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**REPORT ON THE RESULTS  
OF MONITORING VISIT  
of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union/ UHHRU  
on the topic “Problems of gender-based violence in the conflict zone”  
(Kramatorsk, Donetsk region)**

**SCOPE OF WORK WITHIN THE MONITORING VISIT:**

Purpose of the visit:

Jointly with “Women’s Information Consultative Center” to collect data on gender-based violence in the conflict area (occupied and liberated territories, during the conflict and after it) in order to summarize information and develop recommendations to relevant structures for victims protection.

Dates and location of the visit: August 11-16, 2015, the city of Kramatorsk

Membership of the group:

- XXXXX, UHHRU representative;
- XXXXX, Women’s Information Consultative Center;
- UHHRU volunteers XXXXX and XXXXX.

Aspects which were assessed/tasks in the sphere of women’s safety in the temporarily uncontrolled territory:

- crimes against sexual integrity (harassment, acts of violence);
- forcible detention/seizure;
- use of women/trafficking of women for sexual exploitation;
- abuse of women detainees;
- using women and children as “human shields” or “cover” during military operations.

**VISIT DESCRIPTION:**

August 12, 2015, Kramatorsk city

XXXXX and XXXXX conducted focused group interviews with the members of “Pani” [the Lady] NGO. The story of V.M., who moved from Donetsk and now lives in Kramatorsk and works at “xxx”. She says that in Donetsk there is a complicated ecological and epidemiological situation. “The war has destroyed our family. I worked as a teacher, and at that time in Donetsk there were rallies already and my students were there. I had no right to say anything. The same, many of my friends can’t say anything. It is reliable information that in Donetsk in the occupied territory there is an ecological and epidemiological problem. In the city there is the Donetsk Regional dermatologic dispensary. Not our people work there. When so-called DPR people come there and undergo tests, they are not recorded by names, but by nicknames (Bubble, Tuzyk, Doggy). Then tests are taken. He says that he is ill and it comes out that he has syphilis, but he left. Every second case is AIDS, and it is epidemic and this is

not funny. Syphilis transmitted through everyday life. Venereologists wear gauze masks, they take pictures of the places where he was sitting, where he was standing, etc.

A doctor revealed a disease, and then can't find him. He comes second time, saying that it hurts more. But she says, that she cannot say that he has AIDS because he will shoot her and so keeps silence or says something else. And an infected goes further with the disease and conveys it. Nightclubs function in Donetsk. Guess what are nightclubs there for? I live in Kramatorsk and they do not work here. If they will spread all kinds of viruses, and if they disappear of this, I'll be happy about this. But this epidemic will be spread to peaceful territory. They freely travel from the territory of the DPR to the not occupied territory. When I call to my relatives who stay in Donetsk, they say that everything is fine there, but asked me to send medicines I say that the Security Service of Ukraine will put me in prison for this. No one forces any one to stay there. Donetsk is not fenced with barbed wire. They say that they have gonorrhea like running nose. The smell of corpses spread to a certain distance, because not even their dead bodies are taken away. Those who live there say that they have dizziness and nausea – this may be because of such epidemiological situation. I stayed in the basement for a week and I am a betrayer for them now. And those who stay there, they are victims. We are engaged in volunteer aid, and see that they come here as it should be. I cannot come home for a year. And not because I do not want. The way home will be open for any displaced person. Among the students there are those who remained in Donetsk. They cannot leave and in their hearts are struggling even there. My grandmother has 11 children and I cannot even say anything to them. We build our young republic, they tell me. They have got a number plate for the car. In Donetsk they fix their own number plates, and when they come to the territory of Ukraine they change them”.

During the interview there were found out the contacts of women abused during the occupation and there were defined the areas of work and contacts in the other cities of Donetsk region.

#### August 12, 2015, Kramatorsk city

XXXXX interviewed two victims, wishing to remain anonymous.

A.

Was held captive in May from 10 to 13, 2014. She was detained at the checkpoint between Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, when she and two other women were carrying food for Ukrainian soldiers.

She was pulled out of the car by the hair, having pulled out almost all of it. She was pulled along the ground by the hair. Was beaten during the detention. Was threaten to be killed every day. Was threatened with rape and cruel treatment. “To trough you into plastic bags in pieces”. She did not heard about other cases of sexual violence against other women.

B.

Was held captive in May from 9 to 13, 2014. She was detained at the checkpoint between Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, when she and two other women were carrying food for Ukrainian soldiers to the checkpoint 5 about 5:00 pm. They tried to escape, but were caught up, boards with nails were thrown under the wheels. They were blocked with a white van and two other cars. They do not remember the numbers of the cars.

They put on flexi-cuffs, threw them to the ground face down, beaten them with buttstock on backs. “I was lucky that I was beaten by a man with a weapon, as I was beaten with buttstock, and those who had no weapons beat my friend with clubs”. They beat on the head, ears. I was kept in a separate cell. Was threatened with rape and cruel treatment. Was stripped, humiliated, threatened. Those who carried out the interrogation were in ski masks. One was with Eastern accent, but I do not know whether he was from there or not, I do not know.

There were threats – we will give you to Chechens. They will do such things with you. The man with the Eastern accent cut the hair with a knife and threw it into the toilet. Different people conducted interrogation. Unbuttoned shirt – “it's ok, good enough”, then started to “shot” – go up to the wall and

pray. Started to pray, thought that it was a joke. Then the other one came in and told: what are you doing, the brains will be all over the camera, bring the bedsheet. They left and did not come back. Stress coursed periods untimely. There was no possibility to wash and nothing to use. First they gave toilet paper. Only the next day they brought gauze and cotton wool.

#### August 13, 2015, Druzhkivka

I.K. was interviewed by XXXXX and XXXXX.

A volunteer, a civic activist, a resident of Druzhkivka. During the occupation was engaged in helping military. Carried food, water, clothes for the Armed Forces of Ukraine unit which was between Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. In mid-June when she was crossing the checkpoint at the entrance to Kramatorsk, under the point of a machine-gun she was forced to take two drunken separatists to Kramatorsk. Her son was who traveled after her was the witness of this. Another time, at the end of June, when she was traveling alone at the entrance to Druzhkivka there was an attempt of rape by a person from the Caucasus, may be "kadyrovets". This act was stopped by one of local separatists who distracted attention of the rapist, and ordered her to go as soon as possible. In a state of shock Iryna does not remembers how she left from the checkpoint. Every time passing the place she feels physiological fear.

V.Z. was interviewed by XXXXX and XXXXX.

On June 17, 2014 at 3:30 he was kidnapped from the workplace. Has been held in captivity for 4 days in the premises of the state security service. He was beaten, tortured. Has got incised wound of the leg. Twice in serious condition (heart problems) he was sent to the hospital. The first time the medical aid was not provided. He told about the testimony of one of the separatists that in Druzhkovtka the shooting groups worked. According to Z., when he was in captivity a woman and two men were shot.

A.V., born in 1951, was interviewed by XXXXX and XXXXX.

In Druzhkivka, May 22, 2014, he went to the monument to Lenin to protest action with the flag of Ukraine. He was detained by separatists and was taken to the Kramatorsk city council. He was beaten (teeth were knocked out) and released a day later. The same time a young woman, who on his mind was a drug user, was kept with him.

N.S., the wife of an activist and civic activist herself, interviewed by XXXXX and XXXXX.

The night of May 3 to 4 2014, she was alone with her granddaughter (3.5 years old) at home at the address XXX. At about 23:15 the house was thrown with bottles of flammable liquid. They didn't hit the windows. The frontage of the house was damaged and burning splashes damaged paint on the car. Later, after the family left Druzhkivka, the house was invaded by separatists where they housed their families. Also on their part there was an attempt to sell the building.

#### August 14, 2015, Slovyansk city

X., a pastor of one of the protestant churches said that they collected facts of violence against people during the DPR period, the facts on disappearances of people and violence against them. Most of the facts are concerned those, who belongs to the church. We have been engaged in such work since December 2014. We were preparing the work on religious persecution. And in general, on any violence. We have prepared documents in February. I was in the USA at the presidential breakfast with Obama. Our task is to show the world human rights and religious freedom violations. In America, there are many churches and it is important to give the green light for help in the East of Ukraine. I can

offer ready information collected by us. There are people who live here and their relatives. For example, we have O., who works with Roma R. His father was killed. In Sloviansk, the same as in the front line there was a bad connection there. He went out to the yard to call. He was shot. The father is S.R. The son is R.R. We have several people having been held in captivity. There is a woman I evacuated. She also was held in captivity. She was a duty person of the church. Four brothers, operator and this woman were taken from there.

Among the cases described in the report there is one in which it is told about the threat of castration on the part of the Moscow Patriarchy priest directed against a “wrong priest” of Protestant church. A militant refused to do castration to a prisoner.

O. interviewed by XXXXX.

On April 23, 2014 after 23 p.m. he was detained at his car by separatists. Bound and with a bag on his head he was taken to the Sloviansk department of the Security Service of Ukraine, where he stayed until 9 am of the next day. He saw three other male detainees.

O. interviewed by XXXXX and XXXXX.

A volunteer of one of the protestant churches. During the occupation of Sloviansk took people out of the city by his own car. During the day was crossing checkpoints repeatedly. Some separatists had already known him. He was detained on July 3, 2014 at the checkpoint together with a guy named Tolik, whose motorbike was broken and whom O. picked up. He was kept in the building of the Police Department of Slovyansk city for two days. The night of July 5 to 6 separatists left the city. Some stranger opened cells and released everyone. There were no women among the detained.

#### August 15, 2015, Kramatorsk city

V. was interviewed by XXXXX

From April 15, 2015 her husband, the owner of ..., was held captive.

In April the ... was shelled, we lived there, the house was damaged, my daughter and I went to Kyiv. It was impossible to found out the location of the husband, the official of the UN helped. Police did not provide any information. While the husband was in captivity, our property was nearly destroyed. There is no compensation for destruction, we do not properly executed documents till now. Does not know about cases of sexual violence against women, although general threats to her and the mother of her husband were expressed.

Z. an activist of “Svoboda” from Konstyantynivka. Interviewed by XXXXX.

From mid-June 2014 to July 5, 2014 there were three women together with us in the basement in Slavyansk. They were kept separate from men in the cell. It is difficult to say about one whether there was violence against her. The other one behaved like crazy, was it due to violence or not, I do not know. She writhed, bitted, nibbled gold that was on her, buried it in the pillow feathers. We, after she was taken away, found the gold in feathers and gave it to the guard. As far as I know, she was taken to treat to psychiatric hospital in Donetsk. The third woman was the wife of R. The husband also was held with her, earlier, as far as I know, he was held in the SSU. They were detained because when the helicopter of Armed Forces of Ukraine fell down, he dressed the wound of the pilot. He was taken with his wife. The woman was severally beaten, I can bear witness. I am not aware of sexual violence.

D. Interviewed by XXXXX.

Was held in captivity in Sloviansk first in Sloviansk SSU, then in Sloviansk district department of internal affairs in Spring 2014 (nearly two weeks).

As for detention of women he gave the following explanation:

1. Woman of 30 was stopped in Sloviansk at the checkpoint of DPR. She was driving the car, gray jeep with Russian number plate. She said that came to visit relatives. Militants tried to take away the car, demanded money in the name of the Novorossiia. She sent them with the words: "Go in the ... with your Novorossiia!". According to the militants, they have found two passports at her: Russian and Ukrainian. She was brought to Sloviansk City Police Department for temporary detention. They put her to a separate cell. She was taken for interrogation and was abused there. She screamed very loudly. I saw the handcuffs put on her. She shouted that she was a Russian citizen. Behaved inadequate, rushed to the guards. As far as I know, she was taken to Donetsk. The car was left parked at the City Police Department. It happened in late June 2014, the young woman was held for about 5 days.

2. There was a man from Karpivka, who owned a pond; and in May, he was held in Sloviansk SSU, his wife asked to release him. He was released. Then they were driving a car and were stopped at the checkpoint of DPR and it was determined that he feeds Ukrainian military. Also he was blamed that he leads columns of Ukrainian military by DPR checkpoints. He was detained together with his wife. They were brought to Sloviansk City Police Department to the temporary detention cell. First he was held with his wife in the same cell. Then he was transferred to my cell. I saw his wife beaten. Then I was taken to a separate cell, and didn't see anyone there and do not know what was happening further.

3. While I was held in Sloviansk SSU, I heard that there was a woman there. I was asked by those who detained me whether I know her. They said that she was some kind of a sotnik [captain] at Maidan, a captain of a women unit. I do not know her. While I was there, I heard that she refuses to eat and drink. She was kept together with Nelia Shtepa, she fought with her. There is information about this female captain from Russian mass media (video?) Called "Captain in a skirt".

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

- The implemented documenting of the facts concerning human rights violations and violence in the temporarily occupied territories, in particular against women, shows that such cases took place, but because of the high stigma in the society, people often are not ready to talk about them.
- Threats and simulations of violence, including sexual, are not perceived as violence, although cause deep effect on the victims, which is difficult to overcome for an extended period.
- There are no reasons to say that during temporary occupation there was mass rape as a means of warfare as it occurred in other areas of conflict (Rwanda, Bosnia, etc.)
- There are indirect evidences that in territories that are not under the control of Ukraine, human rights violations, violence, and in particular sexual abuse are of more cruel nature an occur more often and are not documented.

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