

# Will Ukraine's Western Apologists Finally Admit the Truth?

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*For Western officials and their news media conduits who have carefully crafted the myth that Ukraine is a vibrant democracy, the past few weeks have been extremely challenging. First came the revelation that members of the country's draft boards had engaged in a pervasive degree of corruption. Prospective conscripts were paying \$5,000 bribes to avoid military service. The political stench was so bad that an embarrassed **President Volodymyr Zelensky** felt compelled [to fire](#) the heads of all the draft boards.*

On the heels of the bribery scandal, come news reports about the Ukrainian government's use of assassination squads to eliminate political and ideological opponents. There were longstanding rumors, but reports of such abuses had rarely appeared in the establishment corporate press in the West. Information was largely confined to far [less prominent alternative news outlets](#).

That de facto blackout has now lifted at least partially. A September 5, 2023, [article in the Economist](#), described Kyiv's systematic assassination program in some detail. Targets "have been shot, blown up, hanged and even, on occasion, poisoned with doctored brandy. Ukraine is tight-lipped about its involvement in assassinations. But few doubt the increasingly competent signature of its security services. The agencies themselves drop heavy hints." Such behavior did not begin as a response to Russia's February 2022 invasion. "Assassinations date back to at least 2015, when its domestic security service (SBU) created a new body after Russia had seized Crimea and the eastern Donbas region. The elite fifth counter-intelligence directorate started life as a saboteur force in response to the invasion. It later came to focus on what is euphemistically called 'wet work'."

The origin of the assassination program also was quite revealing about the nature of Ukraine's so-called democracy. "Valentin Nalivaychenko, who headed the SBU at the time, says the switch came about when Ukraine's then leaders decided that a policy of

imprisoning collaborators was not enough. Prisons were overflowing, but few were deterred. “We reluctantly came to the conclusion that we needed to eliminate terrorists.” Saying that Ukrainian leaders had a very broad, loose definition of “collaborators” would be putting it mildly, since the prisons were “overflowing” with such regime opponents.

The victims of assassinations received no due process. Government authorities arbitrarily decided that they were traitors and proceeded to execute them without a trial. That would seem to be an odd way for a supposed democracy to behave. It is especially troubling since even so-called propagandists are considered legitimate targets. A May 2023 story in *Business Insider* [highlighted](#) that point. “A Ukrainian spy chief revealed that Kyiv has been assassinating Russian pro-war propagandists far behind enemy lines. In a series of interviews reported on by *The Times*, **Major-General Kyrylo Budanov** – the head of Ukraine’s military intelligence service – said his agents have been targeting, locating, and killing Kremlin-backed propagandists who’ve cheered on Russia’s invasion.”

Thus far, such assassinations of “propagandists” have apparently been confined to individuals residing in Ukraine or Russia. It’s important to remember, though, that in the summer of 2022, the Ukrainian government’s Center for Countering Disinformation (partly funded by U.S. taxpayers) [published a “blacklist”](#) of such opponents. Numerous prominent Americans were on that list, including University of Chicago’s Professor John J. Mearsheimer, then-Fox News host Tucker Carlson, former Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, and Doug Bandow, a Cato Institute Senior Fellow and former aide to President Ronald Reagan.

The menacing nature of the blacklist became even clearer in late September, when the CCD issued a revised roster, including addresses, of the top 35 targets. That high-priority list denounced accused individuals as [“disinformation terrorists” and “war criminals.”](#) Given such inflammatory rhetoric and Kyiv’s treatment of dissidents closer to home, it would be extremely naïve to conclude that Western critics would be off-limits as targets.

Despite such appalling revelations, Ukraine’s Western cheerleaders remain undeterred. European Union leaders speak openly of [admitting Ukraine by 2030](#), even though the country clearly does not meet the EU’s professed standards on democracy and human rights. The Biden administration is taking a [variety of steps to make it difficult](#) for any successor to terminate or even significantly reduce economic or military aid to Kyiv.

Western political leaders and their media sycophants ignore [mounting evidence](#) about the corrupt, brutal, and authoritarian nature of Ukraine’s government. Ukraine is now a “democracy” in which the press is strictly censored, opposition media banned entirely, opposition political parties are outlawed, a longstanding major church is being harassed and silenced, and torture and assassinations have become routine. The Zelensky regime also appears [unwilling to proceed with elections](#), even under such rigged conditions.

Westerners who continue to support Ukraine are guilty not just of blindness but of willful blindness. It is well past time for them to stop making excuses for Kyiv’s egregious misconduct.

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