Freedom of expression, free media and information - 2

Alexander Malkevich, Chairman Commission of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on Development of Information Community, Mass Media and Mass Communications

Freedom of speech, protecting the rights of the Russian media and journalists working (reporting) abroad, as well as supporting the Russian-language media outside Russia are some of today's most pressing issues.

These days journalists are threatened not only by wars and natural disasters. People dedicated to their profession, "Journalists" with a capital 'J' are facing reprisals and persecution by authorities for performing their professional duty.

On May 15, 2018, RIA Novosti Ukraine Editor-in-Chief Kirill Vyshinsky was arrested in Kiev. The journalist was charged with supporting the self-proclaimed republics in Donbass and treason, punishable by up to 15 years. The Russian journalist was finally released only in September 2019 as part of a prisoner swap.

On May 9, 2018, the Security Service of Ukraine detained Rossiya channel journalist Olga Yuryeva and Channel One's Valentina Solovyova. They were deported to Kazakhstan and Russia, respectively, and banned from entering Ukraine for three years.

The Security Service of Ukraine imposed the same three-year ban on Vladimir Solovyov, Chairman of the Russian Union of Journalists. The resolution was dated February 22, 2018 and made public only on July 18, 2018.

On June 26, 2018, authorities in Kiev detained Yevgeny Primakov, Russian journalist, head of the Russian Humanitarian Mission and Chairman of the Russian Civic Chamber Commission on Media at the time. He and RT journalist Paula Slier were denied entry to Ukraine where they were going to attend an OSCE expert conference on freedom of the press.

On February 19, 2019, journalists from two Russian television channels, NTV and Rossiya-1, were denied entry to Moldova, as reported by the press service of the Moldovan presidential executive office.

Russian television crews planned on interviewing President of Moldova Igor Dodon. His press service condemned the incident as another government provocation targeting Russia.

On March 27, 2019, journalists from RIA Novosti, RT, Channel One, Izvestia and Channel Five were denied access to the verdict session in a high-profile case involving Russian nationals Yury Mel and Gennady Ivanov concerning the events in Vilnius in 1991. No grounds for denying access were provided.

In May 2019, Sputnik Lithuania Editor-in-Chief Marat Kasem was detained in Vilnius. The journalist arrived for a business trip but never left the airport. He was detained as a national security threat and banned from entering the country for five years.

On May 8, 2019, I, Alexander Malkevich, was deported from Moldova – without any explanation whatsoever. Border officials could not clearly explain what my violation was. I was interrogated for an hour; then the officers said that I was a persona non grata, seized my passport and proceeded with deportation.

On September 11, 2017, it was reported that the company providing services to RT America received a letter from the US Department of Justice with a request to register as a foreign agent.

In November 2017, RT journalists were stripped of accreditation in the US Congress following the channel's registration as a foreign agent.

I urge the governments of the OSCE countries to fight for freedom of the press and protect journalists, regardless of the country in which they work, and from the views that they share. In upholding the freedom of the press, we uphold our right to know the truth.

The full text will be submitted to the secretariat.