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## **UKRAINE: “I want to live” – Russian soldiers surrender through Telegram channel**

**“I want to live”: Russian soldiers surrender through Telegram channel to save their lives**

*More than 3,500 Russian soldiers have called Ukraine’s surrender helpline, an official said in November*

HRWF – The Ukrainian authorities have created a specific application on Telegram to give the possibility to Russian soldiers to surrender safely and save their lives. This

information is available in Russian on the “**I want to live**” Telegram channel.

A video shows them how such operations happen:

### **Russian soldiers surrender to Ukrainian forces as Kherson fighting rages on**

Russian soldiers are used by Putin as “cannon fodder” and special forces called “barrier troops” or “blocking units” are deployed at the back of the fighters to shoot retreating soldiers, who are unwilling to fight “due to low morale.”

Around mid-November, **a graphic video appeared online to show the brutal execution of a Russian soldier who defected from the pro-Russian mercenary army “Wagner Group”, but was later recaptured.** While the Kremlin denied any knowledge of the incident, Wagner Group founder Yevgeny Prigozhin wrote approvingly about the killing in a statement.

### ***Dozens of Russian deserters threatened with execution, families say***

By Isabel Van Brugen

Newsweek (08.11.2022) – Dozens of mobilized Russian soldiers who have refused to fight in Ukraine are being locked up and threatened with execution, family members say.

The wives and mothers of 21 Russian soldiers say the men are being held captive in Zavitne Bazhannia, a village in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine, over their refusal to participate in the war. The conflict began when President **Vladimir Putin** launched a full-scale invasion on

February 24.

At least eight of the detained men had official exemptions from military service and should not have been drafted as part of Putin's September 21 "partial mobilization" order, a letter from the women obtained by Russian media project The Insider stated.

The mobilized soldiers were allegedly sent to the front lines in Ukraine without appropriate training, and were locked up for submitting written reports in which they said they didn't want to fight because it was against their conscience.

Unit commanders are now attempting to force them to withdraw their statements, relatives have said. The men are also being deprived of food and personal hygiene items, and are being threatened to be sent to the front lines or **shot**.

Elena Kashina told The Insider her 33-year-old husband was summoned despite having no military experience.

"My husband worked at a mining and smelting complex, which is considered a defense enterprise, so, they shouldn't have called him up for military service, but he was not so lucky," she said.

Kashina said her husband was deployed to Ukraine on October 2, and on October 12, he said that he did not want to kill people, and that he would rather "cover his eyes and ears" and wait for the firing squad.

The soldier said he and other mobilized men were threatened with execution when they said they didn't want to take part in the war.

"Before they wrote their reports, the deputy commander of the 5th company in 'DNR' [Donetsk] said that if they wrote anything, they would be shot, their bodies would be thrown into a pit, and their relatives would be told they were

missing in action," Kashina said.

"My husband called me and said: 'Lena, they might shoot me today.' They were completely depressed, psychologically broken. I think that if they returned home, they would need the help of a psychiatrist. They were thrown into the basement in such a condition, and they sat there on the ground in the brick basement for two days," she added.

Kashina said she has not been able to contact her husband since October 31.

The news comes as the British Ministry of Defence said Russian unit officers are likely threatening to shoot deserting soldiers.

The UK ministry said in an assessment of the conflict on Friday that Russian forces have likely started deploying "barrier troops" or "blocking units" to deal with their own retreating soldiers, who are unwilling to fight "due to low morale."

"These units threaten to shoot their own retreating soldiers in order to compel offensives and have been used in previous conflicts by Russian forces," the British defense ministry said.

Putin's military commanders are also likely seeking to keep their troops in defense positions "to the death."

"Recently, Russian generals likely wanted their commanders to use weapons against deserters, including possibly authorizing shooting to kill such defaulters after a warning had been given," the British assessment added.

UK intelligence states that this tactic of **shooting deserters** "likely attests to the low quality, low morale and indiscipline of Russian forces."

***More than 3,500 Russian soldiers have called Ukraine's surrender helpline, official says***

More than 3,500 soldiers drafted into Russia's war in Ukraine have contacted a hotline declaring they want to surrender, according to a Ukrainian official.

**The "I Want to Live" service** is a hotline where Russians and Ukrainians under Russian occupation can signal to Ukraine that they do not want to take part in Russia's invasion, and arrange to surrender.

The service, run both over the phone and on Telegram, was launched two days before Putin **announced a mass mobilization of reservists** on September 21 – an event that prompted the first flood of enquiries, **project spokesperson Vitaliy Matvienko told the Kyiv Post in an interview.**

**Russia's Prosecutor General's office blocked the site** in mid-October, by which time it claimed to have received more than 2,000 enquiries.

It's unclear how people in Russia continue to have access to the service, and Insider was unable to independently verify the figures provided.

Explaining the process, Matvienko told the Kyiv Post that Russians can first reach out via a chatbox, even before they are mobilized, to fill out a questionnaire that is considered a "preliminary surrender," and which is then stored in a

database.

When the soldier reaches Ukraine, they contact the hotline again, whereupon their information is pulled up and arrangements for surrender begins, Matvienko told the outlet.

Matvienko said that most enquiries came from Russia at first, but they have also come from Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine, the frontline, as well as Belarus.

Under the “I Want to Live” process, Ukraine says it guarantees prisoner of war rights under the Geneva Convention, including meals, phonecalls home, and medical care.

*Photo: A destroyed Russian tank near the recently recaptured village of Yampil, Ukraine, Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2022. Andriy Andriyenko/AP Photo*

**Link to all the articles published about the war:**  
**<https://hrwf.eu/российские-новости/>**

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