
War crimes acceptable? Parliament mulls amnesty for Kiev's troops in E. Ukraine

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A bill on amnesty for military personnel who committed war crimes during the military crackdown in Eastern Ukraine was introduced in the Rada (the Ukrainian parliament) on Wednesday, its website says. The bill assumes the discharge of legal responsibility and punishment of military staff and “other people” for the actions which “bear the marks of war crime.”

Earlier, on 8 September, Amnesty International presented a [report](#) in which confirmed that such actions were committed by the Aidar volunteer battalion.

Aidar is one of over 30 volunteer battalions which appeared after Kiev started the military operation in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. It is loosely connected with the Ukrainian security structures.

“Members of the Aidar territorial defense battalion, operating in the north Luhansk [Lugansk] region, have been involved in widespread abuses, including abductions, unlawful detention, ill-treatment, theft, extortion, and possible executions,” the AI report says.

The AI researchers interviewed dozens of victims and witnesses of the abuses and crimes, as well as local officials, police and army commanders in Lugansk area.

The watchdog pointed out that while formally operating under the command of the Ukrainian security forces combined headquarters in the region, members of the Aidar battalion act “with virtually no oversight or control, and local police are either unwilling or unable to address the

abuses.”

“Some of the abuses committed by members of the Aidar battalion amount to war crimes, for which both the perpetrators and, possibly, the commanders would bear responsibility under national and international law.”

The report concluded that while hailed by many nationally as a committed fighting force, *“the Aidar battalion has acquired locally a reputation for brutal reprisals, robbery, beatings and extortion.”*

[Crimes of Ukrainian Aidar battalion confirmed in Amnesty Int'l report - Russia](#)

On Wednesday, the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office said that they had started an investigation into the crimes of volunteer battalions in Eastern Ukraine.

“We have the facts and criminal proceedings where the representatives of volunteer battalions committed crimes against the local population,” Prosecutor General Vitaly Yarema said, RIA Novosti news agency reported.
