

World's press condemns judgment against Ukrainian newspaper

LVIV, UKRAINE / PARIS, FRANCE / DARMSTADT, GERMANY: The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum have condemned a Ukrainian court decision that puts the future of the country's largest circulation daily, *Express*, into doubt.



In a letter to President Viktor Yanukovich, the global organisations of the world's press said the prosecution was believed to be politically motivated. "We respectfully remind you that trying to pressure a newspaper through unfair trials is a blatant act of censorship and violates numerous international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," the letter said.

Overturning a previous Superior Court decision, Lviv Economic Court judge Tatiana Sergejevna Kostiv ruled that one of *Express*' statutory documents was invalid, which threatens the future of the newspaper. The decision was reached in a surprisingly short period and the sentence ignored recognised legal precedents that supported the legitimacy of *Express*' claim.

Shortly after the judgment, government representatives allegedly contacted *Express* to offer to overturn the decision if the newspaper agreed to soften its criticism towards the government.

Harassment, intimidation

Express has been subjected to intimidation over recent years. In November 2011, members of staff were threatened for their investigative work exposing fraud and corruption among senior officials of ruling party, The Party of the Regions, while the newspaper's editor-in-chief, Igor Pochynok, has been threatened repeatedly with criminal prosecution and reportedly endured arson attacks and smear campaigns.

WAN-IFRA and WEF urged the president to provide guarantees that court decisions remain free from government influence, calling for "a thorough investigation into the identity of the officials who offered to overturn the decision against *Express*". They also reiterated their call for dialogue with the Ukrainian government on press freedom issues ahead of the organisations' World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum, due to be held in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, in September.

The full letter can be read [here](#).

More on WAN-IFRA press freedom campaigns can be found at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/microsites/press-freedom>.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>