

Journalists in Ukraine are not safe from attacks by Russia's army: Informal OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists statement, 7 April 2022

I am speaking on behalf of the informal OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists, composed of the following participating States: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Last week, at the funeral of cameraman Pierre Zakrzewski in Dublin, Father Kieran Dunne told the congregation "Truth telling is a work of love, and love always comes at a price, and what a terrible price." Mr Zakrzewski is one of at least six journalists who have been killed since 24 February in the course of their journalistic work, whilst covering Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Unfortunately, their numbers keep growing. Only recently, we learnt of the death of well-known photojournalist Maksim (Maks) Levin who had gone missing on 13 March, after he had last been seen in the Vyshgorod district near Kyiv, where he went to photograph the frontline. A Lithuanian documentary filmmaker, Mantas Kvedaravičius, was killed in Mariupol, a city he had documented for years. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of all journalists who have been killed in Russia's premeditated and unjustified war.

In times of war, the work of free, independent and professional journalists and media actors is of critical importance for providing objective information to the international community. This has been tragically underlined by recent reports on atrocities committed by the Russian armed forces in a number of occupied Ukrainian towns that have now been liberated. Russia, however, wants to stop journalists and foreign correspondents from providing fact-based coverage of the war and from shining a light on the human suffering caused by their military aggression against Ukraine. Because Russia knows, as we do, that facts matter.

Mr Chair,

The Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists welcomes the recent statements by Ms Teresa Ribeiro, the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), [including her powerful statement of 3 March](#). In that statement, Ms Ribeiro condemned strongly Russia's military attack and stressed that "first and foremost, journalists should never be targets" and that participating States should adopt all feasible measures to protect media workers. Additionally, in her 25 March video statement to journalists working in Ukraine, Ms Ribeiro said "Journalists are to be considered civilians and therefore cannot be

attacked or abducted. This includes their equipment. It also includes a duty to respect their professional independence.”

Unfortunately, journalists in Ukraine are not safe from attacks by the invading army. On the contrary, there are reports of the Russian military targeting journalists. There are reports of at least 148 cases of journalists being targeted in the first month of the Russian invasion. [As highlighted by the RFoM in her 24 March statement](#), there has been a growing number of reports on cases of disappearance and abduction of Ukrainian journalists and hostage taking of their relatives. There was the attack on a Sky News team, recorded on camera. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) reported the [case of a fixer for Radio France who was kidnapped](#) by Russian soldiers and, during nine days of captivity, was beaten with an iron bar, subjected to electric shocks, and faced a mock execution.

Mr Chair,

We strongly condemn all attacks on journalists and media workers. We urgently call on Russia to immediately end their attacks on independent media and to respect the rights of journalists and media workers in accordance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and OSCE commitments. We stand with journalists and media workers who, at great personal risk and sacrifice, continue to report the facts and bring Russia’s human rights violations and abuses, as well as war crimes, to light. We commend their professionalism and resilience to ensure the free flow of independent information despite the most challenging circumstances.

Mr Chair,

We call on Russia to end its war on Ukraine and withdraw all troops without delay.

I ask, Mr Chair, that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.