

ALONA LEBEDIEVA ON A RECORD YEAR FOR CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AND CHALLENGES FOR UKRAINIAN BUSINESS

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- 2023 was a record year for Ukrainian businesses in terms of the number of opened criminal proceedings. According to Opendatabot, 43,138 criminal cases were initiated against 5,015 companies. Currently, in 2024, more than 2,800 companies have already found themselves at the center of criminal investigations.



Alona Lebedieva

Alona Lebedieva, the owner of the Ukrainian multi-profile industrial and investment group “Aurum Group,” expresses serious concern about this. She notes that such a number of criminal cases creates an atmosphere of instability and mistrust in the business environment in Ukraine.

Instability and Its Consequences

80% of criminal proceedings against businesses do not end in verdicts or reach the courts. The paper format of letters from the prosecutor’s office regarding the closure of cases complicates their use by companies and creates several problems: the letters can get lost, be improperly formatted, or not reach the addressee on time. They can also be challenged or not accepted by other authorities due to difficulties in confirming their authenticity. This means that companies cannot effectively use these documents in subsequent court proceedings or to protect their rights. This bureaucratic complexity also undermines trust in the justice system.

“Moreover, groundless criminal proceedings against businesses lead to a loss of trust from foreign investors. This can result in a significant decrease in the country’s investment attractiveness and capital outflow,” Lebedieva notes.

Corruption Pressure

At the same time, corrupt actions by law enforcement agencies, which use their power to extort bribes, require immediate intervention and resolution. Such practices further undermine the

already low trust in law enforcement agencies.

“If the situation does not change, Ukraine risks losing not only foreign investments but also its own entrepreneurs, who may decide to move their operations abroad,” she believes.

As an example, Lebedieva cites the case of the owner of one of the Ukrainian companies, who reported that no official or law enforcement officer involved in the searches and arrests in January 2024 at his offices was held accountable. The case is still not closed, and the property and documents seized during the search have not been returned. He noted that the searches were conducted without a court decision, and documents of other companies were also seized and not returned.

Ukrainian entrepreneurs complain that the actions of law enforcement agencies at the pre-trial investigation stage are excessive. This not only paralyzes the work of enterprises but also threatens their existence. The most striking fact is that cases are often opened due to wrongful actions of civil servants, but the main blow falls on the business: searches, seizure of funds, and account blocking. This situation creates a sense of injustice and imbalance. Business, which is the foundation of the economy, becomes a hostage to a system where instead of support and protection, it faces repression. Civil servants, who are the cause of the cases being opened, rarely face the same consequences as the enterprises. This leads to the destruction of trust in state institutions and creates an unfavorable climate for entrepreneurship development.

Proposals for Improving the Situation

To improve the situation with corruption pressure on business in Ukraine, Alona Lebedieva proposes the primary introduction of an electronic signature for the confirmation of procedural documents in criminal cases. This will significantly simplify procedures, increase transparency, and reduce bureaucratic obstacles, allowing businesses to use documents more effectively.

Reforms of law enforcement agencies are also needed to ensure their transparency and accountability. It is proposed to create independent anti-corruption units and involve the public in monitoring the activities of law enforcement agencies through public councils and oversight committees.

In addition, court procedures should be simplified by introducing electronic document management in courts and using online platforms for court hearings. This will help reduce the time for consideration of criminal cases and ensure accessibility and convenience for all participants in the process, reducing the burden on the judicial system.

Lebedieva also agrees with colleagues from the Federation of Employers of Ukraine, who advocate clear responsibility of the procedural leader for conducting searches, including legal responsibility and internal control over compliance with legality. They propose allowing lawyers to conduct video recordings during searches, and this video recording should be recognized as admissible evidence in court. It is necessary to establish clear terms for the arrest of company

accounts, as unlimited blocking leads to the stoppage of the enterprise and its possible destruction. Introducing specific deadlines will reduce the negative impact on business. In addition, the term “critical property” that cannot be seized during searches, such as servers for IT companies, should be defined. This will allow enterprises to continue functioning even in the case of investigative actions, contributing to business development and increasing trust in state institutions.

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