

Donetsk Separatists Introduce Death Penalty for Treason

By [The Moscow Times](#)

August 18, 2014



A separatist guards a checkpoint near the village of Rozsypne in the Donetsk region.

In a sign that separatist leaders in eastern Ukraine are struggling with discord in the ranks, Donetsk separatists announced Monday they were setting up military tribunals and bringing in the death penalty.

The self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, or DNR, said it would bring in military tribunals with the right to pass the death sentence for a string of offences including treason, espionage, attempts on the lives of the leadership and sabotage.

The announcement, issued on the Donetsk's separatists website, quoted leading rebel officials as saying that other serious violations including looting would also be dealt with harshly.

"Introducing the death penalty is not revenge, it is the highest degree of social protection," a senior separatist leader, Vladimir Antyufeyev, was quoted as saying.

Reports of executions orchestrated by separatists in eastern Ukraine have, for months, been used as a propaganda tool by both sides in the Ukraine conflict, though none of the reports has been independently verified.

In one of the most high-profile incidents to date, a document surfaced in May purportedly showed one of the separatists' main leaders, Igor Strelkov, had ordered the executions of two DNR militants on charges of looting.

The document apparently showed Strelkov, a Russian citizen also known as Igor Girkin, had based the ruling on a 1941 Stalin-era law introducing capital punishment for theft of property.

A month later, in June, separatist leader Igor “The Imp” Bezler published a video showing two blindfolded Ukrainian army officers apparently being shot to death by a firing squad as a warning to Ukraine government forces. He later dismissed the video as fake.

Material from the Moscow Times was included in this report.

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