

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ukraine-more-journalists-abducted-in-04-06-2014,46399.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Ukraine

Spiralling out of control

More journalists abducted in eastern Ukraine and Crimea

4 June 2014

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by the continuing abduction of journalists in eastern Ukraine and Crimea and urges the Russian and Ukrainian authorities and all militias active in the region to respect and protect journalists regardless of the editorial policies of the media they work for.

Two journalists kidnapped and beaten in Crimea

Two journalists with the Centre for Investigative Reporting in the Crimean capital of Simferopol, reporter **Sergei Mokrushin** and producer **Vladlen Melnikov**, were arrested at around 8 p.m. on 2 June by members of a "self-defence militia," who took them to their headquarters, beat them, and examined the contents of their mobile phones and social network accounts.

Mokrushin received repeated blows to the abdomen and lower back while Melnikov's head was smashed against a pane of glass. The journalists said [two local politicians were present](#) while they were being beaten. The mistreatment only stopped when policemen arrived and [took them away to a police station](#).

The editor of the Centre for Investigative Reporting said the militiamen accused Mokrushin and Melnikov of "hooliganism" without offering any details. The two journalists were released during the night after questioning by the police. According to preliminary diagnoses, Mokrushin has ribcage bruising and possibly broken ribs.

The Centre for Investigative Reporting is one of the few remaining independent news outlets in the region, where several media were closed following the Russian intervention. A member of the Global Investigative Journalism Network, it posts its findings on [its website](#) as well as reporting them as part of a TV programme. It also provides training in investigative journalism.

Two newspaper editors kidnapped in Donetsk

The editors of two regional newspapers – **Aleksandr Brizh** of *Donbas* and **Leonid Lapa** of *Vecherny Donetsk* – were kidnapped in Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine, on 2 June by anti-Kiev militiamen, who stormed into their offices and took them away.

After being released later the same day, they said their separatist abductors had demanded a change in editorial policies. They refused on the grounds that, if they complied, their newspapers would be "breaking Ukrainian law," which penalizes inciting separatism, and [said](#) that, instead, they would stop working into further notice.

Vecherny Donetsk belongs to Rinat Akhmetov, an oligarch who is very influential in the region and who recently announced his support for the government in Kiev against the separatists of the "People's Republic of Donetsk."

Myroslav Rudenko, one of the separatist leaders, said the two editors were abducted in reaction to the publication in recent weeks of special dossiers paid for by Akhmetov, "each page of which denigrated the People's Republic of Donetsk and the people's choice."

Dmytro Litvinenko, a journalist with the Ukrainian TV station *STB*, [reported](#) on 2 June that he was detained at a "People's Republic of Donetsk" checkpoint for 12 hours on 29 May. The rebels examined his equipment and did not like the tone of his SMS messages and his recent reporting on the Donbas Battalion (a pro-Kiev militia).

Litvinenko, his cameraman and their driver were tied up and beaten, and then taken with bags over their heads to the main SBU building in Donetsk, where the head of the separatist unit ordered their release as soon as he learned of their detention.

Citizen-journalist still missing

There is still no word of **Artem Laryonov**, an anti-Kiev citizen-journalist who was reported missing on 10 May. Ever since the start of the unrest in eastern Ukraine in March, he had been filming the activities of the rebels and the effects of the fighting, and posting his videos on [Ustream](#) and [YouTube](#).

According to two friends, [he was seen for the last time](#) at a Ukrainian army checkpoint between the eastern cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. The Ukrainian authorities say they know nothing of his whereabouts.



Reporters Without Borders is very concerned about Laryonov and urges anyone holding him to provide information about his current situation and state of health.

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(Photos: Viktor Drachev / AFP, AFP Photo / Artem Larionov family archive)

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