

## **Ukraine Mission November 2014**

The IFJ / EFJ conducted a mission to Kiev, Ukraine 6/8 November 2014 to

- Investigate pressures on journalists reporting the conflict and examine the immediate and long term needs of the journalists affected
- Review the support programme provided by IFJ/EFJ to date and develop proposals for further support
- Discuss reasons behind abstaining from the EFJ Annual meeting
- Report findings to the EFJ SC and Annual meeting in Moscow

The mission was conducted by Yannis Kotsifos, EFJ SC member with support from Oliver Money-Kyrle IFJ AGS and Director of Project Division responsible for overseeing the Ukraine project programme.

The mission was hosted by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) and the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine (IMTUU) and meetings were organised by Yuriy Lukanov (President) and Oksana Vynnychuk of IMTUU; and Sergei Tomilenko (President) Alex Boyko of NUJU.

### **Summary**

The situation in Ukraine first deteriorated at the end of November 2013 with the attempted violent repression of demonstrations in the Independence Square, or Maidan, which eventually came to a bloody conclusion at the end of February when over one hundred demonstrators were killed.

During this period our two affiliates NUJU and IMTUU opened their offices on nearby Kreschatyk street as a support centre to journalists covering the event. From there they offered safety advice, and equipment, recorded all incidents of violence against journalists and campaigned, together with IFJ/EFJ on journalists' rights and safety. The NUJU / IMTUU hosted an EFJ mission 18 / 21 February which coincided with the last fraught days of protests and saw the mission evacuated following the sniper activities against demonstrators.

In the early spring the crisis moved on first to Crimea with the annexation of the territory by the Russian Federation, and then to Eastern Ukraine in the Donbass region where civil unrest turned into a full blown military confrontation.

The conflict has evolved over the year with a shaky ceasefire in existence since 5 September.

Journalists have been at the heart of these events covering violent demonstrations, clashes and armed conflict. They have been shot at, assaulted, kidnapped, arrested, abused and killed. They have been accused of being spies, extremists or propaganda agents. They have

had their equipment destroyed, forced to leave their homes, worked under extreme conditions and have witnessed events that will haunt them for the rest of their lives.

### **Targeting Journalists:**

Journalists have been targeted since the very start of the conflict. While IMTUU / NUJU have been recorded on their database over 600 separate incidents involving the violations of journalists' rights by different groups, the summary of the main issues is as follows:

**Deaths:** During this period seven journalists and media workers have been killed covering the crisis:

Ukrainian journalist Vyacheslav Veremiy (18 February); Italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian fixer and Human Rights activist Andrei Mironov (24 May); Russian journalist Igor Kornelyuk and sound engineer Anton Voloshin (17 June); Russian cameraman Anatoly Klyan (30 June), and Russian photojournalist Andrei Stenin (August). (see annex on killed journalists)

**Detentions:** IMTUU/NUJU estimate that there have been up to fifty journalists who have been held either for a few hours or for several weeks, by armed groups in the Donetsk People's Republic. Many have been seriously mistreated, beaten and even claims of torture. At the ceasefire seven journalists were being held captive and at the time of the mission two journalists, Roman Cheremsky (taken August 30th) and Sergiy Sakdynskyi (taken July 28th) were still being held.

The mission met with Yegor Vorobiyov, Expresso TV, who was held for 39 days after being captured in late August during fighting near Ilovaysk. He was severely beaten, had both arms broken and said his captors enjoyed shooting at his feet and over his head for fun. He says he was captured by

Russian regular forces before being later handed over to separatists. He believes he was held because he had reported on the presence of Russian tanks. Eventually he was released as part of a prisoner exchange.

**Denial of Freedom of Movement to Journalists:** The Ukraine government have refused entry visas to tens of Russian journalists following the outbreak of hostilities. Ukraine journalists attempting to report from Russia claim they are also denied accreditation. One Ukraine journalist, Yevgeny Agarkov, was arrested in Voronezh in July and found guilty of working illegally before being fined and deported. He had been attempting to report on the Ukraine helicopter pilot that was being held in Russia. Meanwhile almost no Ukraine journalists can freely access the DPR territory. Since the temporary detention of Simon Ostrovsky, Vice News Correspondent in April, there have been no reported incidents of serious obstruction of international correspondents who can travel relatively freely.

Within the Donetsk People's Republic: Media continue to operate within the DPR. Without visiting the territory it is difficult to assess, however the journalists we met from the region reported the following:

- Many journalists' names were included in lists drawn up by the DPR *as enemies of the republic*, and were forced to flee the region
- No exact figures are available for the numbers of journalists who have left but the NUJU/IMTUU have provided humanitarian assistance to almost 100 journalists and their families
- Those that stay often do so because they cannot leave their families
- There is no independent media operating in DPR
- Unfavourable Ukraine media sites are blocked abruptly and without any formal explanation.
- Ukraine media have to rely on networks of anonymous sources for their information
- The displaced journalists have left behind files and documents necessary to them in their quest for new work.

**Propaganda:** There was universal condemnation of the performance of Russian media accusing them of outrageous falsification of reports and incitement of hatred. This propaganda machinery is being orchestrated in every sector of the Press, from social media to newly-minted newspapers and it is believed that its financial backing is quite solid. We saw newspapers whose content was obviously slanted, thereby confirming the claims made by the Ukraine journalists.

Moreover, in a meeting we had with Diana Dutsyk from the NGO <http://www.telekritika.ua/> it was pointed out to us that extensive monitoring of the Russian media has ascertained constant and extensive distortion of the facts. We were given to review 100 characteristic examples.

**Practical support:** From the start of the crisis the IFJ / EFJ have been supporting NUJU and IMTUU to assist their members. From running safety campaigns on the Maidan to monitoring the endless list of violations of journalists' rights, from offering humanitarian support to journalist victims to providing safety training and trauma counselling, the NUJU and IMTUU have been ceaseless in their efforts to help and protect journalists. By November they reported training 275 journalists on safety, providing 96 journalists with trauma counselling and distributing up to 14.150 € to 98 journalists with humanitarian assistance out of funds from the IFJ, Polish Association of Journalists, Warsaw Press Club and the Ukraine based Akhmetov Foundation. Together we have secured the support of the Open Society Foundation to continue the safety and trauma support and to develop the assistance programme to displaced journalists in need of income and employment.

**Co-operation:** During 2014 there have been a number of meetings held between the two Ukraine affiliates and the Russian Union of Journalists in an effort to strengthen co-operation

and promote a common strategy to supporting journalists reporting from the conflicts.

Meetings include

- IFJ / EFJ hosted meetings in Brussels in March and in Paris in May
- The OSCE hosted three meetings in Vienna in March, June and September

Throughout the year the three unions have remained in communication often co-operating in the sharing of information over missing journalists and calling for journalists to be allowed to operate freely in the region.

In September the RUJ, NUJU and IMTUU agreed to produce a joint handbook on the safety of journalists in East Ukraine to be used as both a report on the violations of journalists' rights during the tension and a manual that illustrates the dangers that journalists face in such conflicts.

The agreement between NUJU and IMTUU to support a motion favoring the further development of cooperation between the two Ukrainian unions and the RUJ, which was tabled by 21 unions at the Annual General Meeting, is also in the same frame of mind. The modification of the said resolution during the course of the mission, abated the reservations that were expressed by the two Ukrainian unions in an open letter.

The IMTUU and NUJU explained again their reasons for not attending the EFJ Moscow meeting that have been also elaborated in public statements to EFJ affiliates. They have no issue with the RUJ with whom they have closely collaborated during the conflict, but strongly insist that the EFJ should have taken into consideration the reality of Russia as an aggressor state that has ruthlessly used media as part of its war strategy. They insist that this propaganda machinery can manipulate the EFJ meeting to their advantage.

The mission explained again that all these concerns had been carefully considered by the EFJ SC and that the fully democratic decision to maintain the meeting was swayed by the need to show support to the independent Russian journalists and the RUJ who stand up to and against the state propaganda and continue the fight for the rights of Russian journalists.

### **Recommendations to EFJ and IFJ**

- Continue to support the Ukraine Crisis Centre programme and campaigns
- Continue to promote co-operation between Journalists unions in Ukraine and Russia
- Continue to support initiatives to improve safety of journalists in conflict zones
- Strengthen the efforts to obtain justice in cases of police violence, since the authorities are constantly obstructing the process.
- Consider a programme to counter propaganda in media, since the case of the Ukraine crisis may potentially have a ripple effect on ethics issues throughout Europe.

- To observe the ongoing process of restructuring the state broadcasting stations (27 in total, with approximately 2,500 workers) into a unified public broadcasting organization.
- To observe the ongoing process of privatizing about 700 regional newspapers which were partly funded by the government.
- To recommend or seek opportunities for education and training of journalists.
- To examine on a long term basis the possibility of establishing in Kiev a Journalism Training Center which would build both on the lessons learned from the current crisis, as well as on the recognized expertise of the Ukrainian unions on rights claims and related matters.

## **Annex: Journalist Deaths in Ukraine 2014**

### **Viacheslav Veremii**

*18 February 2014*

The journalist for *Vesti* newspaper died of wounds he sustained in attack allegedly by the "tityshki", a group of youths who have been accused of working with security forces in Ukraine, according to the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, an IFJ affiliate. The Union said that Veremii was shot and fatally wounded in the stomach. He was admitted to hospital where he later died.

### **Andrea Rocchelli, Andrey Mironov**

*24 May 2014*

According to reports, Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian interpreter Andrey Mironov were killed in Slavyansk, Eastern Ukraine, while covering fighting between government forces and pro-Russia insurgents. Another media staff, William Roguelon, a French photographer who was travelling with Rocchelli and Mironov and was wounded in the incident, reportedly said that they were hit by mortar fire as they were taking shelter in a roadside ditch.

### **Igor Kornelyuk, Anton Voloshin**

*17 June 2014*

The Russian TV journalist was killed in a mortar attack near Lugansk, Eastern Ukraine. Igor, who worked for All Russian State TV and Radio Company, was covering clashes between pro-Russia insurgents and government forces when he was hit in an attack on a separatists' check point. He was taken to hospital but died shortly afterwards. His sound engineer Anton Voloshin was also killed on the spot. Another crew member, cameraman Viktor Denisov survived.

### **Anatoly Klyan**

*30 June 2014*

Media reports said the cameraman who worked for the Russian public television, Channel One, was fatally wounded in the stomach when the convoy he was travelling in came under fire reportedly from Ukrainian forces in Donetsk.

### **Andrei Stenin**

*05 August 2014*

The 33-year-old photographer, missing since early August 2015, was found dead in Ukraine, the RIANovosti press agency he worked for announced, according to AFP quoting the Russian agency. The RIA-Novosti chief, Dmitry Kiselev, was quoted as saying that Stenin, initially thought as having been detained, had actually been killed when his car was hit by

bullets and burn on the road close Donetsk, a rebel stronghold in eastern Ukraine. Russia had opened a probe in mid-August into the disappearance of the photographer, in the belief that he had been taken by Ukrainian authorities, AFP added.