



Bundesweite Arbeitsgemeinschaft
der psychosozialen Zentren
für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer



Join us for a round table discussion "*Addressing Illegal Detentions and Enforced Disappearances by Russian State Agents: What Can Be Done?*" that will take place on 24 April 2024 between 5 and 8 PM in the [House of Democracy and Human Rights in Berlin](#).

Organized by the [European Prison Litigation Network \(EPLN\)](#) and [German Association of Psychosocial Centers for Refugees and Victims of Torture \(BAfF e.V.\)](#), this event will analyze how impunity surrounding mass enforced disappearances in Chechnya and North Caucasus contributed to the present-day situation with enforced disappearances and illegal detentions by the Russian state agents in Ukraine.

Our speakers will examine the current developments with illegal detentions and enforced disappearances of Ukrainian civilians in Russia. They will also present a new report exploring the long-term impact of enforced disappearances on families in Chechnya, shedding light on the enduring trauma and dramatic social consequences they face and emphasizing the importance of accountability and human rights protection. The event will open with a short animation film dedicated to this issue.

During the discussion, we will brainstorm on how to mobilize political and public pressure to secure the release of Ukrainian civilian hostages held in Russia and support families of victims in Chechnya amidst the current repressive climate. In this regard, we will also examine the impact of international human rights bodies, evaluating the relevance of case studies from other settings and we will explore the role which civil society plays in investigating crimes, supporting victims and families, enhancing legal frameworks, and advocating for justice. Our invited speakers will share their experiences in consolidating advocacy efforts to foster an international response to enforced disappearances and addressing impunity, drawing on examples such as the creation of the [UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria](#).

Opening remarks

- **Julia Krikorian**, Director of Programs at EPLN and **Dr. Katja Mériau**, psychotherapist and expert on psychosocial support to survivors of violence at [BAfF](#).

Speakers

- **Vasyl Melnychuk** is legal advisor at [European Prison Litigation Network \(EPLN\)](#). The network was founded in 2013 by advocates and legal practitioners dedicated to defending prisoners' rights. EPLN serves as a platform for various stakeholders, such as former prisoners, civil society activists, academics, lawyers, and prison doctors, to collaborate, share knowledge, and

strengthen their endeavors in safeguarding prisoners' rights within European institutions. Vasylyshyn has extensive experience in war crimes litigation in Ukraine.

- **Tetiana Pechonchyk**, Director of the Kyiv-based NGO [Zmina](#), an organization dedicated to promoting human rights, the rule of law, and civil society principles in Ukraine. It plays an active role in addressing enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of civilians amidst Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine.
- **Zargan Bachaeva**, researcher of the [Memory Project](#) from Grozny. The Memory Project is an initiative by human rights activists and lawyers aimed at preserving the memory of victims of grave human rights violations, which were widespread in the North Caucasus region, particularly in Chechnya, during the recent wars.
- **Grigor Avetisyan**, Advocacy director, [Stichting Justice Initiative](#). SJI, established in 2001, provides legal assistance to victims of human rights violations across the former Soviet Union. SJI has won over 200 cases representing nearly 1000 victims of enforced disappearances at the European Court of Human rights. A key area of the organization's work is representing victims of enforced disappearances in both domestic and international procedures, as well as conducting research and spreading information about the issue of enforced disappearances.
- **Gareth Sweeney**, UN Director of [Crisis Action](#), which convenes local and international civil society organizations in coalition to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict, serving as both a catalyst and facilitator of collective action. Gareth has supported the establishment of multiple UN accountability and humanitarian mechanisms, including the new Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic (IIMP)

This event is semi-public, and participation requires registration and verification. Please fill out the form to register: <https://forms.gle/RGrKq53jedGwBf7d8>

Upon completion, we will send you an e-mail to confirm your participation and provide you with our detailed program. Please attend on 24.04. only if you have received confirmation. For further inquiries, please contact Julia Krikorian at julia.krikorian@prisonlitigation.org.