

НАЦІОНАЛЬНА СПІЛКА



ЖУРНАЛІСТІВ УКРАЇНИ

— NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS OF UKRAINE —

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№ 168
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**President of Human Rights Foundation
Mr. Thor Leonardo Halvorssen Mendoza**

Dear Mr. Halvorssen,

The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine expresses deep respect to you and your colleagues.

For 30 years since Ukraine's Independence, Ukrainian journalists have been defending freedom and rights of people both within and outside the country. We highly respect compliance with the requirements of journalism, such as neutral coverage of events and objective presentation of material, because these are international standards of the civilized world. We believe that those are also guidelines for international awards and prizes.

Because of the full-scale attack of the Russian Federation, today we, journalists, as well as all citizens of Ukraine, are forced again to win back our right to exist as the Ukrainian nation, defending the state borders of Ukraine and reminding everyone about the great history of Ukrainians.

May we kindly remind you that Russia started its aggression against Ukraine in 2014 by annexation of Crimea and occupation of the part of the Donbas region. The explanation of Russia's aggression is expressed in the words of Russian President Vladimir Putin: "We are ready to show you what true decommunization means for Ukraine...". Then February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale war on the territory of Ukraine. In three months, about 300 children were killed by Russian troops, more than 600 children were wounded and raped by the Russian military, and thousands of Ukrainian civilians (women and men) were tortured, raped, and killed. Data on the number of victims are not final due to the intensity of hostilities across the country.

In this regard, ***let us express our deep concern about the decision of the members of the Vaclav Havel Prize jury to award Russian journalist Marina Ovsyannikova for her creative disagreement.***

As you probably know, Marina Ovsyannikova had been working in the Moscow media since 2002, including last 8 years directly for Channel One ('Perviy Kanal'). Channel One has the largest audience in the Russian Federation and is the main source of Kremlin propaganda.

Ms. Ovsyannikova's appearance with a poster on Russia's main news was perceived by the entire Ukrainian media community as *another act of manipulation* by the Kremlin. The fact is that since February 24, 2022, people in Russia have been arrested for much less support for Ukraine. For example, a man was arrested in Russia for standing in silence with Tolstoy's book 'War and Peace', and there were also numerous arrests of people in Russia who were simply holding a white sheet of paper in the street. In this regard, we find it rather suspicious that after her act with a poster Ms. Ovsyannikova paid only a small fine of 250 euros, and the Kremlin allowed her to leave the country.

In addition, all the journalists who have large experience on TV may assure you that in reality the TV news editorial team would easily disrupt such a protest. Ms. Ovsyannikova could not stay for such a long time on TV screen on air and an advertisement block or another report of the news edition director would have immediately interrupted the program.

In our opinion, all these facts require a more detailed analysis by the world media and organizations that protect the honor and dignity of journalists. Until this is done, it is not advisable to give Ms. Ovsyannikova such an esteemed international award as the Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent.

With all the respect, we kindly ask you to reconsider the decision about the Ms. Ovsyannikova's rewarding because it may make the wrong impression to the world. At least until the independent investigation of the real reasons of the Ms. Ovsyannikova's act (with the poster, and the conditions the Kremlin allowed her to leave the country) has finished.

Sincerely,

Sergiy Tomilenko,

President of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine,

Member of the Steering Committee of the European Federation of Journalists

