



U.S. AGENCY FOR  
GLOBAL MEDIA

UNITED STATES  
BROADCASTING  
BOARD OF  
GOVERNORS

## WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2020

Every year on May 3, the world commemorates World Press Freedom Day. Each year, the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), its five public service media networks—the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks—and a sixth network devoted to internet freedom, the Open Technology Fund (OTF), mark the occasion with a recognition of the importance of press freedom while highlighting ongoing threats to press.

This year, the world looks very different than in years past. Because of the unprecedented global crisis, citizens are seeking out accurate, reliable information on how the COVID-19 pandemic is unfolding in their own countries and around the world.

We thank the journalists, editors, photo-journalists, videographers, and support staff who continue to work despite new challenges and great personal risk in reporting the news.



Since the start of the pandemic, USAGM's public service media has produced thousands of articles, videos, interviews, and fact-checks on this massive news story for television, radio, social media platforms and mobile apps. This is an impressive but not surprising contribution from our networks that already deliver news and information programming in 61 languages to 350 million people in more than 100 countries every week.

Please take a look at some of our recent updates, coverage and upcoming event below. And please see our newly relaunched

[website](#) in recognition of World Press Freedom Day.

-Grant K. Turner, Director and CEO  
U.S. Agency for Global Media

# PRESS FREEDOM FILM FESTIVAL

USAGM is hosting a week-long virtual **Press Freedom Film Festival**.

From May 4-8, 2020, documentary films from each of USAGM's five news networks will be screened and accompanied by a live chat with in-depth information on the target country's media environment and press freedom trends, behind-the-scenes anecdotes, and further information on the network and the filmmakers.



The screenings will be followed by a conversation with the journalists and network representatives. Films and the directors' chats will air every weekday from May 4-8 at 12:00 PM EDT. Find more information about the film festival [here](#).



## COVID-19 COVERAGE

USAGM networks are meeting demands from international audiences craving accurate reporting about the COVID-19 pandemic across traditional media platforms and social properties. [Watch a video](#) about how our networks responded in the first few weeks of the pandemic.



By mid-April USAGM networks were measuring more than double the engagement on social media platforms as compared to 2019. Average *weekly* video views on Facebook and YouTube were up from 178 million to 419 million. USAGM network average *weekly* website visits were up from 23 million to 38 million. [Read more](#).

Some examples of the impact of this reporting are:

Following a series of media articles, led in large part by Radio Free Asia (RFA), questioning the Chinese government's coronavirus fatalities total in Wuhan, [China revised its official count](#). RFA has relentlessly covered Beijing's crackdown on criticism of its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Voice of America (VOA) is tracking COVID-19 connected incidents of censorship, arrests, violence and intimidation of journalists in this [map](#). VOA's Persian Service

continues to cover the secrecy and misinformation from the Iranian regime about its statistics, highlighting contradictions in the Supreme Leader's claims and the erosion of trust among Iranians in the government's approach. VOA's Burmese Service was among the **first to report** an attack on a World Health Organization vehicle transporting coronavirus swabs from tested individuals in restrictive Rakhine State leading the U.S. Department of State and Human Rights Watch to condemn the attack. VOA's **Polygraph.info** featured several stories debunking coronavirus-related disinformation from around the world.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Tajik Service was the first to report on **COVID-19's spread** in the country, while authorities continue to deny the existence of cases. RFE/RL's Afghan Service's **exclusive access** to a makeshift medical clinic in a Taliban-controlled area of Kabul provided Afghans a report that some insurgents appear to be taking the COVID-19 threat seriously.

Current Time – a 24-hour Russian-language television and digital news network produced by RFE/RL in cooperation with VOA- has been offering a broad and compelling media mix about COVID-19. Following its **reporting on shortages** of personal protection equipment for Russian doctors and paramedics, Russian authorities delivered supplies to a clinic featured in the broadcast. In some cases, Russian officials have attempted to **interfere with Current Time's coverage** of issues such as Moscow's COVID-19 tally and hospital conditions, but their journalists have been undeterred.

Alhurra examined how the holy month of Ramadan will change amid COVID-19, including the Egyptian government's decision to extend its curfew throughout Ramadan.

Radio and TV Martí featured **extensive reporting** on the Cuban government's crackdown on activists and journalists. The government has been using the controversial "Decree 370" to arrest journalists and activists who report on the pandemic.

For more information on USAGM's coverage of COVID-19 visit our dedicated page **[here](#)**.

A special thank you to all the journalists who are thinking and working outside-the-box in their commitment to report the news to their audiences. **[Watch this video](#)** to see how VOA's reporters are turning their homes into makeshift studios while balancing their home lives in these extraordinary circumstances.

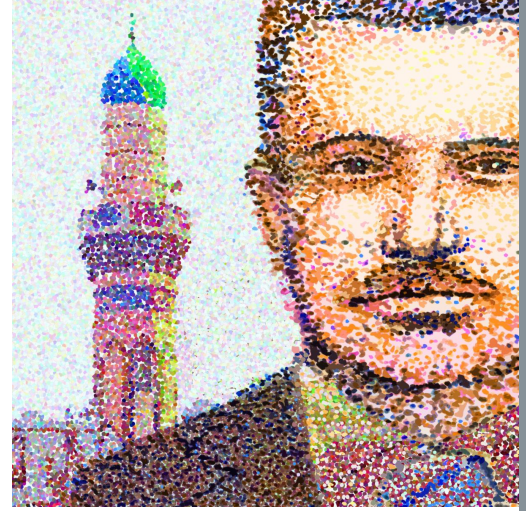
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## USAGM FALLEN JOURNALISTS PORTRAIT PROJECT

The USAGM Fallen Journalists Portrait Project represents a chance to revisit and memorialize lost colleagues who gave their life in the pursuit of truth.



A video of the creation of each portrait will be released coinciding with the anniversary of the death of the journalist(s). The most recent addition honors three RFE/RL Afghan Service reporters - **Sabawoon Kakar**, **Abadullah Hananzai**, and **Maharram Durrani** - killed on April 30, 2018 in Kabul, Afghanistan. Previous portraits include: **Khamail Muhsin Khalaf**; **Abdul-Hussein Khazal**; and **Ricardo de Mello**.



Click each picture to watch the making of each portrait. For the full catalog to date click [here](#).



## THREATS TO OUR JOURNALISTS



The right to free and open access to news and information should be universal, but threats to a free press persist. Journalists reporting for USAGM networks face risks every day. USAGM strongly condemns these actions, which violate international standards by suppressing independent media and targeting journalists doing their jobs.

Read about threats to our journalists [here](#).

*The United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) is an independent federal agency, overseeing public service media networks that provide unbiased news and information in countries where the press is restricted. USAGM entities include the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio and TV Marti), Radio Free Asia, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa) and Open Technology Fund. USAGM programming has a measured audience of 350 million in more than 100 countries and in 61 languages.*