



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1448th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
02 November 2023

Mr. Chairperson,

As today we mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists it is crucial to once again emphasize that attacks against journalists and other media workers pose serious challenges to media freedom, democracy and security.

The situation with the safety of journalists worldwide requires urgent and adequate actions on behalf of the international community. Prevention of violence against journalists is necessary. In this regard, it is of utmost importance that the participating States uphold their commitments regarding media freedom and the safety of journalists.

Since the beginning of russia's aggression against Ukraine back in 2014 and its subsequent full-scale invasion in 2022 the ability of journalists and other media workers to safely fulfil their duties in Ukraine has been gravely impeded because of russian actions.

According to the Institute of Mass Information, in a year and eight months of its full-fledged war russia has committed more than 540 crimes against journalists and media in Ukraine. That means, such russian crimes are committed almost every day.

233 Ukrainian media outlets were forcibly closed in whole or in part in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. 21 Ukrainian TV towers were destroyed, seven were damaged. Dozens of other buildings used to ensure signal transmission across Ukraine were ruined or destroyed. 12 editorial offices were seized or ruined. There were recorded 58 cyberattacks on Ukrainian media outlets covering russia's war, including hacked media websites, phishing attempts etc.

Under various circumstances russian occupiers have killed over 68 Ukrainian and foreign journalists. 24 journalists have been wounded. At least 14 journalists have gone missing, including Ukrainian freelance journalist Victoria Roshchyna.

It has been more than three months since she disappeared from the russian-occupied territory of Ukraine from which she was reporting. Her whereabouts remain unknown. However, according to the information available, she might be hidden detainee being secretly held in russian prison with no official status.

Apart from attacks on independent media, killings of journalists, subjecting them to arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances, Russia actively uses one more tactic to suppress media freedom, intimidate, and silence all those who speak out against the war. It keeps holding Ukrainian journalists, including women and Crimean Tatar citizen journalists captive in inhumane conditions in its pre-trial detention centers and prisons without any medical assistance.

The Hafarov – Shyring list named after two political prisoners who died in Russian places of detention in 2023 – Dzhemil Hafarov and Kostiantyn Shyring has now at least 21 political prisoners, including Crimean Tatar citizen journalists and activists who are in need of immediate medical assistance.

Iryna Danylovysh, a human rights defender and citizen journalist, who spent 14 months in Simferopol pre-trial detention center without any medical assistance is among those on the list. Deaf in one ear, experiencing severe headaches and problems with coordination of movements she is now incarcerated on falsified charges in penal colony in Zelenokumsk, Russia, and continues to face medical negligence.

Iryna Danylovysh is not the only victim of such human rights abuse. Nariman Dzelyal, Tymur Ibrahimov, Amet Suleymanov, Rustem Sheykhaliyev, Server Mustafayev, and many more are at risk of not being released and dying.

For their pro-Ukrainian position and revealing the truth about crimes Russia commits in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine journalists Oleksiy Bessarabov, Vladyslav Yesypenko, Seyran Saliyev, Marlen Asanov, Osman Arifmemetov, Ernes Ametov, Asan Akhmetov, Ruslan Suleymanov, Vilen Temeryanov, Remzi Bekirov are also held captive by the Russian occupation authorities, deprived of the right to legal defense. They are subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment, including torture, both physical and psychological.

We urge for the immediate release of all those journalists and human rights defenders unlawfully detained and sentenced by the Russian occupation authorities.

Mr. Chairperson,

We pay tribute to all brave and devoted journalists and other media workers who under unimaginably difficult conditions continue their work on documenting war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine and elsewhere. It is crucial for accountability and justice.

We reiterate our full support to the autonomous mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and value her constant attention to the cases of targeting Ukrainian and foreign journalists amidst Russia's war. All available instruments in line with the RFoM mandate should be applied to address these Russia's grave violations.

We commend the Safety of Journalists Project that was launched by the RFoM Office last year and seven thematic round tables held within the Project. Launch event on the "Safety of Journalists" toolbox and the RFoM Conference on the Future of Media Freedom to be held on 22 November 2023 will offer yet another opportunity to engage in a meaningful discussion on existing and emerging threats to media freedom and the safety of journalists.

Ukraine together with its partners will spare no effort to investigate Russian crimes against journalists in Ukraine, and the activities of Russian propagandists

who are involved in criminal information operations as an integral part of a full-scale war against Ukraine.

Too many lives have already been lost and neglected. No offence against journalists and other media workers should be left without proper investigation and its perpetrators should be brought to justice.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.