UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

DEADLY DRONES: CIVILIANS AT RISK FROM SHORT-RANGE DRONES IN FRONTLINE AREAS OF UKRAINE

24 February 2022 — 30 April 2025

"About a month ago, right on our street, in front of the house, an FPV drone attacked a cyclist, a man in his 50s. It hit him right in the back, and he was practically torn apart by the impact. It was only in the evening that we were able to go outside and somehow collect his remains, which we could find."

– Resident of Stanislav village, Kherson region.

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I. SUMMARY

The military use of short-range drones in frontline areas of Ukraine has intensified over the past year, driven by technological advancements and increased production rates. While innovations, particularly in targeting capabilities, have enhanced operational precision, they have not increased civilian protection. Instead, these drones have emerged as a leading cause of civilian death and injury in Ukraine, and in some months, even surpassed more powerful weapons like missiles, artillery, and aerial bombs. The vast majority of the casualties occurred as a result of Russian attacks in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine.

The drones used in most attacks causing civilian casualties are known as "First-Person-View" (FPV) drones. They are equipped with cameras that provide their operators with a real-time view of areas being traversed, allowing drone operators to select specific targets, including moving vehicles, and to attack them with exceptional accuracy.

In principle, the enhanced visibility provided by FPV technology should support more accurate assessment and verification of the military or civilian character of a potential target. Nonetheless, operators have deployed these weapons against civilians who showed no signs of direct participation in hostilities. Documented casualties include civilians on bicycles, in private cars, on regular public buses, in ambulances, while delivering humanitarian aid or conducting evacuations, walking outdoors, and outside on their residential property.

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) has documented and analyzed the circumstances of these attacks and assessed that targeting by drone operators has, in practice, violated core international humanitarian law (IHL) principles of distinction and precaution. Some incidents may amount to intentionally directing attacks against civilians, a war crime.

In addition to causing death and injury, the attacks have exacerbated an already critical humanitarian situation. Government workers, healthcare personnel, staff of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) providing assistance, and residents have been unable to safely pass through affected villages, meaning civilians could not access essential services, humanitarian aid, and medical care. This has affected a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, food, and adequate standard of living, and healthcare, with older persons and those with disabilities disproportionately affected as they tend to remain in frontline areas.

Robust measures are needed to protect civilians in frontline areas. Deliberate targeting of civilians by short-range drones must cease. Violations of IHL should be investigated, and those responsible held to account.

METHODOLOGY

To prepare this bulletin, HRMMU documented, verified and analyzed 3,030 civilian casualties resulting from short-range drones from 24 February 2022 through 30 April 2025.[1] HRMMU conducted site visits to very-high-risk areas, such as Kherson city, Zolochiv (Kharkiv region) and other frontline locations, interviewed survivors and witnesses of short-range drone attacks, medical personnel and local authorities, and reviewed open-source materials.

HRMMU also reviewed and geolocated more than 100 videos of footage from Russian FPV drones in Kherson region.[2] These videos, posted on pro-Russian social media channels, provided additional insight into target visibility and selection. Footage from Ukrainian drones operating in occupied territory or the Russian Federation was not available for review, as it had not been made public.

SHORT-RANGE DRONES: CAPABILITIES AND OPERATIONAL USE

Short-range drones are small, remote-controlled unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs),[3] deployed by both the Russian and Ukrainian armed forces. Most are equipped with cameras that transmit real-time video feeds allowing operators to conduct surveillance and execute precision strikes on targets.[4]

There are many types and configurations of these drones, but most carry small quantities of explosives, such as mortar shells, anti-personnel landmines, grenades, improvised explosive devices, or other small ordnance. They strike their targets by dropping munitions on them from above or by conducting self-destructive attacks by diving at a target, self-detonating on impact. These strikes are very precise and contained: for example, a drone can drop an explosive through the windshield of a fast-moving car or on a specific pedestrian. Targeting is highly accurate.

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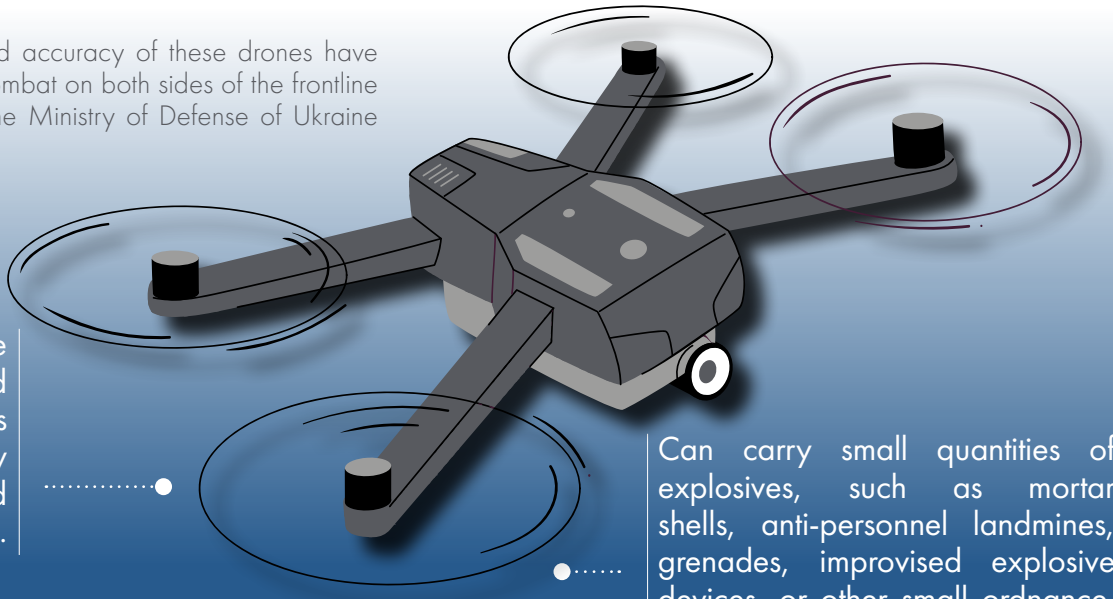
[1] All casualties were verified according to OHCHR standard methodology, unless otherwise noted.
[2] Collection and geolocation of videos supported by the Center for Information Resilience (CIR).
[3] Short-range UAVs are distinct from large, long-range loitering munitions that are also referred to as drones. Long-range loitering munitions travel at much higher speeds, sometimes across hundreds of kilometers, and carry larger explosive payloads. The term "drone" in this bulletin refers only to short-range UAVs.
[4] Although most short-range drones are equipped with high resolution cameras, some have electro-optical or infrared cameras, or are one-way drones that follow pre-programmed routes using GPS, without a camera. However, most drones currently in use are equipped with live-feed cameras, which allow them to accurately strike non-static targets, such as moving vehicles or individuals.

The operating range of these drones is limited to an approximate 30 kilometers distance from the remote-control operator, due to signal limitations and a battery life of around 60 minutes. They are difficult to detect and counter as their speed can exceed 100 km/h.

The low production cost and accuracy of these drones have driven their proliferation in combat on both sides of the frontline since 2024. For example, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine reported that while it purchased thousands of FPV drones in 2023 and 1.5 million in 2024, it planned to procure many more in 2025, with domestic production capacity at 4.5 million.[5]



Short-range drones are small, remote-controlled unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), deployed by both the Russian and Ukrainian armed forces.

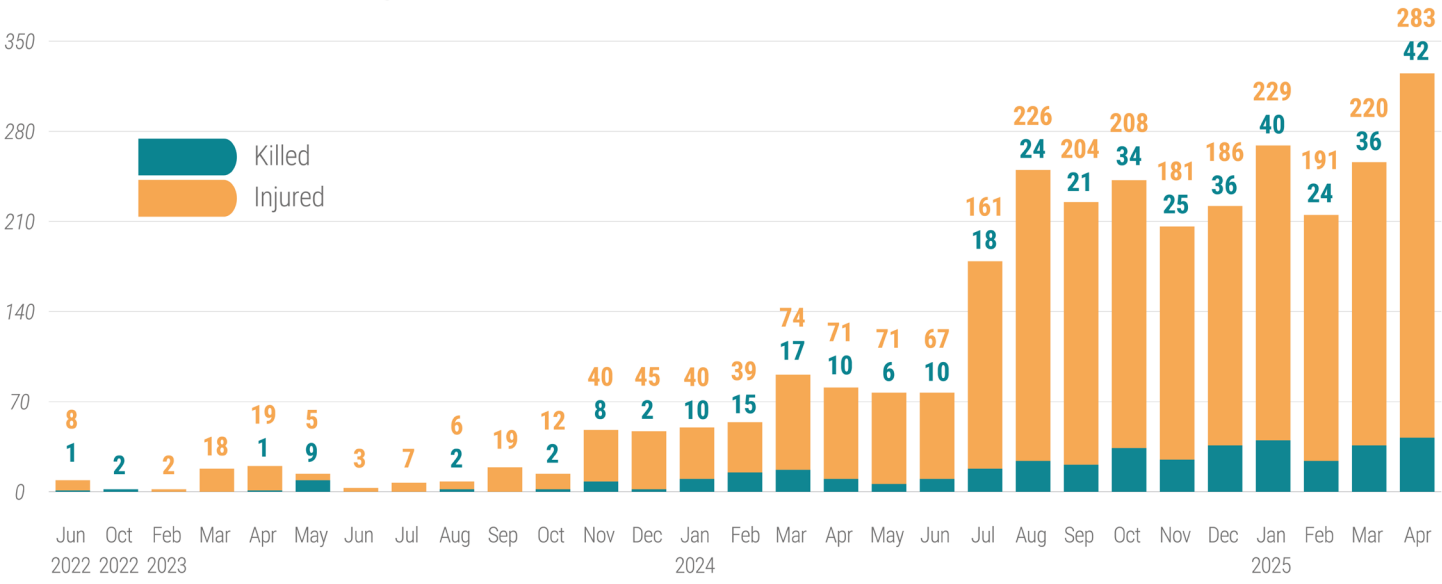
Can carry small quantities of explosives, such as mortar shells, anti-personnel landmines, grenades, improvised explosive devices, or other small ordnance.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FROM SHORT-RANGE DRONE ATTACKS

Between 24 February 2022 and 30 April 2025, attacks with short-range drones killed at least 395 civilians (285 men, 107 women, two girls and one boy) and injured 2,635 (1,717 men, 832 women, 33 boys, 24 girls, and 29 adults whose sex is yet unknown) in Ukraine. While these weapons caused very few casualties in 2022, the numbers gradually increased before doubling in July 2024 and continuing to rise.

About two-thirds of civilian casualties from drones were men and one-third women: this represents a higher proportion of casualties among men compared to other frontline weapons, such as artillery or aerial bombs, which do not use real-time cameras for precise targeting.[6] This may suggest a reliance on unverified assumptions regarding men's military status in targeting decisions.

Civilian casualties from short-range drone attacks, February 2022 to April 2025



[5] https://mod.gov.ua/news/u-2025-roczi-minoboroni-planuye-zakupiti-4-5-mln-fpv-droniv-glib-kanyevskij.
[6] Casualties among men from other weapons in Kherson region is generally 50-55 per cent., for example.

HRMMU staff member interviews a man injured in a drone attack on a company shuttle bus transporting civilian workers to a nearby mining and processing plant on 23 April 2025 at around 7.25 a.m. in Marhanets, Dnipropetrovsk region.

People over age 60 accounted for 34 per cent of civilians killed or injured by short-range drones, despite constituting only 25 per cent of the general population.[7] Older persons are often more reluctant to relocate due to limited financial means, low mobility, or attachment to the land. In some cases, the inability or unwillingness of older persons to relocate also meant that caregivers, usually women, also did not relocate, exposing them to higher risks of attack. Children comprised less than two per cent of casualties, likely due in part to mandatory evacuation orders from frontline communities for families with children.

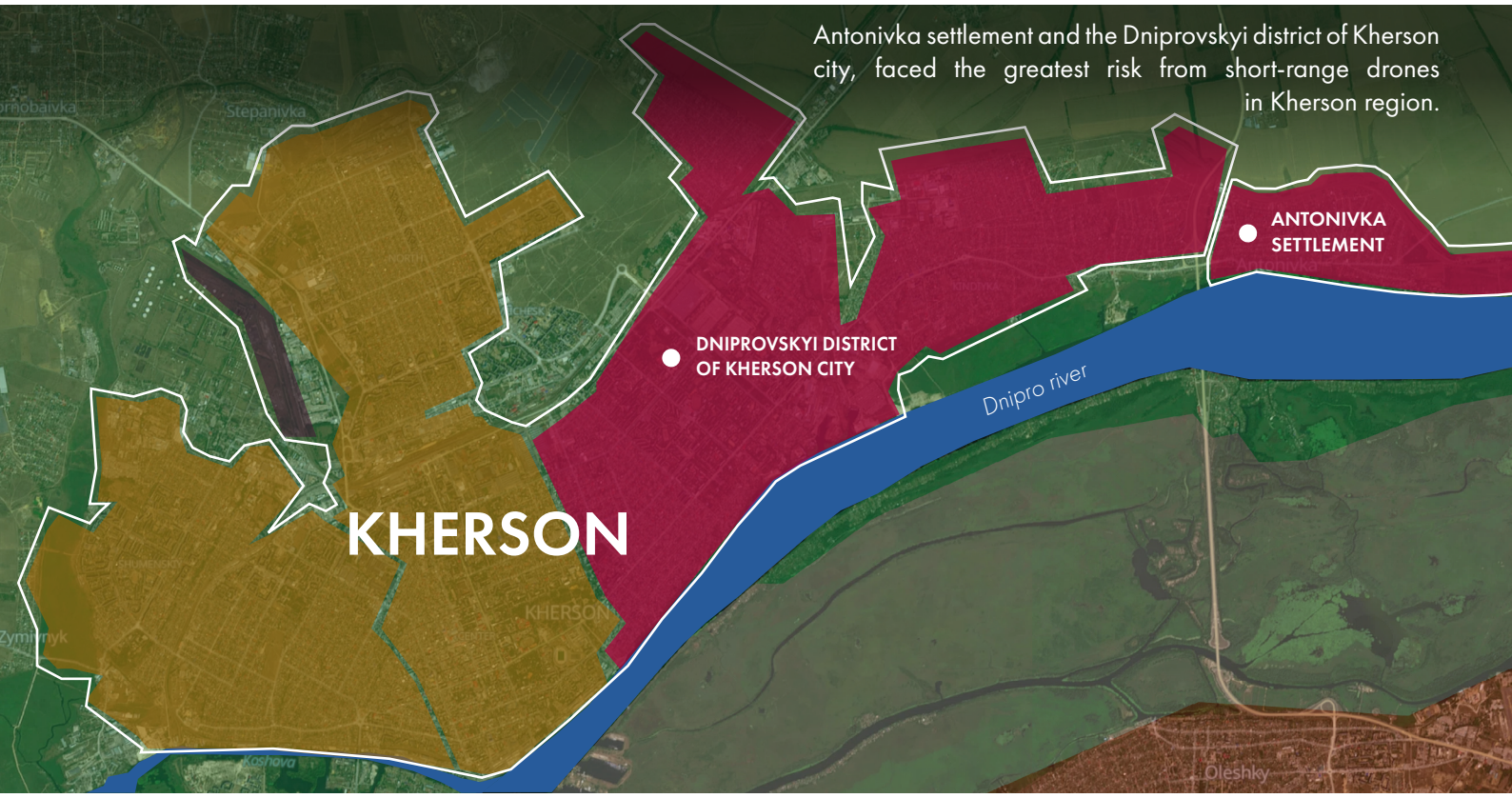
The continued impact on older persons, women of all ages, and men not participating in hostilities raises serious concerns about the adequacy of target identification and verification procedures in drone operations.

> "About two weeks ago, the Russians killed a 71-year-old man with a drone. He was the husband of our nurse. He was walking down the street when they attacked him. Later, they put a video on Telegram channels and wrote that they had killed a Ukrainian soldier."
>
> — local official from Antonivka, Kherson region.

[7] Based on casualties where the precise age is known. From them: 60 per cent men (573) and 40 per cent women (385).

II. ATTACKS IN AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF UKRAINE

Eighty-nine per cent of civilian casualties from short-range drones occurred as a result of Russian attacks in territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine. More than half (62 per cent) occurred in Kherson region (179 killed and 1,481 injured). Civilians living near the banks of the Dnipro River, such as in Antonivka settlement and the Dniprovskyi district of Kherson city, faced the greatest risk, as the river marked the frontline in the region. Between January 2024 and April 2025, 64 civilians were killed and 728 injured by drones in these areas alone.

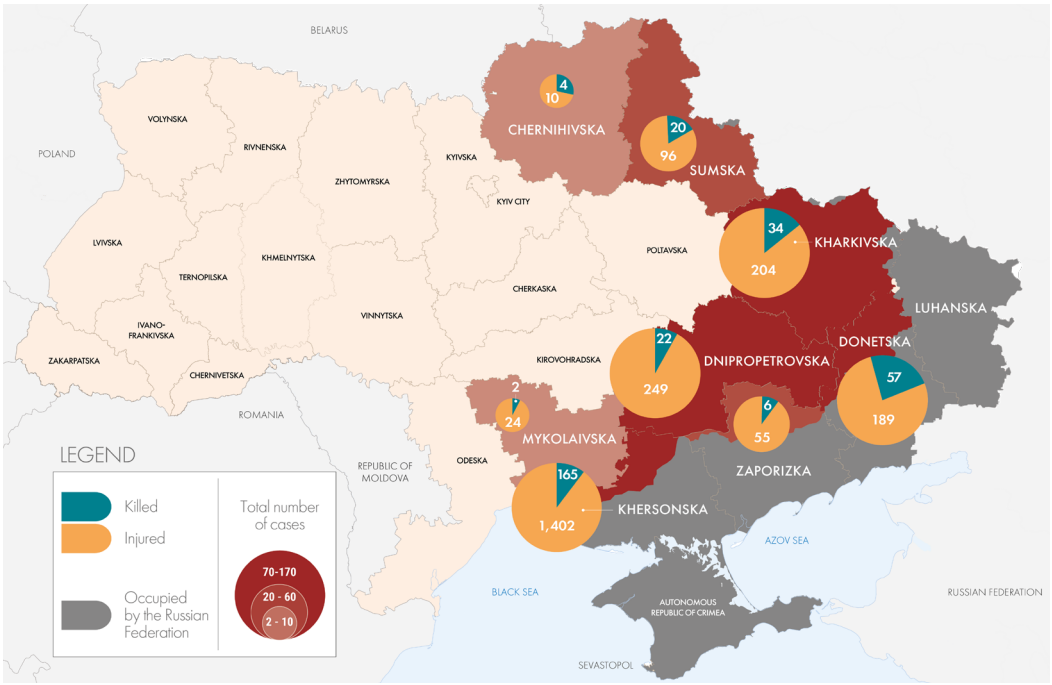


HRMMU also documented an increase in civilian casualties from drones in other frontline regions of Ukraine, which suggests that problematic targeting extends beyond a single location.

Technological advances over the past year have extended the range of drones from around 10 kilometers to up to around 30 kilometers from the frontline, exposing additional populated areas to attacks.

Civilian casualties in Government-controlled frontline regions 2024-2025

region	killed	injured
Khersonska	165	1,402
Donetska	57	189
Kharkivska	34	204
Dnipropertovska	22	249
Sumska	20	96
Zaporizka	6	55
Chernihivska	4	10
Mykolaivska	2	24



ATTACKS ON PRIVATE CIVILIAN CARS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

HRMMU documented that drones killed and injured civilians in at least 237 attacks on civilian cars and buses across frontline regions,[8] even when the vehicles showed no indication of being used for military purposes. The circumstances of these attacks suggest that drone operators did not adequately distinguish between civilian vehicles and military objectives or take the necessary precautions to verify that their targets were indeed military objectives before the attack.

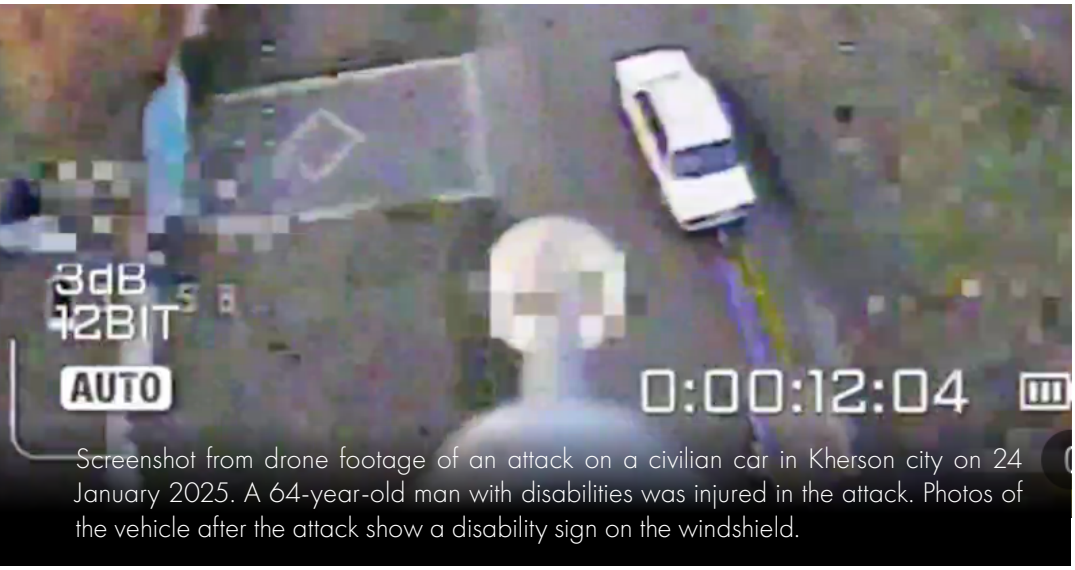
At least 81 civilians (63 men and 18 women) were killed and 328 injured (231 men, 90 women, five boys and two girls) while traveling in private vehicles in Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Sumy and Zaporizhzhia regions. The targets included cars carrying children, families, older persons and persons with disabilities. Russian drone footage from Kherson posted online shows that the operators scanned large areas before homing in on moving cars, which were clearly visible onscreen. In some cases, the drones appeared to target the first moving vehicle they saw. The drones followed the cars, then either dropped munitions on them from above or dove into them, detonating on impact.

Screenshot from drone footage of an attack on a car in Antonivka, Kherson region, on 2 September 2024. The attack killed a 60-year-old doctor and injured his 56-year-old wife.

Representative incidents

» On 9 October 2024, a drone attacked a car with a 76-year-old woman and two neighbors, both 54-year-old-men, who were driving back to their village in Kharkiv region to collect personal belongings after having evacuated. All three were injured in the attack.

» On 21 September 2024, a drone attacked a car in Nikopol, Dnipropetrovsk region, killing a woman and her 12-year-old sister, and injuring the woman's husband and their 4-year-old daughter.

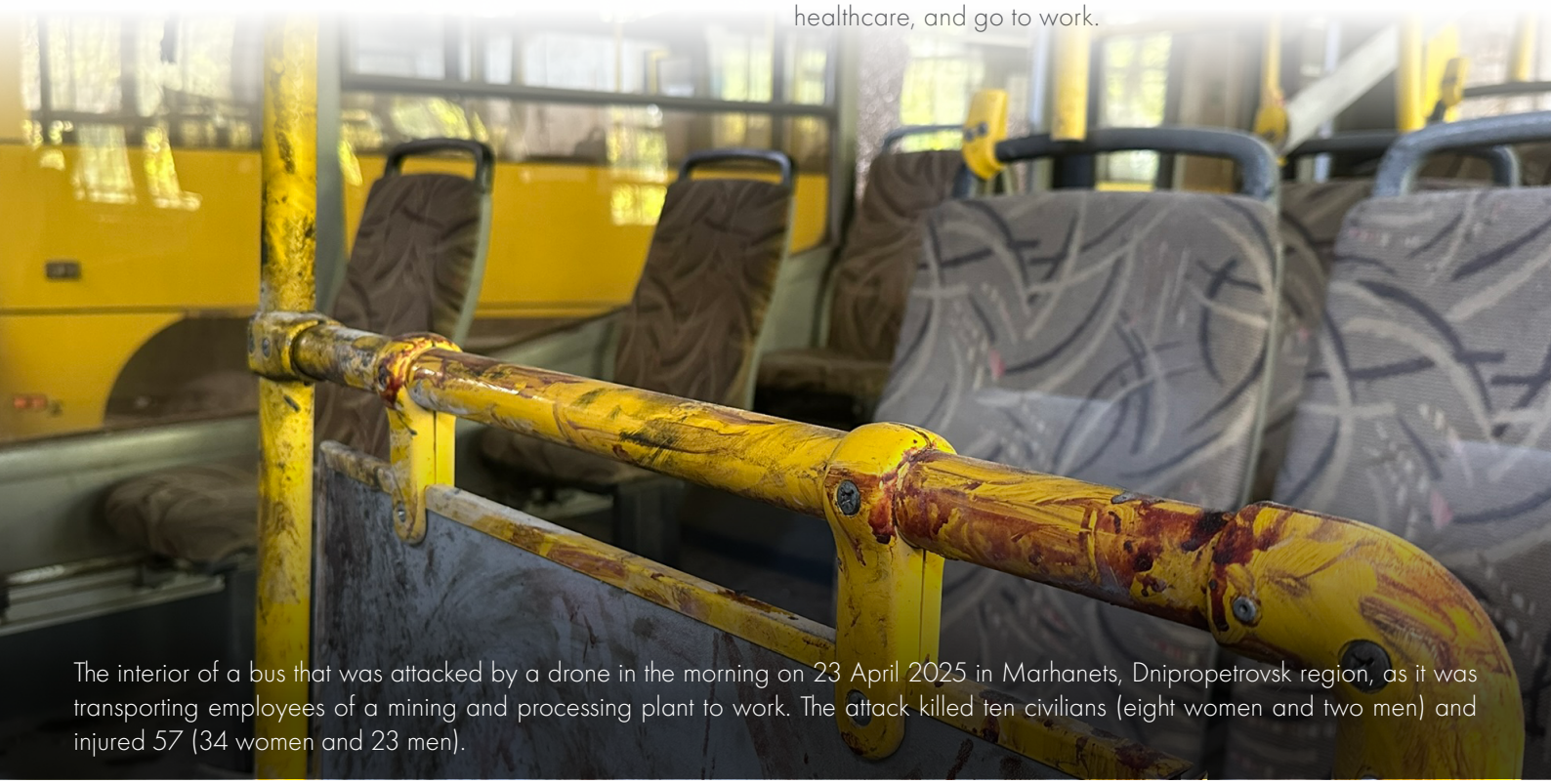


Screenshot from drone footage of an attack on a civilian car in Kherson city on 24 January 2025. A 64-year-old man with disabilities was injured in the attack. Photos of the vehicle after the attack show a disability sign on the windshield.

[8] HRMMU also observed additional incidents where drones targeted civilian cars and buses where no civilian casualties occurred.

Drone attacks on civilian buses caused multiple civilian casualties at once, with at least 18 civilians (13 women and five men) killed and 141 injured (76 women, 62 men, two boys and one girl) in Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Sumy regions. HRMMU reviewed footage where drones followed buses traveling their regular routes in Kherson before dropping munitions precisely through the rooftop ventilation window, killing or injuring civilians inside.

Frequent attacks on cars and public transportation have forced frontline residents to drastically limit their movements, which was particularly harmful for older persons and people with disabilities. In some areas, residents told HRMMU they avoided all vehicular travel, while others hoped that poor visibility from clouds, fog, or nighttime would shield them from drones. Public transportation was also limited or discontinued in some villages due to the danger to bus drivers and passengers. As a result, civilians struggled to safely procure food, access medicine and healthcare, and go to work.

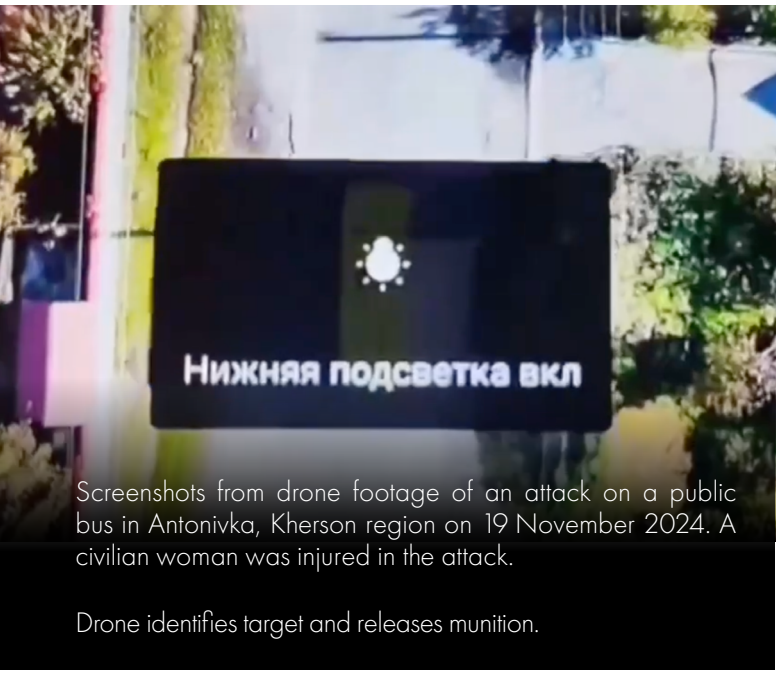


The interior of a bus that was attacked by a drone in the morning on 23 April 2025 in Marhanets, Dnipropetrovsk region, as it was transporting employees of a mining and processing plant to work. The attack killed ten civilians (eight women and two men) and injured 57 (34 women and 23 men).

Representative incidents

» On 1 December 2024, a drone attacked a public bus in Antonivka, killing two civilian women aged 41 and 68, and one civilian man aged 55. The attack also seriously injured eight civilians (four women and four men).

» On 6 January 2025, a drone attacked a public bus in Kherson city, killing two civilians, a 50-year-old man and a 56-year-old woman, and injuring eight civilians (six women and two men).



Screenshots from drone footage of an attack on a public bus in Antonivka, Kherson region on 19 November 2024. A civilian woman was injured in the attack.

Drone identifies target and releases munition.

Munition hits ventilation window on bus roof.

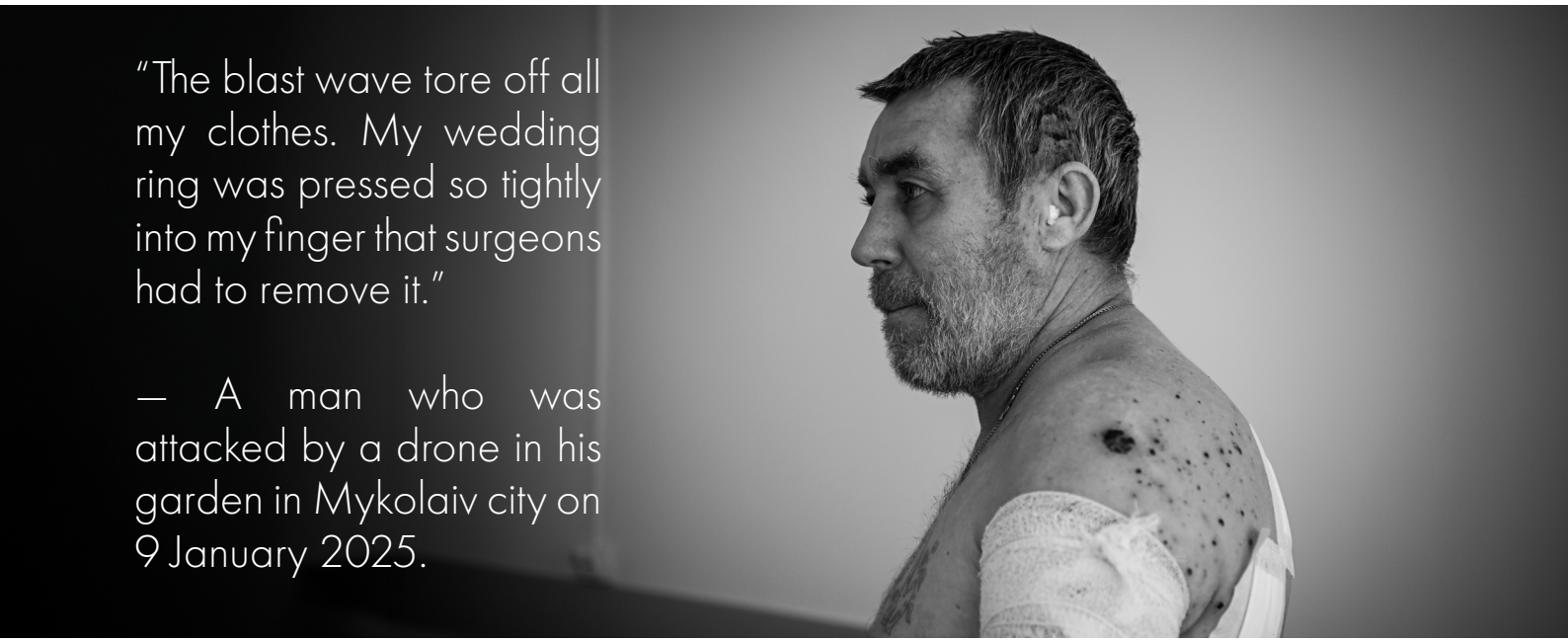
ATTACKS ON CIVILIAN PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS OR THOSE ON THEIR PRIVATE PROPERTY

At least 83 civilians (70 men and 13 women) were killed and 638 (446 men, 177 women, eight boys and seven girls) injured by drones while they were outside on foot, bicycle or moped, in circumstances where drone operators should have been able to identify them as civilians.

HRMMU documented cases where drones attacked residents feeding their dogs, returning home from the market, working in their gardens, talking with neighbours, bicycling to work, waiting for the bus, working in their fields, and fishing. Some people trusted that drone operators would not attack them because they were clearly unarmed, wearing civilian clothing, and participating in normal civilian activities. They expressed shock at being attacked in such circumstances.

Drones attacked some civilians more than once, dropping a second munition after wounding them with the first. One man from Kharkiv region described how he feigned death after being injured so the drone still hovering above him would not drop another munition.

As a result, frontline residents lived in a state of hypervigilance, listening for the sound of drones while outdoors and hoping they would have time to hide before being spotted. These circumstances have further limited residents' mobility, ability to use and live on their own property, farm and fish, including for sustenance, and access to public spaces and essential goods and services.



Representative incidents

» On 3 October 2024, a drone attacked a 62-year-old woman and her 67-year-old husband while they were gathering hay in their field in Kharkiv region. After the drone dropped one munition, the couple fell to the ground, severely wounded. The drone then dropped a second munition on them. Both survived.

» "I pulled at my grey hair with my hands to show that I am an old man. Then I put my hands up to show that I wasn't armed. At that moment, the drone operator dropped a shell on me." — a 68-year-old man who stopped and exited his car when he noticed that a drone was following the car as he and his wife were returning from vegetable-shopping in Antonivka, Kherson region, on 8 October 2024. The man was injured in the attack.

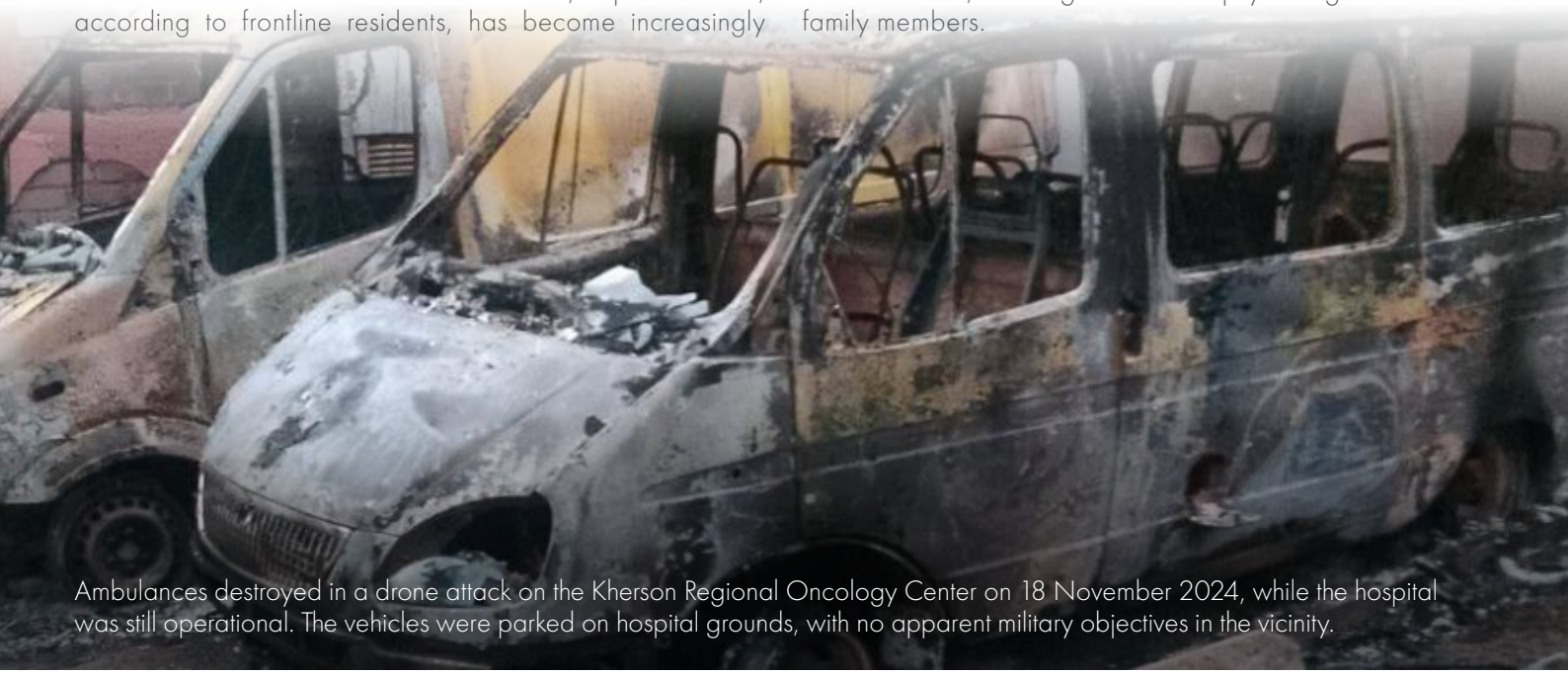

Drone footage from 15 September 2024 showing a pedestrian trying to escape after a drone dropped a munition near him. The person is unarmed, carrying a plastic bag, and dressed in civilian clothing.

AMBULANCES AND FIRST RESPONDERS

Drones have attacked ambulances and emergency first responders on at least 29 occasions. Ambulances in Ukraine are marked with distinctive emblems, meaning that drone operators should have been able to identify them as medical transport with minimal verification effort. At least two civilians (men) were killed and 34 injured (24 men and 10 women) in these attacks, including doctors, paramedics, and ambulance drivers.

Drones attacked ambulances en route to emergencies, preventing first responders from reaching those in need of assistance. Drones also attacked medical personnel attending to the wounded on sites of earlier attacks, a practice that, according to frontline residents, has become increasingly common. Given the real-time capacity of drone cameras, operators should have, in principle, been able to identify circumstances where first responders were providing aid.

The attacks on ambulances and first responders negatively affected people's general access to medical care. The destruction of critical emergency vehicles left frontline hospitals with fewer resources to treat the injured. The high threat of drone attacks in certain places delayed or even prevented medical personnel from evacuating people with disabilities or providing assistance, including in the case of pregnancy and birth. Recovery teams in some areas faced delays in retrieving the deceased, causing additional psychological stress to family members.



Ambulances destroyed in a drone attack on the Kherson Regional Oncology Center on 18 November 2024, while the hospital was still operational. The vehicles were parked on hospital grounds, with no apparent military objectives in the vicinity.

Representative incidents

» On 27 August 2024, a drone attacked an ambulance on its way to assist civilians injured in an artillery strike in Antonivka, Kherson region. The attack injured the ambulance driver and two paramedics and prevented the medical personnel from reaching the wounded civilians.

» On 28 October 2024, medical personnel were tending to three civilians who had been injured in a drone attack the day before in Antonivka, Kherson region, when another drone attacked. The attack killed one of the paramedics and severely injured the ambulance driver and another paramedic.

Screenshot from video of a drone attack on an ambulance in Antonivka, Kherson region, on 27 August 2024.

Photo of the ambulance after the attack.

HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS, ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Drones also attacked humanitarian actors distributing aid and evacuating civilians from dangerous areas, important civilian infrastructure, as well as government employees providing essential services to the civilian population. In at least 36 cases, these attacks caused civilian casualties. The distinctive appearance of some of the vehicles that were attacked, including visible markings, should have alerted drone operators to their civilian nature and prevented their targeting.

HRMMU documented attacks on NGO and religious relief vehicles delivering water, food, solid fuel and other aid to frontline communities, and on clearly marked evacuation convoys bringing older and vulnerable civilians away from dangerous frontline areas. An official from Antonivka told HRMMU that despite efforts to diversify where humanitarian aid was delivered and stored, drones had attacked all aid centres. Others described how constant attacks on bread lorries meant bread was no longer delivered to certain villages.

Attacks on civilian infrastructure temporarily disrupted the provision of essential services such as water, gas, and electricity to the civilian populations in some places. Civilian repair workers restoring energy and other critical infrastructure were also targeted, which delayed crucial repair work, including in places like Kherson city and Zolochiv settlement (Kharkiv region), undermining efforts to restore services. In several incidents, drones attacked police vehicles and employees while they were evacuating civilians or collecting information about civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure.

On 20 April 2025, a drone attacked a clearly marked humanitarian vehicle near Zoria in Donetsk region while it was accompanying a car with elderly civilians evacuating from Kostinatynivka.

A second drone dropped another munition after the evacuees and volunteers exited their cars, injuring one of the evacuees and a volunteer.

Representative incidents

» On 14 August 2024, a drone dropped multiple munitions on a water-delivery truck used by a humanitarian NGO to refill drinking water in Kherson City, despite clear humanitarian markings. Two civilian men working for the NGO were killed, and the NGO was forced to suspend water, bread, and gas distribution to the area.

» On 6 October 2024, a drone struck two vehicles evacuating civilians from frontline areas in the part of Donetsk region controlled by the Government of Ukraine, killing one of the humanitarian volunteers and injuring another. The first vehicle in the convoy was clearly marked as a humanitarian evacuation vehicle.

» On 25 November 2024, a pastor, his son, local residents and representatives from a religious organization were distributing solid fuel for heating out of a white civilian van near the Solonchaky village council in Mykolaiv region when a drone attacked them. The pastor and his son were severely injured; the son later died in the hospital. Four local residents were also injured in the attack.

LANDMINES AND EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR (ERW)

Local authorities and medical personnel in Kharkiv and Kherson regions reported to HRMMU in early 2025 that drones had begun scattering anti-personnel landmines in populated frontline areas. Rather than detonating on impact, these mines explode when triggered later by sensor. For example, at least two civilian men and one civilian woman were killed on 9 March 2025 when a drone-distributed mine detonated in a residential yard in Kharkiv region.

Explosive remnants of drones also pose risks to the civilian population. HRMMU documented two cases in May 2025 when explosive remnants of drones detonated as civilians were inspecting or attempting to remove them from their property. One civilian man was killed in Kherson region, and a civilian father and daughter were injured in Dnipropetrovsk region.

Anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance pose serious long-term risks to civilians and prevent families from later returning to their communities safely.

III. ATTACKS IN TERRITORY CONTROLLED BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

Eleven per cent of civilian casualties (61 civilians killed and 282 injured) caused by short-range drones between 24 February 2022 and 30 April 2025 occurred in territory occupied by the Russian Federation. Residents of occupied areas of Donetsk region, particularly the cities of Horlivka and Donetsk, were most affected, with 36 civilians killed and 247 injured.

In occupied territory, at least 32 civilians were killed and 93 injured in drone attacks on cars and buses. In the cases reviewed by HRMMU, drones attacked civilian vehicles and public buses that showed no sign of being used for military purposes. At least nine civilians were killed and 48 injured while being outdoors on foot and on bicycles. At least six attacks struck ambulances, with one civilian killed and four injured in two of these attacks.

A Ukrainian government official from an occupied area of Kherson region near the Dnipro riverbank told HRMMU that their constituents described "drones flying like flies" around the village, with regular attacks on vehicles creating danger for evacuations and other essential movements.[9]

Screenshot from video of an intensive care ambulance car hit by a short-range drone in Horlivka on 12 January 2024. As a result, a 58-year-old female paramedic was killed and at least two medical workers injured: a 46-year-old woman and a 45-year-old man.

Representative incidents

» On 8 December 2024, a drone dropped a munition on a public bus in Horlivka, injuring four civilians (three women and one man), all over age 60. A few hours later, a drone attacked another public bus, also in Horlivka, injuring a 72-year-old man.

» On 15 December 2024, a drone attacked a civilian car in Horlivka, killing a 66-year-old man and injuring a 66-year-old woman.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Russian authorities have also reported an increase in civilian casualties from short-range drones inside the Russian Federation, particularly in the first months of 2025. However, as they have not consistently disaggregated casualties by specific weapon type, HRMMU has been unable to adequately distinguish reported figures. HRMMU has also been unable to verify all casualties, the protected status of those reported killed and injured, or the circumstances of the attacks, due a lack of access and limited publicly available information.

[9] The official no longer resided in occupied territory but maintained close contact with their constituents.

IV. CONCLUSION

LEGAL ANALYSIS

Principles of distinction and precautions in attack

Attacks on civilians and civilian objects are prohibited under international humanitarian law. All parties to a conflict must distinguish between combatants and civilians, and may only target military objectives.[10] Further, the parties must take "constant care" to spare the civilian population in the conduct of military operations, including by doing everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are lawful.[11] In case of doubt regarding the civilian status of a person or object, the attacking party shall presume that the person is a civilian and refrain from attack.[12]

The camera on short-range drones used in Ukraine allows their operators to identify and verify targets in real-time, and to strike them with exceptional precision. Drone attacks documented by HRMMU illustrate, however, that drone operators routinely attacked civilians and civilian vehicles showing no signs of being used for military purposes. In such cases, drone operators, at the very least, failed to distinguish between military objectives and civilians, or to take sufficient precautions to verify that their targets are neither civilians nor civilian objects, in violation of international humanitarian law.

These failures were particularly pronounced in areas controlled by the Government of Ukraine. The nature, circumstances, frequency and non-cancellation of attacks by Russian drone operators in some areas, including Kherson region, are consistent with a policy of systematic targeting of any vehicle or person in a determined area, in violation of the principle of distinction.[13]

In some cases, drone operators appear to have deliberately targeted civilians and civilian objects, including ambulances and first responders. Intentionally attacking civilians or civilian objects is a war crime.[14] Intentionally directing attacks on duly identified medical personnel and transport is also a war crime.[15]

The scattering of landmines by Russian drones in populated areas appears to violate the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks and the general prohibition on using remotely delivered mines. That prohibition provides for use only in very limited circumstances and subject to strict restrictions, such as the obligation to provide effective advance warnings, which has not occurred.[16]

Precautions against the effects of attack

The parties are obliged to take precautionary measures to protect the civilian population, individual civilians, and civilian objects under their control against the dangers resulting from military operations to the maximum extent feasible, including by avoiding locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas.[17]

Drone footage from frontline areas of Kherson region controlled by the Government of Ukraine has shown instances of individuals wearing military uniforms and sometimes carrying weapons while using unmarked vehicles indistinguishable from those used by civilians. Footage and interviews from frontline areas of Kherson region occupied by the Russian Federation have also indicated that members of the Russian armed forces have used civilian clothing and civilian cars. Such practices violate the fundamental rule that combatants are obliged to distinguish themselves from the civilian population. Soldiers assembling in populated areas or using vehicles that appear to be civilian objects, not only increases the risk to civilians, but also violates the obligation to take the abovementioned passive precautionary measures.[18]

One party's failure to take adequate precautionary measures does not, however, absolve the party launching the attack of its obligations to strictly and fully comply with the principles of distinction and precautions in attack.

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[10] Article 48 of Additional Protocol I.
[11] Article 57 of Additional Protocol I.
[12] Article 50 of Additional Protocol I.
[13] Numerous posts on the social media channels that contain footage from drone attacks by Russian armed forces claim that certain areas of Kherson region are a "red zone" where any person or object may be attacked. Statements like, "Any movement of motor vehicles will be considered a legitimate target" are common. HRMMU has not been able to verify the identity of the administrators) of these channels, whether they are affiliated with the Russian armed forces, or whether such statements reflect the official policy of Russian armed forces.
[14] Statue of the International Criminal Court, art 8(2)(b)(i)(ii).
[15] Statute of the International Criminal Court, art 8(2)(b)(xxiv).
[16] Convention on certain Conventional Weapons, Protocol (II) on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, article 6.
[17] Article 58 of Additional Protocol I.
[18] ICRC, Commentary to Additional Protocol 1, para. 2252 (article 58).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The violations documented in this bulletin underscore the urgent need for fundamental changes in military approaches to the use of short-range drones, including the adoption and integration of concrete civilian protection measures at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, to ensure adherence to international humanitarian law.

HRMMU reiterates its recommendation to the Russian Federation to immediately cease its use of armed force against Ukraine and withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine, as per United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1 on the "Aggression against Ukraine", adopted on 2 March 2022, and in line with the binding order of the International Court of Justice on provisional measures of 16 March 2022 for the Russian Federation to immediately suspend the military operations.

a. Respect and ensure full compliance with IHL in the conduct of hostilities;

b. Ensure drone operators receive sufficient training in IHL, including on the principles of distinction and precaution;

c. Take all feasible precautions to avoid, or at the very least minimize, civilian casualties, including by verifying that targets are military objectives and not civilians or civilian objects and to suspend an attack if it becomes apparent that it would not comply with the requirements of IHL;

d. Systematically conduct after-action assessments following operations using short-range drones to ensure IHL compliance. Revise and update tactical guidance based on the results of the assessments.

e. Strengthen passive precautionary measures, including guidance on the use of civilian objects in frontline areas, to mitigate risks and prevent harm to civilians. Avoid locating military personnel and objects within or near densely populated areas, to the maximum extent feasible, and ensure strict compliance by combatants with the obligation to distinguish themselves from civilians.

f. Ensure prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged violations of IHL and IHRL, and ensure that alleged perpetrators, including drone operators and persons in positions of command, are duly prosecuted;

g. Maintain sustained attention and humanitarian assistance for people in frontline areas at risk from short-range drone attacks, with a focus on persons in vulnerable situations such as older persons and persons with disabilities.

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