
ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES UKRAINIAN LEGAL ADVISORY GROUP

2024

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ABOUT US

Ukrainian Legal Advisory Group (ULAG) is a Ukrainian organisation specialising in international humanitarian and criminal law (IHL and ICL). We focus on justice in context of armed conflict, including the war in Ukraine.

Since 2018, we have been researching the legal aspects of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine since 2014 and its consequences through the prism of national and international courts.

Strengthening of the justice system at the domestic and international level

Nº1

Needs Assessment

Nº2

ICC

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The Dialogue Group

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Advocacy

The Needs Assessment of the Ukrainian Legal System is a unique exercise that analyses the key challenges in ensuring justice for the grave crimes. The document is intended to facilitate a strategic dialogue on building an effective justice architecture in Ukraine.

In the summer of 2024, the report was first presented in The Hague during a closed event supported by Amnesty International, which brought together key international partners to discuss its findings and recommendations. Later in September, it was presented in Kyiv at an event attended by representatives of the justice system, civil society, diplomats and international experts. The report is a living tool that will be updated every six months to reflect new challenges and needs.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF UKRAINE'S JUSTICE SYSTEM:

Delivering Meaningful Justice to
the Victims and Survivors of the
Armed Conflict



ULAG

UKRAINIAN
LEGAL
ADVISORY
GROUP

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This report reflects:

- Our five years of experience in representing victims' interests;
- communication with representatives of the justice system;
- legal analysis of national and international law, practice and standards;
- monitoring and analysis of current initiatives in the domestic and international justice systems;
- national surveys and in-depth interviews with various groups;
- opinions of Ukrainian and foreign experts;
- and other sources and tools used in the preparation of the report.



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ULAG supported the ratification and implementation of the Rome Statute by working with government officials and international partners.

As part of this work, the organisation participated in consultations, legislative analysis and discussions on key challenges and prospects for reforming the justice system in Ukraine in line with international standards.

We also joined the annual ICC-NGO Roundtables, which brought together representatives of the International Criminal Court and civil society to discuss investigations, victims' rights and challenges related to conflict-related grave crimes. Among other things, ULAG representatives raised the threat of sanctions, cybersecurity, the ICC's engagement with civil society, and the Court's work in Ukraine.

Our advocacy efforts resulted in this year's first ever meeting of the ICC prosecutor with Ukrainian civil society in Ukraine and facilitated the ICC's Registrar and director of Trust Fund visit to Kyiv



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In December, the ULAG team participated in the 23rd Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute (ASP 23) in The Hague. We delivered a statement on behalf of the Coalition for the ICC calling for the unconditional execution of arrest warrants and respect for the rule of law.

Within the framework of the Assembly, we co-organised two side events: 'Navigating the Politics of Justice at the ICC' and "Designing an Accountability Mechanism for Ukraine as a Key Step in Effective Capacity Building and Delivering Meaningful Justice for the Victims".

We also spoke at several other side events, where among other things, we addressed key issues such as the implementation of the Rome Statute in Ukraine, the need for a hybrid mechanism for justice and victim support. The discussions demonstrated the importance of active participation of Ukraine and civil society in strengthening international justice. This trip was a significant contribution to our advocacy work in support of the ICC. Read more [here](#).



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The Dialogue Group, established after the Ukraine Accountability Conference in July 2022, continued its work in 2024 as a key platform for international cooperation and discussion on justice for Ukraine.

Nadia Volkova, Head of ULAG, together with Virginie Amato, Advocacy Director of the Coalition for the ICC and the Ombudsman's Office of Ukraine, co-ordinate Workshop 4 ('Civil Society Efforts to Ensure Accountability in Ukraine'). The Dialogue Group actively promotes confidence-building, exchange of experience and implementation of best practices. Its activities bring together civil society, state and international institutions to achieve justice and ensure accountability for grave crimes committed in the course of Russia's war against Ukraine.



EVENTS

Conference "Restoring Justice for Ukraine"

Participation in the ministerial conference 'Restoring Justice for Ukraine', held in The Hague on 2 April, was an important step in supporting justice for Ukraine. The event brought together more than 60 countries, representatives of international institutions and Ukrainian NGOs to coordinate efforts to ensure accountability for crimes committed during the war. ULAG, as co-coordinators of Workshop 4 of the Dialogue Group, Presented a vision on how to ensure transparency and trust in order to realise the full potential of the DG.

As ULAG Head Nadia Volkova stated, the Dialogue Group has a unique potential to contribute to the effective coordination of international justice and can serve as an example for other conflict situations. This event is another confirmation of the importance of inclusive dialogue and cooperation for justice for Ukraine.



Strengthening of the justice system at the domestic and international level

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We held numerous public and bilateral advocacy meetings with Ukrainian and international stakeholders, contributed to the preparation of civil society statements, analysed, offered recommendations and participated in panel discussions, working groups and other formats of discussing draft laws and developments in the field of conflict-related justice. Among other things:

- We were part of the team 'On human rights behind closed doors'
- Contributed to the development of the Rule of Law Roadmap within the framework of the negotiation process on Ukraine's accession to the EU
- Participated in the meetings of the International Council of Experts under the OPG in the field of International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law, the Community Council of the Prosecutor's Office of the ARC and Sevastopol, the Expert Group on the field of CRSV the Interagency Working Group on the investigation of crimes committed in the context of armed conflict, etc.



STRATEGIC LITIGATION

REPRESENTATION OF VICTIMS

In 2024, our lawyers represented the interests of victims of such violations:

- Torture and ill-treatment of detained civilians and prisoners of war;
- illegal detention of civilians in the occupied territories;
- CRSV;
- deportation of children;
- intentional killings of civilians.

As part of strategic litigation efforts, our attorneys represented victims in criminal proceedings at the domestic and international levels

AMONG THEM:

<p>Filed applications to the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of civilians released from illegal detention in the occupied territories.</p>	<p>In collaboration with EHRAC, an appeal was prepared and sent to the UN Human Rights Committee on behalf of 12 civilians who suffered violations of their right to a fair trial by the self-proclaimed 'LPR' and 'DPR' in the temporarily occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The applicants were persecuted mainly because of their pro-Ukrainian political views and activities.</p>
<p>Represented victims of CRSV and deportation of children at the stage of court proceedings in criminal cases.</p>	<p>Jointly with EHRAC, a legal position was prepared to address the UN Human Rights Committee on the deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia or its controlled territory.</p>
<p>Represented victims of enforced disappearances, illegal detentions, torture and ill-treatment committed in the context of the armed conflict at the pre-trial stage of criminal proceedings at the national level.</p>	<p>A submission on the status of Ukraine's implementation of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and problematic aspects of victim protection was prepared and sent to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, jointly with the ZMINA Human Rights Centre and independent legal consultant Carolyn Edgerton.</p>



SUBMISSION TO THE UN COMMITTEE ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES (CED)

Ukraine still faces serious challenges in protecting victims of enforced disappearances, which have been ongoing since 2014. ULAG, together with ZMINA and consultant Carolyn Edgerton, prepared a submission to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, focusing on legislative gaps and justice-related challenges. The document states that Ukrainian legislation does not fully cover all victims, and investigations are often complicated by the lack of access to the occupied territories and insufficient coordination between authorities. The submission was supported by the International Renaissance Foundation.

STRATEGIC CASES

CASES OF RELEASED CAPTIVES

In all cases, we lodged requests to the ECHR under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court (taking urgent and immediate measures to stop human rights violations), back when Russia was a defendant in the ECHR. After the release from captivity, 5 additions to the ECHR were filed on violations suffered by clients in captivity (2 from civilians and 3 from the military). Submissions in other cases are being prepared.

CIVILIANS(4)

Residents of Donetsk region, territory controlled by the 'DPR', detained at different times in 2017, released at different times and in different ways in 2024. All were subjected to torture, ill-treatment, violations of the right to a fair trial, and some were forced to perform hard labour in a penal colony that was not commensurate with their health and the conditions of detention while serving their sentences.

MILITARY(8)

The released NGU and AFU servicemen, who were captured in Kyiv and Donetsk regions in February, March and April 2022, were held in captivity in Kyiv region (24 February 2022 - 31 March 2024 - during the period of control of its part by the RF Armed Forces), Belarus, Russia and the L/DPR. All clients were subjected to torture, cruel and inhuman treatment in captivity.

CRSV

PROJECT WITH WOMEN'S INITIATIVES FOR GENDER JUSTICE

As part of the mentoring programme, Ukrainian lawyers representing survivors of CRSV received mentoring support from international lawyers with experience in defending survivors of sexual violence before international tribunals and in countries where armed conflicts have occurred.

1.

A community of experts on conflict-related sexual violence and a platform for communication has been formed

2.

A **pocket guide** for representatives of survivors of CRSV and a knowledge platform on CRSV created

3.

Expert advocacy and information materials were prepared to promote the implementation of international best practices for the protection of survivors of CRSV in Ukraine

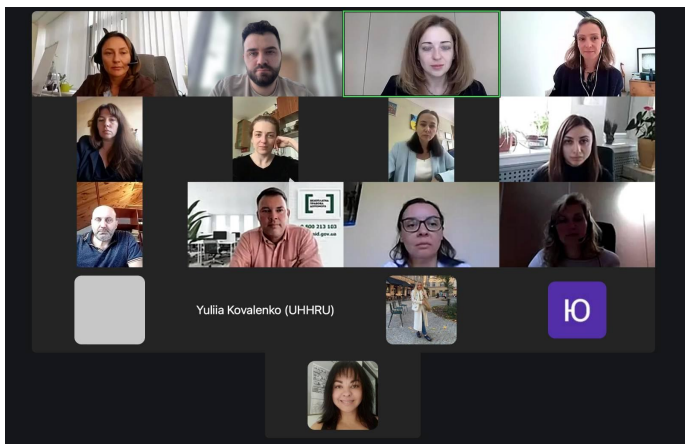


4.

Training 'Building a Strategy in Criminal Proceedings on the Facts of CRSV in Criminal Proceedings' was held in Kyiv

5.

Monthly meetings of the community with the involvement of international experts were held to discuss relevant issues and enhance coordination



SOME OF THE EVENTS WE PARTICIPATED IN 2024

Our Advocacy and Communications Manager Arie Mora spoke at the side event 'Persecution of Ukrainian civilians in the occupied territories as a crime against humanity: Civil Society Efforts to Restore Justice'. The event was held within the framework of the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings, which took place in April in Vienna.

Nadia Volkova moderated a discussion organised by the Media Initiative for Human Rights in the roundtable format 'Deprivation of the right to a fair trial for Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees in international criminal law' in The Hague.



Iryna Kapalkina, ULAG lawyer, represented Ukraine at the 4th Mukwege Chair Congress 'Sexual Violence & Children at War'. The event brought together participants from all over the world to discuss the problems of sexual violence against women and children during war, ways to help survivors and prevent such crimes. Iryna presented the Ukrainian experience and current challenges in protecting the rights of survivors of CRSV.



On 28 August, together with the OMCT, the Media Initiative for Human Rights and ZMINA Human Rights Center, we held a panel discussion 'Torture and persecution of civilians as crimes against humanity by the Russian authorities in Ukraine: ways to ensure accountability'.



On 24-25 June, ULAG took part in the III International Forum of the Crimean Platform Expert Network. The forum brought together representatives from more than 15 countries to discuss current security challenges in the Black Sea region, the decline of Russia's naval capabilities and the recovery of Ukraine's economy. ULAG contributed to the preparation of the panel discussion 'Justice for Crimea: Lessons from the Past for a Just Future', moderated by ULAG's expert Daria Svyrydova.

On 24 October, during the Third Parliamentary Summit of the Crimean Platform, Nadia Volkova took part in a panel discussion on ensuring justice for victims of international crimes. The participants discussed the need for an international response, social rehabilitation of victims and prosecution of both the aggressor state and individual perpetrators. These events were important steps in finding solutions to protect human rights during the war.



Warsaw Human Dimension Conference – co-organised and participated in side events:

- Universal jurisdiction: the path to justice and solidarity in finding and prosecuting international criminals
- In Pursuit of Justice: What Should the Justice Architecture for Ukraine Look Like Based on the Experience of Victims and the Needs of the Justice System.

At the invitation of the Pilecki Institute in Warsaw, Nadia Volkova took part in the discussion panel on the presentation of the **book** 'The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict and War Crimes. Challenges for Documentation and International Prosecution' about documenting war crimes in Ukraine.



Alina Pavliuk, took part in a discussion organised by JustTalk on the role of victims in war crimes investigations, ensuring their safety and rights.



ULAG participated in the roundtable discussion 'The Rome Statute and its implementation: what will work and how?', which addressed practical aspects of the Rome Statute implementation in Ukraine, challenges and opportunities for ensuring justice for international crimes.



Our lawyer Iryna Kapalkina took part in the discussion at the closed symposium 'Documenting, Supporting Survivors and Fighting Impunity'. The discussion was dedicated to cooperation between NGOs and justice authorities in collecting evidence and documenting crimes. They also discussed barriers to work in the occupied territories and ways to build trust between victims and prosecutors.



We took part in a closed-door meeting with the Chief of the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (HUR) Kyrilo Budanov to discuss together with representatives of Ukrainian human rights organisations the return of Ukrainian citizens from Russian captivity.



Development of the documentation infrastructure

- We attended a [global convening](#) organised by WITNESS, which brought together initiatives and organisations from around the world who document human rights violations and international crimes
- We joined the symposium 'The Most Documented War' by organising two workshops on adapting documentation to different purposes and using modern methods of photo and video recording.
- We are developing a partnership with WITNESS, an organisation that specialises in using video to protect human rights.
- We continued to develop our long-standing cooperation with the Ukrainian Archive/Mnemonics, storing information in the archive and advising them.

REPORTS

In 2024, ULAG, together with La Strada-Ukraine, Equality Now, EHRAC and Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, presented a **Shadow Report** to the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The report identifies the main problems in criminal justice legislation and practice in Ukraine, in particular the impact of gender stereotypes and stigmatisation of survivors of sexual violence.

The document contains recommendations aimed at removing these barriers and implementing reforms that will help Ukraine fulfil its obligations under the Convention. Implementation of these changes will be an important step in improving access to justice for those affected by violence.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND STIGMATISATION OF VICTIMS

NGO SHADOW REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL OF
EUROPE CONVENTION OF PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN UKRAINE

REPORTS

ULAG together with the Sociological Group 'Rating' with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation conducted a **sociological survey** among military personnel to collect their opinions on the ratification of the Rome Statute and justice in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The results showed that more than 70% of the military, who are familiar with the Rome Statute, support its ratification, refuting popular political theses about the military's predominant resistance to this issue. In addition, the majority of respondents believe that the decision should be based on public opinion and take into account the position of the military.



Матеріал підготовлено за підтримки Міжнародного Фонду «Відродження». Матеріал представляє позицію авторів і не обов'язково відображає позицію Міжнародного фонду «Відродження».

Чи відповідає ратифікація РС чинному запиту
військових на справедливість?

HOW CAN VICTIMS IN UKRAINE BE HEARD BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Guide for Survivors and Affected Communities to Understand the
ICC Proceedings and their rights before the ICC

2024



REDRESS

Ending torture, seeking justice for survivors

REPORTS

Together with its partners, ULAG contributed to the preparation of a **handbook** for victims of war crimes in Ukraine. The handbook explains the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the investigation of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, as well as the rights of victims before the court and the possibilities of their participation in ICC processes. It also provides practical advice for communities on how to engage with the ICC to achieve justice and bring perpetrators to justice.

Kharkiv Institute for Social Research

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL WAR CRIMES IN UKRAINE

RESEARCH REPORT

REPORTS

The **sociological study** 'Public Attitudes towards International War Crimes in Ukraine', conducted by the Kharkiv Institute for Social Research and commissioned by ULAG, covers key aspects of justice. The report presents findings on public attitudes towards war crimes, witness safety, victim support, and access to and trust in justice at the national and international levels. This data will be useful for state authorities, civil society and other justice stakeholders.

EVENTS

Discussion 'Public attitudes towards justice and victim support in Ukraine'

On 16 December, we brought together experts and international stakeholders to discuss justice processes and challenges faced by victims of international crimes committed in Ukraine.

During the event, a new report 'Public Attitudes to International War Crimes in Ukraine' was also presented. The challenges of improving support for witnesses and victims, better coordination between state institutions and civil society, and the need for an effective victim protection programme to ensure their participation in justice were discussed.



CADENCE IN THE 'UKRAINE 5 AM' COALITION

In 2024, ULAG completed its term as the international advocacy coordinator for the 'Ukraine. 5am' Coalition.

We remain an active member of the coalition, focused on cooperation and support of its activities within organisation's priorities.

5:00 AM



COALITION

PARTNERS

azones

LAW FIRM / NO LIMITS SUPPORT

AZONES Law Firm



Amnesty International



Ukrainian Archive/Mnemonic



Charitable Foundation 'Sylni'

WOMEN'S INITIATIVES
FOR GENDER JUSTICE

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice



World Organisation Against Torture



'Ukraine.5 am' Coalition



JustTalk



Human Rights Watch



Center for civil liberties



Coalition for the International
Criminal Court



European Human Rights Advocacy
Centre



NGO 'Blakytnyi ptakh'



Kharkiv Institute for Social Research



WITNESS



Media Initiative for Human Rights



ZMINA Human Rights Centre



European Center for Constitutional
and Human Rights

COOPERATION WITH STATE AUTHORITIES



Office of the Prosecutor General

Prosecutor's Office of the
Autonomous Republic of Crimea
and the city of Sevastopol



National Police of Ukraine



Представництво
Президента України
в Автономній Республіці Крим

Mission of the President of Ukraine
in the Autonomous Republic of
Crimea

FINANCIAL REPORT

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, MATRA Programme (2022-2024 pp.)	10 455 560.00 UAH
National Endowment for Democracy (NED) (2023-2025 pp.)	180 000 \$
The Central and Eastern European Law Initiative (CEELI)	25 000 \$
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)	10 000 \$
The Sigrid Rausing Trust	85 000 £
The International Renaissance Foundation	1 677 000.00 UAH
European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC)	10 343 £
Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ)	36 557 \$

PLANS FOR 2025

In 2025, we plan to continue strategic litigation efforts, advocating for strengthening the justice architecture, including national capacity and cooperation with the ICC, as well as continue developing existing and building new partnerships to ensure effective collaboration in the fight for justice and human rights.

UKRAINIAN LEGAL ADVISORY GROUP

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