The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Independent Television Station TV-2 Taken Off Air in Tomsk

February 09, 2015



TV-2, one of the first independent news stations in the country, was forced to stop its broadcasts.

Tomsk-based station TV-2 will no longer be screened on television after its broadcast license expired at the weekend, indefinitely cutting one of Russia's last independent stations from cable packages.

The shutdown of TV-2 — an award-winning broadcaster and one of Russia's oldest independent television stations — had prompted protests in Tomsk and in Moscow, with demonstrators urging the government to reverse what critics said was part of a broader crackdown on independent media.

Tomsk's state-run broadcasting center took TV-2 off terrestrial television on Jan. 1, but it was still available on some cable packages until the government's media watchdog Roskomnadzor decided not to renew the station's license, which expired Sunday.

TV-2 ran a program titled "Goodbye, City" on Sunday night, before disappearing from cable networks for good. The company said on its website that it planned to continue operating

online and asked viewers for donations to support its work.

"Friends, all those years both the website and television company TV-2 existed solely through revenues we were receiving from advertisements," the broadcaster said on its website. "As TV-2 has been cut off the air, we have lost the means to support ourselves."

By Monday morning, slightly more than 283,000 rubles ($4,300) had been collected, according to the TV-2 website.

The channel is planning to appeal the decisions of the media watchdog and the regional broadcasting center in an attempt to have its broadcasts restored, chief editor Viktor Muchnik was cited as saying Monday by the Interfax news agency.

"Legally, cable operators had grounds to shut us off themselves because our license has expired," Muchnik added. "We decided not to cause trouble for anybody, so at midnight at the start of Feb. 9 we disconnected ourselves."

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