

Paris, 6 October 2010

Dear Foreign Minister Kouchner,

As you are to meet with Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich on 8 October, during his official visit to France, Reporters Without Borders would like to draw your attention to the serious violations of media freedom that have taken place in his country since his election as president in February.

Our contacts in Ukraine have been alerting us to violations with increasing frequency. Surprised by the suddenness and speed of the deterioration in the situation, we felt we had no choice but to conduct a fact-finding visit to Ukraine in July.

We enclose a copy of the report of our visit which we published at the end of August and which includes our main conclusions and recommendations.

We learned from the people we met that the Ukrainian media are being subjected to increasing harassment by government officials, politicians and leading businessmen. At the same time, the authorities failed to convince us that they seriously intend to deal with cases of obstruction or violence against journalists.

We received many accounts that attest to a return of censorship, especially in the broadcasting sector. We also found a serious conflict of interest in the fact that the owner of Ukraine's biggest broadcasting group is at the same time the head of the Ukrainian intelligence services and a member of the judiciary supreme council. Journalist Vasyl Klymentyev's disappearance in suspicious circumstances in August has reinforced our concerns.

We would therefore be very grateful if you could convey our concerns and recommendations to President Yanukovich. The change of government in Ukraine has raised many questions in France and elsewhere in Europe about the kind of relations that would be possible with a Ukraine that respects fundamental rights less and turns a deaf ear to the appeals of its European neighbours.

We are confident you will appreciate the importance of our request.

Sincerely,



Jean-François Julliard
Secretary-General