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THE UKRAINIAN PARLIAMENT COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

SPECIAL REPORT
on the situation in the territories of Ukraine
temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation

What means the Russian Federation
uses to occupy and subjugate the population of
the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

MARCH 2025

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Opening remarks by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights



With its armed aggression against Ukraine, the Russian Federation has unleashed the first continental war in Europe in the 21st century, undermining the system of collective world security established after the Second World War. Humanity is once again confronted with a regime that seeks a violent revision of borders and is moving towards the latest form of totalitarianism.

Eleven years after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, we can discuss the lessons and experiences that our country has gained and that are important for us and our partners to analyze. As well as the way the aggressor country prepares the occupation of territories with the help of «soft power» - such as cultural, educational programs, simplified passportization, seizure of the information field, etc. The «soft power» is then followed by the troops who, through

the instrumentalization of flagrant violations of human rights, practices of forced disappearances and «filtration», conquer the civilian population of the occupied territories and then impose their policies to keep the population and the occupied territories under control.

This special report is the result of an analysis of the experience of the occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine and a search for common patterns of actions and policies of the Russian Federation implemented before and after the occupation of the territory of the Crimean Peninsula, and how these practices were later applied to other territories of Ukraine that are now under the occupation of the Russian Federation.

The purpose of the report is to systematize and analyze the practices of mass human rights violations by the Russian Federation as one of the key tools for seizing and maintaining control over Ukrainian territories, as well as the implementation of the policy of the aggressor country to conquer the civilian population of these territories.

The report covers the period since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, analyzing the events on the eve of the deployment of the occupation of Ukrainian territories, the systematic practice of human rights violations during the seizure and maintenance of control over the territories. In addition, the report focuses on an attempt to analyze the effectiveness of the response of the Ukrainian state to massive violations of international law by the Russian Federation.

I decided to prepare a special report because today, unfortunately, there are no comprehensive and detailed reports that would outline the living conditions in the

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TOT of Ukraine, as well as the system of actions of the Russian authorities aimed at subjugating the population of the occupied territories. For the Russian Federation, the occupation was never a temporary measure: even before the beginning of the occupation and during all the years after it, the Russian Federation did everything to «transform» the Ukrainian citizens of our occupied territories into Russians - silent, weak-willed and submissive people. And those citizens who bravely resisted had to be destroyed, deprived of freedom or forced to leave the occupied territories.

This report is an attempt to look at the practices and policies of the Russian Federation regarding the occupation of the Ukrainian territories through the prism of human rights violations, which are not isolated acts, but an integral state policy of the Russian Federation. The international community is not fully aware of what is happening in the occupied Ukrainian territories and how the Russian Federation operates. With

this report we want to show the real state of affairs, to show life under occupation as it is. We also want to show how the occupation authorities use systematic practices of human rights violations to ensure control over the TOT of Ukraine and the implementation and maintenance of the occupation regime. Our wish is not only to demonstrate the situation and let the world hear the voice of the people under occupation, but also to start an important conversation about how this terrible Ukrainian experience of war in the center of Europe can and should be investigated to prevent similar crimes in the future.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire team of the Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the members of the Working Group on the Preparation of the Special Report, as well as the team of experts¹ for the prepared Special Report and recommendations, which I am sure will be useful both to the state bodies of Ukraine and to international partners.

Dmytro Lubinets
Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner
for Human Rights

¹ The expert team included: Alyona Lunyova - Director of Advocacy at the ZMINA Human Rights Center, Daria Svyrydova - lawyer, partner at AZONES, Onysiya Synyuk - legal analyst at the ZMINA Human Rights Center.

List of abbreviations

AR Crimea	Autonomous Republic of Crimea
ATO	Anti-Terrorist Operation
IDPs	internally displaced persons
NF	Naval Forces
GA	General Assembly
DPR	the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, that is, the territory of the Donetsk region temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation
ECHR	The European Court of Human Rights
HEI	higher education institution
EECP	entry-exit checkpoint
LPR	the so-called Luhansk People's Republic, that is, the territory of the Luhansk region temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation
MFA of Ukraine	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine
ICC	The International Criminal Court
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization, North Atlantic Alliance
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PGO	Prosecutor General's Office
LSG	Local self-government bodies
UN	United Nations
OCU	Orthodox Church of Ukraine
UOC-MP	The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate
RB	Republic of Belarus

Summary

1. Long before the beginning of active hostilities for the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014, the Russian Federation had for a long time been systematically conducting a policy of preparing for such a seizure. Mostly, it was aimed at creating among the citizens of Ukraine a sense of belonging to the Russian Federation (common history, culture, language, etc.). Soft power is used by financing the operation of Russian educational institutions in certain Ukrainian regions and the Russianization of the Ukrainian educational system; spreading Russian cultural and media products throughout the Ukrainian territory and other information influences; facilitating access to Russian citizenship and passportization of Ukrainian citizens; infiltrating Russian agents into the political, security and governmental sectors, etc. Later and after 2014, such a policy was used by the Russian Federation to prepare and justify a full-scale invasion, in particular through the mass passportization of the population of the occupied territories of Ukraine, the influence Russia exerted on the Ukrainian political agenda, and the powerful information influence on the civilian population of the government-controlled territories of Ukraine.
2. In order to seize the territories, the Russian Federation is using and instrumentalizing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular the massive use of indiscriminate violence against the civilian population (military attacks on civilian objects and infrastructure, indiscriminate shelling and complete destruction of settlements, «filtration» operations involving violations of human rights and illegal detentions during evacuations, obstruction of the evacuation of the population, etc.). There have been numerous cases of using the local population and civilian infrastructure as «human shields» in order to achieve military advances, seize military and administrative buildings, or retreat. The level of violence after the capture of Ukrainian territories by Russian troops does not decrease, but is redirected from the complete destruction of settlements to targeted attacks on the civilian population (enforced disappearances, illegal detentions, torture, extrajudicial executions, cruel prison conditions, etc.) in order to suppress any resistance to the occupation and any support for Ukrainian statehood.
3. Another target of the Russian Federation's attacks during the occupation of territories and subjugation of authorities are persons who have formal and informal power and influence over local communities (representatives of local governments and state administrations, activists, etc.). Such attacks and pressures take the form of both direct violence (imprisonment, torture, execution) and psychological pressure, economic coercion to induce cooperation with the Russian Federation and the creation of occupying administrations, subjugation and control over the civilian population of the captured communities. The experience of a full-scale invasion shows that the Russian Federation uses (imports) citizens from the previously occupied territories of Ukraine or its own Russian citizens from the Russian Federation to establish occupation administrations in the occupied territories. This, in turn, allows the Russian Federation to intensify the use of force or violence to eliminate those civilians who do not want to obey the occupier or cooperate in the estab-

lishment and operation of the occupying authority's institutions.

4. The occupation of Ukrainian territories by the Russian Federation is accompanied by systematic and massive administrative practices resulting in flagrant violations of human rights. Some of these practices are a continuation of such violations against its own population on the territory of the Russian Federation. As a result, after the seizure, all the occupied territories of Ukraine were illegally «incorporated» into the Russian Federation. They are subject to the legislation, policies and system of governance of the Russian Federation, which is the cause, in particular, of numerous violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. The main and ultimate goal of these violations and «integration» into the legal reality of the Russian Federation is to maintain full control over the civilian population of the occupied territories, to transform them into «new Russians» and to expel from the occupied territories disloyal citizens who never submitted to the Russian Federation. Examples of such violations and coercion include:
- legitimizing the previous mass violence by «normalizing» it and subjecting the persecuted to the procedures of the Russian law enforcement and judicial system, using «anti-extremist», «anti-terrorist» and other repressive legislation, practices of torture, deprivation of liberty, the right to defense, the right to a normal and fair trial, etc.;
 - creating conditions for the civilian population in which it is impossible to stay in the occupied territories without obtaining a Russian passport and without integrating into the legal reality of the Russian Federation. Persons without such a document become in fact «foreigners» in their native territory and attract increased attention of the special services of the Russian Federation; they are restricted in their right of residence, without the possibility of obtaining medical and social protection; they are restricted or deprived of property rights, educational and labor rights, etc.;
 - at the same time, persons who receive a passport of a Russian citizen may become liable for military service. As a result, there have been numerous cases of involvement of the civilian population of the occupied territories in the war against their own country. Forcing the local population in the TOT of Ukraine to serve in the Russian armed forces and to participate in hostilities against their own state is carried out both to increase the mobilization reserve and the number of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, and to exert additional control and intimidation. In addition, the propaganda of service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation distorts the local population's vision of the causes and course of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine;
 - seizure of information space and media resources as one of the first steps in establishing the occupation, replacement of Ukrainian media with Russian propaganda, prohibition and persecution of dissent and public disagreement with the actions of the Russian Federation, criminal prosecution, deportation, intimidation, arrests and murders of independent journalists;
 - implementation of the policy of assimilation and eradication of identity, in particular through educational processes (elimination of any Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar educational component from educational programs, integration of children and youth into educational and propaganda programs of the Russian Federation, development of a broad system of out-of-school education and youth movements based on russification and militarization), persecution of Ukrainian activists and public figures, as well as represen-

tatives of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people, including the prohibition of the activities of their representative bodies (for example, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people);

- property confiscation is another method actively used by the Russian Federation to control the TOT of Ukraine and the local population since 2014. In addition to the seizure and nationalization of the property of the Ukrainian state, the occupation authorities also targeted the property of large private enterprises and the private property of local residents. The property policy of the Russian Federation is an additional means of making it impossible to remain in the TOT of Ukraine without obtaining Russian documents, to receive income without working in a Russian enterprise, to retain ownership of property without re-registering it under the Russian procedure. All these measures are aimed at entrenching the Russian presence in the TOT of Ukraine;
 - Consistent destruction by the Russian Federation of any means and ways of supporting the ties of the civilian population of the occupied territories with the Ukrainian state by creating physical impossibility of travel to the territories controlled by the Government of Ukraine, the potential threat of criminal prosecution for any contacts with Ukraine, by destroying small and medium-sized businesses and persuading people to cooperate and work in the «official» institutions of the occupier, by blocking access to Ukrainian information resources, by facilitating young people's access to Russian higher education, by programs of resettlement to the territory of the Russian Federation and replacement of the population of the occupied territories by citizens of the Russian Federation, etc.
5. The Ukrainian authorities are mainly reactive in developing policies in the TOT and maintaining relations with the civilian

population there. It is necessary to significantly strengthen the state's ability to implement systematic practices and policies that can counter Russia's measures to subjugate the civilian population in the occupied territories (access to information channels for the frontline and the occupied territories, educational programs for young people, access to Ukrainian passports and other documents, approaches to forms of responsibility for the civilian population's cooperation with the occupier, etc.). The state's response to the population on the ways of achieving justice is now focused mostly on ensuring fair justice, which is important in the issue of the inevitability of punishment for international crimes, as well as a challenge to the capacity of the judicial system. At the same time, it is important for the state to build other instruments for achieving justice, such as a policy of remembrance and memorialization, measures to restore trust in the authorities (lustration), the formation of a predictable policy for restoring life after de-occupation, and so on. At the same time, certain political and legal measures taken by the Ukrainian authorities to counter the aggression of the Russian Federation and violations of human rights in the occupied territories (decisions of international courts, resolutions of international and interparliamentary structures, etc.) constitute important precedents for the recording and reaction of international legal and political institutions to international crimes. In addition, they actually create the basis for studying best practices on the example of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, using mass practices of violations of the rights of the civilian population as a tool for preparing and further seizure of territories and subjugation of the population living there.

Methodology

In order to prepare the Special Report, the Commissioner formed a Working Group² in September 2024, which included representatives of public authorities of Ukraine, in particular law enforcement bodies, research institutions, experts from public and human rights organizations, charitable foundations, international organizations, UN agencies and others. The working group worked in the format of periodic meetings.

During the work on the report, unique data documented by the Office of the Commissioner, reports of international missions and human rights organizations, information from state authorities, testimonies of victims of crimes of the Russian Federation, information from open sources, court decisions, resolutions and reports of interparliamentary and international organizations were analyzed and systematized. At the same time, while working on the special report, the group of experts was guided by the principles of reliability and completeness, as well as by the interests and safety of the victims of violations.

On October 30, 2024, the workshop was held where the participants of the Working Group identified the main instruments of occupation and subjugation of the civilian population of the territories occupied by the Russian Federation, as well as the forms and methods of reaction of the State of Ukraine to these actions of the aggressor country. General hypotheses of the report were also developed.

The main instruments of occupation and subjugation of the civilian population were considered in four contexts:

- 1) the identification and analysis of the preparatory actions of the Russian Federation for the occupation and seizure of territories (without the inclusion of the military component);
- 2) the use of flagrant human rights viola-

tions to subjugate the civilian population after the seizure of territories and before the establishment of occupying civil administrations

- 3) the construction of policies and institutions in the occupied territories after the establishment of the occupying administrations and the illegal incorporation of the territories of Ukraine into the Russian Federation;
- 4) the response of the Ukrainian authorities and the international community to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the consequences of the occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine.

The results of the workshop, which was attended by 55 members of the Working Group, were used in the preparation of the text of the Special Report.

In addition, the materials provided by the Working Group were used in the preparation of the Special Report. In particular, these are the answers of state bodies to the questions of the Office of the Ombudsman (30), more than 50 reports and reports of civil society and human rights organizations, photographic and video materials, about 200 testimonies of victims and witnesses of crimes documented by representatives of the Office of the Ombudsman, materials and researches provided by the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the National Institute for Strategic Studies, and other sources.

In addition to the materials provided by the members of the Working Group or collected by representatives of public authorities and research institutions, the reports of international organizations, in particular, the UN Hu-

² The composition of the Working Group was approved by the Order of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights of September 18, 2024 No. 118.15/24.

man Rights Monitoring Mission, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, the reports of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, individual decisions of the ECHR and the International Court of Justice were used in the preparation of the Special Report.

The main hypotheses on which the team worked during the preparation of the Special Report were as follows:

- The Russian Federation uses the information and educational policy of expansion to prepare the occupation (media influence, cultural events, education).
- The Russian Federation uses the simplified procedure for granting Russian citizenship as a tool for subjugating the population and justifying future aggressive actions.
- The systematic commission of international crimes by the Russian Federation during the conduct of hostilities is a deliberate policy used by the military-political leadership of the Russian Federation to conquer territories and the civilian population on them.
- The level of aggressive actions and the severity of violations committed by the Russian Federation against the civilian population during the seizure of territories depends on the loyalty (expectations of the Russian Federation regarding such loyalty) of the population of the territories where hostilities are being conducted, as well as on the level of support for the resistance by the Ukrainian authorities, including local self-government.
- The large-scale implementation by the Russian Federation of most of the administrative practices leading to flagrant violations of human rights in the occupied territories is the extension of existing practices and policies that the Russian Federation has been implementing on its own territory for years.
- The Russian occupation authorities are pursuing a deliberate policy of persuading the local population to cooperate (collaborate) in order to break any future ties with the Ukrainian state, including by destroy-

ing small and medium-sized businesses and the conditions for their development, creating conditions for «economic survival» by working for the occupier.

- The Ukrainian authorities need to significantly increase their capacity to develop a policy capable of countering Russia's measures to capture and subjugate the civilian population in the occupied territories.
- Certain political and legal measures taken by the Ukrainian authorities to counter the aggression of the Russian Federation and human rights violations in the TOT of Ukraine create important precedents for recording and responding to international crimes, as well as a field for studying best practices.

Working hypotheses were formulated on the basis of an analysis of materials available from open sources on the policy of the Russian Federation in the TOT of Ukraine, systematic flagrant violations of human rights. They were discussed and clarified at the workshop and meetings of the working group on the preparation of the Special Report of the Commissioner.

No restricted materials were used in the preparation of the document. In addition, a number of online sources with information on data from the currently occupied territories were restricted or deleted (for example, data from the official website of the Ministry for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, or some data from the website of the Central Election Commission on the results of the elections in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, etc.), which also limited access to primary sources and information relevant to this report. The aim of the report was not to cover in detail all human rights violations that have occurred in the TOT of Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian aggression in 2014; however, the text includes an overview and links to a significant number of reports and other materials prepared by human rights and other organizations on various aspects of violations as a result of the occupation since 2014.

SECTION 1

Actions and policies of the Russian Federation that preceded the temporary occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine

Actions and policies of the Russian Federation that preceded the temporary occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine

February 20, 2014 marked the beginning of the modern Russian-Ukrainian war. At that time, for the first time, the facts of the crossing of the state border of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation through the Kerch Strait were recorded. This is recorded in the Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of April 21, 2015³ 337-VIII «On the Declaration of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine «On repulsing the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and overcoming its consequences»³.

At the same time, it is necessary to take into account that the occupation is a complex process that requires preparatory actions that will contribute to the fast subjugation of the population of the occupied territories once the border is crossed and the control over the territory is established.

In recent years, Ukraine has developed a strategy of cognitive de-occupation, in particular of the Crimean Peninsula⁴. However, we have a very limited range of studies on the practice of «cognitive occupation» – the seizure by the Russian Federation of information, cultural, educational spaces as a prerequisite, a preparatory stage of an eventual occupation by using the armed forces.

This section analyzes the actions of the Russian Federation before the beginning of the occupation of the territories of Ukraine, the impact on the local population, local self-gov-

ernment bodies, the informational, cultural, educational space, as well as the policy of the Russian Federation on the passportization of the population of Ukrainian territories as one of the elements of preparing these territories for eventual seizure. Recently, there have been an increasing number of studies on the processes of «colonization» of Ukraine⁵.

In addition, studies focus on the actions and influence of the Russian Federation in various spheres of public life directly on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol before the occupation of these territories in February 2014; on the territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (before the occupation of part of the territories in 2014 and subsequently on the territories that were occupied after 2022); on the territory of the Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions. Unfortunately, at present there are no comprehensive analyses, studies of the influence of the Russian Federation in the period before the occupation of the territories in 2014 and 2022. Therefore, for the most part, when trying to assess the actions and influence of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, which were subsequently occupied, we do so in the period up to 2014 and specifically in relation to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

This analysis does not directly cover the military preparations of the Russian Federation

3 On the Declaration of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine «On repulsing the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and overcoming its consequences»: Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of April 21, 2015¹ 337-VIII URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/337-19#Text>

4 Strategy of cognitive de-occupation of Crimea. Representation of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. 06.11.2023. URL: <https://ppu.gov.ua/documents/stratehiia-kohnityvnoi-deokupatsii-krymu/>

5 The War in Ukraine Is a Colonial War. By Timothy Snyder. April 28, 2022. URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/essay/the-war-in-ukraine-is-a-colonial-war>

SECTION 1

SPECIAL REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN THE TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

for the invasion of the territory of Ukraine. We distinguish between preparations for the seizure of Ukraine in one form or another (political actions aimed at turning Ukraine into a vassal state, the establishment of a puppet government controlled from the Russian Federation) and specific actions to prepare for hostilities on the territory of Ukraine. Also, the analysis does not focus on the history of relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, previous conflicts that arose, in particular, regarding the construction of a dam through the Kerch Strait to the Ukrainian island of Tuzla (2003)⁶.

At the same time, it is important to determine in which spheres of public life of Ukraine, especially in the territories that were temporarily occupied later, the influence of the Russian Federation was such that it can be considered as part of the preparatory actions of the aggressor state to seize and occupy the territories of Ukraine. These spheres include:

- information sphere;
- culture and religion;
- education and youth policy;
- political movements and parties, social movements.

Actions in these spheres can be considered «soft power»⁷, which the Russian Federation systematically uses against Ukraine. A special role in the use of «soft power» was assigned to the Federal Agency for the CIS, the compatriots living abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation («Rossotrudnichestvo» (“Russian Cooperation”), a Russian agency aimed at «strengthening Russia’s humanitarian influence in the world»⁸, which served as the main center of «soft power» of the Russian Federation in Ukraine and was the coordinator of the activities of pro-Russian organizations. In addition, an important subject was the Feder-

al Migration Service of the Russian Federation, whose activities are focused on promoting the resettlement to Russia of citizens of other states, in particular Ukraine, who fall under the category of «Russian compatriots».

In order to identify specific actions of the Russian Federation in the above-mentioned spheres aimed at targeted preparation for further occupation, it is necessary to take into account the following factors:

- systematic approach;
- connection with each other;
- the existence of a causal relationship of actions and the establishment of further control in the territories of Ukraine.

For a more detailed analysis of the preparatory actions, it is necessary to look at specific areas in turn and find out exactly how the Russian Federation used the so-called «soft power» and prepared for the occupation.

1.1. Information sphere

After the independence of Ukraine, there was no de facto separation and formation of Ukraine’s own information space. In the period before the beginning of the armed aggression against Ukraine, the Russian Federation invested considerable resources in the promotion and support of Russian information products on the territory of Ukraine and in the creation of a single information space. This was facilitated by the broadcasting of Russian television channels in Ukraine, the presence of Russian satellite channels in Ukraine, Russian radio, etc. Due to the propaganda of war and violence, Russian propaganda TV channels were banned in Ukraine in 2014 - NTV, Russia-24, Channel One, Russia-1, Zvezda, Life News, Russia Today and several others⁹.

6 Lessons from Russia’s First Assault on Ukraine: 20 Years Since Tuzla. Hanna Shelest. URL: <https://cepa.org/article/lessons-from-russias-first-assault-on-ukraine-20-years-since-tuzla/>

7 The concept of «soft power» is defined in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: Instruction of the President of the Russian Federation dated February 12, 2013 No. Pr-251. URL: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70218094/>

8 Rossotrudnichestvo. URL: <https://rs.gov.ru/about-foiv/>

9 What TV channels were banned in Ukraine and the world: infographics over the past 20 years. Apostrophe. 05.02.2021. URL: <https://apostrophe.ua/ua/news/politics/government/2021-02-05/kakie-telekanalyi-zapreschali-v-ukraine-i-mire-infografika-zapovednie-20-let/222247>

WHAT MEANS THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION USES TO OCCUPY AND SUBJUGATE THE POPULATION OF THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE

Many media outlets disseminating Russian narratives were directly or indirectly funded by the Russian Federation. In addition to national channels, the Russian Federation contributed to the creation of regional (local) media that broadcast Russian narratives, especially in the border regions (Luhansk, Donetsk regions). Regional media could also be affiliated with Russian companies (for example, “Alex”, a broadcasting company)¹⁰ or be part of political projects (for example, the Party of Regions).

An important element of the creation of a common information space and the influence of the Russian Federation on Ukrainian society was the creation of a single Internet space through the popularization of Russian social media (VK, Odnoklassniki, Telegram), as well as Russian influencers and bloggers.

Since December 2013, Russian state media, as well as non-state pro-government media, have been discussing the prospects of the «division» of Ukraine, in particular, the separation of Crimea from the rest of the country. Russian media actively worked to create an «artificial» identity of Crimeans as «others» hostile to Ukraine¹¹.

Since the end of February 2014, the vast majority of Russian media have joined the information war against Ukraine, trying to support the military operation. Such publications as «Izvestia», «Rossiyskaya Gazeta», «Moskovsky Komsomolets», «Kommersant», «Vzglyad», as well as information agencies «Ria Novosti», «ITAR-TASS», «ROSBALT», «AIS» not only printed unverified news, but also created false news themselves. An example is the attempt of TV channels, in particular the satellite channels

«Russia-24» and «NTV World», to confirm the news about the presence of a large number of refugees from Ukraine in Russia by means of a corresponding video sequence¹².

An important component of the information campaign against Ukraine was the dissemination of information about the rapid advance of Russian troops into the regions of Ukraine (in particular, into the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions). Subsequently, this information was not confirmed, and therefore, obviously, this was done in order to spread panic and disorganize the defense efforts of the Ukrainian state, creating an impression of the scale of the invasion. However, it is now clear that these reports were a kind of information preparation for the implementation of the Novorossiia project and were aimed not only at disorganizing the military, but also at preparing the local population for the possibility of an invasion¹³. This tactic was used again by the Russian Federation during the full-scale invasion of 2022¹⁴.

The occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, which was the first stage of the armed aggression against Ukraine, was the result, in particular, of the long and purposeful propaganda activities of the Russian Federation. Since the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Russian authorities have taken active steps to establish an authoritarian model of the information space on the peninsula, which reflects the information policy of the Russian Federation on its territory – the information space is not considered as a space for freedom of speech, but rather as another source of protection of the Russian authorities from any criticism from the opposition or protest forces¹⁵.

10 «Alex TV» was the oldest commercial television station in the Zaporizhzhya region, broadcasting to Zaporizhzhya, Berdyansk, Melitopol, and Orikhiv. It traditionally supported local politician Viacheslav Bohuslaiev, who was close to the Party of Regions and the Opposition Bloc. ZavodoTelevision. Who owns the TV space in Zaporizhzhia. Detector Media. 02.01.2020. URL: <https://detector.media/rinok/article/173613/2020-01-02-zavodotelebachennya-khto-volodiie-teleprostorom-zaporizhzhya/>

11 How Russian media encouraged separatism in Crimea. Detector Media. 07.03.2014. URL: <https://detector.media/rosiiski-zmi/article/164470/2014-03-07-kak-rossyyskiye-smi-pooshchryaly-separatyzm-v-krymu/>

12 An example of news: The flow of refugees from Ukraine to the Rostov region has increased significantly - the governor of the region. Interfax. 01.03.2014. URL: <http://www.interfax-russia.ru/South/main.asp?id=477460>

13 Donbass and Crimea: the price of return: a monograph / edited by V. P. Horbulin, O. S. Vlasiuk, E. M. Libanova, O. M. Lyashenko. Kyiv: NISD, 2015.

14 SBU warns: Enemy fake news appear every day. Ukrinform. 05.03.2022. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220306235740/https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3420585-sbu-vorozi-fejki-zavlautsa-sodna.html>

15 Donbass and Crimea: the price of return: a monograph / edited by V. P. Horbulin, O. S. Vlasiuk, E. M. Libanova, O. M. Lyashenko. Kyiv: NISD, 2015. P. 242.

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Before the occupation of Crimea, the information infrastructure of the peninsula was quite extensive: on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (as of September 2013) there were 83 entities in the field of audiovisual media, which had 141 licenses; in the city of Sevastopol (as of December 2013) there were 19 entities in the field of audiovisual media (analog television broadcasting), 32 digital broadcasting channels, 7 providers of audiovisual services and 19 radio stations (FM)¹⁶. After the beginning of the occupation, the media landscape of the peninsula changed critically due to illegal interference in the activities of the media and persecution by the occupation authorities.

The seizure of the information space both in the Crimea and in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions consisted of two main elements: gaining control over television and radio broadcasting facilities, printing houses, telecommunications and Internet sites, as well as managing the content of information through administrative control over the media, exerting pressure on journalists, etc.

After the beginning of the occupation of Crimea, the Russian Federation continued to exert influence on the Ukrainian population in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian government, in particular, in the Kherson region. This informational influence was exerted by capturing the broadcasting frequencies of FM radio stations. Thus, according to the monitoring data of the Crimean Human Rights Group, since July 2021, Ukrainian radio broadcasting in the Kherson region suffered from overlapping with Russian stations in settlements such as Shchaslyvtseve, Genicheska Hirka, Genichesk, Chonhar, Mykolaivka, Novooleksiivka, Mayachka, Novotroitske, Hromivka, Novomykolaivka,

Strohanivka, Hryhorivka, Chaplynka, Myrne, Kalanchak, Oleksandrivka, Khorly, Rozdolne, Skadovsk. The situation of Ukrainian radio stations blocked near the checkpoints «Chaplynka» and «Chonhar» was also recorded. In the mentioned cities and villages, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation have fully or partially seized at least 34 radio frequencies. These frequencies are used by 37 different Russian radio stations¹⁷. At the same time, the occupation authorities took measures to block the FM signal from the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government. Thus, in 2020 a new TV and radio tower was erected near the Chaplynka entry-exit checkpoint in the occupied territory of Crimea. It is equipped with special antennas that allow to transmit a TV and radio signal to the territory of Crimea and parts of the Kherson region. Thus, the occupation authorities have created another tool in the north of Crimea to block Ukrainian FM radio broadcasting¹⁸.

The media on the TOT of Ukraine systematically broadcast hate speech. Thus, in 2014–2017, the Crimean Human Rights Group, as part of a study of the situation with freedom of speech in the occupied Crimea¹⁹, monitored the content of Crimean and Russian media broadcasting in the Crimean information space and recorded 718 examples of hate speech. Before the full-scale invasion, the main manifestations of hate speech could be attributed to messages related to anti-Ukrainian and anti-American rhetoric. The targets of negativity are also persons who criticize certain manifestations of the foreign and domestic policy of the Russian government, for example, journalists, public activists, political oppositionists and citizens of other countries, whose actions

16 Reporting information of the representative of the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol of Lyashenko Volodymyr Ivanovych for 2023. National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting. URL: <https://webportal.nrada.gov.ua/zvity/>

17 In the Kherson region, the radio of the Russian occupation authorities broadcasts on at least 34 radio frequencies. Crimean Human Rights Group. URL: <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/na-hersonshhini-radio-rosijsko%d1%97-okupacijno%d1%97-vladi-movit-yak-mini-mum-na-34-h-radiochastotah/>

18 In the north of Crimea, the occupation authorities equipped a new tower to block the signal of Ukrainian FM stations. Crimean Human Rights Group. URL: <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/na-pivnochi-krimu-okupacijna-vlada-obladnala-novu-vezhu-dlya-blokuvannya-signalu-ukra%d1%97nskih-fm-stanczij-2/>

19 Hate speech in the information space of the Crimea (research). Crimean Human Rights Group. 29.03.2018. URL: <https://crimeahrg.org/ru/yazyik-vrazhdyi-vinformatsionnom-prostranstve-krjima/>

in some way contradict the interests of the Russian Federation²⁰.

Later, the Russian Federation «exported» a significant part of its practices and experience from Crimea to other occupied territories. Journalists and technical staff were sent from Crimea to other TOT of Ukraine after February 2022 to help the occupying administrations seize part of the Ukrainian information space and establish their own media landscape²¹. Crimea became an important logistical and infrastructural bridgehead for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The occupying forces were able to use Crimean telecommunications networks to redirect Internet traffic from other regions of Ukraine, particularly the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions²².

As for the information space of the government-controlled parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, it continued to be significantly influenced by pro-Russian narratives. Despite the fact that the Ukrainian authorities took measures to prevent Russian broadcasting in these territories, in particular by installing special devices to attenuate the signal²³, building high-frequency TV towers²⁴, Russian TV channels were still available in most of the territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, namely through satellite dishes. Gradually, Telegram has become one of the main tools of Russian propaganda, which has already gained the status of the most popular social media in Ukraine and the most dangerous source of Russian influence²⁵.

1.2. Culture and religion

The influence of Russian culture on Ukrainian citizens was very active, and it did not stop at the time of Ukraine's independence. The central ideas of the humanitarian policy of the Russian Federation were the idea of «one people», i.e. the unity of the Ukrainian and Russian people, but from the point of view of the inferiority of the Ukrainian people. In addition, the Russian Federation actively ensured its presence on the territory of Ukraine, especially in the Crimea.

The Russian Federation actively financed the activities of Russian cultural centers and «houses» on the territory of Crimea. For example, in 2010, Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov approved the Plan of Target Expenditures of the Moscow City Government for the implementation of international projects in 2010. According to this plan, 4.5 million rubles (155,000 USD) were allocated for the maintenance and operation of the International Cultural and Business Center «Moscow House in Sevastopol»; 3.8 million rubles (131,000 USD) for the organization of events dedicated to the 65th anniversary of the Victory in World War Two (the Great Patriotic War); 1 million rubles (34,000 USD) to support veterans' organizations abroad; 700,000 rubles (24,000 USD) to support historical monuments to Russian and Soviet soldiers abroad²⁶. The «Moscow House in Sevastopol» hosted various cultural events and conferences aimed at strengthening the position of the Russian Federation in

20 Hate speech in online media covering events in Crimea: Information and analytical report on the spread of hate speech in Russian-language online media that regularly cover the armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and related events in Crimea (December 2020 – May 2021) /general ed. I. Sedova and V. Krylova-Grek. Kyiv, 2022. 68 p. URL: https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/mova-vorozhnechi_fin_ua.pdf

21 Mayor of Melitopol: In Zaporizhzhya the Russian occupiers set up propaganda television and a «mobile phone operator». Detector Media. 16.07.2023. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/214293/2023-07-16-mer-melitopolya-na-zaporizhzhzi-rosiyski-okupanty-nalagodzhuyut-robotu-propagandystskogo-telebachennya-i-mobilnogo-operatora/>

22 Blockade and control of the Internet – what is happening in the temporarily occupied territories. CrimeaSOS. 31.05.2022. URL: <https://krymsos.com/blokada-ta-kontrol-internetu-shho-vidbuvayetsya-na-tymchasovo-okupovanyh-terytoriyah/>

23 In the ATO zone, the Russian television signal began to be blocked.. Detector Media. 19.04.2018. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/136792/2018-04-19-u-zoni-ato-pochaly-blokuvat-rosiyskyy-telesygnal/>

24 A 134-meter TV tower was built in the Luhansk region. Correspondent.net. 04.08.2017. URL: <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/4000993-na-donetchyne-stroiat-televyshku-dlia-transliatsyi-v-dnr>; In Donetsk region, a TV tower is being built for broadcasting in the DPR. Correspondent.net. 15.08.2018. URL: <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/4000993-na-donetchyne-stroiat-televyshku-dlia-transliatsyi-v-dnr>

25 Telegram Occupation. How Russia built a media network that turned out to be a Potemkin village.. Texts.org.ua. 29.10.2022. URL: <https://texty.org.ua/projects/108016/teleqram-okupaciya-yak-rosiya-vybudovuvala-mediamera-zhu-vyishlo-potomkinske-selo/>

26 On the Plan of International Targeted Projects for 2010 with the Participation of the Government of Moscow Decree of the Government of the City of Moscow dated February 16, 2010No. 141-PP. URL: https://base.garant.ru/5713197/#block_1000

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the Crimea (such as the scientific and practical conference «Russian language as the language of interethnic communication», which was held in 2012)²⁷.

The Russian Federation held many various cultural events and festivals on the territory of Ukraine, in particular on the Crimean peninsula, long before the beginning of the occupation. Thus, since 2007, the International Festival of Russian and Slavic Culture «The Great Russian Word» has been held annually in the Crimea; its purpose was to «develop Russian culture, strengthen the position of the Russian language, and develop international cooperation in the humanitarian field²⁸.»

Russian cultural policy focused on Ukraine was fully integrated into the overall strategy of eliminating Ukrainian statehood. Not only the media, but also the cultural and entertainment industries are widely used to carry out Russian propaganda: cinema, show business, allegedly non-political, «cultural» programs of television and radio broadcasting, etc. Russian cultural expansion against Ukraine was carried out consciously and persistently throughout the years of Ukrainian independence, which was facilitated by the ineffectiveness of the state humanitarian and cultural policy²⁹.

The Russian film industry was actively developing, spreading offensive stereotypes about Ukrainians and depicting Ukrainians as criminals, migrant workers, narrow-minded people who talk silly, etc.). The distribution of Russian film and television products on the territory of Ukraine was due to the common linguistic environment. It is worth noting that a significant part of the so-called documentary cine-

ma, created by the Russian Federation, openly performed propaganda tasks. For example, the film «Three Sisters» as an allegory for Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians made in 2010 spread the narrative of Russian propaganda about the trinity of the peoples of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus in order to strengthen the regional ambitions of the Russian Federation through the manipulation of history³⁰.

A separate channel for spreading the influence of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, especially on the currently occupied territories, was the UOC-MP. The priests of the UOC-MP did not condemn the occupation of Crimea, but consecrated the military equipment of the Russian Federation³¹. In the Donetsk region, one of the centers for the dissemination of Russian narratives is the Holy Dormition Svyatohirsk Lavra (a UOC-MP monastery in Svyatohirsk, Donetsk region). According to various reports, the monastery actively supported the Russian Federation's invasion of the Donetsk region in 2014: in addition to organizing mass prayers in support of representatives of the armed groups of the DPR, the monastery's regular clergy directly participated in hostilities on the side of pro-Russian paramilitary groups³².

Despite the liberation of the region where the monastery is located by the Ukrainian defense forces in the spring of 2014, the priests of the Svyatohirsk Monastery continued their pro-Russian activities. The abbot of the monastery, Metropolitan Arseniy, actively supported the Moscow Patriarch Kirill, called the war in Ukraine «civil war» and accused Ukrainian troops of shelling Slovyansk in 2014 and of

27 The conference «Russian language – the language of interethnic communication» began its work in Sevastopol. ForPost News Service. 23.03.2012. URL: <https://sevastopol.su/news/v-sevastopole-nachala-rabotu-konferenciya-russkiy-yazyk-yazyk-mezhnacionalnogo-obshcheniya>

28 International Festival «The Great Russian Word». URL: <https://artvision-center.ru/международный-фестиваль-великое-рус/>

29 «Crimea. War: preconditions for Russian aggression». Director of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine Volodymyr Horbulin presented analytical materials. National Security and Defense Council URL: <https://www.rnbo.gov.ua/ua/Diialnist/2399.html>

30 Propaganda of the «LPR»: side carcasses, real estate in Europe and Plotnitsky in Antarctica. The real newspaper. 06.06.2017. URL: <https://realgazeta.com.ua/matveev-pti/>

31 «Church annexation». How the Crimean dioceses of the UOC-MP moved to the ROC, and whether the latter is a loss for the Church. Crimea. Realities. 09.06.2022. URL: <https://ua.krymr.com/a/krym-tserkva-perepidporiadkuvannia-moskovskomu-patriarkhatu/31890688.html>

32 The SBU is investigating the activities of representatives of the UOC-MP in Donbas in support of Russian aggression. Vchasno. 28.03.2018. URL: <https://vchasnoua.com/news/sbu-rozslidue-diyalnist-predstavnikiv-upts-mp-na-donbasi-v-pidtrimtsi-rosijsko-ji-agresiji>

conducting the ATO in the Donbas in general. The monastery organized parades of the «Immortal Regiment» during the Victory Day celebrations on May 9, where the participants commemorated the victims of the «fratricidal war» in Ukraine and «prayed for peace»³³.

The activities of the ROC are «merged» with the Russian state and are a foothold of the occupation regime³⁴. Even before the occupation began in 2014, ROC leaders actively condemned the Euromaidan in their sermons. ROC churches were also used directly to launch the occupation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (for example, in the city of Sloviansk, Donetsk region).

1.3. Youth policy and education

As part of the implementation of strategic goals aimed at restoring Russia's control over the post-Soviet space, long before the beginning of the armed aggression in 2014, its leadership carried out a number of targeted measures to strengthen Russian influence in Ukraine. At the same time, the Russian side paid special attention to the Ukrainian youth, which is considered the most active part of the population. Young people were involved through the promotion of training events on the territory of the Russian Federation, participation in Russian international, socio-political, socio-economic, scientific, educational and cultural events, festivals, conferences, forums, seminars, lectures, sports events, creative competitions and exhibitions (for example, the annual All-Russian Youth Educational Forum «Seliger»; the annual International Youth Forum «Molgorod»; the Youth Sports Festival; competitions «Russian Song», «Compatriot of the Year», etc.).

Education is a crucial factor in the formation of a political nation, ensuring the continuity of knowledge, the transmission of historical and cultural narratives. Education in the territories of the Crimean Peninsula, Donetsk and Luhansk regions occupied in 2014 was characterized by the systemic influence of the Russian Federation, the predominant use of the Russian language in education at all levels (from preschool to higher education institutions).

Thus, the active policy of Russification in the Crimea was carried out during all the years of independence, in particular, due to the restriction of education in the state (Ukrainian) language, the reduction of the number of Ukrainian educational institutions and institutions with teaching in the Ukrainian language. In 2013, there were 7 schools with the Ukrainian language of instruction, 76 schools with the Ukrainian and Russian languages of instruction, 829 classes with the Ukrainian language of instruction, in which a total of 12,694 students studied on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula³⁵. For comparison, in the Donetsk region in the 2013/2014 school year, 50.5% of schoolchildren already had the opportunity to study in Ukrainian, and 49.5% - in Russian. In the city of Donetsk itself, there were 20 schools with Ukrainian, 74 with Russian and 56 with bilingual, in which 29% of schoolchildren studied in Ukrainian and 71% in Russian³⁶.

On the territory of Ukraine, in particular on the Crimean Peninsula before the occupation in 2014, there were several branches of educational institutions of the Russian Federation, namely: Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg Humanitarian University of Trade Unions, Moscow State Industrial University, Belgorod State Technological Academy of Building Materials, Modern Hu-

33 «The Arseniy Case»: How a UOC (MP) Metropolitan Assisted Russia from the Sviatohirsk Lavra Religious Information Service of Ukraine, 28.04.2024 https://risu.ua/sprava-arseniya-yak-mitropolit-upc-mp-dopomagav-rosiyi-zi-svyatogirskoyi-lavri_n147893

34 What is the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the war against Ukraine. BBC Ukraine. 24.11.2024. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c7519y16dl3o>

35 «Crimean Scenario 2.0»: how the Russian Federation destroys the Ukrainian identity of children in the occupied territories. Analytical report / M. Sulialina, O. Shapoval. Kyiv: CCE «Almenda», 2024. C-9 URL: <https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Crimean-Scenario-web-1.pdf>

36 Training under fire. How Donetsk is forcibly «russified». Radio Liberty. 17.12.2014. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26749027.html>

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manitarian Academy and others. There was also the Crimean Center for Distance Education of the Moscow State Industrial University, as well as a private educational institution «Crimean Cossack Cadet Corps»³⁷.

In addition, since 1998, Sevastopol has been home to the 8th School of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, named after the 850th anniversary of the founding of Moscow. The education provided was in accordance with the Russian educational curriculum³⁸.

In fact, pro-Russian narratives were integrated into the curricula of Ukrainian educational institutions, Ukrainian students, teachers, and scientists were trained in the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation used various ways to influence Ukrainian youth: participation in trainings in the Russian Federation, spreading of influence on young people through Russian social media, organization of military sports games, creation of computer games, especially on historical topics, providing various forms of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia,³⁹ etc.

This activity is funded both on a regular basis and through bonuses for participation in mass cultural and sports events, grants, payment of fees for publications, sponsorship of private enterprises. Thus, the budget allocations for the activities of Rossotrudnichestvo planned to work with the youth of the CIS countries in 2014, compared to 2013, increased by 413 million rubles (13.8 million dollars). Of this amount, more than 250 million rubles (8.3 million dollars) was allocated to work with representatives of Ukraine. Funding was planned taking into account the number of young people invited. In particular, in 2013, 650 people (250-300 people from

Ukraine) participated in certain events of Rossotrudnichestvo; in 2014, it was planned to invite up to 1,000 people (450-500 people from Ukraine), and in 2015, 1,500 people (up to 950-1000 people from Ukraine).

Thus, before the beginning of the armed aggression, the Russian Federation increased its influence on Ukraine in order to form a positive attitude of the Ukrainian population towards Russia. To achieve this, the Russian side used various forms and methods of influence, paying special attention to the Ukrainian youth as the most active and productive part of the population.

1.4. Political movements and parties, civic associations

The Russian Federation had a significant influence on political and social life in Ukraine. Pro-Russian narratives, the position on the undisputed path of Ukraine's development together with the Russian Federation and the strengthening of integration processes between the countries were spread by the controlled political parties.

As far as civic associations are concerned, there is a noticeable tendency to create and/or support various hunting organizations, Cossack organizations (Kuban Cossacks, Cathedral Cossacks, etc.), civic organizations of veterans of law enforcement agencies, special services, the military, which actively interacted with similar structures in the countries of the former USSR and whose members later became the personnel base for command posts during the occupation.

For many years, the Russian Federation, in particular through the Rossotrudnichestvo agency, has formed and financially supported pro-Russian civil society organiza-

37 Hay-Nyzhnyk P. P. Russia v. Ukraine (1990–2016): from the policy of blackmail and coercion to the war of absorption and attempts at destruction. Kyiv: «MP Lesya», 2017. C. 293.

38 Russian, Moscow! School No. 8 of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation is celebrating its anniversary. ForPost. 21.09.2013. URL: <https://archive.ph/V8f1P#selection-361.0-361.92>

39 Call of Duty in Donbas: how the war in Ukraine is portrayed in computer games. Crimea. Realities. 30.10.2019. URL: <https://ua.krymr.com/a/vijyna-v-ukraini-v-kompyuternykh-ihrah/30244615.html>

40 List of deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea of the VI convocation (2010–2014 URL: http://crimea.gov.ru/o_gossovete/sozyvy/6_sozyv

tions and movements in Ukraine, including the All-Ukrainian Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots, the Congress of Civil Initiative, Russian Unity, the Russian Community of Crimea, the Slavic Guard, the Ukrainian Choice, and the South-East, etc. These movements played a significant role in the occupation and attempted annexation of part of the territory of Ukraine.

At the same time, the presence of openly pro-Russian forces among the local authorities was not high. For example, at the beginning of the occupation, the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, with a total number of deputies of one hundred mandates, had only three deputies of «Russian Unity»⁴⁰ - the only openly pro-Russian party (its leader, Sergei Aksyonov, was appointed by the Russian Federation as the «head of the republic» immediately after the occupation of the peninsula)⁴¹. Therefore, despite the significant influence of soft power, the use of the armed forces of the Russian Federation was crucial to the occupation of territory.

Using budgetary funds, the Russian Federation also supported such organizations as the Night Wolves biker club. Its members were part of the so-called Crimean self-defense units, which played an active role in the events in Crimea in February 2014. During the occupation of Crimea, they appeared on the peninsula with Russian flags and intimidated people who opposed the Russian invasion⁴².

Before the beginning of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, there was a noticeable intensification of activities in Ukraine (primarily in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) of Russian organizations (both state and non-governmental) engaged

in the promotion of Russian ideology in the post-Soviet space. In particular, the main of such organizations are the Federal Agency «Russian Cooperation» (Rossotrudnichestvo) and the Russian World Foundation). In addition, new ideological institutions were created on the territory of Ukraine, an example of which is the «Russian Center» on the basis of the Maritime Library named after Lazarev in Sevastopol, which its leader directly calls «the representation of the Russian world in Sevastopol, the city of Russian naval glory»⁴³. At the same time, the main coordinator of measures to improve the «soft power» system of the Russian Federation in Ukraine was the Institute of CIS countries, which became particularly active in 2013.

The main purpose of such events was to form a positive attitude of the Ukrainian population towards deepening relations with the Russian Federation and participation in Russian integration projects in the post-Soviet space.

The above-mentioned list of spheres in which the Russian Federation exerted influence on Ukraine before the beginning of the armed aggression is not exhaustive. Special attention should also be paid to the issues of demographic policy (resettlement of Russian citizens, mostly retired servicemen of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, to the territory of Ukraine), passportization with Russian documents, a process that began long before the direct occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine. However, all these factors require additional study and analysis in order to draw lessons for our country and for neighboring countries, where certain measures of the Russian Federation are already being implemented, which will be discussed below.

41 Aksyonov was elected «head» of the Crimea. Radio Liberty. 09.10.2014. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26628614.html>

42 Donbass and Crimea: the Price of Return: a monograph / edited by V. P. Horbulin, O. S. Vlasiuk, E. M. Libanova, O. M. Lyashenko. Kyiv: NISD, 2015. C. 92, 233.

43 «... the representation of the Russian world in Sevastopol, the city of Russian naval glory». «Russian Center» in Sevastopol: 86th in the world, 9th in Ukraine and special in its purpose. Crimean Echo. 01.09.2012. URL: <https://kr-eho.livejournal.com/136347.html>

SECTION 2

The use of flagrant human rights violations to subjugate the civilian population (from the seizure of territories to the establishment of power)

The use of flagrant human rights violations to subjugate the civilian population (from the seizure of territories to the establishment of power)

The seizure of Ukrainian territories of the Russian Federation in 2014 and 2022 was carried out according to different scenarios. This can be explained by a number of reasons: from the political crisis in Ukraine as a result of the escape of the former president to the ability of the Russian Federation to conduct a proactive “soft power” policy in Ukraine unhindered, expanding its influence in the information, political, cultural, educational spheres for years, etc. Taking advantage of Ukraine’s vulnerability as a result of these influences and deliberately hiding the beginning of armed aggression with narratives about “self-determination of the population”, using its own military without insignia or even under the guise of civilians of the Russian Federation occupied the Crimean Peninsula. At the same time, a different scenario was used in the eastern territories of Ukraine, despite the actual participation of the Russian armed forces in the conduct of hostilities and control over persons who later occupied senior positions in the occupation authorities, the Russian Federation tried to demonstrate its “support” rather than direct control over these territories, recognizing the “independent” entities and their “independence”.

In 2022, the Russian Federation chose a different scenario and did not directly conceal the armed aggression.

The resistance of the local population in the territories occupied by the Russian Federation took place both in 2014 and in 2022. The biggest difference was the feeling of support and the ability to rely on state institutions in case of a decision to resist. With a clear and unambiguous state position on the

fact of aggression by the Russian Federation and the need to resist the Russian offensive, the local population felt more confident in the possibility and success of their own local resistance.

Probably, the increase in the degree of violence for the rapid subjugation of the population by the Russian army is due to precisely these considerations: in the presence of state resistance and as a result of local resistance, which had the potential to grow into a long one, the Russian Federation chose methods of brutal suppression of any manifestations of disloyalty. In doing so, the Russian Federation committed flagrant violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

“...[The protests] happened every day; there were maybe two weeks, even more, of gathering in the central square at 12 p.m., people singing the anthem, reading the summary from the front. Then a column would form, and the column would march through the city with slogans like “Occupiers, go away” and so on and so forth. And then, after the mayor was arrested, when there was a rally near the premises of the former district administration, then the organizer was arrested; well, they held her for about three days, then released her, and arrested several activists. After that, they started to put military patrols in the meeting places, and several activists were taken away, boys and girls; they confiscated their cell phones, put them in cars, took them out of the city to about 10-15 kilometers into the field, threw them out of the cars there; it was a kind of prevention, that’s the prevention they did. And that’s all, and then everything stopped because they

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started patrolling. We warned people about the patrols; there were RosGvardia vehicles, well, something like prisoner trucks, hidden in the yards, and there were also hidden FSB specialists and RosGvardia officers. So we agreed to stop all these actions⁴⁴.”

Since the first days of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, numerous violations of international humanitarian and human rights law have been recorded. Indiscriminate shelling, deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, illegal detentions, torture and extrajudicial executions have become commonplace in the territories where the offensive of the Russian troops took place and in the territories previously seized after February 24, 2022. The violations committed by the representatives of the Russian Federation at this stage were not an accident, negligence or excesses of the executors. They did not take place in only one settlement, but rather in different regions of Ukraine - both in the Kyiv or Chernihiv region, and in the Kherson, Kharkiv and Donetsk regions. In all these places there were different Russian units, but they had one goal and one method of achieving it. The violations were aimed at bringing the territories under Russian control as soon as possible, at any cost, and at intimidating the local population, suppressing any manifestations of disloyalty and attempts to resist further Russian occupation. The violence was indiscriminate, but systematic, in order to create an atmosphere of fear for one’s life and safety in these areas, in which it would not be possible to worry about less basic needs.

With the establishment of a certain degree of control over the conquered territories, the level of violence in most cases did not decrease, only its nature changed. With the achievement of the first goal - the actual physical conquest of the territory - the representatives of the Russian Federation moved

on to its subjugation, the establishment of control over the population. Violence was re-directed from shelling, complete destruction of settlements and infrastructure to targeted attacks on the civilian population in order to suppress any resistance to the occupation. In these actions, the specific groups of the population targeted by the violence became much clearer because, according to the representatives of the Russian Federation, these groups could have the greatest influence on the mood of the civilian population in the territories they occupied. Illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, extrajudicial executions and other violations were committed against former military personnel, including ATO participants, law enforcement officials, activists and volunteers, public figures, journalists and representatives of local authorities. The circle of civilians who fell into the category of those who posed a danger remained as wide as possible - representatives of the Russian Federation perceived any manifestations of patriotism, support for Ukraine, however insignificant, as resistance to the occupation, and used force to suppress these manifestations. They also served as a barrier and a certain “chilling effect” for others - anything that can be perceived as disobedience or disloyalty to the authorities of the Russian Federation will have consequences.

The issue of determining the boundary between the establishment of power over the seized territory (occupation regime) and the extension of the Russian legal regime and policies to it (attempts to annex and illegally incorporate territories into its constitution) is difficult. Without attempting, within the scope of this study, to establish a specific point in time for each of the TOTs, Section 2 (on the seizure of territories) and Section 3 (on the implementation of policies) are guided by the following logic. The ECHR in the case of Ukraine v. Russia (concerning Crimea) (No.

⁴⁴ Here and below are quotes from interviews conducted by experts from the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights. The wording of the interviewee is preserved as much as possible. Interview with a resident of the Zaporizhzhya region.

20958/14 and No. 38334/18)⁴⁵ established that the territory of the Crimean Peninsula had been under the control of the Russian Federation at least since February 27, 2014 (i.e. even before the so-called “referendum”). Another decision in the case of Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia (No. 8019/16, No. 43800/14 and No. 28525/20) established that the relevant territories in the east of Ukraine⁴⁶ have been under the control of the Russian Federation since May 11, 2014. For the purposes of this study: the period of establishing control over the TOT of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the recognition by the Russian Federation of the territories in the east of Ukraine as “independent” is considered as the stay of these territories under the occupation of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the legal regime of the Russian Federation was almost immediately illegally extended to the TOT of Crimea, and from 2014 to 2022 the occupying authorities copied Russian practices and legislation in the TOT of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, without officially including these territories and management systems in the Russian ones.

The holding of illegal referendums in the TOT of Crimea (2014), Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions (2022), their illegal incorporation into the Russian Federation and the extension of the Russian legal system to them, the incorporation of the occupying authorities into the Russian state power configuration are considered

within the framework of this study as the beginning of the implementation of the policy of the Russian Federation in these territories. Accordingly, in the territories over which Russian control was established, but to which the Russian legal and political system was not extended (Kharkiv region, Kyiv region, etc.), they are considered only within Section 2.

2.1. Indiscriminate shelling and targeting of civilian objects. Use of “human shields”

Attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure and indiscriminate attacks, which did not take into account the damage that could be caused to civilians, became one of the first tools of the Russian invasion, because they did not require prior establishment of control over the territory. Attacks on administrative buildings using the Russian military without insignia, the widespread practice of using civilians during the seizure of military facilities – began to be widely used by Russia already during the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014⁴⁷. The shelling of Maternity Hospital No. 3 and a hospital in Mariupol⁴⁸, an airstrike on the building of the Mariupol Drama Theater⁴⁹, repeated shelling of residential areas of Chernihiv⁵⁰, a humanitarian aid point in Kharkiv⁵¹ after the beginning of a full-scale invasion were not dictat-

45 Case of Ukraine v. Russia (Re Crimea) (Applications nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18). HUDOC database of ECHR practice. 25.06.2024. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-235139>; Case of Ukraine v. Russia (concerning Crimea) under No. 20958/14 and No. 38334/18. Website of the Virtual Museum of Russian Aggression. URL: <https://rusaggression.gov.ua/ua/sprava-ukraina-proty-rosii-shchodo-krymu-za--2095814-ta--3833418-0cff9808a21c12019f8f5c3357383f40.html>

46 Case of Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia (Applications nos. 8019/16, 43800/14 and 28525/20). HUDOC database of ECHR practice. 30.11.2022. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-222889>

47 Study «Occupation of Crimea. No signs, no names, hiding behind civilians.” UHHRU, RCHR. 2019. URL: https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Web_Okupation_Crimea_ukr_A4.pdf

48 In Mariupol, three people were killed in an airstrike on a children's hospital – the city council. Radio Liberty 10.03.2022. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-mariupol-zahybli/31746083.html>

49 The attack on the Mariupol Drama Theater: how it happened. The survivors speak. MIPL. 16.03.2023. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/ataka-na-mariupolskyj-dramteatr-yak-cze-bulo-govoryat-ti-hto-vyzhyv/>

50 Ukraine: Russian strikes have killed dozens of civilians in Chernihiv. Human Rights Watch. 10.06.2022. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/uk/news/2022/06/10/ukraine-russian-strikes-killed-scores-civilians-chernihiv>; Timeline of events in Chernihiv and Chernihiv region during the Russian-Ukrainian war February 24 – June 24, 2022. Educational House of Human Rights Chernihiv. 24.06.2022. URL: <https://ehrh.org/hronologiya-podij-u-chernigovi-ta-chernigivskij-oblasti-pid-chas-rosijsko-ukrayinskoyi-vijny-24-lyutogo-24-cheravnja-2022-roku/>

51 In Kharkiv, the RF shelled a humanitarian aid point: 6 dead, 15 wounded. Suspilne Kharkiv. 24.03.2022. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kharkiv/221135-u-harkovi-rf-obstrilala-punkt-gumdopomogi-6-zagiblih-15-poranenih/>

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ed by military targets. The civilian status of these facilities, as well as the fact that a large number of civilians were located in them, was not concealed. Attacks on these facilities and civilian casualties were an expected and desired result for the representatives of the Russian Federation, a “punishment” for disobedience and at the same time a warning – such attacks will continue if the territory is not conquered.

In addition, it was such shelling that was the first means of capturing settlements, by the fact of intimidation and depriving the local population of access to basic needs. For example, as a result of Russian shelling of Mariupol in February-March 2022, the local population lost access to basic needs; electricity, heating, communications, and later gas supply disappeared. A similar situation with the loss of access to gas supply, drinking water and electricity as a result of the actions of the Russian Federation occurred in the Kherson region in March 2022⁵³. In Mariupol, people came out of shelters in search of food and water and died from shelling .

“Well, you know, we had light and electricity for the first two days. The second day it was over. There was no gas, there was no water. There was nothing. There was no cell phone service, nothing. There was one person who starved to death; he sat there on the bench and died. Because we had nothing to eat either. In the first days, remember, our windows and doors were smashed in, and everybody had food at home. We also had potatoes at home, that’s all. Everything froze. There was frost at night, and then, as

bad luck would have it, in March it was 7-8 below zero every day and 7-8 below zero at night; there was no snow, and the wind blew through everything. So, there was nothing to eat. Well, for the first two weeks there was something if somebody brought out a little bit of food that they had in their refrigerators. After that, there was nothing, there was no water, there was no bread, let alone meat products. We had dreams at night, as if someone would bring some food ⁵⁴.”

In order to protect their armed forces and prevent effective resistance from the Ukrainian side, representatives of the Russian Federation used the practice of “human shields”⁵⁵. The Russian military, along with military equipment, was deployed in residential areas, near civilian facilities, in order to reduce the possibility of being attacked. At the same time, they also restricted the ability of civilians to leave these areas, forcing them to stay in their homes and putting them at risk⁵⁶. This practice has been actively used by the Russian Federation since the beginning of the armed aggression - the seizure of military facilities in Crimea in 2014 took place with the use of civilians as “human shields”. In addition, there was an active campaign aimed at inciting civilians to actively participate in the events, in particular, the seizure of the Southern Naval Base of the Ukrainian Navy, the seizure of the Naval Headquarters of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Sevastopol, the seizure of the 204 Sevastopol Tactical Aviation Brigade named after Oleksandr Pokryshkin, etc. In all cases, civilians, especially children, were present

52 More than 70 settlements without electricity, medicines are running out: what is the situation in the districts of Kherson region. Suspilne Kherson. 19.03.2022. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/219360-ponad-70-naselenih-punktiv-bez-elektroenergii-zakincuutsa-liki-aka-situacia-v-rajonah-hersonsini/>

53 Deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation: signs and context. ZMINA. April 2023 Pp. 8-19. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/deport_people_web.pdf; Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine 27 February – 31 March 2023, p. 27. URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf

54 Interview with a resident of Donetsk region.

55 See Article 8 (b) xxiii “The use of the presence of a civilian or other protected person to protect certain points, areas or armed forces from military operations” of the Rome Statute of the ICC of 21 August 2002 URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_588#Text

56 Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into Violations in Ukraine. 18.10.2022. URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/A-77-533-AUV-UA.pdf>

during the seizure of the facilities, and in many cases it was civilians who carried out the seizure in the first place, while the “Cossacks”, representatives of the “self-defense of Crimea”, as well as the Russian military stayed behind⁵⁷. This tactic was also used by the Russian Federation after the beginning of the full-scale armed aggression in 2022.

“It was very scary. In front of my house, exactly in front of my house, I had a platform for a car. So, they put their Grad system there and shelled Kharkiv right from my house⁵⁸.”

2.2. Restrictions on the exit from the occupied territory, restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid

One of the ways to control the local population and maintain control over the captured territory was to limit the ability to leave that territory. This practice was already widespread in 2014. The first step was the arbitrary restriction of entry into and exit from the territory of Crimea. In particular, this function began to be performed by former employees of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, namely the Berkut unit, who had sworn allegiance to the Russian Federation. Not having the authority to do so, they organized checks at “checkpoints”, inspected transport, checked documents, and did not allow international observers, journalists, law enforcement officers and military to enter

the peninsula⁵⁹. In addition, Maidan activists and journalists were illegally detained at these checkpoints and then handed over to the Russian military after being tortured for their patriotic views and beliefs⁶⁰.

Later, even without the context of active hostilities, representatives of the Russian Federation established restrictions on the movement of the population from or to the territory of the occupied Crimea in accordance with the illegally imposed Russian migration legislation (in particular, with reference to the presence of Russian citizenship, and in the absence of a Russian passport – the requirement for Ukrainian citizens to obtain documents for foreigners to be allowed to stay on the territory of the Russian Federation)⁶¹. Measures introduced by the Russian Federation to restrict the movement of Ukrainian citizens in connection with Crimea were recognized by the ECHR as a violation of the right to freedom of movement⁶².

The occupation authorities also used the situation with the spread of COVID-19 as a formal reason to restrict the movement of the local population through checkpoints (by closing them), to complicate the work of international humanitarian organizations, and to carry out additional counter-intelligence measures against persons crossing them⁶³.

After the full-scale invasion, Russian representatives shelled evacuation columns even after agreements on their organization had been reached⁶⁴ and shelled civilians who tried to evacuate on their own⁶⁵.

57 Occupation of Crimea: «Without signs, without a name, hiding behind the backs of civilians.» UHHRU. 2019. URL: https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Web_Okupation_Crimea_ukr_A4.pdf

58 Interview with a resident of Kharkiv region.

59 Ivanova K. Cases of Maidan. Berkut officers who mocked activists are suspected. Glavkom. 23.05.2024. URL: <https://glavcom.ua/country/criminal/spravi-majdanu-spivrobotniki-berkutu-jaki-znushchalisja-z-aktivistiv-otrimali-pidozri-1001976.html>

60 The case of Berkut officers who helped to occupy Crimea has been sent to court - SBI. Hromadske. 28.06.2024. URL: <https://hromadske.ua/suspilstvo/226829-spravu-berkutivtsiv-iaki-dopomahaly-okupuvaty-krym-peredaly-do-sudu-dbr>

61 «Peninsula of Fear»: five years of unfreedom in the Crimea / under the general editorship of O. Skrypnyk. Third edition, corrected and supplemented. Kyiv: Paper Snake-OPT, 2019. P. 115–117. URL: <https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Peninsula-Fear-2019-RU.pdf>

62 Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea) [GC], Judgment 25.6.2024 [GC], June 2024. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%5B%5C%22002-14347%22%5D%7D>

63 According to information provided by the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine at the request of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.

64 Deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation: signs and context. ZMINA. April 2023 P. 16 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/deport_people_web.pdf

65 Killings of civilians: arbitrary executions and attacks on individual civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy oblasts in the context of the armed attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine, 24 February – 31 October 2022. OHCHR. December 2022 64 to 68 URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2022/2022-12-07-OHCHR-Thematic-Report-Killings-UKR.pdf>

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Another manifestation of this violation was the prohibition to leave the settlement even within the territory controlled by the representatives of the Russian Federation, in particular, if such departure was necessary for humanitarian or vital purposes – access to medical care or medicines⁶⁶.

The delivery of humanitarian aid also became a means of control and verification of the local population's loyalty to the representatives of the Russian Federation. By restricting the delivery of humanitarian goods by Ukraine and international organizations⁶⁷, and by detaining persons who attempted to deliver humanitarian aid⁶⁸, the Russian Federation created a vacuum of basic necessities, forcing the local population to become completely dependent on available supplies and to rely on Russian assistance.

Humanitarian activities should not be used by the parties to the conflict as a means of achieving their political and military objectives⁶⁹. However, "offers" to distribute Russian humanitarian aid have been used to test the loyalty of local authorities and to convince them to side with the Russian Federation⁷⁰. In fact, the Russian Federation is "weaponizing" humanitarian aid and volunteer movements in order to strengthen control over the occupied territories and the population in accordance with the interests of the Russian state.

The decision to stay has been influenced by outright robbery of the local population, especially the theft of property from abandoned houses - from the smallest valuables to a variety of equipment and vehicles - as well as

the actual occupation of residential premises by the Russian military. For fear of losing their homes and livelihoods, people would decide to stay and try to protect their property⁷¹.

Access to information also became a means of manipulation in the context of restricting the local population's freedom of movement. Having lost access to news due to power outages, lack of both mobile and network communications, people were forced to rely on information provided to them by representatives of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the Russian military actively used the dissemination of false information to control the movement of the civilian population, in particular by claiming that the occupying forces had seized a much larger part of the territory of Ukraine than in reality, and trying to convince the local population that there was nowhere to go⁷².

All these measures were aimed at strengthening control and ensuring the dependence of the local population on the representatives of the Russian Federation. The restriction of movement increased the isolation of the occupied territories, the local population's access to information, and also deprived people of the choice of further actions - the only acceptable scenarios were to remain in the occupied territory or to "evacuate" to the territory of the Russian Federation. Control over access to basic necessities, food, and medicine allowed the representatives of the Russian Federation, in their opinion, both to control the level of resistance of the local population and to exert pressure due to priorities of survival.

66 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023, OHCHR. October 2023 74 URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

67 Deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation: signs and context. ZMINA. April 2023 p.20 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/deport_people_web.pdf; Statement by Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine Denise Brown. United Nations. June 13, 2023 URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/uk/236039-application-humanitarian-coordinator-in-ukraine-deniz-brown>

68 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February – 31 July 2023 P. 44. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

69 Respect for Humanitarian Mandates in Conflict Situations. Guideline URL: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2019-02/respect_for_h_mandates.doc.pdf

70 Based on a non-public study by ZMINA.

71 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 70 URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

72 Deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation: signs and context. ZMINA. April 2023 7. - P. 24. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/deport_people_web.pdf

2.3. “Filtration measures”

Certain restrictions and checks for security purposes are permitted by international humanitarian law⁷³, but the “filtering” system used by the Russian Federation from the very beginning of the full-scale invasion contains a number of violations in its implementation, as well as other violations.

It is worth mentioning that the Russian Federation has a long practice of introducing filtration camps in the territories of hostilities, in particular in the Chechen Republic⁷⁴.

“Filtration” in the form in which it was introduced by representatives of the Russian Federation in the occupied territories of Ukraine is a set of measures to restrict the movement of the local population, including inspections and searches within settlements, at checkpoints between settlements, as well as illegal detention in “filtration camps”. “Filtration camps” are places not suitable for long-term detention of persons, which are used for long-term verification procedures, including inspection of personal means of communication and their contents, personal belongings, as well as interrogations by representatives of the Russian Federation⁷⁵.

As a result, “filtering” is accompanied by violations of the right to privacy through excessive and improper collection of personal data⁷⁶, unreasonable length of the process and psychological pressure⁷⁷, illegal detentions and enforced disappearanc-

es⁷⁸, ill-treatment and torture⁷⁹, and sexual violence⁸⁰.

All types of “filtering” measures implemented by the representatives of the Russian Federation are aimed at restricting the movement and identifying persons who, in their opinion, because of their stance, impede or could become an obstacle to the consolidation of Russian control over the territory. Therefore, the “filtration measures” provide for checking the means of communication - whether the person is subscribed to social media sites and channels that publish pro-Ukrainian content, what is the content of personal correspondence, whether the person has patriotic tattoos and elements of clothing, which are the person’s answers to questions aimed at establishing loyalty to the Russian Federation. As a result, those who did not pass this check were restricted in their movements and illegally detained.

2.4. Forced displacement and deportation

Another form of control over the movement and actions of the local population in the occupied territories was the forced displacement of Ukrainians within the occupied territories, deportation to the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. The

73 See 3. Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, Article 27. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text

74 Hundreds of Chechens Detained in «Filtration Camps». Human Rights Watch. 17.02.2000. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2000/02/17/hundreds-chechens-detained-filtration-camps>

75 Operation «filtration». What Ukrainians who found themselves under Russian occupation are going through. MIPL. 23.05.2022. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/operacziya-filtracziya-cherez-shho-prohodyat-ukrayinczi-yaki-opynylysya-pid-rosijskoyu-okupacziyeyu/>

76 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 66. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

77 Deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation: signs and context. ZMINA. April 2023 p. 12 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/deport_people_web.pdf

78 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023, OHCHR. October 2023. 53 URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

79 Analytical report «Deportation of Ukrainian citizens from the territory of active hostilities or from the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine to the territory of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus» /Onysia Syniuk, Alyona Lunyova, Kateryna Rashevskaya, Roman Martynovskiy, Alina Pavliuk, Daria Svrydova, Tetiana Doroshenko, Tetiana Katrychenko. October 2022 P. 8. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/01/deportation_ukr.pdf

80 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 44. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

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exact numbers of forcibly displaced persons and deportees before and since the beginning of the full-scale invasion are unknown due to the limited access to the occupied territories and the territory of the Russian Federation, and the figures provided by official sources of the Russian Federation of 5.4 million “refugees”, including 744,000 children⁸¹, cannot be confirmed. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2,852,395 people have crossed the border into the Russian Federation since February 24, 2022⁸², but this number has not changed since December 31, 2022.

Despite the public justification of these displacements as “evacuations”, they did not meet the requirements of international humanitarian law and were carried out without any permissible grounds⁸³.

The expulsion of the local population by the Russian Federation was presumably carried out for a number of reasons, such as: control over the territory by reducing the population in the occupied territory and “filtration” measures during forced expulsion and deportation; control over the population of the occupied territories by using the vulnerable position of persons - by creating conditions in which it is impossible to stay and removing persons from the territory where they live, limiting access to property, livelihood, living conditions and social ties.

In addition, the Russian Federation focused on the forced displacement and deportation of Ukrainian children.

It should be noted that the forced displacement and deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation began during the armed aggression against Ukraine in 2014. In

particular, already in 2014, 12 relevant cases were recorded within the framework of the implementation of the social project “Radio of Russia” - “Train of Hope”, a project under which orphans were brought to the Russian Federation and placed in Russian families, and in 2015, when Russian citizens adopted 43 orphans from the occupied Crimean Peninsula.

Six days before the full-scale invasion, on February 18, 2022, the Russian Federation began a mass deportation of Ukrainian children. By the morning of February 19, more than 2,700 children, mostly residents of orphanages and boarding schools, had been taken to the Russian Federation. Their names, dates and places of birth were changed and they were given Russian passports. Some children were later placed in foster homes or given up for adoption. Russia justifies these actions as “saving them from danger,” even though the danger is of its own making⁸⁴.

According to Ukrainian data, 19,546 children are considered deported and/or forcibly displaced⁸⁵, but the real figures are likely to be much higher. In particular, according to the Report on the Activities of the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights in 2022, more than 700,000 Ukrainian children began to receive social assistance in the Russian Federation⁸⁶.

In 2022, the practice of placing Ukrainian children in Russian families and changing their citizenship under a simplified procedure began - for Ukrainian children, the mandatory waiting and verification period before being placed in a family was eliminated⁸⁷.

Deportations and forced removals of children have been carried out under various pretexts such as “evacuation”, “treatment”,

81 The number of refugees who have arrived in the Russian Federation from the territory of Ukraine and Donbas since February last year has exceeded 5.4 million people. TASS. 13.03.2023. URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/17248303>

82 Ukraine Refugee Situation. UNHCR. URL: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

83 Deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation: signs and context. ZMINA. April 2023 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/deport_people_web.pdf

84 February 18, 2022 is the day of the beginning of the mass deportation of Ukrainian children. Andriy Yermak’s Telegram channel. 18.02.2025. URL: <https://t.me/ermaka2022/5878>

85 The official platform «Children of War». URL: <https://childrenofwar.gov.ua>

86 Report on the activities of the Commissioner for Children’s Rights under the President of the Russian Federation in 2022. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230730154402/http://www.deti.gov.ru/detigray/upload/documents/July2023/7JkHUTqLsZL45JDp4Xl.pdf>

87 Decrees of the President of the Russian Federation dated 25.05.2022 No. 304, dated 30.05.2022 No.330, dated 11.07.2022 No.440

or “rest camps”. The movement and deportation of children is carried out with the main purpose of destroying their Ukrainian identity and transforming them into Russians. To this end, a whole range of indoctrination and militarization measures are used, but one of the ways is also forced displacement and deportation, which allows children to be alienated from their usual environment and placed in the Russian environment, limiting access to anything Ukrainian. In addition, after deportation, Ukrainian children are also subjected to forced passportization and transferred to Russian families⁸⁸.

2.5. Unlawful detentions and enforced disappearances

After the seizure of the territory, illegal detentions and enforced disappearances became one of the first ways to control the local population. The first case within the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which became known, was the abduction of a civilian citizen of Ukraine Reshat Ametov on March 3, 2014 in Simferopol during his single picket⁸⁹. They also actively detained persons who participated in and prepared peaceful protests in various cities of the peninsula in order to prevent⁹⁰ and suppress resistance to the occupation in general and the illegal referendum in partic-

ular, which was already being prepared under the control of the Russian military⁹¹. They were subjected to violence and detention by members of the so-called “self-defense of Crimea” and other paramilitary groups⁹².

As time passed, the practice only expanded - by 2020, at least 44 people, mostly human rights defenders and activists, had been subjected to enforced disappearance in Crimea alone⁹³.

The situation was similar in eastern Ukraine, where in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the local population was illegally detained on suspicion of “spying”, supporting the Ukrainian military, etc. - both in the area where the people lived and at checkpoints⁹⁴.

Already during the first reporting period from February to July 2022, OHCHR reported a significant increase in the number of conflict-related detentions, recording 407 such cases⁹⁵. At this stage, it is possible to identify specific groups of persons targeted by the representatives of the Russian Federation: former military personnel, in particular ATO participants, representatives of local authorities, human rights defenders and activists, as well as persons whom the representatives of the Russian Federation perceived as expressing support for Ukraine in one way or another. This trend was not limited to one region or a separate unit of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, it was these groups that were targeted in the Kyiv,

88 Re-pollinated: Systemic Russian policy of destroying the Ukrainian identity of children. Special report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the situation with ensuring the rights of the child in the context of armed aggression against Ukraine. July 2024 URL: https://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Special_report_re-dusted_.pdf

89 The first victim of the occupation of Crimea and Putin's war crime. Radio Liberty. 02.09.2019. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/reshat-ametov-rozsliduvannya/30137885.html>

90 Ukraine: Activists were detained and beaten, one of them was tortured. Human Rights Watch. 28.03.2014. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/uk/news/2014/03/28/253187>

91 «Torture has no limits»: Maidan activist Mykola Shyptur told about 9 years of imprisonment in the occupied Crimea. Radio Liberty. 08.06.2023. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/krym-aneksiya-aresht-maydan/32450388.html>

92 «Peninsula of Fear»: five years of unfreedom in the Crimea / under the general editorship of O. Skrypnyk. Third edition, corrected and supplemented. Kyiv: Paper Snake-OPT, 2019. p. 93). URL: https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Peninsula-Fear_2019-RU.pdf

93 Enforced disappearances in Crimea during the period of occupation by the Russian Federation in 2014–2020. Krym SOS. 2020. 72. URL: <https://krymsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/nasylnycki-znyknennya-v-krymu-za-period-okupaczii-rf-veb-versiya-ukr.pdf>

94 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine 16 August – 15 November 2016 by OHCHR. 30:57 URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/UAReport16th_UKR.pdf

95 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February 10 31 July 2023 OHCHR. 04.10.2023. 41. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

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Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhya regions⁹⁶.

Civilians were detained at checkpoints, in the streets, at workplaces, and in their own homes. Due to the lack of permanent control over the territory at that time, such persons were detained in “spontaneous places of detention”, such as the basements of private houses or administrative buildings, or in the confiscated premises of police stations, in temporary detention facilities⁹⁷. The conditions of detention in all these places were inadequate⁹⁸ and constituted inhuman treatment in themselves.

“My former wife was held in a concrete garage; some men were held nearby in the neighboring garage. From time to time, when teachers were arrested, women would be kept there for 2-3 days and then released. This was in March-April 2022. At first, they were kept in a room made of concrete slabs. The only furniture was a chair, a bucket and a mattress covered with rags. Concrete floor, concrete walls. That’s all she had. They fed her, well, I don’t know how; she must have lost 15 kilos, that’s for sure⁹⁹.”

Illegal detentions in this context very often also constituted enforced disappearances, because after detention, contrary to the legal procedure, neither the persons themselves nor their relatives were informed about where they had been taken and where they were staying. Representatives of the Russian Federation did not acknowledge the

fact of the detention and subsequently did not provide any information on the condition of the detainees¹⁰⁰.

“If they knew such disloyal people for sure, they actively worked with them. It was that they were thrown into basements and people left. That is 90% of the cases. As for the rest of the population who lived quietly and were intimidated. People at that time told me that they just stayed at home. They went out as little as possible. They communicated as little as possible. Because everything you say can be reported somewhere. Because they did not trust anyone. People were afraid. They said it was like being in prison¹⁰¹.”

Illegal arrests and disappearances of the local population are a deliberate policy of the representatives of the Russian Federation aimed at achieving several goals: control over those groups of the population that could stimulate resistance to the occupation, and pressure and intimidation of the entire local population by demonstrating what can happen to persons perceived as opponents of the Russian authorities in the territory.

2.6. Torture or ill-treatment

Unlawful detentions were systematically accompanied by torture or ill-treatment¹⁰². These practices were not new in 2022; numerous cases of torture during and after unlawful detentions and enforced disap-

96 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February 10 31 July 2023 OHCHR. 04.10.2023. 41. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf; Illegal detentions, torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population of Ukraine: similarity of practices of committing crimes in the regions occupied by Russia in 2022 / B. Petrunyok. Human Rights Center ZMINA. 2024. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/briefff_ukr_web.pdf

97 Petrunyok B. Illegal detentions, torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population of Ukraine: similarity of practices of committing crimes in the regions occupied by Russia in 2022. Human Rights Center ZMINA. 2024. C-10. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/briefff_ukr_web.pdf

98 An independent international Commission to investigate violations in Ukraine February 27 - March 31, 2023. P. 64. URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf

99 Interview with a resident of Zaporizhzhia region.

100 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February – 31 July 2023 P. 44. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

101 Interview with a resident of Kherson region.

102 Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine February 27 – March 31, 2023. 71. URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf

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pearances have been recorded in the TOT of Ukraine since 2014. In particular, activists in Crimea were kept in basements after abductions, beatings and other methods of torture were used against them - these facts were either not investigated at all by the Russian authorities, or were investigated ineffectively¹⁰³. Illegal detention and torture of local residents and detainees at the checkpoints of entry of Ukrainian citizens into the occupied territory also took place in the eastern regions¹⁰⁴. The “Isolation” facility in Donetsk¹⁰⁵ is one of the most notorious places of illegal detention, known for its terrible detention conditions and the cruelty of torture.

The general conditions of detention did not meet minimum standards - for example, people were held in rooms that were not designed for that number of people¹⁰⁶; places of detention had unsanitary conditions, no

or limited access to showers, fresh air¹⁰⁷; in all cases, inadequate nutrition was also characteristic – food was insufficient, often it was spoiled¹⁰⁸.

The practice, which was repeated in different regions, was psychological abuse of detainees – forcing them to sing the Russian anthem and songs (for example, “Katyusha”), intimidation, as well as influence through the suffering of others – torture was carried out so that other prisoners who were in the cells heard screams¹⁰⁹.

Representatives of the Russian Federation also deliberately used specific methods of torture, which were repeated in different regions and, accordingly, under different commands¹¹⁰, in particular in the Kherson region¹¹¹, Kharkiv region¹¹², Kyiv region¹¹³ – beatings, the use of electric shockers and electric shock, in particular in the area of the

103 «Peninsula of Fear»: five years of unfreedom in the Crimea / under the general editorship of O. Skrypnyk. Third edition, corrected and supplemented. Kyiv: Paper Snake-OPT, 2019. P. 40–41.

104 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine 16 August – 15 November 2016 by OHCHR. 30:57 URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/UAReport16th_UKR.pdf

105 Tortures in the prison «Isolation»: a student from Donetsk told about his experience in the prisons of the so-called «DPR». MIPL. 06.09.2024. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/sprava-izolyacziyi-prokuror-taras-semkiv-pro-nedovichnyi-vyrok-kulykovskomu-robotu-z-poterpilymy-ta-nedoskonalosti-zakoniv/>

106 Torture at school: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the village of Biliaivka, Kherson region / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko; ZMINA Human Rights Center. Kyiv 2023 p. 11. URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/kativnya-u-shkoli-fin-1.pdf>; 85% of men will go through this detention center: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the district police station during the occupation of Kupyansk / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, S. Kochmarskyi; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2024 C.1 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/kupyansk_ukr_web.pdf

107 Torture at school: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the village of Biliaivka, Kherson region / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko; ZMINA Human Rights Center. Kyiv, 2023, p.13: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/kativnya-u-shkoli-fin-1.pdf>; 85% of men will go through this detention center: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the district police station during the occupation of Kupyansk / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, S. Kochmarskyi; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2024 21. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/kupyansk_ukr_web.pdf

108 Torture at school: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the village of Biliaivka, Kherson region / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko; ZMINA Human Rights Center. Kyiv 2023 p. 12 URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/kativnya-u-shkoli-fin-1.pdf>; 85% of men will go through this detention center: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the district police station during the occupation of Kupyansk / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, S. Kochmarskyi; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2024 p. 21. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/kupyansk_ukr_web.pdf

109 85% of men will go through this detention center: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the district police station during the occupation of Kupyansk / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, S. Kochmarskyi; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2024 C-22. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/kupyansk_ukr_web.pdf; “Women’s cells” of Kherson torture chamber: analytical report based on testimonies of detainees / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, N. Okhotnikova; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2023 p. 25. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/07/women_kherson_ukr_web.pdf

110 Illegal detentions, torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population of Ukraine: similarity of practices of committing crimes in the regions occupied by Russia in 2022 / B. Petrunyok; Human Rights Center ZMINA. 2024. P. 16 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/brieff_ukr_web.pdf

111 “Women’s cells” of Kherson torture chamber: analytical report based on testimonies of detainees / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, N. Okhotnikova; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2023 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/07/women_kherson_ukr_web.pdf; Torture at school: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the village of Biliaivka, Kherson region / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko; ZMINA Human Rights Center. Kyiv 2023 URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/kativnya-u-shkoli-fin-1.pdf>

112 85% of men will go through this detention center: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the district police station during the occupation of Kupyansk / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, S. Kochmarskyi; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2024 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/kupyansk_ukr_web.pdf

113 The Anatomy of a Systematic Crime: How Russia Persecutes Civilians. MIPL. 2024. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/anatomyia-systematychnogo-zlochynu.pdf>

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genitals, and imitation of shootings. Sexual violence was used as a method of torture.

Torture in all regions was almost always accompanied by interrogations and had specific goals - to obtain information about the Ukrainian Armed Forces, persons among the local population who supported or might support the Ukrainian Armed Forces, to persuade detainees, including representatives of local authorities, to cooperate, to intimidate and prevent any further resistance, and as a method of punishment for real or imagined support for Ukraine or resistance to the occupation¹¹⁴.

Thus, torture became the next step after detention. Its main purpose was to isolate certain individuals from the community, to spread terror among the local population and to intimidate certain individuals. The purpose of torture was to force people to perform certain actions - to provide information, to stop resisting, to agree to cooperate. However, torture can be practiced by representatives of the Russian Federation as a sadistic practice without any separate purpose, which is proved by numerous interviews with the liberated Ukrainian military who were held by the Russian Federation¹¹⁵.

2.7. Killings and extrajudicial executions

Killings and extrajudicial executions were also part of the consolidation of control over the captured territories and were systematic¹¹⁶. They occurred both in places of detention, after illegal arrests and torture, and in the field, including on the street or in people's private homes¹¹⁷. One of the most striking examples is the murders and extrajudicial executions committed in Bucha by representatives of the Russian Federation, who were later awarded for "resistance and courage" by the President of the Russian Federation, who appointed this brigade to the rank of "guard"¹¹⁸. However, not only a detached brigade resorted to this crime in order to control and intimidate the local population. The facts of murders and extrajudicial executions under various circumstances were recorded in all regions of Ukraine where the Russian military was stationed – in Chernihiv, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Kherson regions¹¹⁹. Such cases were also recorded at the beginning of the armed aggression in 2014 in Crimea¹²⁰ and in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions¹²¹.

Representatives of the Russian Federation

114 Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine February 27 – March 31, 2023. 73. URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf; Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023, OHCHR. October 2023 P. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf; 85% of men will go through this detention center: analysis of testimonies of detainees in the district police station during the occupation of Kupyansk / O. Syniuk, Ye. Sokurenko, S. Kochmarskyi; Human Rights Center ZMINA. Kyiv 2024 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/kupyansk_ukr_web.pdf; Anatomy of a Systematic Crime: How Russia Persecutes Civilians. 2024. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/anatomiya-systematychnogo-zlochynu.pdf>

115 The testimonies of former prisoners of war are presented in numerous investigations by the Media Initiative for Human Rights. They were carved with "Z" on their cheeks, starved and tortured to death: how Ukrainian prisoners of war were killed in the Tula colony. MIPL. 08.02.2024. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/vyryzaly-z-na-shhokah-moryly-golodom-i-katuvaly-do-smerti-yak-polonenyh-ukrayinciv-znyshhuyut-u-tulskij-koloniy/>

116 Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine February 27 – March 31, 2023. 48 URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_UA.pdf

117 Killing of civilians: arbitrary executions and attacks on individual civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy oblasts in the context of the armed attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine, 24 February – 31 October 2022. OHCHR. December 2022 64 to 68 URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2022/2022-12-07-OHCHR-Thematic-Report-Killings-UKR.pdf>

118 Putin gave the honorary title to the military brigade that committed war crimes in Bucha. Suspilne News.18.04.2022. URL: <https://suspilne.media/230069-putin-dav-pocesne-zvanna-vijskovij-brigadi-aka-skoila-voenni-zlocini-v-buci/>

119 The Russian Army: Doomed to Cruelty. Extrajudicial executions. Freerights Association. 18.05.2024. URL: <https://umdpl.info/news/pozasadovi-straty/>

120 Report on violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law, war crimes and crimes against humanity, related to the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Ukrainian civilians by the Russian Federation. OSCE. 25.04.2024. 51 URL: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/4/567367_0.pdf

121 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine May 16 – August 15, 2017. OHCHR. 40–42 URL: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/UAREport19th_UKR.pdf

most likely committed murders and extrajudicial executions to prevent any real or imagined threat that representatives of the local population might pose to the exercise of power in the occupied territory. Extrajudicial executions also served as a warning to others in Russian-controlled territory of the consequences of possible resistance. In particular, extrajudicial executions of persons who had previously been subjected to illegal detention and torture could be a punishment for refusing to cooperate, for eliminating such persons, and for concealing the facts of the commission of other crimes by representatives of the Russian Federation.

2.8. Targeted persecution of local authorities

Another target of attacks by the Russian Federation during the seizure of territories since February 24, 2022, were persons who have formal and informal power and influence over local communities (representatives of local authorities, state administrations, activists, etc.). Unlike the previous ones, this practice was not widely used by the Russian Federation in 2014–2015. This can probably be explained by the hypothesis already stated above, namely that in 2014, due to the political crisis in Ukraine, the lack of a tough position of the central government on resistance that would influence decisions at the local level, as well as the prolonged use of “soft power” even before the aggression, the Russian Federation established its power in the captured territories without using a systematic practice of persecution of representatives of local self-government. However, in 2022, having fewer means of influence within the framework of the use of “soft power”, having encountered resistance at the local level, which was based on a clear position of the central government on the

need to counter armed aggression, the Russian Federation focused on pressure and persecution of local authorities by any means - persuasion to cooperate, coercion to such cooperation, or the complete displacement or elimination of those representatives who refused to cooperate.

These persons were already singled out as a separate group, which became the target of illegal detentions, as well as torture and extrajudicial executions. In addition, because of their special status and their influence on the mood in the communities, they were also subjected to psychological pressure to persuade them to cooperate with the Russian Federation. The representatives of the Russian Federation tried to win the support of the local authorities through encouragement or intimidation in order to conquer the local population as soon as possible. Accordingly, in case of refusal to cooperate, the authorities illegally detained them or tried to force them to cooperate¹²², using family members as hostages. The detention of government officials was also used to isolate them from the community, create a sense of insecurity among the local population and lack any control over cases in the community, except for the Russian one.

“It all started with tolerant conversations about how they have been observing for a long time. I once expressed support for the Opposition Platform for Life¹²³, so I should be tolerant to them and they can offer different positions, ranging from the head of the department to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the LPR. The foreign affairs of the DPR are a very good prospect. Then he started talking about the fact that I have a good rating and people trust me and how much they tried to destroy this trust. After all, the last elections showed that I have an undeniable rating among the population, so I can try to run for the DPR Council. I wonder if there will be

¹²² The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 83-86 URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

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a question of who I want to be. I want to be a human being. So, no, definitely not, because at that time the pro-Ukrainian population had already been arrested after the rally. And I had that; it was almost the middle of March, and I didn't sleep much during that time, maybe only one day in two weeks, because I couldn't sleep. It was very difficult emotionally. And then he started throwing other balls at me. About my life being threatened, about all sorts of things that can happen to people who work in the city council, because they supposedly know a lot there¹²⁴.”

In some cases, such persons were tortured as a means of coercing cooperation, or extrajudicial executions were carried out against them in order to eliminate such a person and transfer power in the community to another person who would be more loyal to the Rus-

sian Federation. As of December 5, 2024, at least six representatives of local self-government were illegally detained by representatives of the Russian Federation.

Violations against representatives of the authorities were motivated by the position these persons held in the community. If the representatives of the Russian Federation could not persuade such persons to cooperate, they were removed from power and often replaced, especially by representatives from the previously occupied territories, in order to create the illusion of “their” leader in the community, who was not just a representative of the Russian Federation. These actions were aimed at moving to the next stage of subjugation of the local population - the establishment of power, civil administration, which will become a means of implementing Russian policy at the local level in the TOT.

¹²³ A pro-Russian political party banned in Ukraine since September 2022.

¹²⁴ Interview with a resident of Luhansk region.

SECTION 3

**Systematic practices
of human rights violations
while maintaining control
over territories (flagrant
violations, policies)**

SECTION 3

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Systematic practices of human rights violations while maintaining control over territories (flagrant violations, policies)

The Russian Federation did not consider the occupation of the Ukrainian territories in both 2014 and 2022 as temporary. Contrary to the provisions of international humanitarian law, which are intended to ensure the temporary nature of the occupation regime, such as the prohibition of the dissemination of its own legislation¹²⁵, unnecessary interference in the administration of the territory¹²⁶, etc., the Russian Federation has made every effort not only to seize, but also to maintain these territories.

The holding of illegal, so-called referendums on the status of the occupied territories (Crimea, Sevastopol, as well as the occupied territories of parts of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions), which contradict both the fundamental principles of international law and Ukrainian legislation, is a vivid example of Russia's use of democratic institutions to legitimize its own illegal actions. In addition to the illegal inclusion of these territories in its administrative composition¹²⁷, the Russian Federation has extended to the TOT of Ukraine the effect of

its legislation, policies and management system in all spheres of life, its own systems of justice, taxation, social protection and provision of social services, regulation of private property, education, employment, currency and customs regulation, up to the change of the time zone¹²⁸.

Such actions are accompanied by systematic and massive administrative practices that lead to flagrant violations of human rights¹²⁹, some of which are a continuation of such violations against their own population in the Russian Federation, such as unlawful detention, torture, politically motivated judicial persecution, deprivation of property rights, restriction of freedom of speech, restriction of freedom of peaceful assembly, etc.

A separate area of influence is the control over the identity of the local population. Some of the violations related to freedom of expression, access to information, the ability to use one's own language and culture, especially among children and youth, are aimed at prohibiting the manifestations of

125 IV Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its Annex: Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land of 18 October 1907, Article 43. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_222#Text

126 For example, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, Article 54. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text

127 On the admission of the Donetsk People's Republic to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new entity within the Russian Federation – the Donetsk People's Republic: Federal Constitutional Law No. 5-FKZ dated October 4, 2022. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/351923141>; On the admission of the Lugansk People's Republic to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new entity within the Russian Federation – the Lugansk People's Republic: Federal Constitutional Law dated October 4, 2022 No. 6-FKZ. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/351923142>; On the admission of the Zaporozhye region to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new subject within the Russian Federation – the Zaporozhye region: Federal Constitutional Law dated October 4, 2022 No. 7-FKZ. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/351923140>; On the admission of the Kherson region to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new subject within the Russian Federation – the Kherson region: Federal Constitutional Law dated October 4, 2022 No. 8-FKZ. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/351923135>

128 On Amendments to Article 5 of the Federal Law "On the Calculation of Time": Federal Law dated April 14, 2023 No. 130-FZ: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_444714/#dst100008

129 Case of Ukraine v. Russia (Re Crimea) (Applications nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18). HUDOC database of ECHR practice. 25.06.2024. P. 947-949. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-235139>

Ukrainian identity and, in the long term, at destroying Ukrainian identity in the occupied territory.

For the same purpose, the Russian Federation is pursuing a deliberate policy of destroying the Ukrainian cultural sphere in the TOT of Ukraine, paying special attention to those sites of cultural heritage that are important for Ukrainian history, are evidence of its independence and contradict the Russian narrative of “one people” and “common history”. For example, representatives of the Russian Federation are actively removing Holodomor memorials and returning monuments to Soviet figures. In addition to transferring cultural buildings and institutions under Russian control, representatives of the Russian Federation seize cultural objects in the occupied territories and transfer them to the territory of the Russian Federation, conduct illegal “restoration” of cultural heritage sites, which, in particular, leads to their destruction¹³⁰.

The Russian Federation pays particular attention to the restriction of religious freedom, emphasizing it as an aspect of Ukrainian identity. In addition to the destruction of religious buildings, the Russian Federation pursues a policy of persecution of certain confessions and religious figures in the TOT of Ukraine - raids are carried out in religious buildings, the presence of believers at worship services is registered, buildings belonging to communities are confiscated and transferred to other Russian organizations or institutions. Some religious communities in the Russian Federation are declared “extremist”, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami. Another reason for the persecution of certain denominations, such as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, was their use of the Ukrainian lan-

guage in worship¹³¹.

The main and ultimate goal of these violations is to “integrate” the population of the TOT of Ukraine into the legal reality of the Russian Federation, to ensure full control over the civilian population of the occupied territories, to transform them into “new Russians”, to break their ties with the state of Ukraine and to physically expel from the occupied territories those who are disloyal and have not submitted to the Russian Federation.

3.1. Imposition of Russian citizenship

The Russian Federation, having set itself the goal of fully and inevitably incorporating the TOT of Ukraine into its administrative composition and making their return under the control of Ukraine impossible, is focused on transforming the entire population of these territories into citizens of the Russian Federation. Acquisition of the citizenship of the state implies a connection with it, as well as the emergence of a certain set of obligations to the state of citizenship. This creates both the conditions for additional control over the population through registration, taxation, linking services to the availability of citizenship, and the prerequisites for liability for violating the law on “loyalty” to one’s state - it makes it possible to convict for treason and other crimes, the subjects of which can only be citizens of the Russian Federation.

In fact, the Russian Federation uses three approaches to impose its citizenship on residents of the TOT of Ukraine. After the occupation of Crimea in 2014, there was a fully automatic forced acquisition of citizenship of the Russian Federation¹³² – the relevant law provided that citizens of Ukraine and stateless

130 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. P. 137–139. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

131 Brytsyn M., Vasin M. Faith Under Fire: Exploring Religious Freedom in the Conditions of War in Ukraine / Franklin, Tennessee, USA: Mission Eurasia, 2023. P. 16 URL: <https://sofiyske-bratstvo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/vira-pid-vognem.pdf>

132 “Human Rights in the Context of Automatic Naturalization in Crimea”. Open Society Legal Initiative. 2018. URL: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O9ZV5INs8PB8VFFvPlecnwL4N8SabsT3/view>

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persons who had a place of residence registration on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula as of March 18, 2014, at the time of “acceptance of Crimea into the Russian Federation” automatically received citizenship of the Russian Federation¹³³. It was almost impossible to file a petition for denial under the procedure provided by the Russian legislation due to the successive restrictions - time for filing, places where such a petition could be filed, etc¹³⁴.

Later on, a different approach was used for other occupied territories. First, after the occupation of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the Russian Federation gradually simplified the procedure for obtaining a Russian passport. However, the passport was issued outside the TOT of Ukraine, on the territory of the Russian Federation. With the full-scale invasion, occupation of new territories of Ukraine and the beginning of a new phase of occupation of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which were also illegally incorporated into the Russian Federation, the approach to passportization of the local population has changed. Russia is trying to create the illusion of voluntary acquisition of its citizenship and to strengthen the narrative of the “oath of allegiance” by obtaining a passport. Therefore, although the federal laws on the incorporation of the occupied Ukrainian territories into the Russian Federation also

provided for the acquisition of citizenship by the inhabitants of these territories, its “automaticity” was limited by the requirement of “taking the oath of a citizen of the Russian Federation”¹³⁵. Minors remained completely deprived of the right to choose – in the case of acquiring citizenship of the Russian Federation by their parents, they acquire it automatically, and for children who are in Russian childcare institutions¹³⁶ or under guardianship of Russian families, Russian citizenship can be granted by the President of the Russian Federation at the request of Russian parents or even heads of institutions¹³⁷.

At the same time, the illegal imposition of Russian legislation in the TOT of Ukraine has created conditions under which living in the occupied territories without obtaining a Russian passport, as well as leaving these territories, is significantly complicated or even impossible. Persons who have not received a passport of the Russian Federation, in fact, become “foreigners” and must legitimize their stay on their own territory, with increased attention to them by the special services of the Russian Federation and the restriction of the right of stay¹³⁸. Currently, foreign citizens staying in the territory of the Russian Federation without proper legal grounds are given time to leave or settle their legal status until April 30, 2025¹³⁹.

133 On the adoption of the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation and the formation of new subjects of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol as part of the Russian Federation: Federal Law No. 6-FKZ, Article 2 URL: <https://rg.ru/documents/2014/03/22/krym-dok.html>

134 Analytical report “Imposing Russian citizenship on Ukrainian citizens in the occupied territory of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation” / Yurii Mykytyn, Oleh Kolesnichenko, Olha Lototska-Kolesnichenko, Nadiia Vaskivska, Liubov Smachylo, Kateryna Rashevskaya, ed. Alyona Luneva, Onysia Syniuk. 2024. 7. - P. 24. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/passport_web.pdf

135 On the admission of the Donetsk People's Republic to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new entity within the Russian Federation – the Donetsk People's Republic: Federal Constitutional Law No. 5-FKZ dated October 4, 2022. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/351923141>; On the admission of the Lugansk People's Republic to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new entity within the Russian Federation – the Lugansk People's Republic: Federal Constitutional Law dated October 4, 2022 No. 6-FKZ. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/351923142>

136 Such institutions mean the institutions defined in the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 11: organizations for orphans and children deprived of parental care, in which the child is placed under supervision, educational and medical organizations, organizations providing social services.

137 On the definition of certain categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons entitled to apply for citizenship of the Russian Federation: Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated January 4, 2024 No. 11. URL: http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202401040003?index=3&fbclid=IwAR08rRV9qWHw1_pQ3TovbT4IbKnnfOXOn1ifDXvKpvPaXynL5ffUCHsNeKU

138 On the peculiarities of the legal status of certain categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Russian Federation: Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated October 27, 2023 No. 307. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202304270013?index=1>

139 On temporary measures to regulate the legal status of certain categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Russian Federation in connection with the application of the expulsion regime: Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated December 30, 2024 No. 1126. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202412300002>

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Moreover, without Russian citizenship in the TOT of Ukraine, persons are deprived of access to both obtaining and providing medical services¹⁴⁰, social protection¹⁴¹, limited in the right to education¹⁴², and labor rights¹⁴³, etc.

“Well, at first, when they hadn’t taken over everything, the whole administration in Oleshky, then it was still possible for our Ukrainians, they could work there for some time. And then, when they were already there, they started to assert their rights, they put their leaders there, and ... then it was already ... yes. Then it was hard. Then nothing was possible without a passport... you had to get a Russian passport in order to go to the hospital, in order to get something like that, only you had to get a Russian passport¹⁴⁴.”

The pressure to obtain a Russian passport is also exerted through the manipulation of property rights. For example, there are plans to confiscate apartments that are “not used” - for which utilities are not paid or which are not registered in the Russian property register, for which it is also necessary to obtain a Russian passport. At the same time, it is possible to confirm the use of the property

only by personal presence¹⁴⁵.

The refusal to obtain a Russian passport resulted in a threat to personal security – the absence of a Russian document provokes the curiosity on the part of law enforcement agencies and the armed forces of the Russian Federation¹⁴⁶, including threats to deprive parents of their parental rights if the child does not receive Russian citizenship¹⁴⁷.

Forced acquisition of Russian citizenship is a means of creating an all-Russian environment in the occupied territories. Refusal to obtain a passport entails restrictions on access to basic rights and services and the impossibility of living in the TOT of Ukraine. Thus, the Russian Federation is also changing the demographic composition of the population – forcing those who do not agree to obtain a passport and cannot survive without it to leave, and forcing those who remain to “prove their loyalty”. The Russian Federation is using the passportization as a means of controlling the population of the occupied territories by imposing on them the duties of citizens, such as military service, and by making it possible to try such persons for crimes the subject of which is exclusively a citizen of the Russian Federation.

140 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 March – 31 May 2024, OHCHR. 03.07.2024. 44. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/24-07-03%20OHCHR%2039th%20periodic%20report%20on%20Ukraine_UKR.pdf; Analytical report “Imposing Citizenship of the Russian Federation on Citizens of Ukraine in the Occupied Territory of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation” / Yurii Mykytyn, Oleh Holesnichenko, Olha Lototska-Holesnichenko, Nadiia Vaskivska, Liubov Smachylo, Kateryna Rashevskas, edited by Alyona Luneva, Onysia Syniuk. 2024. P.35. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/passport_web.pdf

141 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February – 31 July 2023, OHCHR. 04.10.2023. 102. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

142 Analytical report “Imposing Russian citizenship on Ukrainian citizens in the occupied territory of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation” / Yurii Mykytyn, Oleh Holesnichenko, Olha Lototska-Holesnichenko, Nadiia Vaskivska, Liubov Smachylo, Kateryna Rashevskas, ed. Alyona Luneva, Onysia Syniuk. 2024. p. 40. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/passport_web.pdf

143 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 116. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>; Analytical report “Imposing Russian Citizenship on Citizens of Ukraine in the Occupied Territory of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation” / Yurii Mykytyn, Oleh Holesnichenko, Olha Lototska-Holesnichenko, Nadiia Vaskivska, Liubov Smachylo, Kateryna Rashevskas; edited by Alyona Luneva, Onysia Syniuk. 2024. p. 40. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/passport_web.pdf

144 Interview with a resident of Kherson region.

145 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 March – 31 May, 2024. OHCHR. 03.07.2024. 49. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/24-07-03%20OHCHR%2039th%20periodic%20report%20on%20Ukraine_UKR.pdf; Analytical report “Imposing Citizenship of the Russian Federation on Citizens of Ukraine in the Occupied Territory of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation” / Yurii Mykytyn, Oleh Holesnichenko, Olha Lototska-Holesnichenko, Nadiia Vaskivska, Liubov Smachylo, Kateryna Rashevskas; edited by Alyona Luneva, Onysia Syniuk. 2024. p. 41. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/passport_web.pdf

146 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February – 31 July 2023, OHCHR. 04.10.2023. 101 URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

147 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 March – 31 May 2024, OHCHR. 03.07.2024. 45 URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/24-07-03%20OHCHR%2039th%20periodic%20report%20on%20Ukraine_UKR.pdf

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3.2. Forcing to serve in the armed forces of the enemy state / to participate in hostilities against one's own country

At the same time, persons who acquire a passport of the Russian Federation become liable for military service. The Russian Federation widely uses the practice of forcing the local population to serve in its armed forces, as well as to participate in hostilities against its own state. Military conscription in the Russian Federation extended to the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol from the beginning of the occupation in 2014 and during this time 20 conscription campaigns were conducted, the last of which ended on December 31, 2024. During this period, at least 50,000 Crimeans were drafted into the armed forces of the Russian Federation, most of whom are presumably citizens of Ukraine¹⁴⁸. According to the plan, the so-called “partial mobilization”, announced on September 21, 2022, had to mobilize 10,000 residents of Crimea¹⁴⁹.

Despite the illusion of “independence” of the so-called LPR / DPR, the Russian Federation actively involved the local population in participation in its own armed forces; already in 2014, the 1st Army Corps of the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and the 2nd Army Corps of the “Luhansk People’s Republic” were created, which were created, which were fully subordinated to the Russian army and numbered about 35,000 soldiers¹⁵⁰. The simplification of the procedure for obtaining Russian passports for the residents of these regions before the full-scale invasion was also used for recruitment

into the armed forces, taking into account military service.

Residents of the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions came under the “general mobilization”, which was announced by the heads of the occupying administrations in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the same day – February 19, 2022. According to the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, since the beginning of 2022, the Russian Federation has forcibly mobilized from 55,000 to 60,000 men to its army in the TOT of Ukraine¹⁵¹. According to Russian sources, 79,800 people were mobilized on the territory of the so-called LPR / DPR during the mobilization¹⁵². Mobilization also took place under conditions of restriction of freedom of movement, in particular, restriction of men’s departure¹⁵³. In order to force men to participate in the hostilities against Ukraine in these territories, they were “caught” in the street and taken to the military draft office. The detainees were not informed of their location and direction of movement, and their telephones were confiscated in order to limit their ability to contact relatives. Any deferment of military service or business reservation documents were ignored and destroyed on the spot. “Inspections” of municipal institutions and private homes, as well as educational institutions in the occupied territories, were actively carried out to identify men. For evading “mobilization”, individuals were threatened with imprisonment “for seven years”, and relatives who sheltered them were threatened with several years in prison. The legislation of the so-called LPR / DPR generally provid-

148 According to the information provided by the Mission of the President of Ukraine to the ARC at the request of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

149 Analytical report “Forced Mobilization of Citizens of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in the Occupied Territory of Ukraine: Facts and Legal Qualification”. Coalition “Ukraine. 5 am”. September 2022 URL: <https://zmina.ua/publication/prymusova-mobilizaciya-rosijskoyu-federacziyeyu-gromadyan-ukrayiny-na-okupovanij-terytoriyi-ukrayiny-fakty-ta-pravova-kvalifikaciya/>

150 Based on non-public research by the Centre for Information Resilience and Detector Media.

151 How is Russia deceiving the captured Donbas today? Donbas Realities. 30.07.2023. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCH-lp9-trgU>

152 Organizational and mobilization bodies will continue to improve their work in all areas of activity. Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. 27.03.2023. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230525144447/https://voenkom.ric.mil.ru/Stati/item/495317/>

153 Based on non-public research by the Centre for Information Resilience and Detector Media.

ed for responsibility for evading military registration and mobilization¹⁵⁴.

At the same time, the involvement of local residents in the service was accompanied by the creation of an illusion of “voluntariness” – men were forced to sign applications for voluntary enlistment in armed groups under psychological and physical influence.

The illegal inclusion of the TOT of Ukraine into the Russian Federation changed the situation regarding conscription in these territories – the new legislation provided that conscription of Russian citizens living in the occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions began in 2023¹⁵⁵. According to the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, during the autumn draft of 2024, the Russian Federation called about 300 people in the TOT of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions¹⁵⁶. As for the so-called LPR / DPR, servicemen who, at the time of the inclusion of the so-called LPR / DPR in the Russian Federation, served in the “military formations” of these entities, continued to serve in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation until the legislative settlement of the issue of concluding contracts with them or dismissal from service. It was assumed that such servicemen had the status of contract servicemen established by the legislation of the Russian Federation¹⁵⁷. Both conscription campaigns of 2024 were conducted in all the occupied territories of Ukraine.

For the purpose of coercion, the Russian Federation also widely uses administrative and criminal liability to punish the evasion

of military registration and service. For example, since 2015, the occupation “courts” in the TOT of the AR of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol have received 553 criminal cases under Article 328 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation against persons who evade conscription to military service or alternative civilian service. Of these, 244 (44%) were filed after February 24, 2022, that is, after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine¹⁵⁸.

According to non-public research conducted by the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) and Detector Media, attempts continue to be made to create the impression that a large number of volunteers are joining the armed forces of the Russian Federation, in particular, pressure is being exerted on reservists, citizens in reserve, and conscripts to sign contracts obliging them to military service in the Russian Federation. Various methods of pressure are used – from incentives, mainly high wages, to violence, harassment, threats, etc. Another method is used for persons who were mobilized as part of the mobilization campaign in the so-called LPR / DPR – threats of criminal liability and search for unauthorized abandonment of the military unit, for refusal to sign a contract¹⁵⁹.

The Russian Federation also pursues an aggressive information policy to promote the importance and prestige of military service. Propaganda is an integral part both in the media sphere and in the social and educational spheres – more and more “military holidays” and reasons for mentioning “participants of the special operation” are added,

154 Analytical report “Forced Mobilization of Citizens of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in the Occupied Territory of Ukraine: Facts and Legal Qualification” /Onysia Syniuk, Andrii Yakovlev, Mykyta Petrovets, Daria Svyrydova. Coalition “Ukraine. 5 am”. September 2022 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/01/mobilization_ukr.pdf

155 On the admission of the Kherson region to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new subject within the Russian Federation – the Kherson region: Federal Constitutional Law dated October 4, 2022 No. 8-FKZ. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_428186/

156 Forced conscription – Russia activates mobilization in the TOT of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions Official Telegram channel of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. 09.01.2025. URL: <https://t.me/DIUkraine/5184>

157 On the admission of the Donetsk People's Republic to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new entity within the Russian Federation – the Donetsk People's Republic: Federal Constitutional Law No. 5-FKZ dated October 4, 2022. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_428188/

158 According to the information provided by the Mission of the President of Ukraine to the ARC at the request of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

159 Based on non-public research by ZMINA.

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which are also actively involved in communications with children and youth.

The involvement of the local population of the occupied territories in the service of the Russian armed forces and participation in hostilities against their own state is both an end in itself – to increase the mobilization reserve and the number of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, and to have an additional means of control and intimidation. Through the means of propaganda of the service in the armed forces of the Russian Federation, a distorted view of the causes and course of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine is also formed among the local population.

3.3. Use of the Russian judicial and law enforcement system to persecute the local population

The Russian judicial system appeared in the TOT of Crimea as early as in 2014, and in 2022 it was extended to all other territories of Ukraine occupied before and after February 24, 2022¹⁶⁰. At the very least, the judicial system created by Russia in the occupied Crimea has already been recognized by the ECHR as not being “established by law” within the meaning of Article 6 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms¹⁶¹.

The expansion of the Russian judicial and law enforcement systems in the TOT of

Ukraine affected all stages – from the application of Russian legislation in the occupied territory, even retroactively¹⁶², to the replacement of local judges with Russian ones, the incorporation of penitentiary institutions into the federal system, and the full transfer of the Russian judicial system to the TOT of Ukraine¹⁶³. An additional deprivation of remedies was also the seizure of the institute of attorneys in the TOT – to carry out lawyer activity in Crimea since 2014, and after the illegal incorporation of all other territories into the Russian Federation, and in all TOT of Ukraine, it is necessary to have Russian citizenship and pass a qualification exam on knowledge of Russian legislation¹⁶⁴. In addition, independent Ukrainian lawyers in the TOT of Ukraine, who protect Ukrainian citizens from politically motivated persecution by the Russian Federation, are themselves subject to pressure and persecution by the occupying authorities – threats, launching of discrediting campaigns against them in the occupier-controlled media, obstruction of lawyers’ activities, searches of their offices and homes under various pretexts, proceedings against them leading to imprisonment and fines¹⁶⁵.

The Crimean experience has demonstrated that the judicial system imposed by the Russian Federation did not provide effective protection and adequate standards of fair justice and was an instrument of political persecution¹⁶⁶.

For example, the practice of “deportation” of the local population to the territory of the

160 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August to 30 November 2023, OHCHR. 12.12.2023. 41. URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2023/23-12-12-OHCHR-37th-periodic-report-ukraine-UKR.pdf>

161 Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea) [GC] – 20958/14 and 38334/18, Judgment 25.6.2024 [GC], June 2024. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-207622>

162 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. Acc. to cl. 12 URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

163 “Crimea without rules. Thematic review of the human rights situation under occupation.” Issue 5. Occupied justice. Part 1 / under the general editorship: S. Zayets, R. Martynovsky, D. Sviridova. Kyiv. URL: https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/TO5_fin_.pdf

164 Lawyers in the occupation: situation with the observance of the rights of lawyers in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine. UHHRU, RCHR. 2018. C.18. URL: https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/1_Advocates_occupation_2018.pdf

165 Persecution and humiliation: the realities of lawyers in the occupied Crimea / a group of experts in the field of international law with the support of the CEELI Institute and the Coalition “Ukraine. 5 a.m.” 2023 P. 5. URL: <https://ulag.org.ua/uk/reports-and-materials-analytical-report-attorneys-under-occupation-in-crimea/>

166 Crimean process: observance of fair trial standards in politically motivated cases / ed. by Daria Svrydova. Kyiv P. 9. URL: https://zmina.info/upload/CrimeanProcessENG_Web.pdf

Russian Federation, to third countries or to the territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine on the basis of decisions of Russian courts within the framework of administrative jurisdiction, in particular for “violation of migration legislation”, has become widespread. As a result of such expulsions, persons were unable to obtain temporary residence permits in the Russian Federation and permanent residence permits in the Russian Federation for a period of 5 to 10 years, and were banned from entering the Russian Federation and, consequently, the territory of the occupied Crimea, which the Russian Federation illegally considers to be Russian territory¹⁶⁷.

In Crimea, the practice of trying individuals for “domestic extremism” has also become widespread¹⁶⁸. For the period from the beginning of the occupation until 2024, 892 cases in this category were considered in court, of which a total of 794 were adopted a resolution on bringing to administrative responsibility. At least 107 cases of “domestic extremism” and responsibility for it concerned citizens of Ukraine who either kept Ukrainian books that covered Russia’s activities in a negative context, or showed their position in support of Ukraine, demonstrating the symbols of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the Right Sector organization, or the Azov Regiment¹⁶⁹.

In addition, after the full-scale invasion of

Ukraine, the Russian Federation amended the criminal and administrative legislation, providing for liability for public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the armed forces of the Russian Federation¹⁷⁰, as well as for the public dissemination of obviously false information about the use of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, the exercise by the state bodies of the Russian Federation of their powers and public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the armed forces of the Russian Federation in order to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, maintain international peace and security¹⁷¹. In 2022 alone, the issue of alleged discrediting the armed forces of the Russian Federation was considered in the “courts” of the Crimea 234 times and in 194 cases the “courts” adopted resolutions on the imposition of an administrative penalty¹⁷². According to the information of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as of February 24, 2025, 1,242 cases qualified under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation were received by the courts in the TOT of the Crimean Peninsula and other competent authorities (one case of consideration by the commission on juvenile cases is known)¹⁷³. Of these, in 1,101 cases a decision was made to impose an administrative penalty in the form of a fine or to attach it to another case under another article

167 “Crimea without rules. Thematic review of the human rights situation under occupation.” – Special issue – Expulsion of the civilian population from the occupied Crimea by the Russian Federation/ under the general editorship of: S. Zayets, R. Martynovsky, D. Sviridov. Kyiv. URL: <https://krymbezpravil.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/HBP-Vyidvorennye.pdf>

168 This study refers to Article 20.3 “Propaganda or public demonstration of Nazi attributes or symbols, or attributes or symbols of extremist organizations, or other attributes or symbols, the propaganda or public demonstration of which is prohibited by federal laws” and Article 20.29 “Production and distribution of extremist materials” of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (Russian. “Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses”).

169 According to the information provided by the Mission of the President of Ukraine to the ARC at the request of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

170 On Amendments to the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses: Federal Law No. 31-FZ dated March 4, 2022. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202203040006?index=9>

171 On Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and Articles 150 and 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation: Federal Law of March 25, 2022 No. 63-FZ. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202203250068>

172 What was the life in Crimea in 2022. Krym SOS. p. 11. URL: <https://krymsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/crimeasos-annual-situation-report-2022-ua.pdf>

173 Article 20.3.3 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses. Public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in order to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, maintain international peace and security or the performance by the state bodies of the Russian Federation of their powers for this purpose, providing assistance by volunteer formations, organizations or persons in the performance of tasks assigned to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation or the troops of the National Guard of the Russian Federation.

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and a cumulative decision was made. In 40 cases the examination of the material was continued. 520 (47%) decisions were taken against women and 580 (53%) against men. The total amount of fines imposed is at least 35.5 million rubles.

Among these cases, part concerns the publication or demonstration of calls “No to war!” and “Stop War” and other statements against the war, “Glory to Ukraine”, “Glory to the Armed Forces of Ukraine”, and even cases related to public listening to Ukrainian military songs¹⁷⁴.

The ECHR found that the policy of the Russian Federation involved systematic and widespread unreasonable restrictions on the expression of views related to the war in Ukraine. The measures were applied to a range of expressions much broader than those that could actually threaten national or public security¹⁷⁵. Moreover, the nature and severity of the penalties imposed are designed not only to punish individuals, but also to intimidate society as a whole, thereby stifling public discussion of issues of vital public interest. Such an approach inevitably creates an atmosphere of self-censorship that prevents others from exercising their right to freedom of expression, which is necessary for the functioning of a democratic society.

The law enforcement and judicial systems are also actively used to suppress the freedom of peaceful assembly. For this purpose, a number of formal grounds are used, based on which meetings are prohibited at the stage of obtaining prior permission – from the fact of requesting a meeting at the same

time and in the same place by other organizers to the “prohibition of propaganda of non-traditional values”. The next stage is intimidation, the consequences of which are administrative responsibility for holding meetings and forcible termination of meetings by law enforcement agencies and bringing participants to administrative responsibility. As of April 2019, 373 resolutions on 358 people adopted by the occupation courts on the imposition of punishment for organizing and participating in peaceful assemblies have been recorded¹⁷⁶.

With the establishment of political control over the occupied territories, the Russian Federation is also trying to legitimize the previous violence through the conduct of persecuted persons through the procedures of the Russian law enforcement and judicial systems, using “anti-extremist”, “anti-terrorist” and other repressive legislation. Some persons who were illegally detained as part of the first stage of the seizure and maintenance of territories held in violation of legal procedures have been formally prosecuted as a result¹⁷⁷. In addition, the Russian Federation uses retroactive prosecution. Thus, in January 2015, the charge of “organizing mass riots” was brought against participants in a peaceful protest that took place on February 26, 2014 in Simferopol near the building of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, even before the beginning of the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, which, among other things, had the actual purpose of punishing Ukrainian citizens for resisting the occupation¹⁷⁸.

174 According to the information provided by the Mission of the President of Ukraine to the ARC at the request of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

175 Judgement in the Case of Novaya Gazeta and Others v. Russia, 11.02.2025. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-241738>
Pursuant to Article 44 (2) of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, a decision will become final if the parties declare that they will not file a motion for referral to the Grand Chamber; or three months from the date of the judgment, if no motion for referral to the Grand Chamber has been filed; or if a panel of the Grand Chamber rejects a motion for referral to the Grand Chamber under Article 43.

176 “Peninsula of Fear”: five years of unfreedom in the Crimea / under the general editorship of O. Skrypnyk. Third edition, corrected and supplemented. Kyiv: Paper Snake-OPT, 2019. P. 98–99. URL: https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Peninsula-Fear_2019-RU.pdf

177 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February – 31 July 2023, OHCHR. 04.10.2023. 121. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

178 “Peninsula of Fear”: five years of unfreedom in the Crimea / under the general editorship of O. Skrypnyk. Third edition, corrected and supplemented. Kyiv: Paper Snake-OPT, 2019. 102. URL: https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Peninsula-Fear_2019-RU.pdf

“Look, what I did in August was to tear the flag from the village council building. This fact was recorded by a surveillance camera, and I was arrested accordingly. They kept me in the cell for two weeks, well, as a prison, as a pre-trial detention, and in solitary confinement. At that time, they did not have a judicial system or a police system. They were still building them. And it was not until September 2023 that they finally had them. That’s when they got judges and prosecutors and all that. I do not remember the exact date of the trial. It might have been November 17-18, 2023. In the middle of September, the criminal case was opened against me. They were renewed again¹⁷⁹.”

In 2022, courts in occupied Crimea and Russia convicted at least 54 victims of politically motivated prosecutions on the peninsula on charges of participation in “banned organizations” such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hizb ut-Tahrir, manufacture and transfer of explosives, treason, etc¹⁸⁰.

At the same time, in addition to the illegality of the accusations themselves, the system works contrary to the legal process. In at least 154 cases, the courts found Ukrainian citizens guilty on the basis of the results of proceedings in violation of the right to a fair trial, in particular, ignoring reliable allegations of human rights violations in places of detention, in particular, torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and detention¹⁸¹. There is a systematic violation of the right to a fair trial in cases against citizens of Ukraine, which cannot be the result of the excesses of a single perpetrator¹⁸².

The expansion of Russian legislation and systems did not reduce the level of violence

used, namely the practice of detaining people in inappropriate conditions and the use of torture in places of detention. 90% of the detained civilians were subjected to torture or ill-treatment¹⁸³, in particular by representatives of law enforcement agencies and the penitentiary system of the Russian Federation. This is a common symptom of the Russian law enforcement and penitentiary system; the situation of maltreatment and torture in Russian places of detention, where Ukrainian citizens are illegally transferred from the occupied territories, is sometimes even worse¹⁸⁴.

Repressive practices carried out through the application of the administrative and criminal legislation of the Russian Federation make it possible to create the illusion of a certain legal process, staging the provision of the right to a fair trial. At the same time, they have the same goal as open violence in the first stages of the occupation – to subjugate the local population, intimidate and prevent any resistance by threatening with responsibility, restrict personal freedom and cause suffering.

3.4. Expansion of the Russian education system

As with other spheres of life in the occupied territories, the Russian Federation has fully transitioned education to its standards and incorporated it into the national system. In Crimea, the Russian system of preschool, secondary, vocational and higher education was already introduced in May 2014, and from September 1, 2014, the transition took place

179 Interview with a resident of Donetsk region.

180 What was the life in Crimea 2022. Krym SOS. P. 6-9. URL: <https://krymsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/crimeasos-annual-situation-report-2022-ua.pdf>

181 Ten Years of Occupation by the Russian Federation: Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine. OHCHR. 28.02.2024. cl. 13 of QCM URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/2024-02-28%20OHCHR%20Ten%20Years%20of%20Occupation%20in%20Crimea%20UKR_0.pdf

182 Denying a fair trial as an atrocity crime during Russia’s war against Ukraine: context, practice, law and perspectives. ZMINA, MIHR. December 2024:

183 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 40. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

184 According to information provided by Krym SOS.

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in practice. By retraining all the teachers of Crimean schools (about 20,000 teachers) and providing each student of Crimea and Sevastopol with a set of Russian textbooks, education according to Russian curricula began¹⁸⁵.

It was assumed that from the beginning of the academic year 2022/2023 all schools in the TOT of Ukraine would have to work according to the Russian educational standards¹⁸⁶.

The introduction of Russian standards in practice means the destruction of the Ukrainian language and culture; the replacement of Ukrainian textbooks with Russian ones; the prohibition of teaching subjects of the Ukrainian cycle, in particular the history of Ukraine; the distortion of the history of Ukraine and the history of the Crimean Tatars; the partial replacement of teachers who worked in the Crimea by Russian teachers and the active ideological “re-education” of teachers¹⁸⁷.

“The educational sphere is no different from how they have been conducting their education in the territory since 2014, and in other regions of Ukraine. Confiscation of Ukrainian literature and everything connected with it. Every day at 9 o'clock it is the anthem of Russia. If the child refuses to sing the national anthem of Russia, educational conversations with parents follow. I have a girl who used

to perform and now, if I'm not mistaken, she wins prizes in taekwondo. One day she came to the lineup wearing an embroidered Ukrainian shirt. And when they played the Russian anthem, she took off her jacket and stood silently with the embroidered shirt on, showing her pro-Ukrainian attitude. She was immediately taken out of the lineup and her parents were summoned. They were told that if such a shameful case happened again, the question of depriving the parents of their parental rights would be raised. Control of devices at school, confiscation of everything related to Ukraine, imposition of their textbooks, implementation of their educational system. Prohibition of communication in the Ukrainian language in certain schools¹⁸⁸.”

At the same time, from the very beginning of the occupation, the Russian Federation did not limit itself to controlling only formal education in the TOT of Ukraine, but paid great attention to non-formal education, especially patriotic education¹⁸⁹. To this end, “cadet” classes were opened in schools, “talks on the important things” justifying the armed aggression against Ukraine are held regularly, meetings and events in honor of the participants of the so-called “special military operation” are organized¹⁹¹.

185 Analytical report “The Crimean Scenario”: How the Russian Federation Destroys the Ukrainian Identity of Children in the Occupied Territories” / A. Vorobyova, M. Sulialina. Kyiv, 2023. P. 5. URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Analitichnyy-zvit-%E2%80%9E9EKryms%CA%B9kyy-stsenariy-yak-Rosiys%CA%B9ka-Federatsiya-znyshchuye-ukrayins%CA%B9ku-identichnist%CA%B9-ditey-na-okupovanykh-terytoriyakh_ukr_Almenda_2022.pdf

186 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 130 URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

187 Analytical report “The Crimean Scenario”: How the Russian Federation Destroys the Ukrainian Identity of Children in the Occupied Territories” / A. Vorobyova, M. Sulialina. Kyiv, 2023. C-13. URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Analitichnyy-zvit-%E2%80%9E9EKryms%CA%B9kyy-stsenariy-yak-Rosiys%CA%B9ka-Federatsiya-znyshchuye-ukrayins%CA%B9ku-identichnist%CA%B9-ditey-na-okupovanykh-terytoriyakh_ukr_Almenda_2022.pdf

188 Interview with a resident of Luhansk region.

189 Analytical report “The Crimean Scenario”: How the Russian Federation Destroys the Ukrainian Identity of Children in the Occupied Territories” / A. Vorobyova, M. Sulialina. Kyiv, 2023. P. 5. URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Analitichnyy-zvit-%E2%80%9E9EKryms%CA%B9kyy-stsenariy-yak-Rosiys%CA%B9ka-Federatsiya-znyshchuye-ukrayins%CA%B9ku-identichnist%CA%B9-ditey-na-okupovanykh-terytoriyakh_ukr_Almenda_2022.pdf

190 “Universal Soldier”, or Education as a weapon of Russia in the occupied south of Ukraine. Monitoring report / A. Vorobyova, M. Sulialina, O. Ohredko. Kyiv: CCE “Almenda” 2023. C-29. URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Universal_Soldier_report_for-July-September-2023_CGP-Almenda.pdf; “Universal Soldier”, or Education as a weapon of Russia in the occupied south of Ukraine. Monitoring report / T. Lychko, O. Okhredko, O. Shapoval. Kyiv: CCE “Almenda”, 2024. C-28. URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/universalnyy_soldat_lypen_veresen_2024_almenda.pdf

191 Monitoring report “Universal Soldier” or Education as a tool of Russia in the occupied south of Ukraine” / A. Vorobyova, M. Sulialina, O. Okhredko. Kyiv: CCE “Almenda” 2023. 24:35 URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Universal_Soldier_Report-April-June-2023_CGP-Almenda_.pdf

WHAT MEANS THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION USES TO OCCUPY AND SUBJUGATE THE POPULATION OF THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE

In the occupied territories, the Russian Federation has also deployed a system of militarized youth movements aimed at training children as future soldiers - the “Movement of the First” (by the end of 2023, the branches of this organization operate in all regions of Russia and in the TOT of Ukraine)¹⁹², “Youth Army”, “Young South”. In 2023, the Russian Federation allocated 67 billion rubles for patriotic education, which is four times more than the amount allocated in 2022. Part of these funds was allocated to children’s and youth movements, in particular to the most massive of the movements called the “Movement of the First”, created at the end of 2022¹⁹³.

In the TOT of Ukraine, there are also regional departments of the Voluntary Community of Assistance to the Army, Aviation and Navy of Russia. The purpose of this organization is to strengthen the defense capability of the Russian Federation, national security and solve social problems related to the military-patriotic education of citizens. To achieve this purpose, the organization is engaged in patriotic education of citizens, training of military specialties, military training, etc¹⁹⁴. Currently, membership in such organizations is provided from the age of 18. However, the military-patriotic education of young people in the Russian Federation, and, accordingly, in the TOT of Ukraine, is increasingly intensified. According to the latest Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, the management bodies of the Voluntary Community of Assistance¹⁹⁵ to the Army, Aviation and Navy of Russia should include representatives of the authorities of the Russian Federation, representatives of the Presidential Adminis-

tration of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Defense, and other federal executive bodies providing military service. In addition, it is assumed that the coordination of activities on behalf of the state will be carried out by the Ministry of Defense itself. Among the recommendations of the decree is to provide for the possibility of membership in the organization from the age of 14.

In addition to the introduction of the Russian program, the destruction of subjects of the Ukrainian cycle, the militarization of education, the Russian Federation also restricts access to Ukrainian education in every possible way, in particular because of threats to teachers who teach remotely according to the Ukrainian curriculum, and parents who bring children to such training. In some cases, teachers who teach under the Ukrainian program are illegally detained and threatened with further detention and torture if they continue to work¹⁹⁶.

Education is one of the main tools that the Russian Federation uses to achieve the goals of maintaining control over the occupied territory. Narratives that Ukraine has never been and is not an independent state, but is part of the Russian Federation, that those territories that the Russian Federation occupied and illegally included in its administrative composition are “historically” Russian and narratives about the fairness of and need for Russian aggression against Ukraine permeate both formal and informal education. All this is aimed at educating a new generation of the population of the occupied territories, destroying their Ukrainian identity and replacing it with loyalty to the Russian Federation and self-identification as a Russian citizen.

192 Youth movements as an instrument of indoctrination and militarization in the tot of Ukraine. Report / A. Vorobyova, V. Potapova. Kyiv: CCE “Almenda”, 2023. p. 11. URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/YouthmovementsasainstrumentofindoctrinationandmilitarizationinUkraine_Almenda-1.pdf

193 |||UNTRANSLATED_CONTENT_START||| Там само, с. 5. |||UNTRANSLATED_CONTENT_END|||

194 Goals, objectives, areas of activity. Website of DOSAAF of Russia of the Republic of Crimea. URL: <https://dosaaf82.ru/ce-li-zad-achi-napravleniya-devyatelnosti/>

195 Questions of the All-Russian Public and State Organization “Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Aviation and Navy of Russia”: Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated February 3, 2025 URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/7mvJhZqw5wgJ0P9RjZjSRU05RaLBF1dX.pdf>

196 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 133. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

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3.5. Capturing the information space

Since the beginning of the occupation of the Ukrainian territories, even before the illegal referendums were held, Russia has been restricting access to alternative information and filling the information space only with Russian sources. The occupation authorities allowed the media of national minorities in Crimea to continue their work after the occupation of the territory only if they were not political in content or if they supported the official position of the Russian Federation on the status of Crimea; the websites of human rights organizations were blocked¹⁹⁷.

Journalists have been targeted: 85 attacks were recorded in March 2014 alone¹⁹⁸. Numerous Crimean journalists, activists and bloggers, estimated at more than 200¹⁹⁹, were forced to leave Crimea, some stopped their activities due to censorship and fear, and those who remained in the occupied Crimea and covered the events became victims of persecution. A significant number of journalists were banned from entering the occupied Crimea. Human rights activists documented more than 500 violations of journalists' rights during the nearly decade-long occupation, with the peak of these violations in 2014-2015²⁰⁰. Before the occupation, about 3,000 media outlets were registered in Crimea, but in 2015, even the

occupier's authority, Roskomnadzor, registered only 232 publications²⁰¹.

Journalists in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were also persecuted, illegally detained, and threatened with death for their activities²⁰². In general, media representatives were left with limited options – either to leave and/or stop activities or to change editorial policy and write materials in line with Russian narratives.

Already in 2022-2023, the Human Rights Center ZMINA recorded 162 cases of pressure on journalists in the temporarily occupied Crimea, including criminal prosecution, abduction of journalists, administrative protocols, searches of their homes, and threats on the Internet²⁰³. After the full-scale invasion, the methods of repression against journalists developed in Crimea, as they were brought under administrative and criminal responsibility, the Russian Federation began to apply in other occupied territories of Ukraine²⁰⁴.

Russia also established control over the way of access to information itself – the work of Ukrainian providers of Internet services, mobile television and radio networks was stopped in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion. Instead, Russian networks appeared in the occupied territories with blocked access to social media, in particular to Facebook and Twitter, Ukrainian news sites and the Google search engine. Television

197 Ten Years of Occupation by the Russian Federation: Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine. OHCHR. 28.02.2024. cl. 17 of QCM URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/2024-02-28%20OHCHR%20Ten%20Years%20of%20Occupation%20in%20Crimea%20UKR_0.pdf

198 "CRIMEA WITHOUT RULES. Thematic review of the human rights situation under occupation." Issue 4. Information occupation / under the general editorship of: S. Zaets, R. Martynovskyi, D. Sviridova. Kyiv. URL: https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/4Hr_Ru_fin_18.12.2017.pdf

199 Based on non-public research by the Centre for Information Resilience and Detector Media.

200 Ibid.

201 Today Ukraine celebrates Journalist's Day! Official website of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. 06.06.2023. URL: <https://ppu.gov.ua/press-center/sohodni-v-ukraini-vidznachaut-den-zhurnalista/>

202 In the East of Ukraine journalists live dangerously. DW. 18.06.2014. URL: <https://www.dw.com/uk/in-the-east-Ukraine-journalists-live-dangerously/a-17717081>

203 Over the past two years, ZMINA has recorded 162 cases of harassment and pressure on Crimean journalists. ZMINA. 03.05.2024. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/za-ostanni-dva-roky-zmina-zafiksuvala-162-fakty-peresliduvan-ta-tysku-na-krymskyh-zhurnalistiv/>

204 Freedom of speech is tortured. Stories of journalists persecuted or killed by Russia. Truth Hounds. 15.08.2023. URL: <https://truth-hounds.org/cases/zakatovana-svoboda-slova-istoriyi-zhurnalistiv-yakih-peresliduvala-chy-vbyla-rosiya/>

205 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023, OHCHR. October 2023 51 URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf; Media landscape in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Media Detectors, Centre for Information Resilience. 05.06.2024. p.20 URL: <https://detector.media/doc/images/news/archive/2021/227543/ua-media-mapping-2-1.pdf>

channels were treated similarly – the broadcasting of Ukrainian channels was stopped and Russian channels started broadcasting instead, and local pro-Russian TV channels were created²⁰⁶.

“They immediately started Russian TV, 24 channels, 8 of them 24 hours a day. That was it, that is, your possibilities, the Internet was cut off, you can’t watch YouTube or Telegram, read what’s happening in the world, what’s happening in Ukraine; and here you have 24/7, 8 channels constantly broadcasting, constantly running. Damn, I was shocked, I could not stand it. Well, you watch it for a minute and a half and you listen to this bullshit. They brought in some kind of old people, researchers of Ukraine; they talked about the global evil, about how Lenin created Ukraine. And this whole idea is put into people’s heads, which is informational brainwashing²⁰⁷.”

In addition to administrative and criminal liability for “discrediting the armed forces of the Russian Federation”, freedom of speech and expression is restricted by methods long established in the Russian Federation, in particular by restricting and suppressing peaceful protests and assemblies. Following the illegal incorporation of the occupied Ukrainian territories into its administrative composition, the Russian Federation has also imposed martial law in these territories, which provides, in particular, for restrictions on the freedom of assembly and the activities of civic associations²⁰⁸.

The seizure of information space and media resources, the replacement of Ukrainian media with Russian propaganda, the prohibition and persecution of dissent and public disagreement with the actions of the

Russian Federation, the displacement of independent journalists through their persecution, deportation, arrest and murder are aimed at creating a single narrative of events, a single view of Russian aggression against Ukraine, the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations and the inability to access alternative sources of information. Control of the information field allows the Russian Federation to manipulate public opinion, create an image of danger, “threats of Nazism”, the position of defense of the Russian Federation against the “collective West” and Ukraine, and strengthen the rejection and fear of Ukrainians in the territory controlled by Ukraine.

3.6. Expropriation of property

Property confiscation is another method actively used by the Russian Federation to control the TOT of Ukraine and the local population since 2014. In addition to confiscating and nationalizing the property of the Ukrainian state, the occupation authorities have also targeted the property of large private enterprises – nationalizing them by decisions of local authorities without providing any guarantees or compensation to the owners. Often, members of militarized groups such as the “Self-Defense of Crimea” were involved in the physical confiscation of property²⁰⁹. In general, during the occupation of Crimea, the occupation administration of the Russian Federation carried out large-scale measures of “nationalization” (de facto illegal expropriation) of both public and private property. For example, from the beginning of the full-scale invasion, according to various sources, from 300 to more than 500 state-owned enterprises and trade

206 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023, OHCHR. October 2023 52. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

207 Interview with a resident of Zaporizhzhia region.

208 Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023, OHCHR. October 2023 49. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/23-10-04%20OHCHR%2036th%20periodic%20report%20UKR_0.pdf

209 “Crimea without rules. Thematic review of the human rights situation under occupation.” Issue 6. Occupied property / under general editorship: R. Martynovskiy. Kyiv. C-43. URL: <https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Vlasnist-na-sayt.pdf>

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unions, about 300 private enterprises on the peninsula were “nationalized”²¹⁰.

Another way of depriving companies of their property was “forced redemption”. Various reasons were given for this, such as the need to prevent threats to the life and health of the population, evacuation, use of the facility as a place of special cultural value, etc²¹¹.

Separately, the occupation authorities also focused on confiscating land from local residents. Land plots were nationalized in court, justifying the decision by the illegality of land privatization, in fact, retroactively assessing the decisions of the Ukrainian authorities under Ukrainian law. From 2014 to 2019, the most active period of application of this procedure, the Russian authorities seized land plots of at least 3,728 people²¹². In addition, in 2020 the Russian Federation recognized 80% of the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and 99.95% of the territory of the city of Sevastopol as border areas and extended to them the regulation prohibiting the presence of border zone lands in the ownership of foreign citizens, stateless persons and foreign legal entities. Accordingly, citizens of Ukraine who owned land in this territory and did not take Russian citizenship under the occupation were obliged to “voluntarily alienate” it.

In addition to confiscation, the occupation authorities also destroyed private property in the TOT of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, again justifying the decision to demolish the “illegality” of Ukrainian decisions on building permits, which were made even be-

fore the occupation of this territory of the Russian Federation.

The property of enterprises that were re-registered in the territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine and continued to work in the TOT of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, were “nationalized” in 2017 by the leaders of the so-called LPR / DPR. The premises of the enterprises that fell under the “nationalization” were seized by armed persons²¹³.

The practice of appropriating “ownerless” property in the TOT of the Donetsk region was implemented from 2021 – the relevant Decree²¹⁴ was issued by the head of the so-called DPR; it provided that if the property had no owner, or the owner was unknown or had abandoned the property, then such property could be recognized as “ownerless”. Within ten days of the discovery of the property, a notice to the owner was published on the official website, summoning the owner to confirm ownership. If the owner did not appear within 30 days, the process of recognizing the property as “ownerless” was initiated.

A similar practice was introduced in the TOT of the Zaporizhzhia region in 2022. At first, the owners were given only three days to submit the documents to cancel the registration of the property as “ownerless”, and it was necessary to do it in person²¹⁵. Later, the head of Rosregistr (Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography) also declared that the real estate accounting system in the Zaporizhzhya region would be created from scratch, making it

210 Information and analytical note. Economic losses of Ukraine as a result of the temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation /Official website of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea 10.11.2020. URL: <https://ppu.gov.ua/documents/informatsiyno-analitychna-dovidka-ekonomichni-zbytky-ukrainy-vnaslidok-tymchasovoi-okupatsii-avtonomnoirespubliki-krym-ta-m-sevastopolia-rosijskoiu-federatsiiei/>

211 “Crimea without rules. Thematic review of the human rights situation under occupation.” Issue 6. Occupied property / under general editorship: R. Martynovskiy. Kyiv. P. 45 URL: https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Vlasnist_na_sayt.pdf

212 Ibid. p. 43.

213 Donetsk-style nationalization. DW. 01.03.2017. URL: <https://www.dw.com/uk/nationalization-in-dnr-and-lnr-implementation-implementation-external-governance/a-37770801>

214 On the identification, accounting and acceptance into municipal ownership of ownerless real estate and escheat property: Decree of the Head of the Donetsk People’s Republic of April 28, 2021 No. 116. URL: <http://npa.dnronline.su/2021-04-28/ukaz-glavy-donetskoj-narodnoj-respubliki-116-ot-28-04-2021-goda-o-vyyavlenii-uchete-i-prinyatii-v-munitsipalnuyu-sobstvennost-beshozvanyh-nedvizhimyh-veshhej-i-vymorochnogo-imushhestva.html>

215 Identified objects of ownerless property. Official website of the Government of Zaporizhzhya Oblast. 19.08.2022. URL: <https://zo.gov.ru/news/show/vyyavlennye-obekty-besxozhajnogo-imushhestva>

impossible to confirm ownership without a Russian passport²¹⁶.

Already at the end of March 2024, the procedure of seizure of “ownerless” property was provided for in the TOT of the Donetsk region²¹⁷, Luhansk region²¹⁸, Zaporizhzhia region²¹⁹, and Kherson region²²⁰. The newly adopted rules stipulate that owners of residential buildings located on the territory of the Russian Federation must register the ownership of residential real estate in the Unified State Register of Real Estate of the Russian Federation. If the appropriate entry is not made in the register, or if the property shows signs of “ownerlessness” (non-use, non-payment of utility bills during the year), it will be seized (appropriated).

The property policy of the Russian Federation is an additional means of making it impossible to stay in the TOT of Ukraine without Russian documents, to receive income without working in a Russian enterprise, and to retain ownership of property without re-registering it under the Russian procedure. All these measures are aimed at entrenching the Russian presence in the TOT. In order to protect their property rights and preserve their means of survival, local residents are forced to associate themselves

with the Russian Federation in one way or another, or to leave their homes with the understanding that the occupation authorities will take them away.

3.7. Destruction of businesses

One of the tools of Russia’s long-term influence in the TOT of Ukraine is the destruction of Ukrainian business and economic ties with Ukraine.

In all the TOT of Ukraine, after the seizure of the territories, the actions of the Russian Federation to conquer them led directly or indirectly to the displacement of local businesses, replacing them with Russian ones, as well as to systematic practices of nationalization or expropriation of property of the Ukrainian state or business entities²²¹.

For example, according to the data of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as of January 1, 2014, 1,059 legal entities (state enterprises, institutions, organizations), 33 business entities that have a state share in the authorized capital were located (registered) on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol²²².

216 Analytical report “Imposing citizenship of the Russian Federation on citizens of Ukraine in the occupied territory of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation” / Yuriy Mykytyn, Oleh Kolesnichenko, Olha Lototska-Kolesnichenko, Nadiia Vaskivska, Liubov Smachylo, Kateryna Rashevskya; edited by Alyona Luneva, Onysia Syniuk. 2024. p. 41. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/passport_web.pdf

217 On the peculiarities of identifying, using and recognizing the right of municipal ownership of municipalities of the Donetsk People’s Republic to residential premises with signs of ownerless property located on the territory of the Donetsk People’s Republic: Law of March 21, 2024 URL: https://glavadr.ru/doc/zakony/66rz.pdf?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR2LOWN2TXpn1kNnNxrLWNe2kj2CkCK_Oa7D2DOvtzrH3ZyrfHxijDjxgV_aem_AZBWMlviEvgEO_dL07ABsU63pz-EZk1dTo3cVKd0TO85R_5b1VFmDIOWQznUB-FYXvxdFZZSMLetfn3D5x4kiGD8P

218 On the peculiarities of identifying, using and recognizing the right of municipal ownership of municipalities of the Lugansk People’s Republic to residential premises with signs of ownerless property located on the territory of the Lugansk People’s Republic: Law of the Lugansk People’s Republic of March 27, 2024 No. 52-I. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/8100202403270001?ysclid=lvuz00eltt466513048>

219 On approval of the temporary procedure for recognizing property located in the territory of the Zaporizhzhia region as ownerless and on the acquisition of state ownership of the Zaporizhzhia region for such property: Government Decree of September 13, 2023 URL: <https://zo.gov.ru/docs/show/379>

220 On approval of the Procedure for the identification and use of residential premises with signs of ownerless property in the territory of the Kherson region: Government Decree of March 22, 2024 URL: <https://most.ks.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/25-pp-24.pdf>

221 Report on the results of a study of the policy of the Russian Federation on the violent change in the demographic composition of the population of the occupied territory of the Crimean peninsula. RCPL. 2021. URL: <https://krymbezpravil.org.ua/issues/otchet-o-rezultatakh-yssledovanyya-polytyky-rf-po-prynudytelnomu-yzmenenyu-demohrafycheskoho-sostava-naselenyya-okkupyrovannoho-kr-mskoho-poluostrova/>

222 Economic losses of Ukraine as a result of the temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. Information and analytical report of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. URL: <https://www.ppu.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ekonomika-na-sajt.pdf>

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Within just one year, in 2015, the number of Crimean business entities decreased sixfold, according to Russian sources²²³.

After the start of the full-scale invasion, systematic pressure was exerted on business in the TOT of Ukraine. The Russian occupation authorities began to conduct “inspections” of Ukrainian enterprises and demand re-registration of enterprises in accordance with Russian legislation. In case of refusal to register, there is a ban on selling products, and the enterprise itself and its property can be nationalized. Some enterprises, including agricultural ones, have been looted²²⁴. The occupation administration collects taxes as well as various fees (e.g. “marketplace fee”).

The disruption of Ukrainian communications/Internet in the first and last days of May caused an additional problem, i.e. the inability to make cashless payments.

The monetary policy of the Russian Federation in the TOT of Ukraine, as well as the creation of conditions for the termination of economic activity or its re-registration under Russian law, may be a separate subject of research. The Russian Federation sharply introduced the ruble in the occupied territories, replacing the hryvnia money supply in parallel with the ban on using hryvnias in the purchase and sale of food and medicines. Pensions, cash assistance, etc. were paid in rubles. Also, small businesses that used hryvnia for settlement operations received threats from the occupation administration.

“At that time, in March, April and until May, the hryvnia was still in circulation. That is, cashless payments worked. That is, all payment terminals worked. Before May even a bank branch was opened. That is, they regularly accumulated cash, because ATB su-

permarkets and someone else handed over revenues. And since there was no connection, the bank accumulated these funds and opened its branch for those who did not want to withdraw cash from their cards. People continued to receive pensions and salaries. And the bank gave out cash. Then the cash came back into circulation, into the shops and so on.

And when the administration was established, they said, “That’s it, we’ll have the ruble parallel to the hryvnia. They set the administrative exchange rate at 1.5 rubles to 1 hryvnia. Although formally, well, in fact, the market exchange rate was 2 to 1. And they obliged the shops to sell at the rate of 1.5 rubles. That is, but the price tags were still in hryvnia. And then they forced everyone to accept rubles. If someone refused, they held preventive talks with them.

And then they forced everyone to rewrite the price tags in rubles. But at the same time they continued to accept hryvnia. If there were price tags in rubles, then it was a different picture. And all this went on for some time until the middle of the summer. In the summer, they began to simply remove payment terminals and rip them out of the hands of businessmen.

In this way they destroyed the possibility of accepting cashless hryvnia payments, but people still received hryvnias as pensions or salaries on their card accounts. From September they said that payments in hryvnia were forbidden²²⁵.”

For example, 1,022 branches of Ukrainian banks, 11 branches, 53 representative offices and 2 Crimean banks operated in the AR of Crimea and Sevastopol before the occupation²²⁶. The issues of the activities

223 Scorched Earth for Business: Why Enterprises Don’t Survive in Crimea. Crimea. Realities. 10.01.2019. URL: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/pochemu-v-krymu-ne-vyzhivaet-biznes/29701072.html>

224 “People come with weapons.” What is happening to the business in the occupation?”. Radio Liberty URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyiny-pryazovya-fermery-okupatsiya-biznes/32016854.html>

225 Interview with a resident of Kherson region.

226 Economic losses of Ukraine as a result of the temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation. Information and analytical report of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. URL: <https://www.ppu.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ekonomika-na-sajt.pdf>

of Ukrainian banks were regulated by the Russian Federation at the legislative level – since April 2014, regulations have been in force that allowed Ukrainian banks to remain and operate on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula subject to a number of requirements, in particular the provision of banking services related to the use of the ruble as a means of payment²²⁷. Already on April 21, 2014, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation (Bank of Russia) decided²²⁸ to terminate the activities of separate subdivisions of several credit institutions on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula, which meant a ban on the activities of these institutions on the territory of the occupied peninsula²²⁹. Some banks managed to remove equipment and property from their branches, but most of them, primarily the property of Oschadbank and Privatbank, were confiscated along with equipment and cash²³⁰.

It can be assumed that a significant blow to business development was, among other things, the illegal policy of the Russian Federation, including expropriation and nationalization of property, assistance in bringing Russian businesses to the occupied territories, the generally negative investment climate in the Russian Federation and the TOT of Ukraine as a result of sanctions, the departure of Ukrainian businessmen from the occupied territories due to intimidation and coercion to cooperate²³¹, as well as the subjugation of the judicial system, which in fact does not perform the function of an independent and fair trial in the TOT of Ukraine.

Thus, these and other factors together create conditions that are not conducive, or even make it impossible, to develop and run a business, especially one that is not directly subordinated to the occupiers.

3.8. Destruction of relations with Ukraine

The purpose of many measures that the Russian Federation continues to implement in the occupied territories of Ukraine is to ensure the inevitability of control over the territory due to the termination of any ties of the population in the TOT with Ukraine. The above-mentioned persecution of the slightest expression of pro-Ukrainian views, blocking access to Ukrainian resources and filling the information space with non-alternative Russian content, the implementation of the Russian educational program is aimed at isolating and separating people from anything Ukrainian in the long term. In particular, according to the Charitable Foundation “Vostok SOS”, the number of people who left the occupied territory of the eastern regions of Ukraine due to persecution ranges from at least 57,500 to 115,000 people²³².

In addition to the methods already mentioned, the Russian Federation is also inducing the population of the TOT of Ukraine to cooperate (collaborationism). By replacing the local government with the newly created occupation institutions, instead of allowing the Ukrainian institutions to con-

227 On the peculiarities of the functioning of the financial system of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol for the transitional period: Federal Law No. 37-FZ dated April 2, 2014. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/38269>

228 On the termination of the activities of separate structural units of credit institutions on the territory of the Republic of Crimea and on the territory of the federal city of Sevastopol. Press release of the Bank of Russia. URL: https://www.cbr.ru/press/pr/?-file=21042014_090005krim.htm

229 Report on the results of a study of the policy of the Russian Federation on the violent change in the demographic composition of the population of the occupied territory of the Crimean peninsula. RCPL. 2021. URL: <https://krymbezpravil.org.ua/issues/otchet-o-rezultatakh-yssledovanyya-polytyky-rf-po-prynudytelnomu-yzmenenyu-demohrafycheskoho-sostava-naselenyya-okupyrovannoho-kr-mskoho-poluostrova/>

230 Economics of annexation: what happened to Ukrainian businesses in Crimea. Inshe.tv. 18.03.2016. URL: <https://inshe.tv/economics/2016-03-18/100738/>

231 Business in the occupied territories: from hostages to collaborators. Grunt, 2024. URL: <https://grnt.media/nashi-lyudy/biznes-na-okupovanyh-terytoriyah/>

232 Analytical report “Change in the demographic composition of the population in the occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions”. East SOS. 04.04.2023. - P. 71. URL: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/muhyms47ykp3w7rs5zhrk/_web.pdf?rlkey=nqwol8yv3a-n8Rzuehvrqz47u&e=1&dl=0

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tinue working, the Russian Federation not only introduces a new vertical of power, but also leaves no alternatives for the local officials – they are forced either to leave their posts or to agree to work under new rules. The same policy is applied through the seizure by Russian state corporations of facilities owned by Ukrainian state corporations, such as the seizure of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant by Rosatom. As a result of these actions of the Russian Federation, the employees of the station became hostages, because they cannot stop performing their duties to maintain a safe situation and at the same time are forced to obey the representatives of the Russian Federation in the performance of their duties. Employees of the station were intimidated, subjected to physical violence and threatened with confiscation of their property; as a result, they were forced either to sign employment contracts with Rosatom or to leave the occupied territory²³³. As a result of similar manipulations regarding the implementation of international humanitarian law in relation to the continuation of the operation of institutions providing care and education for children, representatives of the Russian Federation involve Ukrainian educational personnel, while demanding that the education be provided under the Russian educational system.

“The engineers who were working there... so these people just came through the door, cut them off there, and said, “Either you keep working here, or you will all be thrown into the basement. So, there were no options, they were not even allowed... those who wanted to leave left”²³⁴.”

Representatives of the Russian Federation convince both employees of civilian infrastructure facilities, authorities, and law enforcement and judicial bodies to collaborate.

“We kind of watched over it by ourselves until the rotation took place. Then they came. By that time, Ukrainian flags were flying on local houses, local government buildings, and around the town. Nobody was arresting people. That is, there was no sign that anything was changing. Everyone was confident, and pro-Ukrainian rallies were held. But then the rotation took place. They said there would be no more Ukraine here. They also met with us. We talked in my office. They said: you had it bad here. We said: it was very good for us here without you, and no one was waiting for you here. One of them was military. There was an FSB officer, a RosGvardia officer, and a military man. There were three of them. The others were on the street, on the guard. The military says: You can continue your activities if you wear white bandages. We refused. This conversation was again reported to the leadership. I was summoned to the vocational school through my subordinate. We went there. They put bags on our heads and interrogated us all day. They tortured us, asked us questions, absolutely meaningless questions. Well, it was even pointless to wait for answers to such questions. The questions were so delusional. Well, they beat us and tortured us. Then they had to shoot us. But they didn’t; they just threw us out. They said, “You have to come back the next day”²³⁵.”

At the same time, working in Russian authorities, enterprises, institutions is considered by Ukraine as a criminal offense and is qualified under Article 111¹ of the Criminal Code of Ukraine as a collaborative activity. Moreover, in most cases, the mere fact of registration for such work, the circumstances of employment, the intent and harm of such actions to national interests are not additionally considered during the pre-trial

233 The human rights situation during the Russian occupation of the territory of Ukraine and its consequences February 24, 2022 – December 31, 2023. OHCHR. 20.03.2024. 97 URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2024-03-20-OHCHR-Report-Occupation-Aftermath-UKR.pdf>

234 Interview with a resident of Zaporizhzhia region.

235 Interview with a resident of Kherson region.

investigation or trial²³⁶. Obviously, the Russian Federation is actively using this practice to strengthen its influence and further sever the ties of the local population in the TOT with Ukraine, convincing them that there is no way back and that the return of the Ukrainian authorities to these territories will mean accountability for everyone who remained there.

According to the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the TOT of the AR Crimea and Sevastopol alone have about 4,000 enterprises, organizations and institutions that are state property of Ukraine. Accordingly, minimum estimates of the potential consequences of the application of Article 1111 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine in the de-occupied Crimea indicate a potential criminal prosecution of approximately more than 200,000 people, including almost all teachers and almost all business entities²³⁷.

The Russian Federation's aggressive demographic policy is also aimed at breaking ties. In addition to the aforementioned deportations and forced displacements, as well as the forced passportization of the local population, Russia is actively encouraging local youth to leave for Russia to continue their studies. For this purpose, the program "University Shifts" is provided, which aims

at career guidance and "formation of Russian identity" of children aged 12-17 from the occupied territories of Ukraine by sending them to 10-day "shifts" in Russian HEIs²³⁸. In 2023, about 10,700 students from the TOT of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions participated in the "University Shifts", which is almost the same number as in 2022, and the number of HEIs participating in the program continues to grow²³⁹. The next step is to provide preferential conditions for admission to Russian HEIs with the provision of further employment in the territory of the Russian Federation²⁴⁰.

In addition to encouraging and forcing Ukrainian citizens to leave the occupied territories, the Russian Federation has also pursued an active policy of resettling its own citizens in these territories since at least the beginning of the occupation²⁴¹. Between 2014 and 2017 alone, more than 100,000 Russian citizens, including pensioners, civil servants and military personnel with their families, officially moved to Crimea²⁴². According to human rights organizations, about 800,000 citizens of the Russian Federation had already arrived in Crimea by December 2023²⁴³. At the same time, according to the occupation authorities, more than 500,000 people had moved to Crimea by the beginning of

236 Survival or Crime: How Ukraine Punishes Collaboration. Analytical report / Syniuk O., Deputy D., Vyshnevskaya I., Volkovynska V., Chervonna V., Yeligelushvili M.; ed. Lunyova O. Kyiv, 2024. URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/07/colaboratz_print_ukr.pdf

237 According to the information provided by the Mission of the President of Ukraine to the ARC at the request of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.

238 Analytical report "The University Changes Program as a Tool for Indoctrination and Destruction of Ukrainian Identity of Children and Youth from Temporarily Occupied Territories" / T. Lychko, A. Vorobyova, M. Sulialina, O. Shapoval, O. Okhredko. Kyiv: CCE "Almenda", 2024. P. 14. URL: https://almenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Analytical_Report-CGP-Almenda_University-Changes_2023-2024.pdf

239 Ibid., p. 22.

240 Ibid., p. 5.

241 Report on the results of a study of the policy of the Russian Federation on the violent change in the demographic composition of the population of the occupied territory of the Crimean peninsula. RCPL. 2021. URL: <https://krymbezpravil.org.ua/issues/otchet-o-rezultatakh-yssledovanyya-polytyky-rf-po-prynudytelnomu-yzmenenyiyu-demohrafycheskoho-sostava-naselenyya-okupyrovannoho-kr-mskoho-poluostrova/>; "Crimea without rules. Thematic review of the human rights situation under occupation." Special issue. Relocation of the civilian population of the Russian Federation to the occupied territory of Ukraine – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Kyiv. URL: https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Crimea_Beyond_Rules_special-issue_ru.pdf

242 Ten Years of Occupation by the Russian Federation: Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Ukraine. OHCHR. 28.02.2024. 22. URL: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/2024-02-28%20OHCHR%20Ten%20Years%20of%20Occupation%20in%20Crimea%20UKR_0.pdf

243 Hundreds of thousands of Russians moved to the occupied territories of Ukraine: illustrative examples of colonization. UHHRU. 06.12.2023. URL: <https://www.helsinki.org.ua/articles/sotni-tysiach-rosiian-pereikhaly-na-okupovani-terytorii-ukrainy-pokazovi-pryklady-kolonizatsii/>

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2024. For a region with a population of about 2.5 million, this means that more than 20% of the population has already been replaced. At the same time, the population of the city of Sevastopol grew from 384,000 at the beginning of 2014 to 561,000 at the beginning of 2024, a 46% increase²⁴⁴.

Russia actively encourages its own citizens to move to the occupied territories by launching state programs such as the “District Doctor”, “District Teacher”, “District Cultural Worker” programs. The programs also provide Russian citizens with housing from the “state housing stock” and one-time financial assistance of 2 million rubles. Benefits are also provided for Russian companies that transfer their employees to the occupied territories²⁴⁵.

“I have a friend there. So, he says, 70% of their apartment building... It’s a nine-story building. They have a block with 4 apartments in it. That is 36 apartments, he says, 70%... I don’t know. And these are mostly people of retirement age. That is, they have already been brought in and they are making their population stratum there. And it’s exactly these pensioners who are brought here²⁴⁶.”

“Then came the time when they probably started coming with families, because he [the Russian military] was no longer coming alone, but with some girl. Or there were rumors that they were looking for apartments there, like “I’m bringing my wife” or some-

thing like that. So, they just started moving in. Also, about the city... there is School No. 15, my niece studies there, well, studied there. And the teachers were brought there en masse, because in general almost all of our teachers left the schools. So, School No. 15, a lot of teachers were brought there. And what’s interesting is that most of them were from Dagestan²⁴⁷.”

All of the above actions are aimed at achieving a long-term goal - the final transformation of the occupied territories of Ukraine into “Russian” territories, the expulsion from them of all those who pose even the slightest danger, who are disloyal to the Russian authorities. Such expulsion is carried out by the use of force, intimidation, and later also by persecution, expulsion, etc.

The remaining population is tied as much as possible to the Russian Federation through the termination of any possible ties with Ukraine - through the forced imposition of Russian citizenship and, as a result, the imposition of military service and conscription into the armed forces, making it impossible to receive any services, conduct business, acquire and protect property rights, employment, education in the occupied territory without a Russian passport or re-registration under Russian law.

In order to exert additional pressure and control over the occupied territories, Russian citizens are settled there, as they also carry propaganda narratives and Russian political culture into everyday life.

244 According to the information provided by the Mission of the President of Ukraine to the ARC at the request of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.

245 Confiscation of apartments and benefits for colonists: how Russia is changing the ethnic composition of the occupied territories of Ukraine. LB.ua. 04.07.2024. URL: https://lb.ua/news/2024/06/04/616769_konfiskatsiya_kvartir_i_pilgi.html

246 Interview with a resident of Zaporizhzhia region.

247 Interview with a resident of Zaporizhzhia region.

SECTION 4

**Responding to and
Countering Russian
Aggression (Illegal Actions,
Practices) at the National
and International Levels:
Lessons from Ukraine**

Responding to and Countering Russian Aggression (Illegal Actions, Practices) at the National and International Levels: Lessons from Ukraine

As stated above, the general human rights situation in the territories of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation and the answers to the main hypotheses put forward in this regard in the Special Report indicate a number of systematic and purposeful policies of the Russian Federation for the preparation, conduct of hostilities, seizure of Ukrainian territories and subjugation of the civilian population in them. Namely:

- The Russian Federation systematically and extensively uses information and cultural events, its own controlled media, promotion of education in Russian educational institutions, passportization with passports of the Russian Federation, etc. as a means of influencing the civilian population of Ukraine and as a basis for the possibility of further deployment of the occupation of territories and establishment of control over their population, which has been previously strongly influenced.
- For the purpose of seizing territories, and especially in conditions when such prior influence on them was impossible for various reasons, the Russian Federation instrumentalizes the commission of international crimes and flagrant violations of human rights, including widespread practices of violence against the civilian population in the combat zone and in the occupied territories, as one of the tactics of warfare and establishing control over foreign territories and population.
- After the occupation of the Ukrainian territories, the Russian Federation in a short time implemented administrative practices leading to flagrant violations of human rights, most of which it has been carrying out for years on its own territory. At the same time, the occupying authorities are pursuing a deliberate policy of using the so-called GONGOs²⁴⁸, persuading representatives of local authorities and activists to cooperate in order to gain the loyalty of the local civilian population, as well as to replace the local population of the occupied territories with citizens of the Russian Federation and to fully integrate them into the legal reality of the Russian Federation.

These practices and actions are not accidental excesses of individual actors, but the result of systematic policy of this state, which could not be initiated and implemented without the consent of high officials of the Russian Federation. As a result, their goal is, inter alia, to subjugate the civilian population of the occupied territories and to ensure the maximum severing of any ties with their own state, Ukraine, for the benefit of the Russian Federation.

This poses a number of challenges for Ukraine and the relevant authorities, primarily related to the need and opportunity to maintain relations with their own population, which remains forcibly in the occupied territories, to develop approaches that will maintain a balance between security measures and measures of reintegration, protec-

248 GONGO is an acronym for government-run non-governmental organizations.

tion and restoration of the rights of victims of the consequences of war, as well as the need to counter the systematic use by the Russian Federation of violations of the rights of the civilian population and the rules of war as a tool for conquering the occupied Ukrainian territories.

A general analysis of the data collected and analyzed during the preparation of this report reveals important conclusions and lessons for the development of Ukraine's policy on reintegration and maintenance of relations with the population of the occupied territories, restoration and protection of the rights of victims of the consequences of prolonged occupation, some of which are discussed in more detail in this section.

I. The Ukrainian authorities develop policies for the occupied territories and their population mostly reactively, and the adoption and implementation of policies for these territories is characterized by considerable inertia.

Thus, after the beginning of the Russian aggression and occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in April 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine”²⁴⁹, which was subsequently extended to all occupied territories of Ukraine. Among other things, the law establishes the obligation of the state to maintain contacts with citizens living in the TOT of Ukraine and to take appro-

prate measures to protect their rights. In addition, the law stated the political position on imposing responsibility on the Russian Federation for violation of human and civil rights and freedoms and damage caused as a result of the occupation. Also in 2014, the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons” was adopted²⁵⁰, which defines the concept of “internally displaced persons”, establishes guarantees of their rights, ensures proper accounting, etc. In 2017, the government approved the first strategy for the integration of IDPs²⁵¹. The first strategy for de-occupation and reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol was approved by the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine in March 2021²⁵².

At the same time, since the beginning of the war in 2014, there were facts of discriminatory practices against the residents of the TOT of Ukraine due to the actions and decisions of the Ukrainian authorities, such as restrictions on access to banking and pension services, restrictions on the movement of one's property through checkpoints, etc. Moreover, the actions of the authorities were often characterized by the lack of a systematic, coherent policy that would meet the guarantees provided by the legislation. Each day of failure to resolve these issues has a significant negative impact on Ukraine's ability to counter Russia's measures to subjugate the population of the occupied territories, their actual immersion in the legal, informational and socio-economic reality of the occupying country.

249 On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine No. 1207 dated May 19, 2014. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1207-18#Text>

250 On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons: Law of Ukraine of October 20, 2014 No. 1706-VII. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1706-18#Text>

251 On the approval of the Strategy for the Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and the Implementation of Long-Term Solutions for Internal Displacement for the Period until 2020: Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated November 15, 2017 No. 909-p. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/909-2017-%D1%80#Text>

252 On the Decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine of March 11, 2021 “On the Strategy of De-occupation and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol”: Presidential Decree of March 24, 2021 No. 117/2021. URL: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1172021-37533>

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It was only in 2016 that the relevant Ministry for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine was established as a central executive body that ensures the formation and implementation of the state policy on the temporarily occupied territories and the protection of the rights of the population living there. The presence of central executive authorities in the structure of the government has had a positive impact on the possibilities of influence and formation of de-occupation policy, maintenance of relations with the population of the TOT of Ukraine. However, as of the date of writing this report, the activities of the above-mentioned body are de facto terminated, and the distribution of its powers remains incomplete (some of the powers have been transferred to the Ministry of Development of Communities and Regions of Ukraine, but not all of them). At the same time, the declared focus of the newly created Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine is mainly focused on maintaining relations with Ukrainians abroad and does not take into account the work with the TOT and the millions of citizens who remain there²⁵³.

At the same time, it is important to note the positive experience and impact on maintaining communication with citizens in the TOT of Ukraine, the resumption of activities in exile of certain authorities and law enforcement agencies from those Ukrainian administrative-territorial units that were completely occupied by the aggressor. For example, the activities of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea have been resumed in the government-controlled territories, and it is working with citizens in Kyiv and in the territories adjacent to the occupied Crimea in Kherson. Since 2021, an updated strategy for

the activities of this body has been approved; the priorities include the improvement of work with citizens' appeals, in particular, the establishment of systematic feedback with citizens of Ukraine living in the TOT of the AR of Crimea and Sevastopol, foreigners and stateless persons legally residing in this territory, preparation of proposals for solving problematic issues, etc²⁵⁴. Or the work of the Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol restored in Kyiv, the strategy of which was also revised in connection with the consequences of the war, taking into account the international humanitarian law and the need to work without access to the territory of crimes, victims and suspects, the introduction of innovative investigative approaches, work with digital evidence and the ability to communicate with citizens from the TOT of Ukraine through online services, etc²⁵⁵.

Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, the state has gained significant and studied experience in the liberation of territories, restoration of the work of the authorities and the rights of the affected persons. However, the government has not yet approved the Strategy for the Restoration of State Power and Reintegration of the Population of the De-occupied Territories of Ukraine, which was developed with the broad participation of civil society, international organizations and independent experts and took into account the long experience of work with the occupied territories and restoration of life in the liberated territories. At the level of normative legal acts or decisions of individual branches of government, the experience of the evacuation of authorities (for example, the judiciary) from the TOT of Ukraine or from the zone of hostilities, recommendations and legal certain-

253 Meeting of the Committee dated 23.12.2024. YouTube channel of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Human Rights. 23.12.2024. URL: <https://youtu.be/eDw5v8BRSIQ?t=2197>

254 On the priority activities of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea: Decree of the President of Ukraine dated April 13, 2021 No. 160/2021. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1255-2021-n#Text>

255 The Strategy for the Development of the Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea under Temporary Occupation for 2019–2021 was approved. Official website of the Prosecutor's Office OF the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol 10.10.2018. URL: <https://surl.li/iigaks>

ty regarding the consequences of the arrest of a person vested with power, etc. are still largely not institutionalized.

Similarly, a strategy and measures to restore the work of criminal justice in the territories liberated from the prolonged occupation have been developed, but have not yet been approved by the Prosecutor General's Office. What is the fate of the lost and incomplete Ukrainian pre-occupation cases that remained in the TOT of Ukraine; what to do with criminal cases and decisions of the courts of the occupation authorities and thousands of people in places of detention at the time of liberation; how to quickly ensure the restoration of human resources and logistical support for the work of criminal justice bodies in these territories after liberation; what to do with tens of thousands of people who are potentially responsible for collaboration, but whose actions obviously did not have significant consequences for the country, and their persecution will be an obstacle to reintegration measures. Solutions to these issues have been worked out and may require additional discussion, but postponing such decisions only exacerbates the numerous fears of the civilian population in the TOT of Ukraine and increases the opportunities for the occupation authorities to intimidate citizens.

Despite the fact that the most common and dangerous consequences of the damage are the impact on children and the systemic militarization of education (in fact, almost 1.6 million Ukrainian children became hostages of the occupying state as of 2024)²⁵⁶, Ukraine currently lacks a state educational concept and a unified vision of the authorities on the reintegration of children and youth who were under occupation, and the processes of restoring the educational system after de-occupation.

Among the systemic challenges leading to problems with access to services or the exercise of rights by citizens from the TOT

of Ukraine is also the failure to resume work or the absence of decisions on the transfer of certain powers of bodies whose activities were not restored after the occupation (both state institutions, such as bodies for the protection of children's rights, and independent professional communities, such as the Bar, etc.) to other institutions and bodies in the government-controlled territory.

These and other examples of a rather reactive and inert policy of the state on the reintegration of the TOT of Ukraine and their population, the latest trends of actual exclusion or ignoring the protection and restoration of the rights of persons from the TOT in the key strategic policies of the state and recommendations on European integration, where this vulnerable group is not taken into account.

II. Ukraine needs to significantly strengthen the capacity of its policies and practices to counter Russia's measures to subjugate the civilian population of the occupied territories and sever their ties with Ukraine.

The systematic and widespread practice of human rights violations in the TOT of Ukraine examined in this report contributes, among other things, to Russia's subjugation of the civilian population of these territories and to ensuring the maximum severing of all their ties with their state, Ukraine. In fact, the severing of such ties occurs in several main areas, in which it is particularly important for Ukraine to develop both measures to counter the criminal actions of the Russian Federation, and preventive and proactive solutions to create conditions for maintaining communication with its own population, which finds itself temporarily under occupation.

²⁵⁶ Recommendations (roadmap) on reintegration policies for children and youth under occupation. CCE Almenda. 05.03.2024: <https://almenda.org/rekomendacii-dorozhnyya-karta-shhodo-politiki-reintegracii-ditej-ta-molodi-yaki-perebuvali-v-okupacii/>

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Physical connections. Immediately after the establishment of the occupation authorities on the Crimean Peninsula and in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014, the Russian Federation restricted the movement of the population with the territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine, establishing the so-called “border control”. Due to the prolonged occupation, Ukraine was forced to establish entry-exit checkpoints on the border with the occupied territories, crossing which became the only legal way to enter and leave the occupied territories. Similarly, for security reasons, the government restricted air traffic and the movement of any other transport (except for private road transport) through the checkpoints established on the border with the occupied territories.

Since 2019, administrative service centers have been established at some entry and exit checkpoints, banks and post offices have been opened, free transportation, reception of citizens, meetings of representatives of state bodies, visits of foreign delegations to the entry and exit checkpoints, etc. have been initiated.

These actions in the complex naturally contributed to maintaining relations with the population of the occupied territories. Thousands of citizens from both sides crossed the checkpoints every day. According to the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, from October 2014 until the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022, 55,885,000 records of crossing the demarcation line by persons from the TOT in the east of Ukraine, as well as 18,323,000 records of crossing the administrative border with the TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea were recorded. At the same time, the Russian Federation regularly carried out unlawful restrictions or blockades of exit from the TOT to the government-controlled territories, for example,

during HEI admission campaigns, under the pretext of measures to combat the COVID-19 epidemic, or to prevent the civilian population from accessing Ukrainian administrative, banking, medical, and other services.

After the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, the demarcation line was transformed by the Russian Federation into a line of hostilities, the relevant entry-exit control points were destroyed or captured and transformed into so-called checkpoints from the territories seized by the Russian Federation after 2022. In addition, one of the powerful factors in the physical interruption of relations with the territories was the large-scale policy of the Russian Federation to deport mostly disloyal citizens of Ukraine from the occupied territories, to create IDP flows and to colonize the occupied territories by citizens of the Russian Federation²⁵⁷, which ultimately leads to a significant change in the demographic composition of the population of these territories.

For objective reasons, there are currently no systemic solutions for the direct movement of citizens between the TOT and Ukrainian government-controlled areas. Interagency and intersectoral cooperation on evacuation from the occupation is at a low level. There are no duly approved evacuation policies, in particular, professional groups or representatives of authorities, which would create conditions for legal certainty of actions in case of seizure or threat of seizure of territories. The state is faced with the challenge of developing new solutions on ways to maintain physical communication with the population in conditions of prolonged occupation and in the absence of direct access of the TOT to the territories controlled by the Government of Ukraine. At present, such contact is carried out only through one operating checkpoint (with the Republic of Belarus²⁵⁸) and through the access of resi-

257 For more information on the patterns and actions of the Russian Federation in violating human rights in various fields in order to subjugate the population of the occupied territories, see Section 3.

258 Until August 2024, there was a checkpoint for the return of Ukrainian citizens from the territory of the Russian Federation – “Kolotylivka – Pokrovka”.

dents of the TOT of Ukraine to the relevant foreign diplomatic institutions of Ukraine.

At the same time, the state will face many challenges related to the need to demine the de-occupied territories, as evidenced by the experience and limited resources for removing explosive objects from the territories now liberated from Russian occupation.

Legal relations. Immediately after the occupation and attempted annexation of Ukrainian territories, the Russian Federation implemented a rapid policy of integrating these territories into its legal space, as well as began to passport the population with its own documents or documents of the entities under its control²⁵⁹. Criminal and other legislation of the Russian Federation was also introduced, which left the civilian population no choice and no opportunity to continue to be guided by Ukrainian legislation and documents. The Ukrainian state does not recognize the extension of Russian legislation to these territories and, accordingly, does not recognize its consequences, in particular, in connection with the acquisition of rights by the civilian population, etc.

In April 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine”, which determined the legal status of the TOT of Ukraine and the legal regime for them (at that time, the Law applied only to the TOT of the AR of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol). In 2022, the law was extended to all TOT of Ukraine.

Despite the legislative non-recognition of forced acquisition of Russian citizenship in the TOT of Ukraine, this regulation often remains declarative and is ignored in actual practice, in particular, in connection with the imposition of sanctions on individual cit-

izens of Ukraine from the TOT of Ukraine as citizens of the Russian Federation, using the fact of obtaining a Russian passport in the qualification of collaborative activities, discriminatory practices of restriction of access to services, posts or the exercise of rights (pension provision), etc. Similarly, despite the legislative consolidation of the possibility of recognition of documents confirming the fact of birth, death, registration (dissolution) of marriage in the TOT of Ukraine, only judicial procedures for recognition of such facts are still provided. This significantly hampers the access of citizens of the TOT to Ukrainian documents that are important for the exercise of their rights. During the prolonged occupation, no more than 10% of births in the TOT of Ukraine were registered in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the rate of registrations has critically decreased. Thus, according to the occupation authorities, in 2022-2024, 63,833 children were born on the territory of the TOT of AR of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. At the same time, the state civil registry authorities registered only 5,492 cases of births²⁶⁰.

This not only deprives the state of important information about its own population in the TOT of Ukraine, but also leaves hundreds of thousands of citizens without proper documents and actually contributes to strengthening their legal ties with the occupying state.

Similarly, the procedure for confirming a person’s registered place of residence in the TOT of Ukraine remains complicated. Despite the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Provision of Public (Electronic Public) Services for Declaration and Registration of Residence in Ukraine”²⁶¹, the procedure is practically ineffective. State bodies do not

259 For more information on the patterns and actions of the Russian Federation in violating human rights in various fields in order to subjugate the population of the occupied territories, see Section 3.

260 What can be the approaches to documents issued in the occupation? Policy Brief A coalition of organizations concerned with the protection of the rights of victims of armed aggression against Ukraine. January 2025 URL: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/02/document_ua_web_dokumenty-vydani-na-tot.pdf

261 On Provision of Public (Electronic Public) Services for Declaration and Registration of Residence in Ukraine: Law of Ukraine No. 1871 dated November 15, 2024. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1871-20#Text>

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have the authority to keep records of the registered / declared place of residence of persons in the TOT of Ukraine; complicated identification of undocumented persons (returning to Ukraine through third countries, applying to foreign diplomatic institutions); this makes it impossible or difficult to obtain an individual tax number without a registered place of residence, etc.

As a result of the occupation, the state lost access to state registers and data, archival documents, court decisions and materials of pre-trial criminal proceedings, there is a lack of large amounts of information on the objects of the land fund, subsoil, cultural heritage in the TOT of Ukraine. Mechanisms for their restoration have not yet been developed to a large extent, which significantly limits or makes impossible the exercise of certain rights by citizens from the TOT of Ukraine, in particular, property rights. At the same time, for example, the legislation obliges state and military personnel to declare property in the TOT of Ukraine, despite the fact that it may be irretrievably lost or data about it may be missing from the declarant or the state for objective reasons.

Some powers and/or authorities or professional self-government bodies are still not restored in the government-controlled territories, which leads to the impossibility of exercising certain rights, and sometimes to the dismissal (termination of employment relations) of officials who did not leave the occupied territories and did not continue their actual work in Ukrainian institutions, as it is not defined by law.

However, an important achievement and motivation for maintaining legal relations with the population of the TOT of Ukraine was the approval of the agreement on visa-free regime between Ukraine and the European

Union, and as a result, the possibility of unimpeded entry to the relevant countries for Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports. There is also the active digitalization of various administrative services, in particular, the creation of a single web portal of public services “Diia” and its filling with many public services.

One of the main challenges for the state due to the prolonged occupation will be the ability to effectively restore the Ukrainian legal space in the liberated territories without significant violations or restrictions of citizens' rights. This raises the question of Ukraine's attitude to all documents, decisions, etc. of the occupying authorities that affect the property and non-property rights of citizens. That is, the development of measures to counter the Russian Federation forcing the population of the occupied territories to transfer all documents and property to the Russian legal space. Despite the draft of the Strategy for the Restoration of State Power and Reintegration of the Population of the De-occupied Territories of Ukraine and the plan of its implementation developed by the Government with the participation of experts²⁶², the document has not yet been approved²⁶³. The absence of this document and relevant decisions will not only significantly complicate the reintegration processes in the liberated territories, but also now creates many fears among the civilian population of the TOT of Ukraine due to the uncertainty of possible consequences for their rights in the living conditions after the liberation of the territories and the restoration of the Ukrainian legal reality..

Social ties. Immediately after the occupation of the Ukrainian territories, the Russian Federation created such conditions for the civilian population on these territories that

262 A draft strategy for the restoration of state authority and the reintegration of the de-occupied territories was presented. Ukrinform. 10.04.2024. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/3850878-vidbulasa-prezentacia-proektu-strategii-vidnovlen-na-derzvladi-ta-reintegracii-deokupovanih-teritorij.html>

263 The strategy for the restoration of state authority and the reintegration of the de-occupied territories will be adopted by the end of June – Vereshchuk. Interfax Ukraine. 29.05.2024. URL: <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/989863.html>

264 For more information on the patterns and actions of the Russian Federation in violating human rights in various fields in order to subjugate the population of the occupied territories, see Chapter 3.

social support became almost the only means of survival, and access to various forms of social and medical assistance in the future became possible only by obtaining Russian passports and other documents, that is, by forcing an oath of allegiance to the occupier and demonstrating loyalty to the aggressor's authorities²⁶⁴. In fact, the opportunity to receive certain types of therapy, access to certain types of medicines for the residents of the TOT under occupation was limited and sometimes remained only under the conditions of travel to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. Accordingly, after the occupation of certain territories in 2014, the receipt of medical services was an important motivating reason for regular visits to the government-controlled territory.

In contrast, after the beginning of the occupation, Ukraine imposed restrictions on access to pension services for residents of the TOT of Ukraine²⁶⁵, which in turn led both to discriminatory practices, violations of property rights and artificial stimulation of the increase in the number of IDPs, and helped the aggressor to break the ties between citizens and the Ukrainian state. Currently, certain issues of providing pensions to persons living in the TOT or who have moved from the TOT require additional regulation (for example, there is still no proper mechanism for obtaining pensions by citizens from the temporarily occupied Crimean Peninsula, which requires confirmation of non-receipt of a pension from the Russian Federation).

Since the full-scale Russian invasion, the problem of recording and compensating for health damage as a result of hostilities has become acute. For example, the relevant procedures for establishing a link between disability and injuries as a result of hostilities are still not considered or applied to residents of the TOT of Ukraine.

An important achievement in the state policy of support of the population in the TOT was the legislative consolidation²⁶⁶ of the provision of various types of social and legal protection to persons in respect of whom it was established the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, and their families. And although certain practices of the Committee, which considers the establishment of the relevant fact, need to be improved (regarding the assessment and consideration of documents and evidence to confirm the facts, etc.), this support from the state is an important signal and one of the tools for maintaining relations with citizens who suffer from persecution by the occupier, often for their position on maintaining the territorial integrity of Ukraine and resistance to the occupation.

Educational connections. Another challenge for Ukraine is the need to counter the occupier's large-scale and systematic policy of militarizing the educational space of the occupied territories and preventing access to Ukrainian education for children and youth from these territories²⁶⁷. Among the important achievements of the state in this field, it is worth mentioning: the transfer since 2014 of more than 23,000 students from universities and scientific institutions located in the TOT of Ukraine to institutions located in the territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine; the relocation of certain educational institutions from the TOT of Ukraine; the cancellation of licenses of about 30 universities remaining in the TOT of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions; the establishment of educational centers "Crimea-Ukraine" and "Donbas-Ukraine". The following decisions and practices of the state had a positive impact on maintaining relations with children and youth from the TOT of Ukraine: the in-

265 They worked for their retirement and were left without a pension: why Crimean pensioners are seeking payments through the court. Suspilne. Crimea dated 29.10.2024. URL: <https://suspiine.media/crimea/867461-zaroblali-na-starist-i-zalisilisa-bez-pensii-comu-pensioneri-z-krimu-cerez-sud-dobivautsa-viplat/>

267 On social and legal protection of persons in respect of whom the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine has been established, and members of their families: Law of Ukraine dated January 1, 2025 No. 2010. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2010-20#Text>

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roduction of the possibility of using distance education for children who resided (still reside) in the TOT of Ukraine; the recognition of the results of education obtained in the HEIs in the TOT of the Crimean Peninsula when entering by 2014; social scholarships and state targeted support for IDPs to obtain professional (vocational), professional pre-higher and higher education.

However, the prolonged occupation, the consequences of a full-scale invasion and the significant influence of the aggressor country on the education system require new solutions and strategies. For example, they do not take into account the consequences of a full-scale invasion for the regulation of the right of admission within quotas for persons from the TOT of Ukraine, or the system of access to professional technical education still does not take into account the peculiarities of the TOT of Ukraine. Currently, the legislation contains a discriminatory rule regarding the passage of a special course by children from the TOT of Ukraine on the consequences of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and countering Russian propaganda, the formation of general cultural and civic competencies²⁶⁸. There is still no procedure for the recognition of the results of education obtained in educational institutions in the TOT of Ukraine, provided for by the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on the Recognition of the Results of Education of Persons Residing in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine”, which significantly hinders the maintenance of relations with the youth of the occupied territories, as well as their ability to start an independent career in the territory controlled by the Government of

Ukraine²⁶⁹.

Given the importance of children and youth for the country as a whole and for future reintegration processes, in particular, given the magnitude of the consequences of the long-term occupation policy in the field of education and its negative impact on young people from the occupied territories, the state urgently needs to strengthen its own educational strategy, develop and implement approaches to the reintegration of children and youth who were under occupation, and the processes of restoring the educational system after the liberation of Ukrainian territories.

Information links. The seizure of the information space, the total destruction of Ukrainian and foreign independent media, the persecution of journalists and large-scale propaganda are another powerful tool used by the Russian Federation to prepare and wage war, to seize and maintain control over the territories²⁷⁰. Therefore, countering this policy of the occupier requires from Ukraine both significant resources and coordinated efforts of relevant stakeholders in the development of information policy, as well as effective cooperation of all stakeholders in the formation and implementation of other decisions in the field of protection of the rights of residents in the TOT of Ukraine. During the years of prolonged occupation, the Ukrainian government took steps to develop and implement information strategies for the occupied territories. For example, in 2018, the strategy of information reintegration of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol was adopted²⁷¹, and in 2021, the strategy of information security was approved by the decree of the Presi-

268 For more information on the patterns and actions of the Russian Federation in violating human rights in various fields in order to subjugate the population of the occupied territories, see Chapter 3.

269 On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Concerning the Recognition of the Learning Outcomes of Persons Residing in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine No. 3482-IX dated November 21, 2023. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3482-20#Text>

270 Real mechanisms for confirming education of youth from TOT should start working: human rights activists made a statement. ZMINA. 21.11.2024. URL: <https://zmina.ua/statements/mayut-zapraczyuvaty-realni-mehanizmy-pidverdzhennya-osvity-molo-di-z-tot-pravozahysnyky-zrobily-zayavu/>

271 For more information on the patterns and actions of the Russian Federation in violating human rights in various fields in order to subjugate the population of the occupied territories, see Sections 1 and 2 of this Report

dent of Ukraine, some components of which relate to the issues of the TOT of Ukraine²⁷². However, the implementation of these strategies remains insufficiently coordinated, often lacks adequate resources, and depends on institutional and personal changes in the relevant authorities responsible for their implementation. Frequently, contradictory messages are conveyed to Ukrainian citizens in the TOT by different authorities and their representatives (for example, on the issue of forced passportization under occupation)²⁷³. Nevertheless, the main challenge in the implementation of the information strategy remains the absence or inadequacy of state decisions in the practical implementation of the rights of the residents of the TOT of Ukraine in the government-controlled territory, which significantly undermines the capacity and effectiveness of any information policy and communication to maintain communication with the population of the occupied territories.

In general, the main role in government communication with the residents of the TOT of Ukraine has been played by the relevant central executive bodies (until recently, the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine), as well as by certain competent regional authorities, including those in exile. However, at the time of writing, the website of the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine is not functioning and cannot be used by users as a source of focused and structured information for residents of the TOT of Ukraine. Communication of the newly created Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine is directed mainly to Ukrainians abroad and IDPs. Uncertainty about the priority of reintegration

and protection of the rights of residents of the TOT of Ukraine for the government is a significant negative signal for the residents of these territories.

Civil human rights and service organizations supporting the residents of the occupied territories significantly assist the state in developing and providing information links with Ukraine. They often become the communicators of certain opportunities and necessary information for people. The work of independent media, especially the Internet media, developed in the territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine, and the simplification of their operation thanks to the Law of Ukraine “On Media”, is equally important for information relations and contributes to the maintenance of a unified information field and relations with citizens living in the TOT.

In contrast, numerous complaints of NGOs and experts in the field of information communication have been ignored, in particular, analog television has not been installed near the TOT. Ukrainian digital television is not available to the residents of the TOT. The functioning of and access to Ukrainian radio broadcasting is also hindered. The Dim TV channel, which the authorities have positioned as a broadcaster for the occupied territories, has long been criticized by experts. All this only worsens the status and possibilities of communication between the Ukrainian authorities and the population, practically excluding the population of the occupied territories from this communication.

Religious ties. Another challenge in countering Russian influence on the civilian population, including the impact of propaganda, has been the activity of the UOC-MP on the territory of Ukraine²⁷⁴. Thus, the representative office of this church not only did not

272 On Approval of the Strategy for Information Reintegration of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol: Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated December 27, 2018 No. 1100-r. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1100-2018-%D1%80#Text>

273 On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated October 15, 2021 “On the Information Security Strategy”: Decree of the President of Ukraine dated December 28, 2021 No. 685/2021. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/685/2021#Text>

274 Vereshchuk urged residents of the occupied territories not to take Russian passports. UNIAN. 01.05.2023. URL: <https://www.unian.ua/war/primusova-pasportizaciya-na-okupovanih-teritoriyah-ukrajini-vereshchuk-zrobila-zayavu-12240561.html>

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condemn the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, but also actively spread Russian narratives among the civilian population and contributed to the seizure of Ukrainian territories by the Russian Federation, beginning with the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula²⁷⁵. In this context, after the occupation of Ukrainian territories, the Russian authorities launched a consistent persecution of certain religious communities, including representatives of Muslim religious groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the religious community of the UOC-Kyiv Patriarchy²⁷⁶.

An important step of the state in the context of protecting the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and reducing Russian influence on it and its parishioners was the decision to hand over the Tomos of autocephaly by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Primate of the OCU, Metropolitan Epifaniy of Kyiv and All Ukraine, which was preceded by protracted work of the government and the public²⁷⁷. Currently, more than 1,800 religious communities and monasteries have transferred from the UOC-MP to the OCU. Also, according to the Security Service of Ukraine, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, criminal cases have been opened against more than 100 clergymen of the UOC-MP for their open support and justification of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation; almost 50 of them have been notified of suspicion, and more than 20 have received court sentences²⁷⁸.

Another important decision of the state in this matter was the adoption in 2024 of the Law of Ukraine "On Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Field of Activities of Religious Organizations"²⁷⁹, which provides for the termination of the activities of religious organizations associated with the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine. The law provides for the impossibility of the activities of those religious organizations that are guided by the state that carries out aggression against Ukraine. Religious organizations suspected of involvement in cooperation with the ROC should be examined by the relevant expert commission and, if such links are established, will have time to terminate them or terminate their activities by a court decision. At the same time, even before the law came into force, according to national surveys, 82% of Ukrainians did not trust the UOC-MP, and 83% of respondents believed that the state should interfere in the activities of the UOC-MP, in particular, 63% supported the total ban of this church²⁸⁰.

At the same time, despite the systematic persecution and pressure on the OCU by the occupying authorities of Crimea, in particular the illegal confiscation of church buildings, the Ukrainian authorities have not yet ensured the implementation of the relevant government decree²⁸¹ on the registration of state ownership of the Cathedral of the Crimean Diocese of the OCU in Simferopol. Similarly, the request to the authorities to allocate premises for the administration of the Crimean diocese and the

275 How long will the ROC exist in Ukraine? Ukrainer. 02.04.2022 URL: <https://www.ukrainer.net/rpc/>

276 See Section 1 (para. 1.2) for details.

277 See Section 3 for details.

278 Having received the Tomos, Epiphany announced the

the establishment of the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Radio Liberty. 06.01.2019. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news/29693853.html>

278 The Verkhovna Rada adopted a law banning the UOC (MP) in Ukraine – MPs. Radio Liberty. 20.08.2024. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-moskovskyy-patriarkhat-zaborona/33085530.html>

279 On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Field of Activities of Religious Organizations: Law of Ukraine dated August 20, 2024 No. 3894-IX. |||UNTRANSLATED_CONTENT_START|||URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/card/3894-20> |||UNTRANSLATED_CONTENT_END|||

280 What should be the policy of the authorities and trust in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). KIIS. 07.05.2024. URL: <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1404&page=1>

281 Some issues of acceptance into state ownership of the Cathedral of the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Volodymyr and Princess Olha and protection of the right to freedom of worldview and religion of believers of the Crimean Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Orthodox Church of Ukraine): Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated October 28, 2022 No. 1213. URL: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/deyaki-pitannya-prijnyattya-u-derzhav-a1213>

Church for worship in Kyiv remains without a decision. At the same time, the Metropolitan of Simferopol and Crimea, with the support of representatives of parishioners from among the IDPs of the peninsula, considers such a decision important for the protection of the rights of the religious community²⁸².

Economic ties. One of the powerful tools for the occupier to break the ties between the civilian population and Ukraine was the economic leverage in the occupied territories²⁸³. Changing the currency, forcing the re-registration of business entities and property rights of Ukrainian legal entities and individuals under Russian law, with the threat of deprivation of such rights in case of refusal to re-register, became a lever of subjugation of the population to the Russian legal reality. In addition, the prolonged occupation of the Ukrainian territories demonstrates the tendency of the Russian Federation to create conditions for the reduction of small and medium-sized businesses in the occupied territories, and sometimes doing business is simply impossible due to the consequences of fighting, expropriation and confiscation of property and land by the occupying forces, etc. All this, in turn, creates conditions in the TOT of Ukraine where the economic security of the civilian population directly depends on the willingness to work for the occupying authorities and enterprises of various forms. At the same time, working in the private sector and developing one's own business in the TOT of Ukraine, which allegedly allows people to avoid contact with the occupier, is still impossible without paying taxes to the occupation authorities and corresponding registration under the legislation of the Russian Federation.

However, during the years of Russian armed aggression, the Ukrainian state has not demonstrated a proper strategy or a predictable policy for maintaining economic relations with the population of the occupied territories. For example, six months after the occupation of Crimea, the law on the so-called free economic zone "Crimea" was adopted. Despite the alleged desire to preserve economic life on the temporarily occupied peninsula, it was not possible to realize this intention. The adopted regulations actually became the basis for further discriminatory restrictions on citizens of Ukraine registered in the TOT of Crimea in terms of access to Ukrainian banking and other financial services (this approach did not apply to all occupied Ukrainian territories). This contributed significantly to the severing of Crimeans' economic ties with the state, especially in the banking sector. The relevant legislation and restrictions were abolished by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine only in 2021²⁸⁴.

Since the beginning of the occupation of Ukrainian territories in 2014, the state has demonstrated tacit consent to the fact that citizens are engaged in economic activities under occupation (or even loyal attitude, given the formal conditions of the free economic zone "Crimea"), but after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022, criminal legislation was amended to punish various forms of collaboration. In particular, they contain concepts such as "economic activity" or the transfer of "material resources", which are interpreted extremely broadly and uncertainly in investigative and judicial practice. According to the research²⁸⁵ of human

282 Metropolitan Klyment criticized the government for inaction on religious issues of ethnic Ukrainians in the occupied Crimea. ZMINA. 13.05.2024. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/mytropolyt-klyment-rozkrytykuvav-uryad-za-bezdiyalnist-u-religijnyh-pytanny-ah-etnichnyh-ukrayinciv-v-okupovanomu-krymu/>

283 On the patterns and actions of the Russian Federation on human rights violations in various spheres for the subjugation of the population of the occupied territories, see section 3.6.

284 On the invalidation of the Law of Ukraine "On the Creation of the Free Economic Zone "Crimea" and on the Peculiarities of Economic Activity in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine" and amendments to some legislative acts of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine of November 21, 2021 No. 1618-IX. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1618-20>

285 There are already more than 8,000 cases of collaboration in Ukraine: what is wrong with them? Here is a report of human rights defenders. ZMINA. 02.08.2024. URL: <https://zmina.ua/media/v-ukrayini-uzhe-ponad-8-tysyach-sprav-pro-kolaboracziyu-shho-z-nymy-ne-tak-perekazuyemo-zvit-pravozahysnykiv/>

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rights organizations, this category of crimes, according to the established practice, may include both the production of food, the performance of any labor activity in the TOT of Ukraine, even in exchange for non-financial remuneration, and the payment of taxes to the aggressor state. Such approaches can have a negative impact on reintegration processes and already have a negative effect on the intensification of fears of the TOT population and, accordingly, on the severing of ties with the state.

The current situation with the development of compensation mechanisms for damaged or destroyed property and other losses as a result of Russian aggression is also worrying. Established under the auspices of the Council of Europe²⁸⁶, the Register of Damages Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has a mandate to work only with consequences and losses after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in 2022. Therefore, the lack of proper communication and action on the part of the state will negatively affect the sense of support of the State of Ukraine for the residents of the territories occupied by the Russian Federation since 2014. The relevant legislation²⁸⁷ on the settlement of property damaged or destroyed as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation now provides for the settlement of

movable and immovable property damaged or destroyed since 2014. However, only residential real estate damaged or destroyed after February 24, 2022 is de facto recorded. Recording of movable property, non-residential property, property to which access is lost, and any property in these categories until 2022 has not been implemented.

Among the positive practices of the state in this matter, it is worth mentioning attempts to provide an audit of losses incurred as a result of the war²⁸⁸ or occupation of certain regions²⁸⁹, as well as the development of plans for the restoration of certain currently occupied regions. Thus, on the initiative of the authorities, economic strategies for the restoration of certain occupied regions were developed and presented, such as the Strategy for the Recovery of Crimea after De-occupation²⁹⁰, the concept of the recovery of Melitopol²⁹¹ and the plan for the revival of the city of Mariupol²⁹². And the very need to develop economic recovery policies is recognized at the state level as one of the important objectives in overcoming the consequences of the war²⁹³. At present, however, these are developments that will have an impact on reintegration and recovery processes, but do not have a direct significant impact on maintaining relations with the population of the TOT of Ukraine under prolonged occupation.

286 On the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Losses Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine: Resolution CM/Res(2023)3 dated May 12, 2023 URL: <http://surl.li/fmcswl>

287 On compensation for damage and destruction of certain categories of immovable property as a result of hostilities, terrorist acts, sabotage caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and the State Register of property damaged and destroyed as a result of hostilities, terrorist acts, sabotage caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine: Law of Ukraine dated December 11, 2024 No. 2923-IX. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2923-20#Text>

288 Report on direct losses of infrastructure from destruction as a result of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine as of the beginning of 2024. Kyiv School of Economics. April 2024 URL: https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/01.01.24_Damages_Report.pdf; Draft Plan for the Recovery of Ukraine Materials of the working group "Audit of losses incurred as a result of the war". Official website of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. July 2022 URL: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/recoveryrada/ua/audit-of-war-damage.pdf>; Environmental damage from the war. Official website of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine. URL: <https://mepr.gov.ua/topics/novyny/zbytky-dovkillyu-vid-vijny/>

289 Estimation of Ukraine's economic losses from the temporary occupation of the Crimean peninsula. Center for Economic Strategies. 16.07.2021. URL: <https://ces.org.ua/assessment-of-ukraines-economic-losses-from-crimea/>

290 Strategy for the restoration of Crimea after de-occupation. Official website of the Mission of the President of Ukraine in ARC. 12.09.2023. URL: <https://ppu.gov.ua/documents/strategiia-vidnovlennia-krymu-pislia-deokupatsii/>

291 The concept of recovery of Melitopol. Restart. URL: <https://www.restartfuture.org/projects/koncepciya-vidnovlennya-melitopolya>

292 Plan for the revival of the city of Mariupol. Mariupol Reborn project website. URL: <https://remariupol.com/>

293 Ihor Marchuk: Ecological and economic recovery of the de-occupied territories is an important task of the Government and the Parliament. Official website of the Verkhovna Rada. 05.11.2024. URL: https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/news_kom/255331.html; Economic Recovery of Donetsk Region – Plans and Obstacles. Anti-Crisis Media Center 12.08.2024. URL: <https://acmc.ua/ekonomichne-vidnovlennya-donechchyny-planu-ta-perepony/>

III. The State's response to the population on the ways to achieve justice is now mostly reduced to the judiciary, which is at the same time important to ensure the inevitability of punishment for international crimes, but also a certain limitation of the instruments to achieve justice and a challenge to the capacity of the judicial system.

Since the beginning of the Russian aggression in 2014, the main scope of work on documenting human rights violations in the state has been taken over by human rights organizations, which, unlike state institutions, sometimes not only had access to these territories, but also enjoyed more trust on the part of witnesses and victims. In fact, since 2016, a consistent development of the work and architecture of the national law enforcement system for the investigation of international crimes has begun. Specialization and adoption of the relevant strategy of the Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, strengthening the Crimean investigative bodies in exile, and the creation in 2019 in Donetsk and Luhansk structures of pre-trial investigation bodies and prosecutor's offices of specialized structural units dealing with crimes committed during the armed aggression and related international crimes. Subsequently,

as part of the PGO, the relevant Department of Supervision in Criminal Proceedings for Crimes Committed in the Context of Armed Conflict was established, which further enabled the law enforcement system to properly respond to the large-scale consequences of the Russian invasion in 2022.

As a result of the efforts of ten years, the state has developed a unique experience of cooperation of human rights organizations with the prosecutor's office and law enforcement agencies in documenting crimes, collecting evidence and working with digital evidence and in the absence of access to the commission of a violation, promoting the professional development of specialists, preparing (in particular, joint with non-governmental organizations) appeals to the ICC Prosecutor's Office²⁹⁴ and interaction with it,²⁹⁵ and building victims' trust in the investigation system, etc. After the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation and the corresponding amendments to the criminal procedural legislation on the consideration and investigation of cases in absentia (in the absence of a suspect or accused), more and more cases end with court verdicts. At the same time, despite the recognition of the ICC jurisdiction over crimes due to the war on the territory of Ukraine²⁹⁶, it was only in 2024 that the government ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC and amendments to it, and is currently working on implementing legislation in the field of criminal justice.

294 "The information message to the ICC was based on the materials of criminal proceedings of the Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomy regarding the illegal persecution of journalists in the Crimea" – Ihor Ponochovnyi. Official website of the Prosecutor's Office OF the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol 25.02.2021. URL: https://ark.gp.gov.ua/en/news.html?_m=-publications&_t=rec&id=290053&fp=150

295 International cooperation of the Attorney General's Office. Key areas and outcomes. Systemic cooperation with the International Criminal Court. Official UCP website. 12.02.2024. URL: <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/miznarodne-spivrobitnictvo-ofisu-general-nogo-prokurora-klyucovi-napryami-ta-rezultati>

296 Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the International Criminal Court on Ukraine's recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over the commission of crimes against humanity by senior officials of the state, which led to particularly grave consequences and mass murder of Ukrainian citizens during peaceful protests in the period from November 21, 2013 to February 22, 2014 No. 790-VII dated February 25, 2014. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/790-18#Text>; On the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On the Recognition by Ukraine of the Jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court Regarding the Commission of Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes by Senior Officials of the Russian Federation and Leaders of the "DPR "and" LPR" Terrorist Organizations that led to Particularly Serious Consequences and Mass Murder of Ukrainian Citizens": Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of February 4, 2015 No. 145-VIII URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/145-19#Text>

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As of the time of preparation of the Report, public data on the PGO website shows that more than 150,000 international crimes and more than 20,000 crimes against the foundations of national security were recorded during the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. However, the PGO has not published similar data on numerous crimes committed by the occupier since the beginning of the aggression in 2014. Therefore, the volume and array of crime data is actually several times greater, and their investigation on such a scale is a challenge for any law enforcement and judicial system. Therefore, the development and provision of effective investigations of international crimes, in particular those committed under occupation, still requires a significant strengthening of the capacity of the system of pre-trial investigation and justice, changes in criminal and criminal procedural legislation, strengthening the capacity of the bar, building a system of protection and support for victims and witnesses²⁹⁷.

Still, numerous studies, in particular by the Sociological Group “Rating”²⁹⁸, over the past few years have demonstrated a steady trend towards justice, primarily through ensuring justice for the most serious crimes. Similarly, the state continues to communicate the topic of justice mainly through ensuring justice for crimes as a result of the war.

Accordingly, the law enforcement system has become in fact the key entry point for all the expectations of the victims of the war and occupation to realize justice for the consequences of the war. In contrast, the results of the study²⁹⁹ on the attitude of the population to international war crimes in Ukraine show that although justice for vic-

tims of the most serious crimes is important (more than 90% of respondents), 83% do not want to participate in this justice. More than half of the respondents noted that excessive bureaucratization, lack of information and the length of processes are a barrier for victims on the way to justice. More than 60% consider absentee proceedings, within the framework of which most of the trials regarding the war are currently taking place, ineffective. Among the requests for assistance from the state, they primarily indicate the need to receive social (42%) and psychological (38%) assistance, as well as physical protection (26%).

Therefore, both public demand and international approaches³⁰⁰ to overcoming the consequences of the war confirm that justice for international crimes is only one of many components of justice. Ignoring its other components may not only reduce the state’s capacity of building a safe recovery and overcoming the consequences of the war, but also become a significant obstacle in maintaining relations with the population of the currently occupied territories. Thus, for example, after the beginning of a full-scale invasion, changes were made to the national criminal legislation regarding the accountability for collaborative activities. The disposition of Article 111¹ of the Criminal Code of Ukraine needs to be revised due to its non-compliance with the requirements of legal certainty and reintegration measures for persons who have not committed socially dangerous acts. Currently, the law enforcement system generates thousands of proceedings against citizens of Ukraine who in one form or another cooperate with the occupier, whether they remained in the occupation and continued their work

297 Needs Assessment of Ukraine’s Justice System: Delivering Meaningful Justice to the Victims and Survivors of the Armed Conflict. Website of the Ukrainian Legal Advisory Group. 2024. URL: <https://ulag.org.ua/reports-and-materials/needs-assessment-ukraines-justice-system/>

298 The study “Justice in the Context of Russian Armed Aggression”. Website of the sociological group “Rating”. 13.08.2024. URL: <https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/justice-context-russian-armed-aggression.html>

299 The results of the study of the Kharkiv Institute for Social Research “Attitude of the population to international war crimes in Ukraine”. Website of the Ukrainian Legal Advisory Group. 2024. URL: <http://surl.li/jhbylr>

300 Transitional Justice. UNDP official website. URL: <https://www.undp.org/rolhr/justice/transitional-justice>

there. This step was considered as a certain prevention of such cooperation at the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. However, the state still has no other answer to the cooperation of citizens with the occupier, except for criminal punishment. Not only does this create an additional excessive burden on the law enforcement system. It is also a source of fueling the fears of most citizens from the occupied territories who have not committed socially dangerous actions, and, accordingly, a significant component of the rupture of ties with the population of the TOT of Ukraine.

Long-term studies of public opinion demonstrate a steady tendency of Ukrainians to reduce the level of condemnation of the actions of the civilian population under occupation, as well as the possibility of applying additional extrajudicial mechanisms of such responsibility, in particular by preventing / removing from power those who cooperated with the occupier³⁰¹. These and other trends once again testify that ensuring a sense of justice for the consequences of the war cannot and should not be reduced only to the instruments of justice.

Therefore, the state's approach to communication and the general response to society's demand for justice requires a conceptual revision. Additional attention from the authorities is needed on topics such as social cohesion and the fight against stigma experienced by residents of the TOT of Ukraine and IDPs. The policy of memory and memorialization at both the state and regional levels requires careful attention, and they will also contribute to reducing social tensions and conflicts in the context of future recovery in the liberated territories. Another tool for achieving justice and security,

restoring trust in communities, including in the liberated territories, can be inspections (or lustration). This tool allows not only to eliminate the excessive level of criminalization of various forms of cooperation with the occupier, but also will help to remove the fears of the TOT population, forming important components of the expected policy of restoring life after de-occupation.

IV. The political and legal measures taken by the Ukrainian authorities to counter the aggression of the Russian Federation and human rights violations in the TOT of Ukraine create important precedents for recording and assessing the consequences of the occupation. At the same time, the response of international political and human rights mechanisms to human rights violations in the TOT of Ukraine is mostly ignored by the Russian Federation. This response is mostly in the form of declarative records rather than practical countermeasures and protection against violations.

Since the beginning of the occupation of Ukrainian territories in 2014, Ukraine has taken an active position on political and legal measures to counter Russian aggression and human rights violations in the occupied territories at the international level.

Thus, on March 27, 2014, the first UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/262 was adopted³⁰², expressing support for the territorial integrity and unity of Ukraine, and

301 Almost 90% of the respondents believe that in addition to the trial, other mechanisms of ensuring justice (lustration commissions, establishing the truth about the events of the war, compensation to victims) should be applied. The study "Justice in the Context of Russian Armed Aggression". Website of the sociological group "Rating". 2024. URL: <https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/justice-context-russian-armed-aggression.html>

302 Territorial integrity of Ukraine: Resolution adopted by the General Assembly No. 68/262. Official website of the United Nations. 27.03.2014. URL: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRes%2F68%2F262&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

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pointing out the illegitimacy of any territorial changes, in particular through the so-called “referendum”, which was organized and held under the control of Russian troops in the occupied Crimea. 100 countries supported the resolution. On April 7, 2022, in response to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which resulted in serious human rights violations, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution ES-11/3³⁰³ to suspend Russia’s membership in the UN Human Rights Council.

During the armed aggression, dozens of resolutions of international and interparliamentary organizations supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemning human rights violations in the TOT of Ukraine were adopted³⁰⁴.

Thus, since 2016, Ukraine has annually submitted a resolution on the human rights situation in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation for consideration by the UN General Assembly. In 2023, the scope of the resolution was extended to all temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which is reflected in the title of the document: “The human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol”. The purpose of the resolution is to protect the rights of Ukrainian citizens, to maintain the focus of international attention on the problem of ensuring human rights in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, to ensure close monitoring by the UN. For its implementation, the UN Secretary General prepares relevant reports (11 reports have already been published), etc.

Since 2014, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has adopted nearly 40 resolutions condemning the actions of the Russian Federation aimed at violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, as well as flagrant violations of human rights, persecution and violation of the rights of indigenous peoples in the occupied Ukrainian territories, and other resolutions related to countering the consequences of aggression.

In the summer of 2014, the UN Human Rights Council adopted resolution 26/30 “Cooperation and assistance to Ukraine in the field of human rights”³⁰⁵, which established the practice of holding regular interactive dialogues on Ukraine, in particular to discuss the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in Ukraine, prepared on the basis of the work of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. In addition, four other resolutions were adopted, one of which, in particular, established the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Ukraine to investigate, document, and identify perpetrators of violations of human rights, international humanitarian law, and other crimes in connection with the Russian aggression in order to further ensure accountability. And more than 20 resolutions of the European Parliament on the consequences of a full-scale war, including human rights violations, as a result of the Russian occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine.

In addition, during the war, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine repeatedly adopted relevant statements³⁰⁶, appealed to international or-

303 Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council: Resolution adopted by the General Assembly No. ES-11/3. Official website of the United Nations. 08.04.2022. URL: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2FES-11%2F3&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

304 For a list of resolutions and other important international documents related to the condemnation of Russian aggression and human rights violations in the TOT, prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine at the request of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, see Annex 1.

305 Cooperation and assistance to Ukraine in the field of human rights: UN Human Rights Council Resolution No. 26/30 of 15 July 2014 . URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/775246?ln=ru&v=pdf>

306 On the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of Ukraine “On repulsing the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and overcoming its consequences and overcoming its consequences” Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dated April 21, 2015 No. 337-VIII. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/337-19#Text>

ganizations and parliaments of the world to condemn the Russian aggression³⁰⁷, flagrant violations of human rights as a result of the occupation of Ukrainian territories, the illegal “elections” in the occupied territories³⁰⁸ or the importance of developing policies for the reintegration of the TOT³⁰⁹. This is important not only to draw attention outside Ukraine to the issue of human rights violations resulting from the Russian aggression, but also to form a certain internal agenda within the country and to send signals of support to Ukrainian citizens under occupation.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the parliaments of at least 40 countries have adopted more than 240 decisions in support of Ukraine’s territorial integrity, condemning aggression, violations of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples as a result of the temporary occupation of certain parts of the territory of Ukraine by the Russian Federation since 2014, etc. In contrast, none of the parliaments of African countries took any decisions in support of Ukraine. This is despite the fact that many countries of this continent have also suffered from wars and faced the challenges of overcoming the consequences of the most serious crimes against their civilian population.

Among the important initiatives of Ukraine, in particular to promote human rights violations as a result of the occupation, is the establishment of the International Crimean Platform³¹⁰ in 2021, as well as

the Global Peace Summit³¹¹ and support for their work.

These and other actions and decisions at the international level are important not only for the continuation of the policy of “non-recognition”, the strengthening of sanctions against the Russian Federation and the dissemination of information about flagrant violations of human rights under the occupation, but also for further processes of restoration and de-occupation, when Ukraine and the world will face the question of how to support the restoration of state control over the previously occupied territories. However, the resolutions adopted over the years by the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and other organizations are not legally binding documents, are of an advisory nature and are mostly ignored by the Russian Federation.

Decisions of the relevant international courts, whose extension of jurisdiction was approved by the Russian Federation or Ukraine (as in the case of the ICC), could be binding on the Russian Federation. The state, often in close cooperation with Ukrainian human rights organizations, has initiated appeals to almost all major international mechanisms for the protection of human rights. For example, in 2017, Ukraine filed a complaint with the International Court of Justice regarding Russia’s violation of its obligations under the International Convention for the

307 On the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “On the aggression of the Russian Federation in the Black and Azov Seas and the Kerch Strait”: Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dated September 20, 2022 No. 2595-IX. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2595-IX#Text> ; On the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the United Nations, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Guam Parliamentary Assembly, the national parliaments of the world on the recognition of the Russian Federation as an aggressor state: Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dated January 27, 2015 No. 129-VIII. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/129-19#Text>

308 On the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the governments and parliaments of foreign states, international organizations, parliamentary assemblies in connection with the Russian Federation holding “presidential elections” in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine: Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dated March 14, 2024 No. 3609-IX. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3609-IX#Text>

309 On the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the steadfastness of the state policy of Ukraine on the de-occupation and reintegration of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol: Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine dated September 4, 2024 No. 3949-IX. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3949-IX#Text>

310 Official website of the International Crimean Platform. URL: <https://crimea-platform.org/>

311 Today is the day when the world begins to bring a just peace closer - the speech of the President of Ukraine at the first plenary session of the Global Peace Summit. Official website of the President of Ukraine. 15.06.2024. URL: <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/sogodni-den-koli-svit-pochinaye-nablizhzhati-spravedlivij-mir-91561>

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Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In the same year, the Court decided to apply provisional measures against Russia, according to which the latter should in the territory of occupied Crimea (1) refrain from maintaining or applying new restrictions on the rights of the Crimean Tatar community to maintain its representative institutions, including the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people; (2) ensure access to education in the Ukrainian language. On January 31, 2024, the Court announced the final decision in the case, ruling that Russia had violated the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by implementing its education system in the territory of the temporarily occupied Crimea since 2014 in such a way that the Ukrainian language suffered extreme repression in its use.

In response to the use of numerous administrative practices by the Russian Federation in the occupied territories, resulting in human rights violations, Ukraine filed several applications to the ECHR.

Subsequently, in the case of *Ukraine v. Russia (concerning Crimea)* (No. 20958/14 and No. 38334/18)³¹², the ECHR, in accordance with its practice, within a rather short period of time, established that the territory of the Crimean Peninsula has been under the control of the Russian Federation since at least February 27, 2014 (i.e. even before the so-called “referendum”). It also recognized the existence of administrative practices on the part of the Russian Federation resulting in human rights viola-

tions in the TOT of the Crimean Peninsula, such as enforced disappearances and the lack of effective investigation into them; ill-treatment; illegal deprivation of liberty; illegal automatic imposition of Russian citizenship; persecution of non-ROC religious organizations; cessation of activities of Ukrainian media; prohibition of public meetings and arrest of their organizers; expropriation of property of civilians and businesses without compensation; restriction of freedom of movement between the peninsula and the government-controlled territory of Ukraine, etc.

In another decision in the case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (No. 8019/16, No. 43800/14 and No. 28525/20)³¹³ the Court established that the relevant territories in the east of Ukraine have been under the control of the Russian Federation since May 11, 2014. The Court also confirmed the systematic nature of the main violations cited by Ukraine in its complaint, including killings, imprisonment, torture, etc.

These decisions not only determine the date of the beginning of the occupation of the Ukrainian territories by Russia, which on the legal level refutes the talking points of Russian propaganda about the “popular will” and “voluntary accession” of territories. It also defines important legal precedents of violations as a result of the occupation, the principles of further responsibility of the Russian Federation for such violations, in particular, if the Russian Federation wishes to return to the Council of Europe in the future³¹⁴.

Currently, the ECHR is considering three other cases “Ukraine v. Russia” on the kill-

312 Case of *Ukraine v. Russia (Re Crimea)* (Applications nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18). HUDOC database of ECHR practice. 25.06.2024. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-235139>

Case “Ukraine v. Russia (concerning Crimea)” under No. 20958/14 and No. 38334/18. Website of the Virtual Museum of Russian Aggression. URL: <https://rusaggression.gov.ua/ua/sprava-ukraina-proty-rosii-shchodo-krymu-za--2095814-ta--3833418-0cf-f9808a21c12019f8f5c3357383f40.html>

313 Case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (Applications nos. 8019/16, 43800/14 and 28525/20). HUDOC database of ECHR practice. 30.11.2022. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-222889>

314 On September 16, 2022, Russia ceased to be a party to the European Convention on Human Rights in accordance with the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe CM/Res(2022) on the termination of the membership of the Russian Federation in the Council of Europe. Official website of the CM of the Council of Europe. 16.03.2022. URL: <https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a5da51>

ings of opponents of the Russian Federation (No. 10691/21), on the detention of Ukrainian sailors and ships in the Kerch Strait in 2018 (No. 55855/18) and on the crimes of the Russian military during a full-scale invasion of Ukraine (No. 11055/22).

In addition, after the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the relevant statements on the recognition of the jurisdiction of the ICC since November 2013, the development and strengthening of the national law enforcement system, the state intensified its work with the consequences of international crimes. In particular, the Criminal Procedure Code has been amended to include provisions on cooperation with the ICC. At present, the ICC is actively working on the consequences of the war in Ukraine (since 2014 as part of a preliminary examination of the situation, and since March 2022 as part of an investigation as a result of an appeal by 42 states). Since 2025, Ukraine is a full member of the ICC. The ICC prosecutor has already issued four arrest warrants, including for Russian President Vladimir Putin³¹⁵ and high-ranking military commanders³¹⁶. This has already become a significant obstacle for the leadership of the Russian Federation in attending international events³¹⁷, but there is a disregard for the orders issued by the ICC by individual member states of the Court³¹⁸.

The implementation of the above-mentioned decisions of international courts, although mostly actually postponed in time due to Russia's position and ignoring its international obligations since the beginning of the aggression, but they have obviously

already become important precedents of international legal practice. As well as part of the prevention of possible attempts to violate the territorial integrity of countries, defining a wide range of human rights violations and responsibility for such violations as a result of aggression and occupation of territories. In addition, the implementation of these decisions should become one of the requirements for the Russian Federation in the future, when this country returns to the civilized world, for the lifting of sanctions, etc.

When assessing the achievements and results of the state in the field of international advocacy and protection of human rights within international legal platforms, it is important to note the unique experience of the state's cooperation with non-governmental organizations in documenting the crimes of the Russian Federation during the occupation, developing legal strategies for protection, preparing appeals to international courts, as well as further promoting the issue of human rights violations during the occupation on the international agenda. Often, it was non-governmental organizations that were the first to document certain crimes committed by the Russian Federation as a result of the occupation, and also sought to initiate relevant international human rights mechanisms³¹⁹, etc. This experience is an important achievement and strengthens the State's ability not only to achieve justice for all victims of the consequences of the war, but also to build trust in the authorities and maintain relations with the population of the TOT of Ukraine.

315 Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova. Official website of the ICC. 17.03.2023. URL: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and>

316 Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Sergei Ivanovich Kobylash and Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov. Official website of the ICC. 05.03.2024. URL: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-sergei-ivanovich-kobylash-and>

317 Putin will not go to the G20 in Brazil, where he would have to be arrested under an ICC warrant. Suspilne News. 18.10.2024. URL: <https://suspilne.media/861163-putin-ne-poide-na-g20-u-braziliu-de-jogo-mali-b-arestuvati-za-orderom-mks/>

318 Putin came to Kazakhstan for the SCO summit, where they have the right to arrest him. ZMINA. 03.07.2024. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/putin-pryihav-do-kazahstanu-na-samit-shos-tam-mayut-pravo-jogo-areshtuvaty/>

319 The OSCE supported the IPMI's call to launch the Moscow Mechanism on Ukrainian Civilian Hostages. MIPL. 29.02.2024. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/obsye-pidtrymala-zaklyk-mipl-zapustyty-moskovskiy-mehanizm-shhodo-ukrayinskyh-zyvilnyh-zaruchnykiv/>

SECTION 4

SPECIAL REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN THE TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

V. The practices and patterns of human rights violations used by Russia in the TOT are mostly viewed and evaluated internationally in a humanitarian rather than a security context. This limits the ability to respond and counter Russian aggression.

As noted above, during the ongoing Russian aggression, the Ukrainian government and numerous non-governmental organizations have made great efforts to consolidate the policy of recognition of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Russian Federation in the TOT of Ukraine in the resolutions of various international and intergovernmental institutions, decisions of governments and parliaments of partner countries. Moreover, in accordance with the ECHR decision in the case of *Ukraine v. Russia* (concerning Crimea), it was precisely the existence of numerous administrative practices leading to human rights violations as a result of the Russian occupation of the peninsula that was recognized.

The results of the analysis of numerous sources in this Report indicate the instrumentalization of human rights violations by the Russian Federation for the seizure of Ukrainian territories and the subjugation of their population. In fact, the issue of the use and instrumentalization of human rights violations for the purpose of conquering territory, conquering populations and waging aggressive war requires an in-depth study, taking into account in particular the experience of other European countries. Thus, the adoption after the end of the Second World War of a number of international instruments for the protection of human rights and the

protection of civilians in times of war, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights³²⁰ and the relevant Geneva Convention³²¹, have actually consolidated the world consensus on these issues. Therefore, such criminal practices in modern history pose many challenges precisely for the rethinking of security measures and the protection of democratic states.

The consequences of the Russian aggression in Ukraine have been extensively documented by state, national, and international organizations. The places where these important issues are raised tend to focus on humanitarian and human rights issues rather than security issues. At the same time, the amount of data collected and the activities of the Ukrainian authorities aimed at European integration and cooperation with NATO create a field for studying such best practices on the example of Russian aggression against Ukraine in connection with Russia's mass practice of violating the rights of the civilian population as a tool for seizing territories and subjugating the population on them. It requires a rethinking of the approach to assessing such large-scale violations as a de facto deliberate method of warfare and a threat to the security of states.

Thus, the assessment of possible risks and hybrid threats, especially for European countries geographically bordering the Russian Federation, has long been the subject of studies and assessments not only in intergovernmental human rights platforms, but also in security platforms³²². In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, NATO members are taking steps to strengthen their resilience to the hybrid threats that Russia in particular uses against them (cyber-attacks, disinformation, energy and migration blackmail)³²³.

320 European Convention on Human Rights of 4 November 1950 URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_004#Text

321 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154

322 NATO welcomes the opening of the European Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats. Official NATO website. 11.04.2017. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news_143143.htm

323 A symposium in Finland brought together experts and industry representatives to strengthen NATO's response to hybrid threats. Official NATO website. 18.12.2023. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_221179.htm?selectedLocale=en

The state and civil society organizations are already trying to include the consequences and challenges of human rights violations resulting from the occupation of Ukrainian territories in the security agenda. This is being done, for example, within the framework of the Black Sea Security Conference, which is being held as part of the activities of the International Crimean Platform (a mechanism aimed at the de-occupation of Crimea, the restoration of the Black Sea, European and global security).

The practice of instrumentalization of human rights violations for warfare by the Russian Federation, analyzed in this Report, can be further universalized and scaled up by the Russian Federation to prepare and conduct hostilities or occupy the territories of other states. In fact, this is demonstrated by the experience of the Russian occupation of Ukrainian territories from 2014 to 2024.

Many examples of Russia's hybrid influence on the civilian population in NATO countries are already known, such as the influence on democratic elections through information technologies and social media in Romania³²⁴, or the influence on the countries of the Baltic region through mass passportization and colonization of Russian-speaking citizens³²⁵ or the influence on religious associations by persons abroad who support aggression or call for war³²⁶, or the systemic information influence through Russia's propaganda media³²⁷, etc. Nevertheless, the significant development of artificial intelligence capabilities in recent years could optimize and

strengthen the efficiency of collecting and analyzing a wide range of data on certain patterns of preparation for the seizure of territory and impact on the civilian population, which can be used by Russia in third countries, taking into account the experience of Ukraine.

Therefore, the issue of studying Ukraine's experience in countering large-scale Russian practices of instrumentalizing human rights violations for the conquest of Ukrainian territories and population can be important both for strengthening the protection and restoration of the rights of victims of war, and for building security in the region, transforming and strengthening NATO capabilities. To this end, the activities of the Center of Excellence may be established and developed in Ukraine on the basis of a network of *Centers of Excellence*³²⁸, with the participation of interested countries, acting as a catalyst for change and strengthening NATO capabilities. Such a center could focus on collecting and analyzing data (especially from third countries) and developing solutions, taking into account NATO standards, to counter the use of violations of civilian rights and democratic means in the preparation and conduct of war and the conquest of territory. Such activities can become an important complement and a specific area of knowledge for expanding the areas of study of hybrid methods of warfare³²⁹, which, among other things, is already in the focus of NATO's attention.

324 The United States calls for an investigation into Russia's interference in the Romanian elections. Radio Liberty. 05.12.2024. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-dzhordzhesku-rumuniya-vybory-rosiya-vtruchannya-ssha/33227697.html>

325 Latvia begins the process of expelling Russian citizens. Postimees. 18.01.2024. URL: <https://maailm.postimees.ee/7940928/lati-alustab-vene-foderatsiooni-kodanike-valjasaatmise-protsessi>

326 The Estonian government approved a bill to sever ties with the Russian Orthodox Church. Postimees. 23.01.2025. URL: <https://rus.postimees.ee/8178172/pravitelstvo-estonii-utverdilo-zakonoproekt-o-razryve-svyazey-s-rpc>

327 Propaganda channels of the Russian Federation were blocked in Germany. Deutsche Welle. 28.09.2024. URL: <https://www.dw.com/uk/u-nimeccini-zablokuvali-pokaz-rosijskih-propagandistskih-kanaliv/a-70351961>

328 Centres of Excellence. Official NATO website. URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_68372.htm

329 Read more about the work of the Hybrid CoE office in Helsinki, Finland. Official website of Hybrid CoE. URL: <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/>

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Special Report, key recommendations have been formulated for the state authorities of Ukraine and international partners, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of systemic countermeasures and responses to the use of various instruments of occupation by the Russian Federation, in particular through the instrumentalization of human rights violations.

For Ukraine:

- introduce the positions of the deputies on issues of TOT, protection of the rights of IDPs and the population living in the TOT of Ukraine, formation of a policy for the victims of the consequences of the Russian armed aggression in all ministries;
- collect data and analyze the policies and practices applied by the Russian Federation in the TOT of Ukraine, as well as ensure the use of this analysis in the formation and adjustment of state policy on the TOT of Ukraine, in particular through the establishment of a think tank under the relevant central executive body within the Government;
- develop and implement measures to counter the Russian Federation's policy of legal, economic, cultural, and informational integration of the civilian population of the TOT of Ukraine, as well as practices and decisions that will contribute to the maintenance of legal relations with the TOT population (such as recognition of facts of legal significance, facilitation of obtaining passport documents, elimination of existing discriminatory practices in access to rights and services, etc.), in particular by adopting a strategy and plan for the restoration of state authority and the reintegration of the de-occupied territories of Ukraine;
- establish and ensure the activities of the Center of Excellence to study and develop solutions to counter the use of violations of civilian rights and the rules of war as a tool for preparing and waging war, conquering territories (collection and analysis of data, in particular from third countries, development and dissemination of security solutions taking into account NATO standards, as well as preparation of training programs, strengthening of specialists in this field, etc.), with the participation of interested NATO countries in the establishment and development of the Center;
- ensure the full implementation of the State Policy Strategy on Internal Displacement for the period up to 2025 and the operational plan for it, as well as ensure the development of a strategy and an appropriate plan for the next period, to provide assistance to IDPs who are forced to return to the TOT of Ukraine due to difficulties with employment, inaccessibility of housing, etc.;
- develop and adopt a State Strategy on Access to Education for Children and Youth from the TOT of Ukraine, in particular to promote motivation and ensure their access to educational services in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine;
- provide access to analog television and Ukrainian radio broadcasting in the areas near the TOT of Ukraine in order to ensure the search for and development of alternative modern ways and channels of communication with the citizens in the TOT;
- strengthen the capacity of the criminal justice system to ensure justice for the most serious crimes committed in the context of the armed aggression against Ukraine, through the improve-

ment of Ukrainian legislation and advanced training;

- develop and implement a model for the restoration of criminal justice in the de-occupied territories of Ukraine, drawing on the experience of the prosecutor's offices and pre-trial investigation bodies of the regions of Ukraine occupied since 2014;
- ensure the investigation of administrative practices leading to human rights violations and international crimes in the TOT of Ukraine, in particular the identification and bringing to command responsibility of persons involved in their initiation and implementation;
- identify and implement non-judicial means of achieving justice, such as policies of remembrance and commemoration, assistance to victims, restoration of confidence in state authorities, etc.;
- promote scientific and academic research on the policies and actions of the Russian Federation that preceded the temporary occupation of certain regions of Ukraine.

For international partners:

- continue to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine by recognizing all the territories occupied by the Russian Federation as Ukrainian, and the consequences of their illegal incorporation into the Russian Federation as null and void (non-recognition of the imposed citizenship of the Russian Federation, the subjectivity of any "authorities", elected or appointed in these territories, etc.);
- strengthen the military support to the Government of Ukraine to protect the territories under its control and to counter the possible seizure of other

territories and massive violations of the rights of its civilian population under occupation;

- support the establishment of a Center of Excellence in Ukraine (based on the network of Centers of Excellence supporting NATO transformation) to study and develop solutions to counter the use of violations of civilian rights and the rules of war as a tool to prepare for occupation and further subjugation of territories;
- monitor and counter the misuse of the Russian Federation of democratic instruments (functioning of cultural centers, holding of elections and referendums, issuing of passports to citizens of the Russian Federation), as well as Russian narratives in culture, media and education abroad;
- promote the study of the use by the Russian Federation of practices and patterns of systematic violations of human rights, violence against the civilian population, the use of democratic institutions as instruments of war against third countries (Georgia, Moldova, the Republic of Ichkeria and others);
- support the creation and development of Ukrainian studies and academic research, exchange of experiences and best solutions to overcome the consequences of the war, support and reintegration of the victims of the war;
- contribute to strengthening the effectiveness of interparliamentary, political and legal international instruments to effectively counter the use of mass violations of human rights as a tool for seizing territory, in particular by ensuring the inevitability of punishment for such violations and crimes.

Annex



List of resolutions and other important international documents related to the condemnation of Russian aggression and human rights violations in the TOT

<https://ombudsman.gov.ua/uk/prava-civilnih-osib-yaki-postrazhdali-vid-zbrojnogo-konfliktu/spisok-rezolyucij-ta-inshih-vazhlivih-mizhnarodnih-dokumentiv-u-konteksti-zasudzhennya-diyi-rf>



The composition of the Working Group was approved by the Order of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights of September

<https://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/Наказ%20про%20створення%20робочої%20групи.pdf>