

Ban on Red Media: EU sanctions against Russia attack press freedom

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In the midst of the boundless war preparations by Germany and the whole of Europe, the EU adopted its 17th sanctions package against Russia on May 20, 2025. This also sanctions pro-Russian and pro-Palestinian media and German journalists and thus represents an open attack on the freedom of the press.

The May 20 sanctions are primarily aimed at the operators of military facilities and the so-called Russian “shadow fleet.” As the European Council explains, this is intended to “deny Russia access to key military technology and cut its energy revenues, which are financing its war of aggression against Ukraine.”

However, the EU is also targeting media platforms for censorship. These media outlets and several German journalists are having their accounts blocked and are banned from travelling in Europe simply because of allegedly making “false reports” about the war in Ukraine or the genocide in Gaza. As a result of the sanctions, no one is allowed to provide them with any economic resources.

The European Council and the German ministers who set the tone in the EU are thus directly violating the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental democratic right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press. This enshrines the right to report freely and without state censorship, to express one’s opinion and to disseminate information. As Article 5 of the German constitution states: “There shall be no censorship.”

German government politicians have long since thrown this overboard. The EU sanctions list, which was adopted by the EU Council of Ministers, bears the signature of the German government. The new German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul (Christian Democrat, CDU), who decided on the sanctions package in Brussels together with Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD), declared on

the news on the evening of May 20: “We are determined to continue along this path.” EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is also a member of the CDU, which has Friedrich Merz as Chancellor in Germany.

The EU sanctions list includes the pro-Palestinian news platform Red Media and its founder Hüseyin Do?ru, who reports from Berlin, as well as the Turkish media company AFA Medya, which was founded by Do?ru. Red Media announced that it would have to cease operations even before the sanctions were officially announced. This was justified with a coordinated press campaign and state pressure, which would also jeopardise the personal safety of employees.

The EU accuses Red Media of “systematically disseminating false information on politically controversial topics and specifically supporting narratives that are seen as destabilising for the EU.” This essentially refers to the fact that Red Media reported on pro-Palestinian protests in Germany, interviewed Greta Thunberg and reported live from the occupied Humboldt University while pro-Palestinian activists occupied its premises. This is a thorn in the side of German government politicians.

The “destabilising activities against the EU” that Red Media is accused of are not defined in more detail anywhere. In a statement in which the web portal explains its closure, Red Media writes:

A coordinated campaign against Red Media has been underway for months—led by a questionable alliance of German media houses, journalists, trade union officials and NGOs, some of which are directly founded or funded by the German or Israeli state.

Red Media has responded to the accusations and defends itself against them. In particular, they firmly deny having “instigated pro-Palestinian protests in Germany” or of coordinating “the occupation of Humboldt University in Berlin by Palestinian activists.” In response to the accusation of “offering terrorists a platform,” they write: “[T]his refers to our interviews with relevant political actors in the Middle East.” And they conclude:

What we are witnessing is not public discourse, but orchestrated repression—legitimised by a media-generated myth of threat. It is an attack on independent journalism (...) What we are currently witnessing is the global normalisation of repression—where talking about genocide is criminalised.

In fact, the inclusion of Red Media in the EU’s sanctions list means the banning of the platform without even an objective hearing of evidence, let alone a court decision. At the behest of the German government, the EU institutions are de facto cancelling the freedom of the press. Anyone who disseminates unfavourable opinions or does not report along official lines is to be sanctioned. The EU institutions is creating a precedent for censoring unpopular media beyond the rule of law.

The as yet unproven accusation that Red Media is financed by Russia is completely irrelevant. Not only because numerous German media products are financed from other countries. Above all, freedom of the press includes not only the freedom of opinion of the publishers, but also the freedom of the population to listen to the different sides of a conflict and form their own opinion. However, in view of the preparations for war against Russia, any position that does not follow the official war narrative is declared “enemy propaganda” and banned.

From this point of view, the sanctioning of German journalists living in Russia must also be rejected. The blogger Alina Lipp from Hamburg, with her Telegram channel “News from Russia,” and Thomas Röperts from Bremen, with his blog “Anti-Spiegel,” often present

right-wing viewpoints and follow the Kremlin’s line. But the population has a right to view such perspectives and to compare it critically with the line of the German government as well as their own.

Chancellor Merz (CDU) and the EU leaders have already threatened even tougher sanctions against Russia. The censorship of allegedly pro-Russian media goes hand in hand with the pro-war policy that has already claimed hundreds of thousands of victims in Ukraine and is aimed at silencing all criticism.

Behind this lies the fear of government politicians and those controlling economics and finances of the growing resistance to war that is spreading among the population of Germany, Europe and the whole world.



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