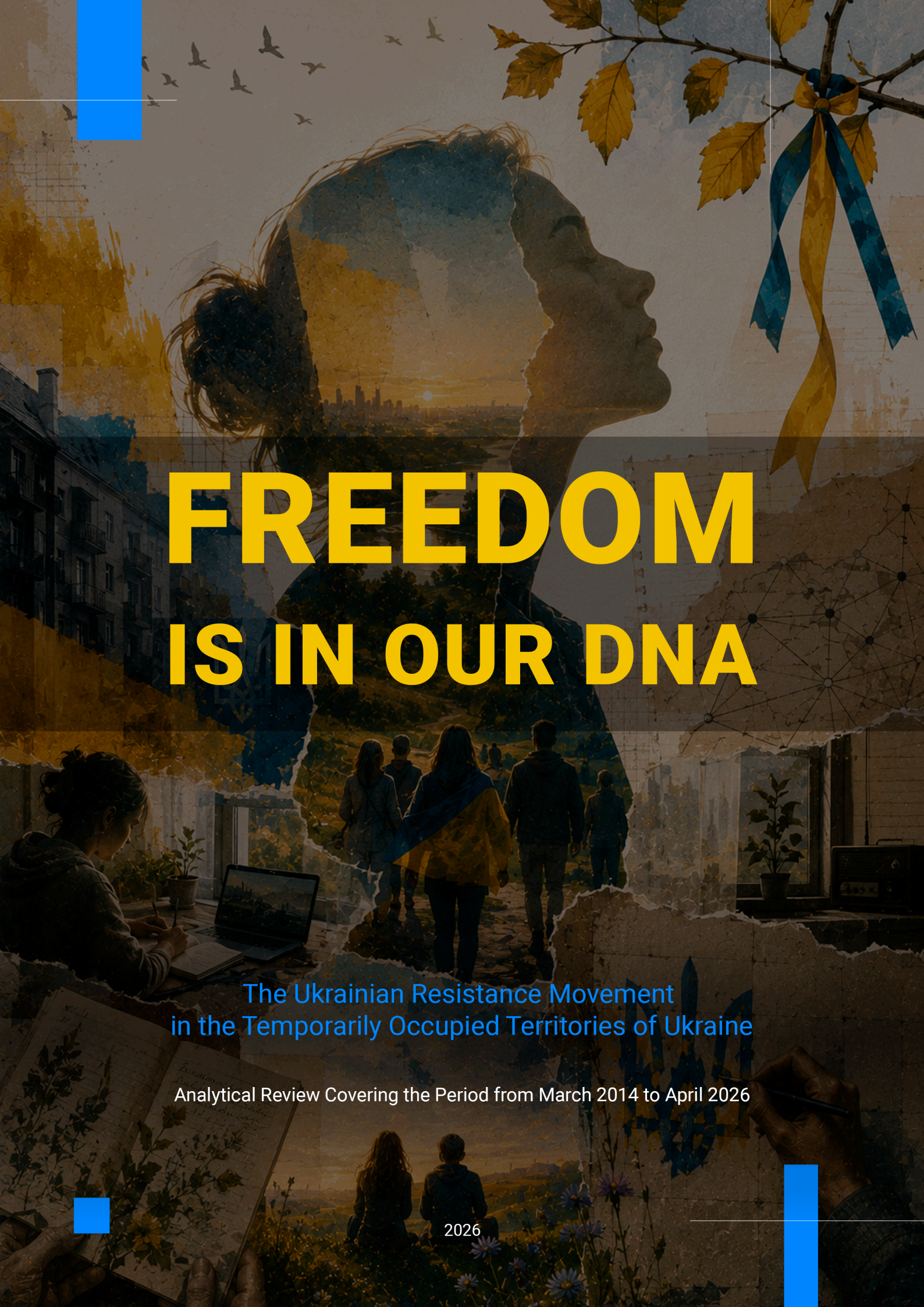




FREEDOM IS IN OUR DNA

The Ukrainian Resistance Movement
in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine

Analytical Review Covering the Period from March 2014 to April 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The publication **Freedom Is in Our DNA: The Ukrainian Resistance Movement in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine** is the thirteenth in a planned series of analytical publications examining the lives of people residing in territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation (TOT).

Previous publications in this series have focused on the humanitarian situation in the TOT, including access to food, water, healthcare, education, and housing. They have documented the crimes of filtration, unlawful detention, and the deportation of Ukrainian civilians; analysed policies of Russification and the eradication of Ukrainian identity; examined the characteristics of Russian propaganda; explored the creation of a digital ghetto in the TOT; and assessed restrictions on freedom of movement as well as the development of Russian military logistics across the temporarily occupied territories.

This publication is intended for a broad audience, including anyone interested in the living conditions of people in the TOT and in ways of maintaining contact with them. It may also be of interest to Ukrainian and international experts working on issues related to territories occupied by the Russian Federation. The analytical review will be particularly useful for officials and representatives of Ukrainian state institutions, as well as policymakers and decision-makers responsible for matters concerning the occupied territories.

The publication examines the institutional and legal foundations of the national Resistance Movement in the TOT, the non-violent resistance of Ukrainians to Russian occupation in both 2014 and 2022, and the methods of resistance employed since 2023, including civic non-violent resistance and partisan military activities in the occupied territories. More broadly, the document demonstrates how residents of the TOT continue to resist occupation on a daily basis despite facing life-threatening risks, support the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), and demonstrate to the world that they do not support the Russian occupation authorities and await the liberation of these territories. It also illustrates how non-violent resistance helps residents preserve their Ukrainian identity under occupation, while information-sharing and military assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine contribute to bringing victory over the occupiers closer.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to systematise and analyse methods of civic resistance in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories, beginning with Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk in 2014 and extending to the newly occupied territories of Ukraine during the first half of 2022, including Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts. The study also examines how methods of civic resistance evolved as the Russian occupation regime became established and consolidated in Ukrainian territories. In addition, the publication describes non-military forms of civic resistance aimed both at supporting residents of the TOT and at demonstrating opposition to occupation to the occupation authorities, the Russian Federation, and the wider international community. Particular attention is paid to military partisan activities in the TOT, conducted in coordination with the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and contributing to efforts to counter Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The study is based on desk research method and on the authors' own experience of communicating with residents of occupied territories. The primary source material for the analysis consisted of monitoring reports produced by the Luhansk Regional Human Rights Centre Alternative (Alternative) concerning life under occupation. In total, the study draws upon 54 issues of the *Life Under Occupation* digest prepared by the organisation's experts between March 2022 and April 2026.

These monitoring reports document evidence of terror perpetrated by the Russian military and occupation administrations, the abduction of civilians, the deportation of Ukrainian citizens, including children, unlawful mobilisation in occupied territories, humanitarian challenges, propaganda as a tool of pressure on the population, forced Russification, and acts of resistance by Ukrainians against Russian occupation. This information was collected by Alternative's experts from open sources, including national media outlets, social media platforms, Telegram channels, and official statements. The information was subsequently verified through testimonies provided by trusted contacts who remained in the TOT and were able to corroborate the reported facts.

RESEARCH CHALLENGES

Researching and documenting resistance in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories is particularly challenging because much of the relevant information remains confidential. When studying the Resistance Movement through desk research methods, researchers can rely only on information available in open sources, which is often difficult to verify and represents only a fragment of a much broader process. It is reasonable to assume that a more complete understanding of the Resistance Movement in the TOT will emerge after the end of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the liberation of the occupied territories, when the disclosure of resistance activities and the identities of those involved will no longer endanger their lives.

This study compiles and systematises information available in open sources in order to provide an overview of the Resistance Movement in the TOT, its methods, motivations, and the daily challenges faced by its participants. In determining the approach to describing the Resistance Movement, the authors adhered to the principle of "do no harm". This applies both to the safety and lives of members of the Resistance Movement and to the effectiveness of the movement itself in resisting occupation and supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT IN THE TOT: PARTICIPANTS' RISKS AND MOTIVATIONS

The Russian occupation authorities seek either to force Ukrainians living in occupied territories to leave or to sever all ties with fellow citizens residing in government-controlled areas and renounce their Ukrainian citizenship in favour of Russia's imperial project. In this way, they attempt to maintain control over the occupied territories. Nevertheless, many Ukrainians who remain under occupation do not wish to accept the ideology of the "Russian world" (Russkiy mir) and are determined to help Ukraine's Defence Forces liberate these territories as quickly as possible.

Participation in the Resistance Movement within the TOT **entails exceptionally high risks to both their freedom and life**. Today, virtually any public manifestation of a pro-Ukrainian position in the occupied territories may lead to arrest or enforced disappearance. It is important to note that, while there remains at least a semblance of legality within the Russian Federation itself, the occupied territories of Ukraine constitute a legal "black hole".

Tracking the whereabouts of Ukrainian civilians imprisoned by the Russian occupation authorities for resisting occupation is extremely difficult. The presence of such detainees within Russian places of detention is generally concealed, and they are frequently held incommunicado, becoming visible to the outside world only once a guilty verdict has been handed down. Inclusion in prisoner exchange lists is exceptionally difficult for detained civilians, and the number of civilians released through such exchanges remains extremely small.

Despite these risks, large numbers of Ukrainian citizens who continue to reside in the TOT engage in daily acts of resistance within the limits of their capabilities. Many resort to individual forms of non-violent resistance, seeking to preserve their Ukrainian identity and maintain connections with Ukraine. Others participate in network-based non-violent resistance activities, including the covert dissemination of Ukrainian symbols in prominent locations throughout the occupied territories and involvement in information and psychological operations directed against the occupation authorities. A further group of citizens join the partisan movement, which employs military methods of resistance.

At present, the methods commonly available in democratic societies for expressing opposition–

such as demonstrations, protest actions, public speeches, statements, or declarations—cannot be used in the TOT. Such forms of resistance were widely employed during the initial stages of occupation, when the occupation authorities were still weak and in the process of consolidating control. As occupation administrations became consolidated and the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) penetrated all levels of governance in the occupied territories, these democratic forms of resistance became not only impossible but increasingly dangerous for those who attempted to engage in them.

A number of experts argue that non-violent resistance in the TOT that involves some degree of public visibility, such as the activities of the Zhovta Strichka and Zla Mavka resistance movements, poses risks to participants that are disproportionately high compared to the potential outcomes¹. Other experts maintain that, despite these considerable risks, such resistance is critically important both for Ukraine and its allies in the struggle against Russian aggression and for the residents of the TOT themselves².

In October 2023, Elon Musk, the owner of SpaceX and Tesla, stated that there were no anti-Russian uprisings or resistance to Russian occupation in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories, where, in his view, many Russian-speaking citizens lived, and that it was therefore possible to agree upon a peaceful border between Ukraine and Russia³. Evidence of the Resistance Movement in the TOT refutes this claim and provides a deeper understanding of the situation in the occupied territories and the context in which negotiations on a ceasefire and a possible peaceful settlement between Ukraine and Russia are taking place.

At the same time, the Resistance Movement operates throughout all temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Those who have joined these initiatives demonstrate to Ukrainians living under occupation that they are not alone in their struggle, and show the world that the occupiers have not extinguished their desire for freedom⁴.

Responding to the question of why people resist in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories, one activist from the Zhovta Strichka resistance movement explained:

“I want my future children to live in a free and democratic country. I want them to have a choice about where to live and study, and to be able to travel freely wherever they wish. I want my children to see Europe, America, and Asia with their own eyes and to be free to choose their way of life, their way of thinking, and their path in anything they do. Russia will give them none of this⁵.”

¹ Kyiv Independent Published an In-Depth Investigation, Artem Skhidnyi, Facebook, 25 April 2026, <https://surl.lu/qghfefq>

² Several Highly Sensitive Issues Surround the Kyiv Independent Investigation on Zhovta Strichka, Andrii Dikhtiarenko, Facebook, 26 April 2026, <https://surl.lt/dpidwq>

³ Musk Calls for Normalising Relations with Russia and Finding Peace in Ukraine: Office of the President Responds, Espresso TV, 24 October 2023, <https://surl.li/rsswxf>

⁴ “These Are People Who ‘Fight’ Under Occupation Without Weapons.” How Does the Zhovta Strichka Resistance Movement Operate?, OMore, 19 February 2024, <https://surl.li/duoxpb>

⁵ From Missile Strikes to Spray Cans: How Ukraine's Resistance Movement Is Fighting Russian Occupation, Texty, 14 November 2023, <https://surl.li/mgjkzp>

For another activist, participation in the resistance movement is a way of signalling to Ukrainian military personnel and people living in government-controlled areas of Ukraine that they are awaiting de-occupation:



Flash mob organised by the Zhovta Strichka movement in Yalta to increase the visibility of resistance in Ukraine

“We must show that occupation has not broken us and that we are worth de-occupying. Military personnel are paying an extraordinarily high price for our freedom, and they also need to see that we are waiting for them. People in government-controlled areas of Ukraine need to see that there is something worth fighting for. In my view, even these small-scale actions show that we have not been broken.”⁶

Activists from the women’s resistance movement Zla Mavka identify demonstrating to Russians that they have not accepted the occupation as the main motivation for their activities:

“The worst thing for them is to acknowledge that we exist. Because then they would have to admit that they do not have the level of support here that their propaganda claims they do. That is our main task – to show the world that we exist and that people here are waiting for Ukraine!”⁷

There are other examples as well. One woman, whose husband was arrested solely because

⁶ “These Are People Who ‘Fight’ Under Occupation Without Weapons.” How Does the Zhovta Strichka Resistance Movement Operate?, OMore, 19 February 2024, <https://surl.li/duoxpb>

⁷ Zla Mavka: Ukrainian Women’s Resistance Under Occupation, *Ukrainer*, 27 November 2024, <https://www.ukrainer.net/zla-mavka>

he had participated in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in 2014, had no information about his whereabouts. Yet, she refused to give up and joined the resistance. When asked whether she was certain about her decision, she replied simply:

“Yes, *this is personal now*.”⁸.

Despite all the efforts of the occupation authorities, the majority of Ukrainians living in the TOT have not become “new Russians”. As a result, participation in the Resistance Movement becomes part of their personal story, helping them preserve their dignity and self-respect even under the harsh conditions of occupation.

⁸ “Burning Russian Flags Is Good for the Soul.” How the Women’s Movement Zla Mavka Resists Occupation, *Platfor.Ma*, 1 April 2025, <https://surl.li/ucahfx>

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT IN THE TOT

I LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The organisation of the Resistance Movement in the TOT is based on the Law of Ukraine “On the Fundamentals of National Resistance”⁹, adopted on 16 July 2021 and entered into force on 1 January 2022. According to Article 1 of the Law:

***The Resistance Movement** is a system of military, information, and special measures, the organisation, planning, preparation, and support of which are carried out with the aim of restoring state sovereignty and territorial integrity while repelling armed aggression against Ukraine.*

Together with territorial defence and the preparation of Ukrainian citizens for national resistance, the Resistance Movement forms part of Ukraine’s national resistance system. The Resistance Movement operates in territories where Ukrainian sovereignty must be restored – in other words, in the temporarily occupied territories¹⁰.

The tasks of the Resistance Movement are:

- ▶ establishing Resistance Movement cells and ensuring their acquisition of the necessary capabilities;

⁹ Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of National Resistance”, *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Legislation of Ukraine*, No. 1702-IX, 16 July 2021, <https://surl.li/juyvag>

¹⁰ National Resistance: An Overview of the Ukrainian Comprehensive Defence System, *Ministry of Defence of Ukraine*, 4 February 2025, <https://surl.li/ynblvk>

- ▶ obtaining, analysing, and processing intelligence data (information);
- ▶ obstructing the actions of the aggressor's (enemy's) troops (forces);
- ▶ countering the aggressor's (enemy's) occupation authorities and their collaborators;
- ▶ preventing the enemy from using local resources;
- ▶ encouraging the population of Ukraine to resist the occupation authorities and/or the aggressor's (enemy's) troops (forces);
- ▶ assisting groups of troops (forces) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the defence forces in carrying out tasks related to repelling armed aggression against Ukraine;
- ▶ participating in special operations (including intelligence and information-psychological operations);
- ▶ participating in the preparation of Ukrainian citizens for the Resistance Movement¹¹.

The leadership of the Resistance Movement is exercised by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine through the Commander of the Special Operations Forces.



Information concerning the forms, methods, and means used to carry out the tasks of the Resistance Movement, as well as information concerning interaction between the Special Operations Forces (SOF) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other forces and resources involved in the Resistance Movement, constitutes **classified**.

¹¹ Who We Are, Resistance Movement of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, <https://opir.org.ua/pro-ruh-oporu>

Individuals who voluntarily and confidentially participate in carrying out the tasks of the Resistance Movement are guaranteed protection of the **confidentiality** of their involvement, as well as **social and legal protection by the state**. In particular, such individuals are recognised as combatants and are entitled to obtain war veteran status in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection”¹². This takes place under a procedure established by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine¹³, ensuring that the fact of their involvement in confidential cooperation cannot be disclosed.

A number of regulatory and legal acts concerning the Resistance Movement remain under development by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

I INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK

National Resistance Centre

The National Resistance Centre (the NRC)¹⁴ is a unit under the Command of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine established to train, coordinate, and scale resistance movements against the occupation of Ukraine. The NRC began operating in late February 2022 following the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine¹⁵.

The NRC’s activities are aimed at carrying out the following tasks:

- ▶ teaching non-violent resistance in the TOT;
- ▶ helping the underground;
- ▶ gathering intelligence on the enemy;
- ▶ connecting underground networks;
- ▶ informing Ukrainians about events in the temporarily occupied territories.

¹² Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection”, *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Legislation of Ukraine*, No. 3551-XII, 2 October 1993, <https://surli.li/wqnrkj>

¹³ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On Approval of the Procedure for Granting Combatant Status to Persons Engaged in Confidential Cooperation Who Participated in Resistance Movement Activities in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine, the Area of the Anti-Terrorist Operation, the Area of Measures to Ensure National Security and Defence, Repel and Deter Armed Aggression, or Other Territories Where Military (Combat) Operations Were Conducted During the Performance of Such Tasks”, *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Legislation of Ukraine*, No. 1452, 29 December 2021, <https://surli.cc/tozgod>

¹⁴ National Resistance Centre, <https://sprotyv.org.ua>

¹⁵ National Resistance Centre Website Launched in Ukraine, *Ukrinform*, 7 March 2022, <https://surli.li/hwbesn>

Individuals may join the Resistance Movement by completing an application form on the website of the Resistance Movement of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine or by writing to a dedicated email address while adhering to basic principles of digital security. Following the review of an application and depending on the applicant's skills, he or she may be offered an individual training course¹⁶. Any Ukrainian citizen aged 18 or over who resides in the TOT and/or in government-controlled areas of Ukraine may join the Resistance Movement¹⁷.

The Centre's website provides reference materials and guides containing recommendations on various forms of resistance against the occupiers, including both armed resistance and non-violent methods. The portal also contains educational materials on tactical medicine, cybersecurity, tactics, intelligence, and related topics. The Centre regularly publishes news from the TOT and maintains contact with residents living in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories. The Centre also operates a YouTube channel¹⁸ where it publishes news updates and instructional videos related to partisan resistance.

¹⁶ Resistance Movement of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, <https://opir.org.ua>

¹⁷ Special Operations Forces Present the Short Film Utility Workers Dedicated to the Resistance Movement, *Ukrinform*, 26 March 2026, <https://surl.li/nigtuz>

¹⁸ National Resistance Centre, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/c/SprotyvUkraine>

NON-VIOLENT CIVILIAN RESISTANCE TO OCCUPATION IN 2014 AND 2022

The beginning of the occupation of Ukrainian territories, both in Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in 2014 and during Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in 2022, was accompanied by a mass resistance movement among Ukrainians. Demonstrations and acts of resistance against occupation took place in nearly all major cities entered by occupation forces, whether through hybrid means using proxies or by military means.

Although these actions lasted only a short time and were eventually curtailed because of the serious risks to the lives of participants and numerous cases of killings of those who openly expressed a pro-Ukrainian position, they demonstrated Ukrainians' resistance to occupation, disproved the Russian propaganda myth that Ukrainians and Russians are "one people", and failed to meet the occupiers' expectations of an easy seizure of territory.

CIVILIAN PROTESTS AGAINST RUSSIAN OCCUPATION IN UKRAINE IN 2014

Resistance to the Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol

On 20 February 2014, active armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine began with the deployment of Russian military units in Crimea and in the Kerch Strait area. This date is engraved on the Russian Ministry of Defence medal "For the Return of Crimea",

while the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 21 April 2015 and the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Concerning the Determination of the Date of the Beginning of the Temporary Occupation” designate 20 February 2014 as the date on which Russian aggression began.



Rally in Crimea, 26 February 2014

On 24 February 2014, vessels of the Russian Navy that had been guarding the maritime area around the Sochi Olympic Games took on board the so-called “little green men” (Russian servicemen without military insignia of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation) together with military equipment in Novorossiysk and set course for Sevastopol.

On 26 February 2014, following a call by the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, thousands of Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, and representatives of other ethnic groups gathered outside the Parliament of Crimea to resist Russian occupation and affirm Ukraine’s territorial integrity before the international community. The rally attracted between 5,000 and 10,000 participants. The following day, on 27 February at 5 a.m., regular Russian military formations entered and seized the buildings of the Parliament and Government of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea¹⁹.

In 2020, a Presidential Decree established the Day of Resistance to the Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, which is observed annually on 26 February. The commemoration is intended to honour the courage and heroism of Ukrainian citizens residing in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of

¹⁹ Day of Resistance to the Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, *Ukrainian Institute of National Memory*, <https://surl.li/gxqlug>

Sevastopol in defending Ukraine's territorial integrity²⁰.

Peaceful Protests in Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014

The hybrid occupation of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in 2014 was carried out through Russian proxies in the region and Russian mercenaries disguised as local forces who had been deployed there. Unlike Crimea, the occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk unfolded over a longer period and lasted several months, during which peaceful demonstrations supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity remained possible.

In total, five pro-Ukrainian rallies were held **in Donetsk** during March and April 2014²¹.

The first pro-Ukrainian rally, entitled "For a United Ukraine", was held in Donetsk on 4 March 2014. Several thousand people gathered spontaneously, carrying blue-and-yellow flags and posters calling for unity. This first rally proceeded relatively peacefully and safely for participants, without the presence of aggressive Russian proxies, for whom opponents of separatist ideas were always targets. The rally demonstrated that residents of Donetsk who supported Ukraine's territorial integrity were prepared to take to the streets.

The following day, on 5 March 2014, when up to 10,000 pro-Ukrainian citizens gathered in central Donetsk, aggressive pro-Russian groups were already waiting for them on the opposite side of Lenin Square. Residents of Donetsk sang the National Anthem of Ukraine and chanted "Donbas is Ukraine!", while representatives of Russian proxy groups threw eggs, stones, and smoke bombs at the rally participants. A police cordon separated the two sides.

Activists generally recall that participants in the pro-Ukrainian rallies were subjected to psychological pressure, including round-the-clock threatening phone calls and messages, the publication of personal information online, posters placed near their homes labelling them as dangerous criminals, surveillance, and harassment. They were also subjected to physical attacks, beatings, and damage to property.

On 13 March 2014, when another pro-Ukrainian rally began, the aggressive crowd on the opposite side of Lenin Square was already better organised and lined up in ranks. The rally ended with activist Dmytro Cherniavskyi being fatally stabbed several times in the stomach. After that, appearing in public with Ukrainian flags became increasingly dangerous. Large numbers of unidentified individuals began appearing in the city and attacking pro-Ukrainian activists. From

²⁰ Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Day of Resistance to the Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol", No. 58/2020, 26 February 2020, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Legislation of Ukraine, <https://surl.li/efbykr>

²¹ "There Was Resistance in Donbas. No Less Dangerous and Heroic Than in Other Regions", *Ukrinform*, 13 March 2024, <https://surl.li/dtjcph>

17 April onwards, serious clashes occurred between pro-Ukrainian activists and unidentified armed groups²².

On 28 April 2014, the last peaceful demonstration in support of a united Ukraine took place in Donetsk. The event took the form of a march along Artema Street and involved approximately 3,000 Ukrainian citizens. After singing the National Anthem, participants marched together for several blocks, while residents watching from nearby buildings greeted them with the slogan “Glory to Ukraine!”.



*Pro-Ukrainian rally in Donetsk,
28 April 2014*



*Resident of Donetsk greets participants in a march
supporting the unity of Ukraine, Donetsk, 28 April 2014*

The participants in the demonstration were pursued by unidentified masked individuals wearing balaclavas, who started a fight in the city centre. These Russian proxies were armed with bats, pepper spray, sticks, traumatic pistols, and knives. Shouting “Russia!”, they threw firecrackers and stones into the crowd²³. Owing to the threat to participants’ lives, the march had to be stopped. As a result of the attack by pro-Russian bandits, dozens of peaceful civilians were injured. Fifteen pro-Ukrainian demonstrators sustained injuries of varying severity, while many of those affected refused medical assistance²⁴ because they feared for their safety if admitted to medical facilities.

In Luhansk, pro-Ukrainian actions were generally held near the monument to Taras Shevchenko²⁵. The largest rally took place on 9 March 2014, the poet’s birthday. The event included musical performances, readings of Taras Shevchenko’s poetry, and activities for children. On that day, pro-Russian proxies attacked the pro-Ukrainian rally, while the police cordon made no attempt to prevent them from doing so. The attack resulted in a mass brawl, and several pro-Ukrainian

²² “Donetsk Is Ukraine”: How Civic Resistance to Russian Occupation Emerged in Donetsk Region in 2014, *Skhidnyi Variant*, 5 March 2026, <https://surl.li/gjsery>

²³ Not the Last Protest, Just the Latest One: The Pro-Ukrainian Rally in Donetsk on 28 April 2014, *Suspilne Donbas*, 28 April 2025, <https://surl.li/dgfvaj>

²⁴ 28 April: The Tenth Anniversary of the Bloody Rally in Donetsk, *State Archive of Donetsk Oblast*, 28 April 2024, <https://surl.li/svywuj>

²⁵ Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko (1814–1861) was a Ukrainian poet, prose writer, playwright, artist and public figure widely regarded as a founder of modern Ukrainian identity

demonstrators were injured. Later that same day, Russian proxies seized the building of the Luhansk Regional State Administration.



Rally in Luhansk, 9 March 2014

The final rally in Luhansk took place on the same day as the last rally in Donetsk – 28 April 2014. After that, pro-Ukrainian activists no longer dared to take to the streets, as Russian proxy groups had begun seizing police stations and regional military recruitment offices²⁶.

CIVILIAN PROTESTS AGAINST RUSSIAN OCCUPATION IN UKRAINE IN 2022

Following the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, civilians across all newly occupied territories of Ukraine engaged in mass non-violent resistance. The primary aim of these actions was to demonstrate opposition to the occupation and affirm that their cities are Ukrainian. Local residents organised protests against the Russian invasion and formed human chains on roads, attempting to block columns of armoured vehicles from entering their communities.

²⁶ "We Have Been Fighting Russia for a Third of Our Lives." Three Stories of Ukrainian Resistance in Donetsk and Luhansk, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 28 April 2023, <https://surl.li/zzlqcv>

These protests were exclusively non-violent and were characterised by the widespread use of Ukrainian symbols and by the replacement of Russian tricolours on buildings with the national flag of Ukraine. In response, Russian troops opened warning fire, which in some cases resulted in protesters being injured or killed. These acts of resistance continued until the end of spring 2022 and were brought to an end by the mass abductions of mayors and activists, the torture of civilians, and the use of weapons against peaceful residents.

Open protests were subsequently replaced by an underground resistance movement, which continues to operate in the occupied territories. The following sections provide selected examples of civilian protests against occupation in different regions of Ukraine.

Kyiv Oblast



*Civilian protests in the city of Slavutych,
26 March 2022*

Russian troops seized the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone on the first day of the full-scale invasion. In mid-March, they completely isolated the city of **Slavutych**, which serves as the satellite city of the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant. Russian troops later entered the city, seized the city hospital, and detained the mayor, Yuriy Fomichev. On 26 March 2022, more than 500 residents of Slavutych took part in a peaceful action against the Russian occupiers. People gathered in the city's main square carrying blue-and-yellow flags, singing the National Anthem of Ukraine, and chanting "Slavutych is Ukraine"²⁷. Russian occupiers opened fire on the crowd and threw stun grenades, injuring two civilians²⁸.

²⁷ Russian Tanks Entered Slavutych: Residents Gathered for Pro-Ukrainian Protests, *UNIAN*, 26 March 2022, <https://surl.lu/jmzjul>

²⁸ Slavutych: Three Defenders Killed and Two Civilians Wounded, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 27 March 2022, <https://surl.li/vrcspa>

Chernihiv Oblast



Residents of Koriukivka obstruct a column of Russian military vehicles, March 2022

In March 2022, residents of **Koriukivka** stood in the path of a Russian tank column, chanting “The tanks are driving backwards!”, after which the occupiers turned around²⁹. In the town of **Horodnia**, local residents blocked a road along which a column of occupiers was travelling towards the town. After the military vehicles had passed through, residents organised a large rally against the occupation³⁰. Later, despite the risks, residents organised a solemn procession with Ukrainian flags on Taras Shevchenko’s birthday, just two weeks after the town had come under occupation³¹.

Sumy Oblast

The city of **Konotop** was surrounded by Russian troops on the second day of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On 2 March 2022, a large meeting of residents was held in the city, during which Mayor Artem Semenikhin informed residents that Russian troops had presented him with an ultimatum: either Konotop would surrender or Russian artillery would level the city. The residents chose resistance and opposition to the occupation, proposing that women and children be evacuated from the city³².

²⁹ Ukrainians Are Stopping Occupiers’ Military Equipment with Their Bare Hands and Turning It into Trophies, Bohdan Amosov, YouTube, 2 March 2022, <https://surl.lu/idzdsi>

³⁰ Peaceful Resistance in the Occupied Territories: Most Cities Had Never Seen Such Large Demonstrations, Texty, 28 April 2022, <https://surl.li/lngyy>

³¹ How the North of Sivershchyna Resisted the Occupation, *Ukrainer*, 8 April 2023, <https://surl.cc/quusqg>

³² “Who Is Ready to Fight? Then We Fight!” Residents of Occupied Ukrainian Cities Protest Against Russian Troops, *Mediazona*, 3 March 2022, <https://surl.li/vahyrs>

Kharkiv Oblast



Pro-Ukrainian rally in Kupiansk, 5 March 2022

In late February 2022, **Kupiansk Mayor** Hennadii Matsehora, who had been elected in 2020 as a representative of the pro-Russian political party Opposition Platform – For Life, independently reached an agreement with the Russian occupiers on the transfer of power in the city³³. After the city came under occupation on 1 March 2022, local residents organised a rally in support of Ukraine. People carried Ukrainian flags and chanted “Everything will be Ukraine!”. They also rushed at a vehicle that, according to preliminary reports, was carrying Russian occupiers. Residents stood in front of Russian troops and military equipment, chanting “Go away!”. The occupiers used tear gas to disperse the rally³⁴.

Luhansk Oblast

From the very beginning of the occupation, residents of the town of **Novopskov** organised several patriotic rallies against the occupation. The last of these took place on 5 March 2022, when local residents gathered to protest against the Russian occupiers who had seized the settlement. Russian soldiers dispersed the gathering by opening fire on peaceful residents³⁵.

In Luhansk oblast, residents of Bilokurakhyne, Markivka³⁶, Starobilsk³⁷, Troitske³⁸, and Svatove³⁹ also took part in rallies against Russian occupation.

³³ In Kharkiv Oblast, a Mayor from the OPZZh Admitted He Had Agreed with the Occupiers to Hand Over the City, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 27 February 2022, <https://surl.lu/hlthle>

³⁴ Residents of Occupied Kupiansk Held a Rally in Support of Ukraine, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 1 March 2022, <https://surl.lu/fezbv>

³⁵ Novopskov in Luhansk Oblast: Russians Opened Fire on Unarmed Civilians, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 5 March 2022, <https://surl.li/ovhlnh>

³⁶ Residents of Bilokurakhyne and Markivka Held Rallies Against the Occupation, *Suspilne Novyny*, 5 March 2022, <https://surl.li/ekjbny>

³⁷ VIDEO: Starobilsk in Luhansk Oblast Also Protests Against the Occupiers, *Militarnyi*, 2 March 2022, <https://surl.li/wetenu>

³⁸ People in Kherson and Luhansk Oblasts Continue to Resist the Occupiers and Take Part in Rallies (VIDEO), *Hromadske Radio*, 6 March 2022, <https://surl.li/iuaxos>

³⁹ Residents of Svatove Held a Rally Against the Occupiers, *Suspilne Novyny*, 8 March 2022, <https://surl.li/uzswfp>

Zaporizhzhia Oblast

Protests against Russian occupation in Enerhodar, near which the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) is located, lasted for almost two months. On 1–2 March 2022, residents of Enerhodar came out to meet the occupiers, carrying Ukrainian flags and expressing their determination to keep the enemy out of the city. People confronted Russian military vehicles on the road leading to the ZNPP while singing the National Anthem of Ukraine⁴⁰. On 20 March, residents of Enerhodar gathered to protest against the detention of local civilians by Russian troops. Mayor Dmytro Orlov called on residents to attend the rally following the abduction of his first deputy, Ivan Samoidiuk⁴¹.



Protest against the detention of Enerhodar residents by Russian troops, 20 March 2022

On 21 March, 600 Russian special forces personnel were deployed to the city to suppress the peaceful protests⁴². On 28 March, local residents held another peaceful protest, demanding that Russian troops leave the city⁴³. On 2 April, Russian troops violently dispersed a rally using

⁴⁰ Residents of Enerhodar Formed a Human Barrier to Defend Their City, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 2 March 2022, <https://surl.li/ylmiih>

⁴¹ Protests Erupt in Enerhodar After Russian Troops Abduct City Council Official, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 20 March 2022, <https://surl.li/jdlcfc>

⁴² Russia Sent 600 OMON Officers to Enerhodar to Disperse the Protests, *Energoatom, LB.ua*, 21 March 2022, <https://surl.li/lwzceo>

⁴³ Residents of Enerhodar Held a Peaceful Rally Against Occupation by Russian Troops, *Suspilne Zaporizhzhia*, 28 March 2022, <https://surl.li/vccxuw>

stun grenades, injuring four protesters and detaining many others⁴⁴. On 20 May, employees of the State Emergency Service came out in protest after the abduction of their head. This protest was also dispersed by force⁴⁵.

In Zaporizhzhia oblast, protests also took place in Berdiansk⁴⁶, Melitopol⁴⁷, Prymorsk⁴⁸, and Tokmak⁴⁹.

Kherson Oblast

On 5 March 2022, residents of **Kherson** gathered for a rally carrying Ukrainian flags and chanting that their city was Ukrainian and would never become Russian, despite the occupation. Russian troops opened warning fire on the rally participants. The National Police of Ukraine released a video showing a Kherson police officer holding a Ukrainian flag and jumping onto a Russian armoured personnel carrier as it passed by the rally, while local residents supported him with cheers and applause⁵⁰. The protest was repeated on 6 March⁵¹. Similar actions took place in Kherson on a daily basis in early March⁵².

On 20 March, protesters in Kherson confronted several Russian military vehicles and ordered them to “go home”. On 21 March, further protests took place in Kherson and were dispersed by gunfire, with protesters sustaining injuries⁵³. On 24 March, the Ukrainian flag was restored on

⁴⁴ Explosions in Enerhodar: Four People Reportedly Injured, *RBC-Ukraine*, 2 April 2022, <https://surl.li/hibjvh>

⁴⁵ In Enerhodar, State Emergency Service Employees Protested the Abduction of Their Head, *Suspilne Zaporizhzhia*, 20 May 2022, <https://surl.li/fqkhcv>

⁴⁶ A Patriotic Rally Attended by Thousands Was Held in Berdiansk Against Russian Occupation (Video), *TSN*, 16 March 2022, <https://surl.li/urccim>

⁴⁷ Russian Troops Opened Fire on Protesters in Melitopol, Mayor Says, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 2 March 2022, <https://surl.li/zeojvg>

⁴⁸ In Prymorsk, Local Residents Held Protests Against Russian Occupation for a Fourth Consecutive Day (VIDEO), *1 Pershyi Zaporizkyi*, 5 March 2022, <https://surl.li/bdukna>

⁴⁹ In Tokmak, Residents Prevent Occupiers from Removing National Flags. Video, *Forpost*, 7 March 2022, <https://surl.li/lshdhd>

⁵⁰ In Kherson, a Police Officer Holding a Ukrainian Flag Jumped onto a Russian Armoured Personnel Carrier, *Ukrinform*, 5 March 2022, <https://surl.li/cgbmde>

⁵¹ Rallies Against the Russian Occupiers Held Across Kherson and the Oblast as the Ukrainian National Anthem Is Sung (Video), *Obozrevatel*, 6 March 2022, <https://surl.li/mzpeek>

⁵² Thousands Gathered in Kherson for a Rally Against Russian Occupation, *Hromadske*, 13 March 2022, <https://surl.li/drubib>

⁵³ Russian Troops Opened Fire While Dispersing a Demonstration in Kherson. There Are People Wounded, *BBC News Russian*, 21 March 2022, <https://surl.li/dafruu>

the city council building⁵⁴. On 10 April, another rally took place and was dispersed by force⁵⁵. On 27 April, the final rally was held in Kherson against the occupation authorities' plans to hold a referendum on the annexation of the oblast by Russia. The occupation authorities violently dispersed the rally using stun grenades, and a number of activists were injured and detained⁵⁶.



Civil protests in the city of Kherson on 27 April 2022

In spring 2022, residents of Kakhovka⁵⁷, Nova Kakhovka⁵⁸, Skadovsk⁵⁹, Kalanchak⁶⁰, Chonhar⁶¹,

⁵⁴ The Ukrainian Flag Has Been Raised Again Above Kherson City Council, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 24 March 2022, <https://surl.li/cwyepf>

⁵⁵ In Kherson, Russian Troops Dispersed a Rally, While a Russian-Organised "Rally" Failed in Nova Kakhovka, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 10 April 2022, <https://surl.li/iafhim>

⁵⁶ In Kherson, the Occupiers Dispersed an Anti-"Referendum" Rally Using Stun Grenades, *Ukrinform*, 27 April 2022, <https://surl.li/hznyec>

⁵⁷ Residents of Occupied Kakhovka Held a Rally, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 27 March 2022, <https://surl.li/cc/jngvgh>

⁵⁸ During a Rally in Nova Kakhovka, the Occupiers Killed One Person and Wounded Seven Others, *UNIAN*, 7 March 2022, <https://surl.li/kcvxcb>

⁵⁹ Residents of Skadovsk Held a Rally Against the Occupiers: Russian Troops Opened Fire, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 16 March 2022, <https://surl.li/uspwnwn>

⁶⁰ Mass Pro-Ukrainian Rallies Held in the Temporarily Occupied Towns of Henichesk, Kakhovka and Kalanchak, *Ukrinform*, 6 March 2022, <https://surl.li/xjsmtx>

⁶¹ "Crimea Is Ukraine": Residents of Chonhar Held a Rally Against the Occupiers, *Censor.NET*, 6 March 2022, <https://surl.li/cc/bixifj>

Henichesk⁶², Novooleksiivka⁶³, Chaplynka⁶⁴, Zaliznyi Port⁶⁵, Hola Prystan⁶⁶, Oleshky⁶⁷, and Novotroitske⁶⁸ also took part in rallies against Russian occupation in Kherson oblast.

Civilian protests in the cities of southern and eastern Ukraine in spring 2022 became a precursor to both civic underground resistance and partisan resistance in the temporarily occupied territories.

ONLINE RALLIES AGAINST RUSSIAN OCCUPATION IN 2022

After non-violent civic resistance to Russian occupation through protests became impossible in the temporarily occupied territories, activists developed a digital form of protest through online rallies.

In June 2022, the resistance movement Zhovta Strichka organised an online rally **in support of occupied Kherson oblast**. Participants were invited to gather on the digital version of Ushakov Avenue in Kherson (renamed Independence Avenue following the city's liberation), the city's main thoroughfare. The action received 75,000 likes and 20,000 shares on social media. Both Kherson residents and people from other regions joined the online rally to demonstrate their support for the city⁶⁹.

In July 2022, the communications agency Gres Todorchuk launched the **Letters of Love (Lettersoflove) platform**, where people could send messages of support to Ukrainians who remained in temporarily occupied towns and villages. The project was implemented with the support of civil society organisations operating in the temporarily occupied territories: Svoi

⁶² Thousands Gathered in Henichesk for a Rally Against the Occupiers (Photos, Video), *Glavcom*, 6 March 2022, <https://surl.li/ajkcxa>

⁶³ People in Kherson and Luhansk Oblast Continue to Resist the Occupiers and Take Part in Rallies (VIDEO), *Hromadske Radio*, 6 March 2022, <https://surl.li/djgqnp>

⁶⁴ Chaplynka Is Ukraine! More Than Three Thousand People Joined a Peaceful Protest in the Settlement, *RBC-Ukraine*, 7 March 2022, <https://surl.li/ijrqpq>

⁶⁵ Day Twenty of Russia's Invasion: The Situation in Kherson Oblast. LIVE TEXT COVERAGE, *Suspilne Kherson*, 15 March 2022, <https://surl.li/axfuxs>

⁶⁶ Residents of Hola Prystan (Kherson Oblast) Held a Rally Demanding That the Occupiers Return the Abducted Mayor, *Hromadske*, 31 March 2022, <https://surl.li/eqkncl>

⁶⁷ Residents of Hola Prystan and Oleshky Held Rallies Against the Russian Occupiers (Photos, Video), *Parlament.ua*, 8 March 2022, <https://surl.li/dcrsgc>

⁶⁸ Residents of Novotroitske (Kherson Oblast) Held a Peaceful Rally, *Suspilne Kherson*, 25 March 2022, <https://surl.li/kxujkt>

⁶⁹ A Unique Online Rally in Support of Kherson Oblast Brought Together More Than 36,000 Participants. A Closer Look at the Initiative, *Vikna TV*, 19 June 2022, <https://surl.li/qtnjif>

(Zaporizhzhia), Molodi Initsiatyvni, and Foundation Union (Kherson Oblast). The messages could be addressed either to a specific individual or more generally to residents of any settlement under Russian occupation⁷⁰.

Later, in August 2022, an online rally entitled **Mariupol Is Ukraine** was organised, also at the initiative of the Zhovta Strichka. The online rally formed part of the Stop the Referendum campaign and lasted for more than two weeks. The designated meeting place was a digital street displayed on an Instagram page, where Peace Avenue in occupied Mariupol had been recreated metre by metre⁷¹.

⁷⁰ A Platform Has Been Launched Where People Can Write “Letters of Love” to Residents of the Temporarily Occupied Territories, *The Village Ukraine*, 1 July 2022, <https://surl.li/blqriy>

⁷¹ Online Rally “Mariupol Is Ukraine” Launched, *Ukrinform*, 4 August 2022, <https://surl.li/crxejr>

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AFTER 2022

I TYPES OF RESISTANCE

At present, it is impossible to describe the precise structure of the Resistance Movement in the temporarily occupied territories because this information is classified both by the Special Operations Forces, which coordinate the movement, and by its participants for security reasons.

At the same time, depending on the methods employed, it is possible to distinguish between civic non-violent resistance and military resistance (the partisan movement) in the temporarily occupied territories. Non-violent resistance may take place either at the individual or family level, or at the network-based level.

Civic non-violent resistance at the individual level encompasses non-military forms of resistance in which a person does not support the occupation or the occupation authorities, but expresses protest individually or only within their immediate circle, particularly within the family. Such individuals may engage in specific acts of civic resistance, including parallel enrolment of their children in Ukrainian schools, studying the Ukrainian language, retaining a Ukrainian passport, secretly following news from Ukraine and consuming Ukrainian media content, celebrating Ukrainian holidays, and similar activities.

Individual resistance may also take the form of minimising interaction with the Russian occupation authorities, refusing to obtain Russian passports, and avoiding the educational, medical, social, and humanitarian services provided by the occupation administration. This is most feasible in rural areas, particularly for families without school-age children that are able to provide food from their own household plots.

Civic non-violent resistance at the network-based level encompasses non-military forms of resistance aimed at demonstrating opposition to the occupation and protesting against the occupation authorities and the Russian Federation through participation in horizontal resistance networks. Although the coordination of such activities takes place covertly, their purpose is to ensure that as many people as possible in the temporarily occupied territories see that others also reject the occupation. To engage in this form of resistance, individuals usually join one of the existing resistance networks (Zhovta Strichka, Zla Mavka, and others). The activities of these networks are intended, on the one hand, to spread Ukrainian symbols throughout the temporarily occupied territories as a demonstration of resistance and support for Ukrainians living under occupation and, on the other hand, to demoralise Russian occupiers and Ukrainian collaborators.

The primary objective of **military resistance (the partisan movement) in the temporarily occupied territories** is to provide informational and military support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Members of partisan networks conduct covert combat operations, gather intelligence, carry out assassination attempts against Russian military personnel and collaborators, and undertake sabotage operations in the occupied territories. The best-known partisan resistance network is Atesh.

CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH RESISTANCE ACTIVISTS OPERATE IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Resistance by Ukrainian citizens in the temporarily occupied territories takes place under the harsh conditions of Russian dictatorship, Russia's complete disregard for international humanitarian law, and the constant threat to the lives of those involved.

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, **it is impossible to engage in resistance using the non-violent methods characteristic of democratic societies**, such as those described in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* by the American political scientist Gene Sharp⁷². These methods may be applicable in democratic, or at least partially democratic, societies. However, the Russian Federation is an authoritarian state, and the human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories is considerably worse than even within Russia itself. Any expression of protest, display of pro-Ukrainian views, refusal to obtain Russian documents, or refusal to cooperate

⁷² 198 Methods of Non-violent Action: Non-violent protest and persuasion, Non-Cooperation (Social, Economic and Political), and Non-Violent Intervention, National Resistance Centre, <https://surl.it/pbylpr>

with the occupiers may expose an individual, at a minimum, to deportation and, much more frequently, to detention, torture in places of detention, or even loss of life.

At the same time, the Resistance Movement operates **under conditions of forced population replacement in the temporarily occupied territories**, involving the displacement of Ukrainian citizens and the encouragement of Russian citizens—primarily from economically depressed regions and especially those loyal to the Russian authorities—to relocate there. Such newcomers not only fail to support the Resistance Movement, but often pose a threat to local residents who reject Russian occupation.

Resistance activities are also hindered by **the digital ghetto** being constructed by the Russian Federation, which restricts not only physical links between residents of the temporarily occupied territories and Ukraine as a state, as well as Ukrainians elsewhere (including family members), but also blocks virtually all means of electronic communication except official channels such as the Russian state messaging application Max. In addition, amid the rapid development of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, Russia is gradually building a system of digital dictatorship in the occupied territories through the expansion of comprehensive digital surveillance. In this respect, the temporarily occupied territories serve as a testing ground for the Russian authorities before such practices are extended to regions of the Russian Federation itself.

Participation in the partisan movement is even more dangerous. Russia has extensive experience in combating partisan resistance dating back to the Chechen wars, and Russian forces employ the same methods in the occupied territories of Ukraine. According to Volodymyr Zhemchuhov, one of the organisers of the partisan movement in the temporarily occupied territories, speaking in October 2023, approximately one thousand partisans operating in the occupied areas of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts were captured following raids conducted by Russian security forces⁷³.

SECURITY MEASURES FOR RESISTANCE PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territories are compelled to conceal their identities for security reasons. They generally do not know one another personally and operate anonymously. Only co-founders may know each other's identities. Activists usually work online through Telegram channels equipped with chatbots, where they communicate with coordinators and receive assignments. They are never asked to provide their real names or any information that could reveal their identity.

⁷³ "About One Thousand Partisans Held Captive." How Does the Resistance Movement Operate Under Occupation?, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 13 October 2023, <https://surl.li/odgzgg>

Resistance activists seek to avoid keeping any personal records, documenting their activities only through their own platforms, including websites, Telegram channels, and social media accounts. Because activists may be stopped and searched at any time, they must constantly delete photographs and contacts from their smartphones, avoid subscribing to pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels, instead finding them from memory, or use multiple mobile phones.

Activists employ various methods to mislead the occupiers. As one Zhovta Strichka activist explained, when hanging yellow ribbons as a symbol of resistance in the occupied territories, it is unwise to carry a whole spool of yellow ribbon. Instead, activists take multiple strips of fabric in different colours, explaining: *"I'm using them to tie up tomatoes in my garden,"* and then hang only the yellow ones⁷⁴.

Whenever possible, Resistance Movement activists communicate anonymously with Ukrainian and foreign journalists, seeking to explain what is actually happening under occupation⁷⁵. During such interviews, they conceal their appearance and do not disclose their real names. For example, when the co-founders of the women's partisan movement Zla Mavka gave an interview to *Ukrainer*, the published video used animation and voice actors, while the interviewees were identified only by the pseudonyms Mavka One, Mavka Two, and Mavka Three⁷⁶.

The National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine and the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine have developed recommendations on personal data protection for people living in the temporarily occupied territories. These recommendations are intended to help conceal evidence of cooperation with Ukrainian intelligence services or the Armed Forces of Ukraine, thereby increasing individuals' chances of survival and reducing the risk of torture⁷⁷.

⁷⁴ From Missile Strikes to Spray Cans: How Ukraine's Resistance Movement Is Fighting Russian Occupation, *Texty*, 14 November 2023, <https://surl.li/dlktkj>

⁷⁵ "Burning Russian Flags Is Good for the Soul." How the Women's Movement Zla Mavka Resists Occupation, *Platforma*, 1 April 2025, <https://surl.li/ugkcwr>

⁷⁶ Zla Mavka: Women's Resistance Movement Under Occupation • *Ukrainer Q*, *Ukrainer Q*, *YouTube*, 27 November 2024, <https://surl.li/wfgflp>

⁷⁷ How to Protect Your Data Under Occupation: A Guide, *Ukrainer*, 2 June 2022, <https://surl.li/ervbly>

CIVIL NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE IN THE TOT

PRESERVING INDIVIDUAL TIES WITH UKRAINE

The Russian occupation authorities are doing everything possible to sever ties between residents of the temporarily occupied territories and Ukraine, as well as Ukrainians living in government-controlled areas, and to integrate them into Russia's legal and information space. This forms part of a broader policy aimed at eradicating Ukrainian identity and replacing the population in the temporarily occupied territories.

For this reason, individual civic resistance is expressed primarily through preserving and maintaining ties with Ukraine as a state and with Ukrainians, especially family members and friends living outside the temporarily occupied territories—in government-controlled areas and in democratic countries abroad. Many Ukrainian citizens who remain in the occupied territories view the preservation of such ties with Ukraine as an act of protest against the occupation.

Parallel Education of Children in Ukrainian Schools

For the Russian Federation, education serves as a tool for fostering loyalty to the occupation authorities and to Russia itself, as well as for justifying the war of aggression it is waging against Ukraine. As a result, school education in the temporarily occupied territories generally functions as an instrument of indoctrination, the involvement of children into militarised propaganda movements, and the erasure of Ukrainian identity. One form of civic resistance to Russian occupation therefore consists of children studying online in Ukrainian schools in parallel with attending schools in the temporarily occupied territories that follow Russian curricula.

During the 2024–2025 academic years, approximately 44,000 children from the temporarily occupied territories were enrolled in Ukrainian schools, representing around 8% of all school-

age children living in the occupied territories⁷⁸.

By participating in the Ukrainian education system, the families of these children are constantly at risk and are forced to overcome numerous security challenges. Parents whose children study in Ukrainian schools face, at a minimum, fines and, more broadly, the risk of losing parental rights and having their children removed from the family⁷⁹. As a result, children are compelled to attend schools teaching the Russian curriculum while secretly studying the Ukrainian curriculum at home. At the same time, Ukrainian schooling remains important for families as a means of maintaining ties with Ukraine, preserving their children's Ukrainian identity, and sustaining positive expectations regarding the future de-occupation of their regions.

There are also children who conceal from their parents the fact that they are studying in a Ukrainian school because their parents oppose such education. After graduating from a Ukrainian school, these children may leave the occupied territories, collect the necessary educational documents, and use them to apply to Ukrainian universities⁸⁰.

Studying the Ukrainian Language

Beginning in 2014, the Ukrainian language was gradually pushed out of public life and the education system in occupied Crimea and in the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. At the same time, between 2022 and 2025, students in the occupied parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts could still study Ukrainian as their native language in grades one to four upon request by their parents, although only one hour per week was allocated for this subject. One school where Ukrainian was taught even continued to operate in Crimea. In June 2025, however, the Russian authorities removed the Ukrainian language from secondary school curricula in the temporarily occupied territories through an order issued by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation⁸¹.

In this way, the occupation authorities turned the study of the Ukrainian language in the temporarily occupied territories into an act of resistance. Under conditions of a complete ban and Russification, individuals who wish and dare to study and practise Ukrainian are forced to

⁷⁸ Why Has the Number of Children from the Temporarily Occupied Territories Studying Online in Ukrainian Schools Declined? The Ombudsperson Explains, *Ukrainska Pravda*. Zhyttia, 8 July 2025, <https://surl.li/bkwehp>

⁷⁹ In Occupied Berdiansk, Children Studying Online in Ukrainian Schools Are Threatened with Removal from Their Families, *Zmina*, 18 October 2024, <https://surl.li/bbzvbj>

⁸⁰ Loss of Hope and Repression: Why the Number of Students from Occupied Territories in Ukrainian Schools Is Declining and How This Can Be Addressed, *Zmina*, 26 June 2025, <https://surl.li/xjgfox>

⁸¹ Studying Ukrainian in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine Has Now Been Banned, *Osvitoria*, 25 June 2025, <https://surl.li/garqrn>

resort to online tools and secretly access Ukrainian-language content using VPN services. In order to practise spoken Ukrainian, some study online with Ukrainian teachers or privately with teachers who previously taught the Ukrainian language and who, for various reasons, remained in the temporarily occupied territories.

As one participant in the Zla Mavka movement explained, several women in Crimea decided to learn Ukrainian independently, step by step: *“One of them reads Kobzar every day. I understand how that sounds, but it is not a joke. She really does read it every day in order to improve her Ukrainian.”*⁸²

Through the secret study of the Ukrainian language, residents of the temporarily occupied territories seek to maintain ties with Ukraine and remain part of the Ukrainian community despite the occupation authorities’ efforts to erase their Ukrainian identity⁸³.

Retaining Ukrainian Passports

The Russian occupation authorities employ a wide range of manipulative and coercive methods to force Ukrainians in the temporarily occupied territories to obtain Russian passports, depriving them of basic rights and freedoms and violating international law⁸⁴. Without a Russian passport or a permanent residence permit, Ukrainian citizens living in the occupied territories cannot receive pensions, social benefits, or even basic medical care.

Despite this forced passportisation campaign, most adult residents of the occupied regions continue to retain their Ukrainian passports and, in some cases, refuse to obtain Russian citizenship documents. The highest proportion of such individuals is found in rural areas of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

Ukrainian children who remain in the temporarily occupied territories and reach the age of 14 may also obtain Ukrainian passports at Passport Service centres abroad or through units of the State Migration Service of Ukraine and administrative service centres upon entering Ukrainian-controlled territory. This is possible through the Mokranove–Domany border crossing point if the individual still possesses a Ukrainian birth certificate or through an identity-establishment procedure⁸⁵. Obtaining a Ukrainian passport is often a highly complex procedure for young

⁸² “Burning Russian Flags Is Good for the Soul.” How the Women’s Movement Zla Mavka Resists Occupation, *Platforma*, 1 April 2025, <https://surl.li/ucahfx>

⁸³ Severing the Tie: Russia Takes Its Campaign Against the Ukrainian Language Under Occupation to a New Level, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 27 June 2025, <https://surl.li/rihzne>

⁸⁴ Repressive Passportisation: Where to Seek Assistance Regarding Imposed Russian Passports, *Zmina*, 12 December 2024, <https://surl.li/ccroxazp>

⁸⁵ Ukrainians from the Temporarily Occupied Territories Have Been Given Expanded Opportunities to Verify Their Identity When Applying for Passports, *Zmina*, 8 January 2026, <https://surl.li/pfdnjy>

people leaving the temporarily occupied territories and frequently requires a case-by-case approach, yet these difficulties do not prevent many young people from pursuing it.

Secretly Accessing News from Ukraine and Ukrainian Content

The Russian occupation authorities are building a digital ghetto in the temporarily occupied territories, leaving fewer and fewer available channels of communication with Ukraine and the outside world. In April 2026, the aggressor began blocking the Telegram messenger. Prior to this, it had already blocked WhatsApp, Viber, Instagram, Facebook, all Google products, and a large number of VPN services. The occupation authorities also block all Ukrainian news websites and dismantle equipment used to receive Ukrainian television broadcasts via satellite dishes.



To enable residents of the temporarily occupied territories to remain connected with Ukraine despite efforts by the occupiers to restrict internet access and block “undesirable” websites, specialists from the Zhovta Strichka movement, together with Dovidka.info, created the You Are in Ukraine service⁸⁶. The service includes a free VPN and a dedicated browser that allows users to watch Ukrainian YouTube content and read Ukrainian news despite Russian restrictions. The website also provides practical advice and instructions on security and resistance, including guidance on how to act in various dangerous situations and how to avoid surveillance⁸⁷.

The You Are in Ukraine service launched for Ukrainians living under occupation

⁸⁶ You Are in Ukraine, <https://www.tyvuukraini.com>

⁸⁷ A Free VPN Service Has Been Launched for Ukrainians Living Under Occupation, *Vchasno*, 9 August 2025, <https://surl.li/oevuyt>

Celebrating Ukrainian Holidays

In order to maintain their moral and psychological well-being, Ukrainians living in the temporarily occupied territories may celebrate Ukrainian holidays and seek to live according to the Ukrainian calendar. This often takes place privately, within a circle of relatives and trusted friends. People may celebrate the New Year according to Ukrainian time, observe Christmas according to Ukraine's new calendar, decorate pysanky at Easter, and celebrate St Nicholas Day in winter.

For example, on 6 December, members of the Zla Mavka movement distributed sweets to children accompanied by notes explaining that they were gifts from St Nicholas. At the same time, they left bags of rubbish for Russian occupiers as a reminder of who the “naughty boys” were. In autumn, the women also left pumpkins for the occupiers, drawing on the Ukrainian tradition of giving a pumpkin to an unwanted suitor. As it was pumpkin season, members of the movement purchased pumpkins and left them for the occupiers with messages such as: “We did not invite you here. You are not wanted here”⁸⁸.

Young People Leaving the Temporarily Occupied Territories for Ukrainian-Controlled Areas

A significant number of cases have been recorded in which young people whose families remain in the temporarily occupied territories choose, after finishing school or reaching adulthood, to leave the occupied territories and enrol in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

Ukraine has introduced a simplified admission procedure for applicants from the temporarily occupied territories. More than 11,000 applicants from the occupied territories enrolled through this procedure in 2024, while more than 9,000 did so in 2025⁸⁹. The decline in these numbers is explained by the fact that moving from the temporarily occupied territories to government-controlled areas of Ukraine is effectively a one-way ticket and may involve long-term separation from family members, with only limited opportunities for future meetings.

Young people who decide to move to government-controlled areas of Ukraine face numerous obstacles. They may encounter difficulties obtaining identity documents (particularly those from Crimea and the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that were occupied before

⁸⁸ “Burning Russian Flags Is Good for the Soul.” How the Women’s Movement Zla Mavka Resists Occupation, *Platforma*, 1 April 2025, <https://surl.li/ucahfx>

⁸⁹ 2026 University Admissions: Challenges and Opportunities for Applicants from Occupied Territories, *Vhoru.Kherson*, Facebook, 1 April 2026, <https://surl.li/hestbw>

the full-scale invasion), problems crossing administrative boundaries, logistical difficulties travelling through Ukraine, a lack of funds for relocation⁹⁰, and other challenges. Nevertheless, these obstacles do not alter their determination to break out of the occupation.

Children under the age of 16 require the involvement of their parents in order to leave the temporarily occupied territories. However, some parents are unable to leave for objective reasons, while others hold views that differ from those of their children. As a result, some young people deliberately wait until they reach the age of 18 in order to leave independently, and in some cases secretly from their parents, who do not support such a decision.

SUPPORTING UKRAINIANS IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES THROUGH RESISTANCE NETWORKS

People living under occupation need to know that they are not alone and that there are others who, while also living under occupation, share their views and expectations regarding the future de-occupation of their territories. For this reason, one of the objectives of civic non-violent resistance carried out through resistance networks is to support residents of the temporarily occupied territories.

Calls to Ignore the Russian Political Context

Resistance Movement activists disseminate appeals urging residents not to participate in activities intended to create the appearance of a democratic process in the temporarily occupied territories. In particular, through resistance networks they called on residents **not to participate in the fake referendum**⁹¹ in September 2022, the **illegal local elections to occupation administrations**⁹² in September 2023, the **illegal Russian presidential election** in the occupied

⁹⁰ "It Feels Like Getting Rid of a Bad Smell." Stories of Young People Who Left Occupation and Are Trying to Build Their Own Lives, *Ukrainska Pravda. Zhyttia*, 5 February 2025, <https://surl.li/xqclkm>

⁹¹ Kherson and Henichesk Continue to Resist, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 27 September 2022, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/1855

⁹² Preparations for the Pseudo-Elections in Melitopol Are in Full Swing, ZLA MAVKA, *Telegram*, 29 August 2023, https://t.me/zlaya_mavka/1044

territories in March 2024, and the **illegal elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation** in 2025.



Resistance Movement participants call on Ukrainians living under occupation to ignore the Russian political context

As part of these actions, activists distributed printed leaflets bearing slogans such as “*Ignore the elections. This is Ukraine*” and “*There will be no elections. There will be a trial. There will be The Hague*”. They also photographed notes with similar messages against the backdrop of recognisable locations in the temporarily occupied territories. Some activists defaced ballot papers with pro-Ukrainian messages⁹³.



Leaflets from the Zhovta Strichka movement against Russia's forced passportisation

At the beginning of the occupation, calls were also disseminated urging Ukrainian citizens in the temporarily occupied territories **not to obtain Russian passports**. These included leaflets bearing slogans such as “*I do not take the occupier's passport because I am waiting for the Armed Forces of Ukraine*”, “*A Russian passport takes you back to a bloody past*”, and “*A Russian passport*

⁹³ The Most Remarkable Ballot Paper from Occupied Nova Kakhovka!, Pravda Gerashchenko, *Telegram*, 08 September 2023, https://t.me/Pravda_Gerashchenko/78952

is humiliating”⁹⁴. Today, however, survival in the temporarily occupied territories is virtually impossible without a Russian passport, and resistance movement participants therefore refrain from making such appeals.

Dissemination of Ukrainian Symbols in the TOT

The dissemination of Ukrainian symbols is particularly important for residents of the temporarily occupied territories, as it demonstrates that Ukraine’s occupied territories have not become Russian, even after 12 years of occupation, and that many people continue to reject the occupation. The dissemination of Ukrainian symbols can take many different forms and often depends on the imagination and creativity of those carrying out the actions.

The most common actions involve hanging yellow ribbons in the streets of occupied settlements or in other recognisable locations across the temporarily occupied territories. Another form is displaying a Ukrainian flag and photographing it. At the same time, such actions are particularly dangerous for those who carry them out. Other forms include the distribution of pro-Ukrainian leaflets, handwritten pro-Ukrainian notes that are photographed, the posting of stickers bearing pro-Ukrainian messages⁹⁵ or Ukrainian poetry⁹⁶, and painting graffiti.



Dissemination of Ukrainian Symbols in the TOT

⁹⁴ The Zhovta Strichka Movement Opposes Russian Passportisation in the Occupied Territories. PHOTOS, *Information Resistance*, 23 March 2023, <https://surl.li/dweovu>

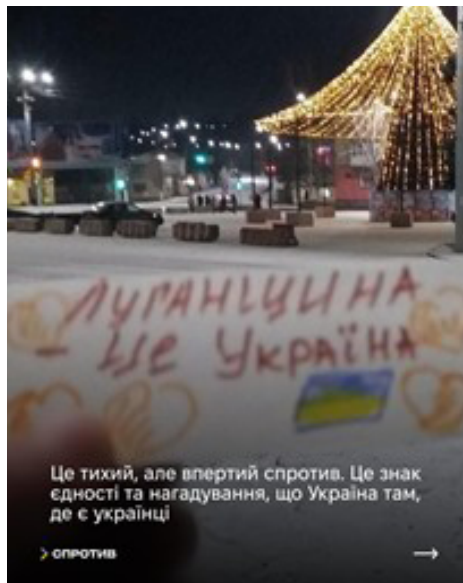
⁹⁵ Simferopol, Sevastopol, Yalta, Alushta, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 5 January 2026, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/13018

⁹⁶ Not a Day Goes By Without Zhovta Strichka Activists Demonstrating Their Resistance to the Russian Occupation Authorities, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 5 February 2026, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/13166

For example, one of the symbols most commonly used in pro-Ukrainian graffiti in the temporarily occupied territories has become the distinctly Ukrainian letter “ї”, which does not exist in the alphabet of any other language. During the temporary occupation of Kherson and surrounding settlements in 2022, residents painted graffiti featuring the letter “ї”. At first, the occupiers did not understand its meaning, but later they began persecuting those who painted the letter on walls, asphalt, utility poles, and other surfaces. Such graffiti can also be seen in other cities. The letter “ї” was painted on the monument to Taras Shevchenko in Mariupol. Similar actions are also carried out actively in temporarily occupied Crimea⁹⁷.

Synchronisation with the Ukrainian Holiday Calendar

On the occasion of various socio-political holidays and commemorative dates observed in Ukraine, activists in the temporarily occupied territories carry out visual actions intended to demonstrate their link with those living in government-controlled areas and to show that Ukrainians under occupation continue to live within the Ukrainian information and cultural space.



Resistance Movement activists' greetings marking Ukrainian holidays

Examples of such actions include the dissemination of notes bearing the messages “Ukraine Is United!” and “Together We Are Stronger” on Ukraine’s Unity Day on 22 January⁹⁸; the dissemination

⁹⁷ “ї” – More Than a Letter, *Ukrainer*, 16 May 2023, <https://www.ukrainer.net/litera-i>

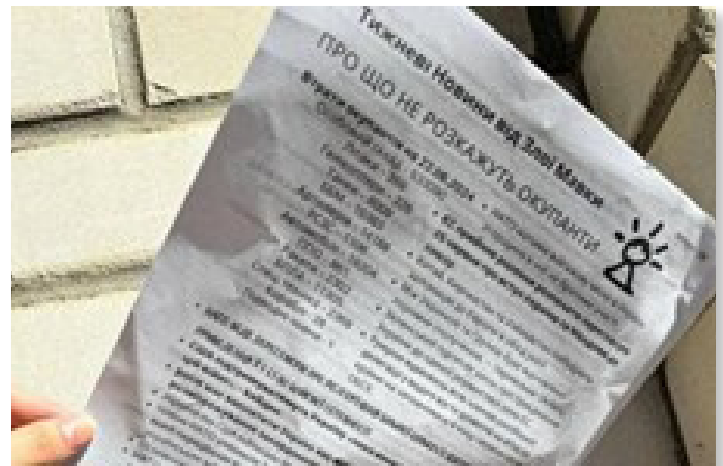
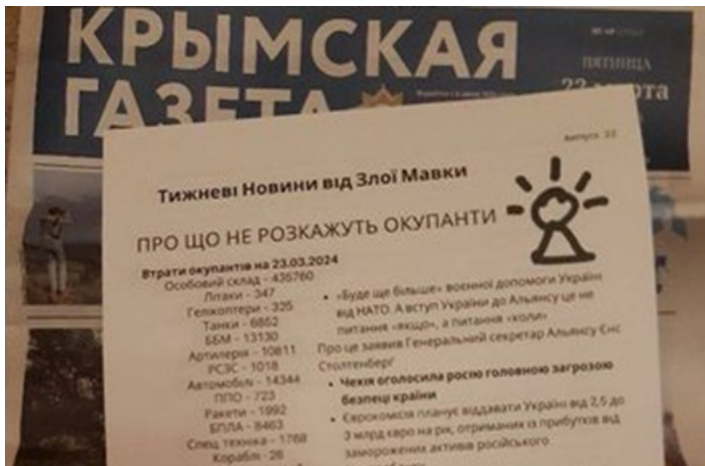
⁹⁸ Zhovta Strichka Activists Carried Out a Resistance Action in the Occupied Territories to Mark Ukraine’s Unity Day, *Detector Media*, 23 January 2025, <https://surl.li/vyktgn>

of quotations from the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, a national symbol of Ukraine, on 9 March, the anniversary of his birth⁹⁹. On the Day of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, observed on 5 December, activists in the temporarily occupied territories distributed leaflets displaying the numbers “10 22 24”. Each number corresponded to a letter of the Ukrainian alphabet: 10 – Z, 22 – S, 24 – U, together forming the abbreviation “ZSU” (Armed Forces of Ukraine)¹⁰⁰.

Ukrainians living in the temporarily occupied territories also frequently send photographic greetings to Ukrainians in government-controlled areas on non-political holidays, including New Year. These greetings are written in Ukrainian and are often accompanied by celebrations of the New Year in the temporarily occupied territories according to Ukrainian time¹⁰¹.

Distribution of Underground Newspapers Featuring Ukrainian News

Access to reliable information in the temporarily occupied territories is difficult, particularly for older people who do not know how to bypass internet restrictions, use VPN services, or are generally unwilling to take risks in searching for Ukrainian media channels. As a result, many receive their news primarily from television.



Issues of the Zla Mavka partisan newspaper

⁹⁹ Today, on Taras Shevchenko's Birthday, Every Ukrainian Is Probably Recalling Lines from the Kobzar's Poetry, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 9 March 2026, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/13297

¹⁰⁰ Today Is the Day of the Armed Forces of Ukraine!, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 6 December 2025, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/12783

¹⁰¹ Ukrainians in the Temporarily Occupied Territories Send New Year Greetings from Their Home Cities, National Resistance Centre, *Telegram*, 1 January 2026, https://t.me/sprotyv_official/8080

To counter this, the Zla Mavka team compiles a weekly selection of the main events taking place in Ukraine and distributes a printed newspaper. Copies are left in mailboxes, parks, and near front doors, while readers are encouraged to pass them on to acquaintances after reading them. An electronic version of the newspaper can also be downloaded via a Telegram bot, allowing people to download and further distribute it via messaging applications¹⁰².

Publication of Diaries Written by Ukrainians Under Occupation

One form of psychological support is diary writing. Many women living under occupation describe their experiences, the issues that concern them, and the things that help them cope. Members of the Zla Mavka movement illustrate these accounts and publish such diary entries on their website¹⁰³ and Telegram channel. This helps residents of the temporarily occupied territories understand that many others share their feelings.



Diaries of Zla Mavka activists under occupation

¹⁰² Zla Mavka: Women's Resistance Movement Under Occupation • Ukraïner Q, Ukraïner Q, YouTube, 27 November 2024, <https://surl.li/wfgflp>

¹⁰³ Diaries of Zla Mavka Activists Under Occupation, Zla Mavka, <https://zlamavka.com/category/shhodennyky>

NETWORK-BASED INFORMATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS AGAINST THE OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES

Another objective of the network-based Resistance Movement in the temporarily occupied territories is the demoralisation of Russian military personnel and occupation authorities, which is achieved through information and psychological operations. Such operations include any actions by the Resistance Movement intended to demonstrate that the occupiers are not in control of the temporarily occupied territories, that local residents do not support the Russian invasion and are awaiting de-occupation, and that punishment for crimes committed will be inevitable.

Monitoring and Documentation of War Crimes



Ukrainian civilians living in the temporarily occupied territories constitute a unique source of information for civil society organisations, media outlets, and Ukrainian state bodies regarding crimes committed by the Russian Federation in occupied territories. They monitor and document Russian war crimes in the temporarily occupied territories, helping to build an evidence base for international courts, support victims, and contribute to future efforts to help bring those responsible to justice¹⁰⁴.

In November 2023, the Zhovta Strichka resistance movement launched the Eyes chatbot¹⁰⁵, designed to collect information about war crimes in the temporarily occupied

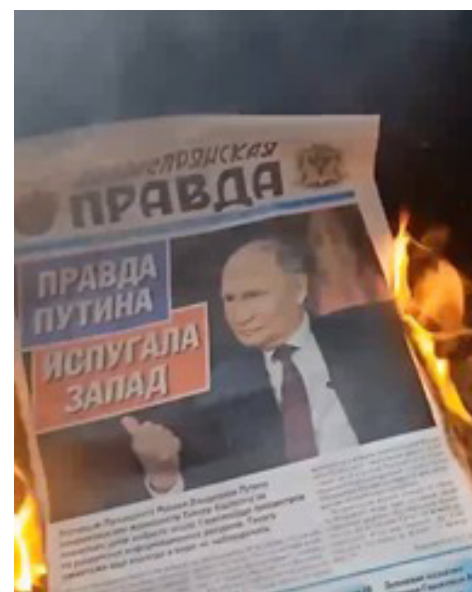
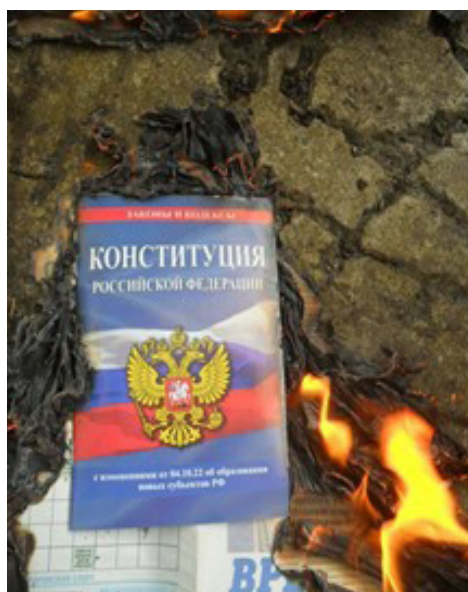
¹⁰⁴ Document the Occupier: How Civilians Collect Evidence of Russian War Crimes, *Frontliner*, 15 April 2026, <https://surl.li/qyktzv>

¹⁰⁵ Eyes, *Telegram*, https://t.me/eyes_ua_bot

territories. All information received is forwarded to the relevant authorities and organisations responsible for investigating crimes and bringing perpetrators to justice¹⁰⁶.

Burning or Destruction of Russian Symbols

Russian occupiers actively mark Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories with Russian symbols, while Resistance Movement activists carry out actions aimed at destroying them. These may include burning Russian campaign materials distributed during pseudo-elections¹⁰⁷, propaganda newspapers, books, copies of the Russian Constitution¹⁰⁸, St George ribbons¹⁰⁹, Russian flags¹¹⁰, or any other objects clearly associated with the Russian Federation and the Russian occupation.



Actions involving the destruction of Russian campaign materials

¹⁰⁶ Zhovta Strichka Resistance Movement Launches Chatbot to Document Russian War Crimes in Occupied Territories, *Ukrinform*, 1 November 2023, <https://surl.li/xkxmtl>

¹⁰⁷ Manuscripts Do Not Burn, and Stinking Russian Propaganda Belongs Only on the Bonfire!, ZLA MAVKA, *Telegram*, 19 August 2023, https://t.me/zlaya_mavka/965

¹⁰⁸ People Are Forced to Pretend to Support the Occupiers at Checkpoints, Zhovta Strichka Activists in Henichesk Show What They Really Think, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 15 December 2025, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/12885

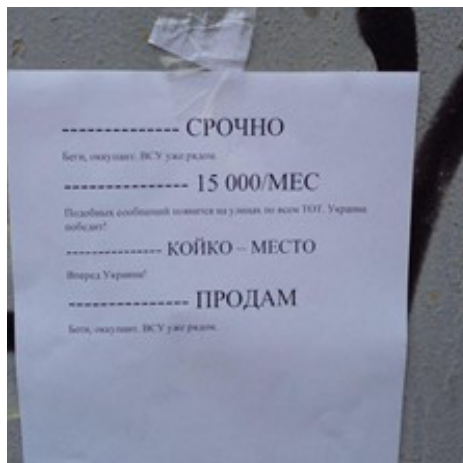
¹⁰⁹ 9 May Is Approaching – Time for Russia's "Victory Mania", Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 3 May 2025, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/11170

¹¹⁰ Occupiers Launch Fake Elections on the Temporarily Occupied Left Bank of Kherson Oblast, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 29 February 2024, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/8005

The objective is to destroy such a symbol in a recognisable location within the temporarily occupied territories and then upload a photograph to a Telegram channel. These actions are intended to demoralise occupiers and collaborators, while also demonstrating the presence of Resistance Movement forces in the temporarily occupied territories and underscoring that the occupied territories are Ukraine.

Dissemination of Ukrainian Symbols Under Russian Occupation

One of the tasks of Resistance Movement activists is to challenge Russian symbols and elements of the occupation. Such actions involve a high degree of creativity and may take many forms, including the distribution of leaflets carrying messages such as “Run, occupier. The Armed Forces of Ukraine are nearby” or “Ukraine will prevail”¹¹¹; the dissemination of leaflets and handwritten notes stating “Occupation Is Not a Holiday” on 20 February, the date on which Russia commemorates the annexation of Crimea¹¹²; or photographing a Russian passport next to a note reading “This Was Not My Choice”.



Resistance actions in the occupied territories

One of the most high-profile actions is the “redesign of Russian roubles” campaign organised by the women’s resistance movement Zla Mavka. Activists print fake rouble banknotes featuring designs intended to remind Russians that they are occupiers in Ukraine. The redesigned

¹¹¹ Notices with a Hidden Message for the Occupiers and Support for Ukraine Appear in Melitopol, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 16 December 2025, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/12887

¹¹² 20 February 2014 Marked the Beginning of Russia’s Occupation of Crimea, Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, 20 February 2026, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/13225

banknotes carry messages such as: *"This Is Not Russia! You Are in Ukraine!"*, *"The rouble's exchange rate is as worthless as Putin's threats to Prigozhin"*, *"Russian banks have no place here"*, and *"Crimea Is Ukraine"*.

As this is one of the actions carried out by the women's partisan movement Zla Mavka, some of the notes feature a Mavka seated on a throne in place of the St Petersburg statue of the Neva. These banknotes were distributed in Melitopol, Berdiansk, Tokmak, Kakhovka, Simferopol, Sevastopol, and Yalta. Some time later, their circulation was reportedly traced even in Kuban, within the Russian Federation. In Melitopol, local pro-Russian channels discussed the campaign as an attempt to undermine the Russian banking system¹¹³.

Minor Acts of Sabotage

Members of the network-based Resistance Movement may engage in minor acts of sabotage against Russian occupiers and collaborators in the temporarily occupied territories. One example of such activity was the **Mavka's Kitchen campaign**.

Initially, women involved in the movement merely distributed posters warning occupiers to pay close attention to what they ate and drank. Later, members of the movement gained access to a kitchen where Russian personnel were being fed and added a laxative to the food. The same was later done with homemade alcohol. As a result, occupiers in Melitopol are now often afraid to eat food they are uncertain about, even fresh fruit and vegetables¹¹⁴.

¹¹³ Zla Mavka: Women's Resistance Movement Under Occupation • Ukraïner Q, Ukraïner Q, *YouTube*, 27 November 2024, <https://surl.li/wfgflp>

¹¹⁴ Zla Mavka: Women's Resistance Movement Under Occupation • Ukraïner Q, Ukraïner Q, *YouTube*, 27 November 2024, <https://surl.li/wfgflp>

MILITARY RESISTANCE – THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT IN THE TOT

Military partisan resistance in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories emerged as early as 2014, when the Russian Federation occupied Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts¹¹⁵. Following the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022, members of underground resistance networks actively destroyed enemy equipment, carried out acts of sabotage at important facilities, and disrupted the occupiers' logistical chains¹¹⁶. According to the American analytical centre the Institute for the Study of War, such activities by the Resistance Movement made it difficult for the occupation authorities to establish stable control over newly occupied regions during the first year of the invasion and to rapidly implement plans for their incorporation into the Russian Federation¹¹⁷.

I INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION

Resistance groups operating in the temporarily occupied territories provide the Armed Forces of Ukraine with critically important intelligence data, including information on the movement of Russian troops, the deployment of air-defence batteries, the locations of Russian command personnel, and other military targets. A number of sources describe such Resistance Movement operations in the temporarily occupied territories. Although these accounts are difficult to verify independently, they are consistent with the broader pattern of resistance activity in occupied areas.

According to security and military studies expert Omar Ashour, the transfer of such data enabled a large number of precise strikes against important targets and also proved significant for major operations, including Ukraine's successful counteroffensive in Kharkiv oblast in Sep-

¹¹⁵ Ukrainian resistance in Russian-occupied Ukraine, *Wikipedia*, <https://surl.lt/vumwxc>

¹¹⁶ National Resistance: The Role of Resistance Movement Participants in Restoring Ukraine's Sovereignty, *ArmyInform*, 26 February 2025, <https://surl.li/ujbzpt>

¹¹⁷ Our Partisans Inflict Significant Losses on the Enemy and Substantially Demoralise the Aggressor, *ArmyInform*, 18 July 2022, <https://surl.li/wwmapn>

tember 2022¹¹⁸.

On 22 September 2023, a Storm Shadow missile strike targeted the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet (the BSF) in occupied Sevastopol. The strike occurred during a high-level meeting attended by the leadership of the Black Sea Fleet. According to reports, 34 Russian officers were killed. As reported by Euromaidan Press, the operation was made possible by the Ukrainian Resistance Movement operating in occupied Crimea¹¹⁹.



The film Utility Workers is dedicated to the activities of the Resistance Movement in the temporarily occupied territories

In March 2026, the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine presented the short film *Utility Workers*¹²⁰, dedicated to the activities of the Resistance Movement in the temporarily occupied territories. The story focuses on municipal utility workers in occupied Melitopol who, under the cover of their everyday work, join a partisan resistance network. They install surveillance equipment near occupiers' military facilities, record the movement of equipment and military infrastructure, and transmit the collected information to Ukraine's Defence Forces. The information is then used in operational planning. In particular, it provides the basis for the work of strike drone units delivering precision strikes against military targets in the temporarily occupied territories¹²¹.

¹¹⁸ How Ukraine's shadow army fights back against the Russian occupation, Omar Ashour, *Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation*, 03 March 2025, <https://surl.li/bjrquub>

¹¹⁹ Missile strikes and spraypaint: how Ukraine's resistance movement fights Russian occupation, *Euromaidan Press*, 09 November 2023, <https://surl.li/qbakix>

¹²⁰ Short Film Utility Workers, Dedicated to Participants in the Resistance Movement of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Facebook, *Special Operations Forces Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine*, <https://surl.li/lwwdpc>

¹²¹ Special Operations Forces Present the Short Film Utility Workers, Dedicated to the Resistance Movement, *Ukrinform*, 26 March 2026, <https://surl.li/qsxbpm>

ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS AND KILLINGS OF RUSSIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL AND COLLABORATORS

Representatives of the Ukrainian authorities have repeatedly acknowledged their involvement in the elimination of individuals suspected of collaboration with the Russian Federation, while also emphasising the involvement of partisans operating in the temporarily occupied territories and coordinating their actions with the Armed Forces of Ukraine¹²².

Wikipedia hosts an article entitled *Assassination Attempts on Collaborators and Occupation Officials During the Invasion of Ukraine*, which is regularly updated¹²³. As of March 2026, it contained information on 217 cases involving assassination attempts against collaborators and occupation officials who were Ukrainian citizens, as well as 29 cases involving assassination attempts against Russian military personnel and occupation officials. Such assassination attempts could result in either injury or death and could be carried out both in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and within the territory of the Russian Federation.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine (HUR) have on multiple occasions acknowledged the elimination of some of these individuals in cooperation with Resistance Movement forces operating in the temporarily occupied territories. At the same time, it is possible that some individuals on this list may have fallen victim to internal disputes¹²⁴.

SABOTAGE OPERATIONS

Sabotage operations carried out by Resistance Movement forces in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories or within the territory of the Russian Federation are aimed at damaging military logistics and destroying infrastructure of critical importance to the enemy. Resistance Movement members disable railway tracks, bridges, ammunition and fuel depots, and burn transformers and railway signalling relay cabinets, significantly limiting the operational capabilities of the occupation forces.

¹²² Killed Collaborators in the Occupied Territories: How Many Were There and Who Were They?, *BBC News Ukraine*, 20 September 2022, <https://surl.lu/hdvssl>

¹²³ Assassination Attempts On Collaborators and Occupation Officials During the Invasion of Ukraine, *Wikipedia*, <https://surl.li/pjipxd>

¹²⁴ The Elimination of Collaborators in the Occupied Territories: Who Was Killed and Under What Circumstances, *Slovo i Dilo Analytical Portal*, 08 April 2024, <https://surl.li/xdlamr>

Reports of sabotage operations in the temporarily occupied territories or within the Russian Federation periodically appear in open sources. In December 2025, for example, the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine reported six successful operations targeting transport infrastructure over the course of several weeks¹²⁵. In November 2025, the Atesh partisan movement reported the burning of a military electric locomotive on railway tracks in the Russian city of Bryansk, a key logistical hub supplying the Northern Grouping of the Russian occupation army. The locomotive was used to transport military cargo, and its destruction created significant supply problems for frontline forces. In particular, schedules for trains carrying ammunition, military equipment and fuel destined for the Sumy axis were disrupted¹²⁶.

¹²⁵ The Resistance Movement Conducted Six Successful Operations in Russia and the Occupied Territories of Ukraine – Defence Intelligence of Ukraine, *Ukrinform*, 04 December 2025, <https://surl.li/onqeqc>

¹²⁶ Partisans Burned a Military Electric Locomotive on Railway Tracks in Bryansk, *Ukrinform*, 30 November 2025, <https://surl.li/dlvrrl>

ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS

The Ukrainian Resistance Movement against Russian occupation emerged as early as 2014, when Ukrainians took part in demonstrations in support of a united Ukraine in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea. Following the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, similar non-violent actions took place in virtually every settlement reached by the advancing front. Demonstrations against Russian occupation were only possible during the initial stage of the invasion. Once occupation authorities became established in the temporarily occupied territories, such activities became impossible due to the threat they posed to the lives of their participants. From the second half of 2022 onwards, the Resistance Movement against occupation went underground.

For the first time in Ukraine's history, **the Resistance Movement in the temporarily occupied territories is supported by Ukrainian state institutions**, which significantly strengthens its activities. In particular, the National Resistance Centre, a unit of the Special Operations Forces Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, coordinates Resistance Movement cells in the temporarily occupied territories and provides them with material, logistical, and communication support. Ukrainian legislation provides security and social guarantees for Resistance Movement participants and their family members.

In Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories, the Resistance Movement operates both in the form of **civic non-violent resistance and military partisan activity**. Any resident of the temporarily occupied territories can engage in **individual non-violent resistance to occupation** by preserving ties with Ukraine as a state and with fellow Ukrainians living in government-controlled areas of the country. The activities of **non-violent Resistance Movement networks** are aimed both at demonstrating the continued presence of Ukrainian symbols in the temporarily occupied territories despite their systematic destruction by the occupation authorities and at demoralising the Russian occupation authorities and collaborators.

Ukrainian partisans in the temporarily occupied territories operate in coordination with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, gathering intelligence data, carrying out assassination attempts and killings of Russian military personnel and collaborators, and conducting sabotage operations both in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories and within the territory of the Russian Federation.

In Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories, **it is impossible to engage in resistance through non-violent methods typically associated with democratic societies**. The Resistance Movement operates under conditions shaped by the Russian occupation authorities' creation of a **digital ghetto, social genocide, the forced replacement of**

the population in the temporarily occupied territories, and the experience acquired by the Russian occupation army and authorities in combating partisan resistance during numerous military campaigns, including in Chechnya.

Participation in the Resistance Movement entails **extraordinarily high risks to the lives of its participants**. Any expression of protest, display of pro-Ukrainian views, refusal to obtain Russian documents, or refusal to cooperate with the occupiers may expose an individual, at a minimum, to deportation and, far more frequently, to detention, torture in places of detention, or even loss of life. Nevertheless, such threats do not deter residents of the temporarily occupied territories from participating in resistance activities.

The Ukrainian Resistance Movement demonstrates that **residents of the temporarily occupied territories have not accepted Russian occupation** and, despite all efforts by the occupation authorities, continue to maintain ties with Ukraine and await de-occupation. The Resistance Movement also prevents Russian occupiers from feeling secure in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories, even when they are located deep behind the front line. It **demoralises representatives of the occupation authorities** and contributes to holding those responsible for war crimes committed in the temporarily occupied territories accountable. The Resistance Movement also consistently **advances de-occupation** through support for and the transfer of information to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Participation in the Resistance Movement enables residents of the temporarily occupied territories to **preserve dignity and self-respect** even under the harsh conditions of Russian occupation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ... Ukrainian state institutions should **continue to support the Resistance Movement in the temporarily occupied territories**, including networks of civic non-violent resistance to occupation and military partisan activity.
- ... The Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine should **pay particular attention to the security of Resistance Movement participants** when planning resistance actions in the temporarily occupied territories, whether non-violent or military in nature.
- ... Resistance Movement participants in the temporarily occupied territories should carefully **familiarise themselves with security measures** when joining resistance activities and comply with established security protocols; where possible, they should undergo training in the security aspects of partisan activity.
- ... Ukrainian state institutions and civil society organisations should **document the activities of the Resistance Movement in the temporarily occupied territories** in order to create a body of information for the study of resistance experience and for the future commemoration of such activities.
- ... The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and other state institutions should widely **inform international partners about the activities of the Resistance Movement** against Russian occupation in the temporarily occupied territories.
- ... Ukraine's international partners should, **during ceasefire negotiations or when developing proposed "peace plans", take into account** the existence of active resistance to Russian occupation and an extensive Resistance Movement network in the temporarily occupied territories, which indicates that residents of these territories continue to await the de-occupation of their region.

APPENDIX: RESISTANCE MOVEMENT NETWORKS

This section presents examples of three institutionalised resistance movements that publicly identify themselves and openly demonstrate the results of their activities. There are significantly more resistance movement cells that operate covertly, either under the cover of the Special Operations Forces or independently, but little information is available about them.

I ZHOVTA STRICHKA

Zhovta Strichka is a civic resistance movement operating in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories. It was established in Kherson in April 2022 following the start of Russia's full-scale aggression. The movement's objectives are to demonstrate civic protest, support Ukrainian citizens living under occupation, and engage in educational outreach¹²⁷. Zhovta Strichka activists emphasise that they engage exclusively in non-violent resistance¹²⁸.



The history of Zhovta Strichka began with activists coordinating the evacuation of people from the combat zone through an online resource they created. The next stage was participation in the rally held in Kherson on 27 April 2022, when nearly 500 participants took to the streets of the city to protest against the occupation and the Russian occupiers. Following this, the resistance movement went underground.

The name Zhovta Strichka does not carry any special symbolism. One of the initiators of the underground movement explains the choice of the movement's symbol as follows:

“We simply chose one of the colours of our flag and thought about how people in the temporarily occupied territories could demonstrate their protest against

¹²⁷ Zhovta Strichka. Civic Resistance Movement Against Occupation, <https://www.zhovtastrichka.org>

¹²⁸ From Missile Strikes to Spray Cans: How Ukraine's Resistance Movement Is Fighting Russian Occupation, *Texty*, 14 November 2023, <https://surl.li/ntncnw>

the rashist occupation. We understood that if they simply used the colour yellow somewhere or tied a yellow ribbon, it would reduce the time needed to carry out such an action and help keep them safe.¹²⁹



The most common methods used by Zhovta Strichka include putting up leaflets, hanging yellow ribbons, Ukrainian flags and other Ukrainian symbols in public places, painting patriotic graffiti (one such symbol is the letter 'ї'), holding online rallies, and destroying Russian newspapers and propaganda materials. After carrying out these actions, participants are asked to send photographs for dissemination through the movement's network. In addition, when Russian occupiers in Berdiansk confiscated and burned Ukrainian literature, Zhovta Strichka activists succeeded in hiding and preserving Ukrainian books. In 2022, movement participants disseminated calls to boycott the pseudo-referendum in the temporarily occupied territories and later campaigned for residents not to obtain Russian passports or Russian pensions.

According to the activists, not all actions are publicised. Movement participants created the Eyes chatbot¹³⁰, through which they ask supporters to submit:

- ▶ photographs and videos of Russian military personnel, collaborators, and military equipment both in transit and at parking sites;
- ▶ photographs of occupiers' propaganda materials (newspapers, announcements, billboards);
- ▶ photographs and videos of streets, administrative buildings, banks and other locations.

Participants also collect and transmit information about traitors and collaborators to the Ukrainian security services. Zhovta Strichka activists are also actively involved in disrupting all possible forms of the forced mobilisation of Ukrainians into the ranks of the Russian army.

According to available sources, the core of the Zhovta Strichka movement remains the two

¹²⁹ How the Zhovta Strichka Resistance Movement Operates in Crimea and Kherson, Radio NV, YouTube, 16 September 2022, <https://surl.it/xtfcms>

¹³⁰ Eyes, Telegram, https://t.me/eyes_ua_bot

individuals who founded it, one of whom is a software developer. Members of the community operate anonymously and do not know one another¹³¹. According to movement participants themselves, the largest number of Zhovta Strichka activists are located in Crimea, where there are significantly fewer checkpoints and no round-the-clock surveillance of the kind found in territories occupied by Russia in 2022¹³². At present, the Zhovta Strichka Telegram channel has approximately 18,000 subscribers¹³³. The movement operates a range of digital resources through which it communicates with supporters from different target audiences: a website¹³⁴, Facebook page¹³⁵, Instagram page¹³⁶, Telegram channel¹³⁷ and an account on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter)¹³⁸. Individuals can join the movement through the Razom chatbot¹³⁹.

Zhovta Strichka activists also emphasise the gender dimension of the movement, noting that women constitute the majority of its participants. As they explain, not everyone is able to take up arms, yet these women, who live under occupation, also wish to be part of Ukraine's future victory and therefore contribute in their own way.

In 2022, the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was awarded to the courageous people of Ukraine, represented by the President, elected leaders and civil society. In the nomination materials, which highlighted the role of individual people, civil society initiatives, and state and public institutions, the Zhovta Strichka civic resistance movement against occupation was specifically mentioned among them¹⁴⁰.

¹³¹ "These Are People Who 'Fight' Under Occupation Without Weapons." How Does the Zhovta Strichka Resistance Movement Operate?, *OMore*, 19 February 2024, <https://surl.li/duoxpb>

¹³² From Missile Strikes to Spray Cans: How Ukraine's Resistance Movement Is Fighting Russian Occupation, *Texty*, 14 November 2023, <https://surl.li/ntncnw>

¹³³ Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, https://t.me/s/yellowribbon_ua

¹³⁴ Zhovta Strichka, <https://www.zhovtastrichka.org>

¹³⁵ Zhovta Strichka, *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/yellowribbonUA>

¹³⁶ Zhovta Strichka, *Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/yellowribbonua>

¹³⁷ Zhovta Strichka, *Telegram*, https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua

¹³⁸ Zhovta Strichka, *X*, <https://x.com/yellowribbonUA>

¹³⁹ Razom, *Telegram*, https://t.me/zhovta_strichka_bot

¹⁴⁰ The Ukrainian People, Led by Zelenskyi, Receive the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, *Ukrinform*, 19 October 2022, <https://surl.li/bczpkv>

THE ZLA MAVKA WOMEN'S PARTISAN MOVEMENT

Zla Mavka presents itself as a Ukrainian women's non-violent resistance movement that emerged in occupied Melitopol in early 2023, when open resistance to the occupiers had become virtually impossible. Its co-founders state that they initially planned to act independently, but were immediately contacted by other women who wished to join their activities.



According to the movement's co-founders, the name Mavka was chosen in reference to a female spirit from Ukrainian folk mythology, depicted as a beautiful naked young woman who lives in the forest, lures young men into it, and then tickles them to death¹⁴¹. This figure from Ukrainian folklore symbolises the anger and defiance of Ukrainian women in response to Russia's invasion and the war crimes committed daily by the Russian army¹⁴².

The movement's main activities focus on information resistance: producing and distributing brochures, leaflets, newspapers, and posters calling for resistance to the occupiers and promoting messages about a free Ukraine.

As of spring 2025, movement participants stated that their ranks included more than 200 active members. A number of other women contribute less visibly by disseminating information, keeping diaries and preserving records. The co-founders state that the movement now has followers from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts to Crimea. At the same time, participants from Crimea are described as the most active and the boldest¹⁴³.

Zla Mavka activists conduct their activities through a Telegram channel and chatbot¹⁴⁴ that allow them to open "offices" through which they interact with group leaders who assign resistance-related tasks. Identifying information remains anonymous on both sides, which is vital for operating in the temporarily occupied territories under the constant threat of arrest. The Zla Mavka movement also publicises its activities through a range of information resources,

¹⁴¹ Mavka, Wikipedia, <https://surl.li/wjrtpq>

¹⁴² Zla Mavka: Women's Partisan Resistance Movement, *Zla Mavka*, <https://surl.li/seakfx>

¹⁴³ "Burning Russian Flags Is Good for the Soul." How the Women's Movement Zla Mavka Resists Occupation, *Platfor.Ma*, 1 April 2025, <https://surl.li/ucahfx>

¹⁴⁴ Partizankabot, Telegram, <https://t.me/partizankabot>

including a website¹⁴⁵, Instagram page¹⁴⁶, Telegram channel¹⁴⁷ and YouTube channel¹⁴⁸.

I ATESH

Atesh (from the Crimean Tatar word *Ateş*, meaning “Fire”) is a military partisan movement involving Ukrainians from the temporarily occupied territories, Crimean Tatars, and Russians who oppose the war. The movement emerged in Crimea in the summer of 2022 and declares its goals as the liberation of Crimea and all other Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia, as well as “bringing about the collapse of the Russian army from within”¹⁴⁹.



*“What the Russians are doing in the occupied territories is simply horrific. Like barbarians, they are trying to burn out everything Ukrainian and Tatar from our native lands. There are repressions, deportations, and the indoctrination of children. That is the worst part. And it must be stopped as soon as possible,” Atesh explains its motivation*¹⁵⁰.

As of February 2023, Atesh reported that around 2,000 members^{151 152} had joined its ranks (although this figure is difficult to verify independently). For the security of the organisation, Atesh uses a decentralised structure in which individual members communicate only with coordinators.

Atesh distributes leaflets both in the temporarily occupied territories and within the Russian Federation, calling on people to join its ranks or provide valuable information. The movement also promises payment to Russian informants. Atesh also maintains a Telegram channel¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ Zla Mavka, <https://zlamavka.com>

¹⁴⁶ zlamavka, Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/zlamavka>

¹⁴⁷ ZLA MAVKA, Telegram, https://t.me/s/zlaya_mavka

¹⁴⁸ Zla Mavka, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmynGQAGSMjEgt-4gFFgWgg>

¹⁴⁹ “Trojan Horse” in the Russian Army, Charter97, 5 October 2022, <https://surl.li/skslgd>

¹⁵⁰ From Missile Strikes to Spray Cans: How Ukraine’s Resistance Movement Is Fighting Russian Occupation, Texty, 14 November 2023, <https://surl.li/mgjkzp>

¹⁵¹ Official Statement by the Atesh Movement, ATESH, Telegram, 2 February 2023, https://t.me/atesh_ua/342

¹⁵² The Ukrainian Resistance Movement in the Occupied Territories, PONARS EURASIA, 20 March 2023, <https://surl.li/nnbhah>

¹⁵³ ATESH, Telegram, https://t.me/s/atesh_ua

through which it reports on its sabotage operations and disseminates its messages.

Atesh carries out intelligence gathering in the temporarily occupied territories and in Russia, transmitting information to the Ukrainian military and the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine on air defence systems, military bases and depots, troop movements and other targets. The movement claims to have informants within the Russian army and the Black Sea Fleet. According to information from Atesh information channels, the movement helped direct the Ukrainian missile strike on the Russian landing ship Minsk and the submarine Rostov-on-Don, and also contributed to the attack on the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in September 2023¹⁵⁴.

Atesh has claimed responsibility for a number of violent actions, including the killing of 30 Russian servicemen in hospitals in Sevastopol and Simferopol (October 2022), the killing of the Kherson collaborator Kyrilo Stremousov (November 2022)¹⁵⁵, an assassination attempt against the deputy head of Nova Kakhovka¹⁵⁶ (May 2023), killings of Russian military personnel and members of the Russian National Guard, and other acts of intimidation¹⁵⁷. In addition, Atesh claimed involvement in a fire at the barracks of a Russian military unit in the settlement of Radianske (December 2022), which resulted in the deaths of two servicemen¹⁵⁸, as well as sabotage operations on railways in the occupied territories, southern Russia, and even Yekaterinburg.

Atesh launched an educational project aimed at Russian servicemen—an online course devoted to methods of surviving the war through sabotage, including damaging ammunition, fuel and military equipment. “No one will be able to prove your involvement!” Atesh assures participants, promising that saboteurs will continue receiving soldiers’ salaries without taking part in combat operations while their equipment is being repaired. According to Atesh information channels, more than 4,000 Russian servicemen had completed the course by August 2023¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁴ “Not All Crimeans Are Zombies.” How the Atesh Movement Tracks Russian Troops in Crimea and Helps Ukraine, *BBC News Russian*, 7 January 2024, <https://surl.li/rdnrf>

¹⁵⁵ Barracks Fire, Stremousov, Leaflets: What Is Known About Crimea's Partisans, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 8 January 2023, <https://surl.li/nnycaa>

¹⁵⁶ Russia-Ukraine war at a glance: what we know on day 384 of the invasion, *The Guardian*, 14 March 2023, <https://surl.li/rmerfs>

¹⁵⁷ Zakhar Prilepin's Car Blown Up in Nizhny Novgorod: Writer Seriously Injured, *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, 6 May 2023, <https://surl.li/oacelk>

¹⁵⁸ The Atesh Partisan Movement Claims Responsibility for a Fire at a Russian Military Barracks in Crimea, *RFE/RL's Crimea Realities*, 11 December 2022, <https://surl.li/oiovwu>

¹⁵⁹ Why Crimean Tatar fighters are playing an increasing role in resistance to Russian occupation, *The Conversation*, 2 August 2023, <https://surl.li/ccrrchdo>