

16 Dec 2013

Far-right group at heart of Ukraine protests meet US senator

By [Brian Whelan](#)

Protests continue in the Ukrainian capital after an endorsement from US Senator John McCain but at the heart of the movement in Kiev lies an extreme right wing party with links to the BNP.

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[Ukraine's pro-EU](#) protests show no sign of stopping – [US Senator John McCain](#) dined with opposition leaders this weekend, including the extreme far-right Svoboda party.

During his trip the former US presidential candidate met with government and opposition figures, but gave his endorsement to the pro-Europe protesters.

Senator McCain later waved to protesters from the stage in Independence Square during a mass rally in Kiev, standing with Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the anti-Semitic Svoboda party.

Growing far-right

Svoboda, meaning freedom, has been enjoying a boom in success in recent years winning their first parliamentary seats in 2010, taking just over 10 per cent of the vote to become Ukraine's fourth biggest party with 36 seats out of 450.

The ultra-nationalist group is aligned with other European far-right parties including the BNP, but their radical stance has made them a central force in the ongoing street protests.

The party was registered in 1995, initially called the Social National Party of Ukraine and using a swastika style logo.

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A 1999 report from Tel-Aviv University called the party: "an extremist, right-wing, nationalist organization which emphasizes its identification with the ideology of German National Socialism".

The party broke with their most extreme elements a decade ago, expelling groups of neo-Nazis and rebranding with a new name and logo.

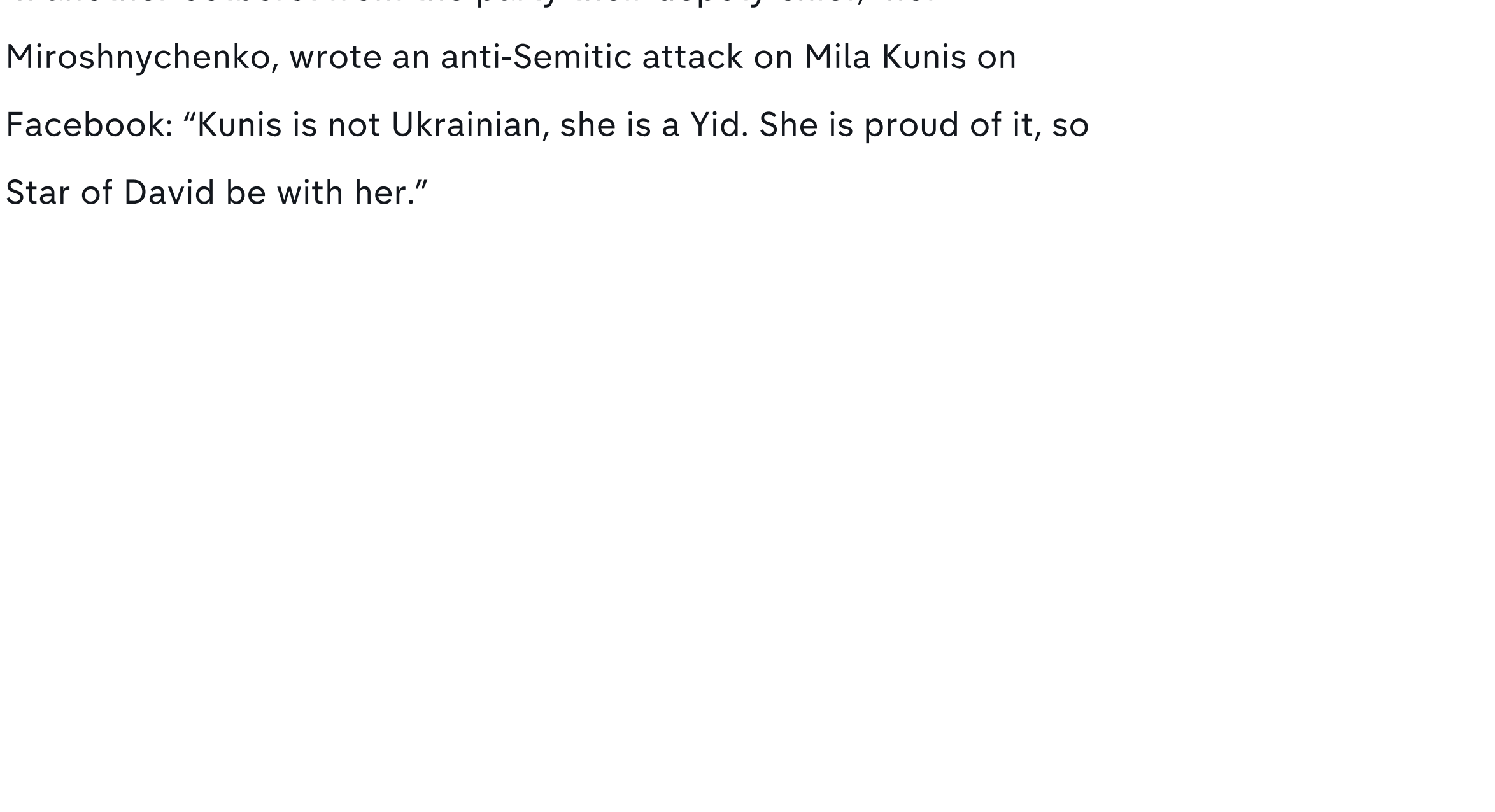


‘Jewish mafia’

However, in 2004 leader Oleh Tyahnybok gave a speech attacking what he called "the Moscow-Jewish mafia ruling Ukraine" and in another speech declared: "the Moskali, Germans, Kikes and other scum who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state."

Despite the controversy his statements attracted in the West, Tyahnybok was voted Person of the Year by readers of Ukrainian news magazine Korrespondent last year.

In another outburst from the party their deputy chief, Ihor Miroshnychenko, wrote an anti-Semitic attack on Mila Kunis on Facebook: "Kunis is not Ukrainian, she is a Yid. She is proud of it, so Star of David be with her."



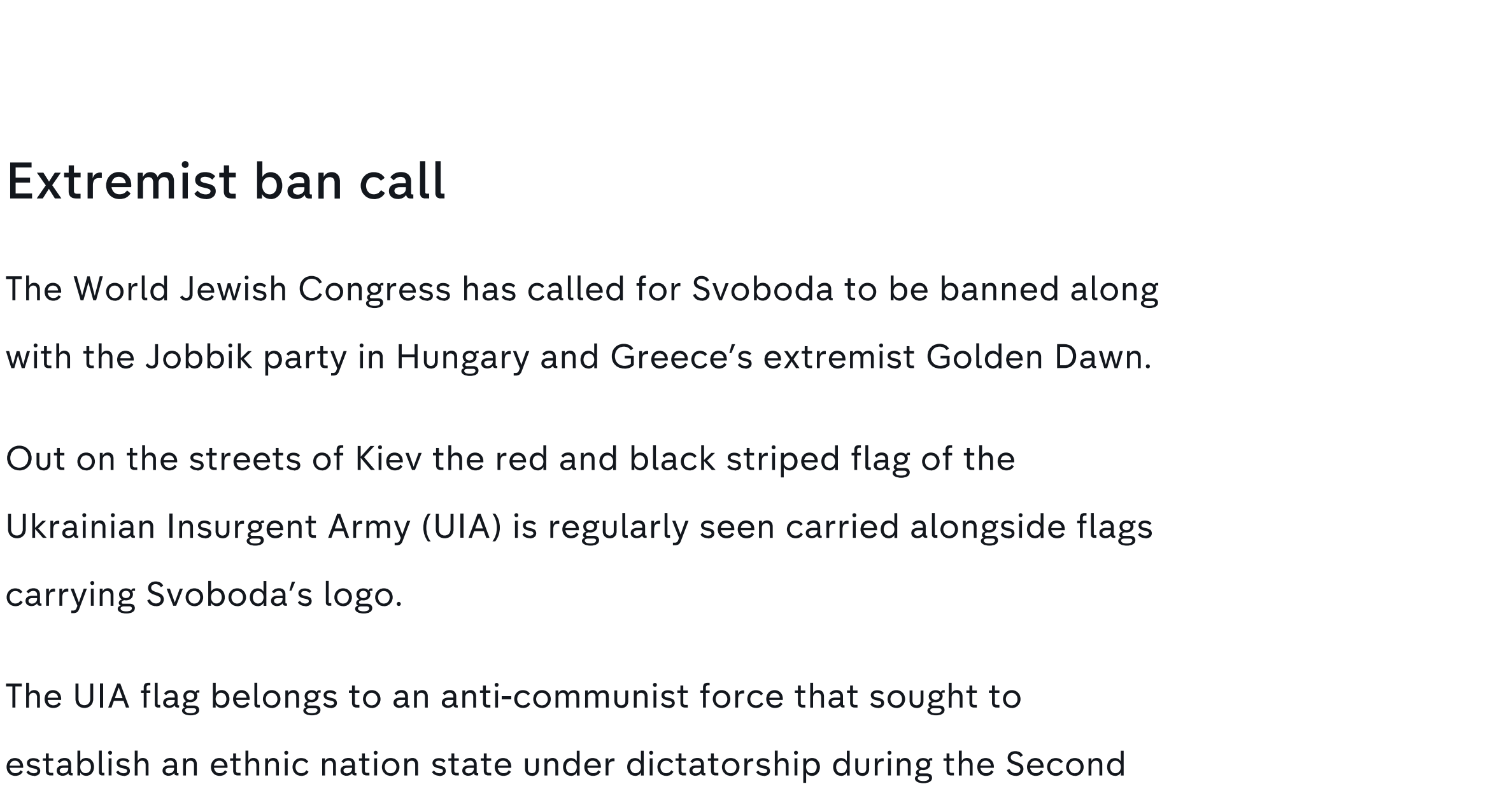
Extremist ban call

The World Jewish Congress has called for Svoboda to be banned along with the Jobbik party in Hungary and Greece's extremist Golden Dawn.

Out on the streets of Kiev the red and black striped flag of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA) is regularly seen carried alongside flags carrying Svoboda's logo.

The UIA flag belongs to an anti-communist force that sought to establish an ethnic nation state under dictatorship during the Second World War.

Svoboda member of parliament Ihor Miroshnychenko called for the banning of a LGBT march this year declaring that "homosexuality provokes sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS".



The statement will sit uncomfortably with Senator McCain's wife Cindy, who has campaigned for same-sex marriage and petitioned her husband on the issue.

However, Svoboda takes a strong anti-Moscow line and has strong relationships with elements in Europe, they are the only non-EU member of the Alliance of European National Movements – a group that includes the BNP and French National Front.

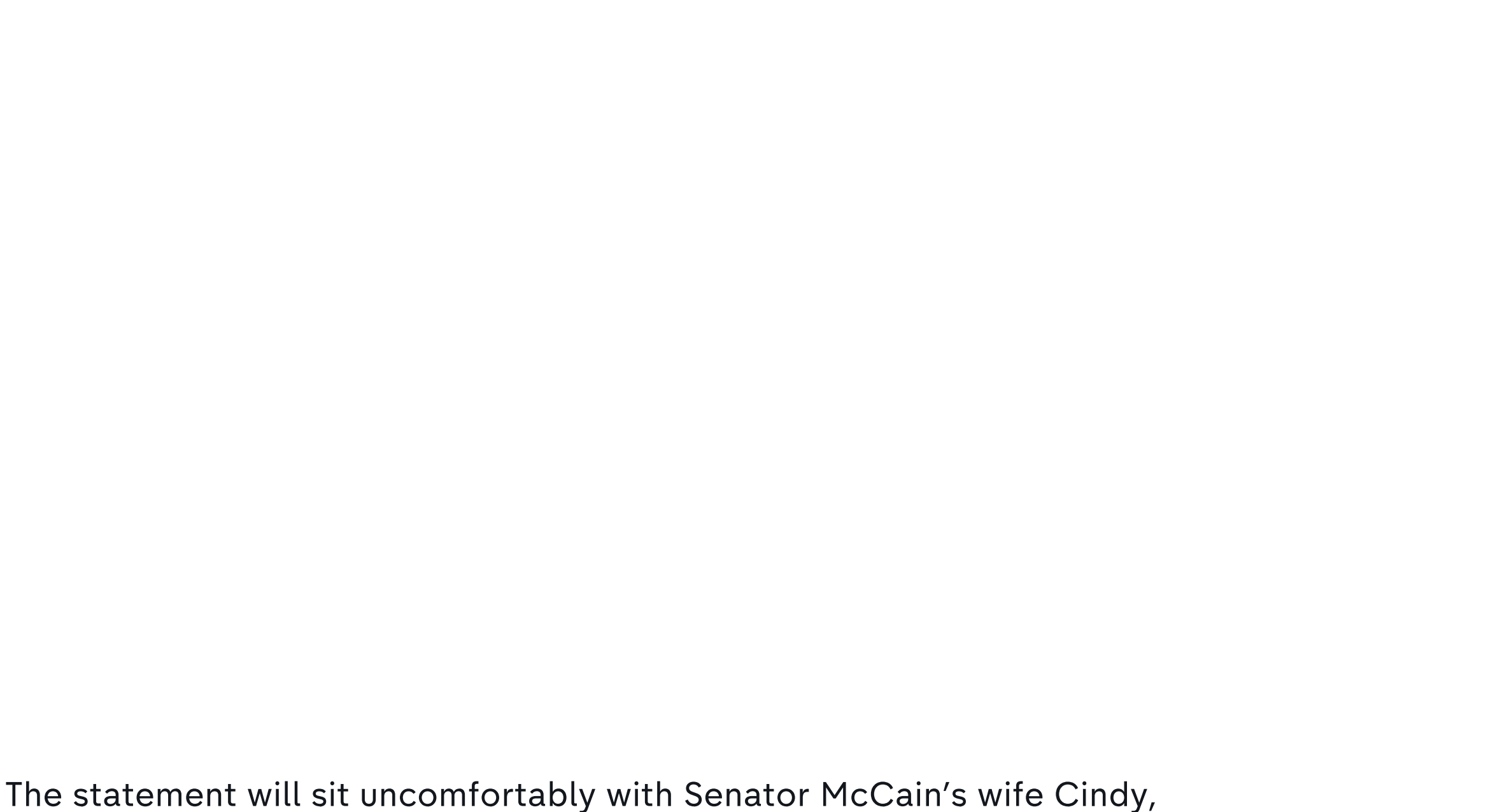
Last year, their members of parliament were involved in a brawl in an attempt to prevent a deputy from speaking in Russian from the podium. They later used a chainsaw to cut down a fence erected around the parliament building.

‘Love of our land’

Defending his party Oleh Tyahnybok has repeatedly claimed that Svoboda is not racist or anti-Semitic, telling the New York Times: "Our view is love. Love of our land. Love of the people who live on this land. This is love to your wife and your home and your family. So, it's love to your mother. Can this feeling be bad?"

Already, public Jewish events celebrating Hanukkah have been cancelled due to fears of violence, with Ukrainian Jewish Committee spokesman Eduard Dolinsky warning: "Increase security everywhere, at every public Jewish place".

After being pictured on stage at a rally with Fatherland leader, Vitaly Klitschko, and Svoboda's Oleh Tyahnybok, McCain declared: "Those brave men and women should know that they are not alone. Their friends across the world stand in solidarity with them."



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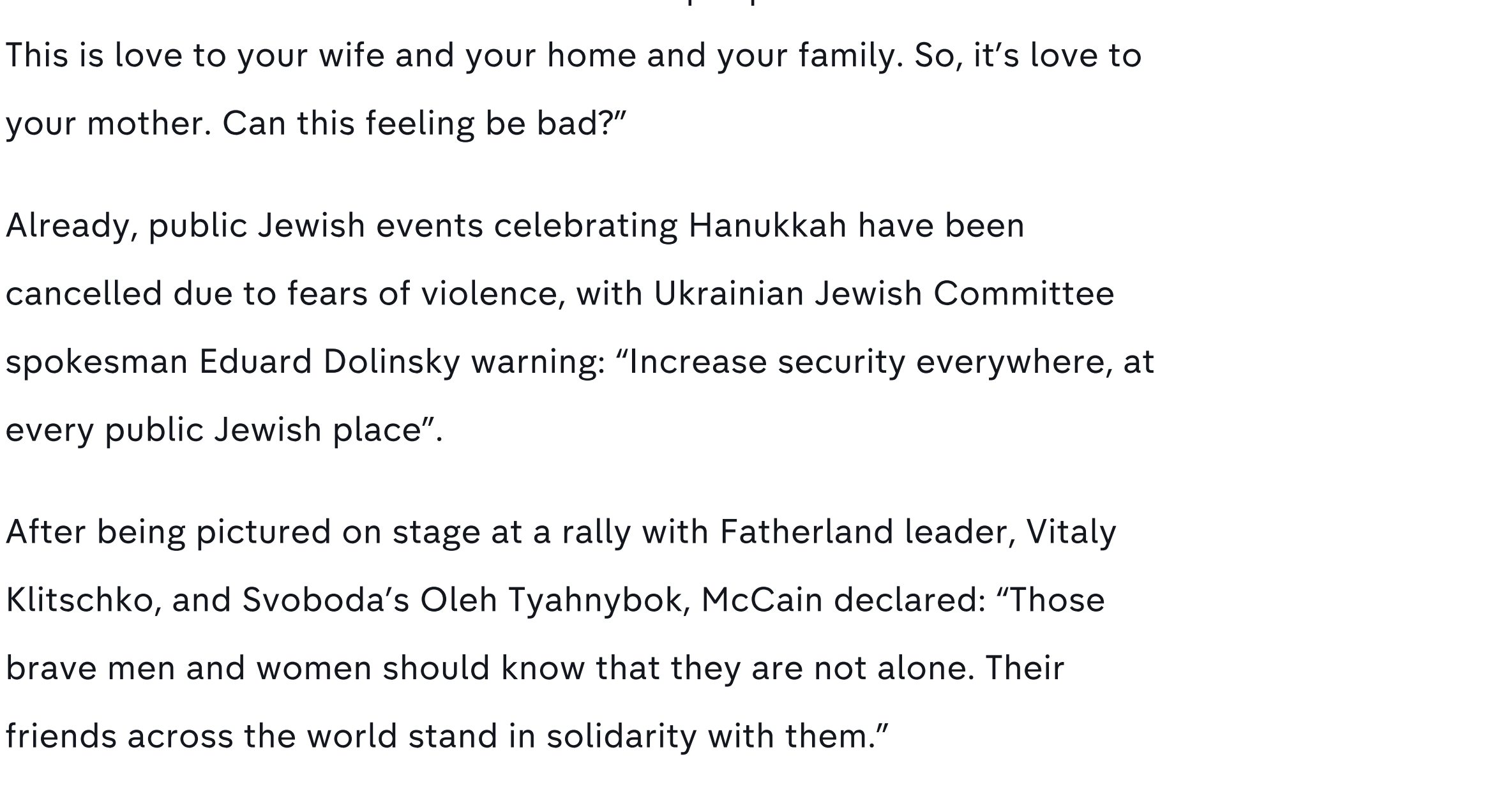
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