

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH
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NEWSONE



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**Ms. Kristina Kvien,
Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the United States in Ukraine**

**Mr. Kurai Takashi,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Ukraine**

**Ms. Anka Feldguzen,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of
the Federal Republic of Germany**

**Ms. Melinda Simmons,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the United Kingdom to Ukraine**

**Mr. Etienne de Poncins,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Ukraine**

**Mr. Pier Francesco Zazo,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Italy to Ukraine**

**Mr. Roman Vashchuk,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Canada to Ukraine**

**Mr. Alex Lenarts,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belgium to Ukraine**

**Mr. Gernot Pfandler,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Austria to Ukraine**

**Mr. Bartosz Cichotski,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Poland to Ukraine**

Journalists of the illegally closed Ukrainian media express their respects to you and take this opportunity to draw your attention to the catastrophic situation with fundamental democratic values in Ukraine, among which freedom of speech, freedom of expression and the right of journalists to perform their professional duties are of particular importance to us.

Today, we have once again received proof that the current government sees disloyal media as the main enemy on the way to the final establishment of a dictatorship in Ukraine, resulting in complete impunity for those close to the country's leadership and personally to President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Yesterday, the leading news TV channels 112 Ukraine, NewsOne and ZIK, closed extrajudicially due to the decision of the National Security and Defense Council (although deprivation of media licenses is possible only by court decision), suffered for their courage for telling the truth about the government's activities. Then came the turn of Pershiy Nezalezhniy, closed by the ordinary letter of the Deputy Chairman of the SBU and again without a trial, and Strana.ua and Shariy.net online agencies.

Today, Radio Svoboda almost got on this list, and only a significant public response forced the authorities to stop covering for Ukreximbank Chairman Yevhen Metzger and his staff, who attacked the film crew of Schemes program.

We have to state that President Volodymyr Zelensky and representatives of the Office of the President of Ukraine have forgotten about the existence of Article 8 of the Law of Ukraine On Protection of Professional Activities of Journalists in Ukraine, which clearly stipulates: intentional obstruction of legal professional activity and harassment of journalists is grounds for criminal prosecution.

So far, we do not see any case of obstruction of journalists' activity being taken to court. We are sure that during Zelensky's tenure as president, the case with the film crew of Schemes program will also not be investigated. The reason is obvious and it lies in the personal connections of the Chairman of the Board of Ukreximbank with President Zelensky.

We emphasize with concern that if this arbitrariness of authorities is not stopped now, Ukraine will be threatened with the curtailment of basic democratic freedoms in the near future. Corruption and nepotism among authorities will push Ukraine back for decades. We simply do not have the moral right to allow journalists in Ukraine to risk their own health and work for asking questions about the president's offshore deals or cases of corruption in the government.

We have high hopes that the influence and attention of Ukraine's international partners will make the Ukrainian authorities stop the pressure on disloyal media and guarantee freedom of speech to citizens and the right to perform professional duties for journalists. We are glad that the closure of opposition TV channels has already been condemned by leading international organizations, well-known politicians and independent experts. In particular, news about the closure of TV channels was published in all leading world media, and only for the last month the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Monitoring Mission for Human Rights, PACE Rapporteur on Media Freedom and Protection of Journalists and Freedom House and others criticized the actions of the Ukrainian authorities.

Taking into account these facts, we ask you to publicly respond to the situation with freedom of speech in Ukraine and express your position on attacks on journalists and illegal closure of Ukrainian media, and also initiate discussions of this issue during your upcoming contacts with representatives of the Ukrainian authorities. We hope that this position will find understanding on your part.

Sincerely,

Teams of illegally closed Ukrainian media.