

Prepared Statement by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing on Accountability for War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity
Wednesday, September 28, 2022
[VIDEO](#)

Thank you, Chairman Durbin, for holding this important hearing.

Since Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine began in February, we've all been horrified by the reports of war crimes committed by Russian forces. We've heard of mass graves, torture, sexual assault, the bombing of a mall crowded with civilians and even an attack on a maternity hospital.

Ukraine has begun to successfully prosecute some war crimes. I hope many more perpetrators will be brought to justice.

We know from our experience with Nazi war criminals that some offenders will escape immediate prosecution. They may assume false names. They may flee to other countries. Some may even successfully make it to the United States.

When these war criminals get into the United States, they can't be allowed to live freely in our country. We have to have options to exclude, extradite and punish war criminals.

We must enhance our immigration laws and ensure it's as difficult as possible for individuals who engage in human rights violations to enter and remain in the United States.

That's why I and Senator Graham introduced the [Human Rights Violators Act of 2022](#) earlier this year.

The bill would formally authorize ICE's Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Center, which has done great work to ensure that the United States doesn't become a refuge for those who engage in war crimes and human rights violations.

It also updates our immigration laws to include specific grounds of inadmissibility and deportability for persecutors and war criminals, and to better take account of non-state groups that engage in extrajudicial killings.

Since cases against human rights violators are often built on criminal statutes related to fraud, perjury and false statements, it would also increase the statute of limitations to 20 years in cases of fraud, perjury and misrepresentation that involve human rights violators.

Finally, it would give USCIS full access to criminal history records and authorize DHS to assess fees to fund the visa security and national security programs within DHS.

I'm proud of this bill and think it's a step in the right direction to ensure that this country is never a safe haven for war criminals and human rights violators.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on this committee and in the Senate to advance this legislation.

But we also have to have a prosecution option. We can work with Ukraine to send war criminals back for trial where they committed their crimes. But there will be times, perhaps other conflicts, where no other authority will be available to prosecute.

With Senators Durbin, Graham, Leahy, Blunt and Coons, I've introduced the [Justice for Victims of War Crimes Act](#). This bipartisan bill narrowly expands the jurisdiction of the existing war crimes statute. It ensures that we have a prosecution option when foreign war criminals are present in our territory.

This type of jurisdiction already exists for many statutes, including many terrorism statutes. I understand that the Department of Defense would like to see this expansion, because it fulfills our obligations under the Geneva Conventions. It ensures that there is no safe haven for any war criminal.

I hope we'll work together to ensure this fix becomes law.

I thank the witnesses for appearing today, and I look forward to hearing more from you about what our government can do to combat atrocities and punish those who commit them.

