



# Missing in the occupation

UKRAINIANS ARE HELD IN BASEMENTS  
AND COLONIES IN RUSSIA



MEDIA  
INITIATIVE  
for Human Rights

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**ON FEBRUARY 24, 2022**, at dawn, Russia attacked Ukraine along the entire length of its common border from Chernihiv to Luhansk, from previously occupied territories, including Crimea, and from neighboring Belarus. In the first days of invasion the Russian Federation managed to occupy parts of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia oblasts (regions) of Ukraine. One of the Kremlin's goals was to seize Kyiv. When attempts to take the capital proved futile, Russian forces in these oblasts launched campaign of terror against local civilian population: abducting, torturing, and killing men, women, and children. Besides, people were taken hostages.

**The reasons for the detention are often unknown.** Ex-hostages say it was a coincidence, **but too cruel:**

**I was standing** on the porch talking by phone to a neighbor. He was asking if his house was safe. As soon as he hung up, a shot was fired. The bullet hit my left knee. I raised my head, seeing a man with a gun in his hand, equipped with Kalashnikov and grenade launcher. I told him that I wasn't armed, I only had a phone, and raised my hands. There was another shot in the thigh of my right leg."

**Oleh Hordiichuk** from Hostomel (Kyiv oblast), detained on March 20, 2022

**I was at home** when Russian soldiers broke into the house. They told me to show them my passport. They asked me what I was doing here. I replied: "I live here." They ordered me to show them my phone. I gave it away, but it was turned off as we hadn't had electricity for two days. They said I had to go with them to check my phone."

**Oleksandr Faizov** from Trostianets (Sumy oblast), detained in mid-March 2022

**They grabbed me outside**, tied my hands, blindfolded me and brought me to the local foundry. I found out later where they were taking me. They said that I shouldn't have shipped humanitarian aid, because they provided it to people themselves."

**Valentyn Hryshchenko** from Dymer (Kyiv oblast), detained on March 23, 2022

**After the interrogation**, I saw my husband in the yard, he was kneeling at a gunpoint of Kalashnikov rifle. The Russians said, "Say farewell." I couldn't figure out how it is to "say farewell". Will we never see each other?! Then I got on my knees, I couldn't say anything to him. They pushed him into the armored personnel carrier and took him away."

**Natalia Gurianova** from Lisova Bucha (Kyiv oblast), wife of Yevhen Gurianov, detained on March 18, 2022

**Five men**, Buryats, jumped out with Kalashnikovs in their hands, shouting: 'Freeze or we'll fire.' They put my son and me on the ground and started searching. Then they told us to put jackets on our heads so that we could not see where they were taking us. They shot their guns over Dima's ear. I fell, so they were dragging me by the collar. They brought us to the warehouse in Kozarovychi village."

**Vasyl Khiliuk** from Kozarovychi (Kyiv oblast), detained on March 3, 2022

**Some civilians were abducted because of their pro-Ukrainian stance or because the Russians found some "suspicious" information on their phones:**

**When the Russians** found patriotic literature at my place, one of the soldiers said, 'That's exactly who we need. There's a million on a true Banderite's head.' After that they took me to a well to shoot me. They put me on my knees and started shooting over my head."

**Viktor Porkhun** from Katiuzhanka (Kyiv oblast) was detained in mid-March 2022

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**On the first day**, the first interrogation was mild enough. They said: "Why are you doing all this?", "Why don't you like Russia?" I said that I am Ukrainian, I have lived here all my life. The second interrogation was tough. They said they needed to record a video where I had to tell how I was wrong and that I would collaborate with them. First they took two books and started beating my ears with it on both sides. One of them asks: "Are you Ukrainian?" Then they told me to put my hands on the table and hit on my fingers with the book. When I turned around, they started hitting on my kidneys. When I tried to sit down, they hit on my feet. "Do you think I feel sorry for you? I don't feel sorry for you," one of them shouted. Later they started to apply the electrical cable to me, first to my fingers. Three fingers on one hand, then on the other. Then it was intensified. I cried, I screamed in pain. I gave up when they attached the wires to my earlobes. I don't know if the voltage was that strong, but it seemed to me that the upper part of my head broke off and flew up somewhere."

**Olena** (name changed) from Berdiansk (Zaporizhia oblast), detained in March 2022

Initially, detainees in the north of Ukraine were held in local basements and premises of enterprises, and in the south - in administrative buildings and seized premises of the police and the Security Service of Ukraine:

**You could** hear when people were beat up. It was once or twice a day. There were loud screams. Then, Russians went around all the cells and asked, "Is everything okay?" And I had to answer that everything was fine. After torture, they always made such a round."

**Oleh Baturin** from Kakhovka (Kherson oblast), detained on March 12, 2022

**Nine soldiers** entered the apartment and got the man inside. His face was mutilated, covered in blood. His nose and jaw were broken... When my mother saw him, she had a heart attack."

**Aliona Lapchuk**, wife of Vitalii Lapchuk from Kherson (Kherson oblast), detained on March 27, 2022

The hostages from Kyiv and Sumy oblasts were **transported to the places of further detention in trucks**. The final destination was the institutions of the **penitentiary system of Russia**:

**It was** March 23-24. They took 14 people from the settlement of Dymer. Then they took another woman along the way. We spent the night in Hostomel (Kyiv oblast) at the airport. Then they brought us by two Ural trucks to Belarus. Each truck had 35-37 people. There were several military men, but the majority, about 90%, were civilians".

**Volodymyr Khropun** from Lytvynivka (Kyiv oblast), detained on March 18, 2022

**We didn't wait** that long at the train station in Trostianets. They tied our hands behind our backs, put us back in the car with bags on our heads, packed the Russian wounded soldiers to take them to the Russian border, and us - to their pre-trial detention center."

**Oleksandr Sytnyk** from Trostianets (Sumy oblast), detained on March 12, 2022

**On February 24, 2022, Russian servicemen captured Ukrainian servicemen on the territory of Ukraine. According to the evidence obtained by the MIHR, they were detained and are being held together with civilians in pre-trial detention centers and colonies in the territory of the Russian Federation. Both civilians and soldiers are later transferred in exchange for the Russian servicemen.**



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**We were placed** in non-functioning refrigeration chambers in a dilapidated dining room. I thought that my family was nearby. But they were not in the cell with me. Only when the guys from the neighboring cell managed to drill some holes, they told that my son was nearby. No one had information about my wife."

**Oleh Hordiichuk**, civilian, about detention in Hostomel, Kyiv oblast

**It's like** a five-by-five-meter garage inside a big shop. There was a large compressor in the middle. We slept on the floor, ate what they brought us and drank water from a canister, using a hose."

**Valentyn Hryshchenko**, civilian, about detention in a foundry in Dymyr village, Kyiv oblast

**I was taken** blindfolded to a room. At first I thought it was in the police station, but later I realized that I was at the train station in a bomb shelter. My first "cellmate" was a retired lieutenant colonel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. I did not ask him about his name. I knew that they interrogated him a couple of times, and then took him away to an unknown destination; I haven't seen him again. Then they caught Mykola in the area between the center and the station. I didn't know who he was, I only heard his name. He was severely beaten and tied up with bands. When Mykola began to express his dissatisfaction with the actions of the Russians, they beat him. Then he began to express even more dissatisfaction, they beat him again and as a result they simply beat him to death. Then there was Valentyn, a man under 50. He removed the trip wire, they caught him with a grenade in hand. They also beat

him several times and took him away to an unknown destination. Then they brought two more, also already beaten. Then they brought Edward, also beaten. They beat all of us."

**Oleksandr Faizov**, civilian, about detention in the premises of the railway station in Trostianets, Sumy oblast

**They fingerprinted** and photographed my son and me, also took our DNA. I ask, "What are you taking?" They say, "This is a coronavirus test." But I understand that the coronavirus test is quite different... They tried to tell me "there is no nation like Ukrainians", "we are saving you".

**Aliona Lapchuk**, civilian, about detention in the premises of the Regional Police Department in Kherson

**We were held** in the pre-trial detention isolator in Kherson. Most of us were guarded by young guys, Russians, who acted as so-called overseers. But they had rotations, they changed. The main contingent that came and used torture consisted of the more severe servicemen. There were also phrases such as: "Now the Chechens are coming."

**Oleh Baturin**, civilian, journalist, on detention in Kherson pre-trial detention center in Kherson

**At the police** station in Nova Kakhovka, we were forced to walk in a circle for a long time. I could barely stand on my feet due to the injuries, so my sergeant kept me quietly by my jacket all the time so that I wouldn't fall."

**"Skif"**, officer of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, captured in April 2022

**At the "reception"**, as soon as they brought us to the pre-trial detention center, they beat us severely. Those who were on the first buses were beaten up the

most. They beat all on their back and legs. I arrived on the second bus, so I was lucky. When it was my turn, they were tired. They did their "massage", of course, but it was far from beating the first detainees."

**Volodymyr Khropun**, civilian, volunteer, about detention in SIZO #2 in Novozybkov, Briansk oblast, Russia

**SIZO#1**, where they brought us, looks like an ordinary prison. There were 22 of us in the first cell, where I was held, and I stayed there for three weeks, and then I was moved to another cell, there were already 12 people. They told us to wear black T-shirts and pants. We were not allowed to sit on our beds, but only on a bench or on the floor. There were toilet and washbasin in the middle of the cell. Each cell had video surveillance. Someone was watching the camera all the time. They switched on their patriotic songs of the 1940s every day from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. They also forced us to learn those songs and sing the anthem of the Russian Federation."

**Maksym**, a serviceman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, about his detention in Kursk SIZO#1, Russia

**They threw all** of us into the cell together, later civilians and soldiers were separated. There were eight of us in the cell. All civilians were seized for no reason. They were interrogated. The Russians asked how we got here, why, where. They asked: "Maybe you had a machine gun or a knife?" I replied that I had nothing,

I sat in the basement all the time, seeing nothing. They did not believe. They fingerprinted everyone, drew blood from the veins, gave X-rays. Also they photographed and filmed us. I couldn't understand why. Only after my release I realized that it all was for propaganda. While I was there, my photos were not exhibited anywhere. But when I was taken away for an exchange, a photo appeared with a caption, as if I had voluntarily surrendered to them with a weapon in hand."

**Oleksandr Sytnyk**, civilian, on detention in SIZO#2 in Stary Oskol, Russia

**Together** with Moskalkova (Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation - MIHR), their media came, forced us to give interviews and say that we are in normal conditions and provided for everyone. Despite the fact that I received first aid almost a week after the injury, they didn't feed us or even didn't give water for the first three days."

**"Skif"**, officer of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, on captivity on the territory of one of the military units in Sevastopol, Crimea



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### **Media Initiative for Human Rights**

(MIHR) - Ukrainian non-governmental organization, founded in September of 2016. The goal of the organization is to combine journalistic activities and the protection of rights in order to uncover the crimes of Russia against Ukraine.

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