

PEOPLE FIRST

Dear President Trump,

On the eve of your upcoming meeting with Vladimir Putin, we, the undersigned — Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, human rights and press freedom defenders, former political prisoners, and families of those still in detention and captivity — appeal to you to take decisive humanitarian action that could save thousands of lives.

The Russian Federation continues to hold tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war. Tens of thousands more are missing as victims of enforced disappearances. Thousands of Russian political prisoners deprived of their liberty because of their anti-war positions and actions remain behind bars.

Conditions in Russian-controlled facilities are inhuman: civilian detainees and POWs, men and women, are tortured including by being beaten unconscious, forced to stand motionless for up to 16 hours a day, subject to electric shocks (including to the genitals), raped, and denied medical aid, even when they are seriously ill. Some of them have already died in captivity. These are not isolated incidents but torture is a *systematic practice*. There are grounds to fear that without urgent intervention, most will not survive until the end of this war.

All unlawfully detained civilians must be immediately released. The most vulnerable groups, among Ukrainian civilians and POWs whose release cannot wait are:

- Women who are at risk of sexual violence
- persons with disabilities and serious illnesses, or who have been seriously wounded including through torture
- older detainees with health conditions
- civilians imprisoned for political reasons years before the full-scale invasion.

Mr. President, you are calling for a cease fire to save tens of thousands of lives, to prevent civilians from dying on the frontlines and in peaceful Ukrainian cities. In the same way, you can demand the release of people to save tens of thousands of lives, to prevent them from dying in detention, incommunicado, in Russia's darkest cells — by facilitating the release of Ukrainian civilians, starting with the most vulnerable groups. Their continued detention is equivalent to hostage-taking. You can demand the repatriation of gravely ill POWs, ensuring that an “all for all” release of all prisoners of war on both sides, including those unlawfully

convicted, can be achieved when the fighting ends. Russian political prisoners, jailed for their anti-war statements and actions should also be released.

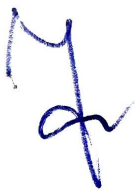
Such an achievement would not only save lives but would also stand as a historic act of statesmanship, earning deep gratitude from thousands of families and admiration from people of conscience around the globe. It would prove that even in the darkest moments, decisive leadership and moral courage can change the fate of thousands of lives.

We are ready to provide your team with supporting documentation, and direct testimony from survivors. Our Nobel Peace Prize Laureates — the *Center for Civil Liberties* and the *International Memorial Society* — will stand ready to support your efforts in saving the lives of captives of this war in any way possible.

Free people fist.

Respectfully,

Oleksandra Matviichuk, Head of the Center for Civic Liberties (Ukraine), 2022 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate



Oleg Orlov, Head of the Memorial Human Rights Defense Center (Russia), 2022 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate



And 73 organizations of the People1st Initiative [People First](#)