**Brussels, 03.03.2022**

**The Media Working Group in the European Parliament**

We, the undersigned members of the Media Working Group in the European Parliament join the calls of the Council of Europe platform partners in demanding the protection of journalists’ safety in Ukraine. Furthermore, we call on the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the representatives of Member State national authorities to provide immediate support to journalists reporting from the areas affected by the illegal invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and subsequent documented war crimes.

Images of journalists reporting from shelters, anchors delivering news from underground locations or reporters close to locations under shelling and heavy bombardment are now part of everyday life. Therefore, we call on EU and Member States authorities to urgently mobilise and provide journalists on the ground with necessary protective equipment such as helmets, bulletproof vests, ballistic protection plates or ballistic glasses. Moreover, we ask for an equal mobilisation to supply medical aid in the form of antibiotics, anti-inflammatory pills, disinfectants, tactical first aid kits, CAT tourniquets, bandages or syringes. Finally, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to represent a major threat, we ask for additional protective sanitary equipment to be deployed.

We strongly condemn the threats to the lives and safety of Ukrainian and foreign journalists reporting from the war area. While the free flow of independent fact-based information and accurate reporting is essential for safeguarding the right to information, under the particularities of the hybrid warfare, ensuring access to this information becomes a vital security and defence component.

We utterly condemn yesterday’s attack of the Russian Federation on the Kiev TV tower, killing and injuring several civilians. We recall here the provisions of the 2015 UN Security Council Resolution 2222, affirming that states must respect and protect journalists as civilians, while also stating that media equipment and installations constitute civilian objects. Such infrastructure cannot be considered as legitimate military targets and shall not be the object of attacks or reprisals. The same resolution requires states to respect the professional independence and rights of journalists.

We strongly denounce the actions of the Russian media regulator, Roskomnadzor, which has become over time the Kremlin’s “Ministry of Truth” and which continues to threaten independent media, block their websites and restrict their coverage of events, recently banning the words “war”, “attack” and “invasion” from being used in reporting about the situation in Ukraine. Roskomnadzor has not limited its actions to Russia, requesting the Moldovan newspaper Ziarul de Garda, to delete articles about the Russian invasion in Ukraine and calling on internet providers to block their website.

We express our full support for all independent journalists in this region and firmly stand together with those of Dozhd TV internet TV station and Ekho Moskvy radio station, some of the last independent Russian media outlets, now blocked by the Kremlin. Latest developments reveal that the liberal radio station Ekho Moskvy has been dissolved by its board, as confirmed by editor Alexei Venediktov. Moreover, Tikhon Dzyadko, the chief editor of Dozhd TV has announced that he and several of his colleagues have left Russia indefinitely amid a harsh crackdown on the few remaining liberal media that the Kremlin had previously tolerated.

The physical safety of journalists delivering independent reporting from the ground must be protected immediately. Journalists and media professionals are risking their lives in order to keep the civilian population safe and the international community up to date with the latest developments on the ground.

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