

## THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

### Belarus Mass Media Week

*Info-posting – December 06-12, 2010*

*The “alternative” Presidential candidates were demanding the Central Election Committee (further - CEC) to provide them with additional TV broadcasting time for presenting their election programs within the reporting period. Tatsiana Protska, who acts as Uladzimir Niaklayeu’s official representative, passed a corresponding statement to the CEC Chairperson on December 7, 2010. On the same day, another Presidential candidate Yaraslau Ramanchuk sent an appeal to the Heads of foreign TV channels that broadcast their programs to the territory of Belarus with a request to provide the candidates with a possibility to address themselves to the Belarusian voters.*

*“Each of nine alternative candidates had only one hour of live broadcasting on the Belarusian TV... The Belarusian citizens enjoy the only opportunity of getting information from the accessible sources, uncontrolled by the incumbent regime, in this situation,” said Ramanchuk.*

*The Central Election Committee refused to provide supplementary TV broadcasting time to the alternative Presidential candidates on December 9, 2010. “We submitted a request to the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company. The company management replied that they had fulfilled their obligations and advised the candidates to address to the structures outside the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company,” noted Mikalay Lazavik, the Secretary of Central Election Committee.*

*The CEC Chairperson Lidziya Yarmoshyna has stated that it is inadmissible for the Presidential candidates to make use of broadcasting time, provided by foreign TV channels. She regarded such broadcasting as foreign aid. According to Belarusian legislation, the candidates can’t make use of foreign funds. Otherwise they take the risk of losing their registered status. However, Mrs. Yarmoshyna added that nobody banned the opposition politicians to deliver their speeches on Belarusian or foreign TV, if the broadcasting time was paid by the candidates from their own funds.*

*The Belarus’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reported that it provided over 600 foreign journalists with the press credentials. It is a record figure in comparison with the previous election campaigns in the country. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has refused to accredit two journalists from “Gazeta Wyborcza” (Poland) and a well-known Swedish photo-correspondent Dean Cox. Also, the Ministry refused to prolong accreditation to a “Voice of Russia” correspondent in Belarus in the autumn 2010.*

The Committee to Protect Journalists (New York, USA) delivered a statement on the necessity of investigating Aleh Biabienin’s death by independent experts **on December 6, 2010**. (It is worth reminding that the independent journalist, who co-founded the “Charter’97” Web-site, was found dead at his summer house on September 3, 2010.) The organization activists expressed their concern with a decision of Belarusian official

authorities to terminate legal investigation of this case. At the same time, it was reported on **December 10, 2010** that the Public Prosecutor's Office for Minsk region would implement additional investigation on Biabienin's case in order to clear out the motives of the alleged suicide.

As reported on **December 8, 2010**, another criminal case got filed on the grounds of information from the PCs, belonging to **Natallia Radzina**, a "*Charter'97*" Web-site correspondent, **Iryna Khalip**, a "*Novaya Gazeta*" (Russia) correspondent, as well the "*Narodnaya Volya*" journalists **Sviatlana Kalinkina** and **Maryna Koktysh**. Natallia Radzina had been informed about the case in Minsk City Public Prosecutor's Office.

The BAJ Press Service officers haven't managed to get more detailed information about the reasons for initiating the new criminal case yet. It is worth reminding that the Belarusian journalists are regarded as witnesses to the defamation criminal case, filed by the former Head of KGB Department for Homiel region Ivan Korzh at the end of 2009. A series of police and KGB searches was carried out at the journalists' private apartments and working places within the case in the spring 2010. The media workers' technical equipment was seized then.

**Anton Taras**, a BAJ member and a correspondent of BelaPAN News Agency was detained near the "Yubileyny" hotel in Minsk on **December 8, 2010**. The journalist was reporting from a picket against a Presidential candidate Alexander Lukashenka, arranged by a group of National Bolsheviks. The unknown people in plain clothes detained a picketer and Anton Taras, disregarding the media worker's press card available. The detained people were brought to the Central City District Department of Interior. They were released as soon as their passport data got copied by the police. No reports were drawn up in relation to them.

A famous Swedish photo-correspondent **Dean CK Cox** has been denied the press accreditation, required for reporting from the Presidential election 2010 in Belarus. The journalist's local fixers informed the Belarusian Association of Journalists about the incident on **December 9, 2010**. It is worth mentioning that Mr. Cox has cooperated with such renounced media and news agencies as the Associated Press, The New York Times, EurasiaNet, and Bloomberg News. Mr. Cox visited Belarus during the election 2006 and came to the country again in 2009. He hadn't faced any problems with getting a visa before his visits in the past.

As reported on **December 10, 2010**, a journalist and a BAJ member **Dzmitry Rastayeu** was forced to dismiss from his position at the "*Viecherniy Bobruysk*" non-state newspaper editorial.

The newspaper editor **Valantsin Sysoi** proposed the media worker to terminate his employment contract on his own wish. However, the journalist didn't agree with the wording and noted that he was leaving his post "in connection with considerable changes of working conditions."

D. Rastayeu noted in his LJ blog that the newspaper editor asked him to leave his position after the visit to the Deputy Chairman of Babruysk City Executive Committee

**Mikhail Kavalevich**, responsible for “the state ideology matters” in the area. Reportedly, the latter showed the printed posts from D. Rastayeu’s LJ blog as well his articles, printed in the “Belgazeta” independent weekly. (The journalist contributes his articles to the nation-wide periodical as a free-lance correspondent.)

***Prepared by BAJ Monitoring Service***