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Ukraine's 'Anti-Russia' Sanctions Target International Media

By The Moscow Times

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Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed a decree on Wednesday to extend or apply sanctions on over 400 individuals and 90 legal entities in response to a decision by separatist rebels to set the date for "illegal elections."

The restrictions will last for one year and apply to people and entities "of Russia and other countries related to the annexation of Crimea and aggression in Donbass [eastern Ukraine,]" according to a statement on the presidential website.

The list includes a number of journalists, including three BBC employees based in Moscow.

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich said Thursday Russia will analyze the possible consequences of the new sanctions, RIA news agency reported.

The Committee to Protect Journalists on Thursday protested Ukraine's decision.

"We are dismayed by President Poroshenko's actions, including a ban on dozens of international media covering Ukraine," Nina Ognianova, Europe and Central Asia Program Coordinator of the New York-based advocacy group, said in a statement.

"While the government may not like or agree with the coverage, labeling journalists a potential threat to national security is not an appropriate response."

The ban, which affects 34 journalists and seven bloggers from countries including Britain, Germany, Spain and Bulgaria, appears to be something of an own-goal for Ukraine, which needs the support of European partners to maintain pressure on Russia.

"This is overkill. The sanctions are going to cause more harm than good. They should have been more flexible in their approach," said Volodymyr Fesenko, an analyst at Kiev's independent Penta political research center.

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