

UN report accuses Ukrainian government of human rights abuses

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The latest report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on Ukraine exposes the devastating consequences of the NATO-backed coup that ousted President Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014 and the ensuing civil war.

The report restricts itself to November 2014, but notes in its opening section that after nine months of conflict, the situation in east Ukraine is “extremely dire for the population, particularly older persons, children and people in institutional care, many of whom are on the brink of survival.” As a result of the conflict in the east, the report adds, “the impact on the rest of Ukraine is increasingly acute.”

The report estimates that in war-torn east Ukraine, at least 4,364 persons had been killed and 10,064 wounded by the end of November. The report describes its own figure as a “very conservative estimate,” adding that over 1,000 bodies delivered to morgues in the conflict zone remain unidentified. In a footnote, it concludes that the “actual numbers of casualties is likely to be considerably higher.”

While stating that the pro-Russian rebel forces controlling parts of the east of the country in the east were also guilty of abuses, the UN report acknowledges that the most of the human rights violations were the result of the Ukrainian government’s military offensive. The intervention of the Ukrainian military in the east has “been accompanied by arbitrary detentions, torture, and enforced disappearances of people suspected of ‘separatism and terrorism’. Most of such human rights violations appear to have been perpetrated by certain voluntary battalions or by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU).”

The report singles out a number of such battalions which are notorious for their brutality and fascistic

ideology: “Aidar, Azov, Slobozhanshchina and Shakhtarsk.”

Among the atrocities committed by the Ukrainian army and its neo-fascist shock troops are 300 cases of the shelling of civilian areas. The report lists the fatalities of women and children in the 100 cases of the shelling of civilians which took place in November alone, including the bombardment of a school football pitch. The UN report repeats charges it has made previously that cluster bombs have been illegally used in such shellings.

The current UN report admits that, despite appeals to the Kiev regime in previous human rights surveys, the Ukrainian Office of the Military Prosecutor has failed to undertake any investigation of the “considerable” number of allegations of human rights violations by the Ukrainian army and the far-right battalions.

In fact, the new Ukrainian regime led by billionaire President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arsenii Yatseniuk exploited the civil war it provoked to pass new legislation to increase the state’s repressive powers and prepare new crimes.

The report notes that under the terms of the “lustration” law adopted in October, the Kiev government dismissed many public officials associated with the Yanukovych regime. A number of these officials have been replaced with far right supporters of the Kiev regime. One example is Vadim Troyan, a leading member of the neo-fascist Azov battalion, who has recently been named as head of police for Kiev.

The regime also introduced an amendment to its law “on fighting terrorism,” extending the period within which a “terrorist” suspect can be held without appearing before a court from 60 hours to 30 days. Another amendment to the country’s Criminal Code greatly expands the power of the public prosecutor to

order searches of property and seize documents in cases of suspected “terrorist” activity.

The Kiev regime was forced to retreat from its plans to pass a law providing a general amnesty for the crimes committed by its “armed formations” in the east. However, on the basis of a presidential decree of November 14, it derogated the provisions of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights in the east of the country. This means that in the future, Ukrainian units and fascist gangs committing war crimes in the east would be protected from prosecution.

In addition to listing the manifest cases of human rights violations, the report also comments on the devastating social situation in the country. One million people have fled fighting in east Ukraine and much of the remaining population of 5.25 million is living on the “brink of survival,” the report warns, with their situation likely to worsen in winter.

One of the principle reasons for the dramatic decline in living conditions was the Kiev regime’s decision to cut all state funding, including social programs, to the east. In addition, it has undertaken to relocate to the west essential social, medical, banking services, educational institutions, and other state enterprises, to commence December 1. The result of this decision has been a further breakdown of economic activity, and the complete disruption of medical services and social welfare benefits in the east.

The report also notes the disastrous state of essential supplies in the east due to the civil war. Twenty-eight villages and towns in the Donetsk region had limited water supply, and 34 settlements remained without electricity.

“In Luhansk region, the settlements of Yuvileine, Novosvitlivka, [and] Stanytsia Luhanska reportedly did not have electricity for up to six months and sewage, water supply and communications consequently did not function. On 27 November, regional authorities reported about 12,000 destroyed public and private facilities and 11,000 families without gas supply in both regions,” the report writes.

The eighth OHCHR report ends with an impotent request for both sides in the Ukraine conflict to abide by international law and respect human rights. The material in the report, however, provides a sufficient basis for charging leading politicians in Kiev with war

crimes and opening investigations into the role of US and European politicians in the ousting of Viktor Yanukovych and the fomenting of civil war.



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