

THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

Mass Media Week in Belarus

Info-posting – January 16 - 22, 2011

The reporting period was marked by a warning issued to the independent magazine *Arche. Beginning*.

On January 16 a freelance correspondent for *Novy Chas* newspaper **Mikita Brouka**, who had been detained on December 19, 2011 and put under 10 days' administrative arrest, was expelled from the Belarusian State Pedagogical University named after Maxim Tank (BDPU). The information was confirmed at the dean's office: Mikita Brouka was expelled "for academic failure in three or more subjects". He specialized in "Belarusian language and literature, journalism". The former student is sure that his expulsion is directly connected to his arrest.

*Note: Mikita Brouka was detained in Independence square on December 19, 2011. On the next day the Partyzanski District Court of Minsk sentenced him to ten days' administrative arrest for participation in an unsanctioned street action. The Editor-in-chief of Novy Chas **Aliaxey Karol** attended the trial as a witness and handed in a written confirmation that Mikita was in the square on a journalist assignment, however, it didn't influence the court's decision.*

On January 18 the journalist for *Nasha Niva* **Tatsiana Haurylchyk** and the freelance photographer **Yulia Darashkevich** finally got back their professional equipment seized by the police a month earlier. Tatsiana Haurylchyk got her video camera, and Yulia Darashkevich got her photo camera and laptop. They both signed a receipt that they didn't have any claims against the condition of the equipment. The equipment stayed almost the same, except for one thing: all information concerning FEMEN action on December 19, 2011 near the KGB was erased.

Note: on the morning of December 19 Y. Darashkevich and T. Haurylchyk were detained while taking photos of the street action staged by the Ukrainian organization FEMEN in front of the KGB office in Minsk. They were first taken to the KGB, and then to the Central district police department. They were set free in the evening, without their equipment.

For the whole month, the journalists were unable to perform their work, waiting until the police complete the "equipment check".

On January 18 BAJ published extracts from the Belarusian law "On republican budget in 2012" highlighting financing of the state mass media. According to the document, the total sum allocated to the state-run mass media equals to 491 678 422 thousand BR., or around 45 mln Euros.

The biggest part of the money is allocated for TV and radio broadcasting - this is 366 270 390 Br., or around 34 mln Euros. 52 895 489 thousand Br is allocated to printed mass media and publishing houses – this is around 5mln Euros. And finally, 72 512 543 thousand Br (around 7 mln Euros) is allocated for "other issues in the field of mass media". The previous year around 54 mln Euros went to the state-run mass media.

On **January 19** the independent TV journalist Ales Barazhenka was set free from the Akrestsina prison where he had spent 11 days' arrest. The journalist got back his video camera **against receipt**.

*Note: Independent TV journalist Ales Barazhenka was detained at 4pm on January 8 near the KGB building where he was making video recording of an action of solidarity with political prisoners. First he was taken to the KGB, then to the Central district police department, and then to the Akrestsina detention center. On January 9 he was sentenced to 11 days' administrative arrest for participation in an unauthorized action (Article 23.34 of the Administrative Code). After the court's decision was announced, the journalist expressed his protest and went on a hunger strike. **Mikita Kavalenka**, an activist of the civil movement European Belarus who staged the protest action, was also detained and sentenced to 15 days' imprisonment.*

On January 19 it became known that the editors' board of the independent magazine *Arche* got a written warning from the Ministry of Information. The warning dated January 10, 2012 was issued against the violation of Article 22 of the "Law on mass media". The Ministry of Information found out that edition No 10 of the magazine *Arche* contained incorrect publication data: the name of the state body which registered the magazine (which is the Ministry of Information) was incorrect, as well as the number and the date when the registration certificate was issued.

It is worth mentioning that according to Article 51/2.2 of the "Law on mass media" a second warning, issued to the editor's board or the founder of a media outlet within the year following the date of the first warning, may end up in cessation of its publication.

On January 20 it became known that the political prisoner **Dzmitry Bandarenka** complains of health deterioration: in addition to the bad back, he has got a vascular disease. It was announced by his wife **Volha Bandarenka** who received three letters from Dzmitry at once.

*Note: Dzmitry Bandarenka is a civil activist and member of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, close associate of Andrey Sannikau at 2010 presidential elections. He was sentenced to two years in a low-security prison, after attending the pro-democracy rally in Minsk on the day of the 19th of December 2010 presidential election. He is serving his term in Mahilou correctional prison No15. Soon after the arrest his health deteriorated, and in July 2011 he underwent a spinal surgery. He has been denied early release on parole two times, the second one on **January 4**.*

Prepared by the BAJ Monitoring Service