

AGGRESSIVE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE: RURAL AND URBAN SAFETY IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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The chapter is devoted to reviewing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in connection with the aggressive war against Ukraine, launched by Russia in 2022. This war in the heart of Europe affects global and national security, as well as rural and urban security. The threat to security is apparent not only in connection with the threat of expansion of the war to NATO countries but also because of the blocking of trade cooperation and routes that made it possible to provide regions of the world with food and clean water. Thus, the connection between Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine and national, public, economic, ecological and other types of safety and security issues is obvious. All demonstrated examples highlight war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide; because of this, international, national, and foreign law enforcement bodies, courts (tribunals), and non-governmental organisations are involved in collecting, checking and evaluating evidence.

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AGRESIVNA VOJNA PROTI UKRAJINI: VARNOST PODEŽELJA IN MEST V KONTEKSTU NACIONALNE IN GLOBALNE VARNOSTI

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Poglavje se osredotoča na cilje trajnostnega razvoja Združenih narodov v povezavi z agresivno vojno proti Ukrajini, ki jo je sprožila Rusija leta 2022. Vojna v osrčju Evrope vpliva na globalno in nacionalno varnost ter varnost podeželja in mest. Ogroženost varnosti je jasna ne le v povezavi z grožnjo širitve vojne na države NATO, temveč tudi zaradi blokiranja trgovinskega sodelovanja in poti, ki so omogočale oskrbo posameznih regij sveta s hrano in čisto vodo. Povezava agresivne vojne Rusije zoper Ukrajino z nacionalnimi, javnimi, gospodarskimi, ekološkimi in drugimi vrstami varnostnih vprašanj je očitna. Prikazani primeri so izpostavili vojne zločine, zločine proti človeštvu in genocid. Posledično so v zbiranje, preverjanje in vrednotenje dokazov vključeni mednarodni, nacionalni in tuji organi pregona, sodišča (tribunali) ter nevladne organizacije.



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1 Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the Russian army began an aggressive full-scale invasion of Ukraine (United Nations General Assembly, 2022). As a result of this war, thousands of war crimes have been committed against the civilian population, the Ukrainian military, and prisoners of war. There has also been significant destruction of military and civilian infrastructure, cultural heritage, ecological systems, and agricultural fields. These war crimes and crimes against humanity were primarily associated with the occupation of certain Ukrainian regions. Only de-occupation and bringing the perpetrators to justice can reduce the risk of such crimes being committed again by the Russian army. Due to the war's devastation, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2023) has become impossible both in Ukraine and in the region (SDG 2 – Zero hunger; SDG 3 – Good health and well-being; SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy; SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth; SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 15 – Life on land; SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions).

According to the online map of military operations as of August 22, 2023 (Deepstate Map, 2023), Ukraine managed to de-occupy 41,663 km² of territories in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson and Mykolaiv regions (see Figure 1), or about 6.9% of Ukraine's territory. This area is comparable in size to Denmark or the Netherlands. Approximately 66 km² (0.01% of the territory of Ukraine) was de-occupied during the summer counteroffensive 2023. Parts of the Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions as well as Crimea – totalling about 106,563 km² or 17.7% of all Ukrainian territory – remain occupied by Russia at the time of writing. The size of these occupied territories is comparable to the size of Bulgaria or Iceland.

The result of the Russian aggression was not only the occupation of territories, lands, cities, and villages, and the killing and wounding of civilians and soldiers, but also significant damage to infrastructure and a vast number of refugees fleeing from the atrocities of the Russian army. In 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2023) registered 5,901,000 refugees from Ukraine in Europe. The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine also registered 4,900,000 internally displaced persons due to the war (Ministerstvo sotsilnoi polityky Ukrainy, 2023).

These figures demonstrate the extent of the danger posed by the war to Ukrainians and the potential risk to the population of European countries, who could hypothetically become victims of Russian aggression if Ukraine loses this war.

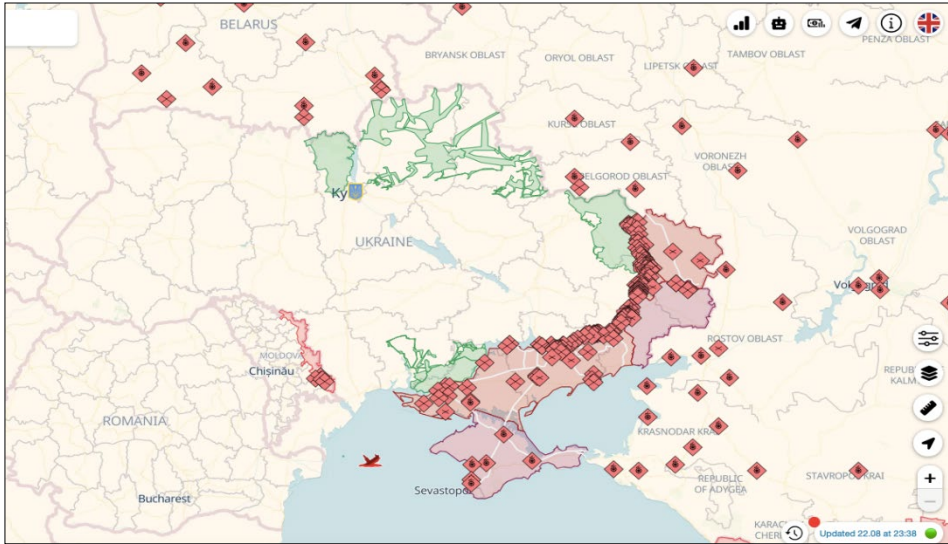


Figure 1: Map of Occupied and De-occupied Territories of Ukraine, August 22, 2023.

Source: <https://deepstatemap.live/#6/49.438/32.053>.

Many agricultural lands, rivers, seas, cities, and territories have become occupied or have been the site of heavy and exhausting fighting in 2022 and 2023. The Russian army’s main goal appears to be the capture of the industrially developed Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the industrially and scientifically developed Kyiv and Kharkiv regions, industrially and agriculturally developed Zaporizhzhia and Zhytomyr regions, and the agriculturally developed Kherson, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions. The occupation of the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants, the occupation and subsequent demolition of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant with the dam on the Dnieper River, and the flight of missiles over other nuclear power plants pose a danger not only to Ukraine but also to Europe and the world.

“The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future” (United Nations, 2023). At its heart, the 17 SDGs are an urgent call for action by all developed and developing countries

in a global partnership. The war in Ukraine has cast doubt on the possibility of achieving these goals in Ukraine, the region, and probably the world. This conclusion is echoed by the United Nations, which has expressed doubts about achieving the SDGs in its report. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, also noted that: “the COVID-19 pandemic and the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are having a devastating and lasting impact. This has been amplified by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which has driven increases in the prices of food and energy and the cost of access to finance, creating a global cost-of-living crisis affecting billions of people” (United Nations, 2023).

This chapter plays an important role in demonstrating the seriousness of the challenges the world faces in stopping Russia’s aggressive war against Ukraine. The impact of this military aggression on food security and hunger (SDG 2), economic growth (SDG 8), healthy lives (SDG 3), and the environment (SDG 15) is extraordinary. These aggressive actions by Russia can undermine the very possibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals both at the regional and global levels. Global efforts are critical not only in stopping aggression and de-occupying Ukrainian territories but also in supporting national and international criminal justice bodies in bringing war criminals to justice. This will help restore a peaceful society (SDG 16), prevent such aggressive actions in the future, and make the world more stable and safer.

2 The Effects of the War on Food Security and Hunger (SDG 2)

The SDG 2 stipulates that the United Nations should strive to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” (2023). A large-scale Russian military aggression against Ukraine has significantly disrupted both rural and urban safety, as well as national and global security. However, the most pressing concerns include the Russian army’s blockade of the Ukrainian seas and rivers (North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 2022), the alleged commission of ecocide on Ukrainian territory as an aggressive environmental weapon (Ofis Generalnogo prokurora, 2023), and the occupation of Ukrainian nuclear power plants (International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], 2022). These factors have global implications, potentially leading to regional trade disruption, famine both in Ukraine and countries relying on Ukrainian grain and food supplies, ecological devastation, and threats to Europe’s security, including the risk of nuclear

incidents at Ukrainian plants. Throughout the conflict, Russian soldiers have blocked riverbeds such as the Dnieper and Siverskyi Donets, using explosives on dammed reservoirs to deny access to clean water to Ukrainians.

One of the clear objectives of Russian aggression against Ukraine was to north Ukraine's access to the Black and Azov Seas, a goal partially accomplished through the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea since 2014, along with the partial capture of certain southern regions of Ukraine and Snake Island in 2022. Additionally, the Russian fleet's patrols and shelling along the Ukrainian coast and sea routes have effectively hindered trade, including humanitarian shipments.

The United Nations Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (United Nations, 2022) – known as “Grain from Ukraine” and signed in Istanbul – succeeded in reopening maritime trade routes in the Black Sea, stabilising food prices on global markets, and preventing famine for millions worldwide. Consequently, Ukraine has shipped 15.5 million tonnes of agricultural products to 38 countries (Interfax, 2022). By the end of 2022, Ukraine independently dispatched three ships to Ethiopia and Somalia to mitigate the risk of famine. Additionally, Ukraine planned to send an additional 60 ships to Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Congo, Kenya, Yemen, and other nations in 2022 (Voice of America, 2022). This grain and other foodstuffs were cultivated on Ukraine's fertile fields during the aggressive war, despite Russian soldiers violating the rules and customs of warfare by destroying city and village infrastructure and bombing and mining rural fields.

It is noteworthy that the United Nations Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (United Nations, 2022) was signed and extended multiple times during the war. However, the document permits the use of Ukrainian ports such as Odesa, Chornomorsk, and Pivdennyi for transporting food and Russian ammonia, shifting the initiative from purely humanitarian to a more commercial agreement. In this context, the Ukrainian government allocated only 10 million euros last year for providing humanitarian aid to Ethiopia and Somalia (Zharikova, 2022).

An additional confirmation of the brutal nature of Russian aggression was the missile strikes on grain, oil, and other food storage facilities in July-August 2023 aimed at undermining the United Nations Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and

Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (United Nations, 2022) and creating a humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. This aggression potentially led to famine not only in Ukraine but also in other countries of the world, while increasing Russia's appeal as a trading partner for some countries. Dmytro Lubinets, the ombudsman for human rights in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, condemned the intensified shelling by Russian occupiers at Ukrainian ports and grain warehouses following the Russian Federation's withdrawal statement on July 17 (Interfax Ukraine, 2023a).

3 The Effects of the War on Economic Growth (SDG 8)

The blockade of the Black and Azov seas poses a navigation hazard in these waters and on the Danube and the Dnieper rivers. This approach renders civilised trade impossible, moving the Russian blockade closer to acts resembling piracy in the region. In late July 2022, Russia, in defiance of the United Nations Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (United Nations, 2022), threatened civilian ships bound for Ukrainian ports. A Russian warship explicitly warned: "I caution against movement towards Ukrainian ports. Additionally, any cargo transport to Ukraine is deemed potential military cargo. The nation whose flag the vessel bears will be considered involved in the Ukraine conflict" (Sitnikova, 2023). Such aggressive actions at sea warrant holding those responsible for the aggression accountable through legal prosecution.

4 The Effects of the War on the Promotion of Peaceful Societies and Justice for All (SDG 16)

Russian aggression has had a profound impact on the lives of people both within the conflict zones and those residing in occupied or unoccupied territories of Ukraine. Ongoing hostilities, rocket attacks by the aggressor, and the initial lack of safe havens in Ukraine at the onset of the invasion resulted in a significant number of casualties among civilians and military personnel. Attacks on critical infrastructure (SDG 9) have precipitated a humanitarian crisis, with widespread displacement of refugees within Ukraine and beyond, and shortages of food, clean water, heating, electricity, gas, fuel, and other essentials (SDG 7). Addressing these challenges necessitates not only halting the aggression through the de-occupation of Ukraine but also ensuring accountability for war criminals and perpetrators of crimes against

humanity through national and international criminal justice mechanisms. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) could also play a pivotal role in this regard.

In times of war, justice plays a crucial role in documenting evidence of war and other international crimes, laying the groundwork for holding guilty individuals accountable. In our view, achieving justice under these circumstances is only feasible through the application of the rules and customs of international humanitarian law, encompassing instruments such as the Geneva Conventions, The Hague Conventions for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and rules of customary international humanitarian law compiled by the International Committee of the Red Cross, among others. The establishment of justice mechanisms has historically been shaped significantly by institutions like the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals, and the adopted Geneva Conventions of 1949 (Campbell, 2000). Special role in formation of international humanitarian law also played International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, n.d.) and International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, n.d.) as tribunals founded by United Nations for prosecution genocide (Rwanda) and war crimes (former Yugoslavia) have played pivotal roles in shaping international humanitarian law. These tribunals, established by the United Nations, have focused on prosecuting genocide (Rwanda) and war crimes (former Yugoslavia), experiences that culminated in the establishment of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the inclusion of definitions of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and crimes of aggression in national Criminal and Penal Codes.

International and national law enforcement bodies and courts, including tribunals, are actively engaged in gathering, documenting, and assessing evidence related to war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of aggression, and genocide committed since the onset of Russian aggression and invasion in Ukraine. On March 2, 2022, following the commencement of a full-scale invasion into Ukraine, Karim A.A. Khan, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, announced the initiation of an investigation into allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide occurring on any part of Ukrainian territory since November 21, 2013. This decision came in response to a recommendation from 40 states, later joined by

an additional four countries, urging the International Criminal Court to undertake such an investigation (International Criminal Court, 2022).

NGOs have played a crucial role, not only in directly assisting witnesses and victims of war but also in supporting the administration of justice. Their strategic support for state and international institutions is pivotal, encompassing financial aid for judicial and law enforcement activities and providing essential tools. For instance, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia developed specialised mechanisms to support victims and witnesses, ensuring their safety and comfort during testimony. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia established a separate Victims and Witnesses Section (VWS), as an independent body that provided logistical, psychological, and protective measures (United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, n.d.). NGOs can utilise such frameworks to offer technical assistance, including forensic tools and specialised training, crucial for combating crime. Their role in documenting war crimes in Ukraine is paramount, facilitating pre-trial investigations domestically and providing vital evidence for international courts, including the International Criminal Court (Truth Hounds, 2024).

The coalition “Ukraine. 5 am” exemplifies such initiatives (Ukraine 5 AM coalition, n.d.). Comprising 16 Ukrainian human rights organisations, this coalition focuses on documenting war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious human rights violations. “Sunflowers Project” (2023) adopts a comparable approach to documenting war crimes in Ukraine. The project aims to complement the efforts of state authorities or any international courts established to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, aggression, or other serious human rights violations linked to the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine (Project Sunflowers, 2023).

From the onset of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, to August 28, 2023, the Prosecutor General’s Office of Ukraine registered numerous violations of the laws and customs of war, along with related crimes. Charges were also prepared in 2022 and the first part of 2023 (January-July 2023; Criminal Code, 2017; Ofis generalnogo prokurora, 2023) (Table 1). This data illustrates the challenges faced by

law enforcement agencies during this period and underscores the significant pressures they encountered in 2022–2023.

Table 1: Number of Violations of the Laws and Customs of War and Other Related Crimes in Ukraine in Connection with Prepared Charges (Accusations) (2022–2023)

Name of crime	Article in Criminal Code of Ukraine	Number of violations in the period from February 24, 2022 to August 28, 2023	Number of prepared charges (accusations) in 2022	Number of prepared charges (accusations) in January-July 2023
Violations of the laws and customs of war	Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine	102,005	135 (47)	32 (9)
Planning, preparing for or starting and waging an aggressive war	Article 437 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine	78	6 (0)	6 (0)
Propaganda of war	Article 436 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine	61	21 (16)	15 (15)
Other crimes of aggression or war crimes	–	2,958	–	–

Ecocide in the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2017, article 441) is defined as a “mass destruction of flora and fauna, poisoning of air or water resources, and also any other actions that may cause an environmental disaster”. In 2022, Ukraine registered 15 cases of ecocide, with no suspicions reported (accusation – 0), and 22 cases of genocide, with four suspicions reported (accusation – 4). In 2023, a similar trend continued with five registered cases of ecocide, no suspicions reported (accusations – 0), and eight cases of genocide, with one suspicion reported (accusations – 1) (Ofis generalnogo prokurora, 2023).

According to the Unified State Register of Court Decisions, only 37 verdicts under Article 438 of the Criminal Code (2017) could be analysed: 34 guilty verdicts and three verdicts prohibited from publication (one of them partially). This indicates that approximately 0.04% of the criminal proceedings registered in 2022 and January-July 2023 resulted in a court verdict (or one for every 2,770 recorded criminal proceedings). Such statistics raise concerns about the effectiveness of national criminal justice in Ukraine during the war period. During this time, 51 individuals received prison sentences ranging from 8 to 15 years, while two individuals received life imprisonment (Table 2).

Table 2: The Analysis of 37 Verdicts Under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine with Number of Punished Persons in Connection of Terms of Imprisonment Penalties

Imprisonment penalties	Number of punished persons
8 years	1 person (1.9%)
8 years and 6 months	2 persons (3.8%)
9 years	4 persons (7.5%)
10 years	8 persons (15%)
11 years	22 persons (41.5%)
11 years and 6 months	1 person (1.9%)
12 years	12 persons (22.6%)
15 years	1 person (1.9%)
life imprisonment	2 persons (3.8%)

The analysis of the available 35 verdicts made it possible to establish that the commission of crimes provided for in Article 438 of the Criminal Code (2017) was carried out in most cases after a large-scale invasion. Only four cases related to 2015 (2 guilty persons) and 2015-2021 (2 guilty persons). Forms of the subsequent violation of the laws and customs of war were different (European data, 2022). However, this analysis could give information about the aggressiveness and brutality of guilty persons (Table 3).

The following actions of the Russian army in Ukraine, which are elements of separate war crimes and aggression, pose a particular danger for the region and the world: 1) blockade of Ukrainian seas and rivers (discussed separately and related to SDG 2); 2) Russian occupation of Ukrainian nuclear power plants; and 3) crimes of ecocide committed in Ukraine.

Table 3: Types and Numbers of the Subsequent Violation of the Laws and Customs of War in Ukraine

Types of the subsequent violation of the laws and customs of war	Number of violations
Culpable homicide	2 (2.1%)
Destruction of civilian and critical infrastructure (including residential buildings, shelling from a tank, missile launchers or other weapon)	7 (7.4%)
Aerial bombardment of civil and critical infrastructure	1 (1.1%)
Theft of property	17 (17.9%)
Injuries	27 (28.4%)
Illegal imprisonment	24 (25.3%)
Tortures (including deprivation of food and water, torture with electricity, the beating of the civil population with usage of different objects, cutting off fingers, handcuffing, putting a bag on the head)	8 (8.4%)
Threat of physical and sexual violence	1 (1.1%)
Sexual violence	1 (1.1%)
Undressing (including the cold season)	4 (4.2%)
Forced conscription of the civilian population	2 (2.1%)
Propaganda of army service	1 (1.1%)

5 The Effects of the War on the Healthy Lives (SDG 3)

The potential consequence of a nuclear explosion resulting from the occupation of nuclear power plants by the Russian army poses a significant threat to Ukraine, Europe, and the world, leading to long-term health, climate, and ecological impacts. The heightened risks and the inability to effectively manage national and global health risks will have enduring consequences for many countries in Europe and beyond. The immediate and most critical impact of a nuclear explosion at these plants would be a rapid increase in deaths and illnesses due to hazardous radioactive materials and environmental contamination from pollutants in air, water, and soil. This could render achieving real targets under SDG 3 before 2030 impossible: significantly reducing deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and pollutants in air, water, and soil (3.9), and strengthening the capacity of all countries, especially developing ones, for early warning, risk reduction, and management of national and global health risks (3.d) (United Nations, 2023).

Since the onset of the war, Ukraine's focus has been on nuclear security (IAEA, 2023). Beginning from the war's outset, the nuclear reactor of the Kharkiv Physical and Technical Institute has been repeatedly shelled; Russian soldiers fired at the "Neutron Source" nuclear reactor in Kharkiv 74 times between March and

September 2022 (Interfax Ukraine, 2023b). The damage inflicted on this renowned scientific research institute, where atomic fission was first achieved, is estimated at approximately 800 million Euros, with an additional estimated environmental damage of 400 million Euros (Interfax Ukraine, 2023b). Furthermore, the Russian army occupied the Chernobyl nuclear power plant (which was returned under Ukrainian control after the looting, February–April 2022) and has continued to hold the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant as a military stronghold since March 2022. Other nuclear power plants were also at risk due to rocket attacks targeting power facilities during the winter aimed at disrupting electricity supply. Russian strikes on other infrastructure facilities have heightened concerns about potential nuclear incidents to the maximum level.

On March 3, 2022, the IAEA issued a call to the Russian Federation to immediately cease all actions directed against or occurring at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant or any other nuclear facilities in Ukraine. The purpose was to enable Ukrainian authorities to maintain or regain complete control over all nuclear reactors within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders, ensuring their safe and reliable operation. Despite this call, the Russian Federation disregarded it and continued to occupy these nuclear power plants, deploying troops and military equipment on their premises or nearby. This occupation included detaining plant workers under constant threat of accidents involving radioactive materials (IAEA, 2022).

The further occupation of the Chernobyl and the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants had varying consequences. Interestingly, the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, located near Kyiv, was both de-occupied and looted. On March 31, 2022, "Energoatom" announced that Russian National Guard troops had withdrawn from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, completing an act of transferring plant security back to personnel (2022). The de-occupation of Chernobyl coincided with the liberation of the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions of Ukraine (MIHR, 2023). Yevgen Kramarenko, head of the State Agency of Ukraine on Exclusion Zone Management, later reported that 95–98% of the exclusion zone is mined, and 40 million euros is needed to restore the Chernobyl nuclear power plant to its pre-war state (Ukrinform, 2023a, 2023b). Another issue arising from the Chernobyl plant's occupation is the spread of radioactive dust within the exclusion zone. While attacking Kyiv, the Russian army's military operations raised radioactive dust,

affecting soldiers forced to occupy the exclusion zone. This has resulted in health and severe environmental damage (Greenpeace, 2022).

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant remains occupied as of March 2024. It has been converted into a military base by the Russian army, where military equipment and ammunition are stored and used for operations within Ukrainian territory (IAEA, 2023). The plant's staff, operating at great personal risk, are effectively trapped there (Murakami & Geddie, 2024). The situation worsened after the Russian army detonated the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, which supplied water for cooling the nuclear reactors of the Zaporizhzhia (IAEA, 2023). These actions exemplify nuclear terrorism, occurring at Europe's largest nuclear power plant under occupation. Such nuclear risks at power plants make achieving SDG targets in Ukraine impossible and significantly jeopardize these goals in Europe and globally in the long term.

6 The Effects of the War on the Environment (SDG 15)

The Ukrainian Criminal Code (2017, Article 441) identifies ecocide as a separate criminal offence against peace, human security, and international legal order. However, including ecocide as a criminal offence in criminal codes is not typical; it is recognised as a criminal offence only in certain countries (Ecocide law, n.d.), such as Armenia (Article 394), Ecuador (Article 245), France (Article 231-3), Georgia (Article 409), Kazakhstan (Article 169), Moldova (Article 136), Uzbekistan (Articles 196, 198), Vietnam (Article 242-244). The term "ecocide" is associated with war crimes and chemical attacks by the United States in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Similarly, "ecocide" is associated with "genocide" since the ecological consequences of its commission can lead to the destruction of specific population groups (Moribe et al., 2023).

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998), in its definition of war crimes, addresses damage to the natural environment. Specifically, Article 8 (2) (b) (iv) contains the following definition: "Intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be excessive about the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated". While Ukraine has not ratified or implemented the Rome

Statute, it recognised the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in 2014 over the situation in Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and again in 2022 after large-scale aggression. This recognition allows for the investigation of severe environmental damage not only within national jurisdiction (Article 441 of the Criminal Code, 2017) but also within international jurisdiction (according to Article 8 of the Rome Statute) (International Criminal Court, 1998).

In 2022 and January-July 2023 alone, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine registered 23 crimes of ecocide, as defined in Article 441 of Criminal Code (2017). Fighting along the riverbed of the Dnieper, Oskil and Siverskyi Donets, the detonation of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, and the flooding of coal mines in the occupied territories can all be classified as ecocide during the Russian aggression. The Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Andriy Kostin, also noted that 30% of Ukraine's territory (174,000 km²) is contaminated with explosive objects, and 24,000 km² of forests are damaged or destroyed. According to him, Ukraine is the first country to prosecute environmental war crimes on such a scale (Radio Svoboda, 2023).

Nikolaychuk emphasised that understanding the impact of such crimes on regions allows for the anticipation of environmental consequences, which, in turn, can lead to economic repercussions, often referred to as externalities (Nikolaychuk, 2023). In this context, the most horrific crime against the environment is exemplified by the ecocide in Ukraine when the Russian army detonated the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant on June 6, 2023, during the retreat from the right bank of the Dnieper to the left (Deepstate Map, 2023). The demolition of the power plant resulted in the flooding of towns and villages downstream of the Dnieper, the destruction of crops, animals, and fish in this area, the deprivation of clean water for people above and below the power plant, the impossibility of irrigating agricultural fields, and climate changes in these regions. Additionally, a massive wave from the blown-up Kakhovskaya hydroelectric power plant dam polluted the Dnieper riverbed and the Black Sea.

Deputy Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine, Vitaly Holovnia, noted that: "94% of irrigation systems in Kherson region, 74% in the Zaporizhzhia region, and 30% in the Dnieper region were left without water after the demolition of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant" (Kravchenko, 2023). According to the State

Agency of Land Reclamation and Fisheries of Ukraine, almost 30,000 fish died in the first days after the Russian attack. The Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine predicts that 95,000 fish could die because of the explosion at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (Derzhrybagenstvo, 2023). Preliminary calculations estimate that losses from the death of all biological resources may amount to 250 million euros (Kravchenko, 2023).

The aggressive actions of the Russian army in Ukraine affect not only the environment in Ukraine and Europe but also prevent the use of terrestrial ecosystems, lead to land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss (SDG 15). Additionally, these serious losses in the region directly result in a lack of clean water, quality food, and other resources, not only in the region but globally (SDG 2), due to the destruction of fields where agricultural crops can be grown and sold. In this context, the threat of hunger and compromised food security becomes a weapon of the Russian army against Ukraine and the world.

7 Conclusion

The research on rural and urban safety in the context of national and global security in Ukraine highlights various problems that have arisen since the beginning of the Russian invasion. Since 2022, it has been impossible to achieve 17 SDGs declared by the United Nations for various reasons. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has resulted in the destruction of ecological systems and trade routes, the blockade of seas and rivers, and the provocation of famine, humanitarian crises, nuclear security crises, and a global cost-of-living crisis affecting billions of people. The Russian aggressive war has made it impossible to achieve SDGs related to food security and hunger (SDG 2), economic growth (SDG 8), healthy lives (SDG 3), access to energy (SDG 7), infrastructure (SDG 9), and the environment (SDG 15) in the region and has made it much more difficult in other regions and the world.

The main factor that increased security, complicated trade, limited access to food and water, and reduced agricultural land was Russian aggression against Ukraine and the ongoing war. The biggest threat to the world stemmed from the activities of the Russian army, including the blockade of Ukrainian seas and rivers, the occupation of Ukrainian nuclear power plants, and acts of ecocide. The danger is amplified by

the one hundred thousand alleged war crimes registered and investigated in Ukraine following the large-scale Russian invasion.

It becomes obvious that there is a need to stop the invasion and convict those guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity within the framework of national and international jurisdictions to maintain global and national security, as well as rural and urban safety. The documentation, investigation, and conviction of those guilty of war crimes and other atrocities can also be carried out by the International Criminal Court. The participation of non-governmental international organisations in this procedure could help collect evidence, document it, and send it to the competent authorities. Such actions can yield positive results in ensuring security at various levels, stopping aggression, and achieving the goals declared by the United Nations.

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