

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Briefing  
on  
IMPRISONED WRITERS

Monday, November 14, 2022 – 1:30 p.m.  
2255 Rayburn House Office Building and Virtual via Cisco WebEx

Statement of Stanislav Aseyev

My name is Stanislav Aseyev, I'm a Ukrainian writer, journalist, and former political prisoner. I will speak in Ukrainian.

In 2017, while I was working as a journalist, I was arrested by the local police in Donetsk. By that time, I had worked for two years already as a journalist for the Ukrainian branch of Radio Free Europe. In 2017, after the detention, I was accused of terrorism. Actually, I admitted to the charge after I had been tortured with electric shocks. [29.25-29.34]. I was charged with extremism, which describes everything that dissenting journalists do in that area of Ukraine. I spent the next two years in jail in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic. I spent the bulk of the time in a place in the facility that was for isolation. While the facility is illegal, it is a jail run by the Russian Federation, but not recognized by the government of the Russian Federation [30:31]. I spent 27 months there, and I was a witness to numerous military crimes that the Russian occupiers committed. Later on, I was convicted. I received two sentences, each getting 15 years in prison. Two and a half years into my prison sentence, I was part of the exchange of prisoners following an agreement between the Russian and Ukrainian governments. I believe that today, as it was in 2017, that area of Ukraine suffers from a totally totalitarian regime. And that regime, as a result of Russian military aggression, has spread from the occupied areas of the Donbas region to the newly occupied and annexed territories. Currently, in addition to that isolation facility, we have several so-called "filtration camps" that the Russian authorities are running. One has to understand that the freedom of speech and the freedom of expression are among the most dangerous activities that undermine the Russian regime. That's why Russian authorities are throwing writers, journalists, and dissenters into the newly created prisons that they often create in basements. Unfortunately, the situation has drastically deteriorated since 2017, and people who live in that region of Ukraine have no legal recourse whatsoever and no legal ties with the rest of the democratic world. We know for a fact that the detention facility—called Izolyatsia installation—was established in 2014 and is still around, and no human rights organization has ever had access to it since then [34.30]. I have a number of my colleagues who are still imprisoned in the Donbas region and Crimea. And I know for a fact that 95 percent of all the detainees are tortured with electric power. One of the recent examples is the case of Vladislav Yesypenko [35.08]. I am hopeful that the United States will continue supporting Ukraine by providing it comprehensive support, including support for political prisoners. It is very important that the names of the people who are imprisoned or detained are known all over the world to save their lives.