



Public Statement

The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the murders of lawyers Tetyana Popova and Valeriy Rybalchenko in Ukraine

Toronto, ON — The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the murders of lawyers Tetyana Popova and Valeriy Rybalchenko in Ukraine.

It has come to the Law Society's attention that on December 22, 2016, Tetyana Popova was brutally attacked near her office in Kharkiv, Ukraine. She was found on the street by passers-by and taken to a hospital, where she eventually died from her injuries (a broken neck and stab wounds to the chest). Tetyana Popova's colleagues believe that her murder was related to her professional activities as a lawyer, as she had won a number of high-profile cases just prior to her death.

As for Valeriy Rybalchenko, sources indicate that he was shot in the head on January 21, 2017 in the Dniproviskyi District of Kiev. He later died from his injuries at a hospital.

According to reports, the Ukrainian National Bar Association has called for thorough investigations into the assassinations of the two lawyers and has expressed concerns over the increasing risk faced by the legal profession in the country.

The Law Society of Upper Canada urges the Government of Ukraine to comply with Ukraine's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Article 18 states:

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

The Law Society urges the Government of Ukraine to:

- a. immediately conduct fair, impartial and independent investigations into the murders of Tetyana Popova and Valeriy Rybalchenko in order to identify all those responsible, bring them to trial and apply to them civil, penal and/or administrative sanctions provided by law;
- b. put an end to all acts of harassment and violence against lawyers in Ukraine;
- c. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all lawyers in Ukraine;
- d. ensure that all lawyers in Ukraine can carry out their professional duties and activities without fear of reprisals, physical violence or other human rights violations;
and
- e. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.