September 10, 2018

Alexander Lukashenko

President of Belarus

Excellency,

Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF), an independent non-governmental organization committed to promoting and defending freedom of expression is writing to express concern over the decision of the Smalyavichy court to impose fine on Belsat TV journalist Volha Czajczyc.

According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), Judge Alyaksandr Kazlouski has imposed a fine of 1,225 Belarusian rubles on journalist Volha Czajczyc for covering a protest by local residents.

This is the ninth time this year that Volha Czajczyc has been punished for doing her job, and has been fined a total of 8,452.5 rubles (around $4,200). She was fined seven times last year.

According to BAJ, Belsat staff is often on trial for illegal distribution of media materials under Article 22.9 of the Administrative Code and for working without approval. In 2017, Belsat contributors paid a total of $14,000 in fines to the government.

94% of the fines for supposed illegal production of media materials were imposed on Belsat journalists, reported BAJ.

The Foreign Ministry of Belarus has stated that journalists working for Belsat TV always break the law and it could not issue any certification to them.

Belarusian authorities have imposed a total of $30,000 in the way of fines on journalists this year.

PPF demands immediate withdrawal of the fine against journalist and urges Belarusian authorities to stop targeting journalists for their work.

I thank you for your attention and will welcome your comments.

Yours sincerely,

Owais Aslam Ali
Secretary General

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