



Омбудсман України  
Ombudsman of Ukraine

# The **Forces of Good** Must Unite as the **Forces of Evil** are United Already



The first emotions  
of the returned  
Defender

№6  
2024

A freed Ukrainian soldier holds  
a watermelon given to him  
by ordinary people in his homeland





# RETURNING OUR PEOPLE HOME!

On 17 July, 95 of our people returned to their homeland. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, a total of 3,405 Ukrainians have been returned home.

Employees of the Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine are present at the exchange site to monitor the observance of human rights in accordance with international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.

Upon returning to Ukraine, the defenders are fed, receive clean clothes, are examined by doctors, and are prescribed the necessary treatment and rehabilitation.

**Ukraine is grateful to the UAE for the assistance in the return of our servicemen, reaffirms its desire to return all its citizens to their homeland and is working towards this goal.**

*Ukrainians are welcoming their defenders as they move through the villages in convoys. Both adults and children wait for the convoys with tears in their eyes, no matter what the weather and the time of the day are, and offer the soldiers water and biscuits.*

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## OLENIVKA: The Second Anniversary of a Terrible Tragedy



On the night of July 28-29, 2022, Russians attacked the colony in Olenivka, where some Ukrainian prisoners of war from the Azovstal Steel Plant were held. **More than 50 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and nearly 130 others were injured.** The deceased had the official status of prisoners of war and were verified by the ICRC!

Immediately after the explosion, Russia accused Ukraine of allegedly firing a HIMARS missile. Ukraine appealed to the UN and the ICRC as guarantors of the agreements on the defenders of Azovstal. **The agreements stipulated that our people would be spared and subsequently exchanged.**

The organisations expressed their readiness to investigate the attack. On August 3, 2022, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the organisation was preparing a group of experts to this end. Five months later, he disbanded the mission due to lack of security guarantees. **Russia has not yet granted access to Olenivka to either Ukraine or international organisations.** The UN mission has never agreed to examine Ukrainian materials on the explosion in the colony. On July 25, 2023, the UN made a statement that the attack in Olenivka ‘was not caused by a HIMARS missile’. This rebuts the myths of the Russian Federation.

**Dmytro Lubinets, the Ombudsman of Ukraine, calls on the UN and the ICRC to fulfil their mandate and investigate the massacre of prisoners of war in Olenivka.**

## MEETING OF THE PEACE FORMULA WORKING GROUP 4

**The meeting was attended by 41 participants:** representatives of various states and international organisations (UN, ICRC). The meeting was held jointly with the co-chairs of the Working Group, the Ambassadors of Canada and Norway to Ukraine. Ukrainians released from Russian captivity – civilians Nariman Dzhelial and Bohdan Heleta as well as the former prisoner of war who survived the terrorist attack in Olenivka – joined the event. They told their stories and called on international partners to help bring Ukrainian citizens back from captivity of the aggressor state.

**Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets appealed to those present to ensure that their states:**

- recognise Russia’s deportation of Ukrainian children as a war crime and a crime of genocide;
- take specific steps to put an end to abduction of Ukrainian children by Russia and ensure their speedy return home;
- jointly develop a mechanism for providing remedies and compensation to victims of deportation;
- demand that the Russian Federation release all detained Ukrainian civilians;
- introduce humanitarian support programmes, for returning children, civilians and prisoners of war.







# FAMILIES LEAVE THE TOTS FOR UKRAINE-CONTROLLED TERRITORY

**Twelve children returned to the government-controlled territory.** They lived with their families in the temporarily occupied territories (TOTs) – in Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Regions. Each family experienced the chaos caused by the occupation ‘authorities’ in their own way.

Families tell how they were forced to take Russian passports, as, without the ‘new documents’, citizens have no rights and can’t enjoy any social guarantees or medical care. **Doctors do not accept even children with birth defects who need special care.** However, parents are offered to send their children for ‘rehabilitation’, which is often deportation or forced displacement in reality. Some children had to attend ‘Russian schools’, where they were subjected to propaganda of the ‘Russian world’.

According to the returnees, **adults on the TOTs are detained, beaten, tortured with electric shocks, subjected to psychological pressure, while children are interrogated without their parents’ presence, in particular with the use of torture methods.** They also regularly conduct unreasonable searches in the homes of local residents.

The families have already visited the Child Rights Protection Center. They were interviewed by a competent multifunctional team that **recorded the crimes** they witnessed or were victims of.

**Ukraine is always ready for everyone’s return and will provide basic humanitarian, medical, psychological, social and other necessary assistance.**

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# SHOOTING OF UKRAINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR:

## Yet Another War Crime of the Russian Occupiers

Soldiers of the Russian Federation committed another war crime – **they brutally shot Ukrainian prisoners of war in the Zaporizhzhia Direction**. They fired nearly ten shots at the unarmed men.

**This is yet another war crime that was filmed and for which there must be accountability** – and yet another fact of violation of the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law, which Russians – from ordinary soldiers to military leaders who do not prohibit the killing and execution of Ukrainian prisoners of war – regularly fails to comply with.



The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, has once again sent official letters to the UN and ICRC to ensure that the organisations record the numerous killings of unarmed Ukrainian prisoners of war by Russian soldiers. **There must be punishment for all the crimes committed!**

# MEETINGS WITH FAMILIES OF PRISONERS OF WAR AND OF PERSONS MISSING UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine holds weekly meetings with the families of servicemen who are currently in enemy captivity or are considered missing.

Recently, such meetings were held with family members of captured and missing defenders from the Military Unit A0409 (30th Brigade) in the cities of Mykolaiv and Ternopil. The relatives of the defenders asked questions about the return of the defenders of Ukraine, including those convicted, the transfer of parcels and letters to Ukrainian prisoners in the Russian Federation, the activities of international organisations, social protection and the involvement of international organisations and third states in the process of returning our people.

**We continue our meetings with family members of our defenders, as we know how important communication and assistance is in dealing with complex issues.**



**Yuriy Kovbasa**

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# RUSSIANS FIRED MISSILES AT UKRAINE'S LARGEST CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Russia simultaneously fired **38 missiles** at **Kyiv** and conducted a targeted missile attack on the country's largest children's hospital. At the time of the attack, there were **627 children** in the hospital.

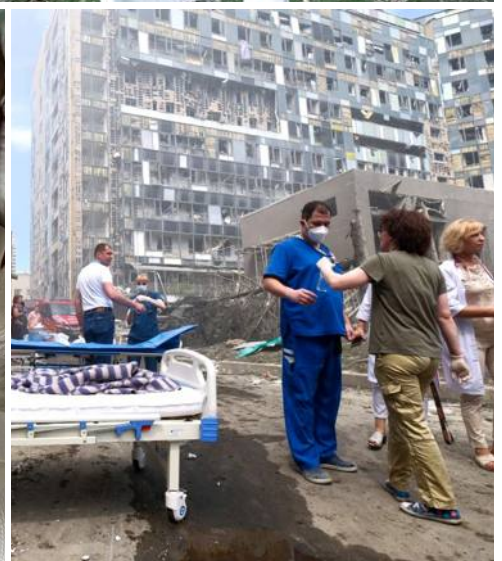
Every year, about 7,000 complex surgeries are performed at Okhmatdyt. It also provides state-of-the-art diagnostics and treatment of onco-haematological diseases as well as the bone marrow transplants for sick children.

**Just realise what a target the Russian terrorists have chosen!**

**All hospital buildings were damaged, and one of them is beyond repair.**

**!The strike killed 2 people. More than 50 were injured, including 7 children.**

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*While rescuers and civilians were clearing the rubble of the children's hospital, the Russians launched another missile attack. Sick children have to hide in basements.*



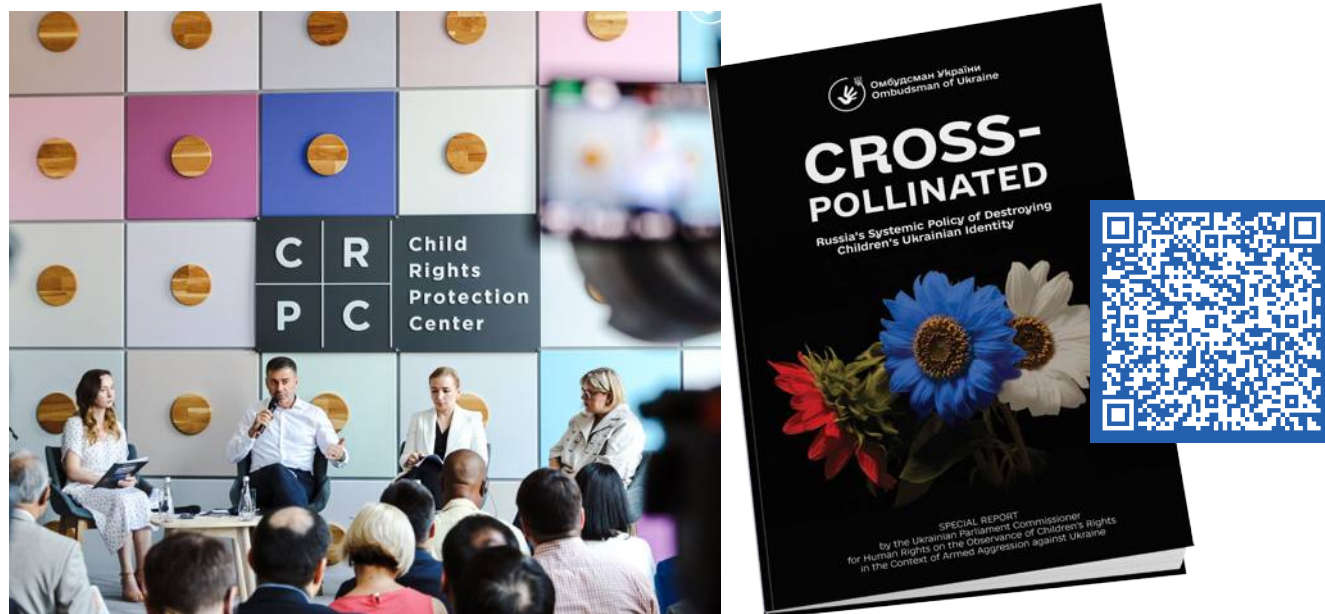
*Over 50 civilian objects were damaged and destroyed by Russian shelling in just 1 day.*





# RUSSIA CHANGES THE IDENTITY OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets presented a special report **‘CROSS-POLLINATED. Russia’s Systemic Policy of Destroying Children’s Ukrainian Identity’** for international partners, representatives of the diplomatic corps, media and the public.



**This special report provides examples of Russia’s systemic policy of destroying the Ukrainian identity of children.** The report is based on the experience of Ukrainian children who have survived deportation and forced displacement, militarisation, re-education and coercion.

The Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights hopes that this document, with details recorded, will enable the recognition of the actions of the Russian Federation as a war crime with indications of genocide.



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## 2 YEARS OF DEPORTATION: Deported 85-year-old Ukrainian Woman Returned from Russia



The applicant addressed the Ombudsman of Ukraine with a request to help return her sister from deportation. For most of her life, the applicant's sister had lived in Volnovakha, Donetsk Region. Following the full-scale invasion of Russia, the woman remained in the TOT without support and care. Russian occupying authorities forcibly deported her to a nursing home in Taganrog (Russia). She spent 2 years there, during which her health condition deteriorated significantly.

Therefore, the Ombudsman's Office, together with the Pluriton NGO, secured the woman's evacuation to the territory controlled by Ukraine. This process required a lot of effort, but it was completed successfully. Now the woman is reunited with her family in her homeland, in the city of Poltava.

## FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 10 YEARS: The Concept Was Presented to Ensure that Victims Receive Compensation for Losses Caused by Russian Aggression

The Concept for Improving the National System of Legal Remedies and Support for Victims of the Armed Aggression against Ukraine contains specific steps and recommendations to address this issue.

The document is based on the outcomes of the offsite meeting of the working group to prepare proposals for compensation to victims of Russian aggression. The working group was established by the Ombudsman's Office in September 2023.



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**Olga Altunina**

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# PROTECTION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS IN TIMES OF WAR IN UKRAINE

Olena Kolobrodova, the Representative of the Commissioner for Social and Economic Rights, took part in the event on the protection of social human rights during the war in Ukraine within the framework of the **High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter in Vilnius** (Republic of Lithuania) as a member of the Ukrainian delegation.

**The protection of social rights in times of war has become an important task for the Ukrainian authorities and for all states that have ratified the European Social Charter and have also been significantly affected by the consequences of the armed aggression against Ukraine.**



Representatives of the Council of Europe and high-ranking officials from Estonia, Lithuania, Moldova and Sweden who attended the event expressed their support and were impressed by Ukraine's determination to not only fulfil its social obligations but also to actively implement social policy reforms aimed at getting rid of the remnants of the Soviet system.

**A special focus of attention in Ukraine's social policy is child protection.**

**Therefore, the following issues were discussed in detail:**

- the issue of returning illegally deported children to Russia from the TOTs of Ukraine;
- protection and support of children staying in the territory of the Council of Europe member states;
- work on developing a system of better care and protection for all children in Ukraine;
- support for Ukrainian children who have found temporary protection in Lithuania.



**Olena Kolobrodova**

Representative of the Commissioner for Social and Economic Rights

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# WORK ON AN INTERNATIONAL ARENA

In July, Dmytro Lubinets, the Ombudsman of Ukraine, spoke at the interactive dialogues during the 56th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council.



*It is important for Ukraine that the mass murder of Ukrainian prisoners committed by Russia in Olenivka is fully investigated and the perpetrators are brought to justice. Ukraine expects international organisations to condemn Russia's criminal actions and demands immediate access to the places of detention of all prisoners."*

## Dmytro Lubinets also met:

- **Dennis Francis**, President of the UN General Assembly;
- **Natalka Cmoc** and **Helene Sand Andresen**, Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Canada and Norway to Ukraine;
- **Seymur Qurban oğlu Mərdəliyev**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Azerbaijan to Ukraine;
- **His Eminence Ilarion**, First Hierarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Archbishop of Winnipeg and Metropolitan of Canada;
- also, an online meeting with **Şeref Malkoç**, the Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye, was held.

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In addition, Ombudsman spoke at the third session of the event on the protection of social human rights in time of war **within the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter** and for the first time **held a speech at the official public hearing of the Federal Senate**.



**Olga Strepochenko**

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# PROTECTION OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITIES OF UKRAINE

Dmytro Lubinets, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, joined the Dialogue ‘**Protection of the Rights of National Communities of Ukraine in the European Perspective**’.

Russian aggression has jeopardized the lives and development of ethnic identity of representatives of 130 national communities and indigenous peoples living in Ukraine. Accordingly, the Ombudsman’s Office shall further strengthen the protection of the rights of representatives of national minorities, ensure sustainable and systematic cooperation with them.

Dmytro Lubinets stressed that the Ombudsman’s Office is working on the establishment of **the Center of National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine in Kyiv**. To date, the Office has already sent a letter to the State Property Fund to provide premises for the Center to operate in the future.

**The Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine will continue to do its best to preserve and develop the linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious identity of representatives of national minorities and indigenous peoples.**



*The protection of the rights of national minorities (communities) in Ukraine is not only a domestic issue, but also an important component of the country’s European integration. In line with European standards, ensuring the rights of national minorities contributes to the strengthening of democratic institutions and stability in the country, which is the basis for the development of a peaceful and prosperous society,” said the **Ombudsman**.*



**Mykhailo Spasov**

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# CONDITIONS IN PLACES OF DETENTION: Ombudsman's Office found cells for 'privileged' persons

The Ombudsman's Office conducted a monitoring visit to the Mena Penal Colony No. 91 in Chernihiv Region. Numerous human rights violations were found there: unsanitary conditions, fungus, cockroaches... The colony management does not react to such violations, while the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine says that 'everything is fine'.

However, there is an exception in this colony – three privileged persons reside in proper conditions and are isolated from the general public. They are the former head of one of the penal executive departments of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and two of his companions. Good conditions were created for them upon their arrival at the institution: for instance, only their cells were renovated in 2024, despite the degrading conditions in other premises of the colony. They also have their own walking yard and five entire rooms of the social and psychological service department No.7 are at their disposal, while there are more than 370 persons in the colony.

All of the above facts indicate the injustice and the satisfaction of interest of certain individuals only. The Ombudsman of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, appealed to the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, which did not notice anything strange about the situation. Thereafter, he sent another letter to the Ministry and appealed to law enforcement agencies separately as well.

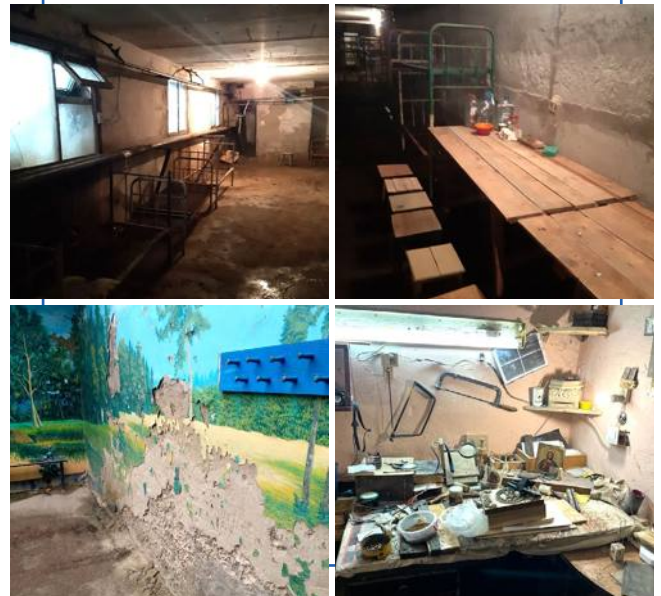
Currently, the Ombudsman's Institution is expecting a due and proper response to this 'privileged' treatment amid the general disorder and violations of the rights of other convicts.

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*Conditions for 'privileged' convicts*



*Conditions for other convicts*



**Vitalii Nikulin**

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# SPECIFIC ISSUES OF PROCESSING AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA OF SURVIVORS OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The topic of personal data protection is of particular importance for Ukraine during the war. A breach of personal data security can result not only in interference with a person’s privacy, but also pose a threat to their physical safety and even pose a threat to their life.

In this context, special attention should be paid to the processing and protection of personal data of victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets emphasises that the CRSV is a gross violation of one of the fundamental human rights – the one to personal integrity.

**The CRSV can be qualified not only as a war crime, a crime against humanity or a gross violation of human rights, but also as an element of the crime of genocide.**



Issue No.6, 2024

The Memo on the specific issues of processing and protection of personal data of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence should become an applied tool for public authorities, especially law enforcement agencies and judges, in their interaction with the CRSV survivors.

This tool, if properly applied in practice, will help build a bridge of trust between the state and the survivor.



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# THE RIGHT OF A CONVICT TO SOCIAL BENEFITS RESTORED

The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights received an appeal from a convict serving a sentence in one of the penitentiary institutions of Vinnytsia Region regarding the violation of his right to receive social assistance as a person with a disability in full for 2023.

The applicant reported that, in 2023, he had been temporarily released from a penal institution in Vinnytsia Region to a pre-trial detention facility, and later to a penal institution in Dnipro Region, and thereafter returned to the penal colony in Vinnytsia Region.

As part of the proceedings, the Ombudsman sent a request to the Department of Social and Youth Policy of the Vinnytsia Regional State / Military Administration.

As a result, the relevant department of labour and social protection was provided with explanations on the specifics of the application of the law in the applicant's situation.

According to the Department of Social and Youth Policy of the Vinnytsia Regional State / Military Administration, the relevant department of labour and social protection of the population **accrued state social assistance to the applicant in the amount of UAH 22047.58, which was already paid to the applicant.**



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# THE OMBUDSMAN OF UKRAINE CONDUCTS PERSONAL RECEPTION OF CITIZENS



This direct way of interacting with applicants and studying specific problems allows citizens to get advice and answers to their concerns.

During meetings with applicants, the Ombudsman is able to better understand the real problems and needs of the population, as well as to respond to human rights violations in a timely manner.

Direct contact with citizens helps to identify systemic problems and work on their elimination.

**Face-to-face meetings promote democratic values such as openness, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.**

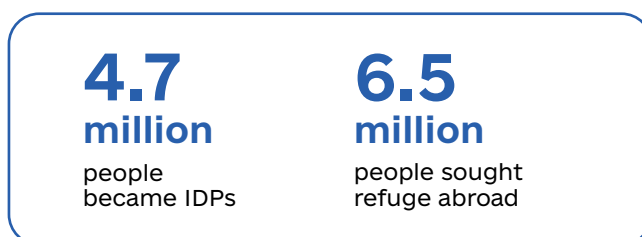
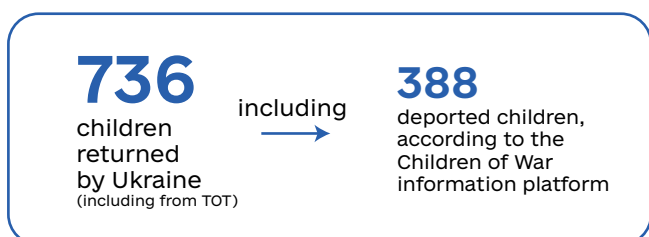
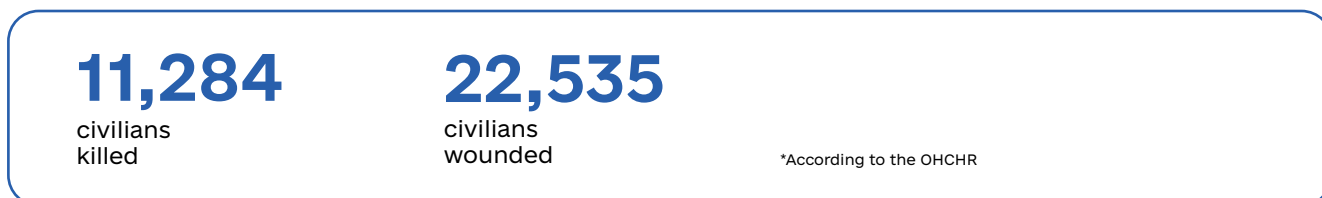
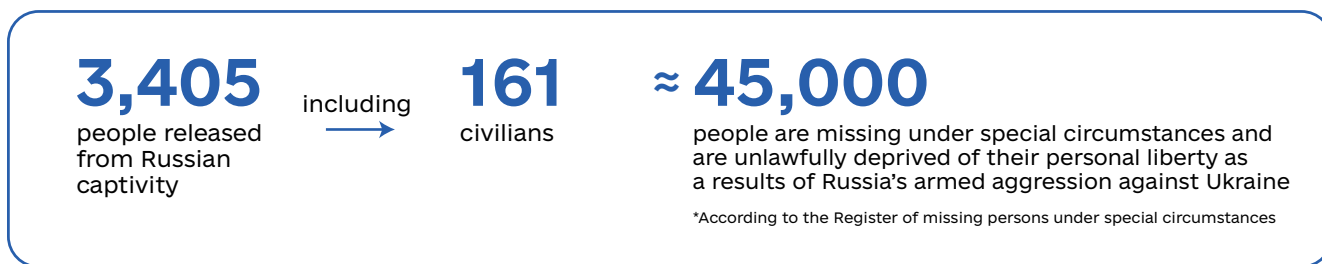
**This is an important step towards building a more just and lawful society.**





# PEOPLE ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THING!

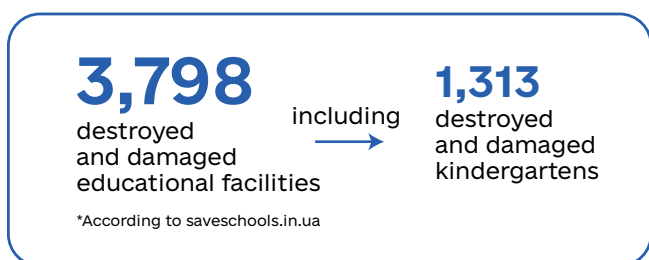
Russia violates human rights in Ukraine on a large scale!



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## SHELLING OF CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Russia destroys residential buildings, educational and medical institutions



\*As on July 22, 2024



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Омбудсман України  
Ombudsman of Ukraine

The Russian Federation and all the criminals it has sent to Ukraine will be held accountable in the most severe way for the evil they have committed.

Ukraine carefully documents every crime and every atrocity.  
All those responsible will undoubtedly be punished.

**We will never forget and we will never forgive. Neither will the world.**

**#StandWithUkraine**

## «Ombudsman of Ukraine» chatbot

is an opportunity to get answers to important questions quickly and conveniently. It contains important information divided into 17 categories.

In particular, servicemen, internally displaced persons, and families with children can receive answers about their rights here. There is also a category for people who are in the temporarily occupied territory or were forcibly deported.

The chatbot is available at

**@ukraine\_ombudsman\_bot**

