



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 delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1245th meeting of the Permanent Council,
31 October 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

On the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, which we mark on 2 November, Ukraine wishes to reaffirm its resolve to safeguard and promote media freedom and protection of journalists in line with the OSCE commitments and international standards.

We strongly condemn all attacks against journalists and maintain a firm view that journalists' safety must be guaranteed at all times. The Ukrainian authorities undertake important legislative measures to strengthen the safety of journalists and increase responsibility for obstruction of their work. We give utmost attention to the comprehensive and impartial investigation of the cases of violence and intimidation of members of the media.

Most recently on 16 September this year the President of Ukraine established a Council on Freedom of Speech and Protection of Journalists. This is an advisory body tasked to facilitate an effective dialogue between state bodies, including law enforcement, media organizations and civil society on the issues of preventing obstruction or impediments to legitimate professional activities of journalists as well as providing their safety. The Council includes the representatives of media and human rights defenders who, among other goals on providing freedom of expression, will exercise the civic control over the investigation of the high-profile crimes against the safety of journalists and their professional work.

Ukraine closely co-operates with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media which provides valuable expertise and assistance in enhancing the implementation of relevant commitments, and will continue to do so in the efforts to enhance media freedom and protection of journalists.

Mr. Chairperson,

We remain alarmed over the climate of impunity for killings and attacks on journalists and suppression of media freedom in the Russian Federation. Russia remains one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the OSCE region with the highest number of journalists brutally attacked and killed in the past 25 years.

A report on journalist killings in the OSCE region since 1992, prepared by the Office of the RFoM, witnesses that among 400 journalists, who paid the ultimate price for their work in the OSCE participating States, over 170 journalists are from Russia. The vast majority of the cases is not investigated and the perpetrators have not been brought to justice.

We do hope that the RFOM's conference in Moscow next week will be properly used by Mr. Desir to encourage Russia to start genuinely addressing this critical situation with journalist's unsafety and clamp-down on media freedom and pluralism in Russia. The clear link between Russia's external aggression and domestic violations must be also addressed.

Dear colleagues,

While Ukraine reiterates its full support for the mandate and autonomy of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, we would like to urge our Representative to be more proactive and to continue its monitoring of the media situation in the occupied Crimea and parts of Donbas, where the journalists face ongoing intimidation and threats and committed crimes remain without due investigation.

Today, during the previous agenda item on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine we have already raised the issue of unlawful detention and the pseudo-sentence of Stanislav Aseev.

In this connection I would remind the Permanent Council that Stanislav Aseev is one of three Ukrainian reporters from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, who were targeted following Russia's invasion into Ukraine's territory. Two other are Donetsk blogger Oleh Halaziuk, who has been held by the Russia-backed forces since August 2017, and Crimean journalist Mykola Semena, who was convicted of so-called "separatism" in 2017 and banned from practicing journalism and leaving the peninsula.

We highly appreciate the international solidarity, including from the OSCE community, in urging the immediate and unconditional release by Russia of Stanislav Aseev, Oleh Halaziuk and other Ukrainian journalists and call on the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to use all available instruments to facilitate their immediate release.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.