



STRATEGIC HUMAN RIGHTS LITIGATION

CEHRI and CFJ file case in Austria against Russian servicemen for sexual crimes committed in Ukraine



The Centre for the Enforcement of Human Rights International (CEHRI) and the Clooney Foundation for Justice (CFJ) filed a case with the Austrian federal prosecutor today requesting an investigation into crimes of sexual violence and murder committed in Ukraine by Russian forces.

The organizations submitted detailed evidence against the perpetrators and are representing two women who were raped by Russian soldiers who occupied their village in the Kyiv area in the early days of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022.

“This case is first and foremost a testament to the incredible courage of the two Ukrainian women who chose to speak up and seek justice,” said Anya Neistat, Legal Director of The

Docket. “Perpetrators of sexual violence assume the victims’ silence would shield them from accountability. In this case, their victims are determined to prove them wrong.”

“Olena” and “Olha” (names changed) were taken from their homes at night by drunken Russian soldiers, accompanied by their commander. The soldiers first came to Olena’s home. When she asked whether the soldiers would kill her, the commander answered that she had nothing to fear because “the boys just want to have some fun.” The soldiers then went to Olha’s house. When her husband tried to prevent them from taking her away, the soldiers shot him dead on the spot.

After being repeatedly raped and subjected to other forms of sexual abuse, both women managed to escape and return to their homes. A few weeks later, Ukrainian forces liberated the village. One of the women stayed in the village, and the other fled to Austria.

The crimes were committed as part of widespread and systematic pattern of human rights violations against the civilian population on the territories occupied by Russian forces, extensively documented by the UN bodies and other organizations.

The case is filed against the direct perpetrators of the crimes as well as seven mid- and high-level commanders identified as suspects by CFJ’s Docket initiative, which pursues accountability for atrocity crimes around the world. The case contains detailed evidence gathered by The Docket during on-the-ground investigations in Ukraine as well as extensive analysis of open-source data used to collect information about individual perpetrators, command structures, and other supporting evidence.

In October 2023, The Docket filed [three cases](#) on other patterns of crimes committed in Ukraine with the German federal prosecutor, requesting an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine. The Docket also shared the investigative dossiers with the International Criminal Court.

CEHRI, an Austrian non-profit organization, carried out a detailed legal analysis showing that Austria has jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute these crimes as war crimes and crimes against humanity in Austrian national courts, based on extraterritorial principles of jurisdiction. This includes the principle of universal jurisdiction, which allows states to investigate and prosecute the most serious international crimes regardless of where they were committed or the nationality of the offender or victims. This principle is based on the understanding that such crimes concern the international community as a whole.

Based on the convincing evidence presented against specific perpetrators, CEHRI and CFJ call on the Austrian authorities to open a criminal investigation and issue arrest warrants for the suspects, which would enable their arrest, extradition, and prosecution. The arrest warrants can be enforced in countries outside of Austria through the Europol and Interpol systems.

“We are honored to represent the Ukrainian survivors in this groundbreaking case – the first of its kind in Austria,” said Tatiana Urdaneta, CEHRI’s founding member. “We now hope that the prosecutors will act without delay to move the case forward.”

Additional information, including about our methodology and Austria’s jurisdiction over the case, can be found [here](#).

About the Clooney Foundation for Justice’s Docket Initiative:

The Docket triggers prosecutions against perpetrators of war crimes and mass atrocities, and represents survivors in their pursuit of justice. The Docket seeks to hold abusers of human rights accountable to survivors, victims, and their families. Its work takes place in conflict zones and courtrooms. The Docket gathers evidence of international crimes and uses that evidence to trigger official investigations and prosecutions by international, regional, or national courts. The Docket represents and supports survivors, witnesses, and victims’ families in court, helping them tell their stories and seek legal accountability.

About the Centre for the Enforcement of Human Rights International (CEHRI):

CEHRI is an Austrian non-profit organization focused on strategic litigation concerning anti-poverty, environmental human rights, and international crimes. CEHRI’s work is victim-centered and based on two pillars: legal and psychosocial support, which allows survivors to actively participate in legal decisions and testify, while their wellbeing is safeguarded and therapeutic justice is being achieved. CEHRI contributes to the fight against impunity by representing survivors of human rights violations in Syria, Sudan, Iran, and today in Ukraine.

For more information about the work of The Docket, please visit our website: www.cfj.org

Survivors and victims can reach The Docket by email: docket_ukraine@protonmail.com

For press requests, please contact media@cfj.org.

For further insight into the work and mission of CEHRI, please visit our website: <http://www.cehri.org>.

For general questions please reach out to info@cehri.org.

For press requests, please contact doireann.mccarthy@cehri.org