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"Torture without a trace": Ukrainian journalist Iryna Danilovych's alarm cry from Russian prison, addressed to the European Union

In a letter sent in mid-July to the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Pina Picierno, Ukrainian journalist Iryna Danilovych denounces the psychological torture inflicted on detainees in the Russian female prison where she is being held, after having been deported from Crimea nearly two years ago. In response, Pina Picierno expressed her concern on 18 July. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is calling for her immediate release and urges the European Union (EU) to continue its efforts to secure the freedom of Ukrainian journalists arbitrarily imprisoned by the Kremlin.

A "torture without a trace," made up of psychological violence, unseen on the body but with devastating long-term effects. These are the terms used by independent journalist from Crimea, **Iryna Danilovych**, to describe the conditions of her detention. [Deported](#) from occupied Ukrainian Crimea to Russia on July 24, 2023, she was then transferred to the women's prison in Zelenokumsk, in southern Russia, nearly 1,000 kilometers from her home region, where she has now been incarcerated for nearly two years.

In a letter addressed to European Parliament Vice-President Pina Picierno - [part](#) of which was made public by her relatives on 15 July - she denounces a regime of psychological harassment by the Russian prison authorities: artificial light kept on day and night, depriving detainees of any darkness, and daily broadcasts of deafening sounds causing auditory pain. The Ukrainian reporter compares these methods to those used by the Gestapo, the Nazi regime's political police.

Pina Picierno reacted on [X](#) on 18 July, telling she was "profoundly concerned about Iryna Danilovych's condition" and stating that the EU institutions with the civil society and the international community were "actively working to find a practical solution to ensure justice for her."

*"Psychological torture, lack of medical care, geographic isolation: in Russia, the detention conditions imposed by the Kremlin aim to break the resistance of Ukrainian journalists. RSF had already documented this in the case of Ukrainian journalist **Victoria Roshchyna**, who died in the Kremlin's jails. Iryna Danilovych has now been arbitrarily detained for over three years, and deported from Crimea to Russia nearly two years ago. She must be released, and the EU must continue its efforts for the release of all Ukrainian journalists still held.*

Pauline Maufrais

RSF regional officer for Ukraine

Inhumane and degrading prison treatment

Since her detention in Russia nearly two years ago, Iryna Danilovych has relentlessly [denounced](#) inhumane and degrading prison conditions: almost complete lack of medical care, inability to receive medication sent by her family despite her fragile health, and long hours spent standing in the rain and cold.

Working as a nurse, she became a reporter and was known for collaborating notably for *Krym.Realii*, *Radio Svoboda's* project, the local branch of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)*, and the local news site *InZhir-Media*. She was [arrested](#) in Crimea in April 2022 and was [sentenced](#) to seven years in prison on fabricated charges of "illegally manufacturing, transporting or possessing explosives."

RSF has [filed](#) a complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) against the Kremlin for the deportation of Ukrainian journalists from occupied Ukrainian territories to Russian territory.

28 Ukrainian journalists behind bars

Twenty-eight Ukrainian media professionals remain [imprisoned](#) by Russia, and only one — *Radio Svoboda's* correspondent in Crimea, Vladyslav Yesypenko, from *RFE/RL's* Ukrainian service — has recently been [released](#) after serving an unjust sentence.

Ukraine and Russia rank 62nd and 171st respectively out of 180 countries and territories in RSF's [2025 World Press Freedom Index](#).

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Austrian Red Cross	Wiedner Hauptstraße	Contact
Austrian Centre for	32, 1041 Wien	Imprint & Disclaimer
Country of Origin and	T +43 1 589 00 583	F.A.Q.
Asylum Research and	F +43 1 589 00 589	Data Protection Notice
Documentation	info@ecoi.net	
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