

## THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

### Mass Media Week in Belarus

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July 7 marked 12 years since the tragic disappearance of a TV cameraman and BAJ member Dzmitry Zavadski.

On July 7, 2000 Dzmitry Zavadski went to meet his colleague at the airport Minsk-2 and disappeared in mysterious circumstances. A criminal case was opened qualified as “murder”, but later it was changed for “abduction and unlawful deprivation of freedom”. On March 14, 2002 Minsk region court sentenced four people to long penalty terms for the abduction of Dzmitry Zavadski. Officers of special regiment “Almaz” Valery Ignatovich and Maxim Malik were sentenced to life imprisonment; former student of the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior Aliaxei Huz was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment, and Siarhei Savushkin was sentenced to 12 years in prison. According to the conviction, the motive was revenge: Zavadski publicly blamed Ignatovich for participation in the Chechen war on behalf of the Chechen militants. None of the convicts pleaded guilty.

On November 27, 2003 Frunzenski District Court of Minsk made a decision to acknowledge the disappeared journalist to be a dead one. However, his body has never been found.

Christos Pourghourides, Special Rapporteur of The PACE wrote a report “Disappeared people in Belarus”; he demanded a special criminal investigation in order to disclose if there was any connection between the abduction of Zavadski and some higher officials.

Since then investigation has several times resumed – because of “newly appeared facts” and has been suspended because of “failure to detect the vanished person”, still all in vain.

On July 3 it became known that in Babruysk colony, where **Ales Bialiatski** is serving the term, the **administration punishes other prisoners** with isolator for contacts with the human rights defender. It was reported by one of former prisoners of the colony. He said that for talking to Bialiatski or showing sympathy on his behalf a prisoner can be transferred to another brigade or deprived of some bonuses. The administration explains their activities by the fact that Ales Bialiatski does not want to repent.

*We remind that on November 24, 2011 head of the human rights center “Viasna” Ales Bialiatski was sentenced to 4.5 years imprisonment in a high security colony with confiscation of property. He was convicted under article 243 part 2 of the Criminal Code*

*(large-scale tax evasion). According to the judge, A.Bialiatski intentionally failed to mention the means in his bank accounts in Poland and Lithuania in his tax declaration, with the aim to evade paying taxes. The judge dismissed the arguments that the money in the accounts was not his personal profit.*

**On July 6** Minsk City Court **upheld** the sentence of “Euroradio” journalist **Pavel Sviardlou**. Maskouski district court of Minsk found the journalist guilty of using foul language in public and sentenced to 15 days’ arrest. He served the whole sentence and was released on July 7.

*We remind that “Euroradio” journalist was detained on June 22 in the morning near his house by unknown people in plain clothes who had come there before in a mini-bus. The journalist wasn’t allowed to phone his relatives or colleagues; he wasn’t allowed to put down his version of the story in the protocol. On the same day the journalist was judged by Tatsiana Matyl who decided he violated article 17.1 of the Code of Administrative Offences. The journalist filed an appeal just after his first meeting with the lawyer, on June 25. Minsk City Court arranged to consider his case at 3pm on June 29. However, his appeal document first was lost, then finally it reached the City Court on June 29 in the evening. Colleagues of the journalist found witnesses who saw that the detention was not accompanied by any foul language. The witnesses say Pavel obeyed the demands of the police and there weren’t any rude words.*

**On July 4** an independent journalist **Mikola Dziatchenia** was **summoned to the police** at his place of residence. There he received a copy of protocols against him and his colleague **Andrey Fralou** dated June 25 and signed by policeman Valery Trusau in Lida.

*The journalists were detained when they were taking photos of a **funeral ceremony** of a pilot Mikalay Hrydniou. Then the journalists spent three hours in the police department and were set free without any procedural documents. Now they are accused of performing journalist activities without accreditation, according to article 34, point 2.3 of the Law “On Mass Media”.*

*BAJ deputy chairperson and lawyer Andrei Bastunets pays attention that the article to which the police refer (art.24, part 4.8 of the Law on Mass Media) does not regulate cases of taking video, audio and photo in places open for the public. The lawyer underlines that the ceremonial parting with the deceased pilot was open to the public, people were freely allowed to enter the premises of the military unit to attend the ceremony.*