

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE MISSING JOURNALISTS IMMEDIATELY

At least two journalists are still missing in eastern Ukraine, believed to be held captive by armed anti-Kyiv protesters in Slovyansk. One journalist recently released spoke of other captives and expressed concern over their safety.

As civil unrest continues to escalate in Ukraine, several journalists and other individuals have been abducted and continue to be held captive in eastern areas controlled by anti-Kyiv protesters. **Yuriy Lelyavskiy**, a journalist working for Vik TV based in Lviv (western Ukraine), telephoned a friend at 8pm on 25 April to say that he was being detained by armed anti-Kyiv protesters in Slovyansk. He has not been in contact with anybody since then. **Serhiy Shapoval**, a journalist working for *Volyn Post*, was last in contact with his family on 26 April. There are also reports that other people may be held captive by the same armed group in Slovyansk.

Following the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014, protesters in eastern (predominantly Russian-speaking) regions of Ukraine who refused to recognize the legitimacy of the interim authorities in Kyiv seized control of local administrations, including in the towns of Slovyansk, Kramatorsk and Mariupol. On 7 April, in the biggest regional city of Donetsk, armed anti-Kyiv protesters proclaimed the establishment of the "People's Republic of Donetsk" of which Slovyansk is a part.

On 9 May Amnesty International spoke on the telephone with the spokesperson for Vyacheslav Ponomarev, the self-styled "People's Mayor" of Slovyansk. She claimed that the individuals being held were not hostages, but that they were detained "on suspicion of espionage", and that it remained to be decided what measures were to be taken against them.

Please send the attached text (if possible by using the Russian text below) or your own message to the e-mail addresses we have located on the official website of the "People's Republic of Donetsk" (<http://donetsk-gov.su>):

English: I am writing to express my concern for the safety of Yuriy Lelyavskiy, and Serhiy Shapoval who are currently being held captive in Slovyansk, possibly along with others. I insist on an immediate and unconditional release of all captives. Wherever they are, their freedom as well as their mental and physical well-being must be assured.

Russian: Я хочу выразить озабоченность по поводу безопасности Юрия Лелявского и Сергея Шаповала, которые в настоящее время содержатся в неволе в Славянске, как, возможно, и другие лица. Я настаиваю на немедленном освобождении всех захваченных лиц, без каких-либо условий. Где бы они ни находились, их свобода и их психическое и физическое благополучие должны быть полностью обеспечены.

PLEASE SEND THE ABOVE MESSAGE BEFORE 23 JUNE 2014 TO THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESSES:

Email addresses located on the official website for the "People's Republic of Donetsk":

hunta.resist@gmail.com
abvgdasm@gmail.com

And copies to:

Valeria Lutkovska Chair of the Ukrainian
Parliament Commission for Human
Rights
Institutska Str. 21/8, 01008 Kyiv
Ukraine

Tel: +380 44 253 2091

Fax: +380 44 226 3427

Email: lutkovska@ombudsman.gov.ua
hotline@ombudsman.gov.ua

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

RELEASE MISSING JOURNALISTS IMMEDIATELY

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The authorities in Kyiv have used police and military forces in an attempt to regain control of Donetsk and other towns and cities in eastern Ukraine from the armed anti-Kyiv protesters. The fighting continues, and has resulted in dozens of casualties and wounded on both sides. There are reports of individuals being held captive by both sides.

Amnesty International has expressed concern about the safety of the local population in eastern Ukraine, and has appealed to the interim authorities in Kyiv over incidents of unlawful deprivation of liberty and ill-treatment of captives by armed individuals who are evidently associated with the pro-Kyiv forces but are not competent officials or persons authorized to exercise those powers (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR50/020/2014/en>). There are also reports, including substantive video footage, or the use of firearms by Kyiv-controlled security officials against unarmed protesters resulting in casualties (in particular in Krasnarmeisk on 11 May resulting in two reported deaths).

In Slovyansk, a city with a population of 150,000 in Donetsk region, the armed anti-Kyiv protesters were behind a string of abductions, including of military observers despatched by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) who have since been released following mediation by a Russian envoy. In a press conference on 23 April, the self-proclaimed "People's Mayor" of Slovyansk, Vyacheslav Ponomarev, said some of the detainees were being held as "bargaining chips" and he had no intention of letting them go. He accused the Kyiv government of detaining and torturing his "comrades". Some captives have already been released or exchanged. On 2 May Serhiy Lefter a journalist working with the Open Dialogue Foundation, and Artem Deynega, a Slovyansk resident were released from captivity. At a press conference organized by Open Dialogue Foundation in Kyiv on 8 May Serhiy Lefter described how he had been treated: "The first week was especially hard. I had my hands and feet tied with an adhesive tape, my eyes were sealed". He reported that the hostages were forced to sleep on a bare concrete floor, and were threatened and beaten. Serhiy Lefter reported that several people were still being held captive: Pavel Yurov, a theatre director, with his colleague Denis and a 19 year-old student from Kyiv.

Name: Yuriy Lelyavskiy, Serhiy Shapoval
Gender m/f: m

UA: Index: 123/14 EUR 50/021/2014 Issue Date: 12 May 2014