



**Centre for  
Information  
Resilience**

# Eyes on Russia

**Report 10**

17 June 2022



## Eyes on Russia: Report 10

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### Background

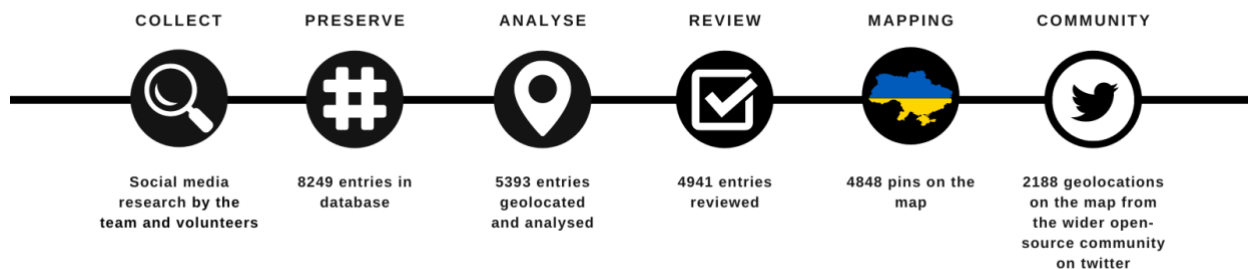
The Centre for Information Resilience’s “Eyes on Russia” Project maps, documents and verifies significant incidents related to Russian aggression toward Ukraine. Each week, CIR investigators collate, geolocate, and verify information appearing on social media and claims made by parties to the conflict. Our latest findings can always be found on this [Twitter thread](#).

CIR contextualizes these details amid the discourse and developments of the week. The footage and imagery are added to the [Russia-Ukraine Monitor Map](#), which policymakers, journalists, and other OSINT researchers can use to track the conflict. As part of this effort, CIR publishes weekly written summaries of its research, detailing verified troop and equipment analysis, influence operation narratives, and broader updates. This is the tenth of such regular reports. The first report can be read [here](#).

The Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) is an independent, non-profit social enterprise dedicated to exposing human rights abuses, countering disinformation, and combating online behaviour harmful to women and minorities.

We believe, at a time of heightened tension, that journalists and policymakers should have easy access to verified information. The Eyes on Russia Project will aim to empower its audiences with analysis and facts on which they can rely.

If you require further information, please do get in touch at [hello@info-res.org](mailto:hello@info-res.org).



## 1. Executive Summary

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- Since 1 June, the Eyes on Russia team observed an increase in the intensity of battles between Ukrainian and Russian forces over the city of Severodonetsk, as Russia seeks to capture Eastern Ukraine.
- As part of the Russian attacks on Severodonetsk, all bridges have been destroyed, preventing the crucial evacuation of civilians from the conflict zone.
- Civilians have been sheltering in the Azot chemical plant in Severodonetsk amidst growing fears of a similar situation to the previous Russian attacks on the Azovstal in Mariupol.<sup>1</sup>
- An often-overlooked element in the ongoing invasion of Ukraine is the effects and losses suffered by Ukrainian zoos and captive wildlife. CIR has published a report that examines the suffering in zoos across Ukraine. The full report can be found [here](#).

In the information sphere, CIR has noted several developments:

- On 8 June, three foreign nationals, including two Britons, were sentenced to death by a court in Russian-occupied Eastern Ukraine. Although they were serving members of the Ukrainian Marines, and so should have been under the protection of the Geneva Convention, disinformation narratives have attempted to justify their sentencing and portray them as foreign mercenaries.
- Since the beginning of the invasion, CIR has observed the circulation of Kremlin aligned narratives by a variety of personalities on social media platforms. This report examines Gonzalo-Lira, Graham Philips, Patrick Lancaster and their growing follower base, and their infiltration of the information space.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61773356>.

## 2. Noted Narratives

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Since 1 June, CIR has continued to observe the promotion of Kremlin-based conspiracy theories across pro-Kremlin media outlets and social media platforms, in an attempt to spread disinformation online about the legitimacy and rationale behind its ongoing invasion and occupation of Ukraine.

Developments in the disinformation sphere have included the following:

- **Prisoners of War Sentencing**

On 8 June, three foreign nationals were sentenced to death by a court in Russian-controlled Eastern Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

Aiden Aislin, Shaun Pinner, and Saaudun Brahim were brought up on charges of terrorism.

The trials have been condemned as ‘show trials’. They are used by the Russian state to imitate the war crime trials of Russian soldiers that are currently underway in Kyiv.

CIR investigators have observed narratives by Russian state media suggesting that these fighters are ‘terrorists’ and ‘mercenaries’.

In a video shared by RIA Novosti, a Russian state news agency, Aislin, Pinner, and Brahim are shown behind bars following sentencing.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/09/britons-sentenced-to-death-russian-occupied-ukraine-aiden-aslin-shaun-pinner>.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CF80CUASOcl&ab\\_channel=GuardianNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CF80CUASOcl&ab_channel=GuardianNews).

Russian show trials portray the efforts of the Kremlin to control the narrative about foreign nationals' involvement in the conflict.

All three men were serving members of the Ukrainian Marines, which would qualify the men for protection under the Geneva Conventions.

- **Useful Idiots for the Circulation of Disinformation**

Within days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, various disinformation narratives were circulating on social media platforms that supported the Kremlin's attack.

The efforts to target and infiltrate the information environment have been a long-time tactic of the Kremlin's disinformation narrative.

To support these narratives, the Kremlin either relies on actors that have a direct link to Russia or uses 'useful idiots' to recycle and spread its claims about the war.

Amongst others, Gonzalo Lira has been a prominent figure helping to spread Kremlin-aligned narratives on social media platforms.<sup>4</sup>

Since the onset of the invasion, Lira, who has lived in Kharkiv, has focused on recycling Kremlin disinformation while increasing his followership by portraying himself as a 'balanced' source.

Lira's posts consisted of several conspiracy theories, including the debunked Russian claim that American bioweapons and labs have been found in Ukraine.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.thedailybeast.com/gonzalo-lira-is-a-pro-putin-shill-in-ukraine-and-a-sleazy-manosphere-dating-coach?ref=scroll>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.thedailybeast.com/gonzalo-lira-is-a-pro-putin-shill-in-ukraine-and-a-sleazy-manosphere-dating-coach?ref=scroll>

In fact, the Daily Beast has recently published an article that exposed Lira’s past as an online ‘manosphere youtuber.’ His YouTube page used to serve as an incubator for “incel” ideology, that promotes the belief that men are the oppressed gender and that misogynist gender roles should be reinforced.<sup>6</sup>

Lira’s followership has grown exponentially on social media, and he currently has 81,000 followers on Telegram.

While he promotes Kremlin aligned disinformation narratives, he also amplifies content by similar figures to himself such as Patrick Lancaster, a propagandist that continuously seeks to portray Russia as a liberator in Ukraine.

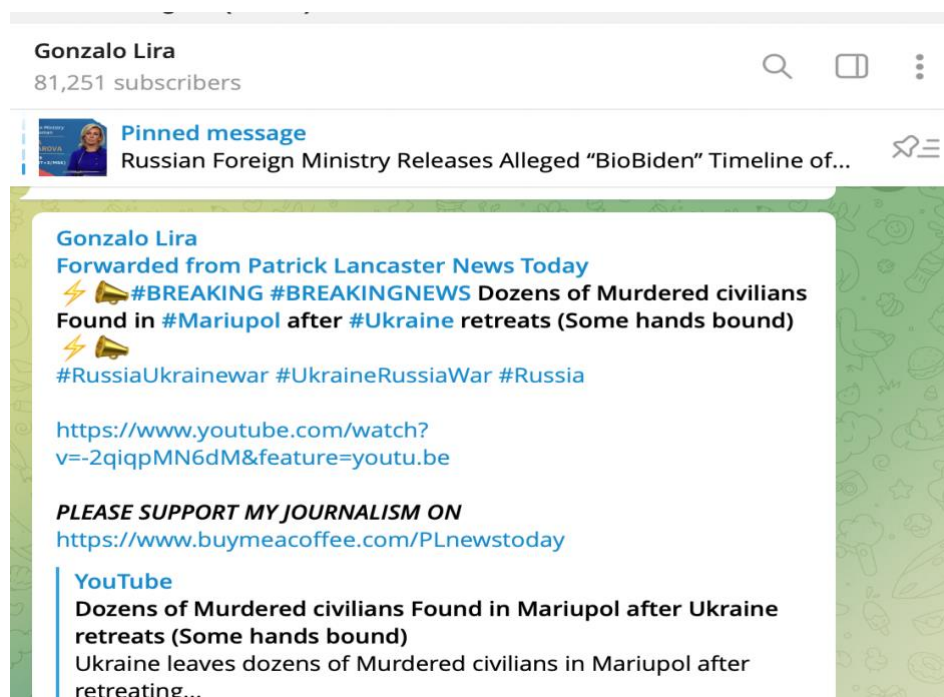


Figure 1: Screenshot taken on 13 June, showing Gonzalo Lira’s Telegram Page.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.thedailybeast.com/gonzalo-lira-is-a-pro-putin-shill-in-ukraine-and-a-sleazy-manosphere-dating-coach?ref=scroll>

<sup>7</sup> <https://t.me/realCRP>.

Another popular disinformers is Graham Phillips. He is amplified by both Lancaster and Lira, and is currently based in Mariupol. Phillips has been taking video footage of destroyed facilities and portraying Russian occupying forces as liberators.

According to Phillips, Russian troops are winning the war against Ukrainian 'Nazis' led by battalions like Azov.

Recently, Phillips celebrated on his social media that Russian occupiers had repainted a symbolic panel at the entrance to Mariupol with the colours of the Russian flag.

Previously, the sign was painted with the colours of the Ukrainian flag.<sup>8</sup>

- **The organ harvesting narrative is reborn in Mariupol**

In the weeks leading to the invasion, Russian media (e.g., 5TV) accused the Ukrainian army's Joint Forces Operation of using mobile crematoriums for illegal organ harvesting.<sup>9</sup>

According to these false claims, Global Rescue, a crisis management entity partly founded by Johns Hopkins Medicine, helped the Ukrainian military conduct these activities.<sup>10</sup>

On 29 May, new claims about organ trafficking in Ukraine re-emerged, targeting international humanitarian movements. Kremlin-official media, including RIA Novosti<sup>11</sup>, Sputnik News<sup>12</sup>, 5TV, and RT<sup>13</sup>, accused the Red Cross of collecting data from healthy children in Mariupol for illegal organ harvesting.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://twitter.com/shaunwalker7/status/1536065745356046336?s=20&t=NujxPo-v\\_3HYm2RPNrGjFg](https://twitter.com/shaunwalker7/status/1536065745356046336?s=20&t=NujxPo-v_3HYm2RPNrGjFg)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.5-tv.ru/news/376067/politolog-nasel-sposob-reanimirovat-minskie-soglasenia-ukraina-dolzna-plunut-nanacionalistov/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/60292915>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ria.ru/20220529/sk-1791622244.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://sputniknews.com/20220529/russian-investigators-launching-probe-into-suspicious-medical-data-at-mariupol-red-cross-1095865451.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.rt.com/russia/556331-red-cross-office-mariupol/>

These unsubstantiated claims originated with misleading video footage taken by the Russian occupying forces visiting the Red Cross office in Mariupol, where allegedly, they found hundreds of dubious medical files from healthy children and their parents<sup>14</sup>.

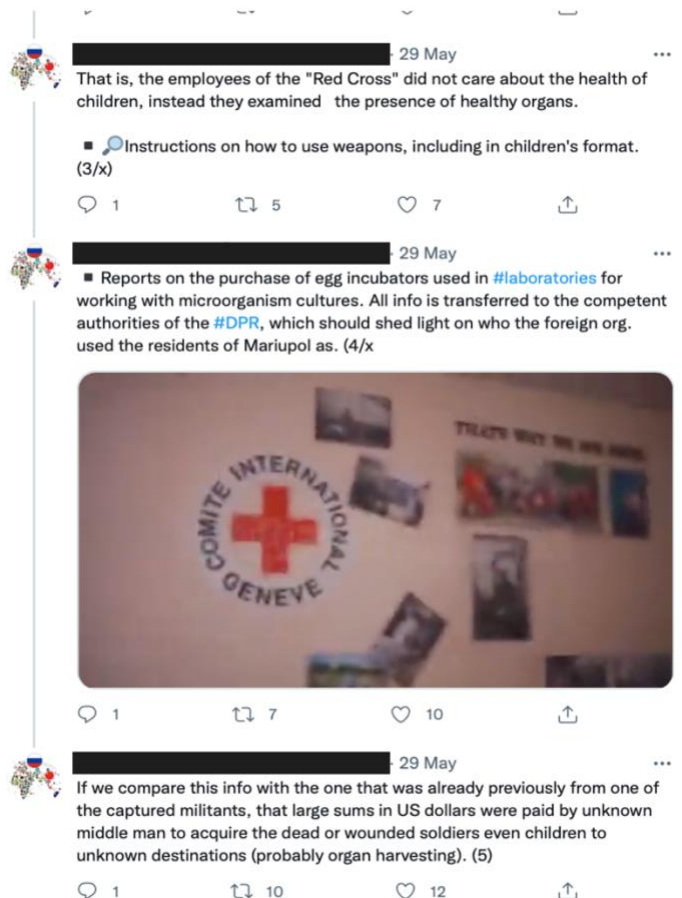


Figure 2: Screenshot taken on 13 June 2022 of a Twitter post sharing the video footage taken at the Red Cross Mariupol office by Russian occupiers<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://t.me/RussiaMyVmeste/27228>

<sup>15</sup> [https://twitter.com/Miguel18011505/status/1530954788179181569?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Cwterm%5E1530954788179181569%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_%ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.polygraph.info%2Fa%2Ffact-check-russia-resurrects-debunked-organ-harvesting-allegations%2F31878977.html](https://twitter.com/Miguel18011505/status/1530954788179181569?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Cwterm%5E1530954788179181569%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.polygraph.info%2Fa%2Ffact-check-russia-resurrects-debunked-organ-harvesting-allegations%2F31878977.html)



Another video taken on the premises<sup>16</sup> was used to accuse the Red Cross of collaborating with “US biolabs” and planning a chemical attack in Mariupol.<sup>17</sup>

On 9 June, Konstantin Malofeev’s pro-Kremlin outlet Tsargrad TV labelled Ukraine as an emerging market for organ trafficking, claiming that similar findings were made at the building where the OSCE’s Ukrainian Special Monitoring Mission used to be based.<sup>18</sup>

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was also mentioned in the article, which recycled the old, debunked narrative claiming Bernard Kouchner, MSF’s co-founder, was responsible for organizing illegal organ trade in Kosovo between 1998 and 1999.<sup>19</sup>

The International Committee of the Red Cross has already issued a statement denying the accusations and denouncing that the video filmed in their Mariupol office is filled with false claims and baseless assumptions.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation announced through their Telegram account<sup>21</sup> that they had launched a probe into the matter<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://web.telegram.org/z/#-1288817752>

<sup>17</sup> [https://tsargrad.tv/news/krasnyj-krest-v-mariupole-pojmali-s-polichnym-na-ukrainskih-biolaboratorijah\\_55660](https://tsargrad.tv/news/krasnyj-krest-v-mariupole-pojmali-s-polichnym-na-ukrainskih-biolaboratorijah_55660)

<sup>18</sup> [https://tsargrad.tv/articles/deti-na-organy-ukraina-mogla-stat-rynkom-potroshitelej-s-ministrom-vo-glave\\_5629](https://tsargrad.tv/articles/deti-na-organy-ukraina-mogla-stat-rynkom-potroshitelej-s-ministrom-vo-glave_5629)

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/irmilitaryvlog/status/1413054355276718081>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/ukraine-online-video-mariupol-filled-false-claims>

<sup>21</sup> [https://t.me/sledcom\\_press/1941](https://t.me/sledcom_press/1941)

<sup>22</sup> [https://t.me/sledcom\\_press/1941](https://t.me/sledcom_press/1941)



Figure 3: Screenshot taken on 13 June 2022, showing a post by the Investigative Committee of Russia announcing a criminal investigation into the files found at the Red Cross office in Mariupol<sup>23</sup>.

The narrative has been extensively supported and shared by Twitter<sup>24</sup> and Telegram<sup>25</sup> accounts, especially in Russian and English-speaking pro-Kremlin filter bubbles.

However, it has also been shared by the Spanish version of RT, RT en Español<sup>26</sup>.

Of note, this narrative has been intermittently used in Ukraine since 2014<sup>27</sup> to target and delegitimize the work of several international organizations and vilify the Ukrainian military.

<sup>23</sup> [https://t.me/sledcom\\_press/1941](https://t.me/sledcom_press/1941)

<sup>24</sup> <https://twitter.com/Miguel18011505/status/1530954788179181569>

<sup>25</sup> <https://t.me/SILOVIKI/49263>

<sup>26</sup> <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/431321-descubrir-mariupol-documentos-medicos-organos-infantiles>

<sup>27</sup> [https://twitter.com/Interpreter\\_Mag/status/517749515450068992](https://twitter.com/Interpreter_Mag/status/517749515450068992)

- **Amid a global food crisis, Russia becomes a wellbeing paradise**

Pro-Kremlin outlets and social media accounts, including Konstantin Rykov's online newspaper Vzglyad<sup>28</sup>, have claimed that “anti-Russian sanctions” (антироссийскими санкциями) are almost exclusively to blame for the inflation and the increase in food and energy prices.

RenTV, which broadcasts in Russia and CIS nations, defended that only one individual is responsible for the inflation and economic recession: Volodymyr Zelensky<sup>29</sup>.

This fearmongering narrative tries to engage domestic and Russian-speaking audiences based in the Baltic states, stating that every product in the Baltic region will see a significant cost increase shortly.

According to Vzglyad's piece, Lithuanians now visit the grocery store as if it was a museum: only to look at the price tags.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://vz.ru/economy/2022/6/14/1162526.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://ren.tv/news/v-mire/987003-kak-zapad-razrushaet-torgovliu-i-raskruchivaet-prodovolstvennyi-krizis>



Figure 4: Screenshot taken on 14 June 2022 of a Twitter post shared from Vzglyad's twitter account claiming that the global food crisis has transformed Russia into an "island of prosperity".<sup>30</sup>

These sources defend that Russia will not be affected by an economic recession, inflation or food shortage, and, unlike in the rest of the world, prices will decrease<sup>31</sup>.

This narrative is aimed at gaslighting Russian speaking groups, hiding and denying the impacts of the invasion in Russia, while spreading fear among those audiences based outside Russia – especially in Europe.

<sup>30</sup> <https://twitter.com/vzglyad/status/1536601558690975746?s=20&t=PDcL2mnQbYKawTmr5m1CCa>

<sup>31</sup> <https://twitter.com/NickNkvd/status/1536704456728920064>

### 3. Military Movements

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Since the launch of the invasion, CIR has moved from tracking troop movements in Russia and Belarus to coverage of, *inter alia*, attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, weapons and equipment used by Russia, and Russian losses. Ukrainian troop movements are not reported as they are not the aggressor country and highlighting their positions may assist their adversary.

Since 1 June Ukrainian forces have recaptured 20 villages in Kherson Oblast and part of Severodonetsk City.<sup>32</sup>

On 7 June Russian forces continued to make a push towards Sloviansk from Izyum, with Ukraine estimating that 31,360 Russian soldiers have been killed since 24 February when Russia launched its invasion.<sup>33</sup>

Russian forces have continued their approach on Severodonetsk, as all bridges leading out of the city have now been destroyed by Russia.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/9/timeline-week-15-of-russias-war-in-ukraine>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/9/timeline-week-15-of-russias-war-in-ukraine>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/13/ukraine-russian-forces-pound-sieverodonetsk-as-fears-grow-for-stranded-civilians>

Below are some notable examples that were verified and geolocated by CIR's investigators:

- On 13 June, Russian military equipment was destroyed as part of ongoing fights in Severodonetsk.
- On 12 June, Russian military equipment was identified in Izyum.
- On 9 June, Russian military equipment was identified on route to Crimea.
- On 6 June, Russian forces were identified in Severodonetsk.
- On 2 June, Russian forces were identified in Popasna.

### ***Civilian Casualties and Infrastructure Damage***

Attacks on civilians, civilian buildings, and other infrastructure have continued to take place by Russian forces ([please see CIR map](#)).

Since 1 June, Russian forces have continued their attacks on civilian infrastructure.

On 13 June, Ukrainian authorities said that they discovered a new mass grave of civilians near Bucha in the Kyiv region. Seven bodies were recovered so far.

According to the head of the Ukrainian national police, around 1,200 bodies including those who were found in mass graves have yet to be identified.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, reports have suggested that since the onset of the Russian invasion Ukraine has lost a quarter of its arable land. The most significant losses were in the south and east of the country.

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<sup>35</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-111-of-the-invasion>

Below are some notable examples that were verified and geolocated by CIR's investigators:

- On 12 June, a power station was on fire in Berdyansk, in Zaporizhia oblast.
- On 10 June, a destroyed kindergarten was identified in Mariupol.
- On 9 June, Russian shelling destroyed civilian buildings in the city of Kharkiv.
- On 7 June, a bridge was destroyed in Severodonetsk as part of the ongoing battle over the city.
- On 6 June, a school in Lysychans'k was set on fire as a result of Russian shelling in the city.

### ***Russian Military Movements***



*Figure 5: A screenshot taken on 13 June showing a train carrying Russian military equipment; geolocated to 48.362196, 38.464608.*



*Figure 6: A screenshot taken on 12 June, showing an attack on Russian forces; geolocated to 48.7885, 38.5491.*



*Figure 7: A screenshot taken on 12 June, showing Russian military equipment being transported; geolocated to 53.197987, 45.033903.*





Figure 8: A screenshot taken on 11 June, showing Russian medical vehicles in Donetsk; geolocated to 47.991164, 37.805776.

### **Civilian Infrastructure Damage**



Figure 9: A screenshot taken on 14 June, showing a destroyed brick factory as a result of Russian shelling; geolocated to 49.799232, 24.905078.



Figure 10: A screenshot taken on 12 June, showing Vuhlehirska Power Station on fire in Luhansk Oblast; geolocated to 48.463955, 38.207012.



Figure 11: A screenshot taken on 13 June of satellite imagery from 8 June of grave rows in Starokrymske Cemetery; geolocated to 47.138388, 37.485231.



Figure 12: A screenshot taken on 13 June of satellite imagery from 8 May of grave rows in Starokrymske Cemetery; geolocated to 47.138388, 37.485231.



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