

The Guardian.- 20.09.2023

Luke Harding

## **Revealed: how russia deliberately targeted Kherson's hospitals**

### ***Дослідження: як росія цілеспрямовано атакувала лікарні Херсона***

*Незалежна англійська некомерційна організація «Центр інформаційної стійкості» надала ексклюзивно The Guardian дослідження, яке докладно описує масштаби атак у південноукраїнському місті Херсон. Згідно з даними дослідження, росія «навмисно і неодноразово» завдавала ударів по медичним закладам, завдавши шкоди дитячим лікарням, пологовим будинкам та обласній клініці. Дослідники використовували супутникові знімки, свідчення свідків та фотографії, розміщені у соціальних мережах, у тому числі з офіційних каналів. Експерти заявляють, що дії росії в Херсоні різьблять нагадують російську тактику в Сирії, де каральні удари завдавалися день у день протягом багатьох років.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/20/revealed-how-russia-deliberately-targeted-kherson-hospitals>

Study shared exclusively with Guardian details extent of attacks in south Ukrainian city

Russia has “deliberately and repeatedly” targeted medical facilities in the Ukrainian city of Kherson, causing damage to children’s hospitals, maternity wards and a regional clinic, according to a new study.

Russian troops swept into Kherson last year in the early days of Vladimir Putin’s full-scale invasion. In November, Ukraine’s armed forces evicted them from the southern city as part of a sweeping counteroffensive.

Since December 2022, the Russian army has been bombarding Kherson from dug-in positions on the nearby left, eastern bank of the Dnipro river. It has attacked civilian infrastructure, including schools, private residential houses, hospitals and the railway station.

A new report by the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) reveals the extent to which Moscow has systematically shelled public medical facilities. Open-source investigators found seven had been damaged in 14 separate attacks over six months between December 2022 and May 2023.

Some facilities were hit several times. The latest strike on a hospital was in August. “It appears some of these sites are being deliberately and repeatedly targeted,” the report says. CIR called the pattern “remarkable” and added: “The situation for residents has become dire.”

Researchers used satellite imagery, witness accounts and photos posted on social media, including from official channels. There was compelling evidence Russian shelling caused the damage. One round left a large hole in the south-facing wall of the city’s regional cardiology centre, which has been hit on three occasions.

Another barrage took place on 27 December 2022. Two shells fell on a busy maternity ward inside Kherson’s clinical hospital, landing just 10 metres away from women with newborn babies. “We quickly got them into the shelter. It was terrifying,” Sergey Morozov, a doctor, recalled. Nobody was hurt.

Four days later, on New Year's Eve, the Russians launched a devastating attack across the city. Shelling damaged buildings including Kherson's regional children's hospital, where 700 windows were blown in. The blast injured a toddler boy and his sister walking in the street.

The boy was taken to the hospital and treated for a major life-threatening wound to his leg. As he waited for an emergency blood transfusion a shell struck the next-door room. He was then transported to Mykolaiv, 45 miles (70km) away, for a further operation, the report said.

Russian artillery units also targeted the city's maternity hospital number one, a rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities, and a regional clinical hospital. They hit a clinical complex in the north-east of Kherson, which housed 120 patients. Maternity and cancer units were damaged.

The report noted that Kherson was "acutely vulnerable" because it was close to Russian positions. Other Ukrainian cities on the frontline were victims of similar "strategic bombardment", used previously by Moscow in its military campaign in Syria to support President Bashar al-Assad.

"Russia's activities in Kherson are strikingly reminiscent of Russian tactics in Syria, where apparently punitive strikes were delivered day after day for years in rebel-held areas of Idlib and Aleppo," CIR said. These were "unconnected to any ground operations", and typically directed at "medical infrastructure" and water treatment plants.

Aftermath of a Russian military strike in Kherson: an intensive care unit of the children's hospital damaged by a Russian military strike, 1 January 2023.

The intensive care unit of Kherson's children's hospital after it was damaged by a Russian military strike in January. Photograph: Oleksandr Ratushniak/Reuters

The Red Cross office in downtown Kherson has been hit three times, with medical workers intentionally targeted. A Red Cross volunteer, Victoria Yaryshko, was killed in December 2022 by a shell as she handed out bread. An elderly man who was queueing outside the building also died.

According to Kyiv, Russia has launched more than 2,000 drone attacks on Ukraine over the past year. Most sent to the Ukrainian capital have been shot down. In Kherson, however, the Russians are using barrelled artillery, which is impossible to intercept. They occupied the city for nine months and are familiar with its locations.

Some of these attacks are aimed at Ukraine's military and air defences. Others appear directed at civilians. Beginning in October 2022, Moscow has attacked Ukraine's power grid in an attempt to freeze its population and plunge it into darkness. A similar campaign is expected this coming winter.

Recently, Russia has been trying to wipe out grain storage and shipping facilities, after it withdrew from the UN-brokered Black Sea grain deal. It has repeatedly bombed the port of Odesa and targeted the Danube river terminals of Reni and Izmail, from where Ukraine has been exporting agricultural products to Europe and countries beyond.

There seems little prospect this bombing will stop any time soon. Ukrainian commandos have carried out raids on speedboats across the Dnipro and established a bridgehead close to the ruined Antonivskyi Bridge, which had connected the two banks. But they have been unable to dislodge Russian soldiers who have taken cover in fortified trenches and riverside villages.

“The only effective mitigation ... is to strike [Russian] firing positions, troops and munition stores in occupied territory to the south,” the report concludes. “As long as Russian forces are able to deploy on the opposite bank of the Dnipro, Kherson will continue to suffer.”