



National Platform of Ukraine

MEDIA LAW INSTITUTE STATEMENT

ON VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS DURING CIVIL PROTESTS

Media Law Institute expresses its indignation at brutal assaults on journalists, performing their professional duties, by the Ministry of Interior special unit "Berkut" defending the Administration of Ukraine's President building. During the events of 1st December outside the Presidential Administration in Kyiv, the authorities severely beaten with truncheons and kicked not only those, who provoked the conflict, but also journalists recording the developments. As a result, more than 50 Ukrainian and foreign journalists were injured. Police had clearly seen and understood that these people do not represent a threat, but this did not stop them. In addition to physical violence against journalists, their professional equipment – cameras and camcorders – was destroyed as well. The events were recorded in photo and video materials, and with eyewitness testimony. In particular, among suffered were journalists of Reuters, AFP, Ukrainska Pravda, Channel 5, Ukrainsky Tyzhden, LB.UA, UBR, other media outlets.

Some days earlier, journalists subjected to violence by the law enforcement authorities and provocateurs, the latter reported to have been organized by the power to destabilize the situation in the country. For instance, on Friday, 29th November, a journalist from Hromadske TV was severely beaten, got his camera and phone crashed. On the weekend, two attacks on journalists of the Channel 5 took place, when unknown persons were throwing stones and sticks, whereas "Berkut" fighters broke the camera.

Media Law Institute recalls that one of the key missions of police is to ensure personal security of citizens, protection of their rights, freedoms and legitimate interests. As the law states, recourse to force shall be reasonable under relevant circumstances and proportionate to the threats. It appears evident that journalists, who were recording the developments for objective coverage, did not constitute any threat to life and health of police officers or citizens, and therefore the use of force against journalists is an obstruction to their professional activities, for which there is criminal liability.

Media Law Institute urges the public authorities to stop violence against journalists immediately, to investigate crimes and compensate material and moral damage suffered by victims. We call on the international journalist community to support their colleagues and to condemn the actions of the Ukrainian authorities.