

## **SF Bay Area Ukrainian Community Calls Upon US and European Leaders to Prevent Ukraine from Being Imprisoned Behind a New Iron Curtain**

*Hundreds of Ukrainians rallied Sunday in front of the German Consulate in San Francisco.*

San Francisco, CA – January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 – The Ukrainian communities of the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento held a demonstration on Sunday, January 26<sup>th</sup> in front of the German Consulate General in San Francisco. The people rallied to ask U.S. and European leaders, more specifically Angela Merkel, to take action to support pro-European movements in Ukraine, and put an end to the violence that has resulted in multiple deaths, and hundreds of injuries in Ukraine’s capital Kyiv last week. The San Francisco demonstration was coordinated with more than ten similar demonstrations in major cities around the United States and Canada, including Washington DC, Chicago, Sacramento, New York, and Quebec. The video of the San Francisco protest was streamed live to screens in Independence Square in Kyiv, and was started by the simultaneous singing of Ukraine’s national anthem by people in both places. About \$5,000 was donated to support the protesters in Kyiv, who have been braving freezing conditions since November of last year. Over 400 signatures were collected on a letter to be sent to the President of the United States, California senators, and members of the House of Representatives.

“We will not tolerate the enforcement of a dictatorship and draconian laws that disregard basic human rights,” said Yulia Z., one of the organizers of the demonstration. “We will continue to support Euromaydan as the generator and soul of the revolution of values and dignity, on our way towards a free and safe democratic country and thriving culture, to join the modern world.”

Another organizer, Oksana Kvitka stated, “We believe that the movement that has started in Ukraine will affect the entire post-USSR region. Today we had Russians, Belarusians, and Kazakhs speaking at the demonstration. They are all fed up with the corrupt rule of oligarchs and their unmitigated self-interest. We are deeply moved to witness the national spirit of Ukrainians as they rise above the long-

fostered indifference and cynical belief that nothing can change.”

**Background.**

The demonstrations in Kyiv, which have attracted hundreds of thousands of people, began in November 2013 after president Victor Yanukovych shelved the signing of an agreement to deepen ties with the European Union, instead choosing to focus on Russia, which worked aggressively to derail the EU deal. The peaceful protests took an unexpected turn after the “Berkut” special police forces used tear gas, truncheons, and flash grenades against protesters. The political conflict in Ukraine has intensified since January 16<sup>th</sup>, when the Party of Regions parliamentary faction, controlled by President Victor Yanukovych, violated multiple procedural rules and voted through a set of laws that criminalized any criticism of the government and its officials, and made fair elections nearly impossible. The draconian laws are a blatant import from neighboring Russia, albeit with more severely defined punishments, and are designed to suppress any opposition against the corrupt Yanukovych regime.

*This demonstration was not sponsored by nor affiliated with any governmental or non-governmental organizations, political groups, or parties.*

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