

# Freedom of speech as a threat to national security of the Baltic States

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Freedom of speech is one of the basic democratic values. Media Freedom, Freedom of Opinion and Expression are fundamental principles of democratic society. Citizens of any country have the right to receive information from alternative sources. It is important that journalists in any country have the opportunity to do their job without fear of interference from the authorities.

Unfortunately, technologies to suppress dissent are currently being used in Europe. In the European countries, there are difficulties for journalists who have alternative opinions. They are not allowed to speak.

In this regard the Baltic States are not an exception. Moreover, the suppressive technologies currently used in the Baltic States are the most advanced.

It has long been known that the Baltic States are permanently fighting the Russian media. Recently, On December 3 Latvian State Security Service officers searched the apartments and offices of Russian-speaking journalists. Their office equipment and personal belongings were seized, then they were interrogated by state security agents. Criminal cases have been initiated against all of them. Journalists can go to jail for several years.

All these people are accused of collaborating with a Russian news agency "Russia Today". Of course, according to the official version, journalists are accused of violating the EU sanctions regime. However, it is clear that they were detained because the agency they are collaborating with is Russian. The

situation is incredible: journalists were arrested for collaborating with a news agency!

The same events are taking place not only in Latvia, but also in Lithuania and Estonia. Freedom of speech in the Baltic States has lost its meaning. All such processes are determined by special services. If someone tries to present information differently than the authorities would like, he is immediately repressed. The evidence is absolutely unimportant. Harassment of journalists in the Baltics occurs on far-fetched reasons. Accusations are always unsubstantiated. There is a separation of media workers on the basis of cooperation with “right” and “wrong” media. Freedom of speech and human rights are not for “wrong” journalists.

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms guarantees the right to receive and distribute information. The Baltic States, as members of the Council of Europe, have given obligations under this convention. Initiation of criminal cases against journalists violates those obligations. This violates the rules of the United Nations Organization and the Council of Europe.

The European Union and international structures for the protection of Human Rights prefer not to talk about the situation with restrictions on the Freedom of Speech of journalists in the Baltics States.

The example of such actions shows the real attitude of the EU countries to Freedom of Speech and basic democratic values. This is an example of violating the foundations of a democratic society – Media Freedom and Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

It's shocking that in the 21st century people are persecuted for their opinions and for trying to express an alternative point of view.

At present journalism is one of the most dangerous job.

Journalists continue to be harassed for their work. Sometimes, they even pay with their lives. For example, Slovak investigative journalist Jan Kuciak was shot dead in February 2018 in Slovakia, as well as many others.

It is sad that this is happening more and more often even in the peaceful democracies of Europe.

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