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Belarus TV Staffs Up With Kremlin-Funded Journalists – RBC

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Belteleradio workers walked off the job on Aug. 17. **Iexei Druzhinin / Russian Presidential Press and Information Office / TASS**

Journalists and technical personnel from Russia's Kremlin-funded RT broadcaster have been standing in for staff on strike at Belarus state television and radio, Russia's RBC news website reported Monday.

Workers at the Belteleradio broadcasting service walked off the job on Aug. 17 in protest against Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's violent crackdown on peaceful opposition rallies. Lukashenko, whose claim of a landslide victory in last month's vote triggered mass nationwide demonstrations, said days later that he had invited Russian replacements for the striking Belarusian journalists.

At least two teams from RT have arrived at Belteleradio's studios since Aug. 18, RBC cited two unnamed Belteleradio employees as saying. The first team has since returned to Russia, according to an unnamed employee of Belteleradio's TV news division.

“They included at least one IT expert, four technical personnel and [RT correspondent] Pridybaylo,” one of the employees said.

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RBC reported that Belteleradio’s TV news division has been using RT’s materials in its broadcasting since at least Aug. 27.

Pridybaylo, described by several Belteleradio employees as a “liaison” between Belteleradio and the Russian journalists, told RBC that RT’s mobile TV station has also arrived in Belarus. He said it films content for RT’s video news agency Ruptly and sells it to other services around the world, including in Belarus.

Pridybaylo denied that RT journalists were officially employed by Belteleradio.

“It’s an amusing fake. No one [from RT] has come to work for Belteleradio,” Pridybaylo told RBC.

“I for example work exclusively at RT. The fact that I come and drink tea and coffee at Belteleradio is out of friendship,” he said.

Around 300 Belteleradio employees have joined the anti-Lukashenko strikes, of whom approximately 100 have resigned, RBC cited current and former staffers as saying.

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