

To the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Sweden:

The Swedish Union of Journalists strongly condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the very serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law that is now taking place. We are greatly dismayed to see how media around the world is reporting from what is going on in the war in Ukraine. We are concerned about the safety of colleagues, both Ukrainian journalists and mediaworkers, but also foreign correspondents and mediaworkers who are reporting directly from the war zones.

We are also deeply concerned about the situation of independent journalism in Russia. The media and journalists should always be able to express themselves freely. Moreover, banning journalists from using certain words is a restriction on freedom of speech and press freedom. Journalists must be able to criticize the state and express things that go against what the state considers to be correct, but instead the Russian state has decided that whoever calls the war a war risks being sentenced to prison for up to 15 years. The fact that the state censorship authority Roskomnadzor has also shut down several independent media outlets such as Ekho Moskv and TV Dozhd is extremely problematic.

This cannot be seen as anything else than a direct attack on freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We know that several foreign correspondents have left Russia and several Russian journalists are leaving the country because of the risk of getting harassed and imprisoned. It has become impossible to work as a free and independent journalist in Russia. We are extremely concerned about the safety of the Russian independent journalists who choose to stay and who are trying to report on what is going on in the country and in Ukraine, despite the strict restrictions. We stand behind them and will support their work in all situations.

The Swedish Union of Journalists calls on the Russian state to immediately put an end to the new laws and controls that severely restrict freedom of speech and freedom of the press – and to instead allow people to take part in free, independent news reporting. Without free press, no democracy.

Ulrika Hyllert, president of the Swedish Union of Journalists