



February 15, 2011

**IGOR SAVITSKY  
PRESIDENT  
AUSTRALIAN RUSSIAN REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL  
CANBERRA**

Dear Mr Savitsky

Further to my telephone conversation with Victor Rebikoff on February 14, 2011, in relation to a National rally being organised in Canberra on February 19, 2011 I would like to provide the following information.

The National rally is being organised by the Australia Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO).

From the outset the AFUO states categorically this rally is aimed at the Medvedev-Putin administration, i.e. at the leadership of the Russian Federation. It is in no way directed at the Russia people or at the Russian community in Australia, many of whom would support the position of defending national and human rights and democratic processes.

Our two communities have always had sound relations and have been model examples in dealing with community relations.

As chairman of the AFUO I have reinforced these points on SBS Radio on both Ukrainian and Russian language programs. The most recent was to be aired today February 15, 2011 on the SBS Russian language program at 11.00am.

We as community leaders need to ensure we manage these relations. We need to be cognisant of anyone in either community doing anything to undermine the principles of community relations we both uphold, or who endeavour to create a sense of disharmony. At times such as these there will be those who will spread disinformation, seeking to create community conflict. Again, as community leaders, we have a responsibility to dispel these attempts.

The AFUO has been proactive in informing the Russian community of the purpose of the rally, that in no way is the rally protesting against the Australian Russian Community.

The Russian community has been proactive by approaching the AFUO directly seeking an explanation about the purpose of the rally. In our opinion this is sound management of community relations.

Our rally in Canberra will protest the violation of human and national rights. It will call for the upholding of democratic process internationally, including Ukraine and Russia. The attack on democratic processes is now evident. These relate directly to the Ukrainian community in Russia. The attacks on these principles are also highlighted in the releases from Russian Human Rights Groups in regards to Memorial and other organisations and individuals in the Russian Federation.

The AFUO calls on the Australian and broader international community to stand by those whose constitutional rights are being violated and defend these basic rights.

The rally on Saturday will commence with a commemorative service for the victims of the Holodomor -1932-33 Famine and to light the International candle of Prayer. Its intention is to

offer prayers for those who perished and call on the international community not to forget the victims and to condemn this crime against humanity perpetrated by the Stalin regime. The Service will be held at 11.00am at the Holodomor Memorial, 6 McKay Gardens Turner. We extend an invitation to your organisation and members to join us in prayer at the service.

The rally will then move to the Embassy of Ukraine in Canberra. Its purpose is show solidarity with the people of Ukraine and to protest against the anti-constitutional activity of President Yanukovich's administration. A memorandum setting out the community's claims will be presented to the Ambassador of Ukraine with a request it be sent to the President's administration.

The third component will be protest rally at the Embassy of Russian Federation to highlight the violation of human and national rights of the Medvedev-Putin administration.

The AFUO provides the following background information in relation to these:

- 1) The attempts of the Russian authorities to liquidate the Federal National Cultural Autonomy of Ukrainians of Russia and the Union of Ukrainians in Russia, the two most prominent Ukrainian NGOs in the Russian Federation.
- 2) A recent seizure of books and newspapers from the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow and the subsequent closure of the only Ukrainian library in the Russian Federation.

On December 21, 2010, after a 9-hour search, officials from the Russian Interior Ministry Anti-Extremism Department seized over 50 books from the Library in order to conduct psycho-linguistic tests on them. All books found to contain the word "*nationalism*" were seized following an electronic data search for that word.

The seized material included books about Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, and the "Пора" (Time) movement, along with "Нація і держава" (Nation and State), "Шлях перемоги" (Road to Victory) and "Українське слово" (Ukrainian Word) newspapers.

## **ARGUMENT**

Freedom of expression is one of the most fundamental freedoms enshrined in several international covenants.

Indeed, the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (Article 19), adopted by the [United Nations General Assembly](#) on December 10, 1948, states that:

*"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."*

A similar protection of the freedom of expression is found in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (Article 19) and the *European Convention on Human Rights* (Article 10), both signed by the Russian Federation.

Moreover, the Russian law "On Countering Extremist Activities" (Article 13) provides that a federal list of extremist materials shall be posted on the web site of the Federal Department of Official Registration. According to the Library director, Natalia Sharina, none of the books seized from the Library were posted on this web site.

The recent seizure of books and newspapers from the Library not only ignores the Russian law "On Countering Extremist Activities" but also conflicts with the obligations of the Russian Federation under the aforementioned UN Declaration and two international covenants.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Union of Ukrainians of Russia (**UUR**), the central umbrella organisation for the Ukrainian ethnic minority in the Russian Federation (**RF**), was formed at its initial convention on May 14-15, 1992, and registered with the Ministry of Justice of the RF (**MJRF**) on March 18, 1994. The UUR is a national member organisation of the Ukrainian World Congress.

On March 27, 1998, another Ukrainian community organisation was founded in the RF under the name "*Ukrainians of Russia*". On April 9-10, 2005, during the Third Congress of this organisation, its legal name was changed to "*Federal National Cultural Autonomy of Ukrainians of Russia*" (**FNCAUR**).

The UUR and the FNCAUR are the two most prominent Ukrainian NGOs in the RF.

The RF authorities are now trying to liquidate both the UUR and the FNCAUR.

The RF is using the same tactics to disrupt the activities of the FNCAUR, the UUR and the Ukrainian national minority in the RF as it did in its campaign against NGOs that began in 2006.

On December 10, 2010, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation brought an action in the Supreme Court of the RF to liquidate the UUR. The substance of the complaint was based ostensibly in Article 15 of the Constitution of the RF.

The Court case against the FNCAUR was held late January 2011 and the court ruling to deregistered the organisation. This matter is now going to international appeal. The case against the UUR has been adjourned.


The Library and Culture Centre, whilst its doors have opened is almost inoperative.

We would be pleased to keep you posted on further outcomes.

We invite your organisation and the broader Australian public to join us in our campaign in ensuring human and national rights are respected and upheld.

In conclusion the AFUO would be pleased to discuss these matters with you further if required. Please do not hesitate to call me on 0419 531 255 if you require further information.

Yours sincerely



**Stefan Romaniw OAM**  
**CHAIRMAN**