

WINTER AS A WEAPON: WHAT THE UN COMMISSION FOUND

On 26 October 2026 the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine reported to the General Assembly that Russia's large-scale attacks on Ukraine's energy system since 10 October 2022 are the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects and the crime against humanity of other inhumane acts, carried out under a state policy to deprive civilians of essential energy and to cause suffering. In 2023 the Commission had found the campaign to be a war crime; it now adds a crime against humanity.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
VERIFIED RECORD
OCT 2026

-21°C

last winter, while millions faced prolonged outages of heating, electricity, water and gas
A/81/440, para. 10 · Tier A

~2 h

of electricity a day, often at night, in many areas; heating unavailable for days or weeks, late Dec 2025 – late Feb 2026
A/81/440, paras. 12–13 · Tier A

255

people interviewed in nine regions: Dnipro, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, Zaporizhzhia, Zhytomyr
A/81/440, para. 9 · Tier A

4

ICC arrest warrants already issued for the 2022–23 energy campaign: Kobylash, Sokolov, Shoigu, Gerasimov
ICC, 5 Mar and 24 Jun 2024 · Tier A

WHAT THE COMMISSION FOUND

A war crime (para. 32). Attacks on energy objects that are civilian or indispensable to the civilian population are unlawful. Commanders knew that the heating facilities they targeted in large civilian areas were indispensable, above all in winter.

A crime against humanity (para. 33). The attacks were broad in geographic scope, repeated and intensified in the cold; they were carried out pursuant to a state policy and amount to the crime against humanity of other inhumane acts.

People (paras. 19–26). Ukrainian authorities documented deaths from low temperatures in homes and hospitals since October 2025; doctors treated frostbite and hypothermia. Older people and people with reduced mobility were worst affected; schools closed and children fell ill from the cold.

Earlier findings (para. 8). The Commission found in 2023 that the attacks were widespread, systematic and disproportionate — the war crime of excessive incidental harm (A/HRC/52/62).

IN RUSSIA'S OWN WORDS

10 Oct 2022 · President Putin. The attacks were launched "at the proposal of the Defence Ministry and in accordance with the plan of the General Staff" (para. 29).

14 Aug 2026 · Ministry of Defence, Telegram. "In winter you will freeze" — posted with its update on strikes on energy (para. 7).

1 Sep 2026 · President Putin. "The Russian Armed Forces have been given instructions to prepare and carry out massive strikes on Ukraine's energy" (para. 7).

The claim. Russian authorities say the targets are military or dual-use (para. 31). The Commission found that targets included objects that are civilian in nature.

READ IT FAIRLY

Both sides examined. The Commission also examined Ukrainian strikes on energy facilities in Russia and in occupied areas (paras. 34–35). It could not investigate their impact because Russia gave no access and did not answer its requests (para. 36).

What it does not give. The report gives no total count of attacks and no national toll of deaths from cold; the Hub does not add one.

Text. Advance unedited version, dated 19 Oct 2026; paragraph numbers may change in the final edition.

ESTABLISHED · PATTERN · POSITION

Established. War crime and crime against humanity of other inhumane acts — finding of a UN-mandated body (A/81/440); war crimes and crimes against humanity for 2022–23 — ICC arrest warrants (2024).

Pattern. Waves of strikes on generation, heating and gas each autumn and winter since October 2022, intensifying in the cold.

Position. Ukraine: "On the eve of the new winter, these findings are especially important" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 Oct 2026).

WHAT TO CITE

"The UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has concluded that Russia's large-scale attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure are the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects and the crime against humanity of other inhumane acts, carried out pursuant to a state policy (A/81/440, paras. 32–33, 26 October 2026)."

THE ASK

- Cite the finding by paragraph: A/81/440, paras. 32–33 — a war crime and a crime against humanity, under a state policy.
- Call on Russia to cease attacking energy infrastructure that is civilian in nature or indispensable to the civilian population, as the Commission recommends (para. 82(a)).
- Support civilians before the cold, as the Commission asks of the international community (para. 85(a)), and protect the grid: air defence, transformers, heating and generation.
- Keep the energy campaign in every accountability track: support the ICC, no amnesty for these crimes in any settlement.

