



Photo: Truth Hounds

#### COUNTRY

**Ukraine, Balakliia**

#### ISSUE

**Abuse during occupation**

#### CRIMES

- **Arbitrary detention**
- **Wilful killing**
- **Torture and sexual violence**
- **Disappearances**

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**They put a bag over my head, asked me “Do you love Ukraine?”, and then punched me in the chest.**

Russian forces occupied Balakliia from 3 March to 8 September 2022. During the occupation, at least 282 people were arbitrarily detained and 275 tortured or ill-treated. Ukrainian police later found a mass grave with 445 civilians near Izyum. 17 soldiers were buried nearby. Most abuses occurred in the Balakliia police station.

#### YEAR

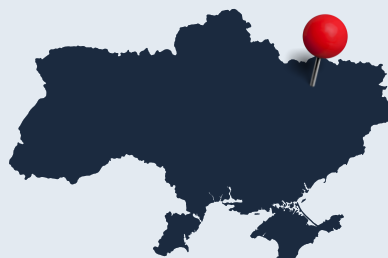
**2022**

**263**

VICTIMS

**84**

PERPETRATORS



**Balakliia,  
Ukraine**

UKR2-25



Russian forces occupied Balakliia, a town in the Izium region of Kharkiv Oblast, shortly after the full-scale invasion began. During six months of occupation, the town became a site of human rights violations and international crimes. Russian forces frequently detained or abducted residents without legal grounds, even for possessing the Ukrainian flag or cursing Putin, creating fear and oppression.

Arbitrary arrests occurred at checkpoints, markets, homes, and parks. The Balakliia police station served as the main detention site, where civilians from Balakliia and nearby settlements were brought, often with sacks over their heads. Detention could last from days to months.

The station remained a detention center until Ukrainian forces freed the town. Detainees were interrogated, tortured, and treated inhumanely. The Balakliia police station stands out for the severity of abuse inflicted on those held there. Some victims were released, others held until liberation, and some disappeared.

## Call to action:



Ukrainian police should investigate and prosecute those responsible for the crimes. Democratic countries should sanction unapprehended perpetrators. Ukrainian authorities must support the victims.



Norwegian  
Helsinki Committee

with contributions from



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