



**RESOLUTION HONORING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF
RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY'S PASHTO LANGUAGE SERVICE FOR THE
PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDER REGION – RADIO MASHAAL**

March 12, 2020

WHEREAS, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Pashto-language broadcasts – known as Radio Mashaal – debuted on January 15, 2010 with an express mission to provide an alternative to extremist propaganda and counter the recruitment efforts of extremist groups in the volatile tribal regions along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan;

WHEREAS, Radio Mashaal has served as an essential source of news, information and entertainment for the people of Pakistan's tribal areas, earning a reputation for professionalism and critical, unflinching reporting on local issues of concern to its audience;

WHEREAS, Radio Mashaal has used its broadcasts and online platforms to provide award-winning coverage of the plight of Pashtun families displaced by the Pakistani Army's ongoing anti-extremist military operation, and spark important debate on high-priority issues for Pashtun-speakers such as the importance of access to education, modern health care, and polio vaccination in Pakistan's northwest regions, as well as active participation in the democratic political processes of Pakistan;

WHEREAS, Radio Mashaal is returning the Pashtun tradition of tolerance to the war-torn region, revealing the colorful and often-hidden lives of local ethnic, religious, and other minority groups, hosting cultural programs by popular entertainers forced to flee by Islamic extremists, and uncovering the ancient history of this proud land;

WHEREAS, Radio Mashaal played a key role in highlighting the need to provide the peoples of Pakistan's northwest provinces, previously known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a democratic and constitutional means to participate in the political life of Pakistan, which in part led to the Pakistani government's decision to merge the FATA with the already-existing Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province in May 2018, and helped convince local activists to abandon violence and turn to peaceful, democratic means to address their concerns;

WHEREAS, extremist forces once able to hide easily and to recruit widely in what was sometimes called "Pakistan's Wild West," in early 2018 protested against these changes and the role of U.S. international media such as Radio Mashaal in bringing them about, only to be met by counter-demonstrators from the FATA who declared that U.S. international media outlets including Radio Mashaal served as their "voice of the voiceless;"

WHEREAS, Radio Mashaal's nine hours of daily original radio programming reaches remote audiences that lack access to the Internet and TV, even as Mashaal's aggressive digital strategy – adopted in response to the spread of mobile phones in the region and extremist content online – reaches two million followers on Facebook, 150,000 followers on YouTube, and 90,000 followers on Twitter in the Pashtun language, proving that Mashaal is a powerful competitor

among the Internet's numerous extremist groups;

WHEREAS, Radio Mashaal's coverage has made it a frequent target of militant groups, criminal gangs, and Pakistani authorities including the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI), which ordered the closure of RFE/RL's Islamabad bureau in January 2018, accusing its journalists of working "against the interest of Pakistan;" and

WHEREAS, Radio Mashaal and its journalists have steadfastly continued to report, despite intermittent blockages of access to its website in Pakistan in the last year in what may represent an additional effort by authorities to suppress its reporting.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of Governors and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the U.S. Agency for Global Media that we celebrate and commemorate the 10th anniversary of RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board and CEO applaud and thank current and former members of Radio Mashaal for their commitment to their audiences and their dedication to professional journalism.