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**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives**

## **Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, submitted in accordance with paragraph 11 (f) of Human Rights Council resolution 49/1, on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression.

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\* A/77/150.

## Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine

### *Summary*

In this report, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine will refer to findings about events during late February and March 2022 in the four regions of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy, as requested by Human Rights Council resolution S-34/1.

During this first phase of its investigations, the Commission has found that war crimes, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed in Ukraine since 24 February 2022. Russian armed forces are responsible for the vast majority of the violations identified.

Ukrainian forces have also committed international humanitarian law violations in some cases, including two incidents that qualify as war crimes.

The Commission, composed of three experts, applies a “reasonable grounds to conclude” standard of proof in reaching its conclusions, based on a body of verified information.

The relentless use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas has killed and injured scores of civilians and devastated entire neighbourhoods. The Commission documented indiscriminate attacks using cluster munitions, unguided rockets, and air strikes in the context of Russian armed forces’ attempts to capture towns and smaller settlements.

These weapons systems are highly likely to have indiscriminate effects and cause significant harm to civilians. Indeed, most of the verified deaths since the outset of the hostilities have been caused by these weapons. Residential buildings, schools, and hospitals, among other parts of the civilian infrastructure, have been damaged or destroyed.

The Commission also found that Russian armed forces have shot at civilians attempting to flee and that during the conduct of hostilities, parties have deployed their military assets and troops in ways that can endanger civilians, in contravention of international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, the Commission documented patterns of summary executions, unlawful confinement, torture, ill-treatment, rape and other sexual violence committed in areas occupied by Russian armed forces across the four regions on which it focused. People have been detained, some have been unlawfully deported to the Russian Federation, and many are still reported missing. Sexual violence has affected victims of all ages. Victims, including children, were sometimes forced to witness the crimes.

Children have become the victims of the full spectrum of violations investigated by the Commission, including indiscriminate attacks, torture, and rape, suffering the predictable psychological consequences.

These violations continue to have a devastating effect for victims and survivors. Significantly, victims emphasised the essential role of justice and accountability. In this regard, the Commission recommends enhanced coordination of international and national accountability efforts, to improve effectiveness and prevent harm to victims and witnesses. The Commission, consistent with its mandate, will seek to contribute to the identification of those responsible.

## I. Introduction

1. The first report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine on the progress of its work and preliminary findings is hereby submitted to the General Assembly.
2. In its resolution 49/1, adopted on 4 March 2022, the Human Rights Council decided to urgently establish an Independent International Commission of Inquiry to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, and related crimes in the context of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine. The Council mandated the Commission to ascertain the facts, circumstances, and root causes of such violations, and, where possible, to identify those responsible, as well as to make recommendations, in particular on accountability measures.
3. The Human Rights Council called upon the Commission to collect, preserve, and analyse evidence, including through field engagement and in cooperation with judicial and other entities; and to provide it with an oral update at its fifty-first session and a comprehensive written report at its fifty-second session, and the General Assembly with a written report at its seventy-seventh session.
4. On 30 March 2022, the President of the Human Rights Council announced the appointment of Erik Møse (Norway), Jasminka Džumhur (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Pablo de Greiff (Colombia) to serve as the three independent members of the Commission, with Mr. Møse serving as chair.
5. In resolution S-34/1, adopted on 12 May 2022, on the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine, the Council further requested the Commission to conduct an inquiry to address the events in the areas of the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions in late February and in March 2022, including their gender dimension, with a view to holding those responsible to account, and to include its findings in its report to the Council.

## II. Methods of work

### A. The Commission's mandate and methodology

6. The Commission considers all violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law and related crimes, committed in Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, as well as outside Ukraine's territory, as long as such events occurred in the context of the aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Guided by the principles of independence, impartiality, objectivity, and integrity, the Commission examines allegations of violations regardless of the identity or nationality of the alleged responsible individual or entity. In addition to making recommendations regarding criminal accountability, identifying responsible individuals or entities, where possible, the Commission will make recommendations about other dimensions of accountability, to which victims also have rights.
7. The Commission adopts a victim-centred approach in all aspects of its work respecting, strictly, the "do no harm" principle, including in relation to guarantees of confidentiality of the information received and the protection of victims and witnesses.
8. Given the large number of allegations of violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law falling under its mandate, the limited resources and time available, the challenges to access certain victims, witnesses, and areas affected by the hostilities, the Commission cannot possibly examine all reported incidents. It focuses on incidents selected based on the gravity of the allegations, their significance in demonstrating patterns of alleged violations, the access to victims, witnesses and supporting documentation, and the incidents' geographic locations. Particular consideration is given to the gender dimensions of violations and on the impact on women, children, and people affected by intersectional inequalities.
9. Findings rely primarily on first-hand information, including through interviews with witnesses and victims of alleged violations and abuses. The Commission seeks further

corroboration from available primary and secondary sources from States, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, civil society organisations, media, and other relevant actors. It also issued a call for submissions of information and documentation relevant to its mandate.

10. Consistent with the standard of proof followed by most international commissions of inquiry, the Commission includes findings in its report when, based on a body of verified information, an objective and ordinary prudent observer would have “reasonable grounds to conclude” that the facts took place as described. It draws legal conclusions when there are reasonable grounds to conclude that the facts meet all the elements of a violation or abuse, and, where possible, that an individual or entity is responsible for the violation or abuse.

11. As of the moment of the submission of the present report, the Commission travelled five times to Ukraine and visited 27 cities, towns, and settlements to conduct its inquiry into the events. The team collected and preserved evidence of violations and related crimes.

12. In preparing the report, the Commission relied on 191 interviews with 110 women and 81 men, conducted in person and remotely, inspected sites of destruction, graves, places of detention and torture, as well as weapon remnants, and consulted a large number of documents and reports. It met with Government authorities, international organisations, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders.

13. The Commission expresses its gratitude to those who shared their – often-traumatic – experiences, and appreciates the assistance provided by Governments, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and civil society organisations.

## **B. Legal framework**

14. Pursuant to resolution 49/1, international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law constitute the law applicable to the mandate of the Commission.

15. As for international human rights law, both Ukraine and the Russian Federation are party to seven of the nine core human rights instruments.<sup>1</sup> Ukraine is additionally party to another core human rights treaty, namely the Convention on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Both States have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

16. Regarding international humanitarian law, both Ukraine and the Russian Federation are party to, among others, the four Geneva Conventions of 1949.<sup>2</sup> Ukraine acceded to Additional Protocols I, II and III of the Geneva Conventions, while the Russian Federation acceded to Additional Protocols I and II, and signed Additional Protocol III. Along with treaty law, the Commission will also apply customary international humanitarian law. Relevant provisions and rules of international humanitarian law are also binding upon non-State actors that may be involved in the conflict.

17. The situation in Ukraine is an international armed conflict, pursuant to common article 2 of the four Geneva Conventions, due to armed hostilities existing between two States, through their respective armed forces or other actors acting on their behalf.

18. In terms of international criminal, the Commission will apply relevant international treaties and customary international law. Neither Ukraine nor the Russian Federation are State Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, the ICC has jurisdiction in Ukraine, pursuant to two declarations lodged by Ukraine and referrals

<sup>1</sup> The seven human rights instruments are: (1) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; (2) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; (3) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; (4) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; (5) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; (6) Convention on the Rights of the Child, and (7) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> For a full list of international humanitarian law treaties and protocols signed or ratified/acceded to by Ukraine and the Russian Federation, see <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/vwTreatiesByCountry.xsp>.

by ICC State Parties.<sup>3</sup> The Rome Statute and its Elements of Crimes provide detailed elements for some of the alleged crimes. The Statute's ratification by a majority of the Member States of the United Nations reflects, on the whole, the definition of these crimes under customary international law.<sup>4</sup> Where the ICC is found to lack jurisdiction, the Commission will apply the elements of crimes within the Rome Statute so long as they reflect customary international law.

### **C. Cooperation and coordination**

19. In accordance with resolution 49/1, the Commission expects to receive full cooperation from a broad range of actors in the course of its investigations. It has sought cooperation and dialogue with the governments of Ukraine and the Russian Federation to, among other things, secure access to the areas where it conducts its investigations and to obtain responses regarding particular aspects of its inquiry. It provided both States with advanced copies of the preliminary findings.

20. The Commission appreciates the cooperation extended by the Government of Ukraine. It regrets that attempts to establish meaningful communication with Russian Federation authorities have been unsuccessful and will persist in its efforts.

21. The Commission builds on the work of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). To ensure its independence and impartiality, the Commission follows well-established processes for such cooperation and conducts its own investigations independently and separately from any United Nations or other entity.

22. In the view of the Commission, sound coordination between entities engaged in the documentation of the violations and crimes in Ukraine is key to ensure efficiency, avoid the duplication of efforts, and the retraumatizing of victims and witnesses. It has therefore engaged with the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, as well as with other relevant international and national entities.

### **D. Accountability and sharing of information and evidence**

23. Information and documentation collected by the Commission will be shared with competent investigative, prosecutorial, and judicial authorities to facilitate and expedite criminal proceedings, under conditions of fairness, due process, non-applicability of the death penalty, and compliance with other relevant human rights standards. The consent of witnesses and other interlocutors for external uses of the information is fundamental in handling such requests. The Commission uses protocols for informed consent from the victims and witnesses during its investigations. In each case, risks to victims, witnesses or information providers and respect for confidentiality will be considered.

## **III. Events since 24 February 2022**

### **A. Background**

24. On 24 February 2022, Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, disclosed the launching of a "special military operation" to "seek the demilitarization and de-Nazification" of Ukraine. On 24 February 2022, Russian armed forces<sup>5</sup> crossed various border points into Ukraine, including from Belarus, and launched attacks by land, air and sea.

<sup>3</sup> For more information regarding the ICC's jurisdiction including Ukraine's two declarations, see <https://www.icc-cpi.int/ukraine>.

<sup>4</sup> This follows from the practices of other OHCHR mechanisms, such as the Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, A/HRC/25/CRP.1, 7 February 2014, fn.1451.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of the present report, Russian armed forces will be used for all combatants who are identified as such or as directly affiliated.

During the preceding days, President Putin had recognized the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, in eastern Ukraine, as independent republics. The Federation Council of Russia subsequently approved the military operation in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup>

25. Calls for an immediate cessation of the hostilities followed. After a draft resolution demanding that the Russian Federation cease its use of force against Ukraine failed to pass in the Security Council owing to Russian Federation veto, on 2 March 2022, the General Assembly demanded “that the Russian Federation immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine” and “immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine”.<sup>7</sup> On 4 March 2022, the Human Rights Council stressed “the urgent need for the Russian Federation to immediately cease its military hostilities against Ukraine”.<sup>8</sup> On 16 March 2022, the International Court of Justice ordered the Russian Federation to “suspend the military operations”.<sup>9</sup> States and regional bodies condemned the military operation, called for its cessation, and imposed far-reaching economic sanctions and other measures. Direct and indirect negotiation attempts have not yielded success so far.

## **B. Military operations**

26. The Ukrainian authorities declared martial law and ordered a general mobilisation. Military strikes using explosive weapons had been launched by Russian Federation armed forces across Ukraine, including in areas situated far from frontlines, causing significant civilian casualties and large-scale destruction of residential buildings and of critical infrastructure.

27. On the northern front, on 24 February 2022, Russian armed forces advanced towards Kyiv and captured key areas to the north and west of the city. They surrounded Chernihiv and subjected the city to heavy airstrikes and artillery fire, which severed it from essential supply and evacuation routes.

28. By the end of March 2022, the offensive on Kyiv stalled. As Russian armed forces withdrew from localities which they had temporarily occupied, dozens of dead people and large-scale destruction were uncovered. Following these reports, the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the Russian Federation to be suspended from the Human Rights Council.<sup>10</sup>

29. In north-eastern Ukraine, Kharkiv and Sumy cities quickly became the scenes of heavy urban warfare. Shelling pounded residential and other key buildings and led to large-scale destruction. By April 2022, Russian armed forces withdrew from Sumy area. In May 2022, a Ukrainian counter-offensive forced Russian armed forces to retreat from Kharkiv. Nevertheless, artillery strikes on Kharkiv city and localities nearby continued in the next phase of the operations.

30. In southern Ukraine, Russian armed forces attacked Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Zaporizhzhia regions, and occupied several cities and localities. As of 26 February 2022, Russian armed forces launched an offensive on Mariupol. The city suffered from constant shelling, which led to large-scale destruction. For weeks, heavy fighting hampered repeated efforts to evacuate civilians and curtailed inhabitants’ access to basic necessities. Tens of thousands of civilians have fled. On 20 May 2022, the Russian Federation declared that it gained full control of the city.

31. Meanwhile, as of 19 April 2022, a “second phase” of the war concentrated mainly on the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and on the southern front. Intense, weeks-long fighting revolved in and around the city of Sievierodonetsk, until its eventual capture by Russian armed forces in June, and in Zaporizhzhia region. Fighting also raged in the Kharkiv region,

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<sup>6</sup> “Letter dated 24 February 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General”, S/2022/154, 24 February 2022.

<sup>7</sup> A/RES/ES-11/1.

<sup>8</sup> A/HRC/RES/49/1.

<sup>9</sup> International Court of Justice, [Order](#), 16 March 2022.

<sup>10</sup> A/RES/ES-11/3.

until Ukrainian armed forces'<sup>11</sup> counter-offensive recovered large swaths of territory in September 2022.

32. The conduct of military operations from within or around Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear plants, and the Russian Federation's threat of using its nuclear capabilities, became a major concern for the international community.

### **C. Impact on civilians**

33. Civilian casualties continue to grow. Since 24 February and as of 17 October 2022, OHCHR has recorded 6,306 killed and 9,602 wounded for all of Ukraine. From 24 February until 31 March 2022, in the four regions under the Commission's investigation, 1,237 civilians, including 112 children, were killed, according to OHCHR. Actual figures are likely much higher. Months of fighting have gravely impacted the country's infrastructure, with thousands of residential buildings, medical and education facilities destroyed or severely damaged. As of mid-October 2022, millions lost homes and livelihoods, and were forced to flee. Over seven million people from Ukraine have sought refuge abroad and over six million are internally displaced. In most of the affected areas within Ukraine, essential supplies are lacking and there are access challenges for humanitarian assistance.

34. Some people, however, remained in their homes. Older persons, in particular, have remained in their places despite the danger, because they may have no place to go, wish to protect their homes, may not want to burden their families, or may be prevented from leaving by disabilities. Many of them are trapped on or near the frontlines, isolated with critical need of food, water, heating, medical, and mental health support. Their difficulties will be further exacerbated in winter.

35. The ongoing hostilities have hampered the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Countless allegations of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, and related crimes, have been reported. On 28 February 2022, the Prosecutor of the ICC opened an investigation into allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.<sup>12</sup> Numerous other international and national entities have initiated investigations on allegations of crimes committed in Ukraine.

## **IV. Violations of international law**

36. The Commission has so far carried out investigations in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy regions, and focused on the events in February and March 2022, as specified in resolution S-34/1. The Commission has concentrated on behavior during the conduct of hostilities, including the use of explosive weapons, the destruction of hospitals and schools, and on violations against personal integrity, including executions, torture and ill-treatment, unlawful confinement, and sexual and gender-based violence. It has also investigated violations affecting children.

37. During its inquiry, the Commission established that human rights and international humanitarian law violations, as well as related crimes, have been committed in all regions on which it has focused so far.

### **A. Conduct of hostilities**

#### **1. Overview**

38. Summarising findings elaborated below, the Commission has found that violations of human rights, international humanitarian law, and war crimes have been committed during the conduct of hostilities. The Commission documented attacks where explosive weapons were used indiscriminately in populated areas that were under attack by Russian armed

<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of the present report, Ukrainian armed forces will be used for all combatants who are identified as such or as directly affiliated.

<sup>12</sup> Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Karim A.A. Khan QC, on the Situation in Ukraine, 2 March 2022.

forces. The Commission also found that Russian armed forces attacked civilians attempting to flee. There are also examples of both parties to the armed conflict, although to different degrees, failing to protect civilians or civilian objects against the effects of attacks, by locating military objects and forces within or near densely populated areas.

## 2. Impact of explosive weapons on civilian areas

39. The use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas has caused 1,495 deaths and injuries in the four regions during the period under review, according to OHCHR, which is 70 per cent of civilians killed and injured in these areas. The actual numbers are likely higher. The Commission has independently investigated attacks with explosive weapons. Such attacks had vast consequences in the regions of its focus, for instance in Chernihiv, Sumy, and Kharkiv cities, and impacted all segments of the population.

40. Attacks with explosive weapons had a devastating effect on buildings and infrastructure. Thousands of residential buildings, schools, hospitals, and facilities hosting essential infrastructure in the four regions have been damaged or destroyed. The Commission observed first-hand the extent of the damage in all 27 settlements it visited. In Chernihiv, the Commission saw dozens of houses and other buildings that had been destroyed or damaged during the attempt by Russian armed forces to take the city. In Kharkiv, explosive weapons devastated entire areas of the city.

41. Fighting and attacks affected a significant number of hospitals, which generally have protected status under international humanitarian law. The Commission documented the damage to or the destruction of five hospitals, including three in Chernihiv, one in Sumy, and one in Kharkiv.<sup>13</sup> Four<sup>14</sup> of these hospitals were operating when they were hit by explosive weapons. Three<sup>15</sup> were severely or completely damaged, which impacted the civilian population's access to health services.

42. The Commission has also documented attacks with explosive weapons which affected educational institutions. It visited seven such institutions, where it observed the damage first-hand.

43. The extensive use of explosive weapons has caused immediate and long-lasting trauma, damage, and has heavily disrupted people's lives, forcing them to flee or live in fear. One older woman, who fled as hostilities raged in Kharkiv area, told the Commission: *"I don't live, I just exist; I have nothing left in my soul."*

## 3. Indiscriminate attacks with explosive weapons

44. The Commission has concluded that several attacks with explosive weapons that it investigated were indiscriminate and that feasible precautions to reduce civilian harm were not taken, in violation of international humanitarian law. An indiscriminate attack is not directed at a specific military objective, or employs a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective or the effects of which cannot be limited, as required by international humanitarian law.

45. Such attacks are particularly challenging to investigate and to attribute, according to the Commission's standard of proof, because they occur in the context of fluid and rapidly evolving situations and the parties to the armed conflict use similar weapon systems. The Commission's investigations are ongoing. The evidence obtained so far strongly suggests that the Russian armed forces have committed indiscriminate attacks.

46. The indiscriminate attacks documented so far took place in areas controlled by Ukrainian armed forces, during Russian armed forces attempts to capture those areas. In Chernihiv city, for example, when Russian armed forces surrounded the city between 25 February<sup>16</sup> and 31 March 2022, multiple indiscriminate attacks with the use of explosive

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<sup>13</sup> Chernihiv Regional Children's Hospital, Chernihiv Central District Hospital, Trostianets Hospital, Iziium Hospital, Chernihiv Cardiology Dispensary.

<sup>14</sup> All except the Chernihiv District Hospital, although there were still some patients there.

<sup>15</sup> Chernihiv Central District Hospital, Iziium Hospital, Chernihiv Cardiology Dispensary.

<sup>16</sup> [TASS](#), 25 February 2022, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation announced that units of the Russian armed forces have "completed the blockade of Chernihiv" (available in Russian only).



weapons occurred. In Sumy, attacks occurred in the context of Russian armed forces' repeated attempts to seize the city through ground battles and airstrikes.

47. In reaching the conclusion that the attacks were indiscriminate, the Commission has taken into account the potential existence of military objectives. In some of the cases, the Commission collected credible information about the presence of Ukrainian armed forces, which might have been the intended target of the attack, at or near the impact locations. Nevertheless, the type and number of munitions used impacted civilians and civilian objects in a wider area, beyond the apparent military objective, therefore constituting indiscriminate attacks.

48. The Commission documented indiscriminate attacks with the use of cluster munitions, which affect a large area and are therefore indiscriminate when used in populated areas. For instance, in Chernihiv city, on 17 March 2022, an attack with cluster munitions struck the Chernihiv Children's Hospital, at a time when some of the victims were queuing for water in the premises of the hospital. It killed several civilians and injured dozens, including four children.

49. The Commission documented indiscriminate attacks with the use of unguided rockets, which cannot be precisely targeted, affect a large area when fired in salvos, and are therefore indiscriminate when used in populated areas. On 16 March 2022, several munitions, including unguided rockets, struck an area in Chernihiv where more than 200 civilians were queuing for bread near a supermarket, and killed at least 14 civilians and injured 26.<sup>17</sup>

50. Significant civilian harm both in terms of casualties and damage to buildings and infrastructure resulted from indiscriminate airstrikes using multiple unguided bombs in populated areas. On 3 March 2022, an airplane dropped several unguided bombs on a residential area around the intersection of the Chornovola and Kruhova streets in Chernihiv city, killing at least 14 civilians and injuring dozens. The Commission saw large craters and destruction indicating that at least six munitions struck within an area of about 130 meters, causing significant damage to the infrastructure. Around the same time, also in Chernihiv, an airplane dropped several unguided bombs in the Podusivka district, about two kilometres east of the first attack, killing at least six civilians, including one child. The impact of the attack spanned over 500 meters and affected a large area, which included two schools and residential buildings. In both cases, the Commission identified potential military objectives in the vicinity, which might have been the intended target. However, the area impacted was much larger and the attacks were therefore indiscriminate.

51. On 7 March 2022, in Sumy city, an airstrike dropped at least two bombs on a residential area, killing at least 15 civilians and injured six civilians. The Commission saw two impact sites, where six houses were entirely destroyed. Other residential buildings were significantly damaged in a radius of more than 100 meters from where the bombs landed. The only potential military objective identified in the vicinity was a mobilisation office, that according to residents, was not in use at that time.

#### **4. Endangering civilians**

52. The Commission has found that in several cases, Russian armed forces appear to have deliberately positioned their troops or equipment in residential areas or near civilians to reduce the likelihood of attacks. Russian armed forces also forced civilians to remain inside or in proximity of their positions, exposing them to significant risk.

53. In Kozarovychi village, Kyiv region, an old woman reported that when Russian armed forces arrived in late February, soldiers came to her house with orders to find hiding places for their vehicles. The woman and other local residents told the Commission that Russian armed forces placed military vehicles between residential houses, in backyards, and in garages, and shot at Ukrainian positions from between the houses. In Lypivka village, Kyiv region, a woman and her daughter said that when Russian armed forces occupied the area on

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<sup>17</sup> When various credible sources reported different causality figures, the Commission chose the reasonable minimum figures that are confirmed, but acknowledges that in many cases these figures are likely higher.

28 February, they parked one military vehicle they identified as a tank next to their house while they hid in their basement.

54. Russian armed forces used a similar tactic in March 2022, in Yahidne village, Chernihiv region, where they placed military vehicles between houses and fired at Ukrainian positions from people's backyards. In addition, the soldiers confined 365 civilians in the basement of a school, while they established their headquarters on the ground floor of the same building. Russian armed forces launched attacks on Ukrainian positions, also from the grounds of the school, placing hundreds of civilians confined in the same building at significant risk (see paras. 78-79 below).

55. The Commission further documented that in areas controlled by Ukrainian armed forces, particularly during the first phase of the hostilities, on some occasions, there was also a lack of separation between armed forces and civilians, which placed civilians at risk. In Chernihiv city, residents stated that while schools 18 and 21 were used to distribute humanitarian aid to the civilian population and school staff had written "children" on the walls of one of the school buildings, Ukrainian Territorial Defence Forces had set up headquarters in school 18 and their members were also present at school 21. Both military and civilians were among those killed and injured when an airstrike hit both schools and nearby houses on 3 March 2022. By not separating civilians from their personnel, the Ukrainian armed forces in this case failed to protect civilians under their control from the effects of attacks:

## 5. Attacks on civilians

56. The Commission found numerous cases in which Russian armed forces shot at civilians trying to flee to safety and obtain food or other necessities, which resulted in the killing or injury of the victims. In the cases documented, the victims wore civilian clothes, drove civilian cars, and were unarmed. Most of the incidents took place during daylight, which means that the civilian appearance should have been clear to the attacker. Under international humanitarian law, if in doubt, a person shall be considered to be a civilian. Attacks intentionally targeting civilians are war crimes.

57. Several of the attacks took place as civilians came across Russian military convoys which were on the move. Soldiers shot civilians using assault rifles, or in some cases, vehicle-mounted weapons. These attacks show disregard for the requirement under international humanitarian law to verify that a target is neither civilians nor civilian objects. In some cases, these were deliberate.

58. Several incidents took place along the E40 highway in the Kyiv region, also referred to as the Zhytomyr highway, as Russian armed forces established control over sections of it in late February and March 2022. On 28 February 2022, around noon, soldiers in a military convoy on the highway opened fire at four civilians who were attempting to flee through the fields. One woman was injured in the leg. On 1 March 2022, around 10 a.m., soldiers opened fire on a civilian car near Kopyliv. The couple in the car, both in their 60s, managed to escape uninjured. On 3 March 2022, also around 10 a.m., a married couple and their two children came under attack near Motyzhyn village. The two adults died in the attack. A nine-year-old girl survived, while her sister, aged 15, was wounded and is still missing. Other organisations have documented additional similar incidents in the same area, showing that these cases were not isolated.

59. The Commission is investigating such incidents in multiple locations in all four regions under investigation, suggesting a clear pattern. For example, a Russian military convoy attacked a civilian car in Shevchenkove village, Chernihiv region, and killed two civilians, one man and one woman, on 8 March. A military convoy opened fire on a civilian car near the Vyrivka village, Sumy region, on 27 February, killing a man and injuring his adult son. Russian armed forces soldiers allegedly shot at two civilian cars as people were trying to leave in Stepanky village, Kharkiv region, on 27 March, killing a woman and a girl. One of the cars was marked with a sign saying "children".

## **B. Violations against personal integrity**

### **1. Overview**

60. Summarizing the Commission's findings outlined below, human rights and international humanitarian law violations against people's personal integrity have been committed in towns and settlements which Russian armed forces had occupied in the four regions. These violations included summary executions, torture, ill-treatment, and sexual and gender-based violence, unlawful confinement and detention in inhumane conditions, and forced deportations. Such acts also amount to war crimes.

61. The Commission also found two cases in which Ukrainian armed forces shot, wounded, and tortured persons hors de combat, which are war crimes. While few in numbers, such cases will continue to be the object of the Commission's attention.

62. Residents of the visited localities told the Commission that in late February or early March 2022, Russian armed forces arrived in their settlements and often deployed in local schools, administration buildings, or residential houses. In most places, soldiers went door to door in search for "nazis" or "banderovtsy," which are derogatory terms often used by Russian Federation officials to describe supporters of the Ukrainian government. In many cases, they confiscated people's phones.

63. In the places that Russian armed forces had occupied, local residents described widespread looting and, at times, wanton destruction. Residents spoke of soldiers stealing food and alcohol, personal belongings, valuables, computers, and household items, such as washing machines and microwaves from stores and houses. Soldiers frequently seemed under the influence of alcohol or intoxicated.

64. According to the interviewed interlocutors, the behaviour of Russian armed forces soldiers differed. The Commission has also received reports that some Russian armed forces servicemen helped people escape from captivity, interfered with attempts of others to commit sexual violence, or provided medical assistance to people injured by attacks.

### **2. Summary Executions**

65. Investigations in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy regions reveal a pattern of summary executions in areas temporarily occupied by Russian armed forces in February and March 2022, which are violations of the right to life and war crimes.

66. Many summary executions occurred in Bucha, Kyiv region. Local and international organisations and media outlets have gathered and published extensive documentation on the events in Bucha. The Commission interviewed a local official who was among the first on the scene after Russian armed forces soldiers withdrew and told the Commission that he saw eight dead bodies in the backyard of the house where the soldiers had established their base. Some of them had hands tied behind their backs and presented signs of torture. He also saw more than ten dead bodies of civilians lying on the street. In another incident, five bodies were found in a basement, with hands behind their backs and gunshot wounds. A woman confirmed that her adult son was among the five bodies.

67. Summary executions took place in numerous other localities than Bucha. The Commission is investigating credible allegations of similar executions in 16 other towns and settlements, involving 49 victims. The majority are men of fighting age, but also two women and one 14-year-old boy. The cases are located in all four regions under the Commission's initial focus, suggesting a wide geographical pattern.

68. The summary executions verified by the Commission occurred in places where Russian armed forces took positions for an extended period of time, close to frontlines. This was the case in settlements situated north of Kyiv, where Russian armed forces were forced to halt their advance; to the south of Chernihiv, while Russian armed forces were launching offensives to capture the city; and close to the separation line between Russian armed forces and Ukrainian armed forces in the Sumy region. At the time of writing, the Commission has not been able to access certain areas of the Kharkiv region due to the continuing precarious security situation.

69. In the cases that the Commission is investigating, several elements, often in combination, indicate that the victims were executed. A common element is that victims were last seen in the custody or the presence of Russian armed forces. The bodies of the victims were exhumed from separate or mass graves or recovered from houses or basements which the Russian armed forces had occupied. Some victims' dead bodies were found with hands tied behind their back, a clear indication that the victim was in custody and posed no threat at the time of death.

70. According to witnesses and survivors, some of the perpetrators accused the victims of transmitting information to Ukrainian armed forces, of collaborating with the Ukrainian armed forces, or of any other contribution to the fighting against Russian armed forces. In a case documented in Vyshneve village, Chernihiv region, which was occupied by Russian armed forces from 28 February to 4 April 2022, witnesses reported that, on 18 March 2022, as they searched for individuals behind an attack on one of their convoys, Russian armed forces arrested three adult brothers. They tied the victims' hands behind their backs, blindfolded them, and beat them severely for three days, after which they shot and buried them in a shallow grave. Two of the brothers died and the third was injured but survived.

71. The Commission's investigations show that the cause of death of the victims is consistent with methods typically used during executions: gunshot wounds to the heads, blunt trauma, or slit throats. In some cases, there was also evidence of torture on the bodies, such as bruises, wounds and fractures (see paras. 81-85 below).

72. A case that illustrates several of these patterns, is the killing of six men in Staryi Bykiv village, Chernihiv region. Witnesses detailed how Russian armed forces troops apprehended several local residents on 27 February 2022, the day they took control of the village, as they were searching for people who had operated a drone that killed one of their soldiers. The perpetrators took the men to their base. Relatives heard screams and gunshots from where the soldiers detained the victims. The next day, they saw the bodies of six men lying on the street where the incident took place but were not permitted to access the location until nine days later, when Russian armed forces finally allowed them to pick up the bodies. The bodies had multiple gunshot wounds, stab wounds, a slit throat, and broken ribs.

73. While summary executions were mainly perpetrated following unlawful detention, the Commission also documented cases in which victims were executed in public places, as others were watching. In Vesele village, Kharkiv region, two witnesses reported that Russian armed forces soldiers beat and shot dead a person whom they dragged off a bus that was transporting people to the Russian Federation. After the execution, the perpetrators told the other passengers that the victim had been shot and killed because he had been transmitting information to the Ukrainian armed forces.

74. The violent loss of a close family member has a profound effect on the survivors. Families described the trauma, anguish, and anger they feel as a consequence of these events. The mother of a man executed in the Kyiv region stated: *"I still wake up at night, stand in the dark and scream, call for my son, and cry out of pain"*.

### **3. Unlawful confinement, inhumane treatment, and forcible transfers**

75. In late February and March 2022, Russian armed forces unlawfully confined large numbers of civilians in areas which they controlled, which is a violation of the right to liberty and a war crime. Victims included local authorities, state personnel, veterans of the Ukrainian armed forces, volunteers evacuating civilians, and civilians who seem to have been randomly arrested. While the majority were young or middle-aged men, women, children, and older persons were also confined. In several cases, perpetrators searched the houses and the phones of the victims.

76. Russian armed forces detained individuals in makeshift facilities established in buildings they had occupied, such as the basement of a school, an industrial facility, an agricultural facility, a train station, an airport, and other dwellings. Victims were often not informed of the reasons behind their detention, these acts were not reviewed by a judicial authority, and families were not informed of their whereabouts. Some are still reported missing.

77. In the majority of cases, the detention took place under conditions so severe that the confinement amounted to inhuman conditions, which is a violation of the right to be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person during deprivation of liberty, and a war crime. Detention was frequently prolonged, facilities were cramped and overcrowded, at times with dozens of people forced to share a small space and to sleep on the floor. Men, women, and children were held together in the same space. There was a lack of light, ventilation, and heating during freezing March temperatures. Some were confined in a metal cellar. Access to food, water, and medical care was limited, and sanitary conditions were lacking. Unlawful confinement was often the precursor to executions, sexual violence, torture, and ill-treatment.

78. In Yahidne village, Chernihiv region, Russian armed forces soldiers confined 365 civilians, including 70 children, for 28 days in the basement of a local school, where they had established their position in March 2022. Victims reported that soldiers threatened to shoot them if they did not assemble in the basement. Soldiers demanded that residents hand in all their phones. The conditions of detention were inhumane. According to the victims, the space was so crowded that some were forced to stand or sleep on chairs for weeks. There was no light or ventilation, and the air was hot and suffocating. Water was dripping from ceilings and walls and there were no showers or toilets.

79. The soldiers degraded and violated the dignity of the detainees. There was very limited access to food and water, and close to no access to medical care. The victims had to seek permission to exit the premises or to use the toilet, which was only given sporadically. In the yard, the soldiers randomly shot near the victims to scare them. Ten older persons died during the confinement as a result of the inhumane conditions, and others developed health problems. The Commission visited the basement and saw the writings of the confined victims on the wall listing the names of those who died.

80. In some of the cases documented by the Commission, after initial detention in Ukraine, individuals were forcibly transferred and unlawfully deported through Belarus, or directly, to the Russian Federation, which is a violation of international humanitarian law. In the Russian Federation, victims were further held in detention facilities. Some victims stated that during their transit in Belarus, Russian armed forces registered them and provided them with Russian Federation identity cards. Witnesses reported seeing dozens of Ukrainian detainees in detention facilities in the Russian Federation. Many people are still missing from the areas that were under Russian armed forces occupation. For example, the Commission received from local residents in Dymyri a list of 58 people still missing in Kyiv region. Many of them were last seen in the custody of Russian armed forces. While relatives have received confirmation that some of them are in detention in the Russian Federation, the fate of many is still unknown.

#### **4. Torture, ill-treatment, and wounding of protected persons**

81. The Commission has documented many cases of torture and ill-treatment committed by Russian armed forces, which is a violation of the prohibition against torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and a war crime. Perpetrators targeted local authorities or employees of the local administration, veterans of the Ukrainian armed forces, and volunteers helping Ukrainian armed forces. They also targeted individuals evacuating civilians. Torture and ill-treatment occurred during unlawful confinement in detention facilities in Ukraine and in the Russian Federation. Victims were mostly men but included women as well.

82. According to victims, Russian armed forces carried out long interrogation sessions, sometimes lasting for days, which were combined with threats, intimidation, ill-treatment, sexual violence, and torture. These were aimed at extracting information about the Ukrainian armed forces, their positions, local resistance groups, or to identify collaborators with Ukrainian armed forces. Perpetrators also accused victims of sharing information with Ukrainian armed forces and committing attacks and sabotage against Russian armed forces. Victims reported that soldiers called the victims “fascists” and “livestock”.

83. Russian armed forces inflicted severe physical and mental pain and suffering upon the victims during detention in Ukraine. Some of the treatments administered included hands tied

or handcuffed, legs tied, eyes blindfolded with cloth, tape, or bags placed on heads, severe and prolonged beatings with rifle butts or batons, electric shocks with tasers, threats of execution or mock executions, and prolonged exposure to cold. In some cases, victims were executed after torture (see paras. 69-72 above). One of the victims who had been detained and tortured by Russian armed forces in the Kyiv region told the Commission that throughout the detention, during which torture was continuous, it was as if the “*body shut down and switched to a survival mode*”. Victims also described acts of forced nudity during prolonged times, in front of others, which also amount to sexual violence.

84. After transfer and detention in the Russian Federation, victims described how they were stripped naked again, were forced to stand naked in front of others for hours, or had hands and feet tied, and underwent long beating sessions. One victim was severely beaten during two days after refusing to declare support for the Russian Federation on camera. Another victim was forced to stand naked and shout “*glory to Russia*” while being beaten and described beatings as a “*punishment for speaking Ukrainian*” and “*not remembering the lyrics of the anthem of the Russian Federation*”.

85. Survivors sustained short-term and long-term injuries and trauma, such as broken facial bones, ribs, knees, and fingers, bruises, or injuries leading to the inability to walk.

86. The Commission has also documented two cases in which Ukrainian armed forces shot, wounded, and tortured captured Russian armed forces soldiers, which are war crimes. Upon their capture, these soldiers acquired prisoners of war status and were protected under international humanitarian law. The Prosecutor General’s Office of Ukraine informed that his office has opened criminal proceedings regarding both cases.

87. In the first case, in Mala Rohan, Kharkiv region, between 24 and 26 March 2022, Ukrainian armed forces soldiers deliberately shot three captured Russian armed forces soldiers in the legs at close range and beat one of them with a rifle butt, while interrogating them. In the second case, near Dmytrivka, Kyiv region, around 29 March 2022, a Ukrainian armed forces soldier shot three times at close range, and wounded, an already wounded Russian armed forces soldier. A video shows other motionless Russian armed forces soldiers nearby, including one with hands tied behind his back and an apparent wound to his head, suggesting that he had likely been executed.

## 5. Sexual and gender-based violence

88. In the period and locations under review, the Commission has been investigating cases of rape committed by some Russian armed forces soldiers in localities that came under their control, which are war crimes. Victims range from four to over 80 years old. Perpetrators raped the women and girls in their homes or took them and raped them in unoccupied dwellings. In most cases, these acts also amount to torture and cruel or inhumane treatment for the victims and for relatives who were forced to watch. Other incidents of sexual violence were also documented against women, men, and girls. The Commission continues to investigate the extent to which sexual and gender-based violence constituted a widespread pattern.

89. Cases relating to sexual and gender-based violence are challenging to investigate. Victims face obstacles in reporting such violations. Because of the current security situation and forced displacement, victims have difficulties accessing appropriate healthcare, psychological support services, as well as law enforcement offices in a timely fashion. It is also not always possible to document forensically the existence of rape and the full extent of the victims’ trauma. Autopsy reports often focus on the immediate cause of death rather than the entirety of the trauma sustained by the victims, because of a lack of resources, of families’ requests that the post-mortem examination not be carried out, or of the condition of the remains.

90. In Kyiv region, in March 2022, two Russian soldiers entered a home, raped a 22-year-old woman several times, committed acts of sexual violence on her husband, and forced the couple to have sexual intercourse in their presence. Then, one of the soldiers forced their four-year-old daughter to perform oral sex on him, which is rape. The Commission is currently investigating three other credible allegations of Russian armed forces raping women and teenage girls in the same village. In another village, Russian armed forces took

a woman out of her house, and forced her to go to a neighbouring house, where one of the Russian armed forces soldiers shot dead a man who tried to defend his wife. The Russian armed forces soldiers took both women to another house that served as their base. The two Russian armed forces soldiers proceeded to different rooms to rape and sexually assault the two women.

91. In another village in the Kyiv region, at the beginning of March 2022, a Russian armed forces soldier entered the house of a 50-year-old woman. After shooting her husband, who tried to interfere, he took the woman to a nearby empty house where he raped her until another Russian armed forces military unit arrived and took him away. Her husband died of his injuries two days later as he could not be taken to the hospital. The Commission is investigating another case of alleged sexual violence in the same time period in the same neighbourhood.

92. In a nearby village, at the beginning of March 2022, two Russian armed forces servicemen repeatedly raped a 33-year-old woman after killing her husband. One of the alleged perpetrators has been identified and criminal proceedings have been initiated *in absentia* against him. The Commission is investigating another incident which occurred later that month in the same village. A 56-year-old woman explained how two of the three Russian armed forces servicemen who broke into her home gang-raped her as the third one watched while masturbating. They stole food and money from her. She learned a couple of weeks later that, in a separate incident, her husband had been tortured and executed.

93. In Chernihiv and another region, the Commission has been investigating two cases of rape against women over 80 years old. An 83-year-old woman described how, while her village was occupied by Russian armed forces, she was raped by a Russian armed forces serviceman in her house where her physically disabled husband was also present. In another instance, neighbours found the body of an older woman, partially undressed and with blood around her vagina. At the request of the family, the authorities did not perform a full autopsy.

94. Also in Chernihiv region in March 2022, Russian armed forces occupied a home for more than one week. The unit commander repeatedly sexually abused a 16-year-old girl during that time and threatened to kill other family members who tried to protect her. Two of the Russian armed forces servicemen have been subsequently identified.

95. The Commission also found an instance in Chernihiv region, in March 2022, where a Russian armed forces serviceman broke into a house, threatened the inhabitants with his weapon and attempted to rape a woman in front of her three-year-old son. The neighbours, alerted by the noise, ran to the house, while others went to alert his commander.

96. In Kharkiv region, the Commission is investigating two cases regarding the repeated rape over a three-month period, of an adolescent girl, allegedly by a Russian armed forces soldier, and the repeated rape reportedly by a Russian armed forces serviceman of a 31-year-old woman who was taking shelter in a school basement.

97. In several incidents documented by the Commission, Russian armed forces committed sexual violence against men and women under their custody, often resorting to forced nudity in a coercive and humiliating environment.

98. Survivors and their families remain deeply traumatized by the ordeal they endured. One victim told the Commission: “*this experience is very shameful for me and I am extremely scared and intimidated*”. In addition, the stigma that continues to surround sexual violence requires patience until victims feel safe and adequately cared for to speak out about what happened. Some victims refuse to speak. Some have considered suicide. One psychologist working with survivors said: “*all victims with whom I am working are blaming themselves for being spotted by perpetrators and being raped*”.

### C. Impact on children

99. The events of late February and March 2022 in the four regions had a devastating and continuing impact on children’s rights and lives. Children of all ages were killed or wounded in their homes, shelters, streets, and playgrounds. OHCHR has verified the deaths of 112

children, including 36 girls, 62 boys, and 14 whose sex could not be determined, in the four regions during the period under review.

100. Many children died as a consequence of attacks with explosive weapons in populated areas (see paras. 44-51 above). The Commission investigated attacks in which children were victims. On 25 February 2022, in Okhtyrka town, Sumy region, for example, two attacks with explosive weapons killed a seven-year-old girl and injured an eight-year-old boy. On 7 March 2022, in Sumy city, an attack killed four children between the ages of six and 16. In the city of Chernihiv, several airstrikes killed one boy and injured seven children on 3 March 2022.

101. The Commission documented cases in which violations of the personal integrity of children have been committed. In one case, a 14-year-old boy was found dead together with his neighbour. Both had injuries to their heads consistent with gunshot wounds, suggesting that they were executed (see paras. 67-71 above).

102. Moreover, the Commission has found that Russian armed forces unlawfully confined children in inhumane conditions. In one case, 70 children were among 365 civilians confined for 28 days by Russian armed forces inside a basement of a school in Yahidne, Chernihiv region, where the soldiers had established their base (see paras. 78 and 79 above). Some children fell sick and had no access to medication. The youngest child was only six weeks old.

103. The Commission confirmed cases of sexual violence in which Russian armed forces raped girls when entering or occupying civilian homes. Further, a four-year-old girl could hear her mother screaming while she was raped in the adjacent room. Such acts also amount to torture.

104. The hostilities have had a significant impact on children's right to education. Attacks with explosive weapons have damaged or destroyed hundreds of schools and kindergartens in the four regions, according to the Ukrainian authorities. The Commission independently documented damage to seven such institutions (see para. 42 above). Airstrikes on Chernihiv on 3 March 2022, for example, severely damaged schools 18 and 21 where more than 1,200 pupils studied previously.

105. One reason for the extensive damage and destruction to schools is that both Russian armed forces and Ukrainian armed forces used some of these schools for military purposes.<sup>18</sup> The Commission documented one case in which a school in Kharkiv region was first occupied by Russian armed forces and then subsequently by Ukrainian forces. While international law does not prohibit military forces from using schools, the presence of military personnel on school premises and their utilization for military purposes puts schools at risk of being attacked as military objectives.

106. The Commission has also examined cases of wanton damage to schools and school equipment. A headmaster of a school in the Kyiv region told the Commission that Russian armed forces which occupied the village destroyed more than 250 computers, furniture, and virtually all windows and doors in the school and shared photos of the destruction.<sup>19</sup>

107. The combined effects of the damage and destruction of educational institutions, the massive displacement of pupils and teachers, and the fact that a large number of schools do not meet the mandated school safety requirements, including adequate bomb shelters, mean that a large number of Ukrainian children had to attend classes online when the schoolyear started. Although Ukrainian authorities have developed extensive content for remote schooling, many children, especially in rural areas, do not have access to equipment, electricity, mobile and internet connectivity that would allow them to attend classes remotely and their right to education is therefore compromised.

108. The war forced thousands of children to flee, uprooted them from their daily life, and, in many cases, separated them from their fathers who either joined the fighting or could not leave with their families. Those who stayed were exposed to explosions and air raid sirens,

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<sup>18</sup> School 18 and 21 in Chernihiv.

<sup>19</sup> Lycee 1 in Hostomel.



and many witnessed traumatic events, including the killing or maiming of parents and loved ones. Parents, family members, and aid workers described how all these factors had a deep psychological effect on children. Some are afraid of loud noises, of being alone, and of men, particularly in uniform. Parents also described how their children had difficulty sleeping and experienced nightmares. After an attack with explosive weapons in a residential area of Kharkiv a mother described how the attack had impacted her daughter: *“She is very traumatized and will only sleep in the corridor. She also goes to the corridor every time she hears sirens during the daytime and starts to shake”*.

## V. Concluding observations

109. Based on its investigations of the events in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy in late February and March 2022, the Commission has found reasonable grounds to conclude that an array of war crimes, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed in Ukraine since 24 February 2022. As detailed in this report, Russian armed forces are responsible for the vast majority of the violations identified by the Commission. The Commission has also found instances in which Ukrainian armed forces have violated international humanitarian law, including two situations in which they committed war crimes. While few in numbers, such cases will continue to be the object of the Commission’s attention.

110. The impact of these violations on the people in Ukraine is immense. The loss of lives is in the thousands. The destruction of infrastructure, which is not only the destruction of physical objects, but the product of life-projects and the source of safety for the future, has been immense. Some people, whose homes have been damaged by explosive weapons, have no choice but to remain in their homes with makeshift walls and windows, as winter approaches. They have to cope with the consequences of the loss of friends, relatives, and immediate family members and large-scale destruction.

111. Family members who lost loved ones have expressed a strong need for justice to be done. A stepfather whose son was killed in Bucha told the Commission: *“I used to want to find those who were responsible and kill them. But now I want the guilty to be put on trial and I want the truth to come out”*.

112. In this connection, more than ever, a sound coordination of the multiple national and international accountability initiatives in Ukraine is key to guarantee strict adherence to relevant standards for the collection of evidence and for its use in judicial processes that satisfy due process guarantees. The Commission expresses its hope that this is a trend that will become more established.

## VI. Next steps

113. Having paid particular attention to violations committed in the four areas specified in resolution S/34-1, the Commission will gradually devote more of its resources to the broader temporal, geographical, and thematic framework set forth in resolution 49/1.

114. Issues of interest will include possible violations in filtration camps, alleged forced transfers of people, conditions under which expedited adoptions of children are allegedly taking place, as well as changes in local administration and so-called referenda, the consequences of which are becoming clearer given recent events.

115. The Commission will continue to act in a victim-centered way, which it interprets not only in terms of doing no harm to victims, but also, and more positively, in terms of making recommendations concerning forms of accountability that supplement criminal accountability, including measures of recognition, reparation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and importantly, guarantees of non-repetition.