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E-NEWSLETTER

MASS MEDIA IN BELARUS

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TUT.BY Editor-in-Chief Maryna Zolatava with her children and husband, December 18, 2025, Warsaw, Poland. Photo: "Zerkalo"

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SITUATION IN BELARUS MASS MEDIA FIELD: OCTOBER– DECEMBER 2025. REVIEW

The repressive policy in relation to mass media representatives continued in Belarus at the end of 2025:

- Criminal prosecution of independent journalists and bloggers within the country as well as those who criticize the situation in Belarus from abroad was further implemented within the period under review. In particular, **5 sentences were passed against journalists, and 3 sentences were pronounced against bloggers,**
- Censorship was in effect in its various manifestations. Among other, **2 media projects were recognized as 'extremist groupings' and 7 journalists were labeled by the Belarusian authorities as 'extremists'** within the period under review,
- The Belarusian authorities **managed to seize the euroradio.by domain name** from the European Radio for Belarus, which was registered by a foreign company,
- It became known about severe pressure on some political prisoners for reporting about them by independent media, which can be considered a specific manifestation of censorship,
- Along with censorship, official propaganda and discreditation of opponents remained an integral part of Belarusian governmental policy in the media field. **The outcome of a special study indicates**



the presence of a 'digital authoritarianism trend' in Belarus, which is the oversaturation of the media field with controlled narratives.

At the same time, **the largest release of Belarusian political prisoners** (123 people) took place as a result of negotiations between the American delegation led by the US presidential envoy John Cole and the Belarusian governmental authorities. Among those released, there were **Maryna Zolatava**, the [Editor-in-Chief](#) of TUT.BY News Portal, which was closed down by the Belarusian authorities, who spent four and a half years in prison, as well as BAJ members **Ales Bialiatski** (Nobel Peace Prize laureate) and [Aliaksandr Fiaduta](#). All those released were forcibly deported from Belarus.

According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists, 28 media representatives [remained](#) behind bars as of December 31, 2025.

Criminal prosecution. Cases of detention in Belarus

5 court verdicts were pronounced to journalists in Belarus during the last three months of 2025. **3 bloggers** were also convicted within the period under review. Moreover, **at least 3 criminal cases were filed against journalists** in the country.

On October 31, 2025, **Siarhei Chabotska**, the editor of s13.ru Hrodna News Portal [was sentenced](#) to 3.5 years in a maximum-security penal colony for the alleged 'extremism' and 'slander' against Aliaksandr Lukashenka. (He had been held behind bars for over a year before the trial). The regional news portal was established 19 years ago.



Reportedly, four employees of the BAR24 News Resource (Baranavichy, Brest region), which was created by the team of the former independent regional publication Intex-Press, which was forced to cease operations after it was designated as 'extremist' by the Belarusian authorities, have been convicted under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code of Belarus ('facilitating extremist activity'). **Natallia Semianovich, Mikita Piatrousky, Ruslan Raviaka, and Liudmila Zeliankova** were sentenced to restriction of liberty.

Yauhen Staravoitau, a local historian and a founder of 'Mahilou Chronicles' blog from Klichau (Mahilou region) spent more than three months in a pre-trial detention center. He was released in early September 2025 after being sentenced to restriction of liberty under Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code ('facilitation of extremist activity').

Video blogger **Karalina Kananovich** announced on October 5, 2025 that she had been sentenced to two and a half years of restriction of liberty under Article 342 of the Criminal Code for the alleged 'active participation in actions that grossly violate public order'.

She was detained upon her arrival in Minsk from Amsterdam and spent 4 months in pre-trial custody. She managed to flee Belarus after the verdict announcement.



Karalina Kananovich. Photo: ilinterviews.com

Video blogger **Maksim Shukanau** ('Union Bell' YouTube channel) from Mazyr (Homiel region) was sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment in a penal colony on November 11, 2025. He covered political issues and the war in Ukraine. The blogger was hiding in deep underground before February 2025. However, as soon as his father was arrested, he had to

seek medical help. Consequently, he was detained together with his fiancée Palina Zyl. (She was sentenced to 1 year in prison in July 2025.)

Reportedly, a journalist **Pavel Dabravolski** has been accused of 'high treason' under Article 356 of Belarus Criminal Code in connection with his professional activities. (He previously worked for both Belarusian and foreign media outlets, including the Ukrainian NV.ua magazine). The media worker has been behind bars in the KGB detention center since January 2025. He faces up to 15 years in prison.



Tatsiana Ashurkevich

Criminal cases have been filed against the exiled journalists **Tatsiana Ashurkevich**, who was included into the database of wanted individuals on the territory of Russia and Belarus, as well as **Iryna Khalip**, who works as a special correspondent for 'Novaya Gazeta Europe'. (The latter learned about the case from her parents in Minsk after a search of their apartment by law enforcement officers on November 27, 2025.)

The released human rights defender **Uladzimir Labkovich** noted in his interview that conditions of imprisonment for Belarusian political prisoners could be regarded as torture in any sense. Among other things, he mentioned that the prison administration kept warning him that **should his name appear in the foreign press, it would be regarded as a reason for the increased pressure**. It could include the prisoner's transfer to a penal colony with harsh conditions of detention. **This policy can be considered as another specific way of censorship, followed by the Belarusian governmental authorities.**

Application of anti-extremist legislation against mass media and other forms of pressure

The Belarusian media projects were further designated as **‘extremist groupings’** by the Belarusian authorities during the period under review. In particular, the [‘Plan B’](#) online publication and the [‘Radio Plato’](#) online radio station were included in the list.

The Ministry of Information of Belarus continued the trend of including multiple accounts of media projects and media figures in the National List of Extremist Materials, following the respective court decisions.

Thus, e.g., the ‘Euroradio-Belarus News’ community on the ‘Odnoklassniki’ social media, the account of ‘Zerkalo’ online publication on Threads, the late blogger Mikita Melkaziorau’s ‘Life-Raspberry’ YouTube channel and several other media resources [were included](#) in the list during the period under review.

Seven convicted journalists – **Aleh Supruniuk** from Brest, **Siarhei Chabotska** from Hrodna, **Ihar Ilyash** from Minsk, **Natallia Semianovich**, **Mikita Piatrouski**, **Ruslan Reviaka**, and **Liudmila Zeliankova** from Baranavichy – were included in the list of individuals involved in extremist activities by decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus during the period under review.

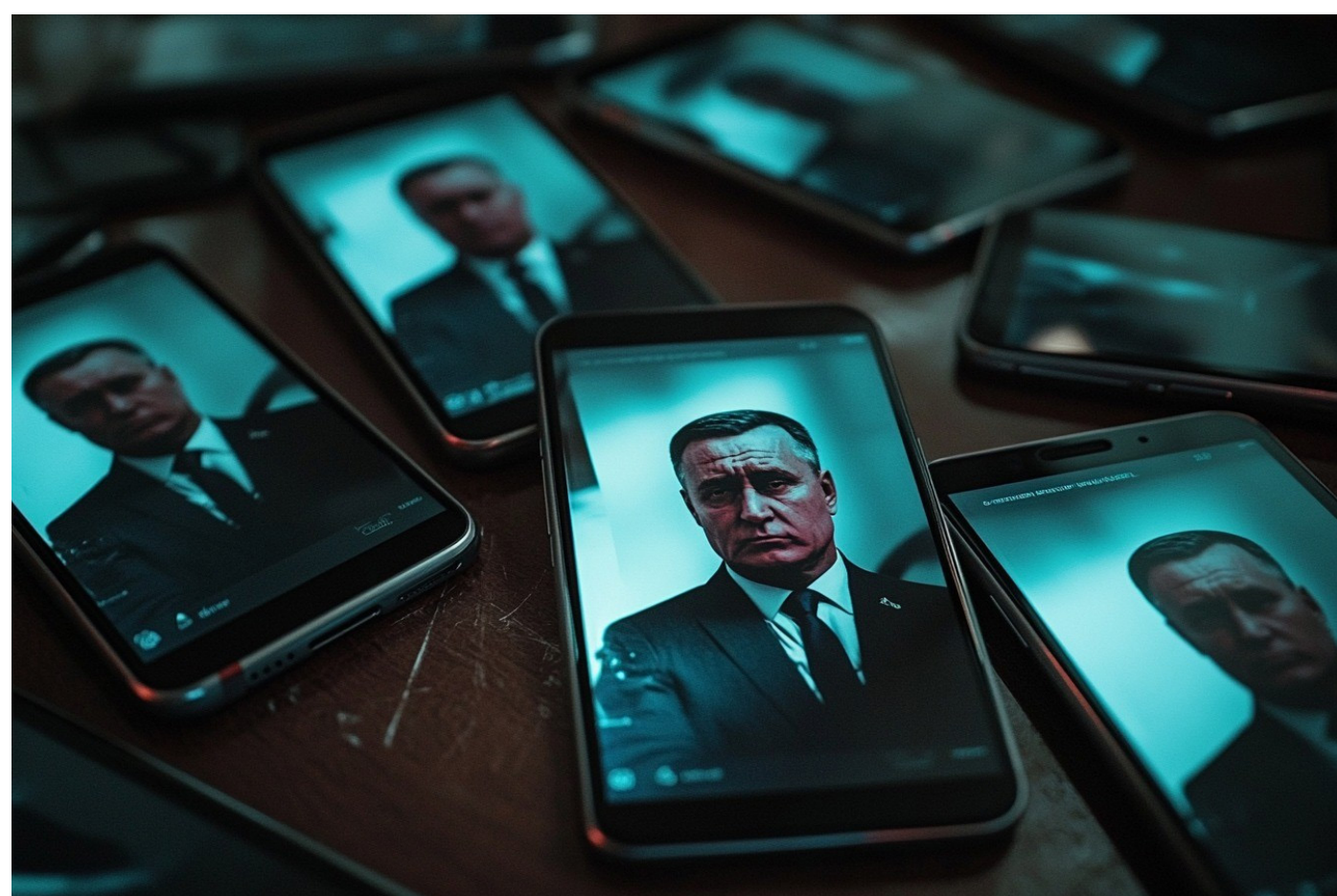
The Belarusian authorities continued the practice of depriving the media resources that were included in the National List of Extremist Materials of their domain names. The trend started in 2024. **Thus, they [managed to seize](#) the domain name **euroradio.by** from the European Radio**



Photo: pixabay.com

for Belarus during the period under review. The domain name was initially registered by the Australian Europe Registry company in 2009. It was the first case of the kind, since previously the trend concerned the domain addresses, which were registered in Belarus.

Along with censorship, propaganda and defamation of opponents remained an integral part of Belarusian governmental policy in the media field during the period under review.



Alesia Rudnik, Director of the 'Center for New Ideas' NGO presented the outcome of [research study](#) under the title of '**Mapping Belarusian Propaganda: What and How Do Belarusian Pro-Government Authors Write About?**' on December 9, 2025.

Among other, it [was noted](#) that the Belarusian authorities started promoting actively their agenda on Telegram following the protests actions in 2020. Thus, dozens of pro-government channels started publishing thousands of identical daily posts in support of the Belarusian authorities and personally Aliaksandr Lukashenka, while simultaneously criticizing his opponents.

All this was happening against the background of blocking access to alternative information and stigmatization of independent media by Belarusian authorities.

Nevertheless, the audience did not respond actively enough to the pro-government content during the period under review. This strategy reflected the **trend of digital authoritarianism**, when control is exercised not so much through censorship as through the oversaturation of the media field with controlled narratives.



FIGURES OF THE YEAR – 2025

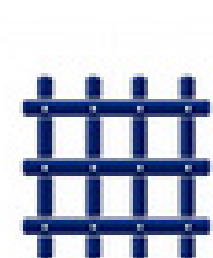
The Belarusian Association of Journalists compiled statistics on repression in the sector for 2025. It also conducted a separate analysis of positive trends in the media sector:

- 28 media professionals imprisoned,
- 34 searches and inspections of premises,
- 12 detentions,
- 42 media outlets designated as ‘extremist formations’,
- More than 100 cases of in absentia prosecution of journalists,
- 26 media outlets and organizations [joined](#) the Code of Ethics of Belarusian Journalists and the self-regulation system,
- 62 colleagues [completed](#) the ‘Saturday Journalism School’ in Vilnius and Warsaw,
- 15 solidarity actions in support of Belarusian journalists held worldwide.



FIGURES OF THE YEAR – 2025

The Belarusian Media Sector in Numbers



28
media
professionals
imprisoned



12
detentions
per year



42
media outlets
designated as
"extremist formations"



34
searches
and inspections
of premises per year



>100
cases of in absentia
prosecution
of journalists

Belarusian Association of Journalists | www.baj.media

FIGURES OF THE YEAR – 2025

The Belarusian Media Sector in Numbers



26
media outlets and organizations
joined the Code of Ethics
of Belarusian Journalists
and the self-regulation system



62
colleagues completed
the "Saturday
Journalism School" in
Vilnius and Warsaw



15
solidarity actions in support
of Belarusian journalists held
worldwide

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Contact:
Mr. Andrei Bastunets

E-mail: office@baj.media
Web: <https://baj.media>