

# Exploring Women's Resistance Against Occupation and War in Ukraine

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**Abstract:** The article presents the results of a theoretical and practical exploration of several forms, categories and types of women's resistance in Ukraine and abroad against occupation and war in Ukraine starting from 2013-2014. The main objective is to explore and explain this resistance. The primary data for analysis were collected by semi-structured interviews with a variety of Ukrainian women in Kyiv, Prague, and Warsaw between April and June 2019. The interviewees were selected through the purposive sampling method. The secondary data was based on analysis of academic articles, data from national and international organizations, charities as well as information from media discourse on Internet websites. Also, one of the main goals of the research was to discover the impact of women's resistance to changing gender stereotypes, models, and gender inequality in the Ukrainian Army and society.

**Keywords:** War, Ukraine, Women, Resistance, Crimea, Occupation.

## **Explorando a resistência das mulheres contra a ocupação e a guerra na Ucrânia**

**Resumo:** O artigo apresenta os resultados da exploração teórica e prática de várias formas, categorias e tipos de resistência feminina na Ucrânia e no exterior à ocupação e à guerra na Ucrânia a partir de 2013-2014. O objetivo principal do artigo é explorar e explicar essa resistência. Os dados primários para análise foram coletados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas com uma variedade de mulheres ucranianas em Kiev, Praga e Varsóvia entre abril e junho de 2019. As entrevistadas foram selecionadas por meio do método de amostragem intencional. Os dados secundários foram baseados na análise de artigos acadêmicos, dados de organizações nacionais e internacionais, instituições de caridade, bem como informações do discurso da mídia em sites da Internet. Além disso, um dos principais objetivos da pesquisa era descobrir o impacto da resistência das mulheres à mudança de estereótipos, modelos e desigualdade de gênero no Exército e na sociedade ucranianos.

**Palavras-chave:** Guerra, Ucrânia, Mulheres, Resistência, Crimeia, Ocupação.

## **Explorando la resistencia de las mujeres contra la ocupación y la guerra en Ucrania**

**Resumen:** El artículo presenta los resultados de la exploración teórica y práctica de varias formas, categorías y tipos de resistencia de las mujeres en Ucrania y en el extranjero por parte de mujeres que se resisten a la ocupación y la guerra en Ucrania a partir de 2013-2014. El objetivo principal del artículo es explorar y explicar esta resistencia. Los datos primarios para el análisis se recopilaron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas con una variedad de mujeres ucranianas en Kiev, Praga y Varsovia entre abril y junio de 2019. Las entrevistadas fueron seleccionadas mediante el método de muestreo intencional. Los datos secundarios se basaron en el análisis de artículos académicos, datos de organizaciones nacionales e internacionales, organizaciones benéficas e información del discurso de los medios en sitios web de Internet. Además, uno de los principales objetivos de la investigación fue descubrir el impacto de la resistencia de las mujeres a los estereotipos, modelos y desigualdad de género cambiantes en el ejército y la sociedad ucranianos.

**Palabras clave:** Guerra, Ucrania, Mujeres, Resistencia, Crimea, Ocupación.

## Introduction

What is resistance in general? Resistance is the efforts and activities undertaken to show disagreement with attempts against freedom, in favor of human and/or women's rights, independence of countries and territories.

What is women's resistance? It is the efforts of women to do all possible in their power when they disagree with something in their lives, countries, communities to improve their lives and the situation of their children, families, countries, and societies. What are they willing to sacrifice for achieving the best results from their resistance? They are willing to sacrifice everything that they have, even their lives.

In this paper, several forms, categories, and types of women's resistance are identified in Ukraine and outside of the country, including the occupied Crimea and Donbas, in the 21st century, during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Besides, it has sought to discover how women's resistance has changed gender stereotypes and models in their country of origin: Ukraine.

Wide-scale social studies and research on occupation and war have shown how both men and women became important agents of resistance against oppressors and how they affect the occupation and wartime reality of their country (Seema SHEKHAWAT 2015; Ozlem GONER; Maria SIX-HOHENBALKEN, 2019). The experiences of women who participated in acts of resistance during the Revolution of Dignity, occupation and war in Ukraine are frequently presented in the shadow of narratives about men. Such juxtaposition underplays women's activity, their role, and so can lead to their activity being silenced and their role diminished. Therefore, in this paper, the authors refer to the narratives of women and describe female resistance that deserves recognition in Ukraine and abroad.

## Methodology

The methodology of the research consisted of primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected by 35 semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian female resisters in the capitals of Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Poland. The women participating in the study represented one country of origin, several countries of residence, different ages, status, and types of resistance.

Women were selected for the semi-structured interviews through the purposive sampling method. Ten of the interviews were conducted in Prague, fifteen in Ukraine, and ten in Warsaw between April and June 2019. The interviews were conducted in the Ukrainian language. To protect sensitive data, names of the women resisters were coded from R\_1 to R\_35 (the first woman was coded as woman 1 or R\_1, and so on). All interviewees were informed about the confidentiality and the protection of sensitive data and the aim of the research. They were also informed that the research results would be used for academic purposes.

The secondary data were collected from academic sources, as well as official websites of several countries, national and international organizations, and charity funds. Among these sources were the UN Women in Ukraine, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, Council of Europe Office in Ukraine, 'Crimean Solidarity', 'Eurovision', 'Invisible Battalion,' 'Crimea SOS', 'International Committee for Crimea', Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, and others. These sources provided information about women's involvement in various acts of resistance during the Russian-Ukrainian war since 2014, inside and outside of Ukraine, including the occupied Crimea and Donbas.

## The scheme for collecting the semi-structured interviews among women resisters

To explore types of women's resistance, in 2019, in the capitals of Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Poland, the primary data was collected by 35 semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian women resisters during the Revolution of Dignity, occupation and war in Ukraine.

As pointed out above, the names of the women were coded from R\_1 to R\_35. Ten of the semi-structured interviews (R\_1 - R\_10) were conducted in Prague, fifteen (R\_11 - R\_25) in Ukraine in the capital Kyiv (including women from R\_11 to R\_20 involved in the Revolution of Dignity; as well as from R\_21 to R\_25 involved in the armed resistance, while ten of the interviews (R\_26 - R\_35) were conducted in Warsaw, all between April and June 2019.

## Exploring the personalities of the women who participated in the semi-structured interviews

Why were these 35 women resisters chosen for the interviews? What was special about them? The women have been chosen for this research according to several principles:

- they were absolute patriots of Ukraine;
- they were actively involved in resistance no matter where they lived during the Revolution, occupation and war;

- some of them became heroes of our time because they have been involved in the hottest and most dangerous periods and battles of the Revolution of 2013, and in the occupation and war in Ukraine, which started in 2014 and continue until today;
- some of them really changed gender stereotypes and models in the country, which would like to be a progressive European country, although in a lot of cases still being a Post-Soviet country (including the Ukrainian Army and society in general).

Among the women resisters who participated in the semi-structured interviews was a nurse from the Euromaidan, the place where the Revolution of Dignity took place; current female officers and soldiers of the Ukrainian Army; female veterans of the Russian-Ukrainian war; labour immigrant-volunteers from abroad (in this case, from the Czech Republic and Poland); internally and externally displaced persons, etc.

## Categories of women's resistance in Ukraine and abroad

According to the collected data, it was possible to recognize several forms of resistance by Ukrainian women who resisted in the country of origin and abroad against the occupation and war in Ukraine.

*The first form* was armed and unarmed resistance of women. Unarmed resistance consisted of women who physically lived abroad outside of Ukraine, but created everything possible in their power to help the country as volunteers. It was their form of resistance against the occupation and war in the country of origin. Armed resistance consisted of women who, with weapons in their hands, fought on the front line in Donbas during the Russian-Ukrainian war, as well as those who, with stones in their hands, fought on the Euromaidan in Kyiv against the Berkut during the Revolution of Dignity.

*The second form* was created using four categories of women resisters involved in the armed and unarmed resistance at the territory of Ukraine and abroad:

The first category were women resisters (R\_1 - R\_10) involved in the unarmed resistance in the Czech Republic as volunteers; the second (R\_11 - R\_20) were women resisters involved in the armed and unarmed resistance in Ukraine during the Revolution of Dignity in 2013; the third (R\_21 - R\_25) were involved in the armed and unarmed resistance on the front line during the occupation and war in Ukraine, and the fourth (R\_26 - R\_35) were involved in the unarmed resistance in Poland as volunteers.

*The third form* was created using primary and secondary sources of information for the research. The resistance of Ukrainian women resisters in Ukraine and abroad have been studied based on the primary sources of information. The resistance of Crimean Tatar women has been studied using secondary sources of information because the majority of those are still under occupation in Crimea since 2014.

## Types of women's resistance using collected primary data

Based on the forms and categories of women's resistance in Ukraine and abroad, as well as on the primary sources of research, it is possible to construct several types of women's resistance:

1. Resistance of women during the Revolution of Dignity;
2. Women's resistance due to Russian aggression in Ukraine including Crimea;
3. Armed resistance of women in Ukraine;
4. Unarmed resistance of women behind the front line;
5. Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women abroad;
6. Female veterans and their resistance outside of the front line.

We thus have identified six types of women's resistance in Ukraine and abroad, as specified below.

## Resistance of women during the Revolution of Dignity

The year 2013 became a fateful and extremely difficult time for Ukraine. It was the year when Ukrainians decided to be a part of the civilized world, a part of European society, but not a part of the empire of peoples called the former USSR. This is the reason why the majority of Ukrainian society supported the Revolution of Dignity in 2013, for the freedom and dignity of Ukraine. Women were an active part of the Revolution. Their resistance was expressed in several types, from preparing food for resisters, providing medical assistance to participating in violent phases of resistance when the special police force, entitled Berkut, beat, maimed and killed the resisters (Oksana KOSHULKO, 2019b). The Revolution of Dignity of 2013 became the active start of female resistance inside and outside of Ukraine for freedom and the real independence of Ukraine from the empire.

Below is a report based on the interview with the nurse from Euromaidan during the Revolution of Dignity (R\_15).

R\_15 was at the square Euromaidan in Kyiv from the end of 2013 to February 2014 (it is the central square of Independence in the capital) even when snipers started shooting in the unarmed resisters without any weapons in their hands. One of the snipers fired in the neck of this nurse even the sniper very well saw her white with the red cross clothes. She wrote on social media: 'I am dying'. But she miraculously survived and became a doctor a few years later.

R\_15 was a great patriot and a medical professional who could not stay at home at the time when her professional help there was extremely important during the Revolution of Dignity. She was in the hottest spot during the Revolution, and her medical assistance was her weapon for resistance for freedom and real independence of Ukraine, for which she almost paid with her life.

## **Women's resistance due to Russian aggression in Ukraine including Crimea**

Since 2014, Ukraine has faced Russian aggression that started with the occupation of Crimea, followed by the occupation of Donbas and the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. Because of that, several types of female resistance, which were part of an important paradigm of social, international, and national solidarity, have appeared.

Anders Aslund (2018) explained the Russian aggression that led to the occupation of Crimea and Donbas as follows:

The Russian occupation of Crimea started on February 27, 2014, as 'little green men' - Russian special forces without insignia - seized the regional parliament in Simferopol. It was unprovoked military aggression and came as a complete surprise. The unprepared Ukrainian armed forces made no resistance, and the occupation was nearly bloodless. On March 18, the Russian Federation annexed the whole of Crimea (ASLUND, 2018, p. 4).

Women in the country and peninsula were forced to deal with the harsh reality of the occupation in their homeland and were forced to resist (KOSHULKO, 2020).

The roots of the Russian aggression in Ukraine have been explored by international researchers, such as Elizabeth A. Wood, William E. Pomeranz, E. Wayne Merry, and Maxim Trudolyubov (WOOD; POMERANZ; MERRY; TRUDOLYUBOV, 2015), as well as Fiona Hill and Pamela. Jewett (2014):

Yeltsin was hobbled by an economic crisis, domestic political turmoil, and secessionist conflicts at home and was never able to mount a major Russian military intervention. Instead, it is Vladimir Putin who invoked the Yeltsin doctrines to move into South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Georgia in 2008 and into Crimea and Ukraine in 2014 (HILL; JEWETT, 2014).

How did the resistance of women start? Russia planned to make the Ukrainian Army very weak. In 2014, when the occupation of Crimea and Donbas started, the Ukrainian Army was not ready to defend the country nor was the majority of the male population of the country. To defend the country, women actively joined the process. As Mila O'Sullivan (2019) remarks, this "initiated a path of the history of women involved in a political and social activity aiming to support their country" (O'SULLIVAN, 2019, p.22). Indeed, women's activity and agency in this field break the paradigm of silence and ignorance shown when referring to the most recent and frequently hidden women's resistance participation in Ukraine.

In this paper, the activities were considered in connection with the behavior of women and their resistance practices, in an attempt to express their disagreement and disapproval or to change their socio-political situation during the occupation and war in Ukraine. These practices exposed women to many negative consequences (repression, persecution, loss of life, prisoners of conscience). They were often in areas where women are traditionally perceived as weak and helpless, sacrificing themselves for the idea of solidarity and heroism. For this reason, broader and further analysis should consider local and contextual conditioning.

Patrick Tucker (2019) described resistance practices of women after meeting Ukrainian female veterans:

Hundreds of women were among the young Ukrainians who left their lives and jobs and families to resist the Russian-backed forces who invaded their country's eastern region in 2014. With little training and no combat experience, these students, economists, academics, office workers, and mothers took on a variety of military roles, first as combat medics, then as snipers and intelligence gatherers (TUCKER, 2019).

Among the women who participated in the resistance and struggle were women of various nationalities but the majority of them were Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar women, the indigenous inhabitants of Crimea (BILL BOWRING, 2018, p. 23).

Between 2014 and 2021, many women were engaged in acts of armed and unarmed resistance against the war and occupation in Ukraine. It is important to note that the majority of these were ordinary women, not feminists, just patriots of their country, attached to their communities, and carrying out the social and professional roles they held in their environments.

In 2014, the Russian occupation of Crimea and Donbas was a massive blow to the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar people, as well as to all the civilized countries in the world that respect international legislation and obligations. To counter this act of aggression, women took part in various acts of resistance in Ukraine, including Donbas and Crimea, and around the world. Crimean Tatar women undertook the unarmed resistance, while Ukrainian women took part in both the armed and unarmed acts of resistance.

The unarmed resistance consisted of fighting for freedom and regaining the occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas. It was a fight for human and women's rights and Ukrainian statehood in the occupied territories of Ukraine. The majority of women were involved in this unarmed resistance both in Ukraine and abroad.

The armed resistance involved joining the Ukrainian Army and defending Ukrainian territory with military weapons. Thousands of women actively fought in Donbas (Lina KLYMENKO, 2019).

## Armed resistance of women in Ukraine

Up to 2014, tens of thousands of women had served in military units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in all regions of the country as soldiers, officers, wives of officers, and service staff in military units. Since 2014, when the occupation and then the war started in Donbas, the situation has changed. A new type of troopers appeared in the Army. This type was female volunteer-warriors who came to the front line with a strong desire to defend their Motherland. These warriors on the front line in Donbas 'changed the face of the Ukrainian Army' (UN WOMEN, 2016).

The majority of them served there as volunteers without any contract with the Armed Forces. On the front line, they served as military doctors, instructors, paramedics, machine-gunners, divers, snipers, sappers, attackers, and aerial scouts. As a result, some of them became professional officers and soldiers (KOSHULKO, 2018). Nevertheless, the women who joined the Army in 2014 had no right to serve on the front line in military positions as machine-gunners, divers, snipers, etc. because of gender inequality and lack of access to serious military positions in the Ukrainian, but still in the post-Soviet, Army. Officially they occupied positions as service staff in the military units on the front line while, in fact, they served there as snipers or machine-gunners, etc. Little by little, the situation for these female volunteer-warriors began to change on the front line and in the Army in general. During 2014-2016, they received some right to serve in appropriate military positions on the front line.

Some of the female warriors went to the front line to join their husbands, sons, or fathers to serve together, or to take the place of their menfolk who had been killed in the war.

The report below is based on the results of a semi-structured interview with a woman (R\_23), who participated in the armed resistance on the front line:

R\_23, a former journalist, served as the commander of a self-propelled gun. R\_23 left her civil profession as a journalist and joined the Army as a volunteer trooper but later passed the theoretical and practical stages of study and became an officer. She was not a feminist, but a great patriot of her country. As a serving officer of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, R\_23 participated in different international events against the occupation and war to show the achievement of Ukrainian women in the Army on the front line, as well as to show the destruction of gendered stereotypes concerning the presence of women in the Army in military positions. She still cannot allow herself to have children with her husband because her main goal during the war is to defend the country of origin, and because of that, to continue resisting the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

## Unarmed resistance of women behind the front line

Among others, the unarmed resistance of women behind the front lines consisted of ordinary women who became internally displaced within Ukraine. According to the data of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in July 2020 was 1,448,761 (MINISTRY OF SOCIAL POLICY OF UKRAINE, 2020; KOSHULKO, 2019c), and according to the data of the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine, almost 60 % of them were women (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2020).

These women knew what the occupation and war entailed and they wanted to free their homeland by doing everything possible to this end. Some of them organized volunteer movements intending to deliver necessary things to the front line, while others resisted the occupation and war from the rear in any other way that they could find.

The results of a semi-structured interview with a woman (R\_22), who was an internally displaced female involved in the unarmed resistance within Ukraine are presented below:

R\_22, a writer, blogger, women's and human rights defender from the Luhansk region of Donbas, was forced to leave her region (Luhansk) and become an internally displaced person due to the persecution of the insurgents from the Luhansk People's Republic. R\_22 arrived in Central Ukraine together with her family, from where she continued her peaceful resistance by conducting a blog about the situation in the occupied region of Donbas. In 2014, she published a book based

on her blog about the first days of the Russian occupation of Donbas. R\_22 is not a feminist, but a great patriot, who during all years of the occupation and war in Donbas believed in the victory of Ukraine. R\_22 always knew that her resistance and activity were extremely important for her compatriots who continue to live in the occupied territories of Donbas.

## Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women abroad

This type of resistance concerned the unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women abroad, the resistance of female representatives of the labour immigrants who regularly sent financial and material help for the Ukrainian Armed Forces from abroad, in particular from the Czech Republic and Poland.

These women, interviewed in Prague and Warsaw, resisted from outside Ukraine through prosocial activities. They were activists cooperating with Ukrainian organizations working outside the country, organizing events supporting children and adults in Ukraine. They conducted information campaigns and protests to draw the world's attention to the social consequences of war and occupation. Ukrainian women in Warsaw organized protests near the Russian Embassy, participated in all the patriotic events in Warsaw, raised funds for the needs of the military families as well as organizing summer camps for the children.

What follows is the result of a semi-structured interview with a woman (R\_3) involved in the unarmed resistance outside of Ukraine in the capital of the Czech Republic, Prague:

R\_3, a 70-year-old woman, a Ukrainian language teacher in Prague. When the Revolution of Dignity, the occupation and war started in Ukraine, she supported the revolutionaries and military by raising funds to help support the participants in the Revolution in Ukraine. She also supported those wounded in the Revolution of Dignity of 2013, who arrived in hospitals in Prague for treatment. Since 2014, she raised funds to buy military uniforms and equipment for the military. Additionally, every Sunday she visited the Orthodox Church in Prague where she provided spiritual support for her Motherland and the Ukrainian military.

We have also the summary of an interview with a woman resister in Warsaw (R\_30):

R\_30, a young woman from Warsaw, organized annual Christmas events for children of the Ukrainian military during all these years of the occupation and war in Ukraine. Supported by her mother and other volunteers, she raised money for Christmas presents, which were sent to the children at Christmas. Moreover, in cooperation with other volunteers, she organized annual summer camps in Poland for children of the Ukrainian military.

## Female veterans and their resistance

On the front line, these female warriors provided armed resistance, but when these female veterans came back home, they started providing their unarmed resistance to the occupation and war. They organized the female veteran movement to continue doing their resistance against Russian propaganda, occupation, and annexation of Ukrainian territories.

These veterans actively resisted at the national and international levels to help win the war, supported other veterans, and informed the international community about the situation in Donbas and Crimea. They organized information campaigns, shot a film about female volunteers in the war, participated in various international events abroad to spread information about the occupation and war in Ukraine. They organized several meetings of the veteran movement in various Ukrainian cities to see and support each other, to build their future strategy for resisting, to help each other to overcome some consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder in a peaceful life, as well as to honor the fighting sisters who were killed in the war.

This is the summary of an interview with a current female veteran and a former soldier (R\_22):

R\_22, after years of involvement in the war, became a champion of the Invictus Games thanks to archery because she won two gold medals at the Invictus Games as a female veteran. She attended an event in the UK about mine clearance in dangerous territories around the world, including the Donbas of Ukraine, where many unexploded landmines remain. As a female veteran, in a peaceful life, she continued to shoot a bow and taught the young generation of Ukrainians archery, and among other ways for resistance, it is her way to resist the occupation and war in Ukraine.

The semi-structured interview with a female veteran R\_25 and officer of the Army revealed the following:

R\_25 served on the front line for 4 years. When she arrived at the front line, she was already a reserve officer. She occupied a senior post in her military unit on the front line. For four years, she helped and supported soldiers and officers of her military unit on the front line and she continues to do so following her return from the war. R\_25 organized all possible campaigns to support the Army and her military unit in particular. She was one of the active participants and organizers of the military parade in the main street in Kyiv on Independence Day in Ukraine in August 2019-2020.

In general, the resistance of female veterans has been spread not only among occupiers on the front line and enemies inside of the country. A lot of elements, rules, and models of the current Ukrainian Army came from the former Soviet Army, and current female warriors, as well as female veterans, are forced to resist them. Among the objectives for struggle and resistance for women resisters in the Ukrainian Army were gender inequality, sexual harassment, gender stereotypes, distorted patterns of behaviour regarding the presence of women in the Army and war (relegating women to kitchens), lack of military positions for female troopers in some military areas. So, the armed and unarmed resistance of female military and veterans were and continue to be very hard, especially in the background of the occupation and war in Ukraine, but these heroic female resisters really changed the attitude toward military women, female veterans in the Army and in the country in general and raised the prestige of women in the Army and society, and their service for the country as a whole.

## Types of resistance to the occupation and war using secondary data

The data on women resisters of various nationalities, including Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar women against the occupation and war in Ukraine, have been collected thanks to secondary sources. Among the sources were the data of 'Crimean Solidarity' (2019), 'Crimea SOS' (2020), 'Invisible Battalion' (2019), UN Women in Ukraine (2016), 'International Committee for Crimea' (2001), SEMA (2020), Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (2020), and others.

Since 2014, both types of resistance have been important for Ukraine as they highlighted the efforts of women of different nationalities, among them Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar women, in defending Ukraine from the Russian aggression and intervention. Among the women resisters who defended the territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine, by armed and unarmed means, were women of Russian, Polish, and Czech nationalities.

Using secondary sources of information, several additional types of armed and unarmed resistance by other categories of women have been identified. Among the types were:

1. Unarmed resistance by Crimean Tatar women in Crimea under the occupation of the peninsula;
2. Unarmed resistance by Crimean Tatar women on the mainland of Ukraine. Some of the Crimean Tatar women served in senior positions in the Government or worked for the Crimean Tatar TV channel or NGO, and actively resisted the war and occupation in Ukraine. As a result, since 2014, these women are unable to visit Crimea because of the occupation;
3. Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women, wives, and mothers of political prisoners in Crimea under the occupation;
4. Unarmed resistance by the people from the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar Diasporas in Turkey, the USA, and other countries. During the occupation of Ukraine and Crimea, the people of these Diasporas organized many meetings and protest actions in cities around the world against the occupation;
5. Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women in the temporarily occupied territory of Donbas. Some of these women resisted the occupation and war in everyday life by using Ukrainian symbols and speaking Ukrainian, by teaching the Ukrainian language and literature and helping the Ukrainian Army;
6. Resistance by women of different nationalities against the occupation and war in Ukraine, the unarmed women in other countries of the world as well as the armed women on the front line of Donbas;
7. Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian female celebrities who visited the armed forces on the front line with their concerts and performances, fundraising in the rear for the Army on the front line, and other protest actions;
8. Unarmed resistance by the Verkhovna Rada Human Rights Ombudspersons, who were women from this high post in Ukraine;
9. Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian and international professional women in various areas of activity against the occupation and war in Ukraine.

## Unarmed resistance by Crimean Tatar women in Crimea

This was peaceful or unarmed resistance by Crimean Tatar women in Crimea against the occupation of the peninsula. The data from secondary sources were collected from data of the organization 'Crimean Solidarity' (2019). There were studies by international scientists who examined and described the difficult social, cultural, and political situation of the Crimean Tatar nation on the occupied peninsula (Halya COYNASH; Austin CHARRON, 2019).

Marketa Zidkova and Hynek Melichar (ZIDKOVA; MELICHAR, 2015) and Oksana Voytyuk (2018) explored the annexation of Crimea, pointing out the political and social conditioning of the changing statehood and the nationalist problem in post-Soviet countries.

Crimea is the Tatars' historical land (Alan W. FISHER, 2014; Paul Robert MAGOCSI, 2014). The population of Crimean Tatars normally consists of several hundred thousand people and their sense of Crimean solidarity is crucial for their survival. To reinforce this, Crimean Tatars founded the organization 'Crimean Solidarity' to support each other and the families of Crimean Tatar political prisoners at the difficult time of the occupation. They also undertook unarmed resistance against the occupation and war in Ukraine.

Since 2014, Crimean Tatar women have carried out unarmed resistance in the temporarily occupied peninsula. From the data from the organization 'Crimean Solidarity,' the unarmed resistance by Crimean Tatar women in the temporarily occupied peninsula, it is possible to categorize the following activities (CRIMEAN SOLIDARITY, 2019).

Firstly, Crimean Tatar women provided permanent support to political prisoners and their families in the temporarily occupied peninsula. Independently of the menfolk, the women organized and conducted common prayers of the Islamic faith for the health and safety of political prisoners arrested as 'extremists' and 'terrorists'.

Secondly, they regularly taught Crimean Tatar children the essentials for good Muslims and patriots of Crimea and Ukraine, including the Quran, the Muslim religion and Islamic traditions, patriotic behaviors to strengthen their connection with Crimea and Ukraine. This helped them to identify with their homeland and be proud of their roots and their culture. The children of political prisoners were taught that their fathers are heroes due to their political struggle against the occupiers of Crimea and Ukraine.

Thirdly, wives of political prisoners organized a campaign, 'Crimean childhood', to improve the childhood of children of political prisoners. They organized interesting events for them, such as lessons, master classes, and excursions in Crimea (CRIMEAN SOLIDARITY, 2019).

## **Unarmed resistance by Crimean Tatar women on the mainland of Ukraine**

Crimean Tatar women continued their unarmed resistance also in the mainland of Ukraine, and their contributions were significant. Among them were journalists, public activists, public servants, and singers. Some of them worked in senior posts in the Ukrainian Government and continued their resistance to the occupation and war in Ukraine at the national and international levels every day as part of their professional activity. Some of them resisted the occupation of Crimea through music, including the winner of the Eurovision competition (EUROVISION, 2016). Some of them have founded charitable funds or social organizations and have been resisting since 2014 through their volunteer and public activities. One such organization is 'Crimea SOS' whose website showed their resistance mission statement: "Our mission is the de-occupation of the Crimea peninsula and its reintegration" (CRIMEA SOS, 2020).

## **Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women, wives, and mothers of political prisoners in Crimea under the occupation**

This was a peaceful or unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women, mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives of Ukrainian political prisoners in Crimea under the temporary occupation of the peninsula.

Some Ukrainian patriots did not leave the occupied peninsula in 2014 and so were arrested under the occupation. Accordingly, their mothers, wives, and other relatives lived through the occupation of the peninsula for years while the arrested menfolk were imprisoned. The men were arrested for using Ukrainian symbols and flags during the occupation. The women have supported their men and each other through the difficult time of the occupation (CRIMEA SOS, 2020). Recently some of the male patriots have been released, but others remain in prison.

## **Unarmed resistance by the people from the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar Diasporas worldwide**

There was unarmed resistance by the people of the Ukrainian Diaspora in many countries worldwide, such as the Crimean Tatar Diaspora in Turkey, the USA, and other countries. During the occupation of Ukraine and Crimea, the Ukrainian Diaspora held many meetings and protests in various cities of the world. At the same time, the people of the Crimean Tatar Diaspora in Turkey, the USA, and other countries actively resisted the occupation of Crimea, holding many meetings and protests in Istanbul, Kyiv, and some American and European cities by celebrating the Day of the Crimean-Tatar flag and other national holidays. The Diasporas in different countries were a strong 'voice' across the nations in the world (INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR CRIMEA, 2001).

## **Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian women in the temporarily occupied territory of Donbas**

The patriotic Ukrainian women in the temporarily occupied territory of Donbas resisted in this way from 2014. This included help for the Ukrainian Army in the temporarily occupied territory, helping Ukrainian orphans when occupiers tried to take the children to Russia, and resisting by displaying Ukrainian national symbols at home and work.

All these types of resistance were a risk to the life and health of these women, but they resisted in every way possible under the occupation for freedom of Donbas. For example, in 2014, a woman helped the Ukrainian Army under the occupation and was arrested. She survived and continued to resist in the capital of Ukraine. She was awarded the Order for her active patriotic position resistance and became a member of SEMA, a global network of victims of wars and conflicts (SEMA, 2020).

Another Ukrainian woman continued to teach Ukrainian literature to children during the occupation of her city. When the Ukrainian Army liberated her city from the occupiers, a painter from Australia came to the city to paint a mural which included her face. This was on a house damaged by bullets and became a symbol of resistance to the occupation and war and a tribute to female resistance (WIDEWALLS, 2016).

## **Resistance by women of different nationalities against the occupation and war in Ukraine**

Women of various nationalities carried out unarmed resistance in many countries of the world as well as armed resistance on the front line in Donbas. Some women of different nationalities served on the front line as volunteers and others resisted the occupation and war in Ukraine from their own home countries, such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Canada, and the USA. They held protest meetings and organized protest action.

## **Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian female celebrities**

Female Ukrainian celebrities undertook unarmed resistance by actively joining resistance movements. They visited various military units on the front line to arrange concerts, humanitarian action, and theatrical performances. They created documentary films about serving female officers and soldiers on the front line and about female veterans. They raised money for the military on the front line. They created different international events to support the Ukrainian Army.

## **Unarmed resistance by the Verkhovna Rada Human Rights Female Ombudspersons**

The Verkhovna Rada Human Rights Ombudspersons, who were women, undertook this resistance since 1998. They carried out significant acts of resistance using their permanent contact with international institutions of many countries worldwide, fighting for the human rights of the captured military, political prisoners in Russian prisons. From the beginning of the occupation and war in Ukraine, the Ombudspersons worked continuously to obtain the release of the captured military personnel and political prisoners (UKRAINIAN PARLIAMENT COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, 2020). Currently, the Ombudsperson continue to resist and call the international community to liberate the captured military personnel, as well as Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar political prisoners from the prisons of the occupied Donbas and Russia.

## **Unarmed resistance by Ukrainian and international professional women**

Ukrainian and international female professionals who resisted included several categories, as listed below (INVISIBLE BATTALION, 2019; KOSHULKO, 2019a; KOSHULKO, 2019b; Oleksandr DLUHOPOLSKYI; Tetiana ZATONATSKA; Ielyzaveta LVOVA; Yuriy KLAPKIV, 2019):

- A. Female doctors, medical volunteers, and nurses who worked in military hospitals around the country;
- B. Soldiers' mothers and wives of Ukrainian military men;
- C. Female volunteers who collected financial and material help for the Ukrainian Armed Forces (money, clothes, medical supplies, food), wove camouflage nets and carried out other very important services for the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Donbas);
- D. Female volunteers who helped the children and families of killed, captured, or wounded Ukrainian military personnel;

E. Female volunteers who supported and helped wounded Ukrainian soldiers and officers in Ukrainian military hospitals;

F. Female military correspondents, journalists, writers, and filmmakers;

G. Female researchers who designed and conducted scientific projects about the occupation of Crimea, occupation and war in Donbas and shared the results of their studies with national and international academic and non-academic communities;

H. Female public activists who organized protest meetings against the occupation and war in Ukraine.

## Conclusions

As a rule, women actively resisted wars and occupations in different countries and periods, but very often their activity was invisible and underestimated. This is the reason why current research is extremely important for Ukraine and the international community too.

According to the results of the conducted research, 3 forms, 4 categories, and 15 types of women's resistance were identified and described in this paper, which provides one of the first steps in exploring Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar women's resistance to the occupation and war in Ukraine.

Besides, it is important to stress that the Ukrainian women resisters who participated in the semi-structured interviews did not consider themselves feminists, but just patriots and ordinary women, who because of their courage and desire to defend the country became extraordinary women: troopers of the Ukrainian Army, volunteers, female veterans, fighters for gender equality, etc.

However, in spite of not being directly aligned with feminism, the fight of Ukrainian women in the 21st century helped to break gender stereotypes in the post-Soviet (currently, Ukrainian) Army, and at the same time, among the Russian occupiers on the front line, placing themselves on an equal footing with men in Donbas. Due to permanent resistance, Ukrainian women have managed to change gender stereotypes and models in the Army and society in general.

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#### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE ACCORDING TO THE JOURNAL'S NORMS

KOSHULKO, Oksana, DLUHOPOLSKYI, Oleksandr. “Exploring Women’s Resistance Against Occupation and War in Ukraine”. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, Florianópolis, v. 30, n. 1, e75862, 2022.

#### AUTORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Oksana Koshulko – The first author’s contribution to the article: creating an idea on the article, planning, collecting and analyzing data, drafting the manuscript, editing and revising the text, and discussing the results.

Oleksandr Dluhopolskyi – The second author’s contribution to the article: planning, analyzing data, drafting the manuscript, editing and revising the text, and discussing the results of the article

#### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Not applicable.

#### CONSENT TO USE IMAGE

Not applicable.

#### APPROVAL BY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Not applicable.

#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Not applicable.

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#### BACKGROUND

Received on 22/07/2020  
Resubmitted on 15/07/2021  
Approved on 29/07/2021

