

**International Publishers Association**  
**Open Freedom to Publish Meeting: The impact of war on the freedom to publish -**  
**Ukraine**  
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**Presentation**  
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First of all, I want to say that I feel very sorry for all those who suffered in Turkey, Syria and other countries from the terrible earthquake. No one deserves such a disaster. This is very similar to the consequences of the war, and, unfortunately, we know a lot about the war in Ukraine.

Foreign and Ukrainian experts say that Putin started the war against Ukraine because he didn't understand what Ukraine is. Maybe not only Putin didn't understand what Ukraine and Ukrainians are. Perhaps the whole world didn't understand and know Ukraine. A few days ago I was talking with our author, the Italian writer Paolo Giordano, who is visiting eastern cities of Ukraine and trying to see the consequences of this war with his own eyes. He told me that Italians, writers particular, do not know and do not understand Ukrainian realities, because they had no reason to come here, and they formed their own impression of Ukraine by looking at Ukrainian emigrant women who clean and take care of the elderly in Italy. So Italians think that Ukrainians are a nation of cleaners. When you see only cleaners, it is hard to imagine that there are still intellectuals, businessmen, and artists in the country, it is hard to imagine that Ukraine has become a smartphone country, that our country is in many ways not inferior to the developed countries of Europe, and we have really good level of service, which is better than in some European countries. However, we still have a lot to change. And first of all - I hope we have already partially achieved this - we must get rid of Russian's imperial influence forever.

For more than 30 years of Ukrainian independence, Ukraine has not become an understandable country for many countries of the world, because it has not been able to tell about itself properly. I see this as a huge fault of all our governments, which did not know how to place the accents correctly and did not know how to promote their own culture. For many years, you could witness our absence at major book exhibitions or see the national stand of Ukraine, which did not present our market in any way. Unfortunately, we, Ukrainians, have allowed the whole world to form an image of our country through the prism of Russian propaganda. We are aware of our guilt in allowing ourselves to be treated as a marginal country with a marginal culture. Only in 2016 was the Ukrainian Book Institute established. We allowed our book market to be secondary to the Russian market, for example, buying rights to foreign books through Russian agents. For many years, we allowed Russian booksellers to almost completely occupy Ukrainian book retail, and until 2014, there were many times more Russian books than Ukrainian books on the shelves of our bookstores. And, honestly, I hope I never see them there again.

I represent a publishing house that has been on the market for 21 years. We started with a team of 2 people and became one of the most influential in Ukraine, and this year we were among the five nominees for the best publishing house in Europe at the Bologna Book Fair. We are lucky to be in the West of the country, and apart from a few times when our books were burned during the bombing of the gas stations and shopping centers where they are sold, we were practically unscathed. This is at first glance. We live in Lviv, which has become a new home for over 150,000 people. This is a city in which are destroyed several power stations, a city that works quietly despite regularly scheduled blackouts, this is a city that has turned its libraries into humanitarian headquarters where people make camouflage nets. This is a city that constantly receives evacuation wagons with wounded people, without arms, without legs. We live as fully as possible. We continue to organize events in the bookstores and bomb shelters, and when the lights go out, we light candles.

Unlike many other publishing houses, especially those in the East, we are fully operational, although we made 100 titles per 2022 out of the planned 130. But every day we overcome challenges. 09:38 Almost all of us have loved ones at the front, we are constantly under the maddening stress of news. We are looking for a way to provide generators for our office and bookstores and coffee shops so that there is light. We stop work and go down to the shelter when the alarm sounds. Yesterday, our author Volodymyr Arenev interrupted the presentation of a children's book in Kyiv, went down with the children to the shelter and continued their conversation there. Many of our women writers, artists, and translators had to leave the country with their children.

My eight-year-old son puts a flashlight and a book to his safety backpack, because when children are sitting in the shelter during the alarm, there may be no light, but he can read with a flashlight. We have a home and he has a school. But many children in Ukraine do not have this. We return from the office to homes where there is no light. And there is no light - no heating, no Internet and mobile connection. But we are not complaining. Because people in cities near the front line live in basements without light, heat and food. In the morning, we watch the news and photos of destroyed houses, libraries, schools, kindergartens and go to work. Four of our workers in the army, several authors in the army, several of our workers were under occupation, we were forced to close one of the Kyiv bookstores because the students did not return to the university, which is located near our bookstore. In spite of everything, the books are sold, even the prices are growing up. And we are very happy about this, because by selling our books, we will be able to support our country and our armed forces on the front line. No matter where we are, in the country or abroad, we think about how we can still support the Ukrainian army. Because there is no other way out, neither for us nor for you, but to defeat Russia with weapons. And we are very lucky that many foreigners already understood this. But if they still don't understand, it is only because they were not here in Ukraine and did not see the scale of the destruction and the scale of Russian crimes. Because they didn't see the diary of Volodya Vakulenko, our children's writer, who did not leave Izium and was brutally tortured by the Russian army. We feel the attention and support from many countries of the world. First of all, help in providing our country with weapons, medicines, and humanitarian aid. Because while the war is going on, we cannot just be publishers. Now we are at least volunteers. And tomorrow we can become soldiers. And this is a

reality for which we must be ready. We were greatly supported by foreign colleagues who bought the rights to the books of our authors. This year we signed the biggest number of deals in our history. We had a successful Frankfurt and we are going to Bologna.

What I want to address to the international community of publishers. We don't want to be pitied. We are very strong and resistible. We need your willingness to speak on a same level, to be on an equal footing, to treat Ukrainian publishers as a full-fledged book market, to see us as full-fledged players and even competitors. We really want you to be motivated to see and read our books, translate them and sell them in your bookstores, we want you to invite our authors and illustrators to workshops. And you can already see the level of many of our artists working with publishers around the world. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

But first of all we need an understanding of our values and ideals. Ukraine is not just defending itself, Ukraine is creating new humanistic meanings. Because no one has the right to take away a person's dignity and freedom. I really want us to finally become visible to the world - not only because we are fighting a terrible crazy war, but because we are creative, interesting, progressive people who are creating the future of a new Europe without a bloody monster.