

ACAT (Harrow) - prayer case of the month (April 2022)

Please pray as you feel led for *Radio free Europe/Radio Liberty* freelance journalist **Vladislav Yesypenko**. In February 2022, a court in Simferopol, the capital of Russian-occupied Crimea, fined him and sentenced him to six years to be spent in a maximum-security penal colony. His home is now in Kyiv and he has joint Russian/Ukrainian nationality.



In 2014 Russia took Crimea from Ukraine by force. Before his arrest, **Vladislav Yesypenko** had worked in there for five years reporting on the social and environmental situation on the peninsula. In March 2021 he was detained and accused of spying for Ukraine. He claims that he was subjected to death threats and was tortured for two days after his arrest. His lawyers were not allowed to see him for several weeks after that. He was also forced to ‘confess’ on the Russia-controlled TV channel ‘Crimea 24’.

In July 2021 he was formally charged with storing and transporting explosives. His trial took place behind closed doors in February 2022. Although the evidence against him seems to have been fraudulent and politically motivated, he was found guilty. According to some media reports, he maintained his innocence throughout the trial, and testified that authorities “want to discredit the work of freelance journalists who really want to show the things that really happen in Crimea.”

His health has worsened steadily since his arrest. He was sent to hospital last August but was returned to his cell against the advice of doctors.

Organisations such as *Reporters Without Borders (RSF)* and *The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)* have called for his release, and he is planning to appeal. **Vladislav Yesypenko** is one of a number of independent journalists who have been harassed and jailed in Crimea since Russia took it over.

Updates: first some good news. As well as the release in March from IRAN of **Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe** (our prayer case for October 2016), **Raif Badawi** (our prayer case for February 2015) was also released last month in SAUDI ARABIA...IRAN: Sadly, **Naser Navard Gol-Tapeh** (our prayer case for December 2021) had his request for a retrial dismissed in February. Please continue to pray for him.