



Latest update date 19 July 2021

## Pickets in Moscow and St. Petersburg for exchange of prisoners in “everyone for everyone” format

Informal union

All actors • Russia

### ***Official position/function in relation to the conflict***

Russian civil activists have consistently advocated the exchange of prisoners of war between Russia and Ukraine. The large exchange did not take place for a long time, not least, because the very fact of the exchange would mean that Russia would recognize the participation of its military servants in hostilities. [A massive public campaign in Russia for the exchange began after the new President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, on the day after his election, “called the release of all Ukrainian prisoners his number one task as President.”](#) In June 2018, the [Ombudsperson of the Russian Federation Tatyana Moskalkova reported that up to 400 Russian citizens are imprisoned in Ukraine, which gave new meaning to civil actions.](#)

### ***Actions in relation to the conflict region***

As soon as it became clear that Ukraine had the political will to exchange all the detainees, non-fixed-term pickets began in Moscow and other Russian cities demanding the exchange of prisoners. In Moscow, pickets were held at the reception office of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at metro stations, and on various streets of the city. [In St. Petersburg, on Nevsky Prospekt and Sadovaya Street. In general,](#)

[according to activists, these pickets were held for more than 300 days.](#)

[On 29 January 2019, the picket participants collected and handed over to the President of the Russian Federation petitions of citizens of the Russian Federation who are in Ukrainian prisons, with their request to the President of the Russian Federation to exchange them for prisoners - citizens of Ukraine who are imprisoned in Russia.](#)

On 10 October 2018, the picket participants handed over 60,000 signatures demanding an exchange to the Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights under the President of the Russian Federation.

The time proved that the actions of civil activists who fought for the exchange of detainees in Russia, Ukraine, and in many other countries had their effect. In 2019, a series of exchanges of detainees took place (in September 2019, as part of the exchange, 24 sailors who were detained as a result of the incident in the Kerch Strait returned to Ukraine). The next big exchange took place in December 2019, another one in April 2020.