

TV Station in Russia's Urals Taken Off-Air By Mystery Man

May 18, 2016



Ural-Inform TV, a television channel based in Russia's Urals, was mysteriously taken off air on May 12 and has remained so ever since, the Meduza news website reported on Wednesday.

On the May 12, an unidentified man posing as the director of the channel presented fake documents to the local branch of Rostelecom, which stores the equipment to broadcast the channel across the Perm region. Once inside the building, the unidentified person is suspected of taking the channel off air.

The channel remains available only in its online form. Since the incident, its staff have been denied access to Rostelecom. The channel published a video showing a visibly drunk security guard refusing entry to its employees.

Ural-Inform TV has filed legal complaints to the police, the Federal Security Service and Russia's Communications and Mass Media Ministry. The channel's journalists began protesting the shutoff online and on the streets when its legal actions produced no results.

The channel's presenters appeared in news segments wearing nooses around their necks,

protesting the shutoff.

On May 18, the journalists organized an event they called “A Farewell to Perm's Free Press.” They placed a television screen in the city center and encouraged people to bring flowers to the scene. A few dozen people took part in the protest.

“This protest is a warning to those who have organized this provocation. They tried to stifle us in this vile way but we want to demonstrate that this is useless, we won't shut up,” said the channel's director Alina Lvova.

Perm's ombudsman, Tatyana Margolina, called the situation “impossible” and stressed its illegality.

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