ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NGO “ASSOCIATION OF RELATIVES OF POLITICAL PRISONERS OF THE KREMLIN”

IN DOCUMENTING WAR CRIMES COMMITTED BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION IN UKRAINE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The analytical review for September 2026 is based on 39 documented testimonies concerning the unlawful deprivation of liberty of civilians in the context of the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine. A distinctive feature of the September dataset is that, alongside accounts provided by victims and their family members, it includes testimonies from former Ukrainian prisoners of war who were held together with civilians in Russian places of detention. The testimonies concern incidents occurring between 2017 and 2026; September denotes the period of documentation rather than necessarily the date of detention. This combination of sources makes it possible to compare accounts of initial capture with descriptions of prolonged detention, transfers between facilities and the circumstances recorded by other eyewitnesses.

Of the 39 testimonies, 30 concern an individually identified principal civilian victim whose own history of detention is reconstructed. In 14 of these 30 cases, the testimony was provided by civilians who had themselves experienced unlawful detention; a further 16 testimonies were provided by family members, partners, acquaintances or other civilian informants. Nine testimonies were provided by prisoners of war and were used exclusively to establish circumstances concerning civilian fellow detainees. Information about additional individuals, including civilians personally known to the prisoners of war, was analysed separately, without automatically adding them to the 30 principal cases, since several respondents describe the same individuals or the same group incidents.

Of the 30 principal civilian victims, 21 were men (70%) and nine were women (30%). The largest number of initial detentions occurred in Zaporizhzhia Oblast — 11 people (36.7%) — followed by Donetsk Oblast with seven (23.3%), Kyiv Oblast with six (20%) and Kharkiv Oblast with four (13.3%). One case each concerned Kherson Oblast and the seizure of a civilian vessel in the Black Sea near Snake Island (3.3% each). The majority of initial detentions — 19 of 30, or 63.3% — occurred in 2022. However, the review also documents earlier imprisonment in occupied parts of Donetsk Oblast, new detentions in 2024–2026 and the renewed deprivation of liberty of individuals who had previously been released.

According to the latest information contained in the testimonies, 16 principal victims had been released from the places of detention specifically described, one of whom subsequently died after release. Eleven remained unlawfully detained, while there was no reliable information about the current fate or whereabouts of three individuals following their detention.

At least 13 principal victims, or 43.3%, came under the control of Russian authorities on the territory of the Russian Federation at some point. In 11 cases, their transfer to Russia formed part of a coercive detention route; in the other two, Russian authorities deprived women of their liberty when they attempted to leave occupied territory by travelling through Russia. Routes through Belarus, Russian remand prisons and penal colonies demonstrate that civilians remained under the control of the Russian penitentiary system for months or years, often

without a judicial decision, access to independent legal counsel or the ability to inform their families.

The testimonies directly describe beatings during capture, torture during interrogations and during the so-called ‘reception’ procedure on arrival at a facility, blows with rifle butts, batons and other objects, electric shocks, mock executions, attacks by service dogs, forced nudity, standing for many hours in painful positions and threats of sexual violence. Some men report electric shocks or blows to the genital area; in one incident in Kyiv Oblast, a woman was directly threatened with gang rape. Reports of sexualised threats, humiliation and physical sexualised violence require separate consideration as potential conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), even where respondents do not themselves use the relevant legal terminology.

One of the most illustrative incidents is the shared experience of two civilians from Vasylivka Raion, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, documented from different perspectives. After more than two months of detention in Dniprorudne, a man and a group of others were compelled to participate in a staged announcement of ‘deportation’ and to walk towards Zaporizhzhia in front of a camera. Following the filming, the individuals were captured again and forced to dig trenches and construct Russian military positions near Verkhnia Krynytsia and Kamianske. A female paramedic who was part of the same group described communal accommodation in a private house and holiday cottages, cooking and washing clothes for military personnel, the use of men for hazardous work, inadequate food and the inability to leave freely. Her account also includes an incident in which civilians were forced to clear mines.

Equally significant is the case of a civilian community activist from Kupiansk, detained on 18 May 2022 together with a relative who was a former city councillor. The respondent provides a detailed account of torture at the Kupiansk temporary detention facility, removal through Belgorod Oblast and detention in Stary Oskol, Kashin in Tver Oblast, and Penal Colony No. 10 in Mordovia. His testimony describes specific features of the detention regime: repeated beatings, forced standing, restrictions on the use of the toilet, severe weight loss, transfer to a disciplinary cell block and inadequate medical care. He was not returned to Ukraine until 2 October 2025. His account makes it possible to trace not only his own route but also the transfers of other civilians, including those with serious illnesses, between the same facilities.

Another particularly significant case concerns a civilian engineer from Kyiv Oblast, detained at a checkpoint in Dymer on 8 March 2022 in front of his wife and six-year-old child. According to his direct observation, 22 civilians and four servicemen were held in one cell in Hostomel. He also reported the death of another civilian man in that room whose identity has not been fully established. His account of sexualised threats, blows to the groin, prolonged forced standing and restrictions on medical assistance is particularly relevant to the analysis of ill-treatment and CRSV.

Among the cases involving women, a particularly notable example is the six-year deprivation of liberty of an employee of a civilian enterprise in Donetsk. Her testimony provides a detailed account of forced labour, the systematic concealment of her whereabouts from relatives, humiliating searches, food provision, medical vulnerability and the fate of numerous other imprisoned women. Two further cases involving women in 2026 illustrate the persecution of older individuals over small bank transfers in support of Ukraine and the use of criminal proceedings under occupation.

A separate category comprises testimonies from prisoners of war about civilian fellow detainees. They describe individuals captured at checkpoints, in their homes, during evacuation or because of their previous military service, and identify places where they were held: Borisoglebsk, Kursk, Stary Oskol, Donskoy, Kizel, Mordovia and other facilities. Several testimonies corroborate one another regarding the presence of particular civilians in the same facilities. Reports concerning people with tuberculosis, mental health conditions, HIV infection, serious injuries and older detainees warrant particular attention. There are also reports of the death of a civilian fellow detainee and the detention of a child together with an adult, both of which require further verification.

Taken together, the testimonies reveal interconnected practices: identifying individuals through lists, telephones, denunciations, previous service or civic views; capturing them without accessible legal safeguards; concealing their whereabouts; using physical and psychological coercion; transferring them between unofficial premises and penitentiary institutions; imposing forced labour; and, in certain cases, subsequently initiating criminal or administrative proceedings. These facts indicate avenues for criminal-law verification but do not, in themselves, conclusively establish the individual responsibility of all identified or unidentified perpetrators or all the contextual elements of international crimes.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The empirical basis of the review comprises 39 testimonies collected during the documentation of victims and witnesses in September 2026.

The testimony dataset comprises three groups of sources. Fourteen testimonies were provided directly by civilians who had experienced detention and subsequent imprisonment. Sixteen were provided by family members, partners, colleagues or other civilian witnesses reconstructing the experiences of particular victims. Nine were provided by former prisoners of war who described civilian fellow detainees, their locations, health, transfers, treatment or subsequent fate. This classification is based on the evidential role of the source, rather than the respondent's sex or nationality.

In this review, prisoners of war act solely as witnesses in relation to civilians. Their own capture, conditions of detention, torture or other violations committed against them as prisoners of war fall outside the scope of the research and are

neither treated as civilian cases nor included in statistics concerning civilian victims. A prisoner of war's description of a facility is taken into account in relation to civilians only where the witness states that they saw a particular civilian, shared accommodation with them, observed their health or specific acts committed against them, or where sufficiently clear information indicates that they were subject to a common regime.

Former military personnel, veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation/Joint Forces Operation (ATO/JFO), demobilised individuals and former law-enforcement officers who were detained after leaving their respective services, with no established membership of the armed forces at the time of capture, are treated as civilians. Their previous military or law-enforcement backgrounds may themselves have prompted their persecution. Where testimonies refer to involvement in transmitting information of military significance or other activities in the context of the armed conflict, civilian status and the question of direct participation in hostilities require a separate factual assessment of the timing and nature of those activities; they cannot be determined solely by the occupying authorities' allegations of 'espionage' or 'spotting for artillery'.

To avoid double-counting in the person-level core statistics, a conservative unit of analysis was adopted: one principal civilian victim for each of the 30 testimonies recounting that person's primary history of detention. Accordingly, the denominator for sex, principal year and region of detention, release status and documented cross-border transfer is 30 principal civilian victims, while the denominator for the characteristics of the documentary dataset is 39 testimonies. This does not mean that the 39 documents concern only 30 civilians: they identify a considerably wider group of fellow detainees and additional victims. However, the testimonies alone do not always permit a reliable determination of the total number of unique civilians, since the same people appear in different accounts and some sources provide only approximate figures for large groups.

Quantitative indicators for the principal group were calculated using consistent definitions, with figures rounded to one decimal place where appropriate. In cases of repeated detention, the principal year is that of the event forming the central account of unlawful detention; earlier or later separate incidents are described individually in the text. The region corresponds to the first documented location of actual capture. A separate maritime geographical category is used for the civilian vessel seized in the Black Sea near Snake Island. Forced removal to the Russian Federation is distinguished from persecution during an individual's voluntary attempt to leave occupied territory in transit through Russia. Concealment of whereabouts, lack of communication, failure to receive replies from institutions and enforced disappearance are likewise not treated as legally identical categories.

Each account was analysed in terms of the circumstances of initial detention, possible motive, the person's status and occupational profile, health and age, digital evidence and searches, duration and legal grounds of detention, individual stages of transfer, accommodation conditions, physical and psychological

methods of coercion, possible indicators of CRSV, forced labour, access to food, water, hygiene, medicines, communication and legal counsel, court proceedings, sentences and status as at the latest recorded date. Information about other victims was placed in a separate dataset, preserving the link to the original testimony and accounting for potential overlaps between individuals.

Sources were distinguished according to the degree of direct knowledge: firsthand observations, information heard by respondents from fellow detainees, reports from relatives and unverified suppositions. For example, testimony about a person's own beating and transfer route is evidentially different from a relative's supposition that a missing man might have been taken to a particular remand prison. Where the name of a facility, a transfer date or a person's subsequent fate cannot be established, the review expressly identifies the resulting gap.

Overlaps between sources require particular attention. A single incident involving the detention of two men in the village of Orlianske on 27 February 2022 appears in the accounts of one man's former partner and the other man, who testified directly; two testimonies describe in detail the same group of individuals forced to work at military positions in Zaporizhzhia Oblast; and several former prisoners of war name the same civilians in Borisoglebsk, Donskoy or Mordovia. Adding together numbers of fellow detainees from different accounts without establishing their distinct identities would produce misleading statistics. Group estimates are therefore presented as the number of people in a particular cell, facility or incident at a given time, rather than as additional independent victims.

Anonymisation and the protection of personal data are fundamental principles of this review. Names and surnames, private contact details, home addresses, full dates of birth, case identifiers and information capable of identifying individuals or their relatives are not reproduced. Testimony numbers and neutral descriptions of individuals are used to enable cross-referencing within the research database. Geographical names and the names of facilities are retained where they are essential to reconstructing transfer routes and documenting potential crimes. All conclusions about the use of those locations are based solely on the accounts provided, rather than on any independent verification beyond them.

The legal assessment is preliminary and analytical in nature. The review identifies categories of conduct potentially relevant under international humanitarian and international criminal law, but does not replace an investigation into individual criminal responsibility. Definitive legal classification requires the establishment of the status of the particular victim and alleged perpetrators, the nexus between the conduct and the armed conflict, the context of occupation, the requisite form of intent, the purpose of the violence and other elements of the relevant offence. Accordingly, the review uses formulations such as 'may constitute', 'shows indications of', 'requires separate verification' and 'subject to the establishment of the relevant contextual elements'.

Testimonies were collected in accordance with the principles of informed consent, respondent safety and anonymisation of personal data. The legal assessment took into account international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international human rights law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture. Relevant prohibitions include arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of liberty, torture, inhuman treatment, unlawful transfer of protected persons, hostage-taking, wilful killing, persecution and the denial of the right to a fair trial.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE TESTIMONY DATASET

The September dataset differs from a collection of isolated complaints about detention in that it comprises several interconnected types of sources. Civilian victims provide chronological accounts of their own prolonged detention and transfer routes; relatives supplement these with enquiries to institutions, correspondence and information about court proceedings; and former prisoners of war describe people whose families sometimes have no confirmation whatsoever of their whereabouts. This structure allows individual links within a wider network of places of detention to be compared, although it does not make the testimonies a statistically representative sample of civilians detained by the Russian Federation.

The 30 principal civilian cases cover six geographical categories of initial detention and a broad period. Nineteen of the 30 principal detentions occurred in 2022; three in 2026; two in 2025; two in 2018; and one each in 2017, 2019, 2023 and 2024. Some of the events described extend beyond this classification: one man was first detained in February 2022 but subsequently disappeared in August 2025; another civilian, a woman previously held for a prolonged period in 2023, was arrested again in April 2026 while attempting to leave through a Russian border crossing.

At least five models of deprivation of civilian liberty can be identified from the testimonies. The first involves the short-term capture of civilians during the movement of military columns, in the street or at checkpoints, often accompanied by beatings and followed by release. The second involves targeted arrests at home following earlier searches, denunciations, examination of telephones or discovery of previous service. The third comprises prolonged unofficial detention without any judicial charge, including in Russian institutions holding prisoners of war at the same time. The fourth involves the initiation of criminal proceedings and the imposition of sentences under Russian or occupation legislation following an initial forcible capture. The fifth involves the exploitation of detainees for military labour and the subsequent disguising of their detention as supposedly voluntary work, ‘deportation’ or an administrative procedure.

Based on the latest known status of the 30 principal civilians, 16 had been released from places of detention, 11 reportedly remained detained, and reliable information was unavailable about the fate of three following their capture. One released person from Kherson Oblast subsequently died; since this occurred outside the documented period of imprisonment, the death is not counted as a killing in detention. Separately from the principal group, another civilian from Kyiv Oblast was found dead after capture, while a direct witness from Hostomel reported a man’s death in an overcrowded improvised detention room.

Some of the documents concern civilians arrested before 24 February 2022 in occupied parts of Donetsk Oblast. They provide particularly detailed accounts of unofficial facilities, including ‘Izoliatsiia’, the Donetsk temporary detention facility and remand prison, and penal colonies in Makiivka and Snizhne, as well as the imposition of lengthy sentences on charges of espionage or terrorism.

The nine testimonies provided by prisoners of war contain substantial additional information about civilians. Some identify one or several people and describe their occupations and transfer routes; others give approximate numbers of civilians in particular cells or institutions — for example, 17 civilians in one room, around 20 people in a given group, or dozens of individuals encountered by a witness over several years. These figures represent observations tied to a particular place and time, not an established total of distinct individuals.

A further cross-cutting feature is the extent to which access to information depended on personal networks. Relatives received news from former cellmates, informal volunteers, intermediaries and, occasionally, lawyers or letters from remand prisons. In some cases, occupation or Russian authorities expressly denied holding an individual or failed to respond to enquiries, even where relatives had received reports naming a particular detention facility. Other families were unable even to approach local residents because of the fear of reprisals or the witnesses' continued presence in temporarily occupied territory.

The material reveals both common and differing regimes of treatment. Some respondents describe certain institutions as comparatively tolerable in terms of food or access to parcels, while also recounting exceptionally violent 'reception' procedures and humiliation during transfers.

2. GEOGRAPHY AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF DETENTION

Within the 30 principal civilian cases, the largest geographical group concerns Zaporizhzhia Oblast — 11 people, or 36.7%. Donetsk Oblast accounts for seven people (23.3%), Kyiv Oblast for six (20%), and Kharkiv Oblast for four (13.3%). One principal case each concerns Kherson Oblast and a civilian vessel seized in the Black Sea near Snake Island (3.3% each). This distribution reflects the geographical origins of the particular documented cases, not the overall territorial prevalence of crimes. Subsequent transfers through Crimea, occupied towns in other oblasts, Belarus and the Russian Federation are not counted again as regions of initial capture.

The Zaporizhzhia group includes Melitopol, Berdiansk, Enerhodar, Pryazovske, Orlianske, Skelky and Liubymivka, settlements in Vasylivka and Polohy raions, and detentions during attempts to leave occupied territory. In October 2024, an older female doctor from Liubymivka was taken away after a search of her home, during which information concerning support for Ukrainian military personnel was found on her telephone. According to a relative, the detention was preceded by repeated searches, threats and disputes with Russian soldiers over their unauthorised occupation of housing. A distinctive feature of this case is the gradual progression from persecution based on private digital content to a prosecution for 'high treason' resulting in a lengthy prison sentence (testimony No. 1).

A similar mechanism is apparent in Melitopol. A former servicewoman, who was working in a civilian occupation at the time, was detained at her home

in April 2025. Several vehicles carrying servicemen and individuals whom the family believed to be FSB officers arrived at the property. During a search, they found another telephone containing subscriptions to pro-Ukrainian channels and evidence of transfers in support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The suggestion that an acquaintance might have denounced the woman remains her son's supposition and cannot be presented as an established motive or as identifying the person who initiated the persecution. After her detention, she was taken to Velyka Bilozerka and subsequently to Donetsk (testimony No. 3).

Two cases involving women in Berdiansk began in different years. A woman whose daughter served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine was taken from her home in June 2022. She was initially held in Velyka Bilozerka and subsequently in a Donetsk remand prison; it later emerged that she had received a lengthy sentence on a charge connected with allegedly assisting Ukraine. In the case of another older woman, her detention in March 2026 was preceded by interrogations and searches in 2025, examination of her telephone and scrutiny of bank transfers and pro-Ukrainian correspondence. Her daughter describes restrictions on the woman's freedom even before her formal remand in custody, including a requirement to remain in the town under the supervision of occupation representatives (testimonies Nos. 9 and 7).

The Enerhodar case concerns a woman formerly responsible for public relations at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), who refused to cooperate with the Russian occupation administration. She came under scrutiny following checks of information concerning bank transfers and contacts with colleagues. According to an acquaintance, she was forcibly apprehended in early July 2026, subsequently transferred between several places of detention in Zaporizhzhia Oblast and taken to Donetsk in September. The testimony suggests that her work at a strategically important civilian facility, refusal to cooperate with the occupation administration and digital surveillance may have been factors prompting the authorities' interest in her. The material does not establish that she was directly involved in any military activities (testimony No. 6).

On 27 February 2022, Russian soldiers captured two men travelling in a car in the village of Orlianske, opened fire on the vehicle, stripped and beat both men, and took them to a field. One of the men gave a firsthand account of the capture, while his companion's former wife described the latter's experience. Both escaped after Russian positions came under fire. The man who testified directly was detained again at his home in August 2022 and held for four days at a police station in Dniprorudne, where violence was used during interrogations. His companion remained in occupied territory and disappeared in August 2025 after occupation forces returned. His subsequent fate has not been established (testimonies Nos. 2 and 4).

A separate cluster of incidents of unlawful deprivation of liberty in Vasylivka Raion, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, concerns the village of Skelky and the town of Dniprorudne. In November 2022, a civilian man was taken from his home in front of his wife and mother and brought to a police station, where he was

held without a defined procedural status until January 2023. The respondent associates the occupation forces' interest in him with humanitarian activities, his links with the local village head, information about Russian positions and his son's service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. However, the specific motive of the occupation representatives has not been corroborated by official documents. In January, he was included in a group subjected to a staged 'deportation' and in fact sent to perform military-related labour. Another member of that group, a female paramedic from Skelky, describes her own capture on 11 January 2023 and subsequent detention in the same or related premises (testimonies Nos. 10 and 38).

Another Zaporizhzhia case concerns detention along an evacuation route. On 30 March 2022, a former law-enforcement officer, who was working as a civilian farmer at the time, attempted to leave occupied territory with an acquaintance. They were stopped at a checkpoint near Novofylypivka, where their telephones were examined and they were questioned about former professional contacts, before being taken to temporary places of detention in the Tokmak and Melitopol areas. The man was subsequently transferred to Donetsk, Olenivka, Taganrog and Borisoglebsk, and was not released until June 2026. A distinctive feature of this detention was the use of his previous law-enforcement service and information extracted from his telephone as grounds for prolonged imprisonment across multiple facilities without a trial (testimony No. 33).

The Donetsk group varies considerably in both time and location. Four cases involve the capture of civilians in Donetsk between 2017 and 2019 following denunciations, pro-Ukrainian activity, previous military service or accusations of passing information to Ukraine. They involve the so-called 'MGB' (Ministry of State Security) and 'UBOP' (Organised Crime Department), deprivation of liberty in unofficial premises, torture using electric shocks, coerced confessions and lengthy sentences. One man detained in 2017 was released after beatings and threats; two others detained in 2018 received lengthy prison sentences. An employee of a civilian enterprise detained in May 2019 was held at 'Izoliatsiia', the Donetsk remand prison and a women's penal colony. These cases demonstrate that, in parts of the geographical area under review, the repressive practices described for 2022–2026 had an earlier history (testimonies Nos. 31, 32, 34 and 35).

The Donetsk testimonies also cover the detention of men during filtration and evacuation from Mariupol and surrounding areas in 2022. A former ATO participant, who was employed by a civilian enterprise at the time of capture, was detained at a checkpoint near Manhush because of information about his military background. Another former contract serviceman, who had been demobilised in 2021, was also detained while attempting to leave the area of hostilities. His route included Manhush, Dokuchaievsk, Donetsk, Olenivka, Horlivka, Kirovske and a Russian facility in Novosibirsk. In both cases, previous military service, rather than an established combatant status at the time of detention, was the principal characteristic used to separate the men from other civilians (testimonies Nos. 15 and 28).

Another case concerns the compulsory filtration of women near Novoazovsk in March 2026. A former nursery-school employee attempting to leave occupied territory was singled out from those departing, held near a checkpoint, questioned in Taganrog and subsequently detained for approximately a month in a hotel used for the temporary accommodation of people undergoing screening. Unlike detention in a conventional penal institution, this case did not involve confinement in a barred cell throughout the entire period. Nevertheless, the seizure of documents, restrictions on movement and requirement to await a decision by Russian authorities raise the issue of whether she was de facto deprived of liberty (testimony No. 22).

The six principal cases from Kyiv Oblast largely concern March 2022 and the initial occupation of settlements to the north of Kyiv. In Dymer, Bucha and Ivankiv, on the outskirts of Hostomel and along other routes, civilians were detained while travelling, at home, in vehicles or after attempting to reach another settlement. Russian soldiers often acted on the basis of immediate suspicions: individuals were said to resemble servicemen, attention was drawn to tattoos or clothing, or they were suspected of directing artillery fire, without any substantiated judicial charge being brought. Some were taken from improvised local basement detention sites through Hostomel and Belarus to Bryansk Oblast in Russia (testimonies Nos. 11, 14, 17, 19, 27 and 39).

The case of the civilian engineer from Kyiv Oblast is particularly detailed. He was detained at a checkpoint in Dymer in front of his wife and young child, initially taken to a former compressor room and then to Antonov Airport. In addition to describing his own beatings, the respondent identifies specific civilian fellow detainees whose subsequent fates differed. According to his firsthand observations, 26 people were held in a cell in Hostomel on the final night, four of whom were military personnel and 22 civilians (testimony No. 39).

Another account from the Ivankiv community describes the joint detention of a woman and her civilian partner from 5 March 2022. Following their capture, they were taken to an improvised place of detention in a wooded area, held under armed guard, subjected to threats against their relatives and forced to appear in a propaganda video. The woman was released, whereas her partner was subsequently found dead. The circumstances and cause of his death require separate verification; nevertheless, the testimony establishes a connection between the prior capture of both individuals and the man’s subsequent disappearance (testimony No. 19).

The Kharkiv group consists of four principal cases involving men. In Kunie, in the Izium area, an elderly pensioner was detained in April 2022 while walking along a road with a telephone number that soldiers mistakenly interpreted as possible coordinates. He was taken to Belgorod Oblast in Russia; information later emerged suggesting detention in Arzamas, although his current whereabouts have not been established. In the village of Hrakove, another respondent’s father disappeared in June 2022; the family received fragmentary reports and rumours but does not know his whereabouts or whether he is alive. In Tavilzhanka, a man

was detained at a checkpoint in August 2022 and, according to later information, taken to a Russian facility in Galich (testimonies Nos. 12, 16 and 18).

The most detailed Kharkiv case concerns Kupiansk. From March 2022, representatives of Russian structures repeatedly sought out a community activist and searched his and his family's homes. He was detained on 18 May in front of relatives; his brother-in-law, a former city councillor, was detained at the same time. Both men were placed in the Kupiansk temporary detention facility and separated. The released man himself documents their subsequent transfers to Shebekino, Stary Oskol, Kashin and Mordovia. Information about other Kupiansk activists and detainees held in the same temporary detention facility, including individuals who remained in captivity after his release, is considered separately (testimony No. 36).

The sole principal case from Kherson Oblast concerns a man detained in Kherson in August 2022 and transferred to several places of detention within the occupied part of the region. He was released at the end of December 2022 following detention and beatings. He subsequently experienced serious health problems and died in February 2026. Claims concerning the cause of death, including any connection with violence during detention, would require separate medical evidence; the fact that he died after release is not equivalent to a documented death in custody (testimony No. 13).

A distinct geographical context is provided by the testimony of a civilian crew member of an unarmed search-and-rescue vessel seized near Snake Island on 26 February 2022. According to the respondent, 17 civilian crew and mission members were on board. Russian military personnel took effective control of the vessel and those aboard, held them on the ship until March and subsequently transferred them to Sevastopol and the Russian Federation. Their subsequent accommodation alongside captured Ukrainian servicemen did not alter the civilian status of those carrying out the search-and-rescue mission (testimony No. 5).

Across the geographical groups, the possible grounds for detention can be broadly classified as political or social profiling, suspicion based on digital information, professional background and ad hoc screening. The discovery of donations and contacts on telephones is specifically described in the cases of women from Liubymivka, Melitopol and Berdiansk and a farmer from Tokmak Raion. Reported grounds for targeted detention include refusal to cooperate with occupation authorities, civic activism, relatives serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and previous military or law-enforcement service. At checkpoints, appearance, tattoos, photographs and sometimes even a recorded telephone number were frequently treated as sufficient grounds for suspicion.

3. PROFILES OF THE VICTIMS

The sex distribution of the 30 principal civilian victims shows a predominance of men: 21 individuals, or 70%, compared with nine women, or 30%. This ratio does not include the separate group of civilians described by the nine prisoner-of-war witnesses, since many of those accounts do not permit all individuals to be reliably distinguished. Cases involving men frequently concern detention during travel or filtration, or persecution linked to previous military, law-enforcement or civic activity. Cases involving women more prominently feature persecution over digital money transfers, family ties to members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, work in civilian roles, and personal vulnerability during prolonged detention.

The victims described span a wide age range. The principal group includes working-age men, pensioners, several older women and women of middle age. One woman detained in Berdiansk was approximately 74 years old in 2026. The female doctor from Liubymivka was also older and had several chronic health conditions. Among additional civilian fellow detainees, former prisoners of war describe men aged approximately 74, younger individuals and a person with severe spinal deformity, mental health problems and tuberculosis. An exact mean age has not been calculated because the biographical information is incomplete and in places inconsistent.

The victims' occupational backgrounds are exceptionally varied. The principal group includes a doctor, a paramedic, an employee responsible for administrative and information functions at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, a former nursery-school employee, an industrial worker, a telegraph operator, a welder, a vehicle-repair engineer, a farmer, a furniture-production worker, a former rescuer or crew member of a search-and-rescue vessel, business owners, manual workers, pensioners and people previously employed in municipal or government positions. Testimonies about other fellow detainees also mention teachers, drivers, a journalist, construction workers, railway employees, judicial staff, forestry workers, cooks, medical personnel and people without regular employment. This diversity precludes attributing the persecution to any single occupational or social group.

A notable group consists of former military personnel detained after leaving the armed forces. A former military telegraph operator from Melitopol had served for more than two decades but was working in the civilian sector at the time of capture. A man from Mariupol who had participated in the ATO completed his service before the full-scale invasion. Another man detained during filtration along a route from Mariupol had completed his contractual military service in 2021. One Donetsk case involves the capture of a demobilised ATO participant; a Zaporizhzhia case concerns a former law-enforcement officer who had become a farmer. In several cases, these earlier careers were expressly discussed during interrogation and used to distinguish the individuals from other detainees, although previous service does not in itself establish military status at the time of capture (testimonies Nos. 3, 15, 28, 31 and 33).

Another group at risk comprises relatives of serving Ukrainian military personnel

and individuals who remained under occupation to care for family members. The daughter of a detained woman from Berdiansk served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as did the son of a civilian from Vasylivka Raion. In several cases, occupation authorities enquired about relatives' work, military units and whereabouts. Such links are relevant when examining possible persecution based on family relationships or the use of a detained person to exert pressure on third parties. However, an expression of interest in such matters is not, by itself, proof of hostage-taking: it is necessary to establish a specific demand and a causal link between the person's detention and the coercion of another party.

Particularly vulnerable individuals include those with long-term illnesses or disabilities, as well as people who became ill during captivity. The older female doctor reported diabetes, hypertension and a history of cancer to her relatives, together with a lack of adequate medical examinations. Another detained woman had gynaecological problems but reportedly did not receive the treatment she needed. The account of a former prisoner of 'Izoliatsiia' describes postoperative conditions, back problems and contact with women suffering from asthma, tuberculosis and other illnesses. Deteriorating cardiovascular and visual health, as well as the effects of severe exhaustion and beatings, were also recorded (testimonies Nos. 1, 9, 35 and 39).

Mental health concerns have two dimensions: pre-existing vulnerability and the consequences of systematic humiliation. A former civilian detainee held in Mordovia described a man from Mariupol who, in the absence of appropriate psychiatric care, exhibited suicidal intentions, inflicted injuries upon himself and displayed markedly disorganised behaviour. In another testimony, a prisoner of war mentions a civilian from Tokmak with mental health problems, spinal deformity and tuberculosis whose subsequent whereabouts are unknown. The paramedic from the Zaporizhzhia forced-labour group describes suicidal statements by two fellow detainees in the context of prolonged isolation, fear and the proximity of minefields (testimonies Nos. 36, 37 and 38).

The nine principal cases involving women differ in age, occupation and circumstances. One woman was held for more than six years in institutions in occupied Donetsk Oblast, including work in a penal colony's sewing workshop, and described systematic humiliating searches. Two older women experienced persecution lasting months or years over financial transfers in support of Ukraine. A former nuclear power plant employee was detained for a prolonged period after refusing to cooperate with the occupation administration. A woman from Kyiv Oblast was held with her civilian partner and threatened with sexual violence. Another woman from Polohy Raion underwent filtration while leaving occupied territory, while a paramedic from Vasylivka Raion experienced two distinct forms of deprivation of liberty — first labour exploitation, then administrative detention on Russian territory (testimonies Nos. 1, 6, 7, 19, 22, 35 and 38).

The wider group of civilians reveals further vulnerabilities not represented among the 30 principal cases. Some former prisoners of war encountered civilians with HIV infection, tuberculosis, amputated fingers or severe effects of frostbite;

several men of pensionable age shared cells with them. One account refers to a child believed to be approximately 12–14 years old whom the witness did not see but reportedly heard alongside an adult in the Kursk remand prison. This is insufficient to establish all the circumstances of the child's detention, but warrants priority verification of a possible violation of the rights of a particularly vulnerable individual (testimonies Nos. 25, 26, 29, 36, 37 and 39).

Finally, the victims' social profiles must not be confused with the detaining authorities' assumptions about their loyalty. In several cases, obtaining a Russian passport in occupied territory was attributed to coercion or to the need to receive a pension, pay fines or leave the area. Without further verification, such circumstances cannot be regarded as evidence of voluntary support for the occupation administration. Likewise, previous military experience, family ties, pro-Ukrainian activity or the use of Ukrainian digital services do not in themselves provide lawful grounds for arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

4. TYPOLOGY OF VIOLATIONS AND LEGAL CLASSIFICATION OF CRIMES

The central subject of the review is the deprivation of civilians' liberty during armed conflict and occupation without sufficient legal grounds, transparent procedures or effective safeguards. In a substantial proportion of the testimonies, individuals were captured following forcible entry into their homes or at checkpoints, without being informed of any comprehensible grounds, having access to independent judicial review, or being able to notify their families or obtain legal representation. The subsequent preparation of procedural documents or pronouncement of sentences by occupation authorities months or years later does not retrospectively render earlier detention lawful or legitimise the ensuing imprisonment. Where the relevant protected-person status and other elements are established, unlawful confinement may constitute a grave breach of international humanitarian law and a war crime.

The legal framework for assessing these incidents includes, in particular, the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Article 78 makes the internment or assigned residence of protected persons on security grounds an exceptional measure subject to appropriate procedures; Article 49 prohibits unlawful transfers and deportations from occupied territory; and Article 147 identifies unlawful confinement and unlawful deportation or transfer of protected persons as grave breaches of the Convention. Under the Rome Statute, potentially relevant provisions include Article 8(2)(a), concerning torture or inhuman treatment, unlawful confinement or transfer, and wilfully depriving protected persons of the rights of fair and regular trial. Applying these provisions to any individual case requires establishing the person's protected status, the nature of the control exercised over them and all elements of the relevant conduct.

A related practice is incommunicado detention, concealment of whereabouts and uncertainty regarding civilians' fate. The family of a missing man from

Orlianske has had no verified information since August 2025; the daughter of a pensioner from Hrakove has had none since June 2022; and the family of a man from the Izium area received fragmentary, at times contradictory information about Russian facilities without knowing his current place of detention. In the case of a woman held at 'Izoliatsiia', relatives lacked reliable information for almost two years, despite the involvement of a lawyer who knew her whereabouts. Incommunicado detention, understood as detention without effective contact with the outside world, may continue even where a person's whereabouts are subsequently established. Enforced disappearance, as a legal category, requires additional examination of any concealment of fate or whereabouts or refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty (testimonies Nos. 2, 12, 16 and 35).

Torture and ill-treatment take specific physical and psychological forms in the testimonies. A man from Orlianske was kicked, punched and struck with a stool during interrogation in Dniprorudne; another former law-enforcement officer reported being beaten with rifle butts after arrest. At the Kupiansk temporary detention facility, interrogators simulated sawing off a respondent's limb with a hacksaw, staged a mock execution, beat him and made threats. In Donetsk, witnesses describe the use of electric shocks, including to the ears and genitals, beatings, coerced confessions and threats against relatives. In Dymer, a civilian was struck on the legs with a baseball bat, a firearm and a rifle butt. Reports from Russian institutions refer to beatings on arrival, compulsory standing from morning until lights-out, punishment for minor breaches of rules and the use of special units to intimidate detainees (testimonies Nos. 4, 8, 31, 32, 34, 36 and 39).

Within the principal group, at least 15 of the 30 testimonies contain sufficiently specific accounts of direct physical violence against the principal victim. This minimum figure includes victims' own reports and detailed descriptions provided by relatives or released fellow detainees. It does not cover all instances of psychological coercion, inhuman conditions or threats, nor does it imply that torture did not occur in the other 15 cases. In particular, where individuals have disappeared or been imprisoned for long periods without contact with the outside world, sources often have no access to information about the treatment they received.

Ill-treatment was not confined to formal interrogations. A man released from a penal colony in Mordovia describes an arrival procedure in which newly admitted detainees were stripped, beaten, forced to run naked in extremely low temperatures and then made to stand throughout the day; following the beatings, they could barely reach their cells. Another released civilian who had been imprisoned in Tula Oblast reports a 'gauntlet' formed by officers, systematic beatings when detainees were taken for exercise, collective punishments and painful prolonged standing. In the Donskoy case, the witness also describes cumulative effects, including substantial weight loss, swelling of the lower limbs, vascular disorders and urological problems following blows to the groin. Considered together, these accounts indicate the need to examine not only individual acts of violence but also the prolonged detention regime as a

possible form of torture or inhuman treatment (testimonies Nos. 36 and 39). Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) constitutes a distinct and important aspect of the September testimonies. A woman detained in Kyiv Oblast in March 2022 expressly describes threats of sexual violence, including gang rape. A former civilian detainee from Donetsk reports electric shocks to the genitals. Other men describe threats of rape or forcible penetration with an object, orders to undress in humiliating circumstances, sexualised intimidation and blows to the groin (testimonies Nos. 19, 31, 33, 34 and 39).

In the testimony of a man detained in Donetsk in 2017, sexualised intimidation was accompanied by electric shocks, coercion to make a video statement and a simulated killing. A civilian released from Borisoglebsk reports threats of sexual violence during degrading searches and forced nudity. A man held in Donskoy describes threats to fill his anus with expanding construction foam and to cut off his genitals, as well as blows to the groin after which he required a urological examination. Such conduct may constitute not only sexual violence but also torture. At the same time, in a former prisoner of war's account of severe sexualised violence at a penal colony, the status of the direct victims of the particular incident is not always clear; those incidents have therefore not been counted as confirmed cases of CRSV against civilians without further identification (testimonies Nos. 28, 33, 34 and 39).

Forced labour for military purposes is especially clearly documented. In the shared Zaporizhzhia incident, civilian men under armed guard were compelled to dig trenches and construct other fortifications at Russian positions. Work could continue from early morning until late evening, or almost until the following morning, without days off and under threat of armed violence. Women in the group were made to cook, wash clothes and clean, while some were taken to work in premises occupied by military personnel. Witnesses also report that two men were forced to clear mines ahead of machinery, exposing them to an obvious risk of death (testimonies Nos. 10 and 38).

From a legal perspective, compelling protected civilians to work at military installations, including directly at military positions, requires examination as a possible violation of the prohibition on forcing protected persons to serve in, or undertake work forming part of, military operations. Hazardous mine clearance also warrants assessment of the deliberate exposure of individuals to danger to life. The women's penal colony in Snizhne presents a different form of forced labour: long hours in a sewing workshop six days a week, for extremely low remuneration and under compulsory prison discipline. The legal assessment must distinguish the unlawfulness of the imprisonment itself, the coercive conditions under which work was performed and the nature of the goods produced, without treating every form of prison labour as directly connected with hostilities (testimony No. 35).

Forced transfers have both internal and cross-border dimensions. At least 11 principal civilians were moved to the Russian Federation as part of transfers between places of detention following their capture, including via Belarus,

Belgorod Oblast, Kursk, Bryansk Oblast, Tula Oblast and Mordovia. Other victims were moved between towns and villages in occupied Ukrainian territory, including temporarily occupied Crimea. Removing civilians from occupied territory without proper legal grounds, safeguards or a free choice may amount to the war crime of deportation; movements within occupied territory may constitute unlawful transfer or another form of arbitrary detention, depending on the circumstances.

In two cases involving women in 2026, cross-border deprivation of liberty must be carefully distinguished from deportation. One woman left occupied Zaporizhzhia Oblast via Novoazovsk, was singled out during filtration and remained under Russian control in Taganrog for more than a month. Another, after being released from forced labour in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, set out independently through Russian territory but was detained again at a checkpoint and sentenced by a Russian court to 14 days' administrative detention. In both cases, entering Russian territory formed part of an attempt to leave occupied territory; it would therefore be inaccurate to describe these women as having been deported from Ukraine by Russian authorities during their earlier captivity. Their actual deprivation of liberty on Russian territory and the use of filtration or administrative procedures nevertheless require legal assessment (testimonies Nos. 22 and 38).

Another category of documented violations comprises threats against relatives, psychological coercion and the compulsion to make public statements. In several cases, civilians were forced to record videos containing pro-Russian claims, admit guilt, criticise Ukraine or declare that they had no complaints against Russian authorities. Threats were directed at children, wives, sons and relatives serving in the military. Such statements cannot be regarded as voluntary confessions or impartial accounts of detention conditions merely because of the formal appearance of the video recordings (testimonies Nos. 10, 19, 33, 34, 36, 38 and 39).

Deaths and severe consequences for civilians' lives require separate legal consideration. One eyewitness reports the death of a civilian man who had been severely beaten while held in an improvised cell at Hostomel airfield; his identity remains unknown. Another witness describes her partner, who was captured with her in Kyiv Oblast and later found dead. A former prisoner of war relays information about the death of an older civilian fellow detainee in Mordovia but does not know the precise circumstances. Several other cases involve deaths after release. Classification as wilful killing, torture resulting in death, or death caused by the withholding of assistance would require further information about timing, injuries, medical causes and the conduct of those responsible (testimonies Nos. 13, 19, 37 and 39).

The use of criminal and administrative prosecution represents a particular form of formalising an existing deprivation of liberty. Occupation and Russian authorities pursued cases involving 'high treason', 'espionage', 'terrorism' or alleged breaches of border regulations following detentions carried out without

fundamental procedural safeguards.

In the context of crimes against humanity, the categories set out in Article 7 of the Rome Statute — imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty, torture, sexual violence, persecution and enforced disappearance — may warrant examination. Similarities in methods of detention, transfer and ill-treatment across different facilities may be relevant to assessing a wider attack directed against a civilian population. However, without additional contextual evidence, the 39 testimonies cannot in themselves conclusively establish all elements of a widespread or systematic attack, a State or organisational policy, or an individual perpetrator's knowledge of the relevant context.

5. TRANSFER ROUTES

Civilian transfer routes are among the most comprehensively documented aspects of the September testimonies. They illustrate how an initial detention at home, on the road or at a checkpoint could lead to confinement in a police basement, local commandant's office, temporary detention facility, remand prison or penal colony, and subsequently to transfers lasting years between different regions of the Russian Federation. In each case, the significant factors include not only the destinations but also the duration of each stage, the function of transit facilities, opportunities to contact relatives and the distinction between a substantiated stage and an unverified supposition.

The route of the female doctor from Liubymivka begins with her capture at home in Zaporizhzhia Oblast in October 2024. The first established destination was Melitopol, followed by Donetsk and subsequently Simferopol in temporarily occupied Crimea. The victim does not have precise information about the dates or reasons for transfers between remand prisons. In Donetsk, she reported overcrowding in the women's cell and a lack of outdoor exercise; she remained in Simferopol after her conviction while a decision was pending on her further transfer to a penal colony. Transfers to judicial authorities also occurred in 2026. A journey to Moscow for an appeal is mentioned as part of the judicial procedure, but the testimony does not establish that she was separately held for a prolonged period in a Moscow remand prison. The sequence Liubymivka–Melitopol–Donetsk–Simferopol is therefore the minimum reliably established route (testimony No. 1).

Following her detention on 11 April 2025, the civilian telegraph operator from Melitopol was taken to Velyka Bilozerka in Vasylivka Raion. According to her son, she was held there in the local temporary detention facility and premises associated with the commandant's office. She was periodically taken back to Melitopol for court hearings concerning extensions of her detention and then returned to the previous facility. Around June–July 2026, the main transfer took place, involving Velyka Bilozerka and Donetsk (Remand Prison No. 1). Another civilian woman had been detained alongside her at the previous location and was also taken to Donetsk, although placed in a different cell (testimony No. 3).

The transfer route of another woman from Berdiansk began with her capture on 4 June 2022. She was taken to Velyka Bilozerka and repeatedly transported from there to Melitopol for procedural steps, before being moved to Donetsk Remand Prison No. 1, where she had been held since late 2022. Information about subsequent stages following her conviction in 2026 remains incomplete. Her daughter's testimony mentions other women subjected to similar transfers but does not establish an identical individual route for each of them. Another older woman from Berdiansk, detained in March 2026, was transferred via Melitopol and Donetsk; reports of brief returns for hearings and restricted correspondence further illustrate the use of the same main detention facilities in different cases (testimonies Nos. 7 and 9).

In the case of the former ZNPP employee, the first identifiable stage was her detention in an occupied part of Zaporizhzhia Oblast in July 2026. She was taken to Melitopol and subsequently, according to an acquaintance, moved between places of detention in Mykhailivka and Vesele. At certain points, she was returned to Melitopol for procedural steps. Information about her formal registration in institutions was inconsistent during this period: relatives were told of transfers while particular facilities did not confirm that she was being held there. She was transferred to Donetsk at approximately 22 September 2026 (testimony No. 6).

The route of one man from Orlianske was short but comprised two separate episodes. On 27 February 2022, he and another man were captured on a village road, held in an armoured vehicle and taken to a field near the village of Vidrodzhennia, after which both escaped and returned home. During his second detention in August 2022, the man was taken from his home to the Dniprorudne police station, where he spent approximately four days. Following release, he left for Ukrainian government-controlled territory. The subsequent disappearance of the other participant in the initial incident in August 2025 prevents reconstruction of a new transfer route for him: the witness knows only that occupation representatives arrived and contact was lost (testimonies Nos. 2 and 4).

The case of a former police officer from Pryazovske concerns events in March 2022. Following his detention alongside other members of the local community, he was taken to an improvised detention site at a military airfield near Melitopol. According to his mother, he was beaten and interrogated there before being released after a short period. There is no information indicating a subsequent transfer to a Russian penitentiary institution (testimony No. 8).

The most thoroughly reconstructed local forced-labour route concerns a group from Vasylivka Raion. A civilian man detained in Skelky on 1 November 2022 was held at Dniprorudne police station until 13 January 2023. On 14 January, he and four other civilians, including one woman, were taken to the outskirts of Vasylivka, where a 'deportation order' was read out in front of a camera and they were instructed to walk towards Zaporizhzhia. Once the group had walked far enough for the footage to be recorded, they were seized again and taken to a

private house near Verkhnia Krynytsia. They were later moved to a holiday-home settlement near Kamianske. At both locations, the men dug military positions while the women performed domestic work under guard. Around mid-March, the group was taken to Melitopol, accommodated at a sports facility, interrogated and ultimately released (testimonies Nos. 10 and 38).

The paramedic in the same group provides details of her own route: capture at home on 11 January 2023; detention in a cell at the local holding facility until approximately 17 January; transfer with others to Verkhnia Krynytsia; guarded accommodation in a holiday cottage from 8 February; and transfer via Melitopol and release between 14 and 16 March. After her release, she remained in occupied territory. In April 2026, she attempted to leave via Mariupol and a Russian border crossing in the town of Donetsk in Rostov Oblast, Russia. She was detained again there, brought before a court the following day and transferred to an administrative detention facility in the settlement of Tarasovsky for approximately two weeks. After her release, she travelled independently back to Ukraine via Rostov, Minsk and Brest (testimony No. 38).

The route of a civilian from Kherson, detained on 6 August 2022, began in premises on Teploenerhetykiv Street, which the respondent associates with ‘Sklotara’. This was followed by a brief period in the Oleshky area and transfer to Novotroitske in Henichesk Raion. He was released towards the end of December 2022, after being forced to sign unidentified documents and having his identity papers taken away (testimony No. 13).

One of the earliest cross-border routes involves a civilian crew member of the vessel ‘Sapfir’. After its seizure near Snake Island on 26 February 2022, he was held aboard under Russian military control until 9 March. On 10 March, the civilians were taken to Sevastopol, where they were accommodated with Ukrainian prisoners of war for approximately a day. Some were subsequently transferred to a camp in Shebekino, Belgorod Oblast, Russia, and then to Remand Prison No. 2 in Stary Oskol. On 23 March 2022, before an exchange, the civilian was moved to Kursk Remand Prison, flown by military aircraft to an airfield near Sevastopol in Crimea and then transported to Zaporizhzhia. The exchange took place on 24 March, and he returned home the following day (testimony No. 5).

The route of a man captured in Bucha on 22 March 2022 passed through a brief period of local detention, Belarus, Bryansk Oblast in Russia and the Novozybkov remand prison. According to his partner’s testimony, he spent more than a year there before being transferred to Penal Colony No. 1 in Donskoy, Tula Oblast. According to the latest available information, he remained there in 2026. The family learned of intermediate stages after Novozybkov from released fellow detainees; the precise date of each transfer requires separate verification (testimony No. 11).

A man detained in Mykolaivka, Kyiv Oblast, in March 2022 while helping other civilians was held with a group in improvised premises at the ‘Viknaland’ enterprise in Dymer and subsequently in an industrial building in Hostomel. He was then

transferred through Belarus to Novozybkov, where he remained for a prolonged period. His wife later received reports that he was being held in a Russian penal colony in Donskoy, Tula Oblast. The testimony also describes the group being separated: the man's brother was released considerably earlier, while others remained in different Russian facilities (testimony No. 14).

The route of another man from Dymer, captured on 9 March 2022, included a local detention site at an enterprise, Hostomel, Belarus, the Novozybkov remand prison and subsequent transfer deeper into the Russian Federation. According to information available to his wife, he was held in Penal Colony No. 7 in the settlement of Pakino, Vladimir Oblast, and later at an unidentified facility in the settlement of Udarny, Republic of Mordovia (testimony No. 27).

According to his family, a civilian mechanic who disappeared near Klavdiievo-Tarasove in March 2022 was transferred via Belarus to the Novozybkov remand prison. He remained there for approximately two years before reports emerged of his transfer to Penal Colony No. 1 in Donskoy (testimony No. 17).

A particularly detailed route is described by the engineer captured in Dymer, Kyiv Oblast, on 8 March 2022. From 8 to 10 March he was held in a former compressor room at a local enterprise; from 10 to 16 March, in refrigeration-type premises at Antonov Airport in Hostomel. On 16 March the group was taken to Naroulia, Belarus, where they were held for approximately two days. On 18 March they were transferred to the Novozybkov remand prison in Bryansk Oblast, Russia, where the man remained until 13 May 2023. On that date, he was taken to Penal Colony No. 1 in Donskoy, Tula Oblast, and held there until 26 June 2026. After being removed from the colony, subjected to an additional video recording and transported via an airfield, he was returned to Ukraine on 27 June 2026. The case also documents the separation of some group members while still in Dymer and Hostomel; the witness's own route must therefore not be attributed to every person he names (testimony No. 39).

An elderly pensioner from Kharkiv Oblast, captured near Kunie on 28 April 2022, was initially under Russian military control in the settlement of Oleksiivka in Belgorod Oblast, Russia. Through reports from other individuals, his family later learned that he might have been held at Remand Prison No. 3 in Arzamas, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast. Later information about his location and health was fragmentary, and his current fate has not been established due to the absence of reliable confirmation. Another man detained in Kharkiv Oblast at a checkpoint near Tavilzhanka in August 2022 was reportedly held, according to his mother, at a remand prison in Galich, Kostroma Oblast, Russia; information about intermediate destinations and his subsequent whereabouts remains incomplete (testimonies Nos. 12, 16 and 18).

A particularly lengthy route is described by the civilian activist from Kupiansk: 18 May–14 June 2022 at the Kupiansk temporary detention facility; approximately 14–21 June at a tent camp near Shebekino, Belgorod Oblast, Russia; from the second half of June until 30 September 2022 at Remand Prison No. 2 in Stary

Oskol; from 1 October 2022 to 9 February 2023 at an unidentified facility in Kashin, Tver Oblast; and, following a brief transfer on 10 February 2023, at Penal Colony No. 10 in Mordovia, where he remained until 1 October 2025. He was flown to Homel, Belarus, for his return and was released on 2 October 2025. Throughout this route he describes different ‘reception’ regimes, forced nudity, cells in ordinary and disciplinary blocks, changing groups of fellow detainees and persistent health problems (testimony No. 36).

A man detained during filtration near Manhush because of his previous ATO service was initially held at Olenivka Penal Colony in occupied Donetsk Oblast, then at the Donetsk remand prison, in Horlivka and in the Torez area. The material refers to a court decision dismissing or not substantiating the charge, yet his deprivation of liberty continued. He remained in captivity at the time of documentation (testimony No. 15).

Another former contract serviceman, who was a civilian at the time of detention, reconstructs an especially complex sequence of transfers: Manhush and the local police station in mid-April 2022; garage-type filtration premises in Dokuchaievsk until late April; premises of occupation security bodies and a temporary detention facility in Donetsk in late April and early May; Olenivka Penal Colony from May 2022 until January 2023; Penal Colony No. 27 in Horlivka from January 2023; Penal Colony No. 33 in Kirovske from June 2024; and, from April 2025, a facility in Novosibirsk, Russia, from which he was subsequently released. The respondent describes differing degrees of overcrowding, violence and forced-labour regimes at each stage (testimony No. 28).

The lengthy routes of civilians captured in Donetsk before 2022 involved a different institutional structure. A demobilised serviceman detained in April 2018 was held in premises of the so-called ‘UBOP’, the Donetsk temporary detention facility, the Donetsk remand prison and a penal colony in Makiivka, where he served an unlawful sentence until August 2025. Another man, detained in September 2018 with members of his family, reports initial confinement in the premises of the so-called ‘UBOP’, followed by a temporary detention facility, the Donetsk remand prison, penal colonies in Makiivka and periods of transfer to the medical facility attached to Penal Colony No. 124 (testimonies Nos. 31 and 32).

The route of a woman detained in Donetsk on 6 May 2019 can be reconstructed with exceptional chronological precision. On the same day, she was taken from the building of the so-called ‘MGB’ to the unofficial detention site ‘Izoliatsiia’, where she remained until 13 March 2021. After an unsuccessful attempt to admit her to the Donetsk remand prison over a weekend, she spent several days in a local temporary detention facility; she was admitted to the remand prison on 15 March 2021. In late November 2021, she was transferred to the women’s penal colony in Snizhne. She was referred to a prison hospital on several occasions because of deteriorating health, but the colony remained her main place of detention. She was released and transferred to Ukraine on 13–14 August 2025. Her total period of deprivation of liberty exceeded six years. The two contrasting stages of this route — the unofficial ‘Izoliatsiia’ facility and the formal women’s penal colony in

Donetsk Oblast — make it possible to compare detention conditions and family contact across different settings (testimony No. 35).

The route of the civilian farmer from Zaporizhzhia Oblast, beginning on 30 March 2022, is among the most precisely documented because of the detailed account and overlaps with other witnesses' information. After capture near Novofylypivka, he was taken to a grain storage building in the village of Nove and then to Melitopol airfield. Following a further movement through the Tokmak area, he was taken to guardhouse premises in Donetsk. In early April he was transferred to Olenivka Penal Colony, where he remained until late September 2022. The subsequent stages involved transit through Taganrog and Remand Prison No. 2 in Borisoglebsk, where he was held from October 2022 until 27 June 2026. The testimony identifies civilian cellmates independently mentioned by other respondents, including two men from Melitopol (testimonies Nos. 33, 24 and 28).

Testimonies from released prisoners of war help reconstruct certain civilian transfer routes. One former prisoner of war describes two civilian men from Kharkiv Oblast who passed through a temporary camp near Maslovka in Belgorod Oblast, Stary Oskol and Russian facilities in the Arzamas area (testimonies Nos. 20 and 21). In Mordovia, another former prisoner of war met several civilians whose previous routes differed. One demobilised man from Mariupol described capture during filtration and successive transfers through Berdiansk, Sevastopol or another location in Crimea, Taganrog, Kursk and Penal Colony No. 10 in the settlement of Udarny. A civilian business owner from Tokmak described Olenivka, Kursk, Tula and Mordovia, while others arrived at the colony from different regions without being able to identify every transit point. Another former prisoner of war reported a man with a disability from Tokmak who had been transferred via Melitopol, Tokmak, Mariupol, Olenivka and Kursk; he was taken from Mordovia in an unknown direction in approximately September 2023 because of tuberculosis (testimonies Nos. 26 and 37).

Other witnesses report Ukrainian civilians being held in penal colonies and remand prisons in Borisoglebsk, Donskoy, Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, Kizel and Novozybkov. One respondent describes a group of construction workers from Kyiv Oblast who, after being detained in March 2022, were held in Belarus, Kursk Oblast in Russia, Sevastopol, Kamensk-Shakhtinsky and Kizel in Perm Krai, Russia. Another mentions civilian men moved from Shebekino and Stary Oskol to Novozybkov and then to a penal colony in Donskoy (testimonies Nos. 23, 24, 25, 29 and 30).

In summary, four types of transfer can be distinguished: a short local route to a police station or commandant's premises; a regional route within occupied Ukrainian territory; a cross-border route via Belarus or directly into Russia, involving multiple remand prisons and colonies; and renewed capture during a purported 'deportation' or filtration procedure. The greatest evidential value lies not in reconstructing an abstract model but in identifying particular dates, places, transfers, fellow detainees and changes in detention regime. This information

helps verify an individual's fate, identify those responsible during particular stages of transfer and determine possible avenues for tracing individuals who remain detained or missing.

6. CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

Analysis of the September testimonies reveals considerable variation in the conditions under which Russian military personnel and representatives of occupation structures held civilians. The nature and severity of violations depended principally on the type of detention site, length of confinement, regime in force and access to external assistance. Despite these differences, recurring practices emerge: overcrowding, inadequate food, restricted access to drinking water and sanitation, failure to provide appropriate medical care, systematic physical and psychological violence, and prolonged isolation from the outside world. In many cases, poor material conditions were accompanied by deliberate humiliating practices and restrictions extending well beyond an ordinary custodial regime.

One of the most widespread problems was the confinement of civilians in overcrowded rooms, often wholly unsuitable for prolonged human occupation. This is particularly apparent from accounts of temporary detention sites established in police stations, industrial buildings and other civilian premises. Two respondents who were held at different times in the Dniprorudne police station describe excessive numbers of detainees in small cells. One describes a room measuring approximately 4.5 m² in which 15 people were held simultaneously, while the other recalls up to 30 detainees accommodated across two cells in the station. Despite differences in timing and individual circumstances, both accounts point to persistent overcrowding, accompanied by inadequate food, restricted access to water and the inability to use sanitary facilities independently (testimonies Nos. 4 and 10).

Similar violations were recorded at detention sites in Kyiv Oblast during the first weeks of the full-scale invasion. A civilian engineer, for example, describes confinement in a former compressor room without windows or lighting, where more than ten people were held in an area of approximately 16 square metres. He was later placed in another small room at Antonov Airport, where, according to his calculation, 26 detainees, including 22 civilians, were held together on the final night. Food was severely restricted, and canisters inside the cell were used for toilet purposes. A particularly grave incident in this testimony is the respondent's discovery of the body of another detainee who had previously been severely beaten. Other testimonies from Kyiv Oblast also describe the use of basements, industrial premises and open-air locations for forced confinement, accompanied by threats, beatings and restricted access to basic necessities. These conditions, however, relate to particular places and periods of detention and cannot automatically be generalised to every part of the relevant facilities (testimonies Nos. 14, 19 and 39).

Overcrowding, inadequate food and poor sanitation were characteristic not

only of unofficial detention sites but also of penitentiary institutions. According to relatives, more than ten women could be held in a single cell at the Donetsk remand prison, with some forced to share a bed because of insufficient sleeping accommodation. Further problems included the absence of regular outdoor exercise, poor food and inadequate attention to the needs of older or seriously ill women. In one documented case, a civilian doctor with several chronic illnesses herself effectively cared for another older detainee, helping with hygiene and obtaining essential items. According to a relative, the doctor did not receive adequate medical examinations or treatment and lost considerable weight during detention. Similar reports of deteriorating health and inadequate medical care are contained in testimonies concerning other women unlawfully deprived of liberty in occupied Zaporizhzhia Oblast (testimonies Nos. 1 and 9).

A further feature of the documented conditions was the use of restrictions on everyday conduct as a means of physical exhaustion, psychological pressure and humiliation. In several Russian remand prisons and penal colonies, detainees were forced to stand for most of the day, prohibited from sitting or lying down without express permission, restricted in their use of the toilet and subjected to strict control over even minor movements. Breaches of these rules could result in beatings or other punishments. A civilian who was held in Novozybkov and Donskoy describes a regime under which detainees could be forced to stand from 06:00 to 22:00, with sitting generally permitted only during meals. Similar practices are reported by another released civilian held in Stary Oskol, Kashin and Penal Colony No. 10 in Mordovia. In his case, prolonged forced standing was accompanied by beatings, exposure to cold while naked and strict enforcement of rules imposed by the administration (testimonies Nos. 36 and 39).

Particularly severe treatment was frequently applied when detainees arrived at a new facility, including during the so-called ‘reception’ procedure. According to the testimonies, this could involve group beatings, forced nudity, threats, the use of service dogs and degrading searches. Such practices are described at various detention sites, including Stary Oskol, Kashin, Mordovia and other Russian institutions. Some respondents notably considered the subsequent material conditions in certain remand prisons comparatively better than at previous facilities, particularly in relation to food or access to exercise. Such differences, however, do not alter the assessment of violence inflicted on arrival; they instead demonstrate variation between detention regimes rather than the absence of violations at those institutions (testimonies Nos. 28, 33, 36 and 39).

Ideological coercion was another recurring feature and formed part of the daily regime at several detention sites. Witnesses report compulsory singing of the Russian national anthem or other songs, coercion to make political and propaganda statements, and punishment for refusing to comply. These practices are described, in particular, in Novozybkov and Donskoy, as well as at the former industrial complex ‘Izoliatsiia’ in Donetsk. In the latter case, a woman describes strict control over the daily routine, limits on outdoor exercise, compulsory singing of the anthem of the occupation entity and

prolonged confinement in premises without adequate sanitation. During the initial period, her diet consisted mainly of small portions of porridge and leftover food from the guards, and she lost approximately ten kilograms. These circumstances illustrate how inadequate material conditions could be compounded by deliberate psychological pressure and practices designed to humiliate detainees (testimonies Nos. 35 and 39).

The forced labour of civilians at military positions in Zaporizhzhia Oblast represents a distinct model of detention. Unlike conventional custodial institutions, those concerned could be housed in private homes or holiday cottages and enjoy some freedom of movement within a restricted area. However, the effective control exercised by Russian servicemen, together with checkpoints, minefields and the threat of violence, deprived them of any real opportunity to leave safely. During winter, detainees faced shortages of heating, blankets, drinking water, food and medicines. They had to insulate the premises themselves, collect rainwater and melt snow. These conditions were combined with strenuous physical labour, principally digging trenches and constructing defensive positions. One testimony also describes civilians being compelled to clear mines without appropriate protective equipment, exposing them to extreme danger. The incidents demonstrate a particular form of exploitation in which deprivation of liberty, inadequate living conditions and forced labour were interconnected aspects of the treatment of civilians (testimonies Nos. 10 and 38).

Forced labour is also mentioned in accounts concerning penal colonies, although its nature and organisation differed substantially from the use of civilians at military positions. A former detainee at the women's colony in Snizhne describes prolonged sewing work that could continue from morning until late evening, six days a week, for extremely low pay. Living conditions were also characterised by overcrowding, lack of privacy, degrading searches and limited access to essential assistance. The witness notes that, following a change in the administrative management of the institution, some material conditions, particularly food, gradually improved. This case further demonstrates the importance of assessing detention conditions over time, taking account not only of the particular institution but also of the period of confinement and changes to the regime in force (testimony No. 35).

Medical provision for unlawfully detained civilians is a matter of particular concern. The September testimonies contain numerous reports of delayed or absent examinations, failure to provide essential medication, merely formal medical assessments and deterioration in health caused by prolonged confinement in inadequate conditions. Reported problems include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, the consequences of injuries, gastrointestinal disorders, dental and eye conditions, and infectious diseases, including suspected tuberculosis. Some witnesses describe substantial weight loss, swelling of the limbs, circulatory problems and other consequences of prolonged forced standing, beatings and inadequate food. One released civilian, for example, reports that his weight fell from approximately 80 to 52 kilograms over a particular period of

detention. In other cases, individuals displaying severe symptoms were forced to continue physical labour, placing their health and lives at further risk. Taken together, these circumstances indicate not only inadequate medical provision but also instances in which evident medical needs were effectively disregarded (testimonies Nos. 1, 9, 17, 18, 35, 36, 38 and 39).

Restrictions on contact with the outside world constituted another significant aspect of detention conditions. In many cases, relatives lacked reliable information about detainees' whereabouts and health for prolonged periods. Even once a particular institution had been identified, communication remained unpredictable: correspondence was censored or delayed, visits were exceptionally rare, and the delivery of food parcels and medicines depended on administrative decisions. Transfers from local institutions in occupied territory to Donetsk Remand Prison No. 1 and other places of detention are particularly illustrative. Such transfers frequently reduced access to information and complicated arrangements for assistance, even where relatives had previously been able to maintain some contact. In certain cases, the provision of basic necessities depended on local intermediaries or other informal support channels (testimonies Nos. 1, 3 and 6).

The formal possibility of correspondence, visits or legal representation did not, in itself, establish that detainees had effective contact with the outside world or access to legal assistance. Some respondents describe appointed lawyers who, according to the information available, did not take adequate steps to protect victims' interests, did not keep relatives regularly informed or lacked actual access to detainees. Any assessment must therefore distinguish the formal existence of procedures from the practical ability to use them. This is particularly important in cases of prolonged detention without reliable confirmation of whereabouts, where restrictions on communication also obstruct medical assistance, deliveries of essential items and effective challenges to the deprivation of liberty (testimonies Nos. 1, 3, 6, 7, 9 and 35).

Overall, the September testimonies demonstrate that inadequate conditions of civilian detention were multifaceted and extended far beyond isolated shortcomings in basic accommodation. Overcrowding, insufficient food, poor sanitation and lack of proper medical care were frequently combined with physical violence, forced labour, psychological pressure and prolonged isolation. Their cumulative effects considerably increased the severity of the victims' experiences and caused long-term consequences for physical and mental health. Depending on the particular circumstances, intensity, duration, consequences and purpose of the treatment, such practices may show indications of inhuman or degrading treatment and, in certain cases, torture. Each incident nevertheless requires an individual legal assessment of the circumstances and the combined measures imposed on the victim. Even a relative improvement in some material conditions does not erase the effects of earlier violations or alter the legal assessment of the underlying unlawful deprivation of liberty.

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

Analysis of the September testimonies reveals several interconnected models for the legal formalisation of civilians' unlawful deprivation of liberty. On the one hand, cases have been documented in which individuals were held for years without formal charges, a trial or any accessible mechanism for reviewing the lawfulness of their detention. On the other, a practice emerges of progressively formalising initially unlawful arrests through the initiation of criminal proceedings, repeated extensions of pre-trial detention and convictions under the legislation of the Russian Federation or occupation entities. Some testimonies also illustrate the use of administrative procedures as a possible additional means of controlling and pressuring civilians. Despite their differences, these models raise significant concerns about effective procedural safeguards, independent judicial oversight and any genuine opportunity to challenge the lawfulness of deprivation of liberty.

From the perspective of international humanitarian law, the judicial guarantees afforded to protected civilians in occupied territory are particularly important, including those contained in Articles 71–75 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. These provisions establish requirements concerning notification of charges, the conduct of the defence, judicial proceedings and appeals against decisions. Under international criminal law, wilfully depriving a protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial may, where the necessary elements are present, constitute a war crime under Article 8(2)(a)(vi) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, a civilian's conviction or the severity of the sentence is insufficient, by itself, to establish such a violation. What matters is the legal basis for the exercise of jurisdiction, the nature of the charges, compliance of the procedure with international standards and the actual protection of the accused's rights.

One of the clearest trends is the use of criminal prosecution to punish civilians for conduct associated with supporting Ukraine, maintaining a pro-Ukrainian position or refusing to cooperate with occupation structures. Particularly illustrative are cases involving women in Zaporizhzhia Oblast in which information extracted from mobile telephones, including evidence of transfers of funds to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine, became a basis for detention and subsequent prosecution. In April 2026, for example, an older female doctor from Liubymivka was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment under Article 275 of the Russian Criminal Code ('high treason'). According to a relative, the judicial proceedings lasted approximately a year, and a subsequent appeal in Moscow did not result in a change to the sentence. Although a court-appointed lawyer formally participated, the family expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the defence provided. The fact that the woman obtained a Russian passport under occupation because she needed a means of subsistence is also legally significant. Obtaining such a document cannot, in itself, be considered a sufficient basis for concluding that the application of Russian criminal law, including the provisions on high treason, was lawful without properly assessing her legal status and the circumstances in which citizenship was acquired (testimony No. 1).

Similar indications of persecution arise in the case of another woman from Berdiansk who, according to relatives, was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment on a charge connected with supporting Ukraine. In this case, particular attention should be paid to how digital evidence was obtained and used, as well as to verification of the chronology of detention and financial transactions, since the testimony contains certain inconsistencies in the relevant dates. These discrepancies should be clarified through examination of procedural documents rather than resolved by assumption. Other cases from Zaporizhzhia Oblast, including those involving an older woman from Berdiansk and a former ZNPP employee, show the use of repeated interrogations, extensions of detention and restrictions on relatives' access to information about proceedings. Considered together, these cases highlight the need to assess separately the occupation authorities' application of criminal law to prosecute civilians for acts connected with their civic position or support for Ukraine (testimonies Nos. 6, 7 and 9).

Another characteristic model is the gradual transition from de facto deprivation of liberty to formalised criminal proceedings. In such cases, the initial detention occurred without adequate notification of legal grounds, after which detention could be formalised through administrative procedures or judicial orders extending custody. For example, the son of a civilian woman detained in Melitopol reports that she was initially held in Velyka Bilozerka under what he understood to be an administrative procedure. She was subsequently taken periodically to Melitopol for court hearings at which her detention was extended, before being transferred to Donetsk Remand Prison No. 1 against the background of possible preparations for criminal proceedings. The family did not have sufficient information about the precise charges, and the formal appointment of a lawyer did not provide effective access to procedural information. This case illustrates that, even where individual judicial orders exist, prolonged deprivation of liberty may remain effectively beyond the control of the victim and her relatives. The absence of a complete set of procedural documents currently prevents any definitive determination of the nature and present stage of the proceedings (testimony No. 3).

A separate group comprises cases from Donetsk Oblast in which criminal prosecutions resulted in lengthy prison sentences. One involves a demobilised serviceman detained in 2018 and sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment on charges that included terrorist activity. Another man, detained in September 2018 with members of his family, reports a 17-year sentence, violence used to obtain a confession and subsequent changes to the judicial decision which he associates with pressure. A civilian woman employed at an enterprise in Donetsk was sentenced in April 2021 to ten years' imprisonment after prolonged detention at 'Izoliatsiia'. Her appeal did not lead to any change in the sentence. These cases combine prolonged deprivation of liberty, the possible use of evidence obtained under coercion and concerns about the effective exercise of defence rights. The victims' status at the time of detention requires particular attention: previous military service does not, in itself, mean that an individual retained the status of a serviceman or lost the protection afforded to civilians (testimonies Nos. 31, 32 and 35).

Continued detention following a judicial decision that, according to the information available, did not provide grounds for further imprisonment raises a distinct issue. The wife of a civilian man from Mariupol, detained after filtration because of his previous military service, reports that a court did not uphold the charge against him in 2022. Nevertheless, he was not released and continued to be held in institutions in occupied Donetsk Oblast. Since the exact content of the relevant judicial decision cannot be established from the testimony, it would be premature to draw conclusions about its procedural form or legal consequences (testimony No. 15).

Unlike the cases of formalised criminal prosecution described above, a substantial proportion of the September testimonies concern the prolonged detention of civilians without any known charge, trial or sentence. This model is particularly apparent in cases involving people who, after being detained in occupied territory, were transferred to Russian remand prisons and penal colonies and held alongside prisoners of war. Relatives of civilians from Bucha and Dymer, for example, describe detention lasting several years without reliable information about any criminal proceedings or court decisions. Other released civilians describe interrogations, polygraph examinations, videotaped confessions and internal procedures undertaken by Russian security structures without accessible judicial supervision. One victim held in Stary Oskol, Kashin and Mordovia does not report any judicial proceedings that could have provided a legal basis for his imprisonment over several years. Another released civilian states that certain documents may have described him as a ‘witness’, although he was in fact detained without any conviction being pronounced (testimonies Nos. 11, 17, 27, 33, 36 and 39).

These cases point to a fundamental distinction between investigative or operational measures and the existence of a lawful procedure for depriving a person of liberty. Interrogations, polygraph tests, the taking of statements or the recording of confessions cannot, in themselves, replace a proper legal basis for detention and an effective procedure for reviewing its lawfulness. Of particular significance is the fact that, in some cases, civilians remained detained for years without being able to obtain information about their procedural status, examine the material supporting the charges or secure independent review of the grounds for their detention. Such practices created conditions for deprivation of liberty of effectively indeterminate duration and increased victims’ vulnerability to other violations, including torture, ill-treatment and concealment of their whereabouts.

The use of administrative procedures in the persecution of civilians also requires particular attention. An illustrative account is provided by a paramedic from Zaporizhzhia Oblast who was detained in 2026 while leaving occupied territory through a Russian checkpoint. She was accused of a public-order offence, allegedly for using offensive language towards border guards. According to her account, the court considered imposing either a fine or administrative detention, but ultimately ordered 14 days’ detention, citing the absence of verified information about her employment and income. She maintains that

she was able to pay a fine. The preceding questioning is particularly relevant: representatives of Russian structures enquired about her sons' military service and financial transfers. Taken together, these circumstances warrant examination not only of the procedural justification for the administrative penalty but also of the possibility that the proceedings were used to exert additional pressure (testimony No. 38).

A cross-cutting problem in the documented proceedings is the largely illusory nature of legal representation. In several cases, victims formally had court-appointed lawyers, yet their relatives report inadequate communication, a lack of information about the progress of the case, limited opportunities to arrange visits and, in their assessment, insufficient activity by defence counsel. At the same time, dissatisfaction with the outcome of a defence or the fact of a conviction does not in itself demonstrate professional inaction by a particular lawyer. The available testimonies reveal a significant gap between a lawyer's formal participation in proceedings and the detained individual's actual ability to benefit from legal assistance (testimonies Nos. 1, 3, 6 and 9).

A similar distinction is required when assessing the potentially illusory nature of appellate review. In several cases, relatives report appeals that did not result in changes to sentences. Particular difficulties arose where relatives received only fragmentary information about proceedings, procedural documents were inaccessible or the individual had been moved to a different facility, hindering communication with counsel. In such circumstances, the formal existence of an appellate court cannot be taken as confirmation that an effective judicial remedy was available.

Overall, the September testimonies demonstrate that violations of procedural safeguards were not confined to isolated shortcomings in court proceedings but were, in many cases, inseparable from the wider practice of unlawfully depriving civilians of liberty. This practice encompassed both prolonged detention without any accessible judicial procedure and criminal prosecution that may have been used to provide a formal justification for an initially unlawful arrest. Cases in which charges were based on pro-Ukrainian views, financial support for Ukraine, previous military service or evidence apparently obtained under duress merit particular attention.

Taken together, the material indicates several recurring violations of the right to a fair trial: prolonged de facto detention before formal charges were brought; confessions obtained through physical violence; inaccessible or passive State-appointed lawyers; limited family access to case materials; 'secret' proceedings; the criminalisation of conduct associated with supporting Ukraine; the use of digital information as evidence of disloyalty; the deportation of convicted individuals to remote regions of Russia; and the application of Russian criminal law to residents of occupied territory. Where the necessary factual and legal elements are established, the identified violations may be relevant to classifying both unlawful confinement and the wilful deprivation of protected persons' rights to a fair and regular trial as separate war crimes.

8. INFORMATION ON OTHER VICTIMS AND THE WIDER CONTEXT

An important component of the September dataset is information about other civilians who were held alongside respondents or about whom respondents learned from fellow detainees and relatives. Particularly significant are the nine testimonies from former prisoners of war, which provide information about civilians in Russian penitentiary institutions, including individuals whose whereabouts and subsequent fate remain unknown. Such information, however, requires differentiated assessment according to its source, the degree to which an individual can be identified and the nature of the observation. Direct experience of detention alongside an individual must be distinguished from second-hand reports, while approximate estimates of detainee numbers cannot automatically be used to establish the number of distinct victims.

An illustrative example of complementary testimony is the group incident involving forced civilian labour in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Two respondents who were part of the group at different times report approximately 17–18 people, including women and residents of Dniprorudne, Tokmak, Enerhodar and other settlements. One witness describes the removal of five detainees, including one woman, on 14 January 2023 under the guise of ‘deportation’. The other respondent, a paramedic, provides more detailed information about the group’s composition, including the occupations and places of origin of some individuals. The slight discrepancy in estimates may be explained by changes in the group’s composition and different times of observation. The available information does not support treating these reports as concerning two separate groups (testimonies Nos. 10 and 38).

These testimonies also describe further circumstances affecting particular civilians, including their transfers, serious illnesses and participation in hazardous work. The detained paramedic reports a man taken from the group in an unknown direction, another detainee with serious medical problems and two men forced to clear mines. By contrast, reports that two ZNPP employees may have been held in a basement and that human remains had been discovered in the area where the work was carried out originated in other people’s accounts. These latter reports require independent verification and do not establish the identities of possible victims, the circumstances of their detention or the causes of death (testimony No. 38).

Other testimonies from Zaporizhzhia Oblast supplement information about civilians held at Dniprorudne police station, in Velyka Bilozerka and at Donetsk Remand Prison. One former detainee, for example, mentions a fellow detainee who, according to information received later, died after release, as well as an ear, nose and throat specialist whom he met personally. He learned of another female doctor only through other people’s accounts. Relatives of the detained telegraph operator mention a civilian woman who was also transferred to Donetsk, although reports concerning a possible sentence remain unverified. A separate testimony describes an older woman at Donetsk Remand Prison who required constant care from a cellmate (testimonies Nos. 1, 3 and 4).

A substantial body of information about fellow detainees concerns civilians captured in Kyiv Oblast at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. A civilian engineer who passed through detention sites in Dymer, Hostomel, Novozybkov and Donskoy describes numerous men of different ages and occupations, including drivers, construction workers, a journalist, a water-utility employee and a security guard. His testimony traces individual transfer routes, circumstances of release and information about those who remained in Russian institutions. Among the victims personally known to him were a man with serious injuries to his fingers after a vehicle came under fire and an unidentified civilian who died in Hostomel (testimony No. 39).

Testimonies from relatives of detainees from Dymer, Bucha and Klavdiievo-Tarasove partially supplement these routes, particularly in relation to Novozybkov and Donskoy. In some cases, information about civilians' whereabouts was obtained from released fellow detainees. One respondent reports that, in his estimation, more than 60 civilians were held in an unidentified Russian institution. However, this is an approximate figure and does not establish the individual identities of those concerned (testimonies Nos. 11, 14, 17 and 27).

Testimonies from former prisoners of war who personally encountered civilians in Russian detention facilities are particularly important for reconstructing possible transfer routes. One respondent describes two civilians from Kharkiv Oblast whom he met in Belgorod Oblast and later in Stary Oskol and a facility near Arzamas. Another mentions a former ATO participant who was a civilian at the time, as well as a group of older men reportedly transferred from another camp (testimonies Nos. 20 and 21).

Testimonies from prisoners of war held at Olenivka and Borisoglebsk repeatedly refer to civilians with disabilities, serious illnesses or indications of mental health conditions. One respondent describes men with severe injuries to their lower limbs, the effects of frostbite and pronounced mental health problems. He also reports a former serviceman who was already a civilian at the time of capture, and other detainees accused of espionage (testimony No. 23).

In another testimony, a former prisoner of war describes two civilians from Melitopol whom he met in Borisoglebsk. Both men are also mentioned in the testimony of a civilian farmer detained with them at the same facility. The reports can therefore be treated as complementary, while avoiding double-counting the victims. The respondent also mentions an older former employee of the local administration and other civilians from Zaporizhzhia Oblast (testimonies Nos. 24 and 33).

Similar corroboration is evident in testimonies concerning Penal Colony No. 1 in Donskoy. One prisoner of war names five civilians, including two older men, a person with chronic illnesses, a man from Sumy Oblast and a civilian from Kyiv Oblast. Some of these individuals are also mentioned by the engineer released from Donskoy in June 2026 (testimonies Nos. 25 and 39).

Particularly detailed information concerns civilians held at Penal Colony No. 10 in Mordovia. A former prisoner of war released in June 2026 names seven people known to him through shared detention, including a former serviceman from Mariupol, workers from Sumy and Kharkiv oblasts, a business owner from Tokmak, a former law-enforcement officer and a judicial-system employee from Kyiv Oblast. He also mentions a man with mental health problems. His account indicates that civilians with different circumstances of capture and geographical origins subsequently came to be held at the same Russian institution. The individual routes of most of these people remain incomplete, however, and are based largely on what the fellow detainees told him (testimony No. 26).

Another prisoner of war reports a civilian man with a disability from Tokmak who had serious health problems, including spinal deformity, mental health difficulties and tuberculosis. Around September 2023, the man was reportedly transferred in an unknown direction because of his illness, and no further information about his fate is available. The same respondent mentions the death of another older civilian but does not know his full name or cause of death. Separate reports concerning the possible detention of a child, an adult civilian and a teacher in Kursk Remand Prison are indirect, since the witness did not personally see those individuals (testimony No. 37).

Information about sizeable groups of civilians also appears in the testimony of a prisoner of war who was held at a penal colony in Kamensk-Shakhtinsky and the remand prison in Kizel, Perm Krai. He estimates that dozens of civilians were present at different times and that around 35 people were transferred with him on one occasion. Specifically described victims include three construction workers from Kyiv Oblast detained together in March 2022, former ATO participants and civilians from Kherson Oblast. The witness also mentions people with serious medical problems, including possible infectious diseases (testimony No. 29).

Another former prisoner of war describes civilians encountered in Shebekino, Stary Oskol, Novozybkov and Donskoy. Among them were an agricultural worker from Kharkiv Oblast and a man whose detention was reportedly connected with a Ukrainian flag. The respondent also provides approximate estimates of civilian numbers in particular camps and cells. These reports may help indicate the scale of the joint detention of prisoners of war and civilians at particular times (testimony No. 30).

Further context concerning civilian women is provided by a former detainee of ‘Izoliatsiia’ and the penal colony in Snizhne. She describes cellmates convicted of espionage, cooperation with Ukrainian structures and other offences under occupation legislation. Some were subsequently released, while others continued to serve their sentences. Particularly noteworthy is a reported group of detainees transferred from Mariupol following the loss of their personal case files. According to the respondent, the absence of proper documentation created difficulties in confirming sentence lengths and challenging judicial decisions (testimony No. 35).

Other testimonies from Donetsk describe civilians persecuted for allegedly

passing information to the Ukrainian side. One respondent, for example, mentions a young man whose charges were connected with a photograph of military equipment sent to a female relative. Another describes violence against members of his own family during their simultaneous detention. These accounts make it possible to identify potentially recurring circumstances of persecution linked to private communication or suspicions of cooperation with Ukraine (testimonies Nos. 31 and 32).

Overall, information about other victims significantly enhances the analytical value of the September dataset by revealing possible connections between individual detentions, transfer routes and places of confinement. Repeated reports about older civilians, people with disabilities or serious illnesses, former servicemen who were civilians at the time of capture, and people whose subsequent fate remains unknown are particularly valuable. Nevertheless, the information does not constitute an exhaustive list of civilians held in the facilities concerned and cannot simply be added to the total number of documented victims. It may be used to support further tracing efforts and investigations into possible violations, provided that safety, confidentiality and appropriate handling of personal data are ensured.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the 30 documented cases of deprivation of liberty of civilians and nine testimonies from former prisoners of war about civilian fellow detainees demonstrates the diversity of forms and mechanisms of unlawful detention. Initial arrests occurred in various circumstances: in homes, at checkpoints, during travel or evacuation, and on the premises of civilian enterprises. Some victims were subsequently transferred between unofficial detention sites, temporary detention facilities, remand prisons and penal colonies, including on the territory of the Russian Federation. The duration of detention varied considerably, from a few days to many years. The testimonies collectively reveal recurring practices that could occur together in a single case but require individual assessment in light of the circumstances of each incident.

Of the 30 principal victims, 21 were men and nine were women. In 19 cases, the initial detention occurred in 2022, while four cases began in 2017–2019. The remaining cases concern later periods. According to the latest available reports, at least 11 civilians continued to be held in places of detention, while the fate of three others remained unknown. Accordingly, the release of at least 14 individuals has not been confirmed. The testimonies also document the transfer of at least 11 principal victims to places of detention on Russian territory.

Recurring circumstances include detention associated with pro-Ukrainian views, previous military service, family relationships or information discovered during searches of digital devices. Most testimonies report a lack of effective judicial oversight, restrictions on contact with relatives, violence during arrest and transfer, inadequate detention conditions and insufficient medical care. Particular attention should be paid to the group incident involving the forced use of civilians to construct military positions and undertake hazardous mine-clearance work. The documented sequence of a staged ‘deportation’ followed by renewed capture also raises the possibility that formal procedures were used to conceal the continuation of de facto deprivation of liberty.

The testimonies contain information about various forms of sexualised violence (CRSV), including blows and electric shocks to the genital area, threats of rape, forced nudity and humiliating searches. These reports demonstrate the need to document potential conflict-related sexual violence against civilian men and women separately. At the same time, any legal classification must be based on establishing the specific nature of the acts, the circumstances in which they occurred, coercion and other legally relevant elements, including the nexus to the armed conflict.

Reports of civilian deaths during detention, including in Hostomel, and the severe consequences of beatings, inadequate food and the withholding of medical care are of particular concern. Some information about those who died comes from direct witnesses, while other circumstances are known to respondents through fellow detainees. Deaths occurring after release also require separate verification, since the available testimonies do not always establish a causal connection between prior detention and death. Older people, persons with disabilities,

mental health conditions, serious injuries and chronic or infectious diseases were particularly vulnerable. The documented circumstances indicate the need to prioritise establishing their whereabouts, health and access to appropriate assistance.

An important result of the analysis is the identification of possible overlaps between different respondents' testimonies, particularly in relation to civilians held in Borisoglebsk, Donskoy, Mordovia and other Russian institutions. Such correspondences create further opportunities to verify transfer routes, identify fellow detainees and clarify their subsequent fate. It is essential to distinguish civilians from prisoners of war, firsthand observations from indirect reports, and confirmed circumstances from preliminary analytical assessments.

Overall, the September testimonies contain a substantial body of specific information about the circumstances of detention, detention sites, transfer routes, conditions of confinement, potential perpetrators and other victims. This information provides a basis for further documentation and verification, including cross-checking independent testimonies, obtaining procedural and medical records, and clarifying the last confirmed whereabouts of individuals who remain in captivity or are considered missing. Consistently distinguishing factual information, reports requiring corroboration and legal conclusions is essential to building a reliable evidential basis for future investigations, establishing victims' fates, ensuring their protection and securing their right to reparation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the analysis of testimonies from witnesses and persons unlawfully deprived of their liberty as a result of the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine, and the recurring patterns of violations of international humanitarian and international criminal law identified, the following measures are recommended:

1. To Law Enforcement Authorities:

a) Ensure the continuous and systematic documentation of unlawful deprivation of liberty, including the circumstances of detention, places and conditions of confinement, detainees' transfer routes, the use of torture and ill-treatment, and related judicial or purported judicial proceedings. Such documentation should meet standards governing the admissibility of evidence in domestic and international criminal proceedings.

b) Integrate the collected testimonies into the work of Ukraine's pre-trial investigation authorities and use them to classify relevant conduct as war crimes and, where the requisite elements are present, crimes against humanity, including enforced disappearances, unlawful imprisonment, torture and persecution of the civilian population.

c) Conduct regular analysis of victims' testimonies as a means of identifying emerging 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) Treat transfers between detention facilities and forced transfers of civilians, including deportation to the Russian Federation, as distinct incidents of international crimes in order to ensure appropriate criminal-law assessment and more effective investigations. Such acts should be documented separately from the initial unlawful detention, including the roles of escort units, detention-facility administrations and so-called 'judicial' bodies in temporarily occupied territories. The relevant facts should provide grounds for initiating separate criminal proceedings under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, taking account of the cumulative nature of violations of international humanitarian law.

e) Pay particular attention to forensic medical and forensic psychiatric examinations conducted in accordance with the United Nations Istanbul Protocol. This includes documenting the consequences of torture and ill-treatment, such as injuries caused by electric shocks and systematic beatings, as well as psychological disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

f) Establish a centralised repository of such expert reports to ensure continuity of the evidential record, avoid the repeated traumatisation of victims and facilitate the identification of recurring patterns of violence.

g) Incorporate the systematic collection and preservation of documents relating to detainee registration into evidential strategies. This includes correspondence and confirmations from the International Committee of the Red Cross, detention-register data, information on 'delivery' and individual identifiers used by the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN), and extracts from so-called 'personal accounts' or electronic record systems. The practice of 'appointed' lawyers or lawyers controlled by the occupation authorities refusing to provide case materials to families or victims' representatives should also be documented separately as a possible obstruction of defence rights and access to information.

h) Develop a distinct procedural approach to assessing the activities of the so-called 'courts' in temporarily occupied territories. Unlawful detention of civilians, the imposition of unlawful sentences and subsequent transfer outside occupied territory to Russia should be documented as separate, complex criminal conduct encompassing unlawful deprivation of liberty, denial of the right to a fair trial and deportation of civilians.

i) Systematise and investigate separately the persecution of current and former employees of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant as a distinct risk profile. In view of repeated reports of detentions, searches, coercion to sign contracts with 'Rosatom', staff questionnaires, telephone checks, beatings, employees being held in handcuffs, threats and pressure on those refusing to cooperate with the occupation administration, law-enforcement authorities should establish a dedicated analytical line of documentation concerning the ZNPP and the city of Enerhodar. This should include compiling a register of affected plant employees, their posts and departments, dates of detention, places of confinement, circumstances of coercion to cooperate, and the individuals and structures involved in arrests, interrogations, screening questionnaires and staff surveillance.

2. To Executive Authorities:

a) Ensure appropriate recognition of the status of persons unlawfully deprived of liberty, including access to social, legal and psychological protection. Recognition procedures should be person-centred, should not impose an excessive burden of proof on victims and should account for the particular nature of crimes committed under occupation.

b) Strengthen international cooperation to exchange information on places where civilian hostages are held, their conditions of detention and the persons responsible, and make use of the collected material through international mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, universal jurisdiction and sanctions regimes.

c) Develop specialised treatment and rehabilitation programmes for persons released from unlawful detention. Such programmes should address chronic illnesses and complications, including cardiovascular and kidney

conditions, the consequences of prolonged starvation (anorexia and critically low body weight), and dental complications.

d) Provide long-term psychosocial support to families of people held incommunicado or considered missing.

e) Strengthen technical cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross to verify transfer routes and the current status of detained persons.

f) Document the militarisation of the ZNPP and associated violations not only as a threat to nuclear safety but also as part of the context of the unlawful deprivation of liberty of civilians. Reports concerning the deployment of military personnel, equipment and ammunition, the use of plant premises, rotations of security units, control over staff, collection of personnel information, forced labour and persecution of employees should be analysed together. For international institutions, including those working on nuclear safety, it is important to emphasise that occupation control of the ZNPP involved not only technological hazards but also repression of civilian personnel, including unlawful detentions, forced transfers, torture, psychological pressure and coercion to cooperate.

g) Provide priority support to families of detained or missing ZNPP employees and residents of Enerhodar, particularly in tracing, legal assistance, medical support and documentation. In many Enerhodar cases, families sought independently to establish victims' whereabouts, contacted occupation authorities, Ukrainian State bodies and international organisations, paid for parcels, travel and lawyers, and maintained communication through controlled channels. Given the particular risks faced by critical-infrastructure workers and their relatives, a dedicated support mechanism for such families should be established or strengthened. It should record the status of missing or unlawfully detained persons, assist with gathering documents and preparing submissions to national and international bodies, and systematically transmit information for investigations into war crimes associated with occupation control of the ZNPP.

3. To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine:

a) Advocate for ICRC access to specific remand prisons and penal colonies in the Russian Federation where, according to documented testimonies, civilians unlawfully deprived of liberty are being held. These include facilities in Krasnodar, Volgograd, Kazan, Irkutsk, the Republic of Buryatia, Saratov Oblast and the Republic of Mordovia.

b) Systematically use documented routes of civilian deportation and detention in bilateral and multilateral diplomatic forums to advocate for their release.

4. To International Institutions and Human Rights Organisations:

a) Use documented transfer routes, conditions of detention, charges under provisions of Russian criminal law and described practices of treatment of detainees to prepare targeted submissions to the International Criminal Court and the United Nations special procedures on torture and enforced disappearances.

b) Use documented transfer routes, detention conditions, charges under provisions of Russian criminal law and described practices of treatment of detainees to initiate targeted individual and sectoral sanctions regimes against the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service and associated 'judicial' and administrative structures.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND CUMULATIVE FIGURES

Since 2022, documenters from the NGO 'Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin' have identified and interviewed more than 798 individuals — witnesses and victims of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and other international crimes against civilians. This analytical review draws on 39 testimonies which, owing to the consolidated nature of one of the materials, directly concern at least 30 civilian victims. At the same time, the total number of people identified by the Association through documentation, open-source intelligence (OSINT) and cooperation with human rights actors is approximately 1,500 individuals unlawfully deprived of their liberty. The documented violations primarily concern unlawful deprivation of liberty, but also include attacks on civilian infrastructure, appropriation of private property by occupation forces and other related crimes.

The documentation of war crimes and preparation of this analytical review were carried out by the Documentation Department and the Research and Analysis Department of the NGO 'Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin'.



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