The Moscow Times
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Russians Launch Campaign To Find Loved Ones Behind Front Line

By AFP

January 22, 2025

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Residents of Russia's Kursk region have made coordinated social media posts appealing for help to find relatives trapped by a Ukrainian border offensive launched last August, Russian media reported Wednesday.

Kyiv seized dozens of small towns and villages in the incursion, more than two years into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Residents in the Russian region have for months accused authorities of not doing enough to secure their loved ones, and of keeping them in the dark about the scale of fighting.

"There are about 3,000 civilians still under occupation in the Sudzha district of the Kursk region," relatives said in posts on Russian social media platform VKontakte, according to a report published Wednesday by the independent news outlet IStories.

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"We, the relatives of those who remain there, ask the leadership of the two countries and international organizations to help save the lives of our family members," the posts said, using the hashtag #YaMySudzha (I Am/We Are Sudzha).

One of those taking part was Lyubov Prilutskaya, a 37-year-old Russian who has spent the last five months trying to locate her elderly mother and father.

She told AFP this month that a missing persons list compiled by Russian authorities was incomplete and included the names of some people known to be dead.

"Unfortunately, so far few people have paid attention to our action," she said of the recent campaign.

On Saturday, dozens of residents confronted the regional governor at a small-scale protest to demand the return of those in the occupied zones and better conditions for people displaced by the fighting.

Ukraine says thousands of its own civilians are being held in areas seized and occupied by Moscow since its assault began in February 2022, and that it is providing safe passage to Russians in the Kursk region.

Kyiv advanced quickly after launching the offensive on Aug. 6, 2024, but stalled after Moscow rushed reinforcements to the area, including thousands of troops from its ally North Korea.

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