

**THE HUMAN FACE
OF UNLAWFUL
DEPRIVATION OF
LIBERTY**

REVIEW OF THE
DOCUMENTATION OF WAR
CRIMES OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION AGAINST
CIVILIANS IN 2025

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EUROPEAN
ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY



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THE REPORT WAS PREPARED BY:

Serhii Melnykovich, LL.M., Research and Analytics Coordinator, human rights lawyer, author of the report.

Alina Rodina, Coordinator of the War Crimes Documentation Department, HUMINT analyst of the war crimes documentation department.


Dmytro Vakhnenko, HUMINT analyst of the war crimes documentation department.

Ihor Kotelianets, Project Lead, Advocacy Manager, Head of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin”, editor of the report.

Olha Makarevych — design and layout.

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ORGANISATION CONTACTS:

 Email: info@relativespp.org

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

 www.relativespp.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES	7
1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TESTIMONIES	8
2. GEOGRAPHY AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF DETENTIONS	8
3. PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS	10
4. TYPOLOGY OF VIOLATIONS AND CLASSIFICATION OF CRIMES	11
Typology of the main violations	11
The practice of fabricating criminal charges	12
Legal classification under international law	12
Indicators of systematicity and organisation	13
5. CHAINS OF TRANSFER	13
General structure of chains of transfer	13
Typical transfer routes (regional analysis)	14
The crimean direction as a transit hub	18
Deportation to the territory of the russian federation	19
Functional analysis of chains of transfer	20
Indicators of systematicity and coordination	20
6. CONDITIONS OF DETENTION	21
Incommunicado regime	21
Physical conditions of detention	21
Torture and ill-treatment as an element of conditions of detention	22
Differentiation of conditions depending on the stage of detention	23
legal assessment of conditions of detention	23
7. JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS AND VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL	23
General characteristics of judicial proceedings	23
Violations of the right of defence	24
Use of confessions obtained under coercion	24
Fabrication of the evidentiary basis and charges	24
Jurisdictional and legal problems	24
Legal classification of the documented violations	24
The functional role of judicial proceedings in the system	25
8. INFORMATION ON OTHER VICTIMS AND THE BROADER CONTEXT	25
CONCLUSIONS	26
RECOMMENDATIONS	29
ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND CUMULATIVE INDICATORS	33

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is devoted to the systematic practice of the unlawful deprivation of liberty of civilians in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in 2025 and their subsequent transfer to the territory of the Russian Federation. During the stated year, the Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin conducted 219 interviews to document cases of unlawful deprivation of liberty, bringing the cumulative body of documented testimonies to at least 631 as of the end of December 2025. At the same time, the total number of persons identified by the Association through documentation, OSINT, and cooperation with human rights actors exceeds 1,000 persons unlawfully deprived of liberty. The analysis of the collected testimonies and data indicates the existence of a clearly structured mechanism covering all stages — from initial detention or abduction to prolonged detention in penal institutions.

Detentions are carried out without proper legal grounds and are predominantly accompanied by incommunicado conditions, which create the prerequisites for the use of torture, ill-treatment and other forms of persecution. Persons are transferred through an extensive network of places of detention, including unofficial locations in the occupied territories, transit points and formalised institutions in the territory of the Russian Federation. Such chains of transfer are systemic in nature and are used to isolate victims, complicate efforts to locate them, and integrate them into the Russian penitentiary system.

Judicial proceedings against persons unlawfully deprived of liberty do not comply with international standards of a fair trial. They are characterised by a lack of independence, restrictions on the right of defence, the use of confessions obtained under coercion, and the fabrication of charges, including under articles on “terrorism” and “espionage”. In this context, judicial mechanisms serve to formally legitimise unlawful persecution. At the same time, a significant number of persons are held incommunicado, without being notified of suspicion or formally charged, and are therefore placed entirely outside the application even of formalised judicial procedures.

The documented conditions of detention indicate systematic violations of the basic rights of persons deprived of liberty, including the right to humane treatment, adequate conditions of detention and access to medical care. Torture and other forms of ill-treatment are regular in nature and are used as an instrument of control and coercion.

The totality of the established facts makes it possible to classify these acts as serious violations of international humanitarian law and international criminal law. In particular, they may amount to war crimes, including unlawful deprivation of liberty, torture, deportation or transfer of the civilian population and deprivation of the right to a fair trial. If their widespread or systematic nature is established, these acts may also be classified as crimes against humanity.

Thus, the recorded practice bears the hallmarks of a deliberate and institutionalised policy aimed at the persecution, intimidation and control of the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories of

Ukraine, with the subsequent use of the legal and penitentiary systems of the Russian Federation as instruments for implementing this policy.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This review was prepared on the basis of a systematic analysis of 12 monthly analytical reviews of the activities of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin” concerning the documentation of war crimes against the civilian population in Ukraine in 2025, prepared on the basis of collected testimonies of victims of unlawful deprivation of liberty, their relatives and witnesses, which together cover 219 interviews.

The analytical reviews of the activities of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin” concerning the documentation of war crimes against the civilian population in Ukraine can be found on the Association’s website in the “Analytics” section at <https://www.relativespp.org/analytic>.

The empirical basis consists of semi-structured interviews conducted by the documenters of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin” in 2025, which capture standardised indicators (date, place, and circumstances of detention, types of violations) while preserving detailed individual narratives. The sources of information were direct testimonies of persons who had been subjected to unlawful deprivation of liberty, as well as detailed testimonies of their relatives, who are searching for the disappeared or remain in constant contact with detained persons.

Testimonies were collected in compliance with the principles of informed consent, respondent safety and the anonymisation of personal data. The analysis was conducted taking into account the norms of international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international human rights law, including the Geneva

Conventions of 1949, the Additional Protocols thereto, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture.

In addition to direct testimonies, the analysis used materials from criminal proceedings, the existence or content of which was reported by interviewees (in particular, extracts from the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations, communications from investigative bodies and procedural documents), as well as copies of medical documents, decisions or materials of de facto “courts” of the occupation administrations, notices of detention or transfer, mentioned or provided by victims. In addition, open-source data referred to by witnesses was taken into account, including media publications, communications from human rights organisations, information from international organisations (including the ICRC), as well as responses from Ukrainian state authorities to information requests by relatives of victims regarding the whereabouts, status or search for persons unlawfully deprived of liberty. The combined use of these sources made it possible to cross-verify individual facts, identify common patterns, and prepare a generalised analytical review in accordance with the standards for documenting violations of international humanitarian law and international criminal law.

The analytical framework combines qualitative pattern analysis, cumulative statistics and interregional comparison. This makes it possible not only to record individual cases but also to reconstruct the systemic characteristics of the practice.

1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TESTIMONIES

The testimonies collected in 2025 are characterised by the stability of the Association's activities in locating victims of unlawful deprivation of liberty, witnesses to such events, or relatives of prisoners.

The cumulative dynamics show a gradual increase in the overall number of documented cases, from more than 420 interviews at the beginning of the year to at least 641 as of December 2025.

The chronological distribution of the identified persons in respect of whom testimonies were collected shows that 10 victims were unlawfully deprived of liberty in 2025, 39 persons in 2024, 39 persons in 2023, and the largest number, 131 persons, in 2022.

The qualitative analysis of testimonies makes it possible to identify a high degree of recurrence across scenarios. Regardless of region, most cases develop

according to similar logic: sudden detention without explanation of the reasons, isolation, the use of torture and other forms of physical and psychological violence, transfer between places of detention within the temporarily occupied territories and the Russian Federation, and subsequent formalisation of unlawful persecution or the continuation of incommunicado detention.

An important characteristic is that a significant share of testimonies contains information about other victims. This creates the effect of a secondary expansion of the information and makes it possible to assess the scale of the phenomenon more broadly than the directly documented cases. Thus, the body of testimonies collected in 2025 may be regarded as a representative sample of the functioning system of unlawful deprivation of liberty.

2. GEOGRAPHY AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF DETENTIONS

The geography of the documented cases covers all temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, in particular Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, other regions of Ukraine, as well as individual cases related to transfer to the territory of the Russian Federation.

The interregional distribution of documented cases in 2025 demonstrates a clearly pronounced concentration in the southern regions of Ukraine, particularly in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts. At the same time, this distribution should be considered

in light of the Association's operational focus, which prioritises documentation in these regions. In particular, Zaporizhzhia oblast accounts for approximately 43.4% of the total body, reflecting not only the intensity of recorded violations but also the focus of documentation efforts.

Kherson oblast accounts for approximately 21.9%, and together with Zaporizhzhia, these two regions accumulate more than two-thirds of all documented cases. Donetsk oblast accounts for approximately 9.5%, and Luhansk for 6.7%, which reflects a stable but

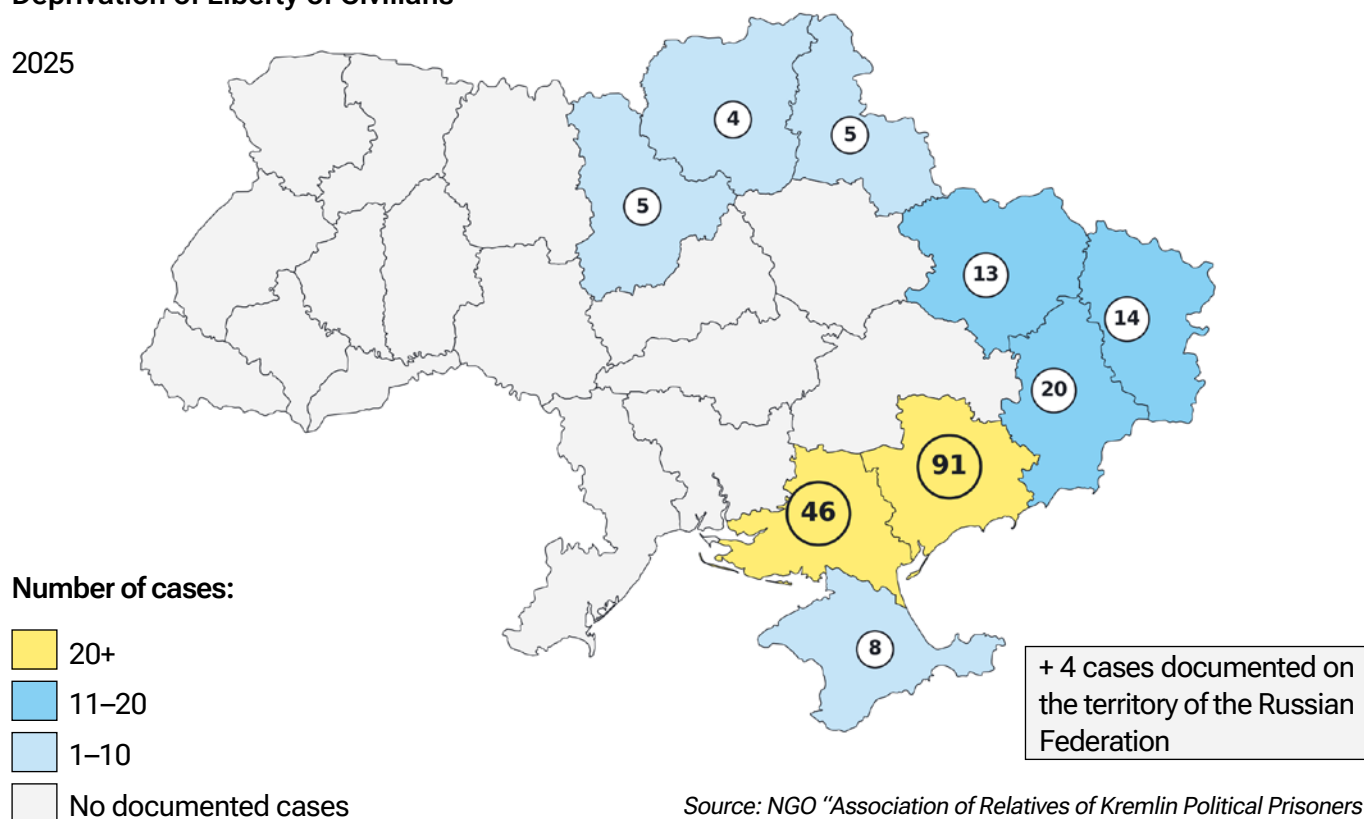
more institutionalised model of the use of repression. The share of Kharkiv oblast is approximately 6.2%, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea 3.8%, Kyiv and Sumy oblasts 2.4% each, Chernihiv oblast 1.9%, and a further 1.9% relates to cases connected with the territory of the Russian Federation.

Total documented cases of arbitrary detention and deprivation of liberty in the territories of:

- Zaporizhzhia oblast - 91 cases.
- Kherson oblast - 46 cases.
- Donetsk oblast - 20 cases.
- Luhansk oblast - 14 cases.
- Kharkiv oblast - 13 cases.
- Autonomous Republic of Crimea - 8 cases.
- Kyiv oblast - 5 cases.
- Sumy oblast - 5 cases.
- Chernihiv oblast - 4 cases.
- Russian Federation - 4 cases.

Geography of Documented Cases of the Unlawful Deprivation of Liberty of Civilians

2025



Source: NGO "Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners"

This distribution indicates not only geographic concentration but also functional differentiation: the southern regions serve as zones of intensive primary application of the practice, while the eastern regions constitute a space for its further institutionalisation, and the territory of the Russian Federation completes the chains of detention.

The analysis of the body of testimonies makes it possible to identify recurring settlements in which cases of unlawful detention are systematically recorded, indicating a concentration of the practice within specific local hubs. In Zaporizhzhia oblast, the most frequently mentioned cities are Enerhodar, Melitopol, Berdiansk, Tokmak, and adjacent settlements under prolonged occupation.

In Kherson oblast, key locations include the cities of Kherson, Nova Kakhovka, Kakhovka, and Oleshky, as well as a number of rural communities, where detentions are both individual and mass. In Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, large urban centres—Donetsk and Luhansk—are typical, as are smaller settlements where places of detention operate or have operated.

In Kharkiv oblast, detentions are most often recorded

in border and frontline settlements, while in Crimea, they are recorded mainly in administrative centres and in victims' places of residence. Cases in the northern regions (Sumy and Chernihiv oblasts) are mostly associated with periods of active hostilities or short-term occupation of specific territories.

In Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, the model of primary coercive control predominates. Detentions often occur at the place of residence or during checks and are accompanied by prolonged incommunicado detention without subsequent formalisation. By contrast, in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, a more institutionalised approach is observed, including the faster transfer of detainees into criminal proceedings and subsequent “judicial” processes.

Despite these differences, a common basic model is observed across all regions: the absence of legal grounds, the violent nature of detentions, and subsequent isolation. This indicates the centralised nature of the practice, with elements of regional adaptation depending on the duration of the armed conflict and the degree to which occupation practices of human rights violations are established or spontaneous.

3. PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS

The analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the victims demonstrates the absence of a clearly defined target group. Although the absolute majority of detainees are men of working age, in 2025 the share of detained women increased to 20% of the total, while the number of elderly persons remained stable.

The victims' age range is broad, indicating no restrictions on the selection of targets for persecution. Cases are also recorded of the detention of persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses, which further increases the severity of the consequences of detention.

A separate category consists of family cases, in which the detention of one person is accompanied by the short-term detention of a family member (one spouse) and subsequent pressure on their relatives, or the detention of those relatives. This indicates the use of unlawful deprivation of liberty as an instrument of

collective influence.

Thus, the profile of victims confirms the universal nature of the practice, aimed at suppressing any manifestations of disloyalty to the occupation authorities.

4. TYPOLOGY OF VIOLATIONS AND CLASSIFICATION OF CRIMES

The analysis of cases of unlawful deprivation of liberty documented in 2025 makes it possible to identify a set of interrelated violations that are not isolated but systemic and reproducible in nature. They cover the full cycle of interaction with the victim - from the moment of detention to a possible "judicial" hearing or prolonged detention without contact with the outside world.

TYPOLGY OF THE MAIN VIOLATIONS

Найбільш поширеним і базовим елементом є неThe most widespread and basic element is unlawful deprivation of liberty, which in the overwhelming majority of cases is carried out without any legal grounds, without notification of the reasons for detention and without access to legal assistance. Such detentions are often accompanied by the forcible removal of the person by unknown persons, frequently with the use of physical force and psychological pressure.

The practice of enforced disappearances followed by incommunicado detention is systematically recorded. It manifests itself in the prolonged holding

of persons without contact with the outside world, refusal to inform relatives of their whereabouts, and denial of the fact of detention itself. In many cases, the incommunicado period lasts from several weeks to several months, significantly increasing victims' vulnerability to other forms of violations.

Torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment are integral elements of this practice. They are used, in particular, to obtain confessions, information about third persons or to coerce cooperation. The recurrence of the described methods, including beatings, electric shocks, mock executions and threats of sexual violence, indicates their standardised nature.

A separate category consists of unlawful transfers, including transfers between different places of detention in the temporarily occupied territories, as well as deportations to the territory of the Russian Federation. Such transfers take place without the consent of the victims and outside any lawful procedures, and are often accompanied by additional isolation and disorientation.

A significant number of cases end with, or are accompanied by, the imitation of criminal prosecution, which includes the opening of cases, the conduct of “investigative actions,” and the organisation of judicial proceedings that do not comply with the basic standards of a fair trial.

THE PRACTICE OF FABRICATING CRIMINAL CHARGES

The practice of fabricating criminal cases under articles of the criminal legislation of the Russian Federation is systematically recorded. These articles are used as a universal instrument to legitimise the unlawful deprivation of liberty. The most common charges are “espionage” (Article 276 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation), “terrorism” (Article 205 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation), and “participation in a terrorist community” (Article 205.4 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation).

The application of these articles is characterised by a number of common features: the absence of a proper evidentiary basis, the use of confessions obtained under pressure or as a result of torture, and the closed nature of “judicial” proceedings. In many cases, the charges are filed after the actual detention and prolonged detention of the person, indicating their secondary, instrumental nature.

Thus, criminal prosecution is not an independent law-enforcement activity, but rather a continuation of the practice of unlawful deprivation of liberty, aimed at its formal legitimisation.

LEGAL CLASSIFICATION UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

The collected body of facts makes it possible to classify them under the norms of international humanitarian law and international criminal law.

In the context of an international armed conflict, the documented acts correspond to the elements of war crimes, in particular:

- unlawful deprivation of liberty of civilians;
- torture and inhuman treatment;
- unlawful transfer and deportation;
- deprivation of the right to a fair trial.

Each of these elements is confirmed by the totality of testimonies indicating their recurrence, purposefulness and intentional nature.

At the same time, the nature and scale of the recorded violations make it possible to consider them in the broader context of crimes against humanity. For this, the key issue is establishing the existence of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population. The analysis of testimonies confirms the presence of all necessary elements of such an attack: a significant number of cases, their geographic spread, the recurrence of scenarios, the participation of state or state-controlled structures, and the targeting of civilians not taking part in hostilities.

In this context, the documented acts may be classified, in particular, as:

- enforced disappearances;
- imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty;
- torture;
- deportation or forcible transfer of population.

INDICATORS OF SYSTEMATICITY AND ORGANISATION

A key characteristic of the documented violations is their systematic nature, which manifests in several dimensions. First, there is a unified set of procedures for detention, interrogation, and detention conditions, irrespective of region. Second, coordination is evident among different structures, including military

5. CHAINS OF TRANSFER

The analysis of cases documented in 2025 makes it possible to establish clearly that the transfer of persons unlawfully deprived of liberty is not a spontaneous or situational phenomenon. Instead, it functions as a systemic element of the overall repressive practice, bearing the hallmarks of a multi-level, logistically supported and functionally differentiated network.

Chains of transfer perform several interrelated functions: the isolation of victims, complicating efforts to locate them, disorientation, and the segmentation of different stages of violence (detention, interrogation, torture, formalisation of charges, further detention).

units, special services, and penal institutions. Third, there is logistical capacity to ensure the transfer of persons between different regions and across the internationally recognised border. Taken together, these indicators show that what is at issue is not a collection of individual offences but the functioning of an integrated system that bears the hallmarks of state policy or an organised practice.

In summary, the established facts make it possible to classify the documented acts as war crimes and, where the context of mass scale and systematicity is present, as crimes against humanity, which is consistent with approaches in international judicial practice and provides a basis for further holding the perpetrators accountable at the international level.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF CHAINS OF TRANSFER

In most cases, a typical multi-stage model can be traced:

- 1. Primary place of detention (place of detention or nearest facility)**
 Detainees are initially held in unofficial places of detention — basements of administrative buildings, police stations, seized local self-government bodies or other premises that the occupation forces systematically use to hold civilians in the settlements where detentions occur (in particular in Melitopol, Berdiansk, Kherson and Nova Kakhovka). In a number of cases, interrogations, beatings and other forms

of torture are used directly during detention - at the person's place of residence or immediately after their actual capture — in order to obtain specific information.

2. Transitional places of detention

After the initial stage, victims are transferred to other facilities within the region or between regions. These transfers may be repeated and often lack obvious geographic logic, indicating their role in disorientation and in severing contacts with the outside world.

3. Final places of detention

At the final stage, persons are partly transferred to more formalised institutions — remand prisons or penal colonies, including those in the territory of the Russian Federation — where their status is institutionalised through criminal proceedings and sentencing. In some cases, after the “charge” is formalised or a sentence is imposed, some detainees gain a limited and controlled opportunity for official correspondence, to receive parcels, or to maintain contact with relatives through the institution's administration. In a number of documented cases, the possibility of telephone calls is also recorded after sentencing and the person's transfer to an institution for serving a sentence.

At the same time, a significant share of civilians held incommunicado may never be transferred to formalised institutions, remaining in unofficial places of detention without any confirmation of their whereabouts or procedural status. This creates additional challenges for relatives, state authorities and human rights organisations in

searching for such persons and establishing their fate.

TYPICAL TRANSFER ROUTES (REGIONAL ANALYSIS)

Southern direction (Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts)

Complex, multi-level chains of transfer are characteristic of the southern regions. They often begin in settlements of Zaporizhzhia oblast (Melitopol, Berdiansk, Tokmak, Velyka Bilozerka) or Kherson oblast (Kherson, Nova Kakhovka, Oleshky, Skadovsk, Hola Prystan, Lazurne). At the initial stage, detainees are generally held in unofficial places — basements of administrative buildings, police stations or other unsuitable places of detention in inhuman conditions (industrial facilities, abandoned industrial premises, garages, basements, and so on), where first interrogations are conducted, and torture is often used. In documented cases, basements of police stations, garages and FSB buildings systematically appear, as well as temporary places of detention in settlements along the logistical routes of the occupation forces.

Subsequently, victims are transferred to temporary detention penitentiary institutions within the region — in particular, temporary detention facilities (ITT) or remand prisons (SIZO) — thereby allowing their status to be partially “institutionalised”. In a number of cases, repeated transfer between such facilities is recorded - from basements to ITTs, from ITTs to other unofficial places of detention, or between different SIZOs. Transfer between SIZO No. 1 and SIZO No. 2 in Simferopol is typical, marked by a

lack of transparency and aimed at disorienting victims, isolating them from the outside world, and preventing relatives or lawyers from establishing their whereabouts.

The Association has also recorded the systematic transfer of civilians to the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, primarily to Simferopol, which regularly appears in testimonies as a key intermediate stage before further transfer to the territory of the Russian Federation. In the documented cases, this is not merely logistical transit through Crimea but rather a transfer with temporary detention of persons in Crimean institutions. In particular, after being held in unofficial places of detention, ITTs or SIZOs in the occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts, victims are transported to Simferopol, where they are held in remand prisons before further transfer to the Russian Federation or the formalisation of criminal prosecution through “judicial” mechanisms in the city of Simferopol controlled by the occupation authorities.

SIZO No. 1 and SIZO No. 2 in Simferopol appear most systematically in the testimonies and are used as key hubs for the temporary detention of civilians. A significant share of the documented routes passes precisely through these institutions. The analysis of testimonies makes it possible to speak of a reproducible model: after primary detention in Kherson or Zaporizhzhia oblasts, the person is transported to a SIZO in Simferopol, where additional interrogations are conducted, criminal-proceeding materials are prepared, and in individual cases a subsequent “judicial” process is organised. After

this, the person is either transferred to institutions in the territory of the Russian Federation or remains in Crimean institutions until sentencing.

Thus, transfers within the southern direction take place between different types of places of detention – from unofficial locations (basements, improvised premises) to formalised institutions (ITT, SIZO) - and include a separate stage of temporary detention in Crimea before the subsequent formalisation of criminal prosecution or prolonged detention in the territory of the Russian Federation. The recurrent use of the same routes and institutions indicates the systemic and organised nature of such transfers.

Thus, the widespread scenario for the southern direction is: temporarily occupied territories (TOT) of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts -> TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea -> Russian Federation. Documented cases are illustrative:



- city of Skadovsk (TOT of Kherson oblast) - village of Chonhar (TOT of Kherson oblast) - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) - city of Taganrog (Krasnodar Krai, Russian Federation) - city of Pugachev (Saratov oblast, Russian Federation).
- TOT of Kherson oblast (Skadovsk/Lazurne, Hola Prystan) -> TOT of Crimea/Russian Federation.
- city of Kherson (TOT of Kherson oblast) - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 1 -> SIZO No. 2 -> conviction by the "Simferopol Regional Court" - city of Moscow (Russian Federation, appeal) - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) - city of Krasnodar (Krasnodar Krai, Russian Federation) - Republic of Mordovia (Russian Federation) - city of Moscow (Russian Federation, cassation) - Republic of Mordovia (Russian Federation).
- city of Kherson (TOT of Kherson oblast) - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 1 -> SIZO No. 2 -> conviction by an unidentified "court" in the city of Simferopol - city of Saratov (Saratov oblast, Russian Federation), Penal Colony No. 10;
- TOT of Zaporizhzhia oblast - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 2 - city of Pugachev (Saratov oblast, Russian Federation).
- city of Nova Kakhovka (TOT of Kherson oblast) - settlement of Hornostaivka (TOT of Kherson oblast), basement premises for temporary detention - settlement of Chaplynka (TOT of Kherson oblast), police department - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 2 - release.
- city of Kherson (TOT of Kherson oblast) - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 1 -> SIZO No. 2.
- village of Velyka Bilozerka (TOT of Zaporizhzhia oblast - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 2 - transfer for judicial proceedings in an unspecified direction of the city of Ust-Labinsk (Krasnodar Krai, Russian Federation) - death of the person during transfer.
- city of Nova Kakhovka (TOT of Kherson oblast), police department, basement; FSB garages, FSB building - city of Sevastopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) - prisoner-of-war camp (location unspecified) - city of Kamyshin (Volgograd oblast, Russian Federation), SIZO No. 2 - city of Rostov-on-Don (Rostov oblast, Russian Federation), SIZO No. 1, sentencing - city of Bataisk (Rostov oblast, Russian Federation), Penal Colony No. 15.

The analysis of these routes shows that Crimea serves not only as a transit hub but also as a space for the primary integration of civilians into the Russian Federation's criminal prosecution system. It is in Crimea that the transition takes place from unofficial detention to a formally documented status of "accused", after which the mechanism of further judicial and penitentiary persecution is launched. The recurrent use of the same routes, SIZOs and "judicial" institutions indicates the systemic and organised nature of such transfers.

While this type of scenario is typical for the southern direction, in individual cases significantly more complex and less predictable routes are recorded. In particular, the Association documented the following route:

- city of Kherson (TOT of Kherson oblast), Penal Colony No. 90 - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 1 -> SIZO No. 2 - settlement of Chonhar (TOT of Kherson oblast) - settlement of Novotroitske (TOT of Kherson oblast), kindergarten - city of Donetsk (TOT of Donetsk oblast), SIZO No. 1 - city of Rostov-on-Don (Rostov oblast, Russian Federation), SIZO No. 1 - city of Krasnodar (Krasnodar Krai, Russian Federation), SIZO No. 1 - city of Simferopol (TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), SIZO No. 1 - settlement of Chonhar (TOT of Kherson oblast), SIZO - city of Rostov-on-Don (Rostov oblast, Russian Federation), SIZO No. 1 -> sentencing - city of Novocherkassk (Orenburg oblast, Russian Federation), SIZO No. 3.

Eastern direction (Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts)

In these regions, chains of transfer are more institutionalised and often include fewer stages, but move more quickly into the phase of formalised criminal prosecution. Unlike in the southern regions, where unofficial places of detention play a significant role, in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, detained persons, after the primary stage, are quickly transferred to facilities that serve as remand prisons or penitentiary institutions.

A typical chain of transfer begins at the place of

detention within the TOT of the oblasts, at the place of residence, at a checkpoint or in a public space (Kalmiuske, “Chervonopartyzansk” crossing point, Krasnohorivka, Mariupol, Novomykilske, checkpoint in the village of Uspenka, Amvrosiivka, Polovynkyne). After this, detained persons are taken to unofficial places of detention or premises controlled by security structures in Donetsk or Luhansk. At this stage, initial interrogations are conducted, often with the use of physical and psychological pressure. Subsequently, the person is transferred to local SIZOs or similar institutions, where their status begins to be formalised, including the preparation of materials for criminal proceedings.

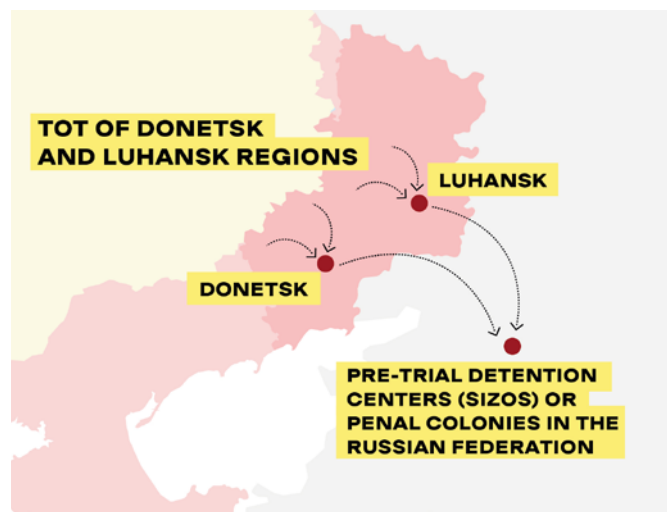
After this, a significant share of victims is transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation, most often to Rostov Oblast. In documented cases, transfers to remand prisons in Rostov-on-Don appear to occur systematically; these are used as key points for further criminal prosecution. It is there that investigative actions are conducted, charges are drawn up, and judicial proceedings are organised, including in cases under articles concerning “terrorism” or “espionage”.

In a number of cases, after staying in SIZOs in Rostov-on-Don, persons may be transferred to other institutions — both within Rostov oblast (for example, to a SIZO in Taganrog) and to more remote regions of the Russian Federation for further detention or to serve sentences in penal colonies.

Thus, the eastern direction is characterised by the faster transformation of unlawful detention into formalised criminal prosecution, in which SIZOs within the territory of the Russian Federation play a

key role as places where investigative actions, judicial procedures, and the further integration of victims into the penitentiary system are concentrated.

Thus, the typical scenario for the eastern direction is: place of detention within the TOT of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts — Donetsk/Luhansk — SIZOs or prisons in the territory of the Russian Federation.



THE CRIMEAN DIRECTION AS A TRANSIT HUB

The temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea performs the function of a key transit hub in the system of transfer and formalisation of the persecution of persons unlawfully deprived of liberty. Simferopol appears most systematically in the testimonies as the central point through which a significant share of transfers passes, especially for victims from Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts. At the same time, other settlements in Crimea are

also mentioned in documented cases, in particular Sevastopol, Kerch and individual institutions on the territory of the peninsula, which are used as places of temporary or transit detention.

Transfer to Crimea usually takes place after primary detention in unofficial or regional places of detention in the occupied territories of the Southern or Eastern regions of Ukraine. At this stage, persons are brought to remand prisons or other controlled facilities, where they are held for a certain time before further transfer.

Functionally, Crimea is used for several interrelated purposes. First, it is temporary detention in more formalised conditions compared with unofficial places on the mainland. Second, it is the conduct of interrogations and investigative actions, including the preparation of materials for further criminal prosecution. Third, in some cases the finalisation of criminal prosecution through the imposition of convictions is carried out precisely by the pseudo-judicial institutions of the city of Simferopol. Fourth, Crimea serves as a stage of logistical preparation for transfer deep into the territory of the Russian Federation, where the person's subsequent route is determined. Finally, further transfer to SIZOs in the territory of the Russian Federation, including to Rostov oblast and other remote regions of the Russian Federation, is often carried out precisely through the territory of the peninsula.

Thus, within this system Crimea performs not only a transit role but also a functionally important role as an intermediate link where the status of detainees is partially or fully institutionalised through the imposition of convictions and preparation for the subsequent stages of their detention or criminal prosecution.

DEPORTATION TO THE TERRITORY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The final stage of a significant share of chains is transfer to the Russian Federation, where the further institutionalisation of unlawful deprivation of liberty takes place through the system of SIZOs and penal colonies. The analysis of documented cases makes it possible to identify a number of recurrent final and intermediate points, indicating stable transfer routes.

Rostov-on-Don appears most systematically in the testimonies; it performs the function of a key centre both for detention and for the conduct of “judicial” proceedings, in particular through transfer to and detention in the city’s SIZOs, as well as hearings in the military court. Persons are often transferred there after transit through the temporarily occupied territories of the Southern or Eastern regions of Ukraine, including Crimea, with subsequent initiation of criminal proceedings.

Taganrog is the second most frequently mentioned location, in particular as the location of remand prisons to which victims are taken after the initial stages of detention in Zaporizhzhia or Kherson oblasts. In a number of cases, this city acts as an intermediate point before further transfer.

Among other regions of the Russian Federation regularly appearing in the cases documented in 2025, the following should be highlighted:

- Krasnodar Krai, to which transfer often occurs after transit through Crimea, with subsequent detention in remand prisons or transfer to other

regions;

- Belgorod oblast, which is used as a border transit or temporary detention point, especially in cases of transfer from the north-eastern regions of Ukraine;
- Saratov oblast, where cases of further detention of persons after the initial stages of investigation have been recorded;
- the Republic of Mordovia, which is traditionally used as the location of penal colonies to which persons are transferred after sentencing to serve their sentences;
- Volgograd oblast;
- the Chechen Republic;
- Smolensk oblast;
- Orenburg oblast;
- Tula oblast.

In a number of cases, complex multi-stage routes can be traced, for example:

Melitopol - Simferopol - Taganrog - Rostov-on-Don - Saratov oblast / Republic of Mordovia, or Kherson / Nova Kakhovka - Crimea - Krasnodar Krai - further transfer to the deep regions of the Russian Federation.

Routes of TOT — TOT — deportation to the Russian Federation in an unknown direction, with further incommunicado detention, are also present. For example, the Association’s documenters recorded a case of transfer in the directions Kursk - Vyazma (Smolensk oblast) — unknown territory within the

Russian Federation.

In individual cases, chains of transfer of victims to the Russian Federation ended with forced deportation from the territory of the Russian Federation after the unlawful deprivation of liberty ended. For example, the Association's documenters recorded cases of the deportation of victims to Georgia.

Overall, such transfers may last for weeks or months, be accompanied by a complete absence of information for relatives and defence counsel, and often include repeated changes of places of detention without any documentary record accessible to the victims. The totality of these data indicates that the territory of the Russian Federation functions not only as an endpoint but also as a full-fledged element of the extensive system of detention, within which both isolation and further criminal prosecution of persons unlawfully deprived of liberty are carried out.

FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHAINS OF TRANSFER

The collected data elucidate that different stages of transfer perform clearly defined functions:

- primary locations - control and the forcible extraction of information;

- transit locations - isolation and disorientation;
- final locations - legitimization through criminal proceedings.

The complete absence of transparency is also important: victims often do not know their whereabouts, and their transfers are not recorded in any official registers or documents, nor communicated to relatives.

INDICATORS OF SYSTEMATICITY AND COORDINATION

The recurrence of routes, the stability of geographic points, and the synchronisation of actions across different structures indicate the existence of a centrally organised, or at least coordinated, system. The logistical complexity of such transfers — including interregional and cross-border stages — indicates the involvement of state-level resources, further confirming the organised nature of this practice.

In conclusion, chains of transfer are not auxiliary but structure-forming elements of the system of unlawful deprivation of liberty, ensuring its efficiency, secrecy, and impunity, as well as complicating documentation and the establishment of the fate of victims.

6. CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

The analysis of the testimonies documented in 2025 makes it possible to establish that the conditions of detention of persons unlawfully deprived of liberty are not only inadequate but also systematically violate the basic standards for the treatment of prisoners enshrined in international law. These are not isolated cases of ill-treatment but rather a reproducible model that bears the hallmarks of deliberate practice.

INCOMMUNICADO REGIME

The overwhelming majority of victims are held in conditions of complete or almost complete isolation from the outside world. At the initial stages of detention, persons often have no opportunity to inform relatives of their whereabouts, obtain legal assistance or contact independent institutions. Such an incommunicado regime may last from several weeks to several months and is one of the key factors creating the prerequisites for other forms of violations, in particular torture. Even after transfer to formalised institutions, access to communication with the outside world remains restricted or controlled by the administration, effectively rendering it ineffective.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

Victims' testimonies indicate systemic problems with basic conditions:

- overcrowding of cells, where the number of detainees significantly exceeds the intended

capacity;

- absence of proper sanitary and hygienic conditions, including limited access to water, showers and hygiene products;
- inadequate food, insufficient both in quantity and quality;
- absent or limited access to medical care, even in cases of injuries or chronic diseases; exceptions are individual cases of receiving medicines through parcels from relatives.

In unofficial places of detention (basements, improvised premises), these conditions are even more critical and are often accompanied by a lack of light, ventilation, and freedom of movement.

In particular, witnesses and victims of unlawful deprivation of liberty stated:

“There are many people in the cells; I do not know the exact number. Detainees are held together. In Mordovia, detainees are forced to stand in cells for 16 hours a day. They bathe once a week, literally for one minute.”

“Near the steps, there was always a heavily built man beaten bloody, sitting on a chair and handcuffed to the bars. I know nothing about him; later, he disappeared somewhere, the curator ... forbade looking in his direction. They fed us once a day at an unspecified time. The ration consisted of a plastic plate of pasta or pearl barley with the aroma (yes, precisely the aroma!) of stew, two or four hardtack biscuits

(for the first 2-3 days they gave two pieces of 'Dachnyi' or 'Kozatskyi' bread) and a tea bag, to which (not always) they added a plastic cup of hot water."

"I tried to improve my living conditions: I made a 'bed' out of chairs. But those turned out to have been sawn through, so they could collapse at any moment. I wonder, was this another expression of the Russian 'sense of humour'? So, as before, I slept sitting at the table, recalling how I used to do that in lectures during my student years."

"There were no detention conditions — the cell was not ventilated, and walks were not allowed. At around 10 a.m. every day, soldiers or employees of the so-called 'police' came in, called out surnames, took some people for interrogations, beat them, and sometimes tortured them with electric shocks."

"When my mother felt unwell or lost consciousness, other women in the cell provided assistance, while the guards reacted only formally. The food was terrible; in fact, detainees in the SIZO survived on parcels from relatives."

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT AS AN ELEMENT OF CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

Torture and ill-treatment are not limited to the stage of interrogation but are integrated into the daily regime of detention. They are used as a means of control, punishment and intimidation.

Recurrent practices include:

- regular beatings;
- the use of electric shocks;
- prolonged holding in stress positions;
- threats of physical or sexual violence;
- threats or mock executions;
- psychological pressure, including mock executions or threats against relatives.

In particular, witnesses and victims of unlawful deprivation of liberty stated:

"The torture lasted approximately 30 minutes; electric current was applied to the earlobe, a finger and the torso. They tortured me for 2-3 minutes at a time; at the end of the interrogation, they put a bag over my head, poured water on me and continued the torture until I began losing consciousness, after which they removed the wires."

"They gave me a bunch of keys and ordered me not to let go of them, attached electrodes to my leg, other parts of the body and genitals, poured water over my left trainer for better contact, and forced me to turn the crank of a field telephone. During the torture there was a hat on my head fixed with insulating tape, so I could not see the occupiers. There were two of them in the room with me during the torture: one sat with a laptop, the other directly generated the current and connected the electrodes. They pressed a hard object to my head and said that I would be left without sight and hearing."

"They tortured me with varying intensity; I cannot state the duration of the torture. They beat me in the stomach; I do not know who exactly. After

the torture I vomited. I was given food only once.”

“During the torture in Simferopol, they forced me to stand facing the wall, legs apart, put a garbage bag over my head, beat me in the kidneys and legs, and broke my ribs.”

The systematicity of these practices is confirmed by their recurrence in different regions and by independent testimonies, which indicates their standardisation.

DIFFERENTIATION OF CONDITIONS DEPENDING ON THE STAGE OF DETENTION

Conditions of detention vary depending on the stage of the chain of transfer:

- primary places of detention are characterised by the highest level of violence and the absence of any guarantees;
- transit locations combine elements of isolation

7. JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS AND VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

The analysis of documented cases indicates that the so-called judicial proceedings in cases involving persons unlawfully deprived of liberty do not comply with the basic standards of a fair trial and primarily serve to formally legitimise violations already committed.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

and disorientation;

- formalised institutions (SIZOs, colonies) provide a minimum level of formal regulation but do not eliminate systemic violations.

LEGAL ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

The documented conditions of detention violate a number of norms of international law, including:

- the prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment;
- the right to humane treatment of persons deprived of liberty;
- minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Taken together, these conditions may be classified as torture or inhuman treatment both in the context of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The judicial proceedings applied to victims have common features:

- absence of independence and impartiality of the court;
- closed or limited public nature of hearings;
- use of evidence obtained in violation of human rights;
- formal character of the hearing, which does not provide for a genuine adversarial process.

In many cases, the judicial hearing is only the final stage in a decision already made regarding the person.

VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT OF DEFENCE

One of the key violations is the systemic restriction of the right of defence:

- victims often have no access to an independent lawyer;
- where defence counsel is appointed, he or she may be controlled or merely formal;
- there is no possibility of effective communication between the accused and defence counsel;
- case materials remain inaccessible or access to them is limited.

This deprives accused persons of the possibility of exercising basic procedural rights.

USE OF CONFESSIONS OBTAINED UNDER COERCION

A substantial characteristic of the judicial proceedings is the use of confessions obtained under pressure or as a result of torture. Such confessions often become the key or sole evidence in the case. At the same time, the absence of effective mechanisms for verifying the voluntariness of such testimony, as well as the ignoring of allegations of torture, indicate the systemic nature of this violation.

FABRICATION OF THE EVIDENTIARY BASIS AND CHARGES

Judicial proceedings are closely linked to the practice of fabricating criminal charges, in particular under articles on “terrorism” or “espionage”. The evidentiary basis in such cases is often formal, built on assumptions or testimony obtained in violation of human rights. This indicates the absence of a genuine investigation and the transformation of judicial proceedings into an instrument for confirming a decision already taken.

JURISDICTIONAL AND LEGAL PROBLEMS

The application of the legislation of the Russian Federation to persons detained in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. Such actions include:

- the unlawful extension of the jurisdiction of the occupying power;
- changing the legal status of persons without lawful grounds;
- using judicial mechanisms to legitimise occupation policy.

LEGAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

Documented violations of the right to a fair trial may be classified as:

- war crimes, in particular deprivation of the right to a fair and regular trial;
- elements of crimes against humanity, if they form part of a broader systemic practice of

persecuting the civilian population.

THE FUNCTIONAL ROLE OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS IN THE SYSTEM

In the broader context, judicial proceedings perform several functions:

- legitimisation of unlawful deprivation of liberty;

- transformation of violent detention into formally “lawful” punishment;
- creation of the appearance of law enforcement;
- integration of victims into the penitentiary system of the Russian Federation.

Thus, judicial mechanisms are not an instrument of justice but rather form part of the repressive system.

8. INFORMATION ON OTHER VICTIMS AND THE BROADER CONTEXT

Testimonies of victims collected during 2025 systematically contain information about other persons who were held together with them in places of detention. In many cases, this concerns dozens of persons, indicating a significantly larger scale of the practice. At the same time, information about unlawfully detained civilians is also obtained after

official exchanges, namely from released prisoners of war and civilians. This indicates the mass and systemic nature of the practice of unlawful deprivation of liberty, which goes beyond isolated cases and bears the hallmarks of a coordinated policy of persecuting the civilian population.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the testimonies collected in 2025 makes it possible to identify the existence of an integrated, multi-level and systematically organised practice of the unlawful deprivation of liberty of civilians in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and their subsequent transfer to the territory of the Russian Federation. The documented cases are not isolated or accidental, but demonstrate clearly reproducible patterns covering all stages — from initial detention to prolonged incarceration in penal institutions.

The report shows that unlawful detentions are carried out without proper legal grounds and are typically followed by incommunicado detention, creating conditions conducive to further violations, including torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Persons are then transferred through an extensive network of places of detention, which includes both unofficial locations in the temporarily occupied territories and formalised institutions, including in the territory of the Russian Federation. Such a sequence of actions indicates the existence of a coordinated mechanism within which various elements — security structures, administrations of places of detention and judicial bodies — function as components of a single system.

Chains of transfer play a particular role in this system, performing not only a logistical but also a functional role. Repeated transfers between different locations make it more difficult to establish persons' whereabouts, hinder access to legal assistance and communication with relatives,

and increase detainees' vulnerability to torture and psychological pressure. At the same time, the analysis of documented cases makes it possible to speak of the formation of transfer routes that recur in different regions. For the southern direction, characteristic routes pass through Melitopol, Berdiansk, Kherson or Nova Kakhovka, with subsequent transit through Simferopol to Rostov oblast or other regions of the Russian Federation. Within the eastern direction, transfer has been recorded from unofficial places of detention or temporary penitentiary detention institutions within the regions of the TOT of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts to Donetsk or Luhansk, with subsequent transfer to Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog and other institutions of the Russian penitentiary system. The recurrence of these routes indicates the existence of a stable infrastructure of unlawful detention and a coordinated system for transferring civilians.

During 2025, the continued use of the practice of unlawful deprivation of liberty as an instrument of control over the civilian population was recorded. At the same time, analysis of the body of testimonies makes it possible to speak of a certain transformation in the motives for detentions. While in the initial periods of the full-scale invasion the occupation administrations and security structures mainly justified detentions by suspicions of cooperation with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, participation in pro-Ukrainian activities or the persons' affiliation with Ukrainian state structures, later there is a significant broadening of the motives used by the occupation authorities to

persecute civilian population. The study indicates that the reasons for detentions, or the explanations for such detentions given by occupation structures, increasingly include any manifestations of perceived “disloyalty”, in particular the use of Ukrainian information resources, refusal to cooperate with occupation administrations, pro-Ukrainian statements, possession of Ukrainian symbols or maintaining contact with relatives in territory controlled by Ukraine.

At the same time, in some documented cases, relatives and victims were unable to establish any comprehensible reasons for the detention, indicating the further intensification of the arbitrary nature of the persecution of the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories. Individual testimonies indicate that even regular telephone contact with children or relatives located in territory controlled by Ukraine may become a basis for persecution. This indicates the gradual expansion of the criteria of “unreliability” and the strengthening of repressive control over the everyday life of the civilian population.

There is also an expansion of the categories of civilians who are considered at risk. If previously the overwhelming majority of victims were men of working age, the cases documented during 2025 increasingly involve women, elderly persons and persons with disabilities or serious illnesses.

Judicial proceedings applied to persons unlawfully deprived of liberty do not meet the basic standards of a fair trial and bear signs of a formal character. They are accompanied by the absence of independence

of judicial bodies, systemic restrictions on the right of defence, the use of evidence obtained under coercion, and the fabrication of charges. In this context, judicial mechanisms perform the function of legitimising already committed violations, transforming actual unlawful deprivation of liberty into formally documented criminal prosecution.

The territory of the Russian Federation and the TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in this system serve not only as places of final detention but also as key elements of the mechanism of persecution, within which charges are formalised, pseudo-judicial proceedings are conducted, sentences are imposed, and the subsequent serving of punishment takes place. The analysis of documented cases indicates that a significant share of “judicial” procedures is carried out precisely in the territory of the TOT of Crimea, primarily in Simferopol, where judicial and penitentiary institutions controlled by the Russian Federation operate. After sentencing, some civilians are transferred to penal institutions in various regions of the Russian Federation, including Rostov oblast, Krasnodar Krai, Saratov oblast and the Republic of Mordovia. This indicates the integration of all stages — from the capture of the person to their prolonged detention — into a single functioning system of persecution.

The totality of documented facts makes it possible to consider these actions as serious violations of international humanitarian law and international criminal law. They may be classified as war crimes, in particular, unlawful deprivation of liberty, deportation or transfer of the civilian population, torture, and deprivation of the right to a fair trial.

Where indicators of mass scale and systematicity are present, these acts may also be classified as crimes against humanity, in particular in the forms of imprisonment, torture and enforced disappearances.

Taken together, the established facts indicate not only the systematicity of violations of international humanitarian law but also the further expansion of repressive practices against the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories. The

documented trends show that the risk of unlawful deprivation of liberty remains for a wide range of civilians, while the criteria for persecution are becoming increasingly broad and less predictable. This creates an atmosphere of constant danger and uncertainty for the population of the occupied territories, in which even everyday communication or manifestations of connection with Ukraine may become grounds for detention, persecution and subsequent unlawful detention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES:

a) ensure continuous systemic documentation of facts of unlawful deprivation of liberty, including the circumstances of detention, places and conditions of detention, chains of transfer of detained persons, the use of torture and ill-treatment, as well as related judicial or pseudo-judicial proceedings. Such documentation should be carried out taking into account the standards of admissibility of evidence in national and international criminal proceedings.

b) integrate collected testimonies into the work of Ukraine's pre-trial investigation bodies and use them to classify the relevant acts as war crimes and, where the necessary elements are present, crimes against humanity, in particular enforced disappearances, unlawful imprisonment, torture and persecution of the civilian population.

c) regularly analyse victims' testimonies as an instrument for identifying new trends, updating the typology of violations and assessing the evolution of practices of unlawful deprivation of liberty in the context of a protracted armed conflict.

d) distinguish transfers and forcible transfers of civilians, including deportation to the territory of the Russian Federation, as standalone episodes of international crimes for the purpose of proper criminal-law assessment and increasing the effectiveness of investigations. Such acts should be documented separately from the initial unlawful detention and include establishing the role of

escorts, administrations of places of detention and so-called "judicial" bodies in the temporarily occupied territories. The relevant facts should become grounds for opening separate criminal proceedings under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, taking into account the cumulative nature of violations of international humanitarian law.

e) pay particular attention to conducting forensic medical and forensic psychiatric examinations in accordance with the UN Istanbul Protocol. This concerns, in particular, the recording of the consequences of torture and ill-treatment, including injuries from electric shocks, systematic beatings, as well as psychological disorders, in particular post-traumatic stress disorder.

f) establish a centralised bank of such expert opinions, which would make it possible to ensure the stability of the evidentiary basis, avoid the re-traumatisation of victims and contribute to identifying typical patterns of violence.

g) include in the evidence strategy an element of systematic collection and recording of documentary confirmations related to the registration of detained persons. This includes correspondence and confirmations from the International Committee of the Red Cross, data on registration in places of detention, information on "delivery" and individual identifiers of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation, as well as extracts from so-called "personal accounts" or electronic

registration systems. The practice of refusal by “appointed” lawyers or lawyers controlled by the occupation authorities to transfer case materials to families or representatives of victims should be recorded separately as an element obstructing the right of defence and access to information.

h) establish a separate procedural approach to the classification of the activities of so-called “courts” in the temporarily occupied territories. The unlawful detention of civilians, the imposition of unlawful sentences and subsequent transfer beyond the occupied territory to the Russian Federation should be documented as separate complex crimes covering the categories of unlawful deprivation of liberty, deprivation of the right to a fair trial and deportation of the civilian population.

i) create a system for the systematic monitoring and informing of Ukrainian citizens who survived unlawful deprivation of liberty but, after release, did not report this to state authorities or human rights structures. Particular attention should be paid to Ukrainians abroad, among whom a significant number of victims remain, as well as persons living in remote regions of Ukraine. For this purpose, it would be advisable to provide targeted information on the feasibility of safe reporting and to introduce remote interviewing mechanisms that enable the documentation of testimonies regardless of a person’s location. This will reduce the latency of such crimes and ensure fuller documentation of cases of unlawful deprivation of liberty.

2. TO EXECUTIVE AUTHORITIES:

a) ensure the proper establishment of the fact of unlawful deprivation of liberty for victims, including access to legal and social protection, as well as priority measures after release. Procedures for establishing the fact should be human-centred, should not place an excessive burden of proof on victims, and should take into account the specific nature of crimes committed under occupation.

b) strengthen international cooperation for the purpose of exchanging information on places of detention of civilian hostages, their conditions of detention and responsible persons, as well as use the collected materials in international mechanisms, in particular within the ICC, universal jurisdiction and sanctions regimes.

c) develop specialised treatment and rehabilitation programmes for persons released from places of unlawful detention. Such programmes should cover the treatment of chronic diseases and complications, including cardiovascular and renal pathologies, the consequences of prolonged starvation (anorexia, critical weight deficit), as well as dental harm.

d) ensure institutional coordination and clear referral protocols between the state and non-state sectors for the purpose of providing continuous, interdisciplinary psychosocial support that takes into account a possible long-term need for accompaniment.

e) ensure long-term psychosocial support for the families of persons who are held incommunicado or are considered missing.

f) strengthen technical interaction with the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to verify transfer routes and the current status of detained persons.

g) create a specialised executive authority — the State Agency for Civilian Persons Affected by Unlawful Deprivation of Liberty as a Result of the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation — which would ensure a unified state policy in this area. Such a body could maintain a centralised register of victims and missing persons, accompany their families, coordinate measures to facilitate release, implement the mechanisms of social and legal protection provided by law, and ensure comprehensive support for persons after release, including medical, psychological and legal support. The creation of a separate institution would enable the elimination of fragmentation in the existing response and the formation of a permanent state mechanism to support civilian victims.

h) introduce a separate state fund (or mixed fund - state with international participation) to support victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, by analogy with practices applied in other states and post-conflict contexts. Such a fund should serve as a targeted instrument for financing the medical, psychological and social rehabilitation of persons subjected to torture, irrespective of the stage of criminal proceedings or the completion of status procedures.

3. TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF UKRAINE:

a) advocate for ICRC access to specific remand prisons and colonies in the territory of the Russian Federation where, according to documented testimonies, civilians unlawfully deprived of liberty are held. This includes, among others, institutions in Krasnodar, Volgograd, Kazan, Irkutsk, the Republic of Buryatia, Saratov oblast and the Republic of Mordovia.

b) systematically use documented routes of deportation and detention of civilians in bilateral and multilateral diplomatic formats to advocate for their release.

4. TO INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS:

a) use documented transfer routes, conditions of detention, classifications under articles of the criminal legislation of the Russian Federation and the described practices of treatment of detained persons to prepare targeted submissions to the International Criminal Court and UN special procedures on torture and enforced disappearances.

b) use documented transfer routes, conditions of detention, classifications under articles of the criminal legislation of the Russian Federation and the described practices of treatment of detained persons to initiate individual and sectoral sanctions regimes against the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation and related “judicial” and administrative links.

c) facilitate the strengthening of mechanisms for searching for civilians who are officially considered

missing but may be in unlawful detention.

d) advocate for the creation of independent international monitoring missions in the temporarily

occupied territories of Ukraine and in the territory of the Russian Federation to inspect places of detention, establish the whereabouts of civilians and document violations of their rights.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND CUMULATIVE INDICATORS

Since 2022, documenters of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin” have identified and interviewed more than 631 persons — witnesses and victims of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and other international crimes against the civilian population. At the same time, the total number of persons identified by the Association through documentation, OSINT, and cooperation with human rights actors exceeds 1,000 persons unlawfully deprived of liberty. The documented violations include, first and foremost, unlawful deprivation of liberty, as well as shelling of civilian infrastructure, appropriation of private property by occupation forces and other related crimes.

The documentation of war crimes and the preparation of this analytical review were carried out by the Documentation and Research and Analytics Departments of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin”.

The documentation project in 2025 was carried out with support from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC). The views and conclusions set out in this publication belong exclusively to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the NHC.

The documentation project in 2025 was implemented with financial support from the Czech organisation People in Need, as part of the SOS Ukraine initiative. The content of the publication does not necessarily coincide with their position.



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