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Watchdogs Press Ukraine to Halt Expulsions of Russian Reporters

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Anna Kurbatova **Screenshot Channel One Youtube**

International press freedom monitors are calling on Ukraine to allow Russian journalists there to report without "fear of reprisals," after a journalist working for Russian state television was expelled by Kiev this week.

Russia's Channel One said on Wednesday its reporter Anna Kurbatova was "abducted" outside her residence in central Kiev. The channel claimed unknown individuals forced her into a car outside her home in wake of her reporting on the persecution of journalists in Ukraine.

The OSCE and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) both condemned the Ukrainian National Security Service's (SBU) detention of Kurbatova in Kiev on Wednesday. An SBU spokeswoman said at the time that Kurbatova was being deported and banned entry into Ukraine for 3 years.

The CPJ urged the Ukrainian government to allow Kurbatova "and other Russian journalists to

work without fear of abduction, deportation, and other means of reprisal," the U.S.-based nonprofit organization's regional office said in an online statement.

Acknowledging that the country is "in an information war with Russia," CPJ Europe and Central Asia program coordinator Nina Ognianova said that "singling out reporters for retaliation is not the means to win it."

The Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) called on Kiev "to refrain from imposing unnecessary limitations on the work of foreign journalists," its media freedom representative said.

The SBU employed "troubling and excessive" measures against Kurbatova, OSCE's Harlem Desir said in a statement on the organization's website.

On Tuesday, Ukrainian media cited the SBU spokeswoman as saying the security service had also expelled two Spanish freelance reporters and barred them from the country for 3 years.

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