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## LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN UKRAINE DURING WARTIME: CHALLENGES, REFORM, AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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We will examine the functioning of Ukraine's law enforcement agencies in the context of full-scale armed conflict and martial law. We will focus on the key challenges faced by law enforcement agencies, including maintaining public order, combating war-related and transnational crimes, protecting

human rights, and supporting institutional resilience. Particular attention is paid to recent legal and institutional reforms aimed at bringing Ukraine's law enforcement practices into line with European standards. We will also analyze the role of international cooperation with the European Union, international law enforcement organizations, and partner states in strengthening Ukraine's law enforcement capabilities during the war. The study concludes that, despite unprecedented challenges, Ukraine's law enforcement agencies are demonstrating adaptability and progress in reform, which is largely supported by international cooperation.

The ongoing armed aggression against Ukraine has radically changed the functioning of state institutions, including law enforcement agencies (Council of the EU, 2024). Under martial law, Ukraine's law enforcement agencies are required not only to perform their traditional functions of maintaining public order and combating crime, but also to respond to new security threats arising from active hostilities, temporary occupation of territories, population displacement, and hybrid warfare (EUAM Ukraine, 2024).

These extraordinary circumstances require a rethinking of operational priorities, legal regulation, institutional coordination, and mechanisms for international cooperation (Council of Europe, 2024). Law enforcement agencies operate in an environment characterized by increased risks, limited resources, and heightened public expectations regarding effectiveness, legitimacy, and accountability (EUAM Ukraine, 2025).

The relevance of the study is determined by the need to analyze how Ukrainian law enforcement agencies are adapting to wartime conditions while implementing long-term reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law and harmonizing national practices with European legal standards (Council of Europe, 2024).

The war has created a wide range of challenges for Ukraine's law enforcement agencies, fundamentally changing both the scope and nature of their activities. One of the most significant challenges is the sharp increase in the number of war-related criminal offenses, including war crimes, crimes against national security, collaborationism, sabotage, illegal arms trafficking, human trafficking, and cybercrime (EUAM Ukraine, 2025). These categories of crimes require specialized investigative approaches, interagency coordination, and, in many cases, international legal assistance (EUAM Ukraine, 2024).

In addition to the increased criminal caseload, law enforcement agencies operate under constant security threats. Police officers, investigators, and prosecutors often work in frontline regions or areas subject to rocket and drone strikes, which directly affects their operational effectiveness and personal safety (EUAM Ukraine, 2025). Infrastructure destruction, temporary

occupation of territories, and mass internal displacement of civilians further complicate the maintenance of public order and access to justice.

A separate and particularly sensitive challenge is the protection of human rights under martial law. Law enforcement agencies must balance urgent security needs with constitutional guarantees and international human rights obligations. Measures such as curfews, checkpoints, restrictions on freedom of movement, preventive detention, and increased surveillance increase the risk of excessive interference with individual rights. Therefore, ensuring the proportionality, legality, and accountability of law enforcement actions becomes critically important (Council of Europe, 2024). In addition, investigative activities are significantly hampered by limited access to crime scenes in temporarily occupied territories. In such cases, law enforcement agencies increasingly rely on remote documentation methods, digital evidence, satellite imagery, open source intelligence (OSINT), and testimony from internally displaced persons (EUAM Ukraine, 2025). These challenges require methodological innovation and continuous professional training (Support in Action, 2024). Despite the extreme conditions of wartime, Ukraine continues to implement systemic reforms of its law enforcement agencies. These reforms are aimed at strengthening institutional resilience, increasing public trust, and ensuring compliance with European legislation (EUAM Ukraine, 2024; Council of Europe, 2024). Importantly, martial law has not halted the reform agenda, but in many respects has accelerated the need for effective and accountable law enforcement mechanisms (EUAM Ukraine, 2025).

Legislative reforms focus on improving criminal and criminal procedure legislation, particularly with regard to the investigation and prosecution of war crimes and crimes against national security (Council of Europe, 2024). Amendments have been made to clarify jurisdiction, expand investigative powers within the law, and improve coordination between law enforcement agencies and the judiciary (EUAM Ukraine, 2024). Anti-corruption reforms remain a key priority, as wartime conditions increase corruption risks in areas such as public procurement, humanitarian aid distribution, and post-war reconstruction efforts (EUAM Ukraine, 2025).

Institutional reforms emphasize professional training, particularly in areas related to international humanitarian law, human rights protection, digital investigations, and crisis management (Support in Action, 2024). Digitalization plays a crucial role in supporting the continuity of law enforcement activities by enabling electronic case management, remote procedural actions, and secure data exchange.

Special attention is also paid to internal accountability mechanisms, including disciplinary procedures, internal audits, and cooperation with oversight bodies. Maintaining transparency and ethical standards in law

enforcement agencies is essential for preserving public trust during a protracted armed conflict (EUAM Ukraine, 2025).

International cooperation is central to Ukraine's law enforcement response to the challenges of wartime. Close cooperation with the European Union, the Council of Europe, Europol, Interpol, and other international partners enables Ukrainian law enforcement agencies to combat transnational crime and strengthen institutional capacity (EUAM Ukraine, 2024).

One of the most important areas of cooperation is the investigation of war crimes and crimes against humanity. International advisory missions and joint investigation teams provide expertise, technical assistance, and best practices in evidence collection, victim protection, and documentation of violations of international humanitarian law (Council of the EU, 2024). Such cooperation strengthens the credibility and effectiveness of national investigations and facilitates future international prosecutions (EUAM Ukraine, 2024). Capacity-building initiatives supported by international partners include training programs, equipment supplies, and advisory support aimed at modernizing law enforcement practices. These initiatives focus on areas such as cybercrime prevention, border security, financial investigations, and critical infrastructure protection (Support in Action, 2024). International cooperation also reinforces Ukraine's strategic goal of European integration (Council of the EU, 2024). The gradual alignment of Ukrainian law enforcement standards with EU norms strengthens mutual trust and operational compatibility, laying the groundwork for deeper institutional integration in the future.

The functioning of Ukraine's law enforcement agencies in wartime is characterized by unprecedented challenges, heightened security risks, and rapid institutional transformation. Wartime conditions have significantly expanded the scope of law enforcement responsibilities while exposing systemic vulnerabilities (EUAM Ukraine, 2025). Despite these constraints, Ukraine's law enforcement agencies continue to perform their core functions and advance reform processes aimed at strengthening the rule of law, protecting human rights, and enhancing institutional accountability. The persistence of reform efforts under martial law demonstrates a strong commitment to democratic values and European legal standards.

International cooperation remains crucial in supporting the effectiveness of Ukraine's law enforcement agencies. Continued support from international partners not only enhances operational capacity but also contributes to long-term institutional development and post-conflict recovery. The Ukrainian experience provides valuable insights into the resilience of law enforcement systems operating in armed conflict and can serve as a reference point for other states facing similar challenges.

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