



THE AFTERMATH OF CAPTIVITY: CHALLENGES FACED BY RELEASED CIVILIANS



Study Report

“The Aftermath of Captivity: Challenges Faced by Released Civilians”

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This publication presents the findings of a comprehensive study on the needs, challenges, and experiences of civilians who were illegally imprisoned by Russian authorities and subsequently returned to Ukrainian-controlled territory. The study was conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation on behalf of the human rights NGO «Civis Fortis: Foundation for Civil Society Protection,» with the support of the Czech humanitarian organization People in Need. The report contains a detailed analysis of the challenges faced by released civilians at the reintegration stage: access to medical and psychological assistance, restoration of documents, obtaining special status, and meeting basic housing and financial needs. Based on data from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with victims and subject-matter experts, the effectiveness of existing state support has been analyzed and practical recommendations for central and local government bodies have been developed. The publication is intended for representatives of central and local government authorities, social sector workers, human rights defenders, representatives of civil society organizations, and all professionals involved in shaping reintegration policy and providing assistance to victims of armed aggression against Ukraine.



Some of the images used in this document were generated using artificial intelligence technologies. This was done for security reasons and to preserve the anonymity of survey participants. Any visual resemblance of these images to real persons is coincidental.

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Foreword



This report grew out of the daily practice of accompanying people who returned from Russian captivity. Working with them, we at Civis Fortis quickly understood: beyond the obvious shortage of resources, Ukraine critically lacks a system — above all, a system of accompaniment, support, and assistance for civilian detainees.

We have witnessed how varied the paths of return can be: some are released through mutual exchange procedures, some escape captivity independently, making their way through third countries, others upon leaving captivity are able to return to de-occupied territories. But despite these different routes of return, all of these people share a common problem — the absence of a clear, comprehensible “civilian detainee pathway” after Day Zero, i.e., from the moment of release.

Today in Ukraine there is effectively no coherent support model that would cover:

- emergency assistance in the first hours and days after release (medical, psychological, material, and informational);
- medium-term support — at the stage of rehabilitation, document restoration, finding housing, and securing a basic income;
- long-term accompaniment — when the question is no longer merely one of survival, but of genuine social reintegration, access to healthcare, education, employment, and legal and psychological support for years to come.

This is felt most acutely by those who returned outside of a state-organized exchange — they often simply “do not exist” for the system: without status, without recognition of the fact of captivity, without the right to the guarantees provided by law. It was precisely by observing their stories that

we came to understand: what is needed is not merely to “patch the gaps” through the efforts of civil society, but to give the state and society a systemic, evidence-based picture of what happens to civilian detainees after release.

That is why it was of fundamental importance to our team to initiate and carry out this sociological study. We wanted not merely to collect individual stories, but to systematize the experiences of victims and experts in a way that could serve as the foundation for designing real mechanisms of assistance — from legislative changes to specific procedures in hospitals, Administrative Service Centers (ASCs), or social protection agencies.

It is also important to highlight the temporal dimension of this report. The collection of primary data began before the “large exchange” and reflected one reality — when the number of released civilians was considerably smaller and assistance practices were only just taking shape. The main field phase — in-depth interviews with respondents and experts, analysis of “bottlenecks” in the system — took place after some of those surveyed had returned from captivity from May–June 2025 onwards. This made it possible to observe the dynamics of change as well: what had improved, where old problems remained, and where new challenges or solutions were visibly forming.

At the center of this study are not structural diagrams or regulatory acts. At the center is a civilian victim who survived unlawful deprivation of liberty, torture, and isolation, and then found themselves face to face with a chaotic and fragmented support system. Every quotation in the text is not merely an illustration, but an attempt to give voice to those whose experience we as a society are not yet fully prepared to hear and come to terms with.

In publishing this report, we have two key goals:

First, to help the victims themselves — through advocacy for changes in legislation and practice, through the development of clearer “pathways” of

assistance for civilian detainees, and through the strengthening of the role of social, medical, psychological, and legal services.

Second, to propose a shared basis for action — for civil society organizations, international partners, and state institutions. We are convinced that only through cooperation among these three spheres can effective accompaniment mechanisms be created — ones that do not depend on individual decisions or “manual mode,” but guarantee dignified support to every person who has returned from captivity.

For Civis Fortis, this report is not a final full stop, but on the contrary, a starting point for further joint work. We are grateful to all the respondents who agreed to share their experiences, and to all the partners who are already today ready to translate these findings into concrete steps.

Our goal is to ensure that no person who has returned from Russian captivity is left alone to face the system, and that the state has a clear, predictable response to their needs — from Day Zero and throughout their lives thereafter.

Liudmyla Yankina,
Chairperson of Civis Fortis

Glossary

IDPs	Internally displaced person is a citizen of Ukraine who was forced to leave their place of residence due to armed conflict, occupation, or an emergency situation.	NGO	Voluntary self-governing organs or organizations created for achieving non-profit goals (public organizations, charitable associations, foundations, etc.).
PO/NGO	Public/Non-Governmental Organization is an association of citizens that carries out activity in the sphere of protection of rights, provision of psychological, social, or legal support to persons released from captivity.	Ombudsman	The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights is an institution that carries out parliamentary control over the observance of human rights and freedoms, in particular of persons who were in captivity.
Unified Register	A state database in which persons released from captivity are recorded. Full name: The Unified Register of Persons for Whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty Has Been Established.	Post-Isolation Measures	Actions conducted after release from places of detention to adapt to peaceful life, including medical, psychological, legal, social, and educational support.
CMU	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine is the highest organ in the system of executive power, which adopts resolutions and orders that determine state policy, in particular in the sphere of social protection of persons released from captivity.	PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental disorder that arises after experiencing extremely stressful events, in particular violence, isolation, or torture.
Commission on Establishing the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty	An interdepartmental body that acts on the basis of the provisions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1281 dated November 15, 2022 and officially confirms the fact of captivity of civilians and military persons. The Commission's decisions are the basis for entering data into the Unified Register and providing state assistance.	Rehabilitation	A complex of measures for the restoration of physical, mental, and social functions of a person after injuries, diseases, or operations.
MoH	Ministry of Health of Ukraine is the central organ of executive power that forms and implements state policy in the sphere of health care, in particular organizes the provision of medical and rehabilitative assistance to persons released from captivity.	Reintegration	The process of return of a released person to full social life, which covers medical, psychological, economic, and legal restoration.
MSEC	Medical-Social Expert Commission is a state organ that determines the degree of loss of working capacity or establishes disability after wounds, torture, or other injuries received in captivity.	SSU	The Security Service of Ukraine is a state organ of special purpose, which ensures national security, in particular takes part in the release of captives and the investigation of crimes connected with illegal deprivation of liberty during armed aggression.
PTR	Places of Temporary Residence are housing objects intended for temporary placement of vulnerable categories of the population, among which are persons released from captivity, IDPs, and veterans.	Social Manager / Case Manager	A specialist who accompanies a released person during the receipt of assistance and coordinates interaction between state, communal, and public organizations.
		Released Civilian Detainee	A citizen of Ukraine who was illegally deprived of liberty as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and subsequently returned to the government-controlled territory.

Executive Summary

The study certifies the presence of numerous challenges faced by civilians released from captivity. From the point of view of the released, the most painful of them remain: the availability of housing, receiving medical care, restoration of documents, and ensuring financial needs. From the point of view of experts, besides these challenges, urgent are the provision of medical accompaniment, provision of clothing, psychological assistance, complex and relevant informing of released civilians about their rights and possibilities of receiving assistance.

The surveyed experts believe: the category of released civilian detainees is not homogeneous, and for its different subcategories, the measure of urgency of issues differs. It is possible to distinguish such subcategories of released civilians:

- 1) those released as a result of mutual releases organized by state organs, and those who independently freed themselves / returned from occupied Ukrainian territories or from the territory of the RF;
- 2) those released in 2025 and those released earlier (during 2019–2024);
- 3) those released who have relatives, close ones, friends on the territories controlled by the Ukrainian authorities and receive support from them, and those released who do not have such support.

As of 2025, the system of primary medical care to released individuals looks insufficiently balanced. Released civilians undergo medical check-up and, in case of need, receive treatment. However, released civilians and surveyed experts noted that not infrequently medical care to the released is limited to diagnostics and recommendations regarding further treatment instead of effective treatment. Also, during examination and treatment, a specialized approach to released civilians is absent: they are placed in general medical institutions, doctors and medical personnel do not have special training. Released civilians face a shortage of necessary medicines, and the

duration of their initial hospitalization does not meet their health recovery needs. Access to dental care and a lack of awareness among released civilians regarding further rehabilitation and sanatorium-resort treatment also remain critical issues.

Housing provision of released civilians remains problematic. All surveyed released before 2025 do not have their own housing. They reside in modular towns, dormitories, hostels, rented apartments, as well as with friends. The surveyed who were released during 2025 predominantly stay in hospitals on rehabilitation. For them, the question of housing provision also stands very acutely, which negatively influences the effectiveness of treatment, rehabilitation, and the state of their mental health.

To ensure the released with housing, experts propose to create a state system of points of temporary settlement for the released and to provide aid (full or partial) from the state's side in renting housing (in particular, with social rent).

For the majority of the surveyed released individuals who acquired the status of a person deprived of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, obtaining this status occurred fairly quickly (within a month). However, some released civilians face the challenge of acquiring this status, as it requires documentary proof of their unlawful detention, which they do not always possess. Proving the fact of captivity is particularly burdensome for persons who returned independently, outside of official releases.

The majority of the surveyed experts consider current state guarantees insufficient in terms of the scope of medical care and financial payments. They proposed: 1) expanding the scope of the law regarding the status of released individuals and payments for them to new categories of victims; 2) simplifying the procedure for granting status; 3) changing the composition of the commission that grants the status by increasing the representation

of public organizations, as well as individuals with firsthand experience of captivity.

The restoration of basic documents for released civilians (such as passports, taxpayer identification numbers [RNOKPP], driver's licenses, IDP certificates, etc.) is done fairly quickly. However, issues usually arise during the restoration of other documents: released civilians face challenges when recovering higher education diplomas (especially medical ones), employment history, pension documents, and military registration records. In cases of problems with document restoration, released individuals require legal accompaniment.

The most significant form of financial support for released civilians remains the payment of state aid. Some released individuals can qualify for IDP aid, payments from local budgets, and non-governmental aid from public organizations and charitable foundations.

At the same time, the issue of financial support for released civilians remains acute. First, the need for money arises the very moment they are released, whereas the state payments they are entitled to arrive only after a certain, sometimes prolonged, period. Second, state payments are not received by those released individuals who lack the official status of a person deprived of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine. Third, the stipulated state payment of UAH 100,000 is currently insufficient, as its amount was determined back in 2018.

Psychological assistance is offered to all surveyed released civilians. The majority of the surveyed (regardless of how much time had passed since their release) noted that they need such assistance, and those who received it reported positive therapy outcomes. The majority of surveyed released civilians believed they would continue to need psychological assistance in the future. Surveyed experts assessed the currently available volume of psychological assistance as insufficient, specifically highlighting the problem of a shortage of qualified psychologists trained to work with released civilians.

Released civilians require medical care, social assistance, and reintegration for a long time. Study participants note the necessity of long-term social accompaniment for released civilians. At the same time, surveyed experts pointed out that current social workers were unprepared to work with released civilians. The opinion was expressed that it was necessary to find a balance between providing released civilians with comprehensive assistance and teaching them to care for themselves independently (in order to prevent dependency on external assistance).

Many released civilians noted a lack of coordination among state organs and institutions, as well as with public organizations. The surveyed experts evaluate the provision of state services to released civilians as insufficiently qualitative due to poor informing of the released individuals about state types of aid and a lack of proactivity. The experts believe that state aid to the released individuals must become more systematic and holistic. At the same time, most of them noted progress in the practices of assisting the released individuals.

Study Methodology

In the conditions of the Russo-Ukrainian war, one of the noticeable humanitarian issues has become the fate of civilians whom the Russian authorities imprison in the occupied Ukrainian territories and in Russia itself. Such people are successfully released (or they themselves reach territories controlled by the Ukrainian government). However, in freedom, they face significant challenges.

With the aim of collecting reliable data regarding the needs, challenges, and experience of released civilians, developing recommendations for state organs and organs of local self-government regarding the improvement of the policy of reintegration and support of the latter, forming a basis for the development of a state program of accompaniment and assistance to released civilians, a study of the current situation of released civilians was organized.

The study customer is the human rights public organization “Civis Fortis: Foundation for the Protection of Civil Society”; the collection and analysis of data was carried out by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. Support in conducting the study was provided by the humanitarian organization People in Need.

To obtain reliable data about the challenges and needs of released civilians, the following were conducted:

- 3 focus-group discussions and 13 individual in-depth interviews with persons who were in Russian captivity. The total number of released civilians involved in the study is 36 persons;
- in-depth interviews with persons who are directly involved in providing various assistance to released civilians, namely work in charitable foundations, public and human rights organizations, state organs that address the challenges of released civilians. Accordingly, such persons are experts regarding the challenges and needs faced by released civilians. The total number of surveyed experts is 25 persons.

During the focus-group discussions and interviews, the main challenges faced by civilians after release, the specificity of their needs, the evaluation of assistance they receive from the state, organs of local self-government, and public organizations, and ideas about possible ways of solving current and future challenges were clarified.

The selection of informants (released civilians and experts) was carried out in a purposeful manner from those released civilians who received assistance from the Civis Fortis NGO (or received assistance from other public organizations), and from among workers of various institutions and organizations that provide assistance to released civilians and with which the Civis Fortis NGO cooperates.

To take into account the influence of time that has passed after release, both persons released recently (the year 2025) and those who returned earlier (the years 2019–2024) were included in the study. The overwhelming majority (30 persons) was constituted by those released in 2025, of whom 25 persons were released in August 2025, and another 5 – in the period of March–July 2025. Another 5 persons were released in 2019–2024.

By the method of release, the majority of respondents (33 persons) were released within the framework of organized exchanges, while 2 persons returned to the territory controlled by Ukraine independently.

Kyiv was the primary location where released civilians received medical treatment (including medical institutions in Kyiv Region). All surveyed received treatment in Kyiv, of whom 27 – exclusively in Kyiv, and 8 underwent treatment also in other regions of Ukraine and abroad.

The field stage of the study lasted in October 2025.

The statements expressed in this study belong to the respondents in the interpretation of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. The Civis Fortis Foundation for the Protection of Civil Society may not share some of them, but leaves them in the study to prevent censoring.

Problem Description

Russia’s full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine has confronted Ukrainian society and the state with challenges that go far beyond the immediate military confrontation. One such challenge — systemic and still insufficiently recognized — is the fate of thousands of civilians who were illegally deprived of their liberty by the occupying authorities and found themselves in a situation for which Ukraine still lacks an adequate legal framework or an effective support mechanism.

The unlawful imprisonment of civilians is not a spontaneous phenomenon but an element of deliberate occupation policy. The vast majority of those who ended up in captivity in the occupied territories are people who openly upheld Ukraine’s sovereignty: local activists and community leaders, journalists, human rights defenders, volunteers, representatives of local government bodies, and simply active citizens whose stance made them dangerous to the occupation structures. Their persecution had a clear logic: to destroy nodes of resistance in communities, to intimidate the population, to suppress any manifestation of civic identity. This is precisely why these people are not merely victims of war crimes — they are a symbol of resistance, and their return to a full life is a question not only of a humanitarian but also of a socio-political nature.

Yet Ukraine is not yet ready to respond to this question systematically. Released civilians return to a society that was not expecting them: without a clear support “pathway,” without a designated responsible authority, without sufficient resources, and without established standards for working with this category of victims. The state broadly acknowledges the existence of the problem, but responds to it primarily on a situational basis — depending on the scale of a particular exchange, its media resonance, and the availability of civil society organizations nearby. A systemic, guaranteed, circumstance-independent approach does not exist.

This gap has consequences that go beyond individual tragedies. In the conditions of a prolonged defensive war, a state that is unable to protect and rehabilitate those who suffered for their pro-Ukrainian stance sends a devastating signal to the entire society — that civic engagement is unprotected and self-sacrifice goes unrecognized. This undermines social cohesion and trust in institutions at precisely the moment when both are a strategic resource for a country at war.

None of the actors can resolve this problem alone. The state has sufficient levers to shape a legislative framework and coordinate resources, but lacks both the flexibility and the proximity to victims that are key to working with this category of people. Civil society has accumulated unique expertise and the trust of released individuals, but operates under project-based funding and constant resource instability. International partners and donors have both the funds and the experience of similar crises in other contexts, but without strategic vision from the Ukrainian state, their support remains fragmented.

The challenge, therefore, lies not in a shortage of individual solutions — it lies in the absence of a single, coordinated mechanism in which the state, civil society, and international partners act according to shared standards, within a shared legal framework, and with an understanding of shared responsibility. Creating such a mechanism is not a technical task but a question of political will and strategic choice — a choice in favor of a society that does not abandon its own.

It is precisely toward building the evidence base for this choice that this report is directed.



1 **KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY CIVILIANS RELEASED FROM CAPTIVITY**

Among the most pressing issues and challenges, the surveyed civilians who were released in 2025 most frequently placed housing, treatment (specifically dental care), document restoration, and meeting financial needs at the top of their list. Those individuals who had been released earlier enumerated the same challenges, except that for them, receiving medical care was unequivocally in first place.

Among the most significant challenges faced by released civilians, the surveyed experts mentioned housing provision, document restoration (specifically acquiring official status), receiving medical care and accompaniment, clothing provision, receiving psychological assistance, obtaining a sufficient volume of information regarding the rights of released civilians and their opportunities to receive aid, and the availability of sufficient financial security. Experts most frequently placed challenges with housing provision and document restoration in first place.

At the same time, a number of experts emphasized that it is difficult to determine priority challenges, as they exist in a complex and there are many released individuals who require literally everything (medical care, clothing, document restoration, monetary aid, housing provision, psychological assistance, and legal aid).

Regarding the possibilities of resolving the challenges faced by released civilian detainees, a fairly widespread conviction among experts is that this is entirely possible provided there is desire and political will.

At the same time, when formulating state policy, it is worth considering that the extent and urgency of the challenges faced by released civilian detainees are not the same for everyone, as this group is not homogeneous.

First, differences exist in the condition and needs of civilians who were released as a result of mutual releases organized by state organs, and those who independently freed themselves and returned from occupied Ukrainian territories or from Russia. Indeed, representatives of the second category

become the least protected and do not receive the necessary assistance, as it is difficult or even impossible for them to prove the fact of imprisonment and torture. As a result, such released civilians do not acquire the status of a person unlawfully deprived of freedom.

Expert assessments

“If they were released independently, they receive nothing at all.”

“There is no support for these people because they cannot obtain any status. They didn’t even get into a hospital, as all civilians do immediately after release. They didn’t even receive that medical care or help with documents if they were lost. In principle, they are completely without all this.”

Accordingly, experts proposed introducing amendments to the relevant law*, which regulates state aid to released civilian detainees, which would ease their receipt of support.

The potential for receiving aid also differs between those individuals who were released in 2025 and those who released themselves earlier (during 2019–2024). Civilians who were released during 2025, received significantly greater aid and support due to better-established mechanisms for providing aid and better recording of information regarding their needs. In contrast, those released before 2025 received significantly less aid immediately (or even none at all), and over time, attention toward them continues to decrease.

The complexity of challenges also depends on whether the released individuals have relatives, close ones, or friends in Ukraine and the opportunity to receive help and support from them. The absence of close ones and property on government-controlled territories puts the released individuals in an even more difficult position.

* Evidently, this refers to the Law of Ukraine On Social and Legal Protection of Persons in Respect of Whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine has been Established, and Their Family Members <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2010-20#Text>



2

**MEDICAL CARE
FOR RELEASED
CIVILIANS**

As of 2025, the system of primary medical care to the released individuals looks established. Civilian detainees who were released through the mutual release procedure were initially placed in a medical institution in Chernihiv, with a very limited examination (general examination, taking of primary analyses without appointment of treatment*).

Testimonies of released civilian detainees:

“At first, we just had a week of rest: nobody did anything, we just rested and adapted.”

“An examination in the hospital without any treatment.”

“They brought us straight to the hospital... we stayed there for 5 days. Basically, nothing was done regarding our health. We were just staying there. Blood tests were then taken 3 days later. They were taken at night, when we were already leaving.”

“In the hospital, people treated us wonderfully, they smiled, but there was no actual work done. None at all. It was done just for show; they took blood but provided no results. And most importantly, this document, the certificate... in which they write ‘no complaints.’ Later, when a doctor looks at it, they say, ‘How can I prove you had injuries or shrapnel in your hip if the primary examination says you have no complaints?’ He said it was the same way last time.”

Further, the released civilians were directed to the Kyiv Regional Hospital, where they underwent a thorough medical check-up, and in case of need received treatment.

At the same time, the available approach has a number of significant drawbacks.

First, the released civilians and surveyed experts noted that even during stay in the Kyiv Regional Hospital, care often was limited to diagnostics and recommendations regarding further treatment.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees:

“We did not receive health restoration services. We received all the tests. ... They diagnose you there, and that’s it.”

“First, there was an examination in the hospital. Then, based on those results, they recommend some treatment.”

“The medical examination... it was, shall we say, minor, and in my opinion, it didn’t quite meet what it should have been. They looked at things, ‘yes, yes.’ They made some discharge summaries, and that was the end of it.”

“If you have something acute, they pay attention to it. If it’s superficial or not acute, then...”

“There was an examination, but no one even told me the results. I have heart problems; I have leg problems. They did the examination: it’s not critical, no surgery needed. But what then? Well, ‘take painkillers, use an ointment.’”

“They were supposed to keep us for 21 days; they did something urgent for some people, but otherwise, they just tell you, ‘You need to come back then and then,’ ‘Here is the doctor, get in touch,’ ‘You’ve got prescribed treatment.’ But without staying in the hospital anymore.”

* In accordance with paragraph 10 of the Procedure for Conducting Restorative (Post-Isolation, Reintegration) Measures, Adaptation, Support (Accompaniment) of Persons in Respect of Whom the Fact of Deprivation of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine Has Been Established, Following Their Release, approved by Resolution of the CMU No. 296 dated March 15, 2024 (hereinafter the Procedure), medical, rehabilitative, and psychological assistance to the released individuals must be provided urgently after their delivery by authorized for their accompaniment organs (persons) to centers of reintegration or institutions of health care.

Expert assessments

"Those released through exchange are taken to the hospital, and in fact, the hospital performs a good screening. However, they find the problems, set the diagnoses, and discharge them. That's it: you take those diagnoses and go do whatever you want."

"The state only examined them but provided no treatment at all."

Second, in work with the released civilians, a specialized approach is absent. Such individuals require more attention from the medical side due to specifics of available traumas and diseases, as well as a special attitude to them during treatment. Instead, the released civilians are placed in general medical institutions, work with them like with ordinary patients; in particular medical personnel is not prepared to work with them, and doctors work with them without reduction of the standard workload by other patients.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

"We were brought to the regional hospital and placed in the urology department. In other words, there is no specific rehabilitation department for people like us. We were placed that way: there was a vacant place in urology – someone was placed in urology, someone in cardiology, someone in traumatology. That is, they just placed us wherever there was a free bed. There was no single center where we could all be brought together and told, 'Lads, you be here, and the doctors will come to you.'"

"This is a hospital where planned work is ongoing. It's actually a surgical department where complex operations are performed. We were put there, and we felt like a burden to those doctors. We felt it. We violated their planned rhythm of work."

Third, insufficient provision of the released civilians with necessary medicines. The released civilians are provided with medicines in negligible quantities; for the most part, they are forced to purchase medical supplies at their own expense, often in conditions where they have little to no funds.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

"Then there's the issue with pills. I have a stomach ulcer. ... I say, 'Give me some probiotics; I need to take them to treat my stomach.' They say, 'We don't have any, buy them with your own money.' Health is more important, so I went and spent UAH 1,000 to buy them."

Expert assessment

"Some were prescribed drugs they had to buy themselves, but they had no money at all... Treatment was prescribed, and they were told – go buy the drugs and then you can be treated. There is a total lack of pharmaceutical supply. The hospitals are not provided."

Fourth, the duration of released civilians' initial hospitalization is not always sufficient for treatment.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

"It is very frustrating that we are given a fixed period during which we are allowed to stay in hospital. As far as I understand, that period is about one month."

Expert assessment

“What is currently being done is a maximum of two weeks in the hospital; there are some support facilities... but in reality, it is insufficient.”

In addition to problems with access to primary medical care, study participants also pointed to deficiencies in sustained medical care. Such care is typically required by all released civilians who have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

“In our case, there was no provision for a sanatorium rehabilitation stage. Previously, after hospital examinations, people would still go somewhere else... it was individualized, based on certain medical indications... but in our case, once the hospital stay expired, they simply told us, ‘We are discharging you.’”

Expert assessments

“In this facility, a person receives the medical care they need, or if doctors see no need for hospitalization, they are not even admitted. After that, they are discharged, and that is all.”

“Recovery after release depends on how traumatic the captivity was, the types of torture and violence endured; overall recovery can take from several weeks to several years.”

“Problems do not just disappear; quite often, certain issues may emerge or manifest after some time. Therefore, prolonged medical care is, of course, necessary here.”

“On the one hand, rehabilitation for those released from unlawful detention is envisaged by the 2010 Law of Ukraine; on the other hand, no im-

plementing mechanisms have been established at the level of secondary acts or government regulations to make this rehabilitation a reality. In other words, there is no rehabilitation program, no designated authority, no allocated funding – there is nothing.”

“We have not resolved the issue of providing sustained medical care. People return with very severe injuries that often affect the rest of their lives. In fact, sustained medical care is not being addressed by the state at all at present, even though the need for it is becoming increasingly urgent.”

One of the most painful problems of the released civilians, which practically all of them face, is receiving necessary dental services. The surveyed released civilians noted cases when they did not receive care or received it in a minimal volume and with a delay. That led to the need to further seek the services of private dentists.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“They say to everyone: no, that is all, some managed to treat the teeth while were in the hospital, to fill in small holes, and all the rest, go and restore, how you want.”

“The other day went to the polyclinic ... Said, ‘I need an implant.’ They responded, ‘Well, you are already discharged. Well, then, do it at your own expense.’ Why they discharged, instead of doing it? ... They do it for someone, while to others they say, ‘Go somewhere or do at own expense.’”

“I have a status, I have everything, they pulled out three teeth, filled one, and that’s it. I call him then the next time, ‘When shall we treat the second one? I need to fill two more holes, at least.’ He says, ‘That’s all, since you were discharged from the hospital, do it at your own expense.’”

"While we were in the hospital, I did not have time to do it. They appointed some period there. At the moment, I have treated one tooth, but there is still a lot to do.... I called and said, 'I did not manage to come on the 23rd.'" The doctor said, "That's it. Next time, it will be a paid service."

Expert assessments

"The global problem for everyone is the lack of teeth. They were knocked out, they fell out due to lack of food, water and sun, from torture. Implantation is needed here. Unfortunately, this is very expensive, and the state does not cover it, while the funds are simply not able to. Some funds can cover it individually for one or two people, but when many released individuals return..."

"If we talk about deeper treatment, dentures and so on, it's always a problem because it's expensive. The state does not cover civilians. Perhaps they do not provide treatment, dental prosthetics, because it is a mega-complex thing and expensive."

"The state now covers only either some urgent dental treatment for civilians, that is, to put in a temporary filling, or it covers the military's treatment... That is, an ordinary civilian who does not have any status, cannot treat their teeth. And it's always paid by either NGO's volunteers, or by the person themselves for the most part."

Furthermore, the subsequent receipt of medical services after the initial hospital stay proves to be inadequate to the released civilians' needs. The released individuals receive medical care on a general basis: through family doctors (who are typically insufficiently trained to work with this category of patients), while the provision of the necessary diagnostics and treatment is excessively prolonged.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

"We are waiting in queues for some free diagnoses. These queues can last for two or three months, if we want to be examined free of charge. Or it must be paid for."

Expert assessments

"Formally, family doctors handle this, but in reality, I am not sure that even a family doctor who has completed training courses would be able to work with a person with such trauma. Especially systematically."

"It seems like access exists de jure, and a person can obtain it. However, it sometimes happens that those medical or rehabilitation services are required. I mean, you need to travel there and live there. The individual has to cover all of this at their own expense. De jure, they can receive everything free of charge, but sometimes there are these things, like MRI or CT scans, for which there are long queues. Therefore, they sometimes need to find funds to do it for a fee in some private clinic out of turn, so that health problems can be diagnosed quickly."

There is also a lack of awareness among the released civilians regarding subsequent rehabilitation and sanatorium-resort treatment. Not all of them are aware of the available opportunities, or they only find out about them when the eligibility period has already expired.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

"I found out about the guaranteed sanatorium-resort provision, about the fact that it could be used or that compensation could be obtained if I am not satisfied with what is offered, a year and a half after my release,

because nobody told me about it. But this guarantee lasts only for a year after release. I’ve already lost the opportunity to get even that.”

Expert assessment

“People who have been in long-term isolation for a significant period do not have a family doctor and cannot always understand how the situation has changed or how to obtain what they can actually get free of charge. The issue here is that, essentially, there is a lack of sufficiently clear mechanisms and social support. That is, most medical procedures can be obtained at the state’s expense in the case of good case-managed social support and clear instructions on how to do it.”

At the same time, the vast majority of surveyed released civilians state the need for further long-term treatment.

Consequently, the informants (the released civilians and the experts) voiced proposals for the state to pay greater attention to the health recovery of the released civilians, such as:

- allocating specialized hospitals with appropriately trained staff and established working algorithms;
- introducing long-term treatment programs;
- providing annual free sanatorium treatment;
- expanding the medical services funded by the state for the released (specifically dental services and psychological services);
- ensuring priority access to medical and diagnostic services.





3

**HOUSING
PROVISION
FOR RELEASED
CIVILIANS**

Housing provision of released persons remains quite problematic. Among the surveyed released civilians who were released before 2025, none possess their own housing. These people reside in modular towns, dormitories, hostels, rented apartments, as well as in the housing of friends. Those who received temporary housing mostly assess it as good or satisfactory.

Those surveyed who were released during 2025 are mostly in hospitals undergoing rehabilitation, and for them, the issue of housing provision is very acute. They do not know where to live, which can negatively affect the effectiveness of their treatment, rehabilitation, and mental health status.

Those civilians who were released in 2025 and have already been discharged from the hospital mostly have temporary housing available for a short period of time.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“They told me, ‘You can stay for six months.’ When I asked what happens after that, they said it would probably be extended. But they were not interested in what would happen after those six months. They only cared about solving the issue for now. So I’m not sure what comes next.”

“It’s granted for a year, then extended. But how it will really work, no one knows. Someone could come tomorrow and say, ‘Pack your things and leave.’”

Expert assessment

“Those who were given temporary shelter – for example, in the Hansen modular town, T. Village, – received housing for five to six months. That is, during this time, they have the opportunity to find employment, undergo rehabilitation with the help of specialists at social service centers in the regions where they are staying, and ultimately, at the very least, get back on their feet.”

Among the organizations and institutions that facilitated obtaining temporary housing, the surveyed released civilians mentioned the Civis Fortis NGO, the Brovary City Council, the Kyiv City State Administration (KCSA), and the Luhansk and Donetsk military administrations.

At the same time, the experts drew attention to the fact that it is necessary not just to provide the released with some housing but to ensure that it is decent: corresponding to the health status of people after a prolonged stay in captivity.

Expert assessments

“Even the housing that is offered is sometimes unsuitable – not necessarily in terms of quality, but in terms of conditions that fail to meet the psychological and physical needs of these individuals.”

“For people returning from long-term captivity, living conditions must be different. The most important condition is to have personal space. There are cases where women who spent six years in captivity were placed in shelters where several women shared one room. This is unacceptable.”

Among those released in 2025, expectations have already formed that the state will provide funding for the purchase of housing, as a result of promises received from the Office of the President (specifically mentioning information provided by the Deputy Head of the Office of the President, I. Vereshchuk, who dealt with issues concerning the released civilians).

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“The state has promised to adopt a law that will provide us with housing certificates. but for now, it’s still only plans.”

“Now we are waiting for a decision on housing, on the certificate. They said that next year they might decide something.”

“They promised these financial housing certificates worth 2 million. But how this process will actually be implemented? I think if they said it, it will happen. The only question is when.”*

To resolve the issue of housing provision for the released individuals, the experts proposed various options. This could include the creation by the state of a system of temporary accommodation facilities for this category of individuals, aimed at stabilizing the individual's situation and finding further solutions to their problems.

Expert assessments

“What’s really needed at the outset is a kind of rehabilitation shelter that would address housing for the initial period – around six months, maybe up to nine. And these shouldn’t be standard dormitories, where conditions can sometimes resemble the cells they were held in, but properly renovated spaces with separate rooms because they need their own space, after being held in these prisons, where they often sat not one by one, but in common cells, with each other. People need their own space – a place where they can rebuild their psychological stability.”

“Perhaps shelters should be established in four regional centers for their residence. In regional centers – one in Odesa, one in Kyiv, one in Lviv, and somewhere else – so that a person could arrive and live decently.”

“This is the one large, broad window... the state must offer something: either dormitories or modular towns. At least some options for temporary residence for a certain period, up to six months. Every person needs to socialize and get some rest.”

“Ideally, every region and every local authority should have some form of social housing and provide it, upon request, to people who arrive in or return to the community and have suffered from captivity or torture. It doesn’t have to be permanent housing, but at least temporary.”

“We need to launch a programme for temporary housing provision. It doesn’t necessarily have to be capital or separate housing – dormitories or other forms are possible – but people must have a place to live.”

An option was also proposed involving state aid (either full or partial) with renting housing (in particular, with social rent).

Expert assessment

“The Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine was working on a draft resolution on social rental housing. We took part in the public consultations and advocated for extending this service and program to people who have been released from captivity.”

At the same time, in the event of the future introduction of state funding for housing purchases, the experts propose providing mandatory case management for the released individuals.

Expert assessment

“With case management in place... so that, for example, if they receive certificates or funds, they could actually use them for their intended purpose. It is also important that they are able to make informed housing choices. Because after release, people are often in a vulnerable state and may not fully understand the consequences of their decisions.”

* Editor’s note: this refers to the Deputy Head of the Office of the President, I. Vereshchuk.



4

CHALLENGES IN OBTAINING SPECIAL LEGAL STATUS

In addition to the issue of restoring documents, the released individuals face the challenge of obtaining the status of a person deprived of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine. Obtaining this status requires documentary proof of being held in unlawful detention, which they often do not possess. As of 2025, approximately one-third of the released individuals surveyed in this study were unable to obtain this status for this reason.

Expert assessments

"The general problem is the inability to prove the status of being in captivity because there are no documents. The person was in places of confinement for a long time and was ill-treated. They claim this, but they have no documents. And no compensation follows. This must be confirmed by independent witnesses. A person comes and claims they were in captivity, held, tortured. There is no proof of this, no other material evidence. Surely, no documents."

"The existing system of proof – of having truly been in unlawful detention – requires the victim to provide information confirming the fact of detention. If a person is imprisoned officially, a case is opened against them, and the relatives of such a person or the person themselves after release can provide documents. If there is no such confirmation, the person can collect testimonies – someone could see them. They can tell their story, undergo a polygraph test. That is, use any means to gather at least some information, but practice shows that in most cases, such information is insufficient for the Commission. And most of those held incommunicado are rejected by the Commission that establishes the fact of unlawful detention."

"To obtain this captive status, they [Ed.: the Commission] need to be provided with a fair amount of evidence that the person was taken captive because they were defending, or accordingly, conducting some pro-national policy and the like. ... And very often, they are rejected because the Commission lack sufficient evidence."

"There is practically nothing that can be done to help. It can be resolved in different ways, but let's put it this way: in most cases, without proper documentary confirmation, a person will remain without compensation and without recognition of this status."

"In general, placing the burden of proof on the victim contradicts the very essence of social assistance, given that a person needs social aid immediately upon return, but is forced to spend months in an exhausted state gathering information and dealing with these matters."

"It must be proven that they were taken captive because, for example, they upheld a Ukrainian position, conducted pro-national activities, and so on. But it must be proven. And usually, if the person is a civilian detainee, this is much harder to do than, for example, for a prisoner of war."

"Hypothetically, a person was held in Donetsk's 'Izoliatsiia' [Ed.: referring to a former art space in Donetsk which, after the 2014 occupation, the authorities of the so-called 'DPR' turned into an improvised torture chamber] and released three months later. They escaped and say they spent three months in isolation (Ed.: referring to the characteristic feature of punishment during deprivation of liberty). It's fine when a well-known person says this and it's known they were in Izoliatsiia; there's a confirmed story. But when nothing is known about the person or whether they were in 'Izoliatsiia,' the person who came out of there has no documents; they only have their word."*

Proving the fact of captivity is particularly problematic for those individuals who returned outside of the official release process.

Expert assessments

"A person is released and chooses to travel through third countries to the controlled part of Ukraine, but then they are actually limited in their

* Izoliatsiia [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%86%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8F%D1%86%D1%96%D1%8F_\(%D0%B2%27%D1%8F%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D1%8F\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%86%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8F%D1%86%D1%96%D1%8F_(%D0%B2%27%D1%8F%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D1%8F))

ability to prove that they truly survived unlawful detention – that during the time they were missing, they were truly in unlawful detention and not elsewhere on personal business. Therefore, they are deprived of the opportunity to gain status.”

“Those who returned on their own or through de-occupation face much greater problems because, without state recognition – that is, obtaining status – the process can drag on for years, and they have no benefits whatsoever. They have no deferment from mobilization; they have no money. For the most part, they are IDPs who still have to find housing for themselves. For civilians returning outside of exchanges, everything is very difficult.”

“People who return independently are currently the most vulnerable, as they often go completely unnoticed by the state.”

A denial of status often contains no explanation of the reasons for such a decision.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“I am fighting just to find out the reason for the refusal. And it’s a closely guarded secret. They replied on Viber, ‘Read the law.’ They send over the text of the law. I write back, ‘I have read the law, and according to it, I should be granted the status.’ They respond again, ‘Read the law.’”

“I recently reapplied to the Commission. It’s still up in the air. ... I don’t know why I was rejected the first time.”

“They don’t explain the reasons. They said right away, ‘We do not provide any comments.’”

“When they issue a refusal ... the person reapplies a second time. They submit a heap of documents again, and again, they are rejected. But why were they rejected? What documents are missing?”

Although those civilians who were released in 2025 and did manage to obtain the relevant status usually received it quite quickly, within a month.

The vast majority of the surveyed experts consider it necessary to grant a special status to the released individuals, combined with the receipt of certain benefits and guarantees.

Furthermore, they consider the current status and existing guarantees to be insufficient in terms of the scope of medical services, care for victims, and the amount of monetary payments.

Accordingly, the surveyed released civilians and the experts proposed:

1. Expanding the scope of the law regarding the status and payments to broader categories of victims and simplifying the procedure for granting the status.

Experts proposal

“We must recognize a priori all civilians who were in captivity, if they were subjected to torture (and 99% of those held in captivity were). They should obtain this status automatically.”

“Regarding the status, there is probably a conflict of our legislation. We had a beneficiary who spent a month in captivity and, according to the law, she is not eligible for this status.... She was still in captivity, she still suffered, was subjected to torture, and, accordingly, she has the right to obtain this status. For me, this is still about reducing the entire duration, this criterion, and about the fact that the rights of all people must be fulfilled after all. I do not understand why a person can be in captivity for four or five months and why they are not considered a civilian detainee.”

2. Changing the composition of the commission that grants the status, namely increasing the representation within it of public organizations, as well as individuals with firsthand experience of captivity.



5

RESTORATION OF DOCUMENTS BY RELEASED CIVILIANS

If we talk about the restoration of basic, standard documents (passports, identification codes, driver's licenses, IDP certificates, etc.), as of 2025, the majority of the released individuals do not encounter significant problems. This is done quite quickly and, in some cases, even directly in the hospital.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

“All of this, while we were undergoing treatment there, they helped us arrange, or the services would just come directly to the hospital. Two minibuses arrived, fully equipped. There were staff, equipment, cameras, printers with the cards. They basically set up a mobile office right there and completed everything for us.”

Such efficiency and convenience are recent innovations; indeed, those individuals who were released prior to the second half of the summer of 2025 had to spend significantly more time resolving those issues and had to handle everything on their own.

However, problems often arise during the restoration of other documents. First, difficulties were mentioned regarding the verification of higher education diplomas, particularly medical degrees, which makes it impossible to obtain employment within one's specialty. Second, the verification of employment history and pension documents proves problematic, preventing individuals of retirement age from registering their pension payments.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“As for restoring educational documents and employment history, I ran into a serious problem. I have neither originals nor copies. I received my diploma under the Soviet regime. The archives are all paper. They remained in the occupied territory.... I have applied to many organizations, structures, and funds. Everyone takes note of the issue. Everyone says

it's hard. They explained the algorithm to me. I have already submitted a request to my university to restore my diploma. There I must receive a negative response stating they have no record of it. After that, I must appeal to the Ministry of Education and Science. From them, I must also get a response saying they have nothing. With these responses, I must go to court, where I need to provide two witnesses to confirm that I am indeed a doctor and that I obtained my degree in a specific year. Only then will the court issue a decision. With that court decision, I go back to the Ministry so they can issue a duplicate. And I have to do all this myself.”

“We also raised the issue of diplomas. For now... today, I got a call from the service. They said, ‘We’ve sent a request to the Department to initiate this process and restore your documents. For now... it’s taking a very long time.’ Two weeks have passed, and there’s still no response.”

“I’m currently dealing with my diplomas. I was given a contact number, and I’m corresponding by email. I was told that my educational institutions are located in the occupied territory, so to confirm my qualification, they have identified institutions here that will issue a duplicate diploma.”

“All my supporting Ukrainian documents, showing where I studied in different places, are in the occupied territory. Here... I only have photos. I gave them to the girls from an organization that helps restore documents – certificates and diplomas. They are currently working on it.”

Expert assessments

“A person has lost their diploma and cannot confirm it. For example, imagine a doctor who cannot prove either their degree or their practical experience. What job can they do then?”

“For many people, restoring educational documents is extremely difficult. They simply don’t have them. We had one civilian released from captivity – he has a medical education, he’s a surgeon. He says, ‘I’m not

going to sweep streets. I am a doctor, I worked as a surgeon. I've got extensive work experience." They are not ready to take just any job. They are still waiting. (...) If the documents were in paper form, they were simply destroyed. Especially for people from occupied territories – mainly Donetsk and Luhansk."

"Very often, people's educational documents remain in the occupied territories. The situation is that, in principle, the Ministry of Education is aware and does get involved. But again, additional support is probably needed."

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

"I already qualify for a pension. But for it to be granted, I need to confirm 35 years of service. In my case, only 10 years could be verified. That's because electronic records were only maintained from 2004 to 2014, until the occupation began. So now I only have those 10 years officially confirmed. The Pension Fund accepted my application, denied it, and instead assigned me social assistance. I'm still in the process of figuring out how this works. And restoring, proving my employment history: it's a procedure similar to restoring a diploma, meaning through the courts, through witnesses. And I have to do all of this myself."

"The only thing left for me now is my pension certificate. I call them, and they promise to call back once it's ready. I've been a retired Ministry of Internal Affairs employee since 2010, but the restoration of my pension certificate has somehow been delayed."

"When I returned from captivity, I was already of retirement age, but my employment record book, of course, remained in the occupied territory. I have no proof of my employment history for the Soviet period before 2000, because Ukraine did not digitize this data in time. And I cannot confirm my employment history. When I applied to the Pension Fund, there was already a law stating that if a person, like in my case, spent 3

years in captivity, those 3 years should also count toward pensionable service. But although the law was adopted, no regulation was put in place specifying who should pay the social contributions on my behalf. And to this day, I still do not receive a pension."

Third, problems may arise with the restoration of military registration documents.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

"My husband... was registered for military service at the local recruitment office... But of course, no one transferred those documents here. And naturally, as soon as I was arrested, he had to flee very quickly; he left, he managed to get out. But now he cannot renew these documents.... Why should he bear responsibility if this wasn't digitized or somehow put in order, starting from 2014, starting from the moment of the war?"

In addition, the released individuals mentioned problems with restoring combatant certificates and private entrepreneur documents.

In cases where issues arise with the restoration of documents, it can be difficult for the released individuals to handle this themselves, and they would like to receive legal support.

Regarding the issue of document restoration, the experts also noted the occurrence of problems with the free-of-charge restoration of the passport of a citizen of Ukraine.

Expert assessment

"Take, for example, the passport of a citizen of Ukraine. It is clearly regulated that it should be issued free of charge and within a certain period

of time. But in practice, we face barriers. This is due to a lack of understanding by ASC administrators or certain branches of the State Migration Service regarding how it should be facilitated in practice.”

“People who have returned have the right to restore their passport free of charge. But what is the nuance? The nuance is that this right belongs to people for whom the fact of deprivation of personal liberty has been established by the special Commission. As for those whom no one looked after, or those for whom this fact was not established for some reason – again, the question of paying for these services exists, it remains, and it is open.”

To improve the situation regarding the restoration of documents by the released individuals, the experts propose introducing systems where the necessary services themselves would “come” to the released; that is, when employees of the relevant state authorities would visit the released individuals and provide services at their place of stay.

Expert assessments

“It would be very convenient if there were one room where there is a representative from every agency. Someone from the Migration Service with their equipment, someone from the police who would be there on a permanent basis.”

“The state needs to oversee this so that the individual is not left alone; to monitor the process; for instance, by sending specialists from the passport office, pension office, etc.”

“If it’s centralized, they can be transported, or I don’t know, a Pension Fund representative could come. There are, say, 100 detainees in this primary center. They come, finish everything, and leave. The next day the SBU arrives, and they all communicate for a day, two, three. If passports need to be restored – lists are compiled. What’s the problem with

transporting them? Or they could similarly come, collect data, and do a centralized issuance, rather than us going to different hospitals and different departments.”

“It might even be possible to set up a rotation at the centers where they arrive and register. Again, drawing a parallel with internally displaced persons. They once organized it in local libraries in Kyiv – something like ‘Thursday is IDP Day.’ Representatives from every structure – the Pension Fund, Employment Center, Social Protection Department, ASCs – would sit there. And they explain things or directly register people for some aid, some services, or some documents.”

In addition, the experts proposed developing an algorithm outlining the sequence of priority actions and applications for the released individuals.



6

**FINANCIAL
SUPPORT FOR
RELEASED
CIVILIANS**

Today, the most significant form of financial support for the released civilians is the payment of state aid provided by law (a one-time payment of UAH 100,000 and UAH 100,000 for each year spent in captivity). This support is generally being implemented successfully, and a large number of released civilian captives receive these payments. Subject to meeting the statutory criteria, the released individuals can also qualify for IDP assistance, and – where support programs exist – for payments from local budgets. Non-governmental aid from public organizations and charitable foundations may also be provided.

At the same time, the issue of financial support remains acute for released civilians.

First, the need for money arises the very moment they are released. They need funds for priority expenses: clothing, transport, document restoration, communication, etc. This financial aid is also important to the released civilians in terms of restoring a sense of dignity, feeling like a free, self-sufficient, and independent person. However, the state payments to which they are entitled arrive only after a certain, sometimes prolonged, period of time.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“We had no money at all – nothing. We walked everywhere on foot. Thanks to kind people who helped... A family came – two people, a woman with a disability and her husband – and they simply transferred 500 hryvnias to anyone who asked. We used that money to get around, because we had no one and nothing, no funds at all.”

“Roughly speaking, for a month we saw nothing. No assistance at all. If you have relatives, that’s good, they might give you 1,000 hryvnias. But if you don’t – well, you walk past a shop and can’t even buy ice cream.”

“There was no money... No bank cards either. Then I went to PrivatBank: they issued cards with zero balance. Only after we contacted the first charitable organizations – the Andreyev Family Foundation and then Vil-

nyi Shliakh – did they transfer at least a symbolic amount, 500 hryvnias each. ... Friends brought me money. I had none, just like everyone else.”

“My daughter and her friends provided me with the money. Because I had none.”

“For the first two or even three weeks, we had nothing – not a single coin.”

“I was exchanged, and I had no relatives here, no one... no financial support from anyone. No documents, nothing – and on top of that, waiting for this payment. How long did we wait? More than two or three months.”

“They brought us in and didn’t give us a single coin. We really did stand there staring at that ice cream. I have no relatives, no close ones. Some people were helped. At least give people a small amount at the beginning so they can afford basic things – small expenses, at least.”

Expert assessment

“There should be some minimal ‘pocket money’ that a person receives for the initial period. Because even if the state provides basic necessities for some time, this does not negate human dignity. A person may want to have a coffee or buy a Coca-Cola – and they have a right to that. They simply have nowhere to get the money.”

Today, this problem is partially solved by public organizations. However, this can also occur with delays, the aid is limited to relatively small amounts, and not all released civilians are able to benefit from such aid. For public organizations, it becomes a problem that they are forced to search for these individuals on their own, lacking complete information about them.

The organizations providing financial aid to the released individuals included the Vilnyi Shliakh NGO, the Right to Protection Charitable Foundation (payment of UAH 10,800 and UAH 16,000), the Blue Bird NGO (UAH

12,000), the Andreyev Family Foundation NGO (UAH 500), and the Civis Fortis NGO (UAH 20,000 or more).

In addition to public organizations, local self-government bodies and state authorities provided some aid. In particular, the released civilians mentioned the Kyiv City State Administration (payment of UAH 20 thousand), the Donetsk Regional Administration (payment of UAH 15 thousand), the Chernihiv Administration, the Kremenets community of Luhansk Region.

Second, state payments are provided only for those individuals who have obtained the status of a person deprived of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine. On the other hand, not all released individuals succeed in obtaining this status, and consequently, they do not receive these payments.

Third, it was estimated that even the statutory state payment of UAH 100,000 is insufficient today, as it was determined back in 2018 based on the financial situation in Ukraine at that time.

Opinion of a released civilian detainee

"100,000 back then... in 2020, a bus to the village cost UAH 35. Currently, it is UAH 100. And in 2024, I receive that same money for years spent in captivity... They should have given it back then when inflation was different. And why 100,000 anyway? Why not 30 or 150? The sum needs to be calculated somehow. It should be based on something... and it must be indexed."

Expert assessment

"A person after release receives only 100 thousand hryvnias, which is less than 2.5 thousand US dollars. When these 100 thousand hryvnias were introduced in 2018, it was 3.5 thousand dollars.... this money has already partially melted, and in a couple of years, it may melt twice as much. That

is, this aid decreases with each passing year, if adjusted precisely for this inflation and the depreciation of this aid."

According to experts and released civilians, the financial assistance system needs to be improved.

First, it is necessary to introduce payments for emergency needs prior to the official establishment of the fact of captivity.

Opinion of a released civilian detainee

"A minimal amount of money on a card, so a person can at least buy a coffee instead of asking someone to treat them. Even just some small amount."

"In the first days we have no money at all. It would be good to have some small amount – one or two thousand hryvnias – in the very first days."

At the same time, the opinion was voiced that it would be better to continue making such payments through public organizations, which should be allocated budget funding for this purpose.

Expert opinion

"In my view, public organizations will likely remain the best-equipped to provide urgent assistance in the future because they are very fast and adaptive – much faster than state bodies. Such urgent assistance programs should be maintained or outsourced to public organizations; that is, they should be funded so they can provide them."

Second, there is a need for an individual approach to the UAH 100,000 compensation.

Expert assessment

“This needs an individual approach. A reparation system should be developed that allows for assessment – perhaps individually, perhaps a flat rate for all – but this system must be built based on the victims’ actual needs. You cannot determine the amount just by looking at it; it must be very meticulously calculated.”

Third, regular payments for the released individuals, similar to pension payments, should be introduced.

Expert assessment

“This should include the military, the wounded, those disabled as a result of the war, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and people who were deprived of their liberty and underwent torture. All of them should receive these reparative payments monthly. Perhaps it would be 100 or 200 euros every month. But for life.”

“The state could do something in this regard, because there aren’t that many people of that age with such issues returning from captivity without documents or the like. I believe a minimal pension – the absolute minimum – should be accrued to such people automatically. There should be no need to force a person to go to court or hunt for witnesses who also fled the occupied territories and worked there with you 40 years ago.”





7

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE FOR RELEASED CIVILIANS

To date, all surveyed released civilians are offered the assistance of psychologists. The majority of surveyed released civilians (regardless of how much time had passed since their release) noted that they need such assistance. Among the reasons mentioned were the presence of anxiety, fear, depression, and sleep problems.

The surveyed released civilians mentioned working with psychologists engaged by the state (in particular, with psychologists from the Mental Health and Rehabilitation Center for Veterans Lisova Polyana), as well as psychologists provided by such non-governmental organizations as the Blue Bird NGO, the Andreyev Family Foundation NGO, the YaMariupol CF, the Eleos-Ukraine NGO, the International Organization for Migration, and the SEMA Ukraine NGO.

The released civilians who sought psychological assistance noted positive results from the therapy.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“They were meaningful conversations; they help me. There was one very professional session that really helped me.”

“She calls me once every two weeks. We talk with her. Everything’s fine.”

At the same time, despite the need for psychological assistance, not all released civilian detainees seek it. As the reasons for this, they cited personal psychological barriers and postponing seeking help until later.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“I cannot imagine it (ed.: psychological assistance); I have never worked with a psychologist; I don’t know what it is. Well, I mean, I can’t explain it at all.”

“I’m probably embarrassed, too” (editor’s note: to seek psychological assistance).

One of the surveyed released civilians expressed the opinion that psychologists would make more sense only when everyday life problems were more or less resolved. Otherwise, psychological support would clash with the reality of the situation.

Testimony of a released civilian detainee

“What is the point of motivating a person or working with them psychologically when, after that session, they go back to that modular settlement where there is no job and no prospects? The psychologist talks to you, lifts your spirits for a few hours, and then you return – and it is the same all over again.”

A similar opinion was expressed by one of the surveyed experts, who believed that, except in cases of a truly acute and immediate need for psychological assistance and treatment, support from a psychologist should not precede but rather follow the fulfillment of core, basic needs.

Expert opinion

“First, the basic issues must be resolved: housing, warmth, safety, health, clothing, relationships with loved ones. In other words, a person needs to be provided with basic comfort first. That is, a person must first be provided with comfort. Once they are comfortable and nothing hurts, then psychological assistance becomes highly relevant. The only exception is an acute stress reaction. Otherwise, you first need to clothe and warm the person, and only then bring in psychological assistance.”

Several of the surveyed released individuals believed that they did not need psychological assistance. In this case, they either considered their current condition to be satisfactory, relied on themselves and time, or did not see any significant benefit from communicating with a psychologist.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

"A psychologist came to the hospital. After talking to me for an hour, he himself concluded that I did not need help."

"At the moment, I don't need it. If I do, I will reach out."

"At this point, I no longer need psychologists; I've come to my senses, I'm fine."

"I relied more on myself than on a psychologist. I thought that with time I would adapt... I hope everything will recover."

"I understand that it won't really change anything... How can she help me? Just by talking – I doubt it."

Regarding this, the experts noted that released civilians who have been free for only a few months are often unable to adequately assess their own psychological state. That is, it may seem to them that everything is fine and no help is needed, but problems will arise later.

Expert assessments

"Our first 60 individuals were offered the opportunity to work with a psychologist. As far as I know, everyone refused, no one wanted to. But afterward, two of them ended up in psychoneurological rehabilitation centers."

"For at least six months, a person needs to gradually re-socialize and receive psychological support, because in the aftermath of the euphoria of release, the body is still sustained by the survival resources developed

in captivity. But within a month, a person begins to face mental health issues – sleep disturbances, anxiety, PTSD – and often does not yet realize it, because such in-depth psychological or psychiatric assessments are not conducted immediately."

"Each of these individuals needs a permanent psychologist – continuously. It can overwhelm them completely after six months, or after a year following release. And all of them would have to be accompanied by psychologists throughout their lives from the very first moment, as soon as they step off the bus during the handover, and for many years to come."

The experts propose maintaining constant contact even with those released individuals who currently do not see a need for psychological assistance. Constant contact will allow, if necessary, to respond and promptly provide support. Additionally, some of the experts suggest introducing a "soft coercion" to undergo psychological consultations.

The majority of surveyed released civilians believed they would need psychological assistance in the future. They talked about difficulties in adapting to ordinary life, states of nervousness and fear.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

"The brain cannot fully understand that I am here, free. ... I'm not fully aware of what's going on. What comes next, how to be, what to do, what to occupy myself with."

"It's like my head is filled with concrete, so to say. Everything is difficult. Even ordinary, elementary things. Before prison, it was all simple; you thought it, you did it. Now you are within some kind of boundaries. You want more."

“I feel like I have not yet fully realized that I am free. Something is still there in my head from those last years. As if some part of me remained there.”

“I would not say that I walked out into freedom and immediately felt it... No, it's hard now. I am living, but it feels like a lot of time has been lost.”

“You behave much more cautiously with others now than before. There is a certain fear when it comes to meeting new people.”

Expert assessments

“They are still, in a sense, inside the shell of captivity: they limit their communication. Many of them do. They do not want to recall what happened to them. Many have not even reported their cases to law enforcement, for various reasons. In particular, psychological ones. They are afraid that they will be accused of something – for example, collaboration. And this has a very negative impact on their return to active social life.”

At the same time, all of the surveyed released civilians who evaluated the possible formats for conducting psychological sessions chose the options of individual, in-person communication.

Experts assessed the current scope of psychological assistance as insufficient.

At the same time, the problem of a shortage of qualified psychologists was noted. In general, there is a lack of professional psychologists in the country who are trained to work with released civilians.

Expert assessments

“There is a significant problem in the country with a shortage of sufficiently qualified trauma therapists. Many tried to provide this assistance

in recent years, but we encountered a situation where even qualified psychologists are unable to work with civilian detainees.”

“Not every psychologist can take on a client who has been released from captivity.”

“There are very few specialists who truly understand how to work with this group.”

“We have a very limited pool of such specialists, and they are burning out. ... There is a shortage of professionals specifically trained to work with people after captivity, particularly after the types of torture inflicted by orcs; there are very few of them.”

The experts propose intensifying the training of relevant psychologists, as well as ensuring they receive appropriate remuneration.

Expert assessments

“In order to increase the number of specialists, the state must become involved in their training. Perhaps some non-state institutions could also play a role. I mean European donors.”

“Most importantly, there must be an adequate system of remuneration for these psychologists. As we can see, for example, the pay system for psychologists working with veterans is several times lower than actual market rates.”



8

**LONG-TERM SOCIAL
REINTEGRATION
OF RELEASED
CIVILIANS: MAJOR
CHALLENGES**

The released individuals will require medical and social assistance, as well as reintegration (ensuring the restoration of social ties, adaptation, and full inclusion of the released individual into society) for a fairly long period of time. The study participants spoke about the need for social case management (support) for this category of people. Such support is critically needed at the initial stage of re-entering society, as the newly released are poorly oriented to the new conditions and are disoriented regarding the restoration of documents and obtaining medical care and financial aid. Since this disorientation can be long-lasting, released civilians and experts emphasize the necessity of a system of long-term and comprehensive support.

Assessments of released civilian detainees

“Once you are discharged, that’s it: you are no longer needed by anyone. That’s where everything ends.”

“It would be good if there were someone who could say, ‘Look, here is what is now available in the country, here are the new developments. What novelties are you interested in? What changes in the legislation matter to you? Are you interested in the novelties in the family code? For example, you have a wife and a child – would you like to know what has changed in terms of your legal status? Let me explain everything to you.’ And that person tells you everything. That would be helpful if such a person existed. But at the moment, there is no one.”

“There should be a dedicated structure that works not only while you are in hospital or in a sanatorium undergoing treatment. Some people are treated for one month, some for two, some for three. But as soon as treatment ends, all support just... disappears. And the person has to run around trying to obtain everything, to figure things out. That is not right. These people should be constantly monitored. Someone should be responsible for this until all issues are resolved for everyone.”

“In my view, this is the biggest problem right now. While people spent a month in hospital, they received assistance. But once they were discharged, there was no further support. And within that month, many simply do not have time to restore all their documents or address other issues. After leaving the hospital, there is no help at all.”

Expert assessments

“In my view, a person should remain within such a process not for some fixed period – say, a conditional one-month term – but for a much longer period.”

“Three months is entirely insufficient to provide this kind of case management. At a minimum, it should be six months to a year, so that the person can stabilize.”

“What is needed here is support – support from case managers, let’s call it that. Support from public organizations that provide relevant guidance and assistance. It is about gentle socialization through rehabilitation-type programs. I am not referring to medical rehabilitation here but rather to psychological and social rehabilitation. It is a gradual return of the person, helping them understand what resources they still have, and whether they are able to reintegrate into one community or another. This requires dedicated socio-psychological support delivered by a person, an organization, or an institution that will accompany them throughout this process.”

“First and foremost, case managers are needed... so that in every district there is a social worker who reaches out and identifies people’s needs. So that people do not feel abandoned.”

“This must go hand in hand with social support, giving them a clear understanding of how they can access these services, what they are entitled to, and how to claim access to the services or assistance to which they have a right.”

"In every district, there should be social workers – and not just one. They should call everyone, inform them, and follow up at least once every two months to ask, 'Are you okay? There are batteries being distributed here, power banks over there,' and so on. Because people will not call on their own."

"People have, in a sense, fallen out of social reality and may have lost their ability to navigate it. Even something as basic as access to social services – which are now often digitalized – or other types of services, requires time for them to adapt, to understand how to access these services and make sense of this new reality."

"There should be some case manager who would establish contacts, for example, with all public organizations working in this area, with state bodies that can also help. Accordingly, to support this person and help them seek help from one or another entity that can help."

At the same time, surveyed experts pointed out that current social workers were unprepared to work with released civilians. In addition, there is often a shortage of even partially trained employees. The experts propose to intensify their additional education and training, as well as to take care of proper remuneration of their work.

Expert assessments

"We lack precisely those social support specialists who understand the specific characteristics of people who have experienced various war crimes, in order to accompany them and help them access existing state services and navigate state mechanisms. In fact, we do not have enough trained specialists who understand not only the experience of captivity but also other types of war crimes more broadly."

"In remote settlements, there is a very significant shortage of personnel capable of providing quality social services. Social workers are often

individuals without the necessary knowledge, skills, or specialized education. In our view, the state is also not paying sufficient attention to building the human resource capacity of the social sector. There is likely too little state-funded training. The profession and role of a social worker are not sufficiently promoted. Yet it seems to me that this could become a state priority in the coming years, as the demand for quality social services will only continue to grow year by year. At the same time, the social workers currently in the system are not receiving adequate professional development."

The surveyed experts drew attention to the importance of providing training and retraining courses for released civilians, if needed. After all, one of the components of successful social reintegration is employment, which can be problematic without additional training. Therefore, vocational training programs must be maintained and developed.

Expert assessment

"Regarding retraining specifically, we have feedback from victims that it works and is stipulated by the 2010 Law on the social and legal protection of persons for whom the fact of captivity has been established. It is provided by any employment center. Through these centers, an individual can receive coverage for their studies. Currently, this is approximately UAH 30,000. That is, they can choose a profession they wish to learn – the state will cover it – in order to earn a living."

At the same time, some experts emphasized the need to find a balance between providing comprehensive assistance to released civilians and teaching them to care for themselves independently. Otherwise, an over-emphasis on assistance could foster dependency, which would negatively impact both society and the survivors themselves.

Expert assessments

“On the one hand, it is important not to lose sight of them; on the other, not to overprotect them in a way that reinforces learned helplessness. It’s very important too. This is a very fine line.”

“Our system tends to swing between extremes. We either provide nothing, or we start infantilizing beneficiaries and giving them everything. As a result, people can actually become helpless. Assistance must be high-quality, sufficient, and accessible – but it should not be such that a person does nothing for it. (...) And they won’t benefit from it either. Neither society, nor they. What they need is to regain a sense of their own capacity – this is crucial.”

“This support should have a defined duration – six months, a year, sometimes extending to two years in the case of medical care. Because any person released from captivity or detention should be encouraged to re-socialize.”

In addition, a proposal was made to involve already released civilians in working with those civilian detainees who will be released in the future. Such a practice would benefit both sides: it would give those already released jobs and a sense of being needed, while future returnees would connect better with people who have shared a similar experience.





ADMINISTRATIVE
SERVICES CENTER



STATE SERVICE
OF UKRAINE



GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF STATE PERFORMANCE

Civilians released in 2025 were generally satisfied with state assistance: they mentioned receiving smartphones with SIM cards, medical care, personal hygiene kits, an initial set of seasonal clothing and footwear, and assistance in restoring documents (passports, driver's licenses). They also highlighted support from the Donetsk Regional Military Administration, the Kyiv City State Administration (KCSA), the Coordination Center, the National Information Bureau, treatment at the Kyiv Regional Hospital and the Lisova Polyana Rehabilitation Center, and receiving a state compensation payment of UAH 100,000.

At the same time, many released civilians noted a lack of coordination in the actions of various state bodies and organizations, as well as a lack of coordinated interaction between the latter and public organizations during the initial reception stage. The released civilians did not receive clear and unambiguous information regarding the algorithm of actions following their release. This resulted in unnecessary meetings, waiting times, and trips, which became problematic due to a lack of familiarity with the locations of various institutions in Kyiv, methods of commuting to them, and a lack of pocket money. There were also instances of overlapping efforts by different public organizations regarding specific types of assistance.

Testimonies of released civilian detainees

“I went to the TRC... I asked, ‘Do I need to go to Salyutna or not? I don’t have a certificate stating I’m exempt from military registration.’ They said, ‘Go, you have to go anyway.’ I wasted my time, I went there, to the other side. I walked back from there. I arrived, some organization was already there, they already processed it... They all go in circles... You arrive here, you have examinations, some organizations, someone calls me from Kharkiv – write some statements, you need to be removed [from the system] because you are wanted. There they say – go open a bank

card. While you’re running around, you don’t understand what you need to do first.”

“Right now, I can’t connect who exactly to contact. There were so many people. You don’t have time to write it down right away... If it were somehow streamlined... But it’s chaotic. It’s as if people came just to report, to show – yes, we communicated. But in terms of any effectiveness...”

“We restored the documents ourselves. When they exchanged, they gave a pile of papers, forms. They said, ‘A person will come to help fill all this out.’ We waited a week or more, ... no one came. In the end, we decided to go to the National Information Bureau ourselves. They explained something to us there, more or less. We filled out the papers ourselves. In the end, they say, ‘Wait.’ But how can we wait if it’s unclear where they’ll put us when we’re discharged from the hospital now? Later, no one helped, no one explained anything, where to go, why to go. We ran around and managed on our own somehow.”

Expert assessment

“The problem is pervasive – it is the inconsistency of cross-sectoral and interagency interaction among all institutions, starting from the state level down to the local level. Certain state authorities do not have a clear algorithm for their actions. And the same applies to providers of social and administrative services, which results in the problem. People encounter these problems because state bodies do not clearly understand their role and mission in supporting these people.”

At the same time, practically all of the surveyed experts assess the provision of state services as low-quality. In particular, the following problematic areas were highlighted:

- Poor informing of released civilians regarding what assistance they can receive and how to obtain it.

Expert assessment

“Released civilians said that ‘before you arrived, we didn’t even know that anyone – you or the state – was supposed to give us anything.’ In other words, they have zero communication with the state regarding how they can recover after captivity, how they can socialize, or what services they can access.”

- Insufficient proactivity [by state bodies] without an external push from public organizations.

Expert assessment

“NGOs, international organizations, or foundations are the ones doing the pushing. Perhaps it’s not entirely proper, but basically, they – I can’t find a better word – force the state to perform its functions. In some cases, they stimulate, in others they simply explain and advocate, telling social protection employees. ‘Look, this is part of your official job description.’ They essentially remind the state that this is indeed part of its functions.”

- The absence of a clear mechanism for supporting released civilians, with this assistance being implemented in a manual mode.

Expert assessment

“If the release happens through an exchange – a large-scale release that allows for media PR – then these people are provided with more state support. But if it’s an isolated case – 2 or 3 people released through an exchange – they receive the bare minimum. If the release happens out-

side of an exchange, they may not know about the possibility of receiving state support at all.”

“There is no clear, understandable resolution mechanism or a unified system. All issues are currently being resolved, but they are very often resolved in manual mode.”

“From the experience of recent exchanges (...) there was a lack of a single, key point of contact that would simply coordinate the provision of all services, be aware of who is working where and who is located where, and link the person with those services and the necessary help. That was missing. In some way, the Ombudsman’s Office took on this role, but in my opinion, that’s not exactly their role. Although, of course, credit must be given to them for constantly raising these issues and coordinating things manually.”

“It must be systemic, because right now, even during exchanges, it’s regulated manually. In the most recent exchanges, the system only worked because Iryna Vereshchuk was correcting it manually. But the system should not operate on manual control.”

“Currently, it’s decided like this: there are a certain number of released people – we solve the issue. But this is not how it should work. Because it remains in this manual mode, often incomprehensible to the people, their relatives, those accompanying them, and even the state bodies implementing it.”

At the same time, it was acknowledged that the state does a great deal to assist released civilians. When assessing the ratio of participation between the state and NGOs, experts generally estimated it as roughly equal (though this ratio depends on specific situations – in some areas, the state provides more, in others, the NGOs).

Regarding individuals released through organized exchange, they are primarily cared for by the state. When it comes to those who were released and relocated to the free territory on their own, they are predominantly cared

for by public organizations. There is also a dependence on the type of assistance, with psychological and legal aid being provided mostly by public organizations.

The vast majority of surveyed experts noted a degree of progress in the practices of receiving and assisting the released. In particular, released civilians who can prove their detention receive aid; they are provided with basic essential items by both the state and public organizations; law enforcement agencies interviewing the released civilians operate more effectively; cooperation between state bodies and public organizations has been established; and various public organizations along with previously released individuals are actively advocating for assistance to the released.

However, attention was drawn to the problematic nature of adopting by-laws for the law that regulates work with released civilians, as well as to the fact that very few state institutions paid attention to this issue. Accordingly, it was recommended to intensify such activities, particularly in cooperation with public organizations.

Expectations regarding state aid are also quite widespread among the released civilians themselves. They seek larger payments, more help with documentation, more help with housing, employment, a reduction in bureaucratic red tape, and continued attention to their needs after completing initial medical treatment. It was also proposed to strengthen support for released civilians by extending certain benefits to their family members, particularly to their children (specifically for their recreation and wellness).

The vast majority of the surveyed experts believe that state activities regarding assistance to the released must be improved, specifically by becoming more systemic and holistic. At the same time, various proposals were voiced regarding what exactly this systemic approach should look like.

The most frequently expressed opinion was the need for a certain centralization of efforts to assist the released – meaning the legalizing the au-

thority for formulating and implementing state policy in this sphere under a single state body.

Suggestions from experts

“It would be worth identifying a single stakeholder who, at the executive level of government, would systematically implement certain measures to support people released from captivity. ... Hypothetically, the Ministry of Social Policy would implement social protection, and other stakeholders according to their mandates. But a single body must coordinate and control this on a permanent basis.”

“We have no ministry, other than the Ministry of Reintegration, that would be responsible for civilian hostages and could, for example, develop a budget program to allocate these specific funds. ... This could be a newly created body entirely, dealing specifically with the consequences of the war. And this agency could allocate funds within some budget program. This should be written in the budget every year, specifying the amount of these funds.”

“This must be some very powerful state body that will communicate with all others and have certain – how to put it – powers to influence.”

“A specific institution must be responsible for something, bear accountability, and help in providing specifically for these people. A multidisciplinary team. That is, it consists of various institutions. This is medicine, this is social protection, this is the police, these are coordination centers that grant those statuses and provide support.”

“There must be some person, some single window (an authorized person or a ministry), that would deal with the formation of state policy regarding the treatment of people who have endured unlawful detention, unlawful deprivation of personal liberty, and suffered all these consequences in the form of torture. There must be a legislative framework, but also an authorized person who, firstly, monitors the state of imple-

mentation of this law and the state of compliance with human rights; who is engaged in the constant study, collection, and research of the needs of the victims; who contacts donors and, in fact, facilitates the attraction of funds to Ukraine. Someone who periodically submits proposals for the revision of certain articles of the law or legislation and participates in related projects, such as the development of de-occupation strategies and transitional justice.”

Moreover, the proposal regarding the necessity of designating a single structure to handle assistance for released civilians was also expressed by the released themselves.

At the same time, experts emphasized that the newly created system must be flexible; it must track the needs of the released and adapt its activities accordingly.

Suggestions from experts

“First and foremost, a system that hears, and a system that does not just hear but changes according to the signals provided by the victims.”

“The system must be proactive; it must not only react, not only provide services, it must shape this policy regarding individuals.”

On the other hand, some experts believed that building a single centralized system is impossible and that a well-defined algorithm of actions for the various existing institutions is sufficient.

Suggestions from experts

“I disagree regarding coordination because no coordinating body standing too high will work directly with the individual. That is, if we are talking about the integration of services, there is a good example that doesn’t work perfectly, but works nonetheless. This is the resolution on interagency interaction for women – primarily women – who have survived violence. If a person enters the system, regardless of where they enter – the healthcare system, social services, or the police – any of these services must redirect to one another. That is, there is a clearly defined algorithm of actions.... Why coordination when this can be described at the local level, at the community level?”

“It should automatically provide the guarantees prescribed in the law, in resolutions, and in the job descriptions for officials at local levels. ... Several different structures are needed because, unfortunately, it will be impossible to combine them into one. For example, a separate department within the Ministry of Health, at the Prosecutor General’s Office, ... under the Human Rights Commissioner, and the coordination of these departments. But for all this, they need some kind of job description so they understand what they need to do.”

“There must be both a clear algorithm of actions worked out and a division of responsibilities: who picks up the person where, who communicates with them first, makes contact, to whom they are handed over, how the accompaniment continues, under what status the accompaniment occurs, where, and so on.”

“The overall strategy for providing services to civilian detainees needs to be considered.... it would be great if a cluster or the state simply defined this: how exactly to work, what the timeframes are, what the activity measures are. ... there should be uniform standards for the approach to providing assistance. And when this is written down by someone, it is easier to orient oneself than now, where each organization works on its

own.... that is, a person is released from captivity – who provides what to whom, what information, who meets them, who accompanies them further.”

A proposal was also voiced to concentrate the care for released civilians within non-governmental organizations through state funding (i.e., introducing a certain form of outsourcing).

Suggestions from experts

“Perhaps it is worth talking about supporting NGOs that can provide these services with quality and help without burdening state bodies. In reality, the state has plenty to do besides those released from captivity; the state has a lot on its plate. There are veterans, there are internally displaced persons. Maybe some things should be given to specialists.”
“The state does not have the resources for this work. Neither with IDPs, nor with civilian locals, nor with civilian detainees. Therefore, for me, it’s at least about building algorithms, about training, and about highlighting this problem. And then NGOs continue to take the initiative into their own hands, communicate with donors, and work.”

Instead, the state should be more actively involved in various communications with possible donors and facilitate the receipt of external funding.



Notes

[illegible]

