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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

**In one sentence: Activities under USAID Human Rights in Action Program's and its experts' participation aimed at overcoming consequences of the armed conflict and occupation (*links are in Ukrainian*)**

- UHHRU/USAID Program's Pavlichenko [delivered an interview](#) on some of Crimea's future de-occupation aspects, particularly what to do when it comes to residents moved into the peninsula as part of Kremlin's colonization plan in an attempt to replace regime-disloyal Ukrainians.
- The Prosecutor General Venediktova removed the Deputy Prosecutor General Gunduz Mamedov from coordinating the work on armed conflict's crimes investigation – civil society organizations, including UHHRU, [consider this a threat](#) to the Prosecutor General Office's War Crimes Department and investigations held therein.



#### Other related activities by UHHRU in brief (*links are in Ukrainian*):

- UHHRU in conjunction with other co-authors announce fresh Crimea Beyond Rules issue, already the 6<sup>th</sup> one – this time it is devoted to occupied property in Crimea or how the RF as de-facto authority ignores property rights in the peninsula. Please use [this link](#) for more details, while the issue itself will be available on our website, [library section](#), later (follow the updates).<sup>1</sup>
- UHHRU joined [public video address](#) in support of persons kidnapped amidst Crimea's occupation – human rights campaigners believe at least 44 persons have gone missing since 2014, while health status and whereabouts of 15 of them still remain undiscovered. Sharing and spreading awareness is highly appreciated!

## STRATEGIC LITIGATIONS

Within this direction USAID Human Rights in Action Program supports strategic legal cases domestically and internationally to protect public interests<sup>2</sup>, as well as assures their broad media coverage among professional community and public. Total number of the conflict-related cases, which have been supported by UHHRU's Strategic Litigation Centre (SLC) within the Program is over 200.

<sup>1</sup> To remind, Crime Beyond Rules is an analytical digest to depict Kremlin's war crimes and blatant human rights violations amidst Crimea's annexation – every issue is devoted to a particular problematic and is accompanied by legal analysis (full compilation of previous issues is stored [here](#)).

<sup>2</sup> Strategic litigations are one of the most powerful tools of human rights protection; conducted in the interests of a citizen or a group of citizens to achieve systemic changes in the legal field for the benefit of society and used for the purpose of creating the case-law (precedents).



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## Ukrainian mayor of an occupied city. The story of the unlawfully removed Mayor Igor Skliarov continues

The applicant was unlawfully dismissed from the post of mayor by representatives of the so-called “DPR”, after which he, assisted by UHHRU/Program’s lawyers, applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) asking to declare his dismissal unlawful, reinstate him and award him damages. Purely to remind, [here is an explanation](#) concerning so far ineffectual domestic-level travails of this case (*link is in Ukrainian*).

### Other related activities by UHHRU in brief:

- **Applications to the ECtHR**

- ✓ The applicants complained against their illegal transfer from Crimea to Russia. Since the Crimean Peninsula is Ukraine’s territory, forced displacement of Ukrainian citizens from there, under any pretext, is a violation of international law.
- ✓ The applicant lodged a complaint against Ukraine and Russia in connection with two injuries that he had sustained in course of clashes between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and illegal armed groups of the so-called “LPR”, as well as the ineffectiveness of investigation of these crimes.

- **Fresh evidence of Kremlin-committed war crimes against pre-conflict prisoners has been submitted to International Criminal Court**



In their submission, UHHRU in conjunction with Regional Center for Human Rights and Crimean Prosecutor’s Office [highlighted](#) (*link is in Ukrainian*) the situation concerning illegal transfer of pre-conflict prisoners from Crimea to the RF to continue serving their sentences there (275 persons totally). These Ukrainians represent a particularly vulnerable group, which stays under full control of the occupying power,

suffering not only from forced relocation, but also from non-adequate medical care, as well as imposition of the Russian citizenship.

## 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 [Toretsk](#), [Mariupol](#), [Kramatorsk](#), [Pokrovsk](#) of Donetsk oblast, [Stanytsa Luhanska](#), [Sumy](#) and [Dnipro](#) providing legal aid to conflict-affected population,



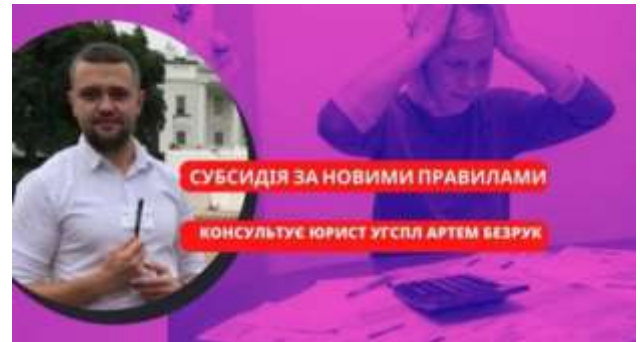
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as well as a [Kyiv-based Specialized LAC](#) targeting both Crimean and Donbas residents and IDPs from their along with a Specialized Crimea-oriented LAC in Kherson.

### Events to raise people's awareness on how to protect their rights *(links are in Ukrainian)*

- Pokrovsk LAC [explains new subsidy rules](#) as number of baffled people from conflict-affected communities increases.
- Kherson-based LAC hosted [an online Q&A session](#) to consult conflict-affected people, especially in light of the recently changed rules for crossing the entry-exit checkpoints (including those located on the administrative border between the temporarily occupied Crimea and Kherson Oblast).
- [New law signed](#) to relax pressure/responsibility on travelers from/to temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine – in a new post, our lawyers [have answered the most frequent questions](#) they get on this matter. Feel free to ask your own question if you feel the need for additional information!
- Mariupol LAC [clarifies](#) the concept of notary's writ of execution: what it is and what consequences it can entail for IDPs.



### Legal assistance to those affected by the armed conflict and occupation *(links are in Ukrainian)*

- UHHRU/USAID Program was contacted by Victoria, an IDP from Makiyivka. As a result of her husband's illness, the couple was forced to move to temporarily occupied Makiyivka, where he passed away. Victoria decided to replace her retirement pension with a pension paid in connection with the loss of her breadwinner; to do this, she had to go to court. The case [was handled](#) by our Pokrovsk LAC. *"More and more often the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU) refuses to pay social benefits in such cases in order to save money. People aren't always willing to uphold their rights in court,"* suggests the LAC's coordinator Artem Bezruk, encouraging everyone in situations like these to seek legal assistance.
- Debt should not be accrued on non-payment of utilities of substandard quality if a consumer has filed an appropriate complaint in accordance with established procedure, as our LAC from the frontline town of Toretsk managed to [prove in court](#). Our LAC was contacted by Oleksiy, who asked for a consultation: the local office of the municipal company Teplokomunenergo applied to court to collect a debt for heating services from him. However, not only was the sum unreasonably high for a pensioner (roughly UAH 15K including penalties), but no reasonable grounds existed to make him pay it.
- Nadiya, mother of a deceased volunteer soldier from Dnipro, applied to PFU to change her pension scheme: from a regular pension to a pension paid in connection with the loss of her





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breadwinner, but was denied twice. Our lawyer [helped](#) Nadiya find justice, suggesting: “*The incompetence of PFU employees can be qualified as conduct by an official that is contrary to his duties. Nadiya had been trying to exercise her rights since 2020 but had been unable to, and not because the law has no provision for it, but because specific officials are unfamiliar with the legislation they work with and don’t bother to study it.*”

## 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)<sup>3</sup>, which is being the only informal educational system that has the material basis for its activities – Educational Human Rights House-Chernihiv.

### **UHHRU/USAID Program finished another cycle of our training course “Protecting human rights under situation of the armed conflict in Ukraine” for proactive lawmen ([links are in Ukrainian](#))**

Ukrainian lawyers and judges have been granted a mighty weapon – deep knowledge of the correlation between international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law, as well as of the proper way to deal with cases related to the armed conflict and the temporary occupation of Crimea. We are deeply grateful to the participants for the time they chose to devote to their training, and to our partners without whom this undertaking would not have been possible. If you are still hesitant whether to join the next training cycle, you can [listen to what the participants have to say](#) about their experience with us, or read a related [publication](#).



<sup>3</sup> 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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## Human rights amidst warfare: expert discussions of human rights professionals and activists



One way or another, the armed conflict affects every one of us, bringing deaths, loss of health and property, as well as economic and psychological damage to our fellow citizens. To make matters worse, human rights violations are being committed in the temporarily occupied territory almost on a daily basis. A regional meeting was held for the graduates of UHHRU/USAID Program's training activities as part of the Human Rights Education Fest – following tradition, lawyers from different cities came together to [share experiences](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) and views on how to ensure

observance of human rights amidst the war and the challenges that our country faces.

## As IHL theme spikes amidst Ukraine's conflict, teachers at secondary schools learn how to convey knowledge on IHL – UHHRU/USAID Program forms a pool of educators to boost process (*links are in Ukrainian*)

UHHRU/USAID Program continues its cooperation with the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, in particular on human rights and IHL education. [We already have some remarkable results](#) to show here: almost 30 educators recently received certificates confirming that they are qualified to train their peers in teaching IHL to 9-12-grade school students.

To further expand their knowledge of IHL and the methodology for teaching this subject, the participants were provided with necessary literature and were also [invited to IHL training](#) organized by our project partner, URCS. If you'd like to be informed of any future possible training events, keep an eye out for announcements or contact us.



## International Law Talks initiative<sup>4</sup> proceeds, under participation of prominent national and international personalities as usual

- The webinar "[Engaging with the China Issue: Navigating Human Rights and Geopolitical Considerations for Ukraine and CEE](#)"<sup>5</sup> engaged the following guest speakers: Teng Biao, Pozen Visiting Professor, University of Chicago, President, China Against the Death Penalty (US); Joshua Rosenzweig, Deputy Regional Director, East & Southeast Asia & the Pacific Regional Office, Amnesty International; Péter Krekó, Senior Fellow, Center for European Policy Analysis, Executive Director, Political Capital Institute (Hungary).

<sup>4</sup> Hosted jointly with Media Initiative for Human Rights NGO.

<sup>5</sup> [Дотична публікація](#) від Радіо Свобода.



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- The next webinar “[Ecocide and Offences against the Environment in Armed Conflict: a Need for New Lawfare?](#)” welcomed the following speakers: Andriy Andrushevych, Senior Policy Expert, Society and Environment; Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Director, Bangladesh Environmental Law Association acting as a member of the global expert drafting panel on the crime of ecocide.

## MAIN EVENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA

### **Inaugural summit in Kyiv officially kicked off the Crimea Platform**

The [Crimea Platform](#) is a new international consultation and coordination format initiated by Ukraine. The Platform aims to increase the effectiveness of international response to the ongoing occupation of Crimea and mounting security threats, respond to growing security threats, increase international pressure on the Kremlin, prevent further human rights violations and protect victims of the occupation regime, and achieve the main goal – de-occupation of Crimea and its peaceful return to Ukraine. Mission of Ukraine’s President in Crimea is [officially designated](#) (*link is in Ukrainian*) for in-country running of the Crimea Platform.

Ahead of the main event, an inaugural forum of the Crimean Platform’s Expert Network took place in Kyiv under participation of Ukraine’s public officials, foreign embassies, national and international experts – more details can be found by following [this link](#) and [this one](#) as well (*both are in Ukrainian*).

*UHHRU/USAID Human Rights in Action Program [salutes](#) these initiatives and takes pride in contributing to creation of a new page in Ukraine’s history, as we are also involved in this process.*

### **Important bills passed concerning the temporarily occupied Crimea (*links are in Ukrainian*)**

[These are](#) draft law No. [5506](#) “On the indigenous peoples of Ukraine”, as well as a set of draft laws – Nos. [5501](#), [5502](#) and [5503](#) – aimed at abolishing the Free Economic Zone “Crimea” and a number of regulations that are discriminatory towards Crimeans living in the temporarily occupied territory.

### **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted resolution on destabilizing military build-up by Russia near mainland Ukraine, in temporarily occupied Crimea, Black, Azov Seas**

Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomes the adoption by the summer session of the OSCE PA of this urgent resolution. In the document, the OSCE PA called on the RF to end the illegal occupation of Crimea, withdraw its troops, weapons, military equipment from the occupied peninsula, and end constant conscription campaigns. In addition, the Assembly called on Russia to lift all restrictions on freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and through the Kerch Strait – [source](#).

### **Cabinet of Ministers adopts National Human Rights Strategy’s action plan till 2023**

A relevant decree rests under [this link](#), in Ukrainian.



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## **Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office incentive to enhance accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity**

Prosecutor General's Office [established](#) (*link is in Ukrainian*) the international board of experts to supervise the process of investigation of human rights violations committed during armed conflict. Permanent President's Envoy to Crimea, Deputy Minister of Justice, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and other professionals in the field of human rights will contribute to developing the state policy on criminal justice in terms of the armed conflict and relevant methodology for the prosecutors and judges.

## **Kremlin continues its policy of systematic persecution against all who oppose the occupation regime in Crimea**

- RF's court [delivered](#) one more illegal verdict against Crimean Tatars in the Hizb ut-Tahrir trial (*link is in Ukrainian*).

*Public statement of UHHRU/USAID Program with ally NGOs condemning this court verdict and targeting the GOU, governments of foreign countries and international organizations is available in [English](#) as well.*

- New [searches](#) in temporarily occupied Crimea to threaten Crimean Tatar community and find new victims to be imprisoned (*link is in Ukrainian*).

*Ukrainian human rights organizations, including UHHRU/ USAID Program, condemn these unlawful actions and call on the international community and Ukraine's authorities to respond to the systematic oppression of the indigenous people in the peninsula.*

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