

## Suppression of Russian Media

**On this World Press Freedom Day, we call on the Russian government to uphold its responsibility to protect and defend freedom of the press. In 1998, the Russian Federation signed the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression for all citizens and the right “to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.”**

Russian independent media, and investigative journalism in particular, is under grave threat. From the very beginning of his presidency Vladimir Putin has [cracked down on independent media](#) through different means: legislative restrictions, change of ownership, fines and criminal charges. These policies have led to a complete [change](#) in the Russian media landscape, which is now dominated by outlets [controlled](#) by the state or Vladimir Putin’s long-time friends.

The major TV channels belong either to the state directly (like RT and Rossiya) or the National Media Group controlled by Yuriy Kovalchuk, who the U.S. Treasury [described](#) as, “the personal banker for senior officials of the Russian Federation including Putin.” The ownership of major Russian newspapers and online media has also changed in the last decade leading

to resignations of key editors and reporters and censorship in once independent outlets.

The past few years have seen a resurgence of investigative media with new organizations doing some of the best work ever done by Russian media.

However, in the past few months, attacks by the Kremlin on what remains of the independent media have escalated.

### **Attack on Roman Anin and IStories**

On April 9, officers of the Federal Security Service led by an investigator from the Investigative Committee of Russia [raided](#) the apartment of Roman Anin, the prominent Russian investigative reporter and founder of [IStories](#), an online independent media outlet. Anin has led numerous groundbreaking investigations into organized crime and corruption in Russia and has received prestigious Russian and international awards for his stories. All digital devices, notebooks, sim-cards and documents were seized from Anin's apartment and IStories offices were also searched. None have been returned. After a seven hour search, Anin was taken to the Investigative Committee for interrogation. Anin is currently considered a witness in the case, but that status could change any day to a suspect and defendant, which could ultimately result in a four year prison sentence.

The pretext for the raid of Anin's apartment and the offices of IStories was a criminal case started five years ago following the criminal complaint by Olga Rozhkova, ex-wife of Igor Sechin, the head of the state controlled oil company Rosneft and one of the most powerful man in Russia. Rozhkova accused Anin of using photos from her Instagram account without her permission for a [story](#) about the luxurious yacht St. Princess Olga.

Documents from the criminal case show that Russian security services used this case as a pretext to put Anin under surveillance for the last several years, which included interception of his phone calls and online communications, hacking of his email and other forms of surveillance.

These draconian actions in response to Anin's use of a readily available Instagram photo amount to a violation of Anin's freedom of expression and harassment of the media by the state.

### **Attack on student magazine DOXA**

On April 14, law enforcement [raided](#) the office of independent student magazine DOXA and the apartments of its four editors Armen Aramyan, Natalia Tyshkevich, Vladimir Metelkin and Alla Gutnikova as well as the apartments of two of the editors' parents. After the raid, these editors were detained and taken to the Investigative Committee for interrogation.

Aramyan, Tyshkevich, Metelkin, Gutnikova were later [charged](#) under Article 151.2 of the Russian criminal code (“involvement of minors in hazardous activities”), which carries a potential sentence of three years in prison. The evidence is based on a video published by DOXA in January 2021. The video emphasizes the unlawful threats of expulsion made by universities’ administration to students before the winter protests supporting Alexey Navalny. DOXA previously removed the video at the request of the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications (Roskomnadzor), but later appealed the order.

Aramyan, Tyshkevich, Metelkin, Gutnikova are currently [detained](#) under house arrest.

### **Attack on Meduza**

On April 23, the Russian Ministry of Justice [proclaimed](#) Meduza, the biggest independent online news outlet in Russia, as a “foreign agent.” Recently introduced by Russian legislators, this status imposes a number of irreversible restrictions on a media outlet which — if not followed — can further lead to huge fines, blockage of the media’s website and criminal prosecution of its reporters.

This decision by the Russian authorities was later [condemned](#) by the European Union which stated, “the so-called ‘foreign agent’ law

contributes to a systematic infringement of basic freedoms, and restricts civil society, independent media and the rights of political opposition in Russia.”

“It is extremely concerning that Russian authorities continue to restrict the work of independent media platforms, as well as individual journalists and other media actors. It goes against Russia's international obligations and human rights commitments,” the EU further stated.

These attacks, in addition to more than a dozen restrictive laws adopted by the state against the freedom of expression in the last decade, show that the Kremlin intends to silence independent media outlets and deprive Russian citizens of truthful information. Today on World Press Freedom Day, we, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with our Russian colleagues from IStories, DOXA, Meduza and other independent Russian media, who withstand unprecedented pressure and nevertheless continue their hard work by telling the truth and holding power to account.

Katharine Viner (The Guardian, UK)

Matt Kiefer (The Washington Post, USA)

Maxime Vaudano (Le Monde, France)

Frederik Obermaier (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany)

Per Anders Johansen (Aftenposten, Norway)

Nicholas Nehamas (Miami Herald, USA)

Mark MacKinnon (The Globe and Mail, Canada)

Jyri Hänninen (Finnish Broadcasting Company, Finland)

Søren Kristensen (Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR), Denmark)

Dawn Garcia (Stanford University - John S. Knight Journalism Fellowships, USA)

Jacques Monin (Radio France, France)

Flor Coelho (LA NACION, Argentina)

Tom Van de Weghe (VRT NWS, Belgium)

Rui Araujo (TVI, Portugal)

Karlijn Kuijpers (Platform Investico, Netherlands)

Emmanuel K. Dogbevi (Ghana Business News, Ghana)

Linton Besser (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australia)

Bastian Obermayer (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany)

Pierre Romera (ICIJ, France)

Johannes Kr. Kristjánsson (Reykjavik Media, Iceland)

Drew Sullivan (OCCRP, USA)

Gustavo Gorriti (IDL-Reporteros, Peru)

Ignacio Gomez Gomez (Noticias Uno, Colombia)

Jelena Cosic (ICIJ, Serbia)

Juliette Garside (The Guardian, UK)

Roman Anin (IStories, Russia)

H R Venkatesh (Media Buddhi, India)

Joel Konopo (Ink Centre for Investigative Journalism, Botswana)

Marina Walker (Pulitzer Center, USA)

Geraldine Moriba (Southern Poverty Law Center, USA)

Robert Olsson (The Swedish Publishers Organization, Sweden)

Shyamlal Yadav (The Indian Express, India)

Oliver Zihlmann (Tamedia, Switzerland)

Andres Bermudez Lievano (Latin American Center for Investigative Journalism (CLIP), Colombia)

Soline Ledésert (ICIJ, France)

Tanya Kozyreva (Ukrayinska Pravda, Ukraine)

Pelin Ünker (Deutsche Welle, Turkey)

Anuška Delić (Oštro, Slovenia)

Dejan Milovac (NGO MANS, Montenegro)

Luc Caregari (Woxx, Luxembourg)

Djordje Padejski (Stanford University - John S. Knight Journalism Fellowships, USA)

Miranda Patrucic (OCCRP, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Delphine Reuter (ICIJ, Belgium)

Besar Likmeta (BIRN, Albania)

Dean Starkman (ICIJ, Hungary)

Margot Gibbs (Freelance/ICIJ, UK)

Sydney P. Freedberg (ICIJ, USA)

Sean McGoey (ICIJ, USA)

Rick Hirsch (Miami Herald, USA)

Ben Hallman (ICIJ, USA)

Emilia Diaz-Struck (ICIJ, Venezuela)

Pete Carey (USA)

Agustin Armendariz (ICIJ, USA)

Rana Sabbagh (OCCRP, Jordan)

Lukas Diko (Investigative Center of Jan Kuciak, Slovakia)

Sasha Chavkin (OCCRP, USA)

Umar Cheema (The News, Pakistan)

Sarunas Cerniauskas (OCCRP/Siena.lt, Lithuania)

Atanas Tchobanov (BIRD.BG, Bulgaria)

Alberto Arellano (CIPER, Chile)

Tom Stocks (OCCRP, UK)

Marcos Garcia Rey (Freelancer, Spain)

Sadie Brown (OCCRP, USA)

Ewald Scharfenberg (Venezuela)

Miglė Krancevičiūtė (Siena.lt, Lithuania)

Adrian Mogos (newsromania.net, Romania)

Aisa Telalovic (Journalism Development Network, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Alina Radu (Media-Guard Association, Moldova)

Edik Baghdasaryan (HETQ, Armenia)



Laura Weffer (Venezuela)

Nicolae Cuschevici (RISE Moldova, Moldova)

Vladimir Thorik (RISE Moldova, Moldova)

Margot Williams (ICIJ, USA)

Ana Poenariu (RISE Project, Romania)

Nathan Jaccard (OCCRP, Colombia)

Richard H.P. Sia (ICIJ, USA)

Jan Strozyk (NDR, Germany)

Pete Carey (USA)

Michelle Holmes (Heart's Ease Love and Freedom Center, USA)

Brenda Medina (ICIJ, USA)

Jose Roberto de Toledo (piauí magazine, Brazil)

James G. Wright (OCCRP, USA)

Nicky Hager (Freelance, New Zealand)

Purity Mukami (Finance Uncovered/The Elephant, Kenya)

Jurre van Bergen (OCCRP, Netherlands)

Nathalie Alvaray (Venezuela)

Carolina Guerrero (Radio Ambulante Studios, USA)

Ronny Rojas (Noticias Telemundo, USA)

Carlos Dada (El Faro, El Salvador)

Jaime Mantilla A (Dialoguemos.ec, Ecuador)

Benjamin Petit (Dysturb, France)

Mónica González (CIPER, Chile)

Echo Hui (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australia)

Guillermo Lopez Portillo Vargas (Televisa, México)

Bill Birnbauer (Democracy's Watchdogs Inc, Australia)

Rakesh Kalshian (Freelance, India)

Boyoung Lim (South Korea)

Sharad Vyas (OCCRP, India)

David Bloss (OCCRP, USA)

Vesna Radojević (KRIK, Serbia)

Inga Springe (Re:Baltica, Latvia)

Micah Reddy (South Africa)

Biro Attila (RISE Project, Romania)

Holger Roonemaa (Eesti Ekspress, Estonia)

Nkateko Chauke (OCCRP, South Africa)

Antonio Baquero Iglesias (OCCRP, Spain)

Daniela Pinheiro (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Portugal)

Sarah Clarke (ARTICLE 19, UK)

Pavla Holcová (Czech Center for Investigative Reporting, Czech Republic)

Ky Krauthamer (Transitions, Czech Republic)

Andrei Ciurcanu (OCCRP, Romania)

Sara Farolfi (OCCRP, UK)

Mira Milosevic (Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), Belgium)

Mogens Schmidt (Denmark)

Izabela Moi (Agencia Mural de Jornalismo das Periferias, Brazil)

Laurens Hueting (European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Germany)

Leon Willems (Free Press Unlimited, Netherlands)

Elena Loginova (OCCRP/Slidstvo.Info, Ukraine)

Guilherme De Abreu Monteiro De Freitas Amado (Abraji/ Globo Group, Brazil)

Matej Zwitter (Oštro, Slovenia)

Bernhard Odehnal (Tamedia, Switzerland)

Luz María (Prensa Democracia y Desarrollo Regional, Peru)

Jacob Borg (Times of Malta, Malta)

Mauritius Much (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany)

Minna Knus-Galan (Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE, Finland)

John Hansen (Politiken/Danish Federation of Investigative Journalists, Denmark)

Michael Bilton (Freelance writer/author, UK)

Alia Ibrahim (Daraj Media, Lebanon)

Ronja Pilgaard (Danwatch, Denmark)

Anders Aslund (Atlantic Council, USA)

Natalia Arno (Free Russia Foundation, USA)

Kristof Clerix (Knack, Belgium)

Paul Radu (OCCRP, Romania)

James Ball (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, UK)

Elaine Díaz Rodríguez (Periodismo de Barrio, Cuba)

Roman Shleyinov (IStories/OCCRP, Russia)

Dragana Pećo (KRIK/OCCRP, Serbia)

Diana Moukalled (Daraj, Lebanon)

Leo Sisti (L'Espresso, Italy)

Ilya Zaslavskiy (Underminers.info, USA/Russia)

Corinne Vella (The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, Malta)

Charles Lewis (Investigative Reporting Workshop, USA)

Simon Mkina (Tampa, Tanzania)

Simon Goodley (The Guardian, UK)

Sandra Bartlett (Room Sound Productions, Canada)

Claudia Nunez (Los Angeles Times , USA)

Deb Woolway (Freelance, Canada)

Sue Prestedge (Canada)

Dave Seglins (CBC, Canada)

Natalie Clancy (Unifor, Canada)

Stephen Grey (Reuters, UK)

Nuno Vargas (Vv, Portugal)

Tassie Notar (Canada)

Mark O'Neill (Canada)

Jose Zamora (Univision News, USA)

Peter Downie (Canada)

Juha Rekola (Union of Journalists in Finland, Finland)

Tamar Weinstein (Canada)

Sofi Oksanen (Finland)

Mohammed Komani (ARIJ, Yemen)

Paolo Biondani (L'Espresso, Italy)

Talin Vartanian (Freelance, Canada)

Susan Reisler (Reisler Productions, Canada)

Tim McKenna (Canada)

Yvonne Gall (Canada)

Sabine Forsblom (PEN Finland, Finland)

Juan Pablo Meneses (Universidad Portátil, Chile)

Howard Bernstein (Canada)

Jeffrey Coonjohn (UNISHKA Research Service, USA)

Karin Wells (Canada)

Bob Culbert (Independent.Documentary Producer, Canada)

Peter DiCampo (The Everyday Projects, USA)

Austin Merrill (The Everyday Projects, USA)

Sarah Shourd (Solitary Watch, USA)

Peter Puxley (Canada)

Rory Donaldson (Transparency International, UK)

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Jill Spelliscy (Canada)

Laura Lokdam (Denmark)

Reg Sherren (Canada)

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David Gutnick (Canada)

Fred Youngs (Canada)

Carole Warren (CBC Radio, Canada)

Anders Alexandersson (Sweden)

Katrine Friis (Berlingske Newspaper, Denmark)

Jerry Dias (Unifor, Canada)

Marijka Hurko (Canada)

Kelly Crichton (CBC, Canada)

Chido Onumah (African Centre for Media & Information Literacy, Nigeria)

Jeffrey Dvorkin (Massey College, University of Toronto, Canada)

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Vittorio Malagutti (L'Espresso, Italy)

Cornelia Abel on behalf of Transparency International

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Darolyn Davis (D&A Communications, USA)

Loreen Pindera (freelance journalist, Canada)

Candice Fortman (Outlier Media, USA)

Aaron Foley (USA)

Kennedy Jawoko (Canada)

Rachel Dissell (Independent, USA)

Jim Colgan (Independent, USA)

Lyndsey Gilpin (Southerly, USA)

Janet Rae-Dupree (Unboxed Media, USA)

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Fredrik Laurin (Swedish Public Service Television, Sweden)

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Jenni Virtanen (HS, Finland)

Chris Horne (The Devil Strip Local News Co-op, USA)

Kersti Forsberg (Linnaeus University, Sweden)

Katie Palmer (USA)

Eduardo del Campo Cortés (El Español, Spain)

James Oliver (BBC Panorama, UK)

Mario Christodoulou (ABC, Australia)

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Maria Ordzhonikidze (Justice for Journalists Foundation)