

Fiat iustitia!¹

The impact of coverage of court decisions in cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine on public attitudes towards the judiciary

The publication will be useful for employees of courts, the prosecutor's office, the police, the Security Service of Ukraine and other state institutions involved in the communication process on the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The guide will be useful to members of the media, as well as non-governmental organizations concerned with armed conflict.

The report has been prepared by the NGO “The Vector of Human Rights” within the framework of the “Monitoring the Impact of the Coverage of Court Decisions in Cases Related to the Armed Conflict in eastern Ukraine on the Public's Attitude to the Judiciary Branch” project implemented by the NGO's team under the UN Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme with financial support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Introduction

According to the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “On Repelling Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation and Overcoming Its Consequences”²:

- “The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine began on February 20, 2014, when the first cases of violation by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation against the international legal obligations of the Russian Federation of crossing the state border of Ukraine near the Kerch Strait and using its military formations to block Ukrainian military units were recorded”;
- “The second phase of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine began in April 2014, when armed gang formations, controlled and financed by the special services of the Russian Federation, proclaimed the creation of the Donetsk People's Republic (April 7, 2014) and Luhansk People's Republic (April 27, 2014)”.

In July 2021, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine Iryna Venediktova reported that during 2014-2020, almost 30,000 criminal offenses committed in the context of the armed conflict and related to Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine were recorded in Ukraine³. The number of civil and administrative proceedings caused by the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine is currently uncountable. Moreover, even an analysis of certain categories of cases shows that there are tens of thousands of cases.

Thus, the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine has placed a significant burden on the work of both law enforcement and the judiciary in Ukraine. It is from the courts that society expects the most not only to restore justice in the lives of specific people who suffered from the armed conflict, but also to establish the facts about the course of the armed conflict.

¹ Let justice be done, though the heavens fall! (*Latin*)

² Resolution on the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “On Repelling Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation and Overcoming Its Consequences” of April 21, 2015 №337-19. Access: <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/337-19>

³ Radio Liberty/Svoboda. The publication “The PGO reported on the number of recorded crimes committed by Russia against Ukraine during the armed conflict”. Access: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zlochyny-ogp-donbas-konflikt/31361443.html>

The proposed report presents the results of a study of the relationship between the level of trust in the courts and the coverage of court decisions in cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. These conclusions may be of interest to all those involved in the communication of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, and the recommendations will be a guide for public authorities and the media.

Research methodology

The research aimed to examine the relationship between the level of trust in the courts and the coverage of court decisions in cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, in order to improve the attitude of citizens to the judiciary.

The following objectives were set to achieve this goal:

- 1) to find out the attitude of citizens to the judiciary and their awareness of court cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine;
- 2) to find out the actual impact of the media publications, pre-trial investigation bodies and the prosecutor's office on court decisions in cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine on the public attitude to the judiciary;
- 3) to identify trends in the observance of journalistic standards and attitudes in the coverage of cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine;
- 4) to outline trends in the coverage of cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, pre-trial investigation bodies and the prosecutor's office regarding court decisions of local general and appellate courts and the Supreme Court;
- 5) to receive specific recommendations on improving the level of trust, attitude to the judiciary and objective coverage of the content of court decisions.

To achieve the goal and objectives of the research, the activities described below were carried out.

1. Public opinion survey

During the survey, the entire adult population of Ukraine was selected as the total population, except for the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, which are temporarily not under the control of the Government of Ukraine. The sample is proportionally stratified by macro-regions of Ukraine – Center (Cherkasy oblast), North (Zhytomyr oblast), East (Donetsk and Kharkiv oblasts), West (Ivano-Frankivsk and Rivne oblasts), South (Kherson oblast), Kyiv. The sample is representative by age, sex, type of settlement.

The statistical error with a probability of 0.95 does not exceed 3.1% for one-dimensional distributions of all respondents⁴. Sample population: 1000 respondents who were questioned through personal formalized interviews. The survey was conducted by the Kharkiv Institute for Social Research in December 2021.

2. Focus group research

Focus group interviews were conducted in the following format: the first part of the interview was devoted to the awareness and interest of citizens in the work of courts in Ukraine and court cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine; the second part was designed to discuss specific publications and court decisions on such cases.

A total of 9 focus groups were held with the participation of 60 people. Focus group research was conducted by the Kharkiv Institute for Social Research in December 2021.

⁴ Theoretical error without taking into account the selective design effect. The size of the design effect is estimated at almost 1.4, thus, in this case the size of the statistical error with a probability of 0.95 does not exceed 4.5%.

3. Interviewing judges

Ten interviews with judges representing courts hearing cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine were conducted. The interviews covered both the general issues of the courts' communication activities and the specifics of this work in cases related to armed conflict.

The interviews were conducted by the Human Rights Vector NGO from November to December 2021.

4. Analysis of publications in the media

143 publications were analyzed during the research⁵, which were published online on 78 different websites⁶ (websites of online media, human rights organizations and state authorities including SBU, police departments, prosecutor's offices that covered lawsuits related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. All analyzed publications cover 33 court decisions made by courts of various instances. All investigated court decisions were made no earlier than January 1, 2018 and belonged to the sphere of civil, administrative and criminal proceedings.

The analysis of the publications was carried out by lawyer Vitaliy Lebid.

The publication provides general information on the understanding of armed conflict cases and separate reports on each of the research activities. According to the results of the research, general conclusions and recommendations have been elaborated.

Conclusions

- 1.** The majority of citizens (63.5%) do not trust the judiciary in Ukraine at all or to some extent. Less than a quarter of those polled who trust – 22.3%. A small number of those who consider the work of courts in Ukraine very or rather effective – only 18.8%. Every other respondent answered (49.3%) that the trials are completely or rather closed to the public in Ukraine. In focus groups, people noted that they were most annoyed by the corruption and politicization of the system, “esprit de corps”, “telephone justice”, impunity and the lack of judges’ “integrity”. People are concerned that this situation in the judiciary has a very strong impact on the development of the state, its democratic and economic growth.
- 2.** Almost all focus group participants pointed to the negative outcome of the reform of the judiciary and, consequently, the low efficiency of the courts. Among the main changes were the increase in salaries, the introduction of electronic litigation, the introduction of specialization of courts and stricter compliance with the practice of the Supreme Court, the introduction of a jury trial. The painful points of the reform, and, accordingly, the factors of inefficiency of the judiciary are staffing problems (lack, difficulty of selection, corruption in appointment procedures), lack of control over the activities of judges and their complete impunity. It is worth noting that the lack of staff provokes long time delays in the case.
- 3.** It should be noted that a significant part of both focus group participants and respondents did not apply to the court on their own. Thus, their ideas about the judiciary and its effectiveness are formed mostly by the media, less – from experience of their acquaintances and friends. This approach, in today's information environment filled with negative reports about the

⁵ Annex 4. List of cases and publications for analysis.

⁶ Annex 5. List of analyzed information resources.

judiciary, corruption scandals and unjustified wealth of judges, significantly affects the opinion of regular citizens about the courts. That is why even positive or neutral reports about the decision of the judiciary in favor of regular people are perceived by respondents mostly as an exception, rather than the rule of justice in Ukraine. Speaking about the work of the judiciary in Ukraine, people are most dissatisfied with high-profile cases of corrupt officials and politicians, which have been going on for years and almost never end in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

4. The main sources of news for citizens are national television and online editions – 50.3% and 48.2%, respectively. Respondents most often heard about certain lawsuits during the last year from national TV channels (41.8%). Significantly less of this news occurred in online editions (26.7%), even less – on Facebook (12.5%) and YouTube (11.6%). Only 2% of respondents learned about these lawsuits from the official websites of state bodies. Almost a quarter of citizens have not heard anything about the court in the last year (26.2%). Most of the focus group participants stated that they were not intentionally interested in the activities of the judiciary. Most often, specific high-profile cases may be of interest, namely road accidents, arrests of activists and politicians, etc.
5. The majority of respondents during the survey stated that they never or almost never verify the information they receive about court proceedings (67.0%). One third of respondents still verify the information: 10.8% - always and 22.2% - sometimes. In more than half of the cases, citizens try to verify information about court proceedings, compare data from different sources (53.8%). In a quarter of cases, they look for the primary source – the websites of courts and other government agencies (26.1%). Every fifth respondent compares the information received with previous publications on the case (19.8%).
6. It should be noted that the majority of respondents have not visited the websites of state bodies for the last three years (82.5%). The most visited state websites were the website of the judiciary of Ukraine (6.8%) and the website of the National Police of Ukraine (6.7%).
7. The majority of citizens (77.0%) are interested in information about the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The majority of respondents trust information about this from civic associations (48.3%) and international organizations (46.2%). Other institutions and organizations received a negative balance of trust.
8. 42.3% of respondents are aware of court cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. One in five Ukrainians cannot remember these cases (20.6%). 37.1% of respondents stated that they did not know about it. Among the list of court cases, the most well-known are the case of MP Nadiya Savchenko and the head of the Officer Corps Center for the Release of Prisoners Volodymyr Ruban (75.9%), the case of MP Viktor Medvedchuk (66.7%), the case of Donbas Battalion Commander Semen Semenchenko (47.7%).
9. The participants of the focus groups mostly pointed out the cases that were constantly mentioned in the media – the cases of Viktor Yanukovych, Nadezhda Savchenko, Nellie Shtepa, Viktor Medvedchuk, Semen Semenchenko, Natalia Poklonskaya, Viktor Nazarov, leaders of the so-called Luhansk People's Republic “LPR”) and the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (“DPR”), Petro Poroshenko, representatives of volunteer battalions (Tornado, Donbas, Azov, etc.), the Wagner Group, as well as cases of the downed Boeing 777 nearby Donetsk and the battles for Ilovaisk and Debaltseve. It is worth noting that it was not easy for the respondents to mention these cases.

- 10.** The results of the survey showed that the majority of respondents did not follow court cases on the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine on purpose, but learned about it by chance while reading the news (61.0%). Respondents who still monitor court cases (18.0% of all respondents) mostly want to see news about the punishment of the perpetrators (43.9%) and find out all the circumstances of the events (35.5%).
- 11.** The majority of respondents believe that publications on court cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine are more or less accessible. Thus, 29.4% believe that there are enough materials, and 23.4% say that they are few, but can be found. Another 12.2% indicated that nothing could be found at all.
- 12.** Focus group participants noted that information on such cases was incomplete; contradictory; more confusing than explaining; filled with rumors, propaganda, fakes, which makes it very difficult to perceive. If people are really interested in learning something about a particular case, they usually use social media, Telegram channels and Internet search. Using a register of court decisions for respondents is currently an inconvenient option to verify court cases they read about in the media.
- 13.** Respondents believe that trials in the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine should be covered, as it is important for the public to know the facts (45.4%). This is no less important for the formation of the state's position on this issue (43.7%) and to ensure the fairness of the sentence (40.2%). Only 1.9% of respondents consider the coverage of such cases in the media unimportant.
- 14.** The majority of citizens (76.7%) are interested in information on trials related to the armed conflict. People are most interested in information about proven guilt in cases (33.9%), the general situation with the administration of justice in connection with armed conflict (30.2%) and verdicts in high-profile cases (26.5%). Judges dealing with such cases are the least interesting (14.9%).
- 15.** Judicial decisions ("dry messages") are of little interest to regular citizens, as they find them incomprehensible and difficult to perceive. This is due to the use of special terminology, the complexity of individual cases and the vagueness of decisions. In publications on the work of the judiciary, citizens want to see the "coloring" of reports on court cases with data on real people, the circumstances, how they affected the practice of legal relations, as well as whether the perpetrators were punished. It is about presenting the life story of a specific person who has applied to the court for protection of their rights, the so-called storytelling in court.
- 16.** When writing publications, it is important to take into account and describe the views of various parties to the process, to specify the data, and perhaps even provide statistics related to the described problem. Respondents appreciated the links to useful materials, and also noted that it is worth referring in articles to regulations for readers' convenience. Some participants also suggested using different formats of court information – pictures, videos, live streaming of trials.
- 17.** The focus group participants indicated that when reading about a specific problem in the publication, they would like to know about the possible solution to this problem, in particular where to go for protection of their rights, etc.
- 18.** Easily and comprehensibly written, structured and concise messages build more trust in readers. More complex texts cause misunderstandings and directly affect the negative attitude towards the judiciary. Disappointing are reports from the judiciary demonstrating the

ineffectiveness of a particular court. At the same time, positive messages about the judiciary do not actually improve the attitude towards it – as it is perceived as the judges' routine.

19. Cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine continue to be actively considered in the courts. Since the beginning of the conflict, the largest number of cases in all categories of justice went to the courts in 2017. There are currently no separate official statistics on the receipt and handling of cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine. Such information can be found for certain categories of cases.
20. The main problems faced by the judges interviewed during the trials related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine are primarily related to the consideration of court cases and not to their coverage.
21. The interviewed judges noted the lack of adequate logistical support, which affects the ability to fully ensure the accessibility and openness of the trial not only for participants in court proceedings, but also for the general public. Thus, there are problems with the notification of court hearings of participants in trials, ensuring their participation in court hearings by videoconference, respectively, ensuring the trial broadcasting. The heavy workload on the representatives of the communication teams of the courts, the lack of a separate position of a press secretary significantly complicates the communication work of the court.
22. The mechanism of trial broadcasting via technical facilities of the court (on the YouTube channel "The Judiciary of Ukraine") in cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine is used, but judges have different views on the appropriateness of publicity of the trial in this format, in particular broadcasting the process of examining evidence. It is now possible to view recordings of high-profile trials in the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.
23. The interviewed judges emphasized that the interest in litigation related to the armed conflict in Ukraine had decreased slightly compared to the first years of the armed conflict, and noted that these cases were primarily of interest to people directly affected by armed conflict or were from families of the victims. Regardless of the form of litigation, according to the respondents, greater public interest is attached to cases involving government officials, including the judiciary, public figures and children.
24. Coverage of cases by the courts, in particular in connection with the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, is best if the court's press service is available and/or there is a separate staff unit of a court's press secretary.
25. Courts usually cover information on trial statistics, general access to justice (e.g. court fees), court decisions, adjournments, and high-profile cases.
26. If information about the trial has been incorrectly covered in the media or on the websites of the pre-trial investigation and prosecutor's offices, courts usually refute the information, clarify the information, and provide the judge's commenting and additional information.
27. Among the positive aspects of the media coverage of the armed conflict in Ukraine, the interviewed judges indicated: seeking comment in court; tracking the case from start to finish; preparation for coverage of judicial issues. Among the negative aspects of media coverage of the armed conflict in Ukraine, the interviewed judges singled out: the media's lack of understanding of the reasons for a court's decision (for example, due to failure of the investigation bodies to finalize it); lack of balance of opinions (for example, the point of view of only one party prevails); lack of understanding between the choice of a measure of restraint

and a court sentence; misunderstanding of terminology regarding armed conflict (e.g. "war"/"armed conflict").

- 28.** According to the respondents' observations, most often informational reports of the prosecutor's office concern the filing of an indictment by the prosecutor with the court. Among the positive aspects of the coverage of the armed conflict in Ukraine by the prosecutor's office, the interviewed judges noted: efficiency of information provision; clarity of information (place, date of the event, all the facts). Among the negative aspects of the coverage of the armed conflict in Ukraine by the prosecutor's office, the interviewed judges singled out: attempts to demonstrate the decisive role of the prosecutor's office; leveling the principle of innocence; selective/unreliable provision of motivation of the court on a particular decision (for example, on the grounds for choosing a measure of restraint).
- 29.** The interviewed judges consider it necessary to work on coverage of information on litigation related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, clarification of mechanisms to protect their rights in such cases, to focus on informing about the inevitability of punishment in such cases, to increase public trust in the judiciary and the implementation of the preventive function.
- 30.** Nine out of ten judges interviewed stated that the coverage of cases related to armed conflict affects the level of trust in the judiciary. Among the factors that may shape the public's negative perception of the court, the interviewed judges noted the activities of other government agencies, the media, different perceptions of some issues by the parties and the public. The answers to the question did not contain clear ideas of the role of courts in shaping the perception of their activities and actually promoting the increase of trust in the judiciary. It should be noted that the judges emphasize the important role of courts in improving the quality of coverage of cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.
- 31.** There is a great demand among the interviewed judges for special training on the issues arising in connection with the armed conflict in Ukraine, both on the issues of consideration of such cases and their coverage. Judges note the importance of conducting exercises in mixed groups with the participation of representatives of state bodies, local self-governments and local authorities, the legal community, human rights defenders, and media representatives.
- 32.** An analysis of media reports showed that most of the terminology used was in line with international humanitarian law and was neutral; however, in some cases there was individual terminology that violated the presumption of innocence.
- 33.** Media reports published on specialized websites for lawyers or accountants were quite neutral, including the case for calculating pensions for combatants and the payment of USC for residents of the occupied territories, etc. Judgments highlighted in these publications usually concerned a legal issue or a gap in legislation or law enforcement. That is why these publications are aimed at conveying information about the court decision and its consequences without providing an assessment or emotionally colored messages. In addition, short information articles were also neutral, which only stated the fact of making a certain decision and did not analyze it or provide an assessment of the decision and the process of its consideration.
- 34.** According to the analysis of media reports, the positive tone of media publications is formed, in particular, due to the following factors:

 - Use by the authors of "approving" words and "positive" vocabulary, such as: "the court fully satisfied the claim", "received compensation", "the court took into account",

- "successful completion of the case", "call this case unprecedented", "the court sided with the IDP", "the court took it into account as mitigating circumstances";
- Positive assessment by the author or expert of the consequences of the court decision (formation of positive case law);
- An author emphasizes the correction of legislative gaps by making a court decision.

35. According to the analysis of media reports, the negative tone of media publications is formed, in particular, due to factors such as:

- Negative assessment of the work of the judiciary: mostly it concerned the delay of the trial, i.e. violation of the principle of reasonable time for consideration of the case;
- An author draws attention to the fact that the plaintiffs in certain cases are forced to prove in court "obvious" facts and that this is negatively reflected on the plaintiffs themselves (IDPs); for example, cases of establishing the fact of resettlement due to armed conflict, deaths or injuries in the anti-terrorist operation zone, etc.;
- Use of negative emotionally-colored language;
- Inability to comply with court decisions;
- Negative consequences of the court decision;
- An author points out shortcomings during the trial or quotes one of the parties regarding such shortcomings;
- a negative assessment of the judge's actions was given.

36. Peculiarities of coverage of the content of court decisions depend on factors such as:

- Media category and its audience;
- The purpose of covering the content of the court decision (information block or analytics);
- A journalist's approach. According to the results of the analysis of publications, four approaches can be distinguished and their inherent features of presenting information about the course of the trial or its outcome: informational, analytical, personal, professional.

37. As part of the analysis of media reports, compliance with journalistic standards was analyzed:

- Balance of thoughts and points of view. Most of the publications analyzed did not adhere to this principle. Often, the presence or absence of views of the parties to the proceedings affected the perception (positive or negative) of the results of the court decision.
- Completeness of facts and information on a particular issue. The analyzed publications have repeatedly encountered cases when information on the court decision or the issue to which it relates is not provided in full and some facts are omitted that may subsequently affect the perception of the decision by readers.
- Reliability. 47% of the surveyed publications did not contain references to primary sources or did not indicate the source of information that would confirm the published information.
- Accuracy of information/inaccuracies or errors. The publications analyzed did not reveal any that completely distorted the court decision covered. It is worth noting that some of the publications contained inaccurate data or incorrect legal terms were used.
- Compliance with the presumption of innocence in the coverage of criminal cases. Of the 47 media reports on criminal cases, seven violated the presumption of innocence. Among the 16 publications on the websites of law enforcement agencies – SBU, police prosecutor's office – 9 publications, i.e. more than half, contained the violation of the presumption of innocence.

Recommendations

For Judicial Branch

- Judiciary and self-government bodies, civic associations, court employees, as well as judges should express a principled position on public information about judges' misconduct (such as allegations of corruption, dishonesty, etc.).
- Carry out active public awareness work on the problems of judicial reform and its impact on the quality of justice.
- Take measures to ensure decent pay for all court employees.
- Address the provision of courts with an adequate number of judges with the right to administer justice.
- Provide courts with high-speed Internet, the necessary amount of equipment for videoconference hearings, as well as to ensure trial broadcast by court technical facilities.
- Establish direct relations with the public and the media.
- Interpret the terms used in official messages in "simple words". It should be kept in mind that most regular citizens do not have a law degree. Provide references to these regulations.
- Use various formats of informing on the work of the court: pictures, infographics, videos, trial broadcasts, briefings of judges or press secretaries after the announcement of high-profile court decisions.
- Create messages that allow to assess the effectiveness of the judiciary (for example, statistics on the number of court cases, the results of their appeals, etc.).
- Inform in a timely manner about changes in the schedule, timeline of the court, postponement of trials, etc.
- Provide a separate position of a press secretary of the court, without imposing responsibilities on other staff members. Ensuring the training of acting press officers is the most pressing issue for local courts. It is necessary to create separate press services of courts of appeal and, if necessary, of the courts of first instance.
- Place the contacts of those responsible for the communication of the court in open access, as well as ensure that these contacts are relevant and valid.
- Form proposals to the legislator from the judiciary to improve the procedure for notification of court hearings of participants in court proceedings.
- Monitor media reports on the work of the court and, if necessary, refute or clarify information, provide comments on behalf of the court, as well as provide additional information, etc.
- Promote the development of court reporting in Ukraine, adhering to the maximum transparency of trials and using various forms of cooperation.
- Create information and educational materials on the general situation of justice in connection with the armed conflict in Ukraine.
- Publish information on the activities of courts and court cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, not only on the website "The Judiciary of Ukraine", but also on the pages of courts on social media. It is worth promoting this information on national television and online editions.
- Establish cooperation with civic associations and international organizations to inform about the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine in general and its reflection in court cases in particular.
- Form messages about the role of the judiciary to establish the truth about the armed conflict in Ukraine.
- Introduce separate public official statistics on the administration of justice in cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, for all forms of justice.

- Initiate trial broadcast by technical facilities of courts in cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, if there are no direct restrictions set by current legislation.

- Judicial, prosecutorial, legal and investigative training institutions should provide systematic special training in international humanitarian law, involving international and national experts, including from civic associations, as well as the use of joint forms of training.

- Develop interdepartmental cooperation of state bodies involved in the investigation and consideration of cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine on the coverage of these court cases (for example, holding regular joint media events, forming joint media reports).

- On the website "The Judiciary of Ukraine" in the description of the claim in the list of court cases to be considered, it is worth mentioning cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine.

- In cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, it is necessary not only to inform about the decisions made, but also actively, in particular through the judges-speakers, to explain them to the public, as well as outline their role in determining the conflict course.

- Create a system of informing the public about court cases related to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.

- Create a single information web resource on armed conflict to inform the public, given the general availability of information, about the content, course and consequences of pre-trial and court proceedings.

For pre-trial investigation bodies and prosecutor's office

- When preparing information, it is necessary to emphasize the role and importance of the prosecutor's office in the investigation of crimes related to armed conflict, in accordance with the law.

- Adhere to the principle of presumption of innocence in official communications and personal comments of representatives of the prosecutor's office. It is important to remember that a person is not guilty of a crime until proven guilty.

- When providing information to the public about a certain court decision, it is also necessary to cite the motivational part of this decision (do not miss the arguments of the court regarding its decision).

- Establish direct relations with the public and the media.

- Explain in "simple words" the terms used in official communications. Keep in mind that most audiences have no legal education. Do not use complex lexical constructions and legal jargon. Provide references to these regulations.

- Use various formats of information about the activities of pre-trial investigation bodies and the prosecutor's office - pictures, infographics, videos, trial broadcasts, comments, interviews, briefings and press conferences.

- Create messages to help assess the effectiveness of the law enforcement system (e.g. statistics on the number of cases transferred, etc.).

- Monitor media reports on the activities of pre-trial investigation bodies and the prosecutor's office. If necessary, refute or clarify information, provide comments on behalf of the pre-trial investigation bodies and the prosecutor's office, as well as provide additional information, etc.

- Training should be provided, in particular on the communication of cases related to armed conflict, in mixed groups with the participation of representatives of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, representatives of state bodies, local governments and local authorities, the legal community, human rights defenders and media representatives.

- Establish cooperation at the level of press services/communication teams with pre-trial investigation bodies, courts to carry out educational activities to raise public awareness of the administration of justice in cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, and to coordinate coverage on these cases in order to avoid creating obstacles during the proceedings.

- Create information and educational materials on the general situation regarding the investigation of crimes related to the armed conflict in Ukraine.
- Publish information on the activities of pre-trial investigation bodies and the prosecutor's office and on cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, not only on official websites, but also on social media pages. It is important to assist in the coverage of this information on national television and online editions.
- Establish cooperation with civic associations and international organizations to inform about the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine in general and its reflection in cases in particular.
- Information reports on crimes related to the armed conflict in Ukraine should promptly provide information to the public, indicating permissible details (such as the place, date and nature of the event).
- Create messages about the role of the prosecutor's office in establishing the truth about the course of the armed conflict in Ukraine. Refrain from statements that may negatively affect the attitude of the population to other public authorities.
- Initiate trial broadcasts by technical facilities of courts in cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, if there are no direct restrictions set by current legislation.
- Introduce separate public official statistics on the administration of justice in cases related to the armed conflict in Ukraine.
- Do not use communication tools in such a way as to create a prejudice in the population about the guilt/innocence of a person against whom a court decision has not entered into force.

For the media

- Provide information about a specific court case in retrospect, not just about a specific decision/event. After reading the material, citizens should have an understanding of what happened, what events preceded it and what the consequences may be.
- If appropriate, when writing materials on court issues, you should use the principle of storytelling: presenting the life story of a particular person who has applied for protection of their rights in court.
- Focusing on regular citizens, it is important not to use complicated legal jargon, to explain the legal terms used or the peculiarities of the judicial process.
- Describing the problem in the publication, it is necessary to provide a possible solution to this problem: where and to whom you can turn for protection of their rights, etc.
- Provide links in publications to previous materials on this topic, the mentioned regulations, useful thematic materials, etc.
- When providing information to the public about a certain court decision, it is necessary to cite the motivational part of this decision (do not miss the court's arguments regarding its decision).
- Develop court reporting as a separate area of training of journalists. People who cover the judiciary in general and in the context of armed conflict in particular should be trained in the basics of justice and international humanitarian law.
- Adhere to the presumption of innocence. It is important to remember that a person is presumed innocent of committing a crime if his or her guilt has not been legally proven and a conviction has not been established.
- Adhere to the principle of balance of opinions and points of view. Cover the trial taking into account the point of view of all participants in the case, because indicating the position of only one party affects the perception of the decision, and indicating only emotionally colored quotes from participants who are dissatisfied with the decision may form a misperception;
- During the coverage of judicial issues, it is necessary to ask for comments to the representatives of the court - press secretaries, judges-speakers, the chairman of the court.

- Provide full information about the trial and do not miss the facts that may affect the perception of the decision by readers.

- Always cite references to primary sources confirming the theses published in the publications in order to comply with the principle of authenticity (in particular, the Unified State Register of Judgments, notifications on official websites of state bodies, records of trial broadcasts by technical facilities of courts, etc.).

- If deficiencies are found in the actions of representatives of the judiciary, it is necessary to provide a reasoned explanation and/or their comments on these deficiencies.