

THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

Mass Media Week in Belarus

January 5 – 11, 2015

The most remarkable event of the reporting period seems to be the real threat of bankruptcy of the Lohvinau bookstore which has been fined and ordered to pay a billion rubles for “illegal entrepreneur’s activities” – selling books without registration of the Information Ministry. The private enterprise Lohvinau was not registered in 2014 in the newly set-up State Register of distributors of print products although the bookstore had applied for registration six times.

On January 6 in the Central district court of Minsk relatives of a charged man attacked journalists who wanted to take pictures of the courtroom and of the charged person during break time.

Judge Mikhail Khoma banned recording and taking pictures during the proceedings. However, nothing was told about break time, so a journalist switched on a video camera, but was unable to record because the relatives started to interrupt and shield the lens. Another correspondent, Aleh Hruzdilovich from *Radio Svaboda*, tried to record this incident and was attacked verbally too; the relatives grabbed his dictaphone and threw out.

The trial had been scandalous, the court of first instance found the man guilty of beating and inflicting serious health damage to a homosexual.

On January 6, the domain **onliner.by** was taken back to the register of the national domain zone. Before that, the company eliminated all violations of trade legislation revealed earlier by an inspection of the Trade Ministry.

We remind that onliner.by, a top retail trade and news portal, was removed from the BY domain zone by Operative Analytical Center under the auspices of the president on December 20 upon request of the Trade Ministry.

On January 8, the Hrodna regional court **dismissed the appeal** of **Andrei Mialeshka**, BAJ member. The journalist wanted to overturn a fine imposed on him on December 2 by the Lenin district court of Hrodna (judge Yury Kazakevich) for work for a **Belarusian Radio Racyja without accreditation (administrative art. 22.9)**.

The journalist thinks his right to profession is violated for political reasons, and will appeal further.

On January 9, the Economic Court in Minsk imposed a **fine** of 5 million rubles and **confiscation** of 961 million rubles from **Lohvinau bookstore**. The suit was filed by the Information Ministry in December. The bookstore was charged with selling books without Registration of the Information Ministry. Lohvinau bookstore had applied for registration at least six times, but all applications ended with refusals. The bookseller has to pay a fine for that he is an unregistered bookseller, the sum equivalent to around 363 USD for the time being. But, the state also wants a compensation of 961 million rubles of the “illegal profit”, which is around 70,000 EURO for the time being. Lohvinau says the state bodies mistaken about the sum of the profit, as this is the annual turnover. The defendant made a motion to attach financial documents proving it to the case materials, but the judge dismissed the motion. The bookseller appeals against the decision.

On January 10, a month after the release from the **KGB** detention center, **Aliaksandr Alesin** gave an interview to the press service of BAJ telling his case was going on and he was periodically summoned to questionings.

“...the questions are all the same, I am questioned about some details that have already been explained... Any examination will show that my materials are based on open sources, so this is fruitless,” he said.

We remind that Aliaksandr Alesin, journalist of *Belorusy I Rynok*, military affairs analyst, [was detained](#) on November 25. Information about the detention and the place of detention became known to the public only at the beginning of December.

On December 8, his relatives announced that he had been accused of treason (article 356 of the Criminal Code) and cooperation with special services or investigative bodies of another state (article 356.1). On December 10, the journalist [was released](#) under recognizance not to leave the country. He said that the charges of treason had been dropped; currently he is accused of cooperation with foreign special services.