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## Events of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024): Ukrainian and Polish experience of documentation and representation

**Liudmyla Bozhuk\***

PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor  
National Aviation University  
03058, 1 Liubomyr Huzar Ave., Kyiv, Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3883-5997>

**Lesia Khaletska**

PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor  
National Aviation University  
03058, 1 Liubomyr Huzar Ave., Kyiv, Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8409-2138>

**Abstract.** The purpose of the study was to investigate and compare the Ukrainian and Polish experiences of documenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war in institutional, organisational, and methodological aspects, from the standpoint of the goals of documenting and presenting the collected evidence as an important factor in the development of national identity and the preservation of historical memory. To achieve this goal, the activities of state institutions and public organisations documenting events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war both in Ukraine and in the Republic of Poland were analysed. The methodological basis of the research was general scientific and special methods of studying problems, the use of which helped to achieve this goal. The use of a complex of general scientific methods: analysis and synthesis, system and functional approaches, classification and systematisation, description, explanation, and generalisation helped to outline the problem of documenting and presenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022-2024 by state institutions and public organisations. The problem and thematic method was used to understand the Ukrainian and Polish experiences of documenting and presenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022-2024. As a result of the study, it was found that both in Ukraine and in Poland, the process of documenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war and war crimes committed by the Russian aggressor by both state institutions and public associations is actively continuing. The dependence of the types and methods of documentation on the conditions of its implementation is clarified, and the basis of documented information is oral, written, photo, video, and film examinations. It is proved that the common goal of documenting the events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war by all institutions is to create an evidence base for bringing Russian aggressors to justice by the International Criminal Court. The practical value of the scientific heritage, given the limited research in the Ukrainian scientific discourse of this topic, is a comprehensive coverage of the Ukrainian and Polish experiences of documenting and presenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war 2022-2024 to preserve historical memory, comprehending the experiences of the war for future generations

**Keywords:** Russian aggression; large-scale war; performances; archives; public organisations; Ukraine; Poland

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\*Corresponding author

## Introduction

The emergence and course of wars, military conflicts, hostilities, terrorist acts, etc. are traditionally accompanied by a process of documentation. In historical retrospect, the closer such events are to the present day, the more documented they are. A distinctive feature of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a significant increase in the volume of documentary evidence about military events and crimes in digital form. A striking example of the latter is the Russian-Ukrainian war, in particular its full-scale phase (2022-2024). Documenting war crimes and creating digital archives has become the goal of interested researchers, journalists, lawyers, IT specialists, other professionals, and public organisations. Notable examples of such activities include documenting human rights violations, particularly during wars, and creating digital archives by Mnemonic, a non-profit NGO that in 2014 created the Syrian archives as a rapid response project, working closely with Syrian reporters and documentation groups to preserve digital information about the Syrian conflict: images, videos, and other publications that are invaluable historical artefacts and potential evidence of human rights violations (Mnemonic, 2024). Mnemonic created the Ukrainian archive, which as of 28.02.2023 collected more than 3 million records of potential human rights violations and alleged war crimes in Ukraine after the Russian invasion (York, 2023). E. Higgins (2022), founder of Bellingcat, a non-profit project that has been researching war crimes since 2014 and, in particular, since the beginning of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, began collecting information about military events and crimes of the Russian Federation, creating an appropriate database – using the example of this organisation's activities, he described the methods of working with open sources when documenting crimes: collecting, checking, archiving videos and photos from open sources using geolocation, satellite images, reverse image search, etc. The problem of documenting international crimes committed during the Russian-Ukrainian war is reflected in the pages of the publication edited by P. Grzebyk, an Associate Professor at the University of Warsaw, a specialist in public international law, and D. Uczkiewicz, a lawyer, historian, Associate Professor of the Centre for Totalitarian Studies at the Pilecki Institute in Warsaw (Grzebyk & Uczkiewicz, 2024). In the sections of this publication, researchers and legal practitioners from Canada, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the USA presented the results of interdisciplinary research, views from the perspective of other post-communist states, and their own experience in documenting these crimes and prosecuting those responsible for them. In particular, the pages of the publication highlight the experience of the UN Stockholm Commission on documenting war crimes, and the activities of the Raphael Lemkin Centre for Documenting Russian Crimes in Ukraine; the ethical and methodological challenges of documenting war on the example of recordings of Ukrainian witnesses after February 24, 2022; the issue of digital evidence in investigations of Russian crimes in Ukraine is revealed.

Dr. P.R. Williams & N. Carle (2023) described in detail the development and implementation process of the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) remote documentation initiatives to collect testimonies of those who suffered violence during the war in Ukraine after the invasion of the Russian Federation in February 2022. The researchers stressed the critical importance of early and sufficient documentation to bring these crimes to justice in the future. In their opinion, the importance and necessity of documentation by remote collection of evidence are conditioned by the long nature of the war, which makes it difficult to conduct thorough investigations for public documentary filmmakers, the unavailability in the first days of the war of collecting reliable witness statements compared to the use of photo and video documentation technologies, the labour intensity and logistical complexity of the process of collecting evidence from geographically dispersed Ukrainian refugees. By implementing the project "Ukrainian initiative for memorialisation and accountability" – a remote documentation programme to collect witness statements through Zoom from those who were subjected to violence during the war in Ukraine – PILPG sought to achieve a dual goal: to contribute to the historical record of events that occurred after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and to help prosecutors and international accountability mechanisms collect data on potential crimes that were committed during the war. Dr. P.R. Williams & N. Carle (2023) described in detail the components of the remote documentation process: from team formation and training, workflow development, indexing collected data and database creation to storing digital information, communicating with witnesses before interviews, conducting interviews using Zoom, and providing psychosocial support to both witnesses and investigators. Authors of the collective study under the general editorship of N. Otrishchenko (2024) focused on documenting the events of the war in Ukraine by interviewing witnesses – people who lived in close proximity to the front line, survived the occupation, are internally displaced persons, belong to various social and professional groups. Through interviews with researchers who recorded oral histories from the first months of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the practice of this method of documentation is highlighted. Attention was focused on the features of documentation "in the field" based on the researchers' own experience, and the stages of documentation are described: from the development of a questionnaire to the creation of an archive of records. The paper raises the debatable question of what an all-Ukrainian archive of the Russian-Ukrainian war would look like, and whether it is worth creating a single information resource for this purpose. The paper also presents the experience of adapting to the challenges of war methodologies that were developed abroad and applied by Ukrainian teams before a full-scale war. At the centre of the researchers' discussion is a complex question about the future fate of recorded evidence, under what conditions access to the archive can be opened, and what is

the future of oral histories as a historical source. These and other questions create a field for future scientific research. L. Bozhuk & L. Khaletska (2024) analysed and highlighted the activities of state regional archives of Ukraine during the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024) on documenting evidence of war events, war crimes committed by Russian aggressors, presenting documentary evidence on the websites of archives of Ukraine, and revealed the areas and significance of assistance from Polish partners in solving important issues of preserving Ukrainian historical and cultural heritage. The topic of documenting war crimes during the ongoing war occupies an important place in the scientific literature. However, according to the study by K. Kysliuk (2024), papers in the international scientometric databases Scopus and Web of Science (as of the beginning of November 2023), the subject of which can be attributed to the field of culture (and, accordingly, to the issue under study), are quantitatively insignificant. The above determines the relevance of studying the Ukrainian and Polish experience of documenting and presenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024). The purpose of the study was to investigate and compare the Ukrainian and Polish experience of documenting war events in institutional, organisational, and methodological aspects, from the standpoint of the goals of documenting and presenting the collected evidence as an important factor in the development of national identity and the preservation of historical memory. In accordance with the goal, the objectives of the study were defined: to find out which institutions in Ukraine and Poland are engaged in documenting the testimony of witnesses to war events and war crimes committed by the Russian aggressor; for what purpose and how the documentation process is organised; to investigate the methods and process of documenting; to get acquainted with the ways of presenting documentary evidence by the institutions under study.

### Materials and Methods

In accordance with the topic and purpose of the study, the objects of research were identified as state archival services of Ukraine, state and public institutions of Ukraine and Poland, engaged in documenting and creating archives/databases of events and crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The choice of state and public institutions of Poland as objects of research was conditioned by the movement of a significant number of Ukrainian citizens under the protection of the Polish Republic in the period after February 24, 2022, close interstate relations and cooperation of countries, including institutions that document the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The stages of the study were: investigation of documentation activities, creation of archives and databases of state and public institutions of Ukraine and Poland; determination of criteria for conducting a comparative analysis of this activity, namely: the purpose of documentation, type of documentation, types

of documentary sources, availability and method of representation of documented evidence; implementation of comparative analysis and classification according to certain criteria; generalisation of information obtained as a result of the study and formulation of conclusions and recommendations on the application of the studied practices of documentation and representation of documented evidence. A set of general scientific methods was used in the study. Analysis and synthesis were used, in particular, to determine the purpose, objectives of the study, the expected results, and to collect and process the information accumulated in the course of the research. The information presented on the websites of these institutions was analysed, including their activities in documenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the presentation of the results of these activities to the public. The source base of the study was the websites of state institutions and public organisations, namely: state regional archives of Ukraine, Prosecutor General's offices of Ukraine and Poland, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine (MCIP), the Rafal Lemkin Centre for Documenting Russian Crimes in Ukraine (Lemkin Centre), etc. The targeted selection of websites of these organisations was conditioned by the hypothesis expressed about the comparability of their activities for documenting and further presenting documented events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which was mainly confirmed as a result of the study. The analysis of the activities of certain institutions for documenting the events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war was reflected in the classification tables and created a basis for comparing the Ukrainian and Polish experiences of documenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war in institutional, organisational, methodological aspects, in terms of goals, types of documentation, representation of the collected evidence. The systematised results of the comparison determined the dependence of types and methods of documentation on the conditions of its implementation and revealed trends in the further progress of Ukrainian institutions in documenting and presenting documented evidence. The selection of literature necessary for completing the paper and the search for relevant sources was carried out using the bibliographic method.

### Results

All the data provided relate to events/crimes during the large-scale Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024). It was found that both in Ukraine and Poland, state institutions and public associations are engaged in documenting the testimony of witnesses to the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war and war crimes committed by the Russian aggressor, in particular, shown in Figure 1. The activities of the institutions under study are characterised by the coincidence of one of the goals of documentation – the creation of an evidence base for the future consideration of crimes of Russian troops in Ukraine in the Ukrainian national and international courts (Table 1).

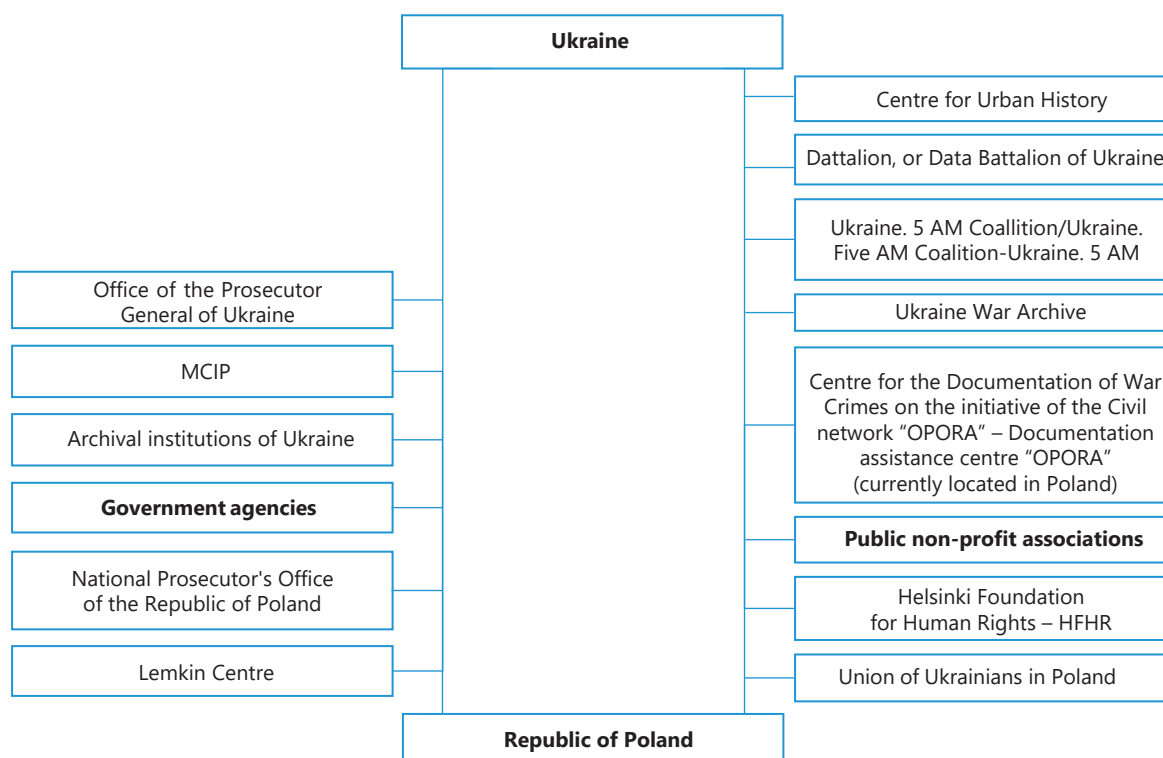


Figure 1. Institutional composition of Ukrainian

and Polish institutions that document events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024)

Source: developed by the authors

Table 1. Purpose of collecting documentary evidence about military events and crimes of the Russian military in Ukraine

<b>Purpose of documentation</b>	<b>Bringing to criminal responsibility those responsible for the crimes committed</b>	<b>Preserving the historical memory of the war</b>	<b>Database for researchers</b>
<b>Institution</b>			
Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine	+	-	-
MCIP	-	+	+
Archival institutions of Ukraine		+	+
National Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Poland	+	-	-
Lemkin Centre	+	+	+
Centre for Urban History	+	+	+
Dattalion	+	-	+
Ukraine. 5 AM	+	-	-
Ukraine War Archive	+	+	+
Documentation assistance centre "OPORA"	+	-	-
HFHR (Poland)	+	-	-

Source: developed by the authors based on the study of the activities of state and public institutions of Ukraine and Poland to document the events/crimes of Russian troops in Ukraine (2022-2024) (according to the data provided on the websites)

Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine (Documenting the war crimes..., 2024) and the National Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Poland (Information on the actions..., 2022) have the same and common purpose – to collect and record evidence of crimes committed by the

Russian military in Ukraine to bring to criminal responsibility those responsible for their commission in the International Criminal Court in the Hague and in the special tribunal after its establishment. Accordingly, until court decisions and sentences are passed, the collected evidence will be

inaccessible to the general public. Along the way, it should be noted that on March 25, 2022 in Ukraine, Prosecutor General of Ukraine Iryna Venediktova, Prosecutor General of Lithuania Nida Grunskiene, Prosecutor General Zbigniew Zebro, and First Deputy Prosecutor General – National Prosecutor Dariusz Barski signed an agreement on the creation of a joint investigation team between Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland regarding Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The creation of the Ukrainian-Polish-Lithuanian investigation team will be particularly useful for identifying, recording and detailing evidence of war crimes occurring on the territory of Ukraine and will allow direct exchange of evidence and lead to simplification of legal procedures (Prosecutor General signed..., 2022). The purpose of the investigation is to quickly obtain evidence of war crimes committed by the armed forces of the aggressor on the territory of Ukraine. The activities of the investigation are primarily aimed at collecting and recording in procedural form the testimony of witnesses to war crimes, identifying persons who were injured, recording photo and film materials documenting war crimes (Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court..., 2022). Despite the common goal, the prosecutor's offices of both countries have differences in the organisation of the

process of documenting evidence. On the website and in the mobile application from the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine for the purpose of fixing a war crime, a questionnaire is posted, which can be filled out and sent by victims or witnesses, and an opportunity for them to upload photos or videos (remote documentation). The National Prosecutor's Office of Poland has asked Ukrainian refugees to appear to give evidence and hand over evidence of crimes (direct documentation). The investigation is interviewing witnesses and seizing records confirming the commission of war crimes. If the readings recorded on digital media are found, they will be copied, and the equipment (for example, smartphones) will be returned to the person giving the testimony. Only persons whose mental and physical condition allows this to be done are questioned, and only with their consent. The participation of an expert psychologist is also provided. Witnesses can also contact the round-the-clock police hotline, which operates in Ukrainian, or any local prosecutor's office (Mamon, 2022). There is no representation of the collected evidence by the prosecutor's office, which is conditioned by the purpose of documentation. The specifics of documenting Russian military crimes by the prosecutor's offices of Ukraine and Poland are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Documenting and presenting evidence of events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024)**

Institution	Type of documentation		Document type			Representation	
	remote	direct	oral (audio document)/ written testimony	photo document	video and film document	available	postponed
Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine	+	-	+	+	+		+
MCIP	+	-	+	+	+	+	-
Archival institutions of Ukraine	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
National Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Poland	-	+	+	+	+	-	+
Lemkin Centre	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Centre for Urban History	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Dattalion	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Ukraine. 5 AM	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
Ukraine War Archive	+	+	+	+	+		+
HFHR (Poland)	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
Documentation assistance centre "OPORA"	-	+	+	-	-	+	+

**Source:** developed by the authors based on the study of the activities of state and public institutions of Ukraine and Poland to document the events/crimes of Russian troops in Ukraine (2022-2024) (according to the data provided on the websites)

The activity of the MCIP can be compared with the activity of the state institutions of Poland in terms of the purpose of documentation, and in part the types of documents that can be viewed on the platform War Evidence (Projects, 2024). In order to cover the events of the war, the life of ordinary Ukrainians in the harsh conditions of martial law, and record the losses caused by Russian aggressors to

Ukraine, several projects were created and presented on the Ministry's website, in particular: "Svidok", "War Up Close" (Projects, 2024).

The issue of documentation by the state regional archives of Ukraine of the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024) as of July 1, 2024 was investigated by analysing their websites (Regional State Archives, 2024).

Analysis testified that according to the information posted on the archives' websites about the documents accepted for preservation and the scope of documents presented for users' review, the results of work on documenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war are most widely

presented on the websites of state archives of Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Poltava, Sumy, Ternopil, Kherson, Chernivtsi, and Chernihiv oblasts. The results of the study on the state of documentation and representation of war events are presented in summary Table 3.

**Table 3. Documentation and representation of military events by regional state archives of Ukraine**

No.	Criteria Oblast	Creation of archive collections	Archival description	Online exhibitions	Appeal to offices of origin
1	Vinnytsia	-	-	-	-
2	Volyn	+	-	-	+
3	Dnipropetrovsk	-	-	-	-
4	Donetsk	-	-	+	-
5	Zhytomyr	-	-	-	-
6	Zakarpattia	-	-	-	-
7	Zaporizhzhia	+	+	+	+
8	Ivano-Frankivsk	-	-	-	-
9	Kyiv	+	+	+	+
10	Kirovohrad	+	+	-	+
11	Luhansk	+	-	-	-
12	Lviv	+	-	-	+
13	Mykolaiv	-	-	-	-
14	Odesa	-	-	-	+
15	Poltava	+	+	+	-
16	Rivne	+	+	-	-
17	Sumy	+	+	+	-
18	Ternopil	+	+	+	+
19	Kharkiv	-	-	-	-
20	Kherson	+	+	+	-
21	Khmelnyskyi	-	-	-	-
22	Cherkasy	-	-	-	+
23	Chernivtsi	+	+	+	-
24	Chernihiv	+	+	+	-

**Source:** developed by the authors based on the study of the Regional State Archives (2024) of Ukraine as of 01.07.2024

Archival institutions of Ukraine have a common goal of documentation with the studied state institutions of Poland. However, they cannot be compared with the corresponding Polish archival institutions, since the latter are not faced with the task of documenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Meanwhile, archives differ from other institutions in the specifics of their activities to collect documentary evidence about these events. Ukrainian archivists responded to the appeal of the management of the State Archival Service of Ukraine to start initiative documentation of military events and the formation of archival collections.

It is worth noting that the initiative documentation of archives of events of a large-scale war is a component of completing archival funds. Currently, these funds are only at the stage of development, since documentary sources

require an expert examination of the value, description, clarification, and consideration of issues of ownership of NAF documents. Therefore, documents reflecting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war are only partially presented on the websites of the state regional archives of Ukraine in the form of brief reporting information indicating the number of collected and processed storage units published in online exhibitions.

Although the Lemkin Centre (Raphael Lemkin Centre..., 2024) and the Centre for Urban History (2024) belong to different institutional categories (Fig. 1), but they are quite comparable in terms of goals, methods of documenting events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war, types of documentation, types of documents collected, and sometimes in ways of presenting the collected documentary evidence (see Tables 1, 2, 4).

Table 4. Ways to present documented evidence of events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-2024)

Institution	Internet platforms (website, instant messengers, social networks)	Scientific and educational events	Art events	Analytical reports	Documentary exhibitions
Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine	+	+	+	-	-
Archival institutions of Ukraine	+	-	-	-	+
Lemkin Centre	+	+	+	+	+
Centre for Urban History	+	+	-	+	-
Dattalion	+	+	-	-	+
"Ukraine 5 AM"	+	-	-	-	-
Ukraine War Archive	+	+	+	-	+
Documentation assistance centre "OPORA"	+	-	-	+	-

Source: compiled by the authors

Notably, the Lemkin Centre was established in Warsaw on 26 February, 2022. The Pilecki Institute (Warsaw) is a government organisation with extensive experience in collecting, preserving, and processing testimonies of victims of totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Centre for Urban History does not have such experience, but actively acquires it, relying on cooperation with international partners, including representatives of the Institute of philosophy and sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Polish Society of Oral History, the University of St Andrews (Great Britain), the Centre for Modern and Digital History of the University of Luxembourg, the Centre for the Study of Modern History in Hamburg (Germany), Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich (Germany), etc. In addition, the Centre for Urban History conducts methodological seminars and presentations on the topic of documentation, in particular, with invited foreign specialists (for example, "Confrontation with violence: when and why to document the experiences of war", German Historical Institute in Warsaw, 27.5.2022; "Who and why collects evidence about the war in Ukraine?", Kyiv School of Economics, 22.8.2022; "Narrating the War Everydayness", Harriman Institute at Columbia University, New York, 11.10.2022; "The war gave everyone a role-what's yours?": Documenting stories Amid Crisis", MacMillan Centre for International and Area Studies, Yale University, New Haven, 12.12.2022, etc.). Attention is drawn to the significant difference in the representation of the collected evidence by the Lemkin Centre and the Centre for Urban History. After processing (translation, digitisation, registration, and anonymisation), the evidence collected by the Lemkin Centre becomes available on the "Records of terror" platform (Records of terror, 2024). Full access to the database is available only in the library of the Piletsky Institute. Forms of dissemination of the collected evidence are publications in the press, films, exhibitions, performances, debates, conferences. Art and scientific and educational events are advertised on the website of the Piletsky Institute. The website also contains a report

of the Lemkin Centre on sexual violence against Ukrainian women by the Russian occupation forces (Report..., 2024), prepared based on the field studies in the temporarily occupied territories during April 2022 – February 2024. Research of the Centre for Urban History "Documenting the experience" (Documenting the experience..., 2024) consists of several research projects: "24.02.22, 5 AM: Evidence from the war", "Visual documentation of the war", "Telegram archive of the war", "Diaries and dreams of war", "We investigate the collection, preservation, analysis, and publication of Ukrainian evidence of the war". The latter began in January 2024 and marked the transition to a new stage in documenting the collected evidence – the development of a digital environment for processing, preserving, and potential access to digital oral evidence of war in collaboration with the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History – "Research on the collection, preservation, analysis, and publication of Ukrainian evidence of war 2022 (U-CORE)" (We investigate the collection..., 2024). The purpose of U-CORE, in particular, is to create a digital environment for a transnational database of war evidence, contribute to the establishment of a culture of memory in Ukraine, create (with the participation of witnesses) a documentary, graphic novel, and organise other activities at the intersection of public history, science, and art. In addition to the planned forms of representation of the collected documentary evidence, a Telegram channel has been created (Telegram archive of the war. Telegram channel, 2024) and the blog "Telegram archive of the war" (Telegram archive of the war. Blog, 2024). Direct access to archival materials is currently impossible due to security risks and sensitive content. Currently, the archive team is working on access formats depending on the needs and level of data sensitivity, as indicated in the first message (18.06.2024) in the Telegram channel. The blog already has archived materials on several topics. Work on the blog content is ongoing. A report on the two-year

results of the Telegram archive of war project is available to the general public (Avramenko *et al.*, 2024).

Describing the activities of public organisations of Ukraine to document and publish the military events of 2022-2024, it should be noted right away that from the very beginning it was actually an initiative of the organisations themselves, individual public activists, and volunteers. Some of them have already had some experience collecting photo and video evidence of war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine since 2014. However, not all materials captured or collected in a certain way, which are stored in different ways, have different degrees of access, can be considered as having archival value and are important for the preservation of historical memory and have legal force so that in the future they can be attached to cases in the International Criminal Court.

The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU) was one of the first NGOs to start documenting Russia's crimes against Ukraine as part of the global Tribunal for Putin initiative with the start of a full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022. As an association of human rights organisations, UHHRU constantly monitors the situation, collects evidence and documents events that show signs of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russian aggressors under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in all regions of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Active work is being carried out at the international level to use the existing mechanisms in the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the EU, and the International Criminal Court to stop these violations (The tribunal for Putin, 2024). It is possible to report crimes in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine by filling out a questionnaire on the project's website, and there is a separate form for reporting crimes committed in Mariupol. After summarising the received materials, the processed information is systematically published on the UHHRU website. For example, the "Overview of documented war crimes for January 2024" states that since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and as of January 2024, the total number of episodes involving human losses or human rights violations on the territory of Ukraine has increased and amounted to 42,860 (Overview of documented war crimes..., 2024). The collected documentation will be used in future trials against Russian war criminals.

Active is carried out by participants of the DocudaysUA project "Archive of war" – an information non-profit platform for digitising and preserving eyewitness accounts of Russian war crimes since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Notably, the project is a partner platform for storing digital data, a single register of materials related to the war. The Docudays UA strategy contributed to the inclusion of a number of public organisations that transmit their own materials to the archive, in particular: UHHRU, Kharkiv Human Rights Group, Centre for Civil Liberties, Lviv Centre for Urban History, and government bodies – the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Government Commissioner for the European Court of Human Rights.

The subject of information resources accumulated in the "War Archive" is quite wide. In addition to testimonies about Russian war crimes, documentary materials are collected about the daily life of ordinary Ukrainians, destruction, interviews are conducted with war witnesses, volunteers, OSINT investigations are accumulated, etc. Currently, the platform contains about 20 million media files, 34 thousand materials collected by hand and received from partners, more than 2 thousand interviews, and about 6.5 million files from open sources. The content of more than 2,800 Telegram channels was archived and 36,000 events and potential war crimes were recorded (Project DocudaysUA, 2024). For security and ethical reasons, while military operations continue, project coordinators and participants have restricted access to the collected resource. The Docudays UA team is actively working to spread truthful information about the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war among the world community using audiovisual media. For example, as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, which took place in Kyiv from 31 May to 6 June 2024 under the slogan "10 Years of a Three-Day War That Lasts Three Centuries", the organisation presented, among other things, the documentary "Witnesses. Captivity kills". The characters of the film are Ukrainian prisoners of war, participants in the defence of Mariupol and their relatives, who in their testimony reveal the truth about the war crimes of Russians, thereby debunking the disinformation that Russia uses in the war against Ukraine.

Coalition "Ukraine. 5 AM" is a union of human rights organisations whose tasks are: documenting war crimes, crimes against humanity, informing the public about them in Ukraine and abroad, protecting war victims through the use of national and international justice mechanisms (Ukraine. 5 AM, 2024). Anyone who witnessed the incident can report crimes by writing a corresponding letter to the coalition. The coalition does not carry out independent work on processing and publishing the information received, and organising and conducting artistic, informational, educational, and educational events.

On 27 February 2022, the volunteer project DATTALION – Ukrainian Data Battalion – was launched. DATTALION is an open, independent, free database of videos from the hottest spots in Ukraine, which are used by most Western media (Fox News, the time, NBC, etc.) related to various events and plots of the war. It is important for users that the materials of the information base are collected from various open sources in electronic folders, and their content is divided into "official", "reliable", and "verified". Collections of videos and photos are formed by date, which allows users to find and view events of a certain day recorded in different regions of Ukraine. Besides, DATTALION offers a database of testimonies from more than 220 verified eyewitnesses who survived the horrors of the Russian invasion, occupation, and exile. Information video and photo materials collected by women volunteers from open official sources (State Emergency Service, the President of Ukraine,

government agencies, etc.) are published with explanations in English, thus forming a database, in fact the largest archive of photos and videos, and evidence of the war. In order to present to the international community the true history of the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war, reveal the truth about the genocide of Ukrainians and receive the support and assistance of partner countries, the DATTALION team organised a series of exhibitions of photographs from Ukrainian fronts, frontline cities, created by photojournalists and ordinary Ukrainians, in particular, in the United States, the Hague, and other European cities. Currently, the DATTALION database, published on its own website, contains 6,100+ videos, 40,000+ photos, 220+ eyewitnesses, 50,000+ monthly visitors (DATTALION..., 2024).

Union of Ukrainians in Poland (Union of Ukrainians..., 2024) posted information on its website about the creation of the Lemkin Centre by the Piletsky Institute, and its involvement in this project, but this organisation does not carry out independent activities of this nature. After the full-scale Russian aggression of the HFHR (Documenting war crimes..., 2022) monitors the observance of human rights on the Polish-Ukrainian border, provides assistance to Ukrainian colleagues, and collects refugee testimonies. The collected documentation can be used in international and national courts. The collected facts are carefully checked and systematised according to the appropriate forms. Various methods of documenting crimes are used: interviewing survivors according to a specific scenario; checking and recording information available in open sources (e.g., the Internet). The interview is conducted according to the form and requirements of the International Criminal Court.

Since 26 June 2022, the Centre for Assistance in Documenting Russian War Crimes (Centre for Assistance..., 2024) has been operating in Warsaw, initiated by the "OPORA" civil network (Ukrainians who worked in the OPORA and came to Poland due to the circumstances of the war). The centre conducts interviews with refugees on the following points: place of collection of evidence; typical profile of the witness; territorial affiliation of the respondents; types of war crimes (destruction or damage to civilian and critical infrastructure; eyewitness accounts of events during the occupation; cases of illegal detention and torture; war crimes against children; war crimes during evacuation, filtration). The methodology of the centre provides for interviewing adult witnesses, but it is possible to allow the presence of children who can supplement the testimony of parents (guardians) at their request and with their permission. The information collected can be used in future lawsuits. The forms of representation of the collected evidence are group analyses of interviews conducted by the centre, and a map of the regions of Ukraine presented on the website indicating the total number of detected crimes and the number and percentage of crimes by type.

## Discussion

The problem of the Russian-Ukrainian war is multifaceted, which requires its solution in scientific research and

open discussions. For Ukraine, the war experience of other countries is interesting and informative, in particular, in terms of recording and publicising war events/crimes. Therefore, the study and analysis of the experience of EU countries, in particular, Poland (state institutions, public organisations) in documenting war events and forming a war archive, implementing the memory policy, which has a continuity since the Second World War, is extremely important for Ukraine.

As of 2024, there are no generalising and comparative studies in Ukrainian historiography that would highlight the problems of Ukrainian and Polish experiences in documenting and presenting the events of the ongoing war in Ukraine caused by the Russian invasion. The characteristic features of the presented scientific searches were the complexity in the approach to the selection of research objects, the allocation of common and distinctive features in their activities for collecting and publishing documentary evidence in accordance with the developed criteria. Available scientific publications address certain aspects of documenting events/crimes of war that do not fully cover the problem put up for discussion. Archivists, historians, and museum workers were among the first to discuss and research this issue. The researchers paid considerable attention, first of all, to the loss of the nation's cultural values, which were caused in various ways, emphasising that in the context of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, Ukrainian archives, libraries, and museums, as institutions of social memory, became "the object and subject of a confessional war". R. Hula *et al.* (2022) presented a view of the consensual war as a component of information warfare, which aims to destroy the cultural and national identity of the population of the victim country by the aggressor country, impose their worldview, and establish Russian (imperial) ideology in the occupied territories. G. Zadorozhny (2021) and M. Ostapenko (2022) analysed the concept of "consensual war", established causal relationships between the object of consensual war – the change of consciousness of the enemy's population, the transformation of its value (national) orientations – and the actions of Russian aggressors against objects of Ukrainian national and cultural heritage: the merciless destruction of educational institutions, archives, museums, libraries, cultural centres – institutions whose fundamental functions are the preservation of historical memory, the development of national consciousness, national identity. The problems of protecting and saving cultural objects, in particular archival collections, museum and library collections, as a factor in preserving the national cultural heritage for the next generations, are addressed by O. Tur *et al.* (2023). Researchers, focusing on the crimes of Russians against cultural property, stressed the importance of documenting such crimes, investigating them, and bringing perpetrators to justice. On the other hand, it was concluded that in the conditions of war, in order to ensure the preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the national cultural heritage, the priority task for modern archives, libraries, and museums is to digitise their collections. Evidently, the researchers have

focused on the issues of preserving cultural objects as material, ignoring the problem of documenting evidence as an intangible heritage.

In the context of this research, a special role, according to the Ukrainian historian and archivist M. Paliienko (2022), belongs to archival institutions "due to their informational, administrative, operational, historical, cultural, and scientific value". The researcher notes that the enemy not only destroys archival premises, but also takes out valuable archival funds from the archives of the occupied territories to use the information available to falsify history, conduct an information war against Ukraine. Continuing to study the international and Ukrainian experience of archives' response in emergency situations, in particular in war conditions, regarding documentary heritage (both in terms of preservation and in terms of documenting war events, creating archival collections that will be part of the national archival fund (NAF), M. Paliienko (2024) emphasises the need to develop priority response plans, considering international experience, combining the efforts of state authorities at both central and local levels, military, cultural figures, and scientists. The researcher focuses on the special role of archives as institutions of social memory in the preservation and protection of documentary heritage and archivists who are ready to act professionally in emergency conditions of war, armed with "modern technologies for storing, preserving, restoring, and digitising documents with various information carriers". Thus, the object of research is only archival institutions and their activities, in particular, on documenting war events, which corresponds to the priority tasks of the State Archival Service of Ukraine for 2024 – "replenishment of archival funds with electronic information resources, and documents created through initiative documentation of wartime events and the recovery period, in particular, through interaction with the creators of such collections" (About the work..., 2024).

The practical aspects and specific features of the interaction between the archive and sources of acquisition in the conditions of war were considered by T. Yemelianova & V. Pokliatska (2023). Investigating the influence of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the acquisition technology and analysing the practical experience of the Central State Audiovisual and Electronic Archive for the development of audiovisual collections, archivists-practitioners focused on the implementation of the archive's initiative documentation of events and consequences of the war as an "important component of the acquisition process". Consequently, the researchers pointed to the search by the archive for new sources of NAF recruitment for future scientific research and preservation of historical memory, which encourages the appeal and use of information from open sources – social networks, Telegram channels, etc., that is, the topic submitted for consideration is revealed based on the activities of a particular archival institution.

The subject of discussion among scientists was oral historical evidence as a component of documenting war events, an important source base for research, and part

of the national archival heritage. Oral eyewitness accounts are collected by numerous researchers both in Ukraine and abroad, so the issues of processing and proper archiving and storage of oral historical documentation heritage are of great interest to researchers from different countries (Khanenko-Friesen, 2024).

With the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Polish and Ukrainian scientists and public figures mainly focused on the problems of Polish-Ukrainian relations (damage and restoration caused by the aggressor, migration and demographic losses, health consequences of the war, the impact of the war on culture and art, changes in social structures, research of battle sites and graves of conflict victims, which was reflected during the 7<sup>th</sup> international scientific conference "The face of war. Social consequences of wars" (2023, June 1-2). A wide range of issues of Ukrainian-Polish relations in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (solidarity, cooperation, including scientific, assistance to Ukrainian refugees, etc.), including issues of Polish-Ukrainian archival cooperation before and after the Russian aggression against Ukraine, documentation and research of war crimes became the subject of discussion "Polish-Ukrainian Relations in the Context of Russian Aggression against Ukraine: Historical and Contemporary Contexts" (2024) to a lesser extent, various aspects of documenting the events of the war under study, exchange of experience with the collected materials, their further archiving and representation of the processed information resource at international conferences (Paliienko, 2024; Protection of cultural heritage..., 2024), seminars (CAAEA..., 2023), international round tables (Documentation, use and dissemination of information..., 2024).

Therefore, the problem of documenting the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war, preserving the collected resource and further presenting it in the public domain by social memory institutions (archives, museums, libraries), various organisations, journalists, and individuals should become the subject of a broad scientific and public discourse from the very beginning of the large-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

## Conclusions

Documentation of the events of the Russian-Ukrainian war 2022-2024 in Ukraine and Poland is carried out by both government (Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, MCIP, State Archival Services of Ukraine, Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Poland, Lemkin Centre) and public organisations. According to the open information provided on the websites of the organisations under study, the common purpose of documenting the events/crimes of the Russian-Ukrainian war by all institutions is to create an evidence base for bringing Russian aggressors to justice by the International Criminal Court. Depending on the programme goals of the activities of the institutions and organisations under study, the target range of documenting events and ways to present documented evidence of events/crimes of war expands. The creation of archives, databases of

documented evidence, audiovisual materials about military events to preserve historical memory and create a source base for future scientific research is one of the declared goals for the organisations under study, except for the Prosecutor's Offices of Ukraine and the Republic of Poland, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland), and the documentation support centre "OPORA" (Poland). Based on the priorities of its activities, one of the important tasks of the state archives of Ukraine is to form the historical memory of everyone and the nation as a whole. Therefore, this affected the methodology and process of documentation and ways of presenting the collected materials.

Common methods of recording events and testimonies of the Russian-Ukrainian war are interviewing direct witnesses to the events, collecting information from open sources (social networks, instant messengers, mass media, websites of state institutions). Documentation takes place both directly and remotely. The basis of documented information is oral, written, photo, video, and film evidence. A special feature of the documentation support centre "OPORA", the union of human rights organisations "Ukraine. 5 AM" is the collection of oral/written evidence. The above stated goals defined the ways of presenting the collected materials, the most common of which is publication on websites, specially created online platforms, in social networks. Artistic events and analytical reports are the least used methods of representation. However, attention should be paid to the

problems of accessing online platforms (for example, War Evidence). In addition, the information posted on them has certain restrictions due to ethical or security reasons. Such a Ukrainian organisation as the Centre for Urban History is at the beginning of the development of a digital environment for processing, preserving, and potential access to digital oral evidence of war, and also has plans to expand the use of diverse artistic projects to publish the collected evidence.

The scientific originality of the study consists in identifying the possibility of comparing the studied documentation experiences and classifying them according to certain criteria (institutional, goal-setting, organisational, methodological) and presenting the collected evidence, forming recommendations for applying the considered documentation practices.

It is advisable to investigate and use the experience of the Lemkin Centre by Ukrainian government and public organisations. In particular, this applies to the state archives of Ukraine, which have a powerful information potential for the development of national identity and historical memory of Ukrainian citizens.

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None.

#### ■ Conflict of Interest

None.

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## Події російсько-української війни (2022-2024 рр.): український і польський досвід документування та репрезентації

**Людмила Божук**

Кандидат історичних наук, доцент  
Національний авіаційний університет  
03058, просп. Любомира Гузара, 1, м. Київ, Україна  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3883-5997>

**Леся Халецька**

Кандидат історичних наук, доцент  
Національний авіаційний університет  
03058, просп. Любомира Гузара, 1, м. Київ, Україна  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8409-2138>

**Анотація.** Метою проведеного дослідження було вивчення та порівняння українського і польського досвідів документування подій російсько-української війни в інституційно-організаційному та методологічному аспектах, з точки зору цілей документування та репрезентації зібраних свідчень як важливого чинника формування національної ідентичності та збереження історичної пам'яті. Для досягнення поставленої мети проаналізовано діяльність державних інституцій та громадських організацій з документування подій/злочинів російсько-української війни як в Україні, так і в Республіці Польща. Методологічну основу дослідження становили загальнонаукові та спеціальні методи вивчення проблематики, використання яких дало змогу досягти поставленої мети. Використання комплексу загальнонаукових методів: аналізу та синтезу, системного та функціонального підходів, класифікації та систематизації, опису, пояснення та узагальнення уможливила окреслення проблеми документування та репрезентації подій російсько-української війни 2022-2024 рр. державними інституціями та громадськими організаціями. Проблемно-тематичний метод було використано для осмислення українського і польського досвідів документування та репрезентації подій російсько-української війни 2022-2024 рр. У результаті дослідження було встановлено, що як в Україні, так і в Польщі активно триває процес документування свідчень подій російсько-української війни та воєнних злочинів, скоєних російським агресором як державними установами, так громадськими об'єднаннями. З'ясовано залежність видів і методів документування від умов його проведення, а основу задокументованої інформації становлять усні, письмові, фото-, відео-, кіносвідчення. Доведено, що спільною метою документування подій/злочинів російсько-української війни усіма інституціями є створення доказової бази для притягнення до відповідальності російських агресорів Міжнародним кримінальним судом. Практична цінність наукового доробку, зважаючи на обмеженість дослідження в українському науковому дискурсі означеної теми, полягає у комплексному висвітленні українського і польського досвідів документування та репрезентації подій російсько-української війни 2022-2024 рр. з метою збереження історичної пам'яті, осмислення досвідів війни для майбутніх поколінь

**Ключові слова:** російська агресія; широкомасштабна війна; представлення; архіви; громадські організації; Україна; Польща