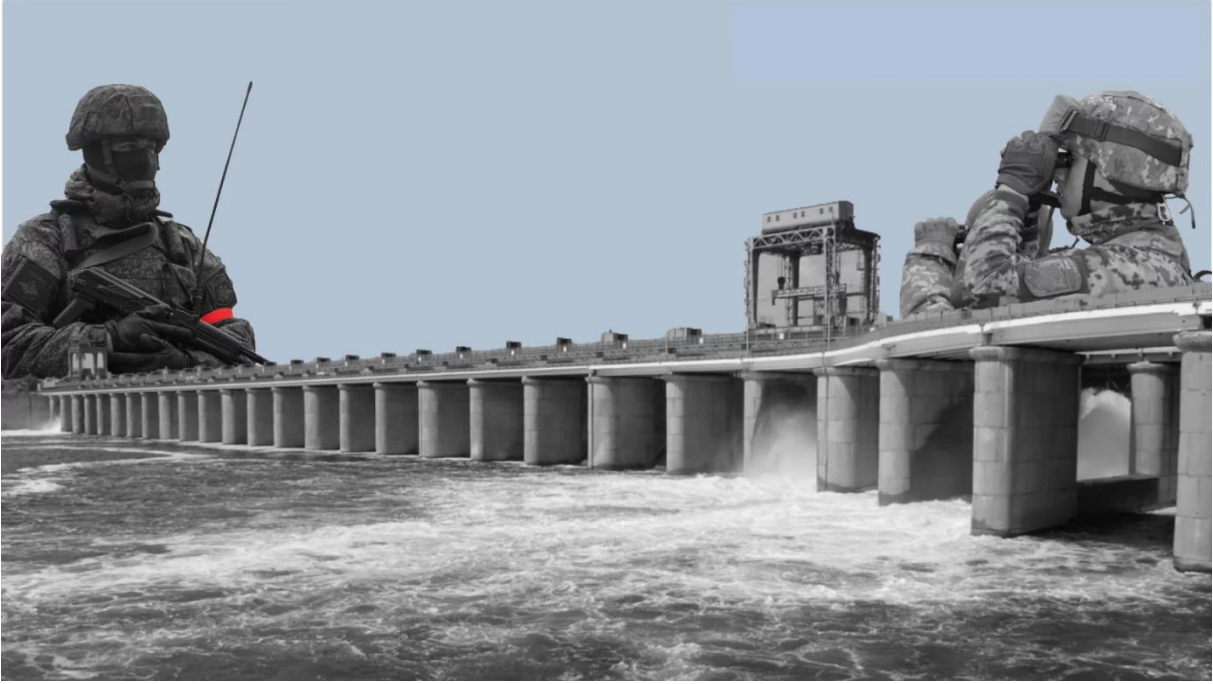


HPA HYDROPOLITCS ACADEMY



Blowing-up a dam or destroying water infrastructure are war crimes.

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The collapse of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam and emptying of its reservoir on the Dnieper River added to the misery the region has suffered for more than a year from artillery and missile attacks.

With humanitarian and ecological disasters still unfolding, it's already clear that tens of thousands of people have been deprived of drinking water, many are homeless, crops are ruined, land mines have been displaced, and the stage is set for long-term electricity shortages.

Damage to Ukraine's Nova Kakhovka dam

1 June 2023 2 June 2023



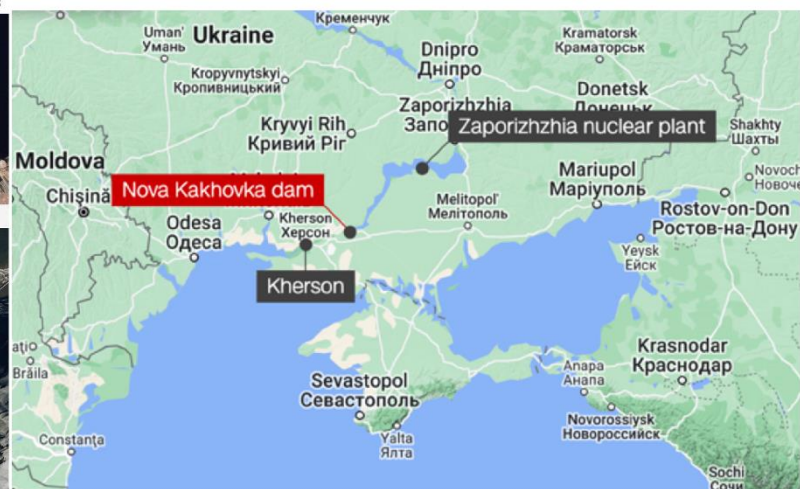
Satellite images show damage to roadway

6 June 2023



Latest images show breach of the dam

Source: Planet Labs



The first report of casualties from the disaster emerged, with a mayor reporting three dead. At least 4,000 people have been evacuated from both the Russian and Ukrainian-controlled sides of the river, officials said, with the true scale of the disaster yet to emerge in an affected area that was home to more than 60,000 people. Russia-appointed authorities in the occupied parts of the Kherson region reported 15,000 flooded homes.

The high water could wash away this season's crops, while the depleted Kakhovka reservoir would deny adequate irrigation for years. The reservoir's loss also complicates any efforts to rebuild and restart the destroyed hydroelectric power station and ensure cooling water for any future attempts to restart the shut-down Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.



Kherson after collapse of Kakhovka Dam



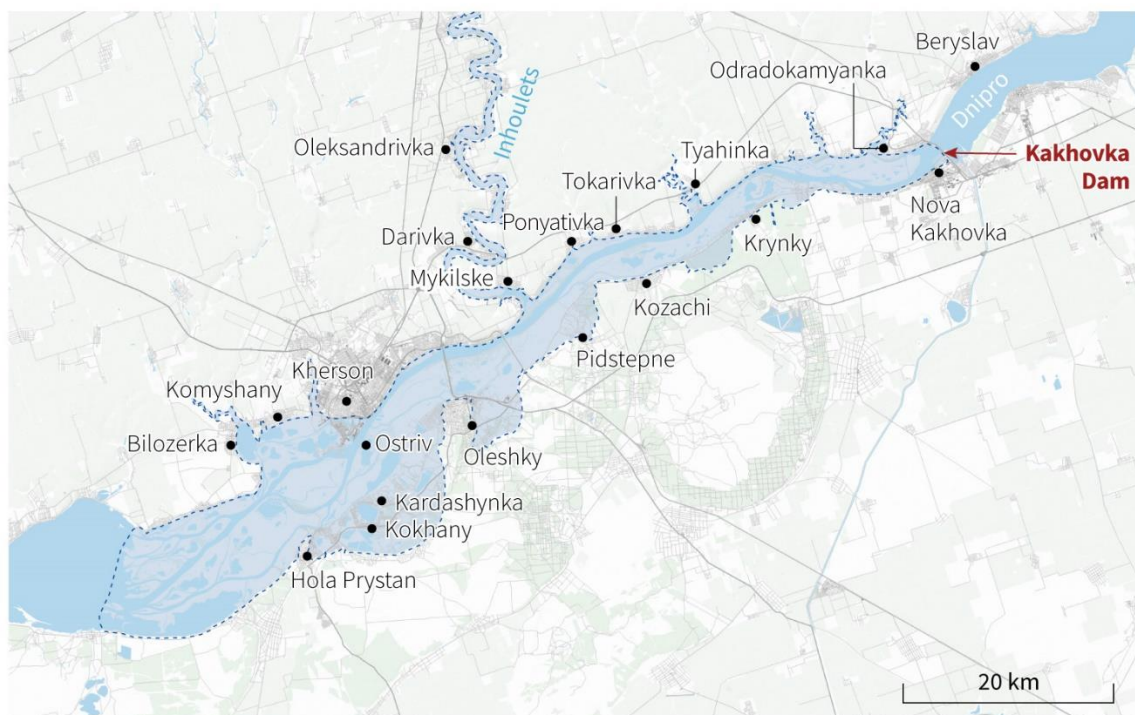
Is it a war crime ?

Blowing up a dam or intentionally destroying water infrastructure can be considered war crimes under certain circumstances. War crimes are acts that violate international humanitarian law and are prohibited during armed conflicts. The deliberate destruction of water infrastructure can have severe humanitarian consequences and may be deemed unlawful for several reasons.

First of all, damaging water infrastructure can directly impact civilian populations by depriving them of clean water, electricity, irrigation, and other essential services. This action can cause widespread suffering and endanger the lives and well-being of civilians who depend on those resources.

Ukraine dam breach: dozens of villages flooded

Thousands flee as Russians and Ukrainians blame each other for the destruction of Kakhovka dam on June 6



■ Waterways before the destruction of the Kakhovka dam
■ Flooded area after the dam breach, as of June 7
■ Assessed Russian controlled zones, as of June 7, 2023 at 1900 GMT
Map data: Humdata/OSM
Source: Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project



Destroying a dam or water infrastructure can cause extensive and long-lasting damage to the environment, affecting not only the immediate area but also downstream regions. The harm inflicted may outweigh any military advantage gained, making the destruction disproportionate and therefore prohibited.

Damaging water infrastructure can lead to severe environmental consequences, such as flooding, destruction of ecosystems, contamination of water sources, and loss of biodiversity. These effects can persist long after the conflict ends, affecting the livelihoods and well-being

of local communities. The long-term environmental consequences can be devastating and affect the well-being of both humans and the ecosystem.



Violation of international conventions

There are international agreements and conventions in place to protect civilian objects, including water infrastructure, during armed conflicts. Dams and hydraulic structures are considered civilian objects, and their intentional destruction would violate these legal frameworks. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols specifically prohibit the targeting of civilian objects, including dams and other water-related facilities, unless they are being used for military purposes.

Intentionally destroying water infrastructure undermines the basic human right to access clean water, which is crucial for maintaining public health and preventing the spread of waterborne diseases. Targeting such infrastructure can lead to a humanitarian crisis, affecting the most vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and the sick.

It's important to note that the classification of a specific action as a war crime ultimately depends on the circumstances surrounding the conflict and the intent of the individuals involved. International courts and tribunals, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), are responsible for determining and prosecuting individuals accused of war crimes.

Why dams and hydraulic structures shouldn't be a war target

Dams and hydraulic structures should not be targeted during the war due to several important reasons such as the protection of the civilian population, disproportionate harm, humanitarian law and conventions, responsibility to protect public health and the environment

Dams and hydraulic structures often serve as vital sources of water, electricity, and irrigation for civilian populations. Targeting these infrastructures can lead to a significant humanitarian crisis, depriving civilians of essential services necessary for their survival and well-being. Water is a fundamental human need and a basic human right. Deliberate attacks on dams and

hydraulic structures can deprive populations of access to clean water, leading to a potential public health crisis. This further exacerbates the suffering of civilians and undermines their right to life and health.

Conclusions

Infrastructure, including dams and hydraulic structures, is also crucial for post-conflict recovery and rebuilding efforts. Targeting these structures hampers the ability to restore essential services, prolongs the recovery process, and undermines the prospects for peace and stability in the affected region.

Overall, it is important to respect the distinction between military targets and civilian objects and to uphold international humanitarian law to protect civilian populations and preserve critical infrastructure necessary for their well-being.

