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TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties

FROM: Stephen M. Greenberg, Chairman; Alexander Smukler, NCSJ President; Mark B. Levin, NCSJ Executive Director

UKRAINE UPDATE #25

Unrest in Eastern Ukraine continues: pro-Russian separatists seized more government buildings in Lugansk, Gorlivka, and Donetsk this week, and in Slavyansk, pro-Russian militants continue to hold dozens of hostages, including the members of an OSCE observer mission to Ukraine.

Ukraine's interim President Oleksandr Turchynov said yesterday that Kyiv is unable to control the situation in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. He said the government will focus on securing the Kharkiv and Odessa regions, which are not currently under control of the pro-Russian groups.

Russia continues to blame Ukraine's government for the unrest in the east. In a conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Putin said that the Ukrainian government must withdraw its troops from the Eastern and Southern regions to stop violence and encourage national dialogue.

Several May Day rallies were held across the region today (May 1st is celebrated as International Workers' Day).

NCSJ spoke with representatives of the Kharkiv Jewish community. They reported that Communist party supporters held a large May Day demonstration. Close to 2,000 people marched in the rally, chanting Communist slogans, they said. The local police implemented additional security measures for the rally, and no clashes were reported. The situation in the city is stable.

The Kharkiv Jewish community is following closely the condition of wounded mayor Gennady Kernes, who they said has regained consciousness and is recovering in Israel after undergoing multiple surgeries.

During our conversation with Donetsk Jewish community representatives, they said the

community has not been affected by the recent unrest in the city. On Monday, pro-Russian groups clashed with the local police; today, pro-Russian demonstrators took over the Donetsk prosecutor's office.

NCSJ also spoke with the Jewish community of Odessa. According to its representatives, the situation in the city is stable in comparison with the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. Communist party supporters held small May Day rallies that were peaceful, they said.

Another pro-Communist May Day rally took place in Kyiv today, with no incidents.

NCSJ spoke today with Chief Rabbi of the Progressive Movement of Ukraine Alexander Dukhovny. According to him, the situation in Kyiv is stable, but there is concern that the recent unrest in Eastern Ukraine could spread to other regions, including Kyiv. Rabbi Dukhovny said that today's pro-Communist rally in Kyiv was peaceful, and that city residents were out celebrating May Day festivities.

Ukrainian media reported a nationalist rally taking place in Kyiv on the evening of Tuesday, April 28. The demonstrators were stopped from proceeding by Maidan activists, which resulted in minor clashes.

Speaking with NCSJ, Josef Zissels, Chairman of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine, called the Tuesday rally a provocation aimed at destabilizing the situation. He said that support is strong for Ukraine's territorial integrity among Kyiv residents.

We have heard from Jewish communities in Kyiv, Odessa, Kharkiv, and Donetsk that the community and Ukrainians in general are concerned about potential provocations in upcoming days, especially on May 9, when Victory Day (over Nazi Germany) celebrations are held throughout the former Soviet Union region.

As always, NCSJ will continue to monitor the situation throughout Ukraine, and provide you with timely and critical updates.

About NCSJ

NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia, founded in 1971, represents the organized American Jewish community in monitoring and advocating on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews living in the 15 successor states of the former Soviet Union.

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