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**BRIEFER # 4 (16) BY UKRAINIAN HELSINKI HUMAN RIGHTS UNION, USAID HUMAN RIGHTS IN ACTION PROGRAM**

**February 2016**

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## Implemented Activities:

### Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy

#### Advocacy Activities

#### Press conference “February 26<sup>th</sup> criminal case”. How Russia pursues the defenders of Ukraine’s territorial integrity”

**On February 25, 2016**, in order to commemorate the second anniversary of the February 26<sup>th</sup> events in Crimea, the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (hereinafter the UHHRU) and the Human Rights Information Center held a [press conference](#) (in Ukrainian) dedicated to the lawsuit against six Crimean Tatars, the participants of the pro-Ukrainian rally on February 26. And one of them is Akhtem Chyigoz, who has been charged by the Russian authorities with creating mass public disorder. He is threatened with imprisonment for a term from four to ten years.

*“February 26<sup>th</sup> criminal case” is a bright illustration of deliberate human rights violation in Crimea, which is also disguised using “a court” signboard, says Georgii Logvynskyi, a Member of Ukrainian Parliament, one of the press conference participants. The UHHRU’s lawyer Daria Svyrydova draws attention to a dramatic character of the case: “Firstly, the case is very symbolic not only for Ukraine but also for Russia and the occupation local authorities that systematically create an image of the “enemy”, demonize and subdue any resistance and “Ukrainism” on the peninsula”. Secondly, this case has put a lot of questions in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law.”*

The human rights defenders lay emphasis that drawing attention of the international community and foreign mass media to the case is of the same importance as the professional activities of advocates. The public control over the compliance with the international human rights standards and the transparency of events in “February 26<sup>th</sup> criminal case” are significant to stop any politically motivated prosecutions of citizens in the Ukraine-uncontrolled territory.

Video of the event is available [here](#) (in Ukrainian).

#### Scandalous draft law withdrawn

**On February 3, 2016**, after the UHHRU’s and partners’ longstanding advocacy campaign, the scandalous draft law No 3066 on cancellation of bail and mandatory arrest for corrupt officials was withdrawn by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

#### Law on civil registration in the occupied territories was adopted

**On February 4, 2016**, the Law of Ukraine No. 3171 “On amendments to the Civil Procedure Code of Ukraine concerning determination of facts of birth or death in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine” was adopted. The law was drafted by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and initiated by the UHHRU in cooperation with the representatives of human rights organizations. It supplements the Code with the Article 257-1, which determines a simplified court procedure for civil registration of birth and death. However, it does not provide administrative procedure for residents of Crimea, whereon our organization insisted. Therefore, the UHHRU will initiate the adoption of another law that provides for such administrative procedure.



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The UHHRU representative's comment on the Law of Ukraine No. 3171 is available [here](#) (in Ukrainian).

## Monitoring and Analytical Activities

### Monitoring procedure of implementation of the National Strategy in Sphere of Human Rights for the period until 2020 was agreed

On February 3, 2016, [a meeting was held](#) on monitoring of implementation of the National Action Plan for the National Human Rights Strategy endorsed by the [Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine](#) No. 1393 (in Ukrainian).

This event was arranged by the UHHRU together with the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, and thanks to the support of the US Agency for International Development (hereafter – USAID) within the Human Rights in Action Program. Representatives of numerous national and international NGOs were involved.



In such a way, the upcoming and advanced measures of the National Action Plan were analyzed. In particular, the attention was drawn to the scope of work specified for 2016 and there were identified 183 events for the first half-year as well as 101 draft laws to be introduced during the year.

The decision was taken for joint development of a mechanism to coordinate the work of the NGOs and the Commissioner's office with the responsible public authorities, which will provide for publicity, transparency and self-organization of the NGOs in monitoring implementation of the Action Plan.

### Presentation of “Observing human rights at the level of local communities” initiative

On February 19, 2016, during the panel discussion “The National human rights institution: from good to great”<sup>1</sup> it was presented a joint activity of the UHHRU and the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights ([link in Ukrainian](#)).

Its main objective is to create a mechanism of permanent monitoring of human rights observance by local authorities and proper interaction of communities with the local authorities to improve the situation in this field.

<sup>1</sup> The panel discussion was held in frames of the presentation of joint project of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Program entitled “Strengthening capacity of the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Commissioner for Human Rights”.



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In frames of this joint initiative, there will be tested an algorithm of monitoring of local self-governance bodies of different levels (e.g. oblast – city – rayon center) in six target oblasts. A set of indicators will be also developed in order to evaluate a dynamic changes in problem solving approaches in human rights field at the local level.

*More details are available at the [web-site](#) (in Ukrainian).*

### UHHRU invites for cooperation experts in the field of transitional justice

Let us remind, that the UHHRU invites experts and researchers to take part in a baseline study on the implementation of transitional justice in Ukraine. *For full details please refer [here](#) (in Ukrainian).*

### Cooperation with universities

The UHHRU continues to develop cooperation with the Ukrainian higher educational institutions. In particular, the mutual action plans were developed with the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine. In the near future, it is intended to develop a similar plan with the Luhansk State University of Internal Affairs named after E.O. Didorenko (Mykolaiv).

Currently, the fifth-year students of the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University are already doing an internship at the UHHRU's central office. The introductory internship is also planned for 46 students.

### Analytical reports on human rights observance

The UHHRU's analytical department in cooperation with the partner organizations is preparing a number of reports:

- An interim alternative report regarding the Russian Federation XXII-XXIV series report on implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);
- An interim alternative report on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Ukraine (VII series report, 2011);
- A thematic report "Rights of persons with mental disabilities, observance of human rights in mental hospitals";
- A thematic report "Violent loss of private property as a result of military operations in the East of Ukraine".

The UHHRU is also elaborating program policies for the National Center for documenting human rights violations to be created within the USAID Human Rights in Action Program.

## Strategic Litigation

### Strategic litigation cases of UHHRU

In February 2016, the UHHRU Strategic Litigations Center supported a number of interesting cases, including:



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## Fight against Pension Fund in Lviv goes on

The Chernobyl nuclear disaster liquidator's widow in Lviv, a disabled person of group 3, Tetiana Soltan [has been fighting](#) (*the link in Ukrainian*) against the arbitrary behavior of the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU) for three years, which demands a reference of a Soviet standard in order to recalculate the pension. Mrs. Soltan's lawyer, Nina Khoma from the SIM Center, pays attention that the PFU has no right to demand this reference from her client, as being a military man's wife she is not obliged to provide it by the law. Moreover, all the necessary data for the recalculation of pension was submitted to the Pension Fund three years ago. Despite the [cases](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) that the Pension Fund has already lost to the UHHRU, it still violates the woman's rights.

The court of the first instance took Mrs. Soltan's side, but the PFU filed an appeal. On February 5, 2016, a [news story](#) (*in Ukrainian*) was shown at the NTA channel (the Independent Television Agency channel).

## Violation of right to peaceful assembly

In February 2016, the Strategic Litigations Center's lawyers filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) regarding violations of the Ukrainian citizens' rights to gather peacefully near the building of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine (PAU).

A husband and wife decided to hold a peaceful protest action in order to draw attention of officials to the illegal actions of the police and prosecutor's office. Despite of adherence to the statutory regulations, the representatives of the Administration of the State Security Guard Service of Ukraine prohibited them from doing that. A recourse to a court resulted in binding the representatives of the State Security Guard Service to lift restrictions on exercising the applicants' rights to a peaceful gathering near the building.

However, thereafter the court, on its own initiative and without summoning the applicants, considered the issue on determination of arrangements and procedure for execution of the court's previous decision. Thus, the court through restriction of peaceful gathering, violated the applicants' right guaranteed by the Article 11 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (hereinafter – the Convention).

## Case of illegal detention by law-enforcement authorities

**On February 5, 2016**, an application was forwarded to the ECtHR concerning the violation of the Article 5 of the Convention by Ukraine. The law-enforcement authorities illegally detained a citizen of Ukraine who resides in Sloviansk. In the course of the applicant's detention, both the international and national regulations on the legality of the arrest were infringed, and procedural safeguards were also disregarded. Since the arrest, a court has extended the period of the applicant's detention 8 times without proper justification and legal background of the decision.

## So-called “Chechen Case” v. Ukrainians Stanislav Klykh and Mykola Karpyuk

**On February 5, 2016**, a [press conference](#) took place, during which the human rights defenders reported that the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation refused to initiate criminal proceedings and consider M. Karpyuk's and S. Klykh's complaints of torture.



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However, the lawyer of the UHHRU Strategic Litigations Center, Nadiya Volkova, remarked: “...*there is an argument for the application at the ECtHR, which witnesses that Messrs. Karpyuk and Klykh suffered bodily injuries during their staying under the control of the law-enforcement authorities*”.



Please, find more details [following this link](#) (in Ukrainian).

**On February 6**, an [article](#) (in Ukrainian) about the Klykh-Karpyuk’s case was published in the Ukrainian Pravda, and, **on February 9**, the UHHRU’s lawyer participated in the live [broadcast](#) (in Russian) on Hromadske.tv speaking on “Chechen Case”.

### Resounding victory at the European Court of Human Rights

**On February 11, 2016**, the European Court delivered a judgment in the case “Karpilenko v. Ukraine”, where the criminal lawyer Oleksandr Zarutskyi represented the applicant. The applicant claimed that her son had been subjected to ill-treatment during his detention, and there had been no efficient internal investigation on that matter. She also complained that he had been provided with no proper medical care while being detained, and accused the authorities of his death. The ECtHR found a violation of the Articles 2 and 3 in their material aspect and of the Article 2 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in its procedural aspect by the state. The case was supported by the UHHRU’s Strategic Litigations Center.

### Prosecution for war crimes in Donbas and crimes committed during Euromaidan

**On February 11, 2016**, a working meeting was conducted with the representatives of the international group of lawyers “Global Rights Compliance Group”, where participants discussed further strategy of cooperation in prosecution of perpetrators of crimes in Donbas.

**On February 19, 2016**, a press conference entitled “Cases of the “Heaven’s Hundred” and the victims of Maidan” ([link in Russian](#)) was held. During the event, the human rights defenders provided information on the course of the trial for the murder of the “Heaven’s Hundred” Heroes and of the victims of the events in February on Maidan (both at the national level and at the European Court of Human Rights). They reported why a break is put on the cases of the killed and injured activists from Kharkiv, and who is trying to “burke” the case.



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### Defeating the Main Department of Pension Fund of Ukraine

Thanks to the legal aid of the UHHRU's lawyers and the Strategic Litigations Center, the decision of the Rivne district court (dd. October 21, 2015) was executed regarding the recognition of illegal actions of the Pension Fund of Ukraine in Rivne oblast when it ceased to provide a pension for a citizen of Ukraine. Thus, the court restored the right of the employee of the State Penitentiary Service to a superannuation.

Consequently, the applicant received payments for the period from April 2015 to February 2016, and his pension payments were completely recovered.

### Torture in pre-trial detention facility

**On February 24, 2016**, the lawyers of the UHHRU Strategic Litigations Centre filed a note on the Government objections in the case of "Melnyk v. Ukraine". The case involved an issue of the applicant's torture and unacceptable conditions in the Kyiv pre-trial detention facility, Korocho, Raykivtsi and Bila Tserkva penal colonies.

### Discrimination of internally displaced persons

**On February 25, 2016**, a hearing was conducted in the case of violation of rights of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) contained in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 79 dd. March 4, 2015. The applicants claim that the necessity to check the actual place of residence, which looks like a visit of the migration service representatives to the citizen's home, is a violation of rights and legal interests of many citizens of our country.

The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights sought to join the case hearing as a third party. However, the court rejected and postponed the hearing to March 3, despite the fact that the parties insisted on conducting it.

### Legal aid for persons affected by military operations in the East of the country

The UHHRU continues to provide legal aid to Ukrainians affected by military operations in the East of Ukraine. Currently, the work has been carried out with more than two hundred persons. In February, six complaints and fifteen follow-ups were filed with the European Court of Human Rights.

### Prisoners of War UA Project

The Prisoners of War UA Project continues its work to liberate the captives. Currently, the project is dealing with about two hundred cases of those affected by events in the East of Ukraine. In February, four follow-ups to the complaints concerning the violation of the Articles 3, 4, 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights were filed.

One of the cases, which the project is dealing with, was presented in the story of the [ICTV](#) channel (*link in Ukrainian*).



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### Materials on web-site of Strategic Litigation Centre worth of paying attention to

- [Can the civilians, who became disabled as a result of the anti-terror operations, obtain the status of war disabled veterans?](#)
- [Fully legal murder.](#)
- [Violation of the right to journalistic freedoms resulted in the conviction of a journalist on the articles published by him.](#)
- [“Inaction by the Kyiv police which resulted in a person’s death”, - the European Court of Human Rights.](#)

*All these materials are available in Ukrainian language.*

### Work with media

**On February 19, 2016**, the lawyer of the Strategic Litigations Centre, Anastasia Martynovska, in her [interview](#) (in Russian) with the Ukrainian Internet TV “UkrLife.TV”, described in what cases and why it is necessary to apply to the European Court of Human Rights, and what nuances may affect the acceptance and consideration of your application by the ECtHR.

**On February 3, 2016**, the Center’s lawyer Dmytro Mazurok [participated in the live broadcast](#) (in Russian) on the “5<sup>th</sup> Channel” regarding the non-enforcement of the ECtHR judgments and the most outrageous examples of human rights violations.

### Free Legal Aid

[The UHHRU network](#) of legal aid centers (LACs) keeps on delivering free legal aid and holding information and awareness raising events in the sphere of human rights. A communication is established and functioning inside the network that allows to forward requests from a citizen to an appropriate advocate for more effective work.

One more focus area of the legal aid centers is documentation of crimes among population who witnessed human rights violations in the occupied Crimea or ATO area. The UHHRU also conducts outreach consultations for delivering free legal aid.

The activities of the UHHRU’s legal aid centers are carried out, in particular, with the financial support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Human Rights in Action Program.

### Expanding of network of legal aid centers

**On February 18, 2016**, [Lutsk joined](#) (link in Ukrainian) the UHHRU’s network of legal aid centers: now one can also receive free legal aid or human rights-related materials in Volyn oblast. The Center for Legal and Political Studies “SIM” will patronize this legal aid center which is situated at: 1 Boyko St., Lutsk (tel. 066 737 5003, [lutsk.ugspl@gmail.com](mailto:lutsk.ugspl@gmail.com)).

**On February 22, 2016**, another [legal aid center was opened in Uzhhorod](#) at 1 Cyril and Methodius Square, room 52 (fourth floor). Contact email: [dopomohauzh@gmail.com](mailto:dopomohauzh@gmail.com).





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## Successful cases of legal aid centers

### Unlawfully dismissed employee reinstated at work thanks to UHHRU's lawyers

Thanks to the lawyers of the UHHRU Legal aid center in Rivne and Center for free secondary legal aid, a man protected his rights as he was illegally dismissed and later renewed on his job position. A man was undeservedly dismissed in frames of so-called reduction of the staff at one of the public enterprises, which cannot be applied to highly qualified specialists like him according to the Ukrainian laws.

Details can be found following this [link](#) (in Ukrainian).

## Human Rights Education and Promotion

### Human Rights Education for Lawyers

#### Information and computer security basics training for advocates

In February 2016, in Kyiv the USAID Human Rights in Action Program conducted a training dedicated to the information and computer security basics. During the event, the advocates could increase their skills and learn how to work safely and effectively with important data on the Internet.

#### Seminar for advocates and lawyers concerning the cases of discrimination

On February 5-7, 2016 the fourth onsite seminar "International Standards of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights case-law concerning non-discrimination" was held for advocates and lawyers, participants of international distance learning course on human rights.



The participants received knowledge on issues related to the concept of discrimination in terms of international human rights law, including defining features of discrimination. Using examples of cases of direct and indirect discrimination, the participants had the opportunity to analyze real situations and were familiarized with the main approaches to proving in cases of discrimination as well as with review of the ECtHR case law relevant to legal practice in Ukraine. Participants themselves initiated evening optional courses, where they were able to analyze together with



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experts the situations from their real work practice with a review to identifying presence or absence of discrimination.

### Seminars for civil servants

In February a series of three seminars entitled “Application of the European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in cases of expulsion, extradition and denial of protection to asylum-seekers” was organized by the UHHRU’s educational team jointly with the qualified trainers. An accent was made on fundamentals of discrimination in frames of the international human rights law and prevention of discrimination, particularly in sphere of migration.



Those were the final seminars within the two-year “Advocacy and Government Capacity in Migration” Project. 114 representatives of the State Migration Service of Ukraine, 168 judges of administrative courts, as well as 285 lawyers from around Ukraine took classes during the project lifetime.

### Conference “International law for protection of public interest”

**On February 26-28, 2016** the final conference of the program “International law for protection of public interest” was held in Vilnius (Lithuania). The lawyers discussed a human rights situation in former Commonwealth of Independent States’ countries and summarized 1,5-year-long educational program, which was attended by 115 lawyers and advocates from five countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine.

During more than a year of training, lawyers completed an on-line educational program to gain knowledge on certain aspects of application of international law norms in daily practice in their countries. And the conference summed up the official part of the learning process.

### Informal Education and Training for Different Target Groups

#### Conference “Local actions to protect human rights in conditions of humanitarian crisis”

**On February 13-14, 2016**, the conference “Local actions to protect human rights in conditions of amid humanitarian crisis”<sup>2</sup> was held in Kyiv in a format of plenary and breakout sessions and open

<sup>2</sup> The conference is a part of “Community Legal Information and Advice Centers in Ukraine” Project, that is being implemented by the National Endowment for Democracy. The event was implemented within “We Understand Human Rights” Ukraine-wide Educational Program, which focuses on support of centers on the basis of human rights NGOs in seven cities of Ukraine. During the year, a sustainable communication



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space as well. The steps of further activities of the Community Legal Information and Advice Centers were determined at sessions: Session 1. “Cooperation between Centers and UHHRU legal aid centers. Features of legal aid centers’ work in context of “new challenges”. Session 2. “Peculiarities of application of International Humanitarian Law in conditions of humanitarian crisis”. Session 3. “Legal and information actions to protect the right to education of IDPs from Crimea and temporarily occupied territories of the East of Ukraine, as well as children who remain in the midst of the military conflict and occupation”. Session 4. “Human rights and local democracy”.

The work at sessions allowed to discuss actual problems of the theory and practice of legal aid provision to individuals in the socio-cultural environment, which is characterized by the recession and psycho-traumatic circumstances; effective ways and means of advocacy for vulnerable groups (including military men who are performing or have performed their duty in the area of combat operations, internally displaced persons from Crimea and temporarily occupied territories of the Eastern Ukraine). Together with the theoretical insight, the representatives of the centers and the UHHRU LACs from nine cities of Ukraine worked out effective solutions to specific, most burning, and social problems of local communities through their involvement in community activities with a focus on human rights. For example, it is scheduled a holding of the all-Ukrainian action “Not indifferent together” during the celebration of the Children’s Day.

### Documenters of the Coalition “Justice for Peace in Donbas” took a digital security training

On Monday, **February 15, 2016**, at the base of “Internews-Ukraine” NGO there was conducted the digital security training for staff members of the Coalition who directly engaged into documentation of human rights violations in Donbas. UHHRU representatives were among its participants. *For more details please follow the [link](#) (in Ukrainian).*

### Other human rights activities

In February several actions, that touched on various aspects of human rights, were carried out by the UHHRU’s specialists (or with their participation):

- [In Lviv the librarians were made aware of the right to liberty and personal security.](#)
- [Women from Khmelnytskyi learned how to avoid becoming victims of gender discrimination.](#)
- [School deputy heads for academic affairs from Lviv participated in a workshop on the right to liberty and personal security.](#)
- [In Kherson a seminar on asylum, deportation and extradition took place.](#)

### Raising human rights awareness among citizens

#### New UHHRU’s website launched

**On February 8, 2016**, the completely updated UHHRU’s [website](#) was launched (*in Ukrainian*). The resource is intended to become useful not only for legal professionals, but also for ordinary users who are interested in situation with human rights at the time of information technology’s impact on

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process was established between participating organizations to assure more efficient reaction on human rights violations and strengthening legal awareness of citizens and human rights activists in Ukraine. Also, an innovative form of delivering legal and consultative aid to local community members was established.



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formation of civil society's opinion in Ukraine, along with journalists who need a reliable expert source of information.

## Other Events

### New UHHRU's Management Board elected

**On February 10-11, 2016**, a General Meeting of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union was held. For two days, the members of the Union, the Supervisory Board, the Auditing Commission and the representatives of the central office were reporting on their annual achievements and discussing crucial in-house issues. The new Management Board of the Union was elected in compliance with the organization's Statute.

## Main Events in Human Rights Area:

### Since now IDPs can get pro bono legal aid in three additional oblasts of Ukraine

Since now the lawyers of Chernihiv Public Committee for Human Rights Protection deliver a full spectrum of pro bono legal support for IDPs that currently reside in Chernihiv, Sumy and Poltava oblasts.

It includes all kinds of pro bono legal and consultative aid, various lawyer's services, including representation in the national and international courts. Contacts of legal aid centers can be found [here](#) (in Ukrainian).

### Experts have analyzed the problem of the prosecutor's office reformation

**On February 16** the press conference "Prosecutor's office: operation of liquidation?" was held with participation of the UHHRU and Center for Political and Law Reforms representatives. During the event experts have analyzed the key problems of the prosecutor's office reformation in respect to what has already been done. More specifically, the problem of so-called "cementation" of the system was underlined, as also delaying the reforms in general. A need in creation of a brand new institution instead of the prosecutor's office and monopoly of advocacy issues were voiced out as well. *Full details are available [here](#) (in Ukrainian).*

### The European Parliament condemns Russia's persecution of Crimean Tatars – resolution

In the resolution from February 4, 2016, the European Parliament has condemned the unprecedented levels of human rights abuses perpetrated against Crimean residents (most notably Crimean Tatars), and recalled, that the Russian Federation as an occupying power, has the



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responsibility to ensure the safety of the whole population and respect for the human, cultural, and religious rights of the indigenous Tatars and all other minorities of Crimea, and to uphold the legal order in Crimea.

The European Parliament urges the Russian and the de facto local authorities to investigate effectively, impartially and transparently all cases of disappearances, torture and human rights abuses by the police and paramilitary forces active in the Crimean peninsula since February 2014. According to international humanitarian law and international human rights law, unimpeded access to Crimea must be granted for international institutions and independent experts from the OSCE, the United Nations and the Council of Europe, as well as for any human rights NGOs or news media outlets that wish to visit, assess and report on the situation in Crimea.

Read more [here](#).

### Drafting a comprehensive report on human rights situation in Crimea

The Council of Europe's human rights mission to Crimea, led by Swiss diplomat Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann, visited Crimea during the period January 25-31, to objectively assess the human rights and rule of law situation in the peninsula. Let us remind that for more than a year, no delegation from an international organization has been able to go there.

The mission looked at several areas, including freedom of expression, minority rights, the fight against corruption and prison conditions, but not addressing Crimea's political status. The delegation met representatives from all sectors in Crimea: more than 50 meetings were held in several locations including Simferopol, Yalta, Sebastopol and Bakhchisaray. Ambassador Stoudmann was also able to visit Akhtem Chiyyoz, Vice Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, who is imprisoned in Simferopol. On results of the visit, a report containing recommendations in a number of key areas within the Council of Europe mandate will be produced.

### Brainstorm meeting “Search for possibilities of continuous international presence in Crimea”

**On February 24**, a brainstorm meeting “Search for possibilities of continuous international presence in Crimea” was held in the National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” under support of numerous human rights NGOs, including the UHHRU. The goal was to find options on how to reduce the risk and tension, as well as how to improve the situation with respect for human rights in Crimea and to ensure participation in the process of such organizations as the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe.

The event was organized by the Center for Intercultural Communication, Department of Politology, and Center for Polish and European Studies of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, along with the Coalition “Initiative Group on Human Rights in Crimea”.

### Rapid Deployment Forces of National Police appeared in Kyiv, Lviv and Kharkiv oblasts

Based on the [“Sambir experiment”](#) (*link in Ukrainian*) and developed with participation of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, in February 2016, the Rapid Deployment Forces of the National Police started functioning simultaneously in three major oblasts of the country. On February 1, they appeared in Kyiv and Kyiv oblast, on February 11 – in Lviv oblast, on 23 February – in Kharkiv oblast too.



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### Allowances for single mothers: what to know in 2016

Recently many questions have arisen about the allowance payment for single mothers. It is mainly associated with the significant reform of such benefits being currently implemented by the government. In this regard, the UHHRU forwarded the information inquiry to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and received such a [response](#) (*in Ukrainian*).

### Docudays UA Film Festival presented new documentaries of its own production

For the anniversary of the tragic events of February 2014, the Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival presented three new films from the series about civic initiatives of self-organization “Encyclopedia of Maidan”. The first films of the series (“Myr”, “Hottabych and His Team” and “Lustration”) premiered on Docudays UA last year.

In February 2016 the next three films were released – “Euromaidan SOS”, “White Collars Hundred” and “Language”, which are available in on-line cinema house [DOCU/SPACE](#) (*links in Ukrainian*).

### Documentary film “Surviving Hell”

Last year the Coalition of Public Organizations and Initiatives “Justice for Peace in Donbas” published the report “Surviving hell: testimonies of victims about places of illegal imprisonment in Donbas” (*in Ukrainian*). The report summarizes a half-year work of the Coalition and was made possible due to monitoring research of facts of numerous violations of human rights in conditions of illegal imprisonment in the ATO zone and on the East of Ukraine.

In February a presentation of the named report was held in some cities of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, namely in Severodonetsk, Lisichansk, Slovyansk, Starobilsk and Dobropillya.

And, in addition to the report, now the documentary film “Surviving Hell” is available for everyone interested by following the link (*in Ukrainian and English*). The film reveals the facts of human rights violations and evidences of awful treatment and tortures.

### Human Rights in Ukraine 2015 report posted on UHHRU’s website

A [report](#) (*in Ukrainian*), in preparation of which over twenty human rights organizations took part, contains the results of monitoring and analytical work on the most burning issues in the field of human rights observance in 2015. Almost every section touches upon the topic of internally displaced persons, which has been remaining one of the most significant in Ukraine over the last two years. The report is published in authors’ edition, and is constantly updated.

Due to a high dynamics of social changes in the country, the UHHRU earlier published other [review](#) (*in Ukrainian*) for the first half of 2015 that allows tracing problems of interaction of civil society with authorities in more detailed manner.

### The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine held public hearings on IDPs’ rights

**On February 17, 2016**, the [public hearings on internally displaced persons’ rights took place](#) at the meeting hall of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (*information is provided in Ukrainian*). Unfortunately, there were almost no Government representatives, and only few Members of Parliament on such an important event (in Ukraine as of February 1 there are 1,704,937 registered IDPs from Donetsk and



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Luhansk oblasts, as well as from Crimea). It should be mentioned, that Jan Tombiński, Head of the EU Delegation to Ukraine, attended the hearings. There were also representatives of the international and Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders, experts and internally displaced persons themselves.

### The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine initiated illegal checks on internally displaced persons

**On February 16, 2016**, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine issued a letter No. 672/0/10-16/081 “On strengthening control over payments”, which contains instructions for the departments of labor and social protection of the population (DLSPP) to strengthen control over the procedure of registration of the internally displaced persons. On February 18, the labor and social protection authorities started receiving registers of the displaced persons drawn up by the Security Service of Ukraine and the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, containing information on persons whose registration as IDPs allegedly must be canceled, because they live on temporarily Ukraine-uncontrolled territory. On February 19, the existence of these so-called “black lists” was confirmed by Pavlo Rozenko, Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine, who said that he really has been cooperating with the Security Service of Ukraine on “elimination of fraud schemes created in relation to payments provided for IDPs” during the last three months.

According to the information, distributed by the IDPs and confirmed by the employees of the structural units on social protection of the population in different oblasts of Ukraine, the DLSPP on the ground of the above-mentioned registers remove the IDPs from the database without prior notice and written decision containing justification of the grounds of removal.

Such actions are not stipulated in any regulatory act, and the checks look more like “cleanup operation”. No criteria, by which people are enlisted, were announced, and therefore, there is a high risk of corruption.

### The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine circulated a direct instruction not to comply with provisions of the law on IDPs

Since the beginning of February 2016, the NGOs have been informing about large-scale violations of displaced persons’ rights through the instruction of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine not to comply with the Law of Ukraine “On amendments to some laws of Ukraine to strengthen the guarantees of observance of internally displaced persons’ rights and freedoms”, which entered into force on January 13, 2016.

On January 20, 2016, DLSPP all over Ukraine received a letter “Not to execute the Law until the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine changes the text of relevant regulations No. 505 and No. 509 signed by Vitaliy Mushchynin, Deputy Minister of Social Policy. This means the actual instruction to the subordinates to violate the law, because it takes precedence over the resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Whereas, the non-compliance with the provisions of the revised law entails significant violations of IDPs rights to social protection, pension, and administrative services.

### We demand ratification of the Rome Statute

The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union joined and participated in the action of the Euromaidan-SOS organization dedicated to the ratification of the Rome Statute. A relevant [announcement](#) was



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posted to the UHHRU's website (*in Ukrainian*), contents of which was fully supported by all members of our Union.

### Ukrainian human rights defender received an award for protection of democracy at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly



Britain, and the USA.

Oleksandra Matviychuk, a Ukrainian human rights defender, [received the Democracy Defender Award – 2016](#) “For exceptional contribution to democracy promotion and human rights protection”. The ceremony was held at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna, and Zhanna Nemtsova, the eldest daughter of the Russian activist Boris Nemtsov (who was assassinated in Moscow last year), handed over the award to Ms. Matviychuk. This award was initiated by 17 delegations to the OSCE, in particular from Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Great

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