

Ігор ЛОССОВСЬКИЙ,
кандидат фізико-математичних наук,
Надзвичайний і Повноважний Посланник першого класу,
заступник Голови Державної служби України
з етнополітики та свободи совісті

ГЕНОЦИД НАЦІОНАЛЬНИХ МЕНШИН РОСІЇ У ВІЙНИ З УКРАЇНОЮ

Анотація. У статті йдеться про геноцид національних меншин у росії під час її війни з Україною. Автор стверджує, що росія проводить приховану «часткову мобілізацію», призиваючи чоловіче населення з віддалених регіонів з високою концентрацією національних меншин. Ця прихована мобілізація, у поєднанні із залученням сирійських найманців, засуджених та приватних військових компаній, має на меті здійснити етнічну сегрегацію та геноцид російських етнічних меншин. У статті представлено докази з різних джерел, включаючи міжнародних експертів, дослідників геноциду та юридичні звіти, які підтверджують, що росія коїть геноцид як проти своїх етнічних меншин, так і проти України. Згадано ордер на арешт, що його видав Міжнародний кримінальний суд (МКС) за ймовірну причетність володимира путіна до викрадення українських дітей, а також резолюція, ухвалена в Парламентській асамблеї Ради Європи (ПАРЄ), у якій депортацію українських дітей росією визнано геноцидом. Крім того, описано військовий призов у росії під час війни з Україною, вказано на те, що призов є менш поширеним в економічно і соціально розвинених містах з більшістю етнічного російського населення. Стаття також проливає світло на втрати, яких зазнали російські військові в Україні, з акцентом на непропорційно великій кількості солдатів з регіонів національних меншин. Автор критикує ліберальних росіян за те, що вони не визнають расизм і ксенофобію у себе вдома, і підкреслює імперську історію та агресивну політику росії. Обговорюється дискримінація, з якою стикаються етнічні та релігійні меншини в окупованому Криму, зокрема, виселення Православної церкви України, знищення культурної спадщини та переслідування Свідків Єгови. Стверджується, що імперська політика росії стикається з опором з боку України та демократичних країн світу, і висвітлено зусилля пригноблених народів у прагненні до свободи і незалежності.

Ключові слова: геноцид, національна меншина, російсько-українська війна, міжнародне гуманітарне право, призов, військова мобілізація, приватна військова компанія.

Ihor LOSSOVSKYI,
*PhD in Physics and Mathematics,
First-Class Minister Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine,
Deputy Head of the State Service of Ukraine
for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience*

GENOCIDE OF RUSSIA'S NATIONAL MINORITIES IN ITS WAR WITH UKRAINE

Abstract. As Russia faces increasing losses of its armed forces in the war with Ukraine, the Kremlin is trying to make up for them in every possible way, even though the Russian dictator is afraid to introduce highly unpopular full-scale conscription openly. Instead, under these circumstances, the country is conducting covert 'partial mobilisation', particularly engaging the male population from remote distressed regions with the compact residence of national minorities and the occupied areas of Georgia and Ukraine, Syrian mercenaries, and tens of thousands of convicts. Conscription is far less common in Russia's major cities, which are both economically and socially developed and primarily inhabited by ethnic Russians. Conversely, it is aimed at wiping out the national minorities coming from remote, disadvantaged regions. Thus, the war covertly serves to carry out ethnic segregation and genocide (effectively, extermination) of Russia's ethnic minorities. Although public information is rather meagre and restricted by the Russian authorities during the war, it reveals that the number of casualties among the poorest national minorities from Russia's remote regions disproportionately exceeds the corresponding toll of ethnic Russians who have met the same fate.

Keywords: genocide, national minority, Russia–Ukraine war, international humanitarian law, conscription, military mobilisation, private military company.

The genocide of Ukrainians

In their legal report, the world's leading experts accuse Russia of committing genocide in Ukraine and having the intention to destroy the Ukrainian people, particularly violating articles of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide [1]. The accusation [2] is underpinned by a long list of evidence, including examples of mass murder, violence, inhumane treatment, and other indications of genocide against Ukrainians.

In fact, the international community has accused Russia of committing atrocities in Ukraine. Canada, Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the USA, and Ukraine have gone further and called it genocide at the parliamentary level. In the middle of July 2022, the European Union and 43 states issued a joint statement [3] supporting Ukraine's intention to condemn Russia under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. There are also dozens of international experts and genocide researchers attesting to Russia's perpetration of genocide in Ukraine.

US Helsinki Commission experts say russia is committing genocide [4] against the Ukrainian people. According to the experts, russia's proven actions in Ukraine meet all five criteria of genocide described in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, whilst meeting even a single criterion already suffices to qualify an act of genocide. Timothy Snyder, the Richard C. Levin Professor of History at Yale University, also provided indisputable evidence of the genocide committed by russia, which, according to the 1948 Convention, implies all five specific types of genocidal crimes, as well as the presence of genocidal intent [5].

Another egregious manifestation of russia's genocidal policy against Ukrainians is the forced deportation [6] of Ukrainian children to russia. According to the russian opposition resource TV Rain, at least 15,000 Ukrainian children have been abducted from the occupied regions of Ukraine and taken to russia. In orphanages and correctional colonies of russia, the authorities intend to erase [7] those children's memory of their past and raise them as impregnable instruments of russia's imperial expansion.

On 17 March 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague issued an arrest warrant for vladimir putin for overseeing the abduction of Ukrainian children – another major step on russia's path towards becoming a pariah state. In granting the ICC Prosecutor's warrant applications, a panel of judges agreed that there were 'reasonable grounds' to believe putin and russia's children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova bore responsibility for the 'unlawful deportation' of Ukrainian children as an act of genocide against the people of Ukraine [8]. On 27 April, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) also adopted a resolution declaring that russia's deportation of Ukrainian children constitutes genocide. The Assembly also recognised putin as a war criminal and approved an amendment implicating Lukashenko in the crime of genocide [9].

One more egregious manifestation of russia's genocidal policy against Ukraine was putin's decree of 27 April 2023, which codifies the conditions for further mass deportation of residents of the occupied territories of Ukraine. According to the American Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 'This decree codifies coercive methods to encourage residents of occupied areas to receive Russian passports and also sets conditions for the deportation of Ukrainians who do not agree to become Russian citizens'. The ISW continues to assess that all efforts to deport Ukrainians to russia may violate the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and constitute a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing [1, 10].

At the time of this writing, the most recent international act condemning the genocidal nature of russia's war against Ukraine was the decision made by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. During the regular session of the Assembly on

22 May 2023 in Luxembourg, it adopted a Declaration recognising the crimes of the Russian Federation against Ukraine as genocide and denouncing the terrorist regime of the aggressor state as ruscism.

All such genocidal actions of Russia towards Ukrainians became a historical continuation of the genocide of the Ukrainian people [11–13] carried out in the early 1930s by the totalitarian predecessor of current Russia's imperial authorities – the Soviet communist power in Moscow.

The genocide of ethnic minorities in Russia

At the same time, Russia's ongoing aggressive war in Ukraine has revealed obvious manifestations of very similar behaviour in Russia itself, where we can see discriminatory attitudes and manifestations of genocide [14, 15] towards Russia's own ethnic minorities residing in the poorest areas in the 'one-seventh of the world's land'. This pertains to the policy and results of the military draft during the intense phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which started on 24 February 2022.

Russia is increasingly losing its military in the war with Ukraine, prompting the Kremlin to compensate for these terrible losses in every possible way, despite the fact that the Russian dictator Vladimir Putin is afraid to conduct an open full-scale military mobilisation. According to British military intelligence, as of the end of May 2022, the Russian army lost one-third of the ground forces it had before the start of the active phase of the war in Ukraine. Official data from the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine indicates that during a year of hostilities in Ukraine, the Russian army's killed in action (KIA) losses approximate the number of manpower of their invasion group from late February 2022, estimated to be around 150,000–180,000 personnel.

In the situation of acute shortage of the so-called cannon fodder for the war, Putin's regime is avoiding full-scale mobilisation, which would be highly unpopular in Russia. Instead, it is conducting partial covert mobilisation [16], targeting the male population from remote and distressed regions with a compact residence of national minorities, notably from Russia's Far East, North Caucasus, Buryatia, Khakassia, Yakutia, as well as the occupied areas of Georgia, Ukrainian Donbas [17] and Crimea [18], Syrian mercenaries, convicted criminal offenders, and representatives of private military companies, including the Wagner PMC, who are actively engaged in the campaign.

Russia is sending the forcibly mobilised Ukrainians from the occupied Donbas – regardless of their age or health condition – to die as 'live bait' on the frontline, feeling no obligation to keep records of KIA Ukrainians and avoiding compensation payments to their families. Not only do the Russians view these men as cannon fodder, but also actively send them to the frontline 'as bait to ascertain the source of fire from the Ukrainian Armed Forces'. The aggressor state coerces men from the occupied territories to fight against their own fellow

citizens and probably die, as they are sent without any training. Russia's use of fake 'republics' in the so-called new territories allows it to get men whose deaths effectively nobody accounts for or even tries to record.

The russians themselves are reluctant to go into open battle, so they continue to collect men from the occupied territories to throw them into hell. The same is true of the methods used to persuade convicted prisoners to fight in Ukraine, with large amounts of money and the waiving of sentences offered to those who survive. Just like the forcibly mobilised Ukrainians from occupied territories, such convicted prisoners are reported [17] to be sent to the worst frontline positions, making them most unlikely to return alive.

Conscription is much less common in russia's large, economically and socially developed cities, where ethnic russians constitute the majority of the population. That is so not only because low-paid representatives of national minorities are more willing to participate in the war as a way to make better money than anywhere in their distressed regions, compared to the population in big industrial centres with the prevailing ethnic russian population. Another apparent reason is the **conscription policy aimed at wiping out the minorities. Thus, the war covertly serves to carry out ethnic segregation and genocide (effectively, extermination) of russia's ethnic minorities.** The number of killed or injured during the war among the poorest national minorities from remote regions of russia disproportionately exceeds the respective share of ethnic russians who met the same fate. What the russian authorities are doing falls under Art. II (c) of the aforementioned Convention ('Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part'). Perhaps, from a purely scientific point of view, this statement may face objections due to insufficient data to support it. However, in the conditions of severe authoritarianism, which has lately turned into totalitarianism in russia, such information is strictly restricted and is not subject to disclosure under the pain of prosecution.

The russian opposition media outlet Mediazona (forced to leave russia and working from abroad) first published a report in mid-April 2022, analysing the available data on the russian military in Ukraine. Using open russian sources, which, however, are far from complete, the journalists found 1,744 reports of russian military casualties – much less than the number the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine officially reported at the time, which exceeded 22,000. The figures provided by Mediazona are also significantly lower than the statistics obtained from independent Western sources, which estimated around 17,000 russian losses at that time. It is emphasised that most of those KIA are servicemen from poor regions. **Dagestan and Buryatia suffered** the greatest losses [19], being among the poorest regions in russia with national minorities of Buryats, Dagestanis, Tuvans, Khakas, and others. Meanwhile, **the reports on soldiers killed in the war listed almost no residents of moscow and Saint Petersburg (where 12% of russia's population reside).**

According to a subsequent report by Mediazona, there were at least 5,801 confirmed deaths in the Russian military from 24 February to 24 August (by that point, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine had recorded 45,700 dead Russian troops). The majority of those KIA came from the so-called ethnic republics, with Dagestan and Buryatia leading the way. In Buryatia, burials of the dead were a nearly daily occurrence.

Most reports about soldier deaths were coming from the poorer regions where the average wage is lower than the Russian median wage. Again, Moscow and Saint Petersburg were almost never mentioned in those reports [20].

By 18 May 2022, Buryatia, second only to Dagestan in the number of Russian troops killed since the start of the Russian invasion, had lost 117 soldiers, according to Mediazona, while Moscow, with a population about 15 times larger than Buryatia, had lost only three. **Measuring by population percentage, the incidence of death at war among the people of Buryatia was the highest in Russia.** If we check the lists [21] **of Russian losses in this war, the prevalence of Muslim names is rather striking**, with soldiers primarily coming from units assembled in Dagestan and other republics of the North Caucasus. Citizens of Russia (or mercenaries) of **Central Asian ethnicities** [22], mostly **Tajiks**, are also dying disproportionately.

This situation is partly caused by poverty. For many young men in Buryatia, Tuva, or Dagestan, signing a contract with the military is one of the few options for a regular income and an attractive career. The Russian army is disproportionately composed of poor, ethnic non-Russians. However, unlike in the US military, which also recruits national minorities for purely voluntary military service, **few representatives of Russian minorities have any illusions regarding their equality, both in the army and beyond**, in an enormous country where the Slavic majority accounts for 80% of the population, **while the deeply-rooted ethnic Russian cultural dominance and racism** [23] remain the norm.

Even the European non-Slavic minorities in Russia, such as the Finno-Ugric Udmurts, Komi, or Erzya [24], complain that their cultures and languages are oppressed or marginalised.

As Russia's losses in Ukraine increase daily and, according to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, amounted to about 210,000 KIA at the end of May 2023 [25], **such ethnic discrimination has become strikingly obvious.** People in remote areas of Russia are increasingly concerned about the prospect of sending their sons and husbands to die in the war waged for the imperial idea of 'Slavic unity'. It is no coincidence that one of the significant anti-war movements in Russia is not one of those led by intimidated Moscow liberals but the national movement ***Buryats Against War***. In Buryatia and other peripheral Russian minority regions, some local activists are trying to oppose the Kremlin's harsh censorship by creating anti-war posters in their native languages (Buryat,

Kalmyk, Chuvash). Since the Russian state machine focuses on ethnic Russians, these slogans pass the radars of federal censors, repressive authorities, and the police almost unnoticed.

Mediazona, a Russian opposition media outlet working with the BBC News Russian Service and a team of volunteers, continues to gather data on the casualties sustained by the Russian military in Ukraine. These numbers do not represent the actual death toll since they can only review publicly available and confirmed reports, including social media posts made by relatives, reports in local media, and statements from local authorities. The actual death toll is much higher, as this information is strictly classified in Russia and rarely appears in public media reports. Besides, a large number of soldiers missing in action or taken prisoners of war remains unknown. However, these overwhelmingly incomplete data show that **most of those KIA come from Dagestan, Buryatia, Sverdlovsk region, and Bashkiria**. An unusually high number of casualty reports from Krasnodar Krai can be attributed to local volunteers' frequent visits to the cemeteries to photograph new graves, thus bringing a greater number of casualties to public awareness. This is how the losses are distributed [20] across the Russian regions.

More and more residents of Buryatia refuse to fight in Ukraine. The servicemen write reports, but they are not considered, and the soldiers are locked up in detention quarters or sent back to the front line. The head of the Free Buryatia Foundation, Aleksandra Garmazhapova [26], spoke about this on the air of the Freedom TV channel in June 2022. She stated that despite the contractual rights for troops to terminate their service, they are coerced into believing otherwise, facing threats of court proceedings, imprisonment, phone confiscation, and officers refusing to acknowledge or consider their reports. Commanders pretend not to see the reports, tagging servicemen as 'prone to lies and betrayal'. All sorts of tricks are used to prevent the Buryat servicemen from going home. Additionally, servicemen from Buryatia refuse to fight in Ukraine not only because of the fear of death but also because they do not want to be invaders and fail to understand why they should 'denazify' Ukraine when they constantly face racism, great power chauvinism, imperialist discrimination, xenophobia and ethnic insults in Moscow. 'Are you sure that Ukraine needs "denazification"? Are you saying that you want to protect the Russian language in Ukraine? Do you remember what happens to the indigenous languages of Russia in Russia? And that it was Vladimir Putin who demoted your language into the category of an elective and optional to study.'

Even liberal Russians belonging to the titular nation either do not believe in or prefer not to acknowledge the high level of domestic racism and xenophobia that exists in Russia. Blinded by their racial privilege, most ethnic Russians, including the liberal intelligentsia, systemic opposition, and other mostly educated people forced to live in exile abroad, fail to realise the unquestionable

fact of russia's centuries-long imperialism and colonialism [27] that russia weaponises against the previously conquered neighbouring peoples.

National minorities in russia regularly suffer from both common and state chauvinism. One of the Buryat activist groups published a photo on social media, demonstrating a slogan on the entrance doors of a restaurant in Irkutsk (Eastern Siberia) demanding to speak only russian. Although Buryats, Tuvans, Dagestanis, and Chechens died by the thousands in the aggressive and senseless war against Ukraine, they continue to be dehumanised in russia, writes the Telegram channel 'Wind Sower'. Representatives of indigenous peoples are even forbidden to communicate in their native language [28]. Nevertheless, they are being sent to die in Ukraine, thousands of kilometres from their homes.

What can russia's disadvantaged national minorities do to avoid becoming the so-called 'cannon fodder' of the empire's expansionist policies? The only thing they can do is remember their ancestral traditions and engage in shamanism. On 26 May, Rossiya-1, the main propaganda channel on russian TV, aired a story from the Ust-Abakan district of Khakassia, where **a large group of local shamans offered a ritual sacrifice** [29], presenting sustenance to the spirits of war, darkness, and fire, urging them to take mercy on Khakassian guys fighting in Ukraine. According to the chief shaman of Khakassia, the ceremony was successful, as the spirits heeded their call, and thus, 'Khakassian boys' should come back home alive. It is not only Khakassian shamans who are using such 'effective' anti-war strategies: the shamans of Buryatia, Tuva, and Yakutia stand right there with them. Notably, the old sorcerers do not ask the spirits to end the war but merely to save their soldiers.

The 300-year imperial history of russia, beginning with Tsar Peter's proclamation of the tsardom of muscovy as the russian empire in 1721, **was a history of its expansion, accompanied by widespread repression, bloody wars, and the genocide of numerous local peoples** who stood in the way of the militant empire. Today, as a descendant and successor of that empire led by dictator putin, russia seeks to continue the aggressive imperial policy of genocide against independent and sovereign Ukraine, the population of occupied territories, and the national minorities living in various regions of the empire. However, modern international law, democratic values, standards, and rules the world follows in the 21st century fundamentally differ from the values and norms of the past. That's why russia's imperial policy of aggression and genocide now faces strong collective resistance from Ukraine and all the democratic nations of the world.

On 17 July 2022, the Free Nations League (FNL), which united representatives of the 'peoples enslaved by the kremlin', addressed US President Joe Biden under Captive Nations Week – an annual series of public events originally aimed at raising public awareness of the problem of 'enslaved peoples'. The Free Nations League is an alliance of the Bashkir, Buryat, Ingrian, Kalmyk, Tatar, Erzya, and

other national movements, openly declaring the goal of creating new nation-states and secession from the Russian Federation.

In their open letter, activists of national movements ask for support for their peoples' exercising their right to self-determination. 'We don't see our peoples' future as part of Russia and don't want to be responsible for the war crimes of the Kremlin,' said representatives of the Finno-Ugric people of Erzya. 'We, the autochthonous peoples living in the Russian Federation, are, in fact, hostages of the Putin regime. We were left with a choice: either fight or go to jail if we don't support Russian aggression.' Tatars, Bashkirs, Buryats, Ingrians, Kalmyks, and Erzyans talk about the goals and objectives of the League: 'Today we are in the same position as Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, or Latvia 40 years ago. We will strive for decolonisation, and in this struggle, we need the support of developed democracies' [30].

Tsakhagiin Elbegdorj, former President of Mongolia (2009–17), called on Buryats and representatives of other national minorities living in Russia to refrain from the war against Ukraine and seek refuge from partial mobilisation in his country. According to him [31], 'From the very beginning of this bloody war, ethnic minorities that live in Russia suffered the most. The Buryats, Tuvans, and Kalmyks have suffered the most. They were used as cannon fodder. Hundreds were injured. Thousands were killed.' He pointed out the following statistics of Russian losses in the war in Ukraine: 'If one soldier dies from the Moscow region, then 625 soldiers die from Buryatia, which amounts to a genocide of Russia's national minorities.' Some data indicate that, at least during the first stage of the war, for every killed Muscovite, there were 87 Dagestanis, 275 Buryats and 350 Tuvans [32, 33].

The policy of genocide carried out by the totalitarian Russian federal government against its own national minorities, which manifests itself more and more prominently in the course of the Russia–Ukraine war, today fuels freedom and independence movements among the enslaved peoples of Russia. In this regard, first of all, we should mention the Government-in-exile of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and activists of other mountain peoples of the Caucasus, who are forced to operate outside their Motherland and engage in active political, diplomatic, and informational efforts worldwide to convey the genuine freedom-loving aspirations of the enslaved peoples of the Caucasus. Recently, several political and information events took place in various countries of the world, during which the prospects for the further disintegration of the Russian empire and the liberation of its enslaved peoples, particularly in the Caucasus region, were discussed [34]. The last such representative event was held in Kyiv on 27 May 2023, involving members of the Government-in-exile of Ichkeria, as well as leaders and activists of public organisations representing the peoples of the Caucasus (Chechens, Ingush, Circassians, Dagestanis, etc.), who are currently dispersed across the world in countries such as Belgium, Canada, France,

The USA, Türkiye, Ukraine, etc. In addition to speeches by representatives of the Caucasian peoples, the Conference featured presentations by scientists, experts, and political figures from Canada, Georgia, Great Britain, Japan, Lithuania, Poland, the USA, and Ukraine [35]. Several similar events with the participation of representatives of the peoples of the Finno-Ugric ethnic group of russia have recently taken place in Helsinki, Tallinn, and the USA.

Discrimination of religious and national minorities in the temporarily occupied Crimea. A similar situation is observed in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by russia, particularly in Crimea, where the russian occupation administration violates the fundamental norms of international humanitarian law.

The disturbing situation regarding ethnic and religious affairs in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) has significantly deteriorated and escalated since the outbreak of russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

The situation with the Crimean Diocese of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) remains tense. Since 2019, the Crimean Diocese has been under permanent risk of eviction from the St Prince Volodymyr and St Princess Olha Cathedral of Sacred Equal Apostles (the main OCU cathedral in Crimea) in Simferopol due to an unlawful decision of the russian occupation administration. Eviction would be equivalent to the total destruction of the religious minority group of the OCU in Crimea. On 28 October 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted Resolution No. 1213 regarding the transfer of this cathedral from the property of the ARC to the state property of Ukraine. It is assumed that the cathedral will be transferred to the free use of the Crimean Diocese of the OCU, and after the liberation of the peninsula, it will return to the property of the OCU. **Russia continues the practice of persecution for alleged 'unlawful missionary activity' among those religious communities that refuse to obey the centralised organisations loyal to or controlled by the occupation administration.**

In 2022, the russian occupation authorities announced their intention to create a recreation area on the territory of the Sauskan Muslim cemetery in the city of Bakhchysarai, which is located near the Khan's palace and is considered one of the oldest Muslim cemeteries in the region. Such a decision caused indignation on the part of representatives of the Crimean Tatar community and posed a threat to the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the Crimean Tatar people on the territory of the peninsula. **Russia continues the arbitrary destruction of the Khan's Palace in Bakhchysarai, the indigenous Crimean Tatar people's most significant architectural heritage site.** The palace is a component of the memorial object 'The historical surroundings of Crimean Khans' capital in Bakhchysarai', which is included in the UNESCO Tentative List. It is well-known that the russian authorities destroyed the Golden Cabinet of Khan Qırım Giray by dismantling the roof and stained-glass windows and turning the

monument into a newly constructed object with elements of historicity. Those construction works are taking place as part of the so-called ‘restoration works’ that began in 2017. In 2021, UNESCO published a report stating that the russian restoration of the Bakhchysarai Palace of the Crimean Khans is distortive.

The russian occupation authorities continue to persecute Jehovah’s Witnesses, banned in russia as an extremist organisation in 2017 without any convincing legal reasons. Since then, followers of this belief, including those residing in occupied Crimea, have been criminally persecuted for their beliefs. In 2022, at least 12 believers of Jehovah’s Witnesses were subjected to searches. In April, the so-called ‘Armiansk City Court’ and ‘Yalta City Court’ started trials for the ‘organisation and financing of extremist activities’ against seven believers of Jehovah’s Witnesses. In February 2022, the so-called ‘Kerch City Court’ sentenced Artem Shablii to two years of conditional imprisonment with a probationary period of three years on the charge of participation in the religious organisation ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’. On 6 October 2022, the so-called ‘Nakhimov District Court of Sevastopol’ sent Yevhen Zhukov, Volodymyr Maladyka, and Volodymyr Saka-da, parishioners of the religious organisation ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’, to the general regime penal colony. All three were sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment, with restriction of movement for a period of one year after completing the sentence and a seven-year ban on mass media and Internet publications.

Residents of the occupied Crimea, particularly individuals belonging to national minorities and indigenous peoples of Ukraine, continue to be drafted into the russian army through military conscription and partial mobilisation. As part of the russian army, they are used in hostilities against Ukraine. It is known that in Crimea, following vladimir putin’s announcement of partial mobilisation in russia, **Crimean Tatar people were given at least 1,500 military summonses. Such actions directly violate the 1949 Geneva Conventions and other norms of international humanitarian law.**

Russian occupation authorities maintain the systematic persecution and oppression of Crimean Tatars. During the first nine months of 2022, the Crimean Tatar Resource Centre recorded 108 detentions (83 of which involved Crimean Tatars), 25 searches (involving 20 Crimean Tatars), 124 interrogations (involving 84 Crimean Tatars), 138 arrests (involving 104 Crimean Tatars), 35 fines (involving 16 Crimean Tatars); 11 individuals were detained on the grounds of their alleged association with Muslim religious organisations, mainly Hizb ut-Tahrir Al Islami. The punishment prescribes up to 20 years in prison while, in most cases, the only ‘evidence’ of alleged terrorist activities is Muslim literature or records of discussions on religious or social topics; 13 persons were detained on the grounds of their alleged association with the ‘Crimean Tatar Noman Çelebicihan Battalion’, which the russian Supreme Court banned and recognised as a ‘terrorist organisation’ on 1 June 2022.

In 2016, the Russian Supreme Court recognised the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people as an extremist organisation, while Russia is obliged to cancel the ban on the activities of the Mejlis and its recognition as an extremist organisation in accordance with the Decision of the UN International Court of Justice dated 19 April 2017. Its leaders, Refat Chubarov and Mustafa Dzhemilev, are prohibited from entering Crimea, and court cases have been initiated against them. Refat Chubarov was convicted in absentia and sentenced to six years in prison and a fine of 200,000 rubles for 'organising mass disturbances' near the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea building in February 2014. On 22 April 2022, the so-called 'Armiansk City Court' announced the verdict in the case against Mustafa Dzhemilev, finding him guilty under Art. 224, Part 1 of Art. 222 and Part 3 of Art. 322 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. On 26 May 2022, the appellate instance of the so-called 'Supreme Court of Crimea' changed the verdict against Mustafa Dzhemilev in absentia, sentencing him to three years of imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 rubles.

All this testifies to the use of various forms of discrimination, racism, chauvinism, and intolerance by the occupying Russian regime towards ethnic and religious minorities living in the temporarily occupied Crimea. At the same time, this is a malicious violation of international humanitarian law that falls under the description of committed war crimes.

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