

All Survivors Project Submission to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine

December 2025

All Survivors Project (ASP) is an international non-governmental organisation that supports global efforts to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and strengthen national and international responses to it through research and action on CRSV against men and boys. Among ASP's objectives are to ensure accountability for CRSV against men and boys and to support access to justice and to timely, safe, ethical, quality and gender-sensitive healthcare by male victims/survivors.

Summary

1. All Survivors Project (ASP) makes the following submission to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine in response to its recent call for relevant information and documentation regarding the human rights situation in conflict-affected Ukraine. This submission specifically sets out ASP's observations and concerns regarding the extent and impact of CRSV on Ukrainian men and boys, including the barriers they face in reporting and receiving support, the need for specialised service provision, and the need for safe, survivor-centred pathways for investigation and justice processes.
2. Since 2024, ASP has been supporting male survivors/victims of CRSV in Ukraine and conducting research on the impacts and barriers to accessing legal and healthcare services. This work is carried out in partnership with survivors/victim-led peer support groups, civil society groups, and the Ukrainian state actors. We support survivors/victims in amplifying their perspectives and advocating for services, medical assistance, justice, and accountability. The observations in this submission draw on de-identified and aggregated information from ASP's survivor support work and research, as well as the reporting and analysis by other trusted national and international organisations. ASP plans to publish more detailed findings from its ongoing research in 2026.

Background on CRSV against Men and Boys in Ukraine

3. There is now extensive evidence that Russian armed forces have perpetrated widespread sexual violence against Ukrainian women, men and children since 2014. In July 2025, the European Court of Human Rights, in *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, recognised that the Russian Federation was responsible for the "widespread and systemic use of rape and sexual violence" and the "use of rape as a weapon of war, an act of extreme atrocity amounting to torture."¹

¹ European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, [Case of Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia Judgement](#), 9 July 2025.

4. While initial accounts of CRSV committed against Ukrainians since the 2022 full-scale invasion by Russia predominantly involved women,² civil society and the UN have documented increasingly high numbers of cases of men being subjected to CRSV, particularly in detention settings. As the Commission itself stated in its report to the Human Rights Council in March 2025, “Russian authorities have systematically used sexual violence as a form of torture against male detainees.”³ Furthermore, the latest Annual Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence found that, of the 85 cases of CRSV documented in Ukraine during the reporting period, 52 of the survivors/victims were men and one was a boy.⁴ The UN Secretary-General has also put the Russian Federation on notice to be listed in the Annex to the Annual Report in future.⁵ In solidarity with survivor/victim-led organisations and in support of their advocacy, ASP and other partners submit that listing should be treated as a matter of priority.⁶

5. Most documented cases of CRSV against men involve Ukrainian military personnel being held as prisoners of war (POWs) by Russian military forces at detention sites and centres in the occupied territories and the territory of the Russian Federation. Hundreds of interviews with former POWs conducted by the UN and civil society have revealed a widespread pattern of torture, including acts of sexual violence such as rape and other grave sexual abuses, intended to humiliate and break the individual’s sense of self.⁷ For example, of the 12 former POWs interviewed by Human Rights Watch between July and October 2025, who had been captured in Donetsk and Luhansk between March and July 2022 by the Russian Forces, 11 reported experiencing CRSV in detention, including rape and threats of rape, forced nudity and their genitals being subjected to electric shocks.⁸ In OHCHR’s latest report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 180 cases of CRSV were recorded, 141 of which involved former POWs, all of whom were men.⁹ These latest cases confirmed patterns of CRSV documented by OHCHR since February 2022, which has since that time recorded a total of 664 cases of CRSV, 422 of which involved male POWs.¹⁰

² See for example, SBV Sub-Cluster Ukraine, Gender-Based Violence in Ukraine, Secondary Data Review, 27 April 2022.

³ Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine to the Human Rights Council, 11 March 2025, UN Doc. A/HRC/58/67,

⁴ UN Secretary-General, *Conflict-related sexual violence: report of the Secretary-General*, 4 April 2024, UN Doc. S/2024/292, para. 71.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Dr Albina Basysta, Alumni Network of Ukrainian Men who Survived Captivity and Torture, Andreiev Family Foundation, Mr Andrii Kostin, Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, Eastern-Ukrainian Center of Civil Initiatives, Global Survivors Fund, La Strada Ukraine, Legal Action Worldwide, Media Initiative for Human Rights, Numo Sisters!, SEMA Ukraine, Synergy for Justice, Truth Hounds, Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association “Jurjem”, Zmina Human Rights Center, 29th December: [Urgent Call for the Listing of the Russian Federation in the Annex to the Annual Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#), 2 July 2025

⁷ Human Rights Watch, [Russia’s Systematic Torture of Ukrainian POWs](#) Report, 11 December 2025.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, [Russia’s Systematic Torture of Ukrainian POWs](#) Report, 11 December 2025.

⁹ OHCHR, [Report on The Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 30 November 2025](#), 9 December 2025, p. 16.

¹⁰ OHCHR, [Report on The Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 30 November 2025](#), 9 December 2025, p. 16.

6. Ukrainian civilians detained by Russian forces on various charges (often held in the same Russian penitentiaries or remand centres as military detainees) have also been subjected to forms of torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence as a form of torture to deter expression of support for Ukraine.¹¹ Since February 2022, OHCHR has documented 135 cases of CRSV against detained civilians, 94 of which involved men and one concerned a boy.¹² CRSV against civilians outside of detention settings has also been reported, affecting mostly women in Russian-occupied territories.¹³ Notwithstanding civil society efforts, information on CRSV committed against LGBTQIA+ persons remains limited and likely under-documented.
7. CRSV against POWs and civilians in Ukrainian detention has also been recorded but to a lesser extent. Since February 2022, OHCHR has documented 79 cases of CRSV perpetrated by Ukrainian officials against Russian and third-country national POWs and conflict-related detainees, 67 of which involved men.¹⁴

Documented Experiences of CRSV in Russian Detention

8. Since 2024, ASP has been working with survivor-led groups and held interviews and focus group discussions with formerly detained civilian Ukrainian men who are survivors/victims of CRSV. Survivors/victims report being held in both formal (police stations, detention centres, penal colonies and correctional facilities) and informal (basements, garages, schools) detention sites, mostly in areas that came under Russian occupation, including Kherson, Sumy, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Chernihiv and the Crimean Peninsula.
9. Survivors/victims have reported experiencing various forms of torture and ill-treatment while in Russian detention, including: physical beatings using fists, pipes, rifle butts and clubs; electrocution through old military field telephones and wires attached to different parts of their bodies such as heads, legs, nipples and genitals; sexualised torture in the form of threats of rape, rape, beatings while naked, intrusive cavity searches and deliberate physical harm to their genitals; psychological torture through sleep deprivation, humiliation, mock executions, threats of violence (including towards their families) and polygraph tests; inhumane conditions, including overcrowded cells, inadequate bedding, insufficient and unclean water and food, and the denial of medical care; and forced labour, including being forced to build trenches and fortifications. Survivors/victims reported that the perpetrators included a mixture of Russian forces and Ukrainian collaborators. Among the Russian actors identified were the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Federal Penitentiary Services (FSIN).

¹¹ World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT): ZMINA Human Rights Center and Media Initiative for Human Rights, [“You’re loyal to Ukraine – Are you a Nazi?”: Torture and other violations as crimes against humanity by the Russian army in Ukraine](#), 18 July 2024, pp. 41-42.

¹² OHCHR, [Report on The Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 30 November 2025](#), 9 December 2025, p. 16.

¹³ The Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Ukraine: [Investigating Wartime Sexual Violence](#), 4 March 2025.

¹⁴ OHCHR, [Report on The Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 June – 30 November 2025](#), 9 December 2025, p. 16.

Impact of Torture and CRSV on Survivors/Victims

10. Former Ukrainian POWs and civilian detainees have reported both extensive physical and psychological trauma because of the torture they experienced in Russian detention facilities. Of the thousands of POWs that have been returned, for example, many had disfigurements and injuries including skull damage, internal bleeding, fractures, missing teeth, and limbs.¹⁵ For those who suffered sexual violence, the consequences can be life-changing.¹⁶ As documented in other contexts of CRSV, conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, paranoia and sexual trauma are frequently reported amongst survivors/victims.¹⁷ Survivors/victims have reported a wide range of psychological symptoms following CRSV, including flashbacks, insomnia, suicidal thoughts, memory loss, as well as other forms of cognitive decline. Chronic injuries, such as lasting urological and reproductive problems, have also been reported.
11. Beyond the physical and psychological impact of CRSV, survivors/victims have described significant personal, economic and material impacts on their lives. Many detainees discovered upon their release that they had lost identity documents, property, businesses and jobs, all the while trying to cope with trauma, displacement and the loss of personal and professional networks. For some men, trauma is compounded by the loss of livelihood and the ability to economically support themselves and their families, disrupting a social expectation in many households that men should act as primary providers. These experiences can make it harder for men to seek assistance and reintegrate into society. Women survivors/victims of CRSV have described equally devastating impacts.¹⁸ The families of survivors/victims also suffer trauma around the disappearance and state of their loved ones once returned, particularly if multiple members of the same family had been detained and tortured, with little state support available to them.

Barriers that CRSV Survivors/Victims Face in Ukraine

12. As the Commission will know, the Government of Ukraine, international agencies and local civil society have responded to the pattern of CRSV in important ways, including in their response to male survivors/victims of CRSV.¹⁹ Different mechanisms and services have been put in place to document and investigate incidents, offer rehabilitation to survivors/victims, and prosecute perpetrators, coordinated by bodies such as the Atrocity Crimes Advisory

¹⁵ The Kyiv Independent, [Years of torture, abuse in Russian captivity take shocking toll on Ukrainian POWs](#), 2 September 2025.

¹⁶ NHK World Japan, [Sexual violence survivors in Ukraine plead for justice](#), 16 April 2025.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, Opinion: [Silent victims of sexual violence, Ukraine's male POWs deserve real support](#), 8 October 2024.

¹⁸ JurFem, SEMA Ukraine, Numo Sisters, [Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Experiences and Perspectives of Women Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ukraine](#), 22 September 2025, paras. 15-17.

¹⁹ Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Visit to Ukraine: Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Jill Edwards, 20 March 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/55/52/Add.1.

Group (“ACA”) and the Inter-Cluster Coordination system. The Protection Cluster, composed of UN agencies and civil society, has a gender-based violence sub-cluster within which there is a Working Group on the Needs of Male Survivors of Sexual Violence.²⁰ At the government level, the Office of the Prosecutor General has played an active role in addressing CRSV, including through the establishment of a CRSV unit and nine regional war crime units with investigation capacity.²¹ As of October 2025, the Prosecutor General’s Office documented 381 cases of CRSV affecting 243 women, 138 men and 23 children.²²

13. Despite these efforts, however, survivors/victims have stated that they continue to face critical barriers to accessing support, including societal and institutional stigma, a lack of tailored care, and bureaucratic exclusion. While some general services exist, such as mental healthcare support open to the public or financial aid for war-affected families, these are rarely accessible or targeted at civilian male survivors/victims of detention and sexual violence. Most of the available support is fragmented, short-term, or offered by NGOs and peer-led groups, rather than by state institutions. Where more structured responses to CRSV have been attempted, they have often been underfunded and focused largely on women survivors.²³ This is partly due to the limited availability of specialised healthcare providers that are able to respond to the specific needs of male survivors,²⁴ and the lack of medical professionals sensitised about male-directed CRSV.
14. Survivors/victims of CRSV have also reported that sustainable financial and livelihoods support for civilian former detainees is lacking.²⁵ Interim reparations which were made available through the Global Survivors Fund pilot project for survivors/victims of sexual violence, for example, were described as insufficient in providing long-term security or recovery. Furthermore, state services are primarily directed at former combatants, who receive support through the Ministry of Defence. For civilian survivors to receive state support, recognition of their victim status is required from the Ministry of Development of Communities, Territories and Infrastructure, a process which interviewees have described as slow, opaque and discouraging. In many cases, their applications have been rejected. Other compensation mechanisms such as The Register of Damages for Ukraine, created by the

²⁰ Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Cluster Working Group on the Needs of Male Survivors of Sexual Violence, [Terms of Reference](#), 17 February 2023.

²¹ Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Visit to Ukraine: Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Jill Edwards, 20 March 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/55/52/Add.1, para. 96.

²² Global Survivors Fund, [Urgent Interim Reparation pilot project for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence](#), November 2025.

²³ Inter-Agency Working Group on Combating Sexual Violence Related to Russia’s Armed Aggression against Ukraine and Assistance to the Survivors (IAWG), Outcomes of the realization of the Plan for the implementation of the Framework of Cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations on the Prevention of and Responses to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, Reporting period: 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024, May 2025, p. 10.

²⁴ The Guardian, [“‘Carved on bodies and souls’: Ukrainian men face ‘systemic’ sexual torture in Russian detention centres”](#), 29 October 2024.

²⁵ ASP, Alumni Network of Ukrainian Men Who Survived Captivity and Torture, December 29th, [Joint Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment](#), Alice Jill Edwards, 22 September 2025

Council of Europe, also pose significant barriers for many survivors/victims. It is only open for claims for houses damaged or destroyed by Russian aggression post-24 February 2022, an exclusion which is a deep source of concern for Ukrainian civil society and survivor-led groups, particularly as the patterns of abuse being documented today often involve the same perpetrators, locations, and methods as those used prior to the full-scale invasion.

15. To offer a more long-term solution to CRSV survivors/victims, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a bill in December 2024 on their legal status (Law No. 4067-IX), the first legal act to define sexual violence and offer a legal framework for emergency services and monetary payments to survivors/victims.²⁶ The implementation of the law is yet to be seen, however, with some survivors/victims concerned about the Government of Ukraine's ability to fully fund payments and services for them.²⁷
16. In terms of emergency shelter and accommodation provision, male survivors/victims of CRSV have reported a lack of support available to them.²⁸ Some sheltering or housing assistance options exist for women former detainees, as many domestic violence NGOs have made provisions for them since the beginning of the war. A temporary housing programme for displaced people also exists, but it is overwhelmed and does not prioritise the most vulnerable. Those survivors/victims without updated identification or formal registration are also often completely excluded from being able to access these programmes. Moreover, there is a shortage of affordable legal services at the national level, particularly for civil proceedings and assistance to access social services or to appeal the decisions of state bodies. Free legal aid has been offered to survivors/victims, but it does not cover all their legal needs (such as support to pursue remedies, appealing administrative decisions, or engage in processes linked to documentation loss) or take into account the complex legal situation created by occupation.
17. Regarding the investigation and documentation of survivor/victims' experiences and associated violations, various international agencies are supporting these efforts, including through the development of manuals for local civil society to conduct investigations that meet international standards,²⁹ and to guide prosecutors and service providers supporting all survivors/victims of CRSV,³⁰ and male survivors/victims specifically.³¹ Significant documentation and reporting of CRSV cases by civil society is also occurring, gathering

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, [Ukraine Parliament Adopts Bill on Legal Status of CRSV Survivors](#), 12 December 2024.

²⁷ ASP, [Submission to the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment: Input for the upcoming report on "Global Trends and Developments on Torture,"](#) 15 May 2025.

²⁸ ASP, Alumni Network of Ukrainian Men Who Survived Captivity and Torture, December 29th, [Joint Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment](#), Alice Jill Edwards, 22 September 2025

²⁹ OMCT, Justice Rapid Response, Media Initiative, Zmina, [Roadmap and methodology for the investigation of crimes against humanity committed by Russian forces in Ukraine in the context of the full-scale invasion](#), 13 June 2025.

³⁰ Council of Europe, [Working with victims of sexual violence during armed conflict: A Manual for Ukrainian prosecutors](#), December 2024.

³¹ Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), [Guidance Note – Working with Male Survivors of Sexual Violence in Ukraine](#), 18 December 2023.

evidence to share with established accountability mechanisms and establishing best practice. Coordination, however, remains a challenge. CRSV survivors/victims frequently report that they have been interviewed multiple times by different actors, including Ukrainian authorities, civil society and the media. When interviews took place, interviewers often failed to obtain full and meaningful informed consent from survivors/victims regarding their statements. Survivors/victims reported that they were often unable to share their experiences fully as they were not asked about CRSV, did not feel comfortable disclosing details, and were not provided with clear information on how their statements would be used. They have also described a lack of follow-up, creating a deficit of trust for survivors/victims wanting to engage in justice processes.

Conclusion

18. While there have been concerted efforts to meet the needs of all survivors/victims of CRSV in Ukraine in an evolving and complex context, ASP's research and work with male survivors/victims and peer support groups reveal that several critical barriers still stand in the way for them to access basic services such as legal representation, medical and mental health assistance, financial support and accommodation. There is an urgent need for state-funded legal assistance to support survivors/victims with navigating access to services, specialised healthcare provision that responds to the specific needs of male survivors/victims, the creation of safe, survivor-centred pathways for investigation and the removal of bureaucratic hurdles to recognising a survivor/victim's status for civilian detainees, among others. The perspectives of survivors/victims must also become part of programmatic design and should inform and improve service provision and justice processes. ASP is actively working to address these barriers and advocate for the implementation of the above-mentioned solutions, with a more comprehensive research paper out in June next year.