

CIVIC SOLIDARITY PLATFORM STRONGLY CONDEMNS THE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED DETENTION OF UKRAINIAN JOURNALIST VLADYSLAV YESYPENKO IN THE OCCUPIED CRIMEA AND CALLS FOR HIS IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement by the Civic Solidarity Platform

31 March 2021

On 10 March 2021, the Russian FSB in Crimea [detained](#) Vladyslav Yesypenko, a Ukrainian freelance journalist working for 'Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty' (RFE/RL), after he attended, for journalistic purposes, a peaceful rally on the occasion of the Ukrainian writer Taras Shevchenko's birthday in Simferopol.

On 12 March, a local 'court' ruled to keep Yesypenko in custody for two months. The FSB accused him of intelligence and subversive activities for Ukrainian security services by taking photos and videos of Crimean locations, critical public infrastructure and places of public gatherings. The genuine reason behind his persecution may be his freelance contribution to 'Krym.Realii' ('Crimea.Realities') project run by the RFE/RL Ukrainian service, covering the events in the peninsula under Russian occupation.

The occupation authorities do not allow independent lawyers to access Yesypenko for him having allegedly refused their assistance. Instead, he has been assigned a State-appointed lawyer Violetta Synieglazova, repeatedly involved in politically motivated cases against Ukrainians and known for defending the FSB interests. In his interview with an occupation TV channel, Yesypenko confessed to having transported an explosive device on him and sent the videos he filmed to Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service. On 23 March, the Ukrainian media project 'Graty' [published](#) information on Yesypenko's having been tortured with electric shocks for two days for confession, referring to their source in the Simferopol SIZO. The same source confirmed that psychological pressure had been exerted on the journalist.

The Civic Solidarity Platform concludes that Yesypenko's detention raises legitimate concerns of being politically motivated due to his journalistic activity, implying an unlawful interference with the freedom of speech. The use of electric shocks and psychological pressure while in detention violates the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, whereas restrictions on accessing a lawyer of one's choosing disclose a breach of the right to defend oneself in court. All of those actions fall short of the Russian obligations, as an occupying power, under international law and standards set by the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

Strongly condemning this detention, the Civic Solidarity Platform members call for the immediate release of Vladyslav Yesypenko, the dropping of all charges against him, an objective investigation into the use of torture and ill-treatment against him and bringing those ordering and administering such treatment to justice. We call the Russian government to stop politically motivated persecutions in the occupied Crimea and the ill-treatment of political prisoners to extract confessions. Finally, we call on the Russian government to abide by their international obligations as an occupying power and guarantee the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms to those under occupation.

List of organisations supporting the statement:

1. Human Rights Center ZMINA, Ukraine
2. Promo-LEX Association, Moldova
3. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
4. Human Rights House Foundation
5. Norwegian Helsinki Committee
6. Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
7. Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania
8. Foundation of Regional Initiatives, Ukraine
9. Libereco - Partnership for Human Rights, Germany/Switzerland
10. KRF Public Alternative, Ukraine
11. Macedonian Helsinki Committee
12. The Human Rights Movement: Bir Duino - Kyrgyzstan
13. Swedish OSCE network
14. 'Human Rights in Mental Health - FGIP'
15. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor, Armenia
16. IDP Women Association 'Consent', Georgia
17. Human Rights Club Azerbaijan
18. DRA Berlin, Germany
19. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
20. Human Rights Center (HRC), Georgia
21. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law, Kazakhstan
22. humanrights.ch, Switzerland
23. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
24. The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House
25. Human Rights Center "Memorial", Russia
26. Citizens' Watch, Russia
27. Human Rights Center "Viasna", Belarus
28. Center for Participation and Development, Georgia
29. International Partnership for Human Rights, Belgium
30. Association UMDPL, Ukraine
31. Crimean Human Rights Group, Ukraine
32. Public Association "Dignity", Kazakhstan