

Revelations in the Maidan Massacre Trial in Ukraine Go Unreported in the West

By [Ivan Katchanovski](#)

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A delayed trial of two Berkut police members in the Maidan Massacre case [1] have produced striking new revelations providing further confirmations of major findings of my Maidan “snipers’ massacre” study about Maidan snipers killing both police and protesters and subsequent cover up and falsification of the official investigation.[2] But these striking revelations have not been reported by the Ukrainian and Western media, even though the trial proceedings were open to the media, were streamed live over the Internet and their recordings were posted on YouTube.

On July 15, 2015, the prosecution made public in court for the first time its charges alleging that two arrested members of the Berkut special company massacred 39 out of 49 killed protesters on February 20, 2014.



However, the prosecution’s case unraveled on July 17 when the brother of one of the victims stated during his questioning by the prosecutors that Andrii Saienko was killed not from Berkut positions but from a top floor of the Maidan-controlled Hotel Ukraina. He made this conclusion on the basis of his brother’s position as shown in a video at the moment of his killing and an entry wound location in upper right chest area and a steep wound channel to the backbone. The prosecutors and relatives of some of the victims reported during the trial that technical expert reports in the investigative file established that Saienko and at least 9 other protesters were killed from the same exact 7.62mm caliber weapon.



This revelation alone means that a significant

proportion of the protesters were shot from this Maidan-controlled hotel, since this caliber bullets were extracted from bodies of 16 protesters. But the prosecution charged two Berkut members with their killings, even though Saienko's brother and his lawyer officially handed to investigators the aforementioned video file in October 2014.

His brother identified the moment when Saienko was killed on Instytutska Street, at 9:08:34am in the video, which was initially filmed from the Hotel Ukraina by Radio Svoboda and then synchronized and time-stamped: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lQkB0jZ39k>. This video also shows the moment when Bohdan Solchanyk was killed at 9:08:16am, less than 20 seconds before Saienko in the same area, reportedly with a 7.62mm bullet. His apparent position, the blood on the right side of the neck, and louder and different sounds of several shots in rapid succession, compared to the AKMS shots fired by Berkut at the same time, indicate that Solchanyk was most likely shot dead from the Hotel Ukraina. At that time, the Berkut policemen were in front and somewhat to the left from Solchanyk and the other protesters; and a specific shot, which was presented in the video synchronization, made by his acquaintance, as the evidence of his killing by Berkut, was from a 12mm caliber Fort pump rifle.

In the same video, Ihor Zastavnyi is seen in a yellow helmet falling nearby several seconds after Solchanyk was killed. Zastavnyi said in various interviews that he fell to the ground after he was wounded there third time and his leg was severed. He stated that the prosecution informed him earlier this year that they lost a bullet extracted from his body: <http://hromadskeradio.org/.../slidchi-prokuraturi-zagubili-ku...>

The analysis of the content of the same video and photo compilation indicates that Maksym Shymko was killed in the same area at about the same time, since he was last seen alive at 9:07:15am and by 9:07:46am he was shot and his stick was on the pavement near a wooden shield. Although the exact moment of his killing is missing from the video, his mother in her court testimony confirmed this location and indicated that the investigation found that he was killed from the same weapon as 9 other protesters, including Saienko.

Another bullet, which was stuck in Shymko's neck and which was publicized as evidence of government snipers, was not of 7.62mm caliber. His mother supported the prosecution charges that Berkut killed her son, but she stated that he was wounded in his neck with an exit wound below his shoulder blade. This indicates a sharp angle, which is consistent with the similar location of the Saienko's killer and an announcement from the Maidan stage at 9:10am about two or three "snipers" on the pendulum floor of the Hotel Ukraina. This announcement relayed reports of Maidan protesters concerning the killings of Shymko, Solchanyk, and Saienko, since they were a part of the first group of the protesters that came under deadly live ammunition fire. One of the charged Berkut members indicated during the trial that the investigative file contained testimonies of protesters about Maidan "snipers" at the Hotel Ukraina.

The list of the 39 protesters whose killing the prosecution attributed to Berkut was only released nearly one and a half years after the massacre. The killings of the other 10 protesters were simply omitted from the charges, even though 8 of them were shot dead at the same time and place as these 39 protesters. The special Council of Europe investigative panel reported that the Ukrainian investigation had evidence that ten protesters were killed by "snipers" from top of the buildings, but that investigation did not find any evidence that these were snipers from the Security Service of Ukraine Alf unit and other government units.

[See here for an [April 2015 news report](#). And here is the [188-page report](#) of the panel, dated March 31, 2015.]

The omitted list confirmed information that the investigation omitted the killings of Oleh Unshnevych, Evhen Kotliar, Ustym Holodniuk and Oleksander Kharchenko because of clear evidence they were killed from the Maidan-controlled locations, such as Hotel Ukraina. In addition, the prosecution charges also omitted the killings of Vasyl Aksenyn, Vladyslav Zubenko, Volodymyr Chaplynsky and Volodymyr Melnychuk. My study presents various evidence that these protesters were also killed from the Maidan-controlled buildings, mostly Hotel Ukraina, starting from about 9:18am till almost 5pm. For instance, the much publicized *Zelenyi Front* video shows at 10:26am (32:13) that Chaplynsky was shot dead when he was running away from the massacre area: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdFHNE8WxOA>. A *Spline TV* recording of its live broadcast, which is now removed from a list of its videos on the Internet, shows sparks flying from the Hotel Ukraina when a loud gunshot killed this protestor. Zubenko was killed in the same area at 9:49am, reportedly with a 5.45 caliber bullet.

The prosecution charges confirmed earlier reports that the investigation did not find specific evidence linking specific Berkut members to specific killed protesters. But these charges also revealed that the prosecution did not specify the exact time of killing of specific protesters and policemen, although such information can be determined from live broadcasts and synchronized and time-stamped videos, and it is presented in my study. These charges deliberately omitted various evidence, including videos, interviews, and public admissions, of Maidan “shooters” of the police.

The prosecution case for the first time de facto admitted an absence of a specific top government order to massacre the protesters on February 20. The prosecution stated that after an unspecified escalation of the conflict around 8am on February 20, the Berkut commander himself ordered the commander of the special Berkut company to disperse the protesters on the Maidan and block them from advancing to the parliament and presidential administration. It would have been irrational for the Berkut commander to issue such an order on his own and use only about two dozen members of a special company. The prosecution itself stated that then-president Viktor Yanukovych and the Minister of Internal Affairs ordered to disperse the protesters on the Maidan by force close to midnight on February 18. The attempt to storm the parliament on February 18 was presented by the prosecution as a peaceful rally, and subsequent clashes, the killing of some 30 policemen and protesters and a computer technician at the office of the Party of Regions were omitted.

The charges stated that following the Berkut commander order, the Berkut special company commander ordered the use of AKMs and Fort 500 pump guns with lead pellets, although no evidence was presented as to why this elite police unit would start using hunting ammunition. Contrary to the prosecutor charges account, various evidence cited in my study and later confirmed by BBC and other sources show that the Maidan protesters forced Berkut and Internal troop units, which did not have then live ammunition, to flee from the Maidan around 8:50am by killing and wounding about 20 of them, specifically with pellets and 7.62mm bullets, from the Music Conservatory and Trade Union buildings. The Berkut special company was first filmed being deployed and shooting with live ammunition on Instytutska street at 9:05am and then briefly moving to Zhovtnevyi Palace to allow remaining policemen there to flee.

The prosecution claimed that around 9am on February 20, 2014, unidentified persons of

unknown allegiance started to shoot at the police and that they killed from an unknown weapon one member of the Berkut special company and wounded another. In response to this, the accused from the Berkut company and unidentified members of this company and other law enforcement units became hostile to protesters and started to shoot in the direction of the unarmed protesters with AKMS and Fort 500 with lead pellets in order to kill them. This timeline is also deliberately misleading, because recordings of live broadcasts, time-stamped and synchronized videos, cited in my study, show that at least five protesters were killed starting at exactly 9:00 am before the member of the special Berkut company was shot dead with pellets at 9:16am: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYjEp1C4hzl>.

The prosecution charged two Berkut members with being a part of an organized group that killed 39 protesters with 7.62mm caliber AKMS during the assault of the Maidan and from two barricades on Instytutska Street from 9am till 1pm. During the testimonies and cross-examination of relatives of six killed protesters, only one single direct witness of the killing of one of these protesters (Eduard Hrynevych) was identified. This witness now happens to serve in a paramilitary unit of the Right Sector, which was involved in the massacre. My study cited videos of protesters referring at 10:25am to the killing of Hrynevych by a shot to his head several meters from them and referring to “snipers” on the pendulum floor of the Hotel Ukraina: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yUingq7eyI>. This and other videos show many protesters and journalists witnessing and recording shooting of these protesters.

Remarkably, a recently posted video, which shows “snipers” on the top floors of the Hotel Ukraina shooting at the Maidan protesters was referred to during the trial as evidence of the killing of Ihor Kostenko by Berkut. This video shows Kostenko seconds before and after (0:59) when he was shot at 9:29am: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akVXLbkjsX0>. At least seven other protesters were killed within less than three minutes in the same area.

[My study](#) presents various evidence, such as videos and eyewitness testimonies, indicating that these and almost all other 39 protesters were also killed from the Hotel Ukraina and other Maidan-controlled buildings, and that the Right Sector, Svoboda, and Fatherland parties were involved in the “snipers” massacre. There are a few protesters whose location and time of the killing are still publicly undisclosed.

A Google News search shows that none of these revelations during the Maidan Massacre trial have been reported by the media in Ukraine and the West. In contrast, there were numerous reports in the Ukrainian media about each of these protesters. Similarly, *The New York Times*, *The Telegraph*, and *Associated Press* previously published articles, respectively, about the killings of Solchanyk and Saienko and wounding of Zastavnyi. The ‘Maidan’ documentary film by Sergei Loznitsa, shown at the Cannes Film Festival this year, included the above-mentioned excerpts of the Radio Svoboda live Internet video stream showing the killings of Shymko, Solchanyk, and Saienko. In media reports and in this documentary, these and other killings of the protesters were typically directly or indirectly attributed to Berkut or government snipers.

In contrast, the Maidan stage announcements concerning the “snipers” at the Hotel Ukraina and other various evidence of the concealed Maidan shooters there and in other Maidan-controlled areas were omitted. The failure to report the striking new revelations from the ongoing trial suggests that the misrepresentation in Ukraine and the West of the Maidan mass killing is driven not by lack of information but by politics.

[1] The two Berkut policemen currently on trial were arrested last year. Three other policemen were arrested on similar charges this year but their trial has not yet started.

[2] See: [The "Snipers' Massacre" on the Maidan in Ukraine \(revised and updated version\)](#), by Ivan Katchanovski, Ph.D, published on Academia.edu, Feb. 20, 2015.

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