



MEDIA RELEASE

**SICKENING VIOLENCE IN UKRAINE –
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE SILENT**

The escalation of violence in Ukraine appalls all Ukrainian Australians and they demand that their Australian Government speak out to condemn it, according to their peak body, the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO).

"We are horrified and deeply saddened by the numerous deaths and injuries in recent hours in Kyiv. Our hearts are heavy for the loss of life of innocent people seeking to live normal lives," Mr Stefan Romaniw OAM, AFUO President, who returned last week from multi-party talks in Kyiv.

"The Australian Government can help stop this violence. It must publicly issue a condemnation, call for withdrawal of State special operations forces, and promote meaningful dialogue toward a peaceful resolution in Ukraine.

"I have written today to Prime Minister Abbott and told him that silence condones violence. International action - including Australia supporting our American, Canadian and European allies - can help prevent it.

"As a community, we are also outraged because the deterioration in Kyiv could have been avoided had the Yanukovych regime listened to the aspirations of Ukrainians, and sought genuine compromise and peaceful progress.

"Instead, up to 10 deaths have occurred after the regime refused real negotiations, refused to allow the legislature to consider Constitutional reform, and deployed thousands of additional heavily-armed State special operations forces into Kyiv.

"What's happening in Ukraine is not a civil war - it is a corrupt oligarchical dictatorship using force to preserve power and privilege at the cost of the lives and well-being of its own citizenry who seek democracy and civil rights," Mr Romaniw said.

Ukrainian Australians and fellow concerned citizens are encouraged to contact the Office of the Prime Minister to demand Government action. They are also encouraged to join protest actions being planned by the AFUO and other community organisations in Canberra and capital cities.

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