

Media Regulator Threatens to Suspend Licence of Independent TV Channel

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Russia's media watchdog has threatened to suspend the broadcasting license of an independent television channel in the Siberian region of Tomsk, in what its editor and viewers describe as media purges extending deeper into Russia's far-off regions.

TV2 had been off the air since mid-April, when it received a notice about a breakdown at a local broadcasting facility, its editor Viktor Muchnik told Ekho Moskvyy radio on Sunday.

Repairs were meant to have been carried out by the state-run Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting System, or RTRS — a monopolist in the region — but have stalled, and media watchdog Roskomnadzor has since threatened to revoke the TV2 license unless it resumes broadcasting, Muchnik told Ekho Moskvyy.

"One government structure, RTRS, is in no hurry with the repairs, and another structure — Roskomnadzor — warns us about suspending the license and, as we well understand, revoking it later," he was quoted as saying on the radio station's website.

"We view all this as an attempt to destroy the company and clean up the information field," Muchnik said.

Muchnik said the company had been withstanding government pressure for years.

Russia abolished official state censorship following the collapse of the Soviet Union, but a reader of the Ekho Moskvyy website commented that "Roskomnadzor has turned into a censor, which is prohibited by the Constitution, but nobody has noticed that."

A reader from Tomsk commented on the website that "now our turn has come," saying that one of the last independent regional media outlets was about to be shut down.

One of Putin's first moves as president 14 years ago was to preside over the government takeover of the once-independent national television network, NTV. With all national networks now long under Kremlin control, the government took independent channel Dozhd off the air earlier this year, and has moved to clamp down on Internet freedom.

Ekho Moskvyy, which has given air time and space on its website to critics of government policies, was named among the top 20 "anti-Russian" news sources by pro-Kremlin monitors earlier this year.

"Producing information that differs from Kremlin propaganda is getting increasingly difficult and, it seems, increasingly unsafe," another reader said on the Ekho Moskvyy website. "There is no place to watch the news in Tomsk except for TV2. And perhaps the most people don't want anything except that propaganda."

See also:

[Website Creates List of Top 20 'Anti-Russian' News Sources](#)

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