

Dozhd Begins Week-Long Fundraising Campaign

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Independent television channel Dozhd is running a week-long fundraiser to keep the station open.

Independent television station Dozhd has begun a week long fundraising drive aimed at keeping the channel running after it was dropped by Russia's largest cable providers, causing its revenue to plummet.

From March 24 to March 30 the channel will be broadcast for free on the Internet and viewers will be asked to donate or purchase items from its store, the channel reported Monday, adding that guests will be invited on air to discuss freedom of speech and media independence in Russia. In an article about the campaign, Dozhd said "The existence of the only independent television station in Russia is under question and a possible way to continue its work is the support and help of viewers."

Dozhd came under fire earlier for this year after briefly posting a poll asking whether Leningrad should have been surrendered during World War II to save hundreds of thousands

of lives. Denounced by conservative politicians, the channel was dropped from satellite and cable television packages, which made up 80 percent of its revenue.

The channel's general director, Natalya Sindeyeva, said in early March that without television advertising, Dozhd could only survive for one or two months. However, she later gave an interview to Sostav.ru in which she said that the outlet would survive by focusing on the Internet and Smart TV, and holding fundraisers.

Last week the station received a letter from their landlords saying that they will not renew Dozhd's lease in the former factory complex Krasny Oktyabr, scheduled to end on June 20. The fundraiser will feature nightly concerts and an closing gala on the roof of the complex.

A counter on the website indicates that as of Monday afternoon viewers' donations are enough Dozhd to stay open for more than five additional days.

Some observers say that the cable companies' decision to drop the channel points to a larger, politically-motivated campaign against Dozhd. The channel is known for its independent coverage of Russian politics and giving airtime to opposition politicians.

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