ANNEX II

HOTEL
TARGETED BY RUSSIA

Last Check-In:
The Russian Strikes on Ukrainian
Hotels Silencing the Press

Russia's Crackdown on Media and
Journalists in Ukraine

TRUTH HOUNDS

RSF REPORTERS
WITHOUT BORDERS

a. Occupied Ukrainian Territories Turned into Informational Black Holes with Access Only to Kremlin Narratives

Since the start of Russia's war against Ukraine in 2014, the Russian authorities and their proxies have systematically suppressed media freedom and exerted pressure on independent journalists working in the occupied regions of Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk. Local media outlets were shut down, independent local journalists were arrested, and Kremlin-affiliated media organisations were established. Under occupation, these Ukrainian regions have become laboratories for the Kremlin's repression of independent journalism. In Crimea, by 2015, 88% of the Ukrainian media registered on the peninsula before the 2014 occupation had ceased operations.[1] In the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the occupying authorities took control of local Ukrainian media outlets to transform them into tools of disinformation,[2] while simultaneously arresting local journalists who refused to work with them.

As Russia started its full-scale invasion in February 2022 and occupied new Ukrainian territories, it systematically extended its pre-existing methods of shutting down and intimidating journalists in the newly occupied areas. This resulted in widespread persecution of media professionals, the forced closure of independent media outlets and seizures of editorial offices, and the parallel development of Kremlin-aligned media networks and the opening of 'training schools' to recruit new media professionals and train them to work in the pro-Russian media system.[3]

According to the Ukrainian NGO the Institute of Mass Information (IMI), during the first two years of the full-scale invasion, Russian occupation directly affected at least 300 editorial offices across three Ukrainian oblasts—Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Luhansk—the vast majority of which were either shut down or seized.[4]

By mid-2024, a unified pro-Russian media ecosystem had formed in the occupied territories, coordinated by local occupying officials linked to the Kremlin.[5] Russian

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[1] RSF (2024). *Ten years of Russian occupation in Crimea: a decade of repression of local independent journalism.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/ten-years-russian-occupation-crimea-decade-repression-local-independent-journalism (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[2] RSF (2024). *Ten years of war in Donetsk and Luhansk: the disappearance of independent journalism and the proliferation of Russian propaganda media.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/ten-years-war-donetsk-and-luhansk-disappearance-independent-journalism-and-prolifera-tion-russian (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[3] RSF (2023). *Report on The Malkevich propaganda machine. The wagner-allied network in Ukraine.* URL: https://rsf.org/sites/de-fault/files/medias/file/2023/04/The%20Malkevitch%20Propaganda%20Machine_EN.pdf (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[4] Vygovska, N. (2024). *How invading Russian forces destroyed media in Ukraine's occupied territories and what they built instead.* URL: https://imi.org.ua/en/monitorings/how-invading-russian-forces-destroyed-media-in-ukraine-s-occupied-territories-and-what-they-built-i60006 (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[5] Detektor media, Centre for Information Resilience (2024). *Media-landshaft na tymchasovo okupovanykh terytoriiakh Ukrainy.* URL: https://detector.media/doc/images/news/archive/2021/227543/ua-media-mapping-2 (accessed: 28.04.2025).

authorities have, for instance, offered a free 'Russian World' satellite TV package in occupied territories since December 2022.[6] Prior to Putin's re-election in 2024, occupied territories were also inundated with special editions of Komsomolskaya Pravda,[7] with circulation reaching 750,000 copies per week in Zaporizhzhia Oblast.[8] At the same time, Russian authorities have created new media outlets specifically for the occupied territories, such as the Melitopol-headquartered Za!Media, which was launched for the occupied Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and the online New.Media, which has a target audience of Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories.[9]

b. Russian Forces Target Media and Journalists Covering the Invasion

The latest RSF report, published for the third anniversary of the Russian full-scale invasion on 24 February 2025 using information provided by Ukrainian organisations such as IMI, reveals that nearly 150 Ukrainian and foreign journalists have been subjected to Russian attacks while carrying out their professional duties over the past three years.[10]

[6] BBC Monitoring (2023). *Analysis: Media in Newly-Occupied Territories in Ukraine's Donbas*. URL: https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c2044vzq.
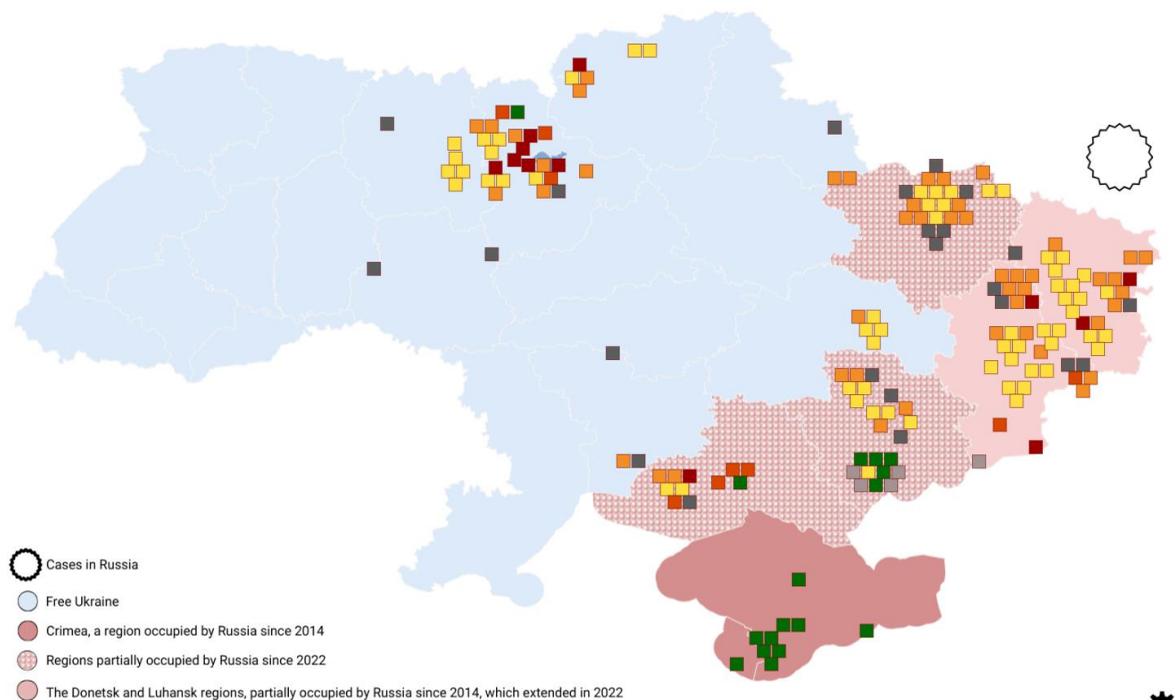[7] Komsomolskaya Pravda is a Russian state-controlled newspaper. As is explored in greater detail in *Annex IV*, by state-controlled, we refer to channels that adhere to the same 'general line' as state-owned channels but are not directly owned by the government, instead being controlled by allied companies and/or oligarchs.
[8] Vyhovksa, N., interviewed in Golovina, O., (2024). *Ukraine's Information Vacuum.* Institute for War and Peace Reporting, URL: https://iwpr.net/global-voices/ukraines-information-vacuum.
[9] Virlych, Y., interviewed in *Ibid*.
[10] RSF (2025). *Three years into Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, nearly 150 journalists attacked.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/three-years-russian-full-scale-invasion-ukraine-nearly-150-journalists-attacked?fbclid=IwY2xjawIhaFxleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABH-dOK8KLv8fvVD9y0znzrgZXqRU9tZVSCRAGVb4IUAL35aYBvgb20NJLs4Q_aem_gP1cvIfQuYJ6uME6CA-OCA (accessed: 28.04.2025).

Type of abuse ■ Killed ■ Injured ■ Attempted killing ■ Taken hostage ■ Disappearance ■ Still detained
■ Strike on a TV tower

○ Cases in Russia
○ Free Ukraine
● Crimea, a region occupied by Russia since 2014
▒ Regions partially occupied by Russia since 2022
● The Donetsk and Luhansk regions, partially occupied by Russia since 2014, which extended in 2022

Source : Reporters Without Borders (RSF) • Data collected since 24/02/2022
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Since 24 February 2022, thousands of Ukrainian and international journalists have been covering Russia's invasion of Ukraine in a highly hazardous security environment, marked by systematic Russian attacks against media professionals and outlets. Thirteen Ukrainian and international journalists have died covering the full-scale invasion, including eight within the first six months.[11] Some were specifically targeted by Russian armed forces, such as Ukrainian photojournalist Maks Levin, killed in the occupied Kyiv Oblast on 13 March 2022,[12] and Lithuanian

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[11] RSF (2022). *Six months of war in Ukraine, eight journalists killed.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/six-months-war-ukraine-eight-journalists-killed (accessed: 28.04.2025).
[12] RSF (2022). *Exclusive RSF investigation into the death of Maks Levin: "Information and evidence collected indicates this Ukrainian journalist was executed."* URL: https://rsf.org/en/exclusive-rsf-investigation-death-maks-levin-information-and-evidence-collected-indicates (accessed: 28.04.2025).

documentary filmmaker Mantas Kvedaravičius, killed in the occupied city of Mariupol, in southeastern Ukraine, on 2 April 2022.[13]

Between 2022 and 2025, at least 47 journalists and media professionals were injured as a result of targeted fire or indiscriminate attacks during their work. The oblasts of Kyiv, Donetsk, Kharkiv, and Luhansk have been among the most dangerous areas for media professionals.[14] In some cases, journalists have fallen victim to double-tap strikes, a tactic involving an initial attack on a target, followed by a second strike shortly thereafter. Such strikes are intentionally timed to hit first responders, including journalists, medical personnel, and rescue teams arriving at the scene.[15] Journalists working in Ukraine also face persistent challenges such as cyberattacks, online threats, and aggressive disinformation campaigns.[16]

Another method of intimidation used by Russian forces is the arrest of local Ukrainian journalists in the occupied territories. Some have been abducted and tortured.[17] Independent Ukrainian media professionals arrested for refusing to collaborate with the occupying authorities are often held in inhuman and degrading conditions, sometimes thousands of kilometres away from Ukraine in order to prevent them from accessing legal assistance or communicating with their relatives.[18]

A particularly tragic example is the case of journalist Victoria Roshchyna, who travelled to Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine in August 2023 to cover the local situation. After more than 13 months in detention in the occupied territories of Ukraine and then in Russia, she was declared dead by Russian authorities on 19 September 2024. An investigation published in March 2025 by RSF and Ukrainian media outlets *Slidstvo.info*, *Graty*, and the public broadcaster *Suspilne* revealed the inhuman conditions of her imprisonment in Taganrog,[19] a city in southwestern Russia, where the local prison has become infamous for the torture of Ukrainian

[13] IMI (2022). *Lithuanian filmmaker Mantas Kvedaravicius was killed while attempting to evacuate civilians from Mariupol – Project.* URL: https://imi.org.ua/en/news/lithuanian-filmmaker-mantas-kvedaravicius-was-killed-while-attempting-to-evacuate-civilians-from-i48362 (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[14] RSF (2025). *Three years into Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, nearly 150 journalists attacked.*

[15] RSF / #Ukraine: while covering the work of ᴜᴀ rescue workers after a ʀᴜ strike on Kharkiv, Victor Pichuhin, a journalist from @nakypiloua, was injured by a 2nd strike [@RSF_inter], (04.04.2024), X (Twitter), URL: https://x.com/RSF_inter/status/1775926756333027639 (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[16] IMI (2022). Russia's war crimes against media in Ukraine (updated continuously). URL: https://imi.org.ua/en/monitorings/russia-s-media-crimes-in-war-against-ukraine-to-be-updated-i44108 (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[17] RSF (2022). *Chilling account of Radio France fixer who was kidnapped and tortured by Russian soldiers in Ukraine.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/chilling-account-radio-france-fixer-who-was-kidnapped-and-tortured-russian-soldiers-ukraine (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[18] RSF (2025). *Three years into the full-scale invasion, RSF brings complaint to ICC for Russia's deportation of Ukrainian journalists.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/three-years-full-scale-invasion-rsf-brings-complaint-icc-russia-s-deportation-ukrainian-journalists (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[19] RSF (2025). *Declared dead by Russia: RSF reveals the brutal reality of Victoria Roshchyna's last months in captivity.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/declared-dead-russia-rsf-reveals-brutal-reality-victoria-roshchyna-s-last-months-captivity (accessed: 28.04.2025).

prisoners.[20] On 24 April 2025, Ukrainian authorities confirmed that Roshchyna's body had been returned to Ukraine in February 2025.[21] According to the Office of the Prosecutor General (OPG) of Ukraine, her body showed *'numerous signs of torture and ill-treatment'*. Due to the condition of the remains and several organs being missing, forensic medical experts were unable to determine the precise cause of her death.[22]

In order to combat impunity for war crimes committed by Russia against journalists and media outlets in Ukraine, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, RSF has filed nine complaints simultaneously with the International Criminal Court and the Ukrainian OPG. RSF has additionally filed two complaints with the French courts concerning the cases of two French journalists, Pierre Zakrzewski (Franco-Irish) and Frédéric Leclerc-Imhoff, who were killed in Ukraine in March and May 2022, respectively.[23]

Media under pressure

Targeted attacks on TV towers and newsroom buildings, leading to broadcasting interruptions, constitute another form of pressure against the media in Ukraine.[24] Repeated attacks on media offices, resulting in partial destruction of premises and equipment, have forced some journalists to relocate to regions further from the frontline. This situation has placed an additional financial burden on Ukrainian newsrooms, which have already been severely affected by a collapse in advertising revenues since 2022 and by rising operational costs due to inflation. According to monitoring conducted by IMI, as of November 2024, 329 Ukrainian media outlets had ceased operations, notably due to financial difficulties.[25]

[20] Vasilyev, P. (2025). *"A hell with all its demons". How a juvenile detention centre in Taganrog was turned into a torture camp for Ukrainian prisoners.* Mediazona, URL: https://en.zona.media/article/2025/01/10/hell (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[21] Diachuk, K. (2025). *Tilo Viktorii Roshchynoi povernuly v Ukrainu.* Institute of Mass Information, URL: https://imi.org.ua/news/tilo-viktoriyi-roshhynoyi-povernuly-v-ukrayinu-i67880 (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[22] *Yurii Bielousov: Ekspertyzy dlia identyfikatsii tila Viktorii Roshchnoi ta vstanovlennia prychyn yii smerti tryvaiut*, (2025). Ofis Heneralnoho prokurora, URL: https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/yurii-bjelousov-ekspertizi-dlya-identifikaciyi-tila-viktoriyi-roshhinoyi-ta-vstanovlennya-pricin-yiyi-smerti-trivayut (accessed: 28.04.2025); An investigation by the *Forbidden Stories* journalism network reported, on 29 April 2025, that Roshchyna's brain, eyes, and part of her trachea had been removed prior to the repatriation of her body; Forbidden Stories (2025). *Russia's 'Ghost Detainees': The Investigation That Cost Viktoriia Roshchyna Her Life*. URL: https://forbiddenstories.org/russia-detainees-investigation-viktoriia-roshchyna/ (accessed: 30.04.2025).
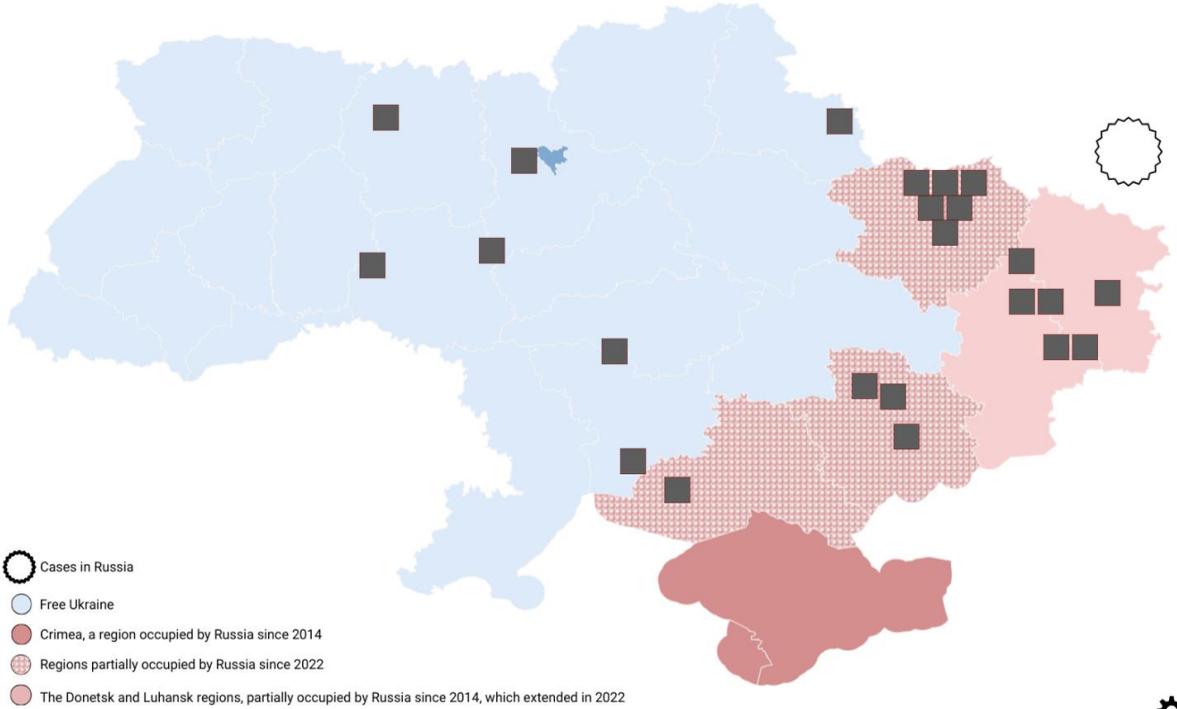
[23] RSF (2025). *Three years into the full-scale invasion, RSF brings complaint to ICC for Russia's deportation of Ukrainian journalists.* URL: https://rsf.org/en/three-years-full-scale-invasion-rsf-brings-complaint-icc-russia-s-deportation-ukrainian-journalists (accessed: 28.04.2025).

[24] RSF (2025). *Three years into Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, nearly 150 journalists attacked*.

[25] IMI (2022). *329 Ukrainian media outlets closed down since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion – IMI study.* URL: https://imi.org.ua/en/monitorings/329-ukrainian-media-outlets-closed-down-since-the-start-of-russia-s-full-scale-invasion-imi-study-i64971 (accessed: 28.04.2025).

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