

Media Slander Campaign Provokes Death Threats Against Ukrainian Economist Vitrenko: Where Are Human Rights Protections in Ukraine?

July 6, 2025—A vicious slander campaign against Dr. Natalia Vitrenko, noted Ukrainian economist, former Member of Parliament, and former leader of the banned Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU), has put her life in danger. It shows how very far the current government of Ukraine is from “democratic norms” or the “rule of law.”

TSN.ua, a web-TV channel owned by the I+I Media Group, crafted a 10-minute video containing incitement to the arrest or assassination of Vitrenko. Posted on YouTube July 3, the slander has more than 280,000 views on TSN’s own channel. Spinoff videos and written summaries have appeared on dozens of other channels and websites.

Headlines like “Shock! Look at Vitrenko Now... Where is the SBU?” (referring to the Ukrainian security agency) and “Supporter of the ‘Russian World’ out and about in the capital!” appear designed to instigate rage in viewers. The TSN reporter concluded by saying in a tone of outrage, “We can see that she is free, everything is fine with her, she is calmly walking through central Kyiv, right next to the main police investigative office and just 300 or 400 meters from the SBU!” The presenter of a spinoff video on Oboz.ua asked viewers, “Is Ukraine threatened by the presence of such people in the country?” The videos provoked comments from YouTube viewers such as “Why is she still alive?”

The TSN segment stated several falsehoods as fact: that there had been “criminal prosecutions” of Vitrenko for treason and promoting separatism; that her PSPU had been “directly funded from Russia”; that Vitrenko “opposed the Ukrainian language”; that she personally went to the eastern Ukraine city of Slavyansk to organize separatist referenda in 2014; and that after 2014 she moved to the Russian Federation. The video also presented Vitrenko’s political views, such as her opposition to International Monetary Fund economic conditionalities for Ukraine in

the 1990s and her 2000s campaign against joining NATO, as evidence of her working for Russia.

Omitted was any reference to Vitrenko’s 30-year record of drafting and proposing economic programs to rescue Ukraine’s industry from destruction during the initial wave of privatization after the country became independent in 1991, and her insistence on protecting the country’s scientists and skilled workforce as its greatest resource. The respect she gained from addressing international conferences, where she advocated specific measures for a “New Bretton Woods” reform of the world financial system and Ukraine’s participation in global infrastructure projects, was left out of the picture. So was the fact that on the eve of the 2019 presidential election in Ukraine, Vitrenko called on her supporters to vote for Volodymyr Zelensky because he had declared himself the pro-peace candidate.

Natalia Vitrenko, who holds a doctorate in economics, was a member of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine in 1994-2002. As a candidate for the Presidency of Ukraine in 1999, she received 11 percent of the vote, despite an assassination attempt when a grenade attack on one of her rallies wounded 45 people and disrupted her campaign. More than a thousand PSPU members and supporters were elected to local governance bodies. In 2019, the PSPU won a five-year court fight to overcome the Ministry of Justice’s stonewalling of its re-registration under the post-2014 “de-communization” laws, which required political parties to excise any positive reference to the Soviet period from their official documents.

The Vitrenko Case: Political Use of the Courts

TSN filmed Vitrenko and Volodymyr Marchenko, former deputy chairman of the banned PSPU and three-term MP (1990-2002), on July 2 as they exited the premises of the Pechersky District Court of Kyiv.

They had been there to file Vitrenko's appeal in the latest of several administrative cases brought against her by the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (Ukrainian acronym NAZK). Major media were present because of an unrelated case involving Ihor Kolomoisky, the former Governor of Dnipropetrovsk Region and Zelensky's former financial backer, now accused of "high treason."

Former MPs Vitrenko and Marchenko were recognized and filmed. The slanderous video, built around the short July 2 footage and Vitrenko's refusal to answer the reporter's questions, also mocked her for contesting the small fine imposed by the NAZK.

The purpose of the NAZK cases, however, is evidently not to collect small fines. Vitrenko is threatened with being officially registered as a "corrupt person," a status that would bar her from future political activity. The first NAZK complaint against Vitrenko, filed in late 2024, was for failure to submit reports on the property, revenues, expenditures, and financial obligations of the banned PSPU (which ceased operations in 2022). According to appellate court filings, she was tried in absentia because the court failed to notify her of the proceedings, and was accused in the capacity of chairman of a "liquidation commission" for the PSPU, a position of which she was unaware and had not accepted.

The NAZK travesty, which the agency is repeating quarterly, is summarized in the EIR release "[Time to Halt Kiev's Flouting of Basic Freedoms and the 'Rule of Law'](#)," January 17, 2025.

There continues to be evidence that the current government in Ukraine is using the courts to silence any political opposition, both formerly prominent figures and political exiles who could enjoy support if allowed to return. For example, in June a Ukrainian court convicted blogger Anatoly Shariy, now living in Spain, in absentia for "high treason," based on years-old videos in which he had criticized the SBU. The Party of Anatoly Shariy, organized by his supporters, was one of the eleven banned by Presidential Decree and Ministry of Justice lawsuits in 2022.

The Schiller Institute fact sheet, "[The Banning of Political Parties in Ukraine](#)" (EIR, Sept. 9, 2022) summarized the absence of due process in those cases. In particular, the Ukrainian trials violated the "Guidelines on Prohibition and Dissolution of Political Parties and Analogous Measures," published by the European Commission for Democracy through Law

(Venice Commission).

Vitrenko's silence in the face of the TSN reporter's needling—"What is your attitude to the Ukrainian language?", "Do you receive support from the Russians?"—was not new. The former PSPU leader has made no political statements whatsoever after February 24, 2022, the day Russian troops entered Ukraine. The only public engagement by the former PSPU leaders since then was to appeal the ban of their party up through the Supreme Court of Ukraine, which tossed out many of the accusations brought against them by the SBU and the Ministry of Justice, but upheld the ban. They filed an appeal with the European Court on Human Rights (Strasbourg Court), which notified in July 2023 that the case had been accepted for consideration; it has not, however, been acted upon.

The Presumption of Innocence

The presumption of innocence until an accused person is proven guilty in a court of law is a fundamental legal principle. In violation of that principle, Ukrainian Ministry of Justice officials in 2022 publicly labelled the political parties targeted for banning, and their leaders, as criminals, before any court proceedings. The officials' frequent characterization of the parties as "pro-Russian" opened the door to further slanders, which created an adverse political climate for the trials. An example was that the website of the western-funded "honest elections" NGO Chesno includes Natalia Vitrenko in an online rogues' gallery of people labeled "traitor."

Enemies lists are common in today's Ukraine. The Ukrainian government's Center for Countering Disinformation (CCD) and "private" projects such as Myrotvorets publish such lists, and a number of their targets have been assassinated.

Official slanders of the innocent carry over into the media, which is tightly controlled in Ukraine. TSN's parent company, the 1+1 Media Group, is a member of the so-called "United News" alliance, which has run a round-the-clock Telemarathon, to enforce a unified media line on politics and foreign affairs, since the beginning of the war with Russia.

Restoration of the rule of law in Ukraine must include an end to slanderous videos such as TSN's smear job against Vitrenko, crafted to elicit enraged responses from viewers and provoke the political or physical lynching of the persons targeted.