

No. 1 ≠ No. 3

Russia's pre-strike claim named Maternity Hospital No. 1; the bomb hit the maternity ward of City Hospital No. 3 — a different institution in a different district

Nebenzia at the Security Council, 7 Mar 2022 (Russian text via Meduza, 12 Mar 2022); OHCHR, 29 Jun 2022, para. 42

17 + 1 + 1

civilians injured at Hospital No. 3 on 9 Mar 2022; a pregnant woman and her unborn child who could not be saved; a girl among the dead reported by the city

OHCHR, 29 Jun 2022, para. 42; Mariupol city council, 10 Mar 2022

~600

people AP's reconstruction estimates died in the Drama Theatre on 16 Mar 2022; Mariupol council estimated ~300; Amnesty: "at least a dozen, likely many more"

AP, 4 May 2022; Amnesty, 30 Jun 2022

2 × 500 kg

aerial bombs Amnesty found most likely to have destroyed the theatre; OSCE: "most likely an egregious violation of IHL" and a war crime

Amnesty, 30 Jun 2022; OSCE Moscow Mechanism report, 13 Apr 2022

WHAT WE ASK

Cite the OSCE Moscow Mechanism report of 13 Apr 2022 and OHCHR's report of 29 Jun 2022, para. 42, whenever the "Azov did it" version is repeated · put on the record that Russia announced a Mariupol maternity hospital as a target two days before striking one · support the ICC and national investigations into both strikes, as Amnesty requested · ask Russia to admit independent forensic experts to the theatre site and to account for the remains it removed in 2022 · ask platforms to keep the removed Embassy posts available to investigators · note the prosecution of Russian journalists who reported on both strikes.

THE OCCASION AND THE RECORD	
Occasion	Russian air strikes on the maternity ward of City Hospital No. 3, Mariupol (9 Mar 2022, afternoon) and on the Donetsk Regional Academic Drama Theatre, used as the city's main shelter (16 Mar 2022, around 10:00), during the siege of Mariupol (from 3 Mar 2022)
Where the claims were made	UN Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, 7 Mar 2022 (Nebenzia, pre-strike); Russian MoD briefings, 5, 10 and 16 Mar 2022 (Konashenkov); Lavrov press conference, Antalya, 10 Mar 2022; @RussianEmbassy (London), 10 Mar 2022 (tweets removed by Twitter); UN Security Council, 17 Mar 2022 (Nebenzia on the theatre, as reported by TASS)
Record	Russian Mission statement of 7 Mar 2022 (via Meduza); OSCE Moscow Mechanism report ODIHR.GAL/26/22/Rev.1 (13 Apr 2022); OHCHR report of 29 Jun 2022, para. 42; AP investigation (4 May 2022); Amnesty "Children" report (30 Jun 2022); HRW/Truth Hounds/SITU "Our City Was Gone" (8 Feb 2024)
What happened next	Twitter removed the Embassy's "FAKE" tweets (10 Mar 2022) · 45 OSCE states' Moscow Mechanism report finds war crimes at both sites (13 Apr 2022) · 'DPR' authorities clear the theatre rubble and say it was "blown up from inside" (Jul 2022) · the theatre's façade is demolished and rebuilt; at its reopening (Dec 2025) TASS repeats the MoD's 2022 claim that Azov blew it up
Status of the claims	Never withdrawn; repeated at the theatre's reopening in Dec 2025 (TASS, citing the MoD)

THE SPEAKERS		
Vassily Nebenzia	Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN	Told the Council on 7 Mar 2022 that Ukrainian forces had expelled the staff of "maternity hospital No. 1" and set up a firing position; on 17 Mar said Russian forces "never considered the theater as a strike target" and that Azov was using it "to cause a provocation"
Sergey Lavrov	Minister of Foreign Affairs · under EU, US and UK sanctions since 25 Feb 2022	At Antalya on 10 Mar 2022, after talks with Ukraine's foreign minister, said the maternity hospital had "long" been an Azov base with no women, children or staff, and cited Russia's 7 Mar Council statement as proof
Maj.-Gen. Igor Konashenkov	Spokesman of the Russian Ministry of Defence	5 Mar: Azov and Aidar fire "from positions equipped in schools, hospitals, maternity wards"; 10 Mar: no Russian aircraft struck ground targets in Mariupol, the hospital story a "completely staged provocation"; 16 Mar: no air missions over Mariupol that day, Azov "blew up the theatre building they had mined"
Russian Embassy in the United Kingdom (@RussianEmbassy)	Official account of the Russian Federation	On 10 Mar 2022 labelled AP's hospital photographs "FAKE", called a pregnant survivor an actress with "very realistic make-up" and said the maternity house "has long been taken by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion"; Twitter removed the posts

WHAT OTHERS SAID	
UN Secretary-General	Called the attack on the maternity hospital "horrific" (9 Mar 2022).
OSCE participating States (45)	Invoked the Moscow Mechanism (3 Mar 2022); the experts' report of 13 Apr 2022 found that the hospital strike and the theatre strike each constituted a war crime.
European Union (HR/VP Borrell)	Called the hospital strike "a heinous war crime" (10 Mar 2022).
United Kingdom	Prime Minister Johnson called the hospital attack "depraved"; Minister Heappey: a war crime whether indiscriminate or deliberate (9–10 Mar 2022).
United States	The White House spoke of the "barbaric use of military force" against civilians (9 Mar 2022); at the Council on 11 and 17 Mar the US said Russia used the Council to spread disinformation.
Holy See	Cardinal Parolin called the hospital strike an "unacceptable attack on civilians" (10 Mar 2022).
Greece and Italy	Greece offered to rebuild the maternity hospital (18 Mar 2022); Italy's culture minister offered to rebuild the theatre (17 Mar 2022).
Twitter	Removed the Russian Embassy's "FAKE" posts for violating its rules (10 Mar 2022).

WHAT THE STATEMENTS LEFT OUT
- The hospital number: Russia's pre-strike claim concerned "maternity hospital No. 1"; the building struck was the maternity ward of City Hospital No. 3, in another district (Meduza, 12 Mar 2022, with geolocation; OHCHR, 29 Jun 2022, para. 42). - The witnesses: AP's Mstyslav Chernov and Evgeniy Maloletka were inside the hospital grounds within minutes and filmed patients, staff and the wounded; the woman called an "actress" gave birth the next day and later said the hospital where she lay was functioning — "there were workers, pregnant women, and new mothers there" (her own post, Apr 2022, via Meduza). - The marking: "ДЕТИ" painted in large letters on both forecourts of the theatre, visible in Maxar satellite imagery of 14 March — two days before the strike (Amnesty; Maxar). - The pattern: OHCHR estimated 150,000–200,000 residents trapped in Mariupol at the end of March and up to 90 per cent of 1,880 multi-storey residential buildings damaged or destroyed by the end of April (29 Jun 2022, paras. 41, 43); HRW/Truth Hounds/SITU estimate at least 8,000 war-related deaths in the city from March 2022 to February 2023 (8 Feb 2024). - The pressure on witnesses: HRW and the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group reported that people deported from Mariupol were pressed to implicate Ukrainian forces, including Azov, in the theatre strike (7 Jun 2022).

HOW IT TRAVELS
The hospital claims ran in three waves: the pre-strike "firing position" line (Nebenzia, 7 Mar; RIA Novosti 5 Mar quoting the MoD); the "staged" line, launched by the anonymous Telegram channel that identified the survivor Marianna Vyshemirska (Podhurska) as a beauty blogger and picked up by the Embassy in London, RT and Channel One within hours (10 Mar); and the "Azov base" line (Zakharova 9 Mar, Lavrov 10 Mar). Twitter removed the Embassy's posts for violating its rules (10 Mar 2022). On the theatre, the MoD's 16 March statement — no air missions, Azov blew it up — was carried by TASS and RIA within the hour and by Nebenzia at the Council the next day; in July 2022 'DPR' officials said the building had been "blown up from inside" and that 14 bodies were found in the rubble (Meduza, 19 Jul 2022); in December 2025 TASS repeated the MoD's version at the rebuilt theatre's reopening (The Insider, Dec 2025). Russian journalists who reported otherwise were prosecuted: Maria Ponomarenko was sentenced to six years (Feb 2023) for a post about the theatre; Alexander Nevzorov was charged (22 Mar 2022) for reporting on the hospital.

CLAIM, RECORD, CONCESSION (1-4)

Each claim as made, with the date, the venue and a link; the record it runs into, with the tier of the evidence; and what it concedes. Words in square brackets are the Hub's.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB

VERIFIED RECORD

MAR 2022

CLAIM 1 · VASSILY NEBENZIA · 7 MAR 2022, UN SECURITY COUNCIL — TWO DAYS BEFORE THE STRIKE

“Having expelled all the staff of maternity hospital No. 1 of the city of Mariupol, the Ukrainian armed forces equipped a firing position in it. [translated from the Russian text]”

Statement at the Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, 7 Mar 2022, Russian text published by the Russian Mission to the UN and quoted by Meduza, 12 Mar 2022
meduza.io/en/feature/2022/03/12/definitely-not-staged

CLAIM 2 · SERGEY LAVROV · 10 MAR 2022, PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER TALKS WITH D. KULEBA, ANTALYA

“There have been no women, children, or staff in this maternity hospital for a long time ... we said that at the UN Security Council on March 7 ... It was occupied by militants of the Azov battalion along with other radicals, who set up a base there ... All the women in labor, all the nurses, and all the attendants were expelled.”

Press conference, Antalya, 10 Mar 2022, as carried by Interfax (interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/76224) and AP
interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/76224

CLAIM 3 · MAJ.-GEN. IGOR KONASHENKOV, MOD SPOKESMAN · 10 MAR 2022

“Absolutely no tasks to hit targets on the ground were accomplished by Russian military aircraft in the area of Mariupol ... [the hospital strike was] a completely staged provocation to sustain anti-Russian hype among Western audiences. [second sentence translated]”

MoD briefing, 10 Mar 2022, as carried by Interfax (English) and Meduza
meduza.io/feature/2022/03/12/neuzheli-ukraina-deystvitelno-sfalsifitsirovala-reportazh-ob-obstrele-roddoma-v-mariupole-spyler-net

CLAIM 4 · RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM · 10 MAR 2022, TWITTER

“She is indeed. As she has some very realistic make-up. She is also doing well with her beauty blogs. Plus she could not be in the maternity house at the time of the strike, as it has long been taken by the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion who told all the staff to clear the place. [and, over AP's photographs:] FAKE”

@RussianEmbassy, 10 Mar 2022; removed by Twitter for violating its rules (Mediaite; TechCrunch; The Guardian, 10 Mar 2022)
techcrunch.com/2022/03/10/twitter-ukraine-pregnant-victim-mariupol

SELF-INCRIMINATING — THE TARGET WAS ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE, AND IT WAS THE WRONG HOSPITAL

Evidence

A

C

The statement, attributed by Nebenzia to "local residents", named Maternity Hospital No. 1. The building hit on 9 March was the maternity ward of City Hospital No. 3, a different institution in a different district, identified from photographs of the neighbouring buildings (Meduza, 12 Mar 2022). OHCHR: "Hospital No. 3 was hit by a Russian air strike, injuring 17 civilians"; a pregnant woman and her foetus "could not be saved" (29 Jun 2022, para. 42). The OSCE experts found the hospital "clearly identifiable and operational" and "destroyed by a Russian attack" with "no effective warning" (13 Apr 2022). No firing position was ever shown.

What the claim concedes: That Russia had Mariupol's maternity hospitals in view as targets before 9 March — the premise Lavrov relied on three days later.

CONTRADICTED BY MONITORS — AND BY THE PHOTOGRAPHS RUSSIA CALLED FAKE

Evidence

A

C

The building Lavrov describes is the one Nebenzia named — No. 1 — not the one struck. At Hospital No. 3 the OSCE found an operational hospital; OHCHR counted 17 injured and a mother and child who died; AP's reporters filmed patients, staff and the wounded inside the compound on 9 March. The survivor Russia called an actress gave birth the next day. The Embassy in London's version — the same hospital, but the victims staged — contradicts Lavrov's: a base with no patients cannot also have fake patients.

What the claim concedes: That the hospital was struck deliberately as a target Russia had chosen — Lavrov's defence is not that Russia missed, but that the building deserved it. That is an admission of the attack.

CONTRADICTED BY RUSSIA'S OWN FOREIGN MINISTER

Evidence

A

C

On the same day Lavrov justified the strike as an attack on an Azov base. The OSCE experts concluded the hospital "was destroyed by a Russian attack" and that those responsible committed a war crime (13 Apr 2022); OHCHR attributes the strike to a Russian air strike (para. 42). Video by AP's Chernov shows the crater, the gutted ward, wounded women and staff; the woman on the stretcher in the third photograph is a different patient from the one Russia named (Meduza, 12 Mar 2022).

What the claim concedes: That if the photographs are genuine, the strike is unjustifiable — which is why the MoD needed them to be fake.

CONTRADICTED BY THE PERSON IT NAMES

Evidence

C

Marianna Vyshemirska (Podhurska), a pregnant patient, was photographed by AP leaving the bombed ward; she gave birth on 10 March; she confirmed she was a patient there and that the hospital was functioning (Meduza, 8 Apr 2022; her BBC interview as reported by CBS News, 17 May 2022). Russian state media used her later interview, given in occupied Donetsk, to claim the attack was "shelling", not an air strike; AP found the evidence contradicted that (AP, 3 Apr 2022). Twitter removed the Embassy's posts the same day.

What the claim concedes: That a pregnant woman was at the hospital at the time of the strike — the Embassy's own tweet is about her photograph.

Sources: Nebenzia, 7 Mar 2022 (via Meduza) · Interfax and AP on Lavrov, 10 Mar 2022 · Russian MoD 5, 10, 16 Mar 2022 (RIA, Interfax, Novaya Gazeta, TASS) · @RussianEmbassy tweets (Mediaite, TechCrunch) · Sputnik on Nebenzia, 17 Mar 2022 · OSCE Moscow Mechanism report, 13 Apr 2022 · OHCHR 29 Jun 2022 · AP 4 May 2022 · Amnesty 30 Jun 2022 · HRW 16 Mar 2022, 7 Jun 2022, 8 Feb 2024 · Meduza 12 Mar and 19 Jul 2022 · The Insider, Dec 2025 · full list on page 6



CLAIM, RECORD, CONCESSION (5–8)

Each claim as made, with the date, the venue and a link; the record it runs into, with the tier of the evidence; and what it concedes. Words in square brackets are the Hub's.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB

VERIFIED RECORD

MAR 2022

CLAIM 5 · RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE · 16 MAR 2022

“During the day of 16 March Russian aviation carried out no tasks involving strikes on ground targets within the city limits of Mariupol ... militants of the nationalist Azov battalion blew up the theatre building in Mariupol that they had mined. [translated]”

MoD statement, 16 Mar 2022, MoD Telegram channel, as carried by Novaya Gazeta and TASS (translated)
novayagazeta.ru/articles/2022/03/16/zdanie-dramteatra-v-mariupole-razrusheno-posle

CONTRADICTED BY MONITORS

Evidence

A

C

OSCE Moscow Mechanism experts (13 Apr 2022): the strike was "most likely an egregious violation" of international humanitarian law and "those who ordered or executed it committed a war crime"; the mission "received no indication" that Azov blew the building up. OHCHR: "the Drama Theatre with the word 'Children' clearly marked on the ground and hundreds of civilians hiding inside [was hit by] most likely a Russian air bomb, which caused numerous casualties" (29 Jun 2022, para. 42). Amnesty (30 Jun 2022): 53 testimonies, satellite and radar data; most likely two 500-kg bombs dropped by a Russian aircraft; an internal explosion of that size (400–800 kg TNT-equivalent on the stage) is implausible with civilians inside; "a clear war crime committed by Russian forces". The walls stand, the roof is gone — the signature of a strike from above (The Insider).

What the claim concedes: That the theatre was destroyed by a large explosion on 16 March with civilians inside — the fact Russia later tried to shrink to "14 bodies".

CLAIM 6 · VASSILY NEBENZIA · 17 MAR 2022, UN SECURITY COUNCIL

“[The theatre was] originally... not designated as a target for an air strike anyway... [Azov was holding many people in the building and preparing a] "bloody provocation". [English as reported by TASS]”

Statement at the Security Council, 17 Mar 2022, as reported by TASS, "Russian air force didn't target theater in Ukraine's Mariupol — Russian UN envoy", 18 Mar 2022 (tass.com/politics/1423881)
tass.com/politics/1423881

NO EVIDENCE PRESENTED

Evidence

C

No name, photograph, intercept or witness was put on the record. AP interviewed 23 survivors, rescuers and people who ran the shelter: "None of the witnesses saw Ukrainian soldiers operating inside the building" (4 May 2022). Amnesty: none of 28 survivors interviewed reported Ukrainian forces using the theatre as a base, weapons store or firing point, and no legitimate military target was found nearby (30 Jun 2022). HRW and the Kharkiv group documented pressure on deportees to blame Azov (7 Jun 2022). The word "ДЕТИ" on both forecourts was visible on satellite imagery of 14 March — a notice to pilots, not to saboteurs.

What the claim concedes: That the theatre was full of civilians — Russia's own claim is that they were used as a "provocation".

CLAIM 7 · MAJ.-GEN. IGOR KONASHENKOV · 5 MAR 2022, MOD BRIEFING

“[Azov and Aidar fighters] fire from positions equipped in schools, hospitals, maternity wards. [translated]”

MoD briefing, 5 Mar 2022, as carried by TASS ("Nationalists in Mariupol setting up emplacements in schools, hospitals — Russian top brass") and RIA Novosti
tass.com/world/1417155

UNVERIFIED — AND NO DEFENCE TO THE STRIKES

Evidence

A

A general allegation with no address, number or image. Even where it were true of a given building, Additional Protocol I art. 51(7)–(8) says the presence of combatants does not release the attacker from its obligations of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and a hospital loses protection only after a warning and a reasonable time limit (GC IV art. 19). The OSCE found "no effective warning" at Hospital No. 3; the theatre carried a warning in the other direction, painted on the ground.

What the claim concedes: That Russia knew it was striking a city with hospitals, maternity wards and shelters full of civilians — the knowledge that makes precaution mandatory.

CLAIM 8 · 'DPR' AUTHORITIES AND RUSSIAN MOD VIA TASS · JUL 2022 AND DEC 2025

“[The theatre was] blown up from inside [and 14 bodies were found when the rubble was cleared (Jul 2022)] ... the building of the Mariupol drama theatre was blown up by Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov formation as a provocation (TASS citing the MoD, Dec 2025). [translated]”

"DPR" authorities via Meduza, 19 Jul 2022; MoD via TASS as documented by The Insider, Dec 2025 (translated)
meduza.io/news/2022/07/19/v-dnr-zayavili-cto-dramteatr-v-mariupole-byi-vzorvan-iznutri-a-pri-razbore-ego-zavalov-nashli-14-pogibshih

CONTRADICTED BY MONITORS — THE SCENE WAS CLEARED BY THE PARTY MAKING THE CLAIM

Evidence

C

Russian-installed authorities cleared the rubble and removed bodies in mid-2022 without international observers; Maxar imagery of 30 Nov 2022 shows the site levelled (ISW). The "14 bodies" figure comes from that clearance; AP's estimate of about 600 and the city's of about 300 were made before it. The claim that "retreating" Ukrainian forces demolished the theatre is contradicted by the chronology: on 16 March fighting was on the city's outskirts and Ukraine rejected Russia's surrender ultimatum on 21 March (ISW; The Insider).

What the claim concedes: That Russia controls the site, the rubble and the remains — and has let no independent body examine them.

Sources: Nebenzia, 7 Mar 2022 (via Meduza) · Interfax and AP on Lavrov, 10 Mar 2022 · Russian MoD 5, 10, 16 Mar 2022 (RIA, Interfax, Novaya Gazeta, TASS) · @RussianEmbassy tweets (Mediaite, TechCrunch) · Sputnik on Nebenzia, 17 Mar 2022 · OSCE Moscow Mechanism report, 13 Apr 2022 · OHCHR 29 Jun 2022 · AP 4 May 2022 · Amnesty 30 Jun 2022 · HRW 16 Mar 2022, 7 Jun 2022, 8 Feb 2024 · Meduza 12 Mar and 19 Jul 2022 · The Insider, Dec 2025 · full list on page 6



THE RECORD			
QUESTION	WHAT RUSSIA SAYS	WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS	SOURCE
Hospital: which building	"Maternity hospital No. 1" taken by Azov (7 Mar); "this maternity hospital" (10 Mar)	Maternity ward of City Hospital No. 3 — a different institution and district	Nebenzia, 7 Mar 2022, via Meduza 12 Mar 2022; OHCHR para. 42
Hospital: who was inside	No women, children or staff "for a long time"; alternatively, actors	17 civilians injured; a pregnant woman and her foetus died; a girl among the dead; patients and staff filmed by AP	OHCHR para. 42; Mariupol council 10 Mar; AP
Hospital: who struck it	Nobody — "no tasks to hit targets on the ground" by Russian aircraft (10 Mar)	"Hit by a Russian air strike"; "destroyed by a Russian attack", no effective warning	OHCHR para. 42; OSCE 13 Apr 2022
Theatre: who struck it	Azov "blew up the theatre building they had mined"; no Russian air missions on 16 Mar	"Most likely a Russian air bomb"; most likely two 500-kg aerial bombs; war crime	OHCHR para. 42; Amnesty 30 Jun 2022; OSCE
Theatre: soldiers inside	Azov using the building "to cause a provocation"	None of 23 (AP) or 28 (Amnesty) witnesses saw Ukrainian forces using the building	AP 4 May 2022; Amnesty 30 Jun 2022
Theatre: dead	14 bodies found (Jul 2022, after Russian clearance)	~300 (city council) to ~600 (AP reconstruction); Amnesty "at least a dozen, likely many more"	Meduza 19 Jul 2022; AP; Amnesty

FAIR TO SAY

The theatre toll is an estimate. AP's ~600 rests on a reconstruction from 23 witnesses and floor plans; the city council said ~300; Amnesty, interviewing 53 people, put it at "at least a dozen, likely many more", noting that many had left in the preceding days and most who stayed were in protected areas. The Hub should give the range, not one number.

The hospital survivor Marianna Vyshemirska said in an April 2022 interview with a "DPR" blogger — on second-hand information from other patients — that soldiers had taken over Maternity Hospital No. 1, a different building (Meduza, 8 Apr 2022). That is consistent with Ukrainian forces being present in the city; it is not evidence that the maternity ward was a firing position, and it does not remove the hospital's protection without warning.

Ukrainian forces were fighting inside a besieged city, and some civilian buildings in Mariupol were used by them; the OSCE report notes allegations of this kind generally. That does not make a maternity ward or a marked shelter with hundreds of civilians a lawful target, and no evidence was ever produced for either building.

No ICC charge has been brought over either strike. The findings cited are those of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism experts, OHCHR, and independent investigations; no UN-mandated body has published a separate finding on the theatre.

ESTABLISHED, PATTERN, POSITION

What mandated bodies have established, what the record shows as a pattern, and what is a position — kept apart. Then the lines to take and the questions to expect.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB
VERIFIED RECORD
MAR 2022

THE LAW

Geneva Convention IV, arts. 18–19; AP I art. 12: civilian hospitals may in no circumstances be attacked; protection ceases only if they are used for acts harmful to the enemy and only after a due warning with a reasonable time limit has gone unheeded. The OSCE found no effective warning at Hospital No. 3; Russia's own account offers none.

AP I arts. 51(7)–(8), 57, 58: the presence of combatants among civilians does not release the attacker from its duties of distinction, proportionality and precaution; a party may not use civilians to shield military objectives, and the other party remains bound regardless. "Azov was there" would be no defence even if it were shown — and it has not been.

Rome Statute art. 8(2)(b)(ii) and (ix): intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects, and against hospitals and places where the sick are collected, are war crimes. The OSCE Moscow Mechanism experts applied the term to both strikes (13 Apr 2022); Amnesty asked the ICC to investigate the theatre.

Three layers. *Established:* Russian air strikes on an operational hospital and on a marked civilian shelter (OSCE experts; OHCHR). *Pattern:* the siege of Mariupol with 150,000–200,000 civilians trapped and up to 90 per cent of housing destroyed (OHCHR, paras. 41, 43). *Position:* the exact death toll of the theatre and individual criminal responsibility — not yet adjudicated.

LINES TO TAKE

1. "Russia told the Council on 7 March that a Mariupol maternity hospital was a firing position. On 9 March it bombed one. In its own account, the hospital was the target."
2. "Russia said the hospital had no patients, that the patients were actors, and that no Russian aircraft flew. Pick one — the OSCE and the UN picked none."
3. "The woman Russia's embassy called an actress gave birth the next day."
4. "'Children' was painted on both sides of the theatre, large enough to read from orbit. It was read."
5. "None of the 51 witnesses interviewed by AP and Amnesty saw Ukrainian soldiers in the theatre. Russia has named none."
6. "Russia cleared the rubble itself and announced 14 bodies. The OSCE called the strike a war crime before the rubble was touched."

Q&A

"Lavrov said the hospital was an Azov base. Was it?"	He was speaking of "maternity hospital No. 1", the building Nebenzia named on 7 March. The bomb hit the maternity ward of Hospital No. 3, in another district. The OSCE found that hospital operational and destroyed by a Russian attack without warning; OHCHR counted 17 injured and a mother and child who died.
"The photographs were staged by a beauty blogger."	She was a patient, she was photographed by AP's journalists minutes after the strike, and she gave birth the next day. Twitter removed the embassy's posts. Russian state media later used an interview she gave in occupied territory to argue about the weapon, not about whether she was there.
"Russian aircraft flew no missions over Mariupol on those days."	That is the MoD's claim for both 9 and 16 March. OHCHR attributes the hospital strike to a Russian air strike and the theatre to "most likely a Russian air bomb"; Amnesty identified two 500-kg aerial bombs. On 10 March the Foreign Minister justified the hospital strike — a strike the MoD said never happened.
"Ukrainian forces used civilian buildings in Mariupol. Doesn't that change the analysis?"	Even where it is true of a building, the law does not change: distinction, proportionality and precaution still bind the attacker, and a hospital keeps its protection until a warning goes unheeded. For these two buildings no evidence of military use was ever produced, and 51 witnesses interviewed by AP and Amnesty saw none.
"Only 14 bodies were found in the theatre."	That number comes from the Russian-installed authorities' own clearance in mid-2022, with no observers. AP's and the city's estimates were made from witnesses before the site was cleared. Whatever the number, a bomb on a marked shelter with hundreds inside is the war crime the OSCE experts named.
"Why does this matter in 2026?"	Because the same three moves — the target was legitimate, the victims were fake, the strike never happened — have been used after every mass-casualty strike since, and because Russia repeated the "Azov blew it up" line at the rebuilt theatre's reopening in December 2025.

WHAT WE ASK

Cite the OSCE Moscow Mechanism report of 13 Apr 2022 and OHCHR's report of 29 Jun 2022, para. 42, whenever the "Azov did it" version is repeated · put on the record that Russia announced a Mariupol maternity hospital as a target two days before striking one · support the ICC and national investigations into both strikes, as Amnesty requested · ask Russia to admit independent forensic experts to the theatre site and to account for the remains it removed in 2022 · ask platforms to keep the removed Embassy posts available to investigators · note the prosecution of Russian journalists who reported on both strikes.

Sources: Nebenzia, 7 Mar 2022 (via Meduza) · Interfax and AP on Lavrov, 10 Mar 2022 · Russian MoD 5, 10, 16 Mar 2022 (RIA, Interfax, Novaya Gazeta, TASS) · @RussianEmbassy tweets (Mediaite, TechCrunch) · Sputnik on Nebenzia, 17 Mar 2022 · OSCE Moscow Mechanism report, 13 Apr 2022 · OHCHR 29 Jun 2022 · AP 4 May 2022 · Amnesty 30 Jun 2022 · HRW 16 Mar 2022, 7 Jun 2022, 8 Feb 2024 · Meduza 12 Mar and 19 Jul 2022 · The Insider, Dec 2025 · full list on page 6



WHERE EVERY LINE COMES FROM

All sources were checked on 21 October 2026. Russian statements are listed as the position under review, not as evidence.

UKRAINE EVIDENCE HUB

VERIFIED RECORD

MAR 2022

SOURCES		
Meduza	Definitely not "staged" — false allegations about the maternity hospital airstrike in Mariupol, debunked (quotes Nebenzia, 7 Mar 2022, in Russian), 12 Mar 2022 https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/03/12/definitely-not-staged	RU
Meduza	Did Ukraine really fake the report on the shelling of the Mariupol maternity hospital? (Russian quotes of Nebenzia, Lavrov, Konashenkov; hospital identification), 12 Mar 2022 https://meduza.io/feature/2022/03/12/neuzheli-ukraina-deystvitelno-sfalsifitsirovala-reportazh-ob-obstrele-roddoma-v-mariupole-spyoler-net	C
Interfax	Mariupol maternity hospital was radical Azov battalion's base — Lavrov, 10 Mar 2022 https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/76224/	RU
AP (via Yahoo News)	Russia claims without evidence maternity hospital was Azov base, 10 Mar 2022 https://news.yahoo.com/russia-claims-without-evidence-maternity-120453288.html	C
Russian MFA	Lavrov's remarks and answers to questions, Antalya, 10 Mar 2022 (as carried by Interfax) https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/76224/	RU
Mediaite	Twitter deletes Russian Embassy tweet claiming maternity hospital bombing was "FAKE", 10 Mar 2022 https://www.mediaite.com/news/twitter-deletes-russian-embassy-tweet-claiming-maternity-hospital-bombing-was-fake	C
TechCrunch	Twitter takes action on Russian Embassy tweet about pregnant Mariupol victim, 10 Mar 2022 https://techcrunch.com/2022/03/10/twitter-ukraine-pregnant-victim-mariupol	C
Novaya Gazeta	Mariupol drama theatre destroyed; MoD denies involvement (MoD Russian text), 16 Mar 2022 https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2022/03/16/zdanie-dramteatra-v-mariupole-razrusheno-posle-obstrela-pod-zavalami-mogut-byt-liudi-minoborony-rf-ot-ritsaet-prichastnost-k-udaru-news	RU
Sputnik (via GlobalSecurity.org)	Russian air force didn't target theater in Mariupol — Nebenzia at the Security Council, 17 Mar 2022 https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/ukraine/2022/03/ukraine-220317-sputnik01.htm	RU
TASS	Russian air force didn't target theater in Ukraine's Mariupol — Russian UN envoy, 18 Mar 2022 https://tass.com/politics/1423881	RU
OSCE / ODIHR	Report on violations of IHL and IHRL, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine since 24 Feb 2022 (Moscow Mechanism; Benedek, Bílková, Sassöli), ODIHR.GAL/26/22/Rev.1, 13 Apr 2022 https://www.osce.org/odihr/515868	A
OHCHR	Situation of human rights in Ukraine in the context of the armed attack by the Russian Federation, 24 Feb – 15 May 2022 (29 Jun 2022), paras. 41–43 https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ua/2022-06-29/2022-06-UkraineArmedAttack-EN.pdf	A
AP	AP evidence points to 600 dead in Mariupol theater airstrike, 4 May 2022 https://apnews.com/article/Russia-ukraine-war-mariupol-theater-c321a196fbd568899841b506afcac7a1	C
Novaya Gazeta Europe (on AP)	AP: about 600 died in the Mariupol theatre strike, twice the local estimate, 4 May 2022 https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2022/05/04/ap-v-rezultate-udara-po-teatru-v-mariupole-pogiblo-600-chelovek-eto-vdvoe-bolshe-chem-predvaritelno-otsenivali-mestnye-vlasti-news	C
Amnesty International	"Children": The attack on the Donetsk Regional Academic Drama Theatre in Mariupol — a clear war crime by Russian forces, 30 Jun 2022 https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/ukraine-deadly-mariupol-theatre-strike-a-clear-war-crime-by-russian-forces-new-investigation/	C
Human Rights Watch	Ukraine: Mariupol theater hit by Russian attack sheltered hundreds, 16 Mar 2022 https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/16/ukraine-mariupol-theater-hit-russian-attack-sheltered-hundreds	C
Human Rights Watch / Truth Hounds / SITU Research	"Our City Was Gone": Russia's devastation of Mariupol, 8 Feb 2024 (at least 8,000 war-related deaths; case studies 9 and 16 Mar) https://hrw.org/feature/russia-ukraine-war-mariupol/report	C
Meduza	'DPR' says the Mariupol theatre was blown up from inside; 14 bodies found in the rubble, 19 Jul 2022 https://meduza.io/news/2022/07/19/v-dnr-zayavili-chto-dramteatr-v-mariupole-byl-vzorvan-iznutri-a-pri-razbore-ego-zavalov-nashli-14-pogibshih	RU
The Insider	Anti-fake: TASS repeats the MoD's claim that Azov blew up the Mariupol theatre, at its reopening, Dec 2025 https://theins.ru/antifake/288161	C
Wikipedia (for chronology only)	Mariupol hospital airstrike; Mariupol theatre airstrike — compiled chronologies with citations https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariupol_hospital_airstrike	C
Wikipedia (for chronology only)	Mariupol theatre airstrike https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariupol_theatre_airstrike	C
Maxar Technologies (via Kyiv Independent)	Satellite imagery of 14 Mar 2022 showing the word "children" in Russian on the theatre forecourts https://kyivindependent.com/uncategorized/satellite-imagery-reveals-word-children-painted-outside-mariupol-theater-before-bombing/	C
Meduza	A new wave of old lies — the Vyshemirska interview and what she said, 8 Apr 2022 https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/04/08/a-new-wave-of-old-lies	C
CBS News	Pregnant woman from Mariupol hospital bombing speaks out (BBC interview), 17 May 2022 https://cbsnews.com/news/marianna-vyshemirsky-pregnant-woman-mariupol-hospital-bombing-speaks-out	C
TASS	Nationalists in Mariupol setting up emplacements in schools, hospitals — Russian top brass (Konashenkov), 5 Mar 2022 https://tass.com/world/1417155	RU

METHOD

Claims are taken from Nebenzia's Security Council statements of 7 and 17 March 2022 (the 7 March text in Russian as published by the Russian Mission and quoted by Meduza, translated here; the 17 March text as reported in English by TASS), from Lavrov's Antalya press conference as carried by Interfax and AP, from Russian MoD briefings as carried by RIA Novosti, Interfax and Novaya Gazeta (Russian text translated and marked), and from the Russian Embassy's tweets as archived by Mediaite and TechCrunch. Words in square brackets are the Hub's.

Each claim is checked against the OSCE Moscow Mechanism expert report (13 Apr 2022) and OHCHR's report of 29 Jun 2022 (Tier A) first, then against AP, Amnesty, HRW and Meduza (Tier C) where they add witness counts, weapon analysis or geolocation. Ukrainian official statements (city council, President) are used only for the first casualty counts and are marked.

Reactions of states and bodies are those recorded at the time (9–18 Mar 2022 and 13 Apr 2022); the OSCE report was commissioned by 45 participating States under the Moscow Mechanism, invoked on 3 Mar 2022.

Tiers: **A** — UN-mandated bodies, international courts and organisations (OHCHR/HRMMU, Commission of Inquiry, ICC, ECtHR, IAEA, OSCE, OPCW, Security Council record); **B** — Ukrainian official bodies, marked "according to Ukraine"; **C** — independent investigators and media; **RU** — Russian official statements, the position under review. Tiers are never combined in one figure.

