

**International Secretariat
Europe Desk**
47 rue Vivienne
75002 Paris, France
Email: europe@rsf.org

**HE Viktor Yanukovich
President of the Republic
The Administration of Ukrainian President
11 Bankova Street
01220 Kiev, Ukraine**

Paris, 28th april 2010

Dear President Yanukovich,

Reporters Without Borders, an organisation that defends journalists and press freedom worldwide, has closely followed your recent statements and actions regarding the media in Ukraine and would like to share its surprise and concern with you.

Your government's behaviour towards the media conflicts with what you told the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, namely that reinforcing democracy was an "absolute priority" and that "it is free, independent media that must ensure society's unimpeded access to information." We are puzzled by the difference between your statements and the recent conduct towards the media.

Many journalists were barred from a news conference which you and your Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, gave in Kharkiv on 21 April. Reporters Without Borders is astonished by this, as it violates the very principle of a news conference and is the exact opposite of what you recently said in response to our press release of 16 April. The excluded journalists were forced to watch the news conference from a room set aside for this purpose, and had no chance to ask questions. A news conference is supposed to give an opportunity for questions and answers and an exchange of views. The Kharkiv news conference did not fulfil that role. We wonder what the point of this news conference was if most of the journalists were unable to participate.


Speaking through your deputy chief of staff, Hanna German, a few days before this incident, you announced that you would meet some of the journalists who had been attacked in recent weeks, including those working for the newspaper *Express* in Lviv. There was also talk of creating a special commission of enquiry into the violations against these journalists. These very positive initiatives are unfortunately deprived of meaning if they are followed by such an incident.

We had been reassured by your statements, interpreting them as a sign of determination to reinforce and protect the freedom of the Ukrainian media. We had hoped to see signs of improvement in the situation of journalists, not such a flagrant violation of access to information. Reporters Without Borders would like to think that your undertakings are firm and not just declarations of intent.

We therefore hope that your government will do what is necessary to ensure that journalists are able to work in the manner that is normal in a democratic country, especially as Ukraine is a member of the Council of Europe and, as such, a signatory of the European Convention on Human Rights. Reporters Without Borders would also like to remind you of the importance of media diversity and respect for journalists under the rule of law.

We thank you in advance for the attention you give to this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JF Julliard', written over a horizontal line.

Jean-François Julliard
Secretary-General