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Russia's Deportation, Imprisonment of Ukrainian Rights Activist

Russia should free Iryna Danylovych

Russian authorities have deported a wrongfully imprisoned Ukrainian human rights defender and civic journalist, Iryna Danylovych, to Russia and are denying her access to medical treatment in custody, nine Ukrainian and international human rights groups said today. Russian authorities should immediately and unconditionally free Danylovych, allow her to return to Ukraine, and provide her with timely and quality medical care as long as she remains in government custody.

The nine organizations are ZMINA, Crimean Human Rights Group, Center for Civic Education "Almenda", Regional Center for Human Rights, Crimean Process, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights and the World Organization Against Torture in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

In December 2022, Russian authorities in Russia-occupied Crimea sentenced Danylovych, 44, to seven years in prison on fabricated charges of "unlawful handling of explosives." On July 24, 2023, without notifying Danylovych's family or lawyer, they unlawfully transferred her to a pretrial detention facility in southern Russia. On August 14, Danylovych's father, Bronislav Danylovych, told Zmina that Danylovych was transferred to Penal Colony No. 7 in Zelenokumsk, in Stavropol

region, and that local officials had refused to provide Danylovykh with the pain killers she had been taking for an ear ailment. He also said that Danylovykh had fully lost hearing in her left ear.

Danylovykh's father also said that when his daughter arrived at the penal colony in Zelenokumsk, a medical officer confiscated her medication, remarking that the pain would go away when she "goes deaf."

"Iryna Danylovykh is one of many whom authorities in Russia-occupied Crimea are targeting in their all-out campaign to crush critical, pro-Ukrainian voices," said Gerald Staberock, Secretary General of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT). "Her imprisonment is an act of sheer reprisal for her peaceful civic work."

[Iryna Danylovykh](#) is a human rights defender, medical professional, and civic journalist who has exposed problems in the healthcare system in Crimea and advocated for the rights of health workers.

Unidentified assailants abducted and forcibly disappeared Danylovykh in Koktebel, Crimea, on 29 April 2022. The same day, a Russian SWAT team (OMON, in the Russian acronym) raided her house, seizing laptops and phones. Danylovykh's whereabouts remained unknown for 13 days until her attorney located her in the pre-trial detention centre in Simferopol on 11 May 2022. On 28 December 2022, the Feodosia City Court sentenced Danylovykh to seven years in prison and fined her 50,000 rubles (approximately 900 EUR), on false, politically motivated charges under Article 222.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, for "illegal acquisition, transfer, sale, storage, transportation, shipment or carrying of explosives or explosive devices." On 29 June 2023, the Supreme Court of Russia-occupied Crimea upheld the verdict and reduced her seven-year sentence by one month.

Russian de-facto authorities in Crimea repeatedly failed to provide Danylovykh with necessary medical assistance and treatment. In a statement Danylovykh sent Zmina in March 2023, Danylovykh said that she heard constant ringing in her left ear and that her hearing had been impaired for four months. A doctor gave Danylovykh medication for her ear without examining her. As Zmina previously reported, authorities refused to allow a doctor to examine her in the presence of her defense lawyer.

Danylovykh's father told Zmina that Danylovykh fainted multiple times while law enforcement officials transported her from Simferopol to Feodosia City Court in Crimea for the court hearings. In her March statement, Danylovykh said that she had difficulty listening to the audio and video recordings of her court proceedings because she has been experiencing hearing problems.

[Danylovykh](#) has worked as a nurse in Crimea. Before her arrest, she cooperated with many independent online media outlets, including "ИНЖИР" and "Crimean Process," which reports on court hearings on politically motivated cases in Crimea. Her work exposing problems in the health care system included the occupation authorities' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Danylovykh advocated for the rights of health workers through their trade union and her project, Crimean Medicine Without Cover.

On July 24, 2023, Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service initiated Danylovykh's transfer from occupied Crimea to Russia. Until August 8, Danylovykh was detained in the pre-trial detention center in Armavir, in Russia's Krasnodar region. On August 9, she arrived at the penal colony in Zelenokumsk.

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which is applicable to all parties to the armed conflict in Ukraine, prohibits individual or mass forcible transfers or deportations of civilians from occupied territory to the territory of the occupying power. Unlawful deportations are grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, which are war crimes.

Systematic denial of medical care can amount to torture and other ill-treatment, which is also a war crime.

Russia should take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Iryna Danylovysh, allow her to return to Ukraine, and guarantee her physical and psychological security and integrity, the organizations said.