

**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

**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 1215

**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 Yauhen Merkis sentenced to 4 years in prison**

### **Journalist Yauhen Merkis sentenced to 4 years in prison on extremism charges**

CPJ (30.05.2023) – In response to a Belarusian court sentencing journalist Yauhen Merkis to four years in prison on Tuesday, May 30, the Committee to Protect Journalists issued the following statement:

“The sentencing of Belarusian journalist Yauhen Merkis to four

years in prison on retaliatory extremism charges is the latest expression of authorities' vendetta against those who dared cover nationwide protests following the disputed 2020 presidential election," said Gulnoza Said, CPJ's Europe and Central Asia program coordinator, in New York. "Authorities should drop all charges against Merkis, release him immediately alongside all other imprisoned journalists, and stop retaliating against members of the press for their reporting."

On Tuesday, a court in the southeastern city of Homel convicted Merkis of creating or participating in an extremist formation and facilitating extremist activities, according to those reports and reports by the banned human rights group [Viasna](#) and the [Belarusian Association of Journalists](#), an advocacy and trade group operating from exile. The court also confiscated the journalist's car, laptop, and phone.

Authorities detained [Merkis](#) in September 2022. Merkis, a former freelance reporter, contributed reporting about the 2020 protests and was repeatedly detained and fined in connection to his journalistic activity, [Viasna reported](#). He stopped working in journalism after authorities labeled several independent media outlets he worked with as extremist organizations, [BAJ reported](#).

Merkis' trial began on May 11, 2023, and was held behind closed doors. Authorities [accused](#) the journalist of sending pictures about the presence and movement of Russian military equipment in the Homel region to [Telegram channels](#) labeled "extremist" by the authorities.

CPJ was unable to immediately determine whether Merkis intends to appeal the sentence. His lawyer signed a non-disclosure agreement, and whether the journalist pled innocent or guilty has not been made public, [BAJ reported](#).

Belarus was the world's fifth worst jailer of journalists,

with at least 26 journalists behind bars on December 1, 2022, including Merkis, when CPJ conducted its most recent prison census.

*Photo Credit: Belarusian Association of Journalists*

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**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 1267

**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

**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 1268

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269