



## **ANALYTICAL REPORT**

No right to health: problems with the provision of medical care to Crimean political prisoners by the Russian Federation

2025

**No right to health: problems with the provision of medical care to Crimean political prisoners by the Russian Federation /** N. Abibulaieva, V. Nesterenko, B. Petruniok, T. Pechonchyk, D. Svyrydova; The Human Rights Centre ZMINA. – Kyiv, 2025.

The research contains an analysis of the situation regarding violations of the right to health care of Crimean political prisoners, including Crimean Tatars, who are being held in places of detention in Russia and the occupied Crimean Peninsula. The report outlines the background and problem of politically motivated persecution of Ukrainian citizens by Russia, provides international standards for the provision of medical care and adequate conditions for the detention of persons in places of deprivation of liberty, describes the conditions of detention in the penitentiary system of Crimea and Russia, the most common health problems among political prisoners, and the reaction in Ukraine and around the world to the denial of medical care to Crimean political prisoners. The publication contains descriptions of specific cases of denial of medical care to political prisoners and the officials of the Russian Federation and the occupying authorities in Crimea who are involved in this. This material is intended for a wide range of readers who are interested in the issue of human rights in the territories occupied by Russia.

The research was prepared by The Human Rights Centre ZMINA in partnership with the NGO Crimean Process with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic as part of the Transition Promotion Programme.



ZMINA works in the field of protecting freedom of speech, freedom of association, combating discrimination, preventing torture and cruel treatment, fighting impunity, protecting human rights defenders and civil society activists, and protecting the rights of victims of Russian aggression. The organisation conducts information campaigns and educational programmes, monitors and documents cases of human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity, prepares research and analysis, and seeks change through national and international advocacy.

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**List of abbreviations**

ECHR – European Convention on Human Rights

ECtHR– European Court of Human Rights

FKU – Federal State Institution

FKUZ – Federal State Healthcare Institution

FSB RF – Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

FSIN – Federal Penitentiary Service

HIV – Human immunodeficiency virus

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

IHL – International humanitarian law

MOTB – Interregional Tuberculosis Hospital

MSU – Medical and sanitary unit

OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

PACE – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

RF – Russian Federation

SHIZO – Punishment cell

SIZO – Pre-trial detention centre

TOT – Temporarily occupied territories

UN – United Nations

UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

VK - Penal Colony

## **Contents**

### **Introduction**

### **Methodology**

### **Chapter 1. International standards for the provision of medical care and adequate conditions of detention for prisoners in places of deprivation of liberty**

#### **General context**

#### **Basic standards and principles**

#### **Extension of the Russian Federation's legislation to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine**

### **Chapter 2. Preconditions and problems of political persecution in the temporarily occupied territories**

### **Chapter 3. The problem of inadequate conditions of detention of Ukrainian citizens in penitentiary institutions in the temporarily occupied Crimea**

### **Chapter 4. Violations of the right to health care and adequate medical assistance in penitentiary institutions of the Russian Federation**

#### **The most common health problems among political prisoners**

#### **Risks of inadequate detention in places of deprivation of liberty and failure to provide medical care to political prisoners**

#### **Description of specific cases of refusal to provide medical care to political prisoners**

### **Section 5. Officials of the Russian Federation and the occupying authorities in Crimea involved in the denial of adequate medical care to Crimean political prisoners**

#### **Judges**

#### **Investigators, witnesses, experts on behalf of the prosecution**

#### **Heads and staff of pre-trial detention and imprisonment facilities. Heads and staff of penitentiary medical institutions**

#### **Ombudsmen and other officials whose powers include monitoring compliance with human rights**

## Introduction

In 2014, the Russian Federation occupied and declared the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Since then, Russian state institutions and authorities have been illegally established on the Crimean Peninsula. In particular, Russian legislation, including criminal law, has been applied unlawfully on the peninsula since 2014, and a network of Russian “law enforcement agencies” and “courts” has been created.

Residents of the temporarily occupied peninsula who in any way expressed their disagreement with the occupation or were considered disloyal to it were persecuted by the occupying authorities. In particular, this applied to ethnic Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians. At a certain point, this politically motivated persecution took on clear signs of persecution on national and religious grounds.

Victims of politically motivated persecution face a whole range of violations of their fundamental rights, including the right to receive adequate medical care in penitentiary institutions. Among the main threats to defendants and prisoners are inadequate conditions of detention in pre-trial detention centres or penal colonies, the inability to obtain qualified medical care, and widespread cases of violence that can reach the threshold of torture.

In February 2023, **Dzhemil Hafarov** and **Kostiantyn Shyring**, who were convicted on political grounds, died due to a lack of medical care in places of detention.

In an effort to draw attention to the situation of prisoners, ZMINA published a list of political prisoners who, due to inadequate conditions of detention, torture or the exacerbation of existing chronic illnesses, required urgent medical care<sup>1</sup>. At that time, the list included information about 21 individuals.

Simultaneously, ZMINA identified Russian officials – judges, FSB investigators, and detention centre administrators – who are responsible for the failure to provide medical care and the deaths of Crimean political prisoners. Information about those involved in human rights violations was published by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in the form of thematic “blacklists” in 2023-2024<sup>2</sup>. ZMINA, together with partner human rights organisations, advocated for the need to impose sanctions on violators. On 5 September 2025, the Council of the EU imposed sanctions on two officials of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation who were involved in violations of the rights of political prisoners<sup>3</sup>.

The situation of Crimean political prisoners, victims of politically motivated criminal prosecution, continues to deteriorate. The RF is not implementing any institutional decisions that could improve detention conditions – instead, it continues discriminatory practices, obstructs access to medication, and deliberately worsens the conditions of detention for political prisoners, particularly in cases where they report violations of their rights. Cases of violence against detainees continue to be documented.

## Methodology

**The subject** of this research is cases of violations of the rights of persons who were detained by Russia in the temporarily occupied Crimean Peninsula, charged and convicted on political grounds. In

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<sup>1</sup> The Hafarov-Shyring list: rescue of Crimean political prisoners at risk. ZMINA. 2023. URL: [https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/zmina2023-list\\_gafarov-shyring\\_ua.pdf](https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/zmina2023-list_gafarov-shyring_ua.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> List of recommended officials for inclusion on the sanction lists / ZMINA, the Crimean Human Rights Group, 2023. URL: [https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/10/zmina2023-sanctionpersonlistua\\_v04.pdf](https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/10/zmina2023-sanctionpersonlistua_v04.pdf)

“Blacklist of officials” involved in crimes against civilians in the temporarily occupied Crimea / ZMINA URL: [https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/01/list\\_ukr\\_web.pdf](https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/01/list_ukr_web.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Global human rights sanctions regime: Council imposes sanctions on two individuals over abuses in detention centres in Crimea / Council of the European Union, 2025. URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/09/05/global-human-rights-sanctions-regime-council-imposes-sanctions-on-two-individuals-over-abuses-in-detention-centres-in-crimea/>

particular, cases of improper and cruel treatment of such persons, torture, denial of adequate medical care, which threatens irreversible deterioration of their health (disability) or threatens their lives.

**The purpose** of this research is to update and summarise the current information available on the situation of Crimean political prisoners as of September 2025. In particular, it highlights cases where the failure to provide adequate assistance to defendants and prisoners threatens their lives.

The research reveals the general context of the functioning of the Russian penitentiary system, particularly in the occupied Crimean Peninsula, and how its degradation contributes to the violation of the rights of political prisoners. Using examples of individual victims, it demonstrates how the political motivation behind their persecution and prejudice against Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians creates additional risks for these individuals, particularly when conditions of detention can become a tool of torture.

## Sources

This research is based on evidence regarding the situation of civilians, residents of the temporarily occupied Crimean Peninsula, who were detained, charged and convicted by the Russian Federation on political grounds. According to information from the Permanent Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, as of 30 May 2025, **there are 222 known Crimean political prisoners** (133 of whom are Crimean Tatars).

Based on monitoring information about violations of political prisoners' rights to adequate medical care from open sources, as well as testimony from relatives and lawyers of political prisoners, as of August 2025, **the Human Rights Centre ZMINA is aware of roughly 100 cases** where the failure to provide medical care, inappropriate conditions of detention and the use of violence in places of detention have a significant impact on condition of detainees. In 46 cases, the failure to provide medical care for potentially life-threatening injuries and illnesses for political prisoners in penitentiary institutions, both in the TOT and in the territory of the RF, was recorded and confirmed<sup>4</sup>.

During the preparation of this research, information about conditions in places of detention within the territory of the temporarily occupied Crimean Peninsula was also analysed, as such information was publicly available in Russian sources.

In particular, information from reports by the so-called "Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea" for the period 2014-2024. Despite the fact that officials of the "Commissioner" are also involved in violating human rights, these reports are in fact the only available source for analysing the state of organisational and functional support for the right to medical care within the penitentiary system on the occupied peninsula by the RF. For example: information on the number of medical personnel in places of detention; information on the prevalence of serious diseases (tuberculosis, HIV, etc) in places of detention; information on the number of requests from prisoners for medical care; information on the number of deaths in pre-trial detention centres and penal colonies.

The data in the reports of the "Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea" may be incomplete, but it should be noted that independent monitoring by third parties of the rights of defendants and prisoners in the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea and Sevastopol has not been carried out since 2014, as the RF does not allow representatives of any independent monitoring missions to enter the temporarily occupied territories. For objective reasons, independent lawyers and families of political prisoners can only operate with information concerning violations of the rights of their clients or relatives.

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<sup>4</sup> As a result, the number of political prisoners whose lives are in danger has at least doubled compared to August 2023.

Within the scope of this research, an assessment was also made of the situation of Crimean political prisoners in terms of compliance with international legal standards, in particular with regard to the provision of medical care and adequate conditions of detention in places of imprisonment.

It also points to Russian officials involved in human rights violations against Crimean political prisoners. A brief overview of the international response to the reported violations is provided.

### Limitations of the research

The limitations of this research are mainly related to partial access to up-to-date information on the functioning of penitentiary institutions, both in the occupied Crimean Peninsula and in the RF. ZMINA also operates with only a limited, fragmentary set of evidence of violations of the rights of specific political prisoners. The RF systematically conceals information about such violations from the families and lawyers of political prisoners. The transfer of evidence about the current situation of political prisoners to independent human rights defenders also creates additional threats to both the families of prisoners and their lawyers. In November 2024, the Human Rights Centre ZMINA was designated an “undesirable foreign non-governmental organisation” in Russia, which complicated the organisation’s work in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories, including its ability to collect information on human rights violations<sup>5</sup>, as ties with “undesirable organisations” in Russia are punishable by fines and criminal liability.

In addition to other violations on the Crimean Peninsula, representatives of the occupying authorities continue to systematically persecute Ukrainian civilians who, as citizen journalists, human rights defenders, and civil society activists, attempt to document human rights violations, including illegal searches and detentions, or politically motivated court hearings. There are systematic violations of the rights of independent lawyers, who are subjected to such forms of pressure as house searches, administrative arrests, fines and revocation of licences to practise law.

A wide range of human rights violations in occupied Crimea, combined with restricted access to information, contribute to the rapid loss of relevance of factual evidence about the situation of political prisoners. Their health at the time of publication of this study may be worse than indicated.

### Key Concepts

Key to this research are the concepts of “politically motivated persecution” and “political prisoner”. The definition of these terms is based on the position of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as expressed in Resolution 1900 (2012) “Definition of the concept of ‘political prisoners’”<sup>6</sup>.

In the pursuit of understanding this position in 2013, an international group of human rights defenders developed the “Guidelines on the definition of political prisoners”<sup>7</sup>. According to it:

**A person deprived of liberty** is to be regarded as a political prisoner if at least one of the following criteria is observed:

a) The detention has been imposed solely because of their political, religious or other beliefs, as well as non-violent exercise of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and information, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and other rights and freedoms guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) or the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR);

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<sup>5</sup> ZMINA has received the status of an “undesirable” foreign organisation in Russia. ZMINA. 2024. URL: <https://zmina.ua/event/zmina-otrymala-status-nebazhanoyi-inozemnoyi-organizacziyi-v-rosiyi/>

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 1900 (2012) Definition of the term “political prisoners”. URL: [http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/mpz/docs/1564\\_rez\\_1900.htm](http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/mpz/docs/1564_rez_1900.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Guideline on the definition of the term “political prisoner” (2013). Centre for Civil Liberties. 2019. URL: <https://ccl.org.ua/posts/2019/07/putivnyk-iz-vyznachennia-poniattia-politychnyy-v-iazhen-2013/>

b) The detention has been imposed solely for activities aimed at defending human rights and fundamental freedoms;

c) The detention has been imposed solely based on gender, race, colour, language, religion, nationality, ethnicity, social or class origin, birth, sexual orientation and gender identity, property or other status, or on other basis, or due to their firm links with communities united on this basis<sup>8</sup>.

The definitions of **“inappropriate conditions of detention”** and **“violation of the right to medical care”** are based on international legal standards, in particular concerning the observance of basic human rights and the provisions of international humanitarian law, in particular regarding the obligations of the occupying state towards the civilian population of the temporarily occupied territories (see the section ‘International standards for the provision of medical care and proper conditions of detention for prisoners in places of deprivation of liberty’ in this research).

The terms **“cruel treatment”** and **“torture”** are used in the sense of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was adopted by the United Nations and entered into force in 1987<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Guideline to defining the concept of “political prisoner” / Institute of Journalism, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. URL: <http://abs.journ.univ.kiev.ua/hri/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/путівник-із-визначенням-Політичний-в'язень.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>



## Chapter 1

### **International standards for the provision of medical care and adequate conditions of detention for prisoners in places of deprivation of liberty**

#### ***General context***

Since at least the end of February 2014, part of Ukraine's territory – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol – has been temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. The international community has recognised the Russian Federation as an occupying power exercising effective control over Crimea without the consent of the Ukrainian Government. Thus, in its decision of 16 December 2020 in the case of *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)* (Application Nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18), the European Court of Human Rights recognised that the Russian Federation had established effective control over the Crimean Peninsula since 27 February 2014<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore, since February 2014, the territory of the Crimean Peninsula has been occupied, and the "law of armed conflict" applies to this situation, which is confirmed, in particular, by the position of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, according to its reports for 2019<sup>11</sup>, 2020<sup>12</sup>, etc.

With the actual transfer of the powers of legitimate authority to the occupying power, it shall take all measures within its power to restore and maintain public order and security, in accordance with the laws in force in the country, except where this is absolutely impossible (Article 43 of the Fourth Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, 18 October 1907<sup>13</sup>).

Accordingly, international human rights law and international humanitarian law apply to this situation, in particular to the territory of the occupied Crimean Peninsula and persons from these territories.

#### ***Basic standards and principles***

### **IV Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War**<sup>14</sup>

#### **Article 27.**

Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity.

#### **Article 32.**

The High Contracting Parties specifically agree that each of them is prohibited from taking any measure of such a character as to cause the physical suffering or extermination of protected persons in their hands. This prohibition applies not only to murder, torture, corporal punishment, mutilation and medical or scientific experiments not necessitated by the medical treatment of a protected person, but also to any other measures of brutality whether applied by civilian or military agents.

<sup>10</sup> Decision of the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR in the case *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-207622>

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Report on Actions Taken in Relation to the Preliminary Examination of Situations in 2019. URL: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/itemsDocuments/2019-PE-Report-UKR.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Report on Actions Taken in Relation to Preliminary Examinations in 2020. URL: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/itemsDocuments/2020-PE/2020-pe-report-ukr-rus.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Fourth Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, 18 October 1907. URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_222#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_222#Text)

<sup>14</sup> Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War/ 12 August 1949. URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_154#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text)

## **Article 76.**

Protected persons accused of offences shall be detained in the occupied country, and if convicted, they shall serve their sentences therein. They shall, if possible, be separated from other detainees and shall enjoy conditions of food and hygiene which will be sufficient to keep them in good health, and which will be at least equal to those obtaining in prisons in the occupied country.

They shall receive the medical attention required by their state of health.

## **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**

### **Article 8.**

1. The Court shall have jurisdiction in respect of war crimes, in particular when committed as part of a plan or policy or as part of a large-scale commission of such crimes.

2. For the purpose of this Statute, "war crimes" means:

a) Grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, namely, any of the following acts against persons or property protected under the provisions of the relevant Geneva Convention:

...ii) Torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments;

iii) Wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health;...

Currently, the jurisdiction of the ICC extends to the territory of Ukraine in accordance with two Declarations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine No. 790-VII of 25 February 2014<sup>15</sup> and No. 145-VIII of 4 February 2015<sup>16</sup>, by which Ukraine effectively recognised the jurisdiction of the ICC within its territory from 21 November 2013 to 22 February 2014 and from 20 February 2014 to the present.

## **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**<sup>17</sup>

### **Article 6.**

1. Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their life.

### **Article 7.**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.

## **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**<sup>18</sup>

### **Article 12.**

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

2. The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realisation of this right shall include those necessary for:

...d) The creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness.

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<sup>15</sup> Statement by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the International Criminal Court on Ukraine's recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court...URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/790-18#Text>

<sup>16</sup> On the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On Ukraine's recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court regarding crimes against humanity and war crimes ...URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/145-19#Text>

<sup>17</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_043#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_043#Text)

<sup>18</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_042#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_042#Text)

**Basic principles for the treatment of prisoners** (adopted by Resolution No. 45/111 UNGA of 14 December 1990)<sup>19</sup>

9. Prisoners shall have access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation.

**Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment** (adopted by Resolution 43/173 UNGA, 9 December 1988)<sup>20</sup>

**Principle 24.**

A proper medical examination shall be offered to a detained or imprisoned person as promptly as possible after his admission to the place of detention or imprisonment, and thereafter medical care and treatment shall be provided whenever necessary. This care and treatment shall be provided free of charge.

**Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners** (adopted at the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, 1955, approved by the Economic and Social Council in resolutions 663 C (XXIV), 31 July 1977)<sup>21</sup>

**Paragraph 22.**

...2) Sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialised institutions or to civil hospitals. Where hospital facilities are provided in an institution, their equipment, furnishings and pharmaceutical supplies shall be proper for the medical care and treatment of sick prisoners, and there shall be a staff of suitably trained officers.

3) The services of a qualified dental officer shall be available to every prisoner.

**Paragraph 25.**

1) The medical officer shall have the care of the physical and mental health of the prisoners and should daily see all sick prisoners, all who complain of illness, and any prisoner to whom his attention is specially directed....

**Paragraph 44.**

1) Upon the death or serious illness of, or serious injury to a prisoner, or his removal to an institution for the treatment of mental affections, the director shall at once inform the spouse, if the prisoner is married, or the nearest relative, and shall, in any event, inform any other person previously designated by the prisoner.

**Principles of Medical Ethics relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment** (adopted by Resolution 37/194 UNGA, 18 December 1982)<sup>22</sup>

**Principle 1.**

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<sup>19</sup> Basic principles for the treatment of prisoners. URL:

[https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl\\_conv/conventions/prisoners\\_treatment.shtml](https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/prisoners_treatment.shtml)

<sup>20</sup> Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment URL:

[https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl\\_conv/conventions/detent.shtml](https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/detent.shtml)

<sup>21</sup> Minimum standard rules for the treatment of prisoners. URL:

[https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl\\_conv/conventions/prison.shtml](https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/prison.shtml)

<sup>22</sup> Principles of Medical Ethics relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. URL:

[https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl\\_conv/conventions/medical\\_ethics\\_principles.shtml](https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/medical_ethics_principles.shtml)

Health personnel, particularly physicians, charged with the medical care of prisoners and detainees, have a duty to provide them with protection of their physical and mental health and treatment of disease of the same quality and standard as is afforded to those who are not imprisoned or detained.

#### **Principle 4.**

It is a contravention of medical ethics for health personnel, particularly physicians:

...b) To certify, or to participate in the certification of, the fitness of prisoners or detainees for any form of treatment or punishment that may adversely affect their physical or mental health and which is not in accordance with the relevant international instruments, or to participate in any way in the infliction of any such treatment or punishment which is not in accordance with the relevant international instruments.

#### **UN Committee Against Torture, Comments of the UN Review Committee on the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, CAT/C/51/4, dated 16 December 2013<sup>23</sup>**

##### **Paragraph 16.**

The Committee considers the right to an independent medical examination as a fundamental legal safeguard from the moment of deprivation of liberty. Prisoners should have prompt access to an independent doctor at any time, without such access being conditional on the permission of, or a request to, officials, and irrespective of the detention regime. The health-care service in prison should be so organised that requests to consult a doctor can be met without undue delay.

##### **Paragraph 21.**

Medical confidentiality should be observed in prisons and places of detention in the same way as in the community at large.

##### **Paragraph 24.**

The Committee has recommended on numerous occasions that States ensure that there are sufficient medical professionals, including mental health professionals, in places of detention.

#### **European Convention on Human Rights<sup>24</sup>**

##### **Article 2.**

1. Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law.

##### **Article 3.**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

##### **Article 8.**

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

These standards also apply to the provision of necessary medical care in places of detention, as confirmed by the relevant practice of the European Court of Human Rights<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Observations of the Committee against Torture on the revision of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMR). URL: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/53429c014.html>

<sup>24</sup> Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (with protocols). URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_004#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_004#Text)

<sup>25</sup> Selected examples of relevant ECtHR practice:

Thus, based on the state's obligation to protect the right to life, it must report on its treatment of persons deprived of liberty and take appropriate steps to protect the lives of persons under its jurisdiction. This is especially true in the case of prisoners, who are under the complete control of the state and are therefore in a particularly vulnerable position.

It is worth noting that on 16 March 2022, the Russian Federation was excluded from the Council of Europe. Accordingly, persons affected by Russian aggression against Ukraine may apply to the ECtHR only in relation to violations of the European Convention on Human Rights that occurred before 16 September 2022, in accordance with the requirements for the admissibility of complaints, in particular with regard to the time limits for their submission (in accordance with Article 58 of the ECHR and the ECHR Resolution of 22 March 2022<sup>26</sup> ).

### ***Extension of the Russian Federation's legislation to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine***

At the same time, simultaneously with the unlawful annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (in accordance with Federal Constitutional Law No. 6 and amendments to Article 65 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation), the RF, in violation of international law, extended the application of its own legislation to this territory. Among other things, the so-called Federal Law No. 91 of 05.05.2014 "On the application of the provisions of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation in the territories of the Republic of Crimea and the city of federal significance Sevastopol" was adopted.

At the same time, Russian legislation also contains requirements and standards for the provision of adequate medical care to persons deprived of their liberty.

Thus, Federal Law No. 323 of 21 November 2011 "On the Fundamentals of Health Protection of Citizens in the Russian Federation" regulates, among other things, the rights to medical care of detained persons, persons taken into custody, persons serving sentences in the form of restriction of liberty, arrest, imprisonment or administrative arrest.

Article 26 of this No. 323-FZ stipulates that *"persons who are detained, taken into custody, serving sentences in the form of restriction of liberty, arrest, imprisonment or administrative arrest, have the right to medical care, in particular, where necessary, in medical organisations of the state health care system and municipal health care system, in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation"*.

Part 3 of this article also stipulates that *"if it is impossible to provide medical care in institutions of the penal system, persons who are in custody or serving a sentence of imprisonment shall have the right to receive medical care in medical organisations of the state health care system and the municipal health care system, as well as to be invited for consultations with medical specialists from these medical organisations"*.

In addition, the rights to medical care for persons sentenced to imprisonment are regulated by the provisions of Article 101 of the Criminal Executive Code of the Russian Federation. Thus, Parts 1–3 of this article stipulate that therapeutic and preventive as well as sanitary and preventive assistance to

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- Slimani c. France, decision dated 27 October 2004. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-66499>  
- Lykova v. Russia, decision dated 22 December 2015. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-159378>  
- Kudla v. Poland, (Grand Chamber), decision dated 26 October 2010 URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-58920>  
- Carabulea v. Romania, decision dated 10 July 2010. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-99911>  
- Ghimp and Others v. The Republic of Moldova, decision dated 30 October 2012. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-114099>  
- Mustafayev v. Azerbaijan, decision dated 4 May 2017. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-173365>  
- Khudobin v. Russia, decision dated 26 October 2006 // <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-77692>  
A detailed overview of the ECtHR's practice regarding healthcare in places of deprivation of liberty can be found in the ECHR Case Law Guide "Prisoners' Rights". 2022. URL: [https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/Guide\\_Prisoners\\_rights\\_ENG](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/Guide_Prisoners_rights_ENG)  
<sup>26</sup> Resolution of the ECtHR on the consequences of the termination of the RF's membership in the Council of Europe in the context of Article 58 of the ECHR dated 22 March 2022. URL: [https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/Resolution\\_ECHR\\_cessation\\_membership\\_Russia\\_CoE\\_ENG](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/Resolution_ECHR_cessation_membership_Russia_CoE_ENG)

prisoners shall be organised and provided in accordance with the Internal Regulations of Correctional Institutions and the legislation of the Russian Federation; within the penal system, appropriate therapeutic and preventive institutions (hospitals, special psychiatric and tuberculosis hospitals) and medical units shall be established for the medical care of prisoners, and the administration of correctional institutions shall be responsible for complying with the established requirements that ensure the protection of prisoners' health.

The procedure for providing appropriate medical care is, in turn, defined by the following Russian regulatory acts:

- Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation, dated 28 December 2012 No. 1466 "On Approval of the Rules for Providing Medical Care to Persons Who Are Imprisoned or Serving Sentences of Imprisonment in state and municipal healthcare organisations, as well as invitations for consultations with medical specialists in cases where it is impossible to provide medical assistance in penal institutions";
- Order of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, dated 28 December 2017, No. 285 "On approval of the procedure for organising medical care for prisoners or persons serving sentences of imprisonment";
- Order of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, dated 4 July 2022 No. 110 "On Approval of the Internal Rules of Procedure for Detention Centres of the Penal System, the Internal Rules of Procedure for Correctional Institutions and the Internal Rules of Procedure for Correctional Centres of the Penal System" (Chapter XII. Organisation and provision of medical care to suspects and accused persons).

In fact, all persons imprisoned within the territory of the occupied Crimean Peninsula, as well as Ukrainian citizens who were forcibly displaced from these territories to places of detention within the territory of the Russian Federation, including for serving sentences, fell under the scope of these regulatory legal acts of the Russian Federation.

### ***General summary***

International human rights standards and international humanitarian law prohibit all forms of torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, intentional infliction of severe bodily harm or damage to health. These standards must apply to all persons without discrimination, including those held in places of deprivation of liberty.

Access to medical care is also recognised internationally as a fundamental right of prisoners at the level of the UN and the Council of Europe. The right to medical care in places of deprivation of liberty derives from the right to life and the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

Responsibility for the health of persons held in places of deprivation of liberty rests with the state that exercises control over the relevant territory and, in particular, with the administration of the institution where such persons are held.

Persons held in places of deprivation of liberty in the temporarily occupied territory must be provided with adequate medical care as required by their state of health. This includes, if necessary, receiving emergency medical care in healthcare facilities. Any physical measures taken must not cause the slightest harm to the person's health and must not exceed the degree necessary for the performance of the duties assigned to the administration of the places of deprivation of liberty.

Among the basic principles of providing medical care in places of deprivation of liberty, it is important to note the adequate level of medical care, the need to take into account the specific needs of prisoners, the confidentiality of medical information and the principle of non-discrimination. The state must be

guided by these principles when implementing any measures related to health care in places of deprivation of liberty.

This is confirmed by the ECtHR in the case of *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*<sup>27</sup>, where the court concluded that there was an administrative practice that violated Article 3 of the Convention regarding the cruel treatment of *"Ukrainian political prisoners, which caused them undeniable mental and physical suffering, as well as the lack of an effective investigation into this matter"*. The court found that since 2014, Ukrainian political prisoners *"were held in inadequate conditions amounting to degrading treatment, in particular due to the lack of sufficient personal space during their detention in the Simferopol pre-trial detention centre, as well as other shortcomings, ...such as insufficient sleeping space, inappropriate temperature, lack of ventilation, infestation, lack of private toilet facilities and poor-quality food"*.

The ECtHR concluded that there had been an *"accumulation of identical or similar violations"* that were *"sufficiently numerous and interrelated" to be considered a 'system or practice'* of inadequate conditions of detention in the Simferopol (Crimea) pre-trial detention centre, for which Russia did not dispute responsibility. *"The scale and systematic nature of this practice further confirms the existence of an element of 'official tolerance' in administrative practice"*, the court stated.

An analysis of the situation regarding systemic problems with the Russian Federation's failure to provide proper and adequate medical care, which in particular led to the death of civilians from the occupied Crimean Peninsula in places of detention, allows us to assert that the Russian Federation has violated the relevant principles and above-mentioned standards of international humanitarian law and human rights, as well as the commission by the Russian Federation (its officials, representatives of the occupation administrations) of international crimes against these affected citizens of Ukraine, and the actual deployment of administrative practices that lead to gross violations of the rights of the civilian population in the territories controlled by the Russian Federation.

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<sup>27</sup> Decision of the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR in the case of *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, Nos. 20958/14 and 38334/18. P. 1228, 1236, 1237, 1238. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-207622>



## Chapter 2

### Preconditions and problems of political persecution in the temporarily occupied territories

On 20 February 2014, the Russian Federation launched an operation to seize the Crimean Peninsula<sup>28</sup>. The Russian Federation's Black Sea Fleet, which was legally based in Sevastopol, secretly left its deployment locations. A few days later, the Russian Federation also began transferring military units to the Crimean Peninsula, in particular from the Krasnodar Krai.

At the same time, relying on marginal pro-Russian forces in the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Russian Federation attempted to provoke a political crisis. The Crimean parliament was supposed to appeal to the Russian Federation with a request for "protection" and ask for "annexation". This provocation was thwarted by a mass pro-Ukrainian protest that took place near the Verkhovna Rada of Crimea on 26 February 2014.

On the night of 27 February 2014, Russian special forces seized the premises of the Crimean parliament. Subsequently, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, which was controlled by the Russian military, allegedly adopted the resolution "On the organisation and conduct of a republican (local) referendum"<sup>29</sup>. According to the resolution, the date of the "referendum" was set for 25 May 2014, but in fact the so-called "referendum" took place on 16 March 2014<sup>30</sup>.

The results of this "expression of will", as well as the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol announced by the RF<sup>31</sup>, were not recognised by the international community, which was confirmed in particular by UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine"<sup>32</sup>.

From the very beginning of the operation to seize the Crimean Peninsula, RF military personnel, who did not wear any identification marks (the so-called "little green men"), together with the so-called "Crimean Self-Defence Forces" began terrorising civilians who openly opposed the occupation<sup>33</sup>. From the first days of the illegal annexation of Crimea, local residents began to engage in peaceful resistance and hold demonstrations in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity. In response, the Russian military almost immediately began the practice of abductions and torture of activists<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> By Order of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation No. 160 dated 21 March 2014, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation medal "For the Return of Crimea" was established. The reverse side of the medal bears the dates "20 February 2014-18 March 2014", while the obverse side depicts the outline of the Crimean Peninsula. See Medal "For the Return of Crimea". URL: [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Медаль\\_«За\\_возвращение\\_Крыма»](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Медаль_«За_возвращение_Крыма»); Order of the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation No. 160 of 21 March 2014 "On the establishment of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence medal "For the Return of Crimea". URL: <https://base.garant.ru/70769742/>

<sup>29</sup> Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on the organisation and conduct of a republican (local) referendum on improving the status and powers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea No. 1630-6/14 of 27 February 2014 (archived copy). URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20250320005558/http://crimea.gov.ru/act/11610>

<sup>30</sup> "Referendum results" on the website of the "State Council of the Republic of Crimea":

"On 6 March, a Crimea-wide referendum was held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. According to the final protocol of the Commission of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on the conduct of the Crimea-wide referendum, 96.77% of voters voted for reunification with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, and 2.51% voted for the expansion of autonomy within Ukraine. Voter turnout was 83.1%. In Sevastopol, 95.6% voted for joining Russia, while 3.37% voted for autonomy within Ukraine. Voter turnout in Sevastopol reached 89.5%". See About the State Council of the Republic of Crimea History and Modernity (archived copy)

[https://web.archive.org/web/20250612194709/http://crimea.gov.ru/en/o\\_gossovete/istoriya\\_sovremennost](https://web.archive.org/web/20250612194709/http://crimea.gov.ru/en/o_gossovete/istoriya_sovremennost)

<sup>31</sup> Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on the admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the formation of new constituent entities within the Russian Federation dated 18 March 2014 (entered into force on 1 April 2014, letter from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 2 April 2014 No. 4886/dp). URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/view/0001201403180024>

<sup>32</sup> Territorial integrity of Ukraine. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014. A/RES/68/262. URL: <https://docs.un.org/A/RES/68/262>

<sup>33</sup> The Crimean Self-Defence Force is a pro-Russian paramilitary organisation created by the Russian Federation during the active phase of the occupation. It consisted mainly of representatives of so-called Cossack organisations, representatives of law enforcement agencies

<sup>34</sup> Forced Disappearances in Crimea during the Period of Russian Federation Occupation (2014–2020). Crimea SOS, 2021. [https://krymsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/naslynyczki-znyknennya-v-krymu-za-period-okupacziji-rf\\_veb-versiya-ukr.pdf](https://krymsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/naslynyczki-znyknennya-v-krymu-za-period-okupacziji-rf_veb-versiya-ukr.pdf)



On 3 March 2014, Crimean Tatar **Reshat Ametov** staged a solo picket against the occupation outside the Council of Ministers of Crimea in Simferopol. Ametov was detained by the so-called "Crimean Self-Defence Forces", after which nothing was known about him. On 15 March 2014, his body, showing signs of torture, was found near the village of Zemlianychnye, Bilohirsk district, Crimea, 60 kilometres from Simferopol. Several Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian activists fell victim to arbitrary detentions during this period<sup>35</sup>.

Subsequently, the Russian Federation continued to systematically persecute civilians who expressed their disagreement with the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula. At the same time, the range of reasons for politically motivated persecution gradually expanded, including through the introduction of new legislation. For example, in 2015, the RF began persecuting participants in the protest on 26 February 2014 (six Crimean Tatar activists were convicted under Article 212 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code for "organising mass riots with the use of violence and destruction of property")<sup>36</sup>. At the same time, the Russian Federation applied its own legislation retrospectively. Similar actions by the Russian Federation could be observed on a larger scale in the newly occupied territories of Ukraine after the start of the full-scale invasion by the RF in 2022.

To suppress protest moods and establish an atmosphere of fear in the occupied territory, starting in May 2014, Russian FSB employees began persecuting active citizens – participants in Crimean Tatar protests near the administrative border of Crimea, pro-Ukrainian activists, and participants in the Revolution of Dignity. In particular, they persecuted a group of like-minded people led by Ukrainian film director **Oleh Sentsov**<sup>37</sup>, Sevastopol resistance representative **Mykola Shyptur**<sup>38</sup>, and others.

From the very beginning, the Russian Federation ignored its own international legal obligations as an occupying power. Instead, Russia declared the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, which was formally recorded in Federal Constitutional Law No. 6-FKZ of 21 March 2014 "On the admission to the Russian Federation of the Republic of Crimea and the formation in the Russian Federation of new subjects – the Republic of Crimea and the city of federal significance of Sevastopol"<sup>39</sup>. At the same time, the main task of the RF was to achieve de facto international recognition of the annexation. In 2022, the RF attempted to annex the territories of the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk regions in a similar manner<sup>40</sup>.

As a result, the RF introduced its domestic legislation in the occupied territory and forcibly imposed Russian citizenship on the inhabitants of the Crimean Peninsula, which had a significant negative impact on the lives of the civilian population. Such actions by the RF directly contradict the norms of IHL, in particular Article 64 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (regarding the validity of criminal legislation in the occupied territory), and Article 54 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (regarding the immutability of the status of officials and judges in the occupied territory)<sup>41</sup>.

Due to the active application of Russian "anti-terrorist" and "anti-extremist" criminal legislation in the occupied Crimea, the first cases of persecution of the civilian population of Crimea in 2015 were followed by a "conveyor belt" of religious repression against members of the Muslim organisation **Hizb ut-**

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<sup>35</sup> Forced Disappearances in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol (Ukraine), Temporarily Occupied by the Russian Federation: Information Note. OHCHR, 2021. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/UKR%20BN%20on%20Enforced%20dis%20Crimea%20.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> The defendants in the "26 February case" were read the indictments. / ZMINA, 2016 URL: [https://zmina.info/ru/news-ru/figurantam\\_spravi\\_26\\_ljutogo\\_zachitali\\_obvinuvalni\\_visnovki/](https://zmina.info/ru/news-ru/figurantam_spravi_26_ljutogo_zachitali_obvinuvalni_visnovki/)

<sup>37</sup> Oleh Sentsov and his Crimea. Ukrainer. 2020. URL: <https://www.ukrainer.net/oleh-sentsov/>

<sup>38</sup> Mykola Shyptur, 2023. Center for Civil Liberties. URL: <https://ccl.org.ua/conscience/mykola-shyptur/>

<sup>39</sup> Federal Constitutional Law "On the Admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Constituent Entities within the Russian Federation: the Republic of Crimea and the City of Federal Significance Sevastopol" No. 6-FKZ of 21 March 2014. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201403210014>

<sup>40</sup> See Federal Constitutional Laws No. 5-FKZ, No. 6-FKZ, No. 7-FKZ, and No. 8-FKZ dated 4 October 2022.

<sup>41</sup> Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 12 August 1949. URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_154#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_154#Text)

**Tahrir**<sup>42</sup>. The religious-political movement Hizb ut-Tahrir was included in the list of organisations recognised as “terrorist organisations” in the RF (according to the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of 4 March 2003)<sup>43</sup>.

The following year, in 2016, the list of politically motivated prosecutions expanded to include cases against participants in the food blockade of Crimea, local journalists and activists, members of the **Crimean Tatar representative body – the Mejlis**, as well as the first “saboteurs” and “spies”<sup>44</sup>. In 2017-2018, the categories of persecuted civilians increased, and several criminal cases were added on charges of extremism due to patriotic statements on social media. Since 2019, religious figures from **the Jehovah’s Witnesses** association have been added to the lists of political prisoners. By the decision of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation on 16 August 2017, the “Administrative Centre of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia” was included in the list of banned organisations, in accordance with the Federal Law “On Countering Extremist Activity”, which was also automatically implemented in the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea.

After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, politically motivated persecutions in occupied Crimea intensified, while the practice of enforced disappearances of civilians, torture and ill-treatment, and the outright fabrication of evidence became widespread. With the start of full-scale war, Russian security forces began to use the same methods of persecution of the population in the territories of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, which were occupied after 24 February 2022. In particular, they unlawfully detained, imprisoned and transferred detained civilians to places of detention on the Crimean Peninsula, where all the necessary infrastructure for judicial prosecution had already been fully established at that time. In particular, Russian legislation was fully applied, and the so-called investigative bodies, judicial system bodies and penitentiary institutions performed their functions. Their work was supported by a large number of trained staff, including investigators, prosecutors, and judges. In addition, to increase the number of detention places in Simferopol, a separate prison block – SIZO No. 2<sup>45</sup> – was opened. The detainees were held incommunicado, subjected to torture and ill-treatment, and in some cases, politically motivated criminal proceedings were initiated against them.

The RF has consistently tightened criminal liability for politically motivated persecution. Already in 2022, amendments were made to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, introducing liability for “discrediting the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation” and disseminating “fake news” about the war. According to information from the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as of 15 February 2024, there were 208 known Crimean political prisoners (125 of whom are Crimean Tatars)<sup>46</sup>, and as of 11 February 2025, there were 221 known political prisoners (134 of whom are Crimean Tatars)<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> In Crimea and Sevastopol, any Muslim can be accused of involvement in a banned organisation. According to media reports, as of 2025, 122 people have been victims of persecution in the “Hizb ut-Tahrir case”, 119 of whom are Crimean Tatars. See: Since the annexation of Crimea, 122 people have been charged in the “Crimean Muslim cases” – CTCR/ KrymRealii, 2025. URL: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/news-krym-anneksiya-kryma-122-cheloveka-dela-krymskikh-musulman-33513709.html>

<sup>43</sup> Unified federal list of organisations, including foreign and international organisations, recognised as terrorist organisations in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (as of 4 August 2025). URL: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>

<sup>44</sup> For cases of politically motivated persecution in Crimea, see, for example, The Crimean process: observance of fair trial standards in politically motivated cases / Edited by D. Svyrydova. – Kyiv: KBC, 2018. – 78 p. URL: [https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/CrimeanProcessRU\\_Web.pdf](https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/CrimeanProcessRU_Web.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Who runs the FSB's secret prison for Ukrainians – SIZO No. 2 in Simferopol / Centre of Journalistic Investigations, 2023. URL: <https://investigator.org.ua/ua/investigations/252518/>

<sup>46</sup> Map of places of detention of political prisoners in Crimea (archived copy 13.03.2024) URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20240313094243/https://ppu.gov.ua/political-prisoners/> and (archived copy 25.02.2024). URL: [https://web.archive.org/web/20240225082755/https://ppu.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/spysok\\_ukr.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20240225082755/https://ppu.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/spysok_ukr.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Map of places of detention of political prisoners in Crimea. URL: <https://ppu.gov.ua/political-prisoners/> and URL: [https://ppu.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-spysok\\_ukr.pdf](https://ppu.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-spysok_ukr.pdf)

## Chapter 3

### **The problem of inadequate conditions of detention of Ukrainian citizens in penitentiary institutions in the temporarily occupied Crimea**

Since the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, and up to and including 2025, the number of politically motivated criminal prosecutions against the civilian population has remained consistently high. The Russian Federation systematically persecutes Crimean Tatars and attacks any manifestations of Ukrainian identity or disagreement with the occupation. A significant number of arbitrarily detained persons are unlawfully held in inadequate conditions in penitentiary institutions. Therefore, one of the main threats to all such victims is the unsatisfactory conditions of detention in places of deprivation of liberty on the Crimean Peninsula and in the Russian Federation (when victims are illegally transferred to its territory – transported). The problem of inadequate conditions of detention in places of deprivation of liberty has two main dimensions.

Firstly, inadequate conditions of detention and violations of the rights of suspects or convicts are typical, characteristic and systematic practices for the Russian Federation, which have also spread to the TOT. Those detained under criminal articles, serving sentences, or those who are suspects in criminal cases often face the risk of torture, particularly during contacts with the prison administration, and during interrogations. At the same time, employees of Russian pre-trial detention centres or corrective labor colonies, on the one hand, acknowledge the existence of the problem, but on the other hand, tend to justify the use of violence against prisoners by the need to establish control (“the system is unable to achieve order among convicts in any other way”), shift responsibility onto the victims (“many prisoners provoke staff themselves”), downplay the scale of the problem in the prison system (“torture occurs due to human factors and emotionality”)<sup>48</sup>.

Violations of detention conditions are also characteristic of all Russian correctional facilities. In some cases, these violations may not have any particular motivation, but simply occur due to systemic issues – the general degradation of the FSIN system.

Secondly, in cases of politically motivated persecution, the typical prejudices of prison staff against defendants or prisoners are compounded by motives of national and ethnic intolerance. In particular, ZMINA has received reports of such cases from Ukrainian civilians who were detained in the temporarily occupied territories after 2022 and held incommunicado in the Russian Federation for a long time. Human rights defenders observe similar prejudices in the case of Crimean political prisoners, especially in cases where the victim is clearly identified as “pro-Ukrainian” and/or “disloyal to the occupying authorities”.

In this context, it is also important to emphasise that prison administrations may deliberately worsen conditions of detention in an attempt to continue exerting pressure on the detainee, their family or their lawyers. In particular, there are numerous cases where the deterioration of a political prisoner’s conditions of detention was the result of their complaints about the lack of medical care or other violations<sup>49</sup>. Often, inadequate conditions of detention, given the presence of other violations and the vulnerable position of the victim, can reach the threshold of torture. In particular, this is the case when the deterioration of conditions of detention is carried out with the intention of exerting pressure or directly causing harm to the victim, for example, as an unofficial punishment.

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<sup>48</sup> See, Why are people constantly being tortured in prisons? Meduza asked FSIN employees what they themselves think about this — and how they justify violence. “Many prisoners provoke it themselves”. Meduza. 2021. URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2021/10/13/mnogie-zaklyuchennye-sami-provotsiruyut>

It should be noted that Meduza collected and published comments from employees of pre-trial detention centres and correctional colonies on 13 October 2021, that is, before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022. Accordingly, these employees do not have any particular political biases regarding the criminal prisoners they mention.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, testimony on the death of K. Shyring, p. 4, The Hafarov-Shyring list: rescue of Crimean political prisoners at risk. ZMINA. 2023. P. 4. URL: [https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/zmina2023-list\\_gafarov-shiring\\_ua.pdf](https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/zmina2023-list_gafarov-shiring_ua.pdf)

The Russian Federation traditionally has significant problems with the effective functioning of its prison system. These problems are likely linked to both the poor quality of management processes within the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN), the heavy burden on correctional institutions (due to the inadequate state of their material and technical resources), as well as to the widespread violations of prisoners' rights, unsatisfactory conditions of detention, frequent instances of violence against them, and the like.

For example, in 2021, the annual report "SPACE I - 2020 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Prison populations"<sup>50</sup>, on the situation of prisoners, prepared by the University of Lausanne at the request of the Council of Europe, indicated that as of January 2020, the Russian Federation had the largest number of prisoners among all participating countries<sup>51</sup>. At the same time, the number of prisoners per capita in the Russian Federation is 3.5 times higher than the European average. Russia also has a significantly higher mortality rate among prisoners<sup>52</sup>, and the lowest level of expenditure per prisoner<sup>53</sup>.

Back in 2018, the Moscow Helsinki Group reported some progress towards the creation of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in the Russian Federation<sup>54</sup>, – a supervisory mechanism for monitoring the rights of prisoners, the creation of which is provided for by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment<sup>55</sup>. Subsequently, the NPM was never established in Russia.

Russian media regularly report on the use of torture in pre-trial detention centres and penal colonies. Cases of violence are sometimes so egregious that they can provoke riots among prisoners. In October 2021, the human rights portal Gulagu.net gained access to 40 gigabytes of video recordings from prison cameras, which showed cases of torture (including rape) of prisoners by FSIN representatives<sup>56</sup>.

There are no independent mechanisms for monitoring the observance of prisoners' rights in the Russian Federation. Following the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 16 March 2022, the aggressor state was excluded from the Council of Europe<sup>57</sup>. Consequently, the annual reports on the situation of prisoners, which were prepared at its request in 2022-2024, no longer contain any factual information about the penitentiary system of the RF<sup>58</sup>.

On 25 August 2025, the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Mishustin, signed a draft government resolution proposing to denounce the Russian Federation's obligations under the European

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<sup>50</sup> Aebi, M. F., & Tiago, M. M. (2021). SPACE I - 2020 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Prison populations. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. URL: [https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2024/01/SPACE-I\\_2021\\_FinalReport.pdf](https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2024/01/SPACE-I_2021_FinalReport.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> See the main indicators of the report in the publication, Prison sentences in Russia are long and cheap. The Council of Europe reports on prison statistics. BBC. 2021. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-56674300>  
From the cited report: As of 1 January 2020, approximately 520,000 people were being held in prisons in the RF. In terms of per capita population in the RF, this equates to 356 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants (the European average is 103.2 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants).

<sup>52</sup> The mortality rate among prisoners in the Russian Federation is 47 deaths per 10,000 prisoners (the average European rate is 27 deaths per 10,000 prisoners).

<sup>53</sup> According to the report, approximately €2.8 per day per prisoner.

<sup>54</sup> A National Preventive Mechanism to Prevent Torture in Places of Detention will be established in Russia / Moscow Helsinki Group, 2018 (archived copy). URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190713153506/https://mhg.ru/news/v-rossii-budet-sozdan-nacionalnyy-preventivnyy-mehanizm-po-predotvrashcheniyu-pytok-v-mestah>

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Guidelines relating to national preventive mechanisms. URL: <https://docs.un.org/ru/CAT/OP/12/5>

<sup>56</sup> Gulagu.net received a "secret archive" containing records of torture in Russian prisons. Videos of the rape of three prisoners were published, the Federal Penitentiary Service and the prosecutor's office announced investigations. Meduza. 2021. URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2021/10/05/gulagu-net-poluchil-sekretnyy-arhiv-s-zapisyami-pytok-v-rossijskih-koloniyah-opublikovano-video-iznasilovaniy-treh-zaklyuchennyh>

<sup>57</sup> The Russian Federation is excluded from the Council of Europe / Council of Europe, 2022 URL: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/the-russian-federation-is-excluded-from-the-council-of-europe>

<sup>58</sup> See, for example: «Data for Belarus, Kosovo\* and Russian Federation are not collected because they are not members of the Council of Europe». Aebi, M. F., Cocco, E., & Molnar, L., (2023). SPACE I - 2022 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Prison populations. Council of Europe and University of Lausanne. P. 10. URL: [https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2024/01/240111\\_SPACE-I\\_2022\\_FinalReport.pdf](https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2024/01/240111_SPACE-I_2022_FinalReport.pdf)

Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment<sup>59</sup>. Additionally, in September 2025, the Russian Federation announced its withdrawal from this Convention<sup>60</sup>. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarded this initiative as an attempt to avoid responsibility for crimes committed by the Russian Federation against Ukrainian citizens.

The situation of prisoners in the temporarily occupied territories, in particular on the Crimean Peninsula, is worse because established practices of the penitentiary system and the FSIN are not systematically implemented there. Even the existing formal guarantees of prisoners' rights, including the right to medical care, are not properly implemented. The political motivation behind criminal prosecutions creates additional threats for victims.

At the same time, the lack of any independent monitoring of the conditions of detention and the situation of prisoners is a problem. Today, the only source of statistical information on the situation in prisons in the temporarily occupied Crimean Peninsula is the so-called "Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea". At the same time, it is known that officials who held the position of the so-called "Commissioner" were involved in concealing information about the critical situation of prisoners, which was probably the cause of their death<sup>61</sup>.

International non-recognition of Russia's occupation of the Crimean Peninsula was confirmed by UNGA Resolution 68/262 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine"<sup>62</sup>. This document became the basis for the future recording and legal assessment of human rights violations in occupied Crimea. Thus, between 2014 and 2018, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published two thematic reports on the human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Some sections of these documents dealt with the administration of justice and the right to a fair trial. In particular, in a report examining the situation on the Crimean Peninsula in 2017-2018, the UN called on the Russian Federation to "ensure that persons held in penitentiary institutions receive adequate medical care, regardless of their citizenship or any other grounds for discrimination; effectively investigate all cases of death in places of detention" (Paragraph K of the Recommendations to the Government of the Russian Federation)<sup>63</sup>.

To a large extent, the position of the OHCHR and other international organisations and partner countries on the situation of politically motivated persecution on the Crimean Peninsula was shaped by the work of Ukrainian human rights organisations and civil society initiatives. They collected information on violations of the rights of political prisoners in ways accessible to them and informed the public about these violations.

Due to the lack of access for members of international monitoring missions to the occupied territories, as well as the total suppression of human rights organisations and independent media throughout the occupation, the issue of conditions of detention in places of deprivation of liberty has not been properly documented. However, the official annual reports of the so-called "Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea", whose official duties include monitoring compliance with and ensuring adequate conditions in places of detention, will help to form a partial picture of the situation and the beginning of the deterioration of conditions in the penitentiary system. The first thing to note when describing the

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<sup>59</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1266 of 23 August 2025 "On submitting to the President of the Russian Federation for introduction into the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation a proposal on the denunciation by the Russian Federation of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the protocols thereto". URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202508250028>

<sup>60</sup> The Federation Council has denounced the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture. Interfax. 2025. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/1048992>

<sup>61</sup> Lawyer refutes statement by Russian ombudsman for Crimea that Dzhemil Hafarov is in "normal" health. KrymRealii. 2020. URL: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/news-krym-advokat-oproverq-zayavlenie-ombudsmena-o-gafarove/30417174.html>

<sup>62</sup> Territorial integrity of Ukraine. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014. A/RES/68/262. URL: <https://docs.un.org/A/RES/68/262>

<sup>63</sup> Report on the situation with human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine). 13 September 2017 – 30 June 2018. OHCHR. URL: [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/CrimeaThematicReport10Sept2018\\_UKR.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/CrimeaThematicReport10Sept2018_UKR.pdf)



state of medical care in pre-trial detention centres and prisons after the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula is the absence of a separate institution responsible for medical and sanitary care in the penitentiary system on the peninsula during the first two years of the occupation. As noted in the 2015 report of the "Crimean Ombudsman", such an institution was only established on the peninsula in 2016, and until then, medical care was provided by Medical Unit No. 23 of the FSIN of the Krasnodar Territory<sup>64</sup>.

Judging by the assessment of the official, the unit did not perform these duties well – *"In 2015, the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea and his staff found that medical units in institutions had extremely low supplies of medicines and lacked the most essential drugs"*, the report states. The report also notes that the so-called "Ombudsman" *"repeatedly, both at the republican and federal levels, in particular at the regular meeting of the Coordinating Council of Russian Human Rights Commissioners of the Russian Federation with the participation of the leadership of the FSIN of Russia, raised the issue of medical care for the FKU of the republic"*. It is noted that the "Ombudsman" allegedly *"had to make efforts to ensure that representatives from the Krasnodar Krai provided the Simferopol SIZO with the most necessary medicines"*, but in the end this had no effect.

The same report notes that at the end of 2014 and in the first half of 2015, a *"critical situation developed in the supply of medicines in the penitentiary institutions of temporarily occupied Crimea. The Office of the "Commissioner" registered "numerous appeals from individuals in which the applicants indicated that they were not provided with the necessary medical care, in particular in terms of tuberculosis and antiretroviral drugs"*<sup>65</sup>.

The creation in 2016 of a separate unit – Medical Unit No. 91 within the FSIN Administration for the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol – did not solve the problem. *"The medical units of FKUZ MSU-91 FSIN Russia are not fully staffed, which, combined with critical overcrowding [by prisoners – ed.], creates enormous problems in diagnosing diseases and providing medical care to detainees"*, the so-called "Ombudsman" noted at the end of the year.

It was not possible to staff medical units with appropriate personnel during 2017, as also noted in the latest report by the "Human Rights Commissioner"<sup>66</sup>: *"Problems related to the provision of medical care arise primarily due to understaffing at the Directorate of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, particularly among medical personnel. The inability to provide medical care in penal institutions is understood to mean, in particular, the absence in a penal institution of a medical specialist with the relevant profile or qualifications, equipment or conditions for providing the necessary level of medical care"*.

The report also partially reveals the attitude of the administrative staff of places of detention towards the organisation of transferring prisoners to civilian medical facilities for them to receive appropriate medical care. According to the text, the insufficient number of staff also affected the escort service, which complicated the fulfilment of *"security requirements for persons [prisoners – ed.] directly during their stay in a medical institution of the state and municipal healthcare system"*. By way of illustration of the problem, the report cites the case of a person who had a displaced femoral fracture for more than a year and, throughout this period, did not receive adequate medical care.

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<sup>64</sup>Report of the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea "On the observance of human and civil rights and freedoms in the Republic of Crimea in 2015" / Simferopol, 2016. URL: [https://map.ombudsmanrf.org/Karta\\_Yadro/prav\\_z\\_karta/sub\\_fed/ugniy\\_fed/respublika\\_krim/dokument\\_krim/dokument\\_1/dokument\\_1web.pdf](https://map.ombudsmanrf.org/Karta_Yadro/prav_z_karta/sub_fed/ugniy_fed/respublika_krim/dokument_krim/dokument_1/dokument_1web.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Report of the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea on the observance of human and civil rights and freedoms in the Republic of Crimea, 2017 URL: <http://crimea.gov.ru/textdoc/ru/7/project/1547pr.pdf>

Also, for the first time since 2017, information is provided on the number of deaths of Crimeans in places of deprivation of liberty. According to the report, 14 people died in places of deprivation of liberty during the year, only one of whom did not die due to health reasons. The causes of death listed include hemorrhagic shock, HIV and heart failure. The text also states that the number of deaths has decreased compared to last year.

Another important indicator for assessing the provision of medical care to prisoners, which was published in the report, was the number of people who were hospitalised. It is noted that during 2017, despite the shortage of staff, only 20 people were referred to specialised medical facilities, 16 of whom had tuberculosis.

In 2018, information about hospitalisation was not disclosed, but the "Ombudsman" indicates that during this period, 3,005 prisoners sought medical assistance, of whom 2,610 were provided with medical assistance without being transported outside FSIN facilities, and 71 individuals received medical assistance outside FSIN facilities. This means that 324 individuals did not receive any medical assistance at all.

Among the 13 people who died in prison in 2018, eight died due to health-related issues (cancer – 1, heart disease – 3, cirrhosis – 1, HIV – 2, cerebral oedema – 1)<sup>67</sup>.

During this period, there were also several reports of Crimean political prisoners being denied medical care. On 20 September 2018, it became known that **Asan Chapukh** was on hunger strike in protest against the lack of medical care in Simferopol SIZO No. 1<sup>68</sup>. According to his lawyer, his health had deteriorated significantly in the detention centre: his leg and arm had become numb, his speech slurred, and his headaches had worsened. At that time, Chapukh suffered a minor stroke in the detention centre and developed cancer. Chapukh himself noted that 10 months of imprisonment had turned him into a "vegetable".

The unresolved issue of medical personnel in prisons in occupied Crimea remains relevant five years after the occupation of the peninsula. *"The main reason preventing the provision of timely medical care in the institutions of the republic's penal system remains the absence of MSU-91 inpatient departments in the Republic of Crimea and a shortage of medical personnel (vacancies) in the medical unit itself. Thus, the total staff of FKUZ MSU-91 FSIN in the Republic of Crimea is 65 employees, of whom 48 work in branches. There are 21 vacant positions, 16 of which are in branches"*, – reports the so-called "Commissioner" for Human Rights in Crimea based on the results of 2019<sup>69</sup>.

2019 saw a record number of prisoner deaths. Among the 27 deceased, 25 died due to health-related issues. The most common cause of death among detainees and convicts was cardiovascular disease, killing 10 people and accounting for 40% of the total number of deaths this year. In 5 cases, death was caused by HIV infection, in 3 cases by pneumonia, in 4 cases by tuberculosis, in 2 cases by cancer, and in 1 case by asthma.

In 2020, the "Ombudsman's" annual report acknowledged that the problem of understaffing in the medical and sanitary unit remains and is even exacerbated by formal circumstances<sup>70</sup>: *"There is a shortage of medical personnel in the republic's FSIN units. Despite the measures taken by the MSU leadership, some vacancies in FSIN institutions have remained unfilled for a long time. There is also a*

<sup>67</sup> Report of the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea on the observance of human and civil rights and freedoms in the Republic of Crimea, 2018 URL: <http://www.crimea.gov.ru/textdoc/ru/7/act/2309pr.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> "They turned me into a vegetable in prison": 65-year-old Crimean Tatar Asan Chapukh is on hunger strike in Simferopol pre-trial detention centre, 2018 URL: <https://ru.krymr.com/a/asan-chapuh-obyavil-golodovku-v-sizo-simferopolya/29500820.html>

<sup>69</sup> Report of the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea. 2019. URL: [https://map.ombudsmanrf.org/Karta\\_Yadro/prav\\_z\\_karta/sub\\_fed/ugniy\\_fed/respublika\\_krim/doklad\\_v\\_krim/doklad\\_v\\_krimweb\\_2019.pdf](https://map.ombudsmanrf.org/Karta_Yadro/prav_z_karta/sub_fed/ugniy_fed/respublika_krim/doklad_v_krim/doklad_v_krimweb_2019.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Report on the activities of the Human Rights Commissioner in the city of Sevastopol and on the observance of human and civil rights and freedoms in the city of Sevastopol in 2020 URL: [https://sevvakon.ru/assets/files/otchet/podkontr\\_org/upch\\_2020.pdf](https://sevvakon.ru/assets/files/otchet/podkontr_org/upch_2020.pdf)

*shortage of certain specialists in the region (phthisiologists, infectious disease specialists, etc). This situation is most acute in SIZO No.1 in Simferopol. Its staffing capacity is 747 people, and the number of medical personnel in the medical unit of this institution has been approved accordingly. However, the pre-trial detention centre is overcrowded, with an average occupancy of about 1,300 people per month. Accordingly, the medical staff of this institution, with vacancies for specialists, are experiencing a double workload, which directly affects the quality of medical care provided”.*

Representatives of the occupying authorities indicate that in 2020 they identified *"violations of the rights of convicted persons in the form of lack of medical examinations, delayed examinations of certain individuals by the medical staff of the sanitary unit of the remand prison despite requests for such examinations, delayed provision of medicines and drugs to convicts, confiscation of medicines delivered by relatives without subsequently handing them over to the convicts, etc”.* Over the course of the year, 13 people died in custody, at least 9 of whom died due to health problems.

According to reports for 2021 and 2022, there have been no changes in the healthcare system. *“As in 2020, most of the complaints received from FKU SIZO No. 1 in Simferopol, Simferopol Directorate of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia for the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, contained information about insufficient medical examination and treatment of detainees and convicts”,* the 2021 document states. *“Most of the appeals contained information about inadequate medical examination, improper treatment of detainees and convicts, and incomplete and untimely provision of medical supplies”,* the report of 2022 states.

Throughout the entire period of occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, in 2022, the “Human Rights Commissioner” concludes that *“the insufficient staffing of MSU No. 91 FSIN of Russia, given the double overcrowding of SIZO No. 1, does not allow for the full provision of adequate medical care to citizens detained there”*<sup>71</sup>.

According to the report of the so-called “Human Rights Commissioner for the Republic of Crimea” for 2023 - 2024, despite the measures taken in 2022 and 2023, there are still not enough facilities in Crimea to accommodate all those who have been arrested and for whom the court has chosen a preventive measure of detention. In SIZO No. 1 in Simferopol, the standard of sanitary space in cells per person (at least 4m<sup>2</sup><sup>72</sup>) is not observed.

In 2023, most of the appeals received by the Ombudsman contained complaints about inadequate medical examination and treatment of defendants and convicts, as well as incomplete and untimely provision of medical supplies. The “Ombudsman” was mostly approached by persons suffering from diseases such as HIV infection and tuberculosis.

The report of the “Commissioner” also mentions the understaffing of the Republican Clinical Psychiatric Hospital, which affects the duration of criminal investigations – the periods of detention of defendants are consequently extended<sup>73</sup>.

In this context, ZMINA has identified several other problems: individuals undergoing psychological and psychiatric evaluation as part of a criminal case are denied the opportunity to receive parcels (parcels must be handed over to the detention centre, and detention centre staff must deliver them to the psychiatric hospital themselves, but due to a lack of staff, these parcels are not accepted).

The food in the psychiatric hospital is slightly better in quality than in the detention centre, but the portions are small. Even the drinks they give (tea, kissel) are only half a glass. There is no access to

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<sup>71</sup> Report of the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea for 2021. URL: [https://map.ombudsmanrf.org/Karta\\_Yadro/prav\\_z\\_karta/sub\\_fed/ugniy\\_fed/respublika\\_krim/doklad\\_v\\_krim/doklad\\_v\\_krimweb\\_2021.pdf](https://map.ombudsmanrf.org/Karta_Yadro/prav_z_karta/sub_fed/ugniy_fed/respublika_krim/doklad_v_krim/doklad_v_krimweb_2021.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> According to Article 23 of Federal Law No. YZ-FZ of 15 July 1995 “On the detention of suspects and persons accused of committing crimes”.

<sup>73</sup> Report of the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea for 2023 URL: [https://ombudsman.rk.gov.ru/uploads/ombudsman/container/2024/04/03/2024-04-03-12-48-52\\_2023.pdf](https://ombudsman.rk.gov.ru/uploads/ombudsman/container/2024/04/03/2024-04-03-12-48-52_2023.pdf)



clean water, let alone hot water. It is not possible to shop at the FSIN store. Natural needs are met without respect for the right to privacy (there are no doors). Hygiene procedures (cutting nails, beards or hair) are performed once a week: scissors (one for everyone) and a hair clipper, which is also not disinfected, are provided.

Psychiatric examination lasts 21-28 days, during which time the person is kept in a psychiatric hospital. Often, the transfer for such an examination is not properly announced in advance, and the accused are not allowed to take with them even a change of underwear, shoes, or warm clothes. Politically motivated defendants who declare their mental health are often held with mentally ill people.

## Chapter 4

### Violations of the right to health care and adequate medical assistance in penitentiary institutions of the Russian Federation

In February 2023, two Crimean political prisoners, **Dzhemil Hafarov** and **Kostiantyn Shyring**, died in detention within the territory of the Russian Federation. Both men required highly specialised medical care, which could not be provided either in pre-trial detention centres or in prison medical facilities. On 10 February 2025, it became known that **Rustem Virati** had died in a penal colony in the city of Dimitrovhrad, Ulyanovsk region, Russian Federation.

**Dzhemil Hafarov** was unjustifiably arrested in 2019 and was under investigation at the FKU SIZO No. 5 FSIN RF, Rostov-on-Don. He had a second-degree disability, chronic heart disease and stage IV renal failure, which required regular dialysis to cleanse his blood of toxins. However, he did not receive adequate medical care while in prison. Despite numerous requests from his lawyer to the prosecutor's office and the presiding judge regarding the need for urgent medical examination and treatment, Hafarov was denied hospitalisation. The court demanded special documents confirming Hafarov's serious condition, but to obtain them, he had to undergo at least a medical examination by specialists. Despite the fact that Hafarov had confirmation of his Group II disability, the judges repeatedly confirmed the preventive measure. After lengthy legal proceedings, the request was granted, and Hafarov was placed in MOTB No. 19 (Interregional Tuberculosis Hospital for Convicts, Rostov-on-Don).

Despite constant complaints and requests to be transferred to a medical facility, the administration of SIZO No. 5 in Rostov-on-Don decided to transfer Hafarov to SIZO No. 3 in Novochoerkassk. During the transfer, Hafarov was forced to carry bags with his clothes and personal belongings himself. Instead of resting, he had to climb up and down stairs, wait in cold rooms and go through the registration procedure at the pre-trial detention centre. The transfer took place in a convoy vehicle in a small compartment, which is called a "glass" because of its limited size. Dzhemil was also denied medical assistance in SIZO No. 3. His condition deteriorated sharply on 27 October 2022, and Hafarov suffered a heart attack. On 10 February 2023, Dzhemil Hafarov died in SIZO No. 3 in Novochoerkassk, Rostov region, within the territory of the Russian Federation. According to the medical report, Hafarov died as a result of atherosclerotic heart disease, which led to acute cardiovascular failure.

**Kostiantyn Shyring** was unlawfully sentenced in temporarily occupied Crimea to 12 years' imprisonment in a maximum security penal colony. He was transferred from the Crimean Peninsula to Colony No. 5 in Novotroitsk, Orenburg region, Russian Federation, where he was at the time of his death. Shyring had cardiovascular disease. During one of the court hearings in August 2021, he fell ill right in the courtroom. Due to his deteriorating health, Shyring repeatedly requested medical assistance from the administration of the Simferopol pre-trial detention centre. He repeatedly complained about the lack of medical care. After that, the administration of the pre-trial detention centre transferred him from cell to cell several times, and the conditions of detention in each subsequent cell were worse than in the previous one. He needed heart surgery, and his health was gradually deteriorating, but neither the administration of the pre-trial detention centre nor the judges who handed down the verdicts in his case paid any attention to this. Thus, during his two years in prison, Shyring never received any medical care, which led to his death in a Russian colony in early February 2023.

**Rustem Virati** was detained on 16 March 2023 in Novooleksiivka, Kherson region, occupied by Russian authorities, but was released the day after his detention. He was later detained again and illegally sentenced by the Russians to 8 years in a maximum security penal colony. He was accused of allegedly contributing to the economic blockade of the Crimean Peninsula, which began in 2015, as well as participating in the Crimean Tatar battalion named after Noman Çelebichan, which the Russian Federation recognises as an "illegal armed formation". After his arrest, Rustem Virati was subjected to numerous acts of torture and was severely beaten. All court hearings were held in closed session. After

the verdict, the Crimean Tatar was first taken to the city of Ufa in the Russian Federation, and then to a penal colony in the city of Dimitrovhrad in the Ulyanovsk region, from where the news of his death came<sup>74</sup>.

In **August 2023**, ZMINA presented the **“Hafarov-Shyring” list**, a list of Crimean political prisoners in need of urgent medical care<sup>75</sup>. At that time, there were at least 21 political prisoners from Crimea whose health was critical. As of **August 2025**, the Human Rights Centre ZMINA is aware of about **100** Crimean political prisoners who have serious health problems and need medical assistance, **46** of whom do not receive the necessary medical care at all and do not have access to medicines provided to them by their relatives or lawyers<sup>76</sup>. In other words, these figures show a disappointing trend. Over the past two years, the health situation of political prisoners who are currently being held in places of detention in the temporarily occupied Crimea or who have been transferred to the Russian Federation, and who are known to be systematically denied medical care during their detention, has worsened twofold.

In general, it is known that the conditions of detention of Ukrainian citizens in penitentiary institutions in the temporarily occupied territories and in the Russian Federation are inadequate. In such conditions, the risks to the health of prisoners increase. At the same time, two fundamental points should be noted here:

- Further detention of political prisoners from the above list threatens to have irreversible negative consequences for their health, including disability or a real risk of death. A significant number of other detainees also suffer from poor conditions of detention, but their situation is less critical at this stage.
- The Russian penitentiary system uses conditions of detention in places of detention as an additional tool to cause suffering to prisoners; deliberate deterioration of conditions of detention can also be classified as a type of torture.

Prison administrations and other officials who are in some way responsible for the situation of prisoners use inappropriate conditions of detention, denial of medical care and torture as a means of punishment, which is completely illegitimate and cannot be calculated or controlled. In a situation where a prisoner already has several chronic illnesses, his health can deteriorate extremely rapidly in such conditions. At the same time, the prison administration is unable to respond, despite the fact that the death of a prisoner for political reasons is objectively undesirable.

Internal rules of procedure should be considered separately. For example, there are often cases of disciplinary action being taken for an unbuttoned button on a jacket or the absence of headgear, or, conversely, if a convict wears something not provided for in the regulations (e.g., a sweater, etc.). These rules are the same for all places of detention, regardless of weather conditions, place of detention, health status, and physical characteristics of the convict. There are cases when winter clothing is not provided, and convicts walk around in summer clothes in sub-zero temperatures and get frostbite. For example, the Human Rights Centre ZMINA is aware of a similar case of frostbite that happened to Alim Karimov. Not all political prisoners are given a change of underwear, which makes it impossible to maintain hygiene.

### **The most common health problems among political prisoners**

The most common diseases among Ukrainian citizens who have been subjected to politically motivated persecution in the temporarily occupied territories by the Russian Federation and are being held in

<sup>74</sup> Rustem Virati, a resident of Novooleksiivka, died in a Russian prison after being unlawfully convicted for “participating in the battalion named after Noman Çelebicihan”. Centre of Journalistic Investigations. 2025. URL: <https://investigator.org.ua/ua/news-2/pivden/274445/>

<sup>75</sup> The Hafarov-Shyring list: rescue of Crimean political prisoners at risk. ZMINA. 2023. URL: <https://zmina.ua/publication/spysok-gafarova-shyringa-poryatunok-krymskyh-polityvazniv-yaki-znahodyatsya-pid-zagrozoyu/>

<sup>76</sup> Almost 100 Crimean political prisoners require urgent medical attention – ZMINA. 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/terminovoyi-medychnoyi-dopomogy-potrebuyut-majzhe-100-krymskyh-polityvazniv-zmina/>

penitentiary institutions both in occupied Crimea and the territory of the Russian Federation are diseases of the circulatory system, cardiovascular diseases, diseases of the musculoskeletal system (arthritis, osteoarthritis), kidney, liver, cancer and diabetes mellitus. Political prisoners also suffer from dermatological diseases (rashes, psoriasis, growths of unknown origin), dental problems, deterioration of vision and hearing, and hernias. Due to poor nutrition, they suffer from gastritis, stomach ulcers and other gastrointestinal diseases. Cases of contracting such serious conditions as hepatitis, HIV and tuberculosis in detention have also been repeatedly documented.

Some of these problems are traditional “age-related” diseases. At the same time, it is obvious that several such common health problems can lead to much worse, often critical consequences in detention centres and prisons. For example, some older political prisoners who already had hypertension suffered strokes or hypertensive crises while in detention. We can only conclude such cases from the statements of the victims themselves or the defence, since proper medical examinations are not carried out in most cases, even when complaints are made. For example, the case of **Servet Haziiev**, who had visible signs of a stroke suffered in the pre-trial detention centre, but Russian doctors did not confirm this diagnosis.

A significant proportion of Crimean political prisoners held by Russia suffer from venous dilation (varicose veins). The prison regime, which prohibits prisoners from sitting or lying down in their cells during the day (up to 16 hours a day), contributes to its onset or significantly worsens the symptoms of an existing condition. A case in point is that of **Arsen Abkhairov**, who spends about 16 hours a day on his feet in Colony No. 9 in Tsvil'sk. Abkhairov now needs surgery to remove his varicose veins. **Nasrull Seidaliiev** also suffers from severe varicose veins. In Minusinsk prison, he is given large quantities of medication every day, which he is forced to take because of the severe pain, but there is no possibility of surgery. **Muslim Aliiev**, **Raif Fevziiev**, **Ali Fedorov**, and **Rustem Sheikhaliiev** also have health problems, including the need for treatment of varicose veins.

Musculoskeletal disorders – back problems, osteoarthritis of the joints – are among those conditions that can be either chronic or acquired in prison.

There are also cases where diseases of the musculoskeletal system and other diseases are a direct result of violence against the victim during his detention or in the place of detention (for example, the beating of **Emir-Usein Kuku** or **Ihor Kiashka**; the case of frostbite of the feet of **Ivan Yatskin**, who was taken out into the cold in slippers).

Ametkhan Abdulvapov is subjected to systematic beatings, which have caused him severe pain near his collarbone and impaired function in his arm. According to the man, he has also suffered a stroke. The Human Rights Centre ZMINA is also aware of the beating of Servet Haziiev for refusing to vote in the Russian elections, after which he still suffers from pain in his collarbone.

It is important to pay special attention to the transfer from the pre-trial detention centre to a penal colony in the territory of the Russian Federation or during the transfer from Crimea to Rostov or other cities of the Russian Federation. The transfer from Crimea takes place in a police van, where the accused is placed in a so-called ‘glass’ (a confined space with a small bench, where the knees rest against the door and the elbows against the walls). In addition, the prisoners are required to hold their bags with their belongings on their knees and, most often, on their heads. The journey to Rostov takes at least 10 hours, with the first stop after three hours lasting 15 minutes. The vehicles are not heated in winter and are not cooled in summer. There is no opportunity to stretch your legs. The transfer between colonies usually takes place by train, where there are three people per sleeping berth. Political prisoners are not taken to the toilet when they need to go or when they ask to, but when the escort wants to. These conditions have a negative impact on their health.

Many political prisoners suffer from dental diseases. Given the specific nature of such diseases, failure to provide timely dental treatment means that, in the long term, there is a risk of losing teeth altogether,

as happened in the cases of **Arsen Abkhairov**, **Vilen Temerianov**, **Ruslan Asanov** and **Emil Ziiadinov**. It may also be associated with the risk of developing concomitant diseases of the gastrointestinal tract or a weakened immune system, as in the case of **Remzi Bekirov**, who did not receive any medical care in Penal Colony No. 33 in Abakan, Republic of Khakassia, Russian Federation, and lost 15kg due to a series of illnesses. Political prisoners often lose their teeth due to torture in places of unlawful detention, example being the case of **Denys Lialka**, who developed dental problems as a result of torture. **Vadym Siruk** has serious dental problems. Due to the poor quality of his crowns, food gets stuck under them and causes constant inflammation. His relatives have repeatedly appealed to the administration of Penal Colony No. 2 in Salavat with a request to hire a doctor, but have not received any response to their appeals.

In addition, requests were made to the Vladimir prison to obtain permission to send dental filling materials at the family's expense and to provide dental filling services using these materials by doctors from the medical unit, but these requests were denied.

Some political prisoners also have kidney disease, digestive system disorders, genitourinary system disorders, etc. Without adequate treatment, such diseases literally mean constant physical suffering for detainees, for example, due to urolithiasis. In the case of **Oleh Prykhodko**, who suffers from diseases of the genitourinary system, during his illegal stay at the FKU T-2 Directorate of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation in the Vladimir region, he was not given the necessary medication and was forced to spend whole days on his feet, despite his advanced age. Diseases such as stomach ulcers and duodenal ulcers, as in the cases of **Medzhyt Abdurakhmanov** and **Eskander Suleimanov**. There are also cases of significant deterioration in vision or hearing, such as in the case of **Iryna Danylovych**, where an untreated ear infection led to partial deafness, or the case of **Rustem Huhurik**, who also lost hearing in his left ear while in prison.

### **Risks of inadequate detention in places of deprivation of liberty and failure to provide medical care to political prisoners**

With the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, pressure on political prisoners in places of detention in the temporarily occupied Crimea and in the Russian Federation has significantly increased – human rights defenders have recorded numerous human rights violations, including the systematic denial of medical care in penitentiary institutions. The number of political prisoners is steadily increasing, and those who have been unlawfully imprisoned are being transferred to prisons and colonies in the RF, which are located quite far from the Crimean Peninsula. This is, firstly, a violation of IHL norms on the part of the Russian Federation and, secondly, causes psychological and economic pressure on both the prisoner and his family.

A large number of political prisoners have chronic illnesses, disabilities, or have been subjected to torture, as a result of which their health is gradually deteriorating due to inadequate conditions of detention. However, neither the prison administration nor other responsible persons are in any hurry to address this problem, even though they are well aware of it. Moreover, they deliberately prevent political prisoners from receiving medication from their relatives or from being visited by private doctors. It can be concluded that the Russian prison system is interested in the systematic and, as far as possible, controlled deterioration of the situation of prisoners as one of the elements of intimidation of the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories who demonstrate disloyalty to the occupation administration or are considered by it to be disloyal.

Inadequate conditions of detention, failure to provide medical care, and even cases of torture and cruel treatment in pre-trial detention centres (beatings, electric shock torture, poor conditions of detention, etc.) result in the exacerbation of chronic diseases among political prisoners, the progression of common illnesses into chronic conditions, and the emergence of new diseases.

The deterioration of conditions of detention may be used by prison authorities as a form of punishment. There have been known cases of political prisoners being placed in punishment cells for long periods of time, which had a critical impact on their condition. **Kostiantyn Shyring**, due to his complaints about his health, was transferred several times to cells with worse conditions.

There are also documented cases where unlawfully imprisoned persons contract new diseases that spread rapidly in premises that do not comply with sanitary standards (where cells are damp, cold, and the water and food are of poor quality), while in prisons on the occupied Crimean Peninsula or in the RF after being transferred to a new place of imprisonment. Additionally, it has been reported that some political prisoners contracted serious diseases such as hepatitis and HIV during transfer, when prisoners are not allowed to use their personal hygiene items – razors, manicure scissors – for some time and are given shared tools that are poorly processed or disinfected.

Most political prisoners face dental problems due to poor nutrition and hygiene conditions, beatings during detention, torture, lack of treatment and access to dental services in prisons on the Crimean Peninsula and in the Russian Federation. Thus, they are deprived of medical services and emergency medical care, resulting in a violation of their right to medical care. Several dozen people are serving long prison terms (from 10 to 20 years), while their physical condition is gradually deteriorating, causing irreparable damage to their health and threatening their lives.

In most cases documented by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, political prisoners in the temporarily occupied Crimea Peninsula and the territory of the Russian Federation, despite their urgent need, were denied urgent hospitalisation, their requests for any tests or examinations were not met, and they were not provided with the necessary medical care in penitentiary institutions. Even when lawyers manage to get a medical examination, in most cases it's just a formality and totally useless – the doctor takes 2-5 minutes to go over the patient's medical history, doesn't confirm the diagnosis, and doesn't prescribe any treatment. The administrative staff of detention centres do not accept or respond to requests for medical examinations or treatment, and ignore complaints from political prisoners and their lawyers about the lack of medical care. In addition, political prisoners are often denied access to medicines and medical supplies – medical units in pre-trial detention centres and prisons lack the necessary medicines, or have no medicines other than painkillers.

Even when the necessary medicines are not available, prisoners are prohibited from receiving parcels containing medicines or medical supplies sent to them by their relatives and lawyers; prison staff destroy medicines and medical supplies without return when prisoners are transferred to other prisons. Thus, many Ukrainian citizens imprisoned by Russia find themselves in a vicious circle: they receive medication only if prescribed by a doctor, and doctors are usually either absent or do not examine prisoners. In rare cases, if a doctor has prescribed medication for a prisoner, it can be sent, but the drugs will be kept by the paramedic and dispensed at the time they are needed, provided that the prisoner is able to call the paramedic or other responsible staff member.

The mutual overlap of the negative consequences of various diseases is critical. In the list of political prisoners studied, there are no people who have only one diagnosed, albeit dangerous, disease. Instead, we are talking about multiple chronic diseases that are exacerbated and combined with the effects of injuries sustained in pre-trial detention centres, for example, as a result of beatings, or with the effects of inadequate treatment of infectious diseases. Since medical diagnoses of prisoners' conditions are not usually carried out, neither they nor the prison administration are aware of the severity of the diseases and the associated risks to health and life. This is directly linked to the risk of disability or death for political prisoners.

The creation of such conditions of detention and the deliberate deterioration of the situation of political prisoners can be used by the administration of penitentiary institutions as a tool of physical and psychological pressure on the political prisoners themselves and their family members.

In general, the following instruments of such pressure/violations of rights can be identified:

- Consistent disregard of prisoners' complaints during trials, extension of the terms of detention for those who have a documented diagnosis (list of diseases that make it impossible to keep suspects in custody, approved by Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3 of 14 January 2011, as amended<sup>77</sup>);
- Complete or partial disregard of prisoners' complaints about health problems that already existed at the time of detention or developed in prison, causing their health to deteriorate;
- Formalism in conducting medical examinations, analyses, or therapeutic and preventive measures, even when this occurs in specialised penitentiary medical facilities (in the case of **Dzhemil Hafarov**, the lawyer equated the conditions in the prison hospital of the Federal Penitentiary Service with torture);
- Refusal to provide/transfer necessary medicines or other medical supplies for the needs of the detainee, disposal of medicines or other medical supplies during the transfer of the detainee from one place of deprivation of liberty to another;
- Refusal to perform regular procedures or examinations (such situations are critical for people who need constant medication or medical procedures, such as dialysis);
- Deliberate deterioration of conditions of detention, in particular prolonged detention of political prisoners in punishment cells, which is also in no way justified by their disciplinary offences.

### **Description of specific cases of refusal to provide medical care to political prisoners**

**Akim Bekirov** – unlawfully sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. He has been diagnosed with tendinitis of the knee joint, but medical treatment has not helped, and the detention centre does not provide any other treatment. For a long time now, the skin on his fingers and feet has been peeling, and creams, ointments and vitamins do not help. He has also appealed to the management of Rostov-on-Don Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 1 for help, but his requests have never been considered.

**Amet Suleimanov** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, initially served his sentence under house arrest, but in October 2023 was transferred to serve his sentence in Vladimir, Russia. Prior to his transfer, he spent several months in Simferopol Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 2. Suleimanov needs heart surgery, specifically a heart valve replacement, and as a result, he has a Group III disability. Prior to his arrest, Suleimanov underwent medical treatment and annual courses of therapy at the Semashko Hospital in Crimea. On 21 March 2019, he last attended the Amosov Institute of Cardiovascular Surgery, where he was being prepared for heart valve replacement surgery. Suleimanov's illness is included in the government list of diseases that prevent detention.

**Ametkhan Abdulvapov** – unlawfully sentenced to 10 years and 6 months' imprisonment, suffered a stroke in Penal Colony No. 2 in Angarsk. He requires medication regularly to maintain normal heart function, which is not available in the colony. Before his imprisonment, Abdulvapov had no heart problems whatsoever. The political prisoner's request for medical assistance at the Angarsk correctional colony was denied. He also has problems with his teeth, blood pressure and vein swelling. There are reports of violence against Ametkhan in the penal facility.

**Ametkhan Umerov** – arbitrarily held in Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 2 in Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation. During his imprisonment, his health began to deteriorate sharply, and Umerov appealed to

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<sup>77</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3 of 14 January 2011 "On the medical examination of suspects or persons accused of committing crimes". URL: <https://normativ.kontur.ru/document?moduleId=1&documentId=204097>

the detention centre staff, but he never received medical assistance or medication. Umerov was subjected to a compulsory inpatient psychiatric examination at a hospital in Simferopol.

**Ansar Osmanov** – unlawfully sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. Osmanov, who is serving his sentence in Vladimir Prison No. 2, complained of a toothache and a rash on his body. He is troubled by rashes on his legs and all over his body and does not know the cause, as his doctor has not examined him. A dentist visited him because of his toothache, but conducted the examination without gloves, failing to observe sterility.

**Arsen Abkhairov** – unlawfully sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment, has varicose veins and needs dental treatment. While in pre-trial detention, he developed dental problems, but due to the lack of dental services, his teeth remain untreated. The harsh conditions of detention in the colony contribute to varicose veins – the political prisoner is on his feet for about 16 hours straight. Although the administration transferred Abkhairov to a general detention regime in February 2023, the conditions of detention in the cell have not changed, and the political prisoner is not provided with medical care.

**Asan Yanikov** – unlawfully sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. In Simferopol SIZO No. 1, where he was held from the very beginning, he was kept in "quarantine" for more than two months in unsanitary conditions, where his health deteriorated significantly due to the inadequate conditions in the pre-trial detention centre, but he was not provided with any medical assistance. His gastrointestinal problems recurred. Yanikov lost weight and became emaciated. He was not provided with any medical assistance due to a lack of medication, including while he was in the SIZO in Rostov-on-Don.

**Azamat Eiupov** – unlawfully sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment. While in the Simferopol SIZO, the activist suffered four ischaemic strokes. The lack of adequate medical care meant that he was unable to move without assistance. The activist's health continues to deteriorate rapidly due to numerous other illnesses caused by his imprisonment. In particular, Eiupov's right leg has almost lost its functionality, making it extremely difficult for him to move around. Despite his critical condition, the prison medic diagnosed him with "osteochondrosis" and returned him to his cell, providing only minimal treatment.

**Eldar Yakubov** – arbitrarily held under investigation in SIZO No. 1 in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. During Yakubov's stay in SIZO No. 2 in Simferopol, he complained of deteriorating health, suffering from headaches and tinnitus, high blood pressure, but he was not provided with medical assistance.

**Emir-Usein Kuku** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in 2015, during his first arrest, FSB officers beat the political prisoner's kidneys and damaged his lumbar spine. These injuries, which cannot be treated in prison, have become chronic and are constantly causing him pain. After the beating, doctors warned that the spinal injury would lead to problems with his entire skeletal system. In 2019, Kuku developed a growth in his kneecap and swelling in his leg. At the Rostov-on-Don pre-trial detention centre, he managed to get an ultrasound scan, after which he was diagnosed with a Baker's cyst. On 21 June 2023, Kuku was taken from the Russian colony in Salavat to the hospital with kidney pain, but during the diagnostic process, it was found that important intestinal functions were impaired. On 23 June, Kuku underwent emergency surgery, but a few days later, he was returned to the colony without being given any information about the type of surgery he had undergone and without any recommendations for recovery, treatment or diet, even though he should have remained under medical supervision for at least 10–14 days after the operation.

**Enver Khalilaiev** – arbitrarily held under investigation in SIZO No. 1 in Rostov-on-Don. In August 2025, doctors discovered he had an umbilical hernia. It has become known that the operation to remove it cannot be performed while the man's trial is ongoing. Khalilaiev also complained of hearing problems, which caused him headaches, which may be caused by problems with the blood vessels in his head or by the fact that the defendant uses a hearing aid.



**Farkhod Bazarov** – unlawfully sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. Bazarov has kidney problems, which led to the trial being postponed due to his deteriorating health. Since the moment of sentencing and imprisonment of the political prisoner in the Russian Federation, he has repeatedly complained about the deterioration of his health, but has not received medical assistance.

**Ihor Kiiashko** – unlawfully sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, suffers from hypertension, and was diagnosed with thrombophlebitis in prison. This disease is a consequence of the abuse and beatings he endured during his detention. Since 2018, Kiiashko has been serving an unlawful sentence in Colony No. 11 in the Nizhny Novgorod region, and in December 2022, he was transferred 5,000 km deeper into the Russian Federation to Penal Colony No. 3 in Irkutsk. The transfer led to exhaustion and exacerbation of chronic thrombophlebitis, and in the spring, Ihor suffered prolonged convulsions in both limbs. The political prisoner was not provided with medical examination or assistance.

**Iryna Danylovych** – journalist and human rights defender who was unlawfully sentenced to 6 years and 11 months' imprisonment in a general regime colony. During her time in prison, Danylovych suffered a stroke, which has left her with constant headaches and coordination problems. She also suffered from otitis, which resulted in her losing hearing in her left ear. During her entire time in the Crimean pre-trial detention centre, she was never provided with qualified medical assistance. She was examined several times, but neither she nor her parents were informed of the results, and she did not receive the medication prescribed by the doctor. The diagnosis of stroke was confirmed by an examination conducted by independent experts after Danylovych was transferred to a prison in Krasnodar, Russia.

**Iryna Horobtsova** – civil society activist who was detained in occupied Kherson in 2022, transferred to the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea, and later unlawfully sentenced to 10 years and 6 months imprisonment. Horobtsova has a brain aneurysm. Because of this, she must take medication regularly, but she does not have access to it in Penal Colony No. 2 in the village of Yavas, Russian Federation. Horobtsova suffers from frequent migraines due to lack of sleep and nervous tension.

**Ivan Yatskin** – unlawfully sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment in a maximum security penal colony with a one-year restriction. He was subjected to inhuman treatment in the Lefortovo detention centre, Moscow, where Yatskin was taken out into the cold in his slippers and suffered frostbite on his feet. These circumstances have led to him suffering from pain, as well as having problems with his teeth and suspected osteochondrosis. At the same time, while in the maximum security penal colony No. 44 in Belovo, Yatskin does not receive appropriate treatment and medication. He is not given painkillers, and for his trophic ulcers, the paramedic gave him an ointment without packaging or instructions for use.

**Khalil Mambetov** – unlawfully sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment by the Southern District Military Court, transferred to Pre-trial Detention Centre No. 2 in Taganrog, Russian Federation. The man suffers from osteoarthritis, which developed before his unlawful detention. Prior to his arrest, Mambetov was taking medication prescribed by a doctor regularly to alleviate his condition. During his stay in Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 1 in Simferopol, Mambetov constantly complained of severe pain in his limbs. His relatives sent the medication for the treatment of osteoarthritis, which had previously been prescribed by his doctor, to the pre-trial detention centre, but he never received it.

**Medzhyt Abdurakhmanov** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. He suffers from chronic illnesses: stomach and duodenal ulcers, and constant back pain. While in SIZO No. 1 in Rostov-on-Don, he began to suffer from frequent headaches, and his teeth started to decay. The SIZO administration did not provide proper examination and treatment, and appeals to the medical unit of the pre-trial detention centre were ignored. Abdurakhmanov complained of constant back pain, but was only offered painkillers as treatment. Before one of the last court hearings, the medical staff gave him an anaesthetic injection and carried him on a stretcher to the courtroom to participate in the hearing. After that, his

lawyer sent a complaint to the main office of the FSIN of Russia in the Rostov region, as well as to the head of SIZO No. 1 in Rostov-on-Don and the head of the medical unit, demanding that his client be hospitalised. Following the lawyer's appeal, Abdurakhmanov underwent a medical examination, during which he was diagnosed with muscle failure, but he was not hospitalised.

**Nariman Dzhelial** – former political prisoner who was unlawfully sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment developed oedema and varicose veins while in prison, and his chronic spinal problems – intervertebral hernias – worsened. During his stay in Simferopol SIZO No. 2, Dzhelial was forced to stand for 16 hours a day without permission to sit or lie down on his bed, which resulted in varicose veins in both legs and exacerbated his back problems. During his entire stay in the pre-trial detention centre, doctors did not visit Dzhelial, only conducting a formal examination in the medical unit, and when he asked for his back pain medication, they laughed at him and provided neither medical assistance nor medication. On 28 June 2024, Ukraine returned Dzhelial from a Russian prison.

**Naryman Mezhmedinov** – unlawfully sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment. Mezhmedinov has several chronic illnesses and a second-degree disability. Despite this, a medical-legal examination deemed it possible to keep him in pre-trial detention. Mezhmedinov's stay in inhumane conditions only exacerbates his suffering. During his detention, he spent almost the entire time in the detention centre's medical unit because he has several serious illnesses: asthma, pancreatitis and heart failure. Of the 10 intravenous drips he needs, he only receives half to save on medication costs.

**Oleksandr Sizikov** – unlawfully sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment. He has a Group I disability. A few years before his arrest, he suffered an accident resulting in an open craniocerebral injury and multiple fractures of the skull vault, base and facial skull, causing him to lose his sight completely. The man, who has a Group I visual disability, spent more than eight months behind bars. He was to spend the first four years in prison and the remaining 13 in a maximum security penal colony. From 2020, the man was under house arrest, and in September 2024, he was placed in a pre-trial detention centre, where he was completely unable to cope due to his total blindness. On 26 May 2025, the Minusinsk City Court of the Krasnoyarsk Krai released Sizikov under house arrest. He was released from prison due to illness (Article 81 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, Paragraph 6 of Article 397 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation), as Sizikov's diagnosis is included in the list of diseases that prevent the serving of a sentence<sup>78</sup>. However, the prosecutor's office appealed against this court decision. The appeal hearing to consider the prosecutor's submission has been postponed until October 2025.

**Oleh Prykhodko** – unlawfully sentenced to 9.5 years' imprisonment. During his stay in Vladimir Central Prison, his relatives were not allowed to bring him the necessary medication. He has never been examined by a doctor. Prykhodko suffers from swollen legs, urogenital and stomach problems, and hearing difficulties. The elderly man with chronic illnesses is forced to spend the whole day on his feet, as he is only allowed to lie down during bedtime.

**Remzi Kurtnezirov** – unlawfully prosecuted for political reasons and is under house arrest. A verdict in his case is expected, and he faces life imprisonment. The man has a second-degree disability. Kurtnezirov has been diagnosed with grade III hyperintense disease and suffers from the effects of cerebrovascular disease (a pathology associated with the brain). He has also suffered three strokes, undergone trepanation of the skull, and has diabetes mellitus. The right side of his body is completely paralysed. Kurtnezirov spent a month undergoing a forensic psychiatric examination at the Crimean Republican Clinical Psychiatric Hospital No. 1, where he lost 12 kilograms.

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<sup>78</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 598 of 19 May 2017 "On Amendments to the List of Diseases Preventing the Serving of Sentences". URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201705260017?index=1>

**Ruslan Mesutov** was unlawfully sentenced to 18 years imprisonment. Upon arrival at the penal colony, he underwent tests and was diagnosed with hepatitis C. He suffers from constant headaches, high blood pressure, gum disease, has practically no teeth left, and his eyesight has deteriorated significantly. He had an injury to his toe, which could not bend after being broken. On 11 March 2025, Mesutov was transferred to a hospital in Tabaz from VK No. 11 Yakutsk. While still at liberty, he had problems with his spine. In SHIZO, he began to lose consciousness and had heart pain – arterial hypertension. After his stay in VK No.1 in Yakutia, all his personal belongings, including medicines and a tonometer, were confiscated. Mesutov reported that his legs hurt badly and his veins were bursting, but the prison doctors could not help him.

**Rustem Emiruseinov** – was unlawfully sentenced to 17 years in a maximum security penal colony. He is serving his sentence in Penal Colony No. 6 in Bezhetsk, Tver region, Russian Federation. After his imprisonment, he developed diabetes mellitus and hypertension, and his teeth were completely destroyed. Emiruseinov's health problems began while he was in Balashov prison in the Saratov region. At that time, he complained of severe itching in his legs and sudden weight loss – he lost 16 kg in two months. In addition, his eyesight deteriorated significantly, as a result of which he can no longer read or write. In the prison hospital, he was diagnosed with diabetes mellitus.

**Rustem Huhurik** – resident of Novooleksiivka village, Kherson region, unlawfully detained in 2022 and sentenced to 8.5 years' imprisonment. During his imprisonment, Huhurik lost hearing in his left ear and constantly complains of shortness of breath. Back in 2022, doctors prescribed treatment for his shortness of breath. However, due to the lack of medical care in Russian prisons, his health deteriorated. He was previously fitted with a Holter monitor due to his persistent shortness of breath, but no one ever received the results of the examination. He was also found to have stones in one of his kidneys, but no treatment or medication was prescribed. Additionally, his eardrum burst, and pus periodically flows from his ear, which may indicate purulent otitis or another serious infection. Huhurik has been repeatedly sent to SHIZO in Colony No. 8 in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia.

**Rustem Murasov** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, he suffers from a serious chronic illness, details of which are not disclosed at the request of the defence. In the SIZO of Simferopol, after undergoing a medical examination, he was informed that no medication was available. Muratov's relatives handed over medicines in accordance with the established procedure, but the political prisoner was not given them. In "FKU SIZO-1 Main Directorate of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation", Rostov-on-Don, where he was held before being transferred to Prison No. 2 in Vladimir, neither medicines nor adequate medical care were provided. Each day, his pain intensified, and the disease progressed, causing him moral and physical suffering, which amounts to torture.

**Rustem Seitmemetov** – unlawfully sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment. A political prisoner was diagnosed with cataracts in both eyes. According to his relatives, Seitmemetov's vision problems began while he was in the Novocherkassk pre-trial detention centre, Russian Federation. Later, during an examination at another penitentiary institution where he was being held during his transfer, a doctor diagnosed Seitmemetov with cataracts in both eyes. It was impossible to perform the operation in the Dymytrovhrad prison where Seitmemetov was being held. "He has been seeing doctors for three years, but has not received any treatment. Seitmemetov also suffers from hypertension. He receives symptomatic treatment, but has to call the doctor several times. It is known that after 7 October 2024, Seitmemetov was hospitalised with complaints of heart pain. In May 2024, he suffered a myocardial infarction, after which he underwent heart bypass surgery, was assigned to the Group III disability classification, and returned to the colony. In Penal Colony No. 16 in Salavat, he continues to suffer from fluctuations in blood pressure.

**Rustem Sheikhaliiev** – unlawfully sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. He suffers from chronic pyelonephritis, right kidney prolapse, varicose veins in his legs, and also has dental problems. Prison doctors refused to hospitalise citizen journalist Sheikhaliev after examining him. On 16 January 2024,

he planned to participate in a hearing on his appeal against the sentence via videoconference from Novochoerkassk Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 3. However, during the hearing, he began to bleed heavily from his nose. He was taken to the medical unit but then returned to his cell. The paramedic, who was called to Sheikhaliev at the previous hearing, recorded high blood pressure during the nosebleed. The victim's lawyer reported that the medical unit staff measured his blood pressure incorrectly, resulting in 'normal' readings. He was given an injection, but was refused hospitalisation. He was not allowed to undergo an examination and be prescribed the necessary treatment. Earlier, Sheikhaliev asked prison doctors to give him an electrocardiogram – he suspects he has heart failure.

**Seidamet Mustafaiev** – unjustifiably held in custody in Rostov-on-Don Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 1. Due to poor conditions in the detention centre and inhumane treatment, he began to complain of deteriorating health and asked for medication for high blood pressure and headaches, but never received it.

**Seiran Khairedinov** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment and is serving his sentence in Vladimir, Russia. Prior to his arrest, Khairedinov was registered with a dermatology and venereology clinic. During his stay in the Rostov-on-Don pre-trial detention centre, Khairedinov was hospitalised for a week at the Interregional Tuberculosis Hospital in Rostov-on-Don in critical condition, with a skin rash all over his body and a fever, the cause of which was unknown to him. On 21 May 2023, he noticed that about 15-20 small red rashes had appeared on his right side, near his liver. The next day, they began to spread across his body, increased in number and began to itch intensely. His temperature rose, and due to the severe itching, he was unable to sleep or eat. He was examined at the medical unit of the detention centre, but was not immediately hospitalised. First, he was taken for an initial examination and then returned to the detention centre. Khairedinov was forced to participate in a court hearing via video link from the detention centre, and only then was he taken to the hospital for a few days. The political prisoner said through his lawyer that a dermatologist examined him and diagnosed him with pityriasis (a rare chronic skin disease) "without any tests or scrapings". The political prisoner was placed in a cell with another prisoner who had been diagnosed with several dangerous diseases, including HIV infection and hepatitis C. Khairedinov's wife reported that her husband had lost four kilograms due to his illness and inadequate care in the pre-trial detention centre and hospital. On 3 June 2023, Khairedinov was returned from MOTB No. 19 to SIZO No. 1 in Rostov-on-Don. He was not completely cured, and his eczema worsened.

**Seitumer Seitumerov** – unlawfully sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment. While in a Russian penal colony in Vladimir, Russia, he complained of deteriorating health due to the appalling conditions in the colony, but received no medical assistance.

**Seitveli Seitabdiiev** – unlawfully sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. Seitabdiiev said that doctors did not respond to his complaints to the medical unit. For more than a month, he was unable to see a surgeon or an ophthalmologist. After seeing a dermatologist, he still did not receive an accurate diagnosis. Seitabdiiev suffers from severe itching, causing him to scratch his scalp until it bleeds, and no medication helps him. In addition, the political prisoner suffers from pain in his back and elbows. He also complained about the quality of food, water and sanitary conditions. Prisoners are often served pork in prison, which means that Seitabdiiev is forced to eat only bread due to his religious principles – because he is a Muslim and cannot eat pork.

**Server Mustafaev** – unlawfully sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. Mustafaev's health deteriorated, and he appealed to the Southern District Military Court of Russia and the prison administration to provide him with adequate medical care, but he was only given injections; no tests were carried out and no diagnosis was made. In fact, limited medical care was provided to him almost a year after his appeal. In February 2025, Mustafaev reported lower back pain and the onset of psoriasis in Tambov Penal Colony No. 1. Currently, Mustafaev complains of pain in his knees and heart, his vision has

deteriorated, he has been diagnosed with lipoma, and there are suspicions of problems with his endocrine system.

**Servet Haziiev** – unlawfully sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment, has high blood pressure and constant pain in his spine. The latter problem appeared after he was tortured in September 2021 in Rostov-on-Don SIZO No. 5. That same year, he contracted coronavirus, and shortly afterwards suffered a micro-stroke. Despite the fact that Haziiev has visible signs of having suffered a stroke, including visible distortion of the right side of his face, Russian doctors claimed that he had not had a stroke, i.e. they did not confirm the diagnosis. Haziiev also constantly complains of intestinal pain. The doctor examined him, but he never received the medication he prescribed.

**Shaban Umerov** – unlawfully sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment. In detention, Umerov's health has deteriorated sharply: his back pain has worsened, and he complains of heart problems, high blood pressure and lung problems. He is forced to take medication constantly, but does not receive adequate medical care. Due to the condition of his teeth, Umerov is almost unable to eat solid food and can only consume liquids, but despite numerous appeals to the medical facility, he has not been transferred. He needs dental prosthetics. The management of VK No. 17 in Murmansk put Umerov on preventive care, but he has not received the necessary medical care.

**Tofik Abdulhaziiev** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. On 22 March 2024, Abdulhaziiev was taken from the prison in Verkhneursalsk, Chelyabinsk region, in critical condition. He was placed in prison, tuberculosis hospital No. 3 in Chelyabinsk, where he was admitted to intensive care two weeks later. He was transferred to the Verkhneursalsk prison in July 2023. Since then, he has lost a lot of weight and complained of pain in his hand joints. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the lymph nodes a month after being admitted to the hospital. Doctors also diagnosed Abdulhaziiev with several other diseases: bilateral pneumonia, small left-sided hydrothorax (fluid in the lungs), moderate anaemia, connective tissue dysplasia syndrome with mitral valve damage (heart disease), chronic heart failure, chronic gastritis and nephrolithiasis, as well as disseminated pulmonary tuberculosis with damage to the intrathoracic lymph nodes in the phase of resorption and consolidation. Despite this diagnosis, which was confirmed by doctors at the Chelyabinsk prison tuberculosis hospital, the court refused to release Abdulhaziiev, even though, according to Russian law, the severity of his tuberculosis prevents him from being held in places of detention. He receives medication in doses that do not meet his actual needs, and his family is unable to regularly send him the drugs he needs for treatment.

**Tymur Ibrahimov** – unlawfully sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment - has a Group III disability (eye implant). In prison, the political prisoner's eyesight has deteriorated significantly, and he always needs eye drops. He has also been diagnosed with gallstones. Ibrahimov complains of back pain, kidney problems and numbness in his right arm. An ultrasound scan revealed the presence of stones, but no recommendations were made regarding treatment or diet. Russian doctors refused to take blood samples for general and biochemical analysis. Ibrahimov needs to have his eye implant replaced, but this cannot be done at the hospital of Penal Colony No. 5 in the village of Klekotki, Ryazan region. During Ibrahimov's unlawful detention at SIZO No. 3 in Novochoerkassk, Russian Federation, there was a shortage of medication. The examination, which his lawyer managed to obtain after eight months of petitions, was only formal in nature and lasted about five minutes.

**Tymur Yalkabov** – unlawfully sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment. He suffers from asthma and has a third-degree disability. After being transferred to Dymytrovhrad prison from Novochoerkassk pre-trial detention centre in December 2022, the Crimean Tatar was systematically sent to SHIZO. He spent three whole months there, from 9 February 2023 to 5 May 2023. Yalkabov suffers from chronic asthma, but the Russian prison administration did not consider this a medical contraindication for placing him in SHIZO. Due to severe pain in his knees, he is forced to perform namaz while sitting. He also began to suffer from psoriasis and lost 25 kilograms. Yalkabov's relatives appealed to Serhii Liulkov, the Human

Rights Commissioner in the Ulyanovsk region, with a complaint about the actions of the administration of the colony in Dymytrovhrad. The complaint was forwarded to the prosecutor's office responsible for supervising compliance with the law in correctional institutions in the Ulyanovsk region. However, the prosecutor's office found no violations in the actions of the prison administration. At the same time, the inspection confirmed the use of physical force against him. Yalkabov's wife stated that her husband was being placed in SHIZO without justification, his personal belongings were being confiscated, and his dignity was being humiliated. She also noted that the quality of food and conditions of detention did not meet the standards. Written complaints from prisoners to the court were not forwarded by the colony administration.

**Vadym Siruk** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. Suffers from serious dental problems. Due to the poor quality of his crowns, food gets stuck under them, and his gums are constantly inflamed. His family has repeatedly appealed to the administration of Penal Colony No. 2 in Salavat with requests for a doctor to visit Siruk, but has not yet received a response.

**Vladlen Abdulkadyrov** – unlawfully sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. Abdulkadyrov's health has been steadily deteriorating in prison. Poor nutrition has negatively affected his liver, his eyesight has deteriorated, and he has begun to experience kidney problems. Recently, he has been suffering from severe back pain. In Prison No. 2 in Yelets, Lipetsk region, medical assistance was not provided despite numerous appeals from the political prisoner. In March 2024, due to severe back pain, Abdulkadyrov was unable to go to work, which the prison administration regarded as a refusal to work and imposed a fine on him.

**Volodymyr Ananiev** – arbitrarily held under investigation in SIZO No. 5 in Rostov-on-Don. Ananiev, at 75 years old, has leg problems, walks with a cane, and has vision problems: he has had two eye surgeries, his vision is very poor, and he is developing glaucoma in one eye. He has very high blood pressure. The man needs constant medical supervision, periodic preventive medical care, and a strict diet, but no medical care is provided in the detention centre, and the poor sanitary and hygienic conditions of detention and poor-quality food contribute to the development of existing diseases. Ananiev was psychologically pressured after his arrest, and attempts were made to intimidate him. He did not receive medical care, as a result of which his health deteriorated.

**Volodymyr Yakymenko** – unlawfully sentenced to 15.5 years' imprisonment. Yakymenko is subjected to systematic abuse by staff at Penal Colony No. 4 in Pugachev, Saratov region. He is denied medical care and is under constant pressure from the administration. There are 83 other people in the 70-square-metre room with him. The man suffers from constant stomach pain due to poor nutrition. The food in the colony is very poor, and sometimes the bread is infected with a parasitic fungus, which gives it a specific smell. Although Yakymenko's health has significantly deteriorated during his imprisonment due to his constant stay in SHIZO and the harsh conditions of detention, he receives no treatment at Penal Colony No. 4 in Pugachev, Saratov region. When he asked a colony employee for help, he was refused. Once, one of the guards bought medicine at Yakymenko's request, but it was not accepted or passed on to the political prisoner. When a special commission inspects the colony from time to time, the management reports that the colony has medicine, but it is not provided for the treatment of prisoners. Because the colony management pressures and forces him to work, Yakymenko cut his veins in protest. One wrist is still numb. The man thinks he damaged his tendons, as the cut on this hand was deep – 12 cm, and on the other – 10 cm<sup>79</sup>.

**Yashar Shykhmetov** – unlawfully sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment. He has heart disease, suffers from stomach pains, periodic back and liver pains, chronic hypertension, and kidney pains. He has not received medical assistance for a long time. Only in April 2025, due to pain in his heart and

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<sup>79</sup> Eight years in harsh conditions: how political prisoner Volodymyr Yakymenko from Chaplynka survives in prison, 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/articles/yakymenko/>

kidneys, Shykhametov was sent to a prison hospital in the Saratov region. The hospital was supposed to issue him a Group I disability certificate, but they did not have time to do so. According to Shykhametov, on the orders of the prosecutor, he was transferred to the Kemerovo region without completing his medical examination. He has almost stopped walking due to osteoarthritis of the elbow, knee joints and feet. Food is brought to the man in his barracks because he cannot walk to the dining room. Shykhametov takes more than two hours to walk fifty metres and cannot walk to the doctor because of the pain. He has not been provided with a wheelchair. Shykhametov also has prostatitis, making it difficult for him to carry out daily activities without assistance.

**Zekiria Muratov** – unlawfully sentenced to 11.5 years' imprisonment- has a Group III disability. He suffers from several musculoskeletal disorders, as well as chronic diseases: hypertension, gallstone disease, heart failure, and experiences constant attacks of severe pain due to kidney failure. With so many diagnoses, the political prisoner did not receive adequate medical care in prison. He suffered a hypertensive crisis in the pre-trial detention centre. While the trial was ongoing, Muratov spent 48 days in quarantine after contracting COVID-19 in the detention centre.

## Chapter 5

### Officials of the Russian Federation and the occupying authorities in Crimea involved in the denial of adequate medical care to Crimean political prisoners

The Human Rights Centre ZMINA, together with other human rights organisations, systematically collects information about Russian officials and officials of the occupying authorities who are involved in politically motivated persecution in occupied Crimea and the newly occupied territories of Ukraine after 2022. In particular, it collects information about individuals whose actions pose a significant threat to the health of victims of politically motivated persecution by denying them adequate medical care.

For example, in October 2023, ZMINA, together with the Crimean Human Rights Group, presented a list of 22 Russian officials who were proposed to be included in the sanctions lists of persons responsible for aggression against Ukraine and human rights violations, which were formed by Ukraine's partner countries in the EU and beyond<sup>80</sup>. In October 2024, the preliminary list was supplemented with 35 more individuals who were involved in violations of the rights of political prisoners, including obstructing their access to medical care<sup>81</sup>. Given the personnel composition of the Crimean and Russian courts involved, as well as the staff of pre-trial detention centres and penitentiary institutions, the total number of such officials may amount to several hundred individuals. Their identification is ongoing.

The list of officials involved can be divided into the following categories:

1. Judges of various courts in the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea and in the Russian Federation;
2. Investigators, witnesses, experts on behalf of the prosecution;
3. Managers and employees of penitentiary institutions, including medical facilities attached to such institutions.
4. Ombudsmen and other officials whose powers include monitoring compliance with human rights;

#### Judges

The names of Russian judges who deliberately handed down unjust decisions in politically motivated cases involving Crimean political prisoners have been repeatedly published by Ukrainian human rights organisations<sup>82</sup>.

At the same time, the same judges, or their colleagues, often delivered interim rulings (in particular, on the application of preventive measures or the extension of pre-trial detention in SIZO), when the health risks for the defendants were already evident; in some cases, the inadvisability of detention was documented in medical reports.

For example, despite confirmation of **Dzhemil Hafarov's** Group II disability due to renal failure and other related diseases (included in the list of diseases that make it impossible to hold suspects in custody, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of 14 January 2011, No. 3 with amendments<sup>83</sup>), his preventive measure was repeatedly confirmed. In particular, judges of the Military Court of Appeal (Vlasikha, Moscow region) – **Tepliuk D.V., Mordovin O.O., Yehorov O.O.** and others. These judges did not rule on the merits of the Hafarov case, while their consistent

<sup>80</sup> List of recommended officials for inclusion on the sanction list. ZMINA, CHRГ. 2023. URL: [https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/10/zmina2023-sanctionpersonlistua\\_web.pdf](https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/10/zmina2023-sanctionpersonlistua_web.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> "Blacklist of officials" involved in crimes against civilians in the temporarily occupied Crimea. ZMINA. 2024. URL: [https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/01/list\\_ukr\\_web.pdf](https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/01/list_ukr_web.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Judges involved in politically motivated prosecutions in occupied Crimea. Crimea SOS. 2022. URL: <https://krymsos.com/ru/suddi-prychetni-do-politychno-vmotyvovanyh-peresliduvan-v-okupovanomu-krymu/>

<sup>83</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 3 of 14 January 2011 "On medical examination of suspects and the list of serious illnesses that prevent detention" URL: <https://rg.ru/documents/2011/01/21/sizo-dok.html>



disregard of the defendant's complaints and his continued detention were among the reasons for his death.

Similar unfounded decisions to extend detention were also made in relation to other political prisoners who had been diagnosed with serious illnesses or had been declared disabled. At the same time, some of them are, by definition, unable to receive qualified assistance in the conditions of a pre-trial detention centre or a penal colony. **Kostiantyn Shyring** needed heart surgery; **Amet Suleimanov** needs a heart valve replacement, has asthma and has Group III degree disability, and was initially under house arrest; **Azamat Eiupov** suffered four ischaemic strokes in the pre-trial detention centre, despite clear signs of stroke, he was allegedly misdiagnosed with osteochondrosis. Accordingly, a significant proportion of Crimean political prisoners require medical supervision and highly specialised medical care, which is almost impossible in prison conditions.

Complaints by defendants about feeling unwell during court hearings are often ignored. Emergency medical assistance is provided only in critical cases, and court hearings continue after assistance has been provided. For example, during court hearings in the "case of the Simferopol group of Hizb ut-Tahrir", emergency medical assistance was called five times for **Servet Haziiev** due to hypertensive attacks and neuralgia; The man has signs of a previous stroke and has been assigned the Group III disability classification; the trial continued after the assistance was provided, or in particularly critical cases, the hearings were postponed<sup>84</sup>.

It should be noted that the formalism of the judicial process and the adoption of decisions to extend detention in pre-trial detention centres (without changes) negates the essence of judicial appeal as a procedure for taking into account new circumstances of the case, including the situation of the defendant, which became known during the proceedings.

### **Investigators, witnesses, experts on behalf of the prosecution**

In the vast majority of politically motivated court cases, witnesses for the prosecution are investigators from the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) or third parties associated with Russian law enforcement agencies, who are in fact agents of these structures.

In the cases known to us, the testimony of such witnesses in court is usually purely formal; they do not in any way reveal or substantiate the essence of the charges brought. Investigators acting as witnesses cannot even accurately specify the circumstances of the investigative actions they carried out directly.

In addition, experts (religious scholars, linguists) are acting as witnesses for the prosecution. Among them, for example, is **Tymur Urazmetov**, an employee of the Department of Cultural Studies and Socio-Economic Disciplines at Bashkir State Pedagogical University named after M. Akmulla.

The defence, for its part, also engages experts in an attempt to point out the unfounded and biased nature of the expert reports and the insufficient qualifications of the specialists involved in the investigation (for example, the audio recordings of the defendants' conversations presented by the FSB investigators are usually of very poor quality and do not support the suspicions raised by the prosecution).

The choice of preventive measures for suspects is made in accordance with the provisions of Articles 97, 99, 100, and 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation. According to Article 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation, "*Detention as a preventive measure shall be applied by court order in respect of a suspect or accused person who has committed crimes for which criminal law provides for punishment in the form of imprisonment for a term of more than*

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<sup>84</sup> An ambulance was called for Umerov Shaban during the hearing. He is not receiving medical care in the detention centre. Crimean Solidarity. 2021. URL: <https://crimean-solidarity.org/news/2021/06/15/shabanu-umerovu-vyzyvali-skoruyu-pomoshh-na-zasedanie-meditsinskaya-pomoshh-v-sizo-emu-ne-okazyvaetsya-1342>

three years, if it is impossible to apply another, more lenient preventive measure"<sup>85</sup>. Under Article 99 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation, when choosing a preventive measure, the severity of the charge must be taken into account, as well as information about the suspect's personality, age, and health<sup>86</sup>.

Thus, the "strengthening" of the prosecution's arguments through the falsification of evidence and expert reports directly affects the risks of keeping suspects in pre-trial detention.

The prosecution is, in a way, competing with the known circumstances of the suspect's situation, which do not allow him to be held in a pre-trial detention centre. At the same time, the Russian justice system is trying to increase the "severity of the charges" while ignoring the real medical contraindications to the suspect's detention (chronic illnesses, disability, need for constant medical supervision and intolerance to prison conditions, etc).

### **Heads and staff of pre-trial detention and imprisonment facilities. Heads and staff of penitentiary medical institutions.**

Most known cases of violations of political prisoners' rights to access medical care in penitentiary institutions are the fault of the managers and employees of these institutions. It is usually difficult to identify the specific officials involved in the violations. Nevertheless, in accordance with the principle of sole responsibility and the relevant regulatory documents of the Russian Federation, the heads of detention facilities may be held responsible for these violations<sup>87</sup>.

Among these individuals are the head of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service for Crimea and Sevastopol, **Vadym Bulhakov**, and his deputy, **Oleksii Pikin**.

In September 2025, the European Council decided to impose sanctions on these individuals<sup>88</sup>. *"The administrative practice of cruel treatment and denial of medical care to political prisoners has repeatedly taken place in the Simferopol pre-trial detention centre in Crimea and has affected, among others, human rights defenders Iryna Danylovych<sup>89</sup> and Amet Suleimanov. As a result of today's decision, Bulhakov and Pikin's assets are frozen, and the provision of funds or economic resources to them, directly or indirectly, or for their benefit, is prohibited. In addition, they are subject to a travel ban to the EU"*, the document says.

Among the most common violations of the right to health care by the administration of penitentiary institutions, the following can be highlighted:

- Complete or partial disregard of complaints by detainees about their deteriorating health and health problems that have arisen as a result of the exacerbation of chronic diseases or have developed in the place of deprivation of liberty.

Among such cases is that of **Iryna Danylovych**, who was denied treatment for otitis in the pre-trial detention centre, as a result of which she lost hearing in one ear and suffered from constant headaches.

<sup>85</sup> Article 108. Detention URL: <https://legalacts.ru/kodeks/UPK-RF/chast-1/razdel-iv/glava-13/statja-108/#100851>

<sup>86</sup> Article 99. Circumstances to be taken into account when selecting a preventive measure URL:

<https://legalacts.ru/kodeks/UPK-RF/chast-1/razdel-iv/glava-13/statja-99/#000002>

<sup>87</sup> See section 4.2.1 of the Regulations on the Pre-trial Detention Centre of the Penal System of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, as amended by Order of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation No. 54 of 5 March 2004. Head of the Pre-trial Detention Centre: is personally responsible for the proper performance of the tasks and functions assigned to the pre-trial detention centre, ensures the organisation of the implementation of the legislation of the Russian Federation on matters relating to the activities of the pre-trial detention centre...". On detention. Collection of documents "Prospekt Publishing House", 2016. - 102 pages. URL:

[https://books.google.nl/books/about/%D0%9E\\_%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B6%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8\\_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4\\_%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0.html?id=fhCfDAAAQBAJ&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.nl/books/about/%D0%9E_%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B6%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4_%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0.html?id=fhCfDAAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y)

<sup>88</sup> Global human rights sanctions regime: Council imposes sanctions on two individuals over abuses in detention centres in Crimea. Council of the EU. 2025. URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/09/05/global-human-rights-sanctions-regime-council-imposes-sanctions-on-two-individuals-over-abuses-in-detention-centres-in-crimea/>

<sup>89</sup> A. Hiriev They took away her freedom and health: what an independent medical examination of Kremlin captive Iryna Danylovych revealed. ZMINA. 2023. URL: <https://zmina.info/articles/zabraly-volyu-i-zdorovya-shho-vyvavyla-nezalezhnaj-ekspertyza-medobstezhennya-branky-kremlya-iryna-danylovych/>

The woman was not allowed to inform her relatives about her health condition, and later, she was denied the medication that had been sent to her, which was also repeated in Russian penitentiary institutions after her transfer<sup>90</sup>.

- Failure to provide medication or other medical supplies to detainees, both in cases where they are delivered by relatives or lawyers, and when they are prescribed by a paramedic after a medical examination in a penitentiary institution.

- Formalism in conducting medical examinations and diagnostics, therapeutic and preventive measures, even when they are carried out, they have no effect.

Among such cases is that of **Servet Haziiev**, whose diagnosis of stroke was not confirmed despite clear signs of it, and who was denied the medication prescribed by his doctor. As a result of constant use of painkillers, in the absence of appropriate treatment, the prisoner complained of problems with his intestines, kidneys, liver, heart and teeth. Haziiev's actual diagnosis remains unclear<sup>91</sup>.

- Refusal to perform regular medical procedures or examinations (medical supervision) when they are critically necessary according to the established diagnosis.

The most egregious case of failure to provide medical care is that of the deceased **Dzhemil Hafarov**, who required regular dialysis due to kidney disease. In the same context, we can consider the case of **Amet Suleimanov**, who was under house arrest during the pre-trial investigation precisely because he needed constant medical supervision, but was deprived of this opportunity in the place of his unlawful detention.

- Deliberately making things worse for a suspect or prisoner in response to their complaints about their health getting worse.

There have been reports of deteriorating conditions for **Kostiantyn Shyryng**, who required heart surgery, after he complained about not receiving medical care. This ultimately led to the death of the political prisoner.

There are known cases of prolonged placement in solitary confinement of political prisoners who refused to cooperate with the Russian special services or who complained. Among them are, for example, the cases of **Teimur Abdulaiev, Marlen Asanov, Server Zekiriaiev, Remzi Bekirov and others**.

It should be emphasised that prisoners in Russian penitentiary institutions may be subjected to torture, even in cases where they have been diagnosed with serious illnesses or disabilities. For example, there are known cases of **Servet Haziiev** being beaten in a pre-trial detention centre, and **Oleh Prykhodko, Vladyslav Yesypenko** and **Nariman Ametov** being tortured with electric shocks. There is also evidence of actions by prison authorities that could be considered cruel treatment or torture, where prisoners with musculoskeletal disorders or varicose veins are forced to stand in their cells for up to 16 hours a day (cases of **Nariman Dzhelial, Arsen Abkhairov** and others). Obviously, only some of the cases of cruel treatment or torture in places of deprivation of liberty of Crimean political prisoners are known.

Subsequently, in the course of investigations conducted by Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, it will be necessary to identify specific officials involved in particular incidents of failure to provide medical assistance to detainees. Cases of torture must be investigated separately.

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<sup>90</sup> "Kremlin captive Iryna Danylovych has completely lost hearing in her left ear". ZMINA. 2023." URL:

<https://zmina.info/news/branka-kremlya-iryna-danylovych-povnistyu-vtratyla-slukh-na-live-vukho/>

<sup>91</sup> "They are slowly killing him in the pre-trial detention centre". How medical assistance is (not) being provided to elderly Servet Haziiev. Crimean solidarity. 2021. URL: <https://crimean-solidarity.org/news/2021/05/21/ego-medlenno-ubivayut-v-sizo-kak-ne-okazyvayut-meditsinskuyu-pomoshh-pozhilomu-servetu-gazievu--1254>

## **Ombudsmen and other officials whose powers include monitoring compliance with human rights**

In the Russian Federation, the actual status of Ombudsmen, their powers and real participation in ensuring respect for human rights is gradually diminishing. These processes can be traced at the level of the evolution of thematic regulatory acts.

For example, the so-called "Law of the Republic of Crimea" dated 23 December 2020, No. 150-ZRK/2020 "On the Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Crimea" only refers in Article 3 to abstract general principles that should guide his activities: the principles of "fairness", "humanity", "transparency", and "impartiality", etc.

However, a similar "law" adopted several months after the occupation (No. 25-ZRK of 02 July 2014) still defined the main tasks of the "ombudsman" in Article 12, while Articles 13 and 14 stated that the "ombudsman" had the right to be received without delay by officials and to obtain documents and materials to respond to human rights violations. In cases of gross or mass violations, the "ombudsman" had the right to respond to them on his own initiative.

Thus, the institution of the "ombudsman" in the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol has steadily deteriorated. At present, it has finally turned into an imitation of a human rights mechanism, whose actual task is to conceal and mask cases of rights violations. This includes violations of the rights of victims of politically motivated persecution.

Nevertheless, the families of Crimean political prisoners and the defence team are actively using all available means to improve their situation. Usually, this means filing complaints about inadequate conditions of detention, cases of cruel treatment in pre-trial detention centres, failure to provide medical care, and the like.

In view of the above, despite attempts to avoid fixing their tasks in existing regulatory acts, regional ombudsmen are obliged to respond to substantiated complaints about serious violations of basic human rights. Reports from lawyers about the detention of parcels containing medicines for prisoners; cases of failure to provide medical care, which may result in disability; complaints of cruel treatment or torture in pre-trial detention centres – these are undoubtedly serious enough grounds for action.

Furthermore, regional ombudsmen or their representatives should regularly inspect places of deprivation of liberty (pre-trial detention centres, corrective labour colonies) and meet with prisoners.

Usually, consideration of complaints by the defence or the victims themselves, as well as inspections of places of detention by representatives of the ombudsman, do not have positive effects. The transfer of medicines to victims requires considerable effort and pressure from the defence. Often, the unblocking of such transfers is motivated by a sharp deterioration in the health of detainees. Regular inspections by representatives of the Commissioner in pre-trial detention centres or correctional colonies have no significant impact on the conditions of detention there.

It should be noted that so-called "ombudsmen" may use misinformation when describing the situation of sick political prisoners. The formal performance of their functions by human rights commissioners in the regions of the Russian Federation, and especially in the temporarily occupied Crimean Peninsula, justifies and covers up violations of prisoners' rights. The institution of ombudsmen does not demonstrate the declared independence from the authorities, which should be a guarantee of its effectiveness. Instead, the Commissioners work in tandem with the police and the prosecutor's office, and sometimes they are former employees of these structures.