



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

### **Statement on World Press Freedom Day**

As for delivery by Viktoriia Kuvshynnykova, Chargée D'affaires a.i.  
Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1472<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
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#### **Madam Chairperson,**

On the World Press Freedom Day, it is critical to admit that journalism serves as a fundamental pillar of the democratic societies and its role cannot be overestimated.

Thousands of brave and dedicated journalists cover various important events all over the world, ranging from disclosing environmental challenges and climate crisis to documenting gross human rights violations and war crimes in conflict zones.

The theme for the 2024 World Press Freedom Day – “A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the Face of the Environmental Crisis” – highlights the important role of journalists in providing inclusive information about environmental crisis and its consequences that impact human beings and nature.

We welcome the Joint statement by the OSCE Chair-in-Office and the Representative on Freedom of the Media on the World Press Freedom Day urging the participating States to uphold their international and OSCE commitments, including those that protect media freedom.

For exposing catastrophic events which result from human decisions and actions, in particular during wars and conflicts, journalists often face elevated risks that impede their ability to report.

russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has not only worsened the security situation in the entire region, but also has a devastating impact on the environment, both in Ukraine and in neighboring countries.

The biggest anthropogenic catastrophe in the last decades – the destruction of the Kakhovka HPP, occupation of Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, russia's constant intense missile and drone attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure and residential areas have both immediate and long-term consequences for human health and the ecosystem of the entire region.

The world has witnessed all these heinous crimes through the reporting of dedicated journalists and environmental activists. Their work cannot be overestimated in ensuring that war crimes committed by russia in Ukraine are punished and the aggressor state compensates for the damage it has done.

russian attacks across Ukraine have turned journalists into war reporters. Unfortunately, many of them paid their lives for reporting about the war on the ground.

According to the Institute of Mass Information, for two years and almost three months of russia's full-scale war 79 journalists have been killed in Ukraine.

Only for the past two weeks two journalists and defenders of Ukraine were killed on the frontline.

The exact whereabouts of at least 14 Ukrainian journalists held by russia remain unknown. They are held incommunicado.

However, even if we know where journalists are held captive, the testimonies of those who are lucky enough to survive and get out of russian prisons prove that they are held in inhuman conditions under enormous physical and psychological pressure, which in most cases amounts to torture.

This is the reality for many journalists, including at least 19 imprisoned Ukrainian citizen journalists from the temporarily occupied Crimea, who dared to speak up against occupation and war, and concentrated their efforts on documenting war crimes and other atrocities committed by russia.

We urge the international community to intensify political and diplomatic pressure on russia to make it adhere to its international commitments regarding media freedom and the safety of journalists, ensure immediate release of journalists and dropping all trumped-up charges against them.

**Esteemed colleagues,**

In its media warfare russia struggles to seize the media and broadcasting facilities in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to isolate people from the Ukrainian information space. Invaders are ready to achieve this goal at any cost. Launching missile attacks on TV towers, as it happened in Rivne region and Kyiv in 2022, and recently in Kharkiv, is no exception. Such brutal attacks on the civilian infrastructure that constitute another war crime should be subject for thorough investigation and receive an appropriate reaction from the international community.

Ukraine resolutely condemns all attacks against journalists and other media professionals and maintains a firm view that they should be able to report on any issue without being threatened, attacked, censored, or coerced.

Together with our partners we remain committed to countering flows of disinformation and propaganda of war and hatred, as well as deliberate attempts by kremlin propagandists and public figures to enable environment where anything can be questioned, anything, like what was the pretext for russian aggression followed by full-scale invasion of Ukraine, what happened in Mariupol and Bucha, who blew up Kakhovka HPP, etc.

We pay tribute to all brave and dedicated journalists and other media professionals who under unimaginably difficult conditions continue their work on documenting war crimes committed by russia in Ukraine and elsewhere. It is crucial for the future accountability mechanisms.

**I thank you, Madam Chairperson.**