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Journalists Worldwide Urge Russia to Stop Persecuting Independent Media

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Nearly 250 journalists from 63 countries decried the "unprecedented pressure" against independent media like DOXA, Meduza and iStories. **istories.media / TASS / Meduza.io / MT**

Hundreds of journalists from scores of countries have called on Russia to end its persecution of independent media, according to an open letter published on the Russian student-run news outlet DOXA's website Monday.

The World Press Freedom Day statement came a month after authorities filed a criminal case against DOXA's editorial team for allegedly "inciting minors to participate in illegal activities." Also in April, security agents raided the home of Roman Anin, editor-in-chief of the iStories (Important Stories) investigative outlet, and labeled one of Russia's most-read news sites, Meduza, a "foreign agent."

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“Russia’s independent media are under serious threat,” 235 journalists representing 63 countries said.

The signatories representing North and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa decried the intimidation of independent media “through legal restrictions, changes in ownership, fines and criminal cases” since Vladimir Putin’s ascent to the presidency two decades ago.

“This policy has led to the fact that the Russian media landscape is now dominated by outlets controlled by the state or Vladimir Putin’s long-time friends,” they said.

Citing the latest criminal cases and “foreign agent” labels as well as anti-free speech laws that Russia passed in the last decade, the international journalists said that “the Kremlin intends to silence independent media and deny Russian citizens access to truthful information.”

“Today on World Press Freedom Day we the undersigned express our solidarity with our colleagues from iStories, DOXA, Meduza and other independent Russian media who are under unprecedented pressure and who nevertheless continue their hard work telling the truth and calling the authorities to account.”

Russia fell one spot in Reporters Without Borders' 2021 global press freedom index to 150th place, ranking below countries such as Zimbabwe and South Sudan.

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