

Human rights violations committed by the Russian Federation on the territories under its control in eastern Ukraine¹

Introduction

The Russian Federation continues to deny its involvement in the armed conflict and uses the terms ‘civil war’ and ‘the war of Kyiv against its own people’². To explain the presence of the Russian regular army in eastern Ukraine the incongruous justification are used: ‘these soldiers actually participated in the patrolling of the section of the Russian-Ukrainian border, and crossed it, probably by accident, at the unmarked section’³. This is despite the fact that these Russian soldiers were detained in the territory of Donbas in the armed conflict zone about 15 kilometers into the border⁴.

Justifying its presence in the Donbas by the illegal ‘humanitarian intervention’, the Russian Federation under the guise of ‘humanitarian convoys’ and in violation of the procedures of the International Committee of the Red Cross brought through the military equipment and ammunition⁵. A common practice was the transportation through the Russian-Ukrainian border of military equipment, which was later described in the OSCE reports as equipment without marking and license plates⁶. Concurrently, the Ukrainian positions on the border are regularly shelled from the Russian Federation by Grad multiple launch rocket system, which was recorded on many videos by the residents of Gukovo, a town in Rostov oblast of the Russian Federation⁷.

Thus, the present armed conflict is of an international character, which according to Reuters, was even non-publicly recognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross⁸. A reputable international organization the Human Rights Watch maintains that an international armed conflict is on between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation⁹. The data by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Security Service of Ukraine, and NATO’s intelligence confirms significant presence of the Russian Military and equipment on the militants-controlled territories;

However, through the efforts of Russian diplomacy at the international level and the aggressive Russian propaganda in different countries the present international armed conflict is described as an internal non-international armed conflict through the local agents, the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk People’s Republics.

First, it should be noted that the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk People’s Republics represent a rather artificial conglomerate of various organized armed groups which are often fighting with

¹ Prepared by Center for Civil Liberties as a Communication within ICCPR on violations committed by the Russian Federation on the territories under its control in eastern Ukraine.

² <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26275/3152889/>

³ <http://grani.ru/Politics/World/Europe/Ukraine/m.232367.html>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjJlfzYTPgk>

⁵ <http://www.unian.ua/society/1010021-u-somomu-rosiyskomu-gumkonvoji-buli-tilki-boepripasi-loda.html>

⁶ <http://podrobnosti.ua/podrobnosti/2014/11/09/1002025.html>

⁷ <http://news.bigmir.net/ukraine/831118-Rossijanin-snjal-video-obstrele-Ukrainy---Gradami---s-rossijskoj-territorii>

⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/22/us-ukraine-crisis-warcrimes-idUSKBN0FROV920140722>

⁹ Human Rights Watch. Eastern Ukraine: Questions & Answers about the Laws of War [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/09/11/eastern-ukraine-questions-and-answers-about-laws-war>

each other for influence¹⁰. It's worthwhile mentioning that certain organized armed groups have been commanded by citizens of the Russian Federation, in particular, Igor Girkin (call sign name "Strelkov"), Igor Bezler (call sign "Bes")¹¹ and others.

Second, since violence and terror against civilians, aimed to establish control over the area, were chosen as the primary method of warfare, all these organized armed groups are terrorist organizations¹².

Third, these organized armed groups are the so-called asteroid groups¹³, the local agents of the Russian Federation, since they exist because of the power of the given state - financial, political, technological, military aid etc. - and are not independent in decision making. In the international arena they are represented by the Russian Federation, which, moreover, is a participant of the Minsk talks¹⁴. Concurrently, the Russian Federation physically liquidates the leaders of the organized armed groups that go out of its control¹⁵.

Four, contrary to the distributed by the Russian propaganda image of 'militants, fighting with fascist junta', it should be noted that on the side of the organized armed groups there are active national-radical and neo-Nazi organizations of the Russian Federation, including the militants of the Black Hundred, the Russian National Unity (including the management of this neo-Nazi organization), the Eurasian Youth Union, 'Other Russia', supporters of the anti-Semitic neo-heathen Conceptual Party Unity (the Concept of public security 'Dead Water') etc.¹⁶

The European Parliament in its Resolution of January 15, 2015 acknowledged that the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics are using terrorist methods, and announced that Russia is involved in an undeclared war on the territory of Ukraine. Thus, the Clause 5 states that Russia is involved in "undeclared hybrid war against Ukraine, including information war, blending elements of cyber warfare, use of regular and irregular forces, propaganda, economic pressure, energy blackmail, diplomacy and political destabilization"; there is a separate emphasis that these actions are in violation of the international law and pose a serious challenge to the security situation in Europe¹⁷.

Moreover, based on specific evidence, international community was able to learn about the participation of individual soldiers and units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the armed conflict on the territory of Donetsk and Lugansk region. As a rule, the military hardware and equipment from the Russian Federation used in armed conflict in Donbas, has no identification, Russian soldiers do not wear Russian military uniform or identification or military chevron and very often appear in the same way as the members of organized armed groups from the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic". However, in majority of cases they bare IDs that testify their affiliation to certain military units and formations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Due to the engagement of a big number of the Russian military in August 2014, resulted in the Illovaysk "boiler" and Illovaysk tragedy, namely the brutal shelling of the green corridor ensured for an exit of surrounded Ukrainian military. It was the engagement of the Russian military, which allowed bringing

¹⁰ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2014/07/1/7030653/>

¹¹ <http://ua.korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3351029-sbu-oholosyla-v-rozshuk-dyversanta-ihoria-bezlera>

¹² <http://www.unian.ua/politics/918854-gpu-viznala-teroristichnimi-organizatsiyami-samoprogholosheni-dnr-ta-lnr.html>

¹³ <http://gtmarket.ru/laboratory/publicdoc/2007/782>

¹⁴ <http://www.osce.org/ru/home/123807>

¹⁵ <http://hvylya.net/news/exclusive/podrobnosti-zachistki-gruppyi-betmena-unichtozhennoy-rossiyskimi-spetssluzhbami.html>

¹⁶ <http://eajc.org/page18/news45696.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2015-0011+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

bigger territories under control of the so-called “Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic”.

This gives grounds to affirm, that the Russian Federation maintains both *overall control* over the controlled military units¹⁸, and *effective control* over military operations (in other words, controls and plans specific military operations)¹⁹.

Based on the *advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*²⁰, we consider the Russian Federation a State which actually occupies and controls certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and, consequently, is responsible for ensuring and protecting human rights according to both the international humanitarian law and international human rights protection law, specifically, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Given the above, it can be stated that the Russian Federation exercise both overall and effective control over the so-called LPR/DPR and therefore over the part of Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts controlled by them. This, the Russian Federation bears responsibility for the actions of the so-called LPR/DPR as well as for all the violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law on these territories.

Characteristics of human rights violations on the territories controlled by the co-called LPR/DPR

The organized armed groups in their controlled areas introduced a systematic and large-scale terror against civilians in order to establish control over the region. The daily beatings, abductions, hostage taking, torture, extrajudicial killings, forced alienation of private property etc. have become common. There is a systematic persecution of real or alleged supporters of Ukraine’s state sovereignty, who were declared as such based on different grounds - political views, religious beliefs, language, membership in the civil service in case of refusal to follow combatants’ orders. The consistency and scale of these actions indicate the existence of a deliberate policy of terror, the planned nature and organization of violence.

The organized armed groups deliberately violate the rules of the international humanitarian law. The intentionality is confirmed by the organized way and frequency of war crimes and human rights violations. It is also proved by the demonstrative way of committing certain war crimes, disregard of any “laws of war”, such as for example, the so-called parade of prisoners of war in Donetsk²¹, “take no prisoners” order²², placing mines in civilian transport vehicles for blowing up at the Ukrainian checkpoints etc.²³

¹⁸ International Tribunal for former Yugoslavia. The Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic. Judgement. 15 July 1999 [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: http://www.icty.org/x/file/Legal%20Library/jud_supplement/supp6-e/tadic.htm

¹⁹ Case concerning the military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America) (Merits). Judgment of 27 June 1986. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?sum=367&p1=3&p2=3&case=70&p3=5> ; Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro). Judgment of 26 February 2007. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/?sum=667&code=bhy&p1=3&p2=2&case=91&k=f4&p3=5>

²⁰ Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004 [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1671.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-EzdyyHQRA>

²² <http://www.memo.ru/d/223351.html>

²³ <https://www.facebook.com/csomvd/posts/670952783013038>

The human rights organizations regularly document cases of using civilians as human shields, placing mines at civilian facilities, shelling green corridors, using civilians as military targets, deliberate attacks on civilian facilities, killings and torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war etc.

The Security Service of Ukraine made publicly available a map of international crimes²⁴, which includes a network of detention centers for hostages (the information is confirmed by local residents' testimonies, results of interrogations of detained combatants and satellite images)²⁵.

It should be emphasized that on territories controlled by the organized militants there is no protection of human rights guaranteed. Neither provisions of the Ukrainian legislation nor of the international human rights law and humanitarian law are respected. Members of the organized armed groups are usually guided by verbal orders of their leadership, and have broad discretion to make independent decisions on property, health and life of civilians. There are no human rights institutions. The so-called DPR and LPR ombudspersons are only dealing with the exchange of prisoners of war²⁶. In the so-called "republics" there are so called "people's courts"²⁷ and death penalties are executed²⁸.

With this in mind, we are dealing with systemic violations of articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (hereinafter - ICCPR), which guarantee the right to life (Article 6), freedom from torture (Article 7), freedom and personal inviolability (Article 9), the right to freedom of movement (Article 12), the right to a fair trial (Article 14), the right to privacy (Article 17), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18), freedom of expression (Article 19), the right to peaceful assembly (Article 21), freedom of association (Article 22), prohibition of discrimination (Article 26). All these violations of the ICCPR articles are carried out within an organized system of terror against civilians who are real or alleged supporters of Ukraine's state sovereignty.

4. Violation of ICCPR Articles through the establishment of a system of violence and terror against civilians

The organized armed groups have declared a wide range of civilians who are real or alleged supporters of Ukraine's sovereignty as so called "enemies of the people"²⁹ and began to persecute them. The victims of these actions are primarily members of the civil society - human rights activists, journalists, participants of peaceful actions for Ukraine's unity, members of community organizations, volunteers, priests, local MPs, civil servants and others. The civilians can be automatically identified as supporters of state sovereignty based on the following:

- political views: human rights activists, journalists, community leaders, members of the parties in opposition to the former authoritarian regime etc.;³⁰
- religious beliefs: clergy and parishioners belonging to Christian Churches other than Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate;³¹
- language: Ukrainian-speaking population;³²

²⁴ <http://ssu.kmu.gov.ua/sbu/doccatalog/document?id=132298>

²⁵ <http://www.unian.ua/politics/992025-sbu-pokazala-kartu-zlochiviv-proti-lyudyanosti-skoenih-boyovikami-na-donbasi.html>

²⁶ http://espreso.tv/news/2015/01/10/terorysty_quotdnrquot_anonsuvaly_mozhlyvyy_obmin_polonenymy

²⁷ <http://vikna.if.ua/news/category/ua/2014/10/31/24396/view>

²⁸ <http://amnesty.org.ua/nws/separatisti-v-ukrayini-pogrozhuut-pro/>

²⁹ http://society.lb.ua/accidents/2014/06/13/269654_rukovodstvo_dnr_reshilo_iskat.html

³⁰ <http://life.pravda.com.ua/person/2014/12/3/185193/>

³¹

http://24tv.ua/news/showNews.do?u_slovyansku_znayshli_mogilu_zakatovanih_teroristami_svyashhenikiv_mvs&objectId=464212

- ex-officio: civil servants, law enforcement agents, local MPs if/when refused subordinate to the so-called DPR/LPR.³³

One of the first victims of persecution was a local council member Volodymyr Rybak (Batkivshchyna political party) from Gorlivka, who was abducted by the unidentified persons on 17 April 2014 after the attempt to plant the national flag on the building of the district state administration (the abduction was recorded on video). The bodies of Volodymyr Rybak and the nineteen-year old student Yuri Popravko, with traces of cruel tortures, were found on 21 April in the Northern Donets River near Slovyansk. The official cause of death is combined body injury as a result of torture, followed by the drowning of the alive but unconscious victims. The Security Service of Ukraine released the phone conversation recording, according to which the murder of Volodymyr Rybak involved the so-called group of ‘Strelok’ acting in the Donetsk region, and Igor Bezler, citizen of the Russian Federation, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. According to this recording, on 17 April 2014 Bezler (call sign name “Bes”) set a task for the chief of the self-proclaimed police of Gorlivka to neutralize Rybak. Simultaneously, Bezler instructed a member of his group, Russian soldier, to abduct Volodymyr Rybak, put him in the car and bring to the appointed place in order to apply force³⁴. In January 2015, the body of another member of the Batkivshchyna party, the deputy of the Soledar City Council Ivan Reznichenko was found in one of the salt pits in Donetsk region. The man disappeared back on 21 June and during all this time was held in captivity by militants until he was killed.

The people held in captivity are subjected to severe torture: beating, cutting off the body parts, burns, application of electrical current etc. The case of a 52-year-old resident of Yasinuvata, Iryna Dovgan, who was abducted from her own home by militants of ‘Vostok’ battalion, received considerable publicity abroad. Iryna told the story of what remained behind the scenes during her detention: “I was beaten, experienced degrading treatment, they fired guns around my ears and threatened to rape me sadistically, telling in detail how it would happen... He told me to come close to the prison bar, opened it, insisted that I stood still, took a run and hit me in the chest with his foot. I flew to the wall and within ten minutes could not breathe properly. It was very amusing for them... It was especially scary when they brought a man following a phone call. I could not see him, but he was beaten, and he cried very loudly. I also cried, crawled on the floor and begged to simply shot”.³⁵

The case of Iryna Dovgan became known because it appeared on the front pages of the New York Times, but not because of its uniqueness. In fact, there are tens of such cases. The militants do not stop from taking hostages even among older women. For example, before the presidential elections in May 2014, the Prizrak battalion captured Antonida Melnykova, Head of the territorial election commission #110 in Lysychansk, North Lugansk as a hostage. The woman, who is over 60, was roughly detained, beaten by the shoulder arm, her arms were being twisted, and she was held in captivity until she agreed to give a seal of the territorial election commission. These methods were used to disrupt the presidential elections in the part of Donbass. In mid-August Larysa Bilotserkivets, a 61-year-old resident of Makiyivka was taken hostage. For 20 days she was held in the basement of the former military commissariat. Although the woman did not experience physical violence (except for the moment of detention), every day before her eyes other people were beaten senseless - both those who were put to the basement for political reasons, and the ‘disciplinary prisoners’ – those captured intoxicated by

³² <http://tsn.ua/politika/na-luganschyni-boyoviki-vbili-dvoh-cholovikiv-za-patriotichne-privitannya-vo-svoboda-348919.html>

³³ <http://crime.in.ua/news/20140809/kazn-prokurora>

³⁴ <http://nbnews.com.ua/ua/news/119533/>

³⁵ http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/politics/2014/09/140901_donbas_dovgan_ie_yg

drugs or alcohol, those detained for violating the curfew or due to other reasons like ‘looked the wrong way’, ‘photographed the wrong thing’, ‘listened to music too loudly’.

In general, any person who is actively involved in activities that are not controlled by the organized militants, such as social volunteering, may become a victim of persecution. The very policy of the organized militants is aimed to suppress any form of public activity beyond their control. Thus, volunteers who helped the civilians in Donbass have been among the victims of violent abductions and hostage too. For example, on September 29 2014, Vasyl Kovalenko, Director of the recreation facility “Biryusa” located near the Bezimene village of Novoazovsk district, was abducted. The armed men in the sport-utility vehicle with symbols of the so-called DPR “offered” Vasyl to have a “ride with them” in his own car, accompanied by the sport-utility vehicle. On October 1, 2014 Vasyl Kovalenko’s private car without license plates was seen in the use of the organized armed group. It should be noted, that during the last months before the abduction he provided shelter for the internally displaced persons from the area of anti-terroristic operation (ATO)³⁶. Olexander Kudinov, human rights activist and lawyer, who helped hundreds of people to leave the ATO area and participated in the negotiations for the release of civilian hostages regardless of their political views, was abducted for the same reason³⁷.

Cases of abduction of members of Protestant communities engaged in humanitarian work on the occupied territories, including the evacuation of civilians from the combat zone, supply of water, food and clothing, were reported. The Protestant Pentecostal Gennady Lysenko, who was taken hostage in May and interrogated by Igor Strelkov–Girkin, former officer of the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, described the situation very succinctly: “The year 1937” - he said, referring to the beatings and interrogations about his alleged involvement in the “Pravy Sector” (Right Sector). Before he was captured at one of the checkpoints, Gennady had managed to take dozens of civilians out of Slovyansk, which at the time was an epicenter for the military combat.

In order to combat the so-called “enemies of the people”, the organized armed groups use the practice of drawing up the “execution lists” used for verification at the checkpoints³⁸. Back in July 2014, they sent letters to Ukrainian journalists with a warning that they were declared the enemies of the “Russian World” and “write lies about Donbass at dictation of the stagnating West”. A preliminary list of 15 journalists who were promised to be tracked and killed wherever they were was published³⁹. Overall, more than a few dozen journalists were taken hostage during 2014⁴⁰. Some of them were offered to shoot the propaganda scenes for the Russian TV channels in exchange for their release⁴¹. Quite telling is the “black list” discovered in the building of Ukrainian Security Service in Slovyansk used as the headquarters of the so-called “Russian Orthodox army” under the command of Igor Strelkov-Girkin. The first in the list was the local historian, journalist and writer, with the following wording: “has access to archives, very dangerous and idea-driven enemy”. The “black lists” were also drawn up in order to liquidate the law enforcement agents who remained loyal to the oath and refused to follow the orders of the members of organized armed groups. The relevant publications appeared in the media controlled by militants with photos of the so-called “enemies of the people” and appeals to readers to be vigilant and report the location of the listed individuals to the so-called “authorities”.

³⁶ http://donbasssos.org/post_20141011_01_uk/

³⁷ <http://www.telekritika.ua/profesija/2014-09-30/98666>

³⁸ <http://tsn.ua/ukrayina/motoroshne-pravosuddya-boyovikiv-smertniy-virok-za-tri-dni-ta-rozstril-invalidiv-374729.html>

³⁹ http://24tv.ua/news/showNews.do?teroristi_pogrozhuuyut_fizichno_znishhiti_15_ukrayinskih_zhurnalistiv_spisok&objectId=463239

⁴⁰ <http://imi.org.ua/barametr/>

⁴¹ http://www.telekritika.ua/profesija/2014-10-07/98949?theme_page=70&

Thus, in the areas controlled by the organized armed groups a system of mass abductions and torture of civilians was established. In May 2014, Hugh Williamson, Director of the Human Rights Watch's Europe and Central Asia Division said: "The militants use beatings and abductions to make it clear that anyone who does not support them, should better keep quiet or leave. These groups perform arbitrary acts and are not controlled"⁴². Later, the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics established special units following the Soviet Union example, with the same names - the NKVD⁴³ and SMERSH. The members of these units draw up "execution lists", abduct civic activists and their families, torture and shoot people⁴⁴.

The extremely difficult situation is faced by many groups in the areas controlled by the organized militants, including minorities, religious communities, LGBT, HIV-positive people and prisoners. The inmates of prison #52 in Yenakiyev reported that after six prisoners escaped, they stopped being provided with bread. Approximately two weeks before that, in the medical unit a prisoner with AIDS died because he could not get therapy⁴⁵.

Conclusions:

1. In Ukraine the hybrid war started by the Russian Federation and carried out by its local agents, illegal armed groups, regular Russian army is on. The ongoing armed conflict is international, despite the efforts of Russian propaganda to present it as internal by nature.
2. The organized armed groups which form the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics use the terror against civilians as the primary method of warfare. On the territories under their control, ICCPR violations (beatings, enforced disappearances, torture, extrajudicial killings, forced alienation of private property of civilians etc.) is a common practice.
3. The organized armed groups deliberately, systematically and with open contempt violate the rules of the international humanitarian law: use civilians as human shields, place mines in civilian facilities, shell green corridors, use civilians as military targets, make deliberate attacks on civilian facilities, murder and torture Ukrainian prisoners of war etc.

Recommendations for the Russian Federation:

- 1) To immediately stop the provision of financial, political, technical, and military support to the organized militants of the so-called LPR/DPR and withdraw its regular troops and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine;
- 2) To stop gross violation of the State Border of Ukraine and the border-crossing rules, the unauthorized shipment of cargo, equipment, people, across the Ukraine-Russia border, to unilateral changes of the border-crossing rules;
- 3) To investigate all cases of illegal orders to sending the Russian troops to combat in eastern Ukraine and bring the perpetrators to justice;
- 4) To conduct an effective investigation and prosecution of Russian citizens (in particular, leaders of the organized armed groups of the Russian Federation Igor Girkin, Igor Bezler and others) responsible for cases of abduction, enforced disappearances, beatings, torture, murder of participants of peaceful gatherings for the unity of Ukraine, Ukrainian military, leaders of local Euromaidans, community activists, journalists, etc.;

⁴² <http://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2014/05/27/ukraina-proizvol-opolchentsev-na-vostoke>

⁴³ <http://www.svoboda.org/content/transcript/26691749.html>

⁴⁴ <https://vk.com/club75481560>

⁴⁵ <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/26612124.html>

- 5) To immediately release all Ukrainian soldiers and civilians abducted in eastern Ukraine and Crimea and kept in custody in the Russian Federation due to politically-motivated criminal proceedings, including Nadiya Savchenko, Roman Veremyichuk, Yuriy Yatsenko, Oleg Sentsov, Olexander Kolchenko, Stanislav Klykh, and others;
- 6) To exercise control over organized militants of the so-called LPR/DPR for the immediate release of all civilians illegally held in custody on the territory under their control in Donbass and immediately exchange the Ukrainian soldiers – prisoners of war;
- 7) To publicly condemn the practice of an organized system of mass abductions and torture of civilians carried out by the organized militants of the so-called LPR/DPR in order to establish control over the region, including torture and inhumane treatment of the prisoners of war;
- 8) To stop the pressure, censorship, obstruction of professional journalist activity and unlawful judicial persecution of the media representatives that provide perspective on events in Donbass as alternative to the official position of the Russian Federation;
- 9) To stop the incitement of ethnic hatred between the Russian and Ukrainian people, the use of hate speech against the Ukrainian people in official statements by the officials of the Russian Federation, and the use of Russian media as part of a military operation (intimidation by the ‘Kyiv bloody junta’ that would ‘destroy the Russian-speaking population’).

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