



The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Dunja Mijatović

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PRESS RELEASE

Stop attacks on journalists, de-escalate situation by allowing media to report freely in Ukraine, says OSCE representative

KYIV, 7 March 2014 – OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović today warned that the current situation in Ukraine has led to a media freedom crisis as she ended a four-day visit to the country.

“I am extremely worried about the media freedom situation, we are seeing cases of intimidation, beatings and media censorship every day. I call on all those responsible to stop the information war, ensure journalists’ safety in Crimea and elsewhere and immediately start to de-escalate the situation by allowing media to report freely,” Mijatović said.

“In times of crisis, members of the media are among the first to be attacked to deprive citizens from receiving information from a variety of sources. The recent demonstrations in Kyiv and other cities and what we are seeing across Crimea are clear examples of this.

Mijatović met with media associations and local journalists in Simferopol on Wednesday to discuss media freedom issues.

“The biggest problem is journalists’ safety. In addition, signals of Ukrainian television stations have been cut in Crimea, including the signal of the independent Chernomorskaya TV,” Mijatović said.

She said Tatar journalists at the state broadcaster Krym are under political pressure from the broadcaster’s administration and that access to official information from local authorities is provided only to loyal journalists

“History has shown that attempts to silence critical voices are never successful and restrictions on media can have disastrous consequences. From personal experience I know very well what the destructive power of controlled media can be,” Mijatović said.

During her meetings in Kyiv with senior government officials Mijatović stressed that there must be no impunity for attacks against journalists, and she raised the case of the murder of Vesti journalist Vyacheslav Veremyi.

“I noted that the public prosecutor will focus on these cases and I expect justice to be served”, she said. “Veremyi’s family, friends and colleagues deserve it.”

In her meetings with government officials Mijatović also noted that recent proposals by some parliamentarians to ban Russian television channels have been withdrawn.

“These are positive steps. But in order for media freedom to be restored, I stressed that there is a need for thorough and comprehensive actions in the media legislation reform to ensure media pluralism,” Mijatović said.

She expressed hope public service broadcasting law would be adopted to establish a politically and financial independent and impartial broadcaster, improve access to information, enhance the regulator, and continue the digitalization process without delay.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes media developments in all 57 OSCE participating States. She provides early warning on violations of freedom of expression and media freedom and promotes full compliance with OSCE media freedom commitments. Learn more at www.osce.org/fom, Twitter: @OSCE_RFoM and on facebook.com/osce.rfom.