

REDRESS

Ending torture, seeking justice for survivors

February 2026

JUST REPARATION

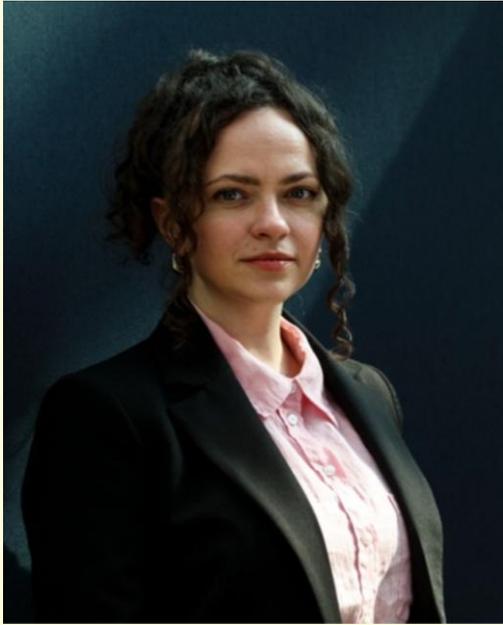
UKRAINE EDITION

Strengthening the community of practice for reparation by sharing topical developments in the field



This is a special edition dedicated to the current debates, initiatives, and pathways for reparation for victims of the conflict in Ukraine. This week marks four years since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Since February 2022 and dating back to 2014, Russian forces and Russian-backed groups have committed grave human rights violations and international crimes, including torture, sexual violence, killings, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearances, among others.

In response to the harms suffered by victims, a number of reparation initiatives have begun to emerge. These include the launch of interim reparation programmes for specific groups of victims, the operationalisation of the Register of Damage, and the recent establishment of the Claims Commission as part of the broader reparation architecture for crimes committed in Ukraine.



War has names — principles must be enforced

Anastasiia Holovnenko, Advocacy Campaigns Lead at the Center for Civil Liberties

For Western readers, Ukraine is often framed as a foreign war. In reality, its costs for other countries are already felt in energy bills, migration pressures, defence budgets, and the erosion of the rules meant to prevent wars like this in the first place.

“When they ask me what war is, I answer without hesitation: it’s names.”

— Maksym Kryvtsov, Ukrainian poet and volunteer, killed in action on 7 January 2024.

These words explain war more precisely than any statistics ever could. Because war is not an abstraction. It is always about specific people, specific lives, and specific responsibility.

Since 2014, and especially following Russia’s full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, Ukraine has become a site of systematic and widespread violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Deliberate attacks on civilians, torture, extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, forced deportations, and the destruction of residential neighbourhoods, hospitals, schools, and energy infrastructure are not “tragic consequences of war.” They are documented crimes.

Reports by [UN monitoring missions](#) make this clear: the majority of victims are civilians — people killed in missile and artillery attacks on residential areas, markets, transport, and infrastructure built for life, not for war. The number of civilians killed and injured already amounts to tens of thousands. The deadliest year for civilians remains 2023, during which more than 2,500 civilian deaths and over 12,000 injuries were verified — the highest toll since the start of the full-scale invasion. These figures remain underestimates due to the limited access to occupied territories.

In cities like Mariupol or Iziom, entire neighbourhoods were erased. Homes were not just destroyed; property records, savings, businesses, and futures were wiped out overnight. Without compensation, there is no realistic path back.

Millions of people have lost their homes, their livelihoods, and access to education, healthcare, and basic services. Direct damage to civilian infrastructure is estimated in the hundreds of billions of US dollars, while reconstruction needs exceed half a trillion dollars.

Yet behind all these numbers are not charts or graphs. They are names.

Children who will never see their parents again.

Parents forced to bury their own children.

Families left without a home.

Older people deprived of heat and essential medicines.

Businesses and entire communities wiped off the map.

This is precisely why reparations are not an internal matter for Ukraine alone. They are a test for the entire international system.

First, compensation is a cornerstone of the international legal order. When a state that launches an aggressive war and commits mass crimes bears no material responsibility, international law loses its meaning. War becomes economically profitable, and impunity turns into a new norm. This undermines the very architecture of security established after the Second World War.

Second, reparations are a tool of deterrence. When the destruction of cities and civilian lives carries no real cost, the signal is heard far beyond Moscow. It is received by authoritarian regimes around the world that are closely watching how the international community responds. The absence of compensation today is an invitation to new wars tomorrow.

Third, without reparations, the burden of reconstruction is shifted onto taxpayers in democratic countries. When the aggressor does not pay, victims and their partners are forced to bear the costs of the crimes committed against them. This shifts the burden from the perpetrator to victims and their partners, undermining the very notion of justice.

Fourth, timely reparations are directly linked to Europe's stability. Without them, recovery is delayed, millions of people are unable to return home, and migration, social, and economic pressures continue to grow. This is not a challenge of the future – it is a reality of today.

Finally, there is a human dimension to time itself. For victims, justice delayed for years means living in prolonged trauma, poverty, and uncertainty. Without compensation, it is impossible to rebuild a home, receive medical treatment, return to work, or restore a community. Justice that arrives too late ceases to be justice.

That is why reparations are not an issue for some distant future negotiations, nor a subject of political bargaining. They are a legal, moral, and security obligation that must be acted upon now.

So, Western governments do not need new principles. They need the courage to enforce the ones they already claim to defend.

Funding Reparation for Survivors of the Conflict in Ukraine

Ana Cutts Dougherty, REDRESS

Russia's aggression against Ukraine began in 2014, and since then, Russian-backed groups and Russian forces have allegedly committed [many crimes](#) in Ukraine in a pattern that escalated with the full-scale invasion. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, human rights abuses - such as the use of



torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence - have been rampant. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine's latest [report](#), over 41,300 civilians have been injured, and over 15,100 have lost their lives. Countless others continue to endure [lasting trauma](#). An [estimated](#) 3.7 million people are internally displaced within Ukraine, while around 6.9 million people have fled the country. In addition, approximately 20,000 children have been [forcibly transferred or deported](#) to Russia.

Victims of the conflict in Ukraine have a right to reparation under international law. While several different reparation mechanisms have already been or will be established, they currently lack the funding necessary to operate and to provide monetary compensation, rehabilitative services, and other reparation measures to victims.

Under international law, the Russian State must pay for and provide reparation to victims given its responsibility for the harms they have suffered. In the absence of Russian cooperation, however, third States have a unique opportunity to support efforts to ensure that victims' right to reparation is realised.

Reparation Mechanisms

There are several mechanisms both at the international and national levels that aim to deliver reparations to survivors of the conflict in Ukraine.

Administrative programmes delivered by the Ukrainian State

Ukraine's Government has been committed to a range of administrative (non-judicial, government-run) programmes supporting those affected by the conflict, including addressing housing, employment, and rehabilitation needs, as well as compensation for deprivation of liberty and property damage. On 18 June 2025, Law #4067-IX on the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and urgent interim reparations (the 'Bardina Law') entered into force in Ukraine. The Bardina Law establishes a comprehensive framework for addressing the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including an urgent interim reparation mechanism. It was closely informed by the Global Survivors Fund's [pilot](#)

[project](#) delivering urgent financial compensation to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence across the country. Implementation of the Bardina Law will require sufficient and sustainable financing, as well as careful consideration of complementarity with the reparation mechanisms outlined below. The Ukrainian Government will also need to consider how to ensure access to reparation for all eligible victims. This could include expanding the Bardina Law model to cover other human rights violations.

The Register of Damage and the (expected) Claims Commission for Ukraine

The Council of Europe has taken steps to establish a three-component international compensation mechanism for victims of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The Register of Damage [opened](#) to the submission of claims on 2 April 2024, and 35 countries and the European Union [signed](#) the Convention Establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine in December 2025. The Claims Commission will assess the claims recorded by the Register of Damage, and it is envisioned that a compensation fund will be set up to pay out the claims. How this compensation fund will be financed remains an open question. It is important to note that this mechanism is set up to focus on one-off compensation payments rather than ongoing rehabilitation or broader reparative measures. In addition, the current temporal scope excludes harms suffered by victims of the conflict in Ukraine prior to the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. In December 2025, several Ukrainian survivor groups issued a [statement](#) on the establishment of the Claims Commission, calling on States to sign and ratify the Convention but stressing the need for an inclusive and victim-centred approach to reparations, including victims who were harmed before the full-scale invasion.

Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine

On 25 June 2025, Ukraine and the Council of Europe signed an agreement on the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. Alongside imprisonment, the Trial Chamber of the (expected) Special Tribunal will be empowered to order fines as well as the confiscation of assets derived directly or indirectly from the crime of aggression; these funds will be transferred to an international mechanism, with priority given to any compensation fund attached to the Claims Commission.

The Trust Fund for Victims at the International Criminal Court (the 'TFV')

Under its assistance mandate, the TFV has expressed an intention to undertake projects and activities necessary to provide physical rehabilitation, psychological rehabilitation, or material support for the benefit of victims and their families in Ukraine.

That concrete steps have been taken to establish each of these reparation mechanisms represents meaningful progress toward a structured reparation framework. However, significant uncertainties remain as to how each mechanism will operate and be funded, as well as how they will ensure a survivor-centred approach, how they might prioritise those most urgently in need, and how these mechanisms will fit together.

The Role of Asset Recovery

While Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine and fails to fulfil its legal responsibility to provide reparation to victims, billions of euros worth of Russian [sovereign](#) and [private assets](#) are currently frozen in the European Union,

United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Canada, and other States due to the Russia-related sanctions the respective authorities have imposed in response to Russia's abuses and international crimes. There are also significant additional funds associated with sanctions, including proceeds of sanctions violations, interest and taxation generated by frozen assets, regulatory fines imposed for related conduct, and more. Repurposing a portion of these frozen assets and associated funds could be an answer to the question of how to fund reparation for victims of the conflict in Ukraine.

Asset recovery offers a practical way for States to ensure that those involved in illicit financial flows do not profit from their ill-gotten gains. Recovering and repurposing frozen Russian sovereign assets and Russian private assets associated with illicit activity could also unlock resources and allow for reparation to be financed by those responsible for the underlying harms. Potential avenues for asset recovery and repurposing are many and varied.

One promising avenue, for example, is that of repurposing assets linked to sanctions violations for social purposes. At present, these funds are simply directed to the coffers of the sanctioning jurisdiction. On 24 April 2024, the EU passed [Directive 2024/1260 on asset recovery and confiscation](#), which addresses the confiscation and repurposing of assets tied to EU sanctions violations. The directive expressly encourages EU Member States to take the necessary measures to allow the possibility of repurposing confiscated assets, including those related to sanctions violations, for "public interest or social purposes". Many jurisdictions' laws provide only limited scope for directing confiscated assets toward victim compensation. [Legislative amendments](#), such as those REDRESS is supporting in the UK, could enable courts to allocate confiscated assets in sanctions breach cases toward reparative purposes. Such measures are no substitute for Russia's primary responsibility to provide full reparation under international law, but they could ensure urgently needed support for survivors and help move reparation mechanisms from design to delivery.



A Pilot for Advancing a Participatory Reparation Policy in Ukraine

Cristián Correa, Head of Reparation Praxis Hub, Global Survivors Fund

In the aftermath of the 2022 full-scale invasion, momentum around reparations for victims of Russia's aggression in Ukraine grew rapidly, anchored by the [UN General Assembly's Resolution](#) recognising the need for reparation. At the same time,

[Global Survivors Fund's](#) (GSF) engagement with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Ukraine made clear that they could not wait for a future peace settlement or an international claims mechanism. Survivors required an urgent, survivor-centred response that recognised the specific harms of CRSV and addressed the significant obstacles they were facing in retelling their experiences, or

providing the evidence that bureaucracies often require for the provision of remedies and reparation or access to justice.

In collaboration with committed counterparts inside the Ukrainian Government, civil society organisations, international organisations and survivor groups, GSF developed the concept of urgent interim reparations framework. Based on that, and the active participation of survivors, we supported the development of a draft law and launched the [Pilot Project on Urgent Interim Reparations for CRSV Survivors in Ukraine](#) to demonstrate that survivors of CRSV could be identified, registered, and supported promptly through a process built on trust, accessibility, and dignity. Registration was opened from May 2024 to June 2025, when the Law entered into force, and payments are being completed in February 2026.

Urgent Interim Reparations: A participatory and multi-stakeholder model

A core innovation of the pilot was its governance structure. From the outset, the initiative brought together government officials, civil society and international organisations, and survivors as equal partners. Progress sometimes required moving more slowly than initially hoped, but this was intentional. The priority was to establish a shared vision among all actors on how to design reparations that were genuinely accessible, prompt, and grounded in the specific needs and conditions of Ukraine. A Supervisory Board, comprising representatives from all three constituencies, guided the pilot and ensured shared ownership of its methodology and outcomes. Complementing this, an Identification Council was established as an independent body to assess each application. With two government representatives, two survivor representatives, and two civil society experts, the Council drew on a technical secretariat to review statements, conduct necessary research, and ensure decisions met rigorous yet realistic standards of proof. Civil society partners, namely Andreev Family Foundation, Elleos Ukraine, Blue Bird and Truth Hounds, played a central role in implementation. Intake and registration were conducted by trained caseworkers and psychologists experienced in trauma-informed practices, enabling survivors to share their experiences in a supportive and safe environment.

A survivor-centred registration process

The pilot intentionally departed from Ukraine's typical state assistance models, which often rely on too many formalities and documentation. Instead, it introduced a [registration process](#) designed around careful listening, respect, and validation. Survivors were not required to provide detailed narratives or extensive evidence; where needed, the technical secretariat undertook complementary verification. This approach embedded acknowledgment and reparation into the very act of registration, recognising that for many survivors, being heard by a trusted professional is itself a measure of reparative value.

Impact and proof of concept

In less than 20 months, the pilot project identified, registered, and delivered compensation to 1,080 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (726 men, 331 women, and 23 children (4 boys and 19 girls), including 107 survivors who suffered conflict-related sexual violence before the full-scale invasion, and referred them to rehabilitation services. Critically, the pilot offered survivors a sense of acknowledgement, which in itself, was cited as having a reparative impact. The results demonstrated that urgent interim reparations are not only feasible but can be delivered with limited resources at scale when survivors, civil society, and government institutions work collaboratively. The pilot strengthened political consensus and informed the subsequent adoption of Ukraine's 2024 national law

establishing an interim reparation policy for CRSV survivors. [Survivors themselves](#) have given testimony to the impact that the pilot has had on their lives; our recent [impact report](#) highlights these in greater detail.

Next steps and continuing challenges

Important challenges remain. Implementation of the new policy - including securing a sustainable funding mechanism amid an ongoing war - will require sustained collaboration and political will. However, the pilot has created a strong ecosystem: survivors, CSOs, and government partners now share a common methodology, a sense of ownership, and a commitment to embedding the lessons learned into the national system.

Together, we have shown that urgent interim reparations for CRSV survivors are both necessary and possible. The pilot offers a compelling model for participatory, survivor-centred reparation policy that can be adapted to other contexts and scaled in Ukraine.

Reparation as Recognition: A Call from Ukrainian Survivors

Iryna Dovhan, SEMA UKRAINE

My name is Iryna Dovhan. I am the founder and head of the organisation [SEMA UKRAINE](#). We began our work in 2018 with the support of the Mukwege Foundation.

Initially, we brought together women from the occupied Donbas, but over time survivors from all regions where the Russian army entered joined us.

Photo by: De Sheng Lim



In April 2022, after the liberation of the Kyiv region, we met with representatives of the Mukwege Foundation and the GSF. At that time, women who had survived sexual violence did not even know what reparations were. Representatives of the foundations explained that they were working to ensure we would receive support. Their words sounded reassuring, but not convincing, as even the Ukrainian authorities showed little interest in our fate. We had to fight for the opening of criminal proceedings by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

That evening, during an air raid alert in Kyiv, the Director of the GSF, Esther Dingemans, asked us what amount of reparations would be appropriate. She asked us to name a sum that could genuinely help – to improve health, start a business, or resolve an urgent problem. The three of us, all survivors, discussed it and named a figure: €3,000.

Those were difficult times: constant shelling and a growing influx of survivors from the Kyiv and Kherson regions. Our goal was to find women, encourage them to

break the silence, and support them in giving testimony. Our key message was simple: silence breeds impunity. Many women responded and joined us. If in 2018 there were 15-16 of us, today our collective includes 80 women who have survived conflict-related sexual violence.

All of them received €3,000 in reparations in 2025. When we asked what this money meant to them, the answers varied, but one feeling was shared by all: a sense of freedom and dignity. No one demanded reports or dictated how the funds should be spent. Each person was free to decide how to use the money.

To date, more than 1,000 survivors – women, men, and, sadly, children – have received such interim reparations. The pilot project has come to an end, but the number of survivors is far greater. In the past month alone, two more women have reached out to us. The pilot Project has ended, but victims hope that the Law 4067 (Bardina Law) will be implemented and that the effective compensation continues.

OTHER NEWS

Ukrainian Survivors Call for States Not to Forget Pre-2022 Victims

Photo by: De Sheng Lim



Global Momentum Builds for Convention Creating International Claims Commission

Photo Council of Europe



EU Council Agrees Position on Legal Basis for €90 Billion Ukraine Support Loan

See also: [GSF Brief Comment](#)

Photo by: Auben ministerium CC 2.0



Diplomatic Avenues and Mediation So Far in Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks

Photo by: Thien An CC 2.0



ICJ Weighs Counter-Claims and Preliminary Objections in Ukraine-Russia Genocide Case

Photo by: Ministry of Defense Ukraine CC 2.0



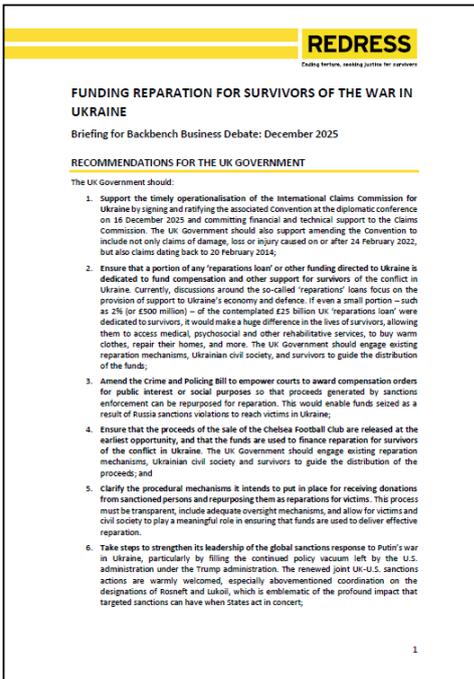
WEEKEND READS

REDRESS Practice Notes in Ukrainian

REDRESS has translated a number of our key Practice Notes into Ukrainian. These documents are intended to serve as practical tools for practitioners, activists, human rights defenders, survivors, and other stakeholders seeking to use strategic litigation to advance justice and secure reparation for victims of torture.

- **Practice Note 10: Reparation for Torture Survivors**
- **Practice Note 11: A Survivor-Centred Approach to Seeking Reparation for Torture**
- **Practice Note 12: Compensation for Victims of Torture**
- **Practice Note 13: Claiming and Implementing Reparation for Torture Survivors**





Briefing Paper: Funding Reparation for Survivors of the War in Ukraine

REDRESS

This briefing paper was prepared for the Backbench business debate on the war in Ukraine in the UK's House of Commons on 4 December 2025. It provides a background on the UK's response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, victims' right to reparation and the work of the Register of Damage and the proposed establishment of the Claims Commission, and our recommendations to the UK Government on funding reparation for survivors of the war in Ukraine.

Urgent Interim Reparation pilot project for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence

Global Survivors Fund

The pilot project on Urgent Interim Reparation for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence was designed as a survivor-centred, multi-stakeholder response to the urgent needs of survivors, combining immediate assistance with sustained advocacy under a “learning by doing” approach. Through collaboration in identifying survivors, delivering interim compensation, and facilitating referrals, the initiative demonstrated that it is possible to reach significant numbers of survivors despite fear, mistrust, and evidentiary barriers, while providing meaningful acknowledgment and support.



EVENTS



EXHIBITION AND PANEL EVENT: Delivering Justice for Ukrainian Survivors through Asset Recovery

To mark four years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, REDRESS and the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Magnitsky Sanctions and Reparations hosted an exhibition and panel discussion in the UK Parliament to highlight what reparation would mean for survivors and how it can be achieved.

One of the survivors featured in the exhibition, Oleksandr Maksymenko, who spent six months under occupation and endured captivity and torture, said:

“Compensation for my losses would give me the opportunity to live a full life, to decide for myself where to live and what to do.”

The panel also explored broader measures the UK can take to deliver reparations now, including using revenue raised through sanctions enforcement, advancing proposals on confiscated assets, and establishing a pathway to distribute the proceeds from the sale of Chelsea FC.

Thank you for joining us for this special edition. We'll return to our regular newsletter set-up next month.

Take a look at our previous editions [here](#).

If someone has forwarded you this newsletter, please subscribe [here](#).



