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Human Right Violations In The Russo-Ukrainian War

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Human Right Violations In The Russo-Ukrainian War

ABSTRACT

While the war crimes and crimes against humanity being committed by Russia in its invasion of Ukraine is under the magnifying lens of the international community, there hasn't been sufficient action taken to stop them. This conflict, initiated by an unprovoked Russian invasion in February 2022, has inflicted death and widespread suffering on Ukrainian civilians and military personnel including blatantly implementing the strategy of attacking health care facilities and health workers. This paper hopes to shed further light on the extent of human rights violations and suggest solutions to mitigate the crisis at hand and end this gruesome conflict once and for all.

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more¹. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination. But conflicts seem to supersede basic human privileges such as in this case. Since 24th February 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has been documenting violations of international humanitarian law and violations human rights law which have been occurring in the country². The hardest-hit city of all has been Mariupol, where relentless Russian attacks have left many areas in ruins. In Bucha and other towns northwest of Kyiv, Russian soldiers have extrajudicially executed civilians and looted civilian property. More than 14 million people have been uprooted by the conflict, with close to six million fleeing to neighboring countries as refugees³.

BACKGROUND

The Russian President Vladimir Putin thought that having a prosperous, modern, independent, and democratic European state bordering Russia was perceived as posing a threat to Russia's autocratic regime⁴. The official reasons given for the “special military operation”, as the Russian Government calls it, is the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine⁵. Russia accuses Ukraine of “genocide” against ethnic Russians and native Russian speakers in the Donbas; a wholly unfounded allegation denied by Ukraine and its allies and of which Russia itself has no evidence of. After eight years of conflict with Ukraine since the annexation of Crimea, Russian forces launched a full-scale invasion in early 2022 and started a long list of heinous acts committed by the soldiers in the name of fighting for their nation.

¹ *Human rights*, United Nations.org, available at <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

² *Plight of civilians in Ukraine*, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2022/05/plight-civilians-ukraine>

³ *Ukraine-Russia*, Amnesty International, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/ukraine/>

⁴ *Conflict decoded: Why did Russia invade Ukraine?*, Jars Balan, available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/conflict-decoded-why-did-russia-invade-ukraine/articleshow/89865445.cms>

ANALYSIS

Hundreds of cases of enforced disappearance, abductions, incommunicado detention, or missing persons have been reported amongst human rights defenders, local officials, journalists, volunteers, civil society activists, veterans, or ordinary civilians, in areas of Ukraine under the control of Russian or Russian-controlled troops. There have also been some reported cases of possible enforced disappearances or abductions in the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government⁶. There are also numerous reports of war-related sexual violence allegedly

committed by Russian troops. Even the wounded civilians succumb to their injuries as the invading troops attack hospitals and other healthcare facilities. The World Health Organization reported 323 attacks on medical facilities in Ukraine between February 24 and June 24, leaving 76 persons dead and 59 injured⁷. Russian forces have targeted schools and civilian neighborhoods. They have executed unarmed civilians without cause. The sheer brutality committed against innocent bystanders seen in this war is a throwback to the wanton killings and dehumanization of Chinese citizens by the Japanese Army.

The Ukrainian government wants to undertake large-scale prosecutions for crimes of aggression and genocide. It claims to have identified more than six hundred suspects in Russia's political and military leadership⁸. There have been more than ten thousand war crimes, committed by soldiers, registered at the office of Ukraine's prosecutor general. Admissible evidence such as bodies, the position of bodies, firsthand witness testimony, images posted on social media and mass graves can point to atrocious crimes having been committed. Swift justice must be served to the perpetrators by Ukraine and the international community as the magnitude of the crimes committed affects, not only the citizenry of the nation but also, humanity.

⁵ *Understanding the Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine*, Bloomberg, Patrick Donahue & Daryna Krasnolutska, available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-02/understanding-the-roots-of-russia-s-war-in-ukraine-quicktake#xj4y7vzkg>

⁶ *Memorandum on the human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine*, Commissioner of Human Rights, available at <https://rm.coe.int/memorandum-on-the-human-rights-consequences-of-the-war-in-ukraine/1680a72bd4>

⁷ *WHO records 100th attack on health care in Ukraine*, Media Team WHO, available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/07-04-2022-who-records-100th-attack-on-health-care-in-ukraine>

CONCLUSION

Overall, the situation in Ukraine is unfathomable in the modern world which has not seen a war of this scale in decades. The priority should be to create safe conditions for survivors, ensure their effective access to redress, and prioritize respect for their dignity and well-being. Council of Europe States should remove any barriers that survivors of war-related sexual violence and refugees from Ukraine may face in accessing sexual and reproductive health care services. Ukraine's recent ratification of the Istanbul Convention provides an additional tool for the protection of victims of war-related sexual violence. Nations must ensure that all those fleeing from the conflict in Ukraine should be protected without discrimination, including on the basis of racial, national and ethnic identity. Through international corporation and a proper plan of action that deals with all aspects of the issue discussed in the above paper, the beacon of human rights must be upheld in the face of adversity.

⁸ *The Prosecution of Russian War Crimes in Ukraine*, Masha Gessen, available at <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/08/08/the-prosecution-of-russian-war-crimes-in-ukraine>