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Appeal to the International Community

We, the representatives of public associations, organizations, professional and creative unions, volunteers, and active members of the Ukrainian civil society, appeal to the international community as follows.

In 2019, after five-year government of Poroshenko regime, “The Servant of the People” party (Sluha Narodu) in its electoral program focused on the need to clear the country from corruption, looting, corrupt officials and hypocrites, undertaking the mission to serve Ukraine and its voters, to embody the course of the President of Ukraine V. Zelensky, and to implement the fundamental changes that would help Ukraine to be finally free, independent and successful country.

But six months have passed, and **instead of laws adoption** required for implementation of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU and expansion of cooperation with the European Union and NATO, **conduction** of de-monopolization of key industries, **release** of business from tyranny of officials and raiders, **conduction** of audits of state functions and reduction of number of authorities, **protection** of human rights and fundamental freedoms, etc., civil society is surprised with increasing frequency by the bills adopted by “The Servants of the People” that actually **duplicate the standards and provisions of the criminal laws adopted by Yanukovych against which Maidan rose in 2014**.

Criticism, arising out by all social groups on the actions and omission to act by the government, the deepening of economic, political, legal and humanitarian crisis, which has acquired threatening scales for the state existence and normal life of the society, is growing every day. However, instead of taking decisions by officials to remedy the situation, they submit the bills, aimed at trying to suppress any criticism, introducing censorship in Ukraine, violating fundamental human rights and freedoms, and actually departing from Ukraine's democratic values.

Currently, a lot of bills concerning information space regulation with provisions on news requirements and standards, developed by the Order of the President V. Zelensky, and which, for various reasons, have become scandalous, provoked public and media outrage, etc., are discussed in the state.

These are media bills № 2693 dd. 27.12.2019 from the subjects of legislative initiative, Deputies **O. Tkachenko, M. Poturaiev**, its actual copy, alternative one - № 2693-1 dd. 15.01.2020 from the Deputies **M. Kniazhytskyi, V. Viatrovyh**, and the bill on so-called “**disinformation**”, submitted on January 17, 2020 by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports **V. Borodianskyi** and his First Deputy **A. Maksymchuk**, who by their field of expertise have nothing to do with media, ignoring negative opinion issued by the Scientific and Expert Department of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

The projects provide for a strict censorship by the state and high penalties for vague and inaccurately worded “violations”. This censorship opens a wide field for subjective interpretation of

activities of any Ukrainian media and creates the tools for pressure on active public society.

Authorities are scared of independent and free media, that is, by the way, applicable to all representatives of TV, radio, TV and radio suppliers, service and digital services providers, print and online media, bloggers, ordinary citizens exchanging their opinions in social networks. The bills actually “close mouths” of the Ukrainian journalists and citizens and propose to “educate” them and punish by severe Soviet Union methods, actually eliminating independent journalism and posing threat to public society. Moreover, the regulatory authorities demand access to the personal data of media services users without court order, which is an unjustifiable and illegal interference in the private life of the citizens.

At the same time, we draw attention to impossibility of protecting violated rights and freedoms in the likely reformed judicial system. The courts, not staffed with the relevant number of judges (judicial overload), and high court fees result in the violation of reasonable terms for the case hearing and quality of the orders made

It is also worth noting two Supreme courts – the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court of Ukraine. In addition, there is an obvious problem with the enforcement of orders issued by the courts, in which the state is a defendant, actual disregard of court orders issued by the European Court of Human Rights.

Imposing a dependence on being a member of the Association of Journalists on the right to exercise journalism (the right to practice a profession), contradicts both the Constitution of Ukraine and international law.

Therefore, the bills do not comply with the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, Association Agreement and European choice of Ukraine, repeat similar rules of the “dictatorial law” dd. January 16, 2014, adopted by the criminal authorities and canceled due to the Revolution of Dignity, impose practices originated from the aggressor state - Russia, North Korea, etc., concerning total control over the citizens and blocking (restricting access) to information (information resources) without court decisions, and actually grant the powers and authorities to the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting similar to the russian “Roskomnadzor”.

We are convinced that powerful censorship tools in the Ukrainian legislation during hybrid aggression by Russia pose threat to young democracy and may result in return to the totalitarianism.

Our appeals, prepared on the basis of article 5 of the Constitution of Ukraine, to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with the requirement to stop imposing practices and “experience” of totalitarian countries and ensure implementation and protection of the Constitutional rights and freedoms of the citizens in the information sphere from total control and absurd innovations concerning access restriction to information by blocking it without court orders, had no results. Our voice in defense of the Constitutional rights and freedoms of the citizens is too low for the current government.

Therefore, we appeal to the representatives of the foreign states and international organizations to consider position of the public and take all possible measures to prevent Ukraine from returning to the totalitarianism, block any mechanisms aimed at returning to the entrenched soviet regime, stop its anti-national decisions and actions aimed at the Constitutional rights and freedoms cancellation.

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