



КОНГРЕС УКРАЇНЦІВ КАНАДИ

UKRAINIAN CANADIAN CONGRESS

CONGRÈS DES UKRAINIEN-CANADIENS

January 18, 2014

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**UKRAINE VICTIM OF NEW REPRESSIVE LAWS - say Ukrainian Canadians  
Call for sanctions and visa restrictions to be applied**

OTTAWA - The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) condemns the actions of Ukraine's President Victor Yanukovych, who signed a series of laws that curb freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, the right to legal due process and freedom of association; severely curtailing civil liberties and political rights in Ukraine.

The laws implemented are intended to shut down the Euromaidan protests, which have underscored the determination of the Ukrainian people to live in a free, just and democratic society. Rather than engaging in constructive dialogue with its citizens, the government is silencing these protests through repression, censorship, and intimidation.

The UCC calls for Canada, together with its U.S. and European allies to immediately implement visa restrictions and individual financial sanctions against those responsible for perpetrating the violations of human rights and freedoms in Ukraine.

"Upon taking office, Ukraine's President swore an oath to uphold the Constitution and protect the rights and freedoms of the Ukrainian people. Today, by signing these laws, the President has de facto turned Ukraine into a police state," said Paul Grod, President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. "These laws were passed in violation of Ukraine's Constitution and with egregious contraventions of Parliamentary procedures. President Yanukovych has signaled his approval for these authoritarian methods, and for the content and substance of these laws."

The UCC expresses its complete solidarity with the people of Ukraine in their peaceful struggle to build a free and democratic nation. UCC President explains the situation in Ukraine in an interview on CTV National News as new laws are passed against protestors

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=277100>.

"We fear that Ukrainians will face violent repression, as these draconian laws take effect immediately", said Grod. "We are appalled that Ukraine's Parliamentary Chairman Volodymyr Rybak would choreograph this illegitimate vote and allow for violence against opposition deputies to take place in the Parliament without censure."

The signing of the so-called "Dictatorship Laws" have transformed the country overnight into a police state that many experts have compared to Russia, Belarus and North Korea. Equally concern is the fact that on the same day the "dictatorship laws" were signed by the President, he fired the Commander of the Armed Forces, the Head of the Presidential Administration, and appointed over 70 new judges throughout Ukraine in an effort to consolidate control over the military and judiciary in addition to the legislative branch and the executive.

Global reaction to the legislation has been swift and harsh. Amnesty International stated: "in passing this law the government is halting any progress Ukraine has made over the past twenty years towards full compliance with its international human rights obligations."

(<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/ukraine-s-new-charter-oppression-2014-01-17>).

The UCC wishes to thank the Government of Canada and Canada's Parliamentarians for their continued and unwavering support for the people of Ukraine. Canada's Foreign Minister, the Honourable John Baird, who in December visited to protesters in Ukraine, stated yesterday, "Canada strongly supports the Ukrainian people, who have spoken out courageously in support of a free and democratic Ukraine. Canada is ready and prepared to consider all options to make clear on whose side we stand."

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### **Backgrounder on Ukrainian Laws signed by President Yanukovich**

Among other provisions, the new laws provide for the following amendments to Ukrainian legislation:

- State may take the decision to ban Internet access;
- Criminalization for libel targeting media for criticizing government officials, up to two years in jail;
- Blocking government buildings, up to five years in jail;
- Up to 15 days arrest for unauthorized installation of tents, stages and sound equipment;
- Up to 10 days arrest for participation in peaceful gatherings wearing a mask, helmet or other means of covering one's face;

- Groups of more than 5 cars driving together require permission from the Ministry of Interior Affairs, otherwise, the drivers face loss of license and vehicle for up to two years;
- A broad definition of “extremist activities” adopted disallows NGOs and churches from engaging in support of civil protests.
- Allowing trial and sentencing in absentia of individuals, including prison terms, in cases where the person refuses to appear in court and when criminal proceedings in absence of such person are pronounced possible;
- Blocking access to residential buildings, up to six years in jail
- Gathering and disseminating information about Berkut (Ukraine's special security force), judges or their families, up to 2 years in jail;
- MPs may be stripped of immunity by a simple majority vote in Ukraine's Parliament (the Verkhovna Rada) thereby allowing initiation of criminal proceedings, detention or arrest with such cases no longer requiring prior review by the relevant Parliamentary Committee;
- Amnesty from prosecution previously adopted by the Verkhovna Rada and granted to peaceful protestors who participated in protests since November 21, 2013 has now been extended to also exempt from punishment those who committed crimes against protestors, including Berkut and other law enforcement officials;
- NGOs that accept foreign funds must include in their title the term “civic organizations that fulfills the functions of a foreign agent” and face high scrutiny, additional tax and regulatory measures.