

Russia Convicts and Tortures Ukrainian Civilian Women

Systematic detentions of civilians in the occupied territories have been one of the most brutal tools of Russian aggression against Ukraine since 2014. Following the full-scale invasion in 2022, this practice has expanded to an unprecedented scale. As of July 1, 2026, the Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR) has managed to identify the names of **2,592 civilians currently held in captivity**. Among them are **223 civilian women**, while the fate of **another 25 women remains unknown**, as the Russian Federation completely conceals their whereabouts after detention.

The youngest among them is currently 18 years old. Her name is Yulia Buievets, detained in March 2026 in the occupied city of Volnovakha, Donetsk Oblast. The oldest is 73-year-old Vira Hryhorivna Hella, a resident of occupied Berdyansk, Zaporizhzhia Oblast.

Those detained include activists, journalists, teachers, medical workers, relatives of military personnel, and ordinary civilians who refused to cooperate with the occupational authorities, demonstrated general dissent against the occupation, or expressed pro-Ukrainian views in private conversations. The practice of detaining civilians under occupation—both men and women — is part of the Russian Federation's systematic policy to suppress or prevent any resistance in the seized territories.

Conditions in Russian prisons are horrific: there is no access to fresh air, medical assistance, or communication with families, and representatives of international monitoring missions are strictly barred. Behind closed doors, civilian detainees, including women, are frequently subjected to torture. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) emphasized in its report that **95% of released Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians reported being subjected to torture** or ill-treatment during their captivity.

This torture frequently leads to death, as was the case with Ukrainian journalist Viktoriya Roshchyna. She was detained by the Russians under occupation in August 2023, and in September 2024, it became known that she died in the SIZO (pre-trial detention center) of Kizel, Perm Krai, as a result of torture. Other Ukrainian women are also being held in the mentioned SIZO, including another journalist of "RIA Melitopol" Anastasiia Hlukhovska.

Right now, Russian prisons also hold 21-year-old Yana Suvorova from Melitopol, who ran the Telegram channel "Melitopol is Ukraine"; Larysa Machylska, a pensioner from Berdyansk who attended peaceful rallies; Esma Nimetulaieva, a Crimean Tatar and mother of five daughters, and many others. The Russian system not only detains these women but also fabricates criminal cases against them for social media posts, donations supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine, or volunteer activities.

"...Maybe I should just sleep for ten years and wake up young..." — these words were written in one of her letters by a Ukrainian woman currently held in captivity by the Russian Federation. Instead of youth and an ordinary life, the occupiers have condemned these women to years of isolation and a slow fading away in captivity.

Initially, the Russian Federation holds civilians in *incommunicado* status (without contact with the outside world). Later, it attempts to "legalize" its actions through unlawful judicial prosecution, convicting civilian women under charges of "espionage," "justification of terrorism," or "high treason." Sentences of **5, 10, and 22 years in prison** have already been documented.

As the practice of returning Ukrainian citizens during prisoner-of-war exchanges shows, the Russian Federation almost never returns women. This situation demands immediate and decisive pressure from the international community, as for many hostages, each subsequent day in captivity could be their last.

Attached to this document is a file containing detailed descriptions of 10 specific cases of Ukrainian women. We know their precise current places of detention because we maintain contact with their families, conduct active advocacy and information campaigns for their release, and seek public "ambassadors" to bring international visibility to these cases.

Additional MIHR Analytics on Related Topics (PDF):

- [Female Captives: An Analysis of Testimonies from Women Released from Captivity](#)
- [Missing Under Occupation](#)
- [Technologies of Terror: A Comparative Analysis of Soviet and Russian Methods of Torture](#)
- [Crime Scene: Chongar](#)

The Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR) is a Ukrainian human rights NGO established in 2016. It systematically investigates war crimes and other human rights violations resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian war. Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale aggression, MIHR has become a leading center for documenting and investigating international crimes committed by the Russian Federation, including enforced disappearances, unlawful detention of civilians, violations of the rights of prisoners of war, torture, and the denial of the right to a fair trial.

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