

2 March 2022



ORAL STATEMENT

U.N. Human Rights Council 49th Session

Urgent debate on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression

Delivered by: Peter Micek, General Counsel and UN Advocacy Manager, Access Now (*via video*)

Thank you Mr. President.

Your excellencies,

As we speak, the people of Ukraine continue to suffer under an illegal, brutal invasion, both offline and online. I want to draw attention to cyberattacks that compound suffering in Ukraine and threaten human rights.

We stand with the people of Ukraine as they endure Russia's large-scale military invasion targeting population centers across the country, alongside ongoing cyberattacks that impact critical services and infrastructure. Cyberattacks can destroy essential systems such as electrical grids, hospitals, and governmental services, exacerbating tensions, worsening crises, and endangering lives. Violations of human rights online enable and escalate offline violence, and the calculated attacks targeting digital systems essential to people's safety and wellbeing are unacceptable.

The Council must take action **now**. Access Now urges this Council to:

- 1) Unequivocally condemn attacks on Ukraine's internet, telecommunications, and broadcast infrastructure, which deliver essential information and services, and to investigate serious violations of international human rights law, online and offline;
- 2) Establish and uphold clear, people-first cybersecurity standards, condemn cyberwarfare as a threat to human rights in Ukraine and seek accountability for cyberattacks and;
- 3) Facilitate timely access to support for local actors, particularly human rights defenders, activists, journalists, civil society organizations, and other vulnerable groups in strengthening their resilience against cyber attacks;

Thank you.



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Access Now (<https://www.accessnow.org>) defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining direct technical support, comprehensive policy engagement, global advocacy, legal interventions, grassroots grantmaking, and convenings such as RightsCon, we fight for human rights in the digital age.

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