The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

For Russia Regional Coverage, Look to These 9 Independent Media

January 06, 2020



Roman Demyanenko / TASS

Regional issues took center stage in Russia in 2019 — from trash protests in the north to contested elections in the Far East, from border disputes in the North Caucasus to the effects of climate change in Siberia.

As Russians increasingly turn their attention to local problems, independent media organizations have stepped in to provide critical coverage outside Moscow.

Many of these local outlets are online-based and reader-supported — helping them survive despite new government restrictions, fines and hacking attacks.

Here is a selection of nine important media outlets that are covering Russia's regions:

Tayga.info

Based in: Novosibirsk, Siberia

Tayga.info is an independent news website based in Russia's third-largest city of Novosibirsk that has a network of journalists across Siberia.

In 2019, the news outlet covered important local environmental stories including the pollution of Lake Baikal, protests against a coal mine in the Kuzbass region and the disastrous effects of Siberia's forest fires and floods in the summer.

In recent years, its employees have survived attacks and intimidation, including an assault in 2018 on a journalist covering local elections in Khakassia, as well as an attack on the outlet's editor in chief outside his office in 2015.

Znak.com

Based in: Yekaterinburg, Urals

Znak.com is an independent news website that provides important regional and national coverage from its headquarters in Yekaterinburg in the Urals.

It was founded in 2012 and since then has become one of Russia's most-cited online media (in ninth place for 2018).

In the past year, Znak.com stood out for its coverage of protests in Yekaterinburg against the construction of an Orthodox church in a popular public square — which was later put on hold.

Fontanka.ru

Based in: St. Petersburg

Fontanka is one of Russia's most influential online media outlets based outside Moscow. Based in St. Petersburg, the website is known for both local news coverage and investigations that resonate across the country.

Over the past year, Fontanka has published widely read investigations into cases of torture in prisons, elections violations in St. Petersburg and the activities of the Wagner private military contractor.

7x7

Based in: Syktyvkar, republic of Komi

The 7x7 website is based in the city of Syktyvkar and specializes in news from Russia's northwestern, central, Volga and Ural regions.

It self-identifies as a "horizontal media," giving space to activists and bloggers to write about important local issues.

Journalists from the outlet have often been targeted by the authorities. Earlier this month, a 7x7 correspondent was fined for allegedly participating in a local branch of the Open Russia organization, which authorities have labeled as an "undesirable organization." 7x7 previously recieved a fine for publishing an interview discussing drug legalization that it helped pay with

the help of a crowdfunding campaign.

Takie Dela

Based in: Moscow and other regions

Takie Dela is a web portal run by the "Need Help" charity which aims to attract public attention to under-covered social issues across Russia.

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Its journalists write about disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities, homeless people, migrants, victims of domestic violence and hospital patients.

Together with the Need Help charity, the portal has helped direct tens of millions of rubles in donations to important social causes.

MediaZona

Based in: Moscow

MediaZona is a Moscow-based media outlet that covers court cases as well as news related to Russia's law enforcement, penal system and human rights compliance.

It was founded in 2014 by members of the Pussy Riot performance art group and is largely funded through donations.

MediaZona is best known for its live updates on court hearings and over the past year it has extensively covered cases of prison torture, domestic violence and political persecution.

Novye Kolesa

Based in: Kaliningrad

Novye Kolesa is based in Russia's Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad and is known for its investigations into local corruption.

Igor Rudnikov, the chief editor of the newspaper, was released this June after spending more than a year and a half in jail for allegedly extorting money from Russia's Investigative Committee in a case that critics say was fabricated.

In 2018, the paper was temporarily forced to go out of print after local publishers and distributors refused to print or sell it. It returned to print earlier this month.

Chernovik

Based in: Makhachkala, republic of Dagestan

The Chernovik newspaper covers social and political news in the North Caucasus republic of

Dagestan.

In October 2019, security forces searched its editorial office as part of a criminal case against Chernovik journalist Abdulmumin Gadzhiev, who was placed in pre-trial detention on charges of financing terrorism.

In protest, three local newspapers published issues with covers bearing a slogan saying: "I Am / We Are Abdulmumin Gadzhiev."

Vesma Today

Based in: Magadan, Far East

Vesma Today is based in Magadan in Russia's Far East and covers political events in the region, including investigations into local corruption.

In October 2019, its editor Andrei Grishin was beaten by two men at the entrance of his home.

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