



BAJ represents
the media sector,
baj.media

E-NEWSLETTER

MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS

№1 (79)
2025



SITUATION IN BELARUS MASS MEDIA FIELD: JANUARY-MARCH 2025. REVIEW

The previously observed trends in the treatment of independent press continued in Belarus at the beginning of 2025. They were aggravated by the 'election' of Aliaksandr Lukashenka that took place on January 26, 2025.

Among other, the following developments were further observed in the Belarusian media field in January – March 2025:

- large-scale criminal prosecution of journalists both inside the country and in exile,
- pressure on journalists and bloggers in Belarus by means of searches and detentions,
- systematic labeling of all unwanted content as 'extremist'.

Censorship went beyond the traditional 'fight against extremism' in the period under review. Thus, the national domain zone administrator was granted the authority to delete domain names, which 'could harm the national interests of the Republic of Belarus.'

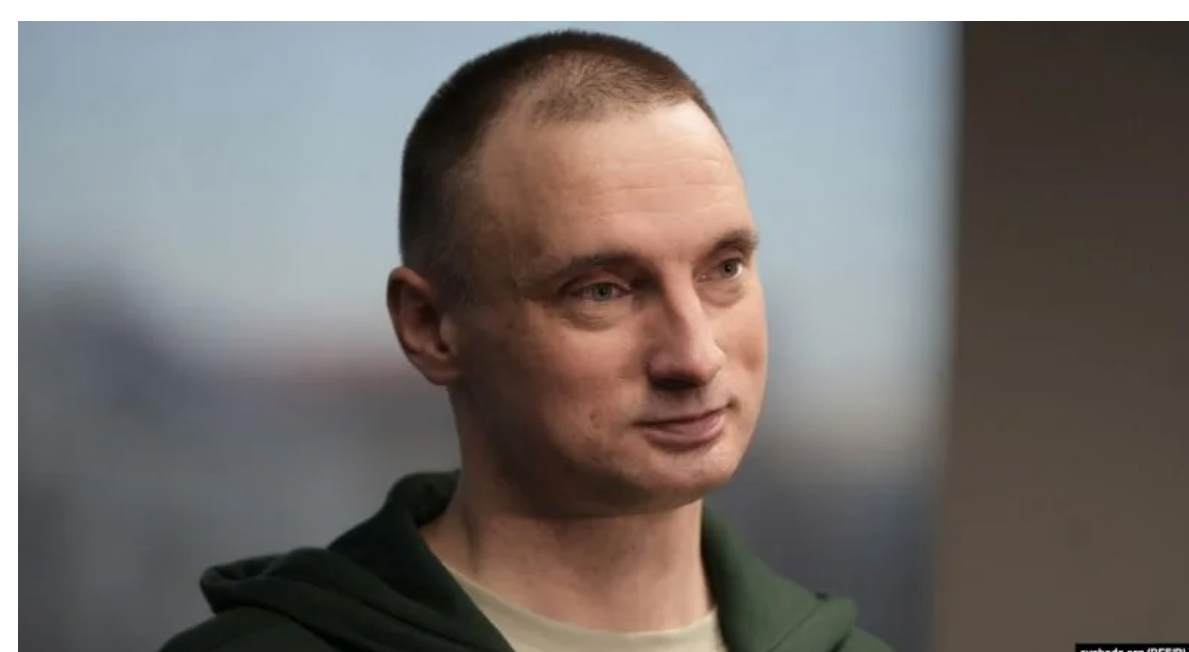
During the so-called 'election,' the authorities applied technical means to block access to websites in the Belarusian national domain zone from abroad and to limit the Belarusian Internet users' ability to use VPN services. The access to information was restricted by other means, too.

Criminal prosecution of journalists

40 journalists were kept behind bars subject to criminal prosecution in the first quarter of 2025.

Reportedly, an investigative journalist [Dzianis Ivashyn](#) was transferred to prison for using Belarusian in Mahilou Correctional Colony No. 15 in June 2023. He had been sentenced to 13 years of imprisonment on charges of 'treason.'

The administration of Navapolatsk Correctional Colony No.1 extended the punishment of political prisoner and journalist [Andrzej Paczobut](#) in the form of detention in a cell-type facility for another six months.



Andrei Kuzniechyk released. Photo: Radio Liberty

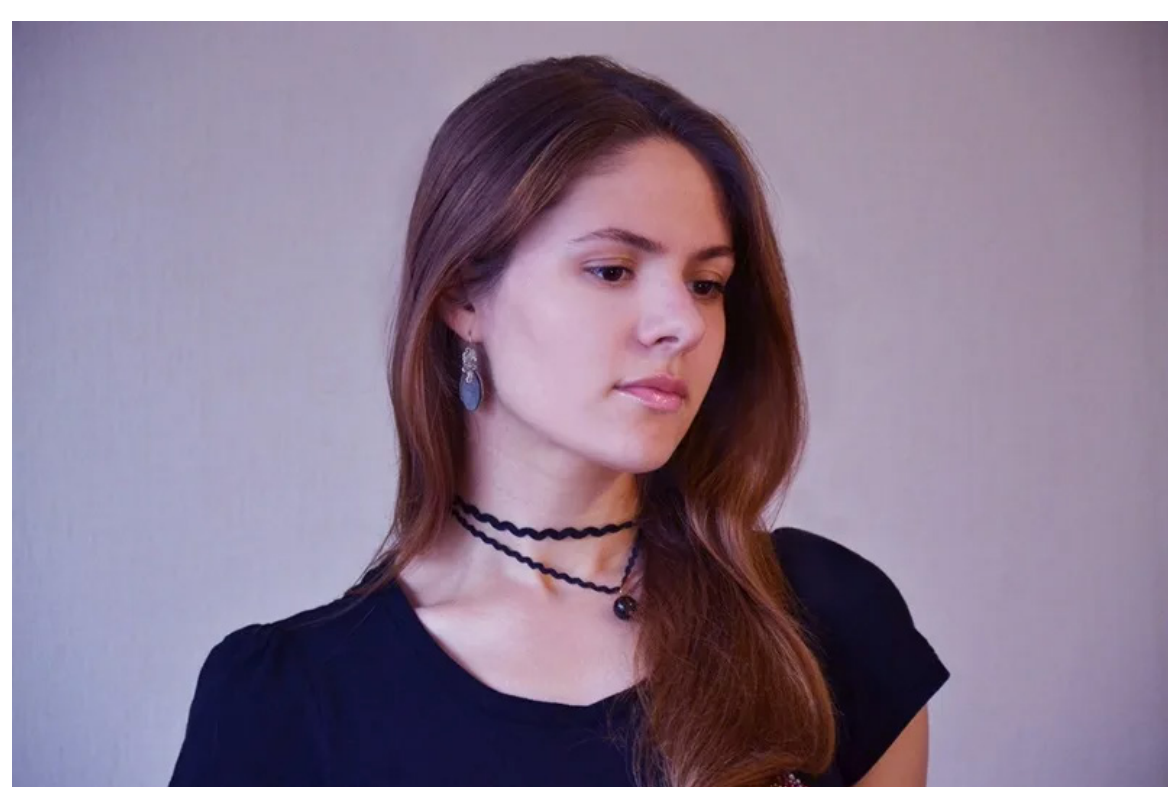
A freelance journalist of 'Radio Liberty' [Andrei Kuzniechyk](#) was released from prison due to the diplomatic efforts of the US government on February 12, 2025. He had been sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment in June 2022.

Court proceedings against journalists and bloggers continued in Belarus in the first quarter of 2025.

A journalist [Ihar Ilyash](#) was put on trial in Minsk on February 21, 2025. (He is the husband of political prisoner and journalist Katsiaryna Andreyeva.) Ihar Ilyash was accused of discrediting the Republic of Belarus and promoting extremist activities. He faces up to 6 years in prison.

A journalist [Palina Pitkevich](#) was sentenced to three years of imprisonment in Minsk on March 7, 2025. She was accused of participation in an 'extremist formation', namely the 'Media IQ' online publication.

[*Ihar Shketau*](#), the administrator of 'Padslukhana Hlybokaye' local public forum was sentenced to two years of restriction of liberty under the commonly applied Article 342 of the Criminal Code ('arrangement of group actions that grossly violate public order or active participation in them') in the township of Hlybokaye, Vitsiebsk region.



Palina Zyl. Photo: "VKontakte"

[*Palina Zyl*](#), a blogger from Mazyr, Homiel region was arrested and taken to custody in the first quarter of 2025. The apartment of blogger [*Vadimati*](#) (Vadim Yermashuk) was searched and arrested in Hrodna in connection with the initiation of a new criminal case in the period under review. The former political prisoner fled Belarus

after serving a prison term.

According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists, **at least 5 criminal cases [were filed](#) against journalists in exile** in the first quarter of 2025.

Reportedly, criminal proceedings were initiated in relation to the authors and participants of 'Plan B' TV show on Belsat within the period under review. Among others, a Russian investigative journalist [*Ilya Davlyatchin*](#) was accused of facilitating 'extremist' activities and declared 'wanted' by the Belarusian authorities.



Ilya Davlyatchin. Photo: Courtesy Image

Searches, detentions, and other kinds of pressure

[According to the BAJ records](#), **three journalists were detained, three more media workers got sentenced to various terms of**

administrative arrest and 9 criminal police searches took place in journalists' apartments in Belarus in the first quarter of 2025.

Numerous journalists working for independent media in exile were declared 'wanted' by the Belarusian authorities in connection with their criminal prosecution, including Deputy Chairpersons of BAJ [Barys Haretski](#) and [Aleh Aheyev](#).

The relatives of exiled independent journalists in Belarus faced various kinds of pressure including searches of their apartments and interrogations by the police.

The private property of 4 media workers was seized as part of criminal prosecution.

The Belarusian authorities further [extended](#) the list of media resources, labeled as 'extremist formations.' The 'Mediazone. Belarus' online publication, 'About Vitebsk' media project, the media initiatives of the Democratic Media Institute and Nastaunik.info were included in this list following the respective decisions taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the KGB.

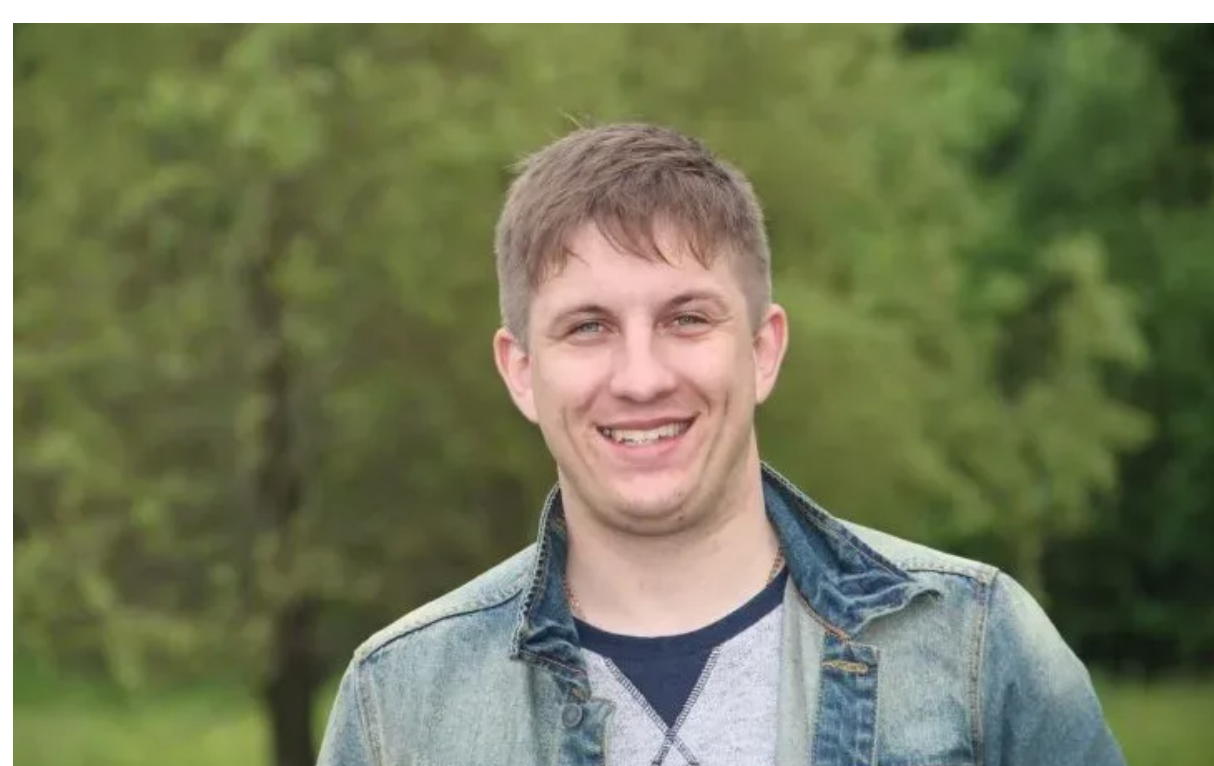


Various accounts of Web resources as well as personal pages of journalists and bloggers on social media were further recognized as 'extremist materials', and the distribution of content from these pages entailed administrative prosecution.

The content of 'Abazhur' magazine No. 3 (124), 2018 was labeled as 'extremist media product' in the first quarter of 2025. It was published by the Belarusian Association of Journalists before its liquidation by the Belarusian authorities. Most of the publications in this issue covered the

topic of persecution of Belarusian independent media workers for their professional activities.

In addition to the Belarusian online resources, a number of Telegram channels broadcasting news from Ukraine as well as all accounts of Ukrainian journalist Dmitry Gordon and Russian journalist Alexander Nevzorov were banned for distribution.



Ihar Shketau. Photo: Facebook

A freelance journalist Volha Radzivonava and the administrator of 'Padslukhana Hlybokaye' local public forum Ihar Shketau were included in the 'List of citizens of the Republic of Belarus, foreign citizens or stateless individuals involved in extremist activities.' Both media workers are serving prison terms on criminal charges.

Additional censorship restrictions were applied on the eve of the election day on January 26, 2025.

Thus, the websites of 'Mahilouskiya Vedamastsi' regional media holding as well as a number of state-owned district newspapers in the Mahilou region either deleted publications about training sessions for members of district election commissions or removed photos from the articles.

The Belarusian authorities introduced changes to the Guidelines 'On Registration of Domain Names in the National Domain Zone of Belarus' on January 17, 2025. The innovations allow the administrator of the national domain zone to cancel domains 'capable of harming the national interests



Image: Rawpixel/Depositphotos.com

of the Republic of Belarus', while simultaneously entering them into a special ban list. The notion of causing harm to national interests was not specified anywhere at that.

During the 'presidential election' on January 26, there was registered blocking of access to websites in the Belarusian national domain zone from abroad. Also, Belarusian Internet users' ability to make use of VPN services was limited.



The company hoster.by is the largest domain registrar in Belarus, an IT infrastructure provider, hosting more than 90% of Belarusian websites. The company [announced](#) in advance that it would restrict access to the hosted websites from

abroad from 10:00 a.m. on January 25, 2025 to 11:59 p.m. on January 27, 2025. This period coincided with the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka. The hosting service provider explained these measures by the alleged 'threats to the media infrastructure facilities and the information, which is processed with their use.

Web-users from Belarus [encountered difficulties](#) with the use of VPN services (in particular, Proton VPN, NordVPN, TunnelBear, VPN - Super Unlimited Proxy, X-VPN, Planet VPN) and faced problems with access to certain foreign websites on the morning of January 25, 2025.

The Belarusian authorities sent a letter of complaint to Google after the voting day on January 26, 2025. They [accused](#) the company of the alleged 'interference in the election.' According to the Minister of Information Marat Markau, the complaints concerned 'the complicity of Google in informational provocations against Belarus and the presidential election in the country with the participation of formations that were recognized by the court as extremist in the Republic of Belarus.' (The Minister of



Information was inaccurate in his statement, since organizations are recognized as 'extremist formations' extrajudicially in Belarus. The decisions are taken either by the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the KGB.) He also stated the need to create a replica of Roskomnadzor in Belarus. (Among other things, the Russian Federal Service for Supervision in the Field of Communications, Information Technologies and Mass Communications regulates media activities.)



**THE BELARUSIAN
ASSOCIATION
OF JOURNALISTS**

baj.media

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

Contact:
Mr. Andrei Bastunets

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