

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

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Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

BELARUS: Journalist Raman Pratasevich sentenced to eight years in prison

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CPJ (03.05.2023) – In response to [multiple news reports](#) that a Belarusian court sentenced journalist Raman Pratasevich to eight years in prison Wednesday, and also issued lengthy sentences to exiled journalists Stsypan Putsila and Yan Rudzik in their absence, the Committee to Protect Journalists issued the following statement of condemnation:

“The sentencing of journalists Raman Pratasevich, Stsypan Putsila, and Yan Rudzik to harsh prison terms, on World Press Freedom Day, is yet another grim demonstration of the Belarusian authorities’ profound contempt for a free press,” said Gulnoza Said, CPJ’s Europe and Central Asia program coordinator, in New York. “Authorities should immediately drop all charges against the three journalists, and release Pratasevich and all other members of the press detained in retaliation for their work.”

On Wednesday, May 3, a court in Minsk convicted Pratasevich of organizing mass protests; publicly calling for the seizure of state power and acts of terrorism; slandering and insulting President Aleksandr Lukashenko; and leading an extremist formation, according to those reports, the banned human rights group [Viasna](#), and the [Belarusian Association of Journalists](#), an advocacy and trade group operating from exile.

Pratasevich is under house arrest and will remain so until his sentence enters into force, usually 10 days after it is announced, according to the state news agency [BelTA](#) and a Viasna representative who spoke to CPJ on the condition of anonymity, for fear of reprisal.

The court also convicted Putsila and Rudzik on the first three of those charges, in addition to conspiring to seize state power, and sentenced Putsila to 20 years and Rudzik to 19, those reports said.

The journalists are also subject to civil proceedings initiated by government prosecutors, seeking 30 million Belarusian rubles (US\$11.9 million) in compensation for alleged damage inflicted on the country, [BelTA reported](#).

Belarusian authorities arrested [Pratasevich](#), co-founder of the Telegram channels NEXTA and former chief editor of Belarus Golovnogo Mozga (Belarus of the Brain), in May 2021 after diverting a commercial Ryanair flight and forcing it to land

in Minsk. Putsila, co-founder of NEXTA, and Rudzik, an administrator of NEXTA and former chief editor of Belarus Golovnogo Mozga, are living outside Belarus, according to the BAJ.

Rudzik told CPJ via messaging app there was “no sense” to appeal the verdict, as he considered it to be “unlawful.” In a comment he [posted](#) on his personal Telegram channel, Rudzik said he had no regrets and took the sentence as “the highest reward.”

CPJ was unable to determine immediately if Pratasevich and Putsila planned to appeal their sentences. CPJ emailed the Minsk regional court for comment but did not receive any response.

[At least 26 journalists](#), including Pratasevich, were detained in Belarus at the time of CPJ’s December 1, 2022, prison census.

Photo credits: Ramil Nasibulin/BelTA pool photo via AP

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Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

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Notice: Undefined index: et_template in

/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269