

Russia's Dozhd TV Defies Crackdown by Continuing Broadcasts From Apartment

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December 09, 2014



Russia's Dozhd TV has been forced to leave its Moscow studio.

Russia's main independent television channel, Dozhd, has been forced to leave its Moscow studio for the second time in as many months, but is continuing its broadcasts from an apartment in the capital, news reports said.

The digital channel has been struggling for survival ever since it was dropped by major cable providers in January after publishing a controversial poll about World War II.

Dozhd had been broadcasting from a studio belonging to Snob magazine, owned by billionaire and 2012 presidential candidate Mikhail Prokhorov, under a leasing agreement that was supposed to last until February.

But the deal was abruptly canceled and the channel was told to leave the premises by Monday, Forbes Russia reported, citing a company source.

The move followed a similar eviction in October, when Dozhd was given notice to leave its studio in a building next to Snob's offices — in what was widely interpreted as a sign of the Kremlin's crackdown on liberal media.

Dozhd resumed its broadcasts this week from an apartment in Moscow.

It has received a number of offers for new rental spaces, including from independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, Dozhd chief editor Natalya Sindeyeva told Ekho Moskvyy radio this weekend, but it remained uncertain about how permanent those offers were, considering the recent slew of evictions.

"We felt certain that we will last until the end of January at Snob," Sindeyeva told Ekho Moskvyy. "So we relaxed a bit, to be honest."

Using a regular apartment is only a "temporary solution, because it's not a studio but a spot from which a signal can be sent as long as there is an Internet connection," she said.

Ekho Moskvyy host Irina Petrovskaya said the setup was reminiscent of a widespread Soviet-era practice when music groups that faced government retribution for diverging from the regime's ideological stance on art were banned from performing in concert halls and played for their fans in tightly-packed private apartments instead.

The comparison is not so far-fetched: Several Russian venues recently canceled scheduled performances by Soviet-era rock legend Andrei Makarevich after the musician criticized President Vladimir Putin's policies in Ukraine, and Moscow officials denounced him as a "traitor."

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/12/09/russias-dozhd-tv-defies-crackdown-by-continuing-broadcasts-from-apartment-a42109>