

Journalist, Pacifist, Soldier

Maxym Butkevych's remarkable journey from Kyiv Maidan to Russian captivity – and back



Maxym Butkevych after his release from Russian captivity in October 2024

Tuesday, 25 March

12:15-13:45h

Room F021 (University of Bern, "Unitobler", entry Lerchenweg 36, ground floor)

Co-moderation:

Carmen Scheide and Cécile Druey, Institute of History

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Panel discussion with Maxym Butkevych, Ukrainian journalist, human rights activist and soldier

It has now been three years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. For more than two-thirds of that time, Maxym Butkevych—a prominent journalist, human rights activist, and philosopher from Kyiv—has been held as a prisoner of war in Russian captivity. This panel discussion, however, goes beyond a mere recounting of Russian aggression. It presents an opportunity to gain deeper insights into Ukraine and reflect on the pivotal historical moments the country has faced over recent decades. Maxym Butkevych, a dedicated journalist, sharp-minded philosopher, and passionate advocate of the civic movement that led the 2013 Revolution of Dignity, will share his experiences as an activist, pacifist, and soldier. How does one retain their humanity in the face of war's horrors? How has the turbulence of recent years transformed Ukrainian civil society? What role has the media played? And what will it take for life to return to normal once the weapons are silenced? Join us for an engaging discussion with Maxym Butkevych on these and other pressing questions on Tuesday, 25 March 2025, at the University of Bern.



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Ukrainian journalist, human rights activist and soldier

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About Maxym Butkevych

Maxym Butkevych (born 1977) is a Ukrainian journalist, human rights activist, and war veteran. He holds a degree in philosophy from Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University and an MA in anthropology from the University of Sussex. Throughout his career, he has worked extensively in the media, including Ukrainian TV channels and the BBC World Service in London. He also co-founded Hromadske Radio, an independent Ukrainian radio station. Beyond journalism, Butkevych has been a tireless advocate for human rights and social justice, assisting refugees, opposing war, discrimination, and racism, and defending freedom of speech and assembly. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, he joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces and was later captured by Russian forces. Within months, a Russian sham court sentenced him to 13 years of imprisonment on fabricated charges.

After spending two years and four months in Russian captivity, he was finally released in October 2024. While imprisoned, a collection of his essays was published in French and German, further amplifying his voice on the international stage.



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