



**CRIMEAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
GROUP**

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# **REVIEW ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CRIMEA**

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**CRIMEAN  
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GROUP**

The **CRIMEAN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP (CHRG)** is a public non-profit organization of the Crimean human rights defenders and journalists, aimed at promoting the observance and protection of human rights in Crimea by attracting wide attention to problems of human rights and international humanitarian law in the territory of the Crimean peninsula, and the search for and development of mechanisms for the protection of human rights in Crimea<sup>1</sup>.

CHRG has been documenting human rights violations, crimes against humanity, war crimes in the occupied Crimea, since 2014.

**5:00 AM**



**COALITION**

CHRG is a member of the **Ukraine 5 AM Coalition**<sup>2</sup>. Ukraine 5 AM Coalition is a coalition of human rights organizations that collect and document war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the Russian armed aggression in Ukraine.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/en/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.5am.in.ua/>

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## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Since the start of full-scale invasion of the RF in Ukraine the Crimean Human Rights Group (*hereinafter the CHRГ*) has been documenting cases of abducting civilians from the new occupied territories of Kherson and Zaporizhia Regions. The civilians are abducted by Russian military, RosGuard or RF FSB men. The abducted are tortured both after the abduction and once they are brought to the Simferopol Pre-Trial Detention Center.

Civil captives abducted from the South of Ukraine after February 24, 2022, are kept in a new pre-trial detention center no 2 supervised by RF FSB. According to the CHRГ information, **over 120 persons** are being kept there. Among the unlawfully detained are civic activists, volunteers, and representatives of local authorities.

The Crimean Human Rights Group has verified the data of at least **50 persons** kept in this pre-trial detention center.

The list of the abducted from the Kherson Region includes **Serhiy Tsyhipa, Oleksandr Zarivnyy, Mykola Petrovs'kyi, Oleksandr Babych, Appaz Kurtamet, Iryna Horobtsova, Pavlo Zaporozhets', Leonid Kondrats'kyi, Oleksandr Novats'kyi, Hennadiy Lasins'kyi, Kostiantyn Rezyk, and others.**

In July 2023 the CHRГ found out that **Leonid Kondrats'kyi**, a resident of Nova Kakhovka, was being kept in Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2 of Simferopol. He was abducted on October 7, 2022, in the town of Tavriys'k, Kakhovka District, Kherson Region. Mr.Kondrats'kyi participated in the Anti-Terrorist Operation in 2014 in Donetsk Region. After a partly occupation of Kherson Region he was abducted three times and tortured, and brought to Crimea after the last abduction<sup>1</sup>.

The CHRГ found out that **Oleksandr Novats'kyi**, a policeman from Kherson, was being kept in Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2. He was a deputy head of National Police Main Department for Kherson Region. The last two years he headed the police unit of Vysopillia. As his relatives said, Mr.Novats'kyi was abducted on July 14, 2022, in Kherson<sup>2</sup>.

The Russian Federation occupation authorities have been keeping other residents of Kherson Region that the CHRГ reported earlier about, in the Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2. Among them is **Hennadiy Lasins'kyi**, a resident of village of Velyka Kardashynka, Hola Prystan' District, Kherson Region, who after the abduction was accused under RF CC Article 222-3 (*Unlawful acquisition, transfer, sales, storage, transportation, forwarding or carrying of weapons, main parts of firearms, ammunition*)<sup>3</sup>.

**Mykola Petrovs'kyi**, a 28 aged disabled volunteer, abducted on March 27, 2022, in Kherson, is also kept in the Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2. He was accused of espionage under RF CC Article 276. The volunteer was kept by the RF FSB in the cellar for 6 months, and when the Russian troops were leaving Kherson, he was taken to Crimea<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-sizo-N2-simferopolya-znajshli-meshkanczya-novoï-kahovki-yakogo-trichi-brali-u-polon/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.slidstvo.info/warnews/avtomatom-po-golovi-i-zabraly-rosiyany-ne-pidtverdzhuyut-shho-trymayut-u-poloni-policzejskogo-z-hersona/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/v-sizo-N2-simferopolya-znajshli-shhe-odnogo-vikradenogo-ukraïnczya/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/vikradenogo-v-hersoni-volontera-z-invalidnistyu-mikolu-petrovskogo-zvinuvachuyut-u-shpigunstvi/>

**Oleksandr Zarivnyy**, a head of Department for Humanitarian Policy of Kherson District State Administration, a Chairman of ATO Veteran Public Association, abducted on March 17, 2022 in Oleshky, Kherson Region, is also kept in the same Pre-Trial Detention Center. On May 22 “Kievskiy District Court of Simferopol” extended his detention period till August 28, 2023. The RF FSB charges him with espionage under RF CC Article 276.



Oleksandr Zarivnyy

In May, 2023, the occupation authorities finally acknowledged keeping Mariano García Calatayud, a volunteer and a Spanish citizen, who had lived in Ukraine for 8 years, in the pre-trial detention center.<sup>5</sup> After the full-scale invasion he had been working in Kherson, helping the children who remained without parents’ care, participating in the anti-occupation rallies. He was abducted on March 19, 2022.

Ukrainian citizens from Zaporizhia Region are also kept in the Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2. According to the CHRG, **Vitaliy Rastohuyev and Volodymyr Kryvtsun** have been detained for more than a year. Both men are accused under RF CC Article 30-3 and Article 361 (*preparation of act of international terrorism*).<sup>6</sup> Mr.Rastorhuyev was officially detained on December 30, 2022, according to the decision of “Kievskiy District Court” of Simferopol, though he had been kept earlier in the pre-trial detention center without any charges. On May 23, 2023, “Kievskiy District Court” of Simferopol extended the term of detention of Vitaliy Rastohuyev and Volodymyr Kryvtsun for three months. The occupation “investigation” bodies have accused the men of allegedly attempt to assassinate Oleksandr Saulenko, an occupation “mayor” of Berdians’k.



Vitaliy Rastohuyev

The CHRG was informed that **Serhiy Petrenko**, a resident of Zaporizhia, who disappeared on March 14, while crossing the CHONHAR Russian check point, was also kept in the Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2. In June the “Prosecutor’s Office” of Crimea confirmed that he had had been kept in the Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2 since March 14, 2023. The RF FSB informed the relatives that Mr.Petrenko “was being checked due to available information about acts aimed at harming the security of Russian Federation in the course of ‘SVO’”.

**Yaroslav Zhuk**, a volunteer from Melitopol’, abducted in June 2022, was moved to the Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2 in Rostov-na-Donu. Then the trial on his faked case under RF CC Article 361-1 (*act of international terrorism*) started in the Southern Area Military Court. He is accused of allegedly attempt to assassinate Olena Shapurova, an occupation director of Melitopol’ Department for Education. Mr.Zhuk reported at court

<sup>5</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/okupanti-viznali-shho-utrimuyut-ispanskogo-volontera-mario/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-sizo-Nº2-simferopolya-znajshli-dvoh-zhiveliv-berdyanska-yakh-okupanti-zvinuvachuyut-u-terorizmi/>



that he had been brutally beaten by Rostov-na-Donu Pre-Trial Detention Center men on May 29, and May 30<sup>7</sup>. Earlier he had been tortured many times<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, the CHRГ was informed that the RF occupation authorities had established one more unofficial pre-trial detention unit in the village of Chonhar, Heniches'k District, Kherson Region. Nothing is reported officially about the new pre-trial detention center by the occupation authorities. Several prisoners abducted in the southern Ukraine and temporarily detained in Crimea have been moved to this site of unfreedom. For instance, about 10 detained on suspicion of serving the Noman Chelebidzhikhan Crimean Tatar Battalion are kept in this pre-trial detention center. The CHRГ has found out that **Lenur Khalilov** from the village of Rykove, Heniches'k District, is also kept there. He is charged with RF CC Article 208-2 (*establishment of unlawful military unit or serving in it*).

## POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIMINAL PROSECUTION

At least **165 citizens** of Ukraine are being kept in places of unfreedom within a political reasoned and/or religious criminal persecution. The complete list is published at the CHRГ website.

### «CASE OF CRIMEAN MUSLIMS»

This case defendants are accused of being members of Islamic organizations or of promoting such organizations' activities, though these organizations recognized as terrorist or extremist in the Russian Federation are not declared such by laws of Ukraine.

Cases are considered in violation of the right to a fair trial, the key evidence for the court is the testimony of anonymous witnesses (*many of them are the Russian Federation FSB staff*), pre-trial testimony of witnesses who later in the court declare having given them under pressure, and linguistic examinations of accused Muslims' conversations. Evidence provided by the defense is usually not taken into consideration by judges. Trials of cases against civilians are held by military courts of the Russian Federation.

On April 5, 2023, **Amet Suleymanov**, a citizen journalist of CRIMEAN SOLIDARITY Initiative, was detained by the FSIN (*Federal Penal Enforcement Service*) and brought to Simferopol Pre-Trial Detention Center<sup>9</sup>. Earlier he had been kept on house arrest due to heart disease. The Southern Area Military Court in Rostov-na-Donu had sentenced him to 12 years in the maximum-security regime penal colony. The actual reason for persecuting Mr. Suleymanov is his journalistic work, i.e. reporting searches and arrests of Crimean Tatars. He had been detained in 2017 and 2019. Mr. Suleymanov is being kept in the special Pre-Trial Detention Center unit, with medicines he needs taken away. He has trouble breathing and needs medication to relieve spasms and breathlessness.

On April 18, 2023, the Southern Area Military Court of Rostov-na-Donu sentenced **Murat Mustafayev**, a Crimean Tatar, to 4 years in confinement on charges of Hizb ut-Tahrir membership under RF Criminal Code Article 205.5-2 (*engagement into the activities of a terrorist organization*) and Article 278, together with Article 30-1 (*preparation for violent seizure of power*). Mr. Mustafayev is to serve the first two years of his sentence in prison, the remaining ones – in the maximum-security regime penal colony<sup>10</sup>. According to the FSB notification, Mustafayev's case was considered under special procedure

<sup>7</sup> <https://zmina.info/news/polityvazen-yaroslav-zhuk-zayavyv-shho-u-rostovskomu-sizo-jogo-byly-ta-katuvaly-strumom/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/vikradenij-volonter-yaroslav-zhuk-rozpoviv-pro-torturi-u-poloni/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/pravozahisniki-zaklikayut-zvilniti-gromadyanskogo-zhurnalista-ameta-sulejmanova-u-yakogo-hvore-sercze/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/krimskogo-tatarina-murata-mustafaeva-zasudili-do-4-rokiv-vyazniczi/>

because he had pleaded guilty and entered into a plea agreement with the prosecutor. Mr. Mustafayev was detained on August 10, 2022, together with Vilen Temeryanov, Enver Krosh, Seitiya Abbozov, Edem Bekirov and Rinat Aliyev, after searches in Dzhankoy and in Dzhankoy District of Crimea.

On May 17, 2023, the Southern Area Military Court in Rostov-na-Donu read out the sentence to **Oleksandr Syzikov, Alim Sufyanov, and Seyran Khayredinov**. Mr. Syzikov, who has a Group I visual disability, was sentenced to 17 years in confinement, with serving the first four years in prison. The court decided to send him to the maximum security regime penal colony, and imposed a one-and-a-half-year restriction of freedom after his release, prohibiting him from attending public events and assemblies. The court sentenced Mr. Khayredinov and Mr. Sufyanov to 12 years in the maximum-security regime penal colony. They are also to serve the first four years in prison, and imposed a year's restriction of freedom after the release.<sup>11</sup>

On May 25, 2023, the Southern Area Military Court in Rostov-na-Donu sentenced **Ernes Seytosmanov**, a Crimean Tatar activist, to 18 years in the maximum security regime penal colony. He is to serve the first four years in prison, and the remaining ones — in the colony. He was detained on February 9, 2022, after the searches. On December 5, 2019, the same court sentenced his brother, **Enver Seytosmanov**, to 17 years in the maximum security regime penal colony.<sup>12</sup>

On May 31, 2023, the Southern Area Military Court read out the sentence to **Rustem Murasov, Dzhebbbar Bekirov, Zavor Abdullayev, and Rustem Tayirov**. The judge sentenced Mr. Dzhebbbar Bekirov to 17 years in the maximum security regime penal colony, with serving the first four years in prison. Activists Rustem Tayirov, Rustem Murasov and Zavor Abdullayev were sentenced to 12 years in confinement each, with serving the first four years in prison, and a year's restriction of freedom after the release.<sup>13</sup> They were detained on August 7, 2021, after their homes had been searched. The actual reason for persecuting them was their civil activity: they attended politically reasoned trials, participated in flashmobs, communication initiatives, and protests to support unlawfully imprisoned Muslims of Crimea.

On June 16, 2023, the Southern Area Military Court sentenced **Ansar Osmanov**, a Crimean Tatar activist, to 20 years in the maximum security regime penal colony.<sup>14</sup> At the moment this is the longest sentence time in the cases "against the Crimean Muslims" in Crimea. Mr. Osmanov was detained on February 9, 2022, after the searches. He was an activist and helped the CRIMEAN CHILDHOOD project for evolution and support of political prisoners' children.

In late June it became known that the Russian Federation, in violation of IHL provisions, convoyed **Farkhod Bazarov, Medzhyt Abdurakhmanov, and Remzi Bekirov** from the occupied Crimea to its territory. Mr. Bazarov and Mr. Abdurakhmanov were brought to the prison in the city of Balashov, Saratov Region. Mr. Bekirov, a citizen journalist, was convoyed to Prison no 2 of city of Yeniseysk, Krasnoyarsk Area. As sentenced by the Southern Area Military Court, the activist is to serve the first 5 years there, and then continue serving the 19-years' sentence in the maximum security regime penal colony.

## CASE OF LENIYE UMEROVA

On December 4, 2022, Ms. Leniye Umerova, aged 25, a Ukrainian citizen, and a Crimean Tatar woman, was detained by the RF FSB border guards after crossing the national frontier between Georgia and the Russian Federation, allegedly for violating the regime zone rules. The woman had chosen this route to get from Kyiv to Crimea to take care of her father suffering from cancer. Until March 16, 2023, she was

<sup>11</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/ogoloshenij-virok-figurantam-spravi-krimskih-musulman-sizikovu-sufyanovu-ta-hajredinovu/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/krimskomu-tatarinu-ernesu-sejtosmanovu-rosijskij-sud-priznachiv-18-rokiv-kolonii-suvorogo-rezhimu/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/rosijskij-sud-zasudiv-do-kolonii-shhe-chotiroh-krimskih-tatar/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/aktivista-ansara-osmanova-zasudili-do-20-rokiv-uvyaznennya/>

held in the Center for Temporary Detention of Foreign Citizens near Vladikavkaz, rejecting to transfer her to Ukraine. The Prigorodnyi District Court found Ms. Umerova guilty of “violating the state border regime” (*Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation, Article 18.1*) and fined her RUR2,000.<sup>15</sup>

On the night of March 16, Ms. Umerova was released from the Center for Foreign Citizens Detention without any explanation. But, as the girl told, a car with 4 men inside was waiting for her at the gate. They rushed her, put a bag on her head, brought her to Vladikavkaz downtown, and left her there. Almost the next while she was detained at the same place by the police patrol that, for no reason, drawn on her a report for “disobedience to the policemen’s requirements.” The Leninskiy District Court imposed an administrative punishment on her — 15 days of arrest.

While Ms. Umerova was kept in the detention center, a similar report was re-drawn on her: the girl was reported to have refused handing her mobile to the policemen. On March 27, the same court again imposed a 15 days’ arrest on her. Leniye Umerova was moved to the detention center in the city of Beslan. On April 9, a new report for disobedience to the police was drawn up on the girl. And a new one was drawn on before the previous one expiry, and she was kept under arrest.

Leniye Umerova’s lawyers asked the court to request the recordings of video surveillance cameras from the detention center, which confirmed that the woman had not committed any actions she had been drawn up the report on. However, each time the court rejected this request and considered exclusively the position of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

In early May, 2023, Ms. Umerova was actually abducted from the Vladikavkaz detention center and, without giving any reasons for this and without notifying the lawyers thereof, transported her to Moscow to the Lefortovo pre-trial detention center where she was accused of espionage<sup>16</sup>. Since then, she has been kept in custody. On June 30, the authorities of the Russian Federation extended the illegal detention period of Leniye Umerova for three months — until October 4, 2023.

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## «CASES OF UKRAINIAN COMMANDOS»

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At least 14 citizens of Ukraine detained before the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, are in prison under the Crimean cases of ‘Ukrainian commandos and spies’, including: Volodymyr Dudka, Oleksiy Bessarabov, Dmytro Shtyblikov, Hennadiy Limeshko, Leonid Parkhomenko, Kostiantyn Davydenko, Dmytro Dolhopolov, Anna Sukhonosova, Yunus Masharipov, Ivan Yatskin, Halyna Dovhopola, Vladyslav Yesypenko, Yevhen Petrushyn, Stanislav Stetsenko (*Khudolei*).

When detained in such cases, the RF FSB accuses the Crimeans of ‘preparing sabotage, storing arms and spying.’ Within these cases, illegal methods of investigating and torturing to obtain confessions, violation of the presumption of innocence, distribution of “confession” videos by the FSB of the Russian Federation through the Russian media have been recorded.

After the full scale invasion, the number of such cases has significantly increased.

On May 3, 2023, the RF FSB detained at least 7 men in Crimea, accusing them of allegedly attempting to assassinate key leaders of occupation administration, i.e. Sergey Aksionov, Vladimir Konstantinov, and Yanina Pavlenko, — and acting as a “Ukrainian intelligence group”. The detained are Crimeans: Viktor Podvalnyy, Oleksandr Lytvynenko, Serhiy Kryvosheyin, Kostiantyn Yevmenenko, Ihor Zorin and Serhiy Voynarovskyy. Denys Petranov detained with them may be a citizen of Bulgaria. The FSB claims that the men were allegedly preparing an assassination attempt under “the leadership of

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<sup>15</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/pomad-4-misyaczi-rosiya-utrimue-v-zaruchnikah-gromadyanku-ukraïni-krimsku-tatarku-lenie-umerovu/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/lenie-umerovu-perevezli-u-sizo-lefortovo-obvinuvachuyut-u-shpigunstvi/>



Kyryl Budanov, Head of Main Intelligence Agency of Ukraine".<sup>17</sup> The Main Intelligence Department of Ministry of Defence of Ukraine called a misinformation the FSB statement about the detained.

According to the information disposed by the CHRG, there is evidence of politically reasoned case and using illegal investigation methods against Viktor Podvalnyy and the other detained.

On May 30, 2023, the FSB detained **Kyrylo Barannyk**, a master of sports in orienteering and resident of Simferopol. He was accused of blasting railway tracks on February 23, 2023, in the village of Poshtove, Bakhchisaray District. He reported torturing with electricity he had been subjected to. Though he admitted his guilt, the FSB men continued the torture, accusing him of one more sabotage — blasting a railway at the village of Chysten'ke, Simferopol District, on May 18. Mr.Barannyk reported that he had been tortured with electric shocks, with electrical terminals connected to his fingers, toes, earlobes, and buttocks. Then the FSB men hit his torso and head with their hands and feet, that caused, as he assumed, breaking a rib on the right side". In addition, during the torture, Mr.Barannyk was threatened with rape and murder when he allegedly tried to escape, and was promised that his mother would be killed<sup>18</sup>. The Crimean is being held in the Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 2 in Simferopol.

In late June, 2023, the FSB detained two residents of Yalta while fishing allegedly for 'willingness to carry out acts of sabotage and terrorism at military objects in Crimea in collaboration with the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU)'. Criminal proceedings against them were initiated under a new article introduced after the large-scale invasion — 275.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (*colluding with a foreign power, international or foreign organization*). The article demands 3 to 8-years' confinement. The "Kievskiy District Court" of Simferopol placed the men in custody<sup>19</sup>.

Yevhen Mel'nychuk, a Crimean resident, detained in October 2022 in Sevastopol for taking photos of the Russian military equipment, is also kept in Pre-Trial Detention Center no 2 of Simferopol<sup>20</sup>.

## PERSECUTION ON CHARGE OF SERVING IN N.HELEBIDZHIKHAN BATTALION

The official reason for persecuting the accused in Crimea and new occupied territories (*since February 24, 2022*) under RF CC Article 208-2 (*Service in an illegal armed unit acting for the purposes that contradict the interests of the Russian Federation*) is that these people "failed to come voluntarily to the RF law enforcement bodies and declare their service in the Crimean Tatar Noman Chelebidzhikhan Volunteer Battalion". The evidence of the battalion actions against the RF interests declared by the investigation is the information of mass media that the purpose of the battalion establishment was to de-occupy Crimea.

On June 1, 2022, the Supreme Court of Russia declared "Crimean Tatar Noman Chelebidzhikhan Volunteer Battalion" to be terroristic and banned it in the territory of the Russian Federation. On July 21, 2022, the RF FSB included the battalion into the list of terrorist organizations.

On April 24, 2023, the "Kievskiy District Court" of Simferopol sentenced a resident of Crimea to 4 years in confinement for serving in the Noman Chelebidzhikhan Battalion. The FSB stated he had allegedly joined the ranks of the battalion in 2016. On June 1, 2023, the "Kirovskiy District Court" in Crimea sentenced a Crimean resident to 2 years in confinement. The man was accused of allegedly serving in the Noman Chelebidzhikhan Battalion.

<sup>17</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-krimu-zatrimali-7-lyudej-za-zvinuvachennyam-u-zamahu-na-aksonova/?fbclid=IwAR30xZoQUue-4oQgLrAn4jBcrg4V4oWQuAg2c21rYYg7ycZKS8GqkTAINec>

<sup>18</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/zatrimanij-za-pidozroyu-u-pidrivi-zaliznichnih-kolij-simferopolecz-zayaviv-pro-torturi/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-yalti-zatrimali-dvoh-miscevih-zhiteliv-za-spivpracyu-z-sbu/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-sizo-%e2%84%962-simferopolya-znajshli-shhe-odnogo-vikradenogo-aktivista/>

On May 31, 2023, two brothers were detained in the Razdol'noye District of Crimea on suspicion of allegedly serving in the Crimean Tatar Noman Chelebidzhikhan Volunteer Battalion and "guarding the battalion's facilities located near Chonhar, Henichesk District, Kherson Region." Criminal cases were initiated against them under RF CC Article 208 (*Establishment of an illegal armed unit or service in it*).

Such a practice of persecuting civilians under such cases has been also used in the occupied territories after February 24, 2022, in particular in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

On April 15, 2023, two men were detained, probably at the checkpoint with Crimea that was controlled by the Russian Federation, on suspicion of serving in the Crimean Tatar Noman Chelebidzhikhan Volunteer Battalion. The FSB initiated criminal proceedings under RF CC Article 208-2<sup>21</sup>.

On April 20, 2023, the "Kievskiy District Court" of Simferopol sentenced **Appaz Kurtamet**, a Crimean Tatar, on the charge of "financing an armed unit" (*RF CC Article 208-1*) to seven years in the maximum-security regime penal colony<sup>22</sup>. Mr. Kurtamet is a teacher of the Crimean Tatar language from the village of Novooleksiyivka, Kherson region. On July 23, 2022, he was detained at the checkpoint between the occupied Crimea and the Kherson region controlled by the Russian Federation. According to the prosecution, "he, being aware of illegal activity of KRYM Islamic Battalion, transferred UAH500<sup>23</sup> to a battalion representative".

On May 21, 2023, the occupying "Armiansk City Court" in Crimea sentenced a 36-year-old Ukrainian to 5 years in confinement for allegedly serving in the Crimean Tatar battalion<sup>24</sup>. According to the FSB, the man allegedly joined the ranks of the battalion in 2015 and served as an active man for two years. As stated by the FSB, he was detained in November 2022 while trying to enter Crimea.

In March, 2023, the "Dzhankoy District Court" sentenced a citizen of Ukraine to 5 years in confinement for serving participating in the "Crimean Tatar Noman Chelebidzhikhan Battalion". Now it has become known that the convict is Ihor Khalilov abducted in Henichesk, Kherson Region, and displaced to Crimea in July 2022.

On May 27, 2023, the FSB reported detaining three men in Kherson Region on suspicion of serving in the Crimean Tatar Noman Chelebidzhikhan Battalion. According to the FSB, these men joined the battalion in 2016<sup>25</sup>.

It should be stated that recently the occupation authorities of Crimea has stopped reporting the names of people detained or sentenced on the charge of serving in the battalion.

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## PERSECUTION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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On April 20, 2017, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation declared "Jehovah's Witnesses" an extremist organization and banned its activities in the territory of the Russian Federation, and in 2018 criminalization of the "Jehovah's Witnesses' persecution in Russia started.

On April 23, 2023, the "investigative committee" reported that the investigation in the case of two Jehovah's Witnesses — Viktor Kudinov from Sevastopol and Serhiy Zhyhalov from Yevpatoria — accused of managing the activities of an extremist organization (*RF CC Article 282.2-1*), had been

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<sup>21</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-krimu-zatrimali-shhe-dvoh-gromadyan-ukraïni-nibito-cherez-uchast-u-krimskotatarskomu-bataljonu/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/krimskogo-tatarina-z-novooleksiivki-appaza-kurtameta-zasudili-do-7-rokiv-uv'yaznennya/>

<sup>23</sup> Circa EUR13.

<sup>24</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-krimu-shhe-odnogo-cholovika-zasudili-na-5-rokiv-u-spravi-krimskotatarskogo-bataljonu/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-krimu-povidomyayut-pro-zatrimannya-troh-osib-u-hersonskij-oblasti-u-spravi-krimskotatarskogo-bataljonu/>

completed. Their case was opened in August 2022, and their homes were searched. As stated by the “investigative committee”, “the investigators of the investigative unit of the Gagarinskiy District came to the conclusion that since May 2019, two followers of “Jehovah’s Witnesses”, the organization banned in Russia, had developed a criminal plan to continue its activities in the territory of Sevastopol, having self-appointed themselves the elders in the “Primorskoye” unit<sup>26</sup>.

On May 22, in the morning, the Zinchenko couple’s home was searched in Feodosia followed with detention of Maksym Zinchenko, aged 31, and his transfer to Sevastopol. After two days spent in the pre-trial detention unit, he was placed under house arrest and accused of membership in the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” extremist organization (CC Article 282.2-2).

According to the investigators, since 2019, Mr. Zinchenko “has been organizing illegal meetings, and speeches on studying religious documents, he has himself delivered sermons at the meetings held on online, communicated extremist ideas.” The case is scheduled to be heard in the “Nakhimovskiy District Court” of Sevastopol.

According to the “Jehovah’s Witnesses’ website, at least 13 criminal cases have been started in Crimea, with 12 believers sentenced to confinement in the colonies. Since 2014, the occupying Russian authorities have made at least 98 searches of Jehovah’s Witnesses followers in Crimea and Sevastopol.

## FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION

### LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS

Freedom of speech is further being curtailed in the Russian Federation and Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine. New legislative restrictions that have that criminalized so called ‘fakes’ about the Russian army actions in Ukraine are in force. A new RF CC article — 207.3 — introduced punishment for disseminating “knowingly false information”.

People are further persecuted under the new administrative article on “public actions aimed at discrediting the Russian army” (Article 20.3.3 of the CoAO of the Russian Federation). The maximum penalty is a fine of up to RUR100,000. For the period of 1 April — 30 June 2023, at least 104 judgements in administrative cases for “discrediting the Russian Army” were awarded by “courts”.

In Crimea members of “State Council” adopted a bill allowing for dismissing “public servants” if they were declared “foreign agents”, in the first reading.

### CASE OF IRYNA DANYLOVYCH, CITIZEN JOURNALIST

Ms.Iryna Danylovyh, a health care worker and a citizen journalist, was abducted by the RF FSB men on April 29, 2022. She was kept in the FSB building basement and subject to torture. When she had been forced to sign blank forms, she was told that two hundred grams of explosives had been found in her small bag and a criminal case had been opened against her under RF CC Article 222.1-1 (*Illegal acquisition, transfer, sale, storage, transportation, or translocation of explosives*). Upon the ‘court’ judgement, she was detained. In custody Ms. Danylovyh was many times treated abusively and inhumanly.

On December 28, 2022, “Feodosiya City Court” sentenced Ms. Danylovyh to 7 years in confinement and a fine of RUR50,000.

<sup>26</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/spravu-shhe-dvoh-svidkiv-egovi-z-krimu-peredali-do-okupaczijnogo-sudu/>

On March 21, 2023, Iryna Danylovych went on a dry hunger strike, protesting against a lack of medical care and treatment in the Pre-Trial Detention Center no 1 of Simferopol that had caused her left ear deafness. On April 6, 2023, she stopped this strike because the detention center administration promised her medical care.

On June 29, 2023, “the Supreme Court” of Crimea considered the appeal against the sentence and changed the term of confinement. The sentence was shortened — just one month less<sup>27</sup>.

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## PERSECUTION FOR EXPRESSING THE THOUGHT

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On June 25, 73-year-old Rustem Kurnosov, 65-year-old Enver Useyinov and Ebabil Ibrahimov, who was filming the event, were detained in Bilohirsk at Ak Kaya Rock. Mr.Ibrahimov was released after an interview in the police station. Mr.Kurnosov and Mr.Useyinov were drawn up reports under RF CoAO Article 20.2-2 “Organizing or holding a public event without submitting a notification on the holding of a public event as established by law”. On the same day, the “Bilohirsk District Court” found the men guilty of an administrative offense and fined them RUR20,000 rubles each<sup>28</sup>.

At the end of June, Denys Bulygin, a Simferopol resident, was fined and arrested by the “Kievskiy District Court” of Simferopol for his posts on social networks. Two administrative cases were opened against him: under CoAO Article 20.3-1 (“*propaganda or demonstration of symbols of banned organizations*) and Article 20.3.3-1 (“*discrediting the Russian Army*”) <sup>29</sup>. The case for “propaganda or demonstration of symbols of banned organizations” was opened because of Mr. Bulygin’s Facebook avatar: “Freedom to Navalnyy!” slogan was on that photo. This was a reason for the “court” to sentence the man to 15 days of administrative arrest.

In order to persecute the Crimeans for their anti-Russian, anti-Putin and/or pro-Ukrainian positions as well as for criticizing the Russian or local occupation authorities, an Internet community called “Crimean SMERSH” was created. The name originates from the word “SMERSH” used to name counter-intelligence agencies in the USSR during the Second World War, that were NKVD<sup>30</sup> units. The word is an acronym for “Death to Spies” expression in Russian (*SMERT’ SHPIONAM*). In fact, in Soviet times, SMERSH was one of the repressive system tools. When the full-scale invasion started, members of this newly established Crimean SMERSH community have been persecuting those who do not support the Russian authorities and the war against Ukraine. The community publishes personal data of such people, incites hatred towards them, calls for their persecution, files reports with the FSB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. The information of this group has repeatedly become the basis for opening criminal and administrative cases against the Crimeans. The founder and this community main administrator is Aleksandr Talipov, a local pro-Russian blogger who systematically uses hate speech against Ukrainians and opponents of the Russian authorities, and collaborates with the RF FSB to persecute activists.

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## PERSECUTION FOR SUPPORT OF UKRAINE AND ANTI-WAR POSITION

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For April — June 2023, the CHRG documented at least 110 administrative proceedings submitted to the “courts” of Crimea for consideration, under RFCoAO Article 20.3.3 (“*discrediting of Russian army*”). Judgements on administrative punishment (*fine or administrative arrest*) were awarded in **104 cases**.


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<sup>27</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/aktivistczi-irini-danilovich-zminili-virok/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/dvoh-krimchan-oshtrafuvali-za-krimskotatarskij-prapor/>

<sup>29</sup> For more details: section “Persecution for support of Ukraine and anti-war position”

<sup>30</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NKVD>



At least **370** administrative cases for “discrediting of Russian army” (RF CoAO Article 20.3.3) against Crimeans  
**328** of them – punishment judgements issued

Totally, for the full-scale invasion period, the CHRG documented at least **370** such administrative proceedings, with administrative punishment judgements issued in **328** of them.

One of the most common grounds for persecuting is posting on a social network. The “court” judgements reviewed by the CHRG show that the Crimeans have been brought to administrative responsibility for the following posts on Instagram, Odnoklassniki, VKontakte, and Telegram channels: “War with Ukraine, a terrible, absurd and incompetent – the most dishonourable, shameful and unjust war in the history of Russia”, “Crimea is Ukraine”, posts with a “negative attitude towards the Special Military Operation conducted by the Russian Federation, dissatisfaction with the Russian government, in particular, the President of the Russian Federation”, “Glory to Ukraine”, “No WAR We Stand with Ukraine” and others. For instance, a Crimean, who posted a flag of Ukraine with “peaceful skies above” statement, was fined of RUR30,000.

The Crimeans are also held accountable for comments placed under posts on social networks. For instance, a Crimean posted the comment under the post about the offensive of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, “Please, hurry on, we’ve already waited so long”, and was administratively punished. Another example is the comment “No War!” to the post “This is how the Kharkiv downtown looks like. They came to liberate, let’s not forget that.”

In all these cases, the “judges” regard it as “disagreement with the actions of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to conduct a military operation on the territory of Ukraine” and “discreditation of using the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to defend interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, to support international peace and security”.

The “Glory to Ukraine” slogan is always a reason for persecution. For example, when an administrative case was being considered against a local resident who had published his photo with the flag of Ukraine in his hands and signed it “Glory of Ukraine”, the “judge” relied on the “scientific opinion” issued by the Feodosiya Museum of Antiquities. This document stated that the “Glory to Ukraine” slogan demonstrates “a provocation against the state system and discreditation of using the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to defend interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, to support international peace and security within the framework of the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine.”

In June, two residents of the village of Sieverne of Chornomorsky District were detained — father and son, Yuriy and Oleksandr Velychko. The information about them was posted by Crimean blogger Aleksandr Talipov, “Crimean SMERSH” community founder. The men were forced to apologize on camera. They were accused of “discrediting the army, the president of the Russian Federation, denying the territorial belonging of Crimea to the Russian Federation on social networks”. The “Razdol’noye District Court” imposed a fine of RUR2,000 on each of them<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/v-krimu-okupanti-oshtrafuvali-ta-zmusili-vibachatis-proukraïnsko-nalashtovanih-batka-ta-sina/>



At the end of June, Denys Bulygin, a Simferopol resident, was fined by the “Kievskiy District Court” for a 16-second video that “expresses support for Ukraine, shows gestures of congratulation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” The “court” imposed a fine of RUR50,000 for violation of RF CoAO Article 20.3.3-1 (*public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation*)<sup>32</sup>.

The occupying power also persecutes people for expressing support for Ukraine and their anti-war position in public places. To mention at least: a Crimean who, speaking with an inspector of the “RF traffic police”, claimed that “*it were Russians who attacked Ukraine*”, or a passenger of the “Moscow-Simferopol” train, who was proving to other passengers that “*the Russian army is killing civilians of Ukraine*”, “*the president of the Russian Federation, “swearword”, started the war with Ukraine*”, “*I am against the presence of Russia in Ukraine and a special military operation*”.

The criminal persecution is also in progress. Thus, in early June, two local residents, Yehor Savchenko and Mykhailo Zhydkov, were detained in Kerch. They were detained for posting anti-war graffiti in the city. According to the occupation authorities, a criminal case was opened against them under RF CC Article 214-2 (*vandalism motivated by political hatred*). Yehor Savchenko is known to have been placed on house arrest by the “Kerch City Court”<sup>33</sup>.

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## CASE OF BOHDAN ZIZA

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Bohdan Ziza, a local resident aged 28, was detained on May 17, 2022. He was accused of having spilled yellow and blue paint on the entrance to the Yevpatoriya ‘occupational administration’ building on the night of May 16, 2022. He was subject to illegal investigation methods (*violence, pressure, intimidation, threats, obstructing of lawyer’s work, etc.*).

In January, 2023, he was convoyed to Russia so that his case should be considered at the Southern Military Area Court in Rostov-na-Donu.

On June 6, 2023, this Court sentenced the Crimean activist to 15 years in confinement on charges that included, inter alia, committing a terrorist act, vandalism, and intentionally destroying or damaging someone else’s property by arson. Making his last statement before the convict was read out, Mr. Ziza demanded releasing all Crimean political prisoners and recited a Ukrainian poem.

On June 10 Bohdan announced a hunger strike as protest against politically reasoned persecution of Ukrainian citizens by the Russian Federation. 17 days later he announced cancelling the hunger strike, having lost 10kg for this time. The Pre-Trial Detention Center administration placed him in an individual cell with a stricter surveillance.

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## CASE OF IVAN KUPYCH

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On March 30, the “Supreme Court” of Crimea convicted Mr. Ivan Kupych, a 40-year-old resident of the village of Pioners’ke, under the Russian Federation Criminal Code articles 281-1 (*sabotage*) and 222.1-1 (*illegal trafficking of explosives*). The man was also accused of preparing for act of sabotage (*RF CC Article 281-1 with a reference to RF CC Article 30-1*). Mr.Kupych was sentenced to 10 years in confinement with a RUR70,000 fine.

Mr. Kupych appealed the judgement in the appellate court, but the sentence was upheld. According to the conviction, Mr. Kupych made Molotov cocktails, and threw them in the Simferopol military commissariat building. According to the testimonies of “witnesses”, there was no fire, they only

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<sup>32</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/zhitelya-simferopolya-oshtrafuvali-ta-zareshuvuvali-na-15-dib-cherez-zapisi-v-soczmerzah/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/u-kerchi-porushili-spravi-proti-dvoh-miscevih-zhitev-cherez-antivoenni-grafti/>

noticed "signs of ignition under the windows". Mr.Kupych is believed by the occupation investigation to have been also planning the explosion of the railway in Crimea. The "judge" decided that "The crime committed by Mr.Kupych was motivated by his disagreement with the Special Military Operation in the territory of Ukraine. Mr. Kupych was set aggressively against the Russian military".

At the court hearing, Mr Kupych claimed that the evidence against him had been fabricated; all the arguments presented by the lawyer were ignored, in particular, about conducting additional examinations.

In late June the Third General Jurisdiction Court of Appeal of Sochi revised the sentence of Mr. Ivan Kupych and reduced it by six months.

# 2

## USING CRIMEA AS RUSSIAN MILITARY BASE

### CONSCRIPTION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORY RESIDENTS TO ARMED FORCES OF OCCUPYING POWER AND MOBILIZATION

The Russian Federation has been involving Crimeans in a full-scale war against Ukraine. In violation of the international humanitarian law norms a forced conscription of Crimeans to the ranks of the Russian Federation Armed Forces keeps going. Compelling the residents of occupied territories to serve in the army of the Occupying Power constitutes a violation of international law, namely, clauses of Article 51, Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Moreover, acts of individuals responsible for such compelling constitute a war crime according to Article 8 of International Criminal Court Rome Statute.

Persecutions for evading the service in the RF Armed Forces continues in Crimea. As of 30 June 2023, the Crimean Human Rights Group documented at least **468 criminal cases** under RF CC Article 328 (*Evading the service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation*) sent to the “courts” in the occupied peninsula. This includes at least 26 criminal cases under RF CC Article 328 documented for April 1 – June 30, 2023, with guilty verdicts delivered for 19 (*finis of RUR15,000 to 50,000*). The payment of fine does not exempt from the service.

In June, the Southern Area Military Court upheld the sentence of 9 years in the maximum-security regime penal colony to Denys Narolsky, a Crimean contract serviceman, who had refused to combat in Ukraine. He was detained in January 2023, and on March 30, the “Crimean Garrison Military Court” sentenced him to 9 years<sup>34</sup> in the penal colony under the article on “desertion committed during armed conflict or hostilities» (*Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, Article 338-3*).

Since February 24, 2022, the Crimean Human Rights Group has been collecting data on dead and captured Russian military personnel assigned to military units in Crimea. As of late June 2023, the CHRG documented at least 267 “200ths” of such military men fighting on the Russian Federation side<sup>35</sup>.

### MILITARIZATION OF CHILDREN

The Russian occupation authorities keep on implementing the policy of destroying the Ukrainian identity, militarizing the consciousness of the peninsula residents, and glorifying the participants in the war in Ukraine. Russia has been spreading military propaganda among the Crimea residents, including children, advertising the service in the Russian army, and communicating the appeals to the aggressive war<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/krimskomu-kontraktniku-yakij-vidmovivsyia-voyuvati-zatverdili-virok-u-9-rokiv/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/zagibli-vijskovi-iz-krimu/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/czilespryamovana-militarizacziya-osviti-movi-kulturi-zbroja-ruskogo-mira-na-okupovanih-teritoriyah/>

The implementation of action plan for local military recruitment offices and so-called ministries goes on. For instance, “Ministry of Education of Crimea” and other ministries and departments shall provide “training equipment and files to teach pupils the defense basics and train them military service basics”; “manage military patriotic actions with citizens of pre-conscription age, familiarize them with military rituals, museums and rooms of military glory”, etc.<sup>37</sup>.

Sergey Kravtsov, Minister of Education of the Russian Federation, stated that starting from September 1, 2023, the initial military training of children should become a mandatory part of the school curriculum. For instance, the children must learn to assemble and disassemble an assault rifle, throw a grenade, slide a rifle bolt, etc.

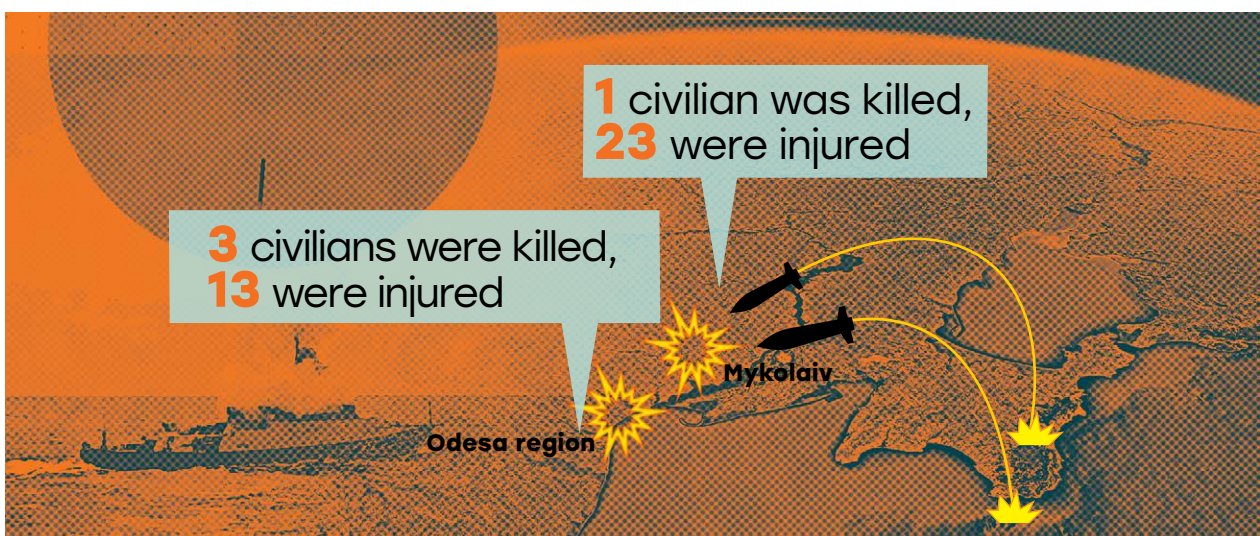
It was the first time during the occupation that the Russian authorities completely canceled May 9 events (*the so-called “Victory Day”*), in particular, the annual parade and “Immortal Regiment” procession were canceled. The occupation authorities explained this with security considerations. In these conditions, the leading children militarization organizations, “YUNARMIIYA” (*Young Army*) and “KrymPatriotTsentr” (*Crimean Patriot Center*), were active in holding online propaganda events for children.

## ATTACKS ON UKRAINIAN CIVILIAN POPULATION FROM CRIMEA

Since February 24, 2022, Crimea has become the base used by Russia for striking Ukrainian cities. Russia is constantly attacking Ukrainian civil infrastructure from the territory of occupied Crimea and the Black Sea water zone, that have caused deaths or injuries of the civilians.

Since the late September 2022, the Russian Federation has begun using actively Iranian-made SHAHED-136 kamikaze drones for attacks on civil infrastructure. These drones are also launched from the territory of the occupied Crimea. To train the drone operators the Iranian authorities sent their instructors to the peninsula.

For instance, on the night of April 27, 2023, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation attacked Mykolayiv residential districts with KALIBR cruise missiles from the Black Sea area. A 5-story multi-apartment building, and several private houses were mostly damaged; the historical building of



<sup>37</sup> <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/v-okupovanomu-krimu-trivayut-borotba-proti-ukraïnskoï-identichnosti-ta-militarizacziya-svidomosti-ditej/>

Admiralty– a monument of national importance –actually burned out. The attack **killed a woman, and left 23 injured**, including a child<sup>38</sup>.

On the night of June 14, 2023, the Russian Federation attacked Odesa area with 4 KALIBR cruise missiles from the Black Sea area, and one hit a civil facility. As a result of the attack, **three people were killed and 13 were injured**<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> [https://t.me/V\\_Zelenskiy\\_official/6011](https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/6011)

<sup>39</sup> <https://t.me/odeskaODA/1774>