

Russian terror in occupied areas of Ukraine: homes confiscated en masse

Thursday 11 July 2024, by [PIRANI Simon](#) (Date first published: 9 July 2024).

Russian authorities in occupied areas of Ukraine have intensified attacks on Ukrainian identity by confiscating people's homes en masse, labour activists report.

The property grabs come on top of a campaign of terror by security forces to encourage people to inform on each other, legal pressures piled on those who still have Ukrainian passports, and other de-Ukrainisation measures.

The confiscations “are now being conducted on a massive scale”, the Eastern Human Rights group (EHRG) [reported](#) on their telegram channel. More than 1 million flats, houses and garages had been seized in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

“The occupation authorities’ list of properties with ‘no owner’ includes 541,904 units in Luhansk and 873,438 in Donetsk (updated on 1 June 2024).

“There are both open and hidden confiscations.”

For example, a family can find that its home has been declared to have “no owner”, and be forced to make a payment to prevent it being seized. If people are away from home for e.g. a month, they can return to find their property has been expropriated.

If the owner of a flat dies, the occupation authorities typically sell it cheaply, or hand it over to the security forces, regardless of the rights of family members or legatees.

Allotments, country houses and garages are being grabbed, as well as flats.

“The seizure of property in the occupied territories is a way of reducing the number of Ukrainian citizens in the occupied areas, since many people’s connection with those areas is exactly that they have property there”, the EHRG [said](#). “Many flats are handed over to citizens of the Russian federation who move to the occupied territories.”

Other ways of piling pressure on Ukrainian citizens include:

Detentions by the security services of people accused of failing to inform on people committing “terrorist acts”. The EHRG [stated](#): “We are aware of 96 cases in which residents were sentenced to terms of imprisonment in this way.”

Typically, the army or security services will detain someone on “terrorism” charges – which can include e.g. communicating information – and, having beaten a “confession” out of them, arrest more people who were supposedly aware of this activity.

They are then charged under Article 205.6 of the Russian criminal code, which criminalises any failure to inform the authorities of people who “will commit or have committed a crime”.

□ A wider campaign of “filtration”, using a wide range of charges, which the EHRG [reported](#) results in deportation or imprisonment in 90% of cases. “If the person is imprisoned, then he is sent as far as possible away from the occupied territories to complete his sentence.”

□ Discrimination against Ukrainian passport-holders at Sheremetyevo airport near Moscow, the key travel junction from the occupied territories to other destinations. The travellers, mostly elderly people whose families have left the occupied territories, are made to stand in queues for between 15 and 27 hours to have documents checked.

More than half are then refused entry to the airport, despite the fact that they are travelling from territories that are supposedly part of the Russian federation.

□ The imposition of Russian nationality on teenagers, including through [recruitment](#) of 48,000 over-14s to the “Movement of the First”, which effectively compels its members to take a Russian passport. This goes with nationalist indoctrination programmes in schools.

The EHRG has [received](#) confirmation of four deaths this year, and numerous hospitalisations, as a result of the conditions at Sheremetyevo.

The EHRG was [formed](#) in Luhansk in 2014 by labour-movement-affiliated lawyers, in response to the mass of labour rights violations and human rights abuses that accompanied the initial Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine. Since 2022 it has continued to monitor the situation for working people in the occupied areas.

Commenting on the latest de-Ukrainisation measures in the occupied territories, the EHRG denounced Russian nationalist ideologues who claim that Ukraine is becoming “post-Ukraine”. They singled out the writer Sergei Uralov, who works with the far-right TV presenter [Dmitry Puchkov](#), and his book [*The Ukrainian tragedy: the technology of craziness*](#).

Uralov warns in the book that Russian nationalism faces a “struggle for the future”: in “post-Ukraine” it will have to explain the history of the “special military operation”.

Uralov writes:

If the narrative of “occupation” [of Ukrainian territory by Russia] dominates, recidivism will continue. On the territory of post-Ukraine a generation will grow up that have lost their fathers, brothers and granddads. And each one of them will want revenge. [...] The safety of our children and grandchildren depends on how we communicate to people in post-Ukraine, who will eventually become our fully-fledged fellow citizens, why the special military operation was necessary, and what sort of state and society we will build together.

The theme, developed in the book - and fitting closely with the intimidation directed against Ukrainian passport-holders in the occupied territories - is that Ukraine has become post-Ukraine, and its only future must be its subordination to Russia. The EHRG cited Uralov’s book and commented:

The occupiers admit that a new generation will appear in Ukraine that hates Russia. [...] The dictator in the Kremlin and his acolytes are signalling to western politicians and the press that they are supposedly ready for negotiations. But at the same time, within the Russian Federation they are stirring up hatred towards Ukrainians, pumping up the rhetoric [...] that all Ukrainian citizens are the enemy and must be destroyed.

Reports of organised resistance to the Russian occupation were [published last month](#) by Alterpravo (Luhansk regional human rights centre). The Zhovta Strichka movement, active in Dovzhansk, Luhansk, Melitopol, Berdiansk and Perevalsk, posts pro-Ukrainian slogans, writes protests on Russian bank notes and posts videos on line of Russian propaganda materials being burned.

Another [report](#), by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies that works closely with the US military, outlines the stream of assassinations, sabotage, poisonings and other attacks on Russian armed forces, some coordinated by the Ukrainian armed forces and some conducted by volunteer partisan groups. It claims a high level of participation in sabotage activities in Crimea, especially by women.

□ **Sources of information in English about the situation in the occupied territories** include the [Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group](#), the Confederation of Free Trade Unions [twitter feed](#) and the regular reports by Alterpravo (tricky to find on their Ukrainian-language web site, the latest is [here](#)). For other sources, see also People & Nature's [overview of the situation in the occupied areas](#) (February 2024).

□ **PS.** In the last 24 hours western politicians, the new UK prime minister Keir Starmer included, have loudly condemned the Russian bombing of the Ohmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv as a war crime, which it undoubtedly was. By comparison, the politicians' silence on the news from Gaza is deafening: the [publication](#) on Friday by The Lancet of a "conservatively" estimated 186,000 death toll from the conflict; the [bombing](#) on Saturday of a school where displaced people were sheltering, causing at least 16 deaths and 50 injuries; the new [assault](#) on Gaza City yesterday, forcing the evacuation of the Al-Ahli Baptist hospital and leaving civilians nowhere to go. These are all war crimes, too. (Starmer [phoned](#) the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, yesterday, but has made no public mention of these genocidal acts.)

On this blog, I write about Russia and Ukraine because I know more about those countries, about which I have written for decades. There's no hierarchy of suffering here. Shame on these politicians and their disgusting double standards. From Ukraine to Palestine, occupation is a [crime](#). *SP, 9 July 2024*

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P.S.

People and Nature

<https://peopleandnature.wordpress.com/2024/07/09/russian-terror-in-occupied-areas-of-ukraine-homes-confiscated-en-masse/>