
Ukraine: Self-proclaimed Donbass republics call for UN war crimes probe

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“Donetsk People’s Republic [DNR] and Lugansk [LNR] People’s Republic are addressing the UN Security Council with a plea to establish an international tribunal for legal prosecution of those responsible for violation of the International Humanitarian Law and crimes against humanity in Ukraine,” the DNR head, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, and LNR head Igor Plotnitsky said at a joint press conference.

Those found responsible should be brought to trial, they stressed.

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The heads of the unrecognized republics are calling for the leaders of Russia, the US, China, Great Britain and France to consider this proposal at the next UNSC session.

"Expecting your soonest reply to the proposal," Plotnitsky said.

Aleksandr Zakharchenko said Kiev's operation in Donbass is *"a direct violation of the Geneva convention."*

"Not one death will be forgotten. Those responsible for the deaths of our women and children, for every human loss that took place, they will be called to account," said Zakharchenko.

"Dear Ukrainian soldiers! Please do not think that coming to Donbass means coming to Wonderland. According to your deeds will be it done to you. If you kill, torture and rape here, an equal calamity will come to your home. We're going to find you at the world's end," Zakharchenko added.

The military operation in eastern Ukraine began in spring last year after residents in the Donetsk and Lugansk Regions refused to recognize the coup-imposed government in Kiev.

On February 12, in Minsk, peace negotiations between the two sides resulted in a second ceasefire agreement. The first was signed in summer 2014 and was violated practically immediately. The current ceasefire is also being violated on a frequent basis. Shelling in the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics happens every other day, with each side pointing the finger at the other.

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Zakharchenko said the prosecutors' offices of both republics have collected copious evidence of war crimes committed by Kiev troops.

"There is a considerable volume of evidence of the Ukrainian National Guards' involvement in torture and killing of civilians. Dozens of mass graves have been found on territory that was occupied by Ukrainian troops," Zakharchenko said.

The DNR and LNR also have evidence of Ukrainian troops using weapons prohibited by the international arms conventions, including cluster and phosphorous bombs.

Since the beginning of 2015 an estimated 1,212 civilians, including 25 children, have died in shelling incidents.

According to DNR and LNR statistics, since the start of the conflict, 3,684 civilians have been killed in both republics, including 522 women and 65 children.

UN data states there were 6,417 deaths in the Ukrainian conflict from mid-April 2014 to May 30, 2015, with an estimated 15,962 people wounded. The war has affected around 5 million, of which about 1.2 million became refugees.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko estimates the conflict's death toll to be nearly 9,000: about 1,800 servicemen and 7,000 civilians.

Over the 15 months of the conflict 4,868 buildings and private households have been destroyed, among them 63 hospitals, 150 schools and 135 kindergartens.

In addition, 1,616 infrastructure installations have been damaged or leveled completely, including factories, mines, power stations and waterways.

There are tens of thousands of buildings in the Donbass region that suffered minor damage.

Over 6,200 people were invalided. More than 2,000 people in Donetsk People's Republic are missing.

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The UN watchdog notes that these statistics are conservative and real losses could be much higher.

The situation in Donbass has long since entered a state of humanitarian catastrophe, a situation exacerbated by the economic blockade established by Kiev against the rebellious republics.

Russia's Emergency Ministry has been sending humanitarian convoys to Donbass on a regular basis - 31 convoys so far. They have delivered over 39,000 tons of food supplies, medicine and equipment needed to restore normal life in the war-torn region.

The 32nd humanitarian convoy to Donbass will hit the road on July 16.
