

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES

### ***Breaking Bodies* - case studies of torture and summary killings in eastern Ukraine**

#### **Case 1 - S.S.'s testimony about summary killings**

Amnesty International spoke to three witnesses who independently gave testimonies that strongly suggest that members of the separatist “Vostok” battalion summarily killed three Ukrainian soldiers and shot several others on 22 January 2015 when they surrendered after being encircled in a trench. They were among a group of 11 soldiers from the Ukrainian military’s 20th Territorial Defence Battalion who were taken prisoner in the village of Krasniy Partizan on that date. Footage posted on YouTube also corroborates the eyewitness testimony.

One of the soldiers who survived, S.S., spoke to Amnesty International on condition of anonymity:

*“There were tens of people around us and every one of them wanted to shoot. There was this girl, about 25 years old, she shot at [our] guys with a Dragunov sniper rifle from about three metres. At their knees, at their lungs. She did as she pleased.”*

One Ukrainian soldier, Andriy Kolesnik, was shot while still holding his weapon and was then left to bleed to death.

Three other soldiers were shot dead after surrendering: Serhiy Sliesarenko, Albert Sarukhanyan and a soldier whom S.S. identified as “Romchik”, a diminutive form of “Roma”. S.S. says Sarukhanyan was killed with two shots because he was Armenian, and because he said that he was “fighting for Ukraine” when asked what was he doing there.

The woman with the sniper rifle shot S.S. twice in the legs. A third shot missed his head. He maintains that a separatist fighter intervened, saying: “Have some decency, these are captives, they don’t have weapons, don’t do it like this”.

S.S. was later transferred with other surviving soldiers to a hospital in Donetsk to be treated for his injuries.

## Case 2 – Alexander Pinchuk’s testimony about a mock execution

On 12 November 2014, three building contractors who live in Donetsk were stopped at a checkpoint in Volnovakha run by the pro-Kyiv militia Right Sector and Dnipro 2. They were handed over to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and held for five days and badly tortured, before being released without charge.

Amnesty International interviewed two of the men, their two wives, two journalists who were involved in the case, and one of the doctors who treated the men’s injuries.

One of the torture victims, Alexander Pinchuk, 45, was treated particularly badly because he shares a surname with a well-known separatist leader. He told Amnesty International:

*“Two men came to my cell. They started to hit me in the neck. I tried to ask, ‘why are you beating me?’ No answer. ‘You can’t be a Ukrainian citizen,’ they said; ‘you’re going to Russia to provide information.’*

*“I said that I only went to Russia for business, but they didn’t believe me. They put a plastic bag over my head, suffocating me. They kept asking me the same questions. They didn’t like my last name, because there’s someone in the DNR [separatist group in Donetsk] with the same last name. They kept asking if I was his relative or if I was helping him. I’m not related to him at all.”*

Pinchuk was then taken outside, thrown into a deep hole in the ground, and subjected to a mock burial.

*“I thought I was being buried alive. I tried to straighten up, but one guy stood on my head to stop me from doing so, and the others threw dirt onto me. I was on my knees, and finally there was quite a thick layer of dirt on top of me. At that moment I lost consciousness because of the dirt, because I couldn’t breathe.”*

Pinchuk told Amnesty International that when he revived, his head and right hand were sticking out of the ground. He later told a doctor that his captors “played football with my head”.

*“The guys kicked my head, and said, ‘oh, he’s breathing’. They checked if I was conscious... Then they pulled me out of the hole. They took my coat, my watch, and my wedding ring, and then they took me back to a cell. My eyes were taped up the whole time. They returned me to the cell sometime around 3 or 4 am.”*

*“My cell was close to [my cousin] Igor [Bedniy’s], and I heard them warn Igor, ‘be a good boy, because we just buried your friend’.”*

Early the next morning the three men were questioned again. Pinchuk recalled:

*“They asked how many tanks were in Donetsk, how many people in military units, who the commanders were. I told him that I didn’t know the answers to those questions, as I wasn’t with the DNR. The interrogator said, ‘you’re not cooperating; you may end up in the hole again’.”*

Pinchuk was so badly beaten that when the three detainees were transferred to an underground bunker where they were held for a further four days, nobody touched him “because he was in such bad shape already,” according to fellow detainee Igor Bedniy.

Five days after they were first detained, the men were driven for about 20 minutes and released, and given back their car, their phones, and their passports, which the militia fighters had torn. They found out that they were in the town of Semenovka, near Sloviansk. When they got back to Donetsk, they went straight to the hospital; Pinchuk spent nearly three weeks recovering there.

The doctor who treated Pinchuk told Amnesty International that the former prisoner was in a very serious condition with a dangerous brain injury when he arrived, and could have died without immediate treatment.

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