

## Peaceful Victory Day actions, attacks on journalists, and the trial of a Ukrainian director

Political and civil rights in Ukraine. May 6-12, 2019

### FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATIONS AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLIES



On May 9th memorable events and peaceful rallies dedicated to Victory Day took place in Kiev, Zaporozhye, Odessa, Dnepr, Zhytomyr, and Kharkov. The police reported 700,000 participants, according to the organizers there were several times more. The human rights activists of "Uspishna Varta" did not register any gross violations and mass clashes, however a number of incidents occurred in different cities.

Thus, counter-rallies that were mostly **provocative and offensive** were held along with the celebration of Victory

Day in some cities of Ukraine. Representatives of right-wing organisations tried to entice participants of peaceful actions into a conflict in Kiev and Zaporozhye, but the police managed to prevent clashes between the participants. In *Kharkov*, activists of radical groups sprayed tear gas at the participants of a peaceful rally. In *Dnepr* there was a skirmish between the participants of a peaceful rally and its opponents. Unknown persons tried to paint the column with red paint. On the morning of May 9th unknown persons stoned a bus near Krivoy Rog that was supposed to transport people to the city to celebrate Victory Day. In *Lvov*, at the Field of Mars, about 20 young people threw eggs at the granite order of the Great Patriotic War that depicts communist symbols - the hammer and sickle. The provocation took place along with shouting: "On the trees, instead of leaves, Communists will hang". The police drew up an administrative protocol for one of the offenders.

The police reported that on May 9th they detained 45 people for **wearing symbols prohibited in Ukraine** ("St. George's ribbon", red flags, symbols of the hammer and sickle). Thus, in Kiev during a peaceful action police officers encircled an elderly woman wearing a red star on her cap and forcefully took her away from the action. The human rights activist Elena Berezhnaya was also detained and an administrative protocol was drawn up. At the same time, in Zaporozhye, during the course of a counter-action, representatives of right-wing radical groups - including "C14" - unfurled a flag with the image of the symbols of the Reich, which violates article 436-1 of the Criminal Code – the dissemination of Nazi symbols. Also, despite the prohibitions, some of them had swastika elements on their clothes, and their faces were hidden.



More details about how the peaceful Victory Day actions on May 9th took place in Ukraine can be found in the review of "Uspishna Varta" human rights defenders.

## FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND OPINIONS



Human rights activists continue to record **new cases of physical aggression and hate speech against journalists**. Thus, on the night of May 12th in Kiev unidentified persons burned the car of the chief editor of the "TVi" channel, Vladimir Egorov. The journalist linked this incident with his professional activities.

Meanwhile, the International (IFJ) and European (EFJ) Federations of Journalists condemned the attack on the journalist Vadim Komarov on May 4th in Cherkassy and called on the Ukrainian authorities to provide a safe working environment for journalists. Earlier the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine reported that since the beginning of 2019 in Ukraine there were 23 incidents of physical aggression against journalists.

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On May 7th the police conducted **searches at the home of Valery Ivanov, the president of the Academy of Ukrainian Press**. The court also arrested Ivanov's accounts, which receive funds from foreign donors. Ivanov [denies](#) all accusations against him and links the investigative actions with an attempt to put pressure on his son.

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On May 6th, during a regular hearing on the **case of the murder of the journalist and publicist Oles Buzina** in the Shevchenkovsky Court of Kiev, the judge Evgeny Sidorov read a statement about his self-withdrawal. Now a new composition of the court vis-a-vis this case has to be formed. According to the lawyer of the mother of the murdered journalist, all phases of these proceedings at the hearing stage are thus subject to "nullification". Recall that Oles Buzina was shot in the yard of his house in Kiev on April 16th 2016. Representatives of the "C14" group who are accused of the murder were released from custody under a personal commitment. The trial of the case has been delayed for more than 3 years, the killers of Oles Buzina remain at large.

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On May 8th the SBU [reported](#) about the latest "exposure" of a **group administrator on social networks** who, allegedly on the instructions of curators from the Russian Federation, prepared and distributed anti-Ukrainian informational materials on the Internet. It is reported that the materials published by the detainee were aimed at "radicalising public actions to initiate riots during the events on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance and Reconciliation and Victory Day". Neither the name, surname, nor any other information about the detainee is known.

## FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND WORLD VIEW



Orthodox Church (UOC).

On May 30th the "Honorary Patriarch" of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), Filaret Denisenko, awarded a medal "For sacrifice and love for Ukraine" to the leader of the right-wing group "C14" Evgeny Karas. Recall that the "activists" of this group have repeatedly participated in and organized a number of provocative and illegal actions. In particular, they took an active part in the pogroms of Romani camps, as well as attacks on and captures of churches of the Ukrainian

In the meantime, between May 6th-12th, new cases of the capture of UOC churches by "**activists**" of the **OCU**, including with the support of local authorities, were recorded:

Thus, on May 12th activists of the OCU [appeared](#) on the territory of the Svyato-Pokrovsky church in the village of Mnyshyn Goshchansky district of the Rovno region in order to cut its locks. Clashes started between believers of the UOC and the raiders. According to witnesses, men from the OCU beat and pushed women, and several believers of the UOC suffered serious injuries. The police, who responded to a call, stood aside and did not intervene. The inter-religious conflict in Mnyshyn continues. Conflicts also arose in the villages of [Buderazh](#) and [Buscha](#) in the Rovno region, as well as in the [village of Skobelka](#) in the Volyn region.

## MONITORING OF HUMAN RIGHTS CASES



On May 11th a preparatory hearing on the case of the **Ukrainian director and cameraman Oleg Sagan** was held in the Solomensky Court of Kiev. During the hearing the 63-year-old Oleg Sagan fell ill, but representatives of the SBU and unidentified people in balaclavas obstructed medical assistance and took the director away in an unknown direction. Oleg Sagan was detained in November 2018 and accused of encroaching on the territorial integrity of Ukraine under Part 2 of Article 110 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

According to the SBU, **Oleg Sagan allegedly filmed and posted videos on the YouTube video service containing content that is disrespectful towards the authorities.** Since November 2018 Oleg Sagan has been in the Kherson pre-trial detention center. On May 2nd 2019 an indictment was brought against him, and the case was transferred to the Solomensky court of Kiev. After the hearing the court extended his stay in custody until the court hearing that is to be held on May 14th. More details about the case of Oleg Sagan can be read [here](#).

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On May 7th the Podolsky court of Kiev extended the arrest of **Kirill Vyshinsky**, who is the editor-in-chief of RIA "Novosti Ukraine", until July 22nd. Court proceedings concerning the case of Vyshinsky continue, and the prosecutors have read out the indictment. The journalist is accused of treason under Article 111 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, and since May 15th 2018 he has been in an pre-trial detention center without an alternative.

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On May 7th the preparatory hearing on the **case of Nadezhda Savchenko** and **Vladimir Ruban** in the Brovarky City District Court was postponed. Due to the fact that not all lawyers were able to attend the hearing, the court decided to postpone the hearing until May 31st. Recall that Savchenko and Ruban are suspected of planning a violent coup and seizing state power. On April 16th the court decided to release them from custody in connection with the expiration of the term of restraint.

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On May 7th a hearing on the case of **Yury Kleinos** and **Yaroslav Granitny** was supposed to take place in Rovno. The defendants were not taken to the courtroom, it was decided to postpone proceedings until May 30th. May 10th marked exactly two years since the detention of Yaroslav Granitny and Yury Kleinos for participating in a protest rally outside the walls of the Rovno Regional State Administration. According to the investigators, the actions allegedly aimed to "create the Rovno People's Republic". The defendants themselves

insist that the picket was directed against the "amber mafia and schemes" aimed at achieving the legalisation of the extraction of amber in Ukraine. Kleinos and Granitny have been in custody for two years without a court sentence. More about their case can be read [here](#).

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On May 8th a hearing on the case of **General Aleksandr Shchegolev** was held in the Shevchenkovsky Court of Kiev. The court continued to familiarise itself with the documents – the access of lawyers to a part of them was limited by the prosecutor's office before the beginning of the hearing. The court also privately studied "secret information" protected by the state (state secret). The motion filed by the lawyers of Aleksandr Shchegolev to change the measure of restraint to house arrest was once again rejected by the court. The next hearing on the case of Shchegolev is scheduled for May 22nd.

Recall that General Schegolev has been in prison for more than 3 years. He is accused of illegally obstructing the holding of peaceful meetings, rallies, and demonstrations and abusing office during the events of February 2014. In total, the case of the General involves 136 victims, and less than a half of them have been questioned in 3 years.

*Remember that you can contact the human rights defenders of "Uspishna Varta":*

*by calling the toll free hotline number: 0 800 20 40 04*

*by sending an email to: [info@uspishna-varta.com](mailto:info@uspishna-varta.com)*

*by sending a message to the social network page: [facebook.com/UspishnaVarta](https://facebook.com/UspishnaVarta)*