

Activists publish list of Ukrainian civilians abducted by Russian forces as part of campaign to free 'The Taken'

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A leading Ukrainian human rights organisation, Human Rights Centre Zmina, has today published a list of civilians that have been abducted by the Russian government and is demanding for their immediate release. Zmina alleges that the Russian government is responsible for targeted abductions to silence key voices and intimidate Ukrainian civilians.



Tetiana Pechonchyk, head of Zmina, said: “Russia is detaining and disappearing civilians in an attempt to break the spirit of the Ukrainian people. They aren’t soldiers – they are journalists, activists, volunteers, community representatives, elected officials and council workers. Their number grows daily. Today we are publishing our first list of those who have been taken so the Kremlin knows the world is watching and will not allow them to come to harm. In total we have so far documented 39 cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions in the Ukrainian territories newly occupied by Russia. We ask everyone to join us in sending a message to Moscow – we know who you have taken and we will not forget their names.”

On Monday 28th March, Zmina organised a Day of Action, on which political leaders and celebrities would take to social media to post the names and faces of the abductees and demand their immediate release. Zmina wants everyone across the world to join in and share these names and faces and call for them to be freed.

In Lviv, Ukraine, Zmina hosted an event where the faces of the abductees were be projected onto the side of a building, their names read out and a demand made for their immediate release.

Oleh Baturin, a journalist from Kherson region, was taken and arbitrarily detained for eight days on his way to meet a friend at a bus stop. He was released on 20th March. He said: “I was beaten up, humiliated, threatened. They told me they would kill me. I had almost no food, no water for several days. They wanted to break me down, crush me. They wanted to show me what will happen to other journalists: you will be crushed. You will be killed.”

Hugh Williamson, director for Europe and Central Asia division, Human Rights Watch said: “These allegations are extremely disturbing. Since 2014, HRW has documented numerous cases of Russia-backed armed groups in Donbas holding civilians in prolonged, arbitrary detention. Some of these constituted enforced disappearances. The Russian authorities should abide by international law and free arbitrarily detained civilians immediately.”

People who want to join in with the Day of Action are being encouraged to post the graphic attached to this release on their

social media accounts along with the following suggested text:

Putin can't take Ukraine so he's taking its people. Dozens of civilians are missing and thousands more deported to Russia. These people have names and faces. Please share them and demand their safe return. Ask @KremlinRussia_E 'Where are the taken?' #TheTaken

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