

THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

Mass Media Week in Belarus

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On May 8 the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic appealed to Aliaksandr Lukashenka to stop persecuting media. “President Lukashenko should cease Belarus’s extremely harsh policy toward media. There is an urgent need for media freedom in Belarus and this freedom can only be achieved if, as a start, all convictions and pending charges against journalists are annulled,” said Mijatovic in her letter to Lukashenka on 8 May. She mentioned Iryna Khalip and Andrzej Paczobut who had been convicted for critical materials about the Belarusian authorities, and also Natallia Radzina who had to flee the country to avoid criminal prosecution and possible imprisonment.

On May 7 Hrodna-based journalist **Viktar Parfionenka** was again **denied accreditation** from the Ministry of foreign affairs in Belarus. Two months ago he applied the fourth time for the accreditation. A month later he was informed that the decision hadn’t been taken yet. And now the press-service on the phone answered that he had been denied accreditation according to points 1 and 4 of the “Regulation on the procedure of accreditation of foreign mass media journalists in Belarus”. Parfionenka is going to appeal against the decision. We remind that journalists for “Radio Racyja” have applied many times for accreditation – and always unsuccessfully.

Famous bard and BAJ member **Zmitser Bartosik** was first detained on **May 6** near Minsk at an improvised open-air concert. He and other participants of the concert were taken to the police department in Zhdanovichy, they gave explanations, fingerprints, and then were set free.

Another detention took place on **May 8** at about 1pm in the center of Minsk. Unknown people in plain clothes took him to the Pershamayski district police department. At 4pm Bartosik informed that he was released without any protocols.

On **May 12** customs officers at the airport “Minsk-2” **searched** the **Danish journalist Jens Nielsen** for four hours. His materials for the article on the Belarusian trade unions were **seized**, as well as electronic data carriers, a laptop, and also the book by Roy Medvedev “Alexander Lukashenko. Contours of the Belarusian model”. The journalist wasn’t told what the grounds were for the seizure of his personal belongings. While he was being searched, his plane took off. The authorities didn’t provide him with another ticket to leave Belarus; so he had to rush for the railway station to catch a train for Vilnius in order not to violate the visa regime (his visa expired on that very day).