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TO: NCSJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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UKRAINE UPDATE #4

On Saturday, January 29, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with Ukrainian opposition leaders at the Munich Security Summit in Germany.

Sec. Kerry and other leaders expressed their concern about the situation in Ukraine. They urged the government to release detained opposition activists, investigate the alleged beating, torture and murder of protesters, and implement constitutional reforms.

EU foreign policy head Catherine Ashton announced that the EU and the U.S. would work together to create a large-scale plan of financial support for Ukraine, aimed at averting an economic crisis.

The situation in Ukraine is changing rapidly. As of today, the government has lost control over state administrations in nine regions (the Lvivska, Volinska, Ternopil'ska, Rovnenska, Chernivetska, Ivano-Frankiv'ska, Chernihiv'ska, Chmelnytska, and Poltav'ska oblasts). However, local state authorities have initiated the creation of alternative "People's Councils" and self-defense units to protect them.

Протести в Україні. Хто контролює регіони країни

Протесты в Украине. Кто контролирует регионы страны

Protests in Ukraine. Who controls regions

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Fig. 1: Map of Ukraine

Blue-Yellow - state oblast administrations seized and controlled by protesters, white pink- mass protests, blue - oblasts controlled by the Party of Regions; dark pink- Party of Regions controls Regional State Administration and Regional Councils under opposition control; Ukraine national flag logo - places where People's Councils have been created so far). Click for larger image (with English text) (*Map by Sergii Gorbachev*).

While Eastern and Southern Ukraine have stronger ties with Russia than pro-European Western Ukraine, many in these regions also support European integration. Regular and large anti-government protests are being held in Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, and Kharkiv.

The government has responded to these protests by intensifying the crackdown on the opposition. There are reports of widespread intimidation of protesters by state authorities in these regions. Human rights organizations have reported increasing numbers of unlawful detentions, kidnapping and torture of civil and political activists.

Several days ago, a massive crackdown against the anti-government protesters took place in Donetsk and Zaporozhe.

Several pro-government groups, similar to the self-defense units of Maidan, have been created to defend the state administrations (in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, and Dnepropetrovsk.)

Pro-government politicians have provided funding to the *Berkut* police forces, called upon federalization of Ukraine, and have issued more than 400 permits to carry non-lethal weapons to hired mobs posing as journalists.

Contributing to the escalation of violence are the growing number of provocateurs, thugs for

hire, and armed groups operating in Ukraine. According to Ukrainian news reports, a Russia-backed paramilitary organization called the "All-Great Don Army" has been involved in clashes in Luhansk, Donetsk, and Zaporozhe.

Many political activists and members of the Ukrainian business community in these regions, including Jewish businessmen in Dnepropetrovsk, have been forced to leave the country due to the fear of prosecution related to their pro-European position.

The situation is different in Western Ukraine. The Lvivska, Volynska, Ternopilska, Rovnenska, Chernivetska, and Ivano-Frankivska State oblast administrations have been seized and are now controlled by the opposition.

While state authorities in Western Ukraine have begun creating alternative National Councils, litigation has also begun to challenge this decision and ban the activities of President Yanukovich's Party of Regions (and of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which closely associates with the Party of Regions).

In addition to government-versus-opposition violence, there are ongoing confrontations among the opposition groups in Western Ukraine. Clashes over the seizure of the state oblast administration buildings, between *Svoboda* party supporters and other opposition groups, have taken place in Lviv and in other cities in Ukraine.

Many experts believe that the ongoing confrontation between the opposition, security forces and government supporters is shifting toward civil clashes at the regional level, and could have serious and unpredictable consequences.

Analysts argue that de-escalation of the situation would require significant concessions by the Ukrainian authorities that would have to include constitutional reform, a release of political prisoners, and investigation of all cases related to the death and abuse of protesters.

The U.S. and the EU need to take concrete steps to ensure the peaceful resolution of the conflict. On Tuesday, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland will travel to Kyiv to meet with government officials, opposition leaders, civil society and business leaders to work out a plan of action to stabilize the country.

NCSJ will continue to closely monitor situation in Ukraine and provide you with relevant and timely information.

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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