



War crimes
of the armed forces
and security forces of Ukraine:
torture of the Donbass
region residents

PHOTOGRAPHS ON THE COVER

From the top down:

- students holding the EU flag on the EuroMaidan (*source: TASS*);
- Ukrainian policemen on fire after a Molotov cocktail attack by supporters of the EuroMaidan (*source: TASS*);
- 'Maidan self-defence units' using the symbol of the SS Panzer Division Das Reich (the units were later transformed into the 'Azov' punitive battalion) (*source: social networks*);
- members of the 'Azov' punitive battalion of Ukraine (*source: social networks*);
- Ukrainian civilians captured by an illegal armed group under the leadership of Ukraine presidential candidate O. Lyashko (*source: social networks*).

From left to right:

- torture of Ukrainian civilians captured by Ukraine presidential candidate O. Lyashko (*source: social networks*);
- bodies of executed civilians bearing torture marks, discovered in a mass grave near the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka after the Ukrainian armed forces retreated (*source: IIA Russia Today*);
- OSCE observers at the gravesite of executed civilians at the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka (*source: social networks*);
- the Ukrainian side during the exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and the Donetsk People's Republic (*photo from the archives of M. Grigoriev, Director of the Foundation for Democracy Studies*);
- exchange of prisoners (*photo from the archives of M. Grigoriev, Director of the Foundation for Democracy Studies*).

**WAR CRIMES OF THE ARMED
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Introduction

This report was written by a non-state organization ‘The Foundation for the Study of Democracy’ (headed by M. Grigoriev) and the Russian Public Council for International Cooperation and Public Diplomacy (presided by S. Ordzhonikidze) with the assistance of V. Dzhabarov, S. Mamedov, I. Morozov, S. Markov and other members of the Committee for Public Support of the Residents of South-eastern Ukraine. For the purposes of investigating specific cases of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, experts of the Foundation interviewed the ex-prisoners released by the Ukrainian side, in some cases five or ten minutes after the exchange. The report written by the Foundation includes the results of interviews with over 100 prisoners released by the Ukrainian side. Experts of the Foundation conducted the interviews in the period from 25 August to 4 November 2014.

It should also be noted that, according to those interviewed, the Ukrainian side releases only those prisoners who are in relatively satisfactory physical condition. Thus, one may conclude that the situation in Ukraine regarding torture is more serious than the one described in this report.

¹ The majority of the interviewees still afraid of possible punitive and unlawful measures by the Ukrainian side against their families, most of their names in this report have been changed. However, as part of legal procedures, a video of each interview has been recorded and personal data – first and second names, age, and place of residence – collected.

As the European Court of Human Rights opined, the Convention on Human Rights prohibits in absolute terms torture, irrespective of other circumstances. Moreover, it is assumed in the law of the European Union that ‘the State is responsible for the actions of all of its agencies, such as the police, security forces, other law enforcement officials, and any other State bodies who hold the individual under their control, whether they act under orders, or on their own accord.’ Unlike other clauses of the Convention related to rights, Article 3 makes no provision for derogation (reservations) in the event of a war or other emergency threatening national security. Article 15 paragraph 2 explicitly states that there can be no derogation from Article 3 within the Convention.

The information collected by the Foundation for Democracy Studies gives grounds to believe that the Ukrainian armed forces, the National Guard and other military units of the Ministry of the Interior of Ukraine, as well as the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) systematically and on purpose violate Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights that reads, ‘No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.’

The extent to which torture is being used and the fact that this is done systematically prove that torture is an intentional strategy of the said institutions, authorized by their leadership.

Commenting on their practice of committing torture, Liliya Rodionova, deputy head of the Committee for Refugees and Prisoners of War (Donetsk), who is personally engaged in the exchange of prisoners, says the following about the prisoners that the Ukrainian side releases, ‘Almost everyone released comes back with their ribs and legs broken and teeth ripped out. There is not a single person with no marks of beating. Treatment does not begin until right before the exchange. There is a guy with eight gunshot wounds. Even at the hospital, he was beaten. They stuck fingers in his wounds. They use pliers to rip out teeth and beat

¹ «Prohibition of Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment under the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 3)», Council of Europe, Interights, 2008.

right in the wounds. Many come back with fractured skulls. One of the torture tools is an awl that they use for stabbing prisoners. Lately, they have been seizing ordinary people, not members of the self-defence forces. They use gunpowder and electroshock to torture people, they brand them. Some were thrown into a pit with dead bodies, crushed with a shovel bucket, had a smouldering iron stuck in their mouth. People were kept in iron containers with no source of oxygen. The torture techniques are sophisticated and brutal, they leave the victims maimed.

Those in need of medical treatment, even with diabetes, receive no medical assistance. Prisoners from our side can be told by the colour of their skin. It is greyish. Each time an exchange is to take place, we draw up a list of acute patients, but the other side won't release them.' Simon Verdian, a volunteer helping the Committee, who was himself released in September 2014, says, 'I know of cases when prisoners had gunpowder spread over their genitals, were branded with hot iron, executed by shooting in front of other prisoners, sent to a mine field, crashed with shovel buckets into the ground and left in a pit of dead bodies for the whole night. Most of their meals consist of bread and water.'

PART I.

Methods and circumstances
of torture committed
by the Ukrainian armed forces
and security forces

An overwhelming majority of prisoners held by the Ukrainian side are brutally and systematically beaten.

Andrey is one of the victims. Here is what he says about the beatings and how he was hung from a hook at the SBU, 'We were arrested by SBU officers dressed as traffic police. They took us to the checkpoint and threatened us with guns saying "We'll shoot you and no one's going to do anything to us for that." They threatened us with electric shock torture, kicked us on the head. We were still at the checkpoint at that time. The handcuffs were always so tight that my hands turned blue. Then I was taken to the SBU where they continued with their beatings but this time they used plastic bottles filled with water; they handcuffed my hands behind my back and hung me from a hook. They took everything I had on me – all of my personal belongings, my phone, cash and credit cards – everything I had on me. Nothing was given back to me, even when we were to be released in the exchange.'

Sergey, a member of the self-defence forces also says he was hung on a chain by his handcuffed hands, 'we were captured not far from Lugansk and were taken to a helicopter landing site and then from there, on a helicopter, to another one. After that we were put in a pit. My friend Alexander caught it harder: when he was taken in, they broke his nose, hit him repeatedly with a rifle butt on the head, fractured his skull and broke his lower jaw. Then we were loaded in a helicopter and this time taken to Kramatorsk.

There, in Kramatorsk, we were, of course, thrown again into pits, handcuffed; we were hung from the ceiling on chains and beaten. Then they took us to the town of Iziium where we were handcuffed to a radiator with bags on our heads and strapped to a rack. My hands went numb; all this continued for three days. Then I was taken to the SBU, where they took off the handcuffs and the bag, cleaned and dressed the wounds on my hands. Then the exchange happened.'

Yuriy, one of the victims, says, 'After the "tumbler" beating, I was locked up in a 1.5 m by 2.5 m room made of concrete and handcuffed to an anchor strap; someone put me in the chair and took the blindfold off me. Later, a man in a military uniform, not saying his name, began asking questions as to who I was and where I was from, how and why I had gotten where I had gotten. He pointed at the green chevron with embroidered dill on it on his left sleeve saying "I am proud to be a Uke!" They took all the money I had on me, gold – both my rings, from the secular and the religious wedding ceremonies, and my chain and the cross. The man spoke quite politely, did not threaten or anything, just said that I was lying, turned around and walked out of the room. After a while, two Ukrainian soldiers wearing camouflage and yellow armbands came for me and started beating me. They kicked me and beat me with a stick freshly cut from a maple tree. They kicked me from my knees all the way up to my face, my hands, and only when I fell to the floor did they stop. Then they calmed down and left, after some time the officer came back saying that if I did not start talking, the same would be happening regularly and constantly.

During the night, almost every two hours, soldiers wearing balaclavas came to beat us, and did so professionally. They kept asking me if I was an FSB agent.'

The captured women are frequently raped. Here is what Yuriy, one of the torture victims, says about Ukrainian soldiers from western Ukraine (he could tell that by their accent) beating up and raping a captured woman in the room next to the one where he was being held:

'One night I heard a woman who was being beaten cry. Those young soldiers (aged from 18 to 25, hardly older) were speaking Ukrainian, but with the same accent they have in western Ukraine, meaning some of the

words were Polish. Then, those youngsters (there were four or five of them, I gather) started insulting her; that is they were raping her, beating her and laughing like horses. That was not a laugh of a human being, meaning they were either high or drunk. They enjoyed beating and raping her very much. As to what exactly happened there, I learned later when that woman told me herself. Just the things I heard were insulting for me as a person.'

According to accounts by the victims, the Ukrainian army, the National Guard, various units of the Ministry of the Interior and the Security Service of Ukraine employ a whole range of torture techniques.

Thus, a large number of victims assert that the torture techniques used include burning skin with the gas burners or burning-hot objects and burning various inscriptions into the skin of the prisoners.

Here is an account by Alexander, member of the self-defence forces, of how the National Guardsmen burnt him with a burner and hung him by his arms:

'We were ambushed and captured by the National Guard. For three days in a row they kept torturing us, they would beat us and burn us non-stop; they would suspend us from the ceiling. I was hooded and they burnt me with what I think was a gas burner.

They hung me by my arms; the scars have not healed yet and I cannot feel my right arm, it's numb. My ribs still hurt. Those people, they would kick me, and tie my hands behind my back and strap a hand grenade safety pin to my finger. You move – you pull the pin. As a result, I had to sit still through the night so as not to pull it. I had to sit still but sometimes even wanted rip the pin out. Some asked to be shot, but those people would say that it was too easy of a death, though they repeatedly put us against the wall menacing with a gun, pulled the trigger but there was no shot, just the sound. Some of us asked them to shoot them, to stop torturing them, but the answer was that it was too easy of a death for us, that we were no human, traitors of our country. They are not human at all; they are animals.'

S. Stankevich, a member of the self-defence forces, describes the tortures inflicted on him by the National Guard – the word 'sepr' (short for 'separatist') was burnt into his chest with a red-hot chain and a Nazi swastika was burnt into his buttocks with a red-hot bayonet-knife:

‘On 24 August 2014, we were taking someone to the border. On our way there our car was shot at. The driver and I were taken to Kramatorsk, where we were tortured, questioned, beaten by National Guardsmen. They burnt the word “sepr” (separatist) into my chest and a Nazi cross into my buttocks. After three days of beating, we were taken to the office of the Security Service in Kharkov. Only after spending 24 hours on the stone floor in a bathroom did we join the others in the mass cells. We had to pay for the treatment ourselves. I was released yesterday together with the others. The Security Service of Ukraine allocated 1,500 hryvnias for medicine so that all wounds could heal they would burn skin using a chain. They burnt a German cross into my thigh using a red-hot bayonet-knife. They beat me so hard they injured my eye; I cannot see with that eye now.’

Michael, a member of the self-defence forces of the Donetsk People’s Republic, who was taken prisoner not far from the town of Volnovakha, says, ‘Later on, when I was transferred to the SBU, more people arrived. They showed the word “sepr” burnt into their bodies, swastika – into their buttocks and stars – into their backs. All of the burns were third-degree burns.’

Another victim, whose name is Roman, says, ‘I was arrested on 5 April 2014 when crossing the border. At the pre-trial detention centre in Kharkov, I met a man who had had his soles burnt with red-hot iron. I do not know where he is now. He was not in any of the buses which brought us to the location of the exchange.’

The methods of torture being used include crashing different parts of the victim’s body. For example, Alexey, a member of the self-defence forces who was taken prisoner on 26 August 2014, describes how the soldiers of the Ukrainian army hit him on his toes and knees with a hammer and a sledge:

‘When I was captured and they put me face down on the ground, the only thing I heard was, “Let’s take the big one. Get rid of the short one and the old one.” There were nine of us in the group. We were put in an APC and taken to an unknown locality; later it became clear that it was the 11th reconnaissance battalion.

It was there that they started hitting us on the toes with a sledge and on the knees and on the legs – with a hammer, they beat us with shovel handles...at night they tied us to some fence, stripped to underwear, and poured cold water on us throughout the night. In the morning the beating continued, and at lunchtime we were taken to some headquarters where there was more beating. Later at the SBU office in Iziium the treatment somewhat improved. We would have one or two meals a day, sometimes they could forget about us at all. Then the exchange happened.'

Here is an account by Oleg, also a member of the self-defence forces, of the brutal torture that he suffered and of how Ukrainian soldiers crashed his friend's toes with a sledge:

'We were arrested at a checkpoint. At first, there was no beating, but then some people from a punitive battalion came, and that is when the beating began. They split my lip, jumped on my chest and back, beat me with rifle butts and with barrels of their rifles on my spine. The three of us were tied up, hooded, and put into an APC; the other five people were executed at the checkpoint. They brought me to some headquarters and the beating continued, they poured water on me. In the evening I was put in some barn and later another man joined me. The third guy was being tortured outside. They crashed his toes with a sledge and were pouring cold water on him throughout the night. In the morning they put us in a car. They got us hooded and tied our eyes with scotch tape. We were brought to some place where the beating continued, meaning they were beating several people at a time. They used a rubber hose for beating. Then we were put into a car yet again and brought to their headquarters in Kramatorsk where they continued with the beating. They executed the beating in groups of three to four people, used electro-shock devices, made us kneel with bags on our heads and fired their guns near the ear. Then their commanding officer came, took us and put on a chain in a pit, handcuffed. I could not stand on my feet, nor could I lie down, so I was hanging on that chain because my ribs and fingers were broken.'

Here is how Andrey, another victim of torture, describes the use of a torture technique called 'tumbler' beating:

'I was arrested based on a denunciation just because I stayed in town. The National Guard and the SBU captured me. They took me to

Kramatorsk and tortured me for three and a half days. They beat me with a maple stick on the elbows and up to the neck and on the knees. My whole body was blue. They hit me on the stomach, too, causing internal bleeding. Then they proceeded to the so-called “tumbler” beating. It is when two men come up to you and hit you on the head with rifle butts. One of them stands in the front and the other in the back, then one on the left and the other on the right and finally you are kicked in the stomach with a boot and you black out. After that I was just lying on the floor. When I was brought in for medical examination, the doctors that were examining me, were shocked by what they saw. All that part of my body from the elbows to the neck and the knees was one big bruise.’

Yuriy, also a victim of this torture technique, says, ‘On 10 September 2014, I was arrested and taken to the airport of Kramatorsk. I was handcuffed to a chain one meter long. After 15 to 20 minutes two men approached me making almost no sound (I was blindfolded and only by the sound of footsteps could say there were two of them) and began the “tumbler” beating, that is started beating me with the flat side of a rifle butt – one of the men hit me on right side of the head, then on the left side, pushing me forward, then the other one hit me on the forehead, which made me lean back, after which I got kicked in the abdomen. I blacked out and fell. I don’t know how long I lay there unconscious. Someone came up to me and explained that it had been a “tumbler” beating. They made me sit on a stool some five meters away and handcuffed me to another chain. I was sitting when (I don’t know how much time had passed) again two men approached me and did the same thing. I blacked out once again, fell to the floor and wet myself. They kicked me in the stomach very, very hard somewhere close to the liver, the beating was professional.’

Here is how Igor, another victim of torture, who was arrested on 14 September by the Dnepr battalion, describes another torture technique called a ‘swing’: ‘...so they take a hex bar. They force your feet between your hands, in handcuffs, and pull the bar over. Then they would rotate me by the bar and leave me hanging like that. I thought my bones would fall out. My hands still won’t listen to me, here and here.’

The so-called ‘Bandera garrotte’¹ is used as a weapon – both for intimidation and torture.

A nurse named Olga, who was captured on 15 October 2014, says,

‘During the questioning at the SBU, one of them showed me an iron wire in the form of a spiral. He asked me, “You know what it’s called? It’s called a ‘Bandera garrotte’. I will be strangling you with it until you start talking.”’

Yevgeniy, a self-defence fighter captured on 10 September 2014 by the SBU, says, ‘At the SBU, they put a garrotte round my throat, kicked me and beat me on the head and in the kidneys with a rifle butt, hooded me, poured water on me. And later on, at a pre-trial investigation facility, beat me on the head with the Criminal Code of Ukraine.’

Electric shock is a common torture tool used by the Ukrainian armed forces and divisions of the Ministry of the Interior.

For instance, Igor, one of the victims of torture who was captured on 14 September 2014, says, ‘Last time, they made me hang by the bar for twenty minutes, then took me down, started pouring water on me and gave me electric shock with an electroshock weapon.’ Stanislav, another victim captured by the Azov battalion, also describes this method of torture: ‘during the beating, my ribs were broken, rib cage displaced and lungs damaged. Then they brought me to the court where I signed, under threats, some documents. I did not even have a chance to read them trough. Those people kept beating and threatening me. They put a damp cloth on my skin and applied electric shock. It happened often. My rib cage was crashed. Later, I had a lung surgery. They beat me on the head and hands. My head swelled up, I could not move my arm and almost all my ribs were broken and liver displaced.’

Alexander, a member of the self-defence forces, describes the electroshock torture he was put through: ‘They forced their entry into the house, tied my hands together with a cable tie and put me into a minivan.

¹ Stepan Bandera – leader of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), is mentioned in the records of the Nuremberg process as a fascist collaborator and agent of the Abwehr of the Wehrmacht; by an order of the Ukrainian President P. Poroshenko, the UPA’s anniversary has been declared national holiday.

The route took about two hours. Then they got me out of the car and I heard someone being led right beside me and very aggressive remarks towards that someone. I heard cries and threats, and then a gunshot and the sound of a human body falling to the ground. Someone said, “Why did you dig out such a small hole?”

I was led into a basement where they had me sit on the stairs with one of my hands handcuffed to a pipe behind my back. After a quarter of an hour, I heard them leading out a man. And again, they were yelling at him, threatening him and I heard a gunshot and the same sound of a body falling to the ground.

The guard would come and kick me and beat me on the head and other parts of the body. They once poured water over me, tied my hands behind the knees, took off my shoes and attached one electrode to my hand and the other one to my foot. All this time, for about twelve hours – I do not know for sure how long – until the evening of the following day, until 5 or 6 p.m., I was being questioned and tortured. They attached wires from a battery to my hand, poured water and switched on the current. I blacked out several times and just as I came to, they would pour water and after some time continued the questioning.

I also remember I was brought in for questioning when someone put a hand grenade into my palm and pressed it against my hand. I think it was done so that the hand grenade had my fingerprints on it; then they took off the cap I had on and began the questioning. During the torture, they said they had some sort of a terrarium where they threw people and there was nothing left of them afterwards.’

The torture victims indicate that the Ukrainian army and law enforcement bodies have recently started to employ a torture technique called ‘waterboarding’. Previously, this method was used by the American secret services.

Here is what says one of the victims named Vlad aged 18, ‘I came home from Donetsk. In the afternoon, a girl I know called me and suggested meeting up. There were three other friends with me. As we were getting out of the taxi, a minibus drove up to us and we were arrested. I was hooded and dragged somewhere. They began the questioning straightaway: they

put me on my back with a cloth on my face and poured water. My hands were handcuffed. My hands were tied behind my back and I was lying on my back. I blacked out and they brought me to. It happened three times. And each time they brought me to. Then they recorded me testifying. They took me to an investigator and drew up a protocol saying I had been driving around Donetsk in an ambulance car looking for the wounded.'

Denis, another victim of torture captured by the Ukrainian National Guard on 31 July 2014 and handed over to the Azov battalion, describes the same torture technique: 'I was blindfolded; they put a cloth on my face and poured water. I could not see anything. And my hands were handcuffed behind my back. They were holding my head from behind and poured water over the cloth that was covering my face. I do not know whether they were pouring water from a teapot or a bottle...I felt as if I was drowning. Then they brought me to... and continued doing the same.'

A large number of the people interviewed said that the Ukrainian troops were sending some of the prisoners to minefields. For example, Vasily, a member of the DPR self-defence forces who was captured not far from the village of Petrovskoye on 18 August, says, '...then they dragged me to a pit. Two men were sent to the minefield. I heard seven explosions. They were going to execute me by shooting.' Konstantin, a torture victim who was also captured on 18 August, says, '...then I was sent to Kramatorsk. There I was put into a pit, occasionally beaten and insulted. Then new prisoners arrived and all attention was focused on them. A paratrooper came up to one of them and took him and another guy somewhere. Later I found out that they were sent to a minefield.'

Alla, the President of a humanitarian foundation, says, 'At the Kramatorsk airport, boys young enough to be my sons yelled insults "we will rape you and send you to a minefield".'

Almost everyone says that the Ukrainian army and punishment battalions kneecap and run over feet with military vehicles. A mock firing squad is also a common practice.

Michael from the self-defence forces says, 'I was arrested during an operation. Two of my comrades were killed, other two escaped and I was among the captured. They tied our hands and put into a car. We arrived

to a place unknown to me. At first, we had to sit in a pit but then we were brought in for questioning. I could not feel my hands.

I saw a guy standing waist-deep in a hole in the ground and being buried with a shovel bucket and then the truck run over him. Two members of the self-defence forces were sent to a minefield but one of them said, "No, I'd prefer you shot me dead right here." Then they started shooting his toes first, then going up all the way to the groin, every new bullet hole about five centimetres from the previous one. When the shooter was done with one leg, he proceeded to the other one. He was shooting an assault rifle.'

Denis, another victim who was arrested by the Ukrainian National Guard on 31 July 2014 and given over to the Azov battalion, says, 'They threw people into a pit full of dead bodies. Bodies of the people they had executed by shooting. Then they threw us into that pit; it had a specific smell. I felt as if I had been executed, too.'

Vladimir, a fighter from the self-defence forces of the Donetsk People's Republic who also suffered acts of torture, describes the threats made to his family and a mock running over with an APC, 'I was taken prisoner on 5 July 2014. On our way somewhere in the car I was being beaten. When we arrived, they threw me into a pit. During the questioning, my hands were tied, I was being beaten; they wanted to shoot me in the knee. Then they put me on the ground under an APC and acted as if they wanted to run me over – in order to scare me. Then they dragged me from under the vehicle and beat until I lost conscious. They then threw me into a waste pit and started shooting right next to me, then dragged me out and continued with the questioning. I kept blacking out throughout the questioning. We had to spend the night in a pit, in the rain. The next day, we were loaded into a car and taken to the SBU. There, they continued beating us and threatened our families with death. After that, we were taken to a pre-trial investigation facility where we underwent a medical examination; then they left us alone.'

A member of the self-defence forces named Anatoly describes how drunk Ukrainian soldiers shot dead one of the female prisoners: 'In early September a guy I know asked me to meet with him. He said someone wanted to meet me and ask me to join the self-defence forces. I met with

him. We sat for a while; he bought me beer and said, "I need to move my car a little closer." As soon as he left, six soldiers with assault rifles came out, accompanied by a policeman. At the municipal police station, they began talking to me in a very rude way.

I was taken somewhere and was locked up in a refrigerator. They beat me, kicked me in the ribs both from the left and from the right. They smothered me with a plastic bag, strangled me with handcuffs and suspended from the ceiling. When I got my jaw displaced, I could hardly chew.

After that, I was supposedly transferred to Iziium. We were kept in a basement of what seemed to be a boiler station. They would get drunk, come to us and playfully fire blank cartridges and shoot at the ceiling. Then people from Right Sector came, drunk as well. Among the prisoners, there was a girl name Katya, from Kramatorsk. They shot her dead when they got drunk.

Then three men came in; one of them with a Kalashnikov in his hands and another one with a Makarov pistol loaded with live ammunition. They went from one prison cell to another shooting, then came to her (as far as we could tell), shot at the ceiling and then after another shot we heard a hoarse sound she made; one of the cellmates said her last word was "Why?" And that was it. There was then a lot of noise and shouting. The next day they acted as if nothing had happened.'

A typical intimidation method used by the Ukrainian armed forces, punitive battalions and the SBU are threats to the families of the captured. Another method of psychological pressure is keeping prisoners in the same cells as criminals.

Under such threats, most of the captured sign the testimonies written for them. Here is, for example, an account by one of the victims named Pavel: 'I was captured on 9 July and beaten. My girlfriend was taken, too, and brought to the military base. They forced her to attest to my being the commander of a unit that was taking down helicopters. They told me that she would not leave the base, that they would rape her in front of me and kill in the end. They gave me blank sheets of paper to sign and forced me to confess to being the commander of that unit, and then let her go.'

Here is an account by Konstantin, a member of the self-defence forces who was tortured and beaten in a 'press-cell', of the threats made by the SBU officers to 'cut his wife's and children's heads off':

'On 26 May 2014, I went to Kharkov on family business. Four men knocked me down and gave me a ten-minute beating with fists and feet. They broke my rib and put guns to my head saying they would kill me.

They took me in a car to some place where there were people in uniform. They had listening devices but kept beating me to make me confess to working for the Russian Main Intelligence Directorate. So they beat me, broke my left eardrum; I could not get up from the bed for four days. The beatings were rough. I spent about a month there. They said they would cut my wife's and children's heads off. They would say, "If you do not confess to anything, we will cut your wife's and her little bastards' heads off. If we don't do it, Right Sector will. We are partners." They mentioned Andrey Beletsky who is now the leader of the Azov battalion. I was afraid for my family, so I signed the documents. However, later I was put through a 'cell press' and 'was given the finishing touch' at the investigation cell.'

In some cases, threats against relatives are actually carried through. Igor, another victim detained by the Dnepr battalion on 14 September, says, 'It turns out my wife was tortured. They took her too, and held her in the cell next to mine. They broke all of the toes on her left foot. And I signed all the papers.'

Vladimir, yet another victim, tells that, aside from threats to his relatives, he was placed in a cell together with actual criminals:

I was detained on 29 June 2014 at a GAI checkpoint on the Kiev-Kharkov highway. When I entered the checkpoint, I was taken by the SBU. We went out to the car; it was open, and inside were two TNT blocks and a map with some marks on it. Neither the map, nor the blocks were mine.

In the SBU quarters they beat me, and violently, and emotionally abused me. They threatened that they will make their daughters prostitutes.

In detention, I was placed in the same cell with veritable criminals, with murderers and drug addicts. For the first time in my life, I saw people shoot drugs, it was a real shock. Then I was transferred to another cell, and the criminals were even worse there.'

Those detained by the Ukrainian side suffer torture at various stages: directly when taken prisoner, during transportation, after being handed over to this or that unit, under preliminary or principal interrogations, in detention facilities, in courts, etc.

When asked to define the entity carrying out the torture, victims name the National Guard, various groups under the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Right Sector, various units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU).

For example, Alexander, a self-defence fighter, says, 'I was taken prisoner. My friend and I were held in a cellar. They demanded we answer their question – how much we sold Ukraine for. I tried to explain that this is my land, I was born here and grew up here, and I didn't sell anything to anybody. Those who guarded us there in the cellar, young men of 25-28 years old, kicked us in the liver, the kidneys; and when one of them got tired, the other took his place. The first one went under the code name Tyoma, the second was Veter, and that one liked to jab an awl into my left shoulder blade. All this was happening in the cellar of the building near the checkpoint. I knew I couldn't stand it anymore, and I attempted to smash down the door, but they said if I tried that they would hang a grenade on it. First, they shot me in the leg, then there were other shots, but those only winged me.

'Then they actually took us to the city, to the hospital. No case was opened against us, but there were talks about prisoner exchange. People came from a different battalion and wanted to take us to exchange, but the first ones wouldn't let us go. I don't want to get into detail – this is too hard for me.'

Sergey talks about how he was severely beaten on the way to the SBU quarters (those were SBU officers who later tortured him and his wife). 'We were captured at home. SBU people came wearing masks, hammered down the door, and began beating me right in front of my wife and ten-year old daughter. My wife started having a heart attack. They searched the flat, planted two grenades there, then put me in a minibus and continued beating me on the way. The papers they had said some nonsense, that I was an agent of the Russian Security Service. They told me that if I didn't

sign them, they would kill my wife. When in the SBU quarters, I signed everything. They'd broken three of my ribs while beating me on the bus. I found this out at fluorography. My X-ray images were replaced so that there would be no problems in the temporary detention centre.'

Another victim says, 'I was in the self-defence forces. They captured me, stabbed me with a knife, and beat me with pieces of metal, on my spine, my legs, too. They demanded I confess to being a terrorist, and so on. They used an electric shocker on me. Then they tied a wire to my legs and started twisting this knob. The shocks were severe. What's really outstanding is that one beating was right in the court hall, in front of the judge. He saw everything. They said if I don't put my signature on the papers, they will bring my children, my family in.'

Artyom, taken on 13 June in Mariupol, testifies, 'They started beating us right away, brought us to the airport, and placed us in the cold storage. They tormented us. All wore masks. We were held there for three days, and then taken to the SBU quarters. We had broken ribs, and no medical aid was given. They abused us physically, put weapons in our hands, so that we would leave fingerprints, and threatened us.'

Some of the victims questioned say that SBU officers prefer to use servicemen from other Ukrainian military units to torture prisoners, but are still present at the torture sessions.

For instance, Alexander, captured on 4 August 2014, talks about being strangled, tortured by means of electric current, and forced to shoot himself – all in the presence of SBU officers. 'In the evening, they would beat and question me. All of the interrogations were the same. One of the sessions lasted ten hours, and in that time, I was not given a drop of water, the shocker battery ran out, and they beat me. Then they changed their tactic and began to strangle me. This went on for five days. SBU people were present at interrogations. They constantly tried to provoke me. They said they'd execute me, but fired above my head and sent me to the cell. Then they gave me a gun to shoot myself, and beat me until I pulled the trigger, but it turned out there were no bullets.'

Some of the victims say that they were subjected to excruciating torture right after being wounded or directly in hospitals. Practically

everybody attests that medical help is either unavailable or insufficient.

For example, Dmitry was under fire at a checkpoint. He was admitted to the hospital with multiple gunshot wounds. He talks about how servicemen of the Ukrainian National Guard tortured him and other patients in the very same hospital right after surgery:

I was taken prisoner in September 2014. At the checkpoint, the National Guard had my car under fire. I had bullet wounds in my hip, lower back, and chest. I was taken to the hospital, went through surgery, and was then placed in the ward for prisoners of war, and handcuffed. Bandages were changed only once a week. Two of the wounds festered.

For three weeks, drunken soldiers of the National Guard came to the ward to ask, "How much did you sell Ukraine for?" Then they would land blows over the whole of my body. We lay there handcuffed to our beds, and they would come and beat us up, they were drunk and carried machine guns. One would approach and strike you in the face, and another into the wound. They would torment us like that, then leave, drink more, and return to start again. This went on for days; they would not let us sleep. They pushed gun-butts into our wounds and threatened to cut our tendons with knives. They shouted at the medics to not give us painkillers. They said I wouldn't last long.

They poked their knives in the arm of another self-defence fighter, Alexander, just moved his bandages aside and picked at it. There was one other who would drive an awl into people's backs.

A man who was in the ward next to ours told us that he had just been driving his car. It had been malfunctioning, and he'd stopped to see what was wrong, and a National Guard vehicle pulled over. They captured him, took him to some building, to the cellar. For two days they tortured and tormented him.

Before the prisoner exchange they gave us injections, and for two days already I have not wanted to sleep. I don't know what they gave us, they didn't explain anything.'

Another victim says, 'They held us in the cold storage of the Mariupol airport. They would come in, put a gun to your head, then fire

a shot somewhere next to you. There were some guys – they made them lie on the floor and fired near their heads. Others yet were cut – one guy had tendons in his leg cut, and another was gun-butted into the head, his scalp almost came off. They said, you are nobodies. They would not give us food or water, would not let us go to the bathroom. They forced us to make confessions about being terrorists. No medical help was given. The only thing they would give us was Analgin, no matter what the problem.’

Alexander, a self-defence fighter, says that those kept in the SBU were not provided with adequate medical assistance either.

‘In the beginning of August 2014 we were driving in a car and got ambushed. A had a lot of injuries to my internal organs, and two ribs broken; one of the ribs punctured my lung, and blood flowed into it. They beat me violently, tied my hands with a rope, grinded me against the asphalt, I almost lost a hand. Then I was taken to the SBU quarters, and only after that to the hospital. They held me in the SBU for a month. There were people with shrapnel and bullet wounds; many of them are not taken to the hospital at all.’

Vladimir talks about what he saw in the SBU quarters. ‘In March 2014, I was taken to the Kharkov division of the SBU. People had been beaten up there; they lay with broken ribs and dislocated jaws. One got sick; he had a fever and was vomiting. Guards were called in, and they took him away. In the morning we asked where he was, but no one told us anything. I suspect he died. This is simply horrible. Everyone comes with injuries from there.’

Ivan, an anti-Maidan activist, says, ‘One day in late May 2014, I was going to Kharkov. At one of the stops a girl entered with a big guy of about thirty. He told her, “Watch it, no funny business!” they said their goodbyes and kissed, she sat down, and we moved on. I arrived to Kharkov, but I hardly made five steps when someone assaulted me, started tugging my hands behind my back, putting handcuffs on me, kicking me in the lower back, ribs, and legs. They put a bag on my head, set me in a car, one person on each side of me; all this was, of course, accompanied by swearing; they hit me in my liver area, on my head and neck. They led me into a building, then along corridors and stairways, up and down, then to another corridor,

shoved me onto the floor, and the cell door was banged to. I lay there for two hours, bag on my head, and headphones on my ears. In a while, someone entered and removed the bag, and it was the guy that had been seeing that girl off. He told me that under the martial law I would be executed by a firing squad, and my body dumped in a swamp. He punched me twice in the head, twice in the stomach, suggested I pray, put the bag back on, and went out. I lay there for some more time; then several people came, lifted me up, and led me away.

They took me to some other room, knocked me down, removed the handcuffs, started twisting my arms at elbows this way and that, and while doing it put machine gun bullets in my hands. They squeezed and twisted my arms, and one of them got hold of my neck and was strangling me so that I was out of air, and they kicked at my tailbone. Then they took me back to the first room, tied my arms with belts above elbow and at wrist level. I lay like that for a day, on the floor, my arms went numb, and I thought they were falling off. After that day I was taken to a small office: there was only one chair on which I sat, and a desk; a man was sitting on that desk, and it was the same guy from before, I later found out that he was a counter-intelligence officer and his name was Oleg. I was told, "You understand, you are a prisoner of war, no one is going to put you on trial, you will be executed." The officer who said that was playing a 'good cop'. Oleg didn't try talking at all, but got to beating me right away. I covered myself with my hands, bent down, he punched me in the back, the spine, the skull base, drove his knee into my head. Then again I was taken away, and again they didn't untie my arms, I was still in belts. I lay there some more time. The next day, as I understand, I was officially taken to the investigator, his name was Artyom. Oleg came, too, and slapped me a couple of times on the ears. The next day I was taken to court. There I was given detention in custody and taken back to the Kharkov SBU.'

Vladimir talks about being beaten by SBU officers. He says, 'On 26 July I was captured and taken to the Kramatorsk airfield. The SBU officers themselves did not manhandle me – they would go away, leaving me alone, and I would be beaten by servicemen of the 95th brigade. The

troopers dislocated my jaw and injured one of my ribs. I was taken to the Kharkov SBU, placed in a separate room where three field operatives hand-beat me.'

Sergey says, 'They beat me in the SBU, mainly hitting me in the kidneys and chest area. They would undress me, place me on the floor, step on my groin, and put a gun against my arm or leg. They were saying they would kill me or shoot me in the arm if I tried to run. They broke one of my ribs.'

Andrey who suffered a torture method called 'tumbler', says, 'No medical aid was provided at the detention facility I was in.' Vladimir, a DPR self-defence fighter, says, 'No medical help was given. Analgin was used as cure for any disease.'

In a number of cases victims were, after all, sent to hospitals and into surgery, but further adequate medical assistance was not provided. Stanislav, a victim who suffered electric shock torture and had his lung punctured, says, 'My head swelled up, my hand would not move, almost all of my ribs were broken, and my liver was dislocated. The detention facility did not take me in, but sent me to the hospital for surgery. Then I was returned to the detention facility, and no medical aid was provided there. They put a bag over my head; I could not breathe.'

Vast majority of the detainees questioned tell that by means of torture and threats the Ukrainian authorities made them sign confessions stating that they were agents of Russian secret service organisations. Overall majority of civilians captured by the Ukrainian Armed Forces could not endure the torture and threats, and signed any accusations relating to them.

For example, Sergey states, '...continued beating me on the way. The papers they had said some nonsense, that I was an agent of the Russian Security Service. They told me that if I didn't sign them, they would kill my wife. When in the SBU quarters, I signed everything. They broke three of my ribs while beating me on the bus.'

Ruslan, a self-defence fighter, says:

'I was detained on my birthday. They hit me on the head and then put a bag over it. Operatives in the SBU tormented us, threatened

our families. I took the blame for everything, and they sent me to the detention facility. For a month I lived with a dislocated jaw.'

A large number of the victims questioned point out specific places where the National Guard and the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been using torture on a massive scale or give code names of the people who subjected them to torture. For example, the National Guard's Dnepr-1 practice ground in the Dnepropetrovsk area is mentioned. Vladimir who was detained on 4 September 2014, says, 'They tormented and humiliated us there, threw people into pits with snakes in them or forced us to dig our own graves.'

Alexander tells how he had unknown medicinal drugs used on him and was subjected to torture and humiliation:

'I was accused of committing a terrorist act and assassination attempt against border patrol members. They started hitting me with clubs, kicked me in the head, then opened my mouth, and threw two cubes there that tasted sour. I started suffocating and losing consciousness.

Later, when I recovered, they gave me papers, and I signed them, and then they took me to the freezer. After that I was taken to the SBU quarters and there again given papers to sign. I refused to do it, and so four men in black uniform and masks, carrying guns, came into the office and started beating me. Then once more they began forcing me to sign those papers, and I did. They held us in the SBU for a while and then took us to the village, to the Dnepr-1 battalion. We were humiliated, thrown into pits with snakes; they fired shots near our heads and feet. Then I got out of the pit, and they made me crawl on the asphalt, on glass, and again fired next to my feet. When I reached the fence they gave me a shovel and said, "Dig a hole for yourself", and when I had done it, once more the shots were fired near my feet.'

Alexander also gives code names of the people who tortured them. '...young men of 25-28 years old kicked us in the liver, the kidneys... The first one went under the code name Tyoma, the second was Veter, and that one liked to jab an awl into my left shoulder blade.'

Also mentioned frequently are the Mariupol airport where detainees are kept in the industrial cold storage and subjected to torture, and the Kramatorsk airport.

Vadim talks about receiving beatings and threats to his family. ‘On 28 July I was captured in the Mariupol City Council. I was taken to the airport and put into the cold storage. There was not enough air. They hit me in the kidneys and knees, I lost consciousness and my ribs were broken. The guard always shouted, and we were often beaten. They threatened to kill my family, my daughter.’

Denis, captured by the Ukrainian National Guard on 31 July 2014, talks about that place as well. ‘I was taken to Mariupol, to the airport, where I was put in a cold storage cell that was switched off. There was no light, and everybody lay on the tile floor. It had vacuum operated doors, and you couldn’t breathe, it was stuffy and suffocating.’

Others state that the storage was turned on to cool down the cell, and temperature fell to minus four. Alexander, captured on 4 August 2014, says, ‘I was taken to the airport cold storage. Some shifts would forget to turn off the cooling, and the temperature would drop to minus four.’

Alexei, a self-defence fighter, talks about people being tortured at the Kramatorsk airfield:

‘I saw volley-fire systems being launched at the airfield. I was detained by SBU officers who brought me to the airfield and tortured me. I was hung by my arms in a pit: there were slabs, a rope attached to them, and handcuffs attached to the rope; I was stretched out there like that, and my eyes were covered. I was hit in the ribs, in the liver, and in the face. Everyone that was brought to that airfield was subjected to such torture and abuse. When men come to the temporary detention facilities, they are black and blue all over, beaten up, and some people’s hearts just give out and they die. Ninety percent of those who come from that airfield are like that, all beaten and disfigured. The 95th brigade is there; there were foreigners with Georgian and Polish accents.

Then I was transferred to the Kharkov SBU where operatives also beat me in the interrogation cell, as soon as I arrived. I was there for a month and a half, beaten black and blue. And while I was there they had my property, keys to the garage, to my car. They took computers and other technology from my house. For a month and a half they would not put forth any accusation against me.’

The victims interviewed also state that the Ukrainian side intentionally for long periods of time does not register its detainees and violates the procedure prescribed by law. For instance, Lilia Rodionova, representative of the Committee on Refugees and Prisoners of War, who herself was once detained by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, says, ‘...I was taken to the SBU, but according to the documents I was not there.’ Alexei, a torture victim, also talks about document falsification by the Ukrainian Security Service. ‘I was kept for several weeks in the SBU, and then they told me, “We are going to court, here’s your summons, you had come to court yourself first when we had summoned you as a suspect, and then in a week we sent you another summons.” I signed both.’

Based on the information collected by the Foundation, a clear conclusion can be drawn that most of the torture victims are not members of the Donetsk or Lugansk People’s Republics’ self-defence forces, but civilians. A ‘reason’ for arrest and torture of civilians by the Ukrainian side can be as simple as ‘possession of a telephone number of a Russian journalist’, ‘Caucasian names – Aslan, Uzbek’ in the personal phone, a phone conversation with ‘a deputy of the Donetsk People’s Republic’, ‘receiving medical assistance in the DPR’, etc. The same absurdity and lack of substantial evidence is characteristic of the other accusations. For example, Vladimirovich, a self-defence fighter, says that in the SBU he was accused of selling a Kolchuga passive sensor unit. ‘I was organising humanitarian aid in Slavyansk, and with two clergymen we went to the Crimea. When we were coming back, SBU officers waited for us at the border. Trial was the next day: I was accused of selling the Kolchuga system, sending fighters to train camps, having acquaintances in the Vostok battalion, etc. They tried strangling me, and put something in my water... When I was in the detention facility one man said that they had been tortured by Nadezhda Savchenko who hit the men in the groins.’

Alexei, arrested by SBU officers, says, ‘...near Slavyansk, to Evgenyevka village where their headquarters and filtration camp, too, were located... there were very different people there, mainly Donbass residents. Each of them had their own story, but mostly they were people

who were passing through a checkpoint and were deemed suspicious for some reason and sent for additional interrogations.

As an example, I can tell you of one case when a man was passing a checkpoint, and the officers took his phone, started looking through it and in contacts found names of people from the Caucasus – Aslan, Uzbek. They detained the man and stated he was a terrorist accomplice and knew all the Chechen militants. They took him away to a military box van and beat him for several days, asking him, “Where are the Chechens hiding?”

Some people were arrested only because when officers looked at their passports, they saw that all of their children’s names were written in the same pen. The officers would claim, “The passport is fake, all of your children’s name are written in the same pen”, and the passport owner would say, “I had lost my passport, it was reissued, and the information rewritten.” – “No, you are an agent”, - and he would be sent to a filtration camp, too.’

In a large number of cases the Ukrainian authorities – to be able to exchange prisoners – would arrest citizens who have not committed any offence. For instance, Natalia, 58, says, ‘They came to me and said that there’d been a call from my phone and I had to go with them. They took me to the airport, kept me in the cold storage, didn’t give me any food. The floors were tiled, and the cold storage engine was turned on every 20 minutes. They claimed I was a traitor to my country and would be given a life sentence. In the SBU, they quickly drew up all of the documents and sent them to the court. On the next day of my stay in the detention facility, I wrote a request to have everything explained to me, but I was not admitted. Then they led me away again, put me on the bus and said I would be taken to the prisoner exchange.’ Alexander says, ‘I was detained when entering Kharkov; I had been going to hand over a package to a person there, upon my friend’s request. Then I was sent to the SBU building. I was held there for half a year and released under prisoners of war exchange.’

In many cases Ukrainian civilians are also subjected to beatings and death threats to their families. For example, Gennady says, ‘I called my friend, we were going to the gym. At a bus stop I was pulled out of my car; none of them gave their names, they put me face down on the road pavement, kicked me in the ribs, broke my glasses, and injured my

eye. They put a bag over my head, handcuffed me and set me in their car. In the car I had to listen to threats to my family and myself. Finally, I lost consciousness. I came to my senses from the smell of ammonia. After arriving to the SBU, I saw that I had this eye injury. Then they took me to the exchange.'

Artyom says, 'I was taken near the auto shop. They told me someone had pointed me out and claimed I was an accomplice... They brought me to their department, searched all through my car, beat and threatened me. They took away my phone and ID papers. However, there was no evidence, and they had to let me go. I returned home; then they called me and said that they still had my car papers. I went there again to get them back. They forced me to sign the documents. They beat me again and then brought me to the hospital, asked me not to file any complaints. After that I was brought into trial and sentenced, and then taken to Kharkov, to the prison. I was there for one day, and then they exchanged me.'

Alexander says that in some cases arrests are carried out with participation of the Right Sector and upon information received from it. 'I was pushed onto the ground and tied up. They said they were from the Right Sector. I was taken to the place of my official registration. They had a search order, and during the search they planted bullets in the flat. The SBU said they would disregard the bullets if I told everything. I told them I didn't know anything. After that they led me to the other room and beat me twice. They threatened to kill my family. Toward the evening, a lawyer came and demanded they call an ambulance. The ambulance arrived, and the medics gave me first aid, but I was refused hospitalisation unless I signed the report. So I did.'

In some cases, arrests are not carried out as it is envisaged by the law and are not registered. For instance, Mikhail says, 'I was detained about the end of July. They brought me behind some garage complex, handcuffed me to a tree and started hand-beating me, kicking me, and hitting me with wooden sticks. Several times I lost consciousness from pain. They wanted to know about the self-defence forces. I said I had nothing to do with them. They took my money and told me to get home on my own. I returned home and rested for a while. Sometime in the

beginning of August they came back. They brought me to the district department, began beating me, putting a bag over my head and not letting me breathe.'

PART II.

Torture and inhuman
treatment:
victims' testimonies



Below are some detailed stories of the people who were subjected to torture by servicemen of the National Guard, the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and the SBU.

Igor, detained on 14 September by members of the Dnepr battalion, talks in detail about how he was tortured: put on a rack, on a 'swing', shocked by electric current; how his wife was captured and tortured as well. He also gives code names of those who subjected him to torture at the Dnepr-1 base:

I was captured by the Dnepr battalion. I had gone fishing, and they detained me, took me to the local police station and immediately began beating me. For that, they used everything at hand – sticks, their own feet; they hit me on the head with their guns. My head was swollen with so many lumps that it looked like a hedgehog. Then they put me on the rack – it means arms drawn behind your back, your hands in handcuffs. They twisted my arms mercilessly. Then they made something they called a “swing”. It’s a long hexagonal crowbar. Your hands are in handcuffs under your legs, and the crowbar is pushed through. They would swing me around by this bar, and then leave me hanging on it. My bones almost pushed out through my skin. My hands are still not working properly in those parts. Last time they held me there for 20 minutes, then released me and started to pour water over me and use shockers. This went on until I began to black out.

They would not let me sleep. If I started falling asleep, the torments were repeated. It turned out they tortured my wife, too. They took her and held her in the cell next to mine. They broke all of the toes on her left foot. I signed every paper with accusations against me and was taken to the SBU. I still don't know what they wanted to find out. And I have no idea why they needed to do all those things they did to me. I studied history and even Germans would not torture people like those men did.

After the detention we were sent to Dneprodzerzhinsk, to the Dnepr-1 base. Code names of those who served there are X, Albina, and Max. They tormented us any way they wanted: they fired above our heads. Nearly everyone had broken limbs, but still they made us do push-ups. They almost buried one man alive in a pit. They wanted to kill me. This lasted for four days, and then we were taken to the Kharkov SBU for exchange.

There I had an ulceration. I was taken to the ambulance service in Kharkov. The doctors gave me an endoscopy and did all the tests, my ulcer was bleeding badly. But the thing is, they'd taken me in under a false name. They said, just give them any fake name and address.

The doctors wanted to hospitalise me but were forbidden to do that. I was brought back to the SBU, and until I was exchanged I had to suffer unbearable pain. This ulcer added to the bruise marks all over my body.'

Pavel testifies that the reason for his arrest and torture was his telephone conversation with a deputy of the Donetsk People's Republic. 'First they talked politely to me, but then a man entered and started kicking me in the ribs. I felt sick, and they gave me a pill. I had convulsions and my body went numb. They wanted me to confess that I was a gun spotter. However, this is not true. They'd monitored my phone conversations, but I had just talked to a deputy of the Donetsk People's Republic, nothing more. They took me to the Dnepr-1 practice ground, and there they would simply throw people in three meter deep pits for no reason whatsoever, and made us dig graves.'

Denis, detained by the Ukrainian National Guard on 31 July 2014 at a checkpoint and given over to the Azov battalion, says, 'Interrogations were every two or three hours. There were lots of things. They were drowning me. My eyes were covered – they would put a towel or a rag over my face.

I could not see. Also my hands were cuffed behind me. Moreover, holding my head from behind, after placing this rag on my face, they poured water down on me. I am not sure, from a bottle, or a kettle, maybe... I could not see. But it felt like drowning. Then they would bring me back to life. And again. I had already had a knee broken, and they saw the girdle on my leg, on my knee, and broke it anew. This happened on the first day. Then they put needles under my toenails. This felt as if someone was drawing tendons out of my neck. Like everything is drawn out of me, and the pain leaves me numb.

They would throw me in a pit with dead bodies. There were firing squad executions. They would push you in that pit, and there's that special smell associated with such an execution. But there were many other things. I know a guy who got four of his front teeth pulled out with pliers. And I saw a lot of people I knew put on those "swings" with crowbars.'

Vladimir was captured on 4 September 2014 by people in civilian clothes and balaclavas, and taken to the Mariupol airport. He says, 'On arrival they led me to a room and started tormenting me using a shocker on my forearm and heart area. They were drowning me. My head in a bag, they would force it down into water and not let me go until I started to black out. After all of that they tried to force me to sign some papers. I refused. They put me in a cell. The next day they took me again. They put a wet rag on my face and poured water over it. I began suffocating, and to make me suffocate even more they would also use a shocker on me. They hit me very hard on my back. My kidneys hurt for a long time after.

Then they brought me to Dnepr-1 near Dnepropetrovsk, where they have a practice ground. There they abused and humiliated us, threw people into pits with snakes and made us dig graves for ourselves. They tormented people horribly; I have no words to describe it.'

Konstantin says that he was arrested for having the telephone number of a Russian journalist, and gives an example of how the Ukrainian Forces sent detainees to the mine field: 'On 18 August 2014, I was arrested at a Ukrainian checkpoint for having a Russian journalist's number in my phone. At the interrogation they gave me an injection, and I felt very sick.

I started to lose consciousness, but they wanted my testimony. They began threatening that if I did not admit to being a separatist, they would not give me an antidote. I didn't care anymore, and I signed the papers just to make the pain go away. They gave me that antidote, and I did in fact feel better. Then there were threats of execution. After that, they sent me to Kramatorsk. There I was put in a pit, beaten and verbally abused from time to time. Then new people were brought in and all attention was drawn to them. A trooper approached one of those newcomers and led him and one other guy away. Later we found out that they were taken to a minefield. We were in such a state that each day we wanted to fight for our lives less and less. Of the people I'd seen two or three would not return. In about three days they loaded us in a car and took us away. There were six of us. While we were on the way we felt more at ease and started talking to each other. One of us, his last name was Kharitonov, had a face that looked like a giant bruise. I also saw how they brought in a guy and began beating him. They were asking if he helped to organise the referendum. He said, yes, and they accused him of being a separatist. Self-defence fighters were beaten and, as I heard put on hooks. The SBU has this practice: if you admit to being guilty, the prosecutor would ask for the minimum sentence for you. Many could not stand the treatment and agreed.'

Vasily, a DPR self-defence fighter detained near the village of Petrovskoe on 18 August says, 'The Ukrainian military convoy saw our car and started firing at it. We were captured, handcuffed and shoved into an APC. On the way we met two civilian cars and they fired at those from an APC too. One guy was still alive and they took him as well, tied him up and threw him in the vehicle. They brought civilians and us to the base. They hit us on the fingers, knees and lower back with a hammer. They injured my head and broke my fingers. They threatened to put me on a stake or saw my leg and arm off with a chainsaw. In the night they tied me to a tree and their leader came wielding a hammer and began questioning me. I said I didn't know anything. He hit my leg with a hammer. Then they dragged me to a pit. Two people were taken to the minefield. There were seven explosions. They were going to execute me. They told me to pray. I asked them to untie my hands, said it was my last wish. He asked if I knew

what holiday it was that day. I replied yes, it was the Day of Our Saviour. He said I was lucky and could consider this day me second birthday. They led me to the pit, there were chains hanging. Then I gave my testimony which they filmed.'

The story of a well-known Ukrainian sports trainer Pyotr B. Gilyov is available online. Let us cite his own words: 'I am a trainer, I have built a public sports organization. I was involved in establishing the Donetsk Republic. They [Ukrainian military — Ed.] knew that I was on the bus and they brought me out. That was a pure abduction. They brought me out of the bus and threw me to the ground... put a bag on my head, tied my hands and then I overheard a conversation and learned by chance that I was handed to Right Sector. Those latter did whatever they wanted to me. They are sadists. They get satisfaction from beating people and seeing people suffer and insulting them. I don't even know what they wanted from me. They would say whatever they wanted and answer their own questions; they weren't merely beating me, but rather trying to mutilate me just for the sake of it.

There were several of us there. We were all almost executed by firing squad several times and one of us was finally killed. He ran when they brought us out and they shot him dead.

They are pitiless. A human life means nothing to them. And no one holds them accountable if they shoot people dead, nobody cares. No one would ever ask them why they did that. In other words, those people do whatever they want. This gang is not solely Ukraine's problem. Indeed, Ukraine could cope with nothing and no one. I want the international community to learn about them because when they try to escape every one of them will go to Europe. They have tasted blood, they can obey no person and no law at all. This would be an enormous and extremely serious problem for the international community, for peaceful Europeans.

They were especially curious to hear that I was a karate trainer, a world champion and European champion. Having learned that they started torturing me with enormous ghoulish joy. It seemed to drive them mad that I got up time after time and they did not know what to do with me. That was the time they took up baseball bats, gun butts and

bladed weapons. They would come in every 25-30 minutes and beat me for half an hour just for the sake of it or for the sake of some infernal experiment...

Later on, I was taken by another battalion. You know how they did it? Just tied my hands behind my back and put a bag on my head again. In fact, I don't even know how I survived. They threw me on the back seat of a car and sat on me. That was how we travelled for several hours to Dnepropetrovsk. For the first three days I could neither get up, nor lie down myself. My cellmates helped me and held me by my arms. I had nothing to eat for about five days.

...It was also hard at the SBU because there they tried to provoke me. In their basement they handcuffed me to a pipe. There was no toilet, neither anything else. A man came and gave us food once a day. Therefore, we had to sit on the concrete floor, handcuffed to the heating radiator for two more days.

The SBU has mercy to no one. They maim people. Those who tell things there can hardly be blamed as few people could stand their torture. I know a family, one of them is a teacher of Russian, the SBU took her out of her apartment, and that was it.'

Yuri Yurchenko, an actor and a playwright residing in France became a war reporter and was seized by the Ukrainian Donbass battalion. Let us cite his story, though somewhat abridged, for journalists.

'In the morning of 10 June 2014 I arrived at Donetsk. There was a tent where one could enlist in self-defence forces. I enlisted. There were some more volunteers. Then they ranged us and lead somewhere. I had a feeling that I was walking to my death. I couldn't fight. I had never served in the army in fact. But I couldn't do otherwise. That was how I joined self-defence.

When my comrade Andrey Stenin was killed, two more war reporters were killed with him, Andrey Vyachalo and Sergey Korenchenkov. It was by mere chance that I was in a different car as usually we moved around together. Korenchenkov was my roommate. Stenin was at the backseat and two war reporters were at the front seats. They were wearing military uniform and had assault rifles. Drunken national guards shot the car. That

day they had lied in ambush by the road. When they saw that journalists were in the car, they pulled it away from the road and set it on fire. That was why it took so long to find Stenin... 95 percent of Western journalists come with pre-set clichés in their heads and care nothing about what happens in reality... I was taken prisoner on the morning of 19 August. The guys said I should be given a lift to Ilovaisk. I sat at the backseat and off we went. Then I noticed that they had taken that very road through Zugress. Then there was a storm of gunfire. When we got out of the car, they threw us to the ground and tied our arms behind our backs. After that they started to beat the tied people. They beat us with gun butts, with their feet, they hit us on our heads and knifed and bayoneted us. The blood was pouring down my face... I saw a foreigner wearing a NATO uniform and helmet. He looked very different from the Ukrainians and spoke with an accent. He approached me and said, "I've given up my business in New York because of you, you motherfucker." Then he swung me. Then he ordered us to run across the bridge. He was a US citizen of Ukrainian origin, a businessman... Another one, a thug called Semyorka smashed me to the ground and started booting me on my ribs. Then others came to beat me too. I felt my ribs were fractured and saw another boot about to hit my chest. I wanted to get up and realized I could not. The pain in my chest was so awful I didn't even notice how I was hit on my leg with a gun butt or something...

Then they brought us all to a school. There was some metal closet for tools. It was dark there and the closet was full of dust and dirt, nothing to sit on and no air to breathe. My face was covered in blood. But I had nothing of what other guys had to go through. I heard how they were made to run around the yard and crawl on all fours crying "Glory to Ukraine and glory to the heroes!", "Ukraine above all!" Isn't the 'Deutschland über alles' come back? And after that they asked us, "Where have you seen fascists?" What is it they are doing? Our locker was near the school workshop where kids have their vocational training, where there are workbenches. They brought the guys into that room and I heard them ask, "What am I taking, your finger or your ball? A finger or a ball? So?" Later on, I learned that they put the group leader's testicles in a screw vice and made another one,

the driver screw it tighter. We spent six days in the locker, I mean Miro a Slovak self-defence fighter and I...

When I was brought to my first interrogation, there was a Georgian named Irakly Gurgenovich. I don't know what his surname was. He was an intelligence adviser at the Donbass battalion. Later I learned that he had served 22 years in intelligence services and had fought in Abkhazia, Ossetia and abroad since the age of 18. He had studied in the US. During Saakashvili's presidency he was a senior official in Georgia... They were preparing to retreat. Once again, someone ordered to shoot the prisoners, but first, we were to put on military uniform. Then suddenly Irakly showed up. He just pushed me in a car...

In the town of Kurakhovo we were all thrown to some basement. At any moment the guards could break in and beat us with gun butts. They made the guys scratch Ukrainian anthem on the wall with a spoon and learn it by heart. They had to sing it every time the guards broke in. They also had to shout "Glory to Ukraine!" There was a sadist cook. He came often and beat the guys. Once he also hit me on my head and made me bleed. I was taken to the doctor and the one who accompanied me left me for a moment. I was standing by the wall on crutches. The cook looked down on me and asked, "So? Glory to Ukraine?" I said nothing. Then he hit me on my head with a bottle full of water. "Glory to Ukraine?" I was bleeding... There was an investigator. A very well-read and educated man. He quoted Jung, Freud, Nietzsche and *Mein Kampf*. An advocate of the overman concept. A professional. He was an expert in psychological treatment of prisoners... He told me, "It would be a piece of cake to get these guys of yours write everything we need. That you were their leader, that they accompanied you and that you were armed to the teeth. We will make you an international super terrorist and offer you to France in exchange for what we require. We will get everything we want for you. And if they don't agree, you will simply kick the bucket in this cellar"...

Irakly personally took care of the exchange. Certainly, they got a deal for me, a Georgian and two Donbass battalion commanders. Later on one of the exchanged officers named Chaikovsky (call-sign Artist) said at a

press conference in Kiev that they were exchanged for a group of Russian Army soldiers.'

Dmitry says, 'I was captured at a Ukrainian checkpoint, then brought somewhere and locked up in a container that resembled a refrigerator, there was fish in it. I was held there for two days and then brought to some hangar. Once we got there, they started hitting (mostly kicking) me in the kidneys. They said they had allegedly found a DPR identification document and 5.45x39 M74 intermediate cartridges among my belongings. Then another man joined them and they put me into a trunk and tied me up with handcuffs to the spare wheel. They took me to Volnovakha and beat me up there again. Then they brought us to the SBU office in Mariupol and threw us into a basement. Then they started beating us up again. After that, they took us to the temporary detention facility. Since then no one interrogated us, no one came or asked any questions. And then we were convicted.'

Sergey, a self-defence fighter speaks about provocations of the SBU. Having lied about being officers of the Federal Security Service of Russia the SBU officers simulated an attack on a Ukrainian army battalion. After this provocation they stopped hiding the fact that they belonged to the SBU and started beating up the hostage and his son. Threatening to kill his son, they forced the self-defence fighter to plead guilty to the charges. Sergey who was the victim, says:

'In the middle of August my son and I were captured by six SBU officers; they tied our eyes and hands and threw us into a car. They drove through the city with us all tied up in the truck and then brought us to an abandoned hangar in an abandoned the suburbs (I could tell by the sounds). They said they were FSB officers trying to save us from SBU. They also said they had allegedly brought us to a Lieutenant Colonel of the Russian armed forces. After that, they tied our eyes and hands again and took us to some forest where we stayed deep into the night. Then they put my son and me into the officers' car again playing the same game. They drove us about one hundred kilometres, then they untied us and said that they had an operation planned to attack a Ukrainian battalion by fire. One of them took a grenade gun out of the trunk and sat in the front

seat of a car, they drove about 700 metres down some dark alleys. Then we heard rifles firing into the air, the door swung open and they threw my son and me out of the car and started beating us up. There was a professional spotlight set up there and they took some pictures of us. After that, they put bags on our heads, threw us down on the concrete floor and began kicking us and breaking our hands.

Then they finally said they were SBU investigators. They asked me only one question, "Do you want your son to live?" "Of course," I said. They responded, "In that case you will sign a protocol of detention." I said, "I have no choice." They had already prepared the protocols. We signed them and they immediately took us to the SBU office. The investigator came in the morning, but he didn't ask many questions. In fact, they already had everything they needed for the case.

They said it was important for me to keep quiet and not to object during the court session. The judge delivered her verdict and we were brought to the temporary detention facility. But before that an investigator came up to us and said that since there was no conflict between us and them they would treat us well.'

Nicolai, captured by Ukrainian armed forces on 8 August 2014 says, 'My friend and I were driving in a car. Some armed men carrying assault rifles stopped us, threw us on the concrete ground and put bags on our heads; after that, they forced us into a car and drove off.

I am sure we were in Kramatorsk. They have a military base and an airfield there. There was always a humming sound most likely made by helicopters. From time to time they would take us to the street, beat us and make threats saying, "We will shoot you," "We will shoot you in the leg", "We will hand you over to a commanding officer who lost many soldiers; his officers will kill you."

Something else happened while we were in the car: there were six of us when we departed, one of us had no documents on him, but they were told that it was impossible to get in without documents. Most likely, they were talking about Kharkov. They took him out of the car right in the middle of the road and we heard several bursts of automatic gunfire, then they closed the car door again, started the engine and continued driving.

They would twist our arms, hit and kick us in the kidneys and in the liver. Upon our arrival to Kharkov, one of the men who was in the car with us was immediately taken to the hospital intensive care unit in. He had a surgery and then they brought him back to the SBU office.'

Vitaly, a member of the self-defence forces, speaks about beatings referred to as 'unpacking' and 'repacking' by the Ukrainian armed forces personnel.

'On 5 July 2014 I was working in my shop. All of a sudden, a few armed men wearing camouflage storm in and start asking, "Where is Dima?" No one explained to me who they were referring to and they started making threats, "Come out from behind the counter or I'll start shooting." They held a gun to my head and said, "I'm going to shoot you now, tell me where the phone is." They confiscated the cell phones, a tablet, a laptop, dash cams, cash from the counter and the self-service payment terminal. After that they asked for our passports, car keys and documents and confiscated them. They put a bag on my head and threw me into the trunk, tied my hands with tape and drove off. As soon as the car stopped, they immediately took me out of the trunk and started beating and kicking me, hitting me on the head. I blacked out and regained consciousness when they were dragging me into a trailer. The next day they took us out of the trailer, got us on our knees, removed the bags from our heads and we saw a weapons arsenal in front of us; they were filming the whole thing saying that we were DPR terrorists.

After that they put bags on our heads again and took us to the trailers, some of them were hitting us in the legs and in the kidneys along the way. They referred to this type of beating as "unpacking". In the evening they started dragging us into a pit. We spent a night and a day there under the rain. From time to time a soldier came down there and hit someone in the kidneys (they called it "repacking") and then wrapped us with tape.'

Pyotr, another member of the self-defence forces captured by the Ukrainian army near the city of Lugansk, also talks about beatings and attempts to bury people alive in a pit.

'They captured us, took us to an airport and started interrogating and beating us up. Then I was brought to another room, put on a chair and

somebody was shooting at me several times. After that, the only thing I remember is being asked my name, last name and patronymic and then it was all a blur.

Then they took us to Kramatorsk. They were beating us up there hitting on the soles of our feet. After that they dug a pit and started pushing us down there with a shovel. They wanted to bury us alive.'

Dmitry, another victim, tells about Galichina battalion soldiers burying him alive in a pit, simulating his execution and setting a bag on his head on fire.

'On 2 August 2014 the National Guard of Ukraine captured me wearing only a t-shirt, shorts and flip flops. They immediately put a bag on my head, handcuffed me and tied my legs with a band. They brought me somewhere, threw me into a pit and told me to pray. They were shooting right next to my ear setting the bag on my head on fire. I'm now hard of hearing in my left ear.

After that someone came for me. I'm not sure who they were, but I heard they belonged to the Right Sector. They put a bag on my head and took me to Slavyansk, where they threw me into a pit and tried to shoot me dead again. They said they belonged to the Galichina battalion. I had my passport with me and they tore it apart and threw it into the pit, then they threw me there too and started filling up the pit. They kept doing it until I was up to my neck in the ground, then their leader came up and ordered them to get me out. After that they took me to a temporary detention centre in Kharkov to exchange me later.'

Yuri, also a self-defence fighter, says, 'A city shuttle brought me to a National Guard's checkpoint. I saw a dark young man who had not even reached the age of twenty, he was undressed all blue and beaten up, his face was badly messed up, his body was covered in bruises and he was shaking. And they shot him. An officer came from the back – he was the one to give all the orders – and shot him in the temple. As for me, they kept beating me up and hanging me up with my hands tied behind my back. This is how I spent three days there.

Some time later, they brought four more young men and started beating them up severely doing the same to me from time to time. Once

they put us all into a lorry mostly made of iron; it was very hot inside and hard to breathe. They drove us around in it for twenty minutes before I started to lose consciousness – one of my ribs pierced a lung. Some old man even had his diaphragm ruptured with intestines falling out. They did not beat us at the SBU office. No medical assistance was provided unless they saw someone blacking out or dying. My ribs are now dented inwards. I can no longer feel the upper side of my thumbs. My head and body were all covered in bruises. They brought a young man from Lugansk captured by the Aidar battalion. His whole body was blue, he resembled one big bruise. Another young man came with us, he was tortured – they shot a bullet through his leg and cut his finger. Some men told us that they made our guys run through a minefield. Out of ten people only 5 came back.’

Aleksey, arrested on 20 June 2014 by the SBU officers says, ‘I was captured by some unknown men wearing police uniform. They twisted my arms, threw me down with my face to the ground, hit me a few times in my body and head, put a bag on my head, forced me into a car and drove somewhere. I think it was a SBU base disguised as a carwash, where for a few days I was being interrogated, beaten up, put under psychological pressure and humiliated.

Then they put me into a SUV going to Evgenyevka village, situated in the outskirts of Slavyansk, where their headquarters also used as a filtration camp were located. There were two military box vans in that filtration camp that served as places of temporary detention. Basically, there were two cars with small trailers spanning 16 or 20 square metres. I spent more than 20 days there and every day there were different people brought.

Beatings were conducted on a regular basis. They would wake me up at night, take me out of that box van and bring me handcuffed and hooded to some military men for interrogation. I remember being put on a chair and hearing questions coming from different directions, and then they would start hitting me in the head.

Detention conditions at the filtration camp were absolutely dreadful. People had to sit around handcuffed with a bag on their head or with a plastic bag fixed with tape around their eyes. When there was a shortage of handcuffs, they started using tie wraps to tie our hands and fingers. Of

course, they used to tie them up pretty tight. The worst thing happened when they filled this box van with people up to its limits, 17 or 18 men were sitting in the 20 square metres room. For several days there was no place to lie down. At times when there were too many people there, they stopped taking us out to the latrine; they just put a bucket in the corner and everyone urinated into that bucket.

They used to put us into a pit as well. There was a five metres wide pit and they would bring us there one by one or all at the same time. Sometimes we stayed in that pit for several days under the rain ankle-deep in water.

After that they brought me to the SBU detention centre. The cells there were cleaner and much more comfortable and we were being fed. The SBU officers did many things they will have to pay for. When the time came for me to come before the court, I had blood stains on my t-shirt as a result of “talks” they had with me, but they made me take it off and put on a clean shirt. The court sentenced me to a pre-trial detention and I was sent to the temporary detention facility and was exchanged later.’

Alla, the President of the humanitarian fund, says, ‘The National Guard detained us according to some list. They had something against me probably because I was helping the citizens. They told me to put my hands on the car and after that they put a bag on my head and taped it up tightly. My vein was pressed and I couldn’t move my head for three days. When I asked them to ease my sufferings because it felt like my head was about to explode they said, “You separatist are going to die. Do you have any idea how many of you are buried here?”

Eventually they brought us to the Kramatorsk airport. What was happening there was worse than any nightmare. They did not just torture people. They hit my husband in the liver just to make me say that Russia supplies weapons, which is not true. What do servicemen of the National Guard do? They put a bag on a diabetic woman’s head and strangle her, and when she asks for water they say, “We’ll give you some urine”.

It was so horrific that frankly speaking, I’m terrified even to think about it, just terrified. After that they took us to Iziium and handcuffed to some pull-up bar. We even slept handcuffed for three days and during all

of that time the only food we got was a piece of bread. Then they took us to the SBU office in Kharkov and locked us up in a cell. The conditions there were more or less acceptable.'

Pavel, a self-defence fighter, tells the story on how the National Guard tortured him and tore his wounds open, 'I was taken hostage on 19 July 2014. I was ambushed from three directions and taken hostage while being in critical condition. They tortured us there. They used to hit us in the heads and press on our wounds that immediately started to bleed. I have six bullet wounds and a shrapnel wound. They dragged us around, tortured and insulted us and took us out for execution.

The SBU sent us to the city of Kramatorsk where we spent a day at the hospital, then they took us to the SBU office in Kharkov, but they did not take us in, so we were sent back to the hospital again.

I lost a lot of blood; they hit my wounds, pressed on my shrapnel and bullet wounds, put their fingers into my bullet holes, twisted them there and laughed. They watched me bleed. They filmed their tortures and mockeries. It was the National Guard servicemen who did that. The next day they came to take us away and shoot us dead, but some other security guards did not let them do that.

The doctors did not even try to get the shrapnel out. One bullet was stuck in my arm and had broken the bone in two pieces; the doctors did not do anything about it because they just did not care. They applied some ointment and gave me some injections to relieve the pain. They did everything they could to stop me from bothering them, saying that my wounds would "heal on their own", "they would fester for some time and eventually heal, it is no big deal." I still have bullets in my body.

Then the doctors took me to the SBU office again even though I did not recover yet and had festering wounds. In the hospital there were people who were beaten up, had swastikas and "SS" letters burnt into their skin. Other people had broken bodies and faces, they were just unrecognizable, beaten up like boxing pears. Every part of their bodies was beat off with meat hanging from their bones.'

