



U.S. AGENCY FOR
GLOBAL MEDIA

UNITED STATES
BROADCASTING
BOARD OF
GOVERNORS



USAGM 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



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USAGM

The United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) is a networked global media agency. The five media organizations that comprise the USAGM complement and reinforce one another in a shared mission vital to U.S. national interests: to inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

Together, USAGM networks communicate each week with more than 345 million people across the globe.



USAGM's mission is to inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

Every week, more than 345 million listeners, viewers and internet users around the world turn on, tune in and log onto U.S. international broadcasting programs.

The day-to-day broadcasting activities are carried out by the individual USAGM international broadcasters.

TOGETHER, WE OPERATE IN 60 CRITICAL LANGUAGES AROUND THE WORLD.



Voice of America



Global English
Learning English

Eastern/ Central Europe

Albanian
Bosnian
Macedonian
Montenegrin
Romanian
Serbian
Ukrainian

Africa

Afan Oromo
Amharic
Bambara
French-to-Africa
Hausa
Kinyarwanda
Kirundi
Lingala
Ndebele
Portuguese-to-Africa
Sango
Shona
Somali
Swahili
Tigrigna
Wolof

Eurasian

Armenian
Azerbaijani
Bashkir
Belarusian
Chechen
Crimean Tatar
Georgian
Russian
Tatar

Middle East/ North Africa

Arabic
Kurdish
Turkish

Central Asia

Kazakh
Kyrgyz
Tajik
Turkmen
Uzbek

South Asia

Bangla
Dari
Pashto
Persian
Urdu

East Asia

Burmese
Cantonese
Indonesian
Khmer
Korean
Lao
Mandarin
Thai
Tibetan
Uyghur
Vietnamese



Radio Free Asia



Office of Cuba Broadcasting



Middle East Broadcasting Networks



Latin America
Creole
Spanish

LETTER FROM THE CEO

In 2015, when I joined the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), then the Broadcasting Board of Governors, I sought to learn everything I could about this agency and the complex global media environment in which it operates. I spent months on a listening tour with stakeholders on and off Capitol Hill, in academia and in the media space; I met with influencers at think-tanks and in the media development community, nonprofit partners and public diplomacy colleagues. I heard many perspectives about what we were getting right and what we could do better.

I heard you ... and we took action.

In 2018, we made the most significant progress yet in our transformation into a modern and nimble media enterprise: we changed our name to the U.S. Agency for Global Media. After much consideration and consultation, I chose this new name to better reflect our modernization and forward momentum while honoring our enduring mission to inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

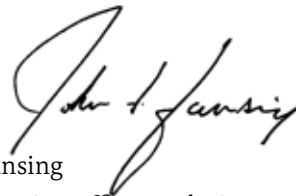
In addition, we laid the foundation to compete in this ever-changing media industry by adding more collaborative and impactful programming. We also revolutionized our reach and impact by expanding affiliate networks, extending the growth of fresh, digital-focused content in difficult environments and focusing on a language-based strategy rather than targeting audiences solely within geographic boundaries.

As a result, this year we saw our largest audience growth ever—a jump from 278 million in 2017 to a total of 345 million in 2018. This growth is due in large measure to our remarkably talented storytellers across the USAGM's five networks (Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks); our response to increased demand for digital, cross-platform programming; our ability to respond quickly to the explosion of disinformation, lies, and distortion; and our commitment to using whatever tools necessary to get content to those who don't have the benefit of a free and open press.

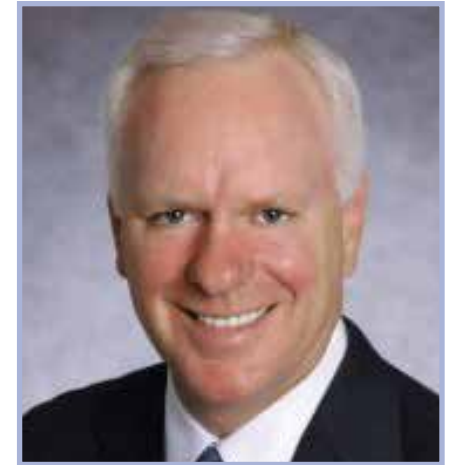
I am so very proud to be at the helm of a modern media organization that has been on an accelerating arc of success for almost two decades. I am especially proud that every USAGM employee is part of one team, collaborating to advance our mission and the fundamental, universal principles of press freedom.

In the following pages, you will see just a snapshot of the powerful results our team has accomplished and the impact we've made in the lives of millions of people around the world. I also invite you to learn more about our efforts on our website, usagm.gov.

Sincerely,



John F. Lansing
Chief Executive Officer and Director
U.S. Agency for Global Media



This report is submitted pursuant to Section 305(a) of the International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-236).

REBRANDING EFFORTS

USAGM



On August 22, 2018, after an exhaustive 18-month effort to rebrand the agency, the Broadcasting Board of Governors changed its name to the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM). This process included comprehensive industry research; a competitive analysis; and consultations with numerous internal and external stakeholders, including the agency’s Board of Governors, agency staff and leadership at all levels, the agency’s five networks, the U.S. Congress, the Administration, and interagency colleagues. Ultimately, the endeavor was designed to best capture the voice of the agency and its value to the U.S. government, American taxpayers, and global audiences.

USAGM is a modern media organization, operating far beyond the traditional broadcast media of television and radio to include digital and mobile platforms. With a near-complete shift to digital-first production, the creation of two new language-based digital and television networks, an increased focus on engaging audiences and facilitating discussion, and the expansion of increasingly effective anti-censorship tools, the term “broadcasting” no longer accurately describes the agency’s work.

REBRANDING EFFORTS

USAGM

CEO Lansing recognized the overdue need to communicate the agency's evolving, global scope, as well as its renewed, urgent focus on priority audiences that reflect U.S. national security and public diplomacy interests. USAGM remains an independent federal agency that provides accurate, professional and objective news and information around the globe in a time of shifting politics, challenging media landscapes and the weaponization of information.

The agency's new identity and name now address these realities but do not change its mission or focus. Rather, it reflects the modernization and forward momentum demonstrated in the past few years, while honoring the enduring mission to inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.



CEO John F. Lansing discusses the agency's new name and branding at a presentation on the evolution of the agency in Washington, D.C., September 2018.



VIDEO: New Name, Same Mission 2:15

REBRANDING EFFORTS

THE BRAND EVOLUTION OF MBN



▶ **VIDEO:** See the transformation 2:42

On November 4, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) revealed the first step of the largest transformation in its 14-year history, with an overhaul of Alhurra Television's programming, on-air personalities and branding.

With this relaunch, Alhurra is poised to increase its competitiveness and relevancy in the saturated, politicized and polarized media markets in the Middle East and North Africa. It does so by providing a humanistic, enlightened and distinctive American voice and perspective for the pan-Arab region.

Broadcasting live from new studios in Dubai and outside of Washington, D.C., and with reporting from throughout the Middle East, the United States and the world, Alhurra has more than doubled its number of newscasts to 12 hours per day. This includes new daily newscasts dedicated to North Africa and stories from within the United States.

Alhurra also boasts a new line up of anchors and programs delivering extensive reporting from across the region, as well as in-depth analysis untold or underreported by Arabic-language media outlets.

Alhurra's remodeled studios outside of Washington, D.C. provide boast the latest in communication technologies, including augmented reality.

In addition to more focused content, the relaunch improved Alhurra's visual identity and brand. The network's sophisticated new graphics, advanced animation and eye-catching augmented reality seamlessly complement the two new studios.

Other MBN properties Alhurra-Iraq, Radio Sawa and Alhurra.com also began undergoing changes, including more news content and increased coverage of topics not found in the broadcast region.

LANGUAGE-BASED STRATEGY

As a part of the larger effort to streamline operations and more effectively reach audiences in need of accurate news and information, USAGM has adopted a strategy of focusing on the languages spoken by target audiences rather than on the geopolitical boundaries in which they reside. This unique approach brings together language services from more than one USAGM network, acts as a force multiplier and capitalizes on the resources and strengths of each network.

The strategy also allows USAGM to engage diaspora audiences, who report to relatives in their home countries and are crucial in information flows.

Riot police officers detain a protester holding a poster reading 'Putin, you are not my President' during a rally in St. Petersburg, Russia, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018 against Russia's Central Election Commission's decision to ban the opposition leader Alexei Navalny presidential candidacy. Navalny has been arrested in Moscow as protests demonstrations called by him took place across the country. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)



LANGUAGE-BASED STRATEGY

CURRENT TIME

The first such project to adopt this model is Current Time, a 24/7 Russian-language digital and TV network led by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in cooperation with Voice of America (VOA). Current Time is an alternative to Kremlin-controlled media for diverse Russian-speaking audiences living not only inside Russia, but also in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, the Baltics, Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and beyond. Launched in February 2017, Current Time has seen explosive growth and impact. In a nationally representative survey of Russians conducted between late April and early June 2018, the measured use of the Current Time network showed that 3.8 percent of Russian adults (3.9 million) use Current Time video and digital content weekly.

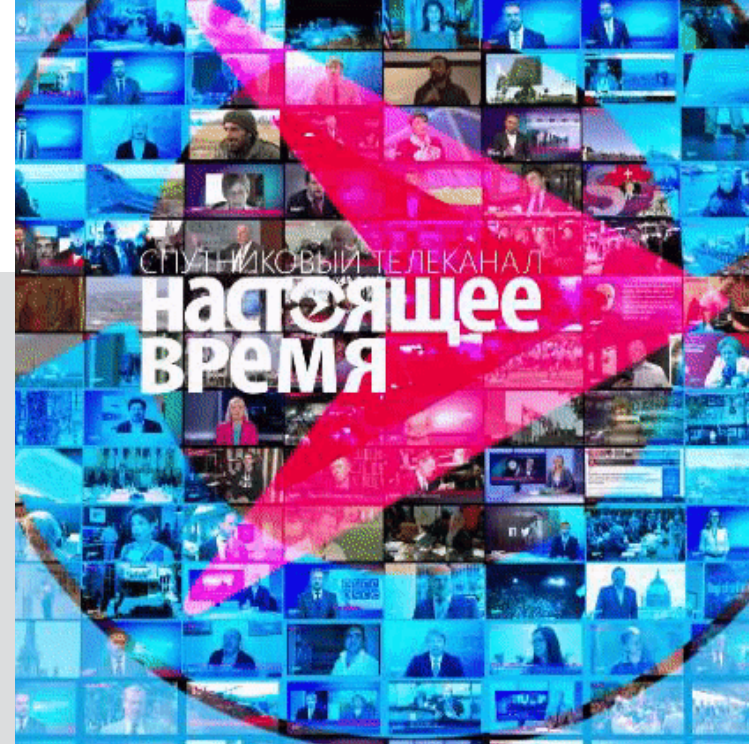
Current Time's on-the-spot, live news reporting and fresh features have driven increasing demand on social media. By the end of 2018, its followers on Facebook had increased by 165 percent to over 850,000, while subscribers to its

YouTube page grew 15-fold to 550,000. In the same year, Current Time's videos received more than 520 million views online and across social media platforms, with more than half coming from inside of Russia.

This, despite efforts by Russian authorities to thwart its distribution and a December 2017 decision by the Ministry of Justice designating it a "foreign agent."

Current Time aims to depoliticize the Russian-language media by serving as an accurate and independent news source for all Russian-speakers, who are often limited to Kremlin-controlled media options even when living far beyond Russia's borders. The network places a premium on live news coverage that allows skeptical audiences, numbed by disinformation and false narratives, to judge events on the ground for themselves.

Current Time's feature programs cast a more intimate light on life in Russia, Ukraine and beyond, telling the untold stories of ordinary



residents in unheralded places who strive to improve life for their neighbors and communities. The network's documentary offerings have opened a wider world of experience to its audiences. Current Time is the largest provider of independent documentaries in the Russian language, screening more than 100 films annually that are often barred from mainstream distribution in Russia because of political content.



VIDEO: Current Time Promo 1:06

LANGUAGE-BASED STRATEGY

VOA 365

Following the success of Current Time, and building on that same model of collaboration, VOA and RFE/RL teamed up to expand programming for Persian-language speakers in Iran and worldwide through VOA 365, a 24/7 global network. Led by VOA, teams from its Persian Service and RFE/RL's Radio Farda worked together to break through the information wall and confront the censorship efforts of the Iranian regime.

VOA 365 offers comprehensive coverage from across the United States and around the world. The network transmits live, unfiltered news conferences and hearings from Washington, D.C., with simultaneous translation into Persian, providing Iranians access to information not otherwise available to them on local and state-run media.

This network features a program based in Los Angeles focused on the Iranian diaspora and a weekly, fast-paced look at the latest developments in science, technology and medicine. New high-quality acquisitions



from CNN, ABC, National Geographic TV, the Smithsonian Channel, and PBS round out the programming schedule.

VOA 365 also has a robust social media presence on sites popular with Persian-speakers and is seeing a strong increase in audience engagement on those platforms.

Shahram Bahrami reads notes before broadcasting live from the new VOA 365 studios in Washington, D.C.



VIDEO: VOA 365 Promo 2:10

MAXIMIZING PROGRAM DELIVERY AGILITY

Maximizing platform agility allows USAGM networks to seamlessly adapt to the fast-changing content consumption preferences of their audiences. By streamlining operations and leveraging research, USAGM is rapidly evolving its market-by-market distribution strategy, ensuring continuously growing relevance.

AFFILIATE STRATEGY

In 2018, USAGM continued its critical role of building and growing its global audience by placing content on in-country media outlets, an effort known as the “affiliate model.”

Some highlights on new affiliate relationships include:

Through the Current Time network, USAGM continues to penetrate not only Russia but also Russian-speaking populations throughout the region and around the world. By the end of 2018, Current Time was present in 19 countries via 85 distributors and 50 affiliate stations, including nine in Russia, and the number of distributors in the region continues to grow. The project has been a



great success on digital platforms as well and is offered on global video-on-demand platforms.

As Afghanistan continues its long road to peace and stability, Afghan media houses look to USAGM for professional, reliable content. Seven new TV and radio affiliates signed on in 2018.

When the VOA Africa division recently launched a new program called *Our Voices* that features African women, Business Development had already placed the program on 23 affiliates, more than had ever agreed to take a brand-new show from VOA before. Among these affiliates is eTV South, a network seen in over 40 countries across Africa.

MAXIMIZING PROGRAM DELIVERY AGILITY



USAGM utilizes these affiliate relationships to support local journalistic operations and standards, for example by offering training to affiliates. In 2018, USAGM hosted its Venezuelan affiliate partners in Washington, D.C., for media training and seminars. This was the first of several planned events to bolster independent, fact-based journalism in Venezuela as the country faces continued political and economic instability.

FMS IN AFRICA

In 2018, USAGM continued its expansion of 24-hour FM stations in Africa. In May, the seventh and final station in a country-wide network of VOA FM stations in the Democratic Republic of Congo went on the air in Kananga. In neighboring Republic of the Congo, VOA established FM stations in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, which further expanded the agency's FM coverage in this volatile region of Africa. During a visit to Washington, D.C.,

the U.S. Ambassador to Congo-Brazzaville, Todd Haskell, expressed deep appreciation.

Other stations installed in 2018 were in Mogadishu, Somalia, and Lome, Togo. Plans are also underway for FM broadcasting in Lusaka, Zambia. Unfortunately, the government of Burundi's May 7 suspension of VOA broadcasts from its 24-hour FM station in the capital of Bujumbura continues.



VOA Director Amanda Bennett participated in dedication ceremonies for the new 24/7 FM station now operating in Brazzaville, Congo.

MAXIMIZING PROGRAM DELIVERY AGILITY

RADIO IN ASIA

In an effort to focus on providing accurate, balanced news and information to those who need it the most, USAGM is working, with VOA's help, to provide appropriate broadcast services to refugee encampments in various troubled spots around the world. In April, USAGM began medium wave and shortwave transmissions of VOA Learning English programming in Burma, where the Rohingya are being persecuted, and to refugee camps in Bangladesh.

In February, VOA's ability to reach North Koreans was expanded with an additional hour of medium wave transmission covering North Korea. To fully utilize the new transmission, VOA's Korean Service launched a fresh one-hour news show filled with original news reporting on North Korea.

ADDITIONAL PLATFORMS

USAGM is constantly searching for new platforms to meet audience demand and improve distribution of our content. For example, in 2018, USAGM signed an agreement with Plex, a multi-platform video streaming company, to place USAGM content on its Plex News app, which claims 14 million users. This technology inserts USAGM programming in a customized news channel with other global brands, including CNN, Hearst, Newsy, DW, BBC, and FT. Plex began by carrying VOA and RFE/RL English, RFE/RL Russian, and Current Time in the Plex News feed.

On April 16, Alhurra HD and Alhurra Iraq HD networks became available for viewing via Nilesat, which is one the most-watched satellite feeds in the Middle East and North Africa. A few months prior, Alhurra Iraq HD joined Alhurra HD on Arabsat, the second most-watched satellite.

TYPHOON YUTU

Clean-up and damage assessment continues in the wake of super Typhoon Yutu, which inflicted extensive damage on USAGM shortwave transmitting sites at Tinian and Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands on October 24-25. At the end of 2018, commercial power was not restored to the stations, and devastation throughout the islands from the storm severely complicated assessment and recovery efforts. Extensive damage to every antenna on both sites crippled broadcasting efforts, primarily affecting Radio Free Asia (RFA). Comprehensive repair and restoration efforts will be required to bring the stations back to their full capacity.



The USAGM Network Control Center is the hub for all USAGM Network broadcast distribution.



Students celebrate in the streets of Yerevan after protests successfully forced President Serzh Sarkisian from power, April 2018. (Amos Chapple, RFE/RL)

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

USAGM networks provide uncensored and unbiased information because a free press is essential to human rights and democratic processes. In addition to providing daily, invaluable reporting of local, regional and international news and developments, coverage by USAGM networks support the democratic principles of freedom of speech and assembly, access to electoral information and government accountability.

DEMONSTRATIONS

USAGM networks provided continuing coverage of protests and demonstrations in many countries where state-run media prefer to ignore or skew the reporting.

VENEZUELA

In Venezuela, for example, VOA's Spanish Service provided continuous, comprehensive reporting on the growing unrest and violent demonstrations in and around the capital. The Service expanded its reporting team in Caracas to provide up-to-the-minute, multi-platform coverage of protests calling for democratic change. It also provided contextual information through interviews with U.S. officials and policymakers. Dozens of media partners in the region relied on VOA throughout 2018 to provide coverage of the growing political and economic instability in Venezuela.



Venezuela's leading daily *El Nacional* added a section on its website to feature content from the Voice of America.

IRAN

VOA's Persian Service and RFE/RL's Radio Farda were major sources of information for audiences inside and outside of Iran during the wave of protests that spread to multiple cities at the end of 2017 and into early 2018, posing the greatest challenge to the Iranian government in years.

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

DEMONSTRATIONS

VOA Persian's extensive daily coverage of the protests on TV and multimedia platforms included exclusive soundbites of anti-government protesters railing against the worsening economy. The Service verified the videos and reports of street protests it received exclusively from citizens on the ground. RFERL's Radio Farda provided verified coverage and user-generated content from the wave of protests that engulfed cities large and small throughout Iran including Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Mashhad. The coverage garnered 940,000 visits and more than 2 million page views on Radio Farda's website on January 1, 2018, alone. In addition, these networks provided continuing coverage of protests that cropped up later in 2018.



Protestors gather in the streets in this cell phone footage sent to USAGM networks during the protests in January 2018.

OUTSIDE INTEREST

Interestingly, web traffic patterns and anecdotal evidence collected by USAGM journalists indicate that when populations challenge their governments, others in repressive countries take notice. This was especially true during the Venezuela and Iran protests.

To answer that need, VOA translated its Spanish-language reporting into English and an array of other languages. Traffic to these stories was especially high in Vietnamese, Mandarin, Russian, and Persian.

USAGM noticed a similar pattern during the 2018 Iranian protests when there was a spike in the use of internet circumvention tools in China and significant interest from Mandarin-speakers in news about Iran. During those protests, VOA's Mandarin Service saw an additional 70,000 visits to its website due to interest in coverage of the protest – the highest volume of traffic for the Mandarin website since China's Party Congress in October 2017. As a result of this increased interest, VOA's Mandarin Service immediately began translating more pieces on Iran, including translating the English-language blog into Mandarin.

ARMENIA

When massive public protests in Armenia led to the election of opposition leader Nikol Pashinian as the country's prime minister, RFE/RL's Armenian Service



RFA Vietnamese contributor Truong Duy Nhat was jailed in early 2019 after writing about the protests in Venezuela. More information on his case can be found at [USAGM.gov](https://www.usagm.gov).



WEB: Truong Duy Nhat

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

DEMONSTRATIONS



This photo of a young girl being comforted by a police officer during the Armenian protests in Yerevan, April 2018, was taken by RFE/RL Photojournalist Amos Chapple and was selected as a finalist for World.Report Award for Documenting Humanity at the 2018 Festival of Ethical Photography.



VIDEO: Armenia Protests (VOA) :56

provided TV audiences with live coverage from the street demonstrations and parliament, featuring exclusive interviews, talk shows, feature stories, and on-demand videos.

RFE/RL Armenian Service's traffic skyrocketed across all platforms. Between April 13 and May 9, 2018, the Service received 12.5 million website visits; 28.9 million website page views; 48.3 million YouTube video views; and 151 million Facebook video views. The Service's coverage

was picked up by all Armenian TV channels, and also spread globally via major TV and online news websites including BBC, Aljazeera, France 24, the Washington Post, and The New York Times. CNN used RFE/RL footage and conducted live interviews with the network's Armenian Service Director.

NICARAGUA

Media partners in Nicaragua have expressed great enthusiasm and gratitude for VOA's Spanish-language daily coverage of the political crisis in the country and reaction from the international community. VOA increased its presence there by placing radio and television content on independent broadcast and digital media affiliates in the capital city of Managua and the interior. With these partnerships, VOA's Spanish Service continued its dual strategy in Nicaragua: to provide information from the United States to Nicaraguan audiences and to inform the rest of the region about the crisis.



"While in prison I was comforted knowing that the Voice of America followed my case, they never forgot me. I want to thank the Voice of America for their coverage of my situation and that of so many others in Nicaragua, victims of the regime" --Miguel Mora, Owner and Director of 100% Noticias,

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

DEMONSTRATIONS

VIETNAM

Three VOA Vietnamese Service reporters were arrested and detained June 10 and 12 as they covered violent demonstrations in Vietnam that erupted after the government announced plans to create economic zones that protestors said would favor Chinese investors. Despite this, they were able to file dramatic footage showing police surrendering to local protestors in Binh Thuan province, vehicles on fire and burned out government property. Their videos were viewed more than three million times documenting what turned out to be a rare violent protest and the largest demonstration in Vietnam in decades. The government later postponed a vote on launching the proposed zones.

RUSSIA

RFE/RL and VOA's Russian Services and Current Time offered broad coverage of the nationwide protests in Russia on September 9 against proposed raises in the pension age. Most TV channels and video agencies focused on the protests that took place in Moscow, and Russian TV sought to ignore them. RFE/RL used its network of correspondents to provide coverage from a variety of locations, including St. Petersburg, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, and Irkutsk, where police used batons to beat and detain participants; in total, more than 1,000 protesters were detained.



Russian police officers push a teenager during a rally protesting retirement age hikes in St. Petersburg, Russia, Sunday, Sept. 9, 2018. A government plan to increase the age for collecting state pensions brought protests across Russia's 11 time zones on Sunday even though the opposition leader who called them was in jail. Nearly 300 people were reported arrested. (AP Photo/Valentin Egorshin)



A charred truck is seen at the fire and police station in the south central province of Binh Thuan, Vietnam, on June 12, 2018. Vietnamese protesters clashed with police on Sunday and Monday in the province to protest over a proposed law on special economic zones they fear will be dominated by Chinese investors. (AP Photo)

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

ELECTIONS

Elections are a critical part of the democratic process, and participating in that process requires access to accurate and unbiased information about the candidates, their platforms and developments as they happen. USAGM’s comprehensive coverage of elections brings transparency, objectivity and accountability, and helps audiences make informed decisions that impact their lives.

CAMBODIA

For months leading up to the July 2018 Cambodian election, government leaders sought to restrict the flow of information and control the narrative. To that end, the Hun Sen administration excluded election monitors, forcibly closed independent news outlets and threatened local and international journalists. RFA journalists were forced to withdraw from the country and two former journalists were arrested—actions meant to simultaneously silence independent voices and threaten those who might speak out.

Nevertheless, RFA’s Khmer Service provided unrivaled independent coverage of the elections, including three days of live coverage, voter interviews, and discussions with a wide network of NGOs and analysts to monitor

events on the ground of what was widely regarded as a sham reelection of Hun Sen. RFA dominated on social media, leading all major outlets in Facebook Live video views by a wide margin (RFA Khmer had 40 percent more live views than its nearest competitor, government-backed FreshNews) and more than twice the engagement rate on Facebook compared to the next competitor.

VOA’s reporters also faced pressure and harassment but were able to keep their News Bureau in Phnom Penh open. On election day, VOA provided all-day live coverage from the field and polling stations, as well as US comment and reaction. When the service’s website was blocked for 48 hours around the election, VOA Khmer took advantage of having the leading Facebook site in Cambodia and published there; engagement on Facebook tripled.

VOA did a series of investigative reports in the run-up to the elections. The Service was able to share rare voter voices from rural Cambodia through its multimedia “Cambodia Adrift” project, which featured compelling personal video interviews, comprehensive infographics, stunning photographs, and views from all major politicians and parties.



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, at the polling place near his home on the day of the general election on July 29, 2018. The official results, being announced province-by-province and party-by-party Wednesday, Aug. 15, 2018, were certain to confirm a landslide victory by Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party, but critics called the election unfair because the only credible opposition force, the Cambodia National Rescue Party, could not contest the polls because it was dissolved by court order last year. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith, File)

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

ELECTIONS



Current Time's reporters cover Russia and provide an alternative to Kremlin-controlled news.

VOA also investigated why thousands of soldiers were streaming into rural communities for a few days in September 2017. The investigation found clear evidence of politically motivated troop movements and military-backed voter fraud. One profiled commune experienced an unprecedented 50 percent increase in voter registration.

RUSSIA

Current Time made use of the March presidential election to further establish itself as a live Russian-language TV channel reporting on topics that

state-run Russian television will not address. The channel's uninterrupted 13.5-hour coverage block featured live and pre-recorded coverage from locations in Russia's Far East to Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea, as well as from Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, the Baltics, the U.K., and the United States. Current Time's live-stream was viewed some 1.2 million times across online platforms.

Throughout election day, Current Time's digital team produced a continuous stream of content for social media, consisting both of TV broadcast

content and user-generated content. Its videos were viewed more than 1.5 million times. One popular video highlighted ballot-stuffing caught on official election web cameras.

VOA's Russian Service offered coverage of the run-up to the elections, capturing how passions ran high as Russian citizens around the globe cast their votes. A video by the Service's Los Angeles stringer of an argument that broke out between supporters and opponents of the current Kremlin leadership at a polling station garnered 249,000 views on Facebook and more than 12,400 engagements.

AZERBAIJAN

RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service provided robust coverage of the run-up to the April snap presidential elections in Azerbaijan, despite the continuing ban on access within the country to the Service's website and the forced closure of the bureau by the government in 2014. Reporting included a review of promises that all eight candidates made to teachers

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

ELECTIONS

and doctors, a review of the broad issues surrounding the election, and input from ordinary citizens on what they wish to see change in their country. The Service's videos were viewed a combined total of 11 million times on YouTube and Facebook in March—significantly higher than in previous months.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Alhurra, Radio Sawa and MBN's digital properties provided far-reaching coverage of the elections across the Middle East. Correspondents were on the ground in Egypt in March as voters went to the polls to cast their ballots during the presidential election. After being delayed for five years, the Lebanese general election finally commenced on May 6, and the MBN team was on the ground to report on the issues most important to the voters and provide analysis following the results. After ISIS left Iraq, voters went to the polls on May 12 to vote in the parliamentary elections that eventually culminated in the naming of the Prime Minister and President of Iraq. Alhurra-Iraq and Radio Sawa-Iraq led the coverage with live reports from throughout the country, as voters spoke out about their concerns for their country.

VENEZUELA

VOA's Spanish Service coverage of Venezuela reached an all-time high following President Nicolas Maduro's win of another six-year term in an election that many global leaders called a sham. Affiliates throughout the region, and in Venezuela particularly, relied on VOA for news and reaction from the United States and the rest of the world.

In Cuba, TV and Radio Martí were the only sources of uncensored, reliable information on developments in Venezuela.

NIGERIA

Prior to the February 16 elections in Nigeria, VOA aired exclusive interviews with the two leading candidates, President Muhammadu Buhari and challenger Atiku Abubakar. The candidates outlined their plans for fighting Boko Haram, ending corruption and improving the economy. These interviews were broadcast on radio and television in Hausa, French, Swahili, and English, including on Nigeria's largest private broadcaster, VOA affiliate Channels TV.



An Iraqi woman gestures to her daughters after waiting in a long line to cast her vote in the country's parliamentary elections at a polling site in a damaged building in west Mosul, Iraq, Saturday, May 12, 2018. This is the first parliamentary election since ISIS was ousted from the city. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY ELECTIONS

AFGHANISTAN

RFE/RL's Afghan Service, Radio Azadi, was the first media outlet to profile Awtar Singh Khalesa, the first Sikh in Afghanistan to stand for election in the country's parliamentary elections. The video became one of the most popular on Radio Azadi's Facebook, where it was viewed some 670,000 times across the Service's Dari and Pashto pages and received hundreds of comments.

▶ **VIDEO:** Representing Sikhs in Afghan Parliament 1:50

TURKEY

VOA's Turkish Service provided extensive coverage of the presidential and general elections on June 24 in Turkey, with live on-the-ground reporting. As a result, VOA Turkish YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and web numbers showed a significant spike. The Service's YouTube videos saw a nearly 60 percent increase in views compared to the previous week and gained more than 1,300 new subscribers -- a nearly 70 percent increase compared to the previous week.

ZIMBABWE

VOA's coverage of Zimbabwe's first election without Robert Mugabe included live reporting from polling stations across the country, an interview by the PBS NewsHour and three Facebook Live broadcasts from U.S.-Embassy-sponsored roundtables with the Zimbabwe Media Center.

*“VOA, thanks! You are great studio than ZBC and TV coz you capture all political parties,”
– voter Godfrey Dongaronga wrote on Facebook.*



Two women are seen through a Turkish flag while celebrating outside the headquarters of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, or AKP, in Istanbul, Sunday, June 24, 2018. More than half of Turkey's voters on June 24 elections approved Erdogan's bid to a powerful executive presidency, cementing what critics call his "one-man rule," (AP Photo/Emrah Gurel)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights violations increased throughout 2018 and in many cases were not covered by local news, whether because of religious or social pressure, or government censorship. USAGM networks, however, provided coverage and information on these issues, bringing many to light for the first time.

MBN's Maghreb Voices website, for example, is one of the few media outlets in North Africa dedicated to informing and engaging audiences on issues related to human rights, slavery and human trafficking, women's and minorities' rights and illegal immigration. Maghreb Voices targets 100 million people and utilizes Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and WhatsApp to provide a 24/7 discussion forum and facilitate the two-way conversation.

In August, OCB began a partnership with Freedom House on a new project called *Cubano conoce tus derechos* (*Cuban, Know Your Rights*). Radio and TV Martí broadcasters read chapters of the UN Declaration of Human Rights on-air and offer a hotline for citizens to report human rights abuses in Cuba. Once these incidents have been checked for accuracy, the reports are sent to Freedom House for dissemination to foreign governments, media outlets and civil society leaders.

In April, the Crimea Desk of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, known locally as Krym.Realii, launched a weekly human rights radio show *The Right for Liberty*, which told the stories of Crimeans and Ukrainians whose rights have been violated. The show also offered practical advice for how to behave when faced with situations such as arbitrary detention or interrogation. The program aired as part of the Radio Krym.Realii program to Russia-annexed Crimea, and was also versioned for distribution via YouTube and Facebook.

RFA provided several special in-depth reports on Chinese government initiatives to both monitor citizen activities and keep them in the dark about a looming economic crisis. In a country where online behavior has long been tracked, citizens' offline activities are also being monitored in what the government calls its social credit system. RFA explored the lengths at which the Chinese government



VOA's Mandarin Service regularly provides access to human rights experts in China such as retired Professor Wenguang Sun. In August, police broke into Professor Sun's home while he was giving a live telephone interview with VOA. The scuffle and his arrest were broadcast live and then widely shared on social media. Upon his release, when two VOA journalists went to his home to interview him, police detained and interrogated them.

is willing to go to control its citizens, and it exposed the government's activities to audiences throughout the country.

VOA Deewa provided in-depth coverage of political and legal reforms in the FATA region of Northern Pakistan, as well as the Pashtun civil rights movement in 2018. At rallies in February and March, leaders of secular political parties and peace and civil rights activists called on people to listen to Deewa for credible information on military operations and human rights. They credited VOA for contributing to the political reforms that ended century-old draconian laws.

HUMAN RIGHTS

LGBTQ

In addition to providing human rights information, the USAGM networks also provide extensive reporting and programming focused on targets groups that routinely face discrimination and rights violations, including members of the LGBTQ community.

RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal, for example, posted a May 16 Facebook video report from a sports festival for transgender individuals in the Arbab Nazi cricket stadium in Peshawar, Pakistan. Within 24 hours, the report was viewed more than 190,000 times, both by people interested in reporting on Pakistan's most oppressed people, and by religious extremists who termed the festival "un-Islamic."

Radio Martí launched *Arcoiris (Rainbow)*, to explore LGBTQ life in Cuba, the United States and around the world, including the social and cultural status of that community as well as their civil and human rights. Led by award-winning journalists, *Arcoiris* examines all facets of gay life inside and outside the island with the purpose of educating and entertaining Cuban audiences.



Individuals laugh and play tug-of-war in this screengrab from Radio Mashaal's Facebook video on a sports festival for transgendered people.

▶ **VIDEO:** Transgender Sports Festival 1:44

HUMAN RIGHTS

REPORTING ON AND FOR WOMEN

With an unprecedented number of women running for office in the United States and around the world, as well as an increased global attention on women's issues, especially sexual and physical violence against women, USAGM networks provided their audiences with innovative programming and coverage for, about, and by women.



MBN's Maghreb Voices profiled the first female mayor of Tunis, 54-year-old pharmacist Souad Abderrahim. Following her oath at the city council, she dedicated her victory to all Tunisian women.

GENDER EQUALITY AND REPRESENTATION

In November, VOA launched *Our Voices*, a half-hour English TV program focusing on African women throughout the continent and around the world. The program encourages African women to speak out about serious issues that impact their lives and their futures, including politics, business, and migration. The show has four core hosts from various corners of the continent, representing different cultural, religious and socio-political backgrounds. Our Voices clearly filled a need in African media—it launched on more than 20 TV affiliates throughout the continent, an unprecedented feat in VOA history.

In May, RFE/RL's Afghan Service launched a bi-monthly video project, *Faces*, spotlighting the efforts and successes of Afghans living in the diaspora, with a particular focus on women. The first episode focused on an Afghan comedian who runs a comedy show on her Facebook page which addresses women's issues, particularly violence against women. "Faces" airs on Afghanistan's first all-female television station, Zan TV, as well as on the Radio Azadi Pashto website and Facebook.



RFA's Burmese Service released a clip from a Muslim women's conference which generated 17,000 shares and reached 1,800 comments, vastly outperforming other RFA content. The clip features several Muslim women discussing a woman's right to divorce and created a massive conversation on Facebook regarding marriage and Islam.

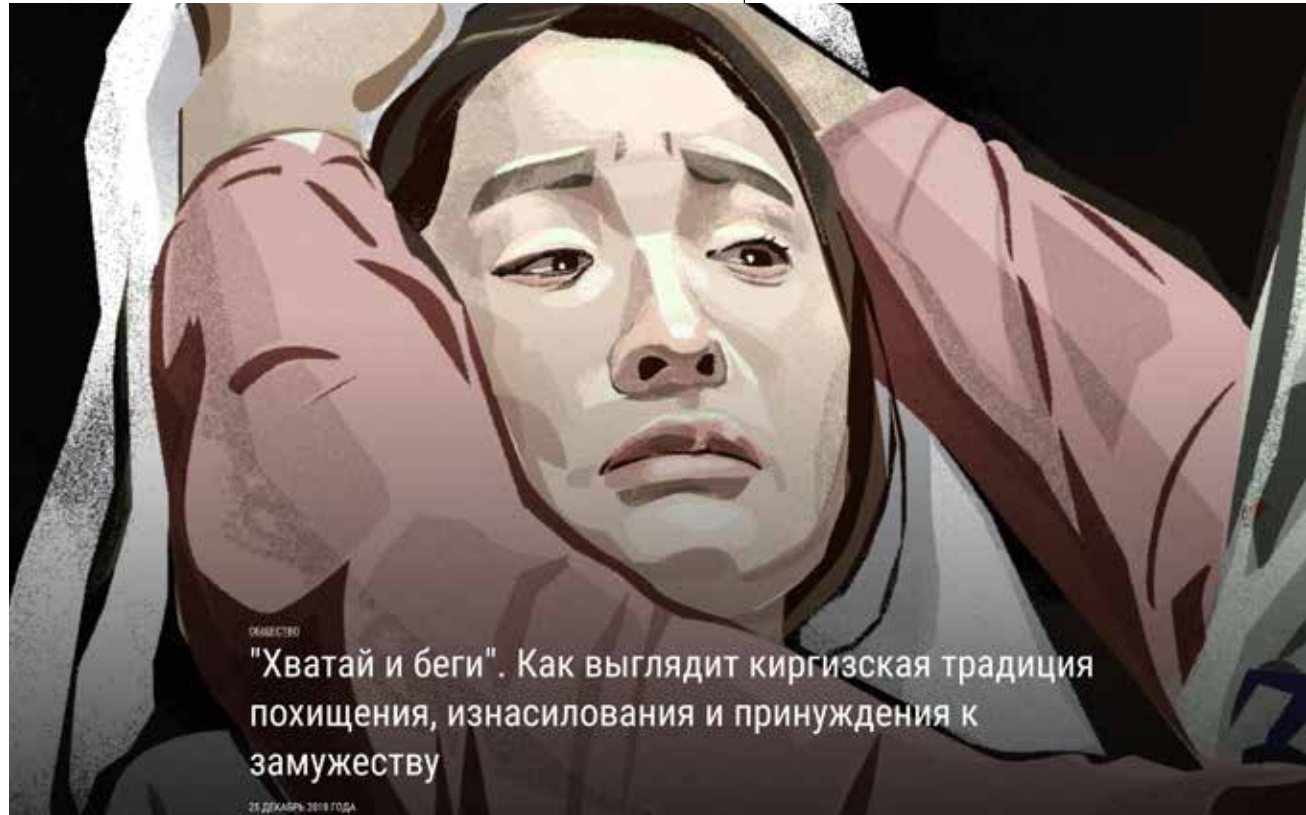
HUMAN RIGHTS

REPORTING ON AND FOR WOMEN

In July, Radio Martí premiered a program, *Las Mujeres de Cuba* (*The Women of Cuba*), which highlights Cuban women who set a new tone for women on the island. Using first-person narratives from prominent women's rights activists, the program explores the history of women's rights on the island, successful efforts and future challenges.

VOA's Tibetan Service launched a new show that focuses on the changing role of women around the world. *BhoMe* (*Women Transforming*) examines the fundamental changes taking place globally, from the home front to all spheres of human activity and discusses it in the Tibetan context.

VOA Serbian's interview with Nevena Nikolic, a female cadet and the first Montenegrin at the United States Military Academy (West Point), was the most popular on the Service's Facebook page, garnering more than 40,000 views in just two days. Nikolic discussed her experiences and impressions of the elite military school.



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sexual and physical violence against women continues to be a problem around the world and is unfortunately often ignored and underreported. Throughout 2018, USAGM networks broke barriers, bringing to light an issue whose solution is long overdue.

Illustration from a [Current Time](#) long-form article profiling five women who were kidnapped and forced into marriage.

HUMAN RIGHTS

REPORTING ON AND FOR WOMEN

Alhurra profiled accomplished women who made a difference in their community, including the first female governor in Egypt and a 21-year-old Palestinian woman who is bringing the #MeToo movement to the West Bank to shine a light on sexual harassment. Alhurra also examined the ‘morality’ laws in Sudan that are being used to silence and punish women, as well as the rights of women in Saudi Arabia. In Morocco, the network profiled single mothers are coming together to create the first-of-its-kind radio station that only employs these women. The network also highlighted a village in Syria populated by women who are building and reconstructing the town on their own.

“Bride trafficking” is a long-standing issue in Central Asia and increasingly so in parts of Asia. A long-form article about bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan was read more than 300,000 times on Current Time’s website and generated debate across social networks. The report featured the stories of five women, who were kidnapped and forced into marriage, as well as interviews with supporters of this practice. In China, decades of the one-child policy has resulted in men vastly outnumbering women. As a result, “bride



trafficking” has also become a serious problem in neighboring countries. A 17-year-old Lao girl who was abused as a young bride in China told her story to RFA’s Lao Service, which shined a light on the growing problem.

A shocking video of a mob beating in Afghanistan’s northern Takhar Province provided a window into the brutal “justice” women in the country can face. Footage of the incident, which reportedly took place in December, showed a woman clad in a blue burqa kneeling as she was assaulted by a crowd of men

In this screengrab from Instagram, women share images of themselves without their headscarves as a part of a larger protest against the compulsory hijab in Iran.

HUMAN RIGHTS

REPORTING ON AND FOR WOMEN

that included family members. RFE/RL's Afghan Service, known locally as Radio Azadi, was the first mainstream media outlet to confirm the video and report on it. Following Radio Azadi's report, Afghan officials sent an investigation team to the remote village where the attack took place—marking the first time since the end of King Zahir Shah's reign in 1973 that police from any Afghan central government had visited the village. Following the team's arrival, seven men were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the beating.

VOA's Somali Service investigated the death of a ten-year-old girl who died after undergoing female genital mutilation in remote rural Somalia. VOA was able to get the only interview with the girl's father who, while obviously saddened by his daughter's death, said he had no second thoughts about the procedure and accepted his daughter's death as the will of Allah. The story was first picked up from the English website by the British newspaper *The Independent*, and then by the BBC and *The Daily Mail*.

WOMEN'S ISSUES


MBN's Alhurra spent considerable air-time examining the unique challenges facing the wives of former ISIS fighters. Some were forced into their marriages, while others were not aware of their husbands' affiliation with the terrorist group. Although Iraqi law grants them the right of separation from their spouses, many fear the social stigma and the "stain" of being ISIS wives.

At least six women in Tehran and one in the provincial capital Isfahan reportedly defied Iran's morality police on January 29 by removing their head scarves on a busy street, attaching them to sticks and waving them around like flags. Images of the women flooded social media in a swell of protest against the compulsory hijab in Iran. VOA's Persian Service, RFE/RL's Radio Farda and MBN's Alhurra all reported on the movement throughout the year.

In the year since RFE/RL's Tajik Service published its first story about "virginity tests," the Service was able to build greater empathy among the general public in Tajikistan towards victims of this practice, which had been condemned by the UN Committee on Women's Rights and termed "unethical" by the Tajik

Council of Clergy. A story about a bride fighting for her rights after she was kicked out of her new husband's home over a dispute about testing has been viewed nearly 360,000 times on YouTube, and received an outpouring of support for the woman.

▶ **VIDEO:** Virginity Tests Spark Debate 1:54



The screenshot shows a VOA news article. At the top, there is a VOA logo and a search icon. The article title is "Third Girl Dies in Somalia After Genital Mutilation" in bold black text. Below the title, it says "By Hanun Maruf" and "September 17, 2018 01:32 PM". There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, Email, Print, and RSS. Below the text is a photograph showing a close-up of a person's hands holding a small, dark, irregular object, which appears to be a piece of tissue or a small animal, possibly a rat, which is a common symbol for FGM. Below the photo, there is a caption: "FILE - A traditional surgeon is seen holding razor blades". The main text of the article begins with "A 10-year-old girl has died in Somalia due to complications from female genital mutilation (FGM).". It continues with "Mumtaz Qorane was the third child to die in the country this week after undergoing the practice, which is also known as female circumcision." and ends with "Dr. Mohamed Hussein Aden tells VOA's Somali service that the girl underwent the procedure three days ago in the countryside near the town of Goldogob, and contracted tetanus afterward."

HUMAN RIGHTS

RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION

RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION BY STATE

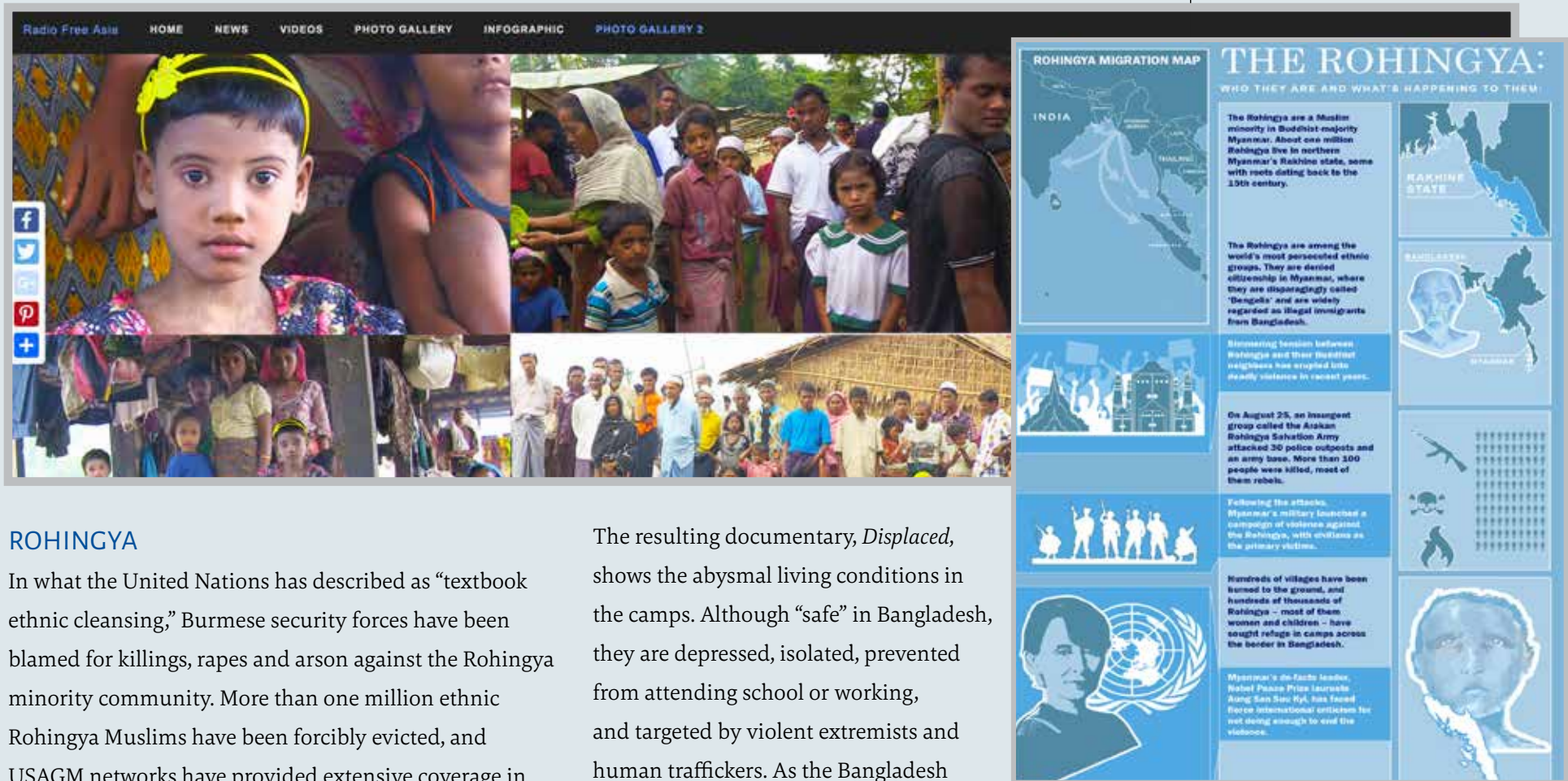
Religious freedom around the world suffered several major setbacks in 2018, and USAGM networks offered comprehensive coverage of the oppressive actions taken by both state and non-state actors, the international response and the impact on those hurt most. RFA's Uyghur Service, the only Uyghur-language news service outside of China, has consistently uncovered the worsening human rights situation in China's far west provinces, while reporting in one of the world's most difficult media environments. Chinese authorities have long used the pretext of terrorist extremism to ramp up security and surveillance in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). But in recent years, the efforts have included high-tech surveillance, far-reaching and intrusive restrictions including bans on Uyghur cultural and religious expression, setting up checkpoints and "convenience" police stations on nearly every block in cities and in well-populated areas, and biometric screenings. As a consequence of RFA's early reporting of events and developments in XUAR, six U.S.-based journalists from its Uyghur Service have been targeted by Chinese authorities, who have detained dozens of their relatives in China. (See also "Threats to our journalists")

Alhurra's investigative team produced an entire episode of Alhurra Investigates dedicated to the plight of the Uyghurs. The program included interviews of former prisoners, representatives from Human Rights Watch, as well as experts from different backgrounds to give viewers a thorough understanding of China's alleged abuses against the Muslim majority Uyghurs. The program provided an in-depth historical look at the Uyghurs in Asia, as well as the continuing persecution.

RFA's project, *Behind the Walls*, gives a rare glimpse into a situation that is increasingly drawing global concern over what is being described as a new apartheid state.



RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION



ROHINGYA

In what the United Nations has described as “textbook ethnic cleansing,” Burmese security forces have been blamed for killings, rapes and arson against the Rohingya minority community. More than one million ethnic Rohingya Muslims have been forcibly evicted, and USAGM networks have provided extensive coverage in Burmese, Bangla and other critical languages.

VOA contributor Greta Van Susteren and a camera crew went behind the walls of the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh to hear their stories of murder and rape.

The resulting documentary, *Displaced*, shows the abysmal living conditions in the camps. Although “safe” in Bangladesh, they are depressed, isolated, prevented from attending school or working, and targeted by violent extremists and human traffickers. As the Bangladesh monsoon season hit, the crew encountered dangerous landslides and a fragile infrastructure struggling to keep up with the need for food, supplies and medicines. But they also found stories of hope. In the

In May 2018, web designer for the project, RFA's Minh-Ha Le, received a Gracie award for best website in the category for interactive news media.

HUMAN RIGHTS

RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION

documentary, the refugees themselves recounted their escape from Burma, as well as the atrocities they suffered at the hands of the Burmese military.

RFA explored the long persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Burma through graphics, videos, key quotes, and current news. The influx of approximately one million refugees put a huge strain on Bangladesh, which is struggling to provide housing and health care for the Rohingya, many of whom escaped with little more than the clothes on their back.

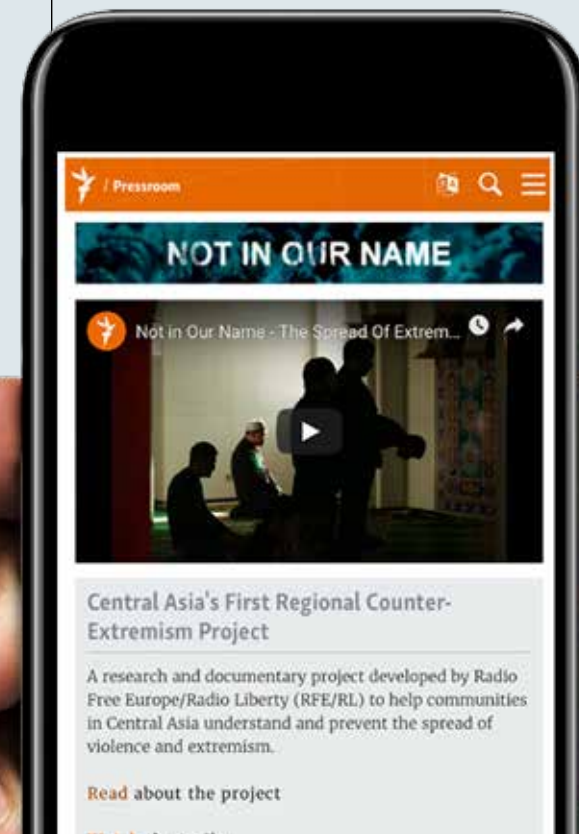


Greta Van Susteren, VOA contributor and host of the TV program *Plugged In with Greta Van Susteren*, testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in September. “[The Rohingya] are especially eager to hear news from Myanmar and what the international community is saying about them. VOA news can make a difference,” she said to the committee.

RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION BY NON-STATE ACTORS

RFE/RL’s *Not In Our Name* is the first regional counter-extremism project of its kind in Central Asia. The documentary project, created to help communities in Central Asia understand and prevent extremist recruiting, follows the journey of those who left their homes in Central Asia for the conflict zones of Iraq and Syria. It is estimated that more than 4,200 Central Asians joined the conflict, many with their families.

The project hosted ten moderated discussion groups, conducted in local languages with residents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. With support from local residents and NGOs, these 30-minute segments, published online and broadcast on TV, have helped local communities confront the taboo topic of extremist recruiting. *Not In Our Name* has also been screened alongside open discussions with audiences in Washington, Boston, New York, Pittsburgh, and London.



TELLING AMERICA'S STORY

News and information about the United States is often distorted in countries that restrict the press. In addition to providing international and local news, USAGM networks are charged with providing accurate information about American culture, people and politics. To that end, VOA and MBN provide not only comprehensive coverage of domestic politics and debates, but they also provide a look at the life and culture of Americans and the issues they face.

FOLLOWING THE AMERICAN DREAM

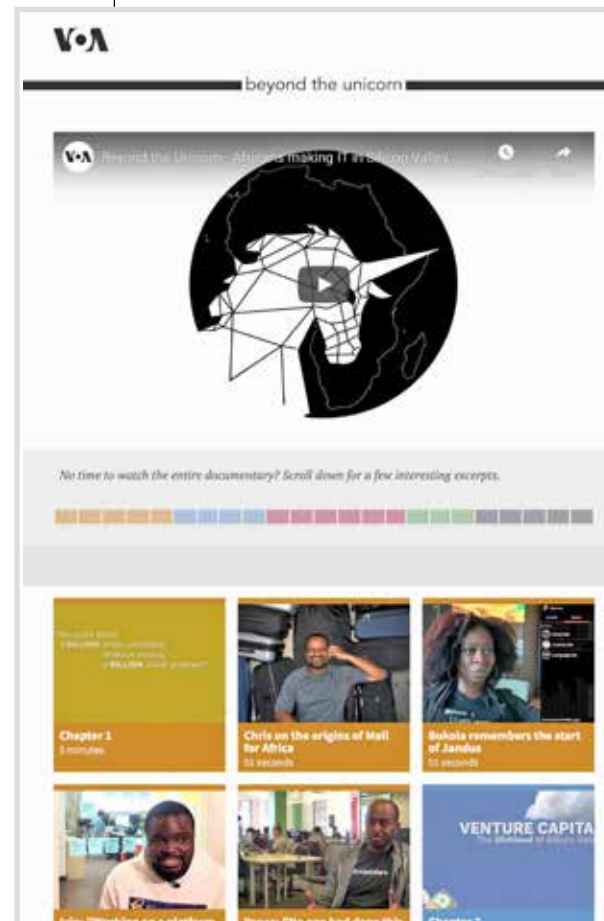
More than 70 percent of Silicon Valley founders come from outside the United States; yet, only a small fraction is from Africa. *Beyond the Unicorn* is a half-hour documentary that takes viewers on a personal and inspiring journey through the insular world of tech start-ups and profiles the African entrepreneurs who dare to build them. In addition to producing a full-length documentary on African entrepreneurs, VOA partnered with INSEEC University (L'Institut des hautes études économiques et commerciales) to host a Facebook Live panel discussion with diaspora tech leaders, garnering more than 51,000 video views.

The Great American Road Trip is a new 20-episode travel series produced by VOA's Russian Service for broadcast on Current Time that explores places and aspects of American life not ordinarily found in travel guides. By telling stories through the eyes of residents themselves, the series provides an alternative to the disinformation propagated by Russian state media that distorts the view of American life.

VOA's Turkish Service launched a new digital special project, *American Dream*, highlighting Turkish-Americans who have successfully realized their goals and aspirations. The initial episodes of this diaspora series feature interviews with a business executive, a college professor and an entrepreneur.

MBN's digital properties regularly profile Arab-Americans who have followed their dreams in the United States, such as Diana Al Sindi, an Iraqi-American immigrant who is a Propulsion Development Engineer who worked for NASA. Within 24 hours, her story had more than 350,000 views, and several Iraqi TV channels shared the report on their websites as well. Another report, featured Mo Seifeldein, a Sudanese-American who was elected to City Council in Alexandria, Virginia.

Beyond the Unicorn is a half-hour documentary that takes viewers on a personal and inspiring journey through the insular world of tech start-ups and profiles the African entrepreneurs who dare to build them.



TELLING AMERICA'S STORY

UNDERSTANDING U.S. POLITICS

VOA's Indonesian Service launched a new social media video series, *Ada Apa Sih dengan White House* (*Keeping up with the White House*), that targets young, digital native audiences on Instagram and features the latest White House news in one minute. The host also poses questions and invites viewers to write in with their answers and opinions. "I like it, it's very youthful."

I even downloaded it and posted it on my Whatsapp status and story as well," a viewer wrote. One episode on U.S. aid to Indonesia had almost 300,000 views with 164 comments and nearly 13,000 likes on Instagram.

Alhurra launched *Decision's Capital*, a weekly program dedicated to U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East. Each episode focuses on one topic and features American experts of both sides of the debate to discuss and explain how that policy impacts the Middle East. Another weekly program, *Inside Washington*, interviews policy makers, American analysts and journalists to provide viewers with an inside look at how decisions in DC are made.

The extensive coverage, which included the Democratic response by U.S. Representative Joe Kennedy, was led by VOA and distributed to more than 100 countries. VOA provided live, simultaneous translations of the speech in Farsi, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, and Pashto languages. Alhurra provided simultaneous translation in Arabic and also aired interviews with Members of Congress from both sides of the aisles. For many, the USAGM networks served as the only source of accurate and unbiased coverage of the President's address.

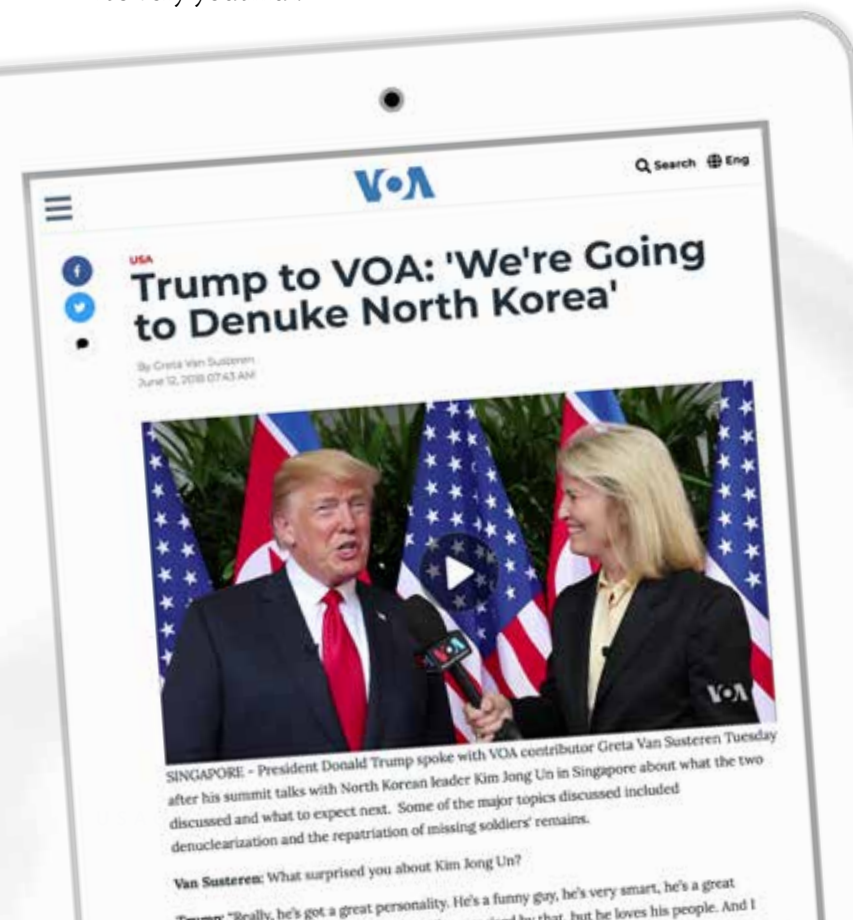
NORTH KOREA SUMMIT

USAGM networks coordinated comprehensive coverage of the historic summit in Singapore between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

During the June 11-12 summit, networks surged broadcast hours and worked around the clock to provide their audiences and affiliates with up-to-date information and coverage. VOA led the effort coordinating logistical arrangements for the 32 reporters, videographers and support staff from VOA, OCB, RFA, and MBN. Current Time and many RFE/RL language services also covered the summit,

STATE OF THE UNION

Audiences around the world, including in some of the most media-repressed countries, were able to watch President Donald Trump's first State of the Union address to Congress on January 30, 2018, thanks to the USAGM



TELLING AMERICA'S STORY

localizing the coverage for their audiences. RFA filed reports from Singapore in coordination with its bureaus in Seoul and Washington, D.C., and featured reactions from inside North Korea.

U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS



In Minnesota's 5th congressional district, VOA Somali followed candidate Ilhan Abdullahi Omar throughout her campaign and was her only election-night interview, with more than 280,000 total video views on Facebook in the first 24 hours.

VOA provided audiences around the world with election results, background on the American electoral process, information about diaspora candidates and voters, as well as analysis of key issues. On its popular social media platforms, VOA reporting generated engagement and discussion

in local languages about important political issues facing America today.

Alhurra Television and Alhurra.com also provided continuous coverage of Election Day. With correspondents reporting from across the country, MBN provided up-to-the-minute news, examined the issues that motivated voters and discussed the implications these elections would have on U.S. foreign policy. Alhurra also included analysis of the winners including the record number of women elected to Congress and the newly elected Muslim-Americans.

CURRENT ISSUES: IMMIGRATION

VOA Spanish provided important, continuing coverage of the immigration crisis affecting the United States with TV packages, live interactions in shows and with affiliates, as well as Facebook Lives and web articles. The Spanish Service's coverage included analysis of the violence and social crisis affecting the countries of the Northern Triangle, as well as explanatory reporting on U.S. immigration laws. It also provided key context of the larger immigration issue, including congressional debate; the U.S. government's position; migrants, NGOs and lawyers' points of view.



As a 7,000-strong immigrant caravan from Central America attempted to reach the U.S. southern border, media partners throughout the 17 countries in the region made use of Greta Van Susteren's interview with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during his visit to Mexico to meet with Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray. (AP Photo/Moises Castillo, File)

TELLING AMERICA'S STORY

DRUGS AND CRIME

VOA embarked on a special project to document the U.S. opioid crisis as experienced by Americans struggling with the epidemic in their own lives and careers. The series, *The Damage Done: Living the America's Opioid Nightmare*, tells stories of everyday Americans dealing with the problem. The stories are told, without narration, by the actions and words of the subjects. Reaction to this intimate storytelling approach and the compelling characters has been very strong.

In partnership with El Salvador's leading television station Canal 12, VOA Spanish produced a six-part TV series on the challenges that the United States and El Salvador face dealing with MS-13, considered one of the most dangerous organized crime gangs in the hemisphere. The collaborative project looked at the genesis and evolution of MS-13, present day challenges, U.S. policy, as well as testimonies from former gang members, convicts, law enforcement officials, and NGOs who are working with youth and families on the issues. All provide insight into the current situation, causes, and possible solutions. The series was filmed in El Salvador, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles.

GUN VIOLENCE

VOA provided comprehensive, on-site, live coverage of the aftermath of the February mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and the ensuing gun debate that consumed the nation. Multiple language services also provided important and comprehensive coverage of the March 24th March for Our Lives protest, a student-led demonstration in Washington, D.C.



"I defend their right to protest, but I don't have to agree with their opinions, and they don't have to agree with mine," a male Second Amendment defender and protester told VOA Spanish, as the service presented both sides of the gun control debate.

THREATS TO OUR JOURNALISTS

Many state and non-state actors will go to great lengths to silence the truth, and as a consequence USAGM journalists routinely face harassment, legal and physical threats and sometimes prison. Below are a small sample of the threats our journalists faced in 2018. For a comprehensive look, please visit the USAGM website, [USAGM.gov](https://www.usagm.gov).

RFE/RL JOURNALISTS KILLED IN KABUL BOMBINGS

On April 30, 2018, three RFE/RL journalists were among at least 25 people killed in a pair of coordinated suicide bombings that rocked central Kabul near the headquarters of Afghanistan's intelligence agency.

Sabawoon Kakar, 30, had been a member of the video team for RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan for five years.

Abadullah Hananzai, 26, was a journalist and video cameraman who had been working on an antinarcotics project for RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan called Caravan of Poison.

Maharram Durrani, 28, was to begin working for RFE/RL in mid-May. She was on her way to the office of Radio Free Afghanistan for training when the attack occurred.

Nine journalists were killed in the April 30 attacks, the worst toll ever among media workers in a single attack in Afghanistan.



Sabawoon Kakar



Abadullah Hananzai



Maharram Durrani



WEB: Threats to Press

THREATS TO OUR JOURNALISTS



RFA UYGHUR SERVICE FAMILY MEMBERS DETAINED

Six RFA Uyghur Service reporters have spent years in exile covering unreported news and documenting human rights abuses under heavy-handed Chinese rule in their homeland in northwestern China. Now, dozens of their family members residing in what China calls the Xinjiang Uyghur

Autonomous Region have been imprisoned in the vast and growing network of political re-education camps. They share the fate of an estimated one million Uyghurs who are being held without due process for ill-defined reasons, under Beijing's brutal campaign against what it calls religious extremism and separatism.



MISSING IN SYRIA

Alhurra correspondent Bashar Fahmi went missing while reporting in Aleppo, Syria, in August 2012. His condition and whereabouts remain unknown.

PRESS FREEDOM CURTAILED IN CAMBODIA

Throughout 2018, the Cambodian government continued its systematic attack on press freedom in an effort to control information leading up to the July general election. VOA and RFA reporters in the country were repeatedly harassed and followed, and two former RFA employees were arrested on



Two former RFA journalists Uon Chhin and Sothearin Yeang were arrested in November 2017 and charged with espionage. Reports say the two were held under suspicion of continuing to work for RFA, despite the network's suspension of operations in Cambodia and the fact that their relationships with RFA, contractual or otherwise, discontinued in September. They were released on bail after the election, have recently undergone trial proceedings in Phnom Penh, and expect a verdict in August 2019.

espionage charges. RFA is working to reopen its Phnom Penh bureau, which closed in September 2017 when the network was forced to withdraw its incountry operations. On July 27, two days before the general election, the Cambodian government blocked the Khmer websites of VOA and RFA.

THREATS TO OUR JOURNALISTS

IMPRISONED JOURNALISTS



Stanislav Aseyev

Stanislav Aseyev, a blogger from Donetsk, whom the U.S. Congressional Freedom of the Press Caucus described as “one of the few independent journalists to remain in the region under separatist control to provide objective reporting,” has been held incommunicado by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine since June 2017. International rights groups have expressed concern about his whereabouts, that he has been subject to threats and possibly torture during his detention, and demanded his release.



Oleh Halaziuk

Ukrainian blogger and RFE/RL contributor Oleh Halaziuk has been held by Russia-backed separatists in Donetsk since August 2017, in connection with his reporting on the effects of the conflict on daily life in the region. On December 27, 2017, a Ukrainian hostage released in a prisoner exchange was able to pass a message from Halaziuk to an RFE/RL editor, confirming that he was being held by the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR).



Nguyen Van Hoa

RFA Vietnamese videographer and contributor Nguyen Van Hoa faced dire circumstances in prison in 2018. He is currently serving a seven-year sentence for “propagandizing” after he reported on a mid-2016 industrial spill that devastated wide areas of Vietnam’s central coast. In August, authorities beat Hoa into making a forced confession used in court to convict environmental activist Le Dinh Luong. Hoa later recounted the statement.



Le Anh Hung

VOA contributor Le Anh Hung was arrested on July 5, 2018 on the charges of “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State, lawful rights and interests of organizations and/or citizens” under Article 331 of Vietnam’s 2015 Penal Code. If convicted, he could serve up to seven years in prison.

AWARDS

INTERNET

Alliance for Women in Media Gracie Awards

Best website, interactive news media

RFA...Minh-Ha Lee

The Rohingya: World's Least-Wanted People

Association of International Broadcasters (AIB) Awards

Photojournalism, Interactive category 'highly commended' and 'direct and motivating.'

RFE/RL...Amos Chapple, Wojtek Grojec, and Andy Heil

Caught Up in a Revolution

Interactive, Shortlist

VOA, RFE/RL, OCB, RFA, MBN

The Dragon's Reach

Institute of Mass Information

2018 Catch The Fake!

RFE/RL...Yevgeniya Tyukhtenko

Soldier Exposes Obvious Photofake: I Was Coming Home From the ATO

Chesapeake Press Broadcaster's Association (CAPBA)

First place

VOA...Voice of America's Immigration Unit: Aline Barros, Ramon Taylor, Victoria Macchi, and editor, Molly McKitterick

2017 Immigration Year in Review

Society of Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi Award

Best e-Book

RFA..."Drawing Fire; The Political Cartoons of Rebel Pepper"

MOBILE

The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences' 22nd Annual Webby Awards

Nominee, Mobile Sites and Apps

RFE/RL...Pangea Digital

RFE/RL News App

Honoree in the Film & Video:
News & Politics: Series

VOA...News Center's Heather Murdock and Greg Flakus and VOA Urdu Service's Deepak Dobhol

Off The Highway

RADIO

Society of Professional Journalists in Hawaii

First Place, Feature Reporting

VOA...Heidi Chang and Faith Lapidus

Obituary for Tyrus Wong, the Chinese-American animator who created the Disney character Bambi

The Next Generation Entertainment Awards (NGEA)

Best Talk Show

VOA...English to Africa

Let's Talk

TELEVISION & FILM

National Association of Broadcasters 2018 New York Festival International Television and Film Awards

Gold Medal, International Affairs

VOA...Senior Executive Producer Beth Mendelson, Hausa Service Mobile Stream Managing Editor Ibrahim Ahmed, News Center Supervisory Investigative Editor Tom Detzel

Boko Haram: Journey from Evil

Silver Medal, Best Promotional Program

MBN...Mireille Auzon, Baraket Allami, Leila Bazzi

Exiting ISIS promo

Bronze Medal, Biography/Profiles

RFA...RFA Burmese Service

Child Soldier Recalls his Plight

Bronze Medal, Coverage of Continuing News

VOA...Heather Murdock, Greg Flakus, Deepak Dobhol

Off The Highway

All-Russian Festival of Television Programming and Films

First Place, See Me as an Equal

RFE/RL...Vadim Kondakov and Stanislav Feofanov, Current Time

Unknown Russia, "City of the Blind"

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

Grand Prix for Best Documentary Film

RFE/RL...Vitaly Mansky, Current Time

Putin's Witnesses

Amorgos Tourism Film Festival

First Place, TV

RFE/RL...Current Time

"Come Visit! With Zurab Dvali" episode: Corfu: Gift of the Gods

Berlin Short Film Festival

2018 Best Short Documentary

RFE/RL...Daud Khattak, Senior Editor of RFE/RL's Pakistani Service

Vanishing History

Listapad International Film Festival

Grand Prix for best documentary film

RFE/RL...Alisa Kovalenko

Home Games

Odessa International Film Festival

Best documentary film

RFE/RL...Alisa Kovalenko

Home Games

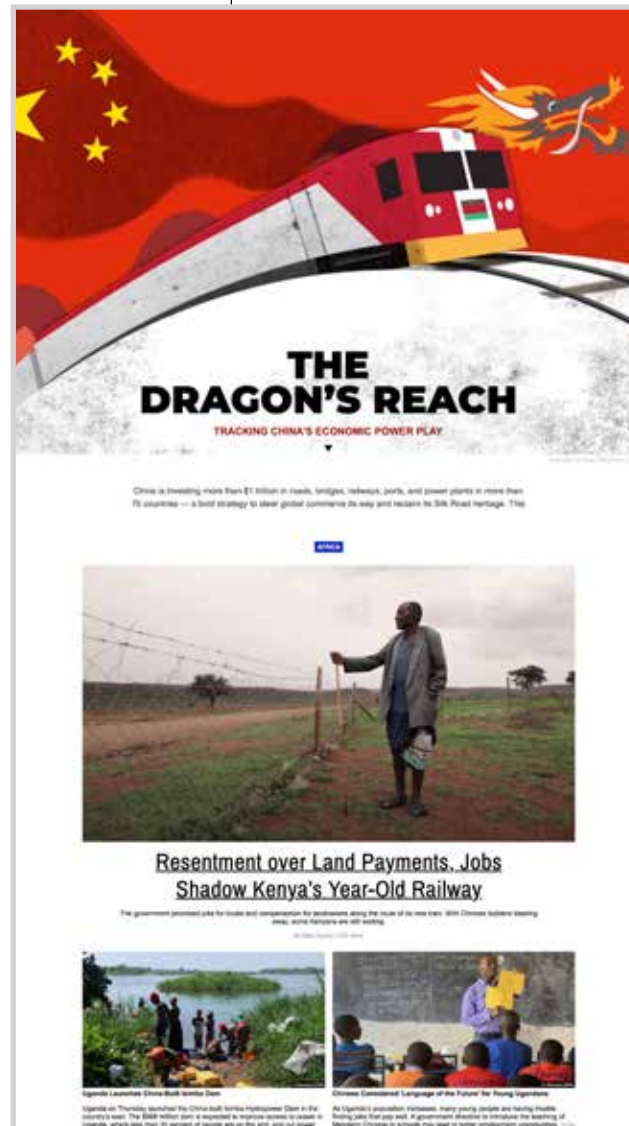
ArtDocFest Film Festival (Online Film Competition)

Special Jury Prize

RFE/RL

Another Signs of Life documentary "In Search of Paraguay"

In an effort to maximize resources, increase collaboration and focus on key issues and audiences, the networks of the USAGM have produced another full-scale collaborative project: The Dragon's Reach; Tracking China's Economic Power Play. The project was shortlisted for recognition in the "Interactive Category" by Association of International Broadcasters (AIB)



AWARDS

Investigative Journalism Foundation of Kazakhstan

Best Television Project (Religion)

RFE/RL
Not In Our Name

African Film Festival

Best Short Documentary Award

VOA...Pascale Gabriella Serra, French to Africa Service
Zone III

National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Emmy Award, Chicago Midwest Chapter

Nomination, Outstanding Achievement for News Specialty Report/Series—Religion.

VOA...Kane Farabaugh
Profile of Tahera Rahman, the first full-time broadcast television news reporter in the United States to wear a hijab

Qinghai TV, Kham TV, and Lhasa TV

Most Influential TV Host

VOA...Tsering Kyi, VOA Tibetan

SPECIAL NOTE

Presszvanie journalist contest

RFE/RL...Ukrainian Service reporters Olga Strizhova (healthcare) and Tatiana Yakubovych (sports) were awarded first prizes, also recognized: Strizhova, Daria Kurennaya, Mikhail Shtekel, Maria Buchel'nikova, and Olga Komarova

Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, the YanukovychLeaks project, and Media Development Foundation's Mezhyhirya Festival

National Competition of Investigative Journalists

RFE/RL...Valeriya Egoshyna, Ukrainian Service's investigative project "Schemes"

UN Office in Ukraine's "Publications for changes. Ukraine on the path to sustainable development,"

Gender Equality

RFE/RL...Iryna Nazarchuk, Ukrainian Service

Belarus PEN Center Ales Adamovich prize

RFE/RL...Alexander Lukashuk, Belarus Service Director

Service's Liberty Library series, as well as his two books "Adventures of ARA in Belarus" and "Trace of the Butterfly."

Golden Pen

RFE/RL... Ulanbek Egizbaev, Kyrgyz Service (posthumously)

Kyrgyzstan's Intellectuals Alliance "Conscience of the Nation" Award

RFE/RL... Ulanbek Egizbaev, Kyrgyz Service (posthumously)

2018 BETA News Agency Photograph of the Year

RFE/RL...Midhat Poturovic, Balkan Service

2018 ADAMI Media Prize for Cultural Diversity in Eastern Europe

Winner

RFE/RL...Georgian Service
Special Mention
RFE/RL...Belarus Service

Penal Reform International's (PRI) Human Rights Award

Promotion of Human Rights Issues in the Media

RFE/RL...Orken Bissenov, Kazakh Service

Regional Press Development Institute

First Place, Countering Disinformation

RFE/RL... Anna Andriyevska, Ukrainian Service

Afghanistan's Ministry of Information and Culture

Recognition for Poetry

RFE/RL... Malali Bashir, Radio Azadi

Centre for Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) - Humanitarian Reporting Award

Runner-Up

VOA... Umer Farooq, Urdu Service
Education for Minorities

All Pakistan Minorities Council and Pakistan Hindus Council in Pakistan "Pride of Performance Award

VOA... VOA Deewa

The Ohio State University 2018 Kiplinger Fellowship in Public Affairs Journalism

VOA... Narin Sun, Khmer Service

Pan-Albanian Federation of America, VATRA, Lifetime Achievement Award

VOA...Dr. Elez Biberaj, director of Voice of America's Eurasia Division

Recognized for his contributions as a VOA journalist and in strengthening relations between the United States and the Albanians in the Balkans

Venezuela's National Assembly Media Committee

Special honor

VOA... Alvaro Algarra, Spanish Service

Zimbabwe Achievers Award 2018 Media Personality of the Year

VOA...Marvellous Mhlanga-Nyahuye, Zimbabwe Service

National Union of Local Government Employees Award of Excellence

VOA...Hausa Service

2018 Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award

RFE/RL...Valeriya Yegoshyna
Luxury Cars of the Security Service of Ukraine

Harvard University Neiman Foundation of Journalism Fellowship

VOA...Myroslava Gongadze, Ukrainian Service Chief



For the first time since VOA Uzbek went on the air in 1972, a VOA journalist received accreditation from the Republic of Uzbekistan to work as foreign media correspondent in that country. VOA Uzbek reporter Navbahor Imamova was the U.S. journalist given accreditation in 2018.

LEADERSHIP

THE CEO

John F. Lansing joined the Agency as CEO and Director in September 2015. Lansing's previous experience includes nine years as President of Scripps Networks, where he is credited with guiding the company to become a leading developer of unique content across various media platforms including television, digital, mobile and publishing.

Most recently, Lansing was President and Chief Executive Officer of Cable & Telecommunications Association for Marketing (CTAM), a marketing association comprised of 90 of the top U.S. and Canadian cable companies and television programmers. There, Lansing oversaw the development of business strategies and marketing initiatives that position cable television companies for continued growth as they compete with emerging digital content platforms.

Lansing also brings a deep understanding of journalism from roles as an award-winning photojournalist and field producer, assignment manager, managing editor, and news director at several television stations earlier in his career.



LEADERSHIP

THE BOARD

USAGM's Broadcasting Board of Governors is composed of nine members with expertise in the fields of mass communications, broadcast media, or international affairs. Eight members are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The ninth, the Secretary of State, serves *ex officio*.

Kenneth Weinstein, *Chairman of the Board*

Weinstein has been President and CEO of Hudson Institute since 2011. Since joining Hudson Institute in 1999, he has held several other positions, including Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Senior Fellow, and Director of the Washington Office. From 1996 to 1998, he was the Director of the Government Reform Project at the Heritage Foundation, and from 1994 to 1996, he was Director of Research at the New Citizenship Project. He served on the National Council of the Humanities from 2006 to 2012 and was appointed to the D.C. Advisory Board to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 2010. Weinstein received a B.A. from the University of Chicago, an M.Phil. from the Institut d' Études Politiques de Paris, and a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Weinstein serves as a member of the Advisory Committee and served on the Special Committee on the Creation of a Chief Executive Officer. He also served on the Special Committee on the Future of Shortwave Broadcasting, which on August 1, 2014, issued its report, *To Be Where the Audience Is; The Future of Shortwave*.

He was confirmed as a member of the board on September 23, 2013 and as Acting Chairman on January 25, 2017.



Leon Aron

Dr. Leon Aron is Resident Scholar and Director of Russian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, a position he has held since 1993. He was a weekly Contributor at the Voice of America's Russian language radio and television show *Gliadya iz Ameriki (Looking from America)* from 1990 to 2004.

Dr. Aron was previously an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University from 1994 to 1996 and a Senior Policy Analyst at the Heritage Foundation from 1987 to 1992. He was awarded the Peace Fellowship from the U.S. Institute of Peace from 1992 to 1993. Dr. Aron received a B.A. from Moscow State Pedagogical Institute and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Columbia University.

He was confirmed as a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors on December 12, 2014.



LEADERSHIP

THE BOARD

RYAN CROCKER

Ambassador Ryan Crocker is currently a Diplomat in Residence at Princeton University. He is on a leave of absence from Texas A&M University as an Executive Professor. From 2010-2011 and 2013-2016, he served as Dean of the George Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M.



He retired from the Foreign Service in April 2009 after a career of over 37 years but was recalled to active duty by President Obama to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan in 2011. He has served as U.S. Ambassador six times: Afghanistan (2011-2012), Iraq (2007-2009), Pakistan (2004-2007), Syria (1998-2001), Kuwait (1994-1997), and Lebanon (1990-1993).

He received a B.A. in English in 1971 and an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 2001 from Whitman College (Washington). He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the Association of American Ambassadors. He is also on the Board of Directors of Mercy Corps International and is a Trustee for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Ambassador Crocker received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009, and in 2012, he was named an Honorary Marine.

He was confirmed to the board on August 1, 2013.

MICHAEL KEMPNER

Michael W. Kempner is the Founder, President, and CEO of MWW, a public relations firm he founded in 1986. He is a board member of Goodwill Industries International and a Founding Board Member of ConnectOne Bancorp. He served on the White House Council for Community



Solutions from 2010 to 2012. In 2013, he was named Agency Leader of the Year by PR News, Executive of the Year by American Business Awards, and Agency Professional of the Year and Communications Professional of the Year by Bulldog Stars of PR. Mr. Kempner received a B.S. from American University.

He was confirmed as a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors on December 12, 2014.

KAREN KORNBLOUH

Ambassador Karen Kornbluh is a Senior Fellow and Director of German Marshall Fund's Technology Policy program which works to help shape a future in which technology strengthens rather than undermines democratic values.



Previously, she was a Senior Fellow for Digital Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations and prior, the Executive Vice President of External Affairs for Nielsen, responsible for global public policy, privacy strategy, and corporate social responsibility. She served as U.S. Ambassador in Paris to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). She was Policy Director for then-Senator Barack Obama as well as serving as deputy chief of staff at the U.S. Treasury Department, and as Director of the Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Federal Communications Commission in the Clinton administration. Kornbluh founded the New America Foundation's Work and Family Program and started her career as an economic forecaster and management consultant. She has written extensively on economic, technology, and family policies in publications including The New York Times, the Washington Post, the Atlantic Monthly, and the Harvard Journal of Law and Technology. Kornbluh has a bachelor's degree from Bryn Mawr College and a Master of Public Policy degree from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

She was confirmed as a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors on December 16, 2014.

LEADERSHIP

THE BOARD

JEFF SHELL

Jeff Shell is chairman of Universal Filmed Entertainment.

He previously served as chairman of NBC Universal International from 2011-2013 and as president of Comcast Programming Group from 2005 to 2011. Prior to joining Comcast, Shell held a number of positions, including CEO of Gemstar TV Guide International and President of the FOX Cable Networks Group. As president of the FOX Cable Networks, he oversaw the operations of FOX's entertainment and sports cable programming businesses. He currently serves on the board of the National Constitution Center. Shell earned a B.S. in Economics and Applied Mathematics from the University of California, Berkeley and an M.B.A. from Harvard University.

Shell served as chair of the Advisory Committee and the Special Committee on the Creation of a Chief Executive Officer.

He was confirmed to the board on August 1, 2013 and served as Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors on August 1, 2013 and served in that position until January 25, 2017.



SECRETARY MIKE R. POMPEO

Ex officio board member

Mike Pompeo was sworn in as Secretary of State on April 26, 2018. He previously served as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from January 2017 to April 2018.

Prior to joining the Trump Administration, Mr. Pompeo was serving in his fourth term as congressman from Kansas' 4th District. He served on the House Intelligence Committee, as well as the Energy and Commerce Committee and House Select Benghazi Committee.

Prior to his service in Congress, Mr. Pompeo founded Thayer Aerospace, where he served as CEO for more than a decade. He later became President of Sentry International, an oilfield equipment manufacturing, distribution, and service company.

Mr. Pompeo graduated first in his class at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1986 and served as a cavalry officer patrolling the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He also served with the 2nd Squadron, 7th Cavalry in the US Army's Fourth Infantry Division.

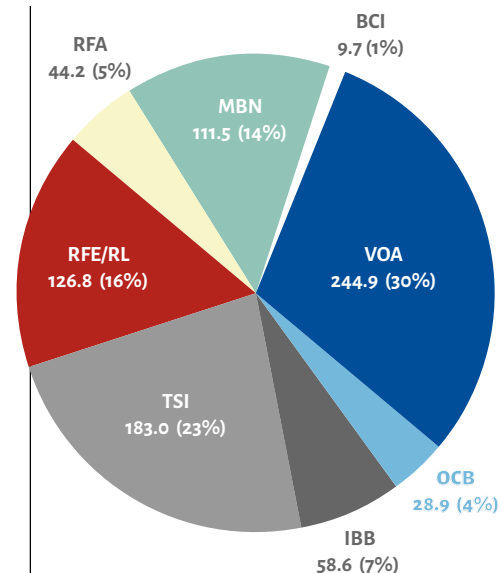
After leaving active duty, Mr. Pompeo graduated from Harvard Law School, having been an editor of the Harvard Law Review.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

(IN THOUSANDS)	2018	2017
AT END OF THE YEAR Condensed Balance Sheet Data		
Fund Balance with Treasury	\$ 253,742	\$ 222,120
Cash and other monetary assets	3	3
Accounts Receivable	171	204
Advances to Surrogate Broadcasters	72,000	71,000
Property, Plant and Equipment	79,783	89,111
Other	874	1,668
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 406,573	\$ 384,106
Accounts Payable and Other	30,407	33,142
Payroll and Retirement Benefits	42,184	42,001
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 72,591	\$ 75,143
Unexpended Appropriations	266,944	232,094
Cumulative Results of Operations	67,038	76,869
TOTAL NET POSITION	\$ 333,982	\$ 308,963
Total Liabilities and Net Position	\$ 406,573	\$ 384,106

(IN THOUSANDS)	2018	2017
FOR THE YEAR Condensed Statement of Net Cost Data		
Total Cost	\$ 798,131	\$ 784,105
Total Earned Revenue	(3,721)	(4,840)
Total Net Cost of Operations	\$ 794,410	\$ 779,265



The independent accounting firm, Kearney & Company, conducted our FY2018 financial statement audit and issued an unmodified opinion on our Principal Financial Statements. Preparing these statements allows USAGM to improve financial management and provide accurate and reliable information to Congress, the President and the taxpayer. USAGM management is responsible for the integrity and objectivity of the financial information presented in the statements. The financial statements and financial data presented in this report have been prepared from the accounting records of USAGM in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles and incorporate the application of the standards as prescribes by the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board.



Teenagers pose for a selfie in front of a line of riot police during the lead up to protests in Yerevan, Armenia. (Amos Chapple, RFE/RL)



U.S. AGENCY FOR
GLOBAL MEDIA

UNITED STATES
BROADCASTING
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