

Ms Liliya Ananich, Minister  
Pieramozhtsau Ave., 11,  
220004 Minsk, BELARUS

## **APPEAL TO THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION OF BELARUS**

Dear Minister Ananich,

27 February 2015

The Belarusian law “On Mass Media” does not contain the term “journalist”. Instead, it operates at a much narrower notion of “a mass media journalist” meaning “a natural person engaged in collection, editing, creation (preparation) of informative reports and/or materials for the legal entity, which is entrusted with functions of the editorial board of the media, which is connected with that legal entity through labour or other contractual relations.”

It is inconsistent with the provision in the Constitution of Belarus, regarding the freedom of expression and distribution of information (article 34) as well as international standards on freedom of expression and information. In practice, it leads to administrative pressure and obstacles for freelancer journalists. According to this law, freelance journalists that are not connected with any specific editorial office of mass media by any contractual relations are not considered as journalists.

Taking into account the above, we call upon you to improve the situation by means of inviting all stakeholders, including the national journalists’ organisations – the Belarusian Association of Journalists and the

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Belarusian Union of Journalists – to a round table discussion, aimed at elaborating draft amendments to the Belarusian law “On Mass Media” with the purpose of introducing the status of freelance journalists to the national legislation to comply with the Constitution of Belarus and the international obligations of Belarus.

Also, we urge you to abolish the mandatory press accreditations for journalistic activities in Belarus that contradicts the Constitution and international obligations of the Republic of Belarus.

We would like to warmly invite you to our headquarters of the European Federation of Journalists and International Federation of Journalists when you visit Brussels to discuss with us common practices throughout Europe.

I look forward to your reply in Belarusian / Russian or English at your convenience. Thank you.

With Kind Regards,

Mogens Blicher Bjerregård



EFJ President.

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