

Regional media during the war: how it is to be independent

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Working during the war is difficult and requires bravery.

This is the time that demonstrates the importance of local media.

Independent regional press is still the most powerful and useful source of information for the regional audience and local society. Local media is the principal place for holding local debates about the restoration of the cities and towns among various opinion leaders, businesses, professionals, local authorities and active citizens. After February 24 the ad market in the country vanished. All the media outlets stopped receiving income. To continue their work, they need to find support for independent content production so that they can keep publishing for the benefit of their readers.

Common war content of the local Ukrainian press today is about places to find clean water, evacuation routes, maps with streets with electricity in towns and cities.

The active war

None of the journalists was prepared to work under the war constraints.

The pre-war plans survive only until one can see the first missile falling on one's house. Or until one can hear and see drones attacking the city. Or until one is called in to identify the victims of the vicious attacks.

Most of the Ukrainian journalists today are more than journalists.

They are volunteers searching for the cars for the Armed Forces.

They act as criminologists collecting evidence about Russian war crimes.

They are volunteer coroners in Bucha, Izyum, Borodyanka who help working with the bodies of the butchered civilians.

These days most of our journalists keep working from the bomb shelters - without electricity supply and often without the internet. Yet they thrive in their willingness to inform the world about the war crimes as well as to tell personal stories of our amazing people.

The work of journalists under occupation

The most dangerous is the work of a journalist under occupation. If you do not cooperate with the occupiers, you will be imprisoned and tortured. In every occupied city there are basements turned into the torture chambers where Russians keep Ukrainians who refuse to cooperate. To leave the occupied territories our journalists have to assume false identities, invent false life stories, risk not only their own lives but also the lives of their loved ones.

The Russian occupiers keep compiling lists of media personnel and wanted editors and journalists. Their houses are being destroyed.

And neither a bulletproof vest, nor a helmet can save you from this.

The propaganda

Newspapers and printing houses of all our regional media in all occupied cities are stolen by Russians. Today they convert our papers into propaganda newspapers. They use our brands for printing their content and distributing it in the occupied regions. A lot of our media companies lose everything – from the big printing facilities to the laptops for journalists.

The journalist's security during the war

Our war started in 2014. But the full-scale Russian invasion happened on February 24. And still our journalists are unprotected from the injuries and deaths of the war. That is why, a few months ago, we launched the Insurance Fund for Journalists. Thanks to donors, we can insure some of them during their trips directly to the frontline. To fix the bombed cities, to talk with a civil Ukrainians, to interview the soldiers-heroes.

A few words from Ukrainian regional editors

How the media business changed, how our media can survive and what they feel of this active war in Ukraine – are in our video with personal stories of the regional editors. Video story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUfcqQXtyLg>

Our heroes are:

1. Yaroslav Suhomlyn, editor from Chernihiv. This city was sieged and destroyed by the Russian army. His editorial office was used by our solders as a defence point. After spending a few weeks in the besieged city, he evacuated with his three small kids. His older son is in the army now.
2. Hennadij Derybas, editor from Zaporizhzhya. 60% of Zaporizka region is now occupied by Russians. His editorial office is located 40 km away from Zaporizka Nuclear power plant. His editorial office is still in the city. They keep working.
3. Lyudmyla Sova, editor from occupied Polohy in Zaporizka region. Her house was bombed when she and her two kids were inside.
4. Mykhajlo Novytskyi, editor from Kherson. His city is occupied. His editorial office and printing house are now under Russians control.
5. Hennadij Chabanov, editor from Odesa. All his brave team of journalists are in the city, they keep working, informing people about the situation.

We keep struggling for European values. We keep dying for our independence.
We all feel your support. Together with us, towards victory.

*To support the Ukrainian local journalists and to help the independent media, please contact us at office.airpu@gmail.com or Brovko.oksana@gmail.com
Our Patreon account is here: <https://www.patreon.com/ukrainianmediasupport>*