

# Ukraine: Mass graves in Izium confirm dark cost of Russian aggression



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In response to the reported discovery of a mass burial site containing the bodies of Ukrainian civilians and military in a forest near the town of Izium, Kharkiv region, which the Ukrainian army recaptured following months of Russian occupation, Marie Struthers, Amnesty International's Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, said:

"These newly reported discoveries confirm our darkest fears. The people of Ukraine and the world deserve to know how exactly those buried in the forest near Izium have died. "For every unlawful killing or other war crime, there must be justice and reparation for victims and their families and a fair trial and accountability for suspected perpetrators. "We reiterate our call for the international community to provide resources to assist Ukraine in securing evidence and conducting the necessary investigations into how these people died and who was responsible. "Those who commit or order crimes under international law should remember: there is no statute of limitation, and justice will catch up with them. To ensure justice and reparation for victims, trials of those suspected of war crimes must adhere to international standards for fair trial."

In March, Amnesty sounded the alarm bell over the fate of civilians in Izium which had been under relentless attack by Russian forces since day four of Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine.

After retaking control of Izium in Kharkiv region, the Ukrainian authorities announced that they had discovered an improvised grave site in a nearby forest where they counted more than 440 recent burials. According to Oleh Kotenko, Ukraine's

Commissioner for Missing Persons, the grave site was hastily dug to deal with numerous casualties, including from heavy shelling of the town by the Russian forces in February and March this year. Photographs and testimonies sourced by journalists from the area are consistent with this report.

Journalists reported that several wooden crosses on the graves bear names of those presumed to be buried beneath, while most have only numbers, including one on a mass grave indicating that 17 Ukrainian soldiers are buried there.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February this year, Amnesty has documented numerous serious violations of international humanitarian law (the law of war) by Russian forces, including unlawful attacks on civilians, residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, unlawful killings and other war crimes.

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