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<http://www.rsf.org/belarus-where-is-journalist-aleksandr-05-12-2014,47345.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Belarus

Disappearance

Where is journalist Alyksandr Alesin?

5 December 2014

Reporters Without Borders is concerned for the safety of the Belarus journalist, a military affairs specialist, who disappeared last month and is believed under arrest for alleged spying.

Alyksandr Alesin, also an expert in economics, has disappeared from sight. According to information [gathered](#) by *Charter97.org*, an opposition website, the journalist was seized on 28 November by state security (KGB) agents at a cafe in central Minsk and accused of espionage.

Charter97.org also reports that political figures unofficially confirmed KGB involvement. But the security agency has declined so far to issue a statement.

"We are deeply concerned by the silence surrounding the disappearance of Alyksandr Alesin," said Lucie Morrillon, programme director of Reporters Without Borders. *"We call on Belarus authorities, in particular the KGB, to disclose as soon as possible their possible involvement in this disappearance, as well as the possible charges of espionage against Alyksandr Alesin."*

The editor in chief of *Belorusy i Rynok*, the daily for which Alesin has worked for nearly 20 years, [said](#) on 4 December that the journalist had not come to the office since 28 November. But the editor made no further comment.

According to other [sources](#), Alesin has been out of reach since he vanished. His telephone is turned off. The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), a RWB partner organization and winner of the 2004 Sakharov Prize, as well as the Viasna Human Rights Centre, have also expressed their deep concern for Alesin. They published an [appeal](#) to the authorities to state where he is being held.

Alesin also contributes to the *BelaPAN* news agency and the *naviny.by* and *Nasha Niva* websites. He is known for his professionalism and for work of high quality.

The journalist's disappearance coincides with charges against two Lithuanian citizens who are accused of spying for Belarus. *Charter97* and *Nasha Niva* raise the possibility that Belarus authorities may be using Alesin as a means of reprisal.

On 3 December, the Lithuanian prosecutor's office accused a Lithuanian citizen of having transmitted information on the armed forces to a Belarus security agency. The previous month, on 10 November, another Lithuanian, a former airline company employee, was accused of having transmitted to Minsk information on sensitive Lithuanian infrastructure, including military installations.

The Ukrainian crisis is aggravating tensions between Lithuania and Belarus. The latter country's president, Alexander Lukashenko, has criticized Russia's annexation of Crimea, but has also welcomed establishment of a Russian airbase in Belarus planned for 2015. Lithuania and the two other Baltic countries, for their part, have had the NATO presence in the region expanded.

Belarus is ranked 157th of 180 countries in the [Reporters Without Borders 2014 World Press Freedom Index](#).

(Photo: www.svoboda.org)
