

# Ukrainian government blacklists Russian actors and musicians

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The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture published a list last weekend of 14 singers and actors whose work will be banned from appearing on radio, television or film. Their songs will be pulled from Ukrainian radio and permits for screening their films will be withdrawn.

The blacklist was drawn up based on recommendations from the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Security Service of Ukraine, the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio. It is expected that the blacklist will grow in size as the culture ministry reviews appeals from the security services.

The artists on the list, all Russian citizens, are accused of posing a threat to Ukraine's "national security." The ban on them is a cultural component of the offensive being waged by the United States and its NATO allies to remove Ukraine from Russia's sphere of influence. The government led by Petro Poroshenko is an effective puppet of the American government, waging a war against pro-Russian separatists and promoting far-right wing Ukrainian nationalist forces.

Those on the cultural blacklist have all, to varying degrees, given support to Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as the pro-Russian separatists in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, who have been in conflict with government-backed forces since the spring of 2014.

The separatists in eastern Ukraine are opposed to the pro-Western regime in Kiev that was brought to power in February last year in a US and NATO backed-coup that ousted pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich. While a ceasefire was signed earlier this year, irregular fighting continues to result in casualties and deaths on both sides.

As popular hostility toward his regime over austerity policies, Ukraine's spiraling economic crisis, and the

human and financial costs of the war in the Donbass grows, Poroshenko is attempting to whip up anti-Russian hysteria and foment cultural terror in the country, which has a large Russian-speaking population.

Among the most notable of those on the blacklist is French actor Gerard Depardieu who was granted citizenship by Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2013. Depardieu has been a vocal defender of Putin and has opposed the pro-Western regime in Kiev. In July, the Ukrainian government banned him from entering the country until 2020.

The list includes Russian actors Sergei Bezrukov and Mikhail Boyarsky, and singers Oleg Gazmanov and Iosif Kobzon. They were among a number of Russian cultural figures who signed a letter in March 2014 supporting the annexation of Crimea in the aftermath of the Maidan coup.

Kobzon, who is a deputy in the State Duma, was added to the European Union's list of sanctioned individuals in February for performing concerts for separatist leaders in his native Donetsk, as well as in Crimea, after Russia's annexation of the territory.

Ivan Okhobystin, Grigory Leps, Vladimir Kucherenko, Yegor Kholmogorov, Mikhail Khazin, Valeriya Perfilova, Iosif Prigozhin, Nikolay Rastorguyev, and Mikhail Porechenkov are also among those who will be subject to censorship in Ukraine. Stas Piekha, another popular Russian singer who was to perform in Odessa this Saturday, was barred from entering the country.

While Ukraine's government is attempting to erase the country's deep cultural and political ties to Russia in the service of the interests of Western imperialism, its history is also being rewritten for the same purposes.

The release of the cultural blacklist follows the passage of legislation in April that rehabilitated Nazi collaborationist forces, including Stepan Bandera's Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA). Forces that carried out massacres during World War II in collaboration with the Germans are now protected from public criticism.

At the same time the government banned the display of all communist symbols in the former Soviet Republic. The law officially criminalizes thousands of street names, public squares, monuments, statues and artwork that commemorate the country's history as part of the Soviet Union. Those who sell communist souvenirs or sing the International face five years in prison, while those belonging to communist organizations could be imprisoned for 10 years.

Since the passage of legislation more than 100 statues commemorating Vladimir Lenin and other leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution have been pulled down. In June, members of the neo-fascist Right Sector militia in the eastern city of Sloviansk pulled down a statue of Lenin over the objections of 4,000 residents who signed a petition opposing its destruction.



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