Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 13881
24 September 2015

President Poroshenko continues to violate journalists' rights and to restrict freedom of the media in Ukraine

Written question No. 693 to the Committee of Ministers
by Mr Alexey PUSHKOV, Russian Federation, Members not belonging to a Political Group

On 16 September 2015, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko introduced sanctions against hundreds of individuals and legal entities, including 42 journalists from the Russian Federation (14), Latvia (4), Moldova (4), Poland (3), Estonia (2), Hungary (2), "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (2), Slovakia (2), Spain (2), Germany, Switzerland, Bulgaria. Among them were journalists of the BBC, El Pais, Die Zeit, RT, TASS, RIA Novosti, NTV Television Company, Channel One, RUSSIA-24 new channel, etc. All the above individuals are banned from entering Ukraine.

After the pressure from European organisations (OSCE, European Union), European politicians and the media (the BBC in particular) as well as from the US State Department and the President of the UN Correspondents Association, Mr Poroshenko selectively shortened the list striking off the names of only 6 journalists from British (the BBC), German and Spanish media outlets, stressing that "freedom of the press is of absolute value" to him.

In particular:

– the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media said that journalists should be excluded from the sanctions list as "the authorities should facilitate the work of journalists and abstain from creating administrative obstacles to the entry; introducing over-board restrictions that curb free movement of journalists is not the way to ensure security".

– the European Commission has also expressed discontent with Mr. Poroshenko's move and expressed concern with the inclusion of journalists in the Ukrainian sanctions list *"because it is not European in spirit'.*

– the President of the UN Correspondents Association describing Kiev's decision to blacklist media representatives noted as well that journalists do not pose any threat to anything. In particular, he noted that *"a journalist is there to observe and to report in the most honest way he can and... this is a value for the country he is operating and from the country he is reporting. So he cannot be* a *threat to anybody''.*

Nevertheless, 36 journalists from ten countries still remain under the ban.

Such actions of the Ukrainian authorities run counter to the international law and international commitments of Ukraine, including their commitments as a Council of Europe member State, in particular as envisaged by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, by paragraph 14 of Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 428 (1970) on "Declaration on mass communication media and Human Rights"; by paragraph 7ii of Resolution 2 Rethinking the regulatory framework for the media" of the 5th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy (Thessaloniki, 11-12 December 1997) and other relevant Council of Europe documents.

Mr. Pushkov,

To ask the Committee of Ministers,

Regarding the above actions by the Ukrainian President as impeding journalists' activities, to assess the Ukrainian sanctions with regard to their correspondence to the principles of freedom of the media.