# TORTURE AND ALLEGED EXECUTIONS OF UKRAINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR

**March 2024 — Combined Evidence File**

| FILE CONTROL | DETAIL |
|---|---|
| File reference | WCUKTE-000324 |
| Incident / subject | UN findings on torture and alleged executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russian captivity |
| Reporting period | 1 December 2023 – 29 February 2024; public findings released 26 March 2024 |
| Principal source | UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), OHCHR |
| Key figures | 58 of 60 interviewed Ukrainian POWs described torture or ill-treatment; credible allegations of at least 32 executions in 12 incidents |
| Verification status | HRMMU independently verified three of the 12 alleged execution incidents; this dossier is not a judicial determination |
| Scope note | The file focuses on the March 2024 findings and includes later UN reporting as context where clearly identified |

## 1. Executive Summary

On 26 March 2024, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), part of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), published findings based on interviews with 60 recently released Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) who had been held in Russian captivity. Fifty-eight of the 60 gave detailed accounts of torture or ill-treatment. Reported methods included beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution, mock executions and painful or prolonged stress positions. More than half of those interviewed reported sexual violence.

For the period December 2023 to February 2024, HRMMU also recorded credible allegations that at least 32 Ukrainian POWs had been executed in 12 separate incidents. The Mission independently verified three of those incidents. These are UN-documented allegations and findings based on the available evidence; they should not be represented as judicial findings against named individuals unless a competent court has made such findings.

OHCHR did not have access to Ukrainian POWs held in Russian captivity during the reporting period. It assessed accounts through confidential interviews after release, cross-checking accounts about facilities, direct observations of injuries and health conditions, open-source information and other documents. This limitation is material and should be stated whenever the findings are cited.




## 1. Established Evidence Portfolio

**a)** HRMMU interviewed 60 recently released Ukrainian POWs, all men, during the reporting period. Their periods in captivity ranged from a few weeks to 22 months; many had been held in more than one facility in occupied Ukrainian territory and the Russian Federation.
**b)** Fifty-eight of the 60 interviewees provided detailed accounts of torture or ill-treatment during captivity.
**c)** Reported methods included beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution, mock executions and positional torture. Interviewees also described deprivation of adequate food and medical attention and restrictions on communication with family.
**d)** More than half of the 60 interviewees reported sexual violence, according to HRMMU's public summary.
**e)** HRMMU recorded credible allegations of at least 32 executions of Ukrainian POWs in 12 separate incidents between December 2023 and February 2024; it independently verified three incidents.
**f)** The Mission reported that the pattern of abuse was consistent with previous findings of widespread and routine torture and ill-treatment in Russian internment, and detention conditions inconsistent with international humanitarian law.
**g)** OHCHR did not have direct access to Ukrainian POWs held by the Russian Federation in this period. Findings were based on interviews following release and corroboration from other available material.

## 2. Incident Context and Scope

This dossier concerns a pattern of alleged abuse in captivity rather than one discrete strike at a single location. The March 2024 findings covered treatment reported by recently released Ukrainian POWs and alleged executions across 12 separate incidents. Many interviewees said they had been held in multiple facilities, including locations in occupied Ukrainian territory and within the Russian Federation.

The UN's lack of direct access to Ukrainian POWs in Russian custody limited its ability to observe detention conditions first-hand during this reporting period. HRMMU nevertheless reported that it cross-checked multiple accounts concerning specific facilities and compared them with earlier documentation, observed injuries and health conditions, open-source material and other available documents. The dossier therefore distinguishes between directly described experiences, corroborated patterns, credible allegations and matters not independently verified.




## 3. Visual Evidence and Image Register

Use original UN materials and their embedded report graphics or press-conference footage for visual context. This dossier links to source material rather than reproducing third-party photographs without confirmed rights or provenance. Before publication, record the original caption, photographer or agency, date, location, retrieval date and licensing terms. Do not use generic images of prisoners as if they depict the specific people or incidents described.

**a)** UN HRMMU press release, 26 March 2024 — summary of interview findings and alleged executions: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/UN-Says-Russia-Continues-to-Torture-Execute-Ukrainian-POWs-UA

**b)** United Nations in Ukraine release — same announcement and key figures: https://ukraine.un.org/en/264368-un-says-russia-continues-to-torture-execute-ukrainian-pows

**c)** OHCHR report PDF, "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024" — see section IV, Prisoners of War: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/report-human-rights-situation-ukraine-1-dec-2023-29-feb-2024.pdf

**d)** UN Geneva press-conference video and transcript, 15 March 2024 — Commission of Inquiry findings on widespread and systematic torture: https://www.unognewsroom.org/story/en/2095/hrc-press-conference-independent-international-commission-of-inquiry-on-ukraine-15-march-2024/6331

## 4. Witness Testimony and Fact-Finding

HRMMU's March 2024 report described confidential interviews with 60 recently released Ukrainian POWs. The Mission reported that it cross-checked accounts of treatment and conditions in particular facilities, compared them with previously documented patterns, and considered direct observations of injuries and health conditions, open-source information and other documents. The public summary does not provide a complete set of named, attributable witness statements; this dossier therefore paraphrases findings rather than presenting interviewees' accounts as direct quotations.

Any additional witness material should be recorded with the original source, interview date, language, translator details, consent and restrictions on publication. Protect identities and identifying details where disclosure could expose former POWs or their relatives to retaliation or distress. Preserve original files and metadata; do not alter images or video, and maintain a clear chain of custody for evidence intended for legal use.




## 5. Documentary Evidence

| ID | Source | Use / evidential value | Caution |
|---|---|---|---|
| POW-01 | HRMMU / OHCHR report, 1 Dec 2023–29 Feb 2024 | Primary UN report; interviews with 60 released Ukrainian POWs and findings on treatment and alleged executions | No direct access to Ukrainian POWs in Russian captivity during this period; allegations must be attributed |
| POW-02 | HRMMU press release, 26 Mar 2024 | Accessible summary of 58/60 torture accounts and 32 alleged executions in 12 incidents | Press summary; use full report for detailed context |
| POW-03 | UN Commission of Inquiry report, A/HRC/55/66, 18 Mar 2024 | Independent UN inquiry reporting on patterns of torture and other violations | Broader inquiry scope; distinguish findings from the specific 60-interview sample |
| POW-04 | OHCHR report on treatment of POWs, published Mar 2023 | Earlier baseline on treatment of POWs by both sides and alleged violations | Historical comparison; do not conflate different reporting periods or parties |
| POW-05 | OHCHR periodic report, 1 Jun–31 Aug 2024, published 1 Oct 2024 | Later context on the continuing pattern and broader cumulative interview base | Subsequent reporting; clearly label as later evidence, not a March 2024 finding |

**Primary source links:**

**a)** HRMMU March 2024 press release: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/UN-Says-Russia-Continues-to-Torture-Execute-Ukrainian-POWs-UA

**b)** Full reporting-period PDF: https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/report-human-rights-situation-ukraine-1-dec-2023-29-feb-2024.pdf

**c)** UN Commission of Inquiry report A/HRC/55/66: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4048787?v=pdf

**d)** OHCHR 2024 follow-up report: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Treatment-of-prisoners-of-war-and-Update-on-the-human-rights-situation-1-June-to-31-August-2024




## 6. Incident Timeline

| Date / period | Event / reported development |
|---|---|
| 1 Dec 2023 – 29 Feb 2024 | Reporting period covered by HRMMU's periodic report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. |
| 24 Jan 2024 | Russian authorities claimed that 65 Ukrainian POWs were aboard a military aircraft that crashed in Belgorod region. OHCHR said it could not sufficiently establish the circumstances without access and called for a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation. |
| 15 Mar 2024 | UN Commission of Inquiry presented findings reinforcing concerns about widespread and systematic torture by Russian authorities. |
| 18 Mar 2024 | UN Human Rights Council document A/HRC/55/66 issued. |
| 26 Mar 2024 | HRMMU publicly reported that 58 of 60 interviewed Ukrainian POWs described torture or ill-treatment and recorded credible allegations of at least 32 executions in 12 incidents; three incidents independently verified. |
| 1 Oct 2024 | OHCHR published a later report with a broader cumulative assessment of POW treatment since February 2022. This is subsequent context, not part of the March 2024 reporting period. |

## 7. Treatment Allegations and Corroboration

The most commonly reported forms of abuse in the March 2024 findings included beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution, mock executions and positional torture. HRMMU also reported sexual violence affecting more than half of those interviewed, as well as lack of adequate food and medical attention and restrictions on contact with family. The details should be cited to the UN report, not generalized to every Ukrainian POW or every detention facility without qualification.

The UN report describes corroboration through comparison of multiple accounts concerning facilities, observed injuries and health conditions, open-source information and other documents. For each alleged execution incident, a rigorous evidence file should separately identify the alleged date and location, source of the allegation, verification status, available visual material, witness accounts, and any official response or investigation. Avoid inferring individual perpetrators or command responsibility where the cited source does not establish them.




## 8. Legal Framework and Status

International humanitarian law requires humane treatment of prisoners of war and prohibits torture, cruel treatment, violence, intimidation, insults and public curiosity. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions prohibits murder, cruel treatment and torture of persons taking no active part in hostilities, including those placed hors de combat by detention. The Third Geneva Convention sets specific protections for POWs, including humane treatment and protection against violence, intimidation and insults. Torture and wilful killing of protected persons may constitute war crimes when the applicable legal elements are met.

The UN findings provide a basis for serious concern and further investigation, but a final determination of criminal responsibility for a particular incident or individual requires a competent judicial process and admissible evidence. The term “alleged executions” is retained for the incident set because HRMMU described credible allegations and independently verified three incidents; this dossier does not claim that all 12 incidents have been judicially adjudicated.

## 9. Attribution and Competing Claims

The March 2024 HRMMU findings concern Ukrainian POWs held in Russian captivity and attribute the reported treatment to Russian service persons or officials as described by interviewees. The public UN summary does not establish the identity of every alleged perpetrator or a complete command chain for each incident. Any official denial, alternative account or subsequent investigation should be captured from an original, dated source and assessed alongside the underlying evidence. Do not present an unsupported denial as equivalent in evidential weight to corroborated UN findings, nor omit relevant contrary evidence.

## 10. Evidence Gaps and Verification Tasks

- **a)** Obtain and preserve the complete OHCHR report and any available annexes in original form; record retrieval date and file hash.
- **b)** For each of the 12 alleged execution incidents, identify which three HRMMU independently verified and what the public report says about the evidential basis.
- **c)** Locate any public incident-specific investigations, indictments, court filings or findings and distinguish allegations, charges and adjudicated facts.
- **d)** Preserve original photographs and video with source URLs, publication dates, metadata, translations and an unbroken chain of custody; do not rely solely on reposted screenshots.
- **e)** Cross-check any later OHCHR findings against the March 2024 report while clearly marking the reporting periods and cumulative totals.
- **f)** Protect personal data and avoid naming survivors, witnesses or relatives unless disclosure is necessary, lawful and appropriately consented to.
- **g)** When making legal claims, cite the applicable treaty provision and the source’s exact conclusion; do not state that a war crime has been judicially proven unless a competent court has so found.




## 11. Later UN Reporting — Context, Not Retroactive Proof

In October 2024, OHCHR published a further report on the treatment of prisoners of war and the human-rights situation from June to August 2024. It reported that, since March 2023, 169 of 174 Ukrainian POWs interviewed over the preceding 18 months had provided detailed and consistent accounts of torture or severe ill-treatment in Russian captivity. This later assessment strengthens the context that the problem was not limited to the 60 interviews summarized in March 2024, but its figures cover a different period and must not be added to the March figures without checking overlap and methodology.

Later OHCHR reporting may also document additional credible allegations of executions. Such later findings should be included in a separate update with their own date range, definitions and source register rather than silently changing the historical March 2024 record.

## 12. Methodology and Caution

This is an open-source evidence compilation, not a substitute for the complete UN report, forensic examination, protected witness interviews or judicial findings. The principal source is HRMMU/OHCHR because it documents a defined reporting period and describes its interview and corroboration methods. Secondary reporting is useful for context and visual leads but should be checked against the original publication. Preserve distinctions between direct witness accounts, corroborated patterns, credible allegations, independently verified incidents and judicial findings.

The subject of this dossier is the UN report published on 26 March 2024. It is not described as a newly occurring attack; the date identifies the publication and reporting period under examination.

## 13. Relevant Visual Material — Access Links

**a)** OHCHR reporting-period PDF (primary report; POW section and report graphics): https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/report-human-rights-situation-ukraine-1-dec-2023-29-feb-2024.pdf

**b)** HRMMU press release and associated page imagery: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/UN-Says-Russia-Continues-to-Torture-Execute-Ukrainian-POWs-UA

**c)** UN Geneva press conference video / transcript (15 March 2024): https://www.unognewsroom.org/story/en/2095/hrc-press-conference-independent-international-commission-of-inquiry-on-ukraine-15-march-2024/6331

**d)** OHCHR follow-up report (1 June–31 August 2024; for separately labelled later context): https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Treatment-of-prisoners-of-war-and-Update-on-the-human-rights-situation-1-June-to-31-August-2024

**e)** Image-use note: retain the source's original caption and attribution. Do not represent a generic image, press-conference frame or later-period graphic as direct visual evidence of a specific alleged execution unless the source establishes that connection.

**A) Ukrainian POWs returning after a prisoner exchange**

A group of released Ukrainian servicemen wrapped in national flags. Useful for the opening section on the impact of captivity and the return of survivors. Source: AP



**B) POWs returning to Ukraine, 31 January 2024**

A photograph of a released prisoner arriving with other returnees. Useful for illustrating the timeline of prisoner exchanges. Source: AP



**C) Released prisoners embracing after an exchange**

A photograph illustrating the reunion of released servicemen. Suitable for the background and humanitarian impact sections. Source: AP



## D) Photographs documenting the physical effects of captivity

### a) Roman Gorlik after his release

A photograph published in reporting about a Ukrainian serviceman returned from captivity in May 2024. It documents visible physical deterioration reported after captivity. Source: AP



**b) Mykhailo Dianov after his release**

A photograph of a Ukrainian serviceman following his release from captivity in 2022. Useful as contextual material concerning the physical consequences of prolonged captivity. Source: AP






## E) Ukrainian serviceman receiving medical attention after captivity

A photograph showing the reported effects of captivity on a released serviceman. Use a caption that identifies the individual and source accurately. Source:

***Important**:* These photographs illustrate the reported effects of captivity; they do not independently prove that a particular person was tortured or that their injuries were caused by a specific incident.

## F) Photographs of detention conditions and documentary evidence

**a) Detention cell in Izium**

A photograph of a room used as a detention facility, published in reporting on alleged torture during the Russian occupation. Useful for explaining detention conditions.
Source: AP

**b) Basement detention site in Kherson**

A photograph of a room containing apparent restraint-related material. It provides contextual visual evidence of conditions at a reported detention site.
Source: AP

## G) Makeshift detention conditions in Izium

A photograph showing a rudimentary sleeping area and a chain fixed to a wall. Useful for discussing the need to document detention facilities and physical evidence.
Source: AP

## H) Official UN documentary source

Source:UN

## I) UN report on the treatment of prisoners of war

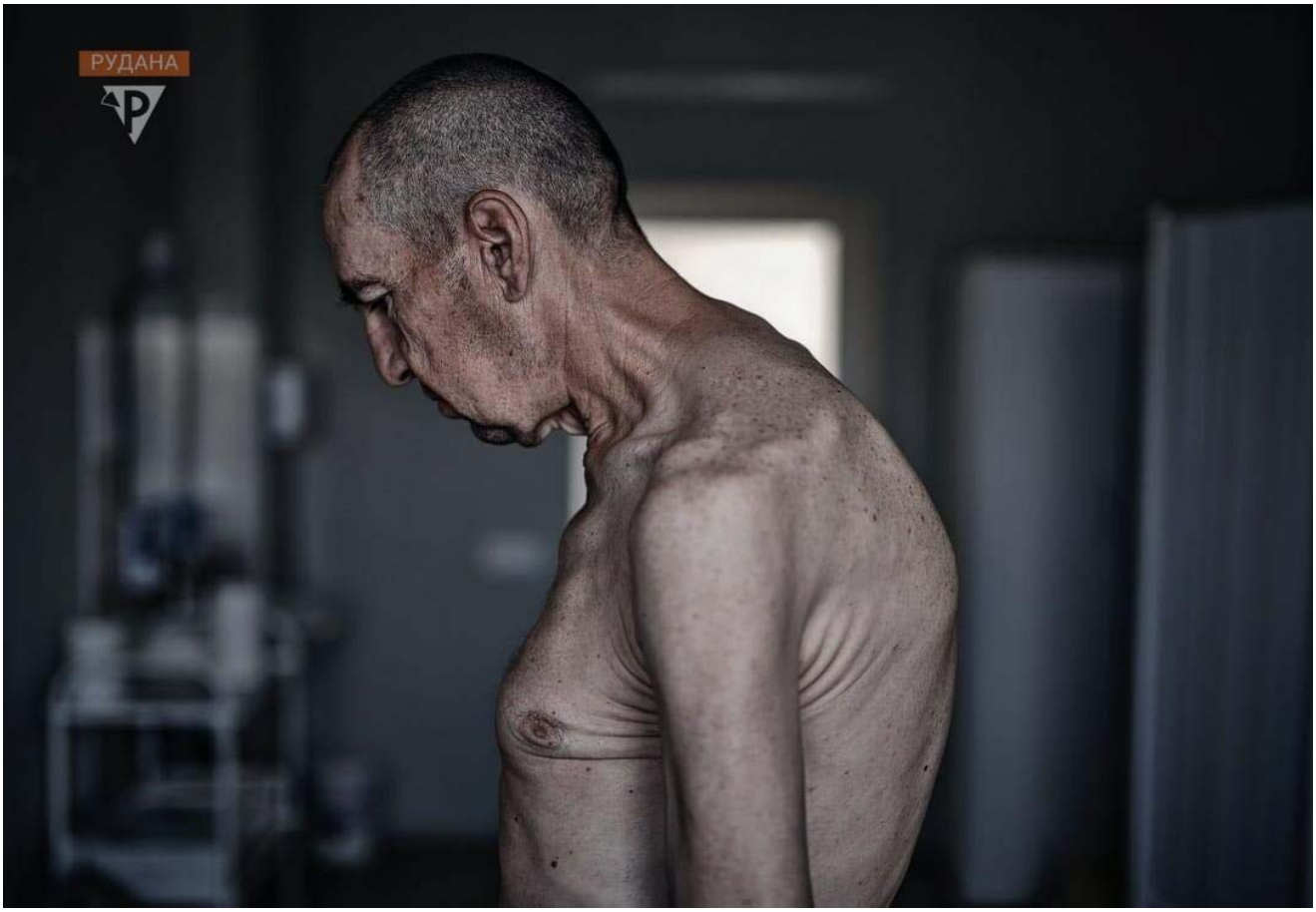
## E) Ukrainian serviceman receiving medical attention after captivity









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Source:UN





## I) UN report on the treatment of prisoners of war



## I) UN report on the treatment of prisoners of war








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## 1. Videos and investigative reports

**The following links provide video footage, survivor testimony and documented investigations into alleged torture and executions of Ukrainian POWs.**

### Video 1 — BBC investigation: Ukrainian POWs tortured in Russian captivity

BBC News

Date: 16 August 2023
Content: Former Ukrainian prisoners describe beatings, electric shocks and abuse while detained in Taganrog, southern Russia.

Watch: BBC News — Ukrainian prisoners of war say they were tortured at Russian prison

This is a useful starting point because it presents survivor testimony through a journalistic investigation. YouTube

### Video 2 — United Nations: Documented torture and executions

United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

The UN reported that videos published in April 2023 appeared to show the execution of a Ukrainian POW and the mutilation of Ukrainian servicemen's bodies.

Read the UN statement: UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission — Video evidence and alleged executions

Note: The statement discusses extremely graphic material. The linked page is a documented official source, rather than a guarantee that the original footage is hosted there. Ukraine Human Rights Office

### Video 3 — UN findings on torture of Ukrainian POWs

Date: 26 March 2024

The UN reported findings from interviews with 60 recently released Ukrainian POWs. Almost all described torture during captivity, including repeated beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution and mock executions. More than half reported sexual violence.

Read the report: UN — Torture and executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war

This is particularly useful for establishing the documented pattern of abuse, even where direct video evidence is unavailable. Ukraine Human Rights Office




## Video 4 — Human Rights Watch: Systematic torture of Ukrainian POWs

**Date: 11 December 2025**

Human Rights Watch published an investigation detailing accounts of physical and psychological torture of Ukrainian POWs in Russian custody.

The report includes detailed survivor accounts of beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution and other forms of abuse.

Read the investigation: Human Rights Watch — Russia's Systematic Torture of Ukrainian POWs

The report is particularly relevant when documenting patterns of abuse and identifying potential lines of further investigation. Human Rights Watch

## Video 5 — UN multimedia report on torture of civilian detainees

Date: 23 September 2025

The UN Geneva multimedia newsroom published a video report on the treatment of Ukrainian civilian detainees, including findings concerning torture and ill-treatment in Russian-occupied territory.

Watch: UN Geneva Multimedia — Report on torture of civilian detainees in Ukraine

This source concerns civilian detainees rather than exclusively military POWs, so it may be useful for a separate section of your research. UNOG Newsroom

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## 2. Video evidence of executions and other alleged war crimes

**If you are looking specifically for original footage rather than interviews or documentary reporting, these official investigations provide useful starting points.**

| Incident or evidence | Source | What it documents |
|---|---|---|
| Alleged execution of a Ukrainian POW, April 2023 | UN Human Rights statement | UN response to footage showing an apparent execution. |
| Alleged executions of surrendered Ukrainian soldiers, 2024–2025 | UN report on executions of captured Ukrainian military personnel | Video and photographic material examined alongside witness interviews. |
| Alleged execution of Ukrainian POWs at Piatykhatky, March 2025 | Associated Press investigation | Analysis of drone footage relating to the alleged execution of four Ukrainian soldiers who had surrendered. |