

**IPHR**International
Partnership
for Human Rights

Analytical Report

5–18 May 2022

Evidence of war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law committed by the Russian Federation during its campaign of military aggression against Ukraine

During the reporting period, Russian occupying forces continued the mass theft of grain and other foodstuffs in the oblasts of Kherson, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia. There were fresh reports of hundreds of dead civilians buried by Russian soldiers in mass graves near Mariupol. In Mariupol, Russian forces blocked the evacuation of circa 600 wounded Ukrainian soldiers from the Azovstal steel plant. There were new recorded instances of sexual violence, torture, and killings of civilians in the oblasts of Kharkiv and Kyiv – while they were under Russian occupation – and in the occupied Kherson Oblast. The Russian military seek out, detain, and – in some cases – kill Ukrainian veterans that fought in the Donbas. Russian forces continued to bombard eastern regions of Ukraine, pillage private and public property, and detain and deport civilians.

During the reporting period, we documented the following war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law being committed by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation: (1) torture and wilful killings; (2) sexual violence; (3) unlawful attacks on civilians; (4) attacks on civilian objects; (5) attacks on specially protected objects; (6) impeding humanitarian relief and evacuation efforts; (7) forcible transfer of civilian population; (8) filtration camps and other cases of unlawful confinement; (9) pillage and appropriation of property; (10) environmental damage.¹

1) Torture and wilful killings

¹ The number of war crimes committed by Russian forces during the reporting period is not limited to those analysed in this report. The total number is much higher. The cases that were included in this report were analysed as exemplary cases of war crimes and breaches of international humanitarian law committed by Russia.

International criminal law (ICL) and international humanitarian law (IHL) forbid the torture and inhumane treatment of any persons regardless of whether they are military or civilian.² ICL and IHL also forbid making civilians the objects of attack and killing them.³ Torture and wilful killings are analysed in this report in one section since in most of the cases of torture analysed the victims were also found dead. Only a few managed to survive and escape to safety. Violations of the prohibition on killing civilians, as well as torture and inhumane treatment, are grave breaches of IHL.⁴ Both torture and killings also constitute war crimes and/or crimes against humanity.⁵

During the reporting period, there were new records of torture and wilful killings of civilians in towns in the oblasts of Kyiv and Kharkiv that were previously under Russian occupation. There are reports indicating that Russian forces are intentionally killing Ukrainian veterans who participated in the war in the Donbas. Occupying Russian forces continued to bring hundreds of killed civilians to mass graves near Mariupol.

09/05/2022: A grave containing the bodies of three men killed by the Russian military by gunshots to the head and abdomen was found near Makarov, Kyiv Oblast. One of those killed was a Czech citizen.⁶

A refugee from Bucha, Kyiv Oblast, told IPHR in an interview that the Russian military had killed her neighbour and shot at a house from a tank.⁷

The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office has identified a Russian serviceman who, during the occupation of the village of Mokrets, Kyiv Oblast, detained and tortured two local civilians.

² Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 7.1(f); Article 8.2(a)(ii); Geneva Convention (I) of 1949, Article 12(2); Geneva Convention (II) of 1949, Article 12(2); Geneva Convention (III) of 1949, Article 17, Article 87, Article 89; Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 32; Rule 90 of customary IHL.

³ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 7.1(d); Article 8.2(a)(i); Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 32; Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 85 3(a).

⁴ Geneva Convention (I) of 1949, Article 50; Geneva Convention (II) of 1949, Article 51; Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 147.

⁵ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 7.1(f); Article 8.2(a)(ii); Article 7.1(d); Article 8.2(a)(i).

⁶ RFE/RL, "A new grave found in Kyiv Oblast next to Makarov, Czech citizen among those shot dead – police", 17 May 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-makariv-zakhoronennya/31854580.html>.

⁷ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 47.

The suspect and several other servicemen undressed the prisoners and beat them on the head and face in an attempt to obtain information on the Armed Forces of Ukraine.⁸

Local authorities in occupied Mariupol reported that occupying Russian forces continue to bring the bodies of hundreds of civilians to a mass grave near Vinogradny,⁹ close to Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast.¹⁰



Mass grave near Mariupol

⁸ Facebook page of the Prosecutor General's Office, "Inhuman treatment of civilians - one more officer of 'the peacebuilding' mission of RF is charged", 09 May 2022, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pgo.gov.ua/posts/366662875496552>.

⁹ RFE/RL, "A satellite shows another mass grave East of Mariupol, in Vinogradny village - - «Schemy»", 22 April 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-skhemy-vynogradne-bratska-mohyla/31816645.html>.

¹⁰ Telegram channel of Mariupol City Council, "Occupiers celebrate the Victory Day on the bones of Mariupol residents", 9 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/mariupolrada/9552>.



Occupation authorities take washed from mass graves bodies of dead civilians to the shopping center for further reburial

10/05/2022: The Human Rights Committee of Ukraine's *Verkhovna Rada* ("Supreme Council") announced that occupying Russian forces are arresting ATO/OOS veterans. Many of them are then shot, including in the presence of their families.¹¹

In particular, according to one of the refugees interviewed by IPHR, her relative, a veteran of the anti-terrorist operation (ATO), was abducted by the Russian military from his home in one of the occupied villages of Kherson Oblast on 2 April 2022. Around 30 armed soldiers took the man and his daughter out of the house. The daughter was released but the man and his car were taken away in an unknown

¹¹ Suspilne, "Rada informs Russian military kills ATO/OOS veterans", 10 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/237906-u-radi-zaavili-so-rosijski-vijskovi-rozstriluut-veteraniv-atoos/>.

direction. The military searched his yard, as well as neighbouring yards, barns, and gardens. As of 19 April, it had not been possible to make contact with the man.¹²

12/05/2022: CNN published a video dated 16 March 2022 showing the Russian military shooting dead two civilians in the outskirts of Kyiv. A group of Russian servicemen broke into a car dealership. They stopped and searched the owner and the security guard, who came out to them with their hands up. When the soldiers allowed them to leave, the men turned to return to the company's premises, and the soldiers shot them in the back. The owner of the company died on the spot. The wounded security guard was able to reach the premises of the company, where he died of blood loss while waiting for help. The video also shows the military looting the dealership.¹³

16/05/2022: The body of a local resident who was shot in the back and killed was found in Vyshegrad, Kyiv Oblast.¹⁴

In occupied Velyka Oleksandrivka, Kherson Oblast, Russian troops captured and tortured a local resident. When he was released from captivity, he said that the military had broken six of his ribs and pierced his lungs.¹⁵

2) Sexual violence

Rape and other forms of sexual violence constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, and a breach of IHL.¹⁶ Sexual violence can also amount to torture and/or inhumane and degrading treatment – another war crime and a grave breach of IHL.¹⁷

¹² IPHR screening interview with Witness № 2.

¹³ CNN, “Video Shows Russian Soldiers Killing 2 Civilians Before They Ransack a Business”, 12 May 2022, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/11/europe/ukraine-video-russian-soldiers-shoot-civilians/index.html?fbclid=IwAR236HuK5mBTdf51i9ojmk8CYKZaKWHQ6V35D7-8eGsKJyetSrSqkHQqKZY>.

¹⁴ Facebook page of Kyiv Oblast Police, “Police in Bucha finds a body of a local resident of Kolonschyna village killed by the occupiers”, 16 May 2022, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pol.kyivregion/posts/370403288457327>.

¹⁵ Suspilne, “‘Six ribs broken and pierced lungs’. A story of a resident of Kherson Oblast tortured by Russian military for two days in captivity”, 16 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/240167-zlamali-sist-reber-i-probili-legeni-istoria-zitela-hersonsini-akogo-dvi-dobi-u-poloni-katuvali-rosijski-vijskovi/>.

¹⁶ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 7(1)(g); Article 8.2(b)(iv); Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 75(2)(b); Article 76(1); Article 77(1); Common Article 3(1)(c) of the 1949 Geneva Conventions; Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 27; Rule 93 of customary IHL.

¹⁷ For more information, see *Amnesty International, Rape And Sexual Violence Human Rights Law And Standards In The International Criminal Court*, Section 6, Acts Of Rape And Sexual Violence Causing Severe Pain And Suffering Must Be Charged As Torture, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ior530012011en.pdf>.

16/05/2022: Two Russian servicemen raped two women in a village in the Russian-occupied area of Kyiv Oblast. They also shot the husband of one of the victims.¹⁸

17/05/2022: Ukrainian law enforcement agencies identified a Russian soldier, Bulat Fasakhov, who raped a local woman during the occupation of a settlement in Kyiv Oblast. Fasakhov broke into the home of the woman's family in Brovary District, locked everyone except the woman in the basement and, while threatening to shoot the whole family, raped her. A few days later, he came to the victim's home again with three other soldiers and the group took turns raping her, threatening to kill her.¹⁹

3) Unlawful attacks on civilians

*IHL and ICL prohibit both intentional and indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations or against individuals not directly involved in hostilities. Violation of this prohibition during an international armed conflict constitutes a war crime and a violation of IHL.*²⁰

09/05/2022: In Bilohirya, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, the Russian military shot at a car carrying two civilians. The passenger died on the spot and the driver was injured.²¹

10/05/2022: The bodies of three civilians were found in a car on the road near Tsyrukun, Kharkiv Oblast, following its liberation from Russian occupation.²²

12/05/2022: In Kherson Oblast, the Russian military fired at a column of civilian vehicles using artillery. On the morning of 12 May, the occupying forces stopped about one thousand civilian vehicles trying to evacuate. They were released in batches of 200 cars only in the afternoon. At

¹⁸ Sky News, "Ukrainian Women Reveal their Rape Ordeal and Say Russian Soldiers Must 'Be Punished'", 16 May 2022, available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/ukrainian-women-reveal-their-rape-ordeal-and-say-russian-soldiers-must-be-punished-12613584>.

¹⁹ RFE/RL, "Intimidated and raped: law enforcement officers reported a suspicion to another Russian military", 17 May 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-pidozra-viyskovomu-rf/31854517.html>.

²⁰ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b)(i), Article 8.2(b)(iv); Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 51; Rule 6 of customary IHL.

²¹ Telegram channel of the Prosecutor General's Office, "The shelling of cars with civilians in Zaporizhzhia by enemy artillery - an investigation has been launched", 10 May 2022, available at: https://t.me/pgov_ua/4048.

²² Suspilne, "The bodies of three civilians were found on the way out of Kharkiv towards Tsyrukun", 10 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/237757-na-viizdi-z-harkova-u-bik-cirkuniv-znajsl-rozstrilani-tila-troh-civilnih/>.

16:00, the Russian military fired at one of the columns that reached the territory controlled by Ukraine. As a result, a woman and an 11-year-old child were injured.²³

13/05/2022: The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine reported that in one of the occupied villages of Kharkiv Oblast, the Russian military shot civilians from a tank.²⁴

15/05/2022: In Severodonetsk, Luhansk Oblast, the Russian military fired on an evacuation vehicle carrying ten civilians. No one was injured.²⁵

17/05/2022: Near Davydov Brod, Kherson Oblast, Russian troops used a Grad missile system to fire on an evacuating convoy of civilian vehicles. At least three people were killed and six others were injured.²⁶

In Luhansk Oblast, Russian troops used a Grad missile system to fire on an evacuation bus carrying residents from Lysychansk and Severodonetsk. No one was injured.²⁷

²³ Ukrainska Pravda, “Aggressors shelled a convoy of refugees in Kherson region, injuring a woman and a child”, 12 May 2022, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/05/12/7345838/>.

²⁴ Telegram channel of MOI Ukraine, “Russian military shot civilians in Khrakiv Oblast from a tank”, 12 May 2022, available at: https://t.me/mvs_ukraine/12717.

²⁵ Suspilne, “10 people evacuated from Severodonetsk, the vehicle was under gunfire — Hayday”, 15 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/239708-z-severodonecka-evakuuvali-10-ludej-avtomobil-potrapiv-pid-obstril-gajdaj/>.

²⁶ Facebook page of Kherson Oblast Prosecutor’s Office, “As a result of another enemy shelling of a civilian convoy in the Kherson region, civilians are dead and wounded - an investigation has been launched”, 18 May 2022, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pho.gov.ua/posts/369519461876788>.

²⁷ Telegram channel of Sergiy Hayday/ Luhansk OSA, 17 May 2022, available at: https://t.me/serhiy_hayday/6542.



A “bus” for evacuation on Lysychansk - Bakhmut road

4) Attacks on civilian objects

ICL and IHL establish provisions for the general protection of civilian objects and entire towns, villages, dwellings, and buildings which are undefended and which are not military objectives.²⁸ Attacks, reprisals, or other acts of violence against such objects in international conflicts are forbidden and considered war crimes and breaches of IHL.

International law prohibits both intentional and indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects. The prohibition includes attacks that are not directed at a specific military objective; attacks that employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective or whose effects cannot be limited and, thus, strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction; bombardment which treats as a single military objective a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located

²⁸ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b)(ii),(v); Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 52.

*in a city, town, village, or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects; and attacks which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.*²⁹

During the reporting period, Russia continued relentless shelling and bombardments, mostly attacking the oblasts of Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk, and carrying out targeted strikes in other regions.³⁰ In this section, we described only the most notorious cases of attacks that resulted in 87 civilian deaths. The fate of another 11 people that became trapped under the wreckage of a Russian-shelled apartment building remains unknown. Additionally, there is new information about previous Russian shellings of civilian infrastructure in occupied cities in the oblasts of Kharkiv and Donetsk that resulted in 74 civilian deaths.

05/05/2022: In Luhansk Oblast, five people died as a result of Russian shelling of civilian infrastructure between 3 and 5 May 2022.³¹

07/05/2022: In Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast, the Russian military dropped an aerial bomb on a school where 90 people were hiding from shelling. Sixty people died and seven others were injured.³²

On the night of 7-8 May, 11 people were trapped while hiding in the basement of a building that came under Russian fire in Shipilovo, Luhansk Oblast.³³ As of 9 May, neither was it possible to contact them, nor could rescuers remove the debris in order to save their lives due to constant shelling.³⁴

²⁹ Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 51.

³⁰ For more information, see Bellingcat Interactive TimeMap of Incidents of Civilian Harm in Ukraine, available at: <https://ukraine.bellingcat.com/>.

³¹ RFE/RL, “The bodies of several victims were found in the Luhansk Oblast due to shelling by the Russian army – Hayday”, 5 May 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-gayday-luganshchyna-zhertvy/31835266.html>.

³² Telegram channel of Serhiy Hayday/ Luhansk OSA (OMA), “Airstrike on a school in Bilohorivka previously killed 60 people”, 8 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2408>.

³³ Telegram channel, “Serhiy Hayday/ Luhansk OSA (OMA), At night the Russians opened fire on Shipilov. A two-storey house was destroyed”, 8 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2409>.

³⁴ Telegram channel of Serhiy Hayday/ Luhansk OSA (OMA), “Connection lost with 11 people hiding in the basement in Shipilov”, 9 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2433>.



A school in Luhansk region was damaged by shelling

08/05/2022: In Kharkiv Oblast, five civilians were killed and five others were injured by Russian gunfire.³⁵

09/05/2022: In Donetsk Oblast, 12 people were killed and seven others injured as a result of Russian gunfire.³⁶

10/05/2022: In occupied Izyum, Kharkiv Oblast, the bodies of 44 civilians were found beneath the rubble of a five-storey building shelled by Russian troops in March.³⁷

³⁵ Telegram channel of Kharkiv OSA, “On May, 8, the enemy continued shelling the villages of Kharkiv region”, 8 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/kharkivoda/4658>.

³⁶ Suspilne, “In Donetsk region on May, 9, 12 people killed, 7 injured”, 10 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/237714-na-doneccini-9-travna-zaginuli-12-ziteliv-7-otrimali-poranenna/>.

³⁷ Telegram channel of Oleh Synyehubov, head of the Kharkiv Oblast State Administration, “The bodies of 44 dead civilians were found in the temporarily occupied Izyum from under the rubble of a five-storey building, which was destroyed by the occupiers in the first decade of March”, 10 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/synegubov/3159>.

17/05/2022: In Bahmut, Donetsk Oblast, Russian troops fired on a residential building. Five civilians were killed and four others were injured.³⁸ Five civilians in four other cities were also killed by Russian gunfire.³⁹

A resident of Mariupol who managed to leave the city told IPHR in an interview that on 11 March 2022, an airstrike was carried out on an apartment building in the basement where she and 150 other people were hiding. The building split in half. There was a landslide in the basement where people were hiding. Around 30 people were killed. Her area was also shelled by a tank. All the houses near where she lived were destroyed.⁴⁰

5) Attacks on specially protected objects

According to ICL and IHL, certain civilian objects are afforded special protection due to their humanitarian importance. Such objects include, inter alia, historic and cultural objects,⁴¹ hospitals,⁴² and foodstuffs.⁴³

During the reporting period, it became known that the Russian military launched at least four attacks against specially protected objects – three attacks against a hospital and an attack against a museum – and is stealing grain, sunflower seeds, potatoes, cabbage, and beets from occupied territories.

07/05/2022: In Skovorodyntsiivka, Kharkiv Oblast, the Russian military fired on the National Museum of Hryhorii Skovoroda. The museum was completely destroyed.⁴⁴

³⁸ RFE/RL, “The shelling of a house in Bahmut: the death toll rose to five, including a two-year-old child”, 18 May 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-obstril-bahmut-zahybli/31856939.html>.

³⁹ Telegram channel of Pavel Kyrylenko / Donetsk OSA (OMA), “Russia kills civilians!”, 17 May 2022, available at: https://t.me/pavlokyrylenko_donoda/3420?fbclid=IwAR3-qgADiu3BFE-WoKzouYRA6XROGcs8SGxKAKgFscOYksTRTwuNggTcQBU.

⁴⁰ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 9.

⁴¹ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (ix); Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 53; Rule 38 of customary IHL.

⁴² Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (ix); Geneva Convention (I) of 1949, Article 19; Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 18; Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 12; Rule 29 of customary IHL.

⁴³ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (xxv); Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 54; Rule 54 of customary IHL.

⁴⁴ Telegram channel of Oleg Synyehubov, Head of Kharkiv Oblast State Administration, “Russian occupiers continue to destroy the civilian infrastructure of Kharkiv Oblast”, 07 May 2022, available at: https://t.me/synegubov/3111?fbclid=IwAR3IvCmbb73FHSGQsSFXg2-bqccwUuotgvUm_4nC_70dZqfborZd_BvfQRk.



The National Museum of Hryhoriy Skovoroda was completely destroyed

Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian troops have committed around 300 crimes against Ukraine's cultural heritage,⁴⁵ including against religious and historical sites that are under special international legal protection.⁴⁶

10/05/2022: In Mala Lepetykha, Kherson Oblast, occupying Russian forces stole and exported 1,500 tonnes of grain to Crimea. They also stole beets, potatoes, and cabbage. In Polohy, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, occupying Russians seized storage facilities housing sunflower seeds and grain and are preparing to transport them to Russia. In Energodar, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, the Russian military is exporting grain by truck to the occupied Crimean Peninsula. Grain has also been stolen in Volokhov Yar, Kharkiv Oblast.⁴⁷ According to Ukrainian intelligence, grain stolen from Ukraine is transported on cargo vessels flying the Russian flag through the Mediterranean to Syria.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, “ICIP continues to record Russian war crimes against cultural heritage”, 14 May 2022, available at: <https://mkip.gov.ua/news/7142.html>.

⁴⁶ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (ix); Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 53; Rule 38 of customary IHL.

⁴⁷ Facebook page of Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, “Grain Stolen from Ukraine Already in the Mediterranean”, 10 May 2022, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/DefenceIntelligenceofUkraine/posts/309137208064373>.

⁴⁸ Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, “Grain Stolen from Ukraine is Already in Mediterranean”, 10 May 2022, available at: <https://gur.gov.ua/en/content/vykradene-z-ukrainy-zerno-vzhe-v-seredzemnomu-mori.html>.

16/05/2022: In Severodonetsk, Luhansk Oblast, Russian troops fired on the city's multidisciplinary hospital for a third time, damaging two of its buildings.⁴⁹ Three floors of the hospital were damaged and the electricity and water supplies were cut after the first shelling.⁵⁰ At least 10 people were killed in the second shelling.⁵¹

6) Impeding humanitarian relief and evacuation efforts

IHL and ICL have specific provisions to ensure that the civilian population is provided with necessary humanitarian relief during wartime, including food, water, and medicine. The parties to the international armed conflict are obligated to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of relief consignments.⁵² Personnel that transport and distribute relief consignments are also under the protection of IHL.⁵³ Actions that impede humanitarian relief constitute a breach of IHL and can amount to the war crime of starvation of civilians.⁵⁴

Additionally, IHL obligates the parties to a conflict to remove the civilian population, individual civilians, and civilian objects under their control from the vicinity of military objectives.⁵⁵ In besieged or encircled areas, the parties are obligated to ensure the removal of wounded, sick, infirm, and aged persons, as well as children and maternity cases, and ensure the passage of ministers of all religions, medical personnel, and medical equipment on their way to such areas.⁵⁶ Parties to the conflict shall, without delay, take all possible measures to search for and collect the wounded and sick to ensure their adequate care.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Telegram channel of Serhiy Hayday / Luhansk Oblast State Administration (OSA), “Russians hit two buildings of the hospital and the building of ‘Impulse’ in Severodonetsk, airstrikes in Popasna region, ten dead and three wounded”, 17 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2658?single>.

⁵⁰ RFE/RL, “Situation in Luhansk region: four dead, 29 Russian strikes, Severodonetsk hospital damaged”, 28 April 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-sytutsiya-na-luhanshchyni/31824733.html>.

⁵¹ UNIAN, “At least 10 people died in Severodonetsk today due to the occupiers (photo)”, 16 May 2022, available at: <https://www.unian.ua/war/novini-syevyerodonecka-sogodni-cherez-rosiyan-zaginuli-ne-menshe-10-osib-foto-novini-vtorgnennya-rosiji-v-ukrajinu-11828973.html>.

⁵² Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (xxv); Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 23, 59; Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 70; Rule 55 of customary IHL.

⁵³ Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 71.

⁵⁴ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (xxv)

⁵⁵ Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 58; Rule 24 of customary IHL.

⁵⁶ Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 17.

⁵⁷ Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 15.

During the reporting period, Russia repeatedly blocked the evacuation of 600 wounded Ukrainian soldiers from the Azovstal metallurgical complex and they were forced to surrender to the Russian army to save their lives. Russian forces blocked the evacuation of civilians of occupied Izyum and Mariupol, constantly shelled the evacuation route from Luhansk Oblast, and attacked an evacuation vehicle and a humanitarian aid headquarters.

06/05/2022: In Mariupol, Luhansk Oblast, on the territory of the Azovstal steel plant, Russian troops fired on a car which the Ukrainian military was using to evacuate civilians from the plant. As a result of the shelling, one serviceman was killed and six were injured.⁵⁸

06/05/2022: President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported that Russia rejected all solutions offered by Ukraine and international partners to evacuate the Ukrainian military from the besieged Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast.⁵⁹ Almost 1,000 Ukrainian servicemen were at the plant.⁶⁰ Almost 600 people were injured, many severely, and with no medication, nor enough food and water.⁶¹ Ten days after this announcement, on 16 May 2022, the soldiers trapped at the plant were ordered to give up the defence of the facility and save their lives⁶² - they were forced to surrender.⁶³ Russian troops took them to the occupied territory of Donetsk Oblast.⁶⁴ The Ukrainian servicemen who were severely wounded received medical treatment and returned to the territory controlled by Ukraine as a result of the exchange.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Ukrainska Pravda, “Russians Fire on an Evacuation Vehicle Near Azovstal, One Dead”, 06 May 2022, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/6/7344445/>.

⁵⁹ Suspilne, “Russia blocks any suggested option: Zelenskyy on the evacuation of military from Azovstal”, 10 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/238031-rosia-blokue-na-bud-akij-iz-zaproponovanih-variantiv-zelenskij-pro-evakuaciju-vijskovih-z-azovstali/>.

⁶⁰ Suspilne, “Over a thousand Ukrainian military remain on Azovstal — Vereshchuk”, 10 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/237902-na-azovstali-zalisautsa-ponad-tisaca-ukrainskih-vijskovih-veresuk/>.

⁶¹ Ukrainska Pravda, “There are Now About 600 Casualties at Azovstal – Policeman from the Factory”, 14 May 2022, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/14/7346196/>.

⁶² <https://www.facebook.com/100069092624537/posts/318566267123125/>.

⁶³ Ukrainska Pravda, “Zelenskyy confirms that Azovstal fighters must be returned to Ukraine”, 21 May 2022, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/05/21/7347609/>.

⁶⁴ RFE/RL, “Ukraine’s Ministry of Defence confirmed the evacuation of military from Azovstal”, 17 May 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-azovstal-evakuatsiya-viyskovi/31853576.html>.

⁶⁵ Interfax-Ukraine, “Severely wounded military from Azovstal received necessary treatment; they were evacuated through an exchange; exchange of bodies of the deceased is in process - the commander of a regiment ‘Azov’”, 5 May 2022, available at: <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/833581.html>.



Photo by Dmytro Kozatskyi

09/05/2022: In Luhansk Oblast, Russian troops obstructed the evacuation of civilians by shelling the Lysychansk-Bakhmut highway, one of the evacuation routes.⁶⁶

13/05/2022: In Derhachi, Kharkiv Oblast, the Russian military destroyed a civilian aid facility with a missile strike.⁶⁷

14/05/2022: In Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast, occupying Russian forces held a convoy of civilian vehicles trying to leave Mariupol for Ukrainian-controlled territory for three days. On 14 May, they were allowed to drive in the direction of Zaporizhzhia.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Telegram channel of Serhiy Hayday/ Luhansk OSA, “No evacuation from Luhansk Oblast today”, 9 May 2022, available at: https://t.me/serhiy_hayday/6390.

⁶⁷ Facebook page of Derhachiv City Administration, 13 May 2022, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/dermiskrada/posts/395673675769291>.

⁶⁸ Ukrainska Pravda, “Evacuation Column from Mariupol Allowed to Move Towards Zaporizhzhia: They Were Held Up at Checkpoint for 3 Days”, 14 May 2022, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/14/7346217/>.

16/05/2022: A representative of the local authorities in occupied Izyum, Kharkiv Oblast, reported that occupying Russian forces were preventing the evacuation of 15,000 locals.⁶⁹

A refugee from Mariupol told IPHR that on 23 March 2022, a Russian soldier from Chechnya told her neighbour that "everyone should flee because tomorrow everything possible will 'fly' over there". When she tried to leave the city that day, the Russian military kept her at a checkpoint for days and she froze her fingers off.⁷⁰

A refugee from Velyka Rohan, Kharkiv Oblast, told IPHR that when the neighbouring town of Mala Rohan was occupied by Russian troops, they did not allow the entry of humanitarian aid.⁷¹

7) Forcible transfer of civilian population

ICL and IHL prohibit forced displacement, deportation, or transfer of the civilian population of an occupied territory. The violation of these norms is a grave breach of IHL, as well as a war crime and/or a crime against humanity.⁷²

According to the Ombudsman of Ukraine, as of 9 May 2022, occupying Russian forces had deported 1.185 million Ukrainians from Ukraine to Russia.⁷³

13/05/2022: Local authorities in Popasna, Luhansk Oblast, reported that occupying Russian forces forcibly removed the local population to Pervomaisk and Stakhanov, Luhansk Oblast, which are under the control of the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic".⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Suspilne, "Some of those deported from Izyum to RF, managed to return to Ukraine — City Council", 16 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/240124-castina-ludej-akih-deportuvali-z-izuma-do-rf-zmogli-povernutisa-do-ukraini-miskrada/>.

⁷⁰ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 23.

⁷¹ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 19.

⁷² Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 7.1(d); Article 8.2(a)(vii); Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 49, 147; Rule 129 of customary IHL.

⁷³ Suspilne, "Russia deported over 1,2 million people from Ukraine — Ombudswoman", 9 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/237522-rosia-deportuvala-z-ukraini-majze-12-miljona-ludej-ombudsmenka/>.

⁷⁴ Ukrinform, "The invaders transfer the residents of Popasna to uncontrolled territories under the barrels of guns", 13 May 2022, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3482430-zagarbniki-pid-dulami-avtomativ-vivozat-ziteliv-popasnoi-na-nepidkontrolni-teritorii.html>.

16/05/2022: Local authorities in occupied Izyum, Kharkiv Oblast, reported that Russian troops are forcibly deporting locals to Russia. Some of these people manage to return to Ukraine via the EU.⁷⁵

8) Filtration camps and other cases of unlawful confinement

According to the Fourth Geneva Convention, civilians may only be interned or placed in assigned residence if “the security of the detaining power makes it absolutely necessary”⁷⁶ or, in occupied territory, for “imperative reasons of security”,⁷⁷ for instance, if the interned persons may seriously prejudice the security of the detaining power by means such as sabotage or espionage.⁷⁸ Any persons arrested, detained, or interned for actions related to the armed conflict shall be informed promptly, in a language they understand, of the reasons why these measures have been taken.⁷⁹ Any person interned or placed in an assigned residence has a right to appeal this decision and – if the decision is maintained – to have it periodically reviewed.⁸⁰ Detention that is not in conformity with the above rules constitutes an “unlawful confinement”, which is a war crime and a grave breach of IHL.⁸¹

There were reports of unlawful confinement cases in the oblasts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. IPHR interviewed a witness who claimed that a civilian man was detained and sent to Donetsk for further filtration.

10/05/2022: Zaporizhzhia City Military Administration reported that, as of 10 May 2022, occupying Russian forces were illegally detaining around 116 civilians in Zaporizhzhia Oblast.⁸²

⁷⁵ Suspilne, “Some of those deported from Izyum to RF, managed to return to Ukraine — City Council”, 16 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/240124-castina-ludej-akih-deportuvali-z-izuma-do-rf-zmogli-povernutisa-do-ukraini-miskrada/>.

⁷⁶ Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 42.

⁷⁷ Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 78.

⁷⁸ ICTY, Delalić case, Judgment, Paragraph 576.

⁷⁹ Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, Article 75(3).

⁸⁰ Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 43, 78.

⁸¹ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8(2)(b)(vii); Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 147; Rule 99 of customary IHL.

⁸² Zaporizhzhia Oblast State Administration, “Regional Authorities Try Finding Alternatives in order to Ensure Social Benefits”, 10 May 2022, available at: <https://www.zoda.gov.ua/news/60951/oblasna-vlada-zaymajetsya-poshukom-alternativnogo-virishennya-pitannya-sotsialnih-viplat.html>.

15/05/2022: The Ombudsman of Ukraine reported that in occupied Kherson, Russian troops captured local residents, interrogated them, and subjected them to ill-treatment.⁸³

A refugee from Mariupol told IPHR during an interview that Russian soldiers strip-searched and “checked” every man at the Russian checkpoints. He saw how one man, a Mariupol port worker, was sent to Donetsk to undergo a more thorough check.⁸⁴

9) Pillage and appropriation of property

ICL and IHL protect the property of civilians from pillage by the warring parties.⁸⁵ They also prohibit extensive destruction and appropriation of any property (including property belonging individually or collectively to private persons or to the state) that is not justified by military necessity.⁸⁶

During the reporting period, we documented six cases of pillage and appropriation of property by Russian soldiers.

⁸³ Facebook page of Lyudmyla Denisova, 15 May 2022, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/denisovaombudsman/posts/pfbid0Do8yQ6TTYKRFZioEgdDoghthTXNQuQCNIpwxa1H6j45gnXkaW8cxC7bK2mxERrVKl>.

⁸⁴ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 3.

⁸⁵ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (xvi); Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 33; Rule 52 of customary IHL.

⁸⁶ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Article 8.2(b) (xiii); Geneva Convention (I) of 1949, Article 50; Geneva Convention (II) of 1949, Article 51; Geneva Convention (IV) of 1949, Article 53, Article 147; Rule 50 of customary IHL.



Russian soldier in Popasna

09/05/2022: The head of the local military administration in occupied Kreminna, Luhansk Oblast, said that Russian troops were destroying and looting the city's sports facilities, as well as stealing interactive whiteboards from schools and medical equipment from hospitals.⁸⁷

09/05/2022: In occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, the Russian military looted the Hydromash plant and the tractor parts plant. The military also steals furniture and equipment from local schools.⁸⁸

A refugee from Melitopol told IPHR that occupying Russian forces remove machines from local factories. They stole all the cars from the only car dealership in the city, robbed schools, and even stole toilets. The loot was taken away in stolen trucks.⁸⁹

A refugee from Kharkiv said that in occupied Tsyrkuny, Kharkiv Oblast, the Russian military looted the houses of locals, ate their food, and swam in their pools.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Suspilne, “Evacuated to Rivne: the head of the occupied Kreminna on atrocities of the army of the Russian Federation”, 09 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/235251-evakujovani-v-rivne-ocilnik-okupovanoi-kreminnoi-rozpoviv-pro-zvirstva-armii-rf/>.

⁸⁸ Suspilne, “The occupying forces collect data on the locals and loot the factories — the mayor of Melitopol on the situation in the city”, 15 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/239673-okupanti-zbiraut-dani-pro-naselenna-ta-grabuut-zavodi-miskij-golova-melitopola-pro-situaciu-v-misti/>.

⁸⁹ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 10.

⁹⁰ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 25.

According to an interview with a refugee from Kherson, the Russian military expropriated diesel cars from the local population.⁹¹

According to an internally-displaced person from Kherson, the Russian military also looted local shops and post offices.⁹²

10) Environmental damage

During the reporting period, Russian forces shelled one crude oil reservoir and continued shelling the Azovstal steel plant, risking damage to its hydrogen sulphide reservoirs and causing an environmental disaster in the Sea of Azov.

08/05/2022: In Lysychansk, Luhansk Oblast, the Russian military fired on an oil depot. A fire broke out as a result of the shelling.⁹³



Dolphins are dying in the Black Sea due to the war

⁹¹ IPHR screening interview with Witness № 21.

⁹² Suspilne, “‘Terror literally began’. An internally displaced woman on life in occupied Kherson”, 09 May 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/237502-pocavsa-teror-u-pramomu-sensi-cogo-slova-pereselenka-pro-zitta-v-okupovanomu-hersoni/>.

⁹³ Telegram channel of Serhiy Hayday / Luhansk OSA, “Russians shelled the refinery in Lysychansk again”, 8 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/2426>.

18/05/2022: A representative of the local authorities of occupied Mariupol said that the shelling of the Azovstal steel plant could cause an environmental catastrophe due to possible damage to a technical facility housing tens of thousands of tonnes of concentrated hydrogen sulphide solution. If hydrogen sulphide is released into the Sea of Azov as a result of damage to the reservoirs, all flora and fauna will die there. The substance also risks spreading to the Black Sea.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Telegram channel of Andryushchenko Time, “Azovstal's bombing could damage a technical facility that holds back tens of thousands of tons of concentrated hydrogen sulphide solution”, 18 May 2022, available at: <https://t.me/andriyshTime/944>.