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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General  
Technical assistance and capacity-building**

## **Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol**

### **Report of the Secretary-General\***

#### *Summary*

In the present interim report, the Secretary-General describes the progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 79/184 and provides options and recommendations for improving its implementation.

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\* Agreement was reached to publish the present document after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



## **I. Introduction**

1. The present report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/184, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit an interim report to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-ninth session. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it, at its eightieth session, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 68/262 and other relevant resolutions, including resolution 79/184, the General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. In the present report, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (hereinafter “Crimea”) and certain areas of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, Ukraine, temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, are referred to as “temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine”, in line with General Assembly resolution 79/184. The organs and officials of the Russian Federation established in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine are referred to as the “occupying authorities of the Russian Federation”.

3. The present report is the twelfth of the Secretary-General on the human rights situation in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. It is focused on the period from 1 July to 31 December 2024. Cases that were documented in the reporting period but occurred prior to it are mentioned where relevant to illustrate patterns of violations.

## **II. Methodology**

4. In its resolution 79/184, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek ways and means, including through consultations with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant regional organizations, to ensure safe and unfettered access to Crimea and other territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation by established regional and international human rights monitoring mechanisms, in particular the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, to enable them to carry out their mandates. In accordance with that resolution, on 26 February 2025, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) transmitted a note verbale to the Russian Federation, seeking its cooperation to conduct a mission in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. OHCHR has so far not been able to settle a modality by which to access the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

5. Unless otherwise specified, the information in the present report was collected and verified by OHCHR. Findings are based on information collected from sources that are assessed as credible and reliable, according to OHCHR methodology. Information is included where the “reasonable grounds to believe” standard of proof has been met. The report is based primarily on direct interviews with victims of alleged human rights violations in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which have been verified using other sources, including interviews with relatives of victims, witnesses, human rights defenders, lawyers and representatives of civil society, along with information obtained from court documents, official records, the analysis of relevant legislation and open sources.

## **III. Conduct of the Russian Federation as occupying Power**

### **A. Respecting the laws in force**

6. International humanitarian law requires an occupying Power to take all the measures in its power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while

respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country.<sup>1</sup> In late 2022, the Russian Federation began gradually imposing its own political, legal and administrative systems in the temporarily occupied areas of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts of Ukraine, as it had been doing in Crimea since January 2015.<sup>2</sup>

## **B. Prohibition on compelling the population of an occupied territory to swear allegiance**

7. International humanitarian law prohibits compelling the inhabitants of occupied territory to swear allegiance to a hostile Power,<sup>3</sup> including through requiring them, either explicitly or through indirect forms of pressure, to procure the citizenship of the occupying Power.

8. After the Russian Federation purported to annex the temporarily occupied areas of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts of Ukraine, in September 2022, residents of these areas who wished to retain their existing citizenship and had not taken the Russian citizenship oath were declared to be foreigners with permanent residency.<sup>4</sup>

9. Residents who recently moved out of the temporarily occupied territories informed OHCHR, however, that it had become nearly impossible to live in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine without Russian citizenship, citing challenges documented in previous reports with regard to accessing medical assistance, receiving a salary, buying and selling property, paying for electricity and obtaining car insurance.

10. In December 2024, adding to the pressure to obtain Russian citizenship, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation adopted laws and made announcements that excluded “foreigners” and stateless persons from receiving pension payments from 1 January 2025.<sup>5</sup> In Luhansk, the city administration confirmed that such persons were to be deprived of social payments and guarantees, including free healthcare.<sup>6</sup>

## **C. Transfers of civilians**

11. International humanitarian law prohibits the forcible transfer or deportation of protected persons from occupied territory. This prohibition also applies to protected persons accused of offences, who, if convicted and sentenced to a period of deprivation of liberty following fair proceedings, should serve their sentences in occupied territory.

12. Persons released from detention recounted to OHCHR several cases in which detained civilians had been transferred from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, continuing a practice documented in previous reports. OHCHR interviewed a man who, in November 2024, along with 15 other civilians, was transferred from a detention facility in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to Altai Territory in the Russian Federation.

13. OHCHR also documented the transfer of at least 11 civilian men detained in Crimea to detention facilities in the Russian Federation during the reporting period. For example,

<sup>1</sup> Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land of 1907 (Hague Regulations), art. 43.

<sup>2</sup> See Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Human rights situation during the Russian occupation of territory of Ukraine and its aftermath, 24 February 2022–31 December 2023”.

<sup>3</sup> Hague Regulations, art. 45. See also Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), art. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Decree No. 307 of the President of the Russian Federation dated 27 April 2023.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, <https://nslnr.su/zakonodatelstvo/normativno-pravovaya-baza/24045/>; Decree No. 679 by the occupying authorities in Donetsk Oblast dated 12 December 2024; Decree No. 139-u by the occupying authorities in Kherson Oblast dated 19 December 2024; and the announcement by the occupying authorities in Zaporizhzhia Oblast dated 2 December 2024, available at [https://vk.com/wall-214495817\\_23922](https://vk.com/wall-214495817_23922).

<sup>6</sup> See [https://vk.com/wall-125790741\\_68273](https://vk.com/wall-125790741_68273) (in Russian).

on 9 December 2024, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation transferred a blind man from Crimea to the Russian Federation to serve a sentence related to his affiliation with Hizb ut-Tahrir<sup>7</sup> in Krasnoyarsk Territory, approximately 4,000 km from his home. In addition, OHCHR interviewed three Ukrainian citizens who had been transferred from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, via the Russian Federation, to Georgia in March or April 2024. In all three cases, the stated reason for the transfer was the lack of Russian citizenship.

14. The exact number and fate of children who were transferred from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, mainly in 2022, remained unclear.<sup>8</sup> The Russian Federation has not provided detailed information about the children concerned to the Central Tracing Agency under the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has prevented systematic efforts to trace and return them.<sup>9</sup>

15. International humanitarian law prohibits the occupying Power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.<sup>10</sup> During the reporting period, the Russian Federation continued to provide socioeconomic incentives to encourage its own citizens to move to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.<sup>11</sup> The relevant State programme includes a broad range of tax breaks for businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as financial benefits for specific categories of professionals. In addition, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation have appointed Russian citizens to oversee local administrations, educational and health facilities, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary in the occupied territories of Ukraine.<sup>12</sup>

#### **D. Prohibition on the forced conscription of protected persons**

16. Under international humanitarian law, the occupying Power may not compel protected persons to serve in its armed forces or exercise any pressure or use propaganda that aims at securing voluntary enlistment.<sup>13</sup> Several actions by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation may have violated these obligations.

17. In October 2024, the Russian Federation conducted its annual military conscription campaign, including in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Information about the number of people conscripted in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine was not publicly available at the time of writing.

18. For the 2024/25 academic year, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation introduced, including in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, a new mandatory school subject in the eighth grade (ages 13 to 14), “Fundamentals of the security and defence of the homeland”.<sup>14</sup> The course includes military training, covering topics such as the different types of weapons and the specifics of their operational use.<sup>15</sup> The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation also continued to introduce “cadet classes” in public schools for girls and boys as young as 6 years old, a form of pre-professional education for entry into law enforcement and the military. All cadets must swear an oath of allegiance to the Russian Federation. As of December 2024, there were at least 19 such cadet classes in the territories temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation since 2022. In Mariupol, the

<sup>7</sup> Hizb ut-Tahrir is an Islamic organization included on the list of “terrorist organizations” in the Russian Federation, but its activities are legal in Ukraine.

<sup>8</sup> OHCHR verified that around 200 children – almost all from institutions – were transferred individually or in groups within the temporarily occupied territories or to the Russian Federation, mainly in 2022. See OHCHR, “The impact of the armed conflict and occupation on children’s rights in Ukraine, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 49.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://government.ru/rugovclassifier/908/events/> (in Russian).

<sup>12</sup> In violation of arts. 49 and 54 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

<sup>13</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 51.

<sup>14</sup> See Order No. 62 of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation dated 1 February 2024.

<sup>15</sup> OHCHR, “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 September–30 November 2024”, para. 79.

occupying authorities of the Russian Federation opened a specialized naval military school in September 2024 with a capacity of 560 students starting from the fifth grade (ages 11 to 12).

19. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation also organized recreational activities to promote military training and future military service for children. In September 2024, the Russian Federation adopted its State Cultural Policy Strategy for the period up to 2030, under which increasing the number of children participating in recreational activities “with a military-historical theme” is listed as a priority.<sup>16</sup> Amendments to the Youth Policy Act in December 2024 authorized State support for “military-patriotic” clubs.<sup>17</sup> State-sponsored youth groups, such as Yunarmiya (meaning “youth army”) and Movement of the First, that promote Russian patriotism and prepare youth for military service claimed to have thousands of members in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in 2024.<sup>18</sup>

20. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation also provided additional financial incentives for residents of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to join the Russian armed forces. In addition to a one-time payment of 400,000 roubles (approximately \$3,500)<sup>19</sup> offered to all eligible Russian citizens and foreigners signing a contract with the Russian armed forces between 1 August and 31 December 2024,<sup>20</sup> the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in Crimea offered an additional 400,000 roubles or, for residents of the city of Sevastopol, an additional 500,000 roubles (approximately \$ 4,400) for joining the Russian armed forces during the same period.<sup>21</sup>

#### **IV. Rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security**

21. Under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, the prohibition of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and of arbitrary detention is absolute.<sup>22</sup>

22. OHCHR continued to document cases of executions, deaths in custody, arbitrary detention, torture, including sexual violence, ill-treatment and enforced disappearance in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Because independent monitors lack regular access to detainees in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation, information about the treatment and conditions of detainees is often available only upon their release and, therefore, with a significant delay. Consequently, the majority of the currently documented cases date from 2022 and 2023. They confirmed previously documented patterns.<sup>23</sup>

23. Between 1 July and 31 December 2024, OHCHR interviewed 37 released civilian detainees. Out of those, seven were released during the reporting period, and all described torture or ill-treatment during their detention, including during interrogation and so-called “admission procedures”. The main methods of torture and ill-treatment included beatings

<sup>16</sup> See Order No. 2501-p of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 11 September 2024, annex.

<sup>17</sup> Federal Act No. 550-FZ of the Russian Federation dated 28 December 2024.

<sup>18</sup> For more detailed information, see OHCHR, “The impact of the armed conflict and occupation on children’s rights in Ukraine, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024”.

<sup>19</sup> All exchange rates are as at 31 December 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Decree No. 644 of the President of the Russian Federation dated 31 July 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Decree No. 196-U by the occupying authorities in Crimea dated 2 August 2024.

<sup>22</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 7 and 9; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Third Geneva Convention), art. 13; Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 27 and 32; and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), art. 75 (2). See also International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law, rules 90 and 99.

<sup>23</sup> See OHCHR, “Human rights situation during the Russian occupation of territory of Ukraine and its aftermath”.

and kicks, electric shocks to various body parts, threats of violence, and humiliation. Recently released Ukrainian prisoners of war recounted similar treatment in detention facilities both in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation, confirming previous findings of widespread and systematic torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war by authorities of the Russian Federation. In the reporting period, OHCHR interviewed 96 Ukrainian prisoners of war (85 men and 11 women), who provided detailed and consistent accounts of torture or other forms of ill-treatment, including severe beatings, electric shocks, suffocation, prolonged stress positions, forced excessive exercise, sleep deprivation, mock executions, threats of violence, and humiliation.<sup>24</sup>

24. Both civilians and prisoners of war shared accounts of sexual violence in detention. Thirteen civilians (10 women and 3 men) and 75 prisoners of war (65 men and 10 women) interviewed by OHCHR described different forms of sexual violence, including rape, beatings and electric shocks to genitals, degrading treatment of a sexual nature, forced nudity, beatings while naked, and threats of rape or castration. OHCHR found that sexual violence was a prevalent method of torture used to intimidate, extract information and humiliate.<sup>25</sup> Thirteen women recounted acts of sexual violence that occurred in the reporting period, including being forced to strip naked and undergo searches and examinations and to shower or to use toilet facilities in the presence of men.

25. Torture and other forms of ill-treatment were pervasive during interrogation and throughout all stages of the captivity of prisoners of war, including during “admission procedures” and daily internment routines and as a result of the severe conditions of internment, such as lack of nutritious food and inadequate medical care. Entire groups of Ukrainian prisoners of war were reportedly routinely subjected to acts of torture or ill-treatment across various internment facilities in numerous areas within the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation.

26. Procedural safeguards meant to prevent torture and other forms of ill-treatment, such as access to independent monitors, were frequently not implemented or were ineffective, compounded by inadequate legislation and a lack of accountability for such acts.<sup>26</sup> Many of the documented instances of torture or ill-treatment involved representatives of different State entities of the Russian Federation, including the Federal Security Service, the Federal Penitentiary Service and, to a lesser extent, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, suggesting some degree of coordination among them. The daily or weekly occurrence of the abuse throughout the period of internment also may suggest that facility supervisors might have known of such abuse. Prisoners of war recounted that, in a few cases in which inspectors of the Russian Federation visited places of internment, the torture and ill-treatment temporarily ceased, and conditions improved, suggesting that officials in charge of the facilities could stop the torture and ill-treatment when necessary.<sup>27</sup>

27. OHCHR also documented dire conditions of detention and a lack of adequate medical assistance. In one case, a Crimean Tatar man transferred from Crimea to a penal colony in the Russian Federation was placed in a cell used for solitary confinement with damaged and leaking sewage pipes, according to relatives and his lawyer who visited him. Subsequently, he started to have stomach pains and hallucinations and regularly vomited. He asked the administration of the penal colony to improve his detention conditions, but the request was ignored.

28. On 19 September 2024, Ukrainian journalist Viktoriia Roshchyna died in the custody of the Russian Federation, according to information that her family received from Russian officials. Ms. Roshchyna had disappeared in August 2023 while reporting from the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Until April 2024, her relatives had not received any information about her status or whereabouts, despite requests. At no point

<sup>24</sup> See OHCHR, “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 June–31 August 2024”.

<sup>25</sup> OHCHR, “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 September–30 November 2024”, para. 47.

<sup>26</sup> For further details on exemptions from accountability, see OHCHR, “Treatment of prisoners of war and update on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 June–31 August 2024”.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

prior to her reported death did her family receive information about her health, conditions of detention or the formal charges laid against her. The cause of death remained unknown at the end of 2024. OHCHR has documented that at least 24 civilian men and 6 civilian women died in custody due to torture or inhuman conditions, including insufficient provision of medical care, after being detained in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine since February 2022.

29. OHCHR documented several cases of detention in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in the reporting period that may amount to arbitrary deprivation of liberty, for example, because the detainees were held in unofficial places of detention. Some cases may also amount to enforced disappearances. In one case, Russian law enforcement officers detained and beat a man in his apartment in Crimea in July 2024 and took him to an unknown location. As they were leaving, his relatives were informed that they should not report his arrest because that would not help. As at 31 December 2024, his family had no information about his fate or whereabouts.

30. Family members of persons detained in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine continued to face difficulties in obtaining concrete information about the fate or whereabouts of their relatives, despite indications, in the form of, for example, witnesses to the detention or informal information from representatives of the authorities, that they had been taken into custody by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation. Some filed complaints with the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation but received no official information about their fate or whereabouts. OHCHR documented severe restrictions on communication with the outside world, with civilian detainees not being allowed telephone calls, letters or visits from their relatives and lawyers for prolonged periods in many facilities in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and within the Russian Federation. For example, the Russian armed forces apprehended a woman from Zaporizhzhia Oblast in May 2023. She was initially held in unofficial places of detention in the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia Oblast before being transferred to the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk Oblast and Crimea. Her relatives tried to establish her fate and whereabouts, but the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation provided no information in response to their requests for 18 months, until November 2024.

31. OHCHR also documented numerous violations of the rights to due process and a fair trial. In the case of the woman from Zaporizhzhia Oblast mentioned in paragraph 30 above, criminal proceedings for espionage were opened in August 2024 after she had spent more than one and a half years in incommunicado detention. On 12 December 2024, the Zaporizhzhia Oblast Court established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation sentenced her to 13 years of imprisonment. The case was considered in closed proceedings, with a State-appointed Russian lawyer providing legal aid.

## **V. Fundamental freedoms and religion**

### **A. Freedom of expression**

32. During the reporting period, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation continued to prosecute individuals for the legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and opinion.

33. Restrictions on the right to freedom of expression are permissible only if they are provided for by law and are necessary to ensure respect for the rights or reputations of others or to protect national security, public order, or public health or morals. Prosecutions of residents in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine for displaying Ukrainian symbols, criticizing the Russian armed forces, or expressing dissenting opinions do not meet these criteria.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 19 (3).

34. Using a legal provision prohibiting “extremist” activities or displaying “Nazi” symbols, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation continued to issue fines to residents for posting Ukraine-related content on social media, such as images of the Ukrainian coat of arms or Ukrainian songs.<sup>29</sup> Publicly available court records analysed by OHCHR show that courts in Crimea fined 72 people (37 men and 35 women) in the reporting period for posting Ukraine-related content under this provision. In one case, a man was sentenced to seven days of administrative detention for posting, on his personal social media account, an image of the Ukrainian coat of arms with the Ukrainian flag in the background.

35. On 28 December 2024, the Russian Federation adopted a State strategy on countering extremism, in which Ukrainian nationalism is identified as a form of extremism and “extremism in Ukraine” is described as a threat to national security. The strategy, which is applied in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, is aimed at eliminating “extremist threats originating from Ukraine” and preventing the “infiltration of representatives of foreign and international extremist and neo-Nazi groups”.<sup>30</sup>

36. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in Crimea also held 224 people (135 women and 89 men) liable for the administrative offence of “discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces” and convicted two men of a related criminal offence.<sup>31</sup> Crimean residents were sanctioned, inter alia, for referring to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation as an “attack”, an act of “aggression” or a “war”, as opposed to a “special military operation”, the expression used by the Russian Federation, calling for an end to the war, criticizing Russian military activities or the President of the Russian Federation, or making references to the suffering of civilians or the occupation of Crimea, in social media posts and comments in reaction to other users’ content, or in oral statements made in public places.

37. In one case, a man was fined 35,000 roubles (\$307) for “discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces” because, when refusing to accept a conscription notice at a military conscription office in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, he said that he did not want to serve “a government of terrorists” and that he was against the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation and the “special military operation” in Ukraine.

38. Media in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine remained severely restricted. During the reporting period, the Russian Federation initiated new proceedings against the Crimean Tatar newspaper Qirim (meaning “Crimea”) and its editor-in-chief. On 27 August 2024, following two convictions for “discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces” in June of that year, a magistrates’ court established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in Simferopol fined the newspaper 250,000 roubles (\$2,197) for “dissemination of unreliable socially significant information” after it referenced the 2023 report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Crimea.<sup>32</sup> In November 2024, the newspaper and the editor-in-chief were prosecuted anew for “abuse of freedom of information”. Subsequently, on 12 December 2024, the Zheleznodorozhnyi District Court established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation fined the editor-in-chief 4,000 roubles (\$35) for mentioning Radio Liberty and Voice of America without noting that these organizations were considered foreign agents under Russian law.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, art. 20.3 (1).

<sup>30</sup> Decree No. 1124 of the President of the Russian Federation dated 28 December 2024, annex, paras. 6, 13, 14 and 20–24.

<sup>31</sup> Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, art. 20.3.3. If the offence is repeated, it could lead to criminal liability under arts. 207.3 and 280.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

<sup>32</sup> [A/HRC/53/64](#).

<sup>33</sup> Under Russian law, organizations, media outlets and individuals under “foreign influence” must register as “foreign agents”. The relevant laws require not only that the “foreign agents” identify themselves as such, but also that others identify them as such when referring to them. On 22 October 2024, the European Court of Human Rights held that the requirement to register as a “foreign agent” violates article 10 (freedom of expression) and article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention

39. In another case illustrating the practice of prosecuting people for the legitimate exercise of freedom of speech, in November 2024, a blind man was fined 10,000 roubles (\$87) for inciting hatred by publishing, on his YouTube channel, a video showing the closed sidewalk of a bridge, with a comment that people were forced to either jump into the river or walk on the roadway.

## B. Freedom of religion

40. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation continued to restrict the right to freedom of religion and belief for certain religious communities in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

41. All congregations of the Jehovah's Witnesses remained under a blanket prohibition.<sup>34</sup> During the reporting period, OHCHR documented two new prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses from Crimea (one man and one woman). They were both arrested on the basis of their membership of the Jehovah's Witnesses and charged with "extremist activities" for conducting or participating in gatherings to worship. In addition, on 3 October 2024, the Supreme Court of Crimea established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation replaced the six-year suspended sentence imposed on two Jehovah's Witnesses from Krasnohvardiiske with a sentence of six years in a penal colony in the Russian Federation. The two men had been convicted in July 2024 for membership of an "extremist organization".

42. On 21 October 2024, the Supreme Court of Crimea established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation removed Alushta, a Muslim independent religious community, from the register of religious organizations of the Russian Federation upon a petition by the Ministry of Justice established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in Crimea, which claimed that the community had disseminated "extremist materials". The legal proceedings against this religious community began in 2023. After a search of its facility, the community was fined 100,000 roubles (\$879) for the possession of religious books considered to be "extremist materials".

43. During the reporting period, OHCHR also documented additional information about past cases involving the transfer to the Russian Federation and detention of priests, the seizure of churches, and pressure from the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation to reregister Catholic communities under Russian legislation. OHCHR interviewed two Greek Catholic priests who had been released as part of a prisoner exchange in June 2024. They had been arrested by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in November 2022, a month before their church was banned in the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia Oblast. One of them reported being tortured and ill-treated in two different detention facilities. In another case, on 2 August 2024, the Zaporizhzhia Oblast Court established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation sentenced a priest from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to 14 years in prison for espionage. The priest had earlier been removed from his position in the church for refusing to pray for the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church and criticizing priests who cooperated with the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation. He was arrested while attempting to leave the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and tried in secret proceedings.

## C. Human rights defenders and representatives of civil society

44. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation continued to target human rights defenders, lawyers and representatives of civil society who criticized the authorities and defended people prosecuted or detained for the legitimate exercise of their rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

on Human Rights). See European Court of Human Rights, *Kobaliya and Others v. Russia*, Applications No. 39446/16 and 106 others, Judgment, 22 October 2024.

<sup>34</sup> For more on the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses, see [A/HRC/44/21](#), para. 35.

45. In November 2024, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation searched the house of two Crimean Tatar lawyers (one man and one woman). Following the search, they detained the man for 10 days on charges of “public display of Nazi or extremist symbols” for reposting on social media a picture showing the Ukrainian coat of arms. He was also fined 50,000 roubles (\$439) for “discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces”. The two lawyers appeared, however, to have been targeted for their professional activities. During the house search, law enforcement officers examined documents that would ordinarily be protected by lawyer-client privilege and seized seals and documents containing information on the criminal cases against the lawyers’ clients. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation had previously targeted the lawyers for their professional activities. In 2022, they were unlawfully disbarred in relation to their work.<sup>35</sup>

46. During the reporting period, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation disbarred another human rights lawyer residing in Crimea who had been sentenced for social media posts condemning the use of cluster munitions and containing images depicting the Ukrainian coat of arms. These alleged violations of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation were cited as the reason for the disbarment proceedings,<sup>36</sup> which OHCHR considers to be arbitrary.

47. In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, OHCHR was told that finding independent and competent legal representation was nearly impossible. Lawyers have refused to take on cases of individuals suspected of criticizing the occupation by the Russian Federation or helping the Ukrainian armed forces out of fear that they themselves might face pressure, intimidation, harassment and reprisals. Russian lawyers based in the Russian Federation have reportedly also declined to take on cases from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, fearing for their safety or, conversely, to avoid any perceptions that they condone the occupation of Ukrainian territories by the Russian Federation. Intimidation of lawyers for the lawful exercise of their professional activities not only undermines the integrity of the legal profession, but also the right to a fair trial.

#### **D. Right to privacy**

48. Under international human rights law, persons may not be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on their honour and reputation.<sup>37</sup>

49. During the reporting period, OHCHR was informed that the Russian armed forces routinely checked the phones of those whom they stopped on the street or at checkpoints, which are prevalent in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Interviewees reported that they prepared for such checks by clearing their search history and deleting Ukrainian applications, as their discovery could lead to questioning and prosecution. Access to Ukrainian websites and media remained restricted in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. OHCHR was told that people were afraid to express their opinions, even in private conversations with family or friends, including over the phone, due to possible electronic surveillance.

## **VI. Economic, social and cultural rights**

### **A. Right to education**

50. Under international human rights law, States have an obligation to provide education that is “culturally appropriate”,<sup>38</sup> develops respect for the child’s own cultural identity,

<sup>35</sup> For more details, see [A/HRC/53/64](#), para. 9.

<sup>36</sup> OHCHR, “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August–30 November 2023”, para. 60.

<sup>37</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comments No. 13 (1999), para. 6; and No. 21 (2009), para. 26.

language and values<sup>39</sup> and does not discriminate on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.<sup>40</sup> International humanitarian law also requires an occupying Power, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, to facilitate the proper functioning of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children, and the occupying Power may not, in any case, change their personal status, nor enlist them in formations or organizations subordinate to it.<sup>41</sup>

51. The academic year that started in September 2024 was the third in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation since 2022. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation continued to impose the Russian State curriculum and conduct instruction in the Russian language only.<sup>42</sup>

52. In the reporting period, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation further intensified efforts to instil Russian patriotism in children in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine through educational and recreational activities. The State Cultural Policy Strategy for the period up to 2030, adopted in September 2024 as a guide for the development and funding of State programmes, listed as its “most important task” the integration of “the new constituent entities of the Russian Federation ... into the Russian cultural and humanitarian space”.<sup>43</sup> The Youth Policy Act was subsequently amended to define and prioritize patriotic education for State youth programmes.<sup>44</sup> A law on children’s rights was also amended to require all educational activities during school holidays, including summer camps, to “develop a sense of patriotism in children”.<sup>45</sup>

53. Families who allowed their children to follow the Ukrainian curriculum in online classes or refused to send their children to public schools faced pressure from the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation. Parents who left the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in the reporting period reported that the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation had threatened to deprive them of their parental rights if they did not send their children to local public schools.

54. A 10-hour online course for educators, entitled “Prevention of the spread of the ideology of neo-Nazism among children and youth”, instructed them to treat Ukrainian symbols and the expression of pro-Ukrainian sympathies among children as indicators that they may engage in illegal activity.<sup>46</sup>

## B. Property rights

55. Under international humanitarian law, private property must be respected and cannot be confiscated by the occupying Power.<sup>47</sup> The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural

<sup>39</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 29; Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 1 (2001), para. 4; and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 21 (2009), para. 15. See also Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 1 (2001), para. 9.

<sup>40</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 2; and Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 50.

<sup>42</sup> For 2024, unlike for previous years, the Russian Federation has not published information regarding the availability and accessibility of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar language classes and schools in Crimea.

<sup>43</sup> Order No. 2501-p of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 11 September 2024, annex, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Federal Act No. 550-FZ of the Russian Federation dated 28 December 2024.

<sup>45</sup> Federal Act No. 543-FZ of the Russian Federation dated 28 December 2024.

<sup>46</sup> The course is available at <https://akademiya.znanierussia.ru/course/profilaktika-ideologii-neonacizma-sredi-detej-i-molodezhi/> (in Russian).

<sup>47</sup> Hague Regulations, arts. 46 and 56. See also ICRC Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law, rule 51 (c).

Rights has stated that land plays an essential role in the realization of a range of rights under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>48</sup>

56. During the reporting period, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in certain areas of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts continued to confiscate “unused” residential property pursuant to laws adopted in 2023 and 2024.<sup>49</sup>

57. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation posted notices listing hundreds of properties that had apparently been “abandoned”, giving the owners a 30-day period in which to confirm their ownership or risk having their property transferred to local councils. On 31 July 2024, for example, the Department of Housing and Public Utilities in Mariupol, temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, published a list of 345 apartments in Ordzhonikidze District that were listed as apparently “abandoned”.<sup>50</sup>

58. Many property owners reported that the legal requirements prevented them from confirming their ownership. In the areas of Zaporizhzhia Oblast temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, for example, the relevant legislation and the instructions from the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation explicitly state that property owners need to present a passport of the Russian Federation to confirm their property ownership, effectively preventing Ukrainians without Russian citizenship from doing so.<sup>51</sup>

59. Furthermore, in the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation, property owners must present themselves in person at the offices of their local municipality to confirm ownership. This is logistically challenging for those who reside outside the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, as there is currently no functional border crossing between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The Russian Federation requires Ukrainian citizens to enter territory that it controls, including the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, only through one land border crossing in Pskov Oblast, Russian Federation, or the Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow, where they are subjected to questioning and inspections, including of their phones. In addition, several individuals interviewed by OHCHR said that they would not travel to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, as they feared they could be detained by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation for their actual or perceived pro-Ukrainian views or connections to persons serving in the Ukrainian armed forces.

60. The occupying authorities of the Russian Federation have publicly voiced their intention to use the confiscated properties for accommodating specialists from the Russian Federation, including civil servants and law enforcement officials. OHCHR was informed that “unused” property had been given to officials appointed by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation, military personnel, and individuals from parts of the Russian Federation such as Chechnya.

61. In Crimea, the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation continued to strip foreigners, including Ukrainian citizens, of land ownership, relying on a 2020 decree that declared significant parts of Crimea to be a “border territory”, thereby restricting land ownership in those areas to citizens of the Russian Federation. For example, in December 2024, a court established by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in the city of Sevastopol stripped a local resident with Ukrainian citizenship of his property because he did not have Russian citizenship.

62. Overall, in 2024, the “State Council of the Republic of Crimea” confiscated real estate belonging to 560 individuals and legal entities in Crimea and 135 legal entities in the city of Sevastopol, in addition to the 2,600 properties previously confiscated.

<sup>48</sup> See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 26 (2022).

<sup>49</sup> [A/79/258](#), para. 62.

<sup>50</sup> See <https://мариуполь.нет/справочная/перечен-недвижимого-имущества-которое-имеет-признаки-бешожаыствности-на-23-07-2024> (in Russian).

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, the instructions on the official site of the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation in Zaporizhzhia Oblast:

[https://zo.gov.ru/news/show\\_group/vyavlennoe\\_besxozyajnoe\\_imushhestvo](https://zo.gov.ru/news/show_group/vyavlennoe_besxozyajnoe_imushhestvo) (in Russian).

63. The Russian Federation continued granting land plots in Crimea to the armed or auxiliary forces of the Russian Federation. For example, the mayor of Sevastopol appointed by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation announced in November 2024 that 549 Russian military servicepersons had received land plots.<sup>52</sup> In the rest of Crimea, by the end of 2024, over 4,400 land plots had been reallocated. After May 2024, the reallocation of land plots increased by 248 per cent.<sup>53</sup>

## VII. Conclusions and recommendations

64. The present report highlights serious concerns of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by the Russian Federation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. It contains findings that are consistent with the 11 previous reports that I have presented since 2018. The violations identified in previous reports have generally not been investigated or prosecuted, partly due to the Russian legislation effectively granting immunity to perpetrators of human rights violations.

65. The continuing lack of mutually acceptable terms to ensure meaningful access by regional and international human rights monitoring mechanisms to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is regrettable. Such access is important to ensure comprehensive first-hand monitoring and reporting in the interests of all parties. I urge both the Russian Federation and Ukraine to make every effort to ensure unfettered access by OHCHR and other international and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine in order to enable the effective implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. I continue to offer my good offices to pursue discussions with all relevant stakeholders, including the Russian Federation, in relation to access for OHCHR to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, and in relation to any potential violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law that may have occurred therein, and to convey the concerns raised by the General Assembly in its resolution 79/184 and other resolutions to Member States.

66. I call upon the Russian Federation to fully uphold its obligations under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, throughout the territory of Ukraine. In particular, the Russian authorities must respect the laws in force in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and are urged to roll back any legal and administrative changes that they have made that are inconsistent with international humanitarian law. Ukrainian citizens must not be compelled or pressured to acquire Russian citizenship, and basic services must be made available to all residents without any discrimination based on citizenship or any other ground. I urge the Russian Federation to end the conscription of protected persons in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine into its armed forces.

67. The Russian authorities must comply fully with the absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, and ensure the independent, impartial, prompt and effective investigation of all allegations of torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention, and other gross violations of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law. The Russian Federation has the obligation to ensure that the rights of persons deprived of liberty are fully respected. I welcome the exchanges of prisoners of war that occurred during the reporting period. I commend the efforts of all involved and urge the sides to increase the scope and pace of these exchanges.

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<sup>52</sup> See the statement by the “Governor of Sevastopol” appointed by the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation, available at <https://t.me/razvozhaev/8878>.

<sup>53</sup> See also [A/79/258](#), para. 64.

68. I urge the Russian Federation to ensure that the rights to freedom of expression and opinion, association, thought, conscience and religion can be freely exercised by all individuals and groups living in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine without discrimination on any grounds or unjustified interference. In particular, consistent with international human rights law, individuals must be able to peacefully express their opinions that may be considered critical of the Russian authorities, the temporary occupation, and the war in Ukraine without fear of retaliation, imprisonment or other sanctions. Individuals should not be subjected to any arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy and family.

69. No individual should be criminally charged or detained simply for practising their religion, including in the forms of collective worship and proselytizing, in accordance with international human rights law. Religious groups in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine should enjoy access to their places of worship and be able to gather freely for prayer and other religious practices.

70. I urge the Russian Federation to immediately cease transfers of protected persons, including detainees, from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The Russian Federation should ensure that all protected persons previously transferred within or transferred out of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine are allowed to return to their homes.

71. I urge the Russian Federation to provide full information about Ukrainian children forcibly transferred within the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine or deported to the Russian Federation, including those in institutional care and those placed with Russian families, to the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross, to refrain from making any changes to their personal status, including nationality, and to facilitate their reunification with family. I also urge the Russian Federation to abolish the simplified procedure allowing guardians to apply for Russian citizenship on behalf of Ukrainian children.

72. I urge the Russian Federation to cease all measures that effectively compel Ukrainian children to swear allegiance to the Russian Federation, dismantle military training and educational programmes aimed at securing future enlistment of children into the Russian armed forces, and end the enlistment of children in formations or organizations subordinate to the Russian Federation, such as those providing “patriotic-military” education. The Russian Federation should restore access to education following the Ukrainian State curriculum both in person and online, ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language, and guarantee that instruction in, and learning of, the Crimean Tatar language satisfy the demand for such education options.

73. The Russian Federation must immediately cease its confiscation of private property in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and rescind the requirement to be a Russian citizen in order to own, buy or sell property. I also urge it to restore the property rights of all former owners deprived of their property titles as a result of the “nationalization” and confiscation processes carried out in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

74. I appeal to the Russian Federation to prevent, investigate and prosecute all alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed by its forces, including allegations of conflict-related sexual violence, to hold perpetrators to account and to ensure due reparations for victims and survivors, in accordance with a gender-sensitive approach.

75. I call upon all Member States to continue to support the work of the United Nations to ensure respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It remains essential for Member States to renew discussions to facilitate unimpeded access by international and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.