



Open Address from the Human Rights Agenda to US State Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations Kurt Volker

Oleksandra Matviychuk, the head of the Center for Civil Liberties, handed over to Kurt Volker, an appeal from more than 50 civil society associations (including [the Open Dialog Foundation](#)) regarding strategic priorities in the course of negotiations with Russia. The document was signed by human rights activists, environmentalists, trade unions, volunteers, and service and expert organisations from all over Ukraine.

According to Oleksandra Matviychuk, Kurt Volker stated that he would consider it carefully and give an answer.

She drew his attention to the fact that more than a hundred people are still present on the Minsk lists. They include soldier Sergey Glondar, journalist Stanislav Aseyev, and even children, such as student Yaroslav Mironov. "I know some relatives who have been waiting for their return for more than three years now", Matviychuk wrote on [Facebook](#).

"Still, the problem is that these lists are incomplete. According to the Kremlin's republics, only in Donetsk, 246(!) people were arrested last year in Donetsk on suspicion of espionage and state betrayal. We don't know who these people are and in what conditions they are held. We don't know the real scale of this phenomenon. The only thing we know is that the practice of abduction, torture and illegal detention of people in the occupied territory of the Donbas continues.

The issue of the release of political prisoners held in Russia and the occupied Crimea has also been raised for a long time. Our [#LetMyPeopleGo](#) list already includes approx. 70 people, including film director Oleg Sentsov, 19-year-old university student Pavlo Grib, human rights activist Emir-Usain Kuku, Crimean farmer Volodymyr Balukh, journalist Roman Sushchenko, Crimean Tatar activist Nariman Memediminov, and others. But this is just the tip of the iceberg. We don't know the real numbers.

These people became direct victims of the hybrid warfare launched by the Russian Federation. But there is still no international platform for discussing their release. Therefore, it is worth demanding that this issue be also included in the Minsk process"- Matviychuk wrote.

The full text of the appeal of the Human Rights Agenda is given below.

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We are very grateful for your efforts to resolve the international armed conflict in Ukraine. It was waged by the Russian Federation in February 2014 after the annexation of Crimea, using its armed forces, sending armed groups under its control to incite armed conflict in the Donbas, creating illegal armed units as its proxy agents in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and conducting direct military operations between the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

To succeed in this complex task, one needs to clearly understand the situation. So, we thank you for the public recognition of the direct participation of the Russian Federation in this undeclared war and its effective control over the so-called "people's republics." This is very important in the post-truth era, manipulation of public opinion and the spread of Russian misinformation in the EU and the US.

At the same time, it seems particularly important to us that in the process of international negotiations, the opinion of the civil society of Ukraine was heard and taken into account. It was civil society from the very beginning of the war that assumed a large part of the state's functions and played an important role in building up the modern Ukrainian Army, establishing a system for documenting human rights violations and providing aid to about 2 million of internally displaced persons.

With this in mind, we would like to convey the following recommendations to you:

- To implement the practice of meetings of participants in negotiations with representatives of non-governmental organizations of Ukraine working on various aspects of armed conflict (documentation of violations, aid to IDPs, reconstruction of the Donbas infrastructure, etc.) in order to find out their positions on the main aspects of the negotiation process;
- To demand the inclusion in the Minsk process of the issue of Ukrainian citizens imprisoned on political grounds in the Russian Federation and the occupied Crimea, including the film director Oleg Sentsov, Crimean farmer Volodymyr Balukh, human rights activist Emir-Usain Kuku, Crimean Tatar activist Nariman Memediminov and about 70 people who have become direct victims of the war started by the Russian Federation;
- To raise the issue of the urgent need for the release of prisoners of war and civilian hostages for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the serviceman Serhii Glondar, journalist Stanislav Aseev, minor student Yaroslav Mironov and more than a hundred other people, as well as the abolition of the practice of abduction, torture and illegal detention of people in the occupied territory of the Donbas;
- To support the position of human rights organizations in Ukraine that elections in the occupied territory of the Donbas are possible only on the condition of free work of the Ukrainian mass media, access to the territory of Ukrainian parties, the return of IDPs, the restoration of the work of courts and law enforcement agencies and the establishment of control over the Ukrainian-Russian state border;
- To publicly advocate a position on the impossibility of amnesty for those guilty of committing

international crimes as required by international humanitarian and international criminal law, despite the fact that the relevant provision is not formulated in the Minsk agreements with sufficient clarity;

- To draw the attention of the Ukrainian authorities to the urgent consideration and adoption of a bill drafted by the human rights advocate, which harmonizes the Criminal Code with the norms of international humanitarian and international criminal law;
- To draw the attention of the Ukrainian authorities to the urgent need to establish a single interdepartmental center for documenting international crimes committed in the course of an international armed conflict and to carry out all possible actions in this situation for an effective investigation;
- To draw the attention of the Ukrainian authorities to the need to develop and start implementing the principles and forms of transitional justice, including legal safeguards for future reconciliation, bringing the perpetrators to justice, establishing historical truth, compensating individual victims of armed conflict and carrying out institutional reforms that make it impossible to repeat the conflict;
- Given that there is currently no international format for negotiating a human rights situation in the Crimea and its de-occupation, to consult with human rights defenders, diplomats and relevant institutions to find ways to implement it.

We understand all the difficulties of negotiating in an unstable "truce" when international observers record periodic violations of the silence regime and the death of the civilian population.

However, we are convinced that the success of the full resolution of this international armed conflict in the future depends to a large extent on the priorities discussed during the process.

Center for Civil Liberties
Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group
Human Rights Information Center
Luhansk Oblast Human Rights Center "Alternative"
Donbass SOS
[Open Dialog Foundation](#)
Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
Center for Law Enforcement Activities Research
Eastern-Ukrainian Center for Civic Initiatives
Center for Policy and Legal Reform
National Union of Journalists of Ukraine
All-Ukrainian Union "People's Solidarity"
Ukrainian League of Lawyers for Corruption Combating
Helsinki Initiative-XXI
Association of the Relatives of the Kremlin's Political Prisoners
Chernihiv Center for Human Rights
NGO Center "Dobrochyn"
People's Council of Chernihiv Oblast
Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv
European Movement Ukraine
Environmental Group "PECHENIGY"
Association UMDPL
No Borders Project
Human Rights Platform
Regional Analytical Center

Kharkiv Institute for Social Research
Ukraine without Torture
Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research
Bilozerka Center for Regional Development
Autonomous Advocacy
Civic Association "Legal Development Network"
Crimean Human Rights Group
All-Ukrainian Board of People with Limited Opportunities "Social Solidarity"
NGO "Transcarpathian Community"
Cherkasy Human Rights Center
NGO "Volunteers of Cherkasy Oblast"
Regional Center for Human Rights
Women's Anti-Corruption Movement
NGO "People's Defense"
Ternopil Human Rights Group
Institute of Mass Information
Liberal Democratic League of Ukraine
All-Ukrainian Trade Union Association "Democratic Trade Unions of Ukraine"
NGO "MART"
NGO "Releasing from captivity"
Center for legal and political studies "DUMA"
Information and educational center "VIS", Vinnytsia
Territory of success, Kropivnitskyi