



To Mr. Ivars Āboliņš,  
Chairman of the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP)  
Latvia

Paris, December 5, 2022

**Object : request not to withdraw Dozhd's license**

Dear Mr. Chairman Āboliņš,

I am contacting you on behalf of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), an international independent organization based in Paris, dedicated to the defense and promotion of the freedom, independence, and pluralism of journalism. While fully respecting the independence of Latvia's National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP), I would like to ask you to consider refraining from withdrawing the license of Dozhd TV.

Dozhd TV is an essential, and one of the only remaining, sources of independent and reliable broadcast information by Russian journalists toward the Russian-speaking population. The withdrawal of the media's license would be a terrible blow for the right to information of the Russian speaking population in Russia and around the world.

Dozhd TV is an independent media, and a reliable source of pluralistic information. While based in Russia, they were the last remaining free TV channel in the country. Highly critical of Vladimir Putin's regime, they were under constant threats and attacks by Russian authorities. After the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine started, the Prosecutor-General of Russia ordered Russian regulator censor Roskomnadzor to restrict access to Dozhd due to their independent coverage of the invasion of Ukraine, claiming that they were spreading "*deliberately false information about the actions of Russian military personnel*" as well as "*information calling for extremist activity*" and "*violence*". Following this decision, the media was forced into exile and found refuge in Latvia. It received a broadcasting license from NEPLP in June 2022 and started to air from Riga.

The media has long been supported by Reporters Without Borders. Our organization supported Dozhd when it was based in Russia, as the last independent TV channel. And our organization supported it, and its journalists, when and after they were forced into exile.

Dozhd TV was never a supporter of the war. On the contrary, it has constantly and only worked to inform the Russian public - which today means providing reliable information about the war which can only mean information viewed as critical by the Kremlin's regime.

The closing of the media by Russian authorities, the risks faced by the media's journalists in Russia, as well as the programs aired from Latvia all demonstrate the independent and pluralistic nature of Dozhd's editorial line.

Dozhd is one of the rare sources of independent and credible information about the war by Russian journalists, addressed to the Russian-speaking public. As such, its ability to continue broadcasting from Latvia is paramount to ensure the Russian-speaking population continues to be able to receive independent and impartial information, in particular about the war.

The infringements with Latvian legislation Dozhd is accused of cannot be seen as a deliberate support for the war and should not justify a withdrawal of the license by NEPLP.

The broadcasting of a map of Ukraine showing Crimea as part of Russia was, according to our contacts with the Media, due to a mistake of a member of the team, who copied a map online and who was not careful enough. Although this mistake is seriously blamable, it should not lead to the withdrawal of a media's license.

The highly criticizable remarks made by anchor Alexeï Korostelev, which are presented as a call for support to Russian soldiers on the front, have led to apologies by the media and by Korostelev. Although the media considers Korostelev's remarks were misinterpreted, it has publicly admitted it is a serious blunder and a grave mistake, which have led to Korostelev being sacked by the media. Both the media and Korostelev however insist they are not, and never were, supporters of the war, and that they were even forced into exile for several month because of their positions against the war.

Mr. Chairman, the withdrawal of Dozhd's license would only negatively impact the freedom, independence, and pluralism of the information Russian-speaking people around the world are able to receive. It would not strengthen democracies' fight against violations of international law, war crimes or wars of aggression. On the contrary, free and independent information is a powerful tool to restore peace, the international order and the rights of Ukraine.



Antoine Bernard  
Director, Advocacy & Assistance