



Ninth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine

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15 July 2026



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Warsaw, 2026 OSCE/ODIHR

Published by the
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions
and Human Rights (ODIHR)
ul. Miodowa 10
00-251 Warsaw Poland
www.osce.org/odihr

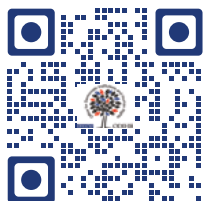
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ISBN: 978-92-9271-518-2

Designed by Jerzy Skakun

Cover photograph: R. Rizvanov / Shutterstock.com



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Executive Summary

I

1. In line with its monitoring mandate, ODIHR launched the Ukraine Monitoring Initiative (UMI) to monitor and report on the most pressing issues affecting the lives of civilians and prisoners of war (POWs), following the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. This is the Ninth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) produced by the UMI, building on the findings and recommendations of the eight previous Interim Reports.
2. The Report includes a short overview of developments in the context of the armed conflict from 1 December 2025 to 31 May 2026, while the main body of the report focuses on specific issues reported to ODIHR by 107 survivors and witnesses during three monitoring deployments conducted by ODIHR in Ukraine in the first half of 2026. The report is also informed by the UMI's remote monitoring, using open-source investigation techniques. Additionally, ODIHR received information from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and made use of information supplied or published by institutions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, as well as intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which is referenced throughout the report.
3. ODIHR's monitoring of the conduct of hostilities showed that, from 1 December 2025 to 31 May 2026, the Russian armed forces continued large-scale coordinated strikes on urban areas of Ukraine. Front-line communities continued to be heavily impacted including by the increased use of short-range drones. Systematic targeting of Ukrainian energy facilities persisted throughout the winter months, while port and railway infrastructure came under increased attack. Verified civilian casualties in government-controlled areas of Ukraine increased by 45 per cent compared with the same period in 2025. The civilian harm from the attacks suggests that the Russian Federation repeatedly failed to comply with the core IHL principles of proportionality and precautions in attack; conduct that may amount to war crimes.
4. Albeit to a far lesser extent, Ukrainian armed forces also conducted shelling and loitering munition strikes in densely populated areas of Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, which, at times, resulted in civilian casualties. Ukrainian armed forces attacked oil infrastructure in addition to military-industrial facilities, in some instances resulting in civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects.
5. Hostilities and harsh winter conditions exacerbated an already deteriorating humanitarian situation, with electricity, heating and water supplies disrupted by attacks on energy infrastructure, including in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. Frontline communities lacked essential services and suffered persistent security risks. ODIHR received reports of civilians being deliberately targeted by Russian armed forces' drones while going about their daily lives. The humanitarian situation was particularly severe in Russian-occupied frontline communities in Kherson region, including Oleshky, where civilians were reportedly prevented from leaving the city by Russian armed forces.

6. Foreign nationals participating in hostilities on behalf of the Russian Federation described predatory recruitment practices, including deception and coercion, as well as torture or other ill-treatment while under the control of the military authorities.
7. Witnesses reported to ODIHR continuing attacks by the Russian Federation affecting humanitarian operations and resulting in deaths and injuries of humanitarian personnel.
8. ODIHR interviewed a further 20 survivors and received testimony from relatives of 31 individuals who were, or remain, arbitrarily detained or enforcedly disappeared from Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, including seven cases of arrests taking place as recently as 2025. The new evidence gathered by ODIHR confirmed previously documented patterns, including the categories of people targeted, denial of procedural guarantees, continued use of incommunicado detention and criminal prosecution on what appear to be fabricated charges, raising serious concerns regarding compliance with fair trial guarantees.
9. ODIHR collected additional evidence of the widespread and systematic use of torture by the Russian authorities against detained Ukrainian civilians. ODIHR interviewed 21 survivors in addition to relatives of individuals who were or remain detained by the Russian authorities. The methods, purposes and circumstances in which torture was inflicted remained consistent with previous reports. Ukrainian former POWs reported to ODIHR being tortured at almost every detention facility, consistent with previous findings.
10. ODIHR received reports confirming previous findings of dire detention conditions for civilians, as well as poor conditions of internment for Ukrainian POWs.
11. ODIHR also received ten accounts from former civilian detainees who were released as part of POW exchanges. Consistent with previous findings, it appears that detained civilians were effectively used as ‘bargaining chips’ in the exchange process, amounting to hostage-taking, which is prohibited under IHL.
12. ODIHR gathered 22 testimonies on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against women and men, of which 15 were provided by direct survivors. Almost half of the testimonies ODIHR received regarding POWs also included allegations of CRSV perpetrated against Ukrainian POWs in Russian detention. The types of CRSV perpetrated remained similar to the findings of previous ODIHR Interim Reports and included various instances of rape, and electric shocks to breasts and genitalia.
13. ODIHR collected further information from witnesses regarding continued attempts by the Russian authorities to alter the status and character of the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine in violation of IHL, including by making residents’ ability to live in the occupied territories dependent on the acquisition

of Russian citizenship. The imposition of the Russian Federation curriculum in schools continued, while measures promoting the military-patriotic education of children further intensified. Attempts to forcibly conscript and recruit Ukrainian civilians in the Russian-occupied territories continued.

14. ODIHR also continued to receive accounts, including through 21 witness testimonies, on the use of administrative and judicial measures, including ‘deportation’, to suppress real or perceived dissent by civilians in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, confirming the findings outlined in previous Interim Reports.
15. More broadly, ODIHR received accounts, including through 25 witness testimonies, about unfair and unlawful trials of Ukrainian civilians and POWs by the Russian authorities on trumped-up charges, including terrorism, murder and espionage. Trials took place both in the Russian Federation, especially in Rostov-on-Don, and in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, especially in Sevastopol and Donetsk region. Many of the trials, all of which resulted in convictions, were based on confessions reportedly extracted under torture.
16. Witnesses continued to describe to ODIHR efforts by the Russian authorities to compel residents of the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine to ‘cooperate’ in ways that violate IHL, while, at the same time, risking unfair prosecution by the Ukrainian authorities under vague ‘collaboration’ laws.
17. ODIHR collected information, including through witness testimonies, indicating the recruitment of children by the Russian Federation for intelligence gathering, espionage and sabotage activities. ODIHR also received allegations that the Ukrainian authorities used information shared by children residing in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine on Russian military positions.
18. ODIHR makes a series of recommendations, calling on both parties to the conflict to address the issues highlighted in this report, as well as to respect and ensure respect for IHL and IHRL. ODIHR also makes recommendations to OSCE participating States to provide redress to survivors of violations, to take steps to ensure accountability and to support and fund humanitarian assistance and the documentation of violations of IHL and IHRL by civil society.

Introduction

II

19. More than four years after the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, the war continues to be marked by the widespread suffering of the civilian population and serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL).
20. The OSCE human dimension commitments emphasize the vital importance of participating States adhering to and implementing their binding IHL and IHRL obligations under international treaties,¹ including the Geneva Conventions.²
21. In line with its core mandate to assist OSCE participating States in the implementation of human dimension commitments,³ ODIHR established the Ukraine Monitoring Initiative (UMI) immediately after the 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and began monitoring and documenting reported violations in the context of the armed conflict, focusing on the most pressing issues affecting the lives of civilians and prisoners of war (POWs).
22. ODIHR's analysis of the situation in Ukraine and of alleged IHL and IHRL violations is informed by relevant legal provisions applicable to the armed conflict in Ukraine. The purported 'annexation' or integration of territories under occupation by the Russian Federation is illegal under international law, produces no legal effect and does not alter the status of these territories, which remain Ukrainian territory. More information about the legal framework is available on ODIHR's website.⁴
23. The methodology employed by the UMI was informed by and tailored to the circumstances on the ground in Ukraine. ODIHR applies a trauma-informed approach, guided by the 'do no harm' principle, informed consent and careful consideration of the risks of re-traumatization. More information about the methodology is available on ODIHR's website.⁵

1 See [Concluding Document of Budapest](#), (Budapest 1994), CSCE, 6 December 1994, pp. 13, 35.

2 See [Concluding Document of Helsinki](#), (Helsinki 1992), The Fourth Follow-up Meeting, CSCE, 10 July 1992, paras. 47-52; CSCE, [Budapest 1994](#), Chapter IV, Code of conduct on politico-military aspects of security, paras. 29-35.

3 CSCE, [Helsinki 1992](#). See also [Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#), (First Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 20 July 2022; [Second Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#), (Second Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 14 December 2022; [Third Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#), (Third Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 17 July 2023; [Fourth Interim Report on violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#), (Fourth Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 12 December 2023, [Fifth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#), (Fifth Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 22 July 2024; [Sixth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#) (Sixth Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 13 December 2024; [Seventh Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#) (Seventh Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 15 July 2025; [Eighth Interim Report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine](#) (Eighth Interim Report), OSCE/ODIHR, 16 December 2025, for additional detail on ODIHR's mandate.

4 See OSCE/ODIHR, [The legal framework applicable to the armed conflict in Ukraine](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 17 July 2023.

5 See [Ukraine Monitoring Initiative Methodology](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 17 July 2023.

24. This Ninth Interim Report builds upon the findings and recommendations of the eight previous Interim Reports on reported violations of IHL and IHRL in Ukraine published in July 2022 (First Interim Report), December 2022 (Second Interim Report), July 2023 (Third Interim Report), December 2023 (Fourth Interim Report), July 2024 (Fifth Interim Report), December 2024 (Sixth Interim Report), July 2025 (Seventh Interim Report) and December 2025 (Eighth Interim Report) respectively.⁶ ODIHR's public reporting aims to contribute further to ensuring accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL committed in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine.
25. The report begins with an overview of conflict-related issues and key developments that occurred in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026. It then turns to specific issues raised during in-person interviews with survivors and witnesses conducted by ODIHR in the first half of 2026, giving prominence to their voices.⁷ ODIHR conducted three monitoring deployments to Ukraine during this period. During these visits, ODIHR carried out a total of 104 interviews with 107 witnesses, including survivors of, or witnesses to alleged violations of IHL and IHRL (50 women and 57 men).⁸ ODIHR interviewees came from various regions of Ukraine, including Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Luhansk, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Volyn, Zaporizhzhia, Zhytomyr, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol (Crimea).
26. ODIHR wishes to express its deepest gratitude to all witnesses and survivors who shared their testimony. Additionally, ODIHR received information from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and made use of information supplied or published by institutions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, as well as intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which is referenced throughout the report.

6 OSCE/ODIHR, [First Interim Report](#); [Second Interim Report](#); [Third Interim Report](#); [Fourth Interim Report](#); [Fifth Interim Report](#); [Sixth Interim Report](#); [Seventh Interim Report](#); [Eighth Interim Report](#).

7 In this respect, certain information included in Chapter IV may relate to events that occurred prior to 1 December 2025.

8 As of 31 May 2026, the UMI has carried out 30 missions in and outside Ukraine, during which it has conducted 786 interviews with a total of 827 survivors of, or witnesses to, alleged violations of IHL and IHRL (418 women and 409 men).

Overview of the situation between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026

III

A. CONTINUED VIOLATIONS OF IHL DURING THE CONDUCT OF HOSTILITIES

27. ODIHR has continued to monitor reported violations of IHL committed during the conduct of hostilities, both in government-controlled and Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as in the Russian Federation. The reporting period was characterized by continued large-scale coordinated strikes by the Russian armed forces on urban areas, resulting in a sustained high level of civilian casualties, as well as the damage and destruction of civilian objects. Systematic targeting of energy facilities persisted throughout the winter, resulting in significant disruption to civilian life across the country, while port and railway infrastructure also came under increased attack. Frontline communities continued to be heavily impacted by the expanding use of short-range drones, as well as aerial bombardments, artillery shelling and multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) strikes. In Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and the Russian Federation itself, Ukrainian attacks at times resulted in damage to civilian infrastructure and, in several instances, multiple civilian deaths and injuries in a single incident.
28. Between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026, the number of verified civilian casualties (killed and injured) in government-controlled territories of Ukraine increased by 45 per cent compared with the same period in 2025.⁹ Compared to the previous reporting period, however, the figures remained broadly similar, increasing by less than 4 per cent. This reflects the sustained rise in civilian casualties observed since the beginning of 2025, which is primarily due to the Russian Federation's intensified use of long-range weapons across the country, as well as an increase in short-range drone attacks in frontline areas. Notably, casualty levels during the reporting period remained comparable to those recorded during the preceding summer and autumn months, when casualty rates have historically been higher. In Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, verified civilian casualties were 13 per cent lower than those in the period from December 2024 to May 2025. However, relative to the period June to November 2025, the number was 32 per cent higher.¹⁰ Given the lack of access for independent monitoring, restrictions on media coverage of attacks and the relatively small number of verified civilian casualties in the Russian-occupied territories, these fluctuations should be interpreted with caution, as they may not reflect a broader change in the pattern of hostilities.
29. As noted in earlier Interim Reports,¹¹ since the beginning of 2025, ODIHR has observed a significant increase in the use of long-range missiles and loitering munitions in the Russian Federation's attacks on densely populated areas of

9 See UN OHCHR Protection of Civilians Updates: [December 2024](#), 9 January 2025, p. 2; [January 2025](#), 11 February 2025, p. 2; [February 2025](#), 11 March 2025, p. 2; [March 2025](#), 9 April 2025, p. 2; [April 2025](#), 8 May 2025, p. 2; [May 2025](#), 11 June 2025, p. 2; [June 2025](#), 10 July 2025, p. 2; [July 2025](#), 13 August 2025, p. 2; [August 2025](#), 10 September 2025, p. 2; [September 2025](#), 10 October 2025, p. 2; [October 2025](#), 12 November 2025, p. 2; [November 2025](#), 12 December 2025, p. 2; [December 2025](#), 12 January 2026, p. 2; [January 2026](#), 13 February 2026, p. 2; [February 2026](#), 16 March 2026, p. 2; [March 2026](#), 10 April 2026, p. 2; [April 2026](#), 13 May 2026, p. 2; [May 2026](#), 12 June 2026, p. 2.

10 *Ibid.* OHCHR notes that the actual number might be higher, as some reports are still pending confirmation.

11 OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 23; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 29.

Ukraine. This pattern persisted during the reporting period: from February through May, attacks involving such weapons were the primary cause of civilian casualties, with the majority occurring in cities and towns far from the frontline.¹² Moreover, Russian armed forces continued their frequent large-scale coordinated strikes involving the simultaneous launch of hundreds of munitions, often overnight. While many of these attacks were primarily directed at military targets or so-called ‘dual-use’ objects,¹³ such as military-industrial, industrial, logistics and critical infrastructure,¹⁴ residential buildings and other civilian objects were often struck, causing numerous civilian deaths and injuries. The frequent nature and severity of civilian harm resulting from these attacks suggest that the Russian Federation repeatedly failed to comply with the core IHL principles of proportionality and precautions in attack;¹⁵ conduct that may amount to war crimes.¹⁶

30. For instance, on 23-24 March 2026, Russian armed forces launched two, large-scale attacks within less than 24 hours, involving 948 loitering munitions and 34 missiles, which targeted multiple regions across Ukraine.¹⁷ As a result, five civilians (including one child) were killed and at least 91 (including seven children) were injured.¹⁸ In the city of Lviv, 26 civilians were injured and several civilian objects, including St. Andrew’s Church and the Bernardine Monastery complex (located in the historic centre and part of the UNESCO World Heritage site) were damaged in a loitering munitions attack.¹⁹ Two eyewitnesses who spoke to ODIHR — a volunteer who assisted at a struck residential building and a priest present at St. Andrew’s Church when its bell tower was hit — provided additional detail on the casualties and damage resulting from the strike.²⁰ On the night of 16 April, the Russian Federation launched another large-scale attack, targeting some of Ukraine’s largest cities.²¹ In Odesa and Dnipro, residential buildings were

12 UN OHCHR Protection of Civilians Updates: [February 2026](#), 16 March 2026, p. 2; [March 2026](#), 10 April 2026, p. 2; [April 2026](#), 13 May 2026, p. 2; [May 2026](#), 12 June 2026, p. 2.

13 Civilian objects that also serve military purposes and, by virtue of their nature, location, purpose or use, make an effective contribution to military action, thereby qualifying as military objectives despite their civilian functions. For such a dual-use object to become a legitimately targetable object, however, an attack must yield a definitive military advantage. See CIHL Rules 8, 10; AP I, art. 52(2).

14 See e.g., [Минобороны РФ сообщило о ночном массированном ударе по военным целям на Украине](#) [The Russian Ministry of Defence reported a massive nighttime strike on military targets in Ukraine], *Interfax*, 24 March 2026, in Russian; Russian Ministry of Defence, Telegram [post](#), 14 May 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 24 May 2026, in Russian.

15 As ODIHR is not positioned to conduct detailed assessments of violations of IHL norms in relation to individual attacks, its findings are based on patterns observed during its monitoring activities. These allow it to make provisional conclusions on the degree of compliance with certain IHL norms by the parties to the conflict. For more details, see OSCE/ODIHR, [Ukraine Monitoring Initiative Methodology](#).

16 CIHL Rules 14, 15-21; AP I, arts. 51(4)(b), 57, 58; ICC Statute, art. 8(b)(iv).

17 See Air Force of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Telegram [post](#), 24 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 24 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram [post](#), 24 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 24 March 2026, in Ukrainian.

18 UN OHCHR, Protection of Civilians Update: [March 2026](#), 10 April 2026, p. 3.

19 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. See also Andriy Sadovyi, Facebook [post](#), 24 March 2026, in Ukrainian; [UNESCO alarmed by strikes on Lviv World Heritage Site](#), UNESCO, 25 March 2026.

20 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.751, paras. 11-17; UKR.WS.759, paras. 7-11.

21 Air Force of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Telegram [post](#), 16 April 2026, in Ukrainian.

hit.²² According to the Ukrainian authorities, at least 17 civilians (including one child) were killed and more than 100 were injured across the country, including in Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Odesa and Zaporizhzhia.²³

31. On 13-14 May, the Russian armed forces carried out its largest and longest aerial assault since the beginning of the invasion, launching 1567 loitering munitions and 56 missiles.²⁴ The main target was Kyiv City where, according to the Ukrainian authorities, 24 civilians were killed (including three children) and more than 50 were injured.²⁵ All deaths and most injuries occurred in the Darnytskyi district, where a missile struck a nine-story residential building causing its partial collapse. The circumstances of the attack indicate apparent non-compliance with the IHL principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions, and may indicate conduct amounting to a war crime.²⁶ On the night of 24 May, another large-scale attack primarily targeting the capital killed two civilians and injured 86 others.²⁷ These attacks, coupled with public threats by the Russian authorities to intensify strikes on the capital,²⁸ raise further concerns about a dangerous escalation in the conduct of hostilities impacting on civilians. Despite a three-day ceasefire agreement,²⁹ for May 2026, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) recorded the highest monthly number of civilian casualties since April 2022, with Kyiv accounting for more civilian deaths and injuries than any other location in Ukraine.³⁰
32. Attacks near the frontline remained constant throughout the reporting period, with daily reports of aerial bombardments, artillery shelling and MLRS strikes causing civilian casualties and widespread damage to residential housing and

22 Oleh Kiper, Telegram [post](#), 16 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Oleksandr Hanzha, Telegram [post](#), 16 April 2026, in Ukrainian. See also ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.767, paras. 17-29.

23 Tymur Tkachenko, Telegram [post](#), 16 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Oleksandr Hanzha, Telegram [post](#), 16 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Odesa Regional Prosecutor's Office, Telegram [post](#), 16 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram [post](#), 16 April 2026, in Ukrainian.

24 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram [post](#), 14 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

25 Vitaliy Klitschko, Telegram [post](#), 15 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

26 CIHL Rules 7, 11, 14, 15, 20; AP I, arts. 48, 51(2), (4)-(5), 52(1)-(2), 57(2), 85(3)(b) and (5); ICC Statute, arts. 8(2)(b)(ii), 8(2)(b)(iv).

27 Tymur Tkachenko, Telegram [post](#), 24 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

28 On 25 May 2026, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a public warning that Russian forces would begin "systematic and consistent" strikes against Kyiv following a Ukrainian strike on Starobilsk in occupied Luhansk region. See [Заявление МИД России в связи с ударами вооружённых формирований киевского режима по гражданскому населению России](#) [Statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding attacks by armed groups of the Kyiv regime on the civilian population of Russia], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 25 May 2026, in Russian.

29 On 8 May, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a three-day ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which the authorities in Kyiv and Moscow subsequently confirmed. See Donald J. Trump, Truth Social [post](#), 8 May 2026.

30 UN OHCHR, Protection of Civilians Update: [May 2026](#), 12 June 2026, p. 2.

critical infrastructure.³¹ Furthermore, ODIHR observed a further expansion in the indiscriminate use by the Russian armed forces of short-range drones, including so-called First Person View (FPV) drones,³² both in terms of the geographic areas affected³³ and the resulting civilian harm.³⁴ Short-range drones attacked civilian vehicles, homes and other civilian objects, in some instances resulting in multiple deaths and injuries.³⁵ ODIHR interviewed seven witnesses who reported that FPV drones deliberately struck humanitarian workers and volunteers assisting in evacuation and aid distribution.³⁶ A survivor of an FPV drone attack in Kherson region told ODIHR: *“This kind of thing is happening every day. [...] I think this is the drone operators using us for training before going to the frontline.”*³⁷

33. From December through February, Russian armed forces continued to carry out large-scale coordinated strikes against Ukraine’s energy infrastructure,³⁸ launching at least 15 nationwide attacks during this period. The attacks damaged electricity generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure, including combined heat and power plants that supply residential heating, causing extensive disruptions to electricity, heating and hot water for hundreds of thousands of households in major urban areas during a period of severe, sub-zero winter

31 For instance, on 4 February, seven civilians were killed and 15 were injured in a missile attack on a market in Druzhkivka (Donetsk region), during which cluster munitions were reportedly used. See State Emergency Service of Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 4 February 2026, in Ukrainian. On 10 March, six civilians were killed and 20 more were injured in an aerial bombardment of Sloviansk (Donetsk region). See Sloviansk City Military Administration, Telegram [post](#), 10 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Donetsk Regional Police, Telegram [post](#), 10 March 2026, in Ukrainian. On 5 May, 12 civilians were killed and 37 were injured when aerial bombs struck industrial areas of Zaporizhzhia City, damaging a car repair shop and surrounding buildings. See Ivan Fedorov, Telegram [post](#), 5 May 2026, in Ukrainian. That same day, on 5 May, at least six civilians were killed and at least 17 were injured in an aerial bombardment of the centre of Kramatorsk (Donetsk region). See Kramatorsk City Military Administration, Telegram [post](#), 6 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

32 ‘First Person View’ (FPV) drones are equipped with cameras that provide operators on the ground with a direct, real-time view of the areas they fly over and any potential targets. This feature allows operators to assess with greater certainty whether a potential target is a military objective or a civilian person or object.

33 Whereas most such attacks were initially recorded in frontline settlements of Kherson region, these are now increasingly expanding into other areas of Ukraine, including Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolaiv regions. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 27; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 32.

34 According to the UN OHCHR, short-range drones continued to be the leading cause of civilian casualties near the frontline. Moreover, **more civilians were killed and injured by this type of weapon in May 2026 than in any other month since 24 February 2022**. See UN OHCHR, Protection of Civilians Updates: [December 2025](#), 12 January 2026, p. 2; [January 2026](#), 13 February 2026, p. 2; [February 2026](#), 16 March 2026, p. 2; [March 2026](#), 10 April 2026, p. 2; [April 2026](#), 13 May 2026, p. 2; [May 2026](#), 12 June 2026, p. 2.

35 For example, on 1 February, following the attack on a DTEK service bus carrying coal mine workers home from their shift in Ternivka (Dnipropetrovsk region), 12 workers were killed and 17 injured. See Dnipropetrovsk Regional Prosecutor’s Office, Telegram [post](#), 1 February 2026, in Ukrainian. On 4 April, five civilians were killed and 27 were injured (including one child) in the attack on a local market in Nikopol (Dnipropetrovsk region). See Mykola Lukashuk, Telegram [post](#), 4 April 2026, in Ukrainian. On 7 April, the attack on a public bus in Nikopol killed four civilians and injured 24. See Oleksandr Hanzha, Telegram [post](#), 7 April 2026, in Ukrainian. ODIHR also interviewed survivors of FPV-drone attacks that occurred in Kherson region in September and October 2025. See ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 45-47; UKR.WS.744, paras. 20-33; UKR.WS.763, paras. 21-24; UKR.WS.778, paras. 44-46.

36 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.684; UKR.WS.688; UKR.WS.712; UKR.WS.714; UKR.WS.765; UKR.WS.782; UKR.WS.783. For more details, See Section IV.a. Attacks impacting on humanitarian operations.

37 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.683, para. 46.

38 From October 2025 onwards, Russian armed forces resumed their large-scale nationwide strikes, launching eight major attacks in less than two months. See OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 34.

weather.³⁹ The attacks also resulted in civilian deaths and injury.⁴⁰ The latest campaign further degraded Ukraine's energy system as a whole, which resulted in prolonged rolling power outages across most regions of the country and disrupted the functioning of hospitals, schools and other essential services.⁴¹ From March onwards, energy infrastructure continued to sustain damage from localized and region-specific strikes, including attacks on substations and other electricity facilities.⁴² Overall, between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026, the Ukrainian authorities recorded more than 1,090 attacks on more than 550 energy infrastructure facilities across the country.⁴³ Attacks on energy infrastructure during severe winter conditions may violate IHL, particularly where they deprive civilians of electricity, heating and other services indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.⁴⁴ The scale and pattern of strikes suggest an intent to disrupt the national energy system as a whole, rather than to target discrete military objectives, in apparent breach of the obligation to take all feasible precautions and minimize civilian harm.

34. During the first half of 2026, the Russian Federation also intensified⁴⁵ strikes on the Ukrainian railway system,⁴⁶ with civilian passenger trains being hit directly on several occasions.⁴⁷ ODIHR interviewed three Ukrainian Railways employees

39 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. For more details, See Section III.b. The humanitarian situation.

40 For instance, on 9 January, four civilians were killed and 26 were injured following a large-scale attack on Kyiv. See Kyiv City Prosecutor's Office, Telegram [post](#), 9 January 2026, in Ukrainian. On 27 January, three civilians were killed and another 25 (including six children and a pregnant woman) were injured after a multi-story residential building partially collapsed and another building was severely damaged in a loitering munitions attack on Odesa City. See Serhiy Lysak, Telegram [post](#), 27 January 2026, in Ukrainian; Odesa Regional Prosecutor's Office, Telegram [post](#), 27 January 2026, in Ukrainian.

41 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. See also [18 годин без світла та блекаут: які регіони в 2026 році можуть залишитись без електрики](#) [18 hours without power and a blackout: Which regions could face power outages in 2026], *Glavred*, 31 December 2025, in Ukrainian; [How Russia's Scorched-Earth Attacks Put Ukraine's Power Grid Near Collapse](#), *The New York Times*, 12 March 2026.

42 [Ukrainian attacks on Russian fuel infrastructure. Day 1532 of the war](#), Centre for Eastern Studies, 5 May 2026.

43 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

44 AP I, art. 54(2).

45 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 34. Between 1 December 2025 and 16 June 2026, 1,190 attacks on Ukrainian Railways company's infrastructure and rolling stock were recorded, according to the Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. See also [Росія перейшла до тактики знищення залізниці в масштабах країни. Інфографіка](#) [Russia has shifted to a strategy of destroying the railway network across the country. Infographic], *Texty.org.ua*, 20 May 2026, in Ukrainian. See further ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.743, para. 30.

46 Logistical infrastructure is often used for both civilian and military purposes, making it a 'dual-use' object. However, any attack must still comply with IHL principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions. Strikes that resulted in civilian casualties therefore raise serious concerns, especially given the high and foreseeable civilian presence on Ukrainian railways, which are the country's primary mode of transportation and a critical means of evacuation.

47 For instance, on 27 January, a drone strike on a passenger train on the Chop-Kharkiv-Barvinkove line killed five civilians and injured two. See Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, Telegram [post](#), 28 January 2026, in Ukrainian. On 24 March, one passenger was killed and the train engineer and his assistant were injured following a direct hit on the Slatine-Kharkiv electric train by an FPV-drone. See Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor's Office, Telegram [post](#), 24 March 2026, in Ukrainian.

who witnessed such attacks during the reporting period,⁴⁸ including an individual onboard the passenger train that came under a drone attack near Apostolove (Dnipropetrovsk region) on 2 March, which killed one civilian and injured ten more.⁴⁹ The witness reported to ODIHR that there was no military equipment or infrastructure nearby at the time of the attack and that all passengers on board were civilians.⁵⁰ The Russian armed forces similarly increased⁵¹ attacks on seaport infrastructure facilities⁵² and foreign vessels in Odesa region, resulting in civilian casualties⁵³ and threatening civilian shipping and the delivery of essential supplies.

35. During the reporting period, first responders⁵⁴ repeatedly came under attack by Russian forces while carrying out their professional duties, including in incidents involving so-called ‘double-tap’ strikes.⁵⁵ For example, while responding to the aftermath of a large-scale attack on 9 January in the Darnytskyi district of Kyiv, a team of first responders was hit in a second strike. The attack killed one medic and injured four others, as well as five rescue workers and one police officer.⁵⁶ On 5 May, following an attack on a gas production facility in Poltava region, a second strike on the same location killed two and injured 23 emergency workers.⁵⁷ Such attacks disrupt rescue operations, impede civilian access to emergency assistance,

48 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.728, paras. 11-40; UKR.WS.731, paras. 8-22; UKR.WS.743, paras. 14-27.

49 Dnipropetrovsk Regional Police, Telegram [post](#), 2 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Oleksandr Hanzha, Telegram [post](#), 2 March 2026, in Ukrainian.

50 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.731, para. 22.

51 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 28. According to ODIHR monitoring, such attacks were frequent in December and January and intensified again from April onwards. According to the Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna, since 1 December 2025, 373 port infrastructure facilities and 68 civilian vessels have been damaged and partially destroyed.

52 Under certain conditions, maritime ports can qualify as military objectives if they are, for instance, used to transport military supplies or to launch military operations. However, there is no publicly available information indicating that the targeted port infrastructure made an effective contribution to Ukraine’s military action or that its destruction offered a definite military advantage and, thus, no basis to conclude that it constituted a military objective.

53 For instance, on 7 January, two civilians were killed and 11 were injured in a missile and loitering munitions attack on the region’s port and industrial infrastructure. See Odesa Regional Prosecutor’s Office, Telegram [post](#), 7 January 2026, in Ukrainian. On 9 January, a loitering munitions’ strike on two ships under the flags of the Comoro Islands and Saint Kitts and Nevis killed one civilian and injured another. See Oleksii Kuleba, Telegram [post](#), 9 January 2026, in Ukrainian. On 15 January, port infrastructure and a Maltese-flagged vessel were hit in a missile attack on Chornomorsk, injuring one of its crew members. See Odesa Regional Prosecutor’s Office, Telegram [post](#), 15 January 2026, in Ukrainian.

54 This includes emergency service workers, medical personnel and police officers. Emergency service workers and members of civilian police enjoy protected status as civilians under IHL. CIHL Rule 1; AP I, art. 50.

55 Such strikes target the same location in two separate attacks: the first causes the initial destruction, while the second impacts emergency responders, journalists or other civilians arriving at the scene. Launching follow-up strikes when emergency responders are present or can reasonably be expected to be at the site to assist victims raises serious concerns under IHL, including with respect to the obligation to take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm. If it were established that such attacks were intended to kill or injure first responders or other civilians, they would amount to deliberate attacks against civilians, which may constitute war crimes. CIHL Rule 15; AP I, art. 57; Rome Statute, art. 8(2)(b)(i).

56 Ihor Klymenko, Telegram [post](#), 9 January 2026, in Ukrainian.

57 Ihor Klymenko, Telegram [post](#), 5 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

and expose emergency workers to heightened risks, raising concerns under IHL, including regarding the principles of distinction and precautions in attack.

36. ODIHR interviewed five witnesses affected by separate Russian strikes during the reporting period, whose accounts underscore the impact of such attacks on civilians, including loss of housing, as well as physical and psychological harm.⁵⁸ They included: a resident of Kharkiv whose apartment was severely damaged following a missile strike on a residential area on 2 January that killed six civilians (including one child) and injured 32 others;⁵⁹ an employee of a confectionery factory in Kyiv who survived an attack on the enterprise on 24 January that killed one of her colleagues and injured two others;⁶⁰ a married couple whose house in Sofiivska Borshchahivka was severely damaged during a large-scale missile and drone strike on Kyiv region on the night of 22 February;⁶¹ and a resident of Yampil (Sumy region) whose house was damaged following an aerial bombardment, which also hit a functioning kindergarten.⁶² At the time of the interviews, the homes of three of the witnesses remained uninhabitable, forcing them to stay with family members or friends, while two described lasting physical and psychological effects, such as hearing problems and psychological distress.⁶³
37. Albeit to a far lesser extent,⁶⁴ the Ukrainian armed forces have also conducted shelling and loitering munitions strikes on densely populated areas in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, which, at times, resulted in civilian casualties. For instance, the Russian authorities reported that, on the night of 31 December 2025 to 1 January 2026, loitering munitions struck a café and a hotel in the village of Khorly (Kherson region), killing 29 people (including two children) and injuring 60 (including five children and a pregnant woman).⁶⁵ While the Russian authorities stated that the victims were civilians celebrating New Year's

58 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.687, para. 83; UKR.WS.699, paras. 24-25; UKR.WS.726, paras. 11-12, 16-17; UKR.WS.784, paras. 5-7, 22-32, 39-41.

59 Kharkiv Regional Police, Telegram [post](#), 4 January 2026, in Ukrainian.

60 Petro Poroshenko, Facebook [post](#), 24 January 2026, in Ukrainian.

61 According to local authorities, the attack killed one civilian and injured 17 (including four children) in several districts of the region. See Mykola Kalashnyk, Telegram [post](#), 22 February 2026, in Ukrainian.

62 Oleh Hryhorov, Telegram [post](#), 27 April 2026, in Ukrainian. See also Na Mezhy, Telegram [post](#), 27 April 2026, in Ukrainian. Educational institutions are entitled to enhanced protection if not used for military purposes, with parties to the conflict obliged to take special measures to avoid their destruction or damage. Hague Regulations (1907), art. 27; CIHL Rule 38.

63 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.687, para. 83; UKR.WS.699, paras. 24-25; UKR.WS.726, paras. 11-12, 16-17; UKR.WS.784, paras. 5-7, 22-32, 39-41.

64 According to data on verified civilian casualties made available by the UN OHCHR, between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026, 97 per cent of civilian casualties occurred in the government-controlled territories of Ukraine, while 3 per cent occurred in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. See UN OHCHR Protection of Civilians Updates: [December 2025](#), 12 January 2026, p. 2; [January 2026](#), 13 February 2026, p. 2; [February 2026](#), 16 March 2026, p. 2; [March 2026](#), 10 April 2026, p. 2; [April 2026](#), 13 May 2026, p. 2; [May 2026](#), 12 June 2026, p. 2.

65 Vladimir Saldo, Telegram [post](#), 4 January 2026, in Russian. See also TASS, Telegram [post](#), 2 January 2026, in Russian; Tavria: News from Kherson Region, Telegram [post](#), 1 January 2026, in Russian. The UN OHCHR established that at least ten of those killed and eight of those injured were civilians (including four children). See UN OHCHR Protection of Civilians Update: [December 2025](#), 12 January 2026, p. 2.

Eve,⁶⁶ the Ukrainian authorities rejected allegations of an unlawful attack and maintained that Ukrainian armed forces target only military objectives.⁶⁷ On the night of 21-22 May, following a strike on an educational complex in Starobilsk (Luhansk region),⁶⁸ 21 civilians were killed and 63 were injured (including 16 children).⁶⁹ The Ukrainian authorities acknowledged the strike at the location but stated that Ukraine did not target a civilian infrastructure facility.⁷⁰ Based on the available information, both incidents raise serious concerns that they may have involved either deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian objects or indiscriminate attacks. Such attacks are prohibited under IHL and may amount to war crimes.⁷¹ The Russian authorities continued to report attacks on energy infrastructure by Ukrainian armed forces, which primarily affected areas close to the frontline and disrupted both electricity and water supplies for the local population.⁷²

38. Finally, ODIHR continued to monitor information concerning attacks by Ukrainian armed forces in the Russian Federation and their consequences.⁷³ During the reporting period, oil infrastructure, including refineries and fuel depots, remained a key target,⁷⁴ while military-industrial facilities, military equipment

66 RTVI, Telegram [post](#), 1 January 2026, in Russian. Shortly after the attack, several unofficial Ukrainian sources claimed that military personnel and employees of the occupying administration celebrated New Year with their families. ODIHR found that several of the victims indeed held positions in the civilian administration and police in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. However, it is important to note that, under IHL, members of the enemy political leadership can be attacked only if they serve in the armed forces, thereby qualifying them as combatants. Civilian members of the political leadership are not considered combatants and cannot be lawfully targeted. See CIHL Rules 1, 3-4, 6; AP I, arts. 48, 51(2)-(3), 52.

67 [Сили оборони України завдають ударів виключно по військових цілях РФ – Генштаб про заяву Сальдо](#) [Ukrainian defence forces are striking exclusively at Russian military targets, says the General Staff in response to Saldo's statement], *Interfax*, 1 January 2026, in Ukrainian.

68 Following the review of publicly available information, ODIHR identified the affected sites as a dormitory and college facilities of Starobilsk College/Luhansk Pedagogical University, which were operational at the time of the attack. In addition, published lists of the dead and missing indicate that there were indeed students in the buildings, many of whom were young women.

69 Information provided to the OSCE by the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. See also Government of LPR, Telegram [post](#), 23 May 2026, in Russian; Luhansk 24, Telegram [post](#), 23 May 2026, in Russian. The UN OHCHR corroborated that all 21 reported dead were civilians (including 18 women), and that at least four of the reported injured were civilians (including two women). See UN OHCHR, Protection of Civilians Update: [May 2026](#), 12 June 2026, p. 3.

70 The General Staff of the Ukrainian armed forces stated that, on the night of 21-22 May, Ukrainian forces struck several Russian military targets, including one of the headquarters of the Russian "Rubicon" unit near Starobilsk. Ukraine described Rubicon as the Russian "Centre for Advanced Unmanned Technologies" and stated that Ukrainian strikes are directed at military infrastructure and facilities used for military purposes. See General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Telegram [post](#), 22 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

71 CIHL Rules 1, 7, 11; AP I, arts. 48, 51(2) and (4), 85(3)(b) and (5); ICC Statute, arts. 8(2)(b)(i), 8(2)(b)(ii), 8(2)(b)(iv).

72 For instance, on 8 December, energy infrastructure facilities in the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region came under loitering munitions attack, leaving nearly 12,000 residents in several towns without electricity. See Evgeniy Balitskyi, Telegram [post](#), 8 December 2025, in Russian. On 23 December, energy infrastructure was hit in occupied parts of Kherson region with drones, leaving more than 60,000 residents without electricity in several districts. See Vladimir Saldo, Telegram [post](#), 23 December 2025, in Russian.

73 Regarding attacks in earlier periods, see also OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 26; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 30; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 31; and [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 36.

74 [Ukraine ramps up attacks on Russian oil, aiming to curb Iranian war windfall](#), *The New York Times*, 7 April 2026; [Russia cuts oil output in April, sources say](#), *Reuters*, 21 April 2026.

and airfields also came under repeated attack. In some instances, such strikes reportedly resulted in civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects.⁷⁵ For instance, according to the Russian authorities, following the 10-11 March attack on a military electronics factory in Bryansk,⁷⁶ seven civilians were killed and 42 injured.⁷⁷ The Ukrainian authorities took responsibility for the attack.⁷⁸ On 15 May, five civilians (including a child) were killed and 28 injured (including four children),⁷⁹ and several apartment buildings were damaged as a result of a loitering munitions strike on the city of Ryazan.⁸⁰ Moreover, ODIHR also observed reports of localized disruptions to electricity and water supplies in the Russian Federation, particularly in areas close to the border with Ukraine.⁸¹

B. THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

39. Ongoing hostilities and harsh winter conditions exacerbated an already deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine. Attacks on energy infrastructure disrupted electricity, heating and water supplies throughout the country, including in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.⁸² Civilians remaining in

75 ODIHR was unable to independently verify the reported number of casualties from the Russian Federation in accordance with its [methodology](#). As, at the time of writing, the Russian authorities have imposed restrictions on the publication of photos and videos showing the aftermath of Ukrainian attacks in more than 60 regions of the country, independent verification based on publicly available information has become increasingly difficult.

76 The main target of the attack was the “Kremniy EL” microelectronics factory — one of Russia’s largest manufacturers in the field, whose chips are used in missile systems and loitering munitions. The facility has been repeatedly attacked by Ukrainian forces in the past. Satellite images and publicly available footage showing the aftermath of the attack indicate that the main production facility of the factory was repeatedly struck. It should be noted that factory workers, even of facilities which produce materials used for military purposes, are civilians and, according to IHL, require all possible precautions to be taken to minimize their harm.

77 Aleksandr Bogomaz, Telegram [post](#), 11 March, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 11 March 2026, in Russian.

78 General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Telegram [post](#), 10 March 2026, in Ukrainian; RBC-Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 10 March 2026, in Ukrainian.

79 Information provided to the OSCE by the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation. See also Pavel Malkov, Telegram [post](#), 15 May 2026, in Russian; Ministry of Health of Ryazan Region, [Vkontakte post](#), 15 May 2026.

80 According to open sources, the main target of the attack was Ryazan oil refinery — one of the largest oil refining enterprises in Russia — which was set on fire following the strike. In addition, two multi-storey residential buildings were also damaged in the attack, one of which was reportedly hit by an air defence missile, while the other was struck by a loitering munition. See Astra Press, X [post](#), 15 May 2026; Reports on attacks on civilian infrastructure from CIT volunteers, Telegram [post](#), 16 May 2026, in Russian.

81 «Вынести одну точку – и питание города вырубается»: как ВСУ и российские власти поставили Белгород на грань коммунального коллапса [“One strike — and the city’s power supply is cut off”: how the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the Russian authorities have brought Belgorod to the brink of a utility collapse], *Verstka*, 28 January 2026, in Russian; [Ukrainian Airstrikes Knock Out Power in Belgorod Region for Second Time in a Month](#), *The Moscow Times*, 4 February 2026; [Thousands Without Running Water in Belgorod After Ukrainian Attack](#), *The Moscow Times*, 9 February 2026. As in all relevant cases in the Russian Federation, ODIHR has not yet been able to independently verify a causal link between the Ukrainian attacks and the reported disruptions nor the extent to which these have impacted the civilian population.

82 For more details, See Section III.a. Continued violations of IHL during the conduct of hostilities. See also UN OHCHR Protection of Civilians Updates: [January 2026](#), 13 February 2026, pp. 2-3; [February 2026](#), 16 March 2026, p. 2; [March 2026](#), 10 April 2026, p. 2; [April 2026](#), 13 May 2026, p. 2; [Путин прокомментировал проблему водоснабжения Донбасса](#) [Putin commented on the Donbass water supply problem], *Донецкое агентство новостей* [Donetsk News Agency], 19 December 2025, in Russian; [Удары ВСУ по энергетике ДНР значительно усугубили водный кризис в регионе](#)

high-risk frontline areas faced hardship due to the unavailability of essential services, experiencing widespread electricity outages, a lack of water or heating,⁸³ inaccessible health care⁸⁴ and persistent security risks.⁸⁵

40. Pre-existing vulnerabilities in the water and energy infrastructure in certain of the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine reportedly worsened in the context of repeated damage to critical systems.⁸⁶ In the most acute situations, the occupation authorities reportedly responded with temporary measures, arranging the occasional delivery of safe drinking water.⁸⁷ Under IHL, an occupying power is obliged, to the fullest extent of the means available to it, to ensure public order, safeguard public health and ensure the provision of food and medical supplies,⁸⁸ as well as facilitate relief where the population is inadequately supplied.⁸⁹ The reported disruption of essential services also raises concerns in light of the prohibition on attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.⁹⁰
41. Shifting frontlines continued to force the displacement of civilians, with over 47,000 evacuees from frontline communities passing through United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) facilities since the beginning of 2026.⁹¹ Reportedly, from 1 December 2025 to 31 May 2026, 86,705 people, including 8,913 children and 1,372 people with disabilities, were evacuated from the frontline areas of Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Chernihiv

[UAF strikes on the “DPR” energy sector significantly worsened the water crisis in the region], TASS, 15 January 2026, in Russian; [Energy attacks amid an unusually harsh winter are exposing Ukraine’s civilians to extreme hardship](#), UN OHCHR, 13 February 2026; [Four years since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine: key facts and findings](#), February 2026, UN OHCHR, 16 February 2026, p. 2; [Humanitarian Needs Four Years After the Full-Scale Invasion](#), Impact Initiatives, 24 February 2026; [Four years of evolution: From emergency monitoring to frontline prioritization \(2022-2026\)](#), Impact Initiatives, 29 April 2026; [Key findings from prioritized frontline oblasts](#), Impact Initiatives, May 2026; [The Cost of Winter in Ukraine: Household Heating Costs, Utility Disruptions and Compounded Vulnerability in 2025-2026](#), IOM, 8 May 2026.

- 83 Luhansk Water, Telegram [post](#), 12 January 2026, in Russian; Government of DPR, Telegram [post](#), 15 January 2026, in Russian; Kherson Regional Administration, Telegram [post](#), 17 January 2026, in Russian; Government of LPR, Telegram [post](#), 19 January 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 30 March 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 6 April 2026, in Russian; [Алчевськ-2. Як і чому замерзає окуповане місто](#) [Alchevsk-2. How and why the occupied city freezes], *Реальна газета* [Real Newspaper], 21 January 2026, in Ukrainian; Vladimir Rogov, Telegram [post](#), 10 April 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 28 May 2026, in Russian.
- 84 [Attacks on Ukraine’s health care increased by 20% in 2025](#), WHO, 23 February 2026.
- 85 [Ukraine: danger is only increasing, warns UN human rights office](#), *UN News*, 26 March 2026.
- 86 LPR Ministry of Fuel and Energy, Telegram [post](#), 5 December 2025; in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 2 January 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 14 January 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 25 January 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 27 February 2026, in Russian; Donetsk News Agency, Telegram [post](#), 19 January 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 20 January 2026, in Russian. See also [Quarterly report on crimes committed by the Kiev regime in January — March 2026](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 10 March 2026, pp. 7, 38-42; [Northern Donetsk Oblast: Water Crisis](#), WASH Cluster Ukraine, 9 April 2026.
- 87 Government of LPR, Telegram [post](#), 8 December 2025, in Russian; Government of DPR, Telegram [post](#), 26 December 2025, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 14 January 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 15 January 2026, in Russian; Kherson Regional Administration, Telegram [post](#), 27 February 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 15 April 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 25 May 2026, in Russian.
- 88 Hague Regulations (1907), art. 43; GC IV, arts. 55, 56, 59.
- 89 CIHL Rules 55–56; AP I, arts. 69, 70.
- 90 CIHL Rule 54; AP I, art. 54.
- 91 [Ukraine Operational Update](#), UNHCR, 13 May 2026.

and Sumy regions.⁹² Due to restricted access to the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, humanitarian organizations were not able to fully assess the humanitarian needs and extent of displacement resulting from the ongoing hostilities and severe winter conditions in these areas.⁹³ However, civilians who recently left Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine confirmed to ODIHR recurrent difficulties in accessing electricity, water and heating due to ongoing hostilities.⁹⁴

42. In several Russian-occupied frontline communities, including Hola Prystan, Oleshky, Nova Zburivka and Stara Zburivka (Kherson region), humanitarian crises unfolded.⁹⁵ Despite dire conditions, around 6,000 people, including 200 children, remained in these settlements as of May 2026.⁹⁶ ODIHR received accounts from individuals who left Oleshky in April 2026, describing “a city turned into a combat zone”,⁹⁷ where civilians were trapped without access to electricity, water, heating, food or medical care.⁹⁸ One witness noted: “*It is hell. People are barely surviving.*”⁹⁹ Witnesses further reported that Russian armed forces prevented civilians from leaving the city and used their presence to shield military positions from attack; conduct that, if established, may amount to the war crime of using human shields.¹⁰⁰
43. In a bid to enhance civilian protection, Ukraine adopted Law No. 4779 regulating the mandatory and forced evacuation of children from zones of active or possible hostilities.¹⁰¹ Notwithstanding the law’s protective objectives, international actors

92 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations to Vienna.

93 [OCHA urges Security Council to protect people from attacks in Ukraine](#), UN OCHA, 12 January 2026.

94 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.704, para. 54; UKR.WS.724, para. 47.

95 [Ukraine: danger is only increasing, warns UN human rights office](#), *UN News*, 26 March 2026; [To stay or risk the ‘Road of Death’ — Ukrainian civilians trapped in frontline city](#), *BBC News*, 6 May 2026; Dmytro Lubinet, [Telegram post](#), 7 May 2026, in Ukrainian; [War in Ukraine: Kherson and Oleshky, two different worlds just 10 kilometers apart](#), *Le Monde*, 22 May 2026; [Без зв’язку, світла, газу, ліків та продуктів: як живе в окупації Голопристанська громада](#) [Without communication, electricity, gas, medicine, and food: how the Holoprystan community lives under occupation], *UKRINFORM*, 28 May 2026, in Ukrainian; Information provided to ODIHR by an NGO working on humanitarian issues; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations to Vienna.

96 [Statement by the MFA of Ukraine on the Critical Humanitarian Situation in Occupied Areas of the Kherson Region](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 6 May 2026; [Ukraine’s Positions Right Now on the Frontline, in Our Long-Range Sanctions, and in Our Joint Results with Partners Are the Strongest They Have Been in Years](#), President of Ukraine, 12 May 2026.

97 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.763, paras. 12-13, 16, 21-24, 26-28, 43, 54, 57-59, 61, 63, 65, 73; UKR.WS.778, paras. 5-9, 13-19, 23, 27, 30, 35, 38, 43-45, 47.

98 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.763, paras. 8, 12, 14, 49-50, 52-54; UKR.WS.778, paras. 22-25, 27-28, 54.

99 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.763, para. 86. Under IHL, an occupying power is obliged to ensure, to the fullest extent of the means available to it, the provision of food, medical supplies and other essentials necessary for the survival of the civilian population under occupation. See Hague Regulations (1907), art. 43; GC IV, arts. 55-56; AP I, art. 69.

100 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.763, paras. 37-43, 66-67; UKR.WS.778, para. 84. Utilizing the presence of protected persons to render immune points or areas from military operations amounts to the use of human shields, which is a war crime. See CIHL Rule 97; GC IV, art. 28; AP I, art. 51(7); ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(b)(xxiii).

101 [ЗАКОН № 4779-IX від 10 лютого 2026 року “Про внесення змін до деяких законодавчих актів України щодо врегулювання питань проведення евакуації, розміщення та життєзабезпечення евакуйованого населення, забезпечення захисту дітей, які перебувають у населених пунктах, розташованих на територіях активних та можливих воєнних \(бойових\) дій”](#) [Law No. 4779-IX of 10 February 2026 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regulating the Issues of

and civil society have raised concerns regarding its practical implementation and potential unintended implications for affected populations,¹⁰² highlighting that the law may create legal uncertainty, lacks sufficient safeguards for vulnerable groups and may have contributed to resistance to evacuation among some front-line communities by mandating the removal of children. ODIHR underscores the importance of ensuring that evacuation frameworks are implemented in a manner that prioritizes the best interests of the child while effectively protecting civilians exposed to the risks of ongoing hostilities.

44. Furthermore, ODIHR received accounts alleging instances where Russian soldiers used drones to intimidate civilians, in particular in communities close to the Dnipro river.¹⁰³ This included targeting them for training purposes.¹⁰⁴ ODIHR was informed of incidents where civilians were struck by drones while engaged in ordinary everyday activities.¹⁰⁵ Such conduct, apparently aimed to terrorize the civilian population,¹⁰⁶ stands in direct contrast to the fundamental IHL principles of distinction and precaution.¹⁰⁷ Deliberate attacks of this nature constitute war crimes.¹⁰⁸

C. OTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

45. ODIHR continued to monitor prisoner of war (POW) exchanges between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.¹⁰⁹ Between December 2025 and June 2026, five parity-based POW exchange rounds were held following talks in Geneva or mediated by the United Arab Emirates or the United States of America. These

Evacuation, Accommodation and Life Support of the Evacuated Population, Ensuring the Protection of Children Staying in Settlements Located in the Territories of Active and Possible Military (Combat Operations)], *Відомості Верховної Ради [Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada]*, 2026, No. 14, p. 38, in Ukrainian.

- 102 [The amended Law on Evacuations – Law No. 4779](#), Legal Brief, UNHCR, March 2026; [DRC Legal Alert on the Evacuation of Civilians in Ukraine](#), Danish Refugee Council, January 2026, p. 9; [Реалізація норм закону про обов'язкову евакуацію ускладнить її, але не розв'яже проблем у цій сфері](#) [Implementation of provisions of the law on mandatory evacuation will complicate it, but will not solve problems in this area], *ZMINA*, 3 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Information provided to ODIHR by an NGO working on issues of protection of civilians.

- 103 [A 'human safari': The Russian drones targeting Ukraine's civilians](#), Chatham House, 15 December 2025; ["Human Safari": Russian drone pilots intentionally hunt civilians on Ukraine's streets](#), *United24 Media*, 7 January 2026; [A city where every step outside risks death by drone](#), *The New York Times*, 28 January 2026; [How Russian drones are terrorizing civilians in Ukraine](#), *France 24*, 21 February 2026; [Zelensky: Russians try to scale up their 'safari' against our people](#), *UKRINFORM*, 7 April 2026. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 27, fn. 39; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 32, fn. 48.

- 104 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.763, paras. 21-24.

- 105 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.778, paras. 44-46.

- 106 CIHL Rule 2; GC IV, art. 33; AP I, art. 51(2).

- 107 CIHL Rules 1-2, 6, 15; GC IV, art. 27; AP I, arts. 48, 51, 57.

- 108 AP I, art. 85(3)(a) and (5); ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(b)(i).

- 109 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Interim Report](#), para. 126; [Second Interim Report](#), para. 163; [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 39-40; [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 35; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 29; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 92; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 39-40; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 42. See also OSCE Moscow Mechanism, Report on Possible Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, Related to the Treatment of Ukrainian POWs by the Russian Federation (OSCE Moscow Mechanism Report), [ODIHR.GAL/43/25/Corr.1](#), 22 September 2025.

exchanges included both military personnel and civilians.¹¹⁰ Available reports suggest that 1,230 POWs and 20 civilian detainees,¹¹¹ as well as the remains of around 4,531 soldiers were returned to Ukraine.¹¹² A reciprocal number of POWs and ten civilians were returned to Russia,¹¹³ along with the remains of at least 181 soldiers.¹¹⁴ Among the ten civilians repatriated to the Russian Federation were the last seven residents from Kursk region who had remained in Ukraine.¹¹⁵

46. As of 31 May 2026, a total of 75 POW exchanges had occurred since the Russian Federation's invasion of 2022, leading to the repatriation of approximately 8,371 Ukrainian POWs and 449 detained civilians.¹¹⁶ ODIHR is unable to provide an estimate of the total number of Russian POWs returned.
47. Outside the formal POW exchange framework, 60 civilians, including 45 civilians who had been held in temporary detention centres for foreign citizens in the Russian Federation, were also returned to Ukraine.¹¹⁷ Ukraine, for its part, returned 15 civilians in addition to those included in the POW exchange structure.¹¹⁸ These returns were facilitated by the Ombudspersons of Ukraine and the Russian Federation as part of the 'humanitarian track'.¹¹⁹
48. ODIHR continued to receive reports of Ukrainian civilians being deported from the Russian Federation and the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine to third countries upon their release from detention, without appropriate legal status or safeguards. Twenty-three Ukrainian civilians were reportedly stranded, at various points between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026, at the temporary migration centre at the Georgian Dariali crossing point.¹²⁰

110 For more details, See Section IV.e. Exchanges of civilians.

111 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram [post](#), 5 February 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 5 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 6 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 11 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 24 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 15 May 2026, in Ukrainian; Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Telegram [post](#), 5 February 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 5 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 6 March 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 11 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 24 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 15 May 2026, in Ukrainian; Dmytro Lubinets, Telegram [post](#), 15 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

112 Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Telegram [post](#), 19 December 2025, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 29 January 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 26 February 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 9 April 2026, in Ukrainian; Telegram [post](#), 16 May 2026, in Ukrainian.

113 Russian Ministry of Defence, Telegram [post](#), 5 February 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 5 March 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 6 March 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 11 April 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 24 April 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 15 May 2026, in Russian.

114 Vladimir Medinsky, Telegram [post](#), 19 December 2025, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 29 January 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 26 February 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 26 February 2026, in Russian; Yana Lantratova, Telegram [post](#), 16 May 2026, in Russian.

115 Vladimir Medinsky, Telegram [post](#), 11 April 2026, in Russian; Aleksandr Khinshtein, Telegram [post](#), 11 April 2026, in Russian. See also OSCE/ODIHR [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 86.

116 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations to Vienna.

117 Dmytro Lubinets, Telegram [post](#), 16 December 2025, in Ukrainian.

118 Tatyana Mosalkova, Telegram [post](#), 16 December 2025, in Russian.

119 The 'humanitarian track' refers to a mechanism for the return of civilians outside the formal POW exchange framework.

120 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. For more details, See Section IV.e. Exchanges of civilians. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 45.

49. As in the previous reporting period, materials appeared online showing alleged wilful killings and apparent extrajudicial executions of Ukrainian civilians and military personnel by the Russian armed forces. These included the killing of seven civilians hiding in a basement in Pokrovsk (Donetsk region),¹²¹ two POWs in Shakhove (Donetsk region),¹²² two civilians evacuating from Hrabovske (Sumy region),¹²³ a serviceman *hors de combat* near Sviato-Pokrovske (Donetsk region)¹²⁴ and four POWs captured near Veterinarne (Kharkiv region).¹²⁵ The Ukrainian authorities have opened investigations into each reported incident. Reportedly, to date, at least 345 Ukrainian military personnel who surrendered to the Russian armed forces have been executed.¹²⁶ ODIHR remains seriously concerned about these recurring allegations of killings of protected persons, including POWs. Under IHL, the wilful killing of protected persons constitutes a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and may amount to a war crime.¹²⁷
50. In addition, accounts have increasingly emerged alleging mistreatment or killings of members of the Russian armed forces in frontline areas.¹²⁸ These allegations describe violence and abuse within the Russian armed forces, including reported instances of humiliation, physical abuse, inhuman or degrading treatment and torture, as well as a practice referred to as ‘zeroing’, whereby soldiers deemed undesirable or insubordinate were allegedly sent on high-casualty assaults, otherwise exposed to extreme danger or executed.¹²⁹ To date, one report has also alleged that recruits in a foreign fighter unit of the Ukrainian armed forces were subjected to severe disciplinary violence, torture and other forms of abuse.¹³⁰

121 Dmytro Lubinets, Telegram [post](#), 29 December 2025, in Ukrainian; [Russian soldiers shot seven civilians in Pokrovsk after demanding alcohol](#), ZMINA, 29 December 2025.

122 Donetsk Regional Prosecutor’s Office, Telegram [post](#), 29 December 2025, in Ukrainian.

123 Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 27 January 2026, in Ukrainian; Oleh Hryhorov, Telegram [post](#), 27 January 2026, in Ukrainian.

124 На Сіверському напрямку під час взяття у полон окупанти розстріляли військовослужбовця ЗСУ – розпочато розслідування [In the Siverskyi direction, the invaders shot a serviceman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine during capture], Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, 5 December 2025, in Ukrainian; Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 5 December 2025, in Ukrainian.

125 Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 12 April 2026, in Ukrainian.

126 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

127 CIHL Rules 47, 89; GC III, arts. 13, 130; GC IV, arts. 32, 147; AP I, arts. 41(1), 75(2)(a), 85(3)(a) and (e); ICC Statute, arts. 8(2)(a)(i), 8(2)(b)(i), 8(2)(b)(vi).

128 ODIHR has not been able to independently verify these accounts.

129 “They don’t give a fuck who they kill”: Inside the execution practices of the Russian army, *Verstka*, 15 December 2025; «Обнуления» и «мясные штурмы». Как россияне пропадают на фронте, а власти врут об этом [“Zeroing” and “meat assaults.” How Russians disappear at the front and the authorities lie about it], *TV Rain*, YouTube, 12 January 2026, in Russian; НЕ ЖДИ хорошие новости [Don’t wait for good news], Telegram [post](#), 21 February 2026, in Russian; Telegram [post](#), 5 March 2026, in Russian; [Контракт, яма, штурм, побег, федеральный розыск: монолог военного о том, что он видел своими глазами](#) [Contract, pit, assault, escape, federal search: a soldier’s monologue about what he saw with his own eyes], *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, 18 February 2026, in Russian; [The Zero Line: Inside Russia’s War review — harrowing testimony from a military that turns on its own](#), *The Guardian*, 24 February 2026.

130 ‘He just wanted to go home’ — Brazilian recruit’s death in Ukraine points to torture, abuse in foreign fighter unit, *The Kyiv Independent*, 19 February 2026. ODIHR has not been able to independently verify this account.

Such conduct raises concerns under IHRL, including the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.¹³¹

51. Open-source information gathered during the reporting period suggests that, as of 1 June 2026, at least 28,394 foreign nationals from 135 countries were recruited into the Russian armed forces.¹³² Whereas both Ukraine and the Russian Federation have long seen foreign nationals participating in hostilities on their behalf, the reported circumstances of their recruitment differ. Foreign nationals participating in hostilities on behalf of the Russian Federation described predatory recruitment practices, including allegations of deception through false promises of civilian employment, coercion into signing military contracts they did not understand and pressure to serve while detained in Russian prisons.¹³³ Such reported practices raise concern under IHRL¹³⁴ and may also engage protections under IHL, in particular where recruitment occurs in conditions of coercion or detention. Subsequent allegations that foreign nationals were subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or other forms of violence while under the control of military authorities also raise concerns under IHL and IHRL.¹³⁵
52. ODIHR also received reports of forcible displacement to the Russian Federation of around 50 civilians from Hrabovske and 19 from Sopych (Sumy region).¹³⁶ The Russian authorities characterized the conduct as an evacuation undertaken to protect civilians from the ongoing hostilities and shelling.¹³⁷ One witness, a relative of people displaced from Hrabovske, stated that 42 civilians were moved to the Russian Federation by the Russian armed forces.¹³⁸ While some of them were reportedly notified in advance,¹³⁹ others were allegedly confined to basements, prevented from evacuating to Ukrainian-controlled territory¹⁴⁰ and transported to temporary accommodation facilities where identity documents were confiscated.¹⁴¹

131 CIHL Rules 90, 92; ICCPR, art. 7.

132 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. See also [Combatants, Mercenaries or Victims of Human Trafficking? Russia's Exploitation of Foreign Fighters in Its War Against Ukraine](#), FIDH/Truth Hounds, 29 April 2026. See also OSCE/ODIHR [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 35.

133 See Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, IICI, [A/HRC/61/61](#), 9 March 2026, paras. 53-55. See also OSCE/ODIHR [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 35.

134 See e.g., ICCPR, arts. 8(1)-(2); Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol), adopted 15 November 2000, UNGA Res. 55/25, [A/55/383 \(2000\)](#), arts. 3(a)-(b), 5-9.

135 AP I, art. 75.

136 Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine, Facebook post, 21 December 2025; BBC News | Русская служба [Russian Service], Telegram [post](#), 22 December 2025, in Russian; Dmytro Lubinets, Telegram [post](#), 6 March 2026, in Ukrainian; [19 людей із Сопича в росії: цивільних показали на пропагандистському каналі «Весті»](#) [19 people from Sopych in Russia: civilians shown on propagandist channel "Vesti"], [Кордон.Медіа](#) [Kordon.Media], 6 March 2026, in Ukrainian.

137 Russian Ministry of Defence, Telegram [post](#), 22 December 2025, in Russian; [Евакуація мирних жителів села Грабовське](#) [Evacuation of peaceful residents of Hrabovske village], Russian Ministry of Defence, RuTube, 9 January 2026, in Russian; [Спасенные из Сумской области беженцы рассказали, что им пришлось пережить](#) [Refugees saved from Sumy Oblast recounted their ordeal], [Vesti](#), 5 March 2026, in Russian.

138 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.712, paras. 52, 54-55, 57.

139 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.712, para. 57.

140 GC IV, art. 35. Under IHL, protected persons have the right to leave the territory of a party to the conflict unless contrary to the national interests of the State.

141 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.712, paras. 58-59, 61.

Although civilians received food, medical care and shelter,¹⁴² many expressed the wish to return to Ukraine, and some eventually did so.¹⁴³ Taken together, the reported absence of a genuine choice of evacuation destination, cross-border transfer into the territory of the Russian Federation and confiscation of identity documents raise concerns that the evacuation may not have been voluntary. If confirmed and the security of the civilian population or imperative military reasons did not warrant displacement, such conduct may amount to a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and the war crime of unlawful deportation.¹⁴⁴

53. Finally, ODIHR notes that, according to the Pension Fund of Ukraine, as of 1 January 2026, pension payments were suspended for around 337,000 individuals who either did not undergo physical identification or who failed to submit the required confirmation that they were not receiving a pension from the Russian Federation.¹⁴⁵ The requirement for physical identification particularly affects civilians in the Russian-occupied territories, as traveling to government-controlled territories of Ukraine may entail security risks, including filtration and security checks by the Russian authorities.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the limited public communication of this new regulation appears to have affected timely awareness among some pensioners, including many of those displaced persons in government-controlled territories of Ukraine, resulting in disruption of payments. A witness displaced from Luhansk region and now residing in government-controlled territories of Ukraine told ODIHR: *“The new regulation concerns four occupied regions. For residents of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, verification is once a year; for Luhansk and Donetsk regions, once every six months.”* The witness noted that *“[the new requirement] was not officially announced anywhere. I have not had any notification even in my personal profile of the [pension] account. The pension payment just didn’t come on the scheduled day.”*¹⁴⁷
54. In response, 46 Ukrainian civil society organizations expressed concern about the suspension of pensions for IDPs and pensioners from the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and called upon the Ukrainian Government to resume payments immediately.¹⁴⁸ In February 2026, the deadline for pensioners who had completed physical identification but had not yet submitted proof of non-receipt of a Russian pension was extended until 1 April 2026.¹⁴⁹ After the expiry of the deadline extension, the Ombudsperson noted that more than 169,000 Ukrainian citizens still remained without pensions, adding that 70 per cent of complaints

142 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.712, paras. 59, 61.

143 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.712, para. 62.

144 CIHL Rule 129; GC IV, arts. 49; 147; AP I, art. 85(4)(a); ICC Statute, arts. 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii).

145 [Information about the suspension of payment for 1.3 million pensioners is not true](#), Pension Fund of Ukraine, 31 January 2026.

146 ‘Russian authorities’ is used throughout this report to refer to include Russian Federation authorities operating in occupied areas of Ukraine, Russian authorities operating out of the territory of Russia, and Russian Federation-appointed authorities in the Russian-occupied territories.

147 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.715, paras. 25-27. See also Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, [Resolution No. 299](#), 11 February 2025.

148 [Human rights defenders call on the Government to immediately reinstate pensions suspended in January 2026](#), ZMINA, 28 January 2026.

149 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, [Resolution No. 126](#), 3 February 2026.

received by his office originated from IDPs living in government-controlled territories of Ukraine.¹⁵⁰

150 Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine, Facebook [post](#), 7 April 2026.

**Specific issues
described by
witnesses and
survivors**

IV

A. ATTACKS IMPACTING ON HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

55. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR continued to monitor incidents affecting humanitarian operations, including those during which humanitarian personnel and assets were reportedly “targeted” or otherwise affected.¹⁵¹ ODIHR interviewed seven humanitarian workers and volunteers who were engaged in the provision and delivery of aid, and/or conducted evacuations from frontline areas.¹⁵² Despite IHL requiring parties to the conflict to respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel,¹⁵³ three humanitarians were killed and 32 injured in multiple incidents that occurred during the first half of 2026.¹⁵⁴
56. For instance, on 20 March, an evacuation team from the NGO Proliska came under attack while evacuating elderly people from Oleksiievo-Druzhkivka (Donetsk region). Two evacuees were killed and two more were injured.¹⁵⁵ On 12 May, a World Food Programme (WFP) truck that had delivered food to frontline communities was hit by a drone in Dnipropetrovsk region, injuring the driver.¹⁵⁶ On 14 May, a United Nations convoy was struck by a drone in Kherson city.¹⁵⁷ Several days later, on 25 May, a WFP warehouse in Dnipro was struck by a ballistic missile, resulting in the destruction of a significant quantity of food commodities.¹⁵⁸ Such incidents affecting humanitarian personnel and assets raise serious concerns under IHL regarding the obligation to respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel

151 [Volunteer supporting ADRA Ukraine severely wounded in Kherson region](#), ADRA Ukraine, 1 December 2025; [NGO Proliska, X post](#), 1 December 2025, in Ukrainian; [WFP Ukraine, X post](#), 2 December 2025; [Tragedy in Poniativka: a drone attacked civilians](#), ADRA Ukraine, 6 January 2026; [UN OCHA Ukraine, X post](#), 6 January 2026; [Attack on humanitarian bread delivery that killed two people highlights growing risks for aid operations in Ukraine](#), UN Ukraine, 23 January 2026; [Ukrainian Red Cross vehicle damaged by drone strike in the Donetsk region](#), Ukrainian Red Cross, 7 March 2026; Kherson Regional State Administration, Facebook [post](#), 7 May 2026, in Ukrainian; World Central Kitchen, Facebook [post](#), 17 May 2026; UN OCHA Ukraine, Facebook [post](#), 18 May 2026; [UNHCR appalled by attacks on aid operations and rising civilian toll in Ukraine](#), UNHCR Ukraine, 22 May 2026.

152 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.684; UKR.WS.688; UKR.WS.712; UKR.WS.714; UKR.WS.765; UKR.WS.782; UKR.WS.783.

153 CIHL Rule 31; AP I, art. 71(2).

154 [Humanitarians must be protected while safely delivering aid to those in need](#), UN OCHA Ukraine, 14 May 2026; [Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director, Crisis Response Division, OCHA, on behalf of Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator – Briefing to the Security Council on Ukraine](#), UN OCHA Ukraine, 19 May 2026; [Delayed diplomacy in Ukraine deepens the threat to regional and international peace and security, ASG Khiari warns](#), UN DPPA, 28 May 2026; [Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, Acting ASG for Humanitarian Affairs, on behalf of Mr. Tom Fletcher, USG for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator — Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine](#), 8 June 2026, UN OCHA Ukraine, 8 June 2026.

155 [20 березня 2026 року став трагічним днем для Гуманітарна місія “Проліска” та для цивільних, яких ми евакуйовуємо з небезпечних територій](#) [20 March 2026 was a tragic day for the Humanitarian Mission Proliska and for the civilians we evacuate from hazardous areas], NGO Proliska, 20 March 2026, in Ukrainian; [Statement attributable to Richard Ragan, Humanitarian Coordinator \(a.i.\), on the latest attack against a humanitarian evacuation in the Donetsk region](#), UN Ukraine, 20 March 2026; [Statement by UNHCR Representative in Ukraine on a deadly attack during the evacuation of civilians in Donetsk region](#), UNHCR Ukraine, 20 March 2026.

156 UN OCHA Ukraine, Facebook [post](#), 12 May 2026.

157 UN OCHA Ukraine, Facebook [post](#), 14 May 2026; [UN releases video of aid convoy hit by drone attack in Ukraine](#), Reuters, YouTube, 15 May 2026.

158 [UN WFP warehouse in Dnipro damaged in strike](#), WFP Ukraine, 25 May 2026; [Carl Skau, X post](#), 26 May 2026.

and objects used for humanitarian relief operations; intentional attacks directed against such personnel or objects may amount to a war crime.¹⁵⁹

57. In line with previous reporting,¹⁶⁰ humanitarian actors carrying out evacuation operations were affected by attacks. Seven witnesses recounted incidents that occurred while on evacuation missions where they themselves or their colleagues were the object of an attack.¹⁶¹ Almost all witnesses emphasized the threats associated with the growing use of short-range drones over the course of the armed conflict, noting that the drone proliferation further constrained access to populations requiring life-saving assistance and compelled humanitarian actors to scale back activities in areas considered especially dangerous.¹⁶² Confirming a trend identified earlier,¹⁶³ one witness explained how advances in drone technology affected humanitarian operations: *“In 2022, the kill zone was five kilometres (from the front line) [...] But now the kill zone is 20 kilometres. This is where you can be very easily identified, and their range is extending”*.¹⁶⁴ ODIHR witnesses also highlighted the threat of ‘double tap’ drone attacks during operations.¹⁶⁵
58. Witnesses furthermore reported that neither the humanitarian nature of their activities nor the use of proper markings and identifiers on vehicles or clothing prevented the deliberate targeting of humanitarian personnel and assets by the Russian armed forces.¹⁶⁶ One local humanitarian actor involved in evacuation activities noted: *“The likelihood that vehicle markings will be seen by drone operators and persuade them to change their decision and not attack is estimated to be under 1 per cent. [...] Volunteers and humanitarian workers are effectively treated as targets in attacks.”*¹⁶⁷ One witness further indicated that such risk extended beyond humanitarian personnel, with civilians attempting to evacuate on their own also coming under attack.¹⁶⁸ As a result, in an attempt to mitigate the risk of detection and targeting by drones, some humanitarian actors relied on specialized equipment.¹⁶⁹
59. New evidence provided to ODIHR by two witnesses described instances in which volunteers were reportedly contacted through social media by Russian

159 ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(b)(iii). See also CIHL Rules 31, 32; GC IV, art. 59; AP I, arts. 70(2)-(4), 71(2). Open-source information attributes these incidents to the Russian armed forces, however, ODIHR remains unable to independently verify these allegations.

160 OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 47.

161 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.684, paras. 26-35; UKR.WS.688, para. 50; UKR.WS.712, paras. 40, 42; UKR.WS.714, paras. 30-31; UKR.WS.765, paras. 31, 37, 40; UKR.WS.782, paras. 45, 77; UKR.WS.783, paras. 29, 31-33, 35-36, 39.

162 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.684, para. 40; UKR.WS.783, paras. 11-12, 14, 17.

163 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 48.

164 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.688, paras. 42-43. See also UKR.WS.684, para. 110; UKR.WS.712, para. 39; UKR.WS.714, para. 41; UKR.WS.765, para. 30; UKR.WS.782, paras. 41, 71.

165 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.684, para. 36.

166 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.684, paras. 64-66, 70-74, 77; UKR.WS.688, para. 40; UKR.WS.712, paras. 43-47; UKR.WS.714, paras. 21, 25, 46-48, 54; UKR.WS.783, paras. 19, 23-26, 29-30.

167 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.684, paras. 70-71.

168 UKR.WS.783, para. 21. For more details, See Section III.c. Other significant developments.

169 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.684, paras. 27-28; UKR.WS.765, para. 22; UKR.WS.782, para. 38; UKR.WS.783, paras. 18, 29, 34, 38. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 50.

individuals and confronted with information indicating that their movements and activities were under observation.¹⁷⁰ A witness engaged with a local NGO, in addition, reported the receipt of false evacuation requests apparently aimed at luring humanitarian volunteers into a trap.¹⁷¹

60. ODIHR is concerned by the continued attacks affecting humanitarian personnel, assets and operations, including those suggesting a pattern inconsistent with the IHL principle of distinction. Under IHL, parties to the conflict are required to respect and protect humanitarian relief personnel and objects used for humanitarian operations, and to take all feasible precautions to avoid harm to civilians and civilian objects, including humanitarian activities.¹⁷²

B. ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

61. ODIHR continued to document cases of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, including enforced disappearances, in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. Between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026, ODIHR interviewed 20 survivors of arbitrary detention (15 men and 5 women)¹⁷³ and obtained testimonies from relatives of 31 individuals (24 men and 7 women) who were or remain unlawfully deprived of their liberty by the Russian authorities.¹⁷⁴
62. While most reported cases occurred between 2022 and 2024, ODIHR received information regarding the arbitrary arrests of seven civilians that took place in 2025 in the occupied Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.¹⁷⁵ New evidence gathered in this latest round of interviews corroborates previously documented patterns, including the reported targeting of distinct groups of civilians, denial of due process guarantees and the continued use of incommunicado detention, as well as criminal prosecution on what appear to be fabricated charges, accompanied by violations of fair trial guarantees.¹⁷⁶

170 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.688, paras. 56, 59; UKR.WS.714, paras. 26-29.

171 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.782, para. 66. See also [Росіяни виманюють волонтерів фейковими заявками на евакуацію з Донецьчини](#) [Russians lure volunteers with fake requests for evacuation from Donetsk region], *Hromadske Radio*, 9 December 2025, in Ukrainian.

172 CIHL Rules 1, 6, 7, 15, 31, 32; AP I, arts. 48, 51, 57.

173 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683; UKR.WS.686; UKR.WS.701; UKR.WS.710; UKR.WS.711; UKR.WS.717; UKR.WS.729; UKR.WS.732; UKR.WS.735; UKR.WS.737; UKR.WS.748; UKR.WS.753; UKR.WS.758; UKR.WS.762; UKR.WS.764; UKR.WS.768; UKR.WS.774; UKR.WS.776; UKR.WS.779; UKR.WS.785.

174 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.692; UKR.WS.695; UKR.WS.707; UKR.WS.708; UKR.WS.709; UKR.WS.713; UKR.WS.716; UKR.WS.718; UKR.WS.719; UKR.WS.720; UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.722; UKR.WS.723; UKR.WS.724; UKR.WS.725; UKR.WS.733; UKR.WS.734; UKR.WS.739; UKR.WS.741; UKR.WS.750; UKR.WS.760; UKR.WS.769. See also UKR.WS.711, paras. 36-67; UKR.WS.735, paras. 32-33, 35-37; UKR.WS.737, paras. 12, 33; UKR.WS.768, paras. 23, 34, 42; UKR.WS.776, para. 4.

175 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.713, paras. 30-31; UKR.WS.716, para. 14; UKR.WS.724, para. 24; UKR.WS.725, para. 29; UKR.WS.734, paras. 8-9; UKR.WS.735, paras. 68, 77, 123.

176 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 41-54; [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 41-55; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 33-41; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 38-50; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 45-56; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 52-62.

63. In line with its earlier findings,¹⁷⁷ the new information collected by ODIHR indicates that individuals were frequently targeted on the basis of their actual or perceived links to the Ukrainian armed forces¹⁷⁸ and their position, role or influence within local communities, including where they refused to cooperate with occupation authorities,¹⁷⁹ as well as pro-Ukrainian views or opposition to the occupation attributed to them.¹⁸⁰ Two survivors said that the Russian authorities had arrested them in an attempt to pressure relatives also detained.¹⁸¹ According to survivors, unlawful detentions during the initial stages of the invasion were primarily carried out by members of the Russian armed forces,¹⁸² while, in more recent cases, those involved were most frequently identified as Federal Security Service (FSB) personnel.¹⁸³
64. In one recent case, ODIHR interviewed a woman from the Russian-occupied Kherson region whose husband was detained by the Russian authorities in March 2025, with no information regarding the grounds for his detention provided to the family. The witness told ODIHR that, following attempts by relatives to establish his whereabouts, several members of the family were also briefly detained, including his parents, while his mother was reportedly tortured in custody. According to the witness, after being subjected to torture and following pressure exerted on his family, her husband subsequently confessed to the offences he was later charged with. The witness further reported repeated searches of her home before she herself was detained twice in 2025. During her second detention at the end of November, which lasted three weeks, she was held incommunicado in a makeshift detention facility and subjected to rape, beatings and electric shocks,

177 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 42-43; [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 43-44; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 34; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 41; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 46; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 53.

178 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 41; UKR.WS.701, paras. 22-23, 25; UKR.WS.735, paras. 74, 85-86, 88; UKR.WS.737, para. 25; UKR.WS.748, paras. 5, 8, 10; UKR.WS.753, para. 8; UKR.WS.758, para. 24; UKR.WS.762, para. 8; UKR.WS.764, para. 7; UKR.WS.776, paras. 6, 8, 11; UKR.WS.779, paras. 7-8, 11; UKR.WS.785, paras. 7-8, 15, 25. See also ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.708, para. 14; UKR.WS.709, para. 4; UKR.WS.716, paras. 12, 19; UKR.WS.721, para. 50; UKR.WS.723, paras. 7, 8; UKR.WS.724, paras. 19-21, 26, 32; UKR.WS.725, para. 30; UKR.WS.737, para. 35; UKR.WS.748, paras. 11, 18; UKR.WS.750, para. 12; UKR.WS.760, para. 8; UKR.WS.768, paras. 14-15; UKR.WS.769, para. 17.

179 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.710, para. 12; UKR.WS.711, paras. 12, 15, 27, 32; UKR.WS.732, paras. 21-22.

180 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 41; UKR.WS.710, paras. 11-12; UKR.WS.717, para. 18; UKR.WS.735, paras. 16, 18; UKR.WS.768, paras. 22-23; UKR.WS.774, paras. 6-8. See also UKR.WS.695, paras. 17-18, 55; UKR.WS.707, para. 7; UKR.WS.708, para. 12; UKR.WS.713, paras. 33-34; UKR.WS.719, paras. 7-8; UKR.WS.720, para. 24; UKR.WS.724, para. 28; UKR.WS.733, paras. 1-3, 8, 26, 28; UKR.WS.734, paras. 8-10. For more details, See Section IV.g.iii. Suppression of dissent.

181 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.735, paras. 29-30, 33, 57, 77, 85; UKR.WS.737, paras. 18-20; UKR.WS.768, paras. 22-24, 35, 38. See also UKR.WS.785, paras. 54, 59, 61, 63.

182 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 8; UKR.WS.701, para. 22; UKR.WS.709, paras. 10-11; UKR.WS.717, para. 26; UKR.WS.729, paras. 9, 11, 20; UKR.WS.735, para. 57; UKR.WS.748, para. 10; UKR.WS.758, para. 23; UKR.WS.762, para. 8; UKR.WS.764, para. 7; UKR.WS.774, para. 8; UKR.WS.776, para. 6; UKR.WS.779, para. 9. In addition, one survivor also identified perpetrators as members of the National Guard of the Russian Federation (*Rosgvardiya*). See UKR.WS.785, paras. 90-91.

183 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.711, para. 16; UKR.WS.732, para. 24; UKR.WS.735, para. 83; UKR.WS.737, para. 8; UKR.WS.753, para. 8. See also UKR.WS.708, paras. 15, 18, 33; UKR.WS.724, para. 27; UKR.WS.734, para. 8; UKR.WS.741, paras. 8-9, 11, 43-44; UKR.WS.760, para. 9; UKR.WS.768, paras. 15, 27; UKR.WS.785, paras. 13, 90-91.

including to her genitalia. Following her release, she fled the occupied territories fearing further persecution.¹⁸⁴

65. According to ODIHR interviews, during the initial stages of the invasion, civilians were often held in improvised facilities, either throughout their detention or for a short period after arrest.¹⁸⁵ More recent incidents, however, predominantly concern detention in official places of detention.¹⁸⁶ In addition, consistent with previous ODIHR findings,¹⁸⁷ the Russian authorities continued to transfer victims frequently between detention facilities in the occupied territories of Ukraine or to the Russian Federation.
66. Survivors consistently reported being denied fundamental procedural safeguards, including prompt notification of the reasons for their arrest, the possibility to challenge the lawfulness of their detention or have it subject to regular review, as well as access to legal counsel of their own choosing.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, in two of the reported cases, the Russian authorities wrongfully and unlawfully classified detained civilians as POWs, effectively denying them procedural safeguards under the Fourth Geneva Convention.¹⁸⁹ Victims were also denied or significantly restricted in their ability to maintain contact with the outside world¹⁹⁰ and, in many cases, were held incommunicado for part or all of their detention.¹⁹¹

184 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.735, paras. 26-30, 33-34, 57, 66, 72, 77-78, 85-97, 121, 125-126.

185 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, paras. 41-42; UKR.WS.701, paras. 26-27; UKR.WS.710, paras. 13, 15; UKR.WS.717, paras. 20, 24; UKR.WS.729, paras. 14-15, 19-20, 25-27; UKR.WS.732, paras. 15, 25-26; UKR.WS.735, paras. 8-14, 66, 68, 85; UKR.WS.737, paras. 14-15, 18; UKR.WS.748, paras. 10, 15; UKR.WS.758, paras. 25-26; UKR.WS.762, para. 9; UKR.WS.764, para. 12; UKR.WS.768, paras. 23, 29; UKR.WS.774, paras. 17-18; UKR.WS.776, paras. 4, 9, 19; UKR.WS.779, paras. 11, 16, 21; UKR.WS.785, para. 65. See also UKR.WS.708, paras. 38, 40-41; UKR.WS.711, para. 51; UKR.WS.721, para. 43; UKR.WS.722, para. 18; UKR.WS.735, para. 32; UKR.WS.737, para. 34; UKR.WS.768, para. 34.

186 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 10, 17, 23-25; UKR.WS.701, para. 27; UKR.WS.710, para. 23; UKR.WS.711, para. 22; UKR.WS.717, para. 25; UKR.WS.729, paras. 31, 38, 44; UKR.WS.748, paras. 34, 44, 62, 76, 79; UKR.WS.753, paras. 9, 15, 23, 29; UKR.WS.762, paras. 11, 17, 22, 40; UKR.WS.764, paras. 17, 53; UKR.WS.774, paras. 19, 25, 27, 31-32, 67; UKR.WS.776, paras. 4, 32, 88; UKR.WS.779, para. 34; UKR.WS.785, paras. 66-67, 71. See also UKR.WS.692, paras. 23-25; UKR.WS.695, paras. 20, 25, 59-60, 67-68; UKR.WS.707, paras. 7-8, 17; UKR.WS.709, paras. 16, 21, 42; UKR.WS.711, para. 51; UKR.WS.718, paras. 14-15, 17, 24, 27, 32; UKR.WS.719, paras. 14, 21, 29, 37; UKR.WS.720, para. 14; UKR.WS.721, paras. 40, 44, 46; UKR.WS.722, paras. 15, 19, 26-27; UKR.WS.723, para. 6; UKR.WS.724, paras. 31, 33, 35; UKR.WS.733, para. 17; UKR.WS.734, para. 11; UKR.WS.735, paras. 35, 37; UKR.WS.737, para. 12; UKR.WS.739, paras. 12, 33; UKR.WS.741, paras. 25-28, 41; UKR.WS.769, paras. 24, 26, 29.

187 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 36; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 47; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 54.

188 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 15-16, 22, 32; UKR.WS.701, paras. 26-40; UKR.WS.710, paras. 36-37; UKR.WS.717, para. 29; UKR.WS.729, paras. 13, 20, 42, 54; UKR.WS.735, para. 72; UKR.WS.737, paras. 18-20; UKR.WS.748, paras. 22, 34; UKR.WS.753, paras. 11, 14, 20, 46; UKR.WS.758, para. 24; UKR.WS.762, paras. 37-38, 58-59; UKR.WS.764, paras. 32-33, 37, 72, 85; UKR.WS.768, para. 41; UKR.WS.774, paras. 59, 110-111; UKR.WS.776, paras. 38-39, 123; UKR.WS.779, paras. 82, 89; UKR.WS.785, para. 63. See also UKR.WS.695, para. 32; UKR.WS.707, paras. 8, 15, 27; UKR.WS.708, para. 33; UKR.WS.709, para. 31; UKR.WS.711, paras. 63, 65; UKR.WS.713, paras. 6-9; UKR.WS.719, paras. 22-24; UKR.WS.722, para. 36; UKR.WS.724, para. 31; UKR.WS.733, paras. 7, 18-19; UKR.WS.734, paras. 15-19, 28-29, 32; UKR.WS.739, para. 31; UKR.WS.741, paras. 20, 29, 38. See further OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 40; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 45; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 48; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 55.

189 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.748, paras. 31-32; UKR.WS.779, paras. 20, 23, 107.

190 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 49; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 39; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 40, 44; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 50; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 56.

191 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 16; UKR.WS.710, para. 17; UKR.WS.717, para. 29; UKR.WS.729, paras. 41-42, 49-51; UKR.WS.731, para. 39; UKR.WS.748, paras. 73-74, 89-91; UKR.WS.753, paras. 11, 46; UKR.WS.762, paras. 15-16, 57; UKR.WS.764, paras. 14, 38, 41; 75-77; UKR.WS.774, paras. 106-107;

67. ODIHR interviewed six survivors who had been held for more than three and a half years without any apparent initiation of criminal proceedings or legal basis for detention communicated to them. At the same time, the Russian authorities did not demonstrate a necessity for internment of the protected individuals on imperative security grounds in these cases, as required under the Fourth Geneva Convention.¹⁹² In addition, two witnesses reported that their relatives, detained as early as 2022, remained deprived of liberty in the Russian-occupied territories or in the Russian Federation at the time of the interviews, without any known procedural status.¹⁹³
68. Moreover, ODIHR received further evidence of the continued practice by the Russian authorities of prosecuting and convicting civilians following their, often prolonged, arbitrary detention.¹⁹⁴ According to testimonies from relatives, 19 victims had been charged or convicted under provisions of the Russian Criminal Code on seemingly fabricated charges of “terrorism”, “espionage” or “high treason”.¹⁹⁵ Witnesses also reported that the detainees were also denied fundamental fair trial guarantees in criminal prosecutions.¹⁹⁶
69. In four separate instances, witnesses recounted how their relatives were arrested in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine on charges related to national security offences. Prosecutions were based on the Russian Criminal Code,¹⁹⁷ which is inconsistent with the obligation under IHL to respect, unless absolutely prevented, the penal laws in force in occupied territory.¹⁹⁸ Witnesses further indicated that criminal cases lacked factual evidence and/or relied on confessions extracted

UKR.WS.776, paras. 77, 83, 85, 103-104; UKR.WS.779, paras. 105-106. See also UKR.WS.695, paras. 25-27, 29-30, 62, 75-76, 90, 92; UKR.WS.707, paras. 9, 12-13, 16; UKR.WS.708, paras. 19, 33, 37, 50-51; UKR.WS.709, paras. 16-17, 20-21, 26, 31; UKR.WS.711, paras. 45, 50-51; UKR.WS.713, paras. 7, 39; UKR.WS.718, paras. 9-17, 31; UKR.WS.719, paras. 14-16, 18-19; UKR.WS.721, paras. 31-41, 47, 49; UKR.WS.722, paras. 9, 14, 17, 19, 27; UKR.WS.723, para. 6; UKR.WS.724, para. 38; UKR.WS.725, para. 39; UKR.WS.733, paras. 3, 5-7, 10-11, 17, 25; UKR.WS.734, para. 11; UKR.WS.735, paras. 28, 31; UKR.WS.737, para. 38; UKR.WS.739, para. 18; UKR.WS.741, paras. 11, 13, 15, 17-19, 23-24, 42; UKR.WS.750, para. 14; UKR.WS.760, para. 10; UKR.WS.768, para. 17; UKR.WS.769, paras. 18, 21.

192 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.729, paras. 42, 54; UKR.WS.753, paras. 20, 46; UKR.WS.762, paras. 37-38, 59; UKR.WS.764, paras. 72, 85; UKR.WS.774, paras. 110-111; UKR.WS.776, para. 123. See GC IV, arts. 42-43, 78.

193 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.721, para. 59; UKR.WS.776, paras. 4, 137.

194 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 30, 41; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 50; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 55; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 59.

195 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.695, paras. 49-50; UKR.WS.707, paras. 8, 15, 27; UKR.WS.708, para. 31; UKR.WS.709, paras. 4, 34, 40; UKR.WS.713, paras. 30-34, 46; UKR.WS.716, para. 19; UKR.WS.719, paras. 20, 29, 35-36, 48-49; UKR.WS.722, paras. 10-12, 16, 30-31, 35-36, 39; UKR.WS.723, para. 5; UKR.WS.724, paras. 5, 32-33, 35-36; UKR.WS.725, paras. 29-35; UKR.WS.733, paras. 5, 8, 20, 26-27; UKR.WS.734, paras. 9-10, 19; UKR.WS.735, paras. 25-26, 28, 31, 34-38; UKR.WS.739, paras. 13, 27-28; UKR.WS.741, paras. 14, 20, 38, 40; UKR.WS.760, paras. 12, 16; UKR.WS.769, paras. 27-28.

196 For more details, See Section IV.h. Trials of Ukrainian civilians and POWs by the Russian authorities.

197 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.692, paras. 32-37, 39-46; UKR.WS.711, paras. 36-50, 66-67; UKR.WS.718, paras. 17-23, 26; UKR.WS.720, paras. 9-10, 19-23.

198 Hague Regulations (1907), art. 43; GC IV, arts. 64, 66; ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(vi).

under torture, with access to independent legal counsel often denied or severely restricted.¹⁹⁹

70. The circumstances in which civilians were released from detention remained consistent with those previously reported by ODIHR.²⁰⁰ Nine survivors reported release without formal proceedings²⁰¹ and nine were released as part of POW exchanges.²⁰² Finally, ODIHR documented two cases in which civilians died while unlawfully deprived of their liberty.²⁰³ In one case, a civilian, detained in 2024 for displaying a Ukrainian flag near his home and later sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment on what appear to be fabricated charges, died during transfer to a penal colony in the Russian Federation in summer 2025, according to information provided by the Russian authorities to his family. The circumstances surrounding his death and its cause were not disclosed to his family, who stated that he had been in good health prior to the transfer. In another case, a woman who had been held incommunicado for over four months died in May 2024 after being transferred to a hospital while reportedly suffering from COVID-19, according to information provided by the Russian authorities to her family. Her daughter told ODIHR that, before her deterioration, she had been held in a makeshift detention facility in poor conditions without adequate medical care.
71. The exact number of civilians arbitrarily detained by the Russian Federation in the context of its invasion of Ukraine remains unknown. The Ukrainian authorities reported that, as of 31 May 2026, at least 15,000 civilians remained missing or illegally detained, while the deprivation of liberty of 847 civilians was confirmed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). According to the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, during investigations into more than 2,200 criminal cases concerning the unlawful deprivation of liberty and hostage-taking of civilians, it was established that more than 7,000 individuals were or remain unlawfully detained by the Russian Federation. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, information was available on the detention by the Russian Federation of 2,814 civilians, while 12,392 remained listed as missing

199 ODIHR notes that denial of fundamental fair trial guarantees may render detention arbitrary where it results in criminal prosecution. See ICCPR, arts. 9, 14; General Comment No. 35: Article 9, UN HRC, [CCPR/C/GC/35](#), para. 17; General Comment No. 32: Article 14, UN HRC, [CCPR/C/GC/32](#). See also Revised Methods of Work of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, WGAD, [A/HRC/36/38](#), para. 8(c). For more details, See Section IV.h. Trials of Ukrainian civilians and POWs by the Russian authorities.

200 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 54; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 46; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 51; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 57.

201 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 15, 40-41; UKR.WS.686, para. 46; UKR.WS.710, para. 45; UKR.WS.711, para. 32; UKR.WS.717, para. 30; UKR.WS.732, paras. 37-38; UKR.WS.735, paras. 68, 121; UKR.WS.737, paras. 18-19; UKR.WS.768, paras. 39-40. See also UKR.WS.709, para. 18; UKR.WS.713, para. 7; UKR.WS.737, paras. 29, 36. Several survivors also specified that their release was conditioned on the signing of statements, including undertakings not to raise complaints regarding their detention and/or to cooperate with the authorities.

202 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.701, para. 34; UKR.WS.729, paras. 3, 58; UKR.WS.748, paras. 98, 101; UKR.WS.753, para. 47; UKR.WS.762, paras. 62-64; UKR.WS.764, paras. 92-95; UKR.WS.774, paras. 93, 98, 110; UKR.WS.776, paras. 4, 130-132; UKR.WS.779, para. 108. ODIHR notes that the detention of civilians merely for the purpose of carrying out a prisoner exchange may constitute hostage-taking, which is a war crime. See CIHL Rule 96; GC IV, arts. 34, 147; AP I, art. 75(2); ICC Rome Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(viii). For more details, See Section IV.e Exchanges of civilians.

203 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.707, paras. 30-36; UKR.WS.708, paras. 18-31, 38, 40, 45.

in connection with the conflict.²⁰⁴ The arbitrary detention of civilians is strictly prohibited under IHL, and Ukrainian civilians subjected to such detention should be released immediately and unconditionally.

72. **In terms of access to remedies and other forms of support**, five survivors also recounted to ODIHR the difficulties they had encountered/were encountering in having their arbitrary detention officially recognized by the Ukrainian authorities for the purposes of obtaining compensation under Ukrainian law.²⁰⁵ According to the witnesses who were able to prove their status and get the Ukrainian Government to acknowledge their detention, the compensation was insufficient, covering only part of the cost of medical treatment or psychological support.²⁰⁶

C. TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT IN AREAS UNDER RUSSIAN CONTROL

73. ODIHR received further evidence indicating the continued widespread and systematic use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment by the Russian authorities against civilians in their custody. To this end, ODIHR interviewed 21 survivors of torture and ill-treatment (17 men and four women),²⁰⁷ and received credible allegations of such violations from relatives of individuals who were or remain detained by the Russian authorities.²⁰⁸ The methods, purposes and circumstances in which torture was inflicted remained consistent with patterns documented by ODIHR in its previous reports.²⁰⁹
74. In line with previous findings,²¹⁰ survivors reported that torture was routinely used during interrogations, primarily to extract information, elicit confessions

204 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

205 Закон України “Про соціальний і правовий захист осіб, стосовно яких встановлено факт позбавлення особистої свободи внаслідок збройної агресії проти України, та членів їхніх сімей” [Law of Ukraine “On social and legal protection of persons in respect of whom the fact of deprivation of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine has been established, and members of their families”], Верховна Рада України [Supreme Council of Ukraine], 20 August 2023.

206 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.732, paras. 55-58; UKR.WS.748, paras. 112-113; UKR.WS.762, paras. 65-66; UKR.WS.764, para. 99; UKR.WS.776, para. 136.

207 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683; UKR.WS.686; UKR.WS.696; UKR.WS.697; UKR.WS.701; UKR.WS.710; UKR.WS.711; UKR.WS.717; UKR.WS.729; UKR.WS.732; UKR.WS.735; UKR.WS.737; UKR.WS.748; UKR.WS.753; UKR.WS.758; UKR.WS.762; UKR.WS.764; UKR.WS.774; UKR.WS.776; UKR.WS.779; UKR.WS.785. This includes two individuals who were detained before February 2022 in government-controlled territories of Ukraine and who remained in custody in facilities that came under Russian control after the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

208 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.695, para. 54; UKR.WS.708, para. 39; UKR.WS.709, paras. 12-13, 23, 43; UKR.WS.711, para. 52; UKR.WS.718, paras. 25, 28; UKR.WS.719, para. 27; UKR.WS.721, paras. 51-52; UKR.WS.722, paras. 18, 29, 36, 41; UKR.WS.723, paras. 33, 38; UKR.WS.724, para. 34; UKR.WS.733, paras. 13, 22; UKR.WS.735, paras. 26, 33; UKR.WS.737, paras. 11, 14, 27, 34; UKR.WS.739, paras. 19-21, 27-28; UKR.WS.741, para. 16; UKR.WS.768, paras. 26-27.

209 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), para. 55-64; [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 56-66; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 42-51; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 52-65; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 57-66; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 63-71.

210 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), para. 56; [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 58; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 44; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 54; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 58; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 65, 68.

or force cooperation.²¹¹ Survivors further described being subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment during arrest, transfer, upon arrival at detention facilities and throughout detention, including practices intended to punish, intimidate, degrade and humiliate victims.²¹² Survivors identified perpetrators as members of the Russian armed forces²¹³ and the FSB,²¹⁴ as well as regular personnel and the special purpose units ('Spetsnaz') of the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN).²¹⁵

75. ODIHR also received reports from three survivors held in two separate detention facilities in the Russian Federation indicating that medical personnel either directly participated in or acquiesced to acts of torture and ill-treatment. Two survivors reported having been subjected to electric shocks by medical staff after seeking medical assistance, while another described a medic routinely observing beatings by detention personnel without intervening.²¹⁶ One survivor recalled that, after complaining of a severe sore throat, a doctor administered electric shocks and, after each shock, asked "*whether my throat still hurt*".²¹⁷
76. Survivors and witnesses consistently described similar methods of torture and ill-treatment occurring between 2022 and 2026 in both official and makeshift detention facilities in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation.²¹⁸ These included severe beatings, stress positions, electric shocks, mock executions, suffocation, waterboarding, hooding and prolonged

211 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 10, 12, 15; UKR.WS.701, para. 26; UKR.WS.710, para. 13; UKR.WS.711, paras. 22-23, 27, 31; UKR.WS.717, para. 20; UKR.WS.732, paras. 23-24, 27, 33; UKR.WS.735, paras. 62-63, 65, 85, 89, 99; UKR.WS.737, paras. 18, 20; UKR.WS.748, para. 17; UKR.WS.758, paras. 27-30; UKR.WS.762, paras. 9, 23; UKR.WS.764, paras. 8-9, 19, 35; UKR.WS.776, paras. 11-12, 15, 50; UKR.WS.779, para. 87; UKR.WS.785, paras. 34-39, 41-44, 96. See also UKR.WS.722, paras. 36, 49; UKR.WS.724, para. 34; UKR.WS.737, para. 27; UKR.WS.739, paras. 27-28; UKR.WS.768, paras. 26-27.

212 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 18; UKR.WS.686, paras. 8-9, 41, 44; UKR.WS.696, paras. 37-38; UKR.WS.701, paras. 27-28; UKR.WS.710, paras. 24-25, 29; UKR.WS.711, paras. 17, 21; UKR.WS.729, paras. 32-33, 39-40, 45; UKR.WS.735, paras. 25, 62, 82; UKR.WS.737, paras. 9, 11, 20; UKR.WS.748, paras. 35, 37-39, 44-46, 49, 51, 56, 63-64, 80-81, 83, 85, 87, 91, 95; UKR.WS.753, paras. 10, 15, 17-18, 24, 30-32, 34-37; UKR.WS.762, paras. 22, 26, 30-31, 35, 40-41, 46-47, 50; UKR.WS.764, paras. 18, 22-23, 25, 30, 48-50, 53-57, 64-66, 70, 86-89; UKR.WS.774, paras. 14-15, 26, 29-35, 40-41, 44-45, 50, 54-56, 62, 69-77, 81-82; UKR.WS.776, paras. 43-46, 49, 53, 55, 63, 67, 71-72, 75, 89-91, 93-96, 105-108, 112, 116, 118; UKR.WS.779, paras. 25-33, 37, 40-41, 43-44, 47-50, 52-53, 79; UKR.WS.785, paras. 101-105, 107-108. See also UKR.WS.695, paras. 71-72; UKR.WS.709, paras. 12-13; UKR.WS.721, paras. 51-52; UKR.WS.722, para. 41; UKR.WS.739, paras. 19-21.

213 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.710, para. 18; UKR.WS.717, paras. 26-27; UKR.WS.732, paras. 25, 36, 40; UKR.WS.748, paras. 17, 20; UKR.WS.758, paras. 30-31; UKR.WS.762, para. 9. In addition, one survivor also identified perpetrators as members of the *Rosgvardiya*. See UKR.WS.785, paras. 34, 41.

214 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.710, para. 13; UKR.WS.732, paras. 24, 36; UKR.WS.735, paras. 83, 85; UKR.WS.737, paras. 8, 33; UKR.WS.748, paras. 17, 19; UKR.WS.753, para. 10; UKR.WS.779, paras. 13-15; UKR.WS.785, para. 41, 62-63.

215 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 21; UKR.WS.729, paras. 32, 38; UKR.WS.748, paras. 47-48, 63-64; UKR.WS.762, paras. 30-31, 39; UKR.WS.764, para. 73; UKR.WS.774, para. 51; UKR.WS.776, paras. 44, 52, 94, 99; UKR.WS.779, paras. 44, 50.

216 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.753, para. 37; UKR.WS.762, para. 44; UKR.WS.776, para. 63.

217 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.753, para. 37.

218 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Second Interim Report](#), para. 102; [Third Interim Report](#), para. 57; [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 60; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 46; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 55; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 59; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 66.

standing, as well as exhausting physical exercise and forced labour.²¹⁹ Fifteen of 21 survivors reported having been subjected to sexual violence.²²⁰ Most survivors, in addition, reported being subjected to multiple methods of torture, with many also having witnessed the torture or physical abuse of other detainees, civilians and POWs alike.²²¹

77. Consistent with earlier findings,²²² nearly all survivors further reported detention conditions amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, characterized by overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, insufficient food and water, lack of heating, poor ventilation and limited or no access to medical care.²²³
78. Most survivors who remained detained for prolonged periods in the same facilities reported that routine torture and ill-treatment, as well as deplorable detention conditions, persisted throughout their detention.²²⁴ Among the three survivors released through exchanges in early 2026 that ODIHR interviewed, two reported a decrease in or cessation of torture and improvements in conditions

219 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 10, 18; UKR.WS.696, paras. 37-38; UKR.WS.697, paras. 16-17, 28; UKR.WS.701, paras. 27, 35-37; UKR.WS.710, paras. 14-15, 24, 29; UKR.WS.711, paras. 22-25, 31; UKR.WS.717, para. 20; UKR.WS.729, paras. 17, 32-33, 39-40, 46; UKR.WS.732, paras. 27, 29; UKR.WS.735, para. 95; UKR.WS.748, paras. 11-12, 14, 35, 37-39, 44-46, 48-52, 80-81, 85; UKR.WS.753, paras. 10, 15, 17, 24, 30-32, 34-37; UKR.WS.758, paras. 27-30, 33-34; UKR.WS.762, paras. 9, 22-23, 31-32; UKR.WS.764, paras. 8, 11, 18-19, 21, 23, 25, 35, 48-50, 55-57, 70, 79, 86; UKR.WS.774, paras. 29-31, 33-34, 40, 44, 55, 69-70, 77; UKR.WS.776, paras. 15, 44-47, 49-50, 55, 70-71, 89-90, 93, 95, 101, 116; UKR.WS.779, paras. 13-14, 25-26, 27-33, 40-41, 43-44, 47-50, 52-53; UKR.WS.785, paras. 34-37, 42-44, 47, 67, 96-97, 102-105, 109. See also UKR.WS.695, para. 54; UKR.WS.708, para. 39; UKR.WS.709, paras. 12-13, 23, 35-36, 40, 43; UKR.WS.711, para. 52; UKR.WS.718, paras. 25, 28; UKR.WS.721, paras. 51-52; UKR.WS.722, paras. 39, 41; UKR.WS.723, paras. 33, 38; UKR.WS.724, para. 34; UKR.WS.733, paras. 13, 22; UKR.WS.735, para. 26; UKR.WS.737, paras. 11, 14, 27, 34, 40-41; UKR.WS.776, para. 17.

220 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 12; UKR.WS.686, para. 42; UKR.WS.696, para. 39; UKR.WS.701, paras. 27-28, 31; UKR.WS.729, paras. 32, 39; UKR.WS.732, paras. 30-33; UKR.WS.735, paras. 85, 88-89, 91, 93-95; UKR.WS.737, para. 20; UKR.WS.748, paras. 11-13, 49, 93; UKR.WS.753, paras. 15, 18, 30; UKR.WS.758, paras. 27, 33, 40; UKR.WS.764, paras. 22, 44-48, 54-57, 78, 87; UKR.WS.774, paras. 50, 70-72; UKR.WS.776, para. 90; UKR.WS.779 paras. 27, 33. See also UKR.WS.709, para. 23. For more details, See Section IV.f. Conflict-related sexual violence in areas under the control of the Russian authorities.

221 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.701, paras. 27, 29-30, 41; UKR.WS.710, paras. 30, 34-35; UKR.WS.711, para. 29; UKR.WS.729, paras. 17, 29; UKR.WS.735, para. 33; UKR.WS.748, paras. 13, 29, 34, 84; UKR.WS.753, paras. 21-22; UKR.WS.758, paras. 31, 33; UKR.WS.762, paras. 9, 17, 21, 39; UKR.WS.764, paras. 8-10, 36, 46, 80; UKR.WS.768, paras. 30, 36-37; UKR.WS.774, paras. 21, 36, 38; UKR.WS.776, paras. 17, 126; UKR.WS.779, paras. 93, 96.

222 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 63; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 38; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 42; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 63; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 70.

223 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 10, 18-19, 27, 38; UKR.WS.696, paras. 7, 23-27; UKR.WS.697, paras. 20, 27; UKR.WS.701, para. 40; UKR.WS.710, paras. 16, 19, 27; UKR.WS.717, para. 29; UKR.WS.729, paras. 15-16, 21-22, 33, 45-46; UKR.WS.735, paras. 84, 111, 113-114; UKR.WS.737, para. 16; UKR.WS.748, paras. 13, 15, 36, 52-53, 65, 81-82; UKR.WS.753, paras. 9, 11, 18, 33, 37, 44; UKR.WS.758, paras. 35-36; UKR.WS.762, paras. 13, 18, 27, 36, 44, 48; UKR.WS.764, paras. 12, 26-29, 58-59, 61, 81; UKR.WS.768, paras. 32-33; UKR.WS.774, paras. 20, 42, 45, 81, 83-86; UKR.WS.776, paras. 27, 32, 37, 50, 53, 60-65, 76, 96, 101, 112-114, 119; UKR.WS.779, paras. 12, 35, 46, 51, 67-75, 101-102; UKR.WS.785, paras. 68, 108-109. See also UKR.WS.695, para. 70; UKR.WS.708, para. 45; UKR.WS.709, paras. 18, 44, 49-50; UKR.WS.711, para. 52; UKR.WS.716, para. 16; UKR.WS.718, paras. 28-29; UKR.WS.719, paras. 27, 41; UKR.WS.721, paras. 51-52; UKR.WS.722, paras. 41-42; UKR.WS.723, para. 33; UKR.WS.734, paras. 21, 31; UKR.WS.737, paras. 30-31; UKR.WS.739, para. 43.

224 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.748, para. 96; UKR.WS.762, para. 61; UKR.WS.774, para. 96; UKR.WS.776, paras. 93, 99; UKR.WS.779, paras. 52-54. Several witnesses also reported temporary improvements in detention conditions and treatment immediately before or shortly after visits by the ICRC or the Russian Commissioner for Human Rights, which were not maintained thereafter. See UKR.WS.748, paras. 67, 71-72; UKR.WS.776, paras. 86, 121, 127-128; UKR.WS.779, paras. 58, 61-63. See also UKR.WS.720, para. 56.

from mid-2025 onwards, while one said that severe beatings continued until a few days before his exchange.²²⁵

79. Eleven survivors reported suffering various short-term and lasting physical injuries and psychological trauma resulting from torture and/or their detention conditions, including fractures, burns, bruises and lacerations, broken teeth, chronic pain, anxiety, panic attacks and sleep disturbances.²²⁶ Seven survivors reported dangerous weight loss from inadequate nutrition during detention.²²⁷ Furthermore, ODIHR also received credible reports of deaths in custody resulting from torture or inhuman conditions, including a failure to provide timely and adequate medical care.²²⁸
80. Torture, inhuman treatment, and wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, are strictly prohibited under IHL and constitute both grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and war crimes.²²⁹ Under IHRL, the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute and non-derogable, including in situations of armed conflict.²³⁰ The evidence gathered by ODIHR indicating the widespread and systematic use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment against detainees under the authority of the Russian Federation raises serious concerns that such conduct may amount to crimes against humanity.²³¹

D. THE SITUATION OF PRISONERS OF WAR

81. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR continued to receive accounts,²³² including through 21 witness testimonies, concerning alleged violations of IHL and IHRL

225 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.729, paras. 52, 58; UKR.WS.764, paras. 67, 80, 93; UKR.WS.779, paras. 52-54.

226 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.701, para. 35; UKR.WS.710, paras. 15, 25; UKR.WS.717, para. 33; UKR.WS.729, para. 33; UKR.WS.732, paras. 43-45, 47, 50, 61-62; UKR.WS.748, paras. 12, 14, 25, 106-109; UKR.WS.758, paras. 34, 40; UKR.WS.762, para. 45; UKR.WS.774, para. 45; UKR.WS.776, paras. 47, 63; UKR.WS.779, paras. 45, 54, 116. See also UKR.WS.709, para. 36; UKR.WS.718, para. 25; UKR.WS.723, para. 33; UKR.WS.741, para. 25; UKR.WS.762, para. 33; UKR.WS.764, para. 80.

227 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 27; UKR.WS.729, para. 37; UKR.WS.748, para. 53; UKR.WS.753, para. 33; UKR.WS.764, para. 29; UKR.WS.774, paras. 42, 86; UKR.WS.776, para. 115. See also UKR.WS.711, para. 52; UKR.WS.721, paras. 51, 63-64; UKR.WS.722, para. 18; UKR.WS.739, para. 43; UKR.WS.741, para. 27; UKR.WS.762, para. 34.

228 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.707, paras. 30-36; UKR.WS.708, paras. 18-31, 38, 40, 45. See also UKR.WS.748, paras. 84, 96; UKR.WS.753, para. 38; UKR.WS.774, paras. 57-58; UKR.WS.776, paras. 40, 109.

229 CIHL Rules 90, 92; GC IV, art. 32; AP I, arts. 75(1)-(2) and 11. See also ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(ii).

230 ICCPR, art. 7; CAT, art. 2.

231 ICC Statute, arts. 7(1)(f) and (k). See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 56. See also Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, IICI, [A/79/549](#), 25 October 2024, paras. 72-78; [Treatment of civilians deprived of their liberty in the context of the armed attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine](#), UN OHCHR, 23 September 2025, para. 78.

232 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), para. 28; [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 33; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 52; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 66; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 67; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 72. See also Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, IICI, [A/HRC/61/61](#), 9 March 2026, paras. 2-46; Information provided to ODIHR by two NGOs working on, among other human rights issues, treatment of prisoners of war; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

related to the treatment of Ukrainian POWs. Five testimonies were provided by former POWs (four men, one woman),²³³ three by family members of interned POWs,²³⁴ and 13 by other civilian witnesses detained alongside POWs or otherwise engaged in POW issues.²³⁵ Of these former POWs, four were exchanged in 2025 and one was released and deported through a third country.²³⁶ Two POWs, whose cases were described by relatives, remained interned in the Russian Federation at the time of publication²³⁷ and one remained in a facility in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.²³⁸ The length of interment reflected in testimonies ranged from 5 to 41 months.

82. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR monitoring did not document individual instances regarding the abuse of Russian POWs. However, as ODIHR has not yet interviewed Russian POWs, it has been unable to document or independently verify any allegations concerning their treatment. The Russian authorities alleged that Russian POWs were held in a network of so-called ‘secret prisons’ in Ukraine, where they were reportedly subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment, to which international humanitarian organizations had no access.²³⁹
83. ODIHR documented the locations where Ukrainian POWs were interned. Three POWs were held in each of the following locations within the Russian Federation:²⁴⁰ Stary Oskol (Belgorod region),²⁴¹ Maslovka (Belgorod region),²⁴² Alexeyevka (Belgorod region),²⁴³ Valuyki (Belgorod region),²⁴⁴ Kursk (Kursk region),²⁴⁵ Rostov-on-Don (Rostov region),²⁴⁶ Novochoerkassk (Rostov region),²⁴⁷ Kamensk-Shakhtinsky (Rostov region),²⁴⁸ Novozybkov (Bryansk region),²⁴⁹ Kamyshin (Volgograd region),²⁵⁰ Saratov (Saratov region),²⁵¹ Pakino (Vladimir region),²⁵² Donskoy (Tula

233 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685; UKR.WS.693; UKR.WS.700; UKR.WS.715; UKR.WS.752.

234 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.761; UKR.WS.773; UKR.WS.777.

235 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.690; UKR.WS.697; UKR.WS.718; UKR.WS.719; UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.729; UKR.WS.762; UKR.WS.764; UKR.WS.769; UKR.WS.774; UKR.WS.776; UKR.WS.779; UKR.WS.785.

236 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 74; UKR.WS.693, paras. 6, 13; UKR.WS.700, paras. 4, 8, 71; UKR.WS.715, paras. 68-74; UKR.WS.752, paras. 15, 54-56.

237 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.761, para. 36; UKR.WS.773, para. 58.

238 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.777, para. 26.

239 [Violations of the international humanitarian law by the Kiev regime regarding treatment of prisoners of war: «Secret prisons» Part II](#), Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 February 2026; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the International Organizations in Vienna.

240 According to the information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations to Vienna, Ukrainian POWs had been or were still being held in 203 institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service in the territory of the Russian Federation.

241 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, paras. 4, 8, 9, 10, 23-24, 27, 30-31, 33; UKR.WS.761, paras. 34, 37.

242 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 4, 8, 11-16, 41.

243 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.761, paras. 35, 37, 40.

244 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.776, paras. 44, 58.

245 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.762, para. 22.

246 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, paras. 49-53.

247 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, paras. 54-58.

248 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, paras. 12, 31-42.

249 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.729, paras. 31-53.

250 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.721, paras. 42, 47; UKR.WS.779, paras. 23, 34.

251 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.697, paras. 12, 30-31; UKR.WS.718, para. 29.

252 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 4, 8, 42-64, 68.

region),²⁵³ Minusinsk (Krasnoyarsk region),²⁵⁴ Omsk (Omsk region),²⁵⁵ Dimitrovgrad (Ulyanovsk region),²⁵⁶ Kizel (Perm region)²⁵⁷ and Udarny (Zubovo-Polyansky region, Republic of Mordovia).²⁵⁸ ODIHR documented the latter three locations for the first time. Other reported places of internment and transit were in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, including Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions, as well as Crimea.²⁵⁹

84. ODIHR also documented locations where most of the reported violations against POWs were perpetrated. Witnesses recounted how in Stary Oskol²⁶⁰ and Olenivka (Donetsk region)²⁶¹ POWs were interned in dire conditions,²⁶² were ill-treated²⁶³ and were denied the right to correspond with their families.²⁶⁴ Witnesses reported that, in Pakino, they were subjected to persistent harassment and insults from prison guards,²⁶⁵ very limited or no access to medical care²⁶⁶ and provided inadequate food for extended periods. One witness noted: *“Hunger was the worst thing in Pakino. You’re hungry all the time, and everybody thought of eating, because everybody was constantly hungry.”*²⁶⁷ Another POW recounted being temporarily held, following capture, in a facility in Sorokyne (Luhansk region) where they received little food, no water and had no beds or bedding.²⁶⁸
85. In line with the findings of previous Interim Reports,²⁶⁹ witnesses reported that, initially, they were held in improvised facilities in random buildings,²⁷⁰ tent camps²⁷¹ and military offices.²⁷² Following their transfer, internment continued in penal colonies,²⁷³ pre-trial detention centres,²⁷⁴ police stations²⁷⁵ and camps

253 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.729, para. 53; UKR.WS.764, paras. 53, 73; UKR.WS.774, paras. 27-28.

254 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, paras. 59-68.

255 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.773, para. 58.

256 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.761, para. 36.

257 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, paras. 13, 43-52.

258 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.774, paras. 67, 98, 114.

259 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 35-48; UKR.WS.693, paras. 7-12; UKR.WS.715, paras. 38, 42, 46, 48, 49, 54; UKR.WS.762, para. 17; UKR.WS.773, paras. 31, 33; UKR.WS.777, paras. 23, 26, 43. According to the information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations to Vienna, Ukrainian POWs were being held in 31 institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.

260 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 31.

261 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, para. 85.

262 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, paras. 72, 79, 85, 87-89; UKR.WS.700, paras. 24-25.

263 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, paras. 69-70, 74, 76; UKR.WS.700, paras. 10, 12, 17-18, 22, 29.

264 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, para. 95.

265 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 43, 47-48.

266 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 51-53.

267 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 45-46.

268 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, paras. 21-34.

269 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 54; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 67; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 68; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 74.

270 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, para. 21.

271 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 8-11, 16.

272 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, paras. 22-25.

273 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 49, 54, 59; UKR.WS.693, paras. 11, 68, 157; UKR.WS.700, paras. 4, 8, 42; UKR.WS.729, paras. 44, 53; UKR.WS.752, para. 31; UKR.WS.762, para. 22; UKR.WS.764, paras. 53, 73; UKR.WS.774, paras. 27-28.

274 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 35, 39, 45; UKR.WS.693, paras. 9, 54, 99; UKR.WS.700, paras. 4, 8, 9; UKR.WS.715, para. 42; UKR.WS.721, para. 42; UKR.WS.729, paras. 31, 53; UKR.WS.752, para. 43; UKR.WS.779, para. 34.

275 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, paras. 20, 25.

designated for POWs.²⁷⁶ Almost all POWs reported being held in multiple detention sites during their internment. At some locations, such as Luhansk, Rovenky (Luhansk region), Dokuchaievsk (Donetsk region), Rostov, Maslovka, Olenivka, Pakino, Kursk, Donskoy and Kamyshin, POWs were reportedly held alongside civilian detainees, with both groups subjected to similar treatment and, in some cases, POWs reportedly subjected to more severe treatment.²⁷⁷

86. Witnesses reported that male and female detainees, whether held as POWs or civilians, were held separately.²⁷⁸ Confirming earlier findings, ODIHR was told of the existence of a separate barrack for women in Olenivka.²⁷⁹ In one instance, a female POW reported being held in solitary confinement and subjected to high-voltage electric shocks during interrogation in an attempt to force a confession, before being released and deported to Georgia after several months of detention without any legal proceedings.²⁸⁰
87. Former POWs interviewed by ODIHR reported being subjected to torture at almost every detention facility, providing further evidence consistent with the widespread and systematic use of torture by the Russian authorities previously documented by ODIHR.²⁸¹ Physical violence in the form of beatings by detention facility guards or other special units' personnel was frequently described,²⁸² reportedly occurring on a regular basis and, in some cases, deliberately targeting existing injuries to aggravate pain.²⁸³ One witness noted: *"The main method of punishment was beating. It was used both as a formal punishment and randomly."*²⁸⁴ Other reported methods included electric shocks (lasting up to two hours),²⁸⁵ stress positions,²⁸⁶ using dogs to attack or intimidate detainees²⁸⁷ and acts of sexual violence,²⁸⁸ including applying electric shocks to genitalia.²⁸⁹ Another witness described how the haemorrhoids he suffered were specifically targeted with

276 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, paras. 26-30.

277 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 37, 39, 46, 50; UKR.WS.700, paras. 37, 41, 56; UKR.WS.715, para. 62; UKR.WS.718, para. 29; UKR.WS.721, paras. 42, 58, 63; UKR.WS.729, para. 53; UKR.WS.752, paras. 19, 22, 27, 33; UKR.WS.762, paras. 17, 20-21; UKR.WS.764, para. 73; UKR.WS.774, paras. 27-28, 46, 67, 98, 114; UKR.WS.779, paras. 97; UKR.WS.785, para. 76.

278 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 37; UKR.WS.693, paras. 25, 75, 84, 111; UKR.WS.700, para. 41.

279 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, para. 84. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim report](#), para. 74.

280 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.715, paras. 42, 46, 51-53, 72-75.

281 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 54; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 67; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 68; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 75; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations to Vienna.

282 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 10, 23, 25, 27, 36; UKR.WS.690, paras. 10, 13; UKR.WS.693, paras. 15, 36, 40-41, 44, 46, 48, 55, 69-70, 74, 76, 93, 114, 117, 125, 127, 135, 139-140, 151-152, 160, 171, 173; UKR.WS.700, paras. 11, 17, 19, 28-30, 33-35, 39, 42-43, 47, 61, 70; UKR.WS.715, para. 66; UKR.WS.752, paras. 22, 31, 40, 44, 49-50; UKR.WS.762, para. 17.

283 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, para. 23.

284 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, para. 140.

285 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 23, 36; UKR.WS.693, paras. 100, 151, 173; UKR.WS.700, paras. 12, 17-18, 22, 25, 43, 50-51; UKR.WS.752, para. 31.

286 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, paras. 56, 68, 151; UKR.WS.700, paras. 17, 42-43, 56.

287 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, paras. 55, 65, 150; UKR.WS.700, paras. 17, 42, 47, 61.

288 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, para. 174.

289 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 23; UKR.WS.693, para. 173; UKR.WS.700, paras. 11-12, 19, 21; UKR.WS.779, paras. 93-94, 96. For more details, See Section IV.f. Conflict-related sexual violence in areas under the control of the Russian authorities.

electric shocks.²⁹⁰ Ill-treatment occurred during the so-called ‘*priyomka*’,²⁹¹ in interrogations,²⁹² showers and during exercise.²⁹³ One witness described an instance in which a POW reportedly experienced severe mental health deterioration.²⁹⁴ Another male witness reported being coerced into providing sexual acts in exchange for medical treatment.²⁹⁵ Witnesses told ODIHR that POWs with the rank of officer and/or affiliated with certain battalions (e.g., Azov or Aidar) or regiments (e.g., Kraken) were subjected to more severe ill-treatment, beatings or torture, or were interned in high-security detention facilities and, in some cases, were prosecuted multiple times and charged with additional offences.²⁹⁶

88. Witnesses also described other types of ill-treatment, including threats of sexual violence,²⁹⁷ execution,²⁹⁸ prolonged imprisonment and adverse detention conditions,²⁹⁹ and excessive physical exercise (e.g., squats).³⁰⁰ One former POW reported that detainees who refused to obey orders could be transferred to a psychiatric ward and be subjected to involuntary administration of medication.³⁰¹ According to witnesses, the severity and frequency of ill-treatment, often used to extract confessions or as a form of punishment, varied between detention facilities and depended on the prison administration and prison guards on duty.³⁰²
89. In line with findings in earlier Interim Reports, all former Ukrainian POWs interviewed by ODIHR consistently reported being subjected to degrading and humiliating treatment. They reported being compelled to learn and sing the Russian national anthem, shout “*Glory to Russia*”,³⁰³ learn the history of Russia³⁰⁴ and memorize poems.³⁰⁵ Detainees who failed to comply were reportedly subjected to punishment.³⁰⁶

290 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 18.

291 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, paras. 55, 93, 100, 114, 125, 150; UKR.WS.700, paras. 33-34, 42-43, 50; UKR.WS.752, para. 31; UKR.WS.762, para. 22.

292 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 10, 22-23, 28; UKR.WS.693, paras. 35-36; UKR.WS.700, paras. 10-11, 13, 17, 30; UKR.WS.715, paras. 51, 66.

293 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 36; UKR.WS.700, paras. 25, 47; UKR.WS.752, para. 41; UKR.WS.779, para. 93.

294 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.779, paras. 93-95.

295 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 53.

296 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.690, para. 8; UKR.WS.693, paras. 71, 93; UKR.WS.697, para. 33; UKR.WS.700, paras. 28, 34; UKR.WS.761, para. 36; UKR.WS.762, para. 39; UKR.WS.779, para. 97. Information provided to ODIHR by an NGO working on human rights issues, including issues of POWs; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. For more details, See Section IV.h. Trials of Ukrainian civilians and POWs by the Russian authorities.

297 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, paras. 23, 65.

298 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, paras. 23, 32.

299 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 59-60; UKR.WS.693, para. 43.

300 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.593, paras. 56, 110, 125-126; UKR.WS.700, para. 51; UKR.WS.752, para. 50.

301 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, para. 67.

302 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 63.

303 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, paras. 108-109, 114, 160, 170; UKR.WS.700, paras. 48, 56; UKR.WS.752, para. 38.

304 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, para. 38.

305 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, para. 34.

306 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, paras. 114, 170.

90. ODIHR continued to receive accounts of poor conditions of internment of Ukrainian POWs, consistent with its previous findings.³⁰⁷ Witnesses described limited and poor-quality food³⁰⁸ often contaminated with waste or other foreign objects,³⁰⁹ very short eating periods³¹⁰ and little to no access to water.³¹¹ One witness outlined: *“To understand better — people were fighting for food inside the cell.”*³¹² Detention cells and sites were described as cold,³¹³ lacking beds or proper bedding or being infested with bed bugs,³¹⁴ and being overcrowded.³¹⁵ Witnesses reported that they were subjected to sleep deprivation.³¹⁶
91. Witnesses reported that hygiene was difficult to maintain due to limited access to showers, water³¹⁷ and hygiene items such as toilet paper, toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap and razors.³¹⁸ In some facilities, access to toilets was restricted or impeded.³¹⁹ For instance, one POW reported being permitted to use the toilet only upon instruction from guards communicated through a loudspeaker installed in the cell.³²⁰ POWs reportedly had no change of clothing and often lacked winter clothing,³²¹ and could rarely wash clothes.³²² Detention conditions were further compounded by practices such as forcing detainees to pass through a ‘corridor’ formed by prison personnel while being severely beaten,³²³ compelling prisoners to perform strenuous physical exercises followed by beatings,³²⁴ requiring prisoners to stand in line or walk around their cells for prolonged periods,³²⁵ and subjecting prisoners to bright lights,³²⁶ loud radio or alarm sounds.³²⁷

307 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 69; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 63-67; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 77-80; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 73-75; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 78. See also [OSCE Moscow Mechanism Report](#), pp. 26, 28, 29.

308 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 25, 30, 37, 38, 51, 54; UKR.WS.693, paras. 22-23, 26, 58, 89, 133, 162; UKR.WS.700, paras. 42, 45, 62; UKR.WS.715, para. 58; UKR.WS.761, para. 37.

309 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 38.

310 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, para. 30.

311 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 25, 37; UKR.WS.693, paras. 22-23, 49, 85-86, 106; UKR.WS.700, para. 42.

312 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 62.

313 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 37; UKR.WS.693, para. 32; UKR.WS.700, para. 56; UKR.WS.715, para. 57.

314 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 37; UKR.WS.693, paras. 72, 79, 107, 123, 137.

315 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 37; UKR.WS.693, paras. 22, 45, 57, 72, 90, 107; UKR.WS.700, paras. 24, 44; UKR.WS.752, para. 44.

316 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 25; UKR.WS.693, para. 47; UKR.WS.752, para. 34.

317 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 36, 40; UKR.WS.693, paras. 88, 98, 106, 161; UKR.WS.700, para. 25; UKR.WS.715, para. 58; UKR.WS.752, para. 41.

318 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 37; UKR.WS.700, para. 43.

319 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 25; UKR.WS.693, paras. 26, 87; UKR.WS.752, paras. 46-55.

320 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, paras. 45-46.

321 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 58; UKR.WS.693, para. 142; UKR.WS.700, paras. 24, 53.

322 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 37; UKR.WS.693, para. 141.

323 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 36; UKR.WS.693, paras. 55, 93; UKR.WS.700, para. 33.

324 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.752, para. 49.

325 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, para. 44; UKR.WS.752, paras. 46, 48.

326 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, para. 113.

327 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 24-25; UKR.WS.700, para. 49.

92. Witnesses reported little to no access to medical care,³²⁸ which, in some cases, may have contributed to deaths in custody.³²⁹ One former POW also described an outbreak of scabies in the internment facility.³³⁰ According to information provided to ODIHR by an NGO representative, POWs captured in 2022, and more recently in Kursk, reportedly had no access to medical care, even in cases of urgent medical need and no information had been provided on their current condition.
93. Former POWs, in addition, reported being forced to perform labour, including sewing and menial tasks such as cutting grass, gathering stones or sorting metal. In one instance, refusal reportedly resulted in beatings, while, in others, POWs reported receiving only nominal remuneration or additional food.³³¹
94. Witnesses furthermore reported being pressured to join the Russian army through threats and intimidation,³³² being compelled to sign blank sheets of paper or documents without the opportunity to read them, or documents confessing to false allegations of criminal conduct, and being instructed to make false statements.³³³ Immediately prior to their exchange, POWs reported being compelled to sign documents stating that they had no complaints about their treatment during internment or about the Russian Federation more generally.³³⁴
95. Only one witness reported being explicitly informed about their POW status,³³⁵ whereas four others reported not being informed of their status or the rights afforded to them under IHL.³³⁶ In many cases, detainees were denied the right to correspond with their families³³⁷ and were effectively held incommunicado.³³⁸ Family members reportedly often learned of the detention location from former POWs or obtained information concerning their relatives only through public video footage of criminal proceedings or Russian media coverage.³³⁹

328 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 40, 58; UKR.WS.690, paras. 11-13; UKR.WS.693, paras. 26, 29, 49, 76-78, 80-83, 121, 127, 129, 148-149, 167, 169, 170; UKR.WS.700, paras. 23, 34, 51-54; UKR.WS.761, paras. 48-49; UKR.WS.773, para. 32; [Anatomy of Torture: testimonies on torture and ill-treatment by medical personnel in Russian captivity](#), Center for Civil Liberties, 2026.

329 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, paras. 149-150, 167, 170.

330 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 51-52, 54. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 79.

331 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 64; UKR.WS.693, paras. 132-135, 163; UKR.WS.752, paras. 36, 39.

332 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 32; UKR.WS.700, para. 65.

333 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 71; UKR.WS.700, paras. 14-15, 40; 59; UKR.WS.776, para. 58.

334 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, paras. 70-71.

335 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.693, para. 118.

336 CIHL Rule 125; GC III, arts. 4-5, 17, 41, 58, 71, 78, 96, 99; AP I, arts. 44, 45, 75. See also ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 34, 45; UKR.WS.700, para. 57; UKR.WS.715, para. 56; [OSCE Moscow Mechanism Report](#), pp. 14-18.

337 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, paras. 165-166; UKR.WS.700, paras. 27, 59; UKR.WS.721, para. 49; UKR.WS.752, paras. 30, 42. See also [OSCE Moscow Mechanism Report](#), pp. 34, 35.

338 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 43, 60; UKR.WS.693, paras. 95, 120, 165; UKR.WS.700, para. 59; UKR.WS.752, para. 16; UKR.WS.761, paras. 33, 55; UKR.WS.773, paras. 19, 58; UKR.WS.777, paras. 48-49.

339 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.761, paras. 30-31, 33; UKR.WS.773, paras. 25-26, 96; UKR.WS.777, paras. 15-16.

96. In line with earlier findings,³⁴⁰ witnesses reported instances of being visited by local or national media outlets,³⁴¹ the office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation³⁴² or ICRC representatives.³⁴³ Witnesses described how such visits took place only in model facilities or specially prepared cells and said that “*only guys [...] with a healthier look*” were shown to visitors.³⁴⁴ One witness also reported receiving parcels bearing ICRC labels.³⁴⁵ Another witness recounted that Russian television crews offered detainees the opportunity to reassure their families of their whereabouts and condition through televised interviews, noting that detention conditions had been improved for filming purposes, and POWs were specifically selected for broadcast because they were considered of greater interest to viewers.³⁴⁶
97. The pattern of recording POWs reported to ODIHR is consistent with earlier findings, raising concerns regarding compliance with the prohibition under IHL against exposing POWs to public curiosity.³⁴⁷ Witnesses also indicated that, although such visits appeared to bring minor improvements to detention conditions, these were generally not sustained over time.³⁴⁸
98. The testimonies provided to ODIHR by former POWs continued to raise serious concerns regarding the Russian Federation’s compliance with its obligations under IHL governing the treatment of POWs, including the prohibitions of torture and inhuman treatment and the obligation to ensure humane conditions of internment.

E. EXCHANGES OF CIVILIANS

99. ODIHR continued to monitor the return of civilians, both through the ‘humanitarian track’³⁴⁹ and, in some instances, through POW exchange mechanisms, notwithstanding that civilians do not qualify as POWs under IHL.³⁵⁰ During the first half of 2026, ODIHR interviewed ten civilians who had been included in POW exchanges in 2025 and 2026.³⁵¹ Of those, nine were detained *after* February

340 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 68; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 85; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 77; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 81.

341 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, para. 153; UKR.WS.752, para. 42.

342 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, paras. 63-64; UKR.WS.776, paras. 102-103.

343 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, paras. 58-60; UKR.WS.721, para. 56; UKR.WS.752, para. 26.

344 *Ibid.*

345 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 60.

346 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.776, paras. 120-121.

347 GC III, art. 13(2). See also OSCE/ ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 33; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 60; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 87; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 76; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 80.

348 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, paras. 54, 61-62; UKR.WS.752, paras. 34-35.

349 As mentioned previously in this report, the ‘humanitarian track’ refers to a mechanism for the return of civilians outside the formal POW exchange framework, facilitated by the Ombudspersons of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

350 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 40; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 82.

351 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.697, paras. 38, 55; UKR.WS.701, para. 34; UKR.WS.729, paras. 3, 58; UKR.WS.748, paras. 98, 101; UKR.WS.753, para. 47; UKR.WS.762, para. 62; UKR.WS.764, paras. 92-93; UKR.WS.774, paras. 93, 98-100; UKR.WS.776, para. 4; UKR.WS.779, para. 108, 113.

2022 and reportedly transferred between multiple detention facilities in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and/or the Russian Federation, where they were held without charge or trial.³⁵²

100. Recounting his detention to ODIHR, one witness from the Russian-occupied areas of Kharkiv region stated how one of the investigators told him: *“I don’t understand why you are here. You are a civilian and older.”* The survivor further noted: *“There was no legitimate reason for keeping me in captivity. I was used as bargaining chip.”*³⁵³ Another survivor from Kharkiv region related: *“They said that they did not quite understand why we were there”,* with investigators telling him: *“You will get home sooner or later, but how and when is not up to us to decide.”*³⁵⁴ The same survivor noted that, at a later stage of his detention: *“... in Valuyki, another investigator also said he saw no grounds for my detention”.*³⁵⁵
101. Seven witnesses told ODIHR that they had been held alongside POWs in detention sites in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.³⁵⁶ Furthermore, two former civilian detainees — one from an occupied area of Kherson region and the other from a previously occupied area of Kyiv region — reported that the Russian authorities had designated them as POWs.³⁵⁷ Treating civilians as POWs or otherwise designating them as POWs is incompatible with IHL, as civilians remain protected under a distinct protective regime and do not acquire POW status solely by virtue of their detention during an armed conflict.³⁵⁸ Consistent with previous findings,³⁵⁹ testimonies collected during the first half of 2026 suggest that these civilians were effectively used as ‘bargaining chips’ in the exchange process, despite not meeting the legal criteria for POW status.
102. Witnesses also recounted being offered Russian passports and military contracts with the Russian armed forces while detained in the Russian Federation.³⁶⁰ According to information provided to ODIHR, there has been a recent change in this practice, whereby civilian detainees, particularly those from the Russian-occupied

352 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.701, paras. 25, 28; UKR.WS.729, paras. 3, 42, 54; UKR.WS.762, paras. 22, 30, 40, 58-59; UKR.WS.764, paras. 17, 53, 72; UKR.WS.774, paras. 25, 27, 31, 58-59; UKR.WS.776, paras. 4, 38; UKR.WS.779, paras. 34, 82.

353 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.774, paras. 37, 111.

354 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.776, para. 38.

355 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.776, para. 38.

356 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.697, paras. 30-34; UKR.WS.729, para. 53; UKR.WS.762, paras. 17, 20-22, 39; UKR.WS.764, paras. 72-73, 99; UKR.WS.774, paras. 28, 46, 56, 98; UKR.WS.776, paras. 58, 103, 121, 131-132; UKR.WS.779, paras. 31, 96-97. For more details, See Section IV.d. The situation of prisoners of war.

357 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.729, para. 27; UKR.WS.779, paras. 23, 107.

358 See also CIHL Rules 3-5, 106; Hague Regulations (1907), arts. 1, 3; GC III, arts. 4, 5; GC IV, art. 4; AP I, arts. 43(1), 50(1).

359 See also OSCE/ODIHR, *Eighth Interim Report*, para. 87.

360 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.729, para. 43; UKR.WS.762, para. 51; UKR.WS.764, para. 43; UKR.WS.774, paras. 104-105; UKR.WS.776, para. 29; UKR.WS.779, paras. 90, 92.

territories of Ukraine, are reportedly being compelled to acquire Russian passports, whereas previously this had been presented as an option.³⁶¹

103. In line with earlier findings,³⁶² one witness from an occupied area of Zaporizhzhia region told ODIHR that, immediately upon his release after serving his prison sentence, he was detained in a migration centre for three months before being deported via a third country.³⁶³ While the exact number remained unknown, reportedly, at least 1,000 Ukrainians were being held in such detention centres for foreign nationals across the Russian Federation.³⁶⁴ The continued practice of depriving Ukrainian civilians without Russian citizenship of their liberty by holding them in migration detention centres following completion of their prison sentences raises serious concerns regarding unlawful confinement and, under certain circumstances, may amount to a war crime.³⁶⁵
104. ODIHR reiterates its previous finding that, although the exchange of civilian internees is not prohibited under IHL, such exchanges require that the civilians concerned were lawfully detained in the first place.³⁶⁶ In addition, designating civilian detainees as POWs blurs the fundamental distinction between combatants and civilians, and undermines the corresponding protections afforded to each category under IHL.³⁶⁷ Accordingly, detaining civilians solely for the purpose of carrying out a future exchange may amount to hostage-taking, which is prohibited under IHL and constitutes a war crime.³⁶⁸

F. CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

105. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR received 22 testimonies on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) perpetrated by the Russian authorities or Russian armed forces,³⁶⁹ of which 15 were provided by direct survivors. Twelve testimonies re-

361 Information provided to ODIHR by an NGO working on issues of civilian detainees. The compelled acquisition of Russian citizenship may serve to recharacterize detained Ukrainian civilians as the Russian Federation nationals rather than Ukrainian civilians, potentially obstructing repatriation and undermining the right of displaced persons to return. See CIHL Rule 132; GC IV, art. 118. Such practices may also raise concerns of physical or moral coercion against protected persons. See GC IV, art. 31.

362 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 88, 93; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 84-85.

363 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.785, para. 73. See also [Deportation to hell: Forcible transfer of Ukrainian prisoners to Russia](#), Dignity, May 2026.

364 [Never-ending prison](#), *iStories*, 20 May 2026.

365 GC IV, art. 147; Rome Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(vii).

366 GC IV, arts. 42, 78. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 40; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 82.

367 See also [OSCE Moscow Mechanism Report](#), p. 1.

368 CIHL Rule 96; GC IV, arts. 34, 147; AP I, art. 75(2); ICC Rome Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(viii). See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 82. For more details, See Section IV.b. Arbitrary deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearances in areas under the control of the Russian authorities.

369 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683; UKR.WS.685; UKR.WS.693; UKR.WS.700; UKR.WS.701; UKR.WS.709; UKR.WS.710; UKR.WS.711; UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.724; UKR.WS.732; UKR.WS.737; UKR.WS.753; UKR.WS.756; UKR.WS.758; UKR.WS.764; UKR.WS.768; UKR.WS.774; UKR.WS.776; UKR.WS.779; UKR.WS.781; UKR.WS.785.

counted acts of CRSV perpetrated against men, seven against women and three involved both male and female survivors. All seven testimonies of CRSV perpetrated against women concerned either rape, threats of rape or electric shocks applied to breasts. Three testimonies collected in the first half of 2026 concerned POWs, and 19 described sexual violence perpetrated against civilians. All but four cases involved violations occurring in custodial settings. ODIHR reiterates that such acts constitute serious violations of IHL and IHRL and may amount to war crimes and, depending on the context, crimes against humanity.³⁷⁰

106. Detention facilities cited by witnesses and survivors were located in (previously) Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, such as Donetsk, Kherson, Kyiv, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea,³⁷¹ as well as Belgorod, Bryansk, Kursk, Mordovia, Tula, Vladimir and Volgograd regions within the Russian Federation.³⁷² Testimonies collected in the first half of 2026 confirmed previous findings, which identified several places of detention, including in Kamyshin (Volgograd region), Pakino (Vladimir region) and Stary Oskol (Belgorod region), as facilities where CRSV was perpetrated.³⁷³ ODIHR also received accounts from two survivors of being subjected to sexual violence in detention facilities in Kherson city.³⁷⁴
107. The acts of CRSV recounted to ODIHR were largely similar to those detailed in earlier Interim Reports.³⁷⁵ Witnesses and survivors provided accounts of several instances of rape,³⁷⁶ including with a foreign object.³⁷⁷ A female survivor from Kherson described how her rape was accompanied by beatings and insults of a sexual nature, and continued even when she fell unconscious.³⁷⁸ In another instance, a witness reported how a married couple detained together was raped consecutively in the same cell.³⁷⁹
108. Twelve witnesses and survivors reported the application of electric shocks to naked detainees or their use on breasts or genitalia.³⁸⁰ In several instances, these

370 CIHL Rule 93; AP I, arts. 75(2)(b) and 76(1); ICC Statute, arts. 7(1)(g), 8(2)(b)(xxii). See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 100; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 86; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 89.

371 Donetsk region: UKR.WS.693, UKR.WS.709, UKR.WS.724; Kherson region: UKR.WS.683, UKR.WS.732, UKR.WS.737; Kyiv region: UKR.WS.781; Luhansk region: UKR.WS.685, UKR.WS.756; Zaporizhzhia region: UKR.WS.701, UKR.WS.711, UKR.WS.785; and Crimea: UKR.WS.710.

372 Belgorod region: UKR.WS.700, UKR.WS.776; Bryansk region: UKR.WS.764; Kursk region: UKR.WS.701; Mordovia region: UKR.WS.774; Tula region: UKR.WS.764; Vladimir region: UKR.WS.700; and Volgograd region: UKR.WS.721, UKR.WS.779.

373 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700; UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.779. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 90, 93.

374 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683; UKR.WS.732.

375 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 96-99; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 80-85; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 90-94.

376 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 36; UKR.WS.693, para. 75; UKR.WS.700, para. 53; UKR.WS.701, paras. 27, 29; UKR.WS.732, para. 30; UKR.WS.756, para. 28; UKR.WS.781, para. 6.

377 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.710, paras. 35, 36; UKR.WS.732, para. 31; UKR.WS.785, para. 44.

378 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.732, paras. 30, 31.

379 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.701, paras. 27, 29.

380 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 10; UKR.WS.685, para. 23; UKR.WS.700, paras. 12, 18, 25; UKR.WS.709, para. 13; UKR.WS.721, para. 52; UKR.WS.753, paras. 10, 30; UKR.WS.758, para. 29; UKR.WS.764, paras. 44, 45, 78; UKR.WS.768, para. 35; UKR.WS.776, para. 124; UKR.WS.779, paras. 32, 93; UKR.WS.785, para. 44.

acts took place in the presence of others, such as during showers or inspections,³⁸¹ exploiting detainees' vulnerability in these moments. One male detainee recounted: *"In the morning, [inspectors] remembered me saying that I had haemorrhoids, and they put the shocker to my anus ... 'to treat me'. They put shockers on [my] legs, back, buttocks, 'til they smell[ed] burnt skin. They said, 'You're ill and we will cure you'."*³⁸² Notably, two survivors from Kamyshin (Volgograd region) confirmed earlier findings on the use of electric shocks in that facility.³⁸³ Detainees were, in addition, struck on the genitalia³⁸⁴ and had pepper spray applied to their genitals.³⁸⁵ In two instances, such targeting of reproductive organs led to long-term health complications.³⁸⁶

109. Eight witnesses and survivors reported threats of CRSV of varying levels of intensity. Detainees were threatened with rape,³⁸⁷ group rape,³⁸⁸ rape with a foreign object,³⁸⁹ forced sexual acts with other detainees³⁹⁰ and castration.³⁹¹ A male survivor recalled his experience in the Donskoy prison colony (Tula region), describing prison guards' *"ingenuity in torturing us,"* indicating how, among several other forms of (sexualized) torture, *"They would make you undress and try to imitate rape with a baton."*³⁹² One female survivor from Donetsk region recalled an interrogation in which the Russian authorities threatened to *"give [her] to the Kadyrovites"* to coerce a signed confession.³⁹³
110. As recorded in previous Interim Reports,³⁹⁴ witnesses and survivors described forced nudity,³⁹⁵ beatings while nude,³⁹⁶ electric shocks applied in the shower³⁹⁷ and being photographed naked, including by guards of the opposite sex.³⁹⁸ In one case, a survivor had to endure forced nudity during the winter in subzero temperature in Mordovia.³⁹⁹ Recalling acts perpetrated while he was naked, another survivor noted: *"We continued to crawl naked through the 'corridor of*

381 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.764, para. 45; UKR.WS.776, para. 124; UKR.WS.779, para. 93.

382 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 18.

383 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.779. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 90.

384 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 23, 36; UKR.WS.693, para. 174; UKR.WS.700, para. 19; UKR.WS.764, para. 45; UKR.WS.779, para. 96.

385 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.785, para. 43.

386 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, para. 21; UKR.WS.709, para. 36.

387 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685 paras. 23, 65; UKR.WS.737, para. 20; UKR.WS.758, para. 29; UKR.WS.768, paras. 20, 24; UKR.WS.785, para. 93.

388 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.724, para. 44.

389 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 12; UKR.WS.700, para. 12; UKR.WS.764, paras. 46, 48, 87; UKR.WS.768, para. 36.

390 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.685, para. 65.

391 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.701, para. 31; UKR.WS.711, para. 29.

392 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.764, para. 87.

393 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.724, para. 44.

394 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 62, 73; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 77; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 96, 97, [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 80, 83; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 93.

395 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.693, para. 25; UKR.WS.737, para. 20; UKR.WS.753, para. 30; UKR.WS.764, paras. 46, 48; UKR.WS.768, para. 36; UKR.WS.776, para. 124.

396 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.764, paras. 22, 56; UKR.WS.779, paras. 28, 32.

397 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, para. 25; UKR.WS.721, para. 52; UKR.WS.753, para. 30; UKR.WS.779, para. 93.

398 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.764, para. 54; UKR.WS.779, para. 29.

399 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.774, paras. 70, 72.

*shame’ (...) again the police, the guards [used] batons and shockers to beat you as you crawl through.*⁴⁰⁰

111. ODIHR also continued to document several other acts of CRSV intended to humiliate.⁴⁰¹ One male survivor, for instance, described an excessively intrusive body cavity search conducted by a male guard in the presence of two laughing female guards.⁴⁰² Two other survivors confirmed the practice, recalling that body cavity searches were done in the presence of guards of the opposite sex and accompanied by sexual harassment.⁴⁰³ Detainees were made to crawl around naked,⁴⁰⁴ urinated on,⁴⁰⁵ coerced into performing sexual acts,⁴⁰⁶ sexually harassed⁴⁰⁷ and subjected to verbal abuse of a sexual⁴⁰⁸ or homophobic nature.⁴⁰⁹
112. The Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine reported that, as of 31 May 2026, it had recorded 401 cases of CRSV perpetrated against 151 male and 250 female survivors. Among the recorded acts were rape, sexual assault, forced nudity, threats and attempted rape, and forcibly being made to witness the sexual assault of loved ones. Nine cases had been recorded during the six months to this date. The Security Service of Ukraine reported that over 4,020 Ukrainian POWs had experienced sexual violence in detention since February 2022.⁴¹⁰

G. ADMINISTRATION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND RELATED VIOLATIONS

Attempts to alter the status and character of the occupied territories

113. Under IHL, occupation is a transitional and temporary regime, with the occupying power not acquiring sovereignty over the occupied territory. During occupation, the local population cannot validly consent to changes affecting the status of the occupied territory or waive the protections afforded to it by IHL. Accordingly, the occupying power must refrain from bringing about irreversible changes fundamentally altering the status or character of the territory. The so-called ‘annexation’ or occupation or ‘integration’ of areas of Ukraine by force by the Russian Federation remains illegal, effects no change to their status as Ukrainian territory under international law, and cannot deprive civilians of the protections afforded to them under IHL.⁴¹¹ Nevertheless, ODIHR has continued to receive accounts regarding the coercion of residents in the Russian-occupied territories

400 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.764, para. 56.

401 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 98; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 91.

402 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.701, para. 28.

403 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.768, para. 36; UKR.WS.785, para. 93.

404 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.764, para. 56.

405 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.764, para. 87.

406 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.700, para. 53; UKR.WS.732, para. 28.

407 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.732, para. 17; UKR.WS.785, para. 93.

408 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.732, para. 32.

409 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.700, para. 42; UKR.WS.753, para. 45.

410 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

411 Hague Regulations (1907), art. 43; GC IV, art. 47.

of Ukraine to acquire Russian citizenship, and of the imposition of Russian educational curriculums and military-patriotic education for children. These measures indicate that the Russian authorities continue their efforts to alter the social and demographic character of the occupied territories, and compel declarations of allegiance.

Forced adoption of Russian citizenship

114. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR received accounts,⁴¹² including through 53 witness testimonies,⁴¹³ of sustained and systematic efforts by the Russian Federation to force residents of the occupied territories of Ukraine to acquire Russian citizenship.⁴¹⁴ Russian citizenship continued to be required for residents of occupied territories to access health care, employment, education and various social services, to be able to move freely, including to leave the occupied territories and the Russian Federation, as well as to maintain possession of their properties. Most witness testimonies concerned events occurring during the second half of 2025 and the first months of 2026. In addition to raising concerns regarding compliance with the law of belligerent occupation, the regulations, restrictions and intimidation applied against Ukrainian citizens may violate the prohibition against discrimination based on nationality⁴¹⁵ and may amount to compelling protected persons to swear or declare allegiance to the occupying power, contrary to IHL.⁴¹⁶ The imposition of Russian citizenship may further lead to forced conscription of persons under occupation, which is explicitly prohibited under IHL.⁴¹⁷
115. Sixteen witnesses reported that, in practice, Russian citizenship continued to be necessary for residents of Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine to access public healthcare services, including emergency treatment.⁴¹⁸ A witness from Kherson region told ODIHR: *“Medical assistance was not provided without mandatory*

412 Information provided to ODIHR by seven NGOs working on IHRL and IHL issues in the occupied territories; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

413 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685; UKR.WS.686; UKR.WS.689; UKR.WS.690; UKR.WS.691; UKR.WS.692; UKR.WS.694; UKR.WS.702; UKR.WS.703; UKR.WS.704; UKR.WS.705; UKR.WS.706; UKR.WS.707; UKR.WS.710; UKR.WS.711; UKR.WS.712; UKR.WS.713; UKR.WS.715; UKR.WS.716; UKR.WS.717; UKR.WS.718; UKR.WS.719; UKR.WS.720; UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.725; UKR.WS.730; UKR.WS.732; UKR.WS.733; UKR.WS.734; UKR.WS.735; UKR.WS.737; UKR.WS.739; UKR.WS.750; UKR.WS.752; UKR.WS.753; UKR.WS.755; UKR.WS.756; UKR.WS.757; UKR.WS.758; UKR.WS.761; UKR.WS.762; UKR.WS.763; UKR.WS.764; UKR.WS.766; UKR.WS.768; UKR.WS.769; UKR.WS.770; UKR.WS.772; UKR.WS.775; UKR.WS.778; UKR.WS.779; UKR.WS.785; UKR.WS.786.

414 See OSCE/ODIHR, [First Interim Report](#), para. 80; [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 57-60; [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 91-97; [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 98-95; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 80-87; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 103-108; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 88-95. [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 96-106.

415 Particularly as it relates to the provision of essential services, See GC IV, art. 27(3); AP I, arts. 69-70.

416 Hague Regulations (1907), art. 45. See also GC IV, art. 68(3).

417 GC IV, art. 51. The conscription of citizens of an occupied territory to the armed forces of the occupying authority constitutes a war crime, See GC IV, art. 147; ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(v). For more details, See Section IV.g.ii. Forced conscription and recruitment into the armed forces of the Russian Federation.

418 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 26; UKR.WS.690, para. 11; UKR.WS.691, para. 10; UKR.WS.692, para. 11; UKR.WS.702, para. 27; UKR.WS.707, para. 5; UKR.WS.715, para. 29; UKR.WS.721, para. 60; UKR.WS.730, para. 26; UKR.WS.732, para. 76; UKR.WS.734, paras. 7, 36; UKR.WS.735, para. 5; UKR.WS.737, para. 43; UKR.WS.750, paras. 24-25; UKR.WS.763, para. 16; UKR.WS.778, para. 33.

*medical insurance, and, to obtain this insurance, it was necessary to have a Russian passport.”*⁴¹⁹ Another witness from the same region reported: *“In 2025, my grandmother suffered a micro-stroke. I went to the hospital with a Ukrainian passport, and the guards didn’t let me enter the hospital. [...] They told me that I first had to get a Russian passport and medical insurance.”*⁴²⁰

116. ODIHR received accounts from 20 witnesses who indicated that Russian citizenship continued to be needed to leave the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, or to move freely between settlements and regions without being subjected to searches or harassment at checkpoints.⁴²¹ The same applied for driving licenses and car plates, which had to be changed from Ukrainian to Russian by the end of 2025, and for which Russian citizenship was required.⁴²²
117. Underlining the findings of previous ODIHR Interim Reports, seven witnesses interviewed by ODIHR reported that residents in the occupied territories had to re-register their properties under Russian law, for which Russian citizenship was also needed, otherwise the properties would be confiscated.⁴²³ A witness from Zaporizhzhia region told ODIHR: *“By the end of this year [2026], owners must return [to occupied territories], get a Russian passport and register their property under Russian law, or it will be nationalized and given to other[s].”*⁴²⁴ Similarly, three witnesses reported that Russian citizenship was needed for people to be able to pay their utility bills and access electricity, heating and water, and that the property may be “nationalized” if utility bills were not paid.⁴²⁵
118. According to seven witnesses, and in line with previous ODIHR findings, Russian citizenship was also required to retain or obtain employment in the public or private sectors, while, in some cases, when people were able to work without a Russian passport, they were paid significantly less.⁴²⁶ Witnesses also reported that Russian citizenship continued to be required for access to various services and social benefits,⁴²⁷ including humanitarian aid⁴²⁸ and access to education,⁴²⁹ as well as to receive pensions administered by the Russian authorities, often critical for elderly residents unable to access their Ukrainian pensions.⁴³⁰

419 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.686, para. 26.

420 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.735, para. 51.

421 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, paras. 20, 73; UKR.WS.691, paras. 11, 39; UKR.WS.692, para. 11; UKR.WS.704, para. 46; UKR.WS.705, para. 31; UKR.WS.706, para. 42; UKR.WS.711, para. 39; UKR.WS.715, para. 36; UKR.WS.717, paras. 30, 63; UKR.WS.721, para. 9; UKR.WS.732, para. 76; UKR.WS.733, para. 30; UKR.WS.737, para. 43; UKR.WS.757, paras. 28-29; UKR.WS.763, paras. 16, 70-71; UKR.WS.768, paras. 22, 45, 52; UKR.WS.778, para. 31; UKR.WS.786, para. 68.

422 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.711, para. 71; UKR.WS.725, para. 45; UKR.WS.786, paras. 29, 53.

423 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.703, para. 37; UKR.WS.711, para. 72; UKR.WS.713, para. 18; UKR.WS.720, para. 29; UKR.WS.725, para. 45; UKR.WS.737, paras. 48, 51; UKR.WS.761, para. 60; UKR.WS.786, para. 29.

424 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.761, para. 60.

425 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.720, para. 29; UKR.WS.733, para. 31; UKR.WS.737, para. 43.

426 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 20; UKR.WS.692, para. 9; UKR.WS.705, para. 30; UKR.WS.716, para. 10; UKR.WS.737, paras. 48, 60; UKR.WS.772, para. 32; UKR.WS.786, paras. 16, 17, 18.

427 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.694, para. 18.

428 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.735, para. 49; UKR.WS.737, para. 47.

429 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.786, para. 11.

430 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.713, para. 38; UKR.WS.715, para. 23; UKR.WS.778, para. 33.

119. Four witnesses told ODIHR that residents without Russian passports who did not want to get Russian citizenship but wanted to stay in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine could apply for a residence permit for foreigners and retain access to certain public services without acquiring Russian citizenship.⁴³¹ However, a witness from Zaporizhzhia region who got such a residence permit was still facing difficulties crossing checkpoints.⁴³² Another witness from Luhansk region who applied for a residence permit and whose background check reportedly identified her as holding pro-Ukrainian views told ODIHR that she was detained for five months, deported to Georgia in May 2025 and given a 30-year ban on entering the Russian Federation.⁴³³

Grave and systematic changes related to education

120. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR continued to receive accounts,⁴³⁴ including through 19 witness testimonies,⁴³⁵ of grave and systematic changes related to the provision of education in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. Most witness testimonies concerned events occurring during the second half of 2025 and the first months of 2026. According to parents, former students and teachers interviewed by ODIHR, the curriculum of the Russian Federation had, by 2026, become firmly established across the occupied territories, while measures promoting the Russian military-patriotic education of children had further intensified, corroborating ODIHR's previous findings.⁴³⁶
121. Under IHL, an occupying power must respect both the laws in force in the occupied territory and existing educational institutions, unless absolutely prevented from doing so.⁴³⁷ It may assume responsibility for children's education only where local institutions are inadequate or unable to function and, where possible, must rely on persons of the same nationality, language and religion as the children.⁴³⁸ An occupying power must further refrain from raising any obstacle to the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights, and the education of children

431 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.715, paras. 31-33; UKR.WS.720, para. 30; UKR.WS.737, paras. 47-48; UKR.WS.768, para. 45.

432 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.768, para. 45.

433 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.715, paras. 31-33, 36-39, 41.

434 Information provided to ODIHR by five NGOs working, among other IHRL and IHL issues, on education of children in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. See also OSCE Moscow Mechanism, Report on Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Criminal Law related to Militarization and Indoctrination of Ukrainian Children by the Russian Federation, [ODIHR.GAI/34/26/Corr.1](#), 9 July 2026.

435 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686; UKR.WS.687; UKR.WS.689; UKR.WS.694; UKR.WS.704; UKR.WS.705; UKR.WS.706; UKR.WS.715; UKR.WS.717; UKR.WS.718; UKR.WS.725; UKR.WS.730; UKR.WS.737; UKR.WS.754; UKR.WS.756; UKR.WS.757; UKR.WS.772; UKR.WS.778; UKR.WS.786.

436 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 83-86; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 88-96; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 109-114; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 96-107; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 107-119.

437 Hague Regulations (1907), art. 43. See further GC IV, art. 64, which allows for derogation from local legislation only for security reasons or where such legislation is an obstacle to the application of IHL, or where it is "essential" to "maintain the orderly government in the territory".

438 GC IV, art. 50(3). See also CRC, art. 29(1)(c); Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on the 'Right of the Child to Education in Emergency Situations', [CRC/C/49/3 \(2008\)](#), 19 September 2008, para. 83.

separated from their parents must, insofar possible, be entrusted to persons of a similar cultural tradition as their parents with a view to preventing political or ideological indoctrination designed to detach children from their national and cultural environment.⁴³⁹ Moreover, under IHL, “it is forbidden to compel the inhabitants of occupied territory to swear allegiance to the hostile Power”.⁴⁴⁰ Yet, the widespread replacement of the Ukrainian curriculum with that of the Russian Federation, along with the introduction of Russian military-patriotic education for school-aged children, appears to violate these principles, fundamentally alter the character of the occupied territory and are difficult to reconcile with the occupying power’s obligations under IHL to preserve, as far as possible, the existing legal, educational and cultural institutions.

122. Consistent with previous reports, witnesses interviewed by ODIHR during the first half of 2026 described the changes imposed by the Russian administration on the education of children in the occupied territories of Ukraine, where the Ukrainian curriculum was fully replaced with that of the Russian Federation.⁴⁴¹ According to witnesses, Russian textbooks were introduced, which replaced the Ukrainian ones. Until the end of 2025, Ukrainian language and literature were offered only as an optional subject at some schools and remained mostly unavailable.⁴⁴² However, as of December 2025, the Russian authorities adopted legislation which officially removed the possibility for children in the occupied territories to study the Ukrainian language in primary, basic and secondary education.⁴⁴³
123. Witnesses furthermore reported that children’s attendance at Russian-curriculum schools was mandatory, and parents received visits by the FSB or were threatened with fines and deprivation of parental rights if they did not comply.⁴⁴⁴ In one case, a parent from Zaporizhzhia region told ODIHR how he was visited at home by FSB officers in October 2024 and was asked why his daughter did not attend the Russian school. He was detained for a day, interrogated and tortured with electric shocks, after which he had to send his daughter to the school.⁴⁴⁵

439 GC IV, art. 24. See also ICRC, Commentary to GC IV (2025), art. 24, para. 2092.

440 Hague Regulations (1907), art. 45.

441 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, paras. 57, 59; UKR.WS.687, para. 3; UKR.WS.689, para. 39; UKR.WS.704, para. 5; UKR.WS.706, para. 20; UKR.WS.717, paras. 49–51; UKR.WS.718, para. 6; UKR.WS.730, para. 40; UKR.WS.754, para. 25; UKR.WS.757, para. 50.

442 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.717, paras. 51, 55; UKR.WS.737, para. 54; UKR.WS.757, para. 52; UKR.WS.786, para. 14.

443 [Приказ Министерства просвещения Российской Федерации от 08.10.2025 № 729 “О внесении изменений в некоторые приказы Министерства просвещения Российской Федерации, касающиеся федеральных образовательных программ начального общего образования, основного общего образования и среднего общего образования”](#) (Зарегистрирован 03.12.2025 № 84436) [Order of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation of 08.10.2025 No 729 “On Amendments to Certain Orders of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation Concerning Federal Educational Programs of Primary General Education, Basic General Education and Secondary General Education” (Registered on 03.12.2025 No 84436)], 4 December 2025, in Russian.

444 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 56; UKR.WS.717, paras. 9, 57; UKR.WS.757, para. 49; UKR.WS.772, para. 16; UKR.WS.778, para. 30. See also UKR.WS.704, para. 17; UKR.WS.730, para. 19; UKR.WS.737, para. 49.

445 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.717, paras. 11, 18, 49. See also: UKR.WS.730, para. 19.

124. Four witnesses confirmed previous reports that, in the early stages of the occupation, some teachers agreed to cooperate with the Russian authorities, as they had no alternative means of supporting their families, while others were coerced into teaching, and some left the occupied territories altogether.⁴⁴⁶ In one case from Zaporizhzhia region, a teacher who refused to teach the Russian curriculum was detained for a week, after which she agreed to cooperate.⁴⁴⁷
125. ODIHR received accounts from four witnesses who reported that the Russian anthem was played in schools before classes started, at some locations every Monday, while at others every day, and students' attendance was mandatory.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, witnesses told ODIHR how students were taught a compulsory class called 'conversations about important things' (*разговоры о важном*) meant to instil Russian patriotism, confirming previous findings.⁴⁴⁹
126. Three witnesses recounted that students continued receiving militarized education at school, including instruction in handling rifles, throwing grenades and conducting trench assaults.⁴⁵⁰ Three further witnesses shared that Russian soldiers, veterans of the so-called 'Special Military Operation' (SVO), visited schools and held lectures about the war to encourage children to serve in the Russian armed forces, confirming the findings from ODIHR's Eighth Interim Report.⁴⁵¹ Witnesses also reported that many cadet classes had opened throughout the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, where students could be enrolled from as early as first grade, as happened in September 2025 with a witnesses' acquaintance from Crimea. At these cadet classes, students wore military style uniforms and had "*many Russian history classes and training on how to assemble an AK-47 once a week*".⁴⁵² Witnesses informed ODIHR that regular students were encouraged to enter military schools after finishing the 9th grade⁴⁵³ and to enlist in the Russian armed forces once aged 18.⁴⁵⁴
127. In line with the findings of previous Interim Reports, witnesses told ODIHR that students continued to be encouraged to join Russian military-patriotic youth organizations, such as the Youth Army (*Юнармия*), where children wore military style uniforms and underwent basic military training, and the Movement of the First (*Движение первых*), where children engaged in activities presented as humanitarian support for war veterans and orphans, and made camouflage

446 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.717, para. 53; UKR.WS.725, paras. 7, 14, 18, 22; UKR.WS.730, para. 42; UKR.WS.737, paras. 49, 54.

447 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.717, para. 53.

448 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 58; UKR.WS.706, para. 21; UKR.WS.717, paras. 53; UKR.WS.737, para. 54.

449 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.704, para. 25; UKR.WS.706, para. 20; UKR.WS.757, para. 54; UKR.WS.786, para. 71.

450 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 58; UKR.WS.689, paras. 50-51; UKR.WS.717, paras. 51.

451 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.689, para. 50; UKR.WS.706, para. 20; UKR.WS.772, para. 13.

452 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, paras. 25-26. See also UKR.WS.706, para. 25.

453 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.730, para. 43; UKR.WS.725, para. 47.

454 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.757, para. 54.

nets and trench candles for the Russian military.⁴⁵⁵ A witness from Crimea noted that, in 2025: “Many school children joined [these organizations] in order to have better grades in classes and to have some benefits to enter university.”⁴⁵⁶ Witnesses also reported to ODIHR that, in 2025, students were offered attendance at recreational camps in Crimea and in the Russian Federation, where Russian patriotic classes and activities were organized. To encourage them to go, teachers would reportedly give better grades to students who attended these camps, confirming earlier findings.⁴⁵⁷

128. Lastly, witnesses explained that a military-patriotic component had also been introduced at universities, with students being visited by veterans of the so-called SVO and having to make camouflage nets for the frontline or organize activities in support of the Russian armed forces, confirming the findings of ODIHR’s Eighth Interim Report. For the first time, ODIHR received reports that universities also ran extracurricular training for drone operators, with students being encouraged to enlist in the Russian armed forces after graduation, especially in drone units.⁴⁵⁸

Forced conscription and recruitment into the armed forces of the Russian Federation

129. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR continued to receive accounts,⁴⁵⁹ including through 24 witness testimonies,⁴⁶⁰ of the forced conscription and recruitment of Ukrainian civilians into the Russian armed forces.⁴⁶¹ Most witness testimonies concerned events occurring during the second half of 2025 and the first months of 2026.
130. Witnesses reported that, as of 1 January 2026, the Russian authorities had introduced a year-long conscription campaign, replacing the previous spring and autumn campaigns and thereby increasing the risk that Ukrainian men living in the occupied territories would be called up for military service in the Russian armed forces.⁴⁶² Electronic conscription notices were reportedly introduced in the autumn of 2025 to complement their paper counterparts, making it more

455 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, para. 27; UKR.WS.706, paras. 17, 22, 23, 24; UKR.WS.725, paras. 47; UKR.WS.754, para. 25.

456 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.706, para. 22.

457 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.694, para. 20; UKR.WS.704, para. 27; UKR.WS.705, para. 29; UKR.WS.706, paras. 18-19; UKR.WS.717, para. 53. See also UKR.WS.686, para. 60.

458 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.706, paras. 12, 14, 19; UKR.WS.756, paras. 27, 35.

459 Information provided to ODIHR by six NGOs working on human rights and humanitarian law issues in the occupied territories; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

460 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, UKR.WS.696, UKR.WS.697, UKR.WS.700, UKR.WS.702, UKR.WS.704, UKR.WS.705, UKR.WS.706, UKR.WS.711, UKR.WS.715, UKR.WS.717, UKR.WS.721, UKR.WS.723, UKR.WS.724, UKR.WS.725, UKR.WS.730, UKR.WS.737, UKR.WS.757, UKR.WS.772, UKR.WS.774, UKR.WS.776, UKR.WS.778, UKR.WS.779, UKR.WS.786.

461 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 64-68; [Third Interim Report](#), para. 95; [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 78; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 97-104; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 115-120; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 108-115; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 120-130.

462 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, paras. 11, 15, 23. See also UKR.WS.706, para. 28.

difficult for civilians in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine to evade conscription.⁴⁶³

131. Under IHL, it is prohibited to compel inhabitants of an occupied territory to swear allegiance to the occupying power⁴⁶⁴ or to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces, including by exerting pressure or conducting propaganda aimed at securing voluntary enlistment.⁴⁶⁵ The conscription of residents under occupation into the occupying power's armed forces constitutes a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and may amount to a war crime.⁴⁶⁶
132. Six witnesses reported cases of the forced conscription of Ukrainian civilians from the occupied territories into the Russian armed forces in 2025 and 2026.⁴⁶⁷ A witness from Crimea told ODIHR: *"At the age of 18, they [young boys] get a notice for regular military service of 12 months. Exception is granted if a person is studying at university; however, the notice will be sent to the person after graduation."*⁴⁶⁸ Another witness from Crimea further stated: *"I know that about 80 per cent of people my age [18-19] received such conscription notices and did the military service."*⁴⁶⁹ Witnesses reported that conscripts were usually not sent near the front line; instead they would serve in their respective regions in the Russian-occupied territories, in the Russian Federation or at the border of Russia with Ukraine.⁴⁷⁰ However, as explained by one of the witnesses: *"There are active hostilities at these locations due to military bases, and Ukraine attacks them",*⁴⁷¹ thereby exposing conscripts to the risks associated with ongoing hostilities.
133. The two witnesses from Crimea also reported that, during their military service, conscripts were coerced to enter into contracts for military service with the Russian armed forces and take part in hostilities, including by being deprived of food unless they sign, or even having a contract signed on their behalf without their knowledge.⁴⁷² In addition to pressure on conscripts, a witness from Kherson region said that in 2025, the Russian authorities were targeting vulnerable people such as unemployed people and those with drinking issues: *"They were beaten and were given one week to obtain a Russian passport, after which they were forced to sign contracts with the Russian army."*⁴⁷³ Moreover, a witness from Donetsk region reported that some private companies had a certain quota of people they had to send to the military for service in the Russian armed forces.⁴⁷⁴

463 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, para. 15; UKR.WS.706, para. 31.

464 Hague Regulations (1907), art. 45.

465 GC IV, art. 51.

466 GC IV, art. 147; ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(v).

467 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, paras. 8-13, 19; UKR.WS.706, paras. 27, 33; UKR.WS.724, para. 8; UKR.WS.730, para. 63; UKR.WS.737, para. 60; UKR.WS.757, para. 41. See also UKR.WS.686, para. 52.

468 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.706, para. 27.

469 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.705, para. 19.

470 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, paras. 17-18; UKR.WS.706, para. 32.

471 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.706, para. 32.

472 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, paras. 19-20; UKR.WS.706, para. 32.

473 ODIHR Witness Interview 772, para. 23. See also UKR.WS.757, para. 41.

474 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.786, paras. 62-63.

134. Five witnesses from Crimea, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions reported to ODIHR examples of Ukrainians being killed and injured after signing contracts for service with the Russian armed forces.⁴⁷⁵ According to the Ukrainian authorities, as of June 2026, at least 3,155 soldiers from units of the Russian armed forces based in occupied Crimea had been killed, of whom 1,571 are believed to have been Ukrainian citizens.⁴⁷⁶
135. Five witnesses told ODIHR that it was mandatory for young men and boys to register for military service with the conscription offices.⁴⁷⁷ Without registering with the conscription offices, men faced issues when moving between checkpoints or border crossings.⁴⁷⁸ A witness from Crimea reported to ODIHR: *“Usually, registration takes place at the age of 16”,* adding that the *“[conscription office] sends a list of eligible male students to the school. Then, the school sends them to the conscription office”*.⁴⁷⁹ Two witnesses further noted that men were required to register with the conscription offices after acquiring Russian citizenship,⁴⁸⁰ while, in one case, a person was conscripted right after acquiring Russian citizenship in mid-2025.⁴⁸¹
136. ODIHR received accounts from six witnesses concerning attempts to recruit Ukrainian POWs and civilian detainees in 2025 and 2026 by offering release in exchange for entering into contracts for military service.⁴⁸² Witnesses stated that, in some detention facilities, Russian military recruiters visited monthly. Additionally, three witnesses informed ODIHR about the widespread promotion of military service under contract in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine,⁴⁸³ while two witnesses shared information on cases when civilians signed contracts for service with the Russian armed forces due to personal financial difficulties.⁴⁸⁴ According to Russian legislative amendments from May 2026, men who sign a

475 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, para. 21; UKR.WS.706, paras. 15, 34-35; UKR.WS.710, para. 64; UKR.WS.715, para. 88; UKR.WS.737, para. 61. See also UKR.WS.786, para. 20.

476 [Оперативна інформація щодо ситуації на тимчасово окупованій території Автономної Республіки Крим та міста Севастополя станом на 23 червня 2026 року](#) [Operational information on the situation in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as of June 23, 2026], Представництво Президента України в Автономній Республіці Крим [Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea], 23 June 2026, in Ukrainian.

477 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.702, para. 11; UKR.WS.705, para. 8; UKR.WS.706, paras. 27-28, UKR.WS.757, para. 42; UKR.WS.786, para. 20.

478 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.702, para. 26.

479 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.706, paras. 27-28.

480 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.737, para. 50; UKR.WS.786, para. 24.

481 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.697, para. 40. Given the widespread reports of forced imposition of Russian citizenship on residents of the occupied territories, instances in which Ukrainian men were compelled to acquire Russian citizenship and then subsequently conscripted should be regarded as constituting forced conscription. For more details, See Section IV.g.i.(a). Forced adoption of Russian citizenship.

482 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.696, paras. 30-32; UKR.WS.697, paras. 24-26; UKR.WS.710, para. 64; UKR.WS.774, paras. 104-105; UKR.WS.776, para. 77; UKR.WS.779, para. 90.

483 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, para. 24; UKR.WS.706, para. 35; UKR.WS.715, para. 89.

484 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.757, para. 41; UKR.WS.786, para. 62.

contract with the Russian armed forces can receive cancellation of debts of up to 10 million roubles (around 118,000 EUR).⁴⁸⁵

137. Finally, four witnesses also recounted how men in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine were trying to avoid military service by reducing their public exposure as far as possible, including by not accepting calls, not residing at their official home addresses or by leaving the occupied territories altogether.⁴⁸⁶ A witness from Crimea noted how the Russian authorities reportedly prosecuted people for evading the draft, as a result of which a friend of the witness received a one-year suspended sentence and an updated conscription notice.⁴⁸⁷ According to the Ukrainian authorities, since 24 February 2022, 340 criminal cases had been initiated against residents of occupied Crimea under Article 328 of the Russian Criminal Code (“Evasion of Military Service”).⁴⁸⁸

Suppression of dissent

138. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR continued to receive accounts,⁴⁸⁹ including through 21 witness testimonies,⁴⁹⁰ on the use of measures aimed at suppressing peaceful dissent by civilians in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. These measures included arbitrary detentions,⁴⁹¹ as well as various criminal charges, deportations, home searches, questioning by police, being forced to make video apologies or administrative or criminal provisions prohibiting the “discrediting the Russian armed forces”.⁴⁹²

485 Федеральный закон от 25.05.2026 № 156-ФЗ “О внесении изменения в статью 2-1 Федерального закона “Об особенностях исполнения обязательств по кредитным договорам (договорам займа) лицами, призванными на военную службу по мобилизации в Вооруженные Силы Российской Федерации, лицами, принимающими участие в специальной военной операции, а также членами их семей и о внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации” [Federal Law of 25.05.2026 No 156-FZ “On Amendments to Article 2-1 of the Federal Law ‘On the Specifics of the Fulfilment of Obligations under Credit Agreements (Loan Agreements) by Persons Called Up for Military Service on Mobilization in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Persons Taking Part in a Special Military Operation, as well as Members of Their Families and on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation’”], 25 May 2026, in Russian.

486 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 50; UKR.WS.705, paras. 8-13; UKR.WS.706, paras. 29-30; UKR.WS.757, para. 42.

487 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.706, para. 30.

488 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

489 Information provided to ODIHR by eight NGOs working on IHRL and IHL issues in the occupied territories; Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

490 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686; UKR.WS.689; UKR.WS.695; UKR.WS.702; UKR.WS.704; UKR.WS.705; UKR.WS.706; UKR.WS.707; UKR.WS.708; UKR.WS.710; UKR.WS.711; UKR.WS.716; UKR.WS.717; UKR.WS.719; UKR.WS.733; UKR.WS.734; UKR.WS.735; UKR.WS.750; UKR.WS.774; UKR.WS.785; UKR.WS.786.

491 For more details, See Section IV.b. Arbitrary deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearances in areas under the control of the Russian authorities.

492 See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Interim Report](#), paras. 106-111; [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 146-150; [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 42, 84-89; [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 43, 86-88, 96-100; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 34; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 41, 121-124; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 116-121; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 131-137.

139. A witness from Zaporizhzhia region told ODIHR that her parents were detained after their pro-Ukrainian views were publicly exposed on a pro-Russian Telegram channel,⁴⁹³ while another witness recounted how his sister was arrested in July 2025 and charged with “public calls to terrorism” for her pro-Ukrainian Telegram posts.⁴⁹⁴
140. Moreover, one witness told ODIHR how his elderly father was detained for putting a Ukrainian flag in front of his residence in May 2024,⁴⁹⁵ after which he was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment in February 2025 for allegedly financing the Ukrainian armed forces. Witnesses reported that civilians received extremely lengthy sentences for donations to the Ukrainian armed forces, characterized by the Russian authorities as “financing terrorism”, with one witness reporting that her relative was arrested and sentenced in October 2025 to 9 years imprisonment for a single transfer of 400 UAH (around 8 EUR).⁴⁹⁶
141. Witnesses further noted that civilians in the Russian-occupied territories were reportedly charged with “discrediting the Russian armed forces” as a means of suppressing their pro-Ukrainian views.⁴⁹⁷ According to the Ukrainian authorities, 1,752 such cases were filed in Crimean courts under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation between April 2022 and June 2026, with 120 new cases since the publication of ODIHR’s Eighth Interim Report. According to the Ukrainian authorities and witnesses interviewed by ODIHR, these provisions were predominantly applied against Ukrainian citizens who expressed anti-war or pro-Ukrainian opinions, who listened to Ukrainian songs or who used Ukrainian symbols.
142. A witness from Crimea told ODIHR that people who publicly expressed their pro-Ukrainian or anti-war views, including on social media, were detained or forced to make public video ‘apologies’, while some left the occupied territories to avoid imprisonment.⁴⁹⁸ Witnesses also reported cases of university students who expressed pro-Ukrainian views being threatened with expulsion from university or being reported to the FSB.⁴⁹⁹ Further examples include people in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine being fined up to 300,000 roubles (around 3,500 EUR) for playing Ukrainian songs at night clubs or at weddings,⁵⁰⁰ or being visited at home and questioned by police for painting a fence in the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag.⁵⁰¹

493 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.708, paras. 12-13.

494 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.734, para. 9.

495 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.707, paras. 7-8.

496 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.716, para. 19. See also UKR.WS.719, para. 53.

497 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.706, para. 7. See also UKR.WS.786, para. 34.

498 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.706, paras. 6, 9, 11.

499 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, para. 33; UKR.WS.706, para. 8.

500 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.705, para. 33; UKR.WS.706, para. 36.

501 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.706, para. 36.

143. Additionally, witnesses said that speaking Ukrainian resulted in difficulties when crossing a checkpoint, being questioned by police, or having one's vehicle searched.⁵⁰² As a result, witnesses reported that civilians in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, shortly after the beginning of the occupation, stopped openly sharing their pro-Ukrainian views or displaying Ukrainian symbols, afraid of repercussions from the Russian authorities.⁵⁰³

H. TRIALS OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS AND POWS BY THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

144. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR received 25 witness testimonies related to unfair prosecutions by the Russian authorities in conflict-related criminal trials of Ukrainian civilians and POWs,⁵⁰⁴ all of which confirm earlier findings.⁵⁰⁵ The Ukrainian authorities reported that 3,120 Ukrainians (1,403 POWs and 1,717 civilians) were being prosecuted in Russia on war crimes, murder and terrorism, amongst other charges, as of June 2026.⁵⁰⁶
145. Three witnesses provided accounts about Ukrainian POWs charged with and/or on trial for offences such as terrorism, murder, the use of prohibited means and methods of warfare and the intentional destruction or damage to property.⁵⁰⁷ In each instance, however, POWs were effectively prosecuted solely for their participation in hostilities, in contravention of IHL.⁵⁰⁸ The overwhelming majority of testimonies collected described unfair and unlawful prosecutions of Ukrainian civilians who were charged with offences related to terrorism,⁵⁰⁹ state treason,⁵¹⁰ coup d'état,⁵¹¹ storing of weapons or explosives,⁵¹² espionage,⁵¹³ murder⁵¹⁴ and sabotage.⁵¹⁵ Trials took place both within the Russian Federation, especially in

502 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.686, para. 40.

503 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 40; UKR.WS.689, para. 35; UKR.WS.702, para. 24; UKR.WS.705, para. 33; UKR.WS.706, para. 6.

504 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685; UKR.WS.690; UKR.WS.692; UKR.WS.695, UKR.WS.707; UKR.WS.709; UKR.WS.711; UKR.WS.717; UKR.WS.719; UKR.WS.720; UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.722; UKR.WS.723; UKR.WS.724; UKR.WS.725; UKR.WS.733; UKR.WS.739; UKR.WS.741; UKR.WS.760; UKR.WS.761; UKR.WS.769; UKR.WS.773; UKR.WS.775; UKR.WS.777; UKR.WS.785.

505 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 122-130; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 138-144.

506 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

507 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 69; UKR.WS.773, paras. 45, 52; UKR.WS.777.

508 GC III, art. 99; AP I, art. 43(2); ICRC, Commentary on the GC III (2020), para. 20. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 126; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 139.

509 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.692, para. 40; UKR.WS.695, para. 24; UKR.WS.709, para. 34; UKR.WS.720, para. 10; UKR.WS.722, para. 16; UKR.WS.724, para. 5; UKR.WS.725, para. 34; UKR.WS.733, para. 10; UKR.WS.739, para. 8; UKR.WS.741, para. 44; UKR.WS.761, para. 40.

510 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.707, para. 28; UKR.WS.724, para. 5.

511 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.709, para. 34.

512 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.711, para. 66; UKR.WS.717, para. 17; UKR.WS.720, para. 10; UKR.WS.741, para. 44; UKR.WS.785, para. 64.

513 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.717, para. 29; UKR.WS.723, para. 5; UKR.WS.760, para. 12; UKR.WS.769; UKR.WS.775.

514 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.722, para.16.

515 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.769.

Rostov-on-Don,⁵¹⁶ and in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, especially in Sevastopol and Donetsk region.⁵¹⁷

146. In line with previous findings,⁵¹⁸ none of the cases reported to ODIHR ended in acquittals. Where, at the time of the interview, judgments had been issued or sentences had been completed, prison terms ranged from 14 to 27 years.⁵¹⁹ In line with earlier findings, nine witnesses reported reliance on violence to extract confessions, in particular, the use of electric shocks and beatings,⁵²⁰ as well as other methods of coercion, such as threatening to hurt or detain family members.⁵²¹ IHL prohibits the use of coercion to secure admissions of guilt.⁵²² Wilfully depriving protected persons or POWs of this fundamental fair trial guarantee may constitute a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and amount to a war crime.⁵²³
147. Almost all testimonies raised the subject of legal aid or its quality. Thirteen witnesses discussed how state-appointed lawyers were assigned to their or their relatives' conflict-related cases,⁵²⁴ while one witness mentioned the complete absence of legal aid.⁵²⁵ However, in line with earlier findings, in cases where state-appointed lawyers were provided, witnesses expressed grievances about the quality of legal aid, describing instances where lawyers maintained a passive rather than a proactive approach to the case or did not give relatives information about the proceedings.⁵²⁶
148. Confirming the findings of previous Interim Reports,⁵²⁷ witnesses considered the assistance provided by state-appointed lawyers ineffective.⁵²⁸ A human rights defender reported how legal professionals “*do not act to defend individuals, but limit themselves to formalities*”.⁵²⁹ ODIHR was, in addition, informed that Russian lawyers appeared apprehensive about working on war-related cases⁵³⁰ due to

516 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 53; UKR.WS.709, para. 32; UKR.WS.741, para. 29; UKR.WS.739, para. 13.

517 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.733, para. 20; UKR.WS.777, para. 33. Notably, IHL stipulates that trials of civilians from occupied territories must be held within those territories, based on the penal laws applicable at the time of occupation. Therefore, prosecuting Ukrainian civilians in Russian-occupied territories under the Russian Criminal Code is in violation of IHL. See GC IV, arts. 64, 66. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 123; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 139.

518 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 129.

519 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.707, para. 29; UKR.WS.777, para. 34.

520 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.695, para. 54; UKR.WS.722, para. 29; UKR.WS.723, para. 35; UKR.WS.739, para. 28; UKR.WS.741, para. 14; UKR.WS.777, para. 15; UKR.WS.785, para. 42.

521 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.719, para. 47; UKR.WS.724, paras. 45, 46.

522 GC III, arts. 17, 99; GC IV, art. 31; AP I, art. 75(4)(f).

523 ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(vi).

524 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.692, para. 32; UKR.WS.707, para. 26; UKR.WS.711, para. 63; UKR.WS.720, para. 22; UKR.WS.722, para. 14; UKR.WS.723, para. 14; UKR.WS.724, para. 31; UKR.WS.725, para. 35; UKR.WS.733, para. 18; UKR.WS.739, para. 9; UKR.WS.741, para. 29; UKR.WS.760, para. 15; UKR.WS.777, para. 17.

525 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.717, para. 29. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 127.

526 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.692, para. 34; UKR.WS.711, para. 63; UKR.WS.720, para. 22; UKR.WS.723, para. 14; UKR.WS.724, para. 31; UKR.WS.733, para. 18; UKR.WS.777, para. 17.

527 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 127; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 141.

528 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 71; UKR.WS.690, para. 16.

529 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.690, para. 16.

530 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.690, para. 16; UKR.WS.725, para. 35; UKR.WS.739, para. 25.

pressure exerted on them.⁵³¹ The witness further stated that lawyers working on such cases were monitored by the FSB and provided information to the intelligence services.⁵³²

149. Additionally, witnesses informed ODIHR of the barriers to appointing independent lawyers. One witness recalled that the FSB told them that, if they were to hire such a lawyer, access to the accused would be obstructed for legal counsel, rendering it impossible to visit or to send packages.⁵³³ Five witnesses told ODIHR that they were able to receive assistance from independent lawyers working on a pro bono basis; in these cases, the witnesses were generally satisfied with the assistance provided.⁵³⁴
150. Witnesses reported that lawyers faced challenges in performing even their basic tasks. For instance, lawyers, especially independent ones, were either not allowed to see their client⁵³⁵ or could have very brief interactions right before a scheduled hearing.⁵³⁶ In one case, the lawyer was only able to meet their client after the court had already issued its judgment.⁵³⁷ Testimonies also described the limited success rates of appeals,⁵³⁸ with two witnesses saying that lawyers, in principle, could not affect the outcomes of the cases.⁵³⁹ IHL guarantees POWs and civilians the right to a fair and regular trial.⁵⁴⁰ Wilfully depriving either a POW or a protected person of these rights constitutes a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and may amount to a war crime.⁵⁴¹
151. New information relayed to ODIHR during the first half of 2026 indicated that people avoided appealing their convictions due to threats against them. A relative of a POW convicted for allegedly committing war crimes recalled: *“They are afraid they would be moved to stricter facilities, face new beatings, new torture and new harassment, and they do not want that. When some of the guys appealed, their sentences were increased.”*⁵⁴² One witness told ODIHR that their civilian relative had been threatened with execution should they appeal their conviction for espionage.⁵⁴³

531 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.722, para. 34.

532 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.690, paras. 15, 40.

533 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.711, para. 63.

534 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, para. 70; UKR.WS.695, paras. 32, 42; UKR.WS.739, para. 10; UKR.WS.741, para. 29; UKR.WS.761, para. 40.

535 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.692, para. 32; UKR.WS.733, para. 19.

536 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.777, para. 50.

537 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.741, paras. 38, 39.

538 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.690, para. 33.

539 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.722, para. 33; UKR.WS.777, para. 31.

540 CIHL Rule 100; GC III, art. 99; GC IV, art. 72.

541 ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(vi).

542 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.777, para. 19.

543 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.760, para. 16.

I. COERCED COOPERATION WITH THE OCCUPYING POWER AND ACCUSATIONS OF COLLABORATION

152. During the first half of 2026, ODIHR received 27 testimonies which discussed coerced cooperation with the Russian authorities or accusations of collaboration by the Ukrainian authorities,⁵⁴⁴ all of which confirm previous findings.⁵⁴⁵ New information shared with ODIHR concerned efforts made by the Russian authorities to coerce children into cooperation in the occupied territories of Ukraine.⁵⁴⁶ In line with earlier findings, witnesses outlined how residents of the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine cooperated with the Russian authorities in policing,⁵⁴⁷ running administrative facilities⁵⁴⁸ and organizing so-called referendums.⁵⁴⁹ Professionals in the fields of education and medicine who continued working and providing essential services to the population under occupation, were nevertheless labelled as collaborators.⁵⁵⁰
153. ODIHR continued to receive accounts of ways the Russian authorities exerted pressure to coerce cooperation.⁵⁵¹ Witnesses reported that detained Ukrainian civilians and POWs were made to cooperate with the detention facility administrations.⁵⁵² A witness told ODIHR that the daughter of a detainee was contacted with an offer to collaborate in exchange for more favourable treatment for the detained relative.⁵⁵³ Several detainees were coerced to sign documents stipulating their express willingness to collaborate.⁵⁵⁴ Individuals who refused to cooperate or those who did not want to continue working under the direction of the Russian authorities were summoned for “conversations”⁵⁵⁵ and subjected to threats (including against their children),⁵⁵⁶ arbitrary detention,⁵⁵⁷ house searches⁵⁵⁸ and torture.⁵⁵⁹

544 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683; UKR.WS.685; UKR.WS.687; UKR.WS.694; UKR.WS.696; UKR.WS.700; UKR.WS.701; UKR.WS.710; UKR.WS.711; UKR.WS.715; UKR.WS.717; UKR.WS.721; UKR.WS.725; UKR.WS.732; UKR.WS.737; UKR.WS.741; UKR.WS.769; UKR.WS.770; UKR.WS.771; UKR.WS.772; UKR.WS.774; UKR.WS.776; UKR.WS.778; UKR.WS.779; UKR.WS.780; UKR.WS.781; UKR.WS.785.

545 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 38-40; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 105-113; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 124-131; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 131-134; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 148-152.

546 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.687.

547 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, paras. 24, 30; UKR.WS.696, para. 36; UKR.WS.741, para. 12; UKR.WS.785, paras. 64, 70.

548 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.737, para. 65.

549 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.769, para. 20.

550 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.687, paras. 44, 45; UKR.WS.770, para. 24.

551 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 109, 110; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 127; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 132; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 149.

552 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.685, paras. 32, 60; UKR.WS.700, paras. 65, 66; UKR.WS.721, para. 60; UKR.WS.774, para. 104; UKR.WS.776, paras. 29, 30; UKR.WS.785, para. 121. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 127.

553 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.715, para. 55.

554 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.683, para. 15; UKR.WS.701, para. 38.

555 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.725, paras. 9, 14.

556 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.772, para. 12.

557 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.710, paras. 5, 12; UKR.WS.711, para. 15; UKR.WS.717, para. 53.

558 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.711, para. 15.

559 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.711, para. 15.

154. One witness, in addition, recounted how children — specifically those whose family members had been involved in the Anti-Terrorist Operation — were encouraged or even incentivized to provide denunciations.⁵⁶⁰ The information sought reportedly related to, for instance, people who held positions perceived as pro-Ukrainian⁵⁶¹ or those who had left their property unattended in occupied areas.⁵⁶²
155. Consistent with the findings of earlier Interim Reports,⁵⁶³ ODIHR was informed about unfair prosecutions by the Ukrainian authorities under collaboration charges. Two witnesses spoke of prosecutions initiated for violations of national security laws where the underlying acts reportedly related to the distribution of goods essential to the survival of the civilian population in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.⁵⁶⁴ Lawyers, in addition, outlined apparent violations of fair trial rights in such cases, with judges visibly prejudiced against the defendant, key defence witnesses not summoned to testify in court, or, in one case, the defendant ill-treated at an unofficial detention site prior to his arrest.⁵⁶⁵ Witnesses reported both judges and defence lawyers working on collaboration cases feeling “pressured” due to their work.⁵⁶⁶
156. As an occupying power may, under IHL, require civilians to carry out work necessary to meet the needs of the local population,⁵⁶⁷ and given the extreme methods of coercion that the Russian authorities employ to secure cooperation, ODIHR reiterates its concern regarding the fairness of prosecuting individuals performing essential services, particularly where cooperation with the occupying authorities was compelled, driven by necessity or undertaken to avoid reprisals. Although collaboration with an occupying power may raise legitimate security concerns for the Ukrainian authorities, it remains essential that such prosecutions comply with fundamental fair trial guarantees and take into account conduct that may be permissible under IHL and the coercive environment in which it occurred.⁵⁶⁸

560 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.687, paras. 44, 47.

561 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.715, para. 12.

562 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.737, para. 53.

563 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 38, 39; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 122; [Sixth Interim Report](#), paras. 128; [Seventh Interim Report](#), paras. 133; [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 151.

564 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.771, paras. 10-13, 16, 17; UKR.WS.781, para. 11.

565 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.771, paras. 33, 34, 40.

566 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.771, para. 43; UKR.WS.781, para. 23.

567 GC IV, art. 51(2)-(3). This right to requisition work can be deemed a corollary to the obligation incumbent upon the occupying power to take “all the measures in his power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and civil life” for the population under its control. See Hague Regulations (1907), art. 43.

568 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 112; [Sixth Interim Report](#), para. 131; [Seventh Interim Report](#), para. 134; [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 152.

J. USE OF CHILDREN IN HOSTILITIES

157. Consistent with findings in the Eighth Interim Report,⁵⁶⁹ information collected by ODIHR, including through six witness testimonies,⁵⁷⁰ suggests that children have been used for intelligence gathering, sharing of military coordinates and/or engaging in espionage and sabotage activities.⁵⁷¹ Both IHL and IHRL prohibit the recruitment and use of children in hostilities, and such acts may constitute a war crime when children under the age of 15 are involved.⁵⁷²
158. Four witnesses reported to ODIHR that children in both Russian-occupied and government-controlled territories of Ukraine were recruited by the Russian Federation for intelligence gathering, espionage and sabotage.⁵⁷³ An 18 year-old witness, who lived in the Zaporizhzhia region from the time of its occupation in March 2022 until he left in December 2025, told ODIHR that the Russian authorities used teenagers for intelligence gathering in government-controlled territories of Ukraine and to inform on civilians with pro-Ukrainian positions in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. As explained by the witness, the Russian authorities would approach children on Telegram and attempt to recruit them through financial incentives.⁵⁷⁴ A witness from the occupied Kherson region further told ODIHR that children were used by the Russian authorities to collect information useful to the Russian armed forces.⁵⁷⁵
159. ODIHR also interviewed a lawyer representing children recruited via social media who had been financially induced into damaging critical infrastructure in government-controlled territories of Ukraine and, as a result, were charged with sabotage by Ukrainian prosecutors. The children were reportedly recruited on Telegram and were offered payment to carry out certain actions; first, to damage specific military equipment and, later, critical infrastructure. The person who recruited the children is alleged to be affiliated with the Russian security structures.⁵⁷⁶
160. In addition to cases when children were used for espionage and sabotage, the Ukrainian authorities also reported on the case of a 17-year-old girl who was detained on suspicion of poisoning a Ukrainian military serviceman, causing his death. The child was allegedly recruited on Telegram in exchange for financial remuneration by a person presumed to be affiliated with Russian security

569 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), paras. 153-157.

570 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.684; UKR.WS.686; UKR.WS.687; UKR.WS.694; UKR.WS.757; UKR.WS.780.

571 CRC, art. 1 indicates that “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”.

572 ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(b)(xxvi); AP I, art. 77(2); CRC, art. 38(2). See also Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

573 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.686, para. 53; UKR.WS.687, paras. 44, 47; UKR.WS.757, para. 43; UKR.WS.780, paras. 4-6, 13-16, 25.

574 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.757, para. 43. See also UKR.WS.687, paras. 44, 47.

575 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.686, para. 53.

576 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.780, paras. 4-6, 13-16, 25.

structures. She was charged with premeditated murder and may also face charges of high treason committed under martial law.⁵⁷⁷

161. According to the Ukrainian authorities,⁵⁷⁸ as of June 2026, 269 children had been suspected of being recruited to commit criminal offences against the national security of Ukraine and other activities in favour of the Russian Federation since February 2022, 14 of whom had been identified since December 2025.
162. ODIHR, in addition, received allegations that the Ukrainian authorities used information shared by children residing in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine on Russian military positions. A witness from Kherson region told ODIHR how her underage grandson was involved in sharing information about Russian troop movements with the Ukrainian authorities. After neighbours reported them to the Russian authorities, the 16-year-old was taken in for questioning by local police and subjected to torture, including electric shocks, leaving burn marks on his hand.⁵⁷⁹ A witness from the Kharkiv region told ODIHR that, in addition to children in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine sharing information with the Ukrainian armed forces, the Ukrainian authorities had also used the voluntary support of children in the government-controlled territories of Ukraine for help with logistical tasks and to provide general support to the armed forces.⁵⁸⁰
163. ODIHR reiterates that children should not be involved in activities related to hostilities and urges the authorities to refrain from involving children in any activities related to hostilities.

⁵⁷⁷ SSU Zhytomyr, Facebook [post](#), 5 June 2026.

⁵⁷⁸ Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

⁵⁷⁹ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.694, paras. 9-10.

⁵⁸⁰ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.684, para. 114. See also OSCE/ODIHR, [Eighth Interim Report](#), para. 154.

Updated Interim Recommendations

V

ODIHR calls on the Russian Federation and Ukraine as parties to the conflict to:

- Respect and ensure respect for IHL and IHRL in territories under their control;
- Take all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimize incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects;
- Cease the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated areas;
- Ensure that any attacks on dual use objects, including energy infrastructure, are conducted in an IHL-compliant manner;
- Ensure that military personnel operating short-range drones are adequately trained in the applicable rules of IHL, including on the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack;
- Ensure unimpeded access to the International Committee of the Red Cross and other relevant organizations to all places where POWs are detained;
- Refrain from prosecuting POWs for the mere fact of having directly participated in hostilities;
- Ensure that all POWs are held in places of internment that fully comply with the Third Geneva Convention (Geneva Convention III relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 12 August 1949); ensure they are treated with the full respect afforded to them under the Convention; and investigate and prosecute all cases of serious violations of IHL in relation to their treatment;
- Ensure that independent and impartial investigations are conducted into all allegations of serious violations of IHL and IHRL, including those committed by armed forces under their control, and that alleged perpetrators are brought to justice in independent, impartial and effective proceedings that comply with international fair trial standards;
- Respect, protect and ensure the full enjoyment of fair trial guarantees for all individuals charged with crimes in relation to the armed conflict; and
- End any involvement of children in activities that relate to hostilities, including collecting and transmitting information, sharing coordinates of military positions or engaging in sabotage activities.

ODIHR calls on the Russian Federation to:

- Cease systematic attacks on energy infrastructure critical to the civilian population of Ukraine;
- End short-range drone attacks against civilians and civilian objects, including those with special protection under IHL, such as medical facilities and personnel, as well as humanitarian workers and assets;
- Ensure the basic needs of civilians in occupied territories are met; in particular, access to adequate food and safe water must be restored;
- Cease summary executions, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence against POWs and civilian detainees;
- Stop the unlawful and arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Ukrainian civilians, including through the misuse of POW internment regimes, release all such individuals and ensure access to effective remedies;
- Halt the incommunicado detention and/or enforced disappearances of individuals and immediately provide information on the whereabouts of detainees to their families and legal representatives;
- Ensure that legal safeguards for people deprived of their liberty are fully respected in accordance with IHRL and IHL;
- Cease the forcible transfer or deportation of Ukrainian civilians to the Russian Federation and third countries;
- Ensure adequate conditions of internment for POWs and civilian detainees, including by granting regular, unimpeded and confidential access for independent monitors to all places (both in the occupied territory of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation) where protected people are interned or detained;
- Respect the main tenets of the law of occupation and refrain from introducing irreversible changes to the status of Ukrainian territories under military occupation by imposing Russian political, legal, administrative, educational and social systems;
- Immediately cease pressuring or coercing the civilian population to change their nationality and ensure that access to rights and services in occupied territories are not conditional upon the acquisition of Russian citizenship, including access to employment, pensions, social benefits, medical care, humanitarian aid, education, parental rights, property rights and freedom of movement;

- Immediately cease the practice of compelling Ukrainian nationals from occupied areas of Ukraine, including those with Russian citizenship, to serve in the armed forces of the Russian Federation;
- Immediately cease pressuring or coercing parents to send their children to Russian curriculum schools, stop imposing Russian military-patriotic education for school-aged children and allow unrestricted access to Ukrainian online education for students in the occupied territories;
- Immediately stop subjecting civilians in occupied territories, including Crimean Tatars, to prosecution for peacefully expressing their views and opinions; and
- Ensure the safe access and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need in accordance with IHL.

ODIHR calls on Ukraine to:

- Strengthen existing support to the most affected populations, including internally displaced and the most vulnerable individuals, such as the elderly and people with limited mobility;
- Amend its criminal legislation regarding ‘collaborative activity’ to dispel any legal uncertainty; provide prosecutorial guidelines that incorporate considerations of duress and lawful requisitions for work; and ensure that any criminal proceedings against alleged collaborators adhere to all fair trial rights;
- Amend Law No. 4779 regulating the mandatory and forced evacuation of children from zones of active or possible hostilities to prioritize and safeguard the best interests of the child, including by preventing family separation, while effectively protecting civilians exposed to the risks of ongoing hostilities;
- Adopt the bylaws necessary to implement the law on interim reparations for survivors of CRSV and enable survivors to apply;
- Duly implement the procedures and mechanisms prescribed by the Law “On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Deprived of Personal Liberty as a Result of the Armed Aggression against Ukraine and Members of Their Families” in order to enable the individuals concerned to fully realize their rights;
- Provide medical, psychological, social and other support to all civilians who have been released following arbitrary detention by the Russian Federation (and their families), especially those who have been subjected to CRSV and other types of torture; and

- Further facilitate communication with the families of civilians detained by the Russian Federation authorities.

ODIHR calls on OSCE participating States to:

- Ensure that rehabilitation, medical, psychological, social and other support is available to all Ukrainian former detainees on their territory, emphasizing help for the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and other types of torture;
- Enhance cross-state cooperation between domestic law enforcement and criminal justice authorities, ensuring the effective investigation and prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and torture committed against arbitrarily detained civilians and prisoners of war; and
- Support and fund civil society in providing humanitarian assistance, documenting violations of IHL and IHRL, and/or contributing to related accountability efforts.

