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E-NEWSLETTER

MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS

№2 (80)
2025



SITUATION IN BELARUS MASS MEDIA FIELD: APRIL-JUNE 2025. REVIEW

The Belarusian Association of Journalists observed a new wave of repression against journalists and their families in Belarus in April – June 2025. It included the following trends:

- continuation of criminal prosecution of media workers: 2 journalists and 2 bloggers were criminally charged within the period under review,
- the increased pressure on independent journalists in Belarus as well as on the relatives of those media workers, who were forced to flee their home country and continue to work in exile. The regional media outlets that carried on operation in Belarus were particularly affected by searches and harassment in the state propaganda media,
- the increased censorship in the Belarus media field. Thus, the same number of over 3,150 Web-resources were blocked for public access within the first five months of 2025 and during the entire year of 2024,
- the first registered case of blocked access to the TikTok social media for users from Belarus. It affected the accounts of opposition leaders Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and Pavel Latushka.

Criminal prosecution of journalists

37 media workers remain in prison in Belarus.

Ihar Karnei, a former journalist for 'Radio Liberty' was released from jail and taken out of Belarus due to diplomatic efforts of the United States on June 21, 2025.

The Belarusian judicial system handed down **2 verdicts in criminal cases against journalists and 2 verdicts against bloggers** within the period under review.

The exiled media workers were further criminally prosecuted in absentia in Belarus.

Volha Loika and **Alena Talkachova**, former employees of Tut.by News Portal were included in the list of 'individuals involved in extremist activities' on April 26, 2025. This means that court verdicts against them were pronounced in absentia and that the respective sentences came into force. Reportedly, the trial began on February 4, 2025. However, its details remain unknown, since the case hearing was held behind closed doors.



Siarhei Biaspalau. Photo: Facebook

Siarhei Biaspalau, a blogger and the founder of 'My Country Belarus' Telegram channel was sentenced in absentia to 18 years in prison and a fine of 42,000 Belarusian rubles under several articles of the Criminal Code on May 2, 2025. Among other, he was criminally charged for the alleged 'conspiracy to seize power in the unconstitutional way' (article 357), 'arrangement of riots, which were accompanied with violence, pogroms, arson, destruction of property and

military resistance to governmental officials' (article 293) as well as 'insults and slander against the president of Belarus' (articles 367 and 368).

Anton Matolka, a blogger and the founder of several Telegram channels, including the 'Belarusian Hajun' monitoring project, [*was sentenced*](#) in absentia to 20 years of imprisonment in a medium-security penal colony, a fine of 84,000 Belarusian rubles (approximately EUR 24,820), and confiscation of private property. He was charged under 13 articles of Belarus Criminal Code, including an attempt to seize power, extremism and treason.

At least 5 criminal cases [*were filed*](#) against journalists in Belarus within the period under review. Two media workers were taken into custody, including **Tsina Palynskaya** from Polatsk, who [*was arrested*](#) together with her eldest daughter Marharyta, and an unnamed journalist from Brest. The latter [*was charged*](#) under Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code for the alleged 'participation in an extremist grouping' that referred to the Belarusian Association of Journalists.



Tsina Palynskaya

Searches, detentions, and other kinds of pressure

In April 2025, the Belarusian law enforcement agencies intensified their pressure on journalists inside the country as well as on the relatives of the exiled media workers, who were forced to flee their home country and continue to work abroad.

In most cases, the law enforcement agents visited the exiled journalists' places of official registration in Belarus. Sometimes, the visits were

followed by searches as part of criminal investigative procedures. At least **7 searches and 4 arrests took place in Belarus in April – June 2025.**

Thus, the mother of exiled journalist **Valery Ruselik** was interrogated by law enforcement agents in Hrodna. Also, the exiled journalist **Henadz Veratsinski's** apartment was sealed in Minsk within the period under review.

On May 28, 2025, the state-owned ANT TV channel broadcast a story that demonstrated another wave of repression against the few survived private media outlets, which are still operating in the Belarusian regions. The claims were made against regional media outlets in connection with their legit cooperation with the German embassy this time. The video highlighted **'Viacherni Babruysk'** and the newspaper's Editor-in-chief **Valiantsin Sysoi**, **babruisk.info** online publication and its Editor-in-chief **Anatol Sanatsenka**, who was sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest on March 31, 2025), **'Volnaye Hlybokaye'** newspaper's former Editor-in-chief **Uladzimir Skrabatun**, and **'UzHorak'** newspaper from Horki, Mahilou region.

The state propagandists showed extracts from interrogations of employees of these regional media outlets regarding the business service contracts, which were allegedly concluded with the German embassy in Minsk. The above-mentioned news resources were unreasonably labeled as 'extremist' on several occasions during the TV program at that.

Maryna Mentuzava, the presenter of the 'Ordinary Morning' show on YouTube, faced gender-based violence online. Fake nude photos with the journalist from the account she allegedly created on the Pornhub porn website were shown on a Telegram channel, which is linked to the Belarus law enforcement agencies.



Maryna Mentuzava. Courtesy of her personal archive

Apparently, it was a planned action, since the same pics were sent to the journalist from an unknown Telegram account directly during a live broadcast. It was stated that she was setting a bad example for her daughter at that. It is obvious that such public actions affect the peace and safety of independent female journalists in general.

The use of “anti-extremist” legislation for prosecuting the distributors of independent media content

The Belarusian authorities continued to apply the anti-extremist legislation to prosecute independent media and journalists.

Five more media projects were labeled by the Belarusian authorities as ‘extremist groupings’,

including ‘a group of ‘BuroMedia’ journalist project’ (Aliaksandr Yarashevich, Volha Alkhimenka, Aliaksandr Karpeka, and Kseniya Viaznikoutsava), the ‘Radio 97’

Belarusian independent online radio station, as well as ‘ChestnOK’ YouTube channel, associated with bloggers Aliaksandr Ivulin and Yaraslau Pisarenka, and ‘Zhizn-malina’ YouTube channel, associated with its presenter Mikita Melkaziorau.



The criminally charged military analyst and blogger **Andrei Parotnikau**, journalist **Palina Pitkevich**, and blogger **Siarhei Biaspalau** were included in the List of Citizens of the Republic of Belarus, Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons Involved in Extremist Activities.

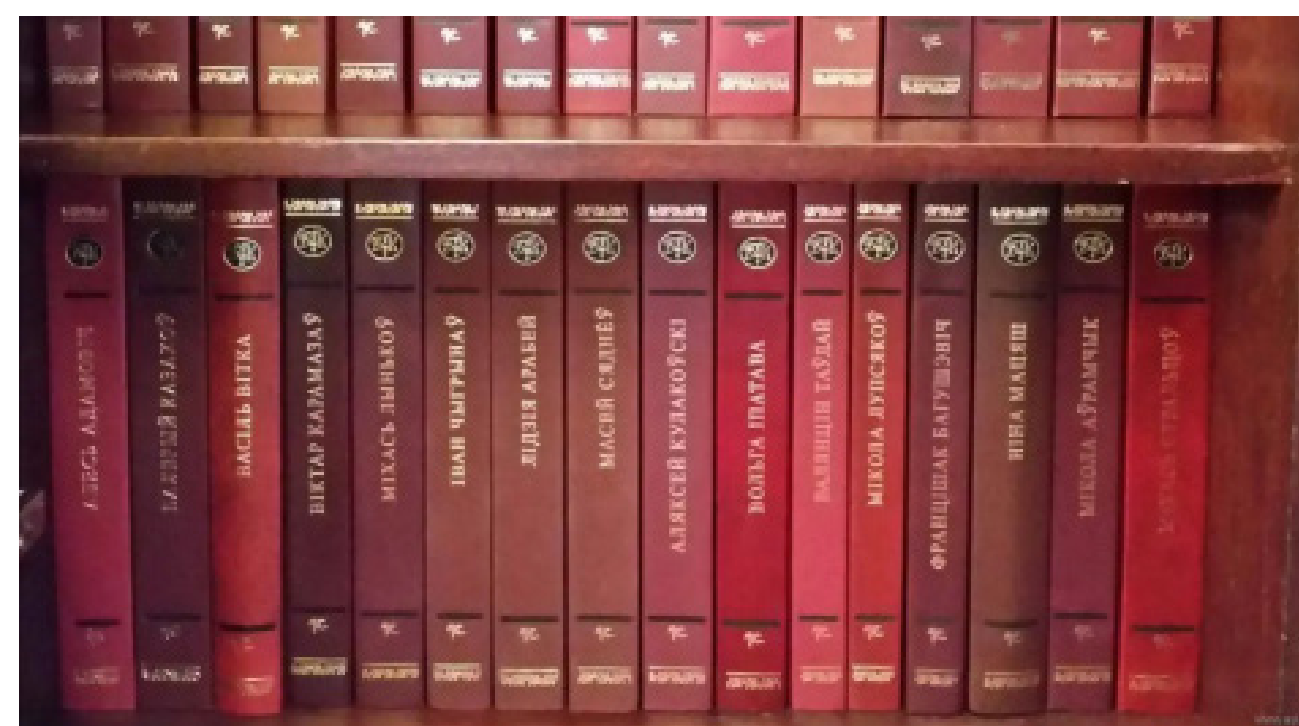
Moreover, **Biaspalau** was added to the list of 'terrorists', which is compiled by the KGB.

The Ministry of Information of Belarus continued to expand the National List of Extremist Materials. The following publications were added to the broad list of materials within the period under review: 'The Handbook for Belarusian Journalist', published in 1999, the social media accounts, associated with blogger Aliaksandra Khanevich, 73, as well as the Telegram channel, associated with a military analyst and blogger Yigal Levin from Israel, who did not comment on events in Belarus at all.

Access blocking of online resources

Censorship restrictions increased in the Belarusian media field.

On June 6, 2025, the Minister of Information of Belarus Marat Markau noted during the 'Media Today: Focus on the Truth' event in Homiel that the same number of over **3,150 Web-resources had been blocked for public access within the first five months of 2025 and during the entire year of 2024**. Also, according to him, **110 books were recognized as 'harmful to our children'**, and the relevant work with the managers of marketplaces and distributors of printed production continued.



Books from the "Belaruski Knigazbor" series.
Photo from the publisher's social media

Also, the Minister [*stated*](#) that the information war was ongoing and even getting more intense in Belarus. Therefore, according to him, *'the state-owned media must be equipped with all kinds of weapons and tools on the information front.'*

The Ministry of Information of Belarus [*blocked access*](#) to the website of 'Viacherni Babruysk' private regional newspaper and [*issued a written warning*](#) to the founder of the Belarusian 'First Musical Channel' TV-program for failing to comply with unspecified 'requirements defined by the media legislation' in May 2025.



Photo: freepik.com

The Belarusian authorities focused their attention on the TikTok during the period under review. It is the most popular social media in Belarus, owned by the ByteDance company from China. The first case of blocked access to the TikTok social media for users from Belarus [*was observed*](#) on June 11, 2025. It affected the accounts of opposition leaders Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and Pavel Latushka.

Ihar Tur, a propagandist from the ANT TV Channel dwelt upon the officials' response to the criticism on social media on June 16, 2025. Among other things, he [*noted*](#) that the state would respond to 'whining' by means of *'revealing deception and holding the complainers accountable.'* It has already been proven that no one will succeed in bending the state with a scandal,' he said. This statement was probably made in response to the appearance of numerous immensely popular videos on TikTok, criticizing socio-economic problems in Belarus.



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