



**ASSOCIATION
OF RELATIVES
of Political Prisoners
of the Kremlin**

"ASSOCIATION OF RELATIVES OF POLITICAL
PRISONERS OF THE KREMLIN"

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**To the UN Committee on Enforced
Disappearances**

*Submission from the Non-Governmental
Organization "Association of Relatives of
Political Prisoners of the Kremlin"*

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Dear Committee Members,

We thank you for the opportunity to provide information about cases of human rights violations in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine, specifically the enforced disappearances of civilian citizens of our state, which have resulted from crimes committed by Russian military personnel and representatives of the occupying authorities in the occupied territories of Ukraine. The Non-Governmental Organization "Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin" (hereinafter - the Association) has been conducting activities aimed at protecting individuals who have been illegally deprived of personal freedom for political reasons since 2017. The large-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation and the occupation of new significant territories of Ukraine has led to a new wave of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions. Since 2022, the Association, as part of the coalition of non-governmental organizations "Ukraine. 5 AM," has been involved in documenting and conducting in-depth interviews with victims and witnesses of international crimes committed by Russian military personnel in the occupied territories of Ukraine.

The main directions of our work are:

- Cooperation with Ukrainian authorities and international partners, non-governmental organizations;

- Documenting war crimes and crimes against humanity on the territory of Ukraine;
- Supporting prisoners, including organizing public and non-public events to support prisoners;
- Uniting the efforts of all concerned parties for the protection and release of captives.

The Association works to achieve systemic changes that would help illegally imprisoned individuals and their families. Unfortunately, with the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2024, the number of civilians illegally deprived of freedom has significantly increased and continues to grow. The exact number of Ukrainian citizens illegally held by the Russian regime is not known and is carefully concealed by the aggressor state. Before February 2022, their number was approximately 300 people. Various sources have already confirmed the presence of over 1,680 civilians in places of forced detention. According to the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the Joint Center for the Search and Release of Prisoners at the Security Service of Ukraine, the number of civilians could be around 16,000 people. An accurate count of those currently held is complicated by the fact that representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross are not allowed access to most of them.

Illegally imprisoned individuals and their families need comprehensive support from the state. On January 26, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of Persons in Respect of Whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine Has Been Established, and Their Family Members" (hereinafter - the Law). This bill was developed to create legislative mechanisms for social and legal protection of persons who were illegally deprived of freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, and their family members, as well as to define the grounds and procedures for establishing such facts.

In addition, this Law establishes a procedure for establishing the fact of illegal imprisonment of Ukrainian citizens as a result of Russian aggression. Thus, decisions on establishing the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine are made by the Commission on Establishing the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine (hereinafter - the Commission), which is formed under the Ministry for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine. The Commission carries out its activities in accordance with the Regulations on the Commission on Establishing the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated November 15, 2022, No. 1281 "Certain Issues of Implementation of the Law of Ukraine 'On Social and Legal Protection of Persons in Respect of Whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine Has Been Established, and Their Family Members'".

The tasks of the Commission are:

- ❖ Reviewing applications and materials (certificates, information, other documents) regarding the establishment of the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, recognition as a family member of a person in respect of whom the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine has been established;

- ❖ Making decisions on establishing the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, on recognizing a person as a family member of an individual in respect of whom the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression

against Ukraine has been established, or on not confirming the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine;

❖ Analyzing the practice of applying legislation on social and legal protection of persons in respect of whom the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine has been established.

To obtain a certificate, a person applies personally or through a legal representative or family member with an application in free form for the issuance of the relevant certificate to the Ministry of Defense, another central executive body that manages military formations established in accordance with the law, law enforcement agency or state body of special purpose with law enforcement functions, commander of a unit of the Armed Forces, other military formation or body established in accordance with the law that belongs to the security forces and defense forces of Ukraine.

The application can be submitted in electronic or paper form. The certificate is issued within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt of the relevant application. The certificate is printed on A4 paper, signed by an authorized official, sealed with an official seal, and issued free of charge, which is recorded in the certificate issuance log.

However, in practice, gaps in the law's implementation have emerged, causing difficulties in obtaining appropriate support. Our organization's team has prepared a thorough analytical report that contains recommendations for effectively ensuring social and legal protection of persons who have been illegally deprived of freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, and for compliance with legislative guarantees for protecting the rights of such persons and their families.

During the course of the Association's work, we have identified the following key issues:

1. *The categories of citizens covered by the provisions of the law do not encompass all individuals who have been unlawfully imprisoned as a result of Russia's armed aggression.* According to the provisions of the law, only two categories of unlawfully detained civilians are covered, namely: "political prisoners" and "civilian hostages." This is discriminatory towards a large number of citizens who have been unlawfully deprived of their freedom but do not fall under these categories.

The detention of civilians, who are protected under international humanitarian law, may not have a specific purpose related to coercing a third party into action or inaction; or the demands may have been and are directed directly at the detainee as a condition of their release, making it impossible to qualify the person as a hostage.

Expanding the list of categories of citizens for whom the fact of deprivation of personal freedom can be established, and supplementing it with civilians protected under international humanitarian law who did not participate in hostilities and were unlawfully and unreasonably deprived of their personal freedom as a result of military aggression against Ukraine, will restore social justice and ensure the right to state assistance for that category of Ukrainian citizens whom the state could not protect and who are serving unlawful imprisonment.

Resolving this issue may involve amending the law and expanding the categories of persons eligible for state protection.

Yes, we have recommended to the Ministry for Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine to initiate amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of Persons for whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine has been Established, and Their Family Members," by supplementing

subparagraph "c" of paragraph 2 of part 1 of article 2, which stipulates that the law applies to Ukrainian citizens who are civilians protected under the Convention on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of August 12, 1949, and who have been unlawfully deprived of their personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine by the aggressor state, its bodies, units, formations, and other entities during their stay in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine or on the territory of the aggressor state due to the illegal actions of the aggressor state, its bodies, units, formations, and other entities regarding the unlawful deprivation of liberty of a Ukrainian citizen.

We also recommended supplementing part 2 of section 2 of the Procedure for the Appointment and Payment of Assistance to Persons for whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine has been Established, as follows: "Family members of persons for whom the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine has been established, within this Procedure, are understood as persons who are married to such individuals, as well as their children, including adult children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, persons under guardianship or care, as well as persons who live together, are connected by a common household, and have mutual rights and obligations. In the absence of documentary confirmation of family relations, the fact of family or cohabitation of a man and a woman without marriage is confirmed by an appropriate court decision that has come into legal force."

2. The procedures by which the specially created Commission for Establishing the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine makes decisions regarding granting the relevant status to individuals are not transparent or comprehensible to applicants. This complicates the adoption of fair decisions that should guarantee timely and comprehensive state protection for unlawfully imprisoned persons and their family members. The mechanisms and procedures for exercising the right to assistance provided by law do not meet the real needs of the victims.

During its operation, the Commission has not analyzed the practice of applying the legislation on the social and legal protection of persons for whom the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine has been established, although this task is assigned to the Commission by law. Applicants who receive refusals for the status do not understand the reason for such a decision and, more importantly, what can be corrected for the Commission to make a different decision. Currently, many applicants do not understand the list and sufficient amount of information required to confirm unlawful imprisonment for the Commission to establish the fact of imprisonment.

Our research and the results of applicant surveys have shown that the procedures adopted by the Commission for establishing the fact of deprivation of personal freedom are not transparent or understandable to applicants. This situation, in some cases, makes it impossible to adopt fair decisions that would guarantee timely and comprehensive state protection for unlawfully imprisoned persons and their family members. The full text of the analytical study can be found at the following link: <https://www.relativespp.org/analytics-ens/why-illegally-detained-civilians-remain-without-comprehensive-social-protection-from-the-state>.

The lack of justification in written refusals to establish the fact of deprivation of personal freedom, the closed nature of the Commission's work, and the failure to ensure the applicant's right to be heard create a sense of injustice and insecurity among the public.

The solution to this issue is to amend the legislation regulating the activities of the Commission, specifically by including a requirement for the Commission to provide justification for its decisions.

Our research and the results of applicant surveys have shown that the procedures adopted by the Commission for establishing the fact of deprivation of personal freedom are not transparent or understandable to applicants. This situation, in some cases, makes it impossible to adopt fair decisions that would guarantee timely and comprehensive state protection for unlawfully imprisoned persons and their family members.

The main violations of the relevant procedure are:

- Systematic violations by the Commission of the deadlines for considering applications and providing responses.
- In cases where the Commission refuses to establish the fact of unlawful imprisonment, the response does not contain information about the reasons for such refusal, depriving the applicant of the legal right to a justified decision by a state body.
- Applicants who wish to be heard by the Commission members are deprived of this opportunity.
- The office of the Ministry of Reintegration periodically loses applicants' documents.

Establishing the fact of deprivation of personal freedom in Ukraine is currently an administrative service and should be carried out in accordance with the law on administrative procedure. Released citizens and relatives of individuals currently deprived of personal freedom due to the armed aggression of Russia often express distrust in the Commission and its decisions due to the closed nature of its work, lack of communication, and non-compliance with national legislation.

To address these issues, we propose that the Ministry for Reintegration initiate aligning the description of the administrative service and the Regulation on the Commission for Establishing the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine with the requirements of the law. We request that the Commission members initiate these changes to the Regulation on the Commission and monitor the Ministry's implementation of measures to eliminate violations.

Additionally, to ensure the consistency of the procedure for providing such a service, it is necessary to align the Regulation on the Commission, the Procedure for the Appointment and Payment of Assistance, and the Procedure for Creating, Maintaining, and Accessing the Unified Register of Persons for whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom has been Established with the requirements of the Law of Ukraine "On Administrative Procedure."

In our opinion, it is essential for the Commission to be obligated to provide the applicant with a written justification (motivation) for the decision not to confirm the fact of deprivation of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine. We also recommend that the Chair of the Commission ensure that applicants who wish to do so can provide explanations and/or

comments to the Commission via videoconference, in accordance with the requirements of the Law of Ukraine "On Administrative Procedure."

3. *State assistance, social protection.* Upon analyzing the most sought-after financial assistance among family members of those unlawfully deprived of personal freedom, as well as those released from unlawful imprisonment, we found that its amount has remained unchanged since 2018. Meanwhile, as of January 1, 2024, considering the annual inflation rate, the real purchasing power of the Ukrainian hryvnia has decreased by almost 57%. The absence of a procedure for indexing state financial assistance will lead to a further decrease in its value, thereby deepening the social insecurity of those affected by Russian aggression. Given the inhumane conditions of detention for those unlawfully deprived of personal freedom, and the physical violence and torture they endure, medical and rehabilitation assistance, including psychological support, for those released must be urgent and comprehensive.

Due to the lack of procedures and mechanisms for implementing a number of benefits provided by the law, people in reality do not receive state support for medical, psychological, and rehabilitation assistance; there is no single point of contact for released persons to ensure they receive all necessary support after their release: housing, rehabilitation, financial assistance, and legal support.

Our comprehensive analytical report contains recommendations for the effective provision of social and legal protection for individuals who were unlawfully deprived of their freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, and for ensuring the legislative guarantees of protection for the rights of such individuals and their families. We have proposed 50 recommendations addressed to the Ministry for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, the Commission for Establishing the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, and other bodies of state executive power and local self-government. The content of the report can be accessed via the [link](#).

In March 2024, our organization issued an official statement calling for the UN Global Compact to exclude Rosatom due to its involvement in the imprisonment and torture of workers at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. This statement is supported by our documentation of 13 cases of unlawful detention of employees at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant located in Enerhodar.

On March 12, 2022, employees under the control of "Rosatom" assumed operational control of the Zaporizhzhia NPP. Evidence obtained indicates that these "Rosatom" employees actively collaborated with officers of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB). Their joint efforts included a coercive initiative involving intimidation tactics to force cooperation, pressure on employees to submit to both Russian military and "Rosatom" employees, and pressure on existing ZNPP personnel to sign new labor contracts with "Rosatom". On October 5, 2022, by presidential decree, the ZNPP was illegally transferred to state ownership of Russia.

Employees were coerced into loyalty to the occupation authorities and into signing contracts with "Rosatom," including through threats and torture. ZNPP employees were subjected to torture, including evidence of particularly brutal attacks and severe beatings, electric shock torture, forcing victims to dig their own graves, threats of rape against victims and their relatives, and holding

detainees in overcrowded cells without food, water, or fresh air. It is confirmed that at least one person was tortured to death.

For instance, the family members of Mr. P., a ZNPP employee, were subjected to electric shock torture during interrogations. To coerce a confession about collaboration with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the occupiers inflicted violence on his wife and student son. His wife was tortured in her husband's presence, with threats of rape.

A similar incident occurred with a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. A., both ZNPP employees. They were unlawfully detained and interrogated by the occupiers about their pro-Ukrainian stance. Fortunately, they were released within 24 hours, but Mrs. A.'s husband was severely beaten.

Moreover, there is ample evidence of the nuclear power plant and the city being shelled from territories controlled by Russian military forces. Rosatom has facilitated the gravest violations of international law – torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. It does so without proper human rights due diligence, in conditions of heightened risk of human rights abuses, and despite direct evidence of such abuses at its facilities.

For more details on human rights violations at the ZNPP, please refer to our statement on the [organization's website](#).

To document war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine, our organization's investigators have been collecting **testimonies from individuals who witnessed Russian war crimes or were victims of unlawful detention and arbitrary arrests by the occupation authorities**.

Since 2022, we have interviewed 177 witnesses of enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, and crimes against civilians. As of the end of June 2024, we have identified 185 civilians who were arbitrarily detained by representatives of the Russian Federation or groups controlled by the aggressor state.

Among them, 2 individuals were under 18 years old at the time of their unlawful detention, and 15 were over 60. A total of 149 men and 36 women were unlawfully detained.

Regarding the status of these individuals at the time of the interview, 91 have been released, the whereabouts of 30 are unknown, and 64 remain in captivity.

Most cases of enforced disappearances of civilians identified by our organization's investigators occurred in the occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia Oblast (132 cases), including 35 individuals detained in Melitopol and 22 in Enerhodar (13 of whom were ZNPP employees), 24 individuals detained in the occupied territory of Kherson Oblast, 4 in Luhansk Oblast, and 5 in Donetsk Oblast.

The reasons for detention included political motives (pro-Ukrainian stance, organization of peaceful protests and assemblies), religious motives (a desire to force representatives of churches to cooperate with the occupation authorities), and sometimes the reasons for detention were

completely unclear and unfounded (supposedly cooperation with the SBU and the Armed Forces of Ukraine, organization of terrorist attacks).

All identified individuals who were unlawfully deprived of their liberty were civilians who did not resist and did not engage in activities that threatened the life and health of others.

Most of the individuals were detained by law enforcement officers of the occupation authorities, who identified themselves as FSB officers. They conducted illegal searches during which they seized personal belongings such as phones, laptops, tablets, and cameras, both from the detainees and from all members of their families living in the house.

Eleven forcibly abducted individuals held positions in state or local government bodies. They were required to cooperate with the occupation authorities and switch sides. Individuals who held elected positions and had authority and popularity among the local population were also required to publicly support the occupation authorities and address people with appeals about the advantages of the "Russian world" and its continued existence.

Twenty-six individuals were targeted due to their openly pro-Ukrainian stance. They participated in pro-Ukrainian rallies, volunteered, or were members of civil society organizations. These detentions were also aimed at suppressing peaceful resistance to the occupation, halting protests in occupied cities in the spring of 2022, and spreading fear and panic among the local population.

There were also instances of abductions for the purpose of blackmail. For example, an elderly man born in 1947 was held for three days in a pretrial detention facility in the occupied territory. The occupiers sought to influence his daughter, a journalist who was actively opposing Russia, including by calling for peaceful assemblies. In essence, the journalist was blackmailed and threatened with her father's life if she did not cease her activities.

In Melitopol, following the occupation, all directors of general education schools submitted resignation letters due to their refusal to conduct the educational process in accordance with the requirements of the Russian occupiers. As we know, several directors were visited by search teams on the same day, detained, and held for several days in cold, damp garage premises without access to medication, food, or a toilet, and without the possibility of sleep. They were threatened, as were their families.

Among the identified individuals who were deprived of their personal liberty, there is a trend of detaining several or all members of a family at once.

The family of Ms. A. from Luhansk region also suffered from the arbitrariness of the occupiers. Three members of her family - her husband and two sons - were unlawfully detained. The reason for the unlawful deprivation of their liberty was an unfounded accusation of terrorism against her husband. Mr. B., a former ATO participant, along with his sons, was detained after a search of their home by FSB officers. While in the pre-trial detention center, he was tortured with electric shock. At the time of communication with the documenters, he was at home awaiting trial.

The eldest son was also released, but the family still has no information about the whereabouts and condition of the youngest son.

Mr. S., who lived with his family in Melitopol at the time of the occupation, testified about the detention of himself and his father, who served in the ATO. The occupiers held his son for a day and, having learned no useful information, released him. His father has been held captive since April 2022.

The K. couple, who worked in education, were detained and interrogated at a police station in an occupied village in the Zaporizhzhia region. They were lucky - they were released within a day, but the husband was severely beaten. The reason for the detention was their pro-Ukrainian position and field of activity, as the occupiers were trying to co-opt educators.

All identified individuals who were unlawfully deprived of their liberty were civilians who did not resist and did not engage in activities that threatened the life and health of others.

Most individuals were detained by law enforcement officers of the occupation authorities, who identified themselves as FSB officers. They conducted unlawful searches, during which they seized personal belongings such as phones, laptops, tablets, and cameras, from both the detainees and all members of their families living in the house.

According to testimonies received, one man was taken away in front of his wife and child, who was only one and a half years old at the time.

The primary places of unlawful detention in the Zaporizhzhia region include police stations, temporary detention facilities, basements, and equipped garage torture chambers. In the torture chambers where unlawfully detained Ukrainian civilians were held, there were often cases of simultaneous detention of both prisoners of war and individuals who had committed criminal offenses. There are known cases of civilian detainees being held together with Russian soldiers who had committed serious war crimes such as looting or rape. The cells where civilians were held were often overcrowded, cold, without access to water or a toilet, with the lights on 24/7, and due to the lack of sleeping places, some detainees were always on the wet concrete floor. It is a widespread practice to take detainees to the toilet a maximum of twice a day and to limit the time they have to relieve themselves. Food in places of detention is always insufficient, and there are numerous cases of detainees not being fed for a week. There is evidence of forced labor in captivity, particularly in the construction of fortifications for Russian servicemen.

There is also a trend of the occupation authorities concealing the whereabouts of detainees, refusing to provide information to their relatives for extended periods or providing vague answers without specifying the exact location and reasons for detention.

The conditions of detention are degrading. Individuals are held in garages and basements, without sufficient food, water, or medical care. Detainees are subjected to torture to obtain information. Relatives do not receive any information about the whereabouts of the forcibly disappeared even after sending written requests to the command of the occupation authorities. While in detention, detainees are unable to communicate with the outside world.

Documenters have recorded numerous cases of torture, ill-treatment, and beating of civilians who have been unlawfully deprived of their liberty by the occupation authorities. Civilians who have been unlawfully deprived of their liberty describe it as follows:

Mr. T, a civilian and a teacher in an educational institution in Kherson:

"From the first days of the occupation of Kherson, units of the Krasnoyarsk police department and the Krasnoyarsk FSB entered the city. The occupiers immediately set up a checkpoint in the city. In the first days of the occupation, I was involved in volunteering. I helped elderly people with medicines and food... Two VAZ Patriot cars with representatives of the Russian National Guard arrived... One of the National Guardsmen hit me on the head with a rifle butt and knocked me to the ground, they put on handcuffs... The first two weeks after we were brought there were constant interrogations. On the first day, they interrogated me without physical violence, because I had a bleeding head. The following interrogations were already conducted with tasers, clamps connected to electricity, and they beat me, beat me with a "tapik" - an electric generator. They used a rubber baton, a police baton, punches, kicks... We were fed three times a day, 4-5 servings for 8 people who were in the cell, usually there was not enough food for everyone. The water was only from the tap - ordinary Kherson water, unfiltered. But in the Kherson isolator while I was there, these were still resort conditions compared to other places where I was held... After returning to Ukraine, I underwent a medical examination. I was diagnosed with a broken bone, a significant deterioration of hypertensive and vascular diseases. And problems with my teeth - due to a lack of vitamins, I lost 4 teeth" (the man was unlawfully deprived of his liberty from 04.09.2022 to 23.03.2023).

Mr. S., a civilian from Polohiv district, Zaporizhzhia region:

"...They tied my hands and feet with tape, removed the sock from my right foot and brought a device that looked like a field phone, attached clamps to the big toe of my right foot and to the big toe of my hand. They poured water on me and said that they needed to check, and for this, they needed to call the phone. I repeated to the interrogator that I was not in the territorial defense, that I did not know anything, that I had no weapons. After these words, they began to torture me with electric shock. I started screaming in pain and fell off the chair I was sitting on. A man in a balaclava took a rag and used it as a gag in my mouth, a man in a balaclava pressed me down with his foot and at that moment my phone rang or he felt documents in my pocket. He conducted a search and took away my documents and phone and told me to confess. For about 5 hours, the same thing was repeated, that is, they beat me with electric shock and asked the same questions. Then they removed the wires, cut the tape and pulled me upstairs to the street. An occupier with red hair gave me my documents, passport, and said that I was not allowed to leave, that all information about me was at the checkpoints, he ordered me to keep quiet, that nothing happened, and sent me home..."

Ms. O., a mother of many children, a civil servant, an employee of the local administration of the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region:

"...There were five people in the police station office, three who took me from home and two from the Kadyrov regiment. These two from the Kadyrov regiment tied my hands and feet to an office chair, I was bent over, the younger one stood to my right, he took a 2-liter bottle of water and hit me on the back of the head with the end of the bottle, while asking where my husband was serving, I answered them that I did not know, that his documents were at home, I did not remember the military unit, they told me that they would now help me remember and continued to beat me on the head. Two from the DNR pulled a bag over my head, wrapped it with tape around my neck,

one held my nose through the bag and waited until I had convulsions. They took an office teapot, wrapped a wire around my neck, strangled me with the wire, used a bag for strangulation, beat me on the head, my head was pretty broken, everything was covered in blood up to my waist, every time my head was spinning, I lost consciousness, I felt dizzy and nauseous. Yan said that now we would play Russian roulette, he took a pistol, spun the chamber and shot. After 3 hours of torture, they threw me into the cell (from the duty station to the temporary detention facility on the left)... After the torture, I felt dizzy and nauseous, I was lying in the cell covered in blood up to my waist. The cell was designed for three people, but I was there alone, there was a toilet in the cell, a sink without water, one small window, the light was not always on, I was not fed for 24 hours, they did not bring any water at all..."

The Association's documenters have also recorded instances of so-called "sentences" being handed down for **forced "deportation" to Ukrainian-controlled territory**. Testimonies have been obtained from 5 individuals who were forcibly transferred from the occupied territory to Ukrainian-controlled territory in this manner. During the forced transfer to Ukrainian-controlled territory, pursuant to a decision of the occupation authorities, a person previously unlawfully deprived of their liberty was taken to the contact line and a "sentence" was announced, and they were forced to walk on foot through a mined area from a Russian checkpoint near the city of Vasylivka towards the city of Zaporizhzhia. The mined road from the checkpoint to the territory controlled by Ukraine was more than 15 kilometers long. There are known cases where, after being filmed by Russian propaganda channels for the procedure of forced expulsion of a civilian, the individual did not appear in the Ukrainian-controlled territory and is currently missing under special circumstances.

Witnesses describe this "justice" as follows:

Ms. Y., a civilian and unemployed resident of the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region:

"...With the beginning of the occupation, many collaborators appeared in the city, and many of them were my acquaintances, which was very disgusting for me. So I started photographing the movement of Russian vehicles and sending them to the 'Vaseline' group and SBU chatbots... Around 2:00-3:00 pm on September 24, 2022, ten people (occupiers) arrived at my house in two cars... I was scared and didn't know what to do... They entered the house, I was very scared. They grabbed me and led me to a room in my house, where there was a gas heater. They sat me down on the sofa and started asking questions, including who I was working for. They hit me twice on the head, I thought it was with a butt, but most likely, it was with a hand, because I tried to cover myself and felt someone's hand. I didn't see who hit me because I was covering my face. It was very painful... Then they hit me twice more on the head... They put me in a two-person cell... The next day I got sick, they didn't provide me with any help... They told me to clean the cell, gave me a rag, a bucket, a broom, told me to put my things in a bag and told me to leave the cell. They put my face against the wall, tied my hands behind my back tightly with tape. They put a bag over my head... They put me in a car, they said that maybe they would kill me... We drove somewhere uphill and then drove a little further past Vasylivka past a checkpoint, they tied my hands, put me on the side of the road. One Kadyrovite was filming, and another was reading out the verdict. I thought they were going to kill me. After they read out the verdict, the Kadyrovite told me to go back. There were trenches there and the Kadyrovites said that this was my grave. After that, I walked towards the Ukrainian territory, and then I ran, he told me not to run, because they would shoot. On the way, a car stopped, a girl in it took us to Zaporizhzhia..."

Ms. L, a civilian from an occupied village in the Melitopol district of Zaporizhzhia region:

"...On September 5, 2022, in the morning, 7 men arrived at my house in a Patriot (car) and a white minibus with tinted windows, without license plates. They were all wearing balaclavas with Russian chevrons on their arms... They took me to a place I don't know exactly... In the room where I was, there was a toilet on the left, it was leaking, and there was a terrible stench. The toilet was even leaking into the corridor. There were two wooden shelves, where there were no mattresses or pillows... It was cold in the cell, the windows were not closed, there were a lot of flies... The next morning they took me for interrogation... They did not allow me to speak Ukrainian. When I thought about how to say some Ukrainian word in Russian, they hit me on the head, or if I told something they didn't like, they also hit me on the head. In total, they hit me on the head 6 times, grabbed my nose, ears, and threatened to "kick me so hard that I would piss myself"... In total, I was held captive for 22 days. I know, because I kept a calendar (made marks in the cell)...

On the 22nd day, in the morning around 9-10 am, "Dobriy" came in and gave me a bag to put over my head. He led me out through the side door and then another occupier grabbed me "by the scruff of the neck" and put me in a car (I was with a bag on my head)... We drove past the "plate" behind Vasylivka and then drove on, past the place where the evacuation column was released (I don't know the coordinates because I'm not local). Ahead of me was a bridge blown up to Zaporizhzhia.

They filmed me, reading out some document that emphasized that this was deportation. And they released me on the Ukrainian side, without returning my passport. I walked for about 30-25 kilometers until Ukrainian soldiers picked me up, took me to the first Ukrainian checkpoint, and then the police took me to Zaporizhzhia." (The woman was illegally held in September 2022).

Our organization has received **testimonies of unlawful detentions based on religious beliefs**. For instance, the head of the religious organization of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in occupied Melitopol was detained by the occupation authorities and immediately "forcibly deported". The individual was forcibly taken to a checkpoint, had all biometric data taken, was photographed, and threatened with execution. Under video recording, a "sentence" was read out, and they were informed that the man was being forcibly expelled beyond the borders of the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia oblast, after which he was sent to walk towards the city of Zaporizhzhia. The walk through the mined territory took 4 hours; only documents were allowed to be taken.

Our organization has also received testimonies from a pastor of a Christian church in Melitopol regarding the intrusion of law enforcement officers from the occupying country into the church premises, an on-site interrogation regarding his religious activities and connections with the Right Sector. The occupiers set conditions, offered the pastor to cooperate, and threatened physical violence. They demanded that he stop the participation of people from the church in pro-Ukrainian rallies, otherwise, they threatened the participants with physical violence as well.

Our organization's documenters have also received testimonies from two representatives of the religious organization of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in one of the occupied cities of Zaporizhzhia oblast, who were detained by the occupation authorities and immediately "forcibly deported". One of them was a citizen of another country.

The information gathered by the documenters of the " Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners of the Kremlin" provides compelling evidence of the aggressor country's violations of

the laws of armed conflict and the norms and principles of international humanitarian law. These violations include war crimes such as murder, torture of civilians in occupied territories, unlawful confinement, plunder of public or private property, and the destruction of cities and villages.

We urge the Committee to consider this information and discuss the aforementioned violations of international law committed by Russia in Ukraine during its 27th session.

Thank you for your attention.

Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners

(Igor KOTELYANETS, head of the Association)

