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USAID HUMAN RIGHTS IN ACTION PROGRAM**

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USAID HUMAN RIGHTS IN ACTION PROGRAM UPDATES

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING, ANALYTICAL ACTIVITY AND ADVOCACY

USAID Program made public LOIPR at the briefing of the UN Committee on PWDs' Rights (*link in Ukrainian*)



Expert of the USAID Human Rights in Action Program [presented](#) in Geneva a LOIPR (List of issues prior to reporting) to be posed to the GOU by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as regards implementation by Ukraine of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

LOIPR relates to the situation with observance of the rights of PWDs residing in conflict-affected areas, IDPs with disabilities, and persons obtaining disability in result of the armed conflict, and was included into the subject-matter coalition submission by Ukraine's National Assembly of PWDs and partners.

Roundtable with public officials on the issue of court cases, paper files of which were lost due to the armed conflict

Expert discussion of the Program-sponsored bill on consideration of the court cases, paper files of which are lost or remained blocked in the NGCA of Donbas or occupied Crimea, [has taken place](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) at the Supreme Court's premises. The event was mostly a brainstorming, and now we are accumulating feedback from the event's attendees to make it possible to organize a more focused discussion soon.

Program-prepared legal analysis of new Cabinet of Ministers' decree №788

On August 21, Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers adopted a decree on social payments to IDPs, which contains a number of drawbacks. Our lawyers [believe](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) that this document contradicts legal and judicial practice, but what is worse – this paper is most likely to entail breaching the rights and freedoms of IDPs (specifically, the pension issue) and risks inciting mass lawsuits.

Methodology for improving legislation concerning conflict-affected people

USAID Human Rights in Action Program [hosted](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) a thematic public expert discussion as a part of the work to develop the Methodological recommendations for assessing compliance of legislation with international humanitarian law and transitional justice fundamentals. Next, the Methodology will be piloted in one of the most requested branches of law – the civil law (in part concerning compensation for the damage inflicted). This will allow to



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receive feedback on the extent to which the Methodology tools are able to identify the choke points in the legislation. At long last, the finalized Methodology will be offered for use to the central executive bodies, Verkhovna Rada, as well as CSOs.

USAID Program shared its vision of de-occupation and reintegration strategy amidst the Human Rights Parliamentary Committee’s gathering (*links are in Ukrainian*)

Our proposals cover such topics as prompt implementation of transitional justice fundamentals, effective [enforcement of the National Human Rights Strategy](#), adoption of a number of ready-to-go quality bills relating to the armed conflict and occupation ([link](#)). Also, we proposed to conduct a legislative expertise of the bills registered in the Verkhovna Rada on their compliance with international human rights standards (which can be based on the Program-prepared [Methodological recommendations](#)).

Why Ukraine needs to ratify the Rome Statute and implement transitional justice (*links are in Ukrainian*)

- ✓ Ratification of the Rome Statute will greatly help with prosecuting and bringing war criminals to responsibility. However, the prosecution is only part of the solution. *For more information on this, see [this article](#).*
- ✓ USAID Human Rights in Action Program and “Vostok SOS” NGO [co-hosted](#) a side-event on transitional justice at the Festival of Opinions-2019 in Severodonetsk of Luhansk oblast.

Grande Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights has completed a preliminary hearing on ‘Ukraine v. Russia’ case

The [dispute](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) centers around Kremlin’s violations of the European Convention on Human Rights in occupied Crimea since late February 2014. Inhuman treatment and torture, and limitations put on freedom of religion and right to education – among other infringements – are the topics of the case. In [interview](#), the Program’s Chief of Party Taras Tsymbriivskyy shared his vision and explained peculiarities of this inter-state application.

Other related activities by UHHRU in brief:

- **UHHRU, other NGOs supplied President Zelenskyy with so-called “Crimean Agenda”**
[Open address](#) provides for a number of priority actions that, as the civil society believes, are the best options to tackle the problems of IDPs and residents of the occupied territories in the context of human rights protection and humanitarian issues. By implementing these comprehensive recommendations, Ukraine, in addition to fulfilling its obligations before own citizens, will be able to take real steps toward protecting those affected by the armed conflict and building durable peace.
- **Human rights defenders will not stop until the last Kremlin’s detainee is free (*links are in Ukrainian*)**
 - ✓ UHHRU representative [delivered comments](#) on how Kremlin fabricates cases against Ukrainian nationals. We also urge everyone to be extra careful when traveling to the temporarily occupied Crimea, Donbas, or Russia.



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- ✓ Our advocacy expert [visited](#) Brussels to shed light on the issue of continuous human rights violations of activists and journalists in Crimea. Meetings were held with permanent representatives of 14 EU states to discuss, among other things, persecution of activists that cover the real state of affairs in the occupied peninsula.



- **Reshat Ametov – a symbol of Crimean resistance**

UHHRU and “Media Initiative for Human Rights” NGO [released](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) an analytical study devoted to kidnapping of Reshat Ametov in 2014, a Crimean Tatar activist, who is believed to be one the first victims of the Kremlin’s repressions in Crimea.

FREE LEGAL AID

[UHHRU network](#) of legal aid centers (LACs) keeps on delivering free legal aid (including outreach legal consultations in the remote areas), holding information and awareness raising events in the sphere of human rights as well as documenting war crimes and conflict-related human rights abuse. USAID supports activities of the UHHRU’s legal aid centers in Starobilsk of Luhansk oblast, [Toretsk](#), [Mariupol](#), Kramatorsk, [Pokrovsk](#) of Dnetsk oblast, [Sumy](#) and Dnipro providing legal aid to conflict-affected population, as well as a [Kyiv-based Specialized LAC](#) targeting both Crimean and Donbas residents and IDPs and a Specialized Crimea-oriented LAC in Kherson.

Events to raise awareness of citizens on how to protect their rights (*links are in Ukrainian*)

- Mariupol-based LAC [released](#) a publication on divorce-related disputes among IDPs.
- Ukraine is in process of introducing the International Bank Account Number (IBAN). This makes many IDPs concerned as to whether they are going to receive their social benefits on time as well as whether they need to get certificates with bank details and bring them to territorial offices of Ukraine’s Pension Fund and/or appropriate social protection departments. The Sumy LAC made a [post](#) on this matter.



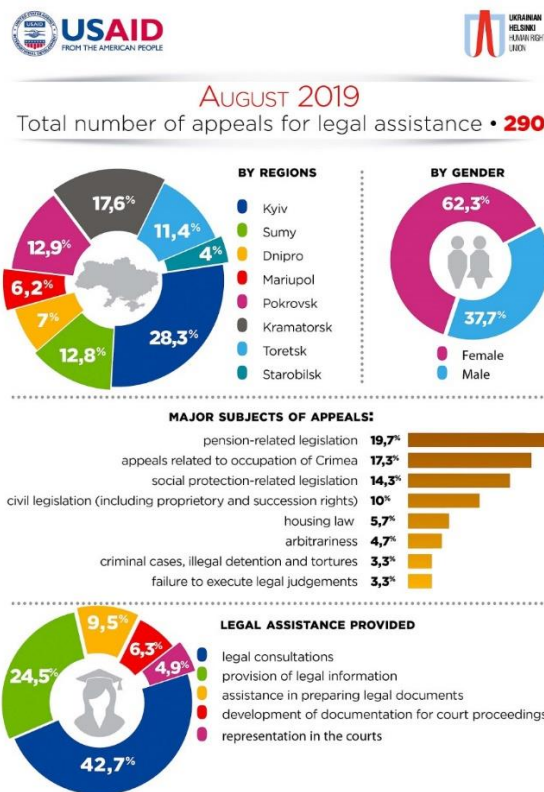
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- On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, legal aid center in Sumy organized a [presentation](#) for students to tell them about main activities in the field of human rights protection, the specifics of working with clients, as well as the human rights defenders' stories of success. The LAC has been contacted by IDP students before, so it is useful for young people to be familiar with the state-guaranteed social benefits for them.

Latest infographics to illustrate legal aid network' performance, in Ukrainian

Program continues regular reporting on the results of the LACs' work – we are glad to present information for [August](#) 2019 with thematic, regional, and gender disaggregation.



HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

UHHRU keeps on organizing human rights training events as well as formulating a comprehensive national human rights education policy. This activity is implemented under Ukraine-wide Educational Program “[We Understand Human Rights](#)” (WUHR)¹, which is being the only informal educational system that has the material basis for its activities – Educational Human Rights House-Chernihiv.

¹ Launched in 2007, the Program envisages development of informal human rights education, contributing to cultivating a human rights culture, strengthening respect for the rule of law in Ukraine, promoting intercultural understanding and principles of peaceful conflict resolution. The Program currently counts more than 3,500 alumni from all regions of Ukraine.



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Attending 2019 Mistechko USAID in Cherkasy and Mariupol²

Program representatives visited two Mistechko USAID events to host their own Human Rights in Action platform there. The attendees raised their awareness about the specifics of human rights protection in the context of the armed conflict and were able to get legal advice from our lawyer.

Also, the Program campaigned towards USAID-contributed transitional justice model for Ukraine: the visitors were suggested to participate in an art workshop on eco-bag painting, during which our experts in an easy-to-understand creative manner familiarized them with the right to access justice, right to fair trial, right to be reimbursed for the damage, right to know the truth, guaranties of non-recurrence, etc.

In [Cherkasy](#) ([link in Ukrainian](#)), the Program also hosted a quiz devoted to the topic of Kremlin's political detainees: winners were handed with branded T-shirts portraying the most famous [former] detainees as a reminder that aggression against Ukraine still goes on, even despite some of the detainees have already been liberated during recent major [swap](#) between the RF and Ukraine.



Program-supported training course “Human rights standards in legal practice of lawyers and judges” is now completed

On September 21-22, the Program hosted the [final meeting](#) in frames of its innovative training course ([link in Ukrainian](#)). It was aimed at holding final teaching classes and eventually honoring course graduates – 12 advocates and 16 judges representing every corner of Ukraine (among them 9 were distinguished with diplomas on successful completion of the entire course, 19 received certificates on completing its online part).





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Program interacts with young generation (*links are in Ukrainian*)

- The Program [launched](#) a Practicum on Human Rights Protection, allowing to equip the master-level students of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv majoring in international law with theoretical knowledge and practical insights on the cutting-edge transitional justice issues.
- Our advocacy manager [delivered a lecture](#) to sociology and political science students at the Verkhovna Rada Educational Center. Particularly, he explained the concept of the Program-supported transitional justice model for Ukraine.
- Program's experts [had a discussion](#) with the students of the College of Europe, Natolin (Warsaw, Poland). Last year's visit to the UHHRU sparked interest and enthusiasm among the college students, so they requested another visit this year to discuss organization's involvement in the protection of human rights in Ukraine, particularly in Crimea and war-affected territories in Donbas.



Program's Chief of Party attended advanced learning event on how to use the EU law to protect human rights

Taras Tsymbrivskyy [attended](#) a training (*link is in Ukrainian*), hosted by the CEELI Institute in Prague, focused on protection of the rule of law in the EU, migrants and their rights under the EU law and the impact of the EU law and the Court of Justice of the European Union's case-law on rights and guarantees under criminal law. In a broad sense, the EU law presents instruments for building a sustainable democracy in Ukraine and, among other things, for overcoming the armed conflict consequences and deterring Russia's aggression.

MAIN EVENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA

A long-awaited swap took place with Russia

The 35 freed Ukrainians, imprisoned by Kremlin amid an endless war in its sixth year, landed Kyiv's airport on September 7 after [being exchanged](#) for 35 prisoners requested by Russia. It is the first mass release of political detainees since Kremlin started its aggression in 2014.



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It should be flagged that so far we believe at least 83 Ukraine's nationals remain in prison on trumped-up charges in Crimea/Russia (the majority of whom are Crimean Tatars); and at least 129 military and civilian persons are unlawfully detained in NGCA of Donbas³.

Exit-entry checkpoint at the administrative border with occupied Crimea are now being renovated

It is still unclear what the finished facilities there [will look like](#) (*link in Ukrainian*), but it is definitely a positive move towards making border-crossing Crimeans feel “less isolated” from the rest of the Ukrainian society.

Worth reminding that UHHRU/ USAID Program has been campaigning strongly towards such a renovation, which found its reflection in our recommendations stemming from monitoring visits to the site ([for instance](#))⁴.

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³ UHHRU Executive Director also [delivered comments](#) on the matter concerned.

⁴ UHHRU Executive Director delivered [a subject-matter interview](#), in Ukrainian.