

24 September 2012

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Dear Mesdames:
 Dear Sirs:

Re: Ukraine's Parliament Passed the First Reading of a Bill to Recriminalize Defamation

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) denounces Ukraine's Parliament intent to reinstate defamation as a crime (please see <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/ombudsman-criticizes-bill-oncriminal-esponsibility-for-slander-313165.html> <http://en.rsrf.org/ukraine-appeal-on-parliament-about-02-08-2012,43153.html?>).

If passed, such legislation would provide for harsh fines and prison sentences of up to five years. Moreover, not only would Ukrainian citizens be at risk, but visitors might be prosecuted for statements made in relation to Ukraine outside its borders.

The enactment of such legislation would be a significant step back for freedom of expression in Ukraine, and could easily be used by governing authorities to muzzle opposition and media.

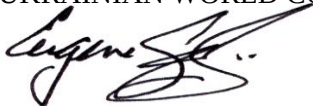
Such legislation would also infringe upon the international conventions ratified by Ukraine, namely the *European Convention on Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

The UWC appeals to the international community to condemn this attempt by Ukraine's governing authorities to recriminalize defamation and to call upon them to abandon this threatening initiative for democracy.

The UWC is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has member organizations in 33 countries and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries. Founded in 1967 as a non-profit corporation, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with special consultative status.

Sincerely,

UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS



Eugene Czolij
 President

c.c. His Excellency Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine
His Excellency Volodymyr Lytvyn, Chairman of the Parliament of Ukraine
Ukrainian World Congress Member Organizations