

War crimes in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine

During the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russian authorities and armed forces have committed war crimes by carrying out both deliberate attacks against civilian targets^{[1][2][3]} and indiscriminate attacks in densely populated areas.^{[4][5][6]} The Russian military exposed the civilian population to unnecessary and disproportionate harm by using cluster munitions^{[7][8][9][10]} and by firing other explosive weapons with wide-area effects such as bombs, missiles, heavy artillery shells and multiple launch rockets.^[9] The result of the Russian forces' attacks has been damage and destruction to civilian buildings including houses, hospitals, schools, kindergartens,^[9] nuclear power plants,^[11] historic buildings, and churches.^{[12][13]} As of the beginning of July, the attacks had resulted in the death of nearly 5,000 civilians including 335 children.^[14]



Bodies of civilians shot by Russian soldiers, lie on a street in Bucha. The hands of one of them are tied behind their back. 3 April 2022

After Russian withdrawal from areas north of Kyiv there was overwhelming evidence of rape, torture and summary killings by Russian forces of Ukrainian civilians.^[15] There were reports of forced deportations of thousands of civilians, including children, from Russian-occupied Mariupol to Russia,^{[16][17]} sexual violence, including cases of rape, gang rape and torture,^{[18][19][14]} and deliberate killing of Ukrainian civilians by members of the Russian forces.^[20] After Ukrainian forces recaptured the town of Bucha, evidence emerged of a massacre perpetrated by Russian troops, including torture and the deliberate killings of civilians.^{[21][22][23]} More than 1,200 bodies of civilians were found in the Kyiv region after Russian forces withdrew, some of them summarily executed,^[14] and the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine documented the unlawful killing of 50 civilians – mostly men, but also women and children – in Bucha.^[24] In the first month of the invasion the Monitoring Mission also documented the arbitrary detention in Russian-occupied territories of journalists, activists, public officials and civil servants,^{[25][9][26]} and expressed concern about videos treatment of prisoners of war in the conflict.^[9] Russian and Ukrainian prisoners of war have been repeatedly abused and exposed to public curiosity,^{[27][28]} tortured^{[29][30]} and killed.^{[31][32]}

On 2 March, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened a full investigation into past and present allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide committed in Ukraine by any person from 21 November 2013 onwards, set up an online method for people with evidence to initiate contact with investigators, and sent a team of investigators, lawyers, and other professionals to Ukraine to begin collecting evidence.^{[33][34][35]} Two other independent international agencies are also investigating violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law in the area: the International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, established by the United Nations Human Rights Council on 4 March 2022, and the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, deployed by OHCHR. The latter started monitoring human rights violations by all parties in 2014 and employs nearly 60 UN human rights monitors. On 7 April 2022, the United Nations suspended Russia from the UN Human Rights Council.^[36] By early June, the Ukrainian Prosecutor's office has documented more than 14,000 Russian war crimes, identified more than 600 suspects and initiated proceedings against approximately 80 of them.^[37]

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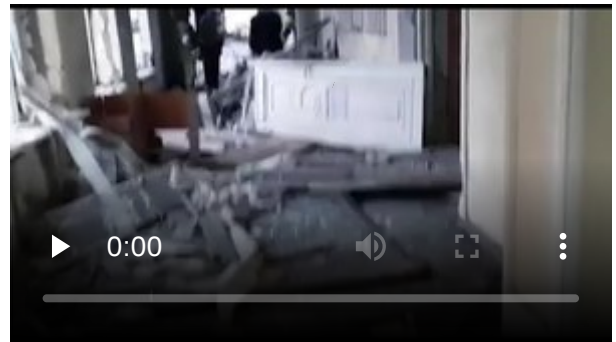
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Indiscriminate attacks and attacks against civilian targets

According to human rights organisations and to the [UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine](#), the invasion of Ukraine was carried out through [indiscriminate](#) attacks and strikes on civilian objects such as houses, hospitals, schools and kindergartens.^{[4][5][9]}

On 25 February, Amnesty International stated that Russian forces had "shown a blatant disregard for civilian lives by using ballistic missiles and other explosive weapons with wide area effects in densely populated areas". In addition, Russia has falsely claimed to have only used precision-guided weapons. Amnesty International said on 25 February that the attacks on Vuhledar, Kharkiv and Uman, were likely to constitute war crimes.^[4] Ukrainian prime minister Denys Shmyhal said on 26 February that Russia was committing war crimes.^[38]



Shelling of Kharkiv regional administration

Russian artillery shelled a densely populated neighbourhood of Mariupol for nearly 15 hours on 1 and 2 March, causing significant destruction. Deputy mayor Sergei Orlov reported that "at least hundreds of people [were] dead."^{[39][40]}

A 3 March statement by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said that the agency had recorded at least 1006 civilian casualties in the first week of the invasion, but that it believed that "the real figures are considerably higher."^[41]



Shelled residential buildings in Kharkiv Oblast

The World Health Organization released a statement on 6 March saying that it had evidence that multiple health care centres in Ukraine had been attacked, and Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted that "attacks on healthcare facilities or workers breach medical neutrality and are violations of international humanitarian law."^[42]

On 24 March, Amnesty International accused Russia of having repeatedly violated international humanitarian law during the first month of the invasion by conducting indiscriminate attacks, including direct attacks on civilian targets. According to Amnesty International, verified reports and video footage demonstrate numerous strikes on hospitals and schools, and the use of inaccurate explosive weapons and banned weapons such as cluster bombs.^[43]

While not suggesting that Ukraine is responsible for civilian casualties, human rights activists and international humanitarian law experts told the Washington Post that "Ukraine's strategy of placing heavy military equipment and other fortifications in civilian zones could weaken Western and Ukrainian efforts to hold Russia legally culpable for possible war crimes".^[44]

On 5 July, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet reported that most of the civilian casualties documented by her office had been caused by the Russian army's repeated use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Bachelet said that the heavy civilian toll from the use of such indiscriminate weapons and tactics had by now become "indisputable".^[14]

Use of cluster munitions

Reports on the use of cluster munitions have raised concerns about the heavy toll of immediate civilian casualties and the long-lasting danger of unexploded ordnance.^{[9][10]} Neither the Russian Federation nor Ukraine ratified the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions,^[7] but the use of cluster munition in populated areas may already be deemed incompatible with principles of international humanitarian law prohibiting indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks.^[6]

The Vuhledar attack at 10:30 (UTC) on 24 February, was the result of a 9M79 Tochka missile, which landed next to a hospital and killed four civilians. Amnesty International describe its analysis as "irrefutable evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law" by Russian forces.^[4] Human Rights Watch (HRW) found that the Vuhledar hospital attack used an 9N123 cluster munition. The 9N123 contains fifty 9N24 individual submunitions, which each split into 316 bomblets. HRW based its analysis on contacts with the hospital and municipal administrations and multiple photographic evidence. HRW called for Russian forces to stop making "unlawful attacks with weapons that indiscriminately kill and maim."^[8] The press secretary of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Peskov, denied Russian involvement, saying that this type of ammunition is used by the Armed Forces of Ukraine.^[45]

On 27 February, Amnesty International stated that it had analysed evidence showing that Russian cluster munitions from a 220 mm BM-27 Uragan rocket had hit a preschool in Okhtyrka where civilians were taking shelter on 25 February, killing three, including a child. UAV film showed four hits on the roof of the preschool, three on the ground next to the school, two injured or dead civilians, and pools of blood. Amnesty International analysed 65 photos and videos of the event and interviewed local residents.^[46] Bellingcat stated that remains of the 9M27K rocket were found 200 metres east of the kindergarten. Russian forces were located west of Okhtyrka. Amnesty described the rocket type as "unguided and notoriously inaccurate", and described the attack as a potential war crime that should be investigated.^[46]

The New York Times reported that on either 6 or 7 March, Ukrainian forces had fired a 220 millimetres (8.7 in) Uragan cluster munition rocket at the Russian-controlled village of Husarivka, 60 miles south of Kharkiv. *The Times* said that no deaths had occurred in the attack.^{[47][48]}

On 14 June, Amnesty International, based on an investigation conducted in April early May, said that Russia's use of cluster munitions and scatterable mines in Kharkiv amounts to a war crime.^[49]

On 19 June, The New York Times reported it had reviewed over 1000 photographs of potentially outlawed munitions. It identified photographic evidence of widespread use of cluster munitions in a wide spectrum of civilian areas. It noted that most were unguided which have a propensity to cause collateral damage against civilians. It also found cases of other types of weapons that might be against international law, such as land mines.^[50]

Targeting of nuclear power plants

At 11:28pm local time on 3 March 2022, a column of 10 Russian armored vehicles and two tanks cautiously approached the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest.^{[51][52][53]} The action commenced at 12:48am on 4 March when Ukraine forces fired anti tank missiles and Russian forces responded with a variety of weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades.^[52] During approximately two hours of heavy fighting a fire broke out in a training facility outside of the main complex, which was extinguished by 6:20am,^{[11][54]} though other sections surrounding the plant sustained damage.^[52] That evening, the Kyiv US Embassy described the Russian attack of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant as a war crime,^[55] though the US State Department quickly retracted this claim with the circumstances of the attack being studied^{[56][57]} and the Pentagon declining to describe the attack as a war crime.^[58] On the same day, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of committing "nuclear terror" by ordering the attack on the plant^[59] and Ukraine regulatory authorities stated that Russian forces fired artillery shells at the plant, setting fire to the training facility.^{[60][61]} The Russian Ambassador to the UN responded that Russian forces were fired upon by Ukrainian "saboteurs" from the training facility, which they set fire to when they left.^[62] Later that day the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that the plants' safety systems had not been affected and

there had been no release of radioactive materials, however he was "...gravely concerned about the situation at Ukraine's largest nuclear power plant. The main priority was to ensure the safety and security of the plant, its power supply and the people who operate it".^[63]

Attacks on nuclear power facilities are mainly governed by Article 56 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions,^[64] which generally prohibits attacks against civilian nuclear power plants.^{[65][66]} According to international scholars: "if it is established that Russian forces engaged in the shelling of the Zaporizhzhia plant or objectives in its vicinity in a way that risked a radioactive leak, it is almost certain that this operation violated Article 56"^[65] but it is "less likely" that Russian forces have committed a war crime in this case.^[66]

Attacks on cultural properties

The use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects has raised concerns about the proximity of historic monuments, works of art, churches and other cultural properties.^{[67][12][68][69]} Russian forces damaged or destroyed the Kuindzhi Art Museum in Mariupol, the Soviet-era Shchors cinema and a Gothic revival library in Chernihiv,^[70] the Babyn Yar Holocaust memorial complex in Kyiv,^[71] the Soviet-era Slovo building^[12] and the regional state administration building in Kharkiv, a 19th-century wooden church in Viazivka, Zhytomyr Region,^[72] and the Historical and Local History Museum in Ivankiv.^[73] On 24 June, UNESCO stated that at least 150 Ukrainian historical sites, religious buildings, and museums are confirmed to have sustained damage during the Russian invasion.^[74]

Cultural property enjoys special protection and international humanitarian law.^[75] Protocol I of the Geneva Convention and the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (both binding on Ukraine and Russia) prohibit states parties to use historic monuments in support of the military effort and to make them object of acts of hostility or reprisals.^[75] Protocol II of the Hague Convention allows attacks on cultural property only in case of "imperative military necessity" provided that there is no feasible alternative. While Protocol II does not apply as such, as only Ukraine is a party and it applies only between parties,^[76] the provision on imperative military necessity may be applicable if it is interpreted as informing the convention, rather than adding to it.^[75] Attacks against cultural heritage amount to war crimes and can be prosecuted before the International Criminal Court.^[75]

Attacks on hospitals and medical care facilities

On 24 February, a cluster munition exploded at the Central City Hospital in Vuhledar, killing at least four civilians and injuring 10, damaging ambulances and the hospital.^[9] On 8 March the newly refurbished central hospital in Izium, south of Kharkiv, was destroyed,^{[77][78]} followed on 11 March by an attack to a psychiatric hospital of the same city.^[79] On 9 March a Russian air strike destroyed Mariupol hospital No. 3, which was clearly identifiable as civilian object, resulting in injuries for 17 civilians, one of whom was a woman at a late stage of pregnancy; neither she nor her unborn child survived.^[9]

As of 26 March, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine verified 74 attacks on medical facilities, 61 of them in Government-controlled territory (e.g. air strikes on hospitals in Izium, Mariupol, Ovruch, Volnovakha and Vuhledar), nine occurring in territory controlled by Russian affiliated armed groups, and four in contested settlements. Six perinatal centres, maternity hospitals, and ten children's hospitals had been hit, resulting in the complete destruction of two children's hospitals and one perinatal hospital.^[9] On 26 March, AP journalists in Ukraine claimed they had gathered sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Russia was deliberately targeting Ukrainian hospitals across the country.^[80]

On 30 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that there had been 82 verified Russian attacks on medical care in Ukraine – including attacks on healthcare facilities, patients, and healthcare workers – since 24 February. WHO estimated at least 72 killed and 43 injured in these attacks.^[81] By 8 April, WHO confirmed 91 attacks.^[82]

Areas hit by indiscriminate attacks

Donetsk Oblast

Denying free passage to civilians

During shelling of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol by Russian forces, a number of attempts to establish a humanitarian evacuation corridor to evacuate civilians from the city have been made, but have failed due to the corridor being targeted by Russian forces.^[83] On 5 March, a five-hour ceasefire was declared, but evacuations were quickly halted after shelling continued during the declared time.^[84] The next day, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced that a second attempt to establish an evacuation corridor had failed.^{[85][86]} On 7 March, the ICRC announced that it had found that one of the routes listed for evacuations during a ceasefire had been mined.^[87]



Photo distributed by the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs showing a Ukrainian civilian killed during the Russian bombing of Chernihiv

Mariupol theatre airstrike

On 16 March, Russian Armed Forces bombed the Donetsk Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol, Ukraine, which was in use as an air raid shelter serving also as a hub for the distribution of food, water, information about evacuation corridors, and as gathering point for evacuations.^[88] Ukrainian authorities stated that between 1,000 and 1,200 civilians had sought refuge in the building during the siege of Mariupol,^[89] that the theatre was the largest single air raid shelter in the city, and at the time of the attack it contained only women and children.^[90]

The building was largely destroyed in the attack, which Ukrainian authorities described as a war crime.^[91] Also the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe called

the attack on the theatre "most likely an egregious violation of IHL" and a "war crime".^[76] On 30 June Amnesty International released a detailed report on the attack based on more than 50 first-hand testimonies, analysis of satellite imagery, radar data, authenticated photos and other information.^[88] Also the human rights organisation concluded that the attack was a war crime and in all probability a deliberate attack on a civilian target by the Russian army: the theatre was easily identifiable as a civilian object where no significant military activity was taking place.^{[88][92]} Satellite images of the theatre taken on 14 March show the word "children" spelled out in Russian in two locations outside the theatre in an attempt to identify it to invading forces as a civilian air raid shelter containing children and not a military target.^[91]



Mariupol theatre airstrike conducted by the Russian Armed Forces on 16 March 2022

As of June 2022 casualty figures were known. Ukrainian authorities stated that people were trapped under the burning rubble of the collapsed theatre following the attack, but ongoing shelling in the area complicated recovery efforts.^{[91][90]} On 25 March, Mariupol City Council estimated that about 300 people had been killed as a result of the airstrike.^[93] On 4 May, Associated Press published an investigation with evidence pointing to 600 dead in the airstrike.^[94] On 30 June, Amnesty International indicated that the casualties count was smaller than previously reported, and stated that at least a dozen people had died in the attack, but also that it was likely that many fatalities had remained unreported.^[88]

In response to criticisms, the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defence accused the Ukraine-backed Azov Battalion of having purposefully destroyed the building from within, without providing any evidence.^[91] The investigation by Amnesty International found no evidence to support the explanation put forward by the Russian authorities.^{[88][92]}

The theatre is one of a number of Ukrainian heritage and cultural sites targeted and destroyed by invading Russian forces.^[90]

Mariupol hospital airstrike

On 9 March 2022, the Russian Air Force bombed *Maternity Hospital No 3*, a hospital complex functioning both as a children's hospital and maternity ward in Mariupol, Ukraine,^[95] during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, killing at least four people and injuring at least sixteen, and leading to at least one stillbirth.^[96]

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy,^[97] Josep Borrell, the European Union head of Foreign Affairs,^[96] and British armed forces minister James Heappey^[98] described the bombing as a war crime. On 10 March, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence claimed that bombing of the hospital was justified by the supposed presence of Ukrainian armed forces^{[99][100]} at Mariupol *Maternity Hospital No 1*, as stated by Russian UN representative Vasily Nebenzya earlier, on 7 March.^{[95][101]} Several media organizations dismissed the Russian claims as false.^[102]

An OSCE report concluded the airstrike was a Russian war crime.

Mass shelling of residential areas in Mariupol

On 2 March, deputy mayor Sergiy Orlov said that Russian artillery targeted a densely populated neighborhood of Mariupol, shelling it for nearly 15 hours. He said that one populated residential district on the city's left bank had been "nearly totally destroyed".^[39] The city was cut off from electricity, food, gas and water. A 6-year-old girl was reported to have died from dehydration under the ruins of her home in Mariupol on 8 March.^[103] Satellite photos of Mariupol taken the morning of 9 March by Maxar Technologies, a contractor for the US military, showed "extensive damage" to high-rise apartments, residential homes, grocery stores and other civilian infrastructure. This was determined by comparing photos taken before and after the attacks.^[104] The Mariupol council made a statement that the damage to the city had been "enormous". It estimated that approximately 80% to 90% of the city's infrastructure had been significantly damaged due to shelling, of which almost 30% was destroyed beyond repair.^[105] Reporting from Mariupol, Reuters reporter Pavel Klimov said that "all around are the blackened shells" of tower block dwellings.^[106]



Ukrainian civilians killed by Russian shelling in Mariupol

On 16 March BBC News reported that nearly constant Russian attacks had turned residential neighbourhoods into "a wasteland."^[107] On the same day it reported that it had obtained drone footage showing "a vast extent of damage, with fire and smoke billowing out of apartment blocks and blackened streets in ruins."^[107] A city resident told the BBC that "in the left bank area, there's no residential building intact, it's all burned to the ground." The left bank contained a densely populated residential district.^[39] She also said that the city centre was "unrecognisable."^[107] On the same day the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) reported that Russian forces continued to commit war crimes in Mariupol including "targeting civilian infrastructure."^[108]

On 18 March, Sky News from the UK described both an aerial and a ground video as showing "apocalyptic destruction in Mariupol."^[109] Sky News also reported that it had verified the locations of both videos to destroyed residential areas of Mariupol, also including some commercial properties.^[109] Also on 18 March, Lieutenant General James Hockenhull, Chief of Defence Intelligence for the United Kingdom (UK), described "continued targeting of civilians in Mariupol".^[110] Ukrainian authorities stated that about 90% of buildings in Mariupol were now damaged or destroyed.^[111] On the same day, Sky News from the UK said videos showed "civilian areas left unrecognisable by the bombing."^[111] Sky News also quoted the Red Cross as describing "Apocalyptic destruction in Mariupol."^[111] On 19 March 2022, a Ukrainian police officer in Mariupol made a video in which he said "Children, elderly people are dying. The city is destroyed and it is wiped off the face of the earth." The video was authenticated by the Associated Press.^[112]

As of 20 March local authorities have estimated that at least 2,300 people were killed during the siege.^[113]

On 20 March 2022 it was announced by Ukrainian authorities that Russian troops had bombed Art School No. 12 in Mariupol where the Ukrainian authorities claimed about 400 people were taking shelter during the battles and bombings on the city.^{[114][115]}

The government of Mariupol said on 28 March that 90% of all buildings in Mariupol had been damaged by shelling, with 40% of all structures inside the city destroyed.^[116] The statistics released also counted that 90% of Mariupol's hospitals had been damaged, and that 23 schools and 28 kindergartens had been destroyed by Russian shelling.^[117]

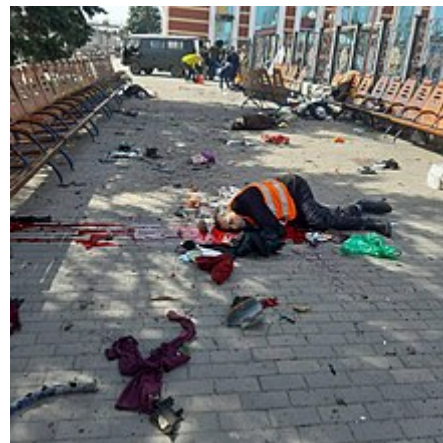
By 18 April, Ukrainian officials estimated that at least 95% of Mariupol had been destroyed in the fighting, largely as a result of the Russian bombing campaigns.^[118] City officials reported that up to 20,000 civilians had been killed.^[119] On the same day, the Mayor of the city reported that about 21,000 civilians had been killed.^[120]

On June 16, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that evidence strongly suggests the Russian armed forces committed serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Mariupol, including the shelling and rocket attacks that destroyed much of the city.^{[121][122]} In a separate statement, Human Rights Watch said Russia's military tactics were indiscriminate and caused a disproportionate effect on the civilians in the city. It also warned that going forward, access to the city and preservation of evidence were likely to be issues, given Russia's occupation of the city, and it called for international accountability.^[123]

Missile strike on Kramatorsk railway station

On 8 April, a Tochka missile struck a railway station in Kramatorsk, where up to 4,000 civilians, mostly women and children, were waiting to evacuate the city. Ukrainian officials accused Russia of carrying out the attack, and stated that between 98 and 300 civilians were wounded in the strike and at least 50 killed, including 5 children;^[124] the final casualty toll was 60 civilians killed, including seven children, and 111

wounded.^{[125][126]} The Russian Ministry of Defense denied the accusations, stating that the Tochka-U missile was only used by the Ukrainian military.^[124] However, analysts say that images and videos on social media appear to show Russia using the missile.^[127]



Kramatorsk railway bombing in April 2022

Chernihiv Oblast

Bombing of Chernihiv

On 3 March, at about 12:15 p.m. local time, Russian forces destroyed two schools and several apartment blocks in Chernihiv, killing 47 civilians and wounding 18.^{[6][128]} Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the attack might constitute a war crime.^{[129][130]} HRW commented on the case, saying that they found no evidence of a "significant [military] target in or near the intersection when it was hit, ... pointing to a potentially deliberate or reckless indiscriminate attack", and called the International Criminal Court and the UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate the incident and hold to account the people responsible. The HRW investigation included telephone interviews with three witnesses and two other Chernihiv residents, and analysis of 22 videos and 12 photographs. The witnesses interviewed by HRW stated that they were unaware of military targets or operations in the neighbourhood.^[130] Also Matilda Bogner, Head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, stated that the bombing violated the principles of distinction, of proportionality, the rule on feasible precautions and the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks.^[6]

On 16 March 2022, a Russian attack killed 14 civilians in Chernihiv. Most of them were standing in line at a food store waiting for bread, when a Russian air strike with eight unguided aerial bombs hit them.^{[131][132]}

Kyiv Oblast

Irpın shelling

On 6 March 2022, from 9:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. local time, the Russian Armed Forces repeatedly shelled an intersection in Irpin that hundreds of civilians were using to escape to Kyiv, whilst Ukrainian forces fired mortar rounds at Russian forces from a military position about 180 meters from the intersection.^{[133][134]} Human Rights Watch accused the Russian army of carrying out an indiscriminate and disproportionate attack.^[134] The shelling was part of an assault on Irpin. Eight civilians were killed,^{[134][135][136]} including two children killed by a mortar strike.^{[135][137]}

Bombing of Kyiv

Ukraine's capital Kyiv, a city of some three million people, was among the targets of Russian airstrikes.^[138] Kindergartens and orphanages were also shelled.^[139]

Bombing of Borodianka

As Russian forces fought in and near Kyiv, Borodianka, which is on a strategically important road,^[140] was targeted by numerous Russian airstrikes.^[141] Most of the buildings in the town were destroyed,^[142] including almost all of its main street.^[143] Russian bombs struck the centers of buildings and caused them to collapse while the frames remained standing.^{[142][143]} Oleksiy Reznikov, minister of defense, said many residents were buried alive by airstrikes and lay dying for up to a week. He further said that those who went to help them were shot at by Russian soldiers.^[144] Some residents hid in caves for 38 days.^[141] according to Ukraine's prosecutor general, Russian forces used 9A52-4 Tornado and BM-27 Uragan rockets to destroy buildings, and "fired at night, when the maximum number of people would be at home".^[145]

Only a few hundred residents remained in Borodianka by the time the Russians withdrew, with roughly 90% of residents having fled,^[143] and an unknown number dead in the rubble.^[141] Borodianka's mayor estimated at least 200 dead.^[146]

According to Iryna Venediktova, prosecutor general of Ukraine, Russian soldiers used cluster munitions during the Bombing.^[145]



Residential building in Kyiv after being hit by a missile, 26 February 2022.

Shelling of Bucha

Ukrainian forensic investigations on the Bucha massacre revealed that dozens of civilians had been killed by metal darts ("fléchettes") of a kind used by Russian army. Bodies from the Bucha-Irpin region showed lesions from small nail-like objects contained in tank or field gun shells. According to witnesses, Russian artillery fired shells that spread fléchettes a few days before retreating from the area at the end of March. While fléchettes are not prohibited under international law, their use in residential areas may qualify as the war crime of indiscriminate attack.^[147] The spokesperson for the Ukrainian Ground Forces stated that Ukraine's military does not use shells with fléchettes.^[148]

Sumy Oblast

Bombing of Sumy

In the evening and throughout the night on 7 March Russian forces executed an airstrike on Sumy's residential neighbourhood. About 22 people were killed, including three children.^{[149][150]} Under the procedural guidance of the Sumy District Prosecutor's Office, criminal proceedings have been instituted for violating the laws and customs of war.^[151]

Kharkiv Oblast

Bombing of Kharkiv

During the Battle of Kharkiv, extensive parts of residential areas were destroyed by Russian shelling.

According to a HRW report published on March 4, on 28 February, at around 10:00 AM, Russian forces fired cluster munitions with Grad rockets into at least three different residential areas in Kharkiv,^{[152][153]} killing at least nine civilians and injuring another 37.^[152] The city's mayor, Ihor Terekhov, said that four people were killed when they left a shelter to get water and a family of two parents and three children were burned alive in their car.^[154] The locations hit were residential buildings and a playground,^[155] dispersed between Industrialnyi and Shevchenkivskyi District. Explosions in the city were recorded as late as 2:23 PM.^[152]

On 1 March, a shell damaged a boarding school for blind children.^[156] As of 4 March 122 civilians including five children had been killed in the Kharkiv region, according to the Kharkiv Region Police.^[157] Out of an initial population of 1.8 million, only 500,000 people remained in Kharkiv by 7 March.^[156] On 18 March, the number of civilians reportedly killed in Kharkiv exceeded 450 as consequence of the use of cluster munitions and explosive weapons in heavily populated areas of the city.^[5] On 24 March at least six people were killed by shrapnel while queuing for humanitarian aid together with hundreds of civilians near the Akademika Pavlova metro station.^[158] On 24 March 2022, a Russian missile strike hit a shopping mall parking lot near the Akademika Pavlova metro station.^[159] At the time, hundreds of people were waiting outside a post office in the mall to obtain humanitarian aid.^[160] Six people were killed and at least 15 further were injured.^[161] Two further cluster bombings damaged the nearby Holy Trinity Church where volunteers were preparing humanitarian aid.^[159]

On 15 April 2022 in the afternoon hours, during the battle of Kharkiv, the Russian Army fired 9N210/9N235 cluster bombs into the Industrialnyi District, striking a residential area and a playground in the Myru Street.^{[162][163]} Nine civilians died and 35 were injured, including children. The local hospital received wounded people with pieces of steel rod and shrapnel in their limbs.^[162] Overall, the cluster bombs detonated over an area of 700 square metres.^[163]

Human Rights Watch investigated the attack and concluded that the Russian forces used Smerch cluster munition rockets, which disperse dozens of submunitions or bomblets in the air.^[152] As there were no military targets within 400 meters of these strikes and due to the indiscriminate use of these weapons against densely populated areas, HRW described these strikes as possible war crimes.^[152] On 13 May, CNN reported that newly collected evidence identified Colonel General Alexander Zhuravlyov commanding the 79th Rocket Artillery Brigade, ordered the use 17 cluster bombs, the 300mm Smerch Cluster Rocket, to be used against civilian targets in Kharkiv on 27–28 February.^[164]

On 13 June Amnesty International published a report on what it called the "relentless campaign of indiscriminate bombardments against Kharkiv" causing "wholesale destruction" in the city from 24 February until late April.^[158] The human rights organisation's researchers found fragments of seven cluster munition strikes in different neighbourhoods of Kharkiv and gathered evidence of the use of scatterable land mines and Grad rockets. Amnesty International documented overall 28 indiscriminate strikes in populated areas of Kharkiv which they claim may constitute war crimes, and which caused hundreds of civilian casualties and injured many more.^[158]

Izium hospital bombing

On 8 March, Russian forces bombed a hospital in Izium, which was totally destroyed.^[165] This shelling has been regarded as a war crime by region authorities.^[166]

Mykolaiv Oblast

Bombing of Mykolaiv

Cluster munitions were repeatedly used also on Mykolaiv during separate attacks on 7, 11 and 13 March, causing civilian casualties and extensive destruction of non-military objects.^[167] Nine civilians waiting in line on the street at a cash machine were killed in the 13 March attack.^{[168][169]} The explosions also damaged houses and civilian buildings.^[169] Human Rights Watch analysed the incident and found that the Russian forces used Smerch and Uragan cluster munition on the densely populated areas.^[167] Due to the inherently indiscriminate nature of cluster munitions, Human Rights Watch described their use in Mykolaiv as a possible Russian war crime.^[167]

Poltava Oblast

Bombing of Kremenchuk

A Russian missile attack on the shopping mall Amstor occurred in Kremenchuk, Ukraine, on 27 June 2022. Initial reports by Dmytro Lunin, governor of Poltava Oblast and media channels claimed there were 20 fatalities^{[170][171]} and 56 injuries.^[172]



Shopping center in Kremenchuk after the shelling on 27 June

According to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the attack on the civilians was carried out by Kh-22 anti-ship missiles launched from Russian Tu-22M3 strategic bombers that took off from the Shaikovka airfield (in the Kaluga region), and the missiles were launched over the territory of the Kursk region.^[171] According to Ukraine Today, the pilots who launched the attack belonged to the 52nd Heavy Bomber Aviation Regiment, of the 22nd Guards Heavy Bomber Aviation Division, commanded by Colonel Oleg Timoshin.^[173] Interior Minister Denys Monastyrsky said that the missile hit the far end of the shopping mall.^[174] Reports claimed that there were over 1,000 people inside the mall when the strike occurred.^[175] The area of the resulting fire was more than 10,000 square metres (110,000 sq ft) and up to 115 firefighters and 20 fire-fighting appliances were involved in extinguishing it.^[171]

On the day of the attack, Russian television did not report it until Russian Ministry of Defense confirmed that it had happened.^[176] Pro-Russian Telegram channels, as well as Russian authorities and state-controlled media have spread multiple conflicting theories about the missile strike, including claims that the attack was “fake” and that the Ukrainians had bombed the mall themselves, that the missile was aimed at a car factory near the mall, that the mall was being used as a military equipment warehouse, or as a base of the Territorial Defense Forces, and that the missile strike is a Ukrainian provocation involving the use of “canned bodies”.^[177] Russia's defence ministry later officially admitted responsibility for the attack, though they claimed the mall was not the intended target, saying that it hit a weapons depot in a nearby factory, the detonation of munitions reportedly caused the fire in the shopping centre.^[178] they also claimed that the mall was “non-functional”^[178] this claim was later debunked by several news channels,^[179] the BBC later published interviews with people who were working or shopping in the mall at the time.^[180]

The leaders of the G7 nations described the missile strike as an “abominable attack. We stand united with Ukraine in mourning the innocent victims”, they said in a joint statement. “Indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians constitute a war crime. Russian President Putin and those responsible will be held to account.”^{[181][182]}

Zhytomyr Oblast

Bombing of Zhytomyr

On 1 March, late in the evening Russian troops hit a residential sector of the city. About 10 residential buildings on Shukhevych street and around the city hospital were damaged. A few bombs were dropped on the city. As a result, at least two Ukrainian civilians were killed and three were injured.^[183] On 2 March, shells hit the regional perinatal center and some private houses.^[184]

On 4 March, rockets hit the 25th Zhytomyr school destroying half of the school.^[185] In the evening the "Ozerne and Zhytomyr Armored Plant" came under fire; two people were injured.^[186] On 8 March, in an air assault, a dormitory was hit and the Isovat factory was damaged.^[187] On 9 March, the outskirts of the city (Ozerne district) came under fire.^[188]



Emergency servicemen carry a dead body found under rubble in Malyn city, Zhytomyr Oblast, after a Russian airstrike on 8 March

Luhansk Oblast

Bilohorivka school bombing

On 7 May Russian forces bombed a school in Bilohorivka where people were seeking shelter from the ongoing fighting during the Battle of Sievierodonetsk. Luhansk Oblast Governor Serhiy Haidai said that about 60 people were probably killed in the attack.^{[189][190]}

The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said he was "appalled" by the deadly attack and reminded that "civilians and civilian infrastructure must always be spared in times of war".^[191] British foreign secretary Liz Truss condemned the attack and said the deliberate targeting of civilians and infrastructure "amounts to war crimes".^[192]

Odessa Oblast

Bombing of Odessa

At around 12:00 local time on 2 March, Russian forces shelled the village of Dachne to the north-west of Odessa, setting fire to nine houses and a garage. This was followed on 3 March by the shelling of the nearby villages of Zatoka^[193] and Bilenke, killing at least one civilian in Bilenke.^[194] Russian warships also shelled the Ukrainian civilian vessel Helt in the port of Odessa, sinking it.^[195] On 23 April, a Russian missile strike hit two residential buildings.^[196] killing eight civilians and wounding 18 or 20, according to Ukraine.^[197] One missile that struck a residential building killed a three-month old baby, the mother, and the baby's maternal grandmother.^{[198][199]}

Serhiivka missile strike

On the morning of 1 July at 01:00 AM (UTC+3) three Tu-22 strategic bombers of the Russian Air Force fired three Kh-22 missiles into a 9-store apartment building and a recreational center in the settlement of Serhiivka, Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy Raion, Odessa Oblast.^[200] A missile hit the apartment, one section of the building was completely destroyed. The fire also spread from the apartment building to an attached store.

According to preliminary data, at least 16 Ukrainian civilians were killed in the residential building. Two missiles hit the recreational center, killing at least 5 (including an 12-year-old boy).^[201] 38 more were also wounded, including 6 children.^[201]

Ill-treatment, torture and willful killing of civilians

By the Russian authorities and forces

Overt command to kill civilians

Other than *prima facie* evidence and witness statements testifying to war crimes, evidence includes Ukrainian government intercepts of Russian military conversations,^{[202][203]} and Russian government contingency planning for mass graves of civilians.^[204]

Killings and torture in Kyiv region and Chernihiv region

On 15 April, Kyiv regional police force reported that 900 civilian bodies had been found in the region following Russian withdrawal, with more than 350 in Bucha. According to the police most – almost 95% of them – were "simply executed". More bodies continued to be found in mass graves and under the rubble.^[205] As of 15 May, over 1,200 civilian bodies had been recovered in Kyiv region alone.^[14]

In April Human Rights Watch visited 17 villages in Kyiv Oblast and Chernihiv Oblast that had been under Russian occupation from late February through March 2022. The human rights organisation investigated 22 summary executions, 9 unlawful killings, 6 enforced disappearances, and 7 cases of torture. Witnesses reported that Russian soldiers beat detainees, used electric shocks, and carried out mock executions to coerce them to provide information.^[206] Twenty-one civilians described unlawful confinement in inhuman and degrading conditions.^[206] Human Rights Watch cited reports that in Stryi Bykiv Russian forces rounded up at least six men and executed them at the beginning of the invasion.^[207]

On 5 July, the OHCHR in Ukraine was working to corroborate over 300 allegations of deliberate killings of civilians by Russian armed forces.^[14]

Bucha massacre

After Russian forces withdrew from Bucha north of Kyiv, at the end of March, videos emerged showing at least nine apparently dead bodies lying in the street in the residential area of the town. Journalists who visited the area reported seeing at least twenty corpses in civilian clothing.^[208] On 1 April, AFP reported that at least twenty bodies of civilians lay in the streets of Bucha, with at least one the bodies having tied hands. The mayor of the city, Anatolu Fedoruk, said that these individuals had all been shot in the back of the head. Fedoruk also said that around 270 or 280 individuals from the city had to be buried in mass graves.^{[209][208]} In Vorzel, west of Bucha, Russian soldiers killed a woman and her 14-year-old child after throwing smoke grenades into the basement in which they were hiding.^[210] On 15 April, local police reported more than 350 bodies found in Bucha following the withdrawal of Russian forces, and said most died of gunshot wounds.^[205]

Video footage from a drone verified by *The New York Times* showed two Russian armoured vehicles firing at a civilian walking with a bicycle. A separate video, filmed after Russian withdrawal, showed a dead person wearing civilian clothing matching the drone footage, lying next to a bicycle.^[211] The Economist

reported an account of a survivor of a mass execution. After getting trapped at a checkpoint when it came under fire from Russian artillery, the man was captured by Russian soldiers, along with the construction workers he was sheltering with at the checkpoint. The soldiers moved them to a nearby building being used as a Russian base, strip-searched them, beat and tortured them, then took them to the side of the building to shoot and kill them. The man was shot in the side, but survived by playing dead and later fleeing to a nearby home.^[212]



Photo distributed by the Ukrainian government showing bodies in the Bucha area in April 2022

Footage released by the Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces appeared to show 18 mutilated bodies of murdered men, women and children in a summer camp basement in Zabuchchya, a village in the Bucha district.^[22] One of the Ukrainian soldiers interviewed stated there was evidence of torture: some had their ears cut-off, others had teeth pulled out, and that the bodies had been removed a day before the interview.^[213] A report by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, an American state-funded media organization, described the basement as an "execution cellar" used by Russian forces.^[214]

According to residents of Bucha, upon entering the town, Russian tanks and military vehicles drove down the streets shooting randomly at house windows.^[215] The New York Times reported that during the Russian occupation snipers set up in high rise buildings and shot at anyone that moved.^[216] A witness told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that the Russians "were killing people systematically. I personally heard how one sniper was boasting that he 'offed' two people he saw in apartment windows.... There was no need. There was no military justification to kill. It was just torturing civilians. On other blocks, people were really tortured. They were found with their hands tied behind their backs and shot in the back of the head." Locals asserted the killings were deliberate and many reported that in several instances snipers would gun down civilians for no clear reason.^[217]

On 4 April, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine stated police in the Kyiv region found a "torture chamber" in a basement of a children's sanatorium in Bucha. The basement contained the bodies of five men with hands tied behind their backs. The announcement was accompanied by several photos posted on Facebook.^{[218][219]} On 5 April, Associated Press journalists saw charred bodies on a residential street near a playground in Bucha, including one with a bullet hole in the skull, and a burned body of a child. The journalists were unable to verify their identity or the circumstances that led to their death.^[220] On 6 April, Ukrainian investigators said they found a mined body and three other corpses, one beheaded, at a glass factory in town.^[221] On 21 April Human Rights Watch reported they had found "extensive evidence of summary executions, other unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, and torture" in Bucha. The human rights organisation documented the details of 16 apparently unlawful killings including nine summary executions and seven indiscriminate killings of civilians.^[222] On 27 April, Michelle Bachelet, Head of OHCHR, reported that the Monitoring Mission in Ukraine had documented the unlawful killing of 50 civilians – mostly men, but also women and children – in Bucha.^[24]

While Ukrainian officials called the situation "genocide", "a massacre" and "war crimes", Russia's Defense Ministry claimed that some of the footage was fake and accused Ukrainian troops of killing people by shelling the town. Numerous other countries demanded investigations and accountability, with UK prime minister Boris Johnson stating the footage in Bucha was "yet more evidence that Putin and his army are committing war crimes".^[223] Several nations such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Spain have called for the prosecution and punishment of Russia troops for reported atrocities in the invasion.^[224]

On 4 April, US president Joe Biden called Putin "a war criminal". UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that the United Kingdom would use its resources to bring Putin to justice for atrocities being uncovered in Bucha.^[225]

Amnesty International stated that the killings near Bucha constituted "extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings, which must be investigated as likely war crimes". Agnès Callamard, the Secretary General of Amnesty International, added that "Testimonies shows that unarmed civilians in Ukraine are being killed in their homes and streets in acts of unspeakable cruelty and shocking brutality".^[226]

On 19 May, New York Times released videos showing Russian soldiers leading away a group of civilians, then forcing them to the ground. The dead bodies of the men were later recorded by a drone in the spot where the video was recorded and the bodies later found after Bucha's liberation. The videos clearly show the murdered men in Russian custody minutes before their execution and confirm eyewitness accounts. The troops responsible for the murders were Russian paratroopers.^[227]

Killings and torture in Borodianka

On 26 March 2022, Russia, repelled from Kyiv, progressively withdrew from the region to concentrate on Donbas.^[228] Borodianka's mayor said that as the Russian convoy had moved through the town, Russian soldiers had fired through every open window. The retreating Russian troops placed mines throughout the town.^[143]

Russian soldiers were accused by Iryna Venediktova, prosecutor general of Ukraine, of "murders, tortures, and beatings" of civilians in Borodianka.^{[229][230]} The head of the Borodiansk police department said that Ukrainian civilians were tortured and killed in retaliation for a successful ambush against a column of Russian troops.^[231]

Killing and torture in Makariv

The Ukrainian Defense Ministry announced the discovery of 132 bodies in Makariv, accusing the Russian forces of having tortured and murdered them.^{[232][233]} CCTV video from 28 February showed a Russian BMP armoured vehicle blowing apart a civilian car, killing an elderly couple inside.^{[234][235]}

E40 highway shooting (Kyiv)

On 7 March, a Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces drone operating near the E40 highway outside Kyiv filmed Russian troops shooting a civilian who had his hands up.^[236] After Ukrainian forces recaptured the area four weeks later, a BBC news crew investigating the area found the bodies of the man and his wife close to their car, all of which had been burned. More dead bodies lined the highway, some of which also showed signs of burning. During the incident, a couple in that car was killed, and their son and an elder were released. The burning of bodies may have been signs that the Russian troops tried to destroy evidence of what they had done. At least ten dead were found along the road, two of them wearing recognisable Ukrainian military uniforms. The drone footage was submitted to Ukrainian authorities and London's Metropolitan Police.^[236]

Shooting on passing civilian vehicles

According to Ukrainian regional authorities, at least 25 civilians, including six children, have been killed in attacks on cars trying to flee Chernihiv, or attacked in public places; one such incident, involving the killing of a 15-year-old boy on 9 March, was investigated by BBC and reported on 10 April.^[237] On 2 May

Human Rights Watch documented three separate incidents involving the Russian forces opening fire on passing cars without any apparent effort to verify whether the occupants were civilians. The incidents took place in Kyiv and Chernihiv regions, involved four vehicles and killed six civilians and wounded three. Multiple witnesses' accounts and *in loco* investigations revealed that the attacks on civilians were likely deliberate and suggested that the Russian forces had also fired on other civilian cars in similar ways.^[3]

On 28 February, Russian forces shot at two vehicles that were trying to flee from Hostomel, northwest of Kyiv. On 3 March, in the same area, they opened fire on a vehicle with four men who were going to negotiate delivery of humanitarian aid. In the village of Nova Basan, in Chernihiv region, Russian soldiers shot at a civilian van carrying two men, injuring one of them; they pulled the second man from the van and summarily executed him, while the injured man escaped.^[3]

The Kyiv Independent reported that on 4 March Russian forces killed three unarmed Ukrainian civilians who had just delivered dog food to a dog shelter in Bucha. As they were approaching their house, a Russian armored vehicle opened fire on the car.^[238] In another incident, on 5 March at around 7:15 AM in Bucha, a pair of cars carrying two families trying to leave the town were spotted by Russian soldiers as the vehicles turned onto Chkalova Street. Russian forces in an armored vehicle opened fire on the convoy, killing a man in the second vehicle. The front car was hit by a burst of machine-gun fire, instantly killing two children and their mother.^[239]

On 27 March the Russian army shot at a convoy of cars carrying civilians fleeing the village of Stepanki, near Kharkiv. An elderly woman and 13-year-old girl were killed. The incident was investigated both by the team on war crimes of the prosecutor's office in the Kharkiv region and by the Canadian news outlet *Global News*. The prosecutor's office said that on 26 March a Russian commander had given the order to fire rockets at civilian areas in order to create a sense of panic among the population. *Global News* presented what it saw as flaws in the official investigation.^[240]

On 18 April, during the capture of Kreminna, Russian forces were accused of shooting four civilians fleeing Kreminna in their cars.^{[241][242]}

Kremmina care home attack

According to Ukraine's human rights ombudsman, on 11 March over 50 elderly persons in a care home had been intentionally fired upon by a tank in the town of Kreminna, calling the attack a "crime against humanity" by "racist occupation forces".^[243] Serhiy Haidai, governor of Luhansk region, made the same claim. Reportedly, 56 victims died while 15 survivors were taken to Svatove in "occupied territory". The allegations have not been independently verified so far.^[243]

Killings and torture in Trostianets

After the town of Trostianets in Sumy Oblast was liberated from Russian control, the local doctor at the morgue reported that at least one person in town was killed by Russians after being tortured, and young people were abducted. The town's hospital was also shelled; *The New York Times* said it was unclear who hit the building, but the locals accused the Russians.^[244]

Reporters from *The Guardian* visited the town after it was liberated from Russian troops and found evidence of executions, looting and torture carried out by Russian troops. According to the mayor of the town, the Russians killed between 50 and 100 civilians while they occupied the town. One local witness stated that Russian soldiers fired into the air to frighten women delivering food to the elderly while shouting "Run bitches!"^[245]

In mid April 2022 *The Independent* obtained numerous testimonies of survivors of a Russian torture chamber in Trostyanets, Sumy oblast. According to the witnesses, at least eight civilians were held in a basement of a train station where they were tortured, starved, subject to mock executions, forced to sit in their own excrement, electrocuted, stripped, and threatened with rape and genital mutilation. At least one prisoner was beaten to death by Russian guards who told the prisoners "All Ukrainians must die". Two were still missing at the time of the report. One prisoner was given electric shocks to his head until he begged the Russian soldiers to kill him. Numerous bodies, mutilated to the point where they were unrecognizable, were discovered by investigators in the area around the town.^[246]

Abduction and torture of civilians in Kherson

Dementiy Bilyi, head of the Kherson regional department of the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, claimed that the Russian security forces were "beating, torturing, and kidnapping" civilians in the Kherson Oblast of Ukraine. He added that eyewitnesses had described "dozens" of arbitrary searches and detentions, resulting in an unknown amount of abducted persons.^[247] At least 400 residents had gone missing by 16 March, with the mayor and deputy mayor of the town of Skadovsk being abducted by armed men.^[248] An leaked letter described Russian plans to unleash a "great terror" to suppress protests occurring in Kherson, stating that people would "have to be taken from their homes in the middle of the night".^[249]

Ukrainians who have escaped from occupied Kherson into Ukrainian-controlled territory have provided testimonies of torture, abuse and kidnapping by Russian forces in the region. One person, from Bilozerka in Kherson Oblast, provided physical evidence of being tortured by Russians and described beatings, electrocutions, mock executions, strangulations, threats to kill family members and other forms of torture.^[250]

An investigation by the BBC gathered evidence of torture, which in addition to beatings also included electrocution and burns on people's hands and feet. A doctor who treated victims of torture in the region reported: "Some of the worst were burn marks on genitals, a gunshot wound to the head of a girl who was raped and burns from an iron on a patient's back and stomach. The patient told me two wires from a car battery were attached to his groin and he was told to stand on a wet rag". In addition to the BBC, the Human Rights Watch UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine have reported on torture and "disappearances" carried out by Russian occupation forces in the region. One resident stated: "In Kherson, now people go missing all the time (...) there is a war going on, only this part is without bombs."^[251]

Kherson's elected Ukrainian mayor has compiled a list of more than 300 people who have been kidnapped by Russian forces as of 15 May 2022. According to The Times, in the building housing the Russian occupation authorities, the screams of the tortured can be frequently heard throughout the corridors.^[252]

Human shields

On 5 July, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet reported that her office had documented the placement of military objectives near civilian objects and the use of human shields by both parties to the conflict. One such case happened in a care house in Stara Krasnianka (Luhansk region).^[14]

Using non-combatants to serve as human shields is prohibited by Humanitarian Law, in particular, Article 51(7) of Protocol I of the Geneva Convention.^[253]

Russian forces

ABC News and The Economist reported Russian soldiers using over 300 Ukrainian civilians as human shields, who were held captive in inhumane conditions for 25 days in March in the basement of the school of Yahidne where a major Russian military camp was located. According to reports 12 elderly people died in the cellar, and local residents were subjected to torture and killings. On 5 March Russian forces had seized the village as a base to attack the nearby city of Chernihiv.^{[254][255][206]}

The BBC and The Guardian found "clear evidence" of use of Ukrainian civilians as human shields by Russian troops in the area near Kyiv after the Russian withdrawal on 1 April, citing eyewitness accounts from inhabitants of Bucha and the nearby village of Ivankiv, and of residents of the village of Obukhovychi, near the Belarussian border, Russian troops were accused of using civilians as human shields as they came under attack by Ukrainian soldiers. Multiple witnesses reported that, on 14 March, the Russian soldiers went door-to-door, rounded about 150 civilians and locked them up in the local school, where they were used as protection for the Russian forces.^{[256][257]}

As the first witness accounts from the Bucha massacre emerged at the beginning of April, Ukraine accused Russian forces leaving the area near Kyiv of using children as human shields. Russian units withdrawing from the village of Novyi Bykiv reportedly placed coaches of Ukrainian children in front of their tanks to protect themselves. In other areas of Ukraine, there were claims that Russian forces took local children hostage and threatened their parents in case they gave away the troops' coordinates. According to the Ukrainian human rights ombudsman, cases of Russian soldiers using Ukrainian children as human shields have been recorded in Sumy, Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Zaporizhzhia Oblast.^{[258][259]}

Ukrainian forces

Since the beginning of the invasion,^[260] Russia has repeatedly accused Ukraine of using human shields, a claim which is regarded by third party observers as baseless.^{[261][262]} Scholars Michael N. Schmitt, Neve Gordon, and Nicola Perugini have rejected these claims as attempts to shift blame for civilian deaths to Ukraine.^[263]

Rape and sexual assault by Russian soldiers

According to experts and Ukrainian officials, there are indications that sexual violence was tolerated by the Russian command and used as in a systematic and deliberate way as a weapon of war.^{[15][264][19]}

After Russian withdrawal from areas north of Kyiv, there was a "mounting body of evidence" of rape, torture and summary killings by Russian forces inflicted upon Ukrainian civilians, including gang-rapes committed at gunpoint and rapes committed in front of children.^[15]

In late March Ukraine's Prosecutor General opened an investigation into a case of a Russian soldier who had killed an unarmed civilian and then repeatedly raped his wife. The incident is supposed to have taken place on 9 March, in a village outside of Kyiv.^[265] The victim related that two Russian soldiers raped her repeatedly after killing her husband, while her four-year-old son hid in the house's boiler room. The account was first published by The Times of London.^{[266][267]} Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dismissed the allegation as a lie.^[268] Ukrainian authorities have said that numerous reports of sexual assault and rape by Russian troops have emerged since the beginning of the invasion in February 2022.^[267] Ukrainian MP Maria Mezentseva said that these types of cases were underreported and that there are many other victims.^[269] Meduza published an in-depth account of the same rape (and of another) in Bogdanivka and of surrounding events.^[270]

In another reported incident a Russian soldier entered a school in the village of Mala Rohan where civilians were sheltering and raped a young Ukrainian woman. Human Rights Watch reported that the woman was threatened and repeatedly raped by a Russian soldier who cut her cheek, neck and hair.^[271] According to witness statements, the villagers informed Russian officers in charge of the occupation of the village of the incident, who arrested the perpetrator and told them that he would be summarily executed.^[272] Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated that Russian soldiers had committed "numerous" rapes against Ukrainian women. According to the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict database, sexual violence by Russian forces has been reported in three of seven years of conflict since 2014 in eastern Ukraine.^[273]

A report published by The Kyiv Independent included a photo and information about one man and two or three naked women under a blanket whose bodies Russian soldiers tried to burn on the side of a road before fleeing.^[274] Ukrainian officials said the women had been raped and the bodies burnt.^[275]

Human Rights Watch received reports of other incidents of rape in Chernihiv region and Mariupol.^[271] ABC News reported in April 2022 that "rapes, shootings and a senseless execution" have occurred in the village of Berestyanka near Kyiv, noting a specific incident where a man was reportedly shot by Russian soldiers on 9 March after attempting to block them from raping his wife and a female friend.^[276]

On 12 April 2022, BBC News interviewed a 50-year-old woman from a village 70 km west of Kyiv, who said that she was raped at gunpoint by a Chechen allied with the Russian Armed Forces. A 40-year-old woman was raped and killed by the same soldier, according to neighbours, leaving what BBC News described as a "disturbing crime scene". Police exhumed the 40-year-old's body the day after the visit by BBC News.^[277]

A report by The New York Times related that a Ukrainian woman was kidnapped by Russian soldiers, kept in a cellar as a sex slave and then executed.^[278]

On 3 June, the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, told the U.N. Security Council that dozens of violent sexual attacks against women and girls have been reported to the U.N. human rights office, and many more cases likely have not been reported. She also said the country is turning into "a human trafficking crisis."^[279] In addition, a major barrier for verification of cases remains access, especially in Russian-occupied territories such as Mariupol.^[280]

In March 2022 the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine stressed the heightened risks of sexual violence and the risk of under-reporting by victims in the country.^[9] At the beginning of June, the Monitoring Mission had received reports of 124 episodes of conflict-related sexual violence committed by Russian forces against women, girls, men and boys in various Ukrainian cities and regions.^[281]

As of 5 July, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine had verified 28 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, torture, forced public stripping, and threats of sexual violence. OHCHR reported that the majority of cases were committed in areas controlled by Russian armed forces and that there were also cases committed in Government controlled areas.^[14]

Deportations

According to Ukrainian officials and two witnesses, Russian forces have forcefully deported thousands of residents from Ukraine to Russia during the Siege of Mariupol.^{[282][283][284]} On 24 March, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the Russian army had forcibly deported about 6,000 Mariupol residents in order to use them as "hostages" and put more pressure on Ukraine.^{[285][286]} The US embassy in Kyiv cited the Ukrainian foreign ministry as claiming that 2,389 Ukrainian children had been illegally removed from the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk and taken to Russia.^{[287][288]}

According to the Russian ministry of defense the residents of Mariupol had a "voluntary choice" whether to evacuate to the Ukrainian- or Russian-controlled territory and that by 20 March about 60,000 Mariupol residents were "evacuated to Russia." Human Rights Watch has not been able to verify these accounts.^[289]

On 24 March, Ukraine's human rights ombudsman said that over 402,000 Ukrainians had been forcefully taken to Russia, including around 84,000 children.^{[290][291]} Russian authorities said that more than 384,000 people, including over 80,000 children, had been evacuated to Russia from Ukraine and from the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.^[292]

Deportation of protected peoples such as civilians during war is prohibited by Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.^[293] On 7 June, Human Rights Watch specialist Tanya Lokshina emphasized this point, reiterating that that forcible deportation against people's will was itself a war crime, and called Russia to stop this practice. In addition, Human Rights Watch and Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group reported cases where refugees were being intimidated and pressured to implicate Armed Forces of Ukraine personnel for war crimes during long interrogation sessions, including the Mariupol theatre airstrike.^[294]

Time period	Deported	Source
18 February	90,000 ^[a]	Ombudsman of Ukraine ^[295]
24 February - 24 March 2022	402,000	Ombudsman of Ukraine ^[296]
24 February - 11 April 2022	700,000	Ombudsman of Ukraine ^[295]
24 February - 28 April 2022	1,000,000	Ombudsman of Ukraine ^[297]

Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of civilians

On 22 March the non-profit organization Reporters Without Borders reported that Russian forces had captured a Ukrainian fixer and interpreter for Radio France on 5 March as he headed home to a village in Central Ukraine. He was held captive for nine days, and subjected to electric shocks, beatings with an iron bar and a mock execution.^{[298][299][300]} On 25 March Reporters Without Borders stated that Russian forces had threatened, kidnapped, detained and tortured several Ukrainian journalists in the occupied territories.^{[25][301]} Torture is prohibited by both Article 32 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 2 of the United Nations Convention against Torture.^{[302][303]}

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine confirmed that in the first month of the invasion they had documented the arbitrary detention in Russian occupied territories of 21 journalists and civil society activists, nine of whom had already reportedly been released.^{[26][6][9]} The Human Rights Monitoring Mission also verified the arrests and detention of 24 public officials and civil servants of local authorities, including three mayors, by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups of the self-proclaimed republics of Luhansk and Donetsk.^{[26][6][9]}

International humanitarian law allows the internment of civilians in armed conflict only when they individually pose a security threat,^{[304][305]} and all detained persons whose prisoners of war (PoW) status is in doubt must be treated as prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention until their status has been determined.^[306] Reports of missing civilians are rampant in villages to the west of Kyiv, as Russian troops have withdrawn in the area, with a large majority of them male. One woman in Makhariy, told reporters she witnessed Russian soldiers force her son in law at gunpoint drive away from their house with the troops and he has not been seen since. Another man disappeared in Shptky, while attempting to deliver petrol to a friend with only his burned out and bullet ridden car found later by Ukrainian troops.^[307]

On 5 July, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had documented 270 cases of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of civilians, eight of which were found dead. The OHCHR informed the Human Rights Council that arbitrary detention of civilians had become "widespread" in territory controlled by Russian forces and affiliated armed groups. OHCHR also reported that since the beginning of the invasion the Security Service of Ukraine and National Police had arrested over one thousand pro-Russian supporters, and that 12 cases were likely to amount to enforced disappearance by Ukrainian law enforcement bodies.^{[14][308]}

Detention camps

Evacuees from Mariupol raised concerns about the treatment of evacuees from Mariupol by Russian troops through a Russian filtration camp, that is reportedly used to house civilians before they were evacuated. Similar camps have been compared by Ukrainian officials to "modern-day concentration camps". Refugees have reported torture and killings when being processed through filtration camps, especially in Mariupol.^{[309][310]} These include beatings, electrocution and suffocating people with plastic bags over their heads.^[309]

The refugees were fingerprinted, photographed from all sides, and had their phones searched, and anyone believed to be a "Ukrainian Nazi" was taken to Donetsk for interrogation. They also told reporters there was a lack of basic necessities and a majority of the evacuations were forcing refugees towards Russia.^{[311][312][313][314]}

On 5 July the OHCHR expressed concern about the whereabouts and treatment of those who had not passed the filtration process, who were possibly detained in unknown locations at high risk of being subjected to torture and ill-treatment.^[14]

Abduction of Ukrainian children

According to Ukrainian authorities, Russian forces have also kidnapped more than 121,000 Ukrainian children and deported them to Russia's eastern provinces. The parents of some of these children were killed by Russian military. The Russian state Duma has drafted a law which would formalize "adoption" of these children.^[315] The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that there was a "blatant threat of illegal adoption of Ukrainian children by Russian citizens without observing all the necessary procedures determined by the legislation of Ukraine." and called on United Nations bodies to intervene to have the children returned to Ukraine.^[316] On 1 June Ukrainian President Zelenskyy accused Russia of forcibly deporting more than 200,000 children from Ukraine, including orphans and children separated from their family. According to Zelenskyy, this amounts to a "heinous war crime" and a "criminal policy," whose object "is not just to steal people but to make deportees forget about Ukraine and not be able to return."^{[317][318]}

Treatment of prisoners of war

Russian prisoners of war

Kneecapping of Russian soldiers

On 27 March a video purportedly showing Ukrainian soldiers torturing Russian prisoners by shooting them in the knees was uploaded on [Telegram](#).^{[319][320]} The video was shot in [Mala Rohan](#), southeast of [Kharkiv](#), in an area recently recaptured by Ukrainian troops.^[320] The footage depicts a number of captured soldiers lying on the ground; many appear to be bleeding from leg wounds and are questioned by their captors. At one point, three prisoners are brought out of a vehicle and shot in the legs with a rifle. The accents and the uniforms of the captors are consistent with them being Ukrainians from the east of the country.^{[320][29]} Independent journalist investigations later confirmed the location of the incident and documented that volunteers of the Ukrainian [Slobozhanshchyna](#) battalion were on site when the Russian prisoners were tortured.^[30] On 13 May French newspaper [Le Monde](#) verified the video and confirmed its authenticity.^[30]



Captured Russian soldiers during the [Battle of Sumy](#).

On 29 March the Head of the [UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine](#) [Matilda Bogner](#) said she was "very concerned".^{[320][321]} She called on Russia and Ukraine to launch investigations on the alleged ill-treatment of prisoners of both sides, and reminded the two countries of their obligations to treat POWs humanely and ensure they "are not exposed to public curiosity and are treated with dignity."^[322] Human Rights Watch said that the video, if confirmed, showed serious violations of international humanitarian law, and urged the Ukrainian authorities to ensure an effective investigation into actions that could qualify as war crime.^[29] [Oleksiy Arestovych](#), adviser to the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, said that the case is taken "very seriously" and that it will be immediately investigated, since it would be "absolutely unacceptable behavior".^{[323][324]} The chairman of the [investigative committee](#) of the Russian Federation, [Alexander Bastrykin](#), also said that an investigation will be launched. The Ukrainian armed forces chief, [Valerii Zaluzhnyi](#), released a statement saying that the Russians had made fake videos in order to discredit Ukraine's defense forces.^{[319][323]}

Execution of captured Russian soldiers

On 6 April a video apparently showing Ukrainian troops of the [Georgian Legion](#) executing captured Russian soldiers was posted on [Telegram](#).^[325] The video was verified by [The New York Times](#) and by [Reuters](#).^{[326][32]} A wounded Russian soldier was seemingly shot twice by a Ukrainian soldier while lying on the ground. Three dead Russian soldiers, including one with a head wound and hands tied behind his back, were shown near the soldier. The video appeared to have been filmed on a road north of the village of [Dmytrivka](#), seven miles south of [Bucha](#).^[327]

The Georgian Legion's commander [Mamouka Mamoulashvili](#) acknowledged that that killing of Russian prisoners of war was done under his own orders by a patrol of the Georgian Legion.^[328] In an interview published by the YouTube channel of the dissident Russian businessman [Mikhail Khodorkovsky](#), he said about the treatment of Russian prisoners: "Sometimes we tie them hands and feet. I speak for the Georgian Legion, we will never take Russian prisoners."^[329] Mamoulashvili justified [no quarter](#) for Russian soldiers as a response to the [Bucha massacre](#).^[330] On 7 April the head of the Russian [investigative committee](#) brought criminal charges against Mamoulashvili for violations of the rules of warfare committed against Russian military personnel.^[331]

In June, [Meduza](#) reported that it had likely identified a Russian PoW who had been shot, a video of which was released in March and was geolocated to near [Kharkiv](#).^[332]

Ukrainian prisoners of war

Executions of surrendering Ukrainian soldiers

At an Arria-formula meeting of the UN Security Council, the US ambassador-at-large for global criminal justice Beth Van Schaack said that US authorities have evidence that surrendering Ukrainian soldiers were executed by the Russian army in Donetsk.^{[333][334]} A Ukrainian soldier who was shown among prisoners in a Russian video on 20 April, was confirmed dead days later.^[335]

Eyewitness accounts and a video filmed by a security camera provide evidence that on 4 March Russian paratroopers executed at least eight Ukrainian prisoners of war in Bucha. The victims were local inhabitants who had joined the defense forces shortly before they were killed.^[31]

Death sentence against foreign soldiers serving in Ukrainian armed forces

Following a show trial by the Supreme Court of the Donetsk People's Republic, three members of Ukrainian armed forces, Aiden Aslin, Saadoun Brahim, and Shaun Pinner were declared mercenaries and sentenced to the execution by firing squad.^[336] The ruling was described as illegal because the defendants qualify as POW under international humanitarian law and have not been accused of committing any war crimes.^[337]

On 10 June the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the death sentence and the trial. A spokesperson of the organisation declared that "such trials against prisoners of war mount to a war crime,"^[338] and highlighted that according to the chief command of Ukraine all the defendants were part of the Ukrainian armed forces and therefore should have not been considered as mercenaries. The OHCHR spokesperson also expressed concern about procedural fairness stating that "since 2015, we have observed that the so-called judiciary within these self-contained republics has not complied with essential fair trial guarantees, such as public hearings, independence, impartiality of the courts and the right not to be compelled to testify."^[338]

The International Bar Association issued a statement, saying "that any implementation of the 'pronounced' death penalty will be an obvious case of plain murder of Aiden Aslin, Shaun Pinner and Brahim Saadoun and deemed an international war crime. Any perpetrators (anyone engaged in the so-called DPR 'court' and anyone who conspired to execute this decision) will be regarded as war criminals", also pointing out that neither Russian nor Ukrainian law allows the death penalty.^[339]

On 12 June, Donetsk People's Republic leader Denis Pushilin reiterated that the separatists did not see the trio as prisoners of war, but rather as people who came to Ukraine to kill civilians for money, adding that he saw no reason for modifying or mitigating the sentences.^[340] Russian State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin accused the trio of fascism, reiterating that they deserved the death penalty. He added that the Ukrainian armed forces were committing crimes against humanity and were being controlled by a neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv.^[341]

On 17 June, the European Court of Human Rights issued an emergency stay of Saadoun Brahim's execution. It stressed Russia was still obliged to follow the court's rulings.^{[342][343]} Earlier in June, the Russian state duma passed a law to end the jurisdiction of the court in Russia, but it has not been signed into law yet.^[344]

Looting

Looting is a war crime under several treaties.^[345] Survivors of the Bucha Massacre, talking to Human Rights Watch (HRW) following the retreat of the Russian forces, described the treatment of people in the city during the occupation: Russian soldiers went door to door, questioning people and destroying their possessions, they also raised accusations that Russian soldiers looted the town, saying that they took clothing, jewelry, electronics, kitchen appliances and vehicles of evacuees, the deceased and those still in the city.^[346] Wall Street Journal journalist Yaroslav Trofimov reported hearing testimonies of Russian soldiers looting food and valuables during his visit to southern Ukraine.^[347] The Guardian journalists visiting Trostanets after a month-long Russian occupation found evidence of "systematic looting".^[348] Similarly, villagers in Berestyanka near Kyiv told ABC News that before the village returned to Ukrainian control, Russian soldiers looted clothes, household appliances and electronics from homes.^[276]

Videos have been posted on Telegram, reportedly showing Russian soldiers sending stolen Ukrainian goods home through courier services in Belarus. Items visible in videos included air conditioning units, alcohol, car batteries, and bags from Epicentr K stores.^[349] News aggregator Ukraine Alert posted video showing stolen goods found in an abandoned Russian armored personnel carrier, and an image reportedly showing a damaged Russian military truck carrying three washing machines. Intercepted telephone calls have also made mention of looting; a call by a Russian soldier released by the Security Service of Ukraine included the soldier telling his girlfriend: "I stole some cosmetics for you" to which the girlfriend responded "What Russian person doesn't steal anything?"^[350] The Russian company CDEK postal service stopped live streaming its CCTV in early April. CDEK live-streams video from its delivery offices as a courtesy to customers to show them how busy the offices are, before customers visit the branches. This live stream was used by Lithuania-based exiled Belarusian dissident Anton Motolko as evidence of looting. Some of the items come from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Some of these items are radioactive or contaminated with radioactivity because they were used in the nuclear power plant.^[351]

There are reports of bazaars set up by Russian forces outside Ukraine to trade in looted goods in Belarus. Such items are "washing machines and dishwashers, refrigerators, jewelry, cars, bicycles, motorcycles, dishes, carpets, works of art, children's toys, cosmetics,". Russian soldiers are seeking payment in euros and US dollars however, and due to currency restrictions this is difficult for locals.^[352]

Widespread claims of looting by Russian troops of cultural institutions were raised by Ukrainian officials with a majority of the accusations coming from the areas of Mariupol and Melitopol. Ukrainian officials have claimed that Russian forces have seized more than 2,000 artworks and Scythian gold from various museums and moving them into the Donbas region.^[353]

Genocide

Several national parliaments, including those of Ukraine^[354] as well as Canada,^[355] Poland,^[356] Estonia,^[357] Latvia,^[358] Lithuania,^[359] Czech Republic,^[360] Ireland^[361] declared that the war crimes taking place in the invasion were genocide. Scholars of genocide, including Eugene Finkel,^[362]^[363] Timothy D. Snyder,^[364] Norman M. Naimark^[365] and Gregory Stanton,^[366] and legal experts Otto Luchterhandt^[367] and Zakhar Tropin^[368] said that along with the acts required by the definition of genocide,^[369] there was genocidal intent, together establishing genocide. Human rights lawyer Juan E. Méndez stated on 4 March 2022 that the genocide claim was worth investigating, but should not be presumed;^[370] and genocide scholar Alexander Hinton stated on 13 April that Russian president Vladimir Putin's genocidal rhetoric would have to be linked to the war crimes in order to establish genocidal intent.^[366] A report accuses Russia.^[371]^[372]

Legal proceedings

Given Russia's seat on the UN Security Council, and existing complaints in international courts by Ukraine about Russian aggression in Crimea and Donbas, legal analysts initially speculated that Ukraine might experience difficulty seeking recourse for the invasion.^[373]

Because of the backload of cases in Ukrainian courts, which as of June 2022 have more than 15,000 pending cases, and the number of different international investigations by different countries, there were calls to create a special hybrid court to centralize domestic and international efforts. Legal analysts described the creation of a hybrid court as difficult, considering Russia's role in the UN Security Council, the basis of previous international tribunals.^[374]

International Criminal Court

On 25 February 2022, ICC Prosecutor Karim Ahmad Khan stated that the ICC could "exercise its jurisdiction and investigate any act of genocide, crime against humanity or war crime committed within Ukraine."^[375] Khan stated on 28 February that he would launch a full ICC investigation and that he had requested his team to "explore all evidence preservation opportunities". He stated that it would be faster to officially open the investigation if an ICC member state referred the case for investigation. Lithuanian prime minister Ingrida Simonyte stated on the same day that Lithuania had requested that the ICC investigation be opened.^[376]

On 2 March 39 states had already referred the situation in Ukraine to the ICC Prosecutor, who could then open an investigation into past and present allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed in Ukraine by any person from 21 November 2013 onwards.^{[377][378]} On 11 March two additional referrals were submitted to the ICC Prosecutor, and the Prosecutor declared that investigations would begin.^[34] The Prosecutor's office set up an online method for people with evidence to initiate contact with investigators,^[34] and a team of investigators, lawyers and other professionals was sent to Ukraine to begin collecting evidence.^{[33][34]}

Neither Ukraine nor Russia are parties to the Rome Statute, the legal basis of the ICC. The ICC has jurisdiction to investigate because Ukraine signed two declarations consenting to ICC jurisdiction over crimes committed in Ukraine from 21 November 2013 onwards.^{[35][379][380]} Articles 28(a) and 28(b) of the Rome Statute define the relation between command responsibility and superior responsibility of the chain of command structures of the armed forces involved.^[381]

As of 10 June, the ICC investigation had dispatched more than 40 investigators, the largest effort ever in ICC history, and there are calls to create a special court or international tribunal to handle the casework.^[374]

In mid June, according to the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service, an alleged GRU officer, who was a student of prominent genocide professor Eugene Finkel, attempted to gain entry into the Netherlands under an assumed identity. The purpose was to infiltrate the ICC via an internship, which would have given him to access and potentially influence the pending criminal war crimes case.^{[382][383]}

International Court of Justice

On 27 February, Ukraine filed a petition with the International Court of Justice arguing that Russia violated the Genocide Convention using an unsubstantiated accusation of genocide in order to justify its aggression against Ukraine.^{[384][385]}

On 1 March, the ICJ officially called on Russia to "act in such a way" that would make it possible for a decision on *provisional measures* to become effective.^[386] Initial hearings in the case took place on 7 March 2022 at Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands—the seat of the court—to determine Ukraine's entitlement to provisional relief.^[387] The Russian delegation did not appear for these proceedings,^[388] but submitted a written statement.^[389]

On 16 March 2022, the court ruled 13–2 that Russia must "immediately suspend the military operations" it commenced on 24 February 2022 in Ukraine,^[390] with Vice-president Kirill Gevorgian of Russia and Judge Xue Hanqin of China dissenting.^[391] The court also unanimously called for "[b]oth Parties [to] refrain from any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the Court or make it more difficult to resolve."^[390]

Ukrainian judicial system

The Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba stated on 25 February that Russia was committing war crimes, and that the ministry and the Prosecutor General of Ukraine were collecting evidence on events including attacks on kindergartens and orphanages, which would be "immediately transfer[red]" to the ICC.^[392] On 30 March, Ukraine's chief prosecutor announced that she was building 2,500 war crimes cases against the Russian invasion.^[393] On 13 May the first war crimes trial began in Kyiv, of a Russian soldier who was ordered to shoot an unarmed civilian.^[394] The soldier, Vadim Shishimarin, soon pleaded guilty to this crime.^{[395][396]} Shortly after Shishimarin pleaded guilty, two other low-ranked Russian soldiers, Alexander Bobikin and Alexander Ivanov, were tried on war crimes charges for firing missiles at a residential tower block in Kharkiv.^[397] They also pleaded guilty.^[398]

Several international legal teams were formed to support the Ukrainian prosecutors.^{[399][400][401]}

EU Joint Investigation Team

In the aftermath of the Bucha massacre, the EU established a Joint Investigation Team with Ukraine to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity. Within the framework of the Join Investigation Team, a pool of investigators and legal experts by Eurojust and Europol is made available for providing assistance to Ukrainian prosecutors.^[399] On 6 April 2022, United States Attorney General Merrick Garland announced that the U.S. Department of Justice was assisting Eurojust and Europol prosecutors with their investigation, and that the Justice and State Departments were also making efforts to support the Ukrainian prosecutor.^[402]

Task Force on Accountability for Crimes Committed in Ukraine

In late March 2022, the Task Force on Accountability for Crimes Committed in Ukraine, a *pro bono* international group of lawyers, was created to help Ukrainian prosecutors coordinate legal cases for war crimes and other crimes related to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.^{[400][393][401]}

Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group

On 25 May 2022, the EU, US, and UK announced the creation of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group (ACA) to help coordinate their investigations and to support the War Crimes Units of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine (OPG).^[401]

Universal jurisdiction

Several states, including Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and Ukraine, announced in March and April 2022 that they would conduct investigations of war crimes in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine under the universal jurisdiction principle of international humanitarian law.^[403]

Other investigations

International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine

On 4 March 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Council voted 32 in favour versus 2 against and 13 absentions to create the International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, an independent international committee of three human rights experts with a mandate to investigate violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law in the context of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.^{[404][405]}

UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), whose monitoring of human rights violations by all parties in Ukraine started in 2014,^[406] continued its monitoring during the 2022 Russian invasion, retaining 60 monitors in Ukraine.^[407] On 30 March 2022, HRMMU had recorded 24 "credible allegations" of Russian use of cluster munitions and 77 incidents of damage to medical facilities during the invasion. Michelle Bachelet stated, "The massive destruction of civilian objects and the high number of civilian casualties strongly indicate that the fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution have not been sufficiently adhered to."^[407]

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

A Report released by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on 12 April 2022 stated that while a detailed assessment of most allegations had not been possible, the mission had found clear patterns of war crimes by the Russian forces.^[76] According to the OSCE Report, had the Russian army refrained from indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, the number of civilians casualties would have remained much lower and fewer houses, hospitals, schools and cultural properties would have been damaged or destroyed.^[76] The Report denounced the violation of international humanitarian law on military occupation and the violation of international human rights law (right to life, prohibition of torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment) mostly in the areas under direct or indirect control of Russia.^[76]

International reactions

During House of Commons commentary in February 2022, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated that "anyone who sends a Russian into battle to kill innocent Ukrainians" could face charges. He remarked in addition, "Putin will stand condemned in the eyes of the world and of history."^[408]

On 16 March, U.S. President Joe Biden called Putin a war criminal. On 23 March, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the United States formally declared that the Russian military had committed war crimes in Ukraine, stating, "based on information currently available, the US government assesses that members of Russia's forces have committed war crimes in Ukraine."^[409] A week later the US

State Department issued a formal assessment that Russia has committed war crimes.^[410] On 12 April 2022, Biden described Russia's war crimes in Ukraine as constituting genocide.^[411] He added that Putin "is trying to wipe out the idea of being able to be Ukrainian".^[412]

On 3 April 2022, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian described abuses by Russian forces in Ukrainian towns, particularly Bucha as possible war crimes.^[413] On 7 April, French President Emmanuel Macron said the killings in the Ukrainian town of Bucha were "very probably war crimes".^[414]

The United Nations General Assembly voted on 7 April 2022 to suspend Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council over "gross and systematic violations and abuses of human rights".^[36]

See also

- Legality of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Casualties of the Russo-Ukrainian War
- Russian war crimes
- Use of cluster bombs in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Use of white phosphorus bombs in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine
- War crimes in Donbas

Notes

a. From DNR and LNR

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External links

- Guide to investigating war crimes (<https://gijn.org/2022/03/02/15-tips-for-investigating-war-crimes>) at *Global Investigative Journalism Network* by investigative journalist Manisha Ganguly
- Contact websites for those providing evidence
 - Contact pathway of the Office of the Prosecutor (https://otppathway.icc-cpi.int/link/register-application?name=otpcontactpathway&lang=en_UK) of the International Criminal Court

- [Ukrainian government website \(https://warcrimes.gov.ua/en\)](https://warcrimes.gov.ua/en) for collecting evidence on war crimes committed by Russian forces
- [Map of likely war crimes in Ukraine \(https://ukraine.bellingcat.com\)](https://ukraine.bellingcat.com) by [Bellingcat](#)
- Videos
 - [Video of drone flyover of apartment buildings being bombed in Mariupol. News.com.au, The News Room, March 15 2022 \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwfyJGdFpSA\)](#)
 - [Video of tanks firing repeatedly on apartment buildings in Mariupol, civilians in hospital, woman crying for dead children. AP News, 12 March 2022. \(https://www.youtube.com/embed/Z1kG24ndMS4\)](#)
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 - [CBS News video about pattern of rape by Russian soldiers against Ukrainian women during the invasion. \(https://www.cbsnews.com/video/at-least-52-dead-in-ukraine-train-station-attack/\)](#)

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