



Ukraine – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 30 November 2010

Information on the prevalence of organised crime in Ukraine

An *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response to a request for information on organised crime in Ukraine, in a section titled “Organized Crime in Ukraine”, states:

“According to the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2006 (INCSR 2006), [d]espite a government crackdown on corruption, organized crime, smuggling, and tax evasion, these problems continue to plague Ukraine's economy and to provide an impetus to money laundering’. Ukraine has been identified as one of the main countries of origin where ‘organized crime networks’ are engaged in human trafficking and immigrant smuggling. These two criminal activities continue to be associated with money laundering and sexual exploitation. INCSR 2006 reported that although Ukraine has satisfactory counternarcotics legislation, ‘[t]rafficking and use of narcotics [have] continued to increase in 2005’. Illegal arms trafficking is another problem that Ukraine is trying to address, in close cooperation with the European Union (EU).” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (14 March 2006) *UKR101124.E – Ukraine: Information on organized crime's infiltration of, and links with, government authorities; government initiatives taken against organized crime (2005 - 2006)*)

The 2007 *US Department of State* country report on Ukraine, in a section headed “Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life”, states:

“During the year politicians, politically active businessmen, and journalists were the victims of sometimes fatal attacks that may have been politically motivated; however, business, government, and criminal activities were intertwined to such an extent that it was often difficult to determine the motives. For example, on August 20, the body of Roman Yerokhin, the former deputy head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' organized crime directorate in Donetsk, was found in the Kyiv region almost a month after he disappeared. Minister of Internal Affairs Yuriy Lutsenko stated publicly that Yerokhin had been investigating economic crimes, in particular foreign currency exchange centers involved in money laundering, and that unnamed members of the Verkhovna Rada were involved in his disappearance. Head of the anti-corruption fund and businessman Borys Penchuk alleged that Yerokhin had been engaged in criminal activity himself.” (US Department of State (6 March 2007) *Ukraine: 2006 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*)

A *Guardian* article on the murder of Russian businessman Maksim Kurochkin states:

“The murder of Kurochkin - an ally of the Prime Minister, Viktor Yanukovich - has raised fears that Ukraine is slipping back to the days of the crime-ridden 1990s when such killings were common. Just over two years since the Orange Revolution brought hopes of a shining new future under President Viktor Yushchenko, corruption and contract killings appear to be making a comeback.” (The Guardian (1 April 2007) *Killing of Mad Max signals the return of Ukraine's gang wars*)

This article also states:

“Early in March Kurochkin's bodyguard and two associates were found dead in a bullet-riddled Toyota Landcruiser just outside Kiev. The director of the Ozerka market was killed in December. There have been a string of other murders of businessmen in the regions in recent months. Kurochkin boasted of surviving 18 attempts on his life. Critics of Yanukovich - himself convicted of theft and assault as a youth - claim the number of contract killings has risen under his government. Yanukovich was defeated during the Orange Revolution, but later muscled his way back to the premiership, which he held under former President Leonid Kuchma. Yanukovich's detractors say that he has halted the clean-up of Ukraine's notoriously corrupt Interior Ministry, which began after the revolution, and reinstated key figures from Kuchma's discredited regime. Opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko said: 'The killing of businessmen and shady suicides gives every ground to say that Ukraine has returned to the early 1990s when a majority of conflicts in business were solved with guns.’” (ibid)

A *BBC News* report on the alleged involvement of organised crime in Ukrainian football clubs states:

“Extortion rackets, money laundering, drugs and even murder - these are among the dubious activities with which ordinary Ukrainians believe some of their football club owners are involved.” (BBC News (1 April 2009) *Ukrainian football's dark side*)

A report from the *European Commission*, in a section titled “Cooperation on Justice, Freedom and Security”, states:

“With regard to the fight against organised crime, Ukraine continues to implement its obligations under the 2003 United Nations Convention on Trans-national Organised Crime in the context of regional cooperation in the area of trafficking of persons and smuggling of migrants. As was the case in 2008, signature and ratification of its Third Protocol on the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking of Firearms, their Parts, Components and Ammunition still remains outstanding. Ukraine's capacity to tackle organised crime suffers from institutional fragmentation with several agencies sharing areas of investigative competence. The development of a national strategy and action plan, determining and delineating institutional competences and cooperation between all state agencies is needed.” (European Commission (12 May 2010) *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2009: Progress Report Ukraine*, p.14)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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