

His Excellency Volodymyr Zelensky
President of Ukraine

Concern: Call to End Impunity for Killers of Journalists in Ukraine

7 November 2019

Your Excellency,

We are writing on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the world's largest organisation of journalists representing over 600.000 members in more than 140 countries, to urge your government to address the issue of impunity for violence against journalists in Ukraine.

The IFJ's principal mandate is to promote and defend the rights of journalists, including the right to life and physical safety. In this regard, it constantly monitors violations of our members' rights around the world and it publishes an annual report on journalists and media staff who are killed for no other reason than the legitimate practice of their profession.

On the UN's International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, the IFJ has launched its annual campaign to 'End Impunity for violence against journalists', focusing on Palestine, Peru, the Philippines, Somalia and Ukraine. The IFJ is mobilising its 187 affiliates worldwide to highlight the impunity in these countries. [You can view the campaign here.](#)

According to our records, sixteen journalists have been killed in Ukraine since 1995 with impunity.

One of the most shocking stories of impunity of crimes committed against journalists in Ukraine is the one of Georgy Gongadze. The Ukrainian journalist disappeared in September 2000, after having written an open letter to the General Prosecutor to file a complaint for harassment from the Security Service of Ukraine. His body was found two months later, in November 2000, decapitated and with acid all over it. Some audio records proved the former President, Kuchma, was involved in the case, as well as the former president of Ukrainian Parliament, Volodymyr Lytvyn and the former Minister of Interior Kravchenko. Nobody has been punished to date.

While the murder of Georgy Gongadze has become emblematic of the culture of impunity in Ukraine, there are numerous other cases of crimes against journalists. The Freedom of speech barometer of the Institute of Mass Information (IMI) records 1 murder, 20 cases of beating, 6 cases of censorship, 99 interference attempts, 36 threats and 15 cases of cyber-attack since the beginning of 2019. Regular monitoring of physical aggressions against journalists and the media in Ukraine ("The Index of Physical

Safety of Journalists in Ukraine”), conducted by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU), recorded 55 cases of physical aggression against journalists so far in 2019.

In 2018, NUJU recorded 86 incidents and in 2017 – 89. In addition, it found that the number of attacks on female media workers increased by 50%. These numbers are unacceptable.

Together with the IFJ and its affiliates in Ukraine, NUJU and IMTUU, we demand your government, judiciary and law enforcement agencies undertake complete and effective investigations of all violations of journalists’ rights and bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against journalists.

We urge your government to dispel the impression of indifference in the face of deadly assaults against journalists. There is so much more that can be done with a genuine commitment to fighting impunity. It needs to start with justice, for the victims of violence.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Bellanger



IFJ General Secretary