



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

PC.DEL/1310/18
2 November 2018

ENGLISH only

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

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1199th meeting of the Permanent Council,
1 November 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

Tomorrow, on November 2, the international community will mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. On this occasion Ukraine wishes to reaffirm its strong resolve to safeguard and promote media freedom and protection of journalists in the country, based on the national legislation, the OSCE commitments and international standards.

We strongly condemn all attacks against journalists and are convinced that journalists must be able to perform their work in safety.

Ukraine gives its utmost attention to the comprehensive and impartial investigation of the cases of violence and intimidation of members of the media, which unfortunately happen in the country, and closely co-operates with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on this matter. We will continue to do so in the efforts to enhance media freedom and protection of journalists.

Mr. Chairperson,

We regularly voice our deep concerns relating to journalists' safety, significant restrictions of media freedom and freedom of expression in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine and in Russia itself.

One of the most glaring cases is that of Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko, who was arrested in Moscow on 30 September 2016 on trumped-up charges of "espionage" and has remained imprisoned by the Russian authorities since then.

Well-known to the OSCE are the cases of journalist Mykola Semena, repressed by Russia in the occupied Crimea, and blogger Stanislav Aseyev, incarcerated by the Russian occupation administration in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

We encourage the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to continue his efforts and use all available instruments to facilitate immediate release of Ukrainian media workers placed in illegal detention by the Russian authorities.

Mr. Chairperson,

As a country suffering from Russia's aggression, we are alarmed over the climate of impunity for attacks on journalists in the Russian Federation, which eradicates pluralism, stifles professional reporting and leads to self-censorship. There is a clear link between Russia's external aggression and domestic clamp-down on human rights and fundamental freedoms. While professional journalism has been placed under severe attack, the Russian authorities cultivate state-sponsored propagandists.

Scores of murders of journalists in the past years or attacks on media workers remain without full investigation. For nearly three years the Russian delegation in the OSCE cannot provide any meaningful update on investigation of a brutal attack on a group of Russian and foreign journalists who were cruelly beaten on their way from Ingushetia to Chechnya in March 2016. Their minibus was burned down.

In April this year yet another media professional was reported killed in Russia. Maksim Borodin, a Yekaterinburg-based investigative correspondent for the independent news website Novy Den, was found dead under dubious circumstances on April 12.

Shortly before his death, Borodin reported on the activities of a Russian private security company "ChVK Wagner", whose mercenaries had been documented in conflicts in Ukraine and later in Syria. Four months later, the filming team of three Russian journalists Kirill Radchenko, Alexander Rastorguyev and Orkhan Dzhemal were killed, while working on a film covering a story on mercenaries of the very same "ChVK Wagner" operating in Central African Republic. While Russia denies affiliation of these mercenaries with Russia's Defense Ministry, they train at the official military training ranges, belonging to Russia's Defense Ministry, and receive state awards from the Russian authorities.

Another investigative journalist and editor of an independent online magazine Mediazona Pytor Verzilov nearly died in a suspected poison attack in September. Reportedly, the attack involved a toxin targeting the nervous system.

A known Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta, whose journalists, including Anna Politkovskaya and Natalia Estemirova, were killed in the past for performing their journalistic work, is being subjected to a massive campaign of intimidation and death threats to its journalists. We join the Representative on Freedom of the Media in urging the authorities to swiftly and fully investigate these incidents and ensure journalists' safety. We again urge Russia to use the expertise of this OSCE Institution to help Russia comply with its OSCE commitments.

Mr. Chairperson,

Before concluding let me reiterate that we welcome the proposal of the Italian OSCE Chairmanship to adopt a ministerial decision on the safety of journalists at the MC meeting in Milan. We look forward to constructive negotiations and reaching consensus on this important topic.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.