



Омбудсман України
Ombudsman of Ukraine

MISSION — FREEDOM





RIGHT OF FREEDOM: A Spring Chronicle of the Return of Ukrainians from Russian Captivity

The Major March Exchange: '500 for 500'. On 5–6 March, a large-scale exchange took place, resulting from agreements reached in Geneva. Members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine returned home, including personnel from the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Territorial Defence Forces (TDF), National Guard of Ukraine, State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and the State Special Transport Service. These are the defenders of “Azovstal”, Mariupol, and the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia sectors.



A prisoner of war exchange took place on **11 April**. Joyful news ahead of Easter: **175 Ukrainian servicemen and 7 civilians** are returning home.

Among those released – Defenders who fought to protect the Kyiv, Mariupol, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Kherson regions. 90% of those returned had been held captive since 2022.

7 Ukrainian civilians, who had been unlawfully detained by the Russian Federation without trial or investigation, have returned home. The return of our citizens was the result of the work carried out by the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War. At the same time, **the humanitarian track for the return of civilians was bolstered by communication between the Ombudsman of Ukraine and the commissioner for human rights of the Russian Federation, T. Moskalkova.**











On 24 April, 193 more Ukrainians returned home as part of a prisoner exchange. Among them were servicemen who had been held in the Chechen Republic.

Efforts to secure their release had been ongoing for a long time. As is customary, representatives of the Ombudsman's Office were present during the exchange process, including the Representative (Deputy) the Commissioner for Human Rights in the System of Bodies in the Security and Defence Sector, Yurii Kovbasa, as well as Representatives of the Commissioner in the Regions of Ukraine who head the Coordination Headquarters' Regional Working Groups: Iryna Isopenko, Vladyslav Nosenko, and Oksana Kizaieva.



9,048 UKRAINIANS,

of them **452 civilians,**
have returned home since the beginning of the full-scale invasion

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At the handover site, Ombudsman **Dmytro Lubinets** welcomed the Ukrainians returning home!



RESULTS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH THE RUSSIAN SIDE

On the day of the prisoners of war exchange, on the eve of Easter, the **Ombudsman of Ukraine held another working meeting with the Russian human rights commissioner.**

Key topics:

- **verification and returning:** lists of prisoners of war and unlawfully detained civilians were discussed;
- **contact with relatives:** letters from prisoners of war were forwarded to their families;
- **search for missing persons:** an agreement to continue work on verifying the identities of persons missing under special circumstances was reached;
- **family reunification:** specific steps were outlined for the return of children and the reunification of separated families.



MEETINGS WITH THE FAMILIES OF DEFENDERS

! The Ombudsman's Office continues to hold **meetings with the families of missing and captured defenders.**

Between March and April, **meetings were held with the families of soldiers from the 81st Separate Airborne Brigade, the 49th Separate Assault Brigade, and the 66th and 32nd Separate Mechanised Brigades.**

At the same time, Representatives of the Commissioner in the Regions of Ukraine held similar events **in the Khmelnytskyi, Zhytomyr, Chernivtsi and Poltava regions as part of the working groups of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War.**



Keep going. Every Ukrainian man and woman must return home!



SEVEN UKRAINIAN CHILDREN HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY RETURNED

From the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine!

This took place on 3 April thanks to the active efforts of the Ombudsman's Office team as part of the implementation of the **Bring Kids Back UA action plan approved by President of Ukraine**, and with the humanitarian support of the **First Lady of the United States, Melania Trump**. The children are aged between 13 and 17.



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Among those who have returned is a **13-year-old boy from the Kherson region, who lost both his parents and has finally been reunited with his sister**. Upon their return, the children attended the Child Rights Protection Center, where work continues to ensure the restoration of their rights and providing the necessary support.

A STORY OF REUNION: a 16-Year-Old Boy Finally Hugged His Mother After Years Apart!





The UN Has Declared the Deportation and Forced Displacement of Ukrainian Children A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY!

The relevant report was presented during the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

This is an extremely important finding, which establishes that the deportation, forcible transfer and disappearance of Ukrainian children committed by Russia constitute **crimes against humanity**. And the unlawful detention of their repatriation is a **war crime**.



The abduction of Ukrainian children is not an ‘evacuation’ but a crime. This has now been clearly established at the international level.

WELCOME TO THE NEW HEAD OF THE UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE IN UKRAINE!

At the Child Rights Protection Center, Ombudsman of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, met with the newly appointed Head of the UNICEF Representative Office in Ukraine, Anne-Claire Dufay.

The protection of children’s rights has been and remains a priority for the Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine.





SYSTEMIC FAILURES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS IDPS:

Key Issues

→ **ISSUE N°1. Ukraine is losing its young people from the TOT: The government continues to be inactive.**

The number of applicants from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine **fell by 17%** over the course of the year. Due to the lack of a clear strategy, the state is effectively pushing our children into the arms of the enemy.

- Monitoring visits to educational centers have confirmed that there **is no single and clear admission process for children from the TOT.**
- **The issue of relocation payments and financial assistance is being ignored,** even though it is a critical factor in relocating to government-controlled territory.



Why are young people staying behind in the occupied territories, and how can this be changed? Read our analytical report at the link below.

→ **ISSUE N°2. The government has still not approved the updated State Policy Strategy on Internal Displacement!**

This was the point emphasised by the Ombudsman of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, during the presentation of **the Special Report on Support for IDPs**. The study analyses 1,375 local programmes and reveals why the quality of life for IDPs has remained unchanged for 13 years. Systematic pretence of providing assistance has been documented: 32% of programmes lack funding, and 90% of communities ignore the involvement of partners. Without an approved strategy, clear funding mechanisms and effectiveness monitoring, local programmes remain fragmented and do not always meet people's real needs.



Read the Report.

→ **ISSUE N°3. Lack of state registration and status of victims of the Russian Federation's armed aggression.**

Major failures: the law has **not yet defined who constitutes a 'victim'**. The Law on the Registration of Damage has been in force since 2024, **but as of March 2026, the Government has not developed the sub-legislative framework or established the Register. Furthermore, the Cabinet of Ministers has still not adopted a Strategy for supporting victims of armed aggression against Ukraine.**

Back in 2024, the Ombudsman's Office, together with its partners, developed a Concept for the Legal Protection and Support of Victims, but the Government is ignoring it. As a result, whilst **the International Register of Damage has already received over 130,000 applications in 16 categories** from individuals, a national recording system in Ukraine is effectively non-existent.



Review the Concept for the Legal Protection and Support of Victims.

WATER AS A WEAPON:

From Ecocide on the Dniester to a Humanitarian Disaster in Oleshky

→ **Russia proves once again: for it, there are no boundaries – neither state borders nor moral ones.**

On the night of 6–7 March, **Russia struck the Dniester Hydroelectric Power Station.** The attack caused an oil spill, which has already crossed the border into Moldova. The Dniester is a strategic water source for both countries. By attacking the hydroelectric power sector, the enemy is provoking a humanitarian crisis on an international scale. **This is a direct assault on the fundamental right of millions of people – the right to water.**



→ **A City Fighting for Survival: Terror in Oleshky.**

People in the temporarily occupied town of Oleshky, in the Kherson region, are forced to make every drop of water and every scrap of food count. The town is facing a catastrophic shortage of drinking water, with no reliable electricity or gas supplies and limited medical care. This is deliberate terrorism on the part of the aggressor state.

At the same time, **Russia continues to engage in disinformation campaigns,** attempting to shift the blame for the consequences of its own actions, despite the systematic shelling and destruction of civilian infrastructure. The situation demands the international community's heightened attention, access for independent missions and effective response mechanisms, as the scale of the civilian population's suffering continues to grow.

Dmytro Lubinets has appealed to the UN, the ICRC and the russian human rights commissioner, calling on them to document these incidents and ensure the establishment of humanitarian corridors.





12TH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE HUMAN DIMENSION: Over 50 Participants from Around the World Unite to Bring Ukrainians Home

Representatives from **45 countries** and **9 international organisations** and **two Ukrainian government authorities** took part in the discussion. The event was co-chaired by the Canadian and Norwegian Ambassadors – **Natalka Cmoc** and **Lars Ragnar Hansen**.

The main focus is on returning our people. This refers to deported and forcibly displaced Ukrainian children, as well as unlawfully detained civilians and prisoners of war. **Particular mention was made of the assistance provided by the State of Qatar and the United States in returning our children.**



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INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES: Uniting the World Around Ukraine

The Ombudsman’s Office is actively expanding its international activities by establishing strong partnerships with foreign partners, international organisations and human rights protection networks.

The Ukrainian Ombudsman was working in Geneva on 30–31 March, where he took part in the General Assemblies of GANHRI and ENNHRI.

Also, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights held bilateral meetings with his colleagues from Armenia, Latvia, France, the United Kingdom and Portugal.





THE OMBUDSMAN OF UKRAINE HAS PRESENTED HIS ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025

This took place before:

- Committee of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine) on Human Rights, De-occupation and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, National Minorities and Inter-ethnic Relations;
- Committee of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine) on Education, Science and Innovation;
- Committee of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine) on Freedom of Speech;
- Committee of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine) on Public Health, Medical Assistance and Medical Insurance.

The document was also presented to Members of the Ukrainian Parliament, members of the **“European Solidarity”** parliamentary faction, and the **“Restoration of Ukraine”** parliamentary faction.



The Annual Report of the Commissioner for 2025 summarises thousands of appeals, hundreds of monitoring visits and inspections, as well as systematic work in the field of human rights protection.





THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED the State Concept for the Targeted Social Programme to Combat Human Trafficking Until 2030

The Concept, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers, **sets out the priorities** of state policy for the coming years: strengthening prevention, ensuring the inevitability of punishment, and guaranteeing state support for victims. The next step will be the urgent approval of the Programme itself by the Government.

RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES (COMMUNITIES) AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF UKRAINE: From Legislative Provisions to Practical Protection

A round table **dedicated to legislative changes in the field of ethnic policy** was held at the Ombudsman’s Office. Members of Parliament, representatives of state authorities, national minorities (communities) and indigenous peoples of Ukraine gathered. International partners were also present.

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In 2025, the Ombudsman’s Office conducted **44 monitoring visits on the observance of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities (communities)**. The conclusion is clear: the law is in force, but its implementation is ineffective. The round table identified systemic violations from the lack of inter-agency coordination to the Government’s outright disregard for its obligations.



“The rights of national minorities (communities) are part of our path to the EU. Without implementation, it is just a piece of paper. We cannot allow this to happen”, concluded Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, **Dmytro Lubinets**.

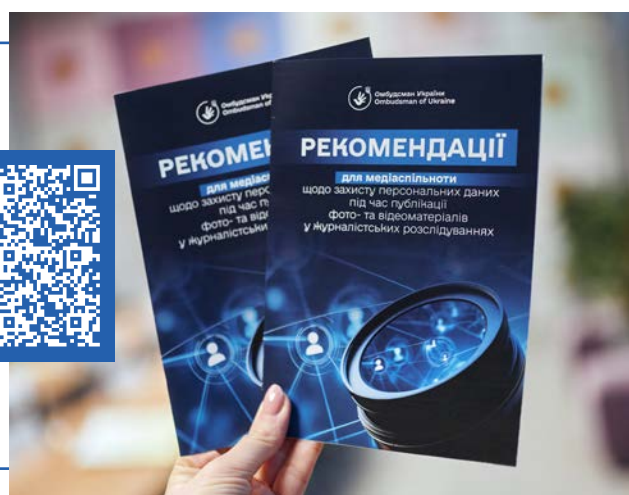
RESULTS OF VISITS TO PLACES OF DETENTION: From Recording Violations to Criminal Proceedings

The effectiveness of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) is not just about statistics, but first of all about tangible results in the protection of human rights. Just in 2026 (as of 21 April), employees of the Commissioner's Secretariat carried out **120 visits** to places of detention. Every revealed violation becomes grounds for a strict legal response. In March and April, on the initiative of the Representative (Deputy) of the Commissioner for Human Rights in Places of Detention, **Vitalii Nikulin**, pre-trial investigations were launched into the following facts.

- 1. Exceeding of official powers by police officers in Odesa.** *Response: The Odesa Regional Prosecutor's Office has initiated criminal proceedings under Part 2 of Article 365 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (exceeding official powers).*
- 2. Death of a prisoner at Bila Tserkva Correctional Colony No. 35.** *Response: Criminal proceedings have been initiated under Articles 120 and 140 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (driving to suicide and improper performance of professional duties by medical staff).*

The Office of the Ombudsman Is Conducting Systematic Awareness-Raising Work IN THE FIELD OF PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

1. A brochure entitled 'Recommendations for the Media Community' was presented. It is a practical guide on how to handle photographic and video material in investigations, striking a balance between the public's right to know the truth and the individual's right to privacy.



2. For those wishing to deepen their knowledge, we have launched and updated the following **educational resources**:



Course on the 'Diia.Osvita' platform.

A new programme for Data Protection Officers (DPOs) – those directly responsible for data security within organisations..



Course on the 'Ed-era' platform.

An updated and accessible introduction to the basics of digital security and personal data protection.

Digital literacy means safety for all of us!



THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OF UKRAINE IS CONSIDERING A CASE on the Moratorium on the Enforcement of Court Decisions Following a Submission by the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, continues to challenge the provision which, **due to martial law, has completely halted the enforcement of non-property-related court decisions.**



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Chronology:

- **30 December 2025:** The Commissioner filed a constitutional petition seeking a declaration that the following provision is inconsistent with the Constitution of Ukraine (i.e. unconstitutional): the provision of the 21st paragraph of Section 10-2 of Chapter XIII 'Final and Transitional Provisions' of the Law of Ukraine 'On Enforcement Proceedings' dated 2 June 2016 No. 1404-VIII.
- **March 2026:** The Commissioner appeared in person before the Constitutional Court of Ukraine and challenged this provision.
- **7 April** The Constitutional Court of Ukraine continued its consideration of the case with the participation of the Representative (Deputy) of the Commissioner in the Courts System.
- **13 April** The Constitutional Court of Ukraine opened proceedings following a submission by the Commissioner regarding issues related to the activities of enterprises within Ukraine's defence-industrial complex, military units and institutions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.



"We hope for a fair ruling from the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, which will restore the balance between the country's defence needs and every citizen's right to effective legal protection," – said the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, **Dmytro Lubinets**.



MARCH AND APRIL: The Scale of Terror and the Reality of Russian Strikes



In March 2026, the number of civilian casualties in Ukraine rose by 49% compared with February. This was reported by the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (UN HRMMU) in its report.

On 7 March, Russian forces launched 29 missiles and 480 drones at Ukraine. Kharkiv was the epicentre. Eight people were killed, including **two children**, as a result of a Russian missile strike on a multi-storey building in Kharkiv.



The photo shows 9-year-old Hordii Udovychenko and his mother Olena, who were killed in the attack. She was a primary school teacher and taught at a secondary school in Kharkiv. Her son attended the same school and played ice hockey.



Issue No2, 2026

On the night of 5–6 April, a Russian 'Shahed' drone struck a residential building in Odesa. Three people were killed, including a 30-year-old woman and her two-year-old daughter... The father of the family survived.



The photo shows 30-year-old Daryna Sapun with her two-year-old daughter Hanna, who were killed by Russian forces in Odesa on 6 April.

The photo shows the funeral of two-year-old Hanna.



CULTURAL HERITAGE UNDER ATTACK: Another Crime by the Russian Federation in Lviv

24 March: a Russian attack damaged the UNESCO World Heritage Site 'Lviv – Historic Centre'.

This constitutes a breach of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the 1954 Hague Convention). In light of this, the Ombudsman has sent an official letter to UNESCO requesting that these actions be properly assessed and that appropriate measures be taken.



The Russians are deliberately 'targeting' Ukrainian passenger trains, buses and ambulances.

On **2 March**, a Russian drone attacked a commuter train in the Dnipropetrovsk region, and on **4 March**, a similar attack took place in Mykolaiv.

On **15 March**, the Russian military targeted an emergency ambulance in the **Kharkiv region**. Two medics were killed in the attack.

On **7 April**, the aggressor attacked a bus carrying passengers in **Nikopol**. Four people were killed. A further 16 were injured.

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PEOPLE ARE THE GREATEST VALUE!

Russia systematically violates human rights in Ukraine!



9,048

people released from Russian captivity

including →

452

civilians

≈ 100,000

people missing under special circumstances

15,578

civilians killed

43,352

civilians wounded

*According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

701

children killed

2,502

children wounded

2,317

missing children

*According to the Children of War information portal

2,134

children returned by Ukraine (including from TOT)

4.5 million

people became IDPs

6.5 million

people sought refuge abroad

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SHELLING OF CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Russia is destroying residential buildings, educational and medical facilities!

4,515

destroyed and damaged educational facilities

including →

1,552

destroyed and damaged kindergartens

*According to saveschools.in.ua

2,614

destroyed and damaged destroyed healthcare facilities

including →

428

hospitals

352

ambulatories

1,723

destroyed religious buildings

2,524

destroyed cultural objects

≈ 250,000

destroyed or damaged houses

≈ 174 thousand square kilometers

of Ukraine's territory are considered potentially mined

*Data as of early May 2026



Омбудсман України Ombudsman of Ukraine

The strength of international law is measured by its ability to stop evil. We are working to ensure that every crime committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine is properly documented and prosecuted, and that those responsible are held accountable under the law.

Justice is the foundation of future peace.

#StandWithUkraine



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