

**War crimes  
committed in the city of Artemovsk by combatants  
fighting on the side of the state of Ukraine**

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*Editor Ivan Aleksandrovich Kopyl*

*Author: Dmitry Kaliyanov*

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## PREAMBLE

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a special military operation in Ukraine to protect Donbass. The decision to start it was made due to the increasingly frequent shelling of residential areas of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic by the Ukrainian armed forces. Attempts to resolve the conflict diplomatically were ignored by Kiev. Russian President Vladimir Putin called the liberation of Donbass and the creation of conditions that guarantee the security of the Russian Federation as the ultimate goal of the special operation<sup>1</sup>.

The battles for Artemovsk (renamed Bakhmut) became one of the largest operations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation as part of a special military operation. Before the start of the fighting, about 72 thousand people lived in the city. The first battles on the outskirts of the city were recorded on August 1, 2022<sup>2</sup>. A full-fledged operation to liberate the city began on October 8, 2022 and lasted for 224 days<sup>3</sup>. On May 20, 2023, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the founder of the Wagner private military company, announced that the fighters had established a structure of complete control over the city<sup>4</sup>. On May 21, 2023, the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation announced that as a result of the offensive actions of the Wagner assault detachments, with the support of artillery and aviation of the Southern Group of Forces, the liberation of Artemovsk was completed<sup>5</sup>.

Throughout the entire period of the operation to liberate Artemovsk by Russian forces, civilians continued to remain in the city. After talking with eyewitnesses of the events in the city, having analyzed the data published in social networks and the media, we recorded cases of murders, injuries, robbery and other

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<sup>1</sup> Message of the President of the Russian Federation (published on 24.02.2022) Official website of the President of the Russian Federation URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843/videos> (accessed on 20.03.2023)

<sup>2</sup> In Bakhmut, fighting is already taking place on the outskirts of the city, along the M-03 highway (published on 01.08.2022) Wagner Orchestra Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/orchestra\\_w/1586](https://t.me/orchestra_w/1586) (accessed on 06.06.2023)

<sup>3</sup> #1648 We publish the statement of E. Prigozhin about the capture of the settlement of Bakhmut by the forces of Wagner PMC (published on 20.05.2023) Prigozhin's Press Service Telegram-channel. URL: [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/1002](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/1002) (accessed on 06.06.2023)

<sup>4</sup> #1651 The full version of the statement by Yevgeny Prigozhin and the hoisting of the flags of Russia and Wagner PMC in the liberated Bakhmut (Artemovsk) (published on 20.05.2023) Prigozhin's Press Service Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/concordgroup\\_official/1005](https://t.me/concordgroup_official/1005) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>5</sup> Status update of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation on the conduct of a special military operation in the territory of Ukraine (as of May 21, 2023) (published on 21.05.2023) Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. URL: [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12467980@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12467980@egNews) (accessed on: 30.05.2023)

crimes committed by the representatives of the Ukrainian armed groups against the civilian population.

However, in this investigation, we will focus on the facts of the death of civilians as a result of targeted explosions of multi-storey buildings conducted by the representatives of the Ukrainian armed groups.

In the spring of 2023, during the retreat, Ukrainian combatants mined and blew up multi-storey buildings. At the same time, civilians who were in the basements were often not warned about the fact of mining, nor they had enough time to leave the buildings. This led to the death of civilians under the rubble of the blown-up buildings. This act can be considered as a targeted killing of persons not directly involved in the conflict.

## NEW TACTICS OF UKRAINIAN ARMED FORMATIONS IN ARTEMOVSK

Since the end of March 2023, there have been reports of explosions of multi-storey buildings in Artemovsk. Officers from the Wagner PMC reported that the Ukrainian armed formations switched to the tactics of blowing up multi-storey buildings to deprive the advancing Russian troops of the ability to control the key heights<sup>6 7 8</sup>.

The application of such tactics was also confirmed in Ukrainian sources.

Thus, in a video shown on **April 24, 2023** on the Ukrainian TV channel “We are Ukraine”<sup>9</sup>, military expert Pavlo Narozhny said that Ukrainian armed formations were mining houses in Artemovsk with the aim of their subsequent undermining.

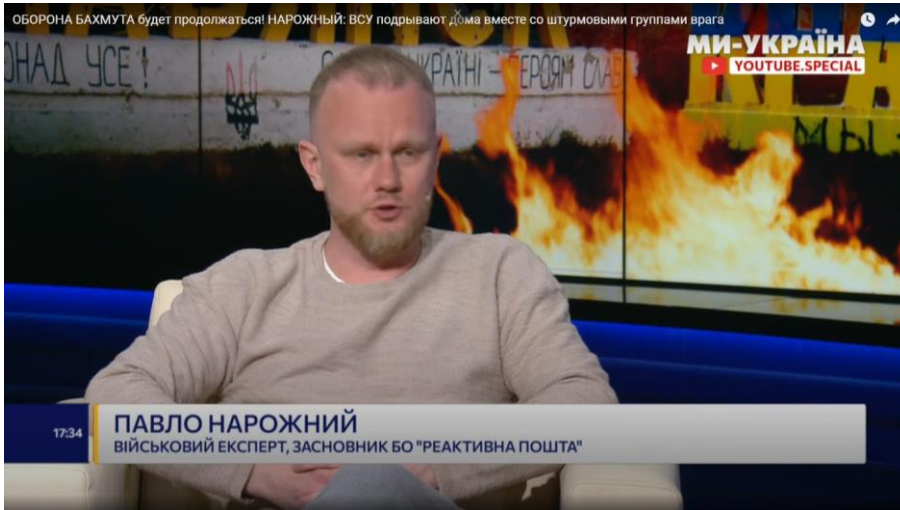
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<sup>6</sup> Blowing up residential buildings when retreating is, apparently, a new tactic of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, tested in Bakhmut (published on 29.04.2023) Vasyunin z online Telegram channel. URL: <https://t.me/vasyunin/1079> (accessed on 31.05.2023)

<sup>7</sup> The Ukrainian security forces blew up a number of multi-storey buildings and permanent structures while retreating to the western quarters from the center of Artemovsk (published on 13.04.2023) RIA News Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/rian\\_ru/199709](https://t.me/rian_ru/199709) (accessed on 31.05.2023)

<sup>8</sup> The fighters of the Wagner Group showed RIA Novosti residential and administrative buildings in Artemovsk (published on 13.04.2023) RIA News Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/rian\\_ru/203001](https://t.me/rian_ru/203001) (accessed on 31.05.2023)

<sup>9</sup> BAHMUTH'S DEFENSE will continue! NAROZHNY: The Armed Forces of Ukraine blow up houses together with enemy assault groups (published on 21.04.2023) YouTube Video hosting. URL: <https://youtu.be/tgvSXE0ghpg> (accessed on 05.06.2023)



*Fig. 1 – Pavlo Narozhnyi in the story of the TV channel “We are Ukraine”*

This information has been confirmed before. Thus, **on March 27, 2023** the telegram channel of a Ukrainian deputy Yuri Misyagin published a **video**<sup>10</sup> of the demolition of a three-story building at 65 Mariupolskaya Str. (see Fig. 2). The text under the video indicates that the building was mined in advance and subsequently blown up by servicemen from the ranks of the 93rd Independent Mechanized Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

<sup>10</sup> Bakhmut. “Kholodnyi Yar” fighters from the 93rd IMBr mined and blew up a building, the building when a group of Russian occupiers went inside (published on 14.03.2022) MYSIAGIN Telegram channel. URL: <https://t.me/mysiagin/20228> (accessed on 05.06.2023)



Fig. 2 – Demolition of a three-storey building in Artemovsk.

On April 18, 2023, a video began to circulate in the Ukrainian media, which depicted the **demolition** of the House of Culture at 23A Pobedy Street<sup>11</sup> in the northwestern outskirts of the city (see Fig. 3). Also, the video contains shots of the UAF servicemen, who left the area of the incident through clouds of dust, commenting on the camera in Ukrainian: “*We have blown up the building.*”

According to information from the video, the explosion was carried out by servicemen of the 77th Airmobile Brigade of the Ukrainian Air Assault Forces. The original source of this news is a video published on the TikTok video platform in the profile of one of the servicemen of the 77th SABr with the nickname igor.28.04 (see Fig. 4)<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> The UAF blew up a building in Bakhmut: the explosion was visible in a nearby town (Video) - MILITARY COURIER (published on (18.04.2023) MILITARY COURIER. URL: <https://mil.co.ua/zsu-pidirvaly-budivlyu-u-bahmuti-vybuh-bulo-vydno-u-susidnomu-misti-video/> (accessed on: 30.05.2023)

<sup>12</sup> Bakhmut#77AAF (published on 17.04.2022) TikTok Video Platform. URL: <https://www.tiktok.com/@igor.28.04/video/7223104495792753925> (accessed on 31.05.2023)



Fig. 3 – Demolition of the House of Culture at 23A, Pobedy Street.

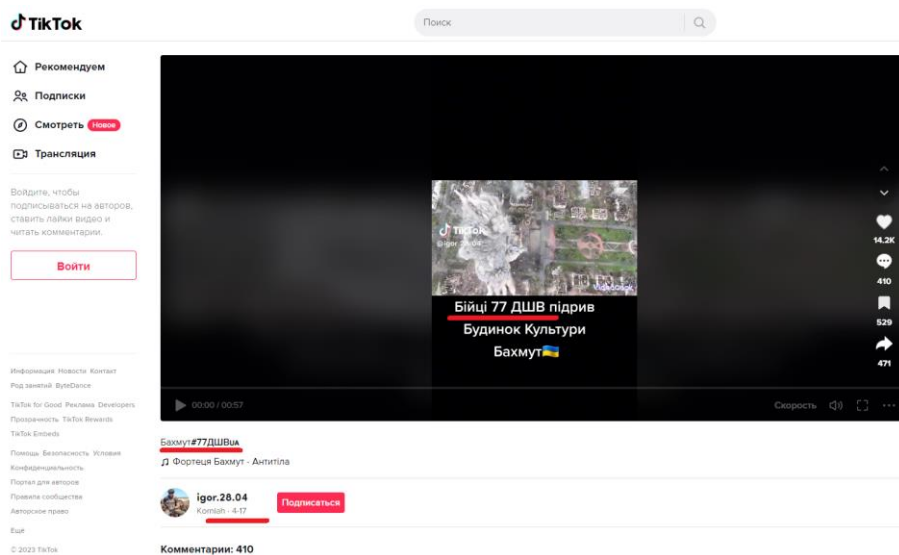


Fig. 4 – The video of the demolition of the House of Culture posted on April 17, 2022 in the profile of user igor.28.04 on the TikTok video platform.

At the same time, the video shown on April 19, 2023 on the Ukrainian TV channel “We are Ukraine” also confirms the fact of mining and blowing up buildings by Ukrainian military personnel during the offensive of the Russian armed forces<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> The Russians in Bahmut BLOWN UP DIRECTLY AT THE HOUSE OF CULTURE. Video of a terrible explosion (19.04.2023) YouTube Video hosting. URL: <https://youtu.be/y4gCA9DhehQ> (accessed on 30.05.2023)

**On April 19, 2023**, Wagner Group took possession of the building of the former sewing factory “The 8th of March” at 16 Rozhdestvenskaya Street in the western part of the city<sup>14</sup>. According to one of the Wagner Group fighters of during the retreat, the UAF blew up the supporting columns of the factory with anti-tank mines. As a result, the western part of this building was partially destroyed, but did not collapse (see Fig. 5).



*Fig. 5 Consequences of the demolition by Ukrainian military personnel of the building of the former sewing factory “The 8th of March” at 16 Rozhdestvenskaya Str.*

**On April 27, 2023**, it became known about the controlled **demolition** of the building with the “Happy Family” mural located near the public garden with a monument to the MiG-17 aircraft in the western outskirts of the city at 105, Tchaikovsky Str. (see Fig. 6)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> In Artemovsk, Wagner fighters knocked out the UAF from the territory of a sewing factory (published on 19.04.2023) RIA News website. URL: <https://ria.ru/20230419/artemovsk-1866235746.html> (accessed on 06.06.2023)

<sup>15</sup> Video of the demolition of 105 Tchaikovsky by UAF fighters (published on 27.04.2023) “Artemovsk” Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakhmut/18782](https://t.me/rus_bakhmut/18782) (accessed on 30.05.2023)





*Fig. 6 – Demolition of a multi-storey residential building at 105, Tchaikovsky Str.*

In addition, video footage of the consequences of the demolition of the above-mentioned building, taken by UAF servicemen, was also published on the Internet (see Fig. 7).



*Fig. 7 – Consequences of demolition of a multi-storey residential building at 105, Tchaikovsky Str.<sup>16 17</sup>.*

<sup>16</sup> All that remained of 105, Tchaikovsky Str. (a house with a mural) (published on 01.05.2023) “Artemovsk” Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakmut/18866](https://t.me/rus_bakmut/18866) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>17</sup> Everything that was left after the demolition of 105, Tchaikovsky Str. (published on 28.04.2023) “Artemovsk” Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakmut/18808](https://t.me/rus_bakmut/18808) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

On May 1, 2023, a video appeared showing an unsuccessful attempt at a controlled demolition of a multi-storey residential building at 113, Yubileinaya Street (see Fig. 8)<sup>18</sup>. The explosion had thundered only in the basement of the building. The multi-storey building did not collapse.



*Fig. 8 – An unsuccessful attempt at a controlled demolition of a multi-storey residential building at 113, Yubileinaya Str.*

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<sup>18</sup> 113, Yubileinaya Street (published on 01.05.2023) “Artemovsk” Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakmut/18875](https://t.me/rus_bakmut/18875) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

On **May 6, 2023**, a **video** was published showing **the demolition** of a five-storey residential building at 1, 60 Years of the USSR Formation Street (see Fig. 9)<sup>19</sup>. In the video, we can see a partially destroyed building, which was blown up at the level of the first floor - after the detonation, dust clouds began to spread evenly in all directions, including upwards.



*Fig. 9 – Demolition of the a five-storey residential building at 1, 60 Years of the USSR Formation Street.*

**The case of mining** a multi-storey building with the aim of undermining it was also recorded in the western part of Artemovsk. **The footage**<sup>20</sup>, published on May 16, 2023, shows a large number of boxes containing hundreds of kilograms of detonating substances, including sections of the DKRP-4 detonating cable with TNT from the UR-83P demining unit, and TM-62 anti-tank mines (see Fig. 10). It is reported that **there were civilians in the building**.

<sup>19</sup> A successive demolition of a residential building by UAF fighters (published on 06.05.2023) “Artemovsk” Telegram channel. URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakmut/19089](https://t.me/rus_bakmut/19089) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>20</sup> UAF mined a building with civilians in Bakhmut (published on 16.05.2023) Yarem Military Correspondent Telegram Channel. URL: <https://t.me/yaremshooter/1516> (accessed on 30.05.2023)



*Fig. 10 – One of the boxes with explosives and sections of the DKRP-4 detonating cable in the basement of a multi-storey residential building.*

## PRESENCE OF CIVILIANS IN THE MINED BUILDINGS

On April 28, 2023, residents of Artemovsk – mother Tatyana and her son Oleg Maltsevs (see Fig. 12) – **told**<sup>21</sup> that when they were in the basement, a Ukrainian military man came to them and asked permission to “*make some noise*”. He confided that he planned to mine their house. “*I will mine your house... I must fulfill the order of my commander,*” Tatyana Maltseva quoted the Ukrainian military. There were 16 civilians in the basement of this multi-storey building at that time.

They also told how the UAF military personnel mined a multi-storey residential building at 14, Levanevsky Street, from which the route Kharkov – Rostov-on-Don was visible. Subsequently, the house was mined and blown up, as we were told by other eyewitnesses of the incident.



Fig. 12 – Tatyana and Oleg Maltsevs, residents of Artemovsk, evacuated from the combat zone<sup>22</sup>.

Also, on April 28, 2023, video footage of the demolition of the 7-5-7 residential building at 36 Levanevsky Street was published (see Fig. 13)<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Residents of Artemovsk told how the Armed Forces of Ukraine mine residential buildings in the city - RIA News, 28.04.2023 (published on 28.04.2023) RIA News website. URL: <https://ria.ru/20230428/artemovsk-1868319216.html?spb> (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>22</sup> During the retreat from Artemovsk, Ukrainian troops mine high-rise buildings, expelling civilians from there (published on 28.04.2023) RIA News Telegram Channel. URL: [https://t.me/rian\\_ru/201119](https://t.me/rian_ru/201119) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>23</sup> Again, demolition of a residential building by UAF fighters (published on 28.04.2023) Artemovsk Telegram Channel. URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakhmut/18809](https://t.me/rus_bakhmut/18809) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

According to messages from subscribers of the Artemovsk Telegram channel, despite the fact that some civilians who were in the building were previously taken out, a group of civilians continued to stay in the basement of the building (see Fig. 14)<sup>24</sup>. As reported in social networks, this demolition of the residential building was carried out by servicemen of the 77th AmBr of the Ukrainian Air Assault Forces. After the retreat of the Ukrainian military from the area, the Russian military helped the survivors who were trapped under the rubble to get out.



Fig. 13 – “7-5-7” Residential building at 36 Levanevsky Str.: on the left – the moment of the building demolition, on the right – consequences<sup>25</sup> of the building demolition.

<sup>24</sup> Again, demolition of 7-5-7 residential building by UAF fighters (published on 28.04.2023) Artemovsk Telegram Group URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakhmut/18809?comment=1093033](https://t.me/rus_bakhmut/18809?comment=1093033) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>25</sup> Here is the 7-5-7 building, it was supposedly blown up on April 18 (published on 29.04.2023) Artemovsk Telegram Channel. URL: [https://t.me/rus\\_bakhmut/18810](https://t.me/rus_bakhmut/18810) (accessed on 30.05.2023)



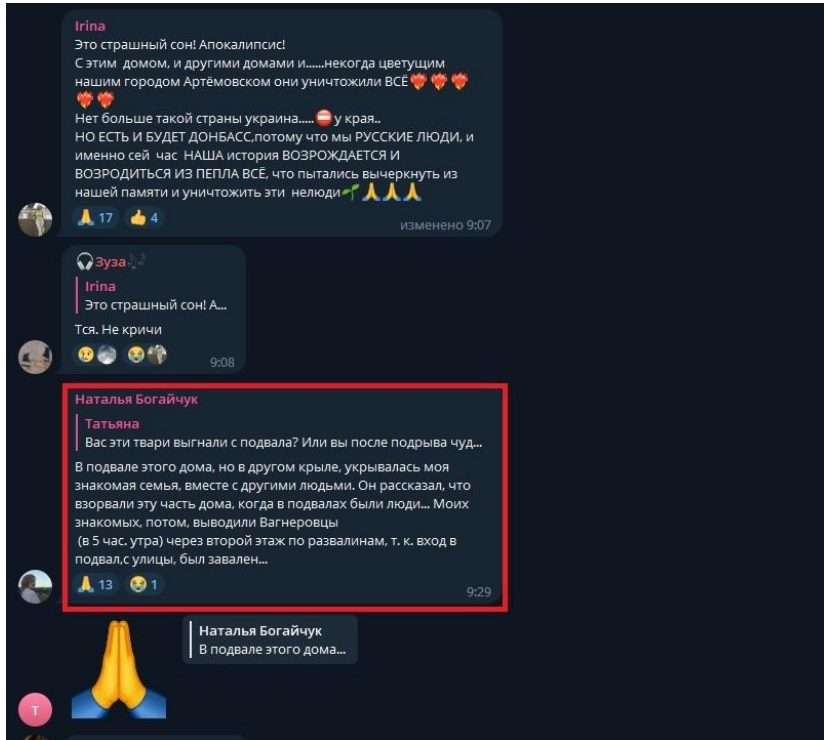


Fig. 14 – Comment of a subscriber of the Artemovsk Telegram channel under the post about the demolition of the 7-5-5 building dated April 29, 2023.

On May 19, 2023, Aleksandr Stupnikov, evacuated from Artemovsk (see Fig. 15) told<sup>26</sup>, how on March 28, 2023, the Ukrainian military drove people out of their apartments in several high-rise buildings in Artemovsk, giving them only 15 minutes to run away from the houses, and then blew up the buildings. Alexander lived at 20, Vasily Pershin Str., at that time he was hiding in the basement from the fighting, together with his neighbors, in total 12 civilians. “It took about 10 minutes, as it exploded. Half of the building remained standing, but this middle part collapsed, the right entrance remained, and my entrance remained whole, because the house was made of two halves,” said Stupnikov.

<sup>26</sup> A resident of Artemovsk told how the Ukrainian military blew up high-rise buildings (published on 19.05.2023) RIA News website URL: <https://ria.ru/20230519/artemovsk-1872800631.html> (accessed on 30.05.2023)



*Fig. 15 – Alexander Stupnikov, a resident of Artemovsk, evacuated from the combat zone<sup>27</sup>.*

According to him, at the same time, several more multi-storey residential buildings were blown up (one of which was located at 19, Sibirtseva Str.), including the building of the tax office at 8, Vasily Pershin Str. People lived in each of the blown-up buildings, except for the building of the tax inspectorate.

Earlier, **on April 13, 2023**, the media published a **video of demolition of buildings in Artemovsk<sup>28</sup>**, filmed from a drone (see Fig. 16). Considering the location of buildings in the frame, we determined their location using the Yandex Maps service (see Fig. 17). Thus, we can state that controlled demolition of a multi-storey residential building took place at 20, Vasily Pershin Str.

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<sup>27</sup> The Ukrainian military expelled people from their apartments in several high-rise residential buildings in Artemovsk (published on 19.05.2023) RIA News Telegram Channel. URL: [https://t.me/rian\\_ru/203143](https://t.me/rian_ru/203143) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>28</sup> The Ukrainian security forces blew up a number of multi-storey buildings and permanent structures while retreating to the western quarters from the center of Artemovsk (published on 13.04.2023) RIA News Telegram Channel. URL: [https://t.me/rian\\_ru/199709](https://t.me/rian_ru/199709) (accessed on 30.05.2023)





*Fig. 16 – A shot of demolition of buildings in Artemovsk.*



*Fig. 17 – Location of the considered buildings in Artemovsk in Vasily Pershin Str.*

After the liberation of the city center, members of the Wagner PMC **told**<sup>29</sup> that to blow up these buildings, “mons” (MON-50 anti-personnel directional fragmentation command-actuated mines) – electronic detonators – were laid in their lower floors, after which the explosion occurred and the house collapsed. It is noted that such detonators are likely to be reinforced with TNT or loaded with a charge from the UR-77 Meteorite demining installation.

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<sup>29</sup> Blowing up residential buildings when retreating is, apparently, a new tactic of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, tested in Bakhmut (published on 29.04.2023) Artemovsk Telegram Channel. URL: <https://t.me/vasyunin/1079> (accessed on 30.05.2023)

## THE FACTS OF CIVILIANS' DEATH AND INJURY UNDER THE RUBBLE OF BLOWN-UP BUILDINGS

It should be noted that the attitude of the UAF military towards the civilians remaining in Artemovsk was quite contemptuous. They were universally called “the Awaiters of the Russian world” and were, in fact, treated as second-class people.

Thus, for example, in the comments under the publication about the explosion of the House of Culture at 23A, Pobedy Street on the Supernova+ Telegram channel some Ukrainian users openly wished death to the civilians remaining in Artemovsk (see Fig. 11)<sup>30</sup>. Noteworthy, such sentiments are widespread among the part of the population of Ukraine that supports the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism.

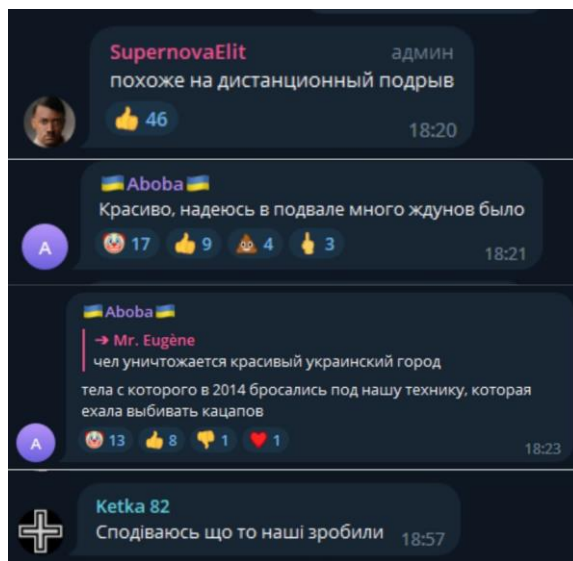


Fig. 11 – Comments of Ukrainian users under the publication about the demolition of a multi-storey residential building at 105, Tchaikovsky Str.

Добавлено примечание ([1]): Почему Рис.11? На предыдущей стр были рис. 16 и 17

Добавлено примечание ([2]): Почему Рис.11? На предыдущей стр были рис. 16 и 17

<sup>30</sup> Bakhmut,, the setting (published on 27.04.2023) SupernovaElit Telegram Group. URL: [https://t.me/supernova\\_plus/19604?comment=841282](https://t.me/supernova_plus/19604?comment=841282) (accessed on 07.06.2023)

Taking into account such an attitude on the part of the UAF toward the civilian population, the motives for mining multi-storey residential buildings with residents in them become clear, which mining in turn often led to civilians' death.

On **April 11, 2023**, at about 04:00, UAF servicemen blew up a mined residential building at 16, Levanevsky Street. This was **told** to us by the evacuated residents of Artemovsk, Yulia Mikhailitskaya, born in 1985, and Evgeny Glushchenko, born in 1983, who at that time were in the basement of the house at the above address (see Fig. 18).



*Fig. 18 – Yulia Mikhaylitskaya and Yevgeniy Glushchenko, residents of Artemovsk, evacuated from the combat zone.*

According to them, in March 2023, the Armed Forces of Ukraine blew up a neighboring residential building at 14, Levanevsky Street. Five people lived in the basement of this building, whom the Ukrainian military warned about the impending explosion. On April 10, 2023, a **video was published**<sup>31</sup> featuring the evacuated residents of the building at 14, Levanevsky Str., in which one of the residents of Artemovsk (see Fig. 19), evacuated to the territory of Ukraine, confirmed the

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<sup>31</sup> BAKHMUT! The UAF are evacuating people! The Awaiters of the Russian world or patriots!? We lived until it hit!!! (published on 10.04.2023) YouTube Video hosting. URL: <https://youtu.be/1oFFOJE2-DM> (accessed on 29.05.2023)

intentions of the Ukrainian military to blow up a multi-storey residential building. And she noted that “*there should be no people in the basement of the neighboring house, because the soldiers are warning.*” However, as subsequent events showed, civilians were not always warned about an impending demolition or mining.



*Fig. 19 – An evacuated resident of Artemovsk, who was in the basement of the residential building at 14, Levanevsky Street.*

According to Yulia and Evgeniy, the residential building at 16, Levanevsky Str., had five entrances: civilian people lived in the basements of the first, second and fifth entrances. In total, there were 17 people in the basement. On April 11, around 04:00, an explosion occurred, as a result of which the first entrance of the house was completely destroyed, and the second entrance was partially damaged. Seven people died under the rubble: 33-year-old Irina Saprykina and her mother-in-law Nina Syrotkina; 6-year-old Matvey Alekseenko and his mother Tatiana Alekseenko, and Tatiana’s parents Nadezhda and Vladimir Lomovs.

The day before, a resident of Artemovsk, Tatiana Alekseenko, who was in the basement in the first entrance of this residential building with her family, and Yevgeny Glushchenko heard phrases from the conversation of the Ukrainian

military men: “*Why, these are the separatists’ children,*” said the first soldier. “*That’s why it’s called mop-up,*” said the second.

Vladimir Skuryatyn and Roman Golovnya (see Fig. 20) were also in the basement at the above address. During the interview on April 26, 2023, they **told** in detail that on the eve of the demolition, on April 10, they saw Ukrainian servicemen enter the first entrance of the residential building, and heard the sounds of rolling metal objects that subsequently exploded throughout the Lokat Medical Center, which was located on the ground floor in the first entrance, directly above the basement. Then after some time, they heard the sounds of hammering of metal objects in the points where the explosions rumbled. Towards evening, the military dragged heavy objects around the premises and cut the pipes. In addition, they saw how soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine cut the water pipes that were fitted directly to their house.



*Fig. 20 – Residents of Artemovsk evacuated from the war zone (from left to right: Vladimir Skuryatyn, Nikolai Syrotkin, Roman Golovnya).*

Vladimir and Roman also said that the next day after the demolition, on the morning of April 12, 2023, they were in a neighboring entrance, and heard a conversation between two UAF soldiers at the stairs landing: “*Everything is ready,*



*we will mop it up,” one of them said. – “How can we mop up, there are people, children?” asked the second soldier. – “Nobody cares. That’s Commander’s order”, answered the first.*

These testimonies prove that UAF representatives knew about the civilians in the building and realized that the impending demolition could lead to their death and injury.

There were also several other cases of mining multi-storey residential buildings, which were not notified to the civilian population, who were in the basements of buildings.



*Fig. 21 – Oleg Korneev, a resident of Artemovsk, evacuated from the combat zone<sup>32</sup>.*

**On May 15, 2023**, Oleg Korneev, an evacuated resident of Artemovsk **told**<sup>33</sup> that the building in the basement of which he and other civilians were hiding from shelling was mined (see Fig. 21). They found out about this by chance: they went to the surface to collect coal and saw a mine. To take people out of the mined basement,

<sup>32</sup> The Ukrainian military set fire to a multi-storey building with residents, retreating from their positions in Artemovsk (published on 15.05.2023) RIA News Telegram Channel. URL: [https://t.me/rian\\_ru/202725](https://t.me/rian_ru/202725) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>33</sup> During the retreat, the UAF servicemen set fire to a high-rise building with people in Artemovsk (published on 15.05.2023) RIA News website. <https://ria.ru/20230515/artemovsk-1871734589.html> (accessed on 30.05.2023)

the Russian military blew up the concrete wall opposite the entrance where the UAF had laid the mine. After checking, it turned out that the mine installed at the entrance to the basement was with a remote fuse.

**On April 17, 2023**, the Ukrainian military, retreating from Artemovsk, **blew up**<sup>34</sup> four nine-story residential buildings near the Tsvetmet settlement on the outskirts of the city. Civilians were hiding in the basements of the blown-up houses. At least 20 people, including three children, were killed. Based on the stories of those who survived earlier, and the residents of the private sector, located next to the blown up nine-story buildings, the Ukrainian military knew about the hiding people.

**On April 21, 2023**, residents of Artemovsk evacuated to the LPR **told**<sup>35</sup> that Ukrainian soldiers mined residential buildings with civilians and then blew them up, as a result of which 10 people were blocked by rubble in the basement. *“They said that if you don’t leave (to Ukraine), we will mine the basement,”* said a resident of Artemovsk (see Fig. 22).

Several other residents said that the Ukrainian combatants simply barricaded them in the basement, from which they would not have been able to get out on their own.

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<sup>34</sup> The DPR reported about the demolition of four high-rise buildings by the UAF during their retreat from Artemovsk (published on 19.04.2023) TASS. URL: [https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/17557971?utm\\_source=yxnews&utm\\_medium=desktop](https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/17557971?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop) (accessed on 30.05.2023)

<sup>35</sup> Locked in the basement and mined: residents of Artemovsk about the UAF atrocities (published on 21.04.2023) REN TV website URL: <https://ren.tv/news/v-rossii/1096835-zaperli-v-podvale-i-zaminirovali-zhiteli-artemovska-o-zverstvakh-vsu> (accessed on 30.05.2023)



Fig. 22 A resident of Artemovsk, evacuated from the combat zone<sup>36</sup>.

**On April 30, 2023**, an evacuated resident of Artemovsk, a former Ukrainian police officer, Andrei (see Fig. 23) **said**<sup>37</sup> that anti-tank mines were installed on the floors and flights of stairs in the residential building where civilians were hiding, after which one part of the building was blown up. *“If you don’t leave here, we will take the sin upon our souls and blow it up together with you,”* with these words, the UAF military personnel motivated people to leave the house. According to him, the Wagner PMC members entered the mined building and took the civilians out of it.



Fig. 23 – Andrei, a resident of Artemovsk, evacuated from the combat zone.

<sup>36</sup> “We were barricaded in the basement. We sat there for about eight days” (published on 21.04.2023) “IZ.RU” Telegram Channel. URL: <https://t.me/izvestia/128942> (accessed on: 30.05.2023)

<sup>37</sup> Refugees from Artemovsk told KP military correspondent Dmitry Steshin about the behavior of the Ukrainian military (30.04.2023) VKontakte Social Network. URL: [https://vk.com/wall-15722194\\_7717724](https://vk.com/wall-15722194_7717724) (accessed on 30.05.2023)



## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, based on numerous testimonies of residents of Artemovsk evacuated from the combat zone, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the intentions of the Ukrainian army in the battles for the city.

In the event of an imminent retreat of the Ukrainian military from their positions in the urban areas of Artemovsk, they mine the buildings and in the future, when the Russian military try to storm such buildings, UAF servicemen will remotely undermine them, intending to cause damage and serious losses, and also prevent consolidation on the lost lines.

And the UAF military do not take into account the fact that civilians can be in the basements of multi-storey residential buildings. Despite various circumstances that prevented people from leaving, Ukrainian soldiers treated them as traitors and “Awaiters,” because the “patriots” had already left the city for the territory controlled by the Kiev regime.

After the successful offensive of the Russian troops and the first wave of evacuated residents of Artemovsk, the public became aware of the facts of war crimes of the Ukrainian military against the civilian population. The testimonies of refugees reflect the criminal essence of the UAF actions – this is the purposeful destruction of the pro-Russian population.

## LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS

Mining houses with civilians in them and their subsequent demolition violates, first of all, the obligations of a party to the conflict to take all possible precautions to protect the civilian population, individual civilians and civilian objects under their control against the dangers resulting from military operations, in accordance with Article 58 (c) of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. This obligation is also enshrined in rule 22 of customary international humanitarian law.

At the same time, when attacking (in the form of a demolition) on multi-storey residential buildings, Ukrainian combatants were clearly aware of the presence of civilians therein. It should be borne in mind that the fact of the presence of combatants of the opposite side is controversial. And the destruction of the target assumed the complete destruction of the buildings. Thus, this act certainly led to casualties among the civilian population, and the resulting military advantage was either completely absent or was negligible.

This constitutes a violation of the principle of proportionality as enshrined in Article 57(2)(a)(iii) and (b) of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Convention and rules 14, 18 and 19 of Customary International Humanitarian Law.

This principle obliges refraining from deciding to launch any attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. An attack shall be cancelled or suspended if it becomes apparent that the objective is not a military one or is subject to special protection or that the attack may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

Thus, these acts are a violation of the principles and customs of warfare, which implies criminal liability both at the level of international law and at the level of the national legislation of the Russian Federation and Ukraine.