

The “Snipers’ Massacre” on the Maidan in Ukraine

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The “Snipers’” Massacre Question

The massacre of several dozen Maidan protesters on February 20, 2014 was a turning point in Ukrainian politics and a tipping point in the escalating conflict between the West and Russia over Ukraine. The mass killing of the protesters and the mass shooting of the police that preceded it led to the overthrow of the highly corrupt and pro-Russian but democratically elected government of Viktor Yanukovich and gave a start to a large-scale violent conflict that continues now in Donbas in Eastern Ukraine. A conclusion promoted by the post-Yanukovich governments and the media in Ukraine that the massacre was perpetrated by government snipers on a Yanukovich order has been nearly universally [accepted](#) by the Western governments and the media, at least publicly, without concluding an investigation and without all evidence considered. For instance, Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko in his [speech](#) to the US Congress on September 18, 2014 again claimed that the Yanukovich government overthrow resulted from mass peaceful protests against police violence, in particular, killings of more than 100 protesters by snipers on February 20, 2014.

The question is which side organized the “snipers’ massacre.” This paper is the first academic study of this crucial case of the mass killing. Analysis of a large amount of evidence in this study suggests that certain elements of the Maidan opposition, including its extremist far right wing, were involved in this massacre in order to seize power and that the government investigation was falsified for this reason.

Evidence

Evidence used in this study includes publicly available but unreported, suppressed, or misrepresented videos and photos of suspected shooters, live statements by the Maidan announcers, radio intercepts of the Maidan “snipers,” and snipers and commanders from the

special Alfa unit of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), ballistic trajectories, eyewitness reports by both Maidan protesters and government special unit commanders, public statements by both former and current government officials, bullets and weapons used, types of wounds among both protesters and the police, and the track record of politically motivated misrepresentations by the Maidan politicians of other cases of violence during and after the Euromaidan and historical conflicts. In particular, this study examines about 30 gigabytes of intercepted [radio exchanges](#) of the Security Service of Ukraine Alfa unit, Berkut, the Internal Troops, Omega, and other government agencies during the entire Maidan protests. These files were posted by a pro-Maidan Ukrainian radio amateur on a radio scanners forum, but they never were reported by the media or acknowledged by the Ukrainian government.

The timeline of the massacre with precision to minutes and locations of both the shooters and the government snipers was established in this study with great certainty based on the synchronization of the sound on the main Maidan stage, images, and other sources of evidence that independently corroborate each other. The study uses content analysis of all publicly available videos of the massacre, in particular, an unreported, time-stamped version of a previously widely seen, long video of the massacre on Instytutaska Street, videos of suspected snipers and reports of snipers in live TV broadcasts and Internet video streams from the Maidan (Independence Square), time-stamped and unedited radio intercepts of SBU Alfa snipers and commanders, and radio intercepts of Internal Troops on the Maidan. The analysis also uses live Internet broadcasts. Recordings of all live TV and Internet broadcasts of the massacre by Espresso TV, Hromadske TV, Spilno TV, Radio Liberty, and Ukrstream TV, were either removed from their websites immediately following the massacre or not made publicly available.

These recordings were mostly made by Maidan supporters, but they got very scant attention or [removed](#) from public access.

Similarly, official results of ballistic, weapons, and medical examinations and other evidence collected during the investigations concerning this massacre have not been made public, while crucial evidence, including bullets and weapons [disappeared](#) under the post-Yanukovich government. This investigation relies on such evidence reported by the media and reliable information in the social media. An on-site research on the site of the massacre on the Maidan itself and on Instytutska Street was also conducted for this study by the author.

An Academic Investigation

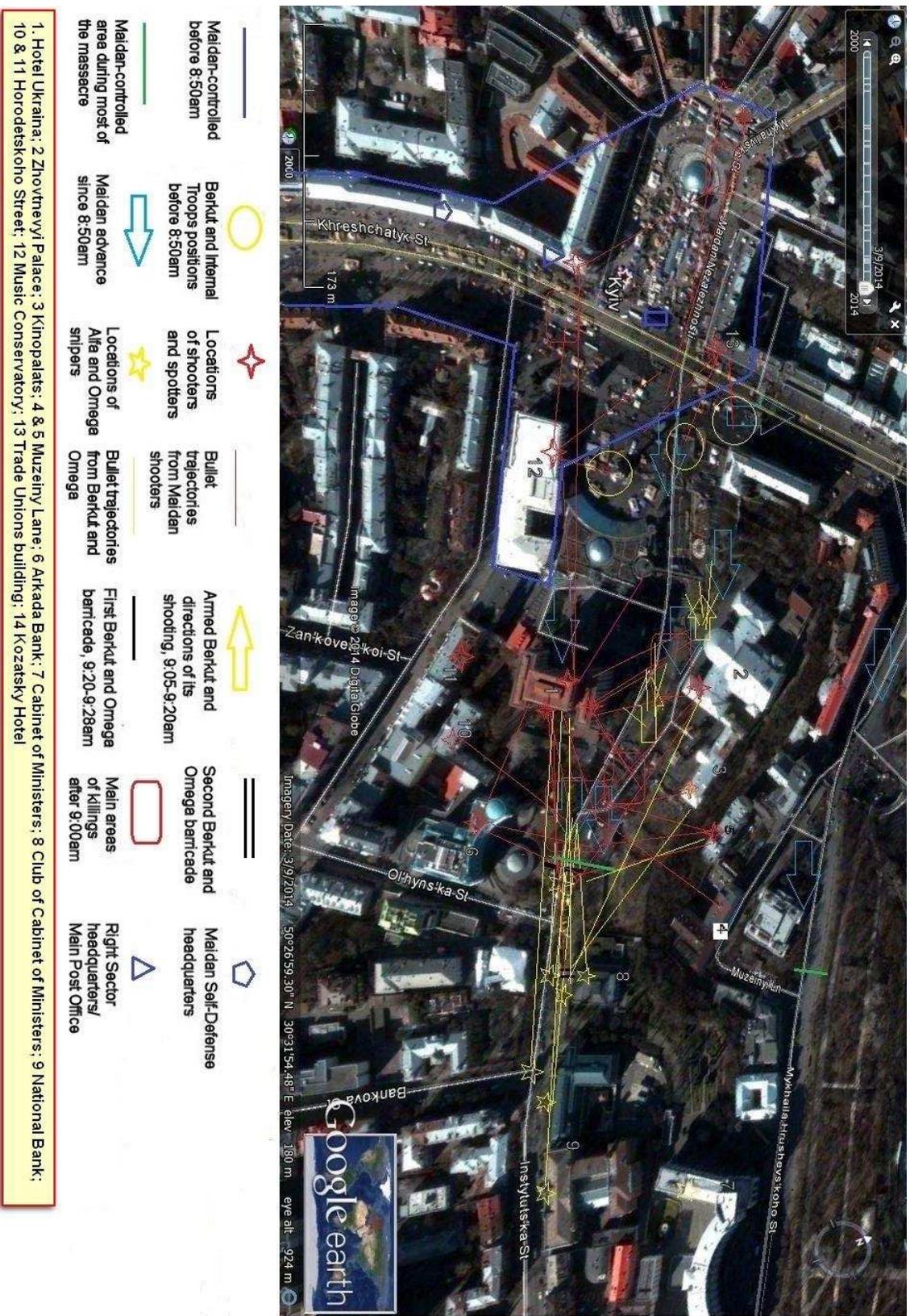
A recently released [time-stamped version](#) of an over 40-minute-long video, which was [filmed at a close distance](#) on Instytutska Street starting at 9:06am, covers, with some unexplained omissions, the most intense parts of the killings. It confirms that the mass killing of Maidan protesters on February 20 began on the adjacent Instytutska Street around that time. The Berkut anti-riot police and Internal Troops units, which were besieging, storming, and blocking the Maidan for almost three months, hastily abandoned their positions and fled by 9:00am, while protesters then started to advance from their stronghold on the Maidan up Instytutska Street.

This and [other](#) videos show members of the special elite unit of [the Berkut](#) anti-riot police and “Omega” Internal Troops special unit, including two snipers, temporarily halting the advance of protesters near Zhovtnevyi Palace starting at 9:05am, shooting with both live ammunition from the Kalashnikov assault rifles (AKMS) and rubber bullets, and [pointing sniper rifles](#) in the direction of the protesters and then retreating along with Berkut and Internal Troops units, who were resting in Zhovtnevyi Palace. After [retreating](#) to [these barricades](#) under fire, respectively, at 9:20am and 9:28am, Berkut and Omega were doing the same from two

barricades on Instytutska Street and nearby buildings of the National Bank and the Club of the Cabinet of Ministers. Directions of many [bullet holes and their impact marks](#) in the electric poles, trees, and walls of Zhovtnevyi Palace and the Hotel Ukraina also indicate that the police fired at the direction of the protesters and the protester-held buildings. SBU snipers were located in the Cabinet of Ministers, the Presidential Administration, and neighboring buildings.

The [new Ukrainian government](#) and the head of the [parliamentary commission](#) publicly stated that “snipers,” who massacred the unarmed protesters, were from these units. Specifically, the Prosecutor General Office announced on September 12, 2014 that its investigation found a Berkut commander and two members of his unit responsible for killing 39 Euromaidan protesters, or the absolute majority of some 50 protesters killed or mortally wounded on February 20, 2014. But this [Berkut commander](#) was then put under house arrest, and he disappeared. In contrast, the government deliberately [denies or ignores](#) evidence of shooters and spotters in at least 12 buildings occupied by the Maidan side or located within the general territory held by them during the massacre. This includes the Hotel Ukraina, Zhovtnevyi Palace, buildings on both sides that were not previously identified as locations of snipers, and several buildings on the Maidan (Independence Square), such as the Conservatory, the Trade Union headquarters, and the Main Post Office. (See Map 1).

The Hotel Ukraina was controlled by the Maidan side since about 9:00am. During a volley of fire by the government forces near Zhovtnevyi Palace at 9:10-9:11am, and within a few minutes of calling for ambulances and medics, an announcer on the Maidan stage publicly [warned](#) the protesters about two to three snipers on the pendulum (second from the top) floor of the Hotel Ukraina on the opposite side of the street. The first wave of casualties among the protesters included Bohdan Solchanyk, a history instructor at the Ukrainian Catholic University



Map 1. Map of the massacre on February 20, 2014

in Lviv. He was [killed](#) by a 7.62mm bullet in the area between the hotel and Zhovtnevyi at 9:12am or within a couple minutes earlier. Videos indicate that one of the two protesters [shot there](#) at 9:14am appears to have been wounded in his backside from a direction of the hotel.

A Radio Liberty [video](#) shows at least one protester shot near the Maidan side of Zhovtnevyi Palace at 9:10am and two other protesters on the ground near the middle section of this building at 9:19am. The first location matches a [reported](#) place of killings of Vasyl Moisei from the Volhynian company of the Maidan Self-Defense and an elderly protester, likely, Iosyp Shilling. The government investigation, the [media](#), and the Volhynian company [commanders](#) concluded that the Berkut shot dead these protesters during its counterattack. However, they omitted bullet impact traces in trees, poles, and Zhovtnevyi Palace facade within meters of these spots of the killings. Similarly, they omitted reports by the Maidan protesters witnesses concerning shooters in the Hotel Ukraina within minutes of these killings. In addition to the Maidan stage warning about “snipers” in the Hotel Ukraina at 9:11am, a [video](#) shows protesters taking cover under a pedestrian bridge on Instytutska Street between the hotel and Zhovtnevyi Palace and pointing out at 9:23am live ammunition fire at them and other protesters from a top floor of the hotel.

A [BelSat video](#) from the Hotel Ukraina depicts a bullet hitting a tree in front of a group of protesters from the direction of the hotel at 9:38am. [A BBC video](#) shows a sniper firing at the BBC television crew and the Maidan protesters from an open window on the pendulum floor of the hotel at 10:17am, and the BBC [correspondent identifies](#) the shooter as having a green helmet worn by the Maidan protesters. Two protesters at 10:24am point out sniper fire from the pendulum floor of the Hotel Ukraina in [another video](#) filmed from amid a group of protesters under the deadly fire on Instytutska Street. A first-hand [account](#) by Ilya Varlamov, his [photos](#), a

[testimony](#) by another eyewitness, and two nearby shots in the live [broadcast, which was recorded](#) from this hotel starting at 8:49am, suggest that two other people were shot at 10:30-10:31am from the Hotel Ukraina on the Maidan side.

Warnings from the Maidan stage about “three snipers” or “snipers” “shooting to kill” the Maidan protesters from the same hotel, specifically on Instytutska Street, were made again as the killings continued there, for example, at 10:36, 10:59, 11:07, and 11:09am in the live [broadcast](#). Eyewitnesses in another [video](#) of the shooting around 4:00pm and the direction of the entry wound indicate that a bystander was killed by a bullet from the Hotel Ukraina in front of Zhovtnevyi Palace. In the late afternoon, a speaker on the Maidan stage [threatened to burn](#) the Hotel Ukraina, as they did the Trade Union building a day earlier, because of constant reports of snipers in the hotel. But a previously unreported radio intercept of the Omega commander (“Pegas”) and servicemen from his unit [informed](#) at 10:37am on February 21 about gunshots coming from the Hotel Ukraina.

Many eyewitnesses among the Maidan protesters [reported](#) snipers firing from the Hotel Ukraina during the massacre of the protesters, specifically, about [killing eight](#) of them and at least [one member](#) of the Volhynian company of the Maidan Self-Defense on Instytutska Street. [Bullet holes](#) in trees and electricity poles on the site of the massacre and on the walls of Zhovtnevyi Palace indicate that shots came from the direction of the hotel.

When the Hotel Ukraina was controlled by the Maidan, “snipers” there were also shooting at the police. A Berkut policeman [was killed](#) in front of Zhovtnevyi Palace by two shots at 9:16am, minutes after the announcement about “snipers” in the hotel. There were bullet impact traces in a trees and poles within meters of this spot from a Hotel Ukraina direction. A Berkut commander [stated](#) that snipers in the Hotel Ukraina were shooting at the policemen from

7.62mm caliber hunting guns. A [video](#) from the police side of the barricade depicts several Berkut policemen with 7.62 caliber AKMs and many armed members of the Omega special Internal Troops unit with different caliber AKS-74, including several snipers, taking cover from live ammunition fire during the height of the massacre of the protesters starting from a few minutes before 10:00am. It shows at the very end one Omega sniper targeting an open window of the Hotel Ukraina and another sniper pointing his rifle in an upward direction, likely toward Zhovtnevyi Palace. A Ukrainian TV journalist, who filmed this video, [confirmed](#) that they came under a fire and were looking for a sniper in the Hotel Ukraina. The video also shows two Berkut servicemen pointing their Kalashnikov rifles or shooting from the top side of Kamaz trucks, likely at the same direction or in the direction of Muzeinyi Lane buildings, where shooters could be seen in live broadcasts around the same time. All these buildings and the protesters on Instytutska Street were located downslope from this police barricade.

Mustafa Nayem, an initiator of the Euromaidan protests and a widely known journalist from Ukrainska Pravda, an openly pro-Maidan online newspaper, tweeted at 11:58am a [photo](#) of snipers on the police side of this barricade located at the intersection of Instytutska and Bankova streets. This photo was presented by the Ukrainian media as evidence that these were snipers who massacred the protesters. However, these snipers and Berkut special company shooters generally did not hide, and they allowed the media and bystanders to [film](#) themselves during the massacre.

Various sources of evidence indicate that Berkut and Omega used, respectively, their AKMS, AKS, and sniper rifles and that they shot live ammunition at the general direction of both the protesters and suspected Maidan “snipers.” These live ammunition rounds came around the time of the killing and wounding of many protesters. Videos show that at least a large

proportion of the victims were shot at that time while [taking cover](#) behind [a wall](#), [trees](#), and a barricade, and thus being outside of a [hitting zone](#) from the direction of the police barricade and the adjacent government buildings, as the [Google street view](#) illustrates. But a possibility that some of the protesters, specifically armed ones, including “snipers,” were wounded or killed by the police fire cannot be ruled out.

The [Omega commander](#) and an Internal Troops [commander](#) in charge of such special units stated that they received orders to target snipers at the Hotel Ukraina and other locations and had permission to shoot at armed protesters. A former Berkut officer [said](#) that a sniper that accompanied the Berkut special company had a task to look for a Right Sector sniper in the Hotel Ukraina. [Videos](#) show the sniper lying on the ground and then pointing his rifle into the direction of the Hotel Ukraina at 9:23am exactly when one of the unarmed protesters is seen shot dead in a close proximity near the barricade. This was used as evidence of a direct hit, but the direction of the sniper rifle, sound of the gunshot, and a [reported](#) entry wound in the right shoulder and an apparent [exit wound](#) on a left front side of a torso, and an absence of a bullet hole on the shield indicate that the gunshot came from a building located in the back or on the right side. A BBC [report](#) shows another unarmed protestor shot dead in the same spot apparently from a [similar direction](#) within a [minute before](#). An armed protestor in a Berkut-style uniform was [wounded in his arm](#) while he was [running away](#) from the scene. Many of the commanders and members of Omega, Alfa, and the special company of disbanded Berkut were deployed by the post-Yanukovich government along with Maidan Self-Defense and the Right Sector commanders and members in the [civil war](#) with pro-Russian separatists in Donbas in Eastern Ukraine.

A Ruptly TV [video](#) shows three armed Maidan protesters who were shooting from a top floor of the Hotel Ukraina in the direction not of the Independence Square but of Instytutska Street, judging by buildings that can be discerned. Volodymyr Ariev, an investigative journalist and a member of the parliament from the Maidan coalition party, [concluded](#) that “snipers” came to the Hotel Ukraina from the Music Conservatory side and that they blocked the Ruptly TV crew on the 14th floor of the hotel. A RT [report](#), the abovementioned video, and other [videos](#) indicate that they were armed Maidan protesters. But Ariev claimed without providing any evidence that these “snipers” were working for the Russian government.

A previously unreported [intercept](#) of radio communications by the SBU Alfa commanders, contains specific information by the head of this Security Service unit (“Suddia”) and his deputy (“Indeiets”) that “shooters” or “snipers” were moving to the Hotel Ukraina and that they were from the Maidan side. This is consistent with an [interview](#) of the former SBU head, who said that one half of about 20 “snipers” with concealed AKMs in bags moved from the neighboring Music Conservatory, which was held by the Maidan, to the Hotel Ukraina, while another half moved in the direction of the Dnipro Hotel, located on the European Square near Muzeinyi Lane. The most complete [time-stamped version](#) of the Alfa commanders’ radio intercept synchronized with the local time indicates that their report of shooters moving to the Hotel Ukraina was made at 9:23am. It is contained among the intercepted [radio exchanges](#) of Alfa, Berkut, the Internal Troops, Omega, and other government agencies during the entire Maidan protests.

The Alfa commanders’ intercept demonstrates that snipers from this SBU unit were given an order to deploy to the Presidential Administration soon after a full combat readiness was reported by them at 7:24am. It also contains similar orders to get arms and deploy to these and

other government locations to other SBU units around the same time. In contrast to many fake claims and evidence publicized by the Ukrainian government, the radio intercept is not a fake. Their publicly available versions came from several different pro-Maidan sources. [One version](#) with omitted parts was posted by a news website run by an advisor to the current Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, but it was also not acknowledged by the government.

An unedited and [time-stamped intercept](#) of a radio communication by this SBU sniper team, led by “Miron,” demonstrates that they were tasked with and were monitoring the Hotel Ukraina, specifically its top floors, and other neighboring buildings for snipers and their spotters, who helped to direct the fire, after the massacre was already underway. [These snipers](#) detected armed people, who shot from the tops of the buildings or were lying there, and then swiftly moved away after their location was communicated via radio among the SBU snipers. The Alfa snipers were based then the Cabinet of Ministers building (See Map 1). There are no sounds of gunshots by these SBU Alfa snipers or other indications that they fired in the audio clips, which span the most intense phase of the killings from 9:35am till 11:13am. Similarly, no evidence was produced that the protesters were killed with German sniper rifles used by this group of snipers. This is consistent with information provided by three SBU Alfa commanders during the [parliamentary investigation](#) and in their [statements](#) to Ukrainian TV networks.

However, an [edited version](#) of this SBU sniper team’s radio communications intercept was posted on YouTube on the day of the massacre with its content and added photos of the massacre misrepresented to claim that these were the killers. It was swiftly used by Ukrainian politicians, including the head of the parliamentary commission, and the media as key evidence that these SBU snipers killed the protesters. “Miron” [stated](#) that this highly publicized version was also cut and did not include their reports of civilians carrying weapons in bags in the

European Square. The time-stamped version includes such cut-out parts in the beginning and the end, but some key time periods during the massacre are missing there also.



Photo 1. Suspected shooters on a roof of Zhovtnevyi Palace during the massacre. Source:

Espresso TV [broadcast](#)

In their [radio intercept](#), SBU snipers report hearing numerous gunshots and seeing suspected snipers or their fire coordinators at several other buildings then held by the Maidan side, such as on the roof of Kinopalats at 9:43am. The Maidan announcers [reported](#) three snipers shooting to kill from the top of Zhovtnevyi Palace, which is connected to Kinopalats, at 9:46–9:47am, and they repeated such specific warnings until at least 10:53am. A bullet strikes a tree near a group of protesters from the direction of these buildings during one of the first waves of mass killing at [9:45am](#), when within a couple of minutes at least eight protesters were killed or seriously wounded in a few meters radius from that tree. Bullet holes there indicate the same direction (See Photo 2). These three suspected “snipers” on the roof of Zhovtnevyi Palace were [seen and identified](#) as such during another wave of killing of protesters around 10:00am in a live

broadcast (Photo 1). One of them is recorded in the same spot on the top of this yellow building in a BBC [video](#) at 10:04am, but this was not previously noted. Two “snipers” there were [shown](#) by ICTV on February 20, 2014. An apparent human contour is noticeable on the roof of Kinopalats in a [photo](#) taken by a French photographer from the midst of the massacre when at least several protesters were killed or seriously wounded [near him](#) around 10:20-10:25am. The Maidan Self-Defense [reportedly](#) later found more than 80 bullet casings on the roof of Zhovtnevyi Palace. [Eyewitnesses](#) among the Maidan protesters confirm presence of at least three snipers on Zhovtnevyi Palace roof and its upper floor.



Photo 2. Bullet impact marks from the direction of Zhovtnevyi Palace and Kinopalats on another tree at the site of the massacre. (Source: Photo by the author)

There is similar evidence of shooters on the top of buildings on both sides of Instytutska Street in the general area that was under Maidan control. A recording of live broadcast showed at [10:23am](#), [10:45am](#), and [12:15pm](#) a person lying on a roof of a Muzeinyi Lane building (see Photo 3 and the linked videos). In the first two cases, a camera zoomed into these areas [within minutes](#) when gunshots were heard and protesters were shot on Instytutska Street. This recording appears to confirm previous media reports about a different video showing a “sniper” on a roof shooting at Berkut and then protesters from AK and wearing a Berkut-style uniform. The [video](#) was shown in the Ukrainian parliament to some of the Maidan leaders and other members of the parliament, but it is still not released publicly. There is also a [brief extract](#) from an unknown video showing a Maidan activist identifying a shooter, who was aiming his gun in the direction of Instytutska Street, on a roof of an adjacent building on Muzeinyi Lane. An apparent human figure might be noticed there at [10:23am](#). A bullet is seen striking a pole from the Muzeinyi Lane direction and ricocheting at [9:54am](#). At least several protesters are killed and seriously wounded at this spot or in a few meters radius within minutes of that time. Bullet holes in the trees on the site of the massacre indicate the same direction of fire. A [bullet impact](#) point suggests that ABC News occupied room in the Hotel Ukraina was fired from a direction of Muzeinyi Lane or Kinopalats buildings.

Suspected shooters on the green Arkada Bank building are pointed out by fleeing protesters after many shots fired at [9:44am](#). Reports by SBU snipers in their intercepted [radio communication](#) at 9:46am, by a female Maidan medic at 10:04am in the [BBC video](#), and by another protester in the [Radio Liberty](#) video corroborate this. A TVP journalist based in the Hotel Ukraina during the massacre [stated](#) that he saw one of the “snipers” on the roof of Arkada and that their producer was shot from this building’s roof in his Hotel Ukraina room, judging by the

direction of a bullet strike. Ruslana, in one of her [announcements](#) on the Maidan stage in the afternoon, relayed “reliable reports” from the Maidan Self-Defense members of “snipers” on the roof of Arkada.

Likely shooters or spotters can also be identified in windows on the roofs of two other buildings in the 45 minute-long [video](#) of the massacre and in the SBU snipers’ intercept at about the same time at 10:11–10:12am. One of the survivors of the massacre, who can be seen [pointing a hand](#) after being wounded there during one of the early waves of the killing around 9:44-9:45am, [stated](#) that shots that [killed and wounded](#) most members of his group came from the sides and from the back. [Videos](#) show at least eight protesters killed and gravely wounded in this spot during this short period of time and more than dozen other protesters gunned down in the same area on the right side of Instytutska Street within the next 45 minutes. He also said that his group of Svoboda-led Khmelnytskyi company of the Maidan Self-Defense received an order to go there. A [video](#) confirms this. Likewise, bullet [impact points](#) in trees confirm the live ammunition fire from this sidewise direction.

It is noteworthy that some crucial parts of this and other waves of the killings are missing in this long [video](#) filmed by an activist of Zelenyi Front, a Kharkiv organization. This organization is associated with one of the former opposition leaders, who became the Minister of Internal Affairs in the post-Yanukovich government. Another pro-Maidan activist is seen in different videos filming and taking pictures during the massacre from within advancing protesters, many of whom were then killed and wounded. His publicly released [videos](#) and [photos](#) also do not include many crucial parts of the massacre. He later served in the special police battalion Azov, which was created under formal command of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and he gained notoriety for painting a star on the top of a Moscow high-rise building. In

videos of both these pro-Maidan amateur photographs, there were no signs of attempts to identify Maidan sniper positions in surrounding buildings, in spite of their close proximity, or reaction to loud warnings from the Maidan stage about snipers in these locations. Similarly, “shooters” did not appear to target them to avoid possible identification, in contrast, to targeting many professional foreign journalists, including the BBC correspondent in the same area, the [Associated Press](#), [TVP](#), ABC News, and Australian Broadcasting Corporation journalists, and at least twice reporters from both [ARD](#) and [RT](#).

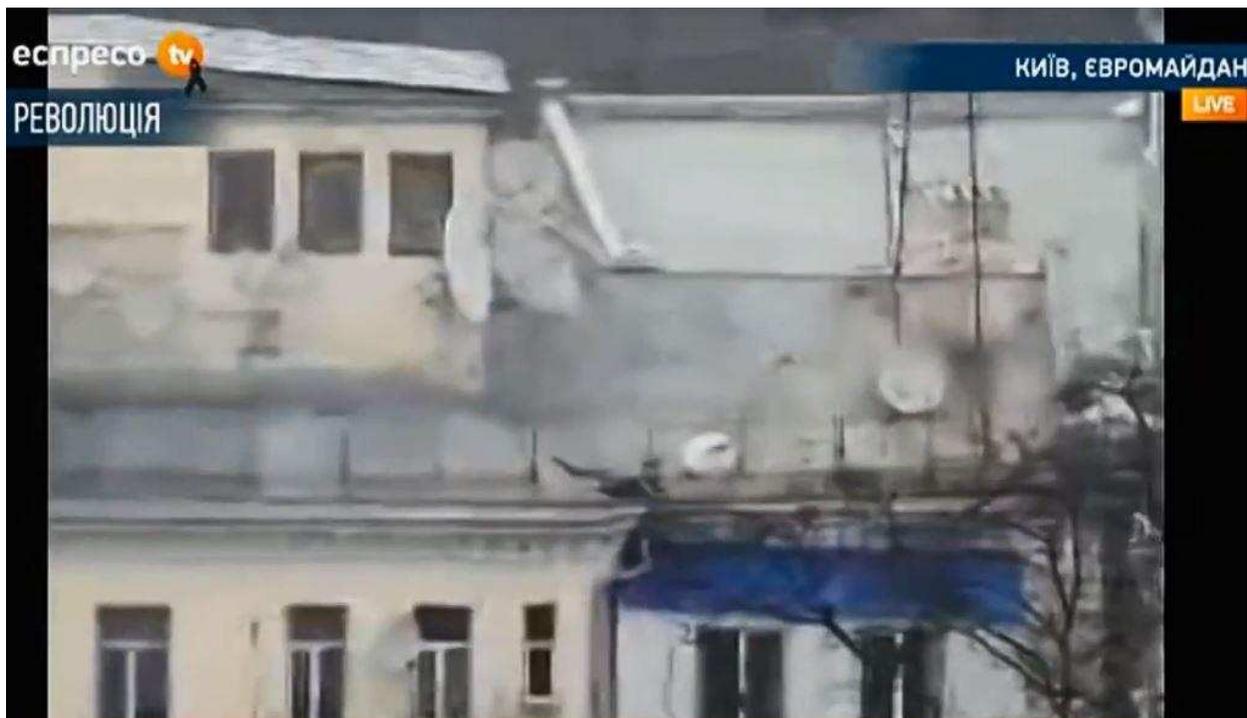


Photo 3. A suspected shooter on a roof of a Muzeinyi Lane building during the massacre. Source: Espresso TV/Spilno TV [broadcast](#)

Another indication that the shooters were from the Maidan side is that the gunshots on Instyutska Street significantly subsided or stopped by about 10:50–11:20am, but they continued

on the Maidan itself. This square, along with main buildings and surrounding areas, was under control of the opposition. This corresponds in time to a [report](#) by a senior opposition leader, who became the head of the presidential administration after the violent overthrow of the previous government, of receiving SMS request at 10:45am from the commander of a sniper group, likely Alfa, Omega, or Sokil, to allow their snipers to search together with Maidan representatives for a shooter from the Hotel Ukraina. He also said that there was a subsequent meeting between him together with Andrii Parubii, the Maidan Self-Defense commander, with a group of government snipers. The reported fact and the location of this meeting in the government-controlled area near the same barricade with Berkut and Omega on Instytutska Street close to the Presidential administration also indicate that these snipers were regarded at the time by the opposition leaders as not the actual killers, in spite of public statements to the contrary. Similarly, there were two members of Svoboda leadership near the Hotel Ukraina [at the time](#) of the massacre. The government snipers accompanied by the Maidan Self-Defense reportedly remained in the hotel area till 1:00–1:30pm. Exact locations of the shooters could have been easily determined by open windows in the Hotel Ukraina and eyewitnesses identifying them. There were also media reports of a few captured “snipers” in this hotel.

But Maidan leaders denied that any shooters were there and claimed that several Maidan Self-Defense and Right Sector searches at the Hotel Ukraina, specifically conducted there around noon by Maidan protesters [armed](#) with AKMS or AKS and rifles, in Zhovtnevyi Palace, and in the Conservatory during the massacre and soon after it ended did not find any of the “shooters.” For, example, Mustafa Nayem, who streamed live for Hromadske TV, [stated](#) at 3:00pm that a Right Sector and Self-Defense search did not locate any snipers who were spotted on an upper

floor of the Hotel Ukraina. As noted the shootings from the hotel, specifically one of its top floors, continued afterwards.

Similarly, several leaders of the opposition parties ([Svoboda](#), the [Radical Party](#), and the [Fatherland](#)) were speaking on the Maidan stage and blaming the Yanukovich government and its snipers during the very time or shortly after numerous gunshots fired from nearby buildings on the Maidan. For example, a synchronization of a [live broadcast recording](#) and a brief intercepted [radio communication](#) of the actual shooters show that they fired several rounds of altogether 10 shots in quick succession at 11:33–11:34am. The loud sound of these gunshots in a recording of the [live broadcast](#) (1h 08-09 min) from the Kozatsky Hotel on the Maidan indicates that these shots likely came from this or other nearby locations, such as the Trade Union building. A minute afterwards, Oleksander Turchynov, a former head of the Security Service of Ukraine who would become the head of the Ukrainian parliament and the acting president after the violent overthrow of the Yanukovich government, started [his speech](#) with the “Slava Ukraini” greeting, which was used by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and copied by the Maidan. Sounds of other shots and sirens of moving ambulances can be heard in the live broadcast during his speech. The manner of the communication of these shooters in the single publicly available recording is very different from those of SBU and Omega snipers and other government agencies in more than 30 gigabytes of their intercepted, recorded, and released radio exchanges during the entire Maidan protests. These intercepts, [admissions](#) by the Maidan leaders that they had such intercepts, and a statement by the Alfa commander all indicate that the shooters and their spotters had such radio intercepts and were able to avoid tracking by the SBU snipers or move to different positions.

Similarly, a female medic was [wounded](#), and another protester standing in front of her [was killed](#) on the Maidan near the Kozatsky Hotel at 11:43am. This happened during a speech by Oleh Liashko, a leader of the Radical Party, which openly cooperated after the overthrow of Yanukovich with the neo-Nazi Social National Assembly, which was one of the founders of the Right Sector. A more distant sound of a shot than the abovementioned rounds is heard at 1 hour and 18 minutes in the [live broadcast recording](#), which starts at 10:23am. [Eyewitnesses](#) and the direction of the entry wound indicate that this shot was made from the Main Post Office building, which was [occupied](#) by the Right Sector. This shooting case attracted big attention from the Ukrainian and [Western media](#), but like all shootings of protesters, journalists, and the police on the Independence Square, government snipers were blamed and no real investigation was conducted.

[Eyewitnesses](#) among the protesters, the [TVP correspondent](#), and bullet trajectories also point to shooters around the same time in the Trade Union building, the Kozatsky Hotel, the Music Conservatory buildings, and some other buildings on the Maidan itself. At 11:43am, an unidentified intruder broke into a radio communication of the Internal Troops units, which retreated from the Maidan, and [informed](#) them that there were people aiming a rocket propelled grenade launcher into the Hotel Ukraina from the 6th floor of the Trade Union building. SBU snipers [noted](#) people at the top of this building at 10:53 and 10:59am.

An RT correspondent [reported](#) at 10:58am that a 7.62mm AKM bullet narrowly missed him at a Hotel Ukraina window and that its trajectory pointed to the Conservatory building. An Associated Press correspondent also [reported](#) being fired at in his Hotel Ukraina room overlooking the Maidan in the morning of February 20, and he found that bullet on his balcony.

An Australian [ABC reporter's](#) hotel room was also shot from the direction of the Maidan around that time. A BBC occupied room was also [fired upon](#).

Various sources show that Maidan shooters used these buildings to fire live ammunition at journalists and at Berkut and Internal Troops at night or early morning on February 20. Two Ukraina hotel rooms of German journalists were [shot from](#) the direction of the Main Post Office, as a Ukrainian journalist working for the German TV reported on his [Facebook](#) page, or from the direction of Conservatory, located across the street from the new headquarters of the Maidan Self-Defense and the Right Sector. The parliamentary commission stated based on medical emergency services reports that shooting at Berkut and Internal Troops from the Maidan and neighboring streets started on February 20 at 6:10am. A parliament member from the Maidan opposition [stated](#) that he received a phone call from a Berkut commander shortly after 7:00am that 11 members of his police unit were wounded by shooters from the Music Conservatory building. A Maidan Self-Defense search there found no shooters after this parliament member informed Parubiii and other opposition leaders. But this Berkut commander again reported that within a half an hour his unit casualties increased to 21 wounded and three killed.

Similarly, reports in the morning of February 20 by the Internal Affairs Ministry, statements by the former heads of SBU and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, [radio intercepts](#) of Internal Troops, [videos](#), and eyewitness accounts by the protesters, including a Swedish [neo-Nazi volunteer](#), independently confirm that the police units on the Maidan were shot with live ammunition from the Conservatory and Trade Union buildings before 9:00am and that they swiftly [retreated](#) as a result of this fire and the many casualties that they suffered. For instance, in their [radio communications](#), the Internal Troops units, stationed on the Maidan near the Trade Union building, made urgent requests for an ambulance at 8:08am, a life support vehicle at

8:21am, an ambulance at 8:29am, two ambulances at 8:39am, five ambulances at 8:46am, and then issued retreat orders at 8:49 and 8:50am.

A senior Internal Troops officer [stated](#) that they had information that five “snipers” moved to the Conservatory from the Trade Union building after it was burned by the protesters during Alfa’s attempt to seize it [after 11:00pm on February 18](#). He also confirmed the shooters killed and wounded many policemen from the Trade Union building and Maidan tents before its burning, when it was occupied and used as the headquarters of the Maidan Self-Defense and the Right Sector. At least 17 of them were killed and 196 wounded from [gunshots](#) on February 18-20, including three killed and more than 20 wounded on February 20.

The radio intercepts of Internal Troops [units](#) and Alfa [commanders and snipers](#) confirm that their attempts to seize the Maidan and the Trade Union building on February 18 were stopped by the burning of this building by its defenders and by use of live ammunition by the Maidan Self-Defense and the Right Sector. These seizures of the Maidan and its headquarters were authorized by the Yanukovych government as a part of the “[Boomerang](#)” and “Khvylia” plans. These plans were put in force after an attempt by the opposition led by the Maidan Self-Defense and the Right Sector to storm the parliament and their burning of the Party of Regions headquarters resulting in a death of an employee working there in the morning of the same day. An Alfa officer, who led one of the SBU groups during storming of the Trade Union Building, [stated](#) that their task was to seize the 5th floor, which contained a lot of weapons. The Right Sector occupied the entire floor which served as both its headquarters and a base of the Right Sector company of the Maidan Self-Defense. A [radio intercept](#) of Alfa commanders contains their report about deploying SBU snipers after two “snipers” or spotters from the Maidan side

were noticed on a Maidan-controlled building, their preparation to storm this building, and an order from their superior to Alfa jointly with the Internal Troops to start this attack.

The current government and the parliamentary commission claimed without providing any evidence that Alfa burned the Trade Union building and that undercover SBU agents burned the Party of Regions headquarters. After these attacks, Berkut, the Internal Troops, and titushki assembled by the Yanukovych government launched a [counterassault](#), and at least five Maidan protesters died as result of being beaten, driven over, or injured by stun grenades. At least six Maidan protesters were killed on February 18 and 19 by gunshots, primarily from hunting weapons and pellets, like was the case with three protesters killed in the end of January, 2014. The Maidan opposition and the current government asserted without providing any evidence that these protesters were gunned down by the Berkut and snipers, while similarities with the “snipers” massacre on the Maidan are not considered and not investigated.

The Main Post Office at the time of the February 20th shootings was occupied by the Right Sector, an alliance of radical nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations and football ultras groups, which took active part in the violent attacks on the presidential administration on December 1, 2013 and the parliament in the end of January and on February 18, 2014. The Maidan company commander [confirmed](#) that at that time his special combat company, which included armed protesters with experience of fighting in armed conflicts, was based in the Conservatory building. He stated that this company was formed with an agreement of the Right Sector. In a new US [documentary](#) investigating the Maidan massacre, Berkut members said that they noticed protesters with the Right Sector insignia in the Music Conservatory building on February 19, that armed protesters took positions there, and that they were shot and wounded, while other Berkut officers killed by shooters from the second floor of the Conservatory in the

morning of February 20. Maidan eyewitnesses among the protesters [said](#) that organized groups from Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions in Western Ukraine arrived on the Maidan and moved to the Music Conservatory at the night of the February 20th massacre, and that some of them were armed with rifles.

The seeming absence of the Right Sector and this combat company during the snipers' massacre of the protesters is the “dog that did not bark” evidence pointing to their likely involvement. The leader of the Right Sector shortly after the midnight [announced](#) that his organization did not accept a truce agreement with Yanukovych and would undertake decisive actions against the government forces. A [report](#) by the head of the parliamentary commission concluded that “unknown civic organizations” could have been shooters of the police. But these cases of the killing and wounding of the police were not investigated by the government, specifically the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This ministry created, along with the Right Sector and the Social National Assembly, special police battalions, which fought in Donbas. Similarly, the National Guard was newly organized on the basis of the Internal Troops and the Maidan Self-Defense.

It was the same special combat company commander who [called](#) from the Maidan stage in the evening of February 21 to reject a signed agreement, which was mediated by foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland and a representative of the Russian president, and issued a public ultimatum for President Yanukovych to resign by 10:00am of the next day. He justified his ultimatum by blaming Yanukovych for the massacre, stated that his combat company based in the Music Conservatory was responsible for the turning point of the Euromaidan, and threatened an armed assault if Yanukovych would not resign. Yanukovych [fled](#) from Kyiv on the same day soon after this ultimatum was issued.

The types of guns and ammunition used and the direction and types of entry wounds among both protesters and policemen also confirm that the shooters came from the Maidan side. The parliamentary commission [reported](#) that 17 protesters were killed by buckshot (pellets), a part were shot dead from AKMS (7.62x39mm caliber), one from the Makarov handgun, while in most cases the bullets went through the bodies. The Prosecutor General Office [stated](#) on April 2 that a SKS semi-automatic “sniper” carbine, which has the same caliber as AKMS, was use to shoot protesters from the Hotel Ukraina, even though this outdated firearm was not used by professional snipers and was available in Ukraine as a hunting weapon. But the Prosecutor General Office then began to claim that they still were checking if any snipers were in the hotel.

The [head](#) of the medical service of the Euromaidan and other medics [reported](#) that both protesters and the police were shot by similar ammunition, specifically 7.62mm caliber bullets and buckshot (pellets), and that they had similar types of wounds. This information was relayed by the Estonian minister of foreign affairs in his intercepted [telephone call](#) to the EU Foreign Affairs head. Various statements by medics, videos, photos, and media reports confirm that dozens of protesters were shot precisely in necks, heads, thighs, and hearts, the most lethal places, and that many entry wounds were from the top, side, or back. This is consistent with locations of shooters on the roofs or top floors of all specified buildings. Precise and deadly gunshots and the 7.62mm Kalashnikov AKMS type assault rifles and various hunting weapons and ammunition used also indicate that shooters were positioned within several dozen meters from the places where both the police and the protesters were killed or wounded.

[Photos](#), [videos](#), eyewitness [testimonies](#) and other sources demonstrate that some protesters were shooting with or openly carrying hunting and sporting rifles, Kalashnikov assault rifles and their hunting versions, Makarov, and other handguns during the mass shooting of the police and

the protesters. The parliamentary commission concluded that it was very likely that the policemen on the Maidan were shot from firearms and ammunition that were seized by protesters from the police, internal troops, and SBU offices and arsenals in Western Ukraine on February 18 and 19. These weapons specifically [included](#) 1,008 Makarov handguns, 59 AKMS (folding 7.62 caliber Kalashnikov assault rifles, two SVD sniper rifles, and various other rifles and shotguns. Their present whereabouts remain unknown.

The failure by the government to locate and identify the shooters of the protesters and investigate the shooting of the police and the similar failure of the Maidan Self-Defense to stop or detain them during the massacre in spite of their locations being known at that time and in spite of calls to do so from the protesters and the government officials also indicate that the shooters were from the Maidan side. [Media reports](#), [eyewitness accounts](#), the audio of the shooters, and statements by the former [SBU head](#) and [internal affairs minister](#) suggest that they included armed protesters and hired people with appropriate experience from Ukraine and foreign countries.

But the specific identities of the shooters and the politicians who directed them remain unknown. There were various public allegations concerning purported involvement in the massacre of specific politicians and political parties, but such allegations did not lead to any investigations since these politicians or their parties occupied various positions in the new government. The massacre master-minders and perpetrators are unlikely to be uncovered by the current government, even though it has much more evidence available that has still not been made public. This evidence includes reported videos of shooters from Muzeinyi Lane and the Trade Union buildings, intercepted radio communications of Berkut, and ballistic and medical expert reports.

[Videos](#) and photos of armed Berkut members shooting during their counterattack and then from barricades were cited by the top Ukrainian government officials and by the [head](#) of the special parliamentary commission and reported by the media as the undisputable proof that the special police units massacred the protesters. The Reuters reported that the [prosecution case](#) against three Berkut members relies on such videos and photos, and that some of key pieces of such evidence were misrepresented or ignored. However, the analysis of the publicly available evidence is inconclusive whether Berkut and Omega killed any of the protesters, specifically unarmed ones, because there were other shooters killing the protesters at the same very time. The head of the special parliamentary commission [reported](#) that ammunition expertise, contrary to an earlier claim by the minister of interior, failed to link any of their weapons to the killed protesters and that many of their Kalashnikov assault rifles, records of their use, and the bullet database disappeared when the new government was in power.

Similarly, while the new government and the head of the parliamentary commission publicly [alleged](#) that an order to kill unarmed protesters was issued personally by Yanukovich and that his entire government and law enforcement agencies and commanders of Berkut, Internal Troops, and SBU's Alfa, were involved in this "criminal organization" by implementing this order and issuing similar orders, no evidence of such order was produced. Commanders of Alfa and its sniper team, Internal Troops, and Omega all denied receiving such an order, and their radio intercepts confirm this.

The "sniper massacre" fits a pattern of the politically motivated misrepresentations of the mass killing and other cases of violence by the same Ukrainian political forces and the media involved. Such cases include the Odesa massacre on May 2, 2014, killings of civilians in Donbas, and the beating of Tetiana Chornovol last December and the abduction of Dmytro

Bulatov, two Maidan activists who became government ministers as a result of these highly publicized cases. The new investigations named the same suspects arrested in December in the Chornovol case and [pursued](#) as the possibility a version in which Bulatov's abduction was staged. Contrary to the available evidence, the government claimed that more than 40 Odesa protesters died as result of a fire caused by them and claimed that separatists killed more than 1,000 civilians in Donbas by shelling them in their own cities and town. Similar cases include misrepresentations of the involvement of the OUN and the UPA in the [mass killings](#) of Poles and the Nazi-led [mass murder](#) of Jews and [misrepresentation](#)s of more than 2,000 recently uncovered, primarily Jewish victims of Nazi-led executions in the town of Volodymyr-Volynskyi as Poles killed by the Soviet NKVD. While the various available evidence indicates that the Malaysian airliner in Donbas was likely shot down by separatists, such a track record also raises questions in this case.

Conclusion

The analysis and the evidence presented in this academic investigation put the Euromaidan and the conflict in Ukraine into a new perspective. The seemingly irrational mass shooting and killing of the protesters and the police on February 20 appear to be rational from self-interest based perspectives of rational choice and Weberian theories of instrumentally-rational action. This includes the following: the Maidan leaders gaining power as a result of the massacre, President Yanukovych and his other top government officials fleeing on February 21, 2014 from Kyiv and then from Ukraine, and the retreat by the police. The same concerns Maidan protesters being sent under deadly fire into positions of no important value and then being killed wave by wave from unexpected directions. Similarly, snipers killing unarmed protesters and targeting foreign journalists but not Maidan leaders, the Maidan Self-Defense and the Right

Sector headquarters, the Maidan stage, and pro-Maidan photographs become rational. While such actions are rational from a rational choice or instrumentally-rational theoretical perspective, the massacre not only ended many human lives but also undermined democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Ukraine.

The massacre of the protesters and the police represented a violent overthrow of the government in Ukraine and a major human rights crime. This violent overthrow constituted an undemocratic change of government. It gave start to a large-scale violent conflict that turned into a civil war in Eastern Ukraine, to a Russian military intervention in support of separatists in Crimea and Donbas, and to a de-facto break-up of Ukraine. It also escalated an international conflict between the West and Russia over Ukraine. The evidence indicates that an alliance of elements of the Maidan opposition and the far right was involved in the mass killing of both protesters and the police, while the involvement of the special police units in killings of some of the protesters cannot be entirely ruled out based on publicly available evidence. The new government that came to power largely as a result of the massacre falsified its investigation, while the Ukrainian media helped to misrepresent the mass killing of the protesters and the police. The evidence indicates that the far right played a key role in the violent overthrow of the government in Ukraine. This academic investigation also brings new important questions that need to be addressed.