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Invitation to the Panel Discussion

Ukraine 2014 – from revolution to secession?

Civil Society between might and powerlessness

Monday 1 December, 18:30-20:30, University of Basel
Aula of the Kollegienhaus, Petersplatz 1, Basel

Speakers

Konstantin Reutskiy, Human Rights Activist, Luhansk, Ukraine
Valentina Cherevatenko, Union of the Don Women, Novochoerkassk, Russia
Alexandra Delemchuk, Center for Civic Liberties, Kiev, Ukraine

Respondent: Maxim Butkevych, Coordinator of the NGO Social Action Center, Kiev, Ukraine

Moderation: Prof. Ulrich Schmid, University of St.Gallen

The Ukrainian crisis is not ebbing and is continuously taking new forms. What has started as a movement of civilian protest (“Maidan”) against a corrupt and ideologically ambiguous political elite in late 2013, has developed into an armed conflict between (pro) Russian and Ukrainian forces in spring 2014, with people killed every day and tens of thousands of refugees in Ukraine and Southern Russia. Although the open armed conflict is now somewhat brought to the background, a huge work remains for civil society organisations in both Russia and Ukraine to fulfil tasks often left untended by the government, easing the most pressing humanitarian needs, and monitoring the human rights situation in and around the areas of conflict.

The situation is aggravated by a constant lack in independent information and a propaganda-war between (pro) Russian and Ukrainian media that leads to an increasing ethnicisation of the conflict. There is a need for national and transnational dialogue between (pro) Russian and Ukrainian civil societies at a grassroots level, all the more that people do not really understand, why suddenly they should fight an “enemy” with whom they so far lived closed together in peace.

However, we should not forget about the initial, purely inner-Ukrainian dimension of the conflict that tends to be overshadowed by the tragic events in the East of the country: facing the emergency of conflict and humanitarian hardship, the civil society actors feel distracted from what they perceive to be their core task: now, that it has been made possible by “Maidan”, civil society can and must play a crucial part in the political reform process, securing its place in a new, transparent and efficiently organised state of democratic Ukraine.

The present panel discussion addresses the following sets of questions:

- What are the prospects for national and trans-border peacebuilding initiatives between (pro) Russian and Ukrainian civil societies at a grassroots level? Who can assume this task? What impact can or should such initiatives have on the overall process of reconciliation?
- What concrete steps can or must be taken in order to foster civil society’s controlling and monitoring function with regard to the new state that is about to be built in Ukraine? How can the civic organisations present on „Maidan“ keep their impetus, once the common enemy (“Yanukovychshina”) is gone?

We are looking forward to an interesting and stimulating panel discussion on 1 December in Basel, supported by practitioners from Ukraine and Russia. You are welcome to actively participate!

No registration needed. For further information please contact Cécile Druey, cecile.druey@swisspeace.ch