



Омбудсман України  
Ombudsman of Ukraine

# COURAGE HAS TWO COLORS

№7  
2024

# 3520

**UKRAINIANS RETURNED FROM RUSSIAN CAPTIVITY**  
since the beginning of the full-scale invasion as of August 31, 2024



The returned soldier  
talks to his family  
by phone



*"Congratulations, mom, I've been exchanged," the defender says.*



# ON INDEPENDENCE DAY, 115 UKRAINIANS RETURNED TO THEIR HOMELAND

**On August 24, a prisoner-of-war exchange took place,** within the framework of which soldiers of the National Guard, the Armed Forces, the Navy, and the State Border Guard Service returned to Ukraine. **Many of the returnees have serious health conditions.**



**Employees of the Ombudsman's Office were present** and talked to the returned Ukrainians. They informed the defenders of their rights. In the future, all of them will undergo medical examination and rehabilitation, as well as restoration of documents and banking cards.

**Ukraine works every day to bring its citizens home. To this end, government agencies act in a coordinated manner.** We are grateful to the UAE for their assistance in returning the defenders.





## THE TASK – TO BRING EVERY UKRAINIAN HOME

On the instructions of the President of Ukraine, **the Public Council of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the coordinating body are being established.** The Public Council includes the Ombudsman of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, as well as representatives of other state bodies.

**The main tasks of the Public Council of the Coordination Headquarters are:**

- Return of citizens home: prisoners of war and civilians.
- Constant communication with the families of prisoners of war and missing persons.
- Collaboration with international partners.

In particular, **the regional offices of the Ombudsman's Office** will be staffed by employees of the Coordination Headquarters who will communicate with the relatives of soldiers and civilians unlawfully abducted by Russia.

The principles that will be used to communicate about the release of prisoners of war have also been defined. **First and foremost, Ukraine demands the return of seriously ill and severely wounded people, as well as women.** In addition, preference will be given to those who have been in captivity for the longest time.



Ukrainians released from captivity sing the National Anthem on Independence Day





# MORE THAN 95% OF UKRAINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR WERE TORTURED IN RUSSIA – UN DATA

The Head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Danielle Belle, noted this information. She also informed that **prisoners are being tortured during the first interrogation. This includes beatings and torture with electric shock.**



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*Photos of the returned defenders on August 24, taken by Kostiantyn and Vlada the Liberovs*



Employees of the Ombudsman’s Office communicate with Russian prisoners of war before each exchange. This time, the Russians confirmed that they were provided with proper medical care and good food. They have no complaints, instead, they note that the treatment was humane.



# BRINGING UKRAINIAN CHILDREN BACK HOME

**On August 13,** the Ombudsman's Office together with partners managed to return six children from the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. According to their parents, the children were forced to attend a Russian school and celebrate Russian holidays, and Ukrainian citizens were pressured to obtain Russian-issued documents. In addition, armed Russians broke into the families' dwellings and conducted unreasonable searches.



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**On August 29,** the Ombudsman of Ukraine, Dmytro Lubinets, reported that 14 more children had been returned to their native land. These are children of the families from the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.



The return of children is carried out within the framework of the approved action plan of the President of Ukraine **Bring Kids Back UA.**

## FAMILY IS THE MOST VALUABLE THING. WE ARE REUNITING FAMILIES!

As part of family reunification under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, adult daughter and son from Luhansk region were returned to the government-controlled territory and met with their mother. Another woman was also returned to her native land and reunited with her adult daughter.



In addition, the meeting between the Ombudsman's Office staff and the Russian Commissioner's Office staff was held. The two sides exchanged letters from prisoners of war on a 200-for-200 basis and discussed humanitarian issues.

## OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE HELPS CITIZENS TO LEAVE THE TOT OF UKRAINE

**On August 10,** an elderly woman and her adult daughter were facilitated to return to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. The citizens were in difficult conditions on the TOT, they were unable to receive the necessary care. They were safely returned to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine.



**On August 16,** the Ombudsman's Office together with partners successfully organised the transfer of a woman with limited mobility from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. The Ukrainian woman could not leave the occupation on her own due to health problems.

**On August 27,** due to the efforts of the Ombudsman's Office staff, two women with limited mobility from the TOT of Ukraine returned home and reunited with their families in the city of Zaporizhzhia.





# INTERACTION WITH FAMILIES OF UKRAINIAN DEFENDERS AND UNLAWFULLY DETAINED CIVILIANS

In August, a number of meetings were held with the families of **Ukrainian defenders and civilians unlawfully abducted by Russia**. Two of them were held at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. This is a communication between government agencies and family members of captured and missing servicemen:

1. The 36th Marine Brigade;
2. The 46th Separate Airmobile Brigade.

The two meetings were attended by more than 600 family members of the defenders.



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The Ombudsman of Ukraine told them about the humanitarian initiatives that Ukraine offers and implements. In particular, the transfer of letters from family members to prisoners of war and humanitarian kits.

Dmytro Lubinets also held a meeting with the families of prisoners of war and those who went missing under special circumstances in Zhytomyr. **The meeting was attended by about 600 relatives of Ukrainian defenders.**



Employees of the Ombudsman's Office collect appeals from relatives of soldiers



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# RETURNING CHILDREN AND WORKING ON THEIR REHABILITATION: Cooperation Between Ukraine and Canada

The Ombudsman of Ukraine met with Ahmed Hussen, **Minister of International Development of Canada**, at the **Child Rights Protection Center**.



Dmytro Lubinets spoke about the implementation of Point 4 of the Peace Formula and the work on the return of Ukrainian children, civilians, and prisoners of war. During the meeting, they discussed possible areas of cooperation.

At the same time, **Ukraine and Canada already have a lot of effective cooperation:**

- Canada is a co-chair of the working group on Point 4 of the Peace Formula.
- Ukraine and Canada have created the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, which includes 40 countries.

After the meeting, Ombudsman of Ukraine Dmytro Lubinets, together with Minister of International Development of Canada Ahmed Hussen and UNICEF Representative in Ukraine Munir Mammadzade, held a press briefing. Ahmed Hussen announced that Canada is providing Ukraine with \$10 million for the return and reintegration of Ukrainian children. The funds will be transferred to UNICEF in Ukraine.

**Ukraine is grateful to its partners for their help in ensuring the best interests of the child!**



**Iryna Suslova**

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# STATE SUPPORT FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) SHOULD BE REAL

The Ombudsman’s Office analysed the implementation of the State Policy Strategy on Internal Displacement until 2025 and the Operational Plan for its implementation in 2023–2025. In August this year, the results were presented at a separate event.



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At the meeting, Olga Altunina, Representative of the Ombudsman for the Rights of Citizens Affected by the Armed Aggression against Ukraine, emphasized that the **Operational Plan is filled with a large number of purely declarative tasks**, the performance indicators of which cannot be calculated or evaluated.

**Many measures are defined poorly**, without prior planning with the responsible executors, who then do not understand how to fulfil the task. That is why the Strategy Implementation **Analysis provides recommendations to the authorities**.

**Analysis of the implementation of the State Policy Strategy on Internal Displacement for the period up to 2025 (April 2023 – April 2024)**



# WE MONITOR THE OBSERVANCE OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS' RIGHTS

Representative of the Commissioner for the Rights of Citizens Affected by the Armed Aggression against Ukraine Olga Altunina took part in the **offsite meeting of the Temporary Special Commission of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine** on the Protection of Property and Non-Property Rights of IDPs and Other People Affected by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation.



The participants of the field meeting **inspected the living conditions of IDPs** in temporary settlements in Odesa region, visited social housing facilities, considered options for accommodating IDPs, and talked to them and volunteers.

The Temporary Special Commission **held a session** to discuss the activities of Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odesa Regional Military Administrations (RMA) in these regions regarding the needs of IDPs and the efficiency of budget spending. Based on its results, it was decided to address the Prime Minister of Ukraine regarding:

- improving the efficiency of social services and increasing their funding;
- implementing support measures for children who have been granted the status of a child of war, including psychological assistance;
- access to the “єВідновлення” (“eRestoration”) program for Ukrainians whose manor houses of summer cottages and garden cooperatives were destroyed or damaged and who are not included in the address book, and other issues.

In addition, **after analysing the activities of Odesa, Mykolaiv and Kherson RMA**, the commission suggested that they

- strengthen the work on the formation of housing funds for temporary residence of IDPs;
- to conduct comprehensive monitoring of temporary residence places and other facilities housing IDPs and take measures to improve their living conditions, access to medical, social, educational services and legal support;
- to inform citizens about the places of temporary residence for IDPs, their location, number of vacant places, technical condition, by placing an interactive map with information about places of temporary residence on the RMA website.



**Olga Altunina**

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# ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY OF UKRAINE: The Ombudsman's Office is Involved in the Work



The Ombudsman's Office hosted a meeting with members of the "Ecobezpeka" (Ecological Safety) parliamentary association to discuss **Point 8 of the Ukrainian Peace Formula on the environmental safety of our country.**

The Ombudsman's Office has a **Unit for the Right to a Safe Environment** within the Department for Monitoring of Social and Economic Rights. It processes citizens' appeals regarding violations of sanitary legislation and household waste management.

## The current problematic issues include:

- lack of a system of environmental control;
- failure to calculate the amount of environmental damage caused to the environment of Ukraine;
- business entities' refusal to allow state inspectors to carry out state control measures.

At the meeting, the Ombudsman of Ukraine noted that **it is important to emphasize the damage that the terrorist country has caused and continues to cause to Ukraine during the COP29 climate summit.**



*In addition, our state, which has ratified the Rome Statute, should work to ensure that a new term 'ecocide' is included in it. Responsible associations and government agencies should work to ensure that Russia pays in full for the destruction of the environment!"* said **Dmytro Lubinets.**

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# WE PROTECT THE SOCIAL RIGHTS of citizens, including those affected by the Chornobyl disaster

The Ombudsman of Ukraine Dmytro Lubinets met with an initiative group from Korosten district of Zhytomyr region **to protect the rights of people affected by the Chornobyl disaster.**





One of the topics discussed at the meeting was the right to pension supplements for non-working pensioners living in the area of radioactive contamination, which people have been fighting for in courts.

Dmytro Lubinets spoke about the measures taken by the Ombudsman's Office to resolve the issue and outlined the recommendations made to the authorised central executive authorities.



*An attempt to resolve the situation with the enforcement of court decisions on the implementation of the said pension supplement through the Law of Ukraine 'On the State Budget for 2024' does not comply with constitutional principles and leads to a systemic violation of citizens' rights. **The lack of proper legislative response of the authorised bodies to the situation** leaves me no other option but to submit a constitutional petition to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine," the Ombudsman said.*

As a result of the event, **it was decided to hold a meeting with representatives** from other radioactively contaminated regions, MPs of Ukraine and authorised central executive bodies.

## ■ RUSSIA POSES A NUCLEAR THREAT TO THE WHOLE WORLD

The Russian military regularly conducts provocations at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. At the same time, it is not only the temporary occupation of ZNPP that poses a nuclear threat to the entire world.

During one of the largest shelling incidents since the start of the full-scale invasion, the **IAEA reported on 26 August that four power units at Ukrainian nuclear power plants were disconnected from the grid during the Russian attack.** These are units one, three and four of the Rivne NPP, as well as unit three of the South Ukrainian NPP.

**Russian attacks pose a significant risk to the stable operation of nuclear facilities in Ukraine and the safety of millions of people.**



**Olena Kolobrodova**

Representative of the Commissioner for Social and Economic Rights

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# COORDINATED WORK WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS is the way to return Ukrainian citizens

The Ombudsman's Office held a **meeting of the Working Group on Point 4** of the Ukrainian Peace Formula.

**The meeting was attended by 36 participants**, including representatives of international organisations: UN, UNICEF, ICRC, OSCE and EU.



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**One of the main topics** was the search for a mechanism to put pressure on Russia to stop the practice of torture and ill-treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war and illegally detained civilians.

**At the meeting, the following were discussed:**

- **the functioning of mixed medical commissions to assess the condition of prisoners of war**, which should work on both sides, but, unlike Ukraine, Russia has not yet established them;
- **repatriation of seriously ill and seriously wounded prisoners of war and women**, as provided for by international humanitarian law;
- the release of all unlawfully detained civilians;
- the immediate return of all illegally deported and forcibly displaced Ukrainian children.

# INTERNATIONAL ASPECT OF THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE WORK:

## meeting with heads of foreign diplomatic missions of Ukraine

Within the framework of the conference of Ukrainian ambassadors 'Military Diplomacy: Resilience, Weapons, Victory', the Ombudsman of Ukraine held a separate panel discussion, which **was attended by 113 ambassadors, permanent representatives, consuls general, consuls of Ukraine and chargés d'affaires.**



Dmytro Lubinets outlined the work of the Ombudsman's Office, with a special focus on the **international component**. This includes the Ombudsman's institution joining international alliances and associations, the Office organising visits of foreign delegations to Ukraine, and **opening temporary representative offices abroad**. He emphasised international monitoring visits by the Office's staff.

**Anyone can apply to the Ombudsman of Ukraine for protection of their rights, including Ukrainians from abroad** (according to Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine 'On the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights').

Following the meeting, **Dmytro Lubinets called on the ambassadors:**

- Facilitate the work of the Ombudsman's representatives abroad;
- Inform the foreign audience using the information of the Ombudsman's Office, in particular, information brochures; →
- To hold events abroad on Point 4 of the Peace Formula and to promote the accession of new countries to this point.



**Human rights are a powerful tool for strengthening international cooperation.**



**Mykhailo Spasov**

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# WE WORK TO STRENGTHEN THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND NATIONAL COMMUNITIES

The Ombudsman’s Office held a meeting on the **development of the State Policy Strategy for ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples of Ukraine affected by the occupation regime for the period up to 2030**. The meeting was attended by representatives of government agencies, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, NGOs and academics.



*Protecting the rights of indigenous peoples is a sign of a sustainable democracy and developed statehood. Ukraine protects the rights of its indigenous peoples. The Ombudsman’s Office, headed by Dmytro Lubinets, works every day to ensure that our citizens in the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) know that Ukraine remembers them,”* said **Oleksandr Osipov**, Representative of the Commissioner for Equal Rights and Freedoms, Rights of National Minorities, Political and Religious Beliefs.

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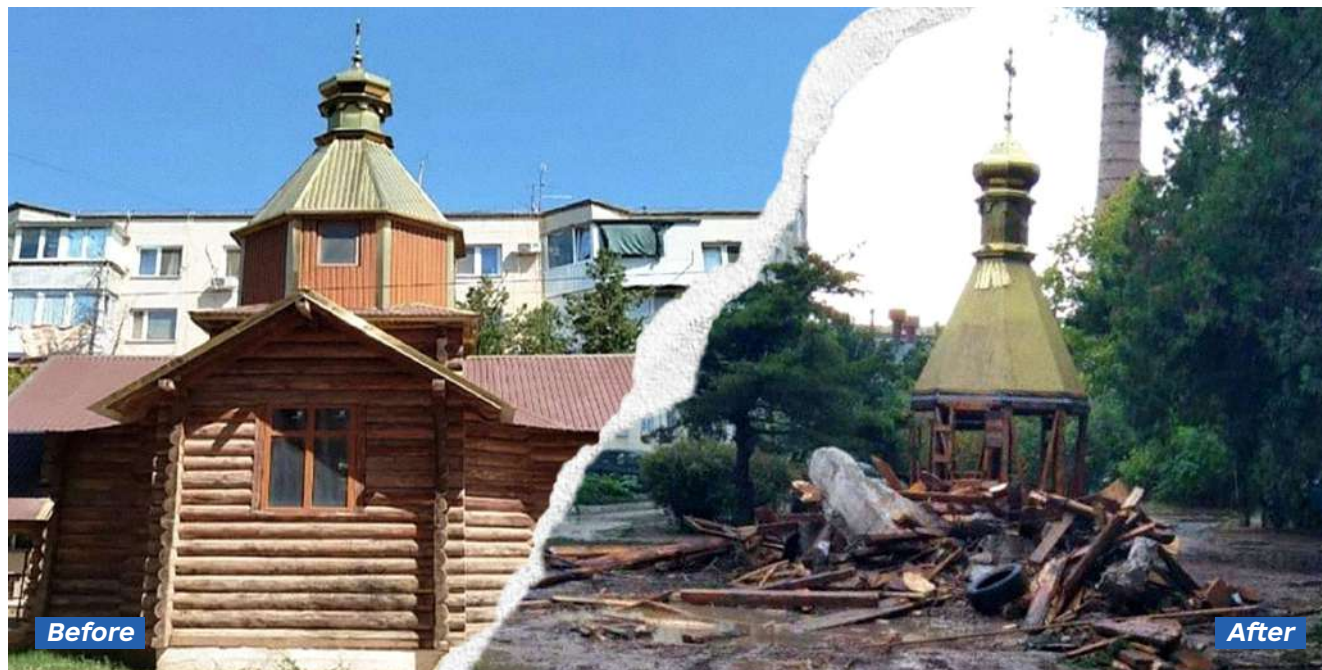
During the meeting, the participants emphasised the need to strengthen measures to protect the rights of indigenous peoples in Ukraine. **Particular attention was paid to the issue of restoring the rights of indigenous peoples affected by the occupation regime.**

The meeting concluded with the development of recommendations that will be considered in the preparation of the Strategy. Participants stressed the importance of further cooperation and coordination of efforts of all stakeholders for the effective implementation of strategic goals.



# RUSSIA VIOLATES CITIZENS' RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND DESTROYS RELIGIOUS SITES

Russia continues to mercilessly **destroy religious sites in the temporarily occupied Crimea**: The Ombudsman of Ukraine condemned the actions of the occupation authorities in Yevpatoria regarding the **illegal demolition of the The Holy Cross Exaltation Church of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU)**.



Since 2019, the parish and the Crimean Diocese of the OCU have been under **constant pressure**. The occupation court issued a decision in absentia to demolish the church. According to this decision, the dismantling should be carried out by the church community itself.

Despite the persecution by the occupiers, the parish community, together with its head, Reverend Yaroslav, had been defending the right to freely practice their religion for 5 years. However, on 3 July 2024, the occupation “Yevpatoria City Court” ruled that the local so-called “authorities” shall demolish the church.

**Such actions by the occupation “authorities” are a gross violation of the norms of international humanitarian law.** In this regard, the Prosecutor’s Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol launched criminal proceedings regarding the illegal demolition of the church.



*This is yet another evidence of systematic repression against the Ukrainian people. I call on the international community to increase pressure on the Russian Federation to stop violations of human rights and religious freedoms in the temporarily occupied Crimea!”* the **Ombudsman of Ukraine** noted.



**Oleksandr Osipov**

Representative of the Commissioner for Equal Rights and Freedoms, National Minorities, Political and Religious Beliefs  
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## A 400% 'BONUS' FOR TORTURE for former head of penal colony



Dmytro Lubinets, the Ombudsman of Ukraine, drew public attention to the **revealed facts of torture of convicts** of the Bozhkivske Correctional Colony No. 16, revealed in 2022–2023.

For a long time, these facts were not noticed by the leadership of the North-Eastern Interregional Department for the Execution of Sentences and the Ministry of Justice. On the contrary, following a personal inspection of the institution in February 2022, the current Minister noted the proper and effective functioning of the institution and the observance of the rights of convicts.

**Dmytro Lubinets initiated the study of official documentation on the activities of the institution** and took a number of steps in accordance with his mandate.

Thus, it was established that in July 2023, in course of an internal investigation, without expecting the final outcomes, the head of the institution got a dismissal at his own request **with a bonus comprising 400% of his official salary 'for exceptional working performance'** and other monetary payments totalling almost UAH 400,000. Later, in December 2023, the former head of this institution got a decision on the maximum level of retirement pension.

**This case requires a thorough investigation.** And those guilty of beating and torturing prisoners must be punished!

## MORE THAN UAH 425,000 of unlawfully deducted funds returned to 40 convicts

The Ombudsman of Ukraine received an appeal from a convict from Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast regarding **violation of his right to social assistance in full as a person not entitled to receive a pension.** According to him, the administration of the institution deducted the costs of housing and communal services from his allowance.

The Ombudsman initiated inspections, during which he found violations of the law. After that, a submission was made to the Minister of Justice of Ukraine to eliminate the violations and return the unlawfully deducted funds. Dmytro Lubinets also demanded that the right to social assistance be checked in relation to other persons serving their sentences.

As a result of the response, **the right to receive assistance was restored in full for 40 people** – funds totalling UAH 425,500 were returned.



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for Human Rights in Places of Detention

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## ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION shall be provided in accordance with the law

Following the Ombudsman's response, a **report was drawn up** and the head of Lutsk Raion, Volyn Oblast was brought to administrative responsibility.

A citizen appealed to the Ombudsman regarding **violation of the Law of Ukraine 'On Access to Public Information'** by officials.

The woman sent a request asking the administrator to provide information that is public according to the Law, but is not published on the official website of the community, in particular the staff list of village council employees, decisions and other administrative documents of the council, approved budget, expenditures, revenues, etc.

However, **the applicant did not receive a response** to her request, so she applied in writing to the Ombudsman's Representative at the on-site reception.

**As a result, measures were taken within the Ombudsman's mandate.**

## SHARING EXPERIENCE WITH EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ON DATA PROTECTION

The delegation of the Department for Monitoring Information Rights of the Ombudsman's Office made a study visit to the capital of Estonia, Tallinn.



At the invitation of the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV), the staff of the Office visited the showroom of the *e-Estonia* office, met the Minister of Justice of Estonia, and learned more about electronic services. The visit also includes visits to the Police and Border Guard Board, the Office of the Chancellor of Justice, and Tallinn University of Technology.

**A special part of the visit programme was devoted to studying the work of the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate.** During the visit, it is planned to learn more on the processes of data protection monitoring, review of appeals and interaction. Among other things, a seminar on handling personal data protection cases is planned.



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## PRISONER'S RIGHTS RESTORED: UAH 12,500 of social assistance for a person with disabilities

The Ombudsman of Ukraine was addressed by a prisoner who reported that he had ceased to receive disability social benefits after being placed in a pre-trial detention facility. The medical unit provided a medical expertise, which did not confirm his disability. However, at the time of the expertise, the man had the status of a person with a disability and was entitled to benefits.

**After the Ombudsman's intervention in the case, the applicant was awarded assistance for the period from November 2023 to May 2024 in the amount of UAH 12,477.42.**

## UKRAINE RATIFIED THE ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

**The Rome Statute** is the main instrument of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is based in The Hague. It defines the powers of the ICC to investigate grave offences, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Following ratification of the Rome Statute, the state becomes a party to the ICC and will be able to enjoy the benefits of a full member of the ICC: to put issues on the agenda of the Assembly of States Parties, to have its own judge at the ICC, to participate in the work of the Court, etc.

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*The Rome Statute had been signed by Ukraine back in 2000, but only today was it ratified. **This step brings us closer to joining the European Union. It will also help to bring to justice the Russians that commit international crimes in Ukraine,***” said **Dmytro Lubinets**, the Ombudsman of Ukraine.



**Andrii Ovsienko**

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# RUSSIA IS TRYING TO DESTROY UKRAINIANS AND SHELLS PEACEFUL CITIES EVERY DAY!

In August, Russians carried out a series of attacks on peaceful cities and towns in Ukraine.

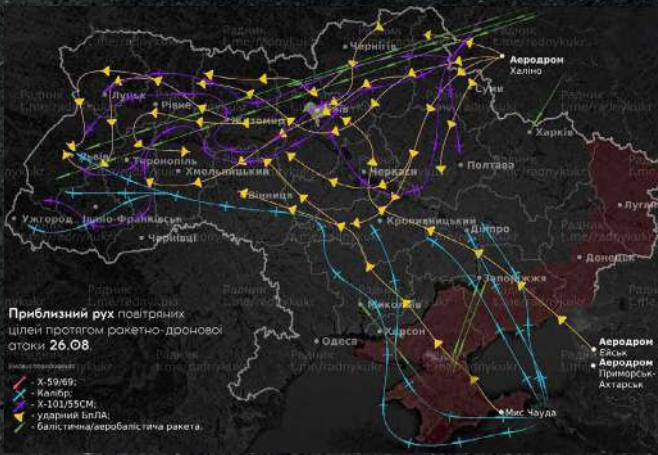
**On 9 August,** Russian troops shelled the town of Kostiantynivka in Donetsk Oblast, hitting a local shopping centre. In particular, a supermarket and a post office were located there. **The attack killed 14 people** and injured more than 40 civilians.



**On 11 August,** a missile attack in Kyiv region killed a father and his four-year-old son. Three other people were injured, including a child.



*Bodies of father and son killed in Russian attack*



The most massive attack since the beginning of the full-scale invasion took place **on 26 August**. In total, the Russians fired 127 missiles and 109 UAVs at the territory of Ukraine. Lutsk, Ternopil, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk, Vinnytsia, Kyiv, Dnipro, Poltava, Kharkiv, Kryvyi Rih, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, and other cities were under attack.

*Movement of Russian air targets across Ukraine during the 26 August attack*

The attack **killed 7 people** and injured almost 50, including four children. In particular, the occupiers hit an apartment building in Lutsk.



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**On 30 August**, the occupiers launched a massive attack on Kharkiv. The attack damaged apartment blocks and private houses, administrative buildings, and educational institutions. The attack **killed 6 people, including a 14-year-old girl**. About 100 people were injured, including 22 children.

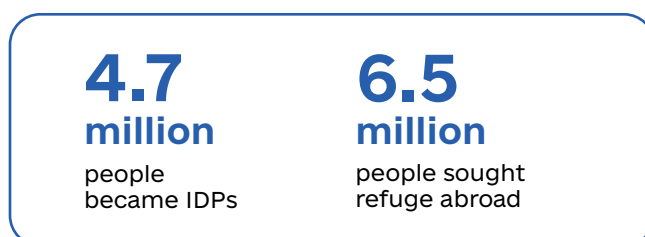
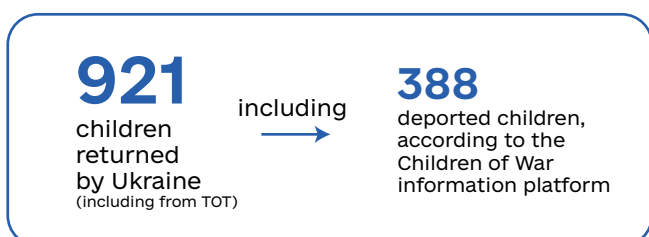
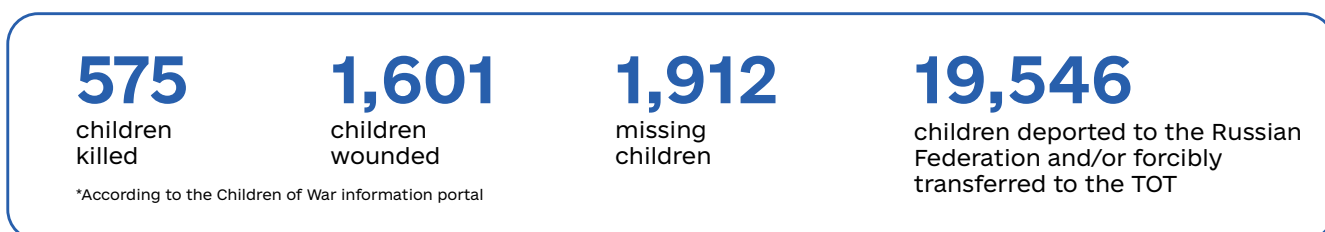
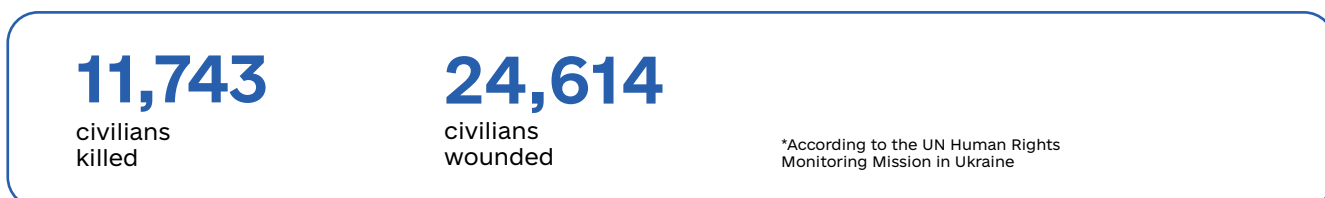


**Russia is shelling Ukraine every day, killing civilians, including children! The world must respond appropriately!**



# PEOPLE ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THING!

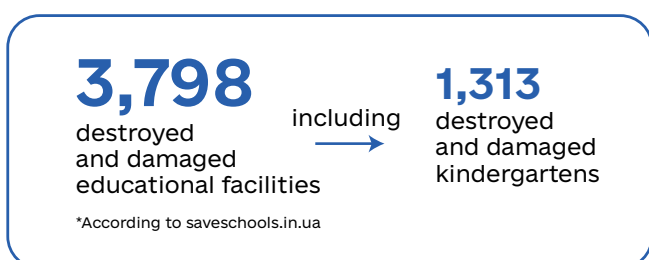
Russia violates human rights in Ukraine on a large scale!



Issue No.7, 2024

# SHELLING OF CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Russia destroys residential buildings, educational and medical institutions



\*Data as of the beginning September 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**

