

## **From Russia with love: enforced disappearances and the creation of "republics" on the territory occupied by the Russian armed forces**

Since the beginning of the new wave of armed aggression by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 and the invasion of the territory of mainland Ukraine, information about enforced disappearances of journalists, politicians and activists in Russian-controlled territories has begun to come to light. Judging by the focus on people in these groups enforced disappearances appear to be being used to suppress resistance in the occupied territories and create pseudo-republics, under Russian control – like the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR).

Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the United States released intelligence warning that the Russian Federation was planning targeted attacks on politicians, activists and Russian dissidents after the invasion of Ukraine “which in previous Russian operations involved targeted killings, abductions, torture, are likely to be aimed at those who oppose Russia’s actions”.<sup>1</sup>

*This report contains information on the cases of enforced disappearances and other forms of attacks against activists, politicians and journalists of which we are aware at the time of writing. New information on enforced disappearances and new cases is published daily.*

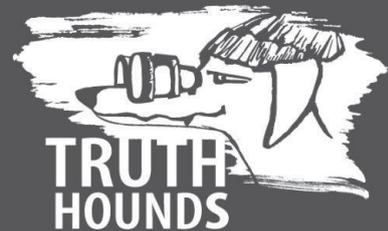
### **Creation of “republics”**

From 2 March 2022, representatives of the Russian armed forces have been trying to create a so-called KNR (abbreviation for Kherson People’s Republic) in settlements in Kherson region. This requires persuading the authorities of the region to cooperate with the occupying forces and the appointment of new leaders from among the locals as well as the suppression of any dissent that opposes such plans.

In order to prepare the ground the occupying authorities impose restrictions on freedom of speech and freedom of movement, stipulating that “... *in the event of a breach ... of the rules, individuals will be detained, prosecuted and transferred to military law enforcement*

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<sup>1</sup> Russia Planning Post-Invasion Arrest and Assassination Campaign in Ukraine, U.S. Officials Say, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/18/russia-ukraine-arrest-assassination-invasion/>  
Secretary Antony J. Blinken on Russia’s Threat to Peace and Security at the UN Security Council, published February 17 2022, available at: <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-on-russias-threat-to-peace-and-security-at-the-un-security-council/>



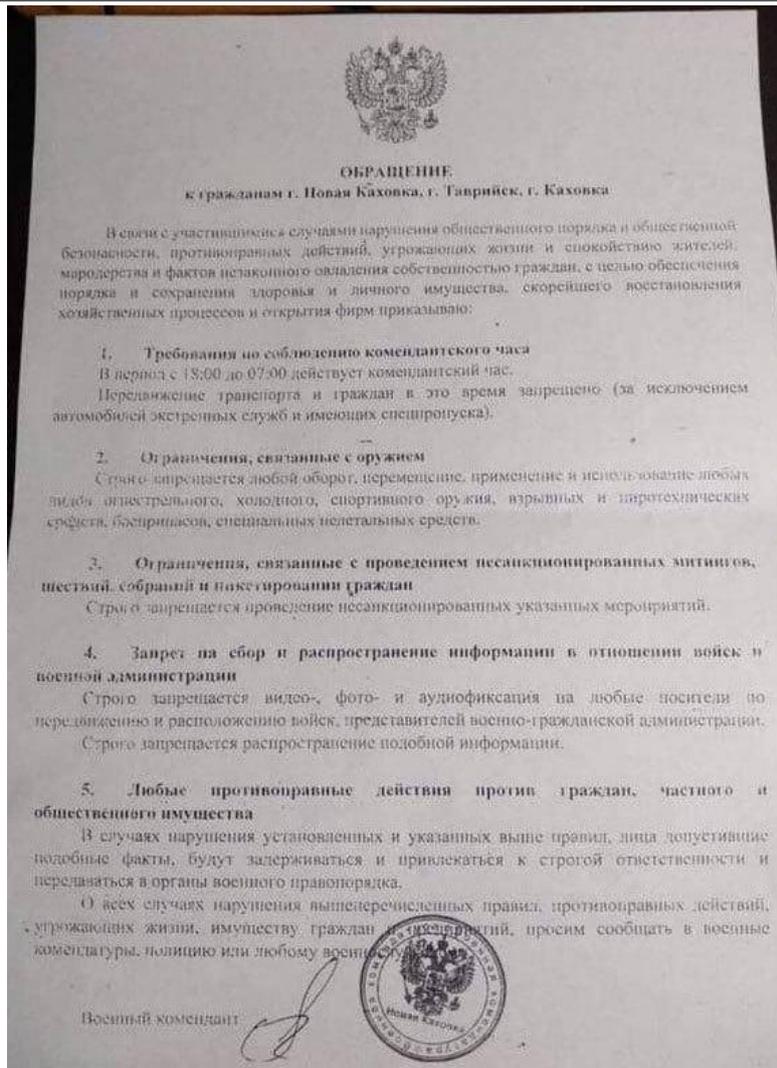
*officials*”.<sup>2</sup> Thus, any public expression of civil position and disagreement with the administrative decisions of the occupying state, have been declared illegal.

The work of persuading local residents to head the occupation administrations is well illustrated by the example of Kakhovka, where Ukrainian citizen Volodymyr Leontiev appears to have been elected to serve as either commandant or “acting head of the administration”. According to local activist Andrii Kalov, Volodymyr Leontiev and another local resident, Vitaliy Yefimenko (believed to be a member of a local criminal group and going by the nickname “Yefim”), joined Kakhovka City Council after it was seized by Russian armed forces. Shortly afterwards, local media sources in the Kakhovka City Council confirmed the cooperation of Volodymyr Leontiev and Yefim with the occupying forces and their presence in the city council building.<sup>3</sup> According to Andrii Kalov, Vitalii Yefimenko, in particular “promised massacres of pro-Ukrainian locals”.

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<sup>2</sup> Пост омбудсмана в соціальній мережі Facebook , 13 March at 02:14 available at:[https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=501495704665040&set=a.244521147029165&type=3&eid=ARDXZoyHZU0BvLTkblur-dnY5u3bWldpOJPI5iYgQs3QYWbbAc5KUZtXtO5LugApE5Uw48vKE8ypSpGn&\\_xts\\_\\_\[0\]=68.ARAmgDctF0rhWa\\_4rdD1F4N-FQDV8NG7FmgTII9E\\_UzmGaSz2bwLoxtpoISLESA61YbMBYArkeHKnyV5sa-mGhGLDs-O13QtdRIZ4Ycit7dPA0HVoxl3odzuPcGWsQ2-hbbDeOQAC2gkQS9p3eiPYKkRfyPgMOScS8KwNE55tQMprBvrjWos6mzV5-pU2RoP-fVeGCp1N\\_B\\_wdXxyfw5B6r7q8WC\\_-7CSUXq2ReXr\\_fz2ZOT9hsstBNecMrmKzLF1X3abuO3NX7QJUZFeKL-wvqm6D\\_AC7vnfDMhF17VZS72H6NMr3w](https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=501495704665040&set=a.244521147029165&type=3&eid=ARDXZoyHZU0BvLTkblur-dnY5u3bWldpOJPI5iYgQs3QYWbbAc5KUZtXtO5LugApE5Uw48vKE8ypSpGn&_xts__[0]=68.ARAmgDctF0rhWa_4rdD1F4N-FQDV8NG7FmgTII9E_UzmGaSz2bwLoxtpoISLESA61YbMBYArkeHKnyV5sa-mGhGLDs-O13QtdRIZ4Ycit7dPA0HVoxl3odzuPcGWsQ2-hbbDeOQAC2gkQS9p3eiPYKkRfyPgMOScS8KwNE55tQMprBvrjWos6mzV5-pU2RoP-fVeGCp1N_B_wdXxyfw5B6r7q8WC_-7CSUXq2ReXr_fz2ZOT9hsstBNecMrmKzLF1X3abuO3NX7QJUZFeKL-wvqm6D_AC7vnfDMhF17VZS72H6NMr3w)

<sup>3</sup>Типовий “бендерівець”. Що відомо про нового “гауляйтера” Нової Каховки, March 10, available at: <https://eprostit.org/2022/03/10/shcho-vidomo-pro-novoho-hauliaitera-novoi-kakhovky-i-kakhovky/>



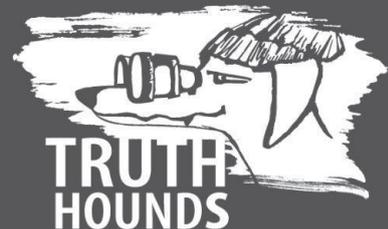
*Order of the "military commander of Kherson People's Republic"*



*A screenshot pf O. Baturin's Facebook page about the "military commander of Kherson People's Republic"*

The third component necessary for the establishment of sham republics in occupied Ukrainian territories is the coercion of existing government officials to cooperate. In this regard, only one case of public transition to the side of the Russian Federation is publicly known – that of Galina Danilchenko in Melitopol. As a member of the Melitopol City Council, Danilchenko agreed to become so-called acting mayor and began reiterating Russian state propaganda. It should be noted that international humanitarian law presupposes the cooperation of the local authorities of the state with the occupying state. However, the Russian Federation has shown no interest in establishing temporary good faith cooperation with the existing and legitimate authorities and instead, it has sought to replace them with self-created bodies who lack legitimacy and backing by local communities.

In order to create a so-called "KNR", Russian representatives use methods including intimidation and enforced disappearances. These methods are aimed at suppressing dissent and persuading the local authorities to cooperate with the occupying power. Below is a summary



of those cases of enforced disappearances in various regions of Ukraine currently under Russian occupation.

### Missing persons

The report describes only some cases of enforced disappearances that took place in the territories temporarily controlled by Russian armed forces. Information is presented here in chronological order starting from 4 March 2022.

- 1. Volodymyr Tiurin, head of the military-civil administration.** In the Luhansk region on 4 March Russian soldiers abducted the deputy head of Shchastia City Military Civil Administration Volodymyr Tiurin.<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing, his fate is unknown. Soldiers put a bag on Tiurin's head and took him away in an unknown direction.
- 2. Oleksandr Fediunin, an employee of the military registration and enlistment office.** Fediunin's case was the first case of abduction made public by the Russian law enforcement agencies. On 8 March 2022, a video was published on the Rus Criminal YouTube channel<sup>5</sup> showing a detained man in Kherson. The man in the video identified himself as Oleksandr Fediunin. A local journalist later confirmed that it was indeed Fediunin. The video was entitled "Russian special services detained a ukrodeversant (Ukrainian saboteur) in Kherson". It is noteworthy that the channel Rus Criminal was set up on 12 August 2016 and that most of the videos it features are devoted to the activities of Russian law enforcement agencies. Representatives of the occupying forces had several versions of Oleksandr Fediunin's identity - : the video mentioned him as the head of the group of civil-military cooperation of the military unit A7053, ( 124 brigades of territorial defence of Kherson region). In the video, Fediunin is asked in Russian about why he was detained. He explains the arrest by saying that he "tried to remove the booby traps near the Scythian building". After that, the author of the video asks what kind of building it is. From this it is possible to conclude that the person conducting the interrogation is not local. In Kherson, most locals know the Scythia TV channel, which has been broadcasting for almost three decades. The TV channel's building was mined on 3 March after it was seized by Russian troops.

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<sup>4</sup>Пост в соціальній мережі Facebook, published March 17 2022, at 11:00, available at <https://www.facebook.com/sergey.gaidai.loga/posts/137205428818849>

<sup>5</sup>Russian special services detained a ukrodeversant in Kherson, published march 8 2022, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIkE3JvekM8>



*Still image from video of the interrogation*

Subsequently, the version given of Fediunin's detention changed. On 9 March at 12:33 the Russian-language media outlet "SM News" published an article entitled "In Kherson, a detainee of the reconnaissance group of the civil-military cooperation of the armed forces of Ukraine handed over lists of all its accomplices to the Russian Federation." There are two key points in the article: 1) according to journalists "citing sources in law enforcement agencies" the detention and interrogation were conducted by representatives of the so-called "Kherson People's Militia"; 2) representatives of the sham republic received lists with the names of 402 Ukrainian servicemen from Fediunin and "... now no one will go unpunished".<sup>6</sup>

Another version of events was published in the Russian media "Komsomolskaya Pravda" on the same day as the previous publication, but later that evening at 09.20 p.m. According to the publication, Fediunin "... set up a booby trap on his own and was tasked with organising a terrorist attack during demonstrations so that the Kyiv authorities could accuse Russian soldiers of carrying out a terrorist attack against local residents". Photos, which are essentially screenshots from the same video of the

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<sup>6</sup> В Херсоне задержанный нач группы ГВС ВСУ передал РФ списки всех своих подельников, published March 9 2022 at 12:33, available at: <https://sm.news/gotovivshij-terakt-v-xersone-major-vsu-slil-spisok-komandovaniya-brigady-teroborony-56509/>



interrogation, were signed as if they had been taken by representatives of the so-called “People's Militia of the DNR”.<sup>7</sup>

In the publications "SM News" and "Komsomolskaya Pravda" the dates of the planned terrorist attack differ. The first edition claims that the "terrorist attack" was planned for 6 March, while Komsomolskaya Pravda names 8 March. However, both editions share the common thesis that representatives of Russian law enforcement agencies received lists of persons who are at risk of being forcibly disappeared. The fate and whereabouts of Oleksandr Fediunin is unknown at the time of writing.

3. **Serhii Krychuk, activist.** On 9 March in the Zaporizhzhya region, Russian soldiers abducted activist Serhii Krychuk as he drove in a car with his family listening to the song “Bayraktar”, which praises one of the most effective Ukrainian weapons used against Russians. The fate and whereabouts of Krychuk are unknown at the time of writing.<sup>8</sup>
4. **Leila Ibragimova, people’s deputy.** On 10 March soldiers abducted Leila Ibragimova, a people’s deputy of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Council from her home. She was released later that day.<sup>9</sup>
5. **Ivan Fedorov, mayor.** On 11 March, Russian soldiers abducted Melitopol mayor Ivan Fedorov from the humanitarian headquarters.<sup>10</sup> On 14 March it became known that Fedorov was in the occupied Luhansk region being detained by representatives of the so-called “MDB LNR”.<sup>11</sup> On 11 March, about 10 people entered Fedorov's office, put a bag on his head and took him out of the room.<sup>12</sup> The so-called "Prosecutor's Office of the KNR" accused Fedorov of financing terrorism and terrorist crimes. On 16 March Fedorov was released.<sup>13</sup>
6. **Andrii Solovei, football fan.** On 11 March the leader of the fans of the football team "Crystal" in Kherson region Andrii Solovei was detained after Russian soldiers broke

<sup>7</sup> Украинские военные оставляют в городах арсеналы для провокаций диверсантов, published March 9 2022 at 21:20, available at:

<https://www.kp.ru/daily/27374/4556327/>

<sup>8</sup> У Мелітополі російські солдати викрали учасника мітингу проти окупації, published 10 March 2022 at 16:03, available at: <https://hromadske.radio/news/2022/03/10/u-melitopoli-rosiys-ki-soldaty-vykraly-uchasnyka-mitynhu-proty-okupatsii>

<sup>9</sup> Мери, депутати та учасники мітингів: люди, яких викрали російські військові, available at: <https://primorka.city/articles/198795/meri-deputati-ta-uchasniki-mitingiv-lyudi-yakih-vikrali-rosijski-vijskovi->

<sup>10</sup> Відео підтвердження викрадення окупантами мера міста Мелітополь, published at March 11 2022, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlbyE9MmA0>

<sup>11</sup> Телеграм-канал блога "Рупор Тоталитарной Пропаганды", published March 11 2022 at 04:58, available at: [https://t.me/boris\\_rozhin/31015](https://t.me/boris_rozhin/31015)

<sup>12</sup> Недели пакет на голову и увезли - как похищали мелитопольского мэра, published March 11 2022 at 16:58, available at: <https://www.mv.org.ua/news/264329-nadeli-paket-na-golovu-i-uvezli-kak-pohishali-melitopolskogo-mera.html>

<sup>13</sup> Офіційний Telegram-канал української служби Радіо Свобода, published March 16 2022 at 05:45, available at: [https://t.me/svoboda\\_radio/6914](https://t.me/svoboda_radio/6914)



into his house and took him away in an unknown direction. Since then, Solovei has not been in touch with his relatives and acquaintances.<sup>14</sup>

7. **Leonid Kondratskyi, activist.** On 11 March Leonid Kondratskyi was abducted. He had organized local self-defense and attended rallies against the occupation authorities. He worked with another local activist, Serhiy Tsyhipa, to set up a territorial defense for Kherson. Little is known about the circumstances of his disappearance at the time of writing.
8. **Viktoriia Roshchyna, journalist.** On 11-12 March contact with Hromadske journalist Viktoriia Roshchyna was lost. On 18 March it became known that she was detained by representatives of the Russian FSB. Roshchyna had written about the life of the temporarily occupied city of Enerhodar and was planning to cover the situation in Mariupol. According to her colleagues, she left Zaporizhzhia for Mariupol on 11 March and arrived in occupied Berdyansk the next day. She was detained by Russian officials on 15 March. Her current whereabouts are not known at the time of writing.<sup>15</sup>
9. **Olha Haisumova, activist.** On 12 March Olha Haisumova, coordinator of anti-occupation rallies in Melitopol and head of the NGO 'Melitopol Conscious Society', was abducted after a rally. Her fate remains unknown at the time of writing.<sup>16</sup>
10. **Oleh Baturin, journalist.** On 12 March journalist Oleh Baturin disappeared after telling his wife he was going to meet an acquaintance. He left his phone at home and never returned. His wife and colleagues did not have any information about the grounds on which Oleh was detained, nor who was holding him or where he was being held. Eyewitnesses in local chat rooms reported that Russian soldiers appeared around 04:50 p.m near the bus station. However, there are no Russian troops posted permanently in Kakhovka although the neighbouring town of Nova Kakhovka is occupied. This does not prove the involvement of Russian soldiers in the abduction of the journalist, but indicated it as a possible scenario.

On 20 March 2022, the occupying forces released Oleh Baturin from prison, where he had spent 8 days in detention with almost no food or water, being threatened and beaten. Throughout his detention, the journalist was made to sit with his head bowed down or

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<sup>14</sup> У Херсоні російські окупанти викрадають людей: днями прийшли за ультрасом "Кристала", published March 14 2022, available at:

[https://most.ks.ua/news/url/u\\_hersoni\\_rosijski\\_okupanti\\_vikradajut\\_ljudej\\_dnjami\\_prijskli\\_za\\_ultrasom\\_kristala](https://most.ks.ua/news/url/u_hersoni_rosijski_okupanti_vikradajut_ljudej_dnjami_prijskli_za_ultrasom_kristala)

<sup>15</sup> Журналістка hromadske Вікторія Рошина передположително находитя в плену у російських окупантов, published March 18 2022 at 16:24, available at:

<https://hromadske.ua/ru/posts/zhurnalistka-hromadske-viktoriya-roshina-predpolozhitelno-nahoditsya-v-plenu-u-rossijskih-okkupantov>

<sup>16</sup> У Мелітополі на мітингу проти окупантів викрали активістку Гайсумову, published March 12 2022, at 11:29, available at: [https://lb.ua/society/2022/03/12/509162\\_melitopoli\\_mitingu\\_proti.html](https://lb.ua/society/2022/03/12/509162_melitopoli_mitingu_proti.html)

covered to make it impossible for him to identify members of the occupying authorities.<sup>17</sup>

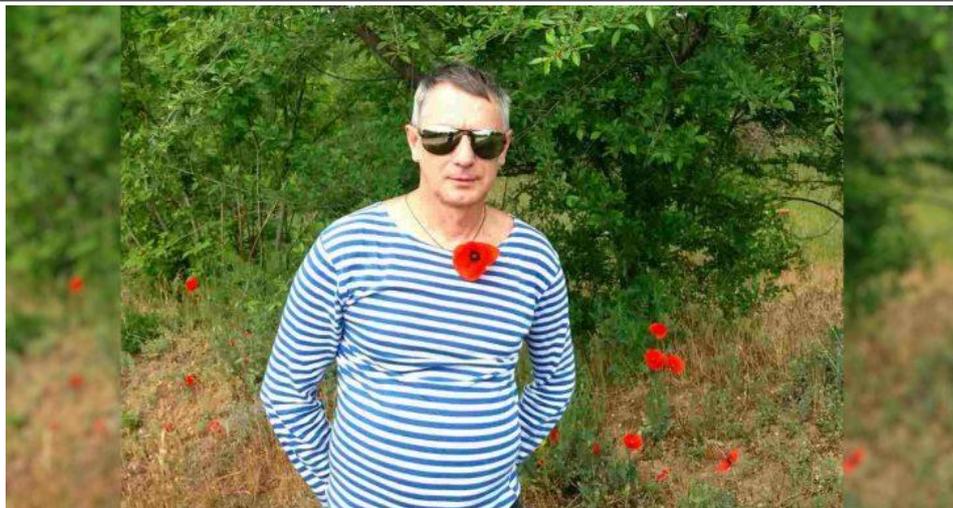


*Photo from Oleh Baturin's Facebook profile*

- 11. Serhii Tsyhipa, activist.** Another victim of enforced disappearance Tsyhipa - an Anti-Terrorist Operation veteran, journalist and Head of the NGO 'Kakhovskyi platsdarm (Kakhovka Lodgement)' disappeared on 12 March. He had taken part in a pro-Ukrainian rally against the occupation authorities. Even before his abduction, Tsyhipa assumed he was being monitored by Russian officials. A few days before his abduction, he wrote on social media: "Friends! Do not search online. Rashystski kontryky (representatives of the Russian intelligence agency) have been looking for me since last night. Those I need I will find myself. Everything will be Ukraine!" The post was written on 8 March 2022.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> пост Ольги Перепелиці в соціальній мережі Facebook, published 20 March 2022 at 04:52, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/100002043268644/posts/5083703281707730/>

<sup>18</sup>У Каховці російські окупанти вдерлися в будинок місцевої активістки, published 08.03.2022 available at: <https://eprostit.org/2022/03/08/u-kakhovtsi-rosiiski-okupanty-vderlysia-v-budynok-mistsevoi-aktyvistky/>



*Photo of Serhii Tsyhipa*

According to Tsyhipa's wife, at about 9:00 a.m. her husband went out with the dog (which she found later near to the local executive committee) to bring food and medicine for his mother-in-law.<sup>19</sup> He failed to return and later people called Tsyhipa's wife saying that they had seen her husband at the checkpoint, being held for quite a long period of time.<sup>20</sup> Representatives of the occupying authorities told Tsyhipa's wife that neither he nor Oleh Baturin were or had been in Nova Kakhovka, and that people like them were moved to Kherson right away. The question of where exactly they were held in Kherson was not resolved.

Oleh Baturin's sister reported that representatives of the occupying authorities assured her that "her brother and Tsyhipa were all right, they are alive, fed, have something to drink and are not sad". The relatives were even allowed to hand over good for them.<sup>21</sup> At the time of writing Tsyhipa's whereabouts is not known.

**12. Serhii Pryima, Head of the District Council.** On 13 March Russian servicemen abducted the Head of Melitopol District Council, Serhii Pryima. At 7:30 a.m., eight representatives of the occupying forces searched his home and took him away. During the search documents and mobile devices were confiscated and passwords were demanded. Pryima's whereabouts are unknown at the time of writing.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/tsyhipa/posts/5668060013220600>

<sup>20</sup> «Люди просто зникають» в окупованих військами Росії містах півдня України, published March 15 2022 at 13:37, available at:

<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovya-viyna-khersonshchyna-znyknennya-lyudey/31753840.html>

<sup>21</sup> Сім'ї викраденого журналіста з Каховки Батурина сказали, коли його відпустять, published March 16 at 22:06, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-kakhovka-khersonshchyna-zhurnalist-baturyn/31756608.html>

<sup>22</sup>В Мелітополі похитили главу районного совета, published March 13 2022 at 11:40, available at: [https://ria-m.tv/news/280208/v\\_melitopole\\_pohitili\\_esche\\_odnogo\\_rukovoditelya.html](https://ria-m.tv/news/280208/v_melitopole_pohitili_esche_odnogo_rukovoditelya.html)

**13. Yevhen Matvieiev, mayor.** The mayor of Dniprorudne Yevhen Matvieiev was detained on 13 March at 8:30 a.m.,<sup>23</sup> as he drove to a checkpoint on the outskirts of city at the intersection of roads to Dniprorudne, Balki, Orlyanka and Vesele.<sup>24</sup> The reason for his enforced disappearance could be his pro-Ukrainian stance. In the 2020 mayoral election, he ran for the OPZZh (Ukrainian Political Party, Opposition Platform - For Life), and after the start of the invasion he took a pro-Ukrainian position and joined others on 27 February blocking the path of Russian tanks.<sup>25</sup> A local resident reported seeing the mayor's car in the city after he was abducted, bearing Russian symbols.<sup>26</sup>

**14. Giga\_mo, blogger.** On 14 March a blogger in Kherson approached Russian soldiers while streaming from her Tik-tok account, and began asking them questions and calling them "orcs"<sup>27</sup>. One of the servicemen told her to get in the truck where other servicemen were standing, and although she tried to escape she was detained and driven away.<sup>28</sup> The girl's identity is currently unknown. Her Tik-tok account: [https://www.tiktok.com/@giga\\_mo?lang=ru-RU](https://www.tiktok.com/@giga_mo?lang=ru-RU)



**giga\_mo**

user9124901439820

Слідкувати

153 Слідкування 6660 Слідкувачі 105.5К Уподобання

активистка, волонтер  
Херсон

*Screenshot from TikTok*

<sup>23</sup>Центр стратегічних комунікацій та інформаційної безпеки, пост в соціальній мережі Facebook, published March 13 2022 at 01:15, available:

<https://www.facebook.com/StratcomCentreUA/posts/306897228176931>

<sup>24</sup>Окупанти викрали мера міста Дніпрорудного, published March 13 2022, available at:

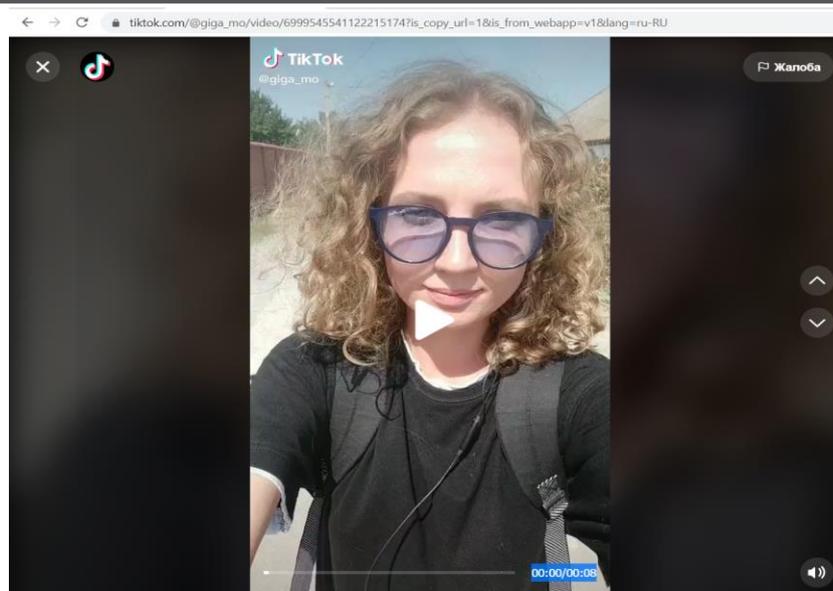
<https://forpost.media/vijna/okupanty-vykraly-mera-mista-dniprorudnoho.html>

<sup>25</sup>Відео зупинки російської техніки, available at: <https://t.me/dvvideo/246>

<sup>26</sup>"Залякують, що влада змінилася", — місцева жителька Дніпрорудного про ситуацію в місті, published March 15 2022 at 16:50, available at: <https://susilne.media/217852-zalakuut-so-vlada-zminilasa-misceva-zitelka-dniprorudnogo-pro-situaciu-v-misti/>

<sup>27</sup> Derogatory term for Russian invaders

<sup>28</sup> Затримання блогерки у Херсоні, published March 14 2022, available at: <https://youtu.be/wuFT671KmdY>

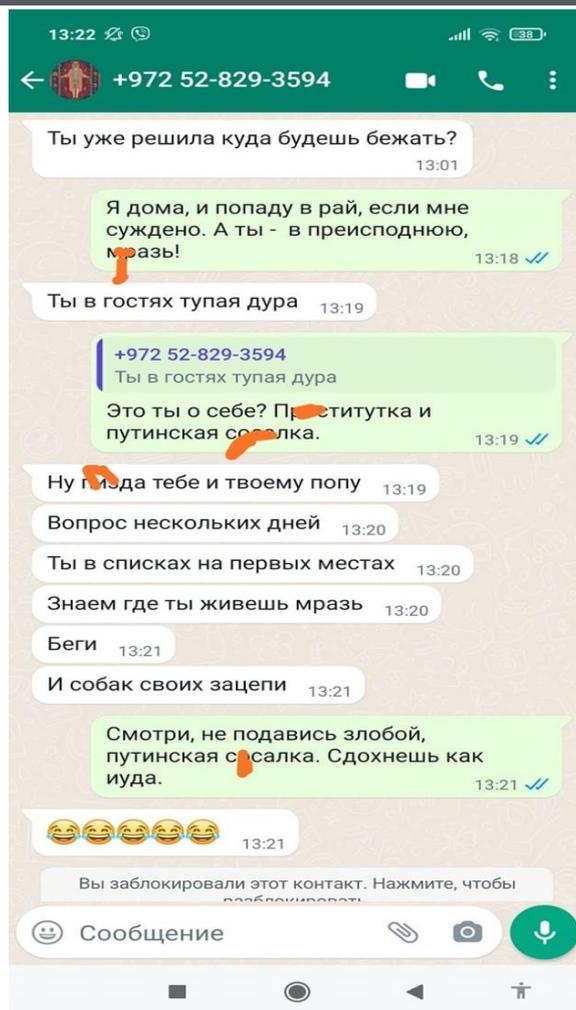


*Photo of the missing blogger Giga-mo*

- 15. Oleh Nykolaiev, priest.** On 14 March Russian soldiers abducted Oleh Nykolaiev in Berdyansk after surrounding his house. The armed soldiers searched the house, arrested Father Oleh and took him away in an unknown direction. His wife Yuliia has special needs and is need of regular therapy. She was ordered not to leave the house.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Пост запорізька єпархія Православної Церкви України в соціальній мережі Facebook, published March 14 2022 at 02:13, available at [https://www.facebook.com/pcu.zp.eparchy/posts/5310180895680067?\\_cft\\_\[0\]=AZWjlxZLILBjDjYB6w7E6PR61b7JysWZ91IO4G2FVprID4uSpeGicC7lp940SLRxsPS-66ZzgklSngGFBwsCKfCaPKtNlqRXGgPgo6oePU0IJZ9hn1jGwJqr34sJzDBOP\\_yBSbrKSPFR5fpMfF8eo0J3&\\_tn\\_=%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/pcu.zp.eparchy/posts/5310180895680067?_cft_[0]=AZWjlxZLILBjDjYB6w7E6PR61b7JysWZ91IO4G2FVprID4uSpeGicC7lp940SLRxsPS-66ZzgklSngGFBwsCKfCaPKtNlqRXGgPgo6oePU0IJZ9hn1jGwJqr34sJzDBOP_yBSbrKSPFR5fpMfF8eo0J3&_tn_=%2CO%2CP-R)



*Threats towards Nykolaiev's family*

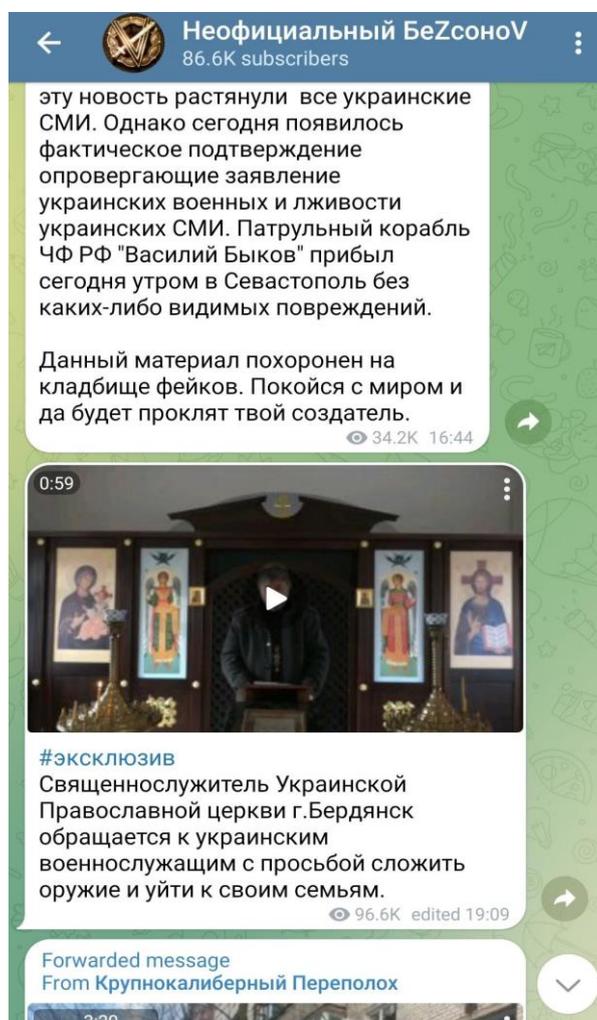
Prior to his detention, Nykolaiev and his wife had received threats.<sup>30</sup> Nykolaiev was released later the same day.<sup>31</sup> A video with the hashtag #Exclusive was shared by Telegram channels supporting Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine.<sup>32</sup> In the video, Nykolaiev is shown calling on Ukrainian servicemen to lay down their weapons

<sup>30</sup> В окупованому Бердянську родині священника ПЦУ Олега Ніколаєва погрожують убивством, published February 28 2022 at 12:16, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3415719-svaseniku-pcu-v-berdanku-zagroze-smertelna-nebezpeka.html>

<sup>31</sup> Пост Я.Мищенко в соціальній мережі Facebook published March 14 2022 at 08:11, available at: [https://www.facebook.com/lanagmailcom/posts/5416748721687616?\\_cft\\_\\_\[0\]=AZUV3-gMfXtZU0gxBO32RytrzOIj3bg7odirfdA7Mxp3jEf06W-9-MgyZt9jFIddC5jBHK6HqoD5kBfp794tEVxoVCpkee9SlnhHOoktap4Y6XOIITzdMbyXeJqIKcmgrq8&\\_tn= %2C0%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/lanagmailcom/posts/5416748721687616?_cft__[0]=AZUV3-gMfXtZU0gxBO32RytrzOIj3bg7odirfdA7Mxp3jEf06W-9-MgyZt9jFIddC5jBHK6HqoD5kBfp794tEVxoVCpkee9SlnhHOoktap4Y6XOIITzdMbyXeJqIKcmgrq8&_tn= %2C0%2CP-R)

<sup>32</sup> Телеграм канал Неофициальный БеЗсоноV, published March 16 2022 at 05:09, available at: <https://t.me/neoofficialnybezsonov/8957>

and return to their families. The video was published on 16 March although Nykolaiev was already free by then.



JOIN

*Screenshot from Telegram*

**16. Maksym Nehrov, activist.** Maksym Nehrov, Director of Tavriia Park, LLC and a member of the political party 'European Party of Ukraine', was abducted in Kherson on 15 March. He was reported missing by his friend on his social network page. The friend noted Nehrov had been captured by Russian soldiers and taken away in an unknown direction. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that Nehrov is suffering from a serious illness and requires careful medical care.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Пост В.Синявського в соціальній мережі Facebook, published March 17 2022, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/syniavskiy.valerii/posts/5412086728842353>



- 17. Vitalii Shevchenko, activist.** On 15 March Vitalii Shevchenko, organizer of pro-Ukrainian rallies that took place in Zaporizhzhya was abducted along with several other people. Some media outlets say that Rosgvardia soldiers (russian guard) were involved in his abduction.<sup>34</sup>
- 18. Serhii Slavov, relative of a people's deputy.** On 15 March Serhii Slavov, the husband of people's deputy at Zaporizhzhia Regional Council Iryna Slavova, was abducted. Slavova noted on her Facebook page: "... It is clear that they came for me. However, I managed to get to a safe place. My husband is not involved in my activities and the cases that might be of interest for those who took him away... All his accounts are active now and I understand why – they are searching for evidence». Her husband was released later and Slavova subsequently removed the abduction report. At the time of writing, the reference to the post stating that her husband had been abducted remains available in the media only.<sup>35</sup>
- 19. Oleksandr Yakovliev, city mayor.** On 16 March Russian soldiers abducted the mayor Skadovsk City, Oleksandr Yakovliev.<sup>36</sup> He was released the same day and expressed hope that other detainees would be released.<sup>37</sup>
- 20. Yurii Paliukh, Secretary of the City Council.** On 16 March Russian soldiers abducted Yurii Paliukh, Secretary of the local City Council at the same time as they abducted Yakovliev. Paliukh remains in detention at the time of writing.
- 21. Dmytro Vasyliiev, Secretary of the United Territorial Community.** On 16 March Dmytro Vasyliiev, Secretary of Nova Kakhovka United Territorial Community Council, was abducted. According to witnesses, Vasyliiev is being held in a temporary detention facility, which the occupation authorities use as a military commandant's office.<sup>38</sup> According to the same witnesses, Vasyliiev was subjected to torture.<sup>39</sup>
- 22. Viktor Tereshchenko, city mayor.** On 17 March the mayor of the Velykyi Burluk community, Viktor Tereshchenko, was detained at his workplace in Kharkiv Oblast. He is currently being held at the local police station.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Російські військові викрали активіста у Бердянську, published March 15 2022 at 18:47, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/03/15/7331640/>

<sup>35</sup> У Мелітополі депутатка облради повідомила, що викрали її чоловіка, published March 15 2022 at 10:56, available at: <https://suspihne.media/amp/217636-u-melitopoli-vikrali-colovika-deputatki-oblradi-irini-slavovoi/>

<sup>36</sup> Пост А.Костюченко в соціальній мережі Facebook published 17 March 02:16, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/kostyuchenka/posts/7152339894837625>

<sup>37</sup> Пост О. Яковлева в соціальній мережі Facebook, published March 15 2022 at 23:41, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/YakovlievOleksandr/videos/666218654695608/>

<sup>38</sup> Секретаря Новокаховської міськради посадили у підвал, published March 18 2022 at 17:44, available at: <https://novakahovka.city/articles/199547/sekretarya-novokahovskoi-miskradi-posadili-u-pidval->

<sup>39</sup> Пост Васильєвої Л.в соціальній мережі Facebook, published March 18 2022 at 16:44, available at: [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=5067611169962766&id=100001417987122](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=5067611169962766&id=100001417987122)

<sup>40</sup> У Харківській області окупанти викрали селищного голову Великобурлуцької громади, published March 17 2022 at 18:39, available at: <https://news.liga.net/ua/politics/news/v-harkovskoy-oblasti-okkupanty-vikrali-poselkovogo-glavu-velikoburlukskoy-gromady>



It is very difficult to establish the exact number of victims of enforced disappearance on territory of Russian-controlled so-called DNR and LNR and there is little information about abductions or disappearances of civilians in these areas.<sup>41</sup> The lives of those who were forcibly disappeared on the territories of the so-called DNR and LNR are possibly at much higher risk compared to other areas temporarily occupied by regular units of the Russian armed forces. The risks are increased because since 2014, in the territories of DNR and LNR, Russian officials have been creating a “security system” based on the Soviet law enforcement system of 1937 with the help of Russian intelligence and law enforcement officers and former law enforcement officers of Ukraine who joined the so-called Republics.

- 1) Since 2014, a network of places of imprisonment has been set up so-called DNR and LNR. These detention centres are both official and unofficial (such as the special base of the so-called “Ministry of State Security of the DPR” at 3 Svitlyi Shliakh Street, known as “Isolation”). If it is possible to get some information on detainees being held in “official” penitentiaries (i.e. prison buildings that functioned before the creation of the “republics”), information about detainees held in places such as “Isolation” is almost impossible to obtain.
- 2) After the escalation of the armed conflict in Ukraine, information about civilians detained by Russian law enforcement agencies or the law enforcement officers of the so called DNR and LNR is scarce.
- 3) Thus, representatives of the so-called republics may feel impunity and lack of any oversight or control over their activities, which undoubtedly creates more favourable conditions for enforced disappearances.

### **Executives who may be involved in enforced disappearances**

As the people’s deputy of Kherson Regional Council from European Solidarity Party Serhii Khlan notes, “... the perimeter of [Kherson] is controlled by Russian armed forces, and civilians [representatives of the Russian Federation] and representatives of the Rosgvardia (Russian guard) came directly to Kherson to support the occupation administration in the territories controlled by the Russian armed forces. The majority of the officers of Rosgvardia in the Kherson region [are] former members of the Ukrainian special police unit «Berkut», who joined the Russian Federation after the Revolution of Dignity”.<sup>42</sup>

The Office of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea notes that according to its sources “most people [in the newly occupied territories] are detained either at enemy checkpoints or by occupiers who appear at their places of residence”. At checkpoints set up by the occupiers, telephones and cars are checked. If the soldiers or officers of

<sup>41</sup> Пленных группировок «ЛДНР» агитируют воевать против Украины – правозащитники., published 16 March 2022 at 16:24, available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/donetsk-plenn-voyna/31754126.html>

<sup>42</sup>“Военные держат Херсон по периметру, а город контролирует Росгвардия”. Депутат Сергей Хлань о российских военных в захваченной области, published March 12 2022 at 21:11, available at: <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/rossiiskie-voennye-v-khersonne/31749937.html>



Rosgvardia at a checkpoint do not like anything about the car, phone or communication with the citizen, the person is detained. In addition, soldiers visit people at home. This applies mainly to Antiterrorist Operation/Operation of Joint Forces participants, Ukrainian law enforcement officers and representatives of the Crimean Tatar community. At the same time, for example, the occupiers are not interested in looters and do not prevent their illegal activities.<sup>43</sup>

From time to time, Russia sends troops to those settlements that are not under its control. The media outlet "Bridge" reported that a military convoy came to the village of Lazurne, Skadovsk district, Kherson region, to detain an SBU officer at his home. He was not at home, but his house was burgled.<sup>44</sup>

According to Kherson journalist Konstantyn Ryzhenko, who is in hiding in the occupied city, the Russian military has lists of civil servants, public figures, activists and civilians who help the Armed Forces of Ukraine.<sup>45</sup> According to the journalist, Russian troops have occupied a pre-trial detention centre in order to detain people, and in Nova Kakhovka they are using garages and basements as places of detention.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the Russian armed forces, Rosgvardia (i.e., representatives of law enforcement agencies of the Russian federation) are present in the occupied Ukrainian territories, as confirmed by eyewitnesses and videos.<sup>47</sup>

The occupying authorities also involve FSB (Federal Security Service) officers<sup>48</sup> and some of the local population, who allegedly suffered from the actions of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, and who now support the occupation regime. The presence of FSB representatives in the occupied territories was reported by various media. In addition, the involvement of FSB officers in the enforced disappearances is confirmed by photos and videos, such as those of Halyna Zakharchenko, whose house was raided early in the morning of 8 March by FSB officials. She posted on her Facebook page along with some photos from CCTV cameras.

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<sup>43</sup> Представництво Президента України в Автономній Республіці Крим, Ситуація по незаконному затриманню громадян України в тимчасово окупованих районах Херсонщини, published March 11 at 03:47, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ppu.gov.ua/posts/328851965955502>

<sup>44</sup> На Херсонщині загарбники викрадають людей з домівок та затримують на блокпостах, published March 11 2022 at 19:38, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3426913-na-hersonsini-zagarbniki-vikradaut-ludej-z-domivok-ta-zatrimuut-na-blokpostah.html>

<sup>45</sup> Из Херсона, занятого войсками РФ, сообщают о задержаниях активистов, published 12 March 2022, available at: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/iz-hersona-zanyatogo-voyskami-rf-soobschayut-o-zaderzhaniyah-aktivistov/31749996.html>

<sup>46</sup> «Вже не вистачає місць у камерах». На Херсонщині військові РФ переслідують активістів та журналістів, published March 12 2022, available at: <https://youtu.be/L07ezWJV5A>

<sup>47</sup> Росгвардия взяла под охрану Каховскую ГЭС в Херсонской области, published March 16 2022, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7pgCHbRzuY>

<sup>48</sup> Tweet user KherRadio / Радіо Херадіо @kherradio, published 11 March at, 11:21 PM available at: <https://twitter.com/i/status/1502243306964762624>

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*Still image from Halyna Zakharchenko's video*



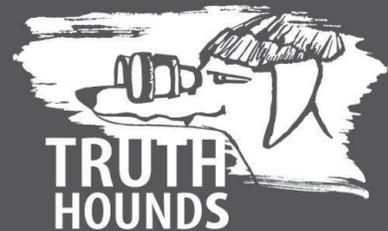
*A screenshot of Zakharchenko`s Facebook page about the visit of Russian law enforcement officers*

On 10 and 11 March FSB officials conducted searches, breaking into homes and at least four apartments belonging to pro-Ukrainian activists and members of patriotic organizations. In one case, according to eyewitnesses, they even used explosives to blow the front door open, probably trying to break into the home of representative of the National Corps (Ukrainian Nationalist Party) Mykyta Tiutiunnyk.<sup>49</sup>

In Kherson, Kyrylo Stremousov (blogger and head of the so-called "Committee for Peace and Rescue", a sham organization that the occupying forces are trying to portray as a transitional legitimate authority in the Kherson region<sup>50</sup>) threatens dissidents with Russian imprisonment.

<sup>49</sup> На Херсонщині зникають проукраїнські активісти та журналісти, published March 13 2022 at 17:06, available at <https://kavun.city/articles/198414/na-hersonschini-znikayut-proukrainski-aktivisti-ta-zhurnalisti>

<sup>50</sup> Пост в групі "Херсонщина за день", в соціальній мережі Facebook, published March 16 2022 at 17:31, available at: [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=394067122719086&id=100063474035056](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=394067122719086&id=100063474035056)



“Everyone who is against the 'Russian world', i.e., patriots, activists, journalists, is in danger here. Stremousov promises zachystki (cleaning operations) and prisons”, - one of the journalists in the regional centre told Institute of Mass Information. In one of his videos, Stremousov promised a "census" and punishment for "those who lived on grants." “The Nazis were killed, we will kill them in parasha (toilet), in any case. Nazis, be prepared, no one will talk to you here,” Stremousov said in a video he published.<sup>51</sup>

On 10 March the Information Resistance project released information about Stremousov’s possible connection to the FSB on its Telegram channel.<sup>52</sup> Correspondence allegedly received by hackers was added to confirm this. According to the authors, FSB officer Valerii Solokha and Kherson collaborator Viktor Yatsenko also took part in the correspondence. The latter was born in Kherson, and worked as the Minister of Communications of the DNR and has been declared as ‘wanted’ by the Security Service of Ukraine.

In addition to units of Russian armed forces, Rosgvardia and FSB, the presence of police officers of the Krasnodar Territory and Russian-occupied Crimea has been recorded in the Kherson region, as well as representatives of the so-called «MDB LNR» (Ministry of State Security of Luhansk People’s Republic).<sup>53</sup>

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<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovya-rosiyska-okupatsiya-vlady-khersonshchyna/31759012.html>

<sup>51</sup> У Херсоні колаборанти погрожують українцям застінками published March ,04 2022, at 11:34 available at: <https://imi.org.ua/news/u-hersoni-kolaboranty-pogrozhuut-zhurnalistam-zastinkamy-i44188>

<sup>52</sup> Взламана переписка, опублікована на Телеграм каналі Інформаційний спротив, available at: [https://t.me/inform\\_resistance/133](https://t.me/inform_resistance/133)

<sup>53</sup> Окупанти завозять на Херсонщину поліцію з окупованого Криму та Краснодарського краю, published March 17 2022, available at: [https://most.ks.ua/news/url/okupanti\\_zavozjat\\_na\\_hersonschinu\\_politsiju\\_z\\_okupovanogo\\_krimu\\_ta\\_krasnodarskogo\\_kraju](https://most.ks.ua/news/url/okupanti_zavozjat_na_hersonschinu_politsiju_z_okupovanogo_krimu_ta_krasnodarskogo_kraju)