

UN report documents death of over 9,000 Ukrainians

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A recent report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has documented the deaths of over 9,000 Ukrainians in the conflict between the NATO-backed Kiev puppet regime and pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Over 2,000 of the approximately 9,000 dead are civilians, not including the 298 civilians killed in the downing of flight MH-17. Another 21,000 Ukrainians have been injured since the beginning of hostilities in April 2014. As of November 15, over 1.5 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes.

The report was released just one day after the visit of United States Vice President Joseph Biden to Kiev.

In addition to the deaths, injuries and refugees, the report documents the devastating effects of the war on the country's working class, especially in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, where approximately 2.9 million people live and where the majority of the fighting has taken place.

According to the report, "The impact of the conflict on economic and social rights for people residing in the conflict areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions remains significant. The interruption of access to basic services is life-threatening and can have a life-long impact on the affected population, hindering the post-conflict recovery. It is especially worrying with the onset of winter."

Responsibility for the current economic and social misery in these regions lies solely with the Poroshenko regime, which essentially imposed a blockade on the region in January 2015 by requiring citizens in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to obtain a special permit in order to cross into government-controlled areas. To further complicate the lives of people in these areas, this permit can only be obtained in government-held territory, effectively stranding civilians in war-torn

areas and preventing them from crossing the checkpoints to access medicine, basic goods and services or to meet family members.

The report notes that as a result, "With only four transport corridors being operational in the Donetsk region, and just one recently opened corridor for pedestrians in Luhansk region, movement back and forth and around the contact line has been very limited, congested and time-consuming. People often spend hours and even nights waiting in queues to pass checkpoints, with limited access to water and sanitation facilities."

Despite Ukraine being a signatory to the Ottawa Treaty, or Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which "categorically prohibits the use of anti-personnel mines "under any circumstances," the report states, "The presence of mines alongside the official transport corridors is a security risk, and constitutes a particular threat along other roads crossing the contact line."

Mines or explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are a particular risk for civilians and children, since they are untrained to look for signs of their presence. In the most recent period tracked by the UN (August 16 to November 15), 93 civilians were killed by either IEDs or ERW.

NATO-backed Kiev forces and pro-Russian separatists have been either complicit or actively involved in major violations of international humanitarian and military laws. Ukrainian government personnel have disappeared, tortured and killed civilians. In one case a woman accused of being a terrorist "was hung by her hands handcuffed in the back until her elbow joints were torn apart. About 20 times, a gas mask was reportedly put on her head, with the inhaler closed," the report notes.

In another case three men "detained by police in

Donetsk region claimed that for more than eight hours after their detention they were subjected to beatings, death threats, and mock executions during which they were forced to dig their own graves. In a city police department they were tortured with a gas mask (so-called ‘elephant torture’) and forced to sign a confession to incriminate themselves. Two of them claimed that they had been electrocuted with an electric wire connected to their genitals.”

The report also documents an instance in which a man detained by the fascist Azov battalion “claimed that his legs were pierced with a bayonet knife, he was hit in the face and his ribs were broken. He also reported being threatened with rape and subjected to a mock execution.” The behavior of these imperialist-backed thugs mirrors that of United States interrogators at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq over 10 years ago.

In September 2014, the report notes, a man was apprehended by armed men in the city of Mariupol. According to witnesses, the men were clearly members of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU), with one individual introducing himself as an SBU officer and presenting official SBU identification. The following day the apprehended man’s “body, bearing signs of violence, was found dead on the outskirts of the city.”

The report also notes several cases in which armed separatist groups in the Donbass region have executed captured Ukrainian soldiers. The report also documents abductions and disappearances of those suspected of being government collaborators or spies.

While Russia has been repeatedly condemned for the actions of separatist groups in the Donbass by Western imperialist government officials and subjected to harsh economic sanctions, the Poroshenko regime is free to engage in terror and violence without fear of being prosecuted for war crimes due to the backing of the major imperialist powers. As the report notes, Ukrainian security “officers appear to enjoy a high degree of impunity, systematically escaping from investigations into alleged violations.”

During his recent visit to Ukraine, US Vice President Joe Biden said not a word regarding the blatant violations of international humanitarian law by the right-wing Kiev regime, or the miserable state of the country’s impoverished population. Rather, Biden declared before the country’s parliament, “the hopes of freedom-loving people the world over are with you

because so much rides on your fragile experiment with democracy succeeding.”

Biden, who criticized rampant corruption in Ukraine during his remarks, failed to mention that his own son, lobbyist Hunter Biden, is a member of the board of Burisma Holdings, one of Ukraine’s largest national gas companies. It has recently been investigated for the laundering of \$23 million in Ukrainian public assets through London banks.

While condemning Russia for “send[ing] its thugs, its troops, its mercenaries across the border,” Biden promised Ukraine further support from both NATO and the United States, including an additional \$190 million of funding and the training of Ukrainian military forces.



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