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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

UN Human Rights Report Cites Murder, Kidnap and Torture in Ukraine

By The Moscow Times

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Medics assist a man who sustained injuries in what local residents said was a recent shelling in Donetsk Aug. 26, 2014.

Separatists in Ukraine and Ukraine government forces are guilty of a wide array of human rights abuses, including torture, a leaked UN report says.

The report by the 34-member UN monitoring mission, prepared by the UN human rights office in Geneva, said the death toll has risen to at least 2,200 since the fighting began in mid-April, with an average of at least 36 people killed daily. That is up from at least 2,086 on Aug. 10 and 1,129 on July 26.

"Armed groups continue to commit killings, abductions, physical and psychological torture, ill treatment, executions, murder and other serious human rights abuses," the report said, adding that violations were "disproportionately targeting civilians."

At least 468 people are believed to be held captive by rebels, according to the report, which covers the period from July 16 to Aug. 17.

"The Ukraine military has reported shelling from (Russian) territory ... and of the illegal use of landmines in Ukraine territory," the monitors said.

On the topic of the July 17 crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, the report said sporadic fighting has made it impossible for international investigators to assess the site.

The reported abuses by the Ukrainian military and special Interior Ministry battalions include "arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and torture," the report said.

The UN missions of Russia and Ukraine did not have an immediate reaction to the report.

Russian President Vladimir Putin urged his Ukrainian counterpart on Tuesday not to escalate an offensive against the rebels while Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko replied by demanding a halt to arms shipments from Russia to the separatists.

The UN monitors said the humanitarian situation has worsened as the Ukrainian military has tightened its blockade of rebel strongholds in Luhansk, Donetsk and Horlivka.

They said "government forces are obliged to ensure the unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief and goods essential to the survival of the population."

The rebels "are now professionally equipped and appear to benefit from a steady supply of sophisticated weapons and ammunition, enabling them to shoot down Ukrainian military aircraft such as helicopters, fighter jets and transport planes."

Russia denies Kiev's allegations that it is sending troops and armor to Ukraine. The UN report did not say who was sending arms to the rebels.

Fighting in eastern Ukraine broke out in April, a month after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula in response to the toppling of a pro-Moscow president in Kiev.

The monitors said that in Crimea, "harassment and discrimination continued against Ukrainian nationals, Crimean Tatar and other minorities."

"No serious attempts have been made to investigate allegations of human rights abuses committed by the so-called Crimean self-defense forces following the March 'referendum,'" it said.

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