This report was developed by the Eastern-Ukrainian Centre for Civic Initiatives.

The report was produced within the framework of the project “Action to ensure the respect of human rights in the armed conflict zone and on its bordering territories in Donbas, Ukraine” implemented by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw) in cooperation with partner organizations from the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas”.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the member organizations of the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas” or the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw).
Imprisoned in the "LPR Government" Building: Analytical Report
This report concerns one of the many illegal detention facilities established in Luhansk oblast during the armed conflict in Donbas. The facility was located in the former Luhansk Oblast Administration at 3, Heroiv Velykoi Vitchynianoi Viiny Square. The report is based on 19 interviews with former detainees held at the “LPR government building” by the representatives of the self-proclaimed republic.
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COALITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES “JUSTICE FOR PEACE IN DONBAS” .................................................................................................................................................. 42
The basement of the former Luhansk Oblast Administration, the de facto building of the “government of Luhansk People’s Republic”, is one of many illegal places of detention that were and, probably, continue to function in the non-government controlled territories.

The study is based on the testimonies of people released from illegal detention. These testimonies were collected by members of the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas” in the process of documenting human rights violations.

Those interviewed recounted experiences of being subjected to torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment, including sexual violence. While in illegal detention, the detainees experienced being forced to bury bodies or clean rooms after torture. Those interviewed described family members being threatened with physical violence. The detainees were deprived of access to legal remedies, and their relatives were not informed of their whereabouts.

Prosecution of perpetrators is one of the key elements of restoring justice for the victims. However, most interviewees who contacted law enforcement in Ukraine upon their release have not subsequently received information on their investigation, or said it to be ineffective. Other respondents did not believe in the prospects of holding perpetrators to account, and did not therefore contact law enforcement.

SUMMARY
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFU</td>
<td>Armed Forces of Ukraine</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATO</td>
<td>anti-terrorist operation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECHR</td>
<td>Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECtHR</td>
<td>European Court of Human Rights</td>
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<td>I.</td>
<td>interviewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>illegal armed group</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</td>
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<td>MIA</td>
<td>Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.</td>
<td>respondent</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSU</td>
<td>State Security Service of Ukraine</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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</table>
This report would not have been possible without the active cooperation of people who had been illegally detained in the basement of the former Luhansk Oblast Administration. We are extremely grateful to those of you who found the strength and the opportunity to meet with us (Oleksandr Belokobylskyi, Viktoria Kononova, Oleksandr Kononov, Oleksandr Retivov, Dmytro Tynda, Ihor Hromiak), as well as those whose names we cannot disclose for security reasons. They recalled the horrific days of imprisonment, helped identify important details of their detention and found others who had not been interviewed.

We are also grateful to our colleagues from Vostok SOS Charitable Foundation, Moloda Prosvita Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Organization for their cooperation and support in establishing contact with former detainees.

We would like to thank the photographers and journalists Oleksandr Volchanskyi and Oleh Peretiaka who agreed to provide their work for illustrations in this report.

We also thank our colleagues at the Centre who helped prepare the report for publication and designed the graphics - Alina Bodnar and Karina Doroshenko. We are also grateful to Bogna Chmielewska, Jonathan Andrew, Marta Szczepaniak and Simon Schlegel for proofreading the text.

We are grateful to our colleagues from the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw) for advice to improve the report and their support during the research process.

Hanna Yanova, Volodymyr Shcherbachenko
The key **goal** of this report is to use the case of one illegal place of detention, the former Luhansk Oblast Administration building, to illustrate gross human rights violations related to the conflict in Donbas, as well as to attract public attention to the issues related to prosecution of perpetrators.

The study’s **objectives** include:

- to describe the political context of the administration basement’s transformation into an illegal place of detention;
- to analyze the serious human rights violations committed in this place of detention during the armed conflict;
- based on the case of one illegal place of detention, to provide recommendations for all parties to the conflict concerning both the detention period and the time after release (medical, psychological, legal assistance to the released people and their family members).

The key information in the report was obtained from 19 interviews with people, who had been illegally detained at the “LPR government” building in 2014-2015. Interviews were conducted using the questionnaire “Human rights in the ATO area: places of detention”. Several interviews with persons having information about the basements of the Luhansk Oblast Administration building and with persons who had information familiar with the events in Luhansk during the seizure of the administration building were also collected.

Interviews used for this research were held between 2015 - 2018 by members of the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas”: Eastern-Ukrainian Centre for Civic Initiatives, Vostok SOS, Ochyschennya, Moloda Prosvita Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Organization, the Alternativa Luhansk Regional Human Rights Centre, Public Committee for the Protection of Constitutional Rights and Freedoms of Citizens, Bakhmat Environmental and Cultural Center, and the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union.

Each analyzed interview includes an audio and a video record, an interview transcript, a completed questionnaire and a consent form signed by the interviewee for the use of collected information. During the interview the respondents were asked about the circumstances of their arrest, conditions of detention, interrogation, forced labor, injuries, access to medical assistance, proof of support of the “LPR” by the Russian Federation, torture and extrajudicial killings, perpetrators, circumstances of release, and assistance (legal, psychological, social etc.) received after release.

Additional sources of information included international and domestic legal documents, decisions of Ukrainian courts and the ECtHR, information from open sources (media reports from Ukraine, “Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics” and the Russian Federation). Content analysis encompassed messages in social media, information from the sites of public organizations, photo-, video materials on data portals of all participants of the conflict (Ukraine, “LPR”, “DPR”, Russian Federation). Our analysts collected information related to the area of research (photo, video, and screenshots) in the database for further use.
The administration building is located at Heroiv Velykoi Vitchyznianoi Viiny Square (hereafter - Heroiv VVV) designed at the former Sinna Square (Fair Square). In different periods, the square had a number of names: first Tsentralna ("Central"), later Radianska ("Soviet"). After the Stella of Glory was erected in 1965, the square was named Heroiv VVV\textsuperscript{1}.

The architectural ensemble of the square includes several administrative and residential complexes. The design was developed back in 1939, during Stalin’s rule, and the building was envisioned in the empire style. However, in practice, construction started after World War II. It was finished during Nikita Khruschev’s tenure as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Therefore, the architectural ensemble of the square exhibits several styles - Stalin’s empire style evolved with the more utilitarian buildings of Khruschev’s time.

As a result, the administrative building that hosted the national economy council and the Luhansk Oblast Administration was built without “architectural excesses” that were declared undesirable. Residents of Luhansk called it “the building with globes” because there were two granite globes installed at the entrance.

In the years of Ukrainian independence, a monument to Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko was installed next to the building. Later, the pedestal of the monument was used as an improvised tribune for different events and protests, both by officials and by the opposition. During the Revolution of Dignity, the area near the monument was one of the key places of assembly for local Euromaidan supporters.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Heroiv_VVV_Square_1962.jpg}
\caption{Photo 1. Heroiv VVV Square. 1962\textsuperscript{2}}
\end{figure}


On March 9, 2014, on the 200th anniversary of Shevchenko’s birth, several hundreds of pro-Ukrainian activists with Ukrainian symbols gathered for the Maidan protest in Luhansk next to Shevchenko’s monument. At the same time, representatives of “anti-Maidan” gathered across from the square. A several-month long, predominantly peaceful confrontation between the pro-European and pro-Russian groups turned into a violent fight on that day in Luhansk. The police failed to ensure order, and participants of the pro-Russian meeting violently dispersed the peaceful gathering dedicated to the anniversary of Shevchenko’s birth.
Directly after the forced dispersal of the meeting, pro-Russian activists took over the oblast administration building and demanded a referendum on the status of Luhansk oblast. Though they later left the building, and Luhansk branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (hereafter - the MIA) launched criminal proceedings into the takeover of the Luhansk Oblast Administration, on 29 April, separatists took over the building again. The Ukrainian flag was taken down from the building, and representatives of law enforcement left the building.

Later, the “LPR leadership” was located in the oblast administration building, and the basement hosted an illegal place of detention. According to the former administration employee, Hennadii Tsypkalov became the “commandant” of the building. Afterwards, Tsypkalov went on to become the head of the “LPR government”. In 2016, he was found dead in the basement of the administration he had led two years earlier.

According to the respondents, the illegal place of detention had been functioning in the seized administration building from June 2014 until February 2015. At the same time, according to open sources, the

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3 Politika 2.0. Zahvat Luganskoj oblastnoy by pro-russkimi aktivistami (Politics 2.0. Takeover of the Luhansk Oblast Administration by the pro-Russian activists). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpQZAbYPnsw. – 09.03.2014.


basement of the “LPR government building” was still used for illegal detention in 2016.6

On September 21, 2016, Ihor Plotnytskyi, the head of the “LPR”, made a statement regarding a “coup attempt” in the self-proclaimed republic. Several days later, Serhii Rachel, representative of the “LPR prosecutor general’s office”, announced the arrest of Hennadii Tsypkalov, “prime minister of the LPR”, and Vitalii Kyseliov, deputy head of the “people’s militia”, “advisor to the head of the LPR”? Both detainees were held in the building of the former administration. A representative of the “prosecutor’s office” claimed that Hennadii Tsypkalov had committed suicide.

“In the evening, Tsypkalov was detained. Perhaps, understanding the depth of his crimes and understanding that operative information about a number of people he has provided is dangerous for his life, he committed suicide by hanging”7


The change of power in the “LPR” led to the publication of information with regard to several crimes (including certain crimes committed in the illegal prison in the “government building” that was operating in 2016). On November 22, 2017, a video of the interview with Oleksii

Oliynyk, an “investigator of the prosecutor general’s office”, was published. In the interview he spoke of the circumstances surrounding Tsypkalov’s death:

“According to the preliminary results, which were not written on paper, but based on what I was told, Tsypkalov had broken ribs on both sides and had asphyxia. There was a noose on the neck, and a constriction mark. But the cause of death indicated in the conclusion was only asphyxia”11

At the time of writing, the building of the “LPR government” continues to function as a place with restricted access. There is no data to corroborate the assertion that the basement is not used as an illegal detention facility at the present time.


7 Ibid.


12 Retrieved from miasitok.su.

FIGURE 1. PLACES OF ILLEGAL DETENTION ESTABLISHED IN LUHANSK DURING THE ARMED CONFLICT.
LEGEND (FIGURE 1)

LENINSKY DISTRICT, LUHANSK
1. Former building of the Luhansk Oblast Administration (3 Heroiv VVV Square).
2. Garages in the yard of a 5-storey building (10 Heroiv VVV Square), previously occupied by “Kokhana” store.
3. Former building of Lenin district department of the MIA of Ukraine in Luhansk (50, Shevchenko Block).
4. “Palats Shchestia”, Central Department of Civil Registration (147A Hazety Luhanska Pravda St.).
5. Luhansk oblast hospital (14 50-Richcha Oborony Luhanska Block).
7. Former building of the headquarters of the State Fiscal Service in Luhansk (2A Kotsubynskoho St.).
8. Former office building for public and political institutions and the business enterprises of Volodymyr Landik, a businessman and one of the leaders of the local branch of the Party of Regions (22A Khersonska St.).

ZHOVTNENYI DISTRICT, LUHANSK
9. Former building of the SSU Office in Luhansk oblast (79 Radianska St.).
10. Former dormitories of Volodymyr Dal Eastern-Ukrainian National University (20A Molodizhnyi Block).
11. “Molodizhnyi” hotel (14B Molodizhnyi Block).
12. Former building of Zhovtnevy Rayon City Council of Luhansk (14 31st Block).
13. Former building of the Tax Police Headquarters (1 Hradusova St.).
14. Former building of Zhovtnevy district department of the MIA of Ukraine in Luhansk (3 27th Block).
15. Motor pool near “Chorna Sotnya” (19 Montazhna St.).
16. “Horyzont” factory (119 Frunze St.).
17. Private house in the Chervony Yar village situated near the local police station (2B Vokzalna St.).

KAMYANOBIRDSKYI DISTRICT, LUHANSK
18. Temporary detention facility No. 2 “MIA LPR” (32 Krupskoi Lane).

ARTEMIVSKY DISTRICT, LUHANSK
19. Building of the LTD “Vtorchermet” (71 Linyova St.).

This list of places of illegal detention remains incomplete. Only places of illegal detention with an identified location are included in the list. All illegal places of detention marked on the map were created by the illegal armed groups (hereafter - IAGs), except for the illegal place of detention #18, which was created by the ATO forces.
There were systematic human rights violations in the illegal detention facilities created by representatives of the self-proclaimed republics. This report will provide an overview of the key international standards applicable in armed conflict.

International human rights law states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The deprivation of liberty is unlawful unless it falls within one of the permissible grounds specified in sub-paragraphs (a) to (f) of Article 5 § 1 ECHR. In particular, a prolonged period of detention of a person requires due process be observed, and a conviction by a competent court. In order to protect the personal security of persons deprived of their liberty they must be held exclusively in officially recognized places of detention. In this respect in the General Comment No. 20 on Article 7 of the ICCPR the Human Rights Committee states:

“To guarantee the effective protection of detained persons, provisions should be made for detainees to be held in places officially recognized as places of detention and for their names and places of detention, as well as for the names of persons responsible for their detention, to be kept in registers readily available and accessible to those concerned, including relatives and friends. To the same effect, the time and place of all interrogations should be recorded, together with the names of all those present and this information should also be available for purposes of judicial or administrative proceedings.”

In many cases the ECtHR has stated that poor detention conditions may amount to violations of Article 3 of the ECHR. For instance, in the case Peers v. Greece, the court stated that the applicant had to spend most of the day in the cell without ventilation or windows, which made the cell unbearably hot. The detainee also had to use the toilet in the presence of another prisoner and was present when his cellmate used the toilet. The Court concluded that the conditions of detention amounted to degrading treatment and violated the Convention.

The ECtHR has also considered the issue of strip searches of prisoners and concluded that the manner in which the search is conducted can amount to degrading treatment and violate Article 3 of the ECHR.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has established that the minimum standard for personal living space in prison establishments is 4m² of living space per prisoner in a multiple-occupancy cell with fully partitioned sanitary facility, and 6m² of living space for a single-occupancy cell with a sanitary facility. The ECtHR has stated in its jurisprudence that 3m² of floor space per detainee in a multiple-occupancy cell is the required minimum for the purposes of meeting the provisions of Article 3 of the Convention. When the space is less than 3m², the lack of personal space is extreme enough to justify a finding of a violation of the Convention.

The International Court of Justice considers that the protection offered by human rights conventions does not cease in case of armed conflict, save through derogation.
from the obligations undertaken by the state. Under the ECHR states may take measures derogating from its obligations under the Convention to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with its other obligations under international law.24

In May 2015, the Parliament of Ukraine stated that the ongoing armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, together with war crimes and crimes against humanity committed both by the regular Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and by illegal armed groups guided, controlled and financed by the Russian Federation, constitutes a public emergency threatening the life of the nation25. Accordingly, Ukraine announced derogation from certain obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The Russian Federation is fully responsible for the respect for human rights and implementation of the relevant treaties in the annexed and temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine26. In the statement by the Parliament of Ukraine, the hostilities in Donbas are defined as an anti-terrorist operation (hereafter - the ATO) while it also notes the military aggression by the Russian Federation and the evidence of shelling from its side, and the presence of Russian armed forces in the self-proclaimed republics.27 The aforementioned statement therefore concludes that the events in Donbas constitute an armed conflict, not an ATO.

Before January 2018, events in Donbas were qualified differently under domestic and international law, namely as the ATO and as an armed conflict. As a result, participants of events used to have different status and legal safeguards. Under national law, persons in detention during the ATO in Donbas were hostages; separatists were members of the IAGs, terrorists. Instead, international humanitarian law recognizes civilians and members of the armed groups as persons detained in relation to conflict and prisoners of war28 and provides relevant protection and safeguards. Armed separatists are recognized as members of organized armed groups.

In January 2018, the law “On the state policy to ensure state sovereignty of Ukraine over the temporarily occupied areas in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts” was adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament. According to the explanatory note to the law, the scale, nature and length of the ATO do not meet the objectives of liberation of the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts29. Accordingly, the law referred to international law30 in referring to the Russian Federation as an occupying state. Separate districts of Donbas are considered occupied territories under the effective control of the Russian Federation31; the term “ATO” has been replaced by “the measures to restore territorial integrity”. On April 30 2018, the ATO was declared completed, and the Operation of Joined Forces was launched32.

On the basis of Resolution 3314 (XXIX) of the UN General Assembly “Definition of aggression” (14 December 1974) international law affirms that the use of armed force such as that by the Russian Federation against Ukraine constitutes a crime of aggression33. Moreover, an aggressive war is a crime against international peace triggering international liability. In particular, there is a liability for such acts in accordance with the Rome Statute34.

In its Report on Preliminary Examination Activities 2016, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC assessed that by 30 April 2014 the level of intensity of hostilities between Ukrainian government forces and anti-government armed elements in eastern Ukraine had reached a level that would trigger the application of the law of armed conflict and that the armed groups operating in eastern Ukraine, including the “LPR” and “DPR”, were sufficiently organized to qualify as parties to a non-international armed conflict35.


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Prisoners of war are members of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict, as well as members of militias or volunteer corps forming part of such armed forces who have fallen into the power of the enemy (see Article 4, Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949).


The Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC also cited additional information pointing to direct military engagement between the respective armed forces of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, suggesting the existence of an international armed conflict in eastern Ukraine from 14 July 2014 at the latest, in parallel to the non-international armed conflict.

The Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC continues to examine allegations that the Russian Federation has exercised overall control over armed groups in eastern Ukraine. The existence of a single international armed conflict in eastern Ukraine would entail the application of articles of the Statute relevant to armed conflict of an international character for the relevant period

International humanitarian law provides for the internment of prisoners of war and, in certain conditions, of civilians in international armed conflict. According to Article 21 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Geneva Convention III), the Detaining Power may subject prisoners of war to internment. Prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity

In non-international armed conflicts, the Parties have the duty to:

- ensure humane treatment, without any adverse distinction, of any persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause;
- to collect and care for the wounded and the sick.

According to Additional Protocol (II), key guarantees for those who do not take a direct part or who have ceased to take part in hostilities, whether or not their liberty has been restricted, include the following:

- respect for their person, honour and convictions and religious practices;
- humane treatment, without any adverse distinction;
- prohibition against orders that there shall be no survivors;
- prohibition against violence to the life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder as well as cruel treatment such as torture, mutilation or any form of corporal punishment;
- prohibition against collective punishments;
- prohibition against taking of hostages;
- prohibition against acts of terrorism;
- prohibition against outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault;
- prohibition against slavery and slave trade in all their forms;
- prohibition against pillage;
- prohibition against threats to commit any of the foregoing acts.

In addition to these guarantees, the following provisions shall be respected as a minimum with regard to persons deprived of their liberty for reasons related to the armed conflict, whether they are interned or detained:

- the wounded and the sick shall be treated humanely and shall receive, to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention required by their condition;
- the persons referred to in this paragraph shall, to the same extent as the local civilian population, be provided with food and drinking water and be afforded safeguards as regards health and hygiene and protection against the rigours of the climate and the dangers of the armed conflict;
- they shall be allowed to receive individual or collective relief;
- they shall be allowed to practice their religion and, if requested and appropriate, to receive spiritual assistance from persons, such as chaplains, performing religious functions;
- they shall, if made to work, have the benefit of working conditions and safeguards similar to those enjoyed by the local civilian population.

Those who are responsible for the internment or detention of the persons shall also, within the limits of their capabilities, respect the following provisions relating to such persons:

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23 Ibid.


26 The Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them.

27 According to Article 3, common to the Four Geneva Conventions, humane treatment shall include prohibition on violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; taking of hostages; outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

28 Out of action (French).

29 Article 3, Convention (II) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949; Article 3 Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field. Geneva, 12 August 1949.
• except when men and women of a family are accommodated together, women shall be held in quarters separated from those of men and shall be under the immediate supervision of women;
• they shall be allowed to send and receive letters and cards, the number of which may be limited by competent authority if it deems necessary;
• places of internment and detention shall not be located close to the combat zone. The persons referred to in paragraph 1 shall be evacuated when the places where they are interned or detained become particularly exposed to danger arising out of the armed conflict, if their evacuation can be carried out under adequate conditions of safety;
• they shall have the benefit of medical examinations;
• their physical or mental health and integrity shall not be endangered by any unjustified act or omission. Accordingly, it is prohibited to subject the persons described in this Article to any medical procedure which is not indicated by the state of health of the person concerned, and which is not consistent with the generally accepted medical standards applied to free persons under similar medical circumstances.

As in international law, the domestic legislation of Ukraine prohibits illegal deprivation of liberty, battery, torture, and sexual violence. In violation of international and domestic law, representatives of the “DPR” and “LPR” subjected many detainees of illegal detention facilities to physical, sexual and psychological violence. People suspected of either supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (hereafter - the AFU) were among these detainees. This report discusses at a later juncture one of the illegal detention facilities that was established in the basement of the Luhansk Oblast Administration.

45 Article 5, Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977.
46 See art. 115 (murder), 121 (intended grievous bodily injury), 122 (intended bodily injury of medium gravity), 126 (battery), 127 (torture), 129 (death threat), 146 (illegal deprivation of liberty or kidnapping), 149 (trafficking in human beings and other illegal transfer deals in respect of a human being), 152 (rape), 153 (violent unnatural gratification of sexual desire), 260 (creation of unlawful paramilitary or armed formations) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.
This study is based on 19 interviews with men and women who had been detained in the basement of the “LPR government” building from June 2014 onwards. During different periods, there were at times only a few people to up to 70 people held in this facility. Several interviewees reported also being detained in other facilities. The respondents spent from several days to several months in conditions unsuitable for either short or long-term detention. More than half of the interviewees were detained in July 2014. The most recent testimonies about detention in the Luhansk Oblast Administration was received from February 2015.

Members of the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas” interviewed people of different age and professions: including journalists, volunteers, a priest, a pensioner, a system administrator, a driver, a legal consultant, a Special Forces officer, a university employee, a former marine soldier, a member of the armed forces, a student, and a social worker.

The respondents were apprehended by the armed representatives of the “LPR” in the city of Luhansk or the surrounding oblast, and at checkpoints in Luhansk oblast. The member of the AFU apprehended near Debaltseve (Donetsk oblast) was later transferred to Luhansk.

Interviewees named the following grounds for their apprehension:
- pro-Ukrainian stance or suspicion of pro-Ukrainian stance;
- support for the Ukrainian military or suspicion of supporting the Ukrainian military;
- membership in the AFU.

Interviewees described the grounds for apprehension in their own or in other cases:

“I.: How did they explain to you the reason for apprehending you?
R.: They said I was an “Ukrop” (uu-678).

“During the stay there, when analyzing the reasons for arrests, I realized that it was because of being different, to destroy human dignity and let people understand that, ‘you are scum, a nobody, workhorse’” (fd-722).

“The majority were captured without a reason or harming anyone. Someone was driving a car... I do not know the last name, Petro [...]: ‘Why you?’ He said, ‘I was driving a car. I had a BMW. They stopped and took the car. I started arguing, and they said, ‘Oh, you are also drunk’. They decided I was an alcoholic. That is all; I am sentenced for alcoholism here. But why did they take the car?’” (et-312).

Two respondents saw Oleh Stishak, a pro-Russian activist, head of the Alchevsy city referendum commission and a deputy of the “people’s council of the LPR” in the “government” building basement. In August 2014, he was detained in the basement of the former Luhansk Oblast Administration and later transferred to the “commandant’s office”.

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48 Interviewees reported between several individuals to several dozen detainees in different cells of the illegal prison at different times. It is not possible to establish the total number of detainees held in the former oblast administration. Interviewees in this research were in the prison at different times; in addition, it continued functioning after the respondents’ release.

49 A term that appeared after the Revolution of Dignity, its meaning is “patriotic” citizen of Ukraine. During the military conflict in Donbas, it has been used for all Ukrainian armed forces members, volunteers, and supporters of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

50 The commandant’s office was located in the building of Zhovtneny district council at 14A 31st Kvartal, Luhansk.
Based on only the interviews conducted by the members of the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas”.

FIGURE 2. LOCATION OF THE INTERVIEWEE’S ARREST

- Luhansk – 7 people
- Stanytsia Luhanska, checkpoints and village in Stanytsia Luhanska district (Luhansk oblast) – 4 people
- Checkpoint near Katerynivka (Luhansk oblast) – 2 people
- Checkpoint near Perevalsk (Luhansk oblast) – 4 people
- Debaltseve (Donetsk oblast) – 1 person
- Village in Sorokyne district (Luhansk oblast) – 1 person

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51 Based only on the interviews conducted by the members of the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas”.
According to the interviewees and to open sources, Oleksandr Makarov, a former SSU official, was among the detainees in the basement of the administration building.\(^{52}\) One of those who apprehended him was Arkadii Korniievskyi, Oleksandr Makarov’s former subordinate at the SSU. Initially he was detained in the basement and later transferred to the “commandant’s office”.\(^{53}\) During the writing of this report, we managed to identify the names of people held in the Luhansk Oblast Administration who continue to live in the “LPR”. Their names have been withheld for security reasons.

One of the interviewees talked about a child detainee:\(^ {54}\)

“Once, they threw in a boy named Vova from Volkov district. He looked like a kid, 13, maximum 14 years. There was a fire station with a generator next to his place, and he used to take his laptop there to charge. He left the laptop for the night, and took it back in the morning. Once, separatists opened that laptop and saw that he had “Right Sector” as a screensaver. [...] He was wearing no more than a tank top when we saw him. His shoulders were burnt with cigarette butts. He was hysterical. V. tried to calm him down. Vova was terrified. It was normal to threaten someone with an execution at that time [...] . The boy was crying and asking us to tell his grandmother everything if someone managed to escape. It was horrible to see the child suffer” (uu-678).

According to testimonies, adults were also detained with their children:

“[...] there was a girl, very young. She used to walk around and ask, ‘I will work for you, stay as your servant, just tell me where my child is’. As far as I understood, she was arrested with a child. The girl tried to cut her wrists [...] . I think her daughter was very small. They arrested her together with the daughter, and it is unclear where they put her [the daughter]” (xy-499).

The media reported the detention of two representatives of the Ukrainian National Guard\(^ {55}\) and a member of the “Aidar” battalion, Yuriy Kryzhberskyi, in the Luhansk Oblast Administration\(^ {56}\).

In addition to “political prisoners”, people accused of “administrative offences”, such as looting, curfew violations, alcohol or drug consumption, or people detained for the purpose of forced labor were held in the basement of the administration building.

“They often grabbed people simply to make them work. I even heard the senior guard say, ‘Go catch some seals’. Seals were people used for labor” (po-385).

“I know that women used to work for them doing laundry, cleaning and cooking. Some [worked] for two, three weeks, or even a month. They were catching people after the curfew in cafes and bars. They were waiting in these cars, “Aha, it’s a curfew and you are drinking here”. Then they took and humiliated them, I know they were raping them” (jo-011).


\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) See Article 37, Convention on the Rights of the Child.


\(^{56}\) Pokolenyi ”adarivec” Kryzhberskyj vzhe na voii i likuyetsya u shpytali. TSN. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bluz660HM. – 10.11.2014.
The Luhansk Oblast Administration, a building located at 3, Ploshcha Heroiv VVV, was where representatives of the self-proclaimed republic established the illegal place of detention. The complex consists of two buildings: an older one (the so-called building with globes), and the newer one called “the annex” by the administration staff. These two buildings were connected by covered bridges on different floors. Passages between buildings under the walkways were protected with iron gates. Due to these walkways and gates, these two buildings form a single closed administrative complex with an internal courtyard.

Figure 3. The building of the Luhansk Oblast Administration (3, Ploshcha Heroiv VVV) on the map of Luhansk.67

The five-storey building of the Luhansk Oblast Administration (“the house with globes”), which faces the park, used to be the main administrative building in the oblast before the armed conflict. It housed the offices of the heads of oblast administration and council, the immediate offices of both these entities, large and small meeting halls, a dining room and the cloakroom. The basement hosted a medical station, an archive, facilities of the dining room and several technical premises. The new administration building hosted several departments of the oblast administration, Luhansk cable television (“LKT”), the economic court of Luhansk oblast, etc.

After the building was seized by the IAGs, the premises changed their functions. Some offices were now used for administrative and military governance, in particular, the “commandant’s office of Luhansk”58 was located in the building. The rest of the premises were turned into barracks and storage units. For instance, goods and products, including those stolen from the city’s shops, were stored in the “annex” building. One respondent said, “[…] there were tires from Epicenter59, coffins in the basement. […] Food was in the hall of this building. Products and water from all shops, most likely, wherever they could collect it, flour…” (et-312).

Supporters of Novorossiya60 created an illegal prison in the basement of the oblast administration. They arranged living premises of the detention facility personnel and other IAG members in the same basement.

“Some people who served there, especially “Bronia”, took normal rooms in the same basement, but on the other side. They had normal living rooms, refurbished, with good lighting. They arranged the rooms, put beds in there in case of shelling, to live safer. Some windows were barricaded with sandbags against shrapnel” (et-569).

Respondents described the basement where they were detained:

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58 The “commandant’s office” was later relocated to the premises of the former Zhovtneviy district council in Luhansk (14A, 31st Kvartal). “(…) and, as far as I understand, they were making it into a government building, so the prison was in the way, and they arranged this base for the commandant’s office in a different district. They took people to work there, ‘We will go to work at the new base’. It turned out that ‘the new base’ was the Zhovtneviy district council, and that is where they transferred the “commandant’s office” (io-360).

59 A network of construction stores in Ukraine.

60 Literally means new Russia.

Figure 4. Indicative plan of the basement in the main building of the Luhansk Oblast Administration ("the house with spheres"). Based on the interview data.
“[...] basement: everything is covered in pipes, wet; the plaster is falling down, mold, dampness, one dull light bulb, water flowing down to the floor... The barrack - 3 by 4 meters. There was no ventilation; access to air was sporadic, when guards opened the door to check on us. There were no sleeping places. The room was empty, there was a bed somewhere by the wall, but I was chained far from it. There was blood next to the bed” (lz-279).

“Some technical premises, pipes, 6 by 4 meters, maybe bigger. Incredibly hot. It was difficult to breathe. [...] There were approximately 30 people and three beds, bunk beds, so there were six places. Concrete” (sl-174).

«Cells» (premises for holding apprehended and detained people)

Depending on the reasons for detention, the cells were “political” and “non-political”. The former were designated for civilians who supported territorial integrity of Ukraine, the Ukrainian military and members of volunteer battalions, and for AFU members and volunteers. The latter held locals detained by the “LPR” officials for “administrative offences”. According to the respondents, the attitude to the latter was not so strict: they could leave the cells and walk in the hallway. The conditions were also better. An eyewitness, po-385, talked about one of these cells in the interview:

“It was an improved cell. There were already beds, even some bedding, a pillow, some blankets. These cells were for people who were about to be released, and the guards treated them leniently, or their relatives asked favors for them. They were detained for curfew violations. Many of them continued to work there, in that commandant’s office”.

Several respondents said that there was a cell called “the fridge”. A detainee apprehended for supporting the Ukrainian army said:

“The cell had a broken fridge where they threw me in to die. For a day and a half, they held me there, in the dark, tied and with a bag over my head. The militants urinated on it to make it “easier” for me. Once a day they came, kicked me to see whether I was alive. I peed myself for a day and a half” (jo-011).

Another respondent, also detained for political views and detained in the same premises, had a very similar recollection. During three days, he received no food, water, no chance to go out to the bathroom or receive medical assistance, and had his hands tied. The prisoner described the premises:

“It was a utility room, probably a washing room, because it had tiles in white and blue up until eye level. There were tiles on the floor, small tiles, something similar to a glass in the corner. [...] When the Luhansk Oblast Administration was operating, it had dining rooms, a washing room. They used to wash dishes, they cooked there, there were fridges. Now, this room was covered in blood stains up to the eye level, from different times” (uu-678).

A journalist arrested at a checkpoint was at the cell called “gym” in the beginning. Later, he was transferred to the general room (“obshchak”) with no windows or

Photo 12. Luhansk Oblast Administration. The windows mentioned by interviewee uu-678. April 29, 201462

sleeping arrangements. He said that there could be up to 25 people in the room.

People were also held in the boiler room ("the boiler room"): "Rather big room, about 15 meters long, 4.5 - 5 meters wide. The boiler was in the center, there were some cupboards, tables" (io-360). Respondents also mentioned "cell #7" in the interviews: "There were large sinks and even running water [...]. The room had a window facing the Shevchenko monument and Heroiv VVV Square [...]" (uu-678).

In addition, people were detained in other technical premises (the storage and the archive). For instance, former detainee we-749 spoke of the storage unit:

"We ended up in a storage room for computer equipment: monitors were on the shelves, there was a palette machine, a large press, a couple of tables; there was cardboard on the floor, used computer packaging on which we were sleeping".

A female volunteer had been detained in the archive for a month:

"In the oblast administration, I was detained in the former archive. They pushed some clustered things to the side: old passport templates, spreadsheets. Detainees who had been held there before us had an idea: to put together plastic chairs and cover them with mattresses. Those who were taken to [work] at the "expropriation of property" brought bedding. But there were bed bugs jumping around and mice rustling…" (io-360).

Most premises did not have arrangements for sleeping or ventilation. Many people were held there together. There was only artificial lighting, if any, or it could be missing for many days. The detainees collected drinking water when they were allowed to go to the toilet. Some detainees did not receive water or had restricted access during the first couple of days.

"There was half of a liter-and-a-half bottle during the entire time. That’s all. There was no food at all. They did not give us any water during the following four days, but said we had enough. We also had to drink the water flowing from the pipes from the floor" (lz-279).

In several cases, a canister or plastic bottle was used as a toilet. Moreover, they also did not take prisoners out to the toilet in some cases. Meals were provided once a day, and, in some cases, there was no food during the first days. A detainee said, "They started giving me food in this cell. It happened like this: from 10 until 11pm, our cell [door] opened, and everyone went to the dining room in a single row" (uu-678). According to one of the interviewees, he and his fellow “cellmates” were beaten “to improve appetite” before mealtime. A female prisoner of the basement said that only people who worked received food:

"Closer to our release, we started receiving food, but only those who were working. In some case, 12 out of 25 people were taken to work, and they bring food only for 12 people who were working. ‘You did not work - you are not allowed’, they said" (io-360).
In all of the documented cases there was no record of apprehension or an explanation of reasons for detention. Third parties were not informed of a person’s detention, and no access was granted to lawyers. People were detained in the former administration building’s basement without any court decision. None of the detainees was informed about duration of their detention:

“This is the most difficult thing, that nobody is told how long they will be detained. When someone was detained for looting or something else, he or she knew it would be two weeks or a month in detention. In principle, my category was on the kill list” (jj-028).

Charges against the detainees were based on actions considered “unlawful” or sufficient for detention by the officials of the self-proclaimed republic:

“We had to go out, line up against the wall, and say our name and charge. In addition, we had to use their version. For instance, I was “Ukrop” for them, the priest was “Prawosek”, and an elderly man from the bullet factory was “Korektualnyk”. Sometime later, they threw prisoner I. into our cell. He was a marine and had to call himself “Deserter” (uu-678).

During detention in the “government” building, majority of the detainees reported being subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, both during interrogation by the “investigators” and also during “inspections”:

“Which rights? You are nobody there. You had no name there; they called you by names such as “Propagandist” or “Looter” (jj-028)

“This Russian soldier interrogated me [...] I do not remember his face, but I remember that he had been sitting with me for the last hour and playing with a grenade, assembling and disassembling RGD-5, which had two pieces… It was terrible because if it exploded… It would be the most pointless death” (kv-223).

Certain interviewees mentioned physical violence they suffered or witnessed:

“For instance, those who went to the front line had barracks on the first floor. They could easily come over and beat the prisoners. It happened every night” (et-569).

“The cell opened every night, and we went out to the hallway saying our last names, patronymics, and charges. Everyone made mistakes in their charges. So everyone was scolded oftentimes. In addition, they also did it for entertainment. You know, they come drunk because someone did not like them, ‘You go back, and you stay’. They are working on us that way…” (uu-678).

“They took my left hand, started holding it. They told me not to try to get away because it would be worse. I have scars; you cannot see them well anymore. They took a shard and started to cut me. The mirror was not cutting but tearing. The veins were visible, but they did not touch the veins. They started to tear the skin from different sides. It was hellish pain, but I had nothing to say” (et-569).

“At first, two people were beating me. I fell on the tiles and only covered my head. They hit me with a stick so hard that it broke. They were joking that I was a tough ‘pravosek’. Then, they stopped the assault to make sure I was conscious. Then, at some point, another man came in saying, “This the ‘pravosek’?”, and started kicking me again, on the stomach, on the back, on the entire body” (et-569).

An interviewee held in the “government” building from 7 July until 11 July 2014 said:

“For the entire four days, they kept me in handcuffs. I tried to unlock them, but it did not work. [...] On the third time, they
gave me a chair to sit on. [...] Before they brought the chair, I used to sit on the floor and the pipe. My feet were soaking wet, [it was] damp, water was flowing from the pipes, water on the floor. It was uncomfortable to sit on the chair because I had to sit leaning forward. The chair was tall, and I was handcuffed about 40 cm from the floor” (lz-279).

The interviews contain information about the use of sexual and gender-based violence against detainees: the joint detention of men and women, sexual humiliation and torture:

“And women were ready to do anything. Through tears in some moments when it was absolute abuse, I know they were taken for several hours, upstairs. And then she came down and cried for a long time” (xz-388).

“The guards at the oblast administration closed the door when the militants returned from combat. ‘Sorry, girls, but we don’t need problems’. We were told about the situations when these people returned from combat. They got drunk, smoked a lot, raped one girl who was a prisoner… So they closed the door to avoid trouble, so no one would [try to assault]” (io-360).

“[…] and one of them came, we were lined up against the wall. The started joking aggressively, ‘Pravoseks, you are in trouble - we had a flag - we are going to shove the flag up your ass and spin it. They started to threaten me, ‘[...] you are not simply going to die, and we will not simply kill you. We’ll cut off your genitalia’” (et-569).

There were also documented cases of summary executions in the illegal detention facility. A witness, ks-394, reported:

“They brought me there, and a murdered man was there already. Simply killed. He was as blue as I was. The tiles were covered in blood, the walls were covered in blood. So they brought me there, and he was pulled out by his legs. They pulled him out and said, ‘This is it, this one goes to the waste’”.

Another interviewee went to bury a man’s body in the city cemetery near Oleksandrivsk. He alleges seeing other graves there. One of the interviewees heard about a murder from one of the representatives of the self-proclaimed republic:

“I was a so-called accidental witness when everyone was chased out to work. The door was closed and they apparently thought nobody could hear them, but they had a loud argument […] He said, ‘How did you let this happen? What kind of mess is this?! To bring Reva⁶⁴! Why?! How could you let him hang himself?! I will never believe he hung himself! There was a witness! He was not alone in the cell! This witness can’t leave! You can’t let him go to work! And all of a sudden, you forgot and took him to dig trenches! And he decided to run. And you kill him all of a sudden! The witness! The following day after Reva hung himself! Are you bullshitting me? You [finished] him off, one hundred percent!’” (et-312).

“DPR” representatives threatened interviewees with execution:

“Their priest came and offered to pray because they would take us to our execution on the following morning” (lz-279).

“Perhaps, at the very end, I thought they would execute me and it would all be over. And I was ready for everything, you know? So much… It was not just me, it was everyone there” (xy-499).

Often, people in the basement witnessed physical violence against others - they either were “cell mates” or saw other people in the administration:

“The worst was… this drunk who was transferred with us… there, in the basement of the administration, was something similar to a remand prison… and he tried to tell everyone he loved them and say how much he loved Novorossiya, and for some reason, they beat him even harder for that. In our presence, they smashed his face with buttstocks. He survived but… the blood splattered on us. This also was psychological pressure” (kv-223).

“I heard others being tortured. One was handcuffed with a blindfold on his eyes. I had a peephole I could see through a little. He had a pot on his head. They were hitting the pot, He yelled, ‘Kill me but stop hitting me’” (lz-279).

“The boy was arrested for something and shot in the leg. I saw him with a gun wound. I asked to use the toilet and saw him - he was dragging his leg behind him. They helped him walk. He was undressed, had a white towel, and the towel was bloody on the side of the injury” (et-569).

In addition, respondents received threats against them or their family members:

“Militiamen came to me and said that if I did not tell them the truth they would bring me my child’s body” (xz-388).

“They asked if I had children. He said he would take the child, my daughter. He said he had a boy, a son. She would be his sister…” (lz-279).

In addition children were detected in the administration using violence against detainees and helping the IAG members:

“Sometimes, for fun, they took us out of the cell for a beating by visiting separatists. One of the boys really liked hitting people in the heart. He looked no more than 16 years. When we were pulling the bags of papers, two underage children were in the courtyard, one of them playing the harmonica. The children were wearing “the Colorado beetle” ribbons⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Prosecutor Andrii Reva – ed.
⁶⁵ Derogatory reference to the Ribbon of Saint George as the colors of the ribbon coincide with the colors of a Colorado potato beetle.
The boy in the basement was around 15 years old. He used to serve the militants: help them, bring something. He came with his mother - she was cooking for the rebels, and he was around her. They even received a room not far from our cell, only better equipped” (uu-678).

Injured detainees had no access to any medical assistance, which was reported by several respondents:

“I have not received medical assistance. I had three broken ribs - they tied them up with a bag, that’s all” (jo-011).

“My foot was extremely swollen; it did not fit into the shoe. I was walking in one shoe on one foot and two socks on the other one. Roma offered to take me to “Hostra molnya”, to Luhansk oblast hospital, the hospital for the militants. This hospital was working due to a generator. I was waiting for the doctor for a long time. Everyone was nervous and even offered for me to run so they could shoot me in the head to spare them or me from misery. After examining me, the doctor asked who I was. They said I was an “ukrop”. Either the doctor did not want to deal with me or because I was an “ukrop”, he said I needed a vascular surgeon. He suggested that they took me to the hospital Nr. 4” (uu-678).

Detainees or their cellmates were used for forced labor.

“It was daytime when we were sitting in the cell, several people, 2-5 people. And someone in the corridor told the commandant’s office guard, “Give me a couple of robots, I need something there”. And he said, “There’s no one”. “Oh, what a mess, we don’t have slaves in the basement” (td-722).

“They come, for instance, “Who is going to strip the supermarket? You, you and you - come out. [...] The girls are going to clean the cells after torture. You go to do the laundry, you go here, you go there” (xy-499).

“At first, I and other people from other cells were taken to the third floor where there were offices with documents. We received plastic bags which we had to fill with paper, documents, and put it downstairs in those bags into the courtyard, to the containers with garbage. One of these containers was on fire, and we threw all the documents inside. I remembered that almost all documents concerned Party of Regions deputies, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce and accounting documentation” (uu-678).

“They took me to work with six more people in three “Gazel” cars. They put us into the “Gazel” and took us to the storage units in Luhansk. Those were abandoned, no owners, there were locks on the doors. We came there. There were other people robbing these storage units. Three military drivers in three “Gazel” cars, two people in each. We came to the bulk storage base and, as a rule, it had two large locks. They broke the locks with construction tools and told us to load everything on the truck” (et-569).

People were also taken to clean premises:

“They made us mop the floor on the second floor and in the administration lobby. There was also a problem with that because the entire hallway was covered in blood. On June 2, 2014, there was a bombing, and two shells hit - several people died, the blood was smeared because, apparently, they were dragged [...] it was difficult to wash the blood off the marble floor” (kv-223).
Interviewees were released under different circumstances: 13 people - based on a decision of the “LPR” representatives, 5 people - during hostage exchange. One more prisoner was released after a special operation of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense.

Photo 13. Left to right: Oleksandr Kononov, Viktoria Kononova, Dmytro Tynda after their release. November 7, 2014, Borivske near Severodonetsk, Luhansk Oblast
Figure 5 is compiled based on testimonies of 19 people who were interviewed by the representatives of the Coalition “Justice for peace in Donbas”. The figure indicates the period from the day of the arrest to the release day. It is worth noting that apart from the former building of Luhansk Oblast Administration, respondents could be held in other places established by representatives of the self-proclaimed republic during this period.

Decision on release taken by the «LPR» representatives - 13 people

Released during a prisoner exchange – 5 people

Released during the special operation of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine – 1 person

*Figure 5 is compiled based on testimonies of 19 people who were interviewed by the representatives of the Coalition “Justice for peace in Donbas”. The figure indicates the period from the day of the arrest to the release day. It is worth noting that apart from the former building of Luhansk Oblast Administration, respondents could be held in other places established by representatives of the self-proclaimed republic during this period.*
As mentioned above, the “commandant’s office” and the “LPR government” were located in the former administration building. After the takeover in 2014, Hennadii Tsypkalov became the “commandant” of the building. At first, he was the first deputy “people’s governor” of Luhansk oblast, and later became the head of the “LPR government”.

Name: Hennadii Mykolaiovych Tsypkalov  
Nickname: “Redhead”, “Cat”  

In 2009, Tsypkalov graduated from the Eastern-Ukrainian National University. He served as deputy people’s governor of the “LPR”, vice prime minister of the “LPR”, and the head of the “council of ministers of the LPR”. On September 24, 2017, Serhii Rakhno, representative of the “prosecutor general’s office of the LPR”, announced that Tsypkalov had been arrested in connection with attempting a coup d’état in the “republic” and committed suicide.

Several respondents reported that Valerii Bolotov, the “people’s governor” at the time, had an office on the third floor of the Luhansk Oblast Administration. He was succeeded by Ihor Plotnytskyi.

Name: Valerii Dmytrovych Bolotov  
Nickname: “Dmytrovych”, “First”  
Date of birth/death: 13.02.1970–27.01.2017

Role/position: first deputy head of the “LPR”, acting head of the “LPR”, head of the “council of ministers” of the “LPR”

Biography: Born on June 21, 1973 in the village of Malchevsko-Polnenska, Rostov Oblast, then Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Two months after his birth he moved with his parents to Khriashchuvate village near Luhansk. In 1988, Tsypkalov finished the eighth grade and, in 1991, graduated from Novosvitlivske technical college no. 113 as a train operator. He served in the air assault brigade of the Air Force. In 1994, he founded an automobile enterprise “LAN”. In 1998, started working in a farming enterprise “Ternove”. Since 2001, Tsypkalov was the head of Luhansk unit of “Ukrtransnafta” company.

Role/position: direct commander of the Smersh “LPR” KGB; according to interviews, Bolotov authorized executions and the killing of the prisoners.

References:
Ihor Venedyktyovych Plotnytskyi

Name: Ihor Venedyktyovych Plotnytskyi
Nickname: "Zoria"
Date of birth: 24.06.1964

Role/position: minister of defense of the “LPR”, head of the “LPR”

Biography: Ihor Plotnytskyi was born on January 24, 1964 in the village of Kelmetsi, Chernivtsi Oblast, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1987, he graduated from Voronov Higher Artillery Engineering College in Penza; in 2008, he received a master’s degree in state governance from Volodymyr Dal Eastern-Ukrainian National University. In 1982 – 1991, Plotnytskyi served in the armed forces of the USSR and retired as a reserve major. Since 1991, Plotnytskyi has lived in Luhansk. In 1992 – 2004, he worked for different commercial companies as a manager, deputy commerce director, and director general. In 2004-2012, Plotnytskyi held positions of leading specialist, deputy department head, head of quality assurance and non-food and fuel product sales, head of market oversight unit at the oblast customer rights inspection. In April 2014, after so-called establishment of the “LPR”, Plotnytskyi became the commander of “Zoria” battalion. In the period from May 21 to August 14, 2014, he served as the “minister of defense of the LPR”. Since 14 August, Plotnytskyi became the deputy head of the “republic”, from 20-26 August 2014 – head of the “council of ministers of the LPR”. On 2 November 2014, Ihor Plotnytskyi was “elected” as the head of the “LPR”. On November 24, 2017, he resigned due to poor health. Afterwards, he allegedly left Luhansk for the Russian Federation77. In February 2018, Vladlen Zaruba, former assistant to the “former head of the LPR” Valerii Bolotov, stated that Ihor Plotnytskyi was allegedly arrested in Russia for embezzlement of Russian financial assistance78.

According to the interviewees, his guards came to the basement of the administration:

“The prison was functioning for quite some time, and it was scheduled for termination at that time. A man who allegedly was the head of the first person’s guard, i.e. the guard of the “LPR” head, came and said with a distinctly Russian accent: “The first person is here, and you will hold the detainees here? This is not right”” (we-749).

“Plotnytskyi’s guard came. Russians were in that guard… A clean shaved man in camouflage, without a beard or mustache, with clear face features… He said he was the head of Plotnytskyi’s guard… He said with a distinctly Russian accent, “I am a professional soldier”. He is often on videos together with Plotnytskyi” (fd-722).

According to public sources, Yevhen Seliverstov served in Plotnytskyi’s protective guard79. At the time of writing, his exact whereabouts were unknown. According to media reports, he left for the Russian Federation together with Ihor Plotnytskyi.

Name: Yevhen Oleksandrovych Seliverstov
Nickname: “Silver”
Date of birth: 22.05.1973

Role/position: former head of the LPR

**Role/position:** Head of the protective guard of Ihor Plotnytskyi, the “LPR” head.

**Biography:** Born May 22, 1973. Seliverstov had been in charge of Plotnytskyi’s protective guard since summer 2014. In November 2017, it is believed he left Luhansk for the Russian Federation. According to other sources, the Russian Federal Security Service convoy took him there and he died in a remand prison in Russia.

Oleh Valeriiovych was also a member of the protective guard (his last name is unknown). According to media reports, in May 2015, he was charged with an offense under article 152(1) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (rape) and fled to the Russian Federation afterwards.

Based on the facts outlined above, we can assert with a high degree of certainty that the first person of the “republic” Ihor Plotnytskyi would have known about the illegal prison as he had been working in the same building for an extended period.

Before relocating to Zhovtnevyi district council, the “commandant’s office” of Luhansk led by Serhii Hrachov also occupied several rooms in the administration.

According to the interviewees, in August-September 2014, his office was in the administration building:

“Hrachov was above. I can’t say for sure what he was in charge of, but he was one of the leaders in this administration. When they said they would allegedly let us go, we were told to write a report to Hrachov that we had no complaints” (el-569).

**Name:** Serhii Viktorovych Hrachov

**Nickname:** “Hrach”, “Baghdad”, “Batia”

**Date of birth:** 18.01.1965

**Photo 18: Serhii Hrachov, “commandant” of the Luhansk Oblast Administration**

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**Role/position:** commandant of the occupied SSU building in Luhansk, military “commandant” of the Luhansk Oblast Administration, “commandant” of Luhansk

**Biography:** Born in 1964 in the town of Krasnyi Luch, Voroshlyovgradsk Oblast, USSR. In the period between 1983 and 1986, he served in the border guard of the USSR KGB in the Republic of Afghanistan as a grenadier in operational maneuevre group. On April 6, 2014, he was involved in the takeover of the SSU building, and later he became the “commandant” of the building.

In August-September 2014, Hrachov had a personal office at the Luhansk Oblast Administration. Hrachov was in charge of the so-called commandant’s office of Luhansk.

Later, possibly in September 2014, the “commandant’s office” was relocated to a new place at 14A 31st Kvartal.

At that time, detainees saw the same “investigators” in the “government” building and at the “commandant’s office”. Among them was Arkadii Korniievskyi, the former SSU official, “investigator of the LPR commandant’s office” who gave orders on how to treat the detainees in the administration building.

**Name:** Arkadii Yuriiovych Korniievskyi

**Nickname:** “Arkasha”

**Date of birth:** 11.11.1969

**Photo 19: Arkadii Korniievskyi, “investigator of the “LPR commandant’s office”**

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**Role/position:** senior investigator of the “LPR investigation committee”

**Biography:** Born on November 11, 1969. Former SSU official. Korniievsky resigned in 2004 and started a legal practice. He served as a lawyer in the case against the son of the deputy, Roman Landik, who assaulted a girl in a restaurant. In 2014, Korniievsky was the senior investigator of the “LPR investigation committee.” Afterwards, he became the “LPR prosecutor” in the unit of oversight over the observance of laws during pre-trial investigation at the “LPR investigation directorate”.

Interviewees shared their recollections of Korniievsky:

“Three days later, they took me to an investigator. At the commandant’s office, Arkadii Yuriiovych Korniievskyi, investigator of the LPR investigation committee interrogated me. He was a former SSU official. He told them to keep me handcuffed and not give me food or water” (xz-388).

“So he decided absolutely everyone’s fate, to beat or not to beat, where to put someone, for how long, to take to work or not. This man decided everything” (uu-678).

“I was told that I had to wait for some mythical investigator. When I would speak with him, he would decide what to do with me. Everyone has to go through this procedure. No one ends up here or leaves this place without him knowing. I found out later that it was Arkadii Korniievskyi, and he determined people’s destiny. Whatever he says or decides, happens” (xy-499).

In September 2017, the Prosecutor General’s Office of Ukraine summoned Korniievskyi for interrogation. As stated in the summons notice, he is suspected of committing crimes under articles 258-3(1) (establishing a terrorist group or terrorist organization), 27(5), 28(2), 437(2) (planning, preparation and waging of an aggressive war), 438(1) (violation of the rules of warfare), 257 (membership in an organized crime group), 187(4) (plundering), 262(3) (stealing, appropriation or extortion of firearms, ammunition, explosives or radioactive material, or obtaining them by fraud of abuse of office), 146(2) (illegal confinement or abduction of a person).

His son, Yuriy Korniievskyi, was also an employee of Luhansk “commandant’s office” in the summer of 2014.

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of ministers of the LPR”, since 27 August 2014 was the “minister of agriculture and food of the LPR”.

**Biography:** Born on July 2, 1973 in Lysychansk, Luhansk oblast. Later, Lytvyn moved to Luhansk with his family, studied in school no. 17 in Luhansk and then in a technical college. Later, he graduated with a degree in management and human resources from Volodymyr Dal Eastern-Ukrainian National University. Lytvyn worked in production and commerce and was in charge of an agricultural enterprise for five years. He was one of the organizers of the referendum on May 11, 2014, which resulted in the establishment of the “LPR”. Lytvyn was the “minister of agriculture and food of the LPR”. He died on December 27, 2016.

Two interviewees saw Oleh Popov in the Luhansk Oblast Administration. He was observed participating in the illegal arrest of one interviewee, and on occasion visited the basement.

**Name:** Oleh Mykolaiovych Popov  
**Nickname:** “Communist”  
**Date of birth:** 16.04.1972

**Role/position:** member of the “LPR” republican assembly, “Novorossiya” parliament member, member of “Zoria” battalion, assistant to the deputy of the “LPR people’s government”.

According to testimonies provided, Viktor, the brother of Dmytro Alimpiiev, lived in one of the administration buildings - the directorate building (note: when the “LPR government” building was in operation, the directorate building was used as a prison).

**Name:** Dmytro Oleksandrovych Alimpiiev  
**Nickname:** “Boroda”  
**Date of birth:** 18.05.1980

**Role/position:** head of the protective guard

According to testimonies provided, Dmytro Alimpiiev was the head of security at the Luhansk Oblast Administration. He accompanied detainees, and took them to work, specifically, to the oblast administration building.
building was used for storage). Viktor Alimpiiev was in charge of storage and took part in hostilities.

Several guards and “investigators” have not been identified yet. For example, a man nicknamed “Malysh” was working in two buildings, the former Luhansk Oblast Administration and the former Zhovtnevyi district council in Luhansk, in August-September 2014. This subordinate of Arkadii Korniievskyi used physical violence against the detainees.

In August 2014, a certain person by the name of Zhenia, and nicknamed “Freon” as a former refrigerating equipment expert, was a guard in the administration. A certain Serhii, who went by the nickname “Okulist” as one of the owners of the “Optyka” store in Luhansk, was one of the heads of convoy.

“They were safeguarding, as far as I understand, based on the command from the leadership. When they needed to push, they pushed. Well, almost all men were severely beaten upon admission at the basement” (io-360).

Volodymyr, a former construction worker nicknamed “Tsyhan”, used violence against the detainees:

“Tsyhan - perhaps, that is his nickname. At two o’clock in the morning, he would lose a game or get drunk, enter the cell, mainly to the guys. The majority of them were Ukrainian soldiers. And he would start to hit, kick, humiliate them” (xy-499).

In July 2014, an unidentified nurse was also working in the illegal prison. lz-279 talked about her participation during the use of physical violence:

“They tried to resuscitate me twice so I would wake up. When I heard that “I was passing out”, a woman came, she gave me an injection, and I woke up. Again, another injection, and I woke up. I don’t know the woman but I saw her. She was a local from our area. She was big, young, under 35, dark haired, with a short haircut (bob)” (lz-279).

A female volunteer described the hierarchy in the basement:

“In the guard, Hrachov was in charge. He led the commandant’s office and the law enforcement in a way they understood. The commander of this prison was responsible for the conditions and our presence. And the decisions to release were up to Arkadii Yuriiovych” (io-360).

According to an interviewee, decisions to release or keep the person were made at the sessions in the “administration”:

“Regularly, every few days, these investigators had a meeting. In particular, there were women among these investigators. They decided whether to release you or keep you if hadn’t managed to re-educate you yet. [...] They would come to the commander’s office, ‘Come with me’. The prisoner was gone for some time, half an hour, and then came back, ‘They did not release me, summoned me before the lawyers, investigators, but did not release me’. And we were waiting. These sessions were usually held before lunchtime, and everyone hoped that they would be released today” (et-312).

In addition, interviewees mentioned the presence (in different roles) of people thought to be Russians in the illegal detention facility. Such conclusions were drawn based on their accent, insignia on their clothes, or conversations with them:

“Once, they threw a Russian citizen into our cell - Serhii from Murnansk. He was drunk, and they threw him into the ‘ukrop’ cell for re-education. Serhii told us where he was from, that they did not know where or why they were going, they were not informed. They only realized where they were when they had arrived” (uu-678).

During work assignments, detainees also saw people who were likely to be Russian citizens:

“When we were setting up the new commandant’s office in the Zhovtnevyi district administration building, there were these two-story dormitories behind it. People from the Caucasus, Chechens, maybe even Dagestanis, were stationed there. [...] When we talked to them, we clearly understood they came from Groznyi. Some of them had difficulties speaking Russian, with some accent” (uu-678).
Lengthy detention in inadequate conditions, violence suffered or witnessed by the interviewees, and constant uncertainty have affected their physical and mental condition negatively. They talked about this issue in their interviews.

“I had broken ribs, multiple bruises. Another man had a slit in his eardrum because of shots fired next to his head. So he was deaf in one ear. The ear was swollen, and ichor [serosanguinous fluid] was coming out of it… He had a scar on the upper back” (io-360).

An interviewee sustained multiple injuries during four days of detention in the basement:

“Broken nose, smashed, ribs broken. I don’t feel my toes partially. Part of my arm was numb – it was pierced by a knife (in the upper palm, above the thumb, there is a photo; I have a scar). From the blows, the fluid in my arm and leg accumulates; the tissue is dying and turns into calluses” (lz-279).

Victims suffer the consequences of detention long after their release:

“I still have nightmares about the basement, running away, even though it has been more than a year” (et-569).

“They finished the injections in February [2016]… Well, injections… My treatment course started since the beginning of the year, for two months. Approximately two weeks before the beginning of the year and until February. I have a cyst there. These beatings caused pathologies” (uu-678).

A man detained in the “government building” in 2014 said:

“A month and a half after the release, there was a forensic examination. In January this year [2016], I was assigned a third category of disability due to a back injury” (sl-174).

One of the interviewees has developed a fear of persecution, and he lost contact with his family and has suffered severe health issues. As a result, he was sleeping in the street and got frostbite in his legs. His mother said:

“He needed to be in a hospital because of his condition. I sent him [...]. They put him in Mechnykoii institute. He was in the psychosomatic unit there. We took him to Truskavets for treatment but he has developed an acute psychosis. [...] Now we suffer - he runs somewhere. Now he lost his legs because of the frostbite - both were amputated. There are no documents because he leaves everything and runs because he is afraid he will be arrested, assaulted, or killed” (xy-499).
ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE RELEASED FROM ILLEGAL DETENTION

As stated in this report, executions, sexual violence, intentional bodily injuries, battery, torture, death threats, illegal deprivation of liberty or kidnapping constitute crimes under the Criminal Code of Ukraine. These cases must be investigated and perpetrators must be held accountable.

Ukrainian law requires prosecutors to open an investigation within 24 hours after a crime has been reported. Among the 19 interviewees, eight former detainees of the “LPR” have not contacted Ukrainian law enforcement upon release, including one prisoner who had been chained to a valve for four days, threatened with execution and assaulted. Those who reported to law enforcement often do not trust the justice system and do not have access to information about their cases.

“I don’t really trust the system in general, especially our system. It failed once regarding Luhansk-Doneck. What makes you think it is going to work in our case? [...] For some reason, I am 99 percent sure” (et-312).

The approach of the law enforcement to the security of interviewees raises particular concerns. During the interview, several people reported providing testimony to the SSU, in particular with video recording of their testimony. The records were published online without their permission. Moreover, one respondent was living in the temporarily occupied area at that time.

At the time of writing, several interviewees were victims or witnesses in the case against Arkadii Korniievskyi at Svatove district court:

“Despite everything, there is a trial against Arkadii Yuriyovych Korniievskyi. The former SSU official became an attorney of the Luhansk bar association. He is known to the public because of a widely discussed case connected with the previous government. He represented the son of the Party of Regions member, Roman Landik, prosecuted for assaulting a girl from Luhansk. In addition to what has been said, Korniievskyi’s story is also different because he joined the “LPR” voluntarily when it was being formed, and offered his services. He also brought in his son’” (uu-678).

In addition, there is a verdict against an IAG member in the Integrated State Register of Court Decisions. The perpetrator interrogated detainees at the former Luhansk Oblast Administration and participated in the illegal deprivation of liberty and kidnapping. He was found guilty of crimes under articles 146(2) and 260(2) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine and sentenced to five years in prison

Sadly, in the process of writing this report, we found that many people affected by the conflict have not contacted law enforcement, while others faced the justice system’s inability to hold the perpetrators to account.

In terms of “access to justice” in the self-proclaimed republics, as stated above, Ihor Plotnytskyi was removed from the position of the head of the self-proclaimed republic following internal conflicts. Afterwards, local “law enforcement” started an “investigation” into the death of Hennadii Tsypkalov detained in the “government building” (i.e. the former Luhansk Oblast Administration). After Tsypkalov’s alleged suicide reported by the “LPR law enforcement” in 2016, the investigation in 2017 found that he sustained fatal bodily injuries. Such a shift in conclusions suggests that the case is political and it is used for the leadership’s political struggle against its opponents.

There has been no information about any investigation by “LPR law enforcement” of the operations of an illegal detention facility in the former administration building’s basement in 2014-2015.

In all the documented cases both apprehension and detention were carried out without the procedural safeguards provided for in national and international law. While in detention, many of former detainees (2014-2015) of the Luhansk Oblast Administration were subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence, unjustified use of physical restraints and weapons. The majority of interviewees were detained and held in the basement of the Luhansk Oblast Administration by “LPR” representatives based on charges of pro-Ukrainian views and/or supporting the Ukrainian military.

Respondents had spent from several days to several months in the basement in conditions unsuitable for either short or long-term detention. Certain detainees were forced to work, for example in cleaning up blood after shelling incidents or torture, or they had to bury bodies, act as a cook, or load or unload goods.

Medical assistance was either unavailable or insufficient at the time of the detention of those we interviewed. Contrary to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, persons with medical functions had limited power and resources for prescribing proper treatment. There were recorded instances of medical personnel’s deliberate participation in acts of ill treatment of the detainees.

The personnel of detention facilities failed to comply with international human rights standards and the safeguards provided for by international humanitarian law. The interviewees also reported involvement of children in the IAGs.

After the release from illegal detention facilities, very few interviewees contacted the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities. At the time of writing, the trial in the case against Arkadii Kornievskiy was ongoing, and at least one decision was published in the Integrated State Register of Court Decisions concerning a person who illegally detained people in the administration basement.

One of the key obstacles to restoring justice for the victims and their next of kin is the inability of the justice system to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law in the armed conflict to account.
RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE UKRAINIAN AUTHORITIES

• To the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine - to consider ratifying the European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes.

• To the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – to introduce amendments to the Criminal Code of Ukraine criminalizing recruitment and engagement of children in military activities and militarized groups.

• To the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – to establish a legal framework for the system of protection and rehabilitation of persons who had been illegally detained by organized armed groups in the armed conflict in Donbas.

• To the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Prosecutor-General’s Office, the Military Prosecutor’s Office and the Ministry of Defense – to provide personnel training on international standards of documentation and investigation of conflict-related sexual violence, including the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Istanbul Protocol.

• To the Ministry of Health of Ukraine – to develop an order allowing free examination and medical care for illegally detained persons in Ukraine.

• To the Ministry of Health of Ukraine – to establish a psychological assistance service for illegally detained persons and victims of violence.

• To the Security Service of Ukraine in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense, the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Military Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Justice – to develop an action plan for the prevention of recruitment and use of children as soldiers in combat.

• To the State Court Administration and the media - to inform the Ukrainian and international public about the progress and outcomes of cases and punishment received by perpetrators of gross human rights violations during the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.

TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

• To stop financial and organizational support of the IAGs and withdraw the armed groups of the Russian Federation, their advisors and instructors, from the separate areas of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

• To investigate and prosecute perpetrators in all cases of orders to deploy members of the Russian armed forces to combat missions in Ukraine.

• To conduct effective investigations and prosecution of Russian citizens who have committed serious human rights violations, including forced disappearance, torture, sexual violence, extrajudicial or summary executions of civilians and members of the armed forces of Ukraine.

• Until the complete withdrawal of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, the IAGs established and
funded by the Russian Federation, to ensure their compliance with international humanitarian law.

• To develop a law on reparations for pecuniary and/or non-pecuniary damages related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, which has led to illegal detention and kidnapping, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, civilian deaths and injuries, as well as the loss of property.

TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF “LPR” IAG

• To ensure compliance with international humanitarian law in relation to treatment of persons deprived of liberty during armed conflict through the training of the IAG members on international humanitarian law standards.

• To ensure a proper response to human rights violations committed by IAG members and hold the perpetrators to account.

TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, THE UN MONITORING MISSION, THE OSCE

• To ensure the examination of possible mass graves at the Luhansk solid waste landfill in Oleksandrivsk.
COALITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES
“JUSTICE FOR PEACE IN DONBAS”

https://jfp.org.ua/

The Coalition is an informal union of 17 human rights organizations and initiatives founded in 2014 in response to the outbreak of the conflict in Donbas. Most Coalition members are public associations from Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. The mission of the Coalition is to build a sustainable and just peace in Donbas by consolidating the efforts of civil society institutes to ensure proper respect for human rights and freedoms.

The member organizations of the Coalition cooperate to collect, systematize and record evidence of human rights violations during the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The member organizations of the Coalition agree that bringing perpetrators to justice is a prerequisite for the restoration of peace and a condition for reconciliation in eastern Ukraine.
IMPRISONED IN THE “LPR GOVERNMENT” BUILDING: ANALYTICAL REPORT

Idea of the report, editor
Volodymyr Shcherbachenko

Cover
Romana Ruban