



**Displacement of Ukrainian
citizens to the Russian Federation
during the war:
how can we help these people?**

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Good afternoon friends!

I am glad to see Russian and Ukrainian human rights activists, both those whom I know personally and those whom I don't know. Meetings during the war evoke special emotions. I am sincerely glad that we are alive and free. We in Ukraine are losing our friends, acquaintances, and neighbours. We can no longer help those who died. But we are also losing those who were taken to Russia. We must try to help these people. Those who want to return or travel to another country.

Since the beginning of the war, about 1.3 million people have been resettled to the Russian Federation, according to the Russian side. The Russian authorities call it an evacuation from dangerous areas. There is no exact data on how many Ukrainians were displaced without their consent. The head of the Committee on Humanitarian and Information Policy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Nikita Poturaev, said on April 20, 2022 that there are 500,000 such people. In any case, this figure has increased, because every day, on average, 7-10,000 people are taken to the Russian Federation. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 prohibit the massive forcible transfer of civilians during a conflict into the territory of an occupying power. Such displacement of people qualifies as a war crime. The Russian authorities deny the violent nature of the displacement of people.

At least 200,000 of these displaced people have Russian passports. These are residents of the territories of Ukraine occupied since 2014.

The displacement of people from Ukraine to the Russian Federation was like an avalanche. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated March 12, 2022 No. 349 on quotas for the resettlement of Ukrainians by regions was supposed to resettle 95,909 people. There are now more than one million of them.

Citizens of Ukraine are also not required to apply for any special status. Up to 90 days they can live in the Russian Federation without any special permission, they only need to register at the place of stay.

Citizens of Ukraine who arrived from Ukraine can receive temporary asylum status for 1 year. The status of temporary asylum is prescribed to be granted according to a simplified procedure within 3 working days. But in Moscow, for the majority of Ukrainian citizens, there is a 3-month rule for granting this status. The peculiarity of Moscow is that within 3 days the status should be granted only to those Ukrainians who have relatives there. However, this rule is not followed in practice. This status makes it possible: to obtain a compulsory medical insurance policy, to send children to schools and kindergartens, to work legally. The holder of this status can go to one of the Temporary Accommodation Centres (TAPs) that have been established in 38 constituent entities of the Russian Federation. There, displaced people are provided with housing, food, and hygiene items. The percentage of Ukrainians

who live in TAPs is relatively low, about 5-10%. These are people who cannot find housing on their own or cannot afford to pay for it. One-time assistance to displaced people is just 10,000 rubles, but some displaced people have problems getting it.

If a displaced person plans to permanently stay in the Russian Federation, he can apply for citizenship. Citizenship is given without any problems. In 2021, a record number of people received Russian citizenship - more than 735,000. The Russian authorities thus statistically cover the natural population decline (about 600,000 per year).

Many Ukrainians end up in the Russian Federation due to the fact that they did not have the opportunity to travel to the territory controlled by the Ukrainian authorities. The Russian military did not open humanitarian corridors in that direction.

Filtration camps operate in the occupied territories of Ukraine. The first evidence of such a camp appeared in the second half of March, when images from space confirmed the words of the residents of the town of Bezymenny, east of Mariupol, about the filtering of people in the tent camp. This camp was built by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation, officially for humanitarian purposes. The Guardian and BBC News published the first materials about this camp. Today there are already many publications based on the testimony of people who have been filtered. Judging by these testimonies, filtering includes filling out a form with personal data, answering questions about the person's attitude towards the Armed Forces of Ukraine, contacts with the Ukrainian military, membership in "nationalist groups", visual inspection (they are looking for tattoos), checking the phone, fingerprinting. After passing the filtration, a person gets a ticket to enter the territory of the Russian Federation. If they do not pass, they are taken to Donetsk. What happens to these people next is unknown. According to some journalists, they are kept in a pre-trial detention centre and used to obtain evidence about "the crimes of the Ukrainian authorities against the inhabitants of Donbas."

According to Vladimir Osechkin, coordinator of the Gulagu.net information website, the Russian authorities have a plan to hold at least 200 criminal trials accusing Ukrainians, including prisoners of war, of war crimes. People who are selected based on the results of the filtration to participate in such trials are placed in a pre-trial detention centre in Russia. These are in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog. So-called "press teams" of convicts and those under investigation are brought to these pre-trial detention centres from other places of detention to put pressure on Ukrainians. The situation of these people, already designated as victims, is a separate issue that needs to be addressed.

Those Ukrainians who are free in the Russian Federation also face problems. Ukrainian SIM and bank cards do not work in the Russian Federation. Sometimes people do not have passports, often they do not have the means to leave Russia. Our Russian colleagues will tell you about these problems and solutions better than I can.

There is a serious problem for those citizens of Ukraine who left the Russian Federation for Georgia without passports. Now there are more than 30,000 citizens of Ukraine in Georgia. In the diplomatic missions of Ukraine there are no forms of certificates for returning to Ukraine, the so-called "white passports". The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine is trying to solve the problem. Since May 16, consuls have been allowed to accept applications for the issuance of foreign passports. But for a person, this means that you need to pay 120 euros and wait 3-4 months without any guarantees. Ukrainian human rights activists, I hope, will be able to influence the solution of this problem. But there are many others and we must cooperate with human rights activists from other countries to resolve those issues.

I want to remind the goal of our today's Solidarity - to find common ground between Ukrainian and Russian human rights activists, formats for joint actions to help Ukrainians who ended up in Russia during the war.