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# UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine finds continued systematic and widespread use of torture and indiscriminate attacks harming civilians

25 September 2023



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**GENEVA (25 September 2023)** – There is continuous evidence that Russian armed forces are committing war crimes in Ukraine, including unlawful attacks with explosive weapons, attacks harming civilians, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and attacks on energy infrastructure, the [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine](#) said in its latest [update](#) today.

During a presentation to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Commission reported that it had documented explosive weapons attacks on residential buildings, a functional medical facility, a railway station, a restaurant, shops and commercial warehouses. These attacks led to civilian casualties, the damage or destruction of key facilities, and the disruption of essential services and supplies.

The Commission deplores that attacks affecting civilians and medical institutions, which have protected status, continue to take place.

The Commission is investigating the cause of the breach of the Nova Kakhovka dam and its impact on the civilian population.

The Commission's investigations in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia indicate the widespread and systematic use of torture by Russian armed forces against persons accused of being informants of the Ukrainian armed

forces. In some cases, torture was inflicted with such brutality that it caused the death of the victim.

One victim who suffered torture through electric shocks stated: “Every time I answered that I didn’t know or didn’t remember something, they gave me electric shocks ... I don’t know how long it lasted. It felt like an eternity.”

In the Kherson region, Russian soldiers raped and committed sexual violence against women of ages ranging from 19 to 83 years, the Commission found. Frequently, family members were kept in an adjacent room hence being forced to hear the violations taking place.

Amongst the many devastating consequences for children, the Commission has continued to investigate individual situations of alleged transfers of unaccompanied minors by Russian authorities to the Russian Federation. It regrets that there is a lack of clarity and transparency on the full extent, circumstances, and categories of children transferred.

The Commission is also concerned about allegations of genocide in Ukraine. For instance, some of the rhetoric transmitted in Russian state and other media may constitute incitement to genocide. The Commission is continuing its investigations on such issues.

The Commission reiterates its deep concern at the scale and gravity of violations that have been committed in Ukraine by Russian armed forces and emphasizes the need for accountability. It also recalls the need for the Ukrainian authorities to expeditiously and thoroughly investigate the few cases of violations by its own forces.

The Commission’s latest update to the Human Rights Council is a continuation of its previous reports, including its [Conference Room Paper](#) with detailed findings, released on 29 August 2023.

Since its establishment, the Commission has travelled over ten times to Ukraine. In the course of its investigations, its members and investigators met with government authorities, international organisations, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders.

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**The full text of the Oral Update** as presented to the UN Human Rights Council can be found [here](#)

The **Members** of the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine are available for interviews.

**Background:** The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine is an independent body mandated by the UN Human Rights Council to, among other things, investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, and related crimes in the context of the aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation. The Commission will submit reports of its activities to the General Assembly in October 2023, and to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2024. The Commission comprises Erik Møse (Chair), Pablo de Greiff and Vrinda Grover.

**More information** on the work of the Commission can be found at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iic/hr-ukraine/index>

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