Ukrainian Healthcare Center, Physicians for Human Rights,
eyeWitness to Atrocities, and Insecurity Insight

ATTACKS ON HOSPITALS AND HEALTHCARE IN UKRAINE

Joint Submission to the
United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine

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Introduction

Since Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the World Health Organization has already recorded more than 500 attacks on health care, affecting facilities, personnel, transport vehicles, and leading to over 200 deaths. (1) (2) The Ukrainian Healthcare Center (UHC), a health policy think tank based in Kyiv, Ukraine, further reports that within the first three weeks of the invasion—between March 1 and March 21—assaults on the country's healthcare system were particularly intense: during this period, five to six healthcare facilities were attacked daily. (3) The widespread and systematic nature of attacks on healthcare infrastructure is a pattern of Russian warfare in Ukraine and beyond. From Chechnya (4) to Syria (5), the targeting of healthcare professionals and facilities has been a characteristic feature of both conflicts, with little to no accountability to date.

Our four independent, non-governmental organizations express deep, shared concern over the ongoing attacks on hospitals and healthcare perpetrated by Russian forces in Ukraine. **We urge the Commission to ensure that these attacks — which are gross violations of human rights law as well as international humanitarian law — are included in its ongoing investigations and recommendations.**

In response to the Commission's call for submissions, we share that the following incidents are those we are currently aware of that provide a reasonable basis to believe that serious violations have occurred.

Methodology and Sources

This submission relies on information gathered from a variety of sources, including open-source materials, site visits conducted by the UHC, local witness statements, remote interviews with Ukrainian civil society colleagues, and photo and video footage collected by the UHC with the "eyeWitness to Atrocities" app. (6) The app is a software for Android smartphones that captures reliable photographs, videos, and audio recordings. It records date, time, and location metadata that helps verify the authenticity of the footage, while maintaining the chain of custody once securely uploaded onto the eyeWitness to Atrocities server. Annex I, attached, provides a list of the footage and its associated metadata, along with a brief description of the footage, captured by the UHC in relation to four of the incidents reported in this submission: Chernihiv Regional

Children's Hospital, Kyinka Primary Care Center (old), Kyinka Primary Care Center (new), and Trostyanets City Hospital.

Each of the reported incidents is elaborated in the UHC's new report, "Massive, Brutal, Deliberate: Attacks on Hospitals in the Russia-Ukraine War during the First Phase of the Invasion," which offers further documentation and analysis of these and other attacks on hospitals and health care clinics. (7) Individual incidents can also be viewed on Insecurity Insight's interactive map on attacks on healthcare Health Map | Insecurity Insights. (8) These incidents respond to the Commission's current geographic and temporal focus (Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy regions in late February and March), but attacks on healthcare are ongoing across the country and merit continuous scrutiny.

Attacks on Hospitals and Clinics: Late February-March 2022

1. *Kyiv*

Makariv Primary Care Clinic was located in the north-western part of Makariv, an urban-type settlement 30 kilometers west of Kyiv. The Clinic was razed after being attacked on March 28, following Russian troops' advancement from the north, reportedly with mortar fire. (9) The facility was entirely destroyed in the attack, while nearby buildings had windows broken and showed traces of artillery shooting and gunfire. No other facilities except for a few residential buildings were located nearby. Most of the Clinic's personnel were evacuated at the time of the attack, except for several staff members. A UHC site visit to the area revealed traces of mortar fire. The character of the destruction in the facility vis-a-vis those of the nearby area suggests that the attack was a standalone, targeted effort.

The Adonis Medical Center was another facility located in Makariv that was also totally destroyed. Located close to the city center, it was near residential buildings and shops, the Makariv City Council, and the bridge over the Zdvyzh River (which has a critical role in connecting Makariv to the western part of Kyiv). Only several hospital building walls remain, and the territory around the facility is devastated. Although the exact type of weapons that destroyed the facility is unknown, the pattern of the attack(s) on the Adonis hospital and the surrounding area suggests that they were damaged in a series of airstrikes, part of a series of broad indiscriminate attacks perpetrated from the north, where Russian forces were then located. (10)

The Regional Mental Care Center in Vorzel, an urban-type settlement located 30 kilometers northwest of Kyiv, was occupied by Russian forces for 35 days and reportedly suffered from indiscriminate shelling. The facility is located outside the official town border, in an isolated area surrounded by forest but its buildings were damaged by the explosions nearby, its windows, doors, and walls blown out. (11) Later, as Russian troops retreated from the town, they planted it with mines, looted the medical equipment, drugs, and medical devices, and damaged all of the nine service cars parked on the territory of the facility – two of them being ambulances used to carry patients. According to the hospital director, the Ukrainian military was never deployed or operated in or around the Center.

2. *Chernihiv*

Chernihiv Regional Children's Hospital, located in the city center of Chernihiv, was shelled by Russian forces on March 17. Cluster munitions appear to have been used, launched presumably from the Uragan MLRS. Fourteen civilians were killed and another 21 injured as a result of the attack. (12) According to hospital representatives, no military objects were located nearby. The UHC captured footage of the Chernihiv Regional Children's Hospital (see Pic. 1).

Pic. 1. Regional Children's Hospital, attack on March 17. Possible traces of cluster munition on the hospital's building. Captured by UHC with the eyeWitness to Atrocities app. Item ID 127803. See Annex I.

Kyinka Primary Care Centers were located on the southwest outskirts of Chernihiv, which was encircled and damaged during attacks on the village. Kyinka is located on the southwest outskirts of Chernihiv and is connected by two important road arteries to Kyiv. Kyinka had two primary care facilities—an older care point and a newer site built in 2020—and was shelled multiple times during the Chernihiv siege. The UHC captured footage of the sites (see Pic. 2). Various types of munitions appear to have been used: the remains of cluster munitions were found on both sites, allegedly the 9M27K munitions launched by either BM-27 Uragan or BM-30 Smerch MLRS. The nature of the damage sustained suggests that the shellings were random and not linked to specific recognizable military targets and involved the frequent use of cluster bombs. As of July 2022, neither of the primary care centers is operational.

Pic. 2. The case from a cluster munition in the yard of a residential house near the Kyinka old primary care center. Date of attack - February 28 (12.00 and 20.00) or March 6. Alleged perpetrators - Russian forces. Captured by UHC with the eyeWitness to Atrocities app. Item ID 127840. See Annex I.

3. Kharkiv

Izyum Central City Hospital, located about 120 kilometers southeast of Kharkiv, is located in a residential area with several medical facilities, a church, a medical college, and residential buildings. It was first damaged on March 3, when the city was bombed, and eight civilians, including two children, were killed in the attack. While not a direct attack on the facility, the blast blew out most windows of the hospital's buildings. On March 6, the facility was attacked as a part of what appears to have been a large-scale carpet-bombing campaign. Local government officials claimed that Russian forces attacked the city using missiles, artillery, and mortars; there were also attacks from the air. The shelling was brutal and chaotic and led to the massive destruction of civilian infrastructure. Deputy Mayor Volodymyr Matsokin later confirmed that, "Almost 80 percent of residential buildings in the city of Izyum have been destroyed." (13) The UHC further reports that the hospital team had also marked the hospital with a big red cross that could be seen from the air. As a result of the bombings, all the hospital premises were damaged. The admission department was destroyed; the anesthesiology department and intensive care unit were also heavily damaged. The elevator fell into the basement, and ceilings and walls on some floors collapsed. The facility was still operational at the time of the attack, with patients receiving care.
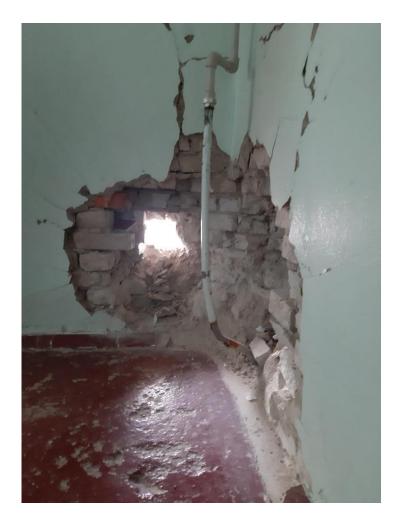
4. Sumy

Trostyanets City Hospital is located in Trostyanets, a town in the Sumy Oblast close to the Russia-Ukraine border. During the period of Russia's occupation of Trostyanets (from March 1

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until March 26), the town was attacked persistently. Mr. Zhyvytskyi, the head of the Sumy regional state administration, first reported an attack on the hospital on March 18: the destruction was severe, but no one was injured or killed. (14) According to UHC's research, at least three witnesses stated that it was a targeted attack. Continuous shelling on March 20, 23, and 25 was further confirmed by UHC during an interview with the hospital medical director Anna Shvetsova, who had been at the hospital all the time. Apart from shelling, Russian forces stole the hospital's only ambulance available to go on calls and other vehicles were damaged as a result of numerous attacks. This made the medical personnel unable to deliver care outside the facility. On March 25, a video was published that captured Russian tanks attacking the facility. (15) After the city was liberated, graphic evidence appears to show that it was Russian tanks attacking the hospital building. (16) This information was later confirmed by witnesses that the UHC team interviewed during its site visit. In May, the State Bureau of Investigation in Ukraine identified Russian servicemen who allegedly fired at the facility from tanks. The UHC captured footage revealing extensive damage to the Trostyanets City Hospital (17) (See Pic.3, Pic. 4).

Pic. 3. Damage to exterior of the Trostyanets City Hospital. Captured by UHC with the eyeWitness to Atrocities app. Item ID 133743. See Annex I.

Pic. 4. Damage to the Trostyanets City Hospital after the first attack on March 18, 2022. Captured by UHC with the eyeWitness to Atrocities app. Item ID 133765. See Annex I.

<u>Gender Dimension</u>

The gendered impact of attacks on health facilities is relatively underexplored and should also be a concern for the Commission. The physical destruction of medical establishments, in addition to being a violation of the laws of war, reduces community members' access to care. Moreover, when hospitals and medical facilities are known to be targets of attack, patients may not seek necessary care or choose to minimize the time spent in hospitals, subjecting themselves to greater risk of health complications. Women and girls, particularly, can face a lack of gynecological and reproductive medical care when health choices are increasingly driven by scarcity and conflict. Furthermore, attacks on health can prevent survivors of sexual or gender-based violence from coming forward and seeking necessary care. A lack of access to care, combined with other diminished social supports and fear or reprisals or stigma, can lead to other forms of interrelated violence in the long term, including the inability to access needed reproductive care, forced pregnancy, mental health issues, and barriers to preventative care and specialized services for women and girls.

Conclusion

The evident pattern of violence against healthcare will continue to have severe negative implications for the safety, health and rights of Ukrainians for many years. We urge the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine to investigate these violations and ensure that attacks on hospitals and healthcare facilities comprise an important part of the Commission's analysis into the events committed in the forementioned regions of Ukraine between late February and March 2022.

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Footnotes
1. Word Health Organization Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA), for the period of 24 February – 20 September 2022.
2. "500 Reported Attacks on Health Care in Ukraine a "Colossal Tragedy that Calls for Accountability"," Physicians for Human Rights, September 2, 2022.
3. "Massive, Brutal, Deliberate: Attacks on Hospitals in the Russia-Ukraine War during the First Phase of the Invasion," Ukrainian Healthcare Center, September 2022.
4. "Endless Brutality: War Crimes in Chechnya", Physicians for Human Rights, May 2001.
5. "Findings of Attacks on Health Care in Syria", Physicians for Human Rights, Findings as of March 2022 (verification ongoing).
6. See https://www.eyewitness.global/ for more information about the app.
7. "Massive, Brutal, Deliberate: Attacks on Hospitals in the Russia-Ukraine War during the First Phase of the Invasion," Ukrainian Healthcare Center, September 2022.
8. "Attacked and Threatened: Health Care at Risk. Interactive Map," Insecurity Insight.
9. "Invaders destroyed more than 200 houses in Makariv," Ukrinform, April 15, 2022.
10. "Significant destruction seen in Makariv, a Ukrainian village 30 miles west of Kyiv," CNN, March 12, 2022.
11. "Eight hectares of sorrow: what happened to Vorzel's psychiatric hospital during Russian occupation," Rubryka, May 18, 2022.
12. "Ukraine: Russian Strikes Killed Scores of Civilians in Chernihiv," Human Rights Watch, June 10, 2022.
13. "Izyum city government: Izyum 80% destroyed," Ukrayinska Pravda, April 3, 2022.
14. Dmytro Zhyvytskyi, Sumy regional state administration. Telegram, March 19, 2022, https://t.me/Zhyvytskyy/1260
15. Yuriy Mysiahin, Telegram, March 25, 2022, https://t.me/mysiagin/3848
16. "Trostyanets. 30 days of hell." YouTube, uploaded by War diary. Sumyshchyna UA, April 5, 2022, https://youtu.be/KanxVlnd6Kw
17. "The SBI identified Russian service members who, with tanks, were firing at a hospital in Trostyanets," State Bureau of Investigation of Ukraine, May 25, 2022.