



Ukrainian Congress Committee of America Illinois Division

Український Конгресовий Комітет Америки - Відділ Ілліной

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

22 February 2014

**CHICAGO UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY CALLS FOR VIGIL
FOR THE FALLEN HEROES WHO WERE KILLED BY GOVERNMENT FORCES
IN DEFENSE OF UKRAINIAN FREEDOM
AND RALLY OF HOPE FOR THE REBIRTH OF THE NATION**

**Consulate General of Ukraine
SUNDAY, February 23, 2014 at 1:30 pm
10 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL**

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America – Illinois Division has called for a vigil to honor those who were killed by government forces in this week's deadly clashes with government units in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, with a death toll of 100 and thousands wounded. There is outrage at the government's deadly force against its own people, and worldwide condemnation of the brutality and violence.

The UCCA-Illinois Division on behalf of the entire Ukrainian community welcomes the news of recent developments in Ukraine, including the establishment of a new Parliamentary majority in the Verkhovna Rada, the release of former PM Yulia Tymoshenko, and the decision to have Ukraine become a signatory to the International Criminal Court. Today's events follow the international agreement signed yesterday which stopped the killing of Ukrainian citizens by the authorities. UCCA-Illinois expresses its deepest sympathy to all those who have lost family and friends.

The February 21 Agreement marked a return to the 2004 Constitution, which limits the powers of the president, called for the formation of a unity government, a process of constitutional reform and pre-term presidential elections, the adoption of new election legislation, a new Central Election Commission appointed on a proportional basis, the independent investigation of the violence and human rights violations of recent weeks, and an amnesty for demonstrators.

Today February 22, the Verkhovna Rada adopted, with a Constitutional majority, to remove all Constitutional powers from Yanukovich, named a new Speaker, removed the Ministers of Defence, Interior, Security Service and the General Prosecutor and appointed Deputies to oversee those Ministries.

The European Union has agreed to impose sanctions on Ukrainian officials "responsible for violence and excessive force".

President Obama warned the Ukrainian military to stay out of the crisis. "We have been watching very carefully and we expect the Ukrainian government to show restraint, to not resort to violence in dealing with peaceful protesters... There will be consequences if people step over the line."

In Washington, the State Department imposed a visa ban on 20 senior Ukrainian officials, whom it accused of playing a role in the government's crackdown.

U.S. Helsinki Commission Chairman Sen. Ben Cardin of Maryland, and Co-Chairman Rep. Chris Smith of New Jersey, both senior members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, issued a statement that included the following condemnation: "... This violence is the result of a regime which has repeatedly displayed contempt for its people, who want nothing more than to be afforded the dignity which is their right as citizens. We unequivocally deplore the renewal of violence in Kyiv. We stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people in their struggle for justice. The time has come to immediately impose personal sanctions, including visa bans, asset freezes and other measures, against the organizers and perpetrators of the violence and other egregious human rights abuses. The U.S. and EU should use the available tools at its disposal to contribute to a peaceful resolution of this crisis. The OSCE in particular should employ its resources and mechanisms to monitor and mitigate the serious human rights concerns."

Illinois Senator Dick Durbin stated "Ukrainian government officials involved in violence – and the Russian oligarchs who are backing them – should face a freeze on their assets and a visa ban from the United States if they continue this bloodbath.... Tragically, what is happening today is instead a cynical attempt to hold power by Ukraine's leadership and thinly veiled manipulation of the situation by Russian President Vladimir Putin." (Full statement <http://1.usa.gov/1fmWEzn>)

In a statement from Illinois Senator Mark Kirk, he said, "I strongly condemn the Ukrainian authorities for instigating the horrific violence the world witnessed in Kyiv this week...." (Full statement http://www.kirk.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=1000).

UCCA-Illinois calls upon the government of Ukraine to end the violence, and return to the people their inalienable human rights, including freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of speech, and to hold free and fair Presidential elections as soon as possible.

UCCA-Illinois underscores its complete solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and supports their brave struggle to protect their dignity, human rights, and democracy in Ukraine.

Media Contact:

Pavlo T. Bandriwsky, Vice President, UCCA-Illinois Division

Telephone: 773-848-6886

Email: pbandriwsky@gmail.com

Website: www.uccaininois.org

About UCCA IL: Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) Illinois Division was established in 1974 to unite the Ukrainian community and represent its interests in Chicago and throughout the state while maintaining contact with its ancestral homeland. UCCA conducts initiatives that underscore and preserve the community's Ukrainian traditions while fulfilling its American civic responsibilities and strengthening ties between the United States and Ukraine. It supports cultural, educational, and humanitarian activities that emphasize the Ukrainian American heritage and provide support for Ukraine's newly developing democracy.