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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

IN THIS ISSUE

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Ukraine / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

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OSCE REPRESENTATIVE: MANDATORY ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALISTS IN BELARUS IS WRONG

Belarus / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

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JOURNALIST FINED SECOND TIME IN 3 MONTHS FOR COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN MEDIA

Belarus / Media in the legal field / 07.10.2014

Andrey Mialeshka (photo), an independent journalist from Hrodna, was sentenced to 35 basic amounts fine





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

(approximately € 390) on October 7th. The Hrodna District Court found the journalist guilty of violating Section 2 of Article 22.9 of the Code of Administrative Offences (illegal production and distribution of mass media products). Andrey Mialeshka told the Belarusian [...]

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CAPTURED JOURNALIST'S WIFE DOES NOT KNOW WHEN HE MAY BE RELEASED

Ukraine / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

Ukrainian journalist Yehor Vorobiev has been held in the captivity on the territory of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic for more than a month. Lately a video of the journalist's interrogation by a Russian citizen, a representative of the Cossacks Union of Don Military Region was published on the Internet. Consequently, a number of videos [...]

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NORWEGIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE AWARDED ANDREI SAKHAROV AWARD TO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee awards the Andrei Sakharov Freedom Award in 2014 to political prisoners in Azerbaijan. The Award distribution will take place in Oslo on November 13th. "This award is given to all of the political prisoners. It is a sad fact that they are too numerous to all be mentioned here", the press-release [...]

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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

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Georgia / Politics and Media / 06.10.2014

Esteemed Georgian NGOs have accused the country's Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili of violating the principle of benefit of the doubt and interfering with the activities of media representatives. On October 2nd, Irakli Garibashvili criticized the media for not expressing their solidarity with Zazu Davitaia, a journalist with Asaval-Dasavali newspaper, who was taken to the hospital [...]

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Georgia / Analytics / 06.10.2014

A presentation of the results of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index was held in Tbilisi. Media experts and representatives of various media outlets were present at the event. Georgia remains the leader of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index for the first half of 2014. The Media Freedom Index is compiled under the EU-sponsored [...]

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BAJ REQUEST TO REFORM MEDIA LEGISLATION WILL BE ANSWERED "WITHIN THE LEGAL TIME FRAME"

Belarus / Media in the legal field / 06.10.2014

The Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Media of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus examined the protest of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) against





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

the prosecution of freelancers. The Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Media of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus “does [...]

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ZHANNA LITVINA: BELARUS NEEDS MEDIA REFORMS AND MEDIA LITERACY

Belarus / In defense of the media / 06.10.2014

The chair of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, Zhanna Litvina, participated in the autumn plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as a member of Belarusian delegation. The session was held from September 29th to October 3rd in Strasbourg. The main concern for the first days of the session was the [...]

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TV CHANNEL'S CHAIRMAN THREATENED

Ukraine / In defense of the media / 06.10.2014

The Seventh Channel from Odesa communicated during a special report that Mykhailo Malyshev, the channel's director general, has received threats. “On October 1st, when I returned home, two young men approached me near my house. They came from a dark corner, where I could not see their faces,” the general director said. “They recommended me to [...]

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OMBUDSMAN PRESENTS 2013 CONCLUSIONS

Armenia / Analytics / 03.10.2014





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

On October 2nd, at the National Assembly's Human Rights Defender Karen Andreasian presented the annual report on his activities and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Armenia in 2013. One of the chapters of the report is on the National Commission on Television and Radio (NCTR), the body regulating activities of Armenian broadcasters. [...]

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SHOWDOWN BETWEEN TWO GEORGIAN NGOS AND JOURNALISTS TURNED INTO MASS BRAWL

Georgia / Politics and Media / 03.10.2014

A scuffle between activists of non-governmental organizations "Free Zone" and "Free Generation" resulted in hospitalization and arrests of several people. The parties blame each other for a provocation. One should note that "Free Zone" is regarded as opposition movement in Georgia, while "Free Generation" is said to be pro-governmental. In Tbilisi, many believe that the [...]

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POLITICAL REFUGEES HELD RALLY AT PACE DURING SPEECH OF AZERBAIJANI FOREIGN MINISTER OF AFFAIRS

Azerbaijan / In defense of the media / 03.10.2014

On October 2nd, a group of Azerbaijani political refugees held a protest at the PACE session in Strasbourg during the speech of Elmar Mammadyarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan. Activists wearing red T-shirts with the images of political prisoners chanted "Freedom to political prisoners of Azerbaijan". After Anne Brasseur, the PACE President, asked [...]

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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

LAURA BAGHDASARIAN: "ARMENIAN JOURNALISTS TRUST SOCIAL NETWORKS"

Armenia / Analytics / 03.10.2014

On October 2, Research Center "Region" presented the results of their study "Social Media as a Source of Public Information for the Armenian Media: Standards Shaped and Practice Applied" conducted in the frameworks of the project, supported by OSCE Office in Yerevan. The study is based on a survey among 100 journalists/media executives from 50 [...]

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MESROP HARUTYUNYAN: "PRESSURE ON MEDIA CONTINUES"

Armenia / In defense of the media / 02.10.2014

Mesrop Harutyunyan, a media expert agrees with the estimation given to Armenia in the "Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index" report. He said this in an interview to Aravot.am. One reminds that in the first half of 2014, Armenia ranked the fourth among six countries. Georgia was on top of the list followed by Moldova and [...]

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INTERNET INFLUENCE IS GROWING

Moldova / / 02.10.2014

Internet popularity as a source of information about political developments in Moldova increases, as shown by Institute of Marketing and Polls (IMAS) survey for IPN agency. Doru Petrutu, the IMAS director, stated at a press conference announcing the survey results that the number of Internet sympathisers is growing. "Several years ago about 10% of population [...]"





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

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ON OCTOBER 7TH TWO JOURNALISTS TRIED

Belarus / Media in the legal field / 02.10.2014

On October 2nd, the court in Grodno began the consideration of the second administrative case against Andrei Meleshko, a freelance journalist. As the defendant requested a lawyer, the court postponed the hearing for October 7th. The same day a similar case against Aleksandr Burakov, also a journalist, will be considered by the court in Mogilev. [...]

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ZIARUL DE GARDĂ WEBSITE SUFFERED A CYBER ATTACK AGAIN

Moldova / In defense of the media / 01.10.2014

On September 30th, newspaper Ziarul de Gardă reported on Facebook that its website had once again become a victim of a cyber-attack. The editorial office learned this from representatives of the hosting company, administering the website. The hosting company's representatives said that they had been forced to suspend operation of the website due to attacks [...]

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13 BROADCASTERS LOST CASE VERSUS STATE REGULATOR

Moldova / Media in the legal field / 01.10.2014

The Supreme Judicial Chamber has delivered a verdict in favor of the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC) on the case, where plaintiffs demanded the cancellation of the regulator's decision to apportion 30%





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

of airtime to local production and in the state language. The Broadcasting Coordinating Council issued an instruction as far back as in December 2012 [...]

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DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ URGES TO END CLIMATE OF IMPUNITY

Armenia / In defense of the media / 01.10.2014

On September 30, Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, called on the Armenian authorities to end the climate of impunity and to bring to justice those responsible for attacks on journalists. In a letter to RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, dealing with the September 19 incident between Taguhi Hovhannisian, correspondent of "Haikakan [...]

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PACE COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONDEMNED ARRESTS IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan / In defense of the media / 01.10.2014

On September 30th the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of PACE unanimously adopted the statement deploring the recent persecution of civil society activists in Azerbaijan during its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The statement was distributed by PACE press service. The committee "considers these arrests and convictions as retaliation for the critical [...]

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INVESTIGATION AGAINST DEPUTY PROSECUTOR GENERAL OPENED





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Ukraine / Politics and Media / 01.10.2014

The Deputy Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Anatoliy Danylenko (photo) is suspended from his post for the time of internal investigation. The Prosecutor General of Ukraine Vitaliy Yarema informed about it during his briefing. Earlier journalists of the TV show “Nashi hroshi” (Our money) discovered evidence of large scale corruption on the part of Mr Danylenko, [...]

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FACEBOOK CLAIMS THAT ITS UKRAINIAN SEGMENT IS NOT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BY RUSSIANS

Ukraine / / 01.10.2014

Representatives of Facebook dismiss accusations that its Ukrainian segment is administered by a person with Russian citizenship. This is stated in the company’s response to the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine enquiry. “Facebook doesn’t have offices in either Russia or Ukraine. Our international headquarters in Dublin, Ireland, provides support for people using [...]

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JOURNALISTIC ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND TO STOP IMPUNITY

Armenia / In defense of the media / 30.09.2014

On September 29, seven media NGOs of Armenia, including Yerevan Press Club, issued a statement condemning the decision of the RA Special Investigation Service (SIS) on the cases related to impeding professional activities of journalists. The journalistic organizations mentioned two high-profile cases investigated by SIS: the incident which took place on September 9 at the [...]





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

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JOURNALIST KHADIDZHA ISMAYILOVA THREATENED WITH ARREST

Azerbaijan / Politics and Media / 30.09.2014

Journalist Khadidzha Ismayilova wrote on her Facebook page that she received a message on the phone warning about a future arrest. "I received a message from a representative of the law enforcement bodies. The message read that they will be waiting for me at the airport. If they hope that I will be scared and will not [...]"

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CHURCH VS MEDIA - NEW ACCUSATIONS

Moldova / In defense of the media / 30.09.2014

Representatives of Moldovan civil society stated during a press conference at IPN that mass-media defame the Moldovan Orthodox Church at politicians' request. They called on journalists not ignore ethical standards. Professor Victor Borsevic (photo) urged journalists not to violate ethical standards in their materials about the Church. He stressed that politicians decided to slander the [...]"

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ALMOST NO HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS LEFT IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan / Analytics / 30.09.2014

A meeting with Azerbaijani human rights activist Vugar Gojayev and journalist Shahla Sultanova (photo), initiated by the international organizations Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Reporters without Borders





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

(RSF), took place in the HRW Berlin headquarters on September 29th. According to Azerbaijani activists' evaluation, the situation in the country had been unfavorable for many years, yet [...]

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DONETSK SEPARATISTS BLOCK UKRAINIAN WEBSITES

Ukraine / In defense of the media / 30.09.2014

Separatists from the so-called Donetsk National Republic instructed local internet providers to restrict users' access to a number of Ukrainian news websites that the "experts" of the "republic" found out were "spreading false materials and slander". In particular, the ban was imposed for sites of local media outlets that do not support the idea of [...]

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UKRAINIAN JOURNALIST RELEASED FROM CAPTIVITY

Ukraine / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

On October 7th, [Yehor Vorobiev](#), a Ukrainian journalist, was released from the captivity. He was held as a captive of the so-called "Donetsk National Republic" for more than a month. In late August Vorobiev was covering the fighting near the city of Ilovaisk in Donetsk region, where he was captured by the Russian military.

Even in the morning on the day of release, Yelena Solodovnikova, Yehor's wife, [giving an interview to EaP Media Freedom Watch](#), said she did not know when her husband would be freed. However this happened after lunchtime that day.

Yelena wrote on her [Facebook page](#) that the TV channel 112 Ukraine and Maksim Shevchenko, a Russian journalist and a presenter of the First Channel, were engaged in the process of Ukrainian journalist's





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

release.

The release of the journalist was reported on Twitter by Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine. "Just released three civilians from captivity, including journalist Yehor Vorobiev," the President wrote.



Петро Порошенко ✓
@poroshenko



Підписаний

Щойно звільнили з полону 3 цивільних,
серед яких журналіст Єгор Воробйов.
Слава Україні!

Yelena Solodovnikova in the abovementioned interview to our website was critical towards the actions of the Ukrainian authorities to release the journalist though.

EAP MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH

OSCE REPRESENTATIVE: MANDATORY ACCREDITATION OF JOURNALISTS IN BELARUS IS WRONG

Belarus / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, reiterated the call to cancel accreditation for journalists working with foreign media, this time, through an interview to DW.

"I will closely monitor the trial on Tuesday," Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

Media, commented on the trial of Aleksandr Burakov, a journalist from Mogilev, scheduled for October 7th. He is accused of cooperation with the media company Deutsche Welle without accreditation of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. In an interview to DW Mijatovic said that she is also concerned, in addition to charging journalists with working without accreditation, with freedom of speech situation in general in the country.

DW: BELARUSIAN JOURNALIST ALEKSANDR BURAKOV IS ACCUSED OF WORKING WITHOUT ACCREDITATION. HE CLAIMS THAT HE DOES NOT NEED IT. WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE?

Dunja Mijatovic: I cannot tell the details of this case. They are not so important anyway. It is wrong to introduce any type of accreditation for journalists of this type. This is what should be changed in the spirit of international practice. I have talked about this during my recent visit to Minsk. This has become a big problem. Accreditation should not be a license to work for a reporter or limit his freedom of expression. Cancellation of such accreditation would be a significant step forward to weakening of the pressure faced by journalists in Belarus. I am still waiting for an answer. I will closely follow the decision of the court on Tuesday.

- DO YOU THINK THAT THE OFFICIAL MINSK HAS LISTENED TO YOU?

- Yes, I have a feeling that, in general, the authorities regard the work of our office positively. We have held a number of successful trainings, for example, on cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and reporters during riots and mass demonstrations. I addressed the authorities with constructive criticism on various issues, and they reacted, for example, with removing all criminal charges from journalists.

Today no reporters are jailed in Belarusian prisons, as far as I know. But that is too small achievement to say that we are moving forward. I do not see the striving to soften the legislation in media field, which is too strictly regulated. The door to communication is open, we have excellent relations with the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, but the situation with freedom of speech does not change practically.

- DO YOU SEE SOME SENSE IN PROSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS FOR WORK WITHOUT ACCREDITATION RIGHT NOW?





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

- I do not know. Besides, I see another problem: frequent short-term detentions of journalists. Such detentions are carried out almost every day, while detainees are released within a few hours. In all the cases of charges and detention of Belarusian journalists I ask the local authorities to release them and to remove all charges. There is hardly anyone who would call this a democratic procedure. These processes assure me that there is still no political will to provide the public with more freedoms – the freedom of speech and expression.

Source: DW.de, interviewer Mikhail Bushuiev

JOURNALIST FINED SECOND TIME IN 3 MONTHS FOR COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN MEDIA

Belarus / Media in the legal field / 07.10.2014

Andrey Mialeshka (photo), an independent journalist from Hrodna, was sentenced to 35 basic amounts fine (approximately € 390) on October 7th. The Hrodna District Court found the journalist guilty of violating Section 2 of Article 22.9 of the Code of Administrative Offences (illegal production and distribution of mass media products).

Andrey Mialeshka told the Belarusian Association of Journalists' press service that the hearing lasted for about two hours, including a short break. Judge Hanna Liavusik decided the case in 5 minutes.

The journalist's lawyer was present at the hearing. The witness in the case, Oleg Sozinov, the Head of the Chair of Botany of Ianka Kupala Hrodna State University, was present as well. He confirmed that Andrey Mialeshka interviewed him. A material with Mr Sozinov's comment was published on Belarusian Radio Racyja website in the end of August this year. It was not signed. However, this very publication on establishing of ecological reserve in Hrodna region served as a basis for the administrative offence case filed against Andrey Mialeshka.

According to the journalist this case was in essence the same as the one from June 16th, when the Oktyabrsky District Court of Hrodna sentenced him to [30 basic amounts fine](#). A publication on a regional





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

campaign of health workers “For a healthy heart” served as a basis for filing the case. As it became obvious from the case’s documents, the police interviewed the doctors and they testified that it was Andrey Mialeshko who talked to them. The protocol was drawn based on these testimonies.

“I feel that courts function as if using a template. And that they want to get as much money as possible from me and to distract me from my work,” Andrey Mialeshka commented on the recent court decision. The journalist intends to appeal to the regional court.

Since the appeal about the previous decision of the district court [failed at the level of regional court](#), Andrey Mialeshka will appeal to the Supreme Court.

EAP MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH based on [BAJ report](#)

CAPTURED JOURNALIST’S WIFE DOES NOT KNOW WHEN HE MAY BE RELEASED

Ukraine / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

Ukrainian journalist [Yehor Vorobiev](#) has been held in the captivity on the territory of the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic for more than a month. Lately [a video of the journalist’s interrogation](#) by a Russian citizen, a representative of the Cossacks Union of Don Military Region was published on the Internet. Consequently, a number of videos on people living in Donetsk with the participation of Yehor Vorobiev appeared.

EaP Media Freedom Watch talked about the prospects of Yehor Vorobiev release to Yelena Solodovnikova, his wife and [a journalist](#) herself.

DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON WHERE YEHOR IS NOW AND WHAT IS HIS CONDITION?

I know only one thing, that his release is being negotiated at the initiative of Russian journalists who have already helped us and continue to do it. The other party talked about various conditions. I cannot tell you anything about the details of these negotiations. It is really nice of our Russian colleagues to interfere and





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

to help to establish connection. In the beginning I was hoping for the Ukrainian authorities to resolve this issue, but then I understood that it is easier and more efficient for the other side to act.

HAS ANYTHING HAPPENED SINCE THE PRESS-CONFERENCE OF UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT PETRO POROSHENKO, WHERE [YOU ASKED HIM ABOUT YEHOR'S FATE?](#)

Nothing has happened really. After the press conference I received a call from an unknown number. They introduced themselves as the Security Service of Ukraine and asked me to tell them what was happening with Yehor. I asked them why they were calling at my private phone number and whether it would not be better to meet in person and to talk about it. Besides, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko (the Head of the Ukrainian Secret Service - **ED**.) knows about the situation, he was informed about it several times. I was told that fine, we will stay in contact. Yehor's mother also received a phone call. Probably, someone told them that calling her is a good idea. That was it, no more "moves" since.

HAVE YOU TALKED TO YEHOR APART FROM THAT ONE PHONE CALL THAT WAS REPORTED BEFORE?

No, but I talked to Tigran Parsegyan. This is the journalist who filmed Yehor and published [those videos](#) in the Internet. He is a press secretary of the Cossacks Union of Don Military Region. Tigran initiated negotiations on Yehor's release. He was actively involved in the situation around my husband and it is thanks to him that at least some connection was established and I could at least learn about Yehor's condition.

Many people think here that in Donetsk there are no people able to demonstrate human compassion toward others, irrespective of their political views. And yet, Tigran was taking my husband to his office, giving him food and supporting him morally; he also participated in negotiations. According to his passport he is a Russian citizen and arrived to Donetsk in June.

IS SHOWING THESE VIDEOS ON UKRAINIAN TV CHANNELS ONE OF THE CONDITIONS FOR YEHOR'S RELEASE?

No, there was no strict requirement about that, nothing like "you should show it on such and such channels





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

that many times, otherwise we will not talk about release". Tigran only mentioned that it would not be bad if those stories were aired by Ukrainian TV channels so that Ukrainians saw an alternative perspective on the developments in Donetsk. Anyway, it is hard to get there and not everybody is able to film in the city; one needs a special accreditation and so on. So if my husband had an opportunity to film people who stayed there – why not to do that? Only two Ukrainian TV channels, ZIK and partly ICTV, reacted to my request to air these videos.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT A DATE OF YEHOR'S RELEASE?

I have no assumptions and no information. Yehor is on all possible exchange lists of captured and detained persons. [The other side] expressed their readiness to release him. However, there are some technical obstacles. I suspect that Ukrainian side is slowing the process down, since there are more "our" guys in captivity than vice versa. Maybe there is a bargain about the conditions of release, i.e., who can be exchanged for a journalist and so on.

EAP MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH

NORWEGIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE AWARDED ANDREI SAKHAROV AWARD TO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan / In defense of the media / 07.10.2014

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee awards the Andrei Sakharov Freedom Award in 2014 to political prisoners in Azerbaijan. The Award distribution will take place in Oslo on November 13th. "This award is given to all of the political prisoners. It is a sad fact that they are too numerous to all be mentioned here", the press-release reads.

The authorities in oil and gas-rich Azerbaijan have brutally silenced critics by arresting them on trumped up charges. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee stresses that civil society in Azerbaijan is being crushed,





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

though the country remains one of Norway's partner countries, as Norwegian oil company Statoil actively operates in Azerbaijan.

Among the 98 political prisoners there are 13 journalists and bloggers, 10 human rights defenders lawyers and civil society activists.

The following human rights activists were specifically mentioned: [Leyla Yunus](#), [Arif Yunus](#), [Anar Mammadli](#), [Bashir Suleymanli](#), [Rasul Jafarov](#), [Intigam Aliyev](#).

The Andrei Sakharov Freedom Award was established in 1980 by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

Source: [contact.az](#)

GEORGIAN PM ACCUSED OF INTERFERING WITH MEDIA ACTIVITIES

Georgia / Politics and Media / 06.10.2014

Esteemed Georgian NGOs have accused the country's Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili of violating the principle of benefit of the doubt and interfering with the activities of media representatives.

On October 2nd, Irakli Garibashvili criticized the media for not expressing their solidarity with [Zazu Davitaia](#), a journalist with *Asaval-Dasavali* newspaper, who was taken to the hospital after being beaten, and for not highlighting the case of the underage brother of a reporter with Rustavi-2 TV channel, who, according to the Prime Minister, "robbed two taxi drivers".

"Independence of editorial staff is a very important aspect of media activities. It means that the media decide independently if an issue is of public interest and if information on a certain event should be provided," the statement of four NGOs reads.

Moreover, non-governmental organizations condemned the Prime Minister for his statements regarding an underage person.





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

“The Prime Minister spoke about the crime in an affirmative tone... However, the sentence has not been announced yet; even more so, there has not been a trial. In this case, the PM’s interest may have a negative impact on the independence of the court,” the statement further reads.

The NGOs pointed out that due to the Prime Minister’s statement, the minor can be identified.

“It is not clear why [the PM] chose to provide this information and provoked the unnecessary politicization of this case,” according to the statement.

The document was signed by the following NGOs: Transparency International Georgia, Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, The Civic Development Agency.

SOURCE: newsgeorgia.ru

GEORGIA PRESENTATION OF EAP MEDIA FREEDOM INDEX: WE HAVE REACHED THE NEXT LEVEL

Georgia / Analytics / 06.10.2014

A presentation of the results of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index was held in Tbilisi. Media experts and representatives of various media outlets were present at the event. Georgia remains the leader of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index for the first half of 2014. The Media Freedom Index is compiled under the EU-sponsored EaP Media Freedom Watch project, which monitors the situation of press freedom in the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

The survey analyzes possibilities for media outlets and journalists to exercise their rights and freedoms without control or pressure from the authorities and other state institutions. It takes into account not only the role of the state in securing these rights and freedoms, but also the reaction of the authorities to cases of their infringement.





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

The index is calculated by adding up scores on four benchmarks: Politics, Practice, Broadcasting, Internet and New Media. Georgia took the lead in three areas, except for Internet and New Media; online freedom and free access turned out to be higher for Moldova.

According to Maka Jakhua, the Georgian project's coordinator and the director of *Green Wave* radio station, the survey revealed the importance of the European integration process for the development of Eastern Partnership member states.

"The states that actively participate in the process of European integration always take the lead. Armenia is a good example: when, in 2012, the country expressed its wish to participate in the European integration processes, its successes in media sphere were similar to Georgia. But after Armenia declared its wish to become a Customs Union member, it fell to the 4th place in the ranking. Ukraine's position before the Maidan events was rather precarious, but since it signed the Association Agreement with the EU, its ranking improved. At the moment, it is ranked 3rd, behind Georgia and Moldova".

According to survey participant Nino Lomjaria, the director of the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, some of the questions from the questionnaire were not relevant for Georgia, since the country is already at a completely different level of freedom of expression and freedom of media.

"Are journalists being arrested? Is broadcasting state-owned? We answered "No" to these questions," she explained. "If we were to compare our situation with other countries such as Belarus and Azerbaijan, we are well ahead of them. However, this does not mean that we have no problems. I believe that in the future there should be different questions in relation to Georgia, adapted to our reality. Because we are at a different development stage and the issues that were problematic several years ago are not pertinent anymore".

According to media expert Natia Kapanadze, the good result demonstrated by Georgia is explained by the absence of criminal cases against journalists in the country.

"However, there are also shortcomings," she noticed. "For instance, working hours for journalists during elections. In many cases, broadcasters encounter obstacles when filming in the courts. A considerable issue is officials' attitude towards journalists and the vocabulary they use to talk to media representatives. Such





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

attitudes towards journalists can be contagious and influence the work of media in general”.

The main problem listed by the experts was the election of the Board of Trustees of the Georgian Public Broadcaster. In their opinion, the government is trying to politicize the issue and thus hinder the unbiased work of the broadcaster.

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BAJ REQUEST TO REFORM MEDIA LEGISLATION WILL BE ANSWERED “WITHIN THE LEGAL TIME FRAME”

Belarus / Media in the legal field / 06.10.2014

The Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Media of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus examined [the protest of the Belarusian Association of Journalists \(BAJ\)](#) against the prosecution of freelancers.

The Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Media of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus “does not have a right to control the activities of courts and other state institutions, nor to evaluate if decisions made by state institutions or officials are legal,” Aliaksandr Naumovich, the chair of the Committee, wrote.

In respect to court decisions on administrative offences, Mr Naumovich informed that they “can be appealed in the way specified by the Code of Administrative Procedures and Enforcement of Belarus,” while actions of policemen can be challenged at the Ministry of Interior.

“The results of the examination of your request to bring the legislation related to free expression in compliance with the Constitution and the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights will be communicated to you within the legal time frame,” the Committee’s chair wrote.

In [the statement](#) adopted on September 26th the Public Association BAJ protested against persecution of





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

journalists and the charges against them for publishing their materials in foreign media. The organization demanded that law enforcement agencies and employees of other state bodies stop the prosecution of freelance journalists and stop pressuring them if they publish materials in foreign media outlets; that authorized officials bring protests against the judicial decisions delivered against journalists under Section 2 of Article 22.9 of the Code of Administrative Violations; as well as that legislative bodies of Belarus bring legislation related to the sphere of free expression in compliance with the Constitution and the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights.

The BAJ statement was forwarded to the Prosecutor's General Office, the Ministry of Interior, the specialized committee of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus, and to the chairman of the Supreme Court.

SOURCE: baj.by

ZHANNA LITVINA: BELARUS NEEDS MEDIA REFORMS AND MEDIA LITERACY

Belarus / In defense of the media / 06.10.2014

The chair of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, Zhanna Litvina, participated in the autumn plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as a member of Belarusian delegation. The session was held from September 29th to October 3rd in Strasbourg.

The main concern for the first days of the session was the political and military conflict in Ukraine, but the Assembly members paid attention to the situation of human rights in other European countries as well. In particular, Thorbjorn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, had a meeting with the Belarusian delegation.

According to Zhanna Litvinova, during all meetings people talked about the new program of cooperation with Belarus that is being elaborated at the moment. The Council of Europe is ready to consider a possibility of renewing the Belarusian parliament's special guest status in the Assembly.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

However, during the meeting, the Secretary General explicitly said: “Of course, Belarus will gain full membership in the Council of Europe one day. But we cannot give up on democratic principles. On Europe’s map there is one country where the death penalty still exists. With the support of the Church and Belarusian civil society we will urge Minsk to ban the death penalty. The most important thing for us is the interaction with civil society. Without a dialogue between the authorities and civil society, movement forward is impossible. This is what we need,” Zhanna Litvinova cited Thorbjorn Jagland.

On her own part, when meeting European politicians, the BAJ Chair stressed two main theses: the need for media reform and the need for media education of the Belarusian society, teaching it to critically evaluate media propaganda.

“One of the consequences of the Ukrainian conflict for Belarusian society is a very aggressive Russian propaganda which shaped society’s opinion on the events according to Kremlin politicians. That is why the Council of Europe programs on media literacy are very important for our citizens; we need to immunize our people against propaganda and teach them about critical perspective, which they lack at the moment. I am sure that the help of European structures in this respect will be invaluable,” Zhanna Litvina stated for the BAJ press service. “One of the conditions of a dialogue in Belarusian society is bringing up issues related to the future of our country in the public sphere. For this to happen, we need a reformed media sphere”.

One of the first steps in this direction could be wide consultations on these issues, with the participation of the European experts, Belarussian journalists, state institutions and other interested parties.

SOURCE: baj.by

TV CHANNEL’S CHAIRMAN THREATENED

Ukraine / In defense of the media / 06.10.2014

The Seventh [Channel](#) from Odesa communicated during a special report that Mykhailo Malyshev, the channel’s director general, has received threats.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

“On October 1st, when I returned home, two young men approached me near my house. They came from a dark corner, where I could not see their faces,” the general director said. “They recommended me to change the editorial policy of the channel, as the current broadcast by the channel affected the interests of persons much respected in the city”.

Mykhailo Malyshev added that, in recent months, the channel had been conducting its own investigations, filmed programs “aimed at fighting evil, corruption, extortion and bribery”.

“I would like to note that the Seventh Channel is the only channel in the city that has completely rejected political commercials. Instead, we offer free space for live air time and debates with officials of all levels, of people’s representatives of all levels, candidates for membership at the Verkhovna Rada (the Ukrainian Parliament – ed.). Our position remains unchanged – we support a united Ukraine. We are against any manifestations of separatism and we are for European values,” the general director stressed.

Source: www.youtube.com

OMBUDSMAN PRESENTS 2013 CONCLUSIONS

Armenia / Analytics / 03.10.2014

On October 2nd, at the National Assembly's Human Rights Defender Karen Andreasian presented the annual report on his activities and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Armenia in 2013.

One of the chapters of the report is on the National Commission on Television and Radio (NCTR), the body regulating activities of Armenian broadcasters. The Human Rights Defender singled out current problems in the broadcasting field and flaws in the work of NCTR in particular. Thus, the ombudsman pointed out that NCTR failed to react to violations of the legislation on advertising by TV channels, which were revealed by independent monitoring.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

Speaking of gaps in the broadcasting legislation, the ombudsman stressed that the process of digitization is still not regulated by the Television and Radio law, whereas July 2015 was set as the deadline for terminating analogue broadcasting in Armenia. Moreover, in the ombudsman's opinion, NCTR does not make enough effort to draft legislation providing for anti-monopoly guarantees. The report also mentioned deficient pluralism in broadcast media, with "obviously insufficient oversight" by NCTR over the compliance of TV channels with this requirement.

The report contains a separate chapter on freedom of speech in Armenia. It presented the official statistics of the Police, according to which in 2013 they gathered materials on 19 cases of violence against journalists or of obstructing their professional activities. However, only three criminal cases were initiated, while 13 cases were rejected, and the materials of three other cases were sent to other bodies for further investigation.

The report stresses that out of the incidents involving journalists that happened in the period of presidential elections and elections to the Yerevan Council of Elders, only one case was opened - on basis of obstruction of the professional duties of Hakob Karapetian, correspondent of iLur.am (the case however was later closed, since the sides reconciled). On all other incidents the law enforcement bodies refused to institute criminal cases, and on two incidents investigations were terminated.

These statistics, according to the Human Rights Defender, undermines society's trust towards investigations of cases on obstruction of journalists' professional activities, especially in the context of election campaigns.

As a positive trend, the report mentions reduction in damage compensations awarded by courts in defamation cases against mass media. At the same time, new problems are revealed, such as court decisions to put the property/financial resources under arrest as a measure to secure a claim.

In addition, the Human Rights Defender talked about the access to information. As independent research shows, many governmental agencies do not provide the requested information or do not provide it in full.

In relation to legislative amendments and initiatives, the ombudsman positively evaluated the draft law on banning commercial advertisement on Public Television of Armenia prepared by the Government (*ed.* - the





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

latter so far have passed the first parliamentary reading in March 2014). Another positive development were the amendments to the Armenian law on copyright, adopted in September 2013 (the amendments stipulate conditions for full or partial reproduction of print/online media pieces by another print/online media).

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SHOWDOWN BETWEEN TWO GEORGIAN NGOS AND JOURNALISTS TURNED INTO MASS BRAWL

Georgia / Politics and Media / 03.10.2014

A scuffle between activists of non-governmental organizations “Free Zone” and “Free Generation” resulted in hospitalization and arrests of several people. The parties blame each other for a provocation. One should note that “Free Zone” is regarded as opposition movement in Georgia, while “Free Generation” is said to be pro-governmental.

In Tbilisi, many believe that the conflict between NGOs is the street version of the confrontation between the two leading political forces. The two organizations possess similar names and almost identical logos, but this fact does not curtail the mutual hostility existing between the two Georgian NGOs. On the night of October 2nd, the activists of “Free Zone”, supported by the “National Movement” party, had to defend their office from the assault of the members of “Free Generation”, which is associated with the ruling “Georgian Dream” party. Judging by amateur footage filmed during the clash, all the objects within the reach were used for the fight – cookware, fans, and even furniture.

Activists of “Free Generation” resorted to assault after the representatives of “Free Zone” had beaten their supporter [Zazu Davitaia](#), who is a journalist of newspaper Asaval-Dasavali.

Moreover, the representatives of “Free Generation” claim that they were not going to fight with the opponents, but wanted to submit some written petition. The workers of the “Free Zone” office call the





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

incident a provocation. According to Gela Vasadze, the Chairman of the Board of the organization, Davitaia, the journalist, personally provoked the activists into a fight, with the intention to use it as a pretext for an attack on the office of “Free Zone”.

“The so-called NGO (“Free Generation”) was established about two weeks ago, although I would call it rather a criminal group, which has set the destruction of “Free Zone” as its goal,” Gela Vasadze says. “For these two weeks, we have seen many provocative statements from them. They announced that they gave us a ten days-long term to self-destruct, which ended yesterday, by the way. Apparently, this explains their yesterday’s activity. The so-called political prisoners and the editorial office of the newspaper Asaval-Dasavali are engaged in this movement”.

There were no law enforcers during the brawl, as one can see in the video footage filmed by amateurs. As the participants of the brawl say, police arrived at the site of the incident when there had been some injured already. Several persons, including those who had beaten the journalist Davitaia, were detained by the police.

David Mchedlidze, the chief editor of the news portal Media.ge, is sure the incident will most likely reoccur. This is the matter of engagement of nonpolitical organizations and some media in the political conflict between the ruling “Georgian Dream” party and the opposition “United National Movement”, Mchedlidze says: “This is a countermeasure against the activity of “Free Zone”. It is an open secret that the mentioned organization enjoys support of the “National Movement” and constantly criticizes the policy of the ruling power. Therefore the “Georgian Dream” has established an organization in response; it is completely similar, but aimed at serving as a kind of pro-government strike force. We have already faced such situation in the pre-election period, when so-called NGOs used to carry out all the dirty work. Apparently, the authorities and the opposition have decided to use this experience again”.

Mchedlidze is sure that the confrontation at the level of NGOs is fraught with some danger. The political “disputes”, which already involve the youth, are becoming “street fighting”, and such confrontation can escalate into riots. Moreover, it is easily done in such a politicized society, as the Georgian society is.

The incident drew the attention of Giorgi Margvelashvili, the President of Georgia. In his words, it is





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

unacceptable to involve young people in political conflicts, while outrage for dissent is inadmissible.

However, Irakli Garibashvili, the Prime Minister, does not think so. He accused journalists of wrong shaping of priorities. The “Free Zone”, much referred to, is a destructive force associated with the “National Movement”. The Prime Minister was very surprised that journalists had not expressed solidarity with their colleague Zaza Davitaia, beaten by activists of “Free Zone”.

The incident caused response among representatives of independent NGOs. They issued a statement condemning the actions of the protesters and the attempt of assault on the office as a manifestation of physical violence. The NGOs says that in this case it does not matter what political force the “Free Zone” associated with. The Georgian legislation does not provide for the elimination of an NGO because of its association with any party.

The authors of the statement take notice of the comment by the Prime Minister Garibashvili as well. According to the NGOs, the statement of Prime Minister, where he called “Free Zone” a destructive force and pointed to its connection with the “National Movement” may be regarded as encouraging violence and inadequate investigation by law enforcement authorities.

Source: [Radio Liberty](#), [Rustavi 2](#), [interpressnews](#)

POLITICAL REFUGEES HELD RALLY AT PACE DURING SPEECH OF AZERBAIJANI FOREIGN MINISTER OF AFFAIRS

Azerbaijan / In defense of the media / 03.10.2014

On October 2nd, a group of Azerbaijani political refugees held a protest at the PACE session in Strasbourg during the speech of Elmar Mammadyarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan. Activists wearing red T-shirts with the images of political prisoners chanted “Freedom to political prisoners of Azerbaijan”. After Anne Brasseur, the PACE President, asked the protesters to keep quiet, the action continued in the silent form: political emigrants raised their hands.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

Brasseur, prior to giving the word to Mammadyarov, wished to hear explanations about what was happening in the country. She noted that the arrest of members were particularly alarming.

Brasseur stressed that Azerbaijan had serious problems with compliance with the COE standards. In particular, the problems are noticeable in the areas of judicial independence, freedom of assembly and expression – and these problems must be solved in a timely manner.

The chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers is not only a responsibility, but also a good opportunity to demonstrate commitment to the country's obligations to the Council of Europe. Azerbaijan has enough time before the completion of its presidency, and the official Baku should take the appropriate steps in these areas, Brasseur said.

However, Mammadyarov spoke on general topics, reciting the activities of the COE during the presidency of Azerbaijan, leaving the questions of the head of the PACE unanswered.

Nevertheless, the human rights issue in Azerbaijan was raised by members of the PACE.

Robert Biedron, a Polish MP, wondered why independent NGOs were subjects to tax audits, while Heydar Aliyev Foundation was not?

Teenie Koch, a representative of the Netherlands, asked why after I. Aliyev had promised to hold a roundtable on the issue of political prisoners in Azerbaijan new arrests have taken place, and the event was never held?

Mammadyarov put this down to some “summer break”, promising to continue the work in this direction after Gurban Bayram.

Answering the question by Michael McNamara from Ireland, on how the arrests of human rights defenders [Leyla Yunus](#), [Intigam Aliyev](#), [Rasul Dzhafarov](#) affected the image of the country-member of the Council of Europe, Mammadyarov said he had already answered McNamara's question in Baku.

In conclusion, the Minister said that Azerbaijan had no political prisoners.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

Source: minval.az

LAURA BAGHDASARIAN: “ARMENIAN JOURNALISTS TRUST SOCIAL NETWORKS”

Armenia / Analytics / 03.10.2014

On October 2, Research Center “Region” presented the results of their study [“Social Media as a Source of Public Information for the Armenian Media: Standards Shaped and Practice Applied”](#) conducted in the frameworks of the project, supported by OSCE Office in Yerevan.

The study is based on a survey among 100 journalists/media executives from 50 media outlets of the country, as well as on monitoring of 9 media (6 online publications and 3 national TV channels) carried out by “Region” Center in May-June 2014.

According to the Director of the “Region” Laura Baghdasarian, Armenian journalists use Facebook for their daily communication equally often as such traditional means as telephone and email.

Most of surveyed journalists do not consider reprinting content from social media into traditional media outlets problematic. It is thought to be unacceptable only by the minority of the respondents.

Social networks are definitely seen as sources of information of public significance. Trust in information from social networks is evidential: more than two thirds of surveyed journalists repeatedly use social networks when preparing their materials.

Social networks are used as sources for exclusive information not only in respect to issues such as corruption, events in other countries but also in respect to developments in the internal politics. As a result, exclusive information on the authorities and opposition can also be “dug out” from social media, stressed Laura Baghdasarian.

According to respondents, apart from using social networks for disseminating and receiving information, journalists also use them as a feedback tool. To put it differently, media outlets where journalists work are





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

perceived by them as less effective platforms for maintaining or expanding their own audience as well as the audience of the media they work for.

Those who believe that social media influence Armenian media positively, explain it, among others, by the fact that information circulated in social media is more prompt compared with the traditional media, which makes the latter work faster. The traditional media have consequently lost their monopoly on owning and disseminating information.

At the same time, claims that present day Armenian media are packed with so-called “fast food information from social media” are somewhat exaggerated. A two-month media monitoring by “Region” Research Center showed that in the press there was only 5% of publications based on social media content, while for TV channels the numbers were significantly lower, about 0.3%.

EAP MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH

MESROP HARUTYUNYAN: “PRESSURE ON MEDIA CONTINUES”

Armenia / In defense of the media / 02.10.2014

Mesrop Harutyunyan, a media expert agrees with the estimation given to Armenia in the “Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index” report. He said this in an interview to Aravot.am. One reminds that in the first half of 2014, Armenia ranked the fourth among six countries. Georgia was on top of the list followed by Moldova and Ukraine. Whereas Armenia is ahead of Azerbaijan and Belarus.

“It cannot be due to legislation, because our legislation is highly provided: there is a certain provision of freedom of expression both by the Constitution and the laws,” Mesrop Harutyunyan told Aravot.am. In the nomination of “practice section”, Armenia gained 603 points. Harutyunyan thinks that this score is in compliance with the current state of the Armenian media.

The media expert supposes that Armenia tends to aggravation of media freedom situation. In particular, he





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

illustrates the cases of violence against the journalists of “Chorrord Ishkhanutyun” newspaper and “A1+” TV channel or obstructing their work, noting that no criminal proceedings was filed for both cases.

“Year by year, we see exertion of pressures on the media by the state and the authorities, and there are lawsuits that lead to deterioration in the state of affairs of the freedom of media,” Harutyunyan adds.

Commenting on the nomination of “Internet and New Media” section, in which Armenia gained 117 points, Mesrop Harutyunyan mentioned that explicit and sometimes hidden control tendencies are observed recently. Harutyunyan agrees with the scoring given to the Armenian television in the report (Armenia gained 65 points), because he believes that the level of freedom in broadcasting companies of Armenia is very low. “This implies to both public broadcasters and the private broadcasters. There are 1 or 2 TV channels that may voice views different from the state.”

Source: aravot.am

INTERNET INFLUENCE IS GROWING

Moldova / / 02.10.2014

Internet popularity as a source of information about political developments in Moldova increases, as shown by Institute of Marketing and Polls (IMAS) survey for IPN agency.

Doru Petruti, the IMAS director, stated at a press conference announcing the survey results that the number of Internet sympathisers is growing. “Several years ago about 10% of population was getting information on political developments in the country from Internet. At present this number increased to almost 20%”, Dr Petruti specified.

Dr Petruti added that television remains a confident leader in this field with 66% of population. At the same time, he pointed to a rising dynamics of Internet usage: 33% of surveyed told that they use Internet all the time and 17% that they use is often.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

EAP MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH

ON OCTOBER 7TH TWO JOURNALISTS TRIED

Belarus / Media in the legal field / 02.10.2014

On October 2nd, the court in Grodno began the consideration of the second administrative case against Andrei Meleshko, a freelance journalist. As the defendant requested a lawyer, the court postponed the hearing for October 7th. The same day a similar case against Aleksandr Burakov, also a journalist, will be considered by the court in Mogilev.

The journalist from Grodno requested not only a contract with a lawyer, but also the right to look through the case file, as the Administrative Protocol and other materials of the case were drawn up when he was not present.

Meleshko learned about the administrative proceedings being instituted against him on September 29th from the letter sent from the court.

The journalist is accused of working for a foreign media outlet without accreditation. The police regard this as the violation of article 22.9 part 2 of the Administrative Code - "illegal production and dissemination of media products".

Notably, Andrei Meleshko has [already been fined](#) 30 basic amounts (about 300 euros) under the same charges this summer by the Oktiabrskiy District Court of Grodno region.

The journalist appeals that the charges against him are a violation of his constitutional right to collect and disseminate information.

The very same day, on October 7th, the Leninskiy District Court of Mogilev shall hold the hearing of a similar case against Aleksandr Burakov, a journalist. The ground for the charges is the articles published at the





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

website of the Russian service of “Deutsche Welle” radio station and singed with the journalist’s name.

This year there have been nine administrative cases initiated against journalists for working with a foreign media outlet without accreditation.

Another six journalists have received warnings under the same accusations from the Prosecutor’s office in 2014.

Dunja Mijatović, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, has repeatedly urged the Belarusian authorities to cancel the requirement of mandatory accreditation of journalists, and reiterated this position during her official visit to Minsk in September 2014.

The public organization Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) issued a statement the previous week and forwarded it to a number of state bodies (the Prosecutor’s General Office, the Ministry of Interior, the chairman of the Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Media of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus, and to the chairman of the Supreme Court). The organization demands the state bodies to take measures to put an end to prosecution of journalists.

Source: baj.by

ZIARUL DE GARDĂ WEBSITE SUFFERED A CYBER ATTACK AGAIN

Moldova / In defense of the media / 01.10.2014

On September 30th, newspaper Ziarul de Gardă reported on Facebook that its website had once again become a victim of a cyber-attack. The editorial office learned this from representatives of the hosting company, administering the website. The hosting company’s representatives said that they had been forced to suspend operation of the website due to attacks from the outside. This is not the first hacker attack on the newspaper’s website. Previously this happened after the periodical had published an article on property of high clergy. This resulted in disabling of the website for some time.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

Recently the newspaper has become known for its high-profile investigations of clergy's possessions. The scandal has not abated yet.

EAP MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH

13 BROADCASTERS LOST CASE VERSUS STATE REGULATOR

Moldova / Media in the legal field / 01.10.2014

The Supreme Judicial Chamber has delivered a verdict in favor of the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC) on the case, where plaintiffs demanded the cancellation of the regulator's decision to apportion 30% of airtime to local production and in the state language.

The Broadcasting Coordinating Council issued an instruction as far back as in December 2012 that at least 30% of the TV programs must be local production and in the state language. The decision entered into force on April 1st, 2013.

In a few days, 13 TV channels, mainly engaged in the retransmission of foreign content, challenged the decision in court. The litigation between the media companies and the BCC lasted for about a year and a half. As a result, the arguments of the broadcasters were rejected by all courts.

SOURCE: MEDIA-AZI.MD

DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ URGES TO END CLIMATE OF IMPUNITY

Armenia / In defense of the media / 01.10.2014

On September 30, Dunja Mijatović, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, [called on the Armenian authorities](#) to end the climate of impunity and to bring to justice those responsible for attacks on





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

journalists.

In a letter to RA Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, dealing with the September 19 [incident between Taguhi Hovhannisian, correspondent of "Haikakan Zhamanak" daily, and Artyusha Karapetian, the head of the Armenian community of Kazakhstan](#), Dunja Mijatović expressed concern with the recent attacks against journalists in Armenia and the lack of effective measures to end the climate of impunity. "I hope the attack on Hovhannisian will be duly addressed by law enforcement", stressed OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in her letter to Foreign Minister.

Dunja Mijatović also expressed her disappointment with the RA Special Investigation Service's (SIS) refusal to open a criminal case on the September 9 attack on Marineh Khachatryan, correspondent of "A1+" TV, by the chief of parliament security service, as well as with the decision of the SIS to dismiss the criminal case initiated against police officers who on February 12 used force against Ani Gevorgian, correspondent of "Chorrord Ishkhanutyun" newspaper.

"I urge the authorities to adequately and timely address these crimes. Impunity has a potential to generate more violence and produce a chilling effect on free expression and free media", Dunja Mijatović said.

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PACE COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONDEMNED ARRESTS IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan / In defense of the media / 01.10.2014

On September 30th the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of PACE unanimously adopted the statement deploring the recent persecution of civil society activists in Azerbaijan during its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The statement was distributed by PACE press service.

The committee "considers these arrests and convictions as retaliation for the critical views expressed by





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

the activists” and called on the Azerbaijani authorities “to release the above-mentioned civil society activists, refrain from unfairly prosecuting others and ensure the application of the standards laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights”.

According to the statement, freedom of expression, assembly and association is a necessary condition for the functioning of any democratic and pluralistic society.

The committee also declared that it considers a matter of increasing urgency to receive the report on “Azerbaijan’s Chairmanship of the Council of Europe: what follow-up on respect of human rights?”.

SOURCE: azadliq.org

INVESTIGATION AGAINST DEPUTY PROSECUTOR GENERAL OPENED

Ukraine / Politics and Media / 01.10.2014

The Deputy Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Anatoliy Danylenko (photo) is suspended from his post for the time of internal investigation. The Prosecutor General of Ukraine Vitaliy Yarema informed about it during his briefing.

Earlier journalists of the TV show “Nashi hroshi” (Our money) discovered evidence of large scale corruption on the part of Mr Danylenko, whose family removed from state ownership around 140 hectares of water reservoirs in Kyiv Region. When this story was to be aired, its author Alina Stryzhak was threatened.

“Anatoliy Danylenko expressed his wish to be suspended from his post for the time of internal investigation”, Vitaliy Yarema said. The investigation was started on the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko request. It is conducted by employees of the Secret Service of Ukraine.

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Photo from gp.gov.ua





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

FACEBOOK CLAIMS THAT ITS UKRAINIAN SEGMENT IS NOT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BY RUSSIANS

Ukraine / / 01.10.2014

Representatives of Facebook dismiss accusations that its Ukrainian segment is administered by a person with Russian citizenship. This is stated in the company's response to the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine enquiry.

"Facebook doesn't have offices in either Russia or Ukraine. Our international headquarters in Dublin, Ireland, provides support for people using Facebook in both Ukraine and Russia... The team comes from many different countries and provides support of Ukrainian Facebook users in an impartial way", company's press service announced.

Facebook stressed that their internal rules, known as the Facebook Community Standards, are applied to all posts and messages put up on Facebook.

Recently Yuriy Artemenko, a chairman of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine, and his deputy Olha Herasymyuk wrote a letter to Facebook chairman Mark Zuckerberg. They stated that Facebook's Ukrainian segment is administered by a person with Russian citizenship and it is likely that due to this fact he often blocks accounts of Ukrainian users.

SOURCE: hromadske.tv

JOURNALISTIC ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND TO STOP IMPUNITY

Armenia / In defense of the media / 30.09.2014

On September 29, seven media NGOs of Armenia, including Yerevan Press Club, issued a statement condemning the decision of the RA Special Investigation Service (SIS) on the cases related to impeding





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

professional activities of journalists.

The journalistic organizations mentioned two high-profile cases investigated by SIS: the incident which took place on September 9 at the entrance to the RA National Assembly, when the head of the security service of the parliament obstructed the professional activities of Marineh Khachatrian, “A1+” TV correspondent, and the February 12 incident, when police officers used force against Ani Gevorgian, correspondent of “Chorrord Ishkhanutyun” newspaper. On the first incident, the SIS refused to open criminal case as there was no corpus delicti. On the second incident, the investigation was terminated.

“Such course of events suggests that the incident which occurred on September 19, when Artyusha Karapetian, the head of the Armenian community of Kazakhstan, and persons accompanying him used violence against Taguhi Hovhannisian, correspondent of “Haikakan Zhamanak” daily, most probably will bring no further consequences”, the statement noted.

“In fact, a vicious tradition is being set: after receiving reports on obstruction of journalists’ activities or usage of violence against them, the RA Prosecutor’s Office requests the SIS to investigate the incidents, but the latter glosses over the cases with a standard explanation ‘absence of corpus delicti’. And this happens even in the cases where the facts of violence and impeding had been filmed and published on the Internet and in numerous media outlets”, the statement reads.

“Such work style of the SIS is extremely reprehensible and dangerous: SIS, in fact, protects the perpetrators, thereby increasing the frustration and distrust to law enforcers”, media NGOs stated.

Journalistic organizations demand:

- the SIS administration to take measures to review the decisions made on the aforementioned incidents, and to hold responsible the investigators that did not show impartiality and professionalism;
- the RA Prosecutor’s Office to exercise pertinent supervision over the activities of the SIS and the decisions it had delivered, and to ensure a thorough investigation of each case of violence and impeding the professional activities of journalists in order to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice;





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

- the authorities of the country to oblige the law enforcement agencies, with all severity, to put an end to the parade of impunity gaining momentum in the country.

EAP MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH

JOURNALIST KHADIDZHA ISMAYILOVA THREATENED WITH ARREST

Azerbaijan / Politics and Media / 30.09.2014

Journalist [Khadidzha Ismayilova](#) wrote on her Facebook page that she received a message on the phone warning about a future arrest. "I received a message from a representative of the law enforcement bodies. The message read that they will be waiting for me at the airport. If they hope that I will be scared and will not come back, they are mistaken. They can wait for me, I will return immediately after the PACE session in Strasbourg," the journalist wrote.

Another wave of articles attacking Khadidzha Ismayilova began after a [rally](#) held on September 23rd in Warsaw, at the high-level meeting of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The pro-government press recalled all the "[old sins](#)" and added some new ones accusing the journalist of conspiracy with representatives of the Armenian delegation at the above-mentioned event.

The opposition newspaper *Yeni Musavat* wrote, in connection to this, that while Akhmed Shakhidov (the head of the pro-government NGO Azerbaijani Institute of Democracy and Human Rights – **ED**.) was delivering his speech, about 10 Armenians rose up from their seats, turning their backs to the speaker. As *Yeni Musavat* noted, they rose after a signal given by Khadidzha Ismayilova, the journalist from Azerbaijan. The newspaper even posted a picture confirming this point (see photo).

Vidadi Mirkiamal, a member of the Coordinating Center of the National Council of Democratic Forces, believes that authorities will repeat the scenario of Leyla Yunus.

"Leyla Yunus also reported this kind of warnings before the arrest. Khadidzha Ismayilova is one of the





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

bravest journalists who criticized the actions of the authorities. She has long been involved in the investigation of corruption on the highest levels of power, the participation of members of the ruling family in these projects," Vidadi Mirkiamal told the newspaper *Azadliq*.

[Mirvari Gahramanly](#), a human rights activist, believes that the authorities use a different tactic with Khadidzha Ismaylova.

"Ismaylova is not a representative of an NGO, thus she cannot be accused of receiving grants from pro-Armenian organizations. She took part in the action as an independent journalist. It is her right. On the background of increasingly harsh repression, if she is indeed arrested, the government will find itself in a very ambiguous situation. That is the way they put psychological pressure on Ismaylova," Gahramanly said.

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CHURCH VS MEDIA - NEW ACCUSATIONS

Moldova / In defense of the media / 30.09.2014

Representatives of Moldovan civil society stated during a press conference at IPN that mass-media defame the Moldovan Orthodox Church at politicians' request. They called on journalists not ignore ethical standards.

Professor Victor Borsevic (photo) urged journalists not to violate ethical standards in their materials about the Church. He stressed that politicians decided to slander the Church in order to pursue their own interests. In his opinion, attacks against the Church are not coincidental; they are closely related to the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Professor Borsevic emphasized that, according to opinion polls, the majority of Moldovans trusts the Church.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

Moreover, the professor pointed out that even though he is an atheist, he believes the Church must be protected from the media's attacks since clergymen play a very important role in society, comparable to that of psychologists.

Activist Nina Dimoglo expressed regret that in Moldova there are no regulations on how the media should report on the Church. She quoted examples of other countries where only journalists accredited by the Church are allowed to write about it. Ms Dimoglo also urged journalists not to write negative materials about the Church.

Lawyer Dumitru Chiseev claimed that materials on high-ranking clergymen published in newspapers contain certain traits of defamation. He maintains journalists made biased statements about the Metropolitan's property and connections. Mr Chiseev believes the articles were written on request. The lawyer evaluated compensatory damages at one million lei.

Olivia Pirtac, a law expert at the Independent Journalism Center, expressed a different opinion. She believes reporters are free to write about the Church, especially when public interest is at stake. She added that representatives of civil society have the right to express their opinion as well.

"Limitation of freedom of expression can happen only when disseminated information is false. (...) secret information, hatred speech, such kinds of expression can be limited. Otherwise, the press is free to write on various topics, express different opinions and publish well-documented information," the expert said.

Olivia Pirtac added that she is not aware of any state in the European Union with limitations on writing about the Church. She also added that statements of the lawyer about compensatory damage were made to attract public attention, since compensation can be received only if one proves that information published was false in court.

Earlier, *Ziarul de Gardă* wrote about Metropolitan of Chisinau and all Moldova Vladimir and a certain Nelli Tcaciuc, [a woman who owns a mansion](#) where the Metropolitan resides.

After the article was published, the Church representatives [accused the journalists of being biased](#) and attacking the Church at government's request because of the Church's disapproval of the law on ensuring





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

gender equality and gay rights.

Ziarul de Gardă staff informed that after the article about Metropolitan's mansion and his relations with Nelli Tcaciuc had been published, a man called their editorial office and [threatened to deal with them "the Chechen way"](#), as they published her photos without permission.

After that an interview with a certain Pavel Doten was published in press. This man claimed that Nelli Tcaciuc was his wife; moreover, that she was Metropolitan's relative. Doten announced his [plan to sue the newspaper](#) for publishing unverified information. He intends to seek damage compensation for moral and material sufferings.

Ziarul de Gardă did not limit itself to writing about alleged Metropolitan's property. It also published a material on the mansion of Bălți and Fălești bishop Marchel. In the course of investigation the bishop called *Ziarul de Gardă* journalist [a hypocrite and a scoundrel](#).

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ALMOST NO HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS LEFT IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan / Analytics / 30.09.2014

A meeting with Azerbaijani human rights activist Vugar Gojayev and journalist Shahla Sultanova (photo), initiated by the international organizations Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Reporters without Borders (RSF), took place in the HRW Berlin headquarters on September 29th. According to Azerbaijani activists' evaluation, the situation in the country had been unfavorable for many years, yet recently the authorities launched a severe repression against their critics, NGOs and independent journalists.

According to HRW data, 50 activists and journalists have been arrested in the course of last 2.5 years on the fake charges; this includes 11 people arrested since May this year. Nine of them were sentenced.

"At the same time, several dedicated activists have fled the country or are in hiding," Rachel Denber,





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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

deputy director of the Europe and Central Asia Division of HRW said.

According to Vugar Gojayev, in their campaign against human rights activists Azerbaijani authorities to a large extent copy anti-Western rhetoric and methods used for the same aim in Russian. For instance, since February this year Azerbaijani Parliament has adopted over 50 regressive amendments to the laws regulating NGO activities; combined with regulations limiting the ability of NGOs to accept donations this has essentially blocked their work.

The ongoing crackdown can be explained by the two upcoming major international events, Mr Gojayev said. In 2015, Azerbaijan will host the inaugural edition of the European Games, and in 2016 it will hold the Formula 1 Grand Prix on the streets of Baku.

Mr Gojayev believes the country's authorities want to prevent protest actions at any price a prevent the 2012 scenario, when the Eurovision contest was accompanied by anti-government protests.

Human rights defenders do not call for boycotting international events in Azerbaijan; instead, they suggest that journalists coming to their country should not limit their coverage to successes of European athletes and world-famous racers.

Shahla Sultanova thinks that this strategy is very important as there are hardly any independent media left in Azerbaijan.

Until recently she was one of the few Azerbaijani journalists writing for foreign media outlets, such as *The Atlantik* and *Transition Online*.

"Personally I have never criticized our government directly, I have never accused it of corruption," Ms Sultanova said. "I just wrote about the facts, I was not inventing anything, I cited different sides. Yet, this turned out to be enough to irritate the authorities".

After a number of threats, Shahla Sultanova was forced to flee the country. Now she lives in Germany, thanks to RSF support.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

She told about different ways of pressuring independent journalist. Women, especially single, are often intimidated or blackmailed. Men are treated more harshly; they are arrested at once. Ms Sultanova explained that many accusations were made up. For instance, drugs can be planted in a journalist's house or some instigator can start shouting that a journalist assaulted him and / or tried to rob him in a public place.

Shahla Sultanova pointed out that not only Azerbaijani journalists have been blacklisted. Recently Jutta Sommerbauer, a journalist of a respectable Austrian newspaper *Die Presse*, was denied entry visa. She intended to accompany the Austrian Foreign Minister on his visit to Baku. RSF believes that the reason were critical articles on Azerbaijan politics regarding Nagorno-Kharabakh, published in 2011.

SOURCE: contact.az

DONETSK SEPARATISTS BLOCK UKRAINIAN WEBSITES

Ukraine / In defense of the media / 30.09.2014

Separatists from the so-called Donetsk National Republic instructed local internet providers to restrict users' access to a number of Ukrainian news websites that the "experts" of the "republic" found out were "spreading false materials and slander".

In particular, the ban was imposed for sites of local media outlets that do not support the idea of separatism and the separatists' policy.





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30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014



**Донецкая народная республика
Министерство информации и связи**

г. Донецк, бул. Пушкина, 34; <http://dnr.today>; e-mail: mininform.dnr@mail.ru

№ 26 от 16.09.2014

На № _____ от _____

Министерством Информации и Связи ДНР, в ходе реализации мер по пресечению разжигания межнациональной розни и распространению заведомо ложной информации и клеветы, получены данные о ряде ресурсов сети Internet, на которых периодически размещается информация, носящая такой характер.

К таким ресурсам, согласно экспертной оценке, относятся:

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| 1. www.ukrinfonews.com.ua | 14. pravda.dn.ua |
| 2. reukraine.blogspot.com | 15. slavinfo.dn.ua |
| 3. www.62.ua | 16. dnl.dn.ua |
| 4. www.06257.in.ua | 17. slavdelo.dn.ua |
| 5. www.6264.com.ua | 18. konstantinovka.dn.ua |
| 6. www.06252.com.ua | 19. gazeta.06237.info |
| 7. www.06255.com | 20. 06254.in.ua |
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| 9. www.dn.ua | 22. 06274.com.ua |
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MEDIA FREEDOM WATCH PROJECT

30.09.2014 - 07.10.2014

“Censorship in action,” Aleksei Matsuka, the chief editor of Novosti Donbassa, wrote. “Terrorists force internet providers in Donetsk to block news of [Novosti Donbassa](#), [Hromadske Telebachennia Donechchyny](#), [Donetska Pravda](#). Use TOR to bypass the blockage. We will also issue the full instruction on how to circumvent DNR’s censorship soon”.

Source: Novosti Donbassa, www.facebook.com/oleksiy.matsuka

