

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG)



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1. Executive Summary

In 2023 the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG) has formulated a comprehensive and holistic approach to collecting information about international crimes committed by Russians, documenting and analysing these crimes, and helping law enforcement agencies investigate these crimes. It also includes rendering legal, psychological, monetary, humanitarian, social, and medical assistance to victims of these crimes, as well as informing Ukrainian and international society about these crimes.

On the base of this approach, KHPG has developed the following direction of activities.

Documenting international crimes allegedly committed in course of full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. KHPG jointly with over 20 Ukrainian Human Rights NGOs collected information on more than 66 thousand incidents of allegedly committed war crimes and entered it into the database produced by KHPG. In addition, KHPG entered 6568 cases to the second database for strategic litigations.

Promoting accountability of the perpetrators of international crimes. We have provided primary legal aid to 4389 people through KHPG Public Reception Offices (PRO) and 155 one-day field receptions. 2935 crime reports to the Ukrainian law-enforcing bodies in interests of victims of war crimes have been prepared. We have carried out secondary legal assistance within the framework of the activity of the Strategic Litigation Centre (SLC) in 1454 criminal proceedings. 340 applications have been sent to the UN mechanisms on human rights. Furthermore, KHPG lawyers prepared, published and disseminated five submissions to the Prosecutor Office of the International Criminal Court.

Rendering other kinds of assistance to victims of war crimes: psychological, monetary, etc. In 2023 12 psychologists carried out 3769 one-hour sessions in order to render psychological assistance to 1277 victims of war crimes in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Lviv regions. Furthermore, KHPG has developed referral networks in these three regions. In addition, 1420 victims of war crimes received charitable assistance in the amount of UAH 3000 each.

Carrying out awareness raising campaign in Ukraine and others. KHPG has continued to support a site of the Tribunal for Putin (T4P) initiative with seven versions in Ukrainian, Russian, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. The site is functioning since September 2022. KHPG disseminated own and partners' analytical articles with summarising the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide allegedly committed by the Russian military, protests the war in Russia, etc through sites and pages in the social networks. In addition, KHPG has created «Oral histories» – recording, transcribing and distributing in Ukrainian and English interviews both inside and outside of Ukraine from eyewitnesses of the events. Additionally, part of these interviews translated and disseminated in 7 languages.

Advocacy activities with national authorities, as well as with the ICC, UN, EU, CoE, OSCE, institutions based on the above activities. KHPG and its partners have encrised on efforts to organise bilateral and multilateral meetings between themselves, other Ukrainian partners and international stakeholders, in order to report on the results of documentation efforts, share their analysis and legal qualification of the crimes that have been committed, present evidence and argue for the adoption of resolutions, statements, declarations establishing or prolonging accountability mechanisms and enacting countermeasures – sanctions, to deter future violations.

KHPG charitable activities. In 2023 KHPG carried out five charitable programmes for victims of war crimes.

2. The approach of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group to documenting crimes and helping their victims

In 2023 KHPG has formulated a comprehensive and holistic approach to collecting information about international crimes committed by Russians, documenting and analysing these crimes, and helping law enforcement agencies investigate these crimes. It also includes rendering legal, psychological, monetary, humanitarian, social, and medical assistance to victims of these crimes, as well as informing Ukrainian and international society about these crimes.

The collected information is entered into the database, whereby the event location is recorded (geodata or addresses of the crime), the date of the event, the type and description of the event, the object of the attack, and preliminary qualification of the crime under the Rome Statute of the ICC. Additionally, we enter the personal data of the victims, witnesses, and perpetrators, if they are known, and evidence of the crime in the form of media files (photos, videos), text documents, etc. Many organizations collect this information, including members of the “Tribunal for Putin” initiative. These NGOs cover the entire territory of the country. Today, the database contains approximately sixty thousand incidents of crimes committed by Russians. Based on our research and collected information, we preliminary classified these atrocities as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Sources of information for the database are open information on the Internet and direct contact with victims and witnesses. Direct contacts make it possible to collect information and file a report about the crime to law enforcement agencies to investigate it. Therefore, it is essential to find victims of a crime and interview them to populate the database, open an investigation, and provide the victim with the necessary assistance.

In addition to the work of the KHPG reception desk, an important tool of such search is monitoring visits to settlements in the de-occupied territory, during which KHPG lawyers interview the victims and find out what types of assistance they need. In advance, the local self-government body announces the date and time of reception, and its social protection department employees call the victims and invite them to a meeting. The monitoring team includes two lawyers who receive people in parallel and a psychologist who provides rapid psychological assistance. At the same time, the fourth team member makes photo and video recordings of the destruction in the settlement for the database. Our team visits the same settlement as many times as necessary to interview all the victims living there.

In 2023 KHPG made 155 such monitoring visits.

Following the priorities of the Office of the Prosecutor General, the KHPG lawyers prepared statements of crimes for national law enforcement agencies regarding:

- dead and wounded civilians;
- illegally deprived of liberty and missing civilians; and
- prisoners of war and civilian prisoners, subjected to torture in captivity and then released.

KHPG lawyers help the police and the State Security Service of Ukraine conduct investigative actions. Such assistance includes questioning victims and witnesses, organizing forensic medical examinations, identifying corpses, identifying suspects, etc. In particular, our lawyers identified nine perpetrators among Russian prisoners of war.

We offer victims of crimes comprehensive help. It includes humanitarian assistance (provision of one-time cash support, clothing, medicines, and household items), legal assistance (provision of legal advice, reimbursement of attorney services for representation in national bodies of Ukraine and Russia, international bodies, such as the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, the International Criminal Court), and psychological aid (payment for long-term and short-term psychotherapeutic consultations).

Collected information about crimes is summarized as analytical articles and submissions to the Prosecutor’s Office of the International Criminal Court. In 2023 we have already submitted six such submissions (more detailed information see in the section 4).

However, it is not enough to transfer this information only to specialists and those investigating crimes, both in our country and abroad. We must reach the mass consumer of information not only in Ukraine but also in other countries. That’s why we created a special war crimes site in seven languages: Ukrainian, Russian, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

We also have the “Voices of War” project. We interview victims and witnesses of war crimes and other people who have something to say about the war — soldiers, volunteers, psychologists, journalists, artists, and musicians. We already collected about three hundred of these interviews on our website and our YouTube channel. They are informative, tell a lot about what is happening in our country, and show the level of mutual assistance and solidarity between Ukrainians. They also demonstrate what kind of terror

the Russian military instills in the occupied territories and how brutally they treat peaceful citizens. We translate the best interviews into other languages. Voices of war are now heard in nine languages.

Also, we are probably the only organization in Ukraine that regularly publishes information about Russian protests against the war in Ukraine. We have published a weekly digest of such protests since mid-March 2022.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that the individual components of our approach are very closely related to each other and support each other. We are interested in extending this approach to all ten Ukrainian regions where fighting occurred.

3. Documenting international crimes allegedly committed in course of full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war

In 2023 KHPG jointly with over 20 Ukrainian Human Rights NGOs collected information on more than 66 thousand incidents of allegedly committed war crimes and entered it into the database produced by KHPG. In addition, KHPG entered 6568 cases to the second database for strategic litigations.

Let's consider the development of the database and actions aimed at improving data security.

Until 24 February 2022 the database was a simple structure MySQL database, located on an internal server in the office of the KHPG, and designed to convert the data from spreadsheets to this database, and edit and add data manually using a simple web interface. Developed by KHPG software allowed to check the correctness of writing home addresses, find and specify repetitions of the same episodes and protect personal data by automatically encoding and storing them in the database in encrypted form. The personal data were reversibly encrypted (AES_ENCRYPT), using a key that could be changed at any time. In this database KHPG kept data on over 16800 civil victims of the first period of the war and on over 22 thousand destroyed civil objects during the period 2014-2018. The database also allowed the output of statistical reports on predetermined requests. The software provides a selection of episodes for a given period of time, location and type of events, both individually and in combination of any set of these features and allows you to generate reports showing summary information in tabular form (distribution of episodes over time) location, type of loss and type of event) and graphically – on maps based on Google Maps.

After 24 February 2022 the task was to bring the database to an external server to provide remote access to work with many documenters. For this purpose, we created a user authorization module with different access rights (guest, documenter, editor, lawyer, administrator, with and without the ability to view personal data). And the database itself was placed on the MIROHOST server (Ukrainian company) and the backup, now working as an online copy of the database on the server IONOS (German company). Servers of both companies are physically located in Europe. In case of problems on the main server, you can quickly switch to work with the database on the spare server, where data is synchronized with the main server daily. The choice of Ukrainian hosting as the main one is due to the convenience / speed of interaction with the database of documenters in Ukraine.

At the first stage of operation of the database, factors limiting its use for work in new conditions and solving new tasks were identified, so in the future and up to now, both the structure of the database data itself and the web interface for working with this database are constantly being improved and developed in accordance with the emerging tasks of documenting war crimes. In other words, the base in its development adjusts to the limited possibilities of documenting crimes in wartime, the increased threat to data security, and, given the need for different classification and statistical processing of entered data at any given time. In this connection, the following stages of work followed.

Access to the folder where media files and documents (in the form of binary files) related to the "testimonies" section are stored has been closed. I.e., you can view or download files only after logging into the database and entering the encryption key of personal data.

Access to the media files and documents (binary files) located in the "Case" section of each episode is completely prohibited to anyone except the lawyer handling the case.

The "hard binding" of data types to database tables was changed. Instead, it is possible to expand the categories entered the database without changing the structure of the database, but only by changing the configuration parameters, i.e., introduced the use of a simple "category builder" for the input data.

A module was created to automatically record all changes in the records entered by data documenters. The history of changes cannot be changed through the database interface, and they are stored in the database in encrypted form. I.e., the storage is carried out on the principle of "black box".

The module of automatic fixation of views of individual episodes and personalities was created, if they were not viewed by the documenter who created the records or by the lawyer conducting the TIP. Storage of viewing history - according to the "black box" principle.

The mechanism of two-factor authorization, which implies after the usual login with a username, password and encryption code of personal data - followed by the subsequent entering of an additional code sent to the e-mail address of the user.

A module for logging all login attempts with failed authorization has been added, and when a certain limit of "authorization errors" is reached, the ability to continue such attempts is closed for the IP address of that user. In addition, the time intervals between authorization attempts have been increased. Unblocking the IP address through the database system administrator.

In order to enhance data security and integrity, the software modules of the database interface are periodically analysed, and obsolete or outdated modules are removed from the database, and inactive users are periodically deleted and/or user passwords are changed.

Almost all technical recommendations from Digital Security Lab to protect the base from potential hacker attacks have been implemented.

4. Promoting accountability of the perpetrators of international crimes

This activity supposes identification of victims of international crimes, initiation of investigation and prosecution of these crimes in Ukraine and in cooperation with international, such as UN Committee on Human Rights (UNCHR), UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and Arbitrary Detentions (UNWGED) as well as International Criminal Court (ICC). KHPG realised it through direct communication with victims and witnesses of the international crimes and various assistance to victims: legal, psychological, social, charitable and other.

Communications were carried out by electronic appeals to the KHPG on the website, pages on social networks and appeals at the reception at the KHPG offices in Kharkiv and Kyiv and at field receptions in settlements on the de-occupation territory during 155 one-day monitoring visits to Kharkiv, Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions. A total of 4385 people applied, all of them received primary legal aid in the form of consultations. Many who applied received other forms of assistance.

In 2023 KHPG lawyers presented interests of victims in the 1454 criminal proceedings. See more detailed information in the following table:

Victims	January -June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023	Total 2023
Missed persons	116	25	28	15	18	47	43	283
Victims of torture	57	46	12	15	12	16	16	177
Dead civilians	246	25	3	38	42	70	48	472
Wounded civilians	231	28	9	54	70	73	57	522
Those who lost property	1283	168	169	249	381	349	316	2915
Total for months	1933	292	221	371	523	555	480	4369

Also, KHPG lawyers prepared and sent 122 individual complaints to the UNCHR and 218 complaints to the UNWGED. All complaints were approved. We look forward to a consideration of these cases and relevant actions of the UN bodies.

In the second half of 2023, KHPG experts prepared, published in Ukrainian and English and disseminated five submissions to the Office of the ICC Prosecutor:

- on the genocide in Mariupol <https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1693155689>;
- on indiscriminate and other shelling of civilian objects <https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1692727617>;
- on "imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law" (in Kharkiv region) <https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1696425214>;
- on extrajudicial killings <https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1696424010>;
- on forcibly transferring children of the group to another group <https://library.khpg.org/index.php?id=1702047873>.

These submissions have been sent to the Office of the ICC Prosecutor.

5. Rendering other kinds of assistance to victims of war crimes: psychological, medical, etc.

Since 1 January 2023 KHPG opened centres for psychological assistance for victims of war in Kyiv and Lviv regions. Such centre was opened in Kharkiv since 1 October 2022. In total, 12 psychologists rendered psychological assistance. They counselled by three supervisors, experienced psychologists twice a month. 12 psychologists carried out 3769 one-hour sessions in order to render psychological assistance to 1277 victims of war crimes in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Lviv regions. Some of them took part in monitoring visits and rendered urgent psychological assistance.

Furthermore, KHPG has developed referral networks in these three regions. Please, see more detailed information here: <https://khpg.org/en/1608813274>.

6. Carrying out awareness raising campaign in Ukraine and other countries

Please, see KHPG's Annual Media Report 2023: <https://khpg.org/en/1608813620>

7. Advocacy activities with national authorities, as well as with the ICC, UN, EU, CoE, OSCE, institutions on the basis of the above activities

KHPG and its partners have encrised on efforts to organise bilateral and multilateral meetings between themselves, other Ukrainian partners and international stakeholders, in order to report on the results of documentation efforts, share their analysis and legal qualification of the crimes that have been committed, present evidence and argue for the adoption of resolutions, statements, declarations establishing or prolonging accountability mechanisms and enacting countermeasures – sanctions, to deter future violations.

Information on advocacy meeting within the T4P initiative is given in the following table:



Date	Place	Event	Link to the event/Photo
24-25 April 2023	Hofburg, Vienna, Austria	OSCE Conference “Torture and Other Grave Breaches of International Humanitarian Law and Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law: Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting II”	https://www.osce.org/odihr/shdm_2_2023 https://khpg.org/1608812190
8 June 2023	Stockholm, Sweden	Meeting with the Swedish NGO “Ostgruppen”	Please, see photo above
8 June	Stockholm, Sweden	Attended meeting of Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the CSOs Presentation on the work of KHPG related to war crimes documenting	
9 June 2023	Stockholm, Sweden	Attended meeting of SIDA with the CSOs Presentation on the work of KHPG related to war crimes documenting	
19-23 June 2023	ICC, The Hague, The Netherlands	“ICC-NGOs Roundtables 2023” organized by the CICC	https://khpg.org/1608812465
2-13 October 2023	Sofitel Victoria Warsaw Królewska St. 11, 00- 065, Warsaw, Poland	OSCE Conference “Warsaw Human Dimension Conference” organized by the 2023 OSCE Chairpersonship of North Macedonia, with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)	https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/2023whdc https://ccl.org.ua/news/czentrum-gromadyanskyh-svobod-vzyav-uchast-u-varshavskij-konferencziyi-z-lyudskogo-vymiru-obgovoryly-filtracziyu-prymusove-pereseleण्या/
9 October 2023	Strasbourg, PACE	Ceremony of awarding Vaclav Havel Prize -2023 Advocacy Meetings	
10 October 2023	Prague	International conference devoted to Vaclav Havel Prize -2023	

7 November	REDRESS, On-line	NGO pre-meeting of the EU Genocide Network Presentation on the work of KHPG related to war crimes documenting and submitting communications to the ICC	
9 November	Eurojust, On-line	4th Ad hoc Genocide Network meeting on the war in Ukraine Presentation on the work of KHPG related to war crimes documenting and submitting communications to the ICC	https://justice.org.uk/events/justice-ukraine-series-future-war-crime-trials/ Video recording here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQYuUqi66tg
30 November	Edinburgh University, Edinburgh, Scotland	JUSTICE Scotland's Future War Crime Event Presentation on the work of KHPG related to war crimes documenting	
14 December	Warsaw University	International conference devoted to 75 Anniversary of the Convention on Genocide	

In 2023, the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group or its members were mentioned 543 times in various international and Ukrainian media outlets, according to KHPG's communication registry.

<i>Source</i>	<i>Mentions (2023)</i>
Website / Newspaper	492
TV / Radio	30
Social Media	18
Other	3

<i>Language</i>	<i>Mentions</i>
Ukrainian	314
English	91
German	34
Russian	31
Czech	26
Polska	20
French	20
Italian	7

Spanish	1
Danish	1

8. KHPG charitable activities

The war forced us to become actively engaged in charity work: it directly affected hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people. And so, we had to do as much as we could to help them.

In 2023 KHPG has five charity and humanitarian aid programmes. The assistance is provided through the Human and Law Charitable Foundation.

1. Assistance to families in difficult life circumstances and Ukrainian Armed Forces

236 individuals and 15 legal entities received cash or in-kind assistance.

2. Assistance to convicts serving their sentences in detention facilities

It is well known that the conditions in Ukrainian penitentiary institutions were poor, mainly due to chronic underfunding. After the outbreak of full-scale war, these problems became even more acute. Our programme was launched on July 1, 2022, with the support of the Danish Institute Against Torture DIGNITY (Copenhagen). In 2023 KHPG continued this programme.

During the year, 1000 packages of food and other items worth UAH 750 each were handed over to convicts who did not have any outside support.

Also, we paid for the services of the State Migration Service to produce passports for 400 convicts who lost them during the investigation (UAH 484 per passport).

3. Participation in the Let's Help Ukraine Stay Warm Through the Winter program

This program was launched by the Polish charitable foundation WOT in November 2022. It aims to purchase and transport the necessary items for heating and electricity generation to Ukraine. Funds for this program are being raised at lightning speed by Russian political migrants everywhere. As of November 1, 2023, 168,689 zł, €274,021, \$82,249, £35,400 have been collected. For more information about the program, see its website <https://wfu.world/>. KHPG became the operator of the program in Kharkiv and the Kharkiv region. We have set up a warehouse in part of our office premises and have already received ten truckloads of the items purchased under our order: generators, fold-up cots, gas stoves, sleeping bags, and stoves. Most of these items have already been delivered to the towns and villages of the region. During the year, more than 2500 families received such kind of assistance.

4. Charitable assistance to families in difficult circumstances

Another project supported by the Danish Institute Against Torture DIGNITY, among other things, involves the distribution of monetary aid of UAH 3000 to a thousand families. In 2023 1020 families have already received such aid.

Only civilians who have been victims of war crimes and human rights violations can receive this aid, namely:

- survivors of torture and ill-treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence;
- relatives of the perished persons (parents, children, grandparents, spouses, siblings);
- persons who suffered due to hostilities;
- relatives of missing persons if their disappearance was related to the military conflict;
- relatives of prisoners of war or civilians detained by Russians who have not been released;
- persons released from captivity;
- owners of buildings that are more than 75 percent destroyed (the fourth degree of destruction).

The groups on this list are arranged in order of priority. The highest priority is given to victims of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment, and relatives of persons killed in the military conflict or wounded in the fighting. Among this group, assistance is provided primarily to people with disabilities and serious illnesses, parents and guardians of three or more children, and lonely older adults.

5. Charitable assistance to families with a perished civilian member

This program started in February 2023. The program funds amount to SEK 1,666,666, half of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the International Memorial. According to the decision of the Board of the International Memorial, this sum will be transferred to KHPG to help the civilian population affected by the war. In 2023 KHPG transferred 3000 UAH to 400 families with a perished civilian member.

9. Financial data

In 2023, KHPG turnover amounted to 53 303 272 UAH. It should be noted that 271 700,17 Euro (appr. 10 868 007 UAH) was directed to FIDH, partner of KHPG in the project, supported EC.

Grants fulfilling by KHPG in 2023 are given in the following table.

Donors	Name of the project, project date	Project amount
European Council	Documenting international crimes committed by the Russia's armed forces following the re-invasion of Ukraine, 18/03/2022 – 17/09/2024	€ 720,000
People in Need	Legal aid for victims of the Russian occupiers and collection of evidence of their crimes, 04/03/2022 – 03/03/2023	€ 50,000
U.S. Embassy	Collect data on the war crimes by Russian army in Ukraine and to prepare several submissions to ICC, 08/07/2022 – 07/07/2023	\$35,000
Centre Dignity (Denmark)	Reducing suffering of detainees in the context of war in Ukraine, 01/07/2022 – 31/12/2023	2 852 200 UAH
Subgrant USAID through Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union	Documentation of international crimes committed in Ukraine by the Russian military from February 24, 2022, 1/11/2022 – 30/10/2023. Extended: 1.12.23 – 31.05.2024	\$200,000 \$160,000
Centre Dignity (Denmark)	Pursuing justice for international crimes in Ukraine, 01/10/2022 – 30/09/2025	21 321 600 UAH
Open Archive	Institutional Support	\$10,000
PANORAMA GLOBAL	Institutional Support	\$70,000
Centre Dignity (Denmark)	Civil Society promote resilience in Ukraine, 01/01/2023 – 30/04/2026	10 180 600 UAH
Prague Civil Society Centre	Voices of War, 01/01/2023 — 29/02/2024	€ 70,000
People in Need	Documenting crimes committed by Russians since February 24, 2022, helping victims of these crimes and informing about crimes in Ukraine and abroad, 01/01/2023 — 31/10/2024	€ 99,960