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Putin Urges Global Authorities to Ensure Freedom Of Information

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has urged governments around the world to protect the freedom of the press, the TASS news agency reported Tuesday.

“There can't be a situation where some governments talk about freedom information when they like what they are hearing, yet immediately decry information they don't like as propaganda of a political group or foreign state,” Putin said at a media forum celebrating the 75th anniversary of state news agency Rossiya Segodnya.

Putin said that the news should be objective and free from repression, naming honesty and truth as being at the heart of good reporting. Journalism today is “not much different from what it was yesterday: it's the search of truth,” Putin said.

Putin spoke out against monopolies in the media last month, calling them “harmful.” “We [the Russian press] deliver alternative information to viewers and listeners,” he said. “Monopoly is always harmful, and in the media it is even more so.”

“Even if we make a mistake on something, so what? We have the right to say these things, and people - our listeners and viewers - must hear and see an alternative point of view,” he was quoted by the Interfax news agency.

The statement came on the same day when three top editors left independent Russian media holding RBC. The resignations were widely seen as another sign of Kremlin pressure on the media outlet, which had published a number of investigations into the business dealings of Putin's relatives and friends.

A poll published on June 6 showed a growing feeling amongst Russians that authorities posed a threat to freedom of speech in the country.

During Putin's sixteen year presidency, the number of Russian citizens who believe the Kremlin poses no threat to freedom of speech has dropped to historic lows - from 58 percent to 35 percent, a poll by the independent Levada pollster revealed.

Sixteen percent of respondents strongly believed and 42 percent somewhat believe that there is pro-government censorship on the Russian television channels. At the same time, TV was the main source of information for most of the poll's participants, with 60 percent of respondents saying that they watch television news every day.

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