



**NO STATUS – NO RIGHTS:
what prevents victims of unlawful deprivation of personal liberty from
receiving social protection**

Analytical review of requests for legal aid to the ORPC during February 2024 – February 2025.

Kyiv - 2025



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Summary

Analytical report by the NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners” "No status, no rights: What prevents victims of unlawful deprivation of personal liberty from receiving social protection" covers the key challenges faced by Ukrainian citizens who have been unlawfully deprived of their personal liberty as a result of the Russian Federation's armed aggression, and their families.

The study focuses on the fates of people who found themselves in a legal vacuum after their release. Based on 200 consultations provided by the organization's legal service during the year, it highlights systemic problems regarding the state's provision of effective and equal access to social and legal protection, rehabilitation, and adequate compensation for this category of persons.

The report formulates a number of systemic recommendations aimed at state authorities and local self-government bodies, and also contains recommendations directly for persons who have been unlawfully deprived of their personal liberty and their family members. In particular, it proposes the introduction of a “single window” model to simplify access to legal, social, medical, and psychological support. It is recommended to improve the regulatory framework regarding the procedure for payments, the status of family members, mechanisms for indexing assistance, and expanding the rights of persons who were not returned during mutual releases. Particular attention is paid to the international component — the report highlights the untapped potential of the institution of the protecting power provided for in the Geneva Conventions. This refers to the importance of a comprehensive approach to the problems of victims, where legal aid is seen not only as a legal instrument but as a social mission to restore dignity and justice. The implementation of the proposed solutions could radically change the situation, restoring trust in the state and ensuring the real restoration of the rights of those who have suffered from Russia's war crimes.



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Systemic support for victims: the role and approaches of the Association

The public organization “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners” was founded in 2017 with the aim of fighting for the release of Ukrainian citizens who were illegally deprived of their liberty as a result of the Russian Federation's armed aggression, as

well as providing support to their families. The Association focuses its activities on achieving profound systemic changes aimed at improving the situation of illegally imprisoned persons and supporting their families. One of the areas of the organization's work is free legal aid. Our specialists provide advice and practical assistance on:

- establishing the fact of deprivation of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, drafting statements;
- obtaining annual state financial assistance for persons who have been deprived of their personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine and their family members (if necessary, preparing applications);
- drafting appeals to state authorities on issues of deprivation of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine;
- preparing appeals to the Global Fund for the purpose of obtaining interim reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence;
- the procedure for applying and submitting an application to the Register of Damages for Ukraine (RD4U);
- actions in case of illegal arrest, enforced disappearance, or abduction of a family member in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and, if needed, preparing statements to state authorities;
- searching for missing persons in the temporarily occupied territories;
- mobilizing persons who have been deprived of their personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine;
- interaction with Ukrainian state authorities in cases of illegal arrest, abduction, or enforced disappearance of a family member in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine;
- social and legal protection of persons who have been deprived of their personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, and their family members.

In addition, the NGO is actively involved in documenting war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the temporarily occupied territories. This helps to draw the attention of the international community to the problems of illegally imprisoned persons and their families and to strengthen advocacy efforts for their release.

Providing legal assistance to persons who have been unlawfully deprived of their personal liberty as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression, and to their family members, is critically important. According to the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe “Missing persons, prisoners of war and civilians in captivity as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine”, as of September 18, 2024, a total of 65,956 people — military and civilians — are considered missing or in captivity. Of these, 50,916 have been officially confirmed as missing based on reliable sources. In reality, the actual number of victims is significantly higher. The Assembly notes with concern that about one-third of the released persons were considered missing until the exchange due to the Russian Federation's refusal to provide timely information about their status, which is a direct violation of international obligations.

From February 24, 2022, to February 2025, according to data published by the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Ukraine managed to return 4,131 people through exchanges and other special operations. Of these, 173 are civilians, including 43 women and 130 men. At the same time, the exact number of Ukrainian citizens held by Russia remains unknown, as the aggressor state conceals this information. Official statistics do not reflect the full picture, which only exacerbates the scale of the tragedy.

Conditions of detention in places of deprivation of liberty in the temporarily occupied territories and in Russia are often inhumane: there have been cases of torture, psychological pressure, and coercion to confess to fabricated crimes. Many civilians face serious legal and social challenges after their release from illegal imprisonment, ranging from restoring documents and obtaining compensation to undergoing rehabilitation. The families of victims and the victims themselves need legal and social support, particularly in matters of social protection, searching for missing persons, and interacting with state institutions.

To analyze the provision of legal support by the Association's specialists, the period from February 2024 to February 2025 was taken into account. The analytical study took into account the number of requests for legal support from the organization, their nature, and the categories of applicants. The main applicants are illegally imprisoned persons and their family members who face problems in obtaining legal status, social benefits, and protection of their rights. The organization's legal team provides support in the process of preparing documents, establishing the facts of illegal imprisonment, and written consultations at the request of applicants.

The legal assistance provided by the organization is not only support for victims, but also an important tool for restoring justice. It allows the families of persons who have been illegally deprived of their personal freedom as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression to receive the necessary assistance, fight for the release of their loved ones, and record human

rights violations for further international legal prosecution of the perpetrators. To ensure standards for the provision of legal assistance, the NGO has approved two strategic documents: the Standard for the Provision of Legal Services (QR code 1) and the Procedure

for the Provision of Legal Services (QR code 2). These documents regulate a set of rules, procedures, and principles that determine the quality and effectiveness of legal services provided to applicants who have applied to the Association.

To obtain information on the effectiveness of legal aid, a survey of recipients was conducted after consultations. In December 2024 and January 2025, a representative of the Association conducted a survey among persons who had sought legal assistance. A total of 28 respondents were surveyed. Information was collected by telephone and via messengers, which made it possible to reach different categories of service recipients in a convenient manner.

The survey results indicate a high level of satisfaction with the consultations: most respondents (27 out of 28) rated the quality of assistance as excellent. This demonstrates the professionalism of the Association's specialists and their ability to communicate effectively with clients. At the same time, not all consultations led to the desired result. For example, Ms. R. reported that she was unable to achieve her goal due to external circumstances (she did not receive a response to her requests), although she considered the consultation itself to be useful.

The survey revealed a pressing need for further legal support due to changes in state structures, procedural instability, and the need for additional explanations. One of the respondents, Mr. R., noted that the situation required a repeat application because the procedure had changed in the authorities to which he intended to submit his documents. In some cases, clients encountered difficulties in the practical implementation of the recommendations. For example, Mr. O. noted that the instructions on how to apply to a state institution lacked specificity, which complicated his further actions.

In addition, the results of the assistance often depend on the individual circumstances of the recipients. Ms. T., despite fulfilling all legal requirements and preparing the necessary documents, was unable to achieve a result due to the inability to locate a relative, which was a decisive factor in the case.

The legal assistance provided by the Association's specialists is distinguished by a high level of humanistic orientation and a focus on real solutions to applicants' problems. Its activities are not limited to formal counseling — the focus is on the person, their personal history, vulnerability, and life circumstances. Assistance is provided taking into account the individual context, which allows the organization to respond effectively to challenges related to political persecution and violations of the rights of relatives of political prisoners.

The organization's specialists work not only in the format of legal support, but also in the format of comprehensive support — from initial consultation to assistance in drafting appeals, accompanying communication with authorities, and engaging other forms of

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protection, including public campaigns and media activity. It is important that the Association's team as a whole is guided by ethical principles, in particular avoiding conflicts of interest, adhering to the principle of transparency, and steadfastly protecting the dignity of

applicants.

Legal assistance is provided in Ukrainian, and all consultations are in writing and in language accessible to people who do not have specialized knowledge in the field of law. This ensures the most informed understanding of one's rights and the prospects of the case. For the Association's specialists, legal assistance is not only a legal procedure but also a social mission aimed at restoring justice, supporting families, and establishing human rights standards in conditions of political pressure.

The organization not only provides legal assistance but also accompanies the process of defending the rights of illegally imprisoned persons at the national and international levels. This includes representing their interests in court, interacting with human rights organizations, monitoring compliance with international standards, and initiating appropriate legal mechanisms to bring to justice those involved in unlawful deprivation of liberty.

Thanks to its comprehensive approach and professional legal support, the organization promotes the restoration of victims' rights, their rehabilitation and social adaptation after release, and protects their interests at the national and international levels through advocacy activities.

The NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners” provides free legal support to persons who have been unlawfully deprived of their personal liberty as a result of the Russian Federation's armed aggression, as well as to their family members. During the reporting period, the organization's legal service provided 200 consultations, of which:

- **2 consultations** or comprehensive support for legal entities;
- **198 consultations** or comprehensive support for individuals, of which: - 78 consultations for persons who were illegally deprived of their personal freedom as a result of the Russian Federation's military aggression;
 - 122 consultations for relatives and close persons who were illegally deprived of their personal freedom as a result of the Russian Federation's military aggression.

A total of 159 beneficiaries required consultations, including 98 women and 61 men. Consultations were provided in both **initial** and **follow-up formats**. This means that applicants initially contacted us **with one question**, but subsequently required further legal support. For example, individuals initially applied to establish the fact of unlawful deprivation of personal liberty, and after some time needed assistance in applying for state support, obtaining compensation, or appealing against the actions or inaction of state bodies. Of the 200 consultations, 42 were repeat consultations.

An analysis of the appeals shows that many applicants needed **long-term support**. The first contact with the legal service often took place at an early stage (after release or in the process of documenting the fact of unlawful deprivation of liberty). Subsequently, as new legal difficulties arose, applicants repeatedly sought assistance.

It is particularly noteworthy that **a number of individuals contacted the organization repeatedly**, confirming the complexity and length of the process of restoring their rights. In cases where the legal situation required additional action (e.g., judicial protection or intervention by state authorities), the organization's lawyers provided support at all stages.

Regarding the applicants' place of residence at the time of application, most of them lived in territory controlled by Ukraine, specifically in the Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions. Most applicants did not indicate their current place of residence due to their unwillingness to disclose this information, which may be due to various reasons, including security concerns, as their relatives may remain in the occupied territories. Some applicants currently reside in other countries.

Cases where applicants found themselves in difficult circumstances due to unlawful deprivation of liberty and forced displacement deserve special attention. The service was

as a prisoner of war. The refusal was based on the fact that the man was not a citizen of Ukraine but had a temporary residence permit. The woman currently lives in St. Petersburg (Russian Federation) and was looking for a lawyer in Ukraine who could help.

Among the applicants are several people who have been released from illegal imprisonment and are currently in third countries, where they are trying to obtain documents certifying them as citizens of Ukraine.

A separate category of applicants consists of persons who have been illegally deprived of their personal liberty as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression since 2014 (mostly residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), i.e., before the start of the full-scale invasion. These are mainly political prisoners whose prison terms have already expired or are about to expire. Such persons face a number of challenges, including the need to renew their documents and organize their return to Ukraine. To facilitate their reintegration, legal assistance is provided, including the preparation of appeals to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Coordination Headquarters, the Consular Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.

These appeals highlight the importance of legal assistance for persons affected by armed conflict, in particular those who have been illegally detained or whose freedom is currently restricted.

A significant problem in obtaining legal assistance is that some of the victims and their families are abroad. People who have been forced to leave Ukraine due to threats to their lives or persecution often face limited opportunities to obtain legal support. The main challenges are the complexity of accessing Ukrainian state authorities, difficulties in collecting the necessary documents, uncertain legal status in the countries of residence, and a lack of financial resources to resolve legal issues. Remote counseling and documentary support require adaptation to international legal mechanisms, which complicates the process of providing assistance. The NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners” is working to address these challenges by providing remote legal support to those outside Ukraine.

Given the trends in appeals, it can be concluded that there is a need to further strengthen legal support, particularly in matters relating to the documentation of victims' status, social rehabilitation, and judicial appeals against unlawful decisions by state authorities.

NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners”

It is extremely important to study and analyze the issues that individuals who have been illegally deprived of their personal freedom as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression, and their family members, bring to the Association for legal support, as it is on this basis that it is possible to identify common problems that are systemic and need to be resolved by amending legislation or introducing new mechanisms for obtaining assistance.

The most common issues on which the Association's specialists provided consultations between February 2024 and February 2025 were as follows:

Establishing the fact of deprivation of personal liberty (accounting for more than 60% of consultations during the year). Applicants were interested in the procedure for establishing the fact of deprivation of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine and the collection of the necessary documents for applying to the Interdepartmental Commission. Based on the results of such appeals, the organization's specialists develop a strategy for proving the fact of unlawful deprivation of personal liberty, advise on the algorithm of actions for establishing the fact, and sources for obtaining supporting documents.

Searching for the whereabouts of civilians who were illegally deprived of their liberty (15% of consultations per year). The legal service provided recommendations on the algorithm of actions in case of deprivation of personal liberty of family members, including in the temporarily occupied territories.

Writing statements and appeals (approximately 10% of consultations per year). For example, a strategy of action was developed and a statement (+ a package of accompanying documents) was prepared for Mr. O. to the Ministry for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine to establish the fact of unlawful deprivation of liberty.

Other issues, in particular requests for state financial assistance for persons who were unlawfully imprisoned or their families, including: consultations on obtaining assistance from international funds and organizations; consultations on obtaining deferment from military service for persons who have been recognized as having been illegally imprisoned; preparation of written consultations with application forms attached for further submission to the relevant authorities; consultations on social protection issues provided for by the Law of Ukraine " On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Who Have Been Deprived of Their Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, and Members of Their Families"; provision of information on existing specialized rehabilitation and social adaptation programs.

We would like to note that in addition to the main issue, additional recommendations are provided during the legal consultation, for example, regarding participation in the Global Fund program for interim reparations to victims of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). According to feedback from one of the applicants, who is a victim of CSV, received after the

consultation, he has already received appropriate assistance in accordance with the recommendation of the Association's lawyer.

All persons who contacted the organization's legal service were provided with primary legal assistance, and some applicants contacted specialists again with other questions. Upon completion of the oral consultation, written documents were prepared containing answers to the applicants' legal questions.

As part of the consultations, algorithms of actions were provided for:

- filing reports of war crimes with law enforcement agencies;
- establishing the fact of unlawful deprivation of personal liberty as a result of Russian aggression;
- obtaining monetary compensation in accordance with state programs;
- using the opportunities offered by pilot projects for the payment of urgent reparations to victims;
- searching for missing persons under special circumstances.

In addition, during legal consultations, the applicant may be put in touch with other human rights organizations and given recommendations on how to contact support centers for victims of war crimes.

Applicants were advised on the algorithm of actions in case of detection or arrest of their parents, as well as on the procedure for interacting with state authorities. In many cases, relatives know the place of detention of their loved ones, but do not have information about which institutions to contact for legal protection and further response. As part of the consultations, recommendations were provided on how to contact the relevant state authorities, in particular law enforcement agencies, the National Information Bureau (NIB), the Coordination Headquarters (KSH), the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), and other relevant institutions. In addition, applicants were provided with contacts of international organizations dealing with issues of illegal detention and human rights violations, which allows relatives to receive additional support.

Among the applicants are several individuals who were released either as part of mutual releases or after completing their prison terms before the full-scale invasion began. Their parents received financial assistance during their illegal detention, and some of them received a one-time payment after their release in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 328 of April 18, 2018. However, some of these individuals do not have a positive decision regarding the established fact of deprivation of personal liberty as a

result of the Russian Federation's aggression. In such cases, the organization's specialists accompany the applicant to submit an application to the authorized body to establish the fact.

One such case was an applicant's request for guidance on the procedure for obtaining state financial assistance for her husband, who was illegally imprisoned in the temporarily occupied territory of the Kherson region. It was established that the applicant's husband had been illegally detained and that his sister had previously filed a report with law enforcement agencies about his abduction. The status of the case is currently unknown to the family. After his release, the man did not contact law enforcement agencies. The legal service recommended contacting law enforcement agencies to clarify the status of the case, filing a report of a war crime, and explained the steps to take to establish the fact of deprivation of liberty due to armed aggression and the procedure for obtaining state financial assistance (QR code 3). We recommended that she take advantage of the pilot project for the payment of urgent reparations and contact victim assistance centers, providing her with the relevant contacts. Based on the consultation, written recommendations were prepared, including application forms, and sent to the applicant.

Another case involved an applicant who reported the loss of property in the Kharkiv region and the need to restore contact with her husband, who is in a colony in Mordovia. A course of action was developed and communicated to the applicant along with recommendations, taking into account the specifics of the case.

Another case concerned the abduction of a person in the temporarily occupied territory. The applicant sought information on what to do in a situation of abduction and how to verify her own actions when her husband was abducted in Crimea. In response, the legal service explained the algorithm of actions in such situations, provided a list of authorities to contact, and prepared a statement to the Ministry of Reintegration on establishing the fact of deprivation of liberty (the consultation was provided in December 2024). Based on the consultation, written recommendations were provided with application forms for the applicant to use in her further appeals.

Consultations were also sought on obtaining a deferral from conscription during mobilization for persons in respect of whom a decision had been made to establish the fact of deprivation of personal liberty. At the time of consideration of some such requests, there is no approved mechanism for implementing the relevant provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On Mobilization Preparation and Mobilization," which creates legal uncertainty for applicants. As part of the provision of legal assistance, explanations are provided on the current legislation, as well as recommendations on collecting the necessary documents for applying to territorial recruitment and social support centers. In particular, persons planning to obtain a deferral are advised to obtain an extract from the Unified Register of Persons Deprived of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression against Ukraine. This facilitates the proper documentation of their legal status and the further defense of their rights.

Among the requests received in January and February 2025, there were repeated appeals from citizens related to the reorganization of state authorities responsible for

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establishing the fact of deprivation of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine. The lack of clear information about changes in the structure of the responsible agencies creates difficulties for applicants in the process of submitting documents. As part of the legal support provided to applicants, relevant explanations were given regarding the transfer of powers from the Commission on the Establishment of the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty from the Ministry for the Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories to the Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine. A new application form has been approved in accordance with Order No. 76 of the Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine dated January 21, 2025.

Legal assistance includes explaining the procedure for submitting an application to the Commission, providing the current form of the document, and instructions for filling it out. The organization's lawyer independently develops or prepares documents at the applicant's request. In cases where applicants have already prepared documents according to the old requirements, it is recommended to make the necessary adjustments, taking into account changes in the name and subordination of the state body. This helps to reduce the risk of applications being rejected and ensures that the documents submitted comply with the current requirements of the law.

There are frequent cases of applicants requesting that their relatives be included in so-called “exchange lists.” The organization's specialists provide written advice on the algorithm of actions, which includes contacting the authorized body—the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War—as well as collecting and summarizing information about prisoners, and the transfer of data on relatives to law enforcement agencies, international monitoring missions, and organizations is carried out by the National Information Bureau, which operates in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions. To facilitate the exchange and return of prisoners to Ukraine, it is necessary to maintain regular contact with the Coordination Headquarters and the National Information Bureau, update information about the prisoner through the personal account of the Coordination Headquarters, and report any new information to the investigating authorities regarding changes in health status, new evidence, or any details that may contribute to the release process. It is important to inform international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

A separate problem is situations where individuals who were illegally deprived of their personal liberty as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression continue to face legal restrictions and obstacles to returning to their homeland after serving their sentences. In some cases, despite the end of their detention, individuals are subject to additional administrative restrictions that prohibit them from moving freely, require them to report to supervisory authorities, and impose other restrictions that effectively prolong their unlawful persecution.

Situations of this kind create serious obstacles to their return to Ukraine, especially in cases where they do not have valid identity documents. The need for legal assistance and international support remains critical.

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Mr. O., who was recognized as a political prisoner of the Russian Federation by the Memorial Human Rights Center, appealed to the Association for help in entering Ukraine. After serving his sentence, the occupying authorities allowed him to move around the Russian Federation with the permission of the supervisory authorities, but he managed to move to Moscow and then, with the help of volunteers, escape from the Russian Federation to the Republic of Armenia via Minsk. At the time of providing assistance, Mr. O. was in Yerevan, Armenia, but was unable to return to Ukraine due to the lack of valid documents certifying his identity as a Ukrainian citizen. The Association's lawyers are working to ensure that the man can return to his homeland.

An additional challenge is the need to provide legal assistance to persons who are illegally detained in the Russian Federation. In fact, the only effective mechanism for protecting such persons is to conclude an agreement with a Russian lawyer, which provides for payment of services by relatives or other third parties. Ukrainian legislation guarantees reimbursement of legal aid costs in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Who Have Been Deprived of Their Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, and Members of Their Families.” However, the compensation mechanism has significant difficulties in implementation, as it requires the submission of documentary evidence of payments made.

Mr. S., who was provided with relevant legal advice, encountered these difficulties. However, it should be noted that this is indeed a problematic issue. In particular, due to the impossibility of making financial transfers directly from Ukrainian banks to accounts in another country, individuals are forced to use alternative mechanisms for transferring funds through third countries or individuals, which complicates the documentation of transactions. Additional difficulties arise from the need to confirm the exchange rate at the time of payment and to submit a report on the work performed and a contract with a lawyer. Despite the existence of a legal mechanism for reimbursement of defense costs, its implementation in practice is significantly complicated and requires improvement of regulatory framework.

Recommendations for persons who have been unlawfully deprived of their liberty as a result of Russian aggression, and their relatives, on effective access to legal aid

Unlawful deprivation of personal liberty as a result of Russian aggression is a serious human rights violation that requires careful documentation and proper legal assistance. Persons who have survived unlawful detention, as well as their relatives, face numerous difficulties in restoring their rights and obtaining state assistance. It is important to know what steps to take to establish legal status, obtain social support, and appeal to national and international human rights bodies. These recommendations will help victims to act effectively in conditions of legal uncertainty and ensure adequate protection of their rights. Following this advice will contribute to the restoration of justice and social integration of victims.

Keeping all available documents confirming the fact of unlawful deprivation of liberty is key to obtaining legal status and social assistance in the future. Relevant materials may include court decisions, certificates, official notifications from state authorities, and eyewitness testimony. In the absence of official documents, it is important to record important information, in particular about the place of detention and conditions of detention.

Appeals to state authorities should be made in writing and sent by registered mail or through official electronic channels — this allows you to record the fact of the appeal. In case of inaction, it is worth contacting human rights or international organizations.

Establishing the official status of a person who has been unlawfully deprived of their liberty requires submitting an application to the Commission for the Establishment of the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty under the Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine. Obtaining an extract from the Unified Register of Persons Deprived of Liberty is necessary to access state support.

If a person was released independently, outside the “exchange” procedure, the

Association has developed a specific algorithm of actions that will help the person collect evidence, fill out an application, and successfully submit it to the Commission on the Establishment of the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression against Ukraine (QR code 4), created under the Ministry for the Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine (since December 2024 — the Ministry of National Unity).

We recommend filling out the questionnaire (QR code 5) on the website of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which was created to collect information about civilians who have become victims of illegal deprivation of liberty as a result of armed aggression by the Russian Federation. Filling it out helps state bodies and human rights organizations identify victims, document facts of illegal detention, and provide the necessary legal assistance. The questionnaire can be filled out by the victims themselves, who have already been released, as well as their relatives or legal representatives if the person is still in captivity or missing. When filling out the questionnaire, you need to provide basic information about the victim: their full name, date of birth, contact details, and place of

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residence prior to their abduction. It is important to describe the circumstances of the detention in detail: the date, place, possible witnesses, and conditions of detention. If the person is being held illegally, you should indicate whether any appeals have already been made to law enforcement agencies or international organizations. You can attach copies of documents confirming the fact of illegal deprivation of liberty to the questionnaire, such as appeals to the police, responses from state authorities, or medical certificates. To fill out the questionnaire, follow the link to Google Forms, carefully enter the necessary data, attach documents, check the accuracy of the information before sending, and save a copy or take a screenshot of the confirmation of submission. Filling out the questionnaire is an important step in ensuring legal protection for victims and documenting war crimes.

To exercise your right to social assistance, you should check whether you are eligible for financial support under existing programs. If necessary, you can contact the competent authorities to obtain compensation for unlawful detention.

Legal assistance can be obtained free of charge through the NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners” or other human rights organizations. In complex cases, it is recommended to engage lawyers to represent your interests in national and international courts.

If it is impossible or ineffective to resolve the issue at the national level, it is advisable to contact international human rights organizations: the UN, the OSCE, or the European Court of Human Rights. Legal service specialists from the NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners” can help with appeals.

For persons abroad, it is important to find out about the legal aid mechanisms available in the country of residence and to contact Ukrainian diplomatic missions. If necessary, submit a request for the restoration of documents through consular offices.

In addition to legal issues, it is worth paying attention to psychological support and rehabilitation. Those who have survived illegal imprisonment can take advantage of specialized rehabilitation and social adaptation programs that will help them return to normal life.

Following these recommendations will facilitate effective access to legal assistance, the restoration of the rights of persons who have been illegally deprived of their liberty, and their integration into society.

Recommendations to state authorities and local self-government bodies

Persons who have been unlawfully deprived of their liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine face a range of legal and social problems after their release, as evidenced by the nature of appeals to the legal support service of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners.” Obtaining assistance for them is often complicated by bureaucratic obstacles, the need to apply to various authorities, and the lack of clear coordination between state institutions. Given these challenges, the introduction of a “single

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window” mechanism is an appropriate and necessary solution to simplify access to legal, social, medical, and psychological assistance.

The main problems faced by persons who have been unlawfully deprived of their personal liberty and their family members are:

Fragmentation of services — currently, assistance is provided by various agencies: the police, the Ministry of Justice, social services, medical institutions, human rights organizations, etc. The lack of a single center significantly complicates the process of obtaining the necessary services.

Bureaucratic obstacles — persons returning from illegal imprisonment are forced to independently contact several institutions, which requires collecting a significant amount of documents and spending time. Many of them do not have the necessary documents due to the conditions of detention or loss during abduction.

Lack of awareness — relatives of victims often do not know where to turn for legal support, what assistance they can count on, and where to obtain it.

Psychological and medical consequences of illegal imprisonment — prolonged detention, torture, and other human rights violations can cause serious physical and psychological trauma, requiring a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation.

The introduction of a “single window” will provide simplified access to all necessary services, as victims and their families will be able to receive comprehensive support in one place without having to make multiple visits to different institutions. This will contribute to the optimization of the work of state bodies, as the centralization of the assistance process will allow for better coordination between agencies, reduce the burden on individual services,

and increase the efficient use of resources.

The implementation of this mechanism will improve the effectiveness of responses to victims' requests through clear interaction between state structures, law enforcement agencies, international partners, and civil society organizations. In addition, the “single window” will promote human rights protection and social rehabilitation, as its operation will ensure faster adaptation of persons who have been illegally imprisoned to peaceful life.

The “single window” format may include both offline assistance centers in the regions, where victims can personally seek support, and an online platform that will enable them to submit applications, receive consultations, and check the status of their cases. Within the framework of this mechanism, it is necessary to provide legal support, in particular assistance in completing applications and documents and granting victim status, access to social services, including the restoration of documents, the provision of material assistance, and assistance in finding employment. Psychological support, rehabilitation, medical examination, and treatment will be additional important components. Establishing the facts of human rights violations and preparing evidence for further legal proceedings will play a separate role. The introduction of a “single window” will greatly simplify the process of

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obtaining assistance for persons who have been illegally imprisoned, increase the efficiency of state bodies, and promote respect for human rights. It is advisable for state and local authorities to initiate the creation of a working mechanism at the central and regional levels and to involve civil society organizations and international partners in the process.

Protecting the rights of Ukrainian citizens who have been unlawfully deprived of their liberty as a result of armed aggression is a priority for the state. One of the effective mechanisms of international humanitarian law for ensuring this protection is the institution of a protecting power, provided for by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. This institution allows a neutral state to monitor the observance of the rights of persons under protection, in particular by visiting their places of detention and monitoring their conditions of detention. However, in three years of full-scale war, this mechanism has not been used.

In view of this, it is recommended that:

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine:

1.1. Intensify diplomatic efforts to appoint a protecting power. Ukraine should initiate negotiations with neutral states regarding their willingness to perform the functions of a protecting power for Ukrainian citizens illegally detained on the territory of the aggressor state. At the same time, it is necessary to seek the consent of the state holding Ukrainian citizens for the appointment of a protecting power, as provided for in the Geneva Conventions.

1.2. Expand cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In cases where the appointment of a protecting power is impossible, the ICRC can perform its

functions. It is necessary to strengthen cooperation with the ICRC to ensure access for its representatives to places where Ukrainian citizens are being held, which will facilitate monitoring of their conditions of detention and observance of their rights.

2. Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine:

2.1. Initiate amendments to legislation to expand the list of persons eligible for medical, psychological, and rehabilitation assistance, stipulating that the right to rehabilitation and assistance is granted to the released persons themselves and their family members. Proof that a person needs rehabilitation may be confirmation from a family doctor, a doctor from a clinic providing assistance to released persons (victims of torture), public organizations that have long been working in this area with such persons, etc. This may take the form of appeals, for example, from these organizations to institutions that provide medical, psychological assistance, and rehabilitation.

2.2. Amend the Procedure for the Appointment and Payment of Assistance to Persons Who Have Been Deprived of Their Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against

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Ukraine and Their Family Members by adding a provision stipulating that financial assistance is subject to indexation.

2.3. Amend the Procedure for the appointment and payment of assistance to persons who have been deprived of their personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, and to members of their families, by adding a provision whereby annual financial assistance is paid to family members of persons deprived of their personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, in particular to the spouse (husband or wife), and in the absence of the spouse (husband or wife), to adult children living with the person, or to the legal representatives or adoptive parents of the children (persons with disabilities since childhood, regardless of their age) of such a person, as well as to persons who are dependent on persons deprived of their personal liberty, or parents in equal shares, if the person deprived of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine is not married and has no children. In the absence of these persons, annual assistance may be received by the siblings, grandparents, and grandchildren of the person deprived of personal freedom as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine.

2.4. Develop a procedure for civilians released due to the end of their illegal imprisonment to receive emergency financial, medical, psychological, and other types of assistance to ensure that they can take advantage of urgent support immediately upon their return, without waiting for the Commission on the Establishment of the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Freedom as a Result of Armed Aggression against Ukraine to establish the relevant fact.

2.5. Amend the relevant regulatory and legal acts, linking the amount of annual financial assistance to objective factors: the minimum wage or the subsistence minimum.

2.6. Initiate amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Who Have Been Deprived of Their Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, and Members of Their Families” regarding the list of benefits that may be received by family members of persons who have been deprived of their personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, in particular to provide for the possibility of receiving housing subsidies for the duration of one family member's illegal imprisonment.

2.7. Initiate amendments to Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Who Have Been Deprived of Their Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, and Members of Their Families” in terms of extending the scope of the law to all civilian citizens of Ukraine who have been unlawfully deprived of their personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine.

2.8. Bring the Regulations on the Commission for Establishing the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty 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 (as amended on January 14, 2025), in accordance with the provisions of the current Law “On Administrative Procedure,” which will eliminate conflicts between regulatory acts and bring Ukrainian legislation closer to the standards of European Union countries, where unified

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rules of administrative procedures are in force. In particular, include: precise and reasonable deadlines for consideration of applications; hearing applicants and their representatives who wish to be heard; ensuring maximum assistance in collecting the necessary documents for consideration of the applicant's application.

3. Ministry of Health of Ukraine:

3.1. Take measures to effectively provide medical, rehabilitation, and psychological assistance to persons unlawfully deprived of their liberty.

3.2. Implement the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in its resolution adopted on October 2, 2024, “Missing persons, prisoners of war, and civilians in captivity as a result of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine.” PACE stresses the importance of appropriate rehabilitation programs for released prisoners and detainees, calling for international cooperation to provide the necessary financial and expert resources.

4. Local authorities in the regions should facilitate the creation of housing for the temporary accommodation of persons who have been deprived of their personal liberty as a result of the armed aggression against Ukraine.

The implementation of these recommendations will contribute to strengthening the protection of the rights of Ukrainian citizens who have been unlawfully deprived of their liberty and will ensure that Ukraine fulfills its obligations under international humanitarian law.

QR codes, useful links, and contacts



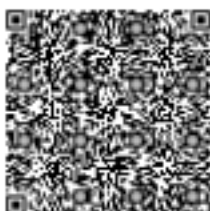
1. Standard for providing legal services to applicants at the NGO
“Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners.”



2. Procedure for providing legal services (legal assistance) to applicants by
lawyers of the NGO “Association of Relatives of Kremlin Political Prisoners.”



3. Algorithm of actions to establish the fact of unlawful deprivation of
liberty for civilians who were released independently, outside the exchange
procedure.



4. Algorithm of actions to establish the fact of unlawful deprivation of liberty
for civilians who were released independently, outside the exchange procedure.



5. Questionnaire for a released defender from the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War.



You can request legal support from the Association by filling out the form at this QR code.

If you have additional questions about our support and how to receive it, please contact us at these contacts:

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