

Russian Activist Who Helped Ukrainian Refugees Dies in Custody – Reports

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The Insider

A Russian activist and volunteer who had helped Ukrainian refugees return home during the invasion has died in police custody in the southwestern Russian city of Belgorod, the Vot Tak news outlet [reported](#) Monday, citing two anonymous sources in his inner circle.

Alexander Demidenko, 61, was reportedly abducted and [tortured](#) in October 2023. After serving 10 days in jail on misdemeanor charges of public alcohol consumption, he was placed in pre-trial detention for alleged illegal weapons possession.

According to Vot Tak, Demidenko died inside a Belgorod detention center on Friday.

The investigator for his case was reportedly informed of Demidenko's death that day, while his wife and son did not learn about it until Monday.

The independent Belgorod-based news outlet Pepel [said](#) it was able to confirm Demidenko's death via unidentified acquaintances of his.

Related article: [As Russia Targets Activists Helping Ukrainian Refugees, Future Aid Grows Uncertain](#)

Vot Tak is a Russian-language affiliate of the Poland-based broadcaster Belsat. Russia's Justice Ministry [labeled](#) Vot Tak a "foreign agent" in January.

Demidenko's home had become a stopping point for hundreds of Ukrainians crossing back into Kyiv-controlled territory nearly every day from Russia, where they were either forcibly deported or evacuated from what is now occupied territory.

They do so via the Kolotilovka border checkpoint, followed by a two-kilometer journey on foot to Ukrainian-controlled territory. Around 100 people are believed to [cross every day](#).

Demidenko had helped Ukrainians reach the Kolotilovka checkpoint. According to his son, Demidenko was abducted at Kolotilovka after reporting to Pepel about an alleged scheme to solicit bribes from Ukrainians.

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