



Inspiration: Poster by Nina Vatolina, 1941

Title, English version:

## **Journalism по-русски**

(Journalism in Russian)

Title, Russian version:

## **Журналистика in Russian**

(Journalism in Russian)

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### **PDF version**

PDF version includes all unabridged juridical texts and interviews [barentspressprojects.com/books](http://barentspressprojects.com/books).

### **About Barents Press International**

Barents Press International is an NGO operated **by journalists for journalists** in the northernmost regions in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and North-western Russia.

We create, we share knowledge and we work together across the borders. We believe that more journalism across the borders are vital in decreasing misunderstandings, fake news and the gap of knowledge between our countries.

This book is part of that **mission**.

## Credits

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#### **Interviewees**

We would like to thank all 28 interviewed journalists, men and women working in the Barents Region for telling your stories.

## NJC on the Bridging Gaps Project

Winston Churchill is quoted for saying that Russia is “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”.

The same goes for Russian Journalism.

The **Nordic Journalist Centre** tries to solve the riddle, understand the mystery and unlock the enigma. Through education and exchange, we bring Russian and Nordic journalists together, and let them look into each other’s profession and the conditions under which it is undertaken.

The Nordic Journalist Centre endorses this booklet and its effort to “bridge the gaps” between journalists in the Nordic regions of Europe and Russia.

“Nordic and the Russian Journalists have much to share. Provided they will”, as Russian tv-host, Vladimir Pozner, phrased it at a seminar in 2019 during Almedalsveckan in Sweden. “I absolutely think that the existing relations between journalists of Russia and the Nordic countries should continue to develop and strengthen”.

*Nordic Journalist Centre, [www.njc.dk](http://www.njc.dk)*

*Leif Lønsmann, Board member and senior advisor*

*John Frølich, Managing Director*

Nordic Journalist Centre (NJC) is a non-profit organization founded in 1957. The goal is to strengthen the development of Nordic media and journalism by organizing mid-career training and courses for journalists from all Nordic countries, based on common cultural values and the ‘Nordic media Model’. Furthermore, NJC contributes to networking activities among journalists and editors in the Nordic Region, including North West Russia..

# A gap that shouldn’t be there

Do western journalists really know the nuances involved in working as a journalist in modern Russia - juridical, financial, ethically? Do Russian journalists really understand the equivalent nuances for journalists in Western countries? Our experience is that the regrettable answer is no.

There is a **gap** of knowledge that can make it challenging to cooperate colleague to colleague. A gap we believe should not be there.

We believe this book is one important **bridge** over the gap. Through the following pages, Russian journalists share their own words about their working conditions, not in black and white but in many different colours. We also outline the most important legal aspects that Russian journalists face in their work.

We **believe** quality journalism is a necessity in society, and we strongly believe that cross border connections and cooperation is key to a more trusting, understanding world.

## Colleagues, let’s start bridging the gap!

*Anna Kireeva, Barents Press Russia*

*Tim Andersson Rask, Barents Press Sweden*





Come to Russia,  
we will show  
and tell you everything.

To understand Russia,  
you need to see it  
for yourself.

We are ready  
to help you.

We try to work  
professionally  
and objectively.

*Interview #17*  
*Editor, privately owned*  
*regional online media*

**Subject by subject:**  
**Legislation explained  
by media lawyer  
Damir Gainutdinov**

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**Icons on cover inside explain risks and sanctions:**



**Warning** by Roskomnadzor.

Listing as foreign agent.

Restriction of banking operations.



**Fines** from thousands to millions of rubles.



**Confiscation** of property (computers, servers, circulation etc.) involved in the violation.



**Arrest.**

**Imprisonment.**

Correctional community service.



**Blocking** of website.

Suspension of the organization.

Termination of the media.



**Relevant laws involved:**

**Act on Narcotic Drugs** – Federal Law of 08.01.1998 N 3-FL

*On drugs and psychotropic substances.*

**Anti-Terrorist Financing Act** - Federal Law of 07.08.2001 N 115-FL *Legislation on income derived from criminal activity and the financing of terrorism.*

**Child Protection Act** - Federal Law of 29.12.2010 N 436-FL

*On the protection of children from information detrimental to their physical and spiritual development.*

**Civil Code** of the Russian Federation - Part I of 30 November 1994, N 51-FL, Part II of 26.01.1996, N 14-FL, Part III of 26.11.2001, N 146-FL and Part IV of 18.12.2006, N 230-FL

**Civil Procedure Code** of the Russian Federation of 14.11.2002 N 138-FL

**Code of Administrative Offences** of the Russian Federation of 30.12.2001, N 195-FL

**Criminal Code** of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996, N 63-FL

**Information Act** – Federal Law of 27.07.2006, N 149-FL  
*On Information, Information Technologies and Information Protection.*

**Law on Extremism** - Federal Law of 25.07.2002 N 114-FL  
*On combating extremist activities.*

**Media Law** - Federal Law of 27.12.1991 N 2124-1 *On mass media.*

**Federal services mentioned:**

**Federal supervisory service for consumer protection** and human welfare

**Prosecutor-General's Office** of the Russian Federation.

**Roskomnadzor (RCS)**– Federal Service for Monitoring Communications, Information Technology and Mass Communications.

### Subjects covered:

1. Disrespect for power and fake news
2. Description of the causes and methods of suicide
3. Information on juvenile offenders and victims
4. Information on drugs
5. Mentioning LGBT
6. Information on terrorist acts and terrorists
7. Mentioning extremist organizations
8. Information about World War II, rehabilitation of Nazism, negative information about memorials and national holidays
9. Insulting the feelings of believers
10. Insults
11. Information about mass (public) events held in violations of the established order
12. Information about privacy, personal and family secrets of people, officials including, image right
13. Obscenity in media
14. Recognition as a foreign agent



In perspective:

## Interviews with 28 Russian journalists representing a wide range of modern media.

All interview persons are **anonymous** but listed by type of their media.



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The PDF version of this book includes all full length juridical texts and unabridged interviews.  
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There's a feeling that we do not fight for our rights.

Our Western colleagues are probably wondering why we tolerate that and continue to work under such conditions.

It would be very curious to imagine our foreign colleagues in our shoes.

I don't think many of them would become heroes or fighters for the rights and freedom of speech with the risk of losing a job, an apartment or social guarantees.

*Interview #14  
Journalist, State owned TV*

*Inspiration: Poster by Nina Vatolina, 1941*

# Disrespect for power and fake news

It is forbidden to disseminate knowingly inaccurate socially significant information under the guise of reliable messages, as well as indecent information that offend human dignity and public morality, obvious disrespect for society, the state, official state symbols of the Russian Federation, the Constitution of the Russian Federation or bodies implementing state power in the Russian Federation.

The editor of the Nizhny Novgorod newspaper KozaPress, Irina Slavina, was fined 70 thousand rubles for a post on Facebook in which she commented on the installation of a memorial plaque to Joseph Stalin, 'After in Shakhunya the muzzle of Stalin was hanged it's proposed to rename the settlement in Shahuynya'.

An activist of the Chelyabinsk Stop-GOK environmental movement, Sergei Belogorokhov, was fined 40 thousand rubles for posting on VKontakte a message about a sinkhole in the village of Roza that could have been formed from blasting operations carried out at the Korkinsky coal mine.



## Legislation:

*Code of Administrative Offenses, articles 13.15 and 20.1.3  
Information Act, articles 15.1.1 and 15.3*



**The law on fake news is worded in the way that all information that someone may not like can be considered fake news. And the courts tend to side with them. Then the author, being even a hundred times right, can be fined for spreading fake news.**

*Interview #5*

*Journalist, privately owned National newspaper*

**We prefer not to publish stories that can be interpreted as an insult to the authorities.**

*Interview #2*

*Journalist, regionally owned media*

The criteria for insulting power are very vague. There are general concepts that, for example, one cannot trample the national **flag** or kick the national **coat of arms**, that is one cannot insult state symbols. But sometimes small officials see themselves as equal to those symbols, and the courts side with officials, not the journalists.

*Interview #10*

*Editor, privately owned National newspaper*



# Description of the causes and methods of suicide

The Information Act provides the possibility of restricting access to information on methods for committing suicide, as well as calls for committing suicide. The relevant pages of the Roskomnadzor is included in the Registry of Prohibited Websites, and a notification is sent to the host for transmission to the owner of the offending page, who has one day to delete the prohibited information. Otherwise, telecom operators will be obliged to start blocking access for their subscribers.

In December 2019, Roskomnadzor demanded that Media Zone edit the article named 'Reasonable Initiative and Creative Approach'. The material described the criminal case against the police of Nizhnekamsk who tortured the detainee Inaz Pirkin who, unable to withstand torturing, committed suicide. Roskomnadzor's claims were caused by the words 'climbed onto the roof of a ten-story building and jumped down', as well as a photograph where the most likely place to jump was shown with an arrow. All this was regarded as an instruction for suicide.



## Legislation:

*Criminal Code, article 110.1*  
*Information Act, article 15.1*



How to write about suicide without naming the sequence of the person's actions? **No way.** Or it's very difficult. That's why Russian media have almost stopped writing about it.

*Interview #7*

*Editor, privately owned National newspaper*

We are learning to **write between the lines.** We cannot write 'A person jumped from a bridge'. We write 'Rescuers found a corpse of a girl under the bridge'. We cannot say 'jumped from the roof', we write 'fell from the roof'.

*Interview #17*

*Editor, privately owned regional online media*

We cannot write 'the man hanged himself' or 'jumped off the roof' - we are forbidden to describe the method of suicide. Many mass media began to use the phrase 'the person has committed 'Roskomnadzor'.

*Interview #5*

*Journalist, privately owned National newspaper*

Yes, we **indirectly** describe what happened. For example, a girl committed suicide by swallowing sleeping pills. I had to write that they found a body of a girl and there were a lot of pills nearby. We are already used to writing that a person did not jump out of the window, but had a terrible fall. We cannot describe suicide methods but we can report that it is was suicide by saying that a note was left or an investigation is underway, etc.

*Interview #21*

*Journalist, privately owned online media*

# Information on juvenile offenders and victims

Dissemination in the media and on the Internet of information about a minor injured as a result of unlawful actions including names, photos and video images of the minor, date of birth, place of residence, studies or work or other information that can identify the person is recognized as abuse of freedom of the media.

It is also forbidden for the media to disseminate information indicating the identity of a minor who committed a crime or any other 'antisocial' action, without the minor's consent or that of his legal representative. Under Russian law, persons under the age of 18 are considered minors.

Such information is prohibited to be disclosed without the consent of the parents or legal representatives, or the children if they are 14 years old. An important disclaimer is that it is possible to disseminate information without the consent of the legal representative if he is himself is a suspect or accused of committing unlawful acts against a minor.



## Legislation:

*Child Protection Act, article 5*  
*Code of Administrative Offenses, article 13.15 part 3*  
*Criminal Code, article 137 part 3*  
*Information Act, article 15.1*  
*Media Law, article 4, 16 and 41*



**In my opinion, one of the most pernicious laws that contradicts the principle of journalistic task to help people is the requirement to publish a photo of a child only if you have a written consent of a parent, a guardian or a trustee).**

**In recent years, the Murmansk region including, people are often lost. Media publish portraits of children with the information about their statures, distinctive features, items of clothing; and then we receive warnings from Roskomnadzor.**

**And the question arises: are we to save the child by spreading information or to wait for a written permission from parents, or ignore this information at all?**

*Interview #7*

*Editor, privately owned National newspaper*

# Information on drugs



Open flap to see sanctions



**Legislation:**

- Code of Administrative Offenses, article 6.13*
- Information Act, article 15.1*
- Law on Narcotic Drugs, article 46*
- Media Law, article 4*



**The main thing is to remember the rules and not break the law.**

**There's always a way, a loophole, that allows to find the right words and catchphrases to write a story on the most difficult topics.**

**Journalists and editors who are afraid to write on sensitive topics are simply lazy and unprofessional. Or they don't have time to sit longer and find safe ways of presenting information.**

*Interview #17*

*Editor, privately owned regional online media*

Sometimes because of these limitations we spend a lot of time on **formulations** and neat phrases so as not to get fines, but in general we write on any topic.

*Interview #15*

*Editor, privately owned regional online media*

# Mentioning LGBT

It is forbidden to disseminate information that denies family values and promotes non-traditional sexual relations among minors. Traditional sexual relations are those between a man and a woman. In practice, any positive or neutral reference to LGBT people may be prohibited, regardless of the target audience of the message, including addressed to adults and having an age mark of 18+.

The presence of an age marking on the website does not guarantee protection.

In 2019-2020 activist Yulia Tsvetkova was fined three times for propaganda of non-traditional sex on social networks due to the conduct of the publication which discussed issues of feminism and LGBT rights. As an example, the reason for the persecution was a picture with the caption 'Family is where love is. Support LGBT+ families'.



## Legislation:

*Child Protection Act, article 5*  
*Code of Administrative Offences, article 6.21*  
*Information Act, article 15.1*



**No. The less shit you touch, the less it stinks, any mentions of them are propaganda. They are all crazy.**

*Interview #16*  
*Journalist, regionally owned media*

Because of the enforcement of Federal legislation on the so-called 'gay propaganda', in our media there are almost no publications about LGBT people, this is a **taboo** for us.

*Interview #2*  
*Journalist, regionally owned media*

I wrote a story about a gay pride parade. It was **cleaned by editors and lawyers** so that there were no details that could be regarded as propaganda. There were no phrases like 'people are kissing', 'they declare love for each other' - that made the report more vivid, but those phrases applied to people of the same sex.

*Interview #5*  
*Journalist, privately owned National newspaper*

**I do not write**, but the website publishes such stories. This topic is not interesting to me. I do not write about this not because I am afraid of it, but because I do not see a topic here. A gay or a heterosexual - this does not mark one as a person.

*Interview #11*  
*Journalist, state owned news agency*

# Information on terrorist acts and terrorists

The media are prohibited to disseminate information containing public calls for terrorism or publicly justifying terrorism. When reporting on a counter-terrorist operation, it is prohibited to disseminate information on special means, techniques and tactics of such an operation.

The editorial board of a registered media outlet may receive Roskomnadzor's warning; and if it is repeated it may lose its certificate of media registration.

Journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva was accused of propagating terrorism when she discussed the motive of the bombing done by Mikhail Zhlobitsky of the FSB building in Arkhangelsk on the radio channel Echo Moskvys Pskov station. In addition the editors were issued with administrative responsibility for publishing the transcript of the broadcast on their website. The editors of the Pskov News Feed were also fined as they reprinted the broadcast on their feed. The prosecutors office insisted on a six year imprisonment. The court found her guilty and fined her 500 000 rubels as punishment.



## Legislation:

*Anti-Terrorist Financing Act, article 6*

*Code of Administrative Offences, article 13.15 part 6*

*Criminal Code, article 205.2*

*Media Law, article 4*



**A year ago, in one of the regions of our country a young man blew himself up inside FSB buildings.**

**Several journalists from different parts of the country were accused of acquitting terrorism for their stories in which they tried to reason or discuss the reasons that could have motivated a young man to such step.**

**In addition, the media that wrote about the tragedy, faced the same problems if comments supporting the young man had not been removed on time.**

*Interview #12,*

*Editor, privately owned regional online media*

# Mentioning extremist organizations

It is forbidden to disseminate information about a public association or other organizations included in the published list of organizations prohibited or liquidated under the Law on Extremism without indicating that the organization has been liquidated or its activities are prohibited. The list of extremist organizations is published on the website of the Ministry of Justice of Russia and currently includes 74 entries, including:

- The Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people,
  - Ukrainian nationalist organizations Right Sector and UNA-UNSO,
  - The National Bolshevik Party,
  - The religious association Tabligi Jamaat,
  - Jehovah's Witnesses,
  - The Karelian branch of the Youth Human Rights Group,
- as well as a number of Russian ultra-right movements and associations.

The editorial office or the founder of a registered media outlet may receive the Roskomnadzor's warning; and if repeated, they may lose the certificate of registration. This is also an administrative offense.



## Legislation:

*Code of Administrative Offenses, article 13.15 part 2*  
*Law on Extremism*  
*Media Law, article 4*



**Once I wrote a story about a person who had posted a story in his social networks about the plans of Muslims to kill Russians. He was fined for inciting ethnic hatred.**

**And I, too, got an administrative case for the same reason since I quoted several sentences from his story which seemed to me the most harmless.**

**In the second attempt to write about such issues, a criminal case on extremism will be started against me.**

*Interview #21*

*Journalist, privately owned online media*

Once we published a photo with a poster 'Stop feeding Moscow', this text was duplicated in the article. Law enforcement agencies asked experts if this phrase could be interpreted as extremism and separatism - the phrase could be linked to aspects of the federal structure. The experts did not find that the phrase could be interpreted as extremism or separatism. Our lawyers did not agree to withdraw the circulation and the confiscating of computers.

*Interview #4*

*Editor, party owned regional newspaper*



“

If a website is in opposition to power this media can't count on advertisements because local business is afraid to advertise in oppositional media. Now I am collaborating with such an opposition website. There is no money; there are only tiny pensions, a computer and a camera. There is no room for the editors as there's no money to rent it. We work from homes.

*Interview #28  
Editor-in-chief, privately owned  
regional online media*

## Information about World War II, rehabilitation of Nazism, negative information about memorials and national holidays

The denial of the facts established by the verdict of the International Military Tribunal for the trial and punishment of the main war criminals of the European Axis countries, the approval of the crimes established by the specified verdict, the dissemination of knowingly false information about the activities of the USSR during the Second World War in the media, as well as the dissemination of information expressing clear disrespect for society about the days of military glory and the memorable dates of Russia related to the defense of the Fatherland, or the public desecration of the symbols of military glory of Russia forms corpus delicti, and for legal entities (an editorial or a founder) is an administrative offense.

Perm resident Vladimir Luzgin was found guilty and sentenced to a fine of 200 thousand rubles because of a repost of the article '15 facts about Bandera, or what the Kremlin keeps silence about' which described the joint attack of the USSR and Germany on Poland in September 1939 and the start of the Second World War.



### Legislation:

*Code of Administrative Offenses, article 13.15 part 4*  
*Criminal Code, article 354.1*



**If you decide to write an article on fascism, nationalism, you have to be extremely careful not to suddenly get accused of propaganda.**

**That is, the arguments of the Nazis, even if they are followed by a complete debunking, can be regarded precisely like propaganda.**

*Interview #28*

*Editor-in-chief, privately owned regional online media*

The practice of some restrictions, of course, is shocking. For example, wild fines for Nazi symbols means it's impossible to publish **historical photos** of World War II because they show those symbols.

*Interview #18*

*Regional freelancer*



# Insulting the feelings of believers

It is forbidden to insult the religious feelings of believers, as well as to publicly desecrate religious or liturgical literature, objects of religious veneration, signs or emblems of ideological symbols and paraphernalia, or their damage or destruction.

Such actions may also fall under the definition of extremism; and relevant publications are qualified by Roskomnadzor as an abuse of freedom of media. There is a possibility for a prosecutor to request a ban on information in court and the subsequent blocking of the website by Roskomnadzor.

The Grani.ru publication illustrated the news on the attack of the editorial board of Charlie Ebdon by photographing the cover of the magazine. Grani.ru received Roskomnadzor's warning about the inadmissibility of using a media to carry out extremist activities.

Artist Artem Loskutov was fined for publishing posters depicting the so-called 'Pussy Riot Icon'; and some media which reported on that received Roskomnadzor's warnings.



## Legislation:

*Code of Administrative Offenses, article 5.26 part 2*  
*Criminal Code, article 148 part 1*



**The last thing deleted from the website of our newspaper was the announcement of a Night-at-the-Library event entitled 'Once in Transylvania, or A Night with Dracula'.**

**A group of Orthodox believers promised to complain to the prosecutor's office about the librarians being devil worshippers.**

**We cooperated with the librarians as we have been friends for a long time and they pleaded with us 'not to poke the bear'.**

*Interview #20*

*Editor, privately owned City newspaper*

**We write with great caution about anything related to Orthodoxy.**

*Interview #19*

*Journalist, regionally owned media*

# Insults

The insult, which means humiliation of another person's honor and dignity, expressed in an indecent form, is an administrative offense. In case a person is a representative of the government and the insult is inflicted during their performance of official duties or in connection with their performance, the action is considered a crime. It is also a crime to disrespect the court in the form of insulting the participants in the process, as well as the judge or other persons involved in the administration of justice.

Due to the uncertainty of the wording, in most of these cases the expert's opinion is the defining evidence. Since the sign of 'indecent form' is indicated only in the corresponding article of the Code of Administrative Offenses, the limits of appreciation in cases of insulting representatives of the authorities are even wider.



**Legislation:**

*Code of Administrative Offenses, ch. 2 and 3, article 5.61*  
*Criminal Code, article 319*

Open flap to see sanctions



**If it is a direct insult or a implication of a crime but the news has a social significance, we publish it without direct quotes.**

**For example, 'a well-known opposition leader was extremely negative speaking about the President of the country.' But we won't state what exactly he said.**

*Interview #2*  
*Journalist, regionally owned media*

**Self-censorship** has increased. We play safe smoothing the corners, trying to protect ourselves and avoid obvious statements, even when we hold all the facts. For example, speaking about the corrupt activities of officials we use the words 'perhaps', 'most likely', 'as may be supposed' or write 'the person whose name coincides with the name of the official', 'the owner of this cottage is Ivan Ivanov, a full namesake of the official'. In case it goes before the court it doesn't matter if you have evidence of a corrupt official, it's important whether the story has insulted that official. The court will not consider the veracity of the information.

*Interview #10*  
*Editor, privately owned National newspaper*

It has become very difficult to cover rallies, especially in terms of video. Slogans and shouting can easily turn into slander, contempt and fakes. **We try to keep the word 'president' out of the shot.**

*Interview #17*  
*Editor, privately owned regional online media*

# Information about illegal mass meetings and demonstrations

Calls for riots, extremist activities, participation in mass (public) events held in violation of the established order are prohibited. Internet resources that contain such information can be immediately blocked at the request of the Attorney General or his deputies. The site owner (including the network of a media outlet) will be notified only after telecom operators have started to restrict access to the resource.

In 2014, at the request of the Deputy Prosecutor General, the websites of the independent publications Grani.ru, Kasparov.ru and The Daily Journal were completely blocked. The reason was the publication of the dispersal of demonstrations in Moscow, as well as the protests of Crimean residents against the annexation.



We can go there, but in covering the event it is important to show not only the protesters' opinion but also the opinion of officials. After it is done with comments and a completed text officials will decide that **it's better not to publish** the story and either forbid publishing or remove the text. Journalists see how it turns out and don't report on it.

*Interview #19*  
*Journalist, regionally owned media*

This topic is **prohibited**. Only 'positive' processions, demonstrations are allowed to be covered by our media..

*Interview #14*  
*Journalist, state owned TV*

The **danger** to be accused exists, but we never call for protests and read every text carefully before publication. We inform about the fact: there was/is an action taking place.

*Interview #3*  
*Editor, privately owned regional online media*

**We cover protest actions** and understand that there is danger in this work. We report on all meetings online. We cover as fully as possible, with direct inclusions. We give activists and government officials the opportunity to speak out, but the government does not like to comment on such things.

*Interview #12*  
*Editor, privately owned regional online media*



**Legislation:**  
*Information Act, article 15.3*

## Information about privacy, personal and family secrets of people, officials including, image right

It is prohibited to use the image of a citizen with the exception of the use of an image taken in state, public or other public interests; the image is to be obtained in places open for free visits or at public events, with the exception of cases when such an image is either the main object of use or a citizen posed for a fee.

A citizen can demand the removal from the Internet of relevant information obtained in violation of the law, the confiscation of tangible media and the cessation of the dissemination of such information. A claim it is possible to apply measures in the form of blocking the resource.

A criminal case has been instituted against Ivan Zhdanov of the Anti Corruption Foundation after he maliciously failed to comply with a court decision in connection with the refusal to remove from the Youtube channel a video about Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's corruption called 'He is not Dimon for you'.



### Legislation:

*Civil Code, articles 152, 152.1 and 152.2*

*Civil Procedure Code, article 140*

*Criminal Code, articles 137 and 315*

*Information Act, article 15.5*

*Media Law, article 49*



**We internally know perfectly well what and how it is possible to write and what is not.**

**A person who comes to work in our media understands perfectly well whose media these are, how they write here, on what topics we will write and which topics we will never notice, who can be criticized and who cannot.**

*Interview #19*

*Journalist, regionally owned media*

# Obscenity in the media

The use of obscene language in media is an abuse of freedom of media. The law does not provide a definition of obscene language and does not contain a list of specific words, but Roskomnadzor refers to them as 'obscene language for the male genital organ, obscene language for the female genital organ, obscene language for the process of copulation and obscene language for promiscuous women.

The issuance of two written warnings are given to the editorial office or the founder of the media within 12 months gives Roskomnadzor reason to apply to the court with a statement to close the media house.

A journalist, an editor and an editorial staff can be held administratively liable, and accountable both for the use of obscene words directly in the media and for hyperlinks to such materials or for refusing to remove users' obscene comments from the website. For example, Taiga.info was fined for publishing news about a beating of a teenager accompanied by hyperlinks to videos published on social media.



## Legislation:

*Code of Administrative Offences, article 13.21*  
*Media Law, article 4 and 16*



**This is not even about Roskomnadzor but communication culture of journalists.**

**If parents had taught them to be polite and respectful as to other people's feelings then they should not have problems with Roskomnadzor.**

*Interview #16*

*Journalist, regionally owned media*

# Recognition as a foreign agent

In 2017, the Ministry of Justice of Russia received the authority to recognize foreign media as foreign agents. Listing means an obligation to provide quarterly reports on the financial and economic activities of the organization to the Ministry of Justice, to accompany all published materials with a clause that they are distributed by 'a foreign agent', and to conduct an annual audit.

In 2019, the statements of the Media Law in this part were supplemented with the possibility of recognizing as a foreign agent not only editorial offices, but also individuals, including Russian citizens distributing information created by foreign media agents.

The list of foreign media agents includes Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and their projects. As of now no cases of prosecution for violation of the above standards are known. Also, not a single individual has been recognized as a foreign agent.



## Legislation:

*Code of Administrative Offenses, article 19.34.1*  
*Information Act, article 10 part 7 and article 15.9*  
*Media Law, articles 6 and 25.1*



Now most of the independent media in Russia do not want to take on journalists for staff positions and work with freelancers, especially in the regions. And this, of course, also applies to journalists of the Barents region in Russia.

Among these media are also those which I write for: Radio Svoboda and its projects Sever.Realii, and Siberia.Realii.

All of them are recognized as **foreign agents**; I receive fees from them and disseminate information since this is my main activity.

**So for me the threat of becoming a foreign agent is large. It may happen that, for example, my pages on social networks will suddenly be locked by decisions of the prosecutors and Roskomnadzor.**

It is also possible they may oblige me to do my financial accounts. In case I am not informed or not informed on time there is a danger that they will impose a large fine on me and freeze my bank cards.

*Interview #23*

*Freelance journalist, privately owned National newspaper*



JOURNALISM



**Today, journalists need to learn to write between the lines again – a skill that was well mastered by previous generations of journalists in our country.**

***Interview #1  
Journalist, state owned news agency***

## This project's aim is to convey information about the way Russian journalists work to colleagues from the Nordic countries. What would you tell them journalist to journalist?



**I think that the existing relations between journalists of Russia and the Nordic countries should continue to develop and strengthen. The central TV and propaganda has nothing to do with journalism. Such propagandists in the Barents region of Russia are very few.**

*Interview #3  
Editor, privately owned regional online media*

They are very **lucky** with the working conditions for journalists in the Nordic countries. Let them come here to work – their professional potential will fly incredibly high.

*Interview #4  
Editor, party owned regional newspaper*

For a journalist in a little local newspaper it is important to understand that we are seen as **colleagues**, equal partners of a large European editorial office and that we all work for one purpose – access to information for our readers, freedom of speech and development of democracy. This is the most important professional motivation. We should understand that for the Barents region Moscow is far away; Europe is much closer to us. It is important that we continue to feel we are part of a common international network, a common global community. Without free press there cannot be a free state.

*Interview #10  
Editor, privately owned National newspaper*

There is a feeling that we do not fight for our rights.. Our Western colleagues are probably wondering why we **tolerate** that and continue to work under such conditions. I would be very curious to imagine our foreign colleagues to be put in our shoes. If you want to be a journalist here are the rules of the game for you. I don't think many of them would become heroes or fighters for the rights and freedom of speech with the risk of losing a job, an apartment and social guarantees.

*Interview #14  
Journalist, state owned TV*

Come to Russia, we will show and tell you everything. To **understand** Russia, you need to see it for yourself. We are ready to help you with this. We try to work professionally and objectively.

*Interview #17  
Editor, privately owned regional online media*



## On journalism

Let's meet, talk and communicate. We have a lot of subjects to cover together. And personal communication is very important, it breaks **stereotypes**.

*Interview #19  
Journalist, regionally owned media*

'Let's hug', I would say. But seriously, despite different standard of living in our countries and the difference of **freedom** for the media, we have common topics to report on. We should proceed with collaborative projects.

*Interview #23  
Freelance journalist, privately owned National newspaper*

## On journalism

What is independent journalism? It is not independent; it is always dependent on finance. We need money, advertising or power as a founder. **Independent**. There are no independent journalists or media. Talks of independent journalism is nonsense.

*Interview #16  
Journalist, regionally owned media*

I don't know a single independent media in our region where journalists would be **objective** in their stories. Everywhere there are centers of influence: regional or city governments, interests of business or opposition where news is also presented in a certain way, - they become hostages of the situation and also have to adapt to their media's policy.

*Interview #22  
Journalist, privately owned online media*

If a website is in **opposition** to power this media can't count on advertisements because local business is afraid to give adverts to opposition. Now I am collaborating with such a website. There is no money; there are only tiny pensions, a computer and a camera. There is no room for the editors as there's no money to rent it. We work from homes.

*Interview #28  
Editor-in-chief, privately owned regional online media*

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## What is more important: the independence of journalism or the survival of your media?



You just have to do your job. Restrictions appear, and the task of journalists and editors is to find **new formats**, turns, phrases. It's just much more complicated. There are no forbidden topics; there is a question of how to write about them.

*Interview #3  
Editor, privately owned regional online media*

## What, in your opinion, are the most controversial, painful or 'dangerous' topics that can be covered in the Russian media? Are there topics that media in general or you as a journalist prefer to avoid?



The most dangerous topics are related to criticism of the **authorities** and mass protests. The problem of corruption in power is a dangerous topic, few journalists undertake it, and even fewer media are willing to publish such matters.

*Interview #1  
Journalist, state owned news agency*

**The personal life of the President and his family, Prigozhin's alleged activities, any story about corruption in government - in fact, any topic can be sensitive if it concerns high-ranking personalities.**

*Interview #5  
Journalist, privately owned National newspaper*

The problem here is not in some specific topics, but in the fact that many regional media have information contracts with the authorities and large regional enterprises. The presence of such **contracts** keep us from going too deep into stories; such media try not to focus on critical topics.

*Interview #6  
Journalist, state owned TV*

We try to **avoid** many topics if these topics are not issued for us by the regional government which is the founder of the media. Otherwise, it will end just with removing the article. We, as a state-owned media, avoid all **sensitive** topics related to any field of activity. It is important to understand that these prohibitions are connected not with federal state policy, but with individual regional or city officials, directors, 'small tsars', who themselves establish their own rules.

*Interview #13  
Editor, regionally owned media*

## How do you think our western colleagues perceive journalism and journalists in Russia? Are they right or wrong? Why?



I think that **propaganda** is strong in Russia as well as in the West. Many sayings about our work or about the country as a whole are myths from the 90s. Over the past 30 years, Russia and the information field in our country have changed a lot. There was much more press freedom in the **1990s**, but no media responsibility for any fakes that they published. But, on the other hand, now there are excesses with the restrictions of Roskomnadzor.

*Interview #7*

*Regional editor, privately owned National newspaper*

In my opinion, the way Western journalists perceive Russian media and the way Russian journalists perceive Western media both have strong **stereotypes**. One should realize that Putin is not the entire Russia. Not all Russian journalists write positively about Kremlin's actions, not all journalists in Russia are **propagandists**. Some of them are trustworthy, some are not. But the situation in the Western media is exactly the same.

*Interview #2*

*Journalist, regionally owned media*

In my opinion, they don't understand how we work, under what conditions we have to get information and what it means to transfer it to readers.

**How can I explain to them that the mayor can call the heads of enterprises and prohibit advertisements in certain media outlets and threaten them with sanctions? And that the head of the education department may call the principal who gave us an interview and shout at her, threatening to fire if he doesn't like something in the interview. And that the mayor may call the director of Rospechat (a publishing house) and prohibit the sale of our newspapers.**

And that we can wait for the response to our request for comment on the current event from seven days to infinity. And that the governor's press secretary may insult you in social networks with complete impunity. That the media simply doesn't have any money for anything, neither for business trips, nor for food. And journalists have to feed their families and educate their children.

*Interview #28*

*Editor-in-chief, privately owned regional online media*

Probably, the Russian journalism is not well spoken of in the West. I think that's fair enough in most cases.

*Interview #1*

*Journalist, state owned news agency*

## On journalism

Sometimes it seems that they are sure we live in a totalitarian **dictatorship** and that there are no independent media and independent journalists. But this, of course, is not true. Each region has independent media and **bloggers** (they are few but their stories are the most read), and they do real journalism.

*Interview #12*

*Editor, privately owned regional online media*

We ourselves are to blame for the fact that they have such **stereotypes**.

*Interview #18*

*Regional freelancer*

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**Is anything changing for the better in your work? If so, what is it? Do you think it is possible to professionally work as a journalist within the current restrictions in Russia, and if so, how?**



I think if you don't believe you can do your job professionally you'd better leave the profession. Indeed, there are a number of limitations which have to be considered and kept in mind. You can remain a **professional** if you

## On journalism

understand that you do not violate your intrinsic principles, that is you do not lie, do not distort facts, do not adjust to anything but you can refuse what contradicts these principles. Today, journalists need to learn to write between the lines again – a skill that was well mastered by previous generations of journalists in our country.

*Interview #1*

*Journalist, state owned news agency*

The problem is that it's possible to carry out the work professionally but the result of this work is not seen. Journalists and their work have ceased to influence the situation. They get no reactions from the authorities; they are just not noticed. The power is closed and very far from the people. We have a situation in which besides the fact it's really hard for a journalist to do the job, it is **pointless**.

*Interview #18*

*Regional freelancer*

**I would not say that something is changing for the better. The screws are being tightened and reinforced control is ongoing, the leash is getting shorter. Looking back to what we wrote about 5-7 years ago, I realize how much the time has changed.**

*Interview #19*

*Journalist, regionally owned media*

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Let's hug, I would say.  
But seriously, despite  
different standard of living  
in our countries  
and the difference  
in freedom for the media,  
we have common topics  
to report on.

We should proceed with  
collaborative projects.

*Interview #23*

*Freelance journalist, privately owned  
National newspaper*

Обнимемся! – сказал бы я.  
А если серьезно, несмотря  
на разный уровень жизни в  
наших странах и на разницу  
в свободе для СМИ, у  
нас есть общие темы, на  
которые мы можем писать.  
Заниматься совместными  
проектами.

”

*Интервью #23  
Региональный журналист-фрилансер  
независимых федеральных СМИ*