-rf/>

⁸³ <https://www.slidstvo.info/warnews/pidlitky-perevertni-iak-z-malenkykh-ukrainsiv-vykhovuiut-soldativ-rf/>

Thus, on March 12, it became known that in the city of Berdyansk, the Zaporizhzhia region, all female patients were discharged from the gynecological department and 30 wounded Russians were placed instead. 80 seriously wounded invaders were placed in the surgical and ENT departments⁸⁴.

On March 19, the information appeared that in the city of Sevastopol, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, blood and its components were taken from transfusion centers for a clinical military hospital, which caused their shortage in medical facilities for civilian citizens of Ukraine⁸⁵.

On May 27, in temporarily occupied Luhansk, the Russian military once again delivered additional beds and equipment to the Railway Hospital, where the injured invaders are now being treated. In the same city, the occupiers handed over maternity hospital No. 2 to the Wagner PMC⁸⁶.

There is a critical shortage of medical staff in the temporarily occupied territories. There is a shortage of medicines due to restrictions on the import of medicines by the occupation authorities. Some medical facilities were destroyed.

"We have nowhere to go for medical assistance. There is nothing around. There is only a field military hospital for the occupiers. But there they treat only "the orcs". You can go to Donetsk, but now it's dangerous to move around. Therefore, we treat ourselves at home as best as we can. I consult with our doctor by phone. I hope that none of my relatives will get seriously ill, because then I won't know what to do. Not so long ago, a neighbor died of a heart attack, and nothing could be done. Ambulances don't get here."

From an interview with parents

Besides, the occupying authorities deprive Ukrainian citizens of their real estate and continue to loot the houses that remained vacant after the evacuation of people.

Thus, in the temporarily occupied Yalta, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, people who did not take Russian citizenship during the occupation of the peninsula are evicted. Servicemen of the Russian occupying forces move into such apartments⁸⁷.

In the town of Starobilsk, the Luhansk region, Ukrainian citizens who refused to get a Russian passport are forcibly evicted from their homes by the occupiers. The occupiers usually come to the apartment several times. For the third time, people

⁸⁴ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/rosiyany-rozmishhuyut-poranenyh-okupantiv-u-czyvilnyh-likarnyah/>

⁸⁵ <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/rosiyany-zagostryuyut-medychnu-kryzu-v-krymu/>

⁸⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/pfbid0bAfbHGBPWQGST7z4TtmmwesUhEwWtcgH6K54DpuvQHcxYBknA3zCo4Nmy4keMCGSI>

⁸⁷ https://www.zsu.gov.ua/new_page/6476e20e6933218792387cdd

and their belongings are forcibly thrown out into the street. Even the fact that minor children can live in the apartment does not stop the occupiers. After eviction, such citizens are sent to filtration points, and their housing is given to servicemen of the Russian occupation army⁸⁸.

In the village of Bokovo-Khrustalne, the Luhansk region, servicemen of the Russian occupation forces are also looting the homes of local residents⁸⁹.

Besides, access to various vital services (medical, communal, transport) is significantly limited or even terminated without a Russian passport. What's more, the absence of Russian citizenship means for Ukrainian families additional interrogations, checks, home searches, and even threats to take away the children.

Thus, in the temporarily occupied Melitopol of the Zaporizhzhia region, the residents are being blackmailed by providing free medical care only with Russian medical insurance, which can be issued only with a Russian passport. Also, according to the unspoken rule of the occupiers, ambulances refuse to take people without a Russian passport to the hospitals⁹⁰.

In the temporarily occupied territories of the Kherson region, local energy companies notify of the mandatory renegotiation of contracts for the supply of electricity only based on a Russian passport. All Ukrainian citizens who refuse to receive Russian documents are threatened with termination of electricity supply, deportation, confiscation of property and forced eviction from their homes⁹¹.

In the Zaporizhzhia region, the occupation administration notified that residents need to receive new documents for monthly social assistance for the care of people with disabilities. The main requirement for guardians is to obtain a Russian passport. At the same time, they must renounce Ukrainian citizenship, despite the permission to have dual citizenship in the Russian Federation⁹².

The humanitarian situation is worsened by the continuous growth of prices for food and basic necessities. At the same time, a significant number of unemployed and socially vulnerable people live in the temporarily occupied territories.

"We are constantly delivering cereals, butter, and pasta for people living under occupation. It will be a little easier in summer, people will grow some of the food in their gardens. But in spring it was very difficult. People ran out of all their stocks. There was nothing to eat. We delivered food and medicine with each trip. We are also

⁸⁸ https://www.zsu.gov.ua/new_page/6456b288d75d722aeabd78d4

⁸⁹ https://www.zsu.gov.ua/new_page/644d08cdd75d722aeebb75c9

⁹⁰ https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_melitopol/2124

⁹¹ https://www.zsu.gov.ua/new_page/647997d3693321879239770e

⁹² <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/vorog-perestane-platyty-soczdopomogu-meshkanczyam-tot-yakshho-ti-ne-otrymayut-pasport-rf/>

trying to pass hygiene products, which seem to be available in stores, but are very expensive, the majority of the population cannot afford to buy them all the time."

From an interview with a volunteer

Also the destruction of communal infrastructure, which is almost never restored, is critical in some villages.

Recommendations

- Constantly maintain contact with the temporarily occupied territories and active combat areas. The population should know about the evacuation routes, possible types of support and assistance, the procedure in various situations. This makes it possible to maintain peace and trust of the population in the decisions of the state.
- Regularly remind the population of these territories of the safety rules, the observance of which will make it possible to preserve life and health, prevent abuse and murder, mobilization to the army of the occupier, deportation to the Russian Federation, etc. Constantly update the importance of observing the rules for children during air raids in bomb shelters and at home. Parents should prevent **as much as possible children's staying** in places where there is a risk of injury. This also applies to the ban on visiting forest strips, beaches and rivers that can be mined by the occupiers.
- Promote the organization of humanitarian corridors and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, active combat areas and territories which are suffering from a humanitarian crisis, as well as to form stocks of food, water and medicine in the territories where there is a significant risk of Russian occupation.
- Contribute to the recording of all crimes committed by the Russian military: murders, maimings, ill-treatment. An integral part of this process is building trust and informing the residents about the necessity of contacting law enforcement agencies with statements and evidence of committed crimes, including via the Internet and telephone.
- Increase efforts to record crimes of a sexual nature, particularly against children. Most of them remain latent and are rarely recorded by law enforcement agencies.
- Maximize the use of international channels to monitor the condition of children who were deported to Russia, to document the crimes committed against them. Promote greater involvement of international organizations and volunteer communities in the process of returning Ukrainian children home.
- Urgently ratify and sign the Rome Statute to open the full spectrum of the Court's powers in the investigation of Russia's war crimes in Ukraine and to

investigate them as soon as possible with the aim of bringing all the guilty parties to justice.

- Create a single mechanism for returning Ukrainian children home, which will simplify and speed up all the related procedures.
- Conduct information campaigns on the prevention of epidemics of infectious diseases throughout Ukraine, especially where it is difficult to provide the appropriate level of medical care.
- Conduct explanatory conversations with children about the safety rules on the Internet and existing schemes for recruiting / involving teenagers in the war (transmission of intelligence data, participation in agitation, etc.).
- Implement an information campaign to warn parents and children in the temporarily occupied territories:
 - not to attend schools where the Russian education system is implemented;
 - not to join militaristic organizations, such as "Unarmy", "Young Guard", etc.;
 - not to participate in celebrations, contests and other leisure and entertainment events aimed at collecting personal data and documents of children;
 - not to agree to taking the child to the Russian Federation for vacation, patriotic education, visiting the Christmas tree, receiving gifts, etc.

Displacement of families with children in Ukraine and abroad

As of the end of May, the total number of internally displaced people, based on the international estimates, reached 5,08 mln, the majority of them are women and children. Most of the internally displaced people were registered in the Kharkiv, Dnipro and Kyiv regions, as well as in Kyiv⁹³. Overall, the number of IDPs is decreasing. At the same time, due to constant shelling by the occupiers, the danger remains almost throughout Ukraine.

Russia's nuclear blackmail remains ongoing. Thus, on May 22, due to Russian shelling, the temporarily occupied ZNPP went into blackout mode for the eighth time. Due to the loss of external power supply, which is vital for the operation of nuclear fuel cooling pumps in the spent fuel pools and nuclear reactors of the power units, the largest nuclear power plant in Europe must operate on diesel generators. If the external power supply to the plant cannot be restored, there could be an accident with radiation consequences for the whole world⁹⁴.

Evacuations of civilians from active combat areas or areas where active combat operations may begin are continuing. Thus, on March 2, due to the unstable security situation in the Kharkiv region, local authorities announced the mandatory evacuation of children and people with limited mobility from the Kupiansk district to safer areas⁹⁵.

On March 7, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine endorsed a mechanism for the forced evacuation of children from active combat zones. This was actively advocated by the civil society sector, including the Voices of Children Charitable Foundation⁹⁶. A mandatory evacuation of children is carried out by force if they are accompanied by one of their parents, a person in loco parentis, or another legal representative⁹⁷. Bakhmut, where about 4,000 civilians, including 38 children, were

⁹³ <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/operativniy-zvit-demografichna-statistika-ta-geografichniy-rozpodil-opituvannya-zagalnogo?close=true>

⁹⁴ https://t.me/energoatom_ua/13192

⁹⁵ <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/03/02/u-kupyanskomu-rajoni-ogolosheno-obovyazkovu-evakuacziyu-ditej-ta-malomobilnyh/>

⁹⁶ <https://voices.org.ua/news/fond-vystupaie-za-nehayne-stvorennia-protsedury-evakuatsii-ditey-z-linii-frontu/>

⁹⁷ <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/03/07/kabmin-shvalyv-mehanizm-prymusovoyi-evakuacziyi-ditej-iz-zon-aktyvnyh-bojovyh-dij/>

staying at the time of the mechanism's adoption, falls under the corresponding criteria for the forced evacuation of children from the combat zone⁹⁸.

In total, between August 2022 and May 10, 2023, around 70,000 people moved to safe regions. Among them are over 8,000 children and more than 3,000 people with limited mobility. The evacuation from the de-occupied territories, which began last fall, is also continuing. Over 25,000 people from the Kharkiv region have fled within the last eight months. More than 23,000 people have evacuated from the recently liberated territories of the Kherson region over the past six months⁹⁹. Evacuees receive one-time financial assistance of UAH 2,000 per adult and UAH 3,000 for children under 18 and people with disabilities.

During the evacuation, a high level of danger still remains.

Thus, on April 13, the occupiers started shooting during the evacuation of people from the village of Dvorichna, in the Kharkiv region. A volunteer was wounded and later died¹⁰⁰.

On May 24, during the evacuation of families with children from the village of New York, the Donetsk region, an enemy shelling took place, as a result of which a 14-year-old girl was wounded¹⁰¹.

"It was hard for us to make the decision to leave. Here is our house, our land, our kitchen garden. You know you won't die of hunger. But it was so scary, I couldn't look at my daughter anymore. She was very anxious because of the constant shelling. So far we have settled down near Lviv. I hope that maybe we will move to more comfortable conditions later."

From the interview with parents

IDPs are returning to their places of permanent residence. As of May 23, almost half of all people who have returned to Ukraine live in Kyiv or the Kyiv region (23% and 17% respectively). The other main areas of return are the Kharkiv (12%) and Dnipro (7%) regions. Among those who have returned to their usual places of

⁹⁸ <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/03/08/z-bahmuta-yaknajshvydshe-potribno-evakuyuvaty-cyvilnyh-razom-z-ditmy/>

⁹⁹ <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/05/10/evakuacziya-gromadyan-do-bezpechnyh-regioniv-ukrayiny-prodovzhuyetsya/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3708523-u-harkovi-pomer-volonter-akij-potrapiv-pid-rosijskij-obstril-u-hodi-evakuacii-ludej.html>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yuvenalni-prokurori-482-ditini-zaginuli-v-ukrayini-vnaslidok-zbroinoyi-agresiyi-rf-27924>

residence from places of internal displacement within Ukraine, the majority have returned from the Lviv region (9%), Kyiv (8%) and the Vinnytsia region (7%)¹⁰².

The liberated territories of the Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson and other regions are gradually being restored. Electricity and gas supply and mobile communications are being restored in the settlements. Medical facilities, social services, and post offices are starting to operate again. The humanitarian assistance to the non-deoccupied territories of Ukraine continues, primarily in the form of food and hygiene kits, medical supplies and equipment, and cash payments.

According to the report of the Coordination Headquarters for the de-occupied territories, the reconstruction is being carried out in 953 liberated towns and villages in five regions - Kharkiv, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. As of May 24, over 370,000 people live in the de-occupied residential areas. Critical infrastructure facilities are being gradually restored there, in particular:

- gas supply - in 247 settlements;
- electricity supply - in 747 settlements;
- centralized water supply and sewerage in 358 settlements;
- mobile communications and the Internet - in 610 settlements.

In addition, international organizations continue to provide financial assistance to the liberated territories. More than UAH 425 million has already been paid¹⁰³.

In March, an online platform to help Ukrainians who have been rescued from the war was launched at the initiative of the Office of the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and with the support of the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy and the UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund in Ukraine. The platform contains all the key services that provide psychological, legal and social assistance to Ukrainians. In addition, the site has leaflets and informational materials to help citizens recognize the negative consequences of violence and deal with them in a timely manner¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰² <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/operativniy-zvit-demografichna-statistika-ta-geografichniy-rozpodil-opituvannya-zagalnogo?close=true>

¹⁰³ <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/05/24/zvituyemo-pro-robotu-koordinacijnogo-shtabu-z-pytan-deokupovanyh-terytorij/>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.help-platform.in.ua/>

One of the most important innovations is the possibility to obtain an extract of the child's place of residence on the Diia portal. This is one of the most popular documents required, in particular, for enrolling a child in kindergarten or school¹⁰⁵.

Also, social payments for internally displaced persons will continue in 2023. Although such payments are sometimes delayed, they are a significant support for IDPs¹⁰⁶.

The housing issue remains a pressing one for a significant number of internally displaced persons. Some Ukrainians who have returned to the de-occupied territories of Ukraine live in damaged houses, which are deteriorating even further due to the lack of repair. At the same time, state and local housing reconstruction programs are extremely slow. Similarly, housing programs for Ukrainians who have lost their homes due to the war are also slow to act.

For example, the housing loan program for internally displaced persons, launched in 2021, has provided loans (at an interest rate of 3% per annum) to only 650 IDPs for a total of UAH 892.6 million. This grant program is implemented by the State Agency for Housing and Urban Development with funding from the German government through KfW Credit Institution. In 2023, international donors promise to provide Ukraine with an additional €17 million grant for housing loans for IDPs.¹⁰⁷

Certain programs and services are available to facilitate the employment of IDPs. In particular, employment services, vocational training and vouchers for training, as well as unemployment benefits, grants for starting and developing a business, and compensation to employers for hiring IDPs¹⁰⁸. At the same time, the Employment Service is not in demand among IDPs. Thus, in the period from January to May 2023, only 34.8 thousand IDPs received the services listed above. The unemployment status of 30.5 thousand people was registered, and only 6.1 thousand IDPs were employed in five months¹⁰⁹.

Failure to address key employment and housing issues significantly slows down the integration of IDPs into communities. Some families are forced to return home to areas regularly shelled by the occupiers.

"We are moving for the third time during this war. There is no work, no living conditions. It's hard for my son. He does not have time to adapt, make friends, get

¹⁰⁵ <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/03/06/vytyag-pro-misce-prozhyvannya-dytyny-vidteper-mozhna-otrymaty-na-portali-diya/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/u-2023-rotsi-budut-zberezheni-sotsialni-vyplaty-dlia-vnutrishno-peremishchenykh-osib>

¹⁰⁷ <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/05/24/mizhnarodni-donory-nadadut-ukrayini-17-mln-yevro-na-zhytlove-kredytuvannya-dlya-vpo/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.dcz.gov.ua/novyna/posluchy-dlya-vpo-vid-sluzhby-zaynyatosti>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.dcz.gov.ua/analitics/68>

used to it. But I don't see any other way out, I have to leave, because if they offer at least a temporary job, I have to accept it. Then I can buy food and clothes, and somehow feel like I'm living, not constantly surviving."

From the interview with parents

As for displacement abroad, according to UNHCR estimates, as of May 31, the number of Ukrainian refugees amounted to 6.2 million. Of these, 5.9 million were registered in Europe. The largest number of refugees from Ukraine with temporary protection status resides in Poland - 1.6 million people. It is followed by Germany and the Czech Republic - 948,000 and 520,000 respectively. Many Ukrainians have also been granted temporary protection in Italy (178,000), Spain (178,000), Bulgaria (161,000), Romania (138,000), Slovakia (117,000), Austria (98,000), the Netherlands (94,000), Ireland (84,000), Switzerland (81,000), Lithuania (77,000), and Belgium (72,000)¹¹⁰.

The European Commission has decided to prolong the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukrainians. It will remain in force until March 2024. Also, Ukrainians will not lose their temporary protection status even if they return home for a long time¹¹¹.

European countries introduce various procedures for prolonging this status and continue to support displaced Ukrainians. However, some assistance programs are being modified due to the significant burden on local refugee social protection systems.

Children abroad still face difficulties in adaptation and education. Although the Ministry of Education and Science reports that there are no requirements for parallel education in Ukraine for schoolchildren abroad, a significant number of children continue to study both in the place of displacement and in Ukrainian educational institutions. In addition to the language barrier, some children face bullying or some cases of harassment by their peers because of their Ukrainian citizenship and pro-Ukrainian position.

"We had a situation at school where a Ukrainian girl was picked on by several children because she occasionally wore yellow and blue clothes or put on an embroidered shirt. Later it turned out that these children had Russian parents, but had been living in Germany for a long time. So, apparently, the children took this manner of behavior from them. But the teachers seemed to settle everything, although the

¹¹⁰ https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.228732760.514168680.1646989952-176134281.1646551413.

¹¹¹ <https://visitukraine.today/uk/blog/996/vremennaya-zashhita-ukraincev-oficialno-prodlena-do-2024-goda>

story is unpleasant, and sometimes I wonder if I can put on her something Ukrainian or if it is better not to risk exposing the child to a conditional danger."

From the interview with parents

Recommendations

- Carry on the awareness raising regarding the evacuation for families with children from the temporarily occupied territories, territories under continual shelling or those under the threat of active combat beginning. It is important to avoid criminal responsibility threatening for the actions, committed under the temporary occupation under duress (for obtaining Russian citizenship in particular).
- Inform and increase the awareness of the residents of the possible ways of leaving the occupied territories, to the territories of the Russian Federation. It is important to coordinate the efforts with volunteering and public initiatives on these territories as well as with the organizations based on the territories neighboring with Russia in order to help Ukrainians leave for Europe.
- Develop state programs to support Ukrainians with children coming back from Europe, which would envisage compensation payments and employment or entrepreneurship perspectives.
- Seek for new opportunities to employ the internally displaced people. In order to do that, it is necessary to evaluate the labor market and IDPs qualifications, intensify the retraining programs for citizens, create new workplaces and coordinate with employers in terms of IDPs employment.
- Analyze the needs of IDPs in accommodation and the availability of the municipal housing to extend the state and regional housing programs of IDPs accommodation.
- Facilitate the restoration of power, water and gas supply in the de-occupied territories, as well as the provision of medical, social, psychological and legal services for residents of the liberated settlements. If necessary, organize the evacuation of people whose homes are uninhabitable due to the war.
- Carry out the regular assessment of the population's needs for humanitarian aid.
- Send clear signals to citizens prohibiting or allowing them to come back to the de-occupied territories and territories that have been heavily shelled. Such statements should be accompanied by the information about the security and infrastructure of the specific settlements.

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