

THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

Mass Media Week in Belarus

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As reported on April 30, the chairperson of BAJ Zhanna Litvina and the journalist of the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* Andrzej Poczobut were listed in the hundred heroes of world journalism compiled by the Reporters without Borders. “They put their ideals in the service of the common good. They serve as examples. “World Press Freedom Day, which Reporters Without Borders helped to create, should be an occasion for paying tribute to the courage of the journalists and bloggers who constantly sacrifice their safety and sometimes their lives to their vocation,” says the [introduction to the list](#) representing journalists from 65 countries.

On May 3, the independent journalist from Vitebsk Alena Stsiapanava received an official reply from the Katrasychnitski district police department stating that the **administrative case** initiated in her regards on April 15 was finally **dismissed**. According to the letter, the journalist had been accused of contributing to the Russian service of the RFE/RL.

We remind that the journalist was also summoned to the police department in July 2013, and accused under the same administrative article 22.9 (unlawful production and distribution of media products). Then, the judge sent the administrative reports for completion, and the case was forgotten. Also, in 2012 the journalist was warned against working for the Radio Liberty, but in that case, according to the police’s allegations, she was contributing to the Czech editorial office which had been closed down 10 years before.

On May 6, journalists Volha Chaychyts and Aliaksandra Dynko were **prevented from entering an open administrative trial** over an activist Mikalay Dziamidzenka.

On entering the court building, the journalists showed their press credentials, but this did not help – the police officers behaved in a rude way and refused to introduce. Around half an hour later, they were able to get through, after the court deputy chair intervened – he copied information from their press cards and ordered the officers to let the journalists in.

On May 5, the Hrodna Regional Court **dismissed cassation appeals** of regional human rights defenders who tried to protest against **finances** imposed on them for “**unlawful picketing**” by means of posting photos on the **Internet**.

We remind that three regional activists were fined on April 3 for posting photos with political and national symbolic on the Internet. On March 25, the Liberty Day in Belarus, Viktor Sazonau, Uladzimir Khilmanovich and Raman Yurgel took photos standing in historic sites of Hrodna and holding Ukrainian and Belarusian national symbolic as a sign of their solidarity with Ukrainians. They posted the photos on the web. On April 2 they received summons to court, and were fined by court for 25 basic amounts (3 million 375 thousand rubles, or approx. 250 euro) for “unsanctioned picket”.

As reported on May 8, authorities started to **cut off cable radio** broadcasting. The Ministry of Communications and Informatization approved the schedule of “optimization” which implies cutting off all the cable radio broadcasting throughout the country. Soon, regional radios will start functioning via ultra-short waves.

On May 8, safety guards **prevented** a TV crew of *Yleisradio* (the Finnish Broadcasting Company) from **interviewing** passers-by in Minsk. They were making a report from the Belarusian city talking

to passers-by in the streets. As their questions touched not only the issues of sports but also those of everyday life in Belarus, police officers ordered the group of foreign journalists, including well-known Finnish sports announcer Kaj Kunnas to stop filming and leave the area in front of the Sports Palace.

On May 9, in the evening, the *Radio Svaboda* and **Valery Kalinouski**, with official accreditation, were **detained** while doing online reporting near Minsk-Arena.

The journalists were showing live picture of the fan zone where people could walk in without tickets and attend different entertaining events. The live broadcasting was interrupted, and the journalists stopped answering the phone. The team was taken to the central district police department; Aliaksandr Lastouski, spokesperson of the police department of the Minsk City Executive Committee informed at about 6 pm that he had seen and talked to the journalists. They were questioned about who they were and what they were doing, and set free two hours later. The police did not compile any procedural reports.

As became known **on May 13**, the International Hockey Federation **did not accredit** several mass media for the Ice Hockey World Championship (May 9 – 25), in particular, the *BBC*, the *Radio Svaboda* and the *European radio for Belarus*. According to the local BBC reporter Tatsiana Melnichuk, all formalities were fulfilled and application for accreditation was filed yet on January 24. At the beginning of May, she was informed about the refusal. The organizers emphasized that decisions on accreditation were made by the Hockey Federation. There were reports that accreditation was also denied to the correspondent point of NTV.