



# CIVILLIANS

**Ukrainian citizens  
held hostage in Russia**



Омбудсман України  
Ombudsman of Ukraine

Since 2014, the Russian Federation has been abducting Ukrainian civilians. Since 24 February 2022 alone, **more than 25,000 Ukrainians** have been listed in the Register of Missing Persons under Special Circumstances.

Among them are **20,000** civilians.

**At this moment, only 140 civilians who were held hostage by Russia have been released!** This data is not final, as the occupation of Ukrainian settlements is still ongoing and Ukraine will be able to assess the full information only after the complete de-occupation of its territory.

At the same time, there are three main categories of citizens who are being unjustifiably detained by the Russian Federation:

- detained and convicted before 24 February 2022;
- convicted in Ukraine, who served their sentences in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and whom the Russian Federation refuses to return to Ukraine after serving their sentences;
- civilians, who were detained after 24 February 2022 (including several other categories of civilians accused of helping or defending their country – Ukraine).

**The Russian side has no legal grounds for detaining civilians. A civilian can not be detained at all, and if this happens, he or she must be released immediately!**

International organisations have documented numerous cases of "filtration measures", enforced disappearances, tortures, forced mobilisation, and restrictions on the freedom of citizens in foreign detention camps committed by the occupation forces against Ukrainian civilians.

Currently, the Russian Federation is completely ignoring the norms of international humanitarian law regarding to the civilian population of Ukraine. In particular, by these actions, **Russia is violating the 4th Geneva Convention, Article 3 of which prohibits the taking of civilian hostages.**



## Why Russia detains civilians?

The aggressor country uses terror against civilians as a tool to influence on Ukraine's position in the context of achieving military and political goals. The Russians understand that every released civilian is a witness to Russia's violation of international norms.

**Ombudsman Office is doing its best to verify and return Ukrainian citizens home at least somehow.**

In order to speed up the process of returning Ukrainians, detained by the aggressor country, the Ombudsman has established a process of cooperation with the Russian Ombudsman. Agreements have been reached on the establishment of a humanitarian corridor and on the return of civilians deprived of their liberty, as well as the repatriation of seriously wounded and seriously ill prisoners of war. However, there has been no significant progress so far.

Our main goal is to find out where Ukrainian civilian hostages are being held, what their health condition is, and to achieve the release of every civilian.

Also, the Russian side has been provided with a list of the most vulnerable citizens illegally detained on the territory of the Russian Federation and the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, namely elderly citizens (70+ years old). However, **there has been no response from the aggressor country. Russia refuses to unconditionally return civilian hostages!**

All civilian hostages are held in inadequate conditions of detention, they are not provided with a medical care and must work at least 12 hours a day to receive food, personal hygiene products and satisfy basic natural needs, they are unable to receive parcels from their relatives and to maintain contact with them.

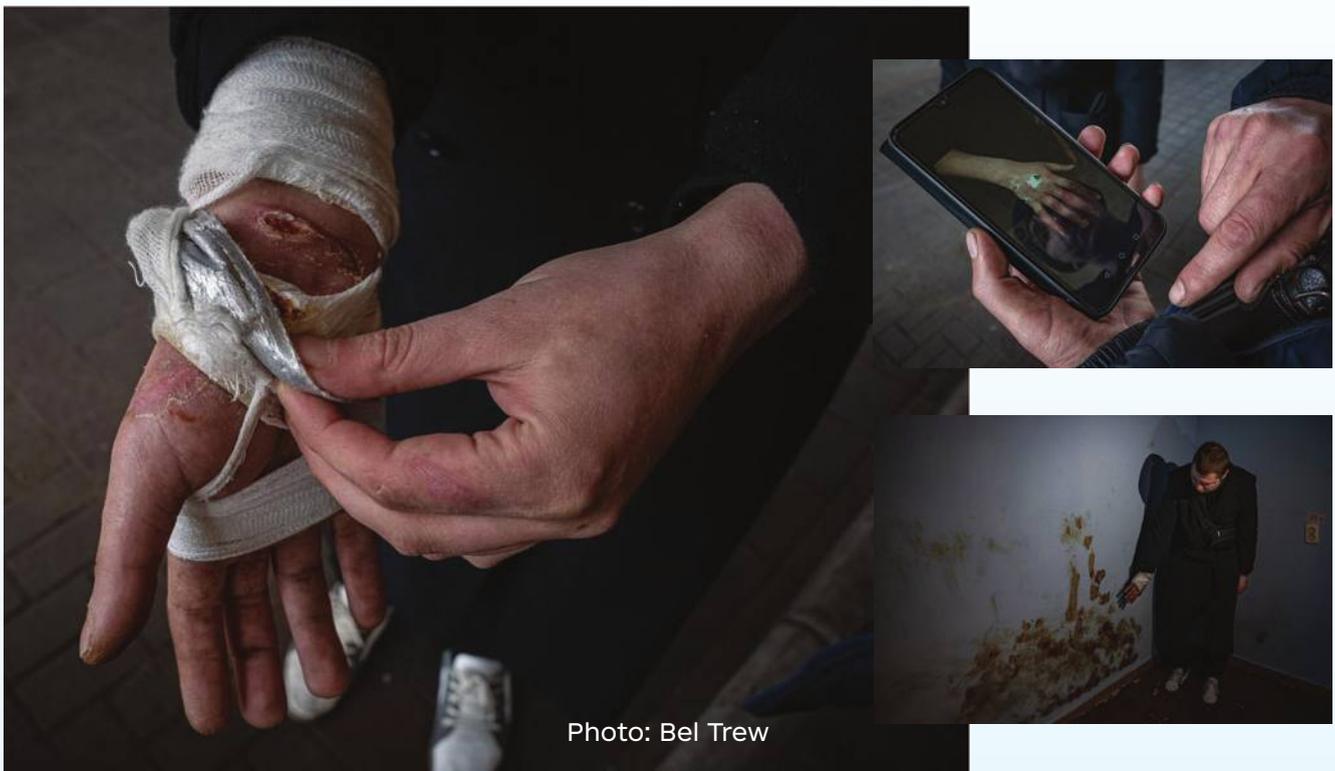


Photo: Bel Trew



**All of the above actions violate the provisions of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, adopted in 1955 by the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.**

Ukraine is talking about civilian hostages on all platforms, asking and sometimes demanding world to react harshly to this fact, to exert pressure to exclude Russia from organisations where this terrorist country has a voice.

**We believe it is necessary to:**

- introduce effective procedures of the international justice mechanism to bring the Russian Federation to justice and ensure international support in creating a mechanism to recover compensation for the damage caused by Russia.

- developing international mechanisms for identifying, protecting the interests of, and returning civilian hostages and forcibly deported children to their homeland with the involvement of the institutions of the Council of Europe, the European Union, the OSCE, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other international specialised organisations and law enforcement agencies of foreign countries.

We expect a strong condemnation by parliaments and governments of foreign countries and international organisations of the crimes of genocide, ecocide and war crimes committed by the Russian Federation, including the illegal detention of civilian hostages, the forced deportation of Ukrainian children, attacks on vital infrastructure, etc. We also expect public support for the activity of the International Criminal Court, in particular in the investigation and punishment of genocide and war crimes.

**The situation regarding the return of civilians is most appalling! We call upon the world to respond to the abduction and detention of our civilians by Russians!**

**Russia has taken civilians hostage – Russia is holding them by force – Russia is not returning them – Russia does not want to be held accountable!**



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