



## SESSION REPORT

*Please know you may design the structure of this report to better suit the session. It's important to capture the key outcomes and solutions proposed for the future.*

### **Session Title: NGOs in Exile: How Not to Become a Grant-Eater?**

**Date:** 19 July 2024

**Time:** 08:30 AM - 10:00 AM (GMT +3)

#### **Report prepared by:**

Ivan Korzh

PR Manager

Transparency International Russia (in exile)

#### **Moderated by:**

Grigory Mashanov

Senior lawyer

Transparency International Russia (in exile)

#### **Panellists:**

- Ye Lin Myint  
BEE House Myanmar
- Ilya Shumanov  
CEO  
Transparency International Russia (in exile)
- Emin Huseynov  
Advocacy director  
COP29.HOST

### **Share the thematic focus of the session, its purpose and corruption risks?**

#### **Thematic focus**

The session explored the unique challenges and strategies of conducting anti-corruption work while in exile, focusing on the experiences from various countries where civil society faces severe repression.

## Purpose

The primary aim was to discuss the mechanisms and strategies that anti-corruption activists and organizations employ to continue their work effectively while operating from exile. The session also aimed to highlight the critical role of international support and cooperation in these efforts.

## Corruption risks

The discussion highlighted the heightened risks faced by activists and organizations working in exile, including limited funding, security threats, and the challenge of maintaining legitimacy and effectiveness from abroad.

## Summary of panellists' contributions & discussion points (please be as detailed as possible)

*Ye Lin Myint:*

- **Coordinator's experience:** Was a part of the Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability. Ye Lin Myint highlighted the absence of civil society in the country yet, despite the coup in Myanmar, he continues to work to battle corruption, in exile.
- **Educational efforts:** Emphasized that cutting off the junta's financial flows, delegitimizing the junta, and holding international companies accountable are key actions.
- **Legitimacy in exile:** Despite the challenges, donors understand the need for anti-corruption work from abroad.

*Emin Huseynov:*

- **Personal background:** Emin, being a stateless person in Switzerland, shared his experience of working in exile for years, focusing on human rights and anti-corruption.
- **Challenges:** Detailed the increased problems since going into exile, including reduced budgets, the killing of colleagues, and the imprisonment of family members.
- **Corruption in Azerbaijan:** Highlighted the massive theft of oil and gas incomes and the high cost of fighting corruption.
- **Recommendations:** Emphasized the importance of leaving authoritarian countries to avoid risk and the effectiveness of working with modern technology from abroad.

*Ilia Shumanov:*

- **Optimism in exile:** Expressed a more optimistic view, stressing the importance of support from Transparency International and the potential for effective work in exile.
- **Technology use:** Discussed the extensive use of technology and remote work, which continued seamlessly after the war.
- **Challenges:** Mentioned the difficulties of working across multiple jurisdictions and the need for adaptive strategies.

## Main outcomes of the session (include quotes/highlights and interesting questions from the floor)

The main outcomes of the session highlighted several key points. First, the session

reaffirmed the critical role of corruption in enabling and sustaining conflicts. The concentration of resources and the lack of oversight in corrupt regimes were identified as key factors facilitating ongoing warfare. Additionally, while sanctions are a vital tool in combating corruption, their current implementation has had limited success in changing the behavior of corrupt elites. Therefore, the need for more robust, targeted, and coordinated sanctions was emphasized.

Furthermore, the session highlighted the resilience and importance of civil society in combating corruption and supporting democratic governance. Continued support for these organizations is crucial for maintaining transparency and accountability. The discussion also detailed how specific elites benefit financially from conflicts through mechanisms such as government contracts and the appropriation of foreign assets. This underscores the need for ongoing efforts to identify and target these beneficiaries.

Lastly, the session underscored the role of corruption as a critical enabler of conflicts, highlighting the need for comprehensive anti-corruption measures.

#### **Quotes:**

*"Cutting off the junta is the most important task."* – Ye Lin Myint

*"Fighting corruption is very expensive. You should hire personnel."* – Emin Huseynov

*"Being a grant-eater is when you have lots of grants, but that's not our story. We're surviving."* – Emin Huseynov

*"It doesn't matter where you are – in the country or outside the country. Technology can be used effectively in exile. In exile, you need to look for completely different donors. There are some in the country, and others outside. There is a vision for 10 years. Lessons learned."* – Emin Huseynov

*"One person in exile can destroy a kleptocracy."* – Emin Huseynov

*"We have been working since 1999. The situation has worsened ever since. Since 2012, we have been labeled as 'foreign agents' by the Russian state. Before 2014, Yanukovich wanted to do the same. The same thing is happening in Georgia now."* – Ilia Shumanov

#### **Key recommendations for the future and concrete follow-up actions**

To effectively combat corruption and its impact on conflicts, it is crucial to strengthen and synchronize international sanctions against entities involved in corruption and war profiteering. This includes implementing more targeted sanctions against the new elite benefiting from the war, as well as exploring new methods to enforce sanctions more effectively and prevent circumvention. Additionally, increasing international support and funding for civil society organizations in affected regions is essential. These organizations play a critical role in monitoring, reporting, and fighting corruption, and their efforts are vital for maintaining transparency and accountability, especially in high-risk areas.

Furthermore, advocating for greater transparency in government operations, particularly in defense and security sectors, can help mitigate corruption risks. Ensuring that public procurement and other significant data are accessible for independent monitoring and

oversight is key to this effort. To address the transnational nature of corruption, fostering stronger international cooperation is necessary. Developing new legal frameworks and mechanisms to track and confiscate assets held by corrupt officials and oligarchs in foreign jurisdictions, along with enhancing information sharing and joint investigations across borders, will strengthen these efforts.

Raising public awareness about the impact of corruption on conflict and governance is also important. Promoting anti-corruption education and campaigns can help build a culture of transparency and accountability. By engaging the public, we can create pressure on governments to implement and enforce anti-corruption measures, thereby fostering a more transparent and accountable global community.

### **What can be done to create opportunities for scaling up the solutions discussed in the session? And by whom?**

To create opportunities for scaling up the solutions discussed in the session, several actions need to be taken by different stakeholders. International bodies such as the UN, EU, and NATO can lead in coordinating anti-corruption efforts and imposing stringent measures against corrupt regimes and individuals. They can also provide technical and financial support to national governments and civil society organizations. Additionally, national governments should implement and enforce robust anti-corruption laws, increase transparency, and strengthen institutions to resist corrupt influences. Empowering and resourcing national anti-corruption agencies to effectively carry out their mandate is crucial.

Furthermore, continued support and funding for civil society groups are essential to maintain their watchdog role and enhance their capacity to combat corruption at all levels. Civil society organizations can also engage in public education campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of corruption and promote a culture of transparency. The private sector also has a significant role to play; businesses should adopt and enforce strict anti-corruption policies and practices. Engaging in collective action to promote a level playing field and supporting anti-corruption initiatives are vital. Transparency in business operations and supply chains can reduce opportunities for corruption.

### **Is there a specific call to action to key stakeholders, such as governments, businesses, funders, civil society, young people, journalists or any other stakeholder that should be noted? Please specify if relevant.**

There is a specific call to action directed at various key stakeholders to enhance and scale up the solutions discussed in the session. Governments are urged to implement and enforce robust anti-corruption laws, increase transparency, and strengthen institutions to resist corrupt influences. Empowering national anti-corruption agencies with adequate resources and support is essential to effectively carry out their mandate. Additionally, international bodies such as the UN, EU, and NATO should coordinate anti-corruption efforts and impose stringent measures against corrupt regimes and individuals. They can also provide technical and financial support to national governments and civil society organizations. Businesses are encouraged to adopt and enforce strict anti-corruption policies and practices, engage in collective action to promote a level playing field, and ensure transparency in business operations and supply chains to reduce opportunities for corruption. Civil society groups must receive continued support and funding to maintain their watchdog role and enhance their capacity to combat corruption at all levels. These organizations can also engage in

public education campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of corruption and promote a culture of transparency. Young people and journalists should be actively involved in anti-corruption initiatives, using modern technology and social media to raise awareness, mobilize support, and bring global attention to local corruption issues. By leveraging these strategies and engaging key stakeholders, the solutions discussed in the session can be effectively scaled up to combat corruption and promote transparency and accountability globally.

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### **Rapporteur's name**

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### **Date submitted**

20 July 2024

**Action!** This report needs to be emailed to [iacc-av@transparency.org](mailto:iacc-av@transparency.org) within 24 hours of the session. If you wish to update the report, please do so by 21 July. Thank you.