

KHERSON, NOVEMBER 2022: WHAT THE CITY REVEALED

Russian forces left Kherson on 11 November 2022, after eight months of occupation and two days after Moscow ordered the retreat. Within a week Ukraine's Interior Minister reported 63 bodies with signs of torture in the liberated part of the region; by 24 November the Prosecutor General had confirmed nine torture chambers. The UN Commission of Inquiry later found the same pattern of torture in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, and in 2024 qualified Russian torture as a crime against humanity.

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VERIFIED RECORD
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DRAFT — not published. Draft for the editor. Figures checked against the Interior Ministry (D. Monastyrskiy, 16 Nov 2022, via Babel and Novaya Gazeta Europe), the Prosecutor General (A. Kostin, 24 Nov 2022, via Ukrainska Pravda/Interfax-Ukraine), the UN Commission of Inquiry (A/78/540, press release 20 Oct 2023; A/79/549, press release 30 Oct 2024), Human Rights Watch (13 Apr 2023) and the Mobile Justice Team (via Reuters, 2 Mar 2023; via CNN/ICTJ, 2 Aug 2023). The Commission's findings are thematic (Tier A); counts of sites and bodies are Ukrainian (Tier B) or independent (Tier C), and the draft keeps them apart. Counts of torture sites differ by source and date (4 of 11 sites → 9 → 20+ → 35+ detention places): each figure is shown with its date, none is merged. Sanctions: FSB — US Treasury press release sm0410 (11 Jun 2018); Putin — EU/UK/US, 25 Feb 2022 (Axios, Bloomberg). Photo slots: buildings only (Commons / National Police / OGP, with licence) — no images of the dead or of injured people.

63

bodies with signs of torture found in the liberated part of Kherson region in the first days after liberation; 'the search has only just begun' B

Interior Minister D. Monastyrskiy, 16 Nov 2022

9

torture chambers confirmed in the liberated territory of Kherson region; 432 civilians killed B

Prosecutor General A. Kostin, 24 Nov 2022

20+

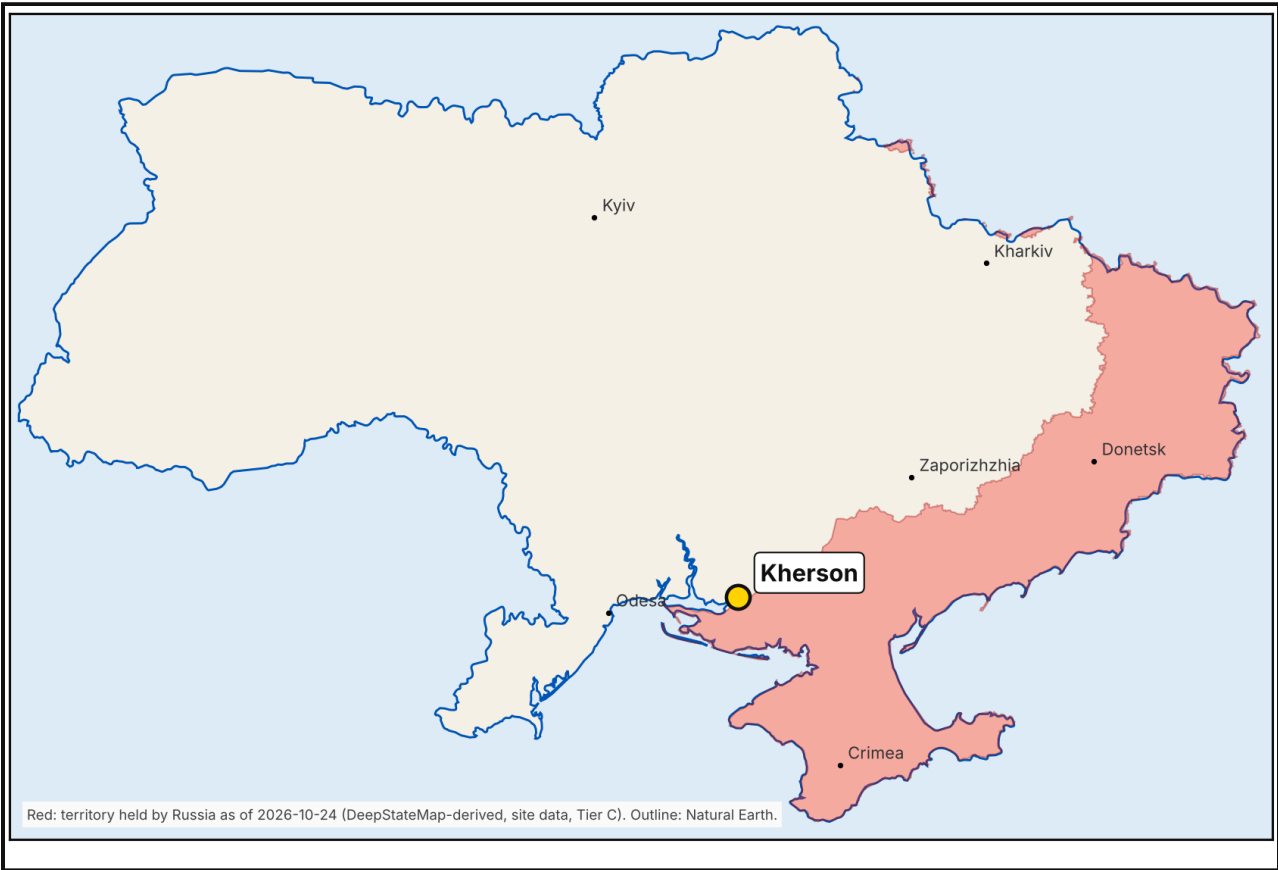
detention sites in and around Kherson city; 34 people interviewed, 3 deaths after torture documented C

Human Rights Watch, 13 Apr 2023

143

states voted that the 'annexation' of Kherson region is invalid — 5 against, 35 abstentions A

UN General Assembly resolution ES-11/4, 12 Oct 2022



BOTTOM LINE

A city that told the truth when the army left. The 'status' Moscow had proclaimed on 30 September 2022 lasted six weeks. When the troops withdrew, investigators entered police stations, a pretrial detention centre and basements that residents had avoided for months.

Torture as a method, not an excess. Beatings with batons, electric shocks including to the genitals, mock executions, hoods, denial of medical care: former detainees describe the same methods at different sites (HRW, 2023). The UN Commission found the same pattern in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions (2023) and qualified Russian torture as a crime against humanity under a coordinated state policy (2024).

Run by the state. Investigators supporting Ukraine's prosecutors reported that the main Kherson torture sites were planned and financed by the Russian state and run by the FSB and the Russian prison service (Mobile Justice Team, 2023). Ukrainian courts have begun to convict, in absentia.

LEGAL QUALIFICATION IN THREE LAYERS

TORTURE IN DETENTION UNDER RUSSIAN CONTROL, KHERSON AND ZAPORIZHZHIA REGIONS — ESTABLISHED (UN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY, A/78/540, 2023); TORTURE AS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY — ESTABLISHED AT THE LEVEL OF THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS (A/79/549, 2024)

DETENTION SITES, TORTURE AND KILLINGS DISCOVERED AFTER LIBERATION (BUCHA, IZIUM, KHERSON) — PATTERN

TORTURE CHAMBERS PLANNED AND FINANCED BY THE RUSSIAN STATE — POSITION (UKRAINE; MOBILE JUSTICE TEAM, TIER C)

Established. The UN Commission of Inquiry found that Russian authorities used torture in a widespread and systematic way in detention facilities, and that new evidence from Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions shows the same pattern (A/78/540, 20 Oct 2023); in 2024 it found that torture by Russian authorities amounts to a crime against humanity, pursuant to a coordinated state policy (A/79/549, 29 Oct 2024). **Pattern.** Occupation, detention sites, torture and killings, discovery after liberation — the sequence of Bucha and Iziurm repeated in Kherson. **Position.** Ukraine qualifies the acts as war crimes (Art. 438 CCU) and holds that the torture chambers were part of a state system; independent investigators reported a paper trail of Russian state financing (Tier C).

WHAT WE ASK

Demand access for the UN Commission of Inquiry and HRMMU to every place where Russia holds Ukrainian civilians, and the release of civilians detained in occupied Kherson region. Cite the Commission's 2024 finding by name: torture by Russian authorities is a crime against humanity. Sanction the FSB and prison-service officials identified as running the Kherson sites.

Sources: A — UN General Assembly resolution ES-11/4, 12 Oct 2022; UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, A/78/540 (press release 20 Oct 2023) and A/79/549 (press release 30 Oct 2024). B — Interior Ministry (D. Monastyrskiy), 16 Nov 2022, via Babel and Novaya Gazeta Europe; Office of the Prosecutor General (A. Kostin), 24 Nov 2022, via Ukrainska Pravda / Interfax-Ukraine; Office of the Prosecutor General, 1 Feb 2024, via UNN. C — Human Rights Watch, 'Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson', 13 Apr 2023; Mobile Justice Team via Reuters (Malay Mail), 2 Mar 2023, and via CNN/ICTJ, 2–4 Aug 2023; NPR, 18 Nov 2022; Al Jazeera, 9 Nov 2022 (Shoigu/Surovikin); Meduza/Interfax, 11 Nov 2022 (Peskov).



EIGHT MONTHS, THEN THE BASEMENTS

The occupation of Kherson lasted from 2 March to 11 November 2022. What happened inside the detention sites became known only when the army that ran them left.

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2 Mar 2022	Russian forces take Kherson; occupation of the city begins. C — Human Rights Watch, 13 Apr 2023
Mar - Nov 2022	Residents are detained over real or suspected support for Ukraine, past service in the security forces or speaking out; detainees describe beatings, electric shocks and threats at the pretrial detention centre on Teploenerhetykiv Street ('the hole') and at other sites. C — Human Rights Watch, 13 Apr 2023
30 Sep 2022	Moscow proclaims the 'accession' of Kherson region, with Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions. C — Kremlin ceremony; open sources
12 Oct 2022	The UN General Assembly declares the 'referendums' and the attempted annexation invalid and illegal: 143 in favour, 5 against, 35 abstentions. A — A/RES/ES-11/4
9 Nov 2022	Defence Minister S. Shoigu orders the withdrawal from the right bank on the proposal of Gen. S. Surovikin, who says the city can no longer be supplied. C — Russian MoD, televised meeting, via Al Jazeera, 9 Nov 2022
11 Nov 2022	Ukrainian forces enter Kherson. The Kremlin says the status of the region 'is legally defined' and that 'there are and can be no changes'. C — Peskov, via Interfax/Meduzha, 11 Nov 2022
16 Nov 2022	63 bodies with signs of torture found in the liberated part of the region; 11 places of detention identified, 4 of them with signs of torture; 436 war-crimes proceedings opened. B — Interior Minister D. Monastyrskiy, 16 Nov 2022
24 Nov 2022	Nine torture chambers confirmed in the liberated territory; 432 civilians killed; 12 joint investigation groups at work. B — Prosecutor General A. Kostin, 24 Nov 2022
2 Mar 2023	Investigators supporting the Prosecutor General: at least 20 torture chambers in Kherson were planned and financed by the Russian state and run by the FSB and the prison service; about 1,000 survivors gave evidence; 400+ people missing. C — Mobile Justice Team, via Reuters, 2 Mar 2023
13 Apr 2023	Human Rights Watch: 34 people interviewed; 20+ detention sites in and around Kherson; three cases in which torture led to death. C — Human Rights Watch, 13 Apr 2023
2 Aug 2023	Mobile Justice Team: more than 35 detention places identified; of 320 detention cases reviewed, nearly half involved torture. C — Mobile Justice Team, via CNN/ICTJ, 2–4 Aug 2023
20 Oct 2023	UN Commission of Inquiry: torture used in a widespread and systematic way in detention; evidence from Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions shows the same pattern. A — A/78/540
1 Feb 2024	A Russian serviceman who served as garrison commandant in Lazurne, Kherson region, sentenced in absentia to 12 years for detaining and torturing residents (Art. 438 CCU). B — Office of the Prosecutor General, via UNN, 1 Feb 2024
29 Oct 2024	UN Commission of Inquiry to the General Assembly: torture by Russian authorities is a crime against humanity, committed pursuant to a coordinated state policy. A — A/79/549; press release 30 Oct 2024

WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

Human Rights Watch interviewed 34 people; 12 former detainees and 10 relatives described torture. Nearly all recent cases occurred at the pretrial detention centre at 3 Teploenerhetykiv Street; others at 10 Perekopska Street, the former police directorate on Liuteranska Street, the city administration, the airport and a village school in Biliaivka (HRW, 13 Apr 2023).

Methods described: beatings with sticks and rubber batons, electric shocks including to the genitals and ears, threats of death and rape, stress positions, hoods, denial of medical care; detainees were made to sing the Russian anthem. Families were usually not told where relatives were held (HRW, 2023).



The regional administration building in Kherson, 19 Nov 2022 — eight days after Russian forces left the city; the pedestal of the Lenin monument in front. Photo: Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine · CC BY 4.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

WHAT WAS FOUND AFTER LIBERATION

16 Nov 2022: 63 bodies with signs of torture; 11 places of detention, 4 with signs of torture (Interior Minister). 24 Nov 2022: nine torture chambers confirmed, 432 civilians killed (Prosecutor General). The counts grew as investigators reached more sites.

By 2023 independent investigators had identified more than 35 detention places in the region and some 1,000 survivors who gave evidence; more than 400 people from Kherson were reported missing (Mobile Justice Team).

Sources: A — UN General Assembly resolution ES-11/4, 12 Oct 2022; UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, A/78/540 (press release 20 Oct 2023) and A/79/549 (press release 30 Oct 2024). B — Interior Ministry (D. Monastyrskiy), 16 Nov 2022, via Babel and Novaya Gazeta Europe; Office of the Prosecutor General (A. Kostin), 24 Nov 2022, via Ukrainska Pravda / Interfax-Ukraine; Office of the Prosecutor General, 1 Feb 2024, via UNN. C — Human Rights Watch, 'Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson', 13 Apr 2023; Mobile Justice Team via Reuters (Malay Mail), 2 Mar 2023, and via CNN/ICTJ, 2–4 Aug 2023; NPR, 18 Nov 2022; Al Jazeera, 9 Nov 2022 (Shoigu/Surovikin); Meduzha/Interfax, 11 Nov 2022 (Peskov).



A UN FINDING, UKRAINIAN COUNTS, INDEPENDENT TESTIMONY

The UN Commission of Inquiry reached thematic findings on torture that cover Kherson region. The site counts are Ukrainian; the testimony was collected by Human Rights Watch and by investigators supporting Ukraine's prosecutors.

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ESTABLISHED BY BODIES WITH A MANDATE

UN Commission of Inquiry, A/78/540 (press release 20 Oct 2023): torture used 'in a widespread and systematic way in various types of detention facilities'; evidence 'collected in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, shows the same pattern of torture'; in Biliaivka, Kherson region, a victim was denied medical help and died within an hour. A

UN Commission of Inquiry, A/79/549 (29 Oct 2024): 'Russian authorities have committed torture as a crime against humanity', pursuant to 'a coordinated state policy'. UN General Assembly, ES-11/4 (12 Oct 2022): the attempted annexation of Kherson region is invalid. A

UKRAINIAN INVESTIGATION

Interior Ministry (D. Monastyrskyi), 16 Nov 2022: 63 bodies with signs of torture; 11 places of detention, 4 with signs of torture; 436 proceedings. B

Office of the Prosecutor General (A. Kostin), 24 Nov 2022: 9 torture chambers confirmed; 432 civilians killed; 12 joint investigation groups. B

Office of the Prosecutor General, 1 Feb 2024: Lazurne garrison commandant sentenced in absentia to 12 years for detention and torture of residents. B

INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Human Rights Watch, 'Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson', 13 Apr 2023. C

Mobile Justice Team (Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group / Global Rights Compliance), findings of 2 Mar 2023 (via Reuters) and 2 Aug 2023 (via CNN, ICTJ). Reuters said it could not verify the March findings independently. C

THE NUMBERS — EVERY SOURCE, AS PUBLISHED

Figure	What it counts	Source · date · tier
63	bodies with signs of torture	Interior Minister, 16 Nov 2022 · B
9	torture chambers confirmed	Prosecutor General, 24 Nov 2022 · B
20+	detention sites in and around the city	HRW, 13 Apr 2023 · C
35+	detention places in the region	Mobile Justice Team, Aug 2023 · C



Site counts differ by source and date because investigators reached more places over time; the hub shows each figure with its source and does not add them up.

Sources: A — UN General Assembly resolution ES-11/4, 12 Oct 2022; UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, A/78/540 (press release 20 Oct 2023) and A/79/549 (press release 30 Oct 2024). B — Interior Ministry (D. Monastyrskyi), 16 Nov 2022, via Babel and Novaya Gazeta Europe; Office of the Prosecutor General (A. Kostin), 24 Nov 2022, via Ukrainska Pravda / Interfax-Ukraine; Office of the Prosecutor General, 1 Feb 2024, via UNN. C — Human Rights Watch, 'Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson', 13 Apr 2023; Mobile Justice Team via Reuters (Malay Mail), 2 Mar 2023, and via CNN/ICTJ, 2–4 Aug 2023; NPR, 18 Nov 2022; Al Jazeera, 9 Nov 2022 (Shoigu/Surovikin); Meduza/Interfax, 11 Nov 2022 (Peskov).



WHO RAN THE SITES

Independent investigators reported that the main Kherson torture sites were run by Russian state security and prison services. Individual perpetrators are being tried in Ukraine, in absentia.

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Who	Role in the case	Proceedings	Sanctions · courts
Federal Security Service (FSB) incl. the FSB unit set up for occupied Kherson	Ran the main torture sites (Mobile Justice Team, 2023)	Not charged as an institution	US: designated (OFAC, 28 Dec 2016; again under CAATSA, 15 Mar 2018 — US Treasury, 11 Jun 2018)
Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN)	Ran detention sites; Commission found Russian security forces deployed to detention facilities in occupied areas (A/79/549)	Not charged as an institution	—
Garrison commandant, Lazurne Russian serviceman	Detention and torture of residents with a pro-Ukrainian position	Sentenced in absentia to 12 years, 1 Feb 2024 (Art. 438 CCU)	—
Vladimir Putin Supreme Commander	Command responsibility (position)	ICC arrest warrant, 17 Mar 2023 (deportation of children); no charge for Kherson torture	EU, UK and US asset freeze, 25 Feb 2022 (Axios; Bloomberg, 25 Feb 2022)

CHAIN OF RESPONSIBILITY

The detention sites operated for eight months in a city under Russian military and administrative control; no other party could run them.

The UN Commission found a coordinated state policy of torturing Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war (2024).

Investigators reported documents showing the main Kherson sites were financed by the Russian state (Tier C, not independently verified).

THE RUSSIAN STATE'S OWN ACTS

30 Sep 2022: Moscow proclaims the 'accession' of Kherson region.

9 Nov 2022: Shoigu orders the withdrawal; 11 Nov 2022: the Kremlin says the region's status cannot change.

The ICC warrant is cited for the chain of command, not for the Kherson sites.

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A 'STATUS' THAT LEFT WITH THE ARMY

On the day Ukrainian forces entered Kherson, the Kremlin said the region remained Russian and that nothing could change. The hub sets that statement against the record — and records that Russia has not answered the torture findings.

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DMITRY PESKOV, KREMLIN SPOKESMAN · 11 NOV 2022

"It is a subject of the Russian Federation; this status is legally defined and fixed. There are and can be no changes here."

Interfax, via Meduza, 11 Nov 2022

FALSE UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

The UN General Assembly declared the attempted annexation invalid a month earlier (ES-11/4, 12 Oct 2022: 143–5–35). Ukrainian forces entered the city the same day; within two weeks nine torture chambers were confirmed.

What the claim concedes: The 'status' rested only on the army — and left with it.

KREMLIN AND RUSSIAN MOD · NO RESPONSE · JAN AND MAR 2023

"(No response to questions about torture and unlawful detention in Kherson.)"

Reuters, 2 Mar 2023

SILENCE IS NOT AN ANSWER

A UN mandated body found torture in Kherson region part of a widespread and systematic pattern (2023) and a crime against humanity (2024).

What the claim concedes: Nothing — and denies nothing specific.

FAIR TO SAY

Russia withdrew from the city, not from the whole region; it still occupies the left bank of Kherson region.

The Kremlin and the Russian MoD did not respond to Reuters' questions on torture in Kherson (Jan and Mar 2023); Moscow denies committing war crimes in general terms.

Sources: A — UN General Assembly resolution ES-11/4, 12 Oct 2022; UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, A/78/540 (press release 20 Oct 2023) and A/79/549 (press release 30 Oct 2024). B — Interior Ministry (D. Monastyrskiy), 16 Nov 2022, via Babel and Novaya Gazeta Europe; Office of the Prosecutor General (A. Kostin), 24 Nov 2022, via Ukrainska Pravda / Interfax-Ukraine; Office of the Prosecutor General, 1 Feb 2024, via UNN. C — Human Rights Watch, 'Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson', 13 Apr 2023; Mobile Justice Team via Reuters (Malay Mail), 2 Mar 2023, and via CNN/ICTJ, 2–4 Aug 2023; NPR, 18 Nov 2022; Al Jazeera, 9 Nov 2022 (Shoigu/Surovikin); Meduza/Interfax, 11 Nov 2022 (Peskov).

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TORTURE IS NEVER LAWFUL

The prohibition of torture is absolute: no war, occupation or security reason permits it. Russia is party to the Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention against Torture. What Kherson needs is access for UN monitors to the people still detained and accountability for those who ran the sites.

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ESTABLISHED — BY BODIES WITH A MANDATE

At Tier A: torture in detention under Russian control is widespread and systematic, with the same pattern in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions (A/78/540); torture by Russian authorities is a crime against humanity under a coordinated state policy (A/79/549).

At Tier A: the attempted annexation of Kherson region is invalid (ES-11/4).

PATTERN — WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

Bucha, Izium, Kherson: occupation, detention sites, torture and killings, discovery after liberation.

Detainees targeted for real or suspected support for Ukraine (HRW; Commission of Inquiry).

POSITION — UKRAINE'S QUALIFICATION

Ukraine qualifies the acts as war crimes (Art. 438 CCU) and pursues commanders under Art. 28 CCU.

The hub's inference: the documented methods meet the definition of torture in Geneva Convention IV art. 32 and Rome Statute arts. 7(1)(f) and 8(2)(a)(ii).

THE RULES THAT APPLY

Geneva Convention IV arts. 27, 31, 32 and 147: humane treatment of protected persons; torture a grave breach.

UN Convention against Torture (Russia is a party): absolute prohibition.

Rome Statute art. 7(1)(f) (torture as a crime against humanity) and art. 8(2)(a)(ii) (torture as a war crime).

WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

How many people from Kherson region remain in Russian detention; Russia gives no access to the Commission or HRMMU.

A consolidated, current count of torture sites in the region from the Prosecutor General.

The fate of the 400+ people reported missing (2023).

WHAT WE ASK

Open the doors. Demand that Russia give the UN Commission of Inquiry, HRMMU and the ICRC access to every place where Ukrainian civilians are held.

Bring them home. Call for the release of civilians detained in occupied Kherson region and transferred to Crimea and Russia.

Cite the finding. In every statement on Kherson, cite the Commission by name: torture by Russian authorities is a crime against humanity (A/79/549).

Name the services. Designate the FSB and prison-service officials identified as running the Kherson sites under national and EU regimes.

Sources: A — UN General Assembly resolution ES-11/4, 12 Oct 2022; UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, A/78/540 (press release 20 Oct 2023) and A/79/549 (press release 30 Oct 2024). B — Interior Ministry (D. Monastyrskiy), 16 Nov 2022, via Babel and Novaya Gazeta Europe; Office of the Prosecutor General (A. Kostin), 24 Nov 2022, via Ukrainska Pravda / Interfax-Ukraine; Office of the Prosecutor General, 1 Feb 2024, via UNN. C — Human Rights Watch, 'Ukraine: Russian Torture Center in Kherson', 13 Apr 2023; Mobile Justice Team via Reuters (Malay Mail), 2 Mar 2023, and via CNN/ICTJ, 2–4 Aug 2023; NPR, 18 Nov 2022; Al Jazeera, 9 Nov 2022 (Shoigu/Surovikin); Meduza/Interfax, 11 Nov 2022 (Peskov).

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2 photographs from official sources, as shown on the live page. Each image is credited and openly licensed; videos are linked to the official post (scan the code). No image shows the dead; graphic aftermath is blurred in print. The downloadable pack on the live page holds the full-size files and their SHA-256.

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The regional administration building in Kherson, 19 Nov 2022 — eight days after Russian forces left the city; the pedestal of the Lenin monument in front

Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine · 2022-11-19 · CC BY 4.0

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kherson_after_Russian_occupation_\(2022-11-19\)_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kherson_after_Russian_occupation_(2022-11-19)_01.jpg)



Deminers clear ground in liberated Kherson region during a press tour, 16 Nov 2022

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine · 2022-11-16 · CC BY 4.0

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kherson_Oblast_after_Russian_occupation_\(2022-11-16\)_03.webp](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kherson_Oblast_after_Russian_occupation_(2022-11-16)_03.webp)



Live page and evidence pack (ZIP): ukraine-evidence.org/#cases/hist-kherson-liberation-2022/media. This appendix is not an evidence repository: original material is held by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine (warcrimes.gov.ua) and the ICC Office of the Prosecutor.