



VOLODYMYR VAKULENKO: UKRAINE

On 28 November 2022, DNA analysis carried out by Ukrainian forensic and war crimes investigators confirmed that the body found in grave N.319 in the woods of Izium, Eastern Ukraine, was that of award-winning Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Vakulenko. News that he had been abducted first emerged in April, but information about his fate was only made possible after the Ukrainian army recaptured Izium from Russian forces in September. According to Vakulenko's family, members of the Russian forces raided his home on 22 March 2022, seizing phones, documents, and books in Ukrainian. A day later, they took Vakulenko and his son Vitalii, diagnosed with autism. They undressed the writer to inspect his tattoos and beat him. Both were allowed to return home the following day. Vakulenko subsequently decided to bury his war diary under a cherry tree in his garden. Around 11 am on 24 March, a bus with a Z-sign drove up to Vakulenko's house and took him towards Izium. His relatives never saw him again. PEN International utterly condemns the killing of Vakulenko and calls for those responsible to be brought to justice. PEN International further condemns the violence unleashed by Russian forces against Ukraine and urges the Russian Federation to immediately end the war in Ukraine.