



baj.media

baj.by = baj.media

BAJ represents the media sector, so the new domain name is baj.media

E-NEWSLETTER

MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS

№2 (76)
2024





SITUATION IN BELARUS MASS MEDIA FIELD: JANUARY-APRIL 2024. REVIEW

Repressions against independent journalists and bloggers continued in Belarus in January – April 2024.

The active application of all previously noticed forms of persecution was registered during the period under review:

- criminal prosecution of journalists and bloggers (incl. in absentia),
- pressure on journalists (detentions, arrests, fines),
- censorship with the use of administrative measures.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus initiated the application of restrictive measures in relation to the media of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia in response to the blocked access to a range of Belarusian state-owned media in these countries.

The governmental authorities of Russia and Belarus agreed to create the Union State's media company to promote a common ideological agenda, following the initiative that had been previously announced by Aliaksandr Lukashenka.



CRIMINAL PROSECUTION

4 journalists were convicted in criminal cases during the period under review.

Aliaksandr Ziankou, a photographer from Barysau (Minsk region) was sentenced to three years in prison under Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code ('participation in an extremist organization') on January 30, 2024. Allegedly, his photos were shown on one of the Web-resources recognized as an extremist organization.

On March 18, 2024, Pavel Marinich, the head of "Malanka Media" as well as four other individuals involved in the case, were sentenced in absentia to 4 years of imprisonment, allegedly, for 'illegal actions to disrupt the National referendum in 2022' (Article 191 of the Criminal Code).

Andrei Tolchyn, a former freelance journalist from Homiel was sentenced to 2 years and 6 months in prison on two criminal charges, for the alleged 'slandering of the president' and 'facilitating extremist activities' on March 21, 2024

A freelance journalist Ihar Karney was convicted after a court trial in Minsk for the alleged 'participation in an extremist organization' (which appeared to be the Belarusian Association of Journalists) and sentenced to three years in prison on March 22, 2024.

<https://baj.media/be/aglyady-manitoringi/represii-suprach-zhurnalistau-i-medyya-u-2024-godze-spis-znyavolenyh/>

In January-March 2024, criminal cases were filed against 7 Belarusian journalists. 5 of them reside outside of Belarus.

In particular, criminal cases were filed against the previously arrested journalists Ales Sabaleuski and Yauhien Hlushkou from Mahilou with charges under Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code ('creating an extremist organization or taking part in it') in connection with their cooperation with the 6tv.by regional media in the past. The media outlet was labeled as an 'extremist organization' by the regime in power.

[https://prisoners.spring96.org/
be/person/ales-sabaleuski](https://prisoners.spring96.org/be/person/ales-sabaleuski)

[https://baj.media/be/suprac-vidaeaperatara-
yaugena-glushkova-raspachali-
kriminalnuyu-spravu-za-supracu-z/](https://baj.media/be/suprac-vidaeaperatara-yaugena-glushkova-raspachali-kriminalnuyu-spravu-za-supracu-z/)



The rest of the criminal cases were filed in accordance with special proceedings, i.e., in absentia. Thus, a 'Radio Liberty' employee Siarhei Dubavets was charged with violating the law on countering extremism, rehabilitation of Nazism and the denial of genocide of the Belarusian people under six articles of the Criminal Code.

<https://nashaniva.com/334641>

Another 'Radio Liberty' employee Yury Drakakhrust and a journalist Hanna Liubakova were enlisted by the Investigative Committee of Belarus among 20 Belarusian experts and political scientists who were accused of the alleged 'active participation in the development and implementation of the concept of destructive activities aimed at harming the national security of Belarus and contribution to the incitement of social hostility and hatred in the society.'

[https://baj.media/be/syarod-20-belaruskih-ekspertau-u-
dachynenni-da-yakih-adkrytaya-specvytvorchasc-try/](https://baj.media/be/syarod-20-belaruskih-ekspertau-u-dachynenni-da-yakih-adkrytaya-specvytvorchasc-try/)



Also, criminal cases were filed against Uladzimir Khilmanovich, a journalist and human rights defender from Hrodna, and Ihar Kazmiarchak, the editor of orsha.eu independent website under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code ('facilitating extremist activities'). The latter was additionally accused of insulting the president.

<https://baj.media/be/sledchy-kamitjet-raspacha-specvytvorchasc-u-dachynenni-da-zhurnalista-uladzimira-hilmanovicha/>

<https://baj.media/be/zhurnalista-igara-kazmerchaka-buduc-sudzic-zavochna/>

OTHER FORMS OF PRESSURE ON JOURNALISTS AND MASS MEDIA

5 cases of arbitrary detention of journalists and 4 cases of administrative arrest of media workers were registered during the first quarter of 2024.

The practice of convicting the exiled journalists for the alleged administrative offenses in absentia continued withing the period under review. Thus, Alena Shabunia, associated with Belsat TV channel, was fined 2,800 Belarusian rubles in Vitsebsk. According to the mailed protocols, she was



charged with the 'dissemination of extremist materials' (Article 19.11 of the Code of Administrative Offenses).

<https://baj.media/be/shtraf-zhurnalistcy-alene-shabuni/>

As part of political purges, Natalia Zhukouskaya, the presenter of Alfa Radio broadcaster, which is part of the 'SB. Belarus Today' state-owned holding company, and Dzmitry Kulikouski, the Alfa Radio sound engineer were detained for supporting post-election protests on February 19, 2024. Both were most probably fired afterwards.

<https://baj.media/be/gubazik-zatrymau-vyaduchuyu-i-gukarezhsyora-alfa-radyyo/>

THE APPLICATION OF 'ANTI-EXTREMIST LEGISLATION' TO RESTRICT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

As before, the authorities restricted access to information from independent sources, applying the legislation to combat extremism. 7 media projects were recognized as 'extremist formations' within the period under review, including 'Belarusian Radio Racyja', located in Bialystok (Poland), 'DW Belarus (German Wave Belarus)', 'UDF – Belarus News', 'This is Minsk, baby' (including blogger Usiaslau Pashkevich's (aka 'Tuteyshy Shliakhtsich') accounts on social media, ZnadNiemna.pl Web-



site of the Union of Poles in Belarus Public Association, which is not recognized by the Belarusian authorities, as well as 'Why are you lying?' project, which deals with the analysis of state propaganda techniques.
<https://mvd.gov.by/ru/news/8642>

On April 4, 2024, the Operations and Analysis Center under the President of the Republic of Belarus published an order that provided for cancellation of domain names of Web-resources included in the National List of Extremist Materials. The national domain zone administrator was authorized to implement the order.
<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=T62405642>

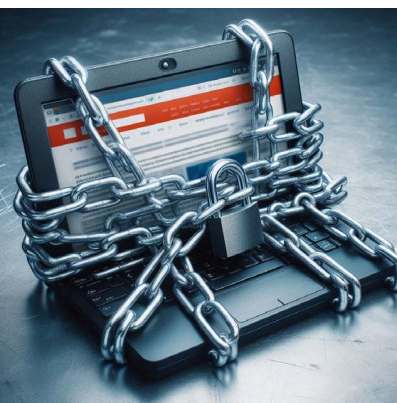
Reform.by and Media-Polesye.by were among the first media outlets affected by the new legal provisions.
<https://baj.media/be/damennae-imja-reform-by/>
<https://baj.media/be/damennae-imja-media-polesye/>

'The First from Pinsk' ('Piershy Pinski') and stolin.by regional Web-sites, a new Web-site of 'Brestskaya Gazeta', 'Reformation – Reform. by' News Web-site, the analyst Siarhei Chaly's and the journalist Katsiaryna Pytleva's social media content, the 'Misha Gypsynkov' TikTok account, owned by a blogger and humorist Mikhail Tsyhankou as well as a range of other media resources were labeled by the state authorities as 'extremist materials' within the period under review.

On February 13, 2024, the content of 'BAJ. Belarusian Association of Journalists' Telegram channel (t.me/bajmedia) was labeled by the regime in power as 'extremist content'. A similar 'extremist' labeling affected the baj.media pages on TikTok social media on March 18, 2024.

<https://nashkraj.by/news/obshchestvo/chetyre-telegram-kanala-priznany-ekstremistskimi-po-zayavleniyu-baranovichskogo-mezhrayonnogo-prokur/>

The 'Current Time' media project with its 6 topical editorials as well as two articles under the headings 'Our Pushkin' and 'A Brotherly Nation as Cannon Fodder', published on 'Die Tageszeitung' newspaper's Web-site (Germany) were included in the National List of Extremist Materials within the reporting period. <http://mininform.gov.by/documents/respublikanskiy-spisok-ekstremistskikh-materialov/>



BLOCKING ACCESS TO ONLINE RESOURCES

As part of the applied censorship policies, the Ministry of Information kept taking decisions on blocking access to online resources. Thus, the Website of 'Bureau Media' investigative journalism media project – buromedia.io was blocked for public access in approximately 30 minutes after posting a publication about the Belarusian Red Cross on its pages.

<https://baj.media/be/paslya-publikacyi-pra-zamezhnyya-vayazhy-belaruskaga-chyrvonaga-kryzha-zablakavali/>

Web-users' access to 'My Brest' regional news Web-resource www.mybrest.by was restricted subject to the 'revealed' violation of mass media law, due to the presence of a hyperlink to the allegedly 'extremist' belsat.eu Web-site in their online publication that was posted back in 2017.

<https://baj.media/be/na-zagad-ministra-infarmacyi-u-belarusi-zablakavali-sayt-moy-brest/>

The “[Belarusian N-corpus](#)” Web-resource with a collection of texts in modern Belarusian language and references to Websites in Belarusian was affected by political censorship, too. The public access to its Web-pages was restored in nearly half a year since their blocking. However, the resumed version lacked nearly 90% of the originally published texts, including the publications of independent Belarusian mass media there. The revived database of Web-resources currently includes the state-owned online media, namely the ‘BeITA’ News Agency, the ‘Zviazda’ newspaper, and the Aliaksandr Lukashenka’s official Web-site. <https://nashaniva.com/334616>

Even advertising publications were subjected to censorship within the period under review. Thus, following a wave of insults and accusations in pro-governmental Telegram channels, the ‘Mila’ chain of stores was forced to delete their post on Instagram with a reference to a famous presenter Yauhien Perlin, who quit from his job at the Belarusian state TV company after the Presidential election in 2020.

<https://news.zerkalo.io/cellar/61075.html?tg=7>

<https://baj.media/be/mininfarm-abmezhava-dostup-da-medyja/>

EVENTS IN THE STATE MEDIA SECTOR

The ideologization of state media activities continued within the framework of the Union State of Belarus and Russia within the period under review. Thus, it was planned to create and promote common media narratives. In particular, a resolution on founding the Union State’s media company was signed at a meeting of the

Supreme State Council of the Union State of Belarus and Russia in St. Petersburg on January 29, 2024. Its idea had been articulated by Aliaksandr Lukashenka repeatedly for several years in a row.



According to Maksut Shadayev, Russia's Minister of Digital Development, Communication and Mass Communications, the media holding will embrace the currently existing two weekly newspapers – 'Soyuznoe Veche' and 'Soyuz. Belarus – Russia' as well as the Union State's TV and Radio Company first of all. The

media outlets are supposed to ensure the implementation of 'the unified and coordinated media policy'.

<https://tass.ru/obschestvo/19847771>

<https://baj.media/be/pucin-i-lukashenka-padpisali-dagavor-ab-stvarenni-abyadnanaga-medyyaholdynga-rasii-i/>

One billion Russian rubles (about 11 million USD) will be allocated for the launch of the media holding from the budget of the Union State. Its headquarters will be based out of Moscow, and its representative office will be located in Minsk. It is planned to establish a 'resource hub' within the holding, which will create content for distribution through electronic media.

<https://iz.ru/1661728/elizaveta-krylova/obediniai-i-deistvui-na-sozdanie-soiuznogo-mediakholdinga-napraviat-1-mlrd-rublei>

The creation of media holdings in the form of joint editorial offices of local state newspapers continued in Belarus, too.



Thus, during the meeting of Brest Regional Executive Committee on January 25, 2024, it was announced that three such newsrooms would be created in the region.

Tatsiana Hahakova, the head of the Main Department of Ideological Work and Youth Affairs at Brest Regional Executive Committee noted during the meeting that 'work in the Web-space is task #1 for modern mass media'. Therefore, bloggers were recruited to work in the editorial offices of two media outlets in the region. The Minister of Information Uladzimir Piartsou attended the meeting in Brest. He noted in his speech that Belarus had developed 'an effective system of providing information.' However, according to him, "it needs sharpening and reformatting in some places that has been completed by 97% in Brest region."

<https://baj.media/be/u-bresce-chynouniki-azadachylisya-chamulyudzi-mensh-chytayuc-dzyarzhaunyya-gazety-vyysce/>

Propaganda activities of state-owned media led to the introduction of additional restrictive measures within the period under review.

In April 2024, it was reported that the suspension of the Belarusian State TV and Radio company's membership in the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) would be indefinite until the situation improvement in the future. It was initially set from May 2021 to July 2024. And it was motivated by the lack of objectivity, freedom and independence of the press, the continuous wave of repression against journalists as well as the broadcasting of so-called "repentant" videos, equated to torture.

<https://reform.news/priostanovka-chlenstva-belteleradiokompanii-v-ebu-stanet-bessrochnoj>

In March 2024, the Latvian National Council for Electronic Media (NEPLP) took a decision to ban access to the websites of the state-owned ANT TV channel (ont.by) and the 'SB. Belarus today' (sb.by) media holding for being related to the dissemination of aggressive



Russian propaganda and hate speech.

<https://rus.delfi.lv/57860/latvia/56402982/nepl-zakryl-dostup-k-devyati-saytam-s-rossiyskoy-propagandoy>

The Ministry of Information of Belarus responded with a [statement](#), blaming the Latvian authorities of ‘impermissible

actions aimed at limiting freedom of speech and purposefully depriving the Latvian citizens of their right to receive complete and unbiased information.’

<https://baj.media/be/u-latvii-zabaranili-dostup-da-ant-i-sb/>

On April 8, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus issued a notification that restricted public access to a number of mass media from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia on the territory of Belarus in response to the previously introduced ban on the activities of certain Belarusian media outlets in these countries. The list of affected foreign media wasn’t provided by the Belarusian governmental agency at that.

<https://www.chn.belta.by/society/view/mininfarm-abmezhavau-dostup-da-sheraga-medycja-latvii-litvy-i-estonii-129950-2024/>

Against the background of international sanctions, the Ministry of Information of Belarus started to apply the mechanism of their circumvention, referring to the





law that had been adopted in 2023. The legal act allows the use of objects of intellectual property without getting the consent of their copyright holders if the latter are included in the list of legal entities from the so-called “unfriendly” countries. The International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) were included in this list by the ministerial decrees of February 14th and February 19th respectively. Consequently, it became possible to broadcast international football championships in Belarus without obtaining the appropriate permissions from the non-resident copyright holders.

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441166>

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441422>



**THE BELARUSIAN
ASSOCIATION
OF JOURNALISTS**

baj.media

The contents of this publication are copyrighted. It is obligatory to refer to the Belarussian Association of Journalists, when using the E-NEWSLETTER: MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS materials.

Contact:
Mr. Andrei Bastunets

E-mail: office@baj.media
Web: <https://baj.media/>