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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING THE MARTIAL LAW IN UKRAINE**

The military conflict in Ukraine, which began in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale war in 2022, has become one of the greatest humanitarian disasters of our time. In addition to the enormous human losses and destruction of infrastructure, this conflict is accompanied by massive violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by international law.

The issue of respect for human rights during armed conflicts is extremely relevant both from the point of view of the humanitarian crisis and the need to hold the perpetrators accountable. Systematic human rights violations, such as the killing of civilians, torture of prisoners, enforced disappearances, large-scale deportations, and other crimes committed in the course of the conflict, pose a serious threat to the international legal order and require serious solutions from the global community.

Today's speech before you is a reminder of the importance of working together, uniting and making difficult decisions in countering the violation of basic human rights and freedoms during war.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February was a violation of the UN Charter and an act of aggression, a crime under international law. Russian forces conducted indiscriminate attacks resulting in thousands of civilian casualties, amid mounting evidence of other crimes including torture, sexual violence and unlawful killings. Almost 8 million Ukrainians, mostly women, children and older people, left the country, creating the largest refugee population in Europe since the Second World War. Almost 7 million were estimated to be displaced within the country [1].

## **International rights were violated during the war**

The main categories of violations recorded during the conflict include deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of war, enforced disappearances, illegal detentions, deportations, and the use of prohibited means of warfare. Such actions constitute serious war crimes and crimes against humanity under the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

As a sign of support for my words about violations of international law by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, we can refer to the report of the US government, which clearly describes that the main target of the aggressor was civilians and objects of critical infrastructure.

They struck at least 261 hospitals and clinics as well as 501 schools by December. Amnesty International and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe characterized these attacks as relentless and indiscriminate; during the year, more than 13 million residents were displaced and thousands of civilians killed, including 429 confirmed deaths among children, with experts assessing the actual number was likely much higher [2].

All that was said above indicates that the Russian Federation directly violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which it is a party. It also violates other pacts and conventions, in particular:

- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (hereinafter – the ICCPR);
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966;
- the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965;
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979;
- the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984;
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989;
- convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 [3].

## **The way to a solution**

To effectively respond to the large-scale violations of international human rights law occurring during the Russian aggression in Ukraine, consolidated efforts are required in several key areas:

- **Documentation of Evidence.** Further thorough recording and collection of evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity is of critical importance. This will allow for the establishment of a strong legal basis for holding perpetrators accountable at both the national and international levels;

- **International Justice.** Engaging the mechanisms of the International Criminal Court, creating special tribunals or other international judicial institutions will be a key step in ensuring the inevitability of punishment for those responsible, regardless of their positions and status;

- **National Judicial Processes.** Parallel to international efforts, Ukraine must continue investigations and prosecutions of crimes committed on its territory within the framework of the national legal system;

- **Humanitarian Assistance.** Providing comprehensive humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict, including medical, psychological, material, and other support, is an integral part of restoring justice and respect for human rights;

- **International Pressure.** Intensifying political, economic, and diplomatic pressure on Russia by the international community to stop violations and hold perpetrators accountable should be a key element of the response.

Such actions of the armed forces of the Russian Federation constitute serious war crimes and crimes against humanity, provided for by the norms of international humanitarian law. They represent gross violations of the fundamental principles underlying the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Thoroughly documenting the evidence of these crimes and ensuring international justice is critical to bringing perpetrators to justice, preventing further human rights abuses, and establishing sustainable peace. The key role in this process will be played by both national law enforcement agencies of Ukraine and international judicial institutions, such as the International Criminal Court.

Only the inevitable punishment of the guilty and the provision of effective means of legal protection to victims and victims can become an effective guarantee of preventing similar crimes in the future and ensure respect for fundamental human rights during armed conflicts.

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## **EUROPOL'S SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE**

Europol has joined the EU and its member states in strongly supporting Ukraine following the Russian invasion in February 2022. The military invasion has caused a humanitarian crisis and prompted large numbers of refugees to flee Ukraine to the EU, meaning that criminal networks can use the situation for further criminal activity. Europol, together with its Member States, remains committed to identifying and combating these criminal threats and is working at all levels to support EU Member States affected by the conflict. As part of this ongoing support, the agency liaises closely with Member States bordering Ukraine and currently deploys experts and guest officers to support local law enforcement in those countries. Ukraine, as an independent state, officially submitted an