

# 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.

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## [Government invests in innovation with £30 million for cutting-edge highway decarbonisation projects](#)

- multimillion-pound Live Labs 2 competition announced to bring ideas for net zero highways to life
- innovative sustainable infrastructure proposals will be implemented with help of £30 million fund
- previous funding supported plant-based living walls to tackle roadside emissions and trials of innovative pothole detection techniques

Cutting-edge, innovative ideas to decarbonise the country's highways will be brought to life thanks to tens of millions of pounds in government funding.

The £30 million Live Labs 2 competition, funded by the Department for Transport (DfT), is being announced today (7 April 2022).

The funding will support pioneering projects looking at ways to decarbonise local highways infrastructure in regions across the UK. There will be a particular focus on making the construction, maintenance and running of the UK's roads more sustainable.

Now in its second round of funding, the competition, organised by the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT), is the latest move in the government's drive to create cleaner air and reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Transport Minister Trudy Harrison said:

Investing in innovation is a priority for this government. That's why we're supporting local highways authorities to develop cutting-edge projects and help drive our decarbonisation mission.

Our £30 million investment will go towards a greener, safer transport landscape. It will help create green, high-skilled jobs across the country and I look forward to seeing these innovative ideas brought to life.

The launch of the second round of the competition follows the success of the [first £22.9 million Live Labs programme which launched in May 2019](#) and supported the creation of 8 local projects testing innovative solutions on local roads.

Previous projects included:

- fibre cables that detect vibrations from vehicles and dynamically change signal junctions to combat congestion
- trials involving drones to detect potholes in Kent
- plastic roads in Cumbria to boost value for money in the construction of highways

Staffordshire County Council also secured the expertise of 2 industry leaders to install plant-based living walls to tackle roadside emissions. The walls act as natural filters made from plants and mosses as part of a national clean air trial.

Meanwhile, Buckinghamshire Council and Suffolk County Council demonstrated how the application of smart transport technology can be expanded to offer greater social value than initially anticipated.

Their project involved repurposing road sensors, typically used to monitor traffic volumes and weather conditions, to be used in adult social care.

The technology was additionally used to allow vulnerable people to live independently for longer by installing the sensors around a house to monitor daily activities, sending signals to carers when needed.

Paula Hewitt, ADEPT President, said:

ADEPT is delighted to be able to move ahead on Live Labs 2 with this new round of DfT funding and support. The highways and transport sector is the UK's single biggest carbon emitter and although we are seeing a transition to electric vehicles, there is a huge gap where we are yet to tackle road infrastructure and maintenance.

Local authorities are perfectly placed to lead the drive to create net zero highways and local roads from the bottom up. The Live Labs format has proven particularly successful for highways authorities, enabling rapid change, innovation and experimentation.

Following the success of the first ADEPT SMART Places Live Labs programme, Live Labs 2 aims to build on the partnerships between DfT, councils, commercial partners, SMEs and academia to deliver scalable zero carbon objectives with potential for commercialisation and applicability to diverse areas across the UK.

The ADEPT Live Labs initiative demonstrates the government's commitment to investing in innovation to decarbonise the UK's transport network, making it greener and more efficient for all.

By issuing significant investments for each project, the fund aims to help local highways authorities and enterprises develop and propel their ideas to market even quicker.

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## [Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: G7 foreign ministers' statement, 7 April 2022](#)

1. We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, and the High Representative of the European Union, condemn in the strongest terms the atrocities committed by the Russian armed forces in Bucha and a number of other Ukrainian towns. Haunting images of civilian deaths, victims of torture, and apparent executions, as well as reports of sexual violence and destruction of civilian infrastructure show the true face of Russia's brutal war of

aggression against Ukraine and its people. The massacres in the town of Bucha and other Ukrainian towns will be inscribed in the list of atrocities and severe violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights, committed by the aggressor on Ukrainian soil.

2. In the presence of the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, we expressed today our heart-felt solidarity with the Ukrainian people and our deepest condolences to the victims of this war and their families. We underline our unwavering support for Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and express our readiness to assist further, including with military equipment and financial means, to allow Ukraine to defend itself against Russia's aggression and to rebuild Ukraine.
3. We underscore that those responsible for these heinous acts and atrocities, including any attacks targeting civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure, will be held accountable and prosecuted. We welcome and support the ongoing work to investigate and gather evidence of these and other potential war crimes and crimes against humanity, including by the ICC Office of the Prosecutor, the Commission of Inquiry mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, the Human Rights Monitoring Mission Ukraine of the OHCHR, and the OSCE's mission of experts mandated by OSCE Participating States. We will provide investigative support, technical experts and funding. We will continue to promote accountability for all those complicit in Moscow's war of choice, including the Lukashenka regime in Belarus. We are convinced that now is the time to suspend Russian membership of the Human Rights Council.
4. Russia must immediately comply with the legally binding order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to suspend the military operations that it commenced on 24 February 2022 in the territory of Ukraine. Further, we urge Russia to withdraw completely its military forces and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.
5. We warn against any threat or use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. We recall Russia's obligations under international treaties of which it is a party, and which protect us all. Any use by Russia of such a weapon would be unacceptable and result in severe consequences. We condemn Russia's unsubstantiated claims and false allegations against Ukraine, a respected member of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention that is in compliance with its legal obligations under those instruments. We express concern about other countries and actors that have amplified Russia's disinformation campaign.
6. We express our gravest concern with Russia forcefully seizing control of nuclear facilities, and other violent actions in connection with a number of nuclear facilities, nuclear and other radioactive material, which have caused and continue to pose serious and direct threats to the safety and security of these facilities and their civilian personnel, significantly raising the risk of a nuclear accident or incident, which endangers the population of Ukraine,

neighbouring States and the international community.

7. We reiterate our demand that Russia upholds its obligations under international humanitarian law and desists from further blatant abuses. The Russian leadership must immediately provide for safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access and make safe passages work, enabling humanitarian aid to be delivered to besieged cities and civilians to reach safety.
8. We commit to supporting the Government of Ukraine's humanitarian coordination structure and to disburse humanitarian support quickly. We ask others to join in this effort. A humanitarian push including more funding is urgently needed for Ukraine and beyond as Russia's ruthless war and actions are having massive consequences on global commodity and food prices. The resulting rise in food insecurity is being felt disproportionately by the most vulnerable. We stand in solidarity with our partners across the world who have to bear the rising price of President Putin's unilateral choice to wage war in Europe. We will make coherent use of all instruments and funding mechanisms to address food insecurity, keep markets open, and build resilience in the agriculture sector on all continents. We will actively counter Russia's narrative that Western sanctions have caused the rise in global food prices and call it out for what it is: a blatant lie.
9. In light of Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, carried out with Belarus' complicity, we have already adopted unprecedented and coordinated economic and financial sanctions against Russia that impose a significant cost on its economy. We stress the necessity of further increasing the economic pressure inflicted on Russia and the Lukashenka regime in Belarus. Together with international partners, the G7 will sustain and increase pressure on Russia by imposing coordinated additional restrictive measures to effectively thwart Russian abilities to continue the aggression against Ukraine. We will work together to stop any attempts to circumvent sanctions or to aid Russia by other means. We are taking further steps to expedite plans to reduce our reliance on Russian energy, and will work together to this end.
10. We commend those neighbouring states to Ukraine that demonstrated great solidarity and humanity by welcoming Ukrainian refugees and third country nationals affected by the conflict. We confirm the need for increased international assistance and will continue to support these countries, including by receiving more refugees. President Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine has already forced millions of civilians, especially women, children, and elderly, to flee their homes. Over 4.2 million crossed the border to other countries, almost all of them to the EU and the Republic of Moldova. We reiterate our concern about the risk to this vulnerable population, including the risk of human trafficking and our commitment to protect these refugees.
11. Ministers paid special attention to the Republic of Moldova, which hosts the

largest group of refugees from Ukraine per capita. The Ministers agreed to further coordinate their assistance for Moldova's humanitarian response and long-term resilience following the Moldova Support Conference co-hosted by Germany, France and Romania on 5 April in Berlin and the establishment of the Moldova Support Platform.

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## [HMRC names avoidance scheme promoters for first time](#)

Tax avoidance schemes have been named for the first time by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as users are warned they could face large tax bills.

HMRC has today advised anyone involved in Absolute Outsourcing's or Purple Pay Limited's Equity Participation Scheme to withdraw from them as soon as possible to prevent building up a large tax bill.

This is the first time HMRC has used new powers to name tax avoidance schemes and their promoters as part of a campaign to warn the public not to get caught up in tax avoidance.

Mary Aiston, HMRC's Director of Counter Avoidance, said:

These schemes are cynically marketed as clever ways to pay less tax. The truth is they rarely work in the way the promoters claim and it's the users that end up with big tax bills.

New legal powers allow us to name promoters and the schemes they peddle much faster, and this announcement is just the first step. But we need the public to be vigilant, and that's why we're also helping people identify, and steer clear, of these schemes through our [Tax Avoidance – Don't Get Caught Out campaign](#).

The 2 named schemes are:

- Absolute Outsourcing, of Foerster Chambers, Todd Street, Bury, Greater Manchester
- Equity Participation Scheme (EPS), promoted by Purple Pay Limited (PPL), of Gracechurch Street, London.

Both schemes involve individuals agreeing an employment contract and working as a contractor. The schemes pay contractors the National Minimum Wage with the remainder of their wage paid through a loan to try to avoid National Insurance and Income Tax.

By releasing the details of these schemes, HMRC is letting taxpayers know as

early as possible so they can steer clear of them or exit them. HMRC will also regularly update the list by publishing the details of other tax avoidance schemes and their promoters. If a tax avoidance scheme is not shown in the list, this does not mean that the scheme works or is in any way approved by HMRC.

Naming avoidance promoters is one of a number of measures that HMRC is using to help people identify avoidance schemes as a part of the [Tax Avoidance – Don't Get Caught Out](#) campaign. Other tools available to customers to help them steer clear of avoidance schemes include an [interactive risk checker](#) and [payslip guidance](#).

Find out more about HMRC's ['Don't Get Caught Out'](#) campaign and the support available for customers who believe they are involved in a tax avoidance scheme.

A video highlighting the experience of a critical care nurse who was recommended a tax avoidance scheme through her agency, has also been published by HMRC today. The video explains the risks of becoming involved in a tax avoidance scheme and the warning signs customers should look out for.

If a customer believes that they are involved in a tax avoidance scheme, they should contact HMRC as quickly as possible by calling 03000 534 226. Alternatively, if a customer has been encouraged to get into a tax avoidance scheme, has come into contact with someone selling tax avoidance schemes, or has become aware of a scheme, they can report it in confidence through [HMRC's online form](#).

This is not a complete list of all tax avoidance schemes currently being marketed or a complete list of all promoters, enablers, and suppliers. There are other schemes, promoters, enablers, and suppliers that remain active, and HMRC will regularly update this list with these details.

Download [HMRC's new video](#) (via WeTransfer) highlighting the case study of someone involved in a tax avoidance scheme.

Further information about [the case studies](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

Further information about HMRC's [strategy on tax avoidance schemes and promoters](#).

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## [Nottingham outdoor retailer Alpkit set](#)



## to scale-up with seven-figure funding package

Outdoor retailer Alpkit has received a £2.7 million funding package from HSBC UK, backed by UK Export Finance (UKEF), to support its international growth.

Alpkit will use the funding to purchase more stock to meet an increase in demand as well as for the development of a new footwear range set to launch this summer. Since the pandemic, demand in the sector has been increasing, with Alpkit seeing particular growth in its sales across cycling, outdoor swimming and technical outdoor clothing.

The company, which has eight sites in key locations across the UK, is also seeing demand increasing from international markets across Europe and the US. Alpkit plans to continue to grow its physical presence with the opening of new UK stores, as well as expanding its product ranges and digital trading capability worldwide.

The funding package from HSBC UK includes a £2 million General Export Facility (GEF) backed by UKEF, the government's export credit agency. The scheme, which launched last December, has already provided over £275 million for businesses across the UK, and can be used by firms to help cover everyday costs linked to exporting and to scale up their business operations.

### **David Hanney, Chief Executive at Alpkit, said:**

This deal will help accelerate our growth as we look to capitalise on a significant increase in demand domestically and internationally. It also means we can invest in innovation to create lower impact, long-lasting technical outdoor gear that is both repairable and recyclable.

HSBC UK has stood side by side with us, providing support through the good and the challenging times. Our Relationship Manager at the bank, Anthony Greenfield, has been a constant source of support and reassurance which has been immensely valuable.

### **Paul Armstrong, HSBC UK Area Director for East Midlands, added:**

With the outdoor retail sector continuing to see substantial growth, Alpkit has moved swiftly to increase its offering across not only the UK but also international markets. We are delighted to work with UKEF to provide continued support as the business grows from strength to strength.

**Andy Mannix, UKEF Export Finance Manager, added:**

The accessibility, flexibility, and certainty of our GEF is a game-changer for companies like Alpkit. We have recently more than doubled the amount that HSBC can automatically administer to an exporter through its facilities to £5 million, and I am delighted our close partnership has helped make this deal happen.

Alpkit donates one per cent of all turnover to the Alpkit Foundation, a charitable organisation set up by the Alpkit founders to support grass-roots and direct action projects to remove the barriers in getting outdoors and experiencing wild places. The charity has supported over 1,500 projects and donated over £450k to date.