



Right-wing radical groups, xenophobia, and aggression in Ukraine

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine must give a proper legal assessment of the actions of right-wing paramilitary organizations and provide an objective and comprehensive investigation into their activities. The existence of any paramilitary groups in the composition of political parties and public organizations, in accordance with Article 37 of the Constitution of Ukraine, shall be prohibited. Law enforcement bodies should stop cooperating with paramilitary groups: both public projects, including the "Municipal Warta" project for the protection of public order, and tacit coordination of actions to put pressure on other organizations and parties.

The existence of paramilitary groups within a number of far-right parties and nationalist organizations, which is expressly prohibited by Article 37 of the Constitution of Ukraine, is of high concern. As a part of the party "National Corpus" (earlier – "Azov") the paramilitary division "National Druzhina" operates, which held a public march in the center of Kiev in February 2018. The activities of this organization are not only not suppressed by representatives of law enforcement bodies, but are openly encouraged by the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine.

28% of all violations of political rights and freedoms recorded by the human rights platform "Uspishna Varta" in April-August 2018 involved right-wing radical organizations, primarily C14, as well as "National Druzhina", "Bratstvo", "Right Sector", etc.

The OHCHR documented 22 cases of discrimination, hate speech, and/or violence directed at persons belonging to minorities or those holding alternative, special social, or political opinions between 16 February and 15 May⁴⁴. At the same time, in 21 cases violence was committed by members of ultra-right groups, who appear to have acted with impunity. The police and the State Prosecutor's office did not prevent acts of violence, did not properly characterize them as hate crimes, did not effectively investigate discriminatory crimes, and did not prosecute the perpetrators, which violates the right to equally not be discriminated against in view of the law and leads to an atmosphere of impunity and a lack of justice for victims.

The problem of the existence of **paramilitary units in the composition of ultra-right and public parties**, the prohibition of which is provided for in Article 37 of the Constitution of Ukraine, remains unresolved.

Ultra-right organizations conduct mass actions and marches with a military character. So, on May 2 in Odessa (the day in memory of those who died on Kulikovo field in 2014) a march was held by Ukrainian right-wing radical organizations under the name "**March of Ukrainian order**". About 1000 representatives of "National Corpus", "Svoboda", "Right Sector", and other organizations attended it. During the march the head of the local branch of the organization "Right Sector" Tatiyana Soykina stated, "Ukraine will belong to Ukrainians, and not to yids or oligarchies". Only after Jewish organizations made appeals and the situation was publicized did the police initiate criminal proceedings in connection with anti-Semitic slogans. Legal proceedings were recorded in accordance with the Article on violations of the racial and national equality of citizens.

A number of district administrations of Kiev signed a Memorandum of partnership and cooperation with the public formation "**Munitsipalynaya varta**", which is headed by a **representative of the C14**

group. The leader of this organization Evgeny Karas was elected as a member of the public council at the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU). It is precisely the C14 organization that took responsibility for the pogrom of the Romani camp in Lysa Gora in Kiev in the night of April 20 to 21. Initially, police officials denied that the pogrom happened, claiming that "activists" from C14 carried out cleaning-up at the site of the abandoned Romani camp. A number of Ukrainian TV channels controlled by the Presidential Administration also reported that this cleaning-up happened and broadcasted the comments of C14. After the publication of the video of pogrom⁴⁶, which documented the persecution of children and women by people armed with gas sprays and bats, Amnesty International, as well as the US Embassy in Ukraine, demanded from the Ukrainian authorities to investigate this incident.

The pogroms of Romani camps took place in other regions of Ukraine too. In the night from 22 to 23 May a similar attack on a Romani camp happened in the village of Bolshaya Berezovitsa in the Ternopol region. An eyewitness of the events said that she and fellow villagers were attacked by a group of unknown persons - about 15 people who opened fire, shouted, and tried to assault them. At the time of the attack there were 7 adults and 33 children in the Romani camp. The representative of the local police stated to journalists that nobody was detained in connection with the attack.

On May 27, in Kiev, representatives of nationalist organizations attacked the boutiques of representatives of Caucasus nationality in the "Darynok" market in Kiev and threw stones at them.

On June 7 there was another attack on the Romani camp in Goloseevsky Park of Kiev. The radical nationalist organization "National Druzhina" claimed responsibility for the attack. And on June 24 in Lvov as a result of the attack of members of a right-wing radical organization on the Romani camp, 1 person was killed, and three others received heavy wounds. The police found and detained 7 young Lvov residents and the organizer of the attack.

The inaction of the police and the absence of punishment for pogroms and ethnic attacks will continue to generate a new wave of xenophobia and hate speech in Ukraine.

Only after there was a significant public and international response on July 10 did the police report suspicion to the C14 coordinator Sergey Mazur concerning the pogrom of the Romani settlement in Lysa Gora in Kiev. On July 18 the Goloseevsky court of Kiev elected a measure of restraint for him in the form of around-the-clock house arrest for two months.

Law enforcement bodies refuse to investigate other episodes involving C14 and other right-wing radical organizations. On May 5 in Kiev, representatives of C14 illegally detained the citizen of Brazil **Rafael Lusvarghi**, who was earlier a defendant in a criminal case for aiding terrorism, and was released by the decision of the Ukrainian court. Representatives of C14 illegally detained Lusvarghi and subjected him to humiliation and physical abuse.

The lawyer of Lusvarghi Valentin Rybin on May 18 obtained a decision from the court that obliges the head investigative department of the SBU to register information into the unified register of pre-trial investigations concerning the facts of members of C14, headed by Evgeny Karas, committing criminal offenses under Articles 258 (terrorist act) and 146 (illegal imprisonment) and to start the pre-trial investigation. Immediately after the court's decision, the personal data of the lawyer Rybin was published on the "Mirotvorets" website.

Human rights activists unanimously agree that the **tolerant attitude of the authorities towards radicals actually legalized their aggression** in relation to Ukrainian citizens and public organizations. “Freedom House”, “Amnesty international”, and “Front line defenders” in an open appeal⁵⁰ (14 June) called on Prosecutor General Yury Lutsenko and Interior Minister Arsen Avakov to condemn the aggression of radicals and to conduct effective investigations into their attacks. The UN also called on the Ukrainian authorities to take urgent measures to protect Romani communities, LGBT activists, and other minorities who are subjected to cruel attacks and harassment.

Both Ukrainian and international organizations have repeatedly expressed their concern about the activities of the **“Mirotvorets” website**, on which lists of people (along with their personal data) are being published who are allegedly associated with armed groups and labelled as “terrorists”. Such a list violates the presumption of innocence, the right to privacy, and the protection of personal data. As of the end of June 2018, there hasn’t been any progress in the criminal investigation concerning the case against the website “Mirotvorets”, which is still functioning.

The other cases

On May 9, 2018, representatives of the ultra-right wing organization **“National Corpus” (“Azov”)** blocked the office of the **“Inter”** TV channel in Kiev, demanding to remove from the air a festive concert timed for Victory Day. The Director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory Vladimir Vyatrovich called the activity of “Inter” “anti-Ukrainian and harmful” and called to fight “against attempts of “red’ Russian revenge in Ukraine”. After the concert was broadcasted, on May 15 the right-wing radical group again blocked the building of “Inter” with the demand to change the editorial policy.

In Kiev the police actually withdrew from the protection of representatives of veteran organizations during a peaceful meeting near the **Vatutin monument** on 13 April, which was disrupted by representatives of the nationalist **organization C14**. Ultra-right nationalists blocked access to the monument, poured paint on both it and the participants of the event, voiced public threats and insults towards the veterans, and sprayed the audience with tear gas. An elderly woman was hospitalized with an eye burn. According to eyewitnesses, the police took a position of non-interference. As a result of the event, one of the representatives of C14 was detained, but released on the same day without charge.

On April 26 in Kiev radicals from the C14 group attacked the Orthodox public figure and chairman of the Kiev Orthodox brotherhood of the Archangel St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Christian Church (UOC) **Valentin Lukiyaniuk**. He is known for his active position during the protection of the Desyatynny Monastery, as well as pickets outside the Presidential Administration and the Cabinet of Ministers against autocephaly. Two years ago, on May 9, the apartment of the activist was set on fire. Lukyanik informed the human rights platform “Uspishna Varta” that one of the attackers “clearly stated that he had been ‘sent by the Presidential Administration’” after the picket against autocephaly.

On May 10 in Kiev, representatives of ultra-right nationalist organizations disrupted the lecture “Attack on LGBT rights as a form of censorship: the experience of Russia”. According to the testimony of those present, among the attackers there was the Chairman of the Kiev branch of “Right Sector”. On May 16 in Zaporozhye, during the public action in support of the LGBT community “rainbow flashmob 2018”, an unknown person threw a firecracker into the crowd. The patrol police of Zaporozhye reported about there being one victim as a result of the explosion.

On May 17 activists of Ukrainian right-wing radical groups, such as “C14”, “Tradition and Order”, “Right Sector”, "Monolit", and "Katekhon", held the action "Nationalists against the leftists from Amnesty”.

On June 17, in the center of Kiev a **march of equality** took place, which was attended by representatives of the LGBT community, diplomats, and human rights activists. In order to avoid clashes with the opponents of this procession, security and law and order provided 5,000 law enforcement officers in the streets.

Despite the fact that the police blocked the center of the capital since dawn, several representatives of the right-wing radical organization C14 managed to get to the place of the parade and block the road on the route of the march. The ultranationalists who entered into a conflict with the police used pepper spray. The police detained 56 people who participated in the clashes with the participants of the march. In response to the actions of the police, the right-wing radicals blocked several roads with the demand to release the detained nationalists.

The chief of police of Kiev Andrey Krishchenko reported that during the passage of the march of equality, 11 people were injured, including five police officers and six civilians. He also said that almost all the detainees were released by the police.

In response, on June 21 activists of the nationalist organizations C14, "Right Sector", and "National Druzhina" blocked the office of the patrol police of Kiev, demanding the resignation of the head of the patrol police of the city Yury Zozulya.

On May 8 members of the right-wing radical organization "National Druzhina" attacked the office of the public organization "**Labour of the Kharkov region**" in Kharkov. The leader of the organization Pavel Tishchenko also connects the pogrom with the events planned by his organization for May 9. On the evening of May 9 the **Communist Party** office in Chernigov was attacked and representatives of the radical C14 group took responsibility for it.

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