



## **War Crimes in the Occupied Part of Zaporizhzhia Region: Documented Testimonies 2022-2024**

analytical review

Zaporizhzhia - Kyiv  
January 2025

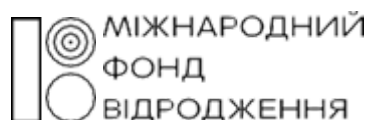
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With financial support from the Czech organization People in Need, within the SOS Ukraine initiative.

The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect their position.



This publication was compiled with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation. It's content is the exclusive responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the International Renaissance Foundation.

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## **Abstract**

The analytical review prepared by NGO "Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin" highlights war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russian occupation forces in Zaporizhzhia region in 2022-2024. The document is based on testimonies from 422 victims and witnesses who survived enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, illegal imprisonment, and other violations of international humanitarian law.

Special attention is paid to documented cases of torture, deportation, forced labor, attacks on civilian infrastructure, and illegal detention of civilians in inhumane conditions. The review presents detailed data on human rights violations, particularly regarding torture, looting, blackmail, violation of religious freedoms, and forced relocation.

This review aims to draw the attention of the public, international organizations, and government structures to the horrific crimes being committed under occupation. It also contributes to the process of documenting international war crimes and promotes justice for victims.

## **Introduction and Methodology**

The NGO "Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin" (hereinafter - the Association) has been conducting activities aimed at protecting persons illegally deprived of personal freedom for political reasons since 2017. The large-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation and occupation of new significant territories of Ukraine led to a new wave of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of Ukrainian civilian citizens. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Association has been documenting and conducting in-depth interviews with victims and witnesses of international crimes committed by Russian military in occupied territories of Ukraine. The organization is a member of the "Ukraine. 5am" coalition of civil society organizations and the global T4P (Tribunal for Putin) initiative. The Association's documenters work on obtaining testimonies from persons who witnessed Russia's crimes, suffered from illegal deprivation of freedom, and were held against their will by occupation authorities.

The Association works to achieve systemic changes that would help illegally imprisoned persons and their families. According to information contained in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolution "Missing persons, prisoners of war and civilians in captivity as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine," as of September 18, 2024, a total of 65,956 military personnel and civilians are considered missing or captured, of whom 50,916 are registered as missing based on verified data. In reality, there are many more victims. Suffering and fear are experienced not only by the prisoners themselves, whether military or civilian, but also by their relatives.

From February 24, 2022, to September 17, 2024, 3,672 people have been returned from Russian captivity, including 168 peaceful Ukrainian citizens. The Assembly notes with concern that among those released, one-third were considered missing as the Russian Federation did not provide timely information about their fate contrary to its international obligations. The number of Ukrainian citizens illegally held by the Russian regime is not exactly known and is carefully concealed by the aggressor state, which is why official figures are significantly lower than the real situation.

The main focus in documenting testimonies is concentrated on Zaporizhzhia region. The military occupation, which began on February 24, 2022, with the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine, led to the capture of part of Zaporizhzhia region. By February 26, the city of Berdiansk came under control of occupation forces, and on March 1, Russian troops established control over Melitopol. As a result of further offensive actions, Russia besieged and captured the city of Enerhodar, where the strategically important Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is located, which was occupied on March 4. Starting from May 2022, forced implementation of Russian citizenship began in occupied territories through issuing passports to the local population. The occupation was accompanied by violent actions, including numerous detentions, forced deportation, creation of torture chambers, and systematic suppression of civilian population. In particular, the city of Enerhodar and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant became centers of large-scale crimes against humanity. It is reliably known that at least 16 torture chambers operated in Enerhodar, created immediately after occupation to pressure and intimidate local residents. The existence of these torture chambers is confirmed by eyewitness testimonies, which indicate torture and detention of people in inhumane conditions.

An important aspect of documenting these crimes has been collecting testimonies from eyewitnesses and victims who survived illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, and other forms of repression. These testimonies are a key tool for establishing the scale and nature of crimes committed by occupation forces. In our work, we are guided by international documentation standards, including the Istanbul Protocol and Berkeley Protocol,

which ensure a proper approach to recording testimonies of human rights violation victims. These standards guarantee accuracy, confidentiality, and ethical conduct during information collection.

The documentation methodology is also based on international humanitarian law norms, particularly the Rome Statute, which defines actions of Russian military as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The use of these standards allows not only to ensure legal admissibility of testimonies but also to facilitate their use in international judicial instances for bringing perpetrators to justice. During documentation, information security of witness interviews and confidentiality of information is ensured.

Thus, collecting and analyzing testimonies about crimes in occupied territories of Ukraine is a key component in identifying the scale of international humanitarian law violations. This also allows highlighting the specifics of crimes aimed at systematic destruction and intimidation of civilian population, which is an important part of work on establishing justice.

## **Profile of Interviewed Witnesses of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity**

Since 2022, we have interviewed **422** witnesses of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and crimes against civilian population, including shelling of civilian infrastructure, occupiers' appropriation of private property, illegal deprivation of freedom, **of which 239 were in 2024.**

**As of the end of 2024, information was revealed about 274 civilians** who were arbitrarily detained by representatives of the Russian Federation or groups controlled by the aggressor country, of which information about 138 people was revealed in 2024. **Of the total number of persons - 55 women and 219 men.**

Among those illegally deprived of freedom, 2 persons were under 18 years old at the time of detention, 25 persons were over 60 years old.

The interviewed persons testified regarding the deprivation of freedom of themselves or their relatives, friends who were illegally imprisoned by the occupiers.

Regarding the status of illegally imprisoned persons at the time of interview, 139 persons were released, there is no information about the whereabouts of 41, 91 are still illegally deprived of personal freedom, 3 persons died in illegal imprisonment and after detention by the occupiers..

## **Geography of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity**

Most cases of enforced disappearance of civilians in 2022-2024, identified by Association's documenters, occurred in Zaporizhzhia region:

- 181 cases identified in temporarily occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia region in 2022-2024, particularly, Melitopol - 49, Enerhodar - 28, Berdiansk - 19, Tokmak - 14;
- 12 persons - in temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk region;
- 12 persons - in temporarily occupied territories of Kharkiv region;
- 8 persons - in Kyiv region territory, which was temporarily occupied;
- 35 persons were deprived of personal freedom during temporary occupation of Kherson region, 6 of them - during temporary occupation of Kherson city;
- 2 persons - during temporary occupation of Mykolaiv region;
- 5 persons - in temporarily occupied territories of Luhansk region.

All identified persons who were illegally deprived of freedom were civilians, did not resist, did not conduct any activities that would threaten life and health of others, did not commit offenses or other illegal activities.

The reasons for detention were political motives (pro-Ukrainian position, organization of peaceful rallies and gatherings, volunteer activities, political activities – forcing cooperation), religious motives (desire to force church representatives to cooperate with occupation authorities), and sometimes detention reasons were completely unclear and groundless (alleged cooperation with SBU and Armed Forces, organization of terrorist acts, photographing military, even presence of tattoos).

Thus, most persons were detained by law enforcement officers of occupation authorities who identified themselves as FSB officers. They conducted illegal searches,

during which they took personal belongings such as phones, laptops, tablets, and cameras, both from persons deprived of freedom and from all family members living in the house. Usually, the occupiers did not specify official reasons and grounds for searches and detentions, committing arbitrariness in occupied territories.

## Reasons for Detention

Witnesses indicate the following key reasons for detention:

- Political activity or open pro-Ukrainian position;
- Participation in peaceful protests and rallies;
- Volunteer activities;
- Religious beliefs and refusal to cooperate with occupation authorities;
- Work at strategic facilities (particularly at ZNPP).

**Political motives.** Detentions by occupiers on political grounds were carried out to reduce peaceful resistance to occupation and stop rallies that were held in occupied cities in spring 2022, spread fear and panic among local population. For this purpose, persons who held positions in local self-government bodies were illegally deprived of personal freedom. Thus, we identified information about 18 such persons.

They were required to cooperate with occupation authorities and switch to the enemy's side, as well as publicly support occupation authorities and address people with statements about the advantages of the "Russian world" and its further immutability.

Among those illegally deprived of freedom, 41 persons had an open pro-Ukrainian position, participated in pro-Ukrainian rallies, were volunteers or members of civil society organizations. Their detention was also carried out to reduce peaceful resistance to occupation and stop rallies that took place in occupied cities in spring 2022, spread fear and panic among local population.

For example, Mr. T., head of one of the occupied communities in Zaporizhzhia region, together with his deputy and community police officer, were illegally deprived of freedom and spent two days in a basement. They were beaten by having their heads hit against the wall and kicked in the ribs while on the floor. After torture, they were interrogated, with information available in public access being verified. There were no direct accusations and threats; the reason for detention was their pro-Ukrainian position and conducting a meeting with utility workers, who were informed about responsibility for collaboration activities. Mr. T. assumes that someone among them leaked this information to the occupiers.

The occupiers also tried to influence public sentiment through **educational representatives**. Thus, in the city of Melitopol after its occupation and establishment of occupation regime, all directors of secondary schools, due to their disagreement to conduct educational process according to Russian occupiers' requirements, wrote resignation letters from their positions. As we know, several directors were searched that same day, detained and held for several days in cold, damp garage premises without access to medicine, food and toilet, without possibility to sleep, while being threatened along with their families.

One man born in 1947 was held for 3 days in a temporary detention facility in occupied territory due to occupiers' desire to influence his daughter, who conducted journalistic activities directed against Russian Federation. In fact, the journalist was blackmailed and demanded to cease her activities, threatening her father's life.

Our organization's documenters also received testimony from Mr. O., who told about illegal deprivation of freedom due to his occupation – he was director of one museum in temporarily occupied territory of Zaporizhzhia region. The occupiers searched the museum for Ukrainian symbols and "Azov" regiment symbols. When they found them – they held Mr. O., an elderly person, for more than two months without proper conditions.

The Association received testimonies **about illegal detentions based on religious beliefs**. Thus, testimony was received from a representative of the religious organization of the Parish of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin in one of the occupied cities of Zaporizhzhia region, who was detained by occupation authorities and immediately "forcibly deported." Mr. O. was forcibly taken to a checkpoint, photographed, threatened with execution. Under video recording, they read a verdict and informed that the man was being forcibly expelled from the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region, after which they sent him walking towards Zaporizhzhia. The walk through mined territory lasted 4 hours, he was allowed to take only documents.

Mr. K., a citizen of Slovakia, was a representative of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church religious organization in an occupied city of Zaporizhzhia region. He experienced illegal detention and subsequent forced deportation due to his religious beliefs and refusal to cooperate with the occupiers.

**We have recorded 16 cases of personal freedom deprivation of Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) workers**, located in Enerhodar. Workers were coerced through threats and torture to show loyalty to occupation authorities and sign contracts with "Rosatom". Additionally, there are numerous reports about shelling of the nuclear plant and city from territories controlled by Russian military.

We also received testimony from Mr. O., who worked at DTEK thermal power plant in Enerhodar as an electrician in the electrical shop. He was illegally deprived of personal freedom by occupiers for pro-Ukrainian position and was sentenced in Russia for "terrorism" to 10 years and 6 months imprisonment. According to his relatives' testimonies, Mr. O. was tortured, including with electricity.

Among persons identified in May 2024 who were deprived of personal freedom, there is **a trend of detaining several or all family members simultaneously. Thus, five families were identified who suffered from occupiers' criminal arbitrariness.**

Family members of Mr. P., a ZNPP worker, were subjected to electric torture during interrogations. Through violence against his wife and student son, they tried to extract confessions about cooperation with the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The wife was tortured in her husband's presence, with threats of rape.

Mr. S., who lived with his family in Melitopol at the time of occupation, testified about the detention of himself and his father, who served in ATO. The occupiers held the son for a day and, not obtaining useful information, released him. The father has been in captivity since April 2022.

Mr. and Mrs. K., who worked in education, were detained and interrogated at the police department of an occupied village in Zaporizhzhia region. They were lucky – they were released within a day, though Mr. K. was severely beaten. The reason for detention was their pro-Ukrainian position and sphere of activity, as occupiers were coercing educators to cooperate.

A similar situation occurred with Mrs. A.'s family. She and her husband – ZNPP workers, were illegally detained and interrogated by occupiers regarding their pro-Ukrainian



position. As with Mr. and Mrs. K., they were released within a day, but Mrs. A.'s husband was severely beaten.

Mrs. A.'s family from Luhansk region also suffered from occupiers' arbitrariness. Three members of her family were illegally detained – her husband and two sons. The reason for illegal deprivation of freedom of her relatives was baseless accusation of her husband in terrorism. Mr. B. – a former ATO participant, along with his sons, was detained after FSB officers searched their house. During his stay in the detention center, he was tortured with electric current. At the time of speaking with documenters, he was at home awaiting trial in his case. The elder son was also released, but the family still has no information about the whereabouts and condition of the younger son.

## **Detention Conditions and Treatment Methods**

Witnesses report **about inadequate detention conditions that are degrading to dignity, persons are held in garages and basements, without sufficient food, water, and without medical assistance. Detainees are subjected to torture to obtain information, particularly, they are subjected to electric torture, beatings, threats of rape or murder.** Occupiers stage executions of detainees for intimidation. 37 persons provided testimonies about this, however, most do not want to recall it.

For instance, Mr. O., who was detained for his volunteer activities, told documenters that he was tortured with electricity and a gas mask: "They stripped me to my underwear, laid me on the floor, put on a gas mask, tied my hands with rope, and then passed voltage through my thumb and earlobe. They forced me to record a video where I promise that, in case of detecting sabotage groups, I am obliged to report this to the military commandant's office."

During communication with documenters, Mr. S. reported the following: "There was torture, interrogations with a stun gun, forcing to cooperate. The motives for detention were civic position and position held, they demanded to 'rewrite' enterprises to Russia."

Mr. H. reported that he was also tortured with electricity for a long time, and when they learned about his heart problems - they found other ways of abuse. They released him only under the condition of so-called "correctional" work - forced labor. "I was released from the cell on the condition of participating in correctional work in the city. Every day they picked me up at 6:00 AM and released me at 17:00. I dug trenches on the outskirts, engaged in city territory cleaning."

One of the women, whose testimony was received by our documenters in October 2024, tells about abuse by occupiers: "I was taken to the duty station, told to lean on the table, a Chechen beat me with an iron rod on my back and neck. 62 blows were delivered, during this they didn't accuse me of anything. I was wearing clothes that became embedded in the skin after the strikes. During the beating, 'Krab' laughed at me. After this, they dragged me to the toilet, where they took out a gun, told me to get on my knees, there was a bucket in the corner, the Chechen took out a gun, told 'Krab' to wrap a cloth around my head so the brain wouldn't fly out. But there was no shot. This all happened for approximately 2.5 hours. After this, I was taken to a cell."

Thus, Mr. O., whose testimony was received in November 2024, recalls his illegal deprivation of freedom as follows: "...Then the interrogation began with the use of physical force and electric stun gun... They beat with a baton on legs, back. Burned fingers with a lighter. Jabbed with an electric stun gun on the back, upper and lower limbs, in the rectum (anus). I don't remember how long the interrogation lasted. After the interrogation, they gave me time to recover and took me to a cell...The cell was approximately 2 meters long by 2.5-3

meters wide, there was a sink, instead of a toilet there was a bucket, 2-tier bed with mesh base, there was light in the cell, there was a window. Prisoners were fed leftovers from the occupiers, as well as dry rations. They didn't bring water."

Mr. S. recalls in his testimony: "After half an hour-hour they opened the door and took me for interrogation to FSB. I was beaten by two FSB officers with a stick. They hit joints, elbows, shoulders, beat without passion. They took my wife and me as pro-Ukrainian oriented. After the beating, they told us to write an explanatory note... that before February 24, 2022, we supported Ukraine, but realized that Ukraine is not ours, that Russia will be here, that we commit not to interfere with the referendum. I also said all this on camera."

Mr. V. told documenters: "After the shelling, they took me for interrogation. Asked the same things, where are the HIMARS. Said I know everything. They led me to an assembly hall, put me on a table, connected clamps to legs and hands (on wrists). Two FSB officers in masks held me, one was turning. When my eyes rolled back, the FSB officer stopped torturing with electricity, this continued until foam came from my mouth and I lost consciousness. This lasted about half an hour. They slapped my cheeks when I regained consciousness. After that, they tied my legs with ropes and ropes to the doors. Started stretching my legs until my jeans burst. I lost consciousness again. Came to in the cell in the morning."

In addition to physical force, there were **also threats of sexual violence** from the occupiers. Thus, Mr. P. says: "They pulled me out of the car, put me on my knees and started hitting with feet, rifle butts. After this, they tied my legs and hands, put a grenade in my hands. After a few minutes, they asked if the 'grenade gave up,' after which they took it away. They demanded information about the Armed Forces of Ukraine, but I said I don't have such information because I'm a civilian... They promoted Russian narratives, called me 'khokhol,' 'Banderite,' threatened sexual violence. At some point, they pulled down my pants, and one of the occupiers started unbuttoning his pants, but at this moment shelling began, after which they threw me in a pit. After the shelling (I don't remember the details of the shelling anymore) they pulled me out and ordered me to run, threatening to kill me if I get caught again."

## **Forced Deportation**

In the occupied territory, there were instances of issuing so-called "verdicts" regarding forced "deportation" to Ukraine-controlled territory. Testimonies were received from 14 persons who in this way got from occupation to Ukraine-controlled territory. During forced relocation to Ukraine-controlled territory by decision of occupation authorities, a person, previously illegally deprived of freedom, was taken to the demarcation line, read a "verdict" and forced to walk through mined territory from the Russian checkpoint near Vasylivka city toward Zaporizhzhia city. The mined road from the checkpoint to Ukraine-controlled territory was more than 15 kilometers. There are known cases when after filming by Russian propaganda channels of the forced expulsion procedure of civilians, they did not appear in Ukraine-controlled territory and are currently missing under special circumstances.

Ms. S. recalls this as follows: "They brought me to the last checkpoint on the hill in Vasylivka city to a flagpole with a Russian flag. They put me near the flagpole, the shorter Russian who took me from the house put on a balaclava and read the verdict while another policeman started filming on phone. I was standing in a white sweater and gray pants, there was some video in open sources, don't have the link. I don't remember the exact text of the verdict, the essence was that I oppose Russia, for this I will be deported outside Zaporizhzhia region. After they read the verdict, they told me to walk toward Zaporizhzhia. When I asked what I had done, the gray-haired Chechen from the 'Lanos' answered that I should have thought earlier. They told me that when an evacuation convoy passes, I should stop them, maybe they'll pick me up. Then I took a spoon of corvalol and went. Convoys with people passed me, about 10 cars, but no one stopped. Then a driver stopped, I was taken into the car and we drove. We reached Oleksandrivka village, where a convoy was gathering to go to Zaporizhzhia."

Ms. V. recalls this as follows: "Cars stopped on a hill at the checkpoint. There were many blocks, a flagpole and approximately 10 Russian soldiers. They took me out of the car, put me at the edge of the road. I thought they would shoot me now, so I stood with my head down. Thought these were the last minutes of my life. I was afraid that relatives wouldn't know what happened to me... I think I was deported because I was a teacher and deputy... After this they told me to go to Zaporizhzhia. I took several steps and turned back to the occupiers again, asked when I would return home, to which the occupiers replied, when combat actions end..."

## **Випадки загибелі у незаконному ув'язненні**

Documenters of the Association have received 3 testimonies from individuals whose relatives died after being detained by the occupation authorities.

Unfortunately, Mr. O. was never able to see his mother again after her illegal imprisonment. She died within the walls of a pre-trial detention center. The man reports that for a year, her administrative arrest was continuously extended every 15 days, accusing her of violating curfew, but it is not known for certain whether she was provided with a lawyer. On May 12, 2024, she died in the pre-trial detention center in Vesele township, where she had been held since her detention. The cause of death was not established, no expert examination was conducted, and she was buried by relatives in Crimea. Her son filed a police report, which opened a criminal case under Article 115 of the Criminal Code (intentional murder). There is a suspicion that she was detained due to beliefs about her providing data on the

location of Armed Forces of Ukraine equipment, although she did not serve in the ATO/OOS and was a private entrepreneur.

Mr. S., who held a position in local self-government on the territory of the temporarily occupied Zaporizhzhia region, unfortunately died after being detained by occupants for his pro-Ukrainian position. According to eyewitness accounts, he was held in an unknown location and severely beaten, after which the man died in intensive care around the beginning of October 2022.

In January 2023, a tragic incident occurred with Mr. A., as reported to the documenters by his parents. According to their testimony, on January 16, he came to his brother's house in a village in the Zaporizhzhia region, which was under temporary occupation. That day, five to six armed representatives of the occupation forces entered his brother's house. They began searching the house for moonshine. Mr. A., trying to protect his brother, intervened, after which the occupants took him to a car and took him in an unknown direction. For three days, his relatives did not know his fate or whereabouts. His mother, who is in the occupied territory, approached the local police and the commandant. Later, DSNS (State Emergency Service) employees found his body in a well in the same village. The body was hidden under branches, leaves, and a dead dog. Torture marks on the body were obvious: numerous iron burns, remnants of ear parts, multiple gunshot wounds to the limbs, torso, and head. This case demonstrates the cruelty with which occupants treat civilian populations, and documenting such crimes is important for further investigation.

## **Violations of International Humanitarian Law and Classification of Crimes**

Based on documented testimonies, the following types of crimes can be identified, as provided in the provisions of the Rome Statute, which indicate the systematic nature of violations of international humanitarian law and the scale of war crimes committed in occupied territories.

- **Intentional Shelling of Civilian Infrastructure.** These actions have become one of the most common forms of violations aimed at demoralizing the local population and destroying critical facilities. For example, in the cities of Melitopol and Zaporizhzhia, numerous cases of targeted shelling have been recorded, resulting in damage to hospitals, schools, residential buildings, and other civilian objects. In total, our organization has received 71 testimonies about such shellings, which were often accompanied by numerous civilian casualties, including children.
- **Enforced Disappearances and Arbitrary Detention of Civilians.** This is one of the most extensive categories of crimes recorded in occupied territories. Our organization has collected testimonies about 274 individuals who were arbitrarily detained by representatives of the Russian Federation or groups under their control. Many of these individuals were illegally deprived of their freedom without any legal grounds, after which they were either held in inhumane conditions or deported to institutions on the territory of Russia. Witnesses describe numerous cases where detentions were carried out without explanation of reasons, often following searches in their homes, and relatives were unable to learn the whereabouts of the detained for extended periods.
- **Torture, Cruel Treatment, and Inhumane Detention Conditions.** According to witnesses, detained individuals were regularly subjected to physical and psychological violence. More than 37 interviewees testify to beatings, torture with electric shocks,

threats of murder or rape. Detention conditions often included overcrowded rooms without ventilation, insufficient food and water, lack of access to medical assistance, and complete isolation. Most released persons state that the purpose of such actions was to obtain confessions, compel cooperation, or intimidate their families.

- **Appropriation and Robbery of Civilian Private Property.** Almost all interviewed witnesses report cases of illegal property seizure by occupants. This includes house searches, confiscation of mobile phones, laptops, documents, and other personal items, which were often not returned even after a person's release. In many cases, after such searches, people were forcibly evicted from their homes, and their dwellings were used by occupants for their own needs.

During the documentation of such crimes, several characteristic trends were identified. First, the crimes were systematic and often aimed at suppressing peaceful resistance among the local population. Second, in most cases, detentions and violence were carried out without any legal grounds, using excessive force. Third, the crimes were accompanied by large-scale information campaigns by the aggressor country, intended to justify their actions and intimidate the local population.

These testimonies are not only evidence of the scale of international law violations but also a basis for further prosecution of those responsible before international judicial instances.

## Conclusions

Systematic human rights violations and international humanitarian law breaches committed by the Russian Federation in occupied Ukrainian territories, particularly in the Zaporizhzhia region, require a comprehensive approach to protecting victims' rights. Illegal imprisonment of civilian populations, torture, arbitrary detentions, and enforced disappearances create a massive humanitarian crisis demanding immediate response from the state, civil society, and the international community. A crucial element of this response is implementing effective mechanisms to release illegally held civilians, ensure their social and legal protection, and develop rehabilitation programs for those released.

**Systemic Nature and Scale of Crimes.** Analysis of collected testimonies indicates the magnitude and systematic nature of war crimes committed by Russian occupation forces in the Zaporizhzhia region during 2022–2024. These crimes include torture, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, civilian deportation, and property appropriation. Such systematic actions point to a deliberate and purposeful violation of international humanitarian law.

**Occupiers' Political Motives.** All documented victims were civilians who did not resist and did not take any actions that could threaten others' safety. The primary reasons for arbitrary detentions were political motives, openly pro-Ukrainian positions, involvement in volunteer activities, religious beliefs, or unfounded accusations of collaboration with Ukrainian armed forces. This discrimination manifested through the use of torture, aimed at obtaining confessions, compelling cooperation, or intimidating detainees' families.

**Violations of Civilian Population Rights.** Documented crimes demonstrate massive disregard for the fundamental rights of civilians by occupation authorities. Detainees were held in torture chambers and basement facilities where detention conditions were degrading and grossly violated the Geneva Conventions. Many individuals suffered both physical and psychological violence, which intensified the suffering of illegally held persons.

**Geography of Crimes.** The highest number of cases were recorded in the temporarily occupied Zaporizhzhia region, specifically in the cities of Melitopol, Enerhodar, Berdiansk, and Tokmak. The situation remains particularly complex in Enerhodar, where systematic forced detentions of Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant employees have been documented. Simultaneously, in many other settlements in the region, occupiers created a network of torture chambers to intimidate and suppress any resistance among the local population.

**Need for Accountability.** The recorded crimes clearly meet the criteria of war crimes and crimes against humanity as defined by the Rome Statute and international humanitarian law. This requires international investigations and holding perpetrators accountable through international judicial mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court.

Based on the Association's activities in documenting crimes committed by the occupation authorities, **we recommend that national state authorities take the following actions** aimed at establishing justice for the Russian side, namely:

1. Continue conducting comprehensive investigations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russian occupation forces in temporarily occupied territories.

2. Introduce personal sanctions against Russian Federation citizens involved in human rights violations and committing crimes.
3. Strengthen mechanisms for searching and releasing illegally imprisoned civilians, including through international platforms, involving the UN, OSCE, and the Council of Europe.
4. Intensify mechanisms for searching and releasing illegally imprisoned civilians from the Zaporizhzhia region, particularly through the International Platform for the Release of Civilians Illegally Held by the Russian Federation, using UN, OSCE, and Council of Europe mechanisms.
5. Amend Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Regarding Whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine and Their Family Members" to expand the law's scope to all civilian citizens of Ukraine who have been illegally deprived of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, in order to ensure social protection of affected citizens at the national level.
6. Develop programs for providing medical, rehabilitation, and psychological assistance to illegally detained persons after their release, regardless of the method or procedure of their release, providing mechanisms for immediate access to these types of assistance for victims.

**For National and International Human Rights Organizations:**

1. Continue documenting crimes and collaborate with international organizations to prepare evidentiary bases.
2. Disseminate information about the scale of war crimes among the international community.
3. Ensure the creation of platforms for psychological, rehabilitation, and medical support for victims.
4. Expand financial and technical assistance to Ukraine for documenting crimes and supporting victims.
5. Contribute to ensuring the safety and rights of civilians in occupied territories through international monitoring mechanisms.

Ensuring justice for victims and restoring violated rights is a crucial element both in countering Russian aggression and maintaining international legal order.

Responding to the issue of illegal deprivation of freedom for civilians must include activating international mechanisms for their release, amending national legislation to ensure social protection of victims, and creating effective rehabilitation programs. Only coordinated activities of state authorities, civil society, and international organizations will enable effective support for victims, restore justice, and hold perpetrators accountable. Protecting the rights of Ukrainian citizens under conditions of armed aggression is not only a moral duty of the state but also an important condition for maintaining international legal order.