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Ukraine Accuses Russian Prison Chief of Torturing Journalist Viktoriia Roshchyna

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Viktoriia Roshchyna. **Anatolii Stepanov / AFP**

Ukrainian prosecutors on Thursday named the former head of a Russian detention center as a suspect in the torture and death of Ukrainian journalist Viktoriia Roshchyna, who died in Russian custody last year.

Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office said the 27-year-old freelance reporter was subjected to "systemic torture" while held at Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 2 in the southern Russian city of Taganrog.

Roshchyna's remains were returned to Ukraine as part of a prisoner exchange in February. Prosecutors said her body showed signs of extensive abuse and mutilation, including the removal of her brain, eyes and larynx.

On Thursday, Ukrainian prosecutors said Alexander Shtoda, the then-head of the Taganrog detention center, had been notified that he is a suspect in the case. His whereabouts are unknown, but Ukraine said he will be tried in absentia.

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While in custody, Roshchyna was allegedly beaten, as well as denied food, water and medical care. Investigative reporters have said she was transferred to Taganrog in December 2023 following four months of torture at a black site in the occupied city of Melitopol.

Prosecutors said Shtoda "deliberately" violated the Geneva Conventions, under which Roshchyna, a civilian reporter, was entitled to protection.

If convicted of violating laws governing the treatment of civilians, Shtoda faces up to 12 years in prison.

Roshchyna had previously reported for Ukrainska Pravda and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Ukrainian service. She was awarded the 2022 Courage in Journalism Award by the International Women's Media Foundation for her frontline reporting.

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