

STATEMENT:

Intensified prosecution of freelance journalists in Belarus

The prosecution of freelance journalists in Belarus is a threat both to freedom of speech and to the freelance journalists' personal lives. Imposing fines on the journalist who contribute to foreign media violates international statutes of press freedom and the right to access to information.

In 2017 a total of 69 fines were issued to freelance journalist and so far during this year 76 fines were issued. These figures show that the situation of Belarusian freelance journalists has deteriorated in 2018. The legal prosecution of freelance journalists for their cooperation with foreign mass media without accreditation has significantly increased. The total sum of fines on article 22.9 part 2 of the Belarus Code of Administrative Offenses has exceeded EUR 25,000 in equivalent since the year started. There have taken place more than 76 trials on administrative cases against freelance journalists since the beginning of 2018.

We as freelance journalists in the Nordic countries are very concerned with the current situation for the rights of freelance journalists, in Belarus.

We, the participants of the Nordic Freelance Seminar 2018, in Malmö, Sweden calls upon the official authorities of Belarus:

- not to harass journalists for doing their journalistic activity

- to stop immediately the prosecution of freelance journalists for their professional work;

- to amend Belarusian media law to guarantee equal rights to all journalists in accordance with international standards and international obligations of Belarus.

Frilans Riks, the freelance district within The Swedish Union of Journalist (SJF)

SFJ, Association of Finnish Freelance Journalist in Finland, within the Union of Journalists in Finland (SJL)

FAO, Freelance Chapter of the Radio and TV Journalists Union in Finland, within the Union of Journalists in Finland (SJL)

NJ Frilans, within the Norwegian Union of Journalists

FreelanceGruppen within The Danish Union of Journalists