

# Annex I: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, September 5, 2023

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Andrew Zoll

September 5, 2023

Ministry of Defense of Ukraine  
Povtroflosky Avenue, 6  
03168, Kyiv-168



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Re: Attacks on schools in Ukraine

Human Rights Watch is preparing a report on attacks on schools in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine to document the damage and destruction of schools and the impact on Ukrainian children's access to education. An important part of this issue both now and in the future relates to military use of schools. We are reaching out to your Ministry to seek information about this matter.

Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental human rights advocacy organization whose work involves investigating and documenting human rights abuses in over 100 countries and supporting efforts to ensure that those most responsible for serious abuses are held to account. We have conducted extensive research on human rights and laws of war violations since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014. We acknowledge the important step taken by the Ukrainian government in 2019 to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

Since February 24, 2022, we have had a team of researchers continuously present in Ukraine. We have published dozens of reports and other publications on countless war crimes committed by Russian forces in Ukraine and other grave human rights abuses.

As part of our research on the military use of schools, we have documented Russian forces' military use of schools and kindergartens in the Kyivska, Chernihivska, and Kharkivska regions, during which they damaged, destroyed, and looted movable school property, including furniture, computers, televisions, projectors, interactive boards, and other equipment. We also documented damage Russian forces caused to school and kindergarten interiors. We [previously documented](#) Russian forces' [illegal detention](#) of civilians who [reported](#) being tortured and ill-treated in schools.

We also documented Russian forces' attacks on schools and kindergartens in the Kyivska, Chernihivska, and Kharkivska regions, resulting in significant damage and destruction, including in some cases damage beyond repair.

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We have also identified instances in which Ukrainian forces attacked schools occupied by Russian forces and several instances in which Ukrainian forces have used schools for military purposes by deploying forces in or near the schools, storing munitions on school premises and placing military equipment in close proximity to schools.

We would welcome the response of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine to the following questions regarding our current research on attacks on and military use of schools, so that we may reflect the Ukrainian government's information in our reporting.

1. We understand that the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has issued an order on school safety, and that the Ministry of Education and Science is undertaking other school safety initiatives. Please explain any additional measures the Defense Ministry has undertaken to ensure the safety of Ukrainian schools and schoolchildren during the war.
2. Since the Ukrainian government signed the Safe Schools Declaration in 2019, what instructions has the Defense Ministry given the Armed Forces of Ukraine regarding the military use of schools? What guidelines has the Defense Ministry given the Armed Forces of Ukraine on this issue? Specifically, has the Defense Ministry undertaken to impart among the Armed Forces of Ukraine the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict, which Ukraine pledged to operationalize by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration?
3. Since February 24, 2022, has the Defense Ministry or any other government structures or officials issued specific orders or other instructions to the Ukrainian Armed Forces or Territorial Defense Units regarding the military use of schools? Please provide the content of any such orders, the timing of such orders or instructions, the number of times they have been issued, their mode of implementation and oversight, and any penalties for failure to implement them.
4. Is the Defense Ministry aware of the Russian military using Ukrainian schools for military purposes since February 24, 2022? Please provide the number of cases, and when and where they occurred. Does the Defense Ministry have information on how many of these schools were attacked by Ukrainian forces while Russian forces were using them or when Russian forces were nearby?
5. Is the Defense Ministry aware of schools that have been used by the Ukrainian military since February 24, 2022? Please provide the number of cases, and when and where they occurred. Does the Defense Ministry have information on how many of these schools were attacked by Russian forces during or after this use or when Ukrainian forces were nearby?
6. Does the Defense Ministry examine the condition of schools when vacated by Ukrainian forces? Russian forces? For example, do you examine for

contamination by landmines, unexploded cluster munitions, or other explosive remnants of war left behind in school buildings and yards? Has the ministry examined the damage to school property from the use of schools? Are there examples of damage to school property that the ministry is aware of from such use by the Russian military since February 24, 2022? Are there examples of such damage by the Ukrainian military?

7. Describe the procedure by which the Ukrainian armed forces, when they consider using a school for military purposes, consider alternative options for deployment that avoid the use of schools?
8. Describe the procedure Ukrainian forces follow, in instances in which they use schools for military purposes, to protect civilians from resulting military operations in the vicinity of such schools. Please provide examples.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I would be grateful to receive Ministry's responses to the questions in this letter by September 20 to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in order to allow us to reflect the response in our report.

Sincerely,



Hugh Williamson  
Director  
Europe and Central Asia division

## **Annex II: Response from the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine**

Department of Humanitarian Provision  
Ministry of Defense of Ukraine

*On the request without No. dated September 5, 2023*

The Department of Humanitarian Provision of Ukraine's Defense Ministry processed a letter from the international non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch regarding ensuring the safety of educational facilities during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

As informed by the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF), the Order of the UAF's Supreme Commander-in-Chief "On the Decision of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Staff Meeting" dated July 26, 2022, No. 1Т/ВГК regulates further non-use of premises of the educational facilities for the temporary accommodation of the military headquarters and units.

It should be noted that requirements on compliance with norms of international humanitarian law (IHL) are prescribed in the UAF's Statute of the Internal Service, Field Manuals of the Ground Forces of Ukraine, Instructions on the Implementation Procedure of IHL Standards in the UAF, approved by order of the Defense Ministry on March 23, 2017 No. 164, registered in Ukraine's Justice Ministry on June 9, 2017 under No. 704/30572 (with amendments), etc.

The distribution of knowledge on IHL, including on protecting and fulfilling children's rights, is carried out at all levels of the training system and among all categories of UAF's servicemen.

Also, according to the joint order of Ukraine's Interior Ministry and Ukraine's Defense Ministry No. 833/443 dated December 21, 2022 "On Approval of the Implementation Procedures of the Priority Measures of Explosives Disposal (Destruction) on the Territory of Ukraine and Organization of Interaction During Their Execution", UAF's engineering units carry out demining and cleaning of the areas (objects) from explosives as a part of the operational response on detecting such objects in the assigned to UAF's units areas.

Therefore, servicemen of the UAF have the necessary basic level of IHL knowledge, which is sufficient for planning and implementing troops' operations, including the ability to distinguish between military and civilian objects and prohibited attacks.

Nazim Agaev, Interim Director of the Department





ДЕПАРТАМЕНТ  
ГУМАНІТАРНОГО  
ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ  
МІНІСТЕРСТВА ОБОРОНИ  
УКРАЇНИ  
Код 26629283

03168, Київ-168  
Повітрофлотський проспект, 6

МНО "Human Rights Watch"

На б/н від 05.09.2023

У Департаменті гуманітарного забезпечення Міністерства оборони України за дорученням опрацьовано лист Міжнародної неурядової організації "Human Rights Watch" щодо забезпечення безпеки закладів освіти під час повномасштабного вторгнення Росії в Україну.

За інформацією, наданою Генеральним штабом Збройних Сил України, повідомляється, що відповідно до наказу Верховного Головнокомандувача Збройних Сил України "Про рішення Ставки Верховного Головнокомандувача Збройних Сил України" від 26.07.2022 №1т/ВГК встановлено подальше невикористання військовими частинами та підрозділами фондів закладів освіти для облаштування місць їх тимчасового розміщення.

Слід зазначити, що вимоги стосовно дотримання норм міжнародного гуманітарного права (далі – МГП) імплементовано до Статуту внутрішньої служби Збройних Сил України, Бойових статутів Сухопутних військ Збройних Сил України, Інструкції про порядок виконання норм міжнародного гуманітарного права в Збройних Силах України, затвердженої наказом Міністерства оборони України від 23.03.2017 № 164, зареєстрованої у Міністерстві юстиції України 09.06.2017 за № 704/30572 (із змінами) тощо.

Поширення знань із МГП, у тому числі з питань захисту та забезпечення прав дітей, здійснюється на всіх рівнях системи підготовки та з усіма категоріями військовослужбовців Збройних Сил України.

Також відповідно до спільного наказу Міністерства внутрішніх справ України та Міністерства оборони України № 833/443 від 21.12.2022 "Про затвердження Порядку здійснення першочергових заходів щодо знешкодження (знищення) вибухонебезпечних предметів на території України та організації взаємодії під час їх виконання" інженерні підрозділи Збройних Сил України



ДОКУМЕНТ СЕДО  
Сертифікат 5B77CE19CBB35C6404000000122D0000B24A0100  
Підписувач Агаєв Назім Асафович  
Дійсний з 28.06.2023 14:18:08 по 28.06.2025 14:18:08

Департамент гуманітарного забезпечення Міністерства оборони  
України



414/1986 від 27.09.2023 12:27

проводять розмінування місцевості (об'єктів) та очищення місцевості (об'єктів) від вибухонебезпечних предметів під час оперативного реагування на виявлення таких предметів у районах виконання підрозділами Збройних Сил України завдань за призначенням.

Отже, військовослужбовці Збройних Сил України мають необхідний базовий рівень знань з МГП, що дозволяє їм на належному рівні застосовувати набуті знання під час планування та застосування військ (сил), у тому числі проводити розрізнення між військовими та цивільними об'єктами, напади на які є забороненими.

Тимчасово виконуючий обов'язки  
директора Департаменту

Назім АГАЄВ

# Annex III: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, October 11, 2023

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October 11, 2023

To: Department of Humanitarian Support of the  
Ministry of Defense of Ukraine  
Code 2662983

Mr Nazim Agaev, Acting Department Director



HRW.org

*Re: Seeking further clarification in relation to the Ministry of Defense communication N° 414/1986 from September 27, 2023*

Dear Mr Agaev,

On September 5, 2023, Human Rights Watch wrote to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine seeking information in relation to Human Rights Watch's ongoing research on attacks on education and military use of schools in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine.

We acknowledge the receipt of the letter number 414/1986 sent by your department on September 27, 2023, which contained responses to our queries. We will reflect them in our report on attacks on schools in Ukraine, scheduled for publication in November. We are deeply grateful for your cooperation and value the ongoing productive dialogue with the Ministry.

As we understand from the Ministry's response, the Order of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' Supreme Commander-in-Chief "On the Decision of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Staff Meeting" (the "Order") dated July 26, 2022, No. 17/ВГК prohibited the use of educational facilities' premises for the temporary housing of military headquarters and units.

We are seeking to further clarify the following:

1. Could you share more details on the Order's mode of implementation and oversight to date, as well as any existing disciplinary measures for failure to implement it?

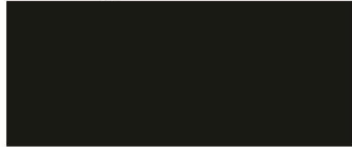
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2. Since July 2022, have there been any follow-up orders or other, additional steps put in place regarding attacks on and military use of schools in the context of the current armed conflict?

We would like to thank you, Mr Agaev, and the staff of the Ministry for the attention to this matter. We would be grateful to receive your response at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] by October 24, so we can reflect it in our reporting.

We stand ready to provide any additional comments or information, if needed.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Hugh Williamson.

Hugh Williamson  
Director  
Europe and Central Asia division

# Annex IV: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, November 10, 2022

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Andrew Zolli

November 10, 2022

Serhiy Shkarlet  
Minister  
Ministry of Education and Science of  
Ukraine  
Prospect Peremohy, 10  
Kyiv, Ukraine 01135



HRW.org

CC: Vasyl Lozynskii, Acting Minister for Communities and Territories Development

Dear Minister Shkarlet,

Human Rights Watch is conducting research on attacks on schools in Kharkivska, Chernihivska, and Kyivska regions. We are documenting the impacts of damage and destruction of schools during the war on the right to education. We are reaching out to your ministry to seek information about this issue.

Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental human rights advocacy organization whose work involves investigating and documenting human rights abuses in over 100 countries and supporting efforts to ensure that those most responsible for serious abuses are held to account. We have conducted extensive research on human rights and laws of war violations since Russia's war with Ukraine first began in 2014.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, we have had a team of researchers present in Ukraine. We have published [dozens of reports and other publications](#), including on the siege of Mariupol; unlawful ground and airstrikes targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure in numerous locations; Russia's use of banned weapons such as cluster munitions and antipersonnel mines; abuses against prisoners of war; summary executions, torture, enforced disappearances, and unlawful detention of civilians by Russian forces during their occupation of areas of Kyivska, Chernihivska, Kharkivska, Khersonska, and Zaporizska

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regions; the abusive and punitive “filtration” screening process; and the crime of forcibly transferring Ukrainian civilians to Russia, among other topics.

We hope that this documentation will serve an important foundation for accountability efforts.

We are grateful for the ministry’s full cooperation during the preparation of our 2016 [report](#) on attacks on schools in Donetska and Luhanska regions. We acknowledge the important step taken by the Ukrainian government in 2019 to sign the Safe Schools Declaration, and the subsequent development of the National Plan on the Safe Schools Declaration, and establishment of the Interinstitutional Working Group on Safe Schools Declaration Implementation.


We would welcome your response to the following questions regarding our current research on attacks on schools, so that we may incorporate the Ukrainian government’s information in our reporting.

- According to the latest figures of the ministry, how many schools in government-controlled areas in Ukraine have suffered damage since February 24, 2022? How many schools in areas under Russian occupation in Ukraine have suffered damage since February 24, 2022?
- Of those, how many are destroyed or damaged beyond repair?
- What steps is the ministry taking to repair and rebuild schools in government-controlled areas that have been damaged and destroyed?
- How many schools have been repaired to date and how much has the government already spent on reconstruction efforts of school facilities?
- What is your current estimate of the cost necessary to repair and reconstruct schools that have to date been damaged or destroyed?
- What was the total student enrollment, prior to February 2022, in the schools that have been destroyed or damaged beyond repair?
- In its repair and reconstruction of schools, what steps, if any, is the ministry taking to ensure accessibility of schools, including for children with physical, sensory, and other types of disabilities? How is it consulting with persons with disabilities in the repair and reconstruction of schools?
- What steps is the ministry taking to ensure that all children living in areas where there is no functioning school building can access education?
- What steps is the ministry taking, as necessary in coordination with Ukraine’s Ministry of Social Policy and regional and local administrations, to provide psychosocial support services to schoolchildren and teachers, particularly those with direct experience of the war?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to sharing our key findings with you in person in Kyiv, in advance of publication.

I would be grateful to receive your responses to the questions in this letter by December 5, 2022, to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Hugh Williamson  
Director  
Europe and Central Asia division  
Human Rights Watch

## **Annex V: Response from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine**

### **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE**

#### **Directorate of Inclusive and Out-of-School Education**

10, Peremohy Ave. Kyiv, 01135, tel. (044) 481-47-58, fax (044) 481-32-87, e-mail: [dps@mon.gov.ua](mailto:dps@mon.gov.ua)

---

To Human Rights Watch  
kvitkak@hrw.org  
gorbuny@hrw.org.

In reply to the Human Rights Watch letter dated November 10, 2022, registered with the MES on 11.11.2022 under No. 28475/0/1-22, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, within its competence, provides available information concerning the enforcement of students' right to education under martial law in Ukraine.

Annex: on 4 pages.

Director General  
YERESKO

Oleg

Tetiana Zaporozhets, +38 098 414 79 39

[QR code]

MES № 4/3387-22 of 25.11.2022

Signed by: Yaresko Oleg Viktorovich

Certificate: 58E2O9E7E900307B04000000C7693300A9EC9B00

Valid: from 25.11.2021 13:21:11 to 25.11.2023 13:21:11

**Information  
concerning the enforcement of students' right to education  
under martial law in Ukraine**

**How many schools have been damaged and destroyed since February 24, 2022?**

According to the information collected by local education authorities, as of 11.18.2022, as a result of the Russian military aggression, since February 24, 2022 180 general secondary education institutions were completely destroyed in Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zhytomyr, Zaporizhzhia, and Kyiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson and Chernihiv regions. At the same time, 1,119 general secondary education institutions in 19 regions and the city of Kyiv suffered damages.

**Concerning the repair and reconstruction of damaged or destroyed general secondary education institutions.**

Repair and reconstruction of such institutions shall be carried out at the expense of state and local budgets and other legal sources.

Under Article 32 of the Law of Ukraine "On Local Self-Government in Ukraine", the management issues of educational institutions owned by or transferred to territorial communities are in power of their own (self-governing) executive bodies of village, settlement, and city councils.

Government authorities, civil-military administrations and local self-government bodies, heads of education authorities and educational institutions, and their founders shall provide state guarantees, create a safe educational environment, and manage the educational process under martial law within their competence.



All students have the opportunity to get an education.

**Concerning the number of students studied in general secondary education institutions until February 24, 2022**

At the beginning of the 2021/2022 academic year, until the hostilities outbreak in Ukraine, there were 13,991 general secondary education institutions, with more than 4.2 million students.

According to the information collected by the local education authorities, as of November 21, 2022, there are 12,915 general education institutions in Ukraine providing various educational services to more than 4 million students.

**What measures does the Ministry take to ensure the accessibility of schools, including for children with physical, sensory and other disabilities, during the repair and reconstruction of schools? How are persons with disabilities involved in consultations during the repair and reconstruction of schools?**

The development of an inclusive educational environment, particularly in educational institutions most accessible and close to the place of residence of persons with special educational needs, ensuring universal design and reasonable accommodation in educational institutions are among the fundamental principles of state educational policy and educational activities.

Under Article 20, part 4 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education", buildings, facilities and premises of educational institutions and inclusive resource centers should meet accessibility requirements in accordance with construction norms and standards.

Clause 25 of the Licensing Conditions for Educational Activities, approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1187 dated

December 30, 2015 (as amended by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 365 dated March 24, 2021), states that the licensee must ensure the accessibility of educational premises for persons with disabilities and other low-mobility persons, in particular the unrestricted access to the building, classrooms and other facilities in accordance with state building codes, rules and standards.

The primary regulatory act establishing the requirements for the inclusive educational environment is the State Construction Standards DBN V.2.2-40:2018 "Inclusiveness of Buildings and Structures". These construction standards provide technical characteristics of the accessibility elements for persons with musculoskeletal disorders, vision and hearing disabilities, mental development disorders and other people with limited mobility.

Unimpeded access to buildings, premises and ground areas of all educational institutions is required by the State Construction Standards DBN B.2.2-3:2018 "Buildings and structures. Educational institutions" and DBN B.2.2-4: 2018 "Buildings and structures. Pre-school educational institution".

State building codes are the regulatory acts mandatory for implementation and consideration in the design and construction of new and reconstruction of existing buildings, structures, and premises of educational institutions.

Compliance with these standards will make it possible to create an inclusive educational environment and to exercise the state-guaranteed right to quality and affordable education for children with special educational needs.

Ensuring the accessibility of educational institutions in accordance with state building standards falls within the competence of local self-government bodies, which, in accordance with the law, control compliance with the requirements of laws and other normative legal acts in the field of education in the respective territories and make sure that citizens get a complete general secondary education.

Given the above, when restoring, reconstructing and repairing educational institutions, construction customers should take measures to ensure the educational institutions accessibility for persons with disabilities and other people with limited mobility in accordance with the state construction standards requirements.

**What measures does the Ministry put in place to ensure access to education for children living in areas where no schools are available?**

The distance learning process in educational institutions in the combat area, temporarily occupied territories, etc. shall be organized by the order (instruction) issued by the founder of the educational institution as agreed with the head of the military administration.

All children forced to change their place of study and/or residence or residing in the temporarily occupied territories may continue their education in general secondary education institutions remotely or externally in the territory free of hostilities.

Officials have been appointed in each region and the city of Kyiv to help children and their parents choose a general secondary education institution to continue education.

Students residing in the temporarily occupied territory can also apply to the State Lyceum "International Ukrainian School" of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine partners in certain countries to enroll children in school as external students, or directly to the State Lyceum "International Ukrainian School" for enrollment as external students and obtaining a certificate of education in the future.

For the sake of care for the participants of the educational process and parents of students who are in the temporarily occupied territories, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has taken the measures to ensure the right of children to education guaranteed by the Constitution of

Ukraine. If a child is in the temporarily occupied territory, to continue their education according to the Ukrainian programs and obtaining the Ukrainian certificate of education in the future, they can:

- continue studying and get the government-issued education certificate in the educational institution where they studied before the military aggression, provided that the educational process follows the Ukrainian state standards and curricula;
- apply for admission to any general secondary education in the safe territory of Ukraine (the education authorities provide assistance in finding an institution);
- if Internet access is available, it is possible to enroll in any Ukrainian licensed distance school online;
- choose homeschooling in an educational institution on the territory controlled by Ukraine or in the institution where they studied before the armed aggression, provided that this institution meets the state standards of Ukraine;
- in order to obtain educational certificates, they can study as external students and pass an annual examination in any general secondary education institution on the government-controlled territory of Ukraine (in case this educational institution provides such an educational service).

As of 11.21.2022, 166,041 students from among internally displaced persons are enrolled in Ukrainian general secondary education institutions.

1,044 institutions are in temporarily occupied territory.

At the same time, 1,230 general secondary education institutions in the Ukraine-controlled territory provide educational services to more than 94 thousand students from the temporarily occupied territories.

**What measures does the Ministry take, where necessary in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, regional and local administrations, to provide psychosocial aid to schoolchildren and teachers, especially to those directly affected by the war?**

20,413 professional psychologists are working in the Ukrainian education system, including 13,486 school psychologists, 6,553 social teachers, and 374 education coordinators.

Since the beginning of Russian armed aggression against Ukraine, there have been many requests for psychological support needed for children in war, for psychological assistance, including the emergency one, in overcoming stress, loss, grief, sorrow and suffering, for psychotherapeutic work with children who lost their parents, home, health and were injured, survived bombing, became refugees, and with internally displaced persons.

Under martial law, requests to provide psychosocial and socio-educational assistance to children and families of internally displaced persons predominate.

In the 2021/2022 academic year (since February 24, 2022), we received 221,664 requests of this kind, where 44% were from children and their family members; 6.7% were from teachers; 4.1% were from people with limited mobility (people with disabilities and the elderly people).

The total number of requests made to psychologists to provide psychosocial, social and educational aid to affected children and families during the hostilities in Ukraine is 446,368, where 54.5% were from children; 24.2% were from parents or legal representatives; 2.5% were from other family members; 17.2% were from educators; 1.6% were from people with low mobility.



# Annex VI: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Ministry for Communications and Territorial Development, November 10, 2022

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November 10, 2022

Vasyl Lozynskii  
Acting Minister  
Ministry for Communities and Territories  
Development  
Velyka Zhytomyrska st., 9  
Kyiv, Ukraine 01601



HRW.org

CC: Serhiy Shkarlet, Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine

Dear Mr Lozynskii,

Human Rights Watch is conducting research on attacks on schools in Kharkivska, Chernihivska, and Kyivska regions. We are documenting the impacts of damage and destruction of schools during the war on the right to education. We are reaching out to your ministry to seek information about this issue.

Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental human rights advocacy organization whose work involves investigating and documenting human rights abuses in over 100 countries and supporting efforts to ensure that those most responsible for serious abuses are held to account. We have conducted extensive research on human rights and laws of war violations since Russia's war with Ukraine first began in 2014.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, we have had a team of researchers present in Ukraine. We have published [dozens of reports and other publications](#), including on the siege of Mariupol; unlawful ground and airstrikes targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure in numerous locations; Russia's use of banned weapons such as cluster munitions and antipersonnel mines; abuses against prisoners of war; summary executions, torture, enforced disappearances, and unlawful detention of civilians by Russian forces during their occupation of areas of Kyivska, Chernihivska, Kharkivska, Khersonska, and Zaporizska regions; the abusive and punitive "filtration" screening process;

and the crime of forcibly transferring Ukrainian civilians to Russia, among other topics.

We hope that this documentation will serve an important foundation for accountability efforts.

We are grateful for the ministry's full cooperation during the preparation of our 2016 [report](#) on attacks on schools in Donetska and Luhanska regions. We acknowledge the important step taken by the Ukrainian government in 2019 to sign the Safe Schools Declaration, and the subsequent development of the National Plan on the Safe Schools Declaration, and establishment of the Interinstitutional Working Group on Safe Schools Declaration Implementation.

We would welcome your response to the following questions regarding our current research on attacks on schools, so that we may incorporate the Ukrainian government's information in our reporting.

- According to the latest figures of the ministry, how many schools in government-controlled areas in Ukraine have suffered damage since February 24, 2022? How many schools in areas under Russian occupation in Ukraine have suffered damage since February 24, 2022?
- Of those, how many are destroyed or damaged beyond repair?
- What steps is the ministry taking to repair and rebuild schools in government-controlled areas that have been damaged and destroyed?
- How many schools have been repaired to date and how much has the government already spent on reconstruction efforts of school facilities?
- What is your current estimate of the cost necessary to repair and reconstruct schools that have to date been damaged or destroyed?
- What was the total student enrollment, prior to February 2022, in the schools that have been destroyed or damaged beyond repair?
- In its repair and reconstruction of schools, what steps, if any, is the ministry taking to ensure accessibility of schools, including for children with physical, sensory, and other types of disabilities? How is it consulting with persons with disabilities in the repair and reconstruction of schools?
- What steps is the ministry taking to ensure that all children living in areas where there is no functioning school building can access education?
- What steps is the ministry taking, as necessary in coordination with Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy and regional and local administrations, to provide psychosocial support services to schoolchildren and teachers, particularly those with direct experience of the war?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to sharing our key findings with you in person in Kyiv, in advance of publication.

I would be grateful to receive your responses to the questions in this letter by December 5, 2022, to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Hugh Williamson  
Director  
Europe and Central Asia division  
Human Rights Watch

# Annex VII: Human Rights Watch Letter to the Russian Ministry of Defense, September 22, 2023

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Bruno Stagno Ugarte, Chief Advocacy Officer

Minjon Tholes, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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Bill Frelick, Refugee and Migrant Rights

Avinid Ganesan, Economic Justice and Rights

Steve Goose, Arms

Frederike Kaltheuner, Technology and Human Rights

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September 22, 2023

Sergei Shoigu  
Minister of Defense  
Russian Federation  
119160, Moscow, Frunzenskaya Embankment, 22/2  
press@mil.ru



HRW.org

*Re: Attacks on schools in Ukraine*

Dear Minister Shoigu,

Human Rights Watch is conducting research on attacks on schools in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine to document the damage and destruction of schools during the war and their impact on the right to education. An important part of this issue relates to military use of schools. We are reaching out to your ministry to seek information about this issue.

As you may know, Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental human rights advocacy organization whose work involves investigating and documenting human rights violations in over 100 countries and supporting efforts to ensure that those most responsible for serious abuses are held to account. We have conducted extensive research on human rights and laws of war violations in Ukraine since Russia's invasion in 2014.

In context of our work in Ukraine, in 2016 we published a report documenting attacks on schools and military use of schools by Russian and Ukrainian forces and urged both Russia and Ukraine to join the Safe Schools Declaration, an intergovernmental political commitment to reduce the likelihood that students, teachers, and schools are targeted for attack during armed conflict. Russia has not endorsed this declaration, which is currently endorsed by 118 countries, including Ukraine.

In the course of our work in Ukraine over the past 18 months, we have documented Russian forces' military use of schools and kindergartens in the Kyivska, Chernihivska, and Kharkivska regions, during which they damaged, destroyed, and looted movable school property, including furniture, computers, televisions, and other equipment. We have also documented damage these forces caused to school and kindergarten interiors. We also, Russian forces [illegally detaining](#) civilians who [reported](#) being tortured and otherwise ill-treated in schools.

AMMAN · AMSTERDAM · BEIRUT · BERLIN · BRUSSELS · CHICAGO · COPENHAGEN · GENEVA · GOMA · JOHANNESBURG · KIEV · KINSHASA · LONDON · LOS ANGELES · MIAMI · NAIROBI · NEW YORK · PARIS · SAN FRANCISCO · SÃO PAULO · SILICON VALLEY · STOCKHOLM · SYDNEY · TOKYO · TORONTO · WASHINGTON · ZÜRICH



In addition, we have documented Russian forces' attacks on schools and kindergartens in the Kyivska, Chernihivska, and Kharkivska regions with munitions resulting in significant damage and destruction, including in some cases damage beyond repair.

We have also identified instances in which Ukrainian forces attacked schools occupied by Russian forces and several instances in which Ukrainian forces used schools for military purposes. We would welcome your response to the following questions regarding our current research on attacks on and military use of schools, so that we may reflect the Russian government's information in our reporting.

1. What measures has the Russian Defense Ministry undertaken to ensure the safety of Ukrainian schools and schoolchildren during the armed conflict?
2. What instructions has the Russian Defense Ministry given to Russian forces and all other forces under their command regarding the military use of schools?
3. What schools in Ukraine have been used by Russian forces since February 24, 2022? Please provide the number of instances, and when and where they occurred?
4. Is the Russian Defense Ministry aware of schools in Ukraine that have been used by Ukrainian forces since February 24, 2022? Please provide the number of instances, and when and where this occurred?
5. What measures has the Russian Defense Ministry taken to investigate alleged looting, defacement, and other willful destruction of school property by Russian forces in Ukraine and to hold accountable those responsible?
6. In areas under Russian forces' effective control or occupation, does the Defense Ministry examine the condition of schools when vacated by Russian forces? By Ukrainian forces? For example, do you examine for contamination by landmines, unexploded cluster munitions, or other explosive remnants of war left behind in school buildings and yards? Has the ministry examined the damage to school property from the use of schools? Are there examples of damage to school property that the ministry is aware of from such use by the Russian military since February 24, 2022?
7. Is there a procedure by which Russian forces, when they consider using a school for military purposes, consider alternative options for deployment that avoid the use of schools? Please provide examples of this.
8. In instances in which Russian forces use schools for military purposes, describe the procedure they follow to protect civilians from resulting military operations in the vicinity of such schools? Please provide examples of this.



Thank you for your attention to this matter. I would be grateful to receive your responses to the questions in this letter by October 6 to [REDACTED] in order to allow us to reflect the response in our report.

Sincerely,



Hugh Williamson  
Director  
Europe and Central Asia division