

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ukraine-news-media-must-be-allowed-to-04-03-2014,45951.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Ukraine

Censorship and obstruction

News media must be allowed to cover Crimea crisis freely

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Reporters Without Borders condemns the censorship and intimidation of many news outlets in Crimea, an autonomous republic in southern Ukraine that has been controlled since 28 February by armed men in battle dress without insignia who are widely believed to be Russian soldiers, although this is denied by Moscow.

While the nature of the on-going developments in the Crimean peninsula continues to be the subject of an information war, many media freedom violations are taking place.

"We remind all parties to the conflict that they have a duty to protect journalists and allow them to work without hindrance," said Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire.

"Those who hold power in Crimea and the armed militias controlling the region must do everything possible to ensure that the local media can resume operating, to restore communications infrastructure and to lift the barriers preventing some journalists from entering the peninsula."

Deloire added: "No matter how complex the current situation, there are no grounds for arbitrarily interrupting the activities of certain media or for physical attacks against journalists."

Censorship and intimidation

The signal of the peninsula's main independent TV station, *Chernomorka*, has been cut since yesterday. Crimea's broadcast transmission centre said it had been forced to suspend the signal "for reasons beyond our control" but provided no further explanation.

The state-owned TV station [GTRK Krym](#), whose headquarters [were overrun](#) by soldiers on 28 February, is now the only local broadcast station available to Crimea's viewers. *Chernomorka* [continues to broadcast](#) by cable, satellite and Internet, but its website has been [brought down by a cyber-attack](#).

The Crimean cabinet yesterday [threatened to suspend](#) local retransmission of Ukrainian TV stations for "creating the illusion of a military intervention." In a press statement, the cabinet said: "If this negative (...) campaign does not stop, the Crimean authorities will be forced to cut off this flood of mendacious and one-sided information in order to shield the population from its influence."

On 1 March, around 30 armed men claiming to represent a pro-Russian militia called the "Crimea Front" [stormed into a press centre](#) in Simferopol, the Crimean capital, which houses the offices of [the Centre for Journalistic Investigations](#). After being blocked inside for several hours, the journalists were finally able to leave taking some of their equipment with them.

"False information is coming out of this building," one of the militiamen said, while urging the journalists to return as soon as possible. The militia also told the journalists that the "Crimea Front" was ready to provide them with enough to live on, and to reach "an agreement on proper coverage of the events."

Telephone operator UkrTelekom has been out of commission since the evening of 28 February, when armed men took control of several transmission centres and sabotaged cables, disconnecting part of the peninsula's fixed telephone line network, Internet access and the TriMob mobile phone network.

Journalists' movements obstructed

Many journalists coming from Kiev have been prevented from entering the peninsula at checkpoints set up at the borders between Crimea and the rest of Ukraine.

Bohdan Kutypov, a reporter for citizen media TV station *Hromadske*, [said](#) he was turned back on 1 March, along with colleagues from *Inter TV*, *CDF* and *France 24*. Armed men guarding the checkpoint threatened to open fire if the journalists tried to take photos of them.

Two other journalists from Kherson, **Igor Trubayev** of *Khersonskie Vesti* and **Oleg Zaychenko** of *Tvoya Pravda*, [were forced to turn back](#) at a checkpoint at Armyansk the same day.

Journalists attacked

Several journalists have been physically attacked in the course of their work in Crimea. Two *ATR* television cameramen were beaten in Simferopol on 1 March while filming militiamen protecting the building used by the regional government's ministers.

Tension between supporters and opponents of the new government has led to attacks on journalists in eastern Ukraine.

A *Radio Svoboda* reporter [was beaten](#) and forced to kneel and kiss a Russian flag during a demonstration in Kharkiv on 1 March. Journalists with *Pershy Dilovy TV* and the *URA- Inform.Donbass* news agency [were beaten](#) while covering a meeting the next day in Donetsk.

(Photos: AFP Photo / Vasiliy Batanov, Genya Savilov / AFP)

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