

ANALYTICAL REPORT

THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIL ACTIVISTS IN UKRAINE IN 2025



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This study analyses the state of civil society in Ukraine in 2025, in the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, martial law, and institutional transformations on the path towards the European Union. The report summarises the results of documenting cases of persecution and losses among representatives of the civic sector, analyses key challenges faced by anti-corruption activists, human rights defenders, journalists, environmental and LGBTIQ+ activists, and presents the findings of a sociological study on levels of safety, risks, and the resilience of the activist community. The report outlines both external threats related to Russian aggression and internal trends affecting the space for civic activity, and is intended for representatives of public authorities, international partners, researchers, and civil society actors.



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Authors:

Iryna Yuzyk, Project Manager at the Human Rights Centre ZMINA

Khrystyna Roman, Documentation Specialist at the Human Rights Centre ZMINA

Diana Deputat, Legal Analyst at the Human Rights Centre ZMINA

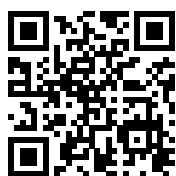
Alona Martynchuk, Analyst at the Centre for Qualitative Research

Editors:

Tetiana Pechonchyk, Head of the Board of the Human Rights Centre ZMINA

Onysiia Syniuk, Head of the Research Department at the Human Rights Centre ZMINA

Cover photo: "Cardboard protests" – a series of rallies against the signing of a draft law that would have restricted the independence of NABU and SAPO, July 2025. Photo by Oleksandra Yefymenko



Website: zmina.ua

The Human Rights Centre ZMINA is a Ukrainian human rights organisation working in the areas of civil society protection, combating discrimination, prevention of torture and ill-treatment, support for human rights defenders and civil society activists, as well as documentation of international crimes and the protection of the rights of victims of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

■ Rally in support of preserving the independence of Ukraine's anti-corruption bodies, Kyiv, 22 July 2025. Photo: ZMINA/Liudmyla Tiahnyriadno



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AFU** – Armed Forces of Ukraine
AntAC – Anti-Corruption Action Centre
CAO – Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences
CC of Ukraine – Criminal Code of Ukraine
CF – charitable foundation
CJE – Commission on Journalistic Ethics
CSOs – civil society organisations
CTRC – Crimean Tatar Resource Centre
ECtHR – European Court of Human Rights
ECHR – European Convention on Human Rights
EU – European Union
FSB – Federal Security Service
HACC – High Anti-Corruption Court of Ukraine
HCJ – High Council of Justice
HPP – hydroelectric power plant
HQCJ – High Qualification Commission of Judges
IDPs – internally displaced persons
KIIS – Kyiv International Institute of Sociology
KHPG – Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group
LGBTIQ+ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people
MIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine
NABU – National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine
NACP – National Agency on Corruption Prevention
NGO – non-governmental organisation
NSDC – National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine
NUAU – National Union of Artists of Ukraine
OCU – Orthodox Church of Ukraine
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PGO – Prosecutor General’s Office
PIC – Public Integrity Council
RF – Russian Federation
SAPO – Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office
SBI – State Bureau of Investigation
SLAPP lawsuits – strategic lawsuits against public participation
SSU – Security Service of Ukraine
TCR – Territorial Center of Recruitment and Social Support
TIC – Temporary Investigative Commission
UAV – unmanned aerial vehicle
UOC – Ukrainian Orthodox Church
URPI – Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
VDNH – National Complex “Expocentre of Ukraine”, an exhibition, cultural and entertainment centre in Kyiv

INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 became a period of serious challenges for Ukraine's civil society, while also demonstrating its resilience in the context of the ongoing full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation. After three years of war, the state is simultaneously defending its sovereignty and pursuing reforms on the path towards European integration. In this complex context, civil society continues to perform a critically important function: exercising public oversight, exposing corruption, protecting the environment, advocating for human rights, documenting violations, supporting vulnerable groups, and responding to systemic challenges.

At the same time, 2025 saw increased pressure on certain segments of the civil sector, in particular anti-corruption organisations, human rights defenders, environmental activists, LGBTIQ+ activists, and journalists. In a number of cases, this did not concern isolated incidents but rather systematic practices, including smear campaigns, politically motivated criminal proceedings, interference in private life, obstruction of the activities of non-governmental organisations, and the use of judicial proceedings as a tool of pressure.

One of the central developments of the year was the institutional crisis surrounding the independence of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, which triggered the first mass protests since the start of the full-scale invasion. The events of July 2025 demonstrated both the existence of risks to the anti-corruption infrastructure and a high level of mobilisation potential within civil society. The mass "cardboard" rallies demonstrated the emergence of a new generation of civil activists operating outside traditional political structures but responding sensitively to threats to the rule of law.

Alongside internal challenges, civil society continued to suffer direct losses as a result of hostilities. Documented cases of killings, injuries, destruction of property, and targeted attacks by Russian forces on humanitarian missions and journalistic teams indicate the systemic nature of threats posed by the aggressor state.

Overall, in 2025 ZMINA documented 178 cases of persecution and losses among representatives of civil society in areas under the control of the Government of Ukraine. More than 60% of these were related to Russian aggression, confirming the direct impact of the war on the safety of activists and media professionals. At the same time, a significant share of incidents was driven by internal factors and related to the actions or inaction of Ukrainian state authorities, law enforcement bodies, local authorities, or non-state actors.

This report combines the results of documenting specific cases, an analysis of legislative initiatives that create risks for civil society, and the findings of a sociological study on the current state of the activist environment. Its aim is not only to record instances of persecution, but also to outline structural trends, sources of threats, levels of trust in institutions, and the self-protection mechanisms of the civil sector.

Despite the fact that in 2025 Ukraine's civil society continued to operate between two types of threats – external, related to Russia's armed aggression, and internal, related to the concentration of powers, restrictions under martial law, and attempts to narrow the space for criticism – activity, solidarity, and public visibility remain key resources of its resilience.



■ KyivPride Equality March, Kyiv, 14 June 2025. Photo: Suspilne

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025 became a period of compounded challenges for Ukraine's civil society, combining the consequences of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, financial instability, institutional conflicts, and increasing internal pressure on the activist environment. Despite this, civil society demonstrated its capacity for mobilisation, solidarity, and influence over state decision-making, reaffirming its key role in preserving the country's democratic vector of development.

According to monitoring by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, in 2025 a total of 178 cases of persecution, pressure, and losses among representatives of civil society were documented in areas under the control of the Government of Ukraine. This figure reflects only those cases that became known and were verified, indicating the scale of the issue.

Overall situation. 112 cases, or more than 60% of the total, were related to actions by the Russian Federation. Volunteer centres, humanitarian warehouses, media editorial offices, and vehicles used for evacuation or the delivery of aid came under shelling. In a number of cases, journalists and volunteers were subjected to targeted attacks while carrying out their professional or civic duties. Thus, the war remains a systemic factor weakening the institutional capacity of the civil sector – through the loss of human potential, material resources, and sustained psychological pressure.

At the same time, 66 documented cases of persecution were not directly related to hostilities. They were driven by the actions or inaction of Ukrainian state authorities, local authorities and law enforcement bodies, or non-state actors. Common forms of pressure included intimidation, online threats, violations of privacy and surveillance, smear campaigns, online harassment, politically motivated legal persecution, and damage to or destruction of property.

Persecution of anti-corruption activists. One of the most high-profile developments of the year was the situation surrounding anti-corruption bodies. Mass searches of NABU detectives, criminal proceedings against anti-corruption actors, and the adoption of draft law No. 12414, which restricted the independence of NABU and SAPO, became a catalyst for a large-scale public response. In July 2025, mass peaceful protest actions took place in Kyiv and other cities across Ukraine – the first demonstrations of such scale since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On peak days, up to nine thousand people took part in the protests in the capital. Many protesters brought slogans written on cardboard signs, which gave rise to the term “cardboard protests”.

Under pressure from civil society and international partners, the parliament was compelled to revise its decision and restore guarantees of the independence of anti-corruption bodies. This episode became an example of a swift and significant victory for civil society and demonstrated the preservation of its mobilisation potential even under martial law.

Pressure on the Public Integrity Council (PIC). In 2025, a separate source of tension was the activity of the parliamentary Temporary Investigative Commission, chaired by Member of Parliament Serhii Vlasenko, which began to actively interfere in the processes of judicial qualification assessment. Despite its formally defined mandate, the TIC summoned members of the High Qualification Commission of Judges for questioning, and subsequently representatives of the Public Integrity Council. This practice prompted criticism from civil society as exceeding the limits of parliamentary oversight and creating risks of political influence over independent institutions.

Against this background, the PIC publicly supported the HQCJ following the initiation of criminal proceedings and the conduct of searches, which effectively hampered its work. At the same time, communication between representatives of the TIC and members of the HQCJ and the PIC was conflictual and at times degrading in nature, further intensifying tensions. Taken together, these developments were perceived as an attempt to exert pressure on judicial governance bodies and on mechanisms of public oversight of judicial integrity.

Other challenges. In 2025, systemic risks persisted for certain groups of activists – LGBTIQ+ activists, environmental activists, and journalists.

The digital environment has become a distinct arena of pressure. More than one third of activists reported experiencing online harassment, and nearly one third reported direct threats. Women journalists were subjected to disproportionate gender-based violence in the online space, including sexualised abuse, threats of violence, and smear campaigns.

Environmental activists remain one of the groups most vulnerable to persecution. Cases of physical attacks, both in previous years and in 2025, have been combined with lawsuits brought by companies whose activities they oppose. Such cases demonstrate a disparity in resources between local activists and business entities and create a risk of displacing public oversight from the sphere of environmental policy.

Particular attention is drawn to the tendency to use judicial proceedings as a tool of pressure. In 2025, a number of cases with indicators of SLAPP lawsuits targeting activists and journalists were documented. Such lawsuits do not necessarily include claims for substantial compensation – they may seek retractions, but are intended to exhaust resources, create a chilling effect, and induce self-censorship.

Financial instability and the curtailment of initiatives. An additional blow to the civil sector was the sharp loss of part of international funding at the beginning of 2025. The termination or suspension of support from the United States, in particular that provided by USAID, led to the closure of projects, staff reductions, and the suspension of regional initiatives.

For a significant number of organisations, this meant the loss not only of financial stability but also of long-term planning capacity. In a number of regions, educational programmes, legal aid for vulnerable groups, analytical research, and advocacy campaigns were curtailed. Financial turbulence intensified competition for resources and increased the risk of burnout within the civil sector.

Legislative risks. In 2025, another challenge for civil society arose from certain registered legislative initiatives and adopted laws, some provisions of which could restrict access to information of public interest, increase the discretion of public authorities, and create new risks for freedom of expression, media activity, and public oversight. In particular, this concerned restrictions on access to certain data in state registers and court decisions, the introduction of vague grounds for liability for public statements, as well as the expansion of supervisory powers over private legal entities.

In 2025, two laws were adopted and entered into force, certain provisions of which could affect the space for civil society activity: a law restricting the scope of publicly available data in public electronic registers, and a law introducing new rules for the verification of humanitarian organisations and the use of vehicles imported as humanitarian aid. In addition, four draft laws remained in focus, containing certain risks for access to information, freedom of expression, and mechanisms of public oversight.

Risk assessment by activists. The results of a sociological study commissioned by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA indicated a complex but not critical situation. Nearly three quarters of surveyed activists had encountered obstacles in their activities, and one in five had experienced pressure on a regular basis. Nearly half of activists assess the level of threats as high.

The main sources of pressure, in addition to external factors, are law enforcement bodies and representatives of local authorities, who not only create obstacles but also often demonstrate an unwillingness to respond effectively to violations. Media and information-based smear campaigns also play a significant role, shaping negative attitudes towards activists, particularly in sensitive areas, including the protection of LGBTIQ+ rights.

The most common forms of pressure remain indirect and reputational practices – manipulation of public opinion, smear campaigns, denial of access to information, and the ignoring of requests. At the same time, the digital space has become a key channel of influence: online harassment and threats are widespread. Physical violence occurs less frequently, but continues to carry a high level of risk. Under such conditions, activists are compelled to rely primarily on public visibility, coalition-based cooperation, and international support as the most effective protection mechanisms.

At the same time, the study revealed significant variation in experiences across different groups of activists. Anti-corruption activists remain the most vulnerable, facing systemic pressure from law enforcement bodies and local authorities. LGBTIQ+ activists face a broader range of threats, including physical attacks by far-right groups. By contrast, in work with veterans and vulnerable groups in small communities, pressure more often takes a situational and bureaucratic form. Despite these differences, a common feature across all groups is a low level of trust in institutional protection mechanisms and a reliance on informal instruments of influence.

Notably, more than 80% of surveyed activists expressed a need to strengthen their capacities in the areas of strategic planning, fundraising, communications, digital security, and risk management. They consider public visibility, coalition-based cooperation, and international support to be the most effective protection mechanisms, indicating the preservation of horizontal ties and solidarity within the sector.

General conclusions. The year 2025 demonstrated an ambivalent dynamic in the development of Ukraine's civil society. On the one hand – systemic losses due to the war, increasing internal pressure, financial instability, and attempts to restrict the space for criticism. On the other – the preservation of civil society's mobilisation capacity, its ability to influence political decision-making, and a high level of value-based motivation among activists.

Civil society remains a key guarantor of Ukraine's democratic development, its European integration, and government accountability under martial law. At the same time, its continued resilience depends on the availability of institutional safeguards for activists' safety, effective investigation of cases of pressure, stable international support, and a systematic dialogue between the state and the civil sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

1. Ensure institutional guarantees for the protection of civic space.

It is necessary to strengthen response mechanisms to cases of pressure, attacks, and persecution of civil activists, journalists, and human rights defenders. It is important to ensure independent and effective investigation of such incidents, as well as to establish systemic mechanisms for monitoring threats to civil society.

2. Introduce systemic safeguards against abuse under martial law.

Wartime restrictions must remain proportionate, temporary, and clearly justified. The state should develop transparent procedures that prevent the use of security arguments to restrict lawful civic activity, peaceful assemblies, or access to information.

3. Ensure regular dialogue between the state and civil society.

Public authorities should institutionalise consultation mechanisms with NGOs during the preparation of legislative initiatives and public policies, particularly in the areas of reforms, human rights, anti-corruption policy, and post-war recovery.

4. Strengthen responses to online persecution and digital attacks.

In view of the increase in online harassment, threats, and smear campaigns on social media, law enforcement bodies should develop specialised expertise in investigating digital attacks against activists. It is also necessary to improve response mechanisms to online threats, cyberstalking, and organised disinformation campaigns.

5. Guarantee the safety of public events and peaceful assemblies.

The state must ensure effective protection of activists during public actions and events, especially where groups at heightened risk of attacks are concerned, including LGBTIQ+ activists or anti-corruption organisations.

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

1. Strengthen horizontal solidarity and coalition-based cooperation.

Coalition initiatives and joint advocacy campaigns enable more effective responses to cases of pressure and enhance the influence of the civil sector on political processes.

2. Develop strategic communications and public visibility.

Active engagement with media, social media, and public campaigns remains one of the key tools for protecting activists and mobilising public support.

3. Strengthen digital security and counter online attacks.

NGOs should invest in the development of digital security, systems for monitoring online harassment, and mechanisms for responding to information attacks that may undermine the reputation of organisations or individual activists.

4. Invest in strengthening institutional capacity.

Capacity-building in the areas of strategic planning, fundraising, advocacy, and crisis communications, as well as the development and implementation of security policies, will enable NGOs to operate more effectively in a complex political and security environment.

5. Diversify sources of funding.

It is important for the civil sector to expand cooperation with local donors, businesses, and charitable foundations in order to reduce dependence on a limited number of international programmes.

FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS AND DONORS**1. Support the long-term institutional capacity of the civil sector.**

International donors should increase the share of programmes aimed at institutional support for NGOs, rather than focusing solely on short-term projects, in order to enhance the sector's resilience in conditions of financial instability.

2. Strengthen protection programmes for civil activists.

It is necessary to support programmes providing legal aid, physical protection, psychological support, and digital security for activists subjected to pressure or persecution.

3. Invest in countering online attacks and information-based smear campaigns.

International partners can play an important role in developing tools for monitoring digital threats, supporting independent media, and strengthening the capacity of NGOs to respond to information attacks.

4. Maintain international visibility of cases of pressure on civil society.

Public responses by international institutions to cases of persecution of activists remain an important factor of deterrence and protection of civic space.

5. Facilitate the development of partnerships between civil society and state institutions.

International programmes can serve as platforms for dialogue between the authorities and the civil sector, contributing to the development of more sustainable cooperation mechanisms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This analytical report was prepared by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA with the aim of providing a comprehensive assessment of the state of civil society in Ukraine in 2025. The study combines quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis and is based on the principles of independence, source verification, and adherence to standards for documenting human rights violations.

The object of the study is the activities of Ukrainian human rights defenders and civil activists, their associations and organisations, as defined in the OSCE ODIHR Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders¹ and the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms².

Based on these documents, **“human rights defenders”** are understood as any individuals who, individually or in association with others, promote and protect human rights, including by advocating for civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, the principles of the rule of law, and non-discrimination on any grounds, regardless of their profession or other status, acting through peaceful means and recognising the universal nature of all human rights for all persons (without any distinction based on colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, age, or other status), and who do not seek to advance corporate or business interests.

The term **“civil activist”** is used to refer to individuals who, individually or in association with others, take decisive action to achieve socially significant change, put an end to violations or other harmful activities, and promote and implement ideas of public benefit, including with the aim of promoting or protecting human rights and public interests, without the intention of obtaining exclusively personal gain.

The concepts of a civil activist and a human rights defender partially overlap: a civil activist is a broader term encompassing any individual who acts to bring about change and is guided by the public interest, whereas a human rights defender constitutes a narrower subcategory. Accordingly, not every activist is a human rights defender; however, where activist activity concerns human rights, these roles coincide. This approach is consistent with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which covers a broad range of individuals who peacefully contribute to the protection of human rights.

Activists or volunteers who support the AFU (fundraising, procurement, logistics) are not, in themselves, human rights defenders, as their activities are primarily aimed at supporting defence rather than directly protecting human rights. However, given their active role in defending a country subjected to external aggression, cases of their persecution are also included in this report, as such activists and volunteers strengthen the capacity of the armed forces of a democratic state under attack to protect the population, sovereignty, and constitutional order. Through resource mobilisation, rapid response to needs, and societal solidarity, they effectively reinforce the resilience of the democratic system in conditions of war.

In addition, this monitoring also covers cases of pressure and persecution of journalists, given their important role in ensuring access to reliable information, government accountability, and space for public debate. Journalists are part of civil society, as independent actors they contribute to the realisation of freedom of expression, oversight of those in power, and the protection of public interests.

The term **“journalist”** refers to a person who, on a professional or regular basis, collects, creates, prepares, and disseminates information through media to inform the public about current events, phenomena, and processes. There are numerous cases where the same individual combines the roles of journalist and activist, simultaneously engaging in professional media activity and participating in civic advocacy.

1 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. URL: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/150476.pdf>

2 United Nations, Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_349#Text

The monitoring and documentation also covered cases where persecution targeted relatives of civil activists, where there were sufficient grounds to assume that such persecution was linked to civic activity and aimed at exerting pressure on or intimidating the activist.

In addition, the monitoring covered the activities of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in its lawmaking function. ZMINA analysed draft laws registered in the Ukrainian parliament with regard to their potential impact on the activities of human rights defenders and civil activists in Ukraine.

Period and geographical scope of monitoring. The monitoring covers events that took place during 2025 in areas under the control of the Government of Ukraine. In cases where an event was of a prolonged nature or its consequences manifested in 2025, it was also taken into account within the scope of the analysis.

The structure of the study consists of four interrelated chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the analysis of key challenges and trends affecting civil society activity in 2025. The second chapter provides a systematic overview of documented cases of persecution, losses, and pressure, with both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The third chapter is based on the results of a sociological survey and reflects the assessments of civil society representatives themselves regarding levels of safety, risks, and needs. The fourth chapter is devoted to the analysis of legislative initiatives and regulatory changes that may affect the space for civil society activity, including an assessment of their compliance with international human rights standards.

General analysis of challenges for civil society. Within the study, particular attention was paid to analysing the key challenges that shaped the environment for civil society activity in 2025. The thematic blocks were developed on the basis of a combination of quantitative monitoring data, analysis of the most high-profile developments of the year, the recurrence of incidents, and their potential impact on democratic processes.

The analytical section includes those areas where systemic pressure or risks were observed, where there was significant public resonance, and where there were potential consequences for the functioning of democratic institutions. This includes, in particular, the situation surrounding anti-corruption bodies and legislative initiatives affecting their independence; the functioning of parliamentary oversight mechanisms in relation to NGOs; cases of pressure on environmental activists; the situation of the LGBTIQ+ community; as well as gender-based forms of online violence against women journalists.

The analysis of these phenomena was carried out not only through the description of individual cases, but also through an assessment of broader factors – the recurrence of pressure mechanisms, the nature of the response of state authorities, and the impact on freedom of association, freedom of expression, and the right to peaceful assembly. This approach made it possible to move from recording individual incidents to identifying structural risks to the space for civil society activity.

Particular attention was paid to the context of martial law, which simultaneously creates objective security constraints, but also increases the risks of concentration of powers, reduced transparency and accountability of public authorities, and reduced tolerance for criticism of senior officials. In this report, the developments of 2025 are examined through the prism of the balance between security needs and the preservation of democratic standards and practices.

Documentation of cases of persecution. The quantitative component of the report is based on a database of documented incidents involving representatives of civil society – human rights defenders, journalists, volunteers, anti-corruption activists, environmental activists, and LGBTIQ+ activists, as well as other individuals whose activities are of public significance.

The list of incidents included cases that met at least one of the following types of persecution:

- obstruction of lawful civic, human rights, or journalistic activity;
- physical attacks, injuries, or killings;
- destruction of or damage to property;
- unlawful legal persecution;
- smear campaigns;

- surveillance or interference in private life;
- obstruction of peaceful assemblies;
- SLAPP lawsuits.

Sources of information. Monitoring and documentation included the description of cases of attacks, persecution, and pressure against human rights defenders and activists, verification of the circumstances of the incident, and analysis of the context using a set of indicators to determine the link between the incident and the activities of the affected individuals or organisations.

The following sources were used for monitoring and documenting cases of persecution:

- open sources (materials from national and regional media, reports by NGOs, posts by victims and other actors on social media, etc.);
- interviews with victims and witnesses;
- official statements by law enforcement bodies and public authorities, including responses to requests from the Human Rights Centre ZMINA;
- observation of judicial proceedings.

The primary method of information collection was direct contact with affected persons, including first-hand reports from victims and/or witnesses of incidents, as well as their relatives and legal representatives.

Information was collected using a semi-structured interview approach with the preparation of a recording protocol. The documentation of each incident was carried out in accordance with a standard operating procedure and included the following information: (a) a description of the incident (including the date, location, type of persecution, information about the perpetrator, etc.); (b) contextual information: the subject of persecution and their prior human rights, civic, or journalistic activities; (c) data on the link between the incident and the human rights, civic, or journalistic activities of the affected party; (d) information on actions taken in response to the incident by law enforcement bodies or other public authorities or local self-government bodies.

In cases of conflicting information, an incident was included in the database only where there was a sufficient level of confirmation of the link between the incident and the human rights, civic, or journalistic activities of the affected individual or organisation.

Classification of incidents. Incidents were systematised according to the following parameters:

- source of threat (internal threats or threats related to Russian armed aggression);
- type of violation;
- region;
- category of the affected individual or group.

This approach made it possible to identify structural trends rather than merely describe individual cases.

Analysis of legislative initiatives. Within the report, a separate legal analysis was also conducted of legislative initiatives and adopted laws that could affect the space for civil society activity in Ukraine. This section includes laws adopted in 2025, as well as draft laws registered in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 2025 or earlier, where they remained relevant during 2025 in view of their potential impact on the activities of human rights defenders, civil activists, media, and mechanisms of public oversight.

Overall, within this section, two adopted laws that entered into force were analysed: a law restricting the scope of publicly available data in public electronic registers, and a law introducing new rules for the verification of humanitarian organisations and the use of vehicles imported as humanitarian aid. In addition, four draft laws at different stages of parliamentary consideration were analysed: a law adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on administrative liability for the “identification of a lawyer with a client”, which as of April 2026 had not entered into force, as well as draft laws of

Ukraine on the recodification of personal rights in the Civil Code of Ukraine, on restricting access to certain court decisions and removing certain information from the texts of court decisions, and on updating the legal framework governing the activities of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights.

Draft laws that were withdrawn, not supported, or did not progress in the adoption procedure during the period under review were not included in the analysis. The assessment of such legislative initiatives was carried out in accordance with international human rights standards, in particular freedom of expression, freedom of association, the right of access to information, as well as the principle of legal certainty and the requirement of proportionality of interference.

The sociological study, forming part of this report was conducted by the Centre for Qualitative Research, commissioned by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, in May–August 2025, using a method of four expert triads (a total of 12 expert participants – activists) and 156 online surveys (among activists). Respondents represent all regions of Ukraine under the control of the Ukrainian government.

The main objective of the sociological study was to assess the current state of civil society in Ukraine, as well as to analyse key threats (including attacks, persecution, and other forms of pressure) faced by human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and representatives of vulnerable groups. The study also examined the impact of legislative initiatives, political decisions, and law enforcement practices on the development of civil society.

Stages of the study. The study was conducted in two stages – qualitative and quantitative – which intersect and complement each other.

At the qualitative stage, changes in the state of civil society following the start of the full-scale invasion by the RF were assessed; threats faced by activists in the current context were identified; a range of specific problems and threats across particular sectors was discussed and described; the state of cooperation between public authorities and civil society on the path towards the EU was evaluated; and the impact of legislative initiatives, political decisions, and law enforcement practices on civil rights and freedoms in the context of European integration, as well as civil society mechanisms for influencing legislative processes, were analysed.

At the quantitative stage, the prevalence of key threats, the level of threats posed by state and non-state actors, and regional trends were assessed; sources of threats were identified based on respondents' self-assessment, as well as areas of civil society activity most exposed to threats and restrictions through comparison across target groups; the state of cooperation between public authorities and civil society was evaluated, along with levels of trust in state institutions, namely law enforcement bodies, the prosecution, the judiciary, and the legislature; the effectiveness of potential civil society mechanisms for influencing legislative processes was assessed; and possible recommendations and ideas for improving protection against potential threats were identified.

Conduct of the qualitative stage of the sociological study. This stage was conducted using expert triads – online discussions with three experts, facilitated by a professional moderator, with a duration of 1.5–2 hours. A total of four expert triads were conducted (total number of respondents – 12 expert participants, with three participants in each triad): a triad with anti-corruption activists, activists and human rights defenders working in the fields of anti-corruption and environmental protection – 3 participants; a triad with LGBTIQ+ activists – 3 participants; a triad with members of veteran communities and representatives of the AFU who were activists in civilian life – 3 participants; a triad with activists representing other minorities and vulnerable groups, including older women and men and people living in district centres – 3 participants). Activists and human rights defenders who observe or face numerous threats, such as attacks, persecution, defamation, legal proceedings, or other forms of pressure, were invited to participate in the triads. Journalists covering these areas and issues also participated as experts. Participants of different genders and age groups (18–55+ years) were present in the triads.

Participants represented different types of settlements and regions of Ukraine (Kyiv and the surrounding region, Centre, West, South, East). Particular attention was paid to those operating outside Kyiv, including activists from district centres.

Conduct of the quantitative stage of the sociological study. A total of 156 activists were surveyed within the quantitative stage, of whom 131 were surveyed using the CAWI³ method and 25 using the CATI method⁴.

The surveyed activists included the following target groups: anti-corruption activists, human rights defenders, and environmental activists – 25 respondents; LGBTIQ+ activists – 22 respondents; members of veteran communities and representatives of the AFU who were activists in civilian life – 27 respondents; activists representing other minorities and vulnerable groups, including older women and men and people living in district centres – 28 respondents; other groups of activists – 54 respondents. The geographical coverage of the quantitative stage included all regions, with the following distribution: West – 16%, Kyiv – 14%, South – 16%, North – 12%, East – 25%, Centre – 12%.

The results of the survey of activists are not representative, but they highlight certain trends across different groups of activists. The findings of this study make it possible to identify the threats faced by activists due to their civic position both in real life and in the online space, as well as the mechanisms for countering them. All findings are based on the assessments and judgements of the surveyed activists and are indicative in nature.

Limitations of the study. The report reflects only those cases that became known and were documented by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in areas under the control of the Ukrainian government. Some incidents may have remained unreported due to the reluctance of affected persons to publicly report pressure, lack of access to information, and difficulties in verification under martial law. However, overall, the study provides a general picture of the environment in which civil society operates in Ukraine.

It is important to note that this report primarily focuses on cases of persecution of civil activists, human rights defenders, volunteers, and attacks on NGOs. Incidents involving journalists and media representatives are included selectively – in cases where they were directly related to the civic activities of the affected persons or had significant public resonance. A separate systematic study on violations of freedom of expression and journalists' rights⁵, as well as on attacks on media by the Russian Federation⁶ is conducted by the Institute of Mass Information.

3 CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) – a survey method conducted via the Internet, in which the respondent independently completes an online questionnaire without the assistance of an interviewer.

4 CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) – a telephone survey conducted with the participation of an interviewer.

5 Institute of Mass Information, Barometer of Freedom of Speech. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/barometr-svobody-slova>

6 Institute of Mass Information, Monitoring of Russian Crimes against Journalists and Media. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/russias-crimes/>

CHAPTER 1.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN UKRAINE IN 2025



RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AS A KEY RISK FACTOR FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

The full-scale aggression of the RF against Ukraine in 2025 remained the main threat to the activities of civil society in Ukraine. Its impact is manifested not only in the form of large-scale hostilities and indiscriminate shelling of Ukraine's territory with missiles and UAVs, affecting the entire civilian population⁷, including representatives of civil society, but also through targeted attacks on activists, journalists, human rights defenders, and volunteers, as well as on the infrastructure of organisations providing humanitarian, human rights, and social assistance.

Documented cases confirm the multifaceted nature of this pressure, which combines indiscriminate shelling of civilians and infrastructure, contract killings and assassination attempts, targeted attacks on volunteers and activists in areas close to the frontline, cyberattacks, and information operations aimed at intimidation, discreditation, and destabilisation of the civil sector.

Overall, 112 documented cases of attacks and persecution of representatives of civil society that occurred in 2025 in areas under the control of the Government of Ukraine, or more than 60% of the total, were related to actions by the RF. 26 of these were killings of civilian volunteers, media workers, activists, and human rights defenders. A further 67 cases of attacks concerned the destruction of or damage to the property of activists, journalists, organisations, or media outlets. Volunteer centres, humanitarian warehouses, animal shelters, media editorial offices, as well as vehicles used for evacuation or the delivery of assistance, came under attack both near the frontline and in relatively rear cities. In a number of cases, journalists and volunteers were subjected to targeted attacks while carrying out their professional or civic duties.

An additional source of threats is the systematic activity of Russian intelligence services on the territory of Ukraine, aimed at the physical elimination, intimidation, or discreditation of active representatives of civil society, as well as the destruction of infrastructure supporting their activities. In particular, in March 2025, civil activist **Demian Ganul** was killed in central Odesa. Ganul was a volunteer, blogger, animal rights and environmental activist, founder and head of the NGO Street Front, and a participant in the Revolution of Dignity and the confrontation in Odesa on 2 May 2014 with pro-Russian forces. In 2014–2016, he headed the security wing of the Right Sector in Odesa.

The circumstances of the crime indicate the involvement of Russian intelligence services in its planning and execution. A few hours after the killing, the police detained the suspect – Serhii Shalaiev, a serviceman who had gone absent without leave, who admitted his guilt in court. In December 2025, the SSU exposed and detained British instructor Ross David Cutmore, who had supplied Shalaiev with firearms and ammunition received from the Russians. Cutmore had travelled to Ukraine to assist in training AFU servicemen. According to the investigation, he was engaged in intelligence and sabotage activities in Ukraine on behalf of Russia.

A similar case is the attempted assassination of civil activist and volunteer **Serhii Sternenko** in May 2025 in Kyiv. Sternenko is the author and host of his eponymous YouTube channel, head of the NGO Nebaiduzhi, co-founder of the CF Sternenko Community, former head of the Odesa regional branch of the Right Sector (2014–2017), and a participant in Euromaidan and the confrontation in Odesa on 2 May 2014 with pro-Russian forces. Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, he has raised significant funds to support the AFU.

⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – December 2025 (United Nations Ukraine). In 2025, the year became the deadliest for civilians since 2022, with at least 2,514 civilians killed and 12,142 injured, representing a 31% increase compared to 2024 and a 70% increase compared to 2023. This trend indicates an intensified impact of the war on the civilian population, particularly due to the increased use of long-range weapons and drones, which are increasingly striking areas far from the frontline. URL: <https://ukraine.un.org/en/308237-protection-civilians-armed-conflict-%E2%80%94-december-2025>



Ukrainian volunteers evacuating animals from the front line. Photo: Serhii Ludenskyi, Head of the NGO Save Animals Ukraine

According to the investigation, the perpetrator of the attempted assassination of Sternenko, Liudmyla Chemerska, a resident of Odesa region, was recruited remotely by representatives of Russian intelligence services. The suspect admitted guilt and is cooperating with the investigation. This case is not isolated – according to representatives of the SSU, it is already the fourth such attempted assassination of Sternenko, indicating the systematic nature of the persecution.

The RF also carries out contract killings on the territory of Ukraine not only of civil activists and volunteers supporting the AFU, but also of political figures. For example, in August 2025, former Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine **Andrii Parubii** was killed in an armed attack in Lviv. Two days later, in Khmelnytskyi region, law enforcement bodies detained the suspect in the killing – Mykhailo Stselnikov, a resident of Lviv, who confessed in court. As in the case of the killing of Demian Ganul, the weapon was supplied to the suspect by David Cutmore, who had been recruited by the RF.

A separate category of attacks by the RF consists of attacks on journalists working in or near the combat zone. For example, in October 2025, French photojournalist **Antony Lallican** was killed as a result of a strike by a Russian FPV drone, while Ukrainian photojournalist **Heorhii Ivanchenko** sustained severe injuries and lost a leg. The attack was targeted in nature, despite the fact that the journalists were clearly identified as media representatives. This case demonstrates Russia's disregard for the norms of international humanitarian law.

In the same month, following a strike by a Russian Lancet UAV on Kramatorsk, FREEDOM TV correspondent **Olena Hubanova** and cameraman **Yevhen Karmazin** were killed. On the day of the attack, the film crew was documenting the aftermath of a previous shelling of the city's central market. According to special correspondent **Oleksandr Kolychev**, who sustained severe injuries, the FREEDOM team did not react to the approaching drone, as they did not expect it to be used against a civilian target. However, he later realised that the Russian side had acted deliberately, as it is not in its interest for Ukrainian independent media to cover developments in frontline communities.

Another journalist, **Tetiana Kulyk**, was killed in her private home in the Kyiv region during an enemy shelling.

Overall, as a result of the actions of the RF, 4 media workers were killed and at least 9 were injured. The highest number of incidents was recorded in frontline areas of Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk regions, while individual cases also occurred in Sumy, Kharkiv, and Kherson regions, as well as in Kyiv.

Among those injured were: **Serhii Horbatenko** (Donbas Realities, Radio Liberty); **Ivan Zakharenko**, **Viktor Lysenko** and **Ibrahim Naber** (Die Welt); **Volodymyr Chepynoha** (Suspilne Kherson); **Maksym Tkachov** (Sumy Channel); **Pavlo Borysko** (TSN).

Regarding attacks on other representatives of civil society, a total of 22 volunteers and activists were killed and 8 were injured as a result of Russian attacks (one of the volunteers was injured twice). The highest number of incidents occurred in Donetsk and Kherson regions, while cases were also

recorded in Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions, Sumy and Odesa regions, Zaporizhzhia, as well as in Kyiv region and the city of Kyiv.

In 2025, the RF killed **Iryna Bairachenko, Vladyslav Horai, Viktoriia Hrebeniuk, Oleksandr Ivakhnenko, Viacheslav Ilchenko, Ilona Kapelnytska, Tetiana Kobryna, Sofiia Kozlova, Anastasiia Kolvakh, Pavlo Matviiets, Yevhen Myrhorodskyi, Nicholas Parsons, Hennadii Omelchenko, Nataliia Osadcha, Olena Polynina, Kyrylo Riabov, Oleh Salnyk, Maksym Starostin, Chris Garrett, Fred Grandy, and Annie Lewis Murphy.**

Injured: **Oleh Dehusarov, Mykola Obelchak, Andrii Pietukhov (twice), Yevhen Tkachov, Kostiantyn Cherniavskyi, Serhii Sternenko, Devon Masser, Edward Scott.**

The impact of Russian aggression also systematically extends to civil society organisations that provide humanitarian, human rights, and social assistance. In 2025, numerous cases of damage to or destruction of their infrastructure as a result of shelling and UAV attacks were documented. In particular, in Sloviansk, the base of the rapid response units of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, which carry out humanitarian missions in the east of the country, was damaged. In Odesa and Kyiv, the offices of the NGOLGBT Association LIGA were damaged as a result of missile strikes, leading to additional financial costs, loss of part of the infrastructure, and temporary disruption of operations. In Sumy, a Russian missile strike destroyed the premises where a mobile consultation point for citizens operated by KHPG had been located, destroying equipment and infrastructure necessary for providing legal aid. As a result of a missile strike on Kyiv, the headquarters of the Veteranka movement – an NGO uniting women with combat experience and working in the field of protection of the rights of women servicemembers and veteran reintegration – was damaged.

Particular attention should be paid to attacks in 2025 on humanitarian initiatives providing support to animals. In Kyiv, a warehouse of the Happy Paw foundation, where food for shelter animals was stored, was severely damaged as a result of shelling. In the Kharkiv region, UAV strikes damaged facilities and harmed animals at Feldman Ecopark, as well as the shelter of the “Animal Rescue Kharkiv” organisation, where infrastructure for animal care was damaged. In Kherson, shelling caused the destruction of the “Kit Behemoth” shelter, the death and injury of animals, and made restoration of the facility effectively impossible due to the ongoing danger. In Kyiv region and Donetsk region, attacks on vehicles and infrastructure of organisations carrying out animal evacuations, including UAnimals, were recorded. In a number of cases, the attacks bore signs of being targeted, despite the presence of humanitarian markings.

In addition to physical attacks, cyberattacks and information operations constitute another source of threats. For example, the hacking of the accounts of Zarema Bariieva, a manager at the Crimean Tatar Resource Centre, carried out by a Russian hacker group, was accompanied by a smear campaign against the organisation in Russian media. Such actions are aimed not only at specific individuals, but also at undermining trust in human rights organisations more broadly, as well as intimidating those who cooperate with them, particularly in the temporarily occupied territories.

The cases described demonstrate that Russian aggression affects civil society not only through direct losses, but also through the systematic destruction of the environment in which it operates. The destruction of infrastructure, attempts on the lives of well-known activists – opinion leaders, drone targeting of unarmed journalists and volunteers, and cyberattacks together form a comprehensive mechanism for weakening the civil sector. As a result, the capacity of organisations and media professionals to document human rights violations and war crimes, provide assistance to victims, and inform their audiences about the current situation is reduced. In the long term, this limits the ability of civil society to fulfil its key role in the context of the Russia–Ukraine war.

INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE ANTI-CORRUPTION SECTOR. CASES INVOLVING MEMBERS OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTION CENTRE

The year 2025 was marked by an increase in systemic pressure on the anti-corruption segment of civil society in Ukraine. Against the backdrop of the war, concentration of power, and increased sensitivity to public criticism, practices aimed at discreditation, intimidation, and restricting the activities of NGOs and activists exposing corruption and monitoring the activities of public authorities intensified.

The situation surrounding anti-corruption activists and organisations was particularly illustrative, including the NGO AntAC and its founder **Vitalii Shabunin**. Throughout the year, information attacks, public smear campaigns, and attempts to call into question the legitimacy and motives of anti-corruption activities were recorded. These actions created an atmosphere of pressure not only on individual activists, but also on the entire sector, which plays a key role in ensuring government accountability.

The case of Vitalii Shabunin as an indicator of a systemic threat

The events of July 2025 marked a turning point in relations between state institutions and the anti-corruption sector. On 13 July 2025, the SBI reported that a notice of suspicion had been served on one of Ukraine's most prominent civil activists, the head of the NGO AntAC, Vitalii Shabunin. He is alleged to have systematically evaded military service and committed fraud.



■ Vitalii Shabunin during a hearing at the Pecherskyi District Court on the application of a preventive measure, 15 July 2025. Photo: ZMINA/Liudmyla Tiahnyriadno

This step attracted significant public attention in light of the context: at the beginning of the full-scale invasion by Russia, Vitalii Shabunin voluntarily joined the AFU. On 11 July 2025, it became known that searches had been conducted at his place of service in Chuhuiv district of the Kharkiv region, as well as at his residence. During the investigative actions, the activist's mobile phone was seized⁸. On 15 July 2025, the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv imposed a preventive measure on Vitalii Shabunin in the form of a personal recognisance, valid until 20 August⁹. According to the court decision, a

⁸ BBC News Ukraine, "Head of the Anti-Corruption Action Centre Vitalii Shabunin Receives Draft Evasion Suspicion: Why It Sparked a Scandal", 13 July 2025. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/cev0knverpno>

⁹ Suspilne, "Personal Obligation – Court Imposes a Preventive Measure on Shabunin", 15 July 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/1067219-sud-obirae-zapobiznij-zahid-aktivistu-sabuninu/>

number of restrictions were imposed on him, including the obligation to appear upon summons by an investigator, judge, or prosecutor, not to leave his place of service, not to visit the premises of the NACP, and to surrender his passport for travel abroad. Such restrictions directly affected not only the activist's personal rights, but also his ability to carry out anti-corruption activities.

A separate episode demonstrating the escalation of pressure and a shift towards interference in the activist's private life was the incident involving the dissemination of his personal photos. On 16 December 2025, Vitalii Shabunin reported that the SBI and the PGO had disseminated his intimate photos from a phone seized during a search via Telegram channels¹⁰. The activist linked this leak to his public criticism of individuals whom AntAC considers to be involved in weakening NABU and SAPO – representatives of the PGO, the SBI, the SSU, as well as judges who issued decisions on the detention of NABU detectives¹¹. The photos were disseminated via the Telegram channel “Zapysky paskvilianta”, linked to blogger Volodymyr Boiko, who had previously initiated criminal proceedings against Shabunin together with lawyer Rostyslav Kravets¹².

The SBI stated that it would conduct an internal inquiry into the possible data leak¹³. At the same time, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, emphasised the inadmissibility of disseminating personal data during an investigation, noting that such actions may violate the Constitution and legislation on privacy protection¹⁴. The head of the parliamentary anti-corruption committee, Anastasiia Radina, suggested possible involvement of the SBI in the leak¹⁵. Tetiana Pechonchuk, Head of the Board of the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, stated on 18 December on Suspilne that criminal proceedings should be initiated in connection with the disclosure of pre-trial investigation data and the violation of the right to privacy.

Civil society response and human rights assessment

The service of a notice of suspicion and investigative actions against the head of AntAC were perceived by a significant part of civil society as part of a broader trend of using criminal law mechanisms to exert pressure on critics of the authorities. On 15 July 2025, human rights and anti-corruption organisations publicly stated that the persecution of Vitalii Shabunin was politically motivated and warned of the risks of using the justice system to restrict the activities of civil activists. ZMINA published a joint statement signed by more than 100 human rights, anti-corruption, and civil society organisations¹⁶.

In an appeal to the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Prosecutor General Ruslan Kravchenko, and Director of the SBI Oleksii Sukhachov, the organisations called for preventing the use of the law enforcement and judicial systems for political reprisals and the persecution of critics of the authorities, and emphasised the inadmissibility of creating a “chilling effect” for the entire civil sector. The statement stressed that such actions may have far-reaching consequences – not only for a particular activist or organisation, but also for the system of democratic governance, as they signal the vulnerability of civil society to abuses of power even in conditions of war.

10 Vitalii Shabunin, Facebook post, 16 December 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10162394152939537&id=678864536

11 Anti-Corruption Action Centre, “Who Is Destroying NABU and SAPO, and by Whose Hands?”. URL: <https://nabudestroyers.antac.org.ua/>

12 Babel, “The State Bureau of Investigation Suspects Anti-Corruption Action Centre Head Vitalii Shabunin of Draft Evasion. The Case Was Initiated and Promoted by Blogger Volodymyr Boiko: What Is Known about It?”, 14 July 2025. URL: <https://babel.ua/texts/119669-dbr-pidozryuye-golovu-pravlinnya-cpk-vitaliya-shabunina-v-uhilenni-vid-sluzhbi-spravu-iniciyuvav-ta-shtovhav-bloger-volodimir-boyko-shcho-pro-neji-vidomo>

13 State Bureau of Investigation, “The SBI Will Thoroughly Verify Information Circulated in the Media regarding the Publication of Private Photos of One of the Parties to Criminal Proceedings”, 17 December 2025. URL: <https://dbr.gov.ua/news/derzhavne-byuro-rozsliduvan-retelno-perevirit-informaciyu-poshirenu-u-media-shhodo-oprilyudnennya-privatnih-fotografij-odnogo-z-figurantiv-kriminalnogo-provadzhennya>

14 Dmytro Lubinets, Facebook post, 17 December 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3755430981431334&id=100008934065016

15 Anastasiia Radina, Facebook post, 17 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/anastasia.krasnosilka/posts/pfbid0w3ufC8ASCYmeiB1kUUFm9poS2j8qCCPCgm1Av9GzoSoXhz932vNUKzCmWim5cCXel>

16 ZMINA, “Stop using the justice system for political reprisals: statement by civil society organisations on the case of Vitalii Shabunin”, 15 July 2025 URL: <https://zmina.ua/statements/prypnyty-vykorystovuvaty-systemu-pravosuddya-dlya-politychnyh-rozprav-zayava-gromadskyh-organizacij-shhodo-spravy-vitaliya-shabunina/>

Expansion of pressure practices targeting representatives of AntAC and their defenders

The developments surrounding the criminal prosecution of Vitalii Shabunin, Head of the Board of AntAC, were not limited to him as a public figure, but took on the features of a broader pressure campaign extending to other members of the organisation, as well as to individuals involved in his legal defence. This indicates the use of indirect instruments of influence aimed at weakening both the organisation itself and its capacity for effective defence.

Particular attention in this context should be paid to the situation surrounding **Olena Shcherban** – a lawyer for Vitalii Shabunin and a member of the Board of AntAC. After she assumed an active role in Shabunin's defence, as well as in providing legal assistance to another figure in high-profile anti-corruption cases – NABU detective Ruslan Mahamedrasulov, signs of professional and reputational pressure against her were recorded.

On 15 August 2025, it became known that attempts had been made to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Olena Shcherban on formal grounds, namely her failure to complete mandatory annual continuing professional development for lawyers. Although this requirement is general in nature and had not been fulfilled by a significant number of lawyers for various reasons over the previous year, several complaints were filed precisely at the time of Olena Shcherban's active involvement in high-profile cases concerning representatives of the anti-corruption sector, potentially leading to restrictions on her professional activity or the revocation of her licence to practise law.

In parallel, a smear campaign was launched against the lawyer across a number of anonymous Telegram channels, which is a typical method of exerting pressure on human rights defenders and lawyers in sensitive political or anti-corruption cases. Such actions created reputational risks and had a chilling effect both on the lawyer herself and on other legal professionals willing to take on the defence of critics of the authorities¹⁷.

A further stage of escalation involved interference in the private life and security of Shcherban's close circle. On 25 September 2025, the SSU conducted a search at the home of Olena Shcherban's brother, **Taras Likunov**, a former NABU detective who at the time was working in the internal security units of Ukrzaliznytsia. The search was carried out within the framework of criminal proceedings that formally had no direct connection to Likunov's activities, raising concerns about the justification and proportionality of such investigative actions.

AntAC publicly stated that there was a discrepancy between the official explanations provided by the law enforcement body and the actual grounds for conducting the searches as set out in the court warrants. This allows the situation to be viewed as part of a broader pressure campaign aimed at discrediting anti-corruption institutions and creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty around individuals associated with AntAC¹⁸.

Overall, the pressure on Olena Shcherban demonstrates a trend of extending persecution from public leaders of civil society to their defenders and family members. Such practices create risks for the exercise of the right to defence, the independence of the legal profession, and the functioning of the anti-corruption sector as a whole.

Another example of pressure on anti-corruption activists in 2025 was the case involving the persecution of the family of AntAC Executive Director **Daria Kaleniuk**. On 1 October 2025, she publicly reported interference in her family's private life and actions directed against her husband, Orest, which she assessed as a form of indirect pressure in response to AntAC's long-standing anti-corruption activities and her public criticism of the authorities¹⁹.

17 ZMINA, "Lawyer of Activist Vitalii Shabunin, Olena Shcherban, Reports Pressure and Attempt to Revoke Her Licence", 15 August 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/advokatka-aktyvista-vitaliya-shabunina-olena-shcherban-zayavila-pro-tysk-i-sprobu-pozbavyty-yiji-advokatskoyi-licenzii/>

18 ZN.UA, "SSU Conducted Searches at a Former NABU Detective Who Led the Artem Shylo Case – AntAC", 25 September 2025. URL: <https://zn.ua/ukr/anticorruption/sbu-provela-obshuki-v-eksdetektiva-nabu-jakij-viv-spravu-artema-shila-tspk.html>

19 Espresso, "They Are Portraying Him as a Draft Dodger": AntAC Co-founder Daria Kaleniuk Claims Government Retaliation for Criticism", 1 October 2025. URL: <https://espresso.tv/suspilstvo-liplyat-z-nogo-ukhilyanta-spivzasnovnitsya-tsentru-protidii-koruptsii-kalenyuk-zayavila-pro-pomstu-vladi-za-kritiku>

According to available information, Daria Kaleniuk's husband had a lawful right to deferment from mobilisation, as the couple are raising a young child with a disability. The relevant documents were duly submitted to the TCR. At the same time, despite compliance with the prescribed procedures and the absence of any formal refusal or explanation from the relevant authorities, Orest's status in the state electronic register of persons liable for military service was changed to one indicating that he was wanted.

Such actions raised doubts as to their lawfulness and proportionality, as well as compliance with the principles of legal certainty and non-discrimination. The context in which these events occurred allows them to be viewed not as an isolated administrative error, but as an instrument of pressure targeting the close circle of a well-known and influential anti-corruption figure.

In addition to administrative decisions directly affecting the rights of a member of the Kaleniuk family, signs of surveillance²⁰, were recorded, creating an atmosphere of insecurity and unpredictability for the family. Such practices are particularly concerning, as they shift the boundaries of confrontation between the authorities and civil society into the private sphere, using family ties as a lever of influence.

An analysis of developments surrounding AntAC indicates that the anti-corruption segment of civil society has become one of the most vulnerable groups to pressure and persecution. This is due to several factors.

First, anti-corruption organisations and activists systematically work on issues that affect the interests of influential political and economic actors, particularly in the areas of public finance, defence procurement, and public administration in wartime. Second, during martial law, the public demand for "unity" is often used as an argument to delegitimise criticism of the authorities, creating a conducive environment for accusations of "undermining state interests". Third, the anti-corruption sector traditionally enjoys a high level of trust among international partners, making it particularly vulnerable to attempts at discreditation or neutralisation. Pressure on such actors may have a "chilling effect" not only on specific organisations, but also on a broader range of civil initiatives engaged in oversight of state activities.

The culmination of this trend was the events of July 2025, when law enforcement bodies launched mass searches of NABU detectives. These actions were perceived by a significant part of civil society as disproportionate and indicative of potential political pressure on independent anti-corruption institutions.

THE CRISIS SURROUNDING THE INDEPENDENCE OF NABU AND SAPO AND THE "CARDBOARD PROTESTS"

Throughout 2025, Ukraine's anti-corruption institutions came under increased pressure from law enforcement bodies, in particular the SSU and the PGO. One of the key instruments of such pressure was a series of large-scale searches targeting NABU staff, as well as persons connected to them – relatives, former colleagues, and individuals involved in high-profile anti-corruption investigations. The largest wave of investigative actions took place in July 2025 and proved to be a direct precursor to the political and societal crisis surrounding the independence of NABU and SAPO.

On 21 July 2025, SSU officers simultaneously conducted more than 80 searches targeting NABU staff within the framework of various criminal proceedings. The searches were carried out both at the detectives' places of residence and at the homes of their relatives, former colleagues, and individuals connected to anti-corruption investigations. According to the official version of law enforcement bodies, the investigative actions concerned suspicions of crimes against national security, illicit enrichment, road traffic offences, as well as possible cooperation of certain individuals with the aggressor state.

²⁰ Daria Kaleniuk, Facebook post, 1 October 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/dkaleniuk/posts/10163850988259188?ref=embed_post

Within the July wave of searches, several NABU staff members were served with notices of suspicion. Two individuals were accused of crimes against national security, while three others were charged with offences related to road traffic accidents that resulted in injuries. Particular attention was paid by the SSU to the case of NABU detective Ruslan Mahamedrasulov, who was suspected of aiding the aggressor state. Alongside him, his father was detained and remanded in custody as an alleged accomplice, as well as detective Viktor Husarov. As a result of these investigative actions, **Ruslan Mahamedrasulov, Viktor Husarov**, and Mahamedrasulov's father, **Sentiabr**, were placed in pre-trial detention. At the end of 2025, the preventive measures imposed on them were mitigated, and all of them were released from custody²¹.

NABU repeatedly stated that a number of searches had been conducted with serious violations of procedural safeguards²². In particular, this included the absence of court warrants in certain cases, the use of physical force against detectives, psychological pressure, degrading treatment, the unlawful seizure of personal mobile phones, and coercion to disclose device access passwords. It was also reported that law enforcement bodies refused to record bodily injuries sustained by detectives who had been subjected to physical force during the searches.

The searches of NABU staff took place against the backdrop of their investigations into a number of high-profile cases, including corruption in Ukrzaliznytsia²³, the energy sector²⁴ and other strategically important industries. NABU and AntAC linked these investigative actions to retaliation for the detectives' active work and to attempts to disrupt or weaken anti-corruption investigations involving high-ranking officials and influential political and business groups.

Representatives of civil society viewed the July searches not as isolated criminal proceedings, but as part of a broader campaign to delegitimise NABU and SAPO, which was later reinforced by legislative attempts to limit their autonomy through the adoption of draft law No. 12414²⁵.

On 22 July 2025, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted draft law No. 12414 with 263 votes in favour. Earlier that day, a meeting of the parliamentary Committee on Law Enforcement was convened in haste, lasted approximately 10 minutes in an online format, and was accompanied by the introduction of key amendments without proper discussion or a comparative table. Despite attempts by certain MPs to block the rostrum and disrupt the vote, the law was adopted at second reading and subsequently signed by the President of Ukraine²⁶.

The draft law provided for a significant expansion of the powers of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine in relation to NABU and SAPO, including the ability to interfere with the jurisdiction of cases, transfer them to other bodies, issue binding written instructions to detectives, obtain full access to investigation materials, close proceedings concerning high-ranking officials, and appoint prosecutors without competitive procedures during martial law. Taken together, these provisions effectively deprived the anti-corruption bodies of their key feature – institutional independence.

Mass protests as a response of civil society

As early as 22 July 2025, the adoption of draft law No. 12414 triggered spontaneous mass protests in Kyiv and a number of other cities across Ukraine. In the capital, around 5,000 people gathered in Ivan Franko Square, calling for the law to be vetoed. Protests also took place in Lviv, Dnipro, Odesa,

21 Ukrainska Pravda, "The Anti-Anti-Corruption Operation: What Is Behind the Searches at NABU", 21 July 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2025/07/21/7522806/>

22 NABU, "Explanation Regarding the Events of 21 July – Official Position of NABU", 21 July 2025. URL: <https://nabu.gov.ua/news/poiasnennia-shchodo-podiyi-21-lypnia-ofitsiynia-pozytycia-nabu/>

23 NABU, "Corruption in the Procurement of Transformers during the War: Case Referred to Court", 9 March 2025. URL: <https://nabu.gov.ua/news/koruptciia-na-zakupivli-transformatoriv-pid-chas-viyiny-skerovano-do-sudu/>

24 NABU, "Corruption in the Energy Sector: Organiser of Transformer Embezzlement Scheme Exposed", 3 June 2025. URL: <https://nabu.gov.ua/news/koruptciia-v-energetyky-vykryto-organizatora-skhemy-rozkradan-na-transformatorakh/>

25 Draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine regarding the Specifics of Pre-Trial Investigation of Criminal Offences Related to Missing Persons under Special Circumstances during Martial Law" No. 12414 of 16 January 2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/55640>

26 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Parliament Adopts Law Restricting the Independence of NABU and SAPO, Bringing Thousands onto the Streets", 22 July 2025. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/parlament-ukhvalyv-zakon-obmezhuje-nezalezhnist-nabu-i-sapo/33480793.html>

Kharkiv, Ternopil, Lutsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Uzhhorod, Rivne, Chernivtsi, Sumy, and Vinnytsia. In Kyiv, the protest continued after the start of the curfew, which was an unprecedented occurrence under martial law²⁷.

On 23 July, the wave of protests intensified: the number of participants in Kyiv rose to around 9,000, in Lviv to 1,500, and in Kharkiv to approximately 1,000. In frontline Sumy, where mass gatherings were restricted for security reasons, activists resorted to alternative forms of protest, leaving cardboard placards with slogans in public spaces and disseminating guidance on safe forms of civic resistance²⁸.



■ Rally in support of the independence of Ukraine's anti-corruption bodies, Kyiv, 23 July 2025. Photo: ZMINA/Oleksandra Yefymenko

The protests continued from 24–30 July 2025, spreading to additional cities and maintaining a steady number of participants. They became the first mass protests against decisions of the parliament and the President since the start of the full-scale aggression of the RF.

Domestic and international response

NABU and SAPO publicly thanked the participants of the protests, emphasising that public support is evidence of trust in anti-corruption institutions²⁹. At the same time, certain officials sought to publicly legitimise the adoption of the law by invoking a “return to the Constitution” or calls for unity³⁰.

At the international level, the adoption of draft law No. 12414 raised concerns on the part of the EU, G7 countries, and the OECD. European Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos emphasised that the

27 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “‘Hands Off NABU and SAPO’: Protests Held in Kyiv, Dnipro, Lviv and Odesa”, 22 July 2025. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-ruky-get-vid-nabu-protest/33481121.html>

28 Hromadske, “Ukrainians in Kyiv and Other Cities Again Took to the Streets to Protest the Law on NABU and SAPO (Photos)”, 23 July 2025. URL: <https://hromadske.ua/kyiv/248534-u-kyievi-liudy-znovu-vyysly-na-aktsiiu-protestu-cherez-zakon-pro-nabu-ta-sap-foto>

29 Ukrainska Pravda, “NABU and SAPO Thank Ukrainians for Their Support during Protests”, 22 July 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/07/22/7522977/>

30 Ukrinform, “Parliament Adopts Law Reducing NABU’s Powers to Restore Constitutional Norms – Maliuk”, 22 July 2025. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/4017792-rada-uhvalila-zakon-pro-zmensenna-povnovazen-nabu-zadla-povremenna-do-norm-konstitucii-maluk.html>; LB.ua, “Amid the NABU and SAPO Scandal, Budanov Urges ‘Wisdom’”, 23 July 2025 URL: https://lb.ua/news/2025/07/23/687830_budanov_tli_skandalu_z_nabu_sap.html

independence of NABU and SAPO is one of the key requirements for Ukraine's accession to the EU³¹. According to diplomatic sources, at the end of July the EU warned the Ukrainian side of the possible suspension of financial assistance if the situation was not remedied.

Under pressure from society and international partners, on 23 July 2025 the President of Ukraine announced the preparation of a new draft law aimed at restoring the independence of anti-corruption bodies. On 31 July 2025, the Verkhovna Rada adopted Law of Ukraine No. 13533³² with 331 votes, and the President promptly signed it³³. The law repealed the key provisions of the previously adopted law, restoring the autonomy of NABU and SAPO, their exclusive jurisdiction, and procedural independence.

“People with cardboard signs” as a new actor of civic resistance

A distinctive feature of the July protests was their composition and format. A key role in mobilising and sustaining the protests was played by young people – a generation for whom this was their first experience of mass civic action. Self-organisation took place without centralised leadership, political parties, or financial support, and the main symbol of the protest became cardboard signs with handwritten, often ironic and sharp slogans. Participants brought handmade cardboard signs with clear, ironic, and politically charged messages in defence of independent anti-corruption bodies, the rule of law, and the right of civil society to exercise oversight over the authorities.

These protests were not focused on individuals or party-based demands. Participants demonstrated rejection of authoritarian practices and manipulation, as well as a high level of sensitivity to breaches of the social contract between the state and citizens.

An important factor in the success of the protests was the ability of civil society to rapidly consolidate: dozens of NGOs agreed on a common position within a short period of time³⁴.

Following the active phase of the protests, an informal movement of “People with cardboard signs” emerged from their core, continuing activities in the protection of anti-corruption institutions and advocacy for justice sector reforms. The events of July 2025 demonstrated the continued presence of a strong democratic potential in Ukraine and the ability of civil society to influence government decisions even in wartime.

Results and implications: an important victory for civil society

The “cardboard protests” became a swift and unexpected victory for civil society. Despite their short duration, they demonstrated a high level of solidarity, an ability to mobilise rapidly, and a clear understanding of the limits of permissible state interference in the work of independent institutions.

The public resonance of the protests, extensive media coverage, and international attention compelled the authorities to respond to societal demands. The events of July 2025 demonstrated that even in wartime, civil society retains the capacity to effectively defend democratic institutions and counter practices of pressure and persecution.

These developments became a key indicator of the state of civil society in 2025. On the one hand, they exposed internal threats related to pressure on anti-corruption activists and independent bodies.

31 European Pravda, “European Commissioner Kos Reacts to Parliament’s Adoption of Controversial Law on NABU and SAPO”, 22 July 2025. URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2025/07/22/7216451/>

32 Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine and Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine regarding the Strengthening of the Powers of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office” No. 13533 of 24 July 2025 URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/56899>

33 Suspilne, “Volodymyr Zelenskyy Signs Law No. 13533 Restoring the Powers of NABU and SAPO, a Presidential Initiative Previously Approved by Parliament the Same Day”, 31 July 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/1080021-zelenskij-pidpisav-zakon-sodo-povnovazen-nabu-i-sapo/>

34 Interfax-Ukraine, “Over 60 Business and Civil Society Associations Call for Repeal of the Law on NABU and SAPO – Joint Statement”, 23 July 2025. URL: <https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/1090049.html>; ZMINA, “Civil Society Calls on Parliament to Restore the Institutional Independence of Anti-Corruption Bodies on 31 July”, 30 July 2025. URL: <https://zmina.ua/statements/gromadskist-zaklykaye-verhovnu-radu-31-lypnya-vidnovyty-instytutczijnju-nezalezhnist-antykorporacijnyh-organiv/>

On the other hand, they demonstrated the strong potential of civil society for self-organisation, solidarity, and the protection of democratic values.

The “cardboard protests” demonstrated that civil society in Ukraine remains an active actor in the political process, capable not only of responding to threats but also of shaping the agenda. This is of key importance for Ukraine’s post-war recovery, strengthening the rule of law, and the country’s further progress towards EU membership.

THE SITUATION REGARDING THE PUBLIC INTEGRITY COUNCIL AND THE VLASENKO TEMPORARY INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION

In 2025, an additional source of tension for civil society was conflicts surrounding mechanisms of public oversight of judicial integrity. Against the backdrop of the ongoing war, the restoration of key judicial governance bodies, and an increase in controversial personnel decisions, public disputes intensified regarding the role of civil society in judicial qualification assessment processes.

Particularly illustrative in this context were the developments surrounding the Public Integrity Council (PIC) – an independent civil society body that assists the High Qualification Commission of Judges (HQCJ) in assessing judges and candidates for compliance with criteria of integrity and professional ethics. The renewal of the PIC’s composition in summer 2025 took place amid intense public debate and mutual criticism among participants in the process³⁵.



■ Serhii Vlasenko, Head of the Temporary Investigative Commission and Member of Parliament, at a commission meeting. Photo: Apparatus of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

This situation was preceded by increased institutional pressure on judicial governance bodies. In spring 2025, the SBI opened a number of criminal proceedings against representatives of the HQCJ³⁶. One of them concerned the actions of an HQCJ member who, within the framework of the qualification assessment procedure of Judge Oksana Tsarevych, sent requests to state registers to collect information on her and her former husband’s assets. Tsarevych, known as a “Maidan judge”,

35 Ukrainska Pravda, “The Agency of the Public Integrity Council: Between De Jure and De Facto”, 6 August 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2025/08/06/7524968/>

36 High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine, “Statement on Investigative Actions of the SBI”, 14 March 2025. URL: <https://vkksu.gov.ua/news/zayava-vyshchoyi-kvalifikacynoyi-komisiyi-suddiv-ukrayiny-shchodo-slidchyh-diy-derzhavnogo>

considered these actions unlawful and filed a complaint with the SBI, alleging that the HQCJ had exceeded its powers. Her complaint served as grounds for criminal proceedings against the Deputy Chair of the HQCJ, Oleksii Omelian, as well as searches at the HQCJ and interrogations of its members. During the investigative actions, materials not directly related to the subject of the investigation were seized from HQCJ members, effectively paralysing the Commission's work. The Public Integrity Council then publicly supported the HQCJ³⁷, viewing the situation as an attempt to exert pressure on the body responsible for judicial qualification assessment.

Further escalation was triggered by the establishment in June of a parliamentary Temporary Investigative Commission on the investigation of possible corruption-related offences in law enforcement bodies, courts, and the judiciary, chaired by MP Serhii Vlasenko, a member of the Batkivshchyna faction³⁸. Although formally the mandate of this TIC was limited to issues of corruption in the courts and law enforcement system, the commission began summoning HQCJ members for questioning regarding judicial assessment procedures, and later also representatives of the PIC. At the same time, communication by representatives of the TIC was confrontational and humiliating in tone, raising concerns among the public and human rights defenders³⁹.

Renewal of the PIC composition: internal disagreements and public criticism

Amid institutional tensions and public attacks on judicial reform bodies, a meeting of civil society organisations was held on 4 August 2025, at which a new composition of the Public Integrity Council was elected⁴⁰.

The formation of the new composition took place amid disputes over the candidate selection procedure, evaluation criteria, and the activities of organisations involved in the organisational support of the selection process. Members of the third composition of the PIC – Oleksandr Voloshyn, Olha Piskunova, Tetiana Katrychenko, and Liudmyla Yankina – wrote an op-ed for *Ukrainska Pravda*, in which they criticised the NGO DEJURE Foundation for its role in the organisational and financial support of the PIC's activities⁴¹. In particular, they stated that there were delays in establishing the secretariat and a lack of analytical and administrative support from DEJURE, as a result of which, in their view, a significant part of the workload fell directly on Council members.

In their article "The Agency of the Public Integrity Council: Between De Jure and De Facto", they also addressed disagreements during discussions on the funding model and the autonomy of the PIC secretariat. The authors of the op-ed critically assessed the role of the head of the DEJURE Foundation, Mykhailo Zhernakov, in these processes, in particular his involvement in communication with donors. It was also noted that at the beginning of 2025, the administration of the US President suspended funding for all international technical assistance projects, which directly affected the donor that at the time supported the work of the PIC. The conditions for further cooperation proposed at that time by Mykhailo Zhernakov were also criticised by the authors of the article.

In addition, the article addressed the preparation of elections for the fourth composition of the PIC. According to the authors, "preferred" and "non-preferred" candidates were discussed ahead of the meeting, and voting recommendations were circulated. As a result, three candidates – Oleksandr Voloshyn, Tetiana Katrychenko, and Kostiantyn Smolov – withdrew their candidacies, citing a lack of trust in the procedure and the absence of proper discussion of concerns during the meeting.

37 Public Integrity Council, Facebook post, 15 March 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/public.integrity.council/posts/pfbid0KGyXwtUR3A7Dcy44xqdEPdeC3aeuAduYaeqdXUFZCDkRReoMvuT7EAUZYGuE8DLI>

38 Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On the Establishment of a Temporary Investigative Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Investigating Possible Facts of Corruption or Corruption-Related Offences in Law Enforcement Bodies, Courts and the Judiciary" of 19 June 2025. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4511-20#Text>

39 Interview with lawyer Olha Veretilnyk, member of the third and fourth convocations of the Public Integrity Council, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 4 November 2025.

40 ZMINA, "Human Rights Defenders, Media Professionals and Lawyers: Who Joined the New Composition of the Public Integrity Council?", 4 August 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/pravozakhysnyky-mediynyky-ta-yurysty-khto-uvyishov-do-novoho-skladu-hromadskoyi-rady-dobrochesnosti/>

41 *Ukrainska Pravda*, "The Agency of the Public Integrity Council: Between De Jure and De Facto", 6 August 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2025/08/06/7524968/>

The DEJURE Foundation presented its version of events in the article “Support, even when it’s difficult: DEJURE’s response to allegations and challenges in the work of the Public Integrity Council”⁴². The article identified disagreements over the administration and funding model of the PIC as the cause of the conflict: some Council members supported the idea of direct donor funding, while DEJURE considered it unrealistic due to international procedures.

DEJURE also noted that from the outset the Foundation had proposed expanding the composition of the PIC secretariat and involving additional experts; however, some of these decisions could not be implemented due to the position of the Council itself and difficulties in finding qualified candidates. In addition, the formation of the secretariat was affected by external factors, such as the suspension of US funding at the beginning of 2025.

The article noted that during the elections to the fourth composition of the PIC, some candidates, in particular Oleksandr Voloshyn and Tetiana Katrychenko, withdrew their candidacies, citing bias in the voting process and the existence of pre-agreed lists. Representatives of civil society organisations urged them to wait until the completion of the vote in order to verify the validity of these concerns, but the candidates did not change their decision. Meanwhile, the DEJURE candidate, who had been predicted to win, did not receive the required number of votes and did not enter the fourth composition.

The publication by members of the third composition of the Public Integrity Council served as a basis for further analysis of the PIC’s activities by the Vlasenko Temporary Investigative Commission, and later for summoning Council members for questioning.

Attempt to delegitimise the PIC through an expert group opinion of the TIC

On 31 October 2025, the expert group under the TIC prepared an opinion stating that the Public Integrity Council allegedly “operates outside the legal framework”, lacks proper legal status and accountability mechanisms, while at the same time exerting influence on judicial evaluation procedures. According to the head of the expert group, Ihor Fomin, such a model of civil society participation creates corruption risks and may pose a threat to the independence of the judiciary. The draft document was submitted to the TIC, and the main findings of the report were published in the “Law and Business” outlet⁴³.

The Public Integrity Council publicly rejected these allegations, stressing that the PIC has been operating since 2016 on the basis of Article 87 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges”⁴⁴, which directly defines its tasks, powers, and role in the judicial qualification assessment system. The statement noted⁴⁵, that the PIC’s activities constitute a form of public oversight over the selection and cleansing of the judiciary, and that the procedure for forming its composition and its lack of legal entity status were established in legislation at the very beginning of the judicial reform. Only representatives of civil society organisations that meet legal requirements and undergo additional vetting may become members of the Public Integrity Council. The PIC concluded that the expert group’s assessments create a risk of using criticism as an instrument of pressure and as a basis for narrowing the Council’s powers.

Questioning of PIC representatives: a shift from criticism to procedural pressure

On 4 November 2025, the Temporary Investigative Commission held a session during which it summoned and questioned members of the third composition of the Public Integrity Council –

42 Ukrainska Pravda, “To Support, Even When It Is Difficult: DEJURE’s Response to Allegations and Challenges in the Work of the Public Integrity Council”, 7 August 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2025/08/07/7525155/>

43 Law and Business, “Expert Group under the TIC Issues Opinion on the Legal Status of the Public Integrity Council”, 31 October 2025. URL: <https://zib.com.ua/ua/169519.html>

44 Law of Ukraine “On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges” No. 4433-IX of 4 June 2025. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1402-19#Text>

45 Public Integrity Council, Facebook post, 3 November 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/public.integrity.council/posts/pfbid02zUBazS2DTToMu9d4viW79rkw6wFmCmL2mh7C9mrCrd2bu5RNkqGEC0NYYdyuHCl>

Olha Piskunova, Tetiana Katrychenko, and Liudmyla Yankina. Formally, the basis for the summons was their op-ed in *Ukrainska Pravda*, in which the activities of the PIC were assessed⁴⁶.

During the session, representatives of the TIC repeatedly demanded that former members of the PIC explain the sources of the information presented in the article and provide details regarding the prior formation of candidate lists and the role of the DEJURE Foundation in organising the selection process. Some of the questions were confrontational in nature and effectively amounted to attempts to interpret the authors' public statements as possible indications of corrupt activities.

At the beginning of her statement, Tetiana Katrychenko said that she viewed her summons to the TIC as an attempt at political pressure and exercised her right not to provide substantive explanations, referring to constitutional guarantees. Olha Piskunova and Liudmyla Yankina emphasised that the op-ed contained subjective assessments and assumptions, and that all information known to them had already been set out in the article. Following the session, members of the TIC stated their intention to continue examining the situation.

On 18 November, officers of the National Police arrived at the residence of the head of the DEJURE Foundation, Mykhailo Zhernakov, in Kyiv with the aim of forcibly bringing him to a session of the Verkhovna Rada Temporary Investigative Commission. The law enforcement officers stated that the basis for these actions was an appeal by the head of the TIC, Serhii Vlasenko, requesting compulsory appearance due to Zhernakov's failure to attend previous sessions⁴⁷. Information about the police visit was first made public by Mykhailo Zhernakov himself on social media⁴⁸; later, the DEJURE Foundation also reported that law enforcement officers had arrived at the organisation's office.

Mykhailo Zhernakov stated that he considered the actions of the TIC unlawful, emphasising that the Commission's mandate does not extend to the activities of civil society organisations. He also reported that he had informed the TIC in advance about his inability to attend the 18 November session and expressed his willingness to appear at a future session provided that it is public and transparent.

The Temporary Investigative Commission questioned Zhernakov during its session on 9 December. Serhii Vlasenko and other members of the TIC made a number of allegations against Zhernakov and the DEJURE Foundation, including alleged pressure on members of the third composition of the PIC, misuse of international technical assistance funds, and influence over the formation and activities of the fourth composition of the PIC. A significant part of the questions concerned the funding of the Foundation's activities, DEJURE's involvement in forming the PIC secretariat, and the remuneration of individual experts⁴⁹.

Mykhailo Zhernakov rejected the allegations, emphasising that the activities of the PIC and the procedure for its formation are regulated by law, and that the participation of civil society organisations in the process is open and public. He also noted that the projects were funded through international technical assistance and that this information has been publicly available for several years⁵⁰.

46 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "Temporary Investigative Commission Examines Possible Corruption in the Formation, Financing and Operation of the Public Integrity Council (Meeting of 4 November 2025)", 4 November 2025. URL: https://www.rada.gov.ua/documents/tskVRU/tsk_antikor/video_tsk_antikor/267882.html; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "Temporary Investigative Commission Meeting. Members of the Third Composition of the Public Integrity Council Provide Explanations", 4 November 2025. URL: https://www.rada.gov.ua/documents/tskVRU/tsk_antikor/video_tsk_antikor/267882.html

47 Suspilne, "Police Attempted to Bring DEJURE Head Mykhailo Zhernakov to a TIC Meeting in Parliament", 18 November 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/1167542-policia-namagalasa-dostaviti-golovu-dejure-zernakova-na-zasidanna-tsk-u-radi/>

48 Mykhailo Zhernakov, Facebook post, 18 November 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/mzhernakov/posts/pfbid02yCpkChciMz zGMuBFG3FiVTbHjMxcoqYkKjVu427g83n443CP5qkYotohAx85WKE3l>

49 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "On 9 December 2025, the Temporary Investigative Commission Held a Meeting at Which DEJURE Executive Director Mykhailo Zhernakov Provided Explanations and Answered Questions from Commission Members", 9 December 2025. URL: https://www.rada.gov.ua/documents/tskVRU/tsk_antikor/news_tsk_antikor/268857.html

50 ZMINA, "DEJURE Head Mykhailo Zhernakov Heard at TIC Meeting", 9 December 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/golovu-fundacziyi-dejure-myhajla-zhernakova-zaslulya-na-tsk/>

Civil society response: demand to terminate the mandate of the TIC

On 17 December 2025, it became known⁵¹, that the Verkhovna Rada planned to consider⁵² the report on the results of the work of the Temporary Investigative Commission on the investigation of possible corruption-related offences in law enforcement bodies, courts, and the judiciary. The TIC report contained critical assessments of the activities of NABU and SAPO, while the work of the SBI was assessed positively. The draft document also included criticism of the HCJ, the HQCJ, and the Public Integrity Council⁵³. However, the draft resolution on the TIC report was withdrawn from consideration due to a lack of votes.

In response, civil society organisations publicly appealed to the Verkhovna Rada calling for the termination of the mandate of the Vlasenko TIC. The DEJURE Foundation published a joint statement signed by nine other human rights, anti-corruption, and civil society organisations. The statement emphasised that, despite its declared purpose, the activities of the TIC pose a risk to the independence of anti-corruption bodies and judicial governance institutions. Among the main concerns was that the Commission exceeded its parliamentary mandate, in particular by examining the activities of the High Council of Justice, the High Qualification Commission of Judges, and the Public Integrity Council, attempting to impose compulsory appearance on an HQCJ member, and establishing an expert group not provided for by law and without defined accountability mechanisms⁵⁴.

It was also emphasised that NABU⁵⁵, SAPO⁵⁶, the High Anti-Corruption Court⁵⁷, the HCJ⁵⁸ and the HQCJ had previously publicly stated that the TIC had exceeded its mandate⁵⁹. In addition, the European Commission, in its 2025 report, warned against TIC actions that could undermine trust in anti-corruption institutions and contradict the principle of separation of powers⁶⁰.

TRENDS IN LGBTIQ+ ACTIVISM

In 2025, LGBTIQ+ activism in Ukraine operated in a complex and contradictory environment. On the one hand, the visibility and public support of the LGBTIQ+ community increased; on the other hand, systemic security risks remained, including pressure from radical groups. Despite the war and overall instability, civil society organisations continued their advocacy, human rights, and educational activities, remaining important actors in promoting the equality agenda.

Throughout the year, there was a continued trend of targeting LGBTIQ+ activism as a form of public activity. Human rights events, educational activities, public demonstrations, and organisational infrastructure came under pressure. In particular, in March 2025 in Lviv, the NGOs Bilkis, Kohorta, and

51 Mykhailo Zhernakov, Facebook post, 17 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/mzhernakov/posts/pfbid02E8Ys8eFGj1z7GYU8swVssKQjB8eicpP6ZA5r2ybmt7PhZzsR7RZgmCMrg3XnXW8dl>

52 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Telegram post, 17 December 2025. URL: <https://t.me/verkhovnaradaukrainy/86367>

53 Draft Resolution "On the Report of the Temporary Investigative Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Investigating Possible Facts of Corruption or Corruption-Related Offences in Law Enforcement Bodies, Courts and the Judiciary on the Work Performed" No. 14299 of 15 December 2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/59353>

54 ZMINA, "Civil Society Organisations Call for the Termination of the Activities of the TIC Led by Vlasenko and Buzhanskyi", 14 January 2026. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/gromadski-organizaciyi-zaklykaly-prypynyty-diyalnist-tsk-pid-kerivnyctvom-vlasenka-i-buzhanskogo/>

55 BBC News Ukraine, "NABU Director Kryvonos on Defence Sector Investigations and Pressure on Detectives: BBC Interview", 3 August 2025. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/cvg48vn9vy0o>

56 ZN.UA, "SAPO Head Oleksandr Klymenko: "Following Kaufman's Plea Agreement, Odesa Airport Was Returned to the Community", 7 August 2025. URL: <https://zn.ua/ukr/POLITICS/kerivnik-sap-oleksandr-klimenko-pislja-uhodi-kaufmana-zi-slidstvom-odeskij-aeroport-povernuto-hromadi.html>

57 ZN.UA, "TIC Led by Vlasenko Pressures HACC by Requesting Information Beyond Its Competence – Document", 22 September 2025. URL: <https://zn.ua/ukr/anticorruption/tsk-na-choli-z-vlasenkom-tisne-na-vaks-zapitujuchi-informatsiju-shcho-ne-nalezhit-do-jiji-kompetentsiji-dokument.html>

58 High Council of Justice, Decision No. 2619/0/15-25 of 9 December 2025. URL: <https://hcj.gov.ua/doc/doc/56239>

59 High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine, Decision No. 192/zp-25 of 27 October 2025. URL: <https://www.vksu.gov.ua/doc/pro-zvernennya-do-vyshchoyi-rady-pravosuddya-pro-vzhyttya-zahodiv-shchodo-zabezpechennya-0>

60 Ukraine Report 2025 / An official website of the European Union, 4 November 2025. URL: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/ukraine-report-2025_en

Resistance were forced to cancel the city's first Transgender Day of Visibility⁶¹ event due to threats and incitement to violence after information about the event was circulated in far-right groups. In June, a KyivPride event in Kyiv was postponed due to security threats and pressure, including from the police, which made it impossible to hold the event at the planned venue⁶². In August in Ivano-Frankivsk, a group of unknown individuals attempted to disrupt the opening of the Insight organisation's community centre⁶³, using intimidation and psychological pressure; subsequently, the centre was subjected to repeated acts of vandalism in the form of homophobic stickers.



■ KyivPride Equality March, Kyiv, 14 June 2025. Photo: Instagram KyivPride

These cases reflect a broader trend: LGBTIQ+ organisations, as well as cultural spaces working with queer themes, remained under targeting by far-right and conservative groups. The main forms of pressure included attempts to disrupt events, online harassment, smear campaigns, and physical intimidation of participants and organisers. Although law enforcement agencies in most cases provided security for mass events, the effectiveness of response to incidents remained limited: investigations into hate crimes did not result in holding perpetrators accountable, creating an atmosphere of impunity.

Legislative initiatives and parliamentary stagnation

The legislative environment remained unfavourable for the development of LGBTIQ+ activism. Despite active advocacy by civil society organisations and support from international partners, no key legislative changes in the field of LGBTIQ+ rights were adopted in 2025. Draft laws on the introduction

61 ZMINA, "A Rally in Lviv Planned for Transgender Day of Visibility at the End of March Was Cancelled Due to Pressure", 9 April 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/naprykinczi-bereznya-u-lvovi-mala-vidbutysya-akcziya-do-dnya-vydymosti-transgendernyh-lyudej-yiyi-skasuvaty-cherez-tysk/>

62 ZMINA, "'KyivPride' on Threats to Disrupt the Event: Police Warn Organisers of a 'Potential Terrorist Attack'", 6 June 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/kyivprajd-pro-pogrozy-zryvu-zahodu-policziya-lyakaye-organizatoriv-potencziynym-teraktom/>

63 ZMINA, "Attempt to Disrupt the Opening of an LGBT+ Community Centre in Ivano-Frankivsk", 17 August 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/na-donechchyni-z-mista-druzhkivka-ta-pryleglyh-sil-ogolosyly-obovyazkovu-evakuacziyu/>

of registered civil partnerships for same-sex couples – Nos. 9103⁶⁴ and 12252⁶⁵, initiated by MP Inna Sovsun – remained stalled.

A similar situation developed in relation to legislation on hate crimes. In July 2025, the Verkhovna Rada withdrew from consideration draft law No. 5488⁶⁶, which provided for the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the list of protected characteristics in criminal and administrative legislation. Instead, on 4 August 2025, a new draft law No. 13597⁶⁷, was registered, which is an updated version of the previous one and aims to strengthen liability for crimes motivated by intolerance. The document was prepared with the involvement of the MIA and through advocacy by civil society organisations, including the NGO Gender Stream; however, as of the end of the year, it had also not been adopted.

The European Commission, in its 2025 EU Enlargement Report, explicitly pointed to the slowdown of the legislative process in this area, despite relevant commitments being enshrined in the rule of law roadmap⁶⁸. As noted by advocacy expert Andrii Kravchuk of the NGO Nash Svit Centre, the government formally recognises these commitments; however, their implementation is blocked by a lack of political will in parliament.

Rights violations and hate-motivated crimes

According to the human rights organisation Nash Svit Centre, in 2025 a total of 60 cases of violations of LGBTIQ+ rights were documented in Ukraine, related to discrimination, hate speech, and violence. Almost half (25) of these incidents took place in Kyiv. The largest share consisted of acts motivated by homophobia and transphobia committed by individuals or organised groups, with at least 23 cases showing signs of hate crimes.

Despite a decrease in the number of recorded cases of physical violence compared to 2024, the trend of attacks on LGBTIQ+ organisations, events, and businesses that publicly support equality persisted. In particular, organisations such as KyivPride, KharkivPride, Insight, as well as cultural spaces working with queer themes, remained under targeting by far-right and conservative groups.

According to human rights defenders, law enforcement agencies generally provided security for large-scale public LGBTIQ+ events. At the same time, investigations into crimes motivated by intolerance remained ineffective: according to the Nash Svit LGBT Human Rights Centre, in 2025 none of such cases were brought to court. A separate issue was violations by the police, including inadequate response to victims' complaints and discriminatory attitudes⁶⁹.

Changes in public attitudes

At the same time, sociological data indicate a gradual increase in public support, creating a more favourable environment for activists' work. KIIS survey data collected at the request of the Nash Svit Centre in autumn 2025 showed an improvement in Ukrainian public attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people. The share of citizens with generally positive attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people increased compared

64 Draft Law of Ukraine "On the Institution of Registered Partnerships" No. 9103 of 13 March 2023. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/41497>

65 Draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine to Bring Them into Compliance with Articles 8 and 14 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) and Council Regulation (EU) 2016/1104 on Implementing Enhanced Cooperation in the Area of Jurisdiction, Applicable Law and the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions in Matters of the Property Consequences of Registered Partnerships" No. 12252 of 27 November 2024. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45293>

66 Draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code of Ukraine on Combating Discrimination" No. 5488 of 13 May 2021. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/26573>

67 Draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code of Ukraine on Combating Discrimination" No. 13597 of 4 August 2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/56933>

68 European Pravda, "The EU Assessed Not Only Reforms: Why the 2025 Enlargement Report Was Successful for Ukraine", 5 November 2025. URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2025/11/5/7224126/>

69 LGBT Human Rights NASH SVIT Center, "The Situation of LGBTIQ+ People in Ukraine in January–September 2025", 8 December 2025. URL: <https://gay.org.ua/blog/2025/12/01/stanovyshche-lgbtq-v-ukraini-u-sichni-veresni-2025-roku/>
LGBT Human Rights NASH SVIT Center, "Holding the Line: The Situation of LGBTIQ+ People in Ukraine in 2025", 8 February 2026. URL: https://gay.org.ua/blog/2026/02/08/trymaiuchy-strii-stanovyshche-lgbtq-v-ukraini-u-2025-rotsi/#6_Nasilstvo_diskriminacia_ta_insi_porusenna_prav_LGBTK

to the previous year, and support for equal rights reached over 70% and remained consistently high across all socio-demographic groups. Support for LGBTIQ+ people's participation in defending Ukraine against Russian aggression also remained high, which is an important indicator of societal solidarity in wartime conditions. At the same time, the issue of legal recognition of same-sex partnerships remained polarised, without a clear societal consensus⁷⁰.

Conclusions and the role of civil society

The events of 2025 demonstrated that civil society remains a key driver of change in the field of protecting LGBTIQ+ rights in Ukraine. Human rights organisations not only documented violations and provided assistance to victims, but also shaped the agenda for EU integration dialogue, advocated for legislative changes, and ensured international visibility of the issue.

At the same time, the gap between public attitudes, Ukraine's international commitments, and actual legislative practice undermines civil society's trust in state institutions. In the context of war and post-war recovery, ignoring the rights of groups vulnerable to discrimination not only contradicts European standards but also weakens social cohesion, which is critical for the resilience of the state.

ONLINE HARASSMENT AND PERSECUTION OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS: GENDER-BASED PRESSURE AS A THREAT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In 2025, online harassment and persecution of women journalists remained one of the systemic threats to freedom of expression in Ukraine. Gender-based online violence is increasingly used as a tool of pressure, intimidation, and discrediting of women working in the media, particularly those covering sensitive socio-political topics, corruption, war, and human rights violations. This does not refer only to isolated cases of aggressive comments or insults, but to mass and repeated patterns of harassment, including misogynistic and sexist language, reputational attacks, dissemination of disinformation, threats of physical and sexual violence, doxxing,⁷¹ and cyberstalking⁷².

In some cases, pressure in the digital space extended beyond it and created real threats to physical safety. This trend was documented, in particular, by a study conducted by the NGO Women in Media, published in April 2025, in which 180 women journalists, editors, and media managers from different regions of Ukraine participated⁷³.

According to the survey results, 81% of women journalists reported experiencing some form of online violence. This indicates not isolated incidents, but a large-scale and systemic problem affecting the majority of women in the profession. At the same time, online attacks were most often directed both at an individual journalist and at the media outlet she works for, which amplified their reputational and psychological impact.

The most common forms of online violence were misogynistic and sexist language, including the use of derogatory terms, as well as defamation aimed at undermining the professional reputation of women journalists. In addition, respondents reported gender-based forms of pressure, including trolling (32%), dissemination of disinformation (27%), cyberstalking (22%), doxxing (18%), threats of

70 Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), "Public Perceptions of LGBTIQ+ People and Their Rights in Ukraine", 8 December 2025. URL: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=news&id=1568&page=1>

71 Doxxing is the collection and publication of an individual's private information (such as addresses or phone numbers) without their consent for the purpose of harassment or blackmail.

72 Cyberstalking is prolonged online harassment that includes threats, persistent messaging and the use of GPS trackers, often employed to exert psychological pressure.

73 NGO Women in Media, "Her Voice as a Target: Gender-Based Online Violence against Ukrainian Women Journalists", 4 April 2025. URL: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/study-online-violence/>

sexual violence (16%), impersonation and account hacking (14%), attacks on family members (14%), and image manipulation (12%). Some women journalists also reported experiencing sextortion and revenge pornography (6%).

In most cases, the attacks lasted from several days to one week; however, long-term online violence – lasting from one month to over a year – was also a widespread pattern. According to women respondents, the intensity of attacks increased depending on the sensitivity of the topics they covered, as well as their level of public recognition and activity on social media. The more visible journalism becomes, the higher the risk of systemic online harassment.

The consequences of such attacks have a serious impact both on women journalists themselves and on the media environment as a whole. The most common consequence was a deterioration in psychological and mental health, as reported by the majority of respondents. The second most frequent consequence was reduced work capacity, and the third was self-censorship on certain topics.

Notably, even among those who had actually experienced online violence, only 64% clearly identified this experience as violence. This indicates the normalisation of aggression in the digital space and insufficient awareness of gender-based forms of harassment. At the same time, 14% of women respondents reported that threats from the online space later escalated into the physical realm, significantly increasing the level of risk to their safety.

Appeals for assistance to law enforcement bodies remain rare. Only 19% of women journalists who experienced online violence reported it to the police or other competent authorities. According to women respondents, in most such cases there was no effective investigation or holding of perpetrators accountable. A lack of trust in the law enforcement system, fear of secondary victimisation, and concerns about further pressure discourage women journalists from seeking protection.

In this context, solidarity within the professional community remains a key resource. Most often, women journalists reported online violence to their colleagues, relying on support within the media community. At the same time, they emphasised the need for accessible legal and psychological support, as well as awareness-raising programmes on forms of online violence and mechanisms for countering it.

Another source confirming the systemic nature of gender-based pressure and online harassment of women media workers is the analytical report “Women in Media and Activism: Challenges, Risks and Opportunities in Wartime”, prepared by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in November 2025⁷⁴. The study combined an online survey, in-depth interviews, and systematic documentation of cases of harassment. The online survey covered 122 women respondents from 20 regions of Ukraine, and 31 in-depth interviews were conducted.

The data obtained indicate a wide range of forms of pressure applied against women journalists, activists, and human rights defenders. These include intimidation, psychological pressure, dissemination of false information, attempts at discreditation, insults and harassment, physical attacks, property damage, and legal persecution. At the same time, a key trend is the rapid rise of digital threats: online threats (often from anonymous or fake accounts), fabricated publications, forged messages, and other forms of remote pressure. Online intimidation and threats on social media were identified as the most common tool by 80% of women respondents. Discreditation in the media and professional circles ranked second – 75% of women respondents. 73% of respondents reported experiencing gender discrimination, indicating the deep-rooted nature of gender bias in the environment in which women work.

The gender-specific nature of harassment is reflected in attacks targeting the person rather than solely professional activity. In many cases, these are accompanied by sexist remarks, humiliation based on appearance or private life, as well as the imposition of stereotypes about women's

74 ZMINA, “Analytical Report “Women in media and activism: challenges, risks and opportunities in wartime”. URL: <https://zmina.ua/publication/analitichnyj-zvit-zhinky-v-media-ta-aktyvizmi-vyklyky-ryzyky-ta-mozhlyvosti-v-umovah-vijny/>

“incompetence” or “emotionality”. Every second case of harassment includes an attempt to discredit a woman specifically on the basis of gender. Among the 46 women respondents who directly experienced harassment, the most frequently recorded forms were online threats (25 cases), discreditation (24), and gender discrimination (22), while 12 reported the use of legal pressure mechanisms, including lawsuits and criminal proceedings.

Social media, which is a key tool in the professional activities of women journalists and activists, are increasingly turning into a space of systemic violence. Among those affected by online harassment, 36 out of 46 women respondents reported experiencing humiliating comments about themselves and their work. In addition, 20% reported the dissemination of false information, 18% reported trolling and manipulation in online discussions, and 16% reported the systematic spread of rumours and offensive messages through digital channels. Thus, the digital space functions not only as a communication channel but also as a key tool for reputational and psychological pressure.

Notably, effective mechanisms for countering such attacks remain limited. Only one in five victims (9 out of 46) sought assistance from digital security specialists and was able to fully eliminate the threat. At the same time, the majority (31 women respondents) noted that even after consultations the problem was not resolved. Women respondents also emphasised the lack of effective institutional protection mechanisms: current legislation has significant gaps, and mechanisms for punishing hate speech and online violence are ineffective. This creates a persistent sense of insecurity and forces women to operate in conditions of constant risk.

Thus, the research findings confirm that gender-based online violence and harassment are not isolated phenomena but a systemic problem affecting various groups of women in civil society and the media. They also show that the digital space has become one of the key environments where such pressure is exerted, while existing institutional tools do not provide an adequate level of protection, thereby increasing the vulnerability of women journalists.

The lack of a systemic response from the state and of effective protection mechanisms effectively turns online violence into a tool of indirect censorship, the consequences of which extend far beyond individual incidents and have a long-term negative impact on the quality of public discourse, journalistic standards, and democratic processes more broadly.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM UNDER PRESSURE: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AS A HIGH-RISK ACTIVITY

In 2025, environmental activism in Ukraine was also accompanied by pressure, persecution, and intimidation campaigns against those who publicly opposed environmentally harmful infrastructure projects.

Pressure on women activists from Zakarpattia

A notable case concerns women activists from Zakarpattia, where biologist and researcher **Oksana Stankevych-Volosianchuk**, investigative journalist **Olena Mudra**, and civil activist **Nataliia Vyshnevskya** faced pressure due to their activities aimed at protecting the Carpathians from development by industrial wind power plants.

Although such projects are publicly presented as part of “green” energy, their implementation in the high-mountain areas of the Carpathians is accompanied by interference in protected areas, deforestation, road construction, soil concreting, and the use of heavy machinery. This creates threats to ecosystems, water resources, and biodiversity, and may also breach Ukraine’s international environmental obligations.



■ Oksana Stankevych-Volosianchuk, Olena Mudra, Nataliia Vyshnevskia. Collage: ZMINA

Oksana Stankevych-Volosianchuk, a biologist, associate professor at Uzhhorod National University, and co-founder of the NGO Ecosphere, has for many years been engaged in activities related to the protection of Carpathian nature. In 2024–2025, she criticised wind power plant construction projects in the highlands, in particular on Polonyna Runa and other mountain ridges that have protected status and are part of the Emerald Network.

Stankevych-Volosianchuk's position is not one of opposing renewable energy, but rather of insisting on compliance with environmental legislation and preventing industrial development in protected areas. It was this expert and public work that became the basis for pressure – Stankevych-Volosianchuk and the NGO she leads faced digital attacks, including attempts to hack personal social media accounts and DDoS attacks on the Ecosphere NGO website, which led to a temporary shutdown of the platform. Subsequently, a series of anonymous or pseudo-media publications appeared online aimed at discrediting Oksana Stankevych-Volosianchuk as a scientist and civil activist. These publications contained false allegations of cooperation with Russian structures, manipulations regarding her scientific work, and fabricated political connections. Some of the materials appealed to social stereotypes and used homophobic narratives as an additional means of pressure and discrediting.

The journalist Olena Mudra, who works in Zakarpattia and specialises in investigations of environmental crimes, began systematically covering the issue of wind farm development in the Carpathians in early 2024. Her reporting was based on analysis of documents, decisions of public authorities, and documented violations of environmental legislation.

In response to these publications, lawsuits seeking financial compensation were filed against Olena Mudra and the affiliated NGO KOD 21. At the same time, the journalist became the target of information attacks: on several websites without publication details, she was accused of having pro-Russian links, being part of a “syndicate of pseudo-environmentalists”, and undermining Ukraine's energy independence. These materials used manipulative visual elements, offensive language, and the publication of personal data.

Olena Mudra filed complaints with law enforcement authorities regarding obstruction of journalistic activity and interference in her private life. However, the discreditation campaign against her continued, indicating the low effectiveness of existing mechanisms for protecting journalists.

The most alarming case concerns Nataliia Vyshnevskia, head of the NGO Save Pikuy, operating in the Zvaniv community of Zakarpattia region. The organisation initially focused on local environmental

issues but later became involved in opposing wind farm construction in mountainous areas. In the course of this work, Nataliia Vyshnevskaya faced not only information pressure but also actions indicative of direct intimidation. Damaged animal remains, traces of blood, and threatening inscriptions were left near the residence of her relatives, accompanied by public accusations of “treason” and working for the enemy. These actions were directed not only against the activist but also against her family members, significantly increasing the level of threat.

The analysis of the cases concerning Oksana Stankevych-Volosianchuk, Olena Mudra, and Nataliia Vyshnevskaya reveals a systemic problem: the anonymity of websites and the rapid dissemination of false information effectively make meaningful legal protection impossible. Even in cases where there are grounds for legal action, the process of identifying those responsible for disseminating information is lengthy, while reputational damage has already been done.

The cases of Oksana Stankevych-Volosianchuk, Olena Mudra, and Nataliia Vyshnevskaya demonstrate that environmental activism in Ukraine in 2025 is associated with heightened risks. Environmental protection, particularly in the context of opposing economically profitable but environmentally questionable projects, is accompanied by information attacks, legal pressure, and direct threats to safety⁷⁵.

Persecution of Mykhailo Berchuk

One illustrative example of long-term and systemic persecution of environmental activists in Ukraine is the case of **Mykhailo Berchuk**, a civil activist from the Kirovohrad region, who has for many years opposed environmental pollution caused by industrial enterprises in the region. His work focuses on documenting toxic emissions into air, soil, and water, in particular the pollution of the Dnipro River by enterprises producing oil, mayonnaise, and ketchup in the settlement of Vlasivka, Svitlovodsk district.

Mykhailo Berchuk is included in the so-called “Handziuk list”, which comprises 55 activists who were physically attacked in 2017–2018 in connection with their civic activities. Two attacks against him, which took place in 2016 and 2017, remain uninvestigated to this day. In one of these cases, the activist was severely beaten, resulting in serious bodily injuries and the need for neurosurgical intervention. Berchuk links the attacks and threats exclusively to his environmental activism. After he began submitting complaints to state authorities, investigating environmental conditions, and seeking accountability for violations of environmental legislation, the pressure on him increased. In particular, he secured fines for local violating enterprises, which led to open confrontation with business actors. During a meeting of the environmental commission in Vlasivka, convened following the activist’s complaints to law enforcement and regulatory bodies, Mykhailo Berchuk was assaulted by the head of a local enterprise. The attack occurred in the presence of representatives of the environmental inspectorate, local self-government bodies, and other participants in the meeting. Following this, the activist reported the incident to the police, underwent a forensic medical examination, and requested protection in view of previous attacks and threats. However, the perpetrator was never held accountable for the offence.

In addition to physical attacks and intimidation, in 2025 Mykhailo Berchuk was subjected to legal harassment. The private enterprise “Viktor i K” and an affiliated individual filed a lawsuit against the activist for the protection of honour, dignity, and business reputation over his public statements on social media regarding the environmental impact of enterprises, seeking a retraction of allegedly false information and compensation for non-pecuniary damage in the amount of UAH 5 million, plus legal costs⁷⁶.

75 ZMINA, “Rotten Fish and Fake Articles: Pressure on Environmental Activists and a Journalist Defending the Carpathian Environment”, 4 July 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/pidpryemstvo-podalo-pozov-pro-zahyst-chesti-j-gidnosti-do-aktyvista-myhajla-berchuka-yakij-boretsya-proti-zabrudnennya-dnipro-i-vymagaye-5-mln-gryven-kompensacziyi/>

76 Ruling of 31 July 2025 in case No. 401/2231/25. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/129260551>
ZMINA, “Company Files Defamation Lawsuit against Activist Mykhailo Berchuk, Who Opposes Pollution of the Dnipro and Seeks UAH 5 Million in Compensation”, 25 July 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/pidpryemstvo-podalo-pozov-pro-zahyst-chesti-j-gidnosti-do-aktyvista-myhajla-berchuka-yakij-boretsya-proti-zabrudnennya-dnipro-i-vymagaye-5-mln-gryven-kompensacziyi/>



■ Activist Mykhailo Berchuk during his court hearing. Photo provided by the activist

In the course of the proceedings, the defence argued that Mykhailo Berchuk's publications constitute an exercise of freedom of expression and contain value judgments, as well as being based on facts confirmed by residents' complaints, inspection results, and materials from regulatory authorities. In particular, documents from the State Environmental Inspectorate were submitted to the case file, documenting violations, as well as lawsuits filed by the Inspectorate itself against enterprises seeking suspension of their activities due to excessive emissions and the lack of environmental impact assessments. At the same time, the plaintiff's representatives sought to narrow the scope of the case solely to a single post by the activist, denying any link between public criticism and long-standing environmental problems in the region. Such an approach effectively ignores the public interest in discussing environmental safety and the role of citizens in overseeing business activities.

Mykhailo Berchuk's lawyer Olha Veretilnyk stated that the lawsuit bears all the hallmarks of a SLAPP – a strategic lawsuit against public participation aimed not at protecting reputation, but at exerting financial, psychological, and reputational pressure on the activist. According to her, there is a clear imbalance of resources between the parties, as the claimant represents a regionally influential business, while the defendant is an individual and a civil activist⁷⁷.

Such lawsuits create a “chilling effect” on civil society, as they signal to other activists and journalists the potential consequences of publicly criticising environmentally harmful activities. Legal pressure, combined with previous physical attacks, creates an atmosphere of danger and impunity for those seeking to defend the right to a safe environment.

The case of Mykhailo Berchuk demonstrates that in 2025 environmental activists in Ukraine remain one of the most vulnerable groups within civil society. Physical attacks, threats, the lack of effective investigation of crimes against activists, and the use of SLAPP lawsuits as a tool of pressure point to systemic problems in ensuring safety guarantees and protecting civic participation.

77 ZMINA, “Lawyer Defending Mykhailo Berchuk Views Lawsuit against Him as a Form of Pressure on an Environmental Activist”, 20 January 2026. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/advokatka-yaka-zahyshhaye-myhajla-berchuka-rozczynyuye-pozov-proty-nogo-yak-formu-tysku-na-ekoaktyvista/>

REDUCTION OF US FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND RISKS FOR THE SECTOR

At the beginning of 2025, Ukrainian civil society organisations faced an unprecedented challenge in their activities due to the sudden suspension of a significant portion of international support following the freezing of funding from USAID and other US federal funds, which affected most aid programmes, including those supporting democracy, human rights, independent media, and social initiatives in Ukraine⁷⁸.

USAID had long been one of the most important donors of civil society in Ukraine. In 2024, Ukraine received significantly less assistance from it than in previous years – overall funding in 2024 amounted to approximately USD 5.4 billion, whereas in earlier years this figure was almost three times higher⁷⁹. However, since the beginning of 2025, the United States has cancelled over 80% of USAID programmes, and most grants have been put at risk of complete termination⁸⁰.

This decision came as a shock to the sector, as USAID funded dozens of projects of civil society organisations, independent media, human rights initiatives, veteran support programmes, and social services⁸¹. In addition, these programmes contributed to strengthening democratic institutions, developing local self-government, providing legal aid to vulnerable groups, and supporting freedom of expression.

Following the freezing of these grants, a significant share of programmes were either suspended or placed at risk of closure, as alternative sources of funding had not been prepared. For example, some independent regional media outlets that received support through USAID-funded grants were forced to temporarily scale back their operations or seek new sources of funding, including from European donors⁸².

The sudden suspension of grants revealed the vulnerability of the financial model on which many NGOs relied: the inability to quickly adapt to the loss of strategic funding and to develop alternative self-sustainability mechanisms. According to a survey by Open Space Works Ukraine and Civic Initiatives of Ukraine, following the suspension of USAID funding, 75% of organisations actively sought alternative resources, while 25% anticipated staff reductions, 19% were forced to introduce unpaid leave, and 12% had to suspend certain programmes or even shut down their organisations⁸³.

Many civic initiatives, including those working in the fields of human rights, veteran support, assessment of local community needs during the war, and countering disinformation, were left without financial resources at a time when their work is critically important. US-funded programmes often operated in the regions and provided services that the state itself is not yet fully able to ensure⁸⁴.

In sectors where USAID funding was most concentrated, this led to delays in implementing key human rights initiatives, community services, social support, and advocacy work, increasing the burden on

78 European Pravda, "Trump Administration Cancels over 90% of USAID Grants for Foreign Assistance", 27 February 2025. URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2025/02/27/7205992/>

79 Slovo i Dilo, "What USAID Funds in Ukraine", 29 January 2025. URL: <https://www.slovaidilo.ua/2025/01/29/infografika/finansy/usa-id-finansuye-ukrayini>

80 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "US Officially Closes 83% of USAID Programmes – Rubio", 10 March 2025. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-prohram-usaid-zakryttya-rubio/33342473.html>

81 Komersant Ukrainskyi, "Government Institutions and Organisations That Lost USAID Funding: Full List", 30 January 2025. URL: <https://komersant.ua/derzhorhany-ta-orhanizatsii-shcho-vtratiat-finansuvannia-usaid-povnyy-spysok/>

82 Institute of Mass Information, "Volyn Media Outlets Report on the Impact of the Suspension of US Funding", 10 February 2025. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/news/media-volyni-rozpovily-yak-pryzupynennya-finansuvannya-z-ssha-vplynulo-na-nyh-i66531>

83 ZMINA, "Seventy-five percent of civil society organisations are actively looking for alternative resources to finance their activities – survey", 11 March 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/75-go-aktyvno-shukayut-alternatyvni-resursy-dlya-finansuvannya-diyalnosti-doslidzhennya/>

84 The New Voice of Ukraine (NV), "USAID: Ministry of Social Policy Explains What Will Happen to Project Funding in Ukraine", 27 January 2025. URL: <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/usa-id-u-minsocpolitiki-poyasnili-shcho-stanetsya-z-finansuvannyam-proyektiv-v-ukrajini-50484977.html>

national and local structures, which do not always have sufficient capacity to compensate for the loss of donor resources⁸⁵.

The situation with USAID funding provoked a mixed reaction in Ukrainian society. According to sociological data, 69% of respondents in Ukraine believed that the suspension of US assistance would have partially or significantly negative consequences for the country, while some respondents viewed it as an opportunity to “weed out ineffective projects”⁸⁶. At the same time, this decision created risks for the position of independent initiatives working on countering disinformation, protecting human rights, and democratic freedoms, as the resulting funding gap could be used by external actors to increase their influence through alternative channels⁸⁷.

85 Legal Development Network, “How the Suspension of USAID Funding Affected the Work of Member Organisations”, 1 March 2025. URL: <https://ldn.org.ua/event/yak-prypynennia-finansuvannia-usaid-vplynulo-na-robotu-chlenskykh-orhanizatsiy-merezhi-pravovoho-rozvytku/>

86 Ukrainska Pravda, “Ukrainians Divided over the Suspension of USAID Funding – KIIS”, 12 February 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/02/12/7497858/>

87 Euronews, “Ukrainian Journalists Fear USAID Funding Cuts Opened Space for Russian Disinformation Campaigns”, 19 June 2025. URL: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/06/19/ukrainian-journalists-fear-usaid-cuts-opened-up-space-for-russian-disinformation-campaigns>

CHAPTER 2.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CASES OF PERSECUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIL ACTIVISTS IN 2025

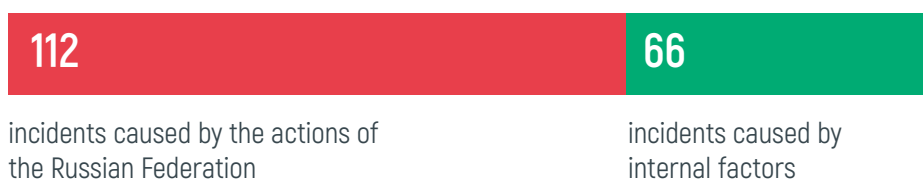


Overall, in 2025 ZMINA documented 178 cases of persecution and losses within civil society in government-controlled territory of Ukraine. This figure is linked to hostilities and intensified large-scale attacks by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, as well as internal threats to activists and journalists.

STATISTICAL DATA ON PERSECUTION

Breakdown by types of persecution

All incidents documented in 2025 were divided into two categories: those caused by actions of the Russian Federation (112), and those caused by internal factors (66).

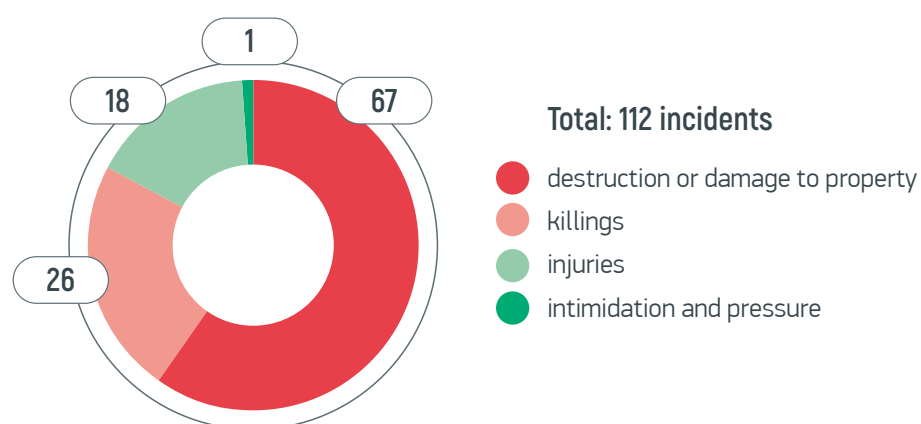


Cases related to Russian aggression

Among attacks on activists and journalists related to Russian aggression, ZMINA documented 112 incidents (accounting for over 60% of the total cases). This figure includes both targeted attacks by Russia against civil society representatives (for example, journalists in frontline areas) and cases where activists and journalists were among those affected by indiscriminate Russian missile and drone strikes on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, which took place across the country.

The largest number of cases (67) concerned property destruction or damage, when, as a result of hostile attacks, offices of civil society organisations, media outlets, or the private homes and vehicles of activists and journalists were partially destroyed, affecting their work.

Diagram 1.
Types of attacks related to Russian aggression



In 2025, actions by the Russian Federation also resulted in the killing of 26 civilian representatives of civil society and the injury of 17 others (although there were 18 cases of injury, as one volunteer was wounded twice in the course of his activities). Among the violent crimes mentioned that were linked to the actions of the FSB of the Russian Federation were the killing of civil activist Demian Ganul in Odesa and another attempted assassination of civic figure and volunteer Serhii Sternenko in Kyiv. Another case concerned an attempted hacking of accounts and intimidation of representatives of the Crimean Tatar Resource Centre by Russian security services. Volunteers, activists and journalists working in

frontline areas reported that Russian forces deliberately target humanitarian and evacuation missions, as well as film crews from Ukrainian and international media outlets⁸⁸. According to victims, markings on civilians' vehicles and gear, such as "Evacuation", PRESS and other labels, did not reduce the risks but, on the contrary, attracted additional attention from the enemy. This indicates the Russian Federation's deliberate disregard for the norms of international humanitarian law and the systematic nature of the threats faced by representatives of civil society carrying out activities in the combat zone.

Cases related to internal factors

Among the documented cases not related to hostilities, the most common were attempts to intimidate activists and journalists (14), as well as legal persecution (11) – including 8 civil cases (in particular, SLAPPs) and 3 criminal cases, notably where activists were subjected to pressure from law enforcement authorities.

Diagram 2.

Forms of persecution



In addition, some cases showed signs of privacy violations (10), where victims reported being subjected to surveillance, or took the form of smear campaigns (9).

Eight incidents involved physical attacks against representatives of civil society, and three concerned the destruction of their property. A further nine can be characterised as interference with the activities of civil society organisations – mostly involving the disruption of awareness-raising events related to LGBTIQ topics or organised by organisations supportive of the LGBTIQ+ community. Two cases, classified as "interference with professional activities", concerned the unlawful dismissal of a married couple of lecturers and anti-corruption activists in Vinnytsia⁸⁹.

As in previous years, victims reported difficulties in accessing justice, in particular due to refusals by law enforcement authorities to enter information based on their complaints into the URPI. In such cases, activists were forced to initiate proceedings through the courts. However, even after that, they often faced investigative inaction and the systematic postponement of court hearings. This problem intensified in the autumn of 2025, when, as a result of massive attacks by the Russian Federation on energy infrastructure in many regions of Ukraine, including Kyiv, hourly power outage schedules were

⁸⁸ Interview with Serhii Horbatenko, correspondent of the "Donbas Realities" project at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 26 November 2025; RSF, "Ukraine: RSF Publishes Initial Findings on Targeted Russian Strike That Killed French Photojournalist Antoni Lallican", 9 October 2025. URL: <https://rsf.org/en/ukraine-rsf-publishes-initial-findings-targeted-russian-strike-killed-french-photojournalist-anton>; East SOS, Facebook post, 25 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/east.sos.ua/posts/pfbid02uDf5ZpYBJ4SzqzQxdraqamUdCmNoTt5Pk2bMhGyT2cDboLxpPv1j3AW1m9hWpvTl?rclid=xG3dIHQFpHJbAKdt#>

⁸⁹ In cases where several forms of persecution occurred simultaneously, those considered more significant for each incident were selected for statistical purposes.

reintroduced. Courts in various regions began to postpone hearings en masse, often at the last minute, citing the lack of electricity supply.

In 2025, pressure on anti-corruption activists and organisations that publicly criticised the authorities and monitored the activities of state bodies also intensified. These activists were subjected to information attacks, public smear campaigns, the use of criminal law mechanisms, and interference in their private lives. The most illustrative developments in this context were the events surrounding the Anti-Corruption Action Centre and its head, Vitalii Shabunin, to whom the State Bureau of Investigation reported the service of a notice of suspicion, and later, intimate photos were leaked from a phone seized from the activist during a search. In addition, other representatives of the organisation and their relatives were also subjected to harassment and persecution.

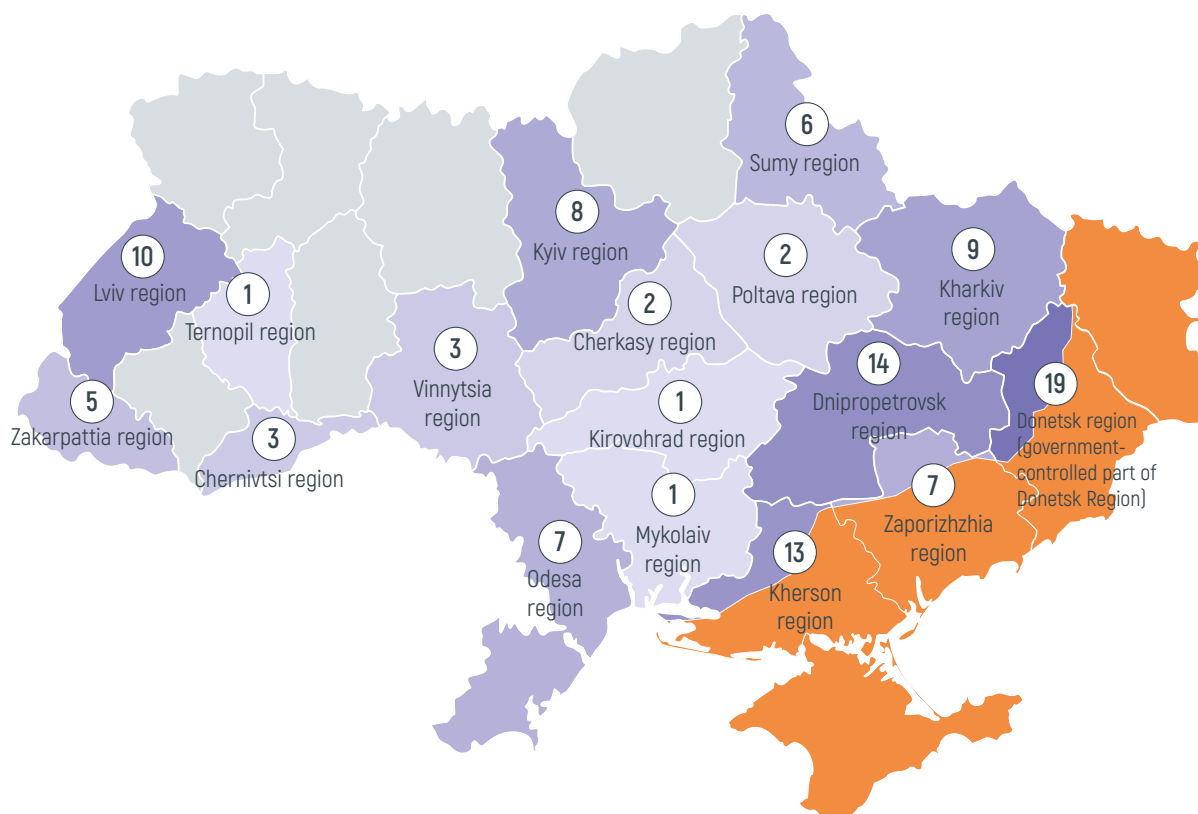
In cases of attacks against members of the LGBTIQ+ community, the police often refused to classify them as crimes motivated by intolerance, instead proposing to treat them as hooliganism or domestic disputes between the parties. This practice complicated the proper legal assessment of the motive of the crime and reduced the visibility of the problem.

Among the notable trends of 2025 – pressure on environmental activists who opposed environmental pollution by local enterprises and the development of protected natural areas. In a number of regions, including Zakarpattia, as well as Kharkiv and Kirovohrad regions, activists reported threats, attempts at discreditation, surveillance and the initiation of court proceedings against them. Such cases were often accompanied by information campaigns in anonymous Telegram channels or media outlets with questionable reputations, which may indicate the use of complex pressure mechanisms.

In addition, in 2025, reports were recorded of mobilisation being used as a tool of pressure against certain activists and their relatives – including those who had lawful grounds for deferment.

Territorial distribution

Overall, all cases of persecution and losses among activists and media workers identified in 2025 were recorded in government-controlled territory across 17 regions of Ukraine, with the highest numbers in Kyiv (67), government-controlled areas of Donetsk region (19), Dnipropetrovsk region (14), Kherson region (13), Lviv region (10), Kharkiv region (9), and Kyiv region (8).

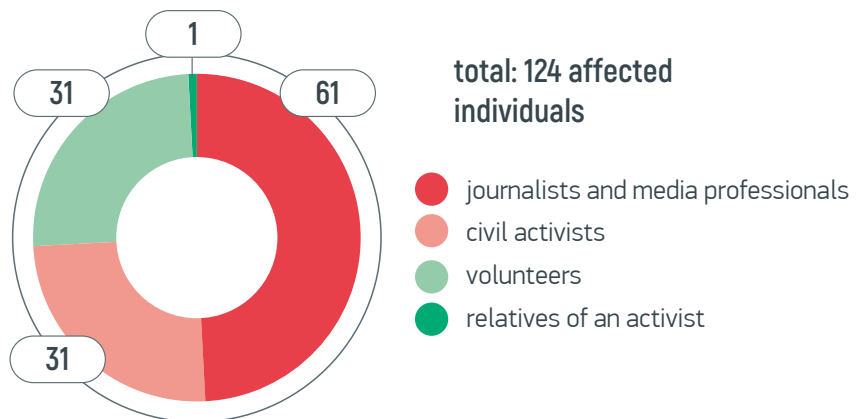


Profile of victims

The total number of affected activists, journalists and human rights defenders in 2025 amounted to 124 individuals, of whom 26 were killed (all deaths were linked to attacks by the Russian Federation).

Diagram 3.

Total number of affected activists, journalists and human rights defenders in 2025

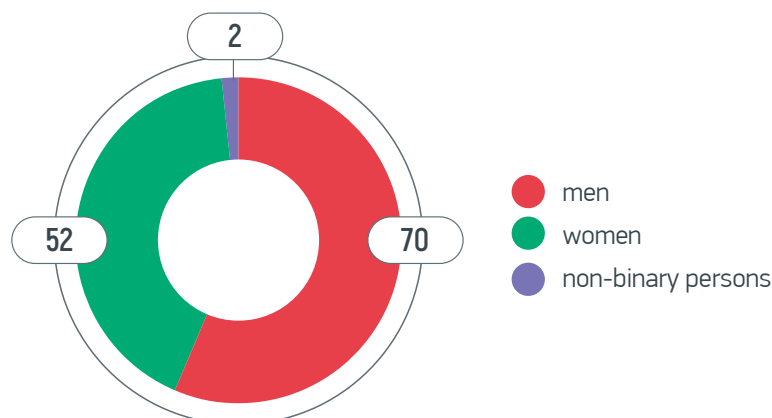


Among the attacks and losses recorded in 2025, the majority – 61 – concerned journalists and other media representatives; those affected also included 31 civil activists, 31 volunteers (however, one volunteer was injured twice, meaning there were two incidents), and one relative of an activist.

The total number of those affected included 70 men, 52 women, and 2 non-binary individuals.

Diagram 4.

Total number of affected individuals by gender



In addition to individual cases, attacks were recorded against 30 civil society organisations (32 incidents in total, as two organisations were damaged twice as a result of Russian aggression) and 17 media editorial offices (19 incidents: one outlet was damaged twice as a result of Russian attacks, while another was twice subjected to pressure from different actors). In addition, in 2025 there were two attacks on a bookshop that organised awareness-raising events related to LGBTIQ+ topics.

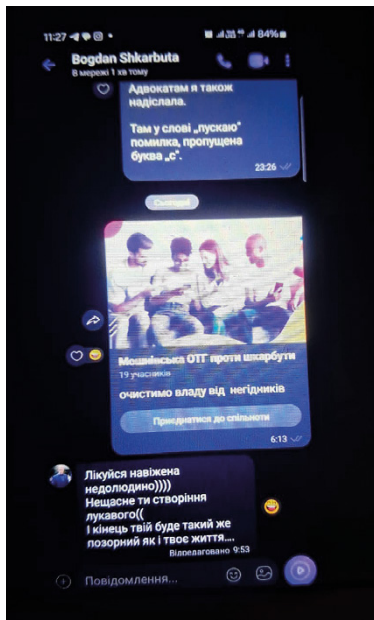
It should be noted that one of the limitations in presenting relevant data within this report is the fact that some representatives of civil society agreed to provide information only for internal documentation by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA but were not prepared to report the incident publicly.

CASES RELATED TO INTERNAL FACTORS

#legal_persecution

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Kateryna Onopriienko



- Photos of threats sent to Kateryna Onopriienko in private correspondence with the claimant. Photo provided by the activist

On 10 January 2025, in Moshny, Cherkasy region civil activist **Kateryna Onopriienko** received a lawsuit from the head of the Moshny territorial community, Bohdan Shkarbuta⁹⁰. The claimant accused her of defaming his honour and dignity through comments on social media and sought compensation for non-pecuniary damage in the amount of UAH 300,000. The case was examined by the Cherkasy District Court of Cherkasy region, presided over by Judge Vadym Morozov. Kateryna Onopriienko also reported that Bohdan Shkarbuta had repeatedly filed complaints against her with the police – including allegations of inciting the community to protest against the construction of a chemical plant near the village of Moshny. Police officers also visited her for “preventive conversations”.

In April 2021, Onopriienko filed a complaint with the police regarding threats received from the head of the community on the premises of the village council. She also requested access to CCTV footage. The Cherkasy District Police Department took no action, so in the autumn of 2021 she submitted a further complaint to the regional police department – she also received no response. According to the activist, on the same day Shkarbuta also threatened another local activist – Serhii Aleksenko from the village of Yasnoziria. Subsequently, unknown individuals set fire to his shed. Discrediting graffiti appeared twice on the wall of Onopriienko’s shop in the centre of the village of Moshny – “b*tch, give the money back” and “give the money back”.

In November 2025, the conflict between Kateryna Onopriienko and the head of the Moshny territorial community, Bohdan Shkarbuta, escalated against the backdrop of her active civic engagement, including public criticism of the head of the community and her involvement in the process of the local religious community’s transition to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. According to the activist, she received further threats from Shkarbuta, including via messaging applications⁹¹, which she perceived as a real threat to her life, and she regarded the lawsuit itself as a form of pressure and an attempt at intimidation⁹². The examination of the case was repeatedly delayed due to the failure of the claimant and his representative to appear at court hearings. On 1 December 2025, the court ruled in favour of the activist⁹³. Following the repeated non-appearance of Bohdan Shkarbuta and his lawyer at the hearing, Judge Vadym Morozov left the claim for the protection of honour, dignity and business reputation filed against Kateryna Onopriienko without consideration⁹⁴.



- Kateryna Onopriienko. Photo provided by the activist

90 Ruling of 10 January 2025 in case No. 707/3743/24. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/124346738>

91 Message sent by Bohdan Shkarbuta, Head of the Moshny Territorial Community, via Viber on 11 November 2025.

92 Interview with Kateryna Onopriienko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 14 November 2025.

93 Ruling of 1 December 2025 in case No. 707/3743/24. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/132232995>

94 ZMINA, “Court Dismisses Claim by Head of Moshny Territorial Community against Activist Kateryna Onopriienko”, 1 December 2025. URL: <https://surl.li/htogqn>

Kateryna Onopriienko – a deputy of the Cherkasy District Council of two convocations, a member of the executive committee of the Moshny Village Council, and an environmental activist. Since 2016, together with the community, she has opposed the expansion of production by MHP (“Nasha Ryaba”) near the village of Moshny due to excessive pollution from poultry farming operations⁹⁵. She later cooperated with the NGO Ecoaction and, together with other community members, opposed the construction of a chemical plant for the production of liquid fertilisers, in particular due to a lack of transparency in decision-making and disregard for environmental risks.

#legal_persecution

#discreditation

Yaroslava Volvach



■ Journalist Yaroslava Volvach. Photo: Facebook

In the period **from 13 to 15 January 2025**, **Yaroslava Volvach**, a journalist at Hromadske, who lives in **Kyiv**, recorded instances of possible unlawful surveillance by law enforcement officials. She reported this in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA. According to information obtained by the journalist from sources within the Security Service of Ukraine, proceedings had been initiated against her within the framework of counterintelligence activities by the SSU Department for the Protection of National Statehood. According to her, the SSU, the SBI, and the National Police of Ukraine also made requests to obtain mobile communication traffic data linked to base stations associated with the journalist’s phone number.

The journalist reported that unknown individuals continued to follow her. She emphasised that such surveillance requires the conduct of covert investigative measures, which may only be carried out on the basis of a relevant court authorisation. In addition, under the law, such measures must be conducted exclusively by the SSU, not by the SBI or the National Police.

In Yaroslava Volvach’s view, the surveillance may be linked to her journalistic activities, in particular to her initiation on 24 December 2024 of a petition calling for the introduction of personal sanctions against Andrii Portnov, a former Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine under Viktor Yanukovich. The petition gathered the required number of signatures – 25,000⁹⁶. Following this, Portnov described a Media Movement statement calling for sanctions as a “denunciation” and claimed that he was being subjected to pressure from journalists and activists. On 28 December 2024, his representative Karina Mikitian appealed to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, requesting the removal of the petition from the official website, alleging that it violated his rights⁹⁷. On 28 January, Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmyhal published a response stating that there were no grounds for the application of NSDC sanctions against Portnov⁹⁸.

The journalist also believes that the pressure may be linked to her work on an investigation into Roman Kravets – the owner of the Telegram channel “Joker” and a candidate for the Verkhovna Rada from the Servant of the People party (No. 153 on the list). Volvach was preparing a report on his trips abroad, which were publicly presented as volunteer activities to procure drones but were accompanied by

95 Podrobnosti, “Scandal Erupts in Cherkasy Region over Agrochemical Enterprise”, 11 February 2025. URL: <https://podrobnosti.ua/2495891-na-cherkaschin-rozgorvsja-skandal-cherez-agrohmchne-pdprimstvo.html>

96 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Electronic Petitions Website, “On Submitting for Consideration by the NSDC a Proposal to Impose Personal Sanctions against A. V. Portnov”, 24 December 2024. URL: <https://petition.kmu.gov.ua/petitions/7617>

97 ZMINA, “Portnov Demands That the Government Remove the Petition about Him from the Website”, 30 December 2024. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/portnov-vymagaye-shhob-uryad-vydalyv-iz-sajtu-petyczyu-pro-nogo/>

98 Suspilne, “Government Finds No Grounds to Impose Sanctions against Portnov: Shmyhal Responds to Petition”, 28 January 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/935631-urad-ne-znajsov-pidstav-dla-zaprovadzennasankcij-proti-portnova-smigal-vidpoviv-na-peticiu/>

leisure travel in Europe. Following the publication on 20 December 2024 of the investigation into how Kravets had been removed from military registration⁹⁹, Volvach began receiving threats, and her phone number was published online.

The journalist also provided the Human Rights Centre ZMINA with correspondence with Kravets, in which, on 19 November 2024, in response to her request for comment, he stated: “And now we are going public”, and later added: “Subscribe to the Joker channel”.

The Telegram channel “Joker” published a post claiming that an investigation was being prepared into Yaroslava Volvach, who was described as the alleged “mistress” of Andrii Smyrnov, former Deputy Head of the Office of the President. The channel’s readers were encouraged to send any information about the journalist to the administrators. The post also contained unfounded allegations about her alleged links with pro-Russian forces. However, on 30 March 2025, the Telegram channel “Joker” was blocked “for disseminating personal data of individuals without their consent”¹⁰⁰.

In addition, on 11 and 23 January 2025, the Telegram channel “Law and Business” published smear posts, including claims that Volvach was calling for parliamentary hearings regarding Portnov, as well as allegations that her partner, Ihor Nerivnyi, was evading mobilisation and was wanted.¹⁰¹

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Ihor Lachenkov

On 22 January 2025, Ukrainian blogger and volunteer **Ihor Lachenkov** (known as Lachen) publicly reported systematic threats he has been receiving over three years of his public activity during Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine¹⁰².



■ Blogger and volunteer Ihor Lachenkov. Photo: Facebook

According to Lachenkov, the threats took various forms – verbal threats, late-night phone calls, and messages via the Telegram messenger (including in chats with a self-destruct function). He also reported organised information attacks, such as bot campaigns on social media, as well as attempts to involve third parties to exert pressure on him. The blogger noted¹⁰³, that the threats appeared after publications in which he covered the activities of certain public figures and high-profile issues, including materials concerning the family of Lviv-based businessman Ihor Hrynkevych¹⁰⁴, Deputy Head of the National Police Dmytro Tyshlek¹⁰⁵,

restrictions on gambling advertising, as well as publications about the outlet “Strana”¹⁰⁶, which is under sanctions by the NSDC, and certain Members of Parliament.

99 Hromadske, “All the Time Tried to Find Drones”: How the Owner of the “Joker” Telegram Channel Spends Time in Europe”, 20 November 2024. URL: <https://surl.li/dtkqbu>

100 Detector Media, “The “Joker” Telegram Channel Blocked”, 30 March 2025. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/239551/2025-03-30-telegram-kanal-dzhoker-zablokovanyy/>

101 Law and Business, Telegram post, 11 January 2025. URL: https://t.me/zib_news/14040; Law and Business, Telegram post, 23 January 2025. URL: https://t.me/zib_news/14212

102 Ihor Lachenkov, Facebook post, 22 January 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17gcL6YRLd/>

103 Interview with Ihor Lachenkov, conducted by the Institute of Mass Information on 22 January 2025.

104 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “SBI Completes Pre-Trial Investigation in the Hrynkevych Case”, 16 January 2025. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-hrynkevychi-zsu-zakupivlya-odyahu-sud/33278009.html>

105 Ukrainska Pravda, “Abuse in Housing Rental: NACP Draws up Administrative Protocol against Former Deputy Head of the National Police Tyshlek”, 4 March 2024. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2024/03/14/7446505/>; Bihus.Info, “Deputy Head of the National Police Lives with a Partner of a Russian Crime Boss and Has a Wife with a Russian Passport”, 26 October 2023. URL: <https://surl.li/qgcwrb>

106 ZMINA, “Website of “Strana.ua”, Sanctioned by the NSDC, Ceases to Operate”, 21 August 2021. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/sajt-vydannya-strana-ua-yake-potrapylo-pid-sankciji-mbo-perestav-pracyuvaty/>

Ihor Lachenkov reported that he had contacted law enforcement authorities in connection with the threats. According to him, in some cases the police responded appropriately; however, it was not always possible to identify those responsible for anonymous threats due to the use of unregistered SIM cards and anonymous accounts. He also noted that, in the context of covering domestic political developments, he had received threats from representatives of the aggressor state.

Ihor Lachenkov – a Ukrainian blogger and volunteer, author of the informational Telegram channel “Lachen Writes”, which covers the war in Ukraine. Together with Serhii Prytula, he is the initiator of the “People’s Bayraktar” project. In 2022, Lachenkov was included in the “30 Under 30: Makers of the Future” ranking by Forbes Ukraine.

#physical_attack

Viktoriia Dmytrenko

On 5 February 2025, in the premises of the Shevchenkovskiy District Court of **Kyiv**, prior to the start of a court hearing in the case concerning the murder of teenager Maksym Materukhin, an attack was carried out on **Viktoriia Dmytrenko**, a journalist at the “We are Ukraine” TV channel. The attack was perpetrated by the mother of the suspect in the murder – Artem Kosov¹⁰⁷.

The incident occurred prior to the start of the court hearing during the filming of a report. According to the police, the assailant snatched the journalist’s phone and struck her, causing injuries. According to eyewitnesses and video footage from the scene¹⁰⁸, the blow was so severe that it caused the journalist to bleed¹⁰⁹.

Viktoriia Dmytrenko formally filed a complaint with the police regarding obstruction of journalistic activity and the attack. Law enforcement officers identified video footage of the incident during online monitoring prior to the submission of the complaint¹¹⁰.

The case on which the journalist was reporting concerned the murder of a 16-year-old teenager who was fatally injured on 7 April 2024 at the upper station of the Kyiv funicular. The suspect, Artem Kosov, was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.¹¹¹

#discreditation

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

LGBT Association LIGA

On 12 February 2025, **Oleh Alokhin**, head of the NGO **LGBT Association LIGA** in Odesa, reported the dissemination of false information aimed at discrediting the organisation and its partners. He published a scanned copy of a fabricated court claim regarding the termination of the organisation’s funding by USAID, although no such court proceedings existed in reality¹¹².

Alokhin later reported that fabricated documents were being circulated online, claiming that a court case had allegedly been filed regarding the organisation’s activities¹¹³. According to him, no such claim exists, and the information campaign bears the hallmarks of a targeted discreditation effort against the LGBT Association LIGA and its partners – aimed at undermining trust in the human rights movement

107 We Are Ukraine, Facebook post, 5 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/weukrainetv/posts/pfbid02dgcmmzYDRV2ZrUi1xC9dpxekwL71xfvn5RDRW5syRtmpeFqAq2byCYzs9mbjLEWl>; Alena Tsyntila, Facebook post, 5 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/alena.tsyntila/posts/pfbid0378mNMU5qW6jwpVYe8AtriJAwXDSdKXYjyVkJvLeepmrVawGfTFW6SwxKmu9DkwwGl>

108 Vechirniy Kyiv, Facebook post, 5 February 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=embed_video&v=2295247497510519

109 Detector Media, “Journalist Viktoriia Dmytrenko of “We Are Ukraine” was Attacked in Kyiv Court”, 5 February 2025. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/237944/2025-02-05-u-sudi-kyieva-napaly-na-zhurnalistu-myukraina-viktoriyu-dmytrenko/>

110 Kyiv Police, Telegram post, 5 February 2025. URL: <https://t.me/gunpKyiv/7622>

111 Suspilne, “Case of Teenager’s Murder at Kyiv Funicular Station: Court Delivers Verdict”, 22 September 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kyiv/1120678-sprava-pro-vbivstvo-pidlitka-na-stancii-funikulera-u-kyevi-sud-ogolosiv-virok/>

112 Oleh Alyokhin, Facebook post, 12 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1KNKhuy453/>

113 Oleh Alyokhin, Facebook post, 12 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16atRjFdT/>

as a whole. The organisation stated that it continues its work in the field of human rights protection, countering discrimination and promoting the principles of equality, and also called on the public to verify information and rely only on official and reliable sources. The dissemination of the false reports was triggered by an executive order signed by US President Donald Trump on 20 January 2025 temporarily suspending all US foreign assistance programmes for 90 days.

In July 2025, Oleh Alokhin stated in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA that the discreditation campaign had continued¹¹⁴. In particular, false reports about the activities of “LIGA” began to be disseminated via anonymous Telegram channels, including after the organisation’s office was damaged as a result of a Russian attack. The posts claimed that the organisation was allegedly providing false information in order to obtain additional donor funding. In addition, the authors of the anonymous channels attempted to link the activities of “LIGA” with a local businessman who, according to their claims, had allegedly filed a lawsuit against USAID in his own name¹¹⁵. The organisation emphasised that it had no connection with this individual. The LGBT Association LIGA addressed a letter to the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine requesting a response to the information attack; however, it received a reply stating that the activities of Telegram channels do not fall within the remit of that body.

The NGO LGBT Association LIGA is a civil society organisation working in the field of human rights protection and countering discrimination and homophobia. The organisation provides services to members of the LGBTIQ+ community in Odesa, including testing for HIV and viral hepatitis, psychological counselling, social support, access to community spaces, as well as humanitarian assistance for LGBTIQ+ individuals who have found themselves in difficult life circumstances as a result of the war.

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Viktoriia (partial anonymity preserved)



■ Blogger Viktoriia.
Photo: dermbeautyauthor / Instagram

On the evening of **5 March**, in central **Lviv**, a group of unidentified individuals began threatening blogger **Viktoriia** (dermbeautyauthor Viktoriia Lviv), who runs a segment on the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community. Viktoriia reported this on her Instagram page and published a video from the scene¹¹⁶.

According to her, the incident occurred while she was spending time with friends. A group of young people approached them, surrounded the group, and began verbally abusing them, making derogatory remarks about the LGBTIQ+ community and Viktoriia’s activities. They poured beer over the activist, after which she began recording a video capturing their statements.

The video footage captures the young men using insults and making direct threats, including stating that “such people have no right to be in Ukraine”, degrading women, and openly expressing a desire to commit acts of violence. One of the individuals explicitly threatened to kill and stated that in the future, if he gained power, he would perpetrate violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals.

On social media, Viktoriia stated that she wanted to draw public attention to manifestations of discrimination and to highlight the importance of advocating for equal rights and state protection. She called on people to share the video and information about the incident.

114 Interview with Oleh Alyokhin, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 17 July 2025.

115 Khuevaya Odesa, Telegram post, 12 February 2025. URL: <https://t.me/xydessa/50531>

116 dermbeautyauthor. Instagram post, 6 March 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DG2oe8pMx0E/>

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations

NGO Bilkis

On **24 March 2025**, the feminist civil society organisation **Bilkis**, based in **Lviv**, began receiving threats on its Instagram page. This occurred after, on 18 March 2025, Bilkis published an announcement of an event marking Transgender Day of Visibility¹¹⁷, and a few days later this information was disseminated by news outlets and far-right public groups in Lviv. Subsequently, threats and calls for violence appeared under the announcement.

In response, the Lviv Regional Military Administration and the local police recommended that the organisers refrain from holding the public event scheduled for 30 March, citing the inability to guarantee the safety of its participants and the risks of provocations. Taking these circumstances into account and prioritising the safety of activists, NGO Bilkis decided to cancel the event¹¹⁸. The organisation did not file a complaint with law enforcement authorities.

In June 2025, activists from NGO Bilkis, in cooperation with NGO Feminist Workshop, were able to safely and peacefully carry out a public action as part of Pride Month¹¹⁹. The event was secured by the National Police.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Antonina Korniienko



■ Investigative actions involving the activist's car

On **21 March 2025, in Brovary, Kyiv region**, an unidentified man set fire to the car of civil activist **Antonina Korniienko**. At around 19:00, he approached the vehicle on a bicycle, smashed the rear right window, and threw a plastic bottle filled with petrol inside. The perpetrator fled the scene, and the fire was extinguished by a passer-by. Antonina herself was at the time in an office nearby.

The Brovary District Police Department of the Main Directorate of the National Police in Kyiv region initiated a pre-trial investigation into the arson, and the information was entered into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations (URPI). In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Antonina Korniienko stated that law enforcement

officers traced the route of the suspected cyclist using footage from CCTV cameras installed on city streets. However, the investigation was complicated by the fact that the arson occurred at night, there were many cyclists on the roads at that time, and the image quality was low. The police detained one suspect, but released him after verifying his alibi. The activist noted that, despite the fact that law enforcement authorities had followed all procedures, she retained a sense of distrust due to the lack of concrete results in the investigation.

In addition, in the summer of 2024, an arson attack took place in Brovary targeting a car service station owned by Antonina's husband. The perpetrator threw two Molotov cocktails into the premises of the station. Law enforcement officers of the Brovary District Police Department identified and detained the suspected perpetrator within the first month of the investigation.

The arson of Antonina Korniienko's car had not been solved over the course of a year. Likewise, the investigation into the arson of the car service station yielded no results, although, according

117 fem.bilkis. Instagram post, 18 March 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DHWWw5YITzX/>

118 fem.bilkis. Instagram post, 18 March 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DIOo0fmls8q/>

119 fem.bilkis. Instagram post, 14 June 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DK4J8BXIY3P/>

to the activist, the perpetrator had been identified. However, she is unaware whether that person has been served with a notice of suspicion or whether any procedural decisions have been taken. In March 2026, Korniienko appealed to the Brovary District Prosecutor's Office of Kyiv region and to Yuliia Yatsyk, Head of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Law Enforcement, requesting assistance in ensuring an appropriate response by law enforcement authorities¹²⁰.



Antonina Korniienko – Head of the civil society organisation Stvoreni Diia Ty, which exposes corruption in the Velyka Dymarka community of Kyiv region. In addition, she volunteers in support of Ukraine's defence forces and provides humanitarian assistance to the local community.



Activist Antonina Korniienko.
Photo: Facebook

#physical_attack

Correspondent of the outlet Svoi. Kryvyi Rih (anonymity preserved)

On **24 March**, in **Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk region**, unidentified individuals attacked a special correspondent of the online outlet **Svoi. Kryvyi Rih**. The outlet reported this on its Telegram channel¹²¹.

The attack occurred at 13:39 near a shop. The journalist suffered a broken nose and ribs, a concussion, and lost consciousness seven times in the ambulance. The circumstances of the attack were reported to the Institute of Mass Information by Oleksii Taimurzin, founder of the outlet Svoi. Kryvyi Rih, who is currently serving in the National Guard of Ukraine¹²².

According to Taimurzin, two men approached the journalist inside the shop and began threatening him, as well as his family and the entire editorial team. After the correspondent left the shop, the attackers used physical force. Taimurzin links the attack to the media outlet's professional activities, in particular to the publication of the investigation "Morgue in a Garage", which addressed corruption and schemes in a morgue in Kryvyi Rih¹²³. He added that during the beating, the perpetrators stated that the editorial team had interfered in the affairs of funeral service workers.

According to Svoi. Kryvyi Rih, the attacker captured in the photo had a prior conviction and, at the time of the offence, was absent without leave from a military unit. Anhelina Kradozhon, Senior Communications Inspector of the Kryvyi Rih District Police Department, told the Institute of Mass Information that law enforcement officers had recorded the bodily injuries and were establishing the circumstances of the crime.

120 Interview with Antonina Korniienko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 23 March 2026.

121 Svoi | Kryvyi Rih, Telegram post, 24 March 2025. URL: <https://t.me/svoiKR/39613>

122 Institute of Mass Information, "Special Correspondent of "Svoi. Kryvyi Rih" Online Media Beaten in Kryvyi Rih (Updated)", 25 March 2025. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/news/u-kryvomu-rozi-pobyly-spetskora-onlain-media-svoyi-kryvyi-rih-i67329>

123 Svoi.KR, YouTube video, "Corruption among Funeral Service Providers and Schemes in a Morgue in Kryvyi Rih. New Investigation", 11 December 2024. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGas4i-emaE>; Svoi.KR, YouTube video, "Secrets of Funeral Service Providers. Part Two of the Investigation", 18 March 2025. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IliJK3hccDw>

#physical_attack

Diana Lavryk

On 8 April 2026, in Verkhni Stanivtsi, Chernivtsi region during coverage of a conflict over the transfer of the local St Nicholas Church from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, an attack was carried out on independent journalist **Diana Lavryk**.



■ Journalist Diana Lavryk. Photo: NTK TV channel

According to Lavryk, she arrived at the church at the invitation of parishioners and priest Roman Hryshchuk to document the first service following the community's transition to the OCU¹²⁴. The journalist stated that the conflict arose immediately after the congregation entered the church. Individuals approached the media workers with sticks and pepper spray, threatened them, and threw stones and sand.

Lavryk was recording the events on camera, having identified herself as a journalist, and was wearing a National Union of Journalists of Ukraine press card around her neck. Despite this, several supporters of the UOC attacked

her – striking her, pulling her by the hair, tearing off her press card, and attempting to seize her equipment¹²⁵. Priest Roman Hryshchuk confirmed that the journalist was deliberately targeted, with full awareness of her status.¹²⁶

In addition, opponents of the transition assaulted other individuals present. They attempted to force their way into the church from both sides, using gas from fire extinguishers. The attackers then formed a corridor and forced people to leave the church while striking them. The police arrived approximately 15 minutes later and took a statement from the journalist. As a result of the attack, she sustained bodily injuries (bruising to her legs and neck, headaches, and nausea) and sought medical assistance.

The Chernivtsi Regional Police classified the offence as “intentional minor bodily harm”¹²⁷. However, the journalist filed a motion with the Vyzhnytsia District Police Department seeking reclassification of the offence as intentional bodily harm against a journalist in connection with professional activities, but this was refused¹²⁸. She subsequently submitted motions to the prosecutor of the Vyzhnytsia District Prosecutor's Office and to the head of the district police department, but again received refusals. Investigators stated that there were no grounds for reclassification, as, according to their version, the attacker was unaware that Lavryk was a journalist. The journalist filed an appeal with the Vyzhnytsia District Court to challenge this decision.

124 National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, “Journalist Beaten during Conflict around a Church in Bukovyna”, 11 April 2025. URL: <https://nsju.org/novini/pid-chas-konfliktu-navkolo-hramu-na-bukovyni-pobyto-zhurnalistku/>

125 National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, YouTube video, “Conflict in Verkhni Stanivtsi”. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Qzif7IkiU0>

126 Vilnyi Holos Newspaper, Facebook post, 12 April 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/vilnholos/posts/1401779024497051>

127 Institute of Mass Information, “Police Open Case over Beating of Journalist by Supporters of the UOC MP”, 6 May 2025. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/news/politsiya-vidkryla-spravu-za-faktom-pobyttya-zhurnalistky-pryhylnykamy-upts-mp-i68066>

128 Institute of Mass Information, “Investigation Refuses to Reclassify Case of Beaten Journalist; She Appeals in Court”, 9 October 2025. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/news/zhurnalistka-oskarzhuye-vidmovu-politsiyi-perekvalifikuvaty-spravu-pro-yiyi-pobyttya-pid-chas-vysvitlennya-konfliktu-v-hrami>

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations

Sunny Bunny festival

On **19 April 2025**, in **Kyiv**, an attack occurred at **the Sunny Bunny** queer cinema festival, which was held at the Zhovten cinema. Initially, representatives of the organisation Prava Molod protested against the LGBTIQ+ festival, but their protest later escalated into clashes with the police¹²⁹.



■ Attack on the SUNNY BUNNY queer film festival.
Screenshot from a video of the attackers' detention

Law enforcement officers detained several protesters. However, the demonstrators claimed that the protest had been peaceful and that participants were unarmed and non-aggressive¹³⁰. Later, Nataliia Krot, press officer of the Podil District Police Department of the National Police in Kyiv, stated that no one had been officially detained in connection with the clashes near the Zhovten cinema¹³¹. Individuals who behaved “suspiciously” were taken to a police station to establish all the circumstances and verify their identities.

On the eve of the festival, a discussion emerged on social media as to whether it was appropriate to hold the event during Holy Week. At the same time, the organisers explained that the dates had been agreed in advance in accordance with the international festival calendar and emphasised that Ukraine is a secular state in which representatives of different religions and beliefs coexist.

The Sunny Bunny festival emerged from the LGBTIQ+ programme of the Molodist Film Festival. The third queer cinema festival took place in Kyiv from 18 to 25 April 2025¹³². The main programme featured full-length fiction films from around the world addressing themes of gender and sexual identity, corporeality, loss, acceptance and protest. The opening film was the documentary “Beauty Queens” – the feature-length debut of Ukrainian director Olha Hibelinda.

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations

NGO Insight

On **26 April 2025**, in **Lviv** a public event titled “Jesus–Queer?” under the slogan “LGBT and Christianity – in search of dialogue”, organised by the local branch of NGO Insight, was disrupted¹³³. The lecture was to be delivered by Yana Lys, coordinator of NGO Insight in Lutsk and one of the organisation’s regional coordinators.

On the eve of the event, threats began to be sent to the Lviv branch of NGO Insight via Instagram. Unknown individuals recorded a video wearing balaclavas and using altered voices, claiming that the event was a “provocation” and that it had allegedly been deliberately scheduled to coincide with the 82nd anniversary of the creation of the SS “Galicia” division. The video was published, inter alia, on the social media pages of Pravyi Sektor and the All-Ukrainian organisation Tryzub named after Stepan Bandera¹³⁴. On the same day the lecture was to take place, a video was published showing two unidentified aggressive individuals attempting to attack the organisation’s premises¹³⁵.

129 Suspilne News, Telegram post, 19 April 2025. URL: <https://t.me/suspilnews/48644>

130 pm_kyivshchyna. Instagram post, 19 April 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Dln67QbolAF/>

131 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Clashes near “Zhovten”: Police Deny Detention of Protesters against LGBT Film Festival”, 19 April 2025. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-sutychky-zhovten-politsia-zaperechuie-zatrymannia/33390131.html>

132 Sunny Bunny. Facebook post, 10 March 2025. URL: <https://surl.li/tdsiff>

133 NGO Insight LGBTQ. Facebook post, 28 April 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/insight.ngo/posts/1125653209595947>

134 Right Sector, Facebook post, 27 April 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/17ceoJCDxu/>; Right Sector (Lviv Region), Facebook post, 27 April 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1GU7dj89TY/>; All-Ukrainian Organisation “Tryzub” named after S. Bandera, Facebook post, 27 April 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1BYv3PSQnv/>

135 Daily Lviv, “Young Men in Masks and Balaclavas Attempted to Break into a Private House in Lviv – Insight (Video)”, 29 April 2025. URL: <https://surl.li/oywigx>

When representatives of NGO Insight contacted the Lviv City Police Department, law enforcement officers proposed organising security for the event with the involvement of the dialogue police¹³⁶. However, in view of the security risks to participants and organisers, the lecture was postponed and scheduled to be held later in several Ukrainian cities¹³⁷.



Attackers at the Insight office in Lviv. Screenshot from a video in which they describe their actions

Insight – a civil society organisation that promotes the principles of equality, freedom, inclusivity and diversity for all social groups. It provides resource support to members of the LGBTIQ+ community, protects their rights, and promotes the ideas of feminism and gender equality. Since 2008, NGO Insight has operated in Kyiv, and since 2015 it has been developing regional LGBTIQ+ initiatives.

#physical_attack

Anastasiia Poltavets

On 29 May 2025, while filming a video in central **Zaporizhzhia**, local blogger **Anastasiia Poltavets** was attacked by a man carrying a belt with Soviet symbols, who struck her several times. As a result, she sustained bruises and abrasions. Video footage of the incident and photos of the injuries were posted on Facebook by journalist Viacheslav Tverdokhlib, who witnessed the incident¹³⁸.

The journalist confirmed the incident to the Institute of Mass Information and stated that the blogger had filed a complaint with the police¹³⁹. According to him, Poltavets often streamed from that location – dancing and collecting donations. The attacker had prepared for the assault and deliberately began beating the blogger, but was later unable to explain his motives, other than stating that “he did not like it”.

The full video of the incident was published by the YouTube channel European Zaporizhzhia¹⁴⁰. The footage shows the blogger setting up a tripod and beginning to dance to Ukrainian music. At that moment, a man approached her, swinging a belt, and began to strike her. He managed to hit her several times before she was able to fight back.

136 Interview with a representative of the NGO Insight office in Lviv (name withheld, No. 26.04.25), conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 12 May 2025.

137 ZMINA, “Unknown Individuals Attempted to Disrupt a Closed Discussion on LGBTIQ+ and Christianity in Lviv over the Weekend”, 28 April 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/na-vyhidnyh-u-lvovi-zirvaly-zakrytu-dyskusiynu-na-temu-lgbtik-i-hrystyianstva/>

138 Viacheslav Tverdokhlib, Facebook post, 30 May 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=9862186563835964&id=100001341567523@rdd=AfWAZZEDNnSO6pCK

139 Institute of Mass Information, “Man with a Soviet Belt Beats Blogger during Video Filming in Zaporizhzhia”, 30 May 2025. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/news/u-zaporizhzhii-cholovik-z-radyanskym-remenem-pobiyv-bloggerku-pid-chas-znimannya-video-i68559>

140 European Zaporizhzhia, YouTube video, “Beaten with a Belt Bearing Soviet Symbols: Details of the Attack on a Blogger in Zaporizhzhia during a Live Broadcast”, 30 May 2025. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/88tvVlKqKg>

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations**NGO KyivPride**

On 5 June 2025, in Kyiv the civil society organisation **KyivPride** issued a statement regarding pressure from the National Police of Ukraine and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in connection with preparations for the annual KyivPride events in the capital¹⁴¹.

On 7 June 2025, the charitable educational event KyivPride Park was scheduled to take place at VDNH – the National Complex “Expocentre of Ukraine”, in the “KYT” pavilion¹⁴². In the days leading up to the event, KyivPride representatives communicated with the MIA, the National Police, the Ministry of Justice, the Kyiv City Military Administration, the VDNH administration, and representatives of the “KYT” pavilion. Following these discussions, activists stated that the National Police of Ukraine was not facilitating the maintenance of public order during the peaceful assembly but was, in fact, exerting pressure in order to obstruct the event.

In particular, according to the organisers, the police intimidated the VDNH administration and representatives of the “KYT” pavilion, claiming that an attack involving approximately 1,000 individuals was allegedly being prepared against the event. At the same time, in informal communication, representatives of the MIA reported a potential terrorist threat which, according to them, they were unable to prevent. In this context, the police stated their intention to block access to the VDNH territory if the tenants of the “KYT” pavilion did not cancel the KyivPride events. However, no official information or written warnings were provided to the organisers by the police or the MIA. In response, activists publicly addressed the Ministry of Internal Affairs, demanding reliable information regarding potential threats, clarification of the security measures taken, and an end to pressure on civil society, businesses and state institutions supporting the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

Ultimately, the VDNH administration decided to cancel the KyivPride Park event on the premises of the complex. Instead, the KyivPride team decided to hold the event at Mykhailivska Square, near the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



■ KyivPride Equality March in the capital near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 7 June 2025.
Photo: Suspilne News/Anna Zhelezniak

Despite the change of location, the security risks for participants remained. Approximately one hour before the start of the event, representatives of far-right groups gathered near Mykhailivska Square, including young people displaying symbols of the organisation Shchyt Tradytzii¹⁴³. They chanted slogans such as “Tradition, family, order” through loudspeakers in an attempt to drown out the event. However, a police cordon prevented direct contact between LGBTIQ activists and their opponents¹⁴⁴. The representatives of the far-right groups later dispersed, after which the event concluded peacefully.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Anna Sharyhina, Head of NGO KyivPride, stated that the police exerted pressure specifically on the VDNH administration, as it is a state institution, insisting on the existence of threats and demanding the cancellation of the event¹⁴⁵. In addition, according to her, law enforcement officers asked the organisers to disclose an alternative

141 KyivPride. Facebook post, 5 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/kyivpride/posts/764515985898945>

142 KyivPride. Facebook post, 6 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/kyivpride/posts/765249119158965>

143 The Village, “KyivPride Festival on Mykhailivska Square: Clashes Occurred, Situation Now Calm”, 7 June 2025. URL: <https://www.village.com.ua/village/culture/culture-news/363539-na-mihaylivskiy-ploschi-de-mali-provoditi-lgbt-festival-stalisya-sutichki>

144 Suspilne Kyiv, “Charity and Educational Event: KyivPride Park Organised in Central Kyiv”, 7 June 2025. URL: <https://surl.li/mwdlijy>

145 Interview with Anna Sharyhina, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 17 July 2025.

venue for the event, stating that they would exert pressure there as well. For this reason, the organisers decided to hold the event in a public space without prior coordination with institutions.

KyivPride – a civil society organisation that seeks to achieve full respect for the human rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals in Ukraine and organises the most prominent annual LGBTIQ+ event¹⁴⁶.

#legal_persecution

Maksym Shumakov

On 10 June 2025 law enforcement officers conducted a search at the residence of **Maksym Shumakov**, an activist of the independent student trade union Priama Diia, in **Lviv**. The apartment was rented by the activist's friends, who were absent at the time of the search, while Shumakov was staying there temporarily.

The activist was a suspect in criminal proceedings concerning the alleged dissemination of communist symbols on his personal Facebook page. This is stated in the search warrant issued by an investigating judge of the Frankivskyi District Court of Lviv at the request of a representative of the investigative unit of Lviv District Police Department No. 2 of the Main Directorate of the National Police in Lviv region¹⁴⁷. During the search, Shumakov's mobile phone, laptop, documents (contracts related to the provision of services as part of his professional activities), and flash drives containing personal data unrelated to his civic activities were seized. Following the completion of the investigative actions, the activist was informed of a scheduled questioning.

On Maksym Shumakov's Facebook page¹⁴⁸ ZMINA did not find any images or video materials containing communist symbols. Among other materials available in open sources was a recording of Shumakov's lecture on YouTube on activism titled "How to Fight Differently? Organisations, Structures and Grassroots Resistance"¹⁴⁹, in which he cites, as an example of an ineffective strategy, an action he took part in several years earlier and shows a photo depicting protesters with anarchist symbols (a black-and-red flag used by anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, the left and social revolutionaries, as well as a red star).

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Maksym Shumakov stated that¹⁵⁰, in the course of his activities in defence of students' rights, representatives of far-right movements had repeatedly threatened him with violence – in particular in connection with his support for LGBTIQ+ students and his coverage of sexual harassment in higher education institutions. In addition, individuals presenting themselves as SSU officers had approached him on several occasions "for a conversation". At times, this was accompanied by intimidation and threats to destroy his academic career. Furthermore, staff of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, where Shumakov studied, informed him in private conversations that his name allegedly appeared on lists of students "to be monitored" compiled by the security services.



■ Trade union activist Maksym Shumakov. Photo: Facebook

As of April 2026, there had been no significant developments in Shumakov's case. He had not been served with a notice of suspicion and had not been granted the status of a suspect. The seized equipment had also not been returned.

Maksym Shumakov – a member of the independent student trade union Priama Diia, engaged in the protection of students' rights, the development of student self-governance, and the countering of discrimination, including against LGBTIQ+ students.

¹⁴⁶ KyivPride, website. URL: <https://kyivpride.org/>

¹⁴⁷ Ruling of 5 March 2025 in case No. 465/1826/25. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/125616966>

¹⁴⁸ Maksym Shumakov, Facebook page. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/maxym.shumakov>

¹⁴⁹ Social Movement, YouTube video, "How to Fight Differently? The Power of Protest. Maksym Shumakov 09.11", 21 November 2024. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=lgzPS-AIMl0>

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Maksym Shumakov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 24 June 2025.

#discreditation**NGO DEJURE Foundation**

In June 2025 a large-scale information attack with signs of a discreditation campaign was carried out against **DEJURE Foundation in Kyiv**. The dissemination of negative publications began with posts on social media pages of judge Inna Otrosh¹⁵¹ and lawyer Rostyslav Kravets¹⁵². The information was later amplified by anonymous Telegram channels with million-strong audiences, including True.XA¹⁵³. On 19 June, these claims were published by a number of national online media outlets, including Informator¹⁵⁴, Ukrainian News¹⁵⁵, UNIAN, and Obozrevatel. The publications alleged that DEJURE Foundation had received over UAH 108 million in donor funding in 2021–2024 but had not published detailed financial reports.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Olha Komarova, Head of Communications at DEJURE Foundation, stated that the organisation considered these materials to be false and damaging to its reputation¹⁵⁶. The Foundation contacted the media outlets concerned, requesting that they publish corrections and provide a right of reply. However, only Ukrainian News published a correction¹⁵⁷. Other outlets either failed to publish a response or refused to do so on formal grounds. In this regard, DEJURE Foundation stated its intention to defend its business reputation through legal proceedings. According to the organisation's Executive Director, Mykhailo Zhernakov¹⁵⁸, such information attacks against the Foundation are systemic in nature¹⁵⁹. The organisation sees its task as creating a precedent that would prevent the impunity of disseminating false information about civil society initiatives.

DEJURE Foundation – a think-and-act tank established in 2016 with the aim of promoting the rule of law and advancing justice sector reforms in Ukraine¹⁶⁰.

#legal_persecution**#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure****Olena Mudra, Oksana Stankevych-Volosiianchuk, Nataliia Vyshnevskia, Nataliia Maistrenko**

In June 2025, cases of a coordinated information attack were recorded in **Zakarpattia** targeting investigative journalist **Olena Mudra**, environmentalist and Associate Professor at Uzhhorod National University **Oksana Stankevych-Volosiianchuk**, as well as environmental activist **Nataliia Vyshnevskia**. The professional and civic activities of Stankevych-Volosiianchuk and Vyshnevskia are linked to the protection of high-mountain areas of the Ukrainian Carpathians from construction projects that pose environmental risks. Mudra covers these processes in her journalistic work.

151 Slidstvo.Info, "HCJ Dismisses Judge Inna Otrosh, Who Travelled to Occupied Crimea and Posted Photos of a Matryoshka from a Russian Museum during the Full-Scale War", 10 October 2024. URL: <https://www.slidstvo.info/news/vrp-zvilnyla-suddiu-innu-otrosh-iaka-izdyla-v-aneksovanyy-krym-i-pid-chas-velykoi-viyny-publikovala-foto-matroshky-z-rosiyskoho-muzeiu/>

152 Rostyslav Kravets, Telegram post, 15 June 2025. URL: <https://t.me/rkravetsUA/17323>; Rostyslav Kravets, Telegram post, 16 June 2025. URL: <https://t.me/rkravetsUA/17336>; Rostyslav Kravets, Telegram post, 16 June 2025. URL: <https://t.me/rkravetsUA/17338>; Rostyslav Kravets, Telegram post, 22 June 2025. URL: <https://t.me/rkravetsUA/17406>

153 True.XA, Telegram post, 19 June 2025. URL: <https://t.me/truexanewsua/115660>

154 Informator, "DeJure Scandal: Zhernakov's Organisation Accused of Non-Transparent Use of UAH 108 Million in Donor Funds – Media Reports", 19 June 2025. URL: <https://ukranews.com/ua/news/1091045-u-fundatsiyi-dejure-sprostuvaly-chutky-pro-vidsutnist-zvitnosti-kompaniyi-ta-nenalezhne>

155 Ukrainian News, "Corruption Scandal: DeJure Foundation Accused of Failing to Report on the Use of UAH 108 Million in Donor Funds – Media Reports", 19 June 2025. URL: <https://ukranews.com/ua/news/1088792-koruptsiyniy-skandal-fundatsiyu-dejure-zvynuvatyly-u-vidsutnosti-zvitiv-za-vykorystannya-108-mln>

156 Interview with Olha Komarova, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 24 June 2025.

157 Ukrainian News, "DeJure Foundation Denies Allegations of Lack of Reporting and Misuse of Donor Funds", 29 June 2025. URL: <https://ukranews.com/ua/news/1091045-u-fundatsiyi-dejure-sprostuvaly-chutky-pro-vidsutnist-zvitnosti-kompaniyi-ta-nenalezhne>

158 Interview with Mykhailo Zhernakov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 26 June 2025.

159 Detector Media, "Kremlin Telegram Network: Why Russia Targets Judicial Reform, Integrity Judges and Activists", 26 February 2024. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/223484/2024-02-26-kremlivska-telegram-merezha-chomu-rosiya-bie-po-sudoviy-reformi-dobrochesnym-suddiam-ta-aktyvistam/>

160 DEJURE Foundation, website. URL: <https://dejure.foundation/>

On 9 June 2025 Olena Mudra publicly reported a large-scale information campaign¹⁶¹ against herself, Stankevych-Volosiianchuk and Vyshnevskya, which unfolded following her journalistic investigation into violations of environmental legislation in the design of wind power plants in the region¹⁶². Authors of materials disseminated on the websites Informator¹⁶³, Bahnet, From.ua, znaj.ua and vlasti.net accused Mudra, Stankevych-Volosiianchuk, Vyshnevskya and lawyer **Nataliia Maistrenko** (maiden name – Hnes) of acting in the interests of Russian energy companies, including Gazprom and Rosneft, and of allegedly receiving funding from Russian sources linked to Viktor Medvedchuk. These claims were presented without any evidence and were accompanied by discrediting messages and manipulative information aimed at undermining the women's reputations. A similar article was published on the website Facenews. For this publication, a forged scanned copy of journalist Olena Mudra's passport was used to suggest that she was allegedly a Russian citizen¹⁶⁴. These publications also referred to the outlet Zakarpattia Online, which, according to the authors, was allegedly linked to Russian IP addresses. The articles included photos of appeals addressed to the NSDC, the SSU and the National Police, in which the authors called for the verification of the IP addresses concerned and the identification of the individuals administering the online resource.

On 20 July 2025, a video by the online resource Zakhid Media titled "Russia is attempting to destabilise the situation in Zakarpattia through pseudo-environmentalists" was published on the YouTube channel News of Ukraine¹⁶⁵. The material also claimed that the aforementioned human rights defenders were allegedly acting in the interests of the Russian Federation. NGO Women in Media analysed the video and identified the presence of false information and signs of the use of artificial intelligence technologies.¹⁶⁶

In addition, Olena Mudra became a defendant in two lawsuits filed by LLC Wind Parks of Ukraine Management Company. The first claim (case No. 299/2199/25)¹⁶⁷ concerns a publication on the page of NGO KOD 21¹⁶⁸ and includes demands for retraction of information and recovery of UAH 50,000 in non-pecuniary damages. The second claim,¹⁶⁹ is related to a publication on the Zakarpattia Online website¹⁷⁰, in which the journalist relies on expert materials and facts cited in criminal proceedings regarding violations within a protected natural area.

Environmentalist Oksana Stankevych-Volosiianchuk stated in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA that over the past three years she has participated in public consultations and provided expert opinions on the strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment of a wind power plant project on the Runa polonyna¹⁷¹. She considers that construction is proceeding without a proper environmental assessment, which constitutes a direct violation of the law. The activist also noted that the articles about her contain fabricated claims that discredit her as a citizen and as an expert.

Nataliia Vyshnevskya, an environmental activist and Head of NGO Zberehty Pikui, who also became a target of the aforementioned discreditation campaign, emphasises that her organisation focuses its

161 Detector Media, "Journalist Olena Mudra Reports Information Attack over Investigation into Wind Farms in the Carpathians", 9 June 2025. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/241633/2025-06-09-zhurnalistka-olena-mudra-zayavyla-pro-informatsiynu-ataku-cherez-rozsliduvannya-shchodo-vitryakiv-u-karpatakh/>

162 Interview with Olena Mudra, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 11 June 2025.

163 Informator, "Syndicate of "Black Environmentalists": Nataliia Maistrenko (Hnes) Blocks Development of Wind Power Plants in Zakarpattia through Courts", 6 August 2025. URL: <https://informator.ua/uk/sindikaty-chornih-ekologiv-nataliya-maistrenko-gnes-cherez-sudi-blokuye-rozvitok-vitroelektrostantsiy-na-zakarpatti>

164 Facenews, "In Zakarpattia, Journalist Olena Mudra and Lawyer Nataliia Maistrenko Called for Protests against Critical Infrastructure Facilities", 19 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facenews.ua/news/2025/528179/>

165 News of Ukraine, YouTube video, "Russia Attempts to Destabilise Zakarpattia through Pseudo-Environmentalists | Zakhid Media", 20 July 2025. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDtiFx1Tz38>

166 NGO Women in Media, "Olena Mudra, AI Video", 20 July 2025. URL: <https://wim.org.ua/online-attacks/olena-mudra-8-2/>

167 Ruling of 30 April 2025 in case No. 299/2575/25: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/126991837>

168 Zakarpattia Environmental, Facebook post, 17 April 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=978438807605349&set=pb.100063177161339.-2207520000>

169 Ruling of 20 May 2025 in case No. 299/2575/25. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/127487353>

170 Zakarpattia Online, "Svaliava Foresters Continue Mass Logging for an Illegal Access Road for Wind Turbines on Polonyna Rivna and Mount Hostra (Photo)", 3 February 2025. URL: <https://zakarpattya.net.ua/News/236015-Svaliavski-lisivnyky-prodovzhuiut-masovu-vyrubku-lisu-pid-nezakonnu-avtodorohu-dlia-vitryakiv-na-polonyni-Rivna-i-hori-Hostru-FOTO>

171 Interview with Oksana Stankevych-Volosiianchuk, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 10 June 2025.

efforts on preserving the highland areas of the Carpathians, in particular in the regions of Mount Ostra, Pikui and the Verkhovyna watershed ridge. As the activist told the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, **on 22 June 2025**, in the entrance hall of a residential building in Kyiv where she is registered but does not currently reside, unidentified individuals left graffiti reading “Vyshnevskia from apartment 171 – Kremlin agent” and “Traitor”, and left spoiled fish with entrails¹⁷². The activist provided CCTV footage capturing the suspected perpetrators; however, she has not yet filed a complaint with the police, as residents of the building who may be witnesses are not prepared to give formal statements.



■ Defamatory graffiti in the entrance hall of the activist's building. Photo provided by the activist



■ Attackers at the activist's residence. Screenshot from a video

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Nataliia Maistrenko stated that an active discreditation campaign against her lasted for approximately four months. She links this campaign to the activities of Wind Parks of Ukraine Management Company, whose interests were affected in court disputes involving the human rights defender¹⁷³. According to Maistrenko, the dissemination of discrediting materials in the media against a group of activists coincided with the consideration in courts of cases concerning, inter alia, the unlawful change of land use designation and other decisions in the fields of urban planning and land use in Zakarpattia¹⁷⁴. She associates the information pressure with these judicial proceedings. In addition, during court hearings in cases where Nataliia Maistrenko represented the interests of the public, according to her testimony, third parties appeared in courtrooms holding placards containing negative or manipulative statements about her. She also regularly received verbal abuse and threats while attending court hearings.

Nataliia Maistrenko stated that, as a result of prolonged pressure, she is unable to carry out her professional activities fully. For security reasons, the human rights defender is forced to conceal case materials and remove equipment from the office, as she fears unauthorised access by third parties. During hours of darkness, Maistrenko is afraid to leave her home, as she perceives a risk of physical attack.

In addition to the group of Zakarpattia-based activists, blogger and environmental activist Mark Melnychenko, whose activities are linked to the protection of high-mountain areas of the Ukrainian Carpathians, also became a target of the aforementioned discreditation campaign.

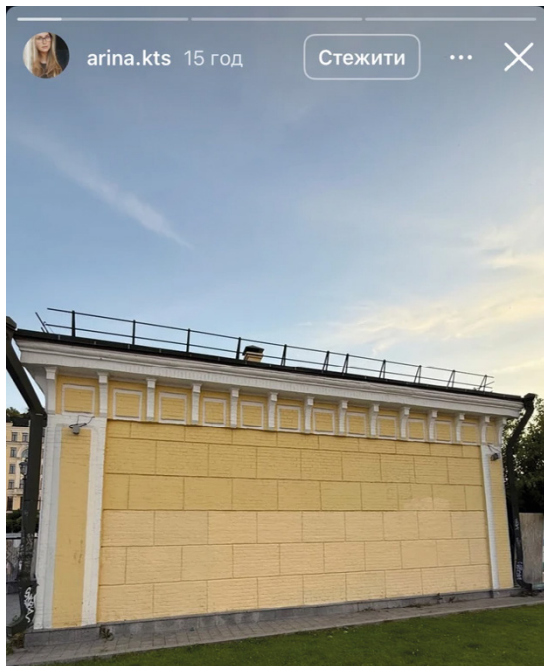
172 Interview with Nataliia Vyshnevskia, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 25 June 2025.

173 Interview with Nataliia Maistrenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 1 December 2025.

174 Court ruling of 25 April 2025 in case No. 260/8523/23. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/126885097>; Court ruling of 5 June 2025 in case No. 260/9623/23. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/127947722>; Ruling of 4 June 2025 in case No. 308/17484/23. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/128422141>.

#damage_to_property #interference_with_civil_society_organisations

Civic initiative “Who ordered the murder of Kateryna Handziuk?”



On 16 June 2025 in Kyiv, at Poshtova Square, unidentified individuals painted over a mural featuring a quote by the late Kherson activist Kateryna Handziuk. This was reported by the media outlet Grunt¹⁷⁵. The disappearance of the mural was confirmed by the “Who ordered the murder of Kateryna Handziuk?” community¹⁷⁶.

The graffiti featuring a quote by Kateryna Handziuk appeared at Poshtova Square in 2019. It was created by activists of the “Who ordered the murder of Kateryna Handziuk?” initiative¹⁷⁷. Since then, the site has become an informal memorial where commemorative events have been held.

The destruction of the mural on the eve of Kateryna’s 40th anniversary was commented on by Member of Parliament and Chair of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Freedom of Speech, Yaroslav Yurchyshyn¹⁷⁸. He described these actions as an example of “particular cynicism” and called on the Kyiv City Administration to restore the mural and grant it protected status. However, on 17 June, the “Who ordered the murder of Kateryna Handziuk?” initiative reported that the mural at Poshtova Square had already been restored¹⁷⁹.



■ Destroyed and restored mural.
Photo from social media

Kateryna Handziuk – a civil activist and co-founder of the MOCT Agency of Civic Journalism, which investigated corruption in the Kherson region. She was a participant in the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity. In the years preceding her death, Handziuk served as an adviser to the Mayor of Kherson and as Acting Head of the Executive Committee of the City Council. On 4 November 2018, she died in hospital as a result of an attack that left her with burns to nearly 40% of her body.

Who ordered the murder of Kateryna Handziuk? – a civic initiative established by the activist’s friends a few days after the attack on her, on 3 August 2018. Members of the initiative attend court hearings in the case concerning the intentional murder of Handziuk and monitor the progress of the investigation to ensure that all those responsible for the crime are held accountable.

175 Grunt, X (formerly Twitter) post, 16 June 2025. URL: <https://x.com/grntmedia/status/1934693011637850320?s=20>

176 Who ordered the murder of Kateryna Handziuk?, Facebook post, 17 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/gandziukgate/posts/pfbid04g4PderRZVKfigFMPzu8C2n49PtDDP53y4ibruVd3KBFgmerLjnuqyqbsxD6QAGVsl?rldid=zuT5HcbQRGgE6W5L#>

177 MOCT, “Unknown Individuals Painted over a Mural with a Quote by Kateryna Handziuk in Kyiv (Photo)”, 17 June 2025. URL: <https://most.ks.ua/news/url/u-kijevi-nevidomi-zamaljuvali-mural-z-tsitatiju-katerini-gandziuk-foto/>

178 Yaroslav Yurchyshyn, Facebook post, 17 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/yaroslav.yurchyshyn/posts/pfbid0nCQTrGNyqoVRtCtToQv8sJmt381TxvAyC6ZBDWNvn37uQjP6af8yZSnjuWuLNEhl?rldid=QMTS43k8TTg2IYNv#>

179 Who ordered the murder of Kateryna Handziuk?, Facebook post, 17 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/gandziukgate/posts/pfbid0wkvUemKRkq5JUab2vwiEbRKLQAQb5rJjg9r6nRFa35X9nbbNwYT5kXAo5ga5XKDYhl>

#discreditation

Sofiia Cheliak



■ Journalist Sofiia Cheliak.
Photo: Facebook

Starting from **27 June 2025**, **Sofiia Cheliak**, a journalist at *Ukrainska Pravda* who lives in **Lviv**, was subjected to a series of online attacks. On that day, she criticised Member of Parliament Oleksii Honcharenko, a member of the European Solidarity faction, on her Facebook page¹⁸⁰. This followed a post by Honcharenko in which he criticised Kateryna Mykhalko – Executive Director of the association of defence industry enterprises “Technological Forces of Ukraine” – for her appointment to a senior position at the age of 22¹⁸¹.

Sofiia Cheliak’s post generated significant public attention. Numerous comments were posted under it, some of which contained elements of sexism, misogyny, gender-based trolling and gender disinformation¹⁸². In addition, certain users alluded to the journalist’s private life and referred to relationships she had not made public.

On 29 June, the original post by Sofiia Cheliak was published by ZAXID.NET as an opinion column¹⁸³, and also shared on the outlet’s page on X. More than two hundred comments appeared under the publication, some of which also contained elements of sexism, misogyny, gender disinformation and defamation. Similar comments with signs of online attacks began to appear on the journalist’s personal Instagram page as well.

Sofiia Cheliak – a cultural manager, journalist, translator, and member of PEN Ukraine. She served as Programme Director of NGO Publishers’ Forum (2016–2025). Since 2024, she has been a freelance adviser to the Mayor of Lviv on publishing. As a journalist, she collaborates with *Ukrainska Pravda* and *Frontliner*.

#discreditation

Mark Melnychenko

On **23 June 2025** blogger and environmental activist **Mark Melnychenko from Nevyske, Zakarpattia region**, became the target of a discreditation campaign. His name was mentioned in an article on the low-credibility online resource *from-UA*, and he was depicted alongside other environmental activists in Russian military uniforms holding weapons¹⁸⁴. The material also unfoundedly accused Melnychenko of working for Russian agents of influence and of allegedly evading mobilisation under the guise of environmental activism. The blogger publicly refuted these claims, stating that they do not correspond to reality: according to him, he does not receive any funding from Russian sources, is registered for military service with the TCR, and is awaiting a conclusion from a regional military medical commission.

180 Sofiia Cheliak, Facebook post, 27 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/sofiachelyak/posts/pfbid02znNhVKUqnLKJ75gZQY7RqJJyAMz8adsQ3txuoT6bRwDn358jHghv6apU1GGX67pjl>

181 Oleksii Honcharenko, Facebook post, 26 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/alexeygoncharenko/posts/pfbid02AiBWT5gUr6XCJ73DWroghCUF9KFAY2RZS4Tke76UAFsaSGbEhmiq8uJ5J4X4hmGil>

182 NGO Women in Media, “Online Attack on Journalist Sofia Cheliak: Wave of Sexist and Abusive Comments after Criticism of an MP”, 5 July 2025. URL: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/sofia-cheliak/>

183 ZAXID.NET, “While You Were Jumping around Yanukovych, We Were Growing up on Maidan”, 29 June 2025. URL: https://zaxid.net/blogi_tag50977/

184 *from-UA*, “How “Independent” Journalist Olena Mudra Fell under Kremlin Influence”, 23 June 2025. URL: <https://from-ua.org/uk/articles/676520-kak-nezavisimaia-zurnalistka-elena-mudraia-popala-v-zavisimost-kremlia.html>



■ Environmental activist, volunteer and blogger Mark Melnychenko.
Photo: my_ukrainian_dream / Instagram

Melnychenko also noted that, after he published a video¹⁸⁵ on the development of wind power plants in the high-mountain areas of the Carpathians without a proper environmental impact assessment (including the Runa polonyna), representatives of the local authorities contacted him requesting that he refrain from further publications on the issue. According to the blogger, he refused to comply with these requests and continued to publicly cover the matter.

Mark Melnychenko – a blogger, environmental activist and military volunteer. Since 2019, he has run the blog “My Ukrainian Dream”, through which he raises funds for the purchase of vehicles for military needs together with the volunteer team of writer Andrii Liubka. Melnychenko also initiated a project to support servicemen undergoing rehabilitation after injuries or on leave¹⁸⁶. Service members are provided with accommodation in an eco-house in Zakarpattia, offering an opportunity for rest and recovery in a safe environment.

#legal_persecution

Mykhailo Berchuk

On 11 July 2025, in **Svitlovodsk, Kirovohrad region**, a claim was filed with the Svitlovodsk City District Court against civil activist **Mykhailo Berchuk** seeking protection of business reputation, an obligation to refute allegedly false information, and compensation for non-pecuniary damage in the amount of UAH 5 million¹⁸⁷.

The claimants are Private Enterprise Viktor i K, which produces sauces under the Korolivskiy Smak trademark, and a natural person, Iryna Korol, founder and ultimate beneficial owner of LLC Hydrosend, which produces goods under the Kukhar Rishelie trademark. The grounds for the claim were a post on Berchuk’s Facebook page¹⁸⁸, in which he stated that, in response to his request to the State Environmental Inspectorate of the Prydniprovskiy District regarding the activities of LLC Hydrosend and PE Viktor i K, he had received a reply indicating that LLC Hydrosend had been fined UAH 1.13 for violations of legislation on the protection and rational use of water resources. In Berchuk’s view, such sanctions are disproportionate to the potential environmental harm, as, according to him, the companies in question have been polluting the coastal protection zone of the Dnipro River for over 10 years.

The claim against Berchuk bears the hallmarks of a SLAPP – a strategic lawsuit aimed at exerting judicial pressure on a civil activist and driven by his environmental protection activities¹⁸⁹.

In 2024, Mykhailo Berchuk discovered that PE Viktor i K and its affiliated company LLC Hydrosend were discharging waste into the Dnipro River. The activist filed a complaint with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources and submitted a report to the police requesting an investigation into the possible involvement of officials of the Svitlovodsk City Council and the head of the Vlasivka settlement in environmental pollution. The State Environmental Inspectorate

185 Mark Melnychenko, “My Ukrainian Dream”, YouTube video, 8 June 2025. URL: https://youtu.be/rxRDSv_kiLw?si=vz45mlcJ1amW-LFT; Mark Melnychenko (my_ukrainian_dream), Instagram post, 14 June 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DK5FXo7lbew/>

186 Varosh, “Zakarpattia Resident Mark Melnychenko Invites Military Personnel to rest in an Eco Cottage”, 19 February 2025. URL: <https://varosh.com.ua/noviny/zakarpatecz-mark-melnichenko-zaproshuye-vijskovyh-na-vidpochynok-v-ekohatynczi/>

187 Ruling of 31 July 2025 in case No. 401/2231/25. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/129260551>

188 Mykhailo Berchuk, Facebook post, 13 March 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/michaelberchuk/posts/9720619584667154>

189 ZMINA, “Court Grants Motions of Both Parties in the Case of Environmental Activist Mykhailo Berchuk, Who Opposes Pollution of the Dnipro”, 2 December 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/sud-zadovolnyv-klopotannya-oboh-storin-u-spravi-ekoaktyvista-myhajla-berchuka-yakij-boretsya-proty-zabrudnennya-dnipro/>

conducted an inspection of the site of the alleged discharges. It identified two pipes likely used for discharges, running from the territory of LLC Hydrosend towards a bay of the Dnipro River. At the time of the inspection, no actual outflow of industrial discharges was recorded; however, fresh traces of moisture were present at the site.

Mykhailo Berchuk – an environmental activist and Deputy Head of NGO Club of Ukrainian Patriots. He is included in the “Handziuk list”, which comprises 55 activists who experienced physical attacks in 2017–2018¹⁹⁰. Two attacks against Berchuk, which occurred in 2016 and 2017, remain unsolved. In autumn 2016, two unidentified individuals beat him with their hands and feet and also used tear gas against him. In spring 2017, Berchuk was beaten with wooden bats and sustained a severe traumatic brain injury. In addition, in August 2024, Berchuk was attacked by Viktor Korol, Director General of PE Viktor i K¹⁹¹ who struck him with his foot to the torso and with his fist to the temple. This occurred during a meeting of the environmental commission in the settlement of Vlasivka.

#legal_persecution

#privacy_violation

Vitalii Shabunin

On 13 July 2025 in Kyiv, the State Bureau of Investigation notified Vitalii Shabunin, Head of NGO **Anti-Corruption Action Center**, of suspicion. He was accused of allegedly systematic “evasion of military service” and “fraud”¹⁹². According to the SBI, Shabunin evaded service from September 2022 to February 2023. During this period, he was seconded to the NACP and allegedly did not perform official duties, remained outside his military unit, and used his time “at his own discretion”. The investigation considers that, as a result, Shabunin unlawfully received a military salary and caused damage to the state.



■ Vitalii Shabunin, Head of the Anti-Corruption Action Centre, at the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv.
Photo: ZMINA/Liudmyla Tiahnyriadno

According to the Anti-Corruption Action Center (AntAC), the secondment was carried out pursuant to an order which Shabunin, as a soldier, could not refuse to comply with. At the NACP, he worked on advancing anti-corruption reforms, including in the defence sector – restoring electronic asset declarations and developing solutions to reduce abuses in defence procurement¹⁹³. The official SBI press release also contained a manipulative reference to the use of a volunteer vehicle. However, according to AntAC, this allegation was not included in the notice of suspicion, as such practice is lawful and common within the Defence Forces. In addition, private donors explained that the vehicle had been purchased with funds from CEO Club and provided specifically for the needs of serviceman Shabunin¹⁹⁴.

On 15 July, the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv imposed a preventive measure on Vitalii Shabunin in the form of a personal undertaking valid until 20 August. He was required to appear upon summons by

190 Ukrainska Pravda, “‘The Silence of the Authorities Is Killing Us’: 55 Unsolved Crimes against Activists”. URL: https://www.pravda.com.ua/cdn/graphics/2018/09/movchannja_vlady_nas_ubyvaje/

191 ZMINA, “Head of a Local Enterprise Attacks Environmental Activist Mykhailo Berchuk, Who Opposes Environmental Pollution”, 8 August 2024. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/na-ekoaktyvista-myhajla-berchuka-yakij-boretsya-proty-zabrudnennya-dovkillya-vchynyv-napad-ochilnyk-miscevogo-pidpryemstva/>

192 State Bureau of Investigation, “SBI Notifies a Civil Society Activist of Suspicion for Evasion of Military Service and Fraud (Video)”, 11 July 2025. URL: <https://dbr.gov.ua/news/dbr-povidomilo-pro-pidozru-odnomu-iz-gromadskih-aktivistiv-za-uhilennya-vid-vijskovoi-sluzhbi-ta-shahrajstvo>

193 Ukrainska Pravda, “Suspicion and Searches in the Case of Vitalii Shabunin Are Arbitrary and Politically Motivated”, 12 July 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2025/07/12/7521411/>

194 CEO Club Ukraine, Facebook post, 20 June 2024. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/100069127895699/posts/778741814440075/>

an investigator, judge or prosecutor, not to leave his place of service, not to visit the NACP building, and to surrender his passport for travel abroad. These restrictions affected not only his personal rights but also his ability to carry out anti-corruption activities. On the same day, ZMINA published a statement condemning the criminal prosecution, which was signed by more than 100 Ukrainian civil society organisations¹⁹⁵. The signatories called for an end to the use of the justice system as a tool of political repression.

Earlier, on 11 July, it became known that searches had been conducted at his place of service in Chuhuiv district of Kharkiv region, as well as at a residence in Kyiv. These investigative actions were carried out without a court warrant and without the presence of lawyers¹⁹⁶. During the searches, the activist's mobile phone was seized. On the same day, in Kharkiv, within the framework of the investigation into Shabunin's case, the SBI conducted searches at the apartment of Liliia Averianova, the mother of the late pilot Andrii "Juice" Pilshchikov¹⁹⁷. Shabunin was a friend of Pilshchikov and had assisted his mother after the tragedy.

On 14 August, the SBI announced the completion of the investigation into Shabunin. The Bureau stated that the electronic devices seized during the searches had been returned to him. However, Vitalii noted that this referred only to equipment seized from his relatives, while his personal phone and laptop remained with the SBI¹⁹⁸.

On 17 October, a hearing was held at the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv regarding the extension of the preventive measure against Shabunin¹⁹⁹. Judge Svitlana Shaputko extended the personal undertaking until 2 November²⁰⁰.

Against the backdrop of judicial restrictions, the case of Vitalii Shabunin gained international attention. On 2 November, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) issued a joint statement calling on the Ukrainian authorities to immediately cease any persecution of the activist²⁰¹. Human rights defenders emphasised that the criminal case bears the hallmarks of judicial harassment with a political motivation.

In November, hearings in Shabunin's case continued at the Pecherskyi District Court under the presiding judge Khrystyna Konstantinova. The defence filed a motion to recuse the judge, citing reasonable doubts as to her impartiality, in particular in light of previous high-profile decisions and public criticism of her activities by the civil society sector. The motion was granted, and the case was reassigned to another judge²⁰².

On 22 December, Shabunin stated that his command had assigned him to the Kupiansk–Vuzlovyyi area to carry out a task involving the installation of anti-drone nets in a high-risk zone²⁰³. According to him, the order involved service members with serious health limitations, raising concerns regarding both the legality and the safety of such a decision. The activist viewed these actions as a possible attempt to physically remove him or, at a minimum, to prevent him from participating in court hearings. Shabunin reported pressure by law enforcement authorities on the command of his unit and emphasised that these actions were taking place against the backdrop of his public criticism of the SBI and the Prosecutor General's Office, as well as his efforts to ensure accountability for those responsible.

195 ZMINA, "Stop Using the Justice System for Political Reprisals: Statement by Civil Society Organisations on the Case of Vitalii Shabunin", 15 July 2025. URL: <https://zmina.ua/statements/prypynyty-vykorystovuvaty-systemu-pravosuddya-dlya-politychnykh-rozprav-zayava-gromadskiyh-organizacij-shhodo-spravy-vitaliya-shabunina/>

196 Daria Kaleniuk, Facebook post, 16 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/dkaleniuk/posts/10163499394599188>

197 Anti-Corruption Action Centre, Facebook post, 16 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/antac.ua/posts/pfbid02fv3NkrXgMLV6DHFJd31BRdepBmxuYMqhxwXkmxtg45zqLzHvhbX86TFA6XbKgUal>

198 NV, "Shabunin Accuses SBI of Lying about Returning His Devices after the Investigation", 15 August 2025. URL: <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/sprava-shabunina-dbr-zavershilo-rozsliduvannya-i-ne-povernulo-gadzheti-50537400.html>

199 Anti-Corruption Action Centre, Telegram post, 17 October 2025. URL: <https://t.me/fuckcorruption/4509>

200 Suspilne, "Court Extends Preventive Measure against Shabunin until 2 November", 17 October 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/1141406-sud-prodovziv-sabuninu-zapobiznij-zahid-do-2-listopada/>

201 OMCT, "Ukraine: Judicial Harassment of Anti-Corruption Activist Mr Vitaliy Shabunin", 2 November 2025. URL: <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/urgent-interventions/ukraine-judicial-harassment-of-anti-corruption-activist-mr-vitaliy-shabunin>

202 ZMINA, "Pecherskyi Court Grants Motion to Recuse Judge Konstantinova in the Case of Activist Vitalii Shabunin", 14 November 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/pecherskyj-sud-zadovolnyv-vidvid-suddi-konstantinovoyi-u-spravi-aktyvista-vitaliya-shabunina/>

203 Vitalii Shabunin, Telegram post, 22 December 2025. URL: <https://t.me/VitaliyShabunin/1974>

A separate incident concerns the dissemination of private photos of Vitalii Shabunin. On **16 December 2025**, Shabunin reported on social media that the State Bureau of Investigation and the Prosecutor General's Office had circulated his intimate photos via Telegram channels; the images had been taken from his personal phone seized during a search²⁰⁴. The activist links this leak to a publication about key individuals whom AntAC considers to be involved in undermining NABU and SAPO – including representatives of the Prosecutor General's Office, the SBI, the SSU, as well as judges who authorised searches and the detention of NABU detectives²⁰⁵.

Shabunin's private photos were disseminated by the Telegram channel Zapysky Paskvilianta, owned by Volodymyr Boiko, a blogger associated with publications and other leaks of information from law enforcement bodies²⁰⁶. In particular, in 2019, Boiko circulated claims that Mykola Zlochevsky, owner of the company Burisma, had allegedly bribed the future US President Joe Biden through his son. In his posts, he frequently mentioned the Anti-Corruption Action Center. It was Boiko who initiated the case against Vitalii Shabunin. He and his lawyer, Rostyslav Kravets (known, inter alia, as a figure in the "Vovk tapes" case and the former Head of the Kyiv District Administrative Court), submitted complaints to the SBI. In his column of 27 October 2024, Boiko stated that he and his lawyer had succeeded in registering criminal proceedings through the courts²⁰⁷.

On 17 December, the SBI stated that it would review the staff who had access to such data and promised to hold those responsible accountable "if the involvement of Bureau employees in the incident is established"²⁰⁸.

The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, stated that the dissemination of personal data during investigative actions is unacceptable, emphasising that such actions violate the Constitution of Ukraine, the Criminal Procedure Code and legislation on personal data protection²⁰⁹. The Ombudsman announced his intention to respond to such cases within the scope of his powers and to seek their proper legal assessment. In turn, the Chair of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Anti-Corruption Policy, Anastasiia Radina, expressed the view that the leak of Shabunin's photos originated from the SBI²¹⁰.

On 18 December, human rights defender Tetiana Pechonchyk stated on Suspilne that, in addition to the internal investigation announced by the SBI, criminal proceedings should be initiated in this case and those responsible should be held accountable. She also noted that Shabunin's lawyers planned to file a criminal complaint with the Prosecutor General's Office regarding the disclosure of pre-trial investigation²¹¹, data and the violation of the right to privacy²¹², after which an investigation must be initiated within 24 hours.

Vitalii Shabunin – co-founder of the AntAC, which develops and advocates legislative frameworks for combating corruption (including in relation to anti-corruption bodies such as NABU, SAPO, HACC and ARMA, the criminalisation of illicit enrichment, etc.), monitors public procurement, and initiates investigations into abuses.

204 Vitalii Shabunin, Facebook post, 16 December 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10162394152939537&id=678864536

205 AntAC, "Who Is Destroying NABU and SAPO?", website. URL: <https://nabudestroyers.antac.org.ua/>

206 Babel, "SBI Suspects AntAC Head Vitalii Shabunin of Evasion of Military Service: Case Initiated and Driven by Blogger Volodymyr Boiko. What Is Known?", 14 July 2025. URL: <https://surl.li/ctageg>

207 Chronicles of Ukrainian Fools, "Interrogation Record of Volodymyr Boiko in the "Shabunin Case"", 27 October 2024. URL: <https://volodymyrboyko.wordpress.com/2024/10/27/protokol-dopytu-v-spravi-shabunina/>

208 State Bureau of Investigation, "SBI to Thoroughly Verify Media Reports on the Publication of Private Photographs of a Person Involved in Criminal Proceedings", 17 December 2025. URL: <https://dbr.gov.ua/news/derzhavne-byuro-rozsliduvan-retelno-perevirit-informaciyu-poshirenu-u-media-shhodo-oprilyudnennya-privatnih-fotografij-odnogo-z-figurantiv-kriminalnogo-provazhennya>

209 Dmytro Lubinets, Facebook post, 17 December 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3755430981431334&id=100008934065016

210 Anastasiia Radina, Facebook post, 17 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/anastasia.krasnosilska/posts/pfbid0w3ufC8ASCYmeiB1kUufm9poS2j8qCCPCgm1Av9GzoSoXhZ932vNUKzCmWim5cCXel>

211 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 387 – Disclosure of Data from Operative-Search Activities and Pre-Trial Investigation. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

212 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 182 – Violation of Privacy. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

The persecution of Shabunin has been ongoing for approximately ten years and includes both physical attacks and encroachments on his property and the safety of his family²¹³. In July 2018, a group of unidentified individuals doused the activist with brilliant green antiseptic outside the SAPO building, causing chemical burns to his eyes. Activists from the “Bratstvo” organisation led by Dmytro Korchynskyi were involved in the attack, and then Minister of Internal Affairs Arsen Avakov was named among those who had allegedly commissioned it²¹⁴.

In July 2020, unidentified individuals set fire to Shabunin’s house, which became uninhabitable as a result of the blaze²¹⁵. Later that year, improvised explosive devices were discovered near the apartment of the activist’s mother in Rivne and near the residence of his wife’s parents in Kyiv²¹⁶. Those responsible for all of these crimes have not been identified.

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations

Trade union Priama Diia

On 21 July 2025, in Lviv during an educational event held as part of the “Free School” project at the Hnat Khotkevych Municipal Palace of Culture, a group of unidentified individuals demanded that the event be cancelled, accusing the organisers of holding “left-wing views” and discrediting their activities. The event was organised jointly with activists of the independent student trade union **Priama Diia**. During one of the sessions, three individuals entered the premises and publicly called for the event to be stopped, referring to the participants as “leftists who are ruining the country”.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Maksym Marynych, a member of Priama Diia, stated²¹⁷, that on the same day he, together with other activists of the organisation, took part in a protest against amendments to draft law No. 12414, which limited the independence of NABU and SAPO²¹⁸. There, they encountered one of the young men who had attempted to disrupt the “Free School” event. He was a school pupil accompanied by three friends of a similar age. The unidentified youths attempted to snatch a placard from one of the Priama Diia activists and tried to provoke a fight with another (which was prevented). This was followed by a dispute triggered by comments about the individuals’ far-right views (they had patches with a stylised Black Sun symbol on their bags, and the young man previously seen at the Khotkevych Palace was wearing an “Idea of the Nation” T-shirt).

Maksym Shumakov told the Human Rights Centre ZMINA that²¹⁹, on the day following the incident, the administration of the Palace of Culture received an email accusing it of providing a venue to a “left-wing organisation”. Citing the inability to guarantee the safety of participants, the administration decided to cancel the “Free School” events at the venue. “Free School – 2025” had been scheduled to take place from 14 to 25 July. However, the students, together with representatives of the Khotkevych Palace, reached a compromise by amending the contract and reducing the number of rental days. The administration also informed the students that it had conducted its own review of Priama Diia’s activities and had reservations about it. They also referred to an article in the journal *Spilne*²²⁰, which stated that members of the trade union included “Marxists, anarchists and representatives of more exotic movements”. However, representatives of the current fourth generation of Priama Diia maintain that

213 AntAC, “Attacks on AntAC: Criminal Prosecution, Arson, Information and Other Pressure on an Anti-Corruption NGO – Why It Happens and Who Is Behind It”, website. URL: <https://antac.org.ua/special-projects/attacks-on-antac/>

214 Ukrainska Pravda, “‘Dear Friends’ of Kholodnytskyi: Who Stood Up for the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor”, 20 July 2018. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2018/07/20/7186906/>

215 Ukrainska Pravda, “Mission: Burn Out Corruption. Who Is Threatened by the Anti-Corruption Action Centre and Shabunin”, 24 July 2020. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2020/07/24/7260613/>

216 National Police of Ukraine, Facebook post, 31 December 2020. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/UA.National.Police/posts/2763755353879261>

217 Interview with Maksym Marynych, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 25 July 2025.

218 Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine on the Specifics of Pre-Trial Investigation of Criminal Offences Related to Missing Persons under Special Circumstances during Martial Law” No. 12414 of 16 January 2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/55640>.

219 Interview with Maksym Shumakov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 24 July 2025.

220 Spilne Commons, “We Must Fight for the Future of Ukrainian Education: Interview with the “Direct Action” Student Trade Union”, 1 September 2023. URL: <https://commons.com.ua/uk/pryama-diia-intervyu/>

they have no connection to those publications. At the same time, the representatives of the Khotkevych Palace had no concerns regarding the content or topics of the “Free School” sessions.

“Free School” is a project initiated by students of Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, and Lviv National Academy of Arts, aimed at creating a space where ideologically engaged students can freely share their views, participate in live discussions, and disseminate knowledge among participants of the school. The project seeks to offer an alternative to the traditional university approach to education, which, according to the initiators, is dominated by a bureaucratic format of the educational process.

Priama Diia – an independent student trade union engaged in the protection of students’ rights, the development of student self-governance, and the countering of discrimination, including against LGBTIQ+ students.

#legal_persecution #discreditation

Olena Shcherban



■ Human rights defender Olena Shcherban. Photo: ZMINA

On 15 August 2025 it became known that several disciplinary complaints had been initiated against **Olena Shcherban**, Deputy Executive Director of the AntAC, lawyer of AntAC head Vitalii Shabunin and NABU detective Ruslan Mahamedrasulov, who lives in **Kyiv**. The complaints were filed during Shcherban’s active involvement in high-profile anti-corruption cases and could have resulted in restrictions on her professional activities or deprivation of her legal licence. The grounds for the complaints were formal – allegedly failing to complete mandatory continuing professional training for lawyers, although this requirement is general and is systematically not fulfilled by a significant number of lawyers.

In parallel, an information campaign to discredit the lawyer and her brother, former NABU detective **Taras Likunov**, was taking place on Telegram channels and in media outlets²²¹.

On 25 September 2025, officers of the Security Service of Ukraine conducted a search of Taras Likunov, who at the time was an employee of the Corporate Internal Security Department of Ukrzaliznytsia²²². The search took place at his residence in Kyiv within the framework of criminal proceedings that formally had no direct connection to Likunov’s activities, and its basis was exclusively operational information without proper factual corroboration²²³. During the investigative actions, two personal smartphones and a flash drive containing materials from his previous work at NABU were seized.

Likunov and his lawyer stated that there had been procedural violations and raised concerns about the proportionality of such actions, noting that the search could be linked to his former anti-corruption

221 Sergii Ivanov, Telegram post, 7 August 2025. URL: <https://t.me/ivanoise/12123>; INSIDER UA, Telegram post, 7 August 2025. URL: <https://t.me/insiderUKR/103973>; INSIDER UA, Telegram post, 14 August 2025. URL: <https://t.me/insiderUKR/104422>; INSIDER UA, Telegram post, 25 September 2025. URL: <https://t.me/insiderUKR/107457>

222 Security Service of Ukraine, Telegram post, 25 September 2025. URL: <https://t.me/SBUkr/15904>

223 AntAC, “SSU Searches Brother of AntAC Board Member and Mahamedrasulov’s Lawyer Olena Shcherban; He Handled the Artem Shylo Case”, 25 September 2025. URL: <https://antac.org.ua/news/sbu-obshukalo-ridnoho-brata-chlena-pravlinnia-tspk-ta-advokatky-mahamedrasulova-oleny-shcherban-same-vin-viv-spravu-artema-shyla/>

activities and cases involving SSU officials²²⁴. In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Taras Likunov expressed the view that the court had not properly verified the grounds for the search conducted at his residence by officers of the SSU Department for the Protection of National Statehood²²⁵. At the same time, Olena Shcherban described the SSU actions as pressure on her and her family, as well as an attempt to intimidate her and force her to abandon her legal work in the Shabunin and Mahamedrasulov case²²⁶.

#physical_attack

Viktor Pylypenko



■ Human rights defender and activist Viktor Pylypenko.
Photo: Facebook

On 18 August 2025, in Kyiv during the funeral of fallen activist and artist David Chichkan, a physical attack took place against civil activist, human rights defender and veteran **Viktor Pylypenko**²²⁷. According to activist Diana Berg, soldiers of the Russian Volunteer Corps were passing by Chichkan's funeral but, upon seeing an LGBT flag, provoked a conflict.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Viktor Pylypenko stated²²⁸, that the fight occurred over an LGBT flag he was holding, which Denis Nikitin, commander of the Russian Volunteer Corps (RVC), attempted to snatch from his hands²²⁹.

Viktor Pylypenko is a veteran of the Russia–Ukraine war, a participant of the Orange Revolution, the Revolution of Dignity, and the Language Maidan, and the founder of the community of Ukrainian LGBTIQ+ servicemen and veterans. Until 2025, he headed the NGO Ukrainian LGBT+ Military and Veterans for Equal Rights²³⁰.

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations

NGO ALLIANCE.GLOBAL

On 28 August 2025, in Lviv during the presentation of Alina Sarnatska's book "Who combined love and courage" about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people in the war, organised by NGO **ALLIANCE.GLOBAL** in partnership with the publishing house Vydavnytstvo, a group of individuals attempted to disrupt the event²³¹.

224 NABU, "UAH 94.8 Million Scheme on Transformers during Wartime: Organised Group Exposed at Ukrzaliznytsia (Photo)", 3 April 2024. URL: <https://nabu.gov.ua/news/94-7-mln-grm-na-transformatorakh-pid-chas-viviny-vykryto-organizovanu-grupu-na-uz/>; EPravda, "Misappropriation of UAH 100 Million in Transformer Procurement for Ukrzaliznytsia: SSU Official Shylo and Six Others Notified of Suspicion", 3 April 2024. URL: <https://epravda.com.ua/news/2024/04/03/711984/>; EPravda, "Former Ukrzaliznytsia Managers Sentenced over UAH 98 Million Fuel Scheme", 30 April 2025: <https://epravda.com.ua/finances/eksmenedzheram-ukrzaliznici-ogolosili-virok-za-shemu-z-palnim-806059/>

225 Interview with Taras Likunov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 7 October 2025.

226 Interview with Olena Shcherban, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 7 October 2025.

227 Suspilne News, "AFU Veteran Pylypenko Reports Clash with RDK Commander over an LGBT Flag at the Funeral of Artist Chichkan", 18 August 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/1093652-veteran-zsu-viktor-pilipenko-zaaviv-so-cerez-lgbt-prapor-pocubivsa-z-komandirom-rdk-na-pohoroni-hudoznika-cickana/>

228 Interview with Viktor Pylypenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 26 June 2025.

229 Oleksandr Sergiienko, Facebook post, 19 August 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/sergiienko.oleksandr/videos/1953712318775945>

230 "Ukrainian LGBT+ Military and Veterans for Equal Rights", website. URL: <https://www.lgbtmilitary.org.ua/>

231 NGO Alliance.Global, Facebook post, 29 August 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/alliance.global.group/posts/1205733821578455>

Around 16:00, a group of unidentified individuals entered the venue, later identified by law enforcement as members of the youth far-right organisation Centuria. They were not registered for the event, behaved aggressively, and attempted to disrupt the event. The organisers called the police, who arrived promptly at the scene. Until the end of the event, law enforcement ensured the safety of participants, and their exit was organised through a different exit to avoid any harassment.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Marta Zmysla, a lawyer at the Paralegal Hub, stated that together with NGO ALLIANCE.GLOBAL she had filed a complaint with law enforcement authorities regarding the incident²³².

NGO ALLIANCE.GLOBAL works in the field of human rights protection, development and support of the LGBTIQ+ community, provides services for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and STIs, and carries out activities aimed at combating discrimination and homo- and transphobia.

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations

Choven Publishing House, NGO Centre for Urban History

On 18 September 2025, in Lviv, Choven Publishing House announced the cancellation of the presentation of Oksana Bryukhovetska's book "Voices of BLM", which was scheduled to take place at **the Centre for Urban History**. The decision was prompted by numerous racist and hate-filled comments and threats directed at the publishing house and the author ahead of the event.

According to the publishing team, over several days aggressive messages were spread on social media, some of which, they said, may have been generated by bots, although there were also comments from real users²³³. Following the wave of online aggression, the publishing house began receiving phone calls with threats. Threats were also received personally by the editor-in-chief of the publishing house, Ihor Balynskyi²³⁴, the author Oksana Bryukhovetska, and American journalist Terrell Starr, who is one of the protagonists of the book and was expected to take part in the presentation.

Oksana Bryukhovetska stated that they were ready to hold the event under enhanced security measures and expressed hope that the presentation would take place at a later date. According to her, Terrell Starr has been working in Ukraine for a long time and covers Russia's aggression in US media; however, during the preparation of the event he faced instances of racist hostility²³⁵.

LLC Publishing House of the Lviv Media Forum (trademark Choven) is a publisher of reportage and documentary literature.

NGO Centre for Urban History of East-Central Europe is an independent research institution founded in 2004 in Lviv by Austrian researcher Dr Harald Binder. The institution focuses on research into East-Central Europe, its history, heritage, and documentation. It supports local researchers.

#damage_to_property #intimidation_threats

KharkivPride

On 23 September 2025, in Kharkiv the premises of the PrideHub resource centre, which belongs to **KharkivPride**, were damaged. The perpetrators placed images of red crosses and nationalist symbols on the facade and also damaged windows and doors. This was reported on social media by

232 Interview with Marta Zmysla, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 18 September 2025.

233 Choven Publishing House, Facebook post, 18 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/ChovenUA/posts/1225530306258529>

234 Interview with Ihor Balynskyi, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 19 September 2025.

235 Suspilne Culture, "'The Situation Has Shown That the Book Matters': Author of 'Voices of Black Lives Matter' Responds to Cancellation of Presentation", 18 September 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/culture/1117948-avtoroka-knizki-pro-black-lives-matter-prokomentuvala-skasuvanna-prezentacii-u-lvovi-cerez-hejt/>

the KharkivPride civic initiative and the Kharkiv women's association Sphere²³⁶. Activists noted that the symbols used may constitute hate speech directed against certain social groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. In their view, such graffiti may contribute to the normalisation of aggression and violence in society.



Unknown individuals vandalised the KharkivPride premises.
Photo: Anna Sharyhina

According to KharkivPride co-chair Anna Sharyhina, a week earlier – 14–15 September – unidentified individuals attempted to enter the PrideHub building during curfew hours²³⁷. The incident was recorded by surveillance cameras, and the organisation's representatives contacted the police. The case was registered in the Unified Register of Applications and Reports of Criminal Offences.

Sharyhina links both incidents to earlier unsuccessful attempts to attack the KharkivPride 2025 festival, which started on 30 August. A day before this, the event organisers received threats from far-right organisations based in Kyiv that planned to travel to Kharkiv to disrupt the event. On the opening day, representatives of far-right and Christian organisations – Prava Molod, Hetmanskyi Harnizon, and Dmytro Korchynskyi's Bratstvo – arrived at the PrideHub building²³⁸. However, the police did not allow them to enter the premises.

KharkivPride is an LGBTIQ+ event in the city of Kharkiv, held since 2019, which includes lectures, public discussions, and the KharkivPride March – a peaceful march in support of equal rights and opportunities for people regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The organiser of the first KharkivPride March was the NGO Kharkiv Women's Association Sphere, with the support of the Kharkiv LGBTIQ+ community.

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Sens Bookstore

On the evening of **28 September 2025**, in Kyiv, unidentified masked men covered the windows of the **Sens bookstore** near the Arsenalna metro station with leaflets containing homophobic content. Surveillance footage²³⁹, released by the bookstore shows four individuals approaching the premises and starting to paste the materials. A bookstore employee attempted to stop them, after which the perpetrators left the scene. The same day, the administration contacted the police²⁴⁰.

236 KharkivPride, Facebook post, 23 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/kharkivprideukraine/posts/1091107279896867>

237 Suspilne Kharkiv, "‘It Is Obvious That This Benefits Russians the Most’: Unknown Individuals Attempted to Break into the KharkivPride Office and Defaced It with Crosses", 23 September 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kharkiv/1122078-ocevidno-so-najvigidnise-ce-dla-rosian-nevidomi-namagalisa-zlamati-ofis-kharkivpride-ta-obmaluvali-jogo-hrestami/>

238 Gwara Media, "KharkivPride 2025 Kicks Off in Kharkiv – Photos", 30 August 2025. URL: <https://gwaramedia.com/harkovi-startuvav-harkivprajd-2025-foto/>

239 Sens Bookstore, Telegram post, 28 September 2025. URL: https://t.me/sens_kyiv/1000

240 Suspilne Culture, "‘Sens’ Bookstore on Arsenalna Covered with Homophobic Stickers: Bookstore Files Complaint with Police", 29 September 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/culture/1126285-nevidomi-obkleili-sens-na-arsenalnij-gomofobnimi-listivkami-knigarna-podala-zaavu-do-policii/>



■ Sens bookshop. Photo: Facebook

On 1 October 2025 a group of masked men carried out a second attack on the bookstore. According to Sens, this time there were more attackers: they blocked the entrance doors, again pasted leaflets, and recorded their actions on video. These actions frightened staff and visitors who were inside the premises. As a result, after the incident, the store filed another complaint with the police. Law enforcement officers promptly arrived at the scene, interviewed visitors as victims, and documented all circumstances of the incident.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, the communications manager of the bookstore, Anzhelika Babii, expressed the opinion that the organisers of the provocation acted for the purpose of “self-promotion”²⁴¹. Journalists of Wonderzine Ukraine identified a possible involvement of representatives of the organisation Shield of Tradition, which positions itself as a movement promoting “traditional values”²⁴². In its Telegram channel, the Shield of Tradition published a video showing the bookstore being covered with leaflets and displaying the organisation’s symbols²⁴³.

Sens Bookstore is a cultural space where, in addition to selling books, book presentations are held. The bookstore has its own book club, where texts by Ukrainian authors are discussed, including classics, new releases, and bestsellers. Since the first days of the full-scale war, a volunteer hub was organised at Sens, providing assistance to military personnel and civilians. Later, it developed into the volunteer community Kitty Pechersk.

#physical_attack #intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Yuliia Rianicheva

On 23 September 2025, during a session of the city council in **Lypovets, Vinnytsia region**, civil activist **Yuliia Rianicheva** was attacked by the head of the culture department of the city council, Hennadii Terletskiy. The incident occurred during the consideration of land-related issues, while Rianicheva was recording the open session on video.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Rianicheva stated that she attended the session together with a group of five local activists who had registered to participate in the meeting for the purpose of public oversight²⁴⁴. During filming, Terletskiy approached Rianicheva and used obscene language. When Rianicheva demanded an explanation for the alleged prohibition of video recording, Terletskiy, according to her testimony, used physical force against her, pushed her towards the exit from the hall, and snatched the mobile phone she was using for filming from her hands²⁴⁵. Two police officers present at the session did not react to these events, stating that the police “ensure order only during the session”²⁴⁶.

After this, Rianicheva called the patrol police and filed a written complaint regarding the attack. According to her, only after persistent insistence did the law enforcement officers agree to question Hennadii Terletskiy. The investigator informed the complainant that the official’s actions could

241 Interview with Anzhelika Babii, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 3 October 2025.

242 Wonderzine Ukraine, “Masked Men Attack “Sens” Bookstore on Arsenalna Again, Likely Members of the NGO Shield of Tradition, 2 October 2025. URL: <https://www.wonderzine.me/wonderzine/life/news/23501-choloviki-v-maskah-znovu-napali-na-sens-na-arsenalniy-imovimo-tse-chleni-go-schit-traditsiyi>

243 Shield of Tradition, Telegram post, 2 October 2025. URL: <https://t.me/shieldoftradition/304>

244 Interview with Yuliia Rianicheva, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 2 October 2025.

245 Yulia Yurchenko (Yuliia Rianicheva), Facebook post, 23 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1492158568397561>

246 Yulia Yurchenko (Yuliia Rianicheva), Facebook post, 25 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/17q1mYN7vM/>

potentially constitute hooliganism, but the entry of information into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations (URPI) was postponed “pending approval from management”. However, no information was ultimately entered into the URPI²⁴⁷. Due to police inaction, the activist submitted written appeals to the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights. According to Rianicheva, the incident may have been linked to her civic activity and video recording of the city council session, where issues within the scope of her monitoring were being considered. She believes that in this way the official sought to prevent the recording of possible violations.

Yuliia Rianicheva is a civil activist who, since 2022, together with a group of women residents of the city of Lypovets, has systematically attended city council sessions and carried out public oversight of the use of communal land. She has publicly highlighted cases of unauthorised ploughing of the riverbank of the Sob River, possible illegal use of land plots by officials, disregard of veterans’ requests for land allocation, as well as alleged abuses in the cultural sector (misuse of funds allocated for the renovation of a youth creativity centre and the local library).

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Daria Kaleniuk

On 27 September 2025, in Kyiv Oryst Rudyi, the husband of the Executive Director of the Anti-Corruption Action Center (AntAC), **Daria Kaleniuk**, was listed as wanted in the Reserve+ application. This occurred despite the fact that he had a legal right to defer mobilisation due to raising a child with a disability and had submitted all necessary documents to the TCR.²⁴⁸

A month earlier, anonymous Telegram and YouTube channels began spreading information about Rudyi’s alleged evasion of mobilisation. In particular, such posts appeared in the Telegram channel “Kartochnyi Ofis”.²⁴⁹



■ Human rights defender Daria Kaleniuk.
Photo: Detector Media

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Daria Kaleniuk stated that these publications appear to be a pre-planned attack against her and her husband²⁵⁰. In her view, the discrediting campaign is linked to her anti-corruption activities and the AntAC position on the independence of NABU and SAPO.

After the publicity and Oryst Rudyi’s completion of the Military Medical Commission, the TCR removed him from the wanted list and granted him a deferment from mobilisation.

Daria Kaleniuk is a civil activist, co-founder and Executive Director of the Anti-Corruption Action Center (AntAC). She coordinates the asset recovery stream and the development of projects using international legal instruments in the field of combating political corruption. Her husband, Oryst Rudyi, was also among the co-founders of AntAC.

The Anti-Corruption Action Center has been exposing high-level corruption in Ukraine since 2012, promoting key anti-corruption legislation, and defending anti-corruption institutions.

247 Yulia Yurchenko (Yuliia Rianicheva), Facebook post, 25 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1ABkK5Lsgf/>

248 Daria Kaleniuk, Facebook post, 1 October 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Pa8tTtcYQ/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

249 Kartochnyi Ofis, Telegram post, 26 August 2025. URL: https://t.me/office_ua/7227; Kartochnyi Ofis, Telegram post, 27 August 2025. URL: https://t.me/office_ua/7235; “Vony Kradut”, YouTube video, 27 August 2025. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/GFS6CCTsjMU>; Kartochnyi Ofis, Telegram post, 22 September 2025. URL: https://t.me/office_ua/7465

250 Interview with Daria Kaleniuk, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 2 October 2025.

#privacy_violation
#persecution
#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Daryna Shevchenko



■ Media professional Daryna Shevchenko.
Photo: Facebook

On 29 September 2025, in Kyiv, an unidentified man came to the building of Daryna Shevchenko, Executive Director of The Kyiv Independent, and attempted to gather information about her. He questioned neighbours, showed them a photo of Shevchenko, and photographed the entrance to the building and the apartment door on the floor where the journalist lives. The incident was reported²⁵¹ by The Kyiv Independent's editor-in-chief, **Olha Rudenko**. She also published surveillance footage from cameras installed in Daryna Shevchenko's building, which showed the man's face. Following public attention, journalists from the Schemes (Skhemy) project of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty identified the man using facial recognition tools²⁵². He turned out to be an SSU officer, Oleksandr H., born in 2000.

In response to journalists' inquiries, the Security Service of Ukraine confirmed that the man was an SSU officer; however, it stated that his presence at the specified address was related to another case and did not concern Daryna Shevchenko. On 1 October 2025, the SSU invited representatives of The Kyiv Independent to a meeting and reiterated this account.

At the same time, according to Olha Rudenko and Daryna Shevchenko, the key discrepancy remains the testimonies of neighbours who stated that the man showed them a photo of Daryna Shevchenko specifically²⁵³. The SSU denies this.

The editorial team of The Kyiv Independent suggested that the incident may be linked to Shevchenko's professional activities and the outlet's journalistic investigations. In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Daryna Shevchenko stated that the events caused her concern in light of previous instances of pressure on the newsroom by law enforcement agencies²⁵⁴. On 30 September 2025, Daryna Shevchenko filed a complaint with the police regarding harassment. On the same day, in response to an inquiry from Detector Media, the spokesperson of the National Police of Ukraine, Yuliia Hirdvylyis, stated that law enforcement had registered the incident and was conducting a review²⁵⁵.

Daryna Shevchenko is a journalist and media manager. Since 2021, she has been the Executive Director of The Kyiv Independent. Previously, she headed the Media Development Foundation, led the investigations department of the ZIK TV channel, and worked as an executive producer at the Slidstvo.Info investigative journalism agency.

In August 2025, The Kyiv Independent published an investigation into the company Fire Point, a manufacturer of drones and "Flamingo" missiles. The report concerned possible abuses in public procurement²⁵⁶. It also stated that NABU is investigating Fire Point's activities and examining its

251 Olha Rudenko, Facebook post, 30 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/olga.rudenko/posts/24805402805765522>

252 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Schemes: An SSU Officer Visited the Home of The Kyiv Independent's Executive Director; the Service Says It Was Unrelated to Any Case", 1 October 2025. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-skhemy-kyiv-independent-pratsivnyk-sbu/33546035.html>

253 Olha Rudenko, Facebook post, 1 October 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/olga.rudenko/posts/24813715484934254>

254 Interview with Daryna Shevchenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 3 October 2025.

255 Detector Media, "Unknown Man Collected Information about The Kyiv Independent's Executive Director near Her Home. UPDATED", 30 September 2025. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/244544/2025-09-30-nevidomyy-cholovik-zbyrav-informatsiyu-pro-vykonavchu-dyrektorku-the-kyiv-independent-bilya-ii-budynku-onovleno/>

256 The Kyiv Independent, "Exclusive: Maker of Ukraine's New Flamingo Cruise Missile Facing Corruption Probe", 29 August 2025. URL: <https://kyivindependent.com/exclusive-maker-of-ukraines-prized-flamingo-cruise-missile-facing-corruption-probe/>

alleged ties to businessman Timur Mindich. Following the publication, the newsroom received letters from company representatives threatening lawsuits and appeals to the SSU²⁵⁷.

#interference_with_professional_activity #discreditation

Tetiana Suprunova



■ Tetiana Suprunova. Collage: Channel 33

On 1 October 2025, in Vinnytsia, the administration of the **National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia (VNMU)** issued an order to re-dismiss **Tetiana Suprunova**, Associate Professor at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Head of the NGO Agronomichne without corruption. Public control.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Suprunova stated that she learned about her dismissal by chance on 2 October 2025 – the day of elections to the Academic Council of the university, for which she was running as an independent candidate²⁵⁸. The administration of VNMU cited “unauthorised absence” as the formal ground for dismissal, which Suprunova

denies²⁵⁹. In her view, the administration sought to prevent her participation in the elections in this way and to retaliate against her for systematically publicly criticising the university leadership, in particular regarding possible corruption abuses and alleged plagiarism in academic works.

At the beginning of November 2025, Tetiana Suprunova filed a claim against the National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia for declaring unlawful and cancelling the dismissal order, reinstatement in her position, and recovery of average wages for the period of forced absence. As of December 2025, the case is still being heard by the Vinnytsia District Court of Vinnytsia region²⁶⁰.

Previously, in 2024, Suprunova had already been dismissed from her position at VNMU. However, on 4 July 2025, the Vinnytsia District Court reinstated her, finding the university administration’s claims unfounded. After her reinstatement and returning to work on 2 September 2025, according to the activist, the university administration systematically obstructed her professional duties. In particular, she was not allowed to conduct classes with students, was not included in the timetable, was not given the opportunity to undergo a mandatory medical examination, and was restricted in access to patients.

According to Suprunova, during 2024–2025 she has been subjected to systematic pressure related to her anti-corruption activities. For example, in 2025 she initiated an investigation into possible abuses during joint replacement surgeries at the National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia. On this basis, the Vinnytsia District Prosecutor’s Office opened criminal proceedings²⁶¹ on the grounds of abuse of power²⁶². As the head of the NGO Agronomichne without corruption. Public control, Suprunova appealed to the VNMU administration with a demand to stop submitting reports to the National Health Service of Ukraine that, in her view, did not comply with the terms of the contract.

However, on 27 August 2025, she publicly reported that the university continued to include in its reporting cases of joint replacement surgeries that are not subject to reimbursement under current

257 Olha Rudenko, Facebook post, 2 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/olga.rudenko/posts/pfbid0kQ3Xhjoo4BMBb8tCir19bLcgdsdy8QRiNQD5nrtXqERJjpW6gE4yiSNcMpTyG8HhI>

258 Interview with Tetiana Suprunova, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 20 October 2025.

259 Tetiana Suprunova, Facebook post, 2 October 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Dg8ZSkhDK/>

260 Ruling of 10 October 2025 in case No. 128/4430/25. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/131688499>

261 Information entered into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations (URPI) under No. 42025022110000398 of 21 October 2025.

262 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 364 – Abuse of Power or Office. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

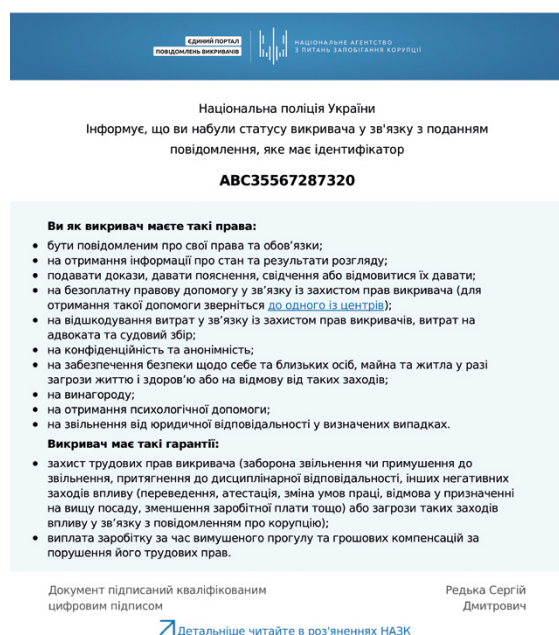
legislation²⁶³. In response to Suprunova's official request, the National Health Service of Ukraine (NHSU) stated that as of 27 June 2025, the possibility of paying for medical services for joint replacement surgeries had been excluded for state healthcare institutions that are not included in the approved list of facilities providing such services free of charge. VNMU is not included in this list²⁶⁴. In other words, the university may provide such procedures exclusively as officially paid services. However, according to Suprunova, patients were forced to purchase prostheses on their own, which effectively created an illegal "shadow" paid service under the cover of the university administration. In addition, Suprunova publicly reported on possible private legal practice by two VNMU legal advisers during working hours, which became the basis for opening criminal proceedings²⁶⁵ on the grounds of possible misappropriation of budget funds by VNMU officials²⁶⁶.

Tetiana Suprunova is an Associate Professor at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia, and Head of the NGO Agronomichne without corruption. Public control. She holds whistleblower status²⁶⁷, granted in connection with a report concerning possible inaccurate asset declarations by the Rector of the National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia, Viktoriia Petrushenko²⁶⁸. Suprunova's activities are aimed at identifying violations in the healthcare sector, in particular at the National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia (VNMU) and other institutions.

Previously, the university administration exerted pressure on another member of the NGO Agronomichne without corruption. Public control, Tetiana Suprunova's husband, senior lecturer Kostiantyn Suprunov.

#interference_with_professional_activity

Kostiantyn Suprunov



On 25 April 2025, in Vinnytsia, the administration of the National Pirogov Memorial Medical University in Vinnytsia dismissed **Kostiantyn Suprunov**, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Normal Physiology and member of the NGO Agronomichne without corruption. Public control²⁶⁹. The reason for dismissal was his reports concerning alleged corruption offences at the university. Prior to this, he had worked at the institution for 30 years.

On 23 December 2024, Suprunov submitted a complaint regarding possible corruption abuses by the administration of VNMU through the Unified Whistleblower Reporting Portal²⁷⁰. The complaint concerned systemic practices of bribery, pressure on employees, and violations of university governance procedures. As a result of these reports, Suprunov was granted whistleblower status.

263 Tetiana Suprunova, Facebook post, 27 August 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17MwZYgMf9/>

264 Tetiana Suprunova published an electronic copy of the response from the National Health Service of Ukraine on her personal Facebook page on 27 August 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17MwZYgMf9/>

265 Information entered into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations (URPI) under No. 42025022110000341 of 13 August 2025, Vinnytsia District Police Department of the Main Directorate of the National Police in Vinnytsia Region.

266 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 191(4) – Misappropriation, Embezzlement or Acquisition of Property through Abuse of Office (committed on a large scale or under martial law or a state of emergency). URL: <https://surl.li/nifenf>

267 Tetiana Suprunova has whistleblower status, confirmed by a letter from the NACP dated 2 October 2025 No. 223-01/81022-25.

268 Information entered into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations (URPI) under No. 42025022110000312 of 4 July 2024 following a report by whistleblower Tetiana Suprunova, Vinnytsia District Prosecutor's Office.

269 Order of Pirogov Vinnytsia National Medical University No. 267/k/tr of 25 April 2025.

270 Kostiantyn Suprunov, Corruption Report No. 410/2024 of 23 December 2024.

According to the activist²⁷¹, after the university administration became aware of his complaint, disciplinary and administrative pressure began to be applied against him. Subsequently, the administration initiated a competition to fill senior lecturer positions at the department, opening only one position out of the three available. Despite Suprunov submitting all required documents, the conditions of the competition were changed, which, according to him, made his reappointment impossible and became the basis for his subsequent dismissal.

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Priama Diia activist (anonymity preserved)

At the beginning of October 2025 individuals who identified themselves as SSU officers visited the educational institution of a **Priama Diia** activist (name withheld) in **Kyiv** and inquired about her. This became known on 14 October, when the activist's associates from the Independent Student Trade Union Priama Diia contacted the Human Rights Centre ZMINA.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, the activist stated that she learned about the incident only a week later from a lecturer at the college where she studies (the name of the student and the educational institution are not disclosed)²⁷². The visit by individuals who identified themselves as SSU officers likely took place between 6 and 10 October. According to the lecturer, the officers were interested in the girl's personal data, including her place of residence, information about her parents, banking history, academic performance, and her civic stance. At the same time, they did not leave any summonses or official requests for the student, and it is also unknown whether they presented any identification.

The victim is a member of the Independent Student Trade Union Priama Diia, which works on protecting students' rights, developing student self-governance, and countering discrimination²⁷³.

According to the girl, she was not actively involved in the activities of the trade union and only took part in several student protests in July 2025, including rallies in support of the independence of NABU and SAPO and against the possible appointment of Member of Parliament Andrii Vitrenko as Minister of Education and Science. The victim believes that the interest from law enforcement agencies may have been linked precisely to these events and to an attempt to identify the organisers of the protests.

#physical_attack

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Vira Chernyhina

On 11 October 2025, in Kharkiv, an unidentified man attacked LGBTIQ+ activist **Vira Chernyhina**. The incident occurred at around 21:35 at Levada metro station, when the activist was returning home²⁷⁴.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Chernyhina stated that the attacker noticed rainbow LGBTIQ+ symbols on her belongings, after which he began following her²⁷⁵. He asked whether she belonged to the LGBTIQ+ community, stated that he was "right-wing", and later began threatening her with rape and the use of a firearm. According to the victim, the man blocked her path, physically stopped her by holding her shoulder, and pointed an object resembling a pistol at her face, repeatedly threatening to "shoot". When Chernyhina began calling for help, the attacker fled. That same evening, Chernyhina contacted the metro police, and, according to her, law enforcement officers began searching for the attacker near the metro station. Due to the approaching curfew, she filed a written complaint the following day – 12 October 2025 – at the metro police department of the Main Directorate of the National Police in Kharkiv region. According to the victim, during the registration of her complaint, law enforcement officers intended to classify the incident as a "conflict", while she insisted it should be

271 Interview with Kostiantyn Suprunov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 23 January 2026.

272 Interview with victim No. 16.10.25 (name withheld), conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 14 October 2025.

273 Independent Student Trade Union Priama Diia, website. URL: <https://www.priama-diia.org/>

274 KharkivPride, Instagram post, 13 October 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPv6VNtDDa1/>

275 Online interview with Vira Chernyhina, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 14 October 2025.

classified as an attack. The teams of KharkivPride and KyivPride, where Chernyhina works, insisted on classifying the case under Article 161 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine as a crime committed on the grounds of intolerance²⁷⁶.



■ Activist Vira Chernyhina. Photo: Facebook

According to Chernyhina, law enforcement officers later insisted on her repeated in-person appearance at the police station to provide testimony, which she perceived as an attempt at pressure or reclassification of the offence. The victim expressed her willingness to cooperate with the investigation remotely and noted that, in her view, the investigation is being delayed, in particular due to the improper use of CCTV footage from the metro station.

Vira Chernyhina is an LGBTIQ+ activist, co-organiser of the KharkivPride and KyivPride initiatives, and a member of the board of the Kharkiv women's association Sphere²⁷⁷, which works on human rights protection, the promotion of gender equality, and inclusivity.

#physical_assault #interference_with_civil_society_organisations

Student Trade Union Priama Diia

On 24 October 2025, in Lviv, during a public discussion at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, an attack took place against members of the independent student trade union **Priama Diia**. The incident occurred in room 216 of the university's main building during an event dedicated to discussing the creation of an open student space²⁷⁸.



■ Photo of the attackers.
Photo provided by the student trade union

As Maksym Shumakov, a member of Priama Diia, stated in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, around 25 people took part in the event – members of Priama Diia and other students. Half an hour after it began, at around 15:30, a group of unidentified young men entered the room, some of whom

276 NV, "‘Mentally Terrified’: Unknown Attack on LGBT+ Activist Vira Chernyhina in Kharkiv", 13 October 2025. URL: <https://nv.ua/ukr/socium/napad-na-viru-chemiginu-v-metro-levada-policija-vidkrila-provadzhennya-50552247.htm>

277 Kharkiv Women's Association "Sphere", website. URL: <https://www.sphere.org.ua/>

278 Priama Diia, Facebook post, 24 October 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/priama.diia/posts/pfbid0vyQ5RckG8Pz9zFUTQ87NWXHuABCJ6HbrHPpz83bN4VH5nL2g7aQ8Mg3fqJbfzppZl>

had symbols resembling those used by far-right groups²⁷⁹. They later blocked the exit from the room and prevented participants from leaving the premises. One of the attackers went on stage, introduced himself as Markiyan, and began stating that the independent student trade union Priama Diia “should not exist” in Lviv²⁸⁰. During the incident, the attackers used a Nazi salute and engaged in clashes with university security and students²⁸¹. Several people sustained physical injuries. According to Shumakov, one of the attackers had a gas canister as well as a knife, which he used to threaten those present.

The participants of the meeting called the police. After law enforcement officers arrived, some of the attackers were detained, although one of the alleged organisers managed to escape. Later, a man arrived at the university who introduced himself as the head of the Lviv regional headquarters of Right Sector. According to witnesses, he defended the attackers and gave them instructions. On the same day, law enforcement officers brought part of the attackers and representatives of the Priama Diia trade union to the Lviv District Police Department No. 1 of the Main Directorate of the National Police in the Lviv region. One of the trade union representatives who sustained bodily injuries (name withheld) filed a complaint, after which criminal proceedings were opened under Part 2 of Article 296 of the CC of Ukraine (“Hooliganism”) and information was entered into the URPI. The following day, a complaint was filed under Article 170 of the CC of Ukraine (“Obstruction of lawful activities of civic organisations”).

The independent student trade union Priama Diia works on protecting students’ rights, developing student self-governance, and countering discrimination. The organisation’s representatives believe that the attack may have been motivated by their activities in support of LGBTIQ+ students and the promotion of gender equality.

#interference_with_civil_society_organisations #intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

NGO Insight

On 19 November 2025 a group of men disrupted an educational event organised by the regional branch of NGO Insight in Zaporizhzhia²⁸². The lecture on overcoming prejudice against the LGBTIQ+ community was scheduled to take place at Zaporizhzhia National University, and the speaker was the branch coordinator **Olesia Meike**.

For security reasons, information about the exact location was kept confidential until the start of the event; however, the announcement was circulated in Telegram channels of the university faculties. It is likely that as a result, the information became known to third parties.

Around 16:00, simultaneously with the start of the lecture, an unidentified man joined the online broadcast and aggressively demanded to “wait for someone else”. His behaviour was overly emotional and insistent, causing concern among the organisers. At approximately 16:20, a crowd formed at the entrance to the lecture hall. According to eyewitnesses, several men deliberately blocked the doors and prevented attendees from entering²⁸³. Later, two of them forced their way into the room, blocked the exit, and effectively held those present inside, demanding explanations regarding the “public benefit” of the event and the “values” that, in their view, the organisers were promoting. The attackers recorded participants on video and transmitted the footage to third parties online. One of them behaved as if he were under the influence of drugs. At the same time, the man who had joined the online broadcast issued threats against lecture participants, stating that “he would kill for something like that”. When a university security guard attempted to enter the room, the attackers physically resisted. After the police arrived, the men claimed that the educational event allegedly “violated their rights” and “imposed foreign ideas”. The law enforcement officers did not detain them.

279 Interview with Maksym Shumakov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 27 October 2025.

280 ZMINA, “Unknown Individuals Attack Members of the Priama Diia Trade Union during a Public Discussion at Ivan Franko University”, 26 October 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/na-uchasnykiv-profspilky-pryama-diia-pid-chas-publichnoyi-dyskusiyi-v-universyteti-franka-napaly-nevidomi/>

281 Priama Diia, Telegram post, 25 October 2025. URL: https://t.me/priama_diia_lnu/242

282 NGO Insight LGBTQ, Facebook post, 20 November 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ACmSft2KF/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

283 Interview with Olesia Meike, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 26 November 2025.

As a result of the incident, the lecture did not take place. Three participants, including the coordinator of NGO Insight, Olesia Meike, filed a complaint with the police regarding the offence. During the acceptance of the complaint, the police officer expressed doubts about the need to record the incident and disagreed with its classification as a hate-motivated crime. After additional explanations regarding the attackers' motives, their statements, and available video evidence, the complaint was accepted; however, no information was entered into the URPI.

Insight is a non-governmental organisation that upholds the principles of equality, freedom, inclusivity, and diversity for all social groups. It provides resource support to members of the LGBTIQ+ community, protects their rights, and promotes the ideas of feminism and gender equality. Since 2008, NGO Insight has been operating in Kyiv, and since 2015 – it has been developing regional LGBTIQ+ initiatives.

#legal_persecution

Svitlana Kuraksina

On 21 November 2025, LLC “Karyer-Osnova” submitted an application to the Slobidskyi District Prosecutor’s Office of Kharkiv requesting the opening of criminal proceedings under Part 2 of Article 206 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (“Obstruction of lawful business activity”)²⁸⁴ against civil activist Svitlana Kuraksina, alleging that her actions supposedly obstruct the company’s lawful economic activity. On 8 December 2025, the Slobidskyi District Court ordered the Prosecutor’s Office to enter the relevant information from the application of LLC “Karyer-Osnova” into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations²⁸⁵. These legal actions bear the hallmarks of a strategic lawsuit against public participation (SLAPP).



■ Activist Svitlana Kuraksina.
Photo provided by the activist

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Kuraksina stated that she links these proceedings to her environmental protection activities. In particular, to the public exposure of possible violations in the field of subsoil use and her active involvement in protecting recreational forest areas in the city of Kharkiv.

On 22 August 2024, the publication Glavkom published an opinion piece by Svitlana Kuraksina titled “There is a war in Kharkiv... for the forest”²⁸⁶, in which she publicly presented facts of deforestation within Kharkiv, which, according to her, belongs to Emerald Network sites, and linked these actions to the activities of LLC “Karyer-Osnova”, which allegedly attempted to expand a sand quarry at the expense of a recreational forest area.

During 2024–2025, Kuraksina systematically appealed to state authorities, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, the Kharkiv Regional Military Administration, members of parliament, the NACP, and the SBI, reporting possible violations of environmental and land legislation. She also participated in public hearings, submitted comments on environmental impact assessment reports, and publicly commented on the situation in the media.

On 9 May and 19 May 2025, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine issued orders refusing to grant environmental impact assessment conclusions to LLC “Karyer-

284 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 206(2) – Obstruction of Lawful Economic Activity. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

285 Ruling of 8 December 2025 in case No. 641/9160/25. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/132421314>

286 Glavkom, “There Is a War in Kharkiv... for the Forest”, 22 August 2024. URL: <https://glavkom.ua/publications/u-kharkovi-jde-vijna-za-lis-1016663.html>

Osnova” and its affiliated company LLC “Raysys Ukraine”, which effectively made it impossible to expand their extraction activities in the recreational zone of Kharkiv²⁸⁷.

After this, according to Svitlana Kuraksina, during the summer and autumn of 2025 she was subjected to psychological pressure, and subsequently legal measures were taken against her.

Svitlana Kuraksina is an environmental activist, head of the NGO Hranitel, and a member of the civic initiative “Holka”. She opposes illegal logging in Kharkiv, in particular within Emerald Network areas – part of the pan-European system of sites of special conservation value.

#privacy_violation

Andriy Kulykov, Yurii Nikolov, Volodymyr Fedorin, Olha Chaika, Yurii Butusov, Maryna Ansiforova, Stanislav Rechynskyi

On 15 December 2025, the Chair of the parliamentary committee on freedom of speech, Yaroslav Yurchyshyn, published a list of journalists on whom figures involved in the energy-sector corruption case “Midas” had been compiling dossiers²⁸⁸. He received the list from the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine in response to a parliamentary inquiry.

According to NABU, among those who were subjected to unlawful surveillance were: **Maryna Ansiforova** (Cosa Intelligence Solutions, Liga Zakon); **Yurii Butusov** (military officer and editor-in-chief of Censor.net); **Stanislav Rechynskyi** (editor-in-chief of Obozrevatel-related outlet “ORD”); **Volodymyr Fedorin** (editor-in-chief of Forbes Ukraine); **Olha Chaika** (editor of Forbes Ukraine); **Yurii Nikolov** (co-founder of the Nashi Hroshi project); **Andriy Kulykov** (Chair of the Commission on Journalism Ethics, host of Hromadske Radio). In addition, investigators found dossiers on two deceased journalists: the founder of Dzerkalo Tyzhnia **Volodymyr Mostovyi** and investigative journalist **Oleksa Shalaiiyskyi**.

According to Yurchyshyn, the existence of such dossiers may constitute a possible interference with private life, which could serve as grounds for opening a criminal case under Article 182 of the CC of Ukraine (“Violation of privacy”)²⁸⁹. However, in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, he noted²⁹⁰, that proceedings can be initiated only if they are triggered by the victims themselves. The Member of Parliament added that journalists can personally contact NABU to find out what exact data was collected about them.

The editor-in-chief of Hromadske Radio, Viktoriia Yermolaieva, stated that the media outlet had appealed to the National Police of Ukraine and the Prosecutor General’s Office with a request to investigate the surveillance of journalists²⁹¹. The Commission on Journalistic Ethics also condemned the collection of information about journalists’ private lives and called for a proper investigation.²⁹²

287 Environment–People–Law (EPL), “Ministry of Environmental Protection Refuses EIA Conclusion for “Karyer Osnova” LLC: Community and Human Rights Defenders Halt Expansion of a Sand Quarry in Kharkiv’s Recreational Zone”, 15 May 2025. URL: <https://epl.org.ua/announces/mindovkillya-vidmovylo-u-vydachi-vysnovku-z-ovd-tov-kar-zer-osnova-gromada-i-pravozahysnyky-zupynyly-rozshyrennya-pishhanogo-kar-zeru-u-rekreatsijnij-zoni-harkova/>; Environment–People–Law (EPL), “Ministry of Environmental Protection Stops Second Sand Extraction Project at Lake Osnovianske in Kharkiv Region: “Raysys Ukraine” LLC Denied EIA Conclusion”, 27 May 2025. URL: <https://epl.org.ua/announces/mindovkillya-zupynylo-drugyj-proyekt-vydobutku-pisku-u-mezhah-ozera-osnov-yanske-na-harkivshhyni-tov-rejsis-ukrayina-otrymalo-vidmovu-u-vysnovku-z-ovd/>

288 Yaroslav Yurchyshyn, Facebook post, 15 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/yaroslav.yurchyshyn/posts/pfbid0KqTtDuIMSEVW2qU6et1X5YjSinnsoyVEQ2tUdMmFtKkKQhRC5X6rtZLZvcStjbGI>

289 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 182 – Violation of Privacy. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

290 Interview with Yaroslav Yurchyshyn, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 16 December 2025.

291 Viktoriia Yermolaieva, Facebook post, 15 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/victoriya.yermolayeva/posts/pfbid0STmWb8uU3irH8amN5QkTY9bcsw7yjZWMtmWxsPugdXJvb99ZCExFptNqfZj7tXYzI>

292 Commission on Journalistic Ethics (CJE), “Statement on Unlawful Surveillance of the Head of the Commission on Journalistic Ethics Andrii Kulykov and Other Journalists”, 16 December 2025. URL: <https://cje.org.ua/statements/zaiava-kzhe-shchodo-nezakonnoho-stezhennia-za-holovoiu-komisii-z-zhurnalistskoi-etyky-andriem-kulykovym-y-inshymy-zhurnalistamy/>

The editor of Forbes Ukraine, Kateryna Shapoval, reacted to Yurchyshyn's post²⁹³. She recalled that in December 2024, after the outlet published a series of materials on corruption in the energy sector²⁹⁴, Olha Chaika first, and later other journalists, became victims of cyberattacks. These included hacking of bank accounts, mass SMS campaigns, and anonymous email threats. During an internal investigation, the newsroom found that shortly before this, personal data of Forbes Ukraine journalists had been sold on darknet forums. The perpetrators of the attacks were not identified, but traces of servers linked to Russia were discovered. Among the two main versions, the newsroom considered a possible link between the attacks and a court case between Forbes Ukraine and the state enterprise Energoatom, which was ongoing at the time. In turn, the founding editor of Forbes Ukraine, Volodymyr Fedorin, stated that the attention to the outlet's work by people who "de facto privatised Ukraine's energy sector" indicates that Forbes Ukraine is perceived as a threat by individuals involved in corrupt schemes. He added that he plans to contact NABU to review the materials and is consulting lawyers on further steps²⁹⁵.

Journalist of LIGA.net, Volodymyr Fomichov, presented his view on the pressure on journalists²⁹⁶. He noted that Olha Chaika is the editor of the Energy section, so interest in her appears entirely logical. In contrast, dossiers on his colleague Maryna Ansiforova may have been compiled during the period when she was conducting OSINT training for journalists at Cosa Intelligence Solutions. Ansiforova herself agreed with this hypothesis²⁹⁷. In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, journalist Yuriy Nikolov stated that he has faced pressure for many years due to his investigations in the defence and energy sectors²⁹⁸. He added that he does not plan to report the incident to law enforcement, explaining this by a lack of trust, as the investigation into the attack on his apartment has not been completed since the beginning of 2024²⁹⁹. Nikolov also noted that the dossiers found on journalists who have already died indicate a lack of competence among those who collected the information.

According to the Chair of the Commission on Journalistic Ethics, Andriy Kulykov, pressure and surveillance of journalists in Ukraine occur systematically, under any government³⁰⁰. He stated that he plans to contact NABU to find out what data was collected about him. In the event that unlawful surveillance is confirmed, the journalist will file a complaint with law enforcement authorities. The editor-in-chief of ORD, Stanislav Rechynskyi, expressed scepticism regarding the prospects of an investigation in this case³⁰¹. In his view, Ukraine still lacks effective mechanisms for holding perpetrators accountable for illegal surveillance of journalists, while authorities and security structures may impose sanctions on media professionals. In addition, Rechynskyi recalled cases of blocking media resources without a court decision, including the blocking of the ORD website in March 2025 at the request of the SSU.

At the beginning of 2026, Yaroslav Yurchyshyn reported that the Solomianskyi Police Department in Kyiv had opened criminal proceedings into the possible surveillance by figures in the "Midas" case of the above-mentioned journalists³⁰². The offence is preliminarily qualified³⁰³ under Part 1 of Article

293 Katerina Shapoval, Facebook post, 15 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/katerina.shapoval/posts/pfbid0MEJdyKqEEf8HBtCv9C98HXZ4YHakartovDVsuZuJHk9HjBtXLTGXQPEw1yBnB4Ml>

294 Forbes Ukraine, "'Energoatom' Publicly Accuses Forbes Ukraine of Lying and Provides Arguments to Support This Claim. We Verified Them. Who Lied?", 12 August 2024. URL: <https://forbes.ua/company/energoatom-publichno-zvinuvativ-forbes-ukraine-u-brekhni-ta-naviv-argumenti-yaki-b-tse-pidtvirditi-mi-perevirili-ikh-na-dostovirnist-khto-zbrekhav-12082024-22958>

295 Interview with Volodymyr Fedorin, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 18 December 2025.

296 Volodymyr Fomichov, Facebook post, 16 December 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/volodymyr.fomichov.2025/posts/pfbid0WVqXa6H3Wh9henjYogXvLo7FSjr7N2XkUuPyehMgSsuAiy4piLHdfpU5tKABNmC5l>

297 Interview with Maryna Ansiforova, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 17 December 2025.

298 Interview with Yuriy Nikolov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 16 December 2025.

299 Institute of Mass Information, "Police Identify Five Men Who Tried to Break into Nikolov's Apartment (Photo)", 21 January 2024. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/news/politsiya-vstanovyla-p-yatoh-cholovikiv-yaki-lomylysya-u-kvartyr-nikolova-i58630>; Institute of Mass Information, "Nikolov Reports That Police Released Five Individuals Who Tried to Break into His Apartment", 26 January 2024. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/news/nikolov-povidomyv-shho-politsiya-vidpustyla-p-yatoh-uchasnykiv-yaki-lomylys-u-jogo-kvartyr-i58799>

300 Interview with Andrii Kulykov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 16 December 2025.

301 Interview with Stanislav Rechynskyi, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 21 December 2025.

302 Yaroslav Yurchyshyn, Telegram post, 8 January 2026. URL: https://t.me/yar_yurchyshyn/5349

303 Information entered into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations under No. 12026105090000009.

182 of the CC of Ukraine (“Violation of privacy”)³⁰⁴. The suspects may have unlawfully monitored journalists and collected information about their whereabouts, movements, personal contacts, and other data.³⁰⁵

Earlier, on 25 November 2025, NABU detective Oleksandr Abakumov stated that in the “back office” of Ukrainian businessman Timur Mindich, who is suspected of organising a large-scale corruption scheme in the energy sector and receiving undue advantage from counterparties of JSC “NNEGC Energoatom”, a set of 527 records containing restricted personal data about NABU detectives, MPs, officials, journalists, and law enforcement officers was discovered³⁰⁶.

According to Abakumov, the dossiers contained residential addresses, passport data, and other restricted information. He also suggested that these documents were compiled with the involvement of law enforcement agencies. Some of the records were created five days before the attack on NABU and SAPO on 17 July 2025.

CASES RELATED TO RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

#killings_of_civilians

Pavlo Matviiets



■ Volunteer Pavlo Matviiets.
Photo: Roman Mrochko/Telegram

On 1 January 2025, in Kherson, volunteer Pavlo Matviiets, a member of the team of the NGO Strong Because Free, was killed as a result of Russian shelling. According to the Kherson District Prosecutor’s Office³⁰⁷, a pre-trial investigation has been initiated into the death of Pavlo Matviiets in criminal proceedings on the grounds of a war crime³⁰⁸.

The deputy head of the Kherson District Military Administration and volunteer Yulian Luchko stated that he last saw Pavlo at the end of 2024 during volunteer activities – in particular, when the team was sandbagging the windows of one of the city’s libraries in order to increase the safety of the space for children’s events³⁰⁹.

Pavlo Matviiets assisted residents of Kherson who were affected by Russian attacks. He delivered household appliances, food, and hygiene kits, and also took part in clearing rubble and removing construction debris after shelling, in cooperation with staff of the Kherson City Military Administration³¹⁰. He helped mitigate the consequences of Russian shelling and the aftermath of

304 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 182(1) – Violation of Privacy; Unlawful Collection, Storage, Use, Destruction or Dissemination of Confidential Personal Information. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

305 Yaroslav Yurchyshyn, Facebook post, 11 February 2026. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/yaroslav.yurchyshyn/posts/pfbid02PpgjBwZdL6TCV5Eq73ZARyQDphMLuKRN9e6uFdZDg8VuNe8NnYkfA9PbD8P3qXT7I>

306 ZMINA, “527 Dossiers on Detectives, Officials and Journalists Found among Suspects in the “Midas” Case – Abakumov”, 25 November 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/u-figurativ-spravy-midas-znajshly-527-dosye-na-detektyviv-posadovciv-i-zhurnalistiv-abakumov/>; Zaliznyi Nardep, YouTube channel of MP Yaroslav Yurchyshyn, 25 November 2025. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/live/HhN1T-4wdBs>

307 Kherson Regional Prosecutor’s Office, Telegram post, 1 January 2025. URL: <https://t.me/phogovua/5780?single>

308 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 438(1)(2) – Violation of the Laws and Customs of War. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

309 Yulian Luchko, Facebook post, 1 January 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Kirte1Qtk/>

310 ZMINA, “Volunteer Pavlo Matviiets Killed in Kherson as a Result of Russian Shelling”, 3 January 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/u-hersoni-cherez-rosijskij-obstril-zagynuv-volonter-pavlo-matviyec/>

the destruction of the Kakhovka HPP, and cooperated with local authorities and humanitarian initiatives. At the time of his death, Pavlo was 23 years old.

#killings_of_civilians

Iryna Bairaichenko



■ Iryna Bairachenko holding a certificate of appreciation for her volunteer work from the head of the Military Administration.
Photo: Roman Mrochko/Telegram

On 13 January 2025, as a result of a Russian artillery shelling of the **Kherson region**, volunteer **Iryna Bairaichenko**, a resident of the village of **Kindiyka** – a suburb of Kherson, was injured³¹¹. She sustained shrapnel wounds to her leg and was hospitalised in a serious condition to the intensive care unit. Despite medical assistance provided, on the night of 14 January 2025, Iryna Bairaichenko died in hospital³¹².

Iryna Bairaichenko was engaged in volunteer work, providing assistance to Ukrainian military personnel and civilians. In particular, she prepared food for soldiers, washed their clothes, baked bread and delivered it to elderly people with limited mobility, and also took care of stray animals.

A month before Bairaichenko's death, the then head of the Kherson City Military Administration, Roman Mrochko, presented her with a letter of appreciation "for her stance, patriotism and kind heart"³¹³.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Ukrainian Red Cross Society

On 22 January 2025, in **Sloviansk, Donetsk region**, as a result of another Russian shelling, the base of the rapid response units of the humanitarian organisation **Ukrainian Red Cross Society**, which operate within the humanitarian mission "East", was damaged for the third time³¹⁴. The organisation's rented office building was struck by an enemy UAV³¹⁵. At the time of the incident, a rotation team of volunteers of the "East" mission consisting of 11 people was present at the base. The volunteers themselves were not injured; however, the building and the surrounding area sustained significant damage.

The organisation emphasised that the shelling of a humanitarian mission facility constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law, which prohibits attacks on civilian objects and humanitarian organisations. The Ukrainian Red Cross condemned these actions and stated that it would continue its humanitarian activities despite security risks.

311 Roman Mrochko, Telegram post, 15 January 2025. URL: https://t.me/roman_mrochko/14055; Kherson City Military Administration, Telegram post, 15 January 2025. URL: https://t.me/kherson_miskrada/44529

312 Suspilne Kherson, "Volunteer Iryna Bairachenko from the Kherson Suburb of Kindiyka Killed in a Russian Attack; the 42-Year-Old Woman Died in Hospital", 15 January 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/925761-dopomagala-zsu-litnim-ludam-ta-tvarinam-cerez-ataku-rf-zaginula-volonterka-z-peredmista-hersona-irina-bajracenko/>

313 Ukrinform, "Volunteer Injured in Shelling on 13 January Dies in Kherson Region", 15 January 2025. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/3948865-na-hersonsini-pomerla-volonterka-poranena-vnaslidok-obstrilu-13-sicna.html>

314 Ukrainian Red Cross, Facebook post, 31 January 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17wYASUyHV/>

315 Radio Svoboda, "Russian Forces Strike Red Cross Base in Sloviansk, Damage Reported", 31 January 2025. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-chervonyy-khrest-viyna-rosiya-ahresiya-obstril/33298638.html>; Censor.NET, "Ukrainian Red Cross Base in Sloviansk Hit by Shelling for the Third Time", 31 January 2025. URL: <https://censor.net/ua/n3533319>



■ Damaged premises of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society.
Photo: Facebook

The Ukrainian Red Cross Society is an organisation that operates exclusively on government-controlled territory of Ukraine, in compliance with Ukrainian legislation and in coordination with state and local authorities. The Ukrainian Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the world's largest humanitarian organisation.

The rapid response units of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society participate in humanitarian operations providing first aid, medical-social and psychosocial support, evacuating people affected by emergencies, organising temporary shelters for those affected by emergencies, and setting up food distribution points, among other activities.

#injuries_of_civilians

Edward Scott



■ Damaged vehicle of volunteers. Photo: Facebook

On 30 January 2025, in Pokrovsk, Donetsk region, a Russian FPV drone with a shaped charge struck an armoured Fiat Ducato vehicle of the Base UA volunteer organisation during an evacuation mission³¹⁶. As a result of the attack, **British volunteer Edward Scott**, who was driving the vehicle, sustained serious injuries³¹⁷.

The incident occurred at around 12:50 during the evacuation of civilians. The UAV strike caused severe injuries to the driver's left arm and left leg, leaving him unable to drive the vehicle. The team's mission coordinator, Pylyp Rozhdestvenskyi, sustained minor shrapnel wounds but was able to quickly assess the situation and provide first aid to the injured person, including applying tourniquets. Two evacuated individuals sustained non-critical shrapnel injuries.

For further evacuation, crew members stopped a military pickup truck equipped with electronic warfare systems. With the consent of the serviceman, the injured volunteer was transferred to the cargo compartment of this vehicle and transported to the village of Hryshyne in Donetsk region, where the convoy stopped to coordinate with a medical evacuation point. Approximately 20 minutes after the attack, Edward Scott was handed over to medics and transported to a stabilisation point.

The initial medical point was unable to admit Scott, and he had to be transported directly to a hospital, with additional stabilisation measures carried out en route. The volunteer was delivered there at 14:40. Medical personnel made every effort to save Edward's limbs, but due to the severity of the injuries, doctors were forced to perform amputations: of the left leg above the knee and a high amputation of the

316 base_ua_ngo, Instagram post, 2 February 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DFjDhPisK3N/>

317 ZMINA, "British Volunteer Injured in Russian Shelling in Pokrovsk While Working with the NGO Baza UA Has Left Arm and Leg Amputated", 3 February 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/brytanskomu-volonteru-yakyyj-potrapyv-pid-rosijskyyj-obstril-u-pokrovsku-razom-z-go-baza-ua-amputuvaly-livu-nogu-i-ruku/>

left arm. After the operation, he was transferred to a MOAS (Migrant Offshore Aid Station)³¹⁸ intensive care vehicle and transported to a hospital in the city of Dnipro.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, the founder of the volunteer organisation Base UA, Anton Yaremchuk, stated that for several weeks prior to the incident, Base UA, in cooperation with the mobile operator Vodafone and the organisation East SOS, had been ensuring the operation of generators for two mobile communication base stations in Pokrovsk, enabling residents to use the evacuation hotline³¹⁹. On the morning of 30 January, the Base UA evacuation team departed from Kramatorsk to Pokrovsk in an armoured vehicle that was clearly marked as civilian evacuation transport; all team members wore white reflective vests. The crew followed standard operating procedures, and the vehicle was equipped with personal protective equipment, individual first-aid kits, communication devices, and frequency analysers.

Edward Scott is a volunteer from the United Kingdom who arrived in Ukraine in 2022 and spent more than three years engaged in humanitarian activities, including the evacuation of civilians from front-line areas.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

NGO LGBT Association Liga



■ Photo of the damaged building where the organisation's office was located

On 1 February 2025, in Odesa, as a result of a Russian missile attack, the office premises of the Odesa branch of the **NGO LGBT Association Liga** were damaged³²⁰. As a result of the strike, windows were broken and window frames were blown out. Inside the premises, damage was recorded to office furniture, roller blinds, and part of the equipment³²¹. Team members were not injured during the attack³²².

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, the organisation's representative Oleh Alokhin stated that the organisation had to independently cover the costs of dismantling the damaged windows, as well as significant heating expenses, since during the winter period the premises remained without glass for a prolonged time and were temporarily covered with plastic sheeting³²³. Volunteers helped to mitigate the consequences of the shelling.

In addition, due to the damage to the office, Liga was forced to relocate its document archive to Kyiv. Previously, after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion, the archive had been evacuated from Mykolaiv to Odesa.

On 28 August 2025, as a result of a massive Russian shelling of **Kyiv**, the office premises of the **NGO LGBT Association Liga** in the capital were damaged³²⁴. Fragments of a munition fell approximately 200 metres from the building. The blast wave damaged the ceiling, windows, and doors, which temporarily disrupted the organisation's work.

318 MOAS – an international humanitarian organisation operating in Ukraine since 2022, providing medical evacuation, stabilisation of the wounded, and transportation of patients from frontline areas to hospitals. URL: <https://moas-ukraine.com/about-the-company/>

319 Online interview with Anton Yaremchuk, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in Kyiv on 3 February 2025.

320 LGBT Association LIGA, Facebook post, 2 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1A16JZNao7/>

321 Vitalii Tsariuk, Facebook post, 1 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17XwhP7Co1/>

322 ZMINA, "Office of the LGBT Association Liga Damaged as a Result of a Russian Attack on Odesa", 3 February 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/ofis-lgbt-asocziacziyi-liga-postrazhdav-vnaslidok-rosijskovyi-ataky-po-odesi/>

323 Interview with Oleh Alokhin, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 17 July 2025.

324 Lenny Emson, Facebook post, 29 August 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/lenny.emson/posts/9773146372788828>

NGO LGBT Association Liga is a non-governmental organisation working in the field of human rights protection and countering discrimination and homophobia. It provides services to members of the LGBTIQ+ community, including HIV and viral hepatitis testing, psychological counselling, social support, access to community spaces, as well as humanitarian assistance for LGBTIQ+ people who have found themselves in difficult life circumstances due to the war, including in cooperation with the World Food Programme.

#killings_of_civilians

Anastasiia Kolvakh



■ Volunteer Anastasiia Kolvakh.
Photo: Poltavshchyna online media outlet

On 1 February 2025, in Poltava, actress and volunteer **Anastasiia Kolvakh** was killed as a result of a Russian missile strike on a residential building. Anastasiia was inside the building that sustained a direct hit – one of the entrances was destroyed and a fire broke out. The volunteer died at the scene from the injuries sustained³²⁵.

Anastasiia Kolvakh worked at the Contemporary Dialogue Theatre, co-authored performances and stage productions, and was also a lecturer at the Poltava film club “Kinodvizh”. She took part in the writing club “Pishu zaraz” and volunteered at the art space “Kultura”³²⁶. In addition to her cultural activities, she cared for animals, participated in animal rights initiatives, and planted trees in cooperation with the NGO UAnimals. At the time of her death, she was 30 years old.

#killings_of_civilians

Yevhen Myrhorodskyi



■ Civil activist Yevhen Myrhorodskyi.
Photo: Facebook

On 9 February 2025, as a result of a Russian airstrike on the city of **Kramatorsk**, physical education teacher and civil activist **Yevhen Myrhorodskyi** was killed³²⁷.

Yevhen Myrhorodskyi worked as a physical education teacher at Secondary School No. 11 in Kramatorsk. In 2023, he was awarded the title “Teacher of the Year”³²⁸. In addition to his professional activity, Myrhorodskyi was an active promoter of running in Kramatorsk. He founded the Running Club and launched the Run Day initiative – regular weekly runs in city parks, which attracted both experienced athletes and beginners. His work was aimed at developing mass sports, encouraging community engagement in physical activity, and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

325 grntmedia, Instagram post, 2 February 2025. URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/DFi_ihNtxGM/; “She Was Bright and Vibrant”: Actress and Volunteer Anastasiia Kolvakh Killed in Strike on Poltava. URL: https://24tv.ua/zaginula-nastya-kolvah-shho-vidomo-pro-aktorku-volonterku-novini_n2743384

326 Censor.NET, “Russian Strike on Poltava: Actress and Volunteer Anastasiia Kolvakh Killed”, 2 February 2025. URL: <https://censor.net/ua/p3533552>

327 Kramatorsk City Council, Facebook post, 10 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17s4ZMJ37A/>

328 ZMINA, “Teacher of the Year” and Founder of the Run Day Initiative Yevhen Myrhorodskyi Killed in Airstrike on Kramatorsk”, 11 February 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/unaslidok-aviaudaru-po-kramatorsku-zagynuv-uchytel-roku-zasnovnyk-iniciziatyvy-run-day-yevgen-myrhorodskyi/>; Suspilne Donbas, “He Was Like a Second Father”: Teacher Yevhen Myrhorodskyi, Killed in Shelling on 9 February, Buried in Kramatorsk”, 13 February 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/donbas/947855-buv-ak-drugij-batko-u-kramatorsku-pohovali-vcitela-evgena-mirgorodskogo-akij-zaginuv-vnaslidok-obstrilu-9-lutogo/>

#destruction_or_damage_to_property**The charity foundation Happy Paw**

On 12 February 2025, in Kyiv region (exact location not disclosed), as a result of a Russian strike, a partner warehouse was destroyed, where the charity foundation Happy Paw stored humanitarian pet food for animals from shelters³²⁹. According to the foundation, the attack resulted in the complete loss of the entire stock of food, as well as the destruction of other food items stored in the warehouse³³⁰. No people were injured, as the shelling occurred at night when no staff were present on the premises. Happy Paw noted that the destruction of the warehouse significantly affected its operations: thousands of shelter animals were left at risk of being without food. For the foundation and its partners, this created an additional logistical challenge, the resolution of which required significant financial and human resources. After the incident, the foundation's representatives appealed to the public for financial support to restore humanitarian food supplies and continue assisting animals.

The charity foundation Happy Paw provides assistance to stray animals and animals in shelters, supplies them with food and veterinary care, and supports the operation of animal shelters in various regions of Ukraine.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property**The charitable organisation UAnimals**

■ Damaged UAnimals vehicle.

Photo: Facebook

On 13 February 2025, a Russian FPV drone hit a vehicle belonging to the charitable organisation **UAnimals** during an evacuation mission from front-line areas. The incident occurred near **Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region**. The volunteers were not injured, as the team had stepped out of the vehicle at that moment to collect animals.

According to the organisation, the drone struck a new evacuation minibus carrying out its first mission³³¹. The explosion damaged the front part of the vehicle: the cabin, windshield, and wheel. In addition, another vehicle belonging to the organisation was damaged: several windows were shattered and the doors were deformed. Both vehicles were clearly marked on all sides, including the roof, indicating that they were used for animal evacuation. Although the UAnimals team had previously worked in high-risk conditions, this was the first time it experienced a targeted attack. The strike occurred during the final stage of the evacuation mission – when volunteers were collecting animals from the last planned address. UAnimals representatives noticed the FPV drone flying toward the vehicle and managed to take cover behind a nearby fence. After that, the volunteers transferred most of the animals into a roadworthy vehicle and left the strike site. A few hours later, the team returned to the location accompanied by military personnel and evacuated the animals that had remained in the yard. All animals were successfully transported to safer regions.

329 NV, ““Thousands of Animals Will Be Left Without Food”: Warehouse with Humanitarian Pet Food Destroyed in Russian Attack on Kyiv Region”, 12 February 2025. URL: <https://nv.ua/ukr/socium/ataka-na-kijiv-12-lyutogo-znishcheno-sklad-z-kormom-dlya-bezpritulnih-tvarin-50489470.html>

330 Happy Paw, Facebook post, 12 February 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CEDpmKv1E/>

331 Oleksandr Todorchuk, Facebook post, 13 February 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=9659967117355100&id=100000257229167

The charitable organisation “Charity Foundation UAnimals” began its activities in 2016 as an initiative of Oleksandr Todorchuk, “Circus Without Animals”. Subsequently, UAnimals expanded its areas of work, focusing on combating animal cruelty and on legislative initiatives in the field of animal protection. The organisation provides humanitarian support to shelters, implements sterilisation programmes, and carries out the evacuation of domestic, wild, and farm animals from front-line and dangerous areas. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the team has evacuated more than five thousand animals from front-line areas.

#killings_of_civilians

Tetiana Kulyk



■ Journalist Tetiana Kulyk. Photo: Ukrinform

On the night of **26 February 2025**, journalist **Tetiana Kulyk** and her husband, surgeon Pavlo Ivanchov, were killed as a result of a Russian attack. An enemy drone struck a private house in **the village of Kriukivshchyna in the Kyiv region**, where the couple lived³³². This information was confirmed in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA by former colleagues of the journalist who worked with her at Suspilne, Maksym Kosheliev³³³ and Anna Ivanytska³³⁴.

According to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the UAV strike caused a fire that was extinguished at 01:54. At that time, the body of a deceased person was found at the scene. As a result of search operations that continued until 10:35 in the morning, SES personnel found a second body.³³⁵

Tetiana Kulyk was a journalist at the Ukrinform news agency, author and presenter of the project “The Invincible Nation”, and also served as acting editor-in-chief of the Main Editorial Office for Multimedia Content. Previously, she held the position of editor-in-chief of the editorial office for socio-publicistic programmes and presenter of the “Central Channel” (KDTRK), worked for the World Service of Ukrainian Radio Broadcasting, and was a television presenter for Suspilne Broadcasting. She was a member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

NGO Feldman Ecopark

On the night of **3 March 2025**, near the village of **Lisne in the Kharkiv region**, the **NGO Feldman Ecopark** was damaged as a result of an attack by Russian Shahed-type attack UAVs. The strike destroyed some of the enclosures and killed animals.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Inha Talalai, an employee of the NGO Feldman Ecopark, stated that three drone strikes were recorded that night. One of the drones fell outside the ecopark’s territory, another struck a non-residential building and did not detonate, and a third strike

332 Ukrinform, “Our Colleague, Ukrinform Journalist Tetiana Kulyk, Killed in Russian Drone Attack in Kyiv Region”, 26 February 2025. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3964633-cerez-rosijsku-ataku-droniv-na-kiivsini-zaginula-nasa-kolega-zurnalistka-ukrinformu-tetana-kulik.html>

333 Interview with Maksym Koshelev, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 6 May 2025.

334 Interview with Anna Ivanytska, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 6 May 2025.

335 State Emergency Service of Ukraine (Kyiv Region), Telegram post, 26 February 2025. URL: https://t.me/dsns_kyiv_region/12594

destroyed a contact enclosure where goats were kept, killing two animals. The destroyed enclosure had been used for excursions, during which children could feed the animals. At the time of the night-time attack, only security guards were present on the ecopark's premises, and they were in shelter during the strike and were not injured. The damaged enclosures were restored at the expense of the ecopark's owner. Under the procedural guidance of the Derhachi District Prosecutor's Office of Kharkiv region, a pre-trial investigation was initiated into the commission of a war crime.



The NGO Feldman Ecopark was established in 2011 as a social and humanitarian multi-complex implementing charitable projects in the fields of environmental and animal protection. On the territory of the landscape park in Derhachi district of Kharkiv region, there operated a zoo, a young naturalists' club, and a Bat Rehabilitation Centre.

■
Dead animals at the Feldman Ecopark in Kharkiv. Photo: Feldman Ecopark

#injuries_of_civilians

Mykola Obelchak

On the evening of **7 March 2025**, during a missile strike on **Dobropillia in the Donetsk region**, **Mykola Obelchak**, an employee of the **humanitarian mission "Proliska"**, was seriously injured, as reported by the Head of the mission, Yevhen Kaplin.

At the time of the first strike, Obelchak was at an acquaintance's home. After the attack, he went outside to assist affected neighbours. Approximately 10 minutes later, Russian forces carried out a second strike on the same location, using cluster munitions with fragmentation elements directed at people providing assistance to the wounded. As a result of the second strike, Mykola Obelchak sustained severe injuries. He was hospitalised in an extremely serious condition at the Mechnikov Dnipropetrovsk Regional Clinical Hospital. The victim underwent three surgeries, lost around four litres of blood, and doctors were forced to remove one kidney. His lungs sustained multiple injuries, and during the final surgery, a fragment was removed from his spine. In total, at least 11 people were killed as a result of the strike on Dobropillia.

The humanitarian mission "Proliska" was established in 2014 to provide comprehensive assistance to civilians affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine. Prior to the full-scale invasion, the organisation operated mainly in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, providing humanitarian, psychological and social assistance, as well as transport support to residents of frontline and "isolated" settlements with limited access to administrative services and social services. After 24 February 2022, "Proliska" expanded its activities and, through a network of regional offices, provides assistance to those affected, internally displaced persons, and returnees across a number of regions of Ukraine.

#killings_of_civil_society_activists_due_to_their_activities

Demian Ganul

On **14 March 2025**, civil society activist **Demian Ganul** was killed in central **Odesa**. He was shot twice with a firearm and died from his injuries³³⁶. On the same day, CCTV footage of the attack was circulated

336 Suspilne Odesa, "Activist Demian Ganul Killed in Central Odesa: What Is Known", 14 March 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/odesa/970387-v-odesi-vbili-gromadskogo-diaca-demana-ganula-policia-pracue-na-misci-strilanini/>

online, showing a man approaching the wounded victim on the pavement, firing shots, and leaving the scene³³⁷.



■ Activist Demian Ganul. Photo: Facebook

According to Demian Ganul's friend, civil society activist Vladyslav Balinskyi, on 8 March, the day before the killing, Ganul reported that he suspected he was being followed. Balinskyi also linked this to previous threats against Ganul³³⁸.

On the evening of 14 March, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Ihor Klymenko, reported³³⁹ the detention of a suspect – 46-year-old serviceman Serhii Shalaiev, who had gone absent without leave less than a month earlier and had been wanted³⁴⁰. Law enforcement authorities suggested that the suspect may have been the perpetrator, while others may have ordered the crime. On 16 March 2025, the Kyivskyi District Court of Odesa remanded the suspect in custody without the right to bail³⁴¹. He was charged with contract killing and unlawful handling of weapons³⁴², offences punishable by life imprisonment with confiscation of property.

On 12 September, the investigation was completed and the indictment against the defendant was referred to the court. On 1 October, the first hearing in the case took place at the Prymorskyi District Court of Odesa³⁴³. On 16 March 2026, the preventive measure imposed on Serhii Shalaiev was once again extended – detention in custody for 60 days³⁴⁴. As of April 2026, the trial is ongoing.

In October 2025, the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) exposed and detained British instructor Ross David Cutmore, who had been visiting Ukraine to assist in training servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine³⁴⁵. The SSU did not disclose the detainee's name. However, it was reported by the outlets *Ukrainska Pravda*³⁴⁶ and *RBC-Ukraine*³⁴⁷ citing their own sources within the SSU. According to the investigation, Cutmore was engaged in reconnaissance and sabotage activities in Ukraine on behalf of Russia. The foreign instructor supplied the perpetrator with firearms and ammunition that he had received from Russian sources.

Demian Ganul had previously repeatedly reported pressure, threats and attacks. In particular, in the summer of 2024, Russian information resources disseminated personal data of Ganul and his relatives and announced a reward for carrying out an attack against him. At that time, the activist submitted applications addressed to the Head of the SSU and the Head of the Main Directorate of the National

337 Dumskaia. Odesa. War in Ukraine, Telegram post, 14 March 2025. URL: <https://t.me/OdesaDumskaiaNet/92408>

338 Suspilne News, "There Are Individuals Interested in Ensuring That the Instigators Are Never Found": What Is Known about the Murder of Odesa Activist Demian Ganul, 17 March 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/972527-e-osobi-zacikavleni-sob-zamovnikiv-nikoli-ne-znajsli-so-vidomo-pro-vbivstvo-aktivista-z-odesi-demana-ganula/>

339 Ihor Klymenko | Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (MIA), Telegram post, 14 March 2025. URL: https://t.me/Klymenko_MVS/1335

340 Odesa Regional Police, "Police Detain Suspect in the Murder of Demian Ganul in Odesa", YouTube channel, 14 March 2025. URL: https://youtu.be/gZuKgd3bsp0?si=d17Qa6rqRJsZO_CO

341 Suspilne News, "There Are Individuals Interested in Ensuring That the Organisers Are Never Found": What Is Known about the Murder of Odesa Activist Demian Ganul, 17 March 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/972527-e-osobi-zacikavleni-sob-zamovnikiv-nikoli-ne-znajsli-so-vidomo-pro-vbivstvo-aktivista-z-odesi-demana-ganula/>

342 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 263(1) – Illegal Handling of Weapons, Ammunition or Explosives (carrying, storage, acquisition, transfer or sale of firearms, ammunition, explosives or explosive devices without the legally required permit). URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

343 Media Initiative for Human Rights, "Murder of Odesa Activist Demian Ganul: Hearings to Be Held Behind Closed Doors", 2 October 2025. URL: <https://mipl.org.ua/vbivstvo-odeskogo-aktivista-demyana-ganula-zasidannya-budut-zakrytymy/>

344 Ruling of 16 March 2026 in case No. 522/20666/25. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/134928671>

345 Security Service of Ukraine, Telegram post, 29 October 2025. URL: <https://t.me/SBUkr/16167>

346 *Ukrainska Pravda*, "Arrived as an Instructor for the Armed Forces of Ukraine: SSU Exposes British National Recruited by Russia", 2 December 2025. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/12/02/8009914/>

347 *RBC-Ukraine*, "SSU Exposes British Instructor Who Spied in Ukraine on Behalf of the Russian Federation – Sources", 2 December 2025. URL: <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/sbu-vikrila-britanskogo-instruktora-kiy-shpiguvav-1764665898.html>

Police in Odesa region, requesting protection³⁴⁸. In August, he reported³⁴⁹, that the cyber police were conducting an investigation into a death threat³⁵⁰. In October of the same year, law enforcement officers detained the organiser of a contract killing of a Ukrainian citizen. During a joint special operation by the SSU and the National Police, it was established that Demian Ganul had also been a target of a series of contract killings. According to the Head of the National Police, Ivan Vyhovskiy, these crimes may have been prepared on behalf of the special services of the Russian Federation. After the organiser was detained, Ganul's protection was withdrawn, and, according to the police, he did not subsequently request its reinstatement³⁵¹.

Ganul had also been subjected to attacks previously. In particular, in 2020, following a protest against the demolition of development on a beach in the town of Pivdenne in Odesa region, Demian Ganul's car was shot at with a pneumatic weapon³⁵². In the same year, unknown individuals twice carried out arson attacks on his vehicles³⁵³.

Demian Ganul was a participant in the Revolution of Dignity and the events of 2 May 2014 in Odesa. From 2014 to 2016, he headed the security wing of the Right Sector in Odesa. He publicly advocated for compliance with legislation on language and decommunisation and took part in dismantling monuments of the communist regime. The activist also opposed the development of Odesa's beaches and the historic city centre, which he linked to corruption schemes. During the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, he engaged in volunteer activities in support of the Ukrainian military and veterans. The activist publicly criticised the Mayor of Odesa, Hennadii Trukhanov, including over his statements regarding the occupation of Crimea. Demian Ganul was convicted in absentia under several articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation by the Basmany District Court of Moscow³⁵⁴.

#killings_of_civilians

Oleksandr Ivakhnenko



■ Volunteer Oleksandr Ivakhnenko.
Photo: MOCT

On 19 March 2025, volunteer Oleksandr Ivakhnenko was killed while carrying out volunteer work as a result of an artillery shelling of Kherson by the Russian Federation³⁵⁵.

On the day of his death, Ivakhnenko, together with other volunteers, was eliminating the consequences of previous Russian attacks, including helping to repair the roof of a local library. A reconnaissance UAV was present over the area, which, according to the volunteers, usually indicates a high risk of further shelling. The first artillery shell struck the corner of the building while Oleksandr was on the roof, after which he stopped responding. According to eyewitnesses, a fragment from a UAV severed an artery in his neck, which led to the volunteer's death.

348 GANUL, Telegram post, 23 June 2024. URL: <https://t.me/Ganul2024/12169>

349 GANUL, Telegram post, 9 August 2024. URL: <https://t.me/Ganul2024/12339>

350 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 129(1) – Threat of Murder.

351 Slidstvo.Info, "Law Enforcement Does Not Rule Out Involvement of Russian Special Services in the Murder of Odesa Activist Demian Ganul", 14 March 2025. URL: <https://www.slidstvo.info/news/publicna-strata-mayzhe-na-kamery-shcho-vidomo-pro-vbyvstvo-aktyvista-dem-iana-hanula-v-odesi/>

352 Dumskaya, "Police Introduce "Interception" Plan Following Shooting at Odesa Activist (Updated, Photo, Video)", 28 July 2020. URL: <https://dumskaya.net/news/politciya-vvela-plan-perehvat-posle-strelby-v-od-121306/>

353 Dumskaya, "Unknown Individuals Set Fire to the Car of Odesa Activist Demian Ganul at Night", 3 April 2020. URL: <https://dumskaya.net/news/nochyu-neizvestnye-podozhgli-mashinu-odesskomu-a-112069/>

Channel 24, "Activist Ganul's Car, Smashed with Bats, Burned in Odesa: What Is Known", 21 November 2020. URL: https://24tv.ua/odesa/rozbitiy-bitami-avtomobil-aktivista-ganula-spalili-novini-ukrayini_n1465931

354 RBC, "Moscow Court Orders Arrest in Absentia of Odesa Nationalist Ganul", 9 April 2024. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/61542d09a7947e3bf6d2696>

355 Suspilne Kherson, "Volunteer Oleksandr Ivakhnenko Killed in Russian Shelling of Kherson", 19 March 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/974539-vnaslidok-rosijskogo-obstrilu-hersona-zaginuv-volonter-oleksandr-ivahnenko/>

As reported by Anastasiia Ukolova, Head of the “Revival of Kherson Region” charitable foundation, in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Ivakhnenko had long been involved in responding to the consequences of Russian artillery shelling as part of volunteer teams, including clearing rubble and boarding up shattered windows³⁵⁶. He also took part in the evacuation of animals from dangerous areas, in particular near the settlement of Antonivka, where regular drone attacks were recorded. In June 2023, Oleksandr Ivakhnenko assisted in dealing with the aftermath of the destruction of the Kakhovka HPP.

At the beginning of the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, Ivakhnenko left Kherson after being detained and beaten by Russian military personnel while delivering humanitarian aid. After the liberation of the city, he returned and continued his volunteer activities³⁵⁷. The Kherson City Military Administration, together with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, posthumously awarded Oleksandr Ivakhnenko the medal “For Sacrifice and Love for Ukraine”.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

NGO Animal Rescue Kharkiv



■ After the attack. Photo provided by the NGO Animal Rescue Kharkiv

On 25 March 2025, in Novyi Korotych in Kharkiv region, a shelter for evacuated domestic animals under the care of the **NGO Animal Rescue Kharkiv** was damaged as a result of an attack by Russian strike UAVs³⁵⁸. Two Geran-2-type drones struck the shelter’s territory³⁵⁹. Under the procedural guidance of the Kharkiv District Prosecutor’s Office of Kharkiv region, a pre-trial investigation was initiated into the commission of a war crime³⁶⁰.

As Yaryna Vintoniuk, a representative of the NGO Animal Rescue Kharkiv, stated in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, no people or animals were injured as a result of the attack³⁶¹. However, significant damage to infrastructure was recorded, including shattered and deformed windows and partially destroyed roofs of several shelter buildings.

The NGO Animal Rescue Kharkiv was established in 2016 with the aim of rescuing animals from dangerous situations. Following the start of the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation in 2022, the organisation focused its activities on evacuating animals from combat zones and placing them with families. To date, the organisation operates its own veterinary clinic and shelter in the Kharkiv region.

356 Interview with Anastasiia Ukolova, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 16 July 2025.

357 Roman Mrochko, Head of the Kherson City Military Administration (2023–2025), personal Telegram channel, 19 March 2025. URL: https://t.me/roman_mrochko/15806

358 Animal Rescue Kharkiv, Ukraine, Facebook post, 26 March 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/spt.kh/posts/pfbid02uNfRjRYgL4J21PYUUpYmf5Lg4QE94rvhr5hczhzCdXzKbh1x5kvd1235riNk94PI>; Oleh Syniehubov, Head of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration, Telegram post, 27 March 2025. URL: <https://t.me/synegubov/13562>

359 Suspilne Kharkiv, “In Kharkiv District, Debris from a Russian Drone Hit a Shelter for Domestic Animals Evacuated from the Combat Zone”, 26 March 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kharkiv/979867-u-harkivskomu-raioni-ulamok-rosijskogo-drona-vluciv-u-pritulok-dla-svijskih-tvarin-vivezenih-iz-zoni-bojovih-dij/>

360 Kharkiv Regional Prosecutor’s Office, Telegram post, 26 March 2025. URL: https://t.me/prokuratura_kharkiv/22063

361 Interview with Yaryna Vintoniuk, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 10 April 2025.

#injuries_of_civilians

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Andrii Pietukhov



■ Volunteer Andrii Pietukhov.
Photo: Facebook

On 4 April 2025, in Kherson, local volunteer Andrii Pietukhov (call sign “Boxer”) was injured during an evacuation mission. As a result of a drone strike, he sustained a concussion and his vehicle was completely burned down³⁶². The incident occurred while Pietukhov and other volunteers were evacuating a man and a dog from a house that had burned down following shelling in the Skhidnyi district of Kherson. An enemy UAV struck the engine of the evacuation vehicle, rendering it unable to continue moving. As a result, the people and the animal first had to take cover behind trees and then in an open house, as a second drone appeared nearby. Failing to locate them, it dropped an explosive on the vehicle. The evacuation participants were rescued by another volunteer – named Oleksandr (surname not disclosed), who promptly arrived at the scene and transported them to a safer location.

On 19 July 2025, Andrii Pietukhov sustained injuries (a concussion) after hitting a mine while evacuating the body of a civilian killed by Russian forces³⁶³. The incident occurred **in the village of Veletense in the Kherson region**³⁶⁴.

Andrii Pietukhov is a boxer from Kherson who became a volunteer from the first days of the full-scale invasion. Following the destruction of the Kakhovka HPP by Russian forces in June 2023, he actively participated in evacuating people from the most heavily flooded areas³⁶⁵. In 2025, Andrii continued his volunteer work in the region, evacuating civilians and animals from dangerous areas and providing support to the Defence Forces of Ukraine.

#killings_of_civilians

Oleh Salnyk

On 12 April 2025, in the Dniprovskiyi district of **Kherson**, Russian forces struck a vehicle of a volunteer team of the charitable foundation **Spravzhni** with a drone, killing **Oleh Salnyk**. The strike occurred at around 16:00³⁶⁶.

Alina Shemediuk, Head of the Spravzhni foundation, stated in a comment to the outlet Vgoru that Russian occupation resources had attempted to justify the attack by claiming that the volunteers had allegedly been “engaged in looting”. They argued this on the basis that the shelled vehicle had been “constantly loaded with items”. Shemediuk emphasised that the “Spravzhni” foundation has been assisting civilians since the first day of the full-scale invasion. The organisation’s team rescues people, evacuates the wounded, carries out emergency stabilisation of buildings damaged by shelling,

362 Suspilne Kherson, ““I Cannot Leave People Behind”: Interview with Volunteer Andrii Pietukhov on Evacuation under Shelling in Kherson Region”, 22 June 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/1038853-ne-mozu-zalisiti-ludej-intervu-z-volonterom-andriem-petukhovim-pro-evakuaciju-pid-obstrilami-na-hersonsini/>

363 andry_boxer, Instagram post, 19 July 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMSzQ8VoMBH/>

364 Suspilne Kherson, “While Recovering the Body of a Deceased Person after a UAV Attack, Volunteers in Veletenske, Kherson Region, Hit a Russian Mine”, 19 July 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/1070421-vivozili-tilo-zagiblogo-cerez-ataku-bpla-u-veletenskomu-na-hersonsini-volonteri-pidirvalis-na-rosijskij-mini/>

365 Suspilne Kherson, “Act of the Year: How a Kherson Boxer Rescued a 93-Year-Old Man from a Flooded Area and Evacuated People from Occupied Oleshky”, 31 December 2023. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/643390-vcinok-roku-ak-hersonskij-bokser-vratuvav-iz-zatoplenogo-rajonu-93-ricnogo-didusa-ta-viviz-ludej-z-okupovanih-olesok/>

366 Vgoru, “Kherson Volunteer Publishes Video from the Site of a Russian Drone Strike on Their Vehicle (Video)”, 13 April 2025. URL: <https://vgoru.org/novini/xersonskii-volonter-opublikuvav-video-z-miscia-udaru-rosiiskogo-drona-po-yixnii-avtivci-video>



■ Volunteer from the Charitable Foundation "Spravzhni", Oleh Salnyk. Photo: Alina Shemediuk/Instagram

and delivers aid to remote areas. The foundation operates in close coordination with international humanitarian partners and always acts transparently³⁶⁷.

Oleh Salnyk was a volunteer at the Spravzhni foundation³⁶⁸, assisting in the evacuation of people from frontline areas, delivering humanitarian aid, and addressing the consequences of Russian shelling in the city. Earlier, in 2024, he joined the School of Craftspeople of the volunteer organisation "BUR – Building Ukraine Together"³⁶⁹. Together with other volunteers, he worked on restoring an outpatient clinic in the Bashtanka community.

#injuries_of_civilians

Oleh Dehusarov, Serhii Boichuk



■ Head of the CF "Spravzhni", Oleh Dehusarov. Photo: Instagram

On 12 April 2025, as a result of a strike by Russian forces on a vehicle of the "Spravzhni" charitable foundation in the Dniproviskyi district of **Kherson**, two other crew members were injured – the Head of the foundation, **Oleh Dehusarov**,³⁷⁰ and volunteer **Serhii Boichuk**³⁷¹.

Oleh Dehusarov, together with Alina Shemediuk, founded the charitable organisation "Charitable Foundation Spravzhni" in June 2023. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Oleh has been delivering humanitarian aid to persons with limited mobility and families with young children. He organised humanitarian missions to settlements in the de-occupied areas of Kherson region and the evacuation of civilians.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

NGO Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG)

As a result of a Russian missile strike on **Sumy** on the morning of 13 April 2025, the office of the Human Rights Commissioner in Sumy region, **Tetiana Myronenko**, located in the Congress Centre of Sumy State University, was destroyed; **the NGO Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG)** had set

367 Vgoru, "Russian Military Attempt to Justify Attack on Vehicle in Kherson by Calling Volunteers "Looters"", 13 April 2025. URL: <https://vgoru.org/novini/rosiiski-viiskovi-atakuvali-avtivku-z-volonterami-v-xersoni-vipravdavs-je-tim-shho-ce-buli-maroderi>

368 Charitable Organisation "Charitable Foundation Spravzhni", Facebook page. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61560469615511#>

369 burburbuur, Instagram post of the volunteer organisation "BUR – Building Ukraine Together", 13 April 2025. URL: https://www.instagram.com/p/DIZS9pyta_0/

370 Kavun City, "Volunteer Oleh Salnyk of the Spravzhni Foundation Killed in Russian Drone Attack in Kherson on 12 April, Says Head of the Foundation Alina Shemediuk", 13 April 2025. URL: <https://kavun.city/articles/414271/u-hersoni-vnaslidok-rosijskogo-obstrilu-zaginuv-volonter-oleg-salnik>

371 MOCT, "Volunteer Oleh Salnyk of the Spravzhni Charitable Foundation Killed in Russian Drone Attack (Updated)", 12 April 2025. URL: <https://most.ks.ua/news/url/unaslidok-rosijskoji-dronovoji-ataki-zaginuv-volonter-bf-spravzhni-oleg-salnik/>

up a mobile citizen consultation point there³⁷². The building is located at 9/1 Pokrovska Street³⁷³. The first explosion occurred at 10:15, and the second – two minutes later. By the evening of 14 April, it was reported that the number of fatalities had risen to 35, with 40 people injured³⁷⁴.



■ Office of the Human Rights Commissioner in the Sumy region, destroyed by a Russian missile strike.
Photo: Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group website

In the office where the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG) operated, the windows were shattered, the roof was destroyed, and all equipment was destroyed. In May 2025, KHPG was able to resume its work in new premises on Kovpaka Street.

The Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group is a human rights organisation with roots in the dissident movement of the 1970s–1980s. Since 1988, KHPG has been known as the human rights group of the Kharkiv “Memorial”³⁷⁵. The organisation operates throughout Ukraine and protects human rights and fundamental freedoms. Its activities focus on representing victims before national courts and the European Court of Human Rights, providing legal assistance, conducting human rights journalism and analysis, and promoting systemic legislative changes.

#killings_of_civilians

Hennadii Omelchenko



■ Volunteer Hennadii Omelchenko.
Photo: Memorial: Killed by Russia

On 17 April 2025, local volunteer **Hennadii Omelchenko** sustained serious injuries as a result of an artillery shelling of **Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk region**. Doctors fought for his life for 10 days, but on 27 April he died in hospital from blast trauma, shrapnel injuries to the chest, and fractures of the ribs, scapula and shoulder³⁷⁶.

Liudmyla Omelchenko, the wife of the deceased volunteer, stated in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA³⁷⁷, that at the time of the shelling, Hennadii was in his own car and heading home, but did not reach his stop.

Hennadii Omelchenko became a volunteer from the first days of the full-scale war. He joined humanitarian missions organised by the Christian Church “Spasynnya”. He delivered aid to persons with limited mobility and elderly people in frontline Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk region, as well as animal feed. He also cooperated with local volunteers, including Maksym Yukhno³⁷⁸, helping to meet the needs of the Defence Forces of Ukraine.

372 sumdu_ua, Instagram post, 13 April 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMXVJjrC3sT/>

373 Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG), “Absolute Evil”, 14 April 2025. URL: <https://khpg.org/1608814579>

374 Hromadske, “A Children’s Performance Was Scheduled at the Centre in Sumy Damaged by Russia. Here Is What It Looks Like Now (Photo)”, 14 April 2025. URL: <https://hromadske.ua/rehiony/243132-u-sumskomu-tsentri-iakyy-poshkodyly-rosiiany-mala-vidbutysia-dytiacha-vystava-ot-iak-vin-vyhladaye-zaraz-foto>; Channel 24, “Strike on Sumy Injures University Staff and Causes Hundreds of Millions in Damage”, 15 April 2025. URL: https://24tv.ua/udar-po-sumah-13-kvitnya-2025-poraneni-pratsivniki-universitetu_n2800125

375 Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG), website. URL: <https://khpg.org/>

376 “Russia Killed Them”, Facebook post, 7 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17s6cceOfn/>

377 Interview with Liudmyla Omelchenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 11 August 2025.

378 max_uhno, Instagram page. URL: https://www.instagram.com/max_uhno/

#injuries_of_civilians

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Yevhen Tkachov



■ Vehicle of Yevhen Tkachov, a volunteer with the Proliska humanitarian mission.
Photo: Facebook

On 20 April 2025, during the evacuation of civilian residents of **the village of Zoria near Kostiantynivka in the Donetsk region**, the vehicle of **Yevhen Tkachov**, a volunteer with **the humanitarian mission “Proliska”**, was damaged as a result of a targeted attack by Russian FPV drones. A civilian woman in the vehicle was injured, and another man was taken to hospital in a state of acute stress reaction³⁷⁹. The incident occurred despite the so-called “Easter ceasefire” announced by the Russian Federation, which was to be in effect from the evening of 19 April until midnight on 21 April 2025 and was intended to provide for a cessation of hostilities.

The volunteer was evacuating elderly people from a frontline village, with two additional civilian vehicles carrying families following behind his car. All vehicles were marked with white ribbons to indicate civilian status. Approximately 50 metres before reaching the Donetsk

highway, Tkachov spotted an enemy UAV, switched on the hazard lights, exited the vehicle, and used gestures to indicate that he was a civilian. Despite this, an FPV drone struck near the vehicle. He then signalled to the two cars behind to move ahead, as his own vehicle could no longer start. Tkachov, together with two evacuated civilians who had been in his car, took cover in some bushes. Shortly afterwards, Russian forces launched a second FPV drone strike, which detonated a few metres from the people. Subsequently, a third UAV destroyed the volunteer’s vehicle.

Tkachov called the police for assistance, but no one arrived. The injured were rescued by chaplain Oleksandr Reshetnyk, with whom Yevhen Tkachov had been held in Russian captivity in Sloviansk in 2014.

The humanitarian mission “Proliska” was established in 2014 to provide comprehensive assistance to civilians affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine. Prior to the full-scale invasion, the organisation operated mainly in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, providing humanitarian, psychological and social assistance, as well as transport support to residents of frontline and “isolated” settlements with limited access to administrative services and social services. After 24 February 2022, “Proliska” expanded its activities – through a network of regional offices, the organisation provides assistance to those affected, internally displaced persons, and returnees across a number of regions of Ukraine.

Yevhen Tkachov is the Head of an office of the humanitarian mission “Proliska”. Since the beginning of the armed aggression by the Russian Federation in 2014, he has been engaged in providing humanitarian assistance and evacuating civilians from frontline areas. As early as 2014–2015, Tkachov repeatedly travelled to areas of active hostilities, including Sloviansk and Debaltseve, delivering humanitarian aid and evacuating persons with limited mobility. During these trips, he was twice detained by representatives of the occupation forces.

Tkachov was also the founder of a hospice in Chasiv Yar, where, prior to the full-scale invasion, elderly people requiring constant care were accommodated. In 2022, the volunteer organised the evacuation of the facility’s residents to safer regions of Ukraine.

379 Ukrainians Pravda, “‘Easter Truce’: Russians Strike Volunteer in Donetsk Region with Three Drones”, 20 April 2025.
URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/04/20/7508372/>

#killings_of_civilians

Sofiia Kozlova



■ Volunteer Sofiia Kozlova.
Photo: Memorial: Killed by Russia

On 24 April 2025, volunteer **Sofiia Kozlova** was killed during a large-scale Russian attack on **Kyiv**³⁸⁰. Her older brother, Nikita, was killed alongside her. According to the Air Force, on the night of 24 April, Russia carried out a large-scale attack across the territory of Ukraine using various types of missiles, including ballistic ones, as well as strike UAVs. At least 12 people were killed and around 90 others were injured.

Sofiia Kozlova was engaged in volunteer activities and supported the Defence Forces of Ukraine. Following her death, words of gratitude and tribute were expressed by servicemen of the 73rd Naval Special Operations Centre named after Chieftain Antin Holovaty and the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine. Sofiia was 19 years old at the time of her death.

#injuries_to_civil_society_activists_due_to_their_activities

Serhii Sternenko



■ Volunteer Serhii Sternenko.
Photo: Radio Svoboda

On 1 May 2025, an assassination attempt was carried out in **Kyiv** against public figure and volunteer **Serhii Sternenko**. As a result of the attack, he sustained a gunshot wound – the bullet passed through his body. He underwent surgery, and his life was not in danger.

The attacker was identified as Liudmyla Chemerska, who was born in Odesa region but was registered and residing in Kyiv. She was charged with high treason committed under martial law and completed attempted murder for financial gain, carried out on contract and by prior conspiracy by a group of persons³⁸¹. Among the possible motives³⁸² the Head of the SSU, Vasyl Maliuk³⁸³ cited the activist's public activities, his participation in the events of 2 May 2014 in Odesa, and his systematic support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to Maliuk, this was already the fourth assassination attempt against Sternenko. Following the attack in May 2025, the SSU strengthened the activist's personal security measures and provided professional protection.



■ Attempted assassination of Serhii Sternenko on 1 May 2025. Photo: Ukrainska Pravda / sources within law enforcement

As reported by the Security Service of Ukraine, in late 2024, the suspect in the attempted attack on Sternenko

380 "Russia Killed Them", Facebook post, 25 April 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EtX8LyQMB/>

381 Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 111(2) – High Treason Committed under Martial Law. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>; Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 15(2) – Completed Attempt to Commit a Criminal Offence. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>; Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III, Article 27(3) and Article 115(2) – Offence Committed by an Organised Group and Attempted Intentional Murder. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

382 Ukrinform, "Head of the SSU Explains Why Russians Targeted Sernenenko in Assassination Attempt", 23 June 2025. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/4007374-golova-sbu-poasniv-comu-rosiani-vcinili-zamah-same-na-sternenka.html>; ZMINA, "Russian Special Services Planned Assassination Attempt on Volunteer Serhii Sternenko, Prompting Increased Protection by the SSU – Maliuk", 23 June 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/rosijski-spezsluzhby-gotuvaly-zamah-na-volontera-sergiya-sternenka-tomu-sbu-posylila-ohoronu-malyuk/>

383 Vasyl Maliuk, Head of the Security Service of Ukraine (2023–2026).



■ Serhii Sternenko in hospital following the attack. Photo: Facebook

was remotely recruited by representatives of the Russian special services while searching for “quick earnings” online. According to the investigation, the woman initially carried out surveillance tasks involving designated vehicles, photographing them and transmitting the information to a handler. She subsequently received further instructions, including on the manufacture of an improvised explosive device.

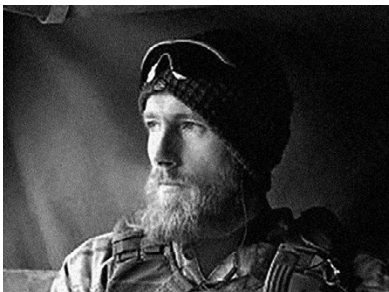
From mid-April 2025, the suspect began surveilling Serhii Sternenko, having taken up residence in the residential complex where he lived. She later received the coordinates of a cache where a firearm was stored – a PM pistol and ammunition for it. According to the investigation, on the morning of 1 May 2025, her handler gave her a direct instruction to carry out the killing of the activist near his residence.

On 3 April 2026, the SSU announced the completion of the pre-trial investigation³⁸⁴. The indictment against the alleged attacker was referred to court. She faces up to 15 years’ imprisonment.

Serhii Sternenko is a public figure, blogger and volunteer. He is the founder of the charitable foundation “Sternenko Community”, which specialises in supplying the Defence Forces of Ukraine with FPV drones and equipment to counter enemy UAVs. He is also the founder and an active participant of “People’s Lustration”, a former member of the leadership and Head of the Odesa regional branch of “Right Sector” (2014–2017), and the author and host of the YouTube channel STERNENKO³⁸⁵.

#killings_of_civilians

Chris Garrett, Nicholas Parsons



■ British volunteer Chris Garrett. Photo: Facebook

On 6 May 2025, near Izium in the Kharkiv region, British volunteer **Chris Garrett** (call sign “Swampy”)³⁸⁶ and Australian volunteer **Nicholas Parsons** were killed while carrying out demining work at a residential building; another team member sustained serious injuries.

Chris Garrett was a demining specialist and co-founder of the NGO Prevail Together, which specialises in humanitarian demining and the provision of medical assistance. At the start of his career, he served in the British Army. From 2014, he repeatedly worked in Ukraine as a volunteer, and following the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation in 2022, he took part in demining de-occupied territories, including Bucha, Irpin and Hostomel Airport. Nicholas Parsons served in the Australian Army and had the call sign “Desmond”. He later joined the international team of Prevail Together and also worked on demining de-occupied territories in Ukraine.



■ Australian volunteer Nicholas Parsons. Photo: Facebook

384 Security Service of Ukraine, Telegram post, 3 April 2026. URL: <https://t.me/SBUkr/17249>

385 STERNENKO, YouTube channel. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/@STERNENKO>

386 Suspilne, “British Volunteer and Veteran Chris Garrett Dies after Explosion near Izium”, 9 May 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kharkiv/1014459-cerez-pidriv-pid-izumom-pomer-britanskij-volonter-i-veteran-kris-garret/>

#killings_of_civilians

Tetiana Kobryna, Pavlo Kobryn



■ Animal welfare volunteer Tetiana Kobryna. Photo: Facebook

On 7 May 2025, as a result of an attack by Russian UAVs on **Kyiv**, a family of animal rescue volunteers – **Tetiana Kobryna** and her son **Pavlo Kobryn** – were killed in their home³⁸⁷.

Tetiana Kobryna worked for many years as a lead engineer at the Antonov aircraft manufacturing plant, while also engaging in animal rescue volunteering³⁸⁸. She personally financed the treatment and feeding of stray animals, including cats. At least ten animals under her constant care lived with her. Her son Pavlo, who had a heart condition and a disability affecting his arm since childhood, worked remotely and assisted his mother in caring for the rescued animals. The family's death was the result of another attack by the Russian Federation against civilians.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Olena Voshun



■ Destroyed home of animal welfare volunteer Olena Voshun. Photo: Instagram

On 12 May 2025, in **Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk region**, the home of animal rescue volunteer **Olena Voshun** was destroyed by fire as a result of a Russian attack³⁸⁹. Olena Voshun is the founder and head of the animal shelter "Chance of Life" in Nikopol³⁹⁰, where around 350 dogs and several dozen cats are under her care³⁹¹.

The volunteer treats animals, including those injured as a result of Russian shelling, organises free sterilisation, and rehomes animals with families. This work is carried out under conditions of constant shelling of the city. In 2025, Olena Voshun received a nationwide animal protection award from UAnimals.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Animal shelter "Kit Behemot"

On 14 May 2025, the animal shelter "**Kit Behemot**" in Kherson was damaged as a result of Russian shelling³⁹². Some animals were killed, others were injured, and a large number fled as the walls of the premises were destroyed³⁹³.

387 "Russia Killed Them", Facebook post, 7 May 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/russiakills.in.ua/posts/688970403882165>

388 Nataliia Babiak, Facebook post, 11 May 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1440309410672394&id=100040800473681

389 nikopolnews, Instagram post, 13 May 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJlTuy8KJb4/>

390 Ludmilla Kapatoura, Facebook post, 13 May 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/ludmilla.kapatoura/posts/1037820765111777>

391 Suspilne | People, "Happiness Is Seeing Dogs at Home, Not under Shelling": Animal Volunteer in Nikopol Cares for 300 Dogs", 4 January 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/917925-sasta-baciti-sobak-vdoma-a-ne-pid-obstrilami-zoovolonterka-u-nikopoli-opikuetsa-300-sobakami-suspilne-ludi/>

392 "Kit Behemot", group assisting stray cats, Facebook post, 15 May 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/14Tgix48fJa/>

393 ZMINA, "Russian Forces Shell "Kit Behemot" Shelter in Kherson, with Animals Killed and Injured", 15 May 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/rosijski-vijska-obstrilaly-prytulok-kit-begemot-u-hersoni-ye-zagybli-ta-poraneni-tvaryny/>



■ “Kit Behemoth” animal shelter in Kherson after Russian shelling.
Photo: organisation

At that time, there were no veterinary clinics in Kherson capable of providing care to animals with such injuries, so the injured animals had to be evacuated for treatment to Odesa, where they were placed under the care of the NGO Animal SOS Odesa.

An authorised representative of the NGO Kit Behemot (name withheld) informed the Human Rights Centre ZMINA that the damaged premises were used for temporary holding, and that at the time of the attack, around 40 animals were kept there.

In the same building that was directly hit, a volunteer of the organisation (name withheld)³⁹⁴, who cares for the animals, also resides. During the shelling, she was at home and survived by taking shelter in the bathroom. The building sustained damage to the heating system and electrical wiring, resulting in the loss of heating and electricity. According to representatives of the organisation, the premises were “barely

fit for use”. Nevertheless, the volunteer remained there with around twenty animals, including four large dogs. The injured and smaller animals were evacuated, but there was nowhere else to relocate the rest.

On 28 May, the building was again damaged as a result of a Russian attack, during which the roof was completely destroyed. The building is located in the so-called “red zone” in the central part of Kherson, where hostile shelling occurs regularly. Due to the security situation, repairs to the premises were not possible in 2025.

The cat shelter “Kit Behemot” has been operating since 2015. The organisation cares for stray animals, provides treatment and sterilisation funded by charitable donations, and finds new homes for the animals. Following the start of the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, the number of animals in the shelter’s care increased, as residents of Kherson often left their pets behind during evacuation. In 2025, around 300 cats were under the shelter’s care³⁹⁵.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Sviatoslav Sheremet



On the night of **17 May 2025**, as a result of a combined Russian attack on **Kyiv**, the home of human rights defender **Sviatoslav Sheremet** was damaged by a blast wave³⁹⁶.

In the activist’s flat, all window structures were damaged in four rooms – the bedroom, living room and bay window, as well as on two balconies. Some window frames were torn out by the blast wave together with their fittings, leaving the windows hanging on the hardware. According to Sheremet, the explosion occurred in immediate proximity to the building, and some residents were injured. Damage to the building’s utilities was also recorded. Sviatoslav Sheremet, his partner and their dog were not physically injured, but experienced severe psychological shock.

■ Damaged home of a human rights defender. Photo provided by the owner

394 Interview with a representative of the NGO Kit Behemot (name withheld, No. 14.05.25), conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 16 July 2025.

395 Suspilne Kherson, “Caring for 300 Cats: Animals Abandoned by Their Owners Are Rescued at a Shelter in Kherson”, 13 February 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/kherson/947803-pid-opikou-300-kotiv-u-hersonskomu-pritulku-ratuut-tvarin-akih-pokinuli-gospodari/>

396 Sviatoslav Sheremet, Facebook post, 17 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/185DjSxFk/J/>

Sviatoslav Sheremet is the Policy and Legislation Coordinator of the National LGBTIQ Consortium #LGBTI_PRO, Head of the human rights organisation “Gay Forum of Ukraine”, and a consultant to the NGO ALLIANCE.GLOBAL. He previously served as a member of the Board of the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM), a consultant to UNDP Ukraine, and Secretary of the Coalition to Combat Discrimination in Ukraine.

#killings_of_civilians

Maksym Starostin



■ Volunteer Maksym Starostin.
Photo: Bilohirska Settlement Council

On 3 June 2025, as a result of Russian shelling of **Kramatorsk in the Donetsk region**, volunteer and student **Maksym Starostin** was killed while carrying out a task in support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. On that day, he went to the frontline on a repair mission to fix electronic equipment.

Maksym Starostin was a member of the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps. He studied at the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. He supported the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including by participating in the production, repair and testing of UAVs and other equipment.

In addition to supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Starostin was involved in volunteer activities in other areas. In particular, he served as a coach at the youth sports club “Kuznia” at a Catholic church in Bilohiria, Khmelnytskyi region.

#killings_of_civilians

Vladyslav Horai



■ Volunteer Vladyslav Horai.
Photo: Odesa National Opera

On 8 June 2025, during a volunteer mission on the north-eastern border of Ukraine in **the Sumy region**, **Vladyslav Horai**, a soloist of the Odesa National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre and an Honoured Artist of Ukraine, was killed³⁹⁷.

Vladyslav Horai had been a member of the opera company of the Odesa National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre since 1993. In 2000–2003, he performed at the State Opera and Ballet Theatre in Constanta (Romania), and in 2003–2004 – on opera stages in Spain, including at the Teatro Monumental in Madrid. He toured the United States, Canada, Italy and Macau as part of the “Three Tenors from the Holy Land” project, and performed at the Royal Albert Hall in the United Kingdom. In 2013, Vladyslav Horai was awarded the title of Honoured Artist of Ukraine. Following the start of the full-scale invasion, he engaged in volunteer activities, including travelling to the frontline to deliver vehicles for the needs of Ukrainian military personnel.

397 Odesa National Opera, Facebook post, 9 June 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1674327679923987>; Oleksandr Sytailo, Facebook post, 9 June 2025: <https://www.facebook.com/oleksandr.sitajlo.13107/posts/pfbid02PmNzgJvgM3ypAGfG5GvLH6dct9ZEDzMA78koFQfckwynGDK7rWswEzsFptmRLvQLI>

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

NGO BELUGA UA



■ Destroyed humanitarian hub of the NGO BELUGA UA. Photo: Instagram

On 14 June 2025, as a result of a Russian attack on Zaporizhzhia, the humanitarian hub of the NGO **BELUGA UA**, which has been providing assistance to civilians since the first days of the full-scale invasion, was destroyed³⁹⁸. According to the Head of the organisation, Oleksandr Beliuha, equipment was destroyed and damaged by the fire, including vehicles, three electric carts, diesel loaders and generators purchased by the organisation on credit. As a result of the incident, more than one hundred people lost their jobs³⁹⁹.

The NGO BELUGA UA was established in 2022 and provides comprehensive humanitarian and social support to the population. The organisation supplies internally displaced persons and persons with disabilities with hot meals, food packages and hygiene products, and also provides psychological support to children. In addition, volunteers of BELUGA UA travel directly to sites of shelling to provide emergency assistance to those affected.

#killings_of_civilians

Fred Grandy



■ Volunteer from the United States, Fred Grandy. Photo: Facebook

On the night of 17 June 2025, as a result of a large-scale Russian strike on Kyiv, US volunteer **Fred Grandy**, who had been in Ukraine for humanitarian purposes, was killed. As reported by The New York Times⁴⁰⁰ citing Ukrainian officials, Fred Grandy died from shrapnel injuries sustained during the attack.

Grandy arrived in Kyiv in late May 2025 to assist with clearing debris after Russian shelling. He disagreed with the current US policy towards Ukraine and sought to personally contribute to assisting the affected civilian population.

398 uabeluga, Instagram post, 14 June 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DK4zZfztngY/>

399 Ukrinform, "Humanitarian Hub of a Civil Society Organisation Destroyed in Zaporizhzhia due to Enemy Attack", 14 June 2025. URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-regions/4004229-u-zaporizhzi-cerez-vorozu-ataku-znisenij-gumanitarnij-hab-gromadskoi-organizacii.html>; ZMINA, "Humanitarian Hub of the 'BELUGA UA' Civil Society Organisation Destroyed in Zaporizhzhia as a Result of Enemy Attack", 14 June 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/u-zaporizhzhii-vnaslidok-vorozhoyi-ataky-znyshhenyj-gumanitarnij-hab-gromadskoyi-organizaciyi-beluga-ua/>

400 The New York Times, "This Oregon Native Went to Kyiv as a Volunteer. He Died in a Russian Attack", 19 June 2025. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/19/world/europe/ukraine-russia-war-american-fred-grandy.html>; Novynarnia, "American Volunteer Fred Grandy Killed in Massive Russian Strike on Kyiv – NYT", 20 June 2025. URL: <https://novynarnia.com/2025/06/20/vnaslidok-masovanogo-udaru-rosiyan-po-kyjevu-zagynuv-amerykanskij-volonter-fred-grandi-nt/>

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Charitable Foundation "12 Vartovykh"



■ Stabilisation centre of the CF "12 Vartovykh".
Photo: Facebook

On 18 June 2025, during a Russian attack on **Kramatorsk in the Donetsk region**, two missiles struck the stabilisation point of the Charitable Foundation "12 Vartovykh"⁴⁰¹, located on the premises of the city's State Veterinary Hospital⁴⁰².

As a result of the strike, the foundation's property in the veterinary hospital was destroyed, including cages, animal crates, medical supplies and vaccines. At the time of the shelling, 23 animals were at the stabilisation point, six of which were in crates and cages following surgical procedures. All animals survived; however, four of them sustained concussions. There were no people in the premises, so staff and volunteers were not injured.

The Charitable Foundation "12 Vartovykh" cares for stray animals, carries out sterilisation, and rehomes street cats and dogs with families. Following the start of the full-scale invasion, the foundation has also been involved in evacuating animals from combat zones, providing their treatment, and subsequently rehoming them with families.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Charitable Organisation "Adopt Don't Stop"

On the night of **23 June 2025**, as a result of a combined Russian attack, the premises of the animal shelter of the Charitable Organisation "**Adopt Don't Stop**" in **Kyiv** were damaged. The blast wave shattered the windows in the premises⁴⁰³. However, the animals in its care were not physically injured.

As reported to the Human Rights Centre ZMINA by the Head of the organisation, Alona Mykytenko, the shelter team was able to quickly raise funds for restoration thanks to donors⁴⁰⁴.

The volunteer initiative Adopt Don't Stop has existed since 2016. Over time, the organisation expanded its activities. In spring 2019, a charitable foundation was registered and a programme for the sterilisation of stray animals was launched, with a centre in Kyiv. In 2021, a Homeless Animals Assistance Center was established. In the first months of the full-scale war, the Charitable Organisation "Adopt Don't Stop" established communication with international partners and organised assistance for animals from various regions of Ukraine.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Volodymyr Balukh

On the night of **4 July 2025**, during a large-scale Russian attack on **Kyiv**, the home of civil society activist and former Kremlin political prisoner **Volodymyr Balukh** was damaged. The blast wave shattered the windows in his flat⁴⁰⁵.

401 uanimals.official, Instagram post, 18 June 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLCXC2oop5/>

402 Suspilne Donbas, "'The Animals Survived, They Came from the Combat Zone': Russian Forces Destroy Veterinary Clinic in Kramatorsk", 18 June 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/donbas/1045537-tvarini-vizili-priihali-iz-zoni-bojovih-dij-rosijski-vijskovi-zrujnuvali-veterinarnu-likarnu-u-kramatorsku/>

403 adopt_dont_stop, Instagram post, 23 June 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLPGfnAN-QV/>

404 Interview with Alona Mykytenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 24 June 2025.

405 Volodymyr Balukh, Facebook post, 4 July 2025 URL: <https://www.facebook.com/baluh.volodimir/posts/1527997115272814>



■ Damaged home of a civil activist.
Photo: Facebook

Volodymyr Balukh was not at home at the time of the strike. According to him, he had left a few minutes before the attack to film the work of municipal services during the shelling and to check whether residents of a neighbouring building, which had shortly before been damaged by the fall of an enemy UAV, required assistance.⁴⁰⁶

Volodymyr Balukh is a civil society activist and a native of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. He twice ran for the Verkhovna Rada of Crimea from the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists. Following the occupation of the peninsula by the Russian Federation in 2014, he refused to obtain a Russian passport, took part in pro-Ukrainian actions, and flew the Ukrainian flag on his house, for which representatives of the occupation authorities frequently visited him⁴⁰⁷. In 2015, he was detained for this and sentenced to 10 days' imprisonment. In 2016, during a search of the activist's home, representatives of the occupation security forces allegedly found ammunition, after which he was accused of unlawful possession of weapons and taken into custody. In August 2017, the Rozdolnenskyi District

Court of Crimea sentenced Balukh to three years and seven months in a general-regime penal colony. In September 2019, he was released as part of an exchange between Ukraine and Russia. He subsequently settled in Kyiv. Following the start of the full-scale invasion, Balukh joined the Territorial Defence Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and served under the call sign "Tsarsky Skif". However, he was forced to leave the military due to health reasons. He is currently engaged in volunteer activities in support of the Defence Forces of Ukraine.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Nataliia Tarasova

On 8 July 2025, in Odesa, the evacuation vehicle of volunteer and medic **Nataliia Tarasova**, who provides assistance in frontline conditions, was set on fire⁴⁰⁸. The incident occurred in the courtyard of a multi-storey residential building where she was temporarily living. As a result of the arson, the vehicle was completely destroyed⁴⁰⁹. The interior contained equipment necessary for evacuation and the provision of medical assistance to the wounded. In addition, the vehicle was used as a mobile training space for combat medics – it contained training equipment for tactical medicine. As Nataliia Tarasova informed the Human Rights Centre ZMINA⁴¹⁰, the vehicle had been equipped through contributions from numerous organisations and volunteers who raised funds and provided equipment to save lives on the frontline.

According to the investigation, a 58-year-old woman and her 13-year-old daughter were involved in the arson, with their actions coordinated by Russian special services⁴¹¹. The minor was recruited via a messaging application and, on the instructions of a handler, was tasked with setting fire to vehicles of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and TCR. The actions of the suspects were classified as attempted sabotage committed under martial law and obstruction of the lawful activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in a special period.

406 Volodymyr Balukh, Facebook post, 4 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/baluh.volodimir/posts/1528061708599688>

407 RBC-Ukraine, "Activist from Crimea: Where Is Volodymyr Balukh Now, Who Was Prosecuted by Occupiers over a Ukrainian Flag", 19 February 2025. URL: <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/aktivist-krimu-de-zaraz-volodimir-baluh-kogo-1739893978.html>

408 Katherine Nozhevnikova, Facebook post, 7 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/katherine.nozhevnikova/posts/pfbidOwEdCdBjqvVnepAK5sZqcaRbs7YTCnKboWPxuZN9fgThkm8Jn5RSYWh4pxSBd3K8l?rdid=90DuGiyRogbvMwP3#>; ZMINA, "Evacuation Vehicle of Combat Medic and Volunteer Nataliia Tarasova Burns Down in Odesa", 8 July 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/v-odesi-zgoriv-evakuacijnyj-avtomobil-bojovoyi-medykyni-i-volonterky-nataliyi-tarasovoyi/>

409 Suspilne, "'This Vehicle Saved Many Lives': Evacuation Vehicle of a Combat Medic Set on Fire in Odesa", 10 July 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/odesa/1063775-ca-avtivka-vratuvala-bagato-zittiv-v-odesi-pidpalili-evakuacijnij-avtomobil-bojovoi-medikini/>

410 Interview with Nataliia Tarasova, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 31 July 2025.

411 Main Directorate of the National Police in Odesa Region, "Police and SSU in Odesa Expose Mother and Daughter Working for the Enemy", 10 July 2025. URL: <https://od.npu.gov.ua/news/v-odesi-politsiia-ta-sbu-vykryly-matir-z-donkoii-iaki-pratsiuvaly-na-voroha>



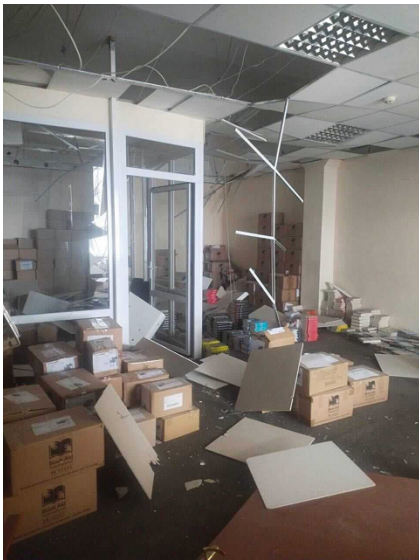
■ Volunteer Nataliia Tarasova.
Photo: Facebook

As of April 2026, the trial is ongoing⁴¹². According to Tarasova, the court is at the stage of examining evidence, including materials submitted by her as the victim⁴¹³. Following the completion of the pre-trial investigation, the 58-year-old suspect's detention in custody was extended. Her daughter is currently in a residential care institution.

Nataliia Tarasova is a volunteer, co-founder and director of the charitable foundation “Lelecare”, which collects recyclable materials to fund the medical needs of wounded military personnel and civilians⁴¹⁴.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Ukrainian centre of PEN International



■ The warehouse of PEN Ukraine damaged as a result of a Russian strike. Photo: PEN Ukraine

On the night of **3–4 July 2025**, as a result of a combined Russian shelling of **Kyiv**, the warehouse of the NGO **Ukrainian centre of PEN International**, where books for the “Unbreakable Libraries” project were stored, was damaged. In this premises, the PEN Ukraine team and dozens of volunteers from different countries assembled packages each month for Ukrainian libraries affected by the Russian war⁴¹⁵.

In the warehouse premises, which were used to store English-language and bilingual books (published in Ukrainian and English), the ceiling collapsed and the windows were damaged as a result of the strike. Approximately 200 boxes of books – around 11,000 copies – were in the premises. There were no people in the building at the time of the attack.

Maksym Sytnikov, Executive Director of PEN Ukraine, informed the Human Rights Centre ZMINA that the team, together with volunteers, had already cleaned the premises⁴¹⁶. According to him, the unpacked books were covered in dust and glass fragments, but preliminarily appeared to be restorable. At the same time, the issue of repairs remained unresolved, as the warehouse was not owned by the organisation and the lease was due to expire in autumn 2025.

PEN Ukraine was founded in 1989, and since 1990 it has been part of PEN International – one of the first international human rights organisations and the first international association of writers. The organisation opposes all forms of discrimination and restrictions on freedom of expression and promotes mutual understanding between peoples and the protection of cultural heritage.

PEN Ukraine had been using the damaged warehouse since November 2023. At that time, the organisation received the first tranche of assistance from the United Kingdom, and a year later a second tranche – books from Book Aid International with the support of PEN International, English PEN, and Pineapple Lane Publishing. From this warehouse, in partnership with Humanitarian Nova Poshta, PEN sent more than 45,000 English-language and bilingual books to over 250 libraries across 17 regions of Ukraine.

412 Court ruling of 23 February 2026 in case No. 523/224/26. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/134277070>

413 Interview with Nataliia Tarasova, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 11 April 2026.

414 Charitable Foundation “Lelecare”, Facebook page. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/lelecare.org/>

415 PEN Ukraine, “Book Warehouse of Ukrainian PEN Damaged as a Result of Russian Attack”, 6 July 2025. URL: <https://pen.org.ua/unaslidok-rosijskoyi-ataky-postrazhdav-knyzhkovyi-sklad-ukrayinskoho-pen>

416 Interview with Maksym Sytnikov, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 11 July 2025.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Kostiantyn Cherniavskiy



■ Damaged home of a volunteer. Photo: Facebook

On 10 July 2025, as a result of a Russian UAV strike on the flat of volunteer and Head of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine, **Kostiantyn Cherniavskiy**, located in **Kyiv**, he was injured⁴¹⁷. Cherniavskiy was taken to hospital, and the circumstances of the incident indicate the targeting of a civilian object⁴¹⁸.

Kostiantyn Cherniavskiy is an Honoured Artist of Ukraine, an art historian, an academician of the International Academy of Education and Science, an Associate Professor at the Department of Graphic Design of the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, and a volunteer. Since 2021, he has headed

the National Union of Artists of Ukraine⁴¹⁹. Following the start of the full-scale invasion, Cherniavskiy, together with the NUAU charitable foundation, has been providing systematic support to military units, including the procurement of equipment and gear. He conducts art therapy activities for military personnel and implements humanitarian and social projects in support of IDPs, including children.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Les Yakymchuk



■ Damaged vehicle of a volunteer.
Photo: Facebook

On 10 July 2025, as a result of a large-scale Russian attack on Kyiv, the vehicle of volunteer and founder of the charitable organisation **UA First Aid**, **Les Yakymchuk**, was damaged⁴²⁰.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Les Yakymchuk stated that a piece of asphalt that struck his vehicle after the explosion had travelled approximately one kilometre⁴²¹. He therefore urged everyone to avoid being outdoors during air raid alerts. The damage to the vehicle amounted to UAH 19,000.

Les Yakymchuk is a co-founder of the charitable initiative UA First Aid. The organisation specialises in tactical medicine and in providing military personnel with high-tech equipment – thermal imagers, communication devices and medical equipment.⁴²²

417 Volodymyr Zhuravel, Facebook post, 10 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/volodymyr.zhuravel/posts/10162015764954093>

418 National Union of Artists of Ukraine, "Head of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine Kostiantyn Cherniavskiy injured in a massive enemy attack", 10 July 2025. URL: <https://nuau.org.ua/2025/07/10/внаслідок-масованої-ворожньої-атаки-по/>; ZMINA, "Head of the Union of Artists of Ukraine and volunteer Kostiantyn Cherniavskiy injured during a Russian attack on Kyiv", 10 July 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/pid-chas-rosijskoyi-ataky-na-kyiv-poranennya-otrymav-golova-spilky-hudozhnykiv-ukrayiny-i-volonter-kostyantyn-cherniavskiy/>

419 Ukrainska Pravda Zhyttya, "A Shahed drone hit the apartment of the head of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine in Kyiv", 10 July 2025. URL: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/vnaslidok-rosijskoji-ataki-postrazhdav-golova-nszhu-309131/>

420 Lesyk Yakymchuk, Facebook post, 10 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=24047861451570155&set=a.293505767432390>

421 Interview with Lesyk Yakymchuk, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 29 July 2025.

422 Ukrainer, "Returning to Ukraine to volunteer", 12 February 2024. URL: <https://www.ukrainer.net/povernutysia-volonterty/>

#killings_of_civilians

Ilona Kapelnytska



■ Volunteer and veteran Ilona Kapelnytska.
Photo: Facebook

On 12 July 2025, as a result of a Russian attack by Shahed drones on a residential building in **Chernivtsi**, veteran and volunteer **Ilona Kapelnytska** was injured. She remained in a coma for nearly two weeks and died on 25 July⁴²³.

In 2015, Ilona Kapelnytska went to the frontline as a volunteer despite having no prior military experience. She was given the call sign “Jane”. After demobilisation, she actively engaged in volunteer work to support the Defence Forces⁴²⁴.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Veteranka Movement



■ Damaged headquarters of the Veteranka movement. Photo: veteranka_/Instagram

On the night of **31 July 2025**, as a result of a missile strike on **Kyiv**, the headquarters of **the Veteranka Movement** sustained significant damage⁴²⁵. In particular, the blast wave caused the ceiling to collapse, pipes to be torn out, windows to be shattered, and electrical wiring to catch fire. The office premises, warehouse and the workshop – where women’s military uniforms are sewn and provided free of charge to women service members at the frontline – sustained the most severe damage. The workshop was forced to temporarily suspend operations due to the damage. The organisation’s team began restoring the headquarters and called on volunteers to join a clean-up effort.

The NGO Veteranka Women Veterans Movement (Veteranka) is the first and only community that brings together women with real military experience. Veteranka defends the rights of women in the military and supports women veterans in returning to civilian life. The organisation’s mission is to increase the representation of women in society through the security and defence sector, ensure women’s leadership and influence within the security and defence forces, and involve women in decision-making at all levels.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

NGO Blue/Yellow

On the night of **31 July 2025**, a Russian Shahed-type UAV destroyed a warehouse of the Lithuanian charitable organisation **Blue/Yellow** in **Kyiv**⁴²⁶. The premises were one of several used by the organisation for the temporary storage of humanitarian aid from Lithuania prior to its dispatch to the frontline. At the time of the strike, the premises were almost empty – only personal protective

423 Chernivtsi City Council, Facebook post, 25 July 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CRFqXuUcX>

424 Suspilne Chernivtsi, “A Woman Veteran Injured in a Russian Attack on 12 July Died in a Chernivtsi Hospital”, 25 July 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/chernivtsi/1075321-u-likami-cernivciv-pomerla-veteranka-aka-postrazdala-vnaslidok-rosijskoi-ataki-12-lipna/>; Novynamnia, “Volunteer Ilona Kapelnytska, injured in a Russian attack on Chernivtsi on 12 July, died in hospital”, 25 July 2025 URL: <https://surl.li/iuhgkq>

425 Wonderzine, “The Headquarters of the Veteranka Movement in Kyiv Damaged in a Missile Strike”, 31 July 2025. URL: <https://www.wonderzine.me/wonderzine/life/news/23053-unaslidok-raketnogo-obstrilu-kieva-zaznav-ruynuvan-shtab-ruhu-veteranka>

426 LRT, “Kyiv Warehouse of Blue/Yellow Destroyed in a Russian Drone Attack”, 2 August 2025. URL: <https://surl.li/dkqwye>

equipment (helmets, vests) for staff and medics was stored there⁴²⁷. The organisation did not suffer significant losses and continued its work⁴²⁸.



■ The warehouse of the NGO Blue/Yellow destroyed as a result of a Russian strike. Photo: NGO Blue/Yellow

The NGO Blue/Yellow was established in 2014 in Lithuania (the NGO BLUE/YELLOW Ukraine was registered in Ukraine in 2019) to provide Ukrainian military personnel and volunteers with the necessary equipment to help them resist Russian aggression⁴²⁹. All funds raised by the organisation are allocated to body armour and helmets, vehicles, optics, night vision devices, demining equipment, drones, clothing, tactical medical supplies, generators, computers and communication equipment, radars, and counter-drone systems. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, Blue/Yellow has procured more than 5,000 UAVs of various types for Ukraine. Since its establishment, residents of Lithuania have donated EUR 100 million to Ukraine.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Maryna Velytchenko



■ Volunteer Maryna Velytchenko. Collage: ZMINA

On 9 August 2025, during a humanitarian trip to the village of Khodyne in the Sumy region (located approximately 2 km from the state border with the Russian Federation), the vehicle of volunteer **Maryna Velytchenko**, founder of the charitable organisation “Kit-Pes Hlukhiv”, came under attack by Russian FPV drones⁴³⁰.

According to Maryna Velytchenko, at the time of the incident the village was under intense shelling by Russian forces⁴³¹. While the volunteer group was in the settlement, Russian forces carried out several drone attacks. One of the FPV drones detonated near the vehicle, causing significant damage –

the windows were shattered, the wheels and fuel lines were damaged, rendering the vehicle temporarily immobile. Due to the threat of repeated attacks, Maryna Velytchenko and her crew were forced to take cover for several hours, waiting for a decrease in the activity of enemy UAVs. Only after the weather deteriorated, with strong wind and rain, was the volunteer group able to restore the vehicle’s movement and leave the dangerous area.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Maryna Velytchenko stated that, prior to the incident, she had received warnings, including from Ukrainian military personnel, about increased risks to her safety due to her volunteer activities in frontline settlements⁴³². Photos of her vehicle and messages about an alleged “hunt” for Velytchenko in connection with her volunteer work appeared on Russian Telegram channels.

427 Novynarnia, “A Russian “Shahed” Destroyed a Warehouse of a Lithuanian Volunteer Organisation in Kyiv”, 3 August 2025. URL: <https://novynarnia.com/2025/08/03/rosijskyj-shahed-znyshhyv-u-kyievi-sklad-lytovskoyi-volonterskoyi-organizacziyi/>

428 Jonas Ohman, Facebook post of one of the co-founders of Blue/Yellow, 1 August 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/jonasohman/posts/10160966380856207?ref=embed_post

429 Blue/Yellow, website. URL: <https://blue-yellow.lt/uk/about-us/>

430 ZMINA, “Unfortunately, Few People Talk About the Real Situation in Sumy Region”: Animal Volunteers from Hlukhiv on Working Under FPV Drones, 30 September 2025. URL: <https://surl.li/tgkhtz>

431 kit.pes.hlukhiv, Instagram post, 13 August 2025. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DNSsNSmMymj/>

432 Interview with Maryna Velytchenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 13 December 2025.

Maryna Velytchenko is a volunteer and civil society activist from the city of Hlukhiv in Sumy region. For more than five years, she has been engaged in animal protection activities, and following the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, she has been providing assistance to animals, civilians and military personnel in frontline settlements of the Sumy region. Since 2023, Velytchenko has carried out regular humanitarian and evacuation missions to settlements near the state border with the Russian Federation, including the villages of Khodyne, Shalyhyne, Esman and other communities that have been systematically subjected to shelling. From April 2025, following the mobilisation of her husband into the Armed Forces of Ukraine, she continued her volunteer work independently and together with other women volunteers, despite the significantly deteriorating security situation in the region due to the intensive use of enemy UAVs.

#killings_of_civilians

Annie Lewis Murphy



■ British volunteer Annie Lewis Murphy.
Photo: Facebook

On 10 August 2025, British volunteer **Annie Lewis Murphy**, who at that time was in **the Donetsk region**, ceased communication. It was later confirmed that she had been killed⁴³³.

Annie Lewis Murphy arrived in Ukraine as part of a humanitarian mission organised by the charitable initiative **Aid Ukraine**. She was tasked with delivering a vehicle to Aid Ukraine UK teams in Lviv, but did not do so, insisting that she would continue the journey herself to Kramatorsk, where the vehicle was to be delivered. Over the following five days, according to the organisers, they had no contact with Murphy, as she did not disclose her exact whereabouts. She last contacted the organisation on 10 August, and her family on 8 August 2025. Aid Ukraine stated that evidence reviewed by the team confirms Lewis Murphy's death, and that it is being investigated as a war crime.

#killings_of_civilians

Nataliia Osadcha



■ Volunteer Nataliia Osadcha.
Photo: Facebook

On 19 August 2025, as a result of a large-scale Russian shelling in **Nikopol, Dnipropetrovsk region**, animal rescue volunteer **Nataliia Osadcha** was killed. That evening, she was on her way to care for the animals she assisted every day⁴³⁴.

Osadcha cared for stray cats and dogs, keeping some of the animals in her own home. According to the Mayor, Oleksandr Saiuk⁴³⁵, the volunteer consistently supported animals despite the constant shelling of the city.

433 Hromadske, "A 69-Year-Old British Volunteer Killed in Donetsk Region: Her Body Cannot Be Evacuated Due to Hostilities", 23 August 2025. URL: <https://hromadske.ua/suspilstvo/250116-na-donechchyni-zahynula-69-richna-brytanska-volonterka-yiji-tilo-ne-mozut-evakuivaty-cherez-boyovi-diy>

434 Misto i Richka, "Animal Volunteer Nataliia Osadcha Killed in Nikopol as a Result of Russian Shelling", 20 August 2025. URL: <https://mistorichka.media/novyny/u-nikopoli-vid-obstrilu-rf-zahynula-zoovolonterka-natalia-osadcha/>

435 Oleksandr Saiuk, Facebook post, 20 August 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/oleksandrsayuk/posts/pfbid02tmFmVyQA5jhtXdT5C4P3UwBpQErVuTyfkoJrWrVUyV2WpEeiwzorhgsT94h8mHRI>

#killings_of_civilians

Viktoriia Hrebeniuk



■ Civil activist Viktoriia Hrebeniuk.
Photo: National University of Kyiv-
Mohyla Academy

On the night of **7 September 2025**, as a result of a large-scale missile and drone attack on **Kyiv**, civil society activist **Viktoriia Hrebeniuk** was killed⁴³⁶. The building in which she lived was destroyed from the sixth to the ninth floors. The strike hit directly the child's room, where Viktoriia was sleeping with her two-month-old son, Roman⁴³⁷.

Viktoriia Hrebeniuk worked at the charitable organisation "100% Life. Kyiv Region", where she progressed from project manager to Head of the Programme Department. Her work focused on supporting people living with HIV, advocating for their rights, and developing assistance programmes⁴³⁸.

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Mark Serheiev



■ Home of volunteer chaplain Mark Serheiev destroyed as a result of a Russian attack. Photo: marksergeev/Instagram

On the night of **28 September 2025**, as a result of a Russian attack on **Kyiv**, the home of **Mark Serheiev**, a pastor of the Melitopol Christian Church and a volunteer chaplain, was destroyed. Following a missile strike, a fire broke out in the house and an explosion occurred. However, Mark, his wife and their three children were not injured. For the Serheiev family, this was their second lost home. In 2024, they moved to Kyiv after their house in Melitopol had been taken by occupying forces⁴³⁹.

Mark Serheiev is a youth pastor of the Melitopol Christian Church and the leader of the Christian band 4UBAND. Since the start of the full-scale war, he remained in occupied Melitopol to support the community, organising humanitarian assistance

and prayer meetings even under pressure from the occupation authorities. Serheiev also testified on the persecution of Christians in Melitopol at hearings of the Helsinki Commission of the US Congress⁴⁴⁰.

#killings_of_civilians

#injuries_of_civilians

Antoni Lallican, Heorhii Ivanchenko

On **3 October 2025**, near the settlement of **Komyshuvakha in Donetsk region**, French photojournalist **Antoni Lallican** was killed as a result of a Russian FPV drone strike, and Ukrainian

436 100% LIFE, Facebook post, 7 September 2025. URL: https://www.facebook.com/100PercentLifeFightForLife/posts/pfbid0x2JwkR_Jxay8PQWyB7u27RuWfWcHc3SgdKR6XniR3hk6VKxpmmk5FautWk3qgaCwLl

437 Suspilne, "Two People Killed in a Massive Missile and Drone Attack in Kyiv: Viktoriia Hrebeniuk and Her Two-Month-Old Son Roman", 7 September 2025. URL: <https://suspilne.media/1109302-mama-ta-sin-zaginuli-u-kyevi-so-pro-nih-vidomo/>

438 Their Russia Killed Them, Facebook post, 7 September 2025. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/russiakills.in.ua/posts/783943421051529>

439 obozrevatel.ua, Instagram post, 28 September 2025: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DPJWGgrjEVN/>

440 LB.ua, "A Russian Missile Destroyed the Home of Chaplain Mark Serheiev", 28 September 2025: https://lb.ua/kyiv/2025/09/28/698719_rosijska_raketa_zruynuvala_budinok.html

photojournalist **Heorhii Ivanchenko**, a member of the Ukrainian Association of Professional Photographers, was injured⁴⁴¹. As a result of his injuries, Ivanchenko lost a leg.



■ French photojournalist Antoni Lallican. Photo: Reporters Without Borders

The international organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF) stated that the Russian attack was deliberate and released further details⁴⁴². On the morning of 3 October, Lallican and Ivanchenko arrived at the site together with servicemen of the 4th Separate Heavy Mechanised Brigade to prepare a report on the construction of fortifications in the region. Although the area is not part of the frontline and is located 20 kilometres from it, it has increasingly come under attack by Russian drones. During their work, the photojournalists were repeatedly warned about UAV attacks and had to take cover. However, due to the noise of construction equipment, they did not immediately notice the approach of one of the drones. At around 9:30, a Russian FPV drone flew over the group and struck. According to RSF, at the time of the attack both photojournalists were wearing helmets and vests marked “PRESS”. They were in an open area, while their vehicle was parked several hundred metres away.



■ Photojournalist, member of the Ukrainian Association of Professional Photographers, Heorhii Ivanchenko. Photo: Ivanchenko George/Facebook

As a result of the attack, Antoni Lallican was killed instantly. Heorhii Ivanchenko was first taken to a hospital in Kramatorsk and later evacuated to a hospital in Dnipro, where his leg was amputated. This was reported in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA by Olha Kovalova, Director of the NGO Ukrainian Association of Professional Photographers, who accompanied Ivanchenko in hospital during the first days after his injury⁴⁴³. She also confirmed the circumstances of the crime reported by RSF.

RSF noted that on 5 October 2025, the French National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor’s Office (PNAT) opened an investigation into a war crime. The French prosecution service entrusted the investigation to the Central Office for the Fight against Crimes against Humanity and Hate Crimes⁴⁴⁴.

In Ukraine, criminal proceedings in relation to a war crime were opened on 3 October under the procedural supervision of the Kramatorsk District Prosecutor’s Office. It was reported that, in addition to the journalists, three civilians were injured⁴⁴⁵.

Following his injury and the amputation of his leg, Heorhii Ivanchenko has been undergoing a prolonged rehabilitation process, which was ongoing as of March 2026. Due to complications, he requires a further operation⁴⁴⁶.

Heorhii Ivanchenko is a photographer, war photojournalist, and a member of the NGO Ukrainian Association of Professional Photographers. Since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, he has been documenting the war, including for Associated Press and the European Pressphoto Agency. He collaborates with Ukrainian outlets The Kyiv Independent and Babel. He has worked in Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Kherson and Donetsk regions, including in Bakhmut during active hostilities. In April 2023, his vehicle was destroyed in Chasiv Yar as a result of artillery shelling.

441 4th Separate Heavy Mechanised Brigade, Facebook post, 3 October 2025: https://www.facebook.com/4ovmbr/posts/pfbid01AhwJ6NAwTwLXzm5QKeBbXChTPCsgv9pnbHVW6PqpJDf2aEtE2Jnr5WaE3n9Ydvl?locale=uk_UA

442 RSF, “Ukraine: RSF Publishes Initial Findings on Targeted Russian Strike That Killed French Photojournalist Antoni Lallican”, 9 October 2025: <https://rsf.org/en/ukraine-rsf-publishes-initial-findings-targeted-russian-strike-killed-french-photojournalist-antoni>

443 Interview with Olha Kovalova, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 8 October 2025.

444 RSF, “Mort du photojournaliste français Antoni Lallican en Ukraine : RSF salue l’ouverture d’enquêtes préliminaires par la France et l’Ukraine”: <https://rsf.org/fr/mort-du-photojournaliste-fran%C3%A7ais-antoni-lallican-en-ukraine-rsf-salue-l-ouverture-d-enqu%C3%AAtes>

445 Donetsk Regional Prosecutor’s Office website, “Foreign Journalist Killed and Four Civilians Injured by Russian Armed Forces in Donetsk Region – Investigation Launched”, 3 October 2025: https://don.gp.gov.ua/ua/news.html?_m=publications&_c=view&t=rec&id=401375

446 Interview with Heorhii Ivanchenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 31 March 2026.

Antoni Lallican is a photojournalist who has been covering Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2022 for the photo agency Hans Lucas and for French and international media, including Le Monde, Le Figaro, Mediapart, La Croix, Libération, Paris Match, as well as for German outlets Der Spiegel and Die Welt, and the Swiss newspaper Le Temps.

#intimidation_threats_or_other_forms_of_pressure

Crimean Tatar Resource Centre

On 28 October 2025, hackers from the Russian group KillNet compromised the social media accounts of Zarema Bariieva, a manager of the **NGO Crimean Tatar Resource Centre (CTRC)**, who is based in **Kyiv**. At around 18:30, unknown individuals gained access to her Facebook and Instagram accounts and subsequently to the messaging applications she used to administer the CTRC's social media pages.

On the eve of the hack, Bariieva published a post about the unlawful sentencing to 29 years' imprisonment of a serviceman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and a representative of the Crimean Tatar people, Eskender Kudusov⁴⁴⁷. The cassation hearing in Kudusov's case took place in Moscow without his personal participation. In the post, Bariieva condemned the actions of the Russian authorities and described the persecution of Crimean Tatars as "a manifestation of the occupation regime's fear".

On the same day, the CTRC manager began receiving threats from various unknown accounts, likely linked to the Russian Federation. The perpetrators threatened to fabricate Bariieva's correspondence and disseminate fake screenshots on social media⁴⁴⁸. In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Zarema Bariieva stated that CTRC staff had not corresponded with residents of temporarily occupied territories via messaging applications⁴⁴⁹. Accordingly, she noted that the perpetrators could not have accessed sensitive information. Bariieva believes that the attack on the CTRC and on her personally was an attempt to discredit the organisation and intimidate residents of Crimea so that they would not communicate with human rights defenders or report crimes committed by the occupying authorities against civilians.

On 29 October 2025, major Russian media outlets, including "RIA Novosti", claimed that the Russian side had allegedly gained access to data of the Crimean Tatar Resource Centre and to the personal page of the organisation's manager, Zarema Bariieva, who is based in Kyiv. The publication asserted that the cyberattack had been carried out by the Russian hacker group KillNet, known for DoS attacks on state institutions of NATO countries after 2022. The media also disseminated allegations that the Centre allegedly "collects information on residents of Crimea" and "recruits people" from various regions of Russia for "destabilisation activities". Similar claims were circulated by a number of Russian propaganda and occupation media outlets.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Eskender Bariiev, Chair of the Board of the CTRC, stated that reports of the alleged hacking of CTRC resources form part of a coordinated information campaign aimed at intimidating residents of Crimea and intensifying repression⁴⁵⁰. In his view, these claims may be used to justify searches, detentions and persecution of representatives of the Crimean Tatar people. Bariiev also suggested that the cybercriminals were in fact acting on behalf of Russian special services and had only managed to gain access to the personal correspondence of Zarema Bariieva.

Following the completion of an internal review of the circumstances of the alleged cyberattack, the CTRC stated that the perpetrators had not succeeded in obtaining confidential data of the organisation and that the reports disseminated by Russian media were disinformation. The Centre emphasised that, following the attempted discreditation, the number of inquiries it received had even increased, including from the territory of the Russian Federation. At the same time, CTRC specialists continue to analyse the circumstances of the incident and monitor further actions by the Russian side in order to assess potential risks for the organisation and for individuals who are in contact with it.

447 Zarema Bariieva, Facebook post, 28 October 2025: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Dfc8WrrfA/>

448 Zarema Bariieva, Facebook post, 28 October 2025: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1JtdEchttN/>

449 Interview with Zarema Bariieva, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 3 November 2025.

450 Interview with Eskender Bariiev, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 31 October 2025.

The Crimean Tatar Resource Centre (CTRC) is an NGO established in 2015 to protect the collective rights of the Crimean Tatar people as an indigenous people of Ukraine and the individual rights of all residents of Crimea. The Centre documents human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including in territories occupied following the full-scale Russian invasion, where Crimean Tatars, Crimean Karaites and Krymchaks live in compact communities⁴⁵¹.

Zarema Bariieva is a manager at the Crimean Tatar Resource Centre (CTRC). She documents human rights violations, prepares reports for international human rights mechanisms, and submits relevant information to state authorities of Ukraine, as well as to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. In addition, Bariieva administers the CTRC's social media pages and regularly reports on unlawful arrests, searches, pressure on Crimean Tatars, and politically motivated decisions of Russian courts.

#killings_of_civilians

Olena Polynina



■ Animal welfare volunteer Olena Polynina.
Photo: Facebook

On 30 October 2025, in the city of Sloviansk, Donetsk region, volunteer and animal rights activist **Olena Polynina** was killed as a result of shelling by the armed forces of the Russian Federation. Her death was reported by the animal rescue service, the NGO U-Hearts⁴⁵².

According to U-Hearts, on the day of her death, Olena Polynina was on Olimpiiska Street in the Lisnyi district of the city of Sloviansk, where she was feeding stray animals she regularly cared for. While the volunteer was in the area, Russian forces shelled the city using a multiple launch rocket system. As a result of the attack, Olena Polynina was killed together with two other civilians. The organisation

noted that since the start of the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, Olena Polynina had coordinated the organisation's humanitarian mission in the Donetsk region. After being forced to leave the region, she continued to organise the delivery of animal feed and humanitarian aid to Sloviansk, and later decided to return to the city to personally assist animals in frontline areas.

The U-Hearts team learned of Olena Polynina's death on 2 November 2025. After reviewing photos of the destroyed vehicle belonging to the volunteer, which contained veterinary supplies and humanitarian aid provided by the NGO U-Hearts Ukraine, her colleagues concluded that Polynina had been killed while carrying out volunteer activities. According to representatives of the organisation, Olena Polynina regularly travelled to frontline settlements in the Donetsk region, including Sloviansk and surrounding communities, where she fed stray animals and provided assistance to people in difficult life circumstances, including children, pensioners and internally displaced persons⁴⁵³. Olena's volunteer work was supported by her husband and two daughters.

#injury

#destruction_or_damage_to_property

Devon Masser, Serhii Horbatenko

On 20 November 2025, in Lyman, Donetsk region, a Russian FPV drone struck an evacuation vehicle. The vehicle was carrying **Devon Masser**, a US national and an employee of the humanitarian organisation **Plain Compassion Crisis Response**, and **Serhii Horbatenko**, a correspondent

451 Crimean Tatar Resource Center, website: <https://ctrcenter.org/uk/>

452 U-Hearts, Facebook post, 3 November 2025: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14VGEPfKaHM/>

453 Interview (name withheld, No. 28.11.25) with a staff member of the NGO "U-Hearts Ukraine", conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 28 November 2025.

of the Donbas Realii project of Radio Svoboda. They were accompanied by two law enforcement officers from the “White Angel” unit, which conducts humanitarian and evacuation missions near the frontline.



■ Volunteer with the humanitarian organisation “Plain Compassion Crisis Response”, Devon Masser.
Photo: Radio Free Europe



■ Donbas Realities correspondent Serhii Horbatenko. Photo: Facebook



■ Destroyed evacuation vehicle.
Photo: Donbas Realities

According to the Donbas Realii Telegram channel, the American volunteer, who was driving at the time, sustained shrapnel injuries to his face. Devon Masser stated that he had not expected the strike, as he had arrived at the location to evacuate civilians⁴⁵⁴. Serhii Horbatenko suffered a concussion. The evacuation vehicle was completely destroyed⁴⁵⁵. Despite the fact that the vehicle bore a large and clearly visible “Evacuation” marking, Russian forces targeted the crew. It was also reported that, prior to the strike, a fibre-optic UAV had been lying in ambush. The Donetsk Regional Prosecutor’s Office opened a pre-trial investigation into a war crime⁴⁵⁶.

In an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, journalist Serhii Horbatenko stated that he was carrying out an editorial assignment for Radio Svoboda to cover the evacuation of civilians from the city of Lyman⁴⁵⁷. According to him, this topic is of public importance, as the situation in the city is dangerous for civilians. The correspondent sought to highlight the risks faced by local residents, as well as the consequences of Russian war crimes.

Since 2015, Serhii Horbatenko has worked as a freelance correspondent for Radio Svoboda. In June 2022, he was awarded the Order of Merit, 3rd Class, for his significant personal contribution to the development of Ukrainian journalism, as well as for the courage and dedication demonstrated while covering the events of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

“Plain Compassion Crisis Response” (PCCR) is a US-based organisation founded in 2014 in response to the humanitarian crisis in the Kurdistan region (northern Iraq)⁴⁵⁸. It provides assistance to those affected by armed conflicts and emergencies in frontline areas and carries out civilian evacuations.

#killings_of_civilians

Kyrylo Riabov

On the evening of **20 November 2025**, in **Zaporizhzhia**, civil society activist and volunteer **Kyrylo Riabov** was killed as a result of a Russian airstrike using a FAB-500 bomb. He was an employee of the Stabilisation Support Services charitable foundation and a former staff member of the charitable organisation “East SOS”.

454 Donbas Realii, Telegram post, 20 November 2025: <https://t.me/donbassrealii/27554>

455 Radio Svoboda, YouTube video, 23 November 2025: https://youtu.be/L_SvWcl00YfQ?si=255rvSGgvih30I2c

456 Suspilne Donbas, “Occupiers Strike an Evacuation Vehicle at the Entrance to Lyman: US Volunteer Injured, Journalist Wounded”, 20 November 2025: <https://surl.li/uapkdw>

457 Interview with Serhii Horbatenko, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 26 November 2025.

458 Plain Compassion Crisis Response, website”: <https://plaincompassion.org/>



■ Activist and volunteer Kyrylo Riabov. Photo: Facebook

The incident occurred in the Shevchenkovskiy district of the city, near the Zavodska public transport stop. Kyrylo Riabov and his partner had left their home to buy coffee, as there was no electricity in their building. At the time of the strike, Kyrylo and his girlfriend were near a mobile coffee stand. This was reported in an interview with the Human Rights Centre ZMINA by a former colleague of the volunteer from the East SOS charitable foundation (name withheld)⁴⁵⁹.

On 21 November 2025, the charitable organisation East SOS publicly reported the death of Kyrylo Riabov⁴⁶⁰. The information was later confirmed by the Stabilisation Support Services charitable foundation, where Riabov worked on a project aimed at strengthening the capacity of the social protection system⁴⁶¹. The foundation noted that he had held the position of Social Institutions Monitoring Specialist and later Regional Social Specialist in Zaporizhzhia region, where he advised social sector professionals, conducted awareness-raising activities, and informed people affected by the war about their rights.

According to the Zaporizhzhia Regional Police, in addition to Kyrylo Riabov, four other civilians were killed in the airstrike⁴⁶². On 21 November 2025, the Zaporizhzhia Regional Directorate of the Security Service of Ukraine, with the participation of a former colleague of the volunteer, carried out procedural actions to identify the deceased. The identity of Kyrylo Riabov was officially confirmed.

#killings_of_civilians

Viacheslav Ilchenko



■ Volunteer Viacheslav Ilchenko. Photo: Facebook

On 25 December 2025, in Kostiantynivka, Donetsk region, volunteer Viacheslav Ilchenko was killed when a Russian FPV drone struck an evacuation vehicle of the NGO The Union of Kramatorsk Volunteers. This was reported by the East SOS charitable foundation⁴⁶³. Representatives of the foundation stated that Russia is “deliberately targeting evacuation crews rescuing civilians”.

The attack occurred at around 07:40, when the crew was responding to a request to evacuate civilians from a dangerous area. As a result of the strike, Ilchenko sustained injuries incompatible with life. Two other members of his team received moderate shrapnel injuries and were hospitalised. The body of the deceased was successfully evacuated from the site of the shelling.

Viacheslav Ilchenko was a volunteer and the founder of the charitable foundation “Nezlamna”. Since 2022, he had been evacuating civilians from frontline areas of Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, including the Kupiansk and Vovchansk directions.

459 Interview (name withheld, No. 10.12.25) with a staff member of the Charitable Organisation “Charitable Foundation “East SOS””, conducted by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA on 8 December 2025.

460 east.sos.ua, Instagram post, 21 November 2025: https://www.instagram.com/p/DRUwWh_CHAc/

461 Stabilisation Support Services Charitable Foundation, Facebook post, 22 November 2025: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14Wa5HeQ4Zz/>

462 ZPRZ.CITY, “Zaporizhzhia Volunteer Kyrylo Riabov Killed in a Russian Airstrike”, 22 November 2025: <https://zprz.city/news/view/zaporizkij-volonter-kirilo-ryabov-stav-zhertvoyu-aviadaru-rf>

463 East SOS, Facebook post, 25 December 2025: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16o2dPnHC2/>

CHAPTER 3.

REVIEW OF LEGISLATION POSING A THREAT TO CIVIL SOCIETY



An analysis of legislative initiatives and adopted laws indicates the existence of risks for the functioning of civil society. These include, in particular, disproportionate restrictions on access to information of public interest, unjustified expansion of the discretion of public authorities, and challenges to compliance with the principle of legal certainty due to the use of evaluative terms and vague wording. This narrows the operating space for independent media and CSOs, complicates public oversight, and creates a “chilling effect” on public participation in public debate.

This chapter provides an overview of laws adopted in 2025, as well as draft laws registered in 2025 or earlier, where they continued to pose risks to the functioning of civil society during the year. It examines the impact of such measures on the exercise of the rights to access to information, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of peaceful assembly, as well as on restrictions on public oversight. Draft laws that were withdrawn, not supported, or did not progress in the legislative procedure within the specified period were not included in the review.

The chapter further analyses the following in sequence: (1) the law restricting electronic access to data from public registers; (2) the law introducing new rules for the verification of humanitarian organisations and the use of vehicles imported as humanitarian aid; (3) the law adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on administrative liability for “identifying a lawyer with a client”; (4) the draft law on the recodification of personal rights in the Civil Code of Ukraine and how it may increase pressure on media and CSOs; (5) the draft law on restricting access to certain court decisions and removing specific information from the texts of court decisions; and (6) the draft law on updating the legal framework governing the activities of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, in terms of expanding its oversight powers to private law entities.

Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Civil Code of Ukraine and Certain Other Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Specifics of Providing Information from Public Electronic Registers Maintained by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and Certain Other Public Electronic Registers” No. 4576-IX of 21.08.2025⁴⁶⁴

Legislative amendments: The law provides that during martial law and for one year after its termination or cancellation, for certain legal entities involved in ensuring the state’s defence, the registered location may be considered the address used for communication with them, including for receiving documents from public authorities and local self-government bodies. In such cases, the register may not contain information about the actual place of activity.

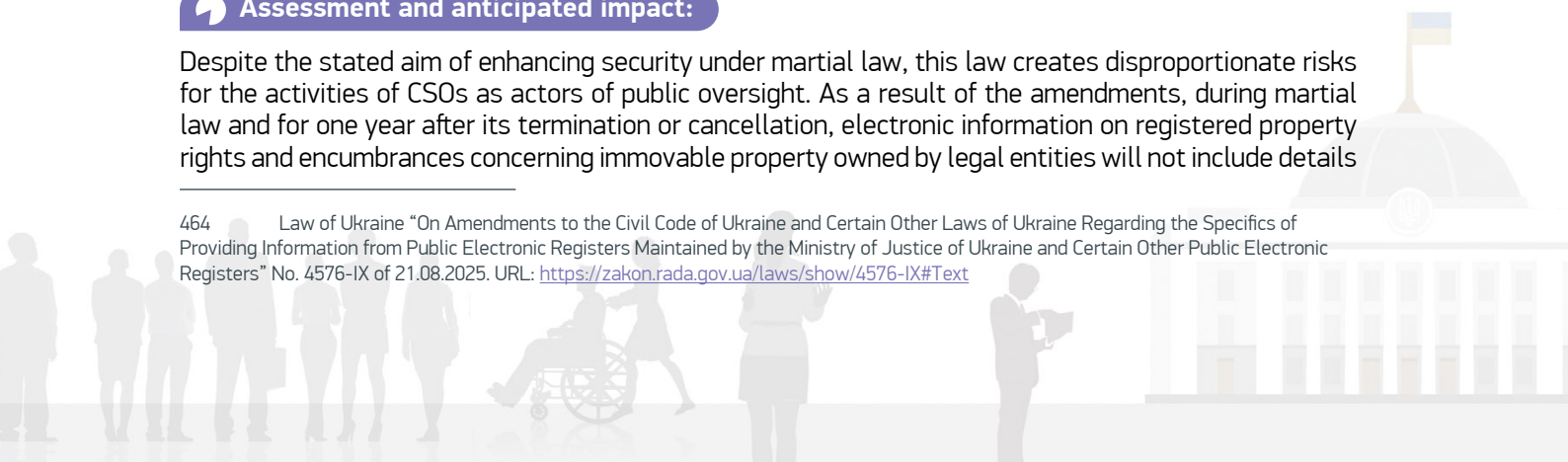
In addition, the law introduces temporary restrictions on access to certain information in the Unified State Register, selected intellectual property registers, and the State Register of Property Rights to Immovable Property. These restrictions apply to information related to national security and defence. In particular, during martial law and for one year after its termination or cancellation, electronic information on property rights and encumbrances concerning immovable property registered to legal entities is provided in a reduced scope: it contains only data on the state, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the region, and does not include the cadastral number of the land plot. An exception applies to information provided to banks on the basis of a service agreement.

Objective: To enhance the security of defence enterprises by restricting public access to information in state registers, in particular regarding their types of activity, location, certain immovable property objects, and information on intellectual property assets related to the fields of national security and defence.

Assessment and anticipated impact:

Despite the stated aim of enhancing security under martial law, this law creates disproportionate risks for the activities of CSOs as actors of public oversight. As a result of the amendments, during martial law and for one year after its termination or cancellation, electronic information on registered property rights and encumbrances concerning immovable property owned by legal entities will not include details

⁴⁶⁴ Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Civil Code of Ukraine and Certain Other Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Specifics of Providing Information from Public Electronic Registers Maintained by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and Certain Other Public Electronic Registers” No. 4576-IX of 21.08.2025. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4576-IX#Text>



of location below the regional level and will not display cadastral numbers of land plots. In practice, this significantly complicates the identification of specific real estate objects and their verification using other open data used in investigative journalism and anti-corruption monitoring.

The loss of the cadastral number as a unique identifier of a land plot and the absence of precise address referencing reduce the quality of the evidentiary base, complicate the detection of conflicts of interest, the establishment of de facto control over assets, as well as the verification of candidates' property links during monitoring of competitions for public positions⁴⁶⁵. In addition, since the restrictions apply to all legal entities and not only to those related to defence, the law may create additional opportunities for concealing assets. As a result, the restrictions not only technically reduce the scope of open data, but also effectively narrow the tools for exercising public oversight.

Thus, the risk posed by this Law lies not only in the narrowing of access to open register information, but also in the overall weakening of public oversight and the reduction of the effectiveness of anti-corruption monitoring.

Civil society response:

Following the adoption of the draft law in the second reading, a number of CSOs and media outlets called on the President of Ukraine to veto it. A corresponding joint statement, signed by more than eight organisations, was published, in particular, on the websites of the Centre for Economic Strategy⁴⁶⁶, Chesno Movement,⁴⁶⁷ RISE Ukraine,⁴⁶⁸ and the DEJURE Foundation⁴⁶⁹. The statement emphasised that the adopted amendments disproportionately restrict access to open register data concerning all legal entities, complicate public oversight and the work of notaries, insolvency practitioners and other professionals who use registers. Moreover, civil society organisations noted that the amendments adopted by parliament do not improve the security situation, as they merely remove electronic access to information for bona fide users while still allowing access through paper extracts.

However, the calls to veto the Law were not taken into account: on 17 September 2025, Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed it.

Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On Humanitarian Aid” Regarding the Regulation of the Activities of Humanitarian Organisations” No. 4608-IX of 18.09.2025⁴⁷⁰

Legislative amendments: The Law introduces the status of a verified humanitarian organisation, defines the main requirements for obtaining it, and provides for the creation of a list of organisations that have obtained this status. It also clarifies the concept of humanitarian response and expands the range of humanitarian aid recipients, including, in particular, bodies and institutions of the State Criminal-Executive Service of Ukraine. A separate set of amendments concerns vehicles imported as humanitarian aid: the Law establishes special rules for the use, transfer and disposal of vehicles imported as humanitarian aid, including in cases of their misuse.

Objective: To ensure, during the period of martial law, the legal basis for additional provision of vehicles imported for the performance of statutory activities related to the provision of humanitarian aid, humanitarian and medical evacuation, the functioning of critical infrastructure facilities, as well as the

465 Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Shadow Report on Chapter 23 “Justice and fundamental rights” and Chapter 24 “Justice, freedom and security” of the European Commission’s report on Ukraine in 2024 EU Enlargement Package, Kyiv, 2025, p. 909. URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/10/shadow-report-2025-ua-2.pdf>

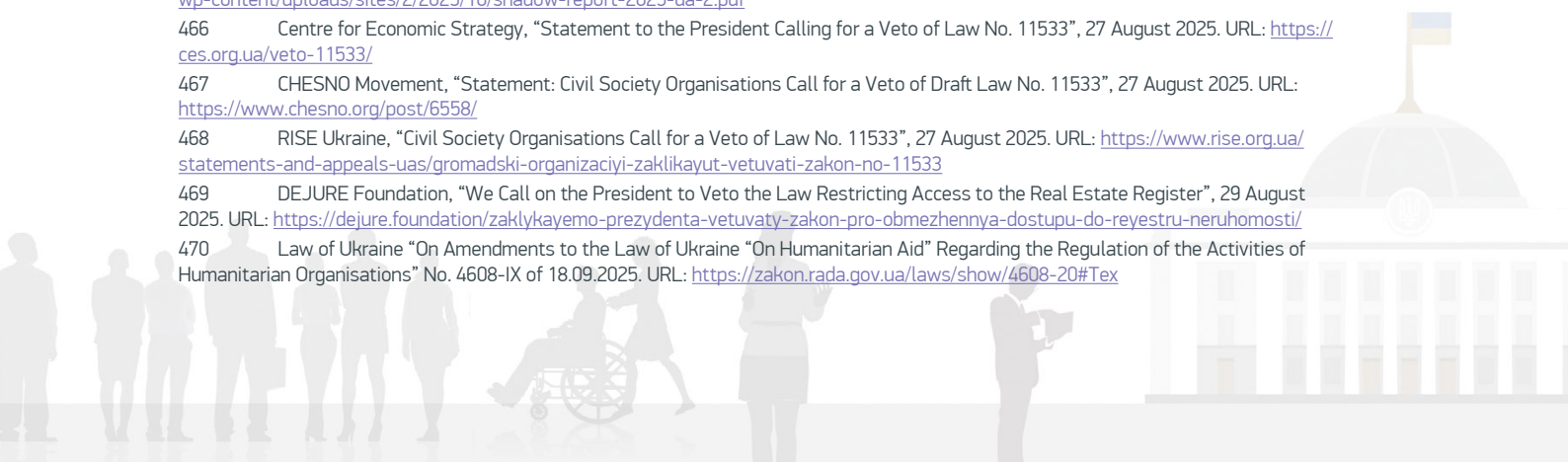
466 Centre for Economic Strategy, “Statement to the President Calling for a Veto of Law No. 11533”, 27 August 2025. URL: <https://ces.org.ua/veto-11533/>

467 CHESNO Movement, “Statement: Civil Society Organisations Call for a Veto of Draft Law No. 11533”, 27 August 2025. URL: <https://www.chesno.org/post/6558/>

468 RISE Ukraine, “Civil Society Organisations Call for a Veto of Law No. 11533”, 27 August 2025. URL: <https://www.rise.org.ua/statements-and-appeals-uas/gromadski-organizaciyi-zaklikayut-vetuvati-zakon-no-11533>

469 DEJURE Foundation, “We Call on the President to Veto the Law Restricting Access to the Real Estate Register”, 29 August 2025. URL: <https://dejure.foundation/zaklykayemo-prezydenta-vetuvaty-zakon-pro-obmezheniya-dostupu-do-reyestru-neruhomosti/>

470 Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On Humanitarian Aid” Regarding the Regulation of the Activities of Humanitarian Organisations” No. 4608-IX of 18.09.2025. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4608-20#Text>



implementation of other measures related to the protection of the state and the enhancement of its defence capability.

Assessment and anticipated impact:

The adopted law is generally intended to regulate the use of vehicles imported as humanitarian aid and to create more predictable legal grounds for their use in humanitarian response, medical evacuation, and the functioning of critical infrastructure. In particular, the law introduces the status of verified humanitarian organisations and establishes a special regime for the use of vehicles imported as humanitarian aid. At the same time, despite these positive changes, the proposed regulatory model narrows the opportunities for civil society organisations to participate in humanitarian response, expands the discretion of the executive authorities, and allows for the loss of property without sufficiently clear procedures and safeguards defined in the law.

One of the key elements of the amendments is the introduction of a special status of a “verified humanitarian organisation”, which is linked to the right to use vehicles imported as humanitarian aid⁴⁷¹. The Law defines the criteria for obtaining such status, including: availability of funding during the previous calendar year, employed staff, as well as internal operational standards developed on the principles of impartiality, openness and transparency, in accordance with business and professional ethics, a public website, and publicly disclosed financial and activity reports for the past two years⁴⁷². These requirements establish a higher threshold for obtaining this status and may disadvantage small, newly established or local organisations, including those operating in frontline areas. Under such conditions, there is a risk of indirect restriction of the participation of part of CSOs in humanitarian response, and therefore these changes require assessment from the perspective of proportionality.

A separate risk is associated with granting the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine broad powers to determine the procedure for acquiring and revoking the status of a verified humanitarian organisation, confirming compliance with the established requirements, inclusion in and exclusion from the relevant list, as well as setting the minimum amount of required financial resources. In combination with the evaluative terms contained in the law (in particular, “internal operational standards” and “sufficiency of financial resources”), this creates a risk of inconsistent, selective or politicised application of the relevant criteria when granting or terminating the status of a verified humanitarian organisation. Under these conditions, there is a potential risk that the regulatory model will not meet the requirements of legal certainty as an element of the rule of law and the quality-of-law standards developed in the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

Particular attention should be given to the expansion of the circle of humanitarian aid recipients through the inclusion of bodies and institutions of the State Criminal-Executive Service of Ukraine⁴⁷³. In itself, granting these bodies the status of humanitarian aid recipients is not controversial. However, combining the status of humanitarian aid recipient with the fact that these bodies belong to the system of executive authorities creates risks of conflicts of interest and of violating the principle of equality in the allocation of resources for humanitarian response. In the absence of normatively defined, transparent and uniformly applied criteria for the distribution of humanitarian resources, a situation may arise in which state authorities are de facto given preference over independent civil society organisations. Such a model potentially affects the balance between state and independent actors in the field of humanitarian response and narrows the autonomy of CSOs.

The Law provides that an organisation which loses the status of a verified humanitarian organisation may be required to transfer free of charge a vehicle imported as humanitarian aid. In other words, this concerns a decision that has direct property-related consequences for the organisation⁴⁷⁴. However, the Law does not provide for a procedure for restoring such status; it only states that the deprivation of the status of a verified humanitarian organisation is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The absence of provisions on the restoration of the status of a verified humanitarian organisation creates legal uncertainty regarding the real possibility both of its reinstatement and

471 *ibid*, para. 1.

472 *ibid*, para. 3.

473 *ibid*, paras. 4,6.

474 *ibid*, para. 7.



of safeguarding property. Thus, the risk lies not so much in the introduction of the accountability mechanism itself, but in the absence of a clearly regulated procedure for its application, which may create conditions for inconsistent application of the law.

Overall, the adopted law has a positive impact on the conduct of humanitarian activities. At the same time, certain of its provisions create risks of indirect discrimination against civil society organisations and undermine the principle of legal certainty.

Civil society response:

Open sources do not indicate any clear public criticism of the draft law from the civil society sector. In particular, the Ukrainian Centre for Independent Political Research reported that its experts participated in the drafting and advocacy of the bill in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy, civil society organisations, customs authorities, and law enforcement bodies⁴⁷⁵. At the same time, between registration and adoption, the content of the draft law was significantly expanded: from amendments to two articles of the Law on Humanitarian Aid concerning the import of vehicles, to the introduction of the status of a verified humanitarian organisation, as well as the rules for obtaining and losing this status. More specific comments from the civil society sector emerged at the stage of drafting secondary legislation, in particular regarding the consistency of requirements for organisations' internal policies, grounds for deregistration, as well as the lack of a clear appeal procedure and mechanisms for restoring the status after the elimination of violations⁴⁷⁶.

Draft Law “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences, the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine to Ensure the Protection of Guarantees of Advocacy” No. 12320 of 16.12.2024⁴⁷⁷

Legislative proposal: It is proposed to supplement the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences⁴⁷⁸ with a new Article 185¹⁶ “Violation of the prohibition on identifying a lawyer with a client”. It is envisaged that reports on such offences may be drawn up by the heads of the Bar Councils of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, oblasts, and the cities of Kyiv and Sevastopol, or by authorised members of these councils, while the relevant cases would be considered by district, city-district, or city courts. In addition, it is proposed to set out a new version of Article 397 of the CC of Ukraine, “Interference with the activities of a lawyer”⁴⁷⁹.

Objective of the draft law: To strengthen the protection of lawyers' rights and guarantees of their professional activity, as well as to ensure the proper exercise of citizens' right to professional legal aid.

Status of the draft law: On 16 July 2025, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted it in the second reading and as a whole, and on 22 July 2025 the law was submitted to the President of Ukraine for signature. As of the end of 2025, Volodymyr Zelenskyy had not signed the law.

Assessment and anticipated impact:

Assessment and anticipated impact: Despite the entirely legitimate aim of the draft law – protecting the professional independence of lawyers and their reputation – the proposed Article 185¹⁶ of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences contains vague wording that does not comply with the principles of legal certainty and may lead to significant violations of the right to freedom of expression.

⁴⁷⁵ Ukrainian Independent Centre for Political Research, “Verkhovna Rada Adopts Draft Law No. 12010: New Opportunities for CSOs”, 18 September 2025. URL: <https://ucipr.org.ua/ua/novyny/verkhovna-rada-ukhvalila-zakonoproekt-12010-novi-mozhlivosti-dlya-ogs>

⁴⁷⁶ Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research, “The Government Updates Its Approach to the Verification of Humanitarian Organisations: Expert Review of the Draft Resolution”, 13 January 2026. URL: <http://www.ucipr.org.ua/ua/novyny/uryad-onovlyue-pidkhid-do-verifikatsiji-gumanitarnikh-organizatsij-ekspertnij-oglyad-proektu-postanovi>; HMH.NEWS, “The Government Prepares Digital Verification of Humanitarian Organisations”, 21 January 2026. URL: <https://hnh.news/22917/uryad-gotuye-cyfrovu-veryfikacziyu-gumanitarnyh-organizacij/>

⁴⁷⁷ Draft Law “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences, the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine to Ensure the Protection of Guarantees of Advocacy” No. 12320 of 16.12.2024. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45435>

⁴⁷⁸ Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences of 7 December 1984 No. 8073-X. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/8073-10#Text>

⁴⁷⁹ Criminal Code of Ukraine of 5 April 2001 No. 2341-III. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>



Thus, Article 185¹⁶ of the CAO proposes introducing administrative liability for the public identification of a lawyer with a client, including *“through media, journalists, public associations, professional unions, digital platforms, social networks, and online resources, without the intent to hinder the lawyer’s exercise of legally provided powers in defence, representation and other types of legal assistance to the client”*⁴⁸⁰. In other words, this provision covers any form of public expression, for which journalists, media outlets, public associations and professional unions could be held liable.

At first glance, Article 185¹⁶ of the CAO appears to be a mechanism for protecting a lawyer’s reputation from being identified with their clients. However, it contains significant risks for media outlets and civil society organisations due to the extensive use of evaluative concepts. The key issue is what would be considered “identification of a lawyer with a client”, as the definition proposed in the draft law effectively leaves room for disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression.

According to the note, the identification of a lawyer with a client means *“any identification (association or linking) of a lawyer with a client, or with the activities or actions of their client, which creates a prejudiced attitude towards the lawyer, indicates the lawyer’s personal involvement in the client’s case, affects the lawyer’s independent status and/or exerts negative pressure during the exercise of legal practice, and/or violates guarantees of legal practice, and/or hinders the exercise of the lawyer’s rights provided for by the Law of Ukraine “On the Bar and Legal Practice”*⁴⁸¹.

For the purpose of establishing administrative liability, it is not merely the mention of a lawyer (identification, association or linking) that matters, but the harm such a mention causes to their professional activity. However, the draft law describes this harm through vague evaluative terms, making it difficult to understand and predict what will be considered identification of a lawyer with a client and what will not. The evaluative concepts in this article include, in particular: “creates a prejudiced attitude”, “indicates personal involvement”, “affects independent status”, and “exerts negative pressure”⁴⁸². From such wording, it is difficult for civil society organisations, journalists or media outlets to understand which specific expression would be considered a violation.

Accordingly, the imposition of liability will depend solely on the subjective assessment of the person authorised to draw up reports on administrative offences (the head of the Bar Council or an authorised member thereof), as well as the judge hearing such a case. It is worth agreeing with the observation of the Main Scientific and Expert Department that a representative of the Bar in such cases can hardly be considered an impartial person⁴⁸³.

Thus, the adopted version of Article 185¹⁶ of the CAO, due to the vagueness of its wording, creates a possibility for arbitrary interpretation of its content, which may lead to abuses and violations of the right to freedom of expression. Therefore, this article does not meet the requirements of legal certainty and clarity of the law, thereby violating Ukraine’s obligations under the ECHR. According to the case-law of the ECtHR, a norm cannot be regarded as a law if it is not formulated with *“sufficient precision to enable a person to regulate their conduct: the person must be able – if need be with appropriate legal advice – to foresee, to a degree that is reasonable in the circumstances, the consequences which a given action may entail”*⁴⁸⁴. In addition, Article 185¹⁶ of the CAO violates the constitutional principles of equality and fairness, as it contains a broad interpretation of the concept of “identification of a lawyer with a client”, resulting in non-uniform application in practice.

Thus, despite the legitimate aim of protecting the professional activity of lawyers, the proposed Article 185¹⁶ of the CAO does not comply with the principle of legal certainty and creates risks of abuse,

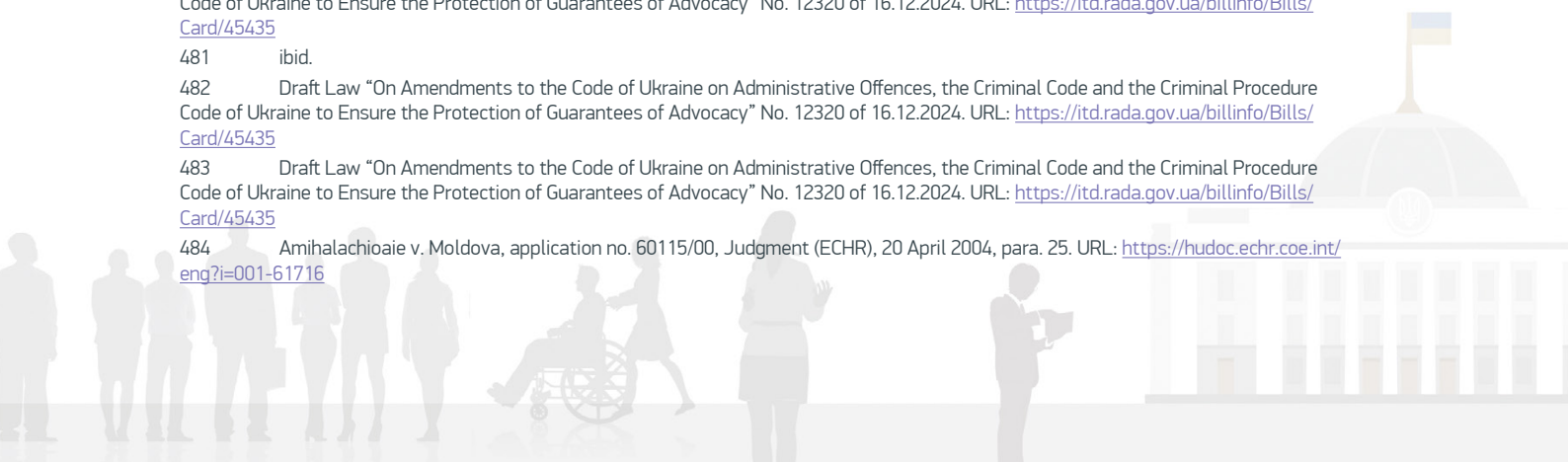
480 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences, the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine to Ensure the Protection of Guarantees of Advocacy” No. 12320 of 16.12.2024. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45435>

481 ibid.

482 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences, the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine to Ensure the Protection of Guarantees of Advocacy” No. 12320 of 16.12.2024. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45435>

483 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences, the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine to Ensure the Protection of Guarantees of Advocacy” No. 12320 of 16.12.2024. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45435>

484 Amihalachioaie v. Moldova, application no. 60115/00, Judgment (ECHR), 20 April 2004, para. 25. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-61716>



discriminatory application, and violations of the right to freedom of expression. Accordingly, the analysed draft law requires significant further refinement.

Civil society response:

Following the adoption of the draft law in the second reading, a coalition of media outlets and civil society organisations called on Members of Parliament to revoke the decision, emphasising that establishing administrative liability for the “identification of a lawyer with a client” directly threatens freedom of expression, the public’s right to information, and the objective coverage of court proceedings⁴⁸⁵. The statement was supported by both media and civil society organisations, including Transparency International Ukraine, the Institute of Mass Information, Ukrainska Pravda, Suspilne Broadcasting, Bihus.Info, Detector Media, ACREC, and the Chesno Movement. Representatives of civil society also called on the President of Ukraine to veto the adopted draft law. As of 31 December 2025, the law was pending the President’s signature.

Draft Law “On Amendments to the Civil Code due to update (recodification) of provisions of Book Two” No. 14057 of 21.09.2025⁴⁸⁶

Legislative proposal: It is proposed to restate Book 2 “Personal Non-Property Rights of an Individual” of the Civil Code of Ukraine⁴⁸⁷ in a new version entitled “Personal Rights”. The draft clarifies the concept of personal rights, their non-property nature, and introduces a new classification of personal rights of individuals that ensure their social existence. It proposes dividing them into four categories: personal rights ensuring the individualisation of a natural person; personal rights ensuring the informed status of a natural person (information rights); personal rights ensuring the privacy of a natural person; and personal rights ensuring the freedom of social existence of a natural person. The draft also provides for the explicit recognition of personal rights for legal entities and other subjects of private law relations.

Objective of the draft law: To update the regulation of personal non-property rights, improve the system of protection of intangible benefits of natural and legal persons, and harmonise the civil legislation of Ukraine with European standards in the field of human rights.

Status of the draft law: Adopted at first reading with subsequent refinement of provisions and extension of the deadline for preparation for the second reading (as of 05.11.2025)

Assessment and anticipated impact:

Although the draft law is positioned as being “aligned with GDPR principles”⁴⁸⁸ and compliant with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights regarding the understanding of personal non-property rights, the proposed amendments to Articles 277, 277-1 and 278 of the Civil Code of Ukraine create numerous risks for civil society. These provisions misinterpret GDPR standards and fail to ensure a fair balance between the rights guaranteed under Articles 8 (“Right to respect for private and family life”) and 10 (“Freedom of expression”) of the ECHR⁴⁸⁹.

The following provides a separate analysis of Articles 277, 277-1 and 278 of the Civil Code of Ukraine from the perspective of the risks they may pose to civil society:

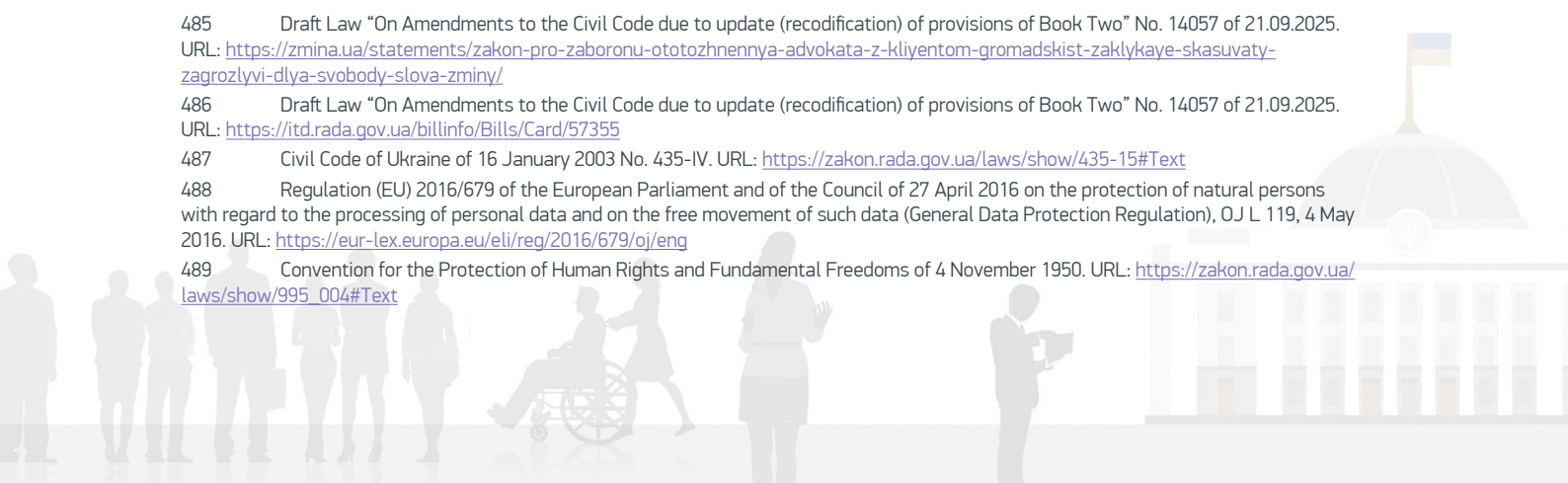
485 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Civil Code due to update (recodification) of provisions of Book Two” No. 14057 of 21.09.2025. URL: <https://zmina.ua/statements/zakon-pro-zaboronu-ototozhnennya-advokata-z-kliientom-gromadskist-zaklykaye-skasuvaty-zagrozlyvi-dlya-svobody-slova-zminy/>

486 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Civil Code due to update (recodification) of provisions of Book Two” No. 14057 of 21.09.2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57355>

487 Civil Code of Ukraine of 16 January 2003 No. 435-IV. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/435-15#Text>

488 Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation), OJ L 119, 4 May 2016. URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj/eng>

489 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_004#Text



1) Article 277 (“Right to Rectification”)

In the current version of the Civil Code of Ukraine, Article 277 already provides for the right to rebut false information and the right of reply. The proposed amendments seek to expand the scope of these rights.

In particular, **paragraph 2 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine** provides the following:

2. “Information is considered false if it does not correspond to reality and/or is presented in a misleading manner. Information is also considered false if it violates the presumption of innocence, until a person’s guilt has been proven in accordance with the procedure established by law and established by a conviction of a court that has entered into force. Value judgments are not subject to rebuttal and/or proof of their accuracy. If value judgments are expressed in a form that defames dignity, honour or reputation, the person who disseminated them may be obliged to compensate for non-pecuniary (moral) damage”⁴⁹⁰.

At first glance, this provision reflects the essence of the presumption of innocence enshrined in Article 62 of the Constitution of Ukraine⁴⁹¹, and also contains a proper distinction between statements based on facts and value judgments. However, the draft in effect equates a violation of the presumption of innocence with the dissemination of false information and does not provide for a mandatory assessment of the context in which the information is disseminated, its public interest, the good faith of the disseminator, or the nature of the expression.

In this regard, the proposed approach is not consistent with the case-law of the ECtHR. In *Axel Springer AG v. Germany*, the Court emphasised the need to ensure a comprehensive balancing between freedom of expression and the protection of reputation and the rights of others, taking into account the following criteria: the contribution to a debate of public interest; the degree of notoriety of the person concerned; the prior conduct of the person; the method of obtaining the information and its veracity; the content, form and consequences of the publication; and the severity of the sanction imposed⁴⁹². The above provision effectively creates the conditions for mass lawsuits against media outlets and civil society organisations for publications on matters of public interest or for conducting journalistic investigations. On the one hand, the provision is aimed at protecting reputation and the right to a fair trial; however, on the other hand, in the absence of clear exceptions and contextual criteria, it may create mechanisms for exerting pressure on civil society.

It should be noted that the ECtHR allows reporting on pre-trial investigations or criminal proceedings prior to a verdict, provided that such reporting does not interfere with the right of the person concerned to a fair trial⁴⁹³. Moreover, the Court has repeatedly emphasised that freedom of journalistic expression includes the possibility of a certain degree of provocation or exaggeration⁴⁹⁴. However, the proposed wording of paragraph 2 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine does not provide any distinctions or exceptions for publications on matters of public interest. This may have a “chilling effect” on journalistic activity and the activities of civil society organisations due to fears of civil liability. These concerns are further reinforced by the fact that Ukraine still lacks legislation on countering strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). Under such conditions, the new provision may be used as an additional instrument of pressure, in particular in cases related to corruption or public figures. For example, individuals involved in corruption schemes may file lawsuits seeking so-called compensation for non-pecuniary damage in order to stop media activities. Such trends are already observable in the case-law of Ukrainian courts⁴⁹⁵.

490 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Civil Code due to update (recodification) of provisions of Book Two” No. 14057 of 21.09.2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57355>

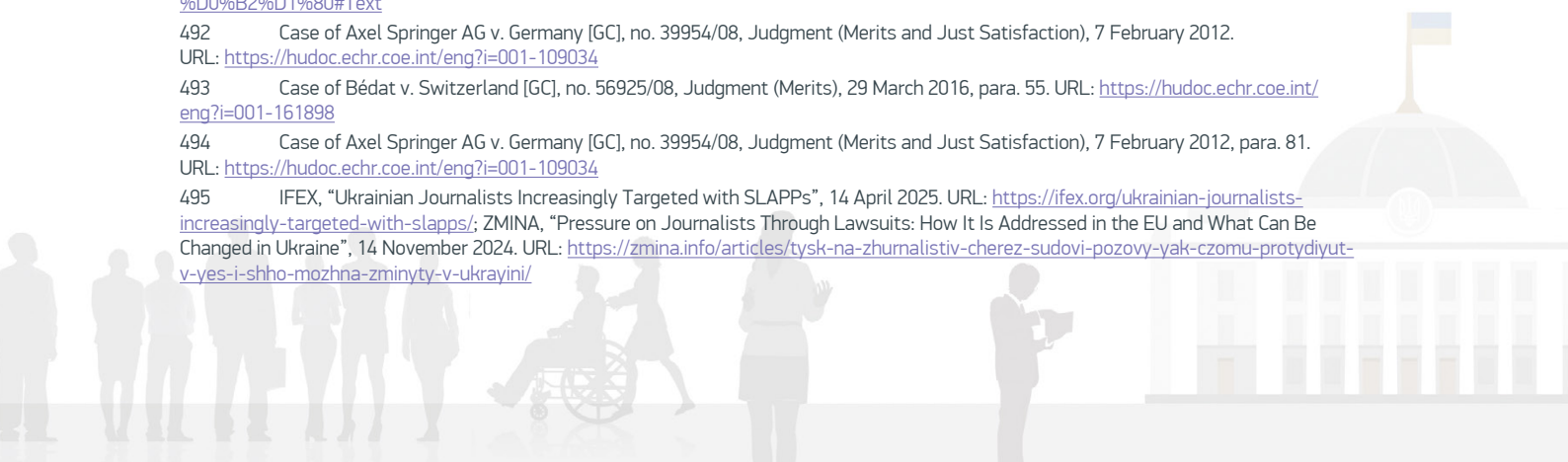
491 Constitution of Ukraine of 28 June 1996 No. 254k/96-VR. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

492 Case of *Axel Springer AG v. Germany* [GC], no. 39954/08, Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction), 7 February 2012. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-109034>

493 Case of *Bédat v. Switzerland* [GC], no. 56925/08, Judgment (Merits), 29 March 2016, para. 55. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-161898>

494 Case of *Axel Springer AG v. Germany* [GC], no. 39954/08, Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction), 7 February 2012, para. 81. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-109034>

495 IFEX, “Ukrainian Journalists Increasingly Targeted with SLAPPs”, 14 April 2025. URL: <https://ifex.org/ukrainian-journalists-increasingly-targeted-with-slapps/>; ZMINA, “Pressure on Journalists Through Lawsuits: How It Is Addressed in the EU and What Can Be Changed in Ukraine”, 14 November 2024. URL: <https://zmina.info/articles/ty-sk-na-zhumalistiv-cherез-sudovi-pozovy-yak-czomu-protydyut-v-yes-i-shho-mozhna-zminyty-v-ukrayini/>



Therefore, the introduction of paragraph 2 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine, without an appropriate balance between the right to freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, and the right to respect for private life, as well as in the absence of legislation on countering strategic lawsuits against public participation, may have a negative impact on the activities of independent media and civil society organisations conducting journalistic investigations into corruption-related cases.

Separate risks to freedom of expression are also embedded in the proposed wording of **paragraph 6 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine**, which defines the manner of rectifying false information. The general requirement to issue a rectification in the same manner in which the information was disseminated is logical and aimed at the effective restoration of the violated right. However, the provision stipulates that, where such a method of rectification is impossible or inappropriate, it shall be carried out in a comparable manner “*with due regard to achieving maximum effectiveness of the rectification, in particular by reaching the maximum number of persons*”⁴⁹⁶.

The use of the vague criterion of “maximum effectiveness” without establishing clear limits of what is proportionate may lead to a broad interpretation of this provision. In practice, this may impose disproportionately burdensome or costly methods of rectification on those who disseminate information. The provision does not contain clear criteria that would allow balancing the nature of the disseminated information and the method of rectification, and therefore creates a risk of violating the principle of proportionality. In light of this, paragraph 6 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine requires further refinement.

Additional risks to the exercise of the right to freedom of expression are associated with **paragraph 7 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine**, which defines the methods of rectifying false information contained in a document. Unlike the current wording, which is limited to the requirement to withdraw a document⁴⁹⁷, the proposed provision significantly expands the list of possible methods of rectification, including the destruction of a document and the issuance of a new one⁴⁹⁸. At the same time, it does not distinguish between documents based on their legal nature, function, or significance for the public interest. The provision also does not contain criteria for assessing the necessity and proportionality of applying such a measure as the destruction of a document.

In light of the ECtHR’s case-law, measures such as the destruction of a document may be considered excessive, as any interference with freedom of expression must be necessary in a democratic society and must not go beyond what is sufficient to protect the relevant right. Defining the destruction of a document as one of the methods of rectification, without clear limits on its application, goes beyond the mere correction of false information and creates a risk of disproportionate interference, especially where documents are of public interest or used in journalistic investigations.

The proposed wording of **paragraph 10 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine**, which regulates the procedure for rectifying false information on the Internet, also creates risks of disproportionate interference with freedom of expression. In particular, it provides for an obligation to publish a rectification at the same URL even in cases where the original content has been removed, to publish it on the homepage of a website where “it is technically impossible to publish the rectification on the same webpage”, and to ensure its availability for a period not shorter than the availability of the original publication⁴⁹⁹. Such an approach goes beyond the mere correction or clarification of information, as it effectively requires the renewed and prolonged dissemination of information that has already been removed from public circulation, which is not always necessary for the protection of a person’s reputation.

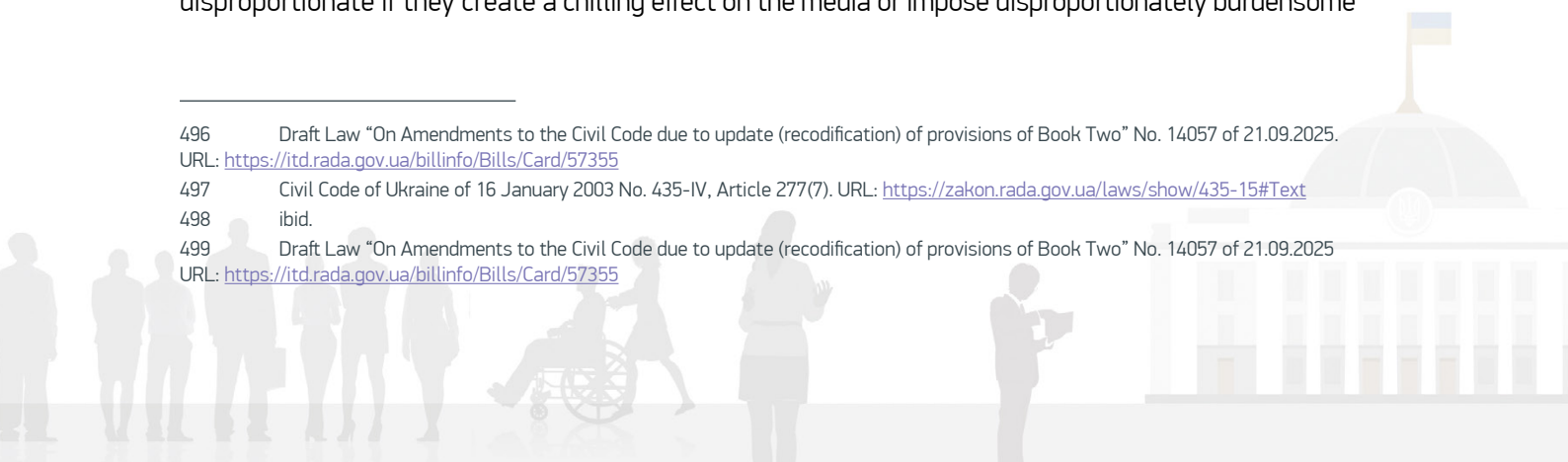
The ECtHR has repeatedly held that even measures which are not punitive in nature may be disproportionate if they create a chilling effect on the media or impose disproportionately burdensome

496 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Civil Code due to update (recodification) of provisions of Book Two” No. 14057 of 21.09.2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57355>

497 Civil Code of Ukraine of 16 January 2003 No. 435-IV, Article 277(7). URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/435-15#Text>

498 *ibid.*

499 Draft Law “On Amendments to the Civil Code due to update (recodification) of provisions of Book Two” No. 14057 of 21.09.2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57355>



and long-term obligations⁵⁰⁰. Since Article 10 of the ECHR protects not only the content but also the form and means of dissemination of information, domestic courts “*must not substitute their own views for those of the press as to what reporting technique journalists should adopt*”⁵⁰¹.

Furthermore, the proposed model raises concerns regarding its compliance with GDPR standards, in particular the principles of data minimisation and storage limitation. Mandatory republication of a rectification at a deleted URL or on a website’s homepage may lead to additional and prolonged processing of personal data, which is not always necessary for the protection of a person’s rights. The provision also does not adequately allow for consideration of the scale of the audience, the nature of the platform, or the level of public interest in the material. In combination with the absence in Ukraine of effective mechanisms to counter strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), this creates a risk that paragraph 10 of Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine could be used as an instrument of pressure on online media, journalists and civil society organisations.

2) Article 277-1 (“Right of Reply”)

Article 277-1 of the Civil Code of Ukraine proposes to regulate the right of reply separately, distinguishing it from Article 277 of the Civil Code of Ukraine. In general, the right of reply is consistent with European standards; however, the proposed wording provides for an automatic mechanism for its implementation, which under certain circumstances may constitute a disproportionate interference with freedom of expression.

At first glance, the provision of paragraph 6 of Article 277-1 of the Civil Code of Ukraine, according to which the right of reply is exercised irrespective of whether a rectification of false information has been applied, appears conceptually justified. The right of reply and rectification have different legal natures: rectification is aimed at removing false information, whereas a reply is a means of responding to a violation of a personal non-property right, which may also arise from the dissemination of true information (in particular, in cases of interference with private life or due to the form and context of presentation of the material).

At the same time, significant risks arise from the fact that paragraph 3 of Article 277-1 extends the rules on the manner of exercising the right of reply to those governing rectification of false information. As a result, the right of reply may be implemented according to the same logic of “maximum effectiveness” and the widest possible audience reach that is characteristic of rectification. In the absence of explicitly established criteria of proportionality between the remedy and the violated right, this creates a risk of an excessive procedural and financial burden for media outlets and civil society organisations.

In practical terms, this means that even in the case of a truthful publication on matters of public interest (for example, following a journalistic investigation into corruption offences), a court may order a media outlet to publish a reply in a manner that is comparable to or even broader in reach than the original publication. In the absence of clear proportionality criteria, such regulation may go beyond what is necessary to restore the violated right and transform the right of reply into an instrument of procedural pressure. This may have a chilling effect on the activities of independent media and civil society organisations.

3) Article 278 (“Right to seek prohibition of the dissemination of information that violates personal rights”)

The current wording of Article 278 of the Civil Code of Ukraine⁵⁰² already provides for the possibility of a court prohibiting the dissemination of material prepared for publication, ordering the cessation of the distribution of a publication that has already been released, as well as seizing a print run for the purpose of its destruction where the violation cannot be remedied by other means. In this respect, the proposed version of Article 278 of the Civil Code of Ukraine does not introduce a fundamentally new mechanism for restricting the dissemination of information. Such a mechanism is generally consistent

500 Case of Independent Newspapers (Ireland) Limited v. Ireland, no. 28199/15, 15 June 2017, para. 85. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-174419>

501 Case of Axel Springer AG v. Germany [GC], no. 39954/08, Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction), 7 February 2012, para. 81. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/?i=001-109034>

502 Civil Code of Ukraine of 16 January 2003 No. 435-IV, Article 278. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/435-15#Text>



with the State's obligation to ensure effective protection of the right to respect for private life and reputation under Article 8 of the ECHR⁵⁰³.

At the same time, a new element is the explicit extension of this mechanism to the digital environment (websites, social media, messaging channels, video-hosting platforms and other online resources), as well as the introduction of the possibility of blocking access to information. It is these provisions that create the main new risks.

First, in the digital context, blocking access to information may have a broader impact on freedom of expression than discontinuing the distribution of a specific print run, as it can affect an indeterminate number of users and the functioning of an online resource as a whole. In line with the ECtHR's approach, even where there is a need to protect rights guaranteed under Article 8 of the ECHR, the State must choose measures that are the least restrictive for freedom of expression and sufficient to achieve a legitimate aim⁵⁰⁴. In the absence of specifically defined proportionality criteria and a requirement to apply less restrictive measures (for example, restricting access to a specific item of content rather than an entire resource, partial removal of fragments, or editorial clarification), there is a risk of excessive interference with freedom of expression.

Second, the application of prohibitions to materials that have not yet been published constitutes a form of prior restraint on the dissemination of information. In the ECtHR's case-law, such measures are not excluded; however, they are subject to particularly strict scrutiny as to whether they are "necessary in a democratic society", since they deprive the public of access to information before it is disseminated⁵⁰⁵. Where the information concerns matters of public interest, including corruption scandals or the activities of public figures, prior restraints may create a chilling effect on the media and civil society organisations. This effect arises where such measures are not accompanied by a clear assessment of proportionality, the public interest of the information, and the possibility of applying less restrictive means of protecting personal non-property rights.

Thus, although the existing remedies for the protection of personal non-property rights provided for in Article 278 of the Civil Code of Ukraine are not new, the extension of this provision to the digital environment and the possibility of blocking access to online information without additional, explicitly defined proportionality safeguards may create a significant risk to freedom of expression in cases of public interest.

Thus, despite the need to harmonise national legislation with European standards, the proposed amendments to Articles 277, 277-1 and 278 of Draft Law No. 14057 create significant risks of disproportionate interference with freedom of expression. Given the absence in national legislation of effective mechanisms to counter strategic lawsuits against public participation, such changes may have a chilling effect on the activities of independent media and civil society organisations, particularly in cases related to corruption and the activities of public figures. Accordingly, the draft law requires substantial further refinement to ensure proper consideration of the ECtHR's case-law and the principles of personal data protection.

Civil society response:

Public criticism of Draft Law No. 14057 emerged almost immediately after its registration. In particular, the editorial team of Bihus.Info stated that the draft law *"increases legal liability for publications that are critical for society and may put at risk the very existence of investigative journalism"*⁵⁰⁶. The Institute of Mass Information also warned that the draft carries risks of censorship, contains excessively stringent requirements for the media, and may strengthen the position of those who abuse procedures

503 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950, Article 8. URL: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_004#Text

504 Case of Axel Springer AG v. Germany [GC], no. 39954/08, Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction), 7 February 2012, para. 87. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-109034>

505 Association Ekin v. France, no. 39288/98, 17 July 2001, para. 56. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-59603>

506 Detector Media, "Draft Law No. 14057 – Freedom for Those in Power and the Destruction of Society's Tools to Hold Them to Account: Experts on Changes to the Civil Code", 25 September 2025. URL: <https://detector.media/infospace/article/244418/2025-09-25-zakonoproekt-14057-pro-svobodu-dlya-vladomozhtsiv-i-znyshchennya-instrumentariyu-suspilstva-ikh-kontrolyuvaty-eksperty-pro-zminy-v-tsyvilnomu-kodeksi/>



for rectification and protection of honour and dignity in order to neutralise journalistic criticism⁵⁰⁷. Experts from the Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law noted that certain provisions of the draft law, in particular those relating to rectification, the right of reply, and remedies in the digital environment, may create excessive obstacles to the professional activities of journalists and pose a risk of restricting freedom of expression⁵⁰⁸. Analysts from the Dejure Foundation emphasised that under such conditions, reporting on potential abuses and criticising certain actions would become practically impossible⁵⁰⁹. Despite this criticism, Parliament adopted the draft law as a basis.

Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” No. 7033-d of 13.01.2023⁵¹⁰

Legislative proposal: It is proposed to amend the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Court Decisions”⁵¹¹, to postpone, for one year, general and full access to certain court decisions and separate opinions of judges entered into the Unified State Register of Court Decisions (hereinafter – the Register) following their entry into the Register, as well as to expand the list of information that is not subject to disclosure in the texts of court decisions.

Objective of the draft law: To prevent the disclosure of certain information in the texts of court decisions by postponing general and full access to certain court decisions or by restricting the disclosure of specific information in their texts.

Status of the draft law: On 23 May 2024, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the draft law at first reading. On 21 March 2025, a comparative table for the second reading was submitted.

Assessment of the draft law and its risks:

According to the text of the draft law prepared for the second reading, it is proposed to restrict, for one year, access in the Register to court rulings in criminal proceedings concerning the conduct of overt and covert investigative (search) actions. In addition, the amendments to Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Court Decisions”⁵¹² expand the list of information that will not be subject to disclosure in the texts of court decisions available for public access.

Among such information are, in particular, “the location, identification code and names of military command bodies, formations and military units, higher military educational institutions and military training units of higher education institutions falling within the management of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the Security Service of Ukraine, the intelligence agencies of Ukraine, the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine, and the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine..., state-owned enterprises in respect of which the joint-stock company “Ukrainian Defence Industry” performs the functions of an authorised economic entity for the management of state-owned assets in the defence-industrial complex..., and state-owned assets of strategic importance for the economy and security of the State”.⁵¹³

A positive aspect is the exclusion from this list of critical infrastructure objects, which include, inter alia, courts. At the same time, the appropriateness of restricting access to the above information not only

507 *ibid.*

508 Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law, “Recodification of the Civil Code: Betrayal, Victory or ‘Not So Straightforward?’”, 29 September 2025. URL: <https://cedem.org.ua/analytics/rekodyfikatsiya-tsyvylnogo-kodeksu/>

509 ZMINA info, “Parliament Takes a Step Towards Aligning Civil Legislation with EU Law: What Was Adopted and What Concerns Experts Have”, 5 November 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/rada-zrobyla-krok-do-uzgodzhennya-zyvylnogo-zakonodavstva-z-pravom-yes-shho-uhvalyly-ta-yaki-perestorogy-mayut-eksperty/>

510 Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” No. 7033-d of 13.01.2023. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/41159>

511 Law of Ukraine “On Access to Court Decisions” of 22 December 2005 No. 3262-IV. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3262-15#Text>

512 Law of Ukraine “On Access to Court Decisions” of 22 December 2005 No. 3262-IV, Article 7. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3262-15#Text>

513 Comparative Table to the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” (Second Reading), Reg. No. 7033-d of 13 January 2023. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/pubFile/2818470>



during martial law but also in peacetime raises concerns. The duration of such a restriction, in particular, requires additional justification from the perspective of public interest and the principle of openness of court decisions.

Following revision, the draft law proposes, for the period of martial law and for one year after its termination or lifting, on grounds of national security, to restrict general access to court decisions in criminal proceedings concerning persons suspected or accused of committing criminal offences against the mobilisation system (Articles 336–336-2 of the CC of Ukraine). It also proposes to restrict access to court decisions in administrative cases brought by the Territorial Centre of Recruitment and Social Support regarding the temporary restriction of Ukrainian citizens' right to drive a motor vehicle during mobilisation⁵¹⁴.

In the initial version of the draft law, this list was significantly broader and included court decisions in criminal proceedings relating to the foundations of national security, the protection of state secrets, the inviolability of state borders, and offences against the established procedure of military service. However, despite the partial consideration of the position of civil society organisations, the proposed restrictions still do not fully reflect the concerns raised by CSOs⁵¹⁵.

First, given the public interest in potential violations by officials of the Territorial Centres of Recruitment and Social Support, maintaining open access to court decisions in criminal proceedings under Articles 336–336-2 of the CC of Ukraine is critically important for monitoring the observance of the rights of persons liable for military service and for the analysis of such proceedings by the human rights community⁵¹⁶. Such legislative changes may lead to the *“concealment of important problems and the impossibility of public discussion on how to address them during wartime; the actions of the authorities and law enforcement bodies will become less transparent and predictable for society, which, in turn, will lead to a loss of trust between society and the State during the war”*.⁵¹⁷

Second, the proposed amendments seek to restrict access to the full text of court decisions, which is disproportionate and raises concerns as to whether it is “necessary in a democratic society”. To protect national interests, it would be sufficient to define the categories of information whose disclosure could harm national security, following the approach proposed above in relation to Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Court Decisions”, while establishing clear time limits for such restrictions—during martial law and for one year after its termination or lifting. By contrast, the absence of access to the full text of decisions is excessive, as the same objectives can be achieved through alternative measures that interfere less with the right of individuals to access information.

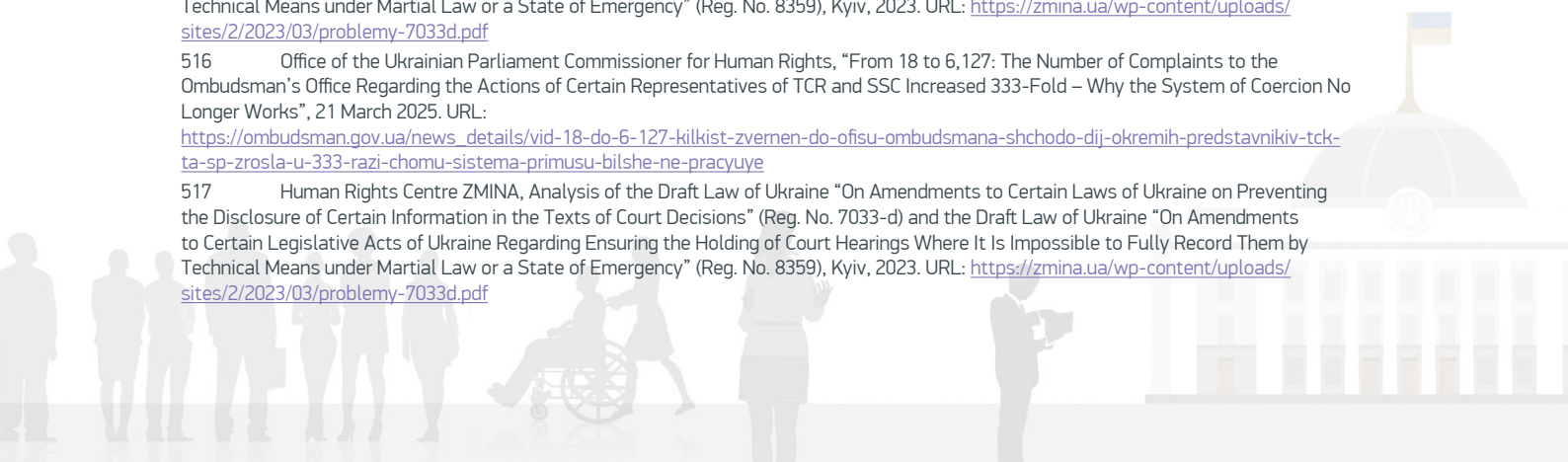
In addition, the draft law proposes to grant judges the power to determine which information contained in a court decision may harm national security and to remove such information when entering judgments into the Register in cases where the application of Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine “On Access to Court Decisions” does not ensure the non-disclosure of such information. Although the draft law provides certain indicators for identifying information the disclosure of which may harm national security, granting judges such broad discretionary powers may create corruption risks. In particular, it allows judges, at their own discretion, to determine which information will not be subject to disclosure in the Unified State Register of Court Decisions. This may hinder the identification of bodies and individuals

514 Comparative Table to the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” (Second Reading), Reg. No. 7033-d of 13 January 2023. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/pubFile/2818470>

515 Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Analysis of the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” (Reg. No. 7033-d) and the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Ensuring the Holding of Court Hearings Where It Is Impossible to Fully Record Them by Technical Means under Martial Law or a State of Emergency” (Reg. No. 8359), Kyiv, 2023. URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/03/problemny-7033d.pdf>

516 Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, “From 18 to 6,127: The Number of Complaints to the Ombudsman’s Office Regarding the Actions of Certain Representatives of TCR and SSC Increased 333-Fold – Why the System of Coercion No Longer Works”, 21 March 2025. URL: https://ombudsman.gov.ua/news_details/vid-18-do-6-127-kilkist-zvernenn-do-ofisu-ombudsmmana-shchodo-dij-okremih-predstavnikov-tck-ta-sp-zrosla-u-333-razi-chomu-sistema-primusu-bilshe-ne-pracyuye

517 Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Analysis of the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” (Reg. No. 7033-d) and the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Ensuring the Holding of Court Hearings Where It Is Impossible to Fully Record Them by Technical Means under Martial Law or a State of Emergency” (Reg. No. 8359), Kyiv, 2023. URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/03/problemny-7033d.pdf>



involved in criminal offences, acts of corruption, abuse of power and other socially significant crimes. In the absence of a mechanism in the draft law to challenge such information restrictions and of adequate safeguards against abuse, the judicial system effectively falls outside the scope of public monitoring and oversight⁵¹⁸.

Civil society response:

Civil society response: Draft Law No. 7033-d has drawn criticism from human rights organisations. In May 2024, civil society organisations publicly called on the Verkhovna Rada to reject the draft law, emphasising that the proposed amendments would restrict public access to information from the Unified State Register of Court Decisions, complicate the monitoring of judicial proceedings, particularly those of public interest, and may negatively affect the transparency of judicial proceedings⁵¹⁹. Public statements and analytical materials warned that the draft law unjustifiably expands the list of information not subject to disclosure and creates a risk of concealing information of public importance both during the war and after its end⁵²⁰. Despite this criticism, on 23 May 2024, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the draft law as basis⁵²¹. At the same time, during the preparation for the second reading, certain provisions were narrowed, indicating partial consideration of civil society comments, although risks to access to court decisions remain.

Draft Law “On the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights” No. 13181 of 17.04.2025⁵²²

Legislative changes: The adoption of a new Law of Ukraine “On the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights” is proposed, along with a number of amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine⁵²³, and the Laws of Ukraine “On State Secrets”⁵²⁴, “On Citizens’ Appeals”⁵²⁵, “On the Protection of Childhood”⁵²⁶, “On International Treaties of Ukraine”⁵²⁷, “On the State Register of Voters”⁵²⁸, “On the Basic Principles of State Supervision (Control) in the Sphere of Economic Activity”⁵²⁹, “On Prevention of Corruption”⁵³⁰, and “On Civil Service”⁵³¹. In particular, the draft law clarifies the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of the Commissioner, the organisation

518 Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Analysis of the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” (Reg. No. 7033-d) and the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Ensuring the Holding of Court Hearings Where It Is Impossible to Fully Record Them by Technical Means under Martial Law or a State of Emergency” (Reg. No. 8359), Kyiv, 2023. URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/03/problemny-7033d.pdf>

519 Influence Group, “We Call on the Verkhovna Rada Not to Adopt Draft Law No. 7033-d Restricting Access to Court Decisions”, 20 May 2024: <https://www.vplyv.org.ua/archives/9001>

520 Human Rights Centre ZMINA, Analysis of the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Preventing the Disclosure of Certain Information in the Texts of Court Decisions” (Reg. No. 7033-d) and the Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Ensuring the Holding of Court Hearings Where It Is Impossible to Fully Record Them by Technical Means under Martial Law or a State of Emergency” (Reg. No. 8359), Kyiv, 2023. URL: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/03/problemny-7033d.pdf>

521 Radio Svoboda, “Despite Criticism from Human Rights Defenders, the Verkhovna Rada Adopted as a Basis a Draft Law Restricting Access to Court Decisions”, 23 May 2024. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zakon-dostup-do-sudovyx-rishen/32961199.html>

522 Draft Law of Ukraine “On the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights” (Euro-integration) No. 13181 of 17 April 2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/56212>

523 Law of Ukraine “On the Rules of Procedure of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine” of 10 February 2010 No. 1861-VI. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1861-17#Text>

524 Law of Ukraine “On State Secrets” of 21 January 1994 No. 3855-XII. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3855-12#Text>

525 Law of Ukraine “On Citizens’ Appeals” of 2 October 1996 No. 393/96-VR. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/393/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

526 Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of Childhood” of 26 April 2001 No. 2402-III. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2402-14#Text>

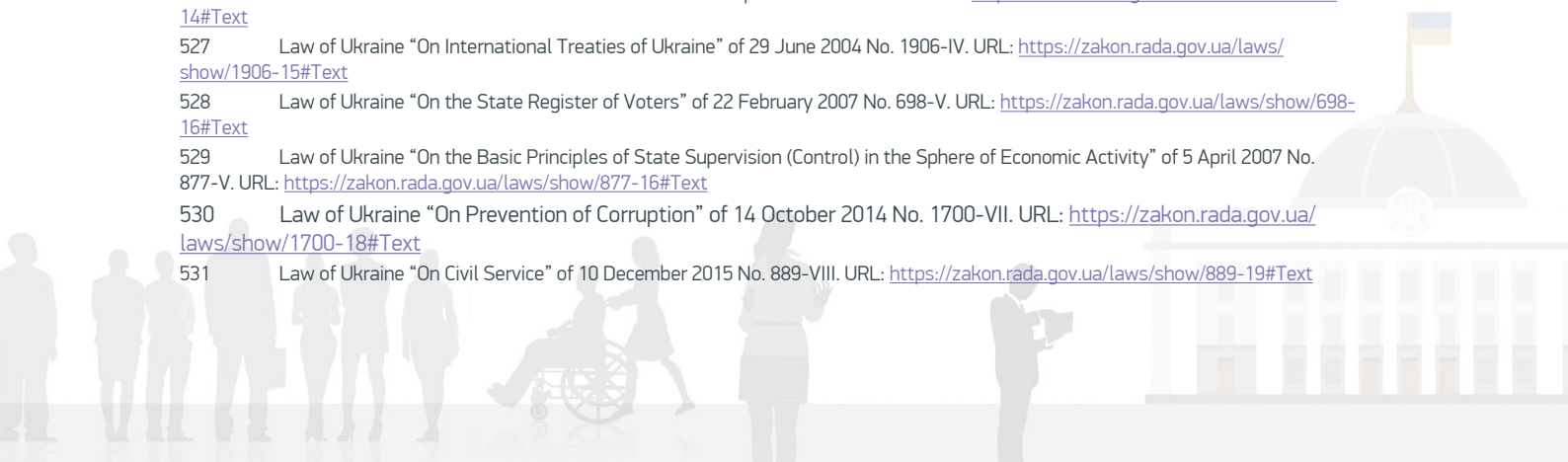
527 Law of Ukraine “On International Treaties of Ukraine” of 29 June 2004 No. 1906-IV. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1906-15#Text>

528 Law of Ukraine “On the State Register of Voters” of 22 February 2007 No. 698-V. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/698-16#Text>

529 Law of Ukraine “On the Basic Principles of State Supervision (Control) in the Sphere of Economic Activity” of 5 April 2007 No. 877-V. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/877-16#Text>

530 Law of Ukraine “On Prevention of Corruption” of 14 October 2014 No. 1700-VII. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1700-18#Text>

531 Law of Ukraine “On Civil Service” of 10 December 2015 No. 889-VIII. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/889-19#Text>



of the work of the Commissioner's Secretariat, the status of the Commissioner's representatives, and issues related to the financing of the institution. It also proposes to expand certain supervisory and information powers of the Commissioner, in particular in the areas of handling complaints, protection of children's rights, access to information, obtaining statistical data from the State Register of Voters, submitting proposals regarding international treaties, and initiating unscheduled state supervision measures in connection with identified human rights violations.

Objective of the draft law: To improve the legal framework governing the activities of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (hereinafter – the Commissioner) and to strengthen the institution's capacity in line with international human rights standards, with a view to enhancing the level of observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine.

Status of the draft law: The relevant committee has issued its opinion following consideration (as of 27.06.2025).

Assessment of the draft law and its risks:

This draft law contains important initiatives aimed at bringing Ukrainian legislation on the activities of the Ombudsman into line with EU legislation and international standards. At the same time, certain provisions of the draft create risks for civil society organisations.

The draft law provides for a significant expansion of the range of entities subject to the Commissioner's oversight. Under paragraph 3 of Article 22, submissions of the Commissioner as a response to violations of the Constitution of Ukraine, the laws of Ukraine and international treaties may be addressed not only to state authorities and local self-government bodies, but also to public associations, enterprises, institutions and organisations regardless of their form of ownership, as well as to their officials and officers⁵³². The revised wording of Article 28 imposes on these entities an obligation to cooperate with the Commissioner, to provide information, documents and explanations, and to consider the Commissioner's recommendations and provide a reasoned written response within a specified time limit⁵³³. In effect, this extends the Commissioner's parliamentary oversight to private law entities, including civil society organisations.

Given the constitutional nature of the Commissioner as a subject of parliamentary oversight, the mandate should primarily be directed at supervising the activities of public authorities in the field of ensuring human and civil rights and freedoms. Public associations do not exercise public authority functions and are not subjects of public authority; therefore, they are not entrusted with the obligation to ensure human rights and freedoms. Accordingly, extending the Commissioner's oversight powers to such entities without a link to the performance of delegated public functions goes beyond the constitutional model of parliamentary oversight. In such circumstances, there is a risk of transforming the institution of the Commissioner from a mechanism for the protection of human rights into a mechanism for overseeing the activities of civil society.

Another risk is associated with the introduction of an obligation to provide the requested information within specified time limits, coupled with legal liability for failure to do so⁵³⁴. Such an arrangement effectively equates private law entities with public authorities in terms of their procedural obligations to respond to the Commissioner's submissions. The absence of a clear distinction between public authorities and private law entities, as well as the lack of specific safeguards to ensure the proportionality of interference in the activities of public associations, creates a risk of disproportionate restrictions on their autonomy.

Thus, despite the generally positive orientation of the draft law, the provisions concerning the expansion of the scope of oversight and the imposition of obligations on private law entities require further refinement prior to the second reading, with a view to clearly defining the limits of the Commissioner's mandate and improving the provisions governing the exercise of parliamentary oversight.

532 Draft Law of Ukraine "On the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights" (Euro-integration) No. 13181 of 17 April 2025. URL: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/56212>

533 ibid.

534 ibid.



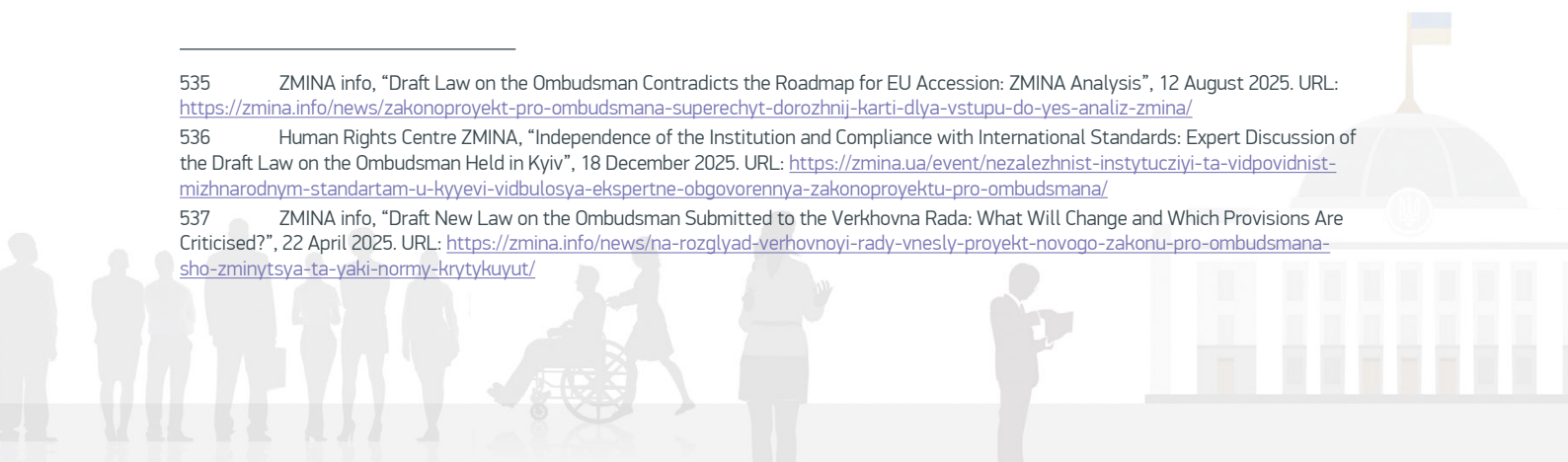
 Civil society response:

Draft Law No. 13181 has drawn criticism from the human rights community and expert organisations. ZMINA noted that the registered version does not take into account a number of key proposals put forward by civil society and international experts regarding a more transparent and inclusive procedure for the appointment of the Commissioner⁵³⁵. Further criticism also concerned the substance of the draft law: human rights defenders warned that certain provisions do not comply with international standards governing the activities of national human rights institutions, and that the expansion of the Commissioner's oversight powers in relation to public associations goes beyond the scope of the mandate and requires further refinement⁵³⁶. At the same time, representatives of the Ombudsman institution generally supported the need to update the law, while emphasising the necessity of its further improvement⁵³⁷.

535 ZMINA info, "Draft Law on the Ombudsman Contradicts the Roadmap for EU Accession: ZMINA Analysis", 12 August 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/zakonoprojekt-pro-ombudsmena-superechyt-dorozhnij-karti-dlya-vstupu-do-yes-analiz-zmina/>

536 Human Rights Centre ZMINA, "Independence of the Institution and Compliance with International Standards: Expert Discussion of the Draft Law on the Ombudsman Held in Kyiv", 18 December 2025. URL: <https://zmina.ua/event/nezalezhnist-instytutczyi-ta-vidpovidnist-mizhnarodnym-standartam-u-kyievi-vidbulosya-ekspertne-obgovorennja-zakonoprojektu-pro-ombudsmena/>

537 ZMINA info, "Draft New Law on the Ombudsman Submitted to the Verkhovna Rada: What Will Change and Which Provisions Are Criticised?", 22 April 2025. URL: <https://zmina.info/news/na-rozglyad-verhovnoyi-rady-vnesly-projekt-novogo-zakonu-pro-ombudsmena-sho-zminytsya-ta-yaki-normy-krytykuyut/>



CHAPTER 4.

CURRENT STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY: RESULTS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY



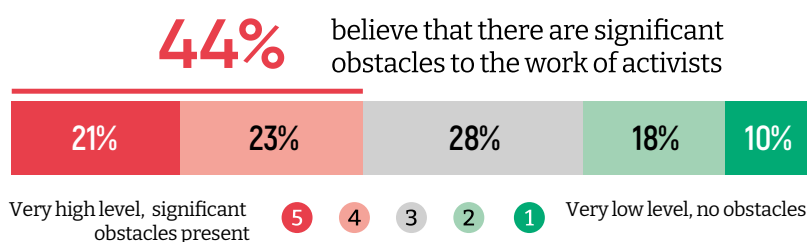
THE SITUATION OF CIVIL ACTIVISTS AND SOURCES OF OBSTRUCTION TO THEIR ACTIVITIES

According to the results of a sociological survey conducted by the Centre for Qualitative Research at the request of the Human Rights Centre ZMINA in May–August 2025, which covered 168 activists, there are a number of risks and obstacles faced by civil society actors. (Detailed results of the sociological study are presented in Annex 1).

Almost three quarters of respondents have encountered obstacles at least once in their activities, while one in five experiences pressure on a regular basis.

According to the responses, **the main source of threats**, including from non-state actors, is law enforcement agencies, which are particularly often the subject of complaints from civil society activists working in the capital. Law enforcement agencies most frequently exert pressure on civil society activists engaged in anti-corruption activities. At the same time, this pressure is not limited to that group – other activists, except for those working with vulnerable groups in small communities, also report pressure from representatives of law enforcement bodies. The main reported problem with the police is the lack of dialogue and unwillingness to conduct investigations.

Assessment of the level of obstacles to activities



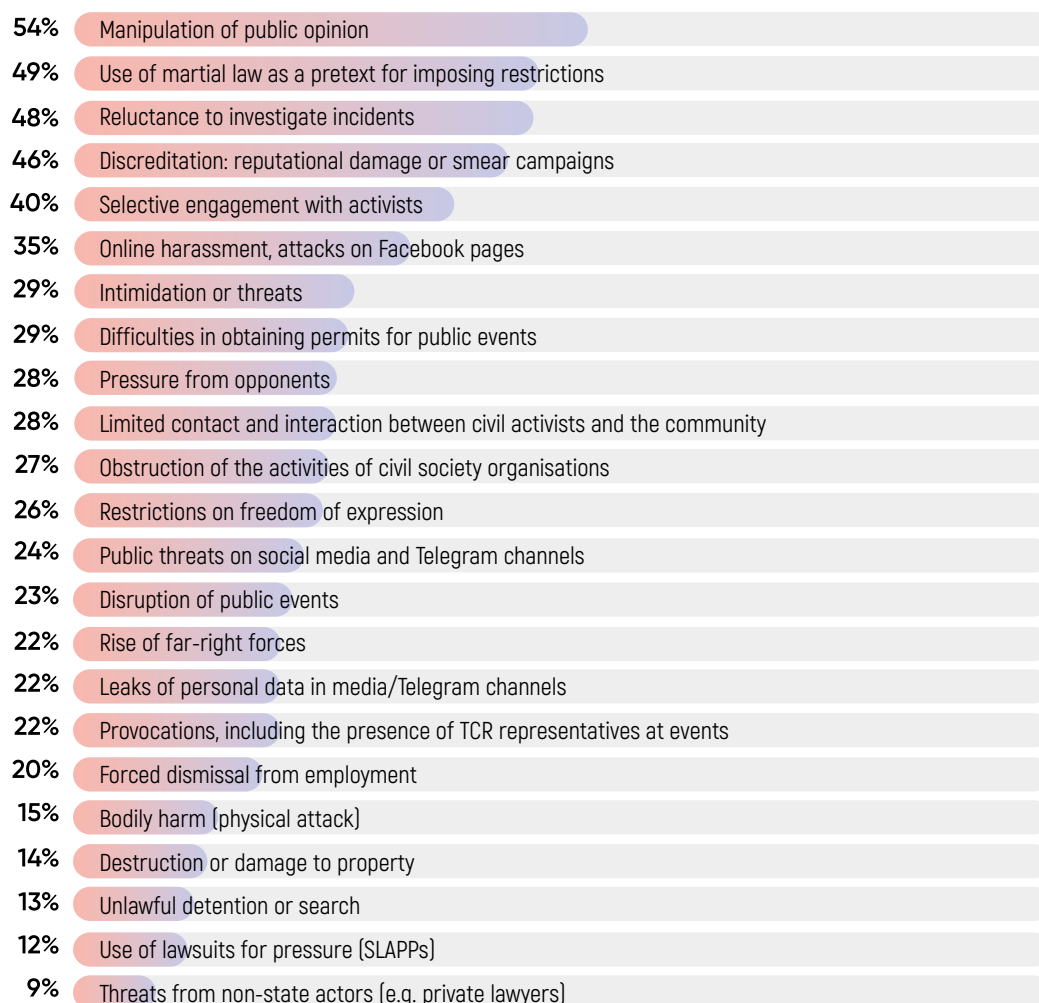
In addition, one third of civil society activists identify “paid-for media” and the “tabloid press” as sources of threats. Activists who point to the media are more likely than others to face threats and harassment on social media, suggesting that such outlets engage in reputational attacks. Activists defending the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons are most frequently affected by media harassment. At the same time, other groups of activists also face similar threats.

“Soft” and reputational forms of pressure are the most common, and such threats are capable of undermining trust in activists. These include, in particular, manipulation of public opinion, the use of martial law to impose restrictions, a reluctance to investigate attacks and threats, as well as discreditation and the dissemination of false information. At the same time, 26% of activists reported restrictions on freedom of expression, which calls into question the ability to express and defend one’s views publicly.

Online attacks also play a significant role: the digital space has become one of the main arenas of pressure. In particular, 35% of activists have experienced online harassment (on Facebook and other social media), and nearly one third (29%) have faced intimidation or threats.

Administrative and institutional barriers are less common; however, they are reported by nearly one third of respondents. These include difficulties in obtaining permits, indicating the presence of systemic risks associated with bureaucratic or political constraints.

Physical violence and direct attacks occur less frequently; however, they remain particularly dangerous as they create an atmosphere of fear and a perception of high risk for activists.

Graph 1. *Forms of threats*

Civil society activists consider informal channels of influence and raising public awareness of the issue to be **the most effective** means of protection, whereas official institutional procedures are viewed as less effective.

The protection strategy of activists is primarily based on solidarity, collective action and public visibility. Activists recognise that institutional channels are weak and therefore rely on horizontal networks and communication.

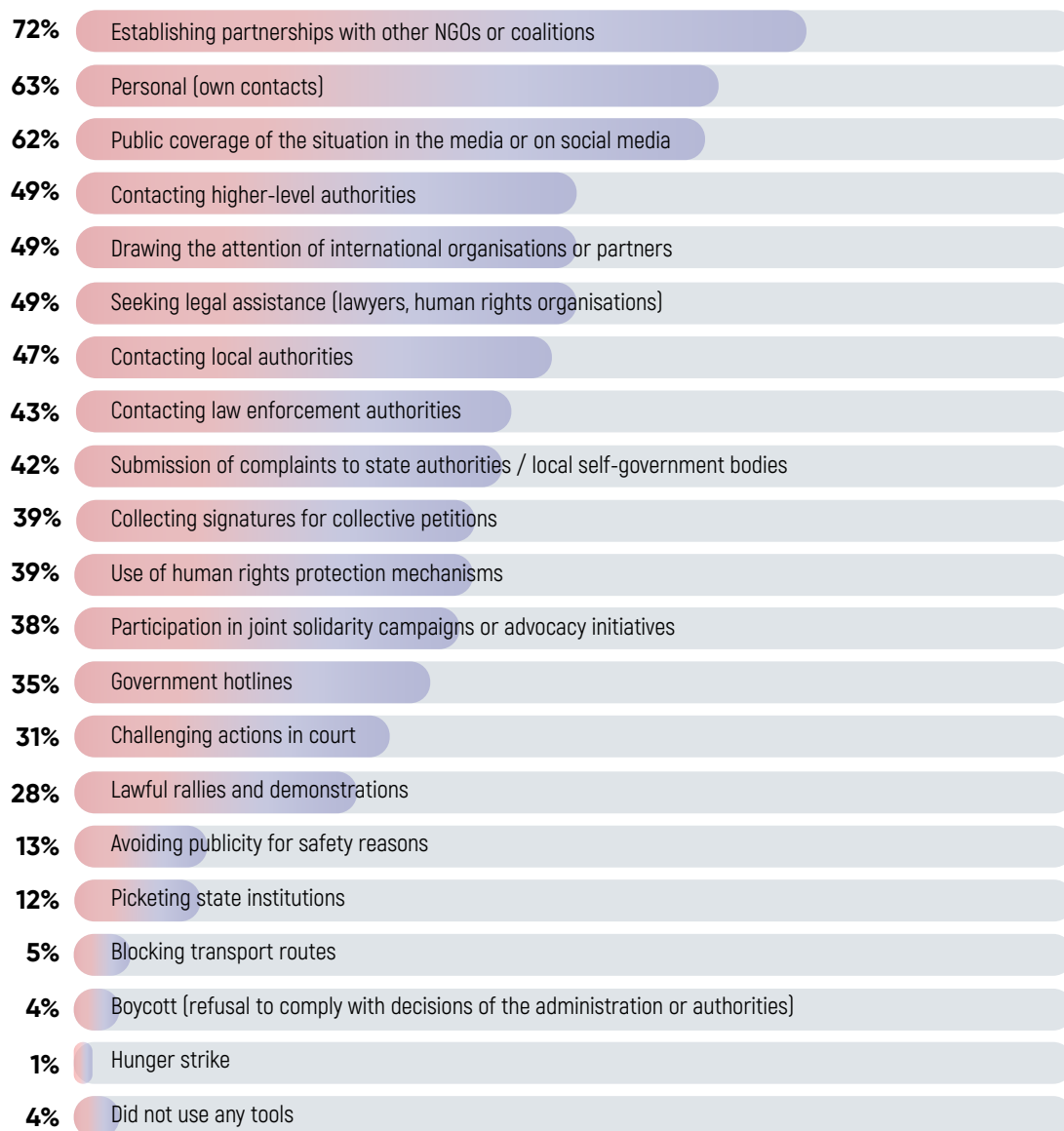
Most commonly, as tools to counter obstacles in civic activity, activists use building partnerships with other NGOs or coalitions (72% of respondents), personal contacts (63% of respondents), and public coverage of situations in the media or on social media (62% of respondents).

Around half of activists still seek assistance from formal institutions; however, their use is less widespread: activists attempt to exert pressure through the system, while not relying on it as the primary tool.

Radical or symbolic forms of protest, according to activists, are used extremely rarely. They also seldom resort to avoiding publicity.

As the overall analysis shows, the activist environment is generally characterised by shared challenges related to pressure, obstruction of activities, the search for effective protection mechanisms, and interaction with the authorities. At the same time, the content, intensity and means of protection differ across specific groups of activists.

Examining individual groups of activists makes it possible to identify specific trends characteristic of each of them.

Graph 2. *Use of mechanisms and tools to counter obstacles*

ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVISTS

Anti-corruption activists constitute the most vulnerable group. Their representatives report pressure most frequently, and a significant proportion of them experience it on a regular basis. An overwhelming majority of this group believes that the situation has deteriorated in recent years. The higher the “stakes”, the more money is involved, the greater the pressure: threats, reputational harm, defamation lawsuits, less frequently – damage to property, housing or vehicles, and in isolated cases – physical injuries.

Sources of obstruction. Anti-corruption activists most frequently report pressure and obstacles in their activities: 40% indicate that they encounter such issues on a regular basis, and an overwhelming majority (76%) report a deterioration in the situation over the past three years.

Law enforcement agencies and public officials at the municipal and regional levels are identified as the main sources of threats.

In the field of anti-corruption activity, all forms of threats are present; however, this group of activists most frequently encounters denial of access to necessary information (84%), manipulation of public

opinion (84%), unwillingness of law enforcement agencies to investigate incidents (84%), reputational attacks (76%), and selective engagement with activists (60%).

Graph 3. Sources of obstacles



The most widespread threats identified by 84% of anti-corruption activists are the use of martial law as a pretext for imposing restrictions or denying access to necessary information. 76% of respondents pointed to discreditation through reputational harm and smear campaigns (for example, some activists are labelled as “local lunatics” – no direct action is taken against them, but an image is created that they should not be taken seriously because they are “unreliable”).

48% of respondents reported the use of lawsuits as a tool of pressure, in particular through claims for the protection of honour and dignity. Such practices are most often applied to activists with a public profile and a significant audience on social media. A further 44% of respondents reported cases of pressure to resign from their employment. In addition, 16% of respondents reported threats related to the destruction or damage of property.

Among documented cases are the use of incendiary mixtures to set fire to homes, as well as damage to vehicles (including the deliberate loosening of fastenings). Activists themselves often describe such actions as “petty acts of sabotage”, which nevertheless create constant psychological pressures.

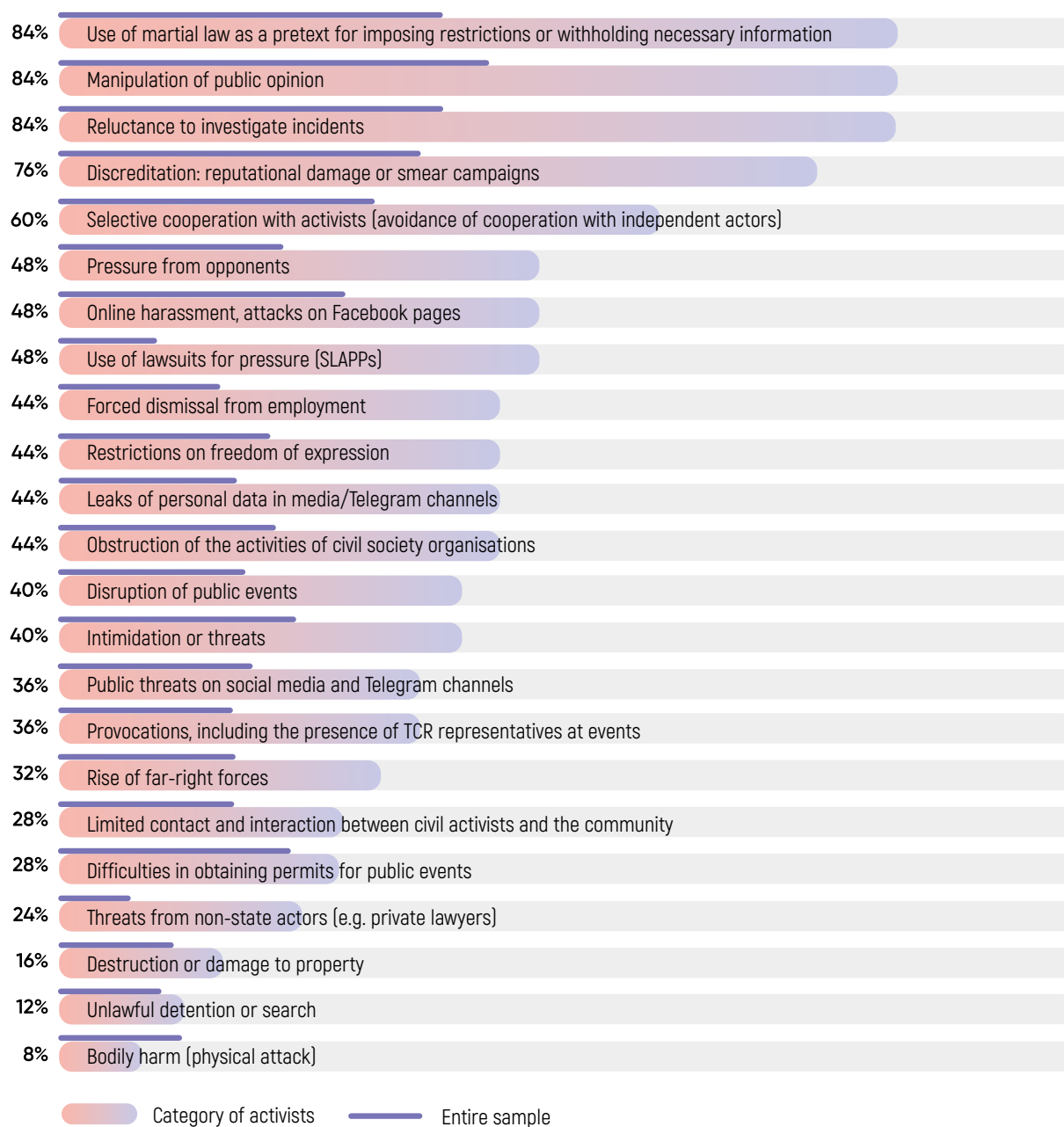
“Everyone who supported the legitimate mayor was thrown out... Those who stayed neutral remained. But even they keep quiet so as not to lose their jobs.”

In terms of the popularity and effectiveness of **protection tools**, anti-corruption activists rely more frequently on legal mechanisms and appeals to the authorities (including law enforcement agencies), but rate their effectiveness lower (in particular, judicial appeals, appeals to local authorities, and government hotlines). This may indicate a lack of trust in public authorities.

Activists also rate the effectiveness of engaging international organisations lower, although this tool is widely used.

The most effective and, at the same time, the most commonly used tools, according to respondents, are public coverage of issues in the media and on social media, seeking legal assistance, and building partnerships with civil society organisations or coalitions.

Activists note that the effectiveness of protection tools and the ability of anti-corruption activists to influence the authorities, as well as the response of the authorities, depend on the “stakes” involved. For example, developers and officials are often “the same faces”, and it is they who initiate pressure.

Graph 4. Forms of threats

“If you are a serious activist and you seriously dig into something, it is very dangerous, because it involves a lot of money.”

Speaking about **communication with representatives of public authorities**, anti-corruption activists reported cases in which the authorities to whom they submit requests use martial law as a justification instead of providing a substantive response and information. During the first year of the full-scale invasion, some responses to requests stated: “*You are requesting sensitive information; we have referred the matter to the SSU for verification*”. Many requests to the State Environmental Inspectorate of Ukraine received replies arguing that “*we are not authorised to conduct inspections because it is wartime*”.

Activists also note that since the introduction of martial law, access to a number of public registers, including the State Land Cadastre, has been restricted. This has significantly complicated the possibilities for public oversight, in particular tracking information on ownership rights to land plots

where, for example, logging is carried out. (See also: *Chapter 3. Review of legislation posing a threat to civil society*).

Additional difficulties are associated with limited access to up-to-date information on the activities of local self-government bodies: instead of live broadcasts of local council meetings, recordings are predominantly published, which reduces the timeliness and transparency of decision-making.

“ At the Kitaihorod settlement council (Kamianske district, Dnipropetrovsk region), a deputy announced that the session would take place tomorrow at 12 and attempted to livestream it. Afterwards, the head of the settlement council filed a complaint with the police against him, claiming that he was exposing deputies to the risk of a missile strike.

Analysing instances of support, activists note that only a portion of them receive meaningful assistance from state institutions. In particular, 44% of respondents working in the anti-corruption field reported cases where public authorities provided support in the actual investigation of incidents.

Anti-corruption activists also provided a more detailed assessment of **the effectiveness of their interaction with public authorities**. According to their observations, certain civil society organisations led by representatives of the sector with experience dating back to the 2000s demonstrate a greater capacity to influence decision-making. This is explained by a combination of institutional memory, established networks of contacts, and experience in advocacy work.

An illustrative example is the establishment of the “Sivershchyna” coalition in the Chernihiv region, which brings together sectoral associations of employers, taxpayers, representatives of the legitimate medium-sized business sector, trade unions, and independent civil society organisations. According to respondents, such a coalition combines the financial and electoral resources of the business community, mobilisation capacity, and experience in organising public events. At the same time, it exerts a significant influence on decision-making processes through sustained public pressure and persistent advocacy efforts regarding public authorities.

Among **the barriers to engaging with representatives of local authorities**, anti-corruption activists point to delays in handling cases, as well as the fulfilment of obligations in good faith only under the pressure of public exposure (including through the use of video recording).

Overall, **trust among anti-corruption activists in institutions** such as law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor’s office and the courts is low – respondents noted that they “do not expect much”. At the same time, despite the existence of formal interaction with law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor’s office and the SBI, the level of actual assistance from these bodies is assessed as low. In particular, even in cases where incidents are responded to, the presence of law enforcement officers is not always accompanied by effective action or adequate protection.

“ I call the police when I am not allowed into the city council. They come – thank God they do not fine me for calling them – but the case never moves forward.

“ When the general plan was being drafted, hired thugs were beating people in the city council – we filed a complaint, but they were never summoned, it just disappeared into thin air, and nothing came of it.

At the same time, the consideration of such cases is often delayed and may last from 1–1.5 years or longer.

“ I am a witness and gave testimony in one case; a year and a half has passed – it is progressing slowly, I think large sums of money are involved there as well.

At the same time, activists assess the level of trust in the judicial system as uneven and largely dependent on individual judges. Respondents note that alongside judges who demonstrate independence and integrity, there are also those whose decisions, in their view, may be influenced by a reluctance to enter into conflict with the authorities. Activists also observe that the presence of video recording during court hearings may affect the course of proceedings: according to their observations, in such conditions judges are more likely to demonstrate a more impartial and procedurally sound approach.

In assessing the level of awareness of legislative acts and policy initiatives, as well as the need for additional knowledge, activists point to significant differences depending on the field of activity. In particular, representatives of the anti-corruption sector demonstrate a higher level of awareness of legislation on corruption prevention, including the law on the protection of whistleblowers; however, they also assess it as insufficiently effective in practice.

Among the most effective tools of influence, activists highlight watchdog initiatives, in particular campaigns monitoring decisions of local authorities and budget transparency. Tools such as DOZORRO, Civil Control, CHESNO and OPORA enable effective public oversight, tracking of key processes, and support for systemic anti-corruption activity.

ACTIVISTS WORKING WITH VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Obstacles for this group are rather **situational in nature** and are not regular. The main problems originate from district administrations and are related to bureaucracy or denial of access to information. Veteran organisations use a wide range of tools; however, unlike anti-corruption activists, they assess their effectiveness much more positively. They demonstrate greater trust in appeals to both local authorities and higher-level bodies, and often rely on personal contacts and partnerships with other civil society organisations.. Such activists are also better informed about legislation and legal initiatives, which indicates a higher level of institutional integration.

Considering this group separately makes it possible to analyse in more detail the dynamics of changes over the past three years. According to the activists themselves, no significant changes have occurred in the environment of their activities. This assessment may be due to the fact that a significant proportion of civil society organisations in this field became active only after the start of the full-scale invasion, which limits the possibilities for comparative analysis over a longer period. The main source of obstruction is identified by activists as officials of district state administrations.

Activists identify officials of district state administrations as **the main source of obstruction**.

Across the sample overall, the principal obstacles, in the view of activists, relate to restricted access to information, manipulation of public opinion, unwillingness to investigate incidents, and selective engagement with activists.

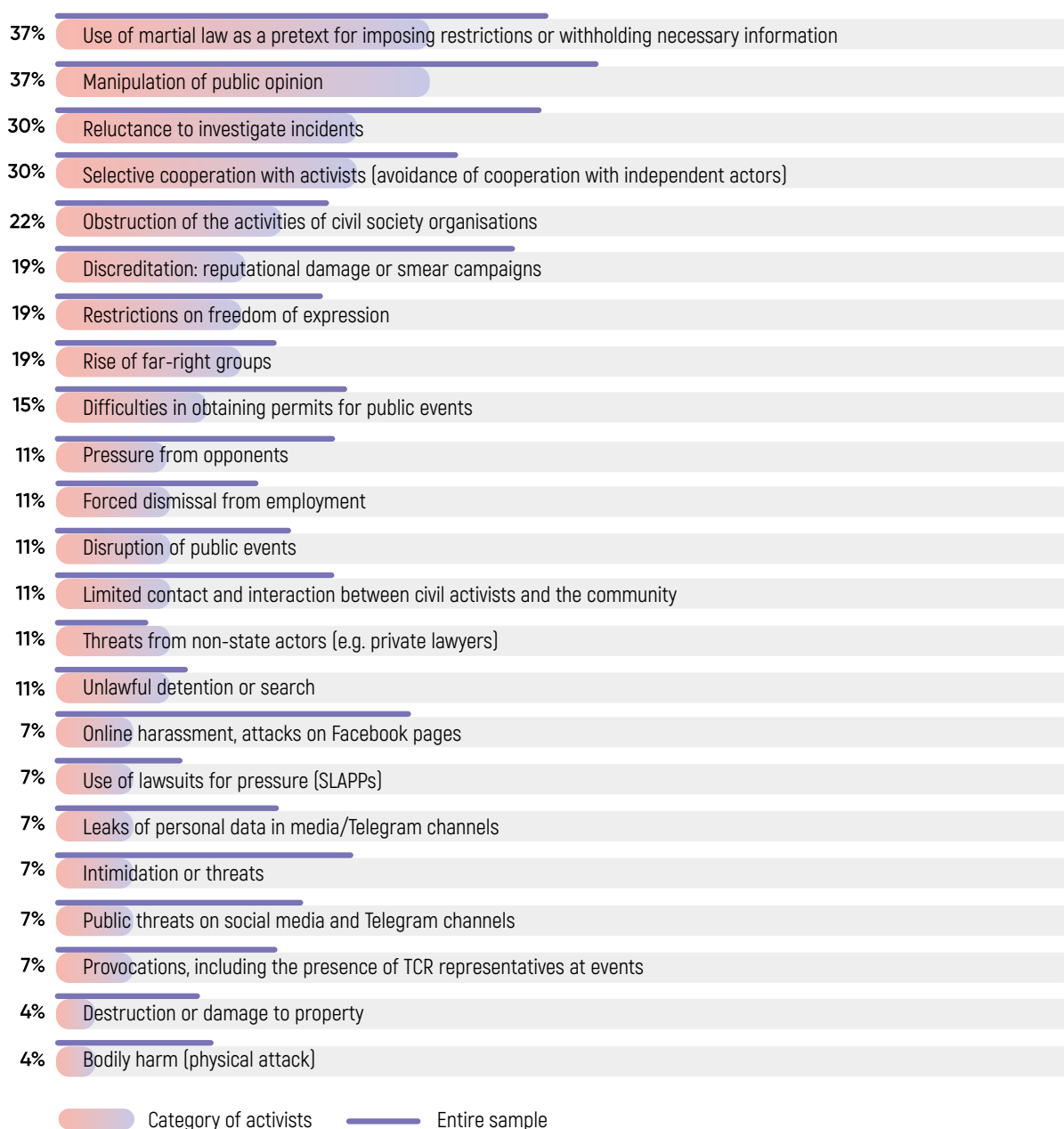
Among specific forms of threats reported by civil society activists working in the field of support for veterans and their families, the most common are the use of martial law as a ground for imposing restrictions or refusing to provide necessary information (37% of cases), as well as manipulation of public opinion (37%). In addition, 30% of respondents point to the practice of selective engagement with activists, which is perceived as a way to avoid interaction with independent representatives of civil society.

According to respondents, veteran civil society organisations do not always ensure adequate coverage of the issues faced by veterans. In particular, respondents report cases of restricted access to public speaking opportunities and media platforms, the editing or exclusion of certain viewpoints from interviews, and insufficient attention to the experiences of veterans who acquired this status prior to the full-scale invasion. At the same time, according to activists, interaction with public authorities shows a tendency to involve a limited circle of “loyal” representatives of the veteran community whose positions are more aligned with the official agenda. This is perceived as a factor that narrows the possibilities for representing a broader range of views within the veteran community.

“ If one of the ‘handpicked’ veterans starts saying something inconvenient, they are simply removed from the pool and replaced with a new person.

Activists also note that in the near future they expect the return of a larger number of veterans who will be ready to assert their rights, which may become a critical point.

“ If there are 63,000 of them in Khmelnytskyi region, they cannot even imagine how many will return and start asking questions.

Graph 5. Forms of threats

Activists working to support veterans and their families also use a broader range of **tools to protect and ensure their rights and freedoms**; however, unlike anti-corruption activists, they tend to rate their effectiveness more positively. In particular, this group of activists more frequently appeals both to local authorities and to higher-level authorities (including government hotlines), and assesses their effectiveness more favourably.

These activists also rely much more frequently on personal contacts and seek to establish partnerships with other civil society organisations. Partnerships with other CSOs or coalitions are used by 89% of activists, with the effectiveness of this tool rated at 74% (scores of 4–5 on a five-point scale).

A striking example of effective collective action by the veteran community, rather than a single organisation, is the case in Kharkiv at the end of April 2025 mentioned by respondents. At that time, veterans, including representatives of the “Azov” unit, joined forces with other members of the veteran community and publicly raised concerns regarding the appointment of a candidate whom they considered unsuitable for a position in the Department for Veterans’ Policy.

“Azov veterans raised the question of why a veteran of other local wars, an Afghan war veteran, had been appointed to a position in the Department for Veterans’ Policy. A group was formed with the involvement of the Ministry and the Veterans’ Council. A decision was taken immediately. One veteran was dismissed. The public proposed another candidate, and it is he who will be held accountable for his work. This was a real influence on the authorities, but not from civil society institutions as such – rather from the veteran community as a whole.

Such a tool as public coverage of a situation in the media or on social media proved popular among 63% of activists, while its effectiveness (scores of 4–5 on a five-point scale) is assessed by activists themselves at 78%. Respondents note that the broader the public resonance, the greater the likelihood that specific measures will be taken.

“No one will even listen to the public as a single entity – you just get a standard reply, one month for consideration under the established procedure, here is our response, here is a reference to a legal provision – thank you and goodbye.

Activists working in the field of support for veterans and their families describe communication with public authorities as limited and selective. According to their assessments, the authorities have taken into account the experience of 2015–2016, when active veterans mobilised en masse and publicly influenced the agenda, including through protests outside state institutions. By contrast, at present, according to respondents, interaction largely takes place with pre-selected, loyal and convenient representatives of the veteran community, who are perceived as the main communicators of the sector’s position. At the same time, activists whom respondents consider independent and critical are effectively excluded from systemic communication, as they are perceived as “inconvenient”. In the view of respondents, this practice indicates an attempt by the authorities to act pre-emptively, minimising potentially critical or confrontational voices in the public space.

In assessing the effectiveness of appeals to public authorities, activists working in the field of support for veterans and their families note that appeals at the central level often do not lead to systemic solutions, as such issues are redirected to the regional level. At the same time, according to their observations, responses in such cases may be more prompt due to increased attention from higher-level leadership.

Respondents also emphasise that real change most often occurs when issues receive public coverage. It is public resonance and media attention that can prompt public authorities to act, although such responses, according to respondents, are usually limited in scope and do not always lead to systemic solutions.

Analysing **barriers in interaction** with representatives of local authorities, activists working in the field of support for veterans and their families emphasise the importance of a clear and predictable legal framework. In their view, the current legal environment lacks sufficient certainty, which makes it difficult to rely on specific legal provisions and to challenge violations in court, both at the national level and through applications to the ECtHR. Respondents also point to the widespread perception of “manual control” practices, whereby certain decisions are taken outside clear procedural frameworks. In their view, this limits the possibilities for legal redress and undermines the predictability of public policy.

Among additional barriers, respondents also highlight the limited influence of the veteran community on ongoing legislative processes. In their view, veterans’ participation in policymaking remains fragmented and does not ensure the systematic consideration of their position.

Activists also emphasise the insufficient transparency of mechanisms for the allocation of state grants. In particular, they note that the criteria for selecting funding recipients are unclear, which creates a perception of unpredictability in the process. Respondents express concern that, in practice, grant allocation may favour organisations demonstrating greater loyalty to the authorities, which, in their view, narrows the opportunities for supporting independent initiatives. Respondents also note that, in a number of cases, state funding is allocated to projects which, in their opinion, do not deliver tangible benefits or direct advantages for veterans.

“ Relying on state grants is like taking a leaking boat and trying to sail in it – it is ineffective.

Activists working in the field of support for veterans and their families lack trust in state institutions (law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor's office and the judicial system). In their view, appointments to these institutions are not based on objective criteria but rather on the discretion of individual decision-makers, and therefore decisions are taken on the basis of loyalty to the authorities.

The situation regarding **the level of knowledge of legislative acts and policy initiatives** is relatively positive. Activists demonstrate a higher level of engagement with the political and legal context: according to them, they are fairly well informed about most draft laws and initiatives and assess their effectiveness more positively compared to other groups of activists.

ACTIVISTS DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY

Overall, activists in this group face a somewhat lower intensity of pressure than anti-corruption activists; however, the forms of threats are significantly more diverse and physical violence is not uncommon. The main sources of threats for this group are far-right groups and other opponents; however, attacks from media outlets and the unwillingness of the authorities to consider their appeals are also widespread. LGBTIQ+ activists more frequently face reputational attacks, harassment on social media, intimidation and even physical assaults. Law enforcement agencies are reluctant to respond to incidents, which forces activists to rely more on public visibility, social media and international support.

An analysis of the situation in the field of protection of the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons shows that obstruction of activities remains widespread: 50% of respondents indicate that such cases occur regularly in their work. At the same time, assessments of the dynamics over the past three years indicate a moderate improvement in the situation and a decrease in the frequency of such incidents.

The main source of obstruction and pressure is far-right groups, identified by all respondents in this group. According to activists, conflicts with opposing activists and reputational attacks by media outlets are also very common.

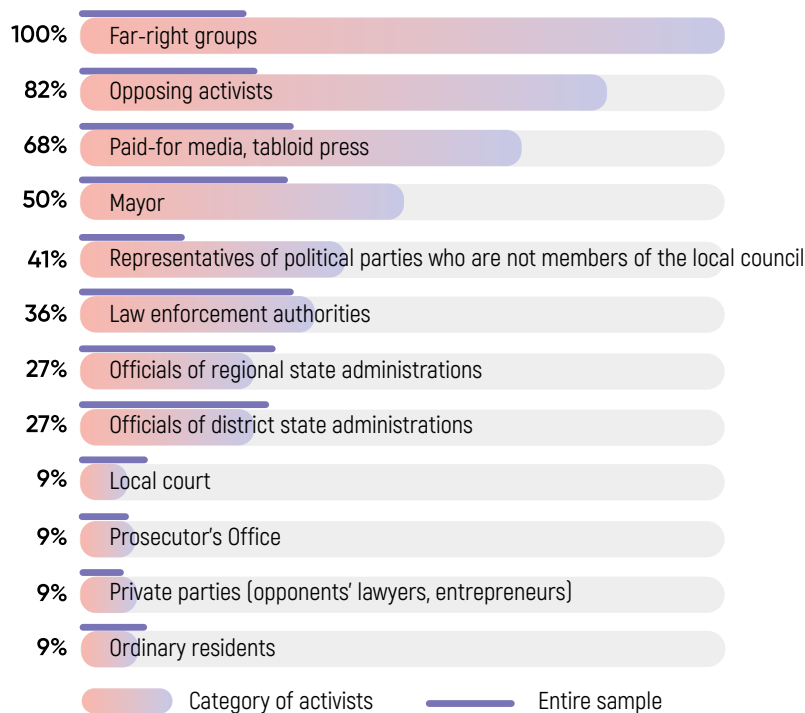
Although the self-assessed intensity of threats and pressure faced by this group of activists is lower compared to the anti-corruption sector, the range of forms of persecution is more diverse and encompasses a broader set of practices. Respondents indicate that virtually all major types of pressure are present in their activities.

The most common **forms of pressure** include discreditation campaigns, threats on social media, intimidation, and instances of physical violence. At the same time, activists note the low effectiveness of responses by law enforcement agencies, in particular their unwillingness to conduct proper investigations of such incidents.

Among the most common threats to their activities, activists identify the following: manipulation of public opinion, online harassment, attacks on Facebook pages, intimidation or threats – each reported by 91% – and the increased activity of far-right groups – 82% of respondents. In addition to these threats, other forms were also reported, including the reluctance to investigate incidents, pressure from opponents, physical attacks, threats on social media, difficulties in obtaining permits for public events and their disruption, obstruction of the activities of civil society organisations, provocations, and damage to property.

Activists defending the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community interact less frequently with representatives of public authorities. Most often, they seek to establish partnerships with other CSOs or turn to law enforcement agencies, but, in their view, these are ineffective tools of protection.

They consider public awareness-raising among the broader public and the international community to be more effective, including through organising rallies and attracting attention on social media. LGBTIQ+ activists also frequently rely on personal contacts and seek legal assistance.

Graph 6. Sources of obstacles

Activists generally assess **communication with representatives of public authorities** as opening up opportunities for cooperation. In particular, they organise events in coordination with the authorities, informing the police in advance and involving them in maintaining public order. This approach helps to increase the level of safety during events and provides additional guarantees of a prompt response in the event of possible attacks or provocations. Activists generally assess the situation in Kyiv as “relatively acceptable”, provided that effective communication with the authorities is established. At the same time, they emphasise the uneven quality of such interaction: the level of security at events and the sensitivity to organisers’ needs are often inconsistent and depend on situational factors. Some events receive adequate protection and support, while others do not.

As a positive example, respondents refer to the Sunny Bunny Film Festival in Kyiv, held at the Zhovten Cinema: despite the presence of protesters, the police promptly stopped their unlawful actions and restored the safety of the event. At the same time, activists note that such examples are not systemic, and the effectiveness of interaction with law enforcement agencies may depend both on the context of a specific event and on the experience and approaches of the organisers themselves.

In the city of **Zhytomyr**, examples of proactive responses by law enforcement agencies to potential threats to event security have been recorded. In particular, during a film club event, the police independently monitored channels of far-right groups, including newly created ones, of whose existence the event organisers had not yet been aware of. This made it possible to detect in advance preparations for potential actions by far-right youth and to take preventive measures.

💬 *They found out everything on their own before we did.*

Activists also note that in **Lviv**, interaction with public authorities and the National Police is more complex and less predictable. In particular, there is an observable reluctance on the part of local authorities and law enforcement agencies to cooperate: notifications from representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community about potential threats to event security are often left without an adequate response.

💬 *Haven't they killed you yet? If they do, come along. Something like that.*

Activists also report a limited willingness to cooperate on the part of public authorities and law enforcement agencies in **Chernivtsi**. In their view, while the authorities formally declare openness

to cooperation, in practice such interaction is insufficiently effective. In particular, during one of the festivals, when a group of individuals nearby was shouting threats, law enforcement agencies failed to take adequate measures to ensure the safety of participants.

As regards practical **support from state institutions**, activists note that in three quarters of cases they received assistance in the form of security provision during public events.

In assessing effective mechanisms for influencing local authorities, activists note that in certain cases an effective tool may be to invoke the risk of losing funding from European partners. At the same time, it is emphasised that this option is limited and not available to all organisations, as not all have direct access to international partners or the capacity to initiate such pressure on local authorities.

At the national level, activists highlight certain organisations, in particular “Fulcrum”, as an example of systematic interaction with public authorities. Over several years, the organisation has cooperated with Parliament, the Government and line ministries, contributing to the development of legislative initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons. Despite the absence of adopted legislation, such activity, according to activists, has facilitated more open communication between the authorities, civil society and international partners, as well as an increase in the number of public officials willing to engage publicly with the LGBTIQ+ community.

Activists working in the field of protecting the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community report a low level of effectiveness in law enforcement responses to hate-motivated incidents. According to them, investigations of such cases are often formal, and additional efforts are frequently required to initiate criminal proceedings and to ensure proper legal qualification of offences as hate-motivated. As a result, such incidents may be reclassified as hooliganism. In addition, activists draw attention to the lengthy duration of court proceedings in such cases, which may last for years, including in cases related to the disruption of public events in Chernivtsi and Lviv.

Trust in state institutions (law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor’s office and the judicial system) among activists defending the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community is low: activists emphasise that effort is required at every stage, whereas ideally such interaction should function automatically.

Activists also demonstrate a higher **level of awareness of most draft laws and initiatives**. Draft Laws No. 5488 and No. 9103 are considered particularly important and potentially effective (neither had been adopted at the time of preparation of this study).

ACTIVISTS WORKING WITH VULNERABLE GROUPS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

According to respondents, activists working to support vulnerable groups in small communities face the fewest challenges. Only 28% report instances of obstruction and pressure, and this figure, according to them, has remained stable over the past three years. At the same time, 46% of activists in this group have encountered such situations at least once in the course of their work.

Activists identify officials of district state administrations as **the main source of obstruction** to their activities. Among the most common forms of pressure, half of respondents highlight manipulation of public opinion, ineffective or reluctant investigation of incidents, and selective engagement with civil society activists.

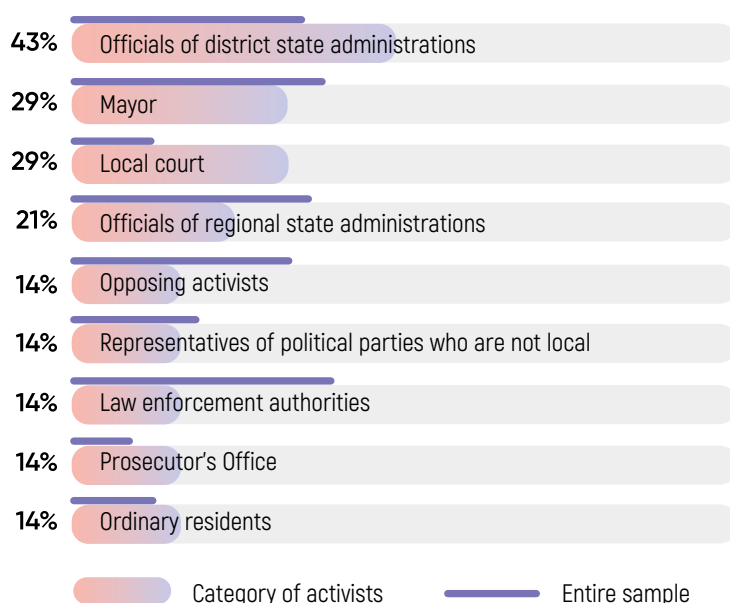
The relatively low level of obstruction and pressure faced by activists supporting vulnerable groups in small communities is largely associated with the decentralisation reform. According to respondents, the situation improved following the implementation of local self-government and decentralisation reforms.

Activists note that some situations they perceive as pressure are rather linked to misunderstandings in their interaction with public authorities and administrative bodies. Such cases require additional effort to substantiate their position; however, they are generally not critical in nature and are assessed as situational.

Activists also consider pressure from opponents to be a form of coercion. Respondents referred to representatives of the authorities who may compete with civil society activists, hold prejudicial negative attitudes towards them, and whom activists therefore try to avoid engaging with.

Activists working with vulnerable groups in small communities rely primarily on personal contacts among the available **protection tools**. Like most other activists, they mainly depend on establishing cooperation with other civil society organisations, seek to raise public awareness of problematic situations, and involve international partners. In addition, activists note that they rarely turn to public authorities.

Graph 7. Sources of obstacles



Activists working with vulnerable groups in small communities note that following the reform of local self-government and decentralisation, **communication with representatives of public authorities** has clearly improved. Decentralisation has significantly increased the ability to influence decision-making, as decisions are now taken at the local level. Activists also report that local authorities often act in the interests of the community and are personally familiar with its members. As a result, the number of conflicts and problems has decreased, and communities have gained new opportunities.

“If you look at the old system, with districts and village councils, there was a very limited, under-resourced village council. Now, especially in the pre-war period, many opportunities for communities' own development have opened up.”

Activists note that the main current constraint is the reallocation of state resources in favour of the defence sector in the context of the full-scale war. At the same time, this situation is perceived as objective and does not give rise to objections.

Activists report that at the local level, interaction with the authorities is often sufficiently effective and is based on informal contacts and direct communication. In their view, a significant share of issues can be resolved through personal interaction with representatives of local self-government bodies, in particular by seeking compromise solutions, such as mobilising extra-budgetary resources or incorporating needs into funding plans for subsequent periods.

Activists emphasise that there are currently no legislative initiatives that directly hinder their activities. They also assess the present conditions as more favourable compared to the period prior to decentralisation, in particular due to their increased influence at the local level. At the same time, participation in influencing legislative processes at the national level remains limited, which is

explained both by a lack of information and by the priority given to issues related to Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine.

The assessment of the level of legal awareness shows that this group of activists is primarily well versed in basic legal acts (in particular, the Constitution of Ukraine, the Laws "On Public Associations" and "On Citizens' Appeals", as well as issues related to decentralisation and the right to peaceful assembly). At the same time, other legislative initiatives and draft laws remain largely unfamiliar to them. Despite this, most respondents assess such initiatives as effective, which may be due to a limited level of awareness and a lack of practical experience in engaging with them.

CONCLUSIONS

1. | RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IS THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF THREATS TO CIVIL SOCIETY.

More than 60% of documented cases of persecution are directly linked to the aggression of the Russian Federation, confirming its role as a key risk factor for civil society in Ukraine. The impact of the war manifests itself not only through large-scale hostilities and indiscriminate shelling, which affect the civilian population, including activists, journalists and volunteers, but also through a targeted policy of pressure on the civic sector. Documented cases point to the multifaceted nature of this threat, combining physical violence, destruction of infrastructure, contract killings and attempted assassinations, cyberattacks, and information operations aimed at intimidation, discreditation and destabilisation.

Thus, the war remains a systemic factor weakening the institutional capacity of the civic sector – both through direct human losses and through the destruction of material resources, constant security risks, and psychological pressure. At the same time, the wartime context creates internal conditions for the concentration of powers, reduced transparency, and diminished sensitivity to procedural safeguards. Martial law objectively requires certain restrictions; however, 2025 demonstrated that, in the absence of clear safeguards, this may lead to abuses or disproportionate decisions. In such conditions, the balance between security and freedom becomes not only a legal but also a political challenge, directly affecting the resilience and capacity of civil society to perform its functions.

2. | THE YEAR 2025 MARKED A NEW PHASE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY.

Developments during the year indicate a gradual shift from a wartime partnership model to one of strained coexistence. In 2022–2023, civil society was primarily perceived as a resource for the state's survival – providing volunteer, humanitarian and expert support. By contrast, in 2025, the active and critical stance of certain organisations increasingly triggered resistance or counter-reactions from some public authorities, particularly the prosecutor's office, the MIA, and the SBI. This creates a risk of further pressure on the civic sector under the pretext of martial law and security needs. Such a trend is dangerous in the long term, as it undermines the very nature of democratic oversight. Trust in law enforcement and judicial protection mechanisms remains low, and 2025 has only reinforced this situation. Activists regard public visibility, international attention and solidarity as more effective means of protection than national legal mechanisms. This indicates a crisis of trust in the institutions responsible for investigating cases of pressure and attacks. Without strengthening the capacity and independence of these institutions, it is not possible to ensure systemic protection of civic space.

3. | VULNERABLE GROUPS OF ACTIVISTS REMAIN UNDER INCREASED PRESSURE.

Anti-corruption activists, representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community, women journalists and environmental activists systematically face forms of persecution that are both repetitive and combined in nature. This concerns not only isolated incidents but also entrenched practices of pressure, including online harassment, coordinated discreditation campaigns, the dissemination of manipulative or false information, surveillance, as well as the initiation of lawsuits bearing the hallmarks of SLAPP, aimed at exhausting resources and limiting public activity. Such pressure often has a cumulative effect: the combination of information attacks with legal persecution and personal intimidation creates an environment of constant insecurity and uncertainty. This, in turn, affects the ability of activists and organisations to operate openly, participate in public processes and carry out public oversight. In a number of cases, a spillover of online aggression into the offline space is also observed – through threats of physical violence or attempts at direct interference with activities. The gender dimension of such persecution is particularly pronounced. Women journalists and activists are significantly more likely to become targets of sexualised threats, hate speech and campaigns aimed at undermining their professional reputation through gender stereotypes. Such attacks are intended

not only to intimidate individuals but also to push women out of the public sphere, reducing their visibility and influence. This is further exacerbated by the overall tolerance of online violence and the insufficient effectiveness of response mechanisms.

4. | FINANCIAL TURBULENCE HAS EXPOSED THE STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITY OF THE SECTOR.

The sharp curtailment or freezing of funding from the United States in early 2025 constituted a serious blow to many organisations. The closure of programmes, staff reductions and the suspension of regional initiatives demonstrated that a significant part of the civil society sector depends on external sources of support. This underscores the need to diversify funding, develop local philanthropy and establish more long-term mechanisms to support institutional capacity, rather than focusing solely on project-based activities.

5. | DESPITE THE PRESSURE, CIVIL SOCIETY REMAINS A KEY RESOURCE FOR POST-WAR RECOVERY, RETAINING ITS CAPACITY FOR MOBILISATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING.

The “cardboard” protests around the independence of the NABU and the SAPO became a turning point of the year. For the first time since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, thousands of people took to the streets demanding the preservation of the anti-corruption infrastructure. This indicates the existence of clear “red lines” in society – areas where the rollback of reforms is not considered acceptable even in wartime. The fact that a legislative decision was revised under pressure from society and international partners confirms that the civil society sector retains a real influence on political processes. Today, civil society organisations document war crimes, support vulnerable groups, produce analytical input for reforms, advocate for European integration, and ensure public oversight of the use of resources. Their potential in the process of post-war reconstruction – from anti-corruption monitoring to community participation in decision-making – is critically important. Weakening this sector would mean weakening the democratic foundations of Ukraine’s future.

6. | THE SOCIOLOGICAL FINDINGS CONFIRM THE OVERALL TRENDS.

The results of the sociological study generally confirm the trends identified in the report and indicate that civil society in Ukraine in 2025 operates under conditions of systemic pressure and heightened risks. For a significant proportion of activists, obstacles to their activities are not isolated but recurrent, pointing to the persistence and repetition of such practices. Indirect forms of pressure remain dominant – including information pressure, reputational attacks, online harassment and administrative barriers – which together create a restrictive environment for civic activity. At the same time, even less frequent instances of physical violence significantly affect the overall sense of security and perception of risks within the sector. The study also demonstrates an uneven distribution of threats across different groups of activists depending on their field of activity, reflecting the broader pattern of vulnerabilities identified in the report. At the same time, a common feature remains the low level of trust in institutional protection mechanisms and a reliance on informal means of response, in particular public visibility and solidarity.

At the same time, despite the existing challenges, the findings point to a continued capacity for development and adaptation within civil society, including a demand for strengthened institutional capacity and more systematic engagement with the state and society.

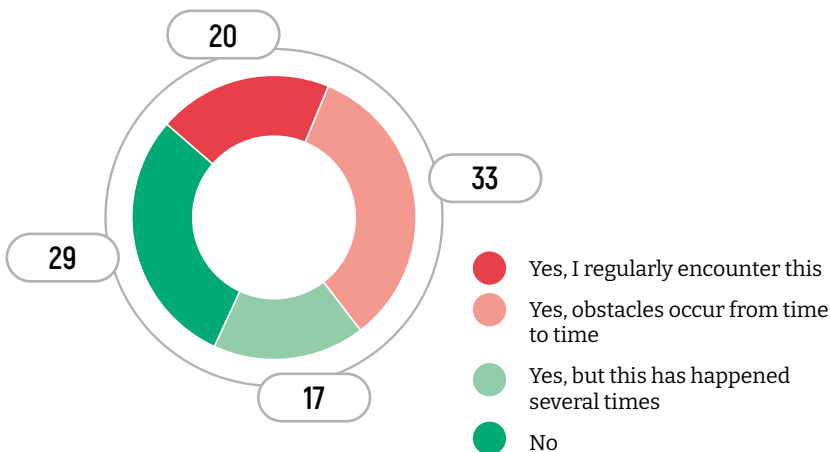
OBSTACLES FACED BY CIVIL ACTIVISTS

Nearly half of the surveyed activists (44%) report a high level of threats and obstacles to their activities. According to activists, the situation has either remained unchanged over the past three years or deteriorated, and only 17% report an increase in the level of freedoms.

71% of civil activists report having encountered obstacles in their activities at least once. 20% encounter them on a regular basis.

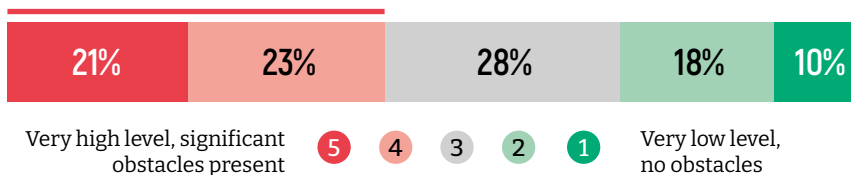
Activists engaged in anti-corruption activities are subjected to the highest level of pressure. The lowest level is reported by those working to support vulnerable groups in small communities.

% who have personally encountered obstacles in their activities

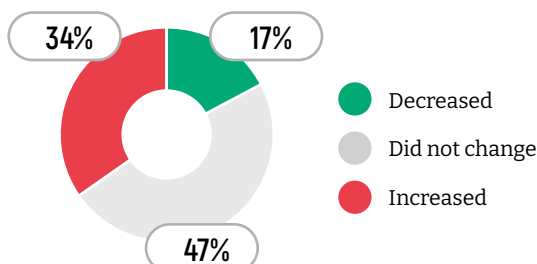


Assessment of the level of obstacles in activities

44% believe that there are significant obstacles to activists' activities



Change in the level of pressure over the past three years



The study was conducted by the Centre for Qualitative Research between May and August 2025 using expert triads and online surveys. A total of 156 activists from different fields participated in the study, including those working on anti-corruption issues, with the LGBTIQ+ community and veterans' communities, protecting vulnerable groups in small communities, advocating for environmental protection, opposing unlawful construction projects, and others. Respondents represented all regions of Ukraine under the control of the Ukrainian government. The study was commissioned by the Human Rights Centre ZMINA.

N=156

How do you assess the level of obstacles in your field of activity? Have you personally encountered various forms of obstruction in your activities as a civil activist? In your opinion, how has the level of obstruction and pressure on civil activists in your field of activity changed over the past three years?

SOURCES OF OBSTACLES

The main source of threats is law enforcement authorities, which are particularly frequently criticised by civil activists in the capital. Law enforcement authorities most frequently exert pressure on civil activists engaged in anti-corruption activities. However, this is not the only group affected – activists from other sectors, except those working to support vulnerable groups in small communities, also report pressure from representatives of these authorities. The main problem with the police is the lack of dialogue and unwillingness to conduct investigations.

One third of civil activists also identify paid media and the tabloid press as a source of threats. Activists who point to the media are more likely than others to face threats, hate speech and harassment on social media, indicating that these media outlets engage in reputational attacks. Activists defending the rights of LGBTIQ+ people are most frequently affected by persecution in the media. Other groups of activists also face this source of threats.



Officials at various levels, from mayors to representatives of regional state administrations, are also among the main sources of obstacles. The main problem with officials is the lack of dialogue with representatives of NGOs and the unwillingness to understand existing problems and consider appeals.

Opposing activists and far-right groups are among the main sources of threats for activists defending the rights of LGBTIQ+ people: they face threats, hate speech and harassment on social media. At the same time, activists note that law enforcement authorities do not always consider such harassment cases.

N=101,

respondents who encountered obstacles

Which organisations or structures most obstruct the activities of civil activists in this field?

FORMS OF THREATS

“Soft” and reputational forms of pressure are currently the most widespread, and such threats are capable of undermining trust in activists. These primarily include manipulation of public opinion, the use of martial law to impose restrictions, unwillingness to investigate incidents, as well as discreditation and the dissemination of false information. 26% of activists pointed to restrictions on freedom of expression, which calls into question the ability to publicly express and defend their position.

Online attacks also play a significant role: the digital space has become one of the main arenas of pressure. In particular, 35% of activists encountered online harassment (on Facebook and other social media platforms), while nearly one third (29%) faced intimidation or threats.

Administrative and institutional barriers are less widespread, although they were reported by nearly one third of respondents. These include difficulties in obtaining permits, indicating the existence of systemic threats linked to bureaucratic or political restrictions.

Physical violence and direct attacks occur less frequently; however, they remain particularly dangerous as they create an atmosphere of fear and a perception of high risks for activists.



N=156,

respondents who encountered obstacles

Assess each of them based on how widespread or uncommon they are in your field

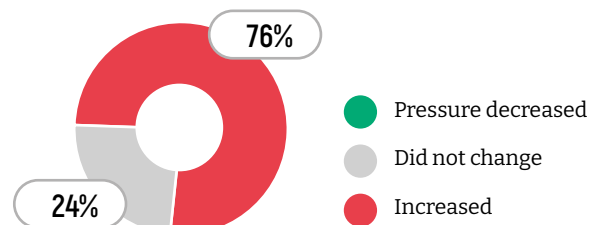
OBSTACLES FACED BY CIVIL ACTIVISTS

(ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITY)

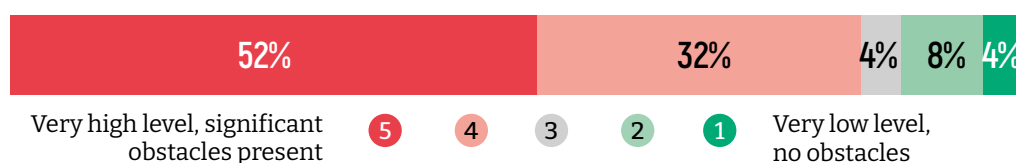
Anti-corruption activists most frequently report pressure and obstacles in their activities: 40% indicate that they encounter them regularly, while an overwhelming majority (76%) report that the situation has deteriorated over the past three years.

The main sources of these threats are law enforcement authorities and public officials at the municipal and regional levels.

Assessment of changes over 3 years

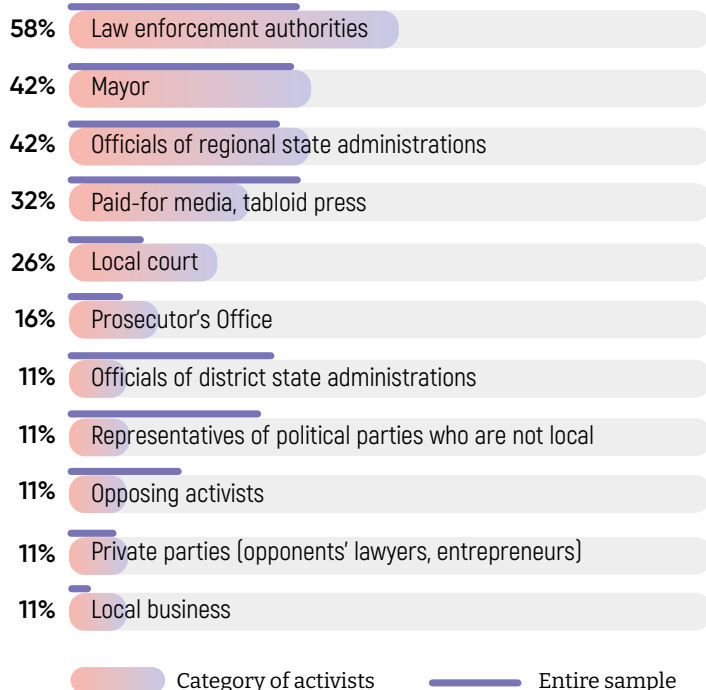


Current assessment in the sector: 84%

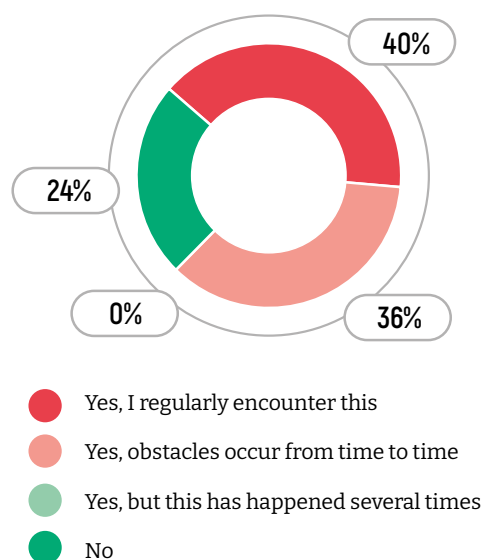


All forms of threats are widespread in this field; however, this group of activists most frequently encounters situations involving the withholding of necessary information (84%), manipulation of public opinion (84%), the unwillingness of law enforcement authorities to investigate incidents (84%), reputational attacks (76%), and selective cooperation with activists (60%).

Sources of obstacles



Personal experience

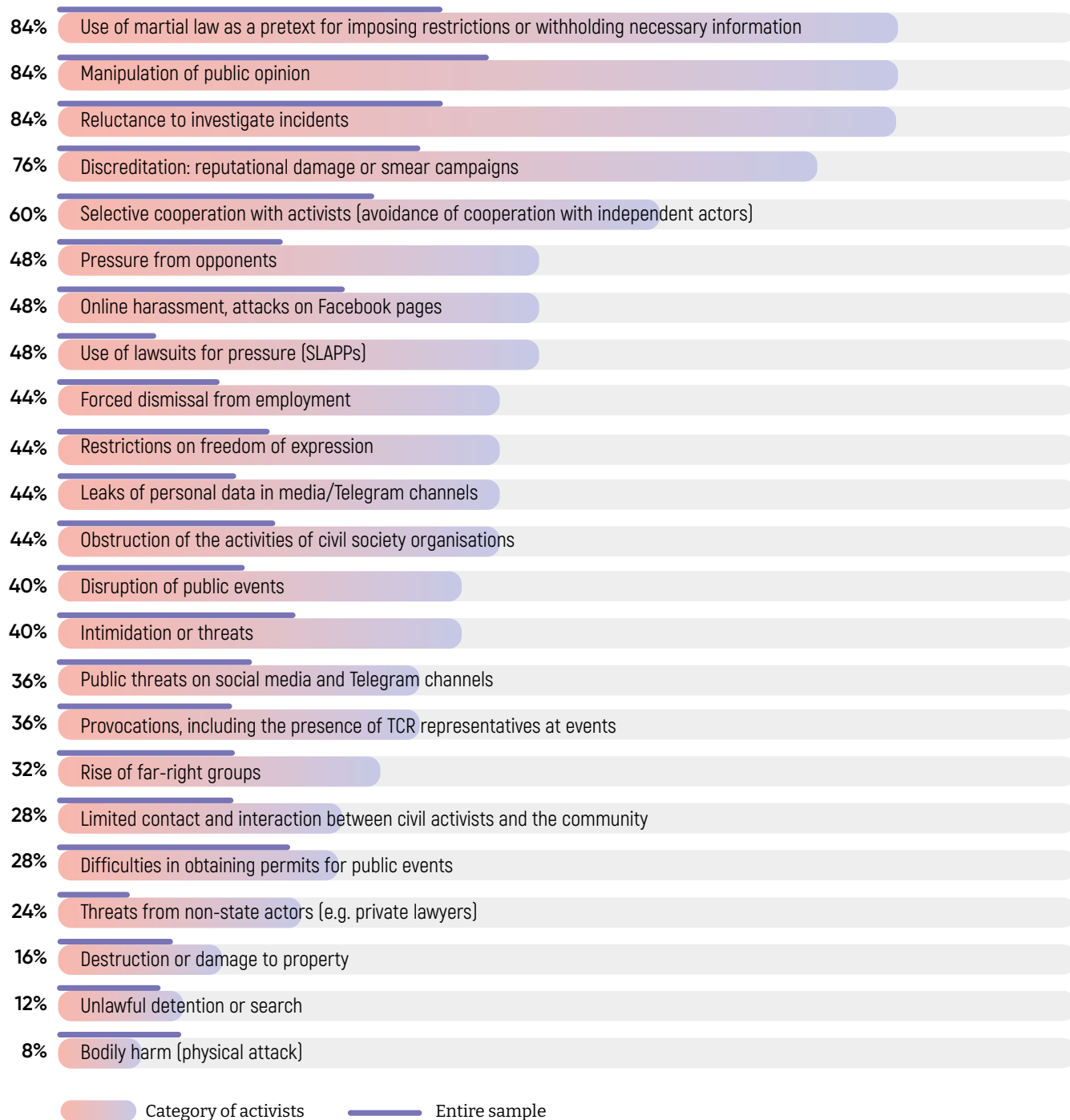


N=25,

How do you assess the level of obstacles in your field of activity? Have you personally encountered various forms of obstruction in your activities as a civil activist? If yes, which ones?

FORMS OF THREATS

(ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITY)



N=25,

Assess each of them based on how widespread or uncommon they are in your field

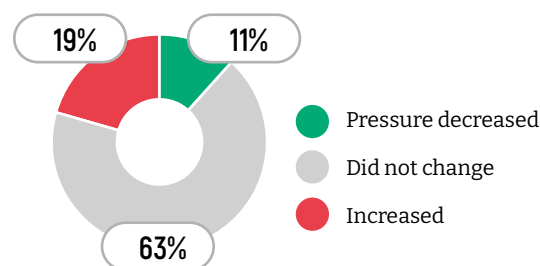
OBSTACLES FACED BY CIVIL ACTIVISTS

(SUPPORT FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES)

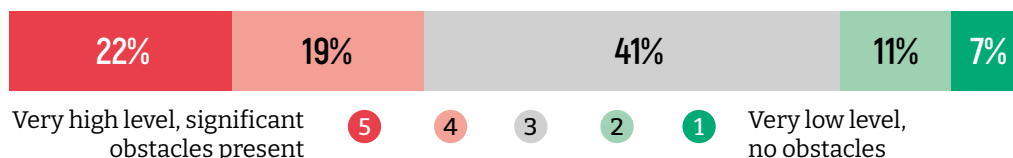
Civil activists working to support veterans and their families encounter obstacles in their activities, although these tend to be situational in nature. Overall, 44% indicate that obstacles in their field occur regularly or from time to time, while another 41% have encountered them several times.

As for developments over the past three years, activists themselves report that nothing has changed. This may be explained by the fact that a significant proportion of NGOs in this field only began operating more actively after the full-scale invasion.

Assessment of changes over 3 years



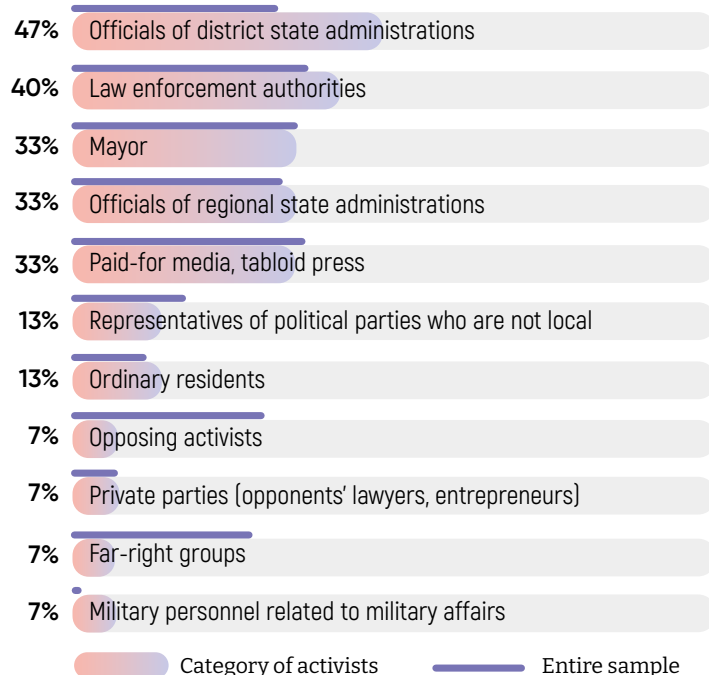
Current assessment in the sector: 41%



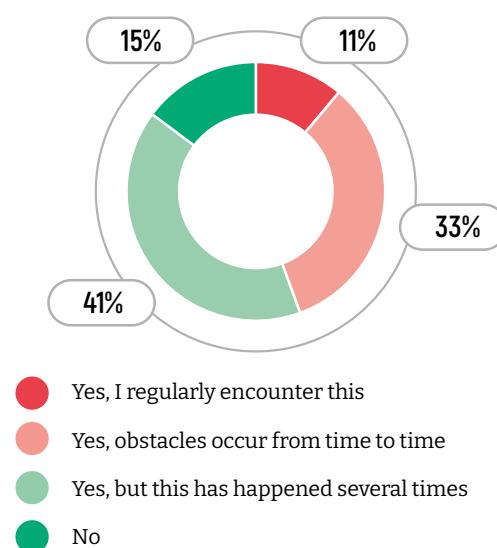
Activists identify officials of district state administrations as the main source of obstacles.

As in the overall sample, the main obstacles relate to restrictions on access to information, manipulation of public opinion, unwillingness to investigate incidents, and selective cooperation with activists.

Sources of obstacles



Personal experience

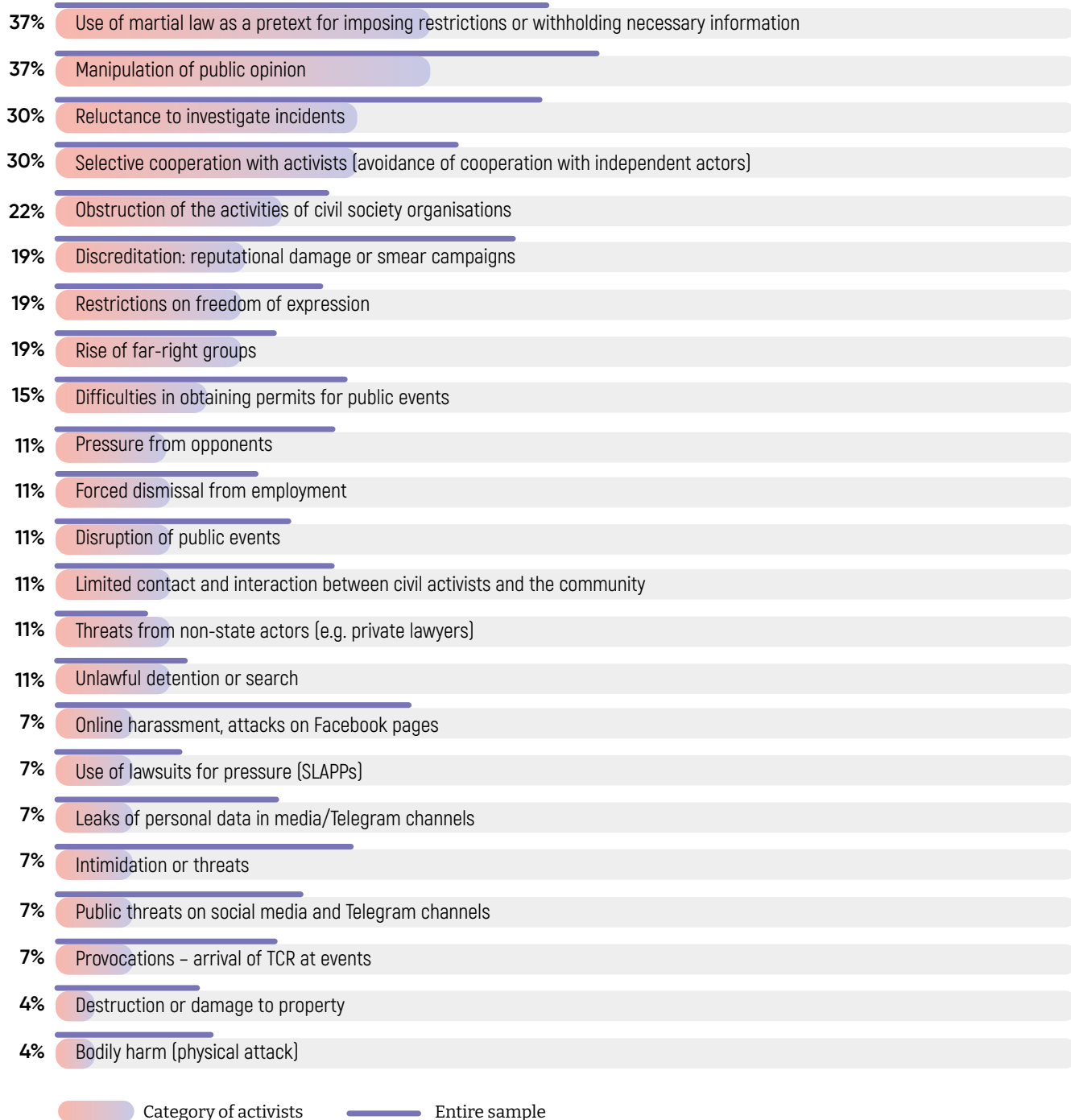


N=27,

How do you assess the level of obstacles in your field of activity? Have you personally encountered various forms of obstruction in your activities as a civil activist? If yes, which ones?

FORMS OF THREATS

(SUPPORT FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES)



N=27,

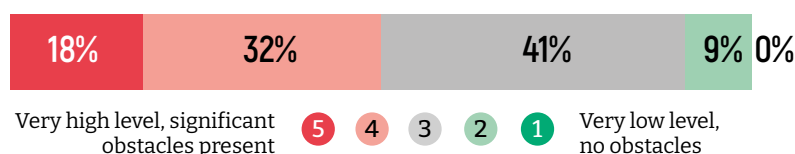
Assess each of them based on how widespread or uncommon they are in your field

OBSTACLES FACED BY CIVIL ACTIVISTS

(PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY)

Civil activists working to protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ people also encounter obstacles and pressure from time to time, with 50% indicating that the problem is widespread in their field of activity. However, the overall assessment of changes in this situation over the past three years rather points to improvement and a decrease in the frequency of such incidents.

Current assessment in the sector: 50%

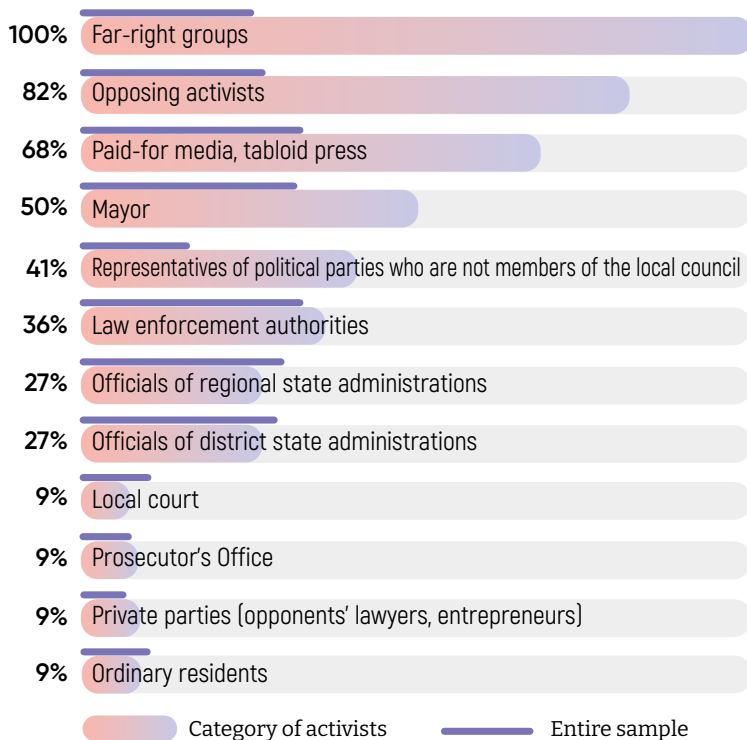


Far-right groups are the main source of obstacles and pressure, identified by all respondents in this group.

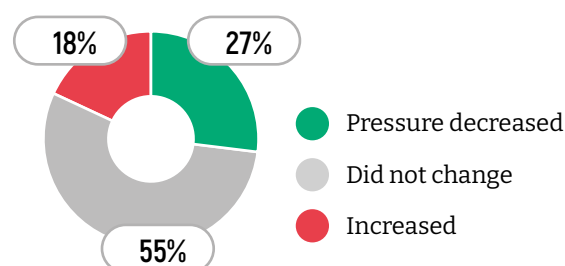
Conflicts with opposing activists and reputational attacks by the media are also highly widespread.

Problems involving the mayor are also reported, with 50% of activists in this group who have encountered obstacles in their activities at least once pointing to this issue.

Sources of obstacles

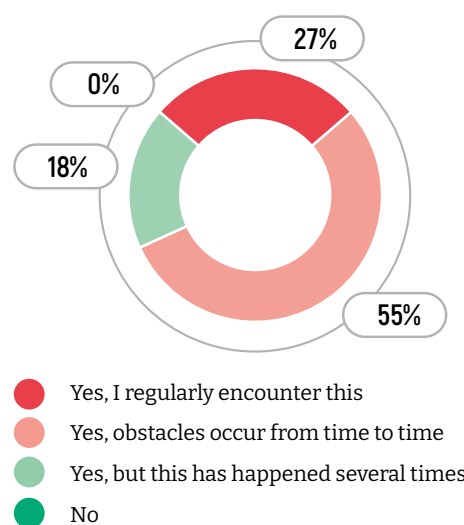


Assessment of changes over 3 years



Although the intensity of threats and pressure faced by this group of activists is lower than that experienced by anti-corruption activists, the forms of pressure are far more diverse in this group (with all forms of pressure being more widespread). These activists mainly face reputational attacks, threats on social media, intimidation, and physical attacks. At the same time, law enforcement authorities are reluctant to investigate these incidents.

Personal experience



N=22,

How do you assess the level of obstacles in your field of activity? Have you personally encountered various forms of obstruction in your activities as a civil activist? If yes, which ones?

FORMS OF THREATS

(PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY)

Far-right groups are the main source of obstacles and pressure.

Dynamics of far-right groups during the full-scale invasion

- At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the activity of far-right groups virtually disappeared.
- However, over the past year, it has resumed both in the information space and physically. Starting with the LGBTIQ+ Pride march in summer 2024, the authorities permitted the event despite restrictions imposed under martial law. At the same time, a counter-action was held on Khreshchatyk in Kyiv – a march in support of the traditional family. As a result of this action, the Pride route was restricted and shortened.

Current situation: experts note that

- new far-right groups are currently emerging, ostensibly centred on the defence of traditional values and opposition to LGBTIQ+ people;
- they assume that this may eventually evolve into a more centralised organisation or far-right wing coordinated, for example, either centrally or through separate regional branches.

Who is organising the far right?

Some experts still do not understand who exactly is behind this in Ukraine: people are organising themselves, yet no one has so far taken responsibility for it. This is linked to the growing spread of right-wing sentiments globally following Trump's rise to power. One view is that this is part of Russia's efforts to divide Ukrainian society.



Something unusual is happening, and the warning signs are already there.

Some experts point to the involvement of movements such as "Prava Molod" ("Right Youth") (although it is still not entirely clear who they are, they refer to themselves as "Right Youth of Lviv Region", "Right Youth of Zhytomyr Region", etc.), the "Vsi Razom" movement, "Tradition and Order", the "Russian Volunteer Corps" (RVC), and the "Brotherhood of Dmytro Korchynskyi".

These organisations are often found to be co-organisers of protest actions. At the same time, the audience of their supporters also remains unclear, as experts observed minors among the participants of such actions – "frightened children" aged 15-16.



Some force cannot find real supporters... They gave children 100 hryvnias each. They stood there frightened... They tore paper out of notebooks and wrote 'we are for the traditional family'. It looked more like a film club gathering.

OBSTACLES FACED BY CIVIL ACTIVISTS

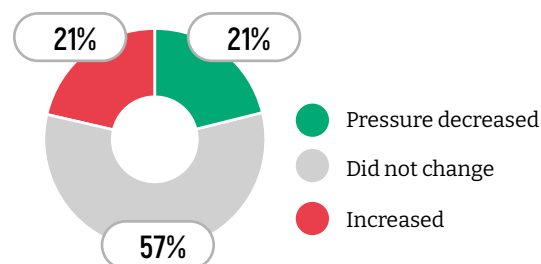
(SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES)

Activists working to support vulnerable groups in small communities encounter obstacles and pressure least frequently: only 28% report the existence of such obstacles, and according to the activists themselves, this level has remained unchanged over the past three years.

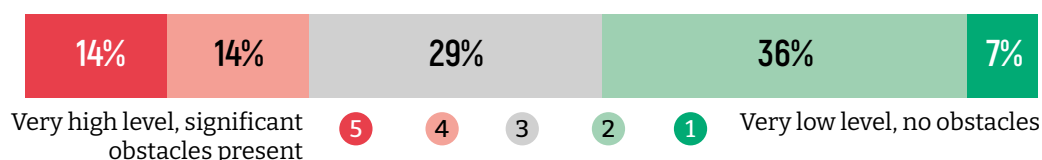
46% of representatives of this group of activists have encountered such situations at least once in the course of their work.

The main source of obstacles is officials of district state administrations.

Assessment of changes over 3 years

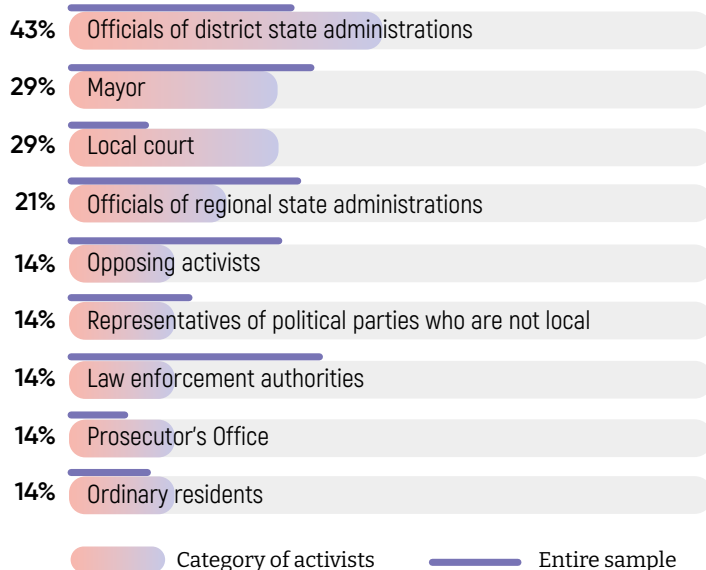


Current assessment in the sector: 28%

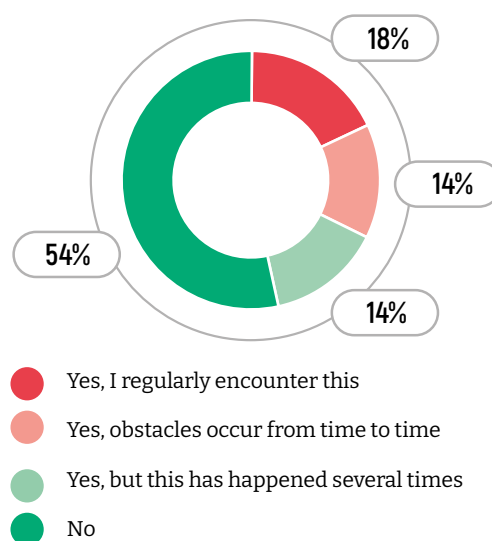


The most widespread forms of obstacles are manipulation of public opinion (50%), reluctance to investigate incidents (50%), and selective cooperation with activists (50%).

Sources of obstacles



Personal experience



N=28,

How do you assess the level of obstacles in your field of activity? Have you personally encountered various forms of obstruction in your activities as a civil activist? If yes, which ones?

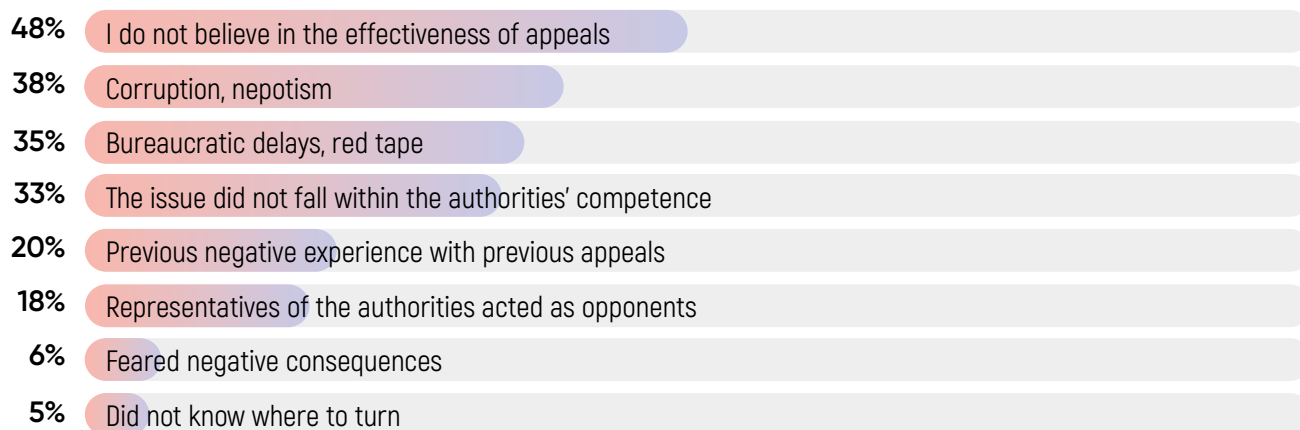
BARRIERS TO APPEALS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Lack of trust in the effectiveness of appeals is the main barrier in interactions with local authorities, cited by 48% of activists who did not contact them.

Systemic problems are also widespread, including the perception of local authorities as bureaucratic and corrupt.

Those who contacted representatives of public authorities most frequently complain about indifference to activists' concerns, unwillingness to engage, lack of empathy, and the artificial creation of bureaucratic obstacles and deliberate delays in procedures.

Barriers to appeals



N=80,

respondents who did not contact local authorities

Why did they not contact local authorities? What main obstacles do you face when communicating with public authorities?

Obstacles arising during communication



N=92,

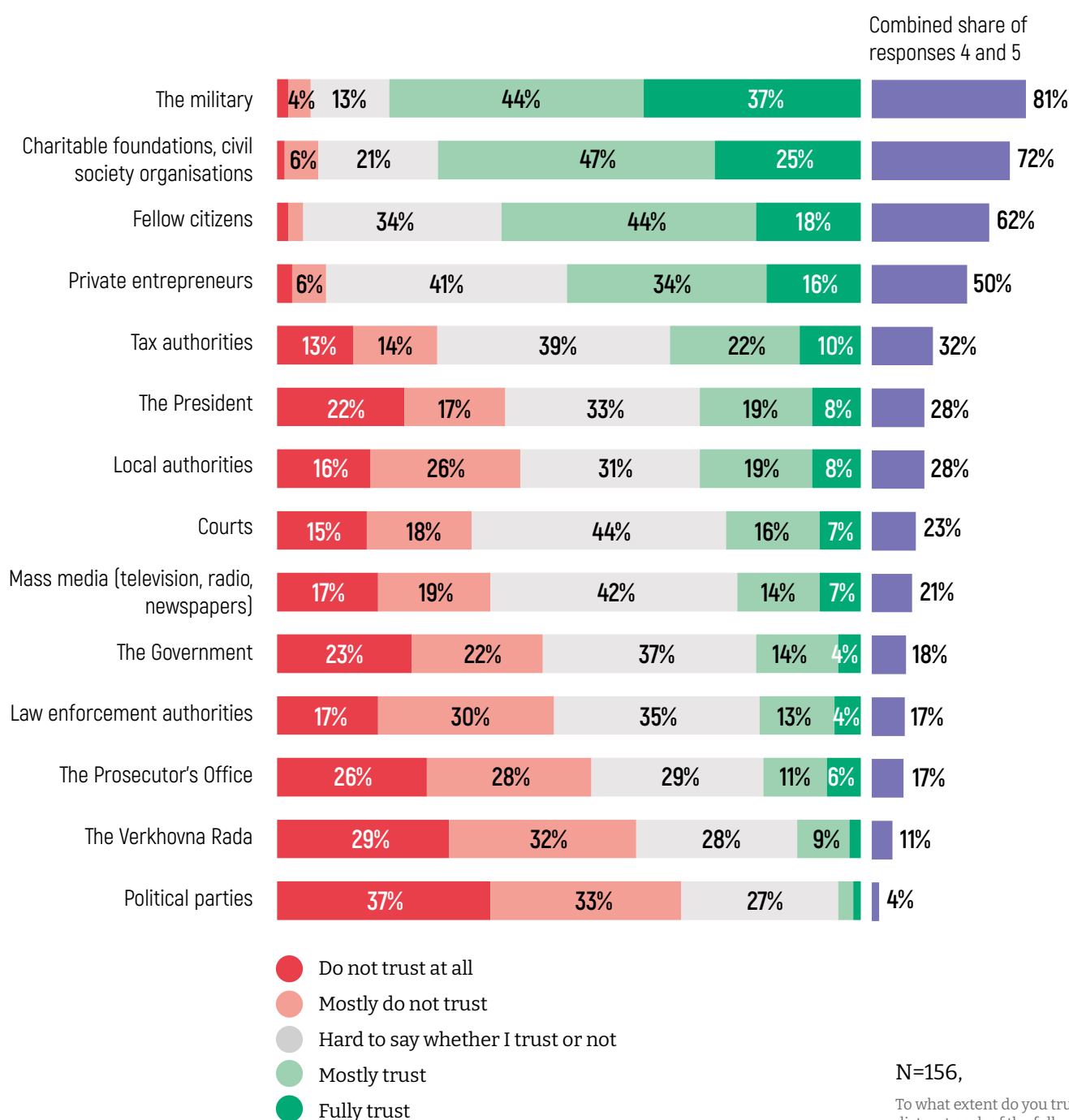
respondents who contacted representatives of public authorities

Why did they not contact local authorities? What main obstacles do you face when communicating with public authorities?

TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

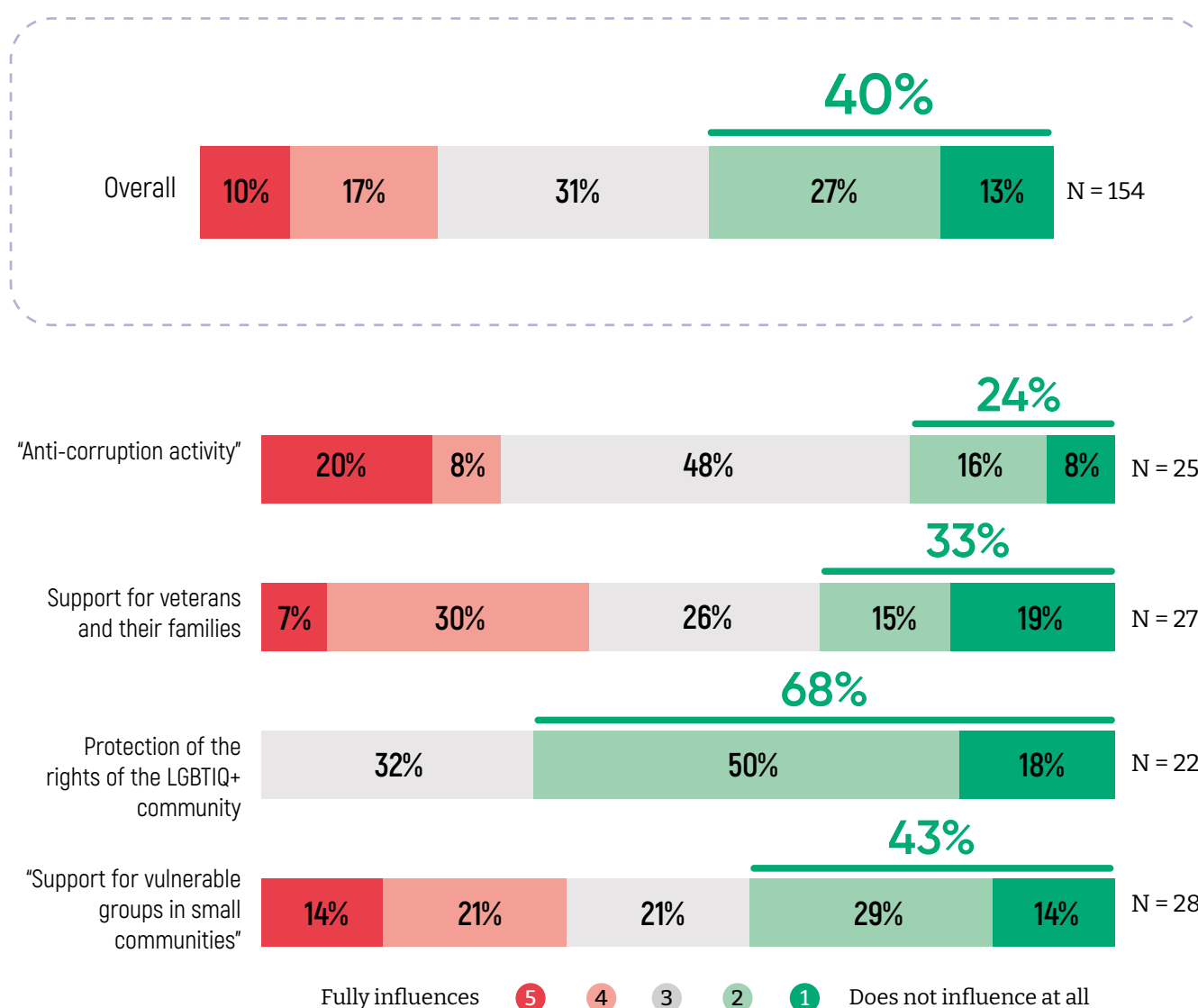
The level of trust in institutions in Ukraine is uneven and reflects the specific conditions of wartime. The military are the clear leaders, trusted by more than 80% of activists. Charitable foundations and civil society organisations rank second in terms of trust (72%). Their positive perception demonstrates the importance of horizontal solidarity networks. A high level of trust is also recorded towards fellow citizens (62%). This indicates that social capital is largely based on interpersonal and local connections.

Trust in public authorities and the media remains rather low.



THE INFLUENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ON GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING

Overall, only 40% of civil activists believe that their activities have a tangible influence on government decision-making. Anti-corruption activists report the lowest figures, with only 24% believing that their activities genuinely influence the authorities. The highest level of perceived influence was recorded among activists working in the field of protecting the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community, at 68%.



To what extent, in your opinion, can civil society in Ukraine genuinely influence the adoption of laws and government decisions?

THE SPECIFICS OF CIVIL SOCIETY'S INFLUENCE ON GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING

ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITY

- Influence depends on the “stakes involved”. Since activists often deal with “high-value” issues, they are unable to influence the situation.
- For example, construction projects on floodplain land allegedly “protected” by the Office of the President. In such cases, complaints are ineffective, including those submitted through MPs, while responses to requests and appeals are negative: “this is not a floodplain, you are mistaken”, “well, it is a floodplain, so what?”.

LGBTIQ+ ACTIVISTS

A trend towards improvement:

- Hate crimes are investigated reluctantly, although there are already cases where a hate motive has been taken into account. These are isolated cases, but previously even this did not occur.
- In addition, public attitudes are improving year by year. This can be observed both in survey results and in the broader information environment. This also affects the state system.
- Draft laws on punishment for hate crimes and civil partnerships have not yet been adopted; however, the authorities communicate more openly on these issues both with activists and with society and international partners more broadly. This may also be because opposition to the rights of LGBTIQ+ people could affect Ukraine’s international reputation, including in the context of EU accession.
- It is possible to reach agreements with law enforcement authorities regarding security for activists’ events. In this regard, regional differences were identified: cooperation is better in Kyiv and Zhytomyr, while in western Ukraine (Lviv, Chernivtsi) it is more difficult to reach agreements with the police.

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

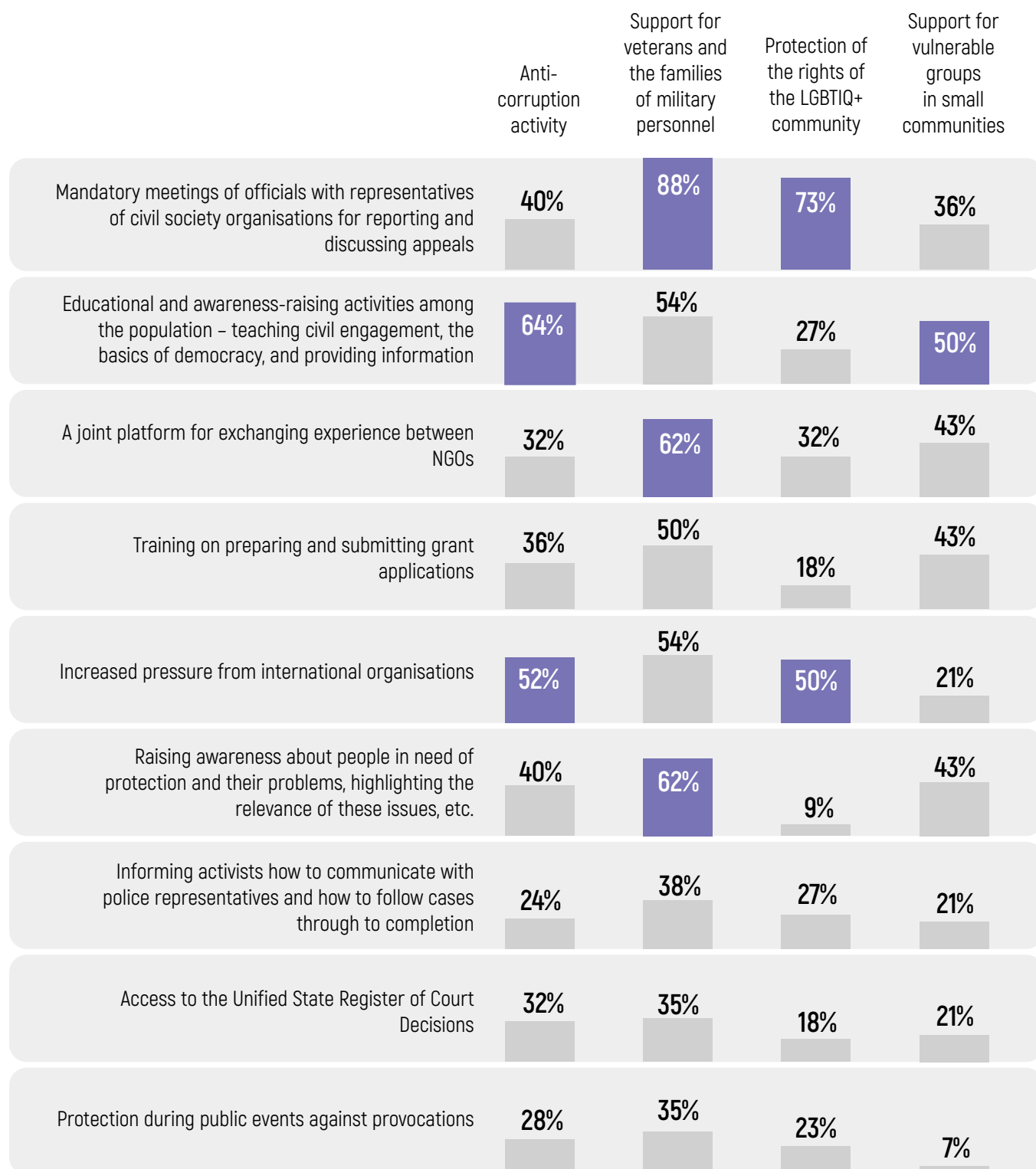
- Effective influence requires a clear legal framework. At present, the legal framework is unclear, and it is impossible to rely on specific legal commitments that could, if not fulfilled, be defended both in Ukrainian and European courts. At present, the state is effectively governed manually: the authorities can act as they wish, and there are no legal norms through which such actions can be challenged.
- Any draft law in this field is always a “good slogan”; the real question is whether it will genuinely protect the interests of veterans.
- The allocation of state grants lacks transparency: it is unclear which organisations will receive funding and which will not. In grant programmes, priority is usually given to “loyal veterans” and organisations that “behave properly”. Grants are often awarded to projects from which veterans receive no real benefit.

„ Relying on state grants is like taking a leaking boat and trying to sail in it – it is ineffective.

SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

- At the local level, attempts to exert influence are made through personal contacts and interaction: inviting the head of the village council, maintaining personal contact with individuals close to the head of the village council, public hearings, and, in larger communities, petitions. According to the experience of experts interviewed in the triads, the local level currently has significant influence due to the decentralisation reform, and working through personal contacts is relatively straightforward.
- At the national level, activists rely on hotlines and petitions.

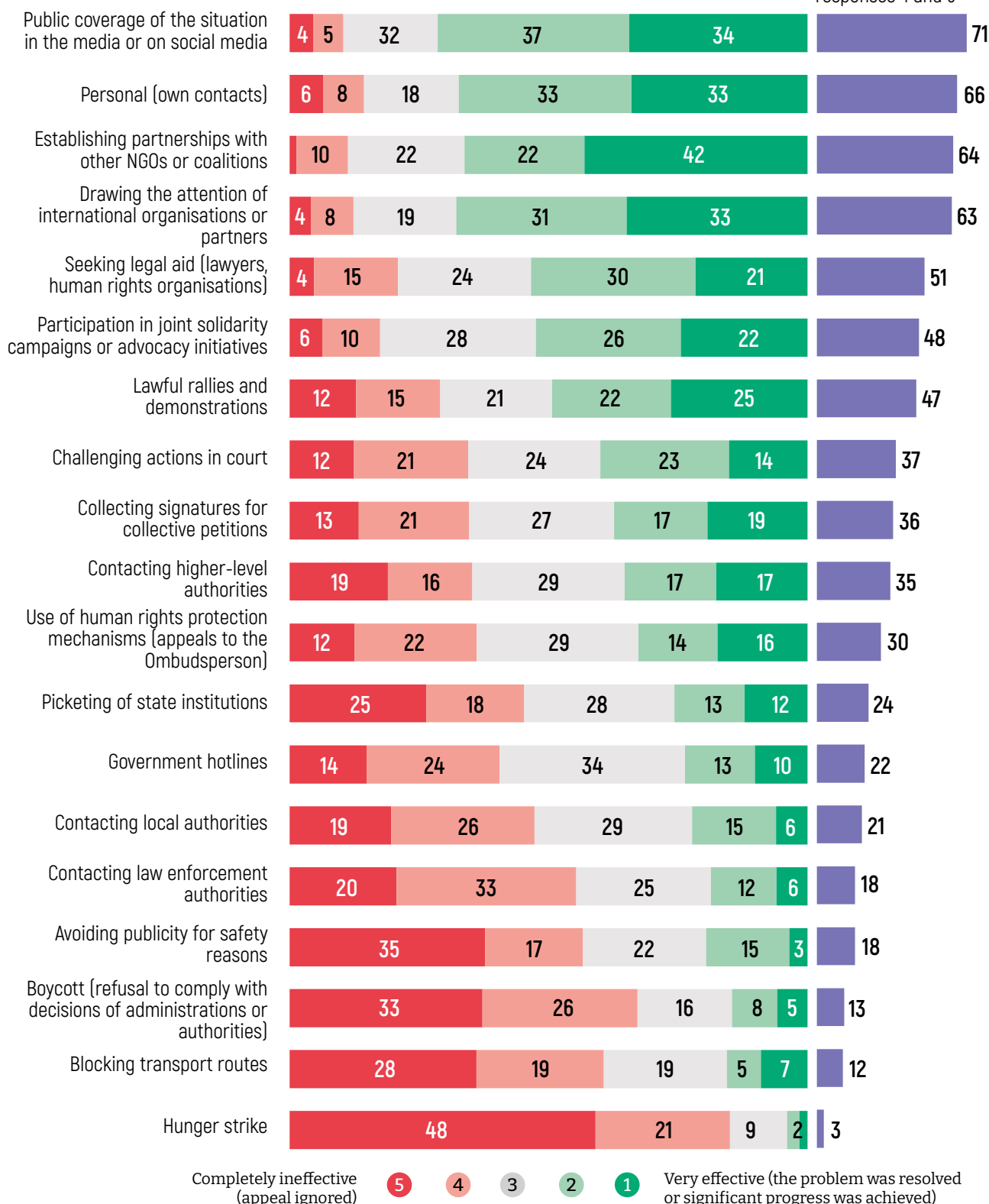
KEY TOOLS FOR ACTIVISTS



Select no more than three tools that you consider the most important today

EFFECTIVENESS OF MECHANISMS FOR COUNTERING OBSTACLES

Combined share of
responses 4 and 5



N=156,

How would you assess the effectiveness of these mechanisms or tools in addressing obstructions to civil activity?



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KEY RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Despite certain common features, different groups of activists have distinct profiles of threats and protection strategies.

The most vulnerable group is anti-corruption activists.

They report pressure most frequently, and a significant proportion of them experience it on a regular basis. An overwhelming majority believe that the situation has deteriorated in recent years. The higher the “stakes” and the greater the financial interests involved, the more intense the pressure: threats, reputational risks, defamation lawsuits, and, less frequently, damage to property, housing or vehicles, as well as isolated cases of bodily harm.

Law enforcement authorities and local government are the main sources of threats, either initiating pressure or “providing protection” for those who do. They often resort to a full range of pressure tactics. In addition, they use martial law as a pretext to impose restrictions or to withhold necessary information. Anti-corruption activists actively use legal mechanisms but assess them as largely ineffective, reflecting a deep lack of trust in institutions.

Public visibility, legal aid and coalitions with other NGOs remain key for them, but require significantly greater effort to achieve results.

A different profile is observed among activists working with veterans and their families. Obstacles in this area tend to be situational rather than regular. The main challenges stem from district-level administrations and are related to bureaucracy or refusals to provide access to information. Veterans’ organisations use a wide range of tools but, unlike anti-corruption activists, assess their effectiveness significantly more positively. They demonstrate greater trust in appeals to both local authorities and higher-level bodies, and often make use of personal contacts and partnerships with other NGOs. These activists are better informed about legislation and legal initiatives, indicating a higher level of institutional integration.

At the same time, it should be noted that only a limited number of veterans have returned from the war, many of whom are preoccupied with personal challenges (such as injuries or family circumstances) and often do not express an active civic position. Meanwhile, drawing on its experience of engagement with active ATO veterans, the authorities have cultivated their own “loyal veterans”, who are selectively involved to advance government interests.

Thus, the authorities currently exercise significant control over this area of civil society. However, experts suggest that a critical point may arise when the majority of veterans (including those with an active civic stance) return from the war and begin to assert their rights.

Activists working on the protection of the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community, face a somewhat lower intensity of pressure than anti-corruption activists; however, the forms of threats are much more diverse, and physical violence is not uncommon. The main source of danger comes from far-right groups and activist opponents, although attacks from the media and the authorities’ reluctance to consider their appeals are also common. These activists more often face reputational attacks, online harassment, intimidation, and even physical attacks. Law enforcement authorities are often reluctant to respond to incidents, which forces LGBTIQ+ activists to rely more on public visibility, social media and international support. In this group, the need for physical protection during public events is particularly important. Another relevant issue is the adoption of draft laws No. 5488 and No. 9103, as well as the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (concerning the health of transgender people).

KEY RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Overall, there is a positive trend regarding the LGBTIQ+ community in Ukraine – awareness and public acceptance are increasing, and the authorities communicate more openly with activists than before. The main task, as well as the expectation from international organisations, is to continue raising awareness about the existence of LGBTIQ+ people and their challenges: highlighting their stories in the media, films and series, including stories about how members of the LGBTIQ+ community defend Ukraine, and emphasising that they face the same challenges as others.

Activists working with vulnerable groups in small communities face the fewest obstacles.

Only a quarter of them face pressure, although nearly half have experienced obstacles at least once. They identify local officials as the main sources of threats, and cite manipulation of public opinion, selective co-operation and bureaucratic barriers as the key problems.

The level of awareness of legislation in this group is lower and limited to basic acts; however, activists assess the tools known to them as effective. In their work, like other groups, they rely on public visibility, partnerships with NGOs and international support. A specific feature of their work is that, following the adoption of the decentralisation reform, civic activists working on small communities have significantly more opportunities, including financial ones, than in 2000–2010, and have a real ability to address community issues.

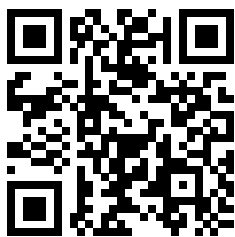
At present, under martial law, these opportunities are more limited. Funding for culture, education and other aspects of community life is somewhat constrained, but activists clearly understand the reasons for this.

Despite differences between groups, all activists are united by a lack of trust in institutional protection mechanisms. Most of them acknowledge that formal appeals to the authorities are often ignored or prove ineffective, whereas publicity, solidarity and international attention have the greatest impact.

At the same time, activists report a strong need for additional knowledge and skills: over 80% seek training, particularly in strategic planning, fundraising, communications and digital security. This indicates that civil society seeks not only resource support but also the development of sustainable mechanisms for engagement with the state and society.

There is a need to strengthen institutional protection for activists, establish independent mechanisms for monitoring threats, and ensure effective investigation of incidents. It is important to expand access to funding and training programmes, particularly in advocacy and digital security. Physical protection during public events should be ensured, and tools to counter online harassment should be further developed.

Establishing regular dialogue between public authorities and civil society remains a key task, helping to overcome alienation and mistrust. International support should remain an important element of protection. Public visibility, solidarity and collective action should continue to form the foundation of strategies to protect activists, as they deliver the most tangible results in countering threats.



The Human Rights Centre ZMINA is a Ukrainian human rights organisation working in the areas of civil society protection, combating discrimination, prevention of torture and ill-treatment, support for human rights defenders and civil society activists, as well as documentation of international crimes and the protection of the rights of victims of the Russian-Ukrainian war.