

Russia Releases 10 Ukrainian Civilian Prisoners – Zelensky

By [AFP](#)

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https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Friday 10 civilians, including a politician and two priests, taken prisoner in Russia and Belarus had been freed in a deal mediated by the Vatican.

Russia and Ukraine have exchanged hundreds of prisoners throughout their two-year conflict, typically in one-for-one swaps, but the release of civilian prisoners is rarer.

"We managed to return 10 more of our people from Russian captivity," Zelensky said in a post on Telegram. It was not immediately clear if the release was part of an exchange deal involving Russian prisoners held in Ukraine.

Some of those released have been in prison since 2017, he said, arrested in Russian-controlled parts of eastern Ukraine that at the time were run by Moscow-backed separatists.

Russia has since annexed four Ukrainian regions — Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia — alongside the Crimea peninsula which it seized in 2014.

The list of those freed included Nariman Dzhelal, a senior Crimean Tatar politician and two priests from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

Five of them were originally arrested in Belarus, Russia's close ally, including on charges of aiding Kyiv's army by providing information on Russian military movements.

Russia invaded Ukraine through Belarus at the start of the war and although Minsk has not joined Russia's offensive, the two countries' militaries are closely linked.

"They have all been released and are now back home in Ukraine," Zelensky said.

"I would also like to note the Vatican's efforts to bring these people home," he added, without elaborating.

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