

# Ukraine: Life under Russian occupation

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**Two new pieces of research from the Luhansk Regional Human Rights Centre Alterpravo paint a grim picture in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.**

[Forced Reality](#) is the first in a series of planned analytical papers covering the lives of people in the temporarily occupied territories. The deaths of a high number of civilians during the hostilities and the occupation of the region by the Russian army has led many economically active people to leave. This, and the inward migration of Russians, is significantly changing the population's composition.

It is extremely difficult for local residents of these territories to get jobs, most of which go to collaborators. Employees even of state-funded institutions are often not paid for months, as Russia has begun reducing the funding for the occupied territories since the summer of this year.

After the occupation, average consumer food prices increased significantly and, in some cases, were twice as high. Additionally, people are forced to eat expired food due to lack of refrigeration, choice or money. Local products are being squeezed out of the market and replaced by goods produced in Russia, which are of much lower quality.

In 2024, the amount of humanitarian aid provided to the occupied territories decreased significantly. The priority is the elderly, from whom the occupation administrations expect the greatest loyalty. Food queues are often hours-long. Moreover, food aid is instrumentalised and presented as a reward for 'correct' behaviour - for example, it is available only to those with a Russian passport.

The water supply is erratic. In occupied Mariupol, tap water is green or rusty and has an unpleasant odour. Despite the poor quality, residents are expected to pay for water services.

Medical services are in disarray, with shortages of both staff and equipment. "During the occupation," says the Report, "the proper supply of medicines has not been established, which leads to a shortage of medicines, artificially inflated prices and the use of fraudulent schemes to deliver them to the occupied territory." Medical services are also being used to force through Russian passportisation of citizens - free medical services in the occupied territories are available only if one has a Russian passport.

In 2023, in-depth preventive medical examinations were used as a pretext for deporting Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation. Those children who were allegedly diagnosed with medical problems were sent 'for treatment' to the Russian Federation and did not return.

The Russians have not given permission for the evacuation of citizens through a humanitarian

corridor from these territories. Only the international organisations of the UN system and the Red Cross operate in the territories. Ukrainian humanitarian organisations have no access.

The report concludes: “The Russian authorities are deliberately working to ensure that the survival of local residents in all occupied territories of Ukraine is possible only if they obtain Russian citizenship, are loyal to the ‘new government and new order’, and integrate into the new social structure. Access to basic human needs, such as food, water and medical services, is impossible without it.”

International law requires an occupying force to provide for all the basic needs of the civilian population, including food, water, and healthcare. The Russian regime, in its pursuit of integrating these territories, is destroying this principle.

## **Resistance continues**

Also from *Alterpravo* comes the November edition of [Life Under Occupation](#), a monthly update on the situation facing Ukrainian territories under occupation. It reports that the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a 14-page resolution calling Russia’s actions against Ukraine a “war of aggression” and spelling out some of its crimes, including torture and ill-treatment of prisoners.

Other updates in the bulletin include: the confiscation in occupied Crimea of 1,200 businesses belonging to people considered ‘unfriendly’ to Russia; the denial of entry of residents into the occupied territories; the confiscation of grain and vegetables from farmers; the emptying of public libraries of Ukrainian literature and their replacement by Russian imperial propaganda; compulsory Russification in schools and a ban on teaching Ukrainian in some areas, with children aged 12 and over forced to take an oath of allegiance to the Russian Federation.

Exacerbating the public health disaster, in some territories residents receiving social and pension payments have been informed that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025, payments will be suspended for those who do not have Russian citizenship.

Despite the brutality of the occupation and the persecution suffered by activists, non-violent resistance continues across the temporarily occupied territories.

*The latest bulletin of the [Ukraine Information Group](#) is available [here](#). Follow the work of the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign [here](#).*

Image: Military base at Perevalne during the occupation the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russian troops in 2014. Source: <http://www.ex.ua/76677715> Author: Anton Holoborodko (Антон Голобородько), licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](#) license.

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