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Latvia Revokes Exiled Russian Station's License Over War Coverage Violations

December 06, 2022



Dozhd TV Channel Studio **Alexander Miridonov / Kommersant**

Latvia said Tuesday that it is revoking the independent Russian television channel Dozhd's broadcasting license, citing "threats to national security and social order" following a series of violations related to the channel's coverage of the war in Ukraine.

"Dozhd TV will disappear from the airwaves on Thursday, Dec. 8," tweeted Ivars Abolins, chairman of Latvia's National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) media regulator.

"The laws of Latvia must be respected by everyone," he added.

Dozhd started broadcasting from Latvia, a European Union and NATO member, in June after it was forced to suspend operations in Russia due to the country's crackdown on independent war coverage.

Latvian authorities fined the channel for displaying a map marking annexed Crimea as part of Russia and for calling the Russian Armed Forces "our army."

The third and final strike appeared to be an anchor's controversial comments expressing hopes that Dozhd had helped supply Russian soldiers with equipment and basic amenities during a live broadcast last Friday.

Related article: Latvia Fines Russia's Liberal Dozhd TV Over Ukraine Coverage

Dozhd editor-in-chief Tikhon Dzyadko later apologized to viewers and the channel publicly fired the anchor, who had said that his on-air remarks were taken out of context.

Dozhd "has not, is not and will not ... help the Russian army — on the frontlines or otherwise," Dzyadko said at the time.

Abolins said an NEPLP investigation determined that the Russian broadcaster "doesn't understand and isn't aware of the nature and seriousness of each individual violation."

Following Latvia's move, Dozhd tweeted: "We continue to work and consider all accusations against us unfair and absurd."

Dozhd creative producer Anna Mongayt said the channel would continue to broadcast on its YouTube channel.

"We know how to overcome epic difficulties and don't consider our mission accomplished," she wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

The Kremlin called the incident "an example of the misguided illusion that anywhere is better or safer than in Russia."

Founded in 2008, Dozhd remains one of the largest independent Russian media outlets and before the war had covered topics like opposition protests, corruption and fake news despite increasing restrictions from Russian authorities.

This fall, Dozhd opened a broadcasting studio in Amsterdam in partnership with The Moscow Times.

Latvia, which was controlled by Moscow under the Soviet Union, has been one of Ukraine's staunchest allies throughout the Russian invasion.

The country's state security service said last week it had repeatedly warned policymakers of the intelligence risks "emanating from Russia's so-called independent media relocating their activity to Latvia."

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