

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2021

His Excellency Emomali Rahmon
President of the Republic of Tajikistan
Palace of the Nation
Dushanbe
Republic of Tajikistan

Dear President Rahmon,

We are writing to express concern about the reported ongoing harassment and intimidation of employees of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Tajik Service (known locally as Radio Ozodi) and their families, as well as numerous obstacles that your government have used to prevent Radio Ozodi from operating freely.

Despite public pronouncements by you and your government about Tajikistan's embrace of democratic values and freedom of the press, Radio Ozodi journalists and their family members in Tajikistan and abroad reportedly continue to experience significant pressure from authorities, including physical threats. According to RFE/RL, some of the examples we have been made aware of include:

- Tajik security officers frequently visit Ozodi journalists at their workplace and in their homes, insisting that these journalists end their relationships with Ozodi and threatening them with severe consequences if they do not. Periodically, security officers allegedly visit the relatives of Radio Ozodi journalists in their workplaces as an intimidation tactic.
- RFE/RL has documented several cases when relatives of Radio Ozodi journalists have been visited at their workplaces by security officials, who pressure these individuals to ask their relatives to stop working for Radio Ozodi or face repercussions.
- The government has seemingly used accreditation and pressure tactics in an attempt to influence Radio Ozodi's hiring choices. For example, denials of accreditation are currently impacting the ability of at least eight journalists to work with Radio Ozodi. The government also insists that all Radio Ozodi technical and support staff, including drivers and cleaners, be accredited as well, contrary to Tajik regulations.
- In addition, current practice by the government has meant that, in many cases, Radio Ozodi journalists are only being accredited for three months at a time. According to Tajik regulations, locally based journalists working for foreign media should be accredited for one year, while journalists visiting Tajikistan from abroad are allowed to obtain a work permit valid for up to 3 months.
- Since April 2019, the government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reportedly not allowed any internships at Radio Ozodi's Dushanbe Bureau, further impacting RFE/RL's ability to work with and develop professional journalists capable of productively serving their audiences in Tajikistan.

The ability of the press to operate accurately and independently is a vital component of a free society, and we hope to be partners in improving and preserving media freedom in your country. As Members of the U.S. Congress, which funds RFE/RL, we express our continued concern about these reports of ongoing harassment and undermining of Radio Ozodi and its staff. We remain worried that these continuing actions, which we first raised two years ago, could pose challenges for the U.S.-Tajik relationship. We once again urge you to ensure the necessary steps are taken to allow Radio Ozodi to operate freely and that all of its staff are accredited expeditiously.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Steve J. Chabot
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Chris Smith
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress