

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ukraine-raids-on-three-opposition-media-as-09-12-2013,45584.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Ukraine

Criminal methods

Raids on three opposition media as pro-European protests dispersed

9 December 2013

Reporters Without Borders condemns today's raids on three Kiev-based opposition media by unidentified armed individuals dressed like members of Ukraine's Special Forces, and appeals to all sides for calm and respect for journalists.

"The raids on the offices of the newspaper *Vechirni Visti*, the online TV station [INTV](#) and the news website [Cenzor.net](#) were serious violations of freedom of information and Ukraine's constitutional guarantees," Reporters Without Borders said.

"They not only forced the targeted media to suspend operations and trampled on the confidentiality of their sources but also sent a very clear intimidatory signal to all other Ukrainian media.

"We urge the Ukrainian authorities to shed light on these raids, which were carried out in an outrageous and clearly illegal manner. If it is confirmed that the Special Forces were responsible, the competent authorities must explain their actions and be held accountable for these grave violations."

The raids on the three news media took place at around 6 p.m. today, as riot police began to disperse the thousands of participants in the pro-European Union protest movement known as "Euromaidan," who have been demonstrating in the capital for days.

The men who carried out the raids wore helmets and uniforms similar to those used by the "Berkut" Special Forces. Some also wore masks. The three targeted news media, which support Yulia Tymoshenko's opposition Fatherland party, have had record numbers of readers and viewers since the protests began.

"The attackers did not introduce themselves or show any warrant," *Cenzor.net* editor **Yuri Butusov** told Reporters Without Borders by telephone.

"They ordered all our staff to move away from their computers and to not use their mobile phones. Then they confiscated all our equipment. It was a criminal raid designed to eliminate a site that has been carrying information about the 'Euromaidan' movement."

Employees at *INTV* and *Vechirni Visti* gave similar descriptions of the raids on their news organizations although they reported that the attackers referred vaguely to "ongoing investigations." The attackers removed computer equipment and servers which contained these news media's databases and which allowed them to connect to the Internet. Documents were also seized at *Vechirni Visti*.

Shortly before the raids, armed men stormed the Fatherland party's headquarters.

The websites of several leading news media, including the [Kyiv Post](#) English-language daily, were inaccessible during these operations, presumably as a result of denial-of-service attacks.

Reporters Without Borders previously condemned the [beatings that around 50 journalists received](#) when the first major opposition demonstrations in Kiev were dispersed at the end of November and in the first few days of December.

(Photo: Sergei Supinsky / AFP)

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