

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 57th SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression

23-24 September 2024

Mr Erik Møse, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, briefed the Council on its preliminary findings, focusing on torture and sexual violence, attacks with explosive weapons, and the impact of attacks on critical energy infrastructure. The commission reiterated its gratitude to victims, witnesses, and organizations who shared valuable information, often traumatic accounts. Appreciating the information provided by the government of Ukraine, affirmed that the Russian Federation still refuses to communicate with the commission.

According to the OHCHR, the toll of the armed conflict presently rises to **over 11,743 civilians killed and 24,614 injured**. The COI continued documenting attacks with explosive weapons affecting civilian objects in populated areas with devastating consequences for the population.

Repeated large-scale waves of attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure have resulted in power outages affecting millions of civilians. The blackouts have particularly affected the health and well-being of certain categories of the population. Older persons and persons with disabilities have suffered from difficulties in accessing shelters during emergencies, reduced access to life-saving medical devices, and increased isolation which accentuated their vulnerabilities.

The COI reported new cases of torture committed by Russian authorities against civilians and prisoners of war in Ukraine and in the Russian Federation. It gathered evidence of sexual violence used as torture mainly against male victims in detention and of raids targeted women in villages under Russian control. These violations have left many of the victims with grave or irreparable physical harm and trauma. They invoked a need for psychological and social support for themselves and their families.

A prisoner of war, victim of torture recounted how he struggled to reintegrate into civilian life after his release saying I was haunted by the fear of being imprisoned again.

The commission reiterated the importance of continuing investigations, identification of perpetrators, and accountability as well as comprehensive support for victims.

Ukraine (Concerned country) affirmed that ten years after the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine and over two years after its full-scale aggression on Ukraine, the efforts to ensure justice and accountability are an integral part of the response to the atrocities that Russia has brought to Ukraine's soil. Ensuring justice and accountability for torture, sexual violence, and related crimes is a priority. Thousands of Ukrainian captives including civilians and particularly children are forcibly detained by Russia in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and Russia.

Systematic torture which includes repeated beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution, prolonged stress positions and mock execution amounts to war crimes and potentially other crimes under international law. In detention contexts particularly, sexual violence is often used as a form of torture whether intended to obtain information, intimidate, or punish and humiliate detainees.

The effect the lack of electricity has on daily life is profound: water utilities cannot distribute clean water to homes or businesses; sewage and sanitation systems become inoperable; and hospitals have to rely on backup generators to operate life-saving equipment, to list a few.

Finally, reported that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has been one of the main causes of civilian casualties. Hundreds, even thousands of indiscriminate attacks with explosive weapons committed by Russian Armed Forces have led to the death and injury of civilians and the destruction and damage of civilian objects.

Interactive dialogue

During the interactive dialogue, 45 country delegations took the floor, including the **Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights who affirmed that** due to the unprovoked Russian invasion, Ukraine has become a country where brutal crimes continue to be committed. These include the murder of civilians, deportation of children, executions of prisoners of war, massive missile attacks on residential buildings, nuclear terrorism, and destruction of cultural monuments, schools, hospitals, and other objects of energy and civilian infrastructure.

Member states of the Council, such as the EU, the United States of America, Malta, the Netherlands, Germany, Liechtenstein, Bulgaria, Japan, the UK, Georgia, Moldova, Australia, Romania, Argentina and Lithuania, condemning and remaining gravely alarmed by the findings of the latest report documenting how Russian authorities have committed a wide array of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including war crimes related to torture, willful killings, rape, and sexual and gender-based violence and the forcible transfer of children, demanded Russia to seize its illegal, unprovoked, and unjustified war of aggression, including the relentless air strikes against Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure. These attacks have indiscriminately killed civilians, and destroyed residential buildings, hospitals, schools, and power plants, blatantly violating international law with the clear aim of making the lives of civilians harder in the light of the coming winter. **North Macedonia, Canada, and France,** among others, were committed to ensuring full accountability for all crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

DPRK considered the report of the COI failing to present the object assessment still insisted on an imbalanced and biased approach on the situation in Ukraine and disregarded its causes that led to the current crisis. The report of COI has ignored the violation and abuses of human rights including the greatest repression of the Russian language. The **Syrian Arab Republic** rejected the content of the oral update presented by the so-called COI. Additionally, **Nicaragua** condemned the regular attacks against Russian territories, in particular, torture and extrajudicial executions of Russian prisoners of war, as well as the violations of the rights of believers, including the US, UK, and EU policy of weaponizing the Russophobic regime. In this vein, **Belarus, China, Eritrea, and the Islamic Republic of Iran** condemned the politically motivated initiatives marked by blatant selectivity and double standards that continue to plague this esteemed Council. The continued use of selectivity politicized attacks on specific nations under the disguise of human rights advocacy must cease.

NGOs focused on the human rights violations and war crimes committed by the Russian Federation regarding the prisoners of war and captured civilians, including the widespread and systematic use of torture. They condemned such ongoing widespread violations. The Russian Federation must be held accountable in particular for its systematic use of arbitrary detention. Cooperation with the ICC is essential. They affirmed that documentation of civilian casualties in frontline settlements, as well as in small villages and towns, remains problematic. Additionally, there is a lack of verified information on fatalities in the Russian-occupied regions.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (45 country delegations):

European Union, Netherlands (on behalf of the group of friends for accountability for Ukraine), Lithuania (on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic States), Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Czechia, Netherlands, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, United States, Ireland, Poland, Luxembourg, Austria, Japan, France, Australia, Canada, Democratic Republic's People of Korea, Belgium, Moldova, Eritrea, Spain, Romania, UK, Iran, Albania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Georgia, Venezuela, China, Türkiye, New Zealand, Montenegro, Croatia, Greece, Syrian Arab Republic, Nicaragua, Argentina, Slovakia, Israel.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (9):

Every Casualty Worldwide, European Union of Jewish Students, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, Human Rights Research League, The Next Century Foundation, Ingenieurs du Monde, Human Rights House Foundation, International Bar Association, iuventum e.V.

To watch the full meeting refer to the UN WEB TV: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).