



**Tell Us
Your Story** | **A Women's Chronicle
of the Missing**





War takes away many things — lives, homes, peace. But one of its most painful and enduring consequences is when a person goes missing – the silence where voices should be; the waiting that knows no end; the uncertainty that burns.

This booklet brings together the personal stories of women — wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of Ukrainian servicemen who have gone missing as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Their loved ones disappeared on the battlefield, in combat, in the chaos where the line between life and death fades.

These testimonies are not just stories of loss: they are testimonies of love, of hope, of unbreakable perseverance. They are a reminder that behind every number in a report there is a life, a family – and an endless wait.

The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) works in partnership with families of the missing. This booklet is a space for truth. It honors the strength of those who wait, who search, and who refuse to give up.

Every story deserves to be heard.



“I believe that everyone who has suffered from this war and has a problem similar to mine – a missing relative – must support one another and stay strong.”

Ella Naumenko

Sister of a missing Ukrainian soldier, has been searching for her brother since early January 2024. The entire family has been doing everything possible to find him. Ella highlighted the fact that the Telegram online community of Ukrainians abroad is a helpful platform for exchanging necessary information and providing mutual support.



“My wish for everyone searching for their loved ones: stay active, knock on every door, make the calls, and always keep your finger on the pulse. Reach out to every organization that offers guidance—even if it means retracing your steps—because it’s better to repeat an effort than to miss a crucial opportunity.

If the stress becomes overwhelming, connect with others who have been through similar experiences. And remember, support is available through psychologists, therapists, and volunteers who are ready to help.”

Alona Aleksandrova

Alyona Aleksandrova is searching for her brother, who went missing during military action in the war. The only information she has received is fragmented: a combat mission, a mortar attack, no-man’s land. But uncertainty hasn’t stopped her – Alyona has reached out to every possible organization; she has submitted DNA samples and searched databases, and she has refused to lose hope. She encourages others not to give up, to keep searching. Her faith gives her strength as she fights to bring her brother home.



“I learned about DNA sample collection abroad through the ICMP initiative. Understanding how important this could be, I shared the information with a legal representative in the Ukrainian community in Germany. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to contribute securely to this process from abroad.

Keep searching. Keep believing.
Keep waiting.”

Oksana Riabukhina

In this episode – the story of Oksana Riabukhina, the sister of a missing Ukrainian serviceman.

Oksana Riabukhina is searching for her brother, Volodymyr Kudlai, who went missing on the battlefield. The last time they spoke was online, on 1 December 2024.

In January, Oksana learned that since 14 December 2024, her brother had been officially listed as missing following an artillery strike during a mission in the Kursk direction.

At first, her search efforts were haphazard. But eventually, she turned to Ukrainian communities and volunteer networks, where incredible women volunteers work tirelessly – offering support, guidance, and real help.



“My advice to other families: never give up. Hope and faith are what keep us going in these difficult times.

I’m truly grateful to ICMP for their support and for organizing DNA sample collection. This is a lifeline — it ensures that every missing person can be identified, and every family can get answers.”



Nino Dzhanesashvili

Shared her experience about searching for her missing husband, Oleksii Popov. The couple have been together for nearly 16 years and have two young children.

Oleksii was mobilized on 18 May 2024. Just over a month later, on 30 June, he went on his first combat mission near Pokrovsk, in the Donetsk region. That was the last time Nino heard from him. As of 4 July, Oleksii has been officially listed as missing.

Although Nino has not been able to request some information, as the couple are not formally married, she has not let this stand in her way. She has reached out to every possible authority, refusing to give up.



Angelika Stas'

Is searching for her father, Dmytro Stas, who has been officially listed as missing since September 2024.

Dmytro served in a military unit that took part in a Ukrainian Armed Forces operation in the Kursk Oblast. At the time of his disappearance, he was the driver of a military vehicle that came under drone attack. Since then, he and three fellow servicemen have gone missing.

To this day, the family has not received any information regarding recovered bodies or evidence confirming their deaths. They waited nearly six months for the results of an official investigation — without any conclusive answers.

“As a daughter, I never stop believing we will find my father. I continue reaching out to government authorities involved in locating missing persons, as well as international organizations — including the ICMP.”



“I would like to appeal to other families which are in the same situation as mine: Don’t lose faith. Hold on tight and keep hoping for the best.”

Halyna Sakhnevych

Halyna Sakhnevych’s brother went missing just recently — on April 21, 2025.

Currently in the Czech Republic, Halyna and her family — some of whom remain in Ukraine — acted swiftly. They contacted all relevant authorities, including the Security Service of Ukraine and the National Police, and quickly received responses from officials.

Her brother is a Ukrainian serviceman who served in the 77th Air Assault Brigade in the Kharkiv Oblast. During a drone attack in April 2025, all contact with him was lost. Since then, he has been classified as a missing person.



“Hope and faith never leave me. I don’t feel that my husband is gone — so I’m doing everything I can, and above all, I’m waiting for official confirmation.”

Nadiia Symon

Is searching for her husband, Iaroslav Symon, who has been missing since May 3, 2025.

He was on a combat mission and heading to a position in Vovchansk, Kharkiv region, when contact was lost due to an artillery strike. Since that moment, there has been no official information on his whereabouts.

Nadiia is doing everything she can to accelerate the search. She is in contact with Ukraine’s National Police and traveled to Prague when she heard that the ICMP was collecting DNA samples in the Czech Republic.



“The status ‘Missing’ does not mean dead. This status leaves open the possibility and the hope that our loved one is still alive. My message is: don’t lose hope, and don’t give up searching.”



Alona Marchenko

In this episode, we share the story of Alona Marchenko, the sister of a missing Ukrainian serviceman. Alona has been searching for her brother, Kostiantyn, since he went missing on 16 January 2023. She explains that she uses the Family Action Roadmap, regularly reaching out to government bodies and international organizations that deal with missing persons. Alona also considers social media a powerful tool that can help to uncover vital information.



Oksana Ariychuk

currently lives in Warsaw and is looking for her brother Taras, who was announced as a missing one at the end of May 2022. Since then, Oksana's family maintains contact and communicates with other families whose loved ones disappeared as a result of the war, exchange information and try to find out the circumstances of Taras' disappearance.

Olha Zheriobkina

Olga Zherobkina's husband has gone missing from a front-line town in eastern Ukraine. He was a civilian. He was detained by the Russian military and is considered missing for a year and nine months.

Victoria Kulyk

Victoria Kulyk's brother went missing in the occupied territory of Ukraine in May 2022, and since then his relatives have not had any news about him.



Nadiia Makarchuk

Nadiia Makarchuk's brother went missing a year and a half ago in Mariupol. His family insists that under the Geneva Convention they have a right to know what happened to him. They continue to hope that he is still alive and will return to them.



“I would like to thank you for this opportunity to present my DNA in Krakow. After all, when the war started, my family left for Poland with kids. At the time when my father went missing, I did not have the opportunity to provide DNA in Ukraine. Now we are very glad that we can cooperate with ICMP. This gives us some hope.”

Yulia Bogutska

The daughter of a missing Ukrainian soldier, says that her father went to defend Ukraine from the enemy from the first days of the war, but disappeared on one of the hottest routes. The search has been going on for more than six months.



“We have been looking for our father for 8 months. Unfortunately, we don’t have any results today, and we don’t really have any information other than a missing person report. A whole group of his brothers-in-arms – 11 people, all of them are considered missing. We are trying to keep in touch and act together with the families of the servicemen who disappeared with my father.”

Kateryna Yanovska

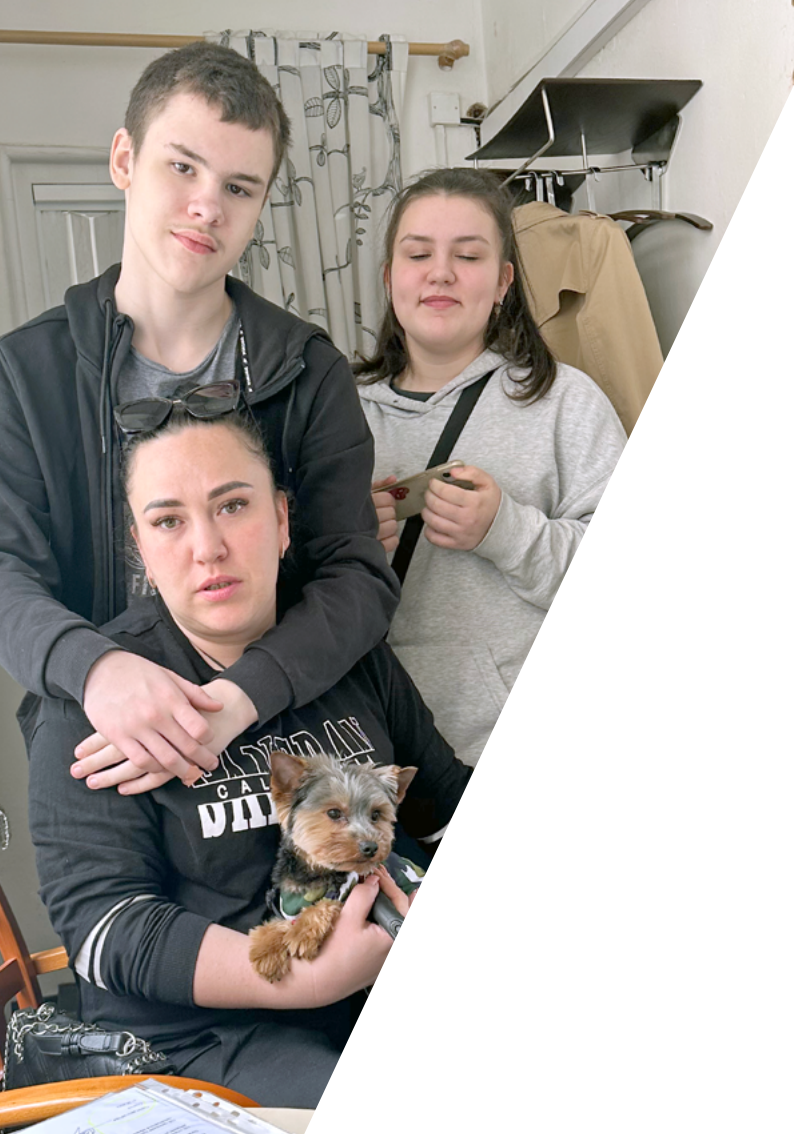
The daughter of a missing Ukrainian soldier, says that the whole family is actively searching for her missing father, especially her mother. She tries to find any information, spending almost 24/7 on the Internet. Kateryna emphasized that they learned about the ICMP from families who interacted with the organization earlier and were advised to apply.



“I would like to thank you for this opportunity to provide my DNA and for your incredible work. My message to all families – mothers, daughters, sisters who are searching for their missing ones – is never to lose hope. Live and act with the hope that you will find your missing family members. I would also like to thank everyone involved who helps families – the Government, international organizations, and investigators – for their joint efforts.”

Lilia Holovchak

The mother of a missing Ukrainian soldier, Lilia, says that her son, Volodymyr Holovchak, went to defend Ukraine and went missing in July 2024, in one of the fiercest areas of fighting near Robotyne, Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Since then, Lilia has searched desperately for her son. She has pursued every avenue, including sending a petition to the President of Ukraine and applying to international organizations. Lilia noted that all her family members have provided DNA samples, hoping to help in the search and identification process.



“I would like to thank you for this opportunity to donate my DNA and for your incredible and important cause!”



Kateryna Nikulina

Kateryna Nikulina, the wife of a Ukrainian military man who has gone missing shared her story, revealing that her husband Andriy courageously volunteered to defend Ukraine from the very onset of the war. Enlisted as a rifle service man, he served in the volatile eastern region of Ukraine. For over a year now, he has been accounted for as missing in action while carrying out his duty on the front lines in the Luhansk Oblast.

Kateryna emphasized the vital role that communication and the support network of families like hers play in providing strength and sustaining hope amidst the uncertainty of their loved ones' fates.



Valentyna Dukhnich

Valentyna Dukhnich, the mother and sister of a missing civilian from Bakhmut, Donetsk Oblast, find out that their son and brother are missing, hiding from the Russian invaders in the basement. Valentina Mykolaivna learned about her son's disappearance from neighbors who last saw her son on May 5, 2023.



“My only wish and recommendation to all the families who have been searching for their loved ones is never to stop. We must act on a large scale instead of waiting and doing nothing.”

Lesia Shchavliova

The former wife of a missing Ukrainian soldier, Lesia, says that she and the whole family are actively searching for her missing ex-husband, Ernest Shchavliov. Ernest went missing in March 2024 during a combat mission in Kharkiv Oblast. Lesia has sought information by applying to institutions and international organizations, including the headquarters of the International Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland, but so far, no information has been found. She said that in all her endeavors, the online communities of Ukrainians abroad have been helpful.



“I would like to thank you for this opportunity to provide my DNA. We do not lose the last hope. Father is a real hero! ICMP is doing extremely important work!”

Elina Kovrizhkina

The daughter of a missing Ukrainian soldier, says that her father went to defend Ukraine from the enemy as a volunteer from the first days of the war, but disappeared on one of the hottest routes- Chasiv Yar, near Bakhmut, Donetsk Oblast. He has gone through the most dangerous and ‘hottest’ areas in the war: Marioupol, Donetsk Oblast, Zaporizzhia direction, Volnovakha, Donetsk Oblast.



“My husband was in captivity and while he was in captivity, we had hope for liberation and communicated with all the families of the prisoners. I really want my DNA data to bring back hope.”

Raisa Garna

Raisa Mykolaivna’s husband fought from the first days of the war in the ranks of the Teroborona, where almost all men were volunteers. He went missing a year ago in Bakhmut, Donetsk Oblast.



“I don’t lose all hope. I apply wherever possible. I hope that by submitting DNA, I will be able to get information about my husband.”

Halyna Medianykh and her daughter Taisiya

Halyna’s husband fought in the famous 24th Brigade named after King Danilo in the volunteer ranks from the first days of the war. During one of the assault battles, he did not leave the battlefield and remained under fire and was probably wounded. Considered missing since March 2023.



“I would like to thank you for this opportunity to provide my DNA and for your incredible work! After all, we do not have the opportunity to come to Ukraine and submit our DNA, so we are glad that – thanks to the ICMP team – we have this opportunity in Poland.”



Vitaliia Bratyshchenko

Vitaliia Bratyshchenko, the daughter of a missing Ukrainian soldier, Vitaliia says that her father, Volodymyr Shvornev, went to defend Ukraine from the first days of the war. The daughter has been searching for her missing father for two and a half years. Vitalina noted that she actively communicates with other families of missing persons, and that the wives of missing servicemen share any new information on social media for mutual support.



“I have been looking for my son for more than a year. Unfortunately, we don’t yet have any results, and we don’t really have any information other than a missing persons report. Submitting my DNA is extremely important for me, given my situation.”

Oksana Kuchkovska

The mother of a missing Ukrainian soldier, Oksana says that she is actively searching for her son, using all possible ways and means. Her son went missing in May 2023 in one of the fiercest areas of battle in the city of Bakhmut, Donetsk Oblast. She tries to find any information, reaching out to the Ombudsman, Ukrainian national authorities, and international organizations such as the ICRC, but so far no information is available.



“I am deeply grateful to ICMP for supporting families and creating opportunities for civic engagement. Because of organizations such as ICMP, we have hope that the process of identification will speed up. I believe that through the work of international and Ukrainian specialists, the wait for answers can become shorter. This is a chance to restore at least a part of our peace.”

Nataliia Zelinska

Nataliia Zelinska is searching for her husband, Yuri Oleksandrovych Zelinskyi, who went missing on 14 August 2022 during an artillery barrage near the village of Volodymyrivka, Volnovakha district, Donetsk Oblast.

She describes her search as a long and emotionally exhausting journey, marked by constant appeals to institutions and services involved in tracing the missing. Through it all she has not lost hope. Her greatest source of strength is her son. Nataliia and her son hold onto the belief that one day they will be able to embrace their beloved husband and father again.

Nataliia urges all families who are still searching not to give up hope. Life has not stopped. She stresses that families have to keep going — for the sake of those they are waiting for, and for themselves too. One day, they will want to tell their loved one how they lived through this time — for their missing loved one and for themselves.

Nataliia is closely connected with other families of the missing. Together, they have built a space for mutual support — through conversations, at public gatherings, and in daily exchanges filled with both sorrow and hope.

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ICMP Headquarters ▪ Koninginnegracht 12

2514 AA The Hague, The Netherlands

icmp@icmp.int ▪ www.icmp.int ▪ [@TheICMP](https://www.instagram.com/TheICMP) ▪ [f /TheICMP](https://www.facebook.com/TheICMP) ▪ [i /TheICMP](https://www.instagram.com/TheICMP)