

# VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION DURING OCCUPATION OF CRIMEA



**USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS DURING THE ENCIRCLEMENT, BLOCKING AND CAPTURE OF MILITARY UNITS OF UKRAINE'S ARMED FORCES**

## DETAILS OF THE VIOLATION

**USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS** is a method of warfare that is prohibited by international humanitarian law (IHL). It involves the use of civilians or civilian objects for protection by persons directly involved in hostilities or military operations, knowing that civilians and civilian objects are protected under IHL and may not be attacked by the adversary

**USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS IS ALSO PROHIBITED** under customary international humanitarian law and is a breach of the principle of distinction, which is one of the fundamental principles of IHL

### SITUATION IN CRIMEA IN FEBRUARY-MARCH 2014

There were at least 5 episodes of the use of human shields during the encirclement, blocking and capture of military units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with over 1,000 civilians used by the RF military for this purpose



**USE OF "LITTLE GREEN MEN" – SOLDIERS IN UNMARKED UNIFORMS**

## DETAILS OF THE VIOLATION

**DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN** civilians and combatants is an unconditional duty of parties to an armed conflict, including states engaged in international armed conflicts. Furthermore, if there is doubt as to whether a person is a combatant or a civilian, it should be assumed that said person is a civilian

### SITUATION IN CRIMEA IN FEBRUARY-MARCH 2014

Mass use of Russia's soldiers in unmarked uniforms during these events in Crimea is the first example of a breach of the duty to ensure distinction between combatants and civilians in modern history of IHL

"Little green men" were armed with military grade weapons, had full military equipment and were dressed in green military uniforms without any distinguishing marks, chevrons or stripes that would make it possible to identify them as servicemen belonging to the armed forces of a certain state; it was also evident that there was a clear hierarchy among them

These "little green men" took part in the capture of government buildings, as well as in the encirclement, blocking and capture of military units of Ukraine's Armed Forces



**PERFIDY AND ILLEGAL USE OF EMBLEMS AND UNIFORMS OF THE ADVERSARY DURING THE BLOCKING AND CAPTURE OF UKRAINE'S MILITARY UNITS**

## DETAILS OF THE VIOLATION

**PERFIDY** is a prohibited method of warfare. In a broad sense, it is a breach of trust based on IHL. Perfidy is addressed by the Article 37 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 8 June 1977

### Perfidy involves the following actions:

- the feigning of an intent to negotiate under a flag of truce or of a surrender;
- the feigning of an incapacitation by wounds or sickness;
- the feigning of civilian, non-combatant status;
- the feigning of protected status by the use of signs, emblems or uniforms of the UN or of neutral or other States not Parties to the conflict.

### SITUATION IN CRIMEA IN FEBRUARY-MARCH 2014

There were several cases of violations of IHL during Russia's takeover of Crimea that can be classified as perfidy and/or misuse of military emblems, insignia or uniforms of the adversary



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## EPISODE 1 - VILLAGE OF NOVOOZERNE, AR CRIMEA, UKRAINE



The Southern Naval Base was a strategically important base of the Ukrainian Navy. After having been blocked for about a month, it was stormed and captured on 19 March 2014

The blocking and storming of the military base was carried out with the use of civilians as human shields. In particular, civilians were mostly located near the gates and fence at the time of the assault, which prevented Ukrainian servicemen from opening fire on Russia's soldiers for fear of civilian casualties

## SOUTHERN NAVAL BASE OF THE NAVAL FORCES OF THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE, VILLAGE OF NOVOOZERNE, AR CRIMEA, UKRAINE



Armed men were dressed in unmarked military uniforms, making it impossible to determine to which state or military unit they belonged

They were openly carrying military grade weapons, similar to those used by the RF's Armed Forces.

## EPISODE 2 - CITY OF SEVASTOPOL, UKRAINE



The blocking of the Navy Headquarters of Ukraine's Armed Forces lasted for about a month and ended on 19 March 2014 when it was stormed and captured by Russia's soldiers

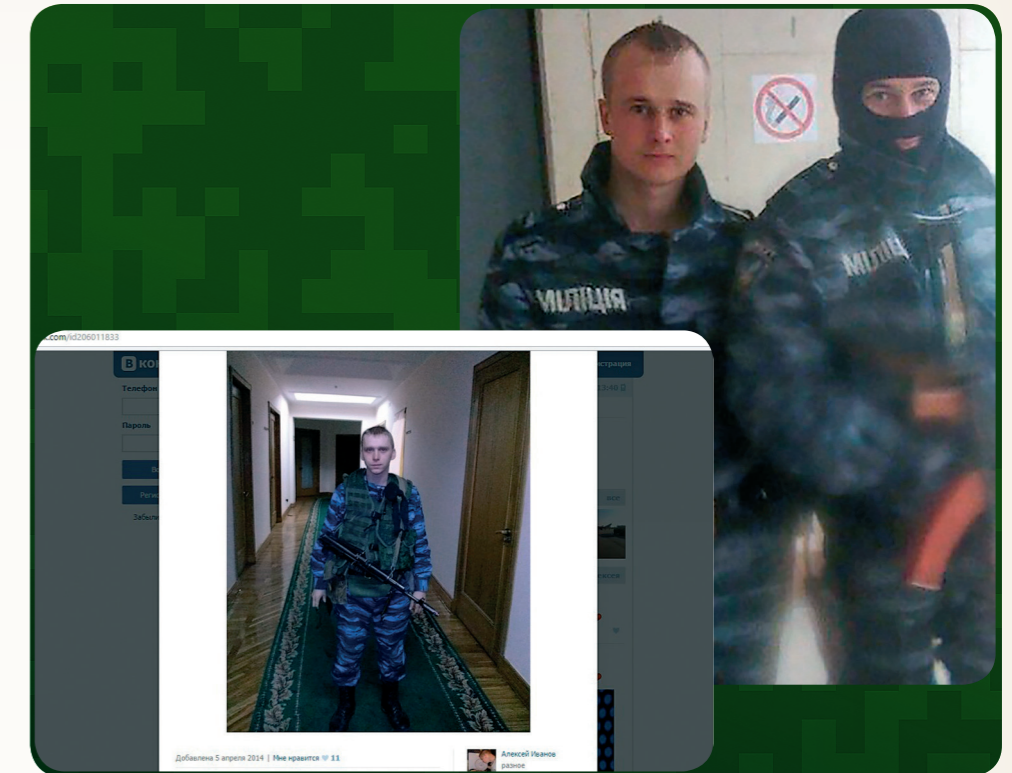
Protesters' location in relation to the HQ's gates at the time of the assault was as follows. Standing at the front were people dressed in civilian clothes and carrying Russia's flags. There were women and children among them. Among the civilians were also Cossacks, members of the "Self-Defense of Crimea" and "Self-Defense of Sevastopol", as well as officers of the RF's Black Sea Fleet, who were seemingly keeping an eye on the gathering. In the back were "little green men" and military vehicles

## 36<sup>TH</sup> SEPARATE MOTORIZED COAST GUARD BRIGADE, VILLAGE OF PEREVALNE, AR CRIMEA, UKRAINE



Blocking of the brigade involved active use of the armed men in unmarked uniforms

Video-footage shows the armed men in unmarked uniforms blocking the military unit



There were several cases of violations of IHL during Russia's takeover in Crimea that can be classified as perfidy and/or misuse of military emblems or uniforms of the adversary

Thus, a journalistic investigation published on the InformNapalm website in 2015 uncovered evidence of the participation of Russia's paratroopers from the 31st Separate Paratrooper Assault Brigade (military unit no. 73612 based in Ulyanovsk, RF) in the capture of the Verkhovna Rada of AR Crimea while disguised as the Ukrainian police officers.

Information received by UHHRU from witnesses among the command of the Ukraine's Navy indicates that some individuals were entering the grounds of the Ukraine's Navy HQ in Sevastopol dressed in Ukrainian Navy uniforms during the blocking and capture of the HQ. Also, according to the witnesses, intelligence reports mentioned robberies at warehouses, which might have provided the perpetrators with Ukrainian Navy uniforms. Thus, about five individuals dressed in Ukrainian military uniforms were apprehended at the Ukraine's Navy HQ



This infographic is part of analytical paper "Occupation of Crimea: No Markings, No Names and Hiding Behind Civilians" produced by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU) and the Regional Center for Human Rights. The report itself is available on UHHRU's website <https://helsinki.org.ua>, "Analytics" section.