

Dear Iryna,

Since the moment you were unlawfully deported to the Penal Colony No. 7 in Zelenokumsk, in Stavropol region, Southern Russia, you have been on my mind. I have to admit; I cried. I cried about the unfairness against you. The torture and violation against you. The cruelty.

I have to admit too: I am also in fear. I am in fear, over the Russian aggression towards Ukraine, and while time goes by, I fear that the world starts to get used to violence and injustice against intellectuals, artists, teachers, writers, journalists, human rights activists, which are hunted and imprisoned – just because they follow the values of democracy and truth.

The life of Ukrainians is in acute danger. On February 24<sup>th</sup> in 2022, Russia began a full-scale war against Ukraine. The monitoring of open sources demonstrates that a considerable quantity of representatives of the cultural, media and creative sector remained in the country: they still fight against Russian aggressors, they volunteer, and participate in meetings with fighters of the regular Army in the zones of operations.

Under the war conditions, it is impossible to evaluate the real state of things in the humanitarian cultural sphere because many libraries and objects of culture came to be in the zones of hot military operations. Houses of Culture, where the Russian occupational troops stayed, and Ukrainian books were simply destroyed, lacerated, or even fusilladed. To not only destroy culture, but to eliminate identity, language, and hope. Scores of Ukrainian citizen journalists and human rights activists are being kept behind bars in occupied Crimea and in the Russian Federation on politically motivated grounds. The attack by Vladimir Putin and his troops is thus an attack on peace and all democratic values in Europe.

Dear Iryna, I would like to let you know that we as your colleagues, not only in Germany but as well as in the whole world, are standing by your side. We read, write and talk about you, about your investigation on the Crimean health care system and on the politically motivated trials in occupied Crimea. We admire your courage, your knowledge, your stamina. We also know that the charges against you are made-up and fake accusations. We know that the judicial system that condemned you is illegitimate, and that in reality that want to shut you down for your brilliant journalistic and strong human rights work.

Dear Iryna: You never asked to be a hero, but you have become one. I am sending you my deepest respect. Beyond the bars of your cell, beyond the walls of your prison, where you suffer under the lack of health care and sunlight, you give us, writers and human rights defenders all over the world, nevertheless, the power to stand up, to fight the good fight.

Survive. Please, survive.

In friendship  
Nina George