

Ukrainian regime detains journalists working for Russian media

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The unelected regime in Kiev is jailing and disappearing journalists working for Russian publications in Ukraine. Relying on the complicit silence of Western media and the Kiev regime's backers in Washington and the European capitals, it is seeking to suppress all independent, on-the-spot reporting in the run-up to the May 25 presidential elections.

Yesterday, the regime released *Russia Today* (RT) journalist Graham Phillips in Kiev without charges, after 36 hours of detention in which he was held at gunpoint and interrogated about his work for RT. A British national, Phillips had provided extensive coverage for RT from eastern Ukraine—where the Kiev regime and allied fascist militias such as the Right Sector are cracking down on civilians and pro-Russian self-defense militias.

Phillips was arrested on Monday in Mariupol, where he was investigating a concocted *New York Times* story claiming that steelworkers loyal to their billionaire employer Rinat Akhmetov were patrolling the streets to help the Kiev regime restore order. Prior to his arrest, Phillips produced an on-the-spot video debunking the *Times*' story and noting that there were no steelworkers' militias active in Mariupol.

After this, Phillips was stopped at a government checkpoint near the city. "They saw that I work for RT, and then things escalated after that. It got more serious this time. They started phoning people, and then I was detained. I had my things taken off of me and was interrogated quite thoroughly," Phillips said. He was handed over to the SBU Ukrainian intelligence agency, then transferred to Zaporozhye and to Kiev the next day, before being released to the British consulate.

Earlier this month, the neo-fascist Right Sector had placed a \$10,000 bounty on Phillips' head. With fascist

gangs openly assaulting opposition politicians in the streets of Kiev in the run-up to the vote, Phillips remains in danger.

On Sunday, the Ukrainian National Guard—a right-wing paramilitary unit set up by the Kiev regime after the fascist-led putsch in February—arrested two Russian journalists, Marat Saichenko and Oleg Sidyakin, working for *Life News* in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk. The SBU acknowledged on Tuesday that they had detained the two men, and denounced them for allegedly "accompanying terrorists and broadcasting their unlawful actions." The Kiev regime calls all pro-Russian opposition forces in eastern Ukraine "terrorists."

A lawyer representing the two journalists told Human Rights Watch that the SBU had denied her access to her clients and claimed not to know where they were. She has filed a missing persons report with the interior ministry in Kiev.

These measures testify to the completely anti-democratic, right-wing character of the pro-Western regime that emerged from the pro-European Union (EU) Maidan protests and the fascist putsch of February 22.

Particularly chilling is the indifference in the Western media to the detention of Phillips and the disappearing of Saichenko and Sidyakin. The American media has maintained total silence on the fate of the captured journalists, while prominent European media posted articles criticizing not the Kiev regime, but the journalists it had detained.

Thus the British *Guardian* posted a brief article reporting the detention of Phillips, who it said had "gained notoriety during the conflict in the east for his gonzo-style reports ... He was often accused of reporting wildly inaccurate claims as fact."

As for the *New York Times*, it is maintaining a complicit silence both on Kiev's crackdown on journalists and on Phillips' exposure of its latest fabrication on Ukraine. Previously, the *Times* promoted blatantly doctored State Department photographs in an attempt to falsely claim that Russian army was running anti-Kiev regime protests in the east.

Now, the team of 12 journalists the *Times* boasts that it keeps in Ukraine again faces charges that they have manufactured a story out of whole cloth—this time, that masses of workers in Mariupol were rising up to defend the authority of the Kiev regime. Though the *Times* spoke to management officials, including a factory manager and a shift boss, about Akhmetov's militia, it presented the militia as a powerful social force with 15,000 steelworkers signed up to defend the city.

The story was absurd on its face, giving no reason why masses of workers should “rise up” under the orders of Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest man, to defend the unpopular, far-right regime in Kiev. Indeed, the article itself tended to suggest that the so-called workers' patrols were a right-wing operation set up by Akhmetov and his factory overseers.

When the *Times* asked why workers supported patrols to restore order, shift boss Sergei Istratov said: “Everybody can have their own opinion, but not at work. At work, you have to do what the factory demands.”



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