

UKRAINE



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Information for All  
Programme  
National Committee

**Statement  
of the IFAP National Committee of Ukraine and  
the Memory of the World National Committee of Ukraine  
on the destruction of the National Archival Fund of Ukraine**

Since 2014, Ukraine has been relentlessly resisting Russian military aggression. The invasion has resulted not only in the occupation of Ukrainian territory and the loss of countless lives, but also in the destruction of the national cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people.

Ukrainian archives, which house the National Archival Fund — a vital part of the world’s cultural heritage — have been subjected to devastating missile attacks, bombings, deliberate destruction, and the brazen looting and removal of archival valuables by the Russian aggressor.

Since 2014, in violation of international law, the Russian Federation has unlawfully appropriated archival documents and the buildings of the State Archive of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the State Archive of the City of Sevastopol, the State Archive of Donetsk Region, the State Archive of Luhansk Region, as well as district, municipal, labor archives, and archival departments of Ukrainian government agencies, state, municipal, and private institutions, enterprises, and organizations located in the territories occupied by Russian forces.

Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the entire country has been subjected to relentless attacks. Several regions have persevered through temporary occupation, while others continue to suffer under Russian control.

Archival institutions in the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Chernihiv regions have at various times come under direct threat, as they are located in active combat zones or occupied territories.

As a result of the occupation of the Kherson region and the city of Kherson in 2022, Russian forces removed — according to preliminary estimates — nearly 1,500 archival

collections from the State Archive of Kherson Region, amounting to half of its entire holdings, along with the archive's official record-keeping documentation.

On February 25, 2022, in the Chernihiv region, a fire broke out in an archive facility following a Russian strike. This archive safeguarded the evidence of crimes committed by the Soviet regime against the Ukrainian people. Up to 13,000 archival files on citizens persecuted during the Stalin era were lost.

In November 2023, the State Archive of Luhansk Region reported the removal of archival records and all accompanying documentation from storage facilities in the city of Sievierodonetsk to the self-proclaimed "archival service of the Luhansk People's Republic."

Due to enemy attacks, the buildings of state archival institutions in the Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Cherkasy regions, as well as the city of Kyiv, have been damaged.

Massive losses of Ukraine's historic documentary legacy are expected to occur in the territories temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. In cities and villages currently outside Ukraine's control, archives of all types and levels are at extreme risk of destruction or theft.

We urge the international community to remember that, under Clause 5.4 of the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form, "to the best of their ability, Member States should take all appropriate measures to safeguard their documentary heritage against all human and natural dangers to which it is exposed, including the risks deriving from armed conflicts. Likewise, they should refrain from acts likely to damage documentary heritage or diminish its value or impede its dissemination or use, whether it is to be found on the territory of one Member State or on the territory of other States".

To preserve its documentary heritage, Ukraine is employing all possible measures, including large-scale digitization of archival collections, relocation of documents to secure storage, and evacuation where necessary.

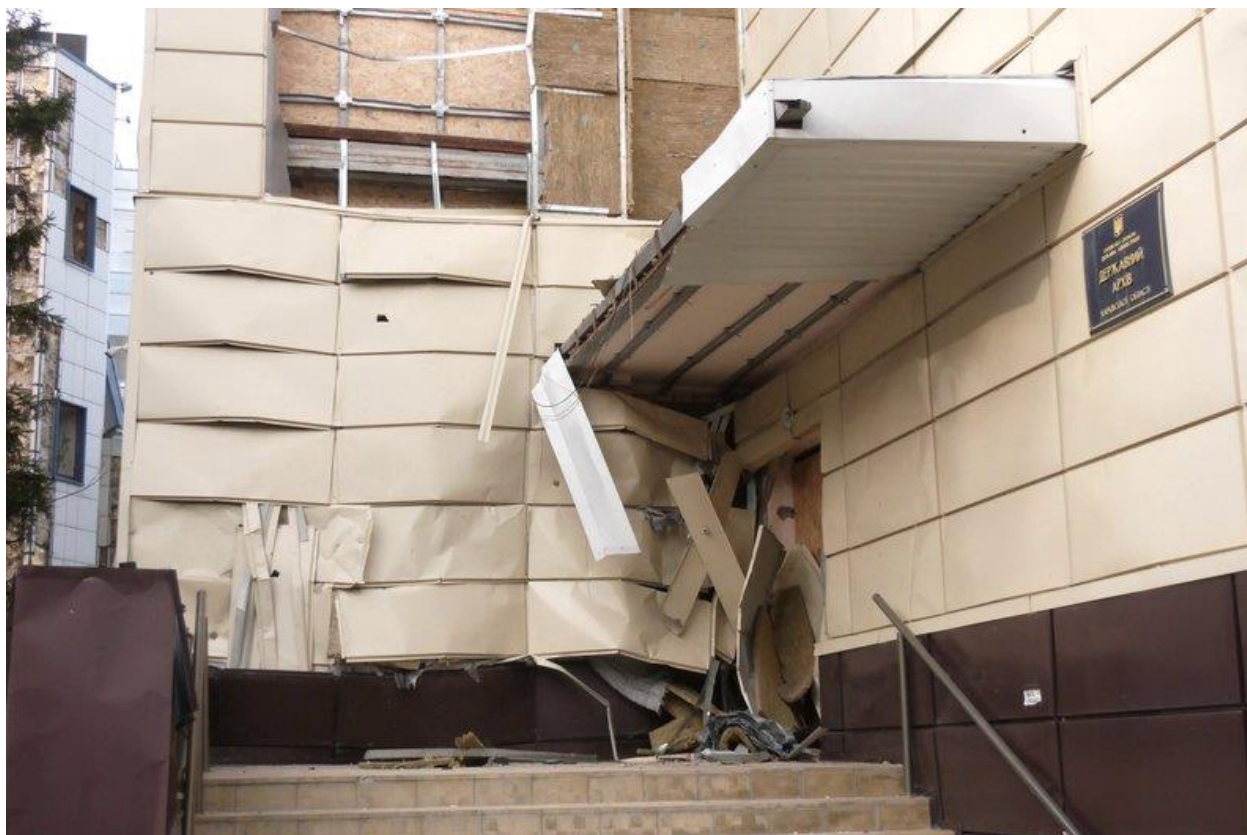
By destroying Ukraine's documentary heritage, the Russian Federation is flagrantly violating the above-mentioned UNESCO Recommendation and other international legal norms aimed at the protection and preservation of documentary heritage.

The loss of Ukraine's archives risks becoming a global humanitarian disaster in the field of national memory. This is not only an irreversible material loss of the documentary historical heritage of Ukraine. It opens the door to the falsification of Ukrainian history by Russian pseudo-scholars in the service of Putin's regime and constitutes a direct threat to Ukraine's national security.

Ukrainian archivists, historians, the wider academic community, and members of the National Committee of Ukraine "Information for All" and the "Memory of the World" subcommittee appeal to UNESCO to:

- Recognize all forms of destruction of Ukrainian archives (physical destruction, removal, theft, etc.) perpetrated by the Russian aggressor as crimes against the Ukrainian people, and crimes against humanity and the collective memory of humankind;
- Call upon the Russian Federation to immediately cease the destruction, theft, and removal of Ukrainian archival treasures;
- Demand the unconditional return by the Russian Federation of all seized archival documents and collections;
- Demand compensation from the Russian Federation for financial and material damages inflicted on Ukrainian archives in the course of the Russian invasion of Ukraine;
- Include information on the damages inflicted by the Russian Federation on Ukraine's archives and documentary heritage in the report of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations of the Executive Board of UNESCO, as well as in the reports of the Director-General at the 43rd and 44th sessions of the General Conference of UNESCO, specifically in relation to the 2015 Recommendation on the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage including in Digital Form.

**Photographic Evidence of the Russian Federation's Crimes Against Ukraine's Documentary Heritage**



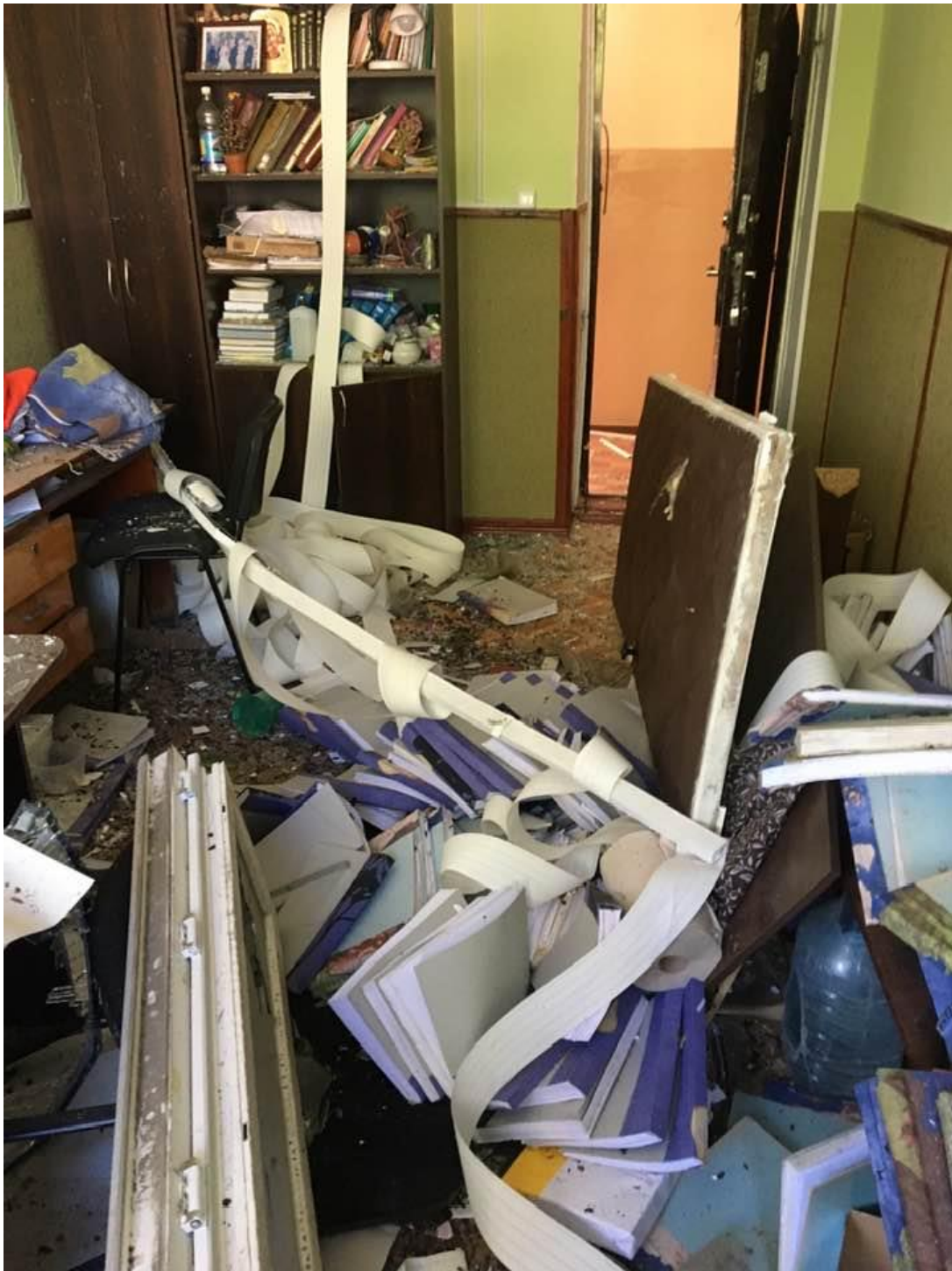
*Photo: The sealed wing of the State Archive of Kharkiv Region after a Russian missile strike. December 2022.*



*Photo: The aftermath of shelling in the archival department of the Chuhuiv District State Administration, Kharkiv Region.*



*Photo: Building of the State Archive of Kherson Region following Russian shelling on the night of February 3, 2023.*



*Photo: Damage to the archival department of the Bashtanka District State Administration, Mykolaiv Region, after Russian shelling in early June*