

THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

Mass Media Week in Belarus

Info-posting April 2 - 8, 2012

Perhaps, the most remarkable feature of the reporting period was an undisguised pressure on the Editor-in-chief of the newspaper “Babruyski Kuryer” and BAJ member Anatol Sanatsienka, exerted by the security forces. Referring to his online publications, which are “accessible for foreigners”, KGB workers announced that Sanatsienka might face criminal prosecution for “discrediting the Republic of Belarus”.

On **March 2**, the PA “BAJ” received an official answer <http://baj.by/en/node/11714> from the General prosecutor’s office concerning **the restrictions to leave Belarus**, imposed on a number of journalists. The document, dated March 9 and signed by the head of the supervisory department **Pavel Radzivonau**, says that the prosecutor’s office failed to find grounds for prosecutor’s check on BAJ’s request. “A study of your request has shown that it [the request] contains no facts about the state bodies and officials that have violated rights and lawful interests of the mentioned citizens. Absence of such facts serves as a factor which hinders all-round and objective investigation into the mentioned questions,” wrote Radzivonau.

We remind that on March 16 the PA “BAJ” sent the request to the heads of the General Prosecutor’s Office, Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the State Border Control of Belarus asking to clarify the grounds for travel restrictions imposed on several BAJ members, in particular, on Zhanna Litvina, Andrey Dynko, Mikhail Yanchuk, Valiantsin Stefanovich and Harry Pahaniayla.

The exhibition of photos “**Belarus in Focus**” by Belarusian reporters opened in Warsaw in Polonia House on **April 5**. It displayed photos by Siarhey Hudzilin, Aliaksandr Vasiukovich, Dzmitry Brushko, Siarhey Vasiliyeu, Siarhey Hapon and Yuliya Darashkevich. The exhibition was organized by the “Solidarity with Belarus Information Office” together with the Polish Press Club, with the support of the Canadian Embassy to Poland.

On April 4, a freelance correspondent for “Babruyski Kuryer” **Volha Asokina** was **denied information** at Babruysk local history museum (she wanted to find out additional information about the current exhibition, devoted to a 200-year old fortress in Babruysk and 1812 personalities). The museum worker said they had been prohibited to provide any information for “Babruyski Kuryer”.

On April 5, the KGB threatened <http://baj.by/en/node/11790> the **Editor-in-chief** of “Babruyski Kuryer” **Anatol Sanatsienka** with criminal prosecution. The journalist was invited via phone to his tax inspector Halina Tanvirava, who provides services for his advertising and publishing company. When they were having a talk, two KGB-men appeared: one of them was lieutenant colonel Dzmitry Leanidavich, and the other – simply Dzmitry Hendzievich. The talk between Anatol Sanatsienka and the KGB lasted 2.5 hours.

The lieutenant colonel Dzmitry Leanidavich showed the journalist a number of print-outs of his articles, published in 2011 – 2012 on different websites, such as “Babruyski Courier”, “BAJ”(author's column), “Belarus Partisan”.

The KGB-man told the journalist that the articles were not objective, they distorted the essence of things happening in Belarus, and the journalist could soon be prosecuted according to **Article 369/1 of the Criminal Code** – “Discrediting the Republic of Belarus”: “providing a foreign state, foreign or international organization with false information about political, economic, social, military or international situation of Belarus, the legal status of citizens in the Republic of Belarus, which discredit the Republic of Belarus or its authorities, - shall be punished by imprisonment for up to six months or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.” The officer emphasized that the materials were published online, that’s why they were easily accessible for foreigners, - and so, Article 369 was fully applicable here.

Sanatsienka suggested that the KGB should formulate their claims in written form in order to make them understandable.