

## THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

### Mass Media Week in Belarus

Info-posting March 25 – 31, 2013

**A wide range of incidents was registered within the reporting period – interfering with journalistic activities, refusal of accreditation, detention, refusal to distribution of a mass medium.**

**On March 25** the republican unitary enterprise *Belposhta* again denied distribution services for the second half of 2013 to non-state newspaper *Volnaye Hlybokaye*. According to the official reply, signed by the general director's deputy **Alena Skrypchyk**, *Belposhta* has the right to compile the catalogue for distribution of its own choice and is not obliged by law to include any particular outlets.

**On March 25** in Kastychnitski district court of Vitebsk a member of BAJ **Leanid Haravy** was **forbidden to take photos** before the court hearing started. He came to an administrative trial of his colleagues Leanid Autukhou and Kastus Smolikau; Leanid Haravy was taking photos of an employee of court security who first expressed his indignation over the fact that he was photographed, and then told it was forbidden to take photos in court. Leanid Haravy draws attention to the fact that later the judge **Ina Grabouskaya** forbade taking photo and video, but a man in plain clothes continued to record video. When the judge insisted that the violator should leave the court, his "colleagues" explained to the judge that he was "their man". So "their man" stayed in the court and periodically made recordings of the hearing.

Leanid Haravy filed a complaint to the chairperson of the court; in the complaint he named actions of the judge discriminatory, as she allowed video recording for the policeman in plain clothes, but forbade it for all the others.

As became known on **March 25**, in 2012 **law enforcement agencies** of Belarus filed 5 requests to the office of **Skype** concerning 35 accounts. The information appeared in a report published by Microsoft. According to the report, the requests covered only the general information about the users, without the contents (photos, correspondence etc.).

**On March 25** the Committee of State Control informed the non-state newspaper *Intex-Press* (Baranavichy) that it was holding a check-up over the complaint that **the Ministry of Architecture and Construction** failed to answer in time to the newspaper's request.

*We remind that Intex-Press sent a request on January 17 to the Ministry about hard situation at the woodworking factory in Baranavichy, but the Ministry – the holder of the control packet of shares – did not reply. Then the newspaper complained to the CSC asking to influence the Ministry's accountability.*

**On March 26** the Ministry of Foreign Affairs **denied accreditation** to **Belsat** on the grounds that Belarusian journalists had many times violated the media law of Belarus when made reports for the channel. It has been the third time that the Belarusian authorities deny accreditation to the TV channel. *Belsat – the first independent TV channel – the Warsaw-based Belarusian-language satellite TV, started broadcast on December 10, 2007, on the World Human Rights Day. Journalists of the channel have been many times persecuted by the Belarusian authorities, by means of warnings and administrative arrests.*

**On March 28** the KGB department in Hrodna region **filed a suit** to Ashmiany district court claiming that the **Belarus Press Photo 2011** contain extremist materials. We remind that 41 albums of the contest were confiscated on the Lithuanian-Belarusian border on November 12, 2012 from the photographers Aliaksandr Vasiukovich and Yuliya Darashkevich. In the case file the head of the KGB department **Ivan**

**Korz** informs that the KGB had assigned an examination of the albums. The expert commission – local ideologists and teachers of Hrodna University – found that “the photo albums contain intentionally distorted, false facts about vital activity of Belarus in political, social, economic spheres and others, which humiliate the national honor and dignity of Belarusian citizens”.

The first court hearing was scheduled for **April 17**. The photographers **Vadzim Zamirouski, Aliaksandr Vasiukovich** and **Yuliya Darashkevich** were summoned as interested parties.

Belarus Press Photo is an annual contest of press photo in Belarus.

**On March 29** the activist in Bialynichy district **Valery Vusik** was fined 50 base amounts under administrative articles “libel” and “unlawful distribution of a mass medium”.

Valery Vusik, ex-deputy in the local council of Lebiadzianka and ex-employee of the agricultural common household, wrote an article criticizing the administration of the complex. The article was published in a small-circulation newspaper *Mahilouski Vybar*. The local police inspector drew up two administrative protocols, accusing the activist of libel and unlawful distribution of the mass medium.

At the trial the judge **Uladzimir Guz** forced out the representative of the activist, a human rights defender from Mahilou **Barys Bukhel**. Valery Vusik was fined 50 base amounts, or 5 mln rubles (around 480 euro). “The court did not listen to my arguments that the article was true. The court disregarded that I had written testimonies of employees of the household which proved the facts I recounted,” said Mr Vusik. He is going to appeal the sentence.

The journalist of *the Radio Svaboda* **Ina Studzinskaya** was detained **on March 31** near the Yanka Kupala Theater in Minsk. It was the first night after the building of the theater was reconstructed, and Ina Studzinskaya was taking an interview from spectators. The detaining police explained that they had to check the journalist's identity. She was taken to the police station in the Kupalausakya metro station. The journalist's personal information was copied, and soon she was set free. Aliaksandr Lukashenka was among spectators that evening.