



**ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCES AND
ARBITRARY DETENTIONS
OF ACTIVE CITIZENS
DURING THE FULL-SCALE
ARMED AGGRESSION BY
RUSSIA AGAINST UKRAINE**

(February 2022 – June 2023)

KYIV 2023

Enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens during the full-scale armed aggression by Russia against Ukraine (February 2022 – June 2023) / N. Okhotnikova, O. Hnatiuk, B. Petruniok; ed. O. Sinyuk; Human Rights Centre ZMINA. – Kyiv, 2023. – 106 p.

This report provides data on enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens, including public activists, volunteers, journalists, local government officials and employees, educators, religious figures, cultural figures, as well as relatives of active citizens; these disappearances and arbitrary detentions took place on the territory of nine regions of Ukraine, which were or remain occupied by the Russian Federation after a large-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine since February 24, 2022; also included are cases where people have been released, found dead or remain missing. The data was collected and documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in cooperation with the public organisation «Ukraine 5 AM Coalition». The report is intended for representatives of state authorities, civil society, international and intergovernmental organisations, and journalists.

ZMINA is grateful to Maria Kvitsinska, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), for her assistance in reviewing this report.



The study was prepared with the support of Freedom House. The content and opinions expressed in this report are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Freedom House.

This publication contains naturalistic descriptions of incidents or victims that may shock, appal or dismay some readers.

The statistics given in the text of the report are illustrative and refer only to the evidence documented and interpreted within the scope of the study.

Human Rights Centre ZMINA works in the area of protection of freedom of speech, freedom of movement, combating discrimination, preventing torture and ill-treatment, combating impunity, protecting human rights defenders and civil society activists in the territory of Ukraine, including the occupied Crimea, as well as protecting the rights of people who suffered as a result of armed conflict. The organisation conducts information campaigns and awareness raising programs, monitors and documents cases of human rights violations, prepares researches, analyses, and seeks change through national and international advocacy.

More about Human Rights Centre ZMINA and its activity: zmina.ua zmina.info

For comments and suggestions: info@humanrights.org.ua

(c) Human Rights Centre ZMINA, 2023

CONTENTS

General context and research methodology	4
Summary of the study	12
CHAPTER 1. Enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active civilians: legal qualification	15
CHAPTER 2. The general situation with enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine	30
2.1. Assessment of the number of people who could become victims of enforced disappearances or arbitrary detentions, and the purposes of such violations by representatives of the Russian Federation in the occupied territories	31
2.2. Categories of people who were subjected to enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions	34
Public activists and volunteers	36
Representatives of local self-government bodies	38
Relatives of active citizens	40
Educators	41
Media workers	42
Workers of culture	44
Religious figures	45
Lawyers and advocates	46
2.3. Gender and age structure of victims of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions	47
2.4. Geography of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens	49
2.5. Duration of being incommunicado or detention of active citizens in places of detention	54
2.6. Involvement of occupation units in enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens	55
2.7. Systematic policy of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions	56
2.8. Use of the latest technologies in enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, as well as the use of technologies to investigate such abductions	59
Recommendations	63
Addition. Individual stories of forcibly disappeared and arbitrarily detained activists, as well as those who were found dead after abduction	65

GENERAL CONTEXT AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The full-scale invasion of the armed forces of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, is accompanied by numerous cases of violence against the civilian population of Ukraine. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, as of June 1, 2023, almost 9,000 civilians have died as a result of the war and more than 15,000 have been injured, but the actual figure may be much higher, since UN specialists did not have access to some areas of Ukraine, where active hostilities were taking place¹.

The Russian occupiers attach particular importance to terror against socially and politically active citizens (activists, volunteers, journalists, officials and employees of local self-government, educators, religious figures, cultural figures, as well as their relatives) in the temporarily occupied territories; such terror is accompanied not only by kidnapping, but also by the use of torture and, in some cases, by causing death.

According to various estimates from both international organisations and government agencies, thousands of civilians have been abducted since the beginning of the full-scale invasion².

In May 2023, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine reported that since the beginning of the war, 101,543 facts regarding the disappearance of missing citizens had been registered, most of which were found. As of the beginning of May 2023, 23,760 Ukrainians are considered missing³.

As of June 20, 2023, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine reported that it registered 91,679 war crimes under Art. 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Violation of laws and customs of war)⁴. However, how many of these registered episodes relate specifically to the facts of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of civilians, in particular active citizens, it is impossible to establish, since Article 146-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine “Enforced disappearance” refers to a gen-

1 The UN Human Rights Mission condemns child victims in the war in Ukraine / United Nations. Ukraine, 01.06.2023: <http://surl.li/ijfck>

2 Kryzheva T. Hostages as a method of blackmail and pressure: why it is difficult to free civilians from Russian captivity / Suspilne, January 11, 2023: <https://suspilne.media/356748-zarucniki-akmetod-santazu-j-tisku-comu-skladno-vizvolati-civilnih-z-rosijskogo-polonu/>

3 The count runs into tens of thousands: the Ministry of Internal Affairs named the number of missing Ukrainians / Unian / May 5, 2023: <https://www.unian.ua/society/viyana-v-ukrajini-v-mvs-nazvali-kilkist-zniklih-bezvisti-ukrajinciv-12243663.html>

4 Official website of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine: <https://www.gp.gov.ua/>

eral criminal offence, and cases of enforced disappearances within the framework of an armed conflict fall under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine regarding violations of the laws and customs of war, and statistics on the differentiation of the components of the crime under this article are not conducted.

In general, international organisations, state authorities, and public organisations agree that these figures are minimum estimates. The exact number of detained civilians cannot be determined due to the lack of access to the territories controlled by the Russian Federation. Even after the de-occupation of these territories, the search and identification process will be complicated and lengthy, given the significant number of cases of human rights violations by the occupying forces and the need to apply a systematic approach to gathering evidence in these cases.

An additional problem is that in the Russian Federation there are actually no official mechanisms and channels that would allow relatives of victims of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions to obtain reliable information about the location, reasons for detention, and the state of health of their loved ones. It is also unrealistic to appeal such non-provision, as there are no effective national legal remedies for filing complaints about such human rights violations.

It should be noted that the practice of enforced disappearances in the course of Russian armed aggression is not new. Since 2014, during the occupation of Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the Russian Federation followed a similar practice, trying to suppress resistance and any attempts to protest against the occupation as such and the subsequent actions of the occupying authorities.

Thus, from 2014 until the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, the non-governmental organisation "Crimea SOS" recorded 44 cases of enforced disappearances on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Of these 44 cases: 6 persons were later found dead, 3 were convicted, 1 was extradited, the fate and whereabouts of 15 persons remain unknown, 19 persons were released⁵.

During the first seven years of Russia's occupation of Crimea, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission documented⁶ 43 cases of enforced disappearances in Crimea. Of the 43 victims of enforced disappearance, 11 people (all men) remain missing, and one man is in custody.

In the years 2014–2022, the Russian Federation in Crimea systematically suppressed any kind of resistance to the occupation, persecuted certain ethnic

5 Study "Enforced disappearances in Crimea during the period of occupation by the Russian Federation in 2014–2020" / Crimea SOS/ 2021: https://krymsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/nasylnyczki-znyknennya-v-krymu-za-period-okupacziyi-rf_veb-versiya-ukr.pdf

6 Enforced disappearances in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation: information report / UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, March 31, 2021: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/UKR%20BN%20on%20Enforced%20dis%20Crimea%20.pdf>

and religious communities, which it considered disloyal and dangerous. The Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people were included in the list of extremist organisations of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Jehovah's Witnesses religious organisations recognized as "terrorist" or "extremist" continue to be persecuted. The community of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is under pressure. In addition to the punitive anti-extremist and anti-terrorist legislation, the occupying authorities use accusations under criminal charges with illegal storage of weapons and ammunition, sabotage, espionage, etc. to persecute the disloyal population of Crimea. The actual reason for the detention and fabrication of criminal cases in a number of cases was an open demonstration of disagreement with the occupation (as, for example, in the cases of Volodymyr Balukh and Oleh Prykhodko). A number of pro-Ukrainian activists were forced to leave the peninsula under threat of arrest. In Crimea, independent mass media have been eliminated, and human rights organisations have virtually no access to the territory. Local grassroots initiatives (for example, the Ukrainian Cultural Centre, Crimean Solidarity) are subject to constant pressure, threats, administrative and criminal prosecution.

Disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings of civilians have been taking place on the Crimean peninsula since the beginning of the occupation. The first victim was Reshat Ametov, a Crimean Tatar activist who, on March 3, 2014, went on a single picket against the occupation on Lenin Square in Simferopol. From there, he was kidnapped by three people from the so-called "Crimea self-defence units" (a paramilitary formation organised by agents of the Russian Federation during the occupation), who approached Ametov, took him out of the square, twisted him, put him in a car and drove him in an unknown direction.

On March 15, his body with traces of torture was found in the village of Zemlanyichne of the Biloghir district, 60 km from Simferopol. The man's body bore numerous signs of torture, his head was bound with tape, his eyes were gouged out, and handcuffs were lying next to him. The cause of death was a stab wound to the eye. In September 2019, the National Police of Ukraine and the Prosecutor's Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea announced the suspicion of Ametov's abduction against Yevgeny Skrypnyk (the head of the "Crimean self-defence" group, retired from the Russian armed forces) and two of his subordinates: Oleksandr Rudenko and Oleksandr Bahliuk. All three suspects have been declared internationally wanted⁷.

According to the conclusions of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), enforced disappearances in Crimea were probably committed by: armed groups such as "self-defence of Crimea" and "Cossack groups"; representatives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation;

7 Torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population in the Ukrainian territories that were under Russian occupation (on the example of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson regions): analytical report / B. Petrunyok, O. Hnatyuk, T. Pechonchyk; ZMINA Centre for Human Rights. — Kyiv, 2023. — 64 p.: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/04/torture_ukr_web.pdf

by other bodies, in particular the “Police of Crimea”. Abductors used torture and ill-treatment to force victims to testify against themselves or others, and in retaliation for their political stance or association with political organisations. No one has been prosecuted for these cases of enforced disappearances, nor for the cases of torture and ill-treatment documented by OHCHR⁸.

In the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the forces of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR” were involved in violations of the rights of civilians, including murders, kidnappings, and torture. The situation with respect for human rights here was even worse than in the occupied Crimea, in particular due to the actual absence of any legal regulation. In the so-called “DPR” since 2016, such a type of punishment as “death penalty” has been applied⁹.

As of September 2021, the International Committee of the Red Cross reported 811 missing people in the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions¹⁰.

We assume that as of June 2023, the scale of crimes of enforced disappearances in the occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas may be much wider, as since the beginning of the large-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2022, terror against the Ukrainian civilian population has turned into one of the main tools of warfare.

The purpose of the research is to collect and analyse available information on enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of public activists, volunteers, journalists, representatives of local self-government bodies and other active citizens, as well as the subsequent transfer of this information to international and national legal mechanisms for effective investigation and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The objectives of this study are as follows.

1. Provide legal qualifications for enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, as well as highlight standards for keeping civilians, in particular active citizens, in places of detention.
2. To investigate the trends identified based on the analysis of data on enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active Ukrainian citizens for the period from February 24, 2022 to June 20, 2023.

8 Enforced disappearances in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation / United Nations. Ukraine, 31.03.2021: <http://surl.li/ijfin>

9 The “DPR” group allowed the death penalty, and the “LPR” punishes with life imprisonment / Radio Liberty, 06/28/2016: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27825663.html>

10 More than 800 people are considered missing as a result of the conflict in Donbas – International Committee of the Red Cross / Radio Liberty, September 6, 2021: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-red-cross-znykli-na-donbasi/31446028.html>

3. Provide a summary of cases of unlawful deprivation of liberty of active civilians, including those whose whereabouts remain unknown, those held in places of detention, those found dead, and those released.
4. Formulate recommendations to key stakeholders, including international organisations and national authorities of Ukraine, regarding the steps necessary to release as soon as possible all forcibly disappeared and arbitrarily arrested civilians – active citizens who are held in places of detention at the time of publication of this report.

Time frames and the subject of the study.

The study covers cases of abductions, which could turn out to be both enforced disappearances (in the case when the fate of the person is unknown or the fact of deprivation of liberty is not recognized by the state or groups of people who kidnapped the person), and arbitrary detentions (in the case when the detention is recognized, but for there were no sufficient legal grounds) of active citizens of Ukraine, which occurred during the full-scale armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine from February 24, 2022 to June 20, 2023.

For the purposes of this report, ***enforced disappearances*** are the arrest, detention, abduction or deprivation of liberty in any other form by representatives of the state or persons or groups of persons acting with the permission, support or consent of the state, with subsequent refusal to acknowledge the fact of deprivation of liberty or concealment information about the fate or location of a missing person, as a result of which this person is left without protection of the law. This definition corresponds to a similar definition in the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance¹¹.

Arbitrary detentions are restrictions on freedom that occur outside the framework of state-recognized laws or international standards (according to paragraphs 10–12 and 23 of General Comments No. 35 of the UN Human Rights Committee)¹².

According to the developed methodology, the following groups of persons are included in the category of “***active citizens***”:

- political and public activists (in particular, participants of peaceful protests against the occupation);

11 International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text

12 UN Human Rights Committee / General Comment No. 35: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/244/53/PDF/G1424453.pdf?OpenElement>

- volunteers who provided any type of assistance to the civilian population (in particular, delivered humanitarian goods and evacuated civilians);
- officials, employees of local self-government bodies, including heads, deputy heads and deputies of city and village councils;
- journalists, including editors and owners of mass media at the national and local level;
- cultural figures, including employees of museums, theatres, cultural centres, etc.;
- education figures, in particular directors of educational institutions of all levels, teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature, history, and other subjects;
- figures of religious cults of all confessions who expressed open support for Ukraine;
- lawyers who provided legal assistance to activists or other civilians;
- family members, if they were abducted to put pressure on persons who fall under the concept of “activist”.

The study did not include information on the places of detention of activists, as deep and meaningful research in this regard was carried out by the partner organisation “Media Initiative for Human Rights”¹³.

Research methods. The following sources were used to collect and document data on enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens:

- notices on official pages of state authorities or local governments;
- reporting to the national or regional mass media, if a sufficient amount of information about the case is indicated, or its origin does not cause reasonable doubts;
- publications of victims, witnesses, eyewitnesses of crimes in social networks, if they can be identified as such;
- other publications in social networks (photos, videos), if it is possible to establish their geolocation, localise in time (establish chronology);
- reports from own sources in the occupied territories;

13 Places of detention of civilian hostages. Interactive map / Media initiative for human rights: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?l=52.53574442979586%2C34.844122306505538z=68mid=1JQXOJBFgbBFkQl4ZKeKmeYC7RZoBv44>

- data from other organisations, in particular human rights organisations that document war crimes committed during the Russian armed aggression and/or have hotlines for calls and reports of victims. In the process of data collection, ZMINA interacted with organisation “Ukraine 5 AM Coalition” that work with the problem of enforced disappearances, including the Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR), Crimea-SOS, the Crimean Human Rights Group, and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

With the help of an in-depth survey, 52 testimonies of victims, members of their families and witnesses of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions were collected. Another 100 cases were documented from open sources using the guidelines of the Berkeley Protocol for Investigating Open Digital Data, prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights at UC Berkeley School of Law¹⁴. In total, within the framework of the project, 562 reports were collected from open sources concerning cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions (in particular, testimonies of victims, information about places where enforced disappearances took place, other reports about the circumstances of enforced disappearances).

In addition, the documented facts of abductions are included in the unified electronic database of war crimes documentation of “Ukraine 5 AM Coalition” I-DOC. A number of human rights organisations working together to document war crimes and crimes against humanity have access to this database as a data repository and analytical tool.

After receiving data from open sources about a case of enforced disappearance or arbitrary detention of a person, documentarians recorded the following data: 1) notification of a recorded or probable crime, its place and time; 2) testimony of victims or witnesses of a crime; 3) notification of places, circumstances and persons involved in the arbitrary detention of a person; 4) information on places of temporary detention of forcibly disappeared persons (if such information is available); 5) reports on torture and other ill-treatment in places of temporary detention; 6) information from reports of international human rights organisations on cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions; 7) other information that, in the opinion of the documenter, is related to the facts of the commission of a possible crime (crimes) and may be useful for establishing additional circumstances.

The collected array of data from open sources of information will be an additional argument for the investigation of relevant cases by national and international justice mechanisms and for defending the rights of victims of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions.

14 The document is available at the following link: Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/OHCHR_BerkeleyProtocol.pdf

The main method used during the work on the report was conducting interviews with family members of arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared persons, their acquaintances, as well as potential witnesses using in-depth interview methods based on the provisions and standards of the Istanbul Protocol¹⁵ – provided that the principle of “do no harm” is followed, prioritising the protection of the physical safety of the person and his relatives, as well as the persons who reported the disappearance. Based on the results of the survey, a protocol was drawn up, the form of which was developed by Human Rights Centre ZMINA with the advisory and methodical support of the World Organisation Against Torture (hereinafter – OMCT), and data reported by the person interviewed was entered.

Thus, within the framework of the study, two main types of testimony about cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions were recorded – relevant reports about the facts of abductions in open sources of information and testimonies of victims, their relatives or witnesses of such disappearances, collected by the method of in-depth interviews.

15 The document is available at the link: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2022-06-29/Istanbul-Protocol_Rev2_EN.pdf

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens (including public activists, human rights defenders, volunteers, journalists, representatives of local self-government bodies, local politicians, educators and religious figures) began on the very first day of the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and continued throughout the entire period of occupation.

The policy of suppressing the resistance of the local population in the occupied territories by the representatives of the Russian Federation was primarily aimed at active citizens and was implemented through kidnapping or illegal detention, as well as further detention in places of deprivation of liberty. Such detention also poses a risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Authorities, international and Ukrainian organisations provide different numbers of cases of enforced disappearances, which is explained by limited access to the occupied territories.

ZMINA, within the scope of the research, which lasted from February 2022 to June 2023, collected and recorded from open sources at least 562 cases of abductions of active citizens, including public activists, volunteers, journalists, officials and employees of local self-government, educators, religious figures, activists culture, as well as relatives of active citizens; these disappearances and detentions took place on the territory of 9 regions of Ukraine, which were or remain occupied by the Russian Federation after the large-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine since February 24, 2022; also included are cases where people have been released, found dead or remain missing. At the time of publication of this report, 311 active citizens have not yet been released or their fate is still unknown, 235 have returned home, 16 have been found dead.

Of these, 100 such cases were documented by the organisation in accordance with the standards of the international Berkeley protocol¹⁶. ZMINA also conducted 52 interviews with victims and witnesses of abductions, as well as with relatives of persons still held in places of detention.

Abductions of active citizens in the occupied territories are carried out by representatives of the occupation authorities in order to intimidate the local population, establish control over the territory and suppress any resistance. Such actions can also be caused by an attempt to replenish the exchange fund, including by civilians.

¹⁶ The document is available at the following link: Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/OHCHR_BerkeleyProtocol.pdf

In the total array of cases, ZMINA recorded the most facts of enforced disappearance or arbitrary detention of public activists and volunteers (323 persons). The second largest group subjected to enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention during the large-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine are representatives of local self-government bodies (128 persons). Relatives of active citizens (32 persons) are the third largest group subjected to enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions. They, in turn, can be divided into three categories. The first group consists of family members who lived together with activists, volunteers, educators, etc., and during searches and illegal detentions, the Russian security forces took away the entire family. The second category is relatives who helped the victims in volunteer or other public activities and paid for it with freedom. The third category is relatives who were deliberately abducted in order to put pressure on active citizens and force them to obey the orders of the occupation authorities.

The fourth largest group of active citizens who were most exposed to the risk of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are educators, in particular school principals, educators, teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature, as well as Ukrainian history (30 persons). The next largest group is journalists, editors, and media workers (18 persons).

Another group of victims of enforced disappearances are **cultural figures and employees of cultural institutions** – 10 persons. Next come **religious figures** who have an influence on communities and in certain cases act as informal leaders of communities or provide volunteer assistance to civilians (8 persons). Another category of active citizens exposed to the risk of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are **lawyers and advocates** who provided legal assistance to the population (4 persons).

Victims of abductions were both **men and women, young people, children, the elderly, and those who have chronic diseases**. However, the vast majority of the abducted are men of various ages, from 18 to 70+ years old (451 persons). Every fifth victim of enforced disappearance is a woman (110 persons). One married couple was abducted along with a child, the gender of which has not yet been determined.

The largest number of recorded cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens occurred in **Kherson region** (258 cases). **Zaporizhzhia region** is in second place in terms of the number of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions (110 cases). **Donetsk region** has the third highest number of documented cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions (67 cases in the newly occupied territories of this region). The situation with informing about enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions in **Luhansk region** is even worse (8 cases in the newly occupied territories of this region). Due to its geographical location near the border with the Russian Federation, **Kharkiv region** (60 cases) was also seriously affected by the occupation. **Kyiv region** was also partially occupied, and there

were detentions and abductions of volunteers and representatives of local self-government – at least 33 persons are known. The researchers recorded the fewest violent disappearances of active citizens in **Chernihiv** (10 persons), **Mykolaiv** (8 persons) and **Sumy** (8 persons) regions.

The analysis carried out by Human Rights Centre ZMINA showed that the Russian military and representatives of the occupation so-called administration use the latest technologies for the enforced disappearance of civilians, aimed at collecting information from the mobile phones of civilian residents to obtain data about their disloyalty and participation in volunteer or other activities.

It is also worth noting that the latest technologies can help in the search for persons who have been forcibly abducted or who have disappeared in circumstances that indicate the possibility of illegal detention in places of deprivation of liberty, in such cases: tracking the bank transactions of abducted persons conducted after their enforced disappearance; billing of mobile phones of victims of enforced disappearances; use of video surveillance camera recordings; application of facial recognition programs.

Based on the analysis of the received data, ZMINA developed a number of recommendations for both state authorities and international organisations and institutions.

CHAPTER 1.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND ARBITRARY DETENTIONS OF ACTIVE CIVILIANS: LEGAL QUALIFICATION

Since the subject of this study is the abduction of active citizens, volunteers, journalists, workers in the field of culture and education, as well as representatives of various religious confessions and family members of all the listed categories, this section will deal exclusively with the legal qualification of the abduction of civilians.



In our opinion, even if the Russian Federation provides information that it considers a person to be a prisoner of war, accusing him or her of any actions that may indicate that the person has the status of a combatant according to the criteria provided for by international humanitarian law, as long as there is no corroborated information in relation to a person's direct participation in hostilities, a person is considered a civilian, and therefore one who is covered by the guarantees of protection provided for the civilian population.

Currently, there is some confusion between the concepts that cover the issue of abduction of civilians, so it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the concepts of "enforced disappearances", "arbitrary detentions", as well as distinguish them from the concepts of "missing person" and "person missing due to special circumstances". The term "civilian in captivity" is also used in the media field, but in this study we will avoid using such a concept, because "captive" is a category of international humanitarian law related to the status of "prisoner of war", and by no means civilians.

The war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is an international armed conflict, which extends to the events in Ukraine under the regime of international humanitarian law, the violation of the norms of which, in particular, entails responsibility under international criminal law. According to the national legislation (Part 1 of Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine), the crime of violating the laws and customs of war is cruel treatment of the civilian population and other violations of the laws and customs of war provided for by international treaties¹⁷.

Taking hostages of the civilian population is prohibited in accordance with subparagraph b of paragraph 1 of part 1 of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention for the Protection of the Civilian Population¹⁸.

International humanitarian law regulates the cases in which the detention of civilians is permitted in time of war, but the places where such detainees are held must be subject to minimum standards of detention, which include, inter alia, the right to communicate with the outside world (except when a person is suspected of committing subversive actions – and even then such a ban should be limited in time), regarding the conditions of housing, food, access to medical and legal assistance, as well as the possibility for international organisations, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross, to have unhindered access to detainees and the opportunity to communicate with them in person and without observers.

Subparagraph "a" of Article 3 of the same Geneva Convention also prohibits any violence, torture and killing of civilians. Enforced disappearances committed intentionally as part of a large-scale or systematic attack on the civilian population are

17 Criminal Code of Ukraine: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14>

18 Convention for the Protection of the Civilian Population in Time of War, Geneva, August 12, 1949: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text

a crime against humanity, according to clause “i” of Part 1 of Art. 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹⁹.

Clause “i” of part 2 of this same article defines: “enforced disappearance of persons” means the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by the state or a political organisation or with their permission, under their support or with their tacit consent, with the subsequent refusal to recognize such deprivation of liberty or to inform of the fate or whereabouts of these persons, in order to leave them without legal protection for a long period of time.

The absolute prohibition of enforced disappearances, even during emergency situations, in no circumstances is enshrined in paragraph 13b of General Comment No. 29 of the UN Human Rights Committee.

Although the term “enforced disappearances” is not used in treaties on international humanitarian law, their prohibition derives from many norms of international humanitarian law and is considered a custom of international law²⁰. At the same time, it is necessary to distinguish between the terms “enforced disappearance” and “arbitrary detention”.

According to UN General Assembly Resolution 47/33 of December 18, 1992, “Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance”, enforced disappearance is defined as: [cases in which] people are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived officials of various branches or levels of the government, organised groups or private individuals who act with its direct or indirect support, with its permission or consent, with the subsequent refusal to inform about the fate or whereabouts of such persons or to recognize the deprivation of their liberty, which puts these persons outside the protection of the law. According to Part 1 of Art. 6 of the Declaration, no order or directive of any public, civil, military or other authority can be used as an excuse for enforced disappearance, and any person who receives such order or directive has the right and is not obliged to obey it²¹.

In accordance with the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances (hereinafter referred to as the Convention)²², **enforced disappearance** is the arrest, detention, abduction or deprivation of liberty in any other form by representatives of the state or persons or groups of persons acting with the permission, support or consent of the state, with subsequent refusal to recognize the fact of deprivation of liberty or concealment of information about the

19 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_588#Text

20 Rule 98 Customary International Humanitarian Law, Cambridge University Press, 2005, Volume II, Chapter 32, section K.: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_588#Text

21 Resolution 47/33 of the UN General Assembly of December 18, 1992 "Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance": https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_225#Text

22 International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text

fate or the location of the missing person, as a result of which this person was left without the protection of the law.

In accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution No. 60/148 of February 21, 2006, long-term incommunicado detention²³ (in the original language – incommunicado detention) can lead to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and can itself be a form of such treatment. In turn, **arbitrary detention**, according to para. 10 – 12 and 23 of General Comments No. 35 of the UN Human Rights Committee, there is a restriction of freedom that occurs outside the framework of state-recognized laws or international standards. “Arbitrary” detention means inappropriateness, unfairness, lack of predictability and due process of law, as well as lack of reasonableness, necessity and proportionality²⁴.

Arbitrary detention is, in fact, a broader concept that covers the entire range of actions related to the deprivation of a person’s freedom, which has no legal basis, and the subsequent detention of such a person in spontaneous or special places of deprivation of liberty. Actions that constitute arbitrary detention may also be further qualified as enforced disappearance if such detention is not recognized by the party that carried it out.

According to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention²⁵, deprivation of liberty is arbitrary if the case falls under one of these five categories.

Category I: when it is clearly impossible to invoke any legal basis justifying the deprivation of liberty (for example, when the person is detained after serving a sentence or despite an amnesty law applicable to him or her).

Category II: if the deprivation of liberty results from the exercise of the rights or freedoms guaranteed by Articles 7, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, as far as States Parties are concerned, Articles 12, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Category III: when the total or partial non-compliance with international norms regarding the right to a fair trial, set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in relevant international instruments adopted by the respective states, is so serious as to render the deprivation of liberty arbitrary.

Category IV: When asylum seekers, immigrants or refugees are subjected to prolonged administrative detention without administrative or judicial review or protection.

23 In some sources, it is called "incommunicado detention".

24 UN Human Rights Committee / General Comment No. 35: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/244/53/PDF/G1424453.pdf?OpenElement>

25 About arbitrary detention / Working Group on Arbitrary Detention: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-arbitrary-detention>

Category V: when deprivation of liberty is a violation of international law due to discrimination based on: birth; national, ethnic or social origin; languages; religions; economic condition; political or other position; gender; sexual orientation; or disability or other status, and which aims at or may lead to the disregard of equal human rights.

Since Ukrainian legislation does not provide for a separate category of persons affected by enforced disappearances, it is worth considering two categories to which such victims may belong. In national legislation, there are also the statuses of “**missing person**” and “**person missing in special circumstances**”, which must be distinguished. According to Part 1 of Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Status of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances”²⁶:

a missing person – a natural person about whom there is no information about his [her] whereabouts at the time the applicant submits an application for his search;

a person missing in special circumstances – a person who went missing in connection with an armed conflict, military operations, temporary occupation of a part of the territory of Ukraine, natural or technogenic emergencies.

The second category most fully reflects the characteristics of a civilian victim of enforced disappearance or arbitrary detention within the framework of an armed conflict.

According to Art. 4 of the Law, a person acquires the status of missing in special circumstances from the moment the information about him [her], contained in the statement about the fact of disappearance, is entered into **the Unified Register of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances**. A foreigner or a stateless person who has disappeared on the territory of Ukraine acquires the legal status of a person who has disappeared in special circumstances, if such a person was on the territory of Ukraine on legal grounds. An application to search for a missing person in special circumstances may be submitted by a relative of such a person, a representative of a military formation, a state authority, a local self-government body, a public association, or any other person who has become aware of the disappearance.

26 The Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On the Legal Status of Missing Persons" and other legislative acts of Ukraine on improving the legal regulation of social relations related to the acquisition of the status of persons missing in special circumstances" dated April 14, 2022. No. 2191-IX [1] amended the Law of Ukraine "On the Legal Status of Missing Persons" dated July 12, 2018 No. 2505-VIII.

International and regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights, as well as monitoring missions and commissions, to which information can be provided about the fact of enforced disappearance or arbitrary detention of civilians

■ International Criminal Court (ICC)

The International Criminal Court can consider cases regarding bringing individuals to criminal responsibility for committing the following crimes: genocide (actions aimed at the destruction of a certain group based on national, religious, ethnic or racial characteristics); crimes against humanity (which, in accordance with Article 7 of the Rome Statute, include **enforced disappearances**); war crimes (a significant violation of the laws and customs of war); the crime of aggression (planning, preparation, initiation or execution of an act of aggression, i.e. the use of armed force by a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another state).

The jurisdiction of the ICC extends to states that have ratified the Rome Statute or recognized the jurisdiction of this court. Ukraine submitted two declarations regarding the recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (regarding alleged crimes committed on the territory of Ukraine from November 21, 2013 to February 22, 2014, as well as regarding the extension of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court for an indefinite period, in relation to further events related to Russia's armed aggression against of Ukraine). Despite the fact that Russia has not ratified the Rome Statute, its representatives can be prosecuted, because the jurisdiction of the ICC extends to the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine, including the temporarily occupied territories.

In addition, victims of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions have the opportunity to submit an individual application to the Victims' Participation and Compensation Section of the ICC, setting out the facts about the violation and the consequences it led to.

■ UN Working Group against Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances

One of the main tasks of the Group is to assist families in determining the fate or whereabouts of their family members who have been reported missing. In this humanitarian aspect, the Working Group serves as a channel of communication between family members of victims of enforced disappearance and other sources reporting disappearances and concerned governments.

To achieve this, the Group: receives, reviews and transmits to governments reports of enforced disappearances submitted by relatives of disappeared persons or human rights organisations acting on their behalf; requests governments to investigate and report the results to the Working Group; requests changes and additions to information received in response to its requests on a periodic basis; performs a preventive role, helping states to overcome obstacles to the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. This is done both during country visits and through the provision of consulting services upon request²⁷.

The Working Group also engages with regional human rights mechanisms to jointly strengthen regional and national policy and institutional frameworks to combat enforced and involuntary disappearances and to expand support for families and their relatives.

The Working Group cooperates with regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights, as well as with international mechanisms, such as fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry in the field of UN human rights, as well as with the International Criminal Court. Experts of the working group also interact directly with national mechanisms that investigate cases of enforced disappearances and/or search for victims²⁸.

■ UN Committee on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

The powers of the Committee include: considering the reports of the participating states on the measures adopted by them to fulfil their obligations under the Convention; sending requests to the states to adopt urgent measures, in particular, temporary measures for the search and protection of missing persons; receiving and considering reports from persons who claim that they are victims of a violation of the provisions of the Convention by a participating state; receiving and considering notifications in which one state party reports a violation of the obligations of another state party in accordance with the Convention; visits to any participating state after consultation with the relevant state, in case of receiving information indicating that this state allows serious violations of the provisions of the Convention.

The Committee mandate overlaps to some extent with that of the Working Group, but the key difference is that the Committee can only intervene in situations involving States that have ratified the Convention, while the Working Group can consider situations in all countries. In addition, the Committee can consider only cases of

27 Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances / United Nations Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances>

28 About enforced disappearance / Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances / United Nations Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances/about-enforced-disappearance>

disappearances that occurred after the entry into force of the Convention on December 23, 2010, and the Working Group can also consider cases that occurred earlier²⁹.

Since the Russian Federation has not ratified the Convention, the Committee can consider only cases of alleged enforced or involuntary disappearances that were carried out with the participation of the signatory state, i.e. Ukraine.

■ UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

The Working Group has a mandate to investigate cases of deprivation of liberty imposed arbitrarily or contrary to international standards set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or an international legal instrument adopted by the relevant states.

The Working Group investigates alleged cases of arbitrary detention by sending urgent appeals and notices to the governments of the countries concerned to obtain an explanation and/or bring the cases to their attention³⁰. The Working Group also examines individual complaints under its normal reporting procedure, leading to findings of arbitrariness of detention. In addition, the Working Group visits countries to assess the situation with deprivation of liberty in the country³¹.

■ European Court of Human Rights

In a certain way, the abduction of active civil citizens falls under the scope of the European Convention and, accordingly, may become the subject of consideration by the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter referred to as the ECHR).

In particular, the abduction of Ukrainian citizens in the newly occupied territories and their further deprivation of liberty and detention, as well as their transfer to places of deprivation of liberty in the occupied territories, as well as in Russia, may consider as:

- violation of Article 2 (violation of the right to life, if the person is later found dead);
- violation of Article 3 (violation of the right to the absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment – can be applied both in the case of physical or psychological violence against the abducted, and in the case of poor conditions of detention,

29 About enforced disappearance / Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances / United Nations Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances/about-enforced-disappearance>

30 About the mandate / Working Group on Arbitrary Detention / United Nations Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-arbitrary-detention>

31 Complaints and urgent appeals / Working Group on Arbitrary Detention / United Nations Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-arbitrary-detention/complaints-and-urgent-appeals>

as well as applicants can be relatives of the disappeared, if they do not have information about the fate of a loved one);

- violation of Article 5 (violation of the right to freedom, which includes both the lack of legal grounds for the detention of civilians, as well as the lack of a proper procedure for reviewing the grounds for the continuation of such detention and failure to inform the persons themselves and their relatives about the legal status of the detained person, etc.);
- violation of Article 6 (if an active citizen was arbitrarily detained and later criminal justice procedures were applied to the person, such as the raising of suspicion, accusation, submission to court of materials regarding the accusation of a person for committing a criminal act and violation of procedural rights and guarantees for such a person);
- violation of Article 8 of the Convention (can be applied in almost every case of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, because the right to private and family life, as well as the right to protection of correspondence and privacy are often violated by representatives of the occupation authorities, who forcibly review the contents of mobile phones, confiscate them, and also destroy the normal life of families who, after the abduction of a loved one, are forced to suffer without realising whether their relative is alive, and in the event that there is information about the person's whereabouts, they are unable to gain access to communication with parents and children, spouses, partners and other relatives).

In addition, the Court is considering several interstate statements of Ukraine against Russia regarding the events related to the occupation of Crimea, actions in the East of Ukraine, the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 (submitted together with the government of the Netherlands), as well as events that took place on the territory of Ukraine after the full-scale invasion.

However, it should be noted that on March 15, 2022, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution concluding that Russia should be expelled from the Council of Europe due to its aggression in Ukraine³².

On the same day, Russia announced its allegedly independent decision to begin the process of withdrawing from the Council and, as a result, denunciation of the European Convention on Human Rights, which ended on September 16, 2022. On March 22, 2022, the plenary session of the European Court of Human Rights adopted a resolution clarifying that the ECHR has jurisdiction over the Russian Federation in relation to events that took place up to and including September 16, 2022. The review of applications against the Russian Federation, which were already registered by the

32 Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine / Parliamentary Assembly: https://pace.coe.int/en/files/29885/html?__cf_chl_tk=jb_OgTa1GRvwaaR1TKQXAQna4q2wCHH8Fioi_GjkLU-1687109400-0-gaNycGzNDFA

Court, was resumed³³. Even after the final exclusion of the Russian Federation from the jurisdiction of the European Court, the latter still continued to rule on applications against Russia, in particular, the last judgment at the time of this report was delivered on June 8, 2023³⁴.

Thus, active citizens and members of their families who managed to file an application by January 16, 2023 (4 months from the termination of the ECHR's jurisdiction over the cases against the Russian Federation) and who received a notification from the Court regarding the registration of their applications, can expect further consideration of the cases. It should be borne in mind that due to exclusion from the jurisdiction of the Court, Russia is not obliged to execute these judgments, however, they may become legal precedents that will be under the control of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Council of Europe until the time when, for some reason, Russia or its successor submits an application for accession to the Council of Europe and return to the system of human rights protection at the European level.

■ The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Investigation of Events in Ukraine

The commission was established in accordance with the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council dated March 4, 2022. It has the mandate:

1. to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, as well as related crimes in the context of aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation, as well as to establish the facts, circumstances and root causes of any such violations and abuses;
2. collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and abuses, including their gender aspects, and systematically record and preserve all information, documentation and evidence, including interviews, witness statements and forensic materials, in accordance with international law standards, in view of any future legal proceedings;
3. document and verify relevant information and evidence, in particular through on-site interaction, and cooperate with judicial and other institutions, if necessary;
4. to establish, where possible, individuals and legal entities responsible for violations or abuses of human rights or violations of international humanitarian

33 Resolution of the European Court of Human Rights on the consequences of the cessation of membership of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe in light of Article 58 of the European Convention on Human Rights: https://echr.coe.int/Documents/Resolution_ECHR_cessation_membership_Russia_CoE_ENG.pdf

34 European Court of Human Rights / Document Collection: Judgments or Decisions: [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22respondent%22:\[%22RUS%22\],%22documentcollectionid%22:\[%22JUDGMENTS%22,%22DECISIONS%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22respondent%22:[%22RUS%22],%22documentcollectionid%22:[%22JUDGMENTS%22,%22DECISIONS%22]})

law, or other related crimes in Ukraine, in order to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice;

5. make recommendations, in particular on prosecution measures, to end impunity and ensure prosecution, in particular in relevant cases of individual criminal responsibility and access to justice for victims³⁵.

In addition to the general mandate, the Investigative Commission received a special mandate to investigate events in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions at the end of February and in March 2022³⁶.

■ The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

The UN monitoring mission was sent to Ukraine in 2014 and, according to the mandate, its main tasks are as follows:

a) monitors the human rights situation in the country with special attention to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, and submits regular, accurate and public reports to the High Commissioner on the situation in the field of human rights and problems, as well as emerging risks ;

b) makes recommendations to the relevant authorities of Ukraine regarding specific further actions, to the UN and the international community regarding actions to solve problems in the field of human rights, prevent human rights violations and reduce the risks that arise;

c) establishes the facts and circumstances and compares the statements regarding the human rights violations that were committed during the anti-government demonstrations and the use of violence in connection with them, which took place between November 2013 and March 2014;

d) establishes facts and circumstances related to potential violations of human rights that may occur during the operation of the mission³⁷.

Over time, the Mission's mandate has been expanded to include events that occurred after March 2014, with an open end date for information collection.

35 Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on March 4, 2022 / United Nations General Assembly: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/277/46/PDF/G2227746.pdf?OpenElement>

36 Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on May 12, 2022 / United Nations General Assembly: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2FRES%2FS-34%2F1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

37 AGREEMENT between the Government of Ukraine and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the placement of a short-term UN human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_001-14#Text

■ International Commission on Missing Persons

The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) is an intergovernmental organisation that helps locate missing persons. Its founders are the governments of various countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain and others. The organisation works in countries where armed conflicts occur, human rights are violated, natural disasters occur, organised crime operates, migrations take place, etc. The main mission of the organisation is the identification of human remains of those who died and those found in mass graves. Also, the commission can join the search for missing persons if it has an invitation from state institutions. ICMP, like any other international organisation represented in Ukraine, works with various mandates and projects. The commission aims to strengthen the existing mechanisms and improve the efficiency of the work of state bodies that search for missing people³⁸. Relatives of people who have disappeared in special circumstances can enter information about a missing person into the ICMP database and submit a DNA sample for further processing and storage. You can also provide the Commission with information about the place of mass burial.

■ National regulatory framework for accounting of civilians who have become victims of enforced disappearances or arbitrary detentions

On June 17, 2015, Ukraine joined the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and is obliged to comply with its provisions. The ratification of this Convention led to a number of certain changes in the legislation, in particular, to the addition of specialised Article 146-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine “Enforced disappearance”, which defines responsibility for the arrest, detention, abduction or deprivation of liberty of a person in any other form, committed by a representative state, including a foreign state, with subsequent refusal to recognize the fact of such arrest, detention, abduction or deprivation of liberty of a person in any other form or concealment of data about the fate of such a person or place of stay, as well as for issuing an order or order to commit such actions, or the manager’s failure to take measures to stop such actions committed by his subordinates.

Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine regarding violations of the laws and customs of war applies to enforced disappearances committed within the armed conflict.

38 Elina Sulima. Searching for the missing: how to submit DNA samples to the laboratory in The Hague and what the International Commission on Missing Persons does / Human Rights Centre ZMINA, 31.05. 2023: <https://zmina.info/instructions/na-sajti-czentru-onlajn-zapytiv-zapovnyty-formu-pro-nyklu-osobu-mozhe-bud-hto-yak-rodych-tak-i-znajomyj-predstavnyk-vid-mkzb/>

■ National Information Bureau

After the start of the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine, in accordance with the requirements of international humanitarian law, a decision was made in Ukraine on March 17, 2022³⁹ to grant the state enterprise “Ukrainian National Centre for PeaceBuilding” (hereinafter – the state enterprise), which belongs to the sphere of management of the Ministry of issues of reintegration of temporarily occupied territories, functions of the National Information Bureau (NIB) in accordance with the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949. The NIB acts in accordance with international humanitarian law, in particular Art. 122 of the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War (III) and Art. 136 of the Geneva Convention on the Protection of the Civilian Population in Time of War (IV). The key purpose of the activity of this body is to collect – by all possible means – and generalise data on prisoners of war, dead, missing, illegally detained by the occupiers, including – and from among the civilian population on both sides of hostilities⁴⁰. NIB, according to the mandate, is the body responsible for interaction and regular exchange of information with the International Committee of the Red Cross, in particular on issues related to civilians, regarding whom there is information that they may have become victims of enforced disappearances or arbitrary detentions.

■ Commissioner for issues of missing persons in special circumstances

On May 20, 2022, at its meeting, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine appointed Oleh Kotenko as the Commissioner for Issues of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances (hereinafter referred to as the Commissioner). The authorised person is an official of the Ministry of Reintegration, who is entrusted with the responsibilities of coordinating the search for missing persons and solving other related issues in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Status of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances”, in particular with regard to obtaining information (including personal data) regarding missing persons in special circumstances, exchange of such information between various authorities, organisation of search activities, as well as taking measures to provide close relatives and/or family members of persons missing in special circumstances, the necessary information regarding the identification report or results investigation of the disappearance of a person⁴¹.

39 Decisions of the Ministry on Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories: <https://minre.gov.ua/informacziya/naczionalne-informaczijne-byuro/>

40 Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the definition of a state enterprise that performs the functions of the National Information Bureau": <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/228-2022-%D1%80#Text>

41 The Cabinet of Ministers appointed the Commissioner for Issues of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances on May 21, 2022: <https://minre.gov.ua/2022/05/21/kabmin-pryznachyv-upovnovazhenogo-z-pytan-osib-znyklyh-bezvisty-za-osoblyvyh-obstavyn/>

■ **The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights is an official who carries out parliamentary control over the observance of the constitutional rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen to protect the rights of everyone on the territory of Ukraine and within its jurisdiction on a permanent basis; these rights include the right to freedom, which is violated in cases of abduction of civilians⁴². In particular, it is the Commissioner who communicates with Tetyana Moskalkova, the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, in accordance with the established procedure, exchanging information about persons who are held in places of detention or whose whereabouts have not been established. Also, on January 13, 2023, the Commissioner personally handed over the first list of civilian Ukrainian hostages to Moskalkova at a meeting in Ankara (Turkey). The list included the names of two thousand people who entered the list according to the age criterion of 65+ and who have significant diseases⁴³.

■ **Working group on issues of civilian hostages in the Coordinating Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War**

In May 2023, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights announced that a separate working group had been created at the Coordination Headquarters to deal with the issues of civilian in captivity, headed by the representative of the Human Rights Commissioner Oleksandr Kononenko. In total, during the period of operation of the headquarters, it was possible to return 2,279 citizens to Ukraine, of which 142 were civilians, and communication with the Russian side on this matter continues⁴⁴. At the moment, ZMINA does not have enough information about the activities of this group.

■ **The United Centre for the Coordination of the Search and Release of Persons Illegally Deprived of their Liberty as a result of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine**

Coordinated by the Security Service of Ukraine, the main responsibilities of the centre include: the release of captured defenders of Ukraine, the release of civilians illegally deprived of their liberty as a result of aggression against Ukraine, the return of illegally deported children and adults held under the power of the aggres-

42 The Law of Ukraine "On the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights": <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/776/97-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

43 Over 20,000 Ukrainian civilians are being held hostage by the Russian Federation – Lubinets / Radio Liberty, May 4, 2023: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-ponad-20-tysyach-ukrajinskyh-cyvilnyh-zaruchnykiv-u-rosiji-lubinec/32396367.html>

44 Over 20,000 Ukrainian civilians are being held hostage by the Russian Federation – Lubinets / Radio Liberty, May 4, 2023: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-ponad-20-tysyach-ukrajinskyh-cyvilnyh-zaruchnykiv-u-rosiji-lubinec/32396367.html>

sor state (its occupation forces or occupation administrations), repatriation of bodies (remains) of persons killed (deceased) in connection with armed aggression against Ukraine.

■ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine

In 2022 was created,⁴⁵ the Unified Register of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances and launched on May 2, 2023⁴⁶ – this is an electronic database designed for the storage, protection, processing, use and distribution of information about persons who have gone missing in special circumstances, about their unidentified remains, about the presence or absence of a court decision regarding the recognition of persons who have gone missing, missing or declared dead, as well as other data used to ensure the registration of missing persons for the purpose of their search. The holder of the Register is the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. The National Police of Ukraine, the Security Service of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, the Commissioner for Persons Missing in Special Circumstances, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the Office of the Prosecutor General, the State Migration Service of Ukraine, the Department of the execution of criminal punishments, interregional administrations for the execution of criminal punishments of the Ministry of Justice, authorised bodies for probation, the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine, the State Service of Ukraine for Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine, the State Border Service of Ukraine, the Expert Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, local bodies of executive power.

In our opinion, it is problematic that this Register records both military personnel who disappeared during the performance of combat missions, or for whom there is unconfirmed information about injury or death, but neither the wounded nor the body of the deceased, as well as civilians who disappeared after the shelling of a populated place, or contact with whom was lost, because their place of stay was under occupation, or if there is no confirmed data about their death or stay in places of imprisonment. The register also includes all cases when contact with a person (military or civilian) is lost and there are grounds to consider him/her missing due to natural or technogenic emergencies. Civilians who were victims of violent abductions or arbitrary detentions are also included in this register, but there is no separate database that records such cases.

45 Regulations on the Unified Register of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0998-22#n14>

46 The Unified Register of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances has been launched at the Ministry of Internal Affairs – Leonid Tymchenko / Portal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, May 2, 2023: <https://mvs.gov.ua/news/u-mvs-zapraciuvav-jedinii-rejestr-osib-zniklix-bezvisti-za-osoblivix-obstavin-leonid-timcenko>

CHAPTER 2.

THE GENERAL SITUATION WITH ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND ARBITRARY DETENTIONS OF ACTIVE CITIZENS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE



2.1. Assessment of the number of people who could become victims of enforced disappearances or arbitrary detentions, and the purposes of such violations by representatives of the Russian Federation in the occupied territories

Enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are widely used by the Russian Federation as one of the methods of warfare aimed at the civilian population: it aims to suppress resistance and any attempts to protest against the occupation as such and the subsequent actions of the occupying authorities. Along with enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, the occupiers also use torture, ill-treatment, deportation and forced displacement of civilians, both adults and children⁴⁷.

Now, thousands of civilians, who are held both in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine and in the territory of Russia, act as a kind of hostages and objects for blackmail and additional pressure from the Russian Federation.

According to the UN Monitoring Mission, for the period from February 24, 2022 to March 24, 2023, 621 cases of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention of civilians by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation were recorded⁴⁸.

According to the data provided in the 2022 Annual Report of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Dmytro Lubinets⁴⁹, as of the end of 2022, the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War and other competent bodies recorded more than 18.4 thousand citizens who disappeared under special circumstances, including 921 civilians whose detention was confirmed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (civilian hostages) during occupation of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Luhansk, Sumy, Kharkiv and Kherson regions.

Representatives of Ukrainian civil society are also counting the number of civilian hostages who have been abducted since February 24, 2022. According to vari-

47 For more information on cases of torture and ill-treatment, deportations, see other studies of Human Rights Centre ZMINA: Torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population in Ukrainian territories that were under Russian occupation (on the example of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson regions): analytical report / B. Petrunyok, O. Hnatyuk, T. Pechonchyk; Human Rights Centre ZMINA. — Kyiv, 2023. — 64 p.: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/04/torture_ukr_web.pdf; Deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation: signs and context: <https://zmina.ua/publication/deportacziya-gromadyan-ukrayiny-na-terytoriyu-rf-oznaky-ta-kontekst/>; Forced displacement and deportation to the Russian Federation of children from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine: <https://zmina.ua/publication/prymusove-peremishhennya-ta-deportacziya-do-rf-ditej-iz-tymchasovo-okupovanyh-terytorij-ukrayiny/>

48 The UN Office for Human Rights in Ukraine presented reports on the treatment of prisoners of war and the general situation with human rights in Ukraine / United Nations – Ukraine, March 24, 2023: <http://surl.li/fuukc>

49 Report on the state of observance and protection of human and citizen rights and freedoms in Ukraine in 2022 / the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights: <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/report-2022/images/documents/annual-report-2022.pdf>

ous estimates, it is about thousands of people. Thus, in particular, the coordinator of the Media Initiative for Human Rights (a public organisation that, together with other 31 public organisations and 4 independent experts and experts, is part of “Ukraine 5AM Coalition”) Olha Reshetylova, as of January 2023, estimates the number of civilian hostages in several thousand people. However, there is no exact figure, because enforced disappearance in the occupied territories is a never-ending process. At least according to the MIHR data, about a thousand citizens of Ukraine were deported from the northern regions – these are Kyiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions⁵⁰.

It is worth noting that international organisations, state authorities, and non-governmental organisations agree that these figures are only minimum estimates. The exact number of dead and wounded, as well as forcibly disappeared citizens and those who were forcibly relocated to temporarily occupied territories or deported to Russia, cannot be estimated due to the lack of access to these territories. Even after the de-occupation of the territory, this process continues to be complicated, given the number of cases of human rights violations by the Russian side and the need to apply a systematic approach to gathering evidence in these cases.

Representatives of the occupation authorities actively use terror against active citizens in order to intimidate and “encourage” cooperation, as well as to suppress civil resistance in the temporarily occupied territories, as well as to create the illusion of control of the situation by Russian law enforcement agencies and the conduct of trials against Ukrainian civilians, who are accused of international terrorism, sabotage and other actions directed against the occupation authorities.

During 2022 and the first half of 2023, ZMINA collected and recorded from open sources at least 562 cases of abductions of active citizens, including public activists, volunteers, journalists, officials and employees of local governments, educators, religious figures, cultural figures, as well as relatives of active citizens; these disappearances and detentions took place on the territory of 9 regions of Ukraine, which were or remain occupied by the Russian Federation after the large-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine since February 24, 2022; also included are cases where people have been released, found dead or remain missing. Also, 52 interviews were conducted with victims and witnesses of abductions or detention of abductees, as well as with relatives of persons who are still detained.

Active citizens as a category are at the greatest risk of abduction or illegal detention by representatives of the occupation administration and subsequent detention in places of deprivation of liberty, as well as the possibility of torture, since the high level of self-organisation of Ukrainian society, as well as strong horizontal ties between residents of communities, are perceived by the occupiers as a threat the way of organising life in the occupied settlements imposed by them.

50 Kryzheva T. Hostages as a method of blackmail and pressure: why it is difficult to free civilians from Russian captivity / Suspilne, January 11, 2023: <https://suspilne.media/356748-zarucniki-ak-metod-santazu-j-tisku-comu-skladno-vizvolati-civilnih-z-rosijskogo-polonu/>

In addition, on the basis of the collected material, it can be concluded that one of the goals of the abductions of active pro-Ukrainian citizens by representatives of the occupation authorities was an attempt to destroy the structure of local communities: first of all, there was a certain attack on horizontal connections between community members and an attempt to disorganise resistance to the occupation. Secondly, in this way, the Russians tried to facilitate the establishment of occupation administrations, replacing them with legitimate bodies of state power and local self-government.

On the other hand, the representatives of the Russian Federation want the relatives of the disappeared to go to mass protests, blocking the streets and roads. We record the facts from open sources of information that the Russian side is constantly working to ensure that the citizens of Ukraine do everything to prevent the normal functioning of state authorities in Ukraine. This may be part of the strategy of the Russian Federation, which it implements within our country.

Another goal of the kidnapping of active citizens by the Russian Federation, in our opinion, is the attempt to increase the exchange fund or the so-called “exchange bank”. Large-scale “filtration measures” are being carried out in the occupied territories occupied by Russian troops. The victims of the occupiers are most often men of conscription age. First of all, there are veterans of the ATO/JFO, former military and law enforcement officers, pro-Ukrainian activists. They are most likely to be exchanged for Russian military personnel, even if the Ukrainians did not participate in hostilities in 2022–2023 or earlier.

At least four relatives of abducted activists in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions indicated what they believe: Russian troops detained civilian activists and volunteers in order to “replenish the exchange fund”. Three of the abducted civilians were identified by the Russians as prisoners of war on social networks (relatives found information about the detention of “prisoners of war” in Telegram channels), and in at least one case, information about the person’s status as a prisoner of war was reported to the International Committee of the Red Cross⁵¹.

We must state that despite a wide range of prohibitions to take any actions aimed at illegal deprivation of liberty and detention without contact with the outside world, representatives of the occupation authorities ignore these prohibitions and continue to commit systematic violations of the rights of the civilian population, in particular by kidnapping, illegally detaining active citizens and keeping them without any contact with the outside world.

Based on the data we managed to get from the victims and their family members, the Russian side is detaining active civilians in several ways.

51 The testimony of Lyubov Pryshlyak from the city of Nova Kakhovka, the wife of the abducted Pryshlyak Yevgeny Oleksandrovych's brother, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA, January 11, 2023.

1. Without any legal status, which is often accompanied by a lack of notification of the family about the fact of being held in places of detention. A civilian can be held for months without any charges being brought, besides, neither he/she herself can notify about himself/herself and his/her stay in places of detention, nor his/her relatives can find out about his/her whereabouts, this is usually accompanied by a lack of information even among the detainees themselves about his or her legal status.
2. As “participants” of the check for involvement in “countering a special military operation”. This is not a term regulated by the norms of criminal procedural legislation, but despite the fact that the person has no legal status and as a result – the state has no legal grounds for keeping a person in places of deprivation of liberty – some of the detained civilians are in this status.
3. As suspects, accused, defendants on charges of committing international terrorism, in the territories that Russia defines as part of its own on the basis of “referendums” – part of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as well as in the territories of the so-called “Donetsk People’s republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic”, in addition, and outside these territories, when the events incriminating the kidnapped or illegally detained activists took place either before the so-called “referendums” or outside the territories listed above.
4. As prisoners of war (while ignoring the norms of the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war). Despite the completely civilian nature of the actions of individual detainees, the Russian side defines them as prisoners of war and demands that the Ukrainian side exchange them only for Russian prisoners of war.

2.2. Categories of people who were subjected to enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention

According to the developed project methodology, the following groups of people were included in the category of “**active citizens**”:

- political and social activists (including participants of peaceful protests against the occupation);
- volunteers who provided any type of assistance to the civilian population (including delivery of humanitarian goods and evacuation of civilians);

- officials, employees of local self-government bodies, in particular heads, deputy heads and deputies of city and village councils; journalists, including editors and owners of mass media (hereinafter referred to as mass media) at the national and local level;
- cultural figures, including employees of museums, theatres, cultural centres, etc.;
- education figures, in particular directors of educational institutions of all levels, teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature, history, and other subjects;
- figures of religious cults of all directions who expressed open support for Ukraine;
- lawyers who provided legal assistance to activists or other civilians;
- family members, if they were abducted to put pressure on persons who fall under the concept of “activist”.

In the case when a person combined several areas of activity (for example, he could be a pro-Ukrainian activist and a local deputy, or a volunteer and a journalist at the same time), documenters analysed on the basis of data obtained both from open sources and from interviewed relatives or witnesses of the abduction, which one exactly the type of activity became a possible reason for the abduction of a given person and assigned him or her to a certain category.

The sphere of activity of people	Number of persons
Activists / volunteers	323
Officials and representatives of local self-government bodies	128
Relatives and friends of active citizens	32
Educators (teachers and directors of educational institutions)	30
Journalists, editors and mass media owners	18
Cultural workers	10
Politicians	9
Religious figures	8
Lawyers and advocates	4



Public activists and volunteers

In the total number of cases, ZMINA recorded the most cases of forced disappearance or arbitrary detention of **public activists and volunteers** (323 persons). In particular, these are participants of peaceful protests against the Russian occupation, organisers of evacuation of the civilian population, drivers of evacuation buses, volunteers who independently evacuated the civilian population from the occupation, delivered food and medicine to residents of occupied settlements.

Among the trends in enforced disappearances of activists and volunteers, the following stand out.

The Russian military and representatives of the occupation authorities often used torture and other forms of systematic ill-treatment during detentions and subsequent interrogations, according to the information obtained by the documenters of Human Rights Centre ZMINA. The Russian side uses torture against the civilian population as an element of a broader policy of identifying citizens disloyal to the occupation and suppressing civil resistance⁵².

During interrogations, representatives of the occupation authorities and the Russian military demanded that the volunteers “surrender” their leaders or superiors, not believing that people could spontaneously come together to provide aid to the civilian population without any organisation or donor, or even provide aid on their own, without involvement of other persons.

Thus, one of the volunteer drivers interviewed by the documentarians of Human Rights Centre ZMINA (name withheld for security reasons), who helped to transport civilians from Mariupol, reports that the Russians demanded large sums of money from all the drivers, because they were sure that those provide evacuation services on a paid basis. When the cash was eventually found in the car, the Russian security forces did not believe that these funds were intended for the purchase of fuel, medicine and other items necessary for evacuation, because in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion there were major problems with ATMs and terminals (since the collection service could not ensure the safety of its employees, collections were put on hold and the terminals could not work properly due to problems with the Internet connection and electricity)⁵³.

52 Torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population in the Ukrainian territories that were under Russian occupation (on the example of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson regions): analytical report / B. Petrunyok, O. Hnatyuk, T. Pechonchyk; Human Rights Centre ZMINA. — Kyiv, 2023. — 64 p.: <http://surl.li/oiyy>

53 The testimony, at the request of the witness, was documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA on an anonymous basis in June 2022.

Activists and volunteers were abducted mostly while passing block posts and so-called “filtering checkpoint”, as well as at protests and peaceful gatherings organised by pro-Ukrainian activists. Representatives of the occupation authorities followed the participants of the protest to establish their places of residence and track their routes, and then organised “raids” and took the activists and volunteers from their own homes or intercepted them on the street.

In particular, journalist, blogger, volunteer, co-organiser of peaceful pro-Ukrainian protests **Serhii Tsyhipa** was kidnapped at one of the checkpoints in the occupied part of Kherson region on March 12, 2022, when he was on his way to nearby Tavriysk. Tsyhipa is currently being held in a pre-trial detention centre in the city of Simferopol in occupied Crimea, his family reports that his health has deteriorated significantly, but the lawyer’s access to him is limited. In December 2022, Serhii Tsyhipa was charged with espionage under Article 276 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and causing harm to the Russian Federation during the so-called special military operation. He faces from 10 to 20 years in prison.

On March 1, 2022, in the city of Kupyansk, Kharkiv region, during the anti-occupation protest “Kupyansk is Ukraine”, **Mykola Masliy**, a member of the city council, a veteran of the ATO, and a public activist, was kidnapped. Masliy was one of the organisers of pro-Ukrainian protests against the occupation of Kupyansk. According to the testimony of one of the volunteers, he was called aside “for a conversation” during the protest by the Russian military, after which he was taken away. At the moment, Masliy’s fate is unknown⁵⁴.

Another abducted volunteer – Mykola Petrovsky from Kherson region, has a disability because he lost part of his leg in a road accident, but despite this, he continued volunteering. The Russians kidnapped Petrovsky on March 27, 2022 in the centre of Kherson. He was kept in the basement for six months, and during the de-occupation of Kherson, he was taken out of the city and transferred to the Simferopol pre-trial detention centre. Mykola Petrovsky was brutally tortured in captivity, his fingers were broken, and his healthy leg and shoulder were severely injured. According to his mother, Petrovsky’s health is very bad.

There have been cases where local activists were found dead some time after the abduction.

British citizen **Paul Urey** is among the dead volunteers. He evacuated civilians (he communicated with them under the pseudonym “Anton”). On April 25, 2022, he allegedly disappeared near the village of Verbove, Zaporizhzhia region, occupied by the Russians, without reaching the city of Dniprorudne, Zaporizhzhia region. In July 2022, the occupation administration of the Russian Federation spread information about the alleged death of a volunteer “due to illness and stress”. The Russian Feder-

54 The testimony, at the request of the witness, was documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA on an anonymous basis in June 2022.

ation returned the volunteer's body only after more than a month and a half of negotiations. Although a lot of time has passed, signs of physical injuries have been found on the body, which may indicate that he was ill-treated, which could have been the real reason for his death. At the same time, the ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets reported that the returned mutilated body of the Briton was missing parts and had numerous cuts and traces of torture.



Representatives of local self-government bodies

The second largest group that was subjected to enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions during the large-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine are **representatives of local self-government bodies (128 persons)**.

One of the priority tasks that the occupying power saw before itself was to encourage local representatives of the authorities, mainly village, settlement and city heads elected by the community, to cooperate, and in case of refusal of such cooperation, to forcibly abduct and arbitrarily detain representatives of local self-government in order to appoint in their place someone either from among the collaborators, or from other people who the local residents had never seen before.

An additional goal was the desire of the Russian side to gain access to official documents, which may include data on volunteers, pro-Ukrainian activists, ATO participants, etc.

Representatives of local self-government were often subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Representatives of local authorities and state bodies, who worked and lived for a long time in populated areas that came under occupation and decided not to go over to the side of the enemy, usually took on voluntary responsibilities for the distribution of humanitarian aid, registration of families in need of help, organisation evacuation of the population, preservation of the property of the state and the community, for which they fell into the field of view of the Russians and became victims of violent abductions.

Thus, on March 28, 2022, **Oleksandr Babych**, the mayor of Hola Prystan, Kher-son region, was kidnapped from his own home. After that, he was taken to the building of the Hola Prystan City Council, which was surrounded by armed Russian servicemen. There were 15 armed men in camouflage uniforms without insignia with white bandages on their hands and feet in Babych's office. He is currently being held in pre-trial detention centre No. 2 in Simferopol. Because of the torture, he started having health problems. In addition to the husband and father, the family also lost

their home and the property that remained there, because they were taken away by the occupiers.

Testimony of Olha Babych, Oleksandr Babych's wife:



Our house was also taken away, for more than a month I don't know what's there. Because we wanted, or rather our father, to settle there people who had nowhere to live, and they begged, but these people never had time to live there! They just came and took the keys...⁵⁵

ZMINA documented the testimony of **Mykola Sikalenko**, the head of the Tsyrykuny village military administration of Kharkiv region – a settlement that was under occupation for several months. Representatives of the occupation authorities kidnapped him twice – on March 3 and 21, 2022, the first time they held him for one day, and the second time they took him for six days. Every night Sikalenko was transported to a different place without being informed of what was going to be done to him, nor was he given food or the opportunity to use the toilet. The following dialogue took place during the interrogation with the alleged FSB representative.



He told me: 'You see, I trust you. You must trust me. Let's talk. We came for a long time. Forever. Now Russia will be here.'" I laughed and said, "Will see". He said that he was from Luhansk, and added: "This is our order. You will have the same order⁵⁶.

Separate enforced disappearances and torture led to the death of the victims. So, on March 23, 2022, the Russians kidnapped the entire family of the head of the village of Motyzhyn: **Olha Sukhenko**, her husband **Oleksandr** and their son **Ihor**. First, the Russian military searched the Sukhenkos' house, took the car and drove away. They returned for Olha and her husband a second time, and later took their son as well.

On March 26, the Prosecutor General's Office reported that due to the abduction of Olha Sukhenko and her family, proceedings were initiated on the fact of violating the laws and customs of war (Part 1 of Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

On April 2, 2022, after the de-occupation of Kyiv region, the bodies of the Sukhenko family were found in one of the mass graves. According to the Prosecutor General's office of Ukraine, Olha, her son, and her husband were tortured before their death, trying to get information about the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). Representatives of the Russian Federation shot his son in the leg in front of his mother, and then killed him with a shot to the head. All family members died from multiple gunshot wounds⁵⁷.

55 A telephone interview with Olha Babych, the wife of kidnapped Oleksandr Babych, conducted by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in December 2022.

56 Testimony from the village Circuses of the Kharkiv region, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA, February 3, 2023.

57 Iryna Venediktova's post on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VenediktovaIryna/posts/395188032618871>

Documentaries of ZMINA organisation also recorded cases of abductions and subsequent ill-treatment of political activists who had a strong pro-Ukrainian position or were members of pro-Ukrainian political parties or participated in the Euromaidan events of 2013–2014, etc. The patriotic position of the victims became the reason for greater brutality on the part of the Russian military.

Thus, on August 9, 2022, the patriotic activist, former local deputy, former member of the political party “Svoboda” and “UKROP” parties, Anatoly Tutov from the city of Balakliia, was detained at his home by representatives of the so-called “L/DPR”. Until September 2, 2022, FSB representatives illegally held him at the National Police station in the city of Balakliia. During the period of detention, he was repeatedly beaten, tortured with electric shock, subjected to psychological torture, etc.

From the testimony of Anatoly Tutov:



They brought me to the interrogation room... And they immediately started saying that you are a Nazi, a terrorist and all that. And they began to beat me, at first it was okay more or less. And there you know right away, they put wires on the fingers, such a machine is turned with electricity. And so at first they started to twist with electricity, then to beat with a plastic stick, like plastic pipes... They beat tolerably at first, and then very hard. Even shouted, you know...⁵⁸



Relatives of active citizens

Another group subjected to the practice of forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are **the relatives of active citizens (32 persons)**. They can be divided into three categories.

The first is the members of families who lived together with activists, volunteers, educators, etc., and during searches and illegal detentions, the Russian security forces took away the entire family. Thus, the testimony of native brothers–farmers from the left-bank part of Kherson region is documented. Their active pro-Ukrainian civic position was known in the village. The men were detained together. One of them was later released, while threatening to be shot before the release. The fate of the brother who remained in captivity is currently unknown⁵⁹.

The second category is relatives who helped the victims in volunteer or other public activities and paid for it with their freedom. Thus, the family history of **Serhii Barchuk**, who was the deputy head of the regional office of the Pension Fund of

⁵⁸ Evidence from the city of Balakliia, Kharkiv region, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA, January 13, 2023.

⁵⁹ The testimony, at the request of the witness, was documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA on an anonymous basis in May 2023.

Ukraine in Kherson, is well known. After the Russian occupation, he tried to hide part of the property of the Pension Fund of Ukraine (about 20 personal computers) in his apartment, as he was responsible for their storage. After Serhii Barchuk was kidnapped by the Russians in July 2022, his father **Artem Barchuk**, mother-in-law **Lidia Podozerska** and uncle **Oleksiy Barchuk** decided to take care of the computers and hide them elsewhere. By chance, they met a family friend, **Oleh Samotoy**, who agreed to help with transportation. On July 22, 2022, they came to Serhii Barchuk's apartment and were detained by representatives of the occupation authorities and accused of "stealing the property which belongs to the state". All family members and friends are currently held in several illegal places of detention – Serhii Barchuk in Crimea, Lidia Podozerska in Chaplinka (Kherson region), and Oleksiy, Artem and Oleh Samotoy in Kalanchak (Kherson region). According to the family, all of them were subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment⁶⁰.

The third category is relatives who were deliberately abducted in order to put pressure on active citizens and force them to obey the orders of the occupation authorities. The documentaries of Human Rights Centre ZMINA recorded at least three cases when, in order to put pressure on local activists and representatives of self-government, the occupiers kidnapped their children or close relatives (of different ages) and blackmailed them that if a person did not go over to the side of the occupiers and take on his responsibilities representative of the occupation authorities, then "explanatory work" will be conducted with the family members. Thus, victims of abduction by the Russian occupiers were **Vladyslav Buryak**, son of the head of the Zaporizhzhia district state administration, son of **Viktor Debely**, head of the Ivanivske community of Kherson region, and son of **Serhii Dereza**, head of the Ukrainian Starostinsky district of the Ivanivske community⁶¹. All of them were later released.



Educators

The fourth largest group of active citizens who were most exposed to the risk of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are **educators, in particular school principals, educators, teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature, as well as Ukrainian history (30 persons)**.

Most often, the reason for the abduction of educators is an attempt to induce cooperation, as well as a demand from the occupiers to facilitate the transition of

60 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with the methods of the Berkeley Protocol.

61 In Kherson Region, in the occupied Ivanovka, Russian soldiers killed a local resident Elena Pashko / Media Centre "IPC-Kherson", February 23, 2023: <https://kherson.ipc.org.ua/uk/2023/02/nahersonshhyni-v-okupovani-j-ivanivtsi-rosijski-vijskovi-vbyly-mistsevu-zhytelku-olenu-pashko/>

Ukrainian schools in the temporarily occupied territories to the Russian program, the destruction of textbooks and books in the Ukrainian language, the planting of propaganda narratives among children about “brotherly nations” and the fact that Ukraine does not exist as a sovereign state.

On the evening of March 31, 2022, **Angelina Kovalenko, Olena Galatsan and Lyudmila Chugai**, school principals in the city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region, were kidnapped by representatives of the occupying forces after the educators wrote statements of resignation because they did not want to cooperate with the occupation forces⁶². The school principals were kept in a garage for some time, and later was taken by car 30 km from Melitopol and abandoned on the road.

The pressure on educators continued in 2022–2023: the occupation authorities tried to restore the educational process, in particular, to conduct it in an offline mode, in the left-bank Kherson region, which remains occupied at the time of preparation of this study. So, on August 21, 2022, **Iryna Dubas**, the director of school No. 3, and **Oksana Yakubova**, the director of Lyceum No. 2, from the city of Nova Kakhovka, Kherson region, were kidnapped and held in custody for about a week. The occupiers persuaded female educators to open the school year according to Russian programs. Both women had to leave for the territory controlled by Ukraine after they were released⁶³.



Media workers

The next largest group is **journalists, editors, and media workers (18 persons)**. In order to spread propaganda statements, the representatives of the occupying power try to persuade journalists to cooperate by all available means, and those who expressed a pro-Ukrainian position were subjected to kidnapping and torture.

Journalists and other media representatives were usually detained at home, very often such “visits” took place early, at 6–7 in the morning, the detention was preceded by a search, during which all means of communication, such as phones and laptops, other equipment, which later did not return. Journalists have often been kidnapped in order to gain access to the admin version of news sites or social media groups.

For example, **Oleh Baturin**, a journalist from the newspaper “Novy Den”, was kidnapped in Nova Kakhovka, Kherson region. On March 12, 2022, public figure and volunteer Serhii Tsyhipa, who was also detained by the Russian occupiers on that day,

62 In Melitopol, the Russian military kidnapped three school principals – Denisov / ZMINA Human Rights Centre, April 1, 2022: <https://zmina.info/news/u-melitopoli-rosijski-vijskovi-vykraly-troh-dyrektoriv-shkil/>

63 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with the methods of the Berkeley Protocol.

contacted Oleh with an offer to meet at a local bus station. Baturin went there without taking his documents and turning off his phone, because he suspected that it might be a trap. Tsyhipa was not at the bus station. Baturin was grabbed by unknown men and pushed into a minibus. Baturin was kept in Nova Kakhovka for the first day after the abduction, and then he was transported to Kherson. There he was in the building of the regional state administration, later in the Kherson detention centre at Teplo-enerhetikiv street, 3. He spent almost eight days in Russian captivity with almost no food, several days almost without water, soap and a change of clothes. During the abduction and during the initial interrogations, he was beaten with the butt of a gun, and between interrogations he was kept chained to a battery in a cold room, and then interrogated and beaten again. Oleh had 4 ribs broken as a result of such treatment. After his release, he had to urgently leave for the territory controlled by Ukraine, and even after he was safe, representatives of the occupation authorities came to his home again and searched for him⁶⁴.

Dmytro Khilyuk, a journalist of the UNIAN news agency, was kidnapped on about March 4, 2022, in the village of Kozarovychy, Vyshhorod district, Kyiv region. Khylyuk's whereabouts are currently unknown, but according to Red Cross volunteer Volodymyr Khropun (who was held by the Russian military in Dyer and later exchanged), published by the Media Initiative for Human Rights on April 22, 2022, Khylyuk was held in pre-trial detention centre No. 2 in the Russian city of Novozybkov, Bryansk region. According to the Frontline Defenders organisation, in August 2022, thanks to the International Committee of the Red Cross, Dmytro Hylyuk's parents received a letter from him dated April 14, 2022, with a "Russian Post" stamp on the envelope. The letter contained one sentence: "Dear Mom and Dad, I am alive, healthy, and well". To date, this has been their only contact with their son since his disappearance. The relatives have hired lawyers, but Russian authorities have not allowed them to see or speak to their client and have yet to provide official confirmation of his whereabouts. There is also no information about possible charges against him⁶⁵.

Marharyta Kharenko, an SMM manager of the Ukrainian Volunteer Service, who was engaged in social delivery (including medicines, products and things) in Zaporizhzhia and Melitopol, was kidnapped on January 9, 2023 from her own home in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. The website of the service has a photo of the team working on this project, where Marharyta was also present. When the girl was just abducted, the main page of the organisation had the mark "USAID" (United States Agency for International Development).



Subsequently, the inscription "USAID" was removed from the site. Perhaps the volunteers understood that for the people who are in Melitopol and are involved

64 Testimony of journalist Oleh Baturin from the city of Nova Kakhovka, Kherson Region, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA June 18, 2023.

65 Ukrainian human rights defender and journalist Dmytro Khyliuk forcibly disappeared by Russian authorities for over a year / Front Line Defenders, June 12, 2023: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/ru/node/7944>

in this organisation, this could pose a threat. It is hard for us to believe that social assistance can be a reason to take a person “to the basement”⁶⁶.

Marharyta was held in the Melitopol Penitentiary No. 144, and from there she was transferred to the detention centre in Yakymivka the urban-type settlement. As it turned out later, the Russians opened a criminal case against her under the articles of “extremism” and “terrorism”. On March 30, 2023, the court hearing of the case against Marharyta has already begun.



Workers of culture

Another group of victims of enforced disappearances are **cultural figures and employees of cultural institutions – 10 persons**. The reasons for the forced disappearances or arbitrary detentions of cultural figures are either the inclination to cooperate or the desire to gain access to the premises of the cultural fund.

The curator of the Melitopol Museum of Local History, **Halyna Kucher**, was detained on April 30, 2022, after representatives of the occupation authorities gained access to the museum’s storage room on April 27 and took the museum’s collection from there. After several hours of interrogation regarding specific exhibits of the collection, Halyna was released on the night of May 1⁶⁷.

The location of another cultural figure is still unknown. **Alla Buryko** is the director of the cultural centre of the Plodrodnenko village council from the village of Bratske, Melitopol district, Zaporizhzhia region. She and her son Oleksandr were taken away by the Russian military on August 25, 2022, allegedly due to unwillingness to cooperate with the occupiers⁶⁸.

Volodymyr Vakulenko, a children’s writer and public figure from the city of Iziium, Kharkiv Region, was abducted by the Russian military in Iziium in early April 2022. Vakulenko did not leave the city because he had to take care of his underage son with a disability. After the abduction, the fate of the writer was unknown until de-occupation. A record of the burial of Volodymyr’s body in a mass burial site, and then his body was found in the fall of 2022.

Regarding the circumstances of Volodymyr Vakulenko’s detention, his ex-wife Iryna Novitska recalls:

66 The testimony of Hanna Podorozhnaya regarding the abduction of Marharyta Kharenko from Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia Region, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA June 20, 2023.

67 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with the methods of the Berkeley Protocol.

68 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with the methods of the Berkeley Protocol.



Well, his parents, his father, was with him at that time, and the little one [15-year-old son Vitalii, suffers from an autistic spectrum disorder]. The father was somewhere with the child, but not near him at that moment. Because Volodya went out to prepare food outside. He was usually dressed in casual home style, wearing slippers in the house. He was preparing food and they came to him... took him away. They explained that “the Nazi is being taken away” – such as: “we came to get your Nazi”. The father also says: “Where have you seen Nazis here at all?” “We know everything about him”⁶⁹.



Religious figures

The next group is **religious figures** who have an influence on communities and in certain cases act as informal community leaders or provide volunteer assistance to victims (**8 persons**). Religious figures were usually detained for a short period of time – from several hours to several days. The occupiers most often targeted those who combined religious and volunteer activities, in particular, organised the process of collecting and distributing humanitarian aid, regardless of denomination (they detained Orthodox priests, Baptist Christians, and representatives of other denominations).

On March 19, 2022, Dmytro Bodyu, pastor of the “Word of Life Fellowship” church in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region, was detained for the so-called “isolation” for 8 days. The Russian military came to his home in the morning, took the mobile phones of the pastor and his family members and asked Dmytro to go with them. On the way, they drove into the church building, took the statutory documents of the religious organisation (supposedly for inspection), took all the office equipment they could find in the church, and then left with Pastor Bodyu in an unknown direction. When asked what would happen to him, they replied that they would check the documents and return him the next day, but this did not happen. On March 20, 2022, the Russian military came to the church again, took the pastor’s sleeping bag and the Bible, and in the evening announced in the church that it was forbidden to hold a religious service, and it was also forbidden to provide humanitarian aid to people. They explained that such restrictions were introduced because “church representatives went to pro-Ukrainian protests”. On March 28, 2022, the pastor’s wife, Helen Bodyu, wrote on Facebook that he was already free, and on May 2, 2022, the pastor himself published a video message, where he disclosed the details of his stay in places of imprisonment for 8 days and reported that he had gone abroad⁷⁰.

69 Testimony of Iryna Ludvigivna Novitska, ex-wife of Volodymyr Vakulenko, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA using a telephone survey on June 1, 2023.

70 Dmytro Bodyu’s video message, published by him on his personal Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/dmitry.bodyu.3/posts/pfbid0MQu45MkZGtwksg9K9XLFGh4DctX4GbbgofXAPXF9M1ytt7BxdhLrtGjqRtYw5nJnl>

On March 9, 2022, **Mykhailo Reznikov**, pastor of the Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists in Mariupol, Donetsk region, according to the religious organisation “Evangelical Christian Baptists of Ukraine”, together with another believer, **Andriy Fomenko**, was captured by the Russian military when they went to get food for the church, where people whose homes were destroyed by shelling were hiding. On March 27, “Evangelical Christian Baptists of Ukraine” confirmed to Human Rights Centre ZMINA documentarians that the men were safe, but without disclosing details.

Serhii Chudynovych is a priest of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine from Kherson, rector of the Church of the Holy Mother of God, public figure and volunteer. According to the “Vgoru” publication, on March 30, 2022, at 8:30 a.m., a religious figure was kidnapped directly from the church by people who called themselves “militia”: three men searched the church, checked the documents and messengers of those present, and then took the priest away for interrogation⁷¹. In the evening of the same day, Serhii Chudynovych posted a video message on his Facebook page⁷², where he reported that he was released after several hours of detention after all questions regarding the church’s volunteer and other activities were clarified. The pastor noted that he was not physically abused.



Lawyers and advocates

Another category of active citizens who were exposed to the risk of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are **lawyers and advocates** who provided legal assistance to the population (**4 persons**). The representatives of the occupation authorities detained them in order to intimidate both the lawyers and the advocates themselves, as well as the entire community, as well as to obtain access to documents that may contain legal secrets and are of interest to the representatives of the occupation authorities (copies of personal documents, documents related to the activities of entrepreneurs, as well as other documents).

One of the people who was interviewed on the condition of anonymity reported that on April 20, 2022 (date approximate), a lawyer and at least two members of his family were detained in the city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. After that, they also searched the office where one of the detainees worked. According to the witness, the reason for the detention could be the suspicions of representatives of the occupation authorities in passing information to Ukrainian military units.

71 Priest Serhii Chudynovych was kidnapped in Kherson / VGORU, March 30, 2022: <https://vgoru.org/novini/v-hersoni-vikradi-svyashennika-sergiya-chudinovicha>

72 Serhii Chudynovych's video message, published by him on his personal Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/4udinovi4/videos/721932238984674>

According to the witness:

“Ten people came, approximately at 6–7 in the morning. They broke into the apartment, turned everything upside down. They are hunters, they had guns in the house... the guns were taken away. Then we went to their office and broke everything there⁷³.”

2.3. Gender and age structure of victims of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions

Victims of abductions are both **men** and **women, young people, children, the elderly, and the chronically ill**. However, the vast majority of the abducted are men, ranging in age from 18 to 70+ (**451 persons**). Every fifth victim of enforced disappearance is a woman (**110 persons**). The gender of one person is unknown, as it is a small child who was abducted together with his parents.

Respondents who were released from prison reported that in different regions and different units of the Russian army, the situation with keeping women separate from men is different.

Usually, detention and the first “interrogations” are conducted by men, during further “administrative arrest” or stay in places of detention, women can be interrogated and guarded by women; according to one of the interviewees, they are former employees of the penitentiary system of Ukraine.

As a relative of one of the detainees pointed out, who was given the opportunity to see the detainee, the conditions of detention do not meet the minimum requirements:

“There is no water, it is supplied once every three days. Icy and technical. They carry bottles of water on them to heat the water to room temperature so they can wash themselves. If someone in the cell shows emotions – laughs, cries – everyone is taken out into the corridor and beaten. They are constantly on their feet from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. (almost 16 hours), they don’t allow them to sit down at all. They are in the basement and their cell is at the entrance, so when the food is distributed, they are the first to be poured with boiling water. We buy them instant noodles, oatmeal and puree, they add it all to hot soup and eat it. They are fed three times a day. Grandma always carries five litres of drinking water in bottles, two or three of which reach them. They give water to the basement once

73 The testimony, at the request of the witness, was documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA on an anonymous basis in May 2023.

every three days. The overseer who poured their food put a lot of sugar in their tea. He was then severely beaten. They have both female and male supervisors⁷⁴.

None of the physiological needs that women have are not taken into account, the situation with hygiene is critical. Thus, **Hanna Vorosheva**, a volunteer who was detained in March 2022 at a checkpoint near Mariupol and held in the Olenivka colony in the temporarily occupied territory of the Donetsk region, indicated during the interview that only after she “made a scandal” the women who were held together with her were provided with the opportunity to use the shower and get hygiene products⁷⁵.

ZMINA recorded cases of detention of elderly women and their subsequent detention in conditions that do not meet the minimum standards of such detention, as well as torture and ill-treatment.

Thus, Lydia Shulga, one of the interviewees, said that the elderly woman with whom she was kept in the premises of the police station in the city of Balakliia, Kharkiv region, was not given the opportunity to put on shoes during the detention – and she was without shoes the whole time.

“*The 65-year-old woman, who was wearing socks and a dressing gown, was obviously taken from the house. They didn't even let her put on her shoes. When we were released, she really wanted to go like that. And I say to her: “Where are you going?”. It was September 8. It was already freezing then. I see that someone's boots are standing there, I tell her to put them on. I see: someone's jacket is hanging, I tell her to put it on. It doesn't matter whose it is. The main thing is not to catch a cold or get sick⁷⁶.*

The family of **Iryna Navalna**, an activist, a 25-year-old resident of Mariupol, who was arbitrarily arrested by the Russian occupiers on September 27, 2022, on the charge that she allegedly tried to blow up one of the polling stations during the so-called “referendum” on the annexation of the occupied territories to Russia, reported to Human Rights Centre ZMINA that Iryna is being held illegally in the Donetsk detention centre. At first, the girl was put in a prison for two weeks with convicts serving a sentence for criminal offences, later she was transferred to a cell where there were Ukrainian military women. The mother also said that Navalna was severely beaten, and because of this, she had numerous hematomas on her body – this was seen by Iryna's relative, who was allowed to see her. It was clear that the beating took place repeatedly and in the same places.

74 Testimony of Oleksandr Stolyar from the city of Mariupol, the mother of the forcibly disappeared Iryna Navalnya, was documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA through a telephone survey in March and June 2023.

75 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA through a telephone survey in June 2023.

76 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the village of Borshchivka, Kharkiv region, on February 2, 2023.

“ There is a witness – a girl who sat in the same cell with her, she was returned from the exchange. She called me and told me that Ira came to their cell badly beaten with black hematomas. All over the body, except for the face. She was very worried about her bruises as they were very black. It can be seen that she was repeatedly beaten, in the same places⁷⁷.

2.4. Geography of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens

From the very beginning of the full-scale invasion, the highest rates of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions were recorded in Kyiv, Kherson and Kharkiv regions, which were the first to be partially or fully occupied. After several weeks, data began to arrive about enforced disappearances in Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions, as well as other regions of Ukraine (Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Chernihiv), which were partially under occupation.

Region	Number of persons
Kherson	258
Zaporizhzhia	110
Donetsk	67
Kharkiv	60
Kyiv	33
Chernihiv	10
Mykolaiv	8
Luhansk	8
Sumy	8

The largest number of recorded cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens occurred in **Kherson region** (258 cases).

It should be taken into account that at the time of writing this report, only part of the Kherson region (right bank) was de-occupied in November 2022, and all set-

⁷⁷ Testimony of Oleksandra Stolyar from the city of Mariupol, the mother of the forcibly disappeared Iryna Navalnya, was documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA through a telephone survey in March and June 2023.

tlements on the left bank of the Dnieper remain under occupation. Civilians there are under considerable pressure from the occupation authorities and are reluctant to report cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, because they do not trust enough the method of transmitting information through e-mail or messengers, fearing that during a “raid” or “street patrol” the phone may be seized, and if correspondence with anyone from the de-occupied territory is found there, it could have negative consequences.

Thus, ZMINA received information about the kidnapping of a public activist in one of the towns of Kherson region in January 2023. A week after the abduction of the man and his wife, the witnesses of the arrest unofficially contacted him and reported that he was walking down the street when a so-called “police” car stopped near him, the witnesses saw the man being beaten and taken away in an unknown direction. After some time, the man’s jacket, stained with blood, was found on the street. In the pockets of the jacket there were documents certifying identity – a passport and a driver’s licence.

“ My mother got a call from an unknown number and received a jacket, which contained my father’s Ukrainian passport, which was covered in blood, and a driver’s licence. That’s all we have now⁷⁸.

In Kherson region, representatives of the occupation authorities conducted and continue to conduct inspections of private homes, during which they check the contents of phones and laptops present in the premises.

Thus, on August 13, 2022, **Yevhen Pryshlyak** was detained by the Russian military together with a friend with whom he was spending the night. Relatives indicate that the Russian military accused Yevhen Pryshlyak’s friend of “espionage” because he worked for the National Police of Ukraine. As for Yevhen himself, the Russians did not like the photos and video files on his phone about the Russian military. Currently, according to unconfirmed data, the men are being held on the territory of Russia. In January 2023, Pryshlyak’s family received a note in Yevhen’s handwriting through the International Committee of the Red Cross:

“ Hello, mom, dad. I am a prisoner in a camp for prisoners of war. Conditions are normal, three meals a day, warm. We have a TV, we watch Russian news. Nova Kakhovka was shown several times. They promised to exchange us, but I don’t know when it will be. It is necessary to inform Ukraine that I am in captivity. Maybe they will exchange us and add it to the lists. This letter will be sent through the Red Cross. Please don’t be nervous and don’t worry. I miss everyone very much. Say hello to everyone. It’s bad in Nova Kakhovka right now, as I see it. I hug everyone. Kiss Sonya and Ksyusha for me⁷⁹.

78 Testimony, at the request of the witness, documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA through an anonymous telephone survey in January 2023.

79 On January 11, 2023, Lyubov Pryshlyak, Yevhen’s relative, explained to the documentarians by phone that Sonia and Ksyusha are their dogs, poodles.

Zaporizhzhia region is in second place in terms of the number of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions (110 cases).

Most often, representatives of the occupation authorities detain activists from Energodar and Melitopol: numerous protests against the occupation took place in these cities.

Volunteer Yaroslav Zhuk became a victim of such abduction on June 17, 2022. His car was stopped near a supermarket in Melitopol, Yaroslav himself was pulled out of the car, thrown into another car and taken to an unknown house with a basement. Zhuk was tortured there until August 8, 2022: he was brutally beaten, electrocuted and his skin burned with a blowtorch. Under torture, he was forced to record a video in which he makes a “heartfelt confession” to the preparation of acts of terrorism. In written explanations, which Zhuk managed to pass through a lawyer, he indicated it⁸⁰:

“ I was regularly beaten on the head, after which I partially lost my hearing. Under torture, I was forced to slander myself. When I agreed, unable to withstand the abuse, I was blindfolded and taken to another room, without electricity or water, where they made me sign a printed confession in a fabricated case.

At the moment, Yaroslav Zhuk is being held in the Rostov detention centre on the territory of the Russian Federation, he is accused of preparing acts of international terrorism and is periodically subjected to beatings and brutal treatment. A court hearing recently began in the city of Rostov-on-Don, Russia. At the beginning of June 2023, Zhuk stated at a court hearing that on May 29–30, as well as on June 5, employees of the Rostov pre-trial detention centre severely beat him⁸¹: they beat him with feet and batons, doused him with water and used an electric shocker. In addition, the wife reported⁸² that Yaroslav was not given bedding in the pre-trial detention centre, and he is forced to sleep on the bare floor of the cell, without a mattress or bed.

Donetsk region has the third highest number of documented cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions (67 cases), but it should be noted that these data are also incomplete, because due to the occupation of some areas of Donetsk region since 2014, local residents, fearing reprisals from the so-called “local authorities”, reluctantly announce a new wave of arrests, which has been going on since the beginning of the full-scale aggression.

80 Kidnapped volunteer Yaroslav Zhuk told about torture in captivity / Crimean human rights group, November 2, 2022: <https://crimeahrg.org/uk/vikradenij-volonter-yaroslav-zhuk-rozpoviv-pro-torturi-u-poloni/>

81 Yaroslav Zhuk stated in court that he was beaten by the prison staff / Crimean trial, May 6, 2023: <https://crimean-process.org/yaroslav-zhuk-zayavil-v-sude-o-tom-cto-ego-izbili-sotrudniki-sizo/>

82 The testimony of Maryna Zhuk, the wife of the kidnapped volunteer Yaroslav Zhuk, was documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA using a telephone survey on June 7, 2023.

On March 18, 2022, 78-year-old **Yevhenii Bal**, a journalist, writer, volunteer, member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine and the National Writers' Union of Ukraine, was illegally arrested by the Russian military at his home in Melkine near Mariupol. Apparently, the reason for the detention was "compromising" photos together with the Ukrainian military. The occupiers turned the house upside down, and the owner himself was taken "to the basement". In three days, he was released after being brutally beaten. On April 2, 2022, Yevgeny Bal died due to injuries inflicted by the occupiers during torture⁸³.

The situation with informing about forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions in **Luhansk region** (8 cases) is even worse, because during the full-scale invasion, a large number of settlements were very quickly occupied or became a site for hostilities, so the population did not have time to report such cases, trying to save lives and fearing for their own safety.

Human Rights Centre ZMINA became aware of the kidnapped activist, known in the city of Rubizhne, Luhansk region, volunteer, participant of the Revolution of Dignity **Lyubov Kharuba**. She was detained by the occupiers on July 23–25, 2022 near the occupied Starobilsk of the Luhansk region, where the occupiers were taking people from Rubizhny. After being held in detention in Starobilsk for several days, Ms. Lyubov was released, and she was able to go abroad to her family through the territory of the Russian Federation⁸⁴.

Due to its geographical location near the border with the Russian Federation, **Kharkiv region** (60 cases) was also seriously affected by the occupation. During a field mission in January–February 2023, documentaries of Human Rights Centre ZMINA had the opportunity to personally visit some places where civilians were held after their abduction, and also collected information about the detention and subsequent torture of local activists and their family members.

There are settlements in **Kharkiv region** (in particular, Tsyrkuny, Savyntsi, Ruska Lozova, Pisky–Radkivski, Balakliia, Borova, Borshchivka) where, according to the testimony of the interviewed persons, the so-called "clearing" was carried out – the Russian military inspected the houses of activists and former or active military personnel and they took away all the men (and sometimes women) who lived in that house.

Thus, 70-year-old **Anatoliy Garagaty**, a photographer and documentary videographer, filmed columns of Russian military equipment at the beginning of the occupation of the village of Savyntsi. He was detained on May 28, 2022 due to a denunciation and spent 100 days in detention at the police station in the city of Balakliia,

83 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with the methods of the Berkeley Protocol.

84 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with the methods of the Berkeley Protocol.

becoming a victim of brutal torture (beatings, electrical shock, inhuman conditions of detention, etc.).

“*The Russian military warned that ‘if you speak Ukrainian, we will teach you the Russian language,’ to which I replied that ‘I have taught for a long time,’ and they said, ‘and we will teach right now, with a stick for every word on your forehead’” (Anatoly clarifies – electric shock). That’s what they did, for every Ukrainian word they gave an electric shock⁸⁵.*

On April 27–28, 2022, **Volodymyr Sherstyuk**, the director of the Pisky–Radkivski psychoneurological boarding school, was subjected to arbitrary detention, forced exposure, beatings and psychological pressure was exerted on him, in particular, they threatened to shoot him and his family three times on suspicion of hiding pro–Ukrainian activists in the boarding school citizens

“*They put me on IFV with the question: Are you hiding Ukrainians here, bastard?’ They hit, not hard. They took me to a boarding school: there they conducted a search. On the road near the “Neptun” store, IFV stopped, two soldiers got out. One of them forced me to undress completely⁸⁶.*

Kyiv region was also partially occupied, and there were detentions and abductions of volunteers and representatives of local self–government – at least 33 people are known. Since the level of brutality of the units occupying Kyiv region was high, at least 5 cases of kidnapping were recorded in Kyiv region, which ended in the murder of active citizens and members of their families – these are volunteers **Serhii Kubrushko** and **Andriy Shostak**, as well as the above–mentioned **Sukhenko family**.

Andriy Shostak is a volunteer from Kyiv region. Delivered food, medicine and helped with evacuation. Together with his father–in–law Serhii Kubrushko, he helped the residents of occupied villages in Kyiv region. He was a student of the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary, studied at the correspondence program “Theology and Christian Ministry”, and was also a teacher of religious studies. Andriy Shostak is Serhii’s wife’s father. According to the “Obozrevatel” publication with reference to the representative of the “Patriot Group” NGO Alla Kotenko, contact with him was lost on March 23, 2022, when he was transporting humanitarian aid to the village of Motyzhyn, Kyiv region, together with his father–in–law⁸⁷. Kotenko suggests that the Russian military was waiting for Kubrushko and Shostak. Shostak was killed by the

85 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the urban–type settlement Savyntsi, Kharkiv region, January 31, 2023.

86 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the village of Pisky–Radkivski, Kharkiv Region, October 18, 2022.

87 Marina Petyk. The occupiers could have waited for the volunteers: they found another body of a murdered person near Kyiv Ukrainian / OBOZREVATEL, June 4, 2022: <https://war.obozrevatel.com/okkupanty-mogli-podzhidat-volonterov-pod-kievom-nashli-esche-odno-telo-ubitogo-ukraintsya.htm>

Russian military (as was Kubrushko). His body was found near a mass grave in Motyzyn on April 11, 2022, as reported by the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary⁸⁸.

2.5. Duration of being incommunicado or detention of active citizens in places of detention

Data on people who have become victims of violent abductions or arbitrary detentions

It should be noted that information from the temporarily occupied territories is received irregularly, this is due to the instability of mobile and Internet connections in such territories, as well as the fact that civilians are afraid to transmit such data through means of communication, because they are not sure, will they somehow be intercepted and used against them. Therefore, information about the abductions of active citizens arrives either a day or more, or the activists report the abduction and subsequent release on their own – already after they have found themselves safe.

With 311 persons who became victims of enforced disappearances, there is no contact or they were arbitrarily detained, in the vast majority of them (88%), the term is calculated in months of detention. The most recent fact of kidnapping that became known to Human Rights Centre ZMINA was on May 6, 2023, when a member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine Iryna Levchenko and her husband Oleksandr were arbitrarily detained in the city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia Region⁸⁹.

As for 37 persons, there is currently no exact information on the date of disappearance or loss of contact with them, so it is impossible to establish the exact duration of the lack of contact with them.

Data on people who were released from detention

Of the 235 released, a certain number of those arbitrarily detained by the occupiers were released on the same day (17 persons) or the day after their detention (12 persons).

Somewhat more people were released within a week (2–7 days) after detention (20 persons). 35 persons were arbitrarily detained for one to two weeks, and 89 people were detained for more than two weeks (15–23 days). In general, according to the observations of the documentarians, if people are not released in the coming

88 Post by the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uets.ukraine/posts/3110523069203387>

89 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with the methods of the Berkeley Protocol.

days after detention, it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve their release. It is worth noting that for 62 persons, there is currently no exact data on the date of their disappearance or release, as they are still in occupied settlements, so it is impossible to accurately estimate how long they were out of touch or detained.

Representatives of the occupying power in various regions used the practice of so-called “administrative arrests” lasting 30 days – when civilians were kidnapped and deprived of their freedom for the time being, allegedly to check the data, whether his or her actions did not constitute a crime under the criminal law. ZMINA recorded at least one case in Kherson region, in which a man was actually released after the term of administrative arrest finished⁹⁰.

2.6. Involvement of occupation units in enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens

Russian troops, during the capture of the territories, encountered unexpected strong resistance from the civilian population. Accordingly, Russian units tended by default to view all local residents as a potential threat to themselves. This became the reason for the development by the Russian Federation of a large-scale filtering system in the territories of Ukraine occupied after February 24, 2022, in which various army units and paramilitary formations participated. The practice of forced disappearances of active citizens has become systematic and comprehensive.

Mostly, the victims identified the military on the basis of indirect signs – the features and general quality of the uniform, accent and appearance.

The Russian military, directly involved in the perpetration of enforced disappearances, in the vast majority of cases tried to hide their identity by using balaclavas and the like.

Among the groups of units identified by the interviewees, the following can be distinguished.

Representatives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

These units are identified by the interviewees and their relatives by the higher quality of military equipment and their use of methods of interrogation, torture, detention in places of imprisonment.

90 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA by telephone on an anonymous basis.

Army units of the Russian Federation

Such units were identified by the victims by the colour of their camouflage (“green”, “swamp green”) and the quality of their equipment. Some of the victims and witnesses of arbitrary detention reported in their testimonies about the involvement in the violent disappearances of representatives of units, mainly formed from residents of the North Caucasian, Far Eastern and Siberian parts of Russia (the so-called “Caucasians”, “Chechens”, “Dagestanis”, “Ingushs”, “Buryats” etc.).

Subdivisions of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR”

Such units were formed from the population of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The victims identified them by worse equipment, a different accent, etc. In many cases, such units performed the functions of armed guard of detainees or directly committed illegal detention. They could also torture detainees directly in places of temporary detention.

It is worth noting that Russian units in many cases did not act independently of each other. The interviewed victims often pointed to the simultaneity of the actions of the FSB of the Russian Federation, units of the so-called “LPR” – “DPR”, army units.

2.7. Systematic policy of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions

On the basis of the analysed information, it can be concluded that the forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of active citizens of Ukraine during the full-scale invasion by Russian forces are **a planned systematic policy**, and not just the arbitrariness of individual actors, particularly given the following factors.

Representatives of the occupying forces intentionally and knowingly completely **isolated the detained civilians** from any contact with the outside world. According to international humanitarian law, detainers must in any case inform relatives of the fact of detention by any available means, even if there are problems with electricity or mobile communications. In many documented cases, victims of enforced disappearances were held in official places of detention belonging to the federal penitentiary system of the Russian Federation. There were no difficulties in informing the family, but the Russian side did it intentionally.

In many documented cases, **the relatives of the victims of enforced disappearances turned to all the mechanisms of finding their relatives** that were available to them – to “law enforcement agencies” in the temporarily occupied territories, to ministries and departments in the Russian Federation (in particular, they submit-

ted requests to the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, to the Ombudsman of the Russian Federation, personally came to the reception at the so-called police departments and pre-trial detention centres located in the premises of police departments in cities that were temporarily occupied), **but could not get official confirmation** about the fate of the person, his or her place of detention and state of health. This caused and continues to cause severe moral suffering for relatives.

In most documented cases, representatives of the occupation authorities had **a list of activists**, volunteers, representatives of local self-government bodies or had information about their names and surnames, family composition and other data. At least two interviewees testified that after the abduction, during interrogations, they were asked **to provide information about the families and residences** of ATO veterans, activists, and volunteers. Also, representatives of the occupation authorities carried out “filtering” among the civilian population to identify participants of ATO or representatives of territorial defence.

One of the interviewed residents of Kharkiv region, who was the head of the settlement, reported:

“...They re-registered all men under the age of 35. Everyone was undressed, they looked at their shoulders, fingers (calluses), checked their tattoos, looked for traces of a bulletproof vest. One had an eagle tattoo, they immediately put a bag over his head and took him to the basement. We don't know what they did with him⁹¹.”

A resident of Kharkiv region, whose son was arbitrarily detained, says that the representatives of the occupation authorities knew the name of the person they were looking for:

“When he (the main Russian) came in, he immediately asked: “Where are the children?”. We still have a daughter. I answered him: “Here she is”. And he said to me: “No. Where are the children?” And here [he] comes out. And they immediately say: “That's another matter”. The (senior) opens the notebook and says: “[first name, last name]. This is him”⁹².”

In the occupied territories, there are often problems with mobile communication and access to the Internet, so **relatives and friends of detained and abducted citizens are unable to report what happened**. Also, people who are under occupation are afraid to spread information about the disappearance of a person, so as not to harm themselves or their loved ones. Relatives of detainees and missing people may not report the disappearance of their loved ones for other reasons. In addition, ZMINA recorded cases when representatives of the occupation authorities conducted

91 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the village of Borshchivka, Kharkiv Region, February 2, 2023.

92 Testimonies documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Kharkiv region on an anonymous basis.

“raids” and confiscated phones from civilian residents. Thus, one of the interviewees from the Kharkiv region reported:

“They took away all my documents and my phone, so I hid so that no one could see me. I almost didn’t go anywhere, because without a passport I could be taken away⁹³.”

In the vast majority of documented cases, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions were accompanied by **physical and psychological effects** of varying degrees of cruelty⁹⁴. The purpose of this influence was both to break the psychological state of the detainee himself and to create an atmosphere of general fear among the local population of the temporarily occupied territories.

Testimony of the victim:

“I already knew how they were beaten and tortured, people told me. They beat very hard with sticks with tips, electric shock, shockers, socks, fists, and pistols. They were beaten with anything that was at hand. They beat them with such sticks, they left them⁹⁵.”

Thus, in the actions of the representatives of the occupation authorities in various settlements that were temporarily occupied, the following general rules for dealing with civilians who have become victims of enforced disappearances or arbitrary detentions can be observed: the application of various pressures to obtain information about possible resistance, the identification of potentially dangerous occupiers of local residents, in particular the identification of pro-Ukrainian activists, volunteers and other categories of active citizens, the implementation of “filtering” measures in occupied settlements and at checkpoints between them, the further detention of civilians without means of communication and the ability to inform relatives about their whereabouts and in what status, as well as the use of physical and psychological violence against civilians during interrogations.

93 Testimonies documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Kharkiv region on an anonymous basis.

94 See also: Torture and ill-treatment of the civilian population on Ukrainian territories, which were under Russian occupation (on the example of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson regions): analytical report / B. Petruniok, O. Hnatiuk, T. Pechonchyk; Human Rights Centre ZMINA. — Kyiv, 2023. — 64 p.: https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/04/torture_ukr_web.pdf

95 Testimonies documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Kharkiv region on an anonymous basis.

2.8. Use of the latest technologies in enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, as well as the use of technologies to investigate such abductions

The analysis carried out by Human Rights Centre ZMINA showed that the Russian military and representatives of the occupying military administration use the following new technologies for the enforced disappearance of civilians.

1. Extraction of information from mobile phones.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Russian troops have been applying so-called filtering measures to civilians in the occupied territories, which involve checking the documents, personal belongings, computer and mobile equipment of civilians when they cross a checkpoint on the way out of occupied settlements. The purpose of these measures is to identify people who support the territorial integrity of Ukraine and are disloyal to the Russian army. The data verified by Human Rights Centre ZMINA show that in the case of finding any information that may indicate indirect support for the Ukrainian army or lack of support for the occupation, Russian forces and armed groups under their control use enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture or cruel and inhumane treatment of civilians handling.

In particular, during filtering activities, the Russian military checks the contents of the memory card of the mobile phones of civilians, as well as the information contained in chat groups and correspondence in social networks on their mobile devices. One of the most popular messengers in Ukraine is Telegram, the functions of which include saving files not only in the account itself, but also in the phone's internal memory. Not all civilians know about such a feature of this messenger. ZMINA recorded cases where civilians deleted information from chat groups in support of Ukraine's sovereignty from their Telegram accounts, but this information remained in the internal memory of the phone. After the Russian military discovered this information, they used psychological pressure, used physical violence against civilians, and subjected them to enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, including illegal criminal prosecutions for allegedly cooperating with Ukrainian intelligence services.

2. Identifying disloyal civilians through the analysis of their activity in social networks in order to then subject them to enforced disappearance

At least 4 witnesses told ZMINA on condition of anonymity that during the occupation of certain territories of Ukraine, in particular Kherson and part of Zaporizhzhia regions, Russian troops and the occupying military administration complete-

ly cut off access to Ukrainian mobile and Internet providers, as well as to Ukrainian television. At the same time, according to interviewees, the occupying authorities installed devices that monitor the incoming and outgoing Internet traffic from the mobile phones and computers of civilian residents in order to monitor their contacts with the outside world and monitor which groups in social networks they read. According to Serhii Khlan, an activist from Kherson and a member of the Kherson Regional Council, this technically happened according to the following method: “The Russian occupiers disconnected the systems that received the signal from the power supply on the fibre optic cable. ...Mobile communication is blocked completely throughout the region. There is only a Russian Internet provider, and only it works. Russia has been running a fibre-optic cable from Crimea since the first days of the occupation of Kherson region, but two days ago they launched and immediately turned off mobile communications and the Internet. As for the mobile operator, after disconnecting the connection, the occupiers began to distribute SIM cards with the Russian code to residents of Kherson region in exchange for people’s passport data. ...This is done in order to monitor Internet traffic, what exactly the residents of Kherson region read and watch, and listen to the conversations of citizens”⁹⁶.

The purpose of these measures was and remains the total suppression of the resistance of public activists, the identification of all civilians disloyal to the Russian army for their punishment, in particular with the help of forced disappearances, and countering the spread of information about international crimes and human rights violations committed by the Russian army in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

3. Use of social networks to disseminate forced “confessions” of public activists who have become victims of enforced disappearances

Representatives of the occupation authorities use the social networks of public activists and volunteers they have captured to force them to record so-called “confession and apology videos”.

ZMINA has documented at least two cases in which the Russian military, after carrying out enforced disappearances of Ukrainian public activists, probably through psychological pressure and physical violence, forced them to record videos of so-called forced confessions, apologising to the Russian army or “confessing” to direct participation in the armed conflict on the side Ukrainian army. After that, the forced video “confessions” were shared in Russian media and social networks.

Thus, **Olena Naumova**, a well-known blogger and public figure from Kherson, was forced to record such a video after she was abducted by the Russian military on

96 Liliya Rzhetska. What is happening in the occupied Kherson region? / DW, June 2, 2022: <https://www.dw.com/uk/bez-zviazku-z-inshym-svitom-shcho-vidbuvaietsia-na-okupovanii-terytorii-khersonskoi-oblasti/a-61999543>

August 23, 2022. The video was shared on social media as allegedly voluntarily⁹⁷. The broadcasting of such videos, which contain false information and information that is extremely contrary to the civil position and beliefs of a person, is humiliating and capable of causing severe moral suffering to a person. Serhii Tsyhipa, a resident of Nova Kakhovka in Kherson region, a veteran of the ATO, a journalist, the head of the NGO “Kahovsky bridgehead”, was kidnapped when he was going with humanitarian aid to a resident of the neighbouring Tavriysk, and soon a video with Tsyhipa appeared on propaganda channels, where he is called “ a senior officer of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, who moved to the Russian Federation”. In it, the man criticises the actions of the Ukrainian army.

4. Using the content of mobile phones and correspondence in social networks as “evidence” or “pretext” for the detention and further criminal prosecution of active citizens and bringing them to administrative and criminal liability by the occupying state

Thus, ZMINA documented a testimony regarding a forced detention in Chernihiv region, in which a woman stated that the Russian military checked the contents of the men’s phones, paying attention specifically to the content of correspondence and files stored on the phone, despite the fact that the correspondence itself could have been deleted. It was from the phone of Serhii Tsyhipa, a Kherson activist, blogger, volunteer, and protest organiser, that Oleh Baturin, a journalist from Kherson region, was invited to a meeting, and the latter suggests that he could get into the “circle of interest” precisely because Serhii’s phone, which was under control of representatives of the occupation authorities, contained working correspondence with him.

5. At the same time, the latest technologies can help in finding persons who have been forcibly abducted or disappeared under circumstances indicating the possibility of illegal detention in places of detention, in such cases.

1. Monitoring of bank transactions of abducted persons conducted after their forced disappearance. As part of the criminal proceedings, using the latest technologies, evidence can be collected, in particular, bank information (often during enforced disappearances, the occupiers take the victim’s bank cards, and can then use them to withdraw funds in areas where ATMs operate, or to transfer funds to their cards or cards of affiliated persons, which is tracked using access to mobile banking, which can be provided only at the request of law enforcement authorities). In at least three cases documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA, family members and acquaintances of victims of en-

97 Testimony documented by Human Rights Centre ZMINA from open sources of information in accordance with methods of the Berkeley protocol.

forced disappearances reported receiving messages from mobile phones or social media accounts on behalf of the abducted person, or learned that funds had been withdrawn or transferred from the abducted person's bank card, but had no confirmation, that these actions were committed by a member of their family, and not by the kidnappers, and therefore they needed to find out who and how sent these messages or used the card.

2. **Billing of mobile phones of victims of enforced disappearances.** Another area where new technologies can help in locating an abducted person is tracking a person's movements using mobile network data that can be reported by mobile service companies, linked to GPS data that shows when and from where the signal was sent from the abducted person's mobile phone to the nearest mobile towers, also at the request of investigative authorities.
3. **Using CCTV footage.** To search for abducted people and the abductors, the search for video surveillance cameras can be used, even in the temporarily occupied territory, because some servers, where recordings from surveillance cameras are stored, are still located in the territory under the control of Ukraine or in third countries, and after losing access to the surveillance cameras it is possible to access the videos saved by them. In order to obtain temporary access to video recordings in accordance with the requirements of Ukrainian criminal procedural law, law enforcement agencies need to obtain a permission of the investigating judge, justifying the necessity and urgency of the need for such actions. The victims themselves or family members of the kidnapped person cannot get such information from banking institutions or business owners who have equipped their premises with video cameras or installed such video cameras outside, because bank secrecy and privacy of individuals are protected by law.
4. **Facial recognition system.** A separate area of application of the latest technologies is facial recognition systems for the analysis of propaganda videos posted by the occupiers regarding searches, arrests and other actions against Ukrainian civilians engaged in active peaceful resistance. These videos do not include the names of the detainees, but often show their faces or even identification documents – and this can be evidence that the kidnapped person was indeed kidnapped, or is being held in a certain city, in a particular penitentiary or investigative facility the detention centre where this video was shot.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the state authorities of Ukraine:

- ensure the creation of a national rehabilitation system for persons affected by enforced disappearances, which will include medical, psychological rehabilitation, social support, etc.;
- encourage the International Committee of the Red Cross to carry out the actions provided for by the organisation's mandate through systematic appeals regarding the need to gain access to Ukrainian civilians, in particular activists who are held in places of detention;
- increase sanction and institutional pressure on the Russian Federation to stop its practice of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions;
- together with non-governmental organisations, develop and conduct an information campaign at the international level to draw the attention of the international community to the problem of abducted civilians, in particular active citizens.

To law enforcement agencies of Ukraine (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Prosecutor General's office of Ukraine, Security Service of Ukraine):

- ensure effective registration of persons who have become victims of various types of war crimes, including enforced disappearances, in particular, ensure the effective functioning of the Unified Register of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances, as well as include in it a separate category of "civilian persons who have become victims of enforced disappearances" and update information on their number and location;
- take measures to establish the whereabouts of persons subject to enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention — based on available means and opportunities;

- establish periodic public reporting on the investigation of cases of abduction and illegal detention of civilians in the temporarily occupied territories and on the territory of Russia, establish supervision over the investigation of these categories of cases;
- continue systematic documentation and investigation of crimes of enforced disappearances, taking into account international standards for effective investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

To international organisations and partners:

- condemn the systematic practice of enforced disappearances by the armed forces controlled by the Russian Federation against the civilian population in the occupied territories of Ukraine;
- call on the Russian Federation to ensure unimpeded access of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organisations to Ukrainian civilians in captivity;
- intensify efforts for the unconditional and immediate release by the Russian Federation of all civilians who have become victims of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions;
- call on the International Committee of the Red Cross to take an active part in the search for abducted civilians, in particular, to conduct regular visits to places of detention in the occupied territories and in Russia, to access all abducted civilians held by Russia, as well as to establish a process of exchanging letters, providing clothing, medicine, etc.;
- promote the dissemination of information about persons who were subjected to enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention in the territories of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation.

ADDITION

**INDIVIDUAL STORIES OF
FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED
AND ARBITRARILY DETAINED
ACTIVISTS, AS WELL AS THOSE
WHO WERE FOUND DEAD
AFTER ABDUCTION**



Abducted or arbitrarily detained active citizens, including those whose location is unknown



Ruslan Abdurakhmanov – an activist who was kidnapped on May 20, 2022 in the village of Azovske, Henichesk district, where the occupiers once again introduced filtering measures, searched and inspected the living quarters of local residents. In the course of such illegal actions, the occupiers detained him and took him to the territory of the occupied Crimea.



Dmytro Afanasyev – a deputy of the Ship District Council in Kherson from the "European Solidarity" political party. Abducted by occupation forces on March 22, 2022. [According](#) to Kherson Regional Council deputy Serhii Khlan, after the dispersal of the pro-Ukrainian protest that day, Dmytro Afanasyev defended his wife, who was being tried to be detained, and for that he was beaten, breaking his ribs. Two hours after the described events, the occupiers came to Afanasyev's home, ransacked it, seized his deputy's ID, video from surveillance cameras and mobile phones of family members, and detained all the men who were in the house (among them Dmytro's friends). On March 23, 2022, the search was conducted again, but one of the detained men was released, so he was able to inform Afanasyev's family that the occupiers were torturing the detainees. Currently, there is no information about Dmytro's whereabouts.



Oleksandr Babych – the mayor of the city of Hola Prystan, Skadovsky district, Kherson region. According to the World Organisation Against Torture, between 7 and 8 in the morning on March 28, 2022, armed servicemen of the Russian Federation came to Babich's house and searched it. He was at home at that time. He was taken to the building of the Hoa Prystan City Council. The building was surrounded by armed Russian servicemen. In Babich's office, where he was brought, there were 15 armed men in camouflage uniforms without insignia with white bandages on their hands and feet. The armed men behaved aggressively. At approximately 10:15 a.m., they took him away from the Holoprystan City Council in an unknown direction. There is unofficial information that he is in the Simferopol Pre-trial detention centre No. 2, but the pre-trial detention centre itself refuses to recognize this.



Serhii Barchuk – the former deputy head of the regional office of the Pension Fund of Ukraine in the city of Kherson. After the Russian occupation, he tried to hide part of the property of the Pension Fund of Ukraine (about 20 personal computers) in his apartment, as he was responsible for their storage. After Sergey was kidnapped by the Russians in July 2022, his father **Artem**, **mother-in-law Lidia Podozerska** and **uncle Oleksii** decided to take care of the computers and hide them elsewhere. By chance, they met a family friend, **Oleh Samotoy**, who agreed to help with transportation. On July 22, 2022, they came to Serhii's apartment and were abducted by Russians and accused of "stealing the property belonging to the state". Currently, all family members and friends are held in several places of detention – Serhii in Crimea, Lidia in Chaplinka, and Oleksiy, Artem and Oleh Samotoy in Kalanchak (Kherson region). According to some reports, all of them were subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment.



Oleh Budyak – the director of the local lore museum of the Osypenkivsk amalgamated territorial community of Zaporizhzhia region, kidnapped on April 19, 2022. Currently, there is no information about Oleh's whereabouts.



Alla Buryko – the director of the cultural centre of the Plodronensk village community from the village of Bratske, Melitopol district, Zaporizhzhia region. On August 25, 2022, she and her son Oleksandr were kidnapped by the Russian military, allegedly due to their reluctance to cooperate with the occupiers. There is currently no information on Alla's whereabouts.



Yuri Vasiliev – a deputy of the Hornostaivka Council of Kherson region, as well as his wife Vasylieva Olha (a teacher) were kidnapped from their own home on October 18, 2022. There is no confirmed data on their location.



Oleksii Vynnychenko – the headman of the village of Hrebenykovka, Sumy region. On March 14, 2022, the Russians broke into the house and took it to an unknown destination. Currently, there is no information about Oleksiy's whereabouts.



Volodymyr Vorovka – a doctor of sciences, professor, lived in the Melitopol district of the Zaporizhzhia region, was kidnapped on December 13, 2022, from his own home. He suffers from a number of chronic diseases and needs treatment.



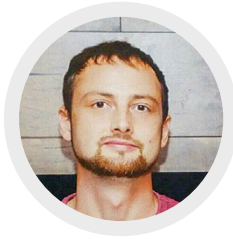
Iryna Horobtsova – a volunteer who was detained on May 13, 2022 in the city of Kherson. He is currently being held in occupied Crimea, lawyer Emil Kurbedinov said, referring to the response received from "law enforcement" authorities. The lawyer also reported that, based on the text of the document, Iryna Horobtsova was held in pre-trial detention centre No. 1 in the city of Simferopol at least since May 25, 2022.



Yevhen Guryanov – a volunteer from Bucha, Kyiv region. Yevhen Guryanov's mother reported that after the start of hostilities, he was engaged in humanitarian aid to local residents and also helped with evacuation. On March 18, 2022, in the early hours of the day, military personnel wearing the "Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" chevrons on their uniforms took Yevhen Guryanov from his own home in Bucha. Military personnel drove up to the house on an armoured personnel carrier. They turned over all the things in the house, took documents, including the foreign passport of Yevhen Guryanov's brother. Evgeny himself was put on an armoured personnel carrier and taken to an unknown direction. Evgeny's wife, Natalia, [reported](#) that as of April 30, 2022, Evgeny was in the pre-trial detention centre in the city of Novozybkov, Bryansk region. At the end of August 2022, Natalia received a call from the Red Cross and was informed that Yevgeny was allowed to write a letter to his family. Only two words were written in the letter by her husband's hand: "Alive, healthy".



Serhii Dyachok – a volunteer from the village of Dymer, Kyiv region, who was kidnapped on March 17, 2022. He was stopped by the Russian military after he was taking people for evacuation. His car was taken away and there was no further contact with him. His whereabouts are currently unknown.



Yaroslav Zhuk – a volunteer. On June 17, 2022, his car was stopped near a supermarket in Melitopol, Yaroslav himself was pulled out of the car, thrown into another car and taken to an unknown house with a basement. Zhuk was tortured there until August 8, 2022: he was brutally beaten, electrocuted and his skin burned with a blowtorch. Under torture, he was forced to record a video in which he makes a "heartfelt confession" to the preparation of acts of terrorism. At the moment, Yaroslav Zhuk is being held in the Rostov-on-Don detention centre on the territory of the Russian Federation, he is accused of preparing acts of international terrorism and is periodically subjected to beatings and brutal treatment. A court hearing recently began in the city of Rostov-on-Don, Russia. At the beginning of June 2023, Zhuk stated at a court hearing that on May 29–30, as well as on June 5, employees of the Rostov pre-trial detention centre severely beat him: they beat him with feet and batons, doused him with water and used an electric shocker.



Oleksandr Zarivnyi – the head of the humanitarian policy department of the Kherson district state administration, the head of the public organisation "ATO Veterans" from Kherson. In a video message on March 18, 2022, the mayor of Oleshky Yevhen Ryschuk reported that during the day they could not find one of the local residents, and on March 27 – that Zarivnyi was captured and held by the occupiers. Ryschuk also said that on March 27 Zarivnyi's apartment was searched. For about four weeks, Zarivnyi was in the Kherson detention centre, which was seized by the Russian military. After that, the man was transported to occupied Simferopol, where he continues to be held in Simferopol Pre-trial Detention Centre No. 2 on charges of espionage (Article 276 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, imprisonment for a term of 10 to 20 years).



Pavlo Zaporozhets – a lawyer who was kidnapped by the occupiers in the city of Kherson and accused of "terrorism". According to the investigation, he was going to detonate explosive devices during the "Immortal Regiment" campaign on May 9, 2022. In May 2022, a court hearing began in the city of Rostov-on-Don, Russia, during which Pavel's lawyer stated that he should be held as a prisoner of war, since he was a representative of the secret services.



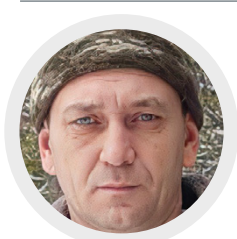
Volodymyr Zbukar – a volunteer from Balakliia, Kharkiv Region, was abducted by the Russian military at a checkpoint in Verbivka on March 29, 2022. His whereabouts are currently unknown.



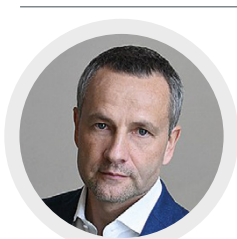
Hlib Zubov – a lawyer from Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region, was kidnapped from his home together with a relative on April 20, 2022. On the same day, the office of the relatives was searched.



Oleh Zubov – a lawyer from Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region, was kidnapped from his home together with a relative on April 20, 2022. On the same day, the office of the relatives was searched.



Anatoliy Izbash – a volunteer from the village Kinburn Spit, Mykolaiv region, who was kidnapped on March 19, 2022. The location is unknown.



Ihor Kolykhaev – the mayor of Kherson. Kidnapped from work on June 28, 2022. Russian Guardsmen (as well as presumably FSB officers) conducted a search, put him on a bus and took him to an unknown direction. According to media reports, Kolykhaev was in Kherson pre-trial detention centre. Then the mayor's son reported that he had been transferred to the city of Chaplynka, Kherson region, and that his father's health had deteriorated due to lack of food and water, as well as proper medical care.



Viktor Kuzmenko – the head of the Department of Information and Communication Resources of the Berdiansk City Executive Committee. According to Berdiansk City Council, Kuzmenko was abducted by the Russian military after the operation of the humanitarian centre was blocked on April 6, 2022. According to the Berdiansk City Council, around 4:00 p.m., Russian servicemen released almost all of the humanitarian centre's employees, except for Kuzmenko and three other people. His whereabouts are currently unknown. According to some unconfirmed data, he may be released.



Iryna Levchenko — a journalist from the city of Melitopol, kidnapped together with her husband from her own house on May 6, 2023. The fact of the abduction became known only at the end of May. According to some reports, torture may be applied to the spouses, they are accused of terrorist activities. The place of detention of Iryna Levchenko and her husband is unknown.



Volodymyr Lifintsev — an educator from the Kakhovka district of Kherson region, he was kidnapped on July 27, 2022, his whereabouts are unknown. According to some unverified data, he may be released, but no further information was received.



Vadym Lomachuk — took people through Romanivka as a volunteer driver, on March 24, 2022, he disappeared from the street of Bucha, Kyiv region, whereabouts unknown.



Mykola Maslii — a member of the Kupiansk City Council of Kharkiv region, a veteran of the ATO, and a public activist. Disappeared on March 1, 2022, during a protest against the occupation "Kupiansk is Ukraine": he was walking in front of a column of demonstrators with a Ukrainian flag. According to Newsroom, he was called aside for a conversation by the Russian military, after which they started shooting and releasing smoke bombs, and Maslii was taken away. The occupiers deny that Maslii was kidnapped. After the release of Kupiansk, there is no new information about the fate of Maslii. On June 9, 2023, the European Court of Human Rights registered the application in the case of Maslii. There is no information about the location.



Mariano Calatayud Garcia, or Mario — a volunteer in Kherson. He helped children who were left without parental care; there is also information that he participated in protests against the occupation. [According](#) to "Krym.Realii", which refers to the local publication "Kavun.City", Mario's friends reported that on March 19, after 2:00 p.m., contact with him disappeared. And in his interview after his release from captivity, journalist Oleh Baturin noted that there were probably a Spaniard and a Dutchman with him, so the publication assumed that the volunteer was kept there as well. Currently, he is being held in the Simferopol pre-trial detention centre, his health is bad.



Yevhen Matveev – the mayor of Dniprorudne, Zaporizhzhia region. On March 13, 2022, he stopped communicating. On March 19, 2022, the Opposition Platform "For Life" (the political party he belongs to) announced on March 19, 2022 that there was no connection with Matveev, and his car was found abandoned near the checkpoint where he was allegedly captured by the Russians. According to MRPL.CITY, the reason for the abduction was a refusal to cooperate with the Russian military. His whereabouts are currently unknown.



Volodymyr Mykolaenko – the former mayor of the city of Kherson (2014–2020). Kidnapped on April 18, 2022. He went to a meeting with an acquaintance and after that did not get in touch. On July 27, his wife received official confirmation from the Russian side that he was "on the territory of the Russian Federation". Volodymyr's exact location is unknown. Previously, Mykolaenko informed the correspondent of the socio-political publication "Most" that he had received threats from collaborators.



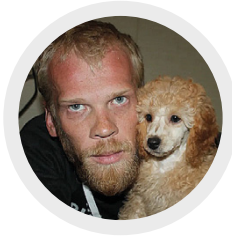
Oleksandr Panchenko – an activist and lawyer from the city of Prymorsk, Zaporizhzhia region, was kidnapped on April 20 or 21, 2022. Currently, there is no confirmed information about Oleksandr's whereabouts.



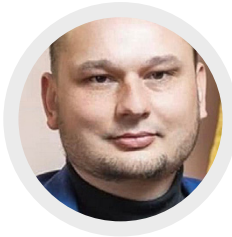
Mykola Petrovsky – a volunteer from Kherson region. He has a disability because he lost part of his leg in a car accident, but despite this, he continued to volunteer. Russians kidnapped Mykola on March 27, 2022 in the centre of Kherson. He was kept in the basement for half a year, and during the de-occupation of Kherson, he was taken out of the city and transferred to the Simferopol pre-trial detention centre. Mykola was brutally tortured in captivity, his fingers were broken, and his healthy leg and shoulder were severely injured. His health is very bad.



Artem Pilypenko – a volunteer from the city of Balakliia, Kharkiv region, was detained on April 21, 2022. Currently, there is no confirmed information about Artem's whereabouts.



Yevhen Pryshlyak – on August 13, 2022, he was detained by the Russian military together with a friend when he stayed overnight at his place. Relatives indicate that the Russian military accused Yevhen Pryshlyak's friend of "espionage" because he worked in the National Police. As for Yevhen himself, the Russians did not like the photos and video files on his phone about the Russian military. Currently, according to unconfirmed data, the men are being held on the territory of Russia. In January 2023, Pryshlyak's family received a note written in Yevhen's handwriting through the International Committee of the Red Cross.



Ihor Protokovilo – a deputy of the Nova Kakhovka City Council, he was kidnapped on April 19, 2022. Currently, there is no confirmed information about Ihor's whereabouts.



Marharyta Kharenko – an SMM manager of the Ukrainian Voluntary Service, who was engaged in social delivery (including medicines, products and clothes) in Zaporizhzhia and Melitopol, was kidnapped on January 9, 2023 from her own home in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. The website of the service has a photo of the team working on this project, where Marharyta was also present. When the girl was just abducted, the main page of the organisation had the mark "USAID" (United States Agency for International Development). Marharyta was detained in the Melitopol Penitentiary No. 144, and from there she was transferred to the pre-trial detention centre in the village of Yakymivka. As it turned out later, the Russians opened a criminal case against her under the articles of "extremism" and "terrorism". On March 30, 2023, the court hearing of the case against Marharyta began.



Serhii Khilchenko – the head of the Khrestiv community of Kherson region. Kidnapped from work on June 28, 2022. The occupiers took Serhii in an unknown direction. His whereabouts are still unknown.



Dmytro Khilyuk – a UNIAN journalist. He was abducted on March 3 in the village of Kozarovichi, Vyshhorod district, Kyiv region. There is a witness, released that day, who saw Khilyuk with other hostages. It is known that at first they were kept in warehouses in Kozarovichi, then they were transported to the village of Dymer, Vyshhorod district, Kyiv region. According to ex-prisoners, Khilyuk is being held in pre-trial detention centre No. 2 in the Russian city of Novozybkov in the Bryansk region. In August 2022, thanks to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Dmytro's parents [received](#) a letter from him with a stamp on the envelope of the Russian Post. There was one sentence in it: "My dear mom, dad, I'm alive, healthy, I'm fine". The letter is dated April 14.



Serhii Tsyhipa – a public activist from the city of Nova Kakhovka, Kherson region, head of the NGO "Kahovsky bridgehead". On March 12, 2022, he was on his way to Tavriysk. According to the activist's wife, she was later told that they saw Tsyhipa detained at a checkpoint by the Russian occupiers. Later, videos with Serhii Tsyhipa appeared on [YouTube](#) and Telegram channels. Tsyhipa is currently held in the Simferopol Pre-trial detention centre No. 2, in December 2022 he was charged with espionage (under Article 276 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) and harming the Russian Federation during the so-called special military operation. He faces from 10 to 20 years in prison.



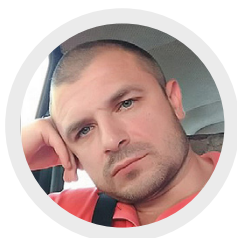
Oleksandr Shmyhol – the head of the Vilkhivka Territorial Community of Kharkiv region. According to the report of the Association of Cities of Ukraine dated August 22, 2022, he is still in captivity.



Dmytro Shurda – a volunteer and a boxing coach from Mariupol. Information about Shurda's kidnapping was [published](#) on April 6, 2022 by his wife Svitlana on Facebook. According to her information, Shurda was kidnapped on his way out of Mariupol on March 17 or 18, 2022. In captivity, he suffered a heart attack, which he was able to inform his family about by phone at the end of April. He is [probably](#) in the Donetsk pre-trial detention centre. Currently, there is no confirmed data on Dmytro's fate. The last mention of him is a recorded video of him (in clothes similar to a prisoner's robe) that was posted on March 19, 2023.



Iryna Shcherbak – the head of the Department of Education of the Melitopol City Council of Zaporizhzhia region. Mayor of Melitopol Ivan Fedorov reported on her abduction in a video message dated March 28, 2022. He called the reason for this the refusal of Iryna Shcherbak to cooperate with the Russians and restore the educational process in schools according to the Russian program. [According](#) to Fedorov, she was detained by representatives of the Russian occupation structures and now they are making trumped-up charges of embezzling budget funds. The Zaporizhzhia Regional Prosecutor's Office is investigating the incident under Part 1 of Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. Her whereabouts are currently unknown.



Oleksii Yurchenko – an employee of the city executive committee of Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region, manager of executive committee affairs. [According](#) to the website "Berdiansk 061" with reference to the Berdiansk City Council, on April 6, 2022, the Russian military blocked the work of the humanitarian centre until 4:00 p.m., after which they released almost all of the centre's employees. Then Yurchenko disappeared, along with two men: members of the executive committee, Viktor Kuzmenko, Oleksandr Faiev, and the director of the centre, Oleh Balaban. On April 16, 2022, the occupiers [posted](#) a propaganda video of him, most likely recorded under duress. The propaganda statement in the description of the video is signed by Volodymyr Rogov, a member of the occupation administration in the Zaporizhzhia region. Yurchenko's whereabouts are currently unknown.



Borys Yarmolenko – the head of the utility property department of the Enerhodar city council, known for his pro-Ukrainian position, was kidnapped on June 23, 2022.

Released active citizens



Viktoriia Andrusha — a mathematics teacher in Brovary, Kyiv region, at the time of her abduction she was in Chernihiv region. According to Human Rights Watch, on March 25, 2022, the Russian military searched her family's home, claiming that they may be collaborating with the Armed Forces. A few days after the first search, the Russians once again came to Andrusha's house and took her mother away, claiming that she "raised Viktoriia badly". The woman was able to return home only on March 31. The Russians first took Victoria to a boiler house in the nearby village of Novyi Bykiv, which was used as an isolation ward, kept her there for three or four days, and then took her to a pre-trial detention centre in the Kursk region of Russia. On September 29, Victoria and two other civilian women were released.



Ihor Anenkov — a former sailor. Participant of pro-Ukrainian protests in Kherson. Illegally detained at home, presumably by the FSB of the Russian Federation, at the beginning of August 2022. He was held in Kherson and Oleshky for 70 days. As a result of being in captivity, he needs rehabilitation.



Roman Baklzhov — an activist from the city of Kherson, on July 6, 2022, he was taken from his home by the Russians. During the search, the family was seized with a laptop, the husband's phone, all flash drives that were seen, personal items that seemed to the occupiers to be "either interesting or dangerous". After that, the occupiers came to the family's apartment several more times and wanted to search it. After 53 days, Roman was released.



Oleh Balaban — an activist, head of the Centre for Children's and Youth Creativity in the city of Berdiansk. According to activist Anzhelika Babych, he was among the local volunteers who were abducted by Russian servicemen on April 8, 2022, from the building of the Centre for Children's Creativity, which housed a humanitarian aid centre. According to her, armed invaders came to the centre on April 8, began interrogating workers and took four men away in an unknown direction. According to the website "Berdiansk 061" with reference to the Berdiansk City Council, all the abductees were released on the same day around 4:00 p.m., except Oleh Balaban, as well as three employees of the executive committee: Oleksii Yurchenko, Oleksandr Faiev, Viktor Kuzmenko. [According](#) to RIA Melitopol, Oleh Balaban was released on April 14, 2022.



Oleh Baturin – a journalist of the "Novy Den" newspaper from Kakhovka, Kherson Region. On March 12, 2022, around 4:30 p.m., he went to meet an acquaintance near a local bus station near his home, after which he lost contact with him. Serhii Tsygipa, whom Baturin was supposed to meet, was already captured by the Russians at that time. On March 20, 2022, the occupiers released Baturin. He spent almost eight days in Russian captivity with almost no food, several days almost without water, soap and a change of clothes. During the abduction and during the first interrogations, he was beaten with the butt of a machine gun. After the capture, the activist had 4 ribs broken.

The FSB of the Russian Federation was probably involved in the abduction of the journalist. Russians, among other things, were interested in his journalistic activities.

The Russian military constantly threatened the man with murder, insulted him. Because he heard other people being brutally beaten nearby, he took these threats as real and assumed that he could be killed at any moment. On July 8, 2022, the Prosecutor General's office of Ukraine [informed](#) Volodymyr Leontiev, the self-proclaimed "head" of the illegal "Nova Kakhovka Military-Civil Administration", about the suspected kidnapping of journalist Oleh Baturin.



Ihor Bahur – Ihor Bahur is an activist from the city of Kakhovka, Kherson region. As reported by the Kakhovka city territorial community, he was abducted by the Russian military on April 3, 2022 in Kakhovka during a peaceful protest against the Russian occupation. According to the data of the Kakhovka city territorial community, he was released on April 6.



Ihor Bashynskyi – an activist from Kherson. According to local residents, he participated in protests against the occupation. He was captured on March 21, 2022, together with a girl who was later released. According to a ZMINA source, as of April 4, 2022, Bashynskyi was dismissed.



Vitalii Bohdanov – a public activist, politician from Kherson. He actively covered the events in Kherson after the occupation on social networks, reporting on the capture of civilian hostages by the Russians. As Serhii Khlan, deputy of the Kherson Regional Council, said, he lost contact with Bohdanov on March 25, 2022. On April 1, Serhii Khlan announced that Bohdanov was released.



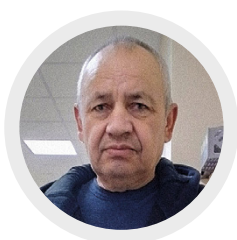
Dmytro Bodrov – a driver and a volunteer. Delivered humanitarian cargo to the city of Mariupol. He was detained on April 1, 2022 while passing a checkpoint. He was illegally held in the correctional colony of Olenivka, Donetsk region. Released.



Dmytro Bodyu – the pastor of the "Word of Life" church in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. On March 19, 2022, Inform zp.ua [reported](#) on his abduction. On March 21, the mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, confirmed this information, noting that the pastor is being held hostage by the Russians. [According](#) to the publication "Vseukrainskyi Sobor" with reference to eyewitnesses, on March 19, 2022, the Russian military came to the house of Dmytro Bodyu in the morning, took mobile phones from the pastor and members of his family and asked Dmytro to leave with them. On the way, they drove into the church building, took the statutory documents of the religious organisation (allegedly for inspection), took all the office equipment they could find in the church, and then left with Pastor Bodyu in an unknown direction. When asked what would happen to him, they replied that they would check the documents and return him the next day, but this did not happen. On March 20, 2022, the Russian military came to the church again, took the pastor's sleeping bag and the Bible, and in the evening announced in the church that it was forbidden to hold a religious service, and it was also forbidden to provide humanitarian aid to people. They explained that such restrictions were introduced because "church representatives went to pro-Ukrainian protests". On March 28, 2022, the pastor's wife, Helen Bodyu, wrote on social networks that her husband had been released.



Hryhoriy Bozhok – a businessman from Snovsk, Chernihiv region (Astra LLC), a former regional council deputy from the "Petro Poroshenko Bloc" political party. He was abducted by the Russian occupation forces in the city of Snovsk on March 25, 2022, together with the mayor of the city, Oleksandr Medvedev. As [reported](#) by the "Social News" channel, he was released on March 28. Two men, who are part of the local law enforcement, were also released.



Buba Vasyl – the director of a utility company in the city of Chonhar, Kherson region, according to anonymous witnesses, he was kidnapped on August 18, 2022. Released.



Mykhailo Burak – the head of the Bekhterska community of the Kherson region. [According](#) to the report of the First Deputy Chairman of the Kherson Regional Council Yuriy Sobolevskiy, he was abducted by the Russian military on April 4, 2022 in the village of Zaliznyi Port, Skadovsk District. On April 5, 2022, the Association of Cities of Ukraine [reported](#) his release.



Vladyslav Buryak – the son of the head of the Zaporizhzhia District State Administration. Oleh Buryak [reported](#) that on April 8, 2022, his son was abducted at a Russian checkpoint in the village of Vasylivka during the movement of an evacuation convoy that was travelling from Melitopol to Zaporizhzhia. According to Buryak, his 16-year-old son was driving to Zaporizhzhia in a car with two women he knew and three minor children. The convoy of cars was stopped by the Russian military. According to available information, the car was held at the checkpoint for three hours, then everyone was released, except for 16-year-old Vladyslav, as Russian servicemen discovered that he is the son of the head of the Regional State Administration.

As Buryak later reported, in captivity he had to clean the room where interrogations and torture took place. Among his duties was cleaning the floor from traces of blood. He reported that he witnessed the torture of other people, but no violence was used against him. For the first 48 days, he was held in a solitary confinement cell in Vasylivka, Zaporizhzhia region. Later, he was transferred to Melitopol, where he was kept in a hotel room under guard. Vladyslav was released on July 7, 2022.



Oleh Bludov – the head of the department of civil protection and cooperation with law enforcement agencies of the city council, kidnapped on March 26, 2022 in the city of Balakliia, Kharkiv region. Released.



V.G. – a social worker, volunteer, activist from the Kherson region. He dealt with issues of combating ill-treatment and cases of torture in places of imprisonment. He was detained on August 13, 2022 at his home. After refusing to cooperate with the occupation administration, he was electrocuted, lost consciousness, and was beaten. I regained consciousness the next day at home. He was able to leave the occupied territory. He needs rehabilitation. Information about the incident was provided anonymously.



Dmytro Vasiliev – the secretary of the Council of the Nova Kakhovka United Territorial Community of Kherson Region. As his wife Ludmila reported, before being taken hostage, he organised the evacuation of civilians from the villages of Kozatske and Vesele and resolved humanitarian issues. According to his wife, on March 16, 2022, Dmytro was captured by the Russians and held in the building of the former department of the Nova Kakhovka police at the address: city of Nova Kakhovka, Dniprovskiy pr., 24 (the occupiers use it as the office of the so-called "commandant's office"). On May 3, 2022, the Kherson edition "Vgoru" reported on his release. Less than a year after his release, he died of a stroke, probably due to the deterioration of his health after captivity.



Kostyantyn Velychko – coordinator of volunteer missions, evacuated civilians from occupied settlements, delivered humanitarian goods. Detained on March 28, 2022 in Mariupol. Was in illegal detention for 107 days, was tortured. Released.



Maksym Vinnyk – Maksym Vinnyk is vice-rector of Kherson State University. The illegal detention became known on June 14, 2022. According to available information, Maksym Vinnyk was abducted on the direct instructions of the so-called self-proclaimed "rector" of Kherson State University – Tetyana Tomilina. Her activities are being investigated by law enforcement agencies of Ukraine. On June 22, 2022, was notified that Maksym Vinnyk was released.



Oleksandr Voronyi – the headman of the village of Chervonyy Mayak, Kherson region, and was kidnapped on June 6, 2022. According to available information, he was released. May be in the occupied territory. He needs rehabilitation.



Hanna Vorosheva – a volunteer who was detained on March 25, 2022 at a checkpoint near Mariupol, she was held in Olenivka Colony in the temporarily occupied territory of Donetsk region, and was released on July 4, 2022.



Hanna Havrylina – the head of the village of Hremiach, Chernihiv region. [According](#) to the "Suspilne Chernihiv" media, the head of the village was captured on March 20, 2022. [According](#) to People's Deputy of Ukraine Iryna Vereshchuk, Havrylina was released as a result of the exchange of prisoners on April 9, 2022. After her release, Havrylina [told](#) "Suspilne" that she was kept in a pre-trial detention centre in the Russian Federation and tortured.



Viktor Havrylyuk – the director of the Kherson Puppet Theater, a public figure. He was taken hostage on March 21, 2022. According to the newspaper "Voice of Ukraine", he was beaten and detained at a protest near the Kherson City State Administration on March 21, 2022. Havrylyuk said that the occupiers took away his push-button mobile phone, studied the contact lists, and then released him. [According](#) to the report of the First Deputy Chairman of the Kherson Regional Council Yuriy Sobolevskiy, Havrylyuk was released the next day, March 22, 2022.



Olha Haysumova – a public activist from Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. Kidnapped on March 12, 2022, during a protest against the Russian occupation in Melitopol. According to eyewitnesses, a group of people in black clothes put her in a car and took her to an unknown direction. Her social media profile has been deleted. As the "RIA Melitopol" publication reported, on March 20, the Russians took Haysumova to a field 25 kilometres from the city and threw her there. According to the activist, she was kept for seven days with a bag over her head, probably in the building of the Military Commissariat, they did not use physical violence, but they exerted psychological pressure. As Olha Haysumova [told](#), she was released after being forced to sign a "refusal" to organise and participate in protest actions, as well as a "document" on informational cooperation and participation in denazification.



Olena Halatsan – the headmistress of school No. 13 in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. As [reported](#) by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Lyudmila Denisova, Olena was kidnapped by the occupiers on March 31, 2022 after refusing to cooperate with the occupiers. On April 3, 2022, the publication "RIA Melitopol" [reported](#) that she was released.



Anatolii Harahatyi – a 70-year-old photographer and documentary videographer interviewed in the village of Savyntsi, Kharkiv Region. At the beginning of the occupation of the village, he filmed columns of Russian military equipment. Detained on May 28, 2022 due to denunciation. He became a victim of brutal electrocution torture and beatings. He spent 100 days in detention at the police station in the city of Balakliia. Even under the threat of torture, he refused to record a video justifying the Russian occupation on his [YouTube channel](#). "I am 70, there is not much left, I want to die an honest and decent person, which I was all my life, so that I would not be ashamed to meet with the souls of my parents", said Anatolii Harahatyi.



Stanislav Hlushkov – a driver, a volunteer who delivered humanitarian aid and evacuated the civilian population from the city of Mariupol. Detained at the entrance to the city at the end of March 2022. He was illegally held in a correctional colony in Olenivka, Donetsk region. He was accused of "terrorist activity". Released along with a number of other volunteer drivers in July 2022.



Volodymyr Hnatovskiy – a volunteer driver who evacuated civilians from the village of Manhush and the city of Mariupol. Detained at the end of March 2022. He was illegally held in a correctional colony in Oleshky, Donetsk region. He was tortured. Released.



Oleksandr Hunko – the chief editor of the Internet project "Nova Kakhovka.City" from Nova Kakhovka, Kherson region. [According](#) to the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, on April 3, 2022, the Russian occupiers searched Hunko's home. According to their data, phones and electronic devices were seized after the search, and the journalist was detained. According to their testimony, the day before the publication "Nova Kakhovka.City" received an email with the demand of the occupiers to cooperate with them and a call to cover the events "correctly". [According](#) to activist Maksym Birovash, Hunko was held at the local police station and was released on April 6, 2022. On April 13, 2022, a video shot by the occupiers was [published](#), in which Hunko says that he is allegedly ready to cooperate with the occupation authorities.



Viktor Debelyi – the son of Viktor Debelyi, the head of Ivanivka community of Kherson region. Detained during a house search. A plastic bag was thrown over his head, his hands were tied behind his back with cable ties, he was kicked in the kidneys at least five times and taken to the previously captured premises of the Police Department No. 2 of the Henichesk District Police Department. There, Viktor was beaten and "interrogated", demanding to reveal the location of his father. They released him in a few hours.



Dmytro Dziadevych – the Orthodox priest, abbot of the Church of Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in Kherson. As reported, from the first days of the war, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste began to help everyone in need: they distributed food packages, prepared and distributed hot lunches for the needy in the Kherson temple. According to "Suspilne" reports with reference to the International Anti-Narcotics Association in Kherson, on April 1, 2022, Dmytro left the church after the service and was taken to an unknown direction, while the phone was turned off. After some time, information appeared that Dmytro Dziadevych was being held hostage. In the evening of the same day, as "Suspilne" [reported](#), the priest returned home.



Serhii Drozdyk – a deputy of the Kherson Regional Council from the "Opposition Platform – For Life" political party. As [reported](#) in the Kakhovka city territorial community, he was kidnapped on April 2, 2022 from his own home in Kakhovka. On March 3, the local publication "Most" [reported](#) with reference to Yehor Ustinov, head of the regional organisation of the Oppositional Platform, that Drozdyk was released.



Iryna Dubchenko – a journalist, volunteer from the village of Rozivka, Zaporizhzhia region. The fact that she was detained became [known](#) from a report by journalist Yakov Noskov on March 28, 2022. The woman was accused of supporting and hiding the Ukrainian military. Iryna was taken to Donetsk for "investigative actions". Her sister Oleksandra Dubchenko told reporters that Iryna last called her on March 26, 2022 at 2 p.m., and said that someone from the local area told the occupiers about her volunteer and journalistic activities. According to the sister, on March 28, Iryna's parents received information from the occupation commandant's office of Rozivka that Iryna had been taken to Donetsk supposedly for a "trial". Dubchenko was released and returned to her family, which Noskov [reported](#) on April 11, 2022.



Viktor Dudka – a deputy of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Council from the "Servant of the People", a farmer. According to the website of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Council, he was abducted by the Russian military on April 6, 2022 in the temporarily occupied village of Mykhailivka in the Zaporizhzhia Region. Released.



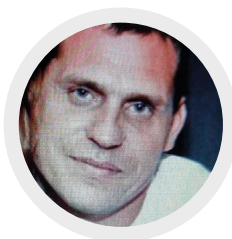
Yosyp Zalizetskyi – the father of Svitlana Zalizetska, journalist from Melitopol, editor-in-chief of RIA "Melitopol". [According](#) to the daughter, on March 23, 2022, the father was taken hostage in order to pressure her: at seven in the morning, three men (one in civilian clothes, two in uniform and with assault rifles) came to their home in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region (75-year-old Yosyp was there with his wife), they searched the apartment, seized the couple's phones, and then took Yosyp Zalizetskyi to an unknown destination. At the same time, the occupiers began blackmailing Svitlana Zalizetska: they forced her father to call her on March 23 around eight in the evening. He said that they are keeping him in the basement and demand that she return to Melitopol. On March 26, Svitlana Zalizetska [reported](#) that her father was released the evening before, after she fulfilled the demands of the occupiers – she handed over control of the RIA "Melitopol" website to them.



Leila Ibrahimova – a deputy of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Council, the director of the Melitopol City Local History Museum, a member of the Melitopol Regional Committee for the Promotion of the Return of the Crimean Tatars to their historical homeland "Azat". She was kidnapped from her own house in Melitopol at six in the morning on March 10, 2022 by people in military uniform. Eskender Bariev, a member of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, head of the Crimean Tatar Resource Centre, [reported](#) on the abduction. At the same time, these people searched the deputy's apartment and took her phone. Ibrahimova was released on the same day.



Dmytro Kapsha – a volunteer from the city of Mariupol. After the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, he returned to the city from western Ukraine and was detained. Tortured. He was in a correctional colony in Olenivka, Donetsk region. Released.



Anatolii Kachynskiy – an activist from the city of Kakhovka, Kherson region. [According](#) to the Kakhovka urban territorial community, he was abducted by the Russian military on April 3, 2022 in Kakhovka during a peaceful protest against the Russian occupation. [According](#) to the notification of the Kakhovka city territorial community dated April 6, he was released.



Serhii Kyrychko – the head of the Okhtyrka District Council of the Sumy Region. He was kidnapped in the village of Boromlya, Sumy region, on March 15, 2022. [According](#) to Olena Shuliak, head of the "Servant of the People" political party, Kyrychko was kept in the basement for a week, after he was released.



Oleksandr Knyha – the general director of the Kherson Regional Music and Drama Theater, chairman of the Eurasian Theater Association, deputy of the Kherson Regional Council. He was kidnapped from his home on the morning of March 23, 2022. This was reported by the former deputy of the Kherson City Council, Vitaliy Bogdanov, and the mayor of Oleshkiv, Yevhen Ryschuk. The next day, March 24, 2022, Ryschuk reported that Knyha was released. It was also [confirmed](#) in the theatre.



Anzhelina Kovalenko – the headmistress of school No. 4 in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. As reported by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Lyudmila Denisova, Anzhelina was kidnapped by the occupiers on March 31, 2022 after refusing to cooperate. On April 3, 2022, RIA "Melitopol" [reported](#) that she was released.



Oleh Kozhemiakin – the ex-deputy of the Kakhovka City Council, activist and veteran of the ATO. According to Kozhemiakin's wife Olha, several "tiger" buses (Russian off-road vehicles) parked near the house, in which there were approximately thirty people in military uniform (Russian style), knocked on the gate. When Oleh came out to them, they immediately put handcuffs on his hands and took him in an unknown direction. A family friend who was in the house was also detained, but was released almost immediately. After that, as Kozhemiakina noted, the military entered the house, started checking phones, turning over drawers and cabinets, looking for something in the garage and the attic. On April 14, the publication "Europrostir" reported that Kozhemiakin was released, he was tortured in captivity. In total, he was in captivity for 10 days. "On April 13, Oleh asked for help from doctors. He was diagnosed with a concussion and broken ribs. He also has knocked out teeth", an employee of a local hospital [told](#) the publication on condition of anonymity.



Oleksii Konovalov – the deputy of the city council of Henichesk, Kherson region, director of the communal enterprise "Komunservis" in the village of Shchaslyvtseve, Kherson region. [According](#) to the first deputy chairman of the Kherson Regional Council Yuriy Sobolevskyi, Konovalov was kidnapped by the Russians on March 28, 2022. According to these data, around 10:00 a.m., Oleksii Konovalov and his wife were driving a car in the direction of the village of Henicheska Hirka and Henichesk, when the occupiers stopped them at a checkpoint near the destroyed bridge and, after checking the documents, captured Konovalov and took him to the Higher Vocational School No. 17 in in the city of Henichesk. At the same time, the wife was left in place. According to Sobolevsky, the occupiers have lists of "interesting people" (local politicians, activists, and officials), and Konovalov was captured because his name was on those lists. Later on the same day, Sobolevsky [reported](#) that Konovalov had been released.



Oleksandr Koshelevych – the mayor of the city of Primorsk, Berdiansk district, Zaporizhzhia region. On March 28, 2022, journalist Iryna Romaliyska [reported](#) that the occupiers detained the mayor of Primorsk and took him to Berdiansk. She also reported with reference to local activists that first the occupiers detained Oleksandr Koshelevych's father, and then Oleksandr exchanged himself for his father. He was kept in Berdiansk, where the occupiers set up headquarters. On March 31, 2022, Romaliyska [reported](#) that Koshelevych was released.



Oleksandr Kraskivskyi – the headman of Zamhlai district No. 1 of Chernihiv region. [According](#) to Suspilne, the Russian military detained Kraskivskyi in the village of Zamhlai near the village of Ripky on March 23, 2022, during an attempt by locals to prevent them from entering the settlement. He was kept for a day and a half in the school basement in the village of Vyshneve, where the occupation commandant's office was deployed. They were kept on the dirt floor and tortured in order to get information about the units of the Armed Forces in the rear and data about pro-Ukrainian activists. According to Kraskivskyi, he did not see those who beat him, but he has reason to believe that they were representatives of the GRU and the FSB. Oleksandr spent a day and a half in captivity. As of April 3, the Russian military left the territory of the former Ripky district.



Viktor Kudlai – the director of the Chorniansk Lyceum Tavriysk community in the Kherson region. As Iryna Shipovych, a specialist in humanitarian policy and media relations of the Tavriysk City Council, [reported](#), Kudlai was abducted by the Russian military on March 21, 2022, from his own home. On March 24, 2022, Shipovych [said](#) that he was released.



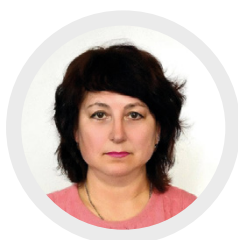
Mykhailo Kumok – publisher "MV-holding" from Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. On March 21, 2022, he was kidnapped by the Russian military in Melitopol, together with his wife Vera Kumok and daughter, Tetyana Kumok, a participant in anti-occupation protests, as well as three journalists of the holding: Yevgenia Boryan, Yulia Olkhovskaya and Lyubov Chaika. [According](#) to the holding, everyone was taken from the house in the morning of that day. It is known that the occupiers held talks with everyone "to establish cooperation". All were released later the same day after media publicity. Personal phones were seized.



Serhii Kunets – the headman of the village Osokorivka, Kherson region. [According](#) to a report on the "Novyny Novovorontsovshchyny" page dated April 6, 2022, he was kidnapped by the military of the Russian Federation and taken to an unknown destination a few days before. [According](#) to available data, Kunets was delivering social bread when the Russian occupiers detained him. On April 21–22, 2022, Serhii was released.



Volodymyr Kurikov – the deputy of Skadovsk district council. On April 13, 2022, Serhii Khlan, a deputy of the Kherson Regional Council, [reported](#) on Volodymyr abduction by the Russian occupiers. According to the report of "Skadovsk.City" with reference to Kurikov's relatives dated April 18, 2022, he was released.



Halyna Kucher – the custodian of the Melitopol Museum of Local History, was kidnapped on April 30, 2022, after the occupiers reached the museum storage room on April 27 and took the museum collection from there. After questioning about specific exhibits of the collection, Halyna was released.



Oleksandr Levechko – the head of the Novooleksandrivka, the urban-type settlement of the Beryslav district of Kherson region. [According](#) to the Kherson Regional State Administration, he was kidnapped. According to his daughter, it happened on March 25, 2022 around 08:00. Unknown people came to the village council and took him to an unknown direction on "Niva" with Ukrainian licence plates (the daughter assumes that the car was stolen). Later that day, they called Levechko's wife, let her hear her husband's voice, asked if she recognized her, and hung up. According to Levechko's daughter, two or three days before that, the occupiers searched the house and interrogated family members. According to the message of the administrator of one of the local information groups in the social network, Dmytro Burlay, dated May 3, 2022, Levechko was released from captivity and delivered help to the residents of the community.



Yurii Leha – a driver and a volunteer, evacuated civilians. He was detained by the Russian military on his way out of the city of Mariupol. He was illegally held in a correctional colony in Olenivka, Donetsk region. Presumably released along with other detained volunteer drivers.



Iryna Lypka – the mayor of Molochansk, Zaporizhzhia region. As [reported](#) in the Zaporizhzhia branch of the "Servant of the People" political party, of which Lypka is a member, she was kidnapped on the morning of March 31, 2022, together with her deputy Vitalii Repin. According to Iryna, some moments of captivity were unbearable. The woman heard how other prisoners were being tortured. The occupiers specially arranged torture so that everything could be heard by other prisoners. Because of this, the mayor of Molochansk suffered two hypertensive crises. She was held in captivity for 24 days and released on April 23, 2022.



Vasyl Lotaniuk – an activist from the city of Kakhovka, Kherson region. [According](#) to the "Slovo i Dilo" portal, he was abducted by the Russian military in Kakhovka on April 2, 2022, during a protest against the occupation authorities, along with four other activists. On April 12, 2022, the Kakhovka City Council announced on its Facebook page that the military of the Russian Federation was holding Lotaniuk captive in Nova Kakhovka. The [message](#) also states that he was taken from his own home by force. On May 23, 2022, the Kakhovka City Territorial Community reported on its Facebook page that Lotaniuk was released.



Dmytro Liakhno – the head of the village of Hornostaiivka, Kherson region. Kidnapped from his own home on August 3, 2022. The Russians surrounded the quarter and drove in armoured personnel carriers, searched the house (they took documents, money, phones, laptops, a shoulder bag, a hunting rifle), took him out to the yard in his underwear, put a bag over his head and took him to an unknown direction. Released.



Ivan Malieiev – the head of the Kyrylivka village council. [According](#) to RIA Melitopol, kidnapped by Russian occupiers on April 17, 2022. According to them, armed men took Malieiev to the commandant's office after he refused to cooperate with the occupation administration, despite the pressure on him. [According](#) to RIA Melitopol from April 23, 2022, Maleev was released.



Viktor Maruniak – the headman of the village of Stara Zbur'ivka, Kherson region, which is currently under the temporary occupation of Russia. On March 21, 2022, he was abducted by representatives of the occupation forces in Stara Zbur'ivka. It is also known that before this Maruniak was detained once, but was released. On March 23, according to local activists, he was brought to his home in handcuffs, searched there and planted grenades, threatening him with imprisonment. Viktor Maruniak managed to tell his wife that he was being beaten.

On March 24, armed occupiers came to his wife again, they did not let anyone into the yard. On April 12, a representative of the Hola Prystan City Council [announced](#) Maruniak's release.



Oleksandr Medvedov – the mayor of Snovsk, Chernihiv region. [According](#) to "Suspilne. Chernihiv" with reference to the head of the Koriukivka District Military Administration, Ivan Vashchenko, on the morning of March 25, 2022, he was detained together with a local businessman and ex-deputy of the regional council Hryhoriy Bozhko. It is known beforehand that the men were taken in the direction of Horodnia, Chernihiv region. On March 31, 2022, Suspilne, with reference to the head of Koriukivka regional military administration, Ivan Vashchenko, [reported](#) that Oleksandr Medvedov was released.



Mykola Myroniuk – an active resident of Kherson. Disappeared on March 24 after participating in a peaceful protest against the occupation. As Ukrinform [reports](#) with reference to his wife, Myroniuk was beaten and detained at a protest on Freedom Square near the "Ukraina" cinema at approximately 12:45 p.m. According to this information, a few hours after the abduction, armed soldiers and persons in civilian clothes arrived at his place of residence in three cars marked "Z", they searched for weapons, but did not find them. They also brought Mykola Myroniuk with them – he had a hat pulled over his eyes, wrapped with tape, his nose was broken and his mouth was covered in blood. Relatives were not allowed to see him. He was released on April 26, 2022. As the wife said, only a week before the release, the commandant told where the man was and that he is recumbent with broken ribs.



Vasyl Mitko – the headman of Nikolske village, Donetsk region. On March 12, the publication "0629" reported with reference to the Mariupol City Council that the occupiers kidnapped him. [According](#) to the message of the head of the Donetsk regional state administration, Pavlo Kyrylenko, dated April 5, 2022, Mitko was released approximately three weeks before the conversation.



Oleksandr Musiienko – the head of the Chulakivka territorial community of the Hola Prystan district of the Kherson region. On March 15, 2022, the publication "Most" [reported](#) that Musiienko recorded the address surrounded by armed occupiers. On April 10, 2022, Musiienko wrote in the Facebook group "Chulakivka village territorial community" that he took the family to a safer place, but plans to return to the community, remains in touch and that the activities of the territorial community will continue as usual. Since then, he has been posting periodic updates to this group.



Denys Miarkivskyi – a volunteer, delivered humanitarian goods. He was detained on April 6, 2022 at a Russian checkpoint in the urban-type settlement of Nikolske, at the entrance to Mariupol. He was kept in a correctional colony in Olenivka, Donetsk region. Released.



Olena Naumova – a blogger, a social activist and a kindergarten teacher. Olena Naumova filmed videos on TikTok in which she talked about life in the occupation and also expressed support for Ukraine. She was kidnapped from her own home on August 23, 2022 at around 11:00 a.m. Elena was released in September 2022.



Maksym Nehrov – a public figure from Kherson, director of "Tavriyskyi Park" LLC, member of the "European Party of Ukraine", veteran of the ATO. Stopped getting in touch on March 15, 2022. [According](#) to the activist's acquaintances, there are eyewitnesses who saw his detention by the Russian occupiers. At the time of his disappearance, Nehrov had health problems. According to information from Nehrov's friend, which he informed the documentarian on April 3, 2022, Maksym was released.



Oleh Nikolaiev – a priest of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region. On March 14, the Zaporizhzhia Diocese of the OCU [reported](#) that the Russian invaders detained him and took him to an unknown destination. On the same day, the "Ukrinform" publication, according to local believers, [reported](#) that in the morning the priest's house was surrounded by people with assault rifles, searched, found nothing, arrested Father Oleh and took him to an unknown destination. Wife Julia, who has an orphan disease and constantly needs therapy, was ordered not to leave the house. Oleh started receiving the first threats on his mobile phone during the battles for Berdiansk. The priest published a screenshot of his correspondence with the enemy on his Facebook page (the page is currently unavailable, a screenshot of the correspondence is [published](#) on the "Ukrinform" website). On the same day, "Ukrinform" columnist Yaroslava Mishchenko [reported](#) that the priest had been released.



Kostiantyn Ovsianynkov – a public activist, citizen journalist and streamer, head of the NGO "Primorsk 24/7" and the Youth Centre "Portal tse" in the city of Primorsk, Zaporizhzhia region. As human rights activist Olha Vesnyanka and the NGO "Theatre of Changes" reported, Ovsianynkov was kidnapped on March 26, 2022 from his home in Primorsk. Later on the same day, human rights defender Yana Salakhova [announced](#) his release.



Marharyta Ovsianynkova – a headmistress of school No. 11 in the city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. "RIA Melitopol" publication [reported](#) that armed men came to Marharyta's home on April 1. They called themselves representatives of the military administration. She was ordered to take warm clothes, water and medicine with her, after which she was taken to an unknown destination. Before that, they took the woman's phone and passport. In Melitopol, all school principals wrote applications for dismissal as a sign of protest and reluctance to cooperate with the occupiers. On April 3, 2022, "RIA Melitopol" [reported](#) that Marharyta was released.



Yuliia Paievska ("Taira") – a Ukrainian volunteer-paramedic, was taken hostage along with her driver in Mariupol, Donetsk region, on March 16, 2022. On March 21, 2022, the Russian NTV channel published a recorded video of Yuliia Paievska, confirming that she was taken hostage by the occupying forces and calling her a "member of the nationalist battalion "Azov"". They called the video with the hostage an "interview". Later, they released an hour-long video, where it was noted that Paievska was captured by representatives of the "DPR" group together with children, in the video she says that their names are Lisa and Sasha, and that she was taking them to Zaporizhzhia (they phrased it as "covering herself with children"), she and Arestovych were accused of organ trafficking. Also in the video, a man's voice says that Paievska is a combatant, because she corresponded with some military man and with Arestovych. Paievska was released on June 17, 2022 as a result of the exchange of prisoners, which was announced by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy in an evening speech.



Yurii Paliukh – a secretary of the city council of Skadovsk, Kherson region. He was abducted by representatives of the occupation authorities on March 16, 2022, together with the mayor Oleksandr Yakovlev from the premises of the city council. On the last day, he was interrogated and released, about which he recorded a [video](#). According to sources in Skadovsk, Paliukh was also released on the same day.



Oleh Pylypenko – the head of the Shevchenkiv Territorial Community of Mykolaiv region. His wife told the publication "Segodnya. Voina" that he disappeared on March 10, 2022, when he went to deliver bread. On June 10, 2022, Vitalii Kim, the head of the Mykolaiv Regional State Administration, announced that Pylypenko was released on that day as a result of the exchange of prisoners. People's deputy Ihor Kopytin published a video with the released Pylypenko, Gazeta.ua reported.



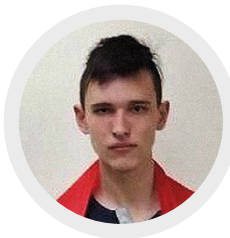
Andrii Pylypovych – an activist from Nova Kakhovka. On April 5, 2022, Pylypovych [announced](#) on his Facebook page that he was released after illegal detention. According to the publication "Most", Pylypovych was kidnapped on April 2.



Olena Plaksina – a member of the Tokmak City Council of the Zaporizhzhia region from the "European Solidarity" political party. [According](#) to Ivan Arefiev, spokesman for the Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration, she was detained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation at around 9:30 p.m. on March 21. According to the available [information](#), the deputy was interrogated by FSB employees of the Russian Federation, who are in the cultural centre of the city of Tokmak at the address: str. Tsentralna, 10. Public activist Askad Ashurbekov told the documentarian that Plaksina was detained for a day, interrogated and released.



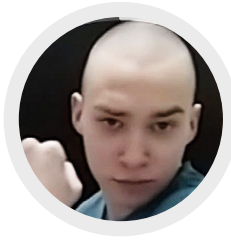
Oleksandr Ponomarov – a deputy of the Verkhovna Rada from the OPZZh from Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region. On March 20, contact with Ponomarov disappeared while he was working at the humanitarian headquarters in Berdiansk, as [reported](#) by his public reception. On March 22, the Berdiansk City Council [confirmed](#) that Ponomarov had been captured by the Russian military and said that a number of local industrial enterprises related to him had suspended operations until he was released. On April 2, the MP's waiting room was [informed](#) that he, accompanied by the Russian military, was hospitalised to an intensive care at the Berdiansk City Hospital 10 days after the abduction, his condition is stable and serious.



Oleksii Polukhin – an LGBTQA activist from the city of Kherson. During the occupation, he volunteered, attended pro-Ukrainian events. On May 9, 2022, he was detained at a Russian checkpoint. Spent 64 days in Kherson pre-trial detention centre. Oleksii was forced to clean cells and places where detainees were tortured.



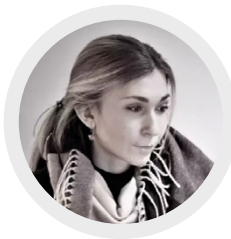
Serhii Pryima – the head of the Melitopol district council of the Zaporizhzhia region. Abducted on the morning of March 13, 2022 by eight Russian servicemen who broke into his apartment to search him without introducing himself and without informing him of the reason for the search. During the search, military personnel seized all documents and mobile devices of Pryima and demanded passwords to them. After the search, they took Serhii in an unknown direction, threatening with a weapon. Pryima's wife could not identify the servicemen who abducted him. She drew attention to the fact that their military uniform was different from that of the Russian military, which controls Melitopol. However, they wore white armbands, as Russian servicemen do, and they also came in a minibus marked "Z". According to UNIAN, on April 26, 2022, he was released.



Viacheslav Ptichkin – an active resident of Kherson, originally from Mariupol, a student. Kidnapped at a protest in Kherson. Ptichkin's disappearance was [reported](#) on March 25 by his mother Olena on Facebook. According to her information, her son disappeared in the Central Square area of Kherson on March 22 at approximately 12:00 p.m. On April 22, 2022, in the "Mylena Kherson" Facebook group, the message about his search was updated with the information that Ptichkin was found alive. This was confirmed by his mother in the comments under this message.



Mykhailo Rieznikov – a pastor of the Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists in Mariupol, Donetsk region. [According](#) to the religious organisation "All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists", together with another believer, Andriy Fomenko, he was taken hostage by the Russian military when they went to get food for the church where people were hiding, whose homes were destroyed by shelling. On March 10, it was known that Mykhailo Rieznikov was in a hospital in the occupied territory, and Andriy Fomenko was being held in an enemy basement. Subsequently, the same organisation [reported](#) with reference to the presbyter of the church in the city of Makiivka, Oleksandr Sivakov, that as of March 11, the brothers were in Novoazovsk (on the territory controlled by the DPR group) in the home of a local pastor. On March 27, "All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists" confirmed to a ZMINA documentarian that Mykhailo Rieznikov and Andriy Fomenko are safe, but the organisation don't disclose details.



Viktoriia Roshchyna – a journalist of "Hromadske Radio". On March 18, 2022, the editors [reported](#) that she was probably being held hostage: colleagues could not get in touch with Viktoriia since March 12. As "Hromadske Radio" [learned](#), at that time the journalist was in the temporarily occupied Berdiansk of the Zaporizhzhia region, and was planning to go to Mariupol, which is under Russian siege. On March 16, the editors learned that the day before (probably March 15) Viktoriia Roshchyna was detained by the FSB of Russia. On March 22, 2022, it became known that on March 21, the occupiers released Roshchyna, forcing her to record a video message.



Vitalii Rudchenko – a well-known lawyer in Melitopol. [According](#) to the "MIG" publication, he was kidnapped on the night of March 31 to April 1 together with his colleague, lawyer Oleh Zubov. "MIG" [reported](#) on April 6, 2022 that Zubov had been released.



Valerii Saltykov – a deputy of the Kherson regional council from "European Solidarity", ex-head of the Kakhovka district administration. [According](#) to the report of regional council deputy Serhii Khlan dated April 7, 2022, Russian servicemen kidnapped Saltykov. After a short stay in captivity, Valerii was released.



Ivan Samoidiuk – the first deputy mayor of Enerhodar, Zaporizhzhia region. At approximately 8 a.m. on March 19, 2022, Samoidiuk was talking on the phone with a colleague while driving through the city. During the conversation, he said that he was being stopped at a checkpoint, but did not have time to say which one. Since then, nothing is known about his whereabouts, nor is it known where his car is. On the morning of March 20, 2022, the mayor of Energodar, Mykhailo Orlov, received a call from the Zaporizhzhia military-civilian administration, during which he was informed that Samoidiuk had been kidnapped. On February 16, 2023, as part of an exchange, Ivan Samoidiuk returned home. The Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War commented on Ivan`s release "He did not break down, he refused to cooperate with the enemy. After 333 days of captivity, he returns to his family and friends".



Yurii Samofal – the secretary of the Mykhailivska village council in Zaporizhzhia region, was kidnapped by the Russian military on July 19, 2022. Released.



Oleksii Semikov – a volunteer from the village of Kozacha Lopan, Kharkiv region. He was detained by the occupiers when he was returning from Kharkiv to his native village with humanitarian aid for his fellow villagers. As he himself [told](#) "Hromadske" after his release, when he drove into Kozacha Lopan, at the fork where the road leads to the centre and to the highway, he was overtaken by a UAZ. Several soldiers with machine guns jumped out of it. They opened the door and knocked the volunteer to the ground, tied his hands and eyes. He was tortured for three days, and then released on March 19, 2022.



Ivan Senyk – the head of the urban-type settlement Novouspenivka of Melitopol district. On April 14, 2022, the RIA Melitopol website [reported](#) on his disappearance. According to the publication, Senyk was first detained by the Russian military on April 7, then the official's phone was taken away, he was allowed to go home to change his clothes, and after that he was taken to an unknown destination. He was released a day later, but on April 13 he was detained again, the newspaper [reports](#) on its Telegram channel. [According](#) to the notification of the Kyiv City State Administration dated April 25, 2022, dismissed.



Son of Serhii Dereza – was detained on June 22, 2022, when the Russians tried to force Serhiy Dereza, the headman of the Ukrainian Starostyn district of the Ivanivka community of Kharkiv region, to cooperate. For this, they detained his 19-year-old son and took him to the Ivanivka police department. In search of his son, the headman was forced to come to the occupiers. Only then the Russians released the boy and illegally imprisoned his father. The man was held for several hours, beaten and tortured with electric shock.



Vitalii Sytnikov – a volunteer from the city of Mariupol. Before the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, he worked as a taxi driver. Together with a group of other drivers, in March 2022, he tried to deliver humanitarian aid to Mariupol by several buses. He was detained. He was in a correctional colony in Olenivka, Donetsk region. He spent a total of 100 days in detention. He witnessed the torture of other detainees. Released.



Mykola Sikalenko – the head of the village of Tsyркunь, Kharkiv region, occupied by Russia. On the morning of March 21, 2022, he was kidnapped from his own home. As the head of the Kharkiv regional military administration Oleh Sinehubov reported, he was taken in the direction of the village of Lyptsi, Kharkiv region. After his release, on May 8, 2022, he published a [video message](#), which was posted by "Tsyркunьvski Visti" on Facebook.



Dmytro Takadzhy – the head of the village of Nyzhni Sirohozy, Henichesk district, Kherson region. On March 25, 2022, the Nyzhni Sirohozy settlement council reported on its Facebook page that Takadzhy had disappeared and that representatives of the village council did not know where the village head was or what was happening to him. "We do not have access to the official offices of the village council, because the premises are under the control of the military", the village council reported. The evening before Takadzhy's disappearance, he published a statement about his resignation on his personal Facebook page. On March 31, 2022, a propaganda video was published on the "Detector" Telegram channel, in which he reports that he allegedly left with his family for the Russian Federation. Later, Takadzhy published a video message that he was forced to record the previous video, because his family and he were detained by representatives of the Russian Federation, who demanded to record such a propaganda video. Later, Takadzhy's family went to one of the European countries. The second video message was removed from Takadzhy's page.



Ihor Talalai – a volunteer from the city of Dnipro. He disappeared on March 18, 2022 in the Zaporizhzhia region, when he was taking help to people from Dnipro to Melitopol. According to a report on the "Dnepr.info" website, contact with him was lost when he was heading towards Mariupol to evacuate people from there. He was released on June 14, and later went to the territory controlled by Ukraine.



Viktor Tereshchenko – the head of the Velikoburlutsk community of Kharkiv region. According to Oleh Synehubov, the head of the Kharkiv regional military administration, Tereshchenko was abducted directly from his office on March 17, 2022 and kept in the premises of the local police station. On March 18, Oleh Sinehubov [announced](#) that Viktor was released.



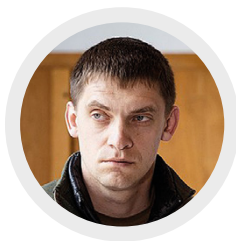
Tetiana Tipakova – an activist from Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region, an active participant in protests against the Russian occupation and a blogger. As her daughter [reported](#), she was kidnapped on March 20, 2022 at around ten in the morning from her home in Berdiansk: two cars arrived and took her to an unknown destination. On March 21, Tipakova again [reported](#) from her daughter's page that she was already released, but noted that her phone was taken away. On March 25, the relatives of another detained and released citizen of Berdiansk knew about Tipakova's re-detention. In a conversation with the documentarian, Tipakova confirmed that she is free again.



Anatolii Tutov – an entrepreneur from the city of Balakliia, Kharkiv region. Patriotic activist, former local deputy, former member of political parties All-Ukrainian Union "Freedom" and "UKROP". He was detained at his home on August 9, 2022 by representatives of the so-called "L/DPR". Until September 2, 2022, FSB representatives illegally detained a man in the Balakliia National Police station. During the period of detention, he was subjected to repeated beatings, torture with electric shock, psychological torture (imitation of shooting, threats of mutilation). The patriotic position and religiosity of the victim became the cause of greater brutality on the part of the Russian military–Muslims.



Oleksandr Faiev – an employee of the City Executive Committee of the city of Berdiansk, Department of Urban Planning and Architecture. [According](#) to the website "Berdiansk 061" with reference to the Berdiansk City Council, on April 6, 2022, the Russian military blocked the operation of the humanitarian centre until 4:00 p.m., after which they released almost all the employees of the humanitarian centre. Then Oleksandr Faiev was detained, as well as two men: employees of the executive committee Oleksii Yurchenko, Viktor Kuzmenko and director of the centre Oleh Balaban. According to the message of RIA Melitopol dated April 14, 2022, he was released.



Ivan Fedorov – the mayor of Melitopol. On March 11, 2022, at 15:10, the Russian military broke into the Shevchenko Palace of Culture in Melitopol, where the executive committee of the city council is located, went to Fedorov, put a black plastic bag on him, put him in a car and drove him in an unknown direction. Ivan Fedorov was released on March 16. The Office of the President of Ukraine reported that the mayor of Melitopol was exchanged for 9 Russian conscripts.



Anton Filipenko – a driver, a volunteer of the NGO "Open Doors International" from the city of Zaporizhzhia. He was engaged in the delivery of humanitarian goods to the city of Mariupol. He was detained at the end of March 2022 at a checkpoint in the village of Nikolske. A group of volunteer drivers is released from captivity in July 2022.



Andrii Fomenko – a brother of the Church of Evangelical Christians–Baptists, who has 10 children under his care. [According](#) to the religious organisation "All–Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists", he was taken hostage by the Russian military together with another pastor, Mykhailo Reznikov, when they went to get food for the church, where people were hiding, whose homes were destroyed by shelling. On March 10, it was known that Mykhailo Reznikov was in a hospital in the occupied territory, and Andrii Fomenko was being held in an enemy basement. Subsequently, the same organisation [reported](#) with reference to the presbyter of the church in the city of Makiivka, Oleksandr Sivakov, that as of March 11, the brothers were in Novoazovsk (on the territory controlled by the DPR group) in the home of a local pastor. On March 27, "All–Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists" confirmed to the documentarian that Mykhailo Reznikov and Andrii Fomenko are safe.



Yurii Fomichev – the mayor of the city of Slavutych, Kyiv region, a member of the "Servant of the People" political party. On March 26, the occupiers captured the city and took it hostage, [according](#) to Oleksandr Pavlyuk, the head of Kyiv regional state administration. Later on the same day, the head of the "Servant of the People" political party, Olena Shuliak, [reported](#) that Fomichev is already free, and protests against the occupation are continuing in the city.



Oleksandr Chub – a cycling coach from Kupiansk, Kharkiv region. After the start of the large–scale invasion, he returned from abroad. Evacuated the civilians, delivered humanitarian goods. Detained on June 12, 2022. He became a victim of torture, he was forced to "confess" that he is hiding weapons. Released after the de–occupation of the city of Kupiansk.



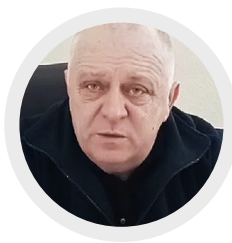
Liudmyla Chuhai – a headmistress of Lyceum No. 9 of the city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. As [reported](#) by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Lyudmila Denisova, Chuhai was abducted by the occupiers on March 31, 2022 after refusing to cooperate. On April 3, 2022, RIA Melitopol [reported](#) that she was released.



Serhii Chudynovych — a priest of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine from Kherson, rector of the Church of the Holy Mother of God, public figure and volunteer. As [reported](#) by the local publication "Vgoru", on March 30, at 8:30 in the morning, Father Serhii was kidnapped directly from the church by people who called themselves "militia": three men searched the church, checked the documents and messengers of those who were present there, and then took the priest, sat down in green DAEWOO Sens BT6734BI and drove in an unknown direction. In the evening of March 30, Serhii Chudynovych [announced](#) in a video message that he was released after interrogation.



Nataliia Chursina — a volunteer from the city of Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. She was the organiser of the evacuation convoy from Melitopol on April 2, 2022, she formed evacuation lists. [According](#) to the publication "Novosti Melitopol", the Russian military detained her during the gathering of the convoy. The woman was surrounded and taken away allegedly for collecting personal data. According to volunteers, she was kept in the former "passport desk" on Oleksiyeva Street. On the same day, she [informed](#) the publication "Novosti Melitopol" that she was released.



Oleksandr Shapovalov — the mayor of Beryslav, Kherson region. As the head of Kherson regional military administration Hennadiy Lahuta [reported](#), on March 19, 2022, around 11 o'clock in the afternoon, Shapovalov was detained together with another activist. On March 21, the mayor was allowed to contact his relatives. The prisoners were probably held in Nova Kakhovka, but their exact location is unknown. On April 3, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko [announced](#) that Shapovalov was released from captivity.



Vitalii Shevchenko — an activist, an entrepreneur (owner of a travel agency), participant in peaceful protests against the Russian occupation from Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region. [According](#) to a report by the "Berdiansk 24" media, he was kidnapped by representatives of the occupying Russian Guard on March 15, 2022, after a protest against the occupation in Berdiansk, when he entered the "Cappuccino" cafe. According to the publication "Ukrainska Pravda", several other activists were detained with him. A [video](#) of his abduction was recorded. Shevchenko's activity on social networks indicates that he was released, since April 7, 2022, his Facebook [page](#) is again regularly updated.



Oleksii Shybaiev – the deputy head of the urban-type settlement Novoslobodsk of the Konotop district of Sumy region. As the head of the Sumy Regional State Administration, Dmytro Zhivytskyi, [reported](#), on April 1, 2022, Shybaiev was captured by the Russian military at their checkpoint near the village of Peresepky in the urban-type settlement Putyvsk, when he was accompanying a humanitarian cargo. On April 3, Dmytro Zhivytskyi [announced](#) in his Telegram channel that Shybaiev is alive and released.



Lidiia Shulha – the village headman of Borshchivka, Iziium district, Kharkiv region. She was illegally detained in September 2022, kept in the police station of the city of Balakliia. A witness of the Russian occupation in the community. Released on September 8, 2022 after the retreat of Russian troops.



Oleksandr Yakovliev – the mayor of the temporarily occupied Skadovsk, Kherson region. [According](#) to Radio Svoboda, on March 16, 2022, the Russian military abducted Yakovliev and his deputy Yurii Paliukh. Yakovliev was released the same day, and Paliukh was left as a hostage.



Oksana Yakubova – the headmistress of the lyceum of the city of Nova Kakhovka, Kherson region, kidnapped on August 21, 2022 by the occupiers to put pressure on the educational process. She was released and had to leave the city.



Oleh Yakhniienko – the head of the Mylivska Territorial Community of Kherson Region. The mayor of Kakhovka, Vitalii Nemerets, [said](#) that on March 27, 2022, the occupiers took Yakhniienko to an unknown destination. Information about the abduction was also [published](#) by the Kherson regional administration. On April 13, 2022, the “Novyny Beryslavshchyny” page reported on his release.

Found dead



Yevhenii Bal — a journalist, a writer, a volunteer, a member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine and the National Writers' Union of Ukraine. On March 18, 2022, 78-year-old Yevhenii Bal was illegally arrested by the Russian military at his home in Melekine near Mariupol. Journalist Lina Kush [announced](#) this on her Facebook page. Apparently, the reason for the detention was "compromising" photos together with the Ukrainian military. The occupiers turned the house upside down, and the owner himself was taken "to the basement". In three days, he was released after being brutally beaten. On April 2, 2022, Yevhenii Bal died due to injuries inflicted by the occupiers during torture.



Serhii Bozhko — a deputy of the All-Ukrainian Union "Freedom". People's deputy Andrii Illienko [reported](#) on his abduction and murder. Bozhko was tortured for two days, shot in the elbow. When the Russians left, relatives found Serhii's body in a pit on the outskirts of the village of Lotskino in Mykolaiv region. His wife Tatiana [confirmed](#) this to the Mykolaiv publication Centre for Investigative Journalism.



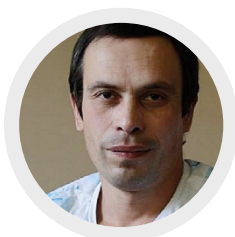
Denys Butenko — an activist from the city of Bucha, Kyiv region. After the occupation of Bucha by Russian troops, Butenko, together with other volunteers, delivered food to civilians and was also a blood donor for victims of military operations. He lived with his mother, who has a disability. Butenko's wife, who lives in another city, last spoke to him by phone on March 5, 2022. After that, there was no mobile service in the town and she could not contact him. On March 9 or 10, 2022, he left home and did not return. On April 18, 2022, the investigator informed the family of Denys Butenko that his body with five gunshot wounds was found in a forest lane between Vorzel and Bucha, Kyiv region.



Volodymyr Vakulenko — a writer, a public figure from the city of Iziium, Kharkiv region. He was detained on March 23, 2022 together with his underage son. After interrogation, which was allegedly accompanied by torture, the man was released. On March 24, 2022, he was detained again. The writer's body was found in the nameless grave No. 319 at the mass burial site of victims of Russian war crimes in the city of Iziium after its de-occupation by Ukrainian troops.



Oleh Yefimenko – an activist from the city of Iziium, Kharkiv Region, kidnapped on March 29, 2022. Member of the National Scout Organization PLAST, former assistant of the local deputy for national and patriotic education. As his relatives reported, he was purposefully abducted as an activist on March 29, 2022. Later, the man's body was found in a spontaneous mass burial in the city of Iziium. Identified by the results of a DNA examination.



Zoreslav Zamoskyi – an activist and a freelance journalist, a contributor to the Internet resource "Informatsiinyi Portal" and the resource "Hromada Pryirpinnia". His body with signs of violent death was found in Bucha, which was [reported](#) to the Irpin City Council on April 12, 2022.



Ihor Karuk – a volunteer, evacuated civilians from occupied villages of Kyiv region. On March 10 (according to other data, March 9), 2022, contact with him disappeared. He was heading in his car to the village of Zabuyany, Kyiv region, to evacuate several people from there. Acquaintances of the volunteer reported that he was last contacted near the village of Stavyshche on the Zhytomyr–Kyiv highway. At the end of May, explosives experts informed the police about the discovery of the body of a man in the forest near Zabuyany in Kyiv region, who was later identified as Ihor Karuk. As the friends of the deceased told Human Rights Centre ZMINA, the body of Ihor Karuk was found in a pit approximately 10 by 10 metres filled with water, his hands were tied behind his back, and his temple was probably shot with a Makarov (PM) pistol.



Mantas Kvedaravichius – a director, an author of the films "Mariupolis" and "Parthenon", a citizen of Lithuania. While in Mariupol, he was detained by Russian troops and executed a short time later. After his death, Mantas' wife managed to take his body from Mariupol to Lithuania in order to organise a proper burial.



Serhii Kubrushko – a volunteer. Contact with him was lost on March 23, 2022, when he was transporting humanitarian aid to the village of Motyzhyn, Kyiv region. On April 4, 2022, he was found dead in a mass grave together with the bodies of the murdered head of the village of Motyzhyn Olha Sukhenko and her family, his wife Maryna published the message on her Facebook page.



Yevhen Piskotin – a Red Cross volunteer. On March 3, 2022, on the way from Makariv to Hostomel, Piskotin was going to pick up his family, which was under fire in the village of Blystavytsia. He was in uniform and had a Red Cross card. His phone was last recorded by a mobile operator in the village of Plakhtyanka at 2:58 p.m. Roughly, he could move by road through such settlements of Kyiv region as Makariv, Havronshchyna, Pliakhtianka, Poroskoten, Klavdiievo–Tarasove, Mykulychi, Nemishaieve and all the way to Blystavytsia. Piskotin was held by the Russian military for more than a month and then killed.



Olha Sukhenko – the head of the village of Motyzhyn, Kyiv region. She was [abducted](#) by Russian occupation forces along with her husband Ihor and son Oleksandr from their home on March 23, 2022. The occupants searched the house and stole a car belonging to the family. The Sukhenkos publicly declared their pro-Ukrainian position. There is evidence that Oleksandr helped the residents of Motyzhyn as a volunteer while he was there.

On April 2, after the de-occupation of Kyiv region from the occupiers, the bodies of village head Olha Sukhenko, her husband and son were found in a mass grave.



Urey Paul – a citizen of Great Britain, a volunteer. Evacuated civilians (communicated with them under the pseudonym "Anton"). On April 25, 2022, he allegedly disappeared near the village of Verbove in Zaporizhzhia region, occupied by the Russians, without reaching Dniprorudne in Zaporizhzhia region. In July 2022, the occupation administration of the Russian Federation spread information about the alleged death of a volunteer "due to illness and stress". The Russian Federation returned the body of the volunteer who died in July only after more than 1.5 months of negotiations. Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets [reported](#) that the returned mutilated body of the Briton was missing parts and had numerous cuts and traces of torture.



Fedorenko Serhii – a volunteer who was kidnapped on January 3, 2023 in Nova Kakhovka. The occupiers stopped the car in which Serhii and another man were driving (he was released a few days later). The men were taken "to clarify the circumstances". For Serhii, this was already a repeated kidnapping, because in July 2022, the occupiers already detained Fedorenko and held him for about 20 days, applying various forms of pressure. He did not stop volunteering and providing various assistance to the civilian residents of Kherson region who remained in the temporarily occupied territory. A few days after his disappearance, Serhii was found in the Kakhovka hospital, his body had traces of brutal beatings, seven hematomas on his head, broken legs, and a tube in his mouth. Serhii died of his injuries on January 10, 2023.



Andrii Shostak – a volunteer who delivered food, medicine, helped with evacuation. Kidnapped on March 23, 2022. That time he, together with his father-in-law Serhii Kubrushka, transported humanitarian aid to the village of Motyzhyn, Kyiv region. On April 11, 2022, he was found dead near a mass grave in the village of Motyzhyn.

