



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

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13 December 2024



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of international humanitarian law and international
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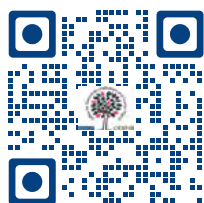
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Executive Summary

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 military attack in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. This is the Sixth 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 five previous Interim Reports.
2. The Report includes a short overview of developments in the context of the armed conflict from 1 June to 30 November 2024, while the main body of the report focuses on specific issues reported to ODIHR by 94 survivors and witnesses during three monitoring deployments conducted by ODIHR in the second half of 2024. The report is also informed by the UMI's remote monitoring, using open-source investigation techniques and information supplied by institutions of the Russian Federation and Ukraine and civil society organizations, among other actors, which is referenced throughout the report.
3. ODIHR's monitoring of the conduct of hostilities showed that, from 1 June to 30 November, the number of large-scale coordinated attacks by the Russian Federation on Ukrainian cities and towns increased, including attacks targeting civilian infrastructure. The intensification of hostilities in frontline areas, especially in the region of Donetsk, contributed to a surge in civilian casualties and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. Overall, continued use by the Russian Federation forces of explosive weapons with wide area effects in densely populated areas further showed the continuing disregard for the principles of distinction and proportionality.
4. On a much smaller scale, Ukraine also engaged in shelling populated areas of Russian Federation occupied territories. Attacks by Ukrainian forces in Russia's border regions also led to civilian casualties in some instances, while Ukraine's August incursion into the Russian Federation region of Kursk led to the displacement of a large number of civilians.
5. During the period, due to escalating military operations, shifting front lines, destruction of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and continued attacks affecting humanitarian operations, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate.
6. ODIHR continued to interview survivors and witnesses, who reported arbitrary detentions, including enforced disappearances of civilians in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. This confirms patterns previously documented by ODIHR, including the categories of persons targeted, the lack of lawful grounds for detention, as well as the consistent denial of applicable procedural guarantees. During the second half of 2024, the Russian authorities appeared to increasingly prosecute and convict civilians on trumped-up charges after their prolonged arbitrary detention.

7. All 14 civilian survivors of arbitrary detention by the Russian authorities interviewed by ODIHR reported having been subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment. The methods, locations and aims of torture were similar to those previously reported to ODIHR, with survivors reporting torture being inflicted to elicit information, extract confessions, force cooperation with the Russian occupation authorities, or to punish or humiliate.
8. ODIHR interviewed 29 Ukrainian former prisoners of war (POWs), all of whom reported being tortured extensively during their internment, including those released in the second half of 2024, further supporting ODIHR's conclusion that the torture of civilians and POWs by the Russian Federation is both widespread and systematic. During the period, there was an increase in material disseminated online depicting the torture or execution of Ukrainian POWs, suggesting that the practice may have increased.
9. ODIHR found further evidence of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) perpetrated by the Russian authorities, including through interviews with 32 men and women direct survivors of CRSV, who reported rape, rape of a family member and electrocution of the genitals, among other crimes.
10. Further information indicated continuing efforts by the Russian authorities to alter the status and character of the occupied territories, in violation of IHL. This included making residents' ability to live and work in the occupied territories dependent on the acquisition of Russian citizenship, as well as the continued imposition of the Russian Federation curriculum in schools and of military-patriotic education for school-aged children.
11. Witnesses described to ODIHR efforts by the Russian occupation authorities to compel residents to 'cooperate' in ways that violate IHL, while at the same time risking unfair prosecution by the Ukrainian authorities under vague 'collaboration' laws.
12. 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 and to take steps to ensure accountability.

Introduction

II

13. More than 1000 days after the military attack initiated by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, the situation in Ukraine continues to be marked by widespread suffering of the civilian population and serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL).
14. The OSCE human dimension commitments emphasize that it is of vital importance that participating States adhere to and implement their binding IHL and IHRL obligations under international treaties,¹ including the Geneva Conventions.²
15. 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 24 February 2022 and began monitoring and documenting reported violations, focusing on the most pressing issues affecting the lives of civilians and prisoners of war (POWs). This has included monitoring the use of means and methods of warfare prohibited under IHL; instances of wilful killings, torture and other inhumane and degrading treatment, and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV); the unlawful displacement of civilians, including children; the denial of humanitarian aid; the situation of prisoners of war; and the situation in occupied territories and violations of the rules of occupation under IHL.
16. ODIHR's analysis of the situation in Ukraine and alleged IHL and IHRL violations is informed by relevant legal provisions applicable to the armed conflict in Ukraine. ODIHR reiterates that the so-called 'annexation' of territories under occupation by the Russian Federation remains illegal, and such territories remain Ukrainian territory under international law. More information about the legal framework is available on ODIHR's website.⁴
17. The methodology employed by the UMI was both informed by and developed for the circumstances on the ground in Ukraine. ODIHR adopts a trauma-informed approach, guided by the 'do no harm' principle, informed consent,

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

² See for example [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 [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 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, for additional detail on ODIHR's mandate.

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

and with consideration to the risks of re-traumatization. More information about the methodology is available on ODIHR's website.⁵

18. This Sixth Interim Report builds upon the findings and recommendations of the five 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), and July 2024 (Fifth 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.
19. The report begins with an overview of conflict-related issues and important developments which occurred in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine between 1 June 2024 and 30 November 2024, and then turns to specific issues which were detailed during in-person interviews with survivors and witnesses conducted by ODIHR in the second half of 2024, giving prominence to their voices.⁷ ODIHR conducted three monitoring deployments to Ukraine during this period. During these visits, ODIHR interviewed 94 witnesses during a total of 89 interviews, speaking with survivors of, or witnesses to alleged violations of IHL and IHRL (44 women and 50 men).⁸ ODIHR interviewees came from various regions of Ukraine, including Chernihiv, Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia and Zhytomyr.
20. ODIHR wishes to convey its deepest gratitude to each witness and survivor who provided their testimony. Additionally, ODIHR received information from the authorities of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, relevant intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), which is referenced throughout the report.

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

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

7 In this respect, certain information included in Chapter IV may relate to events that occurred prior to 1 June 2024.

8 These included ten interviews with two people interviewed together. As of 30 November 2024, the UMI has carried out 22 missions in and outside Ukraine, during which it has conducted 491 interviews with a total of 516 survivors of, or witnesses to alleged violations of IHL and IHRL (265 women and 251 men).

Overview of the Situation between 1 June and 30 November 2024

III

A. CONTINUED VIOLATIONS OF IHL DURING THE CONDUCT OF HOSTILITIES

21. ODIHR continued to monitor reported violations of IHL committed during hostilities, in particular the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas and direct attacks against civilians and civilian objects both in Government-controlled and Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, as well as in the Russian Federation. The period between 1 June and 30 November 2024 saw a continued increase in large-scale coordinated attacks on major Ukrainian cities and towns, as well as repeated targeting of civilian infrastructure, including objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as critical energy infrastructure and grain terminals. The intensification of hostilities in frontline areas, especially in the region of Donetsk following advances by Russian troops, contributed to a surge in civilian casualties, triggered new evacuations and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. In the Russian Federation, the incursion of Ukrainian armed forces into Kursk region also led to the displacement of large numbers of civilians.⁹
22. ODIHR's monitoring activities, including open-source analysis used to verify digital evidence,¹⁰ show that, during the reporting period, Russian armed forces continued to routinely use explosive weapons with wide area effects in their attacks on densely populated areas of Ukraine,¹¹ leading to numerous civilian casualties as well as extensive damage and the destruction of civilian infrastructure.¹² Many of these attacks,¹³ which rely on weaponry that cannot be limited to targeting a specific military objective, raise concerns about respect for the principle of proportionality and for the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks under IHL.¹⁴

⁹ For more details, see Section III.b, *The humanitarian situation*.

¹⁰ Since 24 February 2022, ODIHR has been collecting information on potential violations of the rules on the conduct of hostilities by the parties to the conflict. As ODIHR is not able to conduct detailed assessments of violations of IHL norms in relation to individual attacks, its findings are based on certain patterns observed in the course of its monitoring activities, which allow it to make provisional conclusions regarding the degree of compliance with particular IHL norms by the warring parties. For more information see [ODIHR's methodology](#).

¹¹ These are weapons designed for the open battlefield and, given their inherent inaccuracy, their use in densely populated areas is very likely to cause indiscriminate and disproportionate harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

¹² According to updated figures made available by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights (UN OHCHR), about 98 per cent of civilian deaths and injuries in Ukraine recorded between 1 June and 31 October 2024 were caused by the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including shelling from heavy artillery and multi-launch rocket systems, missiles and air strikes. See [Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 June to 30 August 2024](#), UN OHCHR, 1 October 2024, para. 71.; [Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict. September 2024 update](#), UN OHCHR, 11 October 2024, p. 2; [Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict. October 2024 update](#), UN OHCHR, 15 November 2024, p. 2.

¹³ For instance, on 3 July, eight civilians were killed and 55 were injured in a strike on Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk region). On 4 September, eight civilians were killed and more than 60 were injured in a missile and loitering munitions strike on a residential neighborhood of the city of Lviv (Lviv region). See Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. On the night of 18 November, 11 civilians were killed and 89 were injured in a missile attack on a multi-storey residential building in Sumy (Sumy region). See State Emergency Service of Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 18 November, in Ukrainian.

¹⁴ ICRC Customary IHL (CIHL) Rules 1, 7, 11, 12 and 14; AP I, Arts. 51(4) and 51(5)(b).

23. On 8 July, Russian Federation armed forces launched a large-scale, coordinated missile attack on several Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv, Dnipro and Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk region), using more than 40 missiles of different types.¹⁵ The attack killed at least 43 civilians (including five children) and injured 147 more (including seven children), according to the local authorities and UN OHCHR,¹⁶ and damaged dozens of civilian objects, including four medical facilities.¹⁷ Most of the civilian casualties occurred in the capital Kyiv, following a strike on a multi-storey residential building in the Shevchenkivskyi district.¹⁸
24. The Okhmatdyt Hospital in Kyiv, the country's largest children's hospital, was also damaged during the attack, resulting in the death of two civilians and injuries to at least 18, according to the Ukrainian authorities and the UN OHCHR.¹⁹ Several departments of the hospital, including the Centre for Paediatric Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery, were significantly damaged, while the Toxicology and Traumatology departments were completely destroyed.²⁰ The attack led to the emergency evacuation of hundreds of children receiving treatment.²¹ ODIHR interviewed three survivors of the attack, including medical staff and one first-responder,²² and examined original videos and photographs of the aftermath of the strike, as well as other open-source information, including footage of the missile hitting the hospital. Based on its analysis, ODIHR has reasonable grounds to believe that the hospital was damaged in a direct hit by a Russian missile, most likely a Kh-101, and not by debris falling as a result of an air defence intercept or a direct hit by one of the air defence missiles, contrary to the Russian Federation's claims.²³ According to eyewitnesses, there were no military personnel at the hospital before or at the time of the strike.²⁴ ODIHR could not identify any military targets in the close vicinity of the hospital. A doctor from Okhmatdyt and survivor of the attack told ODIHR, *"I do not know why the hospital was attacked. ... It may be best not to think of such things. I can quote my nurse who said to me: 'Before when I was*

15 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram [post](#), 8 July 2024, in Ukrainian.

16 [Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict. July 2024 update](#), UN OHCHR, 9 August 2024, p. 2; See also Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

17 These include the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital, medical clinics "Adonis" and "Isida" located in the city of Kyiv, and a private medical clinic in Kryvyi Rih. See Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

18 Following this strike, 13 civilians were killed and 20 injured. See [Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 June to 30 August 2024](#), UN OHCHR, 1 October 2024, para. 85.

19 *Ibid.*, para. 86. According to the Ukrainian authorities, two civilians were killed and 34 were injured (including nine children). See Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

20 *Ibid.*, para. 86; [Russia's July 8 Attack on a Children's Hospital in Ukraine](#), Human Rights Watch, 11 July 2024. See also ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.415, paras. 6, 60, 75.

21 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.415, para. 70. See also [Russia's July 8 Attack on a Children's Hospital in Ukraine](#), Human Rights Watch, 11 July 2024.

22 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.415; UKR.WS.422; UKR.WS.428; UKR.WS.479.

23 Russian Ministry of Defence, Telegram [post](#), 8 July 2024, in Russian. See also Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Telegram [post](#), 9 July 2024, in Russian.

24 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.415, paras. 84, 88, 90; UKR.WS.422, para. 16; UKR.WS.428, para. 15.

afraid of anything I thought the biggest hospital would be the safest place in all of Ukraine and now I don't know where to go.”²⁵

25. The reporting period also saw a significant increase in conflict-related violence close to the front line. The situation was particularly dangerous for civilians in the region of Donetsk due to advances by Russian armed forces,²⁶ with reports of daily attacks, including mass casualty incidents,²⁷ and attacks killing and injuring media and humanitarian workers.²⁸ In Sumy region, the Russian Federation intensified shelling and airstrikes in August and September in an apparent response to the incursion by Ukrainian forces into the neighbouring Kursk region of the Russian Federation. The attacks killed and injured civilians and damaged civilian objects, including functional medical facilities.²⁹ In Kharkiv region, repeated aerial strikes and shelling continued following the start of the Russian offensive in May,³⁰ taking a heavy toll on the civilian population.³¹ During October, the city of Kharkiv was subjected to almost daily aerial bombardment, which, according to local authorities, damaged about 380 buildings in the city.³² Starting from late September, the city of Zaporizhzhia was frequently subjected to aerial bombardments, in particular by glide bombs,³³ which resulted in mass casualties.³⁴ Numerous attacks from short-

25 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.428, para. 14.

26 According to the UN OHCHR, at least 200 civilians were killed and 671 injured in the Government-controlled part of Donetsk region between 1 June and 31 August 2024, which is a 129 per cent increase from the previous three-month period. See [Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 June to 30 August 2024](#), UN OHCHR, 1 October 2024, para. 72.

27 For example, on 9 August, Russian armed forces launched a missile strike on a supermarket in Konstantynivka, killing 14 civilians (including two children) and injuring 43. See Office of the Prosecutor General, Telegram [post](#), 9 August 2024, in Ukrainian.

28 For instance, on 24 August, one media worker was killed, and four others were injured in a missile strike on the Sapphire hotel in Kramatorsk. See Donetsk regional administration, Telegram [post](#), 25 August 2024, in Ukrainian; Donetsk regional Prosecutor's Office, Telegram [post](#), 25 August 2024, in Ukrainian. For more information, see Section III.b. *The humanitarian situation*.

29 For instance, on 19 and 28 September, two medical facilities were hit in the city of Sumy, killing 13 civilians and injuring 35. Medical workers and police officers were among the killed and injured, see State Emergency Service of Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 19 September 2024, in Ukrainian; Ihor Kalchenko, Telegram [post](#), 28 September 2024, in Ukrainian; Ihor Klymenko, Telegram [post](#), 28 September 2024, in Ukrainian.

30 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.406 paras. 6-18. For more information, see OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 24.

31 For instance, on 30 August and 1 September, the city of Kharkiv suffered two major attacks with guided aerial bombs and ballistic missiles launched at its populated areas. As a result, at least six civilians were killed (including a medical worker) and more than 90 were injured, see Oleh Syniehubov, Telegram [post](#), 30 August 2024, in Ukrainian; Oleh Syniehubov, Telegram [post](#), 1 September 2024. On 8 October, two civilians were killed and more than 30 were injured in another attack with guided bombs on Kharkiv, see Oleh Syniehubov, Telegram [post](#), 8 October 2024. On 8 November, 25 civilians were injured in a strike on a multi-storey residential building in Kharkiv, see Oleh Syniehubov, Telegram [post](#), 8 November 2024.

32 Ihor Terekhov, Telegram [post](#), 2 November 2024, in Ukrainian.

33 A glide bomb is an autonomous weapon equipped with flight control surfaces that give it a flatter, gliding flight path compared to a conventional bomb, allowing it to be launched from the air at long range. Glide bombs are very difficult to intercept for surface-to-air missiles because of their insignificant radar signatures and short flight time.

34 For instance, on 22 September, 21 civilians were injured (including a child) in the strike on the city centre, see Zaporizhzhia regional military administration, Telegram [post](#), 23 September 2024, in Ukrainian. On 7 November, 10 civilians were killed and 41 were injured in the attack that destroyed a multi-storey residential building and damaged the oncology hospital, see Ivan Fedorov, Telegram [post](#), 8 November 2024, in Ukrainian; Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram [post](#), 7 November 2024, in Ukrainian.

range, unmanned aerial vehicles causing civilian casualties were also reported in the south-eastern region of Kherson.³⁵

26. As noted in ODIHR's Fifth Interim Report, at the end of March 2024 the Russian Federation resumed its coordinated attacks on Ukraine's energy-related infrastructure.³⁶ The attacks continued well into this reporting period, with at least six major waves of attacks recorded between 1 June and 30 November.³⁷ These include the attack of 26 August, which was the largest attack since February 2022, during which Russian forces launched more than 100 missiles and about 100 loitering munitions.³⁸ Energy facilities were damaged in 15 regions of the country, including the Kyiv Hydroelectric Power Plant. The attack also killed seven civilians and injured 47 more (including two children), damaged homes and other civilian infrastructure, and caused power outages across the country, according to the Ukrainian authorities.³⁹ The latest campaign of attacks significantly reduced the country's power-generation capacity, prompting the Ukrainian authorities to impose even longer nationwide rolling blackouts; these were particularly pronounced during the hot summer months.⁴⁰ With a significant power deficit anticipated for the upcoming winter,⁴¹ access to essential services, including heating, is under immense threat for millions of civilians. The targeted destruction of Ukraine's energy production infrastructure, which is indispensable to the survival of the civilian population,⁴² prompts concerns that Russian forces, in conducting these attacks, are in violation of IHL, including the obligation to take precautions to minimize damage to civilian objects when targeting potential military objectives.⁴³

27. The reporting period was also marked by recurring series of missile and loitering munitions strikes on infrastructure in Odesa region, notably on its

35 According to the UN OHCHR, only in October, short-range drone attacks killed 17 civilians and injured 127 (including 2 children) in the Government-controlled part of Kherson region, see [Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict. October 2024 update](#), UN OHCHR, 15 November 2024, p. 2. See also [Russia is deliberately attacking civilians in southern Ukraine with drones, residents say](#), Reuters, 22 October 2024.

36 For more information, see OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 21.

37 Attacks were launched on 1, 20 and 22 June, 26 August, 17 and 28 November 2024 respectively.

38 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram [post](#), 26 August 2024, in Ukrainian.

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

40 [Attacks on Ukraine's Energy Infrastructure: Harm to the Civilian Population](#), UN OHCHR, September 2024, p. 9.

41 [Ukraine's Energy Security and the Coming winter](#), International Energy Agency, September 2024.

42 On 5 March and 24 June 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for senior Russian officials on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in connection with a 2022-2023 campaign of strikes against Ukraine's energy infrastructure. See [Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Sergei Ivanovich Kobylash and Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov](#), International Criminal Court, 5 March 2024; [Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Sergei Kuzhugotovych Shoigu and Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov](#), International Criminal Court, 25 June 2024. Similarly, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has concluded that Russian Federation attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure "critical for the transmission of electricity and the generation of heat constitutes a war crime and may amount to crimes against humanity". [Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine](#), 25 September 2023, paras. 40-44.

43 AP I, Arts. 54(2), 57(2)(a)(ii).

port facilities,⁴⁴ grain terminals and on foreign vessels docked in its ports. The attacks resumed in July, in an apparent Russian Federation campaign to disrupt Ukraine's grain exports after the harvest season.⁴⁵ According to the Ukrainian authorities, between October and early November, Russian forces carried out almost 60 attacks on the port infrastructure of southern Ukraine, which resulted in damage to, and the destruction of almost 300 port infrastructure facilities, 177 vehicles and 22 civilian vessels.⁴⁶ These attacks also caused civilian casualties, including port and ship employees.⁴⁷

28. Between September and November, Russian Federation armed forces initiated an unprecedented number of long-range, loitering munitions strikes at targets far from the frontline, including near-daily attacks on the capital, Kyiv. According to the Ukrainian armed forces, in October alone over 2,000 loitering munitions were launched at civilian and military objects,⁴⁸ including a large number of decoys or false targets⁴⁹ aimed at overwhelming Ukrainian air defences.⁵⁰ Although the majority of drones were intercepted by Ukrainian air defences, some inflicted civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects.⁵¹ The civilian population in cities across Ukraine experienced increasingly frequent air sirens, some of which lasted for hours,⁵² and lived under the constant threat of attacks.
29. Although on a much smaller scale, the Ukrainian armed forces also engaged in shelling populated areas in Russian Federation-occupied territories of Ukraine, resulting in civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects.⁵³ For instance,

- 44 Under certain conditions, maritime ports can qualify as military objectives if they are used to transport military supplies or for launching military operations, for instance. However, there is no information available supporting that the port infrastructure targeted offered an "effective contribution" to Ukraine's military action and, as such qualified as a military target.
- 45 Odesa's port facilities have been under particularly intense attack since the Russian Federation withdrew in July 2023 from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, an agreement designed to facilitate the safe export of grain from Ukraine. For more information, see OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim report](#), para. 23.
- 46 Oleksiy Kuleba, Telegram [post](#), 7 October 2024, in Ukrainian.
- 47 For instance, on 6 October, Russian forces hit the port in Odesa, damaging a Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged civilian vessel loaded with grain for export, see [Russian attack on Odesa damages civilian vessel](#), *The Kyiv Independent*, 7 October 2024. On 7 October, a Palau-flagged civilian ship was damaged and a Ukrainian employee of a cargo-handling company was killed and five foreign crew members were injured in Odesa port, see Oleh Kiper, Telegram [post](#), 7 October 2024, in Ukrainian. On 9 October, five civilians were killed and nine were injured and a Panama-flagged container ship was damaged in the port of Izmail, see Oleksiy Kuleba, Telegram [post](#), 9 October 2024, in Ukrainian.
- 48 General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Telegram [post](#), 1 November 2024.
- 49 Loitering munitions lacking explosive charges that are indistinguishable on radar from armed drones.
- 50 The Defence Intelligence of Ukraine, Telegram [post](#), 11 November 2024, in Ukrainian; See also [Operation False Target: How Russia plotted to mix a deadly new weapon among decoy drones in Ukraine](#), Associated Press, 16 November 2024; [Russia uses cheap decoy drones to overload Ukraine's air defense](#), *Ukrainian intelligence says*, *Kyiv Post*, 18 November 2024.
- 51 For instance, on 25 October, a residential building was hit in the Solomianskyi district of Kyiv, killing a child and injuring five other civilians, see Vitaly Klitschko, Telegram [post](#), 25 October 2024, in Ukrainian. On 29 October, six civilians were injured in another loitering munitions attack on a multi-story residential in the same district of the capital, see Kyiv City Military administration, Telegram [post](#), 29 October 2024, in Ukrainian. AP I, Art. 51(2).
- 52 See [An 8-hour Russian drone barrage keeps Kyiv on edge as the war in Ukraine nears 1,000 days](#), *Associated Press*, 7 November 2024; [Kyiv Under Nine-Hour Air Raid Alert as Russia Launches Massive Drone Attack on Ukraine](#), *United 24 Media*, 5 September 2024; [Longest air-raid warning issued in Khmelnytskyi Oblast since war began: Ukraine's Air Force downs 10 UAVs](#), *Ukrainska Pravda*, 28 October 2024.
- 53 Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

on 7 June, 22 people were killed, including one child, and 15 were injured in an attack on a residential area in Sadove (Kherson region), according to the Russian authorities.⁵⁴ On 23 June, four civilians were killed (including two children) and 150 were injured following the explosion of a missile equipped with cluster munitions over a beach near Sevastopol (Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Crimea)),⁵⁵ according to the Russian authorities.⁵⁶ On 13 August, two people were killed and 31 others were injured in the shelling of a bus in Lysychansk (Luhansk region), according to the Russian authorities.⁵⁷

30. Additionally, Ukrainian armed forces continued to shell border areas of the Russian Federation and launch loitering munitions strikes, including at objects in Russian regions far from government-controlled areas of Ukraine, including Nizhny Novgorod, Tver, Murmansk, Saratov and Krasnodar Krai. Most of the attacks targeted military airfields, bases and ammunition warehouses⁵⁸ but, in some instances, also resulted in civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects.⁵⁹ For instance, on 30 August, five civilians were killed and 37 civilians were injured, including six children, in an attack on the city of Belgorod, according to the local authorities.⁶⁰ Oil infrastructure, including oil refineries and fuel depots, also remained one of Ukraine's key targets during the reporting period.⁶¹ These attacks raise the potential for a violation of IHL, since targeting an object indispensable to the survival of the civilian population must be conducted according to the principles of proportionality and precaution.⁶²

54 Vladimir Saldo, Telegram [post](#), 7 June 2024, in Russian. UN OHCHR verified that at least 14 civilians (including one child) were killed and at least four were injured, see [Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict. June 2024 update](#), UN OHCHR, 8 July 2024, p. 2. "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.

55 As reported by the Russian Ministry of Defence, three missiles launched by Ukrainian armed forces that day were shot down by Russian air defence, while another "deviated from its flight trajectory with the warhead exploding in the air over the territory of the city as a result of the impact of air defence equipment", see Russian Ministry of Defence, Telegram [post](#), 23 June 2024, in Russian.

56 Mikhail Razvozhayev, Telegram [post](#), 23 June 2024, in Russian. UN OHCHR verified that at least three civilians were killed and scores were injured in the attack, see [Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict. June 2024 update](#), UN OHCHR, 8 July 2024, p. 2.

57 The Government of Luhansk People's Republic, Telegram [post](#), 13 August 2024, in Russian; The Government of Luhansk People's Republic, Telegram [post](#), 13 August 2024, in Russian. ODIHR has not yet been able to verify the reported numbers.

58 See [Satellite imagery confirms destruction of Shahed UAV storage site in Russia – Ukrainian Navy](#), *Ukrainska Pravda*, 23 June 2024; [Updated: SBU behind attacks on Russian oil refineries, military airfield, source says](#), *The Kyiv Independent*, 21 June 2024; [Ukraine strikes Russian airfields with homemade weapons in hopes of preventing devastating attacks at home](#), *The Kyiv Independent*, 29 August 2024; [Ukraine's strike on Russian arms depot destroyed up to 3 months' worth of ammunition, Estonian military intelligence head says](#), *The Kyiv Independent*, 20 September 2024.

59 Information provided to ODIHR by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation.

60 Vyacheslav Gladkov, Telegram [post](#), 30 August 2024, in Russian. ODIHR has not yet been able to verify the reported number of casualties from the Russian Federation in accordance with its [methodology](#).

61 See [Satellite image shows significant destruction of oil depot in southern Russia following Ukrainian drone strike](#), *The Kyiv Independent*, 22 June 2024; [Fires reported at 2 oil depots in Russia's Rostov Oblast, local media reports](#), *The Kyiv Independent*, 28 August 2024. For more information, see OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 26

62 AP I, Arts. 54(2), 57(2)(a)(ii).

31. On 6 August, Ukrainian armed forces launched an offensive into Kursk region, advancing over ten kilometres into the Russian Federation and capturing dozens of settlements, including the town of Sudzha, within a week of the incursion. In early September, Russian Federation armed forces launched counteroffensive operations in the region, regaining control over part of the territory. While there were credible reports supported by digital evidence of civilian deaths in the area of heavy fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces on the territory of Kursk region,⁶³ ODIHR is currently not in a position to establish the circumstances of these casualties, nor to attribute them to either party to the conflict. In early October, the Russian authorities reported that approximately 70 civilians had been killed and more than 300 injured as a result of Ukraine's offensive in Kursk region.⁶⁴

B. THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

32. The humanitarian situation in Ukraine continued to deteriorate due to escalating military operations, shifting front lines, the destruction of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and continued attacks affecting humanitarian operations. As a result, organized evacuations and widespread displacement of civilians took place in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Sumy regions. The humanitarian crisis was particularly acute in the Donetsk region,⁶⁵ where the advance of the Russian military prompted one of the largest waves of internal displacement in Ukraine since 2022.⁶⁶
33. The advance of Russian forces in September and October created additional obstacles to humanitarian access in Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, while humanitarian operations, especially near the front lines, remained under threat from ongoing fighting.⁶⁷ ODIHR's open-source monitoring revealed repeated incidents of fighting affecting rescue personnel,⁶⁸ humanitarian

63 These include video footage and photographs of bodies in civilian clothing and damaged civilian vehicles on the roadside. See [Ukraine Invaded Russia. Here's What It Was Like for Civilians](#), *The New York Times*, 27 October 2024.

64 Посол МИДа: с начала боев с ВСУ в Курской области погибли около 70 мирных жителей [Foreign Ministry ambassador: about 70 civilians have been killed since the beginning of fighting with the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Kursk region], *Kommersant*, 8 October 2024. It should be noted that ODIHR has not yet been able to substantially verify the reports from the Russian Federation in accordance with its [methodology](#).

65 During the reporting period, Pokrovsk city has been especially impacted by hostilities leading to the significant decrease of the local population, the relocation of humanitarian actors, and the fact that humanitarian actors are blocked from accessing the critical road connecting Pokrovsk and Kostiantynivka and many communities across the region. See: [Ukraine: Situation Report](#), UN OCHA, 30 October 2024; [Ukraine: Humanitarian Access Snapshot \(July to August 2024\)](#), UN OCHA, 16 September 2024; [Briefing note – Ukraine: Humanitarian impact of increased hostilities in Donetska oblast \(17 September 2024\)](#), ACAPS, 17 September 2024.

66 [Health Cluster Partner Emergency Response: Evacuations in Donetska, Kharkivska and Sumska oblasts \(as of 8th October 2024\)](#), Health Cluster Ukraine – WHO, 14 October 2024.

67 [Ukraine: Humanitarian Access Snapshot \(September to October 2024\)](#), UN OCHA, 15 November 2024.

68 See for instance [Сумщина: ворог атакував підрозділ ДСНС – 5 рятувальників поранено](#) [Sumy: the enemy attacked a unit of the State Emergency Service – 5 rescuers were wounded], The State Emergency Service of Ukraine, 19 October 2024, in Ukrainian.

workers,⁶⁹ humanitarian facilities (e.g., humanitarian transit sites⁷⁰ and offices⁷¹), distribution points⁷² and vehicles,⁷³ often disrupting humanitarian operations and/or leading to the temporary suspension of humanitarian activities. Under IHL, humanitarian personnel and the objects used for humanitarian relief operations must be respected and protected at all times. To the extent that Russian armed forces are not taking precautions to limit the impact of military operations on the activities and movement of humanitarian personnel, they risk violation of their IHL obligations.⁷⁴

34. On 6 August, Ukrainian armed forces launched an invasion into Kursk region of the Russian Federation. The ensuing fighting displaced a significant number of people from their homes, reported by the local authorities to be 150,000.⁷⁵ Ukraine has stated publicly its intention to adhere to its obligations under IHL and asserts that it has formally requested the ICRC and UN to join its humanitarian response measures in Kursk.⁷⁶ Although the OHCHR and other human rights organizations had asked the Russian Federation for access to Kursk region to assess the impact of the fighting on civilians, no response had yet been received.⁷⁷ The Russian authorities stated that the International Committee of the Red Cross, along with the Russian Red Cross, assisted in returning some Russian citizens from Kursk region to other areas of the Russian Federation.⁷⁸ Additionally, the Russian Red Cross reported having received thousands of requests to search for missing people in the Ukrainian-occupied territory since August 2024.⁷⁹ The lack of access to the region for independent observers and humanitarian aid personnel raised concerns about the protection of Russian civilians.

69 See for instance [Russia drone attack at Water Tracking Team of IBC-International Blue Crescent in Kherson killed two relief staff and injured several; IBC deeply condemns the barbarous attack on the humanitarian team and asks for solidarity from worldwide relief community](#), IBC, 15 August 2024.

70 See for instance [Attacks on Civilians Must Stop – Humanitarian Country Coordinator for Ukraine](#), Matthias Schmale condemns an attack by the Russian Armed Forces on a transit site in Pokrovsk town, United Nations in Ukraine, 20 August 2024.

71 See for instance [Press Release: Missile Strike on FSD Kharkiv Office](#), Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FCD), 24 July 2024.

72 Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organisations in Vienna; see for instance also [Ukraine: 3 ICRC staff killed after shelling hits aid distribution site in Donetsk region](#), ICRC, 12 September 2024.

73 See for instance [WCK aid vehicle in Ukraine struck by Russian explosive device](#), World Central Kitchen, 18 July 2024.

74 AP I, Art. 71(2); CIHL Rules 31 and 32.

75 According to at least one regional official, almost 150,000 people were displaced as a result of the incursion of Ukraine forces into Kursk. Alexei Smirnov, Telegram [post](#), 9 November 2024, in Russian.

76 [Заява МЗС щодо забезпечення гуманітарного реагування в районах Курської області](#) [Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the provision of humanitarian response in the districts of Kursk region], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 16 September 2024. See also Iryna Vereshchuk, Telegram [post](#), 14 August 2024, in Ukrainian.

77 [UN Geneva Press Briefing](#), 16 August 2024. See also Vladimir Dzhaharov Telegram [post](#), 14 August 2024, in Russian.

78 Russian Ombudsperson, Tatyana Moskalkova claimed returning 46 Russian citizens who were transferred to Ukraine territory back to the Russian Federation, with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross; see Tatyana Moskalkova, Telegram [post](#), 22 November 2024, in Russian.

79 Russian Red Cross reported supporting displaced population from the Ukraine occupied territories, and receiving over 6,000 requests to search for missing persons since August; see Russian Red Cross, Telegram [post](#), 23 November 2024, in Russian.

C. OTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

35. From October the Russian Federation, Ukraine and other actors reported on the presence of soldiers from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the territory of the Russian Federation and in frontline areas near to the territory of Ukraine, notably that of Kursk region.⁸⁰
36. In early November, the Ukrainian authorities reported that DPRK troops had engaged in small skirmishes with Ukrainian armed forces in the territory of the Russian Federation, but the majority of DPRK forces were reportedly still undergoing training and organization.⁸¹ Further reports by the Ukrainian authorities suggested that DPRK troops were beginning to be deployed and engaging in combat. However, at this time, ODIHR is unable to independently verify this information.⁸²

80 News conference following 16th BRICS Summit, President of Russia, 24 October 2024; (2nd LD) N. Korea decides to dispatch 12,000 soldiers to support Russia in Ukraine war: spy agency, Yonhap News Agency, 18 October 2024; Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte following the North Atlantic Council briefing on the DPRK's troop deployment to Russia, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 28 October 2024; Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Telegram post, 31 October 2024, in Ukrainian; We're Seeing an Increase in the Number of North Koreans, Not an Increase in Our Partners' Response – Address by the President, President of Ukraine, 4 November 2024; Війська КНДР, «Гуманітарний щит», ситуація в Чорному морі: Сергій Боев звернувся до міністрів оборони Південно-Східної Європи [The troops of the DPRK, "Humanitarian Shield", the situation in the Black Sea: Serhiy Boyev addressed the defence ministers of Southeastern Europe], міністра оборони України [Ministry of Defence of Ukraine], 7 November 2024, in Ukrainian. See also Exclusive – Newly obtained footage from Russia's Sergievsky Training Ground showing North Korean troops being outfitted in Russian gear in preparation for deployment to Ukraine, @StratcomCentre, X/Twitter, 18 October 2024.

81 우크라이나 국방장관 “러, 북한군 투입 시작해 소규모 교전 있었다” [Ukraine's defence minister ‘Russia, DPRK troops have started to enter the country, there were small skirmishes’], KBS News, YouTube, 5 November 2024, in English/Korean; North Korea Enters Ukraine Fight for First Time, Officials Say, New York Times, 5 November 2024; N.Korean troops engaged in combat in Kursk for first time, US officials say, Reuters, 6 November 2024; Zelensky confirms deadly clashes with North Korean troops as Putin says he's willing to talk with Trump, CNN, 8 November 2024. See also Andrii Kovalenko, Telegram post, 4 November 2024, in Ukrainian; It's becoming clearer how Ukraine's first attack on North Korean troops went down, Business Insider, 8 November 2024.

82 Нова Ера Ракетної Війни, Секрети Операцій Від Генштабу Та Нові Графіки Світла / Тсн.Тиждень 24.11.24 [A New Era of Missile Warfare, Secrets Of Operations From The General Staff And New Light Schedules / Tsn.Week 24.11.24], TCH Тиждень [TSN Weekly], YouTube, 24 November 2024, in Ukrainian. See also North Korean soldiers joining Russia in combat, US State Dept says, Reuters, 12 November 2024; (LEAD) N. Korean troops dispatched to Russia already engaging in combat: spy agency, Yonhap News Agency, 13 November 2024.

Specific Issues Described to ODIHR by Witnesses and Survivors

IV

37. This, the main body of the report, focuses on specific issues described by witnesses and survivors during interviews conducted by ODIHR in the second half of 2024. Much of the information pertains to events that took place in 2024, while other information relates to incidents and events that happened earlier in the conflict. The witnesses' accounts nevertheless augment and enhance ODIHR's understanding of earlier events and patterns of violations of IHL and IHRL. There are many reasons why witnesses provide testimony after an incident, including months or even years later. In addition to the logistical challenges of locating and speaking to witnesses who may have been detained or otherwise constrained to occupied territories, they may be hesitant or reluctant to talk because of their traumatic experiences. In addition to ODIHR witness statements, Section IV also benefitted from information provided by CSOs during interviews with ODIHR.

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

38. ODIHR continued to document cases of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, including enforced disappearances, in the territory of Ukraine occupied by the Russian authorities. Between 1 June and 30 November 2024, ODIHR interviewed 14 survivors of arbitrary detention, including eight men and six women who provided information regarding their own detention and the experiences of others detained with them.⁸³ In addition, during this period, ODIHR obtained 11 testimonies from relatives of individuals who had been, or remained deprived of their liberty by the Russian Federation authorities⁸⁴
39. Nearly all of the cases described to ODIHR occurred in 2022 and 2023 and confirmed patterns previously documented by ODIHR,⁸⁵ including the categories of individuals targeted, the lack of lawful grounds for detention and the consistent denial of procedural guarantees to detainees under both IHL and IHRL. Moreover, survivors and witnesses continued to report harsh detention conditions and denial of contact with the outside world.
40. As such, the Russian authorities continued to target individuals for their real⁸⁶ or perceived support for the Ukrainian armed forces,⁸⁷ or for having

83 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407; UKR.WS.408; UKR.WS.418; UKR.WS.419; UKR.WS.425; UKR.WS.437; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.449; UKR.WS.453; UKR.WS.455; UKR.WS.467; UKR.WS.481; UKR.WS.483. Witness Interview UKR.WS.453 included testimony from a married couple.

84 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.404; UKR.WS.418; UKR.WS.420; UKR.WS.432; UKR.WS.439; UKR.WS.446; UKR.WS.455; UKR.WS.465; UKR.WS.471; UKR.WS.472; UKR.WS.482.

85 For more information see OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 42-43; [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 43-44, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 34.

86 Survivors and witnesses told ODIHR that, although some of the victims had been involved in gathering information or otherwise assisting Ukrainian armed forces in the past, they were no longer engaged in such activities by the time of their detention.

87 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 53; UKR.WS.408, para.171; UKR.WS.418, paras. 30-31, 35; UKR.WS.419, paras. 8-11; UKR.WS.420, para. 6; UKR.WS.425 paras. 6, 13-16; UKR.WS.432, para. 6; UKR.WS.437, paras. 26-27, 31; UKR.WS.444, paras. 109-110; UKR.WS.455, paras. 67, 110-111; UKR.WS.467, para. 48; UKR.WS.472,

relatives serving in, or being associated with the Ukrainian armed forces.⁸⁸ The apparent reasons for detention also included the positions held by the victims in the community,⁸⁹ their refusal to cooperate with the Russian authorities⁹⁰ and their pro-Ukrainian views.⁹¹ In this latest round of interviews, ODIHR documented individuals arbitrarily detained or ‘disappeared’ by the Russian authorities, including local authority and state personnel,⁹² employees of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP)⁹³ and civic and political activists.⁹⁴

41. According to witnesses interviewed by ODIHR, the Russian authorities often detained civilians at private residences during searches.⁹⁵ The house searches, usually aimed at finding weapons, were conducted in an aggressive manner, with property vandalised and money and valuables, such as electronic devices and vehicles, confiscated.⁹⁶ Ten of the 14 survivors ODIHR interviewed were physically abused and/or intimidated at the time of their arrest.⁹⁷ Three survivors told ODIHR that they were blindfolded, handcuffed and/or gagged while being transported to detention sites.⁹⁸ Survivors and witnesses identified the perpetrators as representatives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB)⁹⁹ and members of the Russian armed forces.¹⁰⁰
42. According to information received by ODIHR, the majority of detainees were kept in official places of detention, such as police stations, pre-trial detention facilities and prisons,¹⁰¹ while others reported being held in improvised detention sites, such as a cage in a courthouse or a basement in a school.¹⁰² All of the survivors reported deplorable detention conditions, including overcrowded

paras. 25-26; UKR.WS.482, para. 23.

- 88 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 184; UKR.WS.425, para. 18; UKR.WS.437, paras. 22, 24, 45, 75; UKR.WS.453, paras. 30-31; UKR.WS.455, para. 67. See also UKR.WS.419, paras. 63-64; UKR.WS.435, paras. 20-21.
- 89 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.419; UKR.WS.419; UKR.WS.453; UKR.WS.455.
- 90 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.444, para. 111; UKR.WS.471, paras. 23, 39; UKR.WS.476, para. 31.
- 91 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.449, para. 56; UKR.WS.453, para. 21; UKR.WS.483, para. 11.
- 92 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.419; UKR.WS.453; UKR.WS.455.
- 93 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.449.
- 94 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.425; UKR.WS.471; UKR.WS.483.
- 95 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, paras. 160, 163-164; UKR.WS.425, paras. 18-20; UKR.WS.437, paras. 20, 22-23; UKR.WS.444, para. 81; UKR.WS.453, paras. 23-25; UKR.WS.455, paras. 26, 29; UKR.WS.483, para. 82. See also UKR.WS.404, para. 33; UKR.WS.432, para. 6; UKR.WS.439, para. 31; UKR.WS.482, para. 11.
- 96 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, paras. 134-159; UKR.WS.419, para. 17; UKR.WS.444, paras. 82-83; UKR.WS.449, para. 35, 37; UKR.WS.453, paras. 43-45; UKR.WS.455, para. 98. See also UKR.WS.439, para. 27; UKR.WS.482, para. 11.
- 97 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, paras. 42, 44-45; UKR.WS.408, paras. 137, 140, 164; UKR.WS.418, paras. 35, 37; UKR.WS.419, para. 15; UKR.WS.425, para. 19; UKR.WS.437, paras. 23-24, 30; UKR.WS.455, paras. 40, 42; UKR.WS.467, paras. 53, 55-57, 59, 61, 68, 73-74; UKR.WS.481, para. 44.
- 98 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.425, para. 19; UKR.WS.467, para. 56; UKR.WS.481, para. 26.
- 99 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 48; UKR.WS.418, paras. 34-35; UKR.WS.453, para. 13, 20; UKR.WS.455, para. 38; UKR.WS.467, para. 45; UKR.WS.481, para. 28.
- 100 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 42; UKR.WS.408, paras. 134, 136; UKR.WS.444, para. 92; UKR.WS.449, para. 45; UKR.WS.453, para. 20; UKR.WS.455, para. 30; UKR.WS.483, para. 52.
- 101 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 52; UKR.WS.418, paras. 37, 57, 65-66; UKR.WS.419, para. 19; UKR.WS.425, para. 20; UKR.WS.437, paras. 56, 59, 72; UKR.WS.453, paras. 25, 84; UKR.WS.455, paras. 48, 147, 165; UKR.WS.481, para. 42; UKR.WS.483, para. 61. See also UKR.WS.404, paras. 45-46, 65, 73; UKR.WS.420, paras. 7, 9-10; UKR.WS.439, paras. 41, 106; UKR.WS.446, para. 8; UKR.WS.471, paras. 33-34, 79, 88; UKR.WS.472, paras. 22-24; UKR.WS.482, paras. 24-25, 27.
- 102 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 169; UKR.WS.444, para. 88; UKR.WS.449, paras. 37, 39, 114.

cells,¹⁰³ lack of light and ventilation,¹⁰⁴ the absence of heating,¹⁰⁵ inadequate sanitary conditions,¹⁰⁶ insufficient and/or poor-quality water and food¹⁰⁷ and lack of access to medical care or inadequate medical care.¹⁰⁸

43. As observed during prior ODIHR monitoring, families were frequently not informed of the whereabouts of their detained relatives,¹⁰⁹ including of their transfers between different facilities within occupied areas and in the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the Russian authorities sometimes refused to acknowledge the fact of detention to close relatives, even when inquiries were made. In seven cases, civilians were held incommunicado for part or all of their detention.¹¹⁰ One witness from Zaporizhzhia region told ODIHR: *“In these four months... I had no contact with the outside world. My daughter somehow learned what happened to me and found the ‘phone number of the prison. She asked about me; she was told that no one with my name was there. I could not use the ‘phone, I could send no letters, I could not receive any parcel.”*¹¹¹
44. In line with earlier reports received by ODIHR, new evidence shows that the Russian authorities have consistently violated international standards relating to the confinement of civilians during armed conflict.¹¹² Thirteen of the 14 survivors interviewed said that the legality of their detention was not reviewed by any administrative or judicial authority.¹¹³ Detainees were also not granted the right of legal representation.¹¹⁴ Moreover, nearly all the survivors of arbitrary detention were never formally charged.¹¹⁵ The length of arbitrary detention varied, with six survivors reporting prolonged detention, including

103 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 55; UKR.WS.419, para. 33; UKR.WS.423, paras. 4, 18; UKR.WS.425, paras. 21, 32; UKR.WS.453, para. 84; UKR.WS.455, paras. 77, 101; UKR.WS.481, para. 51; UKR.WS.483, paras. 62, 75.

104 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 55; UKR.WS.419, para. 34; UKR.WS.453, para. 100; UKR.WS.455, para. 148; UKR.WS.483, para. 64.

105 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.444, para. 40; UKR.WS.453, para. 105.

106 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 217; UKR.WS.418, para. 65; UKR.WS.419, paras. 22, 29; UKR.WS.425, paras. 25; UKR.WS.437, para. 56-58, 97; UKR.WS.453, paras. 59, 85; UKR.WS.455, para. 79, 129, 148-149, 152; UKR.WS.483, para. 62.

107 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, para. 65; UKR.WS.419, para. 88; UKR.WS.423, para. 7; UKR.WS.425, paras. 23, 32; UKR.WS.437, para. 91; UKR.WS.444, para. 93; UKR.WS.449, para. 40; UKR.WS.453, para. 58, 65; UKR.WS.455, paras. 78, 142, 157; UKR.WS.481, para. 55; UKR.WS.483, para. 63.

108 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 189; UKR.WS.418, para. 55; UKR.WS.423, para. 26; UKR.WS.425, para. 23; UKR.WS.437, para. 91; UKR.WS.453, para. 41, 58; UKR.WS.455, para. 133; UKR.WS.481, para. 82.

109 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, paras. 190, 238-239, 241-246, 249; UKR.WS.453, para. 93; UKR.WS.481, paras. 61-62. See also UKR.WS.446, paras. 22-23; UKR.WS.471, paras. 67, 89; UKR.WS.482, para. 25.

110 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 190; UKR.WS.419, paras. 57-58, 86; UKR.WS.425, paras. 29-30; UKR.WS.449, para. 57; UKR.WS.453, para. 94; See also UKR.WS.471, paras. 67, 89; UKR.WS.482, para. 24.

111 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.453, para. 90.

112 See GC IV, Arts. 4, 147; CIHL Rule 99.

113 In one case, a survivor from Zaporizhzhia region told ODIHR that he was sentenced to seven days of administrative detention after a three-minute court hearing in Rostov (Russian Federation), during which he was told to plead guilty to disobeying a lawful order of a police officer. See ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.418, paras. 58-59.

114 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407; UKR.WS.408; UKR.WS.418 para. 59; UKR.WS.419, paras. 60, 85; UKR.WS.425, para. 29; UKR.WS.437, para. 107; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.449, para. 58; UKR.WS.453, para. 41; UKR.WS.455, para. 138; UKR.WS.481, para. 60; UKR.WS.483, para. 81.

115 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407; UKR.WS.408, para. 171; UKR.WS.418, para. 56; UKR.WS.419; UKR.WS.425, para. 29; UKR.WS.437, para. 75; UKR.WS.444, para. 130; UKR.WS.449, para. 45; UKR.WS.453, paras. 52, 78-79, 87-88; UKR.WS.455, paras. 88, 136, 163, 165-166; UKR.WS.481, para. 73; UKR.WS.483.

one whose detention exceeded ten months.¹¹⁶ In one case, illustrating the arbitrariness of the detentions, a survivor from Kherson region told ODIHR that, after being transferred to a new place of detention, her new captors acknowledged that there was no record of her case and her name was not recognized.

45. Three witnesses told ODIHR that, after being detained in different official detention facilities in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, they were brought to Vasylivka checkpoint (Zaporizhzhia region), where the Russian authorities filmed a staged deportation from the occupied territory.¹¹⁷ After that, they were brought to a nearby village still within Russian-occupied territory, where Russian soldiers were stationed. The survivors recounted that, instead of being released or deported, they were held in abandoned, semi-destroyed buildings and subjected to forced labour, including digging trenches and clearing minefields.¹¹⁸ Female survivors also reported being subjected to sexual violence at the site.¹¹⁹
46. Two survivors told ODIHR that the conditions of their release included signing a paper promising to cooperate with the Russian authorities¹²⁰ and obtain a Russian passport.¹²¹ Some witnesses reported being forced to read self-incriminating statements while being recorded.¹²² Four survivors told ODIHR that the Russian authorities forced them to write a statement saying that they did not have any complaints about their arrest and treatment during detention.¹²³
47. ODIHR spoke with relatives of three civilians who, at the time of the interviews, remained in detention in occupied territories of Ukraine or the Russian Federation since their arrests in mid-2022 and early 2024 respectively.¹²⁴ Two of these civilians were charged with “sabotage” and “espionage” almost a year after their detention began and were sentenced, following closed hearings, to six and a half and 13 years of imprisonment respectively.¹²⁵ Another civilian was still awaiting sentencing after being charged with “state treason” and “organization of a terrorist group”, for which

116 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.425, paras. 18, 34, UKR.WS.449, para. 38; UKR.WS.453, paras. 14, 172; UKR.WS.455, para. 134; UKR.WS.481, para. 7. See also UKR.WS.439, para. 79.

117 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.449, paras. 38, 61-62, 66, 71-73, 143; UKR.WS.453, paras. 131-133; UKR.WS.483, paras. 97-105.

118 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.449, paras.75, 78, 91; UKR.WS.453, paras. 139-148; UKR.WS.483, para. 169. Under GC III, Art. 52, the removal of mines is considered as prohibited dangerous labour.

119 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.453, paras.152-155; UKR.WS.483, paras. 115-117, 170. For more details, see Section IV.D. *Conflict-related sexual violence*, para. 86.

120 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 63; UKR.WS.418, paras. 47-48, 51-52.

121 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.407, para.63.

122 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, paras.234-235; UKR.WS.453, paras. 72, 75-78.

123 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.308, paras. 248, 261; UKR.WS.455, para. 166; UKR.WS.481, paras. 90, 92; UKR.WS.483, para. 94.

124 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.404; UKR.WS.420; UKR.WS. 471; UKR.WS.482.

125 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.404, paras. 75, 94-95; UKR.WS.420, para. 11; UKR.WS.471, paras. 50, 60-61, 80.

he could face life imprisonment.¹²⁶ According to witnesses, the detainees' ability to communicate was restricted,¹²⁷ and they either did not have access to independent lawyers or the lawyers' access was obstructed.¹²⁸ One witness said that her husband was beaten during detention and forced to confess.¹²⁹ Another witness said that a staged arrest of her father-in-law was published on the internet nearly a year after his arrest.¹³⁰

48. Two survivors also told ODIHR about the difficulties faced by former detainees in proving their arbitrary detention to the Ukrainian authorities when applying for reparations guaranteed under Ukrainian law.¹³¹ According to them, even when the Ukrainian government acknowledged the detention, compensation was often delayed and insufficient, covering only part of the cost of medical treatment or psychological support. The survivors also said that they found it difficult to prove the full extent of the damage they had suffered, including damage to their health, housing and earning capacity.¹³²
49. ODIHR remains concerned about the long-term detention of large numbers of Ukrainian civilians¹³³ by the Russian Federation authorities, exemplified by the cases described to ODIHR. According to additional information received by ODIHR,¹³⁴ as of the end of November, as many as several thousand individuals remained arbitrarily detained, both in Russian Federation-occupied territories of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation.¹³⁵ Many of them were being held incommunicado, subjected to regular transfers between detention facilities and denied access to lawyers in circumstances that amount to, or may result in enforced disappearance. Concerningly, during the second half of 2024, the Russian authorities appear to have increased the practice of prosecuting and convicting civilians on trumped-up charges after their prolonged arbitrary detention.¹³⁶ Widespread reports of torture, as well as inhuman conditions of

¹²⁶ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.482, paras. 23, 32.

¹²⁷ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.404, paras. 78, 81; UKR.WS.471, paras. 67, 83; UKR.WS.482, paras. 25, 27.

¹²⁸ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.404, paras. 109-116; UKR.WS.471, paras. 52-53, 55-56, 59; UKR.WS.482, paras. 19, 26, 28, 30.

¹²⁹ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.471, paras. 26, 30-31.

¹³⁰ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.404, paras. 70, 72.

¹³¹ 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.

¹³² ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.419, paras. 89-92, 95; UKR.WS.453, paras. 184-187.

¹³³ For more information, see OSCE/ODIHR [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 30, 41.

¹³⁴ This includes information obtained during five in-person interviews conducted in October 2024 with representatives of CSOs and lawyers dealing specifically with the issue of arbitrary detention of Ukrainian civilians, including victims and their families; information provided to ODIHR by Ukrainian authorities; as well as information obtained through publicly available sources.

¹³⁵ Between 24 February 2022 and 7 November 2024, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies identified 15,063 civilians illegally detained by the Russian Federation authorities in the course of their investigation, while 2,375 people were recognized as victims. In addition, between 24 February 2022 and 31 October 2024, Ukrainian authorities established the illegal detention of 47 children. See Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

¹³⁶ Information provided to ODIHR by NGOs working on the issue of the arbitrary detention of civilians.

detention in facilities operated by the Russian authorities,¹³⁷ raise additional concerns for the safety of these individuals.¹³⁸ The prohibition against arbitrary detention is fundamental to IHL and IHRL.¹³⁹ The large number of civilians held incommunicado and detained without charge by the Russian authorities suggests a systematic violation of these norms. In failing to inform civilians of the reason for their arrest and detention, the Russian authorities violate the fundamental guarantees entitled to civilians taken into custody amidst an armed conflict.¹⁴⁰

50. The experience of Ukrainian journalist Viktoria Roshchyna is a tragic illustration of the fate of some detained civilians. She disappeared in August 2023 during a work trip to Russian Federation-occupied Zaporizhzhia region. In April 2024, the Russian authorities acknowledged for the first time that the journalist had been detained in the Russian Federation “for opposing the special military operation” — the most common reason for detention assigned by the Russian Ministry of Defence to civilians in their custody. According to the Ukrainian authorities, Roshchyna was being prepared for a prisoner exchange, but she died on 19 September 2024 during her transfer to Moscow from pre-trial detention centre No. 2 in Taganrog (Russian Federation), according to a letter from the Russian Defence Ministry received by her family on 10 October.¹⁴¹ Viktoria Roshchyna died shortly before her 28th birthday and, according to her relatives, had no health issues prior to her detention.

B. TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT IN AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

51. ODIHR continued to gather evidence of widespread and systematic use of torture by Russian authorities against civilians in detention.¹⁴² All 14 survivors of arbitrary detention (eight men and six women) interviewed by ODIHR reported having been subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment.¹⁴³ In addition, ODIHR interviewed one witness who was already serving a sentence in a penal colony before February 2022, but who was tortured when the facility was placed under Russian Federation control.¹⁴⁴ ODIHR also received seven

¹³⁷ See, for instance, [Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine](#), UN Doc. A/79/549, 25 October 2024. See also Information provided to ODIHR by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

¹³⁸ For more details, see Section IV.b. *Torture and ill-treatment in areas under the control of Russian authorities*.

¹³⁹ 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 9; 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art.9; CIHL Rules 98, 99 and 100.

¹⁴⁰ AP I Art.75.

¹⁴¹ Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

¹⁴² For more information, see OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#) paras. 55-64; [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 56-66; [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 42-51.

¹⁴³ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407; UKR.WS.408; UKR.WS.418; UKR.WS.419; UKR.WS.425; UKR.WS.437; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.449; UKR.WS.453; UKR.WS.455; UKR.WS.467; UKR.WS.481; UKR.WS.483. Witness Interview UKR.WS.453 included testimony from a married couple.

¹⁴⁴ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.423.

credible allegations of ill-treatment from relatives of individuals who were, or remain arbitrarily detained in the occupied territories of Ukraine and/or in the Russian Federation.¹⁴⁵ Separately, ODIHR documented two cases of torture and ill-treatment in non-custodial settings.¹⁴⁶

52. Survivors were subjected to torture and ill-treatment in both official and improvised places of detention in Russian Federation-occupied regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea, and in the Russian Federation. Perpetrators of torture were described to ODIHR as members of the Russian armed forces, including Russian Federation-affiliated armed groups¹⁴⁷ and the FSB.¹⁴⁸
53. Consistent with earlier ODIHR findings,¹⁴⁹ interviews conducted by ODIHR with witnesses and survivors in the second half of 2024 show that the Russian authorities used torture during interrogations to extract information or elicit confessions from witnesses.¹⁵⁰ Perpetrators, for example, were reported to demand that survivors disclose details of their cooperation with the Ukrainian armed forces or provide the names or whereabouts of those cooperating with the Ukrainian armed forces or authorities. Many survivors described how the torture continued, regardless of their answers: *“They asked me questions, but sometimes ... actually they were just making accusations for things I have never done ... and it did not matter what the answer was, they would turn the electricity on anyway.”*¹⁵¹
54. Torture and ill-treatment were also used to force survivors into cooperating with Russian authorities¹⁵² or as punishment or humiliation.¹⁵³ Five survivors reported the existence of rooms specifically allocated for interrogation and torture.¹⁵⁴
55. As documented previously by ODIHR, perpetrators were reported to use similar methods of torture across different detention facilities.¹⁵⁵ Nearly all

¹⁴⁵ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, paras. 48, 54; UKR.WS.455, paras. 74, 103; UKR.WS.467, para. 62; UKR.WS.404, paras. 50, 54; UKR.WS.439, paras. 76, 95; UKR.WS.472; UKR.WS.482.

¹⁴⁶ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.460; UKR.WS.476.

¹⁴⁷ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, paras. 39, 42-43; UKR.WS.423, para. 19; UKR.WS.449, para. 48; UKR.WS.453, paras. 28-29; UKR.WS.476, para. 30; UKR.WS.483, para. 115.

¹⁴⁸ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, paras. 57, 61; UKR.WS.418, paras. 39, 41, 46; UKR.WS.419, paras. 71-73; UKR.WS.437, para. 98; UKR.WS.444, para. 92; UKR.WS.453, paras. 28, 120; UKR.WS.455, para. 83; UKR.WS.460, paras. 55, 98; UKR.WS.467, para. 45; UKR.WS.481, para. 72.

¹⁴⁹ See OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), para. 56; [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 58; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 44.

¹⁵⁰ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 54; UKR.WS.408, paras. 176-186; UKR.WS.418, paras. 39-40, 42, 44-45; UKR.WS.419, paras. 24-28, 35-36; UKR.WS.425, paras. 22, 27-28; UKR.WS.437, paras. 40-42, 127; UKR.WS.444, para. 91; UKR.WS.449, paras. 47-48; UKR.WS.453, paras. 37-39, 55; UKR.WS.455, paras. 58, 70, 73, 85-87, 93, 103, 105, 113-114, 119, 136; UKR.WS.467, para. 63; UKR.WS.481, paras. 67-71.

¹⁵¹ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.408, para. 195.

¹⁵² ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.437, paras. 73, 75; UKR.WS.476, paras. 36, 47.

¹⁵³ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 53; UKR.WS.408, paras. 194-195; UKR.WS.418, para. 41; UKR.WS.453, paras. 31-32; UKR.WS.455, para. 113; UKR.WS.467, paras. 66-67.

¹⁵⁴ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, paras. 53-54; UKR.WS.408, para. 206; UKR.WS.425, paras. 25, 29; UKR.WS.453, para. 108; UKR.WS.455, para. 100.

¹⁵⁵ See OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), para. 57; [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 60; [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 46.

survivors reported being severely beaten, including with various objects and tools.¹⁵⁶ Nine were electrocuted.¹⁵⁷ Perpetrators connected wires or clamps to survivors' earlobes, fingers, toes, noses or genitals and, in some cases, used water to amplify the effect of electric shocks.¹⁵⁸ Two survivors said that electric shocks were administered using a military field telephone called '*Tapik*'.¹⁵⁹ One survivor described how he was tortured with electricity during interrogation: *"They took a device and connected wires, one to my finger and one to my left ear, they moved the handle, and I understood it was electricity. The feeling was as if every nerve in your tooth hurts. Everything went white in front of my eyes. They moved this handle maybe three or four times and I fainted. They moved me to the cell; they had to drag me by my arms as I couldn't move."*¹⁶⁰

56. Other reported methods of torture included inflicting burns with a soldering iron;¹⁶¹ suffocation;¹⁶² stress positions;¹⁶³ cutting;¹⁶⁴ simulated drowning;¹⁶⁵ threats of death, mutilation, and physical violence;¹⁶⁶ and threats to harm family members.¹⁶⁷ Perpetrators often blindfolded the survivors, handcuffed or tied their hands behind their backs, and tied their legs while torturing them.¹⁶⁸ Survivors also reported being subjected to sexual violence and/or threatened with sexual violence against both themselves and their family members.¹⁶⁹
57. In two cases, survivors told ODIHR that perpetrators detained their loved ones along with them, and tortured and abused them also.¹⁷⁰ One survivor described how her son was tortured with electricity in her presence to pressure her to confess: *"I was standing there, listening ... I heard my son being tortured with electricity ... I heard him crying, screaming ... he begged them to stop; he was*

¹⁵⁶ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, paras. 53, 58-59; UKR.WS.408, paras. 178, 184, 199; UKR.WS.418, paras. 39, 48; UKR.WS.419, paras. 15, 20, 29, 35; UKR.WS.423, paras. 19, 30; UKR.WS.437, para. 39; UKR.WS.453, paras. 27, 32, 71, 103-104; 107-108; UKR.WS.455, paras. 70-72, 74; UKR.WS.481, paras. 78-80. See also UKR.WS.404, paras. 50, 54; UKR.WS.444, para. 98; UKR.WS.449, para. 54; UKR.WS.472, paras. 26, 37-38.

¹⁵⁷ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 54; UKR.WS.408, paras. 182-185, 194, 205; UKR.WS.418, paras. 41, 44-45; UKR.WS.419, paras. 20-21, 24-25, 35, 74; UKR.WS.437, paras. 31-35, 44, 111; UKR.WS.444, paras. 90, 113; UKR.WS.449, paras. 47-48; UKR.WS.455, paras. 58, 103-104, 113. See also UKR.WS.439, para. 95; UKR.WS.481, para. 77.

¹⁵⁸ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 54; UKR.WS.408, paras. 182, 195-196; UKR.WS.418, paras. 41, 44; UKR.WS.419, para. 74; UKR.WS.437, para. 31; UKR.WS.444, paras. 90, 113; UKR.WS.449, paras. 47-48; UKR.WS.455, para. 104.

¹⁵⁹ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.437, para. 111; UKR.WS.444, paras. 90, 113. For more information see OSCE/ODIHR [Fifth Interim report](#), para. 46.

¹⁶⁰ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.407, para. 54.

¹⁶¹ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.437, paras. 36, 39, 44.

¹⁶² ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.453, para. 33.

¹⁶³ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 175; UKR.WS.453, para. 27.

¹⁶⁴ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.481, para. 103.

¹⁶⁵ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.419, para. 75; UKR.WS.481, paras. 78-80.

¹⁶⁶ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 54; UKR.WS.418, paras. 39, 45; UKR.WS.425, para. 29; UKR.WS.437, para. 24; UKR.WS.449, paras. 46, 52; UKR.WS.453, paras. 35, 69; UKR.WS.455, paras. 73, 84.

¹⁶⁷ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, paras. 197-198; UKR.WS.455, paras. 99, 118-119, 128.

¹⁶⁸ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 192; UKR.WS.418, paras. 39, 41; UKR.WS.425, para. 22; UKR.WS.481, para. 104. See also UKR.WS.437, para. 94.

¹⁶⁹ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 54; UKR.WS.408, paras. 192, 199-200, 263; UKR.WS.418, para. 41; UKR.WS.419, para. 15; UKR.WS.453, paras. 37, 108-109, 114, 152-155; UKR.WS.455, paras. 149-150; UKR.WS.483, paras. 115-117, 170. See also UKR.WS.439, para. 76. For more details, see Section IV.D. *Conflict-related sexual violence*.

¹⁷⁰ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, paras. 35-38, 48; UKR.WS.455, paras. 74, 99, 103, 119.

saying that it was hurting ... they were asking him: ‘Did your mum work for the armed forces of Ukraine? Did she get money in exchange for information?’ He had to say ‘yes’ because he was in pain ... he agreed and said yes to everything. Then he was taken out of the room, he stood next to me crying ... I could feel he was covered in tears.”¹⁷¹

58. Perpetrators also performed certain rituals which humiliated and degraded the dignity of the detainees. For instance, one male survivor told ODIHR that every time he and his cellmates were taken to shower, they had to sing the Russian national anthem whilst being beaten and humiliated.¹⁷² One female survivor said that she had to sing the Russian anthem in order to use the toilet and whilst using the toilet.¹⁷³ Three survivors reported that every time the cell door was opened, including at night, they had to stand up and say, “*Glory to Russia, glory to Putin!*”. Failure to engage in such rituals resulted in beatings or other punishments, such as deprivation of food.¹⁷⁴
59. Eleven survivors reported that other detainees, both civilian and POWs, were also tortured or physically abused.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, two interviewees reported that they had seen other detainees die in custody as a result of inhumane detention conditions, including the lack of timely and adequate medical care.¹⁷⁶ One witness told ODIHR that a fellow detainee died in custody from injuries sustained during torture.¹⁷⁷
60. Two witnesses stated that, although they had not been subjected to physical violence, they experienced a high level of mental suffering while in detention. They were repeatedly interrogated while blindfolded and handcuffed, and were subjected to threats and psychological pressure.¹⁷⁸ Combined with the deplorable detention conditions in which witnesses were held for several months,¹⁷⁹ such experiences may amount to ill-treatment or torture.
61. A witness who was serving a criminal sentence in a penal colony in Kherson region before the area was occupied by the Russian Federation described the deplorable conditions, physical abuse and cruel treatment imposed after the facility was placed under Russian administration. In particular, he recounted how he was transferred to a colony where detainees with infectious diseases were held together with healthy detainees without proper separation or

171 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.455, para. 103.

172 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.419, para. 84.

173 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.455, para. 151.

174 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.419, para. 32; UKR.WS.453, para. 107; UKR.WS.455, para. 96.

175 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, paras. 58-59; UKR.WS.408, paras. 216, 218-221; UKR.WS.419, paras. 65-66, 74-75; UKR.WS.423, para. 38; UKR.WS.425, paras. 24-25, 29; UKR.WS.437, para. 92; UKR.WS.444, paras. 88, 98; UKR.WS.449, para. 54; UKR.WS.453, paras. 103-104; UKR.WS.455, para. 171; UKR.WS.481, paras. 74, 77-80, 103.

176 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.423, paras. 26-28; UKR.WS.425, para. 23.

177 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.481, para. 102.

178 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.425, paras. 22, 27-29, 36; UKR.WS.481, paras. 67-71, 75-76, 104.

179 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.425, paras. 18, 21, 23, 25, 34; UKR.WS.481, paras. 51, 55-56, 99.

precautions in place. He was also subjected to hard physical labour for more than 20 hours a day, as well as collective beatings and punishment.¹⁸⁰

62. ODIHR also documented cases of torture and ill-treatment of civilians by the Russian authorities during house searches. In one case, an entire family from Kherson region was harmed during a search. The Russian authorities severely beat the father of the family for three hours, put a gun barrel in the children's mouths, and threw a newborn child to the floor while issuing threats and verbal abuse.¹⁸¹ In another case, a witness described to ODIHR how, in July 2024, during the house search and interrogation of a married couple from Zaporizhzhia region, perpetrators severely beat the husband and threatened him with electric shocks in order to force his wife to cooperate with the occupation authorities. The husband suffered a heart attack and had to be hospitalized.¹⁸²
63. Reported injuries as a result of torture included bruises; burns; abrasions and blisters; necrotic wounds; broken ribs, fingers and noses; cracked teeth; traumatic brain injuries; external bleeding; problems with heart and memory; and limited mobility.¹⁸³ Several victims reported psychological problems, including anxiety, exhaustion and trouble with memory and sleep.¹⁸⁴
64. Prohibitions against torture and inhuman treatment are absolute in IHL and IHRL.¹⁸⁵ ODIHR strongly condemns the widespread and systematic use of torture and degrading and inhuman treatment of detainees by the Russian authorities.

C. THE SITUATION OF PRISONERS OF WAR

65. ODIHR's monitoring activities continued to identify patterns of reported IHL and IHRL violations related to the treatment of Ukrainian Prisoners of War (POWs),¹⁸⁶ based on interviews with 29 former POWs (25 men and four women) conducted in the second half of 2024. Of the 29 former POWs interviewed, 17 were released in 2024, with the most recent in August 2024. The length of captivity of those interviewed ranged from four to 28 months from point of capture to their release. Information received through the 29 interviews

¹⁸⁰ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.423, paras. 4, 7, 13-16, 18-19, 21, 24-26, 30-34.

¹⁸¹ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.460, paras. 55-70, 81.

¹⁸² ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.476, paras. 28-51.

¹⁸³ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, paras. 45, 56; UKR.WS.408, paras. 201-204; UKR.WS.418, paras. 55, 82; UKR.WS.419, paras. 15, 25, 29, 31, 42-45; UKR.WS.437, paras. 70, 87, 111; UKR.WS.453, para. 182; UKR.WS.455, paras. 115, 134; UKR.WS.476, para. 38; UKR.WS.483, para. 173.

¹⁸⁴ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, para. 82; UKR.WS.419, para. 36; UKR.WS.453, paras. 182-183; UKR.WS.460, paras. 64-65; UKR.WS.483, para. 163.

¹⁸⁵ 1984 United Nations Convention against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; CIHL Rule 90; GC IV art.32; AP I Art.75.

¹⁸⁶ See OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#); OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#). See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

conducted by ODIHR with survivors and witnesses attested to a continued practice of systematic torture and other IHL and IHRL violations perpetrated against Ukrainian POWs in the second half of 2024. The accounts of survivors interviewed by ODIHR prompt serious concerns about the Russian Federation's failure to comply with the fundamental principles that govern the treatment of POWs.¹⁸⁷

66. In addition, ODIHR's analysis of open sources depicting purported acts of violence against Ukrainian POWs supports this conclusion, with an evident increase in such material being disseminated in the second half of 2024 (see below at para. 92).
67. From the 29 interviews, ODIHR monitors identified more than 35 locations where Ukrainian POWs were detained from point of capture until release, with several previously undocumented locations identified as detention sites. These locations included makeshift detention sites used to interrogate and sort POWs; temporary and pre-trial detention centres; large penal colonies; and barracks used to house hundreds, if not thousands, of detainees. Throughout their internment, POWs were repeatedly transferred between detention facilities throughout the occupied territories of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.¹⁸⁸
68. Male and female POWs were held separately from each other.¹⁸⁹ POWs were largely separated from civilian detainees; however, in some instances, they were held in the same cells or barracks.¹⁹⁰
69. All 29 POWs recounted experiencing and witnessing extensive torture and ill-treatment throughout their captivity and across all detention sites, except for two locations which stood out in their treatment of POWs and adherence to the Geneva Conventions.
70. From the point of capture, the prisoners were held in temporary detention sites before their transfer to more established detention facilities. At these initial sites, seven survivors were subjected to physical violence (both during

¹⁸⁷ 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War; 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War (GC III); AP I Art.45; CIHL Rules 87, 90, 94, and 95.

¹⁸⁸ All 29 POWs interviewed mentioned being detained in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, and on the territory of the Russian Federation. One interviewee, UKR.WS.438, was also briefly held in the territory of Belarus.

¹⁸⁹ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, para. 48; UKR.WS.411, para. 82; UKR.WS.412, para. 27; UKR.WS.424, paras. 15, 28; UKR.WS.429, para. 35; UKR.WS.431, para. 86; UKR.WS.436, paras. 65, 216-217; UKR.WS.440, para. 98; UKR.WS.443, para. 88; UKR.WS.451, para. 142; UKR.WS.463, para. 41; UKR.WS.473, para. 23; UKR.WS.484, para. 12; UKR.WS.490, paras. 30, 37, 39; UKR.WS.491, paras. 27-28. See also UKR.WS.488, para. 78.

¹⁹⁰ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 27, 34, 42, 52; UKR.WS.410, para. 39; UKR.WS.412, paras. 27, 42; UKR.WS.416, para. 33; UKR.WS.424, para. 28; UKR.WS.429, paras. 49-50, 123; UKR.WS.431, paras. 64, 85; UKR.WS.436, paras. 221-223; UKR.WS.438, paras. 104-106; UKR.WS.440, paras. 50, 90, 157; UKR.WS.442, paras. 23, 38-39, 115-117; UKR.WS.443, paras. 34, 136; UKR.WS.448, paras. 103, 109-112; UKR.WS.451, paras. 76-77; UKR.WS.464, paras. 49, 57, 69, 96, 103-104; UKR.WS.470, paras. 35, 70; UKR.WS.473, para. 57; UKR.WS.474, para. 58; UKR.WS.475, para. 103; UKR.WS.484, para. 12; UKR.WS.485, para. 99; UKR.WS.490, paras. 35, 38-40.

interrogations and during captivity)¹⁹¹ and threats of violence/death and mock executions.¹⁹² Survivors also described poor conditions and limited access to basic needs, noting a lack or outright denial of food, water, access to toilet facilities, sleeping arrangements and medical attention.¹⁹³

71. According to survivors interviewed by ODIHR, following this initial detention, POWs were routinely transferred between detention facilities and were subjected to initiation practices or welcome beatings (*priyomka*) upon arrival at each location.¹⁹⁴ Survivors were subjected to humiliation, threats, sexual violence, dog attacks, stress positions, severe physical beatings and electrocution.¹⁹⁵ One practice described by the witnesses was being forced to pass through a “corridor” of prison authorities who would severely beat and electrocute prisoners with a variety of tools.¹⁹⁶ As one survivor described the *priyomka*: “*not only did they beat you with batons and punch and kick you, but they would also pour water on you and then they would apply electricity.*”¹⁹⁷ The Russian authorities consistently employed violence against POWs throughout their detention and at multiple detention sites within the occupied territories of Ukraine and the Russian Federation. The extensive and routine application of torture or ill-treatment towards Ukrainian POWs throughout their detention illustrates a continued systematic pattern of brutality.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹¹ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 19-21; UKR.WS.410, paras. 19, 24-26; UKR.WS.416, paras. 10-11, 14; UKR.WS.429, paras. 12, 17; UKR.WS.443, paras. 18, 45-46; UKR.WS.470, paras. 8-9; UKR.WS.485, para. 24.

¹⁹² ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, para. 19; UKR.WS.429, para. 17; UKR.WS.442, paras. 11-13; UKR.WS.443, para. 18; UKR.WS.485, para. 24; UKR.WS.489, para. 12.

¹⁹³ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, para. 26; UKR.WS.412, paras. 16-17; UKR.WS.416, para. 11; UKR.WS.436, para. 11; UKR.WS.442, para. 19; UKR.WS.443, paras. 19-20, 22-23, 30-31; UKR.WS.450, paras. 20-22; UKR.WS.451, paras. 56-57; UKR.WS.462, paras. 76-78; UKR.WS.474, paras. 8, 17, 20; UKR.WS.485, para. 26; UKR.WS.489, para. 10; UKR.WS.490, para. 13; UKR.WS.491, para. 18.

¹⁹⁴ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, paras. 110, 119; UKR.WS.411, para. 67; UKR.WS.412, para. 53; UKR.WS.416, para. 27; UKR.WS.429, paras. 58-61, 111, 114-116; UKR.WS.431, para. 24; UKR.WS.436, paras. 88, 141; UKR.WS.440, paras. 74, 127, 204; UKR.WS.442, paras. 6, 86-88, 159; UKR.WS.443, paras. 49, 162, 169-170; UKR.WS.448, paras. 25-27; UKR.WS.450, paras. 33, 56-61, 108-110; UKR.WS.462, paras. 80-83; UKR.WS.463, paras. 64-66; UKR.WS.464, paras. 47, 61, 89; UKR.WS.473, paras. 25, 42, 59; UKR.WS.474, para. 27; UKR.WS.475, para. 143; UKR.WS.484, paras. 11, 20, 34-35; UKR.WS.485, paras. 35-36, 73-74, 126; UKR.WS.488, paras. 49, 62-63; UKR.WS.489, paras. 14-15, 24, 26-27; UKR.WS.491, paras. 24-26, 39-42, 69-73, 100.

¹⁹⁵ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 23, 29, 48-49; UKR.WS.410, paras. 34, 109-118; UKR.WS.411, paras. 67, 71-75, 105-106, 196; UKR.WS.412, paras. 23-24, 33, 53; UKR.WS.416, paras. 27, 39, 46; UKR.WS.424, paras. 15, 17, 24, 31; UKR.WS.429, paras. 58-61, 111, 114-116; UKR.WS.431, paras. 24-25; UKR.WS.436, para. 88-92, 141-143; UKR.WS.438, paras. 78-79; UKR.WS.440, paras. 65-66, 127-130, 204-206; UKR.WS.442, paras. 6-7, 85-88, 161; UKR.WS.443, paras. 49, 169, 172; UKR.WS.448, paras. 10, 24-27; UKR.WS.450, paras. 33, 57-61, 109-110, 112, 176; UKR.WS.451, paras. 100-103; UKR.WS.462, paras. 80-83; UKR.WS.463, para. 66; UKR.WS.464, paras. 47-48, 89; UKR.WS.473, paras. 15, 25, 27, 42, 59; UKR.WS.474, para. 27; UKR.WS.475, paras. 25-26; UKR.WS.484, paras. 11, 20, 33-35; UKR.WS.485, paras. 35-36, 73-74, 126; UKR.WS.488, paras. 49, 62-63; UKR.WS.489, paras. 14-15, 24, 26, 48; UKR.WS.490, paras. 23, 35, 51-52, 70-72, 100-102; UKR.WS.491, paras. 24-26, 33, 40-41, 43, 69-73. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

¹⁹⁶ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 29; UKR.WS.410, para. 115; UKR.WS.411, paras. 71-73, 105-106; UKR.WS.412, para. 24; UKR.WS.416, para. 27; UKR.WS.424, para. 17; UKR.WS.429, paras. 58-61, 116; UKR.WS.431, para. 24; UKR.WS.436, paras. 88, 141; UKR.WS.440, para. 129; UKR.WS.442, paras. 6, 86; UKR.WS.443, paras. 49-50, 68; UKR.WS.448, para. 10; UKR.WS.450, paras. 33, 51; UKR.WS.462, paras. 80-83; UKR.WS.463, para. 66; UKR.WS.464, para. 47; UKR.WS.473, para. 15; UKR.WS.474, para. 27; UKR.WS.475, paras. 25-26; UKR.WS.484, paras. 11, 35; UKR.WS.485, paras. 35-36; UKR.WS.488, para. 49; UKR.WS.491, paras. 24-26.

¹⁹⁷ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.464, para. 61.

¹⁹⁸ See OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#); OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#).

72. As described to ODIHR by survivors, the wide-ranging methods of torture or ill-treatment against Ukrainian POWs included: severe physical beatings; electrocution (including the targeting of genitalia); excessively intense physical exercise; stress positions; dog attacks; mock executions (including simulated hangings); threats of physical violence; sexual violence, including rape; threats of rape and castration; threats of coerced sexual acts; and other forms of humiliation.¹⁹⁹ These forms of torture and ill-treatment were a daily aspect of detainees' captivity, with one POW stating: "*the beating was constant, not even one day without it.*"²⁰⁰ At times, the presence of Russian special forces or news about battlefield defeats for the Russian Federation could result in increased violence.²⁰¹
73. Survivors reported being interrogated by a range of personnel, including members of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN), the FSB, the Russian Investigative Committee, Russian armed forces, local investigators and prosecutors.²⁰² Before, during and after the interrogations, interrogators used methods of torture and ill-treatment to obtain information and elicit confessions. The methods of torture and ill-treatment related to interrogations included: severe physical beatings; electrocution (including of genitalia); cutting of the body; simulated drowning; asphyxiation/suffocation; excessively intense physical exercise; and sexual violence.²⁰³ One survivor

199 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 38-39, 50-52; UKR.WS.410, paras. 133-134, 140-145, 147-149, 181; UKR.WS.411, paras. 84, 111-112, 138, 146, 148, 186, 197, 205-206, 227; UKR.WS.412, paras. 37, 40, 45, 51, 56-57, 59, 63-64, 68; UKR.WS.416, paras. 30, 47-48; UKR.WS.424, paras. 25, 32; UKR.WS.429, paras. 69, 71, 103-108, 119, 124, 140; UKR.WS.431, paras. 19, 28-33, 41, 43, 49, 56, 58, 61-63, 65-66, 104-105; UKR.WS.436, paras. 11, 20-21, 62, 78, 114-119, 122-126, 137-139, 242-243, 253-258; UKR.WS.438, paras. 13, 20, 98-101, 116, 125, 155-157; UKR.WS.440, paras. 115, 120, 167-169, 173-174, 207; UKR.WS.442, paras. 82-83, 95, 121; UKR.WS.443, paras. 51, 67, 69, 70-71, 79-80, 93-94, 98, 146-147, 153, 163-163, 182, 184-187; UKR.WS.448, paras. 36, 41, 49; UKR.WS.450, paras. 70-72, 79-80, 83-84, 100, 114, 125-126, 129-130, 137-138, 156-158, 201; UKR.WS.462, paras. 100-101, 116-120, 146-147, 194-195, 199; UKR.WS.463, paras. 43-44, 52, 99-100; UKR.WS.464, paras. 37, 44, 62, 68-69, 86, 90, 92-94, 96-98; UKR.WS.470, paras. 32-34; UKR.WS.473, paras. 30, 43, 67-68; UKR.WS.474, paras. 59-62, 64, 68-69, 71-73; UKR.WS.475, paras. 58-61, 68-70, 97, 110-111, 114-115; UKR.WS.484, paras. 22-23, 37-38, 44-45; UKR.WS.485, paras. 102-103; UKR.WS.488, paras. 57, 74, 78-84, 88-89, 91, 94, 97; UKR.WS.489, paras. 30, 38, 43, 48-50, 53; UKR.WS.490, paras. 36, 43, 47, 49-50, 66, 84, 93, 95-96, 112; UKR.WS.491, paras. 58-59, 73, 80, 84-85, 101-102, 108-109. See Section IV.d. *Conflict-related sexual violence*. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

200 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.412, para. 59.

201 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, paras. 147-148; UKR.WS.411, paras. 185-186; UKR.WS.443, para. 153; UKR.WS.448, para. 149. See also UKR.WS.463, paras. 98-100.

202 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 60; UKR.WS.410, paras. 61, 63; UKR.WS.411, paras. 130-131, 144-145, 160, 184, 217-218; UKR.WS.412, paras. 39-41, 44, 62; UKR.WS.416, paras. 19, 28; UKR.WS.424, paras. 16, 20, 26-27; UKR.WS.429, paras. 25, 42-44, 78, 103-106; UKR.WS.431, paras. 10-11, 16, 21, 33; UKR.WS.436, paras. 12, 18-19, 29, 31-32, 62-65, 225; UKR.WS.438, paras. 15, 120-122, 130; UKR.WS.440, paras. 162-163, 225; UKR.WS.442, paras. 42, 45-46, 56-61, 119-123, 125; UKR.WS.443, paras. 73-76, 142; UKR.WS.448, paras. 18-19, 34-35, 155-158; UKR.WS.450, paras. 73, 75, 89, 117-119, 207; UKR.WS.451, paras. 78-81, 87; UKR.WS.462, paras. 102-111, 145; UKR.WS.463, paras. 49, 53-55, 86-87; UKR.WS.464, paras. 28, 36, 42; UKR.WS.470, paras. 39-40; UKR.WS.473, paras. 28, 43; UKR.WS.474, paras. 80-82, 147; UKR.WS.475, paras. 72-73, 77, 105-109; UKR.WS.488, paras. 68-72; UKR.WS.489, paras. 19, 28-32, 48-49; UKR.WS.490, paras. 27, 62, 82-83; UKR.WS.491, paras. 54-56.

203 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 60; UKR.WS.410, para. 178; UKR.WS.411, paras. 133, 135-137, 141-142, 218; UKR.WS.412, paras. 39, 62, 72; UKR.WS.416, para. 19; UKR.WS.424, paras. 16, 26; UKR.WS.431, paras. 16, 33; UKR.WS.436, paras. 12, 23, 66; UKR.WS.438, paras. 15-18, 120-122, 126; UKR.WS.440, paras. 226, 229; UKR.WS.442, paras. 121-123, 128; UKR.WS.443, paras. 77, 79, 142; UKR.WS.448, paras. 18-19, 34-35, 159-164; UKR.WS.450, paras. 117-119; UKR.WS.462, paras. 102-103, 109-110; UKR.WS.463, paras. 49-50, 87-90; UKR.WS.464, para. 36; UKR.WS.473, paras. 28-30; UKR.WS.474, paras. 80, 82, 147; UKR.WS.488, paras. 68-69, 73; UKR.WS.489, paras. 19, 28-32; UKR.WS.490, paras. 27, 29, 62; UKR.WS.491, paras. 54-57. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

of torture during interrogations described his experience, stating: “I had six interrogations. After the first, they used lots of violence and multiple types at the same time. They used tasers on the genitals, this Tapik and beat you at the same time. They could put a plastic bag over your head and make you almost suffocate, and they used a plastic pipe, approximately 70cm long to beat you. The whole time they would ask questions, and you had to answer loudly and clearly.”²⁰⁴

74. Survivors told ODIHR of instances where interrogators forced POWs to sign documentation that was incriminating or that they were not permitted to read.²⁰⁵ In some cases, the documents referred to the detainees’ alleged participation in, or witnessing of crimes.²⁰⁶ The Russian authorities sought to extract confessions or incriminating evidence from POWs through the use of incentives (such as a possible exchange), threats (such as prison sentences or criminal charges) or through torture.²⁰⁷ One survivor recalled how, during his interrogation, an investigator instructed him to “choose your charge — whether you’re guilty of looting or killing, because if I choose it, it will be the most serious offence.”²⁰⁸
75. Survivors told ODIHR that POWs with the rank of officer, affiliated with the Marines and Azov battalion, or who held specialized roles, such as artillery crewmembers, snipers, tank operators and intelligence operators, received harsher and/or crueller treatment at the hands of the prison authorities or bodies belonging to the Russian state apparatus.²⁰⁹ Some former POWs recalled the presence of civilians held in the same facilities as POWs who received similar or worse treatment.²¹⁰
76. Ten former POWs reported on numerous incidents whereby detainees had died in captivity due to execution, torture, ill-treatment and/or inadequate medical attention.²¹¹

²⁰⁴ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.412, para. 40.

²⁰⁵ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 43, 53; UKR.WS.412, para. 73; UKR.WS.416, para. 28; UKR.WS.424, paras. 16, 20; UKR.WS.429, paras. 136; UKR.WS.431, para. 87; UKR.WS.436, paras. 46, 225; UKR.WS.438, paras. 124; UKR.WS.440, paras. 103, 125; UKR.WS.442, paras. 119, 124; UKR.WS.450, para. 99; UKR.WS.462, paras. 89-90; UKR.WS.463, paras. 54, 91; UKR.WS.470, para. 41; UKR.WS.473, para. 33; UKR.WS.474, para. 86; UKR.WS.489, paras. 33, 52; UKR.WS.490, paras. 63, 83-84; UKR.WS.491, paras. 90-92

²⁰⁶ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 53; UKR.WS.410, paras. 175-180; UKR.WS.489, paras. 33-35.

²⁰⁷ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 43; UKR.WS.410, paras. 177-179; UKR.WS.412, para. 60; UKR.WS.416, paras. 24, 29; UKR.WS.429, para. 135; UKR.WS.431, para. 10; UKR.WS.450, paras. 119-122, 144-149, 182, 187; UKR.WS.463, paras. 55, 91; UKR.WS.470, paras. 42-43; UKR.WS.473, para. 29; UKR.WS.489, paras. 33-35; UKR.WS.490, para. 84.

²⁰⁸ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.429, para. 135.

²⁰⁹ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 52, 71; UKR.WS.411, para. 74; UKR.WS.412, para. 41; UKR.WS.431, paras. 38, 47; UKR.WS.436, paras. 211-213; UKR.WS.440, paras. 48, 81, 167, 171, 173, 232; UKR.WS.443, paras. 191-192; UKR.WS.448, paras. 114-115; UKR.WS.450, paras. 97-98, 125-126, 152; UKR.WS.464, paras. 53, 55; UKR.WS.473, para. 76; UKR.WS.474, para. 28; UKR.WS.491, para. 34. See also UKR.WS.470, para. 50.

²¹⁰ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.431, para. 64; UKR.WS.438, para. 104; UKR.WS.440, para. 75; UKR.WS.442, paras. 115-116; UKR.WS.443, paras. 137-138; UKR.WS.448, para. 112; UKR.WS.464, paras. 49, 53, 104; UKR.WS.470, para. 38; UKR.WS.473, paras. 57, 70; UKR.WS.490, para. 35. See also UKR.WS.443, para. 203. See Section IV.a. *Arbitrary deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearances in areas under the control of the Russian authorities.*

²¹¹ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 46, 71-72; UKR.WS.410, paras. 123-125; UKR.WS.416, para. 38; UKR.WS.436, paras. 56, 206-209; UKR.WS.440, paras. 66-67, 82, 112-113; UKR.WS.442, para. 150; UKR.WS.443, para. 193; UKR.WS.450, para. 52; UKR.WS.489, para. 60; UKR.WS.490, paras. 29, 49-50, 55.

77. Former POWs interviewed by ODIHR described inhumane conditions during their captivity. They received little to no water²¹² and insufficient food of poor quality,²¹³ often rotten or tainted with waste items and debris.²¹⁴ When detainees did receive food, they were often forced to eat in a limited time period, with food that was too hot to eat.²¹⁵ Several former POWs experienced significant malnutrition and weight loss, with one witness losing 50 kg.²¹⁶
78. Former POWs reported that they were subjected to sleep deprivation,²¹⁷ held in overcrowded conditions,²¹⁸ with inadequate sleeping arrangements; insufficient ventilation;²¹⁹ mould;²²⁰ infestations of insects and rats;²²¹ and provided with inadequate clothing and heating during winter.²²² In some instances, the prison authorities intentionally kept cells cold during winter and punished those who complained with beatings or intense exercise.²²³

212 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 90; UKR.WS.412, para. 34; UKR.WS.440, para. 61; UKR.WS.450, paras. 37-38; UKR.WS.463, para. 48; UKR.WS.464, para. 63; UKR.WS.475, paras. 56, 99; UKR.WS.485, paras. 81-82, 86; UKR.WS.488, para. 59. See also UKR.WS.443, para. 176. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna. See Section IV.a. *Arbitrary deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearances in areas under the control of Russian authorities*.

213 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 28; UKR.WS.411, para. 123; UKR.WS.412, para. 34; UKR.WS.416, paras. 25, 47; UKR.WS.424, paras. 15, 28, 64, 124, 137; UKR.WS.431, para. 22; UKR.WS.436, paras. 50, 78-82; UKR.WS.438, para. 12; UKR.WS.440, para. 59; UKR.WS.443, para. 64, 102, 181; UKR.WS.448, para. 32; UKR.WS.450, paras. 123, 140; UKR.WS.462, paras. 123-124; UKR.WS.463, para. 48; UKR.WS.464, paras. 36, 90; UKR.WS.474, para. 109; UKR.WS.484, paras. 13, 21; UKR.WS.488, paras. 59, 76; UKR.WS.489, para. 39; UKR.WS.490, paras. 28, 46, 54, 76. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

214 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 41; UKR.WS.431, para. 23; UKR.WS.436, para. 78; UKR.WS.450, paras. 135, 184; UKR.WS.490, para. 76.

215 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 66; UKR.WS.410, paras. 75, 139, 147; UKR.WS.416, para. 27; UKR.WS.429, para. 64; UKR.WS.431, para. 37; UKR.WS.436, para. 106; UKR.WS.462, para. 148; UKR.WS.464, para. 52; UKR.WS.490, para. 77.

216 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.412, para. 72; UKR.WS.431, paras. 42, 46; UKR.WS.436, para. 60; UKR.WS.438, para. 11; UKR.WS.440, paras. 186-187; UKR.WS.442, para. 152; UKR.WS.443, para. 61; UKR.WS.450, para. 130; UKR.WS.462, para. 123; UKR.WS.464, paras. 52, 70, 90; UKR.WS.474, para. 109; UKR.WS.489, para. 39; UKR.WS.491, para. 107.

217 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 28, 41; UKR.WS.410, paras. 35-36; UKR.WS.411, paras. 86-87; UKR.WS.424, para. 32; UKR.WS.429, para. 66; UKR.WS.436, paras. 69-71; UKR.WS.440, para. 60; UKR.WS.442, para. 102; UKR.WS.443, paras. 105-106; UKR.WS.448, paras. 125-127; UKR.WS.450, paras. 106; UKR.WS.462, paras. 83-84, 192; UKR.WS.490, paras. 36, 39, 53; UKR.WS.491, para. 31. See also UKR.WS.473, para. 46 who recounts that the lights in the cell were on 24/7.

218 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 26, 28; UKR.WS.410, paras. 35, 66-67; UKR.WS.411, para. 82; UKR.WS.412, para. 25; UKR.WS.416, para. 22; UKR.WS.424, paras. 15, 18; UKR.WS.429, para. 124; UKR.WS.436, paras. 11, 48, 68-72; UKR.WS.440, para. 58; UKR.WS.462, paras. 83-86, 192; UKR.WS.470, para. 27; UKR.WS.474, paras. 101-102; UKR.WS.475, para. 32; UKR.WS.485, para. 43; UKR.WS.488, para. 65; UKR.WS.490, paras. 28, 39, 53.

219 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 26, 47; UKR.WS.436, para. 68; UKR.WS.440, paras. 145, 148; UKR.WS.473, para. 63; UKR.WS.490, para. 28.

220 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 33; UKR.WS.431, para. 52; UKR.WS.463, para. 74; UKR.WS.473, para. 61; UKR.WS.484, para. 21.

221 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 35, 47; UKR.WS.410, para. 121; UKR.WS.416, para. 21; UKR.WS.436, para. 99; UKR.WS.440, paras. 122, 147; UKR.WS.443, paras. 124-129; UKR.WS.485, paras. 86-87; UKR.WS.490, para. 61.

222 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 209; UKR.WS.416, para. 50; UKR.WS.429, para. 140; UKR.WS.438, paras. 23-25; UKR.WS.442, para. 103; UKR.WS.443, para. 141; UKR.WS.464, para. 98; UKR.WS.474, paras. 105-106; UKR.WS.484, para. 21; UKR.WS.488, para. 38.

223 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 209; UKR.WS.429, para. 140; UKR.WS.464, para. 98; UKR.WS.474, paras. 105-106.

79. Former POWS told ODIHR that they were given limited, if any, access to toilet and shower facilities.²²⁴ When access was permitted, POWs were often given an unrealistic time limit, as short as 30 seconds,²²⁵ and were frequently beaten and/or given electric shocks while they showered.²²⁶ Two former POWs recounted that the electrocution of POWs while showering “*was just entertainment for them, not punishment*”,²²⁷ and that their captors would beat and electrocute them because it was “*fun for them, they laughed*.”²²⁸
80. Survivors described to ODIHR how their Russian captors also limited or denied medical attention to POWs during captivity.²²⁹ Medical or prison staff often responded to requests for medical attention with apathy, threats of violence and death, and beatings.²³⁰ POWs routinely suffered festering injuries, illnesses and infections, such as scabies, tuberculosis, and hepatitis without treatment.²³¹ In one case, prison staff purposefully tried to infect detainees with tuberculosis by having an infected person transferred to a new cell.²³²
81. According to their testimonies, POWs also endured gruelling daily routines, such as standing for most of the day (up to 16 hours) with little to no movement, and being prohibited from talking (especially in Ukrainian), with surveillance cameras always monitoring their behaviour.²³³ When prison staff deemed

224 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 89; UKR.WS.412, paras. 38; UKR.WS.412, para. 58; UKR.WS.416, para. 22; UKR.WS.431, paras. 31, 45; UKR.WS.436, para. 22; UKR.WS.440, para. 117; UKR.WS.442, para. 32; UKR.WS.443, paras. 60, 100, 176; UKR.WS.448, para. 51; UKR.WS.451, paras. 110-111; UKR.WS.473, para. 48; UKR.WS.475, paras. 90, 137; UKR.WS.484, paras. 22, 37; UKR.WS.488, para. 60; UKR.WS.490, para. 28.

225 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.412, para. 38; UKR.WS.416, para. 47; UKR.WS.431, paras. 18, 45, 65; UKR.WS.438, para. 35; UKR.WS.440, para. 118; UKR.WS.442, paras. 110-111; UKR.WS.443, paras. 60, 100; UKR.WS.473, para. 48; UKR.WS.474, para. 70; UKR.WS.484, para. 22; UKR.WS.489, para. 37.

226 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.431, paras. 18, 31, 65; UKR.WS.440, para. 117; UKR.WS.442, paras. 110-112; UKR.WS.443, para. 60; UKR.WS.450, paras. 95, 115, 177; UKR.WS.474, paras. 59-60, 68-70; UKR.WS.475, para. 137.

227 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.409, para. 51.

228 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.448, para. 51.

229 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 28; UKR.WS.410, paras. 170-172; UKR.WS.411, para. 183; UKR.WS.412, paras. 28, 45-46, 66; UKR.WS.416, paras. 21-22, 38; UKR.WS.431, paras. 32, 50-51; UKR.WS.436, paras. 43, 145, 205; UKR.WS.438, paras. 22, 111-113; UKR.WS.440, paras. 95-97, 143-144, 221-222; UKR.WS.443, paras. 111-115, 118; UKR.WS.448, paras. 49, 132-134; UKR.WS.462, para. 121; UKR.WS.470, para. 52; UKR.WS.475, para. 116; UKR.WS.484, para. 26; UKR.WS.490, paras. 29, 55. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

230 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 28, 37; UKR.WS.412, para. 66; UKR.WS.431, para. 32; UKR.WS.442, para. 143; UKR.WS.443, paras. 114, 120, 167-168; UKR.WS.448, paras. 133-135; UKR.WS.450, paras. 129, 166-167, 190; UKR.WS.464, para. 51; UKR.WS.470, para. 52; UKR.WS.474, paras. 77-78; UKR.WS.484, para. 26; UKR.WS.490, para. 55.

231 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, paras. 170-172; UKR.WS.423, para. 15; UKR.WS.424, para. 22; UKR.WS.429, paras. 125, 127-128, 140; UKR.WS.431, paras. 50-53; UKR.WS.438, para. 127; UKR.WS.440, para. 221; UKR.WS.443, paras. 112, 197; UKR.WS.448, paras. 50, 107; UKR.WS.464, para. 98; UKR.WS.485, paras. 86-88, 90-91, 96-98; UKR.WS.489, para. 51. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

232 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.448, paras. 136-138.

233 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 170; UKR.WS.412, paras. 35, 55-56, 59; UKR.WS.416, paras. 22, 32; UKR.WS.436, paras. 49, 240; UKR.WS.438, para. 117; UKR.WS.440, para. 145; UKR.WS.442, para. 96; UKR.WS.443, paras. 69, 103-104, 107; UKR.WS.448, paras. 126, 143-144, 146; UKR.WS.450, paras. 127, 214; UKR.WS.451, paras. 112-118; UKR.WS.463, para. 78; UKR.WS.464, paras. 37, 91; UKR.WS.473, paras. 45-46, 60; UKR.WS.474, para. 103; UKR.WS.475, para. 112; UKR.WS.484, para. 37; UKR.WS.489, para. 37; UKR.WS.490, paras. 56, 59; UKR.WS.491, para. 49.

POWs to have broken the rules, they were punished both individually and collectively.²³⁴

82. Prison staff conducted multiple daily checks of the cells or barracks, during which they severely beat and electrocuted POWs and forced them to perform intense physical exercise and stress positions.²³⁵ POWs were forced to memorize and recite the Russian national anthem, as well as pro-Russian/Soviet songs and poems as part of “patriotic education”.²³⁶ Refusal or failure to do so resulted in the prohibition of food, intense physical exercise, stress positions, severe beatings and electrocution.²³⁷
83. According to their statements to ODIHR, POWs were routinely subjected to derogatory comments about themselves and Ukraine, and exposed to anti-Ukrainian sentiment and pro-Russian propaganda through constant radio and television broadcasts.²³⁸ Former POWs also reported constantly being encouraged to collaborate with the Russian authorities, relinquish their Ukrainian citizenship and take Russian citizenship, and to fight for the Russian armed forces.²³⁹ One survivor recalled that, upon refusing, he was told “*then you’ll just die here, [expletive]*.”²⁴⁰
84. In some instances, former POWs reported being forced to work during their internment, cooking, producing clothing and performing menial tasks such as gathering stones or pine needles.²⁴¹ If POWs refused to work or their work

234 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 42, 55; UKR.WS.410, paras. 144-145; UKR.WS.431, para. 17; UKR.WS.442, paras. 96-98; UKR.WS.443, paras. 106, 107; UKR.WS.450, paras. 127-130; UKR.WS.463, paras. 96-97; UKR.WS.464, paras. 37, 69, 74; UKR.WS.473, para. 46; UKR.WS.475, para. 112; UKR.WS.490, para. 59.

235 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, paras. 122, 148, 206; UKR.WS.412, para. 45; UKR.WS.416, paras. 21, 46, 48; UKR.WS.424, para. 25; UKR.WS.429, paras. 67-69, 134; UKR.WS.436, paras. 102-103; UKR.WS.438, paras. 155-157; UKR.WS.443, para. 67; UKR.WS.448, para. 33; UKR.WS.450, paras. 78-80, 128; UKR.WS.451, paras. 114-124; UKR.WS.464, para. 62; UKR.WS.473, paras. 38, 45-46; UKR.WS.474, paras. 61-62; UKR.WS.475, paras. 59-61, 68-70; UKR.WS.484, paras. 43-44; UKR.WS.489, para. 37; UKR.WS.490, paras. 43, 57, 76.

236 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 40, 42, 50; UKR.WS.410, paras. 43, 128, 132; UKR.WS.411, paras. 149, 204; UKR.WS.412, paras. 45, 55, 65; UKR.WS.416, paras. 21, 37, 48; UKR.WS.424, paras. 25, 32; UKR.WS.429, paras. 64-65, 124, 134; UKR.WS.431, paras. 30, 37; UKR.WS.436, paras. 51-55, 73, 154; UKR.WS.438, para. 20; UKR.WS.440, paras. 87-88, 137; UKR.WS.442, para. 97; UKR.WS.443, paras. 109, 183; UKR.WS.448, paras. 33, 41; UKR.WS.450, para. 81; UKR.WS.451, para. 108; UKR.WS.462, paras. 113, 194; UKR.WS.464, paras. 56, 63, 91; UKR.WS.473, para. 38; UKR.WS.475, paras. 58-59, 129-133; UKR.WS.484, para. 37; UKR.WS.489, para. 37; UKR.WS.490, paras. 60, 108.

237 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 40; UKR.WS.411, para. 210; UKR.WS.412, para. 57; UKR.WS.429, para. 124; UKR.WS.431, paras. 30, 37; UKR.WS.436, paras. 53-55, 73; UKR.WS.440, paras. 87-89, 116; UKR.WS.442, paras. 97-98; UKR.WS.448, para. 41; UKR.WS.464, para. 91; UKR.WS.475, paras. 59, 129-133; UKR.WS.484, para. 37.

238 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 50, 54; UKR.WS.410, para. 131; UKR.WS.411, para. 165; UKR.WS.412, paras. 36, 54, 65; UKR.WS.436, para. 149; UKR.WS.443, para. 108; UKR.WS.462, paras. 113-114; UKR.WS.484, para. 30; UKR.WS.491, paras. 77, 79.

239 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 62, 70, 77; UKR.WS.410, paras. 188-189; UKR.WS.411, para. 223; UKR.WS.412, paras. 59, 62; UKR.WS.429, paras. 129-130, 133; UKR.WS.431, paras. 40, 58; UKR.WS.448, para. 177; UKR.WS.450, para. 202; UKR.WS.451, para. 74; UKR.WS.463, para. 85; UKR.WS.464, paras. 42, 94; UKR.WS.473, para. 51; UKR.WS.474, para. 93; UKR.WS.475, paras. 74-75, 134; UKR.WS.490, para. 38.

240 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.431, para. 40.

241 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, paras. 42, 45-46; UKR.WS.411, paras. 91-92, 161, 167; UKR.WS.416, para. 32; UKR.WS.431, paras. 34-35, 59-60, 62-63; UKR.WS.436, paras. 107-112, 155-156; UKR.WS.440, paras. 70, 140; UKR.WS.462, paras. 151-156; UKR.WS.475, paras. 87-88; UKR.WS.485, paras. 41-44, 101; UKR.WS.488, paras. 57-58; UKR.WS.490, paras. 36, 80, 105.

output was deemed insufficient, they were forced to perform intense physical exercise and were subjected to beatings and electrocution as punishment.²⁴²

85. Of the 29 former POWs who spoke with ODIHR during the second half of 2024, 16 reported having neither visits from nor interaction with international or humanitarian organizations, including the ICRC.²⁴³ Seven POWs recalled having met representatives of the ICRC but were explicit in stating that these visits only occurred at model facilities which existed to “*show the good conditions of prisoners*” or at facilities that took actions to deceive ICRC visitors by hiding the mistreatment of prisoners, increasing their food, threatening them not to complain, and by impeding or denying free access to ICRC staff when meeting with prisoners.²⁴⁴ One POW was told prior to a visit by ICRC that “*they will come and go, but you will stay, so don’t complain and don’t say anything wrong, don’t tell [them] anything you have heard or seen.*”²⁴⁵ In two instances, interviewees alleged that the Russian authorities impersonated ICRC and/or UN personnel, in order to see if prisoners had any complaints. If they complained of poor treatment, they were subsequently beaten.²⁴⁶
86. Russian Federation media personnel visited certain detention facilities to report on detention conditions and encouraged POWs to provide video testimony.²⁴⁷ Likewise, interrogators, journalists and volunteers visited detention sites offering to record videos of POWs to share with relatives and the public.²⁴⁸ Those involved instructed POWs on what to say on camera and sought information about sensitive and/or political issues.²⁴⁹ Often such videos were the only means whereby the relatives of POWs learnt about their status,²⁵⁰ with nine POWs stating they had no contact with relatives at all

242 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.431, para. 46; UKR.WS.436, paras. 111-112, 127; UKR.WS.440, para. 140; UKR.WS.462, para. 152; UKR.WS.488, para. 57; UKR.WS.490, para. 105.

243 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 44; UKR.WS.410, para. 157; UKR.WS.412, para. 48; UKR.WS.436, para. 245; UKR.WS.438, para. 27; UKR.WS.440, paras. 91, 160, 199; UKR.WS.448, para. 152; UKR.WS.450, para. 160; UKR.WS.462, para. 172; UKR.WS.464, para. 57; UKR.WS.470, para. 45; UKR.WS.473, paras. 53, 65; UKR.WS.475, para. 117; UKR.WS.484, paras. 26, 46; UKR.WS.489, paras. 21, 41; UKR.WS.491, para. 86. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

244 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.429, paras. 7, 73-81, 87-88; UKR.WS.431, paras. 54-55; UKR.WS.438, paras. 159-160; UKR.WS.442, paras. 52-82, 138-139; UKR.WS.451, paras. 60-62, 94; UKR.WS.464, paras. 66-67, 71, 75-78, 81; UKR.WS.470, para. 45.

245 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.429, para. 80. See also UKR.WS.464, para. 56 who received a similar threat during a facility visit by a [Russian] prosecutor.

246 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.448, paras. 43-47; UKR.WS.464, para. 99.

247 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, paras. 159-160; UKR.WS.412, para. 49; UKR.WS.416, para. 36; UKR.WS.424, paras. 21, 27; UKR.WS.429, paras. 92, 98; UKR.WS.431, para. 87; UKR.WS.436, paras. 120-121; UKR.WS.440, paras. 63, 83, 85; UKR.WS.464, para. 81; UKR.WS.470, para. 46; UKR.WS.473, para. 55; UKR.WS.474, paras. 38, 87; UKR.WS.489, para. 42; UKR.WS.490, para. 47.

248 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 59; UKR.WS.410, paras. 162-163; UKR.WS.450, paras. 142-143; UKR.WS.463, para. 94; UKR.WS.464, paras. 29, 81; UKR.WS.485, paras. 108-111; UKR.WS.490, paras. 88, 110.

249 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, para. 59; UKR.WS.436, paras. 229-233; UKR.WS.450, paras. 142-143, 150-151; UKR.WS.464, paras. 29, 59, 72; UKR.WS.490, para. 110.

250 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.410, paras. 161, 165; UKR.WS.411, para. 179; UKR.WS.436, para. 229; UKR.WS.462, paras. 169-170; UKR.WS.484, para. 48; UKR.WS.485, paras. 112-113; UKR.WS.490, para. 90.

during internment.²⁵¹ The reported creation and distribution of videos of POWs is consistent with a pattern observed through ODIHR's remote monitoring,²⁵² whereby Ukrainian POWs, and to a lesser extent Russian POWs, are exposed to public curiosity through interviews or recorded testimonies.²⁵³

87. Four former POWs interviewed by ODIHR stated that, prior to their release, their detention conditions slightly improved, particularly during the time immediately preceding their release/exchange, but clarified that they still regularly suffered ill-treatment through intense exercise regimes and verbal abuse.²⁵⁴ Furthermore, prior to their release (and transfer between facilities), five POWs were forced to proclaim that they had no complaints about their treatment, or that they were not subjected to physical or psychological pressure on the territory of the Russian Federation.²⁵⁵ However, during the exchange process, POWs were subjected to violence and denied access to toilets, food and water during long journeys.²⁵⁶ According to one former POW, his beatings intensified one week before the exchange, and he was told that *"the good time is over."*²⁵⁷
88. Three former POWs stated that they underwent surgeries because of injuries sustained during captivity.²⁵⁸ Likewise, they described suffering from ongoing physical and mental/psychological trauma because of their detention and did not feel ready to return to civilian life.²⁵⁹
89. ODIHR continues to acknowledge the ongoing challenges in accessing and interviewing POWs held by both sides to the conflict.²⁶⁰ ODIHR received information from the Ukrainian authorities asserting that they comply with IHL in their internment of Russian POWs and outlining the conditions of detention and the daily routines of Russian POWs. Ukraine contends that it provides POWs with sanitary conditions, regular food and drink, medical care and the ability to access the ICRC and to communicate with relatives, among

251 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.429, para. 142; UKR.WS.438, para. 26; UKR.WS.440, para. 84; UKR.WS.442, para. 136; UKR.WS.443, paras. 85, 209; UKR.WS.450, paras. 44, 103, 142, 159, 209; UKR.WS.473, para. 52; UKR.WS.475, para. 66; UKR.WS.484, para. 48.

252 As part of its monitoring activities, ODIHR regularly consults social media channels and platforms affiliated with, or supportive of parties to the conflict. In doing so, it has been able to track instances where POWs are exposed to public curiosity through the publication of videos and photos.

253 Both Russian and Ukrainian authorities, as well as international media, have shared materials which expose POWs to public curiosity in violation of IHL. 'Exposure to public curiosity' can take many forms, such as the disclosure of photographic and video images of POWs, including the remains of deceased POWs. The 'public' refers to anyone who is not directly involved in handling the POWs. This protection preserves the dignity of POWs and protects them and their families from being identified and possibly targeted for reprisals after their release. See GC III, art. 13(2).

254 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.429, para. 138; UKR.WS.448, para. 64; UKR.WS.462, paras. 134-136; UKR.WS.474, para. 120.

255 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 240; UKR.WS.424, para. 30; UKR.WS.438, para. 171; UKR.WS.450, para. 171; UKR.WS.489, para. 64.

256 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 77-79; UKR.WS.411, paras. 229-241; UKR.WS.436, paras. 160-161, 169, 172, 179; UKR.WS.462, para. 180.

257 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.473, para. 75.

258 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.409, paras. 55, 75; UKR.WS.424, para. 36; UKR.WS.474, para. 145.

259 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.412, para. 70; UKR.WS.424, para. 36; UKR.WS.489, para. 36; UKR.WS.491, para. 111. See also UKR.WS.436, paras. 61, 144, 196; UKR.WS.450, paras. 227-228; UKR.WS.462, para. 135.

260 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 72.

other guarantees. ODIHR has not visited these detention sites and cannot independently verify the Ukrainian authorities' statements. Meanwhile, the Russian Federation authorities have not been forthcoming with information about Ukrainian POWs, other than in the context of POW exchanges and videos exposing them to public curiosity. To date, ODIHR has not been able to interview Russian POWs or former POWs.

90. While ODIHR's own monitoring did not record and verify any reported violations of the rights of Russian POWs at either the point of capture or during internment, a recent UN OHCHR report (published 1 October 2024) based on interviews conducted between 1 March 2023 and 31 August 2024, concluded that 104 Russian POWs provided "consistent and detailed accounts of torture or other forms of ill-treatment, indicating a persistent pattern", with most instances having occurred during the initial stage of internment.²⁶¹
91. ODIHR's monitoring included the analysis and verification (where possible) of materials circulated online, which show purported violations of IHL. ODIHR is aware of at least fifteen instances in which materials propagated online during the second half of 2024 appear to depict the torture or execution of Ukrainian POWs and individuals *hors de combat*, as well as the desecration/mutilation of bodies. While ODIHR has documented ill-treatment and killing of POWs and civilians repeatedly since February 2022, there has been a significant increase in the dissemination of such material online in the second half of 2024. While ODIHR has not independently verified each reported incident,²⁶² ODIHR remains concerned that the release of materials depicting both the torture and execution of POWs under the control of the Russian authorities indicates that such acts may have increased.
92. Finally, ODIHR continued to monitor the periodic detainee exchanges between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. During the second half of 2024, the authorities reported six POW exchanges, for a total of 58 POWs exchanged, with the most recent exchange taking place on 18 October 2024.²⁶³ According to information received by ODIHR from the Ukrainian authorities in November 2024, the total number of Ukrainian civilians returned via exchanges since

²⁶¹ See [Treatment of Prisoners of War and Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 1 June 2024 – 31 August 2024](#), UN OHCHR, 1 October 2024, para. 56.

²⁶² As part of its monitoring activities, ODIHR regularly consults social media channels and platforms affiliated with, or supportive of parties to the conflict. ODIHR monitors viewed and analysed the relevant materials and verified the sources according to ODIHR methodology.

²⁶³ Dmytro Lubinets, Telegram [Post](#), 25 June 2024, in Ukrainian; Ministry of Defence of Russia, Telegram [Post](#), 25 June 2024, in Russian; Dmytro Lubinets, Telegram [Post](#), 17 July 2024, in Ukrainian; Ministry of Defence of Russia, Telegram [Post](#), 17 July 2024, in Russian; Dmytro Lubinets, Telegram [Post](#), 24 August 2024, in Ukrainian; ; Ministry of Defence of Russia, Telegram [Post](#), 24 August 2024, in Russian; Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Telegram [Post](#), 13 September 2024, in Ukrainian; Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Telegram [Post](#), 14 September 2024, in Ukrainian; Ministry of Defence of Russia, Telegram [Post](#), 14 September 2024, in Russian; Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Telegram [Post](#), 18 October 2024, in Ukrainian; Ministry of Defence of Russia, Telegram [Post](#), 18 October 2024, in Russian. See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

February 2022, is 3,767 (of which, 3,599 are military personnel and 168 civilians) while the total number of Russian POWs returned is 3,151.²⁶⁴

D. CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

93. During the second half of 2024, ODIHR collected statements from 39 witnesses and survivors regarding reported instances of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).²⁶⁵ The reported incidents reflect patterns that have previously been reported by the institution²⁶⁶ and provide additional information on sexual violence perpetrated against Ukrainian POWs. The accounts, both from POWs and civilian detainees, include an increased number of reports of forced nudity and sexual abuse committed while detainees are showering.
94. In 32 of the 39 cases, the interviewees were direct survivors of various kinds of sexual violence. Most of the reported violations occurred in detention sites on the territories of Ukraine that are, or were at the time, occupied by the Russian Federation (35 instances), with 23 survivors being Ukrainian POWs or civilians who were given POW status by the Russian authorities.
95. Interviewees provided ten accounts of alleged acts of sexual violence against girls and women, and 23 directed against men; six interviewees described violence perpetrated against both men and women. Five cases occurred during a house search or a house visit; in four of them, the survivors were women and girls.
96. Interviewees reported incidents of rape²⁶⁷ and attempted rape,²⁶⁸ including group rape,²⁶⁹ rape of a family member,²⁷⁰ and rape and attempted rape with a foreign object.²⁷¹ A survivor of five instances of rape by the Russian forces explained, *“Sometimes, while you were digging a trench and there was a foxhole nearby, an officer would call you there and do it there. Or in one of the houses: after cleaning, someone of them would point at you and would say, ‘You stay behind’, and they would abuse you sexually. You could have to stay there for several days. I remember having to stay at one house for 24 hours, and then I was*

²⁶⁴ See also Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

²⁶⁵ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, UKR.WS.408, UKR.WS.410, UKR.WS.411, UKR.WS.412, UKR.WS.413, UKR.WS.418, UKR.WS.419, UKR.WS.424, UKR.WS.425, UKR.WS.429, UKR.WS.430, UKR.WS.436, UKR.WS.437, UKR.WS.439, UKR.WS.440, UKR.WS.442, UKR.WS.443, UKR.WS.444, UKR.WS.448, UKR.WS.450, UKR.WS.453, UKR.WS.455, UKR.WS.460, UKR.WS.462, UKR.WS.463, UKR.WS.464, UKR.WS.470, UKR.WS.473, UKR.WS.475, UKR.WS.481, UKR.WS.483, UKR.WS.484, UKR.WS.485, UKR.WS.487, UKR.WS.488, UKR.WS.489, UKR.WS.490, UKR.WS.491.

²⁶⁶ See OSCE/ODIHR, *Second Interim Report*, paras. 116-122; OSCE/ODIHR, *Third Interim Report*, paras. 65-71, OSCE/ODIHR, *Fourth Interim Report*, paras. 9, 69, 70, 76; OSCE/ODIHR, *Fifth Interim Report*, paras. 74-78.

²⁶⁷ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.425, para. 24; UKR.WS.430, paras. 8-9 (committed by an alleged collaborator); UKR.WS.453, paras. 152-155. See also UKR.WS.413, para. 9, UKR.WS.448, para. 100; UKR.WS.481, para. 74.

²⁶⁸ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.483, paras. 103, 115-116, 119-122, 127; UKR.WS.425, para. 24.

²⁶⁹ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.444, para. 226.

²⁷⁰ ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.408, para. 264.

²⁷¹ ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.481, para. 74; UKR.WS.489, para. 30.

ordered back to work.”²⁷² In one instance, prison guards filmed themselves raping a detainee.²⁷³ Additionally, survivors and interviewees described threats of rape,²⁷⁴ threats by prison guards of being raped by other detainees,²⁷⁵ threats of rape with a foreign object,²⁷⁶ and other sexual violence,²⁷⁷ including threats to rape the detainee’s family members.²⁷⁸ For example, one survivor described how the Russian authorities brought in his son and threatened to rape him during his interrogation.²⁷⁹

97. Interviewees also reported instances where Russian forces electrocuted the genitals of the survivors,²⁸⁰ struck their genitals²⁸¹ and threatened them with castration.²⁸² A survivor recalled, *“They beat and tasered my genitals; they said ‘you should not be able to father children’.”*²⁸³ Nine interviewees and survivors described forced nudity.²⁸⁴ For example, two survivors reported military and law enforcement personnel performing body cavity searches in front of several officers of the opposite sex.²⁸⁵ Five survivors described the degrading treatment of detainees in the facility’s showers.²⁸⁶ One of them recounted, *“After the shower, I was naked and wet. Several times they tried to shock me on my genitals. I tried to avoid it, so they hit me even more with the shockers. Then the door opened, and a man came in and said, ‘Crawl towards me.’ He said, ‘Crawl like a snake.’ So, I did, and they kept shocking me. I crawled across the room.”*²⁸⁷
98. Interviewees and survivors described sexual harassment,²⁸⁸ verbal abuse²⁸⁹ and other acts of sexual violence meant to degrade detainees.²⁹⁰ A survivor

272 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.453, paras. 152-153. Note that a “foxhole” refers to a pit dug to protect a soldier against enemy fire.

273 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.425, para. 24.

274 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, para. 43; UKR.WS.424, para. 28; UKR.WS.443, para. 146; UKR.WS.455, para. 119.

275 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.412, para. 51.

276 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 54; UKR.WS.408, para. 200; UKR.WS.424, para. 24; UKR.WS.429, para. 103; UKR.WS.444, para. 119; UKR.WS.462, para. 101; UKR.WS.463, para. 50; UKR.WS.464, para. 94; UKR.WS.490, para. 84; UKR.WS.491, para. 59.

277 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, para. 43; UKR.WS.437, para. 38; UKR.WS.455, paras. 94, 171; UKR.WS.488, para. 53.

278 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 57; UKR.WS.408, para. 263; UKR.WS.418, para. 41; UKR.WS.455, para. 119.

279 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.455, para. 119.

280 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 195; UKR.WS.412, para. 40; UKR.WS.419, para. 74; UKR.WS.429, paras. 114, 119; UKR.WS.437, para. 53; UKR.WS.442, para. 121; UKR.WS.448, para. 164; UKR.WS.470, para. 34; UKR.WS.473, paras. 30, 43; UKR.WS.487, para. 35; UKR.WS.489, para. 30.

281 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.436, para. 51; UKR.WS.470, para. 34; UKR.WS.473, paras. 30, 43.

282 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.455, para. 73; UKR.WS.491, para. 59.

283 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.473, para. 43.

284 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.419, paras. 15-17; UKR.WS.424, paras. 24, 31; UKR.WS.429, para. 116; UKR.WS.453, para. 114; UKR.WS.455, para. 171; UKR.WS.462, para. 142; UKR.WS.470, para. 34; UKR.WS.475, paras. 44, 125, 138; UKR.WS.488, para. 53.

285 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 197; UKR.WS.475, para. 125.

286 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.443, para. 100; UKR.WS.448, para. 51; UKR.WS.450, para. 112; UKR.WS.470, para. 34; UKR.WS.488, para. 64.

287 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.450, para. 112

288 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.411, para. 138; UKR.WS.410, para. 181; UKR.WS.485, para. 106; UKR.WS.488, para. 63; UKR.WS.453, para. 118; UKR.WS.488, para. 74.

289 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 195; UKR.WS.460, para. 67; UKR.WS.462, para. 99; UKR.WS.473, para. 43,

290 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.440, paras. 168-169; UKR.WS.443, para. 100; UKR.WS.448, para. 51.

recalled how a prison guard “asked what I would be willing to do to get my glasses back and asked if I would [perform a sexual act on him].”²⁹¹

99. Continuing a pattern documented in previous ODIHR interim reports,²⁹² interviewees and survivors described their captors making degrading homophobic statements²⁹³ and coercing male detainees to perform sexual acts with other detainees.²⁹⁴ A survivor recalled how one of the prison guards asked him, “What type of trousers are these. Are you a [homophobic insult]? You want to be like Europe ... impregnated with gay and lesbian people ... you are not real Christians ... if you want, we can make you gay.”²⁹⁵ Another survivor told ODIHR that prison guards repeatedly used a homophobic slur to refer to him, and that one of the prison guards made him hug and dance with another inmate.²⁹⁶
100. ODIHR emphasizes that the acts described above amount to grave violations of both IHL²⁹⁷ and IHRL²⁹⁸ and might constitute war crimes²⁹⁹ and crimes against humanity.³⁰⁰ ODIHR notes that, according to information from the Ukrainian authorities, as of 22 November 2024, the Prosecutor General’s Office has registered 327 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV); the National Police of Ukraine has opened 110 criminal cases based on the accounts of 187 survivors.³⁰¹

E. ADMINISTRATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Attempts to alter the status and character of the occupied territories

101. Under IHL, occupation is presumed to be a transitional and temporary regime under which the occupying power does not acquire sovereignty over the occupied territory and must refrain from bringing about irreversible changes that would fundamentally alter the status or character of such territories.³⁰² However, ODIHR continued to receive information about the coercion of residents in the occupied territories to acquire Russian citizenship, as well as on the imposition of the Russian Federation curriculum in schools and of military-patriotic education for school-aged children, indicating that

291 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.411, para. 138.

292 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 78.

293 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.436, para. 149, UKR.WS.484, para. 45.

294 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.425, para. 24; UKR.WS.450, para. 157; UKR.WS.484, para. 45. See also UKR.WS.436, para. 243; UKR.WS.424, para. 24.

295 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.455, para. 94. AP I, art. 75(2)(b) includes as a fundamental guarantee the prohibition of “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment”. See also CIHL Rule 90.

296 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.484, para. 45.

297 AP I, arts. 75(2)(b) and 76(1); CIHL Rule 93.

298 See, e.g., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 7.

299 ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(b)(xxii).

300 ICTY Statute, art. 5(g); ICTR Statute, art. 3(g).

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

302 GC IV, art. 47; Hague Regulations, art. 43. See further OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 79.

the Russian authorities continued their efforts to alter the demographic composition of the territory, force declarations of allegiance and change the social status quo.

Forced adoption of Russian citizenship

102. During its interviews conducted in the second half of 2024, ODIHR received accounts,³⁰³ including through witness testimonies,³⁰⁴ of sustained and systematic efforts by the Russian Federation to force residents of the occupied areas of Ukraine to acquire Russian citizenship through legal, administrative and socio-economic policies. According to witnesses interviewed by ODIHR during the second half of 2024, Russian citizenship was required for residents to access health care, employment, education, humanitarian assistance and social benefits. It was also instrumental to the freedom of movement, including the ability to leave the occupied territories, as well as to maintain possession of properties owned by Ukrainian residents, confirming the findings of previous interim reports.³⁰⁵
103. In addition to violating the IHL framework on belligerent occupation,³⁰⁶ the regulations, restrictions and intimidation reportedly applied against Ukrainian citizens may violate the prohibition against discrimination based on nationality³⁰⁷ and result in forced declarations of allegiance to an occupying power.³⁰⁸ The imposition of Russian citizenship may further lead to forced conscription, which is explicitly prohibited under IHL.³⁰⁹
104. Nine witnesses interviewed by ODIHR reported that a Russian passport was needed to have access to public medical services,³¹⁰ stating that residents without a Russian passport could only be provided with limited emergency care. In some cases, residents in the Russian Federation-occupied territories could access private clinics without a Russian passport, but they had to wait

303 Information provided to ODIHR by five CSOs working on human rights and humanitarian law issues in the occupied territories; Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

304 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.405; UKR.WS.407; UKR.WS.408; UKR.WS.413; UKR.WS.416; UKR.WS.417; UKR.WS.418; UKR.WS.421; UKR.WS.423; UKR.WS.426; UKR.WS.431; UKR.WS.437; UKR.WS.439; UKR.WS.441; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.448; UKR.WS.449; UKR.WS.457; UKR.WS.458; UKR.WS.459; UKR.WS.460; UKR.WS.461; UKR.WS.467; UKR.WS.468; UKR.WS.471; UKR.WS.472; UKR.WS.474; UKR.WS.476; UKR.WS.482.

305 See OSCE/ODIHR, [First Interim Report](#), para. 80; OSCE/ODIHR, [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 57-60; OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 91-97; OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 98-95; OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 80-87.

306 Hague Regulations, arts. 42-56.

307 Particularly as it relates to the provision of essential services and humanitarian assistance, see GC IV, art. 27(3); AP I, arts 69-70.

308 Hague Regulations, art. 45.

309 Hague Regulations, art. 45; 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 and ICC Statute, art. 8(2)(a)(v). See also Section IV.e.ii. *Forced conscription and mobilization into the armed forces of the Russian Federation*.

310 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.405, para. 35; UKR.WS.418, para. 29; UKR.WS.437, para. 132; UKR.WS.439, para. 104; UKR.WS.441, para. 106; UKR.WS.444, para. 191; UKR.WS.457, para. 60; UKR.WS.461, para. 27; UKR.WS.476, para. 65.

prolonged periods of time for an appointment.³¹¹ A witness from Kherson region shared with ODIHR, *“to get medical services you need a Russian passport and Russian medical insurance and an identification number. Once we had to call an ambulance for my daughter, they provided first aid but ... we were told that if they had known we didn’t have a Russian passport, they wouldn’t have come.”*³¹²

105. Nine witnesses also stated that not holding a Russian passport impacted the freedom of movement of residents in the occupied territories,³¹³ preventing them from crossing checkpoints or subjecting them to issues such as long waits or detailed questioning at checkpoints. Without a Russian passport, residents could not leave the occupied territories. Additionally, a witness from Zaporizhzhia region stated, *“By the end of 2024, all drivers must have a Russian driving license, to re-register their cars and have Russian license plates.”*³¹⁴
106. Seven ODIHR witnesses with property in Russian Federation-occupied territories were required to re-register their properties under Russian law, a process requiring Russian citizenship, or risk appropriation of the property.³¹⁵ Russian citizenship was also required to pay utility bills in some locations, and failure to pay put residents at risk of losing their apartments.³¹⁶ According to a witness from Donetsk region, *“If you failed to pay these bills for three months, then under Russian law [applied in the occupied territories of Ukraine], your apartment could be seized and sold at an auction.”*³¹⁷
107. Five witnesses stated that residents of the occupied territories were not able to get a job in either the public or private sectors without Russian passports.³¹⁸ Moreover, the children of parents without a Russian passport were prevented from attending school.³¹⁹ Russian citizenship was also required for residents in the occupied territories to access various services,³²⁰ such as social benefits,³²¹ utility services,³²² humanitarian assistance³²³ and notary services.³²⁴

311 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.405, para. 35.

312 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.468, para. 52.

313 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.405, paras. 39, 51; UKR.WS.418, para. 29; UKR.WS.441, para. 41; UKR.WS.444, paras. 66-72; UKR.WS.449, para. 125; UKR.WS.458, para. 61; UKR.WS.461, paras. 28-33; UKR.WS.468, paras. 13, 49; UKR.WS.476, para. 64.

314 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.444, para. 231.

315 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.405, para. 40; UKR.WS.444, para. 230; UKR.WS.458, paras. 36, 46, 49; UKR.WS.460, para. 95; UKR.WS.468, para. 54; UKR.WS.472, para. 107; UKR.WS.476, para. 67.

316 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.461, para. 25; UKR.WS.472, para. 107; UKR.WS.476, para. 67.

317 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.461, para. 25.

318 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.418, para. 29; UKR.WS.449, paras. 27, 31; UKR.WS.460, paras. 92-95; UKR.WS.461, para. 27; UKR.WS.468, para. 53.

319 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.405, para. 37; UKR.WS.457, para. 60. Moreover, according to information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna, for children who reach the age of 14, having a Russian passport was a prerequisite for obtaining a secondary education certificate. See further Section IV.e.i. *Grave and systematic changes related to education*.

320 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.458, para. 40; UKR.WS.476, para. 65.

321 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.461, para. 27; UKR.WS.468, para. 51.

322 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.439, para. 110; UKR.WS.461, paras. 25, 27; UKR.WS.476, para. 65.

323 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.413, para. 35; UKR.WS.458, para. 41.

324 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.461, para. 27.

Grave and systematic changes related to education, including military-patriotic education

108. ODIHR continued to receive accounts,³²⁵ including through 12 witness interviews conducted in the second half of 2024,³²⁶ of the imposition of the Russian Federation curriculum and of military-patriotic education for children in the occupied territories of Ukraine, confirming the findings documented in previous interim reports.³²⁷ 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 the IHL principles requiring an occupying power to refrain from fundamentally altering the *status quo ante*.³²⁸ Specifically, the occupying authority must ensure children separated from their parents are educated by people of a similar cultural tradition as their parents³²⁹ and must not compel the inhabitants of an occupied territory to swear allegiance to the hostile power.³³⁰
109. Eight witnesses interviewed by ODIHR described the imposition of the Russian curriculum in schools in the Russian Federation-occupied territories of Ukraine,³³¹ with one witness from Zaporizhzhia region stating, “*The curriculum has been completely changed; it’s now Russian. It’s taught in the Russian language; all the textbooks are Russian; all the formalities in the school have been changed to reflect the Russian state.*”³³² Many teachers continued holding Ukrainian curriculum classes online,³³³ but secretly, as they were afraid of repercussions from the Russian authorities due to searches and checks conducted of teachers’ homes.³³⁴
110. Witnesses recalled to ODIHR that some members of the teaching staff agreed to cooperate and teach the Russian Federation curriculum, but most did not.³³⁵ Teaching staff who refused to teach under the Russian administration risked

325 Information provided to ODIHR by CSOs working on issues related to education of children in the occupied territories; Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

326 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.405; UKR.WS.408; UKR.WS.413; UKR.WS.441; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.458; UKR.WS.459; UKR.WS.460; UKR.WS.467; UKR.WS.468; UKR.WS.472; UKR.WS.488.

327 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 83-86; OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 88-96.

328 See, e.g., Hague Regulations, art. 43. See also 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.”

329 GC IV, art. 24. See also art. 50(3), which allows the Occupying Power to arrange children’s education only where local institutions are inadequate, and, where possible, by persons of their own nationality, language and religion. See also Pictet Commentary to the Fourth Geneva Convention (1958), art. 24, p. 188.

330 Hague Regulations, art. 45.

331 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.405, para. 27; UKR.WS.413, para. 17; UKR.WS.441, paras. 26, 36-37; UKR.WS.444 para. 200; UKR.WS.458, para. 34; UKR.WS.459, paras. 14, 54; UKR.WS.468, paras. 31, 38; UKR.WS.472, paras. 71, 83.

332 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.444, para. 200.

333 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.441, para. 36; UKR.WS.472, paras. 73-74.

334 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.468 para. 43.

335 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.467, para. 36; UKR.WS.468, para. 34; UKR.WS.472, paras. 78-79.

losing their jobs³³⁶ or being visited by armed men to be persuaded to work under Russian law.³³⁷ They also risked being arbitrarily detained for refusing to work under the Russian curriculum, with one witness from Kherson region stating, *“The director of our school was arrested twice as he had well-known pro-Ukrainian stance, and he refused to continue teaching the Russian curriculum.”*³³⁸ A witness from Zaporizhzhia region told ODIHR that a school director, deputy director and a teacher were taken to a basement and tortured for refusing to cooperate with the new school administration. After learning of their fate, the rest of the teaching staff cooperated with the Russian administration.³³⁹

111. Witnesses told ODIHR that children’s attendance at Russian curriculum schools was mandatory, with one witness from Kherson region stating, *“kids are forced to go to the Russian schools, and, if parents do not send them to school, the Russian authorities threaten parents that they would take the children away from them.”*³⁴⁰ Parents were visited at home by the Russian authorities to be persuaded to send their children to Russian schools,³⁴¹ including through financial incentives consisting of child allowances, scholarships or study trips.³⁴² Occupation administrators asked parents for proof of their children’s enrollment in another Russian curriculum school if they were not enrolled locally.³⁴³ A witness from Zaporizhzhia region stated that she was visited at home by two men in black uniforms and was told that she would be held administratively liable if she failed to send her daughter to the Russian curriculum school.³⁴⁴ Children could not openly say that they attended Ukrainian online education.³⁴⁵
112. Witnesses also described to ODIHR the imposition of Russian military-patriotic education for school-aged children,³⁴⁶ with a parent from Zaporizhzhia region stating that pupils *“have patriotic classes at school every Monday and for every public holiday they have to line up and shout ‘I’m Russian’ while raising their fist in the air.”*³⁴⁷ School administrators displayed Russian flags and pictures of the President of the Russian Federation³⁴⁸ and required pupils to learn the Russian national anthem and start lessons singing it.³⁴⁹ Students were also required to make videos about how much they loved Russia and, starting from

336 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.405, para. 26.

337 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.468, para. 10.

338 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.458, para. 34. See also UKR.WS.468, para. 8.

339 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.444, para. 198.

340 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.468, para. 37; See also UKR.WS.472, para. 74.

341 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.444, para. 195.

342 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 95; UKR.WS.460, para. 78; UKR.WS.472, para. 84.

343 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.468, para. 35.

344 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.459, para. 14.

345 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.468, para. 35.

346 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.468, para. 18.

347 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.472, para. 84.

348 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, para. 92; UKR.WS.444, para. 200; UKR.WS.467, para. 35.

349 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.413, para. 36; UKR.WS.444, para. 201.

the first grade, they were enrolled in the Russian patriotic youth organization “Movement of the First” (“Движение первых”).³⁵⁰

113. Five witnesses from the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions explained to ODIHR that the Russian authorities encouraged parents to send their children to so-called recreational camps in Crimea and the Russian Federation.³⁵¹ According to four CSOs working on issues related to the education of children in the occupied territories, some activities at these recreational camps included pro-Russian military-patriotic education, meetings with veterans of the “Special Military Operation” and instruction on the use of weapons. The CSOs stated that they had identified 13 such recreational camps in the occupied territories of Ukraine, including in Crimea; 67 in Russia; and 18 in Belarus, where children from the occupied territories are being sent. Additionally, children in the occupied territories were encouraged to participate in cadet classes and public propaganda events and were enrolled in different types of military-patriotic youth organizations, such as the “Youth Army” (“Юнармия”), where they were instructed on the use of weapons and a positive attitude towards serving in the Russian armed forces was promoted among children. At school, in addition to attending patriotic classes, children sometimes had to wear military uniforms and participate in meetings with veterans of the Russian armed forces.³⁵²

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

114. During the second half of 2024, ODIHR continued to receive accounts,³⁵³ including through seven witness testimonies,³⁵⁴ of forced conscription and the mobilization of Ukrainian civilians into the Russian armed forces, confirming the findings outlined in previous interim reports.³⁵⁵ There is a clear prohibition under IHL against compelling civilians to serve in the occupying power’s

350 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.413, paras. 39, 44.

351 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.441, para. 27; UKR.WS.444, para. 202; UKR.WS.460, para. 79; UKR.WS.468, paras. 21-28; UKR.WS.472, paras. 84-85.

352 See also ‘Russian Propaganda Camps’: Where and Why Russia Takes Children from the Temporarily Occupied Territories, Almenda, 24 October 2024; Stolen childhood: How the Belarusian regime is erasing Ukrainian children’s identity through displacement, re-education, and militarization, Coalition of Ukrainian and Belarusian CSOs, 12 October 2024; “Universal soldier”, July-September 2024, Almenda, 10 October 2024; How the war is produced: childhood spent in the cadet classes in the TOT of the AR Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Almenda, 27 September 2024.

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

354 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.413; UKR.WS.421; UKR.WS.439; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.461; UKR.WS.468; UKR.WS.472.

355 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 64-68; OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), para. 95; OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), para. 78; OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 97-104.

armed forces or auxiliary forces,³⁵⁶ including through the use of propaganda aimed at securing voluntary enlistment.³⁵⁷

115. According to six CSOs working on human rights and humanitarian issues in the Russian Federation-occupied territories, when civilians acquired Russian passports they received a summons for military registration, thus putting them at risk of serving in the Russian army as conscripts. Those who tried to evade the draft were prosecuted. Moreover, conscripts were encouraged to sign contracts for military service with the Russian armed forces through advertising and offers of social and financial incentives, including plots of land in Crimea.³⁵⁸ Additionally, according to information received by ODIHR from CSOs, Ukrainian prisoners, including some detained prior to February 2022 and some detained after (including prisoners sentenced for expressing dissent), were offered contracts for military service with the Russian armed forces in exchange for a reduction in, or cancellation of their sentence.
116. Forced conscription and prosecutions for evading the draft were especially prevalent in occupied Crimea. According to the Ukrainian authorities, the Russian authorities conducted six conscription campaigns in Crimea since February 2022, during which time 17,300 people were conscripted by November 2024. Moreover, 244 cases had been filed in the courts in Crimea since February 2022 against individuals who evaded conscription for military or alternative civilian service.³⁵⁹
117. Three witnesses interviewed by ODIHR described the link between military registration, which could lead to conscription, and Russian citizenship.³⁶⁰ A witness from Nova Kakhovka (Kherson region) stated, *“now everyone who gets a [Russian] passport receives a paper that they need to go to the recruitment offices for military registration. This practice started after July 2023. People know about this practice, and they are afraid, but they must do it.”* She added, *“when I was taking the [Russian] passport for my son, there was a boy who was 17 years old, and he already had the paper slip on military registration.”*³⁶¹ On 8 August 2024, the President of the Russian Federation signed amendments to

356 GC IV, art. 51. Compelling a POW or other protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile power is a war crime. GC IV art. 147; ICC Statute art. 8(2)(a)(v). Additionally, the occupying power is prohibited under IHL from compelling residents of an occupied territory to swear allegiance to the occupying power. The 1907 Hague Regulations, art. 45.

357 While it remains the prerogative of States to conscript their own nationals, given the widespread reports of forced imposition of Russian citizenship on citizens of occupied territories, instances in which Ukrainian men were forced to acquire Russian citizenship and then subsequently conscripted should properly be understood as forced conscription of Ukrainians. For more information, see Section IV.e.i. *Forced adoption of Russian citizenship*.

358 Information received by ODIHR indicates that conscripts were not sent to active areas of hostilities without signing a contract with the Russian Armed Forces for becoming professional soldiers.

359 Article 328 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code (foresees a fine, forced labour or imprisonment for up to two years). In the majority of cases, people sentenced under this article were issued a fine ranging from 5,000 to 50,000 Russian roubles.

360 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.444, para. 143; UKR.WS.468, paras. 55, 57; UKR.WS.472, para. 97.

361 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.468, paras. 55, 57.

the laws on citizenship and on military service,³⁶² allowing for the termination of Russian citizenship if a person does not register for military service. Considering the pressure to obtain Russian citizenship and the benefits that can only be accessed with Russian citizenship,³⁶³ these changes amount to an additional tool to coerce residents in the Russian-occupied territories to swear allegiance to the Russian Federation and potentially serve in its armed forces.

118. Three witnesses described forced conscription and mobilization into the Russian armed forces.³⁶⁴ A male witness from Zaporizhzhia region stated, *“the [Russian] authorities announced a draft and mobilization at the beginning of 2024,”* adding that, in that period, *“all men of fighting age up to the age of 50 received a summons to the conscription office.”* The same witness also described *“many advertisements for military service and mobilization.”*³⁶⁵ According to a woman from Donetsk region, many men were mobilized in the so-called “Donetsk People’s Republic” in 2022,³⁶⁶ while another witness from the same region explained how he was captured on the street four times between spring 2022 and February 2024, put on buses by armed men and taken to the military draft offices, but was released every time as he was too old to serve in the armed forces.³⁶⁷
119. According to witnesses interviewed by ODIHR, it was not uncommon for men to go into hiding in the occupied territories to avoid mobilization into the Russian armed forces, including not leaving their homes, not going to work, deleting their social media accounts and avoiding even going to hospitals.³⁶⁸ However, two witnesses interviewed by ODIHR stated that, in addition to forced conscription and mobilization, there were also cases of civilians voluntarily joining the Russian armed forces based on their own beliefs and convictions.³⁶⁹

Suppression of dissent

120. According to information provided to ODIHR,³⁷⁰ the Russian authorities actively prosecuted human rights activists, citizen journalists and civilians expressing anti-war or pro-Ukrainian views. Three main charges were used to prosecute citizens who opposed the occupation by peaceful means: “discrediting the

362 Федеральный закон от 08.08.2024 г. № 281-ФЗ О внесении изменений в статью 4 Федерального закона «О воинской обязанности и военной службе» и статью 22 Федерального закона «О гражданстве Российской Федерации» [Federal Law of 08.08.2024 No. 281-FZ On Amendments to Article 4 of the Federal Law «On Military Duty and Military Service» and Article 22 of the Federal Law «On Citizenship of the Russian Federation»].

363 For more information, see Section IV.e.i. *Forced adoption of Russian citizenship*.

364 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.413; UKR.WS.444; UKR.WS.461.

365 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.444, paras. 143-144, 184.

366 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.413, para. 34.

367 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.461, paras. 21, 23.

368 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.413, paras. 6, 9; UKR.WS.421, para. 73; UKR.WS.439, para. 104; UKR.WS.461, para. 21.

369 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.444, para. 144; UKR.WS.468, para. 56.

370 Information provided to ODIHR by five CSOs working on human rights and humanitarian law issues in the occupied territories; Information from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna.

Russian armed forces”;³⁷¹ “propaganda or public display of Nazi paraphernalia or symbols”;³⁷² and “showing disrespect for the Russian state”.³⁷³

121. Pro-Ukrainian civilians in Russian-occupied territories, including Crimean Tatars, were subjected to political and religious persecution through home searches, interrogations, arrests and detention, as well as through the initiation of criminal cases against them on various grounds.³⁷⁴ According to the Ukrainian authorities, the total number of civilians reportedly unlawfully detained by the Russian authorities in Crimea was 218, of whom 132 were Crimean Tatars. Moreover, 1,047 cases of “discrediting the Russian armed forces” were filed in the courts in Crimea from April 2022 to November 2024.³⁷⁵
122. Witnesses interviewed by ODIHR reported that, in some cases where residents of the Russian-occupied territories dissented publicly, expressed pro-Ukrainian views or refused to cooperate, the Russian authorities expelled them from the occupied territories to Ukrainian-controlled territory³⁷⁶ and conducted staged deportations.³⁷⁷ This practice consisted of forcibly taking people close to the contact line, reading aloud their names and the reasons for their expulsion (usually accusations of anti-Russian propaganda and actions), depositing them in the grey zone and forcing them to walk to the Ukrainian government-controlled side. These acts would usually be filmed and the videos posted on social media channels for propaganda purposes.
123. Moreover, as previously reported by ODIHR, civilians were persecuted for expressing dissent in the months after February 2022.³⁷⁸ A witness from Kherson region described to ODIHR how her husband was charged with espionage in December 2022 and sentenced to 13 years in a high security prison in October 2023 after being detained following a peaceful protest and later

371 Article 20.3.3 of the Russian Federation Code of Administrative Offences and Article 280.3 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code (foresees a fine, but if the offence is repeated within a year, it could lead to imprisonment of up to three years).

372 Article 20.3 of the Russian Federation Code of Administrative Offences (foresees a fine or an administrative arrest for up to fifteen days).

373 Article 20.1.3 of the Russian Federation Code of Administrative Offences (foresees a fine, but if the offence is repeated, it could lead to an administrative arrest for up to fifteen days).

374 [Аналіз порушень прав людини в окупованому Криму за 9 місяців 2024 року](#) [Analysis of human rights violations in the occupied Crimea for 9 months of 2024], Crimean Tatar Resource Centre, 15 October 2024, in Ukrainian. According to the CSO, Russian security forces conducted 59 searches, detained 91 and arrested 131 persons, and conducted 89 interrogations based on political and religious grounds in Crimea, from January to October 2024. See also [Crimea Situation Reports](#), CrimeaSOS.

375 [Update on the Situation in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol as of 19.11.2024](#), Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. From the 218 detained individuals in Crimea, 43 are under arrest (including 28 Crimean Tatars), 151 are imprisoned (including 97 Crimean Tatars) and 26 are held without status (including 6 Crimean Tatars). These figures were last updated on 19 November 2024.

376 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.408, paras. 148-149; UKR.WS.444, paras. 174, 185-187; UKR.WS.459, para. 15; UKR.WS.476, para. 27; See also UKR.WS.472, para. 109; UKR.WS.481, para. 109. See further OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 86-88.

377 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.449, paras. 50, 61-62, 71-74, 143-144; UKR.WS.453, paras. 131-136; UKR.WS.483, paras. 52-55, 93-109.

378 See OSCE/ODIHR, [First Interim Report](#), paras. 106-111; OSCE/ODIHR, [Second Interim Report](#), paras. 146-150; OSCE/ODIHR, [Third Interim Report](#), paras. 84-89; OSCE/ODIHR, [Fourth Interim Report](#), paras. 96-100.

transferred to detention in occupied Crimea. At the time of the interview, her husband was imprisoned in Skopin (Ryazan region) in the Russian Federation.³⁷⁹

F. COERCED COOPERATION WITH THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND ACCUSATIONS OF COLLABORATION

124. According to the information provided to ODIHR by the Ukrainian authorities, as of 19 November, at least 4,200 criminal cases had been opened involving collaboration charges, with more than 1,500 individuals notified of suspicion of collaboration, and 1,200 indictments sent to courts. Additionally, as of 30 November, there had been 2,040 first-instance decisions on collaboration.³⁸⁰
125. During interviews with ODIHR in the second half of 2024, 26 witnesses raised the issue of collaboration in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.³⁸¹ Three main subjects emerged: the pressure by the Russian authorities compelling “cooperation”;³⁸² the prosecution of collaborators under Ukrainian law, including the lack of clarity about what constitutes collaboration and alleged ill-treatment of those perceived as collaborators by the Ukrainian authorities;³⁸³ and the negative attitudes towards residents of the occupied territories who either continued working under occupation³⁸⁴ or committed other acts that could be considered collaboration by the Ukrainian authorities.³⁸⁵
126. Under IHL, occupying powers have a right to compel civilians to work but only in jobs that are necessary for the maintenance needs of the occupying army and public utility services, or necessary to provide certain services to the population of the occupied territory.³⁸⁶
127. Nine ODIHR witnesses reported that the Russian authorities enforced cooperation or employment through threats of torture, detention, prosecution and death,³⁸⁷ including two instances where teachers and energy infrastructure

379 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.471, paras. 4, 7, 8-23, 26-27, 33-34, 38-39, 50-53, 67, 79-80.

380 Єдиний державний реєстр судових рішень [Unified State Register of Court Decisions].

381 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.403, UKR.WS.404, UKR.WS.405, UKR.WS.407, UKR.WS.410, UKR.WS.417, UKR.WS.418, UKR.WS.420, UKR.WS.423, UKR.WS.429, UKR.WS.430, UKR.WS.431, UKR.WS.433, UKR.WS.436, UKR.WS.438, UKR.WS.439, UKR.WS.441, UKR.WS.444, UKR.WS.448, UKR.WS.450, UKR.WS.455, UKR.WS.458, UKR.WS.460, UKR.WS.465, UKR.WS.476, UKR.WS.483.

382 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.403, paras. 29-30; UKR.WS.407, para. 63; UKR.WS.410, para. 182; UKR.WS.418, para. 37; UKR.WS.439, para. 81; UKR.WS.441, para. 18; UKR.WS.444, paras. 37, 78, 198; UKR.WS.460, para. 25; UKR.WS.465, para. 38; UKR.WS.476, para. 15.

383 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.403, paras. 22, 39, 51; UKR.WS.433, paras. 14, 64.

384 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.404, paras. 19-22; UKR.WS.405, paras. 27, 37; UKR.WS.417, para. 43; UKR.WS.441, para. 82; UKR.WS.455, para. 28; UKR.WS.483, para. 46.

385 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.403, paras. 69-70; UKR.WS.439, para. 118.

386 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), para. 108.

387 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 63; UKR.WS.410, para. 182; UKR.WS.418, para. 37; UKR.WS.439, paras. 36, 81; UKR.WS.441, para. 18; UKR.WS.444, paras. 37, 198; UKR.WS.460, para. 25; UKR.WS.465, para. 38; UKR.WS.476, para. 15.

workers were compelled to remain in public service roles.³⁸⁸ After being instructed to continue working at a power plant, one witness recalled, “*I asked if I had a choice, and they said you can go back to the cell. So, I did that [to be released].*”³⁸⁹ Another witness told ODIHR that, after detaining her husband, the Russian authorities told her, “*We will never let him out, but if you want him to live, you need to get acquainted with people from the underground, those with weapons and report it to us.*”³⁹⁰

128. Three witnesses described to ODIHR how they were personally, or witnessed others being, summoned to the police or detained on charges of collaboration after Ukrainian forces reclaimed formerly occupied territories.³⁹¹ One witness, whose family member was detained on collaboration charges, described alleged torture perpetrated by Ukrainian authorities, “*They beat my father and cut him, they injected him with something like a narcotic and told him, ‘if you want an end you need to sign a confession’. He didn’t have access to medical care.*”³⁹² The same witness reported that, during the course of the criminal proceedings, his father only received legal aid once.³⁹³ Another witness described pressure applied on lawyers working on collaboration and other national security cases, including surveillance and physical attacks.³⁹⁴
129. Negative perceptions in Ukraine of people who live and work in Russian-occupied areas were pervasive. The Ukrainian National Police referred to collaboration suspects as ‘traitors’³⁹⁵ and ‘Russia lovers’,³⁹⁶ contrasted with ‘citizens who remained loyal to Ukraine’.³⁹⁷ Some perceived collaborators reported being harassed and threatened.³⁹⁸
130. ODIHR is concerned that, due to the vagueness of the law criminalizing collaboration and its application, many prosecutions under its authority may be unfair. In addition, ODIHR is concerned that residents of Russian-occupied areas may be reluctant to leave, despite risks to their liberty and security, due to fears of unfair prosecution under laws criminalizing collaboration.

388 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.407, para. 63; UKR.WS.444, para. 198.

389 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.407, para. 63.

390 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.439, para. 36.

391 ODIHR Witness Interviews UKR.WS.403, paras. 39; UKR.WS.433, paras. 25-26; UKR.WS.439, para. 119.

392 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.403, para. 51.

393 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.403, para. 54.

394 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.433, paras. 37-38.

395 [На Запоріжжі судитимуть двох колаборантів – псевдодепутатів незаконно створеного органу влади](#) [Two collaborators – pseudo-deputies of illegally created authority to be tried in Zaporizhzhia], Національна поліція України [National Police of Ukraine], 24 September 2024.

396 [Підозру у колабораційній діяльності оголошено 11 мешканцям Запорізької області – ДВБ Нацполіції](#) [Suspicion of collaborative activity served to 11 residents of Zaporizhzhia region – SBU], Національна поліція України [National Police of Ukraine], 9 September 2024.

397 [Викрадали та катували людей – за матеріалами ДВБ Нацполіції підозри оголошено 29 політв'язням ворога з тимчасово окупованої частини Херсонщини](#) [Kidnapped and tortured people – 29 enemy accomplices from the temporarily occupied part of Kherson region are declared suspects, according to the National Police's Internal Affairs Department], Національна поліція України [National Police of Ukraine], 7 October 2024.

398 ODIHR Witness Interview UKR.WS.403, para. 70.

131. In line with the conclusions of the Fifth Interim Report, ODIHR encourages the Ukrainian authorities to apply its law or amend it to account for individuals who may have been forced to work under the Russian authorities. ODIHR stresses that all proceedings against alleged collaborators must adhere to relevant fair trial standards.³⁹⁹

399 See OSCE/ODIHR, [Fifth Interim Report](#), paras. 112-113.

Updated Interim Recommendations

V

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

- 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;
- 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; and
- Ensure that all POWs are held in places of internment that fully comply with 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.

ODIHR calls on the Russian Federation to:

- Cease the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated areas;
- Cease attacks on the energy infrastructure critical to the civilian population of Ukraine;
- Cease summary execution, torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence against POWs and civilian detainees;
- Stop the practice of arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Ukrainian civilians, unconditionally release all those thus detained, and provide all victims with effective remedies;
- Halt the incommunicado detention of individuals and immediately provide information on the whereabouts of detainees to their families and legal representatives;
- Ensure that legal safeguards for persons deprived of their liberty are fully respected in accordance with IHRL and IHL;
- 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 persons 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 Federation-curriculum schools and stop imposing military-patriotic education for school-aged children; and
- Immediately stop subjecting civilians in occupied territories, including Crimean Tatars, to prosecution for peacefully expressing their views and opinions.

ODIHR calls on Ukraine to:

- Further improve communication with the families of civilians detained by the Russian Federation authorities;
- 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 persons 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 conflict-related sexual violence and other types of torture; and
- 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.

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 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and other types of torture; and
- Enhance cross-state cooperation between domestic law enforcement and criminal justice authorities, ensuring effective investigation and prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and torture committed against arbitrarily detained civilians and prisoners of war.

