



# NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL

## MEMORANDUM

15 June 2022

### **Russian Forces Conducting Detentions and Forced Deportations Through Systematic Filtration Operations**

#### **Key Takeaway**

We assess that Russia with the help of proxy groups almost certainly is using so-called filtration operations to conduct the detention and forced deportation of Ukrainian civilians to Russia.

These operations have expanded during the course of the conflict to involve the screening of possibly thousands of individual Ukrainians. The filtration process includes temporary detention, data collection, interrogation, and in some cases abuse of detainees, and takes place in a variety of temporary processing centers—often in parallel with internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee processing.

- We assess that many individuals face one of three fates after undergoing filtration. Those who are deemed non-threatening may be issued documentation and permitted to remain in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, or in some cases forcefully deported to Russia. Others deemed less threatening, but still potentially resistant to Russian occupation, face forcible deportation to Russia and are subject to additional screening. Those deemed most threatening during the filtration process, particularly anyone with affiliation to the military or security services, probably are detained in prisons in eastern Ukraine and Russia, though little is known about their fates.

## **Filtration Operations Intended To Identify Individuals Threatening to Russian Occupation**

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Russian forces describe filtration operations as a process to temporarily detain and screen Ukrainians to identify anyone perceived to pose a threat to Russia's occupation efforts in Ukraine, as well as those who may be willing to collaborate with Russia, according to reliable intelligence.

- Russian forces intended filtration operations to occur at filtration centers where Ukrainians could be detained, processed, and then “interned,” deported to Russia, or released.

## **Scope and Conduct of Filtration Evolved During Conflict**

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Because of unexpected Ukrainian resistance, the filtration plan had to scale up to screen thousands of Ukrainian civilians.

Since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine filtration operations have been identified in at least 18 possible locations in eastern Ukraine and western Russia. There almost certainly are other facilities we have not yet detected.

## **The Filtration Process**

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Some witnesses report that they arrived at filtration facilities in several ways: in some cases, individuals were detained and taken to facilities for filtration, while in other cases evacuees, IDPs, or refugees faced filtration at mandatory checkpoints.

- During filtration, screeners inspect detainees for “nationalistic” tattoos, photograph them, and take their fingerprints. Russian forces also check and sometimes confiscate victims' passports and identifying documents, and search their cell phones and download contacts.

We assess that those subjected to filtration probably face temporary detention during processing, poor conditions, and in some cases abuse. Witnesses have described lack of sanitation and food. Some witnesses allege cases of

abuse including torture, threats of gender-based violence, harassment, and possible execution.

## **Screening Determines Post-Filtration Fate**

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We assess that many individuals probably face one of three fates after undergoing filtration. Those who are deemed non-threatening may be issued documentation and permitted to remain in Ukraine with certain restrictions. Those deemed less threatening face forcible deportation to Russia. Those deemed most threatening probably are detained in prisons, although we have little reporting regarding their fate. Because of the scope and variety of actors engaged in filtration operations, the treatment and disposition of individuals may vary depending on how they were detained.

- We assess that those who are deemed loyal may be given documentation verifying their completion of filtration, according to press and defense liaison reporting. This documentation possibly grants limited movement and serves as a food and clothing allowance card. Some categorized as non-threatening, however, may have been deported. Former Mariupol residents said they went through filtration, were deemed non-threatening, and then sent on to Russia.
- We assess that those deemed less threatening, yet still viewed as hostile to Russian occupation, probably are being forcibly deported to Russia, according to Ukrainian officials and witnesses. Once in Russia, witnesses allege that many without Russian contacts or money were put on trains in Taganrog, bound for deeper within Russia. Open-source reporting identifies nearly two dozen locations in Russia where Ukrainians have been deported, including as far away as Vladivostok.
- We assess that those deemed most threatening—particularly men with ties to the Ukrainian military or security services, including anyone assisting the military—possibly are transported to and detained at prison facilities in Russia and occupied eastern Ukraine. In mid-April, the Ukrainian Prosecutor General stated that Russia is holding about 1,700

Ukrainian soldiers and civilians in prisons in  
Russia and in occupied parts of the Donbas region.

### **Number of Ukrainians Filtrated Uncertain, but Probably Large**

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Based on the handful of data points we have, there is significant uncertainty about the number filtrated. We also lack fidelity regarding the numbers of Ukrainians who have been evacuated or deported as part of the filtration process.