



Forum: First Committee of the General Assembly (Disarmament and International Security)

Question of:

Enforcing the ban of bio-chemical weapons in regard to the Russo- Ukrainian war.

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I. Description of the Issue

Bio-chemical weapons are weapons which deliberately inflict death and harm on humans by releasing either dangerous toxins or chemicals. They belong to the weapon class of unconventional weapons and are prohibited through many conventions, such as the *Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)* or the *Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)*. In the recent Russo-Ukrainian War, allegations by the Russian Federation have been made that Ukraine, together with the United States (US), has been developing biological weapons in 30 secret laboratories across the war-torn country. The US and Ukraine have denied all accusations, and the Ukraine has publicly acknowledged the existence of health laboratories focused on mitigating the threats posed by dangerous pathogens which can cause disease. These laboratories receive funding from the *European Union (EU)*, *World Health Organisation (WHO)*, and the US under their "*Biological Threat Reduction Program*" and are locally managed by the *Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (PHC)*. A rough overview of all public health laboratories in the Ukraine can be seen in *Figure 1* of this research report. Russia further claims that they have seized documents on the day of the invasion of Ukraine proving that the Ukrainian government had destroyed evidence regarding their previous claims. As some of the public health laboratories work with high-threat pathogens which could spread dangerous diseases in case the laboratories were attacked by Russian forces, the Ukraine had ordered the destruction of such pathogens to reduce the risk of a potential outbreak, following a recommendation to do so by the *WHO*. There is no credible evidence backing Russia's claims that the Ukrainian government is developing biological weapons to use in the Russo-Ukrainian War, however, as most countries possess the technical capabilities to develop such weapons, enforcing the ban of bio-chemical weapons is of the utmost importance.

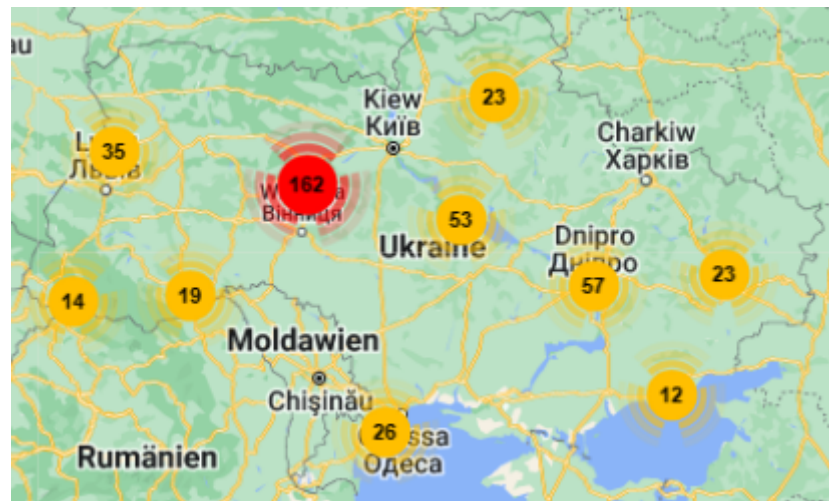


Figure 1: <https://labs.phc.org.ua/>

Rough overview of all public health laboratories in Ukraine.

II. Definition of Key Terms

- **Biological weapons:** Biological weapons are weapons which release or produce dangerous pathogens or toxic substances aimed to deliberately cause death and disease in lifeforms such as humans. Biological weapons can often inflict epidemics and belong to the weapon class of unconventional weapons, also referred to as weapons of mass destruction. Biological weapons are often contained in munitions such as bombs or artillery shells.
- **Chemical weapons:** Chemical weapons are chemicals designed to inflict death or harm on humans. Just like biological weapons, chemical weapons belong to the weapon class of unconventional weapons and are mostly used in munitions like bombs or artillery shells. Any item, when connected to the development of chemical weapons, is regarded as a chemical weapon itself.
- **Pathogen:** A Pathogen is a bacterium, virus or other microorganism that can cause disease.
- **Unconventional weapon / weapon of mass destruction:** Unconventional weapons, also referred to as weapons of mass destruction, are a class of weapons capable of destroying widespread areas and eliminating a large number of people. Biological, chemical, nuclear and radiological weapons belong to the unconventional weapons.



- **World Health Organization (WHO):** The World Health Organization, short WHO, is a United Nations organization which works worldwide to promote the health of all people. The WHO has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland and was founded in 1948.
- **Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (PHC):** The PHC is a department of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health. It manages programs and projects as well as legislative affairs and initiatives of the Ministry of Health and is responsible for the coordination with other executive bodies and ministries within the Ukrainian government.
- **1925 Geneva Protocol:** The Geneva Protocol is a treaty signed in 1925 in reaction to the use of chemical and biological weapons in the First World War and solely prohibits the use of bio- chemical weapons in war.
- **Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction / Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), 1993:** The CWC was signed on the 13th of January 1993 and is a treaty administered by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The treaty, which prohibits the use, development and possession of chemical weapons, can be seen as an improved 1925 Geneva Protocol.
- **Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction / Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), 1972:** The BWC is a United Nations (UN) treaty prohibiting the use, development and destruction of biological weapons. It was signed on the 10th of April 1972 and is effective from March 26th, 1975.

III. Background Information

On the 24th of February 2022, eight years after illegally annexing the Crimea and officially starting the Russo-Ukrainian War, Russia began its invasion of Ukraine. The Russian advance was notably slow, as the Ukrainians managed to push back the overwhelming Russian military force using Guerrilla tactics. This was especially possible due to support from the *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)* and its member states, which provided the



Ukrainian military with Western military equipment, trained Ukrainian forces, and sanctioned the Russian economy. This raised major tensions not only between Russia and *NATO*, but also on a global level. A significant increase in gas prices took place after Russia, which provides about 45% of all gas used in Europe, decided to limit the gas flow to European countries sanctioning their economy. Not wanting to be blackmailed, a majority of European countries decided to completely resort to using Russian gas, and soon, in September 2022, the Nord Stream pipelines were sabotaged, again raising the international tensions at hand. Moreover, the Ukraine War caused an extensive interruption of the global food supply chains, as most of the world's wheat and sunflower oil is produced in the Ukraine. This led to food prices reaching a record high, causing inflation in many countries. With more than 16 million Ukrainians needing to flee their homes due to the fights in the country, as can be seen in *Figure 2*, the conflict furthermore led to a surge in international displacement, raising the number of displaced people by nearly 12 million (*Figure 3*). As of now, there has been no recorded use of bio-chemical weapons in Ukraine, neither by Russia nor Ukraine, and Russia's claims of the development of biological weapons in the area has not been credibly proved. The only evidence of these allegations has been an unverified document brought forward by Russian authorities, which was supposedly seized on the first day of the Russian invasion. Most recently, chemical weapons were used multiple times in the Syrian civil war, with a devastating effect on both civilians and combatants. While the fighting in Syria has essentially elapsed, the situation is ongoing and remains a crisis.

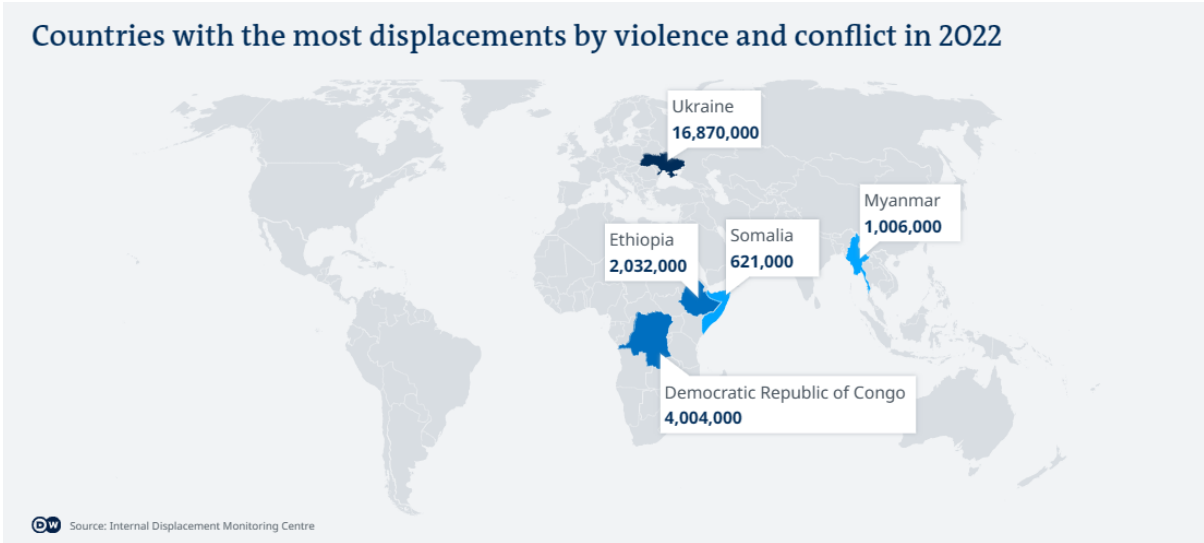


Figure 2:

<https://www.dw.com/en/number-of-internally-displaced-hits-record-amid-war-floods/a-65583938#:~:text=A%20record%2060.9%20million%20new%20displacements%20were%20registered,chief%20Alexandra%20Bilak%20told%20the%20AFP%20news%20agency>

Number of internally displaced people hits record in 2022

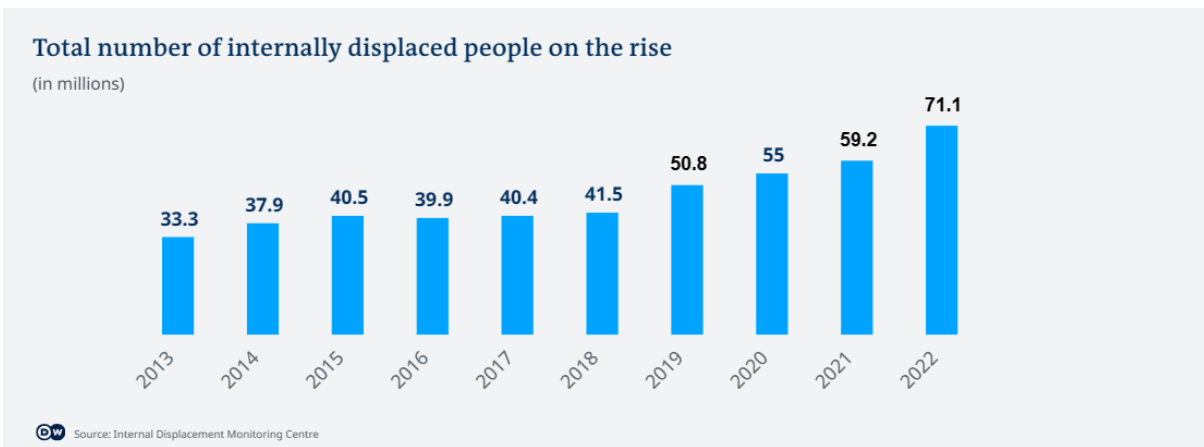


Figure 3:

<https://www.dw.com/en/number-of-internally-displaced-hits-record-amid-war-floods/a-65583938#:~:text=A%20record%2060.9%20million%20new%20displacements%20were%20registered,chief%20Alexandra%20Bilak%20told%20the%20AFP%20news%20agency>

Number of internally displaced people hits record in 2022



IV. Historical Background

Even though particularly used in modern warfare, the first rudimentary use of biological warfare can be traced back to around 1500 to 1200 BC, when the corpses of people with dangerous diseases were transported into enemy lands, causing an outbreak amongst the enemy's troops. Following the first deployment of bio-chemical weapons in modern warfare in the First World War, 38 states signed the *Geneva Protocol* in 1925, which prohibited the use of biological and chemical weapons. Despite these efforts, bio-chemical weapons were still used in many armed conflicts after the signing of the *Geneva Protocol*, most famously in the Vietnam War, as states often violated or just did not ratify the treaty. In 1972, the *Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)* was signed. The *BWC* supplemented the *Geneva Protocol*, as it did not only ban the use, but also the possession and the destruction of biological weapons. 25 years later, in 1997, the same steps were then taken for chemical weapons, when the *Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)* came into force after being signed four years prior in 1993.

On the 20th of February 2014, Russia began its illegal invasion of Crimea, starting the Russo-Ukrainian War. 7 days later, on February 27th 2014, Russian troops captured strategic sites across the peninsula, annexing it. Russia then held a referendum on the status of Crimea on the 16th of March, before declaring Crimea's independence from Ukraine a day later. Both the referendum as well as Crimea's independence were internationally not recognised. On the 24th of February 2022, Russia then invaded the rest of Ukraine, facing heavy resistance from Ukrainian armed forces (see *Figure 4* for the military situation in Ukraine as of late May 2023).



Figure 4:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_invasion_of_Ukraine#/media/File:2022_Russian_invasion_of_Ukraine.svg

Russian invasion of Ukraine, military situation as of 29th May 2023

V. Major Countries and Organizations involved

- **Ukraine:** As the issue is regarding the Russo-Ukrainian War and Ukraine is subject of Russia's allegations, it is one of the major parties in this issue.
- **Russia:** As the aggressor in the Russo-Ukrainian War and main party accusing the United States and Ukraine, Russia is one of the main parties involved.
- **United States of America:** The United States is subject to Russia's accusations and is funding public health laboratories in Ukraine under their "Biological Threat Reduction Program".
- **European Union and its member states:** The European Union and its member states are also funding public health laboratories in Ukraine, so they might also have a stake in the issue.



- **World Health Organization:** The WHO is also financially contributing to the efforts of public health laboratories in Ukraine.
- **China:** China has repeated the accusations made by Russia regarding the development of bio- chemical weapons in Ukraine.
- **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and its member states:** NATO and its member states have supported Ukraine in the Russo-Ukrainian War by equipping the Ukrainian military with Western military equipment, training Ukrainian forces, and sanctioning the Russian economy.

VI. Timeline of Events

Date	Event	Description
In 1899	Hague Declaration of 1899	Banned the use of poisoned bullets.
In 1925	Geneva Protocol	Banned the use of biological and chemical weapons.
In 1972	Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)	Banned the development, possession and use of biological weapons. It is legally binding.
24th August 1991	Ukrainian declaration of independence	Ukraine declares and gains independence from the Soviet Union.
31st December 1991	Dissolution of the Soviet Union	Following the independence of many Soviet states, the USSR officially dissolved.



1997	Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)	Banned the development, possession and use of chemical weapons. Is legally binding.
February 2014 to March 2014	Russian invasion of Crimea; start of Russo- Ukrainian War	Russia invades Crimea and annexes it. The day of the Russian invasion of Crimea marks the official beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian War.
In 2011	Start of COVID-19 pandemic	After an outbreak in Wuhan, China, the COVID- 19 virus spreads around the globe, starting a pandemic. COVID-19 shows the threat dangerous pathogens, which could be used in biological weapons, pose to humans.
In 2020	Start of COVID-19 pandemic	After an outbreak in Wuhan, China, the COVID- 19 virus spreads around the globe, starting a pandemic. COVID-19 shows the threat dangerous pathogens, which could be used in biological weapons, pose to humans.
24th February 2022	Russian invasion of Ukraine	Russia invades the rest of Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is still ongoing.



VII. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Due to the issue of bio-chemical weapons in the Russo-Ukrainian war being fairly new and the fact that the *UN* has neither evidence of Russia's claims of biological weapons in Ukraine nor the technical or operational capacities to investigate them, there have been no previous attempts to solve the issue. There have however been attempts to solve the issue of biological and chemical weapons in general. The first attempt to restrict bio-chemical weapons in modern times was in 1899, when multiple states decided to ban the use of poisoned bullets in war under the *Hague Declaration of 1899*. After the First World War, the *Geneva Protocol* was then signed, further prohibiting the use of all biochemical weapons. While both of these treaties were important steps in the right direction, they only prohibited the use of said weapons and not all nations ratified them or adhered to the agreements, limiting their effectiveness. The *Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)* and *Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)* however eliminated the weaknesses of their predecessors by prohibiting not only the use but also the possession and development of bio-chemical weapons.

Moreover, these conventions are legally binding and violations against them can therefore be punished, contributing to their effectiveness. As of September 2021, the *BWC* has been ratified by 183 nations, while the *CWC* has been ratified by 193 states.

VIII. Possible Solutions

Possible solutions to enforce the ban of bio-chemical weapons in regard to the Russo-Ukrainian War could include:

- regular reports on the potential use of bio-chemical weapons in the Russo-Ukrainian War by Ukraine and Russia,
- establishment of a committee responsible of verifying and monitoring said reports,
- advocating for the imposition of sanctions against states in violation of conventions and similar measures banning bio-chemical weapons.



IX. How to Prepare as a Delegate

In order to be prepared for your upcoming Model United Nations conference here in Hamburg, you should first gain a basic overview over your issues. The easiest way to do this is to read the research report at hand. You should then inform yourself more precisely about your country's role in the issue, its alliances, its possible adversaries, the measures it has already taken. For this you have to do your own research, but taking a look at the useful links, UN resolutions and sources in the research report is often very helpful! Remember, **you are obligated to write at least one draft resolution and a minimum of two position papers, which have to be handed in by the 13th of September 2023** (otherwise they won't be corrected by us, your Chairs)! It is however recommended you write a position paper on each of your issues, as position papers are very helpful when it comes to knowing your country's stance during lobbying and the debates. By then you should already have turned in your documents, any documents turned in later than that will not be included in the decision-making when it comes to awards and we might implement further restrictions if necessary, so please hand them in in time. If you prepare thoroughly and properly, we will have a very fun time together here in Hamburg!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me!

X. UN Resolutions and documents

- Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) / Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (1972): <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/BWC-text-English-1.pdf>
- Resolution reaffirming the BWC (2 Nov. 1999): Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction : (un.org)
- Security Council Resolution 1540 (28 Apr. 2004): Resolution 1540 (2004) / (un.org)



- Resolution reaffirming the CWC (10 Dec. 2004): Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction : (un.org)
- General Assembly resolutions concerning the 1925 Geneva Protocol: 1925 Geneva Protocol – UNODA
- Resolution by the General Assembly concerning general and complete disarmament (12 Jan. 2001): N0056137.pdf (un.org)

XI. Useful links

- Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) / officially: Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction
(1993):https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/CWC/CWC_en.pdf
- UN website of Biological Weapons Convention (BWC):
<https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons/>
- Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW):
<https://www.opcw.org/>
- What is a chemical weapon? <https://www.opcw.org/our-work/what-chemical-weapon>
- What is a chemical weapon? Video: <https://youtu.be/7Dpxz-YhxAU>
- What is a biological weapon? https://www.who.int/health-topics/biological-weapons/#tab=tab_1
- List of all public health laboratories in Ukraine, including map:
<https://labs.phc.org.ua/>
- List of countries who have or had bio-chemical weapons:
<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/cbwprolif>



XII. Sources

- US statement concerning Russian accusations: <https://www.state.gov/the-kremlins-allegations-of-chemical-and-biological-weapons-laboratories-in-ukraine/>
- Fact-check of Russian claims by BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/60711705>
- History and types of chemical weapons:
<https://www.britannica.com/technology/chemical-weapon>
- Report on Ukrainian refugees due to Russo-Ukrainian War by Reuters:
<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/number-refugees-fleeing-ukraine-war-exceeds-5-million-un-agency-2022-04-20/>
- Timeline of Russo-Ukrainian War:
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/ukraine-war-timeline-one-year/#:~:text=Russia%27s%20invasion%20of%20Ukraine%3A%201-year%20timeline%201%20February,2022%20...%208%20September%202022%20...%20Weitere%20Elemente>
- Global number of displaced people: <https://www.dw.com/en/number-of-internally-displaced-hits-record-amid-war-floods/a-65583938#:~:text=A%20record%2060.9%20million%20new%20displacements%20w>
[ere%20registered,chief%20Alexandra%20Bilak%20told%20the%20AFP%20news%20agency.](https://www.dw.com/en/number-of-internally-displaced-hits-record-amid-war-floods/a-65583938#:~:text=A%20record%2060.9%20million%20new%20displacements%20w)
- Report by Deutsche Welle on biological and chemical weapons in general and in Ukraine: <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-infowar-of-chemical-and-biological-weapons/a-61097325>
- Report by The Guardian on Russia's claims:
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/russia-biological-weapon-claim-us-un-ukraine-bio-labs-explainer>
- Structure of Ukrainian ministry of health: <https://en.moz.gov.ua/structural-units>
- History of Russian invasion of Crimea: <https://www.history.co.uk/articles/putin-s-gamble-russia-s-2014-invasion-of-crimea>
- UN report on bio-chemical weapons in Ukraine: UN still sees no sign of biological weapons in Ukraine | UN News



- Facts and timeline about the Syrian civil war: Syrian Civil War | Facts & Timeline | Britannica
- Timeline of Syrian chemical weapons activity, 2012-2022:
<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Timeline-of-Syrian-Chemical-Weapons-Activity>