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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement submitted by Human Rights Research League, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 August 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Continuing Russian Violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law in the Russian Federation's War of Aggression against Ukraine

From the beginning of the Russian Federation's full-scale attack on Ukraine, the Russian Federation has not ceased to commit grave violations of the most fundamental laws governing war and human rights. To the contrary, the unlawful means employed have ever increased and the size of its illegal actions, including indiscriminate drone and missile attacks on the civilian population, have never been higher. In its most recent update [1], the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that with at least 1,575 civilian casualties (232 killed; 1,343 injured), June 2025 had been the month with the highest number of civilian casualties in three years, with long-range strikes and loitering munitions deployed to urban areas causing the majority of civilian casualties, bringing the total number of civilian casualties to at least 47,695 (13,580 killed; 34,115 injured) since 24 February 2022 [2]. The number of missiles and loitering munitions launched by the Russian Federation into Ukraine was more than ten times higher than in June 2024.

It is therefore unfortunately necessary to keep bringing attention to the grave and systematic violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed by the Russian Federation in its ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine.

These crimes are not isolated acts of cruelty; they are part of a deliberate and coordinated policy of terror and repression targeting both combatants and civilians, in blatant violation of the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Conventions, and the most fundamental principles of human dignity.

Crimes against Prisoners of War, Children, and Other Civilians

Credible investigations by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, the International Criminal Court, and independent human rights organizations operating on the ground have documented widespread torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war. Survivors have testified to brutal beatings, electric shocks, mock executions, sexual violence, and prolonged deprivation of food and water. Many have been forced into propaganda recordings meant to humiliate and break their spirit [3]. These actions constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and amount to war crimes for which perpetrators must be held individually accountable.

Equally abhorrent is the systematic removal of Ukrainian children from occupied territories. Thousands have been taken from their homes, orphanages, and foster families, then transported into the Russian Federation or to areas under its control. Once there, they are subjected to forced adoption, stripped of their names and identities, and indoctrinated into rejecting their Ukrainian heritage [4]. This is a direct violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Criminal Court has already recognized such actions as unlawful deportation [5] – a war crime that demands urgent redress. The return of these children to their families must be unconditional and immediate.

The Russian Federation's crimes extend further to the targeting of Ukrainian civilians in occupied territories. Activists, journalists, community leaders, and ordinary citizens have been abducted, detained without due process, tortured, and, in some cases, murdered. One such victim is Leniie Umerova, a Crimean Tatar activist, who was illegally detained in occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea, imprisoned on fabricated charges, and subjected to harsh treatment [6]. Her release was secured only after sustained international pressure, a reminder that global advocacy can save lives, yet also a stark testament to the countless others still held in captivity.

Another harrowing case is that of Viktoriya Roshchyna, a courageous Ukrainian journalist who went into the Russian Federation-occupied areas to expose the truth. She was kidnapped, tortured, and ultimately murdered; her mutilated body was returned to Ukrainian authorities and laid to rest on 8 August 2025 [7]. Her killing is not only a personal tragedy – it is an assault on press freedom, on truth itself, and on the world's right to bear witness to the realities

of war. Ukrainian journalists and human rights defenders have been able to identify some of Viktoriya's torturers: Russian soldiers who brutally beat her while she was illegally imprisoned.

Extending Accountability Efforts for the Crimes Committed by the Russian Federation beyond the International Criminal Court – the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine

These atrocities committed by the Russian Federation are not the result of battlefield chaos; they are deliberate instruments of a campaign aimed at breaking the will of the Ukrainian people, erasing their culture, and undermining the principles upon which the United Nations were founded. They violate the Geneva Conventions, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in some instances meet the threshold for crimes against humanity and genocide.

The international community must respond with unity and resolve. It must demand the immediate cessation of these violations and the unconditional release of all unlawfully detained civilians and prisoners of war. It must support and expand independent investigations by UN bodies, the ICC, and other mechanisms to ensure accountability.

In that connection, we welcome the recent signing of an agreement between Ukraine and the Council of Europe on establishing a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine [8]. While the International Criminal Court has jurisdiction to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Ukraine it cannot currently examine the crime of aggression (i.e., the decision to use armed force against another state, in violation of the United Nations Charter) in this case, due to jurisdictional limitations [9]. For jurisdiction over the crime of aggression to apply, both the state attacked and the state whose nationals are accused of being responsible for the aggression must be party to the Rome Statute of the ICC. The Russian Federation however is not a state party. The Special Tribunal may fill that gap and thus represent an important accountability supplement, complimenting other, existing accountability efforts.

But beyond that, the international community must apply sustained diplomatic, economic, and political pressure until these practices and atrocity crimes end, and all victims are accounted for. And it must guarantee that survivors receive the medical, psychological, and legal assistance they require to rebuild their lives.

The United Nations were created in the aftermath of atrocities whose memory was meant to serve as a permanent warning. To remain silent or inactive in the face of such clear and documented crimes is to betray the very principles that give this body legitimacy. Justice delayed is justice denied – not only for the people of Ukraine, but for the integrity of the international order itself. We owe it to the victims, both living and dead, to act now, decisively, and together.

[1] OHCHR, Ukraine, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – June 2025 Update, available at: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/Ukraine_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_June_2025_ENG.pdf.

[2] As the report also points out, “[t]he actual extent of civilian harm – both casualties and infrastructure damage – is likely considerably higher as many reports of civilian harm, particularly from the period immediately after the full-scale armed attack of 24 February 2022, have not been possible to verify due to the large number of reports and the lack of access to relevant areas. The number of civilian casualties is likely particularly undercounted in cities such as Mariupol (Donetsk region), Lysychansk, Popasna, and Sievierodonetsk (Luhansk region), where there was protracted intensive fighting at the start of the armed attack in 2022”. Ibid., p. 4.

[3] Cf. e.g., The Media Initiative for Human Rights, ‘Human Rights Defenders Prove Russia Tortures Ukrainian Soldiers Just Like the USSR Once Did’, (April 29, 2025), available at:

<https://mipl.org.ua/en/human-rights-defenders-prove-russia-tortures-ukrainian-soldiers-just-like-the-ussr-once-did/>.

[4] Bring Kids Back, ‘Daria Zarivna: “Putin Will Not Stop by Ceding Territory. Over 19,000 Ukrainian Children Still in Russian Hands”’, (February 26, 2025), available at: <https://www.bringkidsback.org.ua/media/dariia-zarivna-putin-will-not-stop-by-ceding-territory-over-19-000-ukrainian-children-still-in-russian-hands>.

[5] International Criminal Court, ‘Situation in Ukraine: ICC Judges Issu Arrest Warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Aleksyevna Lvova-Belova’, (March 17, 2023), available at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and>.

[6] Center for European Policy Analysis, ‘Behind the Lines: Innocence No Defense for Young Crimean’, (March 7, 2024), available at: <https://cepa.org/article/behind-the-lines-innocence-no-defense-for-young-crimean/>.

[7] The Guardian, ‘“Numerous Signs of Torture”: a Ukrainian Journalist’s Detention and Death in Russian Prison’, (April 29, 2025), available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/29/viktoriia-roshchyna-ukrainian-journalist-death-russian-prison>. Ukrainian authorities have now also opened preliminary investigations in absentia against the director of the prison where Viktoriia Roshchyna had been held. Cf. Reporters Without Borders, ‘Death of Ukrainian Journalist Victoria Roshchyna: RSF Welcomes Preliminary Investigation into Russian Prison Director’, (August 7, 2025), available at: <https://rsf.org/en/death-ukrainian-journalist-victoria-roshchyna-rsf-welcomes-preliminary-investigation-russian-prison>.

[8] Council of Europe, ‘Ukraine and the Council of Europe sign Agreement on Establishing a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine’, (June 25, 2025), available at:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/ukraine-and-the-council-of-europe-sign-agreement-on-establishing-a-special-tribunal-for-the-crime-of-aggression-against-ukraine>.

[9] Ibid.