

***TORTURE
OF UKRAINIAN PRISONERS
OF WAR
IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION
DETENTION PLACES***

KHARKIV HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION GROUP
2025

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Convention — Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War

SIZO — pre-trial detention center

RF —Russian Federation

IK — Corrective Colony

PR — Rubber Baton

FSIN — Federal Penitentiary Service

MVD — Department of Internal Affairs

DPR — Donetsk People's Republic

LPR — Luhansk People's Republic

Testimonies of prisoners:

Testimonies are arranged alphabetically. When citing them, the authors' wording has been preserved

KHPG — Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group

INTRODUCTION

1. On February 24, 2022, Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine began. In Ukraine, martial law was introduced and a general mobilization was declared by Decree No. 65/2022 of the President of Ukraine, dated February 24, 2022. As part of mobilization measures, Ukraine is recruiting conscripted men aged 25 to 60 into the army. All persons mobilized into the Defense Forces of Ukraine acquire the status of military personnel, become combatants within the meaning of international humanitarian law, and are subject to the legal protection provided by various international legal instruments signed and agreed upon by the majority of UN member states.
2. During hostilities, both sides suffer losses and take prisoners. Currently, a large number of Ukrainian military personnel have been captured by Russia. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine their exact number, because the Russian Federation does not provide information on all persons it holds in captivity.
3. According to information provided by the Commissioner for Persons Missing in Special Circumstances, more than 80,000 people are considered missing under special circumstances¹. This figure includes both military and civilian personnel. According to statistics, about 9 thousand Ukrainians² are held captive in Russia. These are those for whom there is confirmed data on their whereabouts.
4. Human rights organizations and joint public initiatives have identified and continue to search for places of detention of prisoners. Thanks to these efforts, 115 places of detention in Russia and about 200 in temporarily occupied territories have been identified. Information on the places of detention of prisoners in both the occupied territories and the Russian Federation's territory continues to be collected and systematized³.
5. 4,306 people⁴, mostly military personnel, have been returned from Russian captivity. This is the only officially confirmed figure that directly concerns prisoners of war and civilians detained by the occupying authorities. At the time of the report's submission for publication, the number of returned persons had increased to 5,857⁵.
6. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has prepared reports in which it has repeatedly confirmed that the Russian authorities systematically and on a large scale subject Ukrainian prisoners of war to torture, ill-treatment, and detention in inhumane conditions⁶.
7. According to numerous observations by the KHPG⁷ and other organizations, torture has become one of the most widespread crimes committed. It continues to be com-

¹ How many Ukrainians are considered missing due to the war? Data from the Commissioner. 05/1/2025: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/skilkoh-lyudey-v-ukrajini-vvazhayut-zniklimi-bezvisti-statistika-307827/>

² More than 8 thousand Ukrainians are still in Russian captivity, — Coordination Headquarters: https://lb.ua/society/2024/01/24/595269_ponad_8_tisyach_ukraintsiv_dosi.html

³ Where are Ukrainians being held? Interactive map https://t4pua.org/en/stats_prisons

⁴ Zelensky: More than 4,000 people returned from Russian captivity: <https://www.dw.com/uk/zelenskij-z-rosijskogo-polonu-povernuli-bilse-4000-ludej/a-72002420>

⁵ Website of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War <https://koordshtab.gov.ua/>

⁶ Treatment of prisoners of war and update on the human rights situation in Ukraine p. 28: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024/Ukraine-OHCHR-40th-periodic-report.pdf>

⁷ Communication under Article 15 of the Rome Statute to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court concerning the alleged crime of torture committed by Russian military personnel in Ukraine <https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1735975854>

mitted by those who associate themselves with Russia against detained and captured Ukrainians.

8. Torture is used against both prisoners of war and civilians. It can be safely stated that everyone who, in one way or another, found themselves in places of deprivation of liberty under the complete control of the Russian military, representatives of the occupation authorities, and military formations fighting on the side of the Russian Federation were subjected to torture and/or inhumane treatment⁸. This report confirms this very situation.

Cruel deprivation of liberty in the Russian-occupied Kharkiv region
<https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1696425434>

“Nine circles of hell”: places of deprivation of liberty in Ukraine during the Russian occupation. March 2022 — December 2022
<https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1688191346>

⁸ Yevgeny Zakharov: 99% of those detained by the Russians went through torture, regardless of age and gender
<https://khpg.org/1608813256>

METHODOLOGY

9. The NGO “KHPG” investigated the situation with Ukrainians who returned home as a result of exchanges. The primary method of gathering information for this report was conducting direct interviews with victims and witnesses. The people interviewed were military personnel who were captured during hostilities. Most of them were defenders of Mariupol. In the following text, they will be referred to as prisoners of war or prisoners.
10. The survey covered 11 people. The small number of interviewees was due to the fact that not all those who returned from captivity are willing to give interviews about the events that occurred to them. People who are released, in the vast majority of cases, are so traumatized that they do not want to return to these memories. Some are afraid of publicity and worry about the fate of those who remain in captivity.
11. All those who agreed to supply evidence provided informed consent to be interviewed and to have the information obtained used in preparing submissions to jurisdictional and law enforcement authorities at both the international and national levels.
12. The interview was conducted in the form of a free narrative, observing the principle of “do no harm” and conditions of confidentiality, avoiding excessive immersion in traumatic details (trauma-informed approach).
13. The interview was conducted following the Guidelines for civil society organizations on documenting international crimes and human rights violations for accountability purposes, developed by the ICC together with Eurojust for civil society organizations (“ICC-Eurojust Guidelines for civil society organizations on documenting international crimes and human rights violations for accountability purposes”), the Principles of Effective Investigation and Information Gathering (“the Méndez Principles”), and the Istanbul Protocol.
14. All respondents, without exception, were offered psychological assistance, which could be provided by psychologists who actively cooperate with the NGO “KHPG” or by referral to other psychosocial support services.
15. Table of individual data of interviewed prisoners

| Code name of the interviewee | Age | Duration of captivity | Data on release from captivity |
|------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| P.1 | 31 | 2.5 years | Released on the exchange |
| P.2 | 26 | 2.5 years | Released on the exchange |
| P.3 | 56 | 1 year 9 months | Released on the exchange |
| P.4 | 33 | 2 years 5 months | Released on the exchange |
| P.5 | 27 | 2 years 5 months | Released on the exchange |
| P.6 | 24 | 1 year 9 months | Released on the exchange |
| P.7 | 46 | 2.5 years | Released on the exchange |
| P.8 | 34 | 2 years 5 months | Released on the exchange |
| P.9 | 33 | 2.5 years | Released on the exchange |
| P.10 | 23 | 2 years 4 months | Released on the exchange |
| P.11 | 26 | 2.5 years | Released on the exchange |

16. Information received by the NGO “KHPG” during the documentation, search, and determination of the probable location of missing and captured Ukrainians was also used in the preparation of the report. As a result, 115 places of detention in the Russian Federation where Ukrainians are held were identified. Statistics show that a significant number of prisoners are held in the Republic of Mordovia.

17. The following data was collected regarding Mordovia:

| Subject RF | Institution | Address | Number of detainees |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Republic of Mordovia | Ozerny IK17 | Ozerny, 3Lisova Str | 1 |
| Republic of Mordovia | Yavas IK2 | Yavas, 1 Chornorichenskaya Str | to be specified |
| Republic of Mordovia | Sosnovka IK1 | | 6 |
| Republic of Mordovia | Torbeevo IK6 | Torbeevo, 50 Vesnyana Str | 6 |
| Republic of Mordovia | Polyana IK10 | Udarny, 1 Molodizhna Str | 434 |

18. After all, about 500 prisoners were held in institutions of the Republic of Mordovia. All those interviewed were eventually interned in institutions in Mordovia and spent a significant part of their time in captivity there.
19. Mordovia is a region where a large number of penal institutions were established (in the 1920s–1960s, under Dubrovlag). Moreover, the system of these institutions has a long history and its own “traditions”. It is known as one of the harshest Russian camp systems, which was built to hold dangerous criminals, as well as political prisoners⁹.
20. Currently, 20 institutions operate in Mordovia, five of which hold Ukrainians. These include, in particular, the following institutions: Ozerny, POW 17, Sosnovka, POW 1, Yavas, POW 2, Torbeevo, POW 6, and Polyana, POW 10. The prisoners of war whose testimonies were obtained were held in POW 10 “Polyana”.
21. The testimonies obtained from the interviews were verified by comparing them with each other, as well as with other data available at the NGO “KHPG” and data obtained from open sources.
22. The generalization and assessment of the testimonies indicate that in these institutions, the treatment of Ukrainian prisoners is inhumane, and torture is systematically applied to them. The repetition and uniformity of torture and methods used by Russian military and prison personnel against prisoners give reason to believe that such treatment is a manifestation of a larger-scale coordinated plan of action, implemented by the leadership of Russian law enforcement and security structures or allowed “by default.” All those interviewed spoke of similar types of torture and recalled conditions of detention that were strikingly similar in their horror, and indeed indicated the bias of the colony staff towards Ukrainian prisoners.
23. The testimonies used as the basis for this report retain the wording and style of the prisoners themselves. All testimonies are depersonalized.

⁹ Pallot, Judith, Laura Piacentini, and Dominique Moran. “Patriotic discourses in Russia’s penal peripheries: Remembering the Mordovan Gulag.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 1 (2010): 5. <https://surl.li/pwleut>
Mordovia camps <https://www.gulag-perm36.org/mordovskie-politlagerya/>
Marchenko A. My testimony. 1969 <https://www.gulag-perm36.org/wp-content/uploads/a.marchenko-moi-pokazaniya.pdf>

BEGINNING OF CAPTIVITY

24. During capture, the soldiers were disarmed, and their belongings, jewelry, and money were taken away. The belongings and jewelry were not returned to the prisoners (except for clothing). After that, they were loaded into vehicles for transportation to detention facilities.
25. Immediately after capture, the prisoners were relocated to areas suitable for isolation near the site of capture. These were official or unofficial places of detention, in particular, hangars, garages, and cattle pens. The prisoners were not held in such places for extended periods, usually no more than two or three days.
26. In unofficial places of detention, the conditions of detention were not adapted for people to stay there, since their functional purpose is different. According to a prisoner who was held on a farm:

it was a very long building (like a hangar), similar to the one where they used to keep cattle, or it was some warehouse. The building was very long. There were windows on one side, and some shelves on the other. The building was abandoned. We were held there, 700 people, in an area of approximately 120 square meters (P. 7).

27. At the beginning of the captivity and during the transfer, most of the interviewees who were captured in the Donetsk region recalled that at the time of their detention, they were under the control of the military formations of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). In the vast majority of cases, the fighters of these formations did not use physical force against the prisoners.
28. Those prisoners who were detained in other regions dealt with the Russian military in the initial stages of their captivity. The attitude of the Russian military was similar to that of the DPR representatives; they rarely used physical force.
29. Regarding the general treatment of prisoners in the initial stages of their captivity, the interviewees noted:

...we crossed the bridge, the railway, and went out to the Russian military, the DPR in the village of Mirne, and stood on the street among the houses. (...) We got out of the KAMAZ calmly, no one beat us, and we were immediately taken to these warehouses... (P. 10).

There (in the garages — author's comment) was a young officer who treated us somewhat respectfully and with apprehension. This officer said that we fought very well and they could not cope with us. This young officer attempted to provide us with water in some way (P. 8).

30. But as the prisoners were moved to places located further away from the fighting, there was a change in the attitude towards them on the part of those who accompanied them or received them in the places of internment. Torture became constant, humiliation and mockery turned into a daily routine, and material and living conditions were artificially worsened and became inhuman.

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION IN INTERNMENT CAMPS DURING THE FIRST WEEKS OF CAPTIVITY

31. At the beginning of their captivity, most of the interviewees were placed in the notorious colony “Olenivka” (formerly the 120th Volnovakha correctional colony), located in the village of Molodizhne, Donetsk region. Such places likely served as “reception-distribution centers.” Here, prisoners were collected, segregated, divided into smaller groups, and initially sent to places of imprisonment located in the regions of the Russian Federation closest to the front line.
32. In Olenivka, prisoners were held from two days to a week. Among them, officers and other people were identified who, for various reasons, were of greater interest to the military and law enforcement officers of the Russian Federation. And it was from Olenivka that the prisoners were distributed to other places of imprisonment, which, as a rule, were located on the territory of the Russian Federation.
33. Later, after distribution, the prisoners were sent to official places of imprisonment. These were pre-trial detention centers, penal institutions such as correctional colonies. In such institutions, the conditions were better than in unofficial places of detention due to the presence of the necessary infrastructure for accommodating and detaining a large number of people on a long-term basis. However, in general, the conditions of internment in such institutions were not appropriate.
34. Despite the large area of the premises, they were cramped primarily due to the simultaneous accommodation of a large number of people. Due to overcrowding, in some cases, it was necessary to sleep on the floor or even stand in turns. In the rooms where prisoners were kept, it was always cold, and at the same time, the excessive number of people led to a lack of fresh air.
35. Often, the rooms lacked lighting and water. The interviewee recalls:
we stood all day. The first day we were brought, we slept standing, leaning on each other, for about half an hour (P. 7).
36. Very similar information was provided by other interviewees:
we were put in barracks. I lived there for about 4 days. There was no water, no hygiene products, no toilet, no heating, and nothing else. There were some mattresses of unknown origin. There was a septic tank in the yard outside, where we went to the toilet. We slept on the floor in turns because there wasn’t enough space for everyone on the floor (P. 4).
eight hundred of us were put in one barracks. The area of the barracks was approximately 300 square meters. There was nowhere to sleep. Everyone slept on whatever they could find. There was light in the room, and even a stove could be lit. When we arrived, they showed us where the toilet was located outside (P. 10).
37. They were allowed to use the toilet, but the conditions were appalling. The prisoners noted that sometimes they were forced to go to the toilet in the corners of the rooms where they were held, and to satisfy their significant needs, they were given a basin or bucket, which they used in front of all the other prisoners. Occasionally, the prisoners were allowed to go

out into the yard, but this was only permitted in those facilities where the building housing the prisoners had an outhouse and a fence.

38. Medical care was not provided. Only a few of the prisoners mentioned that Ukrainian medical workers provided basic medical care and conducted examinations. However, the possibilities for such care were limited, and the quality was inadequate, primarily due to a lack of medicines and necessary medical supplies.
39. The worst situation was with drinking water. All the prisoners noted significant thirst in the first weeks of captivity. Water was provided in such scant quantities that conflicts sometimes arose among the prisoners themselves. One of the interviewees describes access to drinking water as follows:

We were only given water for our cell, and sometimes we were very thirsty and drank water from the condensation (which formed because there were so many people inside the room) (P. 7).

40. Food was provided to the prisoners in limited quantities. They noted that the feeding was irregular and scarce. In the first days of captivity, food was provided mainly by volunteers. The prisoners recall:

We were in this room for about 3–4 days. During this time, their volunteers brought us two jars (approximately 250 grams each) of buckwheat with meat for two, and two bags of bread for everyone. However, the bags were not very large; they also gave us one waffle per person. We ate with our hands; we were not given utensils (P. 7).

MOVEMENT OF PRISONERS TO AND BETWEEN PLACES OF INTERNMENT

41. The general path taken by military personnel who are captured or detained (hereinafter referred to as prisoners) and held in places of deprivation of liberty on the territory of Russia and temporarily occupied territories consists of frequent and constant movement through various locations of deprivation of liberty.
42. The analysis of the testimonies allowed us to determine the geography of the movements of a captured Ukrainian. The places of internment were not known in advance and were not communicated to the prisoners. People were kept in constant tension, without being informed about their status, rights, or the destination to which they would be sent, or about the possibility of establishing contact with loved ones, relatives, or other persons. The prisoners established all movements “experimentally” when they actually found themselves in the relevant places and institutions and somehow managed to determine their location (they accidentally overheard someone, saw a sign, etc.).
43. During the transfers, the prisoners were in challenging conditions. Immediately after capture, people were placed in trucks. Often, the number of people was twice or three times the truck’s capacity. Some of the prisoners reported that their hands were bound when they were transported. Their hands were tied with plastic ties. Another method of immobilizing the prisoners was also used. A cable ran along the side of the vehicle, to which the prisoners were fixed with handcuffs or plastic ties.
44. Buses were also used for transportation. The prisoners sat, but they were not given food or water to drink. They also did not stop to visit the toilet. Therefore, the prisoners had to use plastic bottles or cellophane bags for such purposes. Sometimes, using the toilet and relieving themselves during the transfer was completely prohibited.
45. The transfer took place in inadequate conditions, in particular, the interviewed people indicated the lack of places to sit, cold, deprivation of food and water, prohibition to sleep and use the toilet, tying and beatings. Such conditions existed throughout the entire journey to the place of detention. The journey could last an average of six to ten hours.
46. Further transfers into the depths of the Russian Federation were carried out using air transport. During flights, prisoners’ hands were always tied; they were blindfolded and forbidden entirely to move around or use the toilet. Food and drinking water were not provided.
47. From the prisoners’ reports:

we arrived and were told to unload. We were then loaded onto the plane, and it was very cold. I was wearing my jacket and only pants. When we were loaded onto the plane, our hands were tightly bound with cable ties. Those who did not want to tie their hands were beaten very badly. We were loaded onto an IL-76 plane; we had to sit on the ground with our legs stretched out forward, because the next prisoner was sitting between our legs. We had to keep our arms stretched above our heads. We had to sit like that for six to seven hours. We also had everyone’s eyes taped shut with transparent tape. If you were wearing a cap, they taped it 3–4 times; if you weren’t wearing a cap, they taped it more times. During the flight, we were guarded by a Russian soldier with the call sign “Bison”. He had a bright fatigue in a checkered pattern. We were not allowed to go to the toilet, and some of us soiled ourselves (P. 6).

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION IN PLACES OF INTERNMENT DURING SUBSEQUENT PERIODS OF CAPTIVITY WHEN MOVING DEEP INTO THE TERRITORY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

48. Places of detention in the territory of the Russian Federation have always had the status of official ones. Usually, they were pre-trial detention centers or institutions for the execution of sentences — correctional colonies. Here, prisoners were held for an extended period, sometimes reaching a year. As time passed, the prisoners were sent to institutions in the Republic of Mordovia, where they were held until they were released in exchange.
49. The people we interviewed indicated several places where they were sent from Olenivka. These were SIZO No. 2 in Taganrog, SIZO-4 in Shakhty, IK-12 in Kamenets-Shakhtinsky, Rostov Region, SIZO No. 2 in Ryazansk, Ryazan Region, disciplinary battalion in Mulino (near Nizhny Novgorod), SIZO No. 2 in Stary Oskil (Belgorod Region), SIZO No. 2 in Komysheyn, Volgograd Region, IK-7 in Pakino, Voronezh Region, and others.

Places of Detention for Ukrainian Prisoners and Their Transfers.

| State affiliation | Institution | Location | Occupancy limit |
|---|---|--|--|
| Ukraine (temporarily occupied territory) | “Olenivka” Former 120th Volnovakha correctional colony | Donetsk region, village Molodizhne, Volnovakha district | Conserved Planned occupancy limit before conservation — 1100 convicts ¹⁰ |
| Russian Federation | Pre-trial detention center No. 2, Taganrog city | Rostov region, Taganrog city, 175 Lenina st. | Occupancy limit — 512 |
| Russian Federation | Pre-trial detention center No. 2, Komysheyn city | Volgograd region, Komysheyn city, 38 Robocha st. | Occupancy limit — 214 |
| Russian Federation | SIZO No. 2, Novozybkiv city | Bryansk region, Novozybkiv city, 9 Krasnaya Ploshcha st. | Occupancy limit — 300 |
| Russian Federation | Correctional colony No. 7, Pakino village | Vladimir region, Kovrovsky district, Pakino village, 1-A Tsentralnaya st. | Occupancy limit — 1230 |
| Russian Federation | SIZO No. 4, Shakhty city | Rostov region, Shakhty city, Kirpychne village | Occupancy limit — 500 |
| Russian Federation | Correctional colony No. 12, Kamensk-Shakhtinsky city | Rostov region, Kamensk- Shakhtinsky city. Address: 347803, Morskaya st., building 94. | Occupancy limit — 2192 |

¹⁰ Volnovakha corrective colony (N°120) https://ukrprison.org.ua/department_institutions//1209364318

| State affiliation | Institution | Location | Occupancy limit |
|--------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| Russian Federation | SIZO No. 2, Ryazsk Men's pre-trial detention center | Ryazan region, Ryazsk. Address: 391999, Krasnaya st., building 1a | Occupancy limit — 110 |
| Russian Federation | Disciplinary battalion in the village of Mulino, military unit 12801. | Nizhny Novgorod region, Volodarsky district, Mulino village | Occupancy limit — 600 |
| Russian Federation | SIZO No. 2, Stary Oskil | Belgorod region, Stary Oskil, Lenin st., building 7 | Occupancy limit — 240 |

As it was mentioned, the prisoners were transferred frequently, and each of them was kept at different places of detention during their captivity. At the same time, all the interviewed prisoners were ultimately sent to colony No. 10 in the Republic of Mordovia. This section compiles testimonies that enable us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the detention conditions in places of internment, including those in the Republic of Mordovia within the Russian Federation.

“RECEPTION” OF PRISONERS IN PLACES OF INTERNMENT

General description of the reception:

50. The arrival of prisoners at any place of internment was always accompanied by a procedure that they and representatives of the Russian security forces called “reception”. During the reception, the prisoners were stripped of their clothing. Their clothes and personal belongings were taken. Then the prisoners were examined, their data was recorded, fingerprints were taken, and samples of materials necessary for DNA identification¹¹ (hair and nails) were also taken. After that, the prisoners were given uniform clothing, which is typically worn by prisoners sentenced to imprisonment, and sent to their cells.

Step-by-step description of the reception

51. Brutal beatings of the arrivals, humiliation, pressure, and mockery accompanied the entire reception process. The beatings began from the moment the prisoners were unloaded from the pickup trucks. Each of them had to run with their heads down, sometimes in a bent position, through a corridor formed by special forces and the corresponding detention facility personnel. When the prisoners ran through this corridor, they were beaten. They were beaten with feet, hands, and special tools. These could include sticks, wooden batons, rubber batons, belts with metal buckles, plastic pipes, and other similar items. The workers who formed the corridor constantly shouted at the prisoners, cursed and insulted them, threatening them with murder, castration, and torture.
52. While running through the corridor, the prisoners received injuries and traumas; some of them fell and were beaten with demands to move faster. The interviewees recalled that they were all covered in blood after passing through the corridor.

¹¹ The collection of physiological material to form a DNA identification database is obviously illegal. The prisoners did not give any consent to the collection of this data. It is likely that the Russians are forming a DNA identification database in order to be able to identify those who participated in hostilities on the side of Ukraine and the relatives of these persons in the future.

53. Beyond the corridor, the prisoner had to continue running and respond to the commands given to him. Usually, they ran into the room and moved towards the office where the direct procedures for documenting the arrival began. On their way to the office, the prisoners were also beaten until they were in the room.
54. In the office, they were forced to undress and squat naked. Sometimes women were present during these procedures. Then the interrogation began, during which the prisoner had to stand in the so-called stretch — hands with the backs of their palms on the wall, legs apart, face down. During the interrogation, the beating sometimes continued. The interrogation included both the collection of basic personal data and the taking of fingerprints.
55. The next stage was a medical examination, haircut, and collection of materials necessary for identification by DNA (hair and nails).
56. Sometimes there were breaks in the reception. It occurred when there were too many prisoners or when unforeseen events took place (such as someone losing consciousness, etc.). In such cases, the prisoners were forced to sit on the floor, holding their hands behind their heads. During these “breaks,” the beatings did not stop, but other forms of abuse were added. In particular, the prisoners were forced to shout out words of gratitude to the Russian leadership and praise Russia.
57. From the prisoners’ testimonies:

They began to unload us, take us into a room, and start ramming us. The room was 19.5 x 3 meters in size. There were about 20 of us in this room. It was very cramped, because we were squeezed. Some lost consciousness. Before that, they took us to the toilet and gave us water. When we were taken to a room to wait our turn to be admitted, we were forced to sing the Russian anthem and shout: “Thank you, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, for freeing us from the fascist regime, for treating us humanely!” In the room, we sat in the “star” position with our hands up. While we were sitting, a special forces officer came in and asked me what my rank was. I replied that I was a rifleman, and he hit me on the head and back with his boot. About 3-4 strong blows. Then he started walking on our heads, backs, and legs. Then he asked the others what their ranks were, and when they answered, he also beat them. Then they took me out of the cell and led me further along the corridor. While they were taking me, no one touched me. I went to the table, undressed naked. They took my things, then took me to a room naked, where there was a nurse. She examined me, took a photograph, and recorded all my data. After that, they gave me a haircut and gave me their uniform. (P. 10).

When we were brought to the pre-trial detention center in Ryazhsk, we received a tough reception. First, we were fingerprinted (fingerprints were taken), then we squatted, and finally, our heads were shaved and we bathed in cold water. We were forced to sing the Russian anthem, and those who didn’t know it mumbled something. All the time, they beat us wherever they could, with whatever they could. And it lasted about three hours; throughout these three hours, we were constantly being beaten. Then we gathered all our things, they told us where to run, and while we were running, they beat us with tasers and sticks. They beat us wherever they could. I was hit on the back, on the head, and on the arms. They hit me with an electric shocker in the tailbone, in the ass. They hit me numerous times over three hours. There was no more reaction from the body. (P. 6).

58. Then the prisoners were given clothes and sent to the showers. All those interviewed noted that taking a shower was always a separate form of abuse. Very little time was given for taking a shower and changing clothes. It could be as little as one minute, during which it was necessary to wash and dress. The prisoners were forbidden to use hot water, ensuring that they did not even attempt to turn on the corresponding taps. The prisoners were taken to the shower under the supervision of special forces and could be accompanied by beatings. The prisoners recalled cases when special forces threw shoes and basins at them, and sometimes they were harassed by dogs. Given that the prisoners were wet after the shower, the special forces sometimes used electric shocks while the prisoners were taking the shower.
59. The reception process ended with the prisoners being sent to their cells.
60. As noted above, the treatment of the prisoners worsened as they moved away from the scene of hostilities, and the torture and abuse became more intense and brutal. After being transferred from Olenivka to places of detention in the Russian Federation, torture with electric shocks, harassment by dogs, and even more ruthless and regular beatings began to be widely used against the prisoners.

MATERIAL AND LIVING CONDITIONS

61. The rooms in which prisoners were placed varied in size, material, and living conditions. In addition, prisoners were often transferred from one cell to another, so the detention conditions were not constant and could change from more or less acceptable to inadequate. The size of the rooms varied from 5 sq. m to 2 sq. m per person. The material conditions in the rooms also varied. Some prisoners mentioned that the rooms were warm, there was lighting, and minimal hygiene standards were met. Prisoners were allowed to shower once a week, provided with soap, disposable razors, toothpaste, and brushes, and had their hair cut once every month or two (P. 4).
62. Others, on the contrary, noted that the cell was cramped, with just over 2 meters per prisoner (8 people per 18 sq. m). The toilet was located in a cell, separated by a wall, but without a door. The ceilings of the room were covered with mold. Artificial lighting was only available during the day; it was turned off at night, and the prisoners themselves had no control over this process. The beds were metal, rusty, welded to the wall, without springs (P. 8).

FOOD

63. The reports of all the interviewed interlocutors in this respect were very similar. Almost all of them noted that the food was meager, unappetizing, and sometimes contained foreign objects (garbage or non-food impurities) with an unmistakable taste of machine oil. The prisoners noted that the feeling of hunger was constant.
64. In official places of deprivation of liberty, water was sometimes available without restrictions from the tap; however, the prisoners recalled that it was of unacceptable quality, with rust and an unpleasant taste.

The prisoners mentioned improvements in their nutrition only when inspections by the Russian Ombudsman or the Red Cross came to the facilities where they were held. For the rest of the time, the food was insufficient, tasteless, and inedible.

From the prisoners' testimonies:

The menu included water in which a piece of cabbage was floating, 200 grams of millet porridge, a quarter of a round loaf of bread, and 300–400 grams of tea. The food was bland and tasteless (according to testimonies on pages 9 and 4).

The food was terrible. In the morning, we were given 2–3 spoons of porridge. At lunch, we were given soup. Bread was limited. The tea was cold, unsweetened, and served in one cup for three. For dinner, we were given a piece of boiled fish and scraps of potatoes. The time for eating was limited (while some were distributing food, others would follow them almost immediately and take away the dishes), and during this time, we had to eat and wash the dishes. If they found any leftovers or pieces of bread, we were beaten. The food was very hot and we constantly burned our mouths (P. 5).

We were fed three times a day. There were tiny portions. We were given bread, which was not enough for everyone. It could be just soup or porridge, about 1.5 tablespoons. Towards the end, they started adding diesel fuel to the food, which I could smell and taste. They gave us 2 minutes to eat and later 15 minutes. When they gave us little time, the food was very hot and we burned our mouths (P. 1).

We were given food that was, for the most part, normal, but not much of it. We were constantly hungry. They gave us hot food more often, but told us to eat faster; however, we were allowed to eat at our own pace. The water was from the tap, but of poor quality. The prison guards said that it was better not to drink this water (p. 3).

65. The very process of receiving food, preparing for it, and cleaning up after the Russian security forces also used it as a method and basis for bullying and humiliation. The prisoners stated that during the distribution of food, they had to stand in front of the door, bent over, with one hand behind their back, and use the other to take the plates and pass them to others (P. 7).
66. If the meal took place in the dining room, then after it was over, the guards chose two people who had to clean up and restore order. These prisoners cleaned in a bent position, without looking at the staff. Such cleaning was always accompanied by beatings (p. 9).
67. One of the prisoners carefully described the process of distributing food to the cells:

the cell is opened, and food is brought in on a wheelbarrow. The balandyor comes in, and the vertuhay opens the cell. The special forces ask: "Who wants sausages?" I say: Me, he says — "Come over!". I come over with my head down. He hits me in the head with his foot. I fly back to the toilet. Then he asks, "Are you coming again?" I say, "For sure!" because I wanted to get food for the comrades. And he says, "Oh! The points are multiplied by three!" and hits me three more times on the head. And he asks: "Do you want more?" I say: "For sure!" He says: "The points are multiplied!" and hits me three more times on the head. Then another special forces soldier comes up and says, "Let me have a go," and hits me on the head with his boot about three times. When he hit me, he said, "It's only half a sausage." When they hit me, they laughed. After dinner, they return to take the dishes away. I hand over the dishes and hold them out to them with one hand. And he says: "Get on the floor." I put the dishes on the floor, and one of the guards picks me up and hits me with a stun gun on the top of my head, and the special forces immediately hits me on the head with his foot, and the cell door closes (P. 10).

68. In general, the conditions of detention in the internment places were such that Ukrainians were kept in cells all day long, being taken out only for interrogations and beatings. They also received food in the cells. The daily routine did not include any other activities. According to numerous testimonies, there were no walks at all, or they were brief, lasting 10–15 minutes, and were conducted once every two or three days.

MEDICAL CARE

69. It follows from the testimonies of the prisoners that the provision of medical care to Ukrainians who were in captivity was inadequate. They indicated that medical care was supposedly provided on demand, “upon request,” but at the same time noted that a request for such care did not mean that care would be provided. In a large number of cases, a request for care went unanswered, or a doctor would appear to the prisoner, check their physical condition, and then leave without providing any care.
70. Often, when requesting medical care, the prisoner was subjected to beatings. An example is the so-called “Evil doctor” (a doctor or medical officer who was in a colony in Mordovia), whom all the interviewees mentioned in their testimonies and who, upon all requests for care, would beat the prisoners with an electric shocker and then ask: “Does it hurt anymore?”
71. The prisoners also noted that medical care could be incomplete or inadequate. For example, they could be given pills without a name as a form of help. Medical workers did not provide any explanations or comments regarding their methods and means of treatment.
72. Special attention should be paid to situations where prisoners were severely beaten and tortured. According to the prisoners, medical care was never provided in such situations. In some testimonies, prisoners noted that individual medical workers scolded law enforcement officers for beating and abusing prisoners.

In their testimonies, prisoners describe these cases as follows:

...in Ryazhsk, we received medical care. Those who sought medical care were beaten, but medical care was provided. The women doctors even scolded the special forces for beating us and not telling the doctors that the prisoners needed any help (P. 4).

73. At the same time, it is impossible to assume that medical workers were completely unaware of the facts of torture and beatings, because the prisoners testified that doctors, blood, and urine were periodically taken for tests, fluorography, and even an ECG was performed. Therefore, it was impossible not to notice the physical condition of the prisoners.

The prisoners described the periodic medical examinations as follows:

We underwent fluorography once every six months (the first time I underwent it was during a reception, followed by two more sessions four months later). Once they did a cardiogram. They took urine and blood tests. When they took some tests, we were constantly beaten with batons or hands (P. 6).

74. The prisoners also noted that, in emergency cases, medical assistance was still provided, but its receipt depended entirely on the prisoner’s physical condition. If he could move and talk, then medical aid could be provided late or in incomplete form. If it was a situation where the prisoner lost consciousness or the state of health indicated a threat to the life or physical integrity of the prisoner, assistance was usually provided. However, even in such cases, it was limited to quickly alleviating symptoms or resolving the crisis. Supportive therapy and rehabilitation measures were usually not carried out, and the

prisoners were returned to the cell in which they were kept before being admitted to the hospital.

From the testimonies of the prisoners:

...I started to get cold, and my leg began to hurt. In one day, my leg started to turn blue, and by the third day, it had become black and swollen, from the knee down. I asked for medical help, and I was given some medicine. Three days later, I lost consciousness from the pain at night. It was about 5 am, and because the guys in the cell noticed that I was feeling unwell, they started knocking on the door and calling the on-duty doctor. I had come to my senses because the doctor gave me an injection. They carried me out into the corridor, put me on a stretcher, and took me to the hospital. While they were taking me to the hospital by car, I lost consciousness several times, and this doctor told the special forces that I was barely alive and that I needed to be moved quickly so that I could die in the hospital. When I was in the hospital, there was one shift of pre-trial detention center workers who constantly beat the patients. After the hospital, I was brought back to the SIZO, to a separate building, where tuberculosis patients were held, and we stayed there two to a cell (P. 3).

75. The material conditions of detention, food, and medical care described above for Ukrainian prisoners were supplemented by constant beatings, harassment, and psychological pressure. All this exhausted the prisoners physically and psychologically.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

GENERAL REMARKS

76. According to the evidence we have received, torture is a constant practice against Ukrainians who have found themselves in Russian captivity. It is applied to all without exception and, in fact, along the entire route of the prisoners' transfer and movement. Intolerable conditions are created in every place of detention through which a Ukrainian prisoner passes. Not only is physical torture applied to prisoners. Psychological pressure and bullying are widely used. An atmosphere of humiliation and intimidation is created in places of detention where Ukrainians are held.
77. Torture was used both during interrogations of prisoners and as part of the everyday routine. During interrogations, torture was focused and extremely cruel, as it was always carried out by a group of torturers against one prisoner. The interrogators declared the purpose of the interrogation and tortured the prisoner in an attempt to achieve this goal (see the section on the purpose of torture).
78. All prisoners without exception were interrogated. They were part of everyday life in all places of detention of Ukrainians. In each institution where the prisoners arrived, they were interrogated. The number of such interrogations for each was different and did not depend on the fact that each prisoner had already been interviewed. The prisoners spent a significant part of their time in interrogations and anticipation of them, because being in captivity did not provide for other types of "activity". Probably, the purpose of the interrogations was not so much related to clarifying certain circumstances, but creating the general atmosphere of pressure and humiliation of the prisoners.
79. The prisoners described the interrogation process as follows:

During the entire time I was in the institution, I was interrogated many times, sometimes several times a month, and at first, I could be interrogated every day or every other day.

During interrogations, I was constantly humiliated and beaten. They beat me with their hands, feet, batons, used an electric shocker, and forced me to stand in a stretch position (legs wide, bent, hands palms against the wall). They beat me on the ribs; they could hit me on the ribs with keys so that I felt more pain. During one of the interrogations, I stood in a stretch position for about an hour and a half, and for all these hours and a half, they kicked my balls. There were 5 to 6 of them. The FSIN employees were mainly the ones who beat me, while the special forces were there only for insurance. During this interrogation, I fell to the ground and got up about ten times. I almost lost consciousness. After this interrogation, they dragged me and threw me into a cell. The guys in the cell tried to help me. After this interrogation, my stomach hurt for about two or three hours, my legs and head were pounding, and I was reduced to nothing. After this interrogation, after about half an hour, they told me to come to the feeder and asked if I was okay, and said that I would live.

I was taken into a small room. There was a table in the middle of the room, and an investigator was sitting at it. He was dressed in civilian clothes but wore a balaclava. There was one soldier and one special forces officer. One was in black clothes, and the other in fatigues. Everyone was in balaclavas. I stood near the wall, legs shoulder-

width apart, bent over, my head resting on the wall, hands up, behind me (swallow). ... I answered the questions, and the special forces officer said, "I don't believe you for some reason," and they started beating me. First, they punched me in the kidneys. Then they started beating me on the back and buttocks with an electric shocker. Then he kicked me in the thigh. The interrogation lasted about an hour or an hour and ten minutes. I don't remember or don't know for every answer — I was beaten (P. 7).

80. The torture that was used at other times (outside of interrogations) was less cruel, usually applied to a group of prisoners. Sometimes they were carried out by representatives of the Russian security forces for entertainment. Their primary purpose was to humiliate and mock prisoners. Such torture created an atmosphere of helplessness, vulnerability, and arbitrariness.
81. The types and forms of torture were different, but they are all characterized by excessive cruelty, intensity, and systematicity.
The types of torture mentioned by prisoners are:
 - Beating
 - Electric torture
 - Stressful positions and excessive physical exertion
 - Sexualized methods of torture
 - Threats and imitation of execution
 - Suffocation/asphyxiation
 - Hunting with dogs
 - Creating inhuman and degrading conditions of detention
 - Other types of torture

BEATING

82. It is the most common type of physical violence that permeates the entire stay of prisoners in places of detention in the Russian Federation. According to prisoners, beatings occur in all places of detention, at any time, and during any events. Beatings are carried out with both hands and feet, as well as with various implements — sticks, clubs (sticks, batons), tools (hammers, wrenches, etc.), plastic pipes, rubber hoses, ropes with knots, belts with metal buckles, even a fire extinguisher (P. 5), etc.
83. The beatings reported by the interviewed prisoners were very targeted. The location of the blows indicated the executioners' desire to inflict maximum damage to the prisoner's health while at the same time leaving him alive.
84. Most often, numerous and systematic blows were inflicted on the kidneys, trying to inflict maximum damage on the prisoners, causing chronic kidney diseases, which in the future could lead to disability of the person. Many of the prisoners noted that they had long-term pain in the kidney area, urinated blood, etc.
85. All the prisoners recalled that many blows were inflicted on the legs. The prisoners' muscles were severely strained, disrupting blood circulation in their limbs. This entailed a loss of mobility for some time and, in the future, could lead to impaired motor functions. All those interviewed reported that they temporarily lost the ability to move and experienced significant movement difficulties for an extended period.
86. Shocks and the application of electric current to the spine led to a short-term loss of the ability to move, to the point that the victim lost sensitivity in the limbs.

87. The blows to the genitals, the use of electric shocks on the genitals, without any doubt, were aimed not only at humiliating the prisoners, but also at harming their reproductive health and sexual abilities. The interviewees noted that their executioners said this in plain text, including the threats of castration.
88. All these “targeted” beatings against the background of poor nutrition, lack of medical care, constant psychological pressure, and continuous humiliation led to a significant deterioration in the health of the prisoners.
89. From the testimonies of the prisoners:

...while we were rising, they beat us with sticks, batons, and belts with plates all over our bodies. ... They did not try to get to any place; they simply beat us all over our bodies. ... While they were leading us, they beat us with shockers, hands, and feet. ... they beat us with shockers, they beat me in the balls and the buttocks many times. They beat me so hard that my arms and legs started to ache (P. 1).

They beat me with a bat; they beat my legs very hard. My leg was broken: there were about fifty blows. My legs were black, and for two months, I couldn't walk. They also beat my arms, my ribs. I had three broken ribs. They beat me until I lost consciousness. At first, they beat us very hard. We were beaten every day. Once, during an inspection, they also shocked me with an electric device on the balls. ... they beat us with their hands, feet, sticks, batons... with the handle of a shovel... with an electric shocker. (P. 3).

There were cases when Russian soldiers of non-Slavic appearance came in and said: Colonels, get up! And they beat them in public almost to death. During the day, two or three soldiers could come in and beat our prisoners. They mainly beat officers (P. 5)

90. The prisoners testified that cases of beatings and torture until the victims lost consciousness, as well as cases of death among the prisoners, were not uncommon.
91. There were cases of beatings, even of sick and wounded prisoners who were lying down, unable to stand and move independently. From the testimonies of the prisoners:

And in the cell where I was lying, they brought a seriously ill person, who could not even get up. And this SIZO employee who beat me also beat this seriously ill person (P. 3).

92. The prisoners were beaten constantly, during all actions and events in which they became participants. They were beaten during transfers, during admission to various institutions, beaten in cells, during inspections, while being taken to the shower or the canteen, while moving around the territories of the institutions, beaten while being taken for interrogations. They were beaten especially cruelly during interrogations. The beatings could occur several times during the day.

ELECTRIC TORTURE

93. Russian law enforcement officers used this type of torture very widely. It is used both with the use of electrical devices, the terminals of which are connected to parts of the victim's body, and with the use of special devices — stun guns. In some cases, to improve the conductivity of the current, the victim was doused with water or the prisoners were shocked with electricity while taking a shower. One of the prisoners recalls that during interrogation, a slip of paper was attached to his hands, and they began to shock him with electricity and

ask questions. However, the prisoner was not able to answer them, because immediately after the question, the current was applied and the prisoner could only scream in pain. Another prisoner noted that during the first or second interrogation, connectors were attached to his little finger. They also hooked his ears and let out a small current (P. 2).

94. Electric shocks were applied to various parts of the body. On the arms and legs, on the spine, on the tailbone, on the genitals, on the buttocks, on the heels, on the head, under the ribs. One of the prisoners described the use of an electric shocker on him as follows:

I was beaten with a shocker on the legs. They clamped the shocker so that it worked for a few seconds, and then it was pressed against the body and passed along the back from the neck to the tailbone. They also shocked my fingers (P. 9).

Another prisoner indicated that during interrogations, they were beaten with an electric shocker aimed at individual places, on the ribs, back, legs, and arms. The electric shockers varied in size and power, and you could feel when the device was set to its maximum setting (P. 8).

95. The duration and method of applying the electric current were different. One of the interviewees, describing the electric shock torture, noted that he was beaten all over his body, on his genitals, in the anus, except for his head and above his collarbones. He was tortured like that for about a month every day. Out of 1000 days of captivity, according to his calculations, they were beaten with a shocker for 150-250 days. Of these 250 days, they were beaten on the genitals and anus about 15 times. They were beaten on the genitals only during morning checks. This could also be while taking a shower (P. 4). Another prisoner recalled that he was beaten with a shocker on the buttocks. The shockers were of varying sizes and were used all over the body. The shocker could be held for 30 seconds and only then released, after which burns remained on the skin (P. 8).
96. Electric current was applied to prisoners both during interrogations to obtain confessions and testimonies, and during daily interaction with prisoners. During interrogations, electric current was used for a long time, and with serious consequences for the victim. In the second case, electric current was a means of “stimulating” prisoners. Thus, they were forced to move faster, to comply with the demands and orders of the security forces. In such situations, the usage of electric shockers was usually brief.
97. Prisoners describe the consequences of the use of electric shock in different ways, but in the vast majority of cases, they were severe. Prisoners recall losing consciousness, losing sensitivity in their limbs, receiving burns, and being unable to move for some time. This happened when the electric shock was applied to the spine.
98. All those interviewed mentioned that some medical workers (the so-called “Doctor Evil” mentioned by everyone) had electric shockers and constantly used them on prisoners, effectively replacing the provision of medical care with them.

STRESSFUL POSITIONS AND EXCESSIVE PHYSICAL EXERTION

99. This group of torture includes descriptions of cases of prisoners being forced to stay in certain positions for a long time or to perform physical exercises. This type of torture is common in Russian captivity. Representatives of Russian security agencies fill the entire time prisoners spend in internment places with it. It is a daily routine.
100. Given that prisoners spent a significant part of their time in cells, representatives of Russian security agencies forced them to stand without moving throughout the day (8 or more

hours). After getting up and having breakfast, prisoners had to stand in their cells, near their beds, with their hands behind their backs and their heads bowed. Talking and raising their heads were prohibited. Almost always, this was accompanied by a ban on visiting the toilet and drinking water without permission (from the command). Prisoners testified that as a result of such measures, their legs swelled, some of them could not endure, and lost their bladder or bowel control.

101. One of the prisoners describes these abuses as follows:

We were told that we had to stand all the time. We couldn't lean back, we couldn't sit down, we couldn't move. You can only go to the toilet and drink water with permission. If we did not do this, we were taken out into the corridor and beaten. We had to stand from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. And I stood like that every day from February 10, 2023, to October 23, 2024. As a result of standing, I have problems with my legs, and I was given the third group of disability for life (P. 3).

Another person testifies:

We had to stand. Head down, hands behind — all day from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. You can go to the toilet and drink water only when allowed. Sometimes, they did not allow you to drink or use the toilet all day. If someone moved or said something, they took the whole cell out into the corridor and beat it. We stood like that until the last day, until I was released (testimony P. 2).

102. Another standard position was the so-called “swallow” — a position leaning forward, head against the wall, arms raised behind the body, or “stretching” — a position facing the wall, arms raised with palms on the wall (sometimes with the backs of the palms to the wall), legs shoulder-width apart. This position was required of prisoners in all situations when they left their cells and were in corridors, offices, or other rooms, such as those waiting for interrogations or transfers to different areas (e.g., dining rooms, showers, medical units). According to the prisoners, they could be in such positions for a considerable amount of time. One of the prisoners noted that they held the “swallow” position throughout the morning inspection (P. 7)
103. The prisoners were forced to perform physical exercises on a constant basis. It is likely that the Russian special forces and employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service used it as a form of entertainment. The prisoners noted that they were ordered to squat or do push-ups every day. The number of squats varied, but usually no less than 200 times. One of the prisoners (P. 9) reported that the record number of squats in their cell was 2,600 times, while another prisoner (P. 6) determined it to be 4,000 times.
104. The variety of positions in which the prisoners had to be held depended entirely on the imagination of the Russian law enforcement officers. Examples of such imagination include being forced to keep a half-squat position (holding the hands in front while squatting) for 1–1.5 hours. “If they didn’t like the way we were standing, they called us to the bars, ordered to stretch out our arms and beat us on the back with their hands” (P. 10). Another was squatting with the so-called soldier’s grip (several people squatting while holding each other by the shoulders), etc. (P. 7).
105. Sometimes the internment workers gave the order to perform physical exercises to all the prisoners who were kept in one place. Thus, the prisoner recalls that once the entire shift of the SIZO employees, who were in a state of alcoholic intoxication, gave the command “run in place”. “We ran for 2–3 hours. The employees forgot about us, and then when they came to the building, they were surprised why the whole building was running” (P. 9).

106. Other examples of being forced to take certain positions and perform physical exercises include staying in the “plank” position during the entire morning inspection (P. 7) and performing the “split.” “If it didn’t work out, they helped us — they beat the legs, pressed the pelvis hard so that it stretched” (P. 1).
107. The testimonies of the prisoners regarding being forced to take stressful positions and perform physical exercises were very similar. Restrictions on the ability to move freely and change body positions, placing them in uncomfortable and unnatural positions and vice versa — in positions that require special physical training (the “split position”), forcing them to perform excessive physical exertion against the background of exhaustion and constant malnutrition — all this indicates deliberate bullying and exhaustion of prisoners, creating an atmosphere of general humiliation. Given the prevalence, uniformity of such actions, and the fact that a large number of law enforcement officers of the Russian Federation were involved in their implementation, it can be argued with a high degree of probability that such actions were coordinated and sanctioned, and they are of the undisguised nature of torture and inhuman treatment.

SEXUALIZED TORTURE METHODS

108. For this report, a broad interpretation of sexual violence was used, according to which it includes not only rape, forced sex, or other acts involving penetration of the human body, but also other acts not involving penetration or even physical contact. This approach is recognized in international law and was adopted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in the case against Akayesu.
109. Interviewees were reluctant to talk about sexual violence. At the same time, such episodes probably caused significant psychological suffering, and that led most interviewees to provide explanations for these facts.
110. Prisoners did not describe cases of rape, but violence that had all the hallmarks of a sexual nature was used against prisoners very often. These include blows to the victim’s genitals and groin, the use of electric shocks to the captive’s genitals and anus, undressing the victim and forcing them to be naked, performing physical exercises naked, threats of rape, and simulated rape. All those interviewed noted that the threats of castration and genital mutilation were constant and targeted.
111. Many of the captives recalled that special forces and internment workers threatened to use foam as a tool of sexualized torture. The captive said that they shouted at him, cursed him, and asked, “Is there foam in your ass?” and “Are your balls still in place?” He further recalled that after these threats, they began to beat him with an electric shock on his genitals and anus. He was beaten with a shocker many times for 10 minutes (P. 9)
112. The torturers openly told the prisoners about the purpose of sexual violence. They sought to inflict such injuries and damage on the prisoners that it would make it impossible for them to have children in the future. The prisoner said:

they told me to stand in a “stretcher” position and added, “Now we will check your penis,” and started kicking me in the balls. When they beat me in the balls, they justified it by saying that their prisoners in Ukraine have their balls cut off, and they beat us in the balls so that we would not have children in the future (P. 8).
113. Another prisoner recalled that he was constantly interrogated by two people — a lieutenant and a fat captain. Sometimes, Russian convicts who were serving their sentences

in this place of deprivation of liberty participated in the interrogations. The prisoner was threatened that if he did not confess to the bombing of the Drama Theater in Mariupol, the convict would rape him. After this threat, the convict pulled down his pants, demonstrating his willingness to carry out the interrogator's order. The prisoner cried, and the lieutenant ordered the convict to pull up his pants. But after that, the lieutenant said that the prisoner would never have children, and with these words began to beat the prisoner with an electric current (stun gun) on the genitals. The prisoner recalled that he had been shocked (P. 6).

114. Law enforcement officers of the Russian Federation often threatened rape and castration. The interviewees recalled several episodes of simulated rape. The FSIN officers tried to insert a rubber baton into the prisoner's anus (P. 8), a stick, and a bottle (P. 5).
115. Forms of sexualized violence were calls for sexual intercourse, which FSIN officers ordered the prisoners to perform under the threat of beating. The prisoner described that he heard the FSIN officers and special forces officers shouting about ten times through the door to the two prisoners to "suck " each other.

But the boys did not comply, and they were beaten. In another cell, other FSIN officers and other special forces officers shouted at the prisoner to fuck someone else, but they did not do it, and they were beaten (P. 8)

116. The testimonies of the prisoners indicate that sexual violence was used with two main goals: to harm the prisoners' sexual health and to humiliate them. It was used to instill the belief that the prisoners' bodies no longer belong to them. The prisoners noted that after their release from captivity, they had problems with their sexual health. There were complaints about poor spermogram results, pain in the groin area, etc. The interviewees had no such symptoms before their capture (P. 8).

THREATS AND MOCK EXECUTION

117. Threats of murder and physical destruction constantly accompanied the stay of Ukrainian military personnel in Russian captivity. The interviewees recalled that from the very beginning of their captivity, Russian military personnel, militants of quasi-formations (LPR, DPR), and employees of the Russian law enforcement agencies threatened them with murder and reprisals, saying that Ukrainians would not return home alive. Such threats were not personalized and were addressed to all prisoners who heard them. This was part of the daily pressure on the prisoners.
118. At the same time, threats and imitation of execution also had signs of individual cases of torture. Most often, this happened during interrogations of prisoners, when they were left alone with a team of executioners. Such threats and imitations occurred in the context of beatings or other types of torture, and due to this, their probability sometimes acquired signs of inevitability.
119. Other situations were when special forces fighters entered the cell with the prisoners, called the prisoner's name, ordered him to collect their things, and took him out. Then, during the walk to the vehicles and further movement, the prisoners were informed that they were being taken to be shot. The entire time the prisoners were being moved, they were kept in suspense, constantly reminded that they were being taken to be shot, "to be fed to the dogs" (P. 6).

120. One of the prisoners described how in a colony in Mordovia, they were taken outside, made to kneel, and a shooting was simulated by throwing stones at a metal shield. There was a sound similar to a gunshot. The victims could not see what it was, and therefore were very scared and depressed. Consequently, they often lost control of their physiological functions and had accidents.

ASPHYXIA/SUFFOCATION

121. This type of torture consists of depriving the victim of the opportunity to breathe by blocking the airways. This suppression is carried out in various ways — suffocation by squeezing the victim's neck, by pouring a large amount of water through a cloth, by putting a plastic bag on the victim's head, by placing them in a confined space without access to fresh air, and leaving them there for a long time.

Most often, suffocation was used during interrogations. In such cases, it was part of other torture.

122. P.4 recalled that some employees of the Federal Security Service (according to the employees themselves) drowned prisoner X. He was laid on his back with his hands and feet tied, a cloth was placed on his face, and a large amount of water was poured over him (P. 4).
123. Suffocation was also used during the movement of prisoners. One of the prisoners described the method of transportation that the Russians used when delivering prisoners to places of detention. He recalled that a large number of people were placed in a truck, which exceeded the vehicle's capacity several times. He says that "there were panic attacks, there was not enough air. When we asked to open the ventilation, we were ignored" (P. 9)
124. The use of a bag for suppression was a common practice. Interviewee S.1. noted that a bag was put on his head and held until he lost consciousness. Another prisoner described the use of a bag during interrogation as follows:

"...this interrogation was the harshest; they suffocated me. I went into the cell and they told me to lie down. I lay down on the floor and put my hands behind my back. He tied my hands and feet with tape. Then he took two stools, placing one between my arm and torso, and the other between my other arm and torso. And he started asking who killed the civilians. They put a plastic bag over my head and started suffocating me: they closed the bag and covered my mouth and nose with their hands so that I could not breathe. The first bag was chewed through, and they took a new one, put it on my head, and began to strangle me. This interrogation lasted about three hours, and all this time they were squeezing the bag and removing it" (P. 10).

125. Suffocation by squeezing the victim's neck was often combined with other actions that enhanced the effect of asphyxiation. Person P.2 indicated that the executioners combined the strangulation by the neck with simultaneous blows to the solar plexus. Such actions led to the prisoners losing consciousness. After that, the victims were "woken up" with an electric shocker, and everything started again.

HARASSMENT WITH DOGS

126. In penal institutions in the Russian Federation, dogs are used to guard the perimeter of these places and to prevent the escape of convicts. They are also used during the trans-

fer of those convicts who are considered especially dangerous. With Ukrainian prisoners, dogs are used to intimidate and injure them.

127. Interviewees testified that it was common practice to harass prisoners with service dogs, giving the dogs the command to attack and bite the prisoners, and keeping excited and irritated dogs close to the prisoners. Person P.10 described being given the command to crawl into the room at a crawling pace, and at the same time, the dog handler gave the dog the command to attack and hold those who crawled. The dog carried out the command, grabbing the prisoner and holding him by the limb. Person P.10 recalled that a dog bit him twice — on the leg and the buttock during a walk. Some prisoners were left with scars after the dog bites.

At the same time, the prisoners recalled that medical assistance was not provided in such cases (P. 9)

128. Often, harassment by dogs was accompanied by humiliating remarks towards the prisoners. The interviewee recalled how the dog handler, giving orders to the dog, shouted: “Bite the dill [derogatory name for Ukrainians]!”, “Find the mercenary!” (P. 2).
129. The prisoners recalled that as a result of dog bites, they were left with wounds and scars. Given the unsatisfactory state of nutrition, rest, and recovery, as well as constant psychological pressure and a high level of stress, the wounds did not heal well. One of the prisoners recalled that a dog bit off a piece of skin near his comrade’s elbow. According to him, this wound then remained inflamed for a very long time (P. 4).

CREATION OF INHUMAN AND DEGRADING CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

130. The conditions in which the Ukrainian prisoners were kept can be considered a separate type of torture because they formed in the prisoners a persistent feeling of fear, vulnerability, defenselessness, and helplessness. The prisoners could do nothing; they had no way to influence the situation or their circumstances. They had no control over the possibility of any changes in their detention conditions; they could not complain, receive help, or turn to any bodies, organizations, or individuals. The prisoners were under the complete control of the Russians and were deprived not only of all human rights but also of even the elementary minimum physical and physiological freedom (this means the ability to move, engage in some types of activity, and relieve natural needs).
131. The material conditions in which the Ukrainian prisoners found themselves are characterized as follows: cold, insufficient food, lack of medicine, threats, insults, and intimidation, humiliation by forcing them to move in a bent position, crawling, or kneeling.
132. A separate type of influence on the prisoners was the compulsion to eat insignia from the military uniform, study the Russian anthem, songs, and poems, and the compulsion to read poems and recite them aloud. The pressure also consisted in the fact that the perpetrators influenced the intellectual sphere of the prisoners, imposing Russian propaganda narratives, forbidding not only to speak Ukrainian, but also to speak at all.
133. The Russians forced the prisoners to beat other Ukrainian prisoners, tried to create an atmosphere of distrust and mutual denunciations, tension, and danger (P. 8). Constant physical violence, contemptuous attitude, and humiliation, complete control over the prisoners’ bodies, over their time, and the space in which they found themselves. The prisoners were

forbidden to count the days and keep track of the number and month, in an attempt to disorient them and render them completely helpless (P. 5).

Examples from the testimonies of the prisoners:

...comrades next to them were beaten for their tattoos. They forced people to chew Ukrainian flags, chevrons, our symbols; they told them to swallow them. If you didn't eat, they threatened to beat you. Some people felt sick (P. 10).

In the two-person cell where I spent a month, the front door didn't close completely. There was mold in the cell, and it was cold (I was without socks the whole time because they didn't give me any). Then I was transferred to an 8-person cell, which was also cold. There was mold, which we wiped off with our hands. We tried to ventilate the cell so as not to get tuberculosis. The toilet in the cell was blocked. The cell had a table, two wooden benches in a metal frame, which were screwed to the floor (P. 11).

For the first six months, we were forbidden to sit down; we had to stand. We were forbidden to move. If we hadn't done this, we would have been beaten. We were forced to sing the Russian anthem, recite their poems, and shout their proverbs. We also shouted: "Glory to Russia!", "Glory to the Russian special forces!" When they entered the rooms, we had to bow and thunder: "Hello, boss," and when we left, we had to shout: "Goodbye, boss! Thank you for the check!" When they beat us, we had to say: "Thank you, boss." They forced us to learn songs: "Katyusha," "Victory Day," "Dark-haired woman," "Mama, I'm in captivity" (P. 10).

134. The prisoners said that the conditions of detention were so cruel, inhumane, and humiliating that some tried to commit suicide.

...when I was on the 4th floor in cell 49, prisoner Z. was held in cell 46 (opposite). Once during interrogation, he was beaten by three SIZO employees, after which he cut his veins with a tile in his cell. But he remained alive (P. 7)

... When I entered the cell, I shouted, "Go fuck yourself, give me a machine gun, I will shoot you all here and now." I'll shoot myself!". And the guys in the cell said that I ran at them. They knocked me out, and I defecated. At that moment, I had an epileptoid attack. I realized that it was epilepsy, because I didn't remember anything after that, and I had saliva coming out of my mouth. After that, they didn't provide me with medical care. I still have epilepsy (P. 6).

135. The interviewees testified that deaths among prisoners were not uncommon.

I heard our prisoners shouting: "Boss, the prisoner died in the cell!" (P. 5).

On April 20 or April 24, 2024, prisoner X, born in 1979, died of dystrophy in the cell opposite. The day before his death, we heard him screaming in the evening and calling for help. The morning came. The corpse was not taken away until the meal was over. Then the convicts carried the corpse away and laughed: Another one bites the dust (P. 11).

OTHER TYPES OF TORTURE

136. Other types of torture were also applied to prisoners. They were not as widespread. Among them, the interviewees mentioned torture with fire, torture with gas, and tying up. One of the prisoners mentioned pulling out his toenails (p. 6).

The interviewees described these cases as follows:

... [they] asked if there were any tankers? One replied that he was a tanker. He was taken out into the corridor, doused with a flammable mixture, made to sit on the ground, and set on fire (p. 3).

Regarding torture with gas, one of the interlocutors noted:

They set up gas chambers. They did this to us once. After the inspection, we ran into the cells and fell because we felt unwell. The FSIN employees and special forces sprayed gas from canisters into the cell and closed all the openings, ordering everyone to stand still and not move. We were forbidden to open the window. We stood like that for about an hour. There was an older person in our cell, 71 years old, surnamed O., who would lose consciousness. We could not breathe, we were suffocating, tears would flow from our eyes (P. 5).

137. The prisoners recalled being tied as a separate type of cruel treatment. Its cruelty was because the victims' hands were usually bound so tightly that the blood circulation in the limbs was significantly impaired, and given that the prisoners were tied with their hands for a very long time (sometimes 5–8 hours), this could entail significant harm to their health. Most often, tying was used when moving prisoners.

From the testimonies of the prisoners:

...they told us that we were moving in an unknown direction. They gave us bags with clothes and began to tie our eyes and hands with tape. ... Then we were put in vans and drove for four hours. From the noise of helicopters and planes, I realized that we were at the airfield. After two hours of waiting, we were transferred to the plane. I couldn't say how long we flew, but I heard one of the Russians say the word 'Voronezh' when we landed. All this time, our hands and eyes were tied. ... We were allowed to go to the toilet before boarding the plane. At the airfield, with our hands tied, we took off our pants and relieved ourselves. When we arrived, we were transferred back to vans, and we drove for about 10 hours. Our hands and eyes were tied (P. 9).

Before we were loaded into the bus, we were handcuffed and squeezed so hard that everyone bled. We asked them to loosen it, but our requests were ignored. We traveled like this for about 6–8 hours (P. 5)

Our hands and eyes were tied. ... We sat (in the plane — author's note) on the floor, our hands held in front of us. There were many of us, and we sat very closely. We sat between each other's legs. We flew for a very long time (P. 2).

THE GOALS OF TORTURE DURING INTERROGATIONS

138. From the prisoners' accounts, it follows that the primary goal of torture was to obtain confessions, to recognize the actions of the Russian troops as fair, to recognize the power and might of the Russian Federation and its leadership, to provide testimony about the killing of civilians, and to agree to cooperate with the Russian authorities and law enforcement agencies.
139. Some prisoners noted that, based on the content of the questions asked during interrogations, it was possible to infer that law enforcement officers were attempting to establish a specific sequence of information that could indicate the presence of criminal offenses (crimes). At the same time, the prisoners suggested that the law enforcement officers did not want to "fabricate" criminal cases.

It is difficult to draw a definitive conclusion about whether criminal cases were initiated against the prisoners. But it remains undeniable that all the "confessions" and testimonies were obtained through torture.

140. From the testimonies of the prisoners:

Initially, they sought to gather general information, including the location of the units, my whereabouts, the tasks I performed, and the orders I received. They were interested in criminal orders — murders, rapes, looting. If you slandered yourself or others, they stopped touching you.

When I gave testimony, the Russian military immediately asked, "Who can confirm?" When they found out who could confirm, they stopped the interrogation, took me to a cell, and interrogated the person I named. They interrogated about 10 people in this way, and all our testimonies coincided. In this way, we managed to divert suspicion from our brother, who was rumored in another colony to have taken part in gang rape. But since we all had the same evidence, we managed to acquit that person, and he was removed from the case (P. 4).

...there were several institutions, it was Volgograd where prisoners were forced to invent stories, like someone was killed, someone was raped, and the prisoners had to state their last name — who did it to them... (P. 4).

Once, I was taken to a room by an employee in a blue uniform, who instructed me to write a paper in which I agreed to cooperate with the Russian Federation. I refused, and he said that they would beat me and force me to write anyway. So, I wrote that paper (P. 9).

The third time during interrogation (after torture and abuse — author's note), I already gave evidence against myself and the people I was with, and they did not beat me. During this interrogation, an FSB officer forced me to write a statement and threatened to retaliate against my family if I did not sign it. The content of the statement was as follows: I must help any person who approaches me in Ukraine and says certain words. If I refuse or tell the SBU, they will deal with my family. They also told me not to even think about the SBU, because they have their people in the SBU (P. 9).

PERSONS WHO USED TORTURE

141. We believe that the perpetrators of torture, in addition to the direct torturers, can also include the leadership of the places where Ukrainian prisoners of war were held. These officials could not have been unaware of the regular and systematic torture taking place in the institutions they manage. Given the constant and massive nature of the torture, this fact is undeniable. Until March 13, 2024, IK-10 in the Republic of Mordovia was headed by Sergey Zabaikin, and since March 2024, it has been headed by Alexander Gnutov. His deputies today are Alexey Anashkin, Yegor Averkin, Alexander Grishanin, Ivan Veshkin, and Semyon Kuznetsov¹².
142. In their stories, prisoners often mention their torturers. As follows from the testimonies, torture was carried out by employees of special forces, employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN), and representatives of the Federal Security Service (FSB). Much less often, members of the military formations of the Russian Federation (military, Chechen militants, and militants of the DPR/LPR) participated in torture.
143. Given that many of the interviewees recalled that in different places where they were transferred during the time they were in captivity, they met the same workers who tortured prisoners, it can be assumed that special teams of executioners were created. Their task was to travel to places of detention after prisoners and torture them. A kind of team of “professional” torturers-persecutors. This activity was their primary task and only function.
144. Probably, it was they who used torture, and other workers, in particular from the FSIN, helped in this. The task of FSB officers was to conduct interrogations, prepare documents, and record specific facts.
145. If this indeed were the case, it can also be safely assumed that there was a particular order to carry out such “torturous” persecution of prisoners to cause them maximum harm, intimidation, humiliation, etc. This, in turn, is a manifestation of a unified approach and coordinated activities towards prisoners, a kind of policy towards them.
146. As the prisoners testify:
- Special forces and employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service beat us. The employees of the FSIN were in blue uniforms. There were also dog handlers. They put dogs in cages, took some tools, and participated in the beatings and torture of prisoners (P. 4).*
- I only remember that in Mordovia, there was an employee who was in Ryazhsk. We recognized him by his voice (P. 7).*
- We recall that when we were in Mordovia, we recognized the special forces from Bryansk by their voices. These special forces conducted checks, took us for walks, and to the bathhouse (P. 5).*
- Some shifts of the Federal Penitentiary Service employees who were in Novozybkov and tortured the boys were also in Mordovia. This is because they told some people they had seen them in Bryansk (P. 8).*

¹² PKU Correctional Colony No. 10 Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia for the Republic of Mordovia: <https://surl.li/hsxzka>

147. In many testimonies, prisoners mention the military call signs, names, and even surnames of their torturers. In particular, most of the stories mention the following torturers:
- “Bizon” — a special forces soldier who accompanied Ukrainian prisoners during their transportation by plane to a military airfield, from where they were already transported to various institutions before being transported to Mordovia.
 - “Uncle Vanya” — an employee of SIZO No. 2 in Taganrog. As the prisoners recall, he was a former boxer. He participated in the interrogations and torture of prisoners.
 - “Zhenya” — an employee of SIZO No. 2 in Ryazsk. According to the prisoners, this employee was particularly cruel. He often turned off the video surveillance cameras in the corridor where the prisoners’ cells were located, took people out of these cells, and beat them just for fun.
 - Bykov Pavel Valerievich, captain — employee of the SIZO No. 2 in Ryazsk
 - “Doctor Evil” (the prisoners gave him this nickname) — an employee of the medical unit of the IK-10 of the Republic of Mordovia. He always refused to provide prisoners with medical assistance. Instead, he beat the prisoners with an electric shocker.

From the testimonies received, it is clear that almost all prisoners encountered this person and nearly everyone gave him the same description — a cruel executioner, distinguished by inhuman treatment of prisoners. This is especially terrible, considering that everyone remembers him as a doctor.

Thanks to the efforts of journalists from the RFE/RL investigative project “Schemes”, this person was identified. He is a medical worker (probably former) of the medical unit of IK-10 in Mordovia — Ilya Sorokin¹³.

- Inspector Mikhailov — an employee of SIZO No. 2, Komyshin, who participated in the interrogations and torture of prisoners
- Zhuravlev — a special forces soldier who participated in the interrogations and tortures of VK-10 of the Republic of Mordovia.
- “Baikal”, “Tinki-Vinki”, “Kamaz” — call signs of individual employees who were in IK 10 of Mordovia and participated in the interrogations and tortures of prisoners.
- Galitsky is an FSB operative who participated in the interrogations of prisoners in SIZO No. 2 in Ryazsk.
- Other executioners from SIZO No. 2 in Ryazsk are Sasha, San Sanych, Roman, Maksym, and Lieutenant Colonel Semechkin.

¹³ “Doctor Evil”. The doctor who tortured Ukrainian prisoners of war in one of the most secret colonies in Mordovia (investigation) <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/skhemy-mordovia-doktor-zlo/33475835.html>

PRELIMINARY LEGAL QUALIFICATION OF THE EPISODES DESCRIBED IN THE REPORT

148. The evidence obtained allows us to conclude that the Russian military and other agents affiliated with it committed many violations of international law, including those that pose a public danger, in the context of international humanitarian and international criminal law.

Our reasoning is based on the following provisions:

All the interviewed persons were servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. All of them participated in the protection of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this sense, Ukraine exercises its sovereign right to self-defense, as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter, and mobilizes its regular armed forces to repel the Russian Federation's regular armed forces. Under such conditions, the service members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were granted the status of combatants and carried out combat missions as assigned by the command.

After all, Ukrainian military personnel are protected by the Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims.

149. To establish the presence of signs of war crimes, it is necessary to analyze several elements of the events that occurred.

Among them are the following:

- military personnel must be participants in an armed conflict;
- military personnel must have the status of combatants;
- treatment and actions towards the victims must show signs of violations, in particular torture;
- the perpetrators of the relevant actions were aware of the connection between their behavior and the armed conflict.

We believe that all of the listed signs were present in the respondents we interviewed. We base our conclusions on the following.

The presence of an international armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

150. Today, the presence of an international armed conflict can be considered prejudicial to the proceedings.

Per UN Resolution ES-11/1 of March 2, 2022, the Russian Federation committed an act of aggression against Ukraine in violation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the UN Charter. The resolution requires the Russian Federation to cease the use of force against Ukraine immediately and to refrain from any further unlawful threats of force or its use against any UN Member State.

Although the document does not use the phrase “armed conflict”, the mention of Russia's aggressive, forceful violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity indicates the existence of an armed conflict. It is undeniable that this conflict is international, since two states that share a common border are involved in the confrontation. A sign of an armed conflict is also the fact that the regular armed forces of the Russian Federation have illegally crossed

the state borders of Ukraine and are carrying out armed actions and attacks on the territory of Ukraine.

ALL THOSE INTERVIEWED ARE COMBATANTS

151. According to Article 43 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), of 8 June 1977, defines the concept of a combatant, formulating it in terms of the armed forces of a party to the conflict. After all, persons who are part of the armed forces of a party to the conflict are combatants.

From the content of this document (Protocol I), the main characteristics that must be inherent in persons recognized as combatants are seen. These include persons belonging to the armed forces, which encompass any armed formations under the command of a person responsible to one of the parties to the conflict for the conduct of their subordinates. Such armed forces are subject to an internal disciplinary system, which, among other things, ensures compliance with the norms of international law applicable during armed conflicts. Combatants have a specific, visible, and identifiable insignia that is visible from a distance and openly carry weapons.

152. All interviewed victims belonged to the armed forces of Ukraine, were armed and identified, and met other criteria for defining combatants.

As stated in Article 44 of Additional Protocol No. 1, under such conditions, any combatant who falls into the power of an adverse party is a prisoner of war.

This status gives its bearer a whole range of rights and obligations, as well as guarantees; these persons (combatants) are under the protection provided by the Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

The Convention states that persons who take no active part in hostilities, in particular those members of armed forces who have laid down their arms, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any discrimination on grounds of race, colour, religion or belief, sex, birth or property, or any other similar criteria.

153. To this end, the following acts are now and shall continue to be prohibited against the persons mentioned above:

- a) Violence to life and person, including all forms of murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture;
- b) Taking of hostages;
- c) Outrages upon human dignity, including humiliating and degrading treatment;
- d) Conviction and punishment without a previous trial by a court duly constituted and affording judicial guarantees recognized by civilized peoples as indispensable.

154. The Geneva Conventions (in particular, the Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War) establish key guarantees for prisoners and detainees that the conflicting state must ensure. Among these guarantees is the unconditional requirement for humane treatment of those who find themselves under the control of one of the conflicting states, the prohibition of cruel treatment, mockery, humiliation, and torture, etc. The detaining state must provide detainees with free medical assistance, if necessary, and ensure their safety and well-being.

The descriptions given in this report indicate that Russia did not provide these guarantees.

We believe that the representatives of the Russian Federation, by their actions, deliberately violate the norms established by the Geneva Conventions.

THE ACTIONS COMMITTED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF RUSSIAN STRUCTURES AND ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNING UKRAINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR BEAR THE HALLMARKS OF TORTURE

155. We base this conclusion on the testimonies of the interviewed victims, according to which the following types of torture were identified and described: beatings; electric shock torture; stressful positions and excessive physical exertion; sexualized methods of torture; threats and imitation of execution; asphyxiation/suffocation; dog attacks; creation of inhuman and degrading conditions of detention. All of them are thoroughly described in the relevant sections of this report.

Such actions have been repeatedly recognized as torture in the practice of international judicial bodies.

In particular, such types of violence as beatings, rape, threats of physical violence, deprivation of sleep and food, forcing to be in a strenuous position for a long time, etc¹⁴.

A similar position was stated in the ICTY Decision v. Milorad Krnojelac, which ruled that beatings of a detainee that resulted in long-term health problems in combination with other methods of ill-treatment (failure to provide medical care after beatings, solitary confinement, poor nutrition) may amount to torture¹⁵.

156. The practice of international judicial bodies and tribunals usually attaches great importance to the purpose of torture. If they are carried out to obtain information and data, this may also indicate the existence of an intention to commit torture. At the same time, as can be seen from the testimonies of the interviewed prisoners of war, the purpose of torture was often absent. Therefore, torture was an end in itself.

CONNECTION OF EVENTS WITH THE ARMED CONFLICT

157. Participants in the events and perpetrators of the relevant actions must be informed of the existence of an armed conflict and link their actions to it.

The events described in the report undoubtedly indicate that the perpetrators of the actions (a separate section is devoted to them) were aware of the existence of an armed conflict and that all their actions were committed as a result of it. The Russian military and employees of places of detention (both official and unofficial) understood well that they were taking Ukrainian service members prisoner (demanding that they lay down their weapons and provide all the distinguishing marks indicating their affiliation with the armed forces and units), demanded from them information about their affiliation with military units, demonstrated awareness of the existence of units of various types, showed particular contempt and cruelty towards those who served under a contract, etc. The connection with

¹⁴ Guide to Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Prohibition of Torture: https://ks.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr-ks/guide_art_3_ukr

¹⁵ Prosecutor v. Milorad Krnojelac (jcourt decision), IT-97-25-T, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 15 March 2002, (pp. 233–235).

the armed conflict is also evidenced by the fact that the prisoners were required to slander the armed forces of Ukraine and their leadership, as well as to recognize the greatness of Russia.

Therefore, these circumstances strongly indicate the connection between the crimes committed by the Russians and the armed conflict.

THE PRESENCE OF A COORDINATED AND PLANNED POLICY OF ACTIONS AGAINST UKRAINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR

158. Over time, due to the continued work to collect evidence of ongoing violations and crimes, it becomes evident that Russia's actions show signs of pre-planned, systematic actions against Ukrainians. Numerous reports by international and national Ukrainian organizations have identified these trends, which are also acknowledged by international juridical bodies. A vivid example is the ECHR Decision of 9 July 2025 in the case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (applications Nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20 and 11055/22).

159. In the context of this report, it is essential that the ECHR defines the actions alleged by Russia as administrative practices in the Decision mentioned above. The Court has recognized systemic violations that began in 2014 in the territories under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation, continued throughout, and became most widespread after the full-scale invasion in 2022.

The Court has recognized as such administrative practices, extrajudicial executions, unlawful detention, torture and inhuman treatment of civilians and prisoners of war, deportation and forcible transfer of civilians, including children, persecution of religious groups, restrictions on freedom of expression, systematic destruction of buildings and civilian infrastructure, prohibition of education in the Ukrainian language, etc.

160. The arguments put forward by the Court seem particularly important in the context of the qualification of the testimonies under examination:

- It recognises the systemic nature of the violations (i.e., their prevalence, repetition, typicality and uniformity). Such violations have been widespread since 2014 and to the present. Other decisions of the Court have also established their existence¹⁶.
- The Court established, and this is recorded in the Decision, that Russia is by all means obstructing the establishment of the facts of the violations and the conduct of investigations and exchanges of information. In particular, the Russian Federation does not provide access to the relevant territories, including for independent observers and international missions, limits the possibilities for monitoring the situation in places of detention, intimidates victims, which leads to their fear when submitting complaints about violations due to possible persecution of them or their relatives.
- Another important argument formulated by the Court is that the prevalence, repetition, uniformity, and systemic nature of the violations give reasonable grounds to believe that the senior leadership of the Russian Federation inspired and supported such treatment, the commission of violations, and encouraged behavior towards Ukrainian (in particular) prisoners of war. After all, the top leadership of the Russian Federation bears full responsibility for the organization and management of such administrative practices.

¹⁶ CASE OF UKRAINE v. RUSSIA (RE CRIMEA) /(Applications nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18) 25 June, 2024: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%22itemid%22:%22001-235139%22>

161. The Court based its Decision on the mass of information collected to date, which includes materials provided to the Court by the complainants, reports of international organizations, as well as materials prepared by non-governmental organizations. All this mass of information now forms a new quality that undoubtedly indicates the presence of a systemic policy in the actions of the Russian Federation, which contributes to and generates the commission of crimes against Ukrainian service members by representatives of various bodies and formations of the Russian Federation.
162. Based on the evidence received and the preliminary legal analysis, we believe that the described episodes bear signs not only of gross violations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, but also of war crimes in the form of torture. Considering the data obtained, their legal qualification, individualization of episodes concerning the identification of specific perpetrators, and detailing of the circumstances of crime commission, a more thorough study and investigation are required within the framework of relevant criminal procedures. Given the systematicity and large-scaleness, uniformity and repetition of similar acts and deeds, there is every reason to speak of the existence of a single coordinated policy towards Ukrainian prisoners of war, the primary goal of which is the destruction and humiliation of those who identify themselves with the state of Ukraine and make efforts to protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity and national-political identity.

Інформаційне видання

Михайло Романов

**КАТУВАННЯ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ВІЙСЬКОВОПОЛОНЕНИХ
У МІСЦЯХ УТРИМАННЯ ПІД ВАРТОЮ
В РОСІЙСЬКІЙ ФЕДЕРАЦІЇ**

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