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Russia/Ukraine

# Freedom for Maksym Butkevych and for the other prisoners of the Russian army!

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**On Friday 10 March 10, Russian media reported that three Ukrainian prisoners of war, including Maksym Butkevych, had been “found guilty” of war crimes by the “supreme courts” of the "People's Republics Members of the Russian Federation" of Donetsk and Luhansk and sentenced to 13 years for Maksym, 18 and a half years for Vladislav Chel and 8 and a half years for Viktor Prokhozai. These “convictions” herald others.**

Maksym Butkevych is a very famous prisoner, known for years in Ukraine, but also internationally, as a defender of migrants — he had collaborated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) —, as a defender of human rights, as an anti-fascist. He coordinated the European campaign in defence of Crimean prisoners Oleg Sentsov and Alexandr Kolchenk, released in 2019 from Russian prisons. He has been for a long time a student and later civil society activist in Ukraine, advocating libertarian ideas for a world free from domination and oppression. He is also a recognized journalist: he founded Hromadske Radio and collaborated with BBC World Service and several Ukrainian channels. A convinced anti-militarist, he nevertheless decided to join the Ukrainian army for the defence of the people and of civilians, in March 2022, and took part in the liberation of Bucha.

## **A death sentence in disguise**

Butkevych had been a prisoner since June 2022, Russian propaganda presented him as a “Nazi” and a “fascist”, slanders aimed at preparing the "Moscow trial" in Luhansk which was held on 10 March 2023. He was accused of firing a rocket launcher targeting civilians in Severodonetsk on 4 June 2022. According to 12 Ukrainian and Belarusian human rights organizations, Hromadske Radio and the Zmina human rights centre, his unit was never deployed in Severodonetsk .

This infamous accusation aims to portray a human rights defender, recognised as such in Ukraine and in Russia, as a “Nazi”. As Amnesty International points out, the real attack on the “law of war” is the absence of any fair trial for prisoners of war. And the sentence of 13 years in the cellars of the Luhansk regime, if applied to Maksym and his fellow prisoners, is akin to a death sentence in disguise.

The French Committee of the European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU) had already launched a campaign, last autumn, during which many democratic, political, associative and trade union organisations, elected officials and personalities had taken a stand to demand the release of Maksym Buktevych . All these structures and personalities must make their voices heard again: it is urgent! The pressure of democratic public opinion is essential to save Maksym and the other prisoners sentenced by puppet courts or who are in the hands of the Russian army.

They can be saved. Their release must become the symbol of the cause of truth against the “triumphant lie that passes” (Jaurès), for truth and justice!

*Freedom for Maksym Butkevych and for the other prisoners of the Russian army!*

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

PS:

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