

Analytical Overview of the Activities of the NGO "Association of the Relatives of Kremlin's Political Prisoners" on Documenting War Crimes Committed by the Russian Federation Against the Civilian Population in Ukraine, June 2025

Since 2022, the Association's documenters have identified and interviewed 526 witnesses of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and other international crimes against civilians, including shelling of civilian infrastructure, appropriation of private property by the occupiers, and unlawful deprivation of liberty.

As of June 30, 2025, information was documented on 372 civilians who were unlawfully deprived of liberty as a result of Russian aggression. Of these, 17 were identified during documentation work in June 2025.

During the reporting period, documenters from the NGO interviewed 17 people who testified about the unlawful deprivation of liberty of their relatives and loved ones resulting from the armed aggression of the Russian Federation.

In June 2025, documenters identified 17 individuals (16 men and 1 woman) who were unlawfully detained due to Russian aggression, including:

- 4 civilians sentenced by illegal courts of the aggressor state;
- 1 person whose captivity was confirmed by Ukrainian authorities;
- 2 civilians under arrest in detention centers by decision of law enforcement bodies of the aggressor state or de facto authorities in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine;
- 8 individuals detained by occupation authorities or law enforcement bodies in temporarily occupied territories, whose whereabouts remain unknown;
- 1 person detained and later released in a prisoner exchange, who died in hospital months later due to prolonged detention and lack of medical care;
- 1 person who was serving a sentence at the time of occupation and was later forcibly transferred by the occupiers.

Geographical distribution of the documented cases:

- 5 cases in the temporarily occupied Zaporizhzhia region (2022–2024), including two in Melitopol;
- 2 cases in the temporarily occupied Kherson region (Oleshky and Kherson);
- 6 cases in the Luhansk region;
- 1 case in the Kyiv region at the beginning of the full-scale invasion;
- 1 case in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 2023;
- 1 case in the Kharkiv region at the beginning of the full-scale invasion;
- 1 case in the Sumy region at the beginning of the full-scale invasion.

All identified persons were civilians who offered no resistance, engaged in no actions threatening others' life or health, and committed no offenses or illegal activity.

Among those interviewed in June 2025 was a former detainee who had been imprisoned in Kherson at the time of occupation. Following the city's capture, he was forcibly transferred by the occupying forces to various facilities in temporarily occupied Crimea and the Russian Federation. Throughout his detention, he endured systematic ill-treatment: beatings, electric torture, solitary confinement without food and water, humiliation, isolation, and pressure to accept Russian citizenship. His relatives were denied information about his whereabouts, effectively cutting him off from the outside world. He was not provided treatment for a serious illness contracted in detention, further endangering his life. This constitutes grave human rights violations by the occupying power against a person entitled to special protection under international law.

Documenters also interviewed Ms. T., whose husband, a civilian from the Sumy region, was abducted in March 2022 after joining the local territorial defense during the Russian occupation. He was held in complete isolation without access to communication. His relatives had no information about his fate for an extended period. In detention facilities, particularly in the city of Donskoy (Tula region, Russia), he was subjected to beatings, torture, and psychological pressure to force cooperation and signing documents. After his release in a prisoner exchange in February 2023, he was found with severe physical injuries, extreme weight loss, and post-traumatic symptoms, and died months later from



the effects of torture. This case illustrates the systemic use of cruel treatment, denial of medical assistance, and the intentional taking of civilian life—a gross violation of international humanitarian law.

In December 2022, in the occupied city of Zorynsk, Luhansk region, an elderly civilian couple who had openly expressed pro-Ukrainian views were forcibly abducted. Armed individuals in military uniforms without insignia broke into their apartment, conducted a search, used physical violence against the husband, confiscated personal belongings, and took them to an unknown location without explanation or legal documentation. No occupying authority confirmed their detention. Local "administration" claimed to have no knowledge of their whereabouts. Relatives were unofficially told they might be accused of "artillery adjustment," despite no hostilities occurring in the area. According to the sister of the disappeared woman:

"We don't know where they are. They were simply taken — and that's it. No one says anything, and they are not listed anywhere. We contacted the local 'administration,' the so-called 'police,' searched through the 'mayor's office' and acquaintances. Then we wrote to the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War and submitted appeals to the International Committee of the Red Cross — but they responded, 'We only help our own.' I don't know what else we can do. They vanished like into a black hole."

The civilians described in these testimonies had no connection to the Ukrainian military, did not participate in combat, and posed no threat to Russian forces. Grounds for detention often included having relatives in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, participating in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), photos on their phones, refusal to cooperate, or simply being in a "suspicious" location.

Since 2017, the NGO has worked to protect individuals unlawfully deprived of liberty for political reasons. The full-scale war and occupation of vast Ukrainian territories led to a new wave of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions. Since the onset of the invasion, the Association has documented and conducted in-depth interviews with victims and witnesses of international crimes committed by Russian troops in occupied territories. The organization is a member of the "Ukraine. 5 a.m." coalition and the global initiative T4P (Tribunal for Putin). Our documenters work to gather testimonies from people

who witnessed or experienced Russian crimes, including unlawful detention and captivity.

Based on documented testimonies, the following types of crimes, as defined by the Rome Statute, have been identified:

- Intentional shelling of civilian infrastructure (74 testimonies recorded);
- Enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention of civilians in occupied territories, leading to unlawful deprivation of liberty or deportation to facilities in the Russian Federation (372 people documented, including 17 identified in June 2025);
- Torture, cruel treatment, and inhumane detention conditions of civilians — witnesses report electric torture, beatings with rifle butts, threats, and other forms of physical and psychological abuse. All former detainees described inhumane conditions, lack of food, water, and medical assistance.

All documented facts point to systematic violations of the rules of warfare and the principles of international humanitarian law by the aggressor state: including murder, torture of civilians in occupied territories, imprisonment or other severe forms of physical detention, looting of public or private property, and the destruction of towns and villages. We will continue working with witnesses of Russian war crimes.

Prepared by legal analyst Svitlana Odintsova, NGO "Association of the Relatives of Kremlin's Political Prisoners," with financial support from People in Need. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the donor's position.

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