

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/belarus-leading-journalist-arrested-again-22-06-2012,42867.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Belarus

Wounded presidential ego

Leading journalist arrested again on charge of libelling Lukashenko

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Reporters Without Borders firmly condemns leading journalist **Andrzej Poczobut's** detention since yesterday on a new charge of libelling President Alexander Lukashenko, for which he is facing a possible five-year jail sentence.

Poczobut, who works for several independent media including the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, was arrested in the western city of Grodno, where he lives. He spent three months in prison last year on a charge of libelling the president.

"This new arrest shows that Poczobut is being hounded because of his determination to work as an independent reporter," Reporters Without Borders said. "He was convicted on a similar charge just a year ago. [Because of the president's](#) ego, he is now threatened with another grotesque conviction. It will just reinforce self-censorship and the climate of intimidation for independent media. He must be released without delay."

Poczobut is charged with libel under [article 367-2 of the criminal code](#), which carries a possible five-year jail term when it is a repeat offence and the target is the president.

According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, he was arrested at his home at around 4 p.m. yesterday by six men, who included Arseni Nikolski, the investigator who handled the case the last time he was charged. They took him away after searching his apartment and seizing his computers.

Poczobut declined to make any statement when interrogated. He is currently being held at Grodno police headquarters, where his lawyer has not been allowed to talk to him.

After spending three months in pre-trial detention on a charge of insulting the president for calling him a dictator, [Poczobut was given a three-year suspended sentence on 5 July 2011](#). Yesterday's arrest was apparently prompted by articles he wrote for two independent news websites, Charter97.org and Belaruspartzan.org, about the April 2011 Minsk metro bombing, for which two young men were executed after a sham trial.
