



Analytical Review of the Activities of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin” in September 2025 on Documenting War Crimes of the Russian Federation Against Civilians as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine

1. Executive Summary

Across 20 reviewed protocols, episodes of unlawful deprivation of liberty of civilians, enforced disappearances, torture/inhuman treatment, forced transfers (convoying/“etap”) and “closed courts” were documented. These constitute international crimes (war crimes and crimes against humanity), directly attested by witnesses and victims and/or supported by material evidence (transfer routes, judgments/notifications, correspondence with RF institutions). The protocols record abductions and subsequent detention/“judicial” persecution in the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) and in the Russian Federation, including along the routes: Mariupol–Donetsk (TOT) → RF; Polohy/Tokmak (TOT, Zaporizhzhia oblast) → TOT Donbas → RF; TOT Kherson region (Skadovsk/Lazurne, Hola Prystan) → Crimea/RF; Kharkiv region (Vovchansk, border area) → Belgorod/Mordovia; Sumy region (Krasnopillia) → Belgorod/Kursk/Volgograd, etc.

The geography of this review covers:

- (a) places of primary abductions/arrests and detention in the TOT of Ukraine (Mariupol; Polohy/Tokmak; Skadovsk/Chonhar/Hola Prystan; Vovchansk; Yakubivka near Chernihiv; Krasnopillia in Sumy region);
- (b) the network of places of deprivation of liberty and “courts” in the RF to which civilians are systematically transferred (Kursk, Vyazma, Belgorod, Rostov-on-Don, Volgograd, Chechnya (SIZO-2), Mordovia (Colony No. 10/others)).

2. Sources and Scope of Data

The review is based exclusively on 20 protocols (interviews with victims/relatives; in some cases—copies/mentions of verdicts, official replies, data on transfers/registrations, traces of correspondence). Separately noted: appeals/cassations in the RF; transfers between colonies; communication via intermediaries; lack of access to case materials.

3. Consolidated Indicators (20 Protocols) and Motives for Persecution

Statuses (additional ten):

- **Confirmed detention in the RF/TOT (at least 4):** SIZOs/colonies Volgograd–Chechnya, Mordovia, Belgorod/Valuyki–Kursk–Volgograd (chains). In some cases, no verdict/clear charge at the time of interview.
- **Whereabouts unknown/incommunicado (no fewer than 4):** likely transfers and deportations: Mariupol → Donetsk (unknown); Hola Prystan → possibly Rostov; Chernihiv region → likely Bryansk/Belgorod (unconfirmed).

- **Released after detention — 1 (Zaporizhzhia oblast, Polohy/Tokmak):** detailed description of torture/forced labor.
- **Prisoner of war with a “sentence” in the RF.**

Articles the RF imputes to the detained:

– Art. 275 Criminal Code of the RF (“state treason”), Arts. 222/228 (weapons/“narcotics”), Arts. 205.x/205.5/361 (“terrorism,” participation in a terrorist organization). Families are denied access to case files.

Actual motives (per witnesses): openly pro-Ukrainian stance, past ties/military service, denunciations and “personal animosity,” “findings” during searches (including planted items).

4. Geography of Abductions and Disappearances

- **Donetsk oblast (Mariupol):** abductions in the occupied city, subsequent transfer to Donetsk (TOT); July–August 2025.
- **Zaporizhzhia oblast (Polohy/Tokmak/Berdyansk):** “sweep operations,” basements/police stations, systematic torture; June–July 2022 → release; mass detentions “for stance/tattoos/curfew violations.”
- **Kherson region (Skadovsk/Lazurne/Chonhar; Hola Prystan):** arrest directly in a TOT “courtroom”; later Volgograd IK-12 → Chechnya SIZO-2; another case—disappearance in Hola Prystan with probable deportation to Rostov. 2022–2025.
- **Kharkiv region (Vovchansk; border area):** abduction from home, transfers to Belgorod oblast → Mordovia; March 2022—mass filtrations at the border.
- **Chernihiv region (Yakubivka):** disappearance during a “trip for groceries” under occupation.
- **Sumy region (Krasnopillia):** apprehended at a checkpoint due to reserve officer rank; then Valuyki (Belgorod) → Oleksiivka (Kursk) → Volgograd (2023–2025).

5. Courts (Where Civilians Are Sentenced in the Available Testimonies)

- **TOT (Kherson region):** a “court hearing” in Skadovsk, after which the civilian was taken into custody right in the hall, then moved via Chonhar and transferred into the RF (Volgograd → SIZO-2 of the Chechen Republic). Names of judges were not recorded.
- **RF (Rostov-on-Don):** mentions of detention/transfers to Rostov SIZO and hearings in a military court (in cases of “terrorism/treason”; some have POW status).
- **Other TOT/RF:** during investigations, Donetsk (TOT), Kursk/Vyazma are mentioned.

6. Profile of the Affected

Civilians at the time of capture: teachers, factory/infrastructure workers, private entrepreneurs, construction workers, guards; some have prior service (reserve officer/conscription). Women are among applicant relatives and individual victims.



Vulnerabilities: lack of medical care during transfers/detention; deterioration (legs, heart, kidneys; weight loss).).

7. Patterns of Detention and Circumstances

- **From home/work:** masked armed groups, parallel searches, seizure of equipment/money; denunciations; hood over head and removal to a station.
- **From street/checkpoints/during errands:** interception, threats with weapons, vehicle confiscation, removal toward RF.
- **After “court” in TOT:** arrest in the courtroom and immediate removal elsewhere.

8. Conditions of Detention

TOT (basements/stations/SIZOs): overcrowding, constant light, starvation, torture, forced labor (trenching, long shifts without supplies).

RF (SIZOs/colonies): inter-regional transfers; SHIZO (punishment isolation cells), medical neglect; severe health decline (edema, anorexia, leg/kidney damage, heart problems).

9. Torture and CRSV

Methods: beatings, electric shocks to unconsciousness, deprivation of food/water/sleep, humiliation, threats, interrogation torture, overcrowding, wet-cloth suffocation, sexual violence/CRSV.

Consequences: PTSD, sleep disorders, jaw numbness/dental issues, chronic back pain, limb edema.

10. Transfer Chains Documented

Typical routes:

- Polohy/Tokmak → police station → further transfers (toward TOT Donbas), forced labor.
- Vovchansk (Kharkiv) → Belgorod oblast → Mordovia (Colony No.10, Udarnoye).
- Kursk → Vyazma (Smolensk) → unknown.
- Skadovsk (courtroom) → Chonhar → Volgograd (IK-12) → Chechnya (SIZO-2).
- Krasnopillia (Sumy) → Valuyki (Belgorod) → Oleksiivka (Kursk) → Volgograd.

12. “Closed Courts” and Procedural Violations

Testimonies mention closed hearings, denial of access to files (families refused; “lawyers” threaten liability for copies), transfers of cases between TOT and RF, extended appeal/cassation terms without family participation.

12. Evidence of Detention

Traces: registrations in colonies/SIZOs (Mordovia, Volgograd, Chechnya), appellate rulings, ICRC notices, oral confirmations from released persons, sometimes postal “delivered” marks.

13. Anonymized Case Vignettes

A) “Detained in the ‘courtroom’” (TOT Kherson → RF): after hearing, detained in hall, via Chonhar → Volgograd (IK-12) → Chechnya (SIZO-2). Family told of 6-month reduction in appeal but denied access. (*Unlawful deprivation, deportation/transfer*).

B) “Night raid in Polohy” (Zaporizhzhia): masked armed men, beatings, basement, Tokmak police; daily electric shocks, beatings, no food/water, forced trenching. Released after a month. (*Torture, inhuman treatment, forced labor*).

C) “Border and filtration” (Kharkiv → Belgorod/Mordovia): detained by unknowns; indirect evidence of Kursk/Vyazma, later Mordovia; no official response. (*Enforced disappearance, deportation, incommunicado*).

D) “Mariupol. ‘He didn’t write this’” (Donetsk TOT): suspicious calls, transfer to Donetsk SIZO; mentions of Arts. 275/222 (later 285); “state lawyer” refuses to communicate. (*Unlawful detention, lack of guarantees*).

E) “Checkpoint” (Sumy → RF): captured “for rank,” route Valuyki → Oleksiivka → Volgograd; anorexia, edema, kidney/heart exacerbation. (*Unlawful transfer, inhuman treatment*).

14. Legal Assessment

IHL/Rome Statute:

- Unlawful confinement, deportation/transfer of civilians (Art. 8(2)(a)(vii), 8(2)(b)(viii));
- Torture/inhuman treatment (Art. 8(2)(a)(ii));
- Sentences without guarantees (Art. 8(2)(a)(vi));
- Crimes against humanity (Art. 7: imprisonment, torture, persecution) — given scale and system.

Ukrainian Law:

- Art. 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (violations of laws/customs of war).

15. Conclusions

The 20 protocols show one algorithm: arbitrary detention/disappearance → torture/inhuman treatment → “closed courts” → long transfers deep into RF → isolation, SHIZO, lack of care. The breadth of geography and timeline 2022–2025 shows a system, not isolated abuses.

16. Recommendations

Office of Prosecutor General / SBU / National Police:

- Treat deportation/transfer as separate crimes; open cases under Art. 438.
- Conduct Istanbul Protocol examinations; form a database.
- Gather ICRC/FSIN data, “delivered” marks, denials by “lawyers.”
- Document “courts” on TOT as composite crimes (unlawful sentence + deportation).



Ministry of Social Policy / Ministry of Health / Ministry of Internal Affairs:

- Treatment and rehabilitation (heart, kidneys, anorexia, dentistry); psychosocial aid.
- Cooperate with ICRC for verification.

MFA – International track:

- Advocate ICRC access to SIZOs/colonies (Volgograd, Chechnya, Mordovia, Kursk/Belgorod).

International institutions/NGOs:

- Use routes/articles/conditions for ICC/UN submissions and sanctions on FSIN/courts (Rostov, Mordovia, Chechnya, Volgograd).

17. Organizational Context

Since 2022, documenters of the **Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin** have identified and interviewed **584 witnesses** of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and other international crimes against civilians.

As of **30 September 2025**, information on **428 civilians** unlawfully deprived of liberty due to RF aggression has been documented, **20** identified in **August 2025**.

Documentation and preparation of this review were carried out by the **Analytics and Documentation Department of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin.”**

This documentation project is supported by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC). The views and conclusions in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the NHC.

NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin”

<https://www.relativespp.org/>

info@relativespp.org

<https://www.facebook.com/relativespp>