

THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

Mass Media Week in Belarus

Info-posting June 4 – June 10, 2012

On June 4 the police **gave back the equipment to Radio Racyja** that had been seized for a check-up. Nothing was said about the results of the check-up which lasted longer than a month. *We remind that on May 2, around 8pm local policemen paid a visit to the Minsk office of the radio "Racyja", near Victory square. They said they were inspecting all rooms in the building in connection with a rehearsal of the parade on May 9. One employee was present in the office, and opened the door. Seeing the label of the radio and the equipment, the policemen called their colleagues from the Central district police department. In the end, they decided to seize the equipment. The operation was guided by the deputy head of the police department Anatol Shakhlay.*

On June 5 leaders of the Belarusian **opposition did not allow** journalists to **attend the round-table** discussion on the parliamentary elections-2012. The participants of the discussion were Uladzimir Kolas (Rada), Siarhey Kaliakin (left party "Fair world"), Victor Ivashkevich, Yury Hubarevich (the civil movement "For Freedom!"), Vital Rymasheuski (the organizational committee of the Belarusian Christian Democracy), Uladzimir Niakliayeu ("Tell the truth" initiative) promised to join soon.

Participants of the round-table voted and decided by majority that journalists should leave the discussion. According to Kaliakin, the politicians would start talking for the press instead of discussing the issues sincerely. Only Rymasheuski and Liabedzka voted for the press to stay during the discussion.

On June 7 the Pershamayski district court of Minsk started hearing of the **suit of Andrey Bandarenka** against the **Belteleradiocompany**: the leader of the human rights organization "Platform" and ex-political prisoner is trying to **defend his honor and dignity**.

The reason for the suit was a program "In the center of attention", shown on Belarus-1 TV channel on December 11, 2011. It was told that Andrey Bandarenka was "involved in a case of large-scale fraud" and that he allegedly had a criminal nickname "Deputy". We remind that Andrey Bandarenka was convicted, but then the court's decision was overturned because of absence of corpus delicti, and he was fully acquitted.

A representative of the National State TV and Radio Company **Vital Karpiuk** appeared in court with a recording with the program concerned. However, Andrey Bandarenka claimed that the recording was abridged. The judge appointed the next hearing on June 22. The sides must present the video in full. Also Karpiuk said that the author of the video, somebody **Martynenka**, does not work in the BT any more.

On June 6 the Lenin district court of Hrodna (judge Natallia Kozel) found two journalists guilty of violating article 23.34 of the Administrative Code (violating the procedure of organizing and

holding mass events). The journalists were covering the unsanctioned **picket** of the unregistered **“Union of Poles”** in Belarus against introducing Russian-language classes in a Polish-language school. The editor of the newspaper “Glos z-nad Niemna” **Grazhyna Shalkevich** was **fined** 5 mln Belarusian rubles (approximately \$600). The video demonstrated as a proof of her guilt does not prove anything: Grazhyna is only standing there with a photo camera. The judge ignored this fact. Four policemen who detained the journalist were testifying against her. Also, journalist **Yulia Kaliada** was **fined** 2.5 mln BR (around \$300). The policemen, who were testifying against her, claimed that she had been shouting slogans together with other participants of the action.

On June 6 the Kastychnitski court of Vitsebsk heard the case of administrative violation, made by the volunteer of the Civil Campaign “Nash Dom” **Siarhey Kandakou**. The police detained him and **seized 18 copies of “Vitebski Courier”**. Judge Inna Hrabouskaya decided that the activist must be **fined** 20 base amounts (2 mln BR) (around \$250) for distribution of the newspaper “Vitebski Courier”. The activist was accused of violating Article 22.9, part 2 of the Belarusian Code of Administrative Violations, “unlawful dissemination of print press in the territory of the Republic of Belarus”.

We remind that earlier Judge Hrabouskaya made a similar decision, imposing a fine of 2 mln BR on another distributor of the newspaper “Nash Dom” Hanna Hadleuskaya.

As reported **on June 7**, civil activists from Homel prepared a **collective petition** to the Minister of Information Aleh Praliaskouski, asking him to take measures **to eliminate discriminatory statements** in the press relating to **Gypsies**. The petition, prepared by the BHC members Ales Yauseyenka and Maria Bahdanovich, was signed by 40 people.

Homel city-dwellers suggest having a talk with journalists to explain that xenophobic attacks are inadmissible, and explain why it is undesirable to tell the readers about the nationality of the criminals.

“But some newspapers humiliate this national minority,” also says the petition. They set as examples publications from state-run newspapers “Homelskaya Prouda” and “Svetlaye Zhyccio” (Lelchytsy).