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# Russian Paper's Belarus Branch Disbands After Journalist's Arrest

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Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. **Viktor Drachev / TASS**

The Belarus edition of a popular pro-government Russian newspaper said Tuesday it was shutting down after Belarusian authorities blocked its website and detained one of its journalists last week.

Komsomolskaya Pravda Belarus said it reached the decision "having analyzed the events of the past year and especially the past week."

Days earlier, Belarus blocked the paper's website after it published an interview with the classmate of an IT worker allegedly involved in a Minsk apartment shootout that led to the death of a Belarusian KGB security service officer.

The interview's author was placed in a Minsk detention center that became famous for alleged abuse of protesters who attended mass anti-government protests against the results of a disputed presidential election last year.

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Activists claimed that the journalist who wrote the story, veteran KP Belarus reporter Gennady Mozheiko, was apprehended in Moscow and brought to Minsk. Belarus' KGB said Mozheiko was detained at a Minsk airport and the Kremlin said it was unaware of where the detention took place.

Russian media executives slammed Mozheiko's arrest and officials called on Minsk to observe his rights.

In a statement on its website, KP said that it has decided to close its representative office in Minsk.

"All employees will be paid monetary compensation or offered a job at other KP entities," said the one-paragraph statement, which was signed by the editorial team.

The Kremlin said later Wednesday that it was "sorry" to learn about the KP branch's closure in Belarus.

"We see that it was the only correct decision in this case," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

He added that the Kremlin hopes that the charges of  incitement of hatred and insulting the authorities leveled against Mozheiko in Belarus "are not related to his journalistic work."

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