



**CONCEPT NOTE**  
**UNSC Arria-formula meeting:**  
**“Violations of international humanitarian law**  
**against Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees”**

**DATE: 13 January 2025, 3-5pm**

**VENUE: UN Headquarters, Trusteeship Council Chamber**

The Permanent Missions of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, with the co-sponsorship of the Permanent Missions of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, US, and Ukraine to the United Nations, are convening the Arria-formula meeting of the UN Security Council to draw attention to the mounting evidence of Russia’s gross violations of international humanitarian law that demands immediate action.

Through powerful testimonials the Arria-formula meeting will highlight the ill-treatment of Ukrainian Prisoners of War (POWs) and civilian detainees, including torture, summary executions and other forms of inhumane treatment.

It will send a clear message to Russia that it must comply with International Humanitarian Law, including by ensuring full and unimpeded access of a human rights monitoring mechanism to Ukrainian POWs.

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The UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has consistently reported that Russian authorities have tortured Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war, in the context of Russia’s full-scale invasion, violating international humanitarian law, and that members of Russia’s armed forces and other officials have allegedly committed war crimes.

In its most recent report, the Commission of Inquiry concludes that the widespread and systematic use of torture by the Russian authorities amounts to a crime against humanity. According to the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, the Russian Federation is holding tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilian detainees and more than 3000 prisoners of war.

In its reports [A/HRC/55/66](#), [A/79/549](#) the Independent Commission of Inquiry concludes:

- *“The evidence gathered has reinforced the Commission’s previous findings that Russian authorities used torture in a widespread and systematic way.”*

- *“Interviews indicate that the treatment of prisoners of war appeared to have been encouraged by respective hierarchies, or at a minimum tolerated, with an apparent sentiment of impunity.”*
- *“Victims’ accounts disclose relentless, brutal treatment inflicting severe pain and suffering for almost the entire duration of their detention, with blatant disregard for human dignity, leading to long-lasting physical and mental trauma.”*
- *“Conditions of detention were inhuman or degrading. Medical support was mostly denied or inadequate. The food was poor, scarce, and in some places, only 2 to 7 minutes were allowed for eating. Victims reported deep suffering from hunger and resorted to eating worms, soap, paper, and remnants of dog food, leading to sharp fall in body weight.”*
- *“For over two mandates, the Commission has consistently found that Russian authorities used torture, as a war crime and the corresponding human rights violation, against Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war, in the context of their full-scale invasion of Ukraine.”*
- *“Sexual violence as a form of torture has been prevalent in detention facilities held by Russian authorities and medical assistance to detainees has been often denied. The report outlines illustrative cases where Russian authorities committed sexual violence as a form of torture during detention, which amounts to torture”.*
- *“The overall findings lead the Commission to consider that it has sufficient evidence to determine that the Russian authorities have acted pursuant to a coordinated state policy and have therefore committed crimes against humanity of torture”.*

Furthermore, the Russian Federation grants limited access to POWs and civilian detainees to representatives of the ICRC.

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The most recent reporting indicates summary executions of captured Ukrainian Prisoners of War (POWs) by the Russia’s Armed Forces.

As of November 2024, Ukrainian prosecutors were investigating 53 criminal cases concerning the execution of 177 Ukrainian POWs by servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Ukraine registered 37 cases concerning the execution of 109 individuals in the past year.

Since 24 February 2022, OHCHR has documented the execution of 42 Ukrainian servicepersons hors de combat (all men) ([Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine](#)).

Given the widely documented human rights violations committed by members of the armed forces and other officials of the Russian Federation, as well as reports of crimes against humanity published by the UN’s Commission of Inquiry, it is of the utmost importance to bring this matter to the attention of the international community within the framework of the Security Council.

The Montréal Pledge, adopted during the Ministerial Conference on the Human Dimension of Ukraine's 10-Point Peace Formula (30-31 October 2024), outlines concrete measures to

facilitate the release of prisoners of war, unlawfully detained civilians, and the return of deported children.

The implementation of Ukraine's Peace Formula remains a key priority on the way to just, lasting and comprehensive peace in Ukraine.

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**Briefers:**

- **Pablo de Greiff**, Member of the International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.
- **Valerii Horishnii**, former POW, Senior Sergeant, an instructor (scout) of the National Guard of Ukraine, defending Mariupol's in 2022. He spent more than two years in Russian captivity. Previously, he was the head of a public organization and the manager of an educational, youth, and national-patriotic project, "*School of Leaders named after Akson and Khoma*", and an English teacher.
- **Nariman Dzhelyal**, a Crimean Tatar journalist and activist. Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, he informed international media about the situation of the Crimean Tatar people under temporary occupation. In September 2022, he was sentenced to 17 years in prison by the Russian-controlled "Supreme Court of Crimea" in connection with an alleged gas pipeline sabotage case. He was returned to Ukraine in June 2024.
- **Maksym Butkevych**, a Ukrainian human rights defender, journalist, civic activist, and military serviceman. He is best known for his work in supporting refugees and internally displaced persons and combating discrimination. He spent over two years in Russian captivity. In March 2023, he was sentenced to 13 years in a strict-regime colony on fabricated charges of "cruel treatment of civilians and prisoners of war and the use of prohibited methods in armed conflict." He was returned to Ukraine in October 2024.

**Participation:** UN SC members; interested Member States. Participants are requested to limit interventions to 3 min. We request that non-Council members join group statements where possible. To inscribe to the list of speakers, please email [UKMisNewYorkSecurityCouncil@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:UKMisNewYorkSecurityCouncil@fcdo.gov.uk) no later than close of business on 10 January.