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ISW is introducing a new product line tracking activities in the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine. The occupation updates will examine Russian efforts to consolidate administrative control of annexed areas and forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems. This product line is intended to replace the section of the Daily Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment covering activities in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.

To read ISW's assessment of how Russian activities in occupied areas of Ukraine are part of a coerced Russification and ethnic cleansing campaign, click [here](#).

Key Takeaways:

- A recent *BBC Verify* investigation highlights the scale of Russia's property seizures in occupied Mariupol, supporting ISW's assessment of how Russian occupation officials are using bureaucratic tools to exert control over occupied Ukraine.
- Russian occupation officials continue efforts to surveil and securitize occupied Ukraine. The increased surveillance and securitization of occupied Ukraine are likely intended to encourage self-censorship and facilitate Russian occupation authorities' efforts to prosecute perceived anti-Russian sentiment.
- Russia continues to systemically violate the human rights of the residents in occupied Crimea.

A recent *BBC Verify* investigation highlights the scale of Russia's property seizures in occupied Mariupol, supporting ISW's assessment of how Russian occupation officials are using bureaucratic tools to exert control over occupied Ukraine.[1] The investigation, published on April 17, found that Russian occupation authorities have identified at least 5,700 Mariupol homes for seizure, most of which belong to individuals who either fled or died during Russia's 2022 siege of the city. *BBC Verify* noted that Russian occupation authorities use a complicated bureaucratic process to seize properties they deem "ownerless," which requires the owner to appear in occupied Mariupol within 10 days with a Russian passport and relevant ownership documents. If no owner appears before the occupation authorities within 30 days, the occupation administration begins the process of formally registering the property as "ownerless" and transferring it to city (occupation administration) ownership after three months. *BBC Verify* notably found that only residents of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) with Russian passports are eligible to take ownership of such seized homes under the current process in Mariupol, suggesting that this scheme is likely an effort

to exert pressure specifically on residents of occupied Donetsk Oblast to obtain Russian citizenship. This policy may vary between occupation regimes, however. Ukrainian Zaporizhia Oblast Head Ivan Fedorov stated on April 7 that Russian occupation authorities in occupied Zaporizhia Oblast are transferring seized property to Russian officials and military personnel as part of a campaign to repopulate occupied Ukraine with Russian citizens from Russia.[2] *BBC Verify* noted that ongoing property seizures in Mariupol appear to be part of a wider Russian effort to Russify the city, and cited satellite images showing the recent construction of a new naval academy and war memorial.[3]

The scale on which Russian authorities are seizing Ukrainian property is staggering. Ukraine's Luhansk Oblast Administration Head Oleksiy Kharchenko stated on April 19 that Russia has seized and nationalized over 114,000 properties in occupied Luhansk Oblast (likely since 2022).[4] Russian authorities transferred over 17,000 of these properties to the regional occupation administration, 46,000 properties to municipal-level occupation administrations, and 51,000 properties to the Russian federal government. ISW recently assessed that Russian property seizures throughout occupied Ukraine are part of the wider campaign to collect personal information on residents of occupied areas, forcibly passportize Ukrainian citizens, generate profit from the occupation of Ukraine, and facilitate the relocation of Russian citizens to occupied Ukraine from Russia.[5]

Russian occupation officials continue efforts to surveil and securitize occupied Ukraine.

Crimea occupation governor Sergei Aksyonov reported on April 17 that his administration will begin implementing an “intelligent video surveillance system” to “increase the level of public safety, law and order, and anti-terrorist activity” in occupied Crimea.[6] Aksyonov noted that the surveillance system will collect videos and use artificial intelligence (AI) to process them before sending data to Russian law enforcement agents. Russia has employed similar systems to track domestic dissent and has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on installing surveillance cameras in occupied Crimea to track pro-Ukrainian partisan activity.[7] Physical video surveillance is just one layer of a more complex Russian system meant to surveil the activities of residents of the occupied areas—Russian federal censor Roskomnadzor issued a decree on March 31 that will require telecommunications operators to continuously collect and send information about users' internet activities to Russian federal control bodies, including IP addresses and geolocation data.[8] The March 31 Roskomnadzor decree may be linked to the recent arrest of a resident of occupied Simferopol, whom the Russian State Security Service (FSB) accused on April 18 of posting anti-Russian content on an online chat room.[9]

Ukrainian Mariupol Mayoral Advisor Petro Andryushchenko reported on April 18 that the Russian “AN-SECURITY” private security company has “monopolized” the provision of security services in occupied Donetsk Oblast.[10] Andryushchenko noted that “AN-SECURITY” has personal links to Rosgvardia Head Viktor Zolotov and former DNR Science and Education Minister Olga Koludanova, suggesting that Koludanova used her connections to Zolotov to import this private security firm to occupied Donetsk Oblast. “AN-SECURITY” has several active job listings on its website advertising work at schools and other educational institutions in occupied Donetsk Oblast.[11] Russia has already militarized most schools in occupied Ukraine, and the presence of private security personnel will only add to that dynamic and increase pressure on residents to act supportively towards the occupation regime. The increased surveillance and securitization of occupied Ukraine is likely intended to encourage self-censorship and facilitate Russian occupation authorities' efforts to prosecute perceived

Russia continues to systemically violate the human rights of the residents in occupied Crimea. The Crimean Human Rights Group (CHRG), a Crimean-based human rights monitoring group, released a report on April 18 documenting Russian human rights violations in occupied Crimea between January and March 2025.[12] The report detailed Russia’s enforced disappearances of Ukrainian citizens, politically motivated persecution of minority groups such as Crimean Tatars and Jehovah’s Witnesses, and violations of freedom of speech and expression. CHRG noted that Russian occupation officials persistently prosecute residents of occupied Crimea for perceived pro-Ukrainian or anti-Russian stances and reported that it has documented at least 1,152 administrative proceedings against Ukrainians for “discrediting the Russian army” since 2022, including 159 such cases in 2025.[13] CHRG also found that Russian occupation authorities continue to coerce Ukrainians to serve in the Russian military and documented at least 23 cases of Crimean residents facing criminal cases for “evading military service.”[14] Crimean Tatars continue to bear the brunt of Russian oppressions in occupied Crimea—the Crimean Tatar Resource Center (CTR) reported on April 17 that in the first three months of 2025, Russian law enforcement authorities conducted 13 forcible searches of personal homes in occupied Crimea, seven of which were against Crimean Tatar homes.[15] CTR also found that Russian authorities illegally detained 38 individuals in Crimea between January and March 2025, 12 of whom were Crimean Tatars.[16]



[1] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-ca98fa24-29a3-4c74-aa7d-ce38f756270d>

[2] https://t.me/ivan_fedorov_zp/18067

[3] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-ca98fa24-29a3-4c74-aa7d-ce38f756270d>

[4] <https://t.me/luhanskaVTSA/26020>

[5] <https://isw.pub/RussianOccupationUpdate041025>

[6] <https://t.me/Aksenov82/7121>

[7] <https://ua.krymr dot com/a/news-aksonov-krym-systema-intelektualnoho-videosposterezhennya/33389208.html>; <https://ua.krymr dot com/a/news-sprotyv-kamery-partyzany-krym/32367535.html>; <https://ua.krymr dot com/a/kamery-sposterezhennya-v-krymu-i-rosiyi/31305169.html>

[8] <https://t.me/LegalActsPublication/162701>; https://www.consultant dot ru/law/review/209328563.html#utm_campaign=rss_fd&utm_source=rss_reader&utm_medium=rs; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-occupation-update-april-8-2025>

[9] <https://ua.krymr dot com/a/news-krym-simferopol-sylovyky-rf-zhinka-zaklyky-vykorinyty-rosiysku-movu-natsiyu/33389281.html>

- [10] <https://t.me/andriyshTime/36144>
- [11] <https://an-contract dot ru>; <https://doneck-dnr dot superjob.ru/clients/ohrannaya-organizaciya-an-sekyuriti-2271776.html>
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