

URGENT ACTION

Spanish National Forcibly Disappeared by Russia

Russian authorities have forcibly disappeared Mariano García Calatayud, a 75-year-old Spanish volunteer humanitarian worker whom their forces had abducted from occupied Kherson, in Ukraine, in 2022. They held him incommunicado, without charges, in occupied Crimea. The last parcel ordered for him in September through the penitentiary service's online system was returned with a note that he was not among the inmates. The Russian authorities now claim that they do not know his whereabouts and claim he had "left Crimea" on 1 June 2023. His life and his physical and mental integrity may be in grave danger.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Krasnov Igor Viktorovich
Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation
ul. Bolshaya Dmitrovka, 15a, str. 1,
GSP-3, Moscow, 125993
Russian Federation

Dear Prosecutor General,

I am writing to demand the immediate disclosure of the fate, whereabouts and well-being of Mariano García Calatayud, a 75-year-old Spanish volunteer humanitarian worker who was abducted by the Russian forces while they were occupying Kherson, Ukraine, in March 2022. The correspondence between his lawyer and the Russian Black Sea Fleet's Military Prosecutor's Office confirms that for over a year, he was detained without charges, and that as of April 2023 he was held incommunicado in SIZO-2 detention centre in Simferopol. For a period of time, parcels ordered for him at this institution through the penitentiary service's online system were apparently delivered. However, the last parcel sent in September was returned with a note that he was not among the inmates. A letter from the Russian Black Sea Fleet's Military Prosecutor's Office received by his lawyer and dated 4 December 2023 states that Mariano García Calatayud had "left the territory of the Republic of Crimea" and crossed into Kherson region on 1 June 2023, and that the Prosecutor's Office has "no information about his whereabouts at present." The letter does not mention that he was released from detention, nor that he "left" Crimea voluntarily, but states that he is not regarded as a missing person.

I am concerned about Mariano García Calatayud's life, and his physical and mental integrity. I am aware that he suffers from a serious heart condition, and that there are credible reports that he has been tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention by the Russian penitentiary authorities.

I am writing to demand:

- ***an immediate disclosure of the fate and whereabouts of Mariano García Calatayud, including information as to who is holding him, in what location and in what status, and his immediate contact with his family and a lawyer of his choice;***
- ***his immediate release and free and safe passage to a destination of his choice, so that he can be reunited with his family, unless he is charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence and tried according to international fair trial standards;***
- ***an immediate disclosure of the fate and whereabouts of all persons from Ukraine detained by the Russian forces, their immediate contact with their families and lawyers of their choice, and an immediate release of every person held in detention without legitimate legal grounds;***
- ***an end to the practice of enforced disappearances by members of Russian security and military forces, and effective investigation and full accountability of anyone responsible or complicit in it.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mariano García Calatayud, a 75-year-old Spanish citizen, had been working in Ukraine as a volunteer since 2014, delivering humanitarian aid to war-affected children. He remained in Kherson after Russian forces occupied the city in February 2022.

Mariano García Calatayud went missing in Kherson on 19 March 2022, after joining a peaceful protest against the Russian occupation. There are grounds to believe that, like hundreds of other civilians detained by the occupying Russian forces, he was transferred to Russian-occupied Crimea and secretly placed in a detention centre. Russian authorities have been holding him incommunicado since, and only acknowledged his detention officially in April 2023 without providing any legal justifications for it. In May 2023, independent Russian media sources published testimonies of former prisoners who confirmed his poor health and claimed they had witnessed Mariano García Calatayud being tortured by prison guards.

According to unofficial reports, such as information from former prisoners or messages passed on by fellow detainees in possession of Russian passports who were allowed visits by their lawyers, he was held in the pretrial detention centre No. 1 (SIZO-1) in Simferopol until April 2023. According to the Spain-based Russian lawyer who is representing Mariano García Calatayud's, his client was later moved to the newly established pretrial detention centre No. 2 (SIZO-2) in Simferopol. This detention centre was reportedly built to house the numerous detainees from the territories occupied by the Russian forces after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Some individuals recently released from Russian detention (such releases are rare, with some becoming possible due to prisoner exchange) have reported that they had seen Mariano García Calatayud in SIZOs in Simferopol and witnessed his injuries, including those caused by the use of electric shocks and dog bites.

In September 2023, it became apparent that Mariano García Calatayud was no longer held at the SIZO-2 in Simferopol. On 4 September 2023, a parcel sent to the SIZO-2 and addressed to Mariano García Calatayud was returned by the penitentiary administration with a message that Mariano García Calatayud was not among its inmates. Mariano García Calatayud's lawyer was informed by two independent sources that he had been transferred to the SIZO in Chonhar, in the Russian-occupied part of Kherson region. However, all attempts to arrange a visit for a meeting with him, or pass him a message, at the pretrial detention centre in Chonhar, and other detention centres in Crimea and in Russian-occupied Mariupol (Donetsk region, Ukraine), were unsuccessful. The occupying Russian authorities denied any information about Mariano García Calatayud's fate and whereabouts. On 4 December, the lawyer received a letter from the Russian Black Sea Fleet's Military Prosecutor's Office which stated that Mariano García Calatayud had "left the territory of the Republic of Crimea" and crossed into Kherson region on 1 June 2023, and that the Prosecutor's Office has "no information about his whereabouts at present."

Mariano García Calatayud's case falls under the pattern of hundreds of civilians from Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories similarly being forcibly disappeared by the Russian authorities or held in incommunicado detention.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Russian

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 22 January 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mariano García Calatayud (He/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/7012/2023/en/>