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DEAR FAITHFUL READERS,

**THE TEAM OF UKRAINIAN HELSINKI HUMAN RIGHTS UNION
AND USAID "HUMAN RIGHTS IN ACTION" PROGRAM WISH
YOU PEACE, JOY AND PROSPERITY THROUGHOUT THE
COMING YEAR.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION – IT WAS OUR
PLEASURE TO BE WITH YOU IN 2016. WE ARE LOOKING
FORWARD TO MEET YOU ALL IN 2017.**

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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USAID HUMAN RIGHTS IN ACTION PROGRAM UPDATES

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING AND ADVOCACY

All links are given in Ukrainian

Monitoring of National Human Rights Strategy implementation

The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (hereinafter – the UHHRU) in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and in collaboration with civil society organizations and initiatives continues its work on monitoring of implementation of the National Strategy in the Sphere of Human Rights. Thus, the following events were held in December:

- ✓ On December 8 – a public discussion by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine in order to summarize annual results of the Strategy's enforcement, which brought together representative of the responsible state agencies and civil society members.

Brief summary of its results is available [here](#): the document provides recommendations by international organizations as well as assessment and comments by Ukrainian human rights activists. We'd like to pay your attention to the fact that at the beginning of 2017, the Ministry of Justice will initiate working groups to adjust the National Action Plan for the Strategy.

- ✓ On December 9 – an alternative public presentation entitled “One year of implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy: summary of the monitoring” was initiated by UHHRU and Ombudsperson’s Secretariat in order to highlight successes, failures, lessons learned as well further steps need to be undertaken for more efficient Strategy's implementation by all stakeholders.



By following [this link](#) everyone can find complete summary of the event, including dashboard and opinions of the speakers on the issue – some key quotations are given below for your convenience:

Valeria Lutkovska, Ukrainian Ombudsperson: “*Even when we see that only 21% from the initially planned was fulfilled, we should not be disappointed. Theoretically, the Public Platform for monitoring of the Strategy's execution is aimed to make our task and the tasks of government implementers easier. But this will be possible only if we join our efforts as well as our purposes and understanding of the process. I am convinced that we need to meet with the Government to tell the officials about our concerns and willingness to further cooperate, but effectively and not just formally*”.



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Arkadiy Bushchenko, UHHRU Executive Director, Chief of Party of USAID Human Rights in Action Program: “*A great deal of success in the Strategy’s implementation was achieved thank to the active position of the civic organizations and the Ombudsperson’s Secretariat. Strategy is being an important advocacy framework to be used for promotion of important changes in Ukrainian society. And if for this Strategy needs to be adjusted, we will try to make its relevant for addressing new and emerging challenges*”.

In addition, an alternative media coverage of the event held is available [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Just reminding that report itself can be also downloaded [here](#).

It should be noted that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Human Rights in Action Project supports the UHHRU’s work on monitoring of implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy.

Interim results of “Human Rights ‘Passports’ (Profiles) of Oblasts” initiative were presented¹

On December 23, there was held a public presentation to summarize the interim results of the given initiative by UHHRU and Secretariat of Ukraine’s Ombudsperson. In particular, there were introduced further steps to be undertaken to promote more efficient implementation of the “Human rights passport system of oblasts” in course of decentralization.



Several quotations by the keynote speakers on the matter of concern are presented below:

Ombudsperson Valeria Lutkovska: “*Creation of a passport system of oblasts regarding respect for human rights is an important aspect in the framework of decentralization of power in Ukraine*”.

UHHRU Executive Director Arkadiy Bushchenko pointed out: “*The next step should be to establish positive cooperation with the local authorities in dissemination of good human rights practices in their communities*”.

Early media coverage of the event is available [here](#) (including video-footage) and [here](#). The report can be found [here](#) in Ukrainian and [here](#) in English.

¹ This initiative is aimed at developing tools for assessment of all administrative-territorial entities of Ukraine (oblast) on the human rights situation. So far, we managed to conduct monitoring visits to six Ukrainian oblasts. The initiative is being supported by several projects implemented by UHHRU, namely: USAID, Global Affairs Canada and the Embassy of Sweden in Ukraine.



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STRATEGIC LITIGATIONS

All links are given in Ukrainian

Nation-wide precedent decision by High Specialized Court of Ukraine for Civil and Criminal Cases

The USAID “Human Rights in Action” Program contributed into a [precedent court ruling](#) that obliged unfair state bank – the Oschadbank – to refund its customers all the money stolen by dishonest employees (there are more than 50 defrauded depositors whose cases were denied or suspended in courts; the overall sum to be refunded is around UAH 2 million).

This decision can be considered as a follow-up of two USAID-supported successful litigations, when two elderly Lviv residents have turned to UHHRU for legal assistance and succeeded in getting back their legally owned deposited funds, which the bank has flatly refused to return (*respectively described [here](#) and [here](#)*).

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

All links are given in Ukrainian

Travelling educational exhibition “Everyone has the right to know their rights”

In December, the travelling educational exhibition “Everyone has the right to know their rights” visited Chernihiv and Khmelnitsky in the framework of the Ukraine-wide tour organized by USAID “Human Rights in Action” Project (those were the final two out of ten performances in the year 2016). This exhibit is being a methodological tool for human rights education supported by UHHRU within the Educational Program “We Understand Human Rights” (WUHR)². Traditionally, prior to the exhibition itself there were held training seminars to prepare ‘guides’ among local schools students.



² The exhibition was created by Chernihiv-based “MART” NGO (UHHRU’s member organization) under support of the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) as one of the steps to implement systematic approach to human rights teaching.



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Visitors of the travelling exhibition (not only school students) could have a look at 25 stands telling about the origin of human rights, human dignity, basic features of human rights, non-discrimination, the criteria for assessing the legality of limitations of human rights, democracy, rule of law and standards for certain rights and freedoms.

FYI, here is a [video report](#) by Khmelnytskyi local TV channel and a [video report](#) related to the exhibition in Chernihiv. We also suggest paying attention to the following media reports: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#) and [4](#).

Two competitions under “Human Rights in Action” Project’s umbrella finished

The USAID-supported Ukraine-wide essay competition for high school students “Human rights through the prism of modernity” and National competition of teaching and methodical materials on human rights ran to its end³. The winners and laureates are listed on the UHHRU website at the links [here](#) and [here](#) accordingly.

[Ceremony of awarding the winners](#) of both competitions was held jointly by UHHRU and the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights on December 22, recognized three students and three teachers for their winning submissions to the human rights writing competitions.

“We definitely supported this initiative [to hold the contests] because its implementation with broad involvement of children and youth from all regions of our country is an important part of a larger plan developed by the Ombudsperson’s Office jointly with OSCE and the Ministry of education and Science of Ukraine, relative to the active human rights promotion in the school environment,” said Aksana Filipishina, the Ombudsperson’s representative.

USAID Acting Regional Mission Director John Pennell congratulated the contests’ winners: *“Your efforts to teach, study and write about human rights is an important element of promoting widespread acceptance, respect, and protection of human rights across Ukraine. As 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan said “Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.”*



Please proceed [here](#) and [here](#) to find early media coverage of the event.

³ Totally, almost 300 students in grades 9-11 from across Ukraine submitted essays on a broad range of human rights topics, including the rights of persons with disabilities, human rights in the ATO zone, the right to life, freedom of expression, corruption, freedom of religion, domestic violence, gender and employment discrimination, Roma rights, and human rights online. Likewise, 150 teachers from 20 oblasts submitted their human rights curricula on the role of a school in a community, rights of the child, human rights fundamentals, study of fundamental human rights documents, human rights protection, rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the right to medical treatment.



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Moreover, on December 26, a follow-up seminar was held for students and teachers of the school, where the winner of high school students' essay competition is studied at (Velyka Pavlivka village, Poltava oblast). Thus, over 60 attendees got familiarized with the basic theory and practical skills to hold activity in the field of human rights protection, as well as fundamentals of managing an educational institution on the principles of human rights and democracy.

Another similar training was held a bit earlier, on December 20, for teachers serving at the Center of children and youth creativity (Berdiansk, Zaporizhya oblast), to which the winner of human rights curriculum contest belongs to.

USAID-supported local training events on human rights issues and a follow-up initiative

Let us remind, that in October 2016 "Human Rights in Action" Project announced a [competition](#) for CSOs that involve at least one graduate of the WUHR Program. Prize-winners were promised to be granted with a financial support to cover their expenses for holding of educational human rights related activities. So far, the competition is finished, and the organizing committee ruled to initiate the following events as an inseparable series:

- December 10-12 – "Introductory training on human rights for civic activists of Vinnitsa oblast" in Khmilnyk
- December 14-15 – training "Human rights and gender equality" [in Uzhgorod](#)
- December 15-17 – training "Human rights for everybody" in Kremenchuk
- December 25-26 – training "Rights of the child" in Ternopil

In general, the events were aimed at solving the problem of legal nihilism, raising general knowledge of human rights concepts and particular human rights, improving legal awareness of the active citizens in the region, as well as they can be considered as a response to challenging situations related to human rights that arise within the communities of the mentioned cities.

Seminar on International Humanitarian Law

On December 17-18, USAID "Human Rights in Action" Program was holding a seminar "Fundamentals of the International Humanitarian Law" in co-operation with the Ukrainian Association of Humanitarian Law. The event, the main objective of which was an approbation of educational materials developed by UHHRU, was attended by lecturers of various higher education institutions from Kharkiv, Odesa, Kyiv, Dnipropetrovks and other oblasts, who engaged in IHL teaching.

Work meeting on monitoring of human rights teaching at Ukrainian secondary schools

On December 24-25, the work meeting was held by "Human Rights in Action" Program, devoted to summarizing the results of the pilot studies on the matter of delivering human rights education within the Ukrainian secondary education system. Plans for the year 2017 were voiced out as well. As a follow-up activity we plan to publicly present the named results in January 2017.



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MAIN EVENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA

UN General Assembly votes for resolution on human rights in Crimea

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 19 [voted](#) for a resolution on human rights in Crimea, titled “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)”, which was initiated by Ukraine and supported by the UNGA Third Committee. The General Assembly has called on the Russian Federation “to take all measures necessary to bring an immediate end to all abuses against residents of Crimea, in particular reported discriminatory measures and practices, arbitrary detentions, torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, and to revoke all discriminatory legislation.” It also urges Russia to “immediately release Ukrainian citizens who were unlawfully detained and judged without regard for elementary standards of justice, as well as those transferred across internationally recognized borders from Crimea to the Russian Federation.”

The resolution is the first international document designating the Russian Federation as an occupying power and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as a temporarily occupied territory. In addition, the resolution confirmed the territorial integrity of Ukraine and reaffirmed the non-recognition of the annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula.

Ukraine’s statement before the UNGA vote on the draft resolution concerning Crimea can be read [here](#). Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine’s Statement on the adoption of the UN resolution can be found [here](#).

However, certain problematic issues have been pointed out by the Ukrainian human rights defenders in their [public appeal](#) (*link is in Ukrainian*).

Ukraine’s President has initiated changes in law on PWDs

The Head of State Petro Poroshenko [has signed](#) (*link is in Ukrainian*) a decree “On conditions regulating human rights for people with disabilities” during the meeting with civic movement representatives on the occasion of 10th anniversary of UN-adopted Convention on rights of PWDs. It implies the changes in all the spheres of PWDs’ life and could serve as a basis for adaptation the norms of national legislation to the internationally accepted standards.

The recent UN report informs human right violations continue in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts

On December 8, the United Nations has launched a new [report](#) on human rights in eastern Ukraine. According to the document, human rights are violated due to the failure of Minsk Agreements. Violations are most palpable in the area of the so-called ‘contact line’ between Government-controlled and armed group-controlled territory. 9,758 of people (including Ukrainian armed forces, civilians and members of armed groups) is the total death toll from mid-April 2014 to 1 December 2016. Over 2,000 of those killed are civilians. 22,779 people were injured during this time. The report is based on in depth interviews with 176 witnesses and victims.

The human rights discriminators of the year were named in Ukraine

The Coalition against discrimination [has published](#) the list of main human rights violators (*link is in Ukrainian*) such as: Verkhovna Rada, village authorities of Loshchynivka of Odesa oblast and



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People's Deputy Anton Herashchenko. All the listed candidates were "awarded" in the certain nominations.

New online resource on the crimes in Ukraine motivated by hatred

The [resource](#), which was created by human rights defenders, [describes](#) all such crimes from 2009 to 2016 (*links are in Ukrainian*).

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The American people, through the USAID, have provided economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for 55 years. In Ukraine, USAID's assistance focuses on three areas: Health and Social Transition, Economic Growth and Democracy and Governance. USAID has provided 1.8 bln. technical and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since 1992.

For additional information about USAID programs in Ukraine, please visit our website: <http://ukraine.usaid.gov> or our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/USAIDUkraine>.

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