



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

*we, the participants of the Carpathian Sea Democracy Week, the NGO "Human Rights Protection Group "SICH" and the Center for Civil Liberties, address an open appeal to the **Member States of the Council of Europe** with a call for more decisive actions in support of Ukrainian civilians illegally deprived of their liberty by the aggressor country:*

Since 2014, Ukraine has been heroically resisting the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, which is aimed at destroying the foundations of statehood and destroying the Ukrainian people. The aggressor country cynically violates the UN Charter and norms of international humanitarian law. The aggressor does not stop committing war crimes for a single day, and his strategy is a policy of terror against the civilian population of the occupied territories of Ukraine, which is confirmed by the systematic practice of kidnappings, illegal imprisonments, forced deportations to Russia, and torture in captivity.

Thousands of Ukrainians of different ages and genders, including the sick, the elderly, and women, are illegally deprived of their liberty by the occupying country. Civilians in places of forced detention are kept in inhumane conditions, without the necessary medical care, warm clothes, food and medicine. They have neither access to independent lawyers nor the opportunity to communicate with their relatives. According to the testimony of those released, medieval torture, humiliation and systematic deprivation of rights and dignity are applied to prisoners. Civilians have been detained for years without any charges with the occupants hiding them from their relatives and withholding the information about the places of their illegal detention from the Ukrainian authorities, which is a gross violation of Art. 5 § 1 of the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

In this regard, we appeal to the **Member States of the Council of Europe**, as an authoritative international institution, with a call:

a) Increase diplomatic, political and sanctions pressure on the Russian Federation in order to release and return civilians who are illegally deprived of their liberty in the occupied territories and in the Russian Federation.

b) Make the Russian Federation comply with the norms of the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the Geneva Convention on the Protection of the Civilian Population in Time of War, namely: to ensure the correspondence of Ukrainians deprived of their liberty with their relatives; admission of lawyers to civilian Ukrainians against whom there are no criminal cases; stop the practice of keeping prisoners of war and civilians in prison conditions; provide adequate nutrition and medical care.

c) Encourage the Russian Federation to introduce the institution of international observers at trials against Ukrainians.

d) Oblige the aggressor state to provide international organizations access to places of detention.

e) Force the Russian Federation to participate in discussing procedural issues involving the Protecting State in the process of releasing illegally detained civilians.

f) Make the ICRC act as a substitute for the Protecting State, arising from the norms of the Geneva Conventions, in order to provide protection and assistance to victims of conflicts.

We also ask the **Member States of the Council of Europe**, using all possible mechanisms and levers of influence:

a) Promote the creation of a special criminal tribunal to bring to justice those guilty of armed aggression and to collect reparations from the aggressor state;

б) Begin implementation of universal jurisdiction over war criminals in other countries, who can conduct their own investigations based on war crimes in Ukraine;

в) Update the expert dialogue regarding the search for legal levers of influence on the aggressor state;

г) Promote the development of legal forms of activity of joint investigative groups looking into war crimes of the Russian Federation in Ukraine; to provide assistance to Ukraine in the investigation of war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross violations of human rights in the occupied territories;

д) Insist on the responsibility of the aggressor state for violating the provisions of the Memorandum on Security Guarantees in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We call on other participants of the *Carpathian Sea Democracy Week* to support this appeal.

