Those who are able to actually change the current situation are, unfortunately, most interested in leaving the sleeping dogs lie... disinformation and administrative resources. It is not unlikely that blood will be shed in it, and not only the journalists’ blood, alas. Fear has always been the major driving force of violence. The oncoming parliamentary election is likely to turn into a violent war. This would not just be a war of interests, whereas elsewhere in the world “people are dying by dozens and nobody seems to notice it”. Does it mean that people should start dying by thousands in Ukraine for the preventing them or punishing the perpetrators. The same authorities that keep declaring the freedom of speech while cynically curtailing this freedom.

The terrible truth of journalism in Ukraine today is that journalists’ professional activities can cause their deaths. The assassination of our colleague from Slaviansk Ihor Aleksandrov, the second such case over the last year, confirms the general ominous rule: it is mortally dangerous for a political journalist to be unbiased, to say nothing of being oppositional. Not only has the tragedy in Donbass been another manifestation of the real situation with the freedom of speech in Ukraine; but also more evidence of the numerical and the weight of the “media war”. The “author” of this crimes against the mass media representatives but are incapable of preventing them or punishing the perpetrators. The same authorities that keep declaring the freedom of speech while cynically curtailing this freedom.

One can hardly think of an adequate way to evaluate the statement made by the country’s highest official to the effect that the Slaviansk events “are paid too much attention” whereas elsewhere in the world “people are dying by dozens and nobody seems to notice it”. Does it mean that people should start dying by thousands in Ukraine for

The masters of the country are scared lest they should lose their power; because of their fear the people writing about the power are forced to live in a constant fear of their lives. We all live on the Cape of Fear. At this stage it is hard to say who is more scared.

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Besides the official police version, there is another one claiming that Ihor Aleksandrov’s filed his claim to the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg, which allegedly mentions the refusal of an MP Oleksiy Shekhovtsov. This claim is considered to have triggered the whole campaign against the journalist. Having offered our condolences and apologies, we tried to clarify the details in our conversation with the reporter's widow Liudmyla Aleksandrova...

— I don’t know what happened with this claim. As far as I can remember, his last appeal was to the Prosecutor General. Perhaps, Ihor Oleksandrovych’s lawyer Glotov would be better informed about the claim. I think he stopped going directly to Strasbourg...
one way that there is authority in the country ready to protect its citizens. The last to survive will learn everything. The fact is, everyone thinks he will be the last even for a posthumous rehabilitation. Most people in this land have lost their faith in justice, and there is no use trying to appeal to the conscience, good will or happen to them in the next minute. We have not noticed our state's transformation into the land where evil always defeats good, and the latter has no chance whereas others will feel suspicious as to the obvious coincidence between Yevhen Marchuk's people being involved in establishing the "Ukrainian Pravda" newspaper where Georgiy Dedushko was used to work, on the one hand, and Ihor Aleksandrov's active participation in running Yevhen Kyrylovych's election headquarters, on the other. Some people will tend to look for the Slavonskaya reporter's murders among the Donetskl clan's rivals, while others will remain convinced that it was the clan itself who wiped off their old scores with the "heretic".

Mistrust and surmise of this kind have never done a good service to either the society at large or its individual members. However, it is not the most pressing problem of today. The real problem is that Ukrainians have been robbed not only of their confidence of tomorrow, but of their awareness of what is going to happen to them in the next minute. We have not noticed our state's transformation into the land where evil always defeats good, and the latter has no chance of withstanding the former. The authors, however, are still alive. Today, however, we have decided to ask several people, well reputed in the world of media, one and the same question: "What is to be done to make journalists' life and work in Ukraine safe?" Here are their answers.

Oleksandr Tkachenko, General Producer of the "New Channel":
- I think the authorities should declare very distinctly that they stand for:
  a) the freedom of expression in this country;
  b) recognizing journalists' professional activities, no matter whether the authorities like them or not, beneficial for the society;
  c) the mass media serving not as a political instrument but as market-driven and market-targeted organizations.

Should the authorities manage to communicate this message unambiguously to the journalist community, to all entrepreneurs, to the executive management of all levels and regions; should the authorities stop reacting inadequately to the reporters' criticism, irrespective of its essence, I believe, it will help avoid further tragedies.

Of course, the murderers should be caught and punished, but I doubt that a single successful investigation would be capable of changing the overall situation. There should be a specially targeted program in place. The authorities' political credos should be changed, the social culture should be changed. Only then will the journalists feel safe, will attempts on their lives cease and will no one ever conceive the plans of doing so.

Tetiana Korobova, observer of the "Grani Plus" (Facets Plus) newspaper:
- One can qualify everything going on in this country as a campaign of terror against journalists. Perhaps, it is high time for the journalists themselves to stop thinking that their turn will never come. Unfortunately, this is what most of them are sure of. But even this is not what frightens me most of all. What really does, is the change in my own mentality. I have never believed that "the West will help us", I have always been firmly convinced of the opposite. Yet now I think that if our society has swallowed the Gogoladze case, the Major Melnychenko tapes that logically supplemented it, if it has not been awakened by these scandals, then we are not just sleeping, we have been plunged in a deep sleep. I believe that most of the civilized world around us, if they realize this danger - not even to us, to themselves, in the first place, - especially in the context of their own manifest about Ukraine's geopolitical role and value, should stop calling on the Ukrainian authorities that tolerate the situation where journalists are being killed in their dozens, then conduct transparent investigations of these authorities' own wrong-doings or connivance and inaction, and start boycotting them. I see no other way out, since unless something happens to shake our people out of its eternal sleep, the journalists, politicians, businessmen and lawyers alike will be killed on a mass scale. We have reached the point we have been gradually sliding to. It is logical and explainable from this country's historical perspective.

Mykola Veresen', journalist, author of the "Taboo" program:
- I think we need to change the country to make the journalists' safety a reality. When Ukraine has changed, when at least some elements of the civil society have emerged, when we have ceased to be a society existing under the state power's dictatorship, then the situation will become different anyway. The society should not be ruled by the President in the first turn and by the government and Parliament in the second. It should learn to undertake responsibility for its own life and make the state accountable to it. We cannot give each journalist a gun or provide them with bodyguards. Our security is the matter of a system, not of physical protection. Moreover, this isn't even the matter of relations between a certain journalist and a specific oligarch or governor, though they are important, of course. As soon as the system is replaced, the journalists will not have to ask another one what should be done to ensure their safety. We can start changing the system right now, with a fair and transparent parliamentary election. We can make lots of other concrete steps: for instance try to detect at least some of the crimes against journalists, which has not been done so far. Sometimes you cannot help asking yourself: why is it so, that whenever a high-ranking official announces that he is taking an investigation under his personal control, the case is sure to be never solved? All previous cases taken under personal control left a lot to be desired in the end. Then the others may want to think twice before deciding to kill somebody or to hurt a journalist. Perhaps potential killers will start being afraid of the punishment, for now they are not. They are sure nobody will be found and brought to court.

Viacheslav Pykhovsky, journalist, author of the "Epicenter" program:
- For journalists to feel safe, it is essential that the country's law enforcement should work effectively. The existing law enforcement system, as far as I can judge, has preserved its repressive functions, secret agents' network, technical facilities and financial capacities. No one has been held personally responsible for the lack of progress in the high-profile case investigations. For the law enforcement to operate effectively, the country's high-ranking officials should adopt the practice of making the police chiefs' careers dependent on the success of the cases they handle. In other words, the police chiefs and their deputies, either on journalists' lives or on their health, should be held responsible. The Minister of Interior, the chief of a local division - should be fully aware that their failure to detect a crime against journalists is going to have very grave consequences for their chances of promotion or their current positions. However, for the country's political leaders to adopt the above practice, they should have the reputation of statesmen who view the safeguarding of the human rights as their top priority. Provided this multi-layer interdependent combination is established in the country, the journalists will never be hampered in fulfilling their professional duties, neither will they jeopardize their lives in doing so. I think that the present situation of the authorities' extreme hostility towards journalists should be remedied as soon as possible.

Anatoly Hrytsenko, President of the Oleksandr Razumkov Center:
- Unfortunately, journalists are killed from time to time, not only in Ukraine, but in developed democratic countries as well. But, unlike in Ukraine, in those countries the citizens are sure that the authorities, the law enforcement and the journalist community themselves do their best to find the perpetrators and the organizers of the felony. The latter will be caught and punished most severely. In our country, however, not a single journalist's murderer has been found so far, let alone the organizers of these crimes. Other high-profile cases - murders of the People's Deputies, regional leaders, bankers and businessmen - have not been properly detected, either, even though the investigation in these cases has been publicly announced to be the state officials' top priority, to be taken under their personal control (I would not even mention here thousands of laymen whose murders are routinely denied by the law enforcement). As we can see the problem is of a systemic character. It does not solely result from the "Ukrainian journalists' curiosity".
Murders are usually dropped by the law enforcement). As we can see, the problem is of a systemic character, it does not allow easy solutions. The Ukrainian journalists' security can be improved by addressing the problem in the following four ways.

First, the authorities should realize their true place in a democratic society, which means that they have to (a) understand that openness, transparency and a timely identification by the journalists is useful for the society in general and for the authorities, in particular (even if to ensure this openness the authorities will have to get rid of their most offensive and unscrupulous representatives); (b) prevent and nip in the bud the facts of corruption and serious economic misdemeanors, since these are the two major zones for trespassing which the journalists are usually killed.

Second, the journalists should realize that any of them could become a victim at any time. They should realize that they ought not to trigger their internal self-censorship mechanisms and avoid writing about dangerous things, but to get united into one journalist community based on firm professional principles and corporate solidarity.

Third, Article 112 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine should be amended. It provides for a severe punishment (10-12- year or life imprisonment) for an attempt on the life of statesmen and public figures (even for the failed attempt that caused no death!). Equally harsh punishment should be envisaged in the Code for attempts on journalists' lives linked with their professional activities.

And finally, we should not further procrastinate with the drastic reform of the law enforcement. Neither laymen, nor informed reporters believe in its ability to protect the human rights and lives. The outcomes of the latest opinion poll carried out by the Razumkov Center are appalling: 65% of respondents are convinced that the law enforcement in Ukraine is actively involved in political struggle. Unless very decisive steps are taken to reverse the situation, the murders will continue. God alone, apart from the murder organizers, knows who (a journalist, an MP, a minister or a banker) will be killed and why.

Maryna Ostapenko, Press Secretary to the Security Service of Ukraine: [Aleksandrov]

- In case of any emergency caused by threats to the lives of journalists or their family members because of the reporters' professional activities, the Security Service of Ukraine is urged the citizens to report these cases (contact telephone number is 212-70-22). This is a round-the-clock service. You may rest assured that every phone call will be duly responded to by either the Security Service or the Prosecutor General's Office or else by the Ministry of Interior depending on their respective competencies.

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