



**Centre for  
Information  
Resilience**

# **Parallel Worlds: How Russia is Imposing a New Reality on Kherson**

**PART ONE: MECHANISMS OF OCCUPATION**

By Elise Thomas, Belén Carrasco Rodríguez and Alona Shestopalova

September 2022

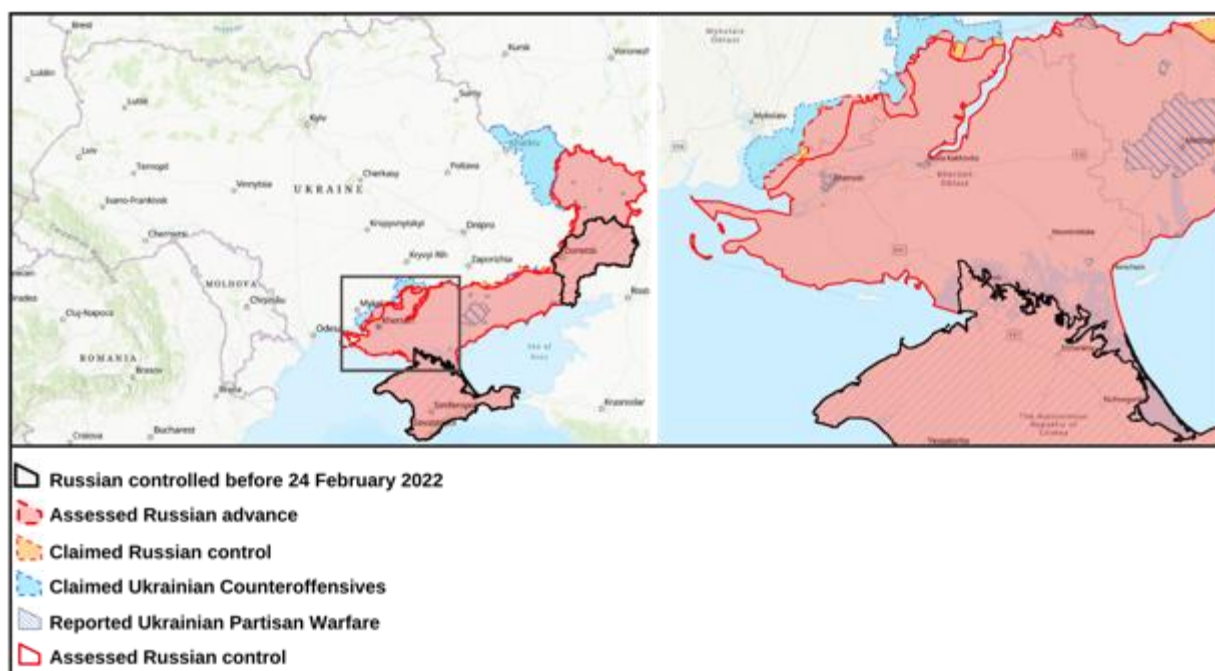


## Parallel Worlds: How Russia is Imposing a New Reality on Kherson

*Introducing the 'Life under Occupation' series*

Kherson was the first major Ukrainian city to face Russian occupation in late February 2022. Now, it is a test case for the Kremlin's forced assimilation of Ukrainian cities into Russia.<sup>1</sup>

This report is the first in a series of open-source investigations into the Russian occupation of the Kherson region (Ukrainian: Херсонська область). It provides a detailed analysis of life there and more broadly in Ukrainian territories under Russian occupation. This report sheds light on the mechanisms of occupation: the means used to establish and strengthen Russian occupational rule over seized Ukrainian territories and to force locals to engage with the occupying authorities.



*Figure 1: Map of the occupation of the Kherson region as of 19 September 2022. Courtesy: [Institute for the Study of War and American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project](#).<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Thomas (17 June 2022). Available at: <https://www.info-res.org/post/briefing-how-russia-is-consolidating-power-in-kherson>

<sup>2</sup> Institute for the Study of War and American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/36a7f6a6f5a9448496de641cf64bd375>

## PLEASE NOTE:

This report contains descriptions of graphic imagery / violence which some readers may find distressing. Additionally, where graphic footage has been verified by CIR investigators it is linked in the footnotes with the explicit warning of “graphic footage.”

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## PART 1: Mechanisms of Occupation

*By Elise Thomas, Belén Carrasco Rodríguez and Alona Shestopalova*

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### I – Introduction: Kherson region, the first to fall

Soldiers invade, but it's bureaucrats who occupy—that's the reality currently playing out in the occupied parts of the Kherson region,<sup>3</sup> where the Russian invasion has been followed by a second assault by bureaucrats, bankers, commercial interests and law enforcement. Together, these actors are attempting to force the idea of a 'Russian Kherson' into reality by making it increasingly difficult for the remaining civilians to survive without participating in the occupation.

As one of the largest population centres under Russian control in 2022, Kherson provides valuable insight into how Russia may attempt to solidify its control in other occupied Ukrainian territories.

The Kremlin—and its arm in Kherson, the occupying authorities—are attempting to entice, persuade, compel, or if need be, violently force civilians in Kherson to accept Russian rule. To access basic needs such as money, transportation, communications and electricity, residents are compelled to acquire Russian citizenship, passports and bank accounts. In the meantime, the Ukrainian government is discussing criminalising<sup>4</sup> the process of obtaining a Russian passport. The necessities of daily life have become a political tool that Russia wields to compel civilians to participate in, and thus strengthen, its occupation of Kherson.

The people of the Kherson region are in a difficult and dangerous position. For some, leaving is not an option. They may be too old, too young, too unwell, or may support relatives who are unable to leave. They also may simply not be able to afford it. Social

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<sup>3</sup> Lukov (31 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-62730439>

<sup>4</sup> Ukrinform (21 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-ato/3533570-obtaining-russian-passport-should-be-considered-criminal-offense-minister.html>

media posts advertising transport out of the occupied regions quote prices ranging from around 7,000 Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH) and up per person (around £165). These costs are substantially more for people with mobility issues or special needs.

Those who are unable to leave face a choice between cooperating with the Russian occupiers and their local collaborators or attempting to survive without access to the basic necessities of life – a difficult, if not impossible, prospect with the freezing Ukrainian winter looming.

Furthermore, Russia is attempting to capture not only territory, but the minds of Kherson's young people. As the new school year began on 1 September, children in the region have entered an entirely new reality, in which education in Russian language and according to Russian propaganda.<sup>5</sup>

This is as much a psychological occupation as a physical one. The occupying authorities have been clear about their goal of creating a feeling amongst the locals that there is no alternative to Russia. They consistently speak about integration as an inevitable and natural process of 'returning' Kherson to Russia.

They have also launched an astroturfed pro-Russian movement (an online campaign that poses as a local grassroots movement, but in reality is funded and directed by the Russians)<sup>6</sup> and the propaganda campaign 'We Are Together with Russia' ("Мы вместе с Россией!") which has held rallies and forums across Kherson and in other newly occupied Ukrainian territories, such as parts of the Zaporizhzhia region.<sup>7</sup>

The threat of physical violence remains pervasive. Armed Russian soldiers patrol administrative offices, and social media is full of posts from desperate relatives looking for family members who have been taken from their homes by Russian forces.

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<sup>5</sup>Devlin and Korenyuk (31 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-62577314>

<sup>6</sup>TASS (30 July 2022). Available at: <https://tass.ru/politika/15351809>

<sup>7</sup>Мы вместе с Россией. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/vmeste\\_rus\\_ZO](https://t.me/vmeste_rus_ZO)

In Kherson, Russia exercises power through both the soldier's gun and the bureaucrat's pen. This report provides a snapshot of the mechanisms that Russian authorities and collaborators use to compel residents of the region to collaborate with the occupation regime. It explains the mechanisms utilised by the occupying authorities to consolidate power in the region, such as propaganda and the use of law enforcement and violence to encourage assimilation. It also details the policies and mechanisms directly impacting the day-to-day lives of civilians residing in the region, including their access to pensions, utilities, transport, essential services, and education.

With a "referendum" to further consolidate Russian power in Kherson and officially assimilate the territory in the Kremlin's eyes, it is critical these coercive methods are exposed, as no vote taking place under such circumstances can be legitimate. The future of Kherson—and other occupied regions of Ukraine—hangs in the balance.

### *Notes*

While some key figures of Russian occupying administration in Kherson are mentioned in this report, this report does not provide extensive background or information about them because this will be the focus of the second report in this series. Transliteration is provided where relevant.

This investigation analyses data from 1 March to 10 September 2022 through a combination of open-source techniques. Evidence gathered includes pictures, videos, news articles, and social media posts collected from the occupying authorities in Kherson, official Kremlin media, pro-Kremlin websites, international media, Ukrainian media, Telegram, Twitter, and TikTok accounts, etc.

## II - Mechanisms of power consolidation

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This section covers the mechanisms utilised by the Kremlin and its collaborators to develop state-like institutions in an effort to replace the Ukrainian power structure and secure the long-term stability of the occupying authorities.

### Passportisation

The distribution of Russian citizenship to civilians across occupied areas of Ukraine is part of a strategy sometimes referred to as ‘passportisation’. It is an attempt to consolidate control over the regions and to further entrench and expand Russian rule, including by claiming that the population are now Russian citizens and thus in need of Russian "protection" against Ukraine.

Russia has used this strategy for decades against Ukraine, as well as Georgia and Moldova,<sup>8</sup> but amid the haste of the invasion it is being implemented far more aggressively than ever before. In addition, citizenship applications and other bureaucratic processes serve as a mass data collection exercise on the civilian population in Kherson that could be used in preparation for the so-called “referendum”.

The first Russian passports were issued to residents of Kherson on 11 June. A month later, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree<sup>9</sup> to fast-track Russian citizenship applications for Ukrainians. As of 15 August, according to Russian sources, over 12,000 people have applied for Russian passports in the Kherson region.<sup>10</sup>

Across social media and propaganda media channels associated with the occupation, Kherson residents are insistently urged to apply for their Russian passports. According to the deputy head of the occupying administration Kateryna Gubareva (Катерина

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<sup>8</sup> Grigas (22 February 2016). Available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/how-soft-power-works-russian-passportization-and-compatriot-policies-paved-way-for-crimean-annexation-and-war-in-donbas/>

<sup>9</sup> Loh (12 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/putin-opens-fast-track-russian-citizenship-to-ukrainians-2022-7>

<sup>10</sup> TASS (15 August 2022). Available at: <https://tass.com/politics/1493447>

Губарева), the new passport office in Kherson region is located on Stritenska Street, 7A, 73000 (Стрітенська, 7А; 46.650162,32.592501).<sup>11</sup>

Passport offices have been opened around Kherson, and as of late August the occupation's 'Migration Service' were even conducting home visits<sup>12</sup> to take citizenship applications from people too frail to come into the offices. This intrusive policy could lead to higher uptake rates, as individuals may feel pressured into filling out applications for fear of retribution.

By doing door-to-door rounds of the region, the 'Migration Service' officials may also be able to identify the individuals who do not want a Russian passport and are resisting Russian influence. The first home visits were organised on 23 August.

A process has also been created whereby people without required identity documents will be given temporary status with a path towards future Russian citizenship.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This street was renamed by the Russian occupying administration, which uses its old communist name Rosa Luxemburg 7A (Розы Люксембург 7А). This is the name that the street had before it was renamed in 2016 during decommunization in Ukraine.

<sup>12</sup> Губарева (24 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/k\\_gubareva/146](https://t.me/k_gubareva/146)

<sup>13</sup> Администрация Каховского района (24 August 2020). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kakhovka/945](https://t.me/VGA_Kakhovka/945)



Губарева Катерина



**!! Подать документы на гражданство из дома? Легко!**

Миграционная служба совместно с Департаментом труда и социальной защиты Херсонской области проработали механизм приема заявлений от маломобильных граждан на гражданство РФ на дому.

Первый выезд организовали 23 августа 2022 года в муниципальные округа области. Приняты десятки заявлений.

Подобная практика будет применяться в дальнейшем.

*Figure 2: Telegram post by deputy head of the occupation Military-Civilian Administration, Kateryna Gubareva, showing the Russian Kherson's 'Migration Service' conducting home visits for citizenship applications.<sup>14</sup>*

As of September 2022, the occupying authorities in Kherson are still attempting to maintain the pretext that civilians are freely choosing to take up Russian citizenship, rather than being forced to do so. However, in a form of indirect coercion, Russian passports are increasingly demanded by the occupying authorities for access to vital payments, utilities and services.

<sup>14</sup>Губарева (24 August 2022). Available at: ([https://t.me/k\\_gubareva/146?single](https://t.me/k_gubareva/146?single))

Some Ukrainian partisan movements, like 'Yellow Ribbon' (Ukrainian: Жовта Стрічка), are campaigning against this, leaving leaflets around the region warning Kherson residents against acquiring Russian passports.<sup>15</sup>

In an interview in July,<sup>16</sup> a man who had recently escaped Kherson described ubiquitous pressure to accept Russian passports:

"[When] people choose to receive humanitarian aid, [when] pensioners come for help, they are asked: where are your Russian passports? That's about it. If you want to survive, take a Russian passport.

It's the same with work. If you want to work, get a Russian passport. If a person is already in a critical situation - many people are now experiencing problems, some have no food, no money - they are pushing him to get a Russian passport.

If some patrol comes up on the street, then the question is: why haven't you taken your passport yet? In general, the imposition of a Russian passport is a shame, of course. Usually people fight for a passport of another state if they want to get it. And here they impose passports, like some rotten canned food. Nobody needs their passports, people are literally forced to take them."  
[Translated]

As Kherson is folded into Russian administrative and legal systems, and with winter looming, residents who are unable to leave are left with few options. For some, there may be no realistic alternative except to engage with the occupation regime and take up Russian citizenship or risk being left out in the cold.

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<sup>15</sup>Жовта Стрічка (1 September 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/yellowribbon\\_ua/1357?single](https://t.me/yellowribbon_ua/1357?single)

<sup>16</sup>Дакo (31 July 20220). Available at: <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/news/live/svoih-zhen-na-manikyur-rossijskie-oficery-soprovohdayut-s-avtomatami-pro-zhizn-v-okkupirovannom-hersone.d?id=90862831>

## Physical coercion: Police, criminal law enforcement and prisons

The Russian takeover of Kherson is a violent invasion and occupation. Despite the efforts of the occupying authorities to build a veneer of law, order and civility, violence and the threat of violence is never far away. In Kherson, violence is wielded partly under the guise of policing and law enforcement.

Up until the end of May, Russian military police<sup>17</sup> were officially in charge of law enforcement in Kherson. The occupying authorities began recruiting<sup>18</sup> for a Russian police force in late May, from inside and outside the Kherson region, with the new police force supposedly beginning work by 28 May.<sup>19</sup>

Volodymyr Lipandin (Володимир Липандін), formerly head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Cherkasy region, located in central Ukraine, was announced as the new ‘head’ of the police force in Kherson<sup>20</sup>. Lipandin fled to occupied Crimea following the Maidan Revolution and has been on a wanted list in Ukraine since 2014 for his involvement in violent assaults on protesters and journalists.<sup>21</sup>

Following his appointment, a prominent Ukrainian pro-Russian politician, Oleh Tsaryov (Олег Царьов), former People’s Deputy (Member of Parliament) of Ukraine, praised Lipandin’s loyalty to Russia.<sup>22</sup>

The first Kherson police officers were sworn in as part of the Russian occupation police on 12 June and presented with patches emblazoned ‘Russian Police’.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Администрация Херсонской области (15 May 20220). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/1989](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1989)

<sup>18</sup>ГУ МВД Херсонской области (19 May 20220). Available at: [https://t.me/police\\_kherson\\_press/5](https://t.me/police_kherson_press/5)

<sup>19</sup><https://t.me/zaporozhye24news/1867>

<sup>20</sup>Борзенко (22 May 2022). Available at: <https://ukranews.com/news/858422-eks-glavnyi-militsioner-cherkass-presledovavshij-reporterov-vozglavil-politsiyu-v-okkupirovannom>

<sup>21</sup>SPILKA News (21 May 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/spilkanews/1182>

<sup>22</sup>Царёв (20 May 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/oleqtsarov/1978>

<sup>23</sup>ГУ МВД Херсонской области (12 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/police\\_kherson\\_press/400?single](https://t.me/police_kherson_press/400?single)



Figure 3: Telegram post from Kherson MVD dated 12 June 2022.<sup>24</sup>

It is not clear how successful the occupying authorities' attempts to recruit for their police force have been. In practice, it appears that military police from Russia have continued to operate alongside and in close collaboration with the fledgling Kherson occupation police force. In June, police from occupied Donetsk were also brought in to assist.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ГУ МВД Херсонской области (12 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/police\\_kherson\\_press/400?single](https://t.me/police_kherson_press/400?single)

<sup>25</sup> ГУ МВД Херсонской области (11 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/police\\_kherson\\_press/384](https://t.me/police_kherson_press/384)

To date, the main focus of police efforts appears to have been on disarming the local population. Since May the Russian Kherson police have called<sup>26</sup> on the population to surrender their weapons and ammunition or face arrest and criminal charges, including imprisonment. Social media channels associated with the occupation feature frequent posts about cooperation between police and “security forces” (it is unclear whether this refers to Russian military police, Russian Army, or other forces) carrying out successful raids resulting in the confiscation of hidden weapons caches.

The occupying police and military also conduct street patrols,<sup>27</sup> mostly targeting young people and checking their pockets, documents and phones. Ukrainian government sources warned<sup>28</sup> that street patrols and searches intensified in early September as the occupying authorities sought to crack down on Ukrainian partisan groups and fight the Ukrainian counter-offensive. Increased searches carry the risk of increased detentions.

Ukraine’s Centre for National Resistance published detailed instructions to advise citizens on how to face a detention by Russian occupiers.<sup>29</sup> Further, the Centre for National Resistance advised citizens:

- Do not voluntarily enter premises occupied by occupiers.
- Always have a witness nearby if an encounter with the occupiers is likely to occur.
- Never carry anything that can reveal or suggest activities against the occupiers, like information about the people cooperating with them, their activities, or data related to infrastructure.
- Do not carry any campaign materials, forbidden literature, or instructions that could indicate organised opposition.

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<sup>26</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (18 May 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2071](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2071)

<sup>27</sup> Херсонська обласна державна адміністрація (23 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/khoda.gov.ua/posts/pfbid0qEBcE6Wn552dxafCFzWt1Smmwfx1TT2jWcZiDuwHZ4sziX2kA11kNj9K9HTuuDMml>

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (7 September 2022). Available at: <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/2022/09/07/na-pivdni-okupanty-poslyly-oblavly/>

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: <https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/portfolio/povedinka-zatrymannya/>

- Curate the content stored on electronic devices, such as contacts, multimedia, etc. Do not to clear phones completely since this can be seen as having something to hide. However, citizens should delete any revealing information, like visits to Ukrainian sites from the browser history.
- Save important phone contacts under pseudonyms.

In addition to search and seizure, torture and forced disappearances have been recorded in Kherson. In July, Human Rights Watch published a report on these and other grave human rights violations by Russian and pro-Russian forces in occupied southern Ukraine, including Kherson.<sup>30</sup>

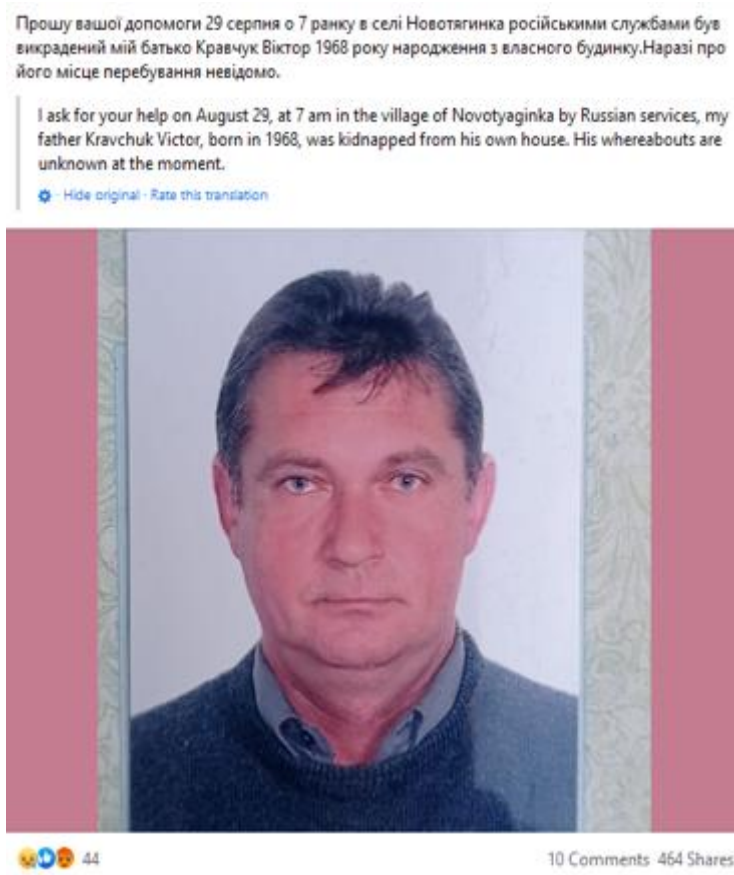
Furthermore, the Crimean Tartar Resource Centre reports that on 19 August, businessman Ihor Muntyan (Ігор Мунтян), whose business was reportedly taken away by Russian forces, disappeared.<sup>31</sup> According to his wife, Muntyan may be detained by the workers of the Russia-controlled Suvorov department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kherson.

Posts on social media suggest that as of late August, people continue to be abducted from their homes without warning or explanation and without their families being told where they have been taken.

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<sup>30</sup>Human Rights Watch (22 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/22/ukraine-torture-disappearances-occupied-south>

<sup>31</sup>Crimean Tartar Resource Centre (24 August 2022). Available at: <https://ctrcenter.org/uk/news/7984-u-hersoni-znik-biznesmen-igor-muntyan>



*Figure 4: Screenshot of a Facebook post, as an example of the many posts on social media from family members attempting to find information about what has happened to abducted relatives.*

Since June, the occupying authorities and law enforcement agents have been applying<sup>32</sup> Russian criminal law in Kherson and charging alleged criminals under the Russian Criminal Code.<sup>33</sup> As of early September 2022, they do not appear to have set up local criminal courts to try cases or pass sentences.

Furthermore, the authorities are violating prisoners' privacy; local rights monitors claim that Russian forces are transferring all data from prisoners' mobile devices to a centralised database in Kherson city,<sup>34</sup> which can be used if a referendum takes place.

<sup>32</sup>Saldo (7 July 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/SALDO\\_VGA/7](https://t.me/SALDO_VGA/7)

<sup>33</sup> Official website of the President of the Russian Federation (14 July 2022). Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/68896>

<sup>34</sup>Media Initiative for Human Rights (3 June 2022). Available at: <https://mipl.org.ua/nochami-tam-lunayut-kriki-vid-bolyu-sotni-lyudej-proxodyat-cherez-kativni-u-xersoni/>

There is limited information available on where those who have been arrested are being taken. In March, Russian forces seized<sup>35</sup> one of the pre-trial detention centres in the city, killing at least one prisoner in the process. Ukrainian collaborator Evhen Sobolev (Євген Соколов) served as the head of the occupation's prisons system, until he was injured in a targeted car bomb attack in June.<sup>36</sup> The occupying authorities have continued to recruit new employees to work in the prisons.<sup>37</sup>

Based on interviews with people who had been detained, the Ukrainian organisation Media Initiative for Human Rights claims that there are at least four locations in Kherson where people are being held and in some cases tortured.<sup>38</sup> These are:

- The basement of the regional police department at 4 Liuteranska Street, 73009 (Лютеранська, 4; 46.633338,32.62035);
- The pre-trial detention centre at 10 Perekopska Street, 73009 (Перекопська, 10; 46.638473, 32.626136);
- The Dar'ivska penal colony No. 10, in Dar'ivka Village, Kherson district, 75032 (село Дар'івка, Херсонський район; 46.759594,32.751529).
- The pre-trial detention centre at 3 Teploenergetykyv Street, 73009 (Теплоенергетиків, 3; 46.66959,32.6580151).

In addition, there are reports of some detainees being transported to Sevastopol in occupied Crimea.

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<sup>35</sup> Ukrinform (3 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-regions/3424750-rossijskie-zahvatciki-zahvatili-sledstvennyj-izolator-v-hersone.html>

<sup>36</sup> Ukrinform (20 June 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-regions/3511198-hersonskij-kollaborant-sobolev-vsledstvie-vzryva-polucil-povrezdenia-nog.html>

<sup>37</sup>

Работа КНЕ. SU (5 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/jobkhesu/27>

<sup>38</sup>Media Initiative for Human Rights (3 June 2022). Available at: <https://mipl.org.ua/nochami-tam-lunayut-kriki-vid-bolyu-sotni-lyudej-proxodyat-cherez-kativni-u-xersoni/>





*Figure 5: Picture of the pretrial detention centre at 10 Perekopska Street [46.638473, 32.626136].*

According to the Kherson Regional Prosecutor's Office,<sup>39</sup> 613 people had been abducted by Russian forces since the beginning of the occupation through September. 346 people are known to have been released. The whereabouts of 248 people remain unknown.

In conversations with the Media Initiative for Human Rights, interviewees report systematic violent interrogations and torture. It is unclear how many people may have been killed by this treatment.

In one example, a member of Kherson's Regional Territorial Defence, Vitaly Lapchuk,<sup>40</sup> was abducted by Russian forces on 27 March. For months his wife was unable to access any information about where he was or what had happened to him. On 9 June, she was informed that his body had been found in a nearby river. It was

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<sup>39</sup>Суспільне Херсон (7 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/suspilnekherson/16050>

<sup>40</sup>Media Initiative for Human Rights (3 June 2022). Available at: <https://mipl.org.ua/nochami-tam-lunayut-kriki-vid-bolyu-sotni-lyudej-proxodyat-cherez-kativni-u-xersoni/>

later discovered that he had been dead since at least 22 May, and his body bore signs of torture.<sup>41</sup>

## Propaganda

Propaganda is utilised by the occupying authorities to conquer Kherson citizens also in the cognitive domain. By shifting views and behaviours towards more Russia-friendly stances, the occupiers hope to build enduring support for the invasion.

The core messages promoted by Russian propaganda targeting Kherson includes the following:

- Annexation by Russia is a natural and positive ‘return’ to Kherson’s so-called historical homeland.
- Being a part of the Russian Federation will improve Kherson citizens’ lives and offer them new opportunities.
- There is no point in resisting as the ‘return’ is inevitable.

These narratives are amplified by Мы вместе с Россией (“We are together with Russia”),<sup>42</sup> a campaign also present in other occupied areas, such as Melitopol (Zaporizhzhia region). The campaign was officially established in Kherson at the end of July<sup>43</sup> as a public forum allegedly comprised of at least 500 delegates from professional organisations, as well as heads of the district and regional administrations, which oversee decisions about socio-political and economic matters in the region.<sup>44</sup>

The forum combines online campaigning and offline events to build support for the occupying administration. It also claims to provide targeted humanitarian assistance to local residents. During the launch event at the occupied Kherson State University,

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<sup>41</sup>ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Мы вместе с Россией. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/vmeste\\_rus\\_ZO](https://t.me/vmeste_rus_ZO)

<sup>43</sup>Шаповалова (30 July 2022). Available at: <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/07/30/forum/>

<sup>44</sup>RenTV (31 July 2022). Available at: <https://ren.tv/news/v-mire/1006666-masshtabnyi-forum-my-vmeste-s-rossiei-proveli-v-khersone>

the campaign adopted a declaration for a ‘Russian Kherson’,<sup>45</sup> which states that “the Kherson region is becoming part of the single powerful social, technological, energy, communication and information infrastructure of Russia, and its people become part of the Russian people.” In practice, integrated and coordinated largely by Russian collaborators, Мы вместе с Россией is a tool which is being used to create a façade of legitimacy for decisions taken by the occupying administration.



*Figure 6: Мы вместе с Россией forum organised on the 8th of September in Bilozerka (Білозёрка), Kherson region.<sup>46</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup>Иванов (31 July 2022). Available at: [https://zavtra.ru/events/zhiteli\\_hersonshini\\_prinyali\\_deklaratsiyu\\_russkij\\_herson](https://zavtra.ru/events/zhiteli_hersonshini_prinyali_deklaratsiyu_russkij_herson)

<sup>46</sup>@VGA\_Chernobaevka (8 September 2022). Available at: <https://kherson-news.ru/society/2022/09/08/30334.html>

The Russian occupying authorities strengthen these messages by actively using Russian state symbols,<sup>47</sup> including an old coat of arms from the period of Russian Empire,<sup>48</sup> the Russian language,<sup>49</sup> and Russian currency.<sup>50</sup> They also destroyed<sup>51</sup> Ukrainian monuments, replacing them with Russian and Soviet statues, including of Lenin.<sup>52</sup>

Several occupying administration leaders use strong pro-Russian rhetoric in their speeches, disseminating messages aimed at normalising the invasion and portraying it as the rightful return to the “Russian Kherson”:

- Acting ‘head’ of the Kherson Region, Sergey Eliseev (Сергей Елисеев): ‘Russia came to the region, came to the Kherson region forever’.<sup>53</sup>
- Deputy head of the occupying administration Kyrylo Stremousov (Кирило Стремоусов):
  - ‘We got liberated from this colony [Ukraine]. The liberation happened on the 24 February’.<sup>54</sup>
  - ‘We go to socialism, we will build social equality in a state where the social standards, [welfare of] pensioners and children’s future are under the personal control of the president of the Russian Federation – Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. Do not be ashamed to say that you are Russians, you have been Russians but today, getting the passport of a citizen of the Russian Federation, you join the big multinational family. [...]. We will, as usual, help all the nations all around the world because

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<sup>47</sup> Буймова (21 August 2022). Available at: <https://ria.ru/20220821/kherson-1811082475.html>

<sup>48</sup> Website of the occupying administration of the Kherson region. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at:

<https://khogov.ru/press-center-news/russkij-gorod-herson-vernul-sebe-isto/>

<sup>49</sup> Ria Novosti (23 August 2022). Available at: <https://ria.ru/20220823/obuchenie-1811475666.html>

<sup>50</sup> Suspilne (17 August 2022). Available at: <https://suspilne.media/272244-zabiraut-terminali-z-magaziniv-okupacijna-vlada-hersonsini-namagaetsa-viluciti-grivnu-z-obigu/>

<sup>51</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (24 April 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/1233](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/1233)

<sup>52</sup> БАЛАЧУК (18 April 2022). Available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2022/04/18/7340449/>

<sup>53</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (23 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2985](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2985)

<sup>54</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (21 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/295](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/295)

we are Russians, because we, Russians, do not start wars, we end wars'.<sup>55</sup>

These messages try to disconnect Kherson citizens from their Ukrainian identity and build the foundations for effective Russian assimilation of the region.

Another important aspect of the propaganda associated with the occupation is the patriotic education techniques aimed at influencing and brainwashing Kherson's children. While announcing new educational measures, Stremousov declared that Kherson would never return to 'Nazi control'. This tactic is further explored below, in the section focused on education.

The pervasive propaganda and increasingly strict assimilation measures leaves people in Kherson with two sets of choices. Either they must leave the region or accept the new status-quo. The latter would mean they would need to get a Russian SIM card, a Russian bank account, a Russian passport, a Russian pension, to pay for utilities through a Russian bank, to get Russian driver's license/car registration, to send their child to a Russian kindergarten/school, or even to work as a part of the occupying administration.

The most likely prognosis is that the longer the occupation lasts, the more locals (who decide to stay) will be forced to accept this status-quo as the occupation regime establishes increasingly strict control over various spheres of life.

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<sup>55</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (22 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2980](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2980)

## III – Daily Life

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Even under occupation, the demand for the necessities of daily life continues. Remaining civilians need access to money, food, water, utilities, transport, healthcare and more. The occupying administration has moved rapidly to make civilians' acceptance and cooperation a prerequisite for access to these vital resources and services.

As research by CIR investigators has found, it is rapidly becoming less and less possible to live in Kherson without engaging, at least to some degree, with the occupation. Although the effect may be less immediate or obvious than being forced to comply at gunpoint, it is nonetheless a form of coercion designed to compel civilians into making a choice: cooperate, leave, or prepare to slowly starve and freeze in the coming winter.

### **Pensions**

For people residing in the occupied parts of the Kherson region, it is becoming increasingly difficult to use Ukrainian currency for both cash-based and cashless transactions. Since the occupying authorities took control of the banks, it has become difficult to access or deposit cash in Ukrainian hryvnia. Additionally, there are reports that the occupying authorities have removed the terminals required for cashless payments with Ukrainian bank cards.

Some Ukrainian social benefits, including pensions, are still paid to people in the Kherson region. The payments are made to Ukrainian hryvnia bank accounts but it is becoming continuously problematic to use that money to pay for products or services. Additionally, in the Russian-occupied parts of the Kherson region, it is no longer possible for pensioners to receive their pensions in cash in Ukrainian banks or from Ukrainian post offices. This places pensioners in an precarious financial position.

According to reporting,<sup>56</sup> in 2021 approximately 275,500 people in the Kherson region received a pension. For some, this is their main or only source of income. It is not clear how many pensioners have fled the region in recent months, but it is worth noting that pensioners - who are likely to be older, frailer and poorer than other segments of the population - may be disproportionately less able to leave. Complications with pension payments, or the disruption of payments due to the invasion, has resulted in significant hardship for many elderly and vulnerable people.

Since late June, the occupying authorities in Kherson have been making pension payments to residents who previously received a pension from Ukraine and are registered with Russia-controlled 'Kherson Region's Pension Fund', which is now a branch of the Pension Fund of Russia. Initial payments<sup>57</sup> of 10,000 rubles (around £140) were made in cash.

Applicants for the pension were told to bring a pension certificate and either a Russian or Ukrainian passport to the office in person. The personal data of pensioners is being collected,<sup>58</sup> with the intention of transferring it to the Pension Fund of Russia.

#### Новости Херсонщины

##### С 30 июня в Херсоне начнет работу пенсионный фонд

Пенсионеров Херсона приглашают пройти регистрацию в пенсионном фонде, который начинает работу с 30 июня текущего года.

👉 При себе нужно иметь пенсионное удостоверение, паспорт, идентификационный код.

📍 г. Херсон, ул. Комкова, 76а.  
🕒 понедельник – пятница, с 10.00 до 15.00

👍 50 ❤️ 8 🗿 1

👁️ 2806 11:57 PM

*Figure 7: post by the pro-occupation telegram channel “News from Kherson region” (Новости Херсонщины) on 30 June inviting Kherson pensioners to register with the new ‘pension fund’.<sup>59</sup>*

<sup>56</sup> Херсонський (17 January 2022). Available at: <https://herson.depo.ua/ukr/herson/na-khersonshchini-istotno-skorotilasya-kilkist-pensioneriv-202201171413412>

<sup>57</sup> Kherson-news.info (25 August 2022). Available at: <https://archive.ph/wip/808vH>

<sup>58</sup> ibid.

<sup>59</sup>

On the first day of the new pension scheme, 30 June, Russian state media and social media footage showed huge queues outside the pensions office, with people waiting to register for their pension.

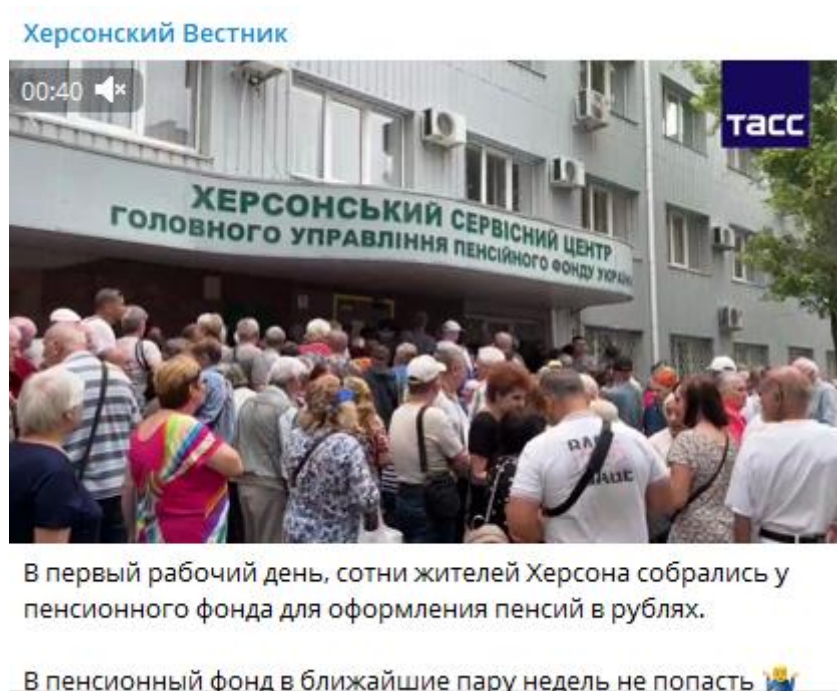


Figure 8: post by @hersonvesti showing queues outside Russia-controlled Kherson's pension office.<sup>60</sup>

A post in a pro-Russian Telegram channel the following day reported that the pension office's operation had been shambolic. The post quoted a person who claimed to have waited at the office for two days and had still not managed to actually get inside. The same source observed, however, that the Russia-controlled *passport* office was working perfectly.

This reflects the priorities of the occupying administration - more resources were directed towards ensuring that the passport office was working than the pension office.

Новости Херсонщины (29 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/kherson\\_news\\_info/32839](https://t.me/kherson_news_info/32839)  
<sup>60</sup>@HersonVesti. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: <https://t.me/HersonVesti/642>



*"Сегодня второй день как начал работу пенсионный фонд в Херсоне. Больше дерьма в организации я не видел. Вчерашние списки составленные самими пенсионерами охрана порвала. Сегодняшние обнулила. И получился хаос. И драки, и давка, и обмороки, и стрельба в воздух из автомата. Два дня там провел, а попасть внутрь не смог.*

*В тоже время паспортный стол в Херсоне работает отлично. Но там за списками следит сама администрация. Помогите навести порядок пожалуйста. Передадим же друг друга".*

Figure 9: post by account @Novorrosia\_Region narrating the chaos around the pension office's operation.<sup>61</sup>

On 17 August, Ihor Butrym (Ігор Бутрим), the head of the occupying administration's Kherson Pension Fund stated<sup>62</sup> that payments would continue to be made to all pensioners regardless of whether they had a Russian or Ukrainian passport. However, in an earlier interview in July with Ukrainian media, the Ukrainian Deputy Chairman of the Kherson Regional Council claimed<sup>63</sup> that pensioners were being forced to acquire Russian passports in order to access payments. The reality of the situation on the ground is therefore unclear.

In August, the occupying administration began shifting pensioners off cash and postal payments into the Russian banking system. In the first stage, they plan<sup>64</sup> to distribute cards from Russian state-owned Promsvyazbank (Промсвязьбанк) to 5000 pensioners, who will then be able to receive their pensions via bank accounts and pay for goods and services using their Promsvyazbank card (in regions where card payments are functioning). On 5 September, the occupying authorities claimed<sup>65</sup> that 937 pensioners had already received Promsvyazbank cards.

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<sup>61</sup> Южный Регион/Новороссия (1 July 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/Novorossia\\_Region/7983](https://t.me/Novorossia_Region/7983)

<sup>62</sup> Таврия (17 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/tavriya\\_kherson/817](https://t.me/tavriya_kherson/817)

<sup>63</sup> Новое Время (15 July 2022). Available at: <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/herson-v-okupaciji-pasporti-ri-jizha-po-barteru-katuvannya-aktivistiiv-shcho-vidbuvayetsya-sogodni-50256609.html>

<sup>64</sup> Инфобур (23 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/infobur\\_times/775](https://t.me/infobur_times/775)

<sup>65</sup> @Digital\_ks (5 September 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/Digital\\_ks/40](https://t.me/Digital_ks/40)

## Taxation

The occupying authorities are moving swiftly to set up a Russian taxation system in Kherson. In June, Volodymyr Saldo (Володимир Сальдо) announced<sup>66</sup> the creation of a new database for tax registrations. In order to continue operating, businesses and individual entrepreneurs are required<sup>67</sup> to register and to open a bank account with an ‘authorised’ bank’, which as of August 2022 appeared to mean Promsvyazbank, a Russian state-owned bank under UK, US, and EU sanctions. Promsvyazbank has advertised<sup>68</sup> that business owners who bank with them can set up Point of Sale terminals or use a mobile app to process electronic payments in their stores.

In order to register their businesses, entrepreneurs must obtain Russian passports.<sup>69</sup> Ukrainian sources have claimed<sup>70</sup> that the occupiers are threatening to confiscate the businesses of those who have not re-registered with the new tax system. Despite this, the Centre for Journalist Investigations, a Ukrainian media outlet, claims<sup>71</sup> that as of 3 August only 2% of businesses had re-registered.

The window in which businesses are required to register has been repeatedly extended, first from July to August and then from August to September.<sup>72</sup> This may suggest that businesses are registering more slowly than the occupying administration had anticipated.

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<sup>66</sup>Администрация Херсонской области (11 July 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2328](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2328)

<sup>67</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (14 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2344](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2344)

<sup>68</sup>Новости Херсонщины (4 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/kherson\\_news\\_info/35161](https://t.me/kherson_news_info/35161)

<sup>69</sup>Херсонська обласна державна адміністрація (24 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/khoda.gov.ua/posts/pfbid02PwARYSG3rPr9QPJntXXrUdApA7BAV9inY193JjgwWaBAKwKSN36qfKKfq9Px78BAI>

<sup>70</sup>Ukrinform (21 August 2022). Available at: (<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3554850-na-hersonsini-rosiani-vimagaut-pereoformluvati-biznes-pid-zagrozou-konfiskacii.html>)

<sup>71</sup>Ukrainian Center for Journalistic Investigations (3 August 2022). Available at: <https://investigator.org.ua/ua/news-2/245454/>

<sup>72</sup>@NALOG\_Zaporozhye\_Kherson (29 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/NALOG\\_Zaporozhye\\_Kherson/138](https://t.me/NALOG_Zaporozhye_Kherson/138)

Work has also begun on integrating individuals into the Russian taxation system. On 13 August, the occupying administration announced that the process of assigning Russian taxpayer identification numbers to Kherson residents with Russian passports had started.<sup>73</sup> Citizens who have received Russian passports can check information about their tax identification number on the website of the Federal Tax Service of Russia.<sup>74</sup> This is yet another mechanism that pushes Kherson citizens to receive a Russian passport.

## Utilities

The overall picture for utilities in Kherson is complex and fragmented, creating a concerning state of affairs with winter looming. The Russian occupying administration has declared that it has lowered<sup>75</sup> the prices for utilities. Ukraine, however, claims that some of the utilities, including electricity<sup>76</sup> and gas<sup>77</sup> are still provided by Ukraine and transported to the occupied parts of the Kherson region from Ukraine-controlled territory.

As such, Ukraine has asked<sup>78</sup> locals to continue paying their invoices to Ukrainian providers. Despite this, the Russian occupying administration's control over the utilities' infrastructure close to the final consumer gives the occupying authorities the technical power and ability to turn off utilities for those locals who will not pay for utilities to new Russian accounts. This leaves local people in an extremely difficult position.

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<sup>73</sup>Администрация Херсонской области (13 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2874](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2874)

<sup>74</sup> Federal Tax Service of Russia. Last accessed 19 September 2022. <https://service.nalog.ru/static/personal-data.html?svc=inn&from=%2Finn.do>

<sup>75</sup>ГУП Херсоноблэнерго (10 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/quphoe/15>

<sup>76</sup> Khersonoblenergo. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: <https://ksoe.com.ua/>

<sup>77</sup>Khersongaz. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: <https://gaz.kherson.ua/?p=5141>

<sup>78</sup> Khersonoblenergo (14 August 2022). Available at: <https://ksoe.com.ua/company/news/do-uvagi-shanovn-spojivach-elektrichno-energ>

## *Electricity*

In late June, the Russian occupiers seized control<sup>79</sup> of parts of Kherson's energy infrastructure. From 1 August the occupying administration, using the name of the pre-existing Khersonoblenergo (Херсонобленерго) Ukrainian enterprise, announced<sup>80</sup> that residents would be charged tariffs at the Russian rate for electricity. The plan is for inspectors to travel door to door checking meter readings, with invoices to be issued in September. As of 19 September, it is unclear whether this plan has been successfully implemented .

On 8 August, Ukrainian energy provider Kherson Regional Energy Supply Company LLC posted<sup>81</sup> on Facebook that the occupying authorities' demands for payment were "nothing but a fraud" and encouraged residents not to pay Russian invoices for electricity. Despite this, on 10 August, the head of the occupying administration, Volodymyr Saldo announced<sup>82</sup> that Promsvyazbank accounts had been created to collect payments for the utility usage from all collective housing and communal enterprises. He also announced his intention to decrease the electricity bill from 3.46 rubles/kWh to 2.12 rubles/kWh in an attempt to build sympathy for the occupation.

According to a Telegram post<sup>83</sup> from the Russian-controlled Khersonoblenergo account, which gives answers to frequently asked questions, residents need to apply for a new account with the utility company. This is perhaps because when the Russians took over the infrastructure, they did not get access to the Ukrainian enterprise's data. Documentation including a passport is required to obtain an account.

The post does not indicate whether Ukrainian passports will be accepted. However, a post from 1st of July states<sup>84</sup> that residents will be required to create a Russian bank

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<sup>79</sup> Pavlysh (29 July 2022). Available at: <https://news.yahoo.com/occupiers-seize-khersonoblenergo-facilities-142835571.html>

<sup>80</sup> <https://t.me/guphoe/21>

<sup>81</sup> ТОВ "Херсонська обласна енергопостачальна компанія" (7 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/khersonenergycompany/posts/pfbid0h6Bmt6yxHpUEVZJjNeJCBPChsPbnNuyWFzKp7QWn2eepuJKjhRNthBWSb1M6tmbvI>

<sup>82</sup> Khersonoblenergo (10 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/guphoe/15>

<sup>83</sup> Khersonoblenergo (18 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/guphoe/60>

<sup>84</sup> Администрация Каховского района (1 July 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kakhovka/384](https://t.me/VGA_Kakhovka/384)

account in order to pay for utility usage, and that people “who have not had time” to acquire Russian citizenship yet will be able to create a Russian bank account with a Ukrainian passport. It is unclear how long this loophole will be in place.

Since 25 August, there have been several power outages recorded<sup>85</sup> in the region. Khersonoblenergo says it is investigating the cause.

### *Water*

There have been significant concerns about access to, payments for, and the cleanliness and safety of drinking water in the occupied territories. As of 12 August, the Russian-controlled Kherson Vodokanal (Херсонский водоканал)<sup>86</sup> is accepting payments<sup>87</sup> in both rubles and hryvnia, charged<sup>88</sup> at the Russian exchange rate. As with electricity, residents will be charged from 1 August onwards and sent invoices during September.

The tariff for cold water supply has also dropped from 33.77 rubles to 25.02 rubles per cubic meter. Water payments are made<sup>89</sup> to a Promsvyazbank account, with the possible implication that in the future residents will be required to pay from a Promsvyazbank account or other Russian bank account.

On 11 August, it was reported by a social media account associated with the occupying administration that water was being provided to residents in the Kherson without interruptions by Russian-controlled Kherson Vodokanal.<sup>90</sup> There have been unverified claims that the counteroffensive temporarily left some towns in the region without

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<sup>85</sup> Interfax (27 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/858566>

<sup>86</sup> Also using the name of the pre-existing Ukrainian Kherson Vodokanal (Херсонський водоканал).

<sup>87</sup> Pro Херсон (11 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/prokherson\\_ru/237](https://t.me/prokherson_ru/237)

<sup>88</sup>

Южный Регион/Новороссия (20 July 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/Novorossia\\_Region/8859](https://t.me/Novorossia_Region/8859)

<sup>89</sup> Pro Херсон (16 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/prokherson\\_ru/262](https://t.me/prokherson_ru/262)

<sup>90</sup> <https://t.me/waterkherson>

water or power in late August.<sup>91</sup> As of 14 September, however, power and water was operational according to the occupying administration.<sup>92</sup>

### *Heating*

With winter fast approaching, access to reliable heating will be crucial for the wellbeing and survival of residents. The occupying administration has promised residents,<sup>93</sup> particularly in Kherson's smaller villages, access to coal and firewood at affordable prices. This fuel appears to be at least partially imported<sup>94</sup> from Pskov (Псков) in Russia.

However, the administration has stated<sup>95</sup> that in order to distribute the fuel it first needs to collect data and build a database on the residents seeking to access the price-controlled fuel. This is similar to other instances in which the occupiers have used access to vital resources as a tool to extract data about the local population.

On 15 August, Kherson's heating provider Teploenergo (Херсонтеплоэнерго), claimed it is still controlled by Ukraine, and released a statement detailing plans to provide heating to the region for the period 2022-2023, with 24 boiler rooms and 26 heating points. The company asked citizens to pay for the services to ensure heating during wintertime, especially since they are working "under extremely difficult circumstances and need resources".<sup>96</sup>

With the information available, it is unclear to assess how easy it would be for Kherson residents to receive heating this winter.

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<sup>91</sup> Koshiw and Sauer (30 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/30/zelenskiy-tells-russian-forces-to-flee-as-ukraine-counteroffensive-begins-in-kherson>

<sup>92</sup> На самом деле в Херсоне (14 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/NSDVCH/7645>

<sup>93</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (10 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2848](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2848)

<sup>94</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (8 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2833](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2833)

<sup>95</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (16 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2907](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2907)

<sup>96</sup> Teploenergo. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: <https://www.teploenergo.ks.ua/news>

## *Telecommunications and internet*

Ukrainian mobile numbers no longer work.<sup>97</sup> In order to acquire and register Russian SIM cards, residents of Kherson are now required to provide their passport details. In late August, users on some networks that had not previously required passport data, (for example the network On Svyaz), began receiving text messages<sup>98</sup> asking them to provide their passport information or have their service cut off. In exchange for providing their data, some providers are offering users in Kherson free SIM cards<sup>99</sup> and/or free mobile data.

The occupying authorities have denied rumours<sup>100</sup> that the goal of this is to collect personal data ahead of an upcoming referendum. They claim that it is required under Russian law and necessary for preventing illegal acts and fighting “radical terrorist groups.” Although they do not state it directly, this implies that the extension of Russian phone networks into Kherson is being used for surveillance purposes.

## **Healthcare**

Communication by the occupying authorities related to healthcare services consists primarily of unfulfilled promises that try to build a favourable image of the occupying administration. It is unclear if the system is ready to deal with the basic needs of the war-torn population with winter looming.

Among the propagandistic promises are:

- free healthcare,<sup>101</sup>
- free medical supplies,<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> The Economist (18 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/08/18/life-in-occupied-kherson-is-grim>

<sup>98</sup> Pro Херсон (22 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/prokherson\\_ru/318](https://t.me/prokherson_ru/318)

<sup>99</sup> Херсонский Вестник (18 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/HersonVestnik/7072>

<sup>100</sup> Губарева (11 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/k\\_gubareva/112](https://t.me/k_gubareva/112)

<sup>101</sup> @depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/26](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/26)

<sup>102</sup> @depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/16](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/16)

- free check-ups,<sup>103</sup>
- financial payments for people who were injured,<sup>104</sup>
- financial payments to people working in healthcare institutions in the Kherson region,<sup>105</sup>
- healthcare institutions will get new and modern medical equipment,<sup>106</sup>
- control of prices for medical supplies,<sup>107</sup>
- humanitarian aid – hundreds of tons<sup>108</sup> of medical supplies from Russia.

The so-called head of the ‘Department of Health of Kherson Region’ says<sup>109</sup> that he is personally grateful to Putin (and other Russian officials) for humanitarian assistance.

Despite these promises and statements referencing humanitarian assistance, there are reports that the medical supply situation in the region is poor.<sup>110</sup> There are initiatives within the Ukrainian-controlled territory that collect money, buy medical supplies, including basic ones, and send them to the Kherson region as parcels. For example, a TikTok video by<sup>111</sup> a Kherson-based pro-Ukrainian blogger unpacks one of such parcels with medical supplies which was delivered to her with the help of volunteers from Chernivtsi, Mykolaiv, and Kherson.

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<sup>103</sup>@depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/30](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/30)

<sup>104</sup>@depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/40](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/40)

<sup>105</sup>@depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/52](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/52)

<sup>106</sup>@depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/54](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/54)

<sup>107</sup>@depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/38](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/38)

<sup>108</sup>@depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/39](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/39)

<sup>109</sup>@depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/40](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/40)

<sup>110</sup> Гарт (27 June 2022). Available at: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/06/27/249250/>; Suspilne (27 June 2022). Available at: <https://suspilne.media/275326-u-taki-momenti-ti-dumaes-so-tvoe-zitta-i-tvoa-svoboda-tobi-ne-nalezat-piv-roku-zitta-volonterki-v-hersoni/>

<sup>111</sup>@vyhovatel\_iz\_humorom (14 June 2022). Available at: [https://www.tiktok.com/@vyhovatel\\_iz\\_humorom/video/7109018762615033093](https://www.tiktok.com/@vyhovatel_iz_humorom/video/7109018762615033093)



There also seems to be a shortage of healthcare personnel after the invasion. The occupying administration is advertising job calls<sup>112</sup> for a wide range of positions connected to the so-called 'Department of Healthcare of Kherson Region' and healthcare institutions of the region: from administrative (accountants, lawyers), to medical positions (doctors, nurses, etc).

People working in healthcare institutions in the Kherson region are getting paid in Russian rubles.<sup>113</sup> Russian standards of healthcare are planned to enter into force in the Kherson region and include everything listed in the paragraph above. However, no reports suggest these policies are not yet being implemented.

## Food supply

The occupation has caused disruptions to the food supply in the region. Most of the prepackaged food and hygienic products are sent to Kherson from Russia or from occupied Crimea. Their cost is significantly higher than before the occupation.<sup>114</sup> Even pro-occupation Telegram channels acknowledge that the lack of affordable food and other essential items is a significant problem in parts of the occupied Kherson region.<sup>115</sup>

Due to the general problem with the disruption to well-established supply chains, the so-called 'spontaneous trade' (styhijna torgivlia) has become quite widespread in Kherson: people sell various products on the streets (e.g. on sidewalks), often without having any certification, approvals, refrigerators, and without following sanitary norms. There are reports<sup>116</sup> that food, including meat and dairy products, medical supplies, and hygienic products are now often sold in this way.

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<sup>112</sup> @depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/27](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/27)

<sup>113</sup> @depzdrav\_Kherson. Last accessed 19 September 2022. Available at: [https://t.me/depzdrav\\_Kherson/51](https://t.me/depzdrav_Kherson/51)

<sup>114</sup> Дяко (31 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/news/live/svoih-zhen-na-manikyur-rossijskie-oficery-soprovozhdayut-s-avtomatami-pro-zhizn-v-okkupirovannom-hersone.d?id=90862831>

<sup>115</sup> В Херсоні (29 July 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/VKhersone/3678>

<sup>116</sup> Suspilne (11 June 2022). Available at: <https://suspilne.media/249115-stihijna-torgivla-u-hersoni-povernenna-u-90-ti/>

The Kherson region is well-known in Ukraine for its vegetables, fruits, and berries, especially watermelons. The image of a watermelon was even used on the cover of 'ABC of Kherson' - a textbook for first graders of Russia-controlled schools in the region (see figure 12, below).

The occupying administration makes use of Kherson's southern favourable farming climate: Russians have organised the export of vegetables, fruits, and berries from the Kherson region to Russia, including to the Moscow Food City Market,<sup>117</sup> markets in occupied Crimea,<sup>118</sup> and markets in the so-called 'DNR'. Allegedly, trading relationships are being established with Kherson's farmers.

The occupying authorities claim that on 1 August, representatives of Moscow's Food City<sup>119</sup> trading hub visited Kherson to implement trade relations and sign direct contracts with farmers of the Kherson region. The occupying administration has promised food exports to Russia will be more profitable for Kherson residents than their trading relationships under Ukrainian rule.

## Transport

Transport is a critical need for the civilian population, particularly in a context in which public transportation is limited, disrupted and unreliable. Some public buses and trolleybuses are running in Kherson, but service is limited in part by a lack of bus drivers.<sup>120</sup> Reportedly, there are more buses than people willing to drive them.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, not driving personal vehicles is simply not an option for many, making it a useful pressure point for compelling Kherson residents to accept Russian passports.

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<sup>117</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (2 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2734](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2734)

<sup>118</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (16 May 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2022](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2022)

<sup>119</sup> Food City website. Last accessed 20 September 2022. Available at: <https://foodcity.ru/>

<sup>120</sup>

Pro Херсон (17 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/prokherson\\_ru/279](https://t.me/prokherson_ru/279)

<sup>121</sup> ibid.

In early August the occupying authorities launched a campaign<sup>122</sup> to replace Ukrainian driver's licenses with Russian ones. They also announced that all cars would need to be re-registered and issued<sup>123</sup> with Russian license plates, using the code 184.



*Figure 9: Screenshot of post dated 16 August in the occupying authorities' main official Telegram channel. The video shows '184' Russian license plates being issued and put on a car.<sup>124</sup>*

Unsurprisingly, Russian passports are required to get licenses and plates. According to the occupying authorities, drivers who have already surrendered their Ukrainian passports but are still waiting for their application to receive a Russian passport to be processed will be issued<sup>125</sup> with temporary documents and license plates with the Kherson coat of arms (most likely the old one from the period of Russian Empire that is currently used by the occupying administration).

<sup>122</sup> Interfax (29 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/854429>

<sup>123</sup> Херсонский Вестник (8 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/HersonVestnik/6779>

<sup>124</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (16 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2905](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2905)

<sup>125</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (9 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2838](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2838)

The occupying authorities have created a traffic police division, and are actively attempting to recruit<sup>126</sup> more employees. The occupying authorities have stated that<sup>127</sup> police are conducting checks on cars (although it is unclear how widely or consistently this is currently being implemented).

In effect, this means that the occupying authorities have tied freedom of movement to cooperation with the occupation. The ability of civilians to use their own vehicles to move about their city in their daily lives, without fear of punishment from the occupation's police, is now contingent on their acceptance of the occupation's administrative rules and requirements.

## Education

As a previous CIR investigation reports,<sup>128</sup> the Kremlin not only attempts to build or maintain support for its invasion; it is indoctrinating and “russifying” future generations to secure long-lasting influence in Ukraine. Hence, the occupation regime expends significant effort to indoctrinate children, manipulate their memories of the war and generate pro-Russian sentiments from an early age.

The occupying administration has increased efforts to persuade citizens and outsiders that conditions for pupils, parents, teachers and school graduates have improved in comparison to the previous situation in Ukrainian Kherson. This has come with several promises, including the provision of funding to parents for their children's education.<sup>129</sup>

Advertisements for Russian schools in the region portray a picture of a joyful education, where children will have a chance to study in-person and meet other students. This is possibly an effort to encourage parents to avoid registering their children for online education in Ukrainian schools and compel them to go to Russian occupation schools instead.

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<sup>126</sup>

ГУ МВД Херсонской области (11 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/police\\_kherson\\_press/1425](https://t.me/police_kherson_press/1425)

<sup>127</sup>

Pro Херсон (5 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/prokherson\\_ru/196](https://t.me/prokherson_ru/196)

<sup>128</sup> Carrasco Rodríguez (25 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.info-res.org/post/the-kremlin-s-generation-z-how-ukrainian-russian-children-are-weaponised-for-pro-war-propaganda>

<sup>129</sup> Министерство образования и науки Херсонской области (4 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/depobrherson/38>

The Russian occupation regime is attempting to persuade teachers and students to work and study in educational institutions within the occupied Kherson region. For example, to incentivise families to abide by the new status quo, parents of first graders with Russian passports will allegedly receive additional money from the regime.<sup>130</sup> Ukrainian officials have also alleged that other, more direct coercive mechanisms are also being carried out to coerce registration in Russian schools.

For example, First Deputy Chairman of the (legitimate, Ukrainian) Kherson Regional Council, Yuriy Sobolevskyi (Юрій Соболевський), cites sources within the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>131</sup> claims that the occupying authorities have threatened to send children to orphanages if parents do not register for Russian-controlled schools.<sup>132</sup>

There are reports that Russia has offered to pay parents who enlist their children in Russian schools and allegations that school principals who do not cooperate have disappeared.<sup>133</sup> CIR has not been able to verify these claims with open source techniques in the course of this investigation. However, due to the high volume of claims and the credibility of the sources, these allegations will be investigated more deeply in upcoming reports within this series.

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<sup>130</sup> Администрация Белозёрки (16 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Belozyorka/74](https://t.me/VGA_Belozyorka/74)

<sup>131</sup> Соболевський (27 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/SobolevskyiYurii/238>

<sup>132</sup> Pryamiy Kanal (27 August 2022). Available at: <https://prm.ua/rosiiany-pohrozhuut-viddavaty-do-dytbudynkiv-ditey-ukraintsiv-na-okupovanykh-terytoriiakh-za-shcho/>; Ukrinform (26 August 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/3558798-rosiani-pogrozuut-zabirati-ditej-na-okupovanih-teritoriah-ukraina-zvernulas-do-unesko.html>

<sup>133</sup> Гричка (21 august 2022). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/larisa.gricka/posts/pfbid02PPWoADWQUzuKZHuXUi8eSZ5Q74LphX3Xh97QQHDEsgMKwEYi4bxbVwGEaP9osBXAI>



Figure 10: Ukrainian officials' claims about children being sent to orphanages if they are not registered in Russian controlled schools.<sup>134</sup>

Collaborators<sup>135</sup> claim<sup>136</sup> that they have successfully integrated the educational system of the Kherson region into the educational system of the Russian Federation.

Тетяна Кузьмич (Tetiana Kuzmich), who appears on the EU<sup>137</sup> and UK's<sup>138</sup> sanctions lists for her central role in the occupation administrative and executive authority 'Комитет спасения за мир и порядок' (Salvation Committee for Peace and Order),<sup>139</sup> has assumed the role of 'head' of the 'Department of Education and Science' for the region.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Соболевський (27 August 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/SobolevskiyYurii/238>

<sup>135</sup> Администрация Белозёрки (23 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Belozyorka/107](https://t.me/VGA_Belozyorka/107)

<sup>136</sup> Администрация Скадовского района (15 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Skadovsk/211](https://t.me/VGA_Skadovsk/211)

<sup>137</sup> Official Journal of the European Union (3 June 2022). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2022:153:FULL&from=EN>

<sup>138</sup> Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (16 September 2022). Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1099766/Russia.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099766/Russia.pdf)

<sup>139</sup> Янковский (18 March 2022). Available at: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/rossiya-ukraina-voyna-khersonshchina-kollaboranty/31759680.html>

<sup>140</sup> ІНжир Медіа (17 March 2022). Available at: <https://inijr.org/tatyana-kuzmich-esche-odin-personaj-kollaboratsionizma-v-hersone-17-03-2022/>

Previously, Kuzmich was Deputy Mayor of Kherson and directed a number of schools in the territory. On August 2020, she was arrested by SBU counterintelligence officers under suspicion of organising an FSB agent network<sup>141</sup> in the Kherson region.<sup>142</sup> (The next report in the series will cover in more depth Kuzmich’s involvement in Kherson’s occupying administration.)



*Figure 11: Tetiana Kuzmich detained in 2020 suspected of collaboration with the Russian FSB.<sup>143</sup>*

### *New academic year*

In the new school year, which began on 1 September,<sup>144</sup> the curriculum is taught in the Russian language. An announcement by Skadovsk district (Скадовский район)

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<sup>141</sup>Zn.ua (20 August 2020). Available at: <https://zn.ua/UKRAINE/sbu-likvidirovala-ahenturnuju-set-fsb-vo-hlave-s-eks-chinovnitsej.html>

<sup>142</sup> Zn.ua (21 August 2020). Available at: <https://zn.ua/UKRAINE/v-khersonne-arestovali-prepodavatel'nitsu-podozrevaemuju-v-orhanizatsii-ahenturnoi-seti-fsb.html>

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> ПУСТІВА (18 July 2022). Available at: <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/4496175-v-rf-yzdaly-okkupatsyonnuui-azbuku>

occupying administration's telegram account<sup>145</sup> listed some new key changes introduced to adapt to the Russian education plan in the new school year. These changes include:

- Textbooks and educational material for schools are provided by Russia.
- Education under Ukrainian Law is no longer legally valid.
- Telegram will be used for official announcements by the occupation Military-Civil Administration at the district level.
- All school graduates have all the opportunity to enrol in Russian universities for free.

The authors of the textbook for first graders, *Азбука Донбасса* (ABC of Donbas),<sup>146</sup> which was introduced in schools in Mariupol, have published *Азбуку Херсона* (ABC of Kherson).<sup>147</sup> By replacing Ukrainian textbooks with Russian textbooks, occupiers want to eliminate young childrens' Ukrainian identity.

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<sup>145</sup>Администрация Скадовского района (15 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Skadovsk/211](https://t.me/VGA_Skadovsk/211)

<sup>146</sup> Новини Донбасу (13 August 2022). Available at: <https://novosti.dn.ua/news/314788-dnr-podarit-pervoklassnikam-azbuku-donbassa-tam-pushilin-i-rodina-rossiya>

<sup>147</sup>Андрющенко (18 July 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/andriyshTime/1864>





Figure 12: New first-graders textbook introduced in Kherson schools by the occupying administration. Source: Петро Андрющенко (Petro Andriushchenko), Advisor to Mariupol Mayor.<sup>148</sup>

The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation has launched a project named University Shifts (Университетские смены). This initiative allegedly provides rest and short educational programmes for children ages 12-16 in educational facilities in Artek (Russian-occupied Crimea), the Nakhimov Naval School in Sevastopol (also in occupied Crimea), and the recreation Centre of the Don State University in Gelendzhik.<sup>149</sup>

### *Ukrainian language and literature*

Russian TV has broadcast programmes discussing why there should not be Ukrainian schools in occupied areas, mentioning that Ukrainian language itself poses a threat to

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (25 July 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2610](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2610)

Russia.<sup>150</sup> However, self-proclaimed Head of the ‘Department of Education and Science’ of Kherson region, Tetiana Kuzmich, recognised in a Telegram post that “Ukrainian culture” is “one of the most widespread and popular [cultures]” in the Kherson region, alongside Russian culture.<sup>151</sup>

Thus, parents can request Ukrainian language and/or literature courses for children, but ultimately schools are to decide about the format and the number of hours of the courses.<sup>152</sup> Even if granted, educational programmes for Ukrainian language and literature will change.<sup>153</sup> Courses in Ukrainian language will be either allocated as a course within a student’s academic timetable or taught as an extracurricular activity.<sup>154</sup>



*Figure 13: Debate on Russian NTV discussing why there should not be Ukrainian schools in occupied territories.<sup>155</sup>*

Russian educational programmes include subjects like history, law, and other social sciences; all these subjects will be taught in accordance with Russian, and not Ukrainian, academic programmes. It is likely, although not proven at this stage, that children will receive lessons on the Kremlin’s official position about the war, as in schools in Russia.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Davis (4 September 2022). Available at:

[https://twitter.com/juliadavisnews/status/1566265477890035713?s=12&t=MU59pgNLrFvbcDx3\\_rQtQ](https://twitter.com/juliadavisnews/status/1566265477890035713?s=12&t=MU59pgNLrFvbcDx3_rQtQ)

<sup>151</sup> Администрация Белозёрки (23 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Belozyorka/107](https://t.me/VGA_Belozyorka/107)

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Администрация Скадовского района (15 June 2022). Available at:

[https://t.me/VGA\\_Skadovsk/211](https://t.me/VGA_Skadovsk/211)

<sup>154</sup> Администрация Белозёрки (23 August 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Belozyorka/107](https://t.me/VGA_Belozyorka/107)

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> BBC (3 March 2022). Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-60593954>

This new policy and the guidelines for teaching the Ukrainian language and literature in the Ukrainian USSR are quite similar; during the Soviet period, school subjects were often taught in Russian. During this period, there was Ukrainian language and literature in the curriculum but no elements confronting Russian power and legitimacy of Russian rule over Ukraine were allowed.

The occupying administration is also sending teachers to Russian-occupied Crimea for short trips to learn about the Crimean educational experience.<sup>157</sup>

### *Higher education*

There are reserved places<sup>158</sup> for school graduates from the occupied territories of Ukraine in the following Russian Universities:

- Peoples' Friendship University of Russia;
- Belgorod State National Research University;
- Voronezh State Technical University;
- Bryansk State University named after Academician I. G. Petrovsky;
- Kabardino-Balkarian State University named after H. M. Berbekov;
- North Caucasus Federal University;
- Don State Technical University;
- Southern Federal University;
- Rostov State University of Economics;
- Volgograd State Technical University;
- V. I. Vernadsky Tauride National University (in occupied Crimea, more often called V. I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University);
- Sevastopol National Technical University (in occupied Crimea).

This list suggests that occupation education authorities in the Kherson region might be planning to collaborate with the authorities in occupied Crimea.

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<sup>157</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (28 June 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2407](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2407)

<sup>158</sup> Администрация Скадовского района (20 May 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/VGA\\_Skadovsk/91](https://t.me/VGA_Skadovsk/91)

In Russian-controlled Kherson, Beryslav and Genichesk medical colleges<sup>159</sup> and the Russian-controlled universities of Kherson<sup>160</sup> are offering scholarships, free accommodation, and low-to-no entry requirements for all future students in a recruitment drive. This is likely an attempt to show the ‘beneficence’ of the occupation regime and its Russian backers, particularly in comparison to the perceived lack of opportunities in these areas when under previous Ukrainian control.

Several universities, colleges, and academies in Kherson were evacuated from Russian-occupied territories to Ukrainian-controlled ones in accordance with the decrees of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science.<sup>161</sup> However, Russian occupying authorities are using the buildings, infrastructure, equipment and the very names of those educational institutions and are recruiting students to study in these institutions now controlled by Russia. Although the authorities want to provide a false image of continuity, in the absence of Ukrainian curriculum, these institutions are now shells of their former selves.

On 1 September, Russia-controlled ‘Kherson State University’<sup>162</sup> and ‘Kherson Agrarian University’<sup>163</sup> began the new academic year, but prolonged the period when new students can join the education process up until the middle of October. The new curriculum for ‘Kherson State University’, allegedly developed in collaboration with the Moscow State Pedagogical University, will also be based on Russian educational standards.

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<sup>159</sup> Администрация Херсонской области (2 August 2022). Available at:

[https://t.me/VGA\\_Kherson/2743](https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/2743)

<sup>160</sup> [https://t.me/hgu\\_official/30](https://t.me/hgu_official/30); [https://t.me/kh\\_agrarka/3](https://t.me/kh_agrarka/3)

<sup>161</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (4 May 2022). Available at:

<https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-timchasove-peremishennya-hersonskogo-nacionalnogo-tehnichnogo-universitetu> ; (3 May 2022). Available at: <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-timchasove-peremishennya-vidokremenogo-strukturnogo-pidrozdilu-hersonskij-navchalno-naukovij-institut-nacionalnogo-universitetu-korablebuduvannya-imeni-admirala-makarova> ; (25 April 2022). Available at:

<https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-timchasove-peremishennya-hersonskogo-gidrometeorologichnogo-fahovogo-koledzhu-odeskogo-derzhavnogo-ekologichnogo-universitetu> ; (25 April 2022). Available at:

<https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-timchasove-peremishennya-hersonskogo-morskogo-koledzhu-ribnoyi-promislovosti> ; (21 April 2022). Available at: <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-timchasove-peremishennya-hersonskoyi-derzhavnoyi-morskoyi-akademiyi> ; (20 April 2022). Available at:

<https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-timchasove-peremishennya-hersonskogo-derzhavnogo-universitetu> ; (20 April 2022). Available at: <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-timchasove-peremishennya-hersonskogo-derzhavnogo-agrarno-ekonomichnogo-universitetu>

<sup>162</sup> ХГУ\_официальный (1 September 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/hgu\\_official/57](https://t.me/hgu_official/57)

<sup>163</sup> Херсонский Аграрный Университет (3 September 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/kh\\_agrarka/52](https://t.me/kh_agrarka/52)

## IV – Conclusion

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Kherson is only one of the areas currently under Russian occupation; however, as one of the earliest and largest population centres captured in 2022, it provides a valuable insight into how Russia is likely to progress in its broader occupation across multiple areas of Ukraine should the occupation continue.

The Russian government has created, and is directing and supporting, the occupying administration in Kherson for a clear central purpose: to pave the way for Kherson's assimilation into Russia. All the policies the administration implements are ultimately building towards that goal. A key component of laying the groundwork for assimilation is attempting to entice, persuade, compel or, if need be, violently force the remaining civilian population to accept Russian rule.

As this report has detailed, violence against civilians remains central in the occupation's toolkit. Increasingly this violence is cloaked under the label of law enforcement and policing, but there is no indication that due process and the rights of civilians are being respected in any meaningful legal process. Simply describing abductions as criminal arrests does not make them legitimate; this is extrajudicial violence—and in some cases, suspected murder—carried out for political purposes.

Violence and the threat of violence is far from the only mechanism which the occupation is using to compel the cooperation of Kherson's remaining civilian population. Even under Russian rule, the needs of daily life remain essential: access to food, water, money, heating, lighting, transport, healthcare and more. By rapidly moving to consolidate control over these crucial elements of civilian life, the occupying administration can force civilians to accept Russian passports, Russian currency, Russian bank accounts and other Russian systems of governance.

For those who are unable to leave, the choice is brutally simple: cooperate with the occupation, or risk a cold, hungry and perhaps ultimately fatal winter.

Russia, via the occupying administration, is also attempting to capture the minds of Kherson's residents, particularly the next generation of children and young people.

Civilians in Kherson are subjected to a bombardment of propaganda, while access to independent information and news is choked off.

The upcoming “referendum”, organised for 23-27 September, will dictate whether Kherson officially joins Russia in the Kremlin's eyes.<sup>164</sup> Ukrainian forces, meanwhile, reportedly hope to retake Kherson by the end of the year.<sup>165</sup> The future of the people of Kherson hangs in the balance.

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<sup>164</sup>

Главное в Херсоне (7 September 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/hercon\\_ru/2798](https://t.me/hercon_ru/2798)

<sup>165</sup> Sciutto and Listo (7 September 2022). Available at:  
<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/09/07/politics/ukraine-russia-war-kherson/index.html>

## Annex I: Methodology and source reliability index

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### *Research Considerations*

This report should be read with several considerations in mind. First, this research was conducted in August and early September 2022 during the Ukrainian counter-offensive in Kherson.<sup>166</sup> Where possible, the impacts of the counter-offensive have been included within the research; however, the situation on the ground is volatile and likely to continue shifting rapidly.

For instance, on 5 September, the occupying authorities announced that a “referendum” on the annexation of the Kherson region into the Russian Federation that had been planned for mid-September had been postponed<sup>167</sup> until 4 November<sup>168</sup> due to security considerations.<sup>169</sup> However, on 20 September, the head of the occupying administration (and former mayor of Kherson), Volodymyr Saldo (Володимир Сальдо) signed a decree to hold the “referendum” between 23 and 27 September 2022.<sup>170</sup> The “referendum” is expected to provide a pretext for the formal annexation of the Kherson region by Russia, although CIR investigators have discovered that the occupying authorities are already forcing assimilation.

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<sup>166</sup> Ukrinform (28 July 2022). Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3538409-kontrnastup-zsu-na-hersonsini-nabirae-obertiv-britanska-rozvidka.html>

<sup>167</sup> Reuters (5 September 2022). Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/kherson-referendum-plans-paused-due-security-situation-tass-cites-russian-2022-09-05/>

<sup>168</sup> На самом деле в Херсоне (7 September 2022). Available at: <https://t.me/NSDVCH/7289>

<sup>169</sup> Tass (5 September 2022). Available at: <https://tass.com/politics/1502703>

<sup>170</sup> Администрации Херсонской области (20 September 2022). Available at: [https://t.me/herson\\_rus/5433](https://t.me/herson_rus/5433)

Additionally, some of the information contained in this investigation refers to policies and initiatives formulated by the occupying authorities that have not yet been implemented. At this stage, CIR cannot predict how successful the implementation of these policies will be.

Second, there are significant restrictions on access to reliable information about the situation on the ground in Kherson. Independent journalists have very limited access to occupied territories. Internet access for civilians may be unreliable and subject to surveillance, which hinders the free flow of social media information. Additionally, both Russian and Ukrainian official information sources have inherent biases. Identifying reliable sources of information about the situation on the ground is therefore a complicated task. CIR investigators addressed this challenge by developing a methodology to assess the reliability of the sources based on how effective a source has been in the past. An overview of the methodology can be found in Annex I.

One final consideration is linked to the duplication of administrative power in the region. There is a Ukraine-controlled entity and its occupying equivalent for: administrations, both at the regional and district level; taxation, health, and education authorities; and service providers, like energy company Khersonoblenergo (Херсонобленерго). The occupying administration has adopted the same names as their Ukrainian predecessors, providing a false sense of normality and continuity. This poses a challenge when trying to identify which information is provided by occupiers versus Ukrainians. The Annex below contains a table that separates Russia-controlled entities from the Ukraine-controlled ones.

- **Objective.** This investigation is an effort by CIR to document, describe and understand the life of Ukrainian citizens in territories occupied by Russian military forces.



- **Approach.** We use a case study approach, taking Kherson region as the selected territory to zoom into the means used by Russia to expand and consolidate control of institutions, resources and people. For this purpose, CIR analysts explore Russia's activities across three different areas, which are reflected in three separate reports:
  - (1) mechanisms utilised to assert power in the area and compel Kherson locals to cooperate;
  - (2) actors actively involved in enabling the occupation;
  - (3) impact of these activities in people and land.
- **Data collection.** In each report of the series, the data is collected using media analysis and open-source intelligence techniques. This includes keywords-based manual search on search engines, media and social media monitoring, and open-source data gathering.
- **Documentation of evidence.** The evidence collected is stored and classified in an internal database.
- **Analysis.** In the analysis, CIR team uses local knowledge to contextualise the data, Russian and Ukrainian native speakers for translation and interpretation, and relevant research from other CIR investigations within the wider Eyes on Russia project.
- **Limitations.** The main limitation is the scarcity of reliable sources in the region caused by:
  - (1) the departure of independent media, intimidation of the local population from posting information, and restrictions on their access to social media;
  - (2) an increase in Russian disinformation and influence operations trying to shape perceptions of local and international audiences.
- To overcome this limitation and ensure the quality, integrity, and authenticity of the information, this study proposes a source reliability index. The index (below) is an adaptation of the NATO System,<sup>171</sup> a model used by NATO allies to evaluate the reliability of a source and assess the level of confidence in the information. According to this model, the reliability is linked to the level of confidence in a given source, based on past performance.
- **Other.** A VPN has been used to mask the analysts' IP addresses, protect the integrity of this investigation, and access domains restricted to certain geographical areas.

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<sup>171</sup> [https://cradpdf.drdc-rddc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc351/p812555\\_A1b.pdf](https://cradpdf.drdc-rddc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc351/p812555_A1b.pdf)

Table 1. Index of reliability of the source

Code	Reliability	Description	Verification	Source examples
<b>A</b>	Completely reliable	A tried and trusted source which can be depended upon with confidence. History of complete reliability.	Source can be used in the report as a completely reliable source. <b>The analyst will not need to use any further sources to confirm/verify the information.</b>	OSINT data (satellite imagery, verified online footage, etc).
<b>B</b>	Fairly reliable	Source has been successful in the past but there is still some element of doubt and needs further scrutiny.	To be included in the report as "authentic" or "confirmed" information the analyst will have to find another source or piece of evidence that validates the information. Otherwise, it will be included as a " <b>claim</b> ".	NGOs, Ukrainian authorities in occupied areas, Ukrainian national agencies, Western governments, international media, Russian authorities/outlets in occupied areas, Russian government policy documents.
<b>C</b>	Not usually reliable	Source which has been used in the past but has proved to be sometimes unreliable or unworthy of confidence.	Information needs to be verified with open-source data if included in the report. If it cannot be verified with open-source data, then it will be labelled as	Kremlin and pro-Kremlin media, Kremlin proxies (incl. outsiders and Western proxies), certain claims on social media by citizens in occupied areas.



<b>D</b>	Proven to be misleading	Source which in the past has proved to spread misleading information.	"unverified claim" or "false claim" in the report.	Kremlin and pro-Kremlin media, Kremlin proxies (incl. outsiders and Western proxies).
<b>E</b>	Reliability unknown	Unknown source. It has not been used in the past.		

Table 2. Relationship between reliability of the source and credibility of the information.

Reliability	Verification	+/-	Credibility
A – Completely reliable	Not needed		Credible information
B – Fairly reliable	Requires additional source (code A or B) to confirm the information; or OSINT verification	+	Credible information
		-	Claim
C – Not usually reliable	Requires OSINT verification	+	Credible information
D – Proven to be misleading		-	Unverified claim
E – Reliability unknown		X	False claim

## Annex II: duality of Ukraine-controlled and Russia-controlled entities

Table 3. Map explaining the duality between Ukraine-controlled and Russia-controlled entities.

Entity	 Ukraine-controlled	 Russia-controlled
Military-Civil Administration of the Kherson region	Kherson Regional State Administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Official website: <a href="http://khoda.gov.ua">Херсонська обласна державна адміністрація (khoda.gov.ua)</a>;</li> <li><a href="#">Telegram account</a>.</li> </ul>	Administration of Kherson Oblast: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Official website: <a href="http://khogov.ru">Администрация Херсонской области (khogov.ru)</a>;</li> <li><a href="#">Telegram account</a>;</li> <li>YouTube account: <a href="#">(2) Военно-гражданская администрация Херсонской области - YouTube</a></li> </ul>
Personal telegram channels of self-proclaimed acting head/deputy heads of the Kherson region		<a href="#">Kateryna Gubareva</a> (Катерина Губарева); <a href="#">Kyrylo Stremousov</a> (Кирило Стремоусов); <a href="#">Volodymyr Saldo</a> (Володимир Сальдо)

Police of the Kherson region	Police of the Kherson Oblast: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Official website</a>;</li> <li>• Facebook page: <a href="#">Поліція Херсонської області   Facebook</a></li> </ul>	Press <a href="#">contact</a> of the Police of Kherson Oblast.
Kherson city authorities/ city council	Kherson City Council, official website: <a href="#">Херсонська міська рада (miskrada.kherson.ua)</a>	Kherson City Council Administration: <a href="#">telegram account</a> .
Skadovsk Administration	Facebook page: <a href="#">Скадовська громада   Facebook</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account</a> .
Skadovsk City Council	Facebook page: <a href="#">Скадовська міська рада   Facebook</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account</a> .
Beryslav Administration	Facebook page: <a href="#">Новини   Бериславська міська рада   Офіційний сайт (berislav-mr.gov.ua)</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account</a> .
Henichesk Administration	Facebook page: <a href="#">Офіційний сайт Генічеської міської ради (genich-rada.gov.ua)</a> <sup>172</sup>	<a href="#">Telegram account</a> .

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<sup>172</sup> Inactive since March 2022.

Nova Kahovka Administration	Official website: <a href="http://novakahovka.com.ua">Нова Каховка (novakahovka.com.ua)</a>  Facebook page: <a href="#">Новокаховська міська територіальна громада   Facebook</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
Kahovka administration	Official website: <a href="http://novinah.gov.ua">Новини — kahovka (kakhovka-rada.gov.ua)</a> <sup>173</sup>  Facebook page: <a href="#">Каховська міська територіальна громада   Facebook</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
Hola Prystan administration		<a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
Bilozerka administration		<a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
Taxation	Official website: <a href="#">Територіальні органи ДПС у Херсонській області, Автономній Республіці Крим та м.Севастополі (tax.gov.ua)</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account.</a>

<sup>173</sup> Inactive since March 2022.

Health authorities	Facebook page: <a href="#">Департамент здоров'я Херсонської обласної державної адміністрації   Facebook</a>	VK account: <a href="#">Міністерство здравоохранения Херсонской области   VK</a> <a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
Departments for different policy areas (education, culture, digitalisation and mass communication, agriculture, family and sport, work and social policies, etc.)	Official website: <a href="#">ОДА інформує (khoda.gov.ua)</a>	“ <a href="#">Ministry of Culture of Kherson region</a> ”; “ <a href="#">Ministry of Digital Development and Mass Communications of Kherson Region</a> ”; “ <a href="#">Ministry of Education and Science of the Kherson region</a> ”; “ <a href="#">Ministry of Labour and Social Policy</a> ”; “ <a href="#">Department of Youth Policy, Family and Sports</a> ”; <a href="#">Employment service</a> ; <a href="#">Agricultural Inspector</a> .
Khersonoblenergo	Official website: <a href="#">АТ "Херсонобленерго" (ksoe.com.ua)</a>	<a href="#">Website</a> ; <a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
Kherson regional energy supply company	Official website: <a href="#">Херсонська обласна енергопостачальна компанія (khoek.ks.ua)</a>	

Khersongas	Official website: <a href="http://gaz.kherson.ua">АТ Херсонгаз – Підприємство з розподілу природного газу (gaz.kherson.ua)</a>	
Khersonwater		Official website: <a href="http://water.kherson.ua">Херсонський водоканал – МКП Херсонський водоканал (water.kherson.ua)</a> <sup>174</sup>  Facebook page: <a href="#">Херсонський Водоканал   Facebook</a> <sup>175</sup>  <a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
Kherson National Technical University	Official website: <a href="http://kntu.net.ua">Головна - Херсонський національний технічний університет (kntu.net.ua)</a>	
Kherson Agrarian University	Official website: <a href="http://ksau.kherson.ua/">http://ksau.kherson.ua/</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account.</a>

<sup>174</sup> It looks like the old Ukrainian website is currently used by Russians. E.g., current prices are written in rubles, and payments should be made to the Russian state-owned Promsvyazbank ([https://water.kherson.ua/hersonskij-vodokanal-ynformyruet/?cat\\_slug=payment](https://water.kherson.ua/hersonskij-vodokanal-ynformyruet/?cat_slug=payment)).

<sup>175</sup> The situation with the previously Ukraine-controlled Facebook page of Kherson water is similar to the situation with the website of Kherson water.



Kherson State University	Official website: <a href="http://kspu.edu">Херсонський державний університет (kspu.edu)</a>	<a href="#">Telegram account.</a>
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