



Free Media Institute, Inc. • 2012

**Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Protests Violations of Journalists' Rights and Media Freedom
Statement for the Official Record
OSCE/HDIM Conference, September 24 – 25, 2012, Warsaw**

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty provides uncensored news, responsible discussion, and open debate in 28 languages to 21 countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established.

The following are violations of international commitments to promote and protect media freedom and independence that restrict RFE/RL operations and imperil RFE/RL journalists.

Azerbaijan Journalists for Radio Azadliq, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani language service, are repeatedly subject to violence and harassment as a result of their reporting, with no adequate government response. Investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilov was the target of a vicious defamation campaign in March that authorities have failed to investigate credibly. A 2009 decree banning international broadcasts on the country's national airwaves, widely viewed as a means to silence unsanctioned media, remains in force.

RFE/RL calls on Azeri authorities to fulfill their international commitments by lifting the broadcast ban and responding to violations of journalists' rights with credible investigations and applicable criminal procedures.

Belarus Journalists working for Radio Svaboda, RFE/RL's Belarusian language service, have been subject to intimidation, detentions and violence as part of the continuing crackdown on civil society unleashed by Belarusian authorities after the December 2010 presidential elections. In addition, authorities in Belarus have used accreditation, and threats of its denial, to selectively coerce and control RFE/RL journalists.

RFE/RL calls on authorities in Belarus to fulfill their international commitments to protect, promote and facilitate the professional rights and activities of independent journalists.

Russia The ability of Radio Svoboda, RFE/RL's Russian language service, to continue providing uncensored news and open debate to audiences in Russia is threatened by new legislation, including a law re-criminalizing libel. Such measures that curtail free speech take place in a larger context of hostility toward and intimidation of independent media.

RFE/RL calls on authorities in the Russian Federation to reverse measures that restrict free speech and fulfill their international commitments to protect and promote the rights and security of independent journalists.

Tajikistan Gulnora Rovshan and Abduqayum Qayumov, two veteran journalists for Radio Ozodlik and Radio Ozodi respectively, RFE/RL's Uzbek and Tajik language services, were denied routine accreditation without cause this spring in cases that may indicate official discrimination against minority journalists and suppression of independent media. Concurrent with security operations in the Badakhshan region, authorities have blocked numerous, independent news portals, including the Russian-language website of Radio Ozodi.

RFE/RL calls on authorities in Tajikistan to accredit its journalists and restore access to its website.

Turkmenistan Requests by Azadlyk Radiosy, RFE/RL's Turkmen language service, to open a bureau in the country and accredit its journalists have been repeatedly ignored by Turkmen authorities. Azadlyk Radiosy reporters have been imprisoned on spurious charges for their reporting and their family members have been harassed. Contributors to the service have been punished for their involvement by being interrogated, defamed, detained and forcibly confined to psychiatric institutions.

RFE/RL calls on authorities in Turkmenistan to take steps to dismantle the country's information blockade by permitting RFE/RL to open a bureau in Ashgabat and accrediting its journalists.