



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS
СОЮЗ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ АВСТРАЛІЇ

Representing 22 Peak Ukrainian Organisations in Australia
Member of Ukrainian World Congress

26 January 2025

Mr Kirk Marcolina
Chair
Antenna Documentary Film Festival

Mr David (Dudi) Rokach
Lead Programmer
Antenna Documentary Film Festival

Via email: kirkym@gmail.com, dudi@antennafestival.org

Dear Mr Marcolina and Mr Rokach,

We write to you as the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO), which represents the interests of the Ukrainian community in Australia. We are the peak body for 22 national community organisations across the country, with interests across culture, business, youth, religion and women's issues.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the Antenna Documentary Film Festival's support of Ukraine. Many members of our community attended Antenna Festival screenings of *20 Days in Mariupol* last year and we commend the inclusion of *Intercepted* in this year's program.

We are reaching out to you today as it was of great concern and distress to us to learn that the festival has decided to include *Russians at War* in this year's program. We are also particularly concerned that as recipients of both State and Federal government funding, the Antenna Documentary Film Festival has chosen to provide a platform for Russian propaganda by screening *Russians at War*.

The trailer sets up the premise and narrative of the movie - that the 'truth' will be revealed by interviewing and recording the 'human stories' of Russian soldiers at war. Yet nothing could be further from the truth as evidenced by watching the trailer and reading testimonies about the movie.

Russia's war against Ukraine has been a brutal war of occupation, which has devastated Ukrainian cities, towns, villages, schools, hospitals and civilian infrastructure. Ukrainian authorities are currently investigating close to [140,000 registered war crimes](#), including summary executions, torture, sexual violence, attacks on cultural institutions and deportations.

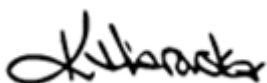
The movie, however, seeks to humanise soldiers who are members of the Russian army which has committed these crimes. The trailer shows Russian soldiers sometimes tired and weary, but also laughing, dancing, holding cats and romancing their girlfriends. According to testimonies, the film does not mention that Russia invaded a sovereign nation, Ukraine, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The movie also fails to show or mention any of the war crimes committed by Russian troops and does not criticise the Putin regime. Without this context, audience members are encouraged to feel sympathy for Russian soldiers who are just 'regular' people, worrying about their children and the future.

As such, the movie presents not the 'truth' but a propaganda narrative which empathises with Russian soldiers, and seeks to absolve them of any crimes they, or their army, have committed. It is no surprise to learn that the director Anastasia Trofimova worked for Russia's state-owned propaganda outlet, Russia Today, earlier in her career. It is also highly improbable that Trofimova was able to embed herself in a Russian army unit without the knowledge or approval of the Russian Defence Ministry (as she has claimed).

For the approximately 5,000 displaced Ukrainians in Australia, the movie is particularly hurtful. Many lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the full-scale Russian invasion; some lived through the horrors of Russian occupation, such as Sydney-based Maria Mykytiuk, a former resident of Bucha. Maria has [described](#) the soldiers who inflicted a reign of terror on her town as *'thinking they could act like wild animals and do anything they wanted with us...It was beastly, inhuman behaviour. They felt no pity for children. For adults. We lived for 33 days in hell.'* Others have experienced something unimaginable for most of us; Ukrainian soldier Oleksandr Sinetskyi (currently living in Sydney with his children and parents) spent more than 560 days in Russian captivity as a prisoner of war. Oleksandr has [spoken about](#) the torture and deprivation he experienced, including beatings, electrocution, and attack by dogs.

We understand that His Excellency Ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko, the President of the Ukrainian Council of NSW, Andrew Mencinsky, and members of our community have written to you about their concerns regarding this movie. We join them in urging the Antenna Documentary Film Festival to cancel all screenings of *Russians at War*. We are ready to meet with you to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,



Kateryna Argyrou
AFUO Co-Chair

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