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Dozhd Director Says Channel May Close in a Month

By The Moscow Times

March 04, 2014



Independent television channel Dozhd will have to shut down in a month if providers continue to isolate the station from their packages, the channel's general director said.

"Without advertising budgets, without money from distribution, which we lost — and we lost 80 percent of our income — there is no way we can survive," Dozhd general director Natalia Sindeyeva said Tuesday at a meeting with the Kremlin's human rights council.

Dozhd was dropped by several major cable operators in January following its broadcast of a poll that asked viewers whether Leningrad should have been surrendered during World War II to avoid the deaths of 300,000 people. The move was criticized as politically-motivated by some observers, given that Dozhd is one of the only networks to give airtime to members of Russia's political opposition.

While viewers can pay a fee to stream the channel online, Internet subscriptions alone fail

to cover Dozhd's financial outgoings, and Sindeyeva said she she planned to meet with colleagues on Tuesday to discuss salary cuts.

"We have a month left to live. In a month, we will close" Sindeyeva said, adding the salary cuts may help the channel to survive for a further two months.

"If we existed in real market conditions, we would be a successful channel," she said, Interfax reported.

Editor-in-chief Mikhail Zygar said that Dozhd has revised its code of ethics since the incident, and that it was ready to create a board of trustees to act as a watchdog for the channel. Sindeyeva said that the channel would do everything within its powers to remain operational.

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