

and stability in the country. The National Police is a key link in the national security system, ensuring law and order, protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens, fighting terrorism and other security threats. In the event of military aggression, the National Police performs important tasks of mobilization and coordination of actions to protect national interests, cooperating with other military and law enforcement agencies. The legal basis of the activity of the National Police of Ukraine in terms of countering military aggression is based on legislation and international norms aimed at ensuring security, protecting human rights and countering threats to national security. Close cooperation between the National Police and other military and law enforcement agencies is an important component of a successful strategies for countering military aggression and ensuring the country's security.

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CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN IN UKRAINE: CHALLENGES AND THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION

The problem of crimes against women is relevant not only in Ukraine but also around the world. However, in the context of Ukraine, this problem is particularly acute due to a combination of social, economic and cultural factors, as well as the duration of the armed conflict in the country. Violence, discrimination and sexual exploitation are just some of the manifestations of a systemic problem. To discuss the protection of women's rights, it is necessary to refer to international standards, in particular the Geneva Conventions governing the rules of war and the protection of civilians.

The international legal protection of women's rights during and after armed conflicts is ensured both under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The main international legal acts regulating this issue are aimed at guaranteeing comprehensive protection of women's rights during armed conflicts, ensuring consistency of these rights in legislative acts and defining legally sound mechanisms for their implementation. Ukraine, having ratified all key international agreements on human rights and the law of armed conflict, has assumed the relevant legal obligations related to the protection of women's rights in war, and

responsibly integrates these norms into national legislation, applying them throughout the country during the wartime period [1, p. 109].

In general, the system of norms, principles and requirements that ensure the protection of women's rights and freedoms in armed conflicts is a set of legal and organisational instruments. This system is aimed at ensuring the social and legal protection of an individual and creating conditions for the exercise of human rights guaranteed by the Constitution in times of war. In this context, it is advisable to pay attention to the international normative acts regulating the status of women during armed conflicts. The main international documents that ensure women's security include: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949), the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949), the UN Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (1974), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), the Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995) together with the Beijing Declaration (1995), the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW (1999) and others [2, p. 55].

The Geneva Convention is a key international instrument that ensures the protection of human rights during armed conflicts. It was adopted in 1949 and consists of four parts that regulate the protection of civilians, wounded and prisoners of war [3]. In particular, the articles of the Convention pay attention to the rights of women, ensuring their protection from all forms of violence, including sexual violence, in the context of hostilities. The Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention, adopted in 1977, further strengthened the protection of women and defined sexual violence in time of war as a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

The armed conflicts in Ukraine, in particular in the context of the full-scale war that began in 2022, have created new challenges for the protection of women. According to the Geneva Conventions, civilian women are entitled to special protection during hostilities, but the real situation demonstrates numerous cases of violations of these rights. In this context, it is extremely important not only to strengthen international control over the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, but also to improve the national system of protection of women's rights in Ukraine [4, p. 296].

Women who are mothers of minor children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of armed conflict. Often, their state of pregnancy or the presence of a child is used by parties to conflicts as an instrument of blackmail or threat, forcing them to take undesirable actions. Among the international legal norms aimed at supporting such women is the Fourth Geneva Convention. It guarantees that pregnant

women and mothers of young children have the right to additional nutrition in accordance with their physiological needs.

Among the victims of armed conflict, it is important not to forget the category of prisoners of war. The protection of women prisoners of war requires special attention. If this specific category is provided with appropriate protection in a timely manner, it may reduce the need for assistance in the future in the context of 'post-conflict recovery'. However, as practice shows, the mere existence of legal acts is not sufficient for effective impact; the ability of states to comply with these acts is key. A feature of armed conflicts of the 21st century is the active participation of women as combatants, which leads to the emergence of women prisoners of war. The greatest efforts to protect women soldiers are made by NATO forces, which have a significant number of women serving in them. NATO was one of the first to adopt regulations governing gender issues in the military service of women. In 1976, the Committee on Women in the NATO Armed Forces was established, which in 2009 received a new name – the NATO Committee on Gender Issues [5, p. 302].

The Criminal Executive and Criminal Procedure Codes of Ukraine provide specific mechanisms for the protection of women and families in peacetime, but these provisions were not intended to be applied in times of conflict. Nevertheless, they remain relevant as they can be used to implement international humanitarian law and provide guidance on appropriate approaches. The ideal way forward is to develop comprehensive methods for monitoring Ukraine's compliance with international humanitarian law, including through the involvement of women in data collection and interpretation, as research on women's experiences in conflict is often conducted by men, who do not take into account important violations of women's rights other than violence. In addition, law enforcement and prosecutors are not always familiar with the principles and standards of working with victims. Therefore, it is important that the relevant Ukrainian authorities systematically collect information on cases of conflict-related violence, in particular for submission to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court [6, p. 62].

In our opinion, the protection of women's rights in Ukraine requires a comprehensive approach, including changes at the legislative level, as well as intensification of social programmes and international cooperation. First and foremost, national laws need to be improved to meet international standards. In addition, the law enforcement and judicial systems need to be strengthened to effectively combat violence and discrimination against women. It is particularly important to develop effective mechanisms to support victims of violence. This could include the establishment of crisis centres, counselling centres, hotlines and psychological and legal support programmes for women victims of crime.

Thus, the problem of protecting women's rights during wartime is complex, requiring specific international legislation for effective implementation. Despite the fact that legislation on the protection of women in armed conflict is well developed, there are difficulties with its implementation by states parties to the conflict due to the uncertainties that accompany these situations. The Geneva Convention and other international instruments provide a legal framework for the protection of women in armed conflict, but their effectiveness depends on proper implementation at the national level. Ukraine faces numerous challenges in protecting women's rights, including in the context of domestic and sexual violence. Strengthening the protection of women requires not only legislative changes, but also social initiatives and international cooperation aimed at supporting victims and preventing crimes.

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