

## Yahidne village case: notification to Russian Government of complaints brought by Ukrainian civilians held for one month in 2022 by Russian troops in school basement

The European Court of Human Rights has given notice<sup>1</sup> to the Government of Russia of the applications **Menyaylo and Others v. Russia** and **Lepekha and Others v. Russia** (nos. 34851/24 and 6972/23).

The case concerns 111 Ukrainian civilians who were captured and held in a school basement by Russian soldiers during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in March 2022. The applicants in the case allege that the school was in effect a military base, that they were used as human shields, and that they were kept in cramped and inhuman and degrading conditions for almost a month, resulting in the deaths of eleven people. Among those trapped were women and children, as well as sick, elderly and disabled people.

The [statement of facts](#) in the applications has been submitted to the parties, with questions from the Court. It is available in English on the Court's website.

These applications concern the events following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which were examined in the 2025 judgment [Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia](#). See also here for the [FAQ](#) on Inter-State cases.

[Russia is no longer a party to the European Convention](#), but it remains responsible for alleged violations of the European Convention during the period when it was still a signatory, that is up until 16 September 2022.

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Notification of a case is a stage in the Court's proceedings when a Government is informed that an application against it is pending and that the Court is requesting more information. The Court cannot take up cases or issues by itself; it examines possible human-rights violations when people or States submit a complaint to it. Notification (often referred to as "communication") does not mean that a case is admissible or that there has been a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court's ruling in the case is made at a later stage. This could either be a decision on admissibility or a decision on admissibility and merits as part of one judgment.

The applicants are 111 Ukrainian nationals most of whom used to live in the village of Yahidne (Ukraine).

On 3 March 2022 Yahidne was occupied by Russian armed forces. Over the next two days Russian servicemen allegedly captured over 360 civilians, including the applicants in the case, their relatives and other local residents, and took them at gunpoint to the basement of the village school.

According to the applicants, the school was guarded by soldiers and they were not allowed to leave the basement, or very rarely, until 30 March 2022 when the troops withdrew from the village. They were kept in extremely cramped conditions (0.5 sq. metres per person) with limited access to food, water, daylight, toilets and medical care. There was little or no sleeping or seating arrangements and

<sup>1</sup> Under Rule 54 § 2 (b) of the Rules of Court: "the Chamber or the President of the Section may decide to give notice of the application or part of the application to the respondent Contracting Party and invite that Party to submit written observations thereon and, upon receipt thereof, invite the applicant to submit observations in reply."

they were in constant fear of the Russian soldiers who threatened them with firearms and grenades and subjected them to systematic humiliations.

Among those trapped were particularly vulnerable individuals, including children, elderly people, cancer patients, a pregnant woman and people with reduced mobility. Eleven allegedly died in the basement, including three of the applicants' close relatives: a husband after hallucinations due to the constant darkness; a grandmother from the pain of pressure sores and starvation; and, a mother from low blood pressure caused by prolonged sitting and lack of air as well as the lack of adequate medical care.

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The applications were lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 29 July 2022 and 5 January 2023, respectively.

All the applicants complain that Russian troops had unlawfully confined them in the school basement for approximately a month, putting their lives in danger, in particular by using them as human shields, and subjecting them to inhuman and degrading conditions, systematic humiliation and threats of execution. They allege that the ill-treatment left them with lasting psychological trauma, requiring medical treatment. They also all allege that the Russian authorities failed to carry out an effective investigation into the circumstances in which their lives had been put at risk and into their alleged ill-treatment, and that they had no effective remedies in Russia to bring their complaints.

Some of the applicants also make specific allegations of human-rights abuse by Russian soldiers during the occupation of Yahidne, submitting that Russian soldiers were responsible for the deaths of their relatives in the basement, as well as for a killing, a disappearance, an attempted rape, a severe beating, destruction of property and looting.

The applicants rely on a number of Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights, including Articles 2 (right to life), 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment), 5 (right to liberty and security), 8 (right to respect for private and family life and home) and 13 (right to an effective remedy); and, Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 (freedom of movement), Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 (protection of property) and Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (right to education).

On 10 June 2026 the Government of Russia were given notice of the applications, with questions from the Court.

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**The European Court of Human Rights** was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.