



CRIMEA RESISTS

PRO-UKRAINIAN AND ANTI-WAR
ACTIONS IN OCCUPIED CRIMEA
IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA'S
FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE



Mission
Of The President Of Ukraine
In The Autonomous Republic Of Crimea



CRIMEA
PLATFORM

MAIN POINTS

Following the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (hereinafter — occupied Crimea) in 2014, **the Russian Federation has been systematically using repressive methods to suppress any manifestations of pro-Ukrainian sentiment and resistance in Crimea.**

Since February 24, 2022, a series of protests and statements against the Russian invasion of Ukraine have taken place in occupied Crimea despite years of occupation. **Hundreds of people express their support for mainland Ukraine, condemn Russian war crimes, and appeal to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) to liberate the peninsula.** In response, the occupying administrations actively apply Russian legislation to persecute those who oppose the regime. They interpret these protests as extremism or treason, thereby enabling the fabrication of charges against the individuals involved.

The Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (hereinafter — the Mission) has recorded various forms of anti-war protests and expressions of dissent, including:

- anti-war posters displayed in public spaces,
- direct actions against individuals supporting the war, among others, distribution of printed materials condemning Russia's military actions in Ukraine,
- expressions of opposition to the occupying regime or support for Ukraine in private correspondence,
- individual pickets,
- performances of songs in the Ukrainian language, by Ukrainian artists, or those associated with Ukrainian resistance,
- political statements made in everyday conversations,
- solitary street demonstrations,
- video statements and social media publications.

The **occupying administration in Crimea continues to suppress any expressions of solidarity with Ukraine, subjecting Ukrainian citizens to persecution** for actions such as wearing traditional embroidered shirts, using blue and yellow nail designs, or displaying official Ukrainian state symbols. Compared to previous years, 2025 marked the highest number of administrative punishments for social media activity, including comments, reposts, and even likes. The documented cases also included one in which a woman was fined after her 10-year-old daughter posted a video that was deemed supportive of Ukraine.

GENERAL TENDENCIES

In 2014, the Russian Federation introduced its own legislation on the peninsula, as well as codes on administrative and criminal offences, to enable the use of specific articles to prosecute Ukrainian citizens for opposing the occupation.

Before 2022, instances of religious persecution were more frequent. Fabricated criminal cases against Crimean Muslims have emerged as the primary grounds for the detention of Ukrainian citizens who expressed dissent toward the occupation policies of the Russian Federation.

After the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russians introduced **Article 20.3.3 on discrediting the Russian Armed Forces** to the Administrative Code, which expanded the range of violations under which the occupation administrations imposed liability on pro-Ukrainian and anti-war activists in occupied Crimea. The Criminal Code was supplemented by **Articles 207.3 on public dissemination of false information about the Russian Armed Forces and 280.3 on public actions aimed at discrediting the Russian Armed Forces, and later by Article 275.1 on confidential cooperation with foreign states and/or organizations.**

As of March 2026, **the number of Crimean political prisoners is 220, while 153 of them are Crimean Tatars**, who make up about 15% of the population of Crimea.

However, due to concealment of information by the occupying courts about the accused persons in a number of cases, the Mission assumes that the actual number of politically persecuted persons is considerably higher: at least 286 persons in total. 220 of them are political prisoners, who have been subjected to politically motivated judicial persecution and 66 of them are those, who have been accused of resisting the occupation.

The likelihood remains high that **not all political prisoners will be able to return from Russian captivity.** In early February 2023, illegally imprisoned Kostiantyn Shyring and Dzhemil Gafarov died due to a lack of adequate medical care. In early February 2025, relatives of political prisoner Rustem Virati were informed of his death. The exact date of his demise was not disclosed. Reports indicate that Rustem suffered torture and was administered injections of unknown origin.

The monitoring detected about 100 political prisoners who require medical assistance due to poor health conditions, chronic illnesses, torture and ill-treatment. Russians refuse to provide urgent medical care even to seriously ill political prisoners. It is important to highlight the story of Lenur Khalilov, a Crimean Tatar imprisoned for alleged religious activity. He was initially released from an 18-year sentence due to health concerns. However, Russian authorities later returned him to Correctional Colony No. 1 in Arkhangelsk, despite his serious medical conditions, including advanced liver cancer with metastases to lymph nodes, chronic hepatitis C, stage II hypertension, liver cysts, a cyst in the left kidney, and kidney stones.

Overall, the situation in occupied Crimea is marked by extensive political repression against local residents who oppose the occupying regime. Russian criminal and administrative laws are systematically employed to suppress resistance to occupation and support for Ukraine, aiming to intimidate and increase control over the population. Occupying courts frequently fabricate cases under charges like “high treason”, “extremism”, or “discrediting the army” to isolate proactive citizens and maintain authority over the region.

The growing scale of persecution is illustrated by the first criminal case against women — the so-called Crimean Muslims case. On October 15, 2025, four Crimean Tatar women — Esma Nimetulaeva, Elviza Aliyeva, Fevzie Osmanova, and Nasiba Saidova — were detained by the Russia’s occupying authorities. They were charged under Article 205.5 of the Russian Criminal Code for “participation in the activities of a terrorist organization.” Notably, the first female “Hizb ut-Tahrir case” continued, resulting in the four women being labeled as “terrorists and extremists” and remaining in custody despite appeals. The cases also included complaints of improper detention conditions and violations of procedural rights.

The Mission notes that the number of cases initiated in Crimea has been increasing significantly over the years, while in the territory of the Russian Federation it has been decreasing. This indicates the following: **Crimea resists and will never become a full-fledged part of the Russian Federation.**

ADMINISTRATIVE PUNISHMENTS

As of March 2026, the Mission recorded **1705 cases of submission of materials drawn up under Article 20.3.3** to the occupying courts in occupied Crimea. In 1570 cases, a decision was made to impose an administrative penalty in the form of a fine or to join the case to another one under a distinct article. Women make up 53% of persecuted individuals .

Particularly notable is the increase in cases under Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation, which indicates a tightening of administrative persecution. In 2024, 494 cases under Article 20.3.3 were considered by the so-called courts of the Russian Federation in temporarily occupied Crimea, while in 2025 the number of such cases increased to 518.

Moreover, in 2024, out of 494 cases under Article 20.3.3, 220 cases (approximately 44%) were handled by the occupying Armiansk court, located near the administrative boundary between occupied Crimea and the Kherson region. In 2025, 264 out of 518 cases (over 51%) were handled by the occupying Armiansk court. The practice of handling these cases by the occupying Armiansk court is applied to standardize prosecutions and facilitate control over their outcomes.

This tendency likely stems from heightened verification measures at the crossing points between the occupied areas of the Kherson region and Crimea.

CASES

On **June 17** and **August 5, 2025**, the occupying judge (appointed by the Russian occupying administration in Crimea) of the **so-called Kirovskyi District Court, found Valerii Totkalo guilty** of committing an administrative offence under Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation.

“On [date] at 12:00, in the Kirovska Central District Hospital, Mr. Totkalo publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine’s territory, stating, “They are bombing our homes, high-rise buildings are collapsing.” These statements were deemed to constitute public actions aimed at “discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the context of protecting the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, and of maintaining international peace and security within the framework of demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine.”

On **February 11, 2025**, the occupying judge of the **so-called Dzhankoi District Court, Eduard Pikula, found Liliia Tsarenok guilty** of committing an administrative offence under p. 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation and imposed a fine of 30,000 rubles.

“On December 30, 2024, in the course of the police action “Surveillance” in the office [number], located at [address], Ms. Tsarenok was identified to have published information in the form of pictures on her Instagram page under the name [username] aimed at public discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, maintaining international peace and security in the framework of demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine, thus committing an offense under p. 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation.”

On **May 15, 2024**, the occupying judge of the **so-called Rozdolne District Court, Aleksandr Abeliashhev, found Seidamet Karabaiev guilty** of committing an administrative offense under p. 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation and imposed a fine of 40,000 rubles.

“On [date], at 9 pm, being at [address], Mr. Karabaiev, using an audio speaker, publicly broadcast a recording of Verka Serduchka’s song with the words “Ukraine has not yet fallen” to an unspecified audience during the special military operation, thereby committing public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, and thus committing an administrative offense, liability for which is provided for in p. 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation.”

On **March 18, 2024**, the occupying judge of the **so-called Yalta City Court, Oksana Kuleshova, found Inna Nosyk guilty** of committing an administrative offense under p. 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation and imposed a fine of 40,000 rubles.

“On [date], at 12:07 pm, while at the vote center [number] at [address], Ms. Nosyk wrote “Occupiers, go away!!!”, “Waiting for the AFU”, and “Go to hell!!!” with the help of a blue marker on the ballot paper for voting in the election of the President of the Russian Federation, and also made two drawings of the Ukrainian flag with blue and yellow markers, which she publicly demonstrated, which indicates that Ms. Nosyk committed public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, to maintain international peace and security in a special military operation conducted by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.”

CRIMINAL PUNISHMENTS

After the full-scale invasion had started, the number of criminal prosecutions of pro-Ukrainian activists also increased significantly. **As of March 2026**, the Mission has documented the following:

At least **143** individuals have been subjected to **persecution on religious grounds**. Persecution of believers who are not under the control of Russian authorities forms part of Russia's policy of "centralizing religious life and marginalizing disloyal communities".

75 cases of criminal persecution related to **the so-called high treason** have been recorded in occupied Crimea.

12 cases of criminal persecution have been recorded against individuals for **"discrediting the Russian army."**

The data presented indicate that the occupying judicial system in Crimea functions primarily as a mechanism of mass political persecution. A key instrument is Article 275 of the Russian Criminal Code (high treason), which accounts for more than half of all political cases (56%) and is applied in full secrecy in 100% of cases. The sharp increase in 2024–2025 (60 cases over two years compared to 9 cases in 2021–2023) points to a significant escalation in the scale of repression. The application of these provisions of the Russian Criminal Code to the civilian population in occupied Crimea constitutes a gross violation of Articles 64–67 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibit the extension of the occupier's legislation to the civilian population of the occupied territory.

The Mission notes that the occupying administrations in Crimea tend to initiate criminal proceedings for high treason or extremist activities, which result in longer prison sentences. In contrast, similar cases in the Russian Federation are usually handled as administrative proceedings.

CASES

Article 280.2

On February 19, 2026, 53-year-old Vitalii Buryk, who had been unlawfully detained on October 9 in Kerch, was sentenced to six years in a penal colony for "organizing the activities of a religious association or other organization in respect of which a court decision on liquidation or prohibition due to extremism has entered into force." It is important to note that Buryk is the father of a daughter with Down syndrome.

This case reflects a broader pattern of repression that also targeted religious communities, particularly Jehovah's Witnesses. Occupying authorities conducted searches and detentions and imposed preventive measures such as house arrest, continuing to criminalize freedom of religion in occupied Crimea.

Article 148

On **February 20, 2026**, the occupying judge **Sergei Pogrebniak** of the so-called Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea began proceedings against **Valerii Shevchuk**, marking a new practice in the occupying courts. Shevchuk was charged under p. 1 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which establishes liability for “public actions expressing clear disrespect for society and committed with the intent to offend the religious feelings of believers”. This is the first recorded case of its kind in occupied Crimea, highlighting the use of Article 148 as a novel instrument by the occupying authorities to prosecute individuals. He was also charged under p.1 of Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

Earlier, Valerii Shevchuk was held administratively liable, fined under Articles 20.1(3) and 20.3.3(1) of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation, and briefly arrested for publicly displaying prohibited symbols, including images associated with the Right Sector. These measures preceded his conviction under Article 280 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, for which he was sentenced to 5 years and 10 days in a penal colony for allegedly posting YouTube comments calling for violent actions against Russians.

Article 207.3

On **November 11, 2025**, **Kateryna Fomenko** was found guilty under point “d” of p. 2 of Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation for allegedly “spreading false information about the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.” According to the occupying authorities, in July 2024 the woman posted messages in a messenger application which, according to the investigation, “led to the discrediting and undermining of the credibility of the Russian army.” The so-called court sentenced her to **five years and six months of imprisonment** and prohibited her from publishing materials online for two years.

Prior to this, on June 26, 2025, Fomenko had been twice found administratively liable under Article 20.3.1 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation.

Article 280.3

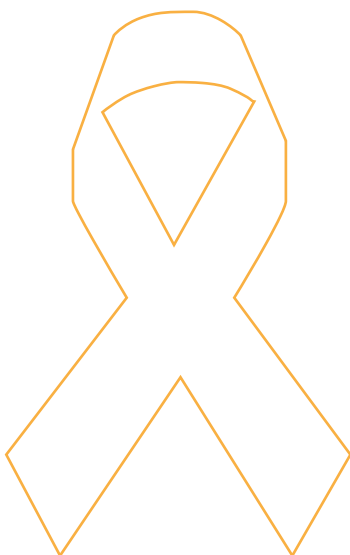
On **August 14, 2025**, the occupying judge of the so-called **Feodosiya District Court** found **Irina Vladymyrova** guilty for allegedly carrying out public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in order to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens and to maintain international peace and security, including public calls to hinder the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in these purposes under p. 1 of Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code.

This case follows previous administrative sanctions: Vladymyrova had already been held administratively liable under Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation on two occasions, specifically on April 21, 2022, and December 4, 2024. Her actions were subsequently classified under Part 2 of Article 280 of the Criminal Code as “public calls for extremism posted online,” and the investigation remains ongoing.

Article 275

On **September 2, 2024**, 23-year-old **Vladyslav Kysliakov** was detained in Kerch on charges of “high treason.” According to the occupying security forces, in September 2023, Kysliakov established contact with representatives of Ukraine’s Defence Intelligence via a messenger. After that, he allegedly collected and transmitted information about the locations of Russian air defence systems in Kerch. The Russian side claims that this data could have been used to strike at the positions of Russian troops.

On **October 18, 2024**, the occupying judge, **Alla Khinevich**, found **Vladyslav Kysliakov guilty** under Article 275 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and sentenced him to **13 years in a penal colony**, with a further restriction of liberty for 1 year and 6 months.



RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

Civil resistance movements play a crucial role in opposing both occupation and war. As of the beginning of 2025, four movements are consistently, actively, and publicly engaged in resistance efforts.

ATESH¹ is a guerrilla movement operating in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and within Russia. It was founded in September 2022 by Crimean and Ukrainian Tatars in response to Russia's mobilisation campaign in both occupied Ukrainian territories and Russia itself.

The core strategy of ATESH is the internal destabilisation of the Russian military by leveraging indigenous Crimean and Ukrainian Tatars conscripted forcibly into the occupying forces. The movement conducts special sabotage operations against Russian troops and gathers critical intelligence on their activities. According to ATESH representatives, the movement's key accomplishments include:

- establishment of regional ATESH cells in Tatarstan, Siberia, and the formation of a civilian resistance network,
- infiltration of agents into units of the Russian Armed Forces, including within special operations forces,
- disruption and dismantling of heavy military equipment intended for use in combat,
- sabotage of enemy railway infrastructure, impeding Russian military logistics,
- cyberattacks on Russian state electronic systems, in particular, disabling the electronic military summons system (2025).

The **Crimean Combat Seagulls** is a resistance movement formed by Ukrainian citizens in occupied Crimea. While its active operations began following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, many of its members have been engaged in resistance since the occupation in 2014. The movement first became publicly known in September 2022.

At the core of its activities is the promotion of Crimea's de-occupation and the accountability of individuals involved in establishing and maintaining the occupying regime. As an underground resistance network, the Crimean Combat Seagulls continue to challenge Russian control and work toward restoring Ukraine's sovereignty over the peninsula.

¹ Ateş is Crimean Tatar for "flame" or "fire."

The Yellow Ribbon civil resistance movement was established in April 2022 in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Today, it comprises over 10,000 activists from Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions, as well as other temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. It is the most significant resistance movement across all occupied territories, with its most active presence in occupied Crimea, where it has approximately 4,000 members. Since 2022, the Yellow Ribbon has evolved into a robust network that unites thousands of activists across the temporarily occupied regions. Their strong point is digitalization, which enables individuals to stay connected and coordinated, even when separated by hundreds of kilometres.

In 2026, the Yellow Ribbon activists continue to organize acts of resistance in the temporarily occupied territories. These actions are part of the movement's broader efforts to engage in informational resistance against the occupiers, including displaying yellow ribbons, Ukrainian flags, posters, and other patriotic symbols in public spaces, organising protest flash mobs on social media, and gathering intelligence on collaborators.

Zla Mavka² is a women's civil resistance movement operating in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. It was founded in 2022 by three friends from Melitopol following the city's occupation. The idea of establishing an underground women's movement emerged in the lead-up to March 8, symbolising resistance against the occupiers.

Members of Zla Mavka engage in informational resistance by producing and distributing anti-Russian occupation leaflets and gathering intelligence on Russian occupation forces. Their activities also include writing diaries from the occupation, fighting propaganda, spreading truthful news, and holding actions demonstrating Ukrainian identity and traditions against the Russian occupation. It serves as a form of psychological resistance and a means of undermining the occupiers' control. Below are fragments of diaries written by women of different ages and professions, from different cities, who have lived under occupation for varying lengths of time.

"When missiles stop flying from Crimea toward Ukraine, it will be easier for me to breathe."

March 25, 2025,
occupied Crimea

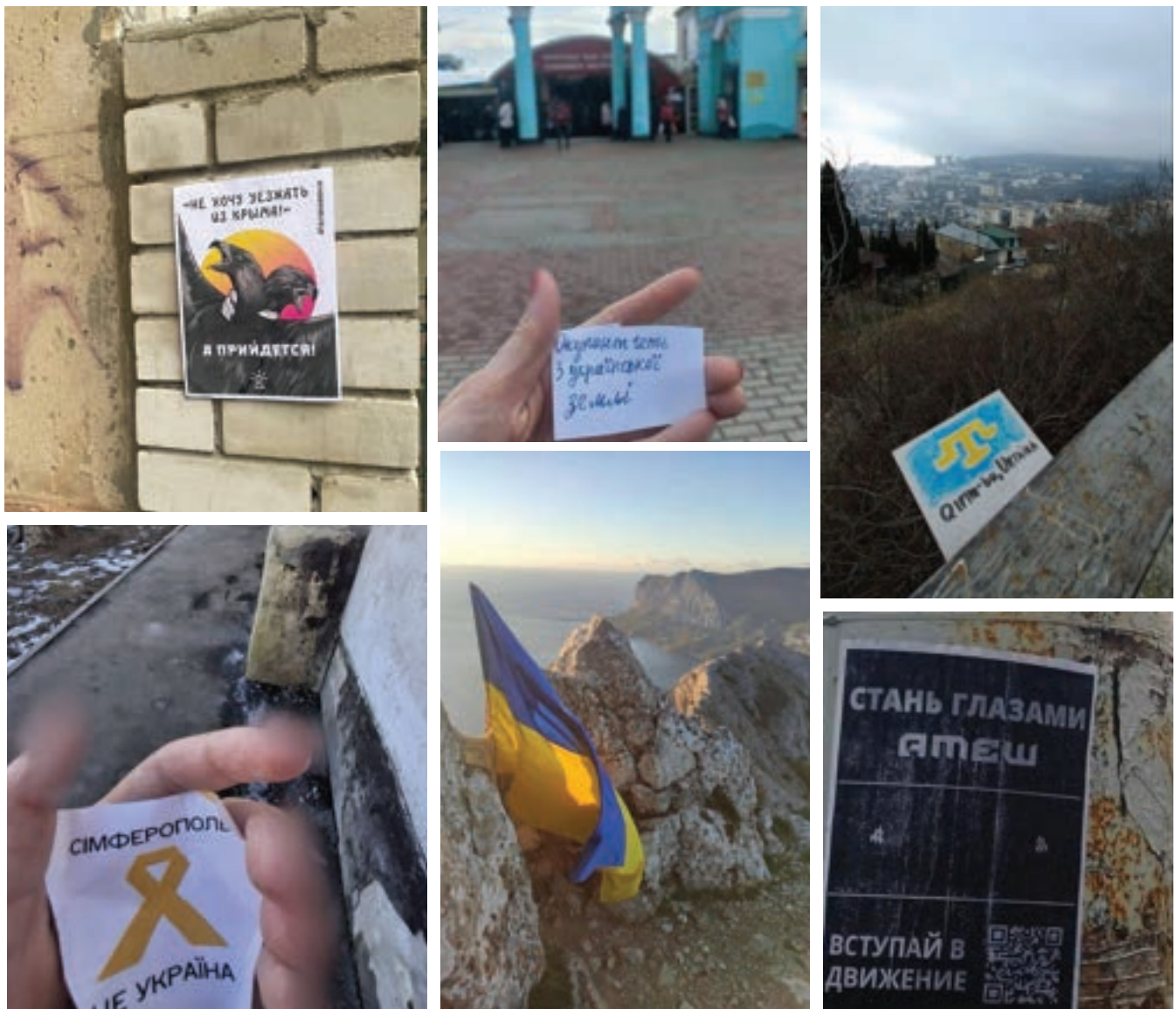
"Every day I walk past a stele with an eagle and the inscription 'Russia is here forever.' And every day, in my thoughts, I erase that 'forever'."

June 12, 2025,
Saky city, occupied Crimea

² Zla Mavka is translated from Ukrainian as "Angry Mavka". In Ukrainian folklore, a Mavka is a mythical creature, often depicted as a spirit of the forest. Mavkas are typically portrayed as young, beautiful women closely connected to nature. However, they can also be dangerous, luring people into the forest with their charm.

In 2024, the First Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, Nariman Dzhelyal, and 26-year-old Crimean Tatar Leniie Umerova were released from Russian captivity and returned to Ukrainian-controlled territory. In June 2025, journalist Vladyslav Yesypenko was released **after serving his full sentence (4 years)**. He eventually returned to his family in mainland Ukraine via third countries. While some political prisoners have been released after serving their full sentences, several hundred individuals remain unlawfully detained in Russian penal colonies...

Ukraine holds a firm position and will not recognise the occupied territories as Russian, as it would be a violation of international law. The return of all the territories under Ukrainian control is essential for a just and lasting peace. This is not only about land — it is about our people who are awaiting Ukraine's return and resisting the occupation. **Ukraine is fighting for their freedom and, together with international partners, is doing everything possible to bring them home.**





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