Residents in Donbas have been subjected to genocide

The Myth

The Ukrainian army is committing genocide against the mostly Russian-speaking population in eastern and southern Ukraine. If Ukraine launches full-scale hostilities in the region, Russia will be forced to protect its citizens.

The Facts

A few weeks after Russia annexed Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula following the 2014 ouster of Moscow-friendly president Viktor Yanukovych by a popular uprising in the capital of Kiev, a separatist conflict erupted in the eastern region of Donbas.

In April and May 2014, Russian-backed separatists seized government buildings in the mostly Russian-speaking provinces of Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk. A pro-Russian, anti-government group calling itself the Donbas People’s Militia soon emerged, and attempts by Ukrainians law enforcement to reestablish control were thwarted by the pro-Russian forces. The situation in the east deteriorated quickly into violence and by April 2014, the Ukrainian government launched what it called an “anti-terror operation,” deploying its armed forces to Donetsk and Lugansk, according to a November 2016 report by the International Criminal Court. That same month, the Ukrainian government said it was no longer in full control of Donetsk and Luhansk, and warned that the country was on “full combat alert.” Since then, fighting between Ukrainian armed forces and Russia-backed separatists has killed more than 13,000 people, including approximately 3,000 civilians in Ukraine, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Following referendums held on May 11, 2014, that were deemed illegitimate by the Ukrainian government, representatives of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics claimed independence from Ukraine. The self-proclaimed republics also appealed to be incorporated into the Russian Federation. They remain unrecognised by almost all states, including Russia. However, Russia has provided the self-proclaimed republics with military, economic, and political support. In 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree simplifying the Issuance of Russian passports to Donbas residents.

Since fighting broke out between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian army in April 2014, the Russian-state media has claimed that the Ukrainian army is committing genocide in the predominantly Russian-speaking east, where many ethnic Russians live. In December 2021, the Russian state-media and Putin repeated
such claims. The situation in Donbas "certainly looks like genocide," Putin said.

The claim began to gain currency after an article published in September 2014 by Russia state-owned media outlet Rossiskaya Gazeta claimed that a Latvian political activist, Elnars Gaudins, had discovered "a mass grave where more than 400 bodies of civilians and executed militiamen were found." State-media and Russian officials used the claim as evidence that the Ukrainian army had committed war crimes. A separate report by state-run news agency RIA Novosti about the same claim, originally titled "OSCE [the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] Expert: 400 Bodies Found in Gravesites Near Donetsk," stated: "The Russian Foreign Ministry believes that 'there are very serious signs' to believe that security forces from the National Guard may be involved in the killings of civilians." During a press conference in October, 2014, Russian Foreign Minister Sergel Lavrov echoed the reports, describing the mass graves as "evidence of war crimes" committed by the Ukrainian army.

In fact, Rossiskaya Gazeta had misrepresented Gaudins's statement; he said that there were about 400 unidentified bodies in the morgues of Donetsk. He did not say that the bodies were in newly discovered graves, nor did he specify who they were. "At the present time, in the morgues of Donetsk alone there are 400 unidentified bodies," Gaudins said.

Meanwhile, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, then-prime minister of the DPR, said new graves being discovered by Russian-backed separatists contain "their fellow fighters or Ukrainian soldiers" and "it is not always a question of the graves of civilians." Additionally, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said in a Twitter post in October 2014 that Gaudins had no link to the OSCE. Gaudins had visited the graves as part of a group of eight human rights experts who accompanied OSCE, but he never worked for the organizations, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, a US-funded news outlet.

In 2014, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights investigated three burial sites that had been referred to by the Donetsk People's Republic as mass graves. The UN body reported in November 2014 that it had identified one grave containing five bodies and two graves containing two bodies each. The report did not mention genocide.

The Kiev-based fact-checking organization StopFake reported in 2018 that the head of its unit focused on the Americas, Europe and Central Asia said the agency has "no data on the location of mass graves, which would allow us to report on this in accordance with the rules, as well as to ensure the preservation of evidence for access by experts. We inquired about where such burial sites might be located, but got no reply."

In 2014, Amnesty International said it did not find "any compelling evidence of mass killings or graves" during research that it conducted in Donbas in 2014. It said: "What we have seen are isolated incidents of summary executions that in some cases constitute war crimes." Amnesty found evidence implicating Kiev-backed forces in the extrajudicial executions of four men as well as evidence that Russian-backed separatists were also involved in execution-style and other deliberate killings of four people.
Reports by the International Criminal Court and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also contradict claims that the Ukrainian army carried out mass killings of residents in eastern Ukraine. A November 2016 report by the ICC found that fighting involved “the use of military weaponry by both sides.” It said that between April 2014 and June 2016, up to 2,000 civilians were killed during the conflict, mostly (85 percent to 90 percent) as a result of shelling in both government-controlled territory and areas controlled by armed groups.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 24 cases concerning alleged executions and killings of 58 civilians, who were not taking part in hostilities, in 2014 and 2015, that allegedly implicated pro-Russian armed groups of the self-proclaimed republics, as well as pro-Ukrainian armed groups and the Ukrainian SBU. The International Criminal Court said that intensified fighting between 2014 and 2015 was attributed to “alleged corresponding influxes of troops, vehicles and weaponry from the Russian Federation to reinforce the positions of the armed groups.”

The ICC found that the acts of violence allegedly committed by the Ukrainian authorities in 2013 and 2014 could constitute an “attack directed against a civilian population.” However, it also said that “The information available did not provide a reasonable basis to believe that the attack was systematic or widespread.” ICC and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports on the human rights situation in Ukraine did not mention a systematic attack by Ukrainian authorities against civilians in the country’s east.

Another story widely reported in March 2015 by Russian state-media, including RIA-Novosti and Russia Today, claimed that a ten-year-old girl was killed during shelling by the Ukrainian Army in Donetsk, citing Eduard Basurin, then-Defense Minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic. A month later, the BBC published a short documentary featuring interviews with residents in Donetsk about the story. The locals interviewed all said they had not heard of the event, nor had they heard the shelling that was supposed to have killed the girl. The local morgue said it had never handled her body. The BBC also interviewed a Russian journalist who originally reported the story, according to the BBC. The man, whose identity the BBC did not disclose, confirmed that the girl never existed and said: “We had to broadcast it,” the BBC reported.

In July 2014, the Russian state-owned Channel One (“Perwy Kanal”) featured an interview with a woman named Galina Pyshniak who claimed that she witnessed members of the Ukrainian army publicly crucify a three-year-old boy in Lenin Square in the town of Slovyansk, while they tied his mother to a tank and dragged her around the square until she died. Slovyansk had been a flashpoint of conflict between the Ukrainian army and pro-Russian insurgents, who had seized it in April 2014.

The Ukrainian government recaptured Slovyansk in July the same year. A day after Channel One published its interview with Pyshniak, Novaya Gazeta, an independent Russian news outlet, visited Slovyansk to speak with residents about her claims. None of the interviewees featured in the Channel One report backed Pyshniak’s allegations. The residents said things like “nothing like this happened” and that the claims were “100% lies” and “nonsense.”
In December, 2014, Russia’s Channel One reported: “The journalists did not have and do not have evidence of this tragedy, but this is a real story of a real-life woman who escaped from hell in Sloviansk.” The channel added there was “no way to confirm or deny this information.”

In late December 2021 and early 2022, as tensions escalated over Ukraine, Putin and the Russian state-run media reiterated claims that the situation in Donbas resembles genocide. On Dec. 9, 2021, Putin said during a meeting with Russia’s Presidential Human Rights Council: “I have to say that Russophobia is a first step towards genocide. You and I know what is happening in Donbas. It certainly looks like genocide.”

In fact, a 2021 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights report blamed the authorities of the Donetsk and Lugansk republic for various abuses, including severe restrictions on the freedom of movement, forcing Russian citizenship, refusing expert access to detainees, and arbitrary arrests. At the same time, the UN reported three cases of arbitrary detention and ill-treatment carried out by Ukraine’s SBU (secret service), and 13 such cases in the self-proclaimed republics, which the UN said were “usually” carried out by the ‘ministry of state security’ officers, known as MGB.

According to the European Council on Foreign Relations, an international think tank, the MGB is headed by Russian FSB officers. The UN documented 62 civilian casualties, including 14 deaths in the self-proclaimed republics and the government-controlled part of Donetsk. The majority of these deaths occurred in the self-proclaimed republics as a result of mine-related incidents and the handling of explosive remnants of war, according to the report, which made no mention of genocide.

Matthew Kupfer and Thomas de Waal, fellows at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a nonpartisan international affairs think-tank, wrote in 2014 that the word “genocide” has become a “leitmotif” in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

Kupfer and de Waal’s report concluded that “pro-Russian separatists know that they are challenging the status quo and the international order, which places them at a disadvantage.” By accusing the Kiev government of genocide “they present their actions not as a first choice but as the last resort of a people trying to protect its fundamental human rights,” they wrote.

**Variations of this Myth**

More than 400 civilians and militiamen were executed by the Ukrainian army and buried in mass graves near Donetsk.

A ten year-old girl was killed during shelling by the Ukrainian army in Donetsk in 2015.

In 2014, members of the Ukrainian army publicly crucified a three-year-old in Lenin Square in the town of Slovyansk.
Examples of this Myth


*events on the ground very much resemble the shocking points of the memo and the
*"guidelines for genocide" exported by the US*

https://tass.com/world/1373489

"Putin emphasized that Russophobia was the first step to genocide. The head of state noted that:"It requires careful action so that these notions aren’t devalued." However, in his words, the notions should reflect the reality of what is happening at the moment."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_mTxCwvmnA

► State-Controlled Source

https://rtfd.rt.com/films/ukraines-refugees/

► State-Controlled Source


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 euler12735

"I wonder if Mr. Lanting has considered that a "yes" vote is a vote to approve an agreement with a violent genocidal regime which overthrew the constitutional government of Ukraine, letting loose a horde of armed extremist militia, and murdering over 9,000 people."

https://www.vesti.ru/article/1862823

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► State-Controlled Source

https://russian.rt.com/article/81264

► State-Controlled Source

https://ria.ru/20140930/1026327604.html

► State-Controlled Source

https://rg.ru/2014/09/30/donbass-site.html

► State-Controlled Source
Russia’s President Vladimir Putin has called the events taking place in the Donbass region of Ukraine "genocide," as he made comments after meeting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. He added that Kiev systematically violates human rights, including by legalising the discrimination of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine.

Reliable Sources


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