Freedom House Report on Hate Crimes in Ukraine
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Why do we publish this report?

Freedom House has been publishing an annual report on hate crimes in Ukraine since 2020. Together with our partners, the LGBT Human Rights Nash Svit Center, the Congress of Ethnic Communities of Ukraine (CECU), and the Coalition of Roma Non-Governmental Organizations of Ukraine (NGO), we monitor hate-motivated violence targeting the LGBT+ community as well as members of various ethnic and religious groups, particularly the Jewish and Roma communities, and non-Ukrainian citizens. Why is it important?

Keeping silent about or ignoring hate crimes makes parts of society feel unprotected, unaccepted, and even rejected. For Ukraine – which seeks to develop through European integration and to create a strong, inclusive, and equal society – such exclusion can pose a serious obstacle to achieving this goal.

This is especially true now during the full-scale war, which places vulnerable groups at even greater risk. The need to draw public attention to hate crimes is even more urgent today than it was during peacetime. As long as Ukrainian society is focused on protecting the state from the aggressor and supporting the army, hate-motivated violence might be overlooked. This, in turn, creates the risk of impunity and escalation of such crimes. Therefore, in this report, we provide not only conventional monitoring indicators but also war-related data. In this way, we strive to emphasize the problems persisting within Ukrainian society, highlight new challenges emerging in the context of Russia’s full-scale invasion, and contribute to their resolution.
2022: Key Indicators

- **LGBT+**
  - Hate-Motivated Incidents: 105
- **Antisemitic Hate Crimes**
  - Violent Antisemitic Incidents: 0
  - Antisemitic Vandalism Incidents: 5
- **Violation of Roma Community Rights**
  - Incidents of Hate and Intolerance Crimes: 5

21 out of 29 cases of interaction with law enforcement officers involved violations.
LGBT+ People

Freedom House and its partners recorded a total of 105 incidents motivated by homophobia/transphobia, discrimination, and other human rights violations in 2022. There has been a downward trend in the number of records for several consecutive years. It should be noted that, due to a lack of resources, monitors have stopped documenting minor incidents of verbal abuse and threats in interpersonal relationships since 2021.

Crimes against LGBT+ People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional Distribution of Documented Cases*

*Regional Distribution of Documented Cases
Thirty-nine incidents involved homophobic/transphobic abuse and hate speech by individuals or groups. Twenty-two of them can be classified as hate crimes and seventeen cases as hate incidents. Hate speech was recorded in three cases.

**Misconduct Motivated by Intolerance towards LGBT+ People**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insults, humiliations, threats</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical violence of varying severity</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophobia / transphobia in family</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasion of privacy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal collection, disclosure (or threat of disclosure) of confidential information</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacks on LGBT+ centers / events or activists</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extortion and blackmail</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophobic inscriptions / incitements (hate speech)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual violence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigandage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapping</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to property</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, during wartime in 2022, the number of attacks on LGBT+ community centers and events or activists by far-right groups significantly decreased due to a lack of public LGBT+ events and the shift in focus of LGBT+ opponents to military affairs. Freedom House and its partners have nonetheless documented several incidents during this period.

**Attack on Olena Shevchenko**

In April, an unidentified man attacked Olena Shevchenko, head of Insight, a Ukrainian LGBT+ organization, and leader of the Women’s March public initiative. The attacker sprayed Shevchenko with an unknown substance. As a result, she suffered a chemical burn on her face and eyes. Olena herself connects this attack with her public activism.
Attack near Versace LGBT+ club

In June, unidentified individuals attacked two LGBT+ people near the Versace LGBT+ club. KyivPride described the case as follows: “Oleksa (whose boyfriend Roman, an LGBT+ soldier, died at the front line in Kharkiv region) was giving an interview to foreign journalists near the club. A group of young men approached them and tried to disrupt the interview. After their attempt had failed, one of the young men punched Oleksa in the jaw. According to Oleksa, they did not like that he was wearing heels and generally belonged to the LGBT+ community. Oleksa’s friend Cheryl, a transgender girl and a blogger, came to help him. In response to that, she was pepper sprayed and punched in the face three times.”

Additionally, the war significantly decreased the number of so-called “mixed-type hate crimes” – crimes for financial gain where perpetrators select a victim based on his or her sexual orientation as a target for robbery or extortion. This may be due to Internet users’ less frequent use of gay dating websites frequently targeted by perpetrators.

Interaction with Law Enforcement Officers

- 29 cases of interaction with law enforcement officers
- calling the police
- reporting offences
- police conducting investigation, etc.

In 21 of the cases, the following violations were recorded:
- 17 prejudice
- 11 abuse of power, insults, threats, physical violence
- 9 invasion of privacy, illegal collection, disclosure (or threat of disclosure) of confidential information
- 8 improper performance of rights protection functions, refusal to protect rights

During martial law, Freedom House and its partners have recorded a significant increase in homophobic and transphobic abuse compared to peacetime. Incidents include the use of physical violence and even torture by law enforcement, particularly police officers.

Homophobic and Transphobic Abuse by Law Enforcement Officers

- 2021: 4 out of 19 incidents
- 2022: 17 out of 21 incidents
An alarming trend has become evident from communication with the representatives of the LGBT+ community: victims refuse to report hate crimes to law enforcement agencies due to disbelief that these agencies will act on their behalf, as well as for fear of facing discrimination by representatives of these agencies themselves.

For example, in 2022, monitors recorded two incidents where units of the State Bureau of Investigation refused to accept reports from victims who suffered from violations committed by police officers and Territorial Defense members. Overall, monitors recorded eight violations of the right to effective redress by law enforcement agencies.

**LGBT+ and War**

Upon the outbreak of Russia’s war against Ukraine, representatives of the LGBT+ community enlisted in the military to defend their country. As we know from reports by openly LGBT+ servicemen, the attitude towards them in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and especially at the front line, is mostly tolerant. Nash Svit has documented incidents of homophobia in the military both before and after Russia launched its full-scale invasion. The incidents were infrequent, and not systemic in nature, and the command usually took measures to investigate them, protect the victims and remedy the situation.

However, the vast majority of LGBT+ servicemen, as well as LGBT+ people in Ukrainian society in general, prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity beyond a narrow circle of trusted persons, fearing negative reactions from society at large.

Violations by members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine/Territorial Defense Forces were recorded in fifteen of these incidents, while in one incident the violation was committed by the representatives of the Municipal Guard NGO. Twelve incidents bore the signs of hate crimes and four – those of hate incidents (according to the ODIHR/OSCE methodology). In six cases, the right to respect for private life was violated. In thirteen cases, victims suffered discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), and in two of them also because of their HIV status.

Most of the recorded incidents involved prejudice, insults, humiliation, and physical violence. Monitors recorded three incidents of sexual violence and one incident of sexual harassment by a commander. On top of this, there were incidents of threats with weapons, robbery, torture or inhuman treatment, inaction by commanders, and harassment. Other illegal actions include isolated incidents of extortion and blackmail, demotion or denial of promotion, and damage to property.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCIDENTS OF VIOLATIONS BY MILITARY PERSONNEL/PARAMILITARY GROUPS</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insults, humiliations, threats</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasion of privacy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal collection, disclosure (or threat of disclosure) of confidential information</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual violence</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, there were several incidents of homophobic and transphobic treatment of civilians by members of the Territorial Defense Forces. This was most often the case at checkpoints when the members of the Territorial Defense Forces performed the duties of law enforcement officers in the first months of the full-scale Russian invasion.

For example, in the first days of the war, armed members of the Karpatska Sich Territorial Defense battalion twice attacked the office of Nash Svit. They smashed the office premises, as well as beat and robbed the NGO’s employees. Both times the police did not arrive after a call, and the relevant unit of the State Bureau of Investigation refused to accept a report of the crime.

**Violations by Occupying Authorities (War Crimes)**

The absence of the rule of law and the inability of the Ukrainian security services to exert any control in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine means civil life in these regions has practically stopped. If the Russian military or occupation administration finds out that an individual belongs to the LGBT+ community, they subject the person to insults, violence, extortion, restriction of freedom, and threats to their lives.

Monitors documented war crimes in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Kharkiv regions. The largest number of cases – 25 – were recorded in the Kherson region. Nineteen cases involved the violation of the right to respect for private life.

Most of the war crimes occurred at checkpoints and in places where the Russian military patrolled in the occupied territories. The pretext for homophobic and transphobic abuse was mostly private information found on the victims’ phones, and in some cases, their appearance or behavior. In one case, victims’ HIV-positive status was among the motivating factors for SOGI-based abuse.
Violations of LGBT+ People’s Rights in Other Areas

**EMPLOYMENT**

The rights of LGBT+ people to equality and non-discrimination were violated, in particular, through the compulsion to resign and prejudice. Invasion of privacy was also documented in these cases. One of the cases concerned sexual harassment by a Russian manager in temporarily occupied Donetsk.

**EDUCATION**

Monitors recorded one violation in the sphere of education in which a university student in Kropyvnytskyi suffered from bullying, prejudice, insults, humiliations, threats, physical violence, and invasion of privacy by a dormitory attendant due to their sexual orientation.

**COMMERCIAL SPHERE**

Monitors documented five cases of discrimination based on SOGI. Two consisted of the denial of service, two in illegal eviction, and one in inactivity by the administration of a catering establishment. Perpetrators damaged victims’ property in two cases and subjected them to physical violence in one case.

**HEALTHCARE**

Monitors documented two cases of the denial of medical services or their incomplete provision due to prejudice by healthcare professionals towards SOGI patients. In one case, a patient experienced physical violence and, in the other, an invasion of privacy.
Antisemitic Hate Crimes

With the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the number of recorded antisemitic hate crimes has drastically decreased. In 2022, monitors recorded the lowest number of such incidents in the last 20 years, since the beginning of systematic monitoring.

Attacks

Throughout 2022, the monitors did not record a single case in which antisemitism was the cause of physical violence. They did, however, document one case where a domestic quarrel, which started over car parking, involved antisemitic insults.

Description of the Incident

On March 31, a brawl occurred in Ivano-Frankivsk, in which attackers stabbed Jewish community leader Igor Perelman three times. The victim says the assailant yelled antisemitic obscenities. Several news outlets reported the incident and the use of these slurs. However, given the context, the antisemitic nature of the case is not obvious. The conflict was sparked by a parking dispute: the victim temporarily parked the car in such a way that it caused an obstruction. He, however, did so because he was unloading humanitarian aid. The assailant, according to him, intervened to help his wife who started the quarrel.

Victims of Violent Antisemitic Incidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vandalism

According to the monitoring methodology, vandalism includes physical damage to buildings of Jewish infrastructure, such as synagogues, community centers, Holocaust memorials, or tombstones in Jewish cemeteries. Acts considered as "damage" include smashed glass or other destruction, as well as antisemitic and/or neo-Nazi graffiti, driven by an ideological cause.
On January 19, a Holocaust memorial was destroyed in Lysychansk.

On January 28, a Holocaust memorial was desecrated in Dnipro.

On May 16, an unidentified vandal painted a symbol resembling a swastika on the shutters at the entrance to the Jewish community center “Thiya” in Khmelnytskyi.

On October 4, vandals tore off the Star of David from the metal railings at the old Jewish cemetery in Ivano-Frankivsk. They also damaged the fence around the memorial plaque and painted red paint over the metal structure.

On December 12, a window was shattered at a synagogue in Kropyvnytskyi.

**Antisemitic Vandalism Incidents in 2022**

- 2020: 10 incidents
- 2021: 14 incidents
- 2022: 5 incidents

**IMPORTANT!**

In 2022, the Ukrainian parliament introduced criminal liability for “manifestations of antisemitism.” These manifestations include hateful attitudes towards persons of Jewish origin, anti-Jewish propaganda, Holocaust denial, and destruction of Jewish buildings, religious structures or monuments. Previously, Ukrainian law classified such crimes as vandalism or hooliganism. Now, antisemitism is punishable by a fine of UAH 3,400 to UAH 8,500 or by restraint of liberty for a term of up to five years, with the deprivation of the right to occupy certain positions or engage in certain activities for up to three years.
Damage to and Destruction of Religious Buildings during the Full-Scale Russian Invasion

Since February 24, 2022, the Congress of Ethnic Communities of Ukraine, in partnership with the Workshop for the Academic Study of Religion, started monitoring the damage to, and destruction of, religious buildings as a result of Russia’s full-scale invasion. They began collecting information from open sources, photo and video evidence, interviews with representatives of centralized religious organizations and local communities, as well as during monitoring missions directly at the scene of incidents (within Kyiv and Chemihiv regions).

By the end of 2022, the monitors had documented **251 damaged or destroyed religious buildings**.

63.6% of these buildings were churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. 8.4% belonged to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. There were also incidents of destruction or damage to Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish religious buildings.

Ruins of the Church of Prophet Ilya and Apostle Andrew the First-Called (Horenka village, Kyiv region)
Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses (Horenka village, Kyiv region)

Irpin Biblical Seminary (Irpin, Kyiv region)
Choral Synagogue (Mariupol, Donetsk region)

Mosque of the Muslim religious community “Sunnah” (Kharkiv, Kharkiv region)
Case 1.

An alarming incident took place in Lviv where people began to gather into anti-Roma squads. One of these self-proclaimed civil defense groups called “Catchers” published photos of girls who had been involved in pickpocketing downtown Lviv. Group members doused three Roma women with “Zelenka – ‘brilliant green’ triarylmethane antiseptic dye – and taped them to lamp posts. Russian propagandists later twisted and exploited this news. In particular, one tweet says in Dutch: “Women and children are used as shields in Ukraine.” The tweet claims that the photo shows “a Russian girl tied up as a living shield by Ukrainian soldiers in Mariupol.” However, the good relations of Roma civil society organizations both inside and outside Ukraine with European human rights organizations and media prompted a quick response and helped prevent the further spread of this propaganda.

Case 2.

A conductor at the railway station in Lozova, Kharkiv region, did not let a Roma woman with nine children into a train car. Eventually, the woman did manage to get on the train. Shelves in the train car were occupied by men and some of them by luggage, but passengers gave neither she nor her children a seat.
Case 3.
In May, the management of Kindergarten No. 145 in Zaporizhzhia hosting refugees denied Roma access to the shelter because they believed that the family with four children did not “look Ukrainian”. As a result, the Roma family lived on the street for two days.

Case 4.
Non-governmental organizations Sumnakuno Petalo (Toretsk), Bakhtalo Drom (Zaporizhzhia) have reported that Roma minority representatives face violations of their rights at checkpoints in Zaporizhzhia and Toretsk when leaving and entering the cities. During August-September 2022, for example, armed guards at several checkpoints stopped persons of Roma origin without any official explanation and then handed them over to the police. Officers then took their photos, fingerprints, and personal data at police stations. They justified their actions by referring to their chief’s order to record all Roma in a “database.” They also checked detainees’ mobile phones.

Case 5.
In December, a Roma family of eight people, including four children, was shot dead in occupied Makiivka, Donetsk region. Later on, the so-called “Ministry of Internal Affairs of the DPR” reported that it had detained three suspects, all of whom allegedly had criminal records and “confessed that they committed the crime for financial gain, in order to steal a car and valuable property.” However, Petro Andriushchenko, Adviser to the Mayor of Mariupol, reported on his Telegram channel that the occupiers did not tell the entire story and that the murder was likely to have been committed by Wagner Group mercenaries. According to him, this crime was clearly based on the ethnic identity of the victims. Furthermore, all those killed had bullet wounds to their heads from close-range gunshots.

Roma and War

According to the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), about 100,000 Ukrainians of Roma origin have been forced to flee their homes since February 2022. Half of them have escaped abroad. Roma families – mostly women with children – tried to leave Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk regions for other countries, but not all of them gained refugee status. This was because many Roma lacked the identity documents, money, and time required to leave the occupied territories.

With the start of the full-scale invasion, the Coalition of Roma Organizations focused on providing humanitarian aid and support to the Roma community throughout Ukraine. Roma organizations take an active part in the evacuation of Roma families from areas of active hostilities to safe places. These organizations help families to move to the Zakarpattia and Lviv regions, providing them with housing, registration assistance, and food.
On top of this, the Coalition’s representatives, together with other organizations, regularly monitor the conditions of Roma temporary settlements. The most common violations include segregation and unsatisfactory living conditions. For example, the inspection of a temporary settlement in the village of Zymna Voda, Lviv region revealed that Roma families are more isolated from social and public services, and the personal security level of the Roma minority representatives in the settlement is low. Roma children do not attend school. This evidences not only their lack of access to distance learning but also the general lack of well-established cooperation between public authorities to ensure children’s rights to education.

An inspection of fourteen shelters in Hungary has found that Roma lived in shelters segregated from non-Roma people with worse conditions. Focus groups with Roma women revealed that they faced discrimination from Ukrainian border guards when crossing into Hungary. In one focus group, Roma women also reported that Hungarian state institutions were trying to arrange for Germany to accept Roma refugees from Ukraine, demonstrating their own aversion to accommodating Roma people in Hungary. Non-Roma women in shelters did not report such information.

A survey was conducted among Roma migrants from different parts of the country in Zaporizhzhia in November-December 2022. Its findings suggest that Roma people face four main challenges:

- **Welfare Payments**: Out of 140 people surveyed, only two families received welfare payments as IDPs.
- **Housing**: None of the survey respondents received housing. Meanwhile, shelters and refugees are overcrowded in Zaporizhzhia.
- **Employment**: None of the survey respondents is currently employed. Roma people are looking for part-time jobs, and women with small children cannot get a job because kindergartens throughout the city have been closed since December 11, 2022.
- **Education**: Children’s access to distance learning is limited due to a lack of technical equipment. Only 33% of survey respondents had devices with which children could access online lessons.

**IMPORTANT!**

In August 2022, the Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine established a separate department to deal with the issues of national minorities and indigenous peoples – a step towards further state involvement in the protection of Roma rights.
Monitoring data demonstrates that there are positive developments regarding the protection of the rights of minority and marginalized communities. In particular, the downward trend in the number of hate crimes against the LGBT+ community continues (~44% since 2020), and the number of attacks on LGBT+ community centers and events has also significantly decreased. The social acceptance of LGBT+ people is improving: according to a survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology at the request of Nash Svit, the positive attitude of Ukrainians towards LGBT+ people has increased fourfold over the past six years. Moreover, 66% of respondents have a positive attitude towards LGBT+ people’s participation in the war against Russia which, in turn, increases overall social acceptance of LGBT+ people.

It is also noteworthy that 2022 saw the lowest number of antisemitic incidents in 20 years, with not a single case of antisemitic violence documented.

At the same time, the full-scale invasion has also exacerbated the discrimination and violence faced by marginalized groups. For example, the number of crimes against LGBT+ people in the temporarily occupied territories, war crimes, has increased. In addition, monitors documented multiple incidents of hate against LGBT+ representatives by military personnel and of rights violations by police officers. In particular, after the attack on LGBT+ people near a club in Kyiv, police officers not only failed to react to violence but also had a friendly conversation with the assailants.

Roma people continue to face challenges caused by racial and ethnic stigma. More than 100,000 Roma people have left for the Zakarpattia region and another 50,000 live in the European Union. The situation of Roma communities worsened with the outbreak of war: many families are unable to leave the temporarily occupied territories, while those who have left are often unable to obtain IDP status or other assistance due to the lack of identity documents. Roma families report discrimination and intolerance in host communities, while monitors have noted the segregation from broader society and poor conditions of their temporary settlements. The situation of those who remain in the occupied territories is no better, with frequent reports of robbery, as well as of the kidnapping and enforced disappearance of journalists, activists, and community representatives.

There is fertile ground for advocacy and human rights work in this sphere. Data collected by Freedom House and its partners demonstrate the urgent need for initiatives analyzing and improving policies preventing and investigating hate-motivated violence at the national level.
ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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