

Olha Tsilynko

Volunteer from Kherson, Director, The Sophia Family Rehabilitation Center, Ukraine

Olha Tsilynko is an outstanding community leader and civic activist from Kherson, Ukraine, recognized for her significant contributions in supporting families with children with disabilities amid the crises caused by the Russian occupation and armed conflict. For more than 15 years, she has led the Sofia Family Rehabilitation Center, an organization dedicated to assisting children diagnosed with central nervous system disorders and their families, providing medical, social, humanitarian, and psychological support.

During the Russian occupation of Kherson, Olha mobilized resources and coordinated interventions to ensure continued support for many families facing extreme hardship. With an academic background in history and extensive experience in volunteer activism, Olha adopted a strategic approach to counter Russian propaganda, avoiding the involvement of families in the distribution of "humanitarian aid" imposed by the occupying forces, which aimed to collect their personal data. Instead, she used social networks to raise funds for the purchase of food and essential medicines, especially for children with special needs, in an environment marked by severe shortages and constant risks.

After the liberation of Kherson and the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, which resulted in the loss of her home, Olha demonstrated exceptional resilience by turning the organization's headquarters into a temporary refuge for her family while continuing to support the local community. Her activities include providing food supplies, organizing psychological counseling sessions, and coordinating assistance efforts for Ukrainian soldiers and civilians affected by the conflict.