

MISSED CALLS FROM KHERSON

Russian sexualised torture
at Temporary Detention Center #1



Missed calls from Kherson: Russian sexualised torture at Temporary Detention Center #1.



ЗА ПРАВА ЛЮДЕЙ
З ІНВАЛІДНІСТЮ! FIGHT
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This report would not have been possible without the contributions of survivors, whose strength and willingness to talk about the Russian forces' atrocities allowed us to reconstruct torture patterns and detention conditions at Kherson TDC. We would also like to thank our project partners — Blue Bird, Fight for Right, Truth Hounds, and JurFem — for their work in atrocity documentation, litigation, and survivors' support. Their efforts have been instrumental in shaping the depth and credibility of this report.

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International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) is an independent, nongovernmental organisation founded in 2008. With a presence in Brussels, Kyiv, and Tbilisi, IPHR works closely with civil society groups in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia to raise human rights concerns at the international level and promote respect for the rights of vulnerable communities. IPHR has been documenting atrocity crimes committed in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine since 2014 and has been using collected evidence for accountability purposes.

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I. Background

Kherson is the regional capital of Kherson Oblast in the South of Ukraine. It had a pre-war population of approximately 300 000 people, which has since shrunk to 66 000 following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.¹ Kherson was occupied by Russian forces at the beginning of March 2022 and liberated by the Ukrainian army some eight months later in mid-November 2022.² The local population opposed the occupation through mass peaceful protests and underground resistance movements.³ To stifle opposition to the invasion, Russian occupying authorities in Ukraine created a large network of detention facilities where individuals were tortured into submission and cooperation.⁴ In Kherson alone, there were 11 such sites.⁵

Kherson Temporary Detention Center No. 1, located at 3 Teploenerhetykiv Street, was one of the largest torture sites in Kherson, where Russian forces held and ill-treated 400 to 500 civilians⁶ perceived as a threat to the occupation regime.⁷

- 1 RFE/RL, *We Realized That We Still Had To Fight: Life In Kherson One Year After The End Of Russia's Occupation*, 11 November 2023, available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-kherson-liberation-anniversary-resistance-collaborators-russian-bombardment-/32680777.html>.
- 2 Ukrinform, *Regional chief reveals current population of Kherson region*, 28 January 2025, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-society/3953685-regional-chief-reveals-current-population-of-kherson-region.html>; UNITED24 Media, *Two Years Ago, Kherson Was Freed From Russian Occupation. Today, It's a Promise for Countless Others Still Occupied*, 11 November 2024, available at: <https://united24media.com/latest-news/two-years-ago-kherson-was-freed-from-russian-occupation-today-it-is-a-promise-for-countless-others-still-occupied-3658>.
- 3 The Guardian, *'It was scary': acts of resistance in Russian-occupied Kherson*, 19 April 2023, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/19/it-was-scary-acts-of-resistance-in-russian-occupied-kherson-ukraine>; Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR), *На Херсонщині викрадають журналістів, активістів, волонтерів: людей утримують в ІТТ та влаштовують допити з побиттями*, 2 April 2022, available at: <https://mipl.org.ua/na-hersonshhyni-vykradayut-zhurnalistiv-aktivistiv-volonteriv-lyudej-utrymuyut-v-itt-ta-vlashtovuyut-dopyty-z-pobyttamy/>; LIGA.net, *Людина-павук: Хто і як створював мережу катівень на окупованій Херсонщині*, 10 November 2023, available at: <https://projects.liga.net/torture-chambers/>.
- 4 LIGA.net, *Spider-Man: Who and how created a network of torture chambers in occupied Kherson Oblast*, 10 November 2023, available at: <https://projects.liga.net/torture-chambers-eng/liga.net>; Global Rights Compliance, *New Torture Chamber Evidence Uncovered from Liberated Kherson*, 2 March 2023, available at: <https://globalrightscompliance.com/2023/03/02/new-torture-chamber-evidence-uncovered-from-liberated-kherson/>; Slidstvo Info, *«У двох російських катівнях Херсона знаходилося понад 600 людей»*, — керівник відділу розслідувань воєнних злочинів Херсонщини, 9 March 2024 року, доступно за посиланням: <https://www.slidstvo.info/warnews/zaraz-dlia-slidchoho-nemaie-vazhlyvishoi-roboty-nizh-rozsliduvaty-voienni-zlochyny-kerivnyk-viddilul-rozsliduvan-voiennykh-zlochyniv-khersonshchyny/>.
- 5 IPHR field investigators identified 11 Russian detention and torture facilities based on interviews with witnesses and survivors. See also: Ukrinform, *Російські катівні у Херсоні мали «спеціалізацію»*, 7 November 2024, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3924501-rosijski-kativni-u-hersoni-mali-specializaciju.html>.
- 6 LIGA.net, *Spider-Man: Who and how created a network of torture chambers in occupied Kherson Oblast*, 10 November 2023, available at: <https://projects.liga.net/torture-chambers-eng/>; Slidstvo.Info, *«У двох російських катівнях Херсона знаходилося понад 600 людей»*, — керівник відділу розслідувань воєнних злочинів Херсонщини, 9 April 2024, available at: <https://www.slidstvo.info/warnews/zaraz-dlia-slidchoho-nemaie-vazhlyvishoi-roboty-nizh-rozsliduvaty-voienni-zlochyny-kerivnyk-viddilul-rozsliduvan-voiennykh-zlochyniv-khersonshchyny/>.
- 7 Reuters, *They call it 'the Hole': Ukrainians describe horrors of Kherson occupation*, 16 November 2022, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/they-call-it-the-hole-ukrainians-describe-horrors-kherson-occupation-2022-11-16/>; Human Rights Watch, *Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson*, 13 April 2023, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/13/ukraine-russian-torture-center-kherson>; LIGA.net, *Spider-Man: Who and how created a network of torture chambers in occupied Kherson Oblast*, 11 November 2023, available at: <https://projects.liga.net/torture-chambers-eng/liga.net>.

While similar to other Russian torture sites⁸ in terms of its deplorable detention conditions and systematic severe violence against detainees,⁹ Kherson Temporary Detention Center No. 1 (hereafter, 'the TDC') stands out because of the overwhelming number of survivors subject to various forms of sexual violence, especially genital electrocution with wires from Russian military field telephones.¹⁰ According to the publicly available information¹¹ and IPHR's preliminary OSINT findings and witness statements analysis, the TDC was first under the control of Rosgvardia and then the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, under the general coordination of the FSB.

IPHR conducted 12 factfinding missions to Kherson and neighbouring towns and villages between March 2023 and August 2024. We collected 59 testimonies of survivors of Russian detention and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, which took place at the TDC. The information presented in this report is based on these 59 testimonies, unless otherwise specified.

projects.liga.net/torture-chambers-eng/. Radio Svoboda, *Новини Приазов'я. Херсонщина: катування і воєнні злочини*, 19 November 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovya-khersonshchyna-katuvannya-voyenni-zlochyny/32137870.html>; Suspilne, "Не давали спати, підіймали та вимагали кричати «Слава Росії»": херсонці свідчать про катування в ІТТ, 27 November 2022, available at: <https://suspilne.media/318636-ne-davali-spati-pidijmali-ta-vimagali-kricati-slava-rosii-hersonci-svidcat-pro-katuvanna-v-itt/>; Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR), *На Херсонщині викрадають журналістів, активістів, волонтерів: людей утримують в ІТТ та влаштовують допити з побиттями*, 2 April 2022, available at: <https://mipl.org.ua/na-hersonshhyni-vykradayut-zhurnalistiv-aktyvistiv-volonteriv-lyudej-utrymuyut-v-itt-ta-vlashtovuyut-dopyty-z-pobyttamy/>.

- 8 International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR), *Torture at Balakliia Police Station: 6 Cells, 64 Captives, and No Room for Humanity*, 20 June 2023, available at: <https://iphronline.org/articles/torture-at-balakliia-police-station-6-cells-64-captives-and-no-room-for-humanity/>; International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR), *When 'Russkiy Mir' Comes: War Crimes and IHL Violations Committed by Russian Armed Forces in Hrakove and Zaliznychne*, 17 November 2023, available at: <https://iphronline.org/articles/new-report-when-russkiy-mir-comes-war-crimes-and-ihl-violations-committed-by-russian-armed-forces-in-hrakove-and-zaliznychne/>; International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR), *Unlawful Confinement and Torture in Dymyr, Kozarovychi, and Katyuzhanka, Ukraine*, 25 October 2022, available at: <https://iphronline.org/articles/unlawful-confinement-and-torture-in-dymer-kozarovychi-and-katyuzhanka-ukraine/>; Human Rights Watch, *Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson*, 13 April 2023, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/13/ukraine-russian-torture-center-kherson>.
- 9 CNN, *Russia ran dozens of torture centers in Kherson during occupation, lawyers say*, 2 March 2023, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/02/europe/russia-kherson-torture-centers-intl/index.html>. Human Rights Watch, *Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson*, 13 April 2023, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/13/ukraine-russian-torture-center-kherson>; Global Rights Compliance, *New Torture Chamber Evidence Uncovered from Liberated Kherson*, 2 March 2023, available at: <https://globalrightscpliance.com/2023/03/02/new-torture-chamber-evidence-uncovered-from-liberated-kherson/>; Radio Svoboda, *Новини Приазов'я. Херсонщина: катування і воєнні злочини*, 19 November 2022, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovya-khersonshchyna-katuvannya-voyenni-zlochyny/32137870.html>.
- 10 Slidstvo.Info, «У двох російських катівнях Херсона знаходилося понад 600 людей», — керівник відділу розслідувань воєнних злочинів Херсонщини, 9 April 2024, available at: <https://www.slidstvo.info/warnews/zaraz-dlia-slidchoho-nemaie-vazhlyvishoi-roboty-nizh-rozsliduvaty-voienno-zlochyny-kerivnyk-viddilu-rozsliduvan-voiennykh-zlochyniv-khersonshchyny/>; LB.ua, *Сексуалізоване насильство під час війни як складник геноциду*, 14 March 2025, available at: https://lb.ua/society/2025/03/14/665461_seksualizovane_nasilstvo_pid_chas.html.
- 11 LIGA.net, *Spider-Man: Who and how created a network of torture chambers in occupied Kherson Oblast*, 10 November 2023, available at: <https://projects.liga.net/torture-chambers-eng/>; Global Rights Compliance, *New Torture Chamber Evidence Uncovered from Liberated Kherson*, 2 March 2023, available at: <https://globalrightscpliance.com/2023/03/02/new-torture-chamber-evidence-uncovered-from-liberated-kherson/>; CNN, *Russia ran dozens of torture centers in Kherson during occupation, lawyers say*, 2 March 2023, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/02/europe/russia-kherson-torture-centers-intl/index.html>; The New York Times, *Ukrainians Tell of Rampant Torture in Kherson Region*, 29 May 2023, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230601002906/https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/29/world/europe/ukraine-kherson-torture-detention-centers.html>.

KHERSON

UKRAINE



**Kherson Temporary Detention Center #1
(TDC)**

**Dniproviskiy District Police
Department**

Kherson Border Detachment

**Korabelnyi District Police
Department**

**Suvorovskiy District
Police Department**

**Court of Appeals of
Kherson Region**

**Kherson Pre-Trial
Detention Centre (SIZO)**

**Kherson Oblast
Regional Council**

**General Department of
the National Police**

Pylypa Orlyka Facility

II. Information about survivors and reasons for their detention



On 11 March 2022, the Russian Armed Forces came to our apartment for the first time and accused me of organising an [anti-occupation] protest. I was reported immediately—these were Saldo’s¹² aides [who reported me]. [...] they immediately provided a list of those who could have organised the protest [to the Russian forces]. The Russian soldiers burst into my apartment and later boasted: ‘See how fast we found you.’¹³

59
INTERVIEWED
SURVIVORS



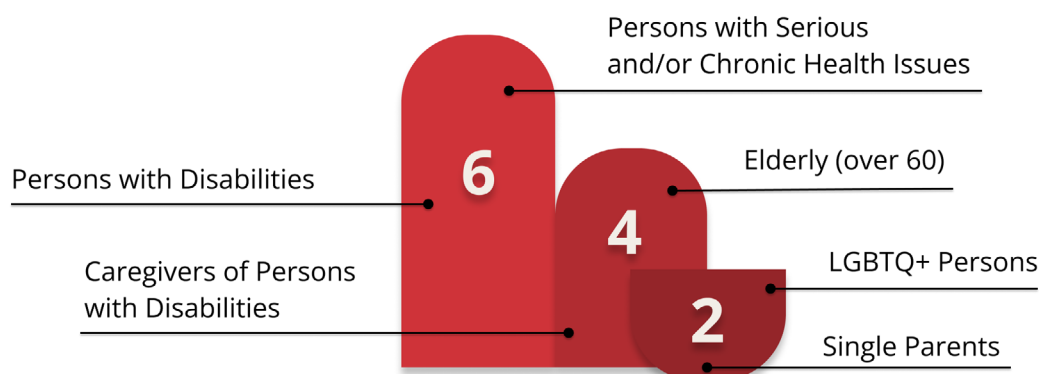
16

43



Age: Min 18 | Avg 42 | Max 68

10 Representatives of Vulnerable Groups*



* Some interviewed survivors fall into several categories and are counted more than once.

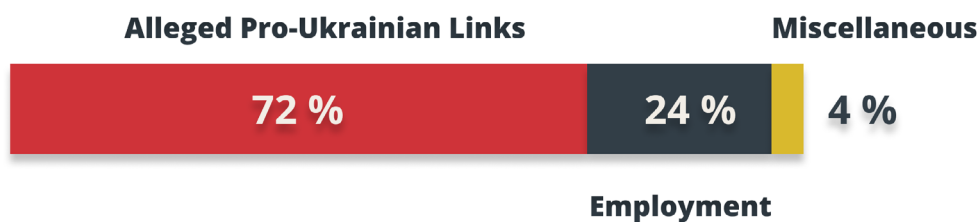
12 Volodymyr Saldo is a Ukrainian politician who collaborated with occupying Russian authorities and was appointed governor of Russian-occupied Kherson Oblast. See: RFE/RL, *Meditation Drums And Caribbean Kidnappings: Meet Russia’s ‘Governor’ In Ukraine’s Kherson*, 12 June 2022, available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-kherson-saldo-kidnapping-yoga-drums/31894865.html>.

13 Witness ND0374.

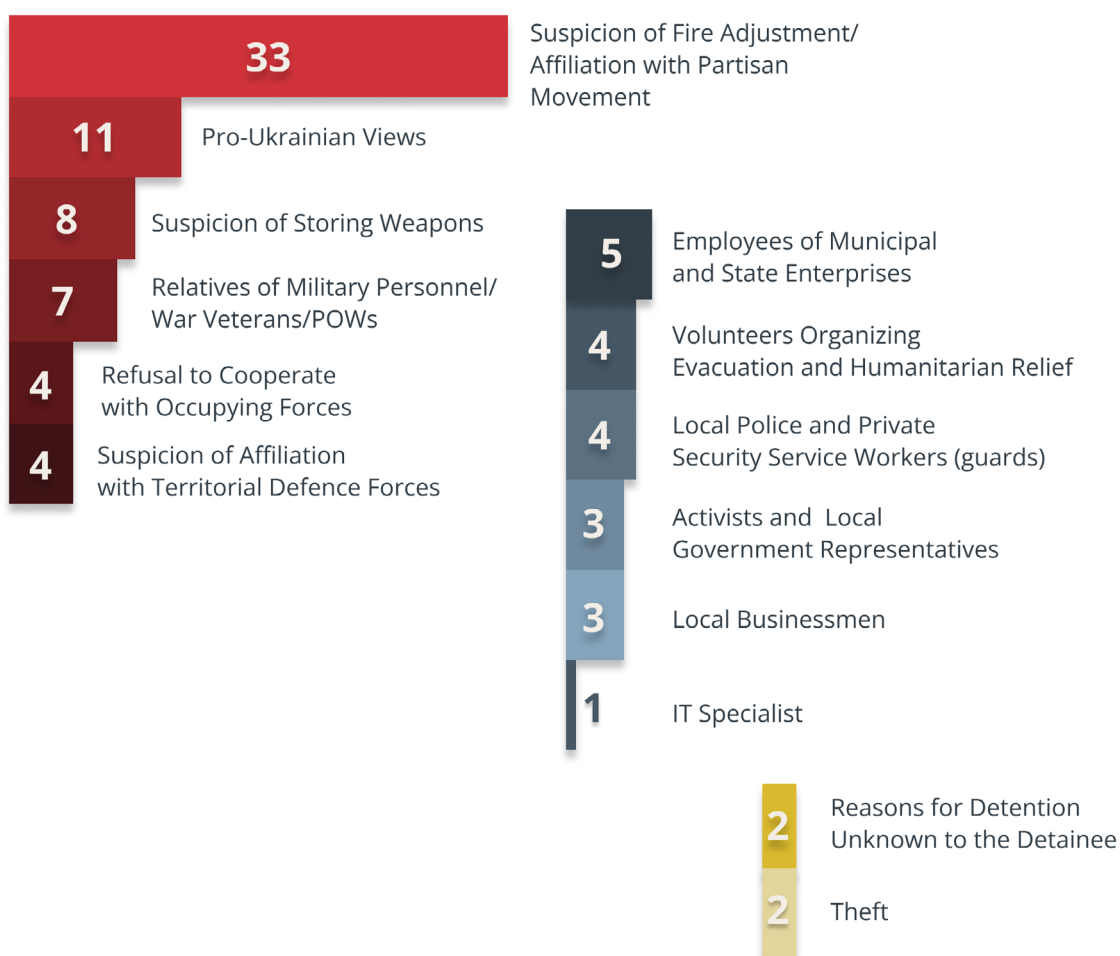


They [Russian soldiers] pushed me in the neck and forced me to kneel by the couch, ordering me to hand over my phone. They started accusing me because I had Ukrainian symbols hanging in my home.¹⁴

Reasons of Detention



Reasons of Detention by Cases*



* Some interviewed survivors fall into several categories and are counted more than once.

Russian occupying authorities in Kherson mostly targeted men in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, that is the fighting-age, able-bodied male population of the city, which was perceived to pose the biggest threat to the occupying Russian regime. However, more than 27 per cent of the detainees were women and more than 20 per cent belonged to vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and individuals with disabilities.

45 out of 59 detainees were accused of helping to adjust Ukrainian military fire or some other form of armed resistance to the Russian occupation. At the same time, for at least 44 detainees, the sole reason, or one of the reasons for their detention was their pro-Ukrainian position or non-military professional activities perceived as a potential threat to the occupying regime. Specifically, 22 people were detained for their or their families' real or perceived allegiance to Ukraine; 22 more were detained for work activities including supplying humanitarian relief, activism, journalism, participation in local government, and soon.

III. Torture at the TDC

i. Physical and psychological violence¹⁵



They held my jaw and poured water from a 5-litre bottle so that I would choke. I pretended to be in pain and I screamed. They tortured me with electric shocks, beat me on the back with a rifle butt, I have a mark left. They kicked me in the stomach, punched me in the head - and it was constant. They threatened to rape me.¹⁶

Russian occupying forces systematically used physical and psychological violence against the individuals detained at the TDC. A total of 50 out of the 59 survivors interviewed were subjected to some form of **physical violence**.¹⁷ At least 26 survivors, including two women, suffered beatings with hands and legs¹⁸ and at least 33 persons, including three women, were beaten with various hard objects.¹⁹ 34 detainees, including four women, were subjected to electrocution on different body parts.²⁰ In nine cases,

15 Unless specifically indicated as hearsay evidence, the reference to a specific survivor in a footnote means that they were direct victims of the specific type of violence.

16 Witness WM3789

17 Some of the 50 survivors were also subjected to physical violence that included a sexual element – rape or genital electrocution. These cases are analysed separately in section ii. Sexual violence.

18 Witness AB4729; Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness GH7182; Witness MN2405; Witness QR6844; Witness KL8921; Witness BR5104; Witness CS6390; Witness DT1827; Witness EU7023; Witness HX8209; Witness KA2375; Witness MC1240; Witness OE4182; Witness SI8021; Witness TJ9245; Witness UK1366; Witness WM3789; Witness ZP6072; Witness AQ7305; Witness FV2559; Witness LB8346; Witness ND0374; Witness QG3749; Witness SI5730.

19 Witness AB4729; Witness GH7182; Witness OP9537; Witness QR6844; Witness YZ8891; Witness BR5104; Witness EU7023; Witness FV3348; Witness IY4752; Witness KA2375; Witness MC1240; Witness ND3578; Witness PF5293; Witness QG6817; Witness SI8021; Witness TJ9245; Witness WM3789; Witness YO5948; Witness ZP6072; Witness BR8194; Witness CS9016; Witness FV2559; Witness HX4770; Witness IY5826; Witness JZ6953; Witness KA7204; Witness LB8346; Witness MC9157; Witness ND0374; Witness PF2803; Witness QG3749; Witness SI5730.

20 Witness AB4729; Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness GH7182; Witness IJ0365; Witness MN2405; Witness OP9537; Witness QR6844; Witness KL8921; Witness YZ8891; Witness AQ4763; Witness BR5104; Witness CS6390; Witness DT1827; Witness EU7023; Witness FV3348; Witness GW1556; Witness HX8209; Witness KA2375;

victims, including two women, were tortured by waterboarding, often combined with electrocution.²¹ Five survivors reported physical mutilation — interrogators sticking needles under a prisoner's nails,²² burning a detainee with melting plastic²³ and three counts of guards cutting detainees' ears.²⁴ Three victims were subjected to strangling or suffocation with a plastic bag.²⁵ Three more were subjected to hanging by the arms.²⁶

In addition, interviewed survivors also reported witnessing at least²⁷ five cases of beating,²⁸ three cases of electrocution,²⁹ and two cases of waterboarding.³⁰ According to the survivors, in at least two cases, torture resulted in the death of the victims.³¹

24 out of 59 interviewed survivors were subjected to **psychological violence**. At least 12 survivors were subjected to death threats and mock executions.³² Five survivors reported threats of physical mutilation. In one case, guards threatened to cut off a victim's fingers and, in another case, to pull out survivor's teeth.³³ Two detainees were threatened with having their hands cut off with a saw³⁴ and one — with being shot in his knee.³⁵ At least 10 survivors were forced to give fake testimonies or confessions,³⁶ six survivors witnessed violence or were threatened with the use of violence against their family members,³⁷ in two cases survivors were forced to torture each other,³⁸ and in at least two cases Russian forces withheld information about the victims from their families.³⁹

Witness ND3578; Witness PF5293; Witness QG6817; Witness RH7392; Witness WM3789; Witness YO5948; Witness ZP6072; Witness BR8194; Witness CS9016; Witness HX4770; Witness LB8346; Witness ND0374; Witness RH4682; Witness SI5730.

21 Witness CD5643; Witness OP9537; Witness YZ8891; Witness AQ4763; Witness BR5104; Witness WM3789; Witness YO5948; Witness PF2803; Witness RH4682.

22 Witness PF5293; Witness QG6817.

23 Witness CD5643.

24 Witness YO5948; Witness BR5104; Witness PF2803.

25 Witness AB4729; Witness FV2559; Witness HX4770.

26 Witness QG3749; Witness RH4682, Witness TJ6291.

27 The overall number of reported beating cases are higher, but we only include here the cases that the interviewed survivors identify with sufficient detail. This is true also for other cases that interviewed survivors witnessed and reported.

28 Witness JZ9987 (About cellmate Victim OL1111 and Victim MM8888); Witness MC1240 (about Victim CC9911); Witness VL2634 (about Victim UY9991); Witness KL8921 (about cellmate Victim JJ8124).

29 Witness QR6844 (about his cellmate, policeman Maksym); Witness JZ9987 (about cellmate Volodymyr); Witness VL2634 (about Victim UY9991).

30 Witness QR6844 (about his cellmate, policeman Maksym); Witness AQ4763 (about Victim UY9991).

31 For obvious reasons, all deaths are reported through either eyewitness or hearsay witness accounts: Witness KL8921 (about his cellmate Serhii); Witness UV1926 and Witness CS6390 (about Victim AM9981, who was beaten to death); Witness LB6069 (a general account on murders).

32 Witness IJ0365; Witness KL8921; Witness BR5104; Witness DT1827; Witness FV3348; Witness GW1556; Witness KA2375; Witness QG6817; Witness UK1366; Witness CS9016; Witness FV2559; Witness QG3749.

33 Witness YZ8891

34 Witness QG3749; Witness CS9016.

35 Witness OE4182.

36 Witness CD5643; Witness IJ0365; Witness HX8209; Witness JZ9987; Witness KA2375; Witness OE4182; Witness QG6817; Witness YO5948; Witness BR8194; Witness KA7204.

37 Witness GH7182; Witness IJ0365; Witness QR6844; Witness BR5104; Witness HX8209; Witness XN4813.

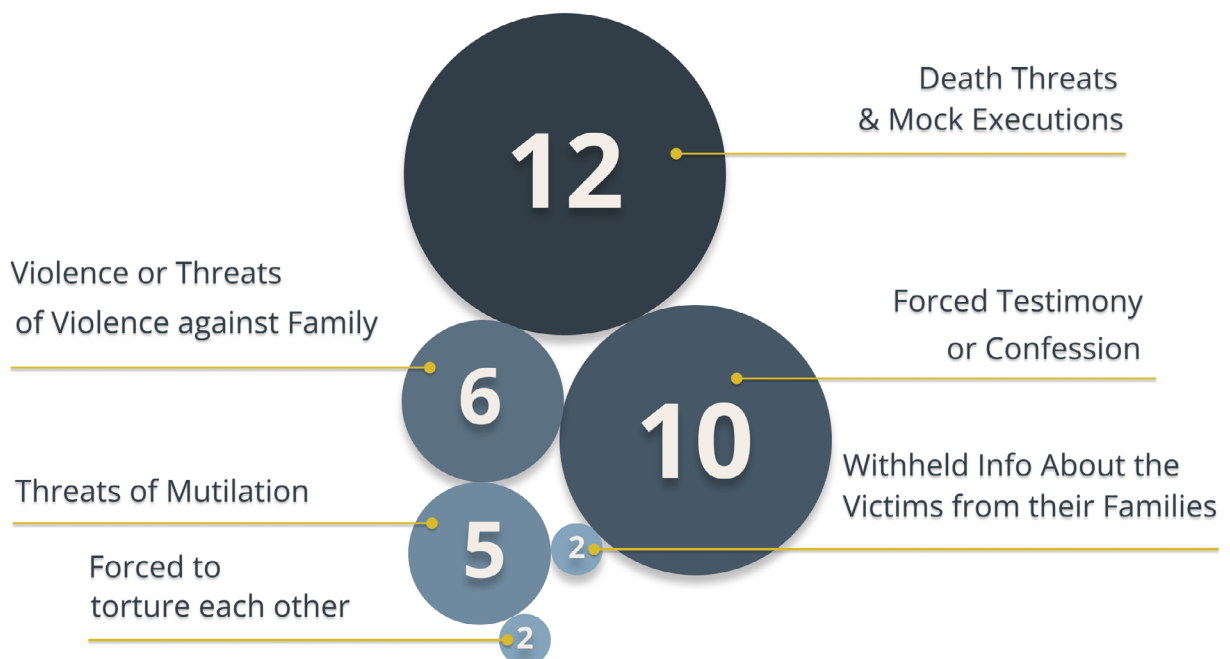
38 Witness QR6844; Witness MC9157.

39 Witness JZ9987; Witness JZ6953 (about her husband).

Physical Violence against 50 out of 59 Survivors*



Psychological Violence against 24 Survivors*



* Some interviewed survivors fall into several categories and are counted more than once.

A. VIOLENT PRACTICES AT THE TDC

Violence, especially beating, started immediately after a detainee's arrival at the facility. Guards subjected prisoners to physical and psychological abuse in the corridors and cells before interrogation. New detainees were transferred to their cells before their first interrogation, which usually took place on their first night at the TDC. Interrogations by FSB officers were usually conducted during the day, but the torture of detainees by the guards continued during the night, from approximately 10:00 pm until 4:00 am.⁴⁰ During the night, victims were not questioned but merely tortured in preparation for the interrogation the next day.⁴¹ Interrogators would 'request' that the guards torture specific detainees who needed further 'work'.⁴²

Torture and inhuman treatment were also routinely used during interrogations. Typically, interrogations lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.⁴³ In some cases, they extended to several hours or a whole day.⁴⁴ Typically, between four and seven Russian interrogators participated in each questioning.⁴⁵ The majority of victims were interrogated at least three times, but many were repeatedly interrogated over weeks, depending on their perceived importance and knowledge of valuable information.⁴⁶ The first couple of days were the harshest for the detainees, as the Russian forces' objective was to break their morale from the very beginning and force them into submission.⁴⁷

As soon as a specific prisoner was called, guards forced them to cover their eyes and led them to the interrogation room.⁴⁸ The whole process — taking prisoners to be interrogated, questioning, and returning them to the cell — was accompanied by beatings and humiliating or threatening remarks.⁴⁹ After being brought to the interrogation room, the prisoner was typically fastened to a chair, with their hands taped, handcuffed, or zip-tied behind them and their legs fixed to the chair legs with duct tape.⁵⁰ In this position, the prisoner was subjected to electrocution on different parts of the body, often accompanied by waterboarding, intended to intensify the effects of the electric shock.⁵¹

Interrogators questioned victims constantly throughout the torture.⁵² Typically, either electrocution or another torture method was used if the interrogators were not satisfied with the detainee's answer.⁵³

40 Witness FV2559; Witness SI5730; Witness OE1498.

41 Witness FV2559; Witness MC9157; Witness PF2803; Witness QG6817.

42 Witness FV2559.

43 Witness MN2405 (1.5 hrs); Witness OP9537(30 mins); Witness YZ8891 (40 mins); Witness BR5104 (30-35 mins); Witness CS6390 (1.5 hrs); Witness KA2375 (1.5-2 hrs); Witness QG6817 (1-1.5 hrs); Witness LB8346 (40mins-1hr); Witness OE1498 (30 mins).

44 Witness YO5948 (from morning to evening).

45 Witness MN2405 and Witness YZ8891(4-5 persons); Witness OP9537(7 persons); Witness CS6390 (7-8 persons); Witness DT1827 (3 persons); Witness QG6817 (more than 3 persons); Witness BR8194 (4 persons); Witness PF2803 (8-10 persons).

46 Witness QR6844 (5 times); Witness JZ9987 (4 times), Witness QG6817 (7 times).

47 Witness CD5643; Witness TJ9245; Witness ZP6072; Witness FV2559 (10); Witness MC9157;

48 Witness QR6844; Witness MC9157.

49 Witness AB4729; Witness CD5643; Witness KA2375; Witness MC9157.

50 Witness AQ4763; Witness QG6817; Witness SI8021; Witness YO5948; Witness BR8194; Witness CS9016; Witness LB8346; Witness MC9157; Witness ND0374; Witness QG3749.

51 Witness CD5643.

52 Witness KA2375; Witness MC9157.

53 Witness AB4729; Witness ND3578.

Where the objective of torture was punishment or intimidation, the torture was administered even without giving the victims the chance to answer the questions. As a rule, victims were blindfolded at all times when taken out of their cells.⁵⁴ Sometimes Russian guards would film or take pictures of the torture process.⁵⁵ Some victims reported that the Russian guards were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs during the torture.⁵⁶

B. COMMON TORTURE METHODS

The most commonly used physical torture methods included:

- **Beatings:** 43 out of 59 prisoners reported being beaten. The guards beat prisoners with their hands or legs or using hard objects, such as rubber truncheons, clubs, rifle butts, tactical gloves, stun guns, fire extinguishers, chairs, and pipes.⁵⁷ They beat prisoners on all parts of the body, but especially on the face, ribs, kidneys and stomach, knees, heels, and other sensitive body parts.⁵⁸ Beatings often resulted in broken ribs. One prisoner was hanged by his hands from the ceiling and beaten, another two were hanged by their hands and left in this position.⁵⁹ The Russian guards called this torture method 'gym' (RU: 'Спортзал').⁶⁰ Women were also beaten, as confirmed by interviewed survivors, including male detainees who heard female screams.⁶¹
- **Electrocution:** 34 interviewed survivors were subjected to electrocution. Russian forces used a military field telephone device referred to as a 'Тарик'⁶² for applying electric shock to victims.⁶³ The use of a car battery, a welding machine⁶⁴ and a stun gun,⁶⁵ was also reported but 'Тарик' was the main means of electrocution during interrogations.

Guards hooked terminals (clamps or so-called 'crocodiles') to different body parts of the victims, most commonly to earlobes or fingers, but also to legs, the back, shoulders, ribs, nipples, and eyebrows and run the electric current through them.⁶⁶ Genital electrocution, described separately

54 Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness MN2405; Witness DT1827; Witness CS9016.

55 Witness AQ4763; Witness WX5430; Witness HX8209.

56 Witness OE1498; Witness KL8921; Witness MN2405; Witness WX5430 II; Witness QG6817; Witness MC1240.

57 Witness AB4729; Witness GH7182; Witness OP9537; Witness QR6844; Witness YZ8891; Witness AQ4763; Witness DT1827; Witness IY4752; Witness KA2375; Witness QG6817; Witness SI8021; Witness TJ9245; Witness WM3789; Witness BR8194; Witness CS9016; Witness KA7204; Witness MC9157; Witness QG3749.

58 Witness EF3098; Witness BR5104; Witness CS6390; Witness DT1827; Witness KA2375; Witness CS9016; Witness LB8346; Witness OE1498; Witness QG3749.

59 Respectively: Witness QG3749; Witness RH4682, Witness TJ6291.

60 Witness RH4682.

61 Witness CD5643; Witness OP9537; Witness BR5104; Witness IY4752; Witness ND3578; Witness MC1240; Witness VL2634 (hearsay); Witness AQ7305; Witness HX4770; Witness IY5826; Witness JZ6953.

62 RU: Тарик, likely derived from the name of the model, TA-57. To generate an electric shock, TA-57 or Тарик, a Soviet military landline phone, is equipped with a miniature hand-cranked generator. Two exposed wires are attached to the detainee's body. A foldable handle on the side of the device is then manually rotated to deliver electrical current to the prisoner's body. See: *The Insider*, *Энциклопедия российских пыток (с иллюстрациями Олега Навального)*, 24 August 2018, <https://theins.ru/obshchestvo/114526>.

63 Witness EF3098; Witness MN2405; Witness OP9537; Witness QR6844; Witness KA7204; Witness RH4682.

64 Witness DT1827.

65 Witness AQ4763; Witness RH7392; Witness VL2634 (hearsay).

66 Witness AB4729; Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness IJ0365; Witness MN2405; Witness OP9537; Witness YZ8891; Witness CS6390; Witness FV3348; Witness HX8209; Witness KA2375; Witness PF5293; Witness SI8021; Witness WM3789; Witness BR8194; Witness MC9157; Witness ND0374; Witness RH4682.

below, was also a prevalent method of torture. After attaching the terminals to two different body parts, the interrogators applied electrical current to the victim by turning a handle on the device to generate electric current.⁶⁷ The voltage and the intensity of the current were gradually increased.⁶⁸ The electricity was applied for extended periods, ranging from 20 minutes to 8 hours.⁶⁹

Different methods of electrocution, primarily genital electrocution, were called a 'call to Zelensky' or a 'call to Biden',⁷⁰ similarly to the same torture practice inside Russia, where it is referred to as a 'call to Putin'.⁷¹ Russian forces also called this method of torture a 'lie detector', or a 'physical polygraph'.⁷² Special names for these types of torture present evidence of a systematic, coordinated character to these practices as opposed to sporadic cases of specific Russian officers' misconduct.

- **Waterboarding:** To ensure that the current passed easily through the victim's body, the Russian forces often employed waterboarding alongside electrocution.⁷³ Waterboarding was reported by nine survivors. For this method, the victim's face gets covered by a T-shirt or a cloth, one of the guards keeps the face of the victim pointing upwards, and another pours water onto the material and down their throat, usually from five-litre bottles.⁷⁴ The water and damp material block the breathing passages and create a drowning sensation for the victim.⁷⁵ One survivor had 150-200 litres of water poured onto him during one interrogation.⁷⁶ Usually, an electric shock is applied to the victim shortly after being doused with water.⁷⁷ Russian forces call this method 'teaching to swim' (Ru: 'Учили плавать').⁷⁸

The pain resulting from electrocution was so intense that it caused victims to tear the fastening tapes and jump out of the interrogation chair.⁷⁹ Their speech became paralysed, their mouths opened involuntarily, and they could not speak even if they wanted to.⁸⁰ The electrocution often resulted in the victims biting their own tongue.⁸¹ Survivors described that they felt as if their organs had been turned inside out or their bodies had been twisted.⁸² For some, this was the most painful type of torture.⁸³ According to survivors, if a person had heart problems, they would not survive this torture. Hence, to be able to apply maximum impact without fatal results, the Russian forces sometimes inquired about heart

67 Witness MN2405; Witness FV3348.

68 Witness KA2375; Witness ZP6072.

69 20 mins (Witness OP9537), 1.5-2 hrs (Witness KA2375), or 8 hrs (Witness PF2803) in one go; or 3-4 times (Witness BR5104), 7-8 times (Witness FV3348) or 10 times (Witness MN2405), in one go.

70 Witness CS9016; Witness LB8346.

71 See: *The Insider*, *Энциклопедия российских пыток (с иллюстрациями Олега Навального)*, 24 August 2018, <https://theins.ru/obshchestvo/114526>.

72 Respectively: Witness GW1556; Witness YZ8891.

73 Witness CD5643; Witness OP9537.

74 Witness QR6844; Witness YZ8891; Witness AQ4763; Witness WM3789; Witness YO5948; Witness PF2803; Witness RH4682.

75 Witness YZ8891; Witness AQ4763; Witness WM3789; Witness YO5948; Witness RH4682.

76 Witness RH4682.

77 Witness OP9537; Witness RH4682.

78 Witness RH4682.

79 Witness GW1556; Witness YO5948; Witness KA7204.

80 Witness CD5643; Witness ND3578.

81 Witness GW1556.

82 Witness OP9537; Witness LB8346.

83 Witness LB8346.

problems.⁸⁴ Most victims lost consciousness after being electrocuted repeatedly for an extended time.⁸⁵ In some cases, guards brought detainees back to consciousness several times and then continued torturing them.⁸⁶ Some victims even asked the torturers to kill them to end the suffering.⁸⁷ The process of electrocution was often accompanied by humiliation. The guards were amused when one survivor urinated involuntarily when she was electrocuted.⁸⁸



A field telephone device ('tapik') discovered by Suspilne Media journalists at the TDC. Source: [Suspilne](#).

Prison guards extensively resorted to **psychological violence**. The most prevalent means of psychological torture were mock executions,⁸⁹ death threats,⁹⁰ or threats of violence against the victim's next of kin. Mock executions sometimes took place in the interrogation room by firing shots close to the victim's head.⁹¹ According to one survivor, this was the worst torture of all.⁹² Russian guards took one survivor out of their cell with the alleged purpose of executing him and made him write a farewell note.⁹³ Another survivor was taken to a bridge and ordered to jump off its edge into the water, before then being stopped.⁹⁴ In another case, Russian forces took a victim to a cemetery, ordered him to lie in a pit, shot over his head, and threatened to bury him there.⁹⁵ One detainee was forced to listen to her son being

84 Witness OP9537; Witness EF3098.

85 Witness IJ0365; Witness GW1556; Witness QG6817; Witness PF2803.

86 Witness YZ8891.

87 Witness PF2803.

88 Witness IJ0365.

89 Witness GW1556; Witness PF2803.

90 Witness IJ0365; Witness DT1827; Witness CS9016; Witness FV2559; Witness QG3749.

91 Witness FV3348; Witness QG6817; Witness FV2559.

92 Witness QG6817.

93 Witness CD5643.

94 Witness KA2375.

95 Witness FV2559.

tortured;⁹⁶ others were also threatened with the torture or killing of their family members.⁹⁷ Detainees were also threatened with life imprisonment or a death sentence.⁹⁸ Sometimes, the detainees' fates and whereabouts were intentionally concealed from their families.⁹⁹

Finally, Russian authorities forced detainees to write and/or sign a fake testimony or confession, as a condition for their release.¹⁰⁰ They were not allowed to read what they signed.¹⁰¹ Some victims were given or were dictated a text that they had to memorise and recite in front of a camera; Russian authorities even brought journalists to make propaganda videos featuring prisoners.¹⁰² At gunpoint or while being electrocuted, survivors were forced to say that Russians were kind,¹⁰³ Ukrainian authorities were to blame,¹⁰⁴ Russians were there forever,¹⁰⁵ and so on.

C. GRAVE HEALTH EFFECTS CAUSED BY ILL-TREATMENT

The torture caused grave consequences for the victims' health. Many survivors lost consciousness as a result of their torture and came around already in their cells.¹⁰⁶ Some victims could not walk and had to crawl back to their cells after the ill-treatment, as reported by them or their cellmates.¹⁰⁷ Some of them could not get up for up to a week.¹⁰⁸ As the result of the beatings, many survivors had broken ribs,¹⁰⁹ arms, legs, and fingers;¹¹⁰ broken jaws and faces so swollen they could hardly open their eyes.¹¹¹ One survivor who had his jaw broken by Russian interrogators, could not eat until he got a surgery after his release from the TDC. He lost 17 kg in captivity.¹¹² Many had bruises and hematomas after the beatings.¹¹³ Nine survivors reported that their bodies were completely 'blue' (covered in bruises) from torture.¹¹⁴ The electrocution caused burns and swelling on different parts of the survivors' bodies; parts of their bodies

96 Witness IJ0365.

97 Witness AB4729; Witness GH7182; Witness IJ0365; Witness QR6844; Witness BR5104; Witness HX8209; Witness XN4813; Witness ND0374.

98 Witness UK1366; Witness BR8194.

99 Witness JZ9987.

100 Witness QR6844; Witness OE4182; Witness KA2375; Witness YO5948.

101 Witness CD5643.

102 Witness CD5643; Witness KA7204.

103 Witness CD5643.

104 Witness HX8209.

105 Witness JZ9987.

106 Witness OP9537; Witness BR5104; Witness KA2375; Witness QG6817; Witness YO5948; Witness QG3749.

107 Witness KL8921 (hearsay); Witness CS6390 (hearsay); Witness FV2559 (hearsay); Witness OE1498 (about male detainees); Witness PF2803.

108 Witness JZ9987 (hearsay).

109 Witness KL8921 (hearsay); Witness MN2405; Witness MC1240; Witness OE4182; Witness PF2803.

110 Witness MC1240; Witness YO5948; Witness HX4770; Witness PF2803.

111 Witness KL8921 (hearsay); Witness TJ9245; Witness MC9157; Witness QG3749 (hearsay).

112 Witness MC9157;

113 Witness QR6844; Witness KA2375; Witness WM3789; Witness ZP6072; Witness IY5826; Witness SI5730; Witness YZ8891.

114 Witness QR6844; Witness CS6390; Witness GW1556; Witness TJ9245; Witness KA7204; Witness LB8346; Witness PF2803; Witness SI5730; Witness PF2803.

became paralysed.¹¹⁵ One survivor lost hearing in the left ear where he was beaten¹¹⁶ and another lost sight in one eye.¹¹⁷ Another victim had necrosis develop in his leg and had to be hospitalised.¹¹⁸

As noted above, per four witness accounts, at least two detainees died from injuries sustained during their ill-treatment by Russian forces.¹¹⁹ Other witness accounts refer to more potential deaths from torture. Several detainees were ordered to clean a basement, where they saw traces of decomposing corpses and clothes scattered around.¹²⁰ One detainee interviewed by IPHR,¹²¹ as well as several detainees interviewed by the media,¹²² reported witnessing Russian soldiers dragging dead bodies out of the TDC. Residents of apartment buildings overlooking the TDC premises shared in media interviews that they witnessed numerous dead bodies removed from the TDC in trucks, corroborating the assumption that violent deaths of TDC prisoners were a common occurrence.¹²³

ii. Sexual violence



One of them [Russian prison guards] came over, taped my hands, took off my trousers and underpants and sat me down on a chair. They also tied my legs to the chair legs and applied current to my genitals. One terminal to my scrotum and the other to my foreskin. They said 'radio check' and turned on the tapik.¹²⁴ They would laugh. [...] The guys in the cell said it lasted about an hour and a half. They knew what they were doing. They said that if they had kept the current going a little longer, I would have become sterile.¹²⁵

115 Witness IJ0365; Witness ND3578.

116 Witness OP9537.

117 Witness SI8021 (confirmed by Witness RH7392); Witness LB8346.

118 Witness QR6844.

119 Witness CS6390 and Witness UV1926 (about Victim AM9981); Witness PF5293; Witness FV2559 (most likely about Victim AM9981 as well); Witness KL8921 (about cellmate Serhii).

120 Witness UK1366.

121 Witness CD5643.

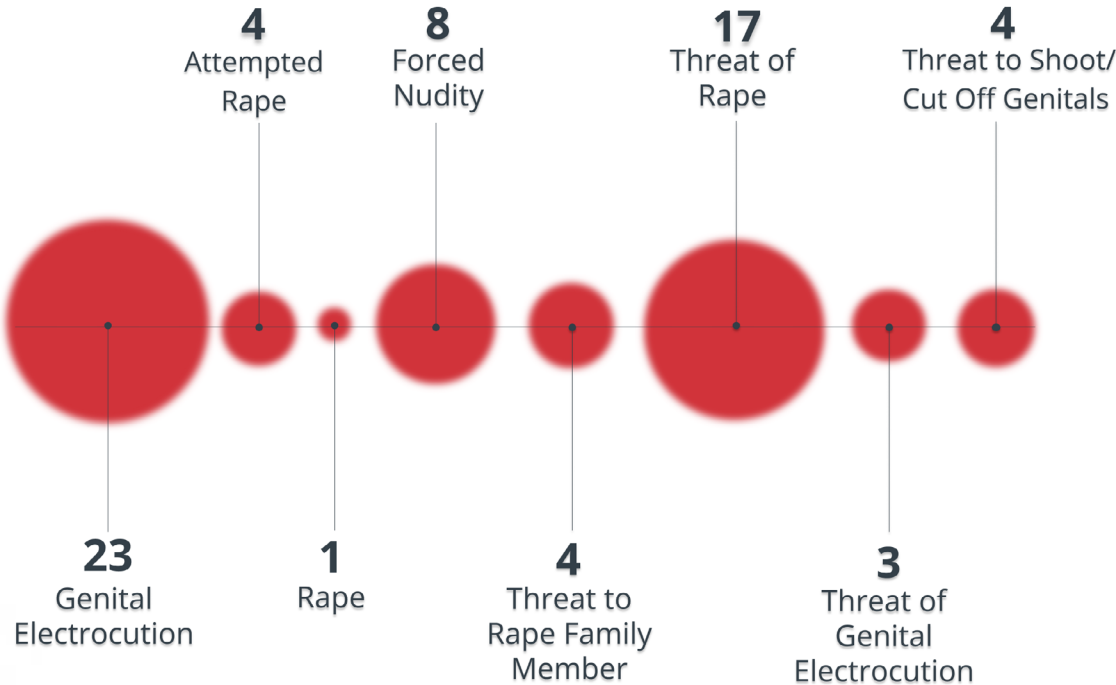
122 Watchers Media, «В окупації не покидає страх, що за тобою можуть прийти»: Людмила Шумкова про полон під час окупації Херсона, 4 June 2024, <https://watchers.media/articles/v-okupatsiyi-ne-pokydaye-strah-shho-za-toboyu-mozhut-pryjty-lyudmyla-shumkova-pro-polon-pid-chas-okupatsiyi-hersona/>; Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR), 280 днів у заручниках: як Ольга Черняк із Херсона пережила тортури, російський полон і не зламалась, 31 December 2023, <https://mipl.org.ua/280-dniv-u-zaruchnykah-yak-olga-chernyak-iz-hersona-perezhyla-tortury-rosijskyj-polon-i-ne-zlamalas/>.

123 Reuters, *They call it 'The Hole': Ukrainians describe horrors of Kherson occupation*, 16 November 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/they-call-it-the-hole-ukrainians-describe-horrors-kherson-occupation-2022-11-16/>; The Guardian, *Alleged Russian 'torture room' uncovered in liberated Kherson*, 16 November 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/16/alleged-russian-torture-room-uncovered-in-liberated-kherson>.

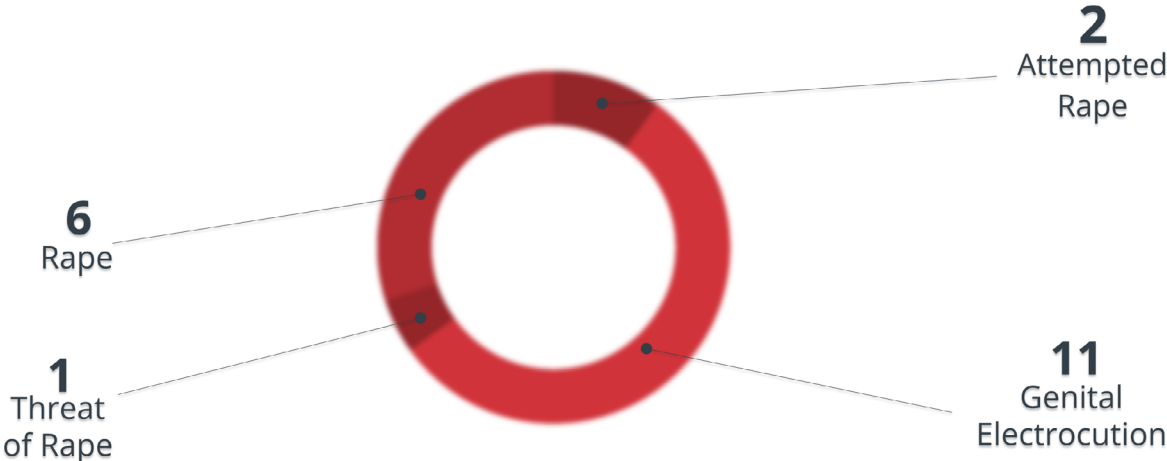
124 TA-57 military landline telephones, also known as 'tapiks', are often used as a torture device in Ukraine by Russian forces. See also *'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine'* (PDF), UN Office of the High Commissioner, 15 March 2023, para. 75.

125 Witness QG3749.

Sexual Violence against 36 out of 59 Survivors*



Survivors Witnessed 20 More Cases of:



* Some interviewed survivors fall into several categories and are counted more than once.



While I was transported [to the TDC], I was constantly threatened with the rape of my child [...]. One of the representatives of the Russian Armed Forces threatened me: “You will be a good wife for the Russians”, “You, Ukrainians, will all become [the wives of the Russians].” During the search, the representatives of the Russian Armed Forces lifted my T-shirt and touched me above the waist a couple of times. The biggest fear for me at that moment was gangrape; they threatened to put me in a cell with a maniac.¹²⁶

Sexual violence¹²⁷ was used extensively by Russian guards as a means of torture (hereafter, ‘sexualised torture’). At least 36 out of 59 survivors were subjected to some form of sexual violence, including threats. The most widespread type of sexualised torture was genital electrocution — 23 of the 59 interviewed survivors were subjected to it.¹²⁸ The actual number is likely much higher¹²⁹ — survivors reported that almost all male victims had their genitals electrocuted.¹³⁰ Threats of rape were recorded in 17 cases, including against two women.¹³¹ One survivor reported being raped.¹³² Survivors also reported attempted rape in four cases.¹³³ The Russian guards subjected detainees to forced nudity in at least eight cases.¹³⁴

126 Witness IY5826.

127 According to the Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, ‘[s]exual violence involves singular, multiple, continuous, or intermittent acts which, in context, are perceived by the victim, the perpetrator, and/or their respective communities as sexual in nature. Such acts are to be characterised as sexually violent if they violate a person’s sexual autonomy or sexual integrity’. The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, Part 1, General Principles, <https://4genderjustice.org/ftp-files/publications/The-Hague-Principles-on-Sexual-Violence.pdf>, (footnotes omitted) p. 13; According to the International Criminal Court Office of The Prosecutor’s Policy on Gender-based Crimes, ‘[s]exual violence is a form of gender-based violence that involves the commission or attempted commission of sexual acts.’ Moreover, ‘[a]n act can be “sexual” even without physical contact, such as psychological violence that arises from threats of rape or genital mutilation. An act may be sexual regardless of whether sexual gratification was part of the intent or result. Finally, sexual violence can be committed by and against any person regardless of sex or gender; it may also involve persons of the same sex’. International Criminal Court, Office of The Prosecutor Policy on Gender-based Crimes, December 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-policy-gender-en-web.pdf>, (Footnotes omitted) paras. 31-32, referring to Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, pp. 14, 75.

128 Witness AB4729; Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness OP9537; Witness YZ8891; Witness FV3348 (confirmed by Witness IY5826); Witness GW1556 (confirmed by Witness XN4813); Witness KA2375; Witness OE4182; Witness QG6817; Witness SI8021; Witness TJ9245; Witness YO5948; Witness ZP6072; Witness BR8194; Witness CS9016; Witness FV2559; Witness HX4770; Witness KA7204; Witness MC9157; Witness PF2803; Witness QG3749; Witness TJ6291.

129 As ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC stated ‘[g]ender-based crimes are hugely underreported. Survivors are often reluctant to speak out about their experiences for many reasons, including stigma, fear of retaliation and rejection, or unfamiliarity with the criminal process.’ International Criminal Court, Office of The Prosecutor Policy on Gender-based Crimes, December 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-policy-gender-en-web.pdf>.

130 Witness EF3098; Witness JZ6953.

131 Witness AB4729; Witness OP9537; Witness MN2405; Witness YZ8891; Witness AQ4763; Witness DT1827; Witness FV3348; Witness PF5293; Witness QG6817; Witness SI8021; Witness WM3789; Witness FV2559; Witness HX4770 (confirmed by Witness BR8194 and Witness EF3098); Witness MC9157; Witness ND0374; Witness RH4682; Witness TJ6291.

132 Witness GW1556 (confirmed by Witness XN4813).

133 Witness YZ8891; Witness HX4770; Witness OE1498, Witness OE1498.

134 Witness AB4729; Witness EF3098; Witness DT1827; Witness KL8921; Witness PF5293; Witness TJ9245; Witness MC9157; Witness RH4682.

Interviewed survivors also reported witnessing six more rape cases,¹³⁵ at least¹³⁶ 11 cases of genital electrocution, including against two women,¹³⁷ one case of threat of rape,¹³⁸ and two cases of attempted rape against female detainees.¹³⁹ One victim was reported to be shot in the genitals; he later committed suicide.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, survivors reported threats of their partner or family members being raped in four cases,¹⁴¹ threats of genital electrocution in three cases,¹⁴² and threats to shoot or cut off genitals in four cases.¹⁴³ For example, in one case, a Russian officer put a knife to a victim's genitals, threatening to cut off his testicles.¹⁴⁴ Another detainee reported interrogators striking him in the genitals.¹⁴⁵ Russian forces also touched a female detainee 'above the waist'¹⁴⁶ several times.¹⁴⁷ One prisoner belonging to the LGBTIQ community was forced, under threat of killing or beating other detainees, to wear a feminine dress and dance in the corridor in order to entertain Russian guards and the head of the TDC.¹⁴⁸

Several witness accounts also contain signs of enforced prostitution. Witnesses heard Russian guards mentioning that some women were kept in the TDC for the guards to 'have fun', meaning that they were at their disposal to fulfil their sexual needs.¹⁴⁹

Guards often recorded or photographed the process of sexual violence.¹⁵⁰

A. FORCED NUILITY

Detainees were often forced to strip down in front of guards. Sometimes this was done to administer genital electrocution. On other occasions, the purpose of stripping was to conduct a bodily search,

135 Mostly direct witnesses (saw or heard): Witness WX5430, Witness AQ7305, Witness JZ9987 (cellmate), and Witness GW3687 (about Victim AW3688); Witness QG6817 (about cellmate Victim JY9012); Witness ND0374 (About Victim IO8881) and three other rape episodes reconstructed below from witness accounts interviewed by IPHR.

136 The overall number of witnessed cases of sexual violence are higher, but we only include here the cases that the interviewed survivors identify with sufficient detail.

137 Witness AB4729 (about mayor Andreyi); Witness IJ0365, Witness AQ4763 and Witness ES1475 (about Victim UY9991); Witness KL8921 (about cellmate Victim GG8764); Witness CS6390 (about Victim VZ0010); Witness EU7023 (about a masseur from Genichesk); Witness PF5293 (about Victim KZ0912); Witness ZP6072 (about cellmate Victim AH8871); Witness CS9016 (against Victim AS888); Witness JZ6953 (about her husband Victim IO0981); Witness LB8346 (the wife of Mayor Victim AA8700); Witness RH4682 (About Victim VV0096).

138 Witness EF3098 (about Victim IU7775).

139 Witness IJ0365, Witness WX5430, Witness AQ4763 and Witness VL2634 (about Victim UY9991); Witness AQ7305 and Witness DT0238 (about cellmate Victim OK9177).

140 Witness ND3578 (hearsay).

141 Witness IJ0365; Witness YZ8891; Witness IY5826; Witness ND0374.

142 Witness BR5104; Witness DT1827; Witness RH4682.

143 Witness GH7182; Witness KL8921 (confirmed by Witness HX8209); Witness OP9537; Witness BR5104.

144 Witness KL8921.

145 Witness MC1240.

146 Likely a euphemism for breasts.

147 Witness IY5826.

148 Witness UK1366.

149 Witness MC1240; Witness ES1475; Witness GW3687; Witness PF2803; Witness KA2375; Witness BR5104.

150 Witness YZ8891; Witness WX5430.

checking for patriotic tattoos,¹⁵¹ and sometimes it was done without a specific reason, likely for humiliation.¹⁵² One survivor reported that, on one occasion, the guards made him and his cellmates undress and photographed them.¹⁵³

B. GENITAL ELECTROCUTION

This torture method was carried out in the same way as the method of electrocution described above, with the difference that electric shock was applied to the genitalia or other sex organs of the victim. Sometimes the current was applied through clothing, but in most cases, the victim was stripped down for this torture method.¹⁵⁴ A naked victim was strapped to the chair and terminals were connected to their groin area,¹⁵⁵ penis,¹⁵⁶ testicles,¹⁵⁷ buttocks,¹⁵⁸ or anus.¹⁵⁹ One female detainee was electrocuted on her nipples.¹⁶⁰ Sometimes Russian officers used a club with wires as a terminal.¹⁶¹ The terminals were usually connected to two organs at the same time (both genital or genital and other).¹⁶² Electric shocks were then applied in the same manner as described above. Waterboarding was also used in combination with genital electrocution to maximise the effects of the electric shocks.¹⁶³ Genital electrocution lasted from seconds to hours, even up to an entire day.¹⁶⁴ Guards told one victim that if they kept the current running for a little longer, he would have become sterile.¹⁶⁵

Electrocution involving sex organs was often called a 'call to Zelenksyy' or a 'call to Biden'. A 'call to Zelenksyy' involved applying one terminal to the penis and another to the nipple or ear.¹⁶⁶ A 'call to Biden' was when a rod with wire was inserted in or terminal was connected to the victim's anus.¹⁶⁷

C. THREATS OF RAPE AND ATTEMPTED RAPE

As a means of psychological torture, guards often **threatened detainees with rape**.¹⁶⁸ 17 out of 59 detainees reported being threatened with rape. Considering the vulnerable position of the victims, as

151 Witness AB4729; Witness MC1240; Witness PF5293.

152 Witness TJ9245; Witness TJ6291.

153 Witness RH4682.

154 Witness AB4729; Witness EF3098; Witness TJ9245; Witness KA7204; Witness MC9157; Witness PF2803; Witness QG3749.

155 Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness OP9537; Witness FV3348; Witness TJ9245; Witness YO5948; Witness ZP6072; Witness BR8194; Witness CS9016; Witness KA7204.

156 Witness GW1556; Witness KA2375; Witness OE4182; Witness QG6817; Witness MC9157; Witness PF2803; Witness QG3749.

157 Witness OE4182; Witness HX4770; Witness MC9157; Witness PF2803; Witness TJ6291.

158 Witness AB4729; Witness SI8021.

159 Witness YZ8891; Witness PF2803; Witness GW1556.

160 Witness IJ0365, Witness AQ4763, and Witness ES1475 (about Victim UY9991).

161 Witness SI8021; Witness GW1556.

162 Witness KA2375; Witness CS9016; Witness QG3749.

163 Witness CD5643; Witness QG6817; Witness YO5948.

164 Witness EF3098 (15 mins); Witness KA2375 (20 seconds in one go); Witness YO5948 (from morning to evening); Witness HX4770 (40 mins); Witness PF2803 (1-1.5 hrs).

165 Witness QG3749.

166 Witness MC9157.

167 Witness XN4813.

168 Witness AQ4763; Witness WM3789; Witness AQ7305 (hearsay).

well as the fact that rapes have actually taken place and purposefully on display to other detainees, such threats were both realistic and imminent.

Sometimes, Russian guards threatened to sexually penetrate detainees with a foreign object, such as a rubber stick, a bottle,¹⁶⁹ a club,¹⁷⁰ a machine gun,¹⁷¹ a stick,¹⁷² a pipe,¹⁷³ a shovel handle,¹⁷⁴ and a rolling pin.¹⁷⁵ For example, in one case, the guards ran a machine gun over victims' buttocks and genitals, threatening to rape him.¹⁷⁶ 'We'll make a woman out of you, we'll fuck you,' — Russian guards told another male survivor.¹⁷⁷ After this experience, the victim did not want to live and asked the Russians to shoot him.¹⁷⁸

On other occasions, guards threatened to send detainees to the so-called 'Donetsk Peoples' Republic',¹⁷⁹ where they would be raped,¹⁸⁰ or to put the victim in a 'special cell' where they would be raped by another inmate — a 'rapist' that Russian guards kept there for this purpose.¹⁸¹ The victims were threatened to be passed around in circles in this cell and to be 'made a faggot' ('отпетушат' in Russian).¹⁸²

In at least five cases, **Russian forces attempted to rape detainees**.¹⁸³ In three cases, the act was not completed for unknown reasons, while in one case the Russian officers decided not to rape the survivor and in another case they were stopped by another Russian officer. Specifically, in one case, the Russian forces 'stretched' one victim out on a table and ran a baton across his buttocks, saying "We will insert not only this and everyone will do it".¹⁸⁴ After this, the victim tried to kill himself by cutting his throat with a nail pulled from the floor.¹⁸⁵ Another male survivor had a stick shoved under his shorts and around his sex organs and was threatened with rape.¹⁸⁶ One survivor reported that Russian guards asked him if he 'would like to try' anal sex and after he said 'no', took off his shorts, and traced his buttocks with a rubber stick. Then they electrocuted his anus with a stun gun, and threatened to take him to the "faggot

169 Witness DT1827.

170 Witness FV3348.

171 Witness PF5293.

172 Witness QG6817; Witness ND0374.

173 Witness SI8021.

174 Witness MC9157.

175 Witness TJ6291.

176 Witness PF5293.

177 Witness TJ6291.

178 Witness TJ6291.

179 Part of Ukraine's Donetsk Oblast under proxy Russian control since early 2014 until 30 September 2022, when it was annexed by Russia after a so-called 'referendum'. See: Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Referendums on Joining Russia in Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson: What Impact on Conflict Classification?, 27 September 2022, available at: <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/news/detail/570-referendums-on-joining-russia-in-luhansk-donetsk-zaporizhzhia-and-kherson-what-impact-on-conflicts-classification>.

180 Witness OP9537; Witness MC9157.

181 Witness AB4729; Witness FV2559; Witness RH4682; Witness WX5430.

182 Witness RH4682.

183 Four direct and one hearsay victims.

184 Witness HX4770.

185 Witness HX4770 (confirmed by Witness BR8194).

186 Witness FV2559.

cell” where he would have been gang-raped until he ‘told them everything’.¹⁸⁷ Russian guards filmed this process on the phone.¹⁸⁸ One Russian guard attempted to rape a female detainee but was stopped by another Russian guard.¹⁸⁹ As reported by several survivors, Russian guards put one female victim on a table, took off her underpants, beat her buttocks with a stick, and threatened to rape her, but eventually did not as she was ‘not shaved’.¹⁹⁰

D. RAPE¹⁹¹

IPHR monitors documented seven episodes of rape that took place at the TDC. The real number is likely higher as only a small fraction of survivors from this detention facility were interviewed and because rape cases are often underreported due to the stigma associated with this extreme type of violence.

Male detainees were raped in corridors or in cells close to other detainees to make sure that everyone heard it.¹⁹² The victims were raped either by Russian guards or thrown into the so-called ‘special cell’ and raped by the convicts there.

Some witnesses describe what was happening in the so-called ‘special cell’ or ‘faggot cell’. Russian guards reportedly brought two long-term convicts¹⁹³ from another prison and kept them in the ‘special cell’ for the specific purpose of raping detainees.¹⁹⁴ One of the convicts was reportedly around 30 years old and was convicted for killing a minor.¹⁹⁵ He was allowed by the Russian guards to walk around the TDC freely.¹⁹⁶ The guards threw a person into this cell, gave the convicts condoms, and the rape was performed.¹⁹⁷ This was done in a way that everyone else could hear.¹⁹⁸ The guards filmed the process and commented on it as it was happening.¹⁹⁹

Episode 1. One survivor interviewed by IPHR said that Russian guards raped him by inserting a rod with wires for electrocution into his rectum.²⁰⁰ His cellmate, who was a doctor, said that ‘everything was flowing out’.²⁰¹

The examination of eyewitness and circumstantial witness accounts allows the reconstruction of at least six other episodes of rape:

187 Witness YZ8891.

188 Witness YZ8891.

189 Witness OE1498 (confirmed by Witness ND0374).

190 Witness IJ0365, Witness WX5430, Witness VL2634 and Witness ES1475 (about Victim UY9991).

191 Except for one direct survivor, this section is based on the accounts of eyewitnesses and circumstantial witnesses of rape that occurred at the TDC. In relation to specific episodes, the identifying information of victims are intentionally omitted or generalised, in the interest of the victims’ anonymity.

192 Witness AQ4763; Witness WX5430; Witness LB6069; Witness SI5730.

193 Meaning that they were not detained in connection with the occupation or conflict.

194 Witness WX5430; Witness GW3687.

195 Witness WX5430; Witness GW3687.

196 Witness WX5430; Witness GW3687.

197 Witness WX5430.

198 Witness WX5430.

199 Witness WX5430.

200 Witness GW1556 (also confirmed by Witness XN4813).

201 Witness XN4813.

Episode 2. Victim AW3688:²⁰² This episode took place around 20 July.²⁰³ Russian forces accused him of being a paedophile, because they allegedly found photos of minors in his computer, and raped him because of this.²⁰⁴ According to one witness, the Russians treated him especially cruelly because he had a high degree of education.²⁰⁵

A Russian guard called their leadership to take permission to rape the victim and said that they were permitted to do anything they wanted.²⁰⁶ The Russian soldiers opened the door to the so-called 'faggot cell', gave the convict a condom, and he raped the victim.²⁰⁷ Other detainees could hear him screaming.²⁰⁸ Russian soldiers recorded the rape on video.²⁰⁹ The victim was raped twice, seemingly once by the convict in the 'faggot cell' and another time with a police baton.²¹⁰ After the rape, the guards asked the victim whether he liked it and he had to reply yes otherwise the rape would continue.²¹¹ The guards lined up other male detainees and forced them to watch.²¹² The victim had to undergo psychotherapy after his release.²¹³

Episode 3. Victim IO8881: This episode took place in May 2022. The victim was a partisan. He was badly beaten, electrocuted, and raped by inserting foreign objects in his anus. After beating him the whole day, five Russian guards took the victim out in the corridor, inserted a stick in his anus and humiliated him by saying that he had grown a tail. The victim was not provided with medical assistance.²¹⁴

Episode 4. Victim JY9012: In another episode, a 24-year-old man was raped with a mop or a stick. The Russian guards dragged him out into the corridor during the night. Other detainees could hear him screaming. When he was returned to the cell, his trousers were down, and his buttocks were covered in blood. He was returned to the cell twice in this condition. His cellmate quoted him as saying that he is no longer a human. There were reports that he died or killed himself after this torture. According to the victim's cellmate, interviewed by IPHR, this was done by Rosgvardia soldiers on the orders of the FSB. Reportedly, the Rosgvardia soldiers were drunk and under the influence of drugs.²¹⁵

Episode 5. Rape episode in September 2022: In mid-September, another episode took place. Some Russian guards got drunk, took one detainee out of the cell, and took him to the room at the end of the corridor. Other detainees then heard him screaming loudly. The

202 At least four witnesses mention this incident: Witness WX5430; Witness AQ7305; Witness JZ9987 (cellmate); Witness GW3687.

203 Witness WX5430. At least four witnesses mention this incident: Witness WX5430; Witness AQ7305; Witness JZ9987 (cellmate); Witness GW3687.

204 Witness WX5430; Witness GW3687.

205 Witness JZ9987.

206 Witness WX5430.

207 Witness WX5430; Witness GW3687.

208 Witness JZ9987; Witness GW3687.

209 Witness WX5430.

210 Witness WX5430; Witness JZ9987.

211 Witness JZ9987.

212 Witness WX5430.

213 Witness WX5430; Witness JZ9987.

214 This whole episode is reported by Witness ND0374, a cellmate of the victim.

215 This whole episode is reported by Witness QG6817, a cellmate of the victim.

next day, the guards escorted several detainees to the shower situated across from the cell where the rape reportedly took place and they saw blood, used condoms, and fecal matter on the floor of the cell. A Russian guard confirmed to the detainees that a rape had taken place.²¹⁶

Episode 6. A person who gave wrong information to Russian forces: Sometime after 23 July, another person was detained and raped in the 'special' cell with the 'rapists' (also referred to as 'faggot cell'). Reportedly, the person was raped because he gave Russian forces wrong information about five or six individuals that they wanted to detain.²¹⁷

Episode 7. A person who Russian guards accused of raping and killing his stepdaughter: At the end of July, another episode took place. Russian soldiers brought a prisoner to the TDC who they alleged to have raped and killed his stepdaughter. The rape took place during the night with a rubber truncheon.²¹⁸

Other potential episodes: According to one witness, two captives were reportedly forced to rape each other.²¹⁹ Other witnesses also reported cases of rape, yet without providing sufficient details about the victims' identities or the circumstances of the rape.²²⁰ One survivor reported that his cellmate, who was a doctor, was called to treat a woman held at the TDC. After returning from her cell, the doctor looked shocked and described signs suggesting that she had been raped - she had torn underwear and traces of beatings on her body.²²¹ One witness also stated that women in general were raped at the TDC. ²²²



One of the cells at the TDC with traces resembling blood on the toilet. Source: IPHR

216 This whole episode is reported by Witness QG3749, the detainee who saw the shower room.

217 Witness WX5430.

218 Witness CS6390; Witness FV2559.

219 Witness EU7023.

220 Witness CD5643; Witness LB6069; Witness GW3687.

221 Witness CD5643;

222 Witness RH4682.

iii. Ill-treatment outside of interrogations



People [detainees] were killed in the cells. For example, they [detainees] were beaten and beaten and then, after some time, they died because they weren't given medical assistance. I constantly heard screams. Inhuman screams. That was the worst torture. Both women's and men's [screams].²²³

The torture and inhuman treatment were not limited to the interrogation room. The detainees were subjected to violence and degrading treatment in their cells and the corridors of the detention center as well. Every evening, the prison guards raided the cells and beat prisoners there or dragged them out into the corridor for a round of beating.²²⁴ One survivor was forced to stand with his hands up all night and was beaten in this position until all his muscles and ligaments were torn.²²⁵ The guards had a 'yellow list' from which they chose detainees for stunning or beating in the corridor.²²⁶ The existence of such lists points to the systemic and organised nature of the violence practiced by Russian forces at the TDC as opposed to it representing sporadic or isolated incidents. Guards were also often drunk when conducting night raids.²²⁷



Corridor of the TDC with doors to the cells. Source: IPHR

223 Witness PF5293

224 Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness MN2405; Witness OP9537; Witness BR5104; Witness MC1240; Witness PF5293; Witness XN4813; Witness YO5948; Witness ZP6072; Witness LB8346.

225 Witness CD5643.

226 Witness MN2405; Witness UK1366.

227 Witness CD5643.

Prison guards forced detainees to get on their knees or move in this manner even within their cells.²²⁸ Sometimes, blindfolded prisoners were ordered to run, without knowing that they were running towards stairs and would ultimately fall down.²²⁹ The guards amused themselves by referring to this method as a 'Boeing crash'.²³⁰ One detainee was handcuffed to a metal grid in the corridor and electrocuted for about six hours.²³¹

The detainees were also subjected to extreme sleep deprivation as they were not allowed to turn off the light during the night.²³² Detainees were exposed to the sound of the screams of other detainees being tortured²³³ both day and night.²³⁴ Guards opened windows on purpose so that detainees in neighbouring cells could hear the screams.²³⁵ According to some survivors, this was the worst form of torture — more brutal than being beaten oneself.²³⁶ Moreover, some inmates were specifically prohibited from sleeping and/or were forced to stand up during the whole night as a means of punishment or to force them into submission.²³⁷ Such sleep deprivation sometimes lasted for up to three days.²³⁸ The guards checked whether the person complied with the order to stand, and punished them or the whole cell in case of non-compliance.²³⁹ Finally, as mentioned above, detainees were systematically taken out of their cells during the night and tortured 'to prepare them' for interrogations the next day.²⁴⁰ The guards also used food deprivation as a punishment.²⁴¹

Detainees were also systematically subjected to degrading and discriminatory treatment due to their Ukrainian nationality and allegiance. The Russian guards established the rule that whenever they entered a cell, the prisoners had to stand up quickly and shout 'Glory to Russia, glory to Putin, glory to Shoigu'.²⁴² Moreover, detainees were forced to learn the words to the Russian national anthem and to sing it whenever the guards played the music or whenever they were ordered to.²⁴³ The detainees were given a printed text of the anthem to learn, with it also being written on cell walls, together with other pro-Russian inscriptions.²⁴⁴ Sometimes a guard would start singing the anthem and the detainees had to continue singing once he stopped.²⁴⁵ Detainees were also forced to sing other Russian patriotic

228 Witness BR5104; Witness RH4682.

229 Witness GW1556.

230 Witness GW1556.

231 Witness KA2375.

232 Havrylenko Natalia; Witness BR5104; Witness ND3578; Witness YO5948.

233 Havrylenko Natalia; Witness BR5104; Witness DT1827; Witness JZ9987; Witness MC1240; Witness ND3578; Witness PF5293; Witness TJ9245; Witness WM3789; Witness RH4682.

234 Witness MC1240; Witness ND3578; Witness PF5293; Witness TJ9245; Witness WM3789; Witness RH4682.

235 Witness DT1827.

236 Witness PF5293; Witness MC9157.

237 Witness AB4729; Witness EF3098; Witness FV3348.

238 Witness AB4729.

239 Witness AB4729; Witness EF3098; Witness FV3348.

240 Witness FV2559; Witness SI5730; Witness OE1498; Witness MC9157; Witness PF2803; Witness QG6817.

241 Witness CD5643.

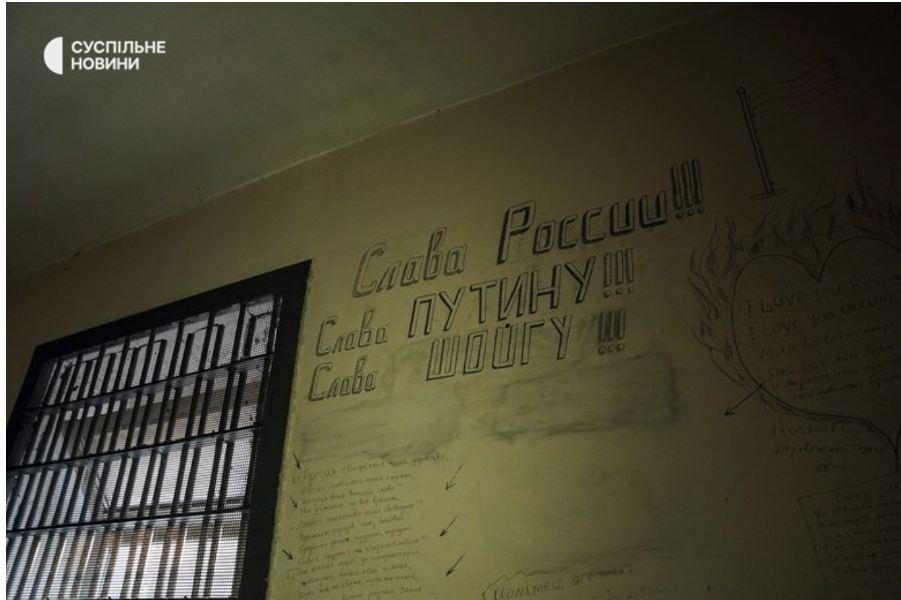
242 Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness GH7182; Witness OP9537; Witness DT1827; Witness FV3348; Witness IY4752; Witness LB6069; Witness SI8021; Witness WM3789; Witness ZP6072; Witness FV2559; Witness HX4770; Witness IY5826.

243 Witness CD5643; Witness EF3098; Witness GH7182; Witness UV1926; Witness DT1827; Witness FV3348; Witness HX8209; Witness IY4752; Witness KA2375; Witness TJ9245; Witness YO5948; Witness FV2559; Witness IY5826.

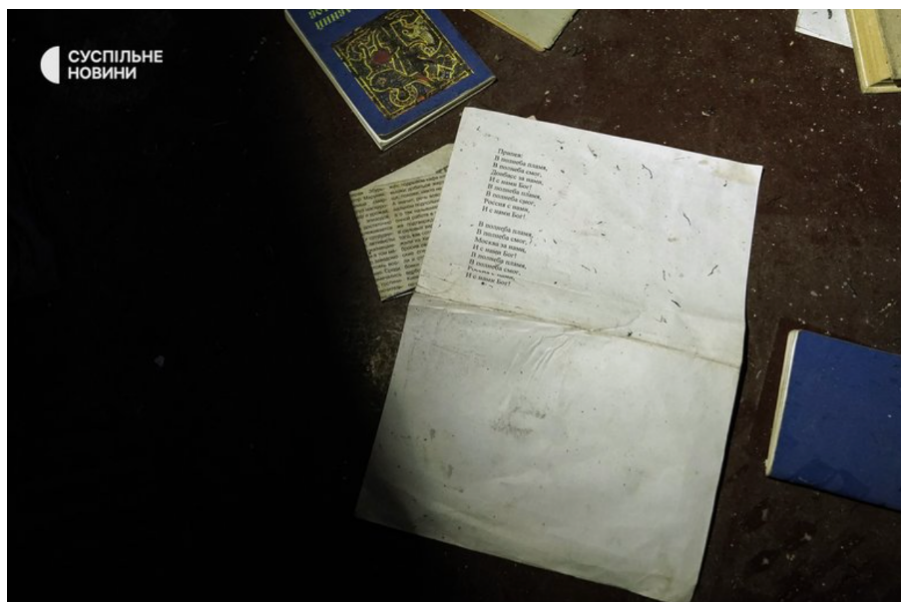
244 Witness ZP6072; Witness QG3749.

245 Witness KA2375.

songs.²⁴⁶ If they refused or made a mistake, the individual or their whole cell would be punished by stun gun electrocution or beatings.²⁴⁷ According to one survivor, this was happening 'constantly, dozens of times'.²⁴⁸ On at least three occasions, detainees were taken out in the corridor, forced to cut the Ukrainian flag into peaces and eat them.²⁴⁹ As one survivor reported, the detainees were also forced to say 'penis' and 'anus' as soon as the cell doors opened under threat of being punished if they failed to do so.²⁵⁰



Writing on the wall of the TDC reading 'Glory to Russia, glory to Putin, glory to Shoigu' in Russian. Source: *Suspilne*.



A printout of a Russian patriotic song discovered at the TDC by Suspilne Media journalists. Source: *Suspilne*.

246 Witness GH7182; Witness LB6069; Witness SI8021; Witness WM3789.

247 Witness CD5643; Witness OP9537; Witness OP9537; Witness DT1827; Witness IY4752; Witness TJ9245; Witness YO5948; Witness BR8194; Witness FV2559; Witness HX4770.

248 Witness CD5643.

249 Witness UK1366; Witness KA2375.

250 Witness ES1475.

iv. The specific purpose of torture

For the war crime of torture, it is necessary to demonstrate its specific purpose, namely, that the perpetrator inflicted the pain or suffering for such purposes as: obtaining information or a confession, punishment, intimidation, coercion, or any reason based on discrimination of any kind.²⁵¹ In the case of the TDC, physical and mental suffering were inflicted for all the listed purposes.

Obtaining information or a confession: Most of the torture administered was for the purpose of obtaining information or a confession from a detainee. The Russian authorities sought information primarily about the location of arms and ammunition,²⁵² the identity and whereabouts of individuals related to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, real or perceived resistance movements, and pro-Ukrainian activists, journalists, and bloggers.²⁵³ Questions also often concerned the victim's alleged role within the Ukrainian Armed Forces or a resistance movement.²⁵⁴ Russian guards demanded that detainees provide information about another person as a condition for stopping their torture or releasing them.²⁵⁵ Sometimes, guards had leads about the victim's knowledge of certain information, but often they acted under a general assumption about such knowledge.²⁵⁶

Torture was also used as a tool for obtaining fake testimonies or confessions. Guards made it clear to detainees that giving a fake confession or reporting another person was the only way of avoiding torture.²⁵⁷ Many survivors were forced to give fake confessions, as detailed above in the section on psychological torture.

Punishment, intimidation, or coercion: Frequently, detainees were subjected to torture as a punishment, for example, due to their actual or alleged involvement in subversive acts against Russian occupying forces.²⁵⁸ Sometimes, victims were punished for giving information that was insufficient or inaccurate in the view of the Russian forces.²⁵⁹

Intimidation was also a major objective of torturing detainees: at times, Russian guards did not ask any questions or were not interested in the answers; rather, they were committing torture for the sake of torture alone.²⁶⁰ Sometimes, the torture continued even after the victim gave information.²⁶¹ Intimidation

251 ICC Elements of Crimes, p. 10.

252 Witness AB4729; Witness EF3098; Witness MN2405; Witness YZ8891; Witness BR5104; Witness CS6390; Witness HX8209; Witness KA2375; Witness TJ9245; Witness UK1366; Witness WM3789; Witness YO5948; Witness CS9016; Witness PF2803.

253 Witness EF3098; Witness GH7182; Witness IJ0365; Witness MN2405; Witness OP9537; Witness AQ4763; Witness BR5104; Witness CS6390; Witness DT1827; Witness KA2375; Witness LB6069; Witness UK1366; Witness ZP6072; Witness AQ7305; Witness BR8194; Witness FV2559; Witness QG3749; Witness RH4682.

254 Witness EF3098; Witness KA2375; Witness AQ7305; Witness HX4770; Witness KA7204.

255 Witness QR6844; Witness BR5104; Witness FV3348; Witness FV3348; Witness HX8209; Witness YO5948.

256 Witness AB4729; Witness IJ0365; Witness FV3348; Witness KA2375; Witness HX4770; Witness MC9157; Witness QG3749; Witness SI5730.

257 Witness QR6844.

258 Witness EF3098; Witness GH7182; Witness QR6844; Witness ND3578; Witness MC1240; Witness ZP6072; Witness BR8194; Witness CS9016; Witness HX4770; Witness KA7204; Witness PF2803; Witness RH4682.

259 Witness MN2405; Witness QR6844; Witness CS9016.

260 Witness EF3098; Witness HX4770; Witness PF2803.

261 Witness CD5643.

was directed against the victim themselves, as well as against all other detainees: Russian guards put extra effort into making sure that other detainees heard or saw the torture of a particular victim. As many victims described, screams could be heard around the clock.

The purpose of intimidation or punishment is also evidenced by cases when Russian forces detained persons on such grounds as having tinted car windows,²⁶² having tattoos,²⁶³ having a PhD,²⁶⁴ attending a demonstration,²⁶⁵ or having dreadlocks.²⁶⁶ One journalist was severely beaten because he reported on the situation in Kherson.²⁶⁷ In several cases, Russian authorities took female victims hostage and used violence against them to coerce their male family members to appear and be arrested in exchange for releasing the female victim.²⁶⁸

Discriminatory reasons: Detainees' Ukrainian nationality and/or allegiance were another reasons for torture and ill-treatment. One survivor stated that, at some point, the torture became a punishment for his (Ukrainian) passport.²⁶⁹ Several persons were detained because they attended a demonstration against the Russian occupation, where they were spotted with a Ukrainian flag.²⁷⁰ One survivor was questioned about why she was speaking Ukrainian.²⁷¹ Another survivor was beaten because, in his house, Russian forces found posters about Ukraine, a traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt (UA: 'Вишиванка'), and an entry in a diary which celebrated Ukrainian military advances.²⁷²

v. A common policy to use torture

The circumstances and patterns of torture and ill-treatment as described by survivors indicate that, rather than being isolated instances of violence, Russian authorities used sexualised torture as a common policy for dealing with individuals in the occupied territory with real or perceived pro-Ukrainian or anti-Russian positions. The first indicator of this common policy is the systematic nature of violence. Most detainees, including women, were subjected to some form of physical violence. Most male detainees were subjected to electrocution, including of their genitals; waterboarding, rape, and rape threats were also frequently resorted; and all detainees suffered psychological pressure. Torture was administered 24 hours a day, both during and outside of interrogations.²⁷³ Consequently, all detainees suffered at least one or more forms of physical or psychological violence.

A common policy is further elicited from the deliberate and well planned acts of humiliation and degradation directed against a specific group — Ukrainian citizens. Forcing prisoners to verbally glorify the Russian military, nation, and leaders was calculated to break the morale of detainees and to make

262 Witness DT1827.

263 Witness MC1240; Witness UK1366.

264 Witness JZ9987.

265 Witness MC1240; Witness RH7392; Witness SI8021; Witness ND0374; Witness OE1498.

266 Witness CS9016.

267 Witness MC1240.

268 Witness IJ0365; Witness LB6069; Witness DT0238; Witness ES1475; Witness JZ6953.

269 Witness EF3098.

270 Witness MC1240; Witness RH7392; Witness SI8021; Witness ND0374; Witness OE1498.

271 Witness RH7392.

272 Witness SI5730.

273 Witness AB4729; Witness GH7182; Witness MN2405; Witness IY4752; Witness MC1240; Witness ND3578; Witness PF5293; Witness TJ9245; Witness WM3789; Witness DT0238; Witness FV2559; Witness HX4770.

them question their allegiance. Forcing the detainees to give fake confessions in front of cameras served a similar purpose and, by using them as propaganda material, was also aimed at breaking the patriotic spirit of the whole population in the occupied territories in line with the broader goal of the Russian full-scale invasion — to erase Ukrainian national identity.²⁷⁴

Russian authorities also resorted to torture and ill-treatment at detention facilities as a means of consolidating their power by spreading terror within the civilian population. Even though an occupying power is entitled to question individuals who potentially possess information about a resistance movement and/or the activities of the armed forces, obtaining such information through illegal means, such as torture, is absolutely prohibited.²⁷⁵ Moreover, as demonstrated above, in many cases, the motive was simply to punish or intimidate individuals, rather than eliciting information from them. The fact that Russian guards were filming torture and rape cases is further proof of their intention to spread terror.

Systematic nature of the violence is also evidenced by the fact that specific torture methods had designated names. As described above, the Russian guards had code names for different types of torture routinely applied to the detainees, including a 'call to Zelenskyy' or a 'call to Biden' for genital electrocution.²⁷⁶ The existence of special names for routine torture methods evidences that torture practices described in this Report were not sporadic and isolated incidents but approved policies systematically applied against detainees in this and other detention facilities under Russian control in Kherson.²⁷⁷ The use of torture as a general policy of the Russian occupying administration is also manifested in the comments of Russian forces at the TDC. Guards indicated that they were free to do whatever they pleased with the detainees, hinting that they were given *carte blanche* to ill-treat them.²⁷⁸ One of them guards said that 'Russia did not sign²⁷⁹ [and thus was not bound by] the Geneva Conventions', allowing the inference that Russian forces had no orders to abide by the norms of international humanitarian law (IHL) and spare the civilian population.²⁸⁰

Finally, the systematic and planned nature of the violence is further exhibited by the fact that, to organise the torture process and maximise its effects, Russian guards kept 'yellow lists' of detainees that had to be repeatedly ill-treated in the corridor of the TDC to force them to speak up and collaborate.²⁸¹

274 See: Genocide Watch, Country Report: Ukraine, 4 September 2022, available at: <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/country-report-ukraine-1>; Global Rights Compliance, New Torture Chamber Evidence Uncovered from Liberated Kherson, 2 March 2023, available at: <https://globalrightscpliance.org/new-torture-chamber-evidence-uncovered-from-liberated-kherson/>.

275 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Policy on Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment Inflicted on Persons Deprived of their Liberty, International Review of the Red Cross, Volume 93 Number 882 June 2011, <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4088-icrc-policy-document-torture-and-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading-treatment-inflicted>; For specific provisions of IHL and human rights instruments prohibiting torture, See Customary IHL Study, Practice relating to Rule 90. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v2/rule90>.

276 Witness MN2405; Witness KL8921; Witness XN4813; Witness CS9016; Witness MC9157.

277 Witness KL8921 mentions the same names for electrocution as used in another facility.

278 Witness HX8209.

279 According to the official website of the ICRC, the Russian Federation signed the fourth Geneva Convention on 12 December 1949 and ratified it on 10 May 1954: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/state-parties?activeTab=>. Moreover, the prohibition on torture, cruel, or inhuman treatment and outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment, is a rule of customary IHL, applicable universally to all states. Rule 90, Customary IHL Study, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule90>.

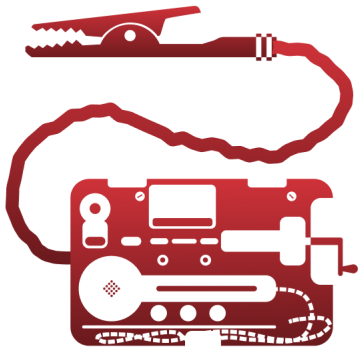
280 Witness MN2405.

281 Witness UK1366; Witness MN2405.

Code names for common **torture** types

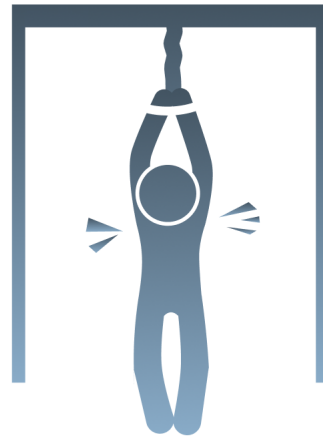
Call to Zelenskyy or Call to Biden
also referred to as
Physical Polygraph and Lie Detector

Electrocution of different body parts, usually the genitals.



Gym
(RU: 'Спортзал')

Hanging a prisoner from the ceiling and beating them, or leaving them in this position for prolonged time.



Teaching to swim
(RU: 'Учили плавать')

The victim's face is covered by a cloth, one of the guards keeps the face of the victim pointing upwards, and another pours water onto the material and down their throat, usually from five-litre bottles which creates drowning sensation.



Boeing crash

Ordering blindfolded prisoners to run, without them knowing that they are running towards stairs and will ultimately fall down.

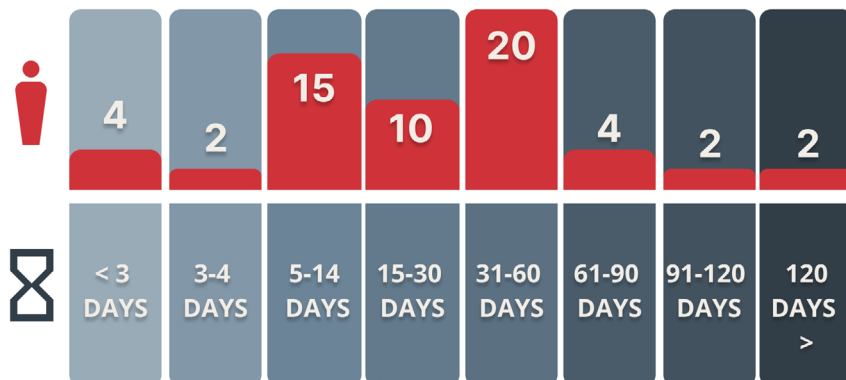


VI. Duration and conditions of detention at the TDC



"[Russian prison guards] forbade me to go outside, to sleep at night and to receive packages. I was afraid of every new day."²⁸²

Duration of Detention at the TDC



Duration of Detention for 22 Survivors Held in TDC + Other Facilities



282 Witness IJ0365.

The average duration of confinement at the TDC was 35 days, ranging from two²⁸³ to 148 days.²⁸⁴ However, almost one third of all detainees interviewed were held in more than one detention facility, adding significantly to their time in confinement. For 22 of the 59 interviewed detainees that were held in other detention facilities in addition to the TDC, the total duration of detention ranged from nine²⁸⁵ to 587 days,²⁸⁶ with an average detention time of 135 days.²⁸⁷

According to survivors' accounts, the TDC had 21 cells,²⁸⁸ designed to hold between two and five inmates each and, approximately, up to 90 detainees in total at a time.²⁸⁹ During the period of Russian control of the TDC, its occupancy always exceeded 100 detainees,²⁹⁰ peaking at 270 in August-September 2022.²⁹¹ Survivors reported that cells often held double or triple their capacity.

IPHR gathered testimonies from survivors who described conditions in 18 of the 21 cells in the TDC. These accounts are often fragmented and describe only some categories of conditions in the cells. This section is thus meant to illustrate the conditions of detention reported by interviewed detainees without aiming at providing an exhaustive description of all cells and other detention conditions.



A wall at Kherson TDC with the inscription 'Hell is here'. Source: [Investigator](#).

283 Witness JZ6953.

284 Witness CD5643.

285 Witness OE4182.

286 Witness PF2803.

287 This calculation is based on 22 interviews mentioning specific dates of detention in the TDC and elsewhere.

288 Witness CD5643; Witness QR6844; Witness KA7204.

289 While we could not establish the exact capacity, according to witness accounts, 15 cells whose capacity was reported could hold up to 52 detainees at a time. The biggest cells were designed for five people, the remaining six cells, whose capacity is unknown, were likely able to hold up to 30 more people. Thus, the overall capacity of the TDC was likely not more than 82 people.

290 Witness MN2405; Witness UK1366; Witness QG3749.

291 Witness QR6844.



One of the cells at the TDC. Source: IPHR.

i. Overcrowding, lack of bedding, and sleep deprivation



I slept on the table while sitting on a bench. In the morning, when other [detainees] woke up, I asked them if I could sleep a little on the [bunk] bed.²⁹²

The majority of the 21 cells at the TDC were overcrowded while under Russian forces' control, providing roughly 1.7 m² living space per detainee — well below international standards.²⁹³ Often cells had fewer bunk beds and mattresses than the number of detainees they accommodated, forcing detainees to sleep on the floor.²⁹⁴ They also lacked sufficient blankets and pillows.²⁹⁵ Some detainees asked the prison guards for minimal bedding but did not receive it.²⁹⁶ Due to overcrowding, detainees often slept sitting up²⁹⁷ or on concrete floors, sometimes without mattresses.²⁹⁸

292 Witness DT1827.

293 European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), 2015, December 15, Living space per prisoner in prison establishments: CPT standards, Council of Europe, paras. 9-11, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806cc449>

294 Witness QR6844; Witness MN2405, Witness ST7301; Witness BR5104; Witness UV1926; Witness OE4182; Witness HX8209; Witness DT0238.

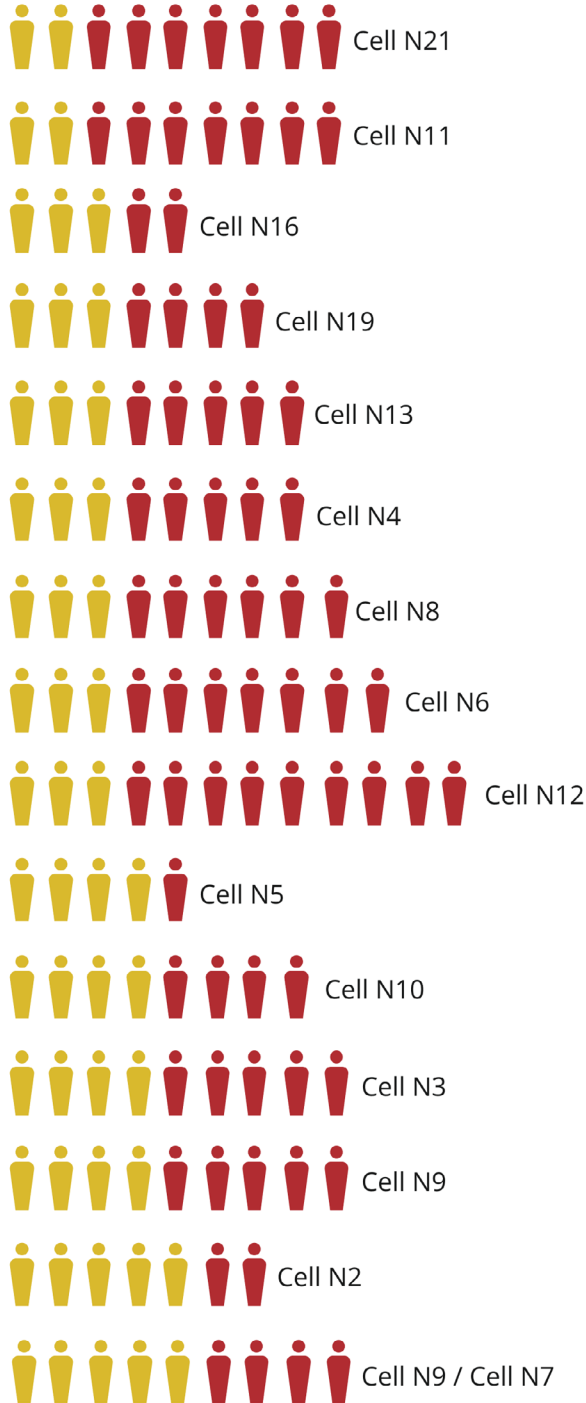
295 Witness CD5643, Witness MN2405, Witness ST7301; Witness BR5104; Witness DT1827; Witness UV1926; Witness HX8209; Witness OE4182; Witness QG6817; Witness ZP6072; Witness DT0238.

296 Witness CD5643; Witness QR6844.

297 Witness DT1827; Witness IY4752.

298 Witness SS9988.

Overcrowding at the TDC



■ Maximum Capacity of the Cell
■ Persons Held on Top of the Cell Capacity

Other Conditions

Sleep Deprivation as a Form of Punishment

Detainees Forced to Sleep on the Floor

No Adequate Lighting and Ventilation

Insufficient Access to Basic Hygiene Facilities

Irregular, Inadequate, Low-quality Nutrition

Insufficient Medical Assistance

- **Cell No. 1 (35m²)** held up to eight detainees.²⁹⁹
- **Cell No. 2**, intended for five people, held up to seven detainees at a time.³⁰⁰
- **Cell No. 3**, intended for four people, occasionally held up to nine.³⁰¹
- **Cell No. 4**, intended for three people, occasionally held up to eight.³⁰²
- **Cell No. 5 (15m²)**, intended for four people, frequently housed five or more.³⁰³
- **Cell No. 6 (17m²)**, intended for three people, held up to ten detainees.³⁰⁴
- **Cell No. 7 (18m²)**, built for five people, held between six and nine detainees.³⁰⁵
- **Cell No. 8 (6m²)**, designed for three detainees, typically housed between six and nine.³⁰⁶
- **Cell No. 9 (the ‘workers’ cell’)**³⁰⁷, designed for four people, held up to nine detainees.³⁰⁸
- **Cell No. 10 (approx. 10m²)**, intended for four people, held up to eight detainees.³⁰⁹
- **Cell No. 11**, intended for two people, held up to nine.³¹⁰
- **Cell No. 12** (approx. 4m²), intended for three people, held up to twelve detainees.³¹¹
- **Cell No. 13**, designed for three people, held up to eight detainees.³¹²
- **Cell No. 16**, built for three people, consistently held five detainees.³¹³
- **Cell No. 17 (12m²)**, housed up to nine detainees simultaneously.³¹⁴ Reportedly, this cell had no bunk beds, forcing all detainees to sleep on the floor.³¹⁵
- **Cell No. 18** was a solitary confinement cell with a toilet and a bunk bed.³¹⁶
- **Cell No. 19 (10 m²)** was designed to accommodate three people³¹⁷ and held up to seven.³¹⁸ In at least one instance, it was used for the solitary confinement of the mayor of Kherson, although other cells were overcrowded.³¹⁹
- **Cell No. 21 (7 m²)**,³²⁰ designed for two people,³²¹ held up to nine female detainees.³²²

299 Witness IY4752.

300 Witness EU7023.

301 Witness ND3578.

302 Witness YZ8891.

303 Witness ZP6072; Witness GH7182; Witness JZ9987.

304 Witness LB6069; Witness AQ7305, Witness WX5430; Witness ST7301.

305 Witness KL8921; Witness SI8021, Witness ZP6072.

306 Witness PF2803.

307 Witness CD5643 mentioned that Cell No. 9 had a machine for drilling which was the reason why this cell was referred to by the detainees as the workers’ cell.

308 Witness XN4813; Witness ND3578

309 Witness MC1240; Witness ZP6072.

310 Witness FV3348; Witness KA2375.

311 Witness OE4182, Witness EU7023; Witness WX5430.

312 Witness EF3098; Witness KA7204.

313 Witness HX4770.

314 Witness AB4729; Witness PF5293; Witness YO5948; Witness MC9157; Witness MN2405.

315 Witness AB4729.

316 Witness KA7204.

317 Witness QR6844.

318 Witness QR6844.

319 Witness KA7204.

320 Witness JZ6953.

321 Witness UV1926, Witness JZ6953.

322 Witness WM3789; Witness DT0238; Witness ES1475.

ii. Access to light and fresh air

Cells lacked adequate lighting and proper ventilation. According to survivor testimonies, they had harsh bright light left on 24 hours a day, disrupting their sleep. Survivors from Cell Nos. 1,³²³ 3, 5, 6³²⁴, 7,³²⁵ 8,³²⁶ 10,³²⁷ 11,³²⁸ 15,³²⁹ and 21 recounted that their cells either had minimal natural light or were lit ceaselessly by overhead fixtures that remained switched on day and night. In Cell No. 15, detainees were prohibited from blocking or dimming the light.³³⁰ One survivor told IPHR that, after his cellmates attempted to block the light, the prison guards beat them.³³¹

Several detainees mentioned that either there was no ventilation³³² in the cells or that it barely functioned.³³³ In Cell No. 6, one detainee experienced a seizure because of a lack of fresh air.³³⁴ According to the survivor from Cell No. 1's account, the cell was stuffy and humid.³³⁵ Cell No. 8 was reported to be very hot.³³⁶ Cell No. 19 was hot and humid.³³⁷ Detainees reported that they seldom had outdoor breaks in the facility yard or did not have them at all,³³⁸ compounding the stress of constant confinement in overcrowded cells and lack of fresh air.³³⁹

iii. Access to toilet and basic hygiene facilities



I asked them [the Russian prison guards] to take me to a cell with a toilet because I can't squat down because of my prosthesis, and they [the Russian prison guards] told me to use the toilet while standing. I used the toilet [only] standing. It was so humiliating for me.³⁴⁰

323 Witness IY4752.

324 Witness LB6069; Witness AQ7305.

325 Witness KL8921; Witness BR5104.

326 Witness BR8194.

327 Witness MC1240.

328 Witness OP9537.

329 Witness OE1498; Witness SS9988.

330 Witness YO5948.

331 Witness YO5948.

332 Witness QR6844; Witness FV3348; Witness IY4752.

333 Witness LB6069; Witness AQ7305.

334 Witness GW3687.

335 Witness IY4752.

336 Witness SS9988.

337 Witness QR6844.

338 Witness TJ9245; Witness HX4770; Witness OE4182; Witness QR6844.

339 Witness BR5104; Witness ZP6072.

340 Witness QG6817.

Cell Nos. 1,³⁴¹ 3,³⁴² 4,³⁴³ 5,³⁴⁴ 6,³⁴⁵ 8,³⁴⁶ 10, 11,³⁴⁷ 17,³⁴⁸ 18,³⁴⁹ 19,³⁵⁰ and 21³⁵¹ had a toilet and/or a sink. Cell No. 17 had a toilet but no sink.³⁵² Cell No. 3's sink was broken and supplied only half a litre of water per hour.³⁵³ Cell No. 8 had a squat toilet. A detainee with a prosthetic leg in this cell requested a transfer to a cell with a seated toilet—guards denied the request, exposing him to humiliating and degrading treatment.³⁵⁴ One survivor told IPHR that at least one cell had no toilet or water access.³⁵⁵ Cell No. 21, the so-called women's cell, had a toilet³⁵⁶ and a sink.³⁵⁷

None of the cells had a shower, making it challenging for the detainees to maintain hygiene.³⁵⁸ In Cell No. 21, female detainees were taken to a shower outside their cells, a privilege granted only at the discretion of the prison guards.³⁵⁹ Male detainees had to wash themselves over the cell toilets since they were not allowed regular access to showers outside the cells.³⁶⁰ In Cell No. 5, detainees used plastic bottles filled with water to wash themselves.³⁶¹ One detainee reported showering only two or three times during his 60-day detention, noting that access to showers was granted by guards as a form of reward for forced labour.³⁶² Detainees mentioned that the Russian-appointed head of the TDC with callsign Zloy (RU: 'Злой', meaning 'angry') allowed only around 10 seconds for males to shower, hurrying the detainees and threatening them with a stun gun.³⁶³

Basic hygiene items such as soap and toothbrushes were not provided. Detainees received them in packages from their relatives.³⁶⁴ In one case, a detainee bought soap from a prison guard.³⁶⁵ As a result of poor sanitation, cells were infested with bedbugs.³⁶⁶

341 Witness IY4752.

342 Witness ND3578

343 Witness ND0374.

344 Witness JZ9987; Witness ZP6072, Witness OE4182.

345 Witness LB6069.

346 Witness CS9016.

347 Witness FV3348; Witness OP9537.

348 Witness MN2405.

349 Witness KA7204.

350 Witness QR6844.

351 Witness AQ4763.

352 Witness AB4729; Witness MN2405.

353 Witness ND3578

354 Witness CS9016.

355 Witness HX4770.

356 Witness AQ4763.

357 Witness JZ6953.

358 Witness RH4682.

359 Witness AQ4763.

360 Witness AB4729.

361 Witness JZ9987.

362 Witness UK1366.

363 Witness ZP6072; Witness AQ4763.

364 Witness KL8921.

365 Witness MC1240.

366 Witness SS9988; Witness ZP6072.

iv. Inadequate food and water



For three days, they [the Russian prison guards] did not give us food, we only drank water from the sink [...]. After three days, they opened the door and said that we whores don't give up and don't beg, so, to keep us from dying, they would feed us again. They started giving us just plain porridge cooked in water without salt, mouldy bread — one slice, once a day.³⁶⁷



They [the Russian prison guards] gave us water [...] and a portion of buckwheat which could fit in the palm of a hand. Sometimes, we received food in the morning and only tea in the evening. We rationed water.³⁶⁸

Accounts of food and water supply vary from cell to cell. The majority of detainees received irregular, inadequate, and low-quality nutrition consisting of one to three meals per day.³⁶⁹ At different times, survivors reported receiving bread, eggs, pasta with canned meat, buckwheat, different types of porridge, canned fish, sausages, borscht, a mixture of canned meat and canned fish, Ukrainian military dry rations from 2015, dry biscuits from Russian military rations, compote, and tea.³⁷⁰ However, none of the detainees received all of the aforementioned food items. Many relied on relatives' packages as a source of higher quality and more diverse nutrition.³⁷¹ For example, one of the detainees interviewed by IPHR was assigned to cook food for other inmates.³⁷² The only ingredients available to him were pasta—18 packages per meal for all cells; canned meat—nine cans per meal for all cells; and cooking oil and salt provided by detainees' relatives. To improve the nutritional value, the detainee added additional cooking oil to the servings.

Food availability and quality depended on several factors, including which Russian authority was managing the TDC at the time, whether a detainee was under punishment or pressure to share information,³⁷³ the specific cell in which the detainee was held, the guards' mood and discretion, and the situation on the frontline. One detainee recalled that food portions were distributed based on the cell's intended capacity, rather than the actual number of detainees held inside.³⁷⁴ Another detainee reported that, while he was in Cell No. 10 — referred to by prison guards as the 'faggot cell' — he had almost nothing

367 Witness MC1240.

368 Witness BR5104

369 Witness OP9537; Witness AB4729; Witness CD5643; Witness KL8921; Witness AQ4763; Witness CS6390; Witness BR5104; Witness EU7023; Witness LB8346; Witness JZ6953; Witness HX4770; Witness MC9157; Witness LB6069.

370 Witness UV1926; Witness MN2405, Witness OP9537, Witness QR6844, Witness AQ4763, Witness BR5104, Witness CS6390, Witness DT1827, Witness MC1240, Witness QG6817, Witness SI8021, Witness ZP6072, Witness AQ7305, Witness BR8194, Witness CS9016, Witness FV2559, Witness HX4770, Witness KA7204, Witness RH4682, Witness TJ9245, Witness OE4182; Witness AB4729.

371 Witness KL8921.

372 Witness CD5643.

373 Witness YZ8891.

374 Witness IY4752.

to eat and, for the first 15 days.³⁷⁵ In one case, as a punishment for not providing requested information, detainees received no food for three consecutive days and survived solely on water from the sink. Guards eventually resumed feeding them, stating it was to prevent them from dying.³⁷⁶ Some detainees experienced prolonged constipation from the prison food.³⁷⁷

Detainees lacked proper cutlery, using plastic utensils that deteriorated over time and were never replaced.³⁷⁸ They also fashioned makeshift knives from empty cans to cut their food.³⁷⁹ In Cell No. 21, female detainees rationed their food to share with those in other cells and ate together from a single plate.³⁸⁰

The supply of drinking water varied from cell to cell. Often, the same water was provided for drinking and hygiene needs, so detainees had to ration it,³⁸¹ sometimes sharing one portion for two people.³⁸² In one instance, a detainee reported drinking low quality, red coloured water from the sink,³⁸³ in another — dirty water was provided by the Russian guards.³⁸⁴

v. Insufficient medical assistance



If a doctor from the Russians came, he mostly said that everyone was faking their illness.³⁸⁵



While [three Russian prison guards] were beating my cellmates in front of me for about 40 minutes, I thought: here, you have no legal status, no protection. There is only the power of weapons, the power of brute force, and the will of God [...] Both [detainees who had been beaten] were leaning on their hands [after]. I heard one of them begin to pray—he was losing balance, coordination [...] I helped him lie down on the bunk bed [...] I knocked on the door, begging them [the Russian guards] to call a doctor. I could hear his breathing getting slower. They told me to put a wet towel on his face, I put it so that he could breathe. A few minutes passed, and his breathing slowed even more. Then the door opened. The same three guards who had beaten them [cellmates of the witness] came in. They looked at him and said he was no longer breathing... He died. There was an exhumation [of killed man's body] later and I was a witness in the case.³⁸⁶

375 Witness CD5643.

376 Witness MC1240.

377 Witness MC1240.

378 Witness MC1240.

379 Witness KL8921.

380 Witness WM3789.

381 Witness BR5104.

382 Witness MC1240.

383 Witness HX8209.

384 Witness CS6390.

385 Witness AQ4763.

386 Witness KL8921.

Interviews with survivors described medical aid in the TDC as virtually nonexistent³⁸⁷ or severely limited. If Russian doctors visited the TDC, they typically accused detainees of faking their illnesses³⁸⁸ and provided only painkillers, regardless of the severity of the detainees' illness or injury.³⁸⁹ To a detainee who had COVID-19 symptoms, the prison guards gave an onion instead of medication.³⁹⁰ In one instance, the Russia-appointed head of the TDC, Zloy, threatened that he would never call an ambulance again, allegedly, because he believed that one detainee had artificially elevated his own blood pressure.³⁹¹

Prison guards often refused or failed to provide any form of medical aid.³⁹² As a general rule, after torture, detainees did not receive any medical aid.³⁹³ Medical checkups did not exist.³⁹⁴ Two detainees experiencing serious heart problems were denied vital medications, even though relatives had brought the drugs to the TDC.³⁹⁵

Detainees were afraid to request medical assistance from the prison guards, instead relying on relatives to bring them medication and resorting to self-treatment.³⁹⁶

The only regular, accessible medical assistance came from fellow detainees, among whom were a masseur,³⁹⁷ a doctor,³⁹⁸ and a detainee with an unfinished medical education.³⁹⁹ These people provided medical aid for all detainees at the TDC. IPHR interviewed a detained doctor who helped 140 fellow detainees.⁴⁰⁰ He even provided medical care to a prison guard.⁴⁰¹

In two instances, detainees were hospitalised only after severe ill-treatment. One detainee was hospitalised after torture left him immobilised⁴⁰² and another after being pushed off a bunk bed by the prison guards, resulting in a broken arm.⁴⁰³ In a later incident, guards instructed the detainee not to reveal the circumstances of his injury and returned him to the TDC the same day without providing any pain medication.⁴⁰⁴ According to three survivors' accounts, one detainee died from injuries received

387 Witness RH4682.

388 Witness AQ4763.

389 Witness EF3098.

390 Witness HX8209.

391 Witness CD5643.

392 Witness EF3098.

393 Witness BR5104; Witness BR8194.

394 Witness IY4752.

395 Witness QR6844; Witness JZ9987.

396 Witness ZP6072.

397 Witness AQ4763; Witness EF3098.

398 Witness XN4813.

399 Witness XN4813.

400 Witness XN4813.

401 Witness XN4813.

402 Witness QR6844.

403 Witness FV3348.

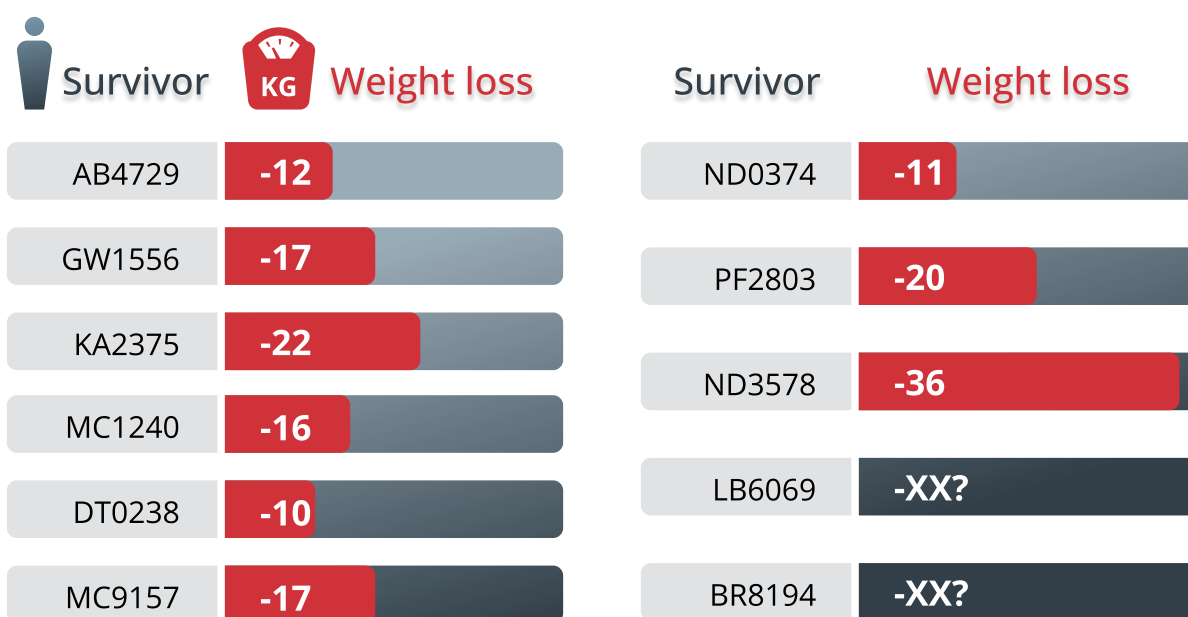
404 Witness FV3348.

in confinement because the prison guards failed to provide him with medical assistance.⁴⁰⁵ One more interviewed detainee witnessed three Russian prison guards beating up his cellmate to death.⁴⁰⁶

Inadequate prison conditions worsened the detainees' health. For instance, in Cell No. 19, detainees who slept directly on the floor without mattresses became ill and were denied any medical assistance or improvement of their bedding.⁴⁰⁷ Male detainees were prohibited from engaging in any physical exercise. In one instance, a detainee was beaten by the guards for doing push-ups.⁴⁰⁸

VI. Long-term consequences of ill-treatment

Captivity had severe consequences for the survivors' physical and mental health. Most survivors suffered drastic weight loss during detention, ranging from 10 to 36 kg.⁴⁰⁹



405 Witness UV1926 and Witness CS6390 directly mention Victim AM9981 as a victim; it is highly likely that Witness FV2559 mentioned the incident of the death of Victim AM9981; Witness PF5293 mentioned the fact that a detainee died in general because they did not receive necessary medical aid.

406 Witness KL8921.

407 Witness QR6844.

408 Witness AB4729.

409 Witness AB4729 (lost 12 kg); Witness GW1556 (lost 17 kg); Witness KA2375 (lost 22 kg); Witness MC1240 (lost 16 kg); Witness DT0238 (lost 10 kg); Witness MC9157 (lost 17 kg); Witness ND0374 (lost 11 kg); Witness PF2803 (lost 20 kg); Witness ND3578 (lost 36 kg). Witness LB6069 and Witness BR8194 lost weight but did not specify how much.

Survivors continued to suffer long-term health consequences after release. Many experienced prolonged pain and loss of sensation in different muscles and body parts.⁴¹⁰ One survivor lost hearing in the left ear; others lost sight in one eye and became disabled.⁴¹¹ Another survivor had necrosis develop in his leg and had to be hospitalised.⁴¹² One survivor had his jaw broken and had to undergo an operation.⁴¹³ Another lost teeth because of electrocution.⁴¹⁴ Many survivors complained about headaches, shortness of breath, insomnia, and nightmares.⁴¹⁵ Some could not sleep at all for the first couple of days after release from the TDC.⁴¹⁶

Many survivors were in a difficult and unstable emotional state after captivity and some had to undergo psychological rehabilitation.⁴¹⁷ One survivor said she was afraid of using electrical appliances because of the electric shocks.⁴¹⁸ Another said that he gets shaky sensations when he hears shots or sees soldiers.⁴¹⁹ One survivor reported that he becomes easily aggressive and is not able to control it.⁴²⁰ Another survivor said he was having suicidal thoughts.⁴²¹

According to anonymised information shared by a partner organisation in charge of providing assistance to interviewed survivors, 29 out of the 59 survivors requested medical or psychological help. Specifically, six survivors were or are still receiving psychological help, including crisis therapy, 15 received both medical and psychological help, and eight more only medical help.⁴²² Relatives of the survivors also contacted this organisation, asking for psychological help. In some cases, the survivors did not request psychological help but their relatives did.⁴²³ Importantly, the number of survivors requiring medical and psychological help is likely higher, as some survivors are likely to have received help from other providers or chose not to receive help for reasons unrelated to their trauma. Finally, this Report does not reflect the whole range of long-term consequences, as survivors are often unable or unwilling to describe them in detail. As such, the effects of physical and psychological ill-treatment and inadequate detention conditions on the survivors' wellbeing are likely much more deleterious and far-reaching than described in this report.

410 Witness CD5643; Witness QG6817; Witness TJ9245; Witness YO5948; Witness MC9157; Witness PF2803; Witness SI5730.

411 Witness OP9537; Witness SI8021 (confirmed by Witness RH7392); Witness LB8346.

412 Witness QR6844.

413 Witness MC9157.

414 Witness BR8194.

415 Witness AB4729; Witness BR5104; Witness KA2375; Witness MC1240; Witness QG6817; Witness BR8194; Witness PF2803; Witness PF2803; Witness SI5730.

416 Witness MC1240.

417 Witness IJ0365; Witness MN2405; Witness BR5104; Witness PF2803; Witness SI5730.

418 Witness IJ0365.

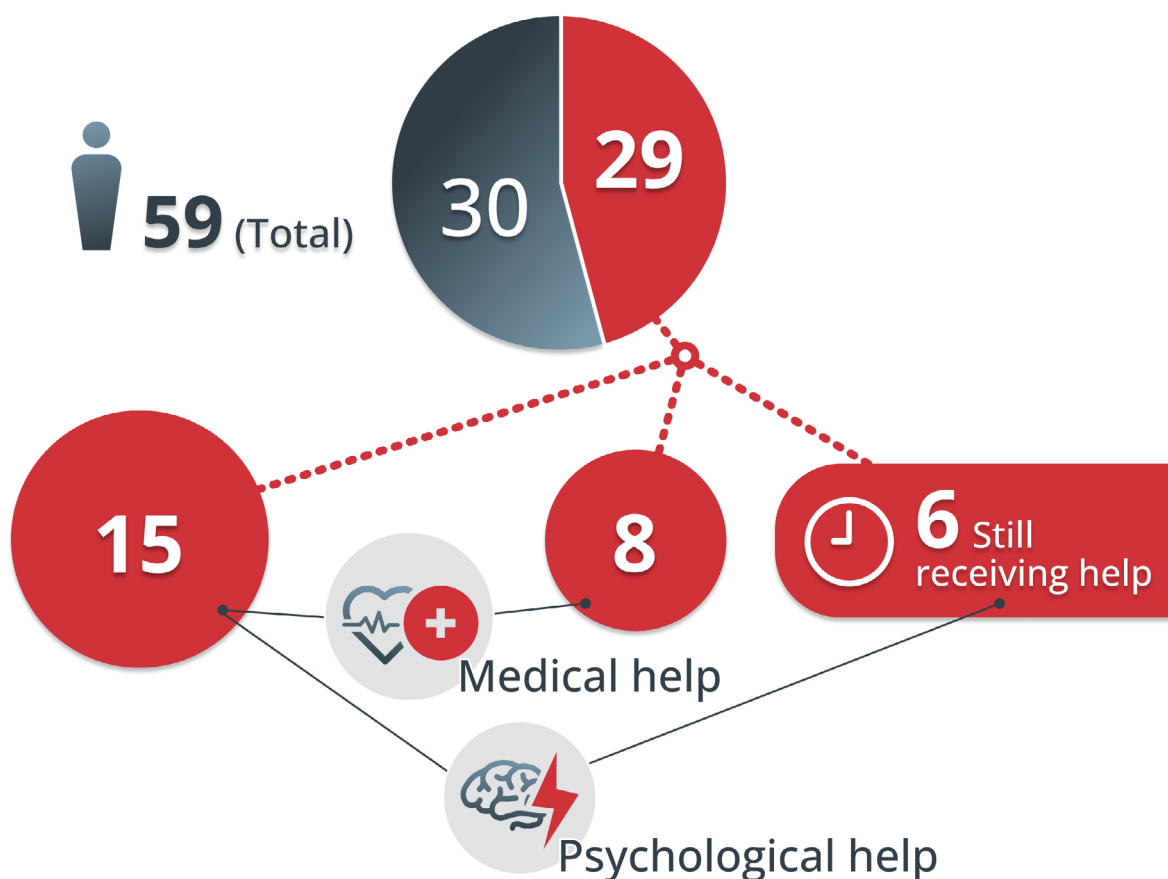
419 Witness BR5104.

420 Witness MC1240.

421 Witness QG6817.

422 Information provided to IPHR by partner organisation Blue Bird. Established by a group of like-minded people in 2015 in Odesa, one of the aims of the 'Charitable Foundation Blue Bird' is to help people affected by war by providing psychological and medical help to the survivors of gross human rights violations and atrocity crimes. For more detail visit their website: <https://bluebird.com.ua/en/>.

423 Information provided to IPHR by partner organisation Blue Bird.



VII. Potential legal classification

i. Prohibition of torture and inhumane detention conditions

There is no definitive list of acts that may constitute **torture** (the threshold will fluctuate with duration and individual circumstances)⁴²⁴ — however, electrocution, severe prolonged beatings, mock executions, rape, and heinous humiliation may all constitute acts of torture (separately or cumulatively).⁴²⁵ Conduct that falls short of the torture threshold, but nevertheless causes severe physical or mental suffering, may be qualified as inhuman treatment. This includes inadequate conditions of detention.⁴²⁶ When assessing conditions of detention, account must be taken of the cumulative effects of these conditions and the amount of time spent in such conditions.⁴²⁷ The threat of severe beatings and rape may constitute

424 ECHR, *Price v UK*, para 30 – whilst there was no intention to humiliate, disregard for health conditions or disability of an inmate can trigger Article 3.

425 ECHR, *Selmouni v. France*, paras 102-103; *Mikheyev v. Russia*, paras 107, 135; *Shishkin v. Russia*, paras 88-89.

426 ECHR, *Neshkov and Others v. Bulgaria*, 2015, para 227.

427 ECHR, *Neshkov and Others v. Bulgaria*, 2015, para 229.

inhuman treatment or contribute to torture in combination with other forms of abuse.⁴²⁸ The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has previously found inhuman treatment or torture whenever an inmate is taken into custody in good health, but leaves with injuries.⁴²⁹

International legal rules on **permissible prison conditions** aim to ensure that all detainees are treated with dignity, respect, and humanity.⁴³⁰ The UN Nelson Mandela Rules,⁴³¹ European Prison Rules,⁴³² CoE Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) standards,⁴³³ and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) require the following **minimum standards** to be fulfilled:

- **Prisoners must be treated without discrimination** on any grounds, including language, political or other opinions, national or social origin, or other status.⁴³⁴
- Disciplinary measures must respect the dignity of prisoners and must **not include corporal punishment, prolonged solitary confinement, or any other form of inhuman or degrading treatment.**⁴³⁵
- **Cells must have adequate ventilation, living space, lighting, and heating.** The CPT's minimum standard for personal living space in a multiple-occupancy cell is 4 m²,⁴³⁶ plus a fully partitioned sanitary facility. The ECtHR established 3 m² per detainee in multi-occupancy cells as the relevant minimum standard under Article 3 of the European Convention.⁴³⁷ Moreover, the ECtHR has repeatedly found that restrictions on access to natural light and air seriously aggravated the situation of prisoners in an already overcrowded cell and weighed heavily in favour of an Article 3 violation.⁴³⁸

428 *Gäfgen v Germany*, Paragraph 108 - a threat of torture can amount to torture, as the nature of torture covers both physical pain and mental suffering. In particular, the fear of physical torture may itself constitute mental torture. However, there appears to be broad agreement, and the Court likewise considers, that the classification of whether a given threat of physical torture amounted to psychological torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment depends upon all the circumstances of a given case, including, notably, the severity of the pressure exerted and the intensity of the mental suffering caused.; see also *Selmouni v. France*, paras 102-103.

429 ECtHR, *Aksoy v Turkey*, para 61.

430 ICCPR, (Art. 10; GC IV, Art. 37; ECtHR, *Vinter and Others v. the United Kingdom*, para 113.

431 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Adopted by General Assembly resolution 70/175, on 17 December 2015, https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Nelson_Mandela_Rules-E-ebook.pdf.

432 Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules, Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 January 2006 at the 952nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, Council of Europe, <https://rm.coe.int/european-prison-rules-978-92-871-5982-3/16806ab9ae>.

433 CoE Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), CPT standards on Living space per prisoner in prison establishments, <https://rm.coe.int/16806cc449#:~:text=12.,living%20space%20for%20one%20inmat>.

434 Article 14 of the ECHR; ECtHR, Guide on the case-law of the European Convention on Human Rights on Prisoners' rights, Updated on 31 August 2024, https://ks.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr-ks/guide_prisoners_rights_eng paras 345-361.

435 Rule 43 of the Nelson Mandela Rules; Paras 56.1-62 of the European Prison Rules; Articles 3, 5, and 6 of the ECHR and Paras 197-209 of the ECtHR Guide on Prisoner's rights.

436 CPT standards on Living space per prisoner in prison establishments,

437 ECtHR, *Muršić v. Croatia*, paras 136-141.

438 ECtHR Guide on Prisoners' rights, para. 37.

- **Prisoners must have access to adequate toilet and washing facilities, clean water, bedding, and clothing.**⁴³⁹ According to the ECtHR, a truly humane environment consistent with Article 3 ECHR is not possible without ready access to toilet facilities or the possibility to keep one's body clean.⁴⁴⁰ The possibility to shower no more than once every 10 days or 15-20 minutes once a week was considered as manifestly insufficient for maintaining proper personal hygiene.⁴⁴¹ The Court also held that necessary sanitary precautions, including adequate disinfection, is an indispensable element for the prevention of skin diseases.⁴⁴² The Court has found a breach of Article 3 where prisoners did not have an individual sleeping place and had to take turns to sleep.⁴⁴³
- **Prisoners must receive sufficient and nutritious food.**⁴⁴⁴ The ECtHR has held that where food given to a prisoner is clearly insufficient, this raises an issue under Article 3 of the Convention.⁴⁴⁵ Moreover, under Nelson Mandela Rules, every prisoner shall have at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily if the weather permits.⁴⁴⁶
- **Prisons must provide medical care that is of the same standard as that available to the general population.**⁴⁴⁷ The lack of appropriate medical care may violate Article 3 of the European Convention.⁴⁴⁸ According to the ECtHR, the mere fact that a detainee is seen by a doctor and prescribed a certain treatment cannot automatically lead to the adequacy of the medical assistance.⁴⁴⁹ The authorities must also ensure that a comprehensive record is kept concerning the detainee's health state,⁴⁵⁰ that diagnosis and care are prompt and accurate,⁴⁵¹ and that supervision is regular and involves a comprehensive therapeutic strategy, rather than addressing detainee's health problems on a symptomatic basis.⁴⁵²

439 Rules 15-21 of the Nelson Mandela Rules; Rules 19-21 of the European Prison Rules; ECtHR Guide on Prisoners' rights, paras 39-47.

440 ECtHR, *Ananyev and Others v. Russia*, 10 April 2012, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-108465%22%5D%7D>, para. 156. This case was adopted as a pilot judgment, and the principles established therein were used in other cases against Russia.

441 Implicating Article 3 of the ECHR. *Ananyev and Others v. Russia*, para. 158; ECtHR Guide on the Prisoner's Rights, para. 41.

442 Implicating Article 3 of the ECHR. ECtHR, *Ananyev and Others v. Russia*, para. 159; ECtHR, *Neshkov and Others v. Bulgaria*, 01 June 2015, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-150771%22%5D%7D>, para. 243.

443 *Ananyev and Others v. Russia*, para. 146.

444 Rule 22 of the Nelson Mandela Rules; Rule 22 of the European Prison Rules; ECtHR Guide on Prisoners' rights, paras 48-53.

445 *Dudchenko v. Russia*, 5 March 2018, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-178344%22%5D%7D>, para. 130.

446 Rule 22 of the Nelson Mandela Rules; See also Rule 27 of the European Prison Rules; ECtHR Guide on Prisoners' rights, paras 54-57.

447 Rule 24(1) of the Nelson Mandela Rules and Rule 40.1 of the European Prison Rules. See also Rules 24-35 of the Nelson Mandela Rules; Rules 40-47 of the European Prison Rules; ECtHR Guide on Prisoners' rights, paras 108ff.

448 ECtHR, *Blokhin v. Russia*, 23 March 2016, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-161822%22%5D%7D>, para. 136; *Wenerski v. Poland*, 20 April 2009, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-90722%22%5D%7D>, paras 56-65.

449 ECtHR, *Hummatov v. Azerbaijan*, 29 February 2009, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-83588%22%5D%7D>, para. 116.

450 ECtHR, *Khudobin v. Russia*, 26 January 2007, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-77692>, para. 83

451 ECtHR, *Melnik v. Ukraine*, 28 June 2006, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-72886>, paras 104-106

452 ECtHR, *Amirov v. Russia*, 20 April 2015, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-148225>, para. 93.

Most of these norms were violated by the Russian forces controlling the Kherson TDC.

Ill-treatment reaching the threshold of torture: In 50 out of 59 cases⁴⁵³ documented by IPHR, survivors reported being subject to one or more of the following types of ill-treatment: beatings, rape, attempted rape, electrocution, including genital electrocution and other forms of physical violence. They were ill-treated as part of “preparation” for or during interrogations, punishment, intimidation or retaliation for victims’ pro-Ukrainian views. Survivors reported pain so severe that they lost consciousness, could not speak, or, in pain, would tear the fastenings used to hold them in place. Some detainees asked the Russian guards to kill them, unable to withstand the pain. In addition to physical violence, in 30 cases, detainees were subjected to threats of violence, including sexual violence — mock executions, threats of execution, beatings, rape or genital mutilation, as well as similar threats against their loved ones. Upon release, many prisoners had to seek medical help for physical and mental trauma sustained in detention. Thus, taking the severity and long-lasting effects of physical and mental pain and suffering the Russian guards inflicted upon the detainees, their conduct separately or cumulatively reaches the threshold of torture and constitutes the war crime of torture⁴⁵⁴ and/or the crime against humanity of torture.⁴⁵⁵

Detention conditions reaching the threshold of inhumane treatment and torture: All detainees were held in overcrowded cells lacking sufficient sleeping places, bedding, basic hygiene, nutrition, and medical care. The detainees were routinely forced to witness physical violence against other inmates and hear their screams day and night. According to one detainee, hearing screams was ‘the worst torture’.⁴⁵⁶ Cumulatively, these conditions amount, at the very least, to inhumane treatment and thus constitute the war crime of inhumane treatment⁴⁵⁷ and the crime against humanity of inhumane acts.⁴⁵⁸ Such treatment likely also reaches the threshold of torture.⁴⁵⁹

ii. Rape and other forms of sexual violence

In addition to the war crime and the crime against humanity of torture,⁴⁶⁰ **rape** also constitutes a separate war crime and crime against humanity.⁴⁶¹ Under ICC Elements of Crimes, rape is defined as an act of invasion committed by force, or by threat of force or coercion, of the body of a person. The invasion is accomplished by conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body.⁴⁶²

453 Additionally,

454 Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(a)(ii). Per Article 8 (2)(a)(ii)-1 of ICC Elements of Crimes, unlike the crime against humanity of torture, the war crime of torture requires specific purposes – obtaining information or a confession, punishment, intimidation or coercion or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind. As demonstrated above, this element is met.

455 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(f).

456 Witness PF5293.

457 Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(a)(ii).

458 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(f).

459 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(f); Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(a)(ii).

460 ICTY, Kunarac at al Appeals Judgment, paras 150-15, Furundžija Trial Judgment, paras 163, 264; ICTR, Akayesu Trial Judgment, para. 597, 687.

461 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(g); Article 8(2)(b)(xxii).

462 ICC Elements of Crimes, Article 7(1)(g)-1, Article 8(2)(b)(xxii)-1.

At least one documented case of Russian guards' forceful anal penetration of a detainee with an electrified metal rod amounts to the war crime and/or crime against humanity of rape.⁴⁶³ Additionally, based on circumstantial and hearsay evidence collected, there is a reasonable basis to believe that the other six documented cases of forced anal penetration of male detainees by other detainees under Russian soldiers' duress, or by Russian soldiers using foreign objects, can also be prosecuted as crimes against humanity and war crimes of rape. Further investigations are required to identify specific perpetrators and prove these allegations beyond a reasonable doubt. Finally, six documented instances of attempted rape may also qualify as rape or at the very least as other forms of sexual violence⁴⁶⁴ analyzed below.

The concept of other forms of sexual violence is underdeveloped in case law and theory. For sexual assaults to amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity of **other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity**, they have to meet two cumulative requirements — constitute an act of sexual nature and be of comparable gravity to other prohibited acts.⁴⁶⁵ There is no established definition of what conduct can constitute **an act of sexual nature**.⁴⁶⁶ International tribunals have recognized genital electrocution,⁴⁶⁷ beating, mutilating or otherwise causing injury to a sexual body part,⁴⁶⁸ sexual threats causing someone to form a reasonable apprehension or fear of sexual violence⁴⁶⁹ as sexual acts amounting to war crimes of torture and inhumane treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity, and/or crimes against humanity of torture, persecution and willfully causing great suffering. Stripping has also been categorized as an act of sexual violence by the ICC Policy on Gender-Based Crimes⁴⁷⁰ and the Hague Principles on Sexual Violence.⁴⁷¹

463 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(g); Article 8(2)(b)(xxii).

464 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(g); Article 8(2)(b)(xxii).

465 Elements of Crimes, Article 8 (2) (b) (xxii)-6 War crime of sexual violence; Article 7 (1) (g)-6 Crime against humanity of sexual violence; See also: The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, pp. 70-8-; 85-88, available at: <https://4genderjustice.org/ftp-files/publications/The-Hague-Principles-on-Sexual-Violence.pdf>.

466 ICC Policy on Gender-based Crimes, December 2023, para 62, available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-policy-gender-en-web.pdf>; The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, pp. 86-87, available at: <https://4genderjustice.org/ftp-files/publications/The-Hague-Principles-on-Sexual-Violence.pdf>.

467 EAC, Habré Judgement, paras 610-624, 1564-1570; ICC, Pre-Trial Chamber I, Gaddafi et al Prosecutor's Application Pursuant to Article 58, para 27; See also: Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Libya (2 March 2012) UN Doc. A/HRC/19/68, p 45.

468 ICTY, Todorović Sentencing Judgement, paras 38, 34, 37; Simić Sentencing Judgement, para 63; Tadić Trial Judgment, paras 206, 194-198, 720, 722-730; Tadić Appeal Judgement, paras 68, 170-171; Kvočka et al Trial Judgement, para 180, fn 343.

469 ICTY, Kvočka et al Trial Judgement), paras 98, 108, 229, 234, 319-321, 408, 415, 419-420, 470, 504, 578-579, 691, 752-753; Kvočka et al Appeal Judgement, paras 329-34, 339, 594-599; Simić Sentencing Judgement, para 63; Brđanin Trial Judgement, paras 516-517, 524, 538, 998, 1013, 1050, 1061, 1088.

470 ICC Policy on Gender-based Crimes, December 2023, p. 26, available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-policy-gender-en-web.pdf>.

471 The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, p. 45, available at: <https://4genderjustice.org/ftp-files/publications/The-Hague-Principles-on-Sexual-Violence.pdf>.

The concept of “**comparable gravity**” is also not yet developed in international case law.⁴⁷² The ICC Elements of Crimes stipulate in this regard that:

a. For an act of sexual violence to *amount to a crime against humanity*, it must be of a gravity comparable to other crimes against humanity involving sexual violence, listed in Article 7(1)(g) the Rome Statute, namely: rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and enforced sterilization.⁴⁷³

b. For an act of sexual violence to *amount to a war crime* in the context of an international armed conflict, it must be of a gravity comparable to that of a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions, such as torture, or inhumane treatment, *wilfully* causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health.⁴⁷⁴

Taking the two different gravity requirements, 23 documented cases of genital electrocution amount to the war crime of any other form of sexual violence,⁴⁷⁵ as they are comparable to grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of torture and/or inhumane treatment and/or wilfully causing great suffering. If these acts result in the loss of sexual function of survivors, they will also likely amount to the crime against humanity of enforced sterilization, or, at the very least, to other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity.⁴⁷⁶

Further, the 17 documented cases of threats of rape, eight cases of other sexual threats,⁴⁷⁷ and three cases of attempted rape likely amount to the war crime of other forms of sexual violence,⁴⁷⁸ as they are comparable to grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of torture, or, at the very least, inhumane treatment and/or wilfully causing great suffering. Additionally, the three cases of attempted rape likely amount to crimes against humanity of other forms of sexual violence⁴⁷⁹ as their gravity is comparable to rape. Finally, while the eight cases of stripping might not satisfy the requisite comparable gravity thresholds on as standalone acts, they likely amount to the crimes against humanity of other inhumane acts⁴⁸⁰ and the war crimes of outrages upon personal dignity,⁴⁸¹ according to existing case law. Further, when perpetrated together with other sexual acts, they can reinforce existing sexual violence cases.

472 The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, p. 86, available at: <https://4genderjustice.org/ftp-files/publications/The-Hague-Principles-on-Sexual-Violence.pdf>.

473 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(g); ICC Elements of Crimes, Article 7(1)(g)-6.

474 Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(b)(xxii); ICC Elements of Crimes, Article 8 (2) (b) (xxii)-6

475 Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(xxii).

476 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(g).

477 Four cases of threats to rape family members of the survivor; three cases of threats to electrocute genitals; four cases to cut off/shoot genitals.

478 Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(xxii).

479 Rome Statute, Article 7(1)(g).

480 ICTR, Akayesu Trial Judgment, paras 688, 685, 692-695, 697, 731-732, 734 and Section 8. Verdict, p. 293; Akayesu Appeal Judgment, p. 143.

481 ICTY, Kunarac et al Trial Judgment, paras 772, 766-771, 773, 782, 886; Kunarac et al Appeal Judgment, paras 283-285 and pp. 125-126.

iii. Due process irregularities and signs of arbitrary detention

A decision to detain a protected person in occupied territory must be made according to a regular procedure prescribed by the occupying power in accordance with IHL norms. Internment may only be applied for imperative reasons of security of the detaining power,⁴⁸² for example, to prevent sabotage or espionage. The reasons for internment must be serious and legitimate.⁴⁸³ Additionally, under both IHL and IHRL, any detained civilian is entitled to **fair trial guarantees**, including the right to be informed of the reasons for detention, the right to challenge the legality of detention, and the right to a fair trial.⁴⁸⁴ Special protections exist for certain categories of civilians, such as women, children, and the elderly.

While a detailed analysis of the legality of the initial and continued detention of the 59 interviewees is beyond the scope of this Report, it is noteworthy, that 44 detainees were confined solely or in part due to their pro-Ukrainian position, non-military professional activities including journalism and provision of humanitarian relief, having relatives serving in the Ukrainian Army and refusal to cooperate with the occupying authorities, none of which qualify as legitimate reasons for detention. At least two detainees were not given any reason for their detention. Finally, none of the 59 detainees were able to challenge the legality of their detention at any point, while many were subject to detention averaging between 35 and 135 days. Cumulatively, these violations are likely to render their initial and/or continued detention arbitrary, but further investigation is needed to prove these allegations beyond a reasonable doubt.

482 Geneva Convention IV, Article 42; 43; 78.

483 ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Delalić*, paras 567; 576.

484 Additional Protocol I, Article 75; ICCPR, Article Art. 9.