

Request for Information: Filtration Points

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The Purpose of Filtration Points

After the start of the invasion, Russian and separatist forces [built](#) a series of “filtration points” to screen local populations in areas that had fallen under their control. Among the groups at risk of detention, ill treatment, and/or imprisonment during “filtration” are [current and former Ukrainian soldiers](#), [pro-Kyiv activists](#), [journalists](#), [resistance operatives](#), [Russian deserters](#), [soldiers’ relatives](#), [outspoken nationalists](#), [witnesses to war crimes](#), occasional [Red Cross volunteers](#) and other “suspicious” persons thought to be loyal to the Ukrainian government. The first of these points [were built](#) in early March, though there are indications that some were set up in the so-called ‘Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics (L/DPR),’ [before the invasion](#) began.

Ukrainian citizens describe being stopped at [three types of filtration point](#). First are special interrogation rooms attached to urban or roadside checkpoints – evacuees have reported passing through up to [20 separate checkpoints](#) while crossing cities such as Mariupol or Donetsk by car. **Second are large-scale camps** where individuals and groups are subject to a more substantive filtration process that can take from a few hours to more than a month. **The third are filtration prisons** where [“suspicious” persons are held](#) until either being successfully filtered or, in the worst-case scenario, transported to prison facilities in the so-called ‘L/DPR.’

Much [international attention](#) has been directed at the filtration camps established in villages and cities across occupied Ukrainian territories. **Conditions in these camps vary, but many lack [beds](#), [heating](#), [washing facilities](#), [medicine](#) or [food](#)**. The Ukrainian government has identified [at least twenty](#) camps and prisons in both Russia and in occupied parts of Ukraine, often built as tent cities or set up in schools, sports halls or cultural centers. Some are located in towns in the ‘L/DPR,’ such as [Bezimenne](#), [Novoazovsk](#), or [Dokuchajevsk](#); others, in recently occupied settlements such as [Manhush](#), [Nikolske](#), [Yalta](#) (Donetsk oblast) and [Oleshky](#). Large cities like [Mariupol](#), [Donetsk](#) and [Lysychansk](#) have seen [temporary filtration points](#) for processing locals who choose to stay. **Filtration is often a [prerequisite for free movement](#) within occupied cities.**

Who is Taken to Filtration Points?

All Ukrainian citizens who evacuate or are deported to Russia must first be processed at a filtration point, though many residents in large occupied cities are also subject to filtration. **While some Ukrainians have [chosen to evacuate to Russia](#), many [do so unwillingly](#).** Some have been loaded onto trucks by Russian soldiers and told they would be driven to Ukraine before being taken to a filtration camp and onward to Russia. For those whose homes have been destroyed and who have no options to travel to Ukrainian government-controlled areas (GCA), evacuation to Russia [seems the only choice](#). **In rare cases, Ukrainian officials even advise residents to flee into Russia:** on 3 June, for example, Mariupol mayoral adviser Petro Andriushchenko [wrote on Telegram](#): “Whoever is in town, flee to friendly countries even through Russia. It’s only going to get tougher [in Mariupol].” Pro-Ukrainian sources inside Russia confirm that **some men seeking to flee to safe third countries may choose to exit via Russia** due to a Ukrainian [law](#) compelling most men between the ages of 18-60 to remain in the country in case of mobilization. Kyiv [claims](#) that **1.6 million Ukrainians have been processed in filtration points, 250,000 of which are children**. These numbers cannot be independently verified.

Filtration Practices

Movement restrictions

Ukrainian citizens who have passed through filtration camps describe a wide range of practices. The majority of evacuees face [restricted movement](#) while waiting for filtration, which can take hours, days or even weeks. **Most detainees are unable to travel from the camp into the surrounding towns or villages.** Some Ukrainians have been allowed to stay in the towns instead of the camps if they could prove they had relatives nearby. Additionally, Andriushchenko [has said](#) that over 10,000 Mariupol residents remain in filtration prisons, where they face even greater restrictions.

Searches, interrogations and family separation

All evacuees passing through filtration points have their [phones, passports and ID documents](#) confiscated. **Phones are often searched for “[incriminating](#)” content suggestive of nationalist or anti-Russian sentiment.** This could include photos with vyshyvankas or the Ukrainian flag, or social media posts critical of the Russian army. [Call histories](#) are also searched for evidence of contact with Ukrainian forces. Many therefore clean their phones before filtration. Family members can be [separately interrogated](#) and, if they raise suspicion, held apart from one another. Per some reports, [children over the age of 15](#) are subject to

standard filtration practices such as being [photographed, fingerprinted and questioned](#). **Evacuees are often questioned about [their relationship to the Ukrainian army](#); many are strip-searched for [tattoos](#) linked to the armed forces or the Azov Battalion.** Interrogators also search for marks on the body linked to armed combat or the use of weapons – [bruises on the shoulder](#), for example, may indicate work as a sniper.

Beatings, imprisonment and disappearances

Ukrainian citizens who raise interrogators' suspicions find themselves in immediate and grave danger. Many evacuees report that they or family members [have been assaulted](#) during questioning. The violence used ranges from [beatings](#) resulting in permanent damage to [sexual assault](#). Victims are [sometimes released](#) after having “learned their lesson,” but may be transported to filtration prisons for further questioning or ill treatment. **Many evacuees particularly dread being sent to Donetsk city's “[Isolyatsia](#)” prison, where detainees are reported to be [killed or otherwise disappear without trace](#).** Evacuees also report overhearing Russian and ‘L/DNR’ soldiers boasting of [summarily executing](#) Ukrainian citizens at filtration camps and prisons.

After Filtration

Following filtration, Ukrainian citizens are given special documents or stamps allowing [passage into Russia](#) or [freedom of movement](#) inside occupied cities. They may be filtered [multiple times](#) if they re-enter certain areas or if the occupying administration decides to conduct additional checks inside cities. For example, on 3 June, Russian authorities reportedly [re-introduced filtration inside Mariupol](#) due to increased local resistance and information leaks to the GCA.

On occasion, Ukrainian citizens have managed to [escape to the GCA](#) following filtration. They were assisted by private drivers and smugglers. Others were [brought to Russia](#), often through cities like [Taganrog](#) or [Rostov-on-Don](#), where they were either placed on trains headed to distant Russian cities or allowed to arrange their own transportation onward. **If evacuees claim that they have plans to create a new life in Russia, this may [increase their chances of being allowed independent travel](#).** Pro-Ukrainian sources inside Russia say that those who choose (and are able) to leave often do so through countries like Georgia, Belarus or the Baltic States. These Ukrainians are often assisted by local activists or organizations like [Helping to Leave](#). Those who stay in Russia may at times be forcibly transported to Russian cities as distant as the [Far East](#). Many are housed in one of [more than 9,500](#) temporary accommodation centers (TAC) and are assisted by local volunteers who provide services with or without the consent of TAC guards.