
ANNUAL REPORT

UKRAINIAN LEGAL ADVISORY GROUP

2025

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EMPOWERING SURVIVORS THROUGH ENGAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC LITIGATION

We continued representing victims of grave crimes in domestic proceedings, before the European Court of Human Rights, UN treaty bodies, and in third-state investigations under the principle of universal jurisdiction, while also engaging with other international justice mechanisms and conducting case-related advocacy.

We support survivors in navigating proceedings and advocating for their rights. Through strategic litigation and engagement with accountability mechanisms, we seek to expand avenues for meaningful justice while identifying and addressing systemic gaps and challenges.

This pillar also includes direct engagement with survivors to strengthen their participation in justice processes and advocacy, ensuring it is informed, strategic, and victim-centred.

KEY INSIGHT

It is evident that survivors of grave crimes benefit from legal representation. Yet, it is becoming increasingly harder to sustain and grow this practice, particularly because of a lack of interest in this topic from the donor community

Empowering Survivors through Engagement and Strategic Litigation

ECtHR

Case-related
Advocacy

Engaging with
survivors

Casework Analysis

European Court of Human Rights

ULAG has 180 cases before the ECtHR, mostly concerning violations from 2014 to 2022.

As the inter-state judgment has been rendered, the Court has started considering thousands of individual cases on merit. Consequently there has been a significant increase in ULAG's workload – although only 16 cases have been communicated in 2025 and we expect more communications in 2026.

180 cases total

Concerning violations since 2014, cases at different stages of consideration

16 cases in 2025

Have already been communicated by the Court
– and much more to come in 2026

59 cases

Are waiting for a judgment

Empowering Survivors through Engagement and Strategic Litigation

ECtHR

Case-related Advocacy

Engaging with survivors

Case Analysis

We analysed the interstate judgement in a [piece for EJIL:Talk](#) and participated in several conversations, organised by ZMINA Human Rights Centre, Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, [EHRAC](#) and JustTalk – to discuss possible implications and issues to consider moving forward.

This includes capacity challenges within the NGO sector, potential approaches of the Court to a great number of cases, and other factors that can potentially hinder the prospects of meaningful justice for survivors and even their access to it.



Empowering Survivors through Engagement and Strategic Litigation

ECtHR

Case-related Advocacy

Engaging with survivors

Casework Analysis

Case-related Advocacy

Detention and conviction of the OSCE Staff Members

ULAG represents families of Dmytro Shabanov and Maksym Petrov who were detained in 2022 and later convicted by the Russian Federation, along with their colleague Vadym Golda.

We also support families' efforts to secure the release of their loved ones – though advocacy efforts domestically, within the OSCE system, individual states and other regional and international fora.



JOINT LETTER

FROM CURRENT AND FORMER OSCE STAFF MEMBERS

FOR THE RELEASE OF DMYTRO SHABANOV, MAKSYM PETROV, AND VADYM GOLDA

signatures collected

360+

as of Nov 15, 2025



In 2025 we issued [a joint letter](#) signed by 360+ former and current OSCE staff members, along with other statements and events that kept the issue high on the agenda list. At the end of last year, a Special Rapporteur within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was appointed, as per our request and as a result of advocacy efforts.

ULAG's advocacy efforts were also directed at issues like a broader release and return of civilians, their treatment in RF detention, and prisoner swaps in crimes against national security of Ukraine.

Empowering Survivors through Engagement and Strategic Litigation

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survivors

Case Analysis

Engaging with survivors

The Hague Delegation (with REDRESS)

During Autumn we partnered with REDRESS to engage a group of survivor organisations' representatives on international justice advocacy issues.

We conducted several preparatory meetings to improve the understanding of different justice mechanisms, strategise on addressing key issues, and plan further engagement with stakeholders.

The project culminated with an advocacy trip to the Hague, where participants met with the International Criminal Court units, delegations of states, representatives of the Register of Damage for Ukraine and other actors.

After the trip we continued coordinating on different advocacy activities, including joint statements.



Empowering Survivors through Engagement and Strategic Litigation

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Engaging with survivors

Beyond this initiative, we strove to ensure that survivors and victims associations could meaningfully participate in conversations and initiatives on conflict-related justice, as well as join our workshops, report presentations and other activities.

We also published a [practical guide](#) for those whose property was damaged, providing recommendations on how to properly document the damage and available avenues for receiving compensation or other forms of support.

ПАМ'ЯТКА

**ПОРЯДОК ДІЙ У РАЗІ ВТРАТИ
АБО ПОШКОДЖЕННЯ
НЕРУХОМОСТІ ВНАСЛІДОК
ЗБРОЙНОЇ АГРЕСІЇ РОСІЇ
ПРОТИ УКРАЇНИ**

ULAG

UKRAINIAN
LEGAL
ADVISORY
GROUP

Empowering Survivors through Engagement and Strategic Litigation

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Advocacy

Engaging with survivors

Case Analysis

Case Analysis

Through strategic legal representation, our lawyers identify and experience systemic institutional and legislative challenges first-hand.

We address such challenges directly in proceedings, but also through legal analysis, policy and advocacy work.

In 2025 we published analysis on challenges in pursuing justice for CRSV survivors (including a [series of publications](#) with EHRAC); [participation of a victim](#) at different stages of a criminal proceeding; [conducting interview](#) under the Article 225 of the CPCU etc.

**EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY
EXAMINATION UNDER ARTICLE 225 OF
THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE OF
UKRAINE**

ULAG 

07.01.25

**Interrogation under Article 225 of the
Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine:
Expectations vs Reality**

**COUNTERING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE
CONDITIONS OF RUSSIA'S WAR OF
AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
(PART III)**

ULAG  

05.08.25

**A systematic response to the CRSV:
Insights and Recommendations**

STRENGTHENING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

We continued to actively initiate and participate in discussions and initiatives to improve legislation, institutions and practices within Ukraine's justice system.

In 2025 practically all justice mechanisms faced existential challenges. We acted to support both the domestic system, but also to defend and strengthen international justice mechanisms, as victims still rely on them to complement national efforts and ensure justice of the most responsible.

KEY INSIGHT

2025 further revealed a greater need for a comprehensive justice system while at the same time lack of a state policy on justice for grave crimes serves as a major roadblock to building such a system. We have embarked on leading on this issue and started laying the groundwork with partners and beneficiaries, so that in 2026 we can provide substantive suggestions on such a policy/strategy.

KEY INSIGHT

It has been ULAG's long standing recommendation to establish a hybrid accountability mechanism for Ukraine for all grave crimes. Establishment of the hybrid Special Tribunal on the Crime of Aggression in Strasbourg in 2025 along with an extensive use of international legal advisors at investigative and prosecutorial level domestically have transformed our approach to this recommendation. Beyond the state policy and other reforms, we are now engaging with the already existent hybrid cooperation to ensure it is properly implemented, effective and responsive to the needs of the victims and survivors.

Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture Advocacy

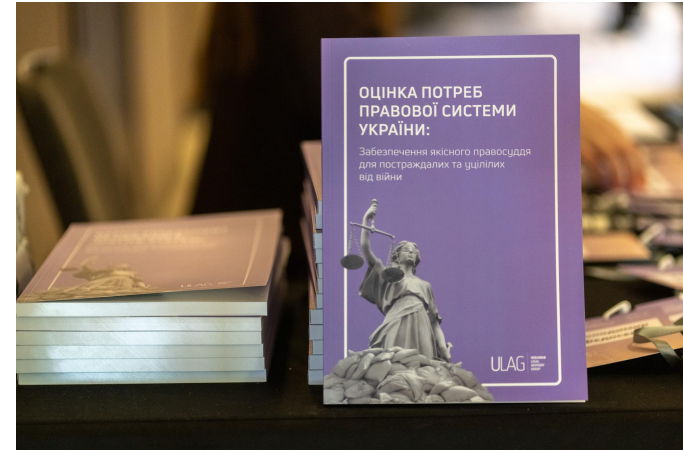
Consulting and training

The Needs Assessment Report

[The Needs Assessment of the Ukraine's Justice System](#) is an exercise that provides a comprehensive overview of the key challenges in ensuring justice for grave crimes. The document is intended to facilitate a strategic dialogue on building an effective justice architecture in Ukraine.

As the Report is intended to be a living tool, its first update was presented in February 2025.

We have conducted **5 closed-door meetings** with investigators, prosecutors, states and I-NGOs, as well as Ukrainian CSOs. Participants provided feedback on the report, shared their perspectives on the most acute challenges, and suggested topics to be addressed in the next iterations of the Needs Assessment report.



Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture Advocacy

Consulting and training

In 2025 we also launched a [dedicated website](#) [with](#) the text of the Needs Assessment report to make it more accessible and easy to navigate.

Throughout the year we have observed a growing **impact** of the Report, as it is used and mentioned by domestic and international stakeholders, and how it shapes further discussions and analysis in this field.



Findings of the Report also informed our input to other analytical products, including:

- **War-Related Justice section** of the [Shadow Report](#) on Chapters 23 and 24 of the 2024 European Commission's Ukraine Enlargement Report (developed by the coalition of civil society organisations in 2025), and
- [The Alternative Report](#) to the UN CAT on Ukraine's implementation of its international obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture
Advocacy

Consulting and training

Platforms and working groups

Throughout the year ULAG participated in various platforms, working groups and legal reform initiatives to improve regulations and practices in the field of justice for grave crimes, committed in the context of armed conflict.

OPG Working Group on Rome Statute Implementation

- The Working Group started operating in early 2025 to ensure proper Rome Statute (RS) implementation into domestic legislation – as a result of public discussions and advocacy efforts that ULAG has actively contributed to and echoing the need for complete implementation mentioned in the Needs Assessment Report.
- We contributed to substantive discussions in all subgroups, including the wording and content of the catalogue of crimes under article 438 in accordance with the RS and Geneva Conventions; inclusion of the crime of terror; interpretation of the crime of aggression; regulation of in absentia proceedings etc.

The Dialogue Group on Accountability for Ukraine

- ULAG continued co-chairing Workstream 4 (Civil Society) of [the Dialogue Group \(DG\)](#), which brings together representatives of the Ukrainian government and justice system, the ICC, Eurojust, partner states, and civil society organisations.
- DG-level cooperation has potential to facilitate justice-related processes, and, for example, it facilitated the work of the RS implementation working group.
- During the 2025 DG Ministerial Conference / United for Justice Conference in May, Nadia Volkova, together with the head of the OPG War Crimes Department, suggested that further harmonisation should be pursued through amendments to the Criminal Code rather than through a separate law – one of the key points of contention at the time – and this approach was later selected by the working group.

Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture Advocacy

Consulting and training

EU-integration platforms

- ULAG contributed to the Rule of Law Roadmap (Chapter 23 and 24) Working Group, EU Pravo Justice Project NGO coordination platform activities, as well as meetings with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.
- Throughout the adoption and implementation of the Roadmap, as well as other EU integration instruments we make suggestions:
 - a. vis-a-vis specific items in the Roadmap such as support and protection of victims and witnesses of international crimes, as well as
 - b. advocating for a broader consideration of the conflict-related justice and accountability as an issue in the EU integration process.

National Strategy on Human Rights

- ULAG contributed to the drafting process of the new National Strategy on Human Rights vis-a-vis various chapters, including input regarding issues like evacuation from near-the-frontline areas; rights of victims, effective investigation and prosecution, access to justice and legal aid of different categories of international crimes and human rights violations; victims support;
- Some of the suggestions have been already accepted in the drafting process. The work on the Draft is expected to continue in 2026.

We also contributed to other platforms and initiatives, such as:

- Working Group on Victims Support
- Working Group on ToT Reintegrations
- Ukraine 5 AM Coalition
- Periodical meetings with the UN Resident Coordinator
- IWG on combating CRSV

Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

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Justice Architecture Advocacy

Consulting and training

Resources

We undertake legal research, analysis, and produce resources to identify and address systemic gaps, as well as promote better standards in ensuring justice for grave crimes. Among other results of our work, we have produced:

Report “[Protecting victims of international crimes in criminal proceedings in Ukraine: international experience and national priorities](#)”

The need for a targeted research of this issue occurred from our experience representing victims in criminal proceedings and analysis conducted during the Needs Assessment preparation.

The current system is outdated and does not take into account challenges that the armed conflict and grave crimes cases produce.

The report recommends adopting a new law on victim and witness protection, amending Criminal Procedure Code, establishing the risk assessment activities and other recommendations to reduce the harm and retraumatization experienced by victims, while making their participation in criminal proceedings more meaningful. It is grounded in best practices and standards, such as the Directive 2012/29/EU and other relevant frameworks. The report was presented in December, in Kyiv with **120+** attendees in person and online.



Strengthening the justice system at the domestic and international levels

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture
Advocacy

Consulting and training

Guide “Using Battlefield Evidence in Atrocity Crime Cases”

Battlefield evidence (BE) can significantly strengthen accountability efforts. The Guide produced by ULAG and LexPat Global Services aims to promote good practices and improve coordination between investigators, prosecutors and the military when working with BE.

It draws on best practices and foundational principles from international law and experience, but is also heavily informed by the context of Ukrainian criminal justice and military systems, and broader realities of the war in Ukraine.

Other publications

Based on the legal analysis, in 2025 we published various articles on key justice-related issues. This includes the [IHL and Rome Statute implementation; classification of crimes against humanity](#) in Ukraine, [specialisation of courts, prosecutorial reform](#) etc.



Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture Advocacy

Consulting and training

Justice Architecture Advocacy

The International Criminal Court (the ICC)

ULAG has been supporting the ICC as an institution and its work in Ukraine throughout the years, including in 2025.

We issued statements, participated in advocacy meetings, annual ICC-NGO roundtables; co-hosted side events at the 24th Assembly of States Parties to:

- Urge states and other actors to defend the Court from existential threats (sanctions), non-cooperation and other challenges it faces
- Strengthen its jurisdiction over the Crime of Aggression
- Promote Ukraine's participation in the RS system and improve the Court's operation vis-a-vis Ukraine and broadly
- Improve the ICC's engagement with Ukrainian CSOs and victims of grave crimes

Throughout the year we contributed to meetings of the Working Group on Amendments, Washington Working Group on the ICC, and Victims Rights Working Group



Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture Advocacy

Consulting and training

Workshop "In Pursuit of Comprehensive Justice for Ukraine: ICC's Role in the Overall Justice Architecture"

On November 27-28th, ULAG and the Coalition for the ICC organised a two-day workshop for civil society and experts working on Ukraine.

The workshop explored different dimensions of international justice for grave crimes committed in Ukraine, including:

- Current state of the domestic justice system, ways to strengthen its capacity, including through EU-integration and a state policy
- Fair trial rights
- Victims participation and reparations avenues
- The role of the ICC, challenges it faces and ICC-Ukraine cooperation
- Other justice mechanisms

The panels featured international and Ukrainian experts and CSOs, representatives of the ICC, EU Project Pravo Justice. Two closed-door sessions with Ukrainian government representatives were also held during the workshop. The workshop attended 40+ participants in person and online.



Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

Needs Assessment

Platforms and Working Groups

Resources

Justice Architecture Advocacy

Consulting and training

We also engaged with other justice pathways, aiming to foster a comprehensive international justice architecture.

- On universal jurisdiction, we joined conversations on current practical challenges, as well as published [an article](#) together with the ECCHR on current state of UJ for Ukraine
- As the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression has been officially launched in 2025, we [contributed to discussions](#) over existing procedural and substantive challenges before the Tribunal, its interrelation with the domestic justice system, as well as ensuring meaningful victim participation.
- More broadly, we have advocated for justice to not be traded off in the context of peace negotiations, and for Ukraine, the EU and other states to stand by their commitments to ensure that victims of grave crimes will not be sidelined.



Strengthening the justice system domestically and internationally

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Justice Architecture Advocacy

Consulting and training

Consulting and training

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with the justice system representatives directly, through learning, consultations and strategic level discussions

1

A series of training sessions with Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City

It focused on improving the understanding of international standards and developing strategies for investigating and prosecuting grave crimes like persecution, unlawful detention of civilians and other violations relevant to the Crimean context.

2

We contributed to the Development of the Strategy for the OPG War Crimes Department

In June, a strategic session at the OPG War Crimes Department was held. We participated in the session, and its results later become the basis for a new iteration of the WCD strategy.

Sharing experience and contributing to important conversations



Iryna Kapalkina spoke at 2nd Annual Summit of the Global Women's Coalition Against the Use of Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War in Paris

Arie Mora spoke at the ODIHR's WHDC Side Event "Beyond the Hague: the OSCE and current challenges in securing justice for victims of war crimes"

Ievgeniia Kapalkina joined a Ukrainian Delegation Visit to Columbia dedicated to the Issue of Enforced Disappearances

ULAG's Institutional Development

In 2025 we focused on strengthening our internal processes to ensure its compliance with good governance and improve our resilience as an organisation

Adopted key internal policies

Including policies on: finances; conflict of interest; communications; equality and non-discrimination; anti-corruption; human resource management.

Organisational structure in accordance with "Good Governance" Principles

General Assembly (highest management authority; the Board (control and oversight); Director and Operational Director (implementation of a strategy and operational management)

PARTNERSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

We want to thank all those; who supports us; run projects with us; collaborate on joint activities; invite us to engage; share their knowledge and expertise, and trust us





WOMEN'S INITIATIVES
FOR GENDER JUSTICE





Office of the
Prosecutor General

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

Dnipropetrovsk Region
Prosecutor's Office

Coordination Centre
for Victim and
Witness Support



National Police
of Ukraine



Ministry of Justice
of Ukraine



Office of the Deputy
Prime Minister for
European and
Euro-Atlantic Integration



International Criminal Court



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Embassy of the Kingdom of
the Netherlands in Ukraine



UKRAINE



UN Resident Coordinator
Office in Ukraine

ULAG'S 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

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