Ukraine Monitoring Initiative Methodology

ODIHR developed its human rights monitoring methodology, in line with the Manual on Human Rights Monitoring by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),[1] for the purposes of, and circumstances faced by, the Ukraine Monitoring Initiative.

ODIHR adopts a trauma-informed approach. Monitors conducting interviews are highly skilled and experienced interviewers. In addition, prior to deployment they all undertake ODIHR's training on trauma-informed interviewing, ensuring that all interactions with witnesses and survivors of human rights violations remain guided by the principles of "do no harm" and informed consent, and that they are aware of the risks of re-traumatization. In doing so, ODIHR's monitors create a safe space where the interviewee can share an uninterrupted account of their experience, as they recall it.

Guided by these principles, ODIHR does not interview children. It also seeks, to the extent possible, to avoid interviewing individuals who have previously provided their testimony to other organizations. ODIHR has sought to identify and reach out to the most relevant interviewees. Hence, prior to deploying monitors, ODIHR conducts scoping visits, speaking to IDPs and refugees who have sought safety outside Ukraine, humanitarian workers, human rights defenders, CSO activists and representatives of relevant authorities on the ground. The findings of these visits enable ODIHR to offer survivors and witnesses referrals to support service providers as needed. ODIHR has made the details of its training available in the form of an e-learning course[2] aimed at human rights defenders in civil society who are conducting human rights monitoring. The course is available in English, Russian and Ukrainian.

Prior to, during and after deployment, monitors and members of the broader monitoring team can rely on the support of a psychologist.

Before deploying monitors in Ukraine, ODIHR conducts detailed Security Risk Assessments for all relevant locations to ensure the safety of interviewees and the ODIHR monitoring team. Deployments strictly adhere to the security protocol developed as part of the Security Risk Assessments. All monitors deployed to Ukraine have undergone appropriate Hostile Environments Awareness Training (HEAT).

ODIHR's monitoring is not limited to interviews. It collects information from various sources, including in-person interviews, desk research, and open-source investigation techniques to verify digital evidence. The latter includes obtaining publicly available text, images, audio and video content published on various platforms (e.g., websites, social media, video streaming platforms) by Ukrainian, Russian and other international sources, as well as retrieving data from open Applications Programming Interface and deep web information sources. The

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[1] Manual on Human Rights Monitoring, Revised Edition, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 01 January 2011, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/manual-human-rights-monitoring-revised-edition>.

[2] See e-learning course on Trauma-Informed Interviewing: Skills and Techniques for monitors, 13 January 2023, <https://freedomlab.io/courses/trauma-informed-interviewing-skills-and-techniques-for-monitors/>.

verification of information is performed with the use of open-source analysis tools and is tailored to the purpose of ODIHR's monitoring.

In addition, ODIHR collects information from relevant intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society in various forms, including by holding in-person meetings in Ukraine and other countries, or at events organized by the OSCE and ODIHR. ODIHR has also sought information from the authorities of Ukraine and the Russian Federation in particular, and their respective National Human Rights Institutions. Representatives of both countries have sent information to ODIHR that is referenced in the reports.

With respect to allegations regarding potential violations of the rules on the conduct of hostilities by the parties to the conflict, ODIHR collects information through extensive desk research, including using open-source investigation techniques to verify digital evidence. The facts and circumstances of attacks that happen in the Ukraine-controlled territories are based on verified information, which is then corroborated by several independent sources that are assessed as credible and reliable. These include official statements by local and national officials, law enforcement agencies, emergency services, independent media, official records, reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations, as well as private posts on social media, and other relevant sources. As happens with attacks that take place in the Ukraine-controlled territories, efforts are made to verify and analyse attacks that occur in the territories under occupation. However, due to lack of access to those areas and limited available sources of information, ODIHR is not always able to verify every case independently. As such, information is obtained from reports of the de facto authorities in territories that are under occupation by the Russian Federation, as well as from media outlets of those de facto authorities, Russian state media and communications from the Russian Federation. This is then corroborated by available digital evidence from other open sources, including social media.

In the course of the UMI's monitoring and reporting activities, ODIHR has made an effort to co-ordinate its work and exchange information and its experience with other entities involved in monitoring and documenting the situation, including intergovernmental organizations, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, as well as local and international non-governmental organizations.