



The Story of Vitaliy Kalynychenko

Who was Vitaly Kalynychenko?

- He was born 31st 1938 in Vasylkivska, Ukraine
- He was the son of schoolteachers, and he was raised during wartime and Stalin's USSR
- He dreamed of freedom and fairness at a young age
- Always questioned injustice, even when it is dangerous

Life in the USSR- why people wanted out?

The Soviet Union was a very strict country

The USSR was one-party state: no free speech, travel, or protest allowed

Anyone who would disagree could be arrested

Vitaly wanted to live in a place where people had basic rights and freedoms, but the Soviet Union did not allow that

Trying to escape

- In 1966, Vitaly tried to escape the Soviet Union by crossing the border into Finland, he was caught and got arrested
- The government accused him of 'treason', even though all he wanted was freedom.
- He was then sentenced to 10 years in labour camp, where the conditions were extremely harsh.

Life in Labour Camp

Labour camps in the USSR were like prisons with hard physical work. The food was poor, guards were cruel and prisoners were often punished for small things.

Vitaliy refused to follow unfair rules and often places solitary confinement.

Even in these tough times, he stayed strong in his beliefs

Released but still watched

- After 10 years, Vitaliy was released. But he was not fully free- he was constantly watched by the police and had to follow strict rules.
- He still couldn't travel or get a good job.
- Despite this, he kept speaking out and writing letters to protest against these restrictions.

Becoming a Human Rights Activist

- In 1977, Vitaliy joined the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, which worked to defend human rights in the USSR.
- He started to publish open letters criticizing the government and even renounced his Soviet Union citizenship.
- He went on a hunger strikes to protest. This made him a bigger target for the authorities.



Arrested Again

- In 1979, Vitaliy was arrested the second time
- The Soviet government charged him with "anti-Soviet ideas" and sentenced him to another 10 years in prison and 5 years of exile.
- They wanted to silence him, but even in prison, he continued to protest for his rights

Gorbachev's Reforms and Release

- In the late 1980s Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduced reforms called Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring).
- These changes led to the release of many political prisoners. Vitaliy was finally released in 1988
- He left the Soviet Union with his wife and moved to the United States, where he lived freely until his death in 2017.

What is a Prisoner of Conscience?

- A Prisoner of Conscience is jailed because of their beliefs , not because they committed a real crime.
- Vitaliy was one of many people who were locked up just for wanting basic human rights.
- Groups like Amnesty International work to protect people like him.

How People Helped Vitaliy

In the 1980s, people around the world, including students and activists, supported Vitaliy by writing letters, raising awareness, and asking their governments to help

. These efforts helped pressure the USSR to release prisoners.

Even though there was no internet, people found ways to spread the word and make a difference.

What Can We Learn from Vitaliy's Story?

- Vitaliy's story shows that even one person can stand up against a powerful system. He risked everything for freedom, and his courage helped inspire change
- Today, we still need to support people who are jailed unfairly. Speaking out for others is one way we can honour his legacy.

